



# 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

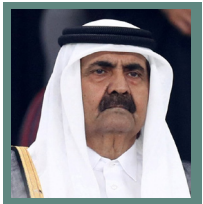
The Father Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, has died at the age of 74, says the Amiri Diwan.

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."

# 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.

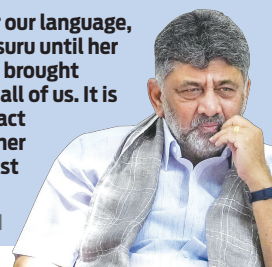
## She was second to none: Ilaiyaraaja

**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

Sullia man booked under POCSO act for assault

**Sullia**  
A man was booked under the POCSO Act for allegedly sexually assaulting a minor girl in Karnataka's Sullia. The accused, a neighbour and acquaintance of the victim, allegedly took advantage of their familiarity and brought her to his house multiple times between June and July, according to reports. Police have registered a case and initiated an investigation into the allegations. The accused faces charges under provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. Authorities are examining evidence and recording statements as part of the probe. Officials said further updates would follow after completion of the ongoing investigation.

Mangaluru Head Post Office extends from today

**Mangaluru**  
The Mangaluru Head Post Office will introduce extended service hours from July 13, offering evening postal banking facilities to customers. The move aims to provide greater convenience for the public by allowing access to services beyond regular working hours. The extended evening service will not be available for SAS and MPKBY agents, officials said. The initiative is expected to benefit account holders requiring postal banking services after normal office timings. The head post office authorities have made arrangements for the new schedule and urged customers to utilise the facility. Further details regarding timings and services can be obtained from officials.

Temple protection campaign in Hebri on July 16

**Hebri**  
A campaign to protect the Ananthapadmanabha Temple in Hebri will be held on July 16, seeking measures to safeguard the temple structure during the proposed land acquisition for the national highway. The temple is located on 56 cents of land in survey number 69/13, of which 13 cents has been notified for acquisition by the National Highways Authority. Organisers will submit a memorandum to officials after a procession from the temple to the Hebri taluk office at noon. Devotees have been urged to participate in large numbers to support the "Save Temple" campaign.

Heavy vehicles damage Tudukuru roads, residents seek action

**ALDUR**  
Heavy vehicle movement has caused damage to concrete roads in Tudukuru village near Aldur, with residents urging authorities and contractors to take immediate steps to prevent further deterioration. The issue has emerged due to the frequent movement of heavy lorries transporting construction materials for the ongoing construction of the B.R. Ambedkar Girls' Residential Hostel in Tudukuru village. The project is being developed with an estimated budget of ₹22 crore, requiring regular transportation of materials through the village roads. Residents said that continuous movement of heavy trucks, especially during the rainy season, has resulted in cracks and damage to the concrete roads inside the village. They expressed concern that the condition of the roads could worsen if heavy traffic continues without restrictions. DSS district unit coordinator Tudukuru Yogesh urged the concerned departments and contractors to address the issue immediately. He suggested that construction materials should be transported using lighter vehicles until the end of the monsoon season to reduce pressure on village roads. According to local residents, the roads were constructed to support regular village traffic but were not designed to withstand frequent movement of heavily loaded lorries. The ongoing rains have further weakened the road surface, making repairs more difficult and costly.

# Doctors' selfless service vital for healthy society, says Minister U.T. Khader

Minister U.T. Khader praises doctors' selfless service, calls healthcare professionals pillars of a healthy and compassionate society

**UDUPI**  
Karnataka Health and Family Welfare Minister U.T. Khader said doctors play an invaluable role in building a healthy society by dedicating their lives to public welfare and saving countless lives through selfless service. He was speaking at the Second Annual Doctors' Day programme organised by the Health Commission of the Udupi Diocese at Ave Maria Hall of Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Udupi on Sunday. Khader said every doctor has the ability to bring meaningful change to society and



carries the responsibility of providing quality healthcare while respecting the dignity of every patient. Describing the medical profession as one of the most noble and respected fields, he urged doctors to take a more active role in cre-

ating awareness among people about healthy food habits and preventive healthcare. Chief guest Dr. H.S. Ballal, Pro-Chancellor of Manpal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), said greater efforts should be made to support underprivileged and economically weaker sections through accessible education and healthcare facilities. He highlighted MAHE's initiatives aimed at providing affordable medical services, including concessional treatment through its Health Card scheme. Presiding over the event, Udupi Diocese Bishop Dr.

Leslie Clifford D'Souza said medicine is not merely a profession but a sacred service to humanity. He appreciated doctors for their dedication and round-the-clock commitment to patient care, calling them a vital pillar of society. As part of the programme, a new Dental Care Unit and Diabetes Screening Centre at Goretta Hospital, Santhekatte, established by the Health Commission of the Diocese, were inaugurated. ECG machines were also provided to two healthcare institutions. Former Joint Director of the Department of Health and Family Welfare Dr. Jacinta

D'Souza delivered the keynote address. Dr. Ballal also launched the 2027 Manpal Arogya Suraksha Card Registration Campaign and honoured directors, coordinators and resource persons for their contributions. The event was attended by Bishop Emeritus Dr. Gerald Isaac Lobo, Chancellor Fr. Stephen D'Souza, health department officials, priests, medical professionals and other dignitaries. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Ren Dais, Secretary of the Health Commission.

## Siddapura irrigation project awaits approval amid farmer distress

**SHIVAMOGGA**  
The Siddapura irrigation project in Karnataka has hit a roadblock as it continues to await government approval for completion, leaving thousands of farmers deprived of the promised irrigation benefits. Shivamogga MP B.Y. Raghavendra has expressed concern over the prolonged delay and urged authorities to take steps for the project's early completion. The project, which was planned to provide a reliable water source for agricultural activities, has reportedly secured necessary clearances but remains stalled due to pending government approval. Farmers in the region have been waiting for years to receive the benefits expected



Siddapura irrigation project awaits government approval, delaying water benefits for thousands of Shivamogga farmers despite completed clearances

from the irrigation initiative. Raghavendra highlighted that despite the project reaching an advanced stage, administrative delays have prevented it from becoming fully operational. He stressed that com-

pleting irrigation projects on time is essential for supporting farmers, improving agricultural productivity and ensuring better water management. The MP said that the delay has affected farming communities who were expecting improved irrigation facilities. He urged the state government to resolve procedural hurdles and provide the required approvals so that construction and implementation activities can move forward. Irrigation projects play a crucial role in Karnataka, particularly in regions dependent on seasonal rainfall. Farmers often face challenges due to irregular monsoon patterns, making assured water supply systems important for crop cultivation and rural economic stability.

Local farmers have also sought swift action from authorities, stating that the completion of the project would significantly improve agricultural prospects and provide long-term benefits to villages dependent on farming. Officials and public representatives are expected to review the pending issues and work towards obtaining the necessary approvals. Farmers hope that government intervention will help remove the hurdles and bring the Siddapura project back on track at the earliest. The project's completion is being viewed as a key requirement for strengthening irrigation infrastructure and supporting the livelihoods of farming communities in the region.

Udupi pineapple farmers struggle amid falling crop yields

**UDUPI**  
Pineapple growers in Udupi district are facing severe challenges as declining crop yield, rising input costs and unfavourable weather conditions affect production and income. Farmers said delayed rainfall and prolonged sunny weather have caused a significant fall in pineapple output during the crucial harvesting period. According to growers, pineapple cultivation usually provides yield throughout the year, but production during May and June has declined by around 30 percent this season. Farmers in Kundapura, Bynoor and Karkala regions, where pineapple cultivation is widespread, have been hit by the setback. The shortage of water due to delayed rains has affected fruit development, resulting in smaller and shrivelled pineapples. Farmers said such fruits receive poor demand in markets, increasing their financial burden.

## Lok Adalat settles bank loan case on humanitarian grounds

**CHIKKAMAGALURU**  
A mega Lok Adalat held by the Chikkamagaluru District Legal Services Authority witnessed a landmark settlement where a bank loan recovery case involving a specially-abled person was resolved on humanitarian grounds. The outstanding loan amount of more than ₹8 lakh owed to Canara Bank was settled for just ₹15,000 after judicial intervention and discussions between the bank officials, legal authorities and the borrower. The settlement was praised as an example of compassionate justice. The case involved a specially-abled individual facing severe physical and financial difficulties. Canara Bank had filed a special execution petition seeking recovery of the pending loan amount. However, due to the person's medical condition and economic hardship, participating in regular court proceedings had become extremely difficult. Understanding the sensitiv-

ity of the matter, Chikkamagaluru Principal District and Sessions Judge Ravindra Hegde personally intervened in the case. Considering the borrower's physical limitations, officials moved beyond regular procedures and met the individual at the front office of the District Legal Services Authority. The judge, bank regional manager and legal team held discussions with the borrower directly and assessed the challenges faced by the individual. Following the negotiations, Canara Bank officials agreed to waive a major portion of the outstanding dues and accepted a settlement amount of ₹15,000. The successful resolution highlighted the role of Lok Adalats in providing accessible and affordable justice, especially for vulnerable sections of society. The process demonstrated that legal services are not limited to strict

enforcement of laws but also focus on fairness, empathy and social responsibility. The settlement proceedings were attended by Principal District and Sessions Judge Ravindra Hegde, District Legal Services Authority Member Secretary V. Hanumanthappa, Chikkamagaluru Advocates' Association President B.M. Lakshman Gowda, pre-litigation counsellors, panel advocates and officials from Canara Bank. The case has emerged as a notable example of how alternative dispute resolution mechanisms can bring relief to individuals facing financial distress while ensuring a balanced solution for all parties involved.



## MLA Mantar Gowda inaugurates Chikkar bridge project

*₹60 Lakh Chikkar Bridge inaugurated in Somwarpet, boosting rural connectivity and development across Kodagu villages*

**SOMWARPET**  
A newly constructed bridge at Chikkar village in Somwarpet taluk of Kodagu district was inaugurated by MLA Dr. Mantar Gowda, improving connectivity for residents of surrounding villages. The bridge, built at a cost of ₹60 lakh, has been constructed on the Chikkar village road connecting Gowdalli, Chikkar and Koogoor areas under the limits of Gowdalli Gram Panchayat. The facility is expected to provide safer and smoother transportation for villagers, motorists and farmers. Speaking after the inauguration, MLA Mantar Gowda said that around ₹8 crore has been allocated for various rural development works in the region. He said several infrastructure projects are being planned to improve road connectivity and basic facilities in villages. He informed that ₹4.25 crore has been sanctioned under a progressive road development programme for the Gowdalli-Chikkar-Hirikara-Beetikatte road. The road work is expected to begin within the next one and a half months, he added. The MLA appealed to residents to cooperate with road development projects by voluntarily providing neces-

sary space wherever required. He said wider roads would benefit future generations and contribute to the overall growth of villages. Gowda pointed out that several villages in the Shanthalli hobli area have already developed wider roads with the cooperation of local residents. He appreciated the public support and encouraged people to continue contributing towards local development initiatives. Highlighting the importance of agriculture, the MLA said farmers are the backbone of the country and providing them with necessary infrastructure and facilities is the responsibility of elected representatives. He assured that efforts would continue to identify local needs through village visits and bring government funds for development projects. The inauguration programme was attended by Chikkar Village Development Committee President Sunil, Block Congress President B.B. Satish, senior Congress leader Koogooru Jayappa and other party workers and local residents. The completion of the bridge is expected to benefit daily commuters, improve rural connectivity and support economic activities in the surrounding areas.

PRC ROW ESCALATES

## PRC notification sparks political clash between BJP and Congress

**MADIKERI**  
A political war of words has erupted between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress in Kodagu district over the state government's recent notification regarding the issuance of Permanent Resident Certificates (PRC). Leaders from both parties held separate press conferences on Saturday and expressed opposing views on the policy. While BJP leaders criticised the notification, Congress leaders defended it, stating that it would help genuine citizens obtain necessary documents. Senior BJP leader K.G. Bopaiah alleged that issuing

permanent resident certificates under the new notification was unconstitutional. He urged the Election Commission of India to examine the matter seriously and demanded that the state government withdraw the notification immediately. Bopaiah claimed that the authority to issue such certificates does not rest with Tahsildars and warned that the policy could potentially benefit illegal immigrants by helping them enter voter lists and access government schemes. He urged the Centre to take action against what he described as an unconstitutional move. BJP Kodagu district president Ravi Kalappa also crit-



icised the notification, alleging that the state government was interfering in the voter list revision process for political gains. He said com-

plaints had already been submitted to the Election Commission and the central government, and a similar complaint would be filed with the district election officer. Meanwhile, Kodagu Congress district president Dharmaja Uthappa defended the move, stating that genuine Indian citizens without proper documentation should not be denied permanent resident certificates. He suggested that the process should be made available at the gram panchayat level to help eligible residents. Uthappa said illegal immigrants should not receive such certificates, but questioned why genuine citizens

living in India should be deprived of them. He alleged that many eligible voters across different states had been excluded from electoral rolls due to lack of documents. Congress leaders argued that the notification would help ensure that no eligible citizen loses voting rights. They questioned the objections raised by BJP and sought clarity from the Election Commission on the authority and procedure for issuing PRCs. The controversy has intensified the political debate over voter verification, citizenship documentation and electoral processes in Karnataka.

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 Mohamad 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.

FARMERS' LEGAL WIN

Ramanagara Lok Adalat settles farmers' compensation cases

**RAMANAGARA**  
A significant victory for local farmers unfolded as the National Lok Adalat successfully resolved 48 long-standing land compensation disputes. After years of legal struggle, farmers affected by power grid installations in the region were granted a collective settlement of Rs 2.21 crore, which includes a 35 percent increase in their original compensation packages. The dispute dates back to 2019, when Power Grid NM Transmission Mission Limited installed towers and wires

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

Hunsur municipal council launches massive pedestrian clearance drive

HUNSUR

In a decisive move to reclaim urban public spaces, Hunsur Municipal Commissioner Manas M. announced that a comprehensive footpath clearance operation will be conducted continuously across the city. Speaking to reporters shortly after launching the high-visibility enforcement drive, the Commissioner emphasized that the administration would aggressively pursue the clean-up initiative without succumbing to any outside political or commercial pressure. The targeted operation aims to ensure the completely unhindered movement of pedestrians while transforming Hunsur into a highly organized, clean, and beautiful city. Acting directly in accordance with long-standing Supreme Court directives on public safety and urban management, the municipal health department had issued a final 48-hour warning to local businesses and street vendors over the weekend. Following the expiration of that grace period, municipal workers deployed heavy machinery, including JCB earthmovers, to dismantle illegal roadside structures blocking walking spaces.

The enforcement teams successfully cleared major bottlenecks across high-traffic zones, including the Old Bus Stand, Santhemala, and various busy market bazaar roads. Shopkeepers who had extended their storefronts outward by installing unauthorized iron display stands, hanging

Hunsur Municipal Commissioner Manas M. has launched an aggressive, continuous citywide operation to clear illegal encroachments, ensuring unobstructed pedestrian access and enforcing strict urban zoning regulations.

nameplates, or placing fast-food counters directly on the tarmac were forced to retract their operations. Furthermore, the Commissioner issued a strict warning specifically targeting mobile pushcart vendors, stating that they are now entirely prohibited from parking permanently in single locations to run business stalls. To prevent the city's visual pollution and structural decay, the municipality also tore down dozens of unauthorized commercial billboards and plastic plexi-boards put up by private firms. Backing the civic initiative, a large contingent of administrative officials remained on-site to oversee the clearance process. The enforcement team included Environmental Engineer Soumya, Senior Health Inspectors Shashi, Lokesh, and Krishnagowda, along with dedicated municipal workers and personnel from the local police department. The Commissioner reiterated that repeat offenders who refuse to comply with the zoning laws would face immediate, severe legal prosecution and hefty financial penalties.

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.

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.

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

Ugrappa demands resignations over Ayodhya scam

**KARWAR**  
Senior Congress leader V.S. Ugrappa has demanded the immediate resignation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, and Yogi Adityanath following corruption allegations within the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerthakshetra Trust. Addressing the media, Ugrappa labeled the recent arrests and trust resignations as proof of a massive scam. He criticized the central leadership's silence, insisting they must accept moral responsibility. Ugrappa accused the BJP of exploiting religious sentiments for political gain while ignoring widespread corruption. He urged a thorough investigation, calling on the government to uphold constitutional values and prioritize integrity over using faith for campaigning.

Thousands Of Liters Asphalt Spill In Karwar

**KARWAR**  
A serious environmental incident occurred at Baitkol port when thousands of liters of hot asphalt leaked directly into the sea. The spill happened during the unloading process from the Marine Fluid ship, which had arrived from the Middle East carrying material for the Ali-garh-based MACL Company. Officials stated that a sudden pressure spike caused a loading pipe to burst, dumping the thick, hot bitumen into the water. The ship's crew worked for several hours to contain the damage and repair the line. Authorities are now assessing the impact of this spill on local marine life.

Javed Hussain Havaladar wins Sahitya Ratna

**GOKAK**  
Renowned teacher and litterateur Javed Hussain Havaladar has been honored with the prestigious state-level 'Sahitya Ratna' award. The accolade was presented in Gokak, Belgaum district, by the Suvarna Karnataka Press Association and the Karnataka Sahitya and Cultural Foundation. This recognition celebrates Havaladar's significant contributions and achievements within the field of literature. The award ceremony featured prominent guests, including MLA Ramesh Jarkiholi and various distinguished scholars. Following the announcement, many local leaders and colleagues extended their heartfelt congratulations to Havaladar for this major milestone. His dedication to writing continues to inspire many aspiring authors across the entire state.

VAYOSHREE YOJANA DRIVE

MP Karajola distributes devices under Vayoshree Yojana

**CHITRADURGA**  
In a move to honor the elderly, Member of Parliament Govinda M. Karajola inaugurated a special distribution drive at the SSKS Community Hall. Under the central government's 'National Vayoshree Yojana,' thousands of state-of-the-art medical devices were provided to senior citizens, aiming to restore their independence and ensure they lead lives filled with dignity and self-respect. Addressing the audience, MP Karajola emphasized that our culture views the elderly as sacred. He noted that Prime



Minister Narendra Modi is deeply committed to the welfare of senior citizens, which has led to increased funding for the Senior Citizens Welfare Department. "These are not

just devices, they are symbols of self-reliance," the MP stated, explaining that age-related disabilities often prevent the elderly from affording essential items like hearing aids,

glasses, or walking sticks. The initiative is a significant boost for the district, where roughly 1.70 lakh senior citizens reside. In this phase, 986 beneficiaries across Chitradurga, Hiriyur, Challakere, and Holalkere taluks received 4,471 pieces of equipment, valued at approximately Rs 84.84 lakh. The MP assured that beneficiaries in the remaining taluks, Molakalmuru and Hosadurga, would receive their aid shortly. Furthermore, he highlighted the 'Elder Line' (14567), a helpline providing health, legal, and social support for those in need. District

officials also shared that from 2022 to 2026, the central government has distributed over 10,000 devices to nearly 3,900 beneficiaries in the district, totaling an investment of Rs 3.60 crore. R. Shivanna, Chairman of the District Guarantee Scheme Implementation Authority, praised the program as a vital lifeline for those struggling with physical challenges. He also urged families to cherish their elders, expressing concern over the rising trend of senior citizens being left isolated as younger generations migrate for work.

MLA Harish Gowda Orders Immediate Irrigation Upgrades As Rain Fails

HUNSUR MLA G.T. HARISH GOWDA LAUNCHED EMERGENCY WATER RELEASE OPERATIONS TO ADDRESS SEVERE AGRICULTURAL DISTRESS AND DROUGHT.

HUNSUR

Responding to an acute deficit in seasonal rainfall, Hunsur MLA G.T. Harish Gowda launched emergency water management operations at the Hanagodu dam, built across the Lakshman Theertha river in Hanagodu Hobli. The local lawmaker offered traditional prayers alongside community leaders and Harangi division engineers before officially opening the sluice gates to divert river water into parched agricultural canals.



Hunsur has faced a severe lack of precipitation this season, which significantly delayed the river's initial flow. Though rainfall has slowed further over the past three days, the recent storage build-up allowed officials to finally

release water into the network. MLA Gowda strictly instructed the irrigation department engineers to prioritize filling the region's drying public ponds and lakes first to sustain livestock and ground aquifers. Addressing concerns regarding heavily silted canals that block water flow, Gowda revealed that the state government has released an emergency relief fund of Rs 20 lakh to jump-start desiltation work. He admitted that a lack of adequate department fund-

ing had severely hampered maintenance, but promised that immediate corrective measures would be taken on both banks. Moving forward, the administration will activate all 14 local surface irrigation projects simultaneously to pump water across the taluk's lake network. The MLA also issued a stern directive to Harangi Executive Engineer K.M. Asha and Assistant Executive Engineer Naveen regarding structural issues at the Hanagodu dam. Locals pointed out that

a massive buraga tree has damaged a section of the structure, causing the retaining wall stones to slip out of alignment. Furthermore, a lack of riverbed maintenance over several years has allowed dense jungle growth to overtake the lower basin, turning it into a dangerous habitat for tigers and leopards. Gowda ordered the engineering team to immediately draft and submit a formal repair proposal to build a fortified retaining wall and clear the wildlife-infested brush.



Gadag Savita Samaj honors Krishna Patil's leadership

GADAG

The Gadag District Savita Samaj has officially recognized the efforts of Youth Congress District President Krishna Gowda H. Patil, celebrating his first year of "pro-people" leadership. In a formal ceremony held this week, community leaders lauded Patil for his unique, compassionate approach to governance and his commitment to addressing the needs of the district's most vulnerable populations.

Krishna H. Hadapada, District President of the Savita Samaj, praised Patil for his humility and accessibility, noting that true leadership is defined by how one interacts with the common person. Unlike many who become distant after gaining influence, Patil has earned a reputation for being a dedicated, hands-on representative. Community members described him as a "rare humane leader" who does not just offer promises but provides on-the-spot solutions for those in distress.

Following in the footsteps of the late cooperative leader K.H. Patil and his father, Minister H.K. Patil, Krishna Gowda Patil has made social service a cornerstone of his tenure. Over the past year, he has spearheaded several initiatives designed to uplift the region. His work includes organizing extensive free health and surgical camps that have provided life-saving care to those who cannot afford private medical treatment. Additionally, his "Green Gadag" campaign has seen thousands of saplings planted to improve the local environment.

Education and youth empowerment also remain high priorities for his office. Patil has personally adopted students from backward communities who were at risk of dropping out due to financial constraints, ensuring their path to knowledge remains open. Furthermore, he has facilitated free skill development training, providing young people with the tools to achieve self-reliance and secure better job opportunities.

Senior leaders, including Hanumanthappa Rampura and Dalit movement representative S.N. Bellary, expressed profound respect for his dedication. They highlighted that seeing such maturity and commitment in a young politician is a sign of a brighter future for the district. As Patil marks his first year, the Savita Samaj and various social activists have expressed their continued support, wishing him long life and further success in his political career.

'BHADRA RESERVOIR WATER RESERVED FOR CONSUMPTION ONLY'

SHIVAMOGGA

A lack of monsoon rainfall has triggered a severe water crisis across Karnataka, forcing authorities to take drastic measures at the Lakkavalli Bhadra reservoir. To prevent an impending drinking water shortage, the district administration has issued an official order prioritizing the remaining water stocks exclusively for human consumption, a move that has left local farming communities deeply anxious.

Following directives from the Water Resources Department and the Mysore Regional Commissioner, Chikkamagaluru District Commissioner Bhanwar Singh Meena confirmed that irrigation releases will be restricted. Officials acknowledge the hardship this imposes on farmers who rely on canal water, but they maintain that the measure is an "inevitable" step to secure the region's water supply if the current dry spell persists. The data behind this decision is stark.

The Bhadra reservoir has a maximum capacity of 186 feet, allowing for a total storage of 71,535 TMC. However, as of July

10, the water level plummeted to just 146 feet, with only 31.257 TMC of usable water stored. In sharp contrast, the reservoir held 56.794 TMC of water at a height of 173.7 feet during the same period last year.

Current inflows into the reservoir are recorded at 13,123 cusecs. To maximize conservation, the administration has capped the total outflow at a minimal 218 cusecs.

Of this, a mere 50 cusecs are directed to the left bank canal and 10 cusecs to the right bank canal, while about 6 cusecs are lost to evaporation.

With the monsoon failing to provide the usual replenishment, the administration's focus has shifted entirely to sustainability. The district is bracing for potential drought conditions, and officials are urging the public to exercise caution regarding water usage.

For now, the priority remains clear:

ensuring that the taps do not run dry for the residents of the region, even as the agricultural sector faces a challenging season ahead due to the restricted water supply.

Congress cannot tolerate OBC leader: Vijayendra

MYSURU

BJP State President B.Y. Vijayendra has launched a sharp attack against the Congress government in Karnataka, accusing the party of harborings deep-seated prejudices. While addressing a meeting of Kayaka communities in Mysuru, he claimed that the Congress party simply cannot tolerate a leader from a backward community serving as the Prime Minister of India.

Vijayendra alleged that the Congress is consistently opposing Prime Minister Narendra Modi based on caste politics. "The Congress cannot stomach the fact that a man from a very backward community has risen to the highest office in the nation," he stated. He further accused the state government of practicing

dangerous appeasement policies, claiming these actions have led to a rise in violence against Hindus across the state. He labeled the current administration as "narcissistic" and incapable of protecting the interests of the majority.

The BJP leader also leveled serious charges against the government regarding immigration and citizenship. He claimed that the state is issuing permanent residence certificates to illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, an act he insists is beyond their legal jurisdiction.

"It is the central government that confirms citizenship, not the state government," he asserted, vowing that the BJP is determined to unseat the current administration.

Haveri legal initiative settles crore-rupee disputes

HAVERI

The National Lok Adalat held across Haveri district concluded as a massive success, resolving a significant volume of disputes and bringing financial relief to thousands of citizens. Bira-dar Devindrappa N., the Principal District and Sessions Judge and Chairman of the District Legal Services Authority, announced that out of 1,65,379 pending and pre-litigation cases, an impressive 1,19,014 matters were successfully settled. The total

value of these settlements reached an astounding Rs 45.19 crore.

The breakdown of the proceedings reveals the wide impact of this initiative. Within the district's courts, 6,028 cases had been identified as pending, and of these, 4,565 were resolved, resulting in settlements worth Rs 20.61 crore. The pre-litigation sector saw even higher participation, out of 1,59,351 cases targeted for resolution, 1,14,449 were settled, totaling Rs 24.57 crore in agreements.



## 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.

## 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.

## UCC is as necessary as the Constitution: Roy

## KOLKATA

Member of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) drafting committee in West Bengal and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Tathagata Roy on Sunday underlined that the proposed law is Sundayas necessary as the Constitution, while attacking the previous Trinamool Congress government for Sundayfavouring Sunday Muslims.

During an interaction with IANS, Roy said: SundayWhen our Constitution was implemented and prepared, Article 44 itself states that the state shall endeavour to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC). So, how can the question arise now about how necessary the UCC is? It is as necessary as the Constitution itself. Sunday

The former Tripura Governor expressed his gratitude upon being appointed as a member of the drafting committee for the UCC in West Bengal, saying: SundayI did not ask anyone to include me in the committee. The Chief Minister (Suvendu Adhikari) felt it was appropriate and included my name, and I am grateful for that. Sunday

Launching a harsh critique on the previous Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government, Roy said: Sunday-The previous state government spread confusion and misconceptions. Trinamool Congress had no ideology or principles. Their only aim was to remain in power by any means and, during this period, extract as much money as possible, from people's pockets and from the government Treasury and fill their own pockets. That was their sole objective. Sunday

SundayTheir only formula to remain in power was to ensure 100 per cent of the Muslim votes, which is why it gave all kinds of benefits to the Muslims. Even in the OBC list (made by the Trinamool government), I think 80-85 names were that of the Muslims, Sunday he alleged.

The BJP leader added: SundayThey (Trinamool Congress) were so much engulfed in power that they turned into Muslims, setting aside the Hindu religion.

## 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

ashing 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, Sunday Padhee 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.

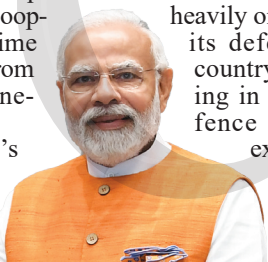
SundayWhile governments and policies in many countries have changed over the past few years, India has established global trust through political stability, policy continuity, and economic strength. India has maintained its stability amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, global conflicts, and economic challenges,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

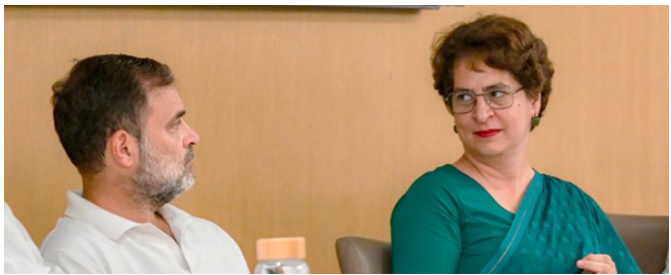
# BJP hits out at Gandhis over Wayanad

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

Minister that the Indian Embassy in Vietnam has appointed an agency to transport the mortal remains of the deceased to their hometowns. The process of handing over and transporting the mortal remains has already commenced. Officials explained that arrangements have been made to transport the tourists who survived the accident back to their hometowns by flight on Sunday.

It was disclosed that the relevant mobile service provider has arranged the flight tickets for them. The CM instructed officials of Andhra Pradesh Bhavan in New Delhi to provide all necessary assistance until the affected individuals return safely to the country and the process of transporting the mortal remains is completed.

He directed officials to coordinate with the Indian Embassy there regarding the transportation process.

# 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.

## 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, northern 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.

## 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.

## 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

## Zelensky proposes replacing PM in major govt reshuffle

KYIV



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-

ic recovery efforts, and its international partnerships.

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

tions during her tenure, thanking her for what he described as clear, steady, and effective leadership. He also acknowledged her years of service within Ukraine's government

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 North-east, 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

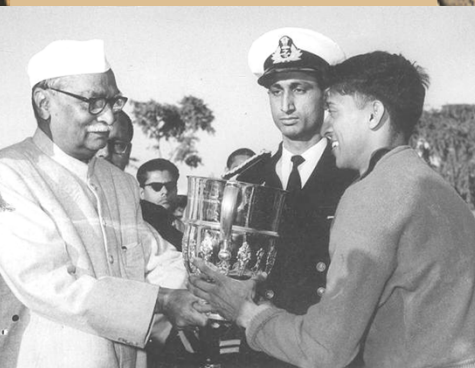
**Known For:** Architect of India's Golden Era. P. K. Banerjee was one of the greatest players in Indian football history. A member of India's golden generation, he played a crucial role in the country's 1962 Asian Games gold medal victory and later became a highly respected



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 highest 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 Satyanathan 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.

