



Monster typhoon batters east China

P8



India's Russian oil imports hit 5.5 billion

P9

P12 Harshit, Varun ruled out; Prince, Bishnoi named as replacements



Is Hormuz open?

US says YES Iran says NO

The resurgence of heightened tensions between the two countries have once again raised concerns over safety on one of the world's most important oil shipping routes.

WASHINGTON

Despite United States and Iran continuing to trade attacks, President Donald Trump on Sunday declared that the Strait of Hormuz is open to commercial traffic.

The Republican leader made these comments during an interview on NBC's Meet the Press.

The resurgence of heightened tensions between the two countries have once again raised concerns over safety on one of the world's most important oil shipping routes.

United States Central Command or CENTCOM also released a statement on Sunday insisting that the ships are moving through the Strait of Hormuz despite Iran's claim to have closed it in the latest flare-up of the Mideast war.



"Iran does not control the strait. Traffic is flowing," CENTCOM, which oversees US forces in the Middle East, said on X.

They also said the Strait of Hormuz is open to all vessels and US military forces are "positioned and prepared" to ensure freedom of navigation.

However, other news outlets are reporting that Iran has released a statement, claiming no travel through Strait is possible until 'stability restored'.

Iran's Persian Gulf Strait Authority says it is currently not possible to transit through the Strait of Hormuz because of "the recent illegal movements of the United States military forces in the region", as per reports.



Strait Of Hormuz Open For Transit

▶ Pathways for free transit through the Strait of Hormuz remain open.

Iran does not control the international waterway used by commercial vessels to globally transport goods and energy.

US forces have facilitated the transit of 800+ ships and 400+ million barrels of crude oil over the last 2 months.

▶ 140+ ships have transited the strait in the last seven days.

The strategic link that quenches global fuel thirst

The Strait of Hormuz links the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea and carries around one-fifth of the world's seaborne oil shipments. Any disruption to shipping through the key waterway has an immediate impact on global energy markets. The closure of Hormuz, announced by Iran's military, has fuelled fresh concerns over global oil supplies and pushed crude prices higher.



Hormuz 'more important deterrent' than dozens of atomic bombs: Iran

TEHRAN

Mohsen Rezaee, an adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, said on Sunday that the Strait of Hormuz is a more important deterrent than dozens of atomic bombs and that Tehran would continue to defend it.

"This strategic passage is more important than dozens of atomic bombs, and the Islamic Republic of Iran will protect it," Rezaee, the former commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, was quoted as saying by Iran's state news agency.

After the Iranian military declared the vital shipping route closed 'until further notice' following the latest round of hostilities with the US, Rezaee said the Strait of Hormuz forms a key part of Iran's deterrence strategy and plays a critical role in safeguarding the country's national interests.

"The Strait of Hormuz is one of the components of the country's deterrence and plays a decisive role in ensuring security and national interests," he said.

"Hormuz acts as a strategic deterrent, and Iran will protect the country's interests and security by relying on its defence capabilities and national strength," he added.



10 rescued, 1 missing: India condemns attack on vessel off Oman

NEW DELHI

Ministry of External Affairs on Sunday released a statement condemning the attack on a merchant vessel with 11 Indian nationals on board off the coast of Oman.

The ministry said targeting of civilian shipping and infrastructure in the region must come to an end.

The Indian embassy in Oman is closely monitoring the situation and proactively coordinating with the Omani authorities in the search and rescue operation. "We condemn the attack on the commercial vessel GFS Galaxy off the coast of Oman. Of the 11 Indian nationals on board, 10 have been rescued so far, while 1 Indian National is reportedly missing. We thank the Omani authorities for their support."

It said the continuing incidents of attacks on commercial shipping in the region are "deeply worrisome".

"We reiterate our call for immediate de-escalation of tensions, and the conclusion of negotiations for a diplomatic solution so that peace and stability can return to the region," it said.

Quake hits Bay of Bengal, triggers tremors in AP coast

Kakinada: A 4.5 magnitude earthquake in the Bay of Bengal triggered tremors in parts of Visakhapatnam and adjoining districts of Andhra Pradesh on Sunday. Some areas in the coastal city of Visakhapatnam were jolted by the tremors around 5:05 am. The tremors were also felt in Gajuwaka, Mangalapalem, Sagar Nagar, Pedda Waltair, Arilova, MVP colony, Appughar and other areas. As per the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services, a quake measuring 4.5 on the Richter scale occurred in the Bay of Bengal early on Sunday, and mild tremors were felt in parts of Visakhapatnam. National Center for Sesimology said the earthquake occurred at 5:05:46 am. IST at a depth of 10 km, with its epicentre located about 225 km off the Kakinada coast in the Bay of Bengal. No casualties or property damage have been reported.

A MODERNISER WHO SEIZED POWER

Qatar's former emir Sheikh Hamad dies at 74

DOHA

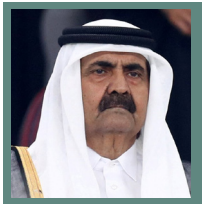
The Father Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, has died at the age of 74, says the Amiri Diwan.

Qatar has announced a four-day period of public mourning starting Sunday, with work suspended at government agencies and public bodies and flags to be lowered to half-mast.

Hamad, who ruled Qatar from 1995 to 2013, was a key architect of the energy-rich country's development.

In a statement, the Amiri Diwan said, "With hearts steadfast in faith in God's decree and destiny, the Amiri Diwan mourns the great loss to the nation of the late—may God have mercy on him—His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, who passed away this morning, 27 Muharram 1448 AH, corresponding to 12 July 2026, at the age of nearly 74 years."

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PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti under 'house arrest' ahead of Martyrs' Day

Srinagar: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti has been placed under house arrest ahead of Martyrs' Day observance here, her daughter Iltija Mufti claimed on Sunday.

"We have been placed under house arrest on the eve of Martyrs' Day for reasons best known to JK police," Iltija posted on X. "This is the normalcy they claim to have established in Kashmir? Make no mistake

the local government too is hand in glove using police in Sidhra to demolish homes and place opponents in detention when convenient," she alleged.

July 13 is commemorated as Martyrs' Day in Jammu and Kashmir as a tribute to the 22 persons who were killed by the Dogra army outside Srinagar's central jail in 1931. The L-G administration had dropped the day from the list of gazetted holidays in 2020.

PM Modi, other world leaders express condolences



Several world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, expressed condolences over the former emir's death. In a post on X, PM Modi wrote, "We deeply mourn the passing of Father Amir of State of Qatar, HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. A visionary leader who led Qatar to great levels of development and prosperity, we remember him also as a true friend whom I had the honour of meeting during my last visit to Qatar in February 2024.

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Nightingale flies away, voice to live on...



The unbreakable bond with Mysuru

Legendary singer S Janaki's connection to Mysuru spans her entire career, from singing her first live stage programme in the city in 1952 to performing her final concert there in October 2017. She spent her twilight years living on Bogadi Road. Honoring her final wish to remain in Mysuru, her family held her cremation with full state honors at a Kaniyanahundi farmhouse in Mysuru, avoiding requests to move her mortal remains to Chennai or Hyderabad.

Mysuru connection

THE MUSICAL JOURNEY BEGAN HERE: She made her debut stage performance in Mysuru in 1952 at an event organized by music director GK Venkatesh, performing alongside the late PB Srinivas.

HER SWAN SONG: Janakamma performed her final, grand stage concert at the Open Air Theatre at Manasa Gangothri in October 2017.

FINAL YEARS: She chose to permanently settle down in the 'City of Palaces', spending her final years at a farmhouse in the Bogadi area.

PASSING AND LAST RITES: Following her demise in Mysuru, her mortal remains were kept for public homage at the Maharaja's College Ground. She was laid to rest at a farmhouse in Kaniyanahundi on July 12, 2026, with full state honours.

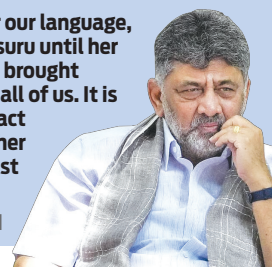
She was second to none: Ilaiyaraaja

Chennai: Legendary music director Ilaiyaraaja on Sunday eulogised S Janaki as a playback singer who "kept proving her talent through her hard work" despite living through many "unbearably painful events" in her personal life. Ilaiyaraaja is credited with bringing the best out of Janaki's talent by giving her songs of different nature — her expressive modulation shone like none in folk and village-themed tracks. Though Janaki worked for several music directors in her long career spanning over half-a-century, it was for Ilaiyaraaja's songs, she effortlessly translated his music into her voice. The Ilaiyaraaja-S Janaki-S P Balasubrahmanyam combo became one of the most successful trio, defining the soundscape of Tamil cinema for decades together, characterising soulful folk-based melodies and romantic duets.



The love she had for our language, our land and for Mysuru until her very last breath has brought immense honour to all of us. It is also a very special fact that she sang both her first song and her last song in Mysuru.

—DK Shivakumar, CM



Indian American ex-Google executive shot dead in US

Georgia: Indian American Sheetal Wrzesien, a former Google executive, was shot dead by her husband in Cobb County in Georgia in the US, a local media report said.

Wrzesien's son Jason was injured in the shootout that took place at the couple's home at Laurel Creek Trail.

The accused, Kirk B Wrzesien (56), was arrested on Tuesday night from the family's residence in Cobb County, near Atlanta. Joanne Anderson, who has lived on the street for more than 20 years and raised her daughter there, said she was caught off guard by the commotion, Atlanta News First reported. "I didn't know

what was going on. I didn't know if someone had a heart attack or what had happened," Anderson said. As per the Cobb County Police, officers responded to reports of gunfire at the couple's home in Smyrna shortly before 8 pm.

Upon reaching the scene, police found 57-year-old Sheetal Wrzesien inside the house with multiple gunshot wounds. She was later pronounced dead.

Kirk faces charges of felony murder, two counts of aggravated assault and two counts of possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony. He is being held without bond at the Cobb County Adult Detention Centre.



Ram Mandir Trust launches CEO search

Lucknow: Shree Ram janmabhoomi Temple Construction Committee president Nripendra Mishra on Sunday said a final decision about appointing the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Ram temple would be taken at a meeting of the Trust to be held on July 22. He told reporters in Ayodhya that the CEO, if appointed, would function under the supervision of the Trust.

"He will appoint his staff under the Trust's supervision and look after the administrative and financial arrangements," he added. Mishra said that ensuring the trust of devotees will be among the primary responsibilities of the CEO, adding that there would be no government 'interference' in the functioning newly-appointed official.

QUICK READ



Volunteers barred from counting temple hundi cash

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
The Karnataka government has issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for managing temple hundis following the alleged theft of devotees' offerings at the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. Under the new guidelines, volunteers and private individuals will no longer be allowed to count hundi cash. Instead, the task will be handled by home guards, bank personnel or government employees to ensure transparency and security. The SOP also promotes QR code-based donations to reduce theft risks. Temples have been directed to display QR code stickers near hundis and regularly inspect them to ensure they have not been tampered with, removed or replaced.

E-auction for 26 liquor licences on July 27

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
The Karnataka Excise Department has invited bids for the online e-auction of 26 vacant CL-2A and CL-9A liquor licences in Bengaluru Urban district. The licences permit the sale of Indian Made Liquor (IML), foreign liquor or both. Bidder registration began on July 3, while the live e-auction will be held on July 27 from 3 pm to 5 pm through the MSTC e-commerce portal. Eligible bidders can access details on the Karnataka Excise Department and MSTC websites. For further information, applicants may contact the department's helpline at 9449597285, according to an official release.

₹228-crore Vande Bharat sleeper depot likely to take shape by 2027

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A dedicated maintenance depot for Vande Bharat sleeper trains is set to come up at Thanisandra in north Bengaluru, with South Western Railway (SWR) initiating the process to acquire nearly 14 hectares of private land for the ₹228-crore project. Railway officials said construction could begin within six months after the land acquisition process is completed and public objections, if any, are addressed. The project is expected to take about 30 months to complete, making an early 2027 start to operations likely if timelines are adhered to. SWR recently issued a notification proposing the acquisition of 14 land parcels located on either side of the railway line near Thanisandra railway station. Members of

Byrathi Suresh goes incognito for BMTC reality check

Transport Minister travelled incognito across Bengaluru to assess BMTC services, passenger grievances firsthand independently.

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Transport Minister Byrathi Suresh conducted a surprise reality check of Bengaluru's public transport system, travelling incognito in BMTC buses for two hours to assess services, passenger experience and staff conduct. Wearing a face mask to avoid being recognised, the Minister travelled in more than 10 BMTC buses between 7.10 pm and 9.10 pm across several parts of the city. During the inspection, he covered routes from Jayamahal to TV Tower, TV Tower to RT Nagar, RT Nagar to CBI Road, CBI Junction to the next stop, CBI Stop to Masjid Stop, Masjid Stop to Ballari Main Road, and later travelled by autorickshaw to Hebbal before continuing by bus through Bhoopasandra,



Hebbal Ring Road, Manyata Tech Park, Nagawara, Hennur, Hennur Bande, Byrathi Bande and Gedalahalli. Since he wore a mask throughout the journey, neither passengers nor BMTC staff recognised him as the Transport Minister. He purchased tickets by paying the prescribed fare on every bus and interacted with fellow commuters to understand their concerns. Several passengers told the Minister that finding seats

during peak hours had become difficult because of the increased number of women commuters availing the State government's free Shakti bus travel scheme. During one leg of the journey, the Minister boarded a bus travelling from Hebbal to Nagashettihalli and asked for two tickets, handing over a ₹100 note. The conductor asked him for exact change and, when the Minister said he did not have any, showed his cash bag and asked him to get off the bus if he could not provide change. Without revealing his identity or arguing, the Minister quietly alighted. The inspection also exposed operational lapses. A BMTC bus bearing registration KA-57 F-3372, travelling from Jayamahal, failed to stop at the Fun World bus stop despite a pas-

senger signalling it to halt. Witnessing the incident from the bus behind, the Minister directed officials to suspend driver Mustaq and conductor Dayanand for negligence. Suresh also checked autorickshaw services during the inspection. After travelling about a kilometre in an auto from Nagashettihalli, he found that the driver demanded ₹36 despite the meter displaying ₹30. When questioned, the driver claimed the meter required correction. The Minister eventually paid ₹40 before getting down. The surprise inspection forms part of the Transport Department's efforts to improve commuter services, enforce accountability among transport staff and address public grievances through firsthand assessment rather than official reports.

Flipkart delivery executive arrested for alleged sexual harassment

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A Flipkart delivery executive was arrested after a woman alleged that he entered her apartment without permission and sexually harassed her after requesting to use her washroom, Bengaluru police said on Sunday. The accused has been identified as Vijay Mallikarjun Kamath. Based on the woman's complaint, the Marathahalli police registered a case under Sections 75, 79 and 329(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Confirming the arrest, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Whitefield Division, said legal action had been initiated against the accused and further investigation was in progress. According to the complaint, the delivery executive arrived at the woman's residence to deliver a parcel before asking if he could use her washroom. The woman alleged that she repeatedly refused his request, stating that she did not allow strangers into her home. She further claimed that she suggested he seek assistance from male neighbours instead. However, despite her objec-

tions, the delivery executive allegedly removed his slippers and entered the flat without her consent. The woman alleged that after coming out of the washroom, the accused exposed himself to her, leaving her shocked and frightened. In a post on social media, she said the incident left her feeling violated and unsafe inside her own home. She emphasised that her repeated refusal should have ended the interaction and that no one had the right to disregard personal boundaries or enter another person's residence without permission. Describing the moments after the alleged incident, the woman said she feared for her safety and took precautionary measures. She switched on her phone camera, kept the front door open and stayed close to the entrance in case she needed to run outside and seek help. Police said the accused was traced and arrested soon after the complaint was lodged. Investigators are examining the sequence of events, including statements from the complainant and other evidence, as part of the ongoing probe.

‘Submit signed SIR forms even without 2002 details’

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Amid concerns from voters unable to locate their own or their parents' names in the 2002 electoral roll, Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Anbukumar has urged them to submit their signed Special Intensive Revision (SIR) enumeration forms with the available information to ensure their names are considered for inclusion in the electoral rolls. Election Commission officials said submitting a signed enumeration form to the Booth Level Officer (BLO), even if some details are unavailable, is the best way to ensure inclusion in the draft electoral rolls, which are scheduled to be published on August 5. Officials clarified that voters would still have an opportunity to verify their details and seek corrections after the draft rolls are published if discrepancies are noticed. The Election Commission has already completed more



than 90 per cent of voter mapping through a tabletop exercise linking electors listed in the 2002 electoral roll with family members who subsequently became eligible to vote. Officials said this exercise would minimise inconsistencies during the verification process. For cases where a voter's or parent's details are unavailable or do not match official records, the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) will issue written notices after publication of the draft rolls. Such voters will be asked to produce supporting documents listed on the reverse of the enumeration form. The ERO will examine the documents before taking a deci-

sion on each case. As of Friday, nearly 89 per cent of the State's 5.5 crore enumeration forms had been distributed. More than 51 per cent of the State's 59,050 polling booths achieved 100 per cent distribution of forms. However, the response from voters has been slower. Only 19.3 per cent of the distributed forms have been filled and digitised so far, while online submissions account for just 0.3 per cent, mainly because of mismatches between Aadhaar and voter ID details. Meanwhile, the Election Commission has identified over 3.3 lakh electors as absent, untraceable, shifted, deceased, duplicate or falling under the "others" category during the verification exercise. Officials said these cases would be shared with recognised political parties through Booth Level Agents (BLA-2s) for field verification before the electoral rolls are finalised.

Direct bus eases commute for Tumakuru techies

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation's (BMTC) newly launched direct Vistara AC bus service between Tumakuru and Electronics City has emerged as a major relief for hundreds of daily commuters, particularly IT professionals, by offering a faster, seamless journey to Bengaluru's technology hub. The 101-km route via NICE Road, now the longest bus service operated by BMTC, has significantly reduced travel time by eliminating the need for multiple bus changes. For commuters like K.N. Tejaswini, who has been travelling between Tumakuru and Electronics City for the past four years, the new service has transformed her daily routine. "Earlier, travelling to Electronics City was a challenge. I had to board a KSRTC bus from Tumakuru to Arasinakunte, another bus to Madavara and then a BMTC bus to Electronics City via NICE Road. It was exhausting and time-consuming. Now, I can travel directly on a single bus and save nearly 45 minutes to an hour every day," she said. The service, launched on



Passengers travelling between Tumakuru and Bengaluru's Electronics City say BMTC's new direct Vistara AC service has cut travel time by up to an hour, eliminating multiple bus changes and making daily commutes far more convenient.

Monday, departs Tumakuru at 7.45 am and reaches Electronics City around 9.45 am. The return trip leaves Electronics City at 5.45 pm and arrives in Tumakuru by around 9 pm. The one-way fare has been fixed at ₹200. Another commuter, Ajay Kumar, said the service was well suited to the work schedules of IT employees. "Hundreds of people travel between Tumakuru and Electronics City every day. The evening service matches my office timings perfectly. Since there are only a few stops between Madavara and Tumakuru, the journey

Longest BMTC route
BMTC Chief Traffic Manager (Operations) G.T. Prabhakar Reddy said the direct service was launched in response to sustained public demand. "The ridership for the newly introduced AC service between Electronics City and Tumakuru has been encouraging. At 101 km, this is the longest route currently operated by BMTC, with a travel time of around three hours. Earlier, we introduced services on the Satellite Town Ring Road connecting Nelamangala and Hoskote over an 80-km stretch," he said.

has become much quicker," he said. Passengers have urged BMTC to introduce similar direct services connecting Electronics City with other satellite towns, saying such routes would benefit thousands of employees working in Bengaluru's IT corridor. BMTC officials said the new service was introduced after the State government permitted the corporation to operate up to 40 km beyond the Greater Bengaluru Area boundary. The corporation has since expanded its Vistara AC network to connect Bengaluru with Tumakuru, Channarayana, Chikballapur, Ramanagara, Kankapura and other nearby towns.

Ambulance driver assaulted in Nelamangala road rage

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A fresh road rage incident in Nelamangala has triggered public concern after an ambulance driver was allegedly assaulted by a car driver on a highway. According to reports, the ambulance, which was not carrying a patient, was being driven with its siren on when the dispute broke out over alleged rash driving. The car driver reportedly stopped the ambulance and physically attacked its driver. Local residents recorded the assault on their mobile phones, and the video has since surfaced online. Repeated highway road rage incidents have drawn public criticism over the police's failure to curb such violence.

Fake IPS officer's Facebook profile used to cheat man of 40,000

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A 56-year-old Bengaluru resident was allegedly duped of ₹40,000 after cyber fraudsters created a fake Facebook profile of an IPS officer and lured him into paying an advance for house hold items purportedly being sold by a CRPF personnel. According to the complaint, Jahir Hussain, a resident of Kariyapalya in Banasawadi, is personally acquainted with IPS officer M. Narayana, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Electronics City Division). Jahir received a Facebook friend request from an account bearing Narayana's name and profile photograph. Believing it to be genuine, he accepted the request. Soon afterwards,

the fraudster initiated a conversation through Facebook Messenger, obtained Jahir's mobile number and later contacted him over the phone. During the call, the accused claimed that a friend serving in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) had been transferred to Kashmir and wanted to dispose of his household belongings before vacating his accommodation. The caller allegedly offered the items at a discounted price and persuaded Jahir to purchase them. The complainant was then sent a WhatsApp message containing a QR code and was asked to pay an advance. Trusting the person to be the senior police officer, Jahir transferred ₹40,000 in multiple digital transactions.

Illegal flex banners turn yatarayanapura footpaths into safety risk

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Even as Bengaluru Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda spearheads a drive to clear footpath encroachments and relocate street vendors, another persistent hazard continues to occupy pavements in his Byatarayanapura Assembly constituency — illegal flex banners. Large banners erected by political parties, businesses and educational institutions have been spotted along Thanisandra Main Road, Jakkur Main Road and K.V. Jairam Road, obstructing pedestrian movement and raising safety concerns.

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

In a major boost to scientific policing and anti-drug enforcement, the Karnataka government inducted 32 Mobile Forensic Vans (MFVs) to enable on-the-spot examination of crime scenes and faster collection of scientific evidence. One van will be deployed in each district, reducing delays in preserving crucial forensic material and strengthening criminal investigations. Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar flagged off the specialised vehicles, saying the initia-

tive would improve investigations, particularly in narcotics cases, and help increase conviction rates through timely and scientific evidence collection. "The misuse of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies is creating new forms of crime. It has become essential for the police to adopt technology-driven investigation methods and strengthen preventive policing," the Chief Minister said. Home Minister Priyank Kharge said the mobile laboratories would transform the way crime scenes are examined by



enabling police personnel to gather high-quality forensic and digital evidence immediately after an offence is reported. "These vans will allow officers to conduct scientific exam-

inations at the crime scene itself, including digital evidence collection, thereby improving both the quality and speed of investigations," he said. Director General and Inspec-

tor General of Police M.A. Saleem said police investigators often faced challenges while collecting sensitive evidence such as blood samples and DNA material, with delays in transporting them to forensic laboratories sometimes affecting investigations. "Collecting scientific and digital evidence from a crime scene is a specialised skill. That is why we have appointed more than 200 Scene of Crime Officers (SOCOs). Earlier, they had to transport samples to jurisdictional Forensic Science Laboratories for preservation.

With the Mobile Forensic Vans, evidence can now be collected, examined and preserved immediately, preventing contamination and saving valuable time," Saleem said. He added that the initiative would help investigators build stronger cases and improve the chances of securing convictions. Each van has been equipped with advanced forensic tools capable of conducting a wide range of examinations at the scene of crime. These include blood and semen detection kits, DNA evidence collection

equipment, gunshot residue testing kits, forensic light sources, fingerprint and footprint analysis tools, digital forensic systems, narcotics detection equipment, explosives detection devices, bullet-hole examination tools, arson investigation kits, microscopes, cameras and LED display screens. Officials said the mobile laboratories would significantly reduce dependence on central forensic laboratories for preliminary examinations and ensure quicker preservation of crucial evidence.

QUICK READ



Six persons arrested in ex-GP president murder case

CH NEWS, Raichur
Six persons have been arrested in connection with the murder of former Gram Panchayat president Meghanath following a violent clash over a petrol payment dispute at Hanchanal village under Idapanur Police Station limits. The incident occurred on July 8 after an argument reportedly broke out between a customer and a petrol bunk employee over a Rs. 10 short payment. Police said Meghanath intervened to settle the dispute but was allegedly attacked by a group of men. He suffered severe head injuries and died on July 9 while undergoing treatment. A case has been registered under BNS and SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act provisions. Investigation is ongoing.

Man killed in fatal assault, another injured in Vijayapura

CH NEWS, Vijayapura
A man was killed in a fatal assault, while another person accompanying him sustained injuries after reportedly trying to intervene in the attack. The injured person was shifted to a hospital and is undergoing treatment. Following the incident, the accused allegedly fled the spot before police arrived. Inspector Parashuram Managuli and personnel from Jhalaki Police Station reached the village after receiving information, inspected the scene and began an investigation. The deceased's body was sent for post-mortem examination. A case has been registered at Jhalaki Police Station, and police have launched a search to trace the accused. Further investigation is underway.

Cooperatives urged year-round registration for Yeshasvini scheme

CH NEWS, Kalagi
Members of cooperative societies have urged authorities to allow year-round registration for the Yeshasvini scheme and hand over registration powers to cooperative societies. They said continuous registration would help more eligible beneficiaries enrol without waiting for a fixed period. The demand was raised in Kalagi, seeking easier access to the healthcare scheme for rural communities. The Yeshasvini scheme is implemented by the Karnataka Department of Cooperation for members of cooperative societies. The applicants also requested simplified procedures to ensure more people benefit from the initiative.

DAM WORK PROBE
Kurihal check dam faces allegations of irregularities

YADGIR

The Taluk Committee of Chala-vadi Mahasabha has alleged irregularities in the construction of a check dam at Kurihal village in Vadagera taluk and demanded a high-level technical investigation into the project. Submitting a memorandum to the Executive Engineer of the Minor Irrigation and Ground-water Development Department, the organisation sought action against the contractor and Junior Engineer (JE) for allegedly carrying out substandard work. According to the complaint,

MLA Darshanapur urges centre to act on drought relief

Darshanapur urges centre on drought relief, defends karnataka government actions, addresses mgnrega, encroachment drive and cabinet expansion issues

BIDAR

Congress MLA Sharanabasappa Darshanapur on Sunday urged the Central Government to fulfil its responsibility in providing drought relief assistance to Karnataka, alleging that the state had earlier been forced to approach the Supreme Court to secure its rightful compensation. Speaking to reporters in Bidar, Darshanapur discussed several issues including drought conditions in North Karnataka, MGNREGA concerns, Bengaluru's anti-encroachment drive, cabinet expansion and recent political controversies. Paying tribute to legendary playback singer S. Janaki, Darshanapur said her contribution to Kannada cinema and Indian

music would remain unforgettable. He expressed condolences to her family and described her demise as a major loss to the country's cultural field.

On drought conditions, the MLA said the state government had already started procedures to assess crop damage and provide relief to affected farmers. He said drought declaration requires a detailed process involving field inspections, official reports and approval as per Central Government guidelines.

Darshanapur recalled that during previous drought situations under Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's leadership, Karnataka had provided compensation according to National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) norms along with additional support from state resources. He alleged that the Centre had failed to provide the additional assistance requested by Karnataka, forcing the state to seek legal intervention. He said farmers who suffered crop losses due to inadequate rainfall should receive support, but relief cannot be announced overnight without proper verification and assessment.

Speaking about MGNREGA-related issues, Darshanapur said Karnataka MPs should also be held accountable for pending matters, as they have a role in raising state concerns at the national level. On Bengaluru's anti-encroachment drive, he

said many street vendors suffered losses but assured that the government had promised relief and alternative vending spaces. He defended the action, stating that illegal encroachments had affected pedestrian movement and contributed to safety issues. Regarding Priyank Khar ge's remarks on the RSS, Darshanapur said those concerned should respond to the letter issued by Kharge. He added that legal disputes should be addressed through courts.

On cabinet expansion, the MLA said many legislators aspire for ministerial positions, but the final decision would be taken by the Congress high command and state leadership after considering regional balance, social representation and political factors.



Old Age home faces acute water shortage crisis

KALABURAGI

An acute water crisis has disrupted daily life at an old age home in Kalaburagi, forcing elderly residents and women inmates to struggle for drinking water and basic hygiene.

The shortage has affected the old age home run by the Mahadevi Tai Mahila Vidyavardhaka Sangha on Syed Chincholi Road. The institution receives financial support from the Department for the Empowerment of Differently Aabled and Senior Citizens. The same campus also houses Shakti Sadan, a shelter for women supported by the Department of Women and Child Development.

The old age home accommodates 32 residents, including elderly men, women and persons with disabilities, while the shelter houses women survivors of domestic violence along with children.

BJP-JD(S) ticket race intensifies in ST constituencies

RAICHUR

Political activity has intensified in the ST-reserved constituencies of Manvi and Devadurga ahead of the 2028 Karnataka Assembly elections, with competing ticket claims emerging within the BJP-JD(S) alliance.

Although the alliance has not officially announced seat-sharing arrangements or candidates, several leaders from both parties have already started public outreach programmes, village visits and community meetings to strengthen their claims.

Political observers believe that the major challenge for the BJP-JD(S) alliance may come from internal competition rather than opposition parties. Supporters of various leaders have launched campaigns on social media platforms, projecting their leaders as probable candidates and increasing uncertainty among party workers.

In Devadurga, sitting MLA Karemma G. Naik, who defeated BJP candidate Shivana-

Akkai Padmashali questions gender tests for transgender persons

YADGIR

Transgender rights activist Akkai Padmashali questioned the need for mandatory gender verification tests for transgender persons and called for equal treatment and dignity for the community.

Addressing a police interaction workshop under the "Fear Less, Love More" campaign at the District Police Office auditorium, Akkai asked why such medical verification requirements should apply only to transgender persons and not others.

She highlighted the discrimination, social exclusion, unemployment, poverty and family neglect faced by the transgender community. She urged the government to provide better infrastructure, welfare schemes and opportunities to help transgender persons lead dignified lives.

Akkai said that despite decades of struggle for equal rights, the community continues to face difficulties in achieving social acceptance and equal opportunities.

Ashakiran Social Service Organisation president Maya S.R. Nayak and transgender activist Malavika from Raichur also spoke about the challenges faced by transgender persons and stressed the need for greater inclusion.

During the programme, police officials raised concerns about complaints involving some transgender persons allegedly engaging in unlawful activities such as harassment, begging and forced collection of money from motorists.

Responding to these concerns, Akkai Padmashali and other activists said that anyone violating the law should face legal action and that illegal activities cannot be justified in the name of the community.

On allegations related to crimes involving transgender persons, Akkai called for strict action against those found guilty. Yadgir Superintendent of Police Prithvik Shankar said that no one chooses a difficult life voluntarily and emphasised the importance of education, employment and livelihood opportunities for transgender persons.



BJP-JD(S) ticket competition intensifies in Raichur's Manvi and Devadurga, with internal rivalries, multiple aspirants and alliance management challenges shaping the 2028 Karnataka election battle.

gouda Naik in the 2023 Assembly election, is reportedly confident of seeking another term if the alliance continues. She is said to have support from senior JD(S) leaders, including former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda and former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy. However, BJP leaders are also expected to seek the constituency if it comes under their share, creating possible tension within the alliance. The situation in Manvi is

more competitive, with multiple BJP leaders reportedly seeking the ticket. Former MP B.V. Naik, former minister Shivanagouda Naik and local leader Gangadhar Naik are among those actively maintaining political visibility.

The JD(S) has also shown interest in Manvi, with former MLA Raja Venkatappa Naik expressing confidence that the constituency may be allotted to his party under the alliance arrangement. Social media has emerged as another battleground, with supporters of different aspirants promoting their leaders and engaging in political debates.

Observers suggest that dissatisfaction over ticket allocation could lead to internal divisions, rebellion or weak campaign support, potentially benefiting the Congress.

The BJP-JD(S) leadership now faces the challenge of balancing regional representation, organisational strength and local political equations while maintaining alliance unity before the 2028 elections.

Drought threatens 70,000 acres of sugarcane in Kalaburagi

KALABURAGI

Nearly 70,000 acres of sugarcane in Kalaburagi district are facing severe drought threat due to prolonged rainfall deficit, leaving thousands of farmers worried over crop losses and rising debts.

The dry spell has severely affected Jevargi taluk, a major sugarcane-growing region, where farmers are watching their crops wither due to declining groundwater levels and drying irrigation sources.

Farmers who invested heavily in sugarcane cultivation during the previous monsoon and January planting season are now struggling as borewells, open wells and the Bhima River have witnessed reduced water availability.

Many growers had expanded cultivation after receiving good

rainfall last year. However, the failure of pre-monsoon and monsoon showers has created uncertainty over crop survival.

A farmer from Gaura (B) village said he cultivated sugarcane on 20 acres by taking loans of nearly ₹5 lakh. With borewells drying up, he expressed concern over repaying debts and sustaining his family.

Sugarcane growers have urged the government to release water into the Bhima River through Krishna Bhagya Jala Nigam canals to provide immediate relief to standing crops.

Assistant Director of Agriculture S.H. Gadagimani warned that continued rainfall deficiency could worsen the situation. He said that if rainfall remains below normal levels for three consecutive weeks, the taluk may qualify for drought declaration.

Kalaburagi Lok Adalat settles 188 cases, awards compensation

KALABURAGI

The National Lok Adalat organised by the High Court Legal Services Committee, Kalaburagi Bench, successfully settled 188 cases through mutual agreement and awarded compensation of over ₹6.04 crore to eligible claimants.

The Lok Adalat was conducted on Saturday following the directions of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), providing an effective platform for resolving

disputes through conciliation. According to an official statement issued by Kumar B.R., Secretary of the High Court Legal Services Committee, a total compensation amount of ₹6,04,47,920 was distributed among victims and beneficiaries involved in various cases.

Special conciliation benches were formed at the Kalaburagi Bench of the High Court to facilitate smooth proceedings. The settlement process was carried out under the guidance of Justices K.N. Ke-

shavanarayana and B.N. Banjantri.

Several long-pending civil, criminal, and other eligible cases were resolved with the consent of both parties during the proceedings. The initiative helped litigants avoid lengthy court battles while ensuring faster and affordable justice.

The High Court Legal Services Committee stated that Lok Adalats play a crucial role in promoting alternative dispute resolution and reducing the burden of pending cases in courts.

QUICK READ

15 foot snake found near Goudahalli home

CHIKKAMAGALURU
Panic struck Goudahalli village after a massive 15-foot-long black snake was discovered near a local home. Workers fled in fear as the giant reptile slithered through the property. The homeowner quickly called expert rescuer Snake Mohammad for help. After a tense hour-long operation, Mohammad successfully caught the elusive creature without harming it. The snake was later released safely into the nearby Charmadi forest. Residents are now breathing a huge sigh of relief. Officials remind everyone that if you spot a wild snake, please do not hurt it; always call trained professionals for a safe rescue.

Fugitives held for BJP activist's 2022 murder

MANGALURU
The National Investigation Agency has finally apprehended two primary suspects in the four-year-old murder case of BJP activist Praveen Nettiara. The arrested men, 32-year-old Naushad and 41-year-old Abdul Nasir, had been on the run since the tragic incident. Officials tracked Naushad to Bengaluru, while Nasir was captured in Kochi, Kerala. Both suspects carried a two-lakh rupee bounty on their heads for their alleged involvement in the crime. This breakthrough brings a long-awaited update to a case that shocked the region. Authorities remain committed to pursuing justice and ensuring all individuals involved are held fully accountable.

Minister Khader addresses persistent Malnad outbreak

SHIVAMOGGA
Health and Family Welfare Minister U.T. Khader has announced that a high-level meeting of experts and senior officials will be held in Bengaluru to address the persistent outbreak of mange in the Malnad region. The disease, which has troubled the district for decades, remains a critical public health concern that requires urgent, coordinated action. During a meeting with health department officials at the Zilla Panchayat's Nazir Saab Hall, Minister Khader expressed deep concern over the current situation. Records indicate that 130 cases have been identified so far this year, tragically resulting in five deaths. The Minister emphasized that such outcomes are unacceptable and strictly instructed local medical officers to prioritize the timely diagnosis and treatment of every patient to prevent further loss of life.

Nikhil Kumaraswamy to lead JD(S) tour of drought-hit regions

Nikhil Kumaraswamy begins a three-day North Karnataka tour starting July 13 to assess severe agricultural drought-related distress.

BAGALKOT

Janata Dal (Secular) Youth Wing President Nikhil Kumaraswamy is scheduled to embark on an extensive multi-day tour of North Karnataka starting July 13, to inspect severe agricultural distress. The outreach initiative comes as several northern districts battle an intense dry spell, driven by an acute 40 to 43 percent deficit in cumulative monsoon rainfall.

The state currently finds itself trapped in a bizarre weather anomaly. While select regions are dealing with extensive infrastructure damage from unexpected, heavy



downpours, vital agricultural Belts are suffering from a full-blown drought. Taking to the social media to share his concerns, Nikhil Kumaraswamy expressed deep sorrow over the worsening situation. He noted that witnessing hardworking farmers shed tears over dry fields has deeply touched the leadership, prompting swift political ac-

tion. To address the brewing crisis systematically, specialized study teams have been formed within the JD(S) organization. The regional outreach program is being executed under the direct oversight and strategic guidance of his father, Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, who wants first-hand operational ground data regarding crop losses. The official itinerary spans three days from July 13 to July 15, focusing heavily on the hard-hit Vijayapura and Bagalkot districts. On July 14, the youth leader will spend the entire day traveling through the

parched fields of Vijayapura district to interact directly with struggling families, wrapping up the leg by addressing a comprehensive regional press conference.

On July 15, the high-level JD(S) study team will shift its operations to Badami in Bagalkot district to hold town-hall meetings with local agrarian communities. Through these visits, the party plans to compile an extensive ground report on water scarcity, which will be used to pressure the ruling administration for immediate crop compensation packages and subsidized fodder supply.

Mohan Bhagwat reviews RSS National Strategy

BELAGAVI

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) concluded its three-day national annual meeting at the Sant Meera School in Anagola, Belagavi. The high-level gathering brought together 226 pracharaks, including RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat and General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale, to deliberate on the organization's future roadmap, national social concerns, and administrative reviews. A major focus of the meeting was the upcoming centenary year of the RSS.

ADC B.T. Kumaraswamy inspects booth level officer performance

CHITRADURGA

As part of the ongoing Special Comprehensive Revision of voter lists, Additional District Electoral Officer and Additional Deputy Commissioner B.T. Kumaraswamy conducted a series of field inspections across the district. His visit aimed to monitor the performance of booth-level officers and ensure that the process of updating electoral rolls is being handled with accuracy and dedication.

During his tour, Mr. Kumaraswamy visited various polling stations and residential areas within the Chitradurga, Holalkere, and Hosadurga assembly constituencies. His primary goal was to engage directly with the public, spreading awareness about the revision exercise and explaining the importance of

filling out census forms correctly. By speaking with residents, he encouraged them to actively participate in the democratic process to ensure their information remains current.

Addressing the booth-level officers, Mr. Kumaraswamy emphasized that updating the electoral roll is a critical responsibility. He reminded the staff that their work directly impacts the right of every citizen to participate in future elections. He stressed that no eligible voter should be left out due to administrative errors or oversights. Consequently, he issued strict instructions for officers to carry out their duties with high levels of integrity and thoroughness.

To ensure comprehensive coverage, the officer laid out clear protocols for handling

difficult-to-reach residents. He directed the teams to visit every household within their designated jurisdictions. If a house is found locked during an initial attempt, the officers were instructed to return at least three more times to ensure they make contact and collect the necessary details. This hands-on approach by district leadership is designed to streamline the data collection process and prevent discrepancies in the final voter lists. By maintaining a high standard of oversight, the election commission aims to guarantee a transparent and inclusive voting environment. As the revision continues, officials remain focused on their commitment to ensuring that every single eligible voter in the district is properly registered and ready to cast their ballot.

Security footage captures courtroom ritual attempt

CHIKKABALLAPURA

Authorities have taken a 65-year-old woman into custody following a bizarre attempt to influence the outcome of a legal battle through alleged black magic. The incident occurred at the 1st Additional Civil and JMFC Court in Chikkaballapura, leaving court staff shocked by the unusual intrusion. The accused, identified as Manjula, a local resident, was seen on security cameras entering the courtroom on the morning of July 9.

Anil Poojary named Karkala Congress campaign head

KARKALA

The Congress party has officially announced the appointment of Anil S. Poojary Mala as the new president of the Karkala Block Congress Campaign Committee. This leadership change was confirmed by Alevoor Harish Kini, the president of the Udupi District Congress Campaign Committee.

The appointment followed guidance from former Chief Minister Dr. M. Veerappa Moily and direct orders from the KPCC Campaign Committee President, Vinay Kumar Sorake. The decision was further supported by key local leaders, including Karkala Assembly constituency representative Muniyal Uday Kumar Shetty, Karkala Block Congress Committee President

Shubhada Rao, and Karkala Assembly Constituency Campaign Committee President Supreet Shetty Kedinje.

Anil S. Poojary brings a wealth of experience to this new role, having long been active in both community service and local governance. Currently, he serves as the president and a director of the Mal-Kerwashe Vyavasaya Sahakari Sangha. His commit-

ment to cooperative movements is further evidenced by his role as a director of the Udupi District Cooperative Union (R). Additionally, he is a dedicated office bearer for the Karkala Billava Sangha.

His political background is equally robust; he has demonstrated strong local support by being elected as a member of the Mal Gram Panchayat on three separate occasions.

Koppal officials have distributed nearly 1.2 million voter forms, successfully advancing the 2026 Special Comprehensive Electoral Roll revision.

Koppal district completes voter form distribution

KOPPAL

The massive effort to update voter information across Koppal district is moving forward at a steady pace. Local election officials announced that their door-to-door campaign for the Special Comprehensive Revision of Electoral Rolls-2026 has reached a major milestone. By the evening of July 11, teams had successfully handed out nearly 1.2 million census forms to residents across the region.

District Election Officer Dr. Suresh B. Itnal provided an update on the progress made since the drive began on June 30. He confirmed that the task is nearly complete, with 11,89,919 forms delivered to voters. This significant achievement marks twelve

days of hard work by booth-level officers tasked with ensuring every citizen's details are accurate and current.

The district is home to five assembly constituencies, which include a total of 11,90,214 registered voters. To manage this workload, election authorities had previously printed and distributed individual forms for every single voter to the officers stationed at each booth. With the distribution phase nearing its end, the focus of the administration has now shifted toward the digital side of the project.

According to Dr. Itnal, the team is working diligently to transfer the collected information into the official government database. So far, they have managed to digitize

4,87,420 of the returned forms. This digital shift is a vital step in modernizing the electoral rolls, making it easier for officials to maintain accurate records and providing a smoother experience for voters during future elections.

The administration has expressed satisfaction with the cooperation shown by the public during these home visits. By updating these rolls, the district aims to ensure that every eligible resident is correctly listed and ready to participate in the democratic process. As the digital entry continues, officials remain confident that the remaining forms will be processed quickly, keeping the entire revision project on schedule for the upcoming electoral requirements in the state.

Gadag residents receive voter enrollment forms

GADAG

The district administration is making significant progress in updating the local electoral rolls. As part of the ongoing Special Comprehensive Revision (SIR) process, officials confirmed that thousands of households have already been visited by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) to ensure every eligible citizen is accounted for in the upcoming electoral cycle. Currently, the district manages a voter base of 9,02,947 individuals spread across 967 designated polling booths. To maintain an accurate and transparent registry, BLOs have been tasked with visiting homes personally to distribute essential Enumeration Forms. This critical field operation, which began recently, is scheduled to continue through July 29, providing residents ample time to participate. According to the latest figures released by the

administration, the outreach effort is proving highly effective. Officers have successfully distributed 9,01,279 forms, covering the vast majority of the district's registered voters. Beyond just physical distribution, the administration is prioritizing modern efficiency; officials reported that 1,95,765 of these forms have already been digitized and uploaded into the system. This massive undertaking aims to streamline the voting process, ensuring that the final electoral roll is error-free and up-to-date. Residents are encouraged to cooperate with the visiting BLOs during this period. By verifying their details now, citizens help guarantee a smoother experience at the polling stations when election day arrives. This proactive step reinforces the district's commitment to strengthening local democracy and ensuring every voice is heard during the democratic process.



across private agricultural lands. Farmers argued that these installations severely restricted their ability to grow trees, build homes, or secure

bank loans. Frustrated by initial payouts they considered inadequate, many farmers a large portion of whom are senior citizens turned to the

courts for justice. After six years of persistent legal battles, the mediation process facilitated by the District Legal Services Authority finally brought them the relief they deserved. During the proceedings, District Principal and Sessions Judge Justice M.H. Annaiah emphasized the importance of the Lok Adalat in providing quick, cost-effective justice. One farmer from Magadi taluk notably received an additional Rs 32 lakh in compensation. The judge noted that prioritizing the cases of elderly farmers was a primary focus for this

session, ensuring they no longer have to endure the physical and financial strain of repeated court visits.

Beyond this specific issue, the National Lok Adalat achieved a massive breakthrough across Ramanagara district. Operating through 17 different benches in courts like Channapatna, Kanakapura, and Magadi, the authority managed to dispose of an incredible 2,64,338 cases. This total includes 2,61,668 pre-litigation matters and various other disputes, ranging from motor vehicle accidents to domestic issues.

WATER SURGE FOLLOWS YETTINAHOLE PIPELINE RUPTURE

SAKALESHPUR

Local residents near Halasulige village were left in shock following a dramatic explosion in a major pipeline connected to the Yettinahole Project. The force of the blast caused a massive plume of water to shoot approximately 100 feet into the air, creating a scene of chaos and alarm throughout the area.

The incident occurred early, accompanied by a loud, thunderous noise that startled villagers. Following the initial rupture, thousands of gallons of water surged from the damaged pipe, quickly flooding the surrounding landscape. The un-

controlled water flow moved rapidly into nearby coffee plantations and agricultural fields, sparking serious concerns among local farmers regarding potential damage to their standing crops and future harvest prospects.

Once the situation was brought under control, locals immediately alerted the relevant authorities. This incident marks yet another technical failure associated with the Yettinahole project. The frequency of these pipeline explosions, occurring even before the official completion of the infrastructure, has triggered widespread public criticism.

QUICK READ

DDA issues SOP for anti-encroachment flying squads

New Delhi

After Delhi Lieutenant Governor (L-G) T.S. Sandhu's directives regarding zero-tolerance to encroachment, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for 14 Flying Squad Teams and four Quick Response Teams, an official said on Sunday. The initiative is expected to strengthen the land-owning agency's enforcement framework for securing government land and preventing unauthorised constructions and encroachments, the DDA official said in a statement. As per L-G Sandhu's instructions, the SOP provides for the use of modern technologies, including drone-based inspections wherever required, it said.

Fake call centres promising low-interest loans busted

Kolkata

Kolkata Police have busted fake call centres in the city and arrested 10 people for allegedly defrauding people by posing as representatives of reputed companies and promising loans. A senior police officer said on Sunday that a large number of mobile phones, SIM cards and a laptop were recovered from them. According to the police, people were being cheated repeatedly on the pretext of securing quick loans at low interest rates. A total of 10 alleged fraudsters associated with the racket were arrested from the Bowbazar and Patulia areas of Kolkata in a joint operation conducted by Metiabruz Police Station and the Cyber Cell of the Port Division of Kolkata Police.

Chinese projects in Tibet damaging local environment

New Delhi

China is using Tibet as a resource hub to propel its renewable energy campaign, but this is happening at a high cost to the region's environment and the life of the local population, according to reports. China is building major green infrastructure in Tibet, including large solar projects and the planned Metok (Motuo) mega-dam on the Yarlung Tsangpo. Many batteries used in clean technologies also depend on materials produced in the region. Tibet therefore stands at the forefront of China's green energy development across wind, solar, and hydropower. Mineral exploration and extraction in Tibet are also intensifying, again to fuel the green energy industry amid China's rising energy demand.

TMC's Saugata Roy opposes UCC

KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Saugata Roy on Sunday reiterated his party's opposition to the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), asserting that it would infringe upon the rights of minority communities.

His remarks come on the back of West Bengal government constituting a high-level committee to prepare the draft UCC Bill for the state.

Speaking to IANS, Roy reacted to the state government's decision to form the panel, saying, Sunday...We oppose the Uniform Civil Code because it will take

No sign of devotees showing 'distrust' in system: Misra

Temple authorities said devotees remain steadfast as construction nears completion despite the recent donation theft controversy at Ram Mandir

AYODHYA

Ram Mandir Construction Committee Chairman Nripendra Misra on Sunday said that the recent donation theft controversy has not affected the faith of devotees visiting the temple in Ayodhya, asserting that pilgrims continue to arrive in large numbers without any signs of hesitation or distrust in the temple administration.

Addressing concerns over whether the donation row had impacted footfall at the temple, Misra said he did not have official data regarding the number of visitors since the incident. However, based



on his interactions with devotees and feedback received from those associated with temple management, there has been no noticeable decline in the number of worshippers offering prayers.

According to Misra, devotees remain focused on their religious beliefs rather than

the controversy surrounding the theft of donations. He said their primary objective is to seek the blessings of Lord Ram, and that commitment continues to draw pilgrims to the temple every day.

He further noted that the number of visitors increases significantly during weekends, particularly on Saturdays and Sundays. Misra also pointed out that nearby Hanuman Garhi continues to witness substantial crowds, dismissing speculation that the controversy had discouraged people from visiting Ayodhya.

Referring to the donation theft incident, Misra de-

scribed it as a matter of deep regret for everyone associated with the temple administration. He acknowledged that the episode had caused disappointment and emphasized that it highlighted the need for stronger administrative systems.

He assured devotees that necessary improvements would be introduced to prevent similar incidents in the future. Expressing confidence in the corrective measures, Misra said the administration was committed to strengthening security and operational procedures to ensure that such lapses do not recur.

Oppn accuses Yogi of diverting attention from Ram Temple case

NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders on Sunday launched a sharp attack on Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over his remarks questioning why the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Congress remain silent on the alleged illegal sale of Waqf land, while accusing the BJP of hurting Hindu faith over the alleged theft of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Lately, the BJP has been come under criticism from Opposition parties over donation theft allegations at the Ram Temple, an the former has projected the issue as an affront on the sentiments of Hindus. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath ordered SIT probe into the incident but kept

lashng out at the Opposition parties, accusing them of insulting Hindu sentiments and also pursuing politics of minority appeasement.

Addressing an event in Uttar Pradesh's Pratapgarh on Tuesday, the Chief Minister said that Congress and the Samajwadi Party remained silent over issues such as alleged encroachment and grabbing of Waqf properties, but were attempting to target the BJP over developments in Ayodhya.

Reacting to the remarks, Samajwadi Party MP Pushpendra Saroj told IANS, SundayThe Chief Minister should avoid making baseless allegations. If he has evidence, he should present it first. If any-

thing had gone wrong during the Samajwadi Party's tenure, the people of Uttar Pradesh responded by electing the Bharatiya Janata Party to power twice.

I can say with certainty that the BJP received more than 50 per cent of the votes in the name of Lord Ram.

He further said, SundayThe BJP pursued politics centred around religion, faith and the Ram Temple, and people supported them on that basis by bringing them to power twice. Today, when allegations of theft have surfaced in the name of the same Ram, the Chief Minister is trying to divert attention from the real issue.



Dispute over Ambedkar statue: TN village sees heavy police deployment

SALEM

Heavy police deployment continues in Odiyathur village near Gangavalli in Tamil Nadu's Salem district after a long-running dispute over an Ambedkar statue erupted into violence following its sudden unveiling, leaving six people, including three police personnel, injured.

More than 100 police personnel have been stationed in the area to prevent any further deterioration of the law and order situation after rival groups clashed over the statue at the Four Roads roundabout in Odiyathur panchayat. Senior revenue and police officials are closely monitoring the situation.

The controversy dates back to 2020, when a group installed a seated statue of Dr B.R. Ambedkar at the junction. The statue depicts the architect of the Indian Constitution seated with one leg crossed over the other. However, another section of the local community objected to the installation and unveiling of the statue at the site.

When attempts were made



to inaugurate the statue in 2021, the then Tahsildar Venkatesan, along with revenue officials and police, intervened and directed that the statue should remain covered until a mutually acceptable solution was reached through official discussions. As a result, the statue remained wrapped in cloth for nearly five years without being formally unveiled.

The issue resurfaced on Saturday after the covering over the Ambedkar statue was unexpectedly removed. The development triggered immediate protests from one group, which demanded that the statue be covered again until legal and administrative issues were resolved.

Another group opposed any attempt to conceal the statue once more, leading to a tense stand-off. Revenue authorities later convened a peace meeting at the Attur Assistant Collector's office with representatives of both groups.

Assistant Collector Tamilmani said the Ambedkar statue could be formally unveiled only after obtaining the necessary court permission. To maintain peace, he announced that three nearby statues, including those of K. Kamaraj and former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, would also be temporarily covered with the assistance of the Revenue Department.

SP MP's ticket remark kicks up debate ahead of UP polls

LUCKNOW

Political activity in Uttar Pradesh is beginning to intensify as parties prepare for the 2027 Assembly elections, with a recent statement by Samajwadi Party (SP) Member of Parliament Anand Bhaduria triggering discussions within political circles.

His remarks, directed at party ticket aspirants, have been widely interpreted as a message emphasizing discipline, transparency, and adherence to the party's leadership in the candidate selection process.

Bhaduria, who represents the Dhaurahara Lok Sabha constituency, took to social media platform X to clarify his position regarding the distribution of Assembly election tickets.

In his post, he stated that he would neither recommend nor endorse any individual seeking a party nomination and stressed that all aspirants should directly approach the party's national leadership for consideration.

The SP leader made it clear that no candidate would receive a ticket based on personal recommendations or lobbying by local leaders. Instead, he asserted that the final decision regarding candi-

Samajwadi Party leader Anand Bhaduria urged ticket aspirants to approach party leadership directly ahead of 2027 elections

date selection rests solely with Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav and the party's central leadership.

In his message, Bhaduria emphasized that he has no personal preference for any prospective candidate in the five Assembly constituencies that fall under his Dhaurahara parliamentary constituency. He assured party workers that he would wholeheartedly support and campaign for whoever is officially nominated by the party.

SundayMy responsibility lies with the five Assembly constituencies within my Lok Sabha seat, Dhaurahara. I will sincerely strive for their victory because I can never go against the party. Whoever the party awards the ticket will be my candidate, Sunday Bhaduria wrote in his social media post.

He also advised ticket aspirants to focus their efforts on presenting their case before the party's national president rather than seeking support from individual leaders.

NDA candidate seeks Nitish Kumar's blessings



PATNA

National Democratic Alliance (NDA) candidate Neeraj Kumar Sinha on Sunday met former Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar ahead of the upcoming Bankipur Assembly by-election, seeking his blessings and guidance as the alliance intensifies preparations for the crucial electoral contest.

The meeting underscored the NDA's efforts to present a united front as campaigning gains momentum.

Sinha was accompanied by Bihar Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president Sanjay Sarawagi during the courtesy visit. Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh was also present at the meeting, where senior NDA leaders discussed the political strategy and preparations for the Bankipur Assembly by-election.

During the interaction, Rajiv Ranjan Singh extended his best wishes to the NDA candidate and expressed confidence that the alliance would contest the election with complete unity and determination. He said the NDA was fully prepared for the electoral battle and believed that the coalition would emerge victori-

ous in the Bankipur constituency.

Former Chief Minister Nitish Kumar also conveyed his best wishes to Neeraj Kumar Sinha and advised him to remain closely connected with the people. Stressing the importance of public service, Nitish urged the candidate to stay active among citizens and work consistently to address their concerns.

He expressed hope that the NDA nominee would earn the trust and confidence of the electorate through dedicated service and contribute to accelerating the development of the Bankipur Assembly constituency. Nitish Kumar emphasized that maintaining close contact with the public and focusing on development would be essential in fulfilling the aspirations of local residents.

Expressing gratitude for the support received from senior leaders, Neeraj Kumar Sinha said their guidance and blessings would serve as a constant source of motivation throughout the election campaign. He stated that the confidence reposed in him by the NDA leadership has strengthened his resolve to work for the welfare of the constituency.

PREPARATIONS GATHER PACE

Puri gears up for Rath Yatra



that idols will be carried from the 'Ratna Singhasan' to the chariots, and will travel to Shri Gundicha Temple.

SundaySeveral infrastructural developmental are being carried out at the premises of

the Gundicha Temple, SundayPadhee said. SundayWe wish that the devotees have an enriching experience of 'darshan' at Gundicha Temple, which is the birthplace of the deities, Sunday he added.

Maintaining that the congregation of the Rath Yatra procession will be huge, Padhee said: SundayPolice and district administration along with all other arms of the government, have lent out huge support to the arrangements. Huge number of police personnel is being deployed. SundayHe added that there will be certain traffic restrictions in view of the procession. Arabinda Kumar Padhee said that traditional Odissi artworks are being made in front of the 'Singh Dwar' of Shri Jagannath Temple as well as near Gundicha Temple.



QUICK READ

AAP event in Rohini a complete failure: BJP leader

New Delhi
Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said on Sunday that former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) attempt to hold a Shri Sundarkand Paath with the objective of politically exploiting the name of Lord Ram turned out to be a complete failure. He said that at a pandal in Rohini, where religious events are usually attended by thousands of devotees, Kejriwal's invitation could not attract even 500 to 600 people despite the AAP pressing buses into service to ferry devotees.

Reading between the lines of Abdullah's protest call

New Delhi
Is it a coincidence that Dr Farooq Abdullah, former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and president of the ruling National Conference, has decided to stage a protest in Delhi demanding the restoration of statehood? The timing certainly invites scrutiny. Barely days after a letter surfaced in which Abdullah was among the signatories urging New Delhi and Islamabad to end their Sunday-prolonged hostility Sunday, arguing that it was denying millions of young people opportunities, prosperity and a secure future, he wrote to 52 prominent political leaders inviting them to join a protest at Jantar Mantar on July 20, the opening day of the Monsoon Session of Parliament.

Shah joins mission to expand urban green cover

Amit Shah and Bhupendra Patel led plantation drives, promoting environmental conservation and public participation across Ahmedabad on Sunday

AHMEDABAD

Ahmedabad's ambitious drive to expand its urban green cover received a significant boost on Sunday as Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah and Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel participated in two large-scale tree plantation programmes under the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation's (AMC) 'Mission 5 Million Trees' on Sunday.

The campaign aims to strengthen the city's ecological balance while encouraging citizens to actively participate in environmental conservation.

The first plantation programme was held at an Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation plot near Apple-



wood, where Amit Shah and Bhupendra Patel planted saplings alongside civic officials and public representatives. The event also carried the theme of creating a Sunday-Green Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency, Sunday reflecting the broader objective of increasing green spaces across the parliamentary constituency.

Later in the day, the leaders joined another plantation drive at the Sabarmati Ashram Gaushala plot managed by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB). Thousands of saplings were planted during the programme in support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's nationwide SundayEk Ped Maa Ke Naam Sunday campaign, which encourages citi-

zens to plant trees in honour of their mothers while promoting environmental awareness.

According to the organisers, both events highlighted a shared commitment to expanding Ahmedabad's green cover, protecting the environment, and fostering greater public participation in tree plantation and conservation activities.

The campaign is designed not only to increase the number of trees in the city but also to ensure their long-term survival through active community involvement. Participants at the events took a pledge to contribute towards making the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency greener, cleaner, and more environmentally sustainable.

Modi govt's foreign policy safeguards national interests: BJP

NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent foreign visits have resulted in significant strategic, defence, and economic benefits for the country.

BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra said this during a press conference at the party's headquarters in New Delhi on Prime Minister's recent visits to Seychelles, Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as the visits of Japan's top leadership to India.

Patra titled his presentation Sunday 10 Kadam, 10 Ka Dum Sunday and noted that through these visits, India has further strengthened its role in the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific regions. He remarked that India is emerging as a Sundayforce for stability Sunday across this entire

region today.

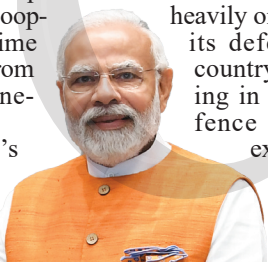
SundayWhile governments and policies in many countries have changed over the past few years, India has established global trust through political stability, policy continuity, and economic strength. India has maintained its stability amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, global conflicts, and economic challenges, Sunday he said.

The BJP MP described Prime Minister Modi's foreign visits as a move to Sunday-strengthen strategic alliances in the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific regions Sunday. He noted that India has expanded its presence and cooperation in the maritime domain, extending from Seychelles to Indonesia.

Citing Indonesia's Sabang Port, he highlighted its Sundayimmense

strategic importance Sunday due to its proximity to the Strait of Malacca. He pointed out that the Strait of Malacca is one of the world's busiest maritime routes, facilitating a vast amount of international trade. SundayIndonesia's interest in developing Sabang Port is significant for India from the perspectives of maritime security and trade. This initiative will strengthen India's strategic reach in the Indian Ocean region, Sunday he said.

SundayDefence and maritime cooperation form a crucial foundation for any nation's strategic strength. While India previously relied heavily on imports to meet its defence needs, the country is now advancing in the fields of defence production and exports, Sunday the BJP spokesperson further stated.



Pune building collapse: Death toll climbs to 8

PUNE

The death toll in the Moshi garbage dump collapse in Pune's Pimpri-Chinchwad has increased to eight after rescue teams recovered the bodies of seven more victims from the damaged administrative building of the Waste-to-Energy project, officials said on Sunday.

Rescue personnel also confirmed that one person is still unaccounted for, and search operations are continuing to locate the missing individual.

The incident occurred at around 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday when a massive mound of garbage gave way and crashed onto the administrative building located inside the Moshi garbage depot operated by the Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation.

At the time of the collapse, a total of 23 people were trapped.

Centre approves Rs 1,647 cr for Delhi infra projects

NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday announced that the Central government has approved financial assistance of Rs 1,647 crore for 28 major infrastructure projects proposed by the Delhi government under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) scheme.

The approval is expected to accelerate several key development projects aimed at improving transportation, public infrastructure, and civic amenities across the national capital.

According to the Chief Minister, the sanctioned projects include the expansion and development of the Delhi Metro network, construction work on the Barapulla Elevated Corridor, the Karawal Nagar Flyover, and the installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) depots. These projects are intended to enhance urban mobility, reduce traffic congestion, and strengthen sustainable transport infrastructure in the city.

In addition to the project funding, the Central government has also approved an incentive of Rs 756 crore for Delhi in recognition of the

Delhi received Central approval for 28 infrastructure projects alongside additional incentives to accelerate capital investment and urban development

government's efforts to increase capital expenditure through its own financial resources. The incentive is aimed at encouraging states and Union Territories to invest more in infrastructure and development while maintaining sound fiscal management.

Chief Minister Gupta described the approval as a significant milestone in Delhi's development journey, stating that it would further strengthen the city's infrastructure and improve the quality of public services available to residents.

She said the financial assistance would enable faster implementation of development works across the capital and provide citizens with better transportation facilities, upgraded public infrastructure, and enhanced civic amenities. According to the Chief Minister, the approved projects will play an important role in modernising Delhi's road and transport network while supporting the city's long-term growth.

Seer seeks changes in Ram Temple Trust membership structure

AYODHYA

Amid the ongoing controversy surrounding alleged irregularities in donations made at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Tapasvi Chhawani Peethadishwar Jagadguru Paramhans Acharya on Sunday said he has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking significant changes in the composition of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

According to the Hindu seer, the letter requests the appointment of Uttar Pradesh Chief

Minister Yogi Adityanath as a lifetime member of the Trust while also recommending the inclusion of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat as a trustee.

The appeal comes at a time when the temple trust has been facing scrutiny following reports of alleged financial irregularities related to donations.

Speaking about the contents of the letter, Jagadguru Paramhans Acharya said it had been sent on behalf of several religious leaders, saints, and followers of the Sanatan Dharma.

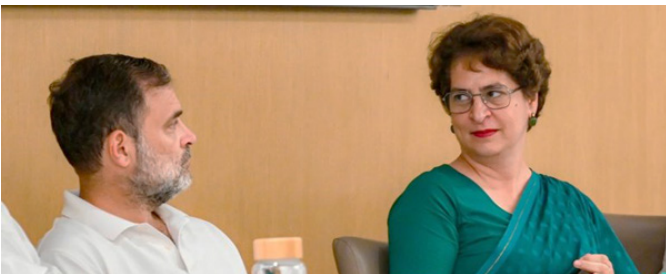
BJP hits out at Gandhis over Wayanad

NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday launched a scathing attack at Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition (LoP) in Lok Sabha and Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi, accusing them of showing lack of empathy over not visiting the landslide-hit Wayanad.

Priyanka Gandhi, who is also a Lok Sabha MP from Wayanad is yet to visit the affected regions in the constituency and express solidarity with the victims, days after the landslide wreaked havoc.

BJP IT Cell chief Amit Malviya taking to X said, SundayDays after the latest Wayanad landslide claimed lives and caused widespread devastation, neither Rahul Gandhi nor Priyanka Vadra has found the time to visit the affected area or meet the victims. Empathy is measured by standing with people in their darkest hour, not just by



showing up before elections. Sunday

SundayJust as conspicuous is the silence of their otherwise vocal ecosystem, Sunday he added.

A landslide occurred at the Anakkampoyil-Meppadi tunnel project site on July 7. As of Sunday, the death toll has risen to eight, with the recovery of a body believed to be that of Vikram Rana, a construction manager.

Both Rahul and Priyanka though expressed their condolences regarding the tragedy; however, neither of them have visited the disaster site yet.

Congress Parliamentarian

and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi is once again missing in action after aggressively pushing the SundayChhatron Ki Goonj Sunday campaign and other issues against the government -- a pattern that has become the hallmark of his politics.

For the past 20 days, Gandhi has remained completely off the radar. He is believed to be on yet another foreign trip, with no public images, no itinerary, and no updates from his usually active social media handles. As the Monsoon Session of Parliament approaches, the question is increasingly getting louder.

Expedite repatriation of Vietnam boat tragedy victims: CM

AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday directed officials to make swift arrangements to bring bodies of three persons who were among 15 Indian tourists who died after a boat capsized in Vietnam.

The Chief Minister reviewed the assistance being provided to the victims of the Vietnam boat accident with officials. According to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), he directed officials to make swift arrangements to bring the victims back to their hometowns.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that Gelle Kishore, who was injured in the accident, is currently undergoing treatment at a government hospital in Vietnam. The CM was informed that his health condition is gradually improving.

The accident occurred



during a leisure trip organised by a mobile phone company for the families of its cell phone distributors in India. One of the tourist boats carrying the group met with an accident near Phu Quoc Island, Vietnam.

The boat was carrying 32 passengers, of whom 15 lost their lives. Among the deceased were three persons from Andhra Pradesh, while another person from the state sustained serious injuries and is undergoing treatment at a hospital in Vietnam.

Officials briefed the Chief

Bomb threat at Mumbai's Taj Hotel declared hoax

MUMBAI

A bomb threat targeting the iconic Taj Hotel in Mumbai triggered a security alarm, prompting police and security agencies to conduct a comprehensive search operation at the premises before declaring that the threat was a hoax, said police on Sunday.

According to officials, the Taj Hotel was placed on high alert after, at around 12:13 a.m., a man called the Navi Mumbai Police Control Room and allegedly claimed, SundayDawood has planted a bomb at the Taj Hotel Sunday. The information was immediately relayed to the Mumbai Police Main Control Room.

Following the alert, teams from the Colaba Police, the Crime Branch, and the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS) rushed to the Taj Hotel and launched an extensive security check. The hotel's main lobby, swimming pool, banquet halls, restaurants, parking area, outer premises, and other sensitive locations were thoroughly searched.

After an exhaustive inspection, police confirmed that no suspicious object or explosive was found on the premises. The bomb threat was found to be a hoax. Technical investigation revealed that the threatening call originated from the Turbhe area of Navi Mumbai. Police have launched a search to identify and arrest the caller based on the mobile number used. Authorities are working with the Turbhe Police to trace and apprehend the suspect.

INTER-STATE BORDER ROW

Tripura initiates fresh dialogue with Mizoram

AGARTALA

Senior officials of Tripura and Mizoram will soon hold talks to discuss the long-pending inter-state border dispute along the 109-km boundary shared by the two northeastern states, officials said here on Sunday.

A senior official said Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha has taken the initiative to revive the dialogue with Mizoram to resolve the long-standing border issue through mutual discussions.



Addressing an official function here on Saturday, CM Saha said he had discussed the inter-state border dispute with Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma during the 73rd plenary session of

the North Eastern Council (NEC) held in Shillong.

SundayWhen I proposed to the Mizoram Chief Minister that we should hold talks to resolve the inter-state border dispute, he

immediately agreed, Sunday CM Saha said.

SundayI suggested that before a Chief Minister-level meeting, senior officials of both states should first sit together and discuss the issue in detail. Thereafter, we can meet and take the matter forward. The Mizoram Chief Minister readily agreed to my proposal, Sunday he added.

The 73rd NEC plenary session was attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER)

Jyotiraditya Scindia, Minister of State for DoNER Sukanta Majumdar, and the Governors and Chief Ministers of all eight northeastern states.

Tripura is surrounded by Bangladesh on its southern, western and northern sides. The state shares an 856-km international border with Bangladesh, accounting for nearly 84 per cent of its total boundary. It also has a 53-km inter-state border with Assam and a 109-km border with Mizoram. The border dispute between Tripura and Mizoram has re-

mained unresolved for several years.

Tensions often surface whenever either state undertakes development or construction work in areas claimed by both sides, with the other state raising objections. In one such incident, unidentified miscreants in May last year hurled moderate-intensity explosives at an under-construction tourism building at Phuldungsei village along the Tripura-Mizoram border in North Tripura district, causing substantial damage to the structure.

QUICK READ

Russia says Ukraine struck tanker in Sea of Azov

MOSCOW

A Ukrainian drone struck a tanker as it was entering the Azov-Black Sea Canal, Yury Slyusar, governor of Russia's Rostov region, said on Sunday. The fire caused by the attack has been brought under control and there was no risk of an oil spill because the vessel was empty, Slyusar said on messaging app Telegram, adding that there were no casualties. The Ukrainian military has recently attacked more than 40 Russian tankers in the Sea of Azov as part of what Ukraine describes as a campaign aimed at disrupting fuel supplies to Russian forces and isolating Moscow-occupied Crimea.

Toronto active shooter incident leaves 5 injured

TORONTO

Five people were injured and two were pronounced dead following an active shooter incident in Toronto on Sunday, according to a police emergency alert on X. Police said officers located five people injured with gunshot wounds. Two victims were pronounced dead at the scene. The conditions of the remaining victims were not immediately known. The shooting occurred in Midtown Toronto during the Salsa on St. Clair festival, an annual Latin festival, according to CTV News. Authorities urged the public to avoid the area and follow all directions from police as the investigation and response continued.

Iraqi prime minister to visit Washington today

BAGHDAD

Iraq's prime minister will visit Washington on Monday to deepen strategic ties with the United States, with oil and gas deals expected to be signed as part of a broader push for economic, trade and investment cooperation. Iraq has been seeking to balance its ties with neighbouring Iran and the U.S. as military escalation between the two rivals continues. The agreements to be signed will include several memorandums of understanding in the oil and gas sector as Iraq prepares to bring in various U.S. companies that will provide momentum to increase oil production capacity, government spokesperson Haider al-Aboudi said. Iraq's state news agency, citing al-Aboudi, said the planned oil and gas agreements would also seek to create alternative export outlets to reduce Iraq's exposure to disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz.

Monster typhoon batters east China

'Typhoon Bavi' triggered mass evacuations, severe flooding, infrastructure damage, and widespread emergency operations across eastern China

WENZHOU

Typhoon Bavi, the strongest storm to hit mainland China so far this year, battered the country's eastern coastline with torrential rainfall and destructive winds before gradually weakening into a tropical storm on Sunday.

Despite losing some intensity after making landfall, meteorologists warned that the massive weather system could continue to bring prolonged and widespread rainfall across eastern and northern China over the coming days, raising concerns about flooding, landslides, and further disruptions.

Chinese authorities launched one of the country's largest evacuation efforts in recent months, relocating more than 2.8 million people



from vulnerable areas, according to figures compiled from state media reports.

Zhejiang Province accounted for over 2.2 million of those evacuations, reflecting the significant threat posed to

one of China's most economically important and densely populated regions.

Officials had not reported any deaths or injuries as of Sunday, suggesting that extensive preparedness measures may have helped reduce the immediate human impact.

Bavi first made landfall in the coastal city of Yuhuan in Zhejiang Province at approximately 11:20 p.m. local time on Sunday before striking Yueqing, a part of Wenzhou city, around midnight. Residents described terrifying conditions as fierce winds battered homes and streets

throughout the night.

Yueqing resident Li Lingxing said the storm's powerful winds were frightening enough to tear roof tiles loose and snap tree branches.

Although accustomed to severe weather because of the city's coastal location, he admitted the intensity of the storm left many residents anxious. Li also pointed to a nearby canal that had overflowed, saying water levels had risen higher than he had ever witnessed, completely submerging what was once a pedestrian walkway.

Malaysia PM's coalition routed by key partner in Johor state poll

KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's coalition suffered a crushing defeat to a key partner in a regional poll on Sunday, raising questions over the strength of the bloc's alliance at the federal level amid talk of an early general election.

While the result in Malaysia's southern Johor state will not directly impact Anwar's majority in parliament, it could deepen strains between Anwar's Pakatan Harapan grouping and the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition - rivals that joined forces to form a government after a hung general election in 2022.

While Pakatan and BN insist their federal partnership can withstand differences at the state level, Anwar said in May he would consider calling a snap poll if internal divisions continued to widen.

BN, the incumbent in Johor, secured a commanding victory on Sunday, winning 48 of 56 state assembly seats, according to the Election Commission's official tally on Sunday. Pakatan won the remaining eight, down from 12 previously.

Hopefully, this win will trigger a blue wave across other states, BN Chairman Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said at a briefing late Sunday, referring to the coalition's banner colour.

The Johor outcome will likely embolden BN, led by the once-dominant United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), and fuel concerns that Anwar's coalition is losing ground among ethnic Chinese voters and reform-minded supporters who helped propel him to power.

Frustration has mounted among progressive allies over the slow pace of promised reforms.

14 nations reaffirm South China sea ruling against claims

TOKYO

A coalition of 14 countries, including Japan, the Philippines, and the United States, has reaffirmed that China's expansive maritime claims in the South China Sea have no legal basis under international law.

The joint statement was issued on Sunday to mark the tenth anniversary of a landmark international arbitration ruling that invalidated Beijing's sweeping sovereignty claims over much of the strategically important waterway.

The statement commemorates the 2016 decision delivered by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, which ruled overwhelmingly in favor of the Philippines in a case challenging China's claims in the South China Sea.

The tribunal concluded that Beijing's extensive claims, often represented by its nine-

The US, UK and 12 other countries renewed support for the landmark arbitration ruling, rejecting China's maritime claims in the South China Sea

dash line, were inconsistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and therefore had no legal foundation.

In their joint declaration, the participating countries emphasized that the tribunal's award remains a significant milestone in the development of international maritime law. They stressed that the decision is final, legally binding, and definitive between China and the Philippines, underscoring the importance of respecting international legal mechanisms for resolving disputes.

The statement was endorsed by Australia, Britain,

Canada, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, New Zealand, the Philippines, Romania, Slovenia, and the United States.

The coordinated declaration reflects growing international concern over rising tensions in the South China Sea, one of the world's busiest maritime trade routes and a region believed to contain significant energy and fishing resources.

Relations between the Philippines and China have remained strained in recent years due to repeated confrontations in contested waters. Manila has accused Beijing's coast guard and maritime forces of carrying out dangerous maneuvers within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, including incidents involving water cannons, vessel collisions, and attempts to obstruct Philippine resupply missions to disputed features.

No evidence of political motive in murder of Widdecombe

HAYTOR

There is no evidence that the suspected murder of former British government minister Ann Widdecombe was politically motivated, police said on Sunday, adding that they were not seeking anyone else after arresting a 28-year-old man.

Widdecombe, 78, was found dead at her home in rural southwest England on Thursday with what police described as serious injuries. Officers arrested a white British man in Rotherham, north-east England, late on Sunday. Police urged the public not to speculate about possible motives while the investigation remains ongoing.

At this point, there is still no information to suggest that this is a terrorism-related incident, and at this point, we are not looking for anyone else in connection with this

murder, Devon and Cornwall Police Assistant Chief Constable Matt Longman told reporters.

Detectives remain open-minded about the potential motive. At this stage, there is nothing to suggest that it was politically motivated. A second suspect arrested on Sunday was later released without charge.

A social conservative, Widdecombe served as a junior minister in John Major's Conservative government in the 1990s. She stepped down as a lawmaker in 2010 but later joined Nigel Farage's Reform UK as its immigration and justice spokesperson.

Two serving British members of parliament have been murdered in the last decade. Labour lawmaker Jo Cox was shot and stabbed by a Nazi-obsessed attacker during the Brexit campaign in 2016.

US Democrat Ro Khanna detained by Israeli settlers

TURMUS AYYA

U.S. Democratic lawmaker Ro Khanna said he was detained by Israeli settlers armed with U.S.-made rifles during a West Bank visit this week that he cast as an unfiltered look at the human toll of Israeli occupation as he weighs a 2028 presidential run.

Speaking in a Palestinian village, Khanna said his group's van was surrounded by settlers wielding M4 rifles a day earlier while touring a part of the southern West Bank where residents face frequent settler attacks.

We were at a village that Israeli settlers had destroyed, they had destroyed the school, they had destroyed that village, and we were just looking at it, said Khanna, a progressive lawmaker from California in the U.S. House of Representatives.

And these hoodlums come in with machine guns – M4, an American-made machine gun – and they detain us. They block off the road. And then they call the IDF and the IDF is on their side, not on the side of the Americans, Khanna said, referring to the



Israeli military.

An aide to Khanna who was in the group, Cameron Kasky, said they were held for more than an hour and made appeals to the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem for help. A group of officers who appeared to be police eventually intervened, leading to their release, Kasky said.

The Israeli military said troops and police officers intervened after receiving a report of settlers blocking vehicles near Khirbet Zanuta, a small Palestinian hamlet whose residents were forcibly displaced by violent settler raids following the 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel.

Upon their arrival, the troops dispersed the Israeli civilians and allowed the vehicles to continue on their way, the military said.

Thumbay launches longevity medicine academic programs in UAE

AJMAN

Thumbay Group has signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Switzerland's Geneva College of Longevity Science (GCLS) to introduce the UAE's first structured academic programs in Longevity Medicine, Healthy Ageing, Preventive Healthcare, and Precision Health through the newly established Thumbay Institute of Longevity Medicine.

The partnership brings together GCLS, the world's first higher education institution dedicated exclusively to longevity science, Gulf Medical University's academic excellence, and Thumbay Healthcare's extensive clinical ecosystem. The collaboration aims to advance longevity education, research, innovation, and professional development across the Middle East.

Aligned with the UAE's vision of becoming a global centre for advanced healthcare, preventive medicine, and medical innovation, the initiative positions the country and the wider GCC region at the forefront of emerging



longevity medicine practices.

The Thumbay Institute of Longevity Medicine will launch six internationally developed professional certificate programs in academic partnership with GCLS. The three-month hybrid programs include Clinical Longevity Medicine, Longevity Physiotherapy, Longevity Nutrition, Longevity Fitness, Peptide Medicine, and Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare. Each program is expected to welcome around 100 participants in the initial intake.

Designed for physicians, pharmacists, nurses, physiotherapists, nutritionists, fitness professionals, and allied healthcare practitioners, the courses combine Swiss academic ex-

pertise with Gulf Medical University's faculty, simulation facilities, and integrated Academic Health System.

Participants will receive internationally benchmarked curricula developed by GCLS, supported by global faculty and regional clinical experts, with pathways for further advancement in longevity science.

Dr. Thumbay Moideen, Founder President of Thumbay Group, said the collaboration would bring world-class Swiss academic standards to the UAE and equip healthcare professionals with skills required for the future of medicine.

Dr. Dominik Thor, President of GCLS, highlighted the growing importance of longevity medicine and the need for credible education, clinical standards, and training infrastructure worldwide.

The MoU marks the beginning of a phased partnership, with plans for joint conferences, workshops, symposiums, and expanded academic initiatives. Admissions are open for the 2026-27 batch, with applications available ahead of the September/October 2026 intake at Gulf Medical University.

Venezuela quakes killed 4,333, hurt 16,740: Prez

CARACAS

The death toll from the two earthquakes that struck Venezuela on June 24 has risen to 4,333, National Assembly President Jorge Rodriguez told reporters on Sunday, announcing that the distribution of housing to those affected will begin next week. Meanwhile, 315 of the dead have not yet been identified, the official said. The official tally of injured remained unchanged at 16,740, while 6,462 people have been rescued and about 17,000 have been left homeless. Rodriguez said acting President Delcy Rodriguez will allocate the first 200 homes to those affected next week, but did not give any more details.

Rodriguez also said that 856 buildings were affected, of which 190 either collapsed completely or suffered structural collapse.

NAME CHANGE

I, HAJIRA BANU, W/o. SAMEER AHMED resident of No:178, 1st Floor, Behind Police Station, K G Halli, Arabic College Post, Bangalore – 560045, have changed my name to HAJEERA BANU, vide affidavit dated: 11.07.2026, before Notary CHANDRASHEKAR M, Bengaluru.

IN THE COURT OF THE 2nd ADDITIONAL CIVIL JUDGE AND JMFC AT, DODDABALLAPURA
Crl Misc.No. 172/2026

PETITIONERS: Sri.Manjunatha.K.N S/o Narayanaswamy, Aged about 44 Years, Rst: Kaduru Village, Madure Hobli, Doddaballapur Taluk, Bangalore Rural District. V/S

RESPONDENT: The Tahasildar, Doddaballapura Taluk, Doddaballapura.

PAPER PUBLICATION

The petitioners have filed this petition for grant of death certificate of grandmother of the petitioners by name Smt. Venkataramakka W/o late TKempaniah, who died on 12.06.1996, at Kaduru Village, Madure Hobli, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bangalore.

Whom so ever if any person who are related or interested or dispute date of death of Smt. Venkataramakka may hereby appear in the above said court in person or through pleader duly instructed and able to answer all material 31.07.2026 at 11 AM in question raising in the petition on the day of said court. Take notice that in default of your appearance on the date before mentioned, it will be heard and determined ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of the court on this the 07th day of July 2026.

By order of the Court

Chief Ministerial Officer, 2nd Addl. Civil Judge, Doddaballapura

Advocate for petitioners: Sri.H.C.Manjunatha, Advocate, Doddaballapura

UPDATED POLITICAL STRATEGY

Zelensky proposes replacing PM in major govt reshuffle



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced on Sunday that he has proposed replacing Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko as part of a broader government reshuffle aimed at implementing what he described as an updated political strategy.

The announcement signals another significant change in Ukraine's leadership as the country continues to navigate war-time challenges, econom-

ies recovery efforts, and its international partnerships.

In a statement posted on social media platform X, Zelenskyy praised Svyrydenko for her contribu-

tion and revealed that he had offered her the opportunity to lead a new and important area of relations with one of Ukraine's key international partners.

While the president did not disclose the specific position he has proposed for Svyrydenko, he expressed confidence that the necessary government changes would be approved in cooperation with members of parliament. Zelenskyy emphasized that the restructuring was intended to ensure the successful imple-

mentation of an updated political strategy but did not provide additional details regarding the objectives or scope of the planned reforms.

Svyrydenko was appointed as Ukraine's Prime Minister in July 2025 and has played a prominent role in managing the country's economic policies and international cooperation during a critical period marked by ongoing conflict and reconstruction efforts. Her tenure has included close engagement with

Western allies and international financial institutions supporting Ukraine.

The president also indicated that the planned changes would extend beyond the prime minister's office. He said there would be leadership changes among the heads of Ukraine's law enforcement agencies, suggesting a broader overhaul of key government institutions. However, no names or further details were announced regarding these anticipated appointments.

QUICK READ

Airtel bets big on new digital growth

NEW DELHI

Telecom giant Bharti Airtel is shifting its focus toward financial services, data centers, and cloud technology for its next growth phase. Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal revealed that the company has invested a massive Rs 3.3 lakh crore into digital infrastructure over the past decade. Moving forward, Airtel has committed Rs 20,000 crore to its non-banking finance branch, Airtel Money. Additionally, its data center arm, Nxtra, recently raised nearly Rs 9,500 crore to expand its capacity. Mittal expressed strong confidence in these new areas, stating that these bold choices will secure Airtel's future success.

Swiggy Instamart faces heat over bad food

NEW DELHI

India's food safety regulator, FSSAI, has hit Swiggy Instamart with nine official notices following severe consumer complaints. Shaken customers reported receiving expired, rotten, and contaminated food through the quick-delivery platform. The complaints highlight shocking violations, including rotten organic eggs, spoiled snacks, foul-smelling milk, and even damaged infant food. Furthermore, some items displayed invalid food licenses. FSSAI has demanded a strict explanation and a complete safety report from the company. If Swiggy fails to fix these dangerous storage and quality issues quickly, it will face severe legal action to protect public health.

NTPC invests billions to boost power supply

NEW DELHI

India's top power company, NTPC, has approved a massive investment of over Rs 20,456 crore for its Lara thermal power project in Chhattisgarh. This big expansion will add two new units, increasing electricity production by 1,600 megawatts to help meet the nation's rapidly growing energy demands. As factories expand and cities grow, India's electricity needs are hitting record highs. While green energy is growing, traditional thermal power still keeps the country running. This major funding move ensures energy security for citizens while NTPC continues to balance its power supply with future clean energy goals.

Foreign investors return to Indian stock market

MUMBAI

Global investors are buying Indian stocks again after four months of heavy selling. This July, foreign portfolio investors poured over Rs 15,000 crore into the market, showing renewed faith in India's steady economy and stable currency. This comeback is a huge relief after massive exits between March and June. While overseas investors are still net sellers for the year 2026, their sudden return has boosted market morale. Foreign money is also flowing steadily into Indian bonds. Experts advise local traders to focus on specific stocks while the market gains new strength from this fresh global support.

India's Russian oil imports hit 5.5 billion

India's imports of discounted Russian crude oil surged to an all-time high in June, reaching 4.5 billion euros.

NEW DELHI

India's imports of discounted Russian crude oil surged to an all-time high in June, even as Moscow's overall global energy revenues experienced a slight dip due to softer international market pricing. Reports confirmed that the South Asian nation has firmly secured its position as the world's second-largest buyer of Russian fossil fuels, trailing only behind China.

According to the data, India imported Russian crude oil valued at a staggering 4.5 billion euros during June alone, marking a massive 34 percent increase compared to its May figures. This spike in buying occurred alongside a broader 5.4 percent monthly increase in India's total global oil intake. Local refining giants heavily scaled up their ship-



ments to take full advantage of cheap pricing, with Reliance Industries' massive Jamnagar facility recording a jaw-dropping 150 percent surge in Russian supply. Similarly, state-run Indian Oil Corporation's Paradip refinery saw a 126 percent intake jump, while Bharat Petroleum's Kochi facility and Nayara Energy's Vadinar refinery recorded gains of 83 percent and 45 percent, respectively.

While the booming Indian demand successfully boosted Russia's total crude export volumes by 14 percent, falling global market prices cut deep into the Kremlin's actual

daily earnings. Russia's daily crude oil export revenues fell by 8 percent over the month, landing at 348 million euros per day.

Beyond crude oil, India's total monthly hydrocarbon basket from Russia reached 5.5 billion euros, which also included 488 million euros in refined oil products and 444 million euros in coal shipments. Interestingly, the CREA report also spotlighted India's massive, evolving role in bypassing global trade blocks. Local refineries have been actively converting this raw Russian crude into processed fuels like diesel and jet fuel, exporting 814 million euros worth of finished petroleum products to heavily sanctioning Western nations including the United States, Australia, and the European Union, throughout the month of June.

India launches 3 nation European trade mission

NEW DELHI

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal is set to head a high-level Indian business delegation on an extensive five-day tour of Spain, Belgium, and Finland. The critical diplomatic mission aims to significantly deepen India's economic ties with Europe by securing fresh foreign investments, expanding bilateral trade, and fostering technological innovation.

The elite Indian delegation features top executives from cutting-edge sectors, including advanced manufacturing, clean energy, artificial intelligence, healthcare, and digital technologies. According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the primary goal of this trip is to secure robust business-to-business partnerships and explore unexplored collaborative ventures with European industrial giants.

The official tour will start in Spain on July 13, perfectly aligning with the ongoing Spain-India Dual Year 2026, which celebrates seventy



Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal will lead a high-level business delegation to Spain, Belgium, and Finland to boost investments and deepen European trade ties.

years of successful diplomatic relations. Goyal will participate in a major business roundtable in Madrid alongside top corporate leaders. Discussions will focus on automotive engineering, semiconductors, and tourism. Major Spanish firms like Iberdrola and Talgo already operate in India, while Indian tech giants like TCS and Infosys are actively expanding their footprints across Spain.

On July 14 and 15, the delegation will travel to Belgium to address the India-EU Business Roundtable and the Trade and Technology Council Plenary. Goyal plans to visit the strategic Port of Antwerp to analyze advanced green logistics and resilient supply chain management. Additionally, the minister has scheduled high-stakes, CEO-level meetings with senior executives from the global defense and tech giant Thales Group.

The final leg of the European tour will take the delegation to Finland on July 16 and 17. Goyal will lead the India-Finland Business Roundtable to engage with pioneering Finnish companies specializing in the circular economy, sustainable technologies, and next-generation digitalization. By building these cross-border alliances, India hopes to accelerate its domestic industrial growth while offering European corporations lucrative access to one of the world's fastest-growing consumer markets.

China's rare earth mining operations have heavily poisoned the Mekong River with toxic heavy metals, causing catastrophic downstream destruction.

Toxic Myanmar mines poison Thailand's rivers

NEW DELHI

China's highly lucrative rare earth industry is causing catastrophic environmental destruction downstream, heavily poisoning the vital Mekong River with dangerous heavy metals like arsenic. A detailed investigation reveals that while Beijing has strictly tightened ecological laws within its own borders, it has effectively outsourced its highly toxic mining operations into neighboring countries, devastating Southeast Asian ecosystems.

The sudden shift began following the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, which destabilized civilian rule and allowed

armed ethnic militias to seize control of resource-rich border territories. Chinese commercial firms quickly struck profitable, direct deals with these heavily armed groups, including the United Wa State Army and the Kachin Independence Army. In Kachin State alone, the number of active, unregulated mining sites skyrocketed from roughly 130 in 2020 to well over 370 by the end of 2024, funding ongoing regional civil conflicts while completely bypassing environmental accountability.

By 2023, Myanmar was supplying over 60 percent of China's heavy rare earth imports, which are vital compo-

nents used globally to manufacture electric vehicle motors and wind turbines. Satellite imagery compiled by the U.S.-based Stimson Centre recently identified 833 unregulated mining operations sprawling across the upper Mekong River Basin, featuring 86 massive rare earth processing sites that utilize highly toxic blue tarpaulin leaching ponds. Tellingly, more than half of these destructive installations opened between 2024 and 2026.

The downstream impact has been immediate and terrifying. Official water testing conducted in early 2026 across Thailand's northern Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai

provinces confirmed that arsenic levels completely exceeded legal safety standards across all 23 monitored river sites for the first time in history. These persistent heavy metals including lead, cadmium, and manganese, are now settling deep into mainstream river sediment, contaminating local fish populations and poisoning regional agricultural staples like rice, garlic, and edamame. Regional regulatory bodies like the Mekong River Commission currently lack the legal authority to compel upstream policy changes, leaving millions of vulnerable downstream residents trapped in an escalating health crisis.

Surat-Bilimora line marks India's first bullet train



NEW DELHI

India's long-awaited bullet train service will officially begin operations in phases starting August 15, 2027, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced recently. The highly anticipated Surat-Bilimora section of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail corridor will serve as the country's inaugural high-speed rail route, introducing cutting-edge transit technology to the nation.

The entire 508-kilometer corridor connecting Mumbai and Ahmedabad is being commissioned in progressive stages. This strategic arrangement allows completed segments of the high-speed network to open to the public while construction pushes forward elsewhere. Following the initial launch of the Surat-Bilimora stretch next year, subsequent sections including the Vapi-Surat, Vapi-Ahmedabad, Ahmedabad-Thane, and final Ahmedabad-Mumbai lines, will open consecutively.

The Railway Ministry confirmed that roughly 80 percent of the ambitious flagship project has already been finished. Workers are currently fast-tracking construction to meet the strict phased timeline. Once fully operational, the high-speed line will drastically slash travel times between the two major financial

hubs, boost regional business connectivity, and spark major economic growth along the transit corridor.

Looking beyond the western corridor, Minister Vaishnaw also unveiled the central government's expansive long-term plans to build a nationwide high-speed rail network. He announced three brand-new proposed bullet train corridors centered around Hyderabad, which will connect the city to Pune, Chennai, and Bengaluru. A separate high-speed link connecting Hyderabad directly to Mumbai is also on the drawing board. Vaishnaw emphasized that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to award these three corridors to Hyderabad will completely transform the region's geographic and economic landscape.

Additionally, the minister highlighted a massive, ongoing railway modernization drive taking place under the national station redevelopment programme. As part of this sweeping infrastructure initiative, 261 railway stations across the country are receiving massive upgrades to provide passengers with modern amenities. In Telangana, prominent transit hubs like Secunderabad, Begumpet, and HITEC City are already undergoing heavy transformation to complement the country's high-speed future.

Minister Mandaviya to inaugurate Rs 668-crore ESI infra

NEW DELHI

Union Labour and Employment Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya is set to launch a massive healthcare expansion by inaugurating seven major Employees' State Insurance (ESI) medical projects across India. Valued at approximately Rs 668 crore, these newly built and upgraded facilities are designed to significantly boost the country's medical infrastructure, directly benefiting nearly 53 lakh insured workers and their families nationwide.

The main event will take place at the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) Hospital in Sanathnagar, Telangana. Dr. Mandaviya will physically inaugurate the state-of-the-art Outpatient Department (OPD) Block at the Sanathnagar campus before virtually unveiling six other vital medical facilities situated across various states. Union Minister of State for



Labour and Employment Shobha Karandlaje will also be present.

The new Sanathnagar OPD block is a premium landmark facility built to provide comprehensive outpatient care to over 12.3 lakh insured individuals across core Telangana districts, including Hyderabad, Medchal-Malkajigiri, Sangareddy, Ranga Reddy, and Mahabubnagar. This addition heavily solidifies the regional ESI network, which historically originated in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

The six virtual projects span the length and breadth of the country to target key industrial zones. In the Northeast, an upgraded 200-bedded

ESIC Hospital in Beltola, Assam, will cater to 13.27 lakh beneficiaries across multiple states, including Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh. Meanwhile, a 100-bedded ESIC Hospital in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, a prominent electronics manufacturing hub will offer full-scale ICUs, emergency wards, and advanced labs to over 5.5 lakh local workers.

Additionally, the expansion includes the ESIS Hospital at Rajamahendravaram in Andhra Pradesh, serving over 2.5 lakh beneficiaries. To expand grassroots care, integrated ESI Dispensaries and Branch Offices are opening in Surendranagar, Gujarat, as well as in Kota and Bhawani Mandi, Rajasthan. These primary centers will bring medical consultations, essential drugs, and reliable social security benefits directly to the doorstep of industrial clusters.

CAPS FIXED, EXEMPTION GRANTED

NPPA fixes 39 drug prices, raises anti-rabies cost

NEW DELHI

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has implemented a major pricing shakeup, fixing the retail rates of 39 essential drug formulations while simultaneously raising the price of life-saving anti-rabies immunoglobulin. The extensive regulatory exercise, conducted under the official Drugs (Prices Control) Order, aims to keep vital therapies for diabetes, hypertension, HIV, and heart disease affordable for patients.

According to the official



gazette notification issued following the pricing watchdog's 148th meeting, the retail cost of anti-rabies immunoglobulin has been revised upward by 6.49 percent. The medicine will now cost Rs 119.48 per milliliter, up from its previous rate of Rs 112.19 per milliliter. This upward adjustment follows a prior

decision in March allowing a minor annual price hike for items on the National List of Essential Medicines based on the shifting Wholesale Price Index.

To safeguard consumer interests, the NPPA clamped strict price caps on widely used daily medications. A highly common combination tablet containing amlodipine, bisoprolol, and telmisartan, regularly prescribed to treat severe chronic hypertension, has been capped at Rs 14.74 per tablet. Additionally, a critical triple-combination capsule of clopidogrel, aspi-

rin, and atorvastatin used to prevent sudden heart attacks and strokes will now cost a maximum of Rs 6.37 per capsule. In eye care, the retail price for nepafenac and moxifloxacin ophthalmic solution was finalized at Rs 68.64 per milliliter.

The NPPA warned that any pharmaceutical manufacturer or marketing firm caught charging patients above these newly established caps will face immediate penalties. Overcharging companies will be legally forced to return the excess money alongside hefty interest rates.

In a separate landmark decision, the pricing regulator granted a special five-year price control exemption to Pneubevax 14. Developed by Hyderabad-based Biological E, it is India's first indigenous 14-valent Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Conjugate Vaccine. Because it was developed through domestic research and holds a valid patent, it qualifies for a temporary regulatory holiday to encourage local medical innovation, though the company must still transparently report its market pricing to the government.

FOOTBALL IN INDIA:

The Beautiful Game's Unfinished Journey

Hepsiba.S

The roar of a packed stadium, the thrill of a last-minute goal and the dreams of millions chasing a single ball football has evolved into far more than just a sport. Known as the beautiful game, it has the power to unite people across cultures, languages and generations. While cricket has long dominated India's sporting landscape, football has steadily carved its own identity, inspiring a growing community of players, fans and aspiring professionals.

The journey of football in India is one of resilience, passion and untapped potential. From the historic triumph of Mohun Bagan Athletic Club in the 1911 IFA Shield to the emergence of the Indian Super League, the sport has wit-

nessed remarkable progress despite numerous challenges. Grassroots academies, improved infrastructure and the success of players such as Sunil Chhetri have reignited hope that India can one day establish itself as a formidable footballing nation.

Why does a nation of over a billion people continue to struggle to qualify for the FIFA World Cup? Why do countries with much smaller populations consistently outperform India on the global stage? Is the challenge a lack of talent, inadequate infrastructure, weak grassroots development, limited investment, or the overwhelming dominance of cricket?

The story of Indian football is one of immense potential, inspiring moments and persistent challenges. From its glorious past to its uncertain present and hopeful future,

this information page explores the journey of football in India examining its history, achievements, obstacles and the road that lies ahead. More importantly, it seeks to answer a question every Indian football fan has asked at least once: Can India truly become a footballing nation?

India, traditionally known as a cricket-loving nation, is gradually embracing the beautiful game. From children playing barefoot on neighbourhood grounds to passionate supporters filling stadiums during the Indian Super League, football has steadily built a loyal and growing fan base across the country. States such as West Bengal, Kerala, Goa, Manipur and Mizoram have long celebrated the sport, while its popularity continues to spread to new regions.

Although Indian football has faced challenges such as

limited infrastructure, inadequate grassroots development and the overwhelming popularity of cricket, the sport has shown remarkable progress in recent years. This information page explores the journey of football in India its history, milestones, challenges and future aspirations while highlighting the passion, perseverance and dreams that continue to drive the game forward.

In a discussion with Mr. Xavier Vijay Kumar, a veteran Karnataka football player and football coach, he shared his perspective on the current state of Indian football and the path it must take to compete at the highest level. According to him, India still has a long journey ahead before it can be compared with established footballing nations. While the country possesses immense talent, football continues to compete for atten-

Coaches Say

"Talent exists in every corner of India. The challenge is providing young players with the right opportunities and consistent coaching."

tion in a nation where cricket remains the dominant sport.

He emphasised that grassroots development is the foundation of long-term success. He believes that identifying talent at a young age, investing in qualified coaches and providing consistent training opportunities are crucial to building a stronger football ecosystem. Rather than expecting immediate results, he stressed the importance of patience, continuous effort and a clear long-term vision.

COACH'S PERSPECTIVE

On interviewing Mr. Jayakumar P, Technical Director and Head Coach at Super Park Academy, a 'B' Licensed Coach who recently coached the Karnataka Senior Women's National Team, it became evident that Indian football has made significant progress over the past decade, but the journey towards becoming a global footballing nation is far from complete. Currently leading player development at Super Park Academy, he believes the sport has witnessed steady growth through better professional leagues, improved infrastructure, expanding football academies and stronger youth development programmes.

Despite these advancements, Mr. Jayakumar points out that football continues to remain behind cricket due to the latter's long-standing

popularity, greater media attention, sponsorship and financial support. He believes that India's population alone cannot produce world-class footballers unless young talent is identified early and nurtured through structured grassroots coaching and competitive youth leagues.

According to him, India certainly possesses the potential to qualify for the FIFA World Cup in the future. However, achieving that dream will require sustained investment in grassroots

football, quality coaching, long-term planning and greater support for talented players from rural and economically weaker backgrounds through scholarships and sponsorships. He also advocates for mandatory coaching licences for all football coaches, emphasising that well-qualified coaches are the foundation of developing technically sound players.

ICONS OF INDIA

1. Sunil Chhetri (1984)

Position: Forward

Known For: India's all-time leading goal scorer and former captain. Widely regarded as the face of modern Indian football, Sunil Chhetri has inspired a generation through his leadership, consistency and remarkable goal-scoring record. With over two decades of international football, he has become one of the highest international goal scorers in the history of the game and remains a symbol of dedication and professionalism.



We have to work a lot to achieve success in football. It all begins with grassroots development, and we must continue working consistently to achieve our goals.
—Mr. Xavier Vijay Kumar

Football is played by over 250 million registered players across more than 200 countries.
More than 3.5 billion people worldwide identify themselves as football fans.
India ranks among the world's largest football audiences despite never qualifying for the FIFA World Cup.
The Indian Super League has significantly boosted football's popularity since its launch in 2014.

YEAR		EVENT
1888		Durand Cup
1937		AIFF Formed
1948		India Plays Olympics Barefoot
1951		Asian Games Gold
1962		Asian Games Gold
1996		National Football League
2014		ISL Begins
2022		India Hosts FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup



2. Bhaichung Bhutia (1976)

Position: Forward

Known For: The 'Sikkimese Sniper'. Bhaichung Bhutia was one of India's first internationally recognised footballers. Known for his pace, finishing and leadership, he captained the national team and played a key role in popularising football across the country. His contributions earned him the nickname "The Sikkimese Sniper."

3. I. M. Vijayan (1969)

Position: Forward

Known For: India's Golden Striker. I. M. Vijayan is celebrated for his exceptional dribbling, creativity and finishing ability. A former Indian captain, he was known for scoring one of the fastest international goals by an Indian. His flair and attacking style made him one of the country's most admired footballers.



4. P. K. Banerjee (1936–2020)

Position: Forward

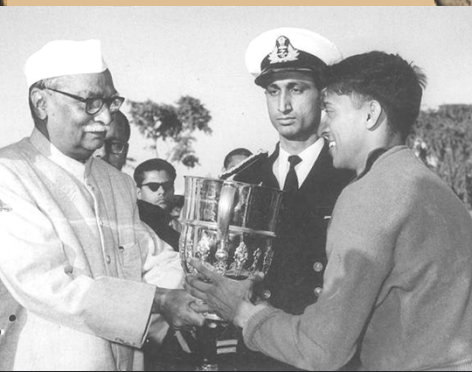
Known For: Architect of India's Golden Era. P. K. Banerjee was one of the greatest players in Indian football history. A member of India's golden generation, he played a crucial role in the country's 1962 Asian Games gold medal victory and later became a highly respected



coach who shaped future generations of players.

Strengthening the Grassroots

Every successful football nation begins with one common factor: a strong grassroots system. Countries such as Spain, Germany and Japan invest heavily in identifying young talent through schools, academies and community football programmes. India must adopt a similar approach by ensuring that children have access to structured coaching from an early age. During the interviews, both Mr. Xavier Vijay Kumar and Mr. Jayakumar P repeatedly stressed that grassroots football is the foundation of future success. Young players require regular competitions, trained coaches and proper facilities if they are to reach professional standards. Expanding grassroots programmes beyond metropolitan cities into rural and semi-urban areas would allow thousands of talented youngsters to showcase their abilities regardless of their financial background.



STREET FOOTBALL

Where Every Dream Begins

Every footballer's journey begins with a simple kick of the ball. Across India, children can be seen playing football on streets, open grounds, beaches and neighbourhood parks, often using makeshift goalposts and limited equipment. These informal games are more than just recreation; they help young players develop creativity, quick decision-making, teamwork and resilience. For many aspiring footballers, street football is the first step towards discovering their passion for the sport. It is here that dreams are born, friendships are formed and the love for football begins to grow.



Building Better Coaches

Players are only as good as the guidance they receive. A technically sound coach can shape not only a player's skills but also their discipline, confidence and understanding of the game.

Coach Jayakumar P, believes that one of the most effective policy changes would be making coaching licences mandatory across all levels of Indian football. Qualified coaches bring scientific training methods, tactical awareness and modern coaching practices that directly improve player development. Continuous certification programmes and exposure to international coaching standards will help create a stronger football culture throughout the country.

A footballer develops through competition. While domestic leagues such as the Indian Super League and the I-League have significantly raised professional standards, greater emphasis must also be placed on reserve leagues, youth championships and state-level tournaments.

Young players need regular, competitive matches rather than occasional tournaments. A structured football calendar will allow athletes to gain valuable match experience while preparing them for higher levels of competition.

Using Sports Science and Technology

Modern football extends far beyond technical ability. Nutrition, strength and conditioning, injury prevention, recovery techniques, performance analysis and sports psychology now play a vital role in player development. Indian academies and clubs should integrate sports scientists, physiotherapists, nutritionists and psychologists into their training programmes. Technology such as GPS tracking, video analysis and performance data can also help coaches monitor player development more effectively. Adopting these methods will enable Indian footballers to compete with international standards.



Changing the Football Culture

Football's growth cannot depend solely on players and coaches. Parents, schools, communities, media organisations and corporate sponsors all have a role to play. Greater media coverage of domestic football, stronger corporate partnerships and increased public engagement can significantly boost the sport's popularity. Encouraging families to view football as a viable profession, rather than merely a recreational activity, will gradually transform India's sporting culture.

DID YOU KNOW?

India qualified for the 1950 FIFA World Cup but did not participate.

The Durand Cup, established in 1888, is Asia's oldest football tournament and one of the oldest in the world.

India won gold medals in football at the 1951 and 1962 Asian Games, marking the country's golden era.

Sunil Chhetri is India's all-time leading goal scorer and among the highest international goal scorers in football history.

India hosted the 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup, which recorded the highest-ever attendance in the tournament's history.

The Indian Super League, launched in 2014, has played a major role in increasing football's popularity across the country.

States like West Bengal, Kerala, Goa, Manipur and Mizoram are considered the heartlands of Indian football.

India has one of the largest football fan bases in the world, with millions following domestic leagues, European football and the FIFA World Cup.

Football is governed nationally by the All-India Football Federation, founded in 1937.

Every Indian footballer's ultimate dream remains the same

SCHOOL FOOTBALL

The First Competitive Stage

Schools play a vital role in introducing children to organised football. Inter-school tournaments and physical education programmes provide young players with their first experience of structured competition. Beyond improving technical skills, school football teaches discipline, teamwork, leadership and sportsmanship. It is also where coaches and scouts often identify promising talent. For many players, representing their school becomes a source of pride and motivation, inspiring them to pursue football beyond the classroom and dream of competing at higher level





Scaloni plays down England clash as 'just a football game'

KANSAS CITY

Argentina head coach Lionel Scaloni sought to defuse the political and historical significance surrounding his side's World Cup semi-final against England, insisting the blockbuster clash was "just a football game."

Alexis Mac Allister handed Argentina an early lead before Dan Ndoye equalised midway through the second half. Switzerland's hopes suffered a major

setback when Breel Embolo was sent off after receiving a second yellow card for simulation.

Argentina capitalised on the numerical advantage in extra time as Julian Alvarez scored in the 112th minute before substitute Lautaro Martinez sealed victory with a late third goal.

The semi-final rekindles one of international football's most intense rivalries, shaped by decades of dramatic World Cup encounters and the long-standing sovereignty dispute over the Falkland Islands, known in Argentina as the Malvinas.

However, Scaloni was determined to keep the focus

firmly on football.

"Look, this is a football game," Scaloni said after the victory. "That's the message. We will be playing against a very tough opponent.

They have an excellent coach, and this is a football game, that's all."

The upcoming encounter comes exactly 40 years after Argentina defeated England 2-1 in the quarter-finals of the 1986 World Cup in Mexico, a match immortalised by Diego Maradona's controversial "Hand of God" goal and his spectacular solo effort, widely regarded as one of the greatest goals in football history.

Since then, the teams have met twice in World Cups, with Argentina winning on penalties in 1998 before England gained revenge in 2002.

Despite progressing to another semi-final, Scaloni admitted his team would need to improve after surviving another demanding knockout contest.

"We won because of our ambition.

We didn't want it to go to penalties. It was more about the desire to win than the quality of our play," he said.

The coach added that reaching the semi-finals was a privilege that should never be taken for granted.



Switzerland slam controversial red card after WC exit to Argentina

KANSAS CITY

Switzerland reacted angrily after Breel Embolo's controversial sending-off in the World Cup quarter-final defeat to Argentina, with coach Murat Yakin describing the decision as a "referee's mistake" that changed the course of the match.

Initially, Argentina midfielder Leandro Paredes was shown a yellow card for a challenge on Embolo. However, following a video review under FIFA's "mistaken identity" protocol, officials concluded Embolo had gone down before any contact was made and instead booked the Swiss striker for simulation.

As Embolo had already been cautioned earlier in the match, the second yellow resulted in his dismissal, leaving Switzerland to play the remainder of the contest with 10 men.

Despite the numerical disadvantage, Switzerland held out until extra time before Julian Alvarez struck in the 112th minute. Lautaro Martinez added a late third to seal Argentina's victory.

Swiss coach Yakin strongly criticised Portuguese referee Joao Pinheiro and the application of the rule.

"We were punished because of a rule that, in my opinion, is completely unacceptable," Yakin said. "The referee made the wrong decision. It was a harmless incident, if it was even a foul. That decision destroyed our game, and it is very painful to be eliminated

Coach says dismissal changed match as Swiss question decisive refereeing intervention completely.

in that way."

Captain Granit Xhaka echoed his coach's frustration, saying the dismissal fundamentally altered the contest.

"I think the red card changed our game. It was very difficult to accept after the match because everyone in the dressing room was disappointed," Xhaka said.

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni acknowledged that the sending-off benefited his side but stopped short of commenting on the referee's decision.

"Luck was on our side because one of their players was sent off," Scaloni admitted.

The incident was only the second use of the "mistaken identity" protocol during the tournament, a rule allowing the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) to intervene when the wrong player has been cautioned.

The decision is likely to intensify scrutiny of officiating after Egypt had earlier questioned refereeing standards following its Round of 16 defeat to Argentina.

FIFA's head of refereeing, Pierluigi Collina, recently defended match officials, insisting their integrity should not be questioned despite criticism surrounding several key decisions during the tournament.

McCullum removed as England Test coach, Bazball era ends

LONDON

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on Sunday sacked Brendon McCullum as England's Test coach, bringing an end to the much-discussed "Bazball" era after disappointing results in the Ashes and the recent Test series defeat to New Zealand. McCullum will, however, continue as England's white-ball coach.

Pressure had mounted on the former New Zealand captain following England's struggles against top sides, with the retirement of Test captain Ben Stokes and off-field controversies further intensifying scrutiny on the team's leadership.

Since taking charge in 2022 alongside Stokes, McCullum transformed England's attacking approach and guided memorable series wins over New Zealand and Pakistan.

However, England failed to win a Test series against In-

dia or Australia during his tenure, with the aggressive "Bazball" philosophy drawing increasing criticism after repeated setbacks against stronger opponents.

England Men's Managing Director Rob Key praised McCullum's contribution despite the decision.

"Some of England's most memorable moments in recent history have occurred under Brendon's leadership. He reshaped the team's mentality and helped develop a new generation of players. He leaves the Test side well placed for the future," the ECB statement said.

McCullum expressed disappointment but accepted the decision.

"I've absolutely loved coaching the Test side and I'm incredibly proud of what we've achieved together. I'm gutted not to continue, but I respect the decision. My focus now is on giving everything I've got to the white-ball teams," he said.

Midfielder starred as Eng overcame Norway to move within 1 win of final.

Bellingham's brace sends England into WC semi-finals

MIAMI GARDENS

Jude Bellingham produced another match-winning performance, scoring twice as England defeated Norway 2-1 after extra time to reach the FIFA World Cup semi-finals for the first time since 2018.

The Real Madrid midfielder struck the equaliser before netting the decisive goal in the third minute of extra time, ensuring England moved within one victory of a place in the World Cup final. The Three Lions, champions in 1966, will now face Argentina in a blockbuster semi-final.

Bellingham's heroics sparked jubilant celebrations among England supporters, who serenaded the 23-year-old with the Beatles' classic "Hey Jude" after the final whistle.

The midfielder now has six goals in the tournament,



drawing level with captain Harry Kane and trailing only France's Kylian Mbappé and Argentina captain Lionel Messi in the scoring charts.

Norway, playing in their first World Cup quarter-final, stunned England in the 36th minute when Andreas Schjelderup fired home after his shot struck the post and bounced into the net.

England responded before half-time as Bellingham finished from close range to restore parity after sustained pressure.

The decisive moment arrived early in extra time when Bellingham once again found space inside the penalty area

and calmly beat goalkeeper Ørjan Nyland to complete the comeback.

Erling Haaland, who entered the match as one of the tournament's leading scorers, was kept scoreless for the first time in the competition by England's disciplined defence. The Manchester City striker also had a second-half goal ruled out after a VAR review found he had committed a foul in the build-up.

Norway coach Ståle Solbakken later revealed Haaland had been substituted because of fatigue and a dead leg.

England manager Thomas Tuchel welcomed the result but admitted he was dissatisfied with his team's overall display.

"The result is fantastic. We're in the last four, but I'm not happy with the performance. I think we can play faster and be more clinical," Tuchel said.

Norway coach questions England equaliser after camera cable controversy

MIAMI

Norway coach Ståle Solbakken insisted the ball struck an overhead camera cable before England scored a crucial equaliser in their World Cup quarter-final, despite FIFA stating that match technology showed no evidence of any contact.

The controversy arose in stoppage time of the opening half when goalkeeper Ørjan Nyland's long clearance appeared to change direction before dropping into the path of England's Elliot Anderson, who initiated the move that ended with Bellingham finding the net.

Norwegian players immediately protested to referee Clément Turpin, arguing that the ball had struck the overhead camera cable. Under FIFA

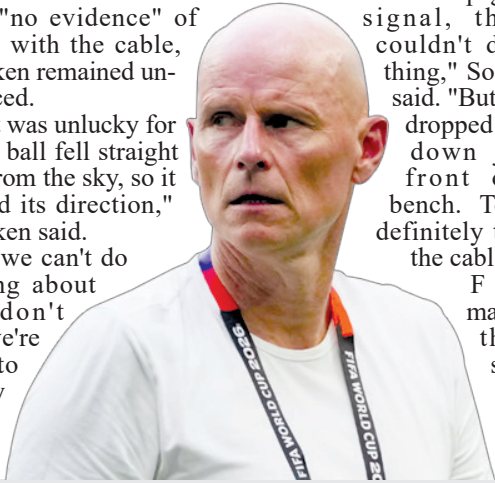
rules, play should have been stopped and restarted with a dropped ball if such contact had occurred.

However, the referee allowed play to continue.

While FIFA later issued a statement saying the chip embedded in the match ball detected "no evidence" of contact with the cable, Solbakken remained unconvinced.

"That was unlucky for us. The ball fell straight down from the sky, so it changed its direction," Solbakken said.

"But we can't do anything about it. I don't think we're going to replay the



game." The Norway coach said he understood why Turpin allowed the goal to stand.

"He told us he didn't see it himself and received no message that it had happened. If FIFA says there was no touch and the chip gave no signal, then he couldn't do anything," Solbakken said. "But the ball dropped straight down just in front of our bench. To me, it definitely touched the cable."

FIFA maintained that the sensor technology, which

has been used throughout the tournament to assist officiating decisions, confirmed there had been no contact.

Despite expressing frustration over the incident, Solbakken accepted that fortune had not favoured his side on the day.

"We can complain and feel most of the margins went against us today. But against Brazil in the previous round, the margins were in our favour," he said.

He also referred to the VAR decision that ruled out what would have been Norway's second goal in the second half, but concluded that such moments are part of football.

"Sometimes you need those margins to beat the world's best teams.

Today, they weren't with us," Solbakken said.

Paolo Maldini named FIGC technical director to rebuild Italian football

ROME

Italian football great Paolo Maldini has been appointed technical director of the Italian Football Federation (FIGC), taking charge of a wide-ranging rebuilding project after Italy failed to qualify for a third consecutive FIFA World Cup.

The appointment was announced by newly elected FIGC president Giovanni Malagò, who described Maldini as his first choice to oversee the federation's technical development over the next four years.

"Maldini has always been my target," Malagò said. "He is the right person to oversee the FIGC's technical sector, which includes not only the senior national team but the entire youth national team structure."

The 58-year-old former AC Milan captain will also serve as president of Club Italia, the body responsible for all Italian national teams across every age group in both men's and women's football.

The dual appointment gives Maldini overall responsibility for sporting decisions within the federation, making it an unprecedented role in Italian football.

Former AC Milan and Paris Saint-Germain sporting director Leonardo will work alongside Maldini as his adviser.

Maldini's immediate priority will be restoring the fortunes of the Azzurri, who have endured one of the darkest periods in their history despite winning the UEFA

European Championship in 2021. Italy has now failed to qualify for the last three FIFA World Cups, raising serious concerns about the country's football development system.

Another pressing task will be appointing a new head coach following Gennaro Gattuso's resignation after Italy's defeat to Bosnia and Herzegovina on penalties in the European play-offs for the 2026 World Cup.

Former Italy coach Antonio Conte, who recently left Napoli after two seasons, has emerged as one of the leading candidates for the position.

Maldini enjoyed one of the most decorated playing careers in football history, spending his entire professional career with AC Milan.



McGregor suffers freak knee injury in comeback defeat to Holloway

LAS VEGAS

Conor McGregor's long-awaited return to the UFC ended in heartbreak after the former two-division champion suffered a freak knee injury during the opening minute of his bout against Max Holloway at UFC 329.

The contest lasted little more than a minute before referee Mike Beltran stopped the fight, awarding Holloway a first-round technical knockout after McGregor was unable to continue.

The defining moment of the contest has since gone viral on social media, with fans analysing slow-motion footage that appears to show McGregor injuring his right knee while landing awkwardly after attempting a jumping kick in the opening

exchanges.

Although McGregor initially continued fighting, his movement immediately appeared restricted. Seconds later, he stumbled while throwing a left hand and struggled to put weight on his right leg as Holloway advanced.

Rather than launching an attack, Holloway noticed his opponent was injured and gestured towards McGregor's compromised leg. Beltran quickly intervened after observing that the Irish fighter could no longer support himself properly, bringing the contest to an immediate end.

The footage has sparked widespread debate online, with many believing McGregor's knee gave way the instant he landed from the jumping kick. Others specu-

lated he may have entered the contest carrying an injury, although no official evidence has supported that claim.

McGregor later dismissed the speculation in a post on X, insisting he had entered the Octagon in peak condition.

"I was so sharp and so ready for this fight. I cannot believe what has happened," he wrote.

"The talk of me being off while walking into the fight is nonsense. I was calm, ready and confident. I am in shock at what has taken place." The 38-year-old also vowed to recover and return to competition.

"I will overcome this. I will not be deterred. I will return," he said.

The injury marks another cruel setback for McGregor,



whose previous UFC appearance in 2021 also ended prematurely after he suffered a broken leg against Dustin Poirier.

For Holloway, the victory came under unfortunate circumstances, while for McGregor, the latest injury raises

fresh questions about his future in mixed martial arts. Instead of the triumphant comeback many had anticipated, UFC 329 will be remembered for a freak accident that abruptly halted one of the sport's most high-profile returns.

FIFA to examine 64-team WC expansion for 2030, says Infantino

ZURICH

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has confirmed that football's world governing body will explore expanding the FIFA World Cup to 64 teams for the 2030 centenary edition, saying the tournament must reflect the global nature of the sport rather than remain dominated by Europe and South America.

Infantino described the ongoing 48-team format at the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico as a "100 per cent success" despite initial criticism over its expanded size.

"It is definitely an issue that will be examined and discussed in the relevant committees after this World Cup," Infantino said.

The FIFA chief reiterated that the World Cup should provide opportunities for nations across all continents. "The

World Cup is for the whole world, not just Europe and South America. Every nation should be allowed to dream of participating," he said, adding that football standards are improving worldwide.

Ironically, the semi-final line-up of the current World Cup features four traditional powerhouses — England, Spain, France and Argentina — despite the expanded competition offering more places to emerging nations.

The 2026 tournament introduced a 48-team format with 12 groups of four teams. The top two teams from each group, along with the eight best third-placed sides, advanced to the Round of 32.

A 64-team World Cup would likely feature 16 groups of four teams, with the top two progressing directly to the knockout stage.

Harshit, Varun ruled out; Prince, Bishnoi named as replacements

Hamstring injuries force changes to India's squads for England ODIs and Zimbabwe T20Is

BIRMINGHAM

India suffered a double injury setback on Sunday with young pacer Harshit Rana and veteran leg-spinner Varun Chakravarthi ruled out of their upcoming international assignments due to hamstring injuries, prompting the selectors to draft in Prince Yadav and Ravi Bishnoi as replacements.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) confirmed that Rana sustained a Grade 1 hamstring injury during the third T20I against England at Trent Bridge. The 24-year-old will miss the three-match ODI series against England and has been directed to report to the BCCI Centre of Excellence (COE) for further assessment and rehabilitation.

Prince Yadav has been named as Ra-

na's replacement and will join the Indian ODI squad in England ahead of the series.

Chakravarthi's injury is more serious, with MRI scans revealing a Grade 2 hamstring tear sustained during the same match.

The experienced spinner has been ruled out of the upcoming three-match T20I series against Zimbabwe later this month and will also report to the COE for treatment.

The 35-year-old's recovery is expected to take considerably longer, with Grade 2 hamstring injuries typically requiring several months of rehabilitation, raising questions over his immediate international future.

Ravi Bishnoi has been recalled to replace Chakravarthi in the Zimbabwe-bound squad despite enduring a difficult

outing in the second T20I against England at Old Trafford, where he conceded 29 runs in the 17th over, a spell that proved decisive in India's defeat.

The changes leave India with two fresh faces ahead of back-to-back white-ball assignments as the team looks to maintain momentum despite the injury concerns.

Shubman Gill will lead the ODI squad in England, with Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Jasprit Bumrah and Kuldeep Yadav among the key players.

The Zimbabwe T20I squad, led by Shreyas Iyer, also features young talents Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Mayank Yadav and Prabhsimran Singh as India continues to build depth across formats.



Patten, Heliovaara retain Wimbledon men's doubles crown

Top seeds edge Pavic and Arevalo in two tiebreaks to defend Wimbledon title successfully.



LONDON

Top seeds Henry Patten of Britain and Harri Heliovaara of Finland successfully defended their Wimbledon men's doubles title with a 7-6(4), 7-6(3) victory over Mate Pavic and Marcelo Arevalo in a high-quality final on Centre Court.

The world No. 1 pairing secured their third Grand Slam title together, adding another Wimbledon triumph to the crown they first won in 2024 and the Australian Open title captured last year.

The championship match was an intense contest dominated by powerful serving, with neither pair able to earn a single break point throughout the encounter. As a result, both sets were decided by tiebreaks, where Patten and Heliovaara held their nerve to emerge victorious.

Heliovaara's sharp volleying and aggressive net play, combined with Patten's accurate serving, gave the top seeds a commanding 4-1 lead in the opening tiebreak. Although sixth seeds Pavic and Arevalo narrowed the gap after Patten produced a double fault, the British-Finnish duo stayed composed to clinch the first set. The second set fol-

lowed a similar pattern, with all four players holding serve comfortably. Patten and Heliovaara came closest to breaking at 4-4 and again at 5-5, pushing their opponents to duce on both occasions, but Pavic and Arevalo resisted to force another tiebreak.

A volley into the net from Arevalo handed Patten and Heliovaara an early advantage before Patten fired down a crucial ace to make it 3-0. The lead proved decisive as the top seeds wrapped up the title without allowing their opponents back into the contest.

Receiving a standing ovation from the Centre Court crowd, both champions struggled to contain their emotions during the trophy presentation.

"These are the moments you've always dreamed of, playing on Centre Court at Wimbledon. Doing it twice is unbelievable," Heliovaara said, thanking Patten for being "the best partner in the world."

Patten also used the occasion to voice his support for doubles tennis, saying the discipline should be promoted rather than reduced, adding that the final demonstrated the excitement and value doubles brings to the sport.

Gaud savours Lord's glory after maiden Test five-for

LONDON

India pacer Kranti Gaud described her maiden five-wicket haul in Test cricket and a place on the iconic Lord's Honours Board as one of the proudest moments of her career after her superb spell put India in a commanding position against England in the one-off women's Test.

The 22-year-old produced outstanding figures of 5/37 as England were bowled out for 170 in reply to India's first-innings total, handing the visitors a commanding 115-run lead. India strengthened their grip on the match by reaching 154/1 in the second innings at stumps on Day Two, extending the overall lead to 269 runs with Smriti Mandhana unbeaten on 69.

"It is a completely different feeling for me. I am very proud to be the first woman to get my name on the Lord's Honours Board. It is a proud moment for my family," Gaud said after play.

The young fast bowler revealed that claiming a five-wicket haul at the 'Home of Cricket' had been one of her biggest ambitions before the match.

"Every player dreams of taking a five-wicket haul. Since it was our first Test at Lord's, I was thinking if I could take five wickets, get my name on the board and also help the team win," she said.



Gaud's milestone wicket came courtesy of a brilliant catch by Shafali Verma. Lauren Bell edged a delivery that was initially parried by Sneha Rana at slip before Verma reacted brilliantly to complete a one-handed catch.

"I had a feeling throughout the day that I would end up taking five wickets. When the catch went up, I lost sight of the ball, but then it looked like Shafali had taken it. My teammates asked me to wait for the replay before celebrating," Gaud recalled.

She added that although she had previously claimed a six-wicket haul in a One-Day International against England, her maiden Test five-for carried special significance.

Gaud also credited England's seam-friendly conditions for complementing her bowling style.

ORGANISERS REVISED NINTH STAGE ROUTE AFTER EXTREME TEMPERATURES TRIGGERED RED WEATHER ALERT

Heatwave cut Tour de France stage by 30 km

BERGERAC

Organisers of the Tour de France shortened ninth stage by 30 kilometres after French weather authorities issued a red alert for an intense heatwave, prioritising rider safety while retaining the original start and finish locations.

The stage from Malemort to Ussel, initially scheduled to cover 185.5 km, was raced over a reduced distance of 155.5 km following changes to the route through the Corrèze department.

In a statement issued, organisers said the decision was taken after Météo-France placed the region on its high-est weather warning level because of exceptionally high temperatures.

Under the revised plan, the race left the original route during the neutral zone before taking the D921 road, traveling directly from Brive-la-Gaillarde to Lanteuil, approximately 147.8 km from the finish in Ussel. The alteration allowed the peloton to avoid the hottest sections of the original course while preserving the competitive nature of the stage.

Race organisers said the start in Malemort and the finish in Ussel remained un-



changed despite the reduced distance.

Officials stated that government departments, local authorities, emergency services, security personnel, civil protection organisations and volunteers had coordinated efforts to ensure the stage proceeded safely under the challenging weather conditions.

The decision came as Western Europe continued to grapple with one of its most severe heatwaves in recent years. June had been recorded as the warmest on record across the region, contributing to a rise in heat-related deaths and disrupting infrastructure and public services.

France had already experienced significant impacts from the soaring temperatures, with several nuclear reactors reducing electricity output because river water used for cooling

had become too warm.

Cycling's governing bodies and race organisers had increasingly faced the challenge of adapting major events to extreme weather conditions, including intense heat, storms and wildfires, as climate-related disruptions became more frequent.

The revised stage remained an important test in the battle for the yellow jersey. Defending champion Tadej Pogacar of Slovenia, a four-time Tour de France winner, retained the overall race lead after Saturday's eighth stage and entered the shortened stage as the general classification leader.

Although the reduced distance eased the workload slightly, the extreme temperatures continued to test the riders' endurance, hydration and tactical discipline throughout the stage.

India retain core squad for Asian Games hockey challenge

NEW DELHI

India retained the core of its successful women's hockey team, naming a largely unchanged 20-member squad for the Asian Games in Japan as it targets a gold medal and direct qualification for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Regular captain Salima Tete will continue to lead the side at the 20th Asian Games, scheduled to be held in Aichi-Nagoya from September 19 to October 4, after guiding India to the FIH Nations Cup title in New Zealand last month.

The triumph not only restored India's place in the elite FIH Pro League but also rein-

forced the team's credentials heading into the continent's biggest multi-sport event.

Chief coach Sjoerd Marijne expressed confidence in the squad, saying it offered the right blend of youth and experience.

"We have a group in which there is a nice balance between juniors, experienced players and seniors who are constantly working to get the best out of each other," Marijne said after the squad announcement.

Veteran goalkeeper Savita, who was recently honoured with the Padma Shri, retained her place alongside Bichu Devi Kharibam as India's two custodians.

Noskova overcomes nerves to win maiden Wimbledon title

LONDON

Linda Noskova overcame a dramatic lapse in concentration to defeat fellow Czech Karolina Muchova 6-2, 5-7, 6-3 and capture her maiden Wimbledon women's singles title in a gripping all-Czech final at the All England Club.

The 21-year-old ninth seed looked set for a comfortable victory after dominating the opening stages of the match. She raced through the first set in just 32 minutes and stormed into a 5-2 lead in the second, appearing only moments away from lifting her first Grand Slam trophy.

The championship clash marked the first Grand Slam singles final in the professional era contested between two Czech women.

With victory in sight, however, Noskova was struck by nerves. She squandered five match points as Muchova staged a remarkable fight-back, saving three at 2-5 before surviving another when Noskova double-faulted while serving for the title.

Muchova then saved a fifth match point at 4-5 and reeled off five consecutive games to snatch the second set 7-5.

The momentum had completely shifted as Centre Court came alive, with the experienced 29-year-old forcing the contest into a deciding set after appearing well beaten.

Noskova, however, regrouped impressively. Putting the disappointment behind her, she rediscovered the aggressive baseline game that had carried her through the tournament and quickly established control of the decider.

The youngster surged into a 5-2 lead before Muchova delayed the inevitable by winning another game. Asked to serve for the championship for a second time, Noskova showed far greater composure.

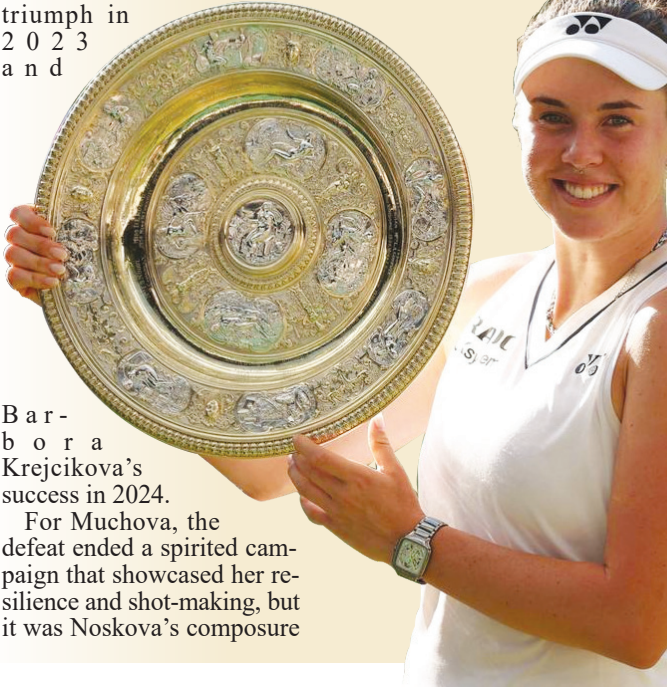
She earned two more championship points and sealed victory with an unreturnable serve, before collapsing to the grass in relief and celebration after securing

the biggest triumph of her career.

The victory gave Noskova her first Grand Slam singles title and continued the recent dominance of Czech women at Wimbledon. She became the third Czech champion in four years, following Marketa Vondrousova's triumph in 2023 and

after her second-set collapse that ultimately proved decisive.

The title is expected to mark the arrival of Noskova as one of the leading stars of women's tennis and could signal the beginning of a new era for the young Czech.



Barbora Krejickova's success in 2024.

For Muchova, the defeat ended a spirited campaign that showcased her resilience and shot-making, but it was Noskova's composure

DOMESTIC RIVALRIES FUEL INDIA'S ATHLETICS BOOM

BENGALURU

Indian athletics is witnessing an unprecedented surge in performances, with fierce domestic rivalries pushing athletes to new heights and helping rewrite national records across multiple disciplines ahead of the Commonwealth and Asian Games.

From sprinting and pole vault to long jump and javelin, healthy competition between emerging stars has created an environment where athletes constantly strive to outperform one another, raising overall standards in the sport.

The most captivating duel is between India's fastest sprinters, Gurindervir Singh and Animesh Kurj. Guided by British coaches James Hillier and Martin Owens respectively under the Reliance high-performance programme, both athletes have transformed Indian sprinting into one of the country's most exciting disciplines.

Their rivalry has already produced India's first sub-10.10-second 100m perfor-



mance, with both sprinters now targeting the elusive 10-second barrier. Their coaches believe the mutual respect between the pair only strengthens their competitive spirit.

A similar story has unfolded in men's pole vault, where Dev Meena and Kuldeep Yadav have elevated a once-overlooked event. The duo has repeatedly broken the national record, pushing it to 5.46 metres while also securing Commonwealth Games qualification.

The women's long jump has witnessed an equally dramatic rise. Ancy Sojan recently erased Anju Bobby George's long-standing national record with a leap of 6.88 metres, while her rivalry with Shaili Singh has become one of Indian athletics' defining contests. Young talents Mubassi-

na Mohammed and Moumita Mondal have further deepened competition in the event.

In men's long jump, Murali Sreeshankar has returned strongly from injury with a season-best 8.38m, while Shahnavaz Khan, Lokesh Sanyanathan and David P. Solomon have consistently crossed the eight-metre mark, creating unprecedented depth.

Even the javelin throw, long dominated by Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra, has become increasingly competitive. Rohit Yadav's personal best of 87.05m has established him among the world's leading throwers while acknowledging Chopra's influence in inspiring a new generation.

The season has already witnessed 27 national records, including five at the National Inter-State Championships alone, highlighting the rapid progress of Indian athletics.

With young stars such as Pooja Singh, Sarvesh Kushare and decathlete Tejaswin Shankar also producing breakthrough performances, India heads into the Commonwealth and Asian Games with renewed confidence.