



US-Israeli war widens across Middle East

P9



EPFO retains 8.25% interest rate for 2025-26

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Gukesh Blunders Again as Abdusattorov Strikes at Prague



BIG WAVE IS ON THE WAY: TRUMP

Israeli-US planes **pound** Iran and Tehran, and its proxies **hit back**; Hezbollah joins conflict; Kuwait **‘mistakenly’** downs 3 US F-15s; conflict expands to **Lebanon** with Israel warning of prolonged combat; Iran death toll crosses **550**

SHORTS FROM WARZONE

Iranian strikes hit Saudi and Qatar energy sites

US crew bailed out safely after crash-landing, says Kuwait

Lebanon's government decides on an "immediate ban" of Iran-backed Hezbollah's military and security activity, says PM Nawaf Salam.

Israel launches new attacks on 'heart of Tehran'

US fighter planes mistakenly shot down in Kuwait

Iran Revolutionary Guards claim targeting 500 US, Israeli sites

Fourth US service member 'killed in action'

QatarEnergy halts liquefied natural gas production after attacks

Iran expands attacks to regional oil infrastructure

Hezbollah fires on Israel, prompting massive response

Tehran's streets deserted



Smoke and dust rise after an Israeli strike on Beirut's southern suburbs. ▶ PHOTO: X

AMMAN (JORDAN)

The Iran-Israel-US war entered its third day on Monday with widening regional fallout, mounting casualties and fresh attacks on energy infrastructure, diplomatic compounds and civilian areas across the Middle East.

It engulfed more of the Middle East and beyond as Lebanon's militant group Hezbollah responded to the killing of Iran's spiritual leader with its first attack on Israel in more than a year.

More than 200 people were initially reported killed after strikes that eliminated Khamenei. Iran's Red Crescent has now put the death toll inside the country at least 555, with 131 cities coming under attack. They included Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and members of his family. Iran said more than 175 schoolgirls were

killed in a direct hit on a school.

Meanwhile, Iran increased attacks on Kuwait, a key US military ally. The Mediterranean island nation of Cyprus said a drone targeted a British base.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump on Monday said the US military is heavily striking Iran, but warned that a "big wave" of attacks is yet to come. "We're knocking the crap out of them," he said, as per agencies. "I think it's going very well. It's very powerful. We've got the greatest military in the world and we're using it," he added.

Conflict expands to Lebanon Israel launched new air strikes targeting Tehran and expanded its military campaign to include attacks on Iran-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon.

Israel said it was attacking sites connected to Lebanon's Shi'ite Muslim armed group

Hezbollah, one of Tehran's principal allies in the Middle East, after Hezbollah acknowledged launching missiles and drones toward Israel in retaliation for the killing Khamenei.

Lebanon's health ministry said Israeli airstrikes in retaliation for the attack by Iran-backed Hezbollah killed at least 31 people and wounded 149, most of them in south Lebanon.

'Epic Fury' hit over 1K targets in Iran in first 24 hrs'

'Operation Epic Fury' struck more than 1,000 targets within its first 24 hours, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Dan Caine said. He said the operation involved more than 100 aircraft launched from both land and sea. The daylight assault was carried out following a trigger strike by Israeli forces, marking a coordinated and rapid escalation in the broader offensive.

Iran bare opens massive armory, declares 'ready for long war'

TEHRAN

Iran's top security official Ali Larijani on Monday said the Islamic Republic is prepared for its war with the United States and Israel to last for a long period of time after the conflict in West Asia entered its third day and spread across the region and beyond, following the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei in a joint US-Israeli strike on a high-security compound in Tehran.

"Iran, unlike the United States, has prepared itself for a long war," said Ali Larijani, the powerful head of Tehran's Supreme National Security Council, in a post on X.

Larijani, who is considered the most powerful figure in Iran following the assassination of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, declared, "We will fiercely defend ourselves and our six-thousand-year-old civilisation regardless of the costs and will make the enemies sorry for their miscalculation."

"We will not negotiate with the US"

Early in the day, he ruled out renewed negotiation with Washington and dismissed reports of backchannel diplomacy while accusing Trump of pushing the region into instability through "delusional actions."

The conflict in West Asia



expanded into a multifront regional war as Iran retaliated, targeting Israel, US allies and military bases in the region. Major cities in the region, including Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Amman, Riyadh and Doha, came under attack from missiles and drones launched by Tehran's security forces.

In retaliation for the joint US-Israeli airstrike, Iran has revealed an underground tunnel storing drones and missiles. On Monday (March 2), the Iranian Revolutionary

Guard Corps (IRGC) released footage through state media showing a long tunnel lined with numerous weapons.

Triangular drones resembling the domestically produced Shahed-136 kamikaze drone are displayed first, while missiles are mounted four per launcher vehicle in standby mode. The tunnel's ceiling bears the Iranian national flag, and a portrait of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei hangs on the wall.

Iran not an endless war, will finish it soon: US Defense Secy

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said the US did not initiate the conflict but was determined to bring it to a decisive end through Operation Epic Fury. He stressed that the objective was to eliminate threats with the 'America First' policy. Hegseth said Iran has long-range strike capabilities and added that he would never put a specific time frame on the Iran operation.



Govt monitoring West Asia crisis; 109 Kannadigas stranded in Gulf: CM

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said the state government is closely monitoring the situation in West Asia following the escalation of tensions between US-Israel and Iran, and assured that the safety and well-being of Kannadigas abroad is



the state's highest priority.

He said as per the information, around 100 Kannadigas are currently stranded in the UAE, including Dubai, and nine in Bahrain due to airspace disruptions and flight cancellations. The government teams are in constant touch with authorities and affected individuals to

verify details and extend necessary assistance.

The government has activated the State Emergency Operations Centre and disemmergency operations centres. It's also in continuous coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs, the Ministry of Civil Aviation, and Indian embassies and consulates in the conflict-hit regions.

NEW DELHI

Reacting to the escalating US-Iran-Israel conflict, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the situation in West Asia is a "matter of grave concern for us".

Speaking at a joint press meet with Canadian PM Mark Carney, Modi said, "India supports resolution of all conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy." He added, "We will keep working with countries in West Asia to ensure safety of Indians there."

He reiterated India's foreign policy stance and said India has always been an advocate for peace amid global tensions. "India's stance has always been clear on tensions across the world. India has consistently advocated for peace and stability, and when two democracies stand together, the call for peace becomes stronger," the PM said. PM dials Saudi Crown



Centre asks states to keep eye on pro-Iran radical preachers

The Union Home Ministry has asked states to keep an eye on pro-Iran radical preachers giving inflammatory statements that may result in violence in the wake of the Israel-US attack on Iran, officials said. In a letter circulated among states on February 28, the Ministry also asked all states and UTs to keep vigil on social media activities of extremists and global terror group handles. Advising the states to ensure that no law-and-order issues arise, the ministry has asked them to heighten vigilance, as global events might have a domestic ripple effect through rhetorical statements.

Prince, Bahrain King, Israeli PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to the King of Bahrain Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince

and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia Mohammed Bin Salman, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday as West Asia plunged deeper into crisis following

the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a joint US-Israeli strike and Tehran's sweeping missile retaliation across the region.

During his conversation with Mohammed bin Salman, who also serves as Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, Modi agreed that the "earliest restoration of regional peace and stability is of utmost importance." He condemned attacks targeting Saudi territory and reiterated India's solidarity.

A similar message was conveyed to Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King of Bahrain, with Modi denouncing strikes on the kingdom and reviewing the safety of the Indian community there. He also spoke with Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, condemning attacks and calling for de-escalation through dialogue and diplomacy.

VICTORY, NO REGIME CHANGE

Military success does not mean regime change in Iran: KP Fabian

DANIEL GEORGE, BENGALURU

Former diplomat KP Fabian has described the recent US and Israeli strikes on Iran — including the assassination of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei — as a significant military success for United States and Israel, but cautioned against equating that with achieving declared political goals such as "regime change."

Speaking to CH from New Delhi on Monday, Fabian underscored that while the operation marks a major battlefield victory, it does not necessarily bring about the deeper political transformation in Iran that US and Israeli leaders often articulate. He pointed out ambiguity around what "regime change" would concretely mean and noted that military action alone may not translate into systemic political shifts within Iran.

Fabian, who served in the Embassy of India, Tehran as

first secretary, emphasized the distinction between tactical military outcomes and strategic political objectives. He implicitly warned against overestimating the impact of precision strikes on long-term geopolitical goals, given Iran's entrenched political structures and the likelihood of complex regional repercussions.

"This is undeniably a dramatic and symbolically powerful operation," Fabian said. "But symbolism in international politics does not automatically translate into structural political change." He added, "Regime change is not an event; it is a process. Removing an individual, even someone at the apex of power, does not dismantle institutions, networks, or ideological foundations overnight." Fabian further cautioned that "external military pressure can sometimes consolidate nationalist senti-

ment rather than fragment authority," stressing that development must be viewed within the broader strategic uncertainties of the Middle East.

The former Indian envoy characterized the operation as a significant military achievement for Washington and Tel Aviv, but raised doubts about whether it would translate into political change within Iran. "This is a major military victory for Israel and the US," he noted. "However, that does not mean they are any closer to what they describe as regime change, especially given the ambiguity surrounding what that term actually entails."

The senior Indian diplomat to Madagascar, Austria, Iran, Sri Lanka, Canada, Finland, Qatar and Italy signed off by saying "this is an important military victory for Israel and the United States, but this doesn't mean that they have got closer to what they call regime change because there's a lot of confusion about that word expression."



Iran gets new acting def min

TEHRAN: Iran's president has appointed Revolutionary Guards general Majid Ebnelreza as acting defence minister after his predecessor was killed in Israeli-US strikes. "By order of President Masoud Pezeshkian, Majid Ebnelreza has been appointed as acting defence minister," said deputy for president.



Saudi Aramco refinery among others shut amid airstrike fears

RIYADH: Amid the ongoing tensions in the West Asia due to strikes by US, Israel and Iran in the region, Saudi Arabia's state oil giant Aramco has shut down its Ras Tanura refinery. As per sources, the decision has been taken as a precautionary measure after it was hit by a drone. "Two drones were intercepted at the facility, with debris causing a limited fire," the Saudi Defence Ministry's spokesperson said. Oil giant Saudi Aramco's 550,000 barrels per day (bpd) Ras Tanura refinery is part of an energy



complex on the kingdom's Gulf coast. It also serves as a critical export terminal for Saudi crude oil, which was shut as a safety measure. In Iraqi Kurdistan, companies including DNO, Gulf Keystone Petroleum, Dana Gas and HKN Energy have stopped output at their respective fields as a precaution, with no damage reported.

China calls for ceasefire

BEIJING: China called for a ceasefire and diplomatic talks to end the Middle East conflict. Israel and the US have been conducting strikes on Iran and Lebanon, with the conflict extending to regional neighbours. "The most urgent task is an immediate cessation of military operations".



QUICK READ



Iran–Israel War: 22 Flights Disrupted at KIA

BENGALURU

As tensions escalate in the ongoing conflict between Iran and Israel, operations at Kempegowda International Airport have been hit, with 22 flights cancelled due to widespread airspace closures. Airport authorities confirmed that 10 departing and 12 arriving international flights were cancelled on Monday following the shutdown of airspace in Iran, Israel and several Arab nations. Services to Abu Dhabi, Jeddah, Doha, Dubai and Bahrain were among those affected. Major carriers including Air India, Emirates, IndiGo and Qatar Airways suspended operations on impacted routes. Airlines are assisting passengers with re-booking and refunds. Airport authorities have urged travellers to confirm flight status before heading to the airport.

641 Stolen Mobile Phones Worth ₹1.6 Cr Recovered Using CEIR

BENGALURU

In a major recovery drive, the East Division Police have retrieved 641 stolen mobile phones worth ₹1.6 crore since January 2026 using the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) software. The special operation was conducted across multiple police stations, enabling officers to trace and recover devices reported missing or stolen in various cases. The recovered phones were handed back to their rightful owners by City Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh during the monthly public grievance meeting in Indiranagar. The initiative was carried out under the supervision of B Ramesh, Joint Commissioner of Police, East Division, who commended the coordinated efforts of the officers and staff involved.

Coordination With MEA to Protect Kannadigas; Helplines Launched

Large number of stranded passengers seek assistance amid airspace closures

BENGALURU

With air travel severely disrupted due to the ongoing conflict in parts of the Middle East, the Karnataka government has stepped up coordination with the Centre to ensure the safety of Kannadigas stranded abroad.

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) and the Karnataka Resident Commissioner's Office in New Delhi are in constant touch with the Rapid Response Cell of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to monitor the situation and provide timely assistance.

A large number of passengers from Karnataka are reported to be stranded in war-affected Middle Eastern nations, particularly the UAE, following widespread air-



space closures. Several countries have issued NOTAMs, leading to suspension of international flight operations. As per the advisory from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, airspace over Iran, Israel, Lebanon and parts of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, UAE and Qatar remains closed till March 2.

Acting on the directions of the Chief Minister and the

Revenue Minister, the SEOC and all District Emergency Operation Centres (DEOCs) have been fully activated and are functioning round the clock. Officials are continuously updating guidelines issued by the MEA and Indian embassies in the affected countries.

The Karnataka Bhavan in Delhi has also been activated by the Resident Commissioner to streamline coordination.

Embassy- and consulate-wise helpline numbers, along with official advisories, have been circulated to all district headquarters and widely shared through official social media platforms.

Requests received at the State and District Emergency Centres are being consolidated and forwarded to the Resident Commissioner's Office and the MEA for necessary action. Kannadigas residing in the affected countries have been urged to follow local government advisories strictly, contact Indian embassies through designated helplines, and register on official portals such as 'Sarathi Sahayata'.

The Minister assured that the State government will extend full cooperation to facilitate coordination and ensure the safety and well-being of its citizens abroad.

MACT Can Hear Personal Accident Cover Claims, Rules HC

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The High Court has held that a Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) is not divested of jurisdiction to examine claims relating to personal accident (PA) cover under a motor insurance policy. Justice K. Manmadha Rao made the observation while dismissing an appeal filed by The New India Assurance Company challenging an order of the MACT in Belagavi. The insurer had questioned the tribunal's refusal to reject a claim petition at the preliminary stage. The case stemmed from an accident on April 8, 2023, in which Umar Farooque, a tailor from Belagavi, sustained serious injuries after his motorcycle allegedly skidded off the road. He filed a claim petition stating that he had purchased a package motor insurance policy that included a personal accident cover of Rs 15 lakh for the owner-driver upon payment of an additional premium. The insurance company sought dismissal of the claim under Section 166 of the Motor Vehicles Act, arguing that the provision permits adjudication only of third-party claims before the tribunal.

Pet Shop Violations Raise Activists' Hackles

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A collective of animal rights activists has submitted a detailed report to Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao, alleging widespread violations by pet shops across the city and calling for urgent enforcement action.

The report documents cramped cages, soiled enclosures and inadequate space that restrict animals' movement. In several aviaries, birds were reportedly unable to spread their wings or fly. Activists also flagged poor temperature control, lack of ventilation and absence of

isolation areas for sick animals, warning that such conditions reflect cruelty and neglect while posing serious health risks.

According to Laavanya Koushik of the Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations (FIAPO), nearly 90 per cent of pet shops in the city lack mandatory registration certificates, citing RTI findings. Many outlets allegedly operate from paved areas or makeshift structures, exposing animals to heat, pollution, noise and odour. Several shops were found to lack basic facilities such as electricity, water supply and power backup.

The activists further alleged that animals protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 were being displayed for sale in violation of statutory provisions and the Pet Shop Rules. Such practices, they said, raise conservation concerns and undermine efforts to protect endangered species.

Hygiene standards were also found wanting, with food and water containers often soiled with excreta and reused without proper cleaning. The absence of smoke detectors and firefighting equipment in many makeshift outlets adds to safety concerns.

The report highlights violations of Rule 7(2)(i) of the Pet Shop Rules, which mandates that animals housed together must belong to the same species and age group. Mixing different species or age groups can trigger stress, aggression and injury.

Kumar Pushkar, PCCF (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden of Karnataka, stated that all dealers must register and declare their stock to the Forest Department. He warned that strict action would be taken against violators, including booking wildlife cases and seizing protected and exotic species where necessary.



Iran Conflict: Hundreds Join Solidarity March in City

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Hundreds of Shia Muslims gathered in Richmond Town for a condolence meeting and solidarity march following the reported killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a US-Israeli strike.

The march was organised by Anjuman E Imamia and Idara E Faizul Islam. Protesters assembled in front of Masjid-e-Askari and Masjid-E-Imam Al Qayem in Anepalya, holding photographs of Khamenei and raising slogans condemning



the United States and Israel. Elderly men and women, youth, and children participated in large numbers.

The gathering later moved in a procession to the Shia cemetery in Richmond Town, where prayers were

offered and tributes paid.

Shantinagar MLA N. A. Haris attended the event, along with Aga Sultan, Chairman of the Central Relief Committee, Karnataka.

Shazia Hussain, one of the participants, said the community was deeply distressed. "Khamenei being martyred was not right. There is danger for Muslims everywhere. What is happening in Palestine is also painful. Everyone here has gathered with a heavy heart," she said.

Alizay Fatima described

the atmosphere as emotional and spiritual. "For many of us, he was not just a political leader but a symbol of resistance and guidance. His passing has shaken millions," she said, adding that many Shia Muslims looked to him for religious direction. She criticised the reported strikes on Iran and called for accountability.

Another protester, Nu-zath Hussain, said the loss transcended borders. "For over 30 years, he was a guide for millions. Killing a leader cannot erase his message," she said.

City Pilgrims Stranded in KSA as Costs Mount

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Around 50 pilgrims from Bengaluru visiting Medina are stranded in Saudi Arabia after escalating tensions in the Middle-East led to widespread flight disruptions. The group was scheduled to return at 2am on March 2, but cancellations have left them stuck with dwindling funds and limited support.

The pilgrims had travelled from Bengaluru on February 15 and have been staying at Al Shams Hostel in Medina. They reportedly learned about the disruption around 7.30pm local time on Saturday. Since then, families say they have



been scrambling to secure extended accommodation while managing rising expenses. Women, toddlers, and elderly members are part of the group, making the situation more challenging.

Mohammed Inayath, 32, a content creator from RT

Nagar, appealed to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah through a post on X in the early hours of Sunday. "We're trying to extend our stay for one more day, but finding rooms with heavy luggage and children is difficult. Rooms cost around Rs 2,000 per person per day with food, which many of us cannot afford. The travel agent has withdrawn support, and the Indian Embassy directed us back to the agent," he said.

Abdul Mannan, 48, a sign-board maker from Gandhinagar, said the trip had already exhausted family savings. "We spent nearly Rs 80,000 per person for this visit.

Age Cut-Off Rule Sparks Admission Crisis; 2.3 Lakh Children Affected

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Thousands of parents and children staged a protest at the Bengaluru Press Club after strict age eligibility norms introduced by the Education Department reportedly blocked Class 1 admissions for nearly 2.3 lakh students across Karnataka.

Under the existing rule, a child must complete six years of age by June 1 to qualify for Class 1 admission. Children born on June 2 and later are deemed ineligible, even if they have successfully completed UKG. Parents argue that the rigid cut-off has

forced many students to repeat UKG, disrupting their academic progress.

Holding placards and raising slogans, protesters demanded a 90-day relaxation in the age limit. They said repeating UKG not only causes financial strain but also affects children's confidence and cognitive development.

According to parents, nearly 2.3 lakh children born in June and July are directly impacted. Families claim they have already invested heavily in school fees, uniforms, books and transport, making it burdensome to repeat an entire academic year.

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A fake bomb threat sent via email to the Regional Passport Office in Koramangala created panic among staff and visitors on Monday, continuing a recent spate of hoax threats across the city.

According to police, an email written in Tamil was sent to the official mailbox of the passport office, warning that explosives placed inside the premises would detonate shortly. The message reportedly referenced the death sentence of Ajmal Kasab and carried a threatening tone.



Acting swiftly, personnel from the Koramangala Police Station, along with the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad and dog squad, rushed to the

BOMB THREAT SCARE

Fake Bomb Threat to Passport Office Sparks Tension

search was carried out.

After an extensive inspection of the premises, officials confirmed that no explosives or suspicious materials were found. Police declared the email to be a hoax, bringing relief to anxious members of the public and office staff. Security checks continued for some time, and entry into the building was regulated before normal passport services resumed.

Cybercrime police have launched an investigation to trace the origin of the email and determine the motive behind the threat. Authorities are examining digital foot-

prints and technical details to identify those responsible.

The incident follows a series of similar hoax threats in Karnataka. On February 16, courts including the Dharwad High Court Bench and district courts in Mangaluru, Davanagere, Haveri, Kodagu, Mandya and Uttara Kannada received bomb threat emails. After detailed inspections, police confirmed that those threats were also false alarms. Officials have urged the public not to panic over unverified messages and assured that strict action will be taken against those misusing digital platforms to spread fear.

QUICK READ



Laborer dies after falling from bullock cart

BHADRAVATI

A tragic accident claimed the life of Sharavani, 53, a laborer from Bhadravati taluk. While cutting an areca tree and transporting it on his bullock cart, he suddenly lost consciousness and fell near Vinayak Industries. He was declared dead as he was being transported. The body has been sent to the Government Public Hospital in Bhadravati for postmortem, which will determine the exact cause of death. Bhadravati New Town police have registered a case and are investigating the incident, urging caution during such work.

Mandya students invited for youth parliament

MANDYA

A district-level speech competition on Vikasit Bharat Youth Parliament-2026 will be held on March 5 at 10:00 AM in the Syndicate Hall of Mandya University. The event is organized by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, the National Service Scheme Cell of the university, and Maibharat Kendra. Students aged 18–25 from Mandya district can register on the Maibharat portal by March 4 to participate. Officials said the competition aims to encourage youth engagement and public speaking skills. Detailed information and updates will be available on the Maibharat portal.

Farmers invited to apply for plastic subsidy

HAVERI

The Hanaga Senior Assistant Horticulture Office has announced a 50% subsidy on 15 kg plastic crates for 2025-26 under the National Agricultural Development Scheme and Integrated Horticulture Development Scheme. Each crate from Samridhi Company costs Rs. 380, and farmers will pay Rs. 190 after the subsidy. Interested farmers must submit applications along with land title deed, crop certificate, Aadhaar copy, and bank passbook copy to the Horticulture Department. Officials said the initiative aims to support horticulture farmers by reducing costs for transport and storage of produce. Farmers are encouraged to apply promptly to avail the benefit.

Mandya gears up for digital census

Dr. Kumar stressed Census importance, urging officers and staff to coordinate and work committedly

MANDYA

The upcoming national Census will be conducted in digital mode for the first time, and officials must carry out their duties with full responsibility, said District Collector Dr. Kumar.

He spoke after inaugurating a district-level training workshop for officers assigned to Census work at the Zilla Panchayat Hall. Calling it the largest public data collection exercise in the country, he said the Census gathers information from the grassroots level and plays a key role in planning development programs for the next ten years.

Dr. Kumar stressed that the Census is as important as election duty and requires strict coordination among departments. He urged all offi-



cers and staff to approach the task with seriousness and commitment. According to the schedule, the Census will be conducted in two phases.

The first phase, house listing field work, will take place from April 16 to May 15, 2026. The second phase, population enumeration, will be held from February 1 to February 28, 2027. Since this is the first fully digital Census after Independence, he warned that there will be no scope for

later corrections. Enumerators must carefully enter accurate data while collecting information from households. He directed all deputed staff to complete the work within the stipulated time frame and ensure smooth implementation. Additional District Collector B.C. Sivanandamurthy and other senior officials participated in the training program as resource persons and guided officers on procedures and responsibilities.

Protesters demand justice for families displaced by Sharavati project, urging the government to issue title deeds to cultivators

Farmers block highway over flood issues

SHIVAMOGGA

Hundreds of farmers under the banner of the Malenadu Raitha Horata Samiti blocked the National Highway near the Sigandur Bridge on Monday, demanding a permanent solution to the long-pending problems of Sharavati flood victims and forest land cultivators.

Led by district coordinator T.N. Srinivas, the protesters staged a sit-in and raised slogans against the government. The agitation disrupted traffic for some time as farmers expressed anger over what they called decades of neglect.

The protesters said families displaced by the Sharavati project in 1964 are still waiting for justice. Many cultivators living on KPC land have demanded that the state government immediately issue



title deeds. They alleged that despite repeated appeals, their concerns have not been properly addressed.

Speaking at the protest, Srinivas said that before coming to power, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar had promised to provide title deeds within a year. However, even after three years, no clear action has been taken, he claimed. He warned that if the demands are ignored,

farmers will lay siege to the District Collector's office and ministers' offices in the coming days.

Legal advisor Kumaraswamy said authorities must consider that people were living on the land even before it was declared forest or sanctuary area. Other leaders, including K.S. Prashanth and Huvanna Hurali,

also joined the protest and extended support to the farmers' cause.

Protest held over Khamenei assassination claim

SHIVAMOGGA

Members of the Anjuman e-Faizan e Hussaini Committee staged a protest in Shivamogga condemning the reported assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Imam Ali Khamenei. The protesters gathered near the District Collector's Office and submitted a petition to the district administration seeking immediate attention to the issue.

Addressing the gathering, Guru Maulana Abbas Ali Sharif said Khamenei had dedicated his life to the welfare of the Muslim community and always stood firmly against injustice. He alleged that powerful nations like the United States and Israel were targeting Iran for political and strategic interests. He claimed that repeated threats and pressure were aimed at



forcing Iran to accept foreign dominance. Sharif said the followers of Khamenei would not be discouraged by violence. "If one leader falls, many more will rise," he declared, adding that true leadership lives on in the hearts of people. He urged the Government of India to intervene diplomatically and raise its voice against actions that disturb global peace.

Speakers at the protest also criticized the role of the United Arab Emirates, accusing it of double standards in international matters. They expressed solidarity with Iran and called upon world nations to act responsibly. Several community leaders, including Mir Mueib Hussain, Sippen Abbas, Sabera Hussain and Tauqir, were present during the demonstration.

FITNESS MEETS CLEANLINESS

Mandya to host Swachhta Marathon drive

MANDYA

A large-scale Swachhta Marathon titled "Our Steps Towards Cleanliness – Run for Mandya" will be held on March 8 under the Swachh Bharat Mission to spread awareness about cleanliness and promote fitness among citizens.

Mandya MLA P. Ravikumar announced this during a preparatory meeting at the District Collector's office. He said the marathon will begin at 6.30 am at Sir M. Visvesvaraya Stadium and is expected to see participation from nearly 25,000 people. He



urged all organizations in the district to actively join and make the event a grand success.

Deputy Commissioner Dr. Kumar said the program must be organized in a meaningful and well-planned manner. He

directed officials to arrange a proper stage, drinking water facilities, ambulance services and breakfast for participants at the venue. He also instructed them to introduce an online registration system to enable participants from out-

side Mandya to join easily.

Students from schools and colleges, government employees, non-governmental organizations and members of the public are expected to take part in large numbers. Officials were asked to ensure smooth coordination and proper arrangements for crowd management and safety.

Senior officials including Mandya Deputy Divisional Officer Shivamurthy and Additional Superintendent of Police Gangadhar Swamy attended the meeting and discussed preparations for the upcoming marathon.

KSIC factory to continue, Minister assures

MYSURU

The Karnataka government has made it clear that the KSIC Filature Factory at T. Narasipura near Mysuru will not be closed. District in-charge Minister H. C. Mahadevappa said the smooth running of the factory is the government's top priority.

Speaking to reporters, he said there is no decision to shut the unit even though there was a proposal to build a stadium on part of its land. He stressed that silk production, especially the famous Mysuru Silk sarees made by Karnataka Silk Industries Corporation, will not be disturbed.

The Minister clarified that the proposed stadium is not a prestige issue for the government. If needed, it can be

built at another place. He said rumours about closing the factory are being spread unnecessarily and the issue is being politicised.

He added that Mysuru MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar met Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and submitted a memorandum seeking protection for the factory. The Minister assured that silk from Mysuru, which enjoys global recognition, will continue to be produced without interruption.

Out of 14 acres of land, 3.5 acres were earlier marked for a silk market that has not come up. The stadium proposal needs only 1.5 acres. The Minister has directed the Deputy Commissioner to inspect the site with officials from the sericulture and sports departments before any



Out of 14 acres, 3.5 were meant for a silk market; the stadium needs 1.5 acres. Minister directs inspection with sericulture and sports officials

final decision.

Meanwhile, factory workers are on an indefinite strike demanding safety for their jobs. NGOs and local leaders have also protested, asking the government to drop the stadium plan completely.

Call grows to clean polluted Tungabhadra

SHIVAMOGGA

A strong appeal to restore the polluted Tungabhadra River was made during the inauguration of the Nirmal Tungabhadra workshop held at Open Minds World School in Shivamogga.

The workshop was jointly organized by Rashtriya Swabhimana Andolana, Parayavan Trust Shivamogga, Nirmal Tunga Abhiyan Karnataka, Shivamogga City Corporation and the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board.

Justice M.S. Santosh, Senior Judge and Member Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority, urged citizens to work hand in hand with the administration to clean the river. He said the Tungabhadra has suffered due to greed, carelessness and irresponsibility. Before the water becomes completely unsafe, people must act to protect it.

He appreciated the efforts of the environmental groups for spreading awareness without blaming governments or officials, and instead offering



cooperation and solutions. He assured that the court would support any lawful steps taken to prevent pollution.

The divine presence of Siddalinga Shivacharya Mahaswamy added spiritual strength to the event. He called on everyone to unite for water conservation and praised earlier awareness padayatras.

Prof. B.M. Kumaraswamy, President of the Environment Trust, presided over the program. Convener M. Shakar introduced the campaign. Several environmentalists and community leaders attended. Hundreds of representatives from villages

along the Tungabhadra River participated and pledged to support the mission for a clean and healthy river.

MAKE WOMEN'S DAY TRULY MEANINGFUL: CEO

MANDYA

District Chief Executive Officer K. R. Nandini has called for meaningful celebrations of International Women's Day 2026, stressing the need to focus on women's empowerment, awareness and development.

She was presiding over a preliminary meeting held at the Zilla Panchayat Mini Hall under the Deen Dayal Antyodaya National Rural Livelihood Mission. Addressing officials, Nandini said Women's Day should not be limited to symbolic events but must create real opportunities for women's growth.

She directed departments to organize programs that spread awareness about women's health and well-being. She also suggested holding essay writing, quiz, debate, speech and painting competitions for post-matric hostel and university students. Such activities, she said, would encourage



young women to express their ideas and build confidence.

The CEO emphasized the importance of skill training for interested women to improve their livelihood opportunities. She noted that the Sports Department is planning competitions such as football, shot put, slow cycling and cricket. Women should be encouraged to participate actively and register online for these events.

Nandini also recommended that winners be honored with attractive prizes, trophies and

medals to motivate greater participation. She instructed various departments to form committees and organize special programs in coordination to ensure that International Women's Day is celebrated in a purposeful and impactful manner.

Deputy Executive Officer Shivalingaiah and heads of several departments, including Social Welfare, Women and Child Development, Health and Animal Husbandry, attended the meeting and shared suggestions for the upcoming celebration.

Urs Kala Bhavan in Hunsur faces neglect

HUNSUR

Satya MAS Foundation President Satyappa expressed deep concern over the state of the Arasu Kala Bhavan in Hunsur, describing it as a building that has fallen into serious neglect due to the inaction of elected representatives.

In a press statement, Satyappa said Hunsur is the hometown of former Chief Minister D Devaraja Arasu, and the Kala Bhavan was constructed in his name in 2015 at a cost of 9.5 crore rupees. The Mysore Construc-



tion Center took up the work, but over the last decade, the building has suffered disrepair due to lack of commitment from local leaders.

Satyappa highlighted that expensive window glasses had been installed but were

broken by miscreants. The repairs, again handled by the Mysore Construction Center, are wasting public money. "The building did not fall into disrepair on its own; it is the negligence of those in power," he said.

He criticized local representatives for failing to secure funds to complete the project. "These leaders often praise D Devaraja Urs in speeches, yet they have failed to honor his legacy by neglecting the Kala Bhavan. This is an insult to his name and contributions to social justice and land reforms," Satyappa said.

QUICK READ



District hospital offers free child heart checkups

CHITRADURGA
The District Hospital, in collaboration with S.S. Narayan Health Hospital, will offer free heart checkups for children every Wednesday at the Mother and Child Hospital within the District Hospital campus. The sessions, led by renowned pediatric cardiologist Dr. Anil Kumar G.S., will run from 10:30 AM to 1:00 PM. Parents are advised to bring children showing repeated infections, bluish lips or skin, breathing difficulties, irregular heartbeat, or persistent cough. District Surgeon Dr. S.P. Ravindra urged the public to take advantage of this service and seek timely medical attention for such symptoms.

Special buses arranged for Nayakanahatti Jatra

CHITRADURGA
Special buses will operate for the grand chariot festival of Tipperudraswamy at Nayakanahatti on March 6. The services will run from March 5 to 7 from Chitradurga, Chalakere, Hosadurga, Hiriyur and Pavagad units of Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation. Buses from Chitradurga will travel via Belagatta, Halkal and Challakere, while other routes will pass through Narlagunte and Sanikere as scheduled. The Chitradurga Divisional Controller urged devotees and passengers to make use of the special arrangements made for the convenience of festival visitors.

Sri Yogi Narayana Yathindra Jayanti celebration

CHIKKABALLAPURA
The Jayanti of Sri Yogi Narayana Yathindra, also known as Kaivara Taitaiah, will be celebrated on March 3 at 11 AM in the 2nd-floor auditorium of the District Collector's Office. The event is jointly organized by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, and the Kannada and Culture Department. Assistant Director D.M. Ravikumar urged the public, community leaders, and office bearers to attend and participate actively to make the celebration a success. Officials said the program will honor the spiritual legacy of Yogi Narayana Yathindra and encourage community engagement in cultural and religious traditions.

COMMUNITY RALLIES TO SAVE HISTORIC KALKUNIKE SCHOOL

HUNSUR

Former MLA S.P. Manjunath expressed strong support for the ongoing struggle to save the 89-year-old Kalkunike Government School, stating that the institution should not be demolished. Speaking at the protest site, he said, "The road was measured during my term and only reaches the school compound. There is no reason to attack the school. It is approaching a century of service and must be preserved." The School Development Committee and the Save School Struggle Committee organized the dharna, joined by senior students, villagers, and community leaders. Protestors

Minister Khandre visits young woman hospital patient

The minister directed BRIMS Hospital to ensure timely staff salaries, emphasizing employee support and maintaining high morale

BIDAR

Forest, Biology and Environment Minister and Bidar District In-charge Ishwar Khandre visited a hospital on Monday to check on a young woman undergoing treatment after a suicide attempt. The woman reportedly attempted suicide following harassment by some male hospital staff. During the visit, Minister Khandre instructed the District Superintendent of Police to carry out a thorough and impartial investigation into the incident. He emphasized that strict legal action must be taken against those found



guilty and warned that negligence regarding the safety and dignity of female staff would not be tolerated. The minister also directed the hospital director to ensure timely payment of salaries to all BRIMS Hospital staff,

during the visit. The hospital administration assured that necessary care and support are being provided to the patient. Authorities also promised a transparent investigation to address the allegations and prevent such incidents in the future. The minister's visit underlined the government's commitment to protecting women in workplaces and ensuring accountability. The case has sparked concern in Bidar, with local residents and staff urging swift action to maintain safety and trust within healthcare institutions.

Freedom fighter Kulageri remembered in Kalaburagi



KALABURAGI

Freedom fighter Channabasappa Kulageri not only resisted the Razakars during the Hyderabad liberation struggle but also stood firmly against corruption and injustice, said author Dr. Shivarajan Satyampete. He was speaking at a lecture on "Hyderabad State Liberation Fighter Channabasappa Kulageri" organized at H.K.E. Society's Women's Polytechnic College in collaboration with the Women's Science and Commerce College on Monday. Dr. Satyampete explained that during the rule of Mir Osman Ali Khan, Kulageri actively opposed the oppressive policies of the Razakars. He said Kulageri launched strong movements against injustice and earned recognition as a brave leader, often compared to revolutionary spirit in Karnataka. Apart from fighting autocratic forces, he also raised his voice against nepotism, fraud and black money dealings. The speaker highlighted Kulageri's contribution to education and cooperative movements. He noted that Kulageri played an important advisory role in strengthening institutions founded by educationist Mahadevappa Rampure and supported the establishment of women's educational facilities. Chief guest Amarnath Patil Kulageri recalled his involvement in guiding educational development, including support for women's colleges and hostels.

Vaidya ordered appointing Malpi Hospital specialist, surveying closed schools, ensuring safety, achieving 100% SSLC results

Minister Vaidya ensures medicine, student safety

KARWAR

Fisheries, Ports and Inland Waterways Minister and District In-charge Minister Mankala S. Vaidya instructed the Health Department to ensure there is no shortage of medicines in any government medical center across the district. Speaking at the quarterly KDP meeting at the Zilla Panchayat Hall on Monday, he said patients should not be given vouchers to buy medicines outside hospitals. Any shortages should be immediately addressed by purchasing drugs through the Health Protection Committee and distributing them free of cost. He also directed officials to appoint a specialist doctor at the Malpi Specialty Hospital in Karwar. Minister Vaidya emphasized that all government schools closed due to low student numbers should be surveyed and handed over to local Gram Panchayats. School safety, including removal of dangerous trees and electric wires, must be en-



sured, while teachers and officers work to achieve 100 percent results in this year's SSLC exams. On transport, he asked that new buses be deployed efficiently, the Karwar-Bengaluru route resumed, and dilapidated buses repaired. He also instructed HESCOM to ensure transformers and poles are ready within 24 hours and replace dangerous wires before the rainy season. Tourism and public safety were addressed, with directives to install warning signs and deploy home guards at waterfalls. Road work, especially on the Haveri-Sirsi route, should be completed urgently to prevent inconvenience and dust for residents and school children. Drinking

water, livestock fodder, and proper hostel facilities for students were emphasized, along with the timely implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission projects. The meeting also reviewed rain gauge repairs, auto permits, crop insurance payments, disaster prevention works, and encroached land surveys. Attendees included Deputy Commissioner K. Lakshmi Priya, Zilla Panchayat CEO Dr. Dileesh Shashi, Superintendent of Police Deepan M.N., and officials from various departments. Separately, Chairman of the Karnataka State Food Commission Dr. H Krishna and members will tour Uttara Kannada from March 2-4 to inspect departments and interact with the public.

Foundation laid for new Ambedkar girls' school building

KARWAR

Karnataka State Marketing Communication and Advertisement Limited Chairman and MLA Satish Krishna Sail laid the foundation stone for the new building of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Girls' Residential School Complex in Bada Hobli, Karwar taluk, at Pantalbagh, Arava Asnoti on February 27. Speaking on the occasion, Sail emphasized that the new building will provide talented students from rural areas with access to quality education along with essential amenities. He said the project aims to empower girls from economically weaker backgrounds and support their overall development. The event was attended by several officials, including Deputy Director of Social Welfare Y.K. Umesh, Field Education Officer Umesh N. Naik, Karwar Taluk Guarantee Scheme Implementation Au-



thority Chairman Rajendra Rane, and Assistant Executive Engineer Chandrashekar B from the Karnataka Residential Educational Institutions Association, Bengaluru. Also present were Asnoti Gram Panchayat Development Officer Praveen Gavas, SKS Karkala Infrastructure Project Pvt. Ltd. Managing Director Sujaykumar Shetty, teaching and non-teaching staff, and lo-

cal villagers. In-charge Principal Parameshwari D. Gowda welcomed the gathering. Mathematics teacher Shwetha Gowda delivered a speech, and Hema S. Gaonkar proposed the vote of thanks. The foundation stone ceremony marks the beginning of a project aimed at nurturing education and development for girls in Karwar.



Job seekers demand immediate recruitment notification

RAICHUR

Hundreds of unemployed youth staged a dharna at Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Circle on Monday, demanding that the state government immediately issue recruitment notifications for thousands of vacant posts. The protest was organized by the Job Seekers' Struggle Committee. Demonstrators said that out of 2,84,881 vacant posts in the state, at least 56,432 posts already approved by the cabinet should be notified without delay. They also called for scrapping the KPS Magnet scheme, alleging that it is affecting teacher posts. Protesters highlighted that more than 5,000 primary and high school teacher posts, including art, music and physical education teachers, remain vacant in the district. They urged the government to release an annual recruitment calendar to ensure regular filling of posts. The agitators further demanded action to fill 9.79 lakh vacant positions in 78 central departments. They

Protesters said over 5,000 teacher posts, including art, music, and PE, are vacant and urged regular recruitment schedules

sought the repeal of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, claiming it restricts government hiring. They also opposed certain administrative reform recommendations and called for greater transparency in recruitment exams. The group insisted that examination irregularities must be stopped and high application fees should be waived. They demanded free transport for candidates attending exams and suitable unemployment allowance for eligible youth. Protesters also called for implementing reforms to prevent irregularities in KPSC and ending contractual appointments in favor of permanent jobs. State Coordinator Channabasava Janekal, District President Hanumantha Kurdi and several job seekers participated in the protest.

US, Israel strike Iran, leader's ally condemns

SINDHANUR

Strong words of protest came on Monday from CPI (ML) Liberation District Secretary Nagaraj Poojar over the recent joint military action by the United States and Israel against Iran. Poojar described the offensive as a serious violation of international peace and a threat to world stability. In a press statement, he said the attacks were "diaboli- cal" and should be halted at once. He urged the Indian government to press the United Nations to push for peace and uphold global agreements that protect nations' sovereignty. Poojar called the strikes an act of "international hooliganism" and said civilian lives in Iran were put at risk. He criticised the United States for acting against a sovereign nation, saying this goes against the UN Charter's principles,

which stress respect for countries' independence. The CPI (ML) leader also spoke about past international attacks, including on Iraq and Venezuela, saying they were based on "false accusations." He accused the US of provoking other conflicts, including tensions involving Palestine-Gaza and Russia-Ukraine, and said this approach harms global peace. Poojar claimed that the real aim of powerful states is to take control of natural resources and disrupt democratic systems in other countries. He warned that without unity among countries that support social justice, democratic values would be in danger. His comments reflect growing concerns around the world as the US and Israel's military actions in Iran have intensified, drawing criticism from many who call for diplomatic solutions instead of war.



Udupi launches helpline for stranded passengers abroad

UDUPI

In view of the ongoing unrest in several Middle East countries, the Udupi district administration has issued a helpline to assist residents stranded abroad. Air routes to 11 countries, including Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia, remain closed till March 2, leaving many passengers from Karnataka, including the UAE (Dubai), unable to re-

turn. Following directives from the Hon'ble Chief Minister and Revenue Minister, the State and District Emergency Operation Centres are functioning 24x7. Authorities are monitoring updates from the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Embassy to coordinate timely assistance. Residents of Udupi district or their relatives seeking help can contact the District Emergency Operation Center.

AWARENESS BUILDS UNITY

Swamiji warns of Lingayat identity crisis

BASAVAKALYANA

A strong message on unity and identity was delivered at a religious gathering in Basavakalyana, where Nijagunanand Swamiji said the future of the Lingayat faith depends on social awareness within the community. Speaking at the concluding ceremony of Kalyana Nadige, Haralaya Jyoti Padayatra and Sharan Sansat Samavesha held at Basava Dharma Peetha, the seer stated that all Lingayats belong to the



Shudra community and must remember their roots. Nijagunanand Swamiji of Bailur Nishkala Mantap said that

Basavanna brought people together under the Lingayat faith to promote equality and social justice.

He stressed that the religion would grow only if followers accept this shared identity and stand united, including Dalit communities who, he said, have upheld many of Basavanna's principles. He warned that losing this awareness could weaken the foundation of the faith. The Swamiji also criticized what he described as a Vedic mindset within sections of the community, saying it distances people from the original teachings of equality and devotion. He urged followers to

understand and respect the contributions of historical Sharanas. Kalyana Karnataka Pratishthan President Basava Kumar Patil called for the development of Beejnalli village associated with Haralaya and demanded better facilities for devotees. Several seers, scholars and community leaders attended the event. Retired Judge S.S. Nagarane presided over the program, which concluded with messages of unity and spiritual commitment.

BSS LAW CHAMBER
Near Civil Court Complex, Doddaballapura.

QUICK READ

DMK sets March 3 deadline for Cong on seat sharing

Chennai
The ruling DMK has set March 3 as the informal deadline for the Congress high command to conclude seat-sharing negotiations for the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, making it clear that it cannot afford further delay, especially with the Rajya Sabha biennial polls fast approaching. The last date for filing nominations for the March 16 Rajya Sabha elections is March 5. With the DMK-led alliance in a position to secure four Upper House seats and the AIADMK-led front likely to win two, the ruling party is keen to finalise its nominees without uncertainty over alliance arrangements.

Hyderabad cops prohibit throwing colours on unwilling persons

Hyderabad
Hyderabad Police Commissioner V. C. Sajjanar on Monday warned that strict action will be taken against those who throw colours at unwilling people during Holi celebrations. He issued a notification prohibiting throwing coloured water or other coloured substances at unwilling persons, places, or vehicles, or smearing unwilling people with colour, on public roads and public places. He advised citizens to celebrate the festival in a peaceful atmosphere and warned that strict action would be taken against those who cause inconvenience to others. In view of the ongoing month of Ramadan, he instructed that care be taken to ensure no disturbance is caused to Muslim prayers.

CPI drops 6 sitting legislators, Kerala Cong-M seeks extra seat

Thiruvananthapuram
With the Assembly elections drawing near, coalition arithmetic within Kerala's ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) has gathered pace. The Communist Party of India (CPI), the second-largest ally in the Left front, on Monday, decided to drop six sitting legislators who have completed three terms, signalling a generational shift and adherence to its internal rotation norm. Those denied renomination include Deputy Speaker Chittayam Gopakumar, P.S. Supal, E.K. Vijayan, V. Sasi, E.S. Jayalal and former Minister E. Chandrasekharan.

BATTLE FOR TN

Vijay calls TVK executive meet in Thanjavur

CHENNAI

Marking a strategic recalibration in his political approach after the Karur episode, Vijay, chief of Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), is set to convene a key executive meeting at Chengipatti in Thanjavur district on March 4. The move signals a shift from large-scale public rallies to structured, district-level organisational strengthening ahead of the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. The party has formally obtained police permission to conduct the executive session. Unlike previous mass gatherings, the Thanjavur meeting will focus on internal coordination, with around 5,000 party functionaries from the district expected to participate. The initiative is



part of a broader plan to reinforce TVK's grassroots structure and streamline its campaign machinery. The Thanjavur event follows a similar executive meeting held on February 23 at Pallikonda in Vellore district, where Vijay directly interacted with office-bearers and cadres. At that gathering, he stressed the importance of personal engagement and organisational unity at a time when the party is posi-

tioning itself as a strong Opposition force. It is my wish to come and meet you in person, Vijay had told party members in Vellore. Referring to political challenges, he added that conspiracies were being hatched against the party as it raised questions against the ruling establishment. He further declared that once TVK forms the government, he would personally visit every village to meet party workers and support-

ers, drawing enthusiastic applause from the cadre. Vijay also took a swipe at Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. K. Stalin over a recent remark suggesting that the election was not just about Tamil Nadu but also about Delhi. Questioning the comment, Vijay asked whether Stalin was contesting in Delhi and asserted that the people of Tamil Nadu were capable of deciding their own political future. The upcoming Thanjavur executive meet underscores TVK's effort to transition from mass mobilisation to deeper organisational consolidation. By focusing on district-level leadership, cadre morale, and disciplined coordination, Vijay appears determined to build a robust and structured campaign framework as the party prepares for the electoral contest ahead.

Not a single Hindu refugee will be deported from Bengal: HM

He reiterated the Centre's commitment to protecting persecuted Hindu communities while driving out infiltrators

KOLKATA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday assured that not a single Hindu refugee who has taken shelter in West Bengal due to religious persecution in a neighbouring country will be deported or denied Indian citizenship. Addressing a public gathering at Raidighi in South 24 Parganas district as part of the Bharatiya Janata Party's ongoing Parivartan Yatra, he reiterated the Centre's commitment to protecting persecuted Hindu communities. Speaking at the rally, Shah said that with the BJP-led government at the Centre, the interests of Hindu refugees remain secure. Not a single Hindu refugee will be deprived of their Indian citizenship or deported, he declared, drawing applause from sup-



porters. The assurance comes amid concerns among sections of the Matua community, many of whom migrated from Bangladesh and settled in districts such as North 24 Parganas and Nadia. Political observers note that apprehensions have grown within the Matua community after reports that names of several voters were referred for judicial scrutiny of documents by officers appointed by the Election Commission

of India. The Matuas, belonging to a Hindu socially backward class, have emerged as a significant electoral bloc in West Bengal since the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, largely backing the BJP. At the same time, Shah struck a firm note against illegal infiltration. He stated that while Hindu refugees fleeing religious oppression would be protected, infiltrators entering the state unlawfully would face strict legal action. Infiltrators will be identified, and appropriate legal action will be taken to remove them from the state, he said. Highlighting the BJP's promises ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections, Shah announced that a provision of ₹5,700 crore would be allocated for women's empowerment in West Bengal if the party forms the government.

He said special schemes would focus on ensuring dignity, security, and economic empowerment for women across the state. The Home Minister also addressed grievances of state government employees regarding non-payment of dearness allowance at par with central government staff. He assured that, if voted to power, the BJP would implement a new pay structure in accordance with the recommendations of the 7th Pay Commission and clear pending arrears. Additionally, Shah promised that the process of filling vacant posts in the state government would begin by the end of the current calendar year if the BJP assumes office, underscoring employment generation as a priority agenda for the party in West Bengal.

Punjab sets up 24x7 helpline for stranded citizens

CHANDIGARH

Amid escalating conflict in parts of the Middle East, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Monday announced a round-the-clock helpline to assist Punjabis stranded in strife-torn Arab nations. Families seeking immediate assistance can contact 0172-2260042, 0172-2260043, or send a WhatsApp message to +91 94787 79112, the Chief Minister said. Stating that the Punjab government is in constant coordination with the Government of India (GoI), Mann assured that every effort is being made to ensure the safe and prompt return of affected individuals. The state government is constantly in touch with the Government of India to ensure safe and prompt return of the people stuck, he said, expressing solidarity with distressed families. Due to the outbreak of hostilities in several Gulf and Arab countries, many Punjabis residing or working there are



reportedly facing serious difficulties. In response, the state government has established a dedicated helpline and control room that will operate 24x7 to provide timely support. If any person or their family is stranded in these countries, they can call on these numbers. People can call or send a WhatsApp message if any kind of help is required, Mann added. The Chief Minister also urged the Union government to intensify evacuation efforts and take necessary diplomatic measures to ensure the safe return of Punjabis trapped in conflict-hit regions. He expressed hope that the Centre would extend all possible assistance to Indian nationals facing hardship abroad. A day earlier, Punjab Legislative Assembly Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan had appealed for the immediate intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to facilitate the safe evacuation of Indians stranded at Dubai Airport and in various Arab countries.

India rejects crime allegations, reaffirms judicial commitment

NEW DELHI

India on Monday firmly rejected allegations of involvement in transnational organised crime, terming them baseless, politically motivated and unsupported by credible evidence, while reiterating its commitment to established judicial processes. The remarks were made during a special media briefing on the visit of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to India.

Addressing reporters, Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Periasamy Kumaran, underlined that India categorically denies any role in transnational violence or organised crime. Let me once again underline that India categorically rejects allegations of involvement in transnational violence or organised crime. These claims are baseless, politically motivated and unsupported by credible evidence despite repeated requests, Kumaran said. He emphasized that concerns of such a sensitive nature should be handled through credible law enforcement and judicial channels rather than public discourse. India believes that concerns



MEA dismisses claims as politically motivated during briefing on Carney visit

of this nature must be addressed through credible law enforcement and judicial processes, not through public or publicised narratives, he added. Responding to queries regarding the killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada, Kumaran said India understands that the criminal investigation is proceeding as per Canada's established legal procedures. He reiterated that India respects the judicial process and believes that matters under legal consideration should not be subjected to public commentary. On the Nijjar case, we understand that the criminal investigation is proceeding as per established legal procedures. The Canadians have an established legal procedure and it will proceed as per that procedure. India has consistently maintained its commitment to the judicial process and we believe that sensitive matters under judicial consid-

eration are best allowed to proceed through established legal processes without public commentary, Kumaran said. Bilateral ties between India and Canada have remained strained since former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged in the Canadian Parliament that there were credible allegations linking Indian agents to Nijjar's killing. The situation escalated further when Canada designated India's High Commissioner and other diplomats as persons of interest in the ongoing investigation. New Delhi strongly refuted the allegations at the time, calling them absurd and motivated. India also accused Ottawa of providing space to extremist and anti-India elements operating from Canadian soil. Despite diplomatic tensions, India has maintained that it remains committed to due legal processes and constructive engagement based on mutual respect and sovereignty.

Tremendous response from public for BJP: Assam CM

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that public feedback received during the ongoing Jana Ashirwad Yatra has been overwhelmingly in favour of the BJP, asserting that people across constituencies are seeking continuity of the present government. Sharing his experience from the yatra, Sarma said he has covered 12 Assembly constituencies so far, and the response from the people has been unanimous, with crowds echoing the sentiment of Phir ek baar, BJP Sarkar. The Chief Minister made these remarks after participating in the yatra at Bihpuria, where he said he felt both pride and responsibility while interacting with local residents. The progress we are building together is visible on the ground, and today's energy makes one thing clear we cannot slow down now, Sarma said in a post on the social media platform X. He added that the enthusiasm witnessed during the yatra reflects public confidence in the developmental initiatives undertak-



en by the BJP-led government over the past years. According to the Chief Minister, infrastructure growth, improved connectivity, welfare delivery, and grassroots governance have strengthened people's trust in the government. Sarma noted that the Jana Ashirwad Yatra is not just an outreach programme but a platform to directly engage with citizens, listen to their concerns, and reaffirm the government's commitment to inclusive development. In Bihpuria, large gatherings welcomed the Chief Minister and other party leaders, with supporters highlighting improvements in roads, healthcare access, education facilities, and employment opportunities.

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

COMMISSIONER SURVEY SETTLEMENT AND LAND RECORDS (SSLR),
K.R.Circle, Bangalore-560001. Ph: 91-080-22212408, Fax: 91-080-22277528.
No: SSLR/17016/20/2023-24 Dated: 02.03.2026

E-TENDER NOTIFICATION

Sub: Hiring of Services of Computer Operators, Drivers, Security Guards & House Keepers Reg.

E-tenders here by are invited from reputed authorized agents for hiring of Man Power Service of Computer Operators-02, Drivers-08, Security Guards-03 & House Keepers - 07, to the Survey Settlement and Land Records Department, Bengaluru, on contract basis. Tender Document and related information are made available in e-procurement Interested firms portal website <http://www.epro.karnataka.gov.in> from 04.03.2026 registered with the centre for e-governance, can participate in the bidding process. The last date of submission of proposal is 23.03.2026, 5.30 PM.

Sd/- K. Jayaprakash
Additional Director,
Survey Settlement & Land Records, Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/5930/Shirdi Sai/2025-26

ಕೋಲಾರ ನಗರಾಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಪ್ರಾಧಿಕಾರ

ದಿ.ದೇವರಾಜ ಅರಸು ಬಡಾವಣೆ, ಬಿಮಕೆ, ಕೋಲಾರ-563103.
ದೂರವಾಣಿ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ:08152-243142, ಇ-ಮೇಲ್:kudakolar@gmail.com.
ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಕೋನಪ್ರಾ.ತಾಂ.ತಾ.ಬಿ.ವಿ.ಸಾ.ಸಂ:663/2025-26 ದಿನಾಂಕ:26.02.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(as per the conditions of the Standard Tender Document E-Procurement Tender Notification)

Kolar District ULB's Tender through Karnataka Procurement Portal as per the GO. No.FD/06/PCL/2006, Bangalore from the Registered, Eligible Contractors. For details visit <http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>. The Indent Numbers details below. Any addendums will be notified through Karnataka Procurement portal only.

Sl. No	Work Indent No.	Amount put to tender (Rs.in lakhs) Excluding GST
1	KLRUDA/2025-26/SM/WORK_INDENT5	327.49
2	KLRUDA /2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT8	28.92
3	KLRUDA /2025-26/EL/WORK_INDENT7	20.96
4	KLRUDA/2025-26/SE0008	-

Tender last date and Bid Opening date should be seen in KPPP Portal Website
Sd/- Commissioner, Urban Development Authority, Kolar.
DIPR/KOLAR/RO:516/KSMCA/2025-26

MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE LIMITED

Formerly MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE PVT LTD
Regd Office: 8/596 A, Padmarabha Building, Near Sreerama Swami Temple, Cherpur - Thiruprayar Road, Thiruprayar, Thrissur, Kerala 689567 | Phone No: 0487-3520504. Website: www.manappuramhomefin.com

POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the authorised officer of Manappuram Home Finance Ltd ("MAHOFIN") under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest ("SARFESI") Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 9 of the security interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the borrowers and co-borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the notice and interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said "Act" read with rule 9 of the said rules. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Manappuram Home Finance Ltd as mentioned below for each of the respective properties:

Sl. No.	Name of Borrower and Co-borrower / Loan account number/ Branch	Description Of Secured Asset In Respect Of Which Interest Has Been Created	Date of Demand Notice sent & Outstanding Amount	Date of Possession
1	Bharati Sankalappa Harjian, Sankalappa Parashurama Harjian, Parashurama Yallappa Harjian, Ishwar Parashurama Harjian, Anjana Ishwar Harjian, Sharavata Parashurama Harjian, Mallamma Fakirappa Harjian, (MHL00260034517/ Hudli	Go Vpc No: 94/B2, Property No: 1513003003002001444, Total Measuring 190.38 Sq Mtr, Building Measuring 74.24 Sq Mtr, Bisaralli Village, Begur Gram Panchayat, Tal:Kallagudi/District:Kannur/Kerala, Pin:581204, East-Property of Renavadi Harjian, West-Road, South-Property of Kanakappa Harjian & Yallappa B Harjian, North-Gaathana Property	24-11-2025 & Rs.535190/-	28-02-2026

Date: 3rd March 2026 | Place: KARNATAKA Sd/- Authorised Officer Manappuram Home Finance Ltd

ಪುರಸಭಾ ಕಾರ್ಯಾಲಯ ಆನ್‌ಲೈನ್‌

ಆನ್‌ಲೈನ್ - 562106, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ನಗರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ
ದೂರವಾಣಿ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 080-27859225, ಇ-ಮೇಲ್: itstaff_uls_aneal@yahoo.co.in
ಫ್ಯಾಕ್ಸ್: 080-27830092

ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಪು.ಕಾ.ಆ/ಅ.ಸಾ./ಬಿಂಡರ್ /11/2025-26 ದಿನಾಂಕ:02.03.2026

ಬಿಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ (ಕೆಪಿಪಿಎ- ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಮಾತ್ರ)

ಆನ್‌ಲೈನ್ ಪುರಸಭೆಯ ಪುರಸಭಾ ನಿಧಿಯಡಿ ಮತ್ತು ಸ್ಥಳೀಯ ಭಾರತ ಮಿಷನ್ ಯೋಜನೆಯಡಿ ಈ ಕೆಳಕಂಡ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಅರ್ಹ ಏಜೆನ್ಸಿಗಳಿಂದ/ನೃತ್ಯಗಾರರು/ಜಿಲ್ಲಾಕರಂ ಬಿಂಡರ್ ಅಪ್ಪಾನ್‌ಸಲಾಗಿದ್ದು, ಸ್ವಾಂತ್ರ್ಯ ಹಕ್ಕುಗಳನ್ನು ಕೆಪಿಪಿಎ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ <http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> ಮುಖಾಂತರ ಈ ಕೆಳಗಡೆ ಸಹಿ ಮಾಡಿರುವವರು ಅಪ್ಪಾನ್‌ಸಿಸುತ್ತಾರೆ. ಬಿಂಡರ್ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ ಕಛೇರಿಯ ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಆರೋಗ್ಯ ಹಿತವಾದ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳಿಂದ ಮಾಹಿತಿಯನ್ನು ಪಡೆದುಕೊಳ್ಳಬಹುದು. ಬಿಂಡರ್ ಹಕ್ಕುಮಂತ್ರ ಮತ್ತು ಕೆಪಿಪಿಎ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ನಿಗದಿಪಡಿಸಿರುವ ಮಾನದಂಡಗಳ ಆಧಾರದ ಮೇಲೆ ಬಿಂಡರ್‌ಗಳ ಮೌಲ್ಯಮಾಪನ ಮಾಡಲಾಗುವುದು ಮತ್ತು ಯಶಸ್ವಿ ಬಿಡ್ಡುದಾರರನ್ನು ಆಯ್ಕೆ ಮಾಡಲಾಗುವುದು.

ಕ್ರ. ಸಂ.	ಕಾಮಗಾರಿ ವಿವರ	ಇಂಡೆಂಟ್ ನಂ.	ಅಂದಾಜು ಮೊತ್ತ (ರೂ.ಅಕ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ)	ಇ.ಎಂ.ಡಿ. ರೂಗಳಲ್ಲಿ (2.5%)
01	ಆನ್‌ಲೈನ್ ಪುರಸಭಾ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯ ಫನಿಷ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ವಿಲೇವಾರಿಗಾಗಿ ಸರ್ವೆ ನಂ.170 ಸುಧಾಪುರ ಜಾಗದಲ್ಲಿ ವೇ ಬ್ರಾಕ್ಡ್ ಮಿಷನ್ ವಿಟ್ ಕಂಟ್ರಿಬ್ಯೂ ಸಿಸ್ಟಮನ್ನು ಖರೀದಿಸಿ ಅಳವಡಿಸುವುದು	DMA/2025-26/IND6002	10.50	26250/-
02	ಆನ್‌ಲೈನ್ ಪುರಸಭಾ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯ ಫನಿಷ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ವಿಲೇವಾರಿಗಾಗಿ ಸರ್ವೆ ನಂ.170 ಸುಧಾಪುರ ಜಾಗದಲ್ಲಿ 35 ಎಂ.ಎಂ.ಮತ್ತು 4 ಎಂ.ಎಂ.ಕ್ರೋಮಲ್ ಮಿಷನ್ ವಿಟ್ ಕಂಟ್ರಿಬ್ಯೂ ಬೇಲ್ಟ್ ಖರೀದಿಸಿ ಅಳವಡಿಸುವುದು	DMA/2025-26/IND6001	75.00	150000/-

ವೇಳಾಪಟ್ಟಿ: 1. ಬಿಂಡರ್‌ಗಳನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವ ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 11.03.2026 ರಂದು ಸಂಜೆ 5.30 ಘಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ. 2. ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ ಕೆಪಿಪಿ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ನೋಡಬಹುದು.
ಸಹಿ/-ಮುಖ್ಯಾಧಿಕಾರಿ ಪುರಸಭೆ, ಆನ್‌ಲೈನ್.

ವಾಸಾಂಶ/ವಾ.ಪ್ರ/5940/ಎಸ.ಎಸ್.ಎ/2025-26



QUICK READ

DMK begins seat-sharing talks with VCK ahead of TN polls

Chennai

With the announcement of the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections expected shortly, alliance negotiations have gathered pace across the political spectrum. The ruling DMK on Monday commenced formal seat-sharing discussions with its key ally, the Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), at the DMK's headquarters in Chennai. The meeting was attended by senior leaders from both parties. VCK President Thol. Thirumavalavan and General Secretary Ravikumar represented the party in the discussions, while top DMK functionaries led the talks on behalf of the ruling alliance.

ED summons Partha, Arpita in Bengal SSC recruitment scam

Kolkata

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned former state Education Minister Partha Chatterjee and his close aide Arpita Mukherjee in the teachers' recruitment corruption case, sources in the central agency said on Monday. It is learnt that the two will be called for questioning after the state Assembly elections. Partha Chatterjee was arrested in July 2022 in the West Bengal School Service Commission teachers' recruitment corruption case. His close aide, Arpita Mukherjee, was also arrested. However, both secured bail and continue to be out of jail.

RTI filed on Bengal ex-minister Chatterjee's performance as MLA

Kolkata

An application had been filed under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, to get details of the performance of former West Bengal Education Minister and ex-Trinamool Congress secretary general as the party legislator from Behala (Paschim) Assembly constituency in South 24 Parganas district during the last five years. Chatterjee had been a four-time legislator from that constituency since 2006. The last time he was elected from that constituency was in 2021. But almost his entire term as the party legislator was spent behind bars after his arrest in July 2022 in connection with the multi-crore cash-for-school job case.

NMC Warns Medical Colleges Over Admissions

NEW DELHI

The National Medical Commission (NMC) has warned that medical colleges admitting "fake patients" to meet inspection norms risk immediate rejection of applications for new postgraduate courses or additional seats.

In a recent order, the NMC said some institutions admit patients who do not require treatment merely to show adequate bed occupancy and clinical material during assessments. It termed the practice a serious violation that would invite strict penalties. The Commission clarified that such institutions could be barred from starting new courses or increasing intake in existing ones.



Advance CAPF deployment in Bengal ahead of polls

Detailing about the same, the said 480 CAPF companies to be deployed in two phases before the poll schedule announcement

KOLKATA

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has released details of the advance deployment of 480 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) across West Bengal ahead of the announcement of polling dates for the forthcoming Assembly elections. The deployment will take place in two phases as part of preparatory measures to ensure a peaceful and orderly electoral process. Out of the total 480 companies, 240 companies were deployed on March 1, while the remaining 240 companies are scheduled for deployment on March 10. The highest number of companies 58 has been allocated to North 24 Parganas district. Murshidabad will receive 35 companies, followed by South



24 Parganas with 33, Kolkata with 30, and East Midnapore with 28 companies. Notably, North 24 Parganas, Murshidabad, and South 24 Parganas are districts bordering Bangladesh, with Murshidabad also being minority-dominated. East Midnapore, allotted 28 companies, is the native district of Leader of Opposition Suven-

du Adhikari. Hooghly district will see deployment of 27 companies, while East Burdwan and Nadia have been allotted 25 and 22 companies, respectively. Howrah and Birbhum will receive 21 companies each. Purulia and West Midnapore have been allocated 20 companies each. Further allocations include 19 companies for North Dina-

jjpur, 18 for Malda, 17 for West Burdwan, 16 for Darjeeling, and 15 for Cooch Behar. Bankura will have 13 companies, while Jhargram is set to receive 11. South Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri will get 10 companies each. The lowest deployments are in Alipurdur, with seven companies, and Kalimpong, with just four companies. According to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs' guidelines, each CAPF company comprises a minimum of 72 personnel. The forces deployed include personnel from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), covering all five CAPFs under central command.

Min reviews Jhotwara works ahead of monsoon

JAIPUR

Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore on Monday held a comprehensive review meeting with officials from the Municipal Corporation, the Jaipur Development Authority (JDA), and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to assess the progress of ongoing development works in the Jhotwara Assembly constituency ahead of the approaching monsoon season.

During the meeting, the Minister stressed that all projects must now move forward in a coordinated and time-bound manner, strictly according to established priorities. He underlined the need for permanent solutions to long-standing civic issues that have repeatedly affected residents of Jhotwara, especially during heavy rainfall.

Rathore directed officials to accord top priority to road construction and repair works before the onset of the monsoon. He emphasized that damaged and potholed roads



must be repaired urgently to ensure smooth vehicular movement and public safety. Over the past several seasons, heavy rains in the region have led to severe waterlogging, traffic congestion, and large-scale deterioration of road surfaces, causing inconvenience to daily commuters.

Special emphasis was laid on expediting ongoing underpass projects and easing congestion on sector roads, where rising vehicular movement has compounded traffic challenges.

The Minister called for immediate corrective measures to streamline traffic flow and prevent bottlenecks that frequently bring movement to a

standstill during peak hours and rainy days.

Addressing the recurring problem of waterlogging and repeated road damage, Rathore instructed officials to strengthen drainage and sewerage systems before undertaking fresh road construction in vulnerable areas. He made it clear that roads damaged due to inadequate drainage should not be rebuilt unless a permanent drainage mechanism is first put in place.

Calling for stronger inter-departmental coordination, Rathore urged departments to work in tandem and deliver visible, on-ground results within stipulated timelines. Reiterating his commitment to the development of Jhotwara, he conveyed a clear message that all priority works must be completed efficiently and within the prescribed timeframe to provide lasting relief to residents, who have repeatedly raised concerns over potholes and the heightened risk of accidents during the monsoon season.

Odisha issues heat preparedness guidelines for edu institutions

BHUBANESWAR

As part of its summer season preparedness measures, the Odisha Higher Education Department has issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Heat Wave Management for all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the state, informed the department in an official statement on Monday.

According to the statement, the directive has been issued to ensure preparedness and precautionary measures to mitigate heatwave conditions and safeguard the health and well-being of students, faculty and staff.

The department, through the SOP, has advised colleges and universities to conduct or

reschedule classes, internal assessments and examinations during morning hours, as far as practicable, to avoid exposure of students to peak heat conditions.

Outdoor academic, sports and co-curricular activities have been restricted during peak afternoon hours. Where unavoidable, such activities must be conducted with adequate safeguards and preferably during relatively cooler periods of the day, directs the department.

Additionally, all institutions have been directed to ensure the uninterrupted availability of safe and potable drinking water at multiple points within campuses.

Adequate stocks of Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS)

must be maintained and made readily accessible in classrooms, hostels, common areas and examination centres.

The SOP also mandates inspection and repair of tubewells, hand pumps and drinking water facilities to prevent disruption in water supply during the summer months.

Colleges and universities have been further instructed to keep basic first aid facilities ready to address heat-related discomfort, dehydration, dizziness and other medical exigencies.

The statement mentioned that responsible personnel must be identified to provide immediate assistance in such situations.

Kerala CM slams T'gana govt over demolition drive in Khammam

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday launched a sharp attack on the Congress, alleging that its government in Telangana had unleashed a bulldozer raj by demolishing hundreds of houses and rendering thousands homeless.

In a strongly worded statement, Vijayan described the demolition drive in Velugumatla village of Khammam district as deeply alarming and accused the Congress of pursuing what he termed a crude politics of displacement.

According to the Chief Minister, nearly 700 houses were demolished under heavy police presence in Velugumatla. He said the houses had been constructed on Bhoodan land allotted to landless families during the historic movement spearheaded by Vinoba Bhave. Vijayan alleged that the evictions were carried out without prior notice and claimed that close to 3,000 people, many of whom possessed valid identity documents, were forced out of their homes in the early hours of February 25.

He further charged that the Telangana government had disregarded the humanitarian spirit of the Bhoodan movement by branding even those with valid 'pattayams' as fake title holders and proceeding with demolitions. Drawing parallels with similar eviction drives in Yelahanka, Vijayan said victims there continue to struggle for survival and rehabilitation.

Questioning the Congress'



He accused the Congress of pursuing what he termed a crude "politics of displacement"

ideological stance, Vijayan asked how a party that claims progressive credentials could implement what he described as inhuman measures. He asserted that the Congress leadership in Kerala must clarify its position on the developments in Telangana and other states where such eviction drives have been reported.

Contrasting Telangana's actions with Kerala's approach, Vijayan said his government had set new benchmarks in post-disaster reconstruction and rehabilitation by providing homes and land titles to affected families. He also accused the Congress of failing to fulfil its promise in Kerala to construct houses for victims of the Mundakkai-Chooralmala disaster in Wayanad.

The remarks mark an escalation in political sparring between the CPI(M)-led Left government in Kerala and the Congress, with housing rights and rehabilitation policies emerging as a fresh flashpoint in the ongoing rivalry.

CM Mohan Yadav extends Holi greetings

BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Monday extended greetings to the people of the state on the occasion of Holi, urging citizens to celebrate the festival with enthusiasm while ensuring safety, maintaining law and order,

and keeping the ongoing school examinations in mind.

Holi will be celebrated with joy and enthusiasm, but at the same time, school exams are also going on in the state. It concerns the future of our children. Therefore, we must keep all these aspects in mind while celebrating the festival, the Chief Minister said during an interaction with media persons in Barwani.

School exams, including those for Classes 10 and 12, are scheduled to conclude on March 6.

The Chief Minister later participated in the traditional Bhagoria festival, which marks the beginning of the festival of Holi in tribal communities in Jhabua, Alirajpur, Khargone, Barwani, and Dhar districts. The festival marks the onset of the spring season and attracts tourists from India and abroad. A week-long festival will conclude today.

Late on Sunday night, Chief Minister Yadav chaired a meeting with senior police officials, including DGP Kailash Makwana and ADG



Intelligence A. Sai Manohar, and reviewed the law and order situation and preparations for the Holi festival. All Range IGs, DIGs, Police Commissioners, and Superintendents of Police joined the video conference and apprised the Chief Minister of the arrangements made in their respective jurisdictions.

The Chief Minister directed officers to remain on high alert during the festival and keep a close watch on every untoward incident. He instructed all police officers to maintain strict vigil over law and order in their areas and to ensure that no laxity is shown in maintaining peace and public safety.

Yadav also stated that he will conduct surprise inspections of police stations in the coming days. Police stations will be graded based on their functioning and public feedback. He instructed that all actions taken for law and order must be fully transparent. Considering the ongoing school exams, he instructed officials to monitor all examination centres and hostels.

MIDDLE EAST TENSION

TELANGANA SETS UP 24X7 CONTROL ROOM

HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has established a 24x7 control room at Telangana Bhavan in New Delhi to assist its citizens residing in the Middle East in view of the ongoing Iran-Israel conflict.

The move comes amid escalating tensions and concerns over the safety of Indian nationals in the affected region.

Acting on the directions of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, the state government is closely monitoring the evolving situation. According to an

official release, senior officials at Telangana Bhavan are in continuous contact with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India, as well as concerned Indian embassies in the region to assess ground realities and coordinate necessary measures.

In view of multiple enquiries received from Telangana citizens residing in the affected countries including those who may be stranded and from their family members back home, the government decided to operationalise a round-the-clock control room. The facil-



ity will function 24x7 to facilitate coordination, provide verified information, and extend assistance in case of distress, travel disruptions, or

emergency situations.

Telangana citizens currently residing in the Middle East, or their family members in the state, can reach out to the designated officials at the control room. The contact persons include Vandana Barua, PS to Resident Commissioner and Liaison Head (+91 9871999044), C.H. Chakravarthi, Public Relations Officer (+91 9958322143), Javed Husain, Liaison Officer (+91 9910014749), and Rakshit Naik, Liaison Officer (+91 9643723157).

The government reiterated

that it will continue to closely track developments in coordination with the MEA and Indian diplomatic missions abroad to ensure the safety and welfare of Telangana residents.

Earlier, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had advised all Telugu people residing in Iran and other Gulf countries to remain extremely alert in light of reports of ongoing hostilities. He urged them to strictly follow safety guidelines and adhere to advisories and warnings issued periodically by Indian embassies in their respective countries.

QUICK READ

Russia prefers diplomatic end to Ukraine war: Kremlin

Moscow

The Kremlin said on Monday that it remains in Russia's own interests to continue peace negotiations with Ukraine, emphasizing that Moscow still prefers a diplomatic settlement to end the fighting. The statement comes amid signs that recent rounds of dialogue have stalled over unresolved territorial disputes in eastern Ukraine. Talks between Moscow and Kyiv have appeared increasingly deadlocked in recent weeks, largely due to Russia's insistence that Ukraine cede the remaining portions of the Donbas region not currently under Russian control.

UN Human Rights chief lauds India's democratic traditions

Geneva

Volker Turk, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has praised the vibrancy of civil society in India, highlighting that it continues to play a key role in upholding the country's democratic traditions and the rights of minorities. At the same time, while presenting his global update to the ongoing 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council last week, Turk slammed Pakistan and China for the worrisome human rights situation that exists in the countries. The UN Human Rights chief was in New Delhi last month on his first India visit during the AI Impact Summit.

Kuwait confirms several US military aircraft crashed, all crew safe

Kuwait City

Kuwait on Monday confirmed that several US military aircraft crashed earlier in the day, adding that all the crew members were safe. Earlier, Iran claimed that a US F-15 fighter jet had crashed in Kuwait, with videos circulating on social media purportedly showing an American pilot ejecting seconds before the aircraft went down. The Ministry's spokesperson stated that the relevant authorities immediately initiated search and rescue procedures, whereby the crews were evacuated and transferred to the hospital to check on their health status and provide the necessary medical care, noting that their condition is stable.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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

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

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

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

US-Israeli war widens across Middle East

Missile exchanges, regional strikes and market turmoil signal deepening conflict with no immediate resolution in sight

TEHRAN

The U.S.-Israeli air war against Iran expanded dramatically on Monday, spreading instability across the Middle East and raising fears of a prolonged regional conflict.

As Israeli forces responded to strikes from Hezbollah in Lebanon, Tehran retaliated by firing missiles and drones toward Israel, several Gulf states, and a British air base in Cyprus. The intensifying exchanges signaled a dangerous widening of hostilities with no immediate diplomatic breakthrough in sight. Dramatic video footage circulating early Monday showed a US warplane plunging from the sky over Kuwait, with a parachute visible as at least one individual ejected. Kuwait's defence ministry later confirmed that multiple American aircraft had crashed but stated that all crew members were safe. The incidents underscored the mounting risks facing military personnel as the air campaign escalates.

The weekend bombardment marked a turning point in the crisis, reportedly resulting in the death of Iran's supreme leader and drawing neighboring countries deeper into the conflict. Shipping traffic



US officials doubt immediate regime change in Iran

TEHRAN

Following the killing of Ali Khamenei on Saturday, senior U.S. officials have expressed skepticism that the ongoing U.S.-Israeli military campaign against Iran will trigger rapid regime change.

While the operation has dealt significant blows to Iran's leadership and military infrastructure, intelligence assessments suggest that dismantling the country's entrenched governing system may prove far more complex.

Before and after the launch of the strikes, U.S. President Donald Trump indicated that weakening or toppling Iran's theocratic leadership was among Washington's objectives, alongside crippling Tehran's ballistic missile capabilities and nuclear ambitions. In a video posted Sunday on Truth Social, Trump called on Iranians seeking political freedom to seize this moment and reclaim their country, framing the military campaign as an opportunity for internal transformation.



through the Gulf, a vital artery for global energy supplies was disrupted, adding to uncertainty in already volatile markets.

When trading opened Monday, energy prices surged sharply, stoking concerns that the fragile global economic recovery could face renewed setbacks. Analysts warned that sustained instability in the region could push oil prices higher and intensify inflationary pressures worldwide.

In what observers describe

Merz walks tightrope ahead of Trump meeting

BERLIN

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz faces a delicate diplomatic balancing act on Tuesday as he travels to Washington for talks with US President Donald Trump.

The meeting comes days after a joint US-Israeli operation that killed Ali Khamenei, dramatically escalating tensions across the Middle East.

Merz will be the first European leader to meet Trump since the launch of the military campaign against Iran. The operation has disrupted one of the world's most critical oil shipping routes and sent shockwaves through global aviation networks, with airlines rerouting flights and



energy markets reacting sharply to the uncertainty. The developments have complicated an already sensitive transatlantic relationship, placing Berlin in a challenging position between strategic alignment and legal caution.

Speaking Merz refrained from openly criticizing the strikes but stopped short of endorsing them outright. He acknowledged the complexities involved, noting that de-

crowded highways attempting to flee major cities amid ongoing bombardment. Public sentiment ranged from deep apprehension to expressions of defiance and even cautious optimism among those hoping for political change. With missile exchanges continuing and regional actors drawn into the confrontation, the conflict shows few signs of abating, leaving the Middle East and the world bracing for further escalation.

acades of diplomatic efforts had failed to deter Iran from pursuing nuclear capabilities or addressing concerns over domestic repression. We recognise the dilemma, Merz said, signaling understanding of Washington's strategic concerns while maintaining a measured tone. So we're not going to be lecturing our partners on their military strikes against Iran.

At the same time, the German leader emphasized that questions remain regarding the legal justification and broader implications of the operation. Critics of Trump have argued that the campaign lacked sufficient explanation and may not meet the standards of international law.

DRONE STRIKE HITS BRITISH AIR BASE IN CYPRUS

AKROTIRI

A drone strike hit a British air base in Cyprus overnight, causing limited damage but no casualties, Cypriot and British officials said on Monday.

The attack marked a significant escalation in the widening conflict surrounding Iran, effectively drawing a European Union member state directly into the unfolding regional crisis.

The strike targeted the runway at the Royal Air Force base of Akrotiri, Britain's key military installation on the eastern Mediterranean island. According to officials, the attack occurred shortly after midnight and involved a Shahed-type unmanned aerial vehicle. Nikos Christodoulides stated that the drone crashed into military facilities at 12:03 a.m., resulting in minor structural damage. Emergency protocols were immediately activated, but authorities confirmed there were no injuries or fatalities.

The incident is the first direct attack on the Akrotiri base since a rocket strike by Libyan militants in 1986. The development has unsettled the island nation, known both as a strategic military outpost and a major tourism and business hub hosting thousands of foreign companies. Security across Cyprus was heightened following the strike, with additional patrols and surveillance measures implemented around sensitive sites.

In recent weeks, Britain



had repositioned additional air assets to Akrotiri amid rising tensions and in anticipation of potential U.S. military action against Iran. At the time, British officials had emphasized that the bases would not be used for offensive operations. However, on Sunday, Prime Minister Keir Starmer acknowledged that Britain had agreed to a U.S. request to use its bases for defensive strikes targeting Iranian missile depots or launchers.

British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper clarified that the United States had not specifically requested access to the Akrotiri air base itself. Nonetheless, the overnight strike has raised concerns about Cyprus becoming increasingly entangled in the broader confrontation.

The attack underscores the expanding geographical scope of hostilities, as military infrastructure beyond the immediate Middle East theater becomes vulnerable. With tensions escalating and diplomatic efforts appearing limited, regional and European leaders now face mounting pressure to prevent further spillover into additional territories.

US military aircraft crash in Kuwait amid escalating conflict

KUWAIT

Several U.S. military aircraft crashed in Kuwait early Monday, but all crew members survived and were reported to be in stable condition, according to Kuwait's Ministry of Defence. The incidents occurred as the widening conflict across the Middle East entered a more volatile phase, with retaliatory strikes extending to Gulf states.

In a statement carried by the state news agency, the Kuwaiti Defence Ministry confirmed that the crews were safely evacuated from the crash sites and transferred to hospital. Officials said the emergency response



was conducted in coordination with U.S. forces stationed in the country. No fatalities were reported, though authorities did not immediately disclose the number of aircraft involved

or the cause of the crashes.

Separately, smoke was seen rising from the vicinity of the U.S. Embassy compound in Kuwait City. Fire trucks and ambulances were dispatched to the area, according to a

witness. There was no immediate official confirmation of damage or casualties related to the embassy incident. The developments heightened security concerns in the Gulf state, which hosts significant U.S. military assets.

Earlier on Monday, Kuwait intercepted hostile drones, marking the third consecutive day of Iranian retaliatory strikes targeting neighboring Gulf countries. The strikes come in response to ongoing U.S. and Israeli military operations against Iran. Regional air defense systems have been placed on high alert as missile and drone exchanges continue to expand geographically.

Iran's state media, citing

the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, claimed that Iranian armed forces had struck a U.S. plane that subsequently crashed in Kuwait. U.S. and Kuwaiti officials have not publicly confirmed that the crashes were caused by hostile fire, and investigations are ongoing.

The incidents underscore the growing risks facing U.S. forces and regional infrastructure as the confrontation intensifies. With Gulf states increasingly drawn into the hostilities, concerns are mounting about further spillover that could destabilize energy markets and critical security partnerships across the region.

DOOR TO DIPLOMACY

In US strikes on Iran, NK sees nuclear vindication

SEOUL

US and Israeli military strikes on Iran, including the killing of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, are likely to reinforce the nuclear ambitions of Kim Jong Un, experts and former officials say, even as attention turns to whether Pyongyang might resume negotiations with Donald Trump over its nuclear arsenal.

The strikes, dramatic in scope and consequence, have sent shockwaves far beyond the Middle East, prompting reassessments of nuclear deterrence dynamics in East Asia.

Talks to curb North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles have been stalled for years, despite historic summits between Kim and Trump in 2018 and 2019. Although the door to diplomacy has never fully closed, Pyongyang's leadership has shunned recent overtures, focusing instead on expanding its arsenal amid heavy international



sanctions.

The recent attacks on Iran — a non-nuclear state decimated at the top of its leadership hierarchy — may deepen Kim's belief that nuclear weapons are indispensable for survival and sovereignty. South Korean experts note that the U.S. operation could strengthen the narrative in Pyongyang that nuclear deterrence prevents attacks from

external powers, just as it has for decades.

If the United States withdraws its policy of confrontation with North Korea by respecting our country's current status ... there is no reason why we cannot get along well with the US, North Korean state media cited Kim as saying in recent commentary, suggesting conditional openness to diplomacy while in-

sisting that Pyongyang's nuclear status be acknowledged.

Analysts argue that such rhetoric reflects both a hardening of resolve and a strategic posture aimed at leveraging past rapport between Kim and Trump should formal talks resume.

Nevertheless, the strikes have also triggered official condemnation from Pyongyang, which denounced the

U.S. and Israel for illegal aggression and hegemonic behavior. North Korea's foreign ministry statement echoed deep unease about the reach of US military power and underscored solidarity with Iran's resistance to external intervention.

Experts are divided on whether the latest events will push Kim toward renewed negotiations or push him further into isolation — potentially accelerating nuclear development. Some analysts believe the demonstration of U.S. force could make Pyongyang more cautious, hoping to avoid direct confrontation, while others view it as validation of North Korea's nuclear posture as a deterrent. Either way, the conflict in the Middle East is already shaping strategic calculations in East Asia, reinforcing the enduring role of nuclear weapons in Pyongyang's defense doctrine and complicating future diplomatic engagements.

Iran Casts Doubt over World Cup Matches in United States

Federation chief cites security fears after escalating US-Israel strikes

TEHRAN

The head of Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran has raised serious doubts over Iran's participation in matches scheduled in the United States at the upcoming FIFA World Cup, citing security concerns amid escalating conflict in the region.

Mehdi Taj, president of the Iranian soccer federation, said the surprise bombardment of Iran by the U.S. and Israel has cast a shadow over the national team's preparations. "What is certain is that after this attack, we cannot be expected to look forward to the World Cup with hope," Taj told sports portal Varzesh3 as hostilities intensified.

The strikes, which followed



the reported killing of Ali Khamenei, have heightened tensions across the Middle East and raised uncertainty about Iran's international sporting commitments.

Iran have been drawn in Group G and are scheduled to play two of their first-round matches on U.S. soil — against New Zealand national

football team in Inglewood, California, on June 15 and Belgium national football team on June 21. Their final group-stage fixture is set for Seattle against Egypt national football team on June 26.

The 2026 World Cup, hosted jointly by the FIFA, will be staged across the United States, Canada and Mexico

from June 11 to July 19. However, Taj indicated that current geopolitical tensions could complicate Iran's travel and participation.

Iranian fans had previously faced restrictions under earlier U.S. travel bans, adding another layer of uncertainty to the situation.

FIFA did not immediately respond to requests for comment regarding contingency plans or potential adjustments should Iran be unable to play matches in the United States. With less than four months to go before kickoff, the evolving security situation threatens to overshadow preparations for the expanded 48-team tournament.

Timber Header Secures Crucial Derby Win for Arsenal

LONDON

Arsenal F.C. tightened their grip on the Premier League title race with a tense 2-1 victory over London rivals Chelsea F.C., courtesy of a decisive second-half header from Jurrien Timber.

In a pulsating north London clash, Timber rose highest in the 66th minute to nod home from a pinpoint corner delivered by Declan Rice, ensuring Arsenal claimed three vital points and opened up a five-point lead at the top of the table.

Mikel Arteta's side now sit on 64 points from 29 matches, ahead of second-placed Manchester City F.C., who have a game in hand on 59. With the title race entering its decisive stretch, Arsenal demonstrated both their set-piece strength and resilience under pressure.

The Gunners had earlier taken the lead in the 21st minute when defender William Saliba bundled home



Dutch defender strikes late as Gunners extend lead in title race

from a well-rehearsed corner routine. Arsenal's prowess from dead-ball situations has been a hallmark of their campaign, and it once again paid dividends.

However, the hosts were pegged back just before half-time when Piero Hincapie inadvertently turned the ball into his own net, giving Chelsea a lifeline. The equaliser shifted momentum and set up a nervy second half, with the visitors growing in confidence.

Timber's towering header

restored Arsenal's advantage, but the closing stages were far from comfortable. Chelsea's hopes suffered a blow when Pedro Neto was shown a second yellow card, reducing Liam Rosenior's side to 10 men and halting their six-match unbeaten league run.

Despite late pressure, Arsenal held firm to secure a crucial derby triumph. As the season edges towards its climax, Arteta's men continue to show the grit and composure required to sustain a genuine title challenge.



Tyler Reddick Wins Third Straight, Makes History at COTA

AUSTIN

Tyler Reddick etched his name into NASCAR history, becoming the first driver in Cup Series history to win the opening three races of a season with a commanding victory at the Circuit of the Americas (COTA).

Reddick held off a relentless challenge from Shane van Gisbergen over the final 20 laps of the road course race to secure his third consecutive triumph of 2026. Driving for 23XI Racing, the team co-owned by basketball legend Michael Jordan, Reddick had already claimed victories at the Daytona 500 and Atlanta before converting his pole position into another landmark win in Austin.

"It's one race, but it was so important," Reddick said after taking the checkered flag. "It's so fitting to get three in a row and make history."

Jordan was trackside, celebrating with the pit crew as Reddick crossed the finish line. The win further cemented the momentum of 23XI Racing, which recently secured its long-term future in NASCAR following a federal antitrust lawsuit settlement in December.

Van Gisbergen, who dominated road courses last season, pushed hard but could not find a way past Reddick in the closing laps. The New Zealander, who had won five of six road races in 2025, finished second after briefly threatening to overtake in the final stage.

Reddick's 11th career Cup victory was also his second at COTA, marking the first time he has multiple wins at a single track. Despite the pressure, he remained composed as van Gisbergen hovered on his bumper before fading in the closing laps.

Stranded Sindhu Set to Miss All England Championships

BIRMINGHAM

India's two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu is set to miss the prestigious All England Open Badminton Championships after being stranded in Dubai due to airspace closures following escalating tensions in the Gulf region.

Travel disruptions have severely affected the build-up to the Super 1000 tournament, which begins on Tuesday. Sindhu has been stuck in Dubai since Saturday after flights were suspended in the wake of US and Israeli strikes on Iran and the subsequent retaliation by Tehran. She and her team, including Indonesian coach Irwansyah Adi Pratama, reportedly had a narrow escape after an explosion occurred near their place of stay before

being moved to a safer location.

Sindhu was scheduled to face Thailand's Supanida Katethong in the opening round. However, with Dubai airport remaining shut and no clarity on flight resumption, her withdrawal now appears inevitable.

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) said it is maintaining "real-time oversight" of the situation and is prepared to review the competition schedule should players face delayed arrivals.

While Sindhu's campaign hangs in the balance, some Indian shuttlers have managed to reach Birmingham through alternate routes via Singapore and Africa. However, the taxing travel could impact their readiness.

Lakshya Sen, a former semifinalist and runner-up here, has arrived without issues but faces a daunting opener against world No. 1 Shi Yu Qi of China. Rising youngster Ayush Shetty will take on Indonesia's Alwi Farhan.

In women's singles, Malvika Bansod meets Tokyo Olympics champion Chen Yufei, while Unnati Hooda, forced to reroute via Africa, clashes with Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong.



LONDON

Arsenal F.C. restored their five-point cushion at the summit of the Premier League with a hard-fought 2-1 win over 10-man Chelsea F.C., while Manchester United F.C. surged to third place after defeating Crystal Palace F.C.

Defenders William Saliba and Jurrien Timber were on target as Arsenal once again showcased their dominance from set-pieces. Saliba opened the scoring midway through the first half, forcing the ball

Gunners restore five-point lead; Sesko inspires United resurgence at Old Trafford

Arsenal Edge Chelsea, United Climb to Third in EPL

home after Gabriel Magalhaes nodded Eberechi Eze's delivery back across goal.

Chelsea responded from a corner of their own when Pedro Hincapie inadvertently diverted Reece James' cross into his net. However, Timber restored Arsenal's lead just after the hour mark, heading into an empty net after Robert Sanchez misjudged Declan Rice's delivery — Arsenal's 16th goal from a corner this season, equalling a Premier League record. Chelsea's woes deepened when Pedro Neto received two quick bookings, leaving the visitors with 10 men. A late equaliser was ruled out for offside,

and defeat leaves them three points adrift of the top five. Arsenal, chasing a first league title in 22 years, continue to keep pressure on second-placed Manchester City F.C.

At Old Trafford, Benjamin Sesko rewarded manager Michael Carrick with a decisive goal in United's 2-1 comeback victory. Palace had stunned the hosts early through Maxence Lacroix, but a red card for the French defender shifted momentum.

Bruno Fernandes converted the resulting penalty before curling in a cross that Sesko powered home, marking his seventh goal in eight games.



Messi, Segovia Rally Inter Miami CF to 4-2 Victory Over Orlando City

ORLANDO

Defending champions Inter Miami produced a stirring second-half comeback to defeat Orlando City 4-2, powered by a Lionel Messi brace and a superb all-round display from Telasco Segovia.

Trailing 2-0 at halftime at Inter & Co Stadium, Miami appeared headed for another frustrating outing on the road. But the reigning MLS MVP Messi ignited the turnaround with two clinical goals, while defender Segovia contributed a goal and two assists in a

dominant second-half performance.

Orlando seized early control when Marco Pašalić finished from Iván Angulo's pass in the 18th minute, marking his fourth consecutive goal against Miami. Just six minutes later, defender Griffin Dorsey set up Martin Ojeda to double the advantage, giving the hosts a commanding 2-0 lead heading into the break.

Miami responded swiftly after halftime. Mateo Silvetti scored his first career MLS goal in the 49th minute, combining with Segovia and Facundo Mura to cut the deficit

to 2-1. The momentum shifted decisively in the 57th minute when Messi calmly slotted home after receiving a precise pass from Segovia to level the contest at 2-2.

Segovia then put Miami ahead in the 85th minute with a composed unassisted finish, completing a remarkable turnaround. Messi sealed the victory in stoppage time, bending a free kick into the bottom corner for his second of the night and 52nd regular-season goal in just 55 MLS appearances.

ISL: Chennaiyin FC, Odisha FC Play Out 1-1 Draw

BHUBANESWAR

Centre-backs Elsinho and Carlos Delgado found the net from set-pieces as Chennaiyin FC and Odisha FC settled for a 1-1 draw in their Indian Super League encounter at the Kalinga Stadium.

Both sides relied on unlikely scorers — their defensive mainstays — to produce moments of quality in an otherwise tightly contested affair. The stalemate meant Chennaiyin opened its account for the season on its third attempt, while Odisha registered its second successive draw.

Chennaiyin had a slice of fortune midway through the first half when Laldinliana Renthlei, the last defender, brought down Rahim Ali during a swift Odisha counterattack in the 26th minute.



The referee opted against a red card, possibly judging that the foul occurred near the halfway line, allowing the visitors to retain all 11 men.

The deadlock was finally broken in stoppage time of the first half. Farukh Choudhary delivered a teasing corner that was met by a towering header from Brazilian defender Elsinho, who rose above the Odisha defence to score his maiden goal in Indian football. The strike was significant for Chennaiyin,

marking the club's first goal of the ISL season and the first by an outfield player under head coach Clifford Miranda.

Odisha returned after the break with greater urgency and intensity. Their persistence paid off in the 68th minute when Spanish defender Carlos Delgado mirrored Elsinho's effort. Meeting a precise free-kick delivery from Puitea, Delgado outjumped his marker Pritam Kotal to nod home the equaliser.

Nico Echavarria Wins Cognizant Classic as Shane Lowry Falts Late

PALM BEACH GARDENS

Nico Echavarria delivered a flawless weekend performance to capture the Cognizant Classic at PGA National, capitalizing on a stunning late collapse by Shane Lowry to seal a two-shot victory.

Echavarria carded a five-under 66 in the final round to finish at 17-under 267, claiming his third PGA Tour title and first on American soil. Remarkably, the Colombian did not make a single bogey over the final holes, showcasing composure and precision when it mattered most.

"It was a blessing today," Echavarria said. "To win out here, sometimes you need good breaks. I'm happy with how it went."

Lowry appeared poised to end his long wait for a win at PGA National, where he has now posted five consecutive top-11 finishes. The Irishman held a three-shot lead with three holes to play but unraveled dramatically with back-to-back double bogeys at the par-4 16th and par-3 17th, both triggered by wayward tee shots into the water. "I had the tournament in my hands and I threw it away," Lowry admitted.

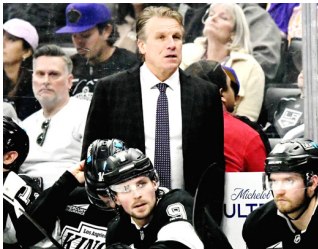


Los Angeles Kings Fire Jim Hiller, Name D.J. Smith Interim Coach

EL SEGUNDO

The Los Angeles Kings have dismissed head coach Jim Hiller amid a midseason slide, appointing D.J. Smith as interim coach in a bid to revive their fading playoff hopes.

General manager Ken Holland made the decision Sunday after the Kings lost five of their last six games, including a humiliating 8-1 defeat to the Edmonton Oilers — the same franchise that eliminated Los Angeles from the past four postseasons. The loss left



the Kings outside the Western Conference playoff picture.

"We've underperformed," Holland said at the team's training complex. "I'm hoping the move will jolt the team and provide a different

message."

Hiller, in his second full season behind the bench, compiled a 93-58-24 record and guided the Kings to consecutive playoff appearances. However, Los Angeles failed to advance past the first round in either campaign and has not won a postseason series since 2014.

Smith, formerly head coach of the Ottawa Senators, takes over with the Kings sitting at 24-21-14 and trailing Seattle by three points for the final wild-card spot. Player development coach Matt Greene has joined Smith's staff as an assistant. "I intend on getting the team into the playoffs," Smith said. "We've got good players. We've just got to get our confidence back."

The Kings have struggled offensively all season, ranking near the bottom of the NHL in goals per game. Injuries have compounded their issues, with Kevin Fiala sidelined after breaking his leg at the Olympics and Andrei Kuzmenko also out following knee surgery.

opment coach Matt Greene has joined Smith's staff as an assistant. "I intend on getting the team into the playoffs," Smith said. "We've got good players. We've just got to get our confidence back."

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EPFO RETAINS 8.25% INTEREST RATE FOR 2025-26

Central Board approves unchanged EPF return, benefiting over seven crore subscribers nationwide

NEW DELHI

The The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) on Monday approved an interest rate of 8.25% on Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) deposits for the financial year 2025-26, retaining the same rate for the second consecutive year.

The decision was taken at the 239th meeting of the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) held in the national capital, according to an official statement.

The meeting was chaired by Union Labour and Employment Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and attended by Minister of State Shobha Karandlaje, Labour and Employment Secretary Vandana Gurnani,



and EPFO Chief Ramesh Krishnamurthi. Following the CBT's approval, the proposed interest rate will now be forwarded to the Ministry of Finance for final clearance. Once ratified, the interest will be credited to the accounts of more than seven crore EPFO subscribers across the country. Interest on EPF deposits is

calculated on a monthly running balance basis but credited to subscribers' accounts at the end of the financial year. However, accounts that remain inactive for 36 months are treated as dormant and do not earn further interest.

Despite ongoing global economic uncertainties, the EPFO has maintained finan-

cial discipline, ensuring stable and competitive returns without putting undue pressure on its interest account. Officials said the move strengthens retirement security for crores of salaried employees and reflects the organisation's commitment to prudent financial management.

The decision to maintain the 8.25 per cent rate signals continuity and stability for millions of workers who rely on EPF savings as a primary retirement corpus. By delivering sustainable and attractive returns compared to other similar investment avenues, the EPFO aims to safeguard contributors' funds while reinforcing confidence in India's social security framework.

QUICK READ

Swiggy shares hit record low, slide 5% amid heavy selling pressure

Mumbai

Shares of Swiggy, the food and grocery delivery platform, fell sharply on Monday and touched a new all-time low on the stock market. During intra-day trade, the stock slipped 5 per cent on the BSE to hit Rs 285.85, breaking its earlier low of Rs 297 recorded on May 13, 2025. The fall came amid heavy trading volumes. With this decline, Swiggy's share price has dropped around 26 per cent so far in the calendar year 2026. In comparison, the benchmark BSE Sensex has fallen about 6 per cent during the same period.

Engage in industry assignments, internships to build practical competence, students told

BELAGAVI

A guest lecture on 'What it takes to be an HR professional' was organised for 3rd Semester HR Specialisation students here recently.

Shravani Kulkarni, Business-HR Talent Acquisition, Aequs Limited, Belagavi-Lead, delivered an insightful session. She highlighted key qualities expected of aspiring HRs namely integrity, business acumen, empathy, analytical thinking, and strong communication skills. Breaking the common myth, she emphasized that HR is not just about people relations—but equally about loving numbers and data.

She stressed the importance of understanding compliance, metrics, analytics, and finan-



cial implications in HR decisions.

Students were encouraged to proactively engage in industry assignments and internships to build practical competence. She also advised developing adaptability and continuous learning to stay relevant in the evolving HR landscape.

The session was highly interactive and inspiring, providing students with a clear roadmap for becoming future-ready HR professionals.

Dr Shailaja Hiremath, Associate Professor-HR organised the session. Dr Arif Shaikh welcomed the guest speaker and encouraged students to learn practical aspects.



Saini unveils ₹2.23L cr Haryana budget

CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Monday presented a Rs 2.23 lakh crore budget for the financial year 2026-27, marking a 10.28 per cent increase over the revised estimate of Rs 2.02 lakh crore for 2025-26.

The budget places strong emphasis on strengthening the rural economy, boosting capital investment, and accelerating infrastructure development across the state.

Presenting his second budget as Finance Minister, Saini projected the fiscal deficit at Rs 40,293.17 crore, which accounts for 2.65 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). The revenue deficit is estimated at 0.87 per cent of GSDP, while the effective revenue deficit stands at 0.41 per cent. Capital expenditure is projected at 1.86 per cent of GSDP, with effective capital expenditure estimated at 2.32 per cent.

A major announcement in the budget was the creation of a third power distribution company, Haryana Agri DISCOM, dedicated exclusively to meeting the electricity needs of the farming community. The move aims to streamline agricultural power supply and support farmers with more efficient services.

Donning a Sikh turban during his budget speech delivered in Hindi, the Chief Minister underlined the im-

portance of enhancing capital investment to drive long-term infrastructure growth. Capital expenditure has been proposed at Rs 28,205 crore, constituting 12.6 per cent of the total budget. Effective capital expenditure stands at Rs 35,216 crore, or 15.7 per cent of the total outlay. This marks an increase from Rs 27,650 crore allocated in 2025-26, which accounted for 13.6 per cent of the budget.

Saini also highlighted Haryana's expanding contribution to India's economic growth and set an ambitious target of transforming the state into a one-trillion-dollar economy by 2047. He noted that 98 per cent of the total budget was successfully utilised in the previous financial year—a first in the state's history.

Emphasising improved financial health, the Chief Minister stated that Haryana now boasts the highest per capita income among major states. At current prices, per capita income has risen sharply from Rs 1,47,382 in 2014-15 to Rs 3,24,958 in 2023-24 (provisional estimate). It further increased to Rs 3,58,171 in 2024-25 (quick estimate), compared to the national average of Rs 2,19,575. For 2025-26 (advance estimate), Haryana's per capita income is projected to reach Rs 3,95,618, reflecting sustained economic momentum.

NITI Aayog hosts workshop on natural farming

NEW DELHI

Government think tank NITI Aayog on Monday organised a two-day national workshop on natural farming under its State Support Mission (SSM), bringing together farmers, policymakers, scientists, agri-startups and civil society representatives from across the country to deliberate on advancing sustainable agricultural practices.

A major highlight of the workshop was the launch of comprehensive training manuals on natural farming in both Hindi and English. These manuals aim to provide practical, region-specific guidance to farmers, extension officers and grassroots-level workers, enabling them to adopt natural farming techniques more effectively. The initiative is expected to strengthen capacity-building efforts and support the transition away from chemical-intensive agriculture.

The workshop featured a virtual address by Acharya Devvrat, who underscored the

urgent need to shift towards sustainable, farmer-centric agricultural systems. Emphasising long-term benefits, he said natural farming practices can significantly improve soil health, reduce dependence on costly chemical inputs and enhance farmers' incomes over time.

Several leading agricultural and research institutions contributed to the discussions, adding scientific depth and credibility to the deliberations. Among them were Junagadh Agricultural University, Dr. Y.S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, and Gujarat Natural Farming Science University. Their participation focused on research validation, best practices and region-specific adaptations of natural farming models.

Farmers, agricultural officers and scientists from Krishi Vigyan Kendras across Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Odisha took part in the event, reflecting widespread national inter-

Carney lauds Modi, strengthens India-Canada ties

NEW DELHI

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney on Monday praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for steering India toward becoming the fastest growing economy in the world over the past decade.

Addressing a joint press conference after bilateral talks in New Delhi, Carney highlighted India's remarkable economic transformation and rising global stature under Modi's leadership.

In the last decade, under your leadership Prime Minister, India has become the fastest growing economy in the world. Per capita incomes in this country have risen at a pace never seen in history, seldom in human history, Carney said. He added that Canada shares India's ambition and sense of purpose in addressing global challenges, emphasising that collaboration among nations is essential in the current era. Referring to the theme of India's G20 Presidency in 2023 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' Carney said the message resonated deeply with the global community. He noted that the challenges facing humanity, including climate change, economic instability and security threats, cannot be addressed by any one nation alone.

The meeting between the two leaders was held at Hyderabad House, where they reviewed the full spectrum of bilateral cooperation. Discussions covered trade and investment, defence and security, education and cultural exchanges, clean energy and critical minerals, artificial intelligence and supercomputing, as well as mobility and people-to-people ties.

Following the talks, several Memo-



India-Canada sign \$2.6 bn uranium deal

India and Canada signed a \$2.6-billion uranium supply agreement during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney at Hyderabad House. The deal ensures long-term fuel for India's civil nuclear programme and boosts cooperation in clean energy, small modular reactors and advanced nuclear technologies. Both nations also decided to accelerate negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), aiming to conclude it by 2026 and raise bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030. Several MoUs on critical minerals, renewable energy and cultural exchange were exchanged by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand. The critical minerals partnership seeks resilient supply chains. Modi said the visit adds new momentum to ties based on shared democratic values, diversity and commitment to global well-being. The leaders emphasised stronger investment flows, technology collaboration and people-to-people links to deepen the strategic partnership in coming years together.



randa of Understanding (MoUs) were exchanged in key sectors including civil nuclear cooperation, energy, critical minerals, education and skill development, science and technology, and culture. These agreements are ex-

pected to further deepen institutional collaboration and economic engagement between the two nations.

Carney also announced renewed defence and security cooperation, including a new defence partnership, maritime collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region, enhanced professional military exchanges, and practical coordination on shared security interests.

'India's self-reliance drive gives big push to exports too'

NEW DELHI

India's experience demonstrates that import substitution and export strength can move together when approached strategically.

Across sectors, from mobile phones and medicines to automobiles and defence, the push is to build in India not only for domestic needs, but for global markets as well, according to an official fact-sheet issued on Monday. As local capacity expands and imports reliance falls, many industries also gain the scale to export more, strengthening the external sector.

Despite the global economic uncertainties, India's cumulative exports reached \$720.76 billion in April-January 2025-26, which represents a 6.15 per cent year-on-year growth. The high growth was driven by the government's focus on sector-specific incentives, investments, and reforms in scaling domestic manufacturing capabilities. Over the past decade, bold reforms and visionary policies like 'Make in India' initiative

and 'Production-Linked Initiatives' have transformed the country into a global manufacturing hub, the official statement said. A direct outcome of the import substitution efforts is clearly visible in the striking performance of India's electronics manufacturing. With a target of building a \$500 billion domestic electronics ecosystem by 2030-31, India is now firmly on track to become a global leader in electronic design, manufacturing and exports.

Electronics production in India rose from Rs 1.9 lakh crore in 2014-15 to Rs 11.3 lakh crore in 2024-25, nearly a six-fold increase. The country has attracted over \$4 billion in FDI in electronics manufacturing since 2020-21, reflecting rising global investor confidence. The electronics manufacturing sector has generated around 25 lakh jobs in India over the last 10 years.

India is now the world's second-largest mobile phone manufacturer, with more than 300 manufacturing units operating today compared to just two units in 2014.



est in transitioning toward eco-friendly cultivation methods.

Officials from key central ministries and government bodies also shared perspectives on certification frameworks, improving market linkages, ensuring financial assistance and fostering better institutional coordination to support farmers embracing natural farming.

The workshop witnessed strong participation from agri-startups, farmer producer organisations, civil society groups and experienced practitioners, highlighting the expanding ecosystem supporting natural farming in India. The deliberations reinforced the commitment to building a resilient, sustainable agricultural future aligned with environmental conservation and farmer welfare.

AI INFRA PUSH

India's AI superpower dream lands \$200 billion

NEW DELHI

Over \$200 billion in AI-related investments are expected across infrastructure, foundation models, hardware and applications, as the 'India AI Impact Summit 2026' concluded with the adoption of forward-looking commitments and strategic partnerships that advance a shared global vision for responsible, inclusive and development-oriented artificial intelligence, an official statement said on Monday.

While Adani Group announced plans to invest \$100 billion by 2035, Reliance In-

dustries pledged \$110 billion over seven years towards AI-focused infrastructure.

Tata Group announced a partnership with OpenAI to scale AI-ready data centres. General Catalyst announced a \$5 billion investment commitment over five years, while Lightspeed Venture Partners announced \$10 billion in investments.

Sundar Pichai, CEO of Alphabet and Google, announced investments including new India-US subsea cable routes and a \$15 billion AI hub in Visakhapatnam. Google will train 20 million civil servants, support 11 million



students, and expand AI research collaborations, said the statement.

A key announcement at the Summit was the expansion of India's sovereign compute ca-

capacity. In addition to more than 38,000 GPUs already provisioned under the IndiaAI Mission, an additional 20,000 GPUs will be added in the coming weeks, further strengthening national AI infrastructure.

Notably, the Summit witnessed extensive participation, with approximately 6 lakh attendees in person and over 9 lakh cumulative views through live virtual streaming. Delegations from more than 100 countries and 20 international organisations participated in the proceedings.

During the Summit, India achieved a Guinness World

Record for the Most pledges received for an AI responsibility campaign in 24 hours, with over 2.5 lakh validated pledges reaffirming public commitment towards responsible AI adoption.

Moreover, the 'India AI Impact Summit Declaration' was endorsed by 92 countries and international organisations. The Declaration acknowledges the work undertaken by seven thematic working groups during the Summit. The 'AI Impact Expo' emerged as one of the largest AI exhibitions globally, with over 850 exhibitors across 10 thematic pavilions.

Unbeaten Proteas Can Conquer Any T20 Side: Simons

Former coach backs confident South Africa ahead of semifinal clash

KOLKATA

South Africa head into the semifinals of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup brimming with belief, and former coach Eric Simons insists the unbeaten Proteas are capable of beating any team in the competition.

The Proteas, who have not dropped a game so far, will take on New Zealand national cricket team in the last-four clash in Kolkata, having already defeated them by seven wickets during the group stage. Simons, who coached South Africa during the 2023 ODI World Cup, said reaching the semifinals was expected of a side of this calibre. "It is obviously good to have reached the semifinals in a tough competition. But with the strength of this squad, not making it would have been regarded as a failure," Simons said.

He reserved special praise for skipper Aiden Markram, highlighting both his leadership and batting form. "He has led from the front with the bat and has been strategically smart. It is clear he trusts his bowlers," Simons noted.



According to Simons, consistency in selection and clarity in roles have been central to South Africa's unbeaten run. He cited key contributions from senior players, including David Miller, whose match-winning knock against India he described as one of the finest he has witnessed. Bowlers such as Lungi Ngidi and spinner Keshav Maharaj have also played pivotal roles in restricting opposition totals.

Reflecting on the dramatic

double Super Over win against Afghanistan, Simons called it the standout match of the tournament for sheer drama.

While he acknowledged that India might start as marginal favourites if they reach the final, Simons was unequivocal about his country's chances. "Any team can beat any team in T20 cricket. But absolutely, South Africa can beat any team and would go into any semifinal as favourites," he asserted.

With momentum and belief on their side, the Proteas appear primed for a serious title push.

Guru Gambhir Beams as Sanju Mirrors His 2011 Masterclass

Samson's unbeaten 97 powers India into T20 World Cup semis

KOLKATA

Fifteen years after crafting a defining 97 in the 2011 ODI World Cup final at the Wankhede Stadium, Gautam Gambhir found himself reliving history — this time as head coach — as Sanju Samson produced a near-identical match-winning knock to steer India into the semifinals of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Back in 2011, Gambhir's 97 anchored India's successful chase against Sri Lanka national cricket team in the ODI World Cup final. On Sunday at the Eden Gardens, Samson struck an unbeaten 97 to guide the Men in Blue past a formidable West Indies national cricket team total of 195 in a high-pressure knock-out clash.

The Kerala wicket-keeper-batter, under scrutiny after a lean patch, rose to the occasion with poise and authority. Chasing a stiff target set by Shai Hope and Co., Samson paced his innings expertly, finding boundaries without resorting to brute force. India reached the target with four balls to

spare and five wickets in hand. Gambhir was effusive in his praise. "Sanju is a world-class player.

He always knew the talent he possesses. It was about backing him, and when the team needed him most, he showed his true potential," the coach said after the match.

He emphasised that Samson's knock was built on classical strokeplay rather than reckless acceleration. Gambhir also revealed that a short break after a tough series against New Zealand national cricket team had helped ease pressure on the batter.

A confidence-boosting outing against Zimbabwe national cricket team further set the stage for Sunday's heroics.

Gambhir credited bowlers Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya for controlling the middle overs against dangerous hitters like Shimron Hetmyer and Rovman Powell, calling Bumrah a "banker" in crunch situations.

India now travel to the Wankhede Stadium to face England national cricket team in the semifinal on March 5 — a venue steeped in Gambhir's own World Cup legacy. As coach, he will hope Samson's brilliance marks the beginning of another historic chapter.



Gavaskar Hails Samson's Redemption Knock in T20 WC

MUMBAI



Batting great Sunil Gavaskar believes the entire cricketing fraternity will rejoice after Sanju Samson finally delivered on the big stage with a match-winning 97 not out against the West Indies national cricket team in the Super 8 of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Samson's composed yet authoritative knock powered India to a five-wicket win in a must-win clash, sealing a semifinal date with England national cricket team at the Wankhede Stadium on March 5.

Gavaskar said the innings lifted a massive burden off Samson's shoulders. "This knock of 97 not out takes the weight off not just Sanju's shoulders, but off everyone who knows what a fine player he is. He

has had ups and downs, and because he is such a nice guy, everybody wants him to succeed," Gavaskar remarked.

The former India captain described the effort as a dream performance in a knockout encounter. Though Samson fell three runs short of a century, Gavaskar felt another hundred was just around the corner. "It was not an easy target, but this team did not give up," he added.

Gavaskar also highlighted India's smart strike rotation during the chase, noting that minimizing dot balls is key in T20 cricket. "If you score off 80 to 85 balls in a 120-ball innings, you give yourself a real chance. India did that perfectly," he explained.

Expert Abhishek Nayar termed Samson's knock "measured, controlled and aggressive," praising his resilience after fluctuating batting positions and limited opportunities.

Meanwhile, Gavaskar called Jasprit Bumrah a "cheat code," citing his twin strikes — including Shimron Hetmyer — as the turning point that dismantled the West Indies' momentum. With confidence soaring, India now march into the semifinals with renewed belief.



Dhoni joins camp as five-time champions eye strong comeback

CSK Begin IPL 2026 Preparations in Earnest

CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings commenced their pre-season camp ahead of the 19th edition of the Indian Premier League, with former skipper MS Dhoni headlining the early arrivals at the franchise's High Performance Centre in Navalur.

The five-time champions have begun training under assistant coach Rajiv Kumar and assistant bowling coach S. Sriram, with head coach Stephen Fleming and bowling

coach Eric Simons expected to join the squad by March 16. The initial batch comprises Indian players, while overseas recruits are slated to arrive later this month.

Captain Ruturaj Gaikwad, along with Dhoni, reached the city. Among the others who have checked in are Ayush Mhatre, Urvil Patel, Mukesh Choudhary and Prashant Veer, as the Men in Yellow look to rebuild after two disappointing campaigns.

Since lifting their fifth title in 2023 under Dhoni's leader-

ship, Super Kings have struggled to replicate that success. They narrowly missed a play-off berth in 2024 and endured a particularly forgettable 2025 season, finishing at the bottom of the table with just four wins.

In a bold move ahead of last year's auction, CSK reshaped their core by signing wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson from Rajasthan Royals. In exchange, seasoned all-rounders Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran were traded to the Royals — a move that

signalled a strategic reset.

With speculation mounting that IPL 2026 could be Dhoni's final season as a player, the campaign carries added emotional weight. The franchise icon, who has been synonymous with CSK's golden era, continues to draw immense support from fans.

For Chennai, the upcoming season is more than just a quest for silverware — it is an opportunity to restore pride and possibly script a fitting farewell for one of the league's greatest leaders.

Gukesh Blunders Again as Abdusattorov Strikes at Prague

PRAGUE

Reigning world champion D Gukesh endured another painful setback, blundering from a position of strength to hand Nodirbek Abdusattorov a crucial victory in the Masters section of the Prague International Chess Festival. For the fifth consecutive day, fortunes refused to favour the Indian prodigy. Just a month ago, Gukesh had suffered a similar fate against Abdusattorov at the Tata Steel Chess Tournament. The defeat, however, proved even more agonising as Gukesh had outplayed his opponent for much of the middlegame and appeared poised for a breakthrough win.

Playing with the black pieces, Gukesh unveiled a fresh strategy, launching an early assault on the white king and steadily building pressure. Engines suggested he was closing in on his first victory in the Masters section this year. But as the first time control approached, the ticking clock seemed to take its toll. A late miscalculation reversed the momentum entirely.

Abdusattorov nearly returned the favour in the tense endgame, but Gukesh faltered again at a critical juncture, allowing the Uzbek star to push his passed pawn to promotion and seal the point.

Elsewhere, Dutch Grandmaster Jorden van Foreest continued his red-hot form, registering his fourth win in five rounds to climb to World No. 11 in live ratings. American Hans Niemann was his latest victim, undone by a single decisive error.

Defending champion Aravindh Chithambaram slumped to his third defeat, losing to Spain's David Navara. Czech star David Navara and Iran's Parham Maghsoodloo also scored important victories.

With four points, Van Foreest leads the standings, followed closely by Abdusattorov and Navara. Gukesh, Aravindh and Niemann languish at the bottom on 1.5 points each.

In the Challengers section, Divyadeshmukh notched her first win, defeating compatriot Surya Shekhar Ganguly to move to an even score.



NEW DELHI

Afghanistan national cricket team will begin their upcoming tour of India with a one-off Test in New Chandigarh, followed by a three-match ODI series, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced on Monday.

According to BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia, the standalone Test will be held from June 6 to 10 at the PCA Stadium in Mullanpur, New Chandigarh. However, the fixture will not



form part of India's World Test Championship cycle.

"The Afghanistan team will play one Test match followed by a three-match One-Day International series," Saikia said in an official release, confirming the dates and venues.

With India's focus gradually shifting towards the 2027 ODI World Cup, the limited-overs leg of the series is seen as crucial preparation. The three ODIs will begin on June 14 in Dharamshala, followed by matches in Lucknow on June 17 and Chennai on June 20. All games are scheduled to start at 1:30 PM IST.

The Test match offers Afghanistan another opportunity to gain experience in the longest format against a top-tier side. Since receiving Test status in 2017, Afghanistan have

shown steady progress, though consistency remains a challenge against established cricketing nations.

For India, the red-ball encounter provides a chance to test bench strength outside the WTC commitments, while the ODI series will likely serve as an early platform to shape combinations for the 50-over World Cup in 2027.

The IDFC First Bank Afghanistan Tour of India schedule is as follows:

Test: New Chandigarh, June 6-10

1st ODI: Dharamshala, June 14

2nd ODI: Lucknow, June 17

3rd ODI: Chennai, June 20

The announcement adds another significant bilateral series to India's packed international calendar for 2026.

Amir Faces Backlash after India Enter Semis, Flags 'Controversial' Dismissal

NEW DELHI

Former Pakistan pacer Mohammad Amir has found himself at the centre of social media backlash after his prediction that India would fail to reach the semifinals of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup was proven wrong.

India sealed their spot in the last four with a crucial victory over the West Indies national cricket team in the Super 8 stage, prompting fans to revisit Amir's earlier remarks. The former left-arm fast bowler had stated that the India national cricket team would not make the semifinals — a claim that quickly went viral after the result.

However, Amir shifted focus to a contentious moment during the match, suggesting that a key decision could have altered the outcome. In the 12th over of the West Indies innings, Shimron Hetmyer attempted an aggressive stroke off Jasprit Bumrah but was caught behind by Sanju Samson. On-field umpire Chris Gaffaney raised his finger after a confident appeal, and although Hetmyer reviewed the decision, replays indicated a faint edge.

Speaking on a Pakistani television show, Amir maintained that the dismissal was debatable.