



Weather Forecast

HYDERABAD	VIJAYAWADA	TIRUPATHI
H 33° C L 25° C	H 35° C L 26° C	H 36° C L 26° C

Secret Witness 'B' to Confront Tahawwur Rana in 26/11 Probe

NIA Tightens Net Around Extradited Accused

Witness B allegedly helped David Headley stay in Mumbai in 2006.

NIA to match Rana's voice, identity with communication evidence.

robe expands to Rana's links in Western UP; Pakistan disowns him.



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

In a major breakthrough in the investigation into the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has revealed that a key witness, codenamed "Witness B," will soon confront Tahawwur Hussain Rana during interrogation. Sources say this critical development could strengthen the case against the 64-year-old alleged conspirator.

Rana, who was recently extradited from the United States and placed in 18-day NIA custody, is accused of playing a vital role in facilitating the attacks that claimed 166 lives. He arrived in India on April 10 after the U.S. Supreme Court denied his final appeal.

According to exclusive information accessed by *Times Now*, Witness B is a pivotal figure in the plot, having allegedly arranged the stay of co-conspirator David Coleman Headley in Mumbai in 2006. Headley, a US national and Lashkar-e-Taiba operative, conducted detailed reconnaissance of Mumbai locations later targeted during the attacks. Witness B reportedly had close ties with both Headley and Rana and is currently in protected custody due to security threats.

The NIA intends to confront Rana directly with the witness to verify not only visual identification but also voice samples that could link Rana to critical communications. "This confrontation will be a significant step forward," said a senior source in the agency, hinting that this may establish a clearer chain of events.

Rana, however, continues to deny direct involvement in the attacks, despite the agency having evidence of over 230 interactions between him and Headley during the latter's multiple visits to India. Additionally, documents obtained from the FBI, including intercepted calls, will be presented during interrogation.

The NIA is also probing Rana's activities in Western Uttar Pradesh and other locations, seeking potential collaborators or support networks. With Pakistan distancing itself from Rana—claiming he never renewed his citizenship—the case has taken on broader geopolitical implications.

The confrontation with Witness B could mark a turning point in the long-standing investigation, providing crucial links and possibly sealing Rana's fate in one of India's deadliest terror attacks.



National Herald case: ED begins possession of assets linked to Sonia, Rahul Gandhi

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday announced that it has issued notices for the possession of immovable assets worth ₹661 crore, which had been attached in its ongoing money laundering investigation into Congress-controlled Associated Journals Limited (AJL). This case, commonly referred to as the National Herald case, involves allegations against AJL and its holding company, Young Indian, which owns the publication National Herald.

The ED's investigation focuses on the financial transactions of AJL and Young Indian, with former Congress President Sonia Gandhi and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi named as accused. The

federal agency stated that it had affixed the notices at three key locations: the Herald House in Delhi, a property in Bandra, Mumbai, and an AJL building in Lucknow. The notices demand the vacation of the Delhi and Lucknow premises, while the Mumbai property offers the option of transferring the rent payment to the ED.

These actions were carried out under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) following the attachment of these assets in November 2023. The ED emphasized that the notices were issued in accordance with Section 8 and Rule 5(i) of the PMLA, which pertains to the procedure for taking possession of attached assets after confirmation by the adjudicating authority.

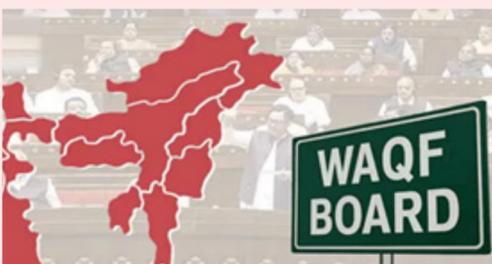
The National Herald case dates back to 2010 when Young Indian acquired all the properties of AJL, valued at over ₹5,000 crore. The ED alleges that properties of Young Indian and AJL were used for generating further proceeds of crime, citing irregular transactions such as bogus donations amounting to ₹18 crore, false advance rent of ₹38 crore, and fraudulent advertisements worth ₹29 crore.

The case was initially filed by BJP leader Subramaniam Swamy, accusing the Gandhis of criminal misappropriation. Sonia and Rahul Gandhi hold a 38% stake each in Young Indian, and the case has become a focal point of political controversy in the country.

Inspection of Waqf properties in Chhattisgarh under new amendment act begins

TPN Correspondent | Raipur

In response to the recently implemented Waqf Amendment Act, a high-level 10-member team from the Centre has arrived in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, to carry out a comprehensive inspection of Waqf properties across the state. This move signals the beginning of a thorough review aimed at ensuring compliance with the new regulations and assessing the condition of Waqf land and assets.



The team, which arrived directly from Delhi, is tasked with inspecting various Waqf properties in Chhattisgarh, including land, buildings, and markets, which are designated for religious and charitable purposes within the Muslim community. The inspection is seen as a step towards increasing transparency and accountability in the management of these properties.

Dr. Saleem Raj, Chairman of the Chhattisgarh Waqf Board, is personally accompanying the inspection team. On Thursday, the team visited the historic Fateh Shah Market in the Tikrapara area of Raipur, one of the

state's significant Waqf properties. The market has faced scrutiny due to ongoing disputes and allegations of irregular management.

Dr. Raj welcomed the initiative, emphasizing that the inspection would help identify potential issues and strengthen efforts to protect and efficiently manage Waqf properties for the benefit of the community. He added that some currently underutilized properties could be developed into shopping complexes, benefiting the Muslim community.

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Mehbooba Mufti Thanks CMs of West Bengal, T.N, and Karnataka for Stance on Waqf Amendment Act

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti on Saturday expressed her gratitude to the chief ministers of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka for their "courageous and principled stand" against the Waqf Amendment Act. Mufti, who previously served as the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, sent identical letters to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. K. Stalin, and Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.



ji & @siddaramaiah ji expressing heartfelt gratitude for their courageous & principled stand against the Waqf Amendment Bill. In today's India, where dissent of any kind is increasingly criminalized, their unequivocal voices come as a breath of fresh air." She further highlighted the significance of their stance for the Muslim-majority region of Jammu and Kashmir, stating, "As residents of Jammu and Kashmir — the only Muslim-majority region in the country — we find solace and inspiration in your unwavering stance in these dark and challenging

In a post shared on the microblogging site X, Mufti said, "I have written to @MamataOfficial ji, @mkstalin

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Religion Can Lead To Happiness, Shouldn't Change It For Greed, Fear: RSS Chief

TPN Correspondent | Valsad



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Saturday emphasized the importance of adhering to dharma amidst the distractions of greed, temptation, and enticement that people often face in daily life. Speaking at the silver jubilee celebrations of the Shree Bhav Bhaveshwar Mahadev Temple at Sadgurudham in Barumal, Valsad (Gujarat), Bhagwat highlighted that dharma alone can guide individuals to-

wards true happiness and societal well-being.

He cautioned against changing one's religion under the influence of greed or fear and urged people to remain firm in their faith. "Even when no external force compels conversion, internal temptations like greed and desire can mislead us," he said, referencing the Mahabharata and Duryodhan's unjust

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Supreme Court Sets 3-Month Deadline For President To Decide On Bills

- President must act on reserved bills within 3 months.
- Governors must act on state bills within 1 month.
- No indefinite delays or "pocket vetoes" allowed.

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi



The ruling specifies strict timelines: a maximum of one month for a governor to act on bills per the advice of the Council of Ministers, and three months for reserving bills or returning them after reconsideration. Once a bill is re-presented, the governor must grant assent within one month.

The Court rejected the idea of a "pocket veto" by either the governor or the President. It clarified that the President must either assent to or withhold assent under Article 201, with no scope for indefinite delay.

By invoking Article 142, the Court deemed the 10 re-enacted Tamil Nadu bills as validly passed. This judgement not only resolves the Tamil Nadu case but sets a nationwide precedent, ensuring accountability and preventing misuse of constitutional provisions by governors. The registry has been directed to circulate the judgement to all high courts and state governors.

In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court has for the first time established a clear timeline for the President to decide on bills reserved by governors for presidential consideration. According to the judgement, the President must act within three months from the date the bill is received. If delayed, reasons must be documented and shared with the concerned state.

This directive comes just days after the Court invalidated Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi's reservation of 10 state bills for presidential consideration, terming it "illegal" and lacking legal basis. The case stemmed from a stand-

off between the Tamil Nadu government and the governor, with the state complaining of undue delays in gubernatorial assent. Some bills had been pending since 2020, prompting the state to approach the Court in 2023.

A bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan emphasized that governors cannot stall legislation indefinitely. Under Article 200 of the Constitution, governors have three options—grant assent, withhold assent, or reserve the bill for the President. However, the Court stressed that this provision should not be used to hinder state legislation.

Indian Army Vows to Continue Anti-Terror Operations in J&K Until Total Elimination

TPN Correspondent | Delhi



Amid continued terrorist activity in Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian Army has reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating terrorism from the region. During a press conference on Saturday, Director General of the Kishtwar-Doda-Ramban Range, Shridhar Patil, declared that security operations will persist until every terrorist in the area is neutralised.

"Until terrorists are eliminated, the operations will go on. The people of the area have given full support to the security forces. These operations show good coordination between the security agencies," Patil stated.

The security forces intensified their operations in the Kishtwar district, where three Pakistani terrorists have been killed in the past two days — one on Friday and two more on Saturday. These terrorists were reportedly affiliated with Pakistan-based terror outfits and

had infiltrated the region with the aim of carrying out attacks.

Brigadier JBS Rathi, Commander of 5 Sector Assam Rifles, highlighted the advanced technology and coordination used during the operations. "On April 9, a joint operation was launched by the Indian Army, J&K Police, and CRPF. In the ensuing firefight, three terrorists were killed. Real-time surveillance of the area was conducted using UAVs and drones," Brigadier Rathi said during a joint press briefing.

He further praised the synergy between the Indian Army, J&K Police, and Special Operations Group (SOG). "Rapid reinforcements, including Special Forces, were deployed

with assistance from the Indian Air Force. Their role in providing aerial surveillance was crucial," he added.

The encounter began after intelligence inputs led to a coordinated search and destroy operation in the Chhatru forest area, spanning Kishtwar and Udhampur districts. The operation, now in its fourth consecutive day, has reportedly cornered additional terrorists.

The White Knight Corps, via a post on X (formerly Twitter), confirmed: "Op Chhatru: Based on specific intelligence, a joint search and destroy operation along with the Jammu and Kashmir Police was launched on April 9 in the Chhatru forest, Kishtwar. Contact was established late evening on the same day."

Security forces are maintaining high alert and continuing their mission to secure the region, with top officials reiterating that no terrorist presence will be tolerated.

Tensions Erupt in Agra After Meat Found in Mosque, 60 Booked for Protests

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Tensions flared in Agra's Mantola area on Friday after a packet of animal meat was discovered inside the historic Jama Masjid just before the weekly congregational prayers. The incident, which police say was a deliberate act by a man named Nazruddin, sparked protests demanding severe punishment.



According to police, the protest began shortly after Friday prayers concluded. A crowd gathered outside the mosque, angered by the act of desecration, and called for swift and harsh action against the accused. As the situation escalated, police deployed over 100 personnel to the area and used mild force to disperse the protesters.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Sonam Kumar confirmed that a First Information Report (FIR) has been registered against Nazruddin, who is accused of placing the meat inside the mosque. Additionally, around 60 individuals have been named in connection with the protest and the disruption that followed.

CCTV footage from the mosque played a crucial role in the investigation. It reportedly showed Nazruddin arriving at the site on a scooty late Thursday night, entering the mosque premises, placing the packet down, and then leaving. The incident was discovered the next morning, just before Friday prayers, leading to immedi-

ate unrest in the locality.

Police traced the scooty to a nearby meat shop and questioned the shop owner, which eventually led to Nazruddin's identification and arrest. He is a resident of the Teela Nandram area in Agra and was taken into custody on Friday.

Additional Police Commissioner Sanjeev Tyagi stated that the matter is being taken very seriously and will be investigated under the National Security Act (NSA). "We are looking into whether Nazruddin acted alone or had accomplices. The intent behind his actions is also under scrutiny," Tyagi said.

Security has been tightened around the Jama Masjid to maintain law and order. Authorities have appealed to the public not to believe or spread rumours, emphasizing the need for peace and restraint. Meanwhile, forensic tests are underway to confirm the exact nature of the meat that was found.

Justice Yashwant Varma likely to retain CRPF security in Capital despite transfer

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Delhi High Court has directed the Delhi Police to maintain security arrangements for Justice Yashwant Varma, who was recently transferred to the Allahabad High Court. The order comes in the wake of a fire incident at his official Delhi residence on March 14, during which semi-burnt sacks reportedly containing Indian currency were recovered.



Despite his transfer, Justice Varma has chosen to retain his official bungalow in Delhi, prompting the High Court to ensure continued security coverage by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

In a letter dated April 5, Deputy Registrar (Project and Planning) S.P. Gupta communicated the court's instructions to the Delhi Police. The letter read:

"I am directed to inform you that Hon'ble Mr Justice Yashwant Varma, Judge of this Court, consequent upon transfer/repatriation to Allahabad High Court is retaining the official bungalow...As desired by his Lordship, the deployment of CRPF security staff be continued in his official bungalow till the bungalow is retained. You are, therefore, requested to do the needful on top priority basis under intimation to this court."

The incident on March 14 had drawn consid-

erable public and media attention when a fire broke out at Justice Varma's Delhi residence. During the subsequent investigation and fire-fighting efforts, authorities discovered several semi-charred sacks allegedly containing bundles of currency notes. The matter raised eyebrows and led to speculation, although no official findings or statements regarding the origin or nature of the currency have been made public.

Sources indicate that investigations into the fire and the recovery of the currency are still ongoing, and Justice Varma has not been named in any wrongdoing. However, given the sensitivity of the case and the public interest involved, the court has prioritized maintaining tight security at his residence.

Justice Varma's transfer to the Allahabad High Court was part of a routine reshuffling of judges across high courts, as approved by the Supreme Court Collegium. However, the developments surrounding the fire incident and currency recovery have kept his Delhi residence under scrutiny.

The Delhi Police is expected to comply with the High Court's direction and continue CRPF deployment at the premises until further notice.

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Mehbooba Mufti Thanks CMs of West Bengal, T.N, and Karnataka for Stance on Waqf Amendment Act

Mufti also posted copies of the letters on her X handle, emphasizing that India has faced an increasing majoritarian tide that threatens the country's core values of pluralism and diversity. She condemned the enforcement of the Waqf Amendment Act, arguing that it undermines religious freedoms, particularly for Muslims, and exacerbates the sense of insecurity felt by minorities.

"In the past decade, India has seen a growing wave of majoritarian sentiment, which has

put our Constitution, institutions, and secular fabric at risk," Mufti stated. She pointed out that, while most citizens reject this divisive agenda, the current powers that be are pushing policies that target minority communities, especially Muslims.

Mufti's letter is part of her continued advocacy for protecting religious freedoms and maintaining secularism in India, amidst growing concerns over the potential negative impact of the Waqf Amendment Act on the Muslim community.

Inspection of Waqf properties in Chhattisgarh under new amendment act begins

While the move has been largely positive, it has sparked mixed reactions from political figures. Fahim Sheikh, State General Secretary of the Indian Youth Congress and member of the Chhattisgarh Muslim Mahasabha, criticized the government's motives. He argued that the process was a political show, accusing the authorities of acting out of self-interest rather than genuinely caring for the welfare of the Muslim community.

Despite this, the Waqf Board maintains that the inspection is conducted in line with national policies and aims to ensure fairness and transparency. The findings of the inspection team are expected to be critical in shaping future policies concerning Waqf properties in the state.

Religion Can Lead To Happiness, Shouldn't Change It For Greed, Fear: RSS Chief

actions driven by greed as examples of adharma.

Bhagwat praised institutions like Sadgurudham, which operate in remote tribal regions to uplift Adivasi communities through social and spiritual initiatives. These centers, he said, are modern-day equivalents of ancient temples that not only provide a spiritual haven but also act as community centers fostering unity, worship, art, and moral grounding.

He lauded the work of saints and ascetics who historically traveled through forests and villages to preach and help people remain steadfast in their faith—not to convert them, but to strengthen their spiritual roots. "When people stay firm in their religion, other

issues like addiction and societal decline do not arise," he said, asserting that Sanatan Dharma harbors no ill will and supports peace.

Bhagwat further linked religious adherence to national strength, asserting that India's identity as a land of dharma is admired globally. He also touched on the economic impact of religious events, noting the financial boost from events like the Maha Kumbh. "Though we never commercialize religion, if we must explain its value to the world, we must speak their language," he said.

Reinforcing the significance of spiritual centers, he concluded that fostering dharma is key to national welfare, unity, and the greater good of humanity.

Will order probe into Delhi govt school infra: Minister Parvesh Verma

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Delhi government will launch a vigilance investigation into the construction of government schools built during the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) administration, Public Works Department (PWD) Minister Parvesh Verma announced on Friday. The probe will focus on tender allocations, maintenance contracts, and construction quality, signaling a broader review of infrastructure projects undertaken by the AAP government.

The announcement came during Verma's visit to a government school in Palam, where the principal raised concerns about recurring flooding within the building. "The principal informed me about a flood-like situation in the school. I have directed an investigation not only into this particular school but also into all schools constructed during the previous government's tenure," Verma told news agency PTI.

The move follows recent criticism by Delhi's Education Minister Ashish Sood, who slammed the AAP's claims of transforming the education system. During a visit to schools in Patparganj, Sood pointed to deteriorating infrastructure, citing issues like unstable roofs, lack of toilets, inadequate drinking water facilities, and insufficient teachers. "Out of 20 schools in Patparganj, many lack concrete roofs or basic amenities. This so-called education revolution was more of a political slogan than a real transformation," he said.

Residents in Palam had also complained of persistent waterlogging in the area, prompting Verma's site inspection. He added that the scope of the inquiry will include reviewing construction work, tender processes, and expenditure of public funds for all such



- Triggered by flooding complaint at Palam school during minister's visit.
- Education Minister Sood slams poor infrastructure in Patparganj schools.
- AAP calls probe a political distraction, defends education record.

schools. Verma further announced plans to inspect the Najafgarh Surakpur Road to evaluate additional projects.

The probe appears to be part of a larger political and administrative effort to scrutinize AAP's governance, particularly in the education sector, which the party once touted as a

model of good governance.

In response, the AAP dismissed the probe, calling it another political distraction. "Just like previous inquiries, this too will lead nowhere," the party stated, reiterating that its record on education remains strong despite the allegations.

Devendra Fadnavis pitches for building Chhatrapati Shivaji memorial in Delhi

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday called for the establishment of a national memorial for Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Delhi, highlighting the Maratha warrior king's enduring legacy and contributions to Indian history. The demand was made during a commemorative event marking the 345th death anniversary of Shivaji Maharaj, where Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar were also present.

Speaking at the event, Fadnavis reiterated his government's commitment to completing the long-pending Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Smarak in the Arabian Sea. "We will win the legal battle and ensure the memorial is constructed. But along with that, there should be a national memorial for Maharaj in Delhi," he said, as quoted by ANI.

Fadnavis paid tribute to Shivaji Maharaj, calling him a divine figure and a unifying force. "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is our Devta. If not for him, we wouldn't be free or able to carry out our duties today. He united 18 different castes and established Hindavi Swarajya, hoisting the saffron flag across the nation," he said.

Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde emphasized Shivaji Maharaj's deep connection



to Maharashtra, recalling how the legendary king was coronated at Raigad Fort and spent his final days there. "We owe our existence and strength to Shivaji Maharaj," Shinde declared.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah also lauded Shivaji's extraordinary legacy, recalling how the young Maratha ruler rose against overwhelming odds. "He had neither luck, wealth, nor a large army, yet through sheer determination and courage, he shattered 200 years of Mughal dominance and gave the country the

mantra of Swaraj," Shah said.

He further expressed hope that India, inspired by Shivaji's vision, would rise to become the number one country in the world by the time it celebrates 100 years of independence in 2047. Shah's remarks underlined the symbolic significance of Shivaji's values in shaping a strong and self-reliant India.

The proposed memorial in Delhi, if approved, would serve as a national tribute to one of India's most revered historical icons.

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta Urges Citizens to Stop Throwing Food on Roads

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has called on the public to stop throwing food, particularly roti, on the roads. Her appeal comes after witnessing a man tossing bread from his car, presumably to feed a cow. Gupta intervened, explaining that such actions not only pose a risk to animals but also endanger road safety for pedestrians and vehicles.

In a post shared on the social media platform X, Gupta emphasized that roti holds deep cultural and spiritual significance in Indian society. She expressed that throwing roti on the road is disrespectful, urging citizens to reconsider their actions. "Roti is not just food; it is a symbol of our culture, faith, and respect," she wrote, adding that feeding animals in such a

manner can create hazards for both the animals and people on the road.

The Chief Minister suggested that people who wish to feed animals should do so in a more responsible way, by visiting designated places like gaushalas (cow shelters). This, she said, would be a reflection of sensitivity and



respect for both the animals and the safety of the public.

Gupta's appeal is a part of her ongoing effort to promote responsible behavior among Delhi residents. She urged them to not only avoid throwing food on the streets but also to ensure that animals are fed in a manner that doesn't compromise public safety. She encouraged citizens to feed animals with love and care but in suitable locations that are safe for everyone.

This move highlights the Delhi government's increasing focus on creating a more organized, responsible, and safe environment for both people and animals, in line with the city's broader vision for sustainable urban living.

SC Verdict Turns Tamil Nadu Bills into Law Without Governor or President's Assent



TPN Correspondent | Chennai

In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court of India has ruled that ten bills previously passed by the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly — but withheld by Governor RN Ravi — are now considered law, effective from November 18, 2023. This historic decision marks the first time in India that state legislation has come into force without the assent of either the Governor or the President.

The Supreme Court bench, comprising Justice S.B. Pardiwala and Justice R. Mahadevan, declared the Governor's prolonged withholding of assent as "illegal" and clarified that under Article 200 of the Constitution, a Governor has only three options: grant assent, withhold it, or refer the bill to the President. Crucially, the court stated that once a bill is re-passed by the Assembly after initial rejection, it cannot be sent to the President — it must be either assented to or rejected within a reasonable time, ideally within one month.

The ten bills, some of which were first introduced in 2020, included key amendments such as stripping the Governor of his role in appointing Vice Chancellors in state universities — a major point of contention between the ruling DMK and the Raj Bhavan.

The conflict reached a boiling point when Governor Ravi returned the bills twice and then referred them to President Droupadi Murmu, prompting the Tamil Nadu government, led by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, to move the Supreme Court. The court had earlier criticized the Governor's inaction, questioning the three-year delay in raising concerns.

Following the verdict, the Tamil Nadu government promptly issued gazette notifications, formalizing the ten bills into law. Chief Minister Stalin hailed the ruling as a "historic victory for all Indian states," suggesting that the judgment would have significant implications for federalism and the functioning of elected state governments.

"Don't Incite Riots For Politics, Won't Enforce Waqf Act": Mamata Banerjee

TPN Correspondent | Kolkata



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday firmly declared that the Waqf (Amendment) Act would not be implemented in the state, as violent protests erupted across several districts. Addressing the unrest, Banerjee emphasized that the legislation was passed by the central government, and any questions or concerns should be directed at them.

"My sincere appeal to people of all religions — please stay calm and restrained. Don't let politics incite violence in the name of religion. Every human life is valuable. Do not let society suffer for political gains," she posted on X.

Protests against the Act turned violent on Friday, with incidents reported in Malda, Murshidabad, South 24 Parganas, and Hooghly districts. Demonstrators clashed with police, set fire to vehicles — including police vans — and blocked roads. Stones were also thrown at security personnel, creating tense situations in several areas.

Banerjee reiterated that the state government has no role in the formulation of the Waqf (Amendment) Act. "We did not create this law. It was enacted by the central government. If you have grievances, ask them — not us," she stated.

Clarifying her government's stance, the Chief Minister said, "We have already made our position clear — we do not support this law, and it will not be implemented in West Bengal. So why these riots?"

She also warned that strict legal action would be taken against those found inciting violence. "We will not tolerate any kind of violent behavior. Certain political parties are trying to exploit religious sentiments for their own gain," she said.

Appealing to the public, Banerjee concluded, "Religion should represent humanity, compassion, and harmony. I urge everyone to preserve peace and maintain communal unity."

CM Rekha Gupta Orders Action to Light Up 4,000 Dark Spots in Delhi To Boost Women's Safety



TPN Correspondent
| New Delhi

In a major push to enhance women's

safety across the national capital, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday directed officials to expedite efforts to illuminate nearly 4,000 dark

and poorly lit areas. These zones, identified as potential hotspots for crimes, particularly against women, are being prioritized for urgent action under a citywide safety initiative.

Chairing a high-level review meeting, CM Gupta focused on several key areas including the traffic management system, public lighting, dark spots, and welfare measures for the homeless and destitute. Emphasizing the need for safer public spaces, she instructed officials to complete lighting upgrades at vulnerable locations as swiftly as possible.

A statement released by the Chief Minister's Office highlighted that work is already underway to address the issue. The 4,000 dark spots, currently without streetlights, are be-

ing identified, cleaned, and fitted with proper lighting infrastructure. Officials involved in the project confirmed that these areas are being treated as high-risk zones, especially after dusk, and are under constant monitoring.

"Women's safety is a non-negotiable priority for this government," said CM Gupta. "Poorly lit areas often become hubs for antisocial elements, and we are determined to change that. Every citizen deserves to feel safe, no matter the time or place."

The initiative is expected to cover areas across all districts of Delhi, including parks, underpasses, isolated streets, and residential backlanes. Departments responsible for urban maintenance, electricity, and securi-

ty have been asked to coordinate and ensure timely implementation of the plan.

Officials also noted that apart from improving lighting, additional steps such as the installation of CCTV cameras and deployment of security personnel in some areas are also being considered. The move is seen as part of a broader commitment by the Delhi government to make the city more inclusive, secure, and accessible—especially for women, children, and the marginalized.

The project is being carried out in mission mode and is expected to show visible results within the coming months.

15 Flights Diverted, Several Delayed As Dust Storm Hits Delhi, Nearby Areas



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

After days of intense heat, residents of Delhi, Haryana, and parts of western Uttar Pradesh experienced a dramatic shift in weather as strong winds swept through the region, triggering a major dust storm on Saturday evening. The powerful gusts brought dust and debris into the air, reducing visibility and disrupting daily life, including air travel.

According to sources, at least 15 flights to and from Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport were diverted due to the storm. Many others were delayed as airlines scrambled to adjust schedules in response to the changing weather conditions. Air India confirmed that some of its flights had been delayed or rerouted, while IndiGo and SpiceJet also issued advisories that their operations may be impacted by the thunderstorm activity.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a weather advisory warning that the strong winds could damage standing crops, weak structures, and pose risks to pedestrians and travelers. Authorities urged people to stay indoors and avoid unnecessary travel during the storm. "Do not

take shelter under trees. Avoid lying on concrete floors or leaning against concrete walls. Unplug all electrical appliances and stay away from water bodies," the advisory stated.

Visuals from across the national capital region showed heavy dust clouds engulfing roads, vehicles, and buildings. The storm dramatically reduced visibility in many areas, and video clips circulating on social media showed cars covered in a thick layer of dust, with trees swaying violently under the force of the winds.

The sudden weather change provided temporary relief from the relentless summer heat, but it also brought concerns over safety, especially in areas with older or unstable infrastructure. Emergency services were put on alert, and local authorities have been monitoring the situation closely.

As the storm subsides, the weather office has indicated a potential drop in temperature over the next 24 hours, offering brief respite from the sweltering conditions. However, officials have cautioned residents to remain alert and follow safety guidelines as more such weather disturbances are possible in the coming days.

Delhi Police Bust International Drug Racket, Arrest Two Foreign Nationals

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

In a significant breakthrough, the Delhi Police on Friday announced the dismantling of an international drug cartel operating in the national capital. As part of the operation, two foreign nationals—one from Nigeria and the other from Uganda—were arrested, and narcotics worth over ₹1 crore were seized.

The crackdown was conducted under the ambit of the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan, a nationwide campaign aimed at eliminating drug abuse with a policy of zero tolerance. The police said that the drug syndicate was primarily targeting college students and young people across Delhi, making their activities particularly dangerous and far-reaching.

Acting on specific intelligence, a team

from the police's Anti-Narcotics Cell laid a trap and successfully nabbed the accused. Upon searching them, the authorities found a substantial quantity of high-grade narcotics. According to police sources, the drugs were intended for distribution at parties, nightclubs, and student gatherings in and around the city.

During interrogation, the suspects reportedly revealed that they were part of a larger network smuggling drugs into India through various channels. The cartel is believed to have international links and has been operating covertly for some time, avoiding detection until now.

A senior police official stated, "The arrest of these two individuals has dealt a serious blow to the cartel. We are currently tracing their local contacts and international suppliers. More arrests

are expected as the investigation progresses."

The Delhi Police emphasized their commitment to keeping the city free from narcotics, particularly in areas where students and youth are vulnerable. They urged the public to remain vigilant and report suspicious activities, reiterating that the fight against drug abuse requires community support along with strong enforcement.

The operation marks another success under the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan, which aims to curb both the supply and demand of illegal substances in India. Authorities confirmed that the accused are being booked under stringent provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, and further investigations are underway to uncover the full extent of the cartel's operations.

Delhi Draft EV Policy 2.0 Offers ₹30,000 Subsidy for Women

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Delhi government is preparing to launch its revised Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy 2.0, with a key highlight being a ₹30,000 incentive for women residents purchasing electric two-wheelers. This subsidy, aimed at encouraging clean mobility and empowering women, will be offered on a conditional basis to the first 10,000 eligible applicants who hold a valid driving licence.

According to the draft policy reviewed by Hindustan Times, an incentive of ₹10,000 per kWh of battery capacity—capped at ₹30,000—will be provided. This initiative is part of a larger plan to increase the adoption of EVs across the national capital and reduce dependency on fossil fuels.

The earlier Delhi EV Policy, launched in 2020, expired in August 2023. Since then, it has been under extension, with the updated policy expected to be rolled out by mid-April after cabinet approv-

al. While the exact mechanism for disbursing the ₹30,000 subsidy is yet to be disclosed, officials confirmed that several other incentives are being introduced to support wider EV adoption.

Beyond the women-centric two-wheeler subsidy, the policy proposes additional financial support for electric goods vehicles. Electric three-wheeler goods carriers (L5N) will be eligible for up to ₹45,000, while four-wheeler goods carriers (N1 category) could receive incentives of up to ₹75,000. Interest subvention schemes will also be available across vehicle categories.



Vehicle scrapping incentives form another key component. Owners who scrap fossil fuel two-wheelers less than 12 years old will receive ₹10,000. Those scrapping old ICE auto-rickshaws will be eligible for ₹20,000. Moreover, CNG auto-rickshaws completing 10 years of registration during the policy period must be replaced with electric alternatives, with a ₹1 lakh incentive per replacement.

The draft also recommends a complete halt to registration of diesel, petrol, and CNG goods carrier three-wheelers starting August 15, 2025. Other provisions include setting up 18,000 EV charging points across the city, EV-ready parking spaces in new buildings (20%) and existing buildings (5%), and mandating EVs for households purchasing a third vehicle.

This ambitious policy signals a bold step toward making Delhi a greener, cleaner, and more sustainable city.

Municipal Corporation of Delhi to elect new Mayor, Deputy Mayor on April 25



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has officially announced that elections for the posts of Mayor and Deputy Mayor will be held on April 25, 2025. This announcement was made through a notice issued by the MCD Secretary's Office on Friday.

The elections will be conducted during the MCD's ordinary meeting scheduled for the same day, with voting expected to take place at 2 p.m. The process is a part of the regular civic administration cycle and is keenly awaited amid ongoing political

tensions within the MCD.

As per official sources, the nomination process will begin on April 15. Interested candidates will have until April 21 to file their nominations for both posts. The electoral process is likely to see participation from all major political parties, including the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), both of whom have been locked in a fierce political contest in the civic body.

This announcement comes at a time when the MCD has witnessed multiple sessions of cha-

os and confrontation. Recent meetings of the MCD House have seen intense clashes between AAP and BJP councillors, adding further anticipation and political heat around the upcoming elections.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor hold significant roles in overseeing the administration and functioning of the city's civic services. Their leadership can greatly influence policy decisions related to sanitation, infrastructure, public health, and urban development in Delhi.

While the current term of the

sitting Mayor is drawing to a close, political observers are closely watching how the new leadership might shift the dynamics of the MCD, especially in the run-up to the next round of civic and assembly elections.

As Delhi continues to evolve as a mega-urban centre, the MCD elections are expected to reflect not just the city's political mood but also shape its governance priorities for the year ahead. All eyes are now on April 25, when the results of the voting will reveal the new civic leadership of the national capital.

Chhattisgarh CM Lays Foundation Stone for State's First GaN Semiconductor Plant in New Raipur

TPN Correspondent | Chhattisgarh

In a landmark move for the state's industrial and technological advancement, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Friday laid the foundation stone for the state's first Gallium Nitride (GaN)-based semiconductor fabrication unit in New Raipur. The project marks a significant step in positioning Chhattisgarh on the national map of semiconductor manufacturing.

The proposed semiconductor plant aims to begin commercial production by April-May 2026 and has an ambitious target of producing 10 billion chips annually by 2030. Once operational, the plant is expected to play a critical role in meeting domestic and global demands for high-performance semiconductors, particularly for applications in 5G, electric vehicles, aerospace, and defense technologies.

Speaking at the foundation stone-laying ceremony, Chief Minister Sai emphasized that the vision behind the project goes beyond industrial growth. "This isn't just a plant, it's the identity of the new Chhattisgarh," he said, underlining the government's commitment to inclusive development. "Our goal is not just attracting investment, but also ensuring that the youth from tribal, rural, and backward regions of the state are active participants in India's technological revolution."



The plant is expected to generate thousands of direct and indirect employment opportunities, creating a skilled workforce and promoting ancillary industries in and around New Raipur. It also aligns with the Central Government's broader mission to promote semiconductor manufacturing in India under the "Make in India" and "Digital India" initiatives.

Gallium Nitride (GaN) is a cutting-edge material in the semiconductor industry, known for its superior efficiency and performance over

traditional silicon-based chips. GaN-based devices are gaining prominence for their use in high-power and high-frequency applications, and the establishment of a domestic GaN fab is expected to boost India's technological self-reliance.

Industry leaders and government officials hailed the initiative as a transformative moment for Chhattisgarh, with the potential to turn the state into a future hub for electronics and semiconductor innovation.

Mumbai Set to Launch 'Mumbai One' Smartcard for Seamless Public Transport Access



TPN Correspondent | Mumbai

Mumbai commuters will soon benefit from a unified travel solution, as Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced the upcoming launch of the 'Mumbai One' smartcard — a single card to access all major public transportation services across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR).

Slated to be operational in the coming months, the smartcard will allow passengers to seamlessly travel across Metro, Mono Rail, local trains, and public buses without needing to purchase multiple tickets. The card's architecture is expected to be ready within a month, Fadnavis said during a joint press conference with Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Friday, April 11.

Highlighting the convenience factor, a railway official explained that the Mumbai One card will allow users to book a single ticket from point A to point B, using a combination of public transport modes without needing to stand in queues at multiple ticket counters.

The initiative draws inspiration from London's Oyster card — a contactless smartcard that grants access to a variety of public transport services including buses, the Tube, Overground trains, and more. Like the Oyster, the Mumbai One card aims to streamline commuting, reduce travel time, and offer an integrated user experience.

In addition to the smartcard, Minister Vaishnaw announced the introduction of 238 new air-conditioned (AC) trains under the Mumbai Urban Transport Project phases MUTP-3 and MUTP-3A. These upgraded trains are designed to handle Mumbai's super-dense crush load with improved ventilation, safer travel, and greater passenger comfort. The trains will be rolled out in two phases — 47 under MUTP-3 and 191 under MUTP-3A.

During the press briefing, Fadnavis and Vaishnaw also revealed plans for extensive infrastructural upgrades worth ₹17,000 crore, including over 300 kilometres of new rail lines. These projects aim to decongest existing networks, boost service frequency, and address the rapidly growing needs of Mumbai's suburban rail commuters.

Tamil Nadu Notifies 10 Acts After Supreme Court Verdict, Bypassing Governor's Assent



TPN Correspondent | Chennai

In a historic move following a landmark Supreme Court verdict, the Tamil Nadu Government has officially notified 10 Acts in the state gazette that were previously stalled due to gubernatorial inaction. These bills, which were re-adopted by the State Assembly and forwarded to the President by the Governor, are now deemed to have received assent as per the Supreme Court's recent judgment.

Among the key legislations is The Tamil Nadu Fisheries University (Amendment) Act, 2020, which renames the institution as The Tamil Nadu Dr. J. Jayalalithaa Fisheries University. The notification states that all 10 Acts are considered to have received the Governor's assent on November 18, 2023 — the date on which they were re-passed by the Assembly.

Other Acts notified include:

The Tamil Nadu Universities Laws (Amendment) Act, 2022

The Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University (Amendment) Act, 2022

The Tamil Nadu Dr. M.G.R. Medical University, Chennai (Amendment) Act, 2022

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (Amendment) Act, 2022

The Tamil University (Second Amendment) Act, 2022

The Tamil Nadu Fisheries University (Amendment) Act, 2023

The Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (Amendment) Act, 2023

The Tamil Nadu Universities Laws (Second Amendment) Act, 2022

A common feature of these Acts is the restructuring of university governance. Most of them strip the Governor of powers related to the appointment of Vice-Chancellors, transferring that authority to the state government.

This development marks a constitutional milestone, as these are the first Acts in Indian legislative history to come into effect without the formal assent of either the Governor or the President, solely based on the Supreme Court's ruling.

Celebrating the moment, DMK Rajya Sabha MP P. Wilson wrote on X, "History is made as these are the first Acts... to have taken effect without the signature of the Governor / President." Chief Minister M.K. Stalin echoed the sentiment, stating, "DMK means creating history."

Two Militants and a Soldier Killed in Separate Encounters in Jammu Region

TPN Correspondent | Jammu

In a continued crackdown against terrorism, two unidentified militants and an Indian Army soldier were killed in separate encounters in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri and Kishtwar districts on April 12, 2025. The operations come amid intensified anti-militancy and anti-infiltration drives across the Jammu region.

In the Rajouri district's Sunderbani sector, a soldier was martyred while foiling an infiltration bid near the Line of Control (LoC) in the Keri Battal area. The Army's White Knight Corps confirmed that Subedar Chand from the 9 Punjab Regiment sustained injuries on the night of April 11 during the gunfight and later succumbed to his wounds.

"We salute the bravery and sacrifice of Subedar Chand. The Army stands in solidarity with his family during this difficult time," said a statement from the White Knight Corps.

Meanwhile, in Kishtwar's Chhatru area, security forces neutralized two more militants during an ongoing counter-terror operation that has been underway for the past four days. This raises the total number of militants killed in the operation to three.

According to official sources, the militants were associated with the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit. Among those killed was reportedly a top commander named Saifullah, who had been active in the Chenab Valley for over a year.

"In the ongoing operations in Chhatru, despite harsh and inclement weather conditions, two Pakistani terrorists have been eliminated," the Army stated. The forces recovered a significant cache of arms and ammunition, including an AK-47 rifle and an M4 carbine, both commonly used by foreign terrorists.

The operation is still ongoing, with Army units combing the snow-covered ridges and upper reaches of the Chhatru region. Officials suspect that more militants may be hiding in the area, which is known for its difficult terrain and proximity to infiltration routes.

The twin encounters highlight the increasing attempts by militant groups to infiltrate and re-establish their presence in Jammu's hilly regions. Security forces remain on high alert as counter-terror operations continue across sensitive border and hinterland zones.



Three Naxalites Killed in Bijapur Encounter; Weapons Recovered

TPN Correspondent | Chattisgarh



Three Naxalites were killed in an intense encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Saturday morning, police officials confirmed. The exchange of fire took place around 9 a.m. in a forested region within the Indravati National Park, a known Naxal stronghold.

According to Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P., the encounter occurred during a coordinated anti-Naxalite operation carried out by a joint team of various security forces. The operation included personnel from the District Reserve Guard (DRG) units of Bijapur and Dantewada districts, the Special Task Force (STF), and two battalions of the elite Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA), specifically the 202nd and 210th units.

The joint force, acting on intelligence inputs, launched a combing operation in the dense forest area early in the morning. Upon entering the targeted zone, the team was met with

gunfire from Naxalites, leading to a fierce firefight. After the exchange, the bodies of three Naxalites were recovered, along with a significant cache of weapons, ammunition, and explosives.

The operation is still underway, and additional forces are scouring the area for more insurgents who may be hiding in the forested terrain.

This encounter marks another major success in the ongoing anti-Naxal campaign in the Bastar region, a hotbed of Naxalite activity. With this operation, the total number of Naxalites neutralized in various encounters across Chhattisgarh this year has risen to 138, according to police sources.

The recovered arms and explosives are expected to undergo forensic analysis to identify the nature of the weapons and any possible links to previous attacks or supply chains.

Empowering Pasmanda Muslims

The Waqf Amendment Act marks a turning point for Pasmanda Muslims, offering not just legal reform but long-overdue recognition. For the first time, the All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz was invited to present its views before the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on Waqf—a historic acknowledgement of a marginalised voice.

At its core, the Amendment focuses on better governance of waqf properties while preserving the foundational Islamic concept of waqf. It ensures that religious and historical sites like mosques, dargahs, cemeteries, and Karbalas remain untouched, safeguarding their cultural and spiritual significance.

A key feature of the Act is the provision for a comprehensive survey of waqf properties (auqaf). This aims to document assets clearly, prevent encroachments, and enhance administrative accountability. The Muslim majority in Waqf Boards and Councils remains intact, ensuring community-led decision-making.

One controversial change is the removal of the “Waqf by User” clause, which allowed long-used properties to be designated as waqf without formal declaration. While the change aims to reduce legal ambiguity and misuse, properties already recognised under this clause will retain their status.

The Act’s broader goal is to curb mismanagement and corruption within Waqf institutions. It introduces stricter oversight, promoting transparency and rebuilding community trust. Efficient administration will



enable waqf assets to serve their original purpose—community welfare.

Crucially, the reform has the potential to transform the lives of economically weaker Muslims, especially Pasmanda groups. Better-managed waqf funds can support educational scholarships, build schools, and offer higher education opportunities—

particularly for girls from financially strained families.

Skill development centres using waqf land can offer training in modern trades like IT, healthcare, and tailoring, increasing employability. Enhanced revenues can also fund self-employment schemes and microfinance, helping artisans and labourers build sustainable liveli-

hoods.

Housing and healthcare, two pressing needs among Pasmanda Muslims, can be addressed through low-cost housing initiatives and free clinics powered by waqf resources. These steps would significantly raise the standard of living for underprivileged families.

The Waqf Amendment Act thus signals a shift from symbolic inclusion to tangible empowerment. For the Pasmanda Muslim community, it is not just a legislative milestone but an affirmation of their place in the national conversation. This recognition must now translate into continued advocacy and equitable development, ensuring waqf resources uplift those most in need.

RBI Cuts Rates, Boosts Lending Push



The Reserve Bank of India’s Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has cut the repo rate by 25 basis points, bringing it down from 6.25% to 6%. This marks the second consecutive rate cut and the first for FY2025-26. The move signals the RBI’s shift from a ‘neutral’ to an ‘accommodative’ stance, indicating potential for further rate reductions or a continued status quo depending on economic trends.

The decision reflects the RBI’s twin objectives: reviving slowing economic growth and keeping inflation under control. The central bank has revised India’s GDP growth forecast for FY26 to 6.5%, down from 6.7%. At the same time, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation projection has been eased from 4.2% to 4%, suggesting improving price stability.

Inflation has been on a steady decline in recent months. From a peak of 5.2% in December 2024, it fell to 3.6% by February 2025, marking a cumulative drop of 1.6%. Even food inflation, which has a direct impact on household expenses, has decreased to 3.8%, its lowest level in 21 months. These favourable numbers give the RBI room to ease monetary policy without risking inflationary flare-ups.

The rate cut is expected to reduce the cost of bor-

rowing for banks, which can now access funds more cheaply from the RBI. In turn, this move is designed to push banks to lend more aggressively to consumers and businesses, spurring demand and investment in the economy.

The policy shift is also a clear response to persistent concerns over weak private consumption and sluggish industrial growth. Lower interest rates may revive credit off-take in key sectors such as housing, automobiles, and MSMEs, which are critical to job creation and overall economic momentum.

Additionally, by adopting an ‘accommodative’ stance, the RBI is keeping policy flexible and open to further rate cuts should economic conditions warrant. This proactive approach may offer a buffer against global uncertainties or domestic shocks that could impact the growth trajectory.

With inflation contained and growth in need of a boost, the RBI appears to be aligning its policy tools toward stimulating the economy without compromising price stability. The latest measures send a clear signal to markets, businesses, and households that the central bank is committed to supporting recovery while remaining vigilant on inflation.

India Must Respond to US Tariffs

When former US President Donald Trump imposed a steep 26% tariff on Indian imports, he justified it as “reciprocal.” He claimed he was being “kind,” implying that the actual duty should be 52%. While the tariff hike has been paused, the Indian government has remained surprisingly silent, neither protesting the move nor explaining why it’s unjustified.

The facts tell a different story from Trump’s logic. In the last year, India imported \$42 billion worth of goods from the US — about 1.1% of India’s \$3.9 trillion GDP. In contrast, US imports from India stood at \$87 billion — only 0.3% of its \$29 trillion GDP. That means the US enjoys a larger share of our economy than we do of theirs.

If parity is the goal, India’s exports to the US should reach \$300 billion — over three times the current amount. Instead, India is being disproportionately generous. With lower per capita income and a growing domestic industry, India needs more protection, not less, to help local businesses achieve scale.

The Modi government appears to have taken Trump’s rhetoric at face value. Rather than pushing back, India has yet to demand fairer terms or retaliate with equal duties. A 26%

counter-tariff would be a justified response if US duties on Indian goods continue.

More than retaliation, this is a moment of opportunity. India should use the crisis to swiftly expand trade relations with other countries. We can seek lower trade barriers and mutually beneficial agreements to offset potential losses from US restrictions. A time-bound, reviewable framework for such deals can boost bilateral gains and diversify our trade network.

While short-term disruptions are inevitable, especially in sensitive industries, India must be ready to adapt. Our past shows we’ve borne short-term hardship for long-term strategic gains — from non-alignment during the Cold War to facing sanctions post-nuclear tests.

What is concerning now is the government’s silence. India should assertively demand more access to the US market and push for equal economic participation. The principle is not just trade parity, but national dignity.

We are not against the US, but we must make it clear that India cannot be bullied or blackmailed. In this trade war, silence is surrender. It’s time India speaks — not just in defense, but with purpose, pride, and principle.





Nagendran Replaces Annamalai as TN BJP Chief

In a significant political reshuffle ahead of the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has appointed Nainar Nagendran as the new president of its Tamil Nadu unit. The announcement follows the party's decision to realign with the AIADMK under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), marking a strategic shift in the BJP's approach in the state.

Nagendran, a three-time MLA from Tirunelveli, replaces K. Annamalai, who served as state president during a period marked by aggressive outreach but strained ties with the AIADMK. Nagendran was the sole candidate to file his nomination on Friday and is now tasked with steering the BJP's campaign for the upcoming state elections.

At a public event celebrating the leadership change, Annamalai congratulated Nagendran, calling him a seasoned leader and expressing full support. "We know our goal and path — we will uproot the DMK from Tamil Nadu with the strongest NDA alliance in 2026," Annamalai declared to loud applause from party workers.

State BJP Vice President Narayanan Thirupathy also hailed the leadership transition. "Nagendran is a versatile man, rich in political culture. The cadre is thrilled. Under his presidency, we believe the BJP will scale new heights in Tamil Nadu," he said.

Nagendran's appointment coincides with the BJP's formal reunion with the AIADMK, a move that is expected to strengthen the NDA's prospects in the state. The two parties had parted ways in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, largely due to Annamalai's outspoken criticism of AIADMK icons like M.G. Ramachandran and J. Jayalalithaa.

Nagendran's political roots in the AIADMK, where he previously served as a minister, are seen as an asset in mending ties between the two allies. His experience and existing rapport with AIADMK leaders are expected to smooth over the past discord and present a united front.

For the BJP, the leadership change signals a shift from confrontation to coalition-building. With the NDA back together in Tamil Nadu and elections a year away, the party is betting on Nagendran's leadership and alliance politics to gain ground in a state where national parties have traditionally struggled for dominance.

Tamil Nadu Enforces 10 Bills Post-SC Verdict

In a significant move following a Supreme Court ruling, the Tamil Nadu government has officially notified ten Acts in the state Gazette, marking a decisive step in the ongoing power tussle between the Raj Bhavan and the State. These Acts, which had earlier been readopted by the State Assembly after initial refusal or inaction by the Governor, were deemed to have received assent as per the Supreme Court's recent verdict.

A large number of these Acts deal with the appointment of Vice-Chancellors (V-Cs) in state-run universities—an area that has been a longstanding point of contention between the Governor and the elected government. The new legislation effectively curtails the powers of the Governor-Chancellor in this domain, transferring authority to the State government. This shift is part of a broader push by the DMK-led government to assert greater auton-



omy in higher education administration.

One of the notable Acts included in the notification is the Tamil Nadu Fisheries University (Amendment) Act, 2020, which renames the university as The Tamil Nadu Dr. J. Jayalalithaa Fisheries University, honoring the late AIADMK

leader and former Chief Minister.

The Supreme Court had earlier ruled that the Governor cannot indefinitely delay assent to Bills passed by the legislature. In its verdict, the apex court emphasized that once the legislature readopts a Bill that has been returned by the Governor, the Gov-

ernor is constitutionally obligated to either grant assent or forward it to the President. In this case, since the Governor had forwarded the Bills to the President without granting assent, and no action was subsequently taken by the President, the Court ruled that the Bills were deemed to have received assent. Legal and political experts see the development as a landmark in the evolving relationship between the Governor and the State legislature, especially in opposition-ruled states. The Tamil Nadu government's move is seen as a bold assertion of federal principles and legislative supremacy.

With the notification of these Acts, the government is expected to move swiftly in appointing Vice-Chancellors without waiting for gubernatorial approval, setting a precedent that could influence other states engaged in similar disputes with Governors over administrative powers.

ED Moves to Seize National Herald Assets



In a major step forward in its money laundering probe related to the National Herald case, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday issued possession notices for immovable assets worth Rs 661 crore. The properties, linked to the Con-

gress-affiliated Associated Journals Limited (AJL), had earlier been provisionally attached as part of the investigation.

The ED confirmed that necessary documentation for taking over the

properties has been submitted to the concerned registrars in each location. In addition to the legal filings, the agency has also physically posted notices on the properties, seeking vacation of the premises and facilitating the agency's takeover.

These locations are key assets under scrutiny in the ongoing investigation against AJL, a company with long-standing ties to the Indian National Congress.

The ED also served a separate notice to Jindal South West Projects Limited, which currently occupies the 7th, 8th, and 9th floors of the Herald House property in Bandra, Mumbai. The notice demands that the occupant vacate the premises, clearing the way for the ED to take official possession.

The National Herald case has remained politically charged, involving top Congress leaders, including Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, who have been questioned in connection with the alleged misappropriation of assets and money laun-

dering. The probe revolves around the acquisition of AJL's assets by a company called Young Indian, in which senior Congress leaders reportedly hold a majority stake.

The ED had provisionally attached the properties in previous stages of the investigation under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), claiming that assets worth hundreds of crores were illegally acquired through financial manipulation.

This latest move signals the agency's intent to escalate proceedings and enforce action on ground, converting provisional attachments into formal takeovers. Legal experts say this could trigger further court battles, especially as the Congress party has repeatedly denied wrongdoing and claimed the case is politically motivated.

The ED's notice issuance comes amidst a broader crackdown on alleged financial irregularities involving political entities and is expected to spark a fresh round of political confrontation in the weeks ahead.

India Firm on Fair Trade Talks

In a strong statement reflecting India's firm stance on trade negotiations, Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and S. Jaishankar emphasized that India will not be pressured into hasty agreements, even amid shifting global dynamics triggered by the United States' recent policy changes.

Speaking at the Italy-India Business, Science, and Technology Forum, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal responded to former US President Donald Trump's move to pause reciprocal tariffs on India for 90 days. This window has been seen as an opportunity for fast-tracking a bilateral trade agreement between the two nations.

Goyal, however, made it clear that India would not compromise under pressure. "We never negotiate at gunpoint. While favourable time constraints encourage faster progress, any deal will be concluded only if it secures the interests of our country and its people," he asserted.

He reiterated that India's ongoing trade discussions with countries including the US, UK, and European Union are progressing steadily. "Our focus remains India First, aligned with our broader vision of achieving Viksit Bharat by 2047 during the Amrit Kaal," Goyal added.

"We are certainly geared up for a high degree of urgency. There's a window and we're keen to deliver results. But our trade deals are complex and require mutual understanding," Jaishan-



kar stated.

Reflecting on past US-India negotiations, Jaishankar remarked, "We spoke for four years during the first Trump administration. They had a view of us, but frankly, we have our view of them too. That mutual understanding was missing back then."

On the EU trade talks, Jaishankar addressed criticism about prolonged negotiations, saying, "It's not that we've been talking for 30 years non-stop — there were long periods when talks were dormant. These are inherently protracted processes." The ministers' remarks underscore India's evolving but steadfast approach: willing to engage but not at the cost of national interest.

Three Killed in Murshidabad Waqf Protests

At least three people have lost their lives in fresh violence that broke out in West Bengal's Murshidabad district on Saturday, as protests over the contentious Waqf (Amendment) Act escalated. The latest fatalities have deepened tensions in the region and drawn sharp political responses.

According to officials, two persons — a father and son identified as Hargobind Das and Chandan Das — were killed in a brutal mob attack in Dhulian, Shamsheganj. The incident, reportedly communal in nature, marks one of the most severe episodes of violence since protests began.

A third casualty was confirmed on Saturday afternoon. Izaz Ahmed Sheikh, a 17-year-old who had sustained bullet injuries during a police firing in Suti on Friday, succumbed to his injuries at a local hospital. The death has further fuelled anger among protestors, who allege excessive use of force by law enforcement agencies.

A senior police official told The Hindu, "Two deaths have been reported in communal clashes. One person injured in police firing died today." Authorities are yet to make any arrests in connection with the killings, though investigations are underway.

The protests stem from growing opposition to the Waqf (Amendment) Act, recently passed by



the Parliament. Critics of the law claim it infringes on minority rights and grants excessive control over religious endowments. Demonstrations have been particularly intense in Muslim-majority pockets of the state, including Murshidabad, which has seen repeated incidents of unrest this week.

Visuals from Jangipur, another protest-hit area, showed vehicles set ablaze and streets strewn with debris. Law and order have reportedly deteriorated in multiple pockets, prompting deployment of additional police forces and rapid action units.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee took to social media to reiterate her government's stance. "We have made our statement on this matter clear — we do not support this law. This law will not be implemented in our state."



Trump Replaces Obama's Portrait with Painting of Himself

Surviving Assassination Attempt at White House

- Painting shows Trump defiant after July 2024 rally shooting in Pennsylvania.
- Video of installation posted with Trump's chant: "fight, fight, fight."
- Critics protest; Trump allies, including Rep. Greene, cheer the change.

TPN Correspondent | US

In a move steeped in symbolism and controversy, U.S. President Donald Trump has replaced the official White House portrait of former President Barack Obama with a dramatic painting of himself surviving an assassination attempt. The new artwork, now displayed in the grand entrance hallway of the White House, depicts Trump with his fist raised defiantly, moments after the July 2024 attempt on his life during a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania.

The 78-year-old Republican leader has shifted Obama's portrait—originally unveiled in 2022 by then-President Joe Biden—to a different location, where George W. Bush's portrait previously hung. Bush's portrait has now been moved to a less prominent spot near the staircase.

The new Trump painting, which captures what many of his supporters view as a defining mo-



ment in his re-election campaign, has been accompanied by a brief video posted on social media platform X. The video, captioned "Some new artwork at the White House," shows staff installing the gold-framed portrait while Trump's rallying cry "fight, fight, fight" plays in the background.

The decision underscores Trump's long-standing rivalry with Obama, which began during the 2016 presidential campaign and was marked by Trump's promotion of the debunked "birther" conspiracy theory questioning Obama's citizenship. Their public tensions have continued ever since, with

frequent jabs exchanged in speeches and interviews.

While it is customary for presidential portraits to be hung after a president leaves office, Trump has never been one to follow tradition. He has previously displayed a framed copy of his Fulton County mugshot near the Oval Office and a bronze sculpture of his assassination attempt reaction at Mar-a-Lago. White House Communications Director Steven Cheung dismissed backlash over the portrait swap in typically blunt fashion, replying to one critic on X with, "Pipe down, moron." Meanwhile, staunch Trump supporter Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene praised the new display, posting a side-by-side comparison with Obama's portrait and writing, "Much better."

The White House Historical Association, which oversees the tradition of presidential portraits since 1965, has yet to comment on the unconventional reshuffling.

Trump opens door to Iran deal, warns of consequences if talks fail

TPN Correspondent | Washington

In a significant foreign policy move, U.S. President Donald Trump has expressed openness to a renewed nuclear deal with Iran but warned of "great danger" if negotiations fail. This comes as the U.S. and Iran prepare for talks in Muscat, Oman, on Saturday, focused on curbing Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program.

Trump's envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi are expected to lead their respective delegations. While Trump claimed the discussions would be direct, Iran has indicated they will likely proceed through intermediaries, with Omani officials shuttling messages between separate rooms.

"I want Iran to be a wonderful, great, happy country, but they can't have a nuclear weapon," Trump said aboard Air Force One. His administration believes Iran is in a weakened position due to regional setbacks, including the degradation of proxy forces like Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis by Israeli and U.S. forces, as well as increasing economic pressure from sanctions.

Iran's nuclear capabilities have significantly progressed since Trump withdrew from the Obama-era 2015 deal. Iran now possesses uranium enriched up to 60%, near weapons-grade level, and enough material to potentially produce multiple nuclear weapons. The U.S. is pushing for a tougher deal that goes beyond the previous agreement, aiming for full dismantlement of Iran's nuclear enrichment and strategic missile capabilities.

National Security Advisor Mike Waltz has stated that the U.S. red line remains weaponisation, while Witkoff hinted at possible flexibility, stating that the administration could accept continued enrichment if weaponisation is prevented.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian reiterated that Tehran does not seek nuclear weapons and suggested openness to foreign investment, including from the U.S., if a deal is reached. This marks a shift from previous Iranian policies that restricted American business presence.

As negotiations begin, both sides face complex challenges. Trump seeks a foreign policy win, while Iran faces internal and external pressures. Whether these talks will succeed depends on the scope of U.S. demands and Iran's willingness to compromise without further escalation.

Earthquake of 5.8 Magnitude Strikes Pakistan; Tremors Felt in Jammu & Kashmir

TPN Correspondent | Srinagar

An earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale struck on Saturday afternoon, with its epicentre located in the Pakistan region. Mild tremors were reported across parts of Jammu and Kashmir, though no immediate reports of damage or casualties have surfaced.

According to Mukhtar Ahmad, Director of the Meteorological Department, the quake occurred at 1:00:55 PM IST. The seismic activity was pinpointed at latitude 33.63°N and longitude 72.46°E, occurring 10 km beneath the Earth's surface.

While the epicentre lay within Pakistan's territory, the tremors were felt across the border in the Kashmir Valley, which lies in a highly seismically active zone. The region is historically prone to earthquakes due to its location on major tectonic fault lines.

The latest event revives memories of the



devastating earthquake on October 8, 2005, which measured 7.6 on the Richter scale and had its epicentre in Muzaffarabad, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). That quake claimed over 80,000 lives on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC), and caused extensive damage in parts of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, India, and China's Xinjiang region.

The 2005 disaster remains one of the deadliest earthquakes of the decade. Official figures from Pakistan estimate the death toll between 73,276 and 87,350, with some reports suggesting the number could have ex-

ceeded 100,000. In India, 1,360 people were killed, and thousands more were injured. The event also left over 3.5 million people homeless and about 138,000 injured.

In recent years, the Chenab Valley region—especially Doda and Kishtwar districts—has experienced frequent seismic activity. Several residential and government buildings in these areas have sustained structural damage, rendering many uninhabitable.

Experts have repeatedly urged authorities and residents to adopt earthquake-resilient construction practices in both the Kashmir Valley and the Chenab region. Traditional structures made of wood and mud were historically more resilient to tremors. However, modern concrete buildings, though widespread, are more vulnerable unless built to seismic safety standards. With ongoing tremors and past experiences, experts emphasize preparedness and resilient infrastructure as essential for minimizing future earthquake-related losses.

Georgia Becomes First US State To Introduce Bill Against Hinduphobia

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

In a historic move, the state of Georgia has introduced a groundbreaking bill to formally recognize Hinduphobia and anti-Hindu bigotry within its legal framework. If enacted, the legislation would amend Georgia's penal code to explicitly define Hinduphobia and mandate law enforcement agencies to account for it in hate crime investigations and enforcement of anti-discrimination laws.



Senate Bill 375 is a bipartisan effort, backed by Republican Senators Shawn Still and Clint Dixon, alongside Democratic Senators Jason Esteves and Emanuel D. Jones. The proposed bill defines Hinduphobia as "a set of antagonistic, destructive, and derogatory attitudes and behaviours towards Hinduism," and seeks to ensure that such bias is taken seriously under Georgia's existing legal protections.

The Coalition of Hindus of North America (CoHNA), which has worked closely with lawmakers on this effort, hailed the bill as a historic first. "Georgia becomes the first state to introduce such a bill, and if passed, will make history once again," CoHNA said in a statement. The organization thanked the sponsoring senators for addressing the growing concerns of Hindu communities both in Georgia and across the United States. This bill builds upon a resolution passed by Georgia's House of Representatives in April 2023, which condemned Hindupho-

bia and recognized Hinduism as one of the world's oldest religions, with a global following of over 1.2 billion people. That resolution, led by Republican Representatives Lauren McDonald and Todd Jones, was celebrated by Hindu American communities, particularly in Forsyth County—home to one of Georgia's largest populations of Hindu and Indian-American residents.

According to a 2023–2024 Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study, approximately 2.5 million Hindus live in the United States, accounting for 0.9% of the national population. Georgia alone is home to more than 40,000 Hindus, most of whom reside in the Atlanta metropolitan area. If passed, Senate Bill 375 would mark a significant step toward recognizing and combating religious discrimination against Hindus, while also setting a precedent for other U.S. states to follow in addressing rising concerns over anti-Hindu sentiment.

Indian-Origin NJ Councillor Charged in Mafia-Linked Gambling Racket

TPN Correspondent | New York

Anand Shah, a 42-year-old Indian-origin municipal councillor from New Jersey, has been charged in connection with a major mafia-run gambling operation, according to New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin. Shah, a two-term councillor in Prospect Park—a suburb of New York—is among 39 individuals facing charges including racketeering, illegal gambling, money laundering, and other serious crimes.

The charges were announced following a series of coordinated raids at 12 locations across New Jersey, including four poker clubs. Authorities say the criminal network was associated with the notorious Lucchese Crime Family, one of the major Italian-American mafia organisations in the United States.

Shah, who oversaw finance, economic development, and insurance for the borough, has been accused of managing illegal poker games and an online sports betting operation tied to the crime family. His alleged involvement has sparked concern about corruption in local government. "The arrest of a sitting council member only adds fuel to the fire of public distrust in elected officials," Platkin said during a press briefing.



The gambling network reportedly operated behind the façade of legitimate businesses such as restaurants and private social clubs, generating nearly \$3 million in revenue. Platkin emphasised that the reality of organised crime is far from the glamorised version seen in pop culture. "This isn't about romanticised mob life. It's about illegal activity—money, power, and the threat of violence," he said.

Another Indian-origin individual, Samir S. Nadkarni, 48, from Longwood, Florida, was also charged. He was described as a "sports-book sub-agent and poker host" within the operation.

The Lucchese-linked syndicate allegedly ran gambling machines and sports betting rings, exploiting loopholes and using social clubs as fronts.

India's auto component industry to hit USD 145 billion by 2030, exports to triple

India's apex policy think tank, NITI Aayog, has laid out an ambitious roadmap to propel the country's automotive components industry to USD 145 billion in production by 2030, with exports expected to triple from USD 20 billion to USD 60 billion. The projections are part of a new report titled "Automotive Industry: Powering India's Participation in Global Value Chains", released by the think tank on Friday.

The report delivers a comprehensive overview of the Indian automotive sector, outlining a strategic vision that balances opportunities, challenges, and a clear pathway to enhance global competitiveness. It emphasizes India's potential to emerge as a key player in the glob-

al automotive value chain, especially as the industry pivots toward electrification and advanced technologies.

Key Highlights of the Report:

Global Position: India is currently the fourth-largest automobile producer globally, behind China, the USA, and Japan, manufacturing close to 6 million vehicles annually.

Global Market Snapshot: The global auto component market stands at USD 2 trillion, with USD 700 billion in exports. India's current share in this export market is a modest 3%.

Growth Potential: The report identifies a major opportunity in engine components, drive transmission, and steering systems—segments that

currently dominate global trade but where India's share remains only 2-4%.

Strategy Framework: The interventions proposed are divided into fiscal and non-fiscal categories, tailored around four types of components based on complexity:

Emerging & Complex Conventional & Complex

Conventional & Simple Emerging & Simple

Fiscal Measures: Operational expenditure (Opex) support

Skill development programs

R&D incentives

Intellectual Property (IP) transfers

Cluster-based infrastructure development

Non-Fiscal Measures: Industry 4.0 adoption

Simplifying regulatory

procedures
Enhancing flexibility in labour norms

Promoting international collaboration
Supplier discovery mechanisms

Challenges Ahead:

Despite significant strengths such as a cost-competitive workforce and strong domestic demand, India's GVC (Global Value Chain) integration remains moderate. Key challenges identified include:

High operational costs
Infrastructure bottlenecks

Low R&D investment
Limited presence in high-precision component manufacturing

NITI Aayog's report asserts that with the right policy push and strategic investments, India can



substantially elevate its share in global automotive exports, aligning with the broader goals of 'Make in India' and economic self-reliance.

Gold skyrockets ₹6,250 to breach ₹96,000 level as U.S.-China trade war intensifies



Gold prices in India surged to an all-time high on Friday (April 11, 2025), driven by strong domestic demand and global safe-haven buying amid escalating U.S.-China trade tensions. In the national capital, the price of gold rose by a whopping ₹6,250, reaching a historic ₹96,450 per 10 grams, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

This sharp rally follows Wednesday's close, where gold of 99.9% purity was priced at ₹90,200 per 10 grams. Similarly, gold of 99.5% purity jumped from ₹89,750 to ₹96,000 per 10 grams, marking one of the steepest single-day increases in recent history.

Silver prices also mirrored this trend, climbing ₹2,300 to touch ₹95,500 per kg. The spike in silver

prices followed the global momentum and was partially influenced by the closure of domestic bullion markets on Thursday for Mahavir Jayanti.

Analysts attribute the surge to increasing geopolitical uncertainties and the growing appeal of gold as a safe-haven asset. "Gold extended its record-setting rally...to hit fresh lifetime highs near ₹93,500 on MCX, defying rupee strength," said Jaiteen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures for June delivery also hit a record ₹93,736 per 10 grams, rising ₹1,703.

Globally, spot gold reached a peak of \$3,237.39 per ounce before stabilizing at \$3,222.04. Meanwhile, Comex gold futures in Asian trading soared to \$3,249.16 per ounce.

Kaynat Chainwala, AVP

of Commodity Research at Kotak Securities, noted that safe-haven demand has intensified amid fears of a prolonged trade war. The Trump administration's recent decision to impose tariffs of up to 145% on Chinese imports prompted a retaliatory 125% duty from China, rattling global markets.

The weakening U.S. dollar, which dropped below the 100-mark, also added momentum to gold's upward trajectory.

Investment bank UBS stated that ongoing trade disputes, economic uncertainties, and geopolitical risks are expected to further fuel the demand for gold, making its long-term outlook increasingly bullish. Central banks, it noted, are continuing to purchase gold at record levels, a trend unlikely to slow in the face of global instability.

Developed world more reliable trading partner than China: Piyush Goyal

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday, April 11, 2025, expressed India's strategic inclination to strengthen trade partnerships with European and North American nations, while maintaining a cautious and reserved approach toward economic engagement with China.

Speaking at the Global Technology Summit hosted by Carnegie India, Goyal emphasized that India's trade policies will prioritize collaboration with developed countries that adhere to principles of fairness, transparency, and mutual benefit. "Our effort is to integrate our economies with the developed world, who believe in fair play, who believe in honest business practices, and where we get an equal opportunity to do business and invest," he stated.

Goyal highlighted the limited Chinese investments in India, stating that even when Chinese firms had the opportunity to invest, their involvement remained minimal. "Nor are we encouraging any significant investment coming in from China at all at the moment,"



he added.

Reinforcing India's cautious stance, Goyal criticized countries with high per capita incomes—implicitly referring to China—labeling themselves as "developing" nations. "If countries with a per capita income of \$50,000 or more choose to call themselves developing nations, then obviously it is going to cause angst," he said, reiterating India's decision to stay out of the China-backed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) as a prudent move.

Addressing India's trade negotiations with the United States, Goyal refrained from committing to a fixed timeline for the bilateral trade agreement, noting that any deal must serve India's

national interests. "We aspire for indicative timelines, but at the end of the day, it has to be a win-win for both sides... Just to meet a deadline, you cannot compromise national interest."

On the European front, Goyal criticized the European Union's climate-related and non-trade demands as unrealistic and obstructive. "Unless they get that out of their system, they will find it very difficult to get a trade agreement with anybody whatsoever," he remarked.

His statements reflect India's evolving foreign trade strategy: safeguarding national interests while aligning with trusted global partners and distancing itself from unreliable or opaque economies.

U.S. Defense Department terminates \$5.1 billion in IT contracts with Deloitte

In a major cost-cutting move, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has ordered the immediate termination of multiple IT services contracts worth a combined \$5.1 billion. The contracts, held by major consulting firms including Accenture and Deloitte, were deemed by the Pentagon to be non-essential expenditures.

The directive, outlined in a memo dated April 10 and released publicly on April 11, 2025, highlights a shift in the Department of Defense's approach to outsourcing and consultant dependency.

Hegseth stated that the terminated contracts "represent non-essential spending on third-party consultants" for tasks that could be performed internally by Pentagon personnel.

"These terminations represent \$5.1 billion in wasteful spending... and nearly \$4 billion in estimated savings," the memo



read. It marks one of the largest single cost-cutting actions taken under Hegseth's leadership.

The decision comes amid increasing scrutiny over defense budget allocations and growing calls from lawmakers and watchdog groups to reduce reliance on costly external contractors for services that do not directly support military readiness or operations.

According to defense officials, many of the cancelled contracts were for IT consulting, project

management, and digital transformation services. While these services have been used to modernize various systems, Hegseth argued that the Pentagon has sufficient in-house capability to manage the majority of these functions.

Sources within the Defense Department say the review leading up to the cancellations was part of a broader audit launched earlier this year, aimed at identifying redundancies and inefficiencies in defense spending.

Industry groups and affected contractors have yet to issue formal responses, but analysts predict significant pushback, particularly from firms that stand to lose long-term federal revenue streams. The decision could also impact the private defense consulting market, which has grown substantially in recent years.

Hegseth, who has championed greater efficiency and accountability within the department, emphasized in the memo that funds saved from these terminated contracts would be redirected toward core defense initiatives and modernization programs that directly enhance national security.

The move is expected to generate both praise and criticism as debates continue around defense budgeting, fiscal responsibility, and the role of private contractors in U.S. military operations.

TCS Q4 Profit Slips 1.68% Despite Revenue Growth

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), India's largest IT services company, reported a net profit of ₹12,224 crore for the quarter ending March 2025, marking a 1.68% decline compared to ₹12,434 crore in the same period last year. Despite the dip in quarterly profits, TCS achieved a major milestone by crossing the \$30 billion mark in annual revenue for FY25, underlining its sustained growth and strong global presence. The company's revenue from operations for the March quarter stood at ₹64,479 crore, registering a 5.29% year-on-year increase from ₹61,237 crore reported in the corresponding period of the previous financial year. The rise in revenue reflects ongoing demand



for digital transformation services, though it was partially offset by cost pressures and slower discretionary IT spending from global clients.

The marginal drop in profits despite revenue growth indicates challenges such as rising operational expenses, wage revisions, and foreign exchange headwinds. North American and European markets, which account for a significant portion of TCS's business, have seen cautious client spending amid economic uncertainty, contributing to

margin pressure.

TCS's performance also highlights its focus on expanding key business areas like cloud services, artificial intelligence, and industry-specific digital solutions. The company continues to build on its strong portfolio across banking, financial services, retail, and health-care sectors, while also adapting to global tech trends and client needs. As one of the first IT majors to report its Q4 earnings, TCS's results set the tone for the rest of the Indian tech industry. Analysts will be closely watching management commentary in upcoming earnings calls for insights into deal pipelines, attrition rates, hiring strategies, and the outlook for FY26.

Eagle Snatches, Returns PSC Hall Ticket

In a scene straight out of a movie, an eagle in Kerala's Kasaragod district created panic just minutes before the start of a crucial Public Service Commission (PSC) exam by swooping down and snatching a candidate's hall ticket — only to return it just in time. The incident took place on the morning of April 10, 2025, at the Government UP School in Kasaragod, where around 300 candidates had gathered to write the 7:30 a.m. exam. Among them was an aspirant who had arrived early to revise. As he sat down beside the parish hall, he placed his hall ticket next to him on the bench — unaware that a twist of fate was about to unfold. Without warning, an eagle swooped down from above, grabbed the hall ticket in its beak, and flew up to a window ledge high above the exam center. What followed was a mix of disbelief, tension, and helplessness as the candidate



looked on in horror. Officials and other examinees were equally shocked. Some bystanders urged the candidate to throw stones to scare the eagle into dropping the ticket. But the candidate, fearing that the bird might fly away completely, decided against any drastic action. He watched anxiously as precious minutes passed and the final bell for the exam neared. In what felt like a miracle, the eagle eventually loosened

its grip and let the hall ticket flutter down from its perch — just in time. The relieved candidate retrieved it and was allowed to proceed with the exam, making it to his seat just as the exam was about to begin. The unusual incident quickly became the talk of the town, adding a feather of a different kind to the PSC exam story — and giving everyone involved a tale they won't forget any time soon.

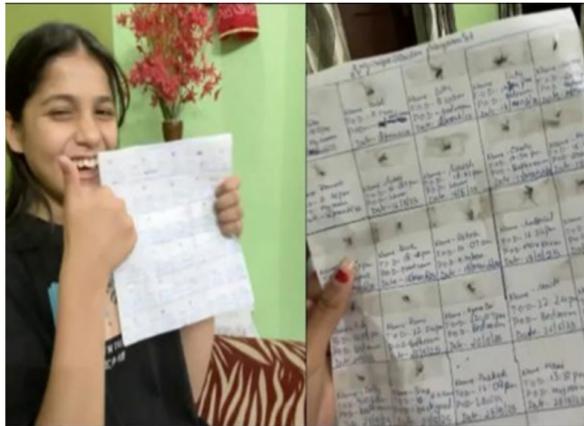
Monkey Hugs Tharoor, Naps Peacefully

In a heart-warming encounter straight out of a storybook, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor had an unexpected visitor at his home — a monkey that ran toward him, hugged him, and then dozed off peacefully on his lap. Sharing the extraordinary moment on social media platform X, Tharoor described how the monkey approached him out of the blue. After receiving a couple of bananas as a friendly treat, the animal nestled comfortably against Tharoor's chest and fell asleep, much to the amusement and surprise of onlookers. Tharoor posted pictures of the calm and cuddly guest, leaving netizens both touched and entertained. Many users praised the tender interaction and the MP's gentle handling of the animal. The post quickly went viral, spreading smiles across timelines and adding yet another memorable chapter to Tharoor's eclectic public life.



Girl Goes Viral for Collecting Dead Mosquitoes

A girl's unusual hobby of collecting dead mosquitoes has gone viral on social media, sparking both fascination and amusement. The video, posted by Akansha Rawat on Instagram, shows the girl taping dead mosquitoes to sheets of paper and categorizing them by name, time, and place of death. The clip has quickly garnered over five million views, with viewers left both perplexed and impressed by this bizarre collection. The video begins with the cameraperson introducing the girl's eccentric hobby, saying, "People have such strange hobbies, and hers is the strangest of them all." The camera then reveals a sheet of paper covered with dead mosquitoes, each labeled with names such as 'Sigma Boi,' 'Ramesh,' 'Babli,' and 'Tinku.' The girl's dedication to this activity has left her friends both amazed and concerned, with one even calling her a "psycho." As the video spread across the internet, many users com-



mented on the strange nature of the hobby. Some humorous responses included: "The entire mosquito community is in fear" and "She is indirectly roasting all men," referring to the male names given to the female mosquitoes, known for their blood-sucking habits. While some found the hobby amusing, others questioned its peculiar nature, with one user commenting on the "Ritual Death Notes" and another

remarking on the difficulty of life for the mosquitoes. The video has created a flurry of re-actions, showcasing just how bizarre hobbies can go viral on the internet. The video's viral success has sparked a debate about eccentricity in hobbies, with many acknowledging the girl's unique way of dealing with her mosquito encounters while humorously engaging the online community.

AI Memes Mock Trump's Tariff Strategy

Chinese social media users have flooded platforms with AI-generated videos and memes that poke fun at U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs on Chinese imports. The viral content showcases a satirical portrayal of Trump and other prominent figures, such as Elon Musk and JD Vance, working on factory production lines—an apparent jab at Trump's push for U.S. reindustrialization. One of the most shared videos, reposted by PhoenixTV, shows Trump and Musk working on a Nike sneaker assembly line, while another depicts Vance assembling an iPhone, wearing a red cap devoid of the MAGA logo. The AI videos humorously imagine a future where Americans return to manual labor, illustrating the fallout from the escalating trade war with China. These videos also depict the impact of Trump's tariff policies, portraying scenes of overweight Americans working in factories, assembling Tesla products. The satire questions the feasibility and effectiveness of Trump's "Make America Great Again" mantra, which includes bringing manufacturing jobs back to the U.S. In addition to the viral videos, Chinese officials and social media users

have used AI memes to further mock Trump's tariffs. One meme, shared by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, humorously claimed that Trump's MAGA hats have become over 50% more expensive due to his tariffs. While the U.S. has exempted certain tech products like smartphones and laptops from these tariffs, the broader trade war continues to escalate. China retaliated with a 125% tariff on U.S. goods, intensifying tensions between the world's two largest economies. The new exemptions may provide relief to U.S. tech companies, including Apple, Nvidia, and Dell, but the overall impact of the 145% tariffs on Chinese imports remains significant. The growing meme culture highlights the ongoing, heated nature of the U.S.-China trade conflict, with both sides taking jabs at each other's policies.



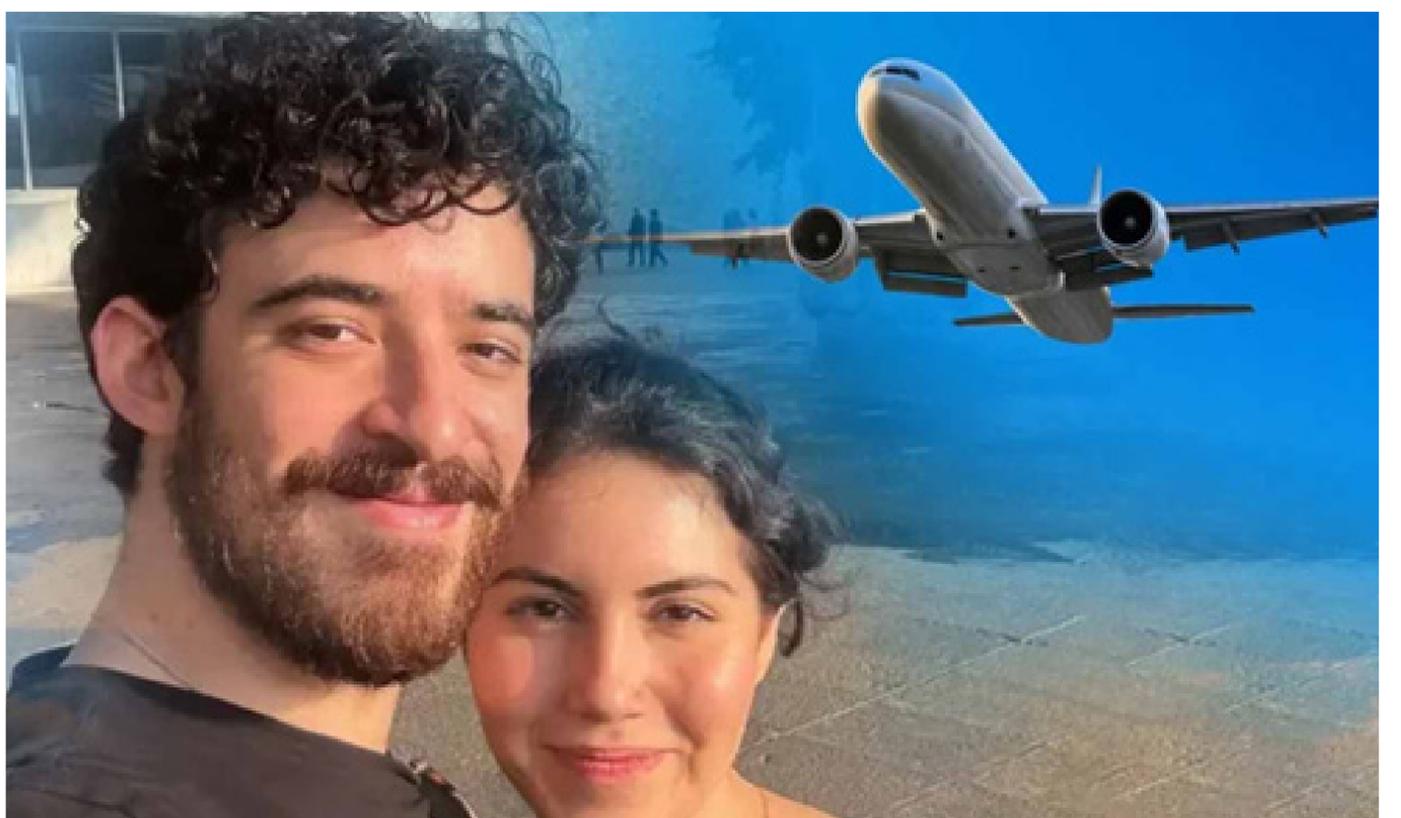
Woman Travels 6,500 KM Weekly for Studies

Nat Sedillo, a 30-year-old woman from Mexico, travels more than 6,500 kilometers every week for her education. Despite living in Santiago, Mexico, with her husband, Sedillo commutes to New York for her college studies. She travels to New York once a week, covering a distance of over 3,000 kilometers each way, and returns the same day. This routine means she is spending more than 6,500 kilometers every week solely for her education.

Interestingly, Sedillo says that traveling to New York weekly is more cost-effective than living there. Despite the long distance and high travel expenses, including flight, accommodation, and food costs, she finds it more economical to make the trip rather than stay in New York full-time. Since January, she has spent approximately ₹1.7 lakhs (around \$2,200) on travel, accommodation, and food.

Sedillo's decision to take this route, rather than staying in New York full-time, has proven financially beneficial for her. Her weekly commute is a strategic choice, helping her save money while pursuing her academic goals. Despite the challenging travel schedule, she remains committed to her education, believing that this is the best approach for her financial situation.

This remarkable story of perseverance and planning has drawn attention for its unconventional approach to balancing education and financial considerations. While many might wonder why she doesn't just stay in New York, Sedillo's unique solution highlights the importance of



making decisions that work best for one's individual circumstances, even if it means undertaking a long and costly commute each week.

ICC Mulls WTC Points System Overhaul



The International Cricket Council (ICC) is reportedly set to deliberate significant changes to the World Test Championship (WTC) points system during meetings in Zimbabwe this weekend, according to a report by The Guardian. However, the controversial plan to introduce a two-division format in Test cricket is likely to be put on hold. Currently, the WTC awards 12 points for a win, six for a tie, and four for a draw, regardless of the strength of the opposition or venue. This uniform system has drawn criticism, especially from within the 'Big Three' – India, England, and Australia – who argue that they are disadvantaged as they frequently play competitive series among themselves. Under the proposed revamp, the ICC is considering a bonus points system that could reflect the margin of victory, similar to rugby union. Points may also be weighted based on opponent strength and awarded additionally for away wins, aiming to make the rank-

ings more reflective of performance difficulty. The next WTC cycle will begin in June 2025 with India's tour of England for a five-match series, shortly after the WTC final between South Africa and Australia at Lord's. South Africa's progression to the final has sparked debate, as they reached the summit without facing England or Australia, primarily winning against teams like West Indies, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The ICC will also discuss the issue of over-rate penalties, which has significantly impacted team standings. England, in particular, have been hit hard – losing 22 points due to slow over-rates, which dragged them down to sixth place in the current cycle, despite having the third-best win percentage of 51.5%. These potential changes signal ICC's intent to address fairness and competitiveness in Test cricket, though radical structural reforms like the two-tier system may have to wait.



SRH Pulls Off Historic Chase Victory

Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) pulled off one of IPL's greatest run chases, defeating Punjab Kings (PBKS) by 8 wickets in a thrilling match at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium. PBKS set a daunting target of 245/6, thanks to a fiery knock from Shreyas Iyer. But SRH's young sensation Abhishek Sharma stunned everyone with a breathtaking 112 off 49 balls, smashing boundaries at will. Travis Head backed him up bril-

liantly with a quickfire 89. Together, they dismantled the PBKS bowling attack and finished the chase in just 18.5 overs. This victory marks SRH's second-highest successful run chase in IPL history, establishing them as a force to reckon with in the 2025 season. The match was a showcase of fearless batting and remarkable composure under pressure, as SRH delivered a performance fans will remember for years.

Pakistan Shines in WC Qualifiers

As the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier 2025 enters a decisive phase, Pakistan's women's team has emerged as a strong contender, securing two convincing victories and expressing confidence ahead of their remaining matches. The hosts began their campaign with a 38-run win over Ireland, followed by a six-wicket triumph against Scotland. These back-to-back victories have placed Pakistan in a favorable position as the tournament progresses toward its conclusion on April 19. Speaking after the win over Scotland, Pakistan captain Fatima Sana emphasized her team's growing composure and the importance of maintaining steady partnerships under pressure. Pakistan's success has been built on all-round team efforts, with key contributions from both batters and bowlers. The depth and balance within the squad have given the team a solid foundation to tackle tougher opponents, including a crucial clash with West Indies. The ICC Women's World Cup Qualifier is currently being hosted in Pakistan from April 9 to 19, featuring six teams – Pakistan,



West Indies, Bangladesh, Ireland, Scotland, and Thailand. The top two teams from this event will earn a spot in the Women's Cricket World Cup 2025, scheduled to take place in India later this year in October and November. With high stakes and only a few matches remaining, Pakistan aims to maintain momentum, knowing that consistent team performance will be key to qualification. Captain Fatima Sana's leadership and the squad's unified approach are shaping up to be critical factors in their campaign's success.

Udayan Mane Leads with Grit

Olympian and 12-time title winner Udayan Mane fired a determined four-under 68 in the third round of the Indorama Ventures Open Golf Championship 2025, taking a two-stroke lead with a total score of 14-under 202 at the Kalhaar Blues and Greens Golf Club in Ahmedabad. Mane, who hails from Pune and is a former PGTI Order of Merit champion, displayed great mental fortitude on Friday. Despite starting the day with a double-bogey, the 34-year-old quickly recovered to post an eagle, five birdies, and a bogey. His composed performance has put him in prime position to end a three-year title drought. Trailing him is Khalin Joshi from Bengaluru, who also has a strong pedigree with six titles and a past stint as PGTI No. 1. Joshi carded a solid three-under 69 on the penultimate day, highlighted by four birdies and a single bogey, keeping himself in the hunt at 12-under 204. Joshi, who shares a long competitive history with Mane dating back

to their junior golf days, is aiming to snap his own winless run of over two years. Abhinav Lohan from Faridabad posted a matching 68 to claim third place at nine-under 207, while Chandigarh's Angad Cheema followed closely behind in

fourth with a round of 70 and an aggregate of eight-under 208. Local favorite Varun Parikh brought in a 69 to finish the day in tied eighth at five-under 211, ensuring Ahmedabad representation among the top contenders.



Pant Reveals Strategy After LSG Win

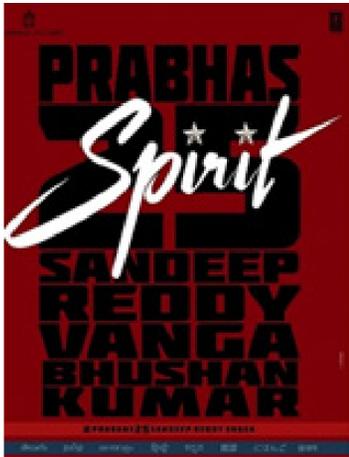
After sealing a hard-fought six-wicket win over Gujarat Titans (GT) at the Ekana Stadium, Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) skipper Rishabh Pant shared his strategy behind the bowling approach that helped his side restrict GT to a modest total in the death overs. Chasing 181, LSG's batting was powered by Nicholas Pooran and Aiden Markram, who played crucial roles in the successful chase. While GT bowlers did well to drag the match into the final over, the home side held their nerve to secure a vital victory. Reflecting on the match at the post-game presentation, Pant

said, "Definitely feeling happy. We just follow the same path, believe in our ability, and take one game at a time. The idea was to bowl yorkers and slower deliveries into the wicket. Bowlers executed the plan well and helped pull the game back. Though the start wasn't ideal, the comeback was amazing." On his own improving form, Pant remarked, "The more time I spend at the crease, the better I feel. I'm getting there with each match." He also reserved special praise for Nicholas Pooran, stating, "We're lucky to have him. You'd rather have a guy like that on your team than against you. His batting has

been phenomenal." In the first innings, GT looked set for a big total after an impressive 120-run stand between Shubman Gill (60 off 38) and Sai Sudharsan (56 off 37). However, a flurry of quick wickets derailed their momentum. GT eventually posted 180/6, losing wickets in clusters post the openers' dismissal. Key contributors like Jos Buttler (16), Sherfane Rutherford (22), and Rahul Tewatia (0) failed to capitalize. LSG, with this win, continues to build momentum at home and looks increasingly confident heading into the business end of the season.



Prabhas' Spirit Gears Up for Shoot



Director Sandeep Reddy Vanga is deep into pre-production for his much-anticipated film Spirit, starring Prabhas in the lead. The latest update reveals that casting is in full swing, with several talented actors being considered for key roles. Described as a gripping cop thriller with Sandeep's signature storytelling style, the film's screenplay took nearly six months to develop. The shoot is expected to begin in September or October 2025.

Prabhas will undergo a striking physical transformation for the role, adding intrigue to his already highly anticipated performance. Interestingly, Spirit will feature actors from both the USA and Korea, hinting at an international flavor.

Produced by Bhushan Kumar, along with Sandeep and Pranay Reddy Vanga, the film is already creating buzz. After Spirit, Prabhas will team up with Ranbir Kapoor for Animal Park.

Kalyan Ram Shines in Arjun S/O Vyjayanthi



The trailer for Arjun S/O Vyjayanthi, starring Nandamuri Kalyan Ram, was launched at a grand pre-release event in Hyderabad with Jr. NTR as chief guest. The event drew a massive crowd and emotional reactions.

Veteran actress Vijayashanthi said the story, centered on a mother-son bond, deeply moved her: "This film is about sacrifices a son makes for his mother. The climax will leave you stunned." She revealed that she

suggested a few script changes before fully committing herself.

Kalyan Ram expressed confidence: "Some films we forget after watching, but this one will stay with you. It's close to my heart."

Jr. NTR praised the film's emotional core and Kalyan Ram's performance: "It's like seeing what would happen if Vijayashanthi's Karthavyam character had a son. The last 20 minutes hit hard because of Kalyan Anna."

Rakul Preet Stuns in Saree Glam



Rakul Preet Singh turned the fashion heat up as she graced the cover of HT City Showstopper magazine, channeling mermaid vibes with her bold ethnic style. Dressed in a printed saree paired with a silver bralette and a statement choker, Rakul looked every bit

the modern-day glam icon. In another look, a soft pink drape added a dreamy touch to her photoshoot, highlighting her versatility. But beyond the exquisite outfits, it was Rakul's effortless confidence and poise that truly stood out. From shimmering crop tops to

bold accessories, she blended tradition with a modern edge, redefining saree fashion in a way only she can. Her looks struck the perfect balance between elegance and edginess, making a strong case for re-inventing ethnic wear with fresh, fearless flair.

'Raama Raama' from Vishwambhara Ignites Devotion

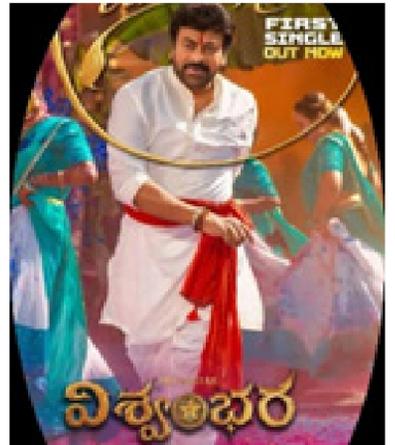
On the auspicious occasion of Hanuman Jayanthi, the makers of Vishwambhara unveiled their first single, Raama Raama, a soul-stirring spiritual anthem. Featuring Megastar Chiranjeevi as a devout follower of Lord Hanuman, the track reinforces the film's spiritual core and divine undertones.

Composed by Oscar-winning maestro MM Keeravaani, the song is a powerful blend of classical Indian melodies and cinematic orchestration. It begins with soothing vocals and soft instrumentals, gradually intensifying with layered percussion and culminat-

ing in Chiranjeevi's fervent chant of "Jai Shri Ram."

Known for his devotion off-screen, Chiranjeevi's portrayal promises to bring an emotional depth to his role as a Hanuman devotee. The lyrical video has already struck a chord with fans, with visuals reflecting spiritual grandeur.

Raama Raama is not just a song—it's a devotional experience, setting the tone for the magnum opus Vishwambhara.



Vaishnavi Chaitanya's Struggle Post-Baby

Vaishnavi Chaitanya shot to fame with the blockbuster Baby, a surprise box office sensation that nearly touched ₹100 crores. Her performance as a conflicted young woman caught between two lovers received immense praise, earning her widespread recognition. However, sustaining that success has proven to be a challenge. Following Baby, Vaishnavi starred in Love Me - If You Dare, backed by Dil Raju. Despite the banner's strong reputa-

tion, the film bombed at the box office. Hoping for a turnaround, she took on a quirky role in Jack alongside Siddhu Jonnalagadda, where she played a "lady detective." Though the concept intrigued many, the film failed to connect with audiences. Now, all eyes are on Vaishnavi's next move. Can she bounce back and recapture the magic of Baby? The industry and her growing fanbase are watching — and hoping.

Jaya's Heartfelt Welcome to Aishwarya

An emotional throwback video from the 2007 Filmfare Awards is winning hearts online. The clip shows Jaya Bachchan warmly welcoming Aishwarya Rai into



the Bachchan family before her marriage to Abhishek Bachchan. Accepting an award on stage, Jaya said, "I am going to be a mother-in-law all over again to a wonderful, lovely girl who has great values, great dignity and a lovely smile. I welcome you to the family. I love you." The heartfelt moment left Aishwarya visibly teary-eyed, with Amitabh Bachchan also present in the audience. Jaya had previously praised Aishwarya on Koffee With Karan, calling her dignified, graceful, and a perfect fit for the Bachchan family. Despite recent rumours about tension in Aishwarya and Abhishek's marriage, the couple has maintained silence. Amitabh Bachchan had requested privacy, dismissing speculation with a firm yet respectful message to the public.