

ARN No: T/TG/2024/1040  
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\*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

Weather Forecast

HYDERABAD

t°

H 33° C

L 25° C

VIJAYAWADA

t°

H 35° C

L 26° C

TIRUPATHI

t°

H 36° C

L 26° C

Indians ‘deserved it’: Tahawwur Rana told David Headley after 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks

Focus shifts to ISI role



Helped Headley with fake business front.

ISI officers linked to Mumbai attacks.

India to interrogate Rana on ISI ties.

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

In a major development in the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks case, Tahawwur Hussain Rana, a Pakistan-born Canadian citizen and one of the key conspirators, was extradited to India by the United States on Wednesday. The extradition marks a critical step toward justice for the 166 victims, including six Americans, who lost their lives during the three-day siege carried out by Pakistani terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

The U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ), which facilitated the extradition, revealed disturbing details, stating that Rana allegedly said Indians “deserved it” following the attacks. He also reportedly praised the nine LeT terrorists who were killed during the operation, suggesting they be honored with the Nishan-e-Haider, Pakistan’s highest military gallantry award, reserved for fallen soldiers.

Rana is accused of helping his childhood friend David Coleman Headley (born Daood Gilani), a U.S. citizen and key plotter of the attacks, by creating a fake business front to facilitate surveillance of targets in Mumbai. Headley later conducted reconnaissance for LeT to plan the assault.


Investigations by India’s National Investigation Agency (NIA) have uncovered deep ties between the terrorists and Pakistan’s intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Senior ISI officers—Major Iqbal and Major Sameer Ali—have been named as collaborators who directed and financed the attacks. Major Iqbal reportedly

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PM Modi Unveils ₹3,880 Crore Projects in Varanasi

Pushes for Strict Action in Gangrape Case



TPN Correspondent | Varanasi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on a visit to his parliamentary constituency Varanasi on April 11, 2025, inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for 44 development projects worth over ₹3,880 crore. During the event, he also addressed a public gathering, highlighting the ongoing development in the region and taking a strong stance on a recent gangrape case.

Among the key infrastructure projects, PM Modi launched initiatives to improve road connectivity, including the foundation stones for a road bridge connecting the Varanasi Ring Road to Sarnath, flyovers at Bhikharipur and Manduadih crossings, and a tunnel at Varanasi International Airport — all worth over ₹980 crore. He also inaugurated rural development projects such as 130 drinking water schemes, 100 new Anganwadi centres, 356 libraries, and new colleges in Pindra.

In a major boost to the power infrastructure in eastern Uttar Pradesh, the Prime Minister inaugurated transmission substations in Jaunpur, Chandauli, and Ghazipur worth ₹1,045 crore, and laid foundation stones for further expansion projects totaling ₹775 crore. Redevelopment of

BJP-AIADMK Alliance Revived for 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections: Amit Shah Announces



TPN Correspondent | Chennai

In a significant political development, Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah on Friday (April 11, 2025) announced the revival of the alliance between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in Tamil Nadu. The announcement was made at a joint press conference held in Chennai alongside AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami.

This renewed partnership will contest the 2026 Tamil Nadu

Assembly elections under the banner of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), with Edappadi Palaniswami set to lead the alliance in the state.

“The BJP and AIADMK will work together to provide a stable and development-focused government in Tamil Nadu,” Amit Shah said. He expressed confidence in the alliance’s strength

and its ability to bring about change in the state. Shah also emphasized that the AIADMK did not place any conditions or demands for reviving ties with the BJP.


When asked about the possible reinduction of expelled AIADMK leader O. Panneerselvam and Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) general secretary T.T.V. Dhinakaran, Amit Shah clarified that such matters are internal to AIADMK and that the BJP would not interfere in the party’s internal decisions.

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Surge in Illegal Immigration Fueling Demographic Crisis in Manipur

IPFM Warns of Existential Threat to Indigenous Communities



TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Manipur is witnessing a rapid demographic transformation, largely driven by illegal immigration, which is now outpacing natural population growth and raising serious socio-political concerns, the Indigenous People’s Forum Manipur (IPFM) said in a press conference in Delhi on Friday.

Highlighting alarming trends, IPFM chief Ashang Kasar pointed to an “unnatural” surge in population and settlement patterns, particularly in border districts such as Jiribam. Citing census

data, Kasar noted that Jiribam’s population grew by 80.22% between 1951 and 2011, well beyond expected rates.

According to the IPFM, the state’s decadal growth rate exceeded 30% for three consecutive decades following Manipur’s merger with India, with a significant 24.5% growth reported between 2001 and 2011. A 42% growth rate, the group emphasized, raises red flags and suggests that illegal immigration is significantly influencing the population figures.

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J.P. Nadda Launches Ayushman Bharat in Odisha

Slams Mamata Govt for Blocking Scheme in Bengal



Union Health Minister and BJP national president J.P. Nadda on Friday launched the Ayushman Bharat scheme in Odisha, asserting that nearly 3.5 crore out of the state’s 4.5 crore population would benefit under the Centre’s flagship health initiative.

At the launch event in Bhubaneswar, Nadda took a sharp jab at West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, accusing her government of obstructing the implementation of Ayushman Bharat in the

less development.

The “double-engine government” phrase has been central

state. “When welfare schemes of the Modi government are blocked, it becomes evident that a single-engine government is not enough. That’s when people bring in a double-engine government,” he said, reiterating the BJP’s pitch for states to align with the Centre for seamless development.

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## Indians ‘deserved it’: Tahawwur Rana told David Headley after 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks

guided Headley’s reconnaissance missions, while Sameer Ali allegedly monitored the attack in real time from a control room in Karachi.

With Rana now in Indian custody, agencies are preparing to interrogate him, especially regarding his links to these ISI officers and the planning of the attacks. The extradition reopens international

attention on Pakistan’s alleged state-sponsored terrorism and ISI’s complicity in one of the worst terror attacks in India’s history.

India’s relentless pursuit of justice in the 26/11 case continues, and with Rana now on Indian soil, a significant chapter in the long battle against cross-border terrorism begins anew.

## Surge in Illegal Immigration Fueling Demographic Crisis in Manipur

The IPFM also reported a sharp rise in the number of villages, especially in non-indigenous dominated hill districts. Between 1969 and 2001, villages increased dramatically in areas like Kangpokpi and Churachandpur. Of the 966 new villages now seeking official recognition in Manipur, 308 are in Kangpokpi, 281 in Churachandpur, and 205 in Chandel, among others.

This demographic shift, the IPFM warned, is linked not only to domestic issues but also to external geopolitical factors, particularly the actions of the Myanmar junta and the instability in neighboring regions, which are believed to be contributing to cross-border migration.

IPFM general secretary Newme Heg Ramtambung joined Kasar in

urging the Indian government to address what they termed an “existential threat” to the indigenous communities. They called for the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Manipur before undertaking the court-mandated delimitation process.

“The demographic imbalance must be tackled with urgency,” Kasar said. “The growing influence of illegal immigrants, unchecked village expansion, and shifting political dynamics are marginalizing the indigenous population and endangering their identity, culture, and rights.”

The press briefing comes amid ongoing ethnic violence in the state and increasing calls for constitutional safeguards and transparent governance in Manipur.

## BJP-AIADMK Alliance Revived for 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly Elections: Amit Shah Announces

This renewed alliance marks a notable shift in Tamil Nadu’s political landscape. The BJP-AIADMK alliance had earlier split in 2023 following disagreements over leadership and electoral strategy. However, with both parties facing electoral challenges in the state, the revived partnership signals a strategic realignment ahead of the crucial 2026 Assembly polls.

AIADMK leader Edappadi Palaniswami welcomed

the alliance, reiterating his party’s commitment to the development of Tamil Nadu and the interests of its people. “Together, we aim to strengthen the NDA in Tamil Nadu and serve the people with dedication and integrity,” he said.

The announcement comes at a time when alliances and political equations are being closely watched across the country in the lead-up to the next round of state elections.

## J.P. Nadda Launches Ayushman Bharat in Odisha

to BJP’s election messaging, implying that states perform better when ruled by the same party as the Centre.

He highlighted the contrast between Odisha, which has now welcomed the scheme, and West Bengal, where political differences have allegedly hampered the rollout of central welfare programs. “It is unfortunate that lakhs of poor people in Bengal are denied the benefits of Ayushman Bharat due to political reasons,” Nadda said.

He added that with Odisha’s participation, the central government aims to bring significant healthcare relief to the region, especially to underprivileged and rural populations.

Ayushman Bharat, also known as PM-JAY (Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana), offers health insurance coverage of up to ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization. The scheme is touted as the world’s largest government-funded health assurance program.

# Drones, space capability game-changers in warfare: Rajnath

- Cites Ukraine war: drones cause major losses.
- Urges tech-driven, multi-domain military upgrades.
- Stresses AI, cyber, and space integration for future.

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday highlighted the pivotal role of emerging technologies like drones and space capabilities in redefining modern warfare. Speaking at the convocation ceremony of the 80th Staff Course at the Defence Services Staff College (DSSC) in Wellington, Tamil Nadu, Singh addressed officers from the Indian Armed Forces as well as those from friendly foreign nations.

He described drones and space-based systems as “game changers,” stressing that warfare is now increasingly shaped by non-traditional means. “We are living in the age of grey zone and hybrid warfare, where cyber-attacks, disinformation cam-



paigns, and economic tactics can be used to achieve strategic goals without firing a single bullet,” Singh noted.

Citing the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, he observed how drones have emerged as a potent tool in combat, becoming “a new arm” that has transformed battlefield dynamics. “Most losses in that conflict are not due to traditional artillery or armoured units, but to drone strikes,” he said.

Singh also pointed out how space-based capabilities are rev-

olutionizing military functions such as intelligence gathering, surveillance, positioning, targeting, and communications. He emphasized that India’s armed forces must embrace such technological advancements to maintain operational superiority.

He affirmed that the government, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership, is committed to transforming the military into a technology-driven, multi-domain force. This includes boosting the integration of artificial intelligence (AI), cy-

ber capabilities, and space technologies.

“Artificial intelligence and other emerging tech are changing the way deterrence and warfare function. The armed forces must be future-ready and operate in an integrated manner across land, air, sea, cyber, and space domains,” Singh said.

Highlighting the evolving global security landscape, Singh mentioned the conflicts in West Asia, rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific, and non-traditional threats like climate change and natural disasters as growing concerns. He urged officers to remain alert to such changes and continuously adapt to stay ahead of the curve.

In conclusion, the Defence Minister called for vigorous efforts to modernize and future-proof India’s military forces to remain effective in both conventional and unconventional theatres of war.

# Padma Awards 2026: Nominations Open on Rashtriya Puraskar Portal

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has officially opened the nomination and recommendation process for the prestigious Padma Awards 2026, which will be announced on the eve of Republic Day next year. According to an official statement released on Friday, the last date to submit nominations is July 31, 2025, and all entries must be submitted online via the Rashtriya Puraskar Portal at <https://awards.gov.in>.

The Padma Awards — Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri — are among India’s highest civilian honors. Instituted in 1954, these awards recognize exceptional and distinguished contributions in various fields such as art, literature, education, sports, medicine, social work, science, engineering, public affairs, civil service, and industry, among others.

The MHA emphasized that any person, regardless of race, occupation, position, or gender, is eligible for the awards. However, government employees, including those working in public sector undertakings (PSUs), are not eligible, with the exception of doctors and scientists.

Reiterating its commitment to transform-



ing the Padma Awards into what has been termed the “People’s Padma”, the government has encouraged all citizens to actively participate in the nomination process — including the option for self-nomination. The focus is on identifying individuals doing selfless service in their communities, particularly from women, SCs, STs, weaker sections, and persons with disabilities (Divyangjans).

Since 2014, the Narendra Modi-led government has been honoring several “unsung heroes” — individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to society without much public recognition.

Nominations must include all relevant personal and professional details, as outlined in the format provided on the portal. Each nomination should be accompanied by a citation in narrative form (maximum 800 words), clearly describing the individual’s distinguished achievements or exceptional service in their respective fields.

Further information, including award rules and statutes, is available on both the Ministry of Home Affairs website (<https://mha.gov.in>) and the Padma Awards portal (<https://padmaawards.gov.in>).

# Ashwini Vaishnaw Dismisses Concerns Over Digital Personal Data Protection Act

Impacting RTI and Journalism

TPN Correspondent| Delhi

Union Information and Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Thursday addressed concerns raised by leaders of the INDIA bloc regarding the potential negative impact of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act on the Right to Information (RTI) Act and investigative journalism. Vaishnaw reassured that the new law was in complete harmony with both privacy and transparency, and would not hinder the ability of citizens to access public information.

His remarks came in response to criticism from Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi, who described the DPDP Act as “draconian.” Gogoi expressed concerns that the new law would limit access to important public information, such as details about contractors involved in infrastructure projects. He specifically



pointed to an example, saying that the DPDP Act could prevent citizens from using RTI to learn about which contractor built bridges in Bihar that later collapsed.

However, Vaishnaw rejected these claims, emphasizing that

the DPDP Act balances the need for data privacy with the principle of transparency. He explained that while the act seeks to protect personal data, it does not interfere with the public’s right to information about government functions and the allocation of resources. According to

Vaishnaw, the law ensures that transparency in public life and the accountability of government institutions are not compromised.

The minister reassured that the DPDP Act is designed to safeguard citizens’ personal data from misuse while still allowing for transparency in government dealings, particularly through RTI. He further added that the government had made provisions to ensure that the new law would not create obstacles for investigative journalism, which plays a crucial role in holding authorities accountable.

Vaishnaw’s comments aimed to clarify the government’s stance and alleviate concerns that the new law would undermine transparency and hinder citizens’ access to information about public projects and governance.



# Delhi To Bring New "Transparent" Excise Policy: CM Rekha Gupta



- **Government to Introduce New "Foolproof" Excise Policy**
- **Current liquor sales run by govt outlets.**
- **BJP plans to follow best state practices.**

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced that the BJP government will introduce a new and "foolproof" excise policy aimed at boosting the state's revenue while ensuring transparency and minimal societal impact. In an interview with PTL, Gupta stated that

the policy would be based on best practices from other states and designed to avoid any issues that might affect the public.

The BJP's return to power in February, following the defeat of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), saw a major focus on the alleged irregularities in the excise policy of 2021-22

introduced by the previous AAP government. The policy was scrapped after corruption allegations surfaced, making it a significant issue in the election campaign.

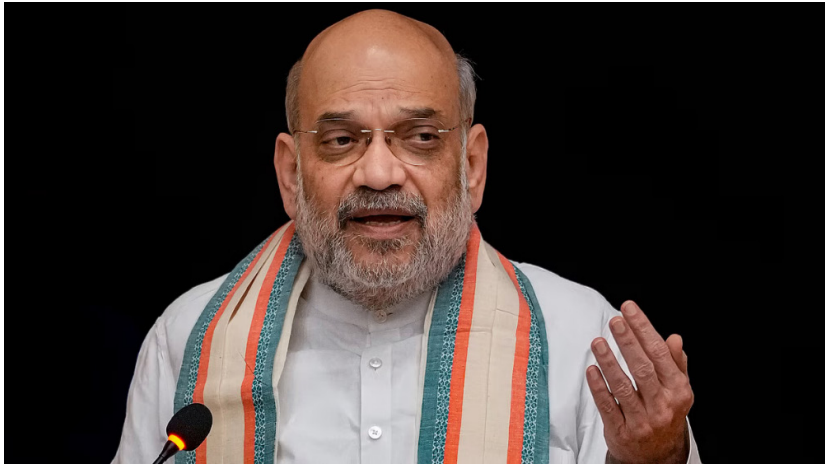
Gupta emphasized that the new excise policy would be transparent, revenue-generating, and free from any adverse consequences for society. "We will bring a new, foolproof policy that is transparent and generates revenue for the government," she said, adding that it would align with the best practices observed in states where excise policies were successful.

The excise policy brought in by the AAP government in November 2021 allowed private players to operate liquor shops in Delhi, handing over wholesale and retail liquor operations to private companies. However, it faced significant allegations of corruption and irregularities, leading to the initiation of a CBI probe by the Lieutenant Governor in July 2022. This probe prompted the scrapping of the policy in August 2022 and the reopening of government-operated liquor stores.

Currently, Delhi operates approximately 700 liquor stores through four government corporations under the old excise policy, which continues to be in effect.

On Wednesday, Chief Minister Gupta held a review meeting with senior officials of the Excise Department, discussing the formulation of the new policy. A post on X by the Chief Minister's Office assured the public that the government remains committed to implementing a "transparent and effective" excise policy in the future.

## Amit Shah Announces Another Hurriyat Constituent Rejects Separatism, Backs Unity



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced on Friday that another constituent of the separatist amalgam Hurriyat Conference, Jammu and Kashmir Mass Movement, has rejected separatism and pledged its complete commitment to the unity of India. Shah welcomed this significant development, stating that this marks the 12th Hurriyat-linked organization to break away from the separatist movement and place trust in the Indian Constitution.

"Under the Modi government, the spirit of unity rules in Jammu and Kashmir. Jammu and Kashmir Mass Movement has rejected separatism and declared its full commitment to the unity of Bharat. I sincerely welcome their move. Till now, 12 Hurriyat-linked organizations have broken off from secessionism and placed their trust in the Constitution of India. This is a victory of PM Shri @narendramodi Ji's vision for 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'," Shah wrote on social media platform X.

This latest disassociation follows a series of similar moves by other organizations previously affiliated with the Hurriyat Conference. On April 8, the Jammu Kashmir Islamic Politi-

cal Party, Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Democratic League, and Kashmir Freedom Front also announced their departure from separatism, aligning themselves with India's Constitution.

Other groups that have distanced themselves from the Hurriyat include Jammu and Kashmir People's Movement, led by Shahid Saleem, Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Political Movement, headed by advocate Sha Reshi, and Jammu and Kashmir Freedom Movement, led by Mohd Sharief Sartaj. These moves were praised by Amit Shah, who had previously stated that the Modi government's unifying policies had successfully marginalized separatism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Two additional constituents of Hurriyat—Jammu and Kashmir Tahreeqi Isteqlal, led by Gulam Nabi So, and Jammu and Kashmir Tehreek-I-Istiqamat, headed by Ghulam Nabi War—also declared their separation from the separatist conglomerate.

This growing trend reflects a shift in Jammu and Kashmir's political landscape as more groups commit to India's constitutional framework, strengthening national unity.

## 22 Killed, 45 Animals Lost in Thunderstorms and Rains in Uttar Pradesh

### CM Yogi Announces Rs 4 Lakh Compensation

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

At least 22 people and 45 animals lost their lives across Uttar Pradesh due to devastating thunderstorms and rains on Thursday. The unseasonal weather also resulted in the damage of 15 houses across the state.

In response to the tragedy, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced an ex-gratia of Rs 4 lakh for the families of those who died. A statement from the state government confirmed that the storm and rain had caused widespread destruction, claiming the lives of 22 individuals and 45 animals while damaging homes.

The Chief Minister expressed condolences to the families of the deceased and directed that the Rs 4 lakh compensation be immediately provided to the bereaved families. He also instructed officials to offer proper treatment to the injured and provide assistance to those who lost animals in the storm.

On social media, the Chief Minister's Office shared a message stating that Yogi Adityanath had also directed authorities to

extend permissible aid to those impacted by the loss of animals. The government's relief efforts are underway, with the aim of providing timely support to those affected by the natural disaster.

The Regional Meteorological Department has issued an orange alert for several districts, particularly in the eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh, for Friday, April 11. The weather forecast predicts more thunderstorms, lightning, and squall-like conditions in districts such as Lucknow, Varanasi, Ayodhya, Gorakhpur, and many others across the state.

This devastating weather system also affected Bihar, where thunderstorms and rains claimed the lives of 22 people in Nalanda district. The Bihar government has also announced Rs 4 lakh compensation for the families of the deceased, and an assessment of damage to homes, livestock, and crops will begin soon.

As the state braces for further severe weather, local authorities continue to focus on providing relief and assistance to those affected by the calamity.



## Another jumla: Rahul Gandhi slams PM Modi over Employment Linked Incentive scheme



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

lead the public.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday sharply criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Employment Linked Incentive" scheme, questioning its effectiveness and accusing the government of offering empty promises. Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, took to social media to attack the scheme, pointing out that while Modi frequently creates new slogans, the youth of India are still waiting for real opportunities.

The Congress leader highlighted that after the 2024 elections, PM Modi had announced the "Employment Linked Incentive" scheme with great fanfare, claiming it would provide substantial employment opportunities to young people. However, Gandhi expressed skepticism about the scheme's impact, raising doubts over whether it was just another "jumla" (empty promise) designed to mis-

"While Modi keeps inventing new slogans every day, our youth are still waiting for meaningful jobs. This 'Employment Linked Incentive' seems like just another jumla," Gandhi said. He emphasized the pressing need for actual job creation and criticized the government for failing to deliver on its promises of employment despite making multiple announcements over the years.

The "Employment Linked Incentive" scheme, which was introduced as a part of the government's efforts to boost employment, has faced backlash from opposition parties, who argue that it lacks clear implementation strategies and fails to address the core challenges of job creation. Critics have pointed out that such schemes often serve as mere political talking points without substantial outcomes for the country's growing workforce.

## Sachin Pilot Slams Nitish Kumar Government Over Unemployment, Labour Migration in Bihar

TPN Correspondent | Delhi



Senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot on Friday launched a scathing attack on the Nitish Kumar-led Bihar government, accusing it of failing to address the state's rampant unemployment and unchecked migration of labourers to other parts of the country. Speaking to reporters during his visit to Patna, Pilot said the government had "miserably failed" to provide adequate employment opportunities, despite being in power for several years.

"The Nitish Kumar-led government has been completely ineffective in stopping the migration of workers from Bihar. This reflects a larger failure in creating sustainable job opportunities for the youth," said Pilot, the former Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan. "After being in power for so long, the Chief Minister must take responsibility for the dismal employment situation."

Pilot further alleged that the recruitment process in Bihar is riddled with irregularities and lacks transparency. "There are hardly any exams or recruitments that are conducted without controversy. This exposes the incompetence of the NDA government, which is not only anti-poor but also anti-youth," he stated.

The Congress leader em-

phasized his party's commitment to uplifting marginalised communities and ensuring employment for youth, both in Bihar and across India. "The Congress has always worked for the socially and economically weaker sections. We are equally concerned about the growing unemployment crisis," he added.

Pilot expressed confidence that the people of Bihar would hold the ruling NDA coalition accountable in the upcoming assembly elections scheduled for later this year.

Following his statements to the media, Pilot joined the 'Palayan Roko, Naukri Do' (Stop Migration, Provide Jobs) yatra in Patna. The campaign is being led by National Students' Union of India (NSUI) national in-charge Kanhaiya Kumar and aims to raise awareness about the widespread issue of labour migration and job scarcity in the state.

A Congress delegation, including Sachin Pilot and Kanhaiya Kumar, is also expected to meet with senior leaders and stakeholders to further discuss strategies to counter the ruling alliance's policies and push for employment reforms in Bihar.



# Delhi's Dirty Secret: Men Clean Drain Barehanded Ahead of CM, L-G Visit



- Violates 2013 Manual Scavenging Prohibition Act.
- Officials inspected Barapullah under sanitation review.
- Activists demand urgent reforms, accountability.

**TPN Correspondent | New Delhi**

Just minutes before a high-profile inspection by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, and Irrigation and Flood Control Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh, at least seven sanitation workers were seen manually cleaning the Barapullah Drain near Sochna Bhawan on Lodhi Road. The incident occurred on Thursday morning and has sparked concern over the continued use of unsafe and unhygienic manual labour practices in the capital.

The workers, all barefoot and without any protective gear, were spotted standing in ankle-deep black sludge. With only steel buckets and pans in hand, they scooped out the muck from the open drain, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Irrigation and Flood Control Department.

The timing of the clean-up, so close to the arrival of top government officials, raises questions about the city's sanitation management and the conditions under which frontline workers operate—often in hazardous environments and without basic safety equipment.

Despite numerous laws and guide-

lines aimed at eliminating manual scavenging and improving worker safety, the reality on the ground remains grim. The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, bans manual cleaning of sewers and drains without protective gear and mechanized equipment. However, enforcement continues to be lax, and Thursday's scene was yet another example of this recurring violation.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, LG Vinai Kumar Saxena, and Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh were on site to review ongoing efforts to clean the Barapullah Drain and inspect progress under Delhi's larger water management and sanitation initiatives. While the leaders focused on long-term environmental and infrastructural concerns, the immediate scene just prior to their visit painted a stark picture of the human cost involved in maintaining the city's drains.

The Delhi government has yet to issue an official response regarding the incident. Meanwhile, human rights groups and labour activists have condemned the use of manual labour without protective measures, calling for urgent reforms and strict accountability from civic agencies.

# Delhi Businessman Shot Dead In His SUV, Cops Suspect Old Rivalry

**TPN Correspondent | Delhi**

In a shocking incident that has sent ripples through the Paschim Vihar East locality of outer Delhi, a 50-year-old property dealer was shot dead inside his car by unidentified assailants on Friday morning. The victim, identified as Rajkumar, was allegedly driving his SUV when multiple attackers in separate vehicles surrounded him and opened fire.

According to a senior police officer, the incident occurred around 7:15 am near the SBI Colony. The local police received a PCR call alerting them to the sound of multiple gunshots in the area. When officers arrived at the scene, they found Rajkumar gravely injured, slumped in the driver's seat of his vehicle, which was riddled with bullet holes.

A disturbing video of the crime scene, allegedly showing the victim lying in a pool of blood, has since gone viral on social media, intensifying public concern and putting pressure on law enforcement.

Rajkumar was rushed to the nearest hospital by police personnel, but doctors pronounced him dead on arrival. A



forensic team was called in to examine the crime scene, collect evidence, and analyze the trajectory of bullets and any possible fingerprints or other clues left behind.

"We are thoroughly scanning CCTV footage from the vicinity to identify the attackers. A case has been registered, and several teams have been formed to probe the incident from all possible angles," said the officer. "At this stage, it appears the murder may be linked to an old rivalry, but we are not ruling out other motives."

The police have also begun questioning local residents and associates of the deceased to gather more insights into the case. While the investigation is ongoing, authorities are urging anyone with information to come forward.

The broad daylight killing has sparked concern over rising crime in the area and raised questions about public safety and the ease with which assailants were able to carry out such a targeted attack.

# Hoax Bomb Threat at Red Fort and Jama Masjid Triggers Security Scare in Delhi

**TPN Correspondent | New Delhi**

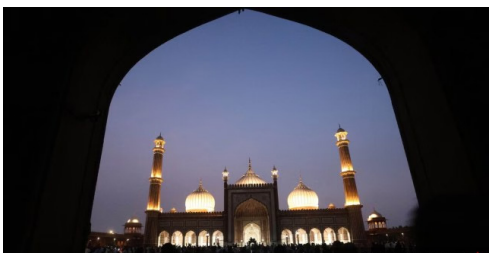
A bomb threat targeting two of Delhi's most iconic landmarks — the Red Fort and Jama Masjid — on Thursday morning caused panic and led to swift action by emergency services. Authorities later confirmed the threat was a hoax, but not before thorough checks were carried out at both locations.

According to officials from the Delhi Fire Services, they received a call reporting the bomb threat at approximately 9:03 am. The caller allegedly warned of explosives placed at both heritage sites, prompting immediate deployment of emergency response teams. One fire engine each was dispatched to the Red Fort and Jama Masjid as part of precautionary measures.

Delhi Police also rushed to the scene, and a coordinated effort was launched to secure the areas. Bomb detection and disposal squads, along with sniffer

dogs and anti-sabotage units, carried out exhaustive checks in and around the premises of both sites. Access to the locations was restricted during the search, and visitors were evacuated or prevented from entering as a safety measure.

Senior officials confirmed that after about an hour of intensive scanning and investigation, no suspicious objects were found. The threat was officially declared a hoax. "Nothing dangerous or unusual was discovered at either location. The situation is completely under control," said a police officer on the scene.



Authorities are now investigating the origin of the call and working to identify the individual behind the hoax. Legal action is expected under relevant sections pertaining to spreading public fear and misusing emergency services.

Incidents of hoax threats not only create unnecessary panic but also divert valuable emergency resources. Thursday's false alarm caused momentary disruption in the vicinity of both monuments, which are frequented by tourists and worshippers alike.

Both the Red Fort and Jama Masjid resumed normal operations shortly after the sites were cleared by security personnel. Police have urged citizens to remain alert but not fall prey to fear-mongering, assuring that Delhi's security apparatus remains vigilant and well-prepared to deal with any real threat.

# Delhi Gets Its First Authorized Vehicle Scrapping Facility, Easing Burden on Vehicle Owners



**TPN Correspondent | Delhi**

Delhi residents will no longer have to travel to neighboring states like Haryana or Uttar Pradesh to dispose of their old, polluting vehicles. In a significant development aimed at streamlining the process of scrapping overage or end-of-life petrol and diesel vehicles, the Capital is set to get its first Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facility (RVSF), officials confirmed on Thursday.

The Delhi Transport Department granted formal approval on April 1 to EZWaste Recycling Private Limited, authorizing the company to establish and operate the facility. The scrapping unit will be located in the Mo-

han Co-operative Industrial Estate on Mathura Road in Southeast Delhi — a strategic location that makes it easily accessible to residents across the city.

The facility has been approved to function until March 24, 2035, under the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH). This move aligns with the national vehicle scrappage policy, which encourages phasing out old, unfit vehicles in order to reduce environmental pollution and promote the use of safer and more fuel-efficient alternatives.

Until now, vehicle owners in Delhi were compelled to transport their de-registered vehicles to authorized scrapping facilities in other states, often facing logistical hurdles and added expenses. The establishment of a local RVSF will significantly

ease this burden, making the process more convenient, cost-effective, and transparent.

Officials stated that the facility will use environmentally friendly processes for dismantling and recycling vehicles, in line with government standards. The scrapping center will issue a certificate of deposit to vehicle owners, which can be used to avail incentives when purchasing a new vehicle.

This is a major step toward implementing cleaner mobility solutions in the city and curbing vehicular pollution, which has been a persistent concern in the national capital. The Delhi government is expected to approve more such facilities in the future as part of its broader efforts to improve urban air quality and manage end-of-life vehicles efficiently.

# Dust Storm and Sudden Showers Bring Relief to Delhi, Yellow Alert Issued

**TPN Correspondent | Delhi**

A powerful dust storm followed by a sudden spell of rain swept through Delhi on Thursday evening, bringing a dramatic shift in weather and offering welcome relief from the intense summer heat. The unexpected change caused a sharp drop in temperature within an hour, with residents experiencing a cool breeze and much-needed respite from the scorching conditions earlier in the day.

The dust storm began in the late evening, reducing visibility in several parts of the city and stirring up loose debris. Shortly after, moderate to heavy showers hit multiple areas, including central, southern, and eastern Delhi. The rain brought the day's high temperatures down significantly, making for a cooler and more comfortable evening.

The Indian Meteorological De-

partment (IMD) had earlier forecast isolated weather disturbances, but the intensity of the storm and rainfall caught many by surprise. According to IMD officials, such pre-monsoon activity is common in April, especially when there is a clash of hot and cool air masses over northern India.

As a precaution, the IMD has issued a yellow alert for the National Capital Region, warning of possible thunderstorms, lightning, and gusty winds through Friday. Residents have been advised to stay indoors during strong winds and avoid sheltering under trees or near electrical poles during lightning activity.



The sudden weather change led to minor traffic snarls and delays in some areas, particularly during the peak evening hours. Commuters reported slowed traffic due to waterlogged streets and reduced visibility, though no major disruptions or damage were reported by authorities.

The rain also helped in settling dust and pollutants in the air, providing a temporary improvement in air quality. Delhi has been grappling with rising temperatures and worsening air quality over the past few weeks, making Thursday's downpour a welcome turn of events.

The IMD has suggested that more such weather fluctuations are likely in the coming days as the region transitions from late spring to early summer. Residents are advised to keep an eye on updates and take necessary precautions during unstable weather conditions.



## Assam CM Biswa Sarma Recalls Narrow Escape from 26/11 Mumbai Terror Attacks

TPN Correspondent | Assam

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma shared a chilling personal account of his narrow escape from the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks after the arrest of key conspirator Tahawwur Rana. On Friday, April 11, Sarma took to X (formerly Twitter) to reveal how he had been scheduled to stay at the Taj Hotel during the attacks but changed his plans at the last minute.

Sarma tweeted, “In a twist of fate, I narrowly escaped being at the Taj Hotel during the 26/11 attacks.” He further recalled the harrowing experience, stating, “I was scheduled to stay at the Taj that night but changed plans and moved to another hotel at the last minute. The horror of that night has stayed with me ever since. I vividly remember watching the NSG operation unfold, with one thought echoing in my mind — karma will eventually catch up with the masterminds behind the attack.”

Sarma’s post came a day after the extradition of Tahawwur Rana, who was one of the key conspirators in the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Union



- Recalled horror, praised Rana’s extradition.
- Rana accused of plotting attacks with LeT, HUJI.
- NIA has Rana in custody till April 29.

Home Minister Amit Shah also hailed Rana’s extradition, calling it a significant success for the Modi government.

Tahawwur Rana, a Pakistani-Canadian national, is accused of conspiring with David Coleman Headley and terror organizations Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Harkat-ul-Jihadi Islami (HUJI) to carry out the attacks that killed 166 people. Rana’s extradition marks a major

step toward seeking justice for the victims of the attacks.

Following his extradition on April 10, Rana was presented before a special NIA court. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has requested Rana’s custody for 18 days for further interrogation. The NIA aims to gain more insights into the planning and execution of the attack, which left the nation in shock and grief.

## ‘Eligible’ Teachers Rally in Kolkata, Demand Justice After Supreme Court Job Annulment

TPN Correspondent | Kolkata

Around 500 teachers, who claim to be “eligible” and not involved in any wrongdoing, took to the streets of Kolkata on Thursday, demanding reinstatement after the Supreme Court annulled their appointments. The apex court’s April 3 ruling upheld a 2024 Calcutta High Court verdict that cancelled the recruitment of over 25,000 teaching and non-teaching staff due to alleged large-scale irregularities in the School Service Commission (SSC) hiring process in 2016.

The affected teachers, now jobless, allege they have been unfairly punished despite clearing all required examinations and procedures. Rallying under the banner of Jogyo Sikshak Manch (Eligible Teachers Forum), they demanded that the SSC release a clear list distinguishing between tainted and untainted candidates.

Mehboob Mondal, a spokesperson for the forum, said, “We hit the streets to make our voices heard. We should not suffer for the SSC’s failure to differentiate between genuine and fraudulent candidates.” Mondal also alleged that the protesters were met with police aggression while trying



to submit a deputation to the District Inspector of Education. “We were lathi-charged, and a police officer even kicked one of our members. Is this how a democracy treats citizens fighting for their rights?” he asked.

Two rallies—one starting from Sealdah and another from Central Avenue—marched toward Esplanade, converging at a central point. The demonstrators carried placards with slogans like “We want back our job” and “Identify the guilty, not the innocent.” A heavy police presence escorted the march, though the protest remained peaceful.

Mondal mentioned the possibility of joining another group of teachers already on a relay hunger strike outside the SSC office, depending on their eligibility status. He clarified that while Jogyo Sikshak Manch is not affiliated with the group staging a sit-in at Sahid Minar, they support any movement seeking justice for legitimately appointed candidates.

The Supreme Court had termed the entire recruitment process as “vitiated and tainted.” Meanwhile, investigations by the CBI and ED have led to the arrests of former state education minister Partha Chatterjee and other officials allegedly involved in the scam.

## 10 Injured in Massive 7-Vehicle Pile-Up on NH-48 in Rajasthan's Dudu



TPN Correspondent | Rajasthan

At least 10 people sustained serious injuries in a major road accident involving seven vehicles on National Highway 48 near Dudu, Rajasthan, on Friday. The incident occurred when one vehicle reportedly lost control, triggering a devastating chain collision involving six other vehicles.

According to local officials, the crash took place during peak traffic hours and caused a temporary shutdown of the highway. Among those injured were several employees of a solar energy company who were traveling together at the time of the accident.

Eyewitnesses reported that the initial vehicle veered suddenly, possibly due to high speed or a mechanical failure, and crashed into another vehicle, leading to a domino effect. The pile-up involved a mix of passenger vehicles and commercial transports, all of which sustained varying degrees of damage.

Local residents acted swiftly, rushing to the scene to assist the injured before emergency services arrived. Many of the victims were transported to a nearby hospital in Dudu with the help of bystanders and passing vehicles. Medical

authorities confirmed that while some victims are in critical condition, most are currently stable and under observation.

“The scene was chaotic — mangled vehicles, people screaming, and others trying to pull the injured out. It was a terrifying few moments,” said one witness who was driving behind the accident.

Police and highway authorities soon arrived to manage the traffic and launch an investigation into the cause of the crash. Preliminary reports suggest that loss of vehicle control, possibly due to speeding or driver error, led to the initial impact. Authorities are also checking CCTV footage from nearby toll booths and cameras for more clarity.

The accident caused significant traffic disruption on NH-48, a key highway connecting Jaipur to Ajmer, for several hours. Efforts are underway to clear the wreckage and restore normal traffic flow.

Officials have urged drivers to exercise caution, especially in areas with heavy vehicle movement. Further updates on the condition of the injured and the results of the investigation are expected soon.

## Powerful Storm Claims 58 Lives in Bihar, Widespread Damage Reported

TPN Correspondent | Patna

A devastating storm accompanied by heavy rainfall and lightning strikes wreaked havoc across several districts of Bihar on Thursday, resulting in the tragic loss of 58 lives. The worst-hit district was Nalanda, where 23 people were killed, primarily due to falling trees and collapsing walls.

Out of the total fatalities, 35 deaths were caused by the collapse of trees or walls, while 23 others lost their lives due to lightning strikes across the state. Nalanda District Magistrate, Shashank Shubhankar, confirmed the high death toll and the widespread damage caused in his district.

On Friday, Mr. Shubhankar provided further details, stating that 22 people in Nalanda died due to falling trees or walls, and one person was killed by lightning. He assured the public that all affected families were being compensated as per the directives of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. A compensation of Rs 4 lakh has been granted to each of the bereaved families, with most already receiving the payments, and the remainder expected to be settled by Friday afternoon.



In addition to the fatalities, several people were injured, with three to four individuals currently receiving treatment at Sadar Hospital. The storm also caused significant property damage in Nalanda, affecting homes, crops, and livestock. The district administration is working to assess the extent of the damage, and compensation is being provided according to government guidelines. Livestock deaths have also been recorded, and post-mortems are being conducted for compensation claims.

Nalanda’s infrastructure has been se-

verely impacted, with over 18 km of power lines downed, more than 300 electric poles uprooted, and several transformers destroyed. The electricity department has deployed 42 teams to restore power, with partial restoration already in place. Additionally, ten generators were deployed overnight to ensure water supply, with more expected to arrive soon.

The storm also claimed lives in several other districts, including Bhojpur, Gaya, Gopalganj, and Patna, due to falling trees and lightning strikes.

## Gujarat Expands Drone Pilot Training Across 19 ITIs to Boost Emerging Industry



TPN Correspondent | Gujarat

Gujarat is set to take a significant leap in the drone education and manufacturing sector by expanding drone pilot training across 19 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in the state. Spearheaded by Kaushalya – The Skill University (KSU), this initiative positions Gujarat as a leader in India’s fast-growing drone ecosystem.

The university’s School of Drones has already trained 504 individuals, awarding them official pilot licences. Additionally, KSU has successfully developed and assembled over 100 drones in-house. The initiative is part of a broader effort under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and Labour and Employment Minister Balvantsinh Rajput, with the goal of enhancing the state’s drone capabilities.

As of now, two ITIs—Bilimora and Mandvi—have been granted recognition by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to operate as Remote Pilot Training Organisations (RPTOs), with the remaining 17 centers expected to follow suit soon. This rollout is part of Gujarat’s commitment to equipping its youth with the skills needed for the emerging drone industry.

Beyond pilot training, KSU’s School of Drones has developed an innovative educational model called “Drone Mantra,” which combines advanced instruction in drone manufacturing, programming, and operations. The curriculum integrates cutting-edge machinery and simulation labs, and benefits from partnerships with leading technology firms, giving students hands-on experience in real-world industrial applications.

The university’s upcoming campus in Shilaj, Ahmedabad, which is being built at a cost of over Rs 164 crore, will become a hub for high-skill training in fields like robotics, artificial intelligence, renewable energy, and drone technology. This expansion comes as drone technology transforms sectors like agriculture, logistics, defence, and infrastructure monitoring.



# Isi role in 26/11 under lens

The extradition of Tahawwur Hussain Rana to India has re-opened the dark chapter of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks and brought renewed focus on Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Rana, a Canadian-Pakistani businessman, was brought to India from the United States on April 10 after a long legal battle. He is now in a high-security lock-up in New Delhi, facing fresh interrogation by Indian agencies. At the heart of the questioning are two shadowy ISI figures — Major Iqbal and Major Sameer Ali — whose names have surfaced repeatedly in investigations into the deadly three-day siege that left 166 people dead.

According to sources in the National Investigation Agency (NIA), Rana’s interrogation will focus on his communication and collaboration with these two ISI-linked individuals. Investigators believe Rana acted as a conduit and facilitator in the larger Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) network that planned and executed the attacks. His connections to David Coleman Headley, the Pakistani-American who carried out the reconnaissance missions in Mumbai, are well-documented. Now, authorities are seeking more details about how much coordination took place between Rana, Headley, and their alleged ISI handlers.

One of those handlers, Major Iqbal, is believed to have played a central role in planning and



financing the operation. Identified in a 2010 US indictment as an ISI officer, Iqbal is accused of directing Headley’s every move. Headley, who pleaded guilty in a US court, testified that Iqbal — known by the alias “Chaudhery Khan” — was his main handler. Their email exchanges included details about targets, surveillance equipment, and cover identities. One notable message involved the attempted use of a Shiv Sena functionary, Rajaram Rege, to gain access to party offices. Rege later confirmed a brief encounter with Headley but said he re-

jected the request outright. While Major Iqbal is portrayed as the architect of the planning phase, Major Sameer Ali is described as the operational commander. According to Zabiuddin Ansari alias Abu Jundal, a 26/11 handler arrested in 2012, Sameer Ali was inside a LeT control room in Karachi’s Malir Cantonment, directing the attacks in real time. He allegedly issued orders to senior Lashkar figures, including Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, during the carnage. Interpol has issued a Red Notice against Sameer Ali, who was reportedly born in Lahore in 1966.

Despite mounting evidence, Pakistan has repeatedly denied his existence, calling him a “fictitious character.”

Jundal also claimed that Pakistan’s own Federal Investigation Agency raided and dismantled the Karachi control room weeks after the attacks, potentially to destroy evidence. While Lakhvi was later arrested, others, including Jundal and trainer Abu Qahafa, escaped. With Rana now in Indian custody, investigators hope to finally expose the depth of ISI’s involvement in the 26/11 plot.



## Don’t Fear AI—Democratise It Instead

A few days ago, in a moment of curiosity and digital experimentation, I uploaded a Ghibli-style AI-generated image of myself to Instagram. Most reactions were encouraging, but a particular comment stuck with me. Someone wrote, “It is an insult to Miyazaki and the lifetime he spent on this,” referencing legendary animator Hayao Miyazaki. The remark was a nod to a now-viral statement Miyazaki made in 2016, calling AI-generated art “an insult to life itself.”

This criticism mirrors a larger, ongoing debate about artificial intelligence and its impact on creativity, originality, and intellectual property. As AI tools like ChatGPT and other natural language processing (NLP)-based algorithms become more mainstream, concerns about their reliance on open-source data and the lack of credit to original creators have grown. Copyright infringement fears are no longer confined to academia or tech circles—they’re now being discussed on social media platforms and in creative communities.

Yet, while the concerns are valid, the broader perspective reveals something more important: AI is not a threat to humanity or the death knell for creativity. Rather, it is a tool—powerful, yes, but still just a tool. Its capacity to assist with mundane tasks like summarising long documents, generating code, or drafting letters, has saved time and opened up creative possibilities for millions.

Instead of panicking about the rise of AI, we should direct our energy toward democratising it. India, in particular, has a chance to lead this movement. By investing in research and development—especially through educational and public research institutions—the country can ensure that AI technologies remain accessible and beneficial to all, not just a privileged few.

AI-driven innovations should not be monopolised by large corporations or confined to elite institutions. If India commits to building open-source frameworks, training diverse AI talent, and embedding ethical AI education in its academic curricula, it could set a global example of how to balance progress with responsibility.

It’s also crucial to build public awareness about how AI works—its limitations, its data dependencies, and the biases it can carry. This knowledge empowers users and helps shift the narrative away from fear and toward informed engagement. Transparency, inclusivity, and accountability must be the pillars of this effort.

## Congress, CPI(M) Struggle as BJP Gains

Nearly a year after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the political landscape in India reflects a curious imbalance. Despite the BJP falling short of an absolute majority and relying on allies to form the government, the party remains comfortably in control. The recent passage of the Waqf amendment bill underlines the strength of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), even as the opposition INDIA bloc attempted to put up a united front.



Ahmedabad was seen as a symbolic move to challenge Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah on their home turf. But the gamble didn’t pay off. Despite fiery speeches targeting Modi and the BJP, the event lacked a forward-looking vision. Critics noted that the Congress failed to articulate a clear and compelling alternative for India’s future.

While most speakers echoed aggressive anti-BJP sentiments, a few voices urged introspection and a more constructive approach. Shashi Tharoor, MP from Thiruvananthapuram and runner-up in the last Congress presidential race, seconded the political resolution moved by Sachin Pilot. Tharoor emphasized the need for Congress to become “a party of hope, not resentment,” advocating for positivity and a future-oriented agenda.

Last week, two key INDIA bloc constituents—the Congress and the Communist Party of India (Marxist)—held their respective national conclaves. The CPI(M) gathered in Madurai for its 24th party congress, while the Congress held its All India Congress Committee (AICC) meeting in Ahmedabad, returning to Gujarat for such a session after 64 years.

However, both events barely stirred the national political discourse. Lacking in headline-making resolutions or innovative political messaging, the conclaves failed to capture media attention. Television debates remained unaffected, and print coverage was largely limited to inner pages. In contrast, the BJP continued with business as usual, unfazed by the opposition’s activities.

The timing of these conclaves coincided with the BJP’s foundation day on April 6. Now 45 years old, the party appears to have overtaken its older rivals—Congress, with a 140-year legacy, and CPI(M), tracing roots back to 1925—not just in organization but in narrative dominance. The momentum clearly rests with the BJP. The Congress’ decision to host its AICC meet in

# India’s Space Power Needs Strategic Boost

India has long been recognised as a formidable player in the global space arena. However, recent developments and geopolitical dynamics highlight the urgent need for New Delhi to ramp up its military space capabilities—particularly in light of the widening technological gap with China.

Speaking at the third edition of the Indian DefSpace Symposium on April 7, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan emphasised the evolving nature of warfare, asserting that “primary elements of warfare will depend on space.” He stressed the importance of defining military space doctrine, fostering a “space culture” within defence circles, and addressing vulnerabilities in India’s space infrastructure.

Space has not recently become a domain of strategic interest—it has been central to defence since World War II. In the war’s final stages, Nazi Germany became the first to launch an unmanned rocket beyond the Kármán Line (~100 km above sea level). What followed was a decades-long race for supremacy in

space between the USA and the USSR, masked as peaceful exploration but driven by military and economic objectives.

The 1957 launch of Sputnik-1 by the Soviet Union and the United States’ swift response marked the beginning of this intense competition. This space race intensified with Yuri Gagarin’s historic manned mission in 1961, followed by President John F. Kennedy’s vision of landing a man on the Moon, achieved with Apollo 11 in 1969. As these milestones were crossed, the militarisation—and eventual weaponisation—of space also gained momentum.

In an attempt to rein in space militarisation, the UN General Assembly adopted the “Declaration of Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space” in 1963. The Outer Space Treaty of 1967, signed by the USSR, UK, and USA, sought to prohibit the placement of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit or on celestial bodies. Yet, these legal instruments did little to curb ac-



tual military ambitions. By the 1980s, both superpowers had developed anti-satellite (ASAT) capabilities. The USSR equipped its MiG-31 with a miniature ASAT missile, while the US destroyed its own satellite in 1985 using the ASM-135 missile. After a pause in such tests, Chi-

na reignited concerns in 2007 with a direct-ascent ASAT demonstration.

India, while having demonstrated ASAT capability in 2019 (Mission Shakti), still lags behind China in the scale and integration of space assets for defence. With

space now firmly established as the next frontier of military power, India must accelerate its investments in satellite networks, space surveillance, and counter-space technologies to ensure its strategic interests are protected in the decades to come.



# India Prioritises Interests in US Trade Talks

India is actively engaging with the United States on a bilateral trade agreement (BTA), but the government is firm in its stance that any such deal will be shaped by national interests, not by pressure or haste. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal asserted on Friday that the dialogue with the US is progressing steadily, underpinned by an "India First" approach that aims to secure long-term benefits for the country.

Speaking at an event in New Delhi, Goyal highlighted that while the discussions are constructive and forward-looking, India will not enter into any trade agreement at gunpoint. He emphasized that the government is committed to safeguarding public and economic interests, and will avoid any decision that could compromise the nation's future.

"We are in a continuous and evolving dialogue with the US. But we're very clear — no deal under pressure. We will protect India's interests, and every step will be taken with due diligence," Goyal said. The broader goal of the discussions is to double bilateral trade between India and the US to USD 500 billion by 2030. Currently, trade between the two nations stands at approximately USD 200 billion. Goyal noted that the partnership with the US is crucial for India's growth trajectory, especially as the country works toward the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, a



roadmap to becoming a fully developed economy. Reaffirming the government's long-term strategic focus, Goyal said India's approach in all global trade negotiations—be it with the US, EU, or other partners—will be guided by transparency, mutual respect, and a commitment to national welfare.

"Our engagements are aimed at enhancing trust and ensuring that India's economy and people benefit the most. We do not rush into decisions that could have long-term consequences. That's not how Atmanirbhar Bharat operates," he added.

The minister also acknowledged that while there is global enthusiasm about India's economic potential, especially in sectors like manufacturing, digital trade, and green technology, India will tread carefully and negotiate from a position of strength.

With the global landscape evolving rapidly, India remains focused on building sustainable trade relationships while ensuring domestic industries are supported and protected. Goyal's statement makes it clear that India is open to collaboration, but on its own terms.

# India Defends EVM Security After Gabbard Remarks



Amid rising concerns over the integrity of electronic voting systems, India's Election Commission has firmly reiterated that the country's Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) are secure, tamper-proof, and immune to hacking. This comes in response to recent remarks by Tulsi Gabbard, former US Congresswoman and current US intelligence chief, who voiced concerns about the vulnerability of voting technologies worldwide.

In her statement, Gabbard highlighted growing evidence of hacking threats to voting systems, urging democratic nations to ensure transparent and secure electoral processes. While she did not single out India, her general comments about EVMs prompted Indian officials to issue a detailed clarification.

Sources within the Election Commission emphasized that India's EVMs are fundamentally different from the complex systems used in many Western nations. "Our machines are built like simple calculators. They are not connected to the internet, WiFi, Bluetooth, or even infrared, making them completely insulated from remote tampering," said an EC official.

The Commission explained that India does not rely on networked electronic voting systems, which are often a combination of hardware, software, and digital processes. Instead, Indian EVMs are standalone, one-way programmable devices with no wireless connectivity. "They are not open to manipulation through

malware or hacking," the official added.

India's EVMs have been in use since 1999 and have withstood numerous challenges in courts, political arenas, and public forums. In several instances, parties have questioned the authenticity of EVMs following election losses, but repeated technical reviews, expert demonstrations, and mock polls have affirmed their reliability.

The EC also noted that each machine is rigorously tested, sealed, and monitored during every phase of the election process—from manufacturing to storage, and through deployment and counting. Security protocols, including randomization of machine allocation, further minimize the risk of manipulation.

The controversy comes at a time when India is preparing for a massive electoral exercise involving millions of voters across thousands of polling stations. The Election Commission reassured voters that the integrity of the election process remains uncompromised, and there is no cause for concern regarding the technology used.

While concerns about election security are valid globally, India's unique approach—low-tech by design but high in transparency and security—continues to set a robust example. The EC's swift response aims to restore public confidence and reaffirm India's commitment to free and fair democratic practices.

# India Pushes for Swift US Trade Deal

India is prepared to move with urgency on securing a bilateral trade agreement with the United States, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Friday, marking a significant shift in India's approach to global trade negotiations.

Speaking at the Global Technology Summit in New Delhi, Jaishankar emphasized that it is now India, not the US, driving the urgency behind the deal. "Normally, a complaint in the past was that we were slowing it down. Today, it's the other way around — we are the ones pressing forward," he said. His remarks come just two days after US President Donald Trump announced a 90-day breather on imposing reciprocal tariffs, which has opened a new window for trade diplomacy between the two nations.

Jaishankar underlined that India is navigating a complex global environment, marked by rising tensions between the US and China over tariffs. "The world is barreling towards deep turmoil and economic upheaval. In this scenario, India must be agile and prepared to protect its



interests," he cautioned. He acknowledged that the US remains a highly ambitious trade partner, which makes the negotiations challenging. However, both countries are now aligned in their desire to close a meaningful trade deal. India and the US have conceptually agreed to finalize the agreement by September–October 2025.

"We will find a fix that works for both sides," Jaishankar asserted, signaling optimism that the long-standing nego-

tiations will reach a mutually beneficial outcome. The current momentum follows a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Trump in Washington earlier this year, during which both leaders committed to concluding the first tranche of the bilateral trade agreement. This was followed by a significant visit from a US delegation led by Assistant Trade Representative Brendan Lynch to New Delhi from March 26 to 29 to iron out the details.



# PM Modi Offers Prayers at Anandpur Dham

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Anandpur Dham in Madhya Pradesh's Ashoknagar district on Friday, where he performed a puja at the revered Guru Ji Maharaj Temple and took part in spiritual and public engagements. This marks his second visit to the state in 2025, underscoring his continued focus on both religious heritage and public outreach.

Located in Anandpur village of Isagarh tehsil, Anandpur Dham lies about 30 km from Ashoknagar district headquarters and approximately 215 km from Bhopal. The Prime Minister arrived in the afternoon and began his visit by performing rituals at the temple, a significant religious center for devotees from across the region.

Following the puja, PM Modi was scheduled to participate in a public programme and address a large gathering of citizens and spiritual followers. A state government official confirmed that the visit aimed to connect with both the spiritual community and the broader public. Anandpur Dham, established by the Shri Anandpur Trust, is known not only as a religious destination but also as a hub for philanthropic and social work. Spread across 315 hectares, the site is home to a modern gaushala that shelters more than 500 cows. The Trust also carries out agricultural activities, promoting sustainability and rural development.

In addition to its spiritual significance, Anandpur Dham contributes actively to public welfare. According to an official release, the Trust runs a charitable hospital in Sukhpur village and manages schools in both Sukhpur and Anandpur. It also operates 'Satsang' centers across India, facilitating community gatherings and spiritual teachings. PM Modi's itinerary reflects a blend of spiritual outreach and governance, reaffirming his government's efforts to support religious institutions that are engaged in charitable, educational, and rural upliftment activities. The visit is expected to further strengthen the relationship between spiritual organizations and developmental initiatives under the banner of inclusive growth. The Prime Minister's engagements at Anandpur Dham are seen as part of a broader effort to combine cultural heritage with social empowerment, aligning with the government's "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" vision.

# Kerala CM Defends Vellappally Natesan



In the wake of a controversy surrounding Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalayanogam (SNDP) general secretary Vellappally Natesan, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan came out in his defense during a public event on Friday. The backlash was triggered by Natesan's recent remarks about the Muslim-majority district of Malappuram, which many interpreted as communal in nature.

Speaking at a function organized to honor Natesan, the Chief Minister clarified that the veteran SNDP leader had not made any statements against any religion. Instead, Vijayan insisted that Natesan's comments were aimed at a particular political party, and not the Muslim community or any religious group. He accused certain political elements of deliberately misrepresenting the statement for their own gain.

Vijayan emphasized that Natesan had always stood for secular values and that the SNDP leader's track record spoke for itself. According to him, it was regrettable that a section of the public had taken the remarks out of context and used them to create communal disharmony. The Chief Minister warned against such attempts to sow division, stating that Kerala's social fabric must not be disturbed for political mileage.

The controversial remark reportedly likened Malappuram to a "separate nation," a comment that sparked criticism from several quarters, especially the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML). However, Vijayan's strong support suggests the ruling CPI(M) does not want to alienate the SNDP or its Ezhava base ahead of the elections. With political narratives heating up, the CM's defense signals an attempt to balance community sentiment and electoral strategy.



# "Stealing Water From Texas Farmers": Trump Threatens Mexico With Tariffs

**Accuses Mexico of hurting Texas farmers. Sheinbaum cites drought, promises solution. Past water disputes sparked unrest in Mexico.**

TPN Correspondent | US

US President Donald Trump threatened Mexico on Thursday with escalating trade consequences, including tariffs and potentially sanctions, unless the country provides more water to Texas under a longstanding treaty. Trump accused Mexico of "stealing" water from Texas farmers and criticized the country for its failure to supply enough water, which he claimed had led to the closure of the only sugar mill in Texas last year.

The dispute stems from a 1944 water-sharing agreement between the United States and Mexico, under which the two countries share water from the Colorado River in exchange for flows from the Rio Grande, which forms part of the border. According

to the U.S. government's Boundary and Water Commission, Mexico owes the United States over 1.55 billion cubic meters of water, with the current cycle set to expire in October.

Trump's post on his Truth Social platform stated, "We will keep escalating consequences, including TARIFFS and, maybe even SANCTIONS, until Mexico honors the Treaty." His remarks highlight the ongoing tensions between the two nations over water rights, with U.S. farmers and lawmakers growing frustrated over Mexico's delayed deliveries in recent years.

In response, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum defended her government's actions, stating that Mexico has been adhering to the treaty despite ongoing drought con-



ditions. She noted that Mexico had sent a "comprehensive proposal" to the U.S. State Department, assuring that an agreement would likely be reached.

Mexico's delayed water deliveries have been linked to two decades of severe drought in the Rio Grande basin. However, the United States has expressed dissatisfaction with Mex-

ico's tendency to wait until the end of each five-year cycle to meet its obligations, leading to complaints from U.S. farmers. In previous years, tensions over water deliveries have resulted in civil unrest in Mexico. In 2020, farmers in the northern state of Chihuahua seized a dam to prevent water from being sent to the U.S., leading to violent clashes with the Mexican National Guard.



## Imran Khan Open to Dialogue, Not Submission: PTI Leader Junaid Akbar

TPN Correspondent | Peshawar

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan is open to holding reconciliatory talks with Pakistan's government and institutions, but he refuses to be coerced into submission, said Junaid Akbar, President of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) unit in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Speaking at a media interaction on Thursday, Akbar emphasized that Khan is willing to engage in dialogue for the supremacy of the Constitution and rule of law, but not under duress.

Khan, who has been incarcerated in Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi, since August 2023, faces numerous legal cases that emerged after his government was ousted in April 2022. Despite his detention, Akbar insisted that PTI remains open to constructive engagement.

"Our doors are open," Akbar stated, "but if someone thinks they can force their will upon us by keeping Khan Sahib and our workers in jail and lodging false FIRs, they are mistaken."

He called on state institutions and political entities to operate within the legal and constitutional framework, noting that while the PTI has grievances with the leadership of certain institutions, the party still respects and acknowledges them as vital national pillars.

Akbar criticized the ongoing legal and procedural barriers that have limited access to Khan in prison. "We are not asking for special treatment—just the rights that are granted under the jail manual," he said. He described repeated attempts to meet Khan being thwarted by long delays and eventual denials.

Highlighting the growing discontent among the public, Akbar warned that the continued suppression of democratic rights and silencing of political voices could provoke unrest. "This is not just about Imran Khan. It's a national issue. The gap between institutions and the people has widened drastically," he said.

He concluded by urging for dialogue and constitutional adherence to avoid a scenario where the public, feeling unheard, takes to the streets. "We don't want that kind of confrontation. We want stability through law, justice, and public trust," he added.



## South Africa Considers Policy Shift to Welcome Starlink Amid Musk-Government Tensions

TPN Correspondent | London

South Africa may soon revise its satellite internet licensing requirements to accommodate companies like Elon Musk's Starlink, in a move that seeks to balance investment with equity policy reforms. The effort comes amid tensions between Musk and the South African government, with the Tesla and SpaceX CEO publicly criticizing laws requiring foreign companies to sell ownership stakes to Black South Africans as discriminatory.

Musk, born in South Africa, has argued that the legislation — part of the country's Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) initiative — restricts the operation of his satellite internet service, Starlink. His comments have drawn sharp criticism, with some accusing him of dismissing the historical injustices of apartheid.

Now, South African Telecommunications Minister Solly Malatsi is proposing an alternative route for companies like Starlink to gain access to the country's market. Instead of mandating equity sales, the new directive under development would allow satellite providers to fulfill licensing requirements by investing in underserved and disadvantaged communities.

Malatsi said he is finalizing the directive, which will then undergo a public consultation process through the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), the country's telecom regulator. "We want to ensure global technological advancements reach rural and marginalized parts of our country," he said.

However, the proposal has sparked backlash from political opponents who argue it could weaken South Africa's transformation agenda. Critics say the move prioritizes the interests of Musk — who left the country in his youth and rarely returns — over longstanding goals to rectify racial inequalities entrenched by apartheid.

"The minister is seeking to cut corners and erode hard-won transformation goals," said Khusela Sangoni Diko, chair of the parliamentary committee on telecommunications. She emphasized that other satellite internet firms are interested in South Africa and are willing to comply with existing BEE regulations.

# China Raises Tariffs On US Goods To 125% As Trade War Worsens

TPN Correspondent | China

China announced on Friday that it would raise tariffs on US goods to 125% from 84%, a move that comes in response to President Trump's recent tariff hike on Chinese imports to 145%. This escalation of the trade war between the two largest global economies marks a significant intensification of the ongoing economic standoff.

The new Chinese tariffs, set to take effect on Saturday, were declared hours after President Xi Jinping urged the European Union to collaborate with China in resisting what he referred to as "unilateral bullying" by the US, a clear reference to the high tariffs imposed by President Trump under his administration. In his statement, Xi emphasized that tariffs had become more of a "numbers game" with no practical economic value, and that China would ignore further tariff increases by the US at this stage.



The Chinese Ministry of Finance issued a statement declaring that the US's continuous imposition of abnormally high tariffs on China was damaging to the global economy. It further claimed that the US should take full responsibility for the global economic "turbulence" caused by Trump's trade policies. Beijing also pointed out that the US's decision to freeze tariffs on other countries was partly due to pressure from China.

In response to the US's previous tariff round, which saw duties

on Chinese imports raised to 104%, China had already increased its tariffs on US goods from 34% to 84%. The latest tariff hike further compounds the tension between the two nations and continues to hurt global markets.

Xi Jinping also took the opportunity to address the European Union, urging the bloc to fulfill its international responsibilities and stand with China against what he described as "unilateral bullying practices." He stressed that this cooperation between China and Europe would protect international fairness and justice. The trade war, which has already caused severe disruptions to global markets, shows no signs of easing as both nations continue to escalate their tariffs, with no clear resolution in sight.

# Key Accused In Nepal Pro-Monarchy Protests Arrested From Assam

TPN Correspondent | Assam

Durga Prasai, a key figure behind the deadly pro-monarchy protests in Kathmandu on March 28, has been arrested in Assam, India, and handed over to Nepalese authorities. The violent protests, which took place in the Tinkune area of Kathmandu, led to the deaths of two individuals, including a photo-journalist, and left over 110 others injured.

According to Nepal Police, Prasai, who was charged with state offenses and organized crime, was arrested in Jhapa district, which borders India. It is reported that Prasai was initially apprehended by Assam police and subsequently transferred to Nepalese authorities. However, there was no official extradition treaty in effect between Nepal and India, so the details of the arrest were not disclosed by officials.

The March protests, organized by pro-monarchy groups including the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), called for the reinstatement of Nepal's monarchy and the establish-



ment of the country as a Hindu state. The unrest in Kathmandu and other regions of Nepal has been fueled by a desire to return to the monarchy, which was abolished in 2008 when Nepal transitioned from a Hindu monarchy to a secular, democratic republic.

In connection with the protests, more than 60 individuals, includ-

ing prominent members of the RPP such as General Secretary Dhawal Shumsher Rana and Vice President Rabindra Mishra, have been arrested. These arrests were made under charges related to state offenses and organized crime, and the suspects are currently in judicial remand, following an order from the Kathmandu District Court.

The RPP has called for the immediate release of its leaders and supporters, demanding justice for those arrested in connection with the pro-monarchy protests. The political tension surrounding the protests highlights the ongoing debate over Nepal's identity as a secular republic versus the desire among some factions to restore the monarchy and its Hindu state status.





The domestic stock market indices witnessed a significant rally on Friday, closing higher with substantial gains. As expected, the market surged, buoyed by US President Donald Trump's decision to suspend tariffs on all countries, except China, for 90 days. This move generated positive sentiment across global markets, leading to heightened optimism that global supply chains would remain intact and that an economic recession might be averted. Moreover, expectations that India could benefit directly and indirectly from this tariff war further fueled the market rally.

The announcement encouraged investors to buy shares in large numbers, particularly benefiting sectors like metals, consumption, government companies, commodities, and energy. These sectors saw in-

## Indices Surge on Positive Sentiment Amid US-China Trade Truce

creased demand, propelling the markets higher. The BSE Sensex rose by 1,310 points, while the NSE Nifty gained 429 points by the close of trading.

The BSE Sensex, which ended the previous session at 73,845, opened at 74,835 on Friday. During the day, it touched an intraday low of 74,762 and a high of 75,467 before closing at 75,157, marking a gain of 1,310 points. The NSE Nifty, which opened at 22,695, saw fluctuations between a low of 22,695 and a high of 22,923, eventually closing at 22,828 with a total gain of 429 points. Additionally, the Nifty Bank surged by 762 points, closing at 51,002.



In the Nifty50, 47 stocks recorded gains, while just 3 stocks ended in the red. Hindalco, JSW Steel, Tata Steel, Coal India, and Geofinance were among the top gainers. On the flip side, Asian Paints, Apollo Hospitals, and TCS were the major losers of the day. The India VIX, or Fear Index, dropped by 6.17% to 20.11, indicating reduced volatility and growing investor confidence. Sectors such as metals, consumption, CPSE, commodities, energy, PSE, pharma, oil, infrastructure, auto, and finance all made significant gains during the session.

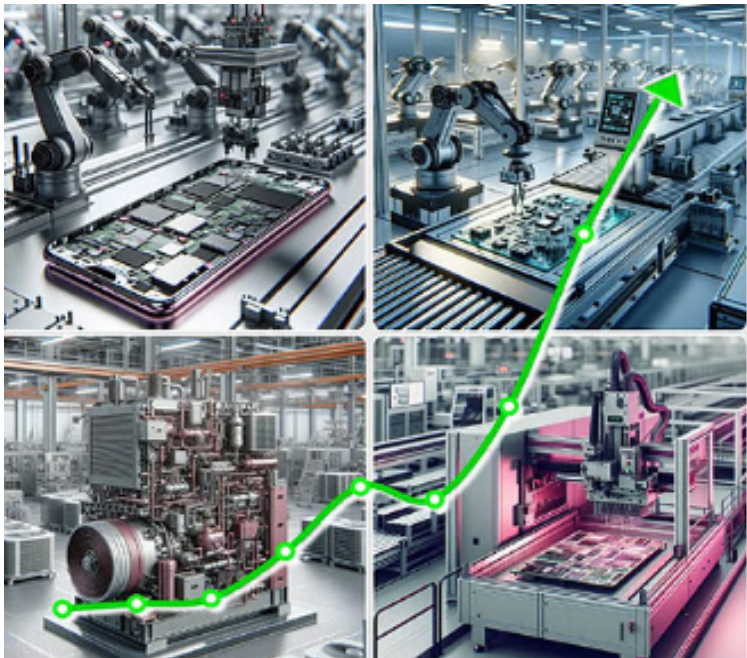
Market breadth was heavily in favor of buyers, with 2,381 shares advancing compared to 492 shares that declined out of 2,959 traded stocks. Notably, 35 stocks hit their 52-week highs, while 18 stocks hit their 52-week lows. Additionally, 160 shares touched their upper circuit limit, while 23 stocks reached the lower circuit.

The Indian Rupee strengthened by 64 paise, closing at 86.05 against the US Dollar. Retail participation in the market surged, with investor accounts on the NSE crossing Rs 22 crore. HSBC recommended a "buy" on Eternal with a target price of Rs 218, while CLSA gave CEAT an "Outperform" rating with a target price of Rs 3,494.

Despite the ongoing tariff war between China and the US, monthly SIP (Systematic Investment Plans) remained stable in March, indicating confidence among retail investors. In corporate news, the Bazel Project Company secured orders worth Rs 50-100 crore for power transmission and substations. Aurobindo Pharma acquired Hyderabad-based Fintra Software, and RBNL emerged as the lowest bidder for a Rs 143 crore project with Southern Railway.

Overall, the market closed on a positive note, reflecting investor optimism spurred by the global trade truce and favorable domestic market conditions.

## India Emerges as Global Electronics Manufacturing Powerhouse



India is rapidly establishing itself as a global hub for electronics manufacturing, driven by supportive government policies and a strategic focus on value addition. According to a recent report by Axis Capital, value addition in electronics manufacturing has surged from 30% to approximately 70%, and is projected to reach 90% by FY27. This shift is significantly improving India's competitiveness in the global supply chain.

A new components policy is playing a critical role in this transformation. The policy aims to increase value addition in the electronics sector from the current 15-16% to a robust 40-50%, reducing reliance on imports and fostering self-reliance in critical components.

Mobile phone exports have been a key success story, growing 77-fold over the past decade. Simultaneously, India has drastically reduced its dependence on imports of completely built air conditioners (CBUs)—from 35% in FY19 to just 5% in FY25. Many essential AC parts like compressors, copper tubes, and aluminum coils are now being manufactured domestically. Although around 8.5 million room air conditioner (RAC) compressors were still imported in FY24, full local manufacturing is expected within the next two to three years.

The demand for Printed Circuit Board Assembly (PCBA) is also witnessing a steep rise across both consumer and business electronics sectors. This surge is bolstered by increased import duties that have encouraged domestic production. Notably, PCBA imports—valued at ₹300 billion in FY18—have fallen to nearly zero in FY24.

This dramatic shift is a result of the government's "Make in India" initiative, which has reversed the trade imbalance in electronics. Until 2016, India imported more electronics than it produced. By FY24, however, domestic production exceeded imports by 24%.

India's electronics exports have been growing at a CAGR of about 26% between FY16 and FY25, reflecting its rising stature on the global stage. Key schemes such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI), Phased Manufacturing Program (PMP), and the SPECS initiative, coupled with a skilled workforce and better infrastructure, have all contributed to this success.

With corporate tax for new manufacturing units reduced to 15% and the global "China+" sentiment gaining traction, India is now the world's second-largest mobile phone producer—with 99% of phones sold in India manufactured locally.

## India's Industrial Output Slows to 2.9% in February 2025 Amid Broad Sectoral Weakness

India's factory output growth, as measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), slowed significantly to 2.9% in February 2025, down from the 5.2% expansion recorded in January. The data, released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, highlights a broad-based moderation across key sectors such as manufacturing, mining, and electricity, reflecting subdued industrial activity.

The sharp deceleration comes amid lingering concerns over global demand uncertainties, supply chain disruptions, and weaker consumer spending domestically, which have collectively impacted industrial production.

According to the official data, the manufacturing sector, which holds the largest weight in the IIP, grew just 3.1% in February compared to 5.7% in January. The sector has seen inconsistent performance in recent months, indicating caution among producers amid fluctuating demand and rising input costs.

Mining output also witnessed a slowdown, rising 2.1% year-on-year in February, lower than the 3.3% recorded in the previous month. Similarly, electricity generation, a critical indicator of industrial and residential demand, grew by a modest 1.8%, sharply down from 5.6% in January.



In terms of use-based classification, capital goods production — a proxy for investment — showed only a marginal rise, reflecting subdued business confidence. Consumer durables continued to underperform, contracting slightly, which points to weaker demand in the economy. Non-durable goods, which include everyday items, registered modest growth, indicating some resilience in rural and low-income segments.

Economists believe the slowdown in IIP growth may impact overall GDP expansion in the fourth quarter of FY2024-25, especially as global trade continues to remain volatile and domestic consumption sees uneven recovery.

While the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has maintained a pause on interest rate hikes, citing inflationary concerns and the need to support growth, the latest IIP data may add pressure on policymakers to consider measures that stimulate industrial demand.

As India approaches a new financial year, industry bodies have called for targeted fiscal support, improved ease of doing business, and supply-side interventions to revive industrial momentum and ensure a more balanced economic recovery.

## India Proposes EV Import-Export Swap to Break Deadlock in UK Free Trade Talks

In a strategic move to accelerate the finalisation of its long-pending Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United Kingdom, India has proposed allowing unlimited imports of high-end electric vehicles (EVs) from the UK, priced above GBP 80,000 (approximately ₹89 lakh). In exchange, New Delhi is seeking a larger export quota for more affordable, mass-market EVs priced below GBP 40,000 (₹44 lakh) to the UK.

This proposed quid pro quo is aimed at resolving key differences between the two countries that have delayed the conclusion of the FTA, which has been under negotiation for several years. If accepted, the deal could significantly benefit Indian automakers such as Maruti Suzuki and Mahindra & Mahindra, both of which have ramped up plans to enter and expand in international EV markets.

India's pitch focuses on leveraging its growing strength in the production of cost-effective electric vehicles, which are becoming



increasingly competitive in terms of price, range, and performance. By gaining preferential access to the UK market for these models, Indian manufacturers could tap into a broader customer base seeking affordable green mobility options, particularly as the UK moves closer to its 2035 ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars.

On the other hand, the offer to allow unlimited imports of luxury EVs from the UK would benefit premium British carmakers like Jaguar Land Rover, which is owned by India's Tata Motors. These companies are looking to increase their footprint in the Indian luxury auto segment, particularly with the rising demand for electric SUVs and sedans among affluent buyers.

The arrangement would strike a balance between the UK's push for greater access to India's luxury goods market and India's ambition to boost EV exports. It also aligns with India's broader climate goals and its push to become a global EV manufacturing hub.

If both sides agree, the EV proposal could become a turning point in the FTA talks, clearing the path for a comprehensive agreement that boosts trade, enhances co-operation in green technology, and deepens economic ties between the two nations.





In a breakthrough that deepens our understanding of the moon, Chinese scientists have discovered that soil from the moon's far side is significantly drier than that of the side facing Earth. The research, published in *Nature*, is based on samples brought back by China's *Chang'e 6* mission, which landed in the South Pole–Aitken Basin—one of the oldest and deepest craters in the solar system. Scientists examined five grams of lunar soil, selecting 578 individual particles for detailed study using advanced electron microscopy. They found that these particles contain less than 1.5 micrograms of water per gram of soil—remarkably lower than the 1 to 200 micrograms typically found in samples from the near side of the moon. While the quantity may seem minuscule, even trace amounts of water on the moon have massive implications for planetary science and future lunar exploration. The presence of water, or lack thereof, can reveal important details about the moon's geological

evolution, the effects of solar wind, and the potential for sustaining human activity on its surface. However, researchers caution that more data is needed to draw definitive conclusions. The current analysis is limited by the small sample size, and the possibility remains that other parts of the far side may have varying moisture levels. Still, the discovery adds a crucial piece to the ongoing effort to map out lunar resources and understand the satellite's complex history. Sen Hu of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, who led the study, emphasized that the findings open up new questions about the moon's formation and environmental conditions. With multiple countries, including India through its *Chandrayaan* missions, working to unlock the secrets of the moon, such international efforts are proving invaluable. As scientists push further into lunar research, even tiny grains of soil are revealing enormous insights about our closest celestial neighbor.

## Thai Restaurant Slammed Over ‘Body Size’ Discounts



A restaurant in Chiang Mai, Thailand, is facing severe backlash after a video revealed its controversial discount strategy—offering lower prices to customers based on how “skinny” they are. Chiang Mai Breakfast World installed a series of five metal frames at the entrance, each decreasing in width. The gimmick? Customers are invited to pass through the bars, with slimmer gaps offering higher discounts. If you squeeze through the narrowest frame, you get 20% off your meal. Wider frames give 15%, 10%, or 5% discounts, and if you can't fit through any of them, the sign reads: “Full price, sorry.” The now-viral video of the setup, shared by travel influencers Alex and Amina on Instagram, garnered nearly 12 million views. The post captioned “Better than nothing. Which one would you go through?” shows the couple laughing as they attempt the challenge. But what

started as a seemingly light-hearted gimmick has drawn major criticism online. One clip showed a diner jokingly being pushed through a narrow gap by a friend who yelled, “You need some butter!” Though they laughed it off and accepted a 5% discount, many viewers didn't find it funny. The video's comment section exploded with criticism. “This is fat-phobic nonsense. What kind of message are they trying to send?” one user asked. Another pointed out, “So if I don't fit, I have to pay more? That's insulting.” While some defended the idea as harmless fun, others slammed the restaurant for promoting body shaming under the guise of humor. “Imagine the embarrassment some people might feel just trying to eat breakfast,” one user commented, highlighting the discomfort such a system could cause.



## Title: Law Student's Weekly 3,200 km Commute

Most students move closer to their campus to ease academic life, but 30-year-old Nat Cedillo has taken a dramatically different route. A law student in her final semester at a prestigious New York City school, Cedillo travels over 3,200 kilometers every week — flying from Mexico City to New York and back — to attend her classes in person.

Her routine is intense: she boards a flight from Mexico City early Monday morning, attends classes in Manhattan, and returns home by Tuesday night. While the commute sounds exhausting, Cedillo insists it's worth it to complete her law degree. Cedillo and her husband, Santiago, moved from Brooklyn to Mexico City last year. The decision was based on a combination of factors — better weather and a more affordable lifestyle being key. However, instead of transferring or deferring her stud-



ies, Cedillo committed to super-commuting, a term for individuals who regularly travel long distances for work or education. Since January, she's made the round-trip journey more than a dozen times, covering over 4,000 miles per week. In total, she has already spent over \$2,000 (around ₹1.7 lakh) on travel, food, and short hotel stays during her 13-week semester. Her commitment puts her among a growing group of Americans embracing the

super-commuting lifestyle. According to a study cited by *The New York Post* from Stanford University, post-pandemic work and education trends have led to a 32% rise in people traveling more than 75 miles for work or studies. In New York City alone, that figure has surged by 89%. While many would find such a schedule unsustainable, Cedillo views it as a small price for academic success and personal happiness. “It's exhausting,” she admits, “but worth it.”

## British Vlogger Amazed by Indian Train Food Delivery

During a train journey to Varanasi, British YouTuber George Buckley was left astonished after experiencing food delivery right to his train coach—a feature that's still uncommon in the UK. Sharing the moment on Instagram, George posted a video that quickly went viral, garnering nearly 8 lakh views. In the clip, recorded aboard his AC first-class coach, George narrates his experience as his train makes a brief five-minute stop at Kanpur Central. “I am getting food delivered on a train in India. If you don't believe me, just hold on,” he says excitedly. George had placed his order—consisting of a sandwich and a milkshake—two hours earlier through the Zomato app. As the train pulled into Kanpur, he waited near the coach door for his delivery. Much to his amazement, the food was handed directly to him by a Zomato delivery agent,

who even snapped a selfie with him before leaving. He later enjoyed his meal with an Indian co-passenger who had helped him navigate the ordering process. In the post's caption, George wrote, “The UK needs to take notes,” applauding the convenience and customer service available in India. The video sparked admiration and humor online. Viewers expressed surprise at the convenience of Indian train travel, with one commenter sharing, “Mad isn't it? I got a Dominos delivered to my bed on a train there.” Another joked, “He will be shocked when he gets groceries delivered in 10 minutes.” Many appreciated George's positivity and openness to Indian culture. Comments praised his cheerful attitude and the impressive logistics behind India's evolving travel amenities.



## Purple: Not a Color, Just an Illusion?

In a surprising twist to how we understand color, scientists now say purple might not be a “real” color at all—but an illusion created by the human brain. Unlike red, green, or blue, which have specific wavelengths on the visible light spectrum, purple doesn't exist as a single wavelength. Instead, what we perceive as purple is the brain's clever blend of signals from both red and blue light. This perceptual trick highlights how color isn't just about the light that hits our eyes, but also how our brains process that light. Flowers appear vivid because of pigments reflecting particular wavelengths. The sky shifts colors as sunlight scatters through the atmo-

sphere. But purple? It's different. There's no wavelength for it—no place for it on the rainbow. Our eyes don't even have a receptor dedicated to purple. The brain simply fills in the gap. This discovery is more than a curious fact about color—it's a reminder of how much of our “reality” is constructed in our minds. Purple feels just as real as any color, yet it's a creation of perception, not physics. So the next time you admire a violet flower or a lavender evening sky, take a moment to appreciate the illusion. You're not just seeing a color—you're witnessing your brain doing a bit of visual magic.





## Supratim Das Dreams of Scoring Against MBSG

In a heartfelt moment ahead of the Indian Super League (ISL) Cup final, 19-year-old midfielder Supratim Das from Mumbai City FC revealed a personal dream that blends childhood admiration with professional ambition—scoring against Mohun Bagan Super Giant (MBSG), the club he grew up idolizing. Born in Kolkata, Supratim was immersed in the city's rich football culture from a very young age. His early exposure to the game began at just two years old, guided by his father, and by four, he had joined a local football academy. His talent quickly stood out, leading to a pivotal moment at age

11 when he was selected by the Reliance Foundation Young Champs (RFYC). With RFYC, Supratim helped his team clinch the Sub-Junior I-League title in 2018-19, contributed to a runner-up finish in the 2022-23 MFA Super Division League, and represented India in the Premier League Next Gen Cup in 2023. Now contracted with Mumbai City FC until 2027, Supratim made his ISL debut this season against Odisha FC and is eager to leave his mark. In an interview with ANI, he spoke passionately about his connection to Mohun Bagan, calling them his childhood favorite and expressing how significant it

would be to score against them. "There's no doubt they have been incredible this season... scoring against them would be a huge moment for me," he said, adding that the child in him would be "absolutely thrilled." While MBSG prepares for a high-stakes clash with Bengaluru FC this weekend, Supratim's story underscores the emotional narratives that often run parallel to competitive football. His journey from a Mohun Bagan supporter in Kolkata to a rising star at Mumbai City FC reflects the evolving dreams of young Indian footballers and the deep-rooted passion that drives them forward.

## Norwich, Chennaiyin FC Launch Talent Program

In a major push for youth development in Indian football, Norwich City FC and Chennaiyin FC have joined hands for a strategic partnership that includes an exclusive six-week training programme in the UK. Sam Jeffery, Commercial Director of Norwich City FC, along with Chennaiyin FC COO Akhil Prakash, spoke to ANI about the vision behind this collaboration, its structure, and long-term goals. The initiative is focused on nurturing Chennaiyin FC's most promising U-23 players by immersing them in a high-performance European footballing environment. These players will travel to Norwich to train under elite coaches at Norwich's Category One academy, one of the top-rated youth development centres in England. Jeffery shared that the idea for this partnership took shape during a sports conference in late 2023, where both clubs recognized shared goals around

academy development. Over the next few months, teams from both sides worked closely to align their resources, setting up a program that focuses on academy frameworks, performance analytics, nutrition, and player pathway development. Jeffery highlighted how Norwich's infrastructure and know-how in running a top-tier academy could significantly benefit Chennaiyin FC in building sustainable talent pipelines. Prakash added that they are currently in the process of identifying top U-23 talents to be part of the inaugural batch heading to Norwich. With Indian football increasingly turning to international expertise, this collaboration marks a significant step in Chennaiyin FC's ambition to not only develop future ISL stars but also players capable of succeeding at global levels. The training program is seen as an investment into the long-term growth of the



sport in India, blending global practices with local ambition. The Norwich-Chennaiyin partnership sets a strong example of how clubs across continents can unite to raise footballing standards, nurture young talent, and shape the future of the game.

## Stokes Unlikely in White-Ball Return Soon

England Cricket's Managing Director Rob Key has cast doubt over Ben Stokes' immediate return to white-ball cricket, emphasizing that the all-rounder's current focus is on red-ball cricket and regaining full fitness. Speaking on the Sky Sports Cricket Podcast, Key shared that Stokes is gradually building up his bowling workload under the supervision of elite pace bowling coach Neil Killeen, recently operating at around 75 percent intensity. With his last appearance in white-ball cricket being during the 2023 World Cup—after briefly coming out of retirement—Stokes has not played any format since. Key stated that while



newly-appointed white-ball skipper Harry Brook would undoubtedly benefit from having a player of Stokes' caliber, such a

return depends heavily on the all-rounder's physical condition and readiness to perform in all departments. The immediate goal for Stokes, according to Key, is to prepare for England's upcoming Test match against Zimbabwe, scheduled to begin on May 22 at Trent Bridge. The management wants to ensure that Stokes can resume his vital role as a pace-bowling all-rounder—a role critical not only for balance but also for his leadership on the field. Key praised Stokes' dual contribution as a captain and batsman and underlined the importance of his fitness to contribute as a fourth bowling option in the Test setup.



## KKR Demolish CSK in 8-Wicket Win

In a thoroughly one-sided contest at Chepauk, Kolkata Knight Riders delivered a clinical all-round performance to decimate a lacklustre Chennai Super Kings by eight wickets in their IPL 2025 clash on Friday. CSK, sent in to bat first, crumbled to their lowest-ever total at home—managing just 103 for 9 on a surface that offered grip and turn. Barring Shivam Dube's unbeaten 31 and brief resistance from Vijay Shankar (29) and Rahul Tripathi (16), the rest of the CSK batting order faltered miserably against KKR's disciplined bowling unit. Sunil Narine once again proved his worth as a match-winner, claiming three wickets for just 13 runs in his four overs. He was well-supported by Harshit Rana

(2/16) and Varun Chakravarthy (2/22), who choked the middle overs and dismantled CSK's batting rhythm. The Knight Riders' bowlers showed excellent control and tactical awareness, not allowing CSK any momentum throughout the innings. The chase was a walk in the park for Kolkata. They cruised to 107 for 2 in just 10.1 overs, making a mockery of the modest target. The KKR top order, brimming with confidence, made light work of the CSK attack, which looked ineffective and demoralised after a dismal show with the bat. The eight-wicket win not only boosted KKR's net run rate but also exposed the glaring gaps in CSK's current form and strategy.



## India's Asia Badminton Hopes End

India's campaign at the Badminton Asia Championships 2025 came to a close on Friday, following the exit of the country's last remaining contenders—Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto—in the Mixed Doubles Quarterfinals. The duo fell short against Hong Kong's fifth-seeded pair, Tang Chun Man and Tse Ying Suet, with a straight-games loss of 22-20, 21-13. The match, although competitive in the opening game, saw the Indian pair lose momentum in the second, bringing the nation's run at the continental tournament to an end.

The tournament, being held in Ningbo, China, witnessed early exits for the rest of the Indian contingent as well. In singles action, Olympic medalist PV Sindhu advanced to the Round of 16 but was edged out in a tough battle against Japan's Akane Yamaguchi, a two-time world champion and currently ranked fourth in the world. Sindhu, seeded 17th, fought hard in the three-game

thriller but eventually lost 12-21, 21-16, 16-21 in just over an hour.

India's men's singles hopefuls, Kiran George and Priyanshu Rajawat, also exited in the Round of 16, while the men's doubles pair of Hariharan Amsakarunan and Ruban Kumar Rethinasabapathi couldn't progress beyond the same stage. Despite moments of promise throughout the tournament, the results highlighted the growing competitiveness of Asian badminton and the challenges faced by the Indian squad in navigating through high-caliber opponents.

With the tournament set to conclude on Sunday, India will now look ahead to regroup and refine strategies for upcoming international events. The early exits also put the spotlight back on team preparation and performance consistency as India builds towards more critical events in the 2025 calendar, including Olympic qualification races.

## India Shine with 8 Medals in ISSF



India wrapped up their campaign at the ISSF World Cup in Buenos Aires on a high note, securing a total of eight medals—four gold, two silver, and two bronze—to finish second in the overall standings. While China topped the table with 11 medals, including five gold, India's strong performances across events showcased the depth and emerging talent in the country's shooting circuit. Among the standout performances was the gold medal haul by Sift Kaur Samra in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions, Rudranksh Patil in the men's 10m air rifle, Suruchi Singh in the women's 10m air pistol, and Vijayveer Sidhu in the men's 25m rapid fire pistol. These victories reinforced India's position as a rising power in shooting sports globally. The bronze medal match in the 10m air pistol mixed team event saw Tokyo Olympian Saurabh Chaudhary and Suruchi

Singh defeat the experienced duo of Manu Bhaker and Ravinder Singh with a scoreline of 16-8. Notably, Chaudhary and Suruchi had posted a strong qualifying score of 581-26x to reach the medal round, finishing third among the qualifiers. Bhaker, despite being a medalist at the Paris 2024 Olympics, had a subdued tournament. She placed 13th in the women's 10m air pistol qualifiers and finished sixth in the 25m pistol event after making it to the medal round. Her bronze-winning partner from Paris, Sarabjot Singh, was absent from the competition. China dominated the gold medal match in the 10m air pistol mixed team event, with Ma Qianke and Zhang Yifan defeating compatriots Yao Qianxun and Hu Kai 16-10. The Chinese pair had topped the qualifiers with identical scores of 582, underscoring their consistency and firepower.





## Hari Hara Veera Mallu On Track



Despite ongoing speculation about another delay, the team behind Hari Hara Veera Mallu has confirmed that the film will release on schedule. Starring Powerstar Pawan Kalyan, the much-anticipated period action drama is now locked for a theatrical release on May 9th, 2025. Rumors had circulated online suggesting pressure from the OTT partner was causing uncertainty about the release date. However, the makers have put those talks to rest with a fresh update on the

film's progress. Currently, re-recording, dubbing, and VFX works are being carried out at a rapid pace. The team promises a grand cinematic experience, emphasizing that they are sparing no effort to deliver a summer blockbuster. The PR team tweeted, "Re-recording, Dubbing, and VFX are in full swing—pushing boundaries at lightning speed. #HariHaraVeeraMallu hits the big screens on May 9th!"

## Kalyan Ram's Full-Throttle ASOV Push

Nandamuri Kalyan Ram, usually low-key in promotions, is going all out for his upcoming film Arjun S/O Vyjayanthi, releasing on April 18th, 2025. Known for being reserved during pre-release campaigns, Kalyan Ram is now actively engaging in promotions, surprising fans and industry watchers alike. This shift stems from the actor's deep connection to the project. He has reportedly given one of the most intense performances of his career, and he's equally invested in

ensuring the film reaches a wide audience. The film's team has rolled out a strategic series of promotional events, including teaser and song launches in multiple cities, generating solid buzz. At each event, Kalyan Ram has been speaking with heartfelt sincerity about the film, impressing audiences with his grounded and passionate presence. His hands-on approach is setting a fresh tone for his image and boosting expectations for ASOV ahead of its release.



## Rama Rama Promo Radiates Devotion

Ahead of Hanuman Jayanthi, the team behind Vishwambhara has unveiled the promo for its first single, Rama Rama — a spiritually rich offering that blends devotion with cinematic grandeur. Featuring Megastar Chiranjeevi and composed by MM Keeravaani, the track is set for full release tomorrow and

is already capturing hearts with its divine aura. The promo teases a soul-stirring composition layered with sacred chants, a powerful melodic base, and emotional depth. Shankar Mahadevan's commanding vocals, paired with Lipsika's soulful touch, bring Ramajogayya Sastry's devotional lyrics to life, creating a ce-

lestial musical experience. Chiranjeevi's majestic appearance amid children dressed as Lord Hanuman adds visual grace and spiritual symbolism, beautifully reinforcing the track's reverent theme. The imagery exudes purity, innocence, and a deep sense of devotion, making it a perfect tribute to Lord Rama and Hanuman.

## Good Bad Ugly: Ajith's Biggest TN Opener



Ajith Kumar's latest film Good Bad Ugly has Astormed the Tamil Nadu box office, registering the highest day-one gross of his career in the state. Directed by Adhik Ravichandran, the gangster action drama opened to packed houses and positive reviews for its Tamil version, earning a massive Rs. 31 crore gross on its first day in the home market. Despite the strong start, the film fell short of becoming Tamil Nadu's all-time top opener. It now

ranks as the fourth biggest opener in the state, behind Beast, Leo, and Sarkaar. While expectations were sky-high for Ajith to break existing records, the film settled for a strong but not record-breaking debut. Good Bad Ugly is produced by Mythri Movie Makers, with music by GV Prakash Kumar. The ensemble cast includes Trisha, Prabhu, Prasanna, Arjun Das, Sunil, Simran, Rahul Dev, and Yogi Babu, contributing to the film's mass appeal.

