

Weather Forecast

HYDERABAD

t°

H 33° C

L 25° C

VIJAYAWADA

t°

H 35° C

L 26° C

TIRUPATHI

t°

H 36° C

L 26° C

# India-China Ties Should Take Form Of Elephant-Dragon Tango: Xi Jinping

Calls for deeper communication and border peace efforts.

Messages mark easing tensions post-2020 Galwan clash.

Highlights shared modernization goals as Global South powers.

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Chinese President Xi Jinping called for closer collaboration between China and India, urging a “Dragon-Elephant tango”—a symbolic dance of their emblematic animals—in a message to Indian President Droupadi Murmu. The exchange marked the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations, reflecting a thaw in tensions following the 2020 Himalayan border clash in Ladakh’s Galwan Valley. Xi’s vision signals a push for harmony between the two Asian giants amid a complex geopolitical landscape.

In his congratulatory note, Xi emphasized peaceful coexistence, advocating for deeper communication and coordination on global issues and joint efforts to maintain border tranquility. “China and India should find ways to co-exist peacefully,” he said, per Reuters, highlighting a strategic shift after years of friction along the Line of Actual Control. The message aligns with recent de-escalation moves, building on the Modi-Xi consensus at the 2022 BRICS summit in Kazan.

The “Dragon-Elephant tango” metaphor encapsulates Xi’s call for a partnership



that leverages both nations’ strengths—ancient civilizations and rising powers—while navigating their rivalry. As key Global South members at critical modernization junctures, their cooperation could reshape regional dynamics. The anniversary messages, echoed by Premier Li Qiang to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, underscore a mutual intent to stabilize ties post-2020, when the deadly skirmish strained relations.

Xi’s outreach, as of April 1, 2025, comes amid ongoing border talks, with a March 25 Beijing dialogue focusing on management and resuming exchanges like the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra. His readiness to deepen ties suggests Beijing sees value in a constructive relationship with New Delhi, balancing competition with collaboration. For India, this offers a chance to bolster strategic autonomy

while addressing border security.

The 75th anniversary provides a symbolic reset, with Xi’s tango imagery framing a future of synchronized steps rather than standoffs. Whether this translates into lasting peace or remains diplomatic rhetoric hinges on tangible progress—on the border and beyond—between these wary neighbors now dancing to a tentative new tune.

## ‘You Let 1 Lakh Vehicles Pollute: BJP Targets Arvind Kejriwal Over CAG Report

Claims 1.08 lakh vehicles exceeded emission limits under AAP.



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Sirsa, on April 1, 2025, accused the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)—oust by the BJP in February’s election—of exacerbating the city’s air pollution crisis. Sirsa claimed AAP allowed over 1.08 lakh vehicles to ply despite exceeding carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon limits, as revealed in a Comptroller & Auditor-General (CAG) report tabled by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta. He also alleged corruption, citing over ₹87 lakh wasted on CNG bus tenders and anti-smog towers, including ₹22 crore for a “missing” tower.

The CAG report, dissecting AAP’s pollution control efforts, blamed lax vehicular emission oversight, missing data on vehicle types and emission loads, and a 20% bus fleet reduction despite a need for

11,000 buses. It flagged dubious Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates—some issued simultaneously at testing centers, an impossibility given test durations—and noted 4,000 non-compliant diesel vehicles falsely certified between 2015 and 2020. Unreliable air quality monitors and weak law enforcement further compounded the annual air quality decline, Sirsa charged.

Sirsa linked these lapses to Delhi’s persistent smog, with the CAG noting vehicular emissions as a “major contributor” and highlighting absent benzene data at fuel stations. The report criticized the Delhi Pollution Control Committee’s 16-hour daily data gaps, skewing pollution analysis, and urged urgent reforms in monitoring and emission controls. AAP has yet to respond.

2 PAGE



## Waqf Amendment Bill Set for Lok Sabha Debate Amid Fierce Opposition

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju announced on April 1, 2025, that the Waqf Amendment Bill, proposing reforms to the administration of Muslim charitable properties, will be tabled in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. With the current Budget session ending Friday, Rijju, also the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, allocated eight hours for debate—extendable by Speaker Om Birla—ensuring ample discussion on a bill that has ignited a bitter clash between the BJP and opposition.

First introduced in August 2024, the bill was

referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), which submitted its report in February after contentious deliberations. Opposition MPs accused JPC Chair Jagadambika Pal of bias and rushing proceedings, claims the BJP’s Aparajita Sarangi countered, insisting fair hearings occurred. The JPC’s 36 meetings often descended into chaos, including a violent outburst when Trinamool MP Kalyan Banerjee smashed a bottle, alleging provocation by BJP’s Abhijit Gangopadhyay. Of 66 proposed amendments, all 44 from the opposition were rejected, while 14 of 23 from the BJP and allies passed, spark-

ing further uproar over excluded dissent notes—later reinstated after negotiations. The original bill suggested 44 changes, including appointing non-Muslims, at least two women, a Union Minister, three MPs, and notable figures to Waqf boards, plus restricting donations to Muslims practicing for five years. Opposition leaders, including Congress’ KC Venugopal, AIMIM’s Asaduddin Owaisi, and DMK’s Kanimozhi, slammed it as unconstitutional, citing violations of Articles 15 and 30, which protect religious freedom and minority rights. Venugopal called it a “direct attack on religion.”

## Punjab Government Provided Over 55,000 Jobs In 36 Months: Bhagwant Mann

TPN Correspondent | Punjab

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann announced that his government has delivered over 55,000 government jobs to the state’s youth in its 36-month tenure. Speaking at an event distributing appointment letters to over 700 new teachers, Mann congratulated the recruits, urging them to serve with dedication. He emphasized that these merit-based appointments followed a transparent process, with a foolproof system ensuring no legal challenges to the hires.

Mann hailed an ongoing “education revolution” in Punjab, spotlighting major school infrastructure upgrades and initiatives to boost teaching quality. He highlighted the government’s move to send teachers to top national and international institutes for skill enhance-



ment, a step he said has bolstered admissions in government schools. “Well-trained staff are driving this change,”

2 PAGE

## Pastor Bajinder Singh Sentenced to Life in 2018 Rape Case

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

On April 1, 2025, a Mohali court in Punjab sentenced self-styled preacher Pastor Bajinder Singh to life imprisonment for a 2018 rape case. The 42-year-old, dubbed the “Yeshu Yeshu prophet,” was convicted under Sections 376 (rape), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code. Following the verdict, Singh was transferred to Patiala jail.

The case originated from a complaint lodged at Zirakpur police station in 2018. The complainant alleged that Singh lured her to his Sector 63 residence in Mohali with promises of overseas travel, raped her, and recorded the assault. She claimed he threatened to leak



the video online unless she complied with his demands. While Singh was convicted, five co-accused—Akhbar

2 PAGE



## Dragon-Elephant duet: Xi Jinping’s congratulatory message to Prez Murmu on 75th anniv of India-China ties

- Urges a strategic, long-term approach to bilateral relations.
- Highlights shared roles as ancient civilizations and Global South leaders.
- Signals intent to reset ties post-2020 Galwan clash with cooperation focus

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

Chinese President Xi Jinping called for enhanced cooperation between China and India in a congratulatory message to President Droupadi Murmu, marking 75 years of diplomatic relations. Xi envisioned a “cooperative pas de deux of the dragon and the elephant,” a metaphor for a harmonious partnership that he said aligns with the core interests of both nations and their peoples. Concurrently, Chinese Premier Li Qiang extended similar sentiments in a message to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In his note, Xi urged both countries to approach their relationship with a “strategic and long-term perspective,” advocating for peaceful coexistence, mutual trust, and shared development. He emphasized that as neighbors and major powers, China and India should foster ties that benefit both sides. “We should seek ways for neighboring major countries to get along in mutual benefit and common development,” Xi stated, highlighting the need for a stable, forward-looking partnership.

Xi described China and India as “ancient civilizations, major developing countries, and key members

of the Global South,” noting their shared stage of modernization. This convergence, he suggested, offers a unique opportunity for collaboration on global and bilateral fronts. The message aligns with recent efforts to de-escalate tensions post the 2020 Galwan Valley clash, reflecting a desire to reset ties.

A statement from Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong echoed Xi’s sentiments, reiterating that both nations, as pivotal Global South players, stand at a “critical stage” in their development journeys. The ambassador’s note underscored Xi’s vision of



a relationship rooted in mutual progress, amplifying the anniversary’s significance. As of April 1, 2025, Xi’s outreach signals Beijing’s intent to bolster strategic trust with New Delhi, leveraging their historical and developmental parallels. The “dragon and elephant” imagery encapsulates a call for synergy over rivalry, a theme that could shape future dialogues. With Modi and Xi’s prior BRICS summit consensus in play, this milestone offers a chance to pivot toward cooperation, potentially redefining a relationship long marked by competition and caution.

### 1st Page Cont..

## ‘You Let 1 Lakh Vehicles Pollute: BJP Targets Arvind Kejriwal Over CAG Report

The report is among 14 audits the BJP government is tabling to scrutinize AAP’s tenure, with eight already presented, including one on the liquor excise policy scam that rocked AAP pre-election. The BJP swept Delhi with 48 of 70 seats, slashing AAP’s tally to 22 from over 60 in prior polls. AAP leaders Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia, jailed over the li-

quor scam, lost their seats.

Sirsa’s salvo, backed by the CAG’s damning findings, paints AAP’s governance as negligent and corrupt, intensifying political heat as Delhi grapples with its perennial air crisis. The BJP aims to leverage this narrative, contrasting its mandate with AAP’s faltering legacy as of April 1, 2025.

## Punjab Government Provided Over 55,000 Jobs In 36 Months: Bhagwant Mann

he noted, crediting additional staffing for allowing educators to focus on academics, further fueling enrollment growth. Taking a swipe at past administrations, Mann accused them of neglecting youth employment, a failure he said led to their rejection by Punjab’s electorate. His government, he asserted, is now undoing that “mess,” committed to crafting a “Rangla Punjab” (vibrant Punjab) through sweeping reforms across sectors. “We fill vacant posts immediately and

transparently,” he said, contrasting his administration’s proactive stance with predecessors’ inertia. The Chief Minister underscored the broader developmental push, with education as a cornerstone. By recruiting more staff and upskilling teachers—some even trained abroad—the state has seen tangible gains in its education system. “This overhaul is propelling Punjab forward,” Mann declared, framing it as part of a holistic vision to revitalize the state.

## Pastor Bajinder Singh Sentenced to Life in 2018 Rape Case

Bhatti, Rajesh Chaudhary, Jatinder Kumar, Sitar Ali, and Sandeep Pehlwan—were acquitted. Singh’s legal troubles extend beyond this case. Earlier in March 2025, Mohali Police booked him for assault after a viral CCTV video, dated February 14, showed him slapping a woman and throwing

papers at her. Additionally, a February 28 sexual harassment complaint by a 22-year-old woman alleges inappropriate messages and advances. A Special Investigation Team, led by SP Rupinder Kaur, is probing these claims, which Singh dismisses as baseless.

# Army Commanders’ Conference Kicks Off in New Delhi to Tackle Key Issues

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Top Army generals convened in New Delhi on April 1, 2025, for the biennial Army Commanders’ Conference, a five-day event aimed at addressing critical operational and policy matters. The gathering, attended by senior leadership, provides a vital platform to evaluate the security landscape, set strategic priorities, and prepare for emerging challenges. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will deliver the keynote address, underscoring the event’s significance.

A defence spokesperson highlighted that the conference aligns with the Army’s vision of building an agile, tech-savvy, and future-ready force. Discussions will focus on integrating new decision-making methodologies through engagements with domain experts, ensuring the Army remains adaptive and effective. Key topics include bolstering organizational resilience, streamlining field operations, and enhancing responsiveness to dy-



namic threats. The agenda also prioritizes personnel welfare, with deliberations aimed at improving the quality of life for soldiers and their families. This includes addressing health, wellbeing, and support systems to sustain morale and operational efficiency. The conference will feature a presentation on the Army’s “Year of Reforms,” outlining ongoing efforts to modernize and strengthen its framework.

In addition to Singh’s address, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan will

speak on inter-service coordination, while NITI Aayog’s CEO will explore the armed forces’ role in India’s journey toward progress. These talks aim to contextualize the Army’s contributions within national development goals, emphasizing its dual role in security and nation-building

Held twice a year, the Army Commanders’ Conference serves as a critical forum for introspection and planning. As of April 1, 2025, this iteration underscores the Army’s commitment to evolving with technological advancements and geopolitical shifts while maintaining a people-centric approach. The outcomes of these discussions are expected to shape policies that enhance operational readiness and institutional health, ensuring the Indian Army remains a robust pillar of national defense in an increasingly complex global environment. With Singh’s address setting the tone, the conference promises to chart a forward-looking course for the force.

## Assam CM Announces ₹1 Per Unit Cut in Electricity Rates from April

TPN Correspondent | Assam

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma declared a significant reduction in electricity tariffs effective April 1, 2025, lowering rates by ₹1 per unit for domestic consumers. With the current rate at ₹5.90 per unit, the new price drops to ₹4.90, a move Sarma assured is no “April Fool’s prank.” In a social media post, he wrote, “Temperatures will increase, but your bijli bill will decrease. Families in Assam will see a ₹1 per unit drop, plus a year-end rebate,” accompanied by a smiling emoji. Commercial establishments, meanwhile, will benefit from a 25-paisa reduction, bringing their rate down from ₹8.60 per unit.

The decision comes amid growing public frustration over rising electricity costs and the rollout of smart meters across Assam, as reported by The Assam Tribune. The Assam Power Distribution Company Limited (APDCL),



regulated by the Assam Electricity Regulatory Commission (AERC), oversees tariff implementation. Domestic tariffs in the state vary by consumption slabs, while residential rates—often higher—depend on usage levels and connection types. The ₹1 cut aims to ease the financial burden on households, with an additional rebate promised at year-end, typically a discount for timely payments or e-payment use.

Sarma’s announcement aligns with ef-

forts to address public concerns while maintaining fiscal balance. “This isn’t an April Fool Prank,” he reiterated, signaling a commitment to affordability. For a typical household, the reduction could notably lower monthly bills, especially as summer demand rises. Commercial users, though receiving a smaller cut, also stand to benefit, with the 25-paisa drop offering modest relief to businesses.

The move follows broader discussions on energy affordability, with Assam bucking trends seen elsewhere—like Karnataka’s recent tariff hike. As of April 1, 2025, this policy shift positions Assam as a state prioritizing consumer relief, though its long-term impact on the power sector’s sustainability remains to be seen. For now, residents can expect lighter bills and a year-end bonus, a tangible step amid ongoing debates over electricity pricing and infrastructure upgrades.

## Actor Ranya Rao Seeks Bail from Karnataka High Court in Gold Smuggling Case

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Bengaluru-based actor Ranya Rao, arrested last month in connection with a gold smuggling case, has approached the Karnataka High Court seeking bail as of April 1, 2025. Her plea comes days after a sessions court rejected her earlier request for relief, intensifying the legal battle surrounding her alleged involvement in the illicit operation. The move marks a significant escalation in Rao’s efforts to secure her release amid ongoing investigations.



The gold smuggling scandal has cast a spotlight on Bengaluru’s underbelly, raising questions about the nexus between high-profile individuals and illegal trade networks. For Rao, known for her roles in regional cinema, the arrest has not only jeopardized her career but also sparked public debate about celebrity accountability. As the High Court prepares to hear her plea, all eyes are on whether this legal maneuver will grant her temporary reprieve or if she’ll remain ensnared in a case that continues to unravel. The outcome, expected in the coming days, will be a pivotal moment in this high-stakes drama unfolding in Karnataka’s judicial corridors.

grant Rao bail, a decision that could hinge on the strength of the prosecution’s case and the actor’s compliance with legal proceedings thus far. The sessions court’s prior denial suggests judicial skepticism about her claims of innocence or concerns over potential flight risk, given the gravity of the charges. Rao’s counsel may emphasize her lack of prior criminal record and her status as a public figure to bolster their case.

The gold smuggling scandal has cast a spotlight on Bengaluru’s underbelly, raising questions about the nexus between high-profile individuals and illegal trade networks. For Rao, known for her roles in regional cinema, the arrest has not only jeopardized her career but also sparked public debate about celebrity accountability. As the High Court prepares to hear her plea, all eyes are on whether this legal maneuver will grant her temporary reprieve or if she’ll remain ensnared in a case that continues to unravel. The outcome, expected in the coming days, will be a pivotal moment in this high-stakes drama unfolding in Karnataka’s judicial corridors.

## Supreme Court Refuses To Release YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia’s Passport

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Supreme Court of India, on Tuesday, declined the request to release the passports of popular podcaster and YouTube personality Ranveer Allahbadia, and fellow YouTuber Ashish Chanchalani, both of whom are under investigation for their controversial comments made during a stand-up comedy show.



The case revolves around a remark made by Allahbadia, which was perceived as insensitive and inappropriate. He made a controversial comment about “sex and parents” on the show India’s Got Latent, sparking public outcry. In light of this incident, Allahbadia, along with Chanchalani, has been facing charges. The comments were widely criticized on social media, leading to a legal investigation into their conduct. The duo had appealed to the Supreme Court for the release of their passports, which were impounded in relation to the ongoing investigation. However, the Court rejected their requests, ruling that the passports would remain with the authorities until the investigation process is complete. Both Allahbadia and Chanchalani had argued that their passports should be returned so that they could travel abroad for work commitments. However, the Court found the ongoing investigation to be a valid concern and decided not to allow the release of their travel documents.

The case has become a point of discussion across social media, where many have voiced their opinions both in favor of and against the remarks made by the two YouTubers. While some view their statements as part of the comedy genre, others believe that they crossed the line of decency and respect. The investigation into the matter continues, and as the legal process unfolds, the Court’s decision to withhold the release of the passports marks a significant development in the case. The final outcome could have wider implications on the freedom of expression of digital influencers and creators in India.



## "Entire Bloc To Vote Against Waqf Bill": MP After INDIA Meet



- **RSP's Premachandran vows strong resistance to bill's passage.**
- **Congress issues whip to MPs for three-day presence.**
- **Bill debate allotted eight hours, deemed unconstitutional by opposition.**

**TPN Correspondent | Delhi**  
India's opposition parties resolved to fiercely contest the Waqf Amendment Bill during a full parliamentary discussion scheduled for Wednesday, vowing to vote against its passage. The decision emerged from a meeting of all opposition groups held Tuesday evening, signaling a unified front against the contentious legislation. "We will actively participate in the discussion and strongly oppose the bill's passage tomorrow," RSP MP NK Premachandran told NDTV,

emphasizing the opposition's consistent resistance at every stage. The bill, aimed at enhancing the management of Waqf properties, has sparked uproar since its introduction last year. Set for debate and voting in the Lok Sabha on April 2, it has been allocated roughly eight hours, according to Union Minister Kiren Rijiju. Initially referred to a joint parliamentary committee, the bill underwent revisions based on the panel's recommendations, with the Cabinet approving

changes. Yet, the opposition deems it unconstitutional, arguing it undermines fundamental rights and institutional autonomy. Premachandran underscored the opposition's intent to challenge the bill's core provisions, reflecting widespread concerns over its implications. The Congress, a key player, has issued a three-day whip to its Lok Sabha MPs, ensuring their presence and signaling the debate's high stakes. This coordinated push follows months of contention, with critics alleging the bill centralizes control over Waqf assets, eroding community oversight. The government defends the legislation as a reform to streamline administration and curb mismanagement, but the opposition's rejection frames it as a power grab. The Wednesday showdown promises a heated clash, with eight hours barely sufficient to unpack the bill's complexities and the opposition's grievances. As of April 1, 2025, the stage is set for a pivotal parliamentary battle, with the opposition leveraging its unity to derail the bill's passage. The outcome could reshape Waqf governance and test the government's ability to navigate a galvanized resistance, making tomorrow's session a defining moment in this legislative saga.

## Lok Sabha Faces Brief Disruption as SP, TMC Raise Protests



**TPN Correspondent | New Delhi**  
Lok Sabha witnessed a fleeting uproar as Samajwadi Party (SP) and Trinamool Congress (TMC) members disrupted proceedings over distinct grievances. The SP contingent protested an attack on the residence of their MP, Ramji Lal Suman, linked to his recent comments on Rajput ruler Rana Sanga, while TMC lawmakers sought to highlight the controversial transfer of a judge. The SP's agitation stemmed from escalating tensions following Suman's remarks, which reportedly provoked outrage among certain groups, culminating in the assault on his home. Party members stormed the well of the House, demanding attention to the incident and condemning the violence as an assault on free

speech and political representation. Their vocal dissent briefly derailed the session, underscoring simmering regional and historical sensitivities. Simultaneously, TMC members attempted to spotlight the transfer of a judge, a move they argue reflects undue interference in judicial independence. Though specifics of the case remained unaddressed amid the chaos, their protest signaled broader concerns over institutional integrity, a recurring flashpoint in Parliament. The dual demonstrations, though unrelated, converged to stall proceedings, prompting the Chair to intervene. The disruptions, while short-lived, exposed the fractious undercurrents in the Lok Sabha as of April 1, 2025. The SP's focus on Suman's safe-

ty tied into broader debates over political violence, while the TMC's grievance hinted at deeper unease with administrative overreach. Both parties, rooted in their regional strongholds, leveraged the House to amplify local issues with national resonance. Order was soon restored, but the episode highlighted the challenges of managing diverse agendas in a polarized chamber. With the Waqf Amendment Bill debate looming, such interruptions signal a tense parliamentary mood. The brief clash—SP defending its MP, TMC its judicial concerns—reflects how swiftly regional sparks can ignite the national stage, testing the Lok Sabha's ability to navigate dissent as the session progresses.

## 'Naxal-hit districts came down from 12 to 6' Shah vows to uproot Left-wing extremism by March 2026

**TPN Correspondent | Delhi**  
Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced on April 1, 2025, that the Centre's uncompromising stance against Naxalism has slashed the number of severely affected districts from 12 to 6, marking a significant step toward a "Naxal-free Bharat." In a post on X, Shah celebrated this milestone, stating, "Today, our nation achieved a new milestone by significantly reducing the number of districts most affected by left-wing extremism to just 6 from 12." He credited the Modi government's relentless approach and holistic development efforts for this progress. Shah emphasized that the government is forging a "Sashakt, Surakshit, and Samridh Bharat" (Strong, Secure, and Prosperous India) through a dual strategy: a "cut-throat" crackdown on Naxal insurgents and sustained initiatives to uplift affected regions. The reduction reflects years of coordinated operations, improved intelligence, and policies aimed at addressing the root causes of left-wing extremism, such as poverty and underdevelopment.



The Home Minister's statement underscores a broader narrative of triumph over a decades-long internal security challenge that once gripped large swathes of central and eastern India. By halving the number of worst-hit districts, the Centre signals a shrinking footprint of Naxal influence, a feat Shah tied to the government's unwavering resolve. "Our ruthless approach to Naxalism, paired with relentless efforts for all-pervasive development, is delivering results," he wrote. This milestone, as of April 1, 2025, aligns with the Modi administration's focus on national security and inclusive growth. While specific districts were not named, the reduction

suggests progress in states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Odisha, historically plagued by Maoist insurgency. The government's strategy—combining aggressive counterinsurgency with infrastructure projects, education, and employment opportunities—appears to be eroding Naxal strongholds. Shah's announcement is likely to bolster the Centre's claim of transforming India's security landscape. However, with six districts still reeling under Naxal influence, the battle is far from over. The Home Minister's words reflect both a victory lap and a pledge to press on, aiming for a future where left-wing extremism is a relic of the past.

## Adityanath on future PM role: 'Yogi at heart, politics not my full-time job'

**TPN Correspondent | Delhi**  
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has brushed aside speculation about ascending to the prime minister's office, asserting that politics is not his lifelong pursuit. In a candid interview with PTI on April 1, 2025, Adityanath emphasized his commitment to serving Uttar Pradesh as entrusted by his party, stating, "I am the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, and my role is to serve its people." Dismissing the buzz around his potential rise in national politics, he added, "Politics is not a full-time job for me. Ultimately, I am a Yogi at heart."

When pressed on how long he intends to stay in politics, Adityanath hinted at a finite tenure, saying, "There will be a time frame for this as well," reinforcing that he does not

view politics as a permanent career. He elaborated on his philosophy, blending spirituality and governance: "If politics is driven by self-interest, it creates problems. But if it's for the greater good, it offers solutions." For him, religion and politics converge in selfless service, a principle he ties to Indian tradition. "Religion, in our philosophy, is not about selfish motives—it paves the way for progress and spiritual liberation," he explained.

Adityanath rejected the dichotomy of being a religious figure



or a political leader, identifying instead as a citizen with constitutional duties. "The nation comes first. If the country is safe, my religion is secure, and welfare follows," he said. His focus remains on collective good over personal ambition, a stance he underscored when asked about his legacy: "It's not the name but the work that should endure. Identity lies in deeds, not titles." The CM's remarks reflect a monk-turned-leader ethos, prioritizing service over political ladder-climbing. As of April 1, 2025, Adityanath's words signal a deliberate distancing from national leadership speculation, framing his tenure as a temporary platform for public welfare rather than a stepping stone to greater power. His blend of yogic ideals and governance continues to define his approach, rooted in duty over desire.

## 'Barbaad bill': Owaisi slams Waqf amendment bill as 'unconstitutional', demands answers

**TPN Correspondent | Delhi**  
AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi fiercely criticized the Waqf Amendment Bill on April 1, 2025, labeling it unconstitutional and a "grave violation" of Articles 14, 25, 26, and 29 of the Indian Constitution. Speaking to reporters, the MP dubbed it the "Waqf Barbaad Bill," accusing it of undermining Muslim rights. Owaisi challenged NDA allies—Nitish Kumar, Chandrababu Naidu, Chirag Paswan, and Jayant Chaudhary—over their support, questioning their motives and

accountability. "If no non-Hindu can join the Hindu Endowment Board, why appoint non-Muslims here?" he asked, highlighting perceived double standards. The revised bill, set to be tabled in Parliament this week, has sparked intense debate. Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju defended it, arguing that Waqf laws predate independence and are not new. "False claims that the government is snatching Muslim properties are misleading innocent people," Rijiju said, dismissing opposition as harm-

ful to society. The legislation, officially the Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency, and Development (UMEED) Bill, seeks to reform the 1995 Waqf Act with digitization,



audits, transparency, and measures to reclaim encroached properties. Opposition parties, including Congress, have vowed to resist. Congress MP Jairam Ramesh called it "a direct attack on the Constitution," alleging it was "bulldozed" through the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) without proper clause-by-clause discussion. "We will oppose it democratically," he told ANI, pressing TDP and JD(U) to clarify their positions. The Lok Sabha adjourned on Tuesday, reconvening at 2:00 pm, as tensions simmered. Owaisi's critique centers on the bill's

alleged erosion of equality and religious freedom, while Rijiju insists it addresses long-standing issues like mismanagement and corruption in Waqf properties. The controversy underscores a broader political clash, with the opposition framing it as an assault on federalism and minority rights, and the government touting it as a modernization effort. As of April 1, 2025, the bill's fate hangs in balance, with its passage likely to fuel further contention in Parliament and beyond.



# Court Acquits 12 Men Accused in 2020 Delhi Riots Murders Due to Lack of Evidence



- **No Conclusive Evidence** linking accused to the crime.
- **WhatsApp Chats** dismissed as inadmissible evidence.
- **Victims Killed** during February 2020 CAA protests.
- **Mixed Reactions** to the acquittal verdict.

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

A court acquitted 12 men who were accused of murdering two individuals during the 2020 Delhi riots. The Additional Sessions Judge, Pulastya Pramachala, stated that there was

insufficient evidence to prove that any of the accused were part of the mob involved in the killings.

The court's decision followed an evaluation of the available evidence, which included WhatsApp chats from one of the accused,

who had allegedly confessed to the murders. However, the judge ruled that these chats were not "substantive evidence" and could not be used to establish guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The court emphasized that there was no conclusive proof linking the accused to the actual crime scene or showing their involvement in the mob that carried out the murders.

The two victims were killed during the violence that erupted in the national capital in February 2020, a period marked by widespread riots in the wake of protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The 12 men were accused of being part of the mob responsible for the murders, but the prosecution's case relied largely on circumstantial evidence and the testimony of witnesses, which the court found inadequate.

In acquitting the accused, the court highlighted that the burden of proof lies with the prosecution, and in this case, it failed to establish the involvement of the accused in the killings. The judge's ruling has raised questions about the strength of evidence in cases related to the Delhi riots and the challenges faced by the legal system in delivering justice in such complex cases.

The acquittal of the 12 men has drawn mixed reactions, with some expressing disappointment over the verdict, while others pointed to the challenges of proving guilt in riot-related cases.

# Delhi to Implement Fuel Ban for Overage Vehicles by Mid-April

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

The Delhi government's decision to stop providing fuel to overage vehicles will be enforced by mid-April, according to Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa. The move, originally scheduled to take effect by April 1, has been delayed due to pending structural adjustments at certain fuel stations.

The new rule targets "overage" or end-of-life vehicles, which includes diesel vehicles older than 10 years and petrol vehicles older than 15 years. These vehicles are not allowed to operate in Delhi as part of the government's ongoing efforts to curb pollution and improve air quality.

In recent years, the Delhi government has taken aggressive steps to deal with such vehicles. If the owners fail to obtain necessary permissions to move these vehicles outside the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) or to sell them in other ar-

eas, the authorities seize and scrap them. In addition, vehicles that are left parked on public roads or in other public spaces without necessary clearance are also subject to this action.

Minister Sirsa acknowledged that while the initial date for the fuel ban was set for April 1, the structural modifications required at fuel stations have caused a delay in full implementation. However, the government remains committed to enforcing this regulation by mid-April. The goal is to phase out the operation of polluting vehicles from Delhi's roads, which have contributed significantly to the city's air pollution levels.

This fuel ban is part of a broader set of measures aimed at improving Delhi's air quality and reducing harmful emissions. The government is also actively promoting cleaner alternatives, such as electric vehicles, in an effort to make the city more environmentally sustainable.

# Early Summer Heat Causes Surge in Fire Calls in Delhi, Prompting Emergency Measures

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

The summer season in Delhi has arrived earlier than usual this year, with temperatures soaring from the last week of March. As the heat intensifies, so does the frequency of fire-related incidents. In March alone, the Delhi Fire Service responded to 1,809 fire calls, marking a significant increase from 1,328 calls in the same month last year. Tragically, eleven people lost their lives in fire accidents, while 56 individuals were either rescued or injured.

According to a senior fire official, the risk of fires tends to escalate during the summer due to the intense heat. "Even a small fire can quickly escalate into a larger blaze because of the high temperatures. A minor ignition, such as a spark from shoes with nails or a discarded cigarette, can easily set off a

fire," the official explained. The situation has been alarming, with fire services receiving around 60 to 70 calls a day in March, a number that is expected to rise to 100 daily in the coming weeks.

A significant portion of these incidents, about 720 out of the 1,809 fire calls, were related to garbage fires, which have become a persistent issue as the temperature climbs.



In response to the growing number of emergencies, fire officials have implemented several new measures to manage the surge in calls. One major change involves restricting leave for staff members to ensure that fire stations remain fully staffed at all times. Previously, leave requests were approved by station officers, but now the assistant divisional officer (ADO) will handle these requests to guarantee that adequate personnel are available.

The Delhi Fire Service is working tirelessly to manage the increased demand and ensure the safety of residents during this early and intense summer heat. With fire calls expected to keep rising in the coming weeks, authorities are taking proactive steps to mitigate the impact of the scorching temperatures on public safety.



# Delhi Expands Public Spaces Along Yamuna Floodplains with New Redevelopment Projects



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

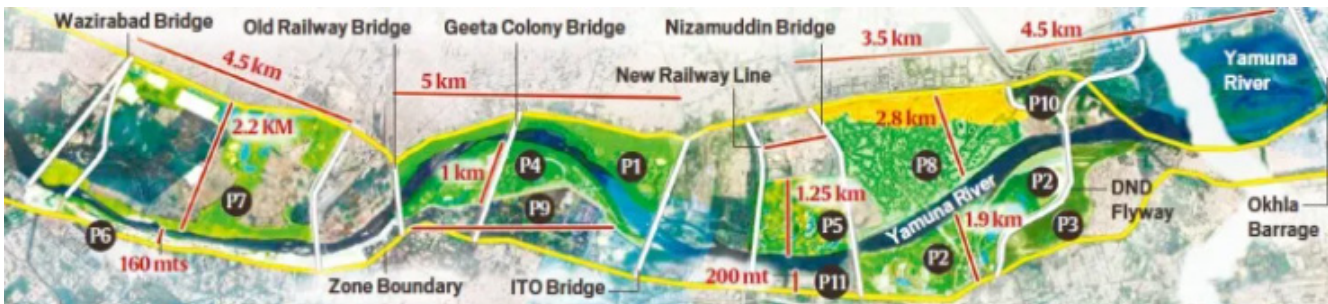
In the past two years, Delhi has witnessed the creation of five new public spaces along the floodplains of the Yamuna River, significantly enhancing the city's green and recreational infrastructure. These spaces include redeveloped ghats, public parks, cafes, and walking trails, providing residents with more opportunities to enjoy the natural beauty of the river and its surroundings.

The redevelopment efforts are part of a broader plan by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to transform a 22-kilometer stretch of land between the Wazirabad Barrage and the Okhla Barrage. According to sources, the DDA has plans to develop at least six more public spaces along this stretch in the next two to three years.

The total area under redevelopment spans 1,660 hectares, with over 740 hectares already developed. Key areas that have been successfully redeveloped include Asita East and West, Kalindi Aviral, which incorporates the Baan-sara Park, Vasudev Ghat, Amrut Biodiversity Park, and the Yamuna Vatika near Rajghat. These spaces aim to offer Delhi residents more green areas for leisure and environmental sustainability.

The initiative is part of an ongoing effort to rejuvenate the Yamuna's floodplains, turning them into accessible, eco-friendly spaces that serve the dual purpose of enhancing public amenities and conserving the environment. The focus on walking trails, parks, and biodiversity conservation is in line with the city's broader goal of improving its urban infrastructure and providing citizens with cleaner, greener spaces to relax and engage with nature.

As the redevelopment progresses, these projects are expected to contribute significantly to the city's environmental and recreational needs, promoting a healthier lifestyle for residents and boosting tourism in the area.



# Massive Fire Engulfs Cars at Commercial Complex in Central Delhi's Jhandewalan Extension



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

A massive fire broke out at a commercial complex in Central Delhi's Jhandewalan Extension on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, severely damaging several cars. Delhi Fire Services officials reported that the blaze erupted at the Anarkali Complex, located in Block E3, around 2:35 PM.

In response to the emergency, 15 fire tenders were immediately dispatched to the scene to control the fire and prevent it from spreading further. Firefighters worked tirelessly to douse the flames, which engulfed multiple vehicles parked in the complex. The fire quickly escalated due to the presence of flammable materi-

als and strong winds in the area.

Though the fire caused significant damage to property, no casualties have been reported so far. The authorities are still assessing the full extent of the damage. Investigations are underway to determine the cause of the fire, with initial reports suggesting it could have been sparked by an electrical short circuit or some other accident within the building.

The commercial complex, which houses several shops and offices, was evacuated promptly, and fire personnel were able to bring the situation under control after several hours of efforts. Delhi Fire Services have assured that the situation is now stable, and the complex has been safely cleared of any lingering hazards.

This incident adds to the growing concern over fire safety in commercial areas across Delhi, highlighting the need for stronger preventive measures and better infrastructure to handle such emergencies. Fire officials have urged business owners to ensure that their premises are equipped with proper fire safety equipment and that all safety protocols are strictly followed to prevent such incidents in the future.

The investigation into the cause of the fire continues as authorities work to fully assess the damage and take further action.



# 2020 Delhi Riots: Court Orders FIR Against Delhi Minister Kapil Mishra



- Judge finds "prima facie" evidence, notes Mishra's presence during riots.
- Plea by Yamuna Vihar resident Mohammad Ilyas triggers ruling.
- Delhi Police oppose, claim Mishra uninvolved in violence.

TPN Correspondent | Delhi

A Delhi court has directed the registration of a First Information Report (FIR) against Kapil Mishra, a newly-elected minister, and others, to investigate their alleged involvement in the 2020 Delhi riots. The order, issued by Additional Chief Judicial

Magistrate Vaibhav Chaurasia, follows a finding of "prima facie" evidence suggesting a cognizable offense, necessitating a formal probe. The court's decision marks a significant development in the contentious case tied to the violent unrest that rocked North East Delhi over four years ago.

The judge's ruling came during a hearing on a plea filed by Mohammad Ilyas, a resident of Yamuna Vihar, who demanded an FIR be lodged against Mishra and others implicated in the riots. Ilyas argued that Mishra, a prominent political figure, played a role in inciting the violence that claimed numerous lives and left widespread destruction. The court noted that Mishra was present in the area at the time of the alleged offense, stating, "It is clear that Mishra was in the area at the time of the alleged offence... further probe required." This observation has fueled calls for a deeper investigation into his actions during the turbulent period.

Delhi Police, however, opposed the plea, asserting that Mishra had no direct involvement in the riots. The police argued that the evidence presented did not sufficiently link the minister to the outbreak of violence, urging the court to dismiss the request for an FIR. Despite their objections, the magistrate found enough preliminary evidence to warrant a formal inquiry, overruling the police stance and setting the stage for a potentially explosive legal battle.

The 2020 Delhi riots, sparked amid protests over the Citizenship Amendment Act, remain a deeply polarizing chapter in India's recent history. Mishra, a vocal political figure, has long been accused by critics of delivering inflammatory speeches that allegedly escalated tensions. His supporters, conversely, maintain that he has been unfairly targeted. As of April 1, 2025, this court order reopens a wound that has yet to heal, raising questions about accountability and justice in one of Delhi's darkest episodes.

# Fresh Encounter in J&K's Kathua: Security Forces Trap Three Terrorists



TPN Correspondent | J&K

A fresh encounter erupted in the Panjthirthi area of Kathua, Jammu and Kashmir, with security forces successfully trapping three terrorists. This marks the second gun battle in the region in just three days. Security forces have launched a large-scale operation, cordoning off the area and intensifying their efforts to neutralize the terrorists.

The operation, which began after a night cordon was established, is being led by multiple security agencies, including the Jammu and Kashmir Police, the Indian Army, National Security Guard (NSG), Border Security Force (BSF), and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). Deputy Inspector General Shiv Kumar Sharma confirmed that the operation would continue until all the terrorists are neutralized, emphasizing that the safety of the people in Jammu and Kashmir remains the top priority. He also urged locals to report any suspicious activities to assist in the mission.

"We will not stop until the last terrorist is neutralized," said Sharma, adding that the Jammu and Kashmir

Police are fully committed to eradicating terrorism in the region. This encounter follows a previous gun battle on March 27, where five terrorists were initially trapped in the Sanyal forests but later escaped to Juthana, about 20 kilometers away. Despite their escape, they left behind US-made M4 carbines, signaling the high level of armament involved in the attack.

In the earlier incident, two terrorists were killed, and four police personnel lost their lives in action. Additionally, five security officers, including a deputy superintendent of police, were injured and are receiving medical care. Security forces, with the help of helicopters, drones, and bulletproof vehicles, continue to search the region for remaining terrorists.

Nalin Prabhat, the Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police, expressed confidence that the remaining terrorists would be neutralized. Authorities have also detained three suspects for questioning as part of the ongoing operation. The situation remains tense, with the security forces determined to eliminate the terrorist threat in the area.

# Madhya Pradesh Announces Complete Liquor Ban in 19 Religious Cities and Gram Panchayats

TPN Correspondent | Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has officially outlined a liquor ban across 19 religious cities and gram panchayats, with the new policy set to be enforced starting April 1, 2025. The decision, announced by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, was approved by the state Cabinet during a meeting held in Maheshwar on January 24, 2025.

Under this new policy, all establishments selling alcoholic beverages, including liquor shops and bars, will be required to close within the urban boundaries of the designated cities. The affected areas include major religious cities such as Ujjain, home to the revered Baba Mahakal Temple, Omkareshwar, known for its Omkar Mandhata Temple, and Amarkantak, the origin of the Narmada River, which holds immense significance for the state.

In addition to these cities, the ban will also extend to several gram panchayat regions, including Salkanpur, Kundalpur, and Barmankalan, among others. These 19 areas, both urban and rural, have been chosen due to their religious and cul-



tural importance, and the government's decision is in line with efforts to promote de-addiction and enhance public welfare in regions of religious significance.

Chief Minister Yadav emphasized that this move is a historic step towards combating addiction and fostering healthier communities. The liquor ban will be implemented across various local government divisions, including one Municipal Corporation, six Municipal Councils, six City Councils, and six Gram Panchayats.

The areas where the liquor ban will take effect include some of the state's most sacred locations, such as the Ramraja Temple area in Orchha, the Pitambar Devi Peeth in Datia, and the Nalkhedha and Khajuraho regions. By April 1, 2025, liquor will be completely prohibited in these spiritually significant areas, marking a pivotal moment in the state's commitment to promoting religious reverence and public well-being.

# Karnataka Cab Drivers Support 'Sahkar Taxi' Cooperative Ride-Hailing Service

TPN Correspondent | Bengaluru

Karnataka's cab drivers have expressed their strong support for the Central Government's initiative to launch 'Sahkar Taxi,' a cooperative ride-hailing service aimed at empowering drivers and providing an alternative to private aggregators. The service, which was recently announced by Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah, envisions a system where two-wheelers, taxis, auto-rickshaws, and four-wheelers can register under a cooperative framework.

This cooperative service aims to offer a more driver-centric model, where the revenue generated from rides will go directly to the drivers. This is in stark contrast to existing private ride-hailing platforms, where drivers often lose a significant portion of their earnings due to hefty commissions deducted by the aggregators.

Amit Shah shared the government's vision, highlighting that the cooperative model would allow drivers to have better control over their in-

come, fostering a more sustainable livelihood. The initiative also focuses on creating a system that encourages drivers to be part of a collective enterprise, where they benefit not only from the ride fares but also from the profits of the cooperative as a whole.

Karnataka, however, had previously planned to introduce its own ride-hailing app to support local drivers. This plan remains in limbo, and many drivers are now hoping that the successful implementation of 'Sahkar Taxi' will offer a more equitable and transparent platform. With this new cooperative model, drivers are optimistic about having a fairer, more reliable source of income without the pressure of high commission fees imposed by private companies.

The 'Sahkar Taxi' initiative is seen as a significant move towards empowering local drivers, and many in the Karnataka cab industry are eager to see how this vision translates into a functioning service. If successful, it could reshape the ride-hailing landscape by promoting fairness and financial independence for drivers.



# Anand Bardhan Appointed as New Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand



TPN Correspondent | Dehradun

On Monday, Anand Bardhan officially took charge as the new Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand, succeeding Radha Raturi, whose extended tenure concluded that day. Ms. Raturi, who made history as Uttarakhand's first female Chief Secretary, handed over the reins to Mr. Bardhan at a ceremony held at the state secretariat in Dehradun.

Mr. Bardhan, a seasoned 1992-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, brings with him over 33 years of experience in various key administrative roles within the state. His extensive career includes significant contributions to the state's governance and policy-making, making him a well-regarded figure in Uttarakhand's administrative landscape.

In his first statement after assuming office, Mr. Bardhan outlined his major priorities as Chief Secretary. He emphasized the importance of effectively implementing government policies and focused on critical issues such as livelihood,

employment, skill development, and addressing reverse migration. He highlighted that creating new livelihood opportunities and improving infrastructure were vital for the state's development.

"We also need to focus on the improvement of healthcare services and tackle the issue of water conservation," Mr. Bardhan stated. Acknowledging the global water crisis, he stressed that water conservation must be a priority, given its significance for the state and the nation. He also called for sustained efforts to address these challenges, ensuring that practical measures are taken to benefit the citizens of Uttarakhand.

Mr. Bardhan's appointment marks a new chapter for the state as it navigates pressing issues related to employment, health, and environmental sustainability. His experience and forward-thinking approach are expected to play a key role in shaping the future development trajectory of Uttarakhand, making him a crucial figure in the state's ongoing progress.





# INDIA bloc as a beginning of democratic renewal

The fight to preserve India’s democracy and constitutional ethos demands a departure from conventional politics, as the ruling party thrives on centralization and the erosion of institutions, narratives, and decision-making processes. To counter this, the Opposition must champion decentralization, foster open dialogue, uphold norms, and prioritize listening over dictating, argues a fresh perspective on India’s political landscape as of April 1, 2025.

The Bharat Jodo Yatra and Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, spearheaded by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi—now the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha—exemplified this alternative. Unlike the ruling party’s tightly controlled campaigns, these yatras embraced a fluid, participatory model. Leaders engaged directly with communities, listening as much as they spoke, allowing citi-

zens to co-shape the narrative rather than passively absorb pre-packaged pledges. This stood in sharp contrast to the centralized, top-down approach of the ruling dispensation, which leans on subversion and narrative dominance.

The yatras demonstrated that a politics of empathy and inclusion can resonate, cutting through the noise of orchestrated propaganda. They offered a glimpse of how decentralization—giving voice to the grassroots—could challenge the ruling party’s grip. Yet, despite their impact, the Opposition has been slow to fully adopt this blueprint. Traditional politicking—marked by reactive rhetoric and insular strategies—persists, diluting the potential of such transformative experiments.

To win, the Opposition must internalize this

lesson: democracy’s defense lies in mirroring its values—openness, plurality, and respect for institutions—rather than mimicking the ruling party’s playbook. The yatras’ success wasn’t just in mileage covered but in trust rebuilt, showing that people crave dialogue over diktats. This requires a shift from leader-centric campaigns to a movement where communities drive discourse, a stark pivot from the ruling party’s reliance on centralized authority.

As of April 1, 2025, the stakes are high. The ruling party’s model thrives on control; the Opposition’s strength lies in relinquishing it. Embracing this paradox—listening before speaking, decentralizing before commanding—could redefine the battle for India’s soul, ensuring constitutional values endure not through politics as usual, but through a reimagined, people-first approach.



## \$1.7 Trillion: Why Investors Are Betting Big On US Despite Recession Fears

Despite recession whispers and President Donald Trump’s tariff turbulence, the US has secured \$1.7 trillion in investment commitments since his second term began on January 20, 2025, signaling robust faith in its economic future as of April 1. Giants like Apple, TSMC, and Saudi Arabia are driving this influx, betting on long-term gains despite short-term chaos. Syed Zubair Ahmed explores why investors remain bullish.

In under three months, standout pledges include Saudi Arabia’s \$600 billion (potentially \$1 trillion) over four years, Apple’s \$500 billion for AI infrastructure and 20,000 jobs, and a \$500 billion Stargate project by OpenAI, Oracle, and SoftBank to dominate AI. TSMC’s \$100 billion adds to its \$165 billion US total, while Eli Lilly (\$27 billion) and Hyundai (\$21 billion) bolster manufacturing. These moves, tied to Trump’s “America First Investment Policy,” aim to secure semiconductors and tech supremacy, countering China.

Trump’s tariff bravado—set to escalate April 2—has rattled markets, yet his knack for luring capital shines. Infrastructure, AI, and chip production could cushion a downturn, reinforcing the US as an innovation hub. Critics, however, question if these billions will materialize, recalling unfulfilled Saudi promises from his first term. FDI has historically wavered, and lofty announcements often shrink under scrutiny.

Economic headwinds loom: inflation persists, interest rates bite, and the dollar recently slumped 3.4%. Germany’s spending surge and Trump’s “transition” talk—echoed by Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent’s “detox” warning—add uncertainty. Investors love tax cuts but hate unpredictability, and Trump’s trade flux keeps them guessing.

Still, Trump 2.0 exudes aggression. His “economic nationalism” pushes onshoring and tariffs, pressuring allies into deals. Supporters see a strongman delivering results; skeptics see hype. Will Apple’s factories rise in Houston? Will TSMC’s chips roll out of Texas? Or is this another mirage? As of April 1, 2025, \$1.7 trillion hangs on Trump’s ability to turn pledges into reality amid a jittery global landscape. Time will tell if this gamble pays off—or fizzles like before.

## Yunus’ Remarks on Chicken’s Neck Ignite Fury in India



Bangladesh’s interim leader Muhammad Yunus stirred outrage in India with comments spotlighting the landlocked Northeast and the strategic Chicken’s Neck corridor. Speaking during a visit to China, Yunus called the seven Northeastern states—termed the “Seven Sisters”—a landlocked region, positioning Bangladesh as their “guardian of the ocean.” He suggested this could extend China’s economic reach, a remark that has inflamed tensions given Delhi’s fraught ties with Beijing post-Doklam and cooling relations with Dhaka since Sheikh Hasina’s ouster. The Chicken’s Neck, or Siliguri Corridor, is a slender 20-km-wide strip in West Bengal linking India’s Northeast to the mainland. Flanked by Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh, it’s the sole land route for road and rail to the region. Its vulnerability was laid bare in the 1962 Sino-Indian War, when China’s advance underscored the risk of a chokehold isolating the Northeast. The 2017 Doklam standoff, where India halted China’s road-building near Bhutan, further highlighted its sensitivity, ending in a tense disengagement. Yunus’ remarks come as Bangladesh’s in-

terim government, in power since Hasina’s exit last year, pivots toward China, unsettling India. Historically, Delhi enjoyed warm ties with Dhaka, rooted in the 1971 Liberation War, but recent minority attacks and Bangladesh’s outreach to Beijing have strained this bond. Yunus’ China trip, including a meeting with Xi Jinping, amplifies India’s security concerns over the Chicken’s Neck, a lifeline now under geopolitical scrutiny. Indian leaders reacted swiftly. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma slammed the comments as “offensive,” urging robust rail and road upgrades to bolster the corridor, warning of its persistent vulnerability. Congress leader Pawan Khera accused Bangladesh of inviting China to encircle India, blasting the BJP’s “deplorable” foreign policy for failing the Northeast. “A country we helped create is now trying to surround us,” he said. As of April 1, 2025, Yunus’ words have thrust the Chicken’s Neck into focus, exposing India’s strategic anxieties amid shifting regional dynamics and an emboldened Sino-Bangladesh axis.



## Salman Khan’s Stardom: The Body That Built a Mythos

Salman Khan’s allure as a Bollywood icon hinges on his chiseled physique, a symbol of cinematic masculinity that fans worship as the essence of stardom. As Yvonne Tasker notes in *Spectacular Bodies*, an action hero’s frame is more than flesh—it’s a layered emblem of power and contradiction. Khan embodies this, his brawn eclipsing dialogue, his blue bracelet a style hallmark. From his debut, he turned gyms into shrines, his body outshining his acting, a true-blue star serving and served by his physicality. The 2014 documentary *Being Bhaijaan* captures this reverence, opening with Khan’s sculpted form dominating the screen. It shifts to Shan, a fan from Chhindwara, sweating in a gym, dreaming of mirroring his idol. The film subtly elevates Shan, blurring the star-fan divide, as devotees like him reflect Khan’s myth through their own fixation. Unlike Shah Rukh’s urban charm or Aamir’s cerebral appeal, Khan’s kingdom thrives in India’s hinterlands—small towns, slums, and mohallas—where his rugged hope resonates with the marginalized, especially working-class Muslims sidelined by post-lib-

eralization dreams. Shohini Ghosh ties Khan’s 1990s rise to communal tensions, as Muslims faced alienation amid the Hindu Right’s ascent. His “bad boy” image—marred by legal woes—mirrored their vulnerability, forging a visceral bond. Eid releases transcend films; they’re communal affirmations, his body a canvas of defiance and triumph. *Being Bhaijaan* probes this masculinity, with fans like Shan and Balram internalizing Khan’s macho ideals—protection, stoicism—shaping their gender views, sometimes conservatively. Yet, this devotion carries a homoerotic edge, a “Bhai-code” where fans’ intense loyalty—chanting “Jai Salman”—binds them in brotherhood. Khan’s body, not the heroine, holds their gaze. This fandom, though fierce, falters when his actions—like his 2014 Modi tie-up—jar their ideals, as seen in Jai Ho’s tepid response. Richard Dyer’s lens on stardom’s fragility fits here: Khan’s image, built on muscle and myth, shifts with time. His latest Eid flop, *Sikandar* (April 2025), underscores a fading vigor, his once-unstoppable frame now hinting at decline—a true-blue star whose descent is as iconic as his rise.



# India and Chile Strengthen Ties on Critical Minerals and Trade

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a joint press address with Chilean President Gabriel Boric Font at Hyderabad House on Tuesday, announced that India and Chile would initiate discussions on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), with a significant focus on critical minerals, trade, and economic cooperation. Emphasizing the importance of resilient supply and value chains, PM Modi highlighted that both nations are committed to forming a mutually beneficial economic partnership. He further stated that India is ready to share its expertise in digital public infrastructure, renewable energy, railways, space, and other sectors with Chile.

As part of their collaboration, India and Chile signed a Letter of Intent recognizing Chile's strategic role as a gateway to Antarctica. Given its geographic proximity and the presence of key cities like Punta Arenas, Chile serves as a major departure point for expeditions and scientific research in Antarctica. PM Modi welcomed the agreement and expressed confidence that it would enhance bilateral cooperation in this critical area.

Health security also featured prominently in discussions, with both leaders acknowledging India's role as a reliable partner in providing medical support to Chile. PM Modi expressed happiness over the growing adoption of yoga in Chile and praised the country's decision to declare November 4 as National Yoga Day. He also highlighted the importance of Ayurveda and traditional medicine, calling for greater collaboration in these fields. The deepening of defence co-operation between the two countries, which



symbolizes mutual trust, was also discussed. Welcoming President Boric on his first visit to India, PM Modi lauded his commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and described Chile as an important partner in Latin America. During their discussions, the leaders explored new opportunities for investment and trade, recognizing that there is untapped potential for collaboration in various sectors. PM Modi noted the steady growth in mutual trade and emphasized that further strengthening economic ties

would be beneficial for both nations. In the agricultural sector, both countries agreed to collaborate on ensuring food security by leveraging their respective strengths. India committed to sharing its experience and technological advancements to support Chile's agricultural industry. The discussions also focused on expanding cooperation in renewable energy, railways, space, and digital public infrastructure, reflecting India's commitment to fostering innovation and economic growth in Chile.

# NHAI Hikes Toll Charges by 4-5% Across India



Commuters using national highways and expressways in India will now have to pay higher toll fees, with the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) announcing an increase of 4-5% in toll charges. This revision, which came into effect on April 1, 2025, is part

of the NHAI's annual process of adjusting toll rates in response to changes in the wholesale price index-based inflation. The toll fee hike will apply to various highway sections across the country, impacting a significant number of road users. This increase in

toll charges aims to account for rising operational and maintenance costs associated with the upkeep of the national highway network. As per NHAI officials, the revised toll rates will help sustain the infrastructure, ensure road safety, and support ongoing and future highway development projects. The toll fee adjustment is a routine exercise conducted by the NHAI, and the revised rates reflect the current economic conditions, especially inflationary trends. The NHAI has clarified that the adjustments are necessary to maintain and upgrade India's national highway system, which is crucial for the transportation of goods and people across the country. For many road users, this hike may come as an additional financial burden, especially for frequent travelers. The increase is expected to affect commercial vehicles, daily commuters, and long-distance travelers who rely on the extensive highway network for their journeys. Despite the hike, the NHAI emphasized that the toll rates remain competitive and are in line with inflation adjustments to ensure the sustainable development of India's road infrastructure.

# India's 'Operation Brahma' Delivers Aid to Myanmar

India has launched a massive humanitarian relief effort, sending 440 tonnes of essential supplies to earthquake-hit Myanmar as part of 'Operation Brahma.' On Tuesday, the Indian Navy's INS Gharial departed from Visakhapatnam for Yangon, carrying a large consignment of relief materials, including rice, edible oils, and medicines. The shipment is equivalent to nearly 45-48 truckloads of aid, reinforcing India's commitment to assisting its neighbor in the wake of the devastating March 28 earthquake.

In addition to INS Gharial, two other Indian Navy warships, INS Karmuk and LCU 52, arrived in Yangon earlier the same day with approximately 30 tonnes of relief supplies. These ships joined the ongoing relief mission, which had already seen INS Satpura and INS Savitri deliver 40 tonnes of humanitarian aid to Myanmar on Monday. Apart from naval support, an Indian Air Force C-130 aircraft also landed in Mandalay, transporting essential medical supplies, water, and diesel generators to assist in the recovery efforts.

The Indian Embassy in Myanmar confirmed on social media that 'Operation Brahma' was launched immediately after the earthquake



struck, with a focus on providing emergency assistance to the hardest-hit regions, including Sagaing, Mandalay, Naypyidaw, Shan, and Bago. India's rapid response included deploying search and rescue teams, medical professionals, and emergency supplies such as food, water, tents, and medicines. The relief efforts began on March 29, when an Indian Air Force aircraft delivered the first batch of 15 tonnes of humanitarian assistance to Yangon. The supplies were officially hand-

ed over by Indian Ambassador to Myanmar, Abhay Thakur, in the presence of Myanmar's Chief Minister U Soe Thein. On the same day, two more C-130 and two C-17 aircraft flew into Naypyidaw, carrying an 80-member National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team, a 120-member Indian Army medical team, and an additional 85 tonnes of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) aid. Notably, these were the first international aid flights to arrive in Myanmar's capital, Naypyidaw.



## Himanta Slams Yunus' Remarks, Calls for NE Bypass

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has strongly condemned Bangladesh Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' recent remarks on India's Northeast, calling them "offensive and strongly condemnable." Yunus, during a recent four-day visit to China, reportedly described Bangladesh as the "only guardian of the ocean" in the region and suggested that India's northeastern states being landlocked could be an opportunity for Chinese economic expansion. Taking to social media on Tuesday, Sarma lashed out at Yunus' statement, emphasizing that such comments should not be taken lightly as they reflect "deeper strategic considerations and longstanding agendas." Sarma further pointed out that this narrative reinforces the strategic vulnerability of India's 'Chicken's Neck' corridor—the narrow Siliguri Corridor that connects the Northeast to the Indian mainland.

Yunus' comments, which surfaced on social media, implied that the northeastern states lack direct ocean access, making Bangladesh a key maritime link for them. "The seven states of India, the eastern part of India, are called the seven sisters. They are a landlocked region of India. They have no way to reach out to the ocean," Yunus reportedly stated. He also suggested that Bangladesh's role in the region could be leveraged for economic expansion with China's involvement.

Sarma responded sharply, highlighting the historical vulnerability of the 'Chicken's Neck' corridor and warning against narratives that could fuel separatist ideas. He noted that even within India, there have been dangerous discussions about isolating the Northeast from the rest of the country, making it essential to strengthen transport infrastructure.

To counter this strategic concern, Sarma advocated for the development of alternative railway and road networks bypassing the Chicken's Neck corridor. Despite significant engineering challenges, he urged that India must push for innovative and determined efforts to enhance connectivity between the Northeast and the mainland.



## Netherlands FM Veldkamp Visits India to Boost Ties

Caspar Veldkamp, the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, is on his first official visit to India from March 31 to April 1, 2025, aiming to strengthen bilateral relations across multiple sectors, including trade, innovation, and security. His discussions with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar focused on expanding cooperation in emerging fields like semiconductors, green hydrogen, and digital technologies, alongside traditional areas such as water management, agriculture, and health.

The two leaders held delegation-level talks on March 31, where they reviewed the growing political, cultural, and economic ties between India and the Netherlands. Both countries have maintained a strong partnership for over 75 years, and this visit is expected to further enhance economic and strategic cooperation. The discussions also covered key global and regional developments, reflecting the evolving geopolitical landscape and the importance of multipolarity in international relations.

Jaishankar welcomed Veldkamp and emphasized the depth of India-Netherlands collaboration, stating, "Delighted to meet FM Caspar Veldkamp of the Netherlands. We discussed our growing cooperation in trade, investments, innovation, water, agriculture, health, security, and people-to-people ties. We also explored new possibilities in semiconductors, green hydrogen, education, and talent flows." Foreign Minister Veldkamp, ahead of his visit, expressed enthusiasm about enhancing collaboration with India, particularly in the context of today's complex geopolitical challenges. "Considering today's geopolitical reality, it is important for both the Netherlands and India to strengthen our cooperation and deepen our relationship," he posted on social media.



# 'Time for reciprocity': US flags India's 100% tariff on agri goods ahead of April 2 deadline

- **New tariffs aim to ensure fairness, details due Wednesday, says White House.**
- **Trump calls April 2 “Liberation Day,” vows to fix unfair trade practices**
- **Advisors like Lutnick, Bessent, and Vance back Trump’s trade overhaul plan.**

TPN Correspondent | Kathmandu

The White House has spotlighted India's 100% tariff on American agricultural products as a key grievance, accusing New Delhi and other nations of stifling U.S. exports with exorbitant levies. With a deadline looming on April 2, 2025, President Donald Trump has vowed to implement reciprocal tariffs, dubbing the date "Liberation Day" for the U.S. economy. The move, flagged as a "big game-changer," aims

to counter what Trump calls unfair trade practices that have long disadvantaged American workers. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, speaking on Monday, April 1, criticized the steep tariffs imposed by multiple countries, including India's 100% duty on U.S. agri-goods, Japan's 700% on American rice, the EU's 50% on dairy, and Canada's nearly 300% on butter and cheese. "These countries have been ripping off our nation for far too long," Leavitt said, display-



ing a chart with India's tariffs highlighted in tricolor circles. She argued that such barriers make it "virtually impossible" for U.S. products to penetrate these markets, costing American jobs and businesses over decades.

Trump has described current U.S. tariffs as "temporary" and "small," promising that the new, reciprocal tariffs—set to roll out on April 2—will level the playing field. While specifics remain under wraps, Leavitt emphasized that

the policy would ensure fairness for Americans, with the President slated to unveil details on Wednesday. "It's time for reciprocity," she declared, framing the shift as a historic correction championed by Trump. The initiative is backed by a robust team of advisors, including Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, and others like Peter Navarro and Kevin Hassett, with Vice President J.D. Vance also deeply engaged. Leavitt sidestepped questions on which nations would face the new tariffs, leaving that to Trump's forthcoming announcement. As tensions simmer ahead of the deadline, the U.S. stance underscores a broader push to rebalance trade dynamics, with India's agricultural tariffs now a flashpoint in the escalating rhetoric. The clock is ticking toward a policy shift that could reshape global trade ties as of April 1, 2025.

## Imran Khan Nominated for Nobel Peace Prize Amid Incarceration



TPN Correspondent | Islamabad

Imran Khan, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan and founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, has received a second nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. Khan, who has been imprisoned since August 2023, was put forward for the prestigious award due to his contributions to human rights and democracy in Pakistan. The nomination was announced by Partiet Sentrum, a Norwegian advocacy group, which collaborated with an individual authorized to nominate candidates for the prize.

In a statement shared on X on Sunday, Partiet Sentrum expressed pride in nominating Khan, emphasizing his efforts to advance democratic principles and protect human rights in his home country. "We are pleased to announce on behalf of Partiet Sentrum that in alliance with somebody with the right to nominate, we have nominated Imran Khan, the former prime minister of Pakistan, to the Nobel Peace Prize for his work with human rights and democracy in Pakistan," the group declared. This marks the second time Khan has been recognized as a contender for the award, highlighting his enduring influence despite his current legal challenges.

The Nobel Peace Prize nomination process allows submissions from a wide range of "qualified nominators," including members of national assemblies, government officials, and other designated individuals or organizations. This broad eligibility ensures that diverse voices can propose candidates they believe have made significant contributions to peace and justice. Khan's nomination reflects his reputation as a leader who championed political reform and social equity during his tenure, even as his incarceration has sparked debate about the state of democracy in Pakistan.

## Yunus Courts China, Stirs Tensions with India Over Northeastern States



TPN Correspondent | Delhi

Bangladesh's interim government adviser, Muhammad Yunus, sparked controversy during a recent four-day visit to Beijing by subtly urging China to "extend" its influence in the region, leveraging the landlocked status of India's northeastern "seven sister states." In a video that surfaced on social media upon his return, Yunus suggested that Bangladesh, as the "guardian of the ocean" for India's northeast, could serve as a strategic base for China. He framed this as an economic opportunity, encouraging Beijing to build infrastructure, market goods, and export through Bangladesh, indirectly pressuring India's isolated states.

"The seven states of India... are completely landlocked. They have no way to reach the ocean. We are the only guardian of the region," Yunus stated, adding that this "opens up a huge possibility for China." Defence analysts criticized the remarks as provocative, while Sanjeev Sanyal, a member of PM Modi's economic advisory council, questioned their intent on X, asking, "What exactly is the significance of 7 Indian states being landlocked?"

During his Beijing visit, Yunus held talks with Xi Jinping, securing agreements to deepen China-Bangladesh ties. These include Chinese investment in modernizing Mongla Port with \$400 million, expanding the China Economic and Industrial Zone in Chattogram with \$350 million, and \$150 million for technical assistance. Yunus also sought a 50-year partnership on river water management, praising China as a "master" in the field. Bangladesh requested aid for managing the Teesta River, shared with India, shifting away from previous direct cooperation with New Delhi, and signed a hydrological data-sharing deal for the Yarlung Zangbo-Jamuna River.

The remarks and agreements signal a strategic pivot toward China, raising eyebrows in India. While Yunus thanked Beijing for enhancing maritime and economic collaboration, his comments about India's northeast have drawn scrutiny. As of April 1, 2025, this development underscores Bangladesh's balancing act between its powerful neighbors, with Yunus seemingly testing New Delhi's patience while courting Chinese investment to bolster Dhaka's regional clout.



## Chile's President Boric Highlights Expanding Ties with India During Visit

TPN Correspondent | New Delhi

During his visit to India, Chilean President Gabriel Boric underscored the burgeoning potential for deepening bilateral ties with India, spotlighting trade, investment, and joint efforts on global issues like climate change. Speaking alongside Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Hyderabad House on April 1, 2025, Boric expressed gratitude for the invitation extended during the G20 summit in Rio last November, emphasizing the untapped possibilities in the seven-decade-long relationship between the two nations.

Boric, the third Chilean president to visit India in 16 years, hailed the visit as a milestone in consolidating ties. "We have come to strengthen seven decades of relations with India," he said, noting India's rise as Chile's seventh-largest trading partner. He urged further collaboration, particularly in commercial ties and critical minerals like lithium and copper, vital for sustainability and combating climate change. "We discussed investment opportunities and the role of critical minerals in facing global challenges," Boric remarked, framing these as key to a sustainable future.

The leaders also explored cooperation in technology and innovation, with Boric positioning Chile as a reliable partner. "We want to consolidate Chile as a trusted ally in sustainable technology and innovation, where we see immense potential with India," he said. He highlighted cultural exchanges too, citing the "Shoot in Chile" program to attract India's Bollywood industry, adding, "What India has done with Bollywood is tremendously important."

Boric praised Chile's international standing as a respected democracy, a foundation for attracting investment and fostering ties. Beyond economics, he emphasized the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the partnership. "It's not just about commerce but also culture and spirituality. India's ancient civilization offers lessons for the world," he noted.

The visit reflects a shared vision for a multifaceted relationship, blending economic goals with sustainability and cultural synergy. Boric's remarks signal a forward-looking agenda, leveraging India's global influence and Chile's strategic resources to address modern challenges while deepening a historic bond as of April 1, 2025.

## Netanyahu Retracts Shin Bet Nominee Amid Coalition Tensions

TPN Correspondent | Israel

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reversed his decision to appoint ex-admiral Eli Sharvit as director of the Shin Bet security service on April 1, 2025, just 24 hours after announcing it. Netanyahu's office stated that, "after further thought," he informed Sharvit of plans to consider other candidates to succeed Ronen Bar, whose dismissal last month awaits court approval. No specific reason was provided for the abrupt shift, though it follows unease within Netanyahu's religious-right coalition. Some coalition members had opposed Sharvit's nomination, pointing to his alleged presence at a 2023 protest against the government's judicial overhaul—a move that sparked controversy. The Shin Bet, akin to the FBI or MI5, handles



internal security, distinct from Mossad's external intelligence role. Netanyahu's decision to sack Bar had already fueled backlash, with critics accusing him and his allies of purging officials who challenge their stance, particularly on the Gaza war against Hamas. The reversal coincides with brewing discord in Netanyahu's multi-party coalition. Finance

Minister Bezalel Smotrich staged a temporary resignation, a procedural tactic to reclaim his Knesset seat and edge out a member of National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir's party. Israeli media reports suggest Smotrich expects Netanyahu to reappoint him once his parliamentary status is restored. His move protests Ben-Gvir's push for additional ministerial roles after rejoining the government last month, according to Reuters, citing Smotrich's party spokesperson.

The Shin Bet leadership shuffle and coalition friction highlight deepening instability within Netanyahu's administration as of April 1, 2025. The backtrack on Sharvit's nomination reflects sensitivity to internal dissent, while Smotrich's maneuver underscores strategic jockeying among coalition partners.



# RBI Announces ₹80,000 Crore OMO to Boost Banking Liquidity

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) unveiled plans for an open market operation (OMO) to inject ₹80,000 crore into the banking system, a strategic move just days before the April monetary policy committee (MPC) review. Bankers say the infusion aims to enhance the transmission of policy rate cuts, ensuring they effectively influence lending rates and stimulate economic activity. The announcement follows a notable shift in banking liquidity, which turned surplus on Saturday and Sunday—the first time in over four months—after persistent deficits. Measured via the RBI’s liquidity adjustment facility, this surplus provides a cushion for smoother policy rate transmission during an easing cycle.

By pumping in ₹80,000 crore, the RBI seeks to sustain this momentum, addressing liquidity tightness that had previously hampered rate cut impacts. The timing is critical, with the MPC meeting looming. Analysts view the OMO as a preemptive strike to bolster system liquidity, supporting banks in passing on prior and potential future rate reductions to borrowers. Surplus liquidity typically lowers short-term interest rates, aligning them with the RBI’s repo rate, a key policy tool. This move signals the central bank’s intent to maintain accommodative conditions amid evolving economic pressures. Bankers note that the RBI’s action reflects a proactive stance after months of managing liquidity shortfalls, which had con-

strained monetary policy effectiveness. The surplus over the weekend, though modest, hints at easing strains, possibly from government spending or reduced cash demand. The ₹80,000 crore injection aims to lock in this shift, ensuring banks have ample funds to lend and support growth. As of April 1, 2025, the OMO underscores the RBI’s balancing act—fostering growth while guarding against inflation. With the MPC review on the horizon, this liquidity boost could set the stage for further easing, depending on economic data. For now, it’s a clear bid to grease the wheels of monetary transmission, reinforcing the RBI’s commitment to a responsive and fluid banking system.



## GST Collections Surge 9.9% to Over ₹1.96 Lakh Crore in March 2025

India’s gross GST collections for March 2025 climbed 9.9% to exceed ₹1.96 lakh crore, according to government data released on April 1, 2025. The robust growth reflects a steady rise in economic activity, with revenue from domestic transactions increasing by 8.8% to ₹1.49 lakh crore. Imports also contributed significantly, with GST from imported goods jumping 13.56% to ₹46,919 crore, signaling strong cross-border trade.

However, the month saw a sharp 41% spike in total refunds, amounting to ₹19,615 crore, a notable increase from the previous year. After accounting for these refunds, the net GST revenue for March stood at over ₹1.76 lakh crore, marking a 7.3% rise compared to the same period in 2024. This net figure, while lower than the gross collection, still underscores a positive trend in tax compliance and economic momentum.

The uptick in domestic revenue highlights resilient consumer spending and business activity, while the higher growth in import-related GST points to India’s deepening global trade ties. The refund surge, though, suggests increased claims or administrative adjustments, potentially tied to exporters or input tax credits, which tempered the net revenue gain.

March’s performance caps a fiscal year where GST has remained a critical revenue stream for the government, balancing economic recovery with fiscal needs. The 9.9% gross growth outpaces the 7.3% net increase, reflecting the impact of refunds on the final tally. Analysts may view the import revenue



spike as a sign of robust demand for foreign goods, while domestic gains indicate steady internal market strength

As of April 1, 2025, these figures offer a snapshot of India’s tax landscape, with GST continuing to evolve as a barometer of economic health. The government will likely leverage this growth to fund infrastructure and welfare, though the refund jump could prompt scrutiny of compliance mechanisms. Overall, March 2025’s GST haul reinforces optimism about India’s fiscal trajectory, even as it navigates refund-related challenges.

## UPI value hits record Rs 24.77 trillion in March, marks new high in FY25

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions soared to unprecedented levels in March 2025, reaching ₹24.77 trillion in value and 19.78 billion in volume, according to National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) data released on April 1, 2025. This reflects a 13% jump in value and a 14% surge in volume from February, fueled by a year-end transaction boom. It’s the first time since UPI’s launch in April 2016 that value has breached ₹24 trillion and volume has topped 19 billion. For FY25, UPI recorded a 30% increase in value to ₹260.56 trillion from ₹199.96 trillion in FY24, while volume grew 42% to 131.14 billion transactions from 92.48 billion. March’s performance stands out after February’s dip, when volume fell 5% to 16.11 billion from January’s 16.99 billion, and value dropped 6.5% to ₹21.48 trillion from ₹23.48 trillion. Compared to March 2024, this year’s figures show a 36% rise in volume and a 25% uptick in value, with daily transactions

climbing to 590 million from February’s 575 million. The surge underscores UPI’s dominance in India’s digital payment ecosystem, driven by its convenience and widespread adoption. March’s spike likely ties to seasonal financial closings, boosting both person-to-person and merchant transactions. The FY25 growth highlights UPI’s role in India’s cashless economy push, with volumes nearly doubling every two years. Meanwhile, Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) also saw gains in March, with volume rising 14% to 462 million

from February’s 405 million, and value increasing 19% to ₹6.68 trillion from ₹5.63 trillion. January recorded 444 million transactions worth ₹6.06 trillion. IMPS’s uptick complements UPI’s dominance, catering to users favoring bank-to-bank transfers. As of April 1, 2025, these milestones reflect India’s accelerating shift to digital finance, with UPI setting new benchmarks monthly. The robust March figures signal sustained momentum, positioning UPI as a global model for real-time payments while IMPS holds steady as a reliable alternative.



## Capital expenditure not cut, rises to Rs 11.21 trn for FY26: Sitharaman

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman clarified on April 1, 2025, that the Centre has not reduced capital expenditure, countering speculation during a Rajya Sabha Question Hour session. She announced that the capital outlay for the 2025-26 fiscal year has increased to ₹11.21 lakh crore, up from ₹11.11 lakh crore in 2024-25. “The capital expenditure has not been cut at all; it has gone up to ₹11.21 lakh crore,” Sitharaman emphasized, dispelling concerns of a rollback in infrastructure spending.

Addressing lawmakers, she highlighted a proportional rise in interest-free, 50-year loans provided to states under a special assistance scheme for capital expenditure. This increase aligns with the enhanced central allocation, ensuring states have greater resources for development projects. “Cutting down capital expenditure is not the case with us,” she asserted, reinforcing the government’s commitment to boosting economic growth through sustained investment.

The modest hike from ₹11.11 lakh crore to ₹11.21 lakh crore reflects a strategic focus on infrastructure, a key driver of

India’s post-pandemic recovery. Sitharaman’s statement comes amid scrutiny over fiscal priorities, with opposition members questioning whether welfare spending might overshadow capital outlays. Her response underscores a balanced approach, maintaining capex momentum while supporting states with long-term financing.

The special assistance scheme, offering 50-year interest-free loans, has been a cornerstone of Centre-state collaboration, enabling states to fund roads, bridges, and other assets without immediate fiscal strain. The proportional increase in these loans for 2025-26 signals continued trust in this model to spur regional development alongside national projects.

As of April 1, 2025, Sitharaman’s remarks in the Rajya Sabha affirm the government’s growth-oriented fiscal stance. The ₹10,000 crore uptick, though incremental, sustains the capex push initiated in recent budgets, aiming to crowd in private investment and bolster economic resilience. With states also empowered through enhanced loans, the Centre aims to maintain a robust infrastructure pipeline, countering any narrative of austerity in a year poised for economic consolidation.



## Sensex and Nifty Plunge on First Day of FY 2025-26 Amid US Tariff Uncertainty

India’s domestic stock market faced intense selling pressure on April 1, 2025, the opening day of the 2025-26 financial year, as the BSE Sensex plummeted 1.8% and the Nifty 50 dropped 1.5%. The sharp decline was fueled by global uncertainty surrounding US President Donald Trump’s reciprocal tariff announcement slated for April 2, casting a shadow over investor sentiment. The Sensex, comprising 30 blue-chip

stocks, shed 1,390.41 points to close at 76,024.51, while the broader Nifty 50 lost 353.65 points, settling at 23,165.7. The sell-off erased gains from recent sessions, reflecting jittery markets bracing for potential disruptions in global trade dynamics. Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Investments Limited, attributed the downturn to “heightened global volatility” ahead of Trump’s tariff reveal. “The domestic market wit-

nessed a significant sell-off today as investors await specifics of these tariffs while monitoring negotiations for a potential Indo-US trade agreement,” Nair noted. Trump’s proposed tariffs, billed as a counter to nations like India with high duties on US goods, have sparked fears of retaliatory trade barriers, unsettling equity markets worldwide. The timing amplifies anxiety, with India’s market already navigating domestic economic cues at FY26’s start. Investors are torn between the tariff threat and hopes of an Indo-US deal to mitigate fallout. The uncertainty prompted broad-based selling, with sectors sensitive to trade—such as IT, auto, and manufacturing—bearing the brunt. As of April 1, 2025, the crash underscores the market’s vulnerability to external shocks, particularly from US policy shifts. Trump’s April 2 announcement, dubbed a “game-changer” by the White House, could reshape export-import equations, especially if India’s 100% agricultural tariffs face reprisals. With no clarity yet on the tariff scope, the Sensex and Nifty’s steep fall reflects a flight to safety, setting a cautious tone for the fiscal year. Investors now await tomorrow’s details, hoping for clarity to steady nerves in an increasingly volatile global landscape.







# Copenhagen’s Alchemist: Fine Dining or Shock Art?”

Alchemist, an avant-garde restaurant in Copenhagen, has gained global attention for its extravagant 50-course menu curated by chef Rasmus Munk. The dining experience lasts around five hours and costs approximately Rs 60,000 (\$700), offering guests an unusual mix of flavors and thought-provoking presentations. The menu features dishes such as edible butterflies, raw jellyfish, lamb brain mousse served in a bowl resembling a cut-open human head, and even smashed chicken heads. Guests are encouraged to approach the meal with an open mind, as Alchemist warns that its unconventional offerings may

not be suitable for first dates or business meetings. Beyond its experimental cuisine, Alchemist integrates social and environmental commentary into its dishes. Some items aim to highlight critical global issues—such as chicken feet served in a cage to draw attention to factory farming, fish wrapped in edible plastic to symbolize ocean pollution, and a dessert made from frozen pig and lamb’s blood to provoke discussions on food ethics. While the restaurant’s mission is to use food as a platform for awareness, it has also sparked controversy. Many social media users have pointed out the irony of promoting ani-

mal welfare while serving dishes featuring live creatures. Some have questioned whether the experience is about fine dining or simply shock value. Despite the criticism, Alchemist continues to push culinary boundaries with storytelling and social activism. For some, it is an extraordinary culinary journey; for others, it raises ethical concerns about where to draw the line between food and performance art. Whether seen as a groundbreaking concept or an over-the-top spectacle, Alchemist remains one of the most talked-about dining experiences in the world.





OpenAI CEO Sam Altman is delighted by the viral trend of people using ChatGPT to create Studio Ghibli-style images. He expressed happiness over social media, particularly X, being filled with positivity. A user, Sohail Ahmed, tweeted, “After a long time, I see positivity on X because of people sharing cute images of their family and loved ones. Thanks, Sam.” Altman responded, “This is generally a quite negative platform, so I am happy we were able to bring some joy temporarily.” The trend began after OpenAI’s

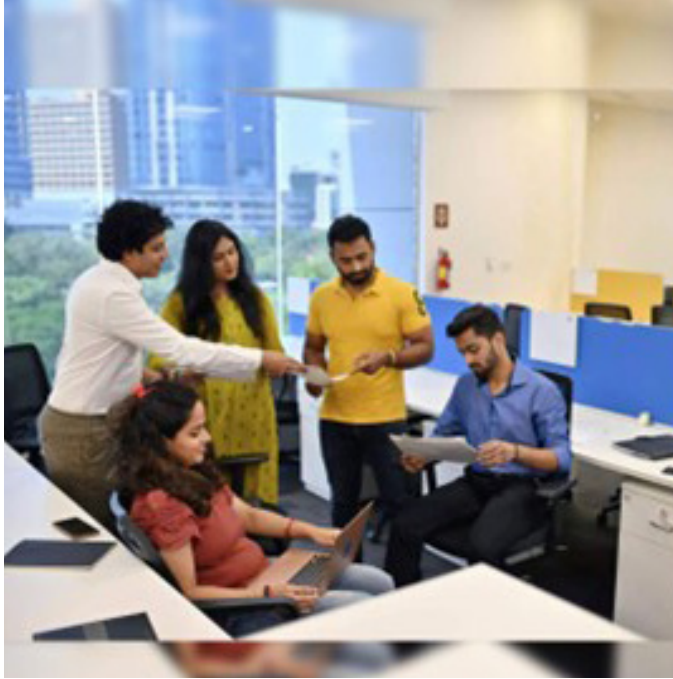
latest update, GPT-4o, was released last week. This version significantly improves text rendering and follows detailed prompts, including the ability to generate stunning Ghibli-inspired images. The AI-generated artworks flooded platforms like X and Instagram, delighting users worldwide. However, not everyone was impressed. Tesla CEO Elon Musk took a jab at OpenAI, suggesting the company was wasting resources on trivial features instead of focusing on more important AI advancements. This adds to

the ongoing rivalry between Musk and Altman. Earlier this year, Musk and a group of investors attempted to purchase OpenAI. Musk claimed the bid aimed to prevent OpenAI from becoming a for-profit entity. However, Altman rejected the offer, stating that OpenAI was “not for sale.” He also accused Musk, who owns AI startup xAI, of trying to hinder OpenAI’s progress. Despite the criticism, the Ghibli AI art trend continues to spread, bringing a rare wave of positivity to social media.

## Pune Techie’s Rise to ₹2.3 Crore

A Pune-based tech professional has shared his inspiring journey of growing his salary from ₹4.7 LPA to an astonishing ₹2.3 crore per year in just eight years. Despite graduating from a tier-3 college with a non-computer science degree, his passion for web development led him to freelance on over 100 projects using HTML, CSS, JavaScript, PHP, and Node.js. This hands-on experience helped him land his first job at ₹4.7 LPA. Realizing the importance of data structures and algorithms (DSA), he invested time in mastering them, which, combined with strategic job switches, propelled him towards FAANG companies. Moving from a service-based startup to a product-based one tripled

his salary, preparing him for the next leap. After two and a half years of rigorous DSA practice, he secured a FAANG job, doubling his pay to ₹26 LPA. As he gained expertise in large-scale infrastructure and distributed systems, he moved up to an SDE II position. A well-timed switch to another FAANG company increased his salary to ₹45 LPA. His growth didn’t stop there—continuous learning and persistence earned him a role equivalent to SDE III, bringing his package to ₹1.3 crore annually. Eventually, after four years in FAANG, he transitioned to a Staff Engineer role at a prestigious global company, hitting ₹2 crore per year. His story sparked debates online, with some praising his skills and strategic moves while others argued about the role of luck. While some found his rapid financial growth motivating, others questioned whether such opportunities exist outside major tech hubs like Bengaluru and Hyderabad. Regardless of opinions, his journey highlights how upskilling, persistence, and calculated career moves can lead to extraordinary financial success.



## Chandigarh Cop Suspended Over Wife’s Dance




A Chandigarh police constable, Ajay Kundu, was suspended after a viral video of his wife, Jyoti Kundu, dancing on a zebra crossing caused a major traffic jam. The Instagram reel, filmed by Jyoti’s sister-in-law, Pooja, was posted on March 22 and quickly gained traction online. The video showed Jyoti dancing to a popular Haryanvi song in the middle of a busy road, disrupting traffic flow and endangering both pedestrians and motorists. As the video spread, it caught the attention of local authorities, who launched an investigation. Reports indicate that vehicles were brought to a complete standstill as Jyoti and Pooja focused on filming, paying no heed to the chaos unfolding around them. An informant alerted the police after watching the viral clip, claiming that the women’s actions posed a significant safety hazard. The police, led by ASI Baljit Singh, reviewed

CCTV footage from key locations, including Gurudwara Chowk and the Police Control Room. The footage confirmed the claims, showing Jyoti in a yellow suit dancing in the middle of the road while Pooja recorded her performance. Following the investigation, an FIR was registered under Sections 125, 292, and 3(5) of BNS for obstructing traffic and endangering public safety. The incident has sparked discussions online, with some criticizing the women for their reckless behavior, while others argue that the punishment was too harsh. Many social media users pointed out that such stunts for viral fame should not come at the cost of public safety. As for Ajay Kundu, his suspension has raised questions about accountability, with authorities reinforcing the need for responsible social media behavior, especially when it disrupts public order.

## April Fool’s Day: Origins & Pranks

April Fool’s Day, celebrated every year on April 1, is a day of jokes, pranks, and playful deception. But where did this tradition originate? While its exact beginnings remain uncertain, many historians trace it back to 1582 when France adopted the Gregorian calendar, replacing the Julian calendar. This shift, ordered by Pope Gregory XIII and the Council of Trent, moved the New Year to January 1. However, not everyone was aware of the change, and those who continued celebrating the New Year in late March or on April 1 were mocked as “fools.” Over time, this ridicule turned into an annual tradition of playing harmless pranks, leading to the establishment of “All Fools’ Day.” Some theories also suggest that April Fool’s Day may have roots in ancient festivals celebrating the arrival of spring, a time of joy, renewal, and playful mischief.



Throughout history, many famous hoaxes have been pulled off on April 1. One of the most legendary occurred in 1957 when the BBC aired a report about Swiss farmers harvesting spaghetti from trees. Viewers believed it, unaware that pasta doesn’t grow on trees! Another notable prank was Google’s infamous joke launches, such as announcing “Google Nose,” a service claiming to

let users search by smell. Across cultures, the spirit of April Fool’s Day remains the same: spreading laughter through harmless tricks. Whether it’s elaborate media hoaxes or simple practical jokes among friends, the day continues to bring joy worldwide. Egypt’s rich and complex past, offering new insights into burial practices and political dynamics during the New Kingdom period.



# Punjab Kings Secure Dominant 8-Wicket Win Over LSG



Punjab Kings (PBKS) defeated Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) by eight wickets+ in an IPL match on Tuesday. Chasing a target of 172, PBKS reached 177/2 in 16.2 overs, powered by Prabhsimran Singh's explosive 69 off 34 balls and captain Shreyas Iyer's unbeaten 52 off 30 balls. Nehal Wadhwa also contributed with 43 not out off 25 balls. Earlier, LSG posted 171/7 in 20 overs, with Nicholas Pooran top-scoring with 44 off 30 balls. Ayush Badoni (41), Aiden Markram (28), and Abdul Sa-

mad (27) also made key contributions. Arshdeep Singh (3/43) was PBKS' standout bowler. PBKS comfortably chased down the target, with Digvesh Rathi (2/30) picking both wickets for LSG. The win strengthens PBKS' position in the tournament.

# Vandana Katariya Retires from International Hockey After 15-Year Career



Indian women's hockey legend Vandana Katariya announced her retirement from international hockey, ending a stellar 15-year career. The 32-year-old forward, India's most-capped female player, played 320 matches and scored 158 goals. A key figure in India's historic fourth-place finish at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, Katariya was the first Indian woman to score an Olympic hat-trick. She also won multiple medals, including gold at the

2016 and 2023 Asian Champions Trophy. "This isn't a goodbye from hockey," she said, confirming she will continue playing in the Hockey India League. Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey hailed her as "the heartbeat of India's attack." Honored with the Padma Shri and Arjuna Award, Katariya leaves behind an inspiring legacy for future generations of Indian hockey.

# Wasim Jaffer Expresses Concern Over India's Test Team Ahead of England Tour



Wasim Jaffer, former Indian cricketer, expressed concerns over the current form of the Indian Test team ahead of their England tour. Speaking to Bo-

ria Majumdar on Revsportz, Jaffer admitted he was "a little worried" following India's poor performance in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and their loss to New Zea-

land. He highlighted concerns over the form of senior batters like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, as well as the potential absence of key pacers like Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Shami. Jaffer also stressed that India's batters will face challenges with the Dukes ball in England. He urged the team to improve and secure their first series win in England since 2007. The five-Test series begins on June 20 in Leeds, marking the start of the ICC World Test Championship 2025-27 cycle.

# Yuva Mumbai, Sonipat Spartans Set for Crucial Eliminator Showdowns



The Yuva All-Stars Championship playoffs are set to feature two thrilling eliminator matches on April 2. Yuva Mumbai, after a 48-26 victory over Junior Steelers, will face Yuva Yoddhas in Eliminator 1 at 4:00 pm. Yuva Yoddhas, having secured their spot after the head-to-head round, will look to advance to the semi-finals. In the second eliminator, Sonipat Spartans, who triumphed over Palani Tuskars 44-33, will face Warriorz KC, who won 51-34 against Chandigarh Chargers, at 5:30 pm. Both teams aim to earn a spot in the semi-finals. The winners of these matches will meet in the semi-final on Thursday, leading up to the grand finale on Friday.

# Indian Arrows Women Juniors Set for IWL 2 Challenge



Indian Arrows Women Juniors, with an average age of just 15, are geared up for the 2024-25 Indian Women's League 2 under Swedish head coach Joakim Alexandersson. The team, preparing for the SAFF U17 Women's Championship (September 2025) and AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup 2026

Qualifiers, will gain valuable exposure playing against senior teams. Their campaign begins on April 2 against Pudhuvai Unicorns in Bengaluru. Placed in Group B, they will also face Inter Kashi (April 4), Roots FC (April 7), and Casa Barwani SC (April 9). The top two teams will advance to

the final round in Goa. AIFF officials hailed this initiative as crucial for player development. "It strengthens their tactical understanding and resilience," said AIFF Secretary General Anilkumar P. All matches will be streamed live on the Indian Football YouTube Channel.

# Thangaraja, Talwar Share Lead at Adani Invitational Golf Championship 2025



Sri Lanka's N Thangaraja and local golfer Saptak Talwar shot five-under 67 to share the lead in round one of the Rs 1.5 crore Adani Invitational Golf Championship 2025 at Jaypee Greens, Greater Noida. Thangaraja, a recent PGTI winner, played a bogey-free round, sinking five birdies with impressive approach shots. "My hitting form has been great, and I'll take an error-free round any day,"

he said. Talwar, adjusting to his home course, recovered from a slow start with an eagle and four birdies in six holes. Om Prakash Chouhan, Arjun Prasad, Sunhit Bishnoi, and Md Somrat Sikdar followed closely at four-under 68. Yuvraj Sandhu and Shaurya Bhattacharya were tied 10th at 70. The tournament continues with high competition expected in the coming rounds.





Ram Charan's upcoming movie Peddi, directed by Buchi Babu Sana, has already created a buzz with its high expectations. Recently, the audio rights for the film were sold for an eye-popping ₹35 crore, a deal secured by T-Series. The film's music is composed by Oscar-winning music director A.R. Rahman, making this collaboration between Rahman and Charan

particularly special. Peddi has garnered attention due to its stellar combination of Charan and Rahman, marking their first project together. The movie's first look and title were unveiled on March 27, coinciding with Charan's birthday, and the team has announced that they will release a glimpse of the film on April 6, during the auspicious occasion of Sri Rama Navami.

The film also stars Bollywood actress Janhvi Kapoor as the lead heroine, alongside prominent actors like Shivrak Kumar, Divyendu, and Jagapathi Babu in crucial roles. The movie is being jointly produced by Maitri Movie Makers, Virdi Cinemas, and Sukumar Writings. Fans are eagerly awaiting the release of Peddi, and the film is expected to be a major hit.

## Sobhita Bags a Big Offer in Director



Tollywood actress Sobhita Dhulipala, who has primarily worked in Bollywood, is now set to make a strong comeback in Telugu cinema. After taking a short break following her marriage to Naga Chaitanya in December last year, she is gearing up to take on new projects. According to reports, Sobhita has been offered a major role in a film directed by sensational filmmaker Pa. Ranjith. Known for his unique storytelling and strong character-driven narratives, Ranjith's films always stand out. His latest project, Vettuvam, features actors like Dinesh, Arya, Ashok Selvan, and Fahadh Faasil in key roles. If Sobhita officially joins the film, it could be a game-changer for her career, as Ranjith is known for casting actors who perfectly fit his characters. This opportunity could help her showcase her talent and achieve the stardom she has been waiting for. An official announcement is awaited.

## Mega157: Cast, Crew, and Special Video

The shooting of Megastar Chiranjeevi's much-anticipated film, Mega157, has officially begun. Directed by Anil Ravipudi, the movie is currently in production, with Mega157 serving as its working title. To build excitement, the makers recently released a special video, offering fans a behind-the-scenes look at the film's key crew members. The video captures Megastar Chiranjeevi interacting with the essential team members, introducing their roles while referencing characters from his previous films. This unique approach has resonated with fans, making the video go viral on YouTube. The filmmakers have set an ambitious timeline, aiming for a grand release during Sankranti 2026. With



Chiranjeevi declaring, "Let's make this Sankranti unforgettable," the production team is working at full speed to meet the deadline. The

buzz surrounding Mega157 continues to grow, with fans eagerly awaiting more updates from the film's unit.

## L2Empuraan Creates Box Office History



Mohanlal's L2Empuraan has made waves at the box office, breaking records and earning massive collections despite

controversies surrounding its release. Directed by Prithviraj Sukumaran, the Malayalam film has crossed the ₹200 crore mark

in just four days, becoming the first Malayalam film to achieve this feat. Released on March 27, the movie has been raking in impressive numbers since its opening day, much to the delight of the production team. Despite facing criticism over the portrayal of certain communities, the film's box office performance continues to soar. L2Empuraan has surpassed the previous ₹200 crore record held by Manjumaal Boys, setting a new benchmark for Malayalam cinema. The film's team remains optimistic about further growth in its collections, with expectations high for continued success. The film's unprecedented achievements in such a short span have made it a significant milestone in the industry.

## Vijay's 'Jana Nayagan' OTT Rights Sold for ₹121 Crore

Ilayathalapathy Vijay's upcoming movie Jana Nayagan, which also stars Pooja Hegde and Mamitha Baiju in key roles, is generating significant excitement. This film is planned as Vijay's final project, with the shoot currently progressing at a rapid pace. The team, led by director H. Vinoth, is working tirelessly to complete the movie, especially considering Vijay's involvement in politics. In major news, Jana Nayagan has reportedly secured a massive deal for its OTT rights. Amazon Prime Video has acquired the pan-India streaming

rights for the film for a whopping ₹121 crore, making it one of the biggest OTT deals in Vijay's career, second only to his Leo film. The movie is set to feature music by Anirudh, while the production is handled

by KVN Productions. Fans can expect a grand release of Jana Nayagan on January 9 next year. This marks another milestone for Vijay, further fueling anticipation for the film's release.



## Salman's 'Sikandar' Makes Moderate Earnings Despite Eid Release

Bollywood's action star Salman Khan's much-anticipated film Sikandar, directed by AR Murugadoss and starring Rashmika Mandanna and Kajal Aggarwal, hit the screens as an Eid release. However, despite the festival release, the movie received unexpected negative reviews, and it struggled to gain significant attention in Bollywood on its opening day. The film managed to earn over ₹30 crores in net collections across India on its

opening day. However, the earnings on Day 2 were comparatively modest, with reports indicating ₹33.36 crores in collections. While the Eid holiday provided a slight boost to the film's box office performance, the overall jump in earnings was not as high as anticipated. The real test will be in the coming weekdays when the movie faces a more regular competition. It remains to be seen how Sikandar performs in the long run during the working days.

