



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 'Sarthi 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.

Sharp Rise in Low-Value Plastic Collection in GBA, Says Karigowda

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has witnessed a significant surge in the collection of low-value plastic waste, with nearly 520 metric tonnes being gathered daily, according to Karigowda, Chief Executive Officer of Bangalore Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML).

Addressing a media conference on Monday, Karigowda said Bengaluru generates an average of 6,000 metric tonnes of solid waste every day. Of this, around 520 metric tonnes comprise low-value plastic, converted into Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF). The civic body has now set an ambitious target of increasing RDF collection to 1,000 metric tonnes per day.

He attributed the progress to sustained Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaigns that have strengthened waste segregation at source. Improved segregation has directly contributed to enhanced recovery of low-value plastic, significantly reducing the volume of waste sent to landfills.

Prior to October 2025, low-value plastic collection stood at barely 10 per cent. However, following intensified awareness drives and stricter enforcement measures introduced since October 2025, the collection rate has reportedly increased nearly 50-fold. Between October 9, 2025 and February 26, 2026, a total of 19,470 metric tonnes of RDF has been



520 metric tonnes collected daily; EPR credits boost financial sustainability.

collected.

The processed RDF is transported to cement factories for co-processing under formal tender agreements. From December 15, 2025 to February 26, 2026, about 18,625 metric tonnes of RDF waste was supplied to Dalmia Cements for disposal.

Under the co-processing mechanism, cement companies issue Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) credits to BSWML. These credits generate financial returns for the organisation, strengthening its economic position and supporting long-term sustainable waste management initiatives.

Citizens facing garbage-related issues within GBA limits can register complaints through the Sahay 2.0 software, the GBA helpline number 1533, or the WhatsApp chatbot number 94481 97197. Complaints are monitored at the Integrated Command Control Centre and promptly forwarded to concerned officials for swift resolution.

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.

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.

FIR Against Retd Official for Issuing 10K Certificates Without Inspection

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The HSR Layout Police have registered an FIR against a retired Senior Motor Vehicle Inspector for allegedly issuing more than 10,000 vehicle fitness certificates without conducting mandatory physical inspections, resulting in substantial loss to the Transport Department.

The case is based on a complaint filed on February 28, 2026, by the Regional Transport Officer (RTO) of Peenya Layout against Nisar Ahmed, who retired on January 31, 2026, after nearly eight years of service. According to the complaint, between August 1,

2025, and January 31, 2026, the officer allegedly issued Form 38(A) fitness certificates to about 10,210 out-of-State vehicles without physically inspecting them, in violation of provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act. The illegal issuance reportedly bypassed mandatory inspection norms and procedural safeguards.

The irregularities came to light after advocate N. Nataraj Sharma, President of the Federation of Karnataka State Private Transport Association, submitted a complaint to the Transport Commissioner. A detailed inquiry was subsequently ordered by the Joint Transport Commissioner.

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 signboard 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

Gadag Home Guard
felicitates award-
winning Kiran

Gadag
Kiran Kumar Katagi, a staff member of the Gadag District Home Guard, was felicitated for receiving the Chief Minister's Gold Medal of Karnataka in 2025. The honor recognized his dedicated service to the community. District Commander Channaraddi Basavaraj Golaradi, Adjutant K.C. Vakkala, S.F. Doddamani, Unit Officers T.L. Rajkumar, B.D. Nayaka, and staff members including Ramesh Yachchalagara, A.M. Naganura, A.S. Angadi, B.F. Madiwalara, P. Guranavara, and B.S. Basavaraddi joined in congratulating him. Home Guardsmen and women from the district also extended their appreciation. Officials praised Katagi's commitment, saying his achievements inspire others in public service and safety.

Rs.5 lakh
insurance cheque
handed over

Haveri
India Post and India Post Payments Bank handed over a Rs. 5 lakh Khinkhi A Umua insurance cheque to Mrs. Jayamma Maheshappa Sunagara of Kusaguru village. The late Manoj Maheshappa Sunagara had bought the policy for just Rs. 320 at the Ranebennur Post Office but died in an accident shortly after. The ceremony was held at the Teachers' Hall in Ranebennur city. Officials, including Haveri Postal Superintendent Manjunath Hubballi and Jagadish Chikkanargund, urged people aged 18–65 to avail accident insurance for Rs. 300–500 per year. Local police and bank staff also attended the program.

Grand Iftar
celebration held at
Pathaniya Mosque

Koppal
A large number of fasting Muslim brothers gathered for the daily Iftar party at the historic Pathaniya Mosque near the Hire Halla railway track. Attendees praised the organizers for hosting the event and offered collective prayers together. Elders of the community, including Mainuddin Saab Kotwal (Babu Saab) and Pesh Imam Mohammad Ibrahim Saheb Ansar, along with the Mosque Committee members, office bearers, and local activists, participated actively. The gathering reflected unity, devotion, and community spirit during the holy month of Ramadan. Organizers said such events strengthen bonds and encourage harmony among residents.

Holi liquor sale banned
across Haveri district

HAVERI
In view of the upcoming Holi festival, the District Magistrate Dr. Vijayamahantesh Danamma has issued orders banning liquor sales at various places in the district to maintain peace and public safety. The restrictions will be in effect from March 3 to March 13. In Haveri city, liquor sale is banned from 6 am March 3 to 6 am March 5, while in surrounding villages like Havanur, Yelagachcha, and Devihosur it is prohibited from March 3 to March 4. Ranebennur city and nearby villages face restrictions from March 4 to March 5. Several towns, including Masura, Nidegilu, Savanur, and Shiggaon, and villages such as Motebennur and Akkialuru, will observe dry days on designated dates during the festival period. Authorities have urged residents and shopkeepers to comply strictly, warning that violations could lead to penalties. These measures aim to ensure a safe and peaceful Holi celebration for all citizens.

Centre assures safe
return of Kannadigas

Joshi said talks with senior embassy officials aim to ensure safe return of affected Indians, citing Ukraine rescue efforts

HUBBALLI

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi has assured that the Central Government will take urgent steps to rescue Kannadigas stranded due to the ongoing tensions between Iran and Israel. He said the safety of Indians across the world remains the top priority of the government. Speaking to reporters, Joshi stated that discussions have already been held with senior embassy officials to ensure the safe return of those affected. He added that the Centre has a strong record of rescuing Indians during crises, recalling how citizens were



brought back safely during the Ukraine conflict. The minister said there are reports that Kannadigas living abroad, including in Dubai, are facing difficulties due to the war situation. Since air travel in conflict zones can be risky, the government is seeking expert advice before arranging transportation. At

present, flight services from some affected regions are disrupted, making evacuation efforts more challenging. Joshi emphasized that the government led by Narendra Modi is fully committed to bringing back not only Kannadigas but all Indians stranded overseas. “No one needs to panic. We are closely monitoring the situation and taking necessary action,” he said. He also mentioned that efforts are being made to assist distressed individuals, including Legislative Council member Bhoje Gowda. The Centre, he assured, will continue working until every stranded citizen returns home safely.



Ballari to
host mega
job fair

BALLARI

A district-level job fair will be held in Ballari on March 4 to provide employment opportunities for youth under the DDU-GKY scheme. The event is being organized jointly by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Department, Sanjeevini – Karnataka State Rural Livelihood Mission and other departments. The job fair will take place from 9 am to 6 pm at Smt. Saraladevi Satishchandra Agarwal Government First Grade College in the city. The inauguration ceremony is scheduled for 10 am. Housing, Waqf and Minority Welfare Minister and District In-charge Minister B. Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan will inaugurate the program. Ministers Priyank Kharge and Sharan Prakash Rudrappa Patil will attend as special guests. Ballari City MLA Nara Bharat Reddy will preside over the function. Several MPs, MLAs, MLCs and heads of state corporations are expected to participate. Senior officials including District In-charge Secretary Dr. K.V. Trilok Chandra, Deputy Commissioner Nagendra Prasad K., Superintendent of Police Dr. Suman D. Pannekar and Zilla Panchayat CEO Mohammed Haris Sumar will also be present. The job fair aims to connect rural and urban youth with private companies and training providers. Organizers have encouraged eligible candidates to attend with necessary documents and make use of the opportunity to secure employment or skill training.

PEERASABA KAUTAL
EMERGES AS
PEOPLE'S LEADER

GADAG

Peerasaba Kautal, known as a servant of all fields and a follower of human values, has become a respected name in Gadag-Betageri for his social commitment and inclusive approach. Believing in the message of loving one's own religion while respecting others, he has worked across social, educational, religious and political areas. His supporters say his friendly nature and simple words have helped him connect easily with people from different backgrounds. Many residents recall that he once had a strict personality, but over the years he changed through spiritual reflection and social service. Inspired by values of devotion and humanity, his journey is often compared to that of Valmiki, symbolising personal transformation. Peerasaba Kautal entered public life at a young age and won consecutive elections from Wards 17 and 18 of the Gadag-Betageri Municipal Council. His victories



earned him recognition as a strong local leader. He later served as Vice President of the North West Karnataka Road Transport Corporation, where he was credited with proactive administration. He has supported mass marriages, educational growth, religious harmony and welfare activities. His family is also involved in helping blind orphans, poor Dalits and needy families, drawing inspiration from the teachings of Dr. Pandit Puttaraja. Through work in social, cultural and public life, Peerasaba Kautal has won wide appreciation. Admirers hope he continues serving society with compassion and dedication in the years ahead.

Honnavar Official Denies GPS Data
Collection from Forest Dwellers

KARWAR

The Assistant Director Grade-I of the Social Welfare Department in Honnavar has clarified that no instructions have been issued to collect GPS maps or any other documents from alleged forest encroachers. In an official statement, the officer said neither the department nor senior authorities had directed staff to gather such records or include them in office files. People living in forest areas were urged not to panic or believe rumors. Meanwhile, a consumer helpline poster prepared jointly by the District Ad-



ministration, Zilla Panchayat, Food Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department, Food Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd., Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, and District Legal Services Authority of Uttara Kannada was released at the

Koppal launches campaign
against child marriage

KOPPAL

The District Administration, along with several government and social organizations, launched the Child Marriage Mukti Rath on Monday to create awareness and prevent child marriage in the district. The program was flagged off at the District Administration Bhavan, under the joint efforts of the District Legal Services Authority, Zilla Panchayat, Women and Child Development Department, Police Department, District Child Protection Unit, Children's Helpline 1098/112, and the Spandana Association. Speaking at the event, Justice Mahantesh S. Dargad, Senior Civil Judge and Member Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority, said child marriage is a punishable crime that violates children's rights. “Everyone has an important role in preventing child marriages. Childhood is precious, and early marriage harms the physical, mental, social, and intellectual development of children,” he said. Justice Dargad reminded participants about the Child Marriage Prohibition Act-2006 and the Karnataka Amendment Act-2016, which provide for imprisonment and fines for those who perform,



Justice Dargad stressed
the Child Marriage
Prohibition Act and
Karnataka Amendment,
urging public
cooperation and
awareness to prevent
child marriages

encourage, or participate in child marriages. He emphasized that public cooperation and awareness programs are crucial to prevent such practices. V. Sushila, Secretary of Spandana Association, highlighted that the nationwide Child Marriage Free India campaign, launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in November 2024, has already reduced child marriage cases significantly. She added that the Mukti Rath will travel

through 50–60 villages across Koppal district over the next week, educating communities about the dangers of child marriage. The program also honored the participation of key officials, including Additional Deputy Commissioner Sidrameshwar, Senior Superintendent of Police Hemant Kumar, Zilla Panchayat Deputy Secretary T. Krishnamurthy, District Child Protection Officer Mahantaswamy Poojara, and Assistant Director of Youth Empowerment and Sports Vitthala Jabagowada, along with students and staff from Spandana Institute and the local community. The campaign aims to build a society free of child marriage by 2030, promoting children's rights and safe, healthy childhoods across rural areas.

Dr. Prabha Mallikarjun coordinated with authorities, ensuring all eight members returned safely to India without further complications.

Hakkipikki members thank
MP for timely help

DAVANAGERE

Eight members of the Hakkipikki community who recently returned safely from Chad in Africa met Davanagere Member of Parliament Dr. Prabha Mallikarjun and expressed their heartfelt gratitude for her timely support. The group had travelled to Chad for herbal trade activities. However, they reportedly faced serious difficulties due to visa-related issues, which left them stranded and worried in the foreign country. After learning about their situation, Dr. Prabha Mallikarjun immediately coordinated with the concerned authorities and initiated necessary steps to resolve the issue. Her intervention helped ensure that all eight members returned safely to India without further complications. On their return, the community members visited the MP's residence in Davanagere to personally thank her. They shared their experiences and expressed relief and happiness at being back home safely. Speaking on the occasion, the MP said that ensuring the safety of citizens is always a priority. She wished the members a peaceful and prosperous



life ahead and assured continued support whenever needed. The meeting was filled with emotion as families felt grateful for the swift action taken. Community leaders said the support had strengthened their trust in public representatives. The incident highlights how timely coordination and quick response can make a major difference in crisis situations abroad.

Guest lecture inspires
students for HR careers

BELAGAVI

A special lecture on “What It Takes to Be an HR Professional” motivated 3rd Semester HR students. Shravani Kulkarni shared insights into essential HR qualities, including integrity, empathy, business understanding, analytical thinking, and strong communication. She clarified that HR is not only about managing people but also involves data, numbers, compliance, and financial decisions. Ms. Kulkarni encouraged students to take on internships and industry projects to gain practical experience. She also stressed adaptability and continuous learning as keys to



staying relevant in a fast-changing HR field. The session was interactive, allowing students to ask questions and understand real-world applications of HR practices. The program was organized by Dr. Shailaja Hiremath, while Dr. Arif Shaikh welcomed the guest and motivated students to focus on both theory and practice in their HR careers.

JUSTICE IN HUBBALLI

High Court orders judicial probe in Hubballi case

HUBBALLI

The Karnataka High Court has ordered a judicial probe into the controversial encounter involving the rape and murder of a five-year-old girl in Hubballi. The court also warned that any shortcomings in the Magistrate's investigation could lead to a probe by a Central Investigation Agency. The case came under public scrutiny after the People's

Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) filed a public interest litigation seeking an independent investigation. The petition demanded that all police personnel involved in the encounter be questioned and investigated. A bench comprising Chief Justice Vibhu Bhakru and Justice C.M. Poonachha heard the petition and directed that the investigation report be submitted by the end of June.



Advocate General Shashikaran Shetty told the court

that the CID had been investigating the case according to Supreme Court and NHRC guidelines, and a judicial investigation would proceed if the High Court so directs. PUCL argued that a separate FIR should be filed against officers involved in the encounter. Background: In April 2025, a man from Bihar kidnapped a five-year-old girl under Ashoknagar police limits in

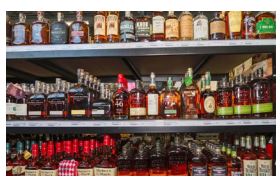
Hubballi. The accused attempted to rape and kill her. During the arrest, he allegedly tried to attack police officers. Police opened fire; the man was shot in the back and died. Questions arose over the use of force and fingerprint procedures taken after his death. The judicial probe aims to establish the facts, determine accountability, and ensure that legal guidelines on encounters are properly followed.

QUICK READ

Anusha Rajura tops state science fair

Dharwad

Anusha Rajura, a Class 8 student of Presentation Convent CBSE School, has won first prize at the state-level science exhibition held in Bengaluru. The event was organized by The World School for CBSE students. Anusha impressed judges with her model on Waste Aggregation Management, showing smart ways to handle garbage. She received a cash prize of Rs. 50,000 and a citation for her effort. Teachers Rufina and Deepa guided her project. School principal Sister Sylvia and staff congratulated Anusha for bringing pride and happiness to the school community.



Koppal Bans Liquor Sale During Holi Festival

Koppal

To ensure peace and prevent incidents during Holi, District Magistrate Dr. Suresh B. Itnal has ordered a ban on liquor sales across Koppal district until March 4. In Alavandi, Hanumasagar, and Yelaburga police station areas, the ban will start from 6 PM on March 2 to midnight on March 3. For the rest of the district, liquor sales are banned from 6 PM on March 3 to midnight on March 4. An investigation team led by the Excise Deputy Commissioner, along with police and excise inspectors, will monitor compliance. Strict action will follow any violations.

Villagers fight to save lake grazing land

Villagers allege Sridhar, a poultry farm owner, is attempting to seize 40 acres near the lake despite earlier complaints

KOPPAL

Tension has risen in Shahapura village under Bevinahalli Gram Panchayat after villagers accused influential people of trying to encroach on the historic Savulu Halla Lake and nearby government cowshed land.

For generations, the lake and cowshed located on the north-northeast side of the village have supported cattle, sheep, goats, oxen and buffaloes. Many herding families depend on this area as their only source of water and shelter. Shepherds have camped along the lake banks for centuries, making it an important lifeline for the village.

Villagers allege that a poultry farm owner named Sridhar, who recently bought private land near the lake, is now attempting to take over



nearly 40 acres within the lake boundary. They claim he had earlier tried to encroach on the land during the tenure of former District Collector Tulsi Maddineni, but stopped after complaints were filed.

Residents say the attempt has started again. They allege that soil leveling work began using a tractor when shepherds had taken their animals out for grazing. As soon as they learned about it, members of the Savulu Halla Lake

Development Committee alerted the Munirabad Police Station. Police officers reached the spot and stopped the work.

Villagers also fear a larger conspiracy to grab lake and grazing land through fake documents, claiming some revenue officials may be involved. Committee leaders have urged the District Collector to take strict legal action and protect government land for future generations.

Saidapur Secretary Ismail was fined ₹20,000 in two installments, while Tadabidi Secretary Yankanagouda must pay ₹3,000 compensation

Karnataka RTI defaulters fined ₹50,000 total

KOPPAL

The State Information Commissioner of the Kalaburagi Bench of the Karnataka Information Commission, B. Venkatasingh, has imposed fines on four gram panchayat officials for delaying the provision of information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

The officials penalized include the Gram Panchayat Development Officer of Tadaru, Shivakumar Doddamani, and three Gram Panchayat Secretaries: Yankanagouda (Tadabidi Gram Panchayat, Vadagera Taluk), Mallikarjuna Nayak (Gundagurthi Gram Panchayat), and Ismail (Saidapur Gram Panchayat,



Yadgir Taluk). Each was fined ₹10,000 for failing to provide timely information to an appellant who had requested details under the RTI Act.

In addition, Saidapur Gram Panchayat Secretary Ismail was fined a total of ₹20,000 in two installments of ₹10,000 each, while Tadabidi Gram Panchayat Secretary Yankanagouda was ordered to

pay ₹3,000 as compensation to the appellant for the delay.

The penalties were imposed after a second appeal filed by the applicant highlighted that the officials had not complied with the initial RTI directives. Commissioner Venkatasingh emphasized that failure to provide information under Section 18(3) of the RTI Act attracts strict action under Section 20(1).

In total, fines of ₹50,000 have been levied across five cases. The officials have been warned to pay the fines promptly and appear at the next hearing, reinforcing the importance of accountability and timely compliance under the RTI framework.

Belagavi DGGI nabs ₹593 crore fake invoice kingpin

BELAGAVI

In a major crackdown, the Directorate of Goods and Services Tax Intelligence (DGGI) Belagavi wing has arrested the key accused in a ₹593 crore fake invoice scam. The accused, Mohammad Saifulla, was taken into custody in Bengaluru on February 24 and produced before the Special Court for Economic Offences. He was later remanded to judicial custody by Belagavi 4th Principal District Court on February 25.

According to Special Prosecutor Satish Karale, Saifulla has been working as a registered tax consultant since 2024 and had set up around 56 shell firms. Investigations began during a routine GST registration check, revealing a large-scale tax evasion net-



Special Prosecutor Satish Karale said Saifulla, a registered tax consultant since 2024, set up 56 shell firms, creating fake invoices for tax evasion

work. Authorities said the accused created fake invoices without providing actual goods or services, mainly through paper transactions and online billing software.

Preliminary estimates suggest the scam involved ₹593 crores in bogus bills, causing a government loss of around ₹235 crore in input tax credits. Saifulla allegedly acted as the mastermind, earning commissions from the fraudulent invoices.

Karale said multiple brokers and beneficiaries were involved, and further action is underway against them. The accused faces charges under Section 132 of the CGST Act, which could lead to imprisonment of up to five years and fines. Officials emphasized that such white-collar financial crimes are increasing as technology expands, highlighting the importance of stricter monitoring.

This operation has exposed one of the largest fake invoice networks in the region.



Kanaka Sahitya Sambraham marks historic milestone event

GADAG

The 100th lecture program of Sri Kanaka Sahitya Sambraham was held at Kanaka Bhavan with great pride and joy. The event was organized by the Sri Kanaka Dasara Sahitya Prachar Samiti, Bengaluru.

Speaking at the program, noted writer Dr. Lingadalli Halappa said that Kanakadasa's works were not widely known in the state until his 500th birth anniversary. He said real attention to his kirtans and writings began only after 1988. He praised Kanakadasa as one of the greatest thinkers of the country.

Prof. F.T. Hallikeri from

Kannada University said the 100th lecture became possible due to strong dedication. He stressed that Kanakadasa's literature must reach every home and that more books will soon be published.

Several speakers highlighted Kanakadasa's role as a saint, poet, and social reformer. They said his teachings can bring peace and remove ego from society.

The function was presided over by Fakirappa Hebasura. Many guests were present. Bharatanatyam performances added color to the event. Winners of literary competitions were awarded prizes, and online speakers were honored during the celebration.

Helplines issued for stranded Karnataka residents

GADAG

Authorities have released emergency helpline numbers after reports that several people from Karnataka are stranded in conflict-hit Middle East countries. According to the District Disaster Management Authority, families in Gadag district can contact official control rooms to seek help or share details of relatives caught in the crisis.

Helpline numbers are available for Qatar (00974-55647502), Bahrain (00973-39418071), Jordan (00962-770422276), Oman (Toll Free 80071234, WhatsApp 9689282270), Iraq (+9647716511185 English/Hindi, +9647704444899 Arabic), Kuwait (9656501946) and Palestine (970592916418).

Residents may also call the Gadag District Disaster Management Center at 08372-239177 or respective taluk centers for assistance. Officials urged families to act quickly and stay calm during this difficult time.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SANGAPPA KOUNDISHETRA
(Old name) address: AT POST DUNDISHI DIST HAVERI. Has changed my name: **SANGAPPA SHASHIDHAR KOUNDI**
(New name)
for all purposes.
Vide Affidavit dated: 27/02/2026
before notary public Hubli

CHANGE OF NAME

I, DYAMAPPA UNKAL
(Old name) address: AT KURDIKERI POST KARADIKOPPA. Has changed my name: **DYAMAPPA CHANNABASAPPA UNKAL**
(New name)
for all purposes.
Vide Affidavit dated: 27/02/2026
before notary public Hubli.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, JYOTI SHANKINAMATH
(Old name) address: **BENGERI HUBLI.**
Has changed my name: **POOJA HIREMATH**
(New name)
for all purposes.
Vide Affidavit dated: 27/02/2026
before notary public Hubli.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SHILPA HABIB
(Old name) address: **VIJAY NAGAR HUBLI.**
Has changed my name: **SHILPA WALVEKAR**
(new name)
for all purposes.
Vide Affidavit dated: 27/02/2026
before notary public Hubli.

CH CLASSIFIEDS

To place a classified ad contact: **080-41209042**

Sports power call echoes across Gadag



GADAG

A strong message encouraging youth to break social stigma and shine through sports was delivered at a special celebration organized by the district Savita Samaj office in Gadag.

The event marked the 42nd birthday of youth leader and sports personality Sunila N. Raichur. District President Krishna H. Hadapada addressed the gathering with passion, urging young members of the community to move beyond reading history and start creating a new one,

both in society and on the sports field. He said their legacy is linked to the great sage Savita Maharishi and carries pride and strength.

Hadapada stressed that the youth are not weak or silent but brave individuals who must stand against injustice. He said achievements in sports can remove feelings of inferiority passed down for generations and bring respect to the community. "We are no less than anyone," he declared.

Savita Samaj Sudharana Sangha President Parashuram N. Kotekalla and Treasurer

Arun Rampura said success in sports is more powerful than war in today's world. They encouraged youth to follow Sunila's example and make sports a way of life.

Senior leaders Ellappa Raichur and Narasimha Gurujalakar emphasized unity, saying the community must stand together to become a strong force.

During the celebration, Sunila Raichur was felicitated and thanked everyone for their support. Many community leaders and youth members attended, raising slogans in support of Savita Samaj.

HEATED CLASH SPARKS WALKOUT AT MEETING

KARWAR

A tense exchange between District In-charge Minister Mankal Vaidya and Independent MLA Satish Sail led to a dramatic walkout during the KDP progress review meeting held at the Zilla Panchayat office in Karwar on Monday.

The disagreement began while reviewing the performance of the Health Department. MLA Sail raised concerns about an alleged shortage of medicines in some government hospitals across the district. Responding to the claim, District Health Officer Shankar Rao clarified that while there might be a shortage of doctors in certain areas, medicines were adequately stocked.

Supporting the officer's statement, Minister Vaidya insisted that there was no shortage of medicines anywhere in the district. However, Sail remained unconvinced and argued that ground reality



was different. As the discussion grew heated, voices were raised inside the meeting hall.

According to sources, the minister, visibly upset, told the MLA to sit down and said the government would handle the issue if he could not. This remark further angered Sail, who responded sharply, stating that he was not "anguta chap," meaning illiterate, and then walked out of the meeting in protest.

Earlier in the meeting, differences had also surfaced between the two leaders over issues such as shortage of transport buses and the need to replace old electric wires in the district.

The incident created a stir among officials present, highlighting growing tensions during review meetings.

ORGAN DONATION

Organ donation drive inspires Gadag residents

GADAG

A public awareness program on organ and body donation was held at Vivekananda Nagar Garden in Gadag to encourage people to pledge their organs and bodies for medical service after death.

The event was organized by the Taluk Health Officer's Office in collaboration with Vivekananda Nagar Sahridaya Balaga. Speaking on the occasion, Taluk Health Education Officer Dr. Rajendra S. Gadada said that after



death, a body either turns to ashes or mixes with the soil. However, by donating the body, it becomes a source of

learning for medical students and benefits society. He quoted the saying, "Paropakaram idam shariram,"

meaning the body is meant to serve others.

Dr. Gadada explained that organ and body donation are legal and can save many lives. Organs like the heart, kidneys, liver, lungs, pancreas, eyes and small intestine can be donated. Tissues such as skin, bones, bone marrow, heart valves and corneas can also help patients in need. He stressed that people of any age or gender can pledge to donate.

Retired teacher Basavaraj Kolar and his wife registered

their names for body donation during the event. City Planning Authority member B.M. Yaranal said many people lack clear information about donation procedures and appreciated the awareness effort by the Health and Family Welfare Department.

Several retired officials and community leaders attended the program. Birthdays of Prof. M.K. Thuppada, Shivayya Kambi and Dr. E.R. Lagalura were celebrated. The program concluded with a vote of thanks.

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.

In this regard it is hereby notice that whoever as interested in the said matter may appear in person or through an advocate duly authorized before the above said court on **25-03-2026** in default this



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 Suvendu 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 Jabua, 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



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

as one of the boldest U.S. foreign policy gambles in decades, President Donald Trump launched the joint campaign alongside Israel against a long-standing adversary accused of destabilizing the region for generations. Trump reiterated calls for Iranians to rise up against their leadership and indicated the military campaign could continue for weeks.

Inside Iran, scenes of uncertainty unfolded as residents

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.

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-

cades 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.

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

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.

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.



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.

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 devel-

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.”

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.

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.

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.



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

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.



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 Fac-

undo 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.



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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.



rand a 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.

