



QUICK READ

Admin Reforms Commission Submits 10th Report to CM

Bengaluru
The Karnataka Administrative Reforms Commission on Wednesday submitted its 10th report to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah at his Kaveri residence. The panel, chaired by former minister and MLA R.V. Deshpande, has recommended a series of administrative reforms aimed at reducing government overhead expenditure. The report suggests merging several departments, noting that many of them are currently performing similar functions, resulting in duplication of work and an unnecessary burden on the state exchequer.

Govt Ready to Run 108 Ambulance Service Directly: Dinesh Gundu Rao

Health Minister says State prepared to directly operate Arogya Kavach 108 ambulance services

BENGALURU

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Wednesday said the State government is fully prepared to operate the Arogya Kavach-108 ambulance service on its own, moving away from the existing contractual model, following widespread public complaints and operational issues.

At present, the 108 emergency ambulance service is being run through private service providers. However, as announced in the State Budget, the Health and Family Welfare Department is making final preparations to take over the service directly under government management. The

Minister said several objections had been raised by the public regarding delays, availability and service quality, prompting the decision.

The department has already issued a notification for the transition and completed most preparatory work, including setting up the required technology systems, command and control centres, and human resources. “All arrangements have reached the final stage, and the government will soon roll out the service across Karnataka,” the Minister said.

Currently, a total of 1,841 ambulances are functioning under the Health and Family Welfare Department. Of



these, 715 ambulances are part of the 108 Arogya Kavach programme, while 1,126 ambulances operate directly under the State sector. As per population norms, the State requires 813 ambulances, indicating that Karnataka has more than the mandated number under government services alone, excluding ambulances operated by other departments.

The Minister said that maintaining the 108 Arogya Kavach service requires an annual grant of ₹162.40 crore. The government has approved and released ₹180 crore under the 108 Health Cover budget head to ensure smooth operations without financial constraints.

Acknowledging that there were minor issues during the transition process from private operators to government control, Dinesh Gundu Rao assured that emergency services to the public would not be disrupted. “The department

is handling the takeover cautiously, as this is a critical emergency health service,” he said.

The Minister also referred to complaints from districts such as Haveri, where the 108 service has reportedly been disrupted for months. Patients, particularly the poor, have struggled to access ambulances for referrals to higher hospitals. Delays of several hours after calling 108 have reportedly worsened patients’ conditions.

The government-run model, he said, aims to address these gaps and ensure timely, reliable and accountable emergency medical services across the State.

Actor Darshan’s wife, Vijayalakshmi, on Wednesday visited the city police commissioner’s office, questioning the lack of progress in the case registered over obscene comments and social media posts allegedly made against her family. She asked why no arrests had been made so far, despite the complaint. Vijayalakshmi met City Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh and CCB Joint Commissioner of Police Ajay Hilori and discussed the status of the investigation. She arrived at the office accompanied by her lawyer. CCB Deputy Commissioner of Police Qasim was also present during the meeting.

Darshan’s Wife Questions Police Inaction over Obscene Comments

BENGALURU

Shakti Yojana Increases Income of Muzrai Temples: Minister Ramalinga Reddy

BENGALURU

Transport and Muzrai Minister Ramalinga Reddy said that the Shakti Yojana, which allows women to travel free in state-run buses, has led to a significant rise in the number of devotees visiting temples across Karnataka, resulting in increased income for Muzrai temples.

Speaking to media persons after offering special prayers during the 43rd Vaikuntha Ekadashi Mahotsav at the Sri Prasanna Lakshmi Venkateswara Temple in Nanjappa Reddy Layout, Koramangala, the minister said free bus travel has enabled more women and families to visit temples, especially on auspicious days. As a result, temple revenues have grown considerably, he added.

Ramalinga Reddy noted that the surge in devotees has also benefited local traders. “Flower, fruit, coconut and other stalls around temples are witnessing good business. This has strengthened the financial condition of small traders who depend on temple-related activity,” he said.

He said Vaikuntha Ekadashi was being celebrated with great devotion across the state, with special pujas and distribution of prasad arranged in all Muzrai temples. Adequate facilities had been put in place to ensure smooth darshan for devotees. “This year, nearly 40,000 laddus are being distributed as part of



the celebrations,” the minister said.

Thousands of devotees visited the Koramangala temple from early morning and had darshan of the deity through the Vaikuntha Dwara. The minister expressed hope that the blessings of Lord Govinda would be upon the government’s welfare schemes and contribute to the overall development of the state.

Trust president S Jayaram Reddy shared the history of the temple, stating that it was established around 120 years ago after idols of Mutarayya Swamy and Ishwara were found while ploughing fields. Later, an idol of Lord Venkateswara was installed. To seek the blessings of great spiritual leaders, idols of Sai Baba, Dattatreya, Adi Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya and Madhvacharya were also consecrated in the temple.

Trustees Purushottam Reddy, Somashekar Reddy, Venugopal Reddy, Chandrappa and villagers from Koramangala were present on the occasion.

At 70, MLA Suresh Kumar Pedals 702 km to Kanyakumari in 5 Days

BENGALURU

At an age when many slow down, Rajajinagar MLA and former minister Suresh Kumar has sent out a powerful message on resilience and recovery by cycling 702 km from Bengaluru to Kanyakumari in just five days. The feat comes months after he battled chikungunya encephalopathy (CE), a rare and serious neurological complication that had left him bedridden and unable to move even his fingers.

For Kumar, now 70, the journey was far more than a physical challenge. It symbolised determination, faith in fitness and the human ability to bounce back from severe illness. He was part of a 12-member cycling group that completed the ride under the banner Rajajinagar Pedal Power.

The long-distance ride had originally been planned for 2024 to mark 50 years since Kumar’s first Bengaluru-Kanyakumari cycling expedition. However, those plans were derailed in August 2024 when he was diagnosed with CE following a chikungunya infection. After spending nearly two to three months recovering, Kumar gradually returned to cycling in March 2025, crediting the sport for restoring his strength, balance and confidence.

In December 2025, he finally realised his long-cherished goal. The group began the journey on December 23,



leaving Bengaluru at 4 am. On the first day, they covered 157 km in about 8.2 hours of cycling. The second day saw them ride 159 km in 8.3 hours, followed by 155 km in 8.1 hours on day three. On the fourth day, they clocked another 156 km in 8.2 hours, before completing the final 73 km stretch in four hours on the fifth day. In total, the cyclists covered 702 km in nearly 37 hours of riding time.

Recalling his lifelong association with cycling, Kumar said the bicycle had been an inseparable part of his life. “I grew up cycling everywhere. Even during my early years as an advocate, I would cycle to the High Court. I took a brief break after entering politics, but I returned to cycling with renewed purpose,” he said.

Fellow cyclist Prashant Sadashiv Patil described Kumar as a constant source of motivation during the journey. “He inspired us with stories and taught us the importance of team bonding. It is time every constituency promotes cycling to bring back the habit in Bengaluru,” he said. For many, Kumar’s journey stands as a reminder that age, illness and public life need not be barriers to fitness and perseverance.

Ashoka Slams Government over Illegal House Allotments

BENGALURU

Leader of the Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly, R. Ashoka, on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on the Congress government, alleging that it has failed to provide government residences to opposition leaders while allegedly allotting houses to those who have “illegally encroached” on land.

Addressing a press conference at Vidhana Soudha, Ashoka claimed that the government had started a “dangerous and bad tradition” by building houses for land encroachers, which, he alleged, was encouraging the land mafia. “This government has not yet given us, the opposition leaders, a government residence. I have written five letters, and Chalavadi Narayanaswamy has written seven or eight letters. But there has been no response,” he said.

Referring to the recent controversy over the demolition of illegal settlements at Kogilu Cross near Yelahanka, Ashoka said Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had criticised the clearance of encroachments on government land in the area. He alleged that about ₹100 crore was being spent on a solid waste



Opposition leader alleges Congress government favours encroachers while denying basic facilities to elected leaders

management unit project at the site, and claimed that illegal migrants from Bangladesh were residing there with fake Aadhaar cards.

Ashoka accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of deciding to provide houses to these occupants under the Ashraya scheme “in the name of humanity”. He said the land in Survey No. 99, spread over nine acres, originally had rocky terrain that was later used as a stone quarry before being earmarked for waste disposal.

“The procedures prescribed for building houses under the shelter scheme have not been followed,” Ashoka alleged. He pointed out that encroach-

ments had been cleared in over 40 locations across Bengaluru. “Does this mean humane houses will be built for everyone who encroaches on land? This is nothing but encouragement to thieves and land grabbers,” he said.

Questioning the legal basis for the move, Ashoka asked under which scheme the Chief Minister was providing houses and whether the land encroachment mafia was being legitimised. He further alleged that such actions could lead to the growth of drug networks and social instability.

Ashoka said he had written to the Chief Minister demanding clarity on the Kogilu Layout issue. “If new laws are made in the name of human rights, lakhs of acres of land in the State will be lost,” he warned, adding that the BJP would launch statewide protests if the government continued on this path.

DEMOLITION POLITICS

Bulldozer Row Draws Pakistan’s Attention; No Minority Appeasement: DK Shivakumar

BENGALURU

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Wednesday firmly rejected opposition allegations of minority appeasement in the State government’s handling of encroachments, asserting that there would be no “gifting of land” or benefits to illegal occupants and that strict action would be taken against those who enabled such settlements.

Responding to BJP charges that the Congress government was pursuing appeasement politics, allegedly with an eye on the Kerala Assembly elections next year, Shivakumar said encroachments were unacceptable under any circumstances. “There is no appeasement politics. Encroachment is encroachment, whoever does it,” he said, adding that the government would proceed strictly against facilitators who allowed illegal settlements to come up.

Shivakumar said several evictees had given statements alleging that intermediaries collected money and permitted them to put up sheds on encroached land. “We will



take action against those who facilitated this. On humanitarian grounds, housing will be provided to eligible evictees under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana,” he said, stressing that eligibility would be strictly verified.

He added that land rights in the area would be reviewed in detail, with special focus on

the timeline of occupation. “Some land rights were granted earlier. I have asked officials to verify these claims. But there are also outsiders who have encroached more recently. We will identify original settlers and ensure rehabilitation only for those who are genuinely eligible,” Shivakumar said.

Reacting sharply to criticism from Kerala MPs over his earlier remark that the encroachment issue was Karnataka’s internal matter, Shivakumar said his government knew how to administer the State. “Yes, we are running our government well. They can make whatever statements they want. We will not allow encroachments,” he said, adding that those criticising Karnataka had failed to deliver on promises even during floods in their own State.

On comments by Pakistan’s External Affairs Minister regarding the Kogilu encroachments, Shivakumar said the matter would be responded to by senior national leaders. Addressing BJP allegations that some evictees were Rohingya from Bangladesh, he said officials were investigating reports of individuals possessing identity cards from two States.

Clarifying the government’s stand, Shivakumar reiterated, “We will rehabilitate only genuine, eligible local residents. We are not regularising encroachments, nor appeasing anyone.”

BENGALURU

More than 150 people have sought emergency assistance through the ‘Safe Connect’ feature on the Karnataka State Police (KSP) mobile application over the past 11 months, highlighting its growing role in enhancing public safety.

Activated in December 2024, Safe Connect enables users to establish instant two-way audio and video communication with the police command centre. The facility allows callers to share their live location, helping police assess situations in real time and respond swiftly.

Police officials have cited several instances where the feature proved effective. In one case, a homemaker travelling alone to Kempegowda International Airport alerted the command centre about her cab driver’s reckless driving. Personnel at the city police commissioner’s command centre on Infantry Road tracked her live location and spoke directly to the driver, warning him to slow down. The woman later contacted the centre again to thank the police after safely reaching

the airport.

In another incident, a college student walking home late at night used Safe Connect to stay connected with the police until she reached safely. According to Joint Commissioner of Police (Administration) Kuldeep Kumar Jain, the two-way audio-video capability gives officers a clear understanding of the caller’s surroundings and the seriousness of the situation, enabling patrolling teams to reach the spot quickly.

“All calls made through Safe Connect are recorded and stored on police servers for at least one year, and can be used as evidence if required,” Jain said.

To access the feature, users need to open the KSP app, navigate to the report section, and select Safe Connect. A red button appears, which when pressed, instantly connects the user to the police command centre through live audio and video.

Officials said the feature is particularly useful for women, senior citizens and people travelling alone, and urged citizens to make use of it responsibly.



BWSSB to Hold Water Adalat across Bengaluru Today

BENGALURU

The Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has organised a water adalat across various city subdivisions on Thursday to address consumer grievances. The adalat for East 1-1 will be held at BEML Layout; East 2-1 at Kalyana Nagar; Southeast 1 at Halasuru; Southeast 4 behind Indiranagar Club; West 1-1 at Vijayanagar 2nd Phase; West 2-1 at Rajarajeshwari Nagar; Northwest-1 behind Rajajinagar Vidya-vardhaka School; Northwest-3 at MEI Layout on Hesaraghatta Road; Central 1-1 at High Grounds; and North 1-1 at Jakkur. The BWSSB Public Relations Officer said grievances can also be sent via WhatsApp to 8762228888.

QUICK READ

Committee meeting focuses on employee welfare

KOPPAL

The District Joint Consultative Committee held a meeting to discuss facilities and support for government employees working under pressure to serve the public. District Commissioner Dr. Suresh B. Itnal, who chaired the meeting, assured that proposals will be submitted to the government to provide necessary amenities for staff. Officials from various departments and employee union representatives participated in the meeting at the DC office. Dr. Itnal highlighted the need to construct hostels for employees in departments lacking accommodation and requested expanding the state health scheme (KASS) to cover more hospitals.

Blocked drain in Hubballi's Amar Colony floods homes

HUBBALLI

In Hubballi's Amar Colony, Gopan Koppa, Ward 40, residents are struggling as a blocked drain has caused water to overflow onto the streets and seep into homes for the past three to four months. The stagnant water has created unbearable conditions, with foul odors making daily life difficult. Despite repeated complaints to the local corporator, municipal staff have shown little action, leaving residents frustrated. People are forced to live in unhygienic conditions, covering their noses indoors to cope with the stench. Locals have urged the municipal authorities to resolve the drainage problem immediately and restore proper sanitation to ensure residents' health and safety.

Balageri Bridge construction begins, restoring vital connectivity

ALLANAVAR

The Balageri bridge, which connects Benachi village, was completely washed away during the heavy rains of 2019, causing severe difficulties for locals, schoolchildren, and especially farmers. Following sustained reporting by Public Next news channel, the authorities responded to persistent public demands and sanctioned bridge construction at a cost of 2 crore. With special interest from Minister Santosh Lad, the bridge work has officially commenced, earning appreciation from the entire taluk. Farmers have expressed hope that the bridge will be constructed with high quality and durability, providing a permanent solution for the village.

Women prepare 3 quintals of sweet laddus

KAVITAL

For the Dasoha of Gavidheshwara Math in Koppla, villagers of Bagalavada came together to prepare sweet jaggery laddus. On Tuesday, women, youth, and village leaders gathered at Shambhavi Math to make the laddus. Under the guidance of cook Mallikarjun Diddagi, groups of women mixed boondi and jaggery to form the laddus. "Approximately three quintals of jaggery laddus have been prepared. The women participated voluntarily. On January 2, five quintals of jaggery laddus and five quintals of rice will be delivered to Koppla Math," said village leader Suryappa Sahukar.

KSRTC bus collides with lorry, multiple passengers injured

A horrific head-on crash near Lokapur left a KSRTC driver grievously injured and several passengers hospitalised, prompting investigation

BAGALKOT

A severe accident occurred near Lokapur outskirts when a KSRTC bus collided head-on with a lorry, resulting in the bus driver losing a leg and multiple passengers sustaining serious injuries. The accident took place on the Belagavi-Raichur State Highway. The injured were immediately transported to Lokapur Government Hospital for treatment. The impact of the collision caused the front portions of both the bus and the lorry to be completely damaged. Local police from



Lokapur arrived at the site to inspect and document the scene. Preliminary reports suggest that the bus and lorry were traveling in opposite directions when the collision occurred. The exact cause of

the accident is under investigation. Authorities have urged drivers and commuters to exercise caution on highways, especially during peak travel times and in areas with heavy traffic. Emergency services

responded quickly to the incident, helping to manage the injured and clear the wreckage. This accident highlights the need for road safety measures and strict adherence to traffic rules on busy state highways. Investigations by Lokapur police and traffic officials are ongoing to determine the factors leading to this unfortunate collision and to prevent similar accidents in the future. The injured are receiving medical care, and police continue to monitor the situation while gathering evidence from the accident site.



Newborn rushed under 0 traffic dies despite efforts

KOPPAL

A newborn baby who was rushed to KIMS Hospital in Hubballi under a special zero traffic arrangement passed away, as doctors could not save the infant despite continuous treatment. The baby was born on Sunday night at the Government Hospital in Kukunoor. Soon after birth, doctors noticed a serious medical condition, as the baby's intestines were outside the body. Due to this complication, the newborn was first admitted to the Mother and Child Hospital in Koppal for immediate care. As the baby's condition remained very critical, doctors advised shifting the infant to KIMS Hospital in Hubballi for advanced treatment. Understanding the urgency, the family and hospital staff sought help from the police department to ensure quick transport. Responding immediately, the police arranged a zero traffic corridor from Koppal to Hubballi. This special arrangement allowed the ambulance to move without any delay. With the support of five

A newborn shifted under a special zero traffic plan to Hubballi KIMS died, despite quick police action and medical efforts.

ambulances and coordinated police control, the newborn was safely transported to Hubballi in the shortest possible time. Doctors at KIMS Hospital began emergency treatment as soon as the baby arrived. Medical teams made all possible efforts to stabilize the infant and provide advanced care. However, hospital sources said that the baby's condition was extremely serious from the beginning. Despite the fast transport, careful handling, and continuous medical attention, the treatment did not succeed. The newborn passed away on Tuesday, leaving the family in deep grief. The incident highlights both the quick response of the police and health departments and the challenges faced in saving critically ill newborns, even when emergency systems like zero traffic arrangements are put in place.

‘D’sthala program encourages women empowerment’

KAGAWAD

A women's awareness meeting organized under the Dharmasthala Rural Development Programme was held at Ainapur town in Kagawad taluk. The programme focused on creating employment opportunities and encouraging self-reliance among women. Speaking at the event, Dharwad Regional Director Dayashil said that in ancient times, employment was seen as a quality linked only to men. However, times have changed, and today employment is a human quality open to everyone. He said any person can take up any job if they have the interest and determination. He added that the Dharmasthala Rural Development Programme plays an important role in building this confidence and mindset among people, especially women. He explained that many opportunities are available today to support self-employment.



Women should make use of these chances to lead independent and respectful lives. He said the rural development programme has introduced several schemes to support self-employment and appealed to women to benefit from them fully. Town Panchayat member Arun Ganiger appreciated the Dharmasthala organization for its strong social service activities. He said such programmes help improve the economic condition of families and strengthen society. Guest speaker Priyavanda Hulagabali delivered a talk on the role of women in managing families in the modern world. She explained how women balance work and family responsibilities and contribute equally to social progress. Town Panchayat President Kasturi Madival, district director Nagaratra Hegde, Sudha Nayik, Subhash Londe, project officer Sanjeev Marathi, Aravind Karchi, Savita Desai, Shivu Shipparamatti, and several other dignitaries were present. Hundreds of women from Ainapur and nearby villages participated in the programme and shared their experiences, making the event meaningful and encouraging.



CPI (M) demands action over senior officer's stay at Jindal guest facility

BALLARI

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has demanded action against Rohini Sindhuri, Secretary of the Commerce and Industries (Mines) Department, for staying at the private guest facility of the Jindal company during her recent visit to Ballari district. In a statement released on Tuesday, the CPI(M) district unit urged the Chief Secretary of the state government to take immediate action in this matter. The party stated that Jindal, apart from steel production, has recently acquired four mines through auction. It pointed out that during the auction process, the government violated Supreme Court directions, as reported by a high-level central committee to the apex court. The statement further said that Jindal has filed an interim application before the Supreme Court in connection with this issue and has named several government departments as respondents. Rohini Sindhuri, being the Secretary of the Commerce and Industries Department, has also been named as one of the respondents in the case. In such a situation, CPI(M) said, it is objectionable and inappropriate for the officer to accept hospitality from Jindal. The party claimed that this action raises serious doubts and creates suspicion about her conduct. It added that it is worrying that a senior government officer could ignore such a basic ethical issue. The party also criticised the larger practice of ministers, public representatives, and senior officials staying at Jindal facilities during visits to Ballari.



Pig theft case: Suspects caught a year later

MUDHOL

The police have caught three suspects in a pig theft case from 2024, recovering ₹5 lakh in cash and a pickup truck valued at ₹8 lakh. Officers involved in the operation were also rewarded for their efforts. Speaking at a press conference on Monday at the city CPI office, officials said that a complaint was filed on June 1, 2024, at Mudhol police station regarding the theft of 70 pigs worth ₹10.50 lakh from Yamanappa Bhajantri of Mugalkhod village. The investigation was led by DSP S. Roshan Zamir, CPI Mahadev Shirhatti, PSIs Ajith Kumar Hosamani and Prakash Muralan, and volunteers R.B. Katageri, B.D. Kuri, H.G. Madar, M.B. Dalavai, S.M. Bhadrashetty, Shri Kant Benakatti, M.L. Wadeyar,

B.R. Jagali, and C.M. Jatteppagol. The arrested suspects include Santosh Kumar Kamanna from Sindhnoor, Shivraj Kariyappa Loni from Devargudi, Sindhnoor, and Maruti Yallappa Koravar from Naganakal, Gangavati. Another suspect, Parashurama Bhajantri, had already been arrested earlier. Officials urged the public to cooperate with law enforcement to maintain peace in the district. They also reminded citizens that following traffic rules strictly, including wearing helmets and seatbelts, significantly reduces fatalities in accidents. For the New Year celebrations, police have ensured tight security. Strict action will be taken against those driving under the influence of alcohol to keep roads and public areas safe, said the Superintendent of Police.

Delay in rehabilitation projects raises serious concern

BALLARI

Even after approving rehabilitation project proposals worth ₹12,049.51 crore under the Comprehensive Environmental Plan for the Mining Impact Zone (CEPMIZ), the Karnataka Mining Affected Areas Rehabilitation Corporation (KMARC) has spent only ₹934.42 crore so far. This slow progress has caused strong dissatisfaction among the monitoring authorities. The Oversight Authority of KMARC, headed by retired judge Justice Sudarshan Reddy, has expressed serious concern over the delay in implementing projects. Large-scale illegal mining in districts such as Ballari, Chitradurga, Tumakuru, and Vijayanagar had earlier caused severe environmental dam-



age and affected the lives of local people. To address these issues, KMARC was formed in 2014 based on Supreme Court directions. The corporation has access to ₹24,929 crore, yet rehabilitation work remains slow. The issue was discussed in detail during the recent 24th meeting of KMARC. Out of 497 approved projects, detailed project reports (DPRs) have been prepared for only 349 projects worth ₹7,749.26 crore. Administrative approv-

al has been given to 281 DPRs amounting to ₹6,270.38 crore. However, DPRs for 148 projects worth ₹4,236.60 crore are still pending from various departments. Further, tenders have been called only for 203 projects, and work orders have been issued for just 189 projects worth ₹2,320.60 crore. Actual spending remains very low. Justice Sudarshan Reddy warned that if departments continue to show negligence, the matter may be reported to the Supreme Court for further directions. He suggested that senior officials from all departments, especially secretaries, must attend KMARC review meetings to speed up implementation and ensure timely rehabilitation of mining-affected areas.

HONOUR KILLING CASE

Minister calls for peace after honour killing in village

DHARWAD

Following the honour killing incident reported in Inam Veerapur village, Excise Minister R.B. Thimmapur has instructed the police and district administration to take all required steps to maintain peace and harmony in the village. He also directed officials to ensure proper compensation, safety, and support for the affected family, as per government rules. The minister reviewed the situation during a meeting held on Tuesday at the Deputy Commissioner's office in Dharwad. Speaking to officials, he described the incident as inhuman and deeply



disturbing. He said such acts weaken the social system and warned that strict action must be taken against those responsible. He stressed that all accused must be punished according to the law and asked officials to fully support government prosecutors to ensure

justice. R.B. Thimmapur said that based on the FIR already registered, all accused persons should be arrested without delay. He instructed officers to act carefully so that peace and unity in the village are not disturbed. While acknowl-

edging that the Revenue and Social Welfare departments had taken action, he noted that the response could have been quicker. The minister also pointed out that the lack of timely information from the intelligence wing was one of the reasons the incident could not be prevented. He said the Deputy Commissioner has ordered an inquiry into the actions taken by various departments after the incident. The investigation should be transparent, and a detailed report must be submitted. Deputy Commissioner Divya Prabhu said the district administration has addressed

several demands of the Vivekananda Doddmani family at the local level. Remaining demands will be forwarded to the government for approval. She added that peace meetings were held in the village and the family has been safely shifted back to their home. She further informed that villagers have assured cooperation in maintaining peace. Police security has been arranged in the village, medical care and counselling provided to the family, and ₹5 lakh compensation has already been released. As a precaution, continuous monitoring of the village and the family is being carried out.



QUICK READ

Town police arrest two for selling ganja

HUVINAHADAGALI

Police arrested two men involved in ganja trading in town and surrounding villages. Near Nandipur Dodbasaveshwar hill, Sunil Naik from Dasarahalli village was caught with 393.85 grams of ganja worth 10,000. In another operation near a dairy farm on the outskirts of Ittigi village, Shrivashankar Bidari, originally from Shidenuru village in Byadgi taluk, Haveri district, was seized with 100 grams of ganja valued at 5,000. Both suspects were taken into custody and handed over to the court. The police have emphasized continued vigilance to curb illegal drug trade in the area.

Railway Min V. Somanna to visit Koppal today

KOPPAL

Union Minister of State for Railways and Water Resources, V. Somanna, is scheduled to visit Koppal district on January 5, 2026. The visit will begin at 10:30 AM from Toranagal, with the minister arriving in Koppal by 11:30 AM via a special train. He will lay the foundation stone for the construction of a railway overbridge (ROB) replacing Level Crossing 77 between Ginigera and Munirabad stations. Afterwards, Minister Somanna will attend local programs organized in Koppal. In the evening, he will participate in the grand festival at Shri Gavimath and engage with residents during the celebrations. The visit will conclude with his return journey to Bengaluru at around 6:30 PM.

Subcontractors clash with police over unauthorized protest

DHARWAD

In Dharwad, a heated argument broke out between police and subcontractors outside the Deputy Commissioner's office after authorities denied permission for a planned protest. Subcontractors from the 69 Assembly constituency alleged improper allocation of funds and work contracts, and had pitched a tent to stage a demonstration. Police ordered them to remove the tent, warning that the protest was unauthorized. The protesters insisted their demands had been ignored despite repeated requests, but officials maintained no permission had been granted and threatened to dismantle the setup themselves. The disagreement escalated into a tense standoff, highlighting rising frustrations among subcontractors over administrative issues.

New Year celebrations with fruits and vegetables

YADGIR

This year, the New Year celebrations in the district took a unique and healthy turn. Instead of the traditional cake, farmers and local residents chose to cut and share fruits and vegetables, highlighting the importance of nutritious food and conscious living. The initiative was organized by the Sri Hanuman Trust a day ahead of the New Year to raise awareness among the public. The trust encouraged people to avoid harmful activities like oil parties, animal sacrifices,

and excessive drinking during celebrations. Youth were urged to participate in the festivities in a safe and meaningful way. Participants were advised to drink sugarcane juice instead of alcohol and to consume fruits and vegetables rather than chicken or mutton. This approach was meant to promote both health and ethical practices during the holiday. The celebration also aimed to set a positive example for younger generations, showing that festivals can be enjoyed in a fun yet responsible manner.

Traffic begins on newly completed Kumta-Shirsi highway

Traffic has officially completed Kumta-Shirsi highway, easing travel and offering major relief to commuters

KUMTA

Traffic on the newly completed Kumta-Shirsi highway officially began today, providing relief to commuters and local travelers. MLA Dinakar Shetti flagged off bus and light vehicle movement on the route this morning. He mentioned that heavy vehicles will continue to be restricted for another week. Bus services have started following the permits issued by the district authorities.

Some work near Belle village, close to Antravalli, is still pending as landowners are abroad, delaying compensation payments. To assist commuters during construction, free tempo services were arranged from Kumta to Devimane Ghat. Officials have conducted several meetings to ensure the remaining work is completed quickly. MLA Shetti added that MP Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri coordinated with ministers and officials to speed up progress. This year's unusually heavy rains also caused delays. Any remaining defects



will be corrected by RNS company officials. The inauguration was at-

tended by local leaders, including Gram Panchayat President Devu Gowda, Vice President Ravi Hegde, former Zilla Panchayat member Gajanan Pai, RFO Preeti Naik, BJP taluk president G.I. Hegde, and other prominent members of the community.

With the highway now open, travel between Kumta and Shirsi is expected to become faster, smoother, and safer, improving connectivity and convenience for thousands of daily commuters.



Villagers demand strict punishment against honor killing

KUNDGOL

The family of a man and a young woman killed in an alleged honor killing in Inam Veerapur village of Hubballi Taluk has urged the Governor to ensure strict punishment for the accused.

On Monday, Mahesh Shanbala, head of the Taluk-based Chalavadi Social Welfare Committee, submitted a memorandum emphasizing swift justice through a fast-track court.

Speaking about the incident, leaders Gurunath Chalavadi, Suresh Makappanavar, Parashuram Veernayak, and Adivappa Hebasur said the accused not only murdered the young woman but also attacked Vivekananda Madar and his family.

They demanded that strict legal action be taken without any leniency.

Earlier, the group marched from Ambedkar Puttali to the Tahsildar office to submit their appeal.

Participants in the protest included Lokesh Bevinamard, Sharif Jogammanavar, Ravi Danammanavar, Kantesh Dodmani, Mailarappa Langa-tada, Fakkhires Mukashi, Ramesh Chalavadi, Ajjappa Talawara, Parashuram Chalavadi, Basavaraj Gudenkatti, Chandru Kale, Manjunath Kalawad, Ravi Kaali, Neelappa Harijan, and Govindappa Kaali, among others.

Rotary Club of Dandeli donates barricades to police

DANDELI

The Rotary Club of Dandeli demonstrated its commitment to social service today by donating five barricades to the city police. DY SP Shivanam Madarakam praised the club's efforts, calling their support highly commendable.

The donation ceremony took place at the city police station premises. Speaking on the occasion, DY SP Madarakam said, "It is encouraging to see the Rotary Club assisting the police department in all its activities. Contributions like these are vital for maintaining safety, discipline, and smooth functioning during public events."

Rotary Club President Ashutosh Kumar Roy explained that the barricades will help the police manage crowds efficiently and maintain public safety during festivals, gatherings, emergen-



Rotary Club donated five barricades to the city police, aiding public safety and crowd management during festivals, emergencies, and other special events.

cies, and other special occasions. "This initiative reflects our club's continuous dedication to community welfare and assisting law enforcement," he added.

The event was attended by PSIs Amin Attar, Kiran Patil, and Jagdish Nayka, along

with Rotary Secretary Mithun Nayak and club leaders Sudhakar Shetty, Rahul Bawaji, Abhishek Kanyadi, and Havaldar Mahadev Balega.

Such initiatives are expected to strengthen police efforts in crowd management and ensure a safer environment for citizens during large gatherings. The collaboration between the Rotary Club and the Dandeli Police highlights the importance of community participation in public safety and demonstrates the club's ongoing role in promoting social welfare in the region.

12 students injured as bus overturns in Sirsi

SIRSI

A bus carrying students on a college trip overturned at Mattighatta Samipada Hase-mane turn in the taluk, leaving 12 students injured.

The students, from Jain PU College in Davanagere, were traveling on a planned excursion to Shirsi Marikamba Temple, followed by visits to Yana and Vibhuti Falls. During the journey, the driver reportedly lost control of the bus at a sharp turn, causing it to overturn.

The impact of the accident shattered the bus's glass panels, and several students suffered minor injuries from the broken glass. In total, 50 students were traveling on one bus and one TT vehicle. The injured students were quickly taken to hospitals in Ankola and Shirsi for treatment. Thankfully, there were no fatalities.

Police have registered a

case at Shirsi Rural Police Station to investigate the incident. Authorities are looking into the cause of the accident, including the bus's speed and road conditions. Efforts are being made to ensure that all injured students receive proper medical attention and recovery support.

The college administration, along with the bus operators, is coordinating with parents and guardians to provide assistance and updates on the students' conditions. Local residents who witnessed the accident helped in providing first aid and called emergency services promptly.

This incident highlights the importance of road safety, especially during group trips and excursions involving students. Authorities are reminding drivers to maintain control, follow speed limits, and drive cautiously on sharp turns to prevent similar accidents in the future.

Court imprisons man convicted of assaulting minor

KOPPAL

A Koppal court has sentenced Mohammad Soyib to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment and imposed a fine of ₹25,000 for sexually assaulting a minor girl.

The verdict was delivered by Additional District and Sessions Court, Special POC SO Judge Kumar D.K. on December 23.

According to the case details, Soyib had known the girl was underage but maintained a relationship with her for two years. During this period, he repeatedly assaulted her. After the girl became pregnant, he allegedly kidnapped her.

The girl's mother filed a complaint at the Koppal Women's Police Station.

PSI Nagappa handled the initial investigation, while PI Anjaneya D.S. conducted further inquiry. Their investigation

confirmed the charges, leading to the submission of a charge sheet in court. Hanumantgowda P.C. assisted in the investigation and evidence collection.

The case was registered under Special SC [POC-SO] No. 62/2024. After examining the evidence and witness testimonies, the court found the accused guilty and ordered



him to serve 20 years in prison along with paying the fine.

Special Public Prosecutor Gauramma Desai represented the government and presented arguments in court, while Munirabad Police staff, including Prakash, helped bring witnesses for trial.

The judgment highlights strict enforcement of the POC SO Act and sends a strong message against crimes involving minors, showing the commitment of authorities to protect children.



Tulajabhavani Shai Kashtika distributes assistive devices

MUDHOL

In a special event organized by Tulajabhavani Shai Kashtika in collaboration with the Rural Development Society of Mudhola, equipment was distributed to primary school children with disabilities. The initiative focused on providing tools that help children improve their learning and daily independence.

Retired D.D.W.S.S. Belagalimathanadi Sangam, who has been working for over ten years to support thousands of disabled children, spoke about the positive impact of these devices. He encouraged parents to guide their children in using the equipment effectively to see noticeable improvements in the future.

A total of 23 children received assistive devices

during the program. Representatives from the APD organization, including Govinda Pujari, Che Thana Patil, Geeta Patil, and Lakshmi Madanashetti, participated and shared insights on supporting differently-abled children.

Ramesh highlighted the steps taken for the initiative, while other key participants such as Sibbam Di Raghuhugara, Kashavva Arakere, and Sri Shai Layam Digere were also present to support the program.

The event aimed to empower handicapped children, giving them tools to enhance their education and independence.

Organizers emphasized the importance of community support in helping children with disabilities reach their full potential and lead productive lives.



Pratibhakaram Ji applauded for mentoring young talents

ANKOLA

Pratibhakaram Ji has been praised as an excellent mentor for nurturing children's talents. Shaki Lata Nayaka, Deputy Director of the School Education Department, said the district-level talent and arts competition has inspired young students, giving them confidence to participate in literature, art, and cultural activities. The event was inaugurated at Swatamtrya San Gram Bhavan on Tuesday, organized jointly by the district administration, school education department, and the office of field education officers. Shaki Lata Nayaka highlighted that students who take part in such competitions develop skills and confidence that will help them succeed in many important stages of life.

M. NR Hegade, Deputy Director of the District Education and Training Institute,

presided over the program and emphasized that children's learning should go beyond mathematics. Introducing students to arts, literature, and culture is vital for their overall growth. He added that understanding the meaning of life and gaining life education is as important as academic education.

Field Education Officer Mangala Lakshmi Patil welcomed the participants and delivered an introductory speech. Other dignitaries present included District Primary School Teachers' Association President Anand Du Gam Vakar, DYC Bhaskara Gam Vakar, Taluk Primary School Teachers' Association President Jagdeesha Nayaka, Taluk Undergraduate Employees' Association President Mahesh Nayaka, BRC De Varaya Nayaka, and Akshardasa Ha San Yozaki Padma Nayaka.

ORGANIC JAGGERY TREND

RIISING DEMAND FOR ORGANIC JAGGERY BOOSTS PRICES

BELAGAVI

Jaggery is seeing growing demand in local and regional markets, attracting both consumers and farmers. Organic jaggery is seeing growing demand in local and regional markets, attracting both consumers and farmers alike.

Organic jaggery prices have risen from ₹500-₹600 per 10 kg last year to ₹700-₹800 this year.

The growing interest is driven by health-conscious buyers, especially after the coronavirus pandemic. As a



result, more sugarcane farmers in villages like Mo Daga, Mavinakatti, and Honnihall have adopted organic farming, and the number of jaggery producers has increased.

Alemanemalee Ka Appiah from Mo Daga village said, "Sugarcane grown on three acres using organic methods yields around 40 tons per acre. From this, I make organ-

ic jaggery and sell it locally." Basavaraja Patil from Dumavinakatti explained that last year's harvest dipped slightly, but this year they aim to produce 120 quintals.

He added that buyers now include customers from Bangalore, Mysore, and Kerala, expanding the market significantly.

Producers also highlighted the demand for powdered jaggery, which allows small-scale farmers with homestead land to earn more income. Samtosha Kittoora, an organic jaggery maker in Kadabi,

Duyargatti taluk, said, "Around 50-60 farmers work in huts crushing sugarcane for 3-4 months annually. From 1.25 tonnes of sugarcane, more than 150 kg of jaggery is produced, ensuring income even after covering all costs."

The growing popularity of organic jaggery is benefiting both local farmers and consumers.

It not only promotes healthier food choices but also strengthens rural livelihoods by encouraging sustainable and organic farming practices in the Belgaum district.

Police warn of strict action against unauthorised NY parties

Police warn strict action against unauthorized New Year parties as Tumakuru issues alerts and Davanagere enforces heightened security

TUMAKURU

District Police Superintendent Ashok has issued a stern warning that New Year celebrations conducted at farmhouses or any other locations without official permission will face immediate legal action. He clarified that parties involving alcohol cannot be organised without obtaining prior approvals from the Excise and Police Departments. Only events that secure necessary clearances from concerned authorities will be allowed. He urged the public to contact the police control room in case of any emergen-



cies during celebrations.

SP Ashok further stated that consuming alcohol in public places without permission is strictly prohibited. Over-speeding two-wheelers, dangerous stunts such as wheel-

ing and any form of harassment, especially against women, will be dealt with seriously.

Meanwhile, Davanagere police have intensified security measures as the city prepares to welcome the New Year. Police are already monitoring sensitive and highly sensitive areas to prevent untoward incidents. Briefing about security arrangements, SP Uma Prashanth said preparations are in place to register drink-and-drive cases, and celebrations must conclude by 1 am on December 31 night. Strict action will be taken against drunk driving, wheel-

ing and triple-riding.

She also warned that indecent behaviour in public places, misuse of loudspeakers, misbehaviour with women and children, causing public inconvenience, bursting crackers in crowded areas, posting or shouting provocative communal content, and moral policing will not be tolerated. Drones are being used to monitor key locations, while checkpoints have been set up for vehicle inspections. Across Davanagere, tight police security has been arranged to ensure a safe and peaceful New Year celebration.

Taluk hosts ‘Women’s Knowledge Development’ seminar

KOPPAL

A taluk-level Women’s Knowledge Development seminar was held on Wednesday at the Hanumasagara Karisiddeshwara Math in Kusthagi under the Dharmasthala Rural Development Project and the Jnanavikas programme. Speaking at the event, Taluk Project Officer Niranjana said women should not remain confined to household responsibilities alone but actively pursue education, employment, entrepreneurship and other fields. Women’s participation, he stressed, is vital for the holistic progress of society.

Dharmasthala Rural Development Association Director Prakash Rao noted that women hold an esteemed place in society, revered in various roles as daughters, mothers and wives.

A taluk-level seminar in Hanumasagara urged women to pursue education, jobs and entrepreneurship as Dharmasthala initiatives highlight empowerment and social progress goals

Lack of awareness is a major reason for backwardness, he said, adding that with proper business knowledge and legal awareness, women can excel in every sector. He also highlighted the importance of nutritious food, health awareness and economic independence.

Regional Director Chandrashekar said the Dharmasthala project has launched numerous initiatives to support

knowledge enhancement and upliftment. What began with limited resources has now expanded significantly, facilitating large-scale loan distribution and benefiting millions across Karnataka. The project currently supports around 5.5 million groups and has reached nearly 30 million beneficiaries statewide, focusing on poverty eradication without discrimination, he added.

The forum shared details of scholarships for over 1.17 lakh students, appointment of guest teachers in government schools and monthly financial assistance of ₹1,000 to 17,000 families. As part of the programme, rangoli competitions, nutritious food preparation contests, bouquet making and cultural events were organised, with prizes distributed to winners.

Belagavi Mayor’s selfie campaign boosts city cleanliness drive

BELAGAVI

For the past month, Belagavi City Corporation Mayor Mangesh Pawar and Deputy Mayor Vani Joshi have been leading a unique initiative titled “Selfie with Safai Mitra” to recognize and motivate civic workers while promoting a cleaner city. Unlike the stereotypical image of a mayor limited to official meetings, Pawar begins his day at 5:30 a.m., visiting different beat points, interacting with sanitation workers, clicking selfies with them, and listening to their concerns.

Every morning around 6 a.m., the Mayor and Deputy Mayor meet workers on duty, greet them with the slogan “Swachh Namaskar,” and encourage citizens to adopt the idea of “My Waste, My Responsibility.” They advise workers on safety measures during cold mornings and assure support in addressing issues they face on the field.

Inspired by cities like Indore, which leads national cleanliness rankings, the mayor is urging citizens to segregate waste into six categories—wet waste, dry waste, plastic, glass, electronic waste, and biomedical waste—for effective

disposal. Pawar says surprise visits help him understand ground realities better and build trust among staff, who feel genuinely appreciated.

Deputy Mayor Vani Joshi highlights that civic workers are like friends who keep the city functioning smoothly, and many female sanitation workers are now more confident sharing their challenges. Corporators too have lauded the effort.

The campaign has strengthened worker morale while spreading awareness on responsible waste management.

Life imprisonment for accused in murder case

CHIKKABALLAPUR

The First Additional District and Sessions Court in Chikkaballapur has sentenced two accused to life imprisonment in connection with the brutal murder of a youth that took place about three years ago near the ACC Cement Factory at Thondebavi village. According to case records, the accused Chandrashekar and Ashraf allegedly suspected the victim Venkatesh of having an illicit relationship with a woman known to them. Driven

by this grudge, they reportedly confronted him at his house on the night of January 21, 2023, assaulted him severely, and forcibly took him away despite his attempts to resist.

Eyewitness statements revealed that the accused beat Venkatesh with sticks and later transported his body towards a forested area nearly one kilometer from the factory. There, the victim was further assaulted, strangled to death, and the body was abandoned. To conceal the crime, the accused allegedly covered the body

with leaves and attempted to destroy evidence. After a detailed trial and examination of witnesses and evidence, Judge S.V. Haritha ruled that the prosecution had successfully proven the case beyond doubt. The court sentenced both accused to life imprisonment under IPC Section 302 along with a fine of ₹2 lakh. Additional imprisonment and fines were imposed under IPC Sections 201, 341, 506 and provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act against the second accused.

Farewell ceremony held for retiring teacher in Kukanur

KUKANUR

A heartfelt farewell program was organized for veteran teacher Veeranagouda Patil, who retired from government service after an illustrious career in the education department. Speaking at the ceremony held at the Government Kannada and English Medium High School in Kolipete, Taluk Employees’ Association President Maruti Talawar said that retirement is a natural process in government service, but teachers like Patil, who earn love and respect through dedication and compassion, become role models for others.

During his speech, Talawar highlighted that Patil worked with cooperation, patience, and commitment, rendering commendable service for nearly 31 years in the education sector. He expressed hopes that Patil would enjoy a peaceful and happy retired life. Teacher Mahesh Bedawatti also praised Patil, stating that his contributions to



the department were exceptional. Losing such an experienced teacher is painful, he said, but wished him a joyful future with his family.

The farewell event witnessed participation from Employees’ Association Treasurer Basavaraj Bellad, Gudusab Makandar, Abdul Devdurga, Sangappa Rajoor, Huligemma Vajrabandi, Shivakumar Muttal, Veeranna Konari, Shambulingappa Arishina, School Headmistress Krishnaveni Deekshit, teachers Shanta Katti, Renuka Badiger, Imam Kalbandi, and several students. The gathering reflected admiration and gratitude for Patil’s long-standing service and inspiring career.

Failed bank robbery attempt: Crores worth of gold remain safe

DHARWAD

A major bank robbery attempt was foiled in Dharwad district after unidentified miscreants tried to break into an SBI branch at Shirur village in Navalgund taluk on Tuesday night. The bank reportedly had gold ornaments worth around ₹5 crore and about ₹11 lakh in cash stored inside. However, the valuables remained completely safe thanks to the bungled attempt.

The burglars targeted the rear side of the bank building and began breaking the back wall late at night. After partially damaging the wall, the gang is believed to have fled when the loud noise raised suspicion, possibly fearing public attention or police alert. The incident came to light on Wednesday morning when bank staff arrived for work. A customer first noticed the dam-

aged wall and alerted the bank authorities.

Soon after, Navalgund Police and the forensic team rushed to the spot, inspected the premises, and registered a case. A search operation has been launched to trace the culprits.

Bank Manager Vinod Kumar Kamble stated that operations had closed as usual at 8 PM the previous night. He confirmed that although the bank housed high-value gold deposits and lakhs in cash, nothing was stolen. Only the wall suffered damage. He also mentioned that earlier the branch had a security guard, and following the incident, authorities have arranged for round-the-clock security starting immediately.

Police are verifying CCTV footage and local movements, and an investigation is underway.

Road safety awareness jatha in dist on Jan 2

CHIKKABALLAPUR

A district-level Road Safety Awareness Jatha has been scheduled for January 2 at 10:30 am, starting from the Chikkaballapur District Court premises. The program is being organized jointly by the District Administration, District Panchayat, Police Department, Road Transport Department, and Drivers’ Association to spread awareness about safe driving and traffic discipline. District & Sessions Judge and Chairman of the District Legal Services Authority, T.P. Ramalinga Gowda, will flag off the awareness march. District Commissioner P.N. Ravindredra, Zilla Panchayat CEO Dr. V. Naveen Bhatt, Superintendent of Police Kshetrachal Chaurasiya, Transport Department officials, municipal representatives, and Drivers’ Association members including President R.V. Abhilash and Working President T.M. Venkatesh will participate in the event. The program aims to encourage responsible road behavior among the public.

NAME CHANGE

I, AMIN KHAN, Resident of No.6, 7th Cross, Someshwara Nagar, Jayanagar 1st Block, Bengaluru-560011, have changed my name to AMEEN KHAN, Vide Affidavit Dated: 31.12.2025 before notary M. PRABHAKAR, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, A MOHAMMED SUFIYAN, S/o. Mohammed Akmal, Resident of No 07, 4th Cross Mukthi Nagar, Hidayath Nagar, K G Halli, A C Post Bengaluru -560045, Karnataka, have changed my name to MOHAMMED SUFIYAN, vide affidavit dated: 30.12.2025 before notary MEER HASSAN, Bengaluru.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Sri AMAR WARAD URUFF AMAR, aged about 33 years, S/o Channabassappa Residing at: No.Belaku 11A, 7th A Cross, Maruthi Layout, Dasarahalli Main Road, Hebbal Kempapura, Bangalore 560024, do hereby solemnly affirm: I state that my Name is AMAR WARAD URUFF AMAR. In My Educational Certificates/Documents mentioned as AMAR, and in my Aadhar Card, Pan and other documents my name mentioned is AMAR WARAD, So I declare to My name AMAR WARAD URUFF AMAR. At Present all the records have my new name AMAR WARAD. I state that this affidavit is sworn before so confirm that AMAR WARAD URUFF AMAR are one and the same person. Vide Affidavit Dated On : 30.12.2025, Sworn to Before, Notary and Advocate at L.B. Anasuyamma, BA, LL.B. at Bangalore.

CH CLASSIFIEDS

To place a classified ad contact: 080-41209042

Karnataka Forest Development Corporation Limited
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
Office of The Divisional Manager, Jinke Vana,
K.M. Road, Chikkamagaluru-577102
e-mail: dmknfdcckm901@gmail.com Ph.: 08262-295901
KFCD/DM/CKM/A-6/EXT&TRA/2025-26/492/Call-02 Date: 26.12.2025
Short-Term Re e-Tender Notice
e-Tender is invited within 17.30 hrs. of 05.01.2026 from Registered Forest Contractors to quote rates for implementation of the work of transportation to factory of the softwood available in the various plantations of this division for the year 2025-26 and cutting of the balance softwood in this division for the year 2024-25 and transporting to factory. Interested Contractors can obtain details from www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in and submit the tenders and for further details of Tender/open auction the above address can be contacted during working hours.
Sd/- Divisional Manager, K.F.D.C.L., Chikkamagaluru.
DIPR/ckm/No.130/25-26/ksnca/1502

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ
ಪಟ್ಟಣ ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಾಲಯ, ಬೋಗಾದಿ
ಮೈಸೂರು ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕು ಮತ್ತು ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ-570026, ದೂ:0821-2331099,
ಇ-ಮೇಲ್: itstaff_ulb_bogadi@yahoo.com, ಪೋಸ್ಟಲ್: www.bogadi.town.mrc.gov.in
ಸಂ: ಪ.ಪಂ.ಬೋಗಾದಿ/ಆ.ಪಾ./ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು/04/2025-26 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 31.12.2025
ಇ-ಪೋಸ್ಟಲ್ ಮೆಂಟ್ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ
ಬೋಗಾದಿ ಪಟ್ಟಣ ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಬೀದಿ ದೀಪ ನಿರ್ವಹಣೆಗಾಗಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ಸಂಗ್ರಹಣೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಪಾರದರ್ಶಕತೆ ಅಧ್ಯಾದೇಶ 1999 ಮತ್ತು ನಿಯಮಗಳು 2000ದಂತೆ ಅರ್ಹ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರುದಾರರಿಗಿಂದ <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> ಮೋರ್ಚಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರುನ್ನು ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದ್ದು, ಆಸಕ್ತ ಅರ್ಹ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರು ಬೆಂಗಳೂರುನಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸಬಹುದಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ.
1. ಪೂರ್ವಭಾವಿ ಸಭೆ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 09.01.2026 ಅರ್ಹರಾತ್ 3.00 ಗಂಟೆಗೆ
2. ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಕಡೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 16.01.2026 ಸಂಜೆ 5.00 ಗಂಟೆವರೆಗೆ.
3. ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 17.01.2026 ರ ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 5.30 ಗಂಟೆಗೆ ಅಥವಾ ಮುಂದೆ ಸೂಚಿಸುವ ದಿನಾಂಕದಂದು ತೆರೆಯಲಾಗುವುದು.
ಕ್ರ. ಸಂ. ವಿವರ ಅಂದಾಜು ಮೊತ್ತ (ರೂ. ಲಕ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ) ಇ.ಎಂ.ಡಿ ಮೊತ್ತ
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ಸೂಚನೆ: 1) ಕಾರಣಾಂತರಗಳಿಂದ ಮೇಲೆ ತಿಳಿಸಿದ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ದಿನಾಂಕಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಇತರೆ ಬದಲಾವಣೆಗಳಿದ್ದಲ್ಲಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ವಿವರಗಳಿಗೆ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರು <http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ನೋಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳುವುದು ಸಹ/- ಮುಖ್ಯಾಧಿಕಾರಿ
ವಾಸಾಸಂ/ಪ/ಮೈಸೂರು/451/ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು/2025-26 ಪಟ್ಟಣ ಪಂಚಾಯಿತಿ, ಬೋಗಾದಿ.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
PWD Ramanagara Division, Bengaluru South Dist.
Tender Notification No. : 16/2025-26 Date : 30-12-2025
TENDER NOTIFICATION
Tenders invited from qualified contractors for the works through KPPP Portal as per **Standard Bid Documents**. The eligible Contractors can participate in this Tender through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> (Estimate Cost Rs. 100.00 to 700.00 Lakhs).
SI. No. (01) to (06) : Documents may be Downloaded from : 31-12-2025 & Last Date for Submission of Tender : 27-01-2026 upto 16.00 hours, Date of Opening of Technical Bid : 28-01-2026 at 16.30 hours. (If possible) Tender Processing Fees and E.M.D. as per E-procurement.
SI. No. (07) to (12) : Documents may be Downloaded from : 31-12-2025 & Last Date for Submission of Tender : 14-01-2026 upto 16.00 hours, Date of Opening of Technical Bid : 16-01-2026 at 11.00 hours. (If possible) Tender Processing Fees and E.M.D. as per E-procurement.
For more information contact the above Office during Office Hours.
Sd/- Executive Engineer,
PWD, Ramanagara Division,
Bengaluru South Dist.
DIPR/Ramanagara/534/Manipal/2025-26

Notice
This is to inform you that our **Margosa Road 10Th Cross Branch, Malleshwaram, is shifting to "Makam Plaza", 3rd Main Road, 18th Cross Road, Malleshwaram, Bangalore & Karnataka - 560055 in March 2026.**
The existing lockers too will be relocated to the new address.
Contact the Branch Manager for any details.
Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd.

ಮರಸಭಾ ಕಾರ್ಯಾಲಯ ಅನೇಕಲ್
ಅನೇಕಲ್ ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕು, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ನಗರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ - 562106
ದೂರಸಂಖ್ಯೆ : 080-27859225, ಫ್ಯಾಕ್ಸ್ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ:080-27830092, E-mail : itstaff_ulb_anekal@yahoo.co.in
ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ : ಪು.ಆ/ಆ.ಪಾ./ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು/08/2025-26 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 31.12.2025
ಮರುಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ
(ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ. ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಮಾತ್ರ)
ಅನೇಕಲ್ ಪುರಸಭೆಯ ಪುರಸಭಾ ನಿಧಿಯಡಿ ಮತ್ತು ಪರಿಸರ ಪರಿಹಾರ ನಿಧಿಯಡಿ ಈ ಕೆಳಕಂಡ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಅರ್ಹ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಂದ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರು/ ಬಿಡ್ಡಾರದಿಂದ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಅಪ್ಪಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದ್ದು, ಸ್ಪಂದರ್ಡ್ ಡಾಕ್ಯುಮೆಂಟ್‌ನ ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ. ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ <http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> ಮುಖಾಂತರ ಈ ಕೆಳಕಂಡ ಸಹಿ ಮಾಡಿರುವವರು ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಿರುತ್ತಾರೆ. ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ ಕಛೇರಿಯ ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಶಾಖೆಯ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳಿಂದ ಮಾಹಿತಿಯನ್ನು ಪಡೆಯಬಹುದು. ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಡಾಕ್ಯುಮೆಂಟ್ ಮತ್ತು ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ. ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ನಲ್ಲಿ ನಿಗದಿಪಡಿಸಿರುವ ಮಾನದಂಡಗಳ ಅಧಾರದ ಮೇಲೆ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರುಗಳ ಮೌಲ್ಯಮಾಪನ ಮಾಡಲಾಗುವುದು ಮತ್ತು ಯಶಸ್ವಿ ಬಿಡ್ಡಾರದವನ್ನು ಆಯ್ಕೆ ಮಾಡಲಾಗುವುದು.
ಕ್ರ. ಸಂ. ಕಾಮಗಾರಿ ವಿವರ ಇಂಡೆಂಟ್ ಸಂ. ಅಂದಾಜು ಮೊತ್ತ (ಲಕ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ) ಇ.ಎಂ.ಡಿ (ರೂ.ಗಳಲ್ಲಿ)
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ವೇಳಾಪಟ್ಟಿ : (1)ಕ್ರ.ಸಂ.01ರ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವ ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 08.01.2026 ರಂದು ಸಂಜೆ 05.30 ಘಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ (2) ಕ್ರ.ಸಂ.02ರ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವ ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 20.01.2026 ರಂದು ಸಂಜೆ 05.30 ಘಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ (3)ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ ಕೆ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ. ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ನೋಡಬಹುದು.
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MAHANAGARA PALIKE, KALABURAGI
Ph.:08472/278675 Fax :08472/260776, E-mail : itstaff_ulb_gulbarga@yahoo.com
No: KMP/EE/Amrut 2.0/RI/ 2025-26 Date: 29.12.2025.
KARNATAKA PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PORTAL TENDER NOTIFICATION NO: 03 /AMRUT2.0/ 2025-26
Kalaburagi Mahanagara Palike, Kalaburagi invites **01 Tender cum Reverse Auction** as per KTPP Act, 1999 and Rules, 2000 through KPP1 Portal 2.0 for Goods in KG-2 Tender bid documents under Reform Incentive Component under AMRUT 2.0 scheme for 30 Days Tender.
The bid documents can download from KPPP Portal website and any information related to these tenders will be updated on www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in
2) Estimate Sanction cost: **Rs. 790.00 lakhs**, 3) EMD Value: Rs. 11,71,700.00, 4) Contractor License: Firm Registration, 4) Pre Bid Meeting date: **20.01.2026 at 11-30 am**. 4) Last date of Bid Submission: **30.01.2026 upto 4-30 pm**. 5) Technical Bid Opening date: **31.01.2026 upto 4-35 pm**. 6) Financial Bid Opening date: **04.02.2026 after 11-30 am**. 7) Office Address: Executive Engineer, Kalaburagi Mahanagara Palike, Kalaburagi. 8) For more details visit Office Website <http://www.kalaburagicity.mrc.gov.in/>
Note: All subsequent corrigendum/amendment shall be published only on website and not in press. Hence, tenderers are advised to always be in touch with our said website until the tender is finally opened.
Sd/- Executive Engineer,
Kalaburagi Mahanagara Palike, Kalaburagi.
DIPR/Kalaburagi/908/KSMC&A/2025-26



QUICK READ

Centre bans high-dose nimesulide oral medicines

New Delhi

The Union Health Ministry has banned the manufacture, sale, and distribution of all oral medicines containing nimesulide above 100 mg, citing serious health risks. The decision follows a recommendation by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Officials said higher doses in immediate-release form could be dangerous, and safer alternatives are available. The notification, issued Monday, aims to protect public health and ensure safer pain management options. Pharmacists, manufacturers, and healthcare providers have been advised to comply with the ban immediately, while patients using high-dose nimesulide are urged to consult doctors for alternatives.

'Proxy' candidate caught in Kolkata Police exam scam

Kolkata

A man was arrested for appearing as a "proxy" in the Kolkata Police Sub-Inspector recruitment exam, police said Wednesday. Lakhai Ghosh, from Murshidabad, took the exam on behalf of the real candidate, Abdul Khaleque. The fraud was detected when Ghosh's signature and photograph did not match the admit card. Authorities detained Ghosh and began questioning him, while searching for Khaleque. Police are investigating whether a financial arrangement or a larger racket was involved. Earlier, malpractice allegations surfaced in Kolkata Police exams, leading to arrests for supplying fraudulent materials and electronic gadgets. Officials are probing a wider network of proxy candidates.

Allahabad HC quashes SC/ST case over land

NEW DELHI

The Allahabad High Court on Wednesday quashed a criminal case, including charges under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, arising from alleged land allotment irregularities dating back over two decades. A single-judge Bench of Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav ruled that merely mentioning Scheduled Caste land or the caste status of the informant does not attract the provisions of the special law. The judge described the case as "predominantly civil and revenue in nature" and said pursuing it criminally amounted to an abuse of the legal process. The court set aside the

Shiv Sena Slams BJP over Athawale's independent bid

MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena (UBT) on Wednesday criticised Union Minister Ramdas Athawale for deciding to contest the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections independently, saying the move highlighted the BJP's record of betraying allies. Athawale's Republican Party of India (A) announced on Tuesday that it would snap ties with the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance and contest the BMC polls alone. Reacting to the decision, Shiv Sena (UBT) spokesperson Anand Dubey said, "Ramdas Athawale is an experienced leader. He should know by now there is no ally the BJP

US Embassy warns against illegal immigration risks

Amid H-1B interview delays, the U.S. embassy warned Indian professionals to comply with laws, emphasizing commitment against illegal immigration

NEW DELHI

The United States Embassy in India on Wednesday issued a stern warning to individuals violating U.S. laws, cautioning that breaking the law could lead to "significant criminal penalties." The advisory also highlighted the Trump administration's ongoing efforts to curb illegal immigration and protect national borders and citizens. The warning comes amid growing concern among skilled professionals in India facing long delays and rescheduling of H-1B visa interviews. The embassy emphasised that individuals must comply with U.S. laws, noting that the administration is "committed to ending illegal immigration to the United



States."

A spokesperson from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said that the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency recently carried out operations targeting "the worst of the worst criminal illegal aliens," including those convicted of serious crimes such as child sexual abuse, domes-

tic violence, and alien smuggling. The spokesperson added that the agency's New Year resolution for 2026 is to continue such arrests. Throughout the past year, ICE conducted several raids to detain undocumented immigrants, drawing both support and criticism from the public. DHS noted that these actions are part of the admin-

istration's commitment to fulfilling Trump's campaign promise to strengthen border security and enforce immigration laws rigorously. Earlier this month, the U.S. government also introduced a major revision to the H-1B visa program, replacing the random lottery with a weighted system favouring highly skilled and higher-paid professionals. The changes, officials say, aim to prioritise talent that contributes significantly to the U.S. economy while ensuring compliance with immigration rules. The embassy's advisory serves as a reminder to Indian nationals seeking to enter the United States that legal channels must be followed, and violations can carry severe consequences.



CM Dhami orders improved care for tunnel injuries

DEHRADUN

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Wednesday reviewed the situation in Chamoli following a collision inside the Pipalkoti tunnel of the Vishnugad-Pipalkoti Hydroelectric Project, which left around 60 people injured.

The accident occurred late Tuesday when a locomotive train carrying workers and officials collided with another transporting construction materials inside the tunnel. The confined space and sudden impact triggered panic among workers, who struggled to find an exit.

CM Dhami said he is in constant touch with the District Magistrate of Chamoli and has directed authorities to provide enhanced medical care for all the injured, including referral to higher medical centres if required. "I pray for the speedy recovery of all the injured workers," he tweeted.

Chamoli District Magistrate Gaurav Kumar said 109 people were aboard the train carrying workers at the time, and about 60 sustained injuries. All those involved have been rescued, and the condition of the injured is reported stable.

CM Dhami, in constant touch with Chamoli authorities, directed enhanced medical care for all injured, including referrals to higher centres, and prayed for their speedy recovery

Ten patients were moved to the district hospital in Gopeshwar, while 17 others are being treated at Vivekananda Hospital in Pipalkoti.

The Sub-Divisional Magistrate added that locomotive trains are routinely used inside the tunnel to transport workers, officials, and construction materials, and the collision was an unfortunate accident during a shift change.

Rescue teams from the project management and local administration responded immediately, managing relief and medical aid on the spot.

The 444-megawatt Vishnugad-Pipalkoti project, under construction on the Alaknanda River between Helang and Pipalkoti, is designed to generate 111 megawatts of electricity per turbine. Project authorities aim to complete it by next year.

Following Sabina Bibi's complaint, ten arrests were made swiftly, though family alleged police delayed action against 28 named suspects

Mother attempts suicide after daughter's tragic death

KOLKATA

The mother of Tamanna Khatun, the minor girl killed in a crude bomb attack in Kaliganj, Nadia district, in June, attempted suicide at her home on Tuesday, police said.

Sabina Bibi reportedly consumed multiple sleeping pills, unable to cope with the loss of her daughter. Family members noticed the attempt and rushed her to Shaktinagar District Hospital in Krishnanagar, where she is undergoing treatment and is in stable condition. Police were later informed about the incident.

Tamanna Khatun had died on June 23 after crude bombs were hurled at her home during a victory procession following the Kaliganj Assembly bypoll results. Trinamool Congress candidate Alifa Ahmed had won, and Khatun's parents claimed their house was deliberately targeted due to their political affiliation with the CPI(M).



Since the attack, at least ten people have been arrested on suspicion of involvement, although Sabina Bibi had named 28 individuals in her complaint. The family alleged that police delayed action and shielded the actual culprits. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had instructed the authorities to arrest the accused swiftly and ensure strict punishment, after which the ten arrests were made within 24 hours.

The family also approached the Calcutta High Court seek-

ing justice and requested a CBI probe. In September, the state police filed a 340-page charge sheet, 84 days after the incident, beginning the formal legal process.

The suicide attempt reflects the deep trauma Sabina Bibi continues to endure. Family members said the emotional wounds remain raw, and the mother's action underscores the devastating impact of the violent attack on the household. Authorities are continuing to monitor her condition closely.

Three prisoners escape Jharkhand's high-security jail

HAZARIBAGH

Three convicted prisoners escaped from Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan Central Jail in Hazaribagh, Jharkhand, on Wednesday, sparking a massive manhunt and raising concerns over the prison's security, officials said. Jail Superintendent Chandrashekhar Suman confirmed that all three escapees are residents of Dhanbad district. Authorities are preparing detailed profiles of the fugitives to aid the ongoing search. The incident came to light during a routine headcount. Prison staff discovered the missing inmates when they were brought out of their barracks. An immediate internal search inside the

jail yielded no results, prompting the administration to alert district police and launch a large-scale search in surrounding areas.

Checkpoints in neighbouring districts have been reinforced to prevent the prisoners from fleeing further. Police teams are monitoring possible hideouts, and the search continues with full force. The escape has shocked officials because JP Jail is considered one of Jharkhand's most secure prisons, featuring five layers of security, round-the-clock CCTV surveillance, and armed guards at every entry and exit point. The facility houses high-profile criminals, Maoists, and undertrial prisoners.

3 family members die in Bihar suffocation tragedy

PATNA

Three members of a family in Gaya district, Bihar, died of suffocation after smoke from a charcoal brazier filled their room Wednesday night. The victims, Meena Devi (60) and her grandchildren Sujit Kumar (3) and Anshu Kumari (5), had lit the brazier to keep warm. With doors and windows closed, smoke accumulated, leaving them unconscious. They were rushed to a local hospital, where they were declared dead. Police said preliminary investigation points to asphyxiation and advised residents not to use charcoal braziers indoors. A post-mortem will confirm the cause.

HUMANIST REFORM JOURNEY

Sivagiri pilgrimage highlights Kerala's humanist legacy

VARKALA

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday said the Sivagiri pilgrimage, now in its 93rd year, continues to reflect the humanist and rationalist vision of Sree Narayana Guru, shaping the state's social and cultural life even after a century. Speaking at the Sivagiri Theerthadanam conference, CM Vijayan noted that with the centenary of the Guru's samadhi approaching in three

years, his teachings remain highly relevant in today's socio-political context. He emphasized that the pilgrimage was not merely a ritual but a historic declaration of social reform based on equality, fraternity, and reason.

Tracing Kerala's social renaissance to the Aruvippuram consecration, the Chief Minister recalled how the Guru directly challenged the caste system, which controlled occupation, rights, and even legal norms, reducing large sec-



tions of society to indignity and servitude. "We have no caste," the Guru had declared, seeking to dismantle caste hi-

erarchies rather than replace one with another, CM Vijayan explained.

Referring to the Guru's message from January 16, 1928, the Chief Minister highlighted that the pilgrimage was intended for all communities. The eight objectives outlined—education, cleanliness, organisation, agriculture, trade, handicrafts, and scientific training—focused on social and material progress, with education as a priority.

CM Vijayan said Kerala's

post-Independence reforms, including land reforms and the expansion of public education, were inspired by the Guru's humanist philosophy and laid the foundation for the state's distinctive development path.

In today's context of rising irrational beliefs and distorted histories, he said the Sivagiri pilgrimage reinforces values of reason, equality, and human dignity—essential principles for a democratic and inclusive society.

QUICK READ

Man dies in fiery vehicle crash in Andhra Pradesh

Amaravati

A man was killed and another injured after a Bole-ro vehicle collided with an unknown vehicle on the Nandyal-Amaravati high-way in Prakasam district Wednesday morning. The Bole-ro, carrying cashew, caught fire, trapping the driver, identified as Swamy (50), who was charred to death. The injured passenger, Kandipalli Jayarami Reddy, was hospitalized in Giddalur. Police are investigating and trying to trace the other vehicle. Separately, a bus collided with a truck in Telangana's Nalgonda district, injuring passengers, and a home guard was hurt in a hit-and-run in Hyderabad. Authorities urge caution on highways after these accidents.

Supreme Court directs businessman to approach High Court



New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday declined to hear a habeas corpus plea by businessman Umang Rastogi from Haldwani, Uttarakhand, alleging illegal arrest by Uttar Pradesh Police. A vacation bench, led by Justices MM Sundresh and Prashant Kumar Mishra, told Rastogi's lawyers to instead seek relief from the Allahabad High Court. The bench noted that a related plea concerning his father's arrest is already pending in the Delhi High Court. The court observed that the high court is the appropriate forum to handle such matters and advised the petitioner to follow the proper legal route for redress.



Gig workers' nationwide strike raises alarm, SP leader calls issue 'very serious'

NEW DELHI

A nationwide strike by gig workers on Wednesday has highlighted growing unrest among delivery partners working with app-based platforms, with Samajwadi Party MP Anand Bhadauriya calling the situation "very serious." Organised by several gig worker unions, the protest aimed to draw attention to low earnings, lack of social security, rising fuel and maintenance costs, and insufficient insurance and safety mechanisms. Bhadauriya said the issue has already been raised in Parliament, emphasizing the economic pressures faced by gig workers. "Many educated and highly qualified young people are unemployed, and a large number of them are working as delivery workers. Inflation has risen, family expenses need to be managed, and yet the same person is earning so little," he stated. On the ground, the strike's impact was uneven. Some delivery partners expressed con-

Indore water contamination sparks health crisis

The outbreak stemmed from a Narmada pipeline leak, with sewage contamination; residents' December 25 complaints went unaddressed

INDORE

A public health crisis has struck Indore, once celebrated as India's cleanest city, after contaminated municipal water in the Bhagirathpura locality reportedly caused deaths and widespread illness. While locals and Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava claim up to seven fatalities, MP Urban Development Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya said official figures would be released only after a thorough government and medical review to distinguish contamination-related deaths from natural causes. "Some deaths are natural; we will evaluate the situation properly before releasing data," Vijayvargiya told reporters, adding that he would remain in Indore until no new patients report symptoms. As of Wednesday, 116 peo-



ple have been hospitalised, with 36 discharged and over 100 still under treatment for vomiting, diarrhoea, and dehydration. Health authorities have surveyed 2,703 households, examined roughly 12,000 residents, and provided on-site care to 1,146 individuals with mild symptoms. The outbreak has been traced to a leak in the main

Narmada water pipeline, where sewage reportedly entered through a nearby toilet structure. Residents say complaints about foul-smelling water, first raised on December 25, were not promptly addressed. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced Rs 2 lakh compensation for families of confirmed victims and free

treatment for all affected, covering both public and private hospitals. Minister Vijayvargiya vowed strict action against the guilty. Three officials have faced disciplinary measures, including suspensions and terminations. A three-member inquiry committee, led by IAS officer Navjeevan Panwar, has been formed to investigate the incident. Four ambulances, 14 doctors, 24 health workers, and specialists from MY Hospital are on-site, while water samples are under testing and pipeline repairs continue. Opposition Congress leaders have accused the administration of negligence and cover-ups, calling the crisis a "blot" on the city's reputation. Authorities maintain that the situation is stabilising with enhanced medical support and monitoring.

Banerjee criticized SIR as a "massive scam," threatening EC gherao, citing AI errors causing deaths and hardships for elderly

BJP slams Mamata over Bengal SIR controversy

NEW DELHI

The political temperature rose on Wednesday as Bihar Minister Dilip Jaiswal launched a sharp attack on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over her opposition to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. Jaiswal said Banerjee "has lost her mind" and claimed her actions were harming the people of Bengal. Jaiswal criticised the Trinamool Congress (TMC) for allegedly supporting illegal immigrants. "The people of Bengal will never accept the way she has supported illegal immigrants and tried to protect them," he said. He echoed Union Home Minister Amit Shah's concerns, saying that illegal migration from



Bangladesh and other countries was infringing on citizens' rights and draining national resources. The confrontation comes after Banerjee's statements in Bankura, where she threatened to gherao the Election Commission (EC) office in Delhi if even a single legitimate voter's name was removed after SIR. She called the process a "massive scam" using artificial intelligence and claimed it caused hardship to poor and elderly citizens. "Around 60 people have died due to SIR. Elderly people are being called for document verification hearings," she said. Banerjee also rebutted accusations that West Bengal had become a hub for terrorists under her leadership. She questioned Union ministers over security incidents in Pahalgam and Delhi, insisting her state was unfairly targeted. The exchange highlights growing tensions between the BJP and TMC over voter registration and alleged illegal migration, with both sides intensifying their rhetoric ahead of upcoming political contests.

AIADMK condemns attack on Odisha worker in TN

CHENNAI

The AIADMK on Wednesday strongly condemned a brutal assault on a migrant worker from Odisha in Tiruttani, Tamil Nadu, blaming the DMK government for rising drug abuse and lawlessness in the state. AIADMK founder and former Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam described the incident, in which four teenage boys allegedly attacked the man with sickles, as "shocking" and deeply disturbing. He said the attack exposed the alarming penetration of narcotics among youth and warned that the state had increasingly become a haven for drugs. "The government must protect young people from falling prey to drugs and ensure strict action against traffickers," Panneerselvam said, urging Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to take urgent corrective measures and implement aware-

ness programmes to prevent similar crimes. The assault occurred on the evening of December 26 near railway quarters close to Tiruttani railway station in Tiruvalur district. Police said the four 17-year-old boys attacked the migrant worker, recording the assault on mobile phones and posting it online, sparking public outrage. Locals alerted authorities, and the injured man was rescued and hospitalised. Police have arrested all four minors and launched an investigation into the circumstances, including a possible link to narcotics. Authorities assured that strict action would be taken in accordance with the law. The AIADMK's statement highlighted growing concerns about youth drug abuse and public safety, calling on the government to enforce stringent measures to curb narcotics and ensure the protection of vulnerable communities in Tamil Nadu.

BJP Veteran Naveen Sinha honoured in Patna

PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Wednesday paid heartfelt tribute to veteran BJP leader Naveen Kishore Prasad Sinha on his 20th death anniversary at Naveen Sinha Park. Sinha, father of BJP National Working President Nitin Nabin, was remembered as a symbol of simplicity, dedication, and tireless public service. The ceremony was attended by Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, Deputy Chief Ministers Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, senior BJP leaders, party workers, and hundreds of supporters. Floral tributes were offered at Sinha's portrait and statue, as leaders recalled his pivotal role in strengthening the BJP in Bihar.

KSRTC POLITICAL DISPUTE

Kerala bus row escalates between Minister, Mayor

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The controversy over city e-buses in Thiruvananthapuram intensified on Wednesday, as Kerala Transport Minister K.B. Ganesh Kumar responded to Mayor V.V. Rajesh's allegations about the deployment of buses outside city limits. The dispute began after Mayor Rajesh claimed that KSRTC had shifted the Corporation's e-buses to other districts under political pressure. Ganesh Kumar, a former

film star, countered that the buses were procured under a state-led project, with the government contributing Rs 500 crore—60% of the total cost—and that KSRTC purchased 113 e-buses through a three-party agreement. The Minister clarified that the buses were not being operated elsewhere due to maintenance challenges, citing that replacing a single damaged battery could cost Rs 28 lakh. He also offered to return all 113 e-buses to the Corporation within 24 hours if re-



quested in writing, while noting that the buses would not be allowed to be parked at KSRTC premises. Ganesh Kumar suggested that the Mayor had been misinformed and emphasized that KSRTC provided drivers, conductors, and workshop facilities for the buses. "We are ready to return the vehicles without any hesitation," he said. Mayor Rajesh insisted that e-buses should serve residents within the city limits and accused political influence of altering the deployment. He

stressed that contract terms could not be changed arbitrarily and called for the Corporation's rightful share of profits from bus operations. The row comes months after the BJP made history by winning the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation for the first time, ending over four decades of CPI(M)-led Left Front rule. The ongoing tension highlights challenges in managing e-mobility projects amid political transitions and administrative responsibilities in the city.



Rajnath, CM Yogi offer prayers at Ayodhya temples

AYODHYA

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday visited Ayodhya's Hanuman Garhi and Shri Ram Janmabhoomi complex to offer prayers and participate in devotional rituals. The leaders began their visit at Hanuman Garhi, where they performed aarti and offered obeisance to Lord Hanuman amid chants of "Jai Shri Ram" and Vedic mantras. They later proceeded to the Ram Lalla temple and Ram Darbar at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi complex, circumambulating the shrine and praying for peace, prosperity, and the welfare of the nation and Uttar Pradesh. Rajnath Singh arrived in Ayodhya earlier in the day for the Pratishtha Dwadashi programme and was received at Maharishi Valmiki International Airport by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Together, they participated in temple rituals, including hoisting the religious flag atop the Maa Annapurna temple. Devotees greeted them with chants, and the Chief Minister blessed children present at the site.

Rajnath Singh visited Ayodhya for Pratishtha Dwadashi, received by CM Yogi Adityanath; they performed temple rituals, hoisted the flag, and devotees offered chants and blessings

A festive and devotional atmosphere prevailed throughout the day, with thousands of devotees from across India and abroad visiting the temple complex. Long queues formed as people participated in darshan and special prayers. The religious observances included Tatra-kalash rituals, havan, mantra chanting, and other ceremonies. The temple administration had deployed additional security personnel and volunteers to ensure smooth crowd management and convenience for the visitors. Devotees described the experience as spiritually uplifting, peaceful, and filled with devotion, marking a vibrant celebration of Pratishtha Dwadashi at one of India's most revered religious sites.

Delhi Govt takes action amid worsening pollution crisis

NEW DELHI

As Delhi's air quality plunged further into the 'severe' category on Wednesday, Urban Development Minister Ashish Sood said the government is making "serious efforts" to tackle pollution, while urging neighbouring states to cooperate in reducing harmful emissions. The city recorded an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 408, with dense fog and smog sharply reducing visibility and affecting daily commuters. Speaking during an inspection at Janakpuri C2C Block, Sood said the pollution crisis was not caused solely by Delhi. "The environment in neighbouring states also plays a major role in Delhi's pollution. That is why the Delhi government is in talks with them," he explained. The Minister highlighted ongoing measures, including dust control, improved public transport, vehicle emission reduction, and Phase V of the metro expansion. He also mentioned a new electric vehicle policy in the works. "We are working day and night to deal with pollution. Serious steps have to be taken rather than relying on slogans, which the previous government used," he added. Sood said inspections are carried out regularly, with



Delhi ministers and officials visiting multiple locations every week to monitor cleanliness and development efforts. He assured residents that the government is taking responsibility for resolving issues across municipal and state departments. Despite these efforts, air quality remained alarming across several areas, with forecasters warning of worsening conditions as the year ends. Commuters were urged to take precautions, especially vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly. The Delhi government says it is committed to long-term solutions, aiming to reduce pollution through a combination of policy reforms, stricter regulations, and enhanced public awareness, while coordinating with neighbouring states to protect the health of the capital's residents.

QUICK READ

Train crash near Machu Picchu injures many tourists

LIMA

A train crash near Peru's famous Machu Picchu killed one person and injured around 30 passengers. The collision involved two trains carrying tourists to the 15th-century Inca site, authorities said. The victim was a railroad worker, and services along the rail line to Cuzco were suspended. Videos showed train cars with broken windows and dents stranded between forest and rocks. Rescue teams evacuated the injured from the nearby town of Aguas Calientes. The cause of the crash is still under investigation.

Hong Kong welcomes 2026 without fireworks show

HONG KONG

Hong Kong is marking New Year 2026 without its usual fireworks over Victoria Harbor after a deadly November blaze killed at least 161 people. Instead, the city will host a music show in Central featuring Air Supply and other performers, with eight landmark buildings displaying countdown lights at midnight. Officials said omitting fireworks may impact hotels and restaurants. The deadly fire at Wang Fuk Court was worsened by unsafe scaffolding and building materials. Past disasters, protests, and the pandemic have also canceled fireworks. Residents continue to recover from the loss of lives and homes, prioritizing safety this year.

Over 2,000 Afghan refugees sent back in one day

KABUL

More than 2,000 Afghan refugees were deported from Iran and Pakistan in a single day, Taliban officials said. On Tuesday, 450 families, totaling 2,254 people, returned through multiple border crossings, including Spin Boldak, Torkham, and Islam Qala. Some families received humanitarian aid, while others were taken to their home areas. Telecommunications firms provided 390 SIM cards to returning refugees. Reports highlighted that many Afghan migrants face harassment, arrests, and extortion in Pakistan, living in fear and without basic rights. Human rights groups have remained mostly silent, raising concerns over migrants' safety and protection.

Thailand frees 18 Cambodian POWs under ceasefire

The release occurred at the Thailand-Cambodia border, with Thailand citing goodwill, confidence-building, and adherence to international humanitarian principles

BANGKOK

Thailand released 18 Cambodian prisoners of war on Wednesday, fulfilling the terms of a ceasefire agreement aimed at ending months of bitter fighting along the Thailand-Cambodia border. The soldiers had been held for five months following cross-border clashes over territorial claims.

The release took place at the border checkpoint between Thailand's Chanthaburi province and Cambodia's Pailin province. Thailand's Foreign Ministry said the repatriation was carried out as a gesture of goodwill, confidence-building, and adherence to international humanitarian principles.

Cambodia's Defense Ministry welcomed the move, stat-



ing it would help create a peaceful and stable environment and support the full normalization of relations between the two nations. Video footage showed crowds cheering and waving flags along the route from the border to the city of Pailin, where the soldiers were transported before being flown to Phnom Penh. The ceasefire, signed

Saturday by the defense ministers of both countries, stipulated that the soldiers would be freed if hostilities remained paused for 72 hours. Thai authorities delayed the release by a day to monitor border activity, citing the presence of 250 Cambodian drones. The circumstances of the soldiers' capture remain disputed. Cambodian officials

said their soldiers approached Thai positions peacefully, while Thai authorities claimed the Cambodian soldiers entered Thai territory with hostile intent. Originally, 20 soldiers were captured, with two repatriated earlier for medical reasons.

The July ceasefire, brokered by Malaysia and supported by pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump, sought to end ongoing violence. Despite prior agreements, minor clashes and propaganda exchanges continued, escalating into heavy fighting in early December, which resulted in casualties on both sides.

The release of the 18 soldiers marks a key step toward de-escalation and rebuilding trust between the two neighboring countries.

Putin claims the buffer zone protects Russia from Ukrainian attacks, while Kyiv accuses him of using it for deeper incursions

Putin orders expansion of buffer zone in Ukraine

MOSCOW

Russia's top general, Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, said on Wednesday that President Vladimir Putin has ordered the expansion of a so-called buffer zone in northeastern Ukraine in 2026, according to Russian news agencies.

Gerasimov specified that the buffer zone would be extended in the Sumy and Kharkiv regions, near the Russian border. He inspected the "North" troop grouping, which has operated in the area since early 2024, aiming to push back Ukrainian forces and create a protective zone along the border.

The announcement follows Russia's recent claims of an



alleged attempt to attack Putin's residence, which Kyiv denied, calling the allegation an effort to undermine peace talks. No immediate response came from Ukraine regarding Gerasimov's statement.

Putin has consistently presented the buffer zone as a measure to distance Ukrainian troops and weapons from Russian territory, citing cross-border shelling and

drone attacks in regions such as Belgorod and Kursk. Kyiv has rejected the notion, saying Russia is using the buffer zone as a pretext for deeper incursions into Ukrainian land.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called Moscow's plans for Sumy and Kharkiv "mad" and vowed that Ukraine would resist the expansion, emphasizing the country's determination to defend its territory.

Gerasimov's remarks underline Moscow's ongoing military focus in northeastern Ukraine as the conflict nears its fourth year, signaling continued tension and uncertainty in the region despite international calls for dialogue and peace negotiations.

Bangladesh sees rise in mob violence, Rights Report

DHAKA

A leading human rights organisation in Bangladesh has raised alarms over widespread abuses across the country, including mob attacks, extrajudicial killings, deaths in custody, political violence, and harassment of minorities and journalists. The Dhaka-based Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) released its annual report on Wednesday, highlighting a sharp rise in "mob terrorism" during 2025. According to the report, mob violence claimed 197 lives in 2025, up from 128 in 2024. Since the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government took office in 2024, at least 293 people have died in mob-related incidents. ASK described cases where people were attacked or killed without investigation.



Thousands attend funeral prayers of Khaleda Zia

DHAKA

Thousands of people gathered outside Bangladesh's national parliament in Dhaka on Wednesday to offer funeral prayers for former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. The ceremony was held at Manik Mia Avenue, and Khaleda Zia will be laid to rest beside the grave of her husband, former President Ziaur Rahman.

The funeral drew a large crowd of citizens, political leaders, and activists, especially from the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), reflecting her lasting influence on the country's political landscape. Several foreign dignitaries also attended to pay their respects.

External Affairs Minister of India, S. Jaishankar, travelled to Dhaka to participate in the ceremony and conveyed condolences from the people and government of India. Sharing his visit on social media platform X, Bangladesh High Commissioner to India, Riaz Hamidullah, said Jaishankar acknowledged Khaleda Zia's contribution to democracy and expressed hope for strengthened ties between India and Bangladesh following

Khaleda Zia, Bangladesh's two-time Prime Minister, significantly shaped the nation's politics and democratic transition; her passing united citizens and leaders to honor her legacy.

the upcoming elections in February 2026. The gathering began early in the morning around 7:00 am and remained a significant show of public grief and respect. Khaleda Zia, a two-time Prime Minister of Bangladesh, played a central role in the country's political history and democratic transition. Her passing marks the end of an era, and the funeral prayers saw citizens and political leaders come together to honour her legacy.

Observers noted the large turnout as a testament to her enduring impact on Bangladeshi politics and her contribution to shaping the nation's governance. International attention and participation underscored her role not just nationally but in South Asia's diplomatic and political environment.

South Korean PM visits front-line army unit

SEOUL

South Korean Prime Minister Kim Min-seok visited a front-line Army unit near the inter-Korean border on Wednesday to inspect defense readiness and boost troop morale, officials said.

Kim toured the Army's 9th Infantry Division, known as the Baekma (White Horse) Division, in Paju, Gyeonggi Province, just north of Seoul. He expressed gratitude to the soldiers for protecting the nation, emphasizing that daily life continues safely because of their dedication.

"We, the government, will work harder to set this country on a firmer footing and encourage soldiers to nurture a strong sense of duty to the nation and to dream of your future work in society after your service," Kim said.

During the visit, he climbed a guard post to observe North Korea and walked along the barbed wire fence at the border to review military readiness.

Earlier in October, Defence Minister Ahn Gyu-back highlighted the importance of adopting advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) to strengthen surveillance along the border. He



inspected an AI-based observation system at the Army's 22nd Division in the eastern front-line area.

"Establishing an AI-based surveillance operation system is the key to opening the door to building a smart and strong military," Ahn said, adding that such technologies allow better allocation of troops to advanced weapons operations and realistic combat training.

The military has been expanding high-tech systems to enhance capabilities for future warfare amid declining troop numbers. Ahn also promised to improve the working environment for soldiers, calling it a top defence priority that cannot be delayed. The visit underscores the government's focus on maintaining a strong defense posture and integrating modern technology to enhance South Korea's military readiness along the tense inter-Korean border.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

1		3		7	8		4
5	8		2		9		6
	6			4	3		8
	7		4		1	5	9
6		1		8		7	4
4		8	7		2	6	
8		6	9		4		5
	1			5	7		3
7		5	3			8	2

2	9	4	8	1	3	6	5	7
6	3	5	9	4	7	8	1	2
1	7	8	5	6	2	3	4	9
3	2	7	1	8	4	9	6	5
9	8	6	7	2	5	1	3	4
4	5	1	3	9	6	2	7	8
5	2	1	6	7	9	4	8	3
7	6	9	4	3	8	5	2	1
8	4	3	2	5	1	7	9	6

Fill a 9x9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3x3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Ukraine drone strikes hit Russian port, gas pipeline

TUAPSE

A Ukrainian drone attack on Tuesday damaged port infrastructure and a gas pipeline in the residential area of Tuapse, a key Black Sea port in Russia, authorities said Wednesday. No injuries were reported. Emergency crews were deployed to

repair the damage, according to the Krasnodar regional operational headquarters on Telegram. The port's berth sustained damage, and local residents reported hearing a series of explosions and seeing a fire, sources told SHOT, a Telegram news channel with contacts in Russian security services. Several

Ukrainian media outlets, including RBC-Ukraine, posted photos appearing to show a large nighttime fire near Tuapse, with a communications mast silhouetted in the foreground. Ukraine did not immediately comment on the attack, and Reuters could not independently verify the extent of the damage.

COUP LEADER TRIUMPHS

Junta leader wins Guinea's controversial election

CONAKRY

Junta leader Gen. Mamdi Doumbouya has been declared the winner of Guinea's presidential election held over the weekend, according to partial results. This marks the country's first vote since Doumbouya led a coup in 2021.

The General Directorate of Elections reported that Doumbouya secured 86.72 per cent of votes counted so far. Analysts had predicted his victory, citing a weakened opposition and limited competition.



The election was widely viewed as a move to legitimize Doumbouya's extended stay in power after he overthrew President Alpha Condé four years ago.

Critics say Doumbouya's government has suppressed dissent, dissolved over 50 political parties, and barred key opposition candidates, leaving him effectively unopposed

among the eight other contenders. The closest runner-up, Yéro Baldé, a former education minister under Condé, received just 6.51 per cent of votes. Voter turnout was reportedly 80.95 per cent of the 6.7 million registered voters. Doumbouya had initially promised not to contest elections, but a September referendum allowed military officers to run and extended the presidential term from five to seven years.

Guinea, rich in minerals and home to 15 million people, continues to struggle with

widespread poverty and food insecurity. The recent launch of production at the Simandou iron ore project, 75 per cent owned by China, is seen as a potential driver for jobs and broader economic growth.

The election comes amid a wave of military takeovers in West Africa since 2020, with countries such as Guinea-Bissau and Benin experiencing coups in recent months. Observers say Doumbouya's victory consolidates military control while raising concerns about political freedom and governance in the region.

QUICK READ

Korean Won hits historic low against Dollar

Seoul
South Korea's Won recorded its weakest yearly average ever against the US dollar in 2025 due to political unrest and strong overseas investment demand. Market data showed the currency averaged 1,422.16 won per dollar, beating the previous low set during the 1998 Asian financial crisis. The won closed the year at 1,439 per dollar. Analysts said leadership changes, high US interest rates, and heavy dollar buying by local investors weakened the currency. Authorities took steps to steady markets, while the central bank promised closer monitoring, reforms, and stronger safety nets to reduce volatility ahead next year economy.

Musk expands xAI power with massive centers

New Delhi
Elon Musk's xAI is expanding its artificial intelligence computing power after buying a third building near its Memphis sites. The move will raise total capacity to nearly two gigawatts, enough to power hundreds of thousands of homes. The new site in Mississippi sits beside an existing data center. Musk said the expansion supports plans to train advanced AI systems. Reports also say xAI is seeking fresh funding at a high valuation. Authorities and industry watchers see this as a major step in global AI competition, boosting America's technology leadership and innovation drive forward in coming years

Coupage urged to offer fair compensation for data leak

Seoul
South Korea's data watchdog said Coupang must offer compensation that victims accept after a huge data leak hit 33.7 million users. The regulator told parliament vouchers alone may not repair harm caused to customers. Coupang's plan offers coupons worth 50,000 won, but most can be used only on other platforms, drawing public anger. Officials stressed the company must prove victims are fairly treated. Coupang's interim chief said the offer carries no conditions and does not block lawsuits. Lawmakers called for clearer rules on damages for future data breach cases as trust remains critical for online shopping safety.

Government grants major relief to Vodafone Idea

New Delhi
The Union Cabinet approved a relief package for Vodafone Idea on Wednesday, offering major support to the debt hit telecom firm. The government froze adjusted gross revenue dues worth Rs 87,695 crore and allowed payments from financial year 2032 to 2041. Sources said the telecom department will reassess the frozen dues using verification rules and audit reports. A government appointed committee will review findings and decide the final amount. The move aims to ease financial stress, protect services for users, and support competition in India's telecom sector. Officials expect long term stability and investor confidence ahead.

ONDC marks four years of transforming India's e-commerce

ONDC enables sellers to access multiple buyer apps, reducing entry barriers, boosting competition, and enhancing price transparency for consumers

NEW DELHI

The Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) has reshaped India's e-commerce sector over the past four years by making it more open, inclusive, and accessible, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Wednesday.
Speaking on the fourth anniversary of ONDC, Goyal highlighted how the initiative has democratized digital trade, enabling small shopkeepers and micro businesses to participate in online commerce. According to the minister, ONDC fosters innovation, encourages collaboration, and expands opportunities for both consumers and sellers.
"By bringing small shopkeepers into the digital mar-



ketplace and widening access for all, it has strengthened trust, benefiting both consumers and sellers," Goyal said in a post on social media platform X.
Unlike traditional e-commerce platforms that operate in silos, ONDC allows sellers to reach customers through multiple buyer apps without

being restricted to a single platform. This interoperability reduces entry barriers for small businesses, increases competition, and improves price transparency for consumers.
Government data shows that over 1.16 lakh retail sellers from more than 630 cities and towns are now active on

ONDC. The presence of multiple sellers offering similar products on the network allows buyers to access a wider range of goods and services, benefiting from competitive pricing and regional diversity.
Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasad told the Lok Sabha that ONDC's open model strengthens the overall e-commerce ecosystem by promoting fairness, expanding access, and creating opportunities for smaller sellers who previously struggled to compete with large, closed marketplaces.
Goyal's remarks underline the government's push to position ONDC as a viable alternative to conventional e-commerce platforms, supporting India's vision of an inclusive and democratized digital economy.

India faces a two-million-bed shortfall, with 65–70% in urban areas, despite most people living in rural regions

India's hospital sector set for strong growth over next 5 yrs

MUMBAI

India's hospital sector is expected to record steady and strong growth over the next three to five years, with revenues likely to rise by 11 to 12 per cent annually, according to a new report by CareEdge Ratings. The report said growth will be driven by rising healthcare needs, wider health insurance coverage, growing medical tourism, and fresh investments in hospital infrastructure across the country.
A major factor supporting this outlook is India's shortage of healthcare facilities. While the country accounts for nearly 18 per cent of the global population, it has only about 16 hospital beds per 10,000 people, far below the World Health Organisation's suggested level of 30 beds.
This gap translates into a shortfall of nearly two million



hospital beds, creating sustained demand for new hospitals, expansions, and modern healthcare services over the long term. The report also points to a clear urban rural divide. Around 65 to 70 per cent of hospital beds are concentrated in urban areas, even though nearly two thirds of Indians live in rural and semi urban regions.
With public healthcare spending limited to roughly 2 to 4 per cent of gross domestic product, the private sector is expected to shoulder much

of the expansion. Private hospital chains are therefore likely to gain the most from rising demand.
Demographic trends are adding momentum. An ageing population is increasing the need for chronic care, specialised treatment, and preventive services. Health insurance coverage has expanded rapidly, rising from about 20 crore people in 2014 to nearly 55 crore people in 2024 and this trend is expected to support future hospital demand.

Indian Oil buys Colombian crude, cuts dependence

NEW DELHI

Indian Oil Corporation has purchased its first shipment of crude oil from Colombia, marking a significant step in India's effort to reduce its heavy dependence on Russian oil imports, according to sources familiar with the deal.
The state-run refiner bought around two million barrels of Colombian Castilla crude for delivery in late February under an optional supply agreement with Colombia's state oil company, Ecopetrol. Indian Oil holds a contract allowing it to purchase up to 12 million barrels, equivalent to six very large crude carriers, which has been renewed annually since it was first signed in 2021.
The move comes as Indian refiners look for alternative crude supplies amid tighter sanctions by the United States and the European Union on Russian oil producers and shipping. These restrictions have disrupted supply flows and increased uncertainty for buyers.
Data from shipping analysts show that India's Russian oil imports are expected to fall to a three-year low of about 1.2 million barrels per day in December, down sharply from November levels. Traditionally, Indian Oil meets most of its crude needs from Russia and the Middle East and rarely buys oil from South America, despite holding optional contracts with countries such as Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia.

Tamil Nadu extends EV tax relief till 2027

CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government has decided to continue the full motor vehicle tax exemption for battery-operated vehicles until December 2027, giving a fresh boost to electric vehicle adoption in the state. Industries Minister T R B Rajaa announced the move for sharing the official government notification.
The decision, taken under the Tamil Nadu Motor Vehicles Taxation Act, 1974, extends the existing 100 per cent tax exemption for both transport and non-transport electric vehicles. The new exemption period will begin on January 1, 2026, and remain in force until December 31, 2027.
Minister Rajaa said the move reflects Chief Minister

Govt launches new Market Access Support for exporters

NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday launched a new Market Access Support intervention to help Indian exporters reach global buyers and expand overseas business opportunities.
The scheme is part of the Export Promotion Mission, a flagship programme approved by the Union Cabinet in November this year. Officials said the initiative aims to strengthen international market access, especially for MSMEs, first time exporters, and companies from priority sectors. Under the intervention, financial and institutional support will be given for buyer seller meets, global trade fairs, exhibitions, reverse buyer meets in India, and trade delegations abroad.
The ministry will also prepare a three to five year calendar of major events to help exporters plan participation in advance. At least thirty five per cent participation by MSMEs has been made mandatory, with focus on new markets and smaller economies.
Small exporters with turnover up to seventy five lakh rupees will receive partial airfare support to encourage wider inclusion. All processes

The ministry will create a 3–5 year major events calendar for exporters, mandating at least 35% MSME participation, emphasizing new markets and smaller economies

will be handled online through the trade portal to ensure transparency, easy access, and effective monitoring. Officials said regular feedback from exporters will help refine the guidelines and improve outcomes over time.
The government believes the intervention will improve buyer connections, boost India's visibility in global markets, support export diversification, and create long term growth opportunities while helping new businesses build confidence, explore unfamiliar regions, reduce entry barriers, and compete more effectively in a challenging international trade environment. Officials added that the programme reflects a long term strategy to strengthen exports and generate employment across regions. Further updates will be shared as implementation progresses.



SoftBank seals massive OpenAI investment deal

TOKYO

SoftBank Group has finished a huge forty billion dollar investment in OpenAI, the company behind the ChatGPT service, according to a media report. The deal marks one of the largest private technology investments ever made and shows SoftBank's growing push into artificial intelligence.
People familiar with the matter said the funding was completed after months of planning and talks. Neither SoftBank nor OpenAI offered immediate comments when

contacted, keeping details of the agreement private for now.
Earlier in 2025, SoftBank agreed to lead a funding round that could reach forty billion dollars. If confirmed fully, the move places the Japanese group among OpenAI's most powerful backers in the global tech space.
SoftBank founder and chief executive Masayoshi Son has been building a massive investment program focused on future technologies. Artificial intelligence, data centers, and digital infrastructure remain at the center of this vision.

MODERN MINING ERA

Mining reforms drive India's sectoral surge forward

NEW DELHI

India's mining sector made strong progress in 2025 after the government rolled out wide-ranging reforms aimed at modernising the industry and improving mineral security, according to the Ministry of Mines.
The government passed the MMDR Amendment Act, 2025, and expanded the National Mineral Exploration Trust into the National Mineral Exploration and Development Trust. The new body now supports mineral development and overseas acquisition of strategic minerals, backed



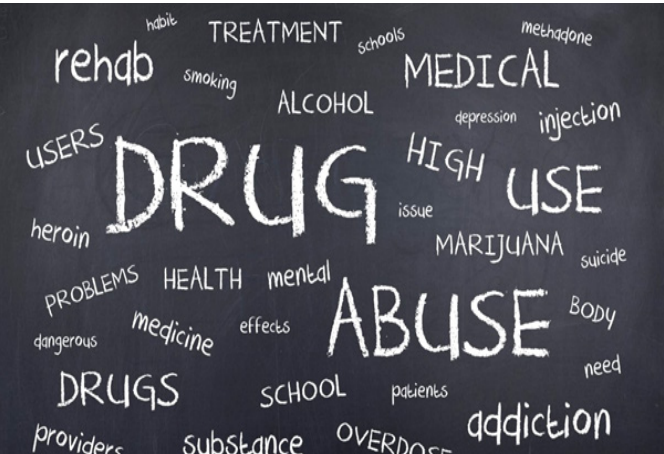
by higher contributions from mining lease holders.
Several other steps were introduced during the year. These included faster auction

critical minerals, promotion of mineral exchanges, and reforms in offshore mining.
As a result, mineral development gained speed. By December 5, a record 141 mineral blocks were auctioned, including 79 mining leases and 62 composite licences. This was the highest number of auctions since the system began in 2015. Assam and Uttarakhand joined the auction process for the first time.
Since 2015, India has auctioned 585 mineral blocks. In 2025, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan led with 33 and 22 blocks. Limestone, iron ore and bauxite saw the most auc-

tions. To improve monitoring, a Mining Dashboard was launched in April to track auctions, approvals and delays, improving transparency and accountability.
The Union Cabinet also approved the National Critical Mineral Mission with a major investment plan to secure long-term supplies. India strengthened global ties through mineral partnerships and discussions with international agencies.
Public sector miners posted strong results, with NALCO and Hindustan Copper reporting profit growth, reflecting confidence in the sector.

India's War on Drugs: A 2025 Retrospective

India's Largest Drug Busts of 2025: A Year of Record Seizures



Bengaluru, the tech hub of India, paradoxically became a hotspot for narcotics in 2025, drawing intense scrutiny from law enforcement. Multiple raids throughout the year exposed layers of trafficking, from street-level dealers to sophisticated rings, with seizures totaling hundreds of crores.

Ahead of New Year, CCB seized drugs worth 28 crores, arresting foreign peddlers stockpiling for festivities. This included 28.75 crores in MDMA and hydro ganja from two nationals. Another haul of similar value involved crystals and premium cannabis. Oper-



How Bengaluru Became a Focal Point in 2025's Anti-Narcotics Drive

lance, using drones and informants to preempt supplies. These efforts not only curbed immediate threats but also mapped broader networks, turning Bengaluru from a vulnerability into a model for urban anti-drug strategies.

In 2025, Bengaluru saw massive narcotics busts as CCB seized drugs worth hundreds of crores, arresting foreign peddlers and disrupting sophisticated trafficking networks ahead of New Year celebrations citywide successfully.



Inside Karnataka's Drug War: CCB and State Police Crackdowns

Karnataka emerged as a frontline state in 2025's anti-drug crusade, with the Central Crime Branch (CCB) and local police orchestrating numerous high-stakes operations.

The focus intensified on synthetic drugs like MDMA and hydroponic cannabis, often linked to foreign networks infiltrating urban centers.

In a bold move, Maharashtra's anti-narcotics team raided three factories in Bengaluru, seizing mephedrone worth 56 crores and arresting four individuals.

This cross-border effort exposed hidden manufacturing units. Separately, Karnataka's

narcotics wing apprehended two men with substances valued at 2.5 crores, disrupting a peddling ring. A Nigerian woman was caught smuggling cocaine concealed in bread, a creative yet failed tactic.

Investigations uncovered an engineer's role in setting up illegal labs, blending technical expertise with criminal enterprise. Near Mulki, CCB arrested four with MDMA worth 50 lakhs, a significant haul in a rural area. The engineer's racket highlighted policing gaps, prompting internal reviews.

Maharashtra's ANTF struck again, busting units and seizing 214 kilograms of narcot-

ics. In October, CCB dismantled two rackets, confiscating 5.5 crores in drugs from foreign nationals.

Three inspectors faced suspension for lapses in a major bust. Another operation yielded 55.88 crores in MD from Bengaluru sites.

These crackdowns illustrate a multi-pronged approach: raids, arrests, and asset seizures. Karnataka's police have targeted production hubs, distribution points, and end-users, aiming to choke the ecosystem. Community outreach and tip-offs have played key roles, turning public vigilance into a weapon against the scourge.

Coordinated Raids Between States: Maharashtra and Bengaluru Police Score a Year-End Success

In a shining example of inter-state synergy, Maharashtra and Bengaluru police joined forces for a December 24-25 operation, seizing drugs and raw materials worth 1.2 crores and arresting four suspects. This raid epitomized the collaborative spirit needed to combat border-hopping cartels.

The operation targeted hidden sites in Bengaluru, uncovering 4.2 kilograms of



Year-End Roundup: 2025 Ends on a High Note with Significant Drug Busts

As 2025 concludes, India's anti-narcotics drive celebrates milestones amid ongoing challenges. Year-end raids, like Ahmedabad's 1 crore seizure and 25 arrests, capped a year of progress. The 1.2 crore Bengaluru-Maharashtra op symbolized unity. Delhi's pre-New Year sweep arrested hundreds, seizing arms and drugs. Bihar uncovered 9.3 kilograms in international links. Mumbai's 7,422 cases reflected sustained effort. Hyderabad's excise ops nabbed nine with synthetics. Cebu-like incidents showed global parallels.

A mysterious lord in a 13,000-crore probe hints at future threats. Delhi's Aaghat 3.0 arrested 285. Over 600 detained in sweeps.

Achievements include record hauls and convictions, but lessons in prevention and rehab are crucial. Ahead, integrated strategies promise a drug-free horizon.

In reflecting on 2025, one sees resilience. Law enforcement's tenacity, coupled with societal awareness, has turned the tide. Yet, the fight demands vigilance—educating youth, bolstering borders, and fostering recovery. As fire-works light the sky, hope flickers for a cleaner tomorrow.

In the largest busts section, stories of undercover ops reveal human elements: officers risking lives in shadowy alleys, families torn by addiction. Telangana's EAGLE force, a symbol of swift jus-

tice, patrolled highways, sniffing out concealed parcels in vehicles disguised as everyday transports.

Karnataka's war isn't just statistics; it's about communities reclaiming streets. A local tip led to the engineer's lab, where beakers bubbled with illicit brews, a Breaking Bad echo in Indian soil.

Bengaluru's transformation from silicon valley to drug valley stems from its cosmopolitan vibe. Raids in posh apartments uncovered parties where synthetics flowed freely, luring professionals into traps. The coordinated raid's success stemmed from months of intel sharing, phone taps revealing codes like "white sugar" for mephedrone.

THE RISE OF SYNTHETIC DRUGS: MDMA AND MEPHEDRONE NETWORKS IN INDIA

2025 witnessed an alarming proliferation of synthetic drugs like MDMA and mephedrone, transforming India's narcotics landscape. These lab-made substances, cheaper and potent, targeted urban youth, with networks spreading from production hubs to darknet sales.

Regional meetings highlighted subregional challenges, with synthetics dominating discussions. Busts in Bengaluru revealed factories churning out MD. Youth entrapment rose, with studies showing 9.5% involvement. A Rajasthan lab yielded 40 crores in mephedrone chemicals.

Global reports noted 76 tonnes seized internationally, with India contributing significantly. Corruption in policing allowed factories to thrive.

Precursor exports fueled global hubs. Interpol ops valued at 6.5 billion dollars underscored the scale. UNODC workshops built forensic responses.

Law enforcement adapted with targeted strikes, but the rise signals a shift from natural to synthetic threats, demanding innovative countermeasures.

ed Africans in an MDMA network.

NCB busted an African syndicate with 9 kilograms of methamphetamine. Two foreigners held with 28.75 crores pre-New Year.

Over 300 deportations for

Addiction, Crime & Community Impact Amid Record Seizures

Behind the headlines of seizures lies the devastating human toll of drug abuse in India. Youth addiction surged, exacerbated by pandemics, with millions trapped in cycles of dependence and crime.

A lingering menace among youth, worsened by COVID,

Meth changes brains, fostering addiction. Spikes in youth use demand mental health interventions. Communities suffer from crime waves, family breakdowns, and economic losses, urging a shift from enforcement to rehabilitation.

Technology and Tactics in 2025 Anti-Narcotics Work

2025 saw anti-narcotics units like CCB, NCB, and ANTF leverage technology for breakthroughs. From AI-driven intelligence to drone surveillance, tactics evolved to match traffickers' ingenuity.

The second ANTF conference focused on drug-free goals by 2047. Strategies emphasized quarterly disposals. NCB disposed 1.37 lakh kilograms worth 4,800 crores. Ruthless actions against cartels were called for.

UNODC shared trends at conferences. Amit Shah inaugurated events, releasing reports.

State by State Review: How Law Enforcement Fought Narcotics in 2025

Comparing states, Karnataka's focus on synthetics contrasted with others' battles. Chennai's NCB froze 12 crores in assets, seizing 2,362 kilograms and arresting 46. Punjab saw drone smuggling skyrocket to 179 cases.

Darknet busts netted LSD and ketamine worth 35 lakhs. National seizures up 160% over a decade.

NCB dismantled "Ketamelon" syndicate. Cryptocurrency worth crores seized. 219 convictions in 103 cases.



peddling. A Fijian case mirrored concealment tactics. Cocaine in bread led to a Nigerian's arrest.

Hydroponic ganja hauls involved 19, including foreigners. Year-end stockpiles targeted celebrations. By August, 37 arrests, with detentions for deportation.

Evolving methods include visa overstays and online coordination, challenging authorities to enhance border and cyber vigilance.

The Human Cost:

drives social disintegration. Over 5.7 crores affected, with 7.2 crores needing opioid treatment. Patterns turned harmful, linking to crime. Empirical studies show behavioral influences, leading to wretched lives.

1.18 crores inject drugs, heightening health risks. Adolescent onset reflects societal pressures. 0.3% dependent users nationwide. Opioids impacted 60 million globally, with South Asia opiate challenges.

Carlsen Clinches Ninth World Blitz Crown, Erigaisi Makes History with Bronze

Magnus Carlsen overcomes adversity to win ninth blitz title; Erigaisi scripts Indian milestone

DOHA

World No.1 Magnus Carlsen underlined his enduring dominance by winning a record-extending ninth World Blitz Championship title, while India’s Arjun Erigaisi settled for a historic bronze at the global showpiece.

Relieved after defending his crown, Carlsen admitted the tournament field was exceptionally tough and that fortune favoured him at key moments. The Norwegian great added the Blitz gold to the Rapid title he won last week, completing a rare double at the championships.

In the final, Carlsen defeat-

ed Uzbek Grandmaster Nodirbek Abdusattorov 2.5-1.5, showcasing his famed end-game mastery. Refusing to settle for a draw in the decisive game, Carlsen uncorked an unexpected pawn move to tilt the contest in his favour after the players were locked at 1.5 points each.

The triumph was particularly sweet after Carlsen endured a rocky qualifying phase, including early reverses and a controversial loss in the Swiss rounds. A crucial draw in Round 19 allowed him and Abdusattorov to sneak into the semifinals behind leader Erigaisi and American Fabiano Caruana. Carlsen then out-



played Caruana 3-1 to book his place in the final.

For India, the spotlight was firmly on 22-year-old Arjun Erigaisi, who finished third to

claim the bronze medal. His podium finish made him only the second male Indian, after five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand, to win a

World Blitz medal. Erigaisi also completed a remarkable double by securing bronze in both Rapid and Blitz formats.

Erigaisi dominated the 19-round Swiss qualification, finishing sole leader with 15 points. However, his campaign suffered a setback in the semifinals, where Abdusattorov produced a clinical 2.5-0.5 victory to halt the Indian’s run.

Meanwhile, in the women’s event, Kazakhstan’s Bibisara Assaubayeva defeated Ukraine’s Anna Muzychuk 2.5-1.5 to claim her third World Blitz title and secure qualification for the 2026 Candidates tournament, further underlining her growing stature in world chess.



Ex-Aus Cricketer Damien Martyn in Induced Coma after Meningitis Diagnosis

BRISBANE

Former Australian batsman Damien Martyn remains hospitalised after meningitis diagnosis, condition serious

Former Australian cricketer Damien Martyn has been placed in an induced coma after being diagnosed with meningitis and is currently in a serious condition at a hospital on the Gold Coast, Australian media reported on Wednesday.

The 54-year-old former right-handed batter, who represented Australia in 67 Test matches, reportedly fell ill over the past few days. According to Nine Newspapers, doctors decided to place Martyn in an induced coma as part of his treatment while he continues to battle the infection.

A spokesperson for Gold Coast Health confirmed Martyn’s condition, saying he “remains in a serious condition at the Gold Coast University Hospital,” where he is receiving specialist care.

Tributes and messages of support have poured in from the cricketing fraternity. Former Australia teammate Darren Lehmann posted on social media, saying: “Lots of love and prayers sending (at) damienmartyn way. Keep strong and fighting legend. Love to the family.”

Close friend and former Australian wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist told News Corp. that Martyn was receiving the best possible treatment. “He is getting the best of treatment and Amanda and his family know that a lot of people are sending their prayers and best wishes,” he said.

Cricket Australia chief executive Todd Greenberg also expressed concern and support. “I’m saddened to hear of Damien’s illness. The best wishes of everyone at CA and in the wider cricket community are with him at this time,” he said.

Martyn was widely admired for his elegant and seemingly effortless stroke play. He averaged an impressive 46.37 in Test cricket and scored 13 centuries, including a career-best 165 against New Zealand in 2005.

Born in Darwin, Martyn made his Test debut at just 21, replacing Dean Jones during the 1992–93 home series against the West Indies, and later captained Western Australia at the age of 23. He played his final Test during the 2006–07 Ashes series before transitioning into commentary.

In one-day internationals, Martyn featured in 208 matches, averaging 40.8. He was part of Australia’s World Cup-winning squads in 1999 and 2003, memorably scoring an unbeaten 88 in the 2003 final against India while battling with a broken finger, and also lifted the 2006 Champions Trophy.



‘Sincaraz’ Set to Dominate 2026 Tennis Season as Djokovic Nears Possible Final Year

SYDNEY

Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner look primed to extend their grip on men’s tennis in 2026, beginning with the Australian Open, as Novak Djokovic prepares for what could be his final full season on the tour.

The new tennis year starts on Friday with the United Cup in Perth and Sydney, but much of the spotlight is already fixed on the rivalry between Alcaraz and Sinner — dubbed “Sincaraz” — who have shared the sport’s biggest prizes in recent seasons. The duo meet in an exhibition in South Korea on January 10, their only tune-up before the Australian Open begins eight days later.

Although Alcaraz ended 2025 as world number one, Sinner had the final say by edging the Spaniard to retain his ATP Finals title in Turin. The Italian enjoyed a remarkable season, retaining his Australian Open crown and adding a maiden Wimbledon title among six overall trophies, despite missing three months due to a doping ban. He finished with an imposing 58–6 win-loss record.

Alcaraz was equally dominant, posting a 71–9 record with eight titles, including the French Open and US Open. However, the Australian Open remains the lone

Grand Slam missing from his résumé. The 22-year-old also enters 2026 with a new coaching setup following a shock split from long-time mentor Juan Carlos Ferrero.

All eyes will also be on Djokovic, who begins his campaign at the Adelaide International on January 12. At 38, the Serbian great is chasing a record 25th Grand Slam title and an 11th Australian Open crown. Since his last major triumph at the 2023 US Open, Alcaraz and Sinner have shared all eight Slams, relegating Djokovic to a secondary role despite semifinal appearances at all four majors in 2025.

“I can do only as much as I can do,” Djokovic admitted after his US Open exit. “It will be very difficult to overcome Sinner or Alcaraz in a best-of-five match.”

On the women’s side, world number one Aryna Sabalenka heads into the season brimming with confidence after a stellar 2025. A two-time Australian Open champion, she starts her campaign at the Brisbane International, targeting a third Melbourne Park title while facing stiff competition from Iga Swiatek, Coco Gauff and Elena Rybakina.

As 2026 dawns, the tennis world appears firmly under new management, even as one of its greatest champions weighs a final stand.

At 59, Japan’s King Kazu extends unprecedented career into remarkable 41st season

Life Begins at 59 for the Globe’s Oldest Professional Soccer Player

TOKYO

He turns 59 in February, yet Kazuyoshi Miura, the world’s oldest professional soccer player, is preparing for yet another season, proving that age remains just a number for the enduring Japanese icon known as “King Kazu.”

Miura this week announced his signing with Fukushima United, a third-division J-League club, ahead of what will be his extraordinary 41st professional season. The veteran forward joins the club on loan from Yokohama FC, having spent the previous season with fourth-division side Atletico Suzuka.

Although Miura did not score in seven appearances for Suzuka last season, his presence alone continues to inspire teammates, fans and younger players across Japanese football. His longevity remains unmatched in the modern



game, where careers rarely stretch beyond two decades.

Miura’s professional journey began in 1986 when he made his debut with Santos in Brazil, the legendary club once graced by Pelé. From there, he carved out a truly global career, playing professionally in Brazil, Italy, Croatia, Australia and Portugal, in addition to his long-standing stints in Japan.

In 2017, at the age of 50,

‘Fake’ Wrestling Coach Forges Federation Letter for US Visa



CHENNAI

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) was left stunned after the US Embassy in New Delhi sought clarification over a wrestling coach who claimed to have the federation’s sponsorship for a training camp in the United States, triggering suspicions of forgery and a possible illegal immigration racket.

According to sources, the Consular Section of the US Embassy contacted the WFI regarding a visa application submitted by one Sandeep, son of Bijender Singh. The applicant claimed that he had been sponsored by the WFI to attend a training camp scheduled from January 10 to 28 at the Mat Sense Academy in the US.

Documents submitted with the visa application included a sponsorship letter on WFI letterhead, purportedly signed by joint secretary R K Purushotham. The letter claimed that the federation would bear Sandeep’s travel, accommodation, training fees and daily allowance. Sandeep also stated that he was working as a wrestling coach with the Sports Authority of India.

The sponsorship letter further listed three others — Sunil (coach), Anshu (wrestler) and Rajan (physiotherapist) — as part of the same delegation.

WFI chief Sanjay Kumar Singh categorically denied any such authorisation. “We have informed the US Embassy that the person is neither empanelled as a coach with the WFI nor with the world body, United World Wrestling. It also appears that the federation’s letterhead has been forged,” Singh said.

In its official response to the embassy, the WFI clarified that as per federation

rules, only the president, secretary general and administrative officers are authorised to sign official correspondence. “The Wrestling Federation of India has not issued any letter sponsoring or supporting the participation of Mr. Sandeep in any capacity,” the reply stated.

The federation has also sought CCTV images of the individual, if available, from the embassy visit. “This is a clear case of forgery and hints at an illegal immigration scam. If required, we will lodge a police complaint,” Singh added.

An online search revealed that the Mat Sense Academy is a private training centre located in Corvallis, Oregon. The forged letter claimed the visit was part of a high-performance programme under WFI’s official development plan — a claim the federation has firmly denied.

Aussies Ellyse Perry and Annabel Sutherland Withdraw from WPL Due to Personal Reasons

MUMBAI

Australian all-rounders Ellyse Perry and Annabel Sutherland have withdrawn from the upcoming season of the Women’s Premier League (WPL), citing personal reasons, prompting their franchises to announce replacements ahead of the tournament beginning next month. Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) confirmed that Perry will not be available for the fourth edition of the WPL. In her place, the franchise has signed Indian all-rounder Sayali Satghare, who will join the squad at her reserve price of Rs 30 lakh. Satghare, a promising domestic performer, will get an opportunity to feature alongside experienced international players in one of the league’s most high-profile teams.

Delhi Capitals (DC) have also been forced into a change following Annabel Sutherland’s withdrawal. The franchise has named Australian leg-spinner Alana King as her replacement. King, who previously represented UP Warriorz in the WPL, will join DC at a reserve price of Rs 60 lakh. The experienced spinner has featured in 27 T20 Internationals for Australia and has claimed 27 wickets, bringing proven international pedigree to the Capitals’ bowling attack.

The WPL, in a media release, confirmed both changes



INJURED SHAHEEN AFRIDI RETURNS HOME FROM BBL, T20 WORLD CUP DOUBTFUL

KARACHI

Experienced Pakistan left-arm pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi will return home from Australia after sustaining a knee injury, casting serious doubt over his availability for the T20 World Cup to be held in India and Sri Lanka early next year. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has recalled Shaheen from the Big Bash League, where he was representing Brisbane Heat, to undergo treatment and rehabilitation at the High Performance Centre in Lahore. The injury occurred while he was fielding during the ongoing BBL season.

Shaheen’s setback has raised concerns given his history with knee injuries. The fast bowler had endured a prolonged layoff during 2021–22 after undergoing knee surgery following an



injury sustained while fielding in a Test match in Sri Lanka. The recurrence has prompted the PCB to adopt a cautious approach. A PCB official said the decision to call Shaheen back was taken after consultations with Cricket Australia. “The initial feedback was that he requires complete rest and time to recover,” the official said, adding that the seriousness of the injury and the recovery timeline would be assessed after a detailed examination by the board’s medical team. The 25-year-old expressed disappointment at having to leave the tournament midway. In a statement released by Brisbane Heat, Shaheen said he had enjoyed his stint in the BBL and was saddened not to complete the season. “Hopefully, I will be back in the fields soon,” he added.

Arsenal Halt Villa Run; Rivals Falter



Arsenal surge clear in title race while rivals falter on pivotal Premier League night

LONDON

Arsenal tightened their grip on the Premier League title race by emphatically ending Aston Villa's 11-game winning run with a dominant 4-1 victory, as Manchester United and Chelsea both squandered opportunities to move into the top four.

Mikel Arteta's side avenged their only defeat in the last 25 matches in all competitions — suffered at Villa Park earlier this month — to open up a five-point lead at the summit. "It is a beautiful evening," Arteta said. "The way we started the second half was amazing. We really turned things up and were efficient in everything we did."

After a cagey first half in which Villa threatened through Ollie Watkins, Arse-

nal blew the visitors away after the break. Gabriel Magalhaes broke the deadlock from a set-piece, out-muscling Emi Martinez on his return from a hamstring injury. Martin Odegaard then slipped a fine through ball for Martin Zubimendi to double the lead.

Leandro Trossard and Gabriel Jesus added further gloss with superb long-range strikes, leaving Villa stunned. Watkins netted a consolation, but Unai Emery's men now trail the leaders by six points, with Manchester City able to cut the gap to two when they visit Sunderland on January 1.

At Old Trafford, Manchester United were held 1-1 by Wolves, who snapped a 12-game losing streak. Joshua Zirkzee's deflected opener was cancelled out by Ladislav

Krejci's header, leaving United sixth and two points off the top four. "We lacked creativity," admitted United boss Ruben Amorim.

Chelsea's struggles continued with a 2-2 draw against Bournemouth at Stamford Bridge, extending their poor run to one win in seven league games.

Goals from Cole Palmer and Enzo Fernandez were offset by strikes from David Brooks and Justin Kluivert, while fans voiced frustration at Enzo Maresca's decision to substitute Palmer.

Elsewhere, Newcastle earned a nervy 3-1 win at Burnley, Everton beat Nottingham Forest 2-0, and West Ham twice surrendered the lead in a 2-2 draw with Brighton, rounding off a dramatic night in the Premier League.

ISL Cost Puzzle Deepens as Budget Estimation Overshoots

BENGALURU

Concerns over the financial feasibility of the upcoming Indian Super League (ISL) season have intensified after preliminary cost estimates for hosting part of the tournament appeared to overshoot the All India Football Federation's (AIFF) proposed operational budget.

ISL clubs are still attempting to find common ground with the AIFF on launching the much-delayed season, with uncertainty persisting due to the absence of a commercial partner. While a centralised format — staging the league at two venues, Goa and Kolkata, split into east and west conferences — has emerged as a preferred option, cost projections have raised fresh alarms.

During an unofficial inter-



Rising operational estimates raise doubts over AIFF budget viability for delayed ISL season

action on Tuesday, clubs were informed that hosting the Goa leg alone could cost around Rs 42 crore, inclusive of production and broadcast expenses. The figure surprised several stakeholders as it accounts for only one half of the proposed league structure. If sim-

ilar costs apply to the Kolkata leg, the combined expenditure could nearly exhaust — or even exceed — AIFF's stated budget of Rs 70 crore under its proposed 20-year roadmap.

Clubs were also told they may need to contribute approximately Rs 2.5 crore each for the season, more than double the Rs 1 crore participation fee discussed earlier. While clubs had broadly accepted a revised revenue-sharing model — a 10-50-40 split between AIFF, clubs and commercial partners — their consent has remained conditional on the federation securing a credible commercial partner.

"If the Goa leg alone costs Rs 42 crore for a curtailed season, the operational expenses will go well beyond the suggested Rs 70 crore budget for a full season," a

club official said. "It raises serious questions about whether the current projections are realistic."

Meanwhile, Jamshedpur FC clarified that they would participate in the season regardless of the outcome of talks, while Odisha FC indicated it would be difficult to compete without a commercial partner. Reports also suggested that Odisha FC CEO Raj Athwal resigned on Tuesday amid ongoing sponsorship struggles.

Clubs stressed that the discussions were unofficial and exploratory. Any formal meeting, they noted, can only take place once the AIFF receives clarity from the Asian Football Confederation on pending issues, including possible relaxations to domestic match requirements for continental qualification in a shortened season.

Chemistry, consistency and belief propel Shikha Gautam and Ashwini Bhat to national glory

Shikha-Ashwini Chemistry Fuels India's Formidable Women's Doubles Pair

BENGALURU

Ashwini Bhat K admires Shikha Gautam's explosive movement and relentless court coverage, while Shikha swears by Ashwini's deceptive wrist work and sharp interceptions at the net. That mutual understanding — built on instinctive reactions to each other's strengths and weaknesses — has turned them into one of India's most formidable women's doubles pairs.

Their chemistry was evident from the moment they teamed up six years ago, almost by chance. A last-minute withdrawal before the 2019 Senior Nationals forced Nasik-born Shikha and Bengaluru's Ashwini to pair up. With barely two days of practice, they stunned the field to win the title in their very first tournament together.

"People called it a fluke," Ashwini recalls. "But now we've won it again and several All-India titles in between. What will they say now?"

That second title arrived on Sunday in Vijayawada, where the Karnataka pair clinched

the women's doubles crown at the 87th Senior National Badminton Championships. They defeated familiar rivals Priya Devi Konjengbam of Manipur and Shruti Mishra of Uttar Pradesh 21-14, 21-18 in the final, becoming the only women's doubles pair from Karnataka to achieve the feat.

The triumph was especially meaningful after two years of relentless training and setbacks. "We didn't miss a single session," Shikha says, noting that re-

stored belief after a challenging period marked by health issues in 2024.

The partnership was first envisioned by coach Jagadish Yadav of the Yadav Pro Badminton Academy. "Shikha brought singles instincts and speed, Ashwini brought doubles intelligence," he explains. "But more than technique, doubles is about bonding. They fight, patch up instantly, and that chemistry works."

Their season has been strong beyond Nationals — bronze medals at the BWF Mangalore International Challenge, Guwahati Open and Odisha Open, and a runner-up finish at the Dutch Open.

Currently ranked 56th, with a career-high of 33 in 2023, the duo now has a clear target. "Top-25 by March 2026," says Yadav. The ultimate aim: qualifying for the 2026 World Championships on home soil.



India's In-Form Shooters, Boxers Await Inclusion in Olympic Scheme

NEW DELHI

As the 2025 season ends, several of India's top shooters and boxers remain outside the government's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), raising concerns over selection delays.

Despite strong international results, pistol shooters Suruchi Phogat and Samrat Rana are missing from both Core and Development groups. Phogat won three World Cup titles and became world No.1 this year, while Rana claimed historic gold at the ISSF World Championships. In boxing, 48kg world champion Minakshi Hooda is excluded, and 57kg champion Jaismine Lamboria remains only in the Development Group. Officials say selections are performance-based, but athletes have expressed concern over delayed support ahead of the Asian Games and Olympic build-up.

Oman Name Jatinder Singh Captain for 2026 T20 World Cup

NEW DELHI

Oman on Tuesday announced a 15-member squad for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, naming experienced batter Jatinder Singh as captain and wicket-keeper-batter Vinayak Shukla as his deputy. The announcement marks a significant moment for Jatinder, who missed out on the 2024 T20 World Cup but now returns as the leader of the national side.

The squad selection features notable changes, including the omission of veteran all-rounder Aamir Kaleem. The 43-year-old had been one of Oman's standout performers at the T20 Asia Cup earlier this year, but did not find a place in the World Cup-bound team. According to ESPNcricinfo, Oman have made five changes compared to their Asia Cup squad.

All-rounders Wasim Ali, Karan Sonavale and Jay Odedra, along with seamer Shafiq Jan and Jiten Ramanandi, have been added to the squad. Ramanandi, Odedra and Wasim impressed during the T20 World Cup qualifiers, while Shafiq Jan and Sonavale earned their opportunities through strong performances in the Asia



Jatinder Singh to lead revamped Oman squad into challenging T20 World Cup

Cup Rising Stars tournament.

Jatinder remains Oman's most prolific batter in the T20 format and brings valuable leadership experience. His appointment is seen as a move to add stability and batting depth as Oman prepare to face elite opposition on the world stage.

Oman have been drawn in Group B, a challenging pool featuring 2021 champions Australia, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and Ireland. The side will open their campaign against Zimbabwe on February 9, hoping to spring surprises against higher-ranked teams.

With a mix of experience and emerging talent, Oman will look to build on their recent progress in associate cricket and make an impact at the global event.

Oman Squad – T20 World Cup 2026	
• Jatinder Singh (Captain), Vinayak Shukla (Vice-captain), Mohammad Nadeem, Shakeel Ahmad, Hammad Mirza, Wasim Ali, Karan Sonavale, Faisal Shah, Nadeem Khan, Sufyan Mehmood, Jay Odedra, Shafiq Jan, Ashish Odedra, Jiten Ramanandi, Hasnain Ali Shah	
Group B Teams	
• Australia	
• Sri Lanka	
• Zimbabwe	
• Ireland	
• Oman	
Key Date	
First match • February 9 vs Zimbabwe	

Man U Open to Selling Bruno Fernandes if Massive Bid Arrives: Report

MANCHESTER

Manchester United could face a defining transfer decision after captain Bruno Fernandes suggested the club may be open to selling him, fuelling speculation ahead of the January window. Reports indicate United would consider an exceptional offer if one arrives, with interest from the

Saudi Pro League emerging as a key factor. Fernandes, 31, recently said he felt United were willing to cash in on him during the summer when Al-Hilal explored a move. Although the club has since reiterated that he remains part of their plans, his comments have raised questions over his long-term future.

The Portugal international

said any decision would need to make sense beyond finances, citing family and lifestyle considerations. He stressed his commitment to United but admitted he could consider a move to Spain or Italy later in his career.

A proposed £100 million fee and wages of around £700,000 a week underline the scale of the decision.

Shreyas Iyer Ruled Out of NZ ODIs after Spleen Injury

NEW DELHI

India batter Shreyas Iyer will miss the upcoming three-match ODI series against New Zealand, starting January 11, as he is yet to receive medical clearance from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) following a serious spleen injury sustained in October.

Iyer suffered a spleen laceration while attempting a diving catch during an ODI against Australia, an incident that led to internal bleeding and required immediate hospitalisation in Sydney. He underwent a minor surgical procedure to control the bleeding and was kept under close observation by medical specialists in Australia, in coordination with the Indian team doctor, before being allowed to return home.

Although Iyer has resumed batting and begun skill-based training this week, concerns remain over his ability to meet the physical demands of a full 50-over match.

According to medical assessments, the 30-year-old has not regained sufficient fielding strength post-surgery, a key factor in the BCCI's decision to withhold

clearance. Reports indicate that Iyer lost around six kilograms following the injury, primarily due to a reduction in muscle mass during recovery.

Earlier media reports had suggested that Iyer could feature in Mumbai's Vijay Hazare Trophy matches on January 3 and 6 as part of his return-to-play pathway before joining the Indian squad in Vadodara. However, those plans are now uncertain.

A BCCI source clarified that both his participation in domestic cricket and international fixtures would depend on how his body responds to the rigours of extended match play.

"Shreyas Iyer has started skill training and is in good shape," the source said. "But his ability to field in a 50-over game needs to be assessed before he can be put back on the park."

Iyer's absence is a setback for India ahead of the New Zealand series, given his importance in the middle order. The team management is expected to continue monitoring his recovery closely, with a cautious approach aimed at ensuring his long-term fitness rather than risking a premature return.

