



QUICK READ

Mother, stepfather held for forcing 15-year-old into prostitution

Bengaluru

According to police officials, the disturbing incident was uncovered during an operation conducted by Chandralayout police. Investigations revealed that the girl's mother and step-father were directly involved in sending the minor to engage in illegal activities through a middlewoman. Police said the accused used to take the girl in their car every day and drop her at the house of the middlewoman. There, the minor was allegedly forced to meet customers and remained at the location until evening. The girl reportedly faced repeated exploitation by clients arranged through the intermediary. During the investigation, officers learned that the middlewoman fixed a price ranging from ₹6,000 to ₹10,000 for customers who sought time with the minor.

₹80 cr worth govt land reclaimed in anti-encroachment drive

Bengaluru

Authorities removed encroachments from approximately 13 acres and 20 guntas of government land during the operation. The land, located in and around Itakalpura village in Yelahanka taluk of Bengaluru Urban district, had reportedly been illegally occupied for some time. The eviction drive was conducted by the district administration along with revenue officials and local authorities. Officials stated that the operation was part of ongoing efforts to identify and recover government properties that have been unlawfully encroached upon. During the clearance process, structures and other illegal developments on the land were removed, enabling officials to take back possession of the property.

Residents, Hotels opt for alternative cooking methods amid LPG crunch

Bengaluru

The shortage of LPG cylinders in several parts of Karnataka, particularly in Bengaluru, has disrupted normal cooking operations in homes, restaurants and large hotels. As the supply of cylinders struggles to keep pace with demand, many consumers are now exploring alternative cooking solutions to ensure uninterrupted food preparation. Electric induction stoves have emerged as one of the most preferred alternatives. Retailers and appliance dealers in the city report a sharp increase in demand for induction cooktops over the past few weeks. Many households and food businesses see induction stoves as a reliable backup option when LPG cylinders are not readily available.

Midnight Warehouse Break-In Leads to Arrest of Burglar

BENGALURU

Police arrested a 28-year-old man after a suspected burglary at a storage warehouse on the city's industrial outskirts. According to investigators, security alarms triggered shortly after midnight alerted guards, who noticed a broken side door and called authorities. Officers arrived within minutes and found the suspect hiding behind stacked crates inside the building. Police say several boxes containing electronic equipment had already been moved near the exit,

‘Stop misusing domestic LPG for commercial purposes

The crackdown comes as part of the govt’s effort to prevent misuse of subsidised cylinders

BENGALURU

According to the department, officials have conducted large-scale seizure operations in multiple districts, targeting establishments that were illegally using domestic LPG cylinders meant for household consumption.

The crackdown comes as part of the government’s effort to prevent misuse of subsidised cylinders and ensure that domestic LPG supplies reach genuine household consumers.

In Bengaluru, officials carried out raids in several areas and seized a significant number of cylinders. In Peenya, authorities confiscated 45 domestic LPG cylinders that were reportedly being used for commercial activities. Similarly, in Chikkajala, officials seized as many as 209 cylinders during the inspection drives. The department stated that these cylinders were being used illegally by businesses instead of authorised commercial LPG cylinders.

The enforcement drive also extended to other districts. In



Yadgiri district, officials seized 46 domestic LPG cylinders that were being misused for commercial purposes. In Shivamogga and Davanagere districts, authorities continued their inspections and seized three cylinders in Shivamogga and 13 cylinders in Davanagere.

Meanwhile, in Kolar district, officials conducted a raid on an illegal LPG refilling unit operating in the KGF area. During the raid, authorities discovered that domestic cylinders were being illegally refilled and redistributed. A case has been registered against the individuals involved in the operation.

Officials said that all such violations are being treated seriously, and strict legal action is being initiated against offenders. Cases have been registered under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, and further investigations are underway to identify other illegal operations.

The department has urged businesses and individuals to strictly adhere to LPG usage regulations and avoid using domestic cylinders for commercial purposes. Authorities warned that enforcement drives will continue across the state, and anyone found violating the rules will face stringent penalties under the law.

K’taka govt steps in to help stranded foreign tourists

Due to ongoing geopolitical tensions and disruptions caused by the global conflict, international flight operations between several countries have been affected. As a result, many foreign tourists visiting Karnataka are facing difficulties returning to their home countries. Some travellers are also worried about the expiry of their visas

and other travel-related complications. Responding to the situation, Karnataka Tourism Minister H.K. Patil assured that the state government is prepared to assist foreign



visitors in every possible way. He stated that the department will provide guidance and necessary support to tourists facing visa management issues or other travel challenges. “Our department is ready to extend all required assistance to foreign guests, including help with visa management and resolving travel-related concerns,” the minister said. The move is aimed at ensuring that tourists visiting the state do not face unnecessary distress during the ongoing global uncertainty.

LPG shortage puts K’taka hotel industry in crisis

Hotel operators across the state say the shortage of LPG cylinders has disrupted daily cooking operations, which are essential for running food businesses. Many hotels depend heavily on a steady supply of commercial LPG cylinders for preparing meals throughout the day. However, due to the current shortage, several establishments are finding it



difficult to maintain regular services. Industry representatives warn that if the supply situation does not improve soon, some hotels may be forced to temporarily shut down. Without adequate fuel for cooking, preparing food items becomes nearly impossible, affecting both small eateries and large restaurants. The crisis has also created anxiety among workers employed in the hotel sector. Thousands of employees depend on hotels and restaurants for their livelihoods. If businesses are forced to close due to the cylinder shortage, many workers could lose their jobs, leading to financial hardship for their families.

New Smart Traffic System to Ease Congestion

BENGALURU

Bengaluru has launched an advanced smart traffic management system aimed at reducing congestion across some of the city’s busiest corridors.

The initiative, introduced by the Bengaluru Traffic Police in partnership with the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), uses artificial intelligence and real-time data to optimize traffic signals and monitor road conditions.

Officials say the system has already been activated at major junctions including Silk Board Junction and KR Puram Junction—two locations known for heavy traffic during peak hours. Cameras and sensors installed at these intersections will track vehicle flow and automatically adjust signal timing to reduce waiting time.

Authorities believe the project could cut average travel delays by up to 20 percent if fully implemented citywide. Commuters have welcomed the move but stress that better public transport and stricter traffic rule enforcement are still needed to address Bengaluru’s growing mobility challenges.

State approves ₹4,824 cr investment for 37 new Industrial projects

BENGALURU

The projects are expected to significantly boost industrial growth in the state and generate large-scale employment opportunities.

According to Minister for Large and Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development M.B. Patil, the approved projects are likely to create around 14,525 new jobs across various sectors.

The projects cover a wide range of industries including IT infrastructure, sugar manufacturing, technical textiles, compressed gas production, aerospace, jewellery manufacturing, electronics, software development and the construction of a five-star hotel. These investments are expected to strengthen Karnataka’s industrial ecosystem while promoting regional economic development in multiple districts.

Among the major projects approved is Bagmane Constructions Private Limited’s ₹494.65 crore investment for the development of IT infrastructure. Another significant proposal includes a ₹443.50 crore sugar factory project by Karnataka Bangaru Sugars. Clene Pax has received approval for a ₹376 crore tech-



nical textiles manufacturing unit, while Trishul Buildtech and Infrastructure will invest ₹300 crore in the construction of a five-star hotel.

In addition, Troutt Grass will establish a compressed gas production unit in Mudhol with an investment of ₹257.77 crore. Tsuyo Manufacturing will set up a unit to manufacture electric vehicle motors and controllers with an investment of ₹250 crore, further strengthening the state’s push toward clean mobility and advanced manufacturing.

The committee also approved 22 major large and medium industrial projects involving investments exceeding ₹50 crore each. These projects alone will bring in investments worth ₹3,908.68 crore and are expected to create employment opportunities for about 12,475 people.

Additionally, 15 new indus-

trial projects with investments ranging between ₹15 crore and ₹50 crore have been approved. These projects will attract investments of ₹350.60 crore and generate around 1,750 jobs.

Two expansion projects involving additional investments of ₹565.03 crore were also cleared during the meeting. These projects are expected to create employment opportunities for around 300 people.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary of the Commerce and Industries Department Dr. N. Selvakumar, Industries Development Commissioner Gunjan Krishna, Karnataka Udyog Mitra Managing Director Doddabasa-varaju and other senior officials. The approvals are part of the state government’s efforts to attract investment and strengthen Karnataka’s industrial development.

Bapuji Seva Kendras now offers caste, income certificate services

BENGALURU

The initiative aims to make essential administrative services more accessible to people living in rural and remote areas. With this move, residents will no longer need to travel long distances to Nadakacheris to apply for important certificates and documents.

Under the new arrangement, applications for caste certificates belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) can now be submitted directly at Bapuji Seva Kendras operating at the gram panchayat level. The decision is expected to simplify procedures and reduce the time and effort required for citizens to obtain official documentation.

Authorities said applicants must visit the nearest Bapuji Seva Kendra with the necessary supporting documents to apply for the certificates. The required documents include a ration card, Aadhaar card, voter ID card and school transfer certificate. Applicants may also submit a family lineage document issued by the village accountant, though this is optional.



For those applying for an income certificate, additional documents such as a salary slip or proof of income tax payment must be provided. Officials said these documents help verify the applicant’s eligibility for the certificate. The process involves multiple verification steps to ensure authenticity. After the application is submitted at the Bapuji Seva Kendra, the Village Accountant will conduct a local verification and prepare a report based on the applicant’s details and documents.

Following this, the report will be forwarded to the Revenue Inspector for approval. Once the verification process is completed and approved, the official certificate will be issued to the applicant.

Officials stated that the initiative will significantly benefit rural communities by improving accessibility to government services and reducing administrative delays.

KSRTC relaxes rules for compassionate appointments

BENGALURU

According to the new circular issued by the corporation (No. 1749), the definition of “family” has been expanded to ensure that more eligible dependents of deceased employees can benefit from compassionate appointments.

The decision aims to remove earlier ambiguities in the recruitment process and provide fair opportunities to families facing financial hardship after the death of an employee.

One of the key changes in-



roduced in the circular is the removal of restrictions based on marital status. Earlier, there were limitations on the eligibility of certain family members depending on whether they were married or unmarried. Under the revised rules, dependent daughters or sisters of the deceased employee will be eligible for compassionate appointments regardless of their marital status.

This means that unmarried, married, divorced or widowed daughters and sisters of deceased KSRTC employees can now apply for jobs under the compassionate appointment scheme. The move is expected to benefit many families where female members depend on the deceased employee for financial support. However, the corporation has clarified that the applicants must have been fully dependent on the deceased employee during their lifetime. They must also have been residing with the em-

ployee at the time, which will be a mandatory condition for eligibility.

To verify this requirement, applicants must submit a residence certificate issued by the concerned Tahsildar. The certificate must confirm that the candidate had been living with the deceased employee during their lifetime. KSRTC officials will consider this document during the recruitment process to verify the claim of dependency. The decision to amend the rules was taken during the KSRTC board meeting held on February 7, 2026.

GET SET TO BEAT THE HEAT

Heatwave grips parts of K’taka, mercury crosses 40°C

BENGALURU

According to weather officials, the northern districts of Karnataka are experiencing extreme heat conditions.

Districts such as Kalaburagi, Bidar and Yadgir have reported temperatures exceeding 40°C, placing the region under conditions similar to a “red alert.”

Meteorologists have warned that hot and dry winds, commonly known as “loo,” are likely to blow during the afternoon hours,



increasing the risk of heat-related illnesses.

Authorities have also issued an alert regarding the ultraviolet (UV) index, which is ex-

pected to exceed level 10 between 12 pm and 3 pm. Experts caution that exposure to such intense ultraviolet radiation can cause significant harm to the

The approved projects are likely to create around 14,525 new jobs across various sectors, says MB Patil.

skin and may lead to various health problems if proper precautions are not taken.

The combination of high temperatures, dry air and strong sunlight has made the heat wave particularly severe this season. Residents across the state have been advised to remain cautious, especially

during peak afternoon hours when the intensity of heat and UV radiation is at its highest.

Health and weather departments have issued a set of safety guidelines to help people protect themselves from the scorching conditions. Citizens are advised to avoid stepping out unnecessarily between 11 am and 4 pm, when temperatures are at their peak. Staying hydrated is considered one of the most important preventive measures. Officials recommend drinking water regularly even if one does not feel thirsty.

QUICK READ

Pvt school principal
faces allegations over
punishing student

Bengaluru
A private school principal in Bengaluru has come under criticism after serious allegations surfaced that a Class I student was made to stand in the sun for nearly two hours for arriving two minutes late to school. The incident has sparked outrage among parents, who have questioned the disciplinary practices followed by the school. According to the allegations raised by parents, the young student was reportedly asked to remain standing under the harsh sun for nearly two hours as punishment for being two minutes late to school. The incident reportedly took place during school hours and has since drawn strong reactions from the child's parents and other guardians. Parents claim that such punishment is excessive and could potentially harm the health and well-being of a young child.

Lingarajapuram
residents complain of
defunct streetlights

Bengaluru
Residents of Lingarajapuram in the Sarvajnagar Assembly constituency of Bengaluru say they are living in constant fear due to non-functional streetlights near a railway bridge and underpass in the area. Locals claim the lights have not been working for several months, leaving the stretch dark and unsafe after sunset. According to residents, the absence of street lighting has turned the area around the railway bridge and underpass into a potential hotspot for anti-social activities. As darkness falls each evening, the poorly lit stretch becomes deserted and intimidating, with locals alleging that miscreants frequently gather there.

Kodagu man strangles
girlfriend over
strained relationship

Bengaluru
Police said Ranjitha and the accused, Ayyappa, both natives of Kodagu district, had known each other for several years. After separating from his wife, Ayyappa reportedly developed a relationship with Ranjitha, who belonged to the same village. Despite belonging to different castes, he allegedly convinced Ranjitha's family that he would marry her and later brought her to Bengaluru. The couple had been living together in a rented accommodation within the Varthur police station limits for the past few months. Ayyappa was working as a supervisor in a dry fruit shop in the city. According to preliminary investigations, the relationship between the two had recently become strained, with frequent arguments reported between them.

Debris clearance gives
Vijnapura lake a fresh look

BENGALURU
The initiative focused on clearing debris and accumulated waste that had been dumped around the lake premises. Officials said the clean-up effort was undertaken as part of ongoing measures to preserve the lake ecosystem and ensure a healthier environment for residents living nearby. During the drive, workers removed piles of debris and waste materials that had gathered in and around the lake

‘Dutiful’ Corp beautifies fetid public space in Ulsoor

BENGALURU

The initiative focused on restoring hygiene and improving the overall appearance of the area, which had long been a concern for residents and commuters. The stretch, located near the Army Compound opposite the Ulsoor Dhobi Ghat, had gradually become a spot for public urination, leading to foul odour, unhygienic conditions and an unpleasant environment for people passing through the locality. Recognising the need for urgent action, the Bengaluru

Central City Corporation took up the task of cleaning and beautifying the area. The effort involved the coordinated participation of civic marshals, Junior Health Inspectors and dedicated Pourakarmikas who carried out extensive cleaning work to remove waste and sanitise the stretch. Personnel from the Army also extended their support to the initiative, while volunteers joined hands with the civic authorities to help in restoring the area. Their collective effort ensured that the location was not only cleaned thor-



oughly but also improved aesthetically to discourage misuse in the future. Officials said the beautification drive was aimed at

A 500-meter stretch near the Army Compound opposite Ulsoor Dhobi Ghat in Bengaluru has been cleaned and beautified after it had turned into a public urination spot.

ing the surroundings, the project also sought to raise awareness about civic responsibility among residents and visitors. Authorities emphasised that maintaining cleanliness in public spaces requires continuous cooperation from the community. They urged citi-

zens to respect public infrastructure and refrain from practices that contribute to unhygienic conditions. The successful transformation of the Ulsoor stretch highlights how coordinated efforts between civic bodies, government personnel and volunteers can effectively address urban sanitation challenges. The initiative now stands as an example of how neglected public spaces can be revived through collective responsibility and community participation while promoting better public hygiene across the city.

Experts brainstorm to improve
last-mile Metro connectivity

The GBA recently convened a roundtable discussion in Bengaluru with mobility organisations, researchers and civil society groups in this regard

BENGALURU

During the discussion, experts reviewed key findings from Phase 3 of the LEAP Program, presented by WRI India in collaboration with Alstom. The assessment studied commuter access patterns across 83 operational metro stations in Bengaluru and analysed how passengers travel to and from these stations. The study revealed that a majority of metro users depend on non-motorised transport to reach stations. According to the findings, about 66 percent of commuters walk or cycle as part of their metro journeys. However, many participants pointed out that commuters often face accessibility barriers even before reaching station entrances, highlighting gaps in pedestrian infrastructure and safe connectivity. Participants emphasised that improving walkability around metro stations should be a priority in urban mobility



planning. Wider and well-maintained footpaths, safer pedestrian crossings and better-designed streets were identified as essential measures to support the large number of commuters who rely on walking or cycling for last-mile travel. The discussion also highlighted the need for stronger integration between metro systems and other modes of transport. Experts noted that seamless connections with buses, shared mobility services and cycling infrastructure would significantly improve convenience for com-

muters and reduce dependence on private vehicles. Representatives from several organisations contributed insights during the roundtable. Experts from Sensing Local, Enable India, the Association of People with Disability, Urban Morph, Beyond Urban, The Mobility Agenda, Bengaluru Walks, Alstom and Purpose participated in the dialogue, sharing recommendations on building more inclusive and well-connected station neighbourhoods. Participants stressed that accessible infrastructure must also address the needs of per-

sons with disabilities, ensuring that metro station areas are safe and usable for everyone. The roundtable concluded that coordinated planning and collaboration among city authorities, mobility experts and community groups will be essential to create pedestrian-friendly environments around metro stations. Officials said such initiatives could play a key role in strengthening Bengaluru's public transport ecosystem by making metro travel more accessible, efficient and user-friendly for the city's growing number of commuters.

DC INAUGURATES ITC MISSION SUNEHRA KAL
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN CHIKKAJALA

BENGALURU

The Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate of Bengaluru Urban, Shri Jagadeesha G.IAS inaugurated and handed over school and Anganwadi infrastructure works, water harvesting structures, and health and sanitation interventions implemented under ITC Mission Sunehra Kal (MSK) at Chikkajala. A total of 13 schools, 11 Anganwadis, 37 rooftop water harvesting structures, 7 lake restoration works along with several other initiatives implemented over the last two years, were formally handed over. Addressing the media, Shri Jagadeesha G.IAS DC said that under the ITC CSR programme, infrastructure at Chikkajala Government High School has been significantly improved to support children from economically weaker households. I have personally handed over the facilities. The work has been done very well. I also suggested extending similar support to many more schools, he said. On behalf of the district administration, he expressed gratitude to ITC for its



continued support, noting that such initiatives would enhance the quality of education in government schools. Speaking on the occasion, Jagadeesha G. appreciated ITC MSK's contribution to Urban water management initiatives. He also encouraged government school students to focus on education and pursue career-oriented higher studies. Manoj Shukla, General Manager, ITC Limited, highlighted the organisation's initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable livelihoods, environmental conservation, and rural empowerment. He also spoke about ITC's collaboration with the Government of Karnataka to create 10,000 groundwater recharge structures in the South Pennar river basin to support river rejuvenation and ground-

water recharge. Mr.Yoganand J.N Environmental Officer, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, in his speech, highlighted the measures adopted by KSPCB to address the issues of pollution and also commended the work done by ITC MSK towards the protection of the environment. Mrs. Ambika T, Deputy Director of the Karnataka Groundwater Authority expressed their gratitude to ITC for its collaborative convergence with their departments and its impactful contributions through partner NGOs, aimed at better serving key stakeholders. Handing over Certificates were given to School and Anganwadi teachers, Tank User Group, Town Municipal Panchayat representatives for Urban water management initia-

tives, Plumbers trained under the Urban Water Management initiative, and vocational training certificates were awarded to youth and persons with disabilities who completed skill development programmes. The initiatives were implemented during FY 2024-25 and 2025-26 in collaboration with partner NGOs WASH Institute, MYRADA, Biome Environmental Trust, and Outreach. Other key dignitaries presented are Mr. Shreyas, Tahsildar Yelahanka Taluk, Bangalore Urban District, Mrs. Renuka. AC DPO, Mrs. Vinodamma, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Bangalore Urban, Mrs. Asha. H, BRC, Yelahanka Taluk, Mrs. Puneetha H.S, Deputy Environmental Officer, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, Mr.Kantaraja, Chief Officer Hunasamaranahalli TMC, Mr.Ravikumar, President, Chikkajala Gram Panchayat, Mr.Nagarajappa, HM, Chikkajala High School and Mrs. Jayashree Patil SDMC President, Chikkajala High School, Mr. Ramesh Himashu, Mr. Susheel Kumar, Harish Babu H R and Priyanka from ITC Ltd.



Bengaluru Expands Metro
Network to Ease Traffic

BENGALURU

Bengaluru's expanding metro network is set to bring relief to the city's growing traffic congestion. Officials from the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited announced progress on new stretches of the Namma Metro that will connect key residential and IT corridors. The new lines aim to improve daily commutes for thousands travel-

ling across Bengaluru, particularly between eastern tech hubs and central districts. Urban planners say the project could significantly reduce road traffic and pollution once operational. Several stations are nearing completion, with trial runs expected later this year. Authorities also plan better last-mile connectivity through feeder buses and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure around major metro stations.

MIRED IN DEVOTION

Devotees throng for Somnath Jyotirlinga darshan

BENGALURU

The spiritual gathering took place at the Someshwara Temple in Doddaballapur, where arrangements were organised to enable devotees to offer prayers and participate in rituals connected with the revered Jyotirlinga tradition dedicated to Lord Shiva. The event drew a steady stream of worshippers who queued patiently to receive darshan and take part in the puja. The Doddaballapur branch of Art of Living played a key role



in facilitating the arrangements for the darshan. Volunteers and organisers ensured that devotees could participate in the religious activities smoothly

while maintaining order and proper management at the temple premises. According to organisers, more than 500 devotees took part in the puja con-

ducted during the event. The rituals focused on the worship of the twin Jyotirlingas, which hold great significance in Hindu spiritual traditions. Devotees offered prayers seeking blessings, peace and spiritual well-being. Religious leaders and volunteers explained that the twin Jyotirlinga worship holds historical and spiritual importance. References were made to historical accounts in which these sacred symbols of Lord Shiva were targeted during invasions in earlier

centuries, including during the Mughal era. Despite such challenges over time, the tradition of worship associated with the Jyotirlingas has continued to remain strong among devotees. The gathering created a devotional atmosphere at the Someshwara Temple, with chants, prayers and rituals performed throughout the event. Organisers also ensured facilities for crowd management so that devotees could have a smooth and orderly darshan experience.



QUICK READ



Uniforms distributed to students in Hunsur

HUNSUR
Students of Bannikuppe Government Higher Primary School in Hunsur taluk received uniforms from Madilu Rural Development and Service Organization. The uniforms were handed out by its president, D. M. Triveni, who also serves as State Mahila Congress General Secretary. Speaking to reporters, Triveni said it is a small initiative to support rural children's education, adding that seeing smiles on children and parents is the real reward. Congress leader Prasanna Kumar, the school principal, teachers, and parents were present during the distribution, making it a joyful event for the school community.

Daughters perform father's last rites in Birur

CHIKKAMAGALURU
In a touching example of gender equality, two daughters performed the last rites of their father in Birur town of Kadur taluk in Chikkamagaluru district. The incident has drawn praise from the local community for challenging traditional norms. B.S. Vishwanath, a member of the Bhavasara Kshatriya community, passed away recently. As he had no sons, his daughter Aishwarya stepped forward to perform the funeral rituals. She was supported by her sister and brother-in-law during the ceremony. Aishwarya carried the ritual pot on her shoulders and completed the traditional rites around her father's body before the cremation.

Chicken Gambling Racket Busted by Police

UPPINANGADY
Police registered a case against five people involved in an illegal chicken numbering operation at Shettikodi, Karaya village in Belthangady taluk. The raid, led by probationary IPS Ananya Srivastava of Uppinangady Police Station on March 13, seized four roosters, two chickens, an auto rickshaw, and Rs. 2,500 used for gambling. Those named in the case include Ankit of Mugera house, Yas-hodhar of Urudai, Shivappa of Mugera house, Karunakar Poojary of Mundi house, and Umesh of Madakkil house. Police confirmed the operation was conducted during an ongoing chicken game, highlighting their crackdown on illegal gambling activities in the area.

New Indira Canteen brings affordable meals to workers

The minister announced 16 Indira Canteens in Shivamogga, offering affordable meals to support poor and working people

SHIVAMOGGA

Minister for School Education and Literacy and District In-charge Minister S. Madhu Bangarappa urged working class and economically weaker people to make good use of the Indira Canteen that provides affordable and nutritious food. He was speaking after inaugurating a newly constructed Indira Canteen near Gandhi Circle in Holehonnur town on Saturday.

The minister said that a total of 16 Indira Canteens have been sanctioned for Shivamogga district and this is the 12th canteen under the Holehonnur Town Panchayat limits. He explained that the canteen scheme is aimed at helping poor and working people by offering quality food at very low prices. Snacks are available for Rs.5 while lunch and dinner meals are served for Rs.10. He appealed to the public to visit the canteen, check the quality of the food



and support the initiative.

Speaking about education, the minister said that around 57 lakh children in the state are receiving hot meals, eggs and milk in schools. He added that officials should also taste the meals during visits to ensure quality and proper implementation.

He also announced that Holehonnur Government High School will soon be upgraded into a Karnataka Public School where students will

receive free education from LKG to Class 12 under one campus. Facilities like transport, computers, skill training and arts education will also be provided.

Shivamogga Rural MLA Sharada Pooryanayaka said the Indira Canteen scheme is very helpful for poor and working people and must be maintained with good food quality. Several officials and local leaders attended the program.

Minister Assures No Cooking Gas Shortage

District In-charge Minister Madhu Bangarappa assured that there is no serious shortage of cooking gas in the district. Speaking to reporters, he said a special meeting with officials has been convened to review cooking gas supply and drinking water availability amid the intense summer. He added that steps will be taken to address possible water issues in some areas. The minister also said government schools and Kannada medium institutions will not be closed and efforts are underway to resolve pending demands.

14 Women Honoured On International Women's Day

KUKANUR

Kukanur celebrated International Women's Day on Saturday with a special program recognizing the achievements of women across various fields. The event, organized jointly by Koppal District and Yalaburga Assembly Women's Congress and ARAM NGO, was held at B.V. Shettar Mangala Bhavan.

Speaking at the event, lawyer Mamata Rayareddy emphasized that women are not only the strength of families but also the lifeblood of the nation. She encouraged equal opportunities and respect for women for the overall progress of society, noting that patience and resilience are women's greatest strengths.

K. S. Eshwarappa announced protests against a project threatening 16,000 trees, wildlife, and the Sharavathi valley

Protest planned against Sharavathi pumped storage project

SHIVAMOGGA

A night-long Dharani Satyagraha will be held in Shivamogga to oppose the proposed Sharavathi Pumped Storage project, which activists claim may seriously harm the environment. The protest will take place in front of Nehru Maidan from 9:30 a.m. on March 24 to 9:30 a.m. on March 25. Rashtrabhakti Balaga convener K. S. Eshwarappa announced the protest at a press conference. He said the project could lead to the cutting of more than 16,000 trees and may threaten wildlife living in the Western Ghats region. According to him, the area is home to rare species such as the lion-tailed macaque, Kalinga snake, Man-



gatte bird and many medicinal plants. Environmental groups fear that landslides, water pollution and drying of rivers may occur if the project proceeds.

Activists also raised concerns that around 18,000 tons of explosives may be used for underground tunnelling up to 1,800 feet deep. They warned that such heavy blasting could increase the risk of earthquakes and damage the natural bal-

ance of the Sharavathi valley. Environmental expert Dr. B. M. Kumaraswamy said some activists have approached the High Court regarding the project. The court has asked the State and Central governments to respond by June 10. Until then, he urged authorities not to begin any work in the valley. Another expert, Dr. Sripathi L. K., said the project cost could rise from ₹10,500 crores to nearly ₹20,000 crores.

He suggested that battery storage systems, which have higher efficiency, could be considered as an alternative. Organizers said

around 500 people and several environmental groups are expected to join the overnight protest.

Dr. Siddarama Honkal unveils travelogue book

YADGIR

Yadgiri witnessed the release of the tenth travelogue by Kannada author Dr. Siddarama Honkal titled 'Dakshina Dhruvadin Uttara Dhruvake' at a Kannada pride event held at the Government First Grade College, Gurumatkal. The event was graced by the presence of Paramapoojya Guru Murugharajendra Mahaswamiji, while the college principal, Dr. J.V. Purushottam, presided over the ceremony. The book launch was conducted by distinguished guests, including Dr. M.S. Shirval, Sharana Sahitya writer Vishwaradhya Satyampete, Kannada department head Dr. Baburay Dore, and English lecturer Mahesh Chandapur.

Speaking at the event, Principal Dr. Purushottam highlighted Dr.

Lady Goschen Hospital dispute settled in Lok Adalat

MANGALURU

A long-pending dispute related to contractor payments during the construction of the new building of Lady Goschen Hospital was settled through compromise in a Lok Adalat held at the district court on Saturday.

The case involved dues to be paid by Nirmithi Kendra to contractors who had worked on the hospital project. Through mediation and discussion between both sides, the compensation amount was reduced to about ₹1.83 crore, instead of nearly ₹4 crores that was earlier claimed along with interest. The settlement helped save a large amount of public money and brought an end to the long legal dispute. The disagreement began during 2012-13 when construction of the new hospital building was taken up. Funds of about ₹21 crores had been sanctioned under

Priyank Kharge demands clarity on LPG shipments

KALABURAGI

Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge has raised concerns over the lack of clear information about liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) shipments passing through the Strait of Hormuz. Speaking to reporters on Thursday, he said it is uncertain whether the vessels carrying LPG have actually reached India or are merely Indian carriers navigating the strategic route.

Kharge questioned the claims of the Bharatiya Janata Party that safe passage had been guaranteed, noting there has been no confirmation from Iranian authorities. "If safe passage has been ensured, it is welcome. But why the delay in clarity?" he asked. He also cited a recent LPG-related incident in Punjab, where a 66-year-old man allegedly died while standing in a queue, highlighting the urgency of the issue. Responding to Union Minister Pralhad Joshi's accusation that the Karnataka government created an artificial LPG shortage, Kharge dismissed it as baseless.



"The State government nei- Kharge challenged BJP claims of guaranteed safe passage, noting no confirmation from Iran and questioning the delay in clarity

ther produces LPG nor owns oil industries or distribution systems," he emphasized, pointing out that these are national assets under Union jurisdiction. He further challenged the Centre's use of the Essential Services Maintenance Act, asking officials to ensure that every consumer can order and receive an LPG cylinder within 24 hours. Kharge's remarks come amid growing public concern over LPG availability and delivery delays in the state.

Lokayukta books Udupi Excise official over assets

MANGALURU

Lokayukta police have registered a case against Udupi Deputy Commissioner (Excise) T. M. Srinivas for allegedly possessing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. According to officials, searches were conducted on March 11 at his house, office, and several other locations linked to him.

The investigation revealed that the officer allegedly owned assets worth ₹9.57 crore. Out of this, Lokayukta police said ₹8.69 crore is suspected to be disproportionate to his official income. Immoveable properties, including six houses, were valued at around ₹6.9 crore.

Movable assets were estimated at ₹2.66 crore. These



include ₹3.95 lakh in cash, gold ornaments worth ₹1.47 crore, vehicles valued at ₹17 lakhs, bank deposits of ₹25.75 lakh, and other items worth ₹72.68 lakh.

Officials confirmed that searches were carried out at 15 locations connected to the accused officer. Further investigation is underway to determine the sources of the assets and take appropriate legal action.

Hunsur gas cylinder delay worries residents

HUNSUR

Hunsur residents have been facing delays in receiving domestic LPG cylinders, causing worry among consumers, said Shravana, head of the Food and Civil Supplies Department.

Speaking to reporters, Shravana explained that many households had booked cylinders, but they had not arrived for several days. Gas agency staff are now personally delivering cylinders to homes that had previously booked them. Some customers using mobile bookings reported that their orders were not being registered by the agency. Officials confirmed that the delay was caused by a temporary software error, which is now being addressed. "This issue will not happen

again," Shravana assured.

Meanwhile, Ustadvani Na Intiaz Ahmed of Indian Gas said that a slight delay had occurred in cylinder deliveries due to a server problem. "We are taking responsibility to load and deliver cylinders immediately after booking," he said. He added that this problem is not limited to Hunsur and similar delays are occurring in other areas as well.

Ahmed emphasized that the staff is working actively to Wensure home deliveries and that the server issue will be resolved in the coming days. Residents were urged not to worry, as all booked cylinders would be delivered promptly. The agency assured continuous monitoring to prevent further delays and maintain smooth gas supply in the city.

TOBACCO GROWERS STRIKE

Farmers protest against falling tobacco prices in Hunsur

HUNSUR

Farmers and leaders of several farmer organizations staged a protest against ITC Limited near Ilavala on the Mysuru main road, accusing the company of paying very low prices for tobacco leaves. The protest was led by former MLA H. P. Manjunath, who said tobacco growers in the region are facing serious financial difficulties. Hundreds of farmers gathered outside the company office and raised slogans demanding fair prices



for their tobacco produce. As part of the protest, demonstrators locked the entrance of the ITC warehouse to express their anger over what they

called discrimination in tobacco procurement. Speaking during the protest, Manjunath said farmers depend heavily on tobacco cultivation for

their livelihood. However, the sudden fall in prices at the Hunsur tobacco auction market has pushed many farmers into hardship. He warned that if justice is not given to farmers soon, stronger protests will be organized in the coming days. Mysuru District Congress Spokesperson M. Laxman also criticized the company, saying tobacco growers in the region are disappointed as prices have been falling continuously for the past one and a half months. He alleged that the company

has failed to purchase tobacco properly from farmers despite repeated requests. Farmers said they trusted the company for many years but now feel cheated due to the low prices offered for their produce. They demanded immediate steps to ensure fair procurement rates and protect farmers' livelihoods. Several farmer leaders and activists including Nitin Venkatesh and J. Madev Ratnapuri David also participated in the protest along with a large number of local farmers.

QUICK READ



Delhi crime branch arrests wanted criminal

NEW DELHI

The Southern Range of the Delhi Crime Branch has arrested a proclaimed offender involved in at least 12 criminal cases, officials said on Saturday. The accused, identified as Harish alias Harsh Gupta alias Yadvender alias KD alias Kalu alias Harsh alias Yash Gupta alias Hars, 39, is a resident of Badarpur in southeast Delhi. Police said he was declared a proclaimed offender in a 2020 Arms Act case registered at Jaitpur police station.

Acting on secret information on March 13, a special team led by Inspector Vijay Pal Dahiya conducted a raid near Vidya Memorial School in Molar Band Extension, Badarpur, and successfully arrested him.

Man beaten to death over parking dispute

KUSHINAGAR

A 30-year-old man was allegedly beaten to death with sticks following a parking dispute in Uttar Pradesh's Kushinagar district, police said on Saturday. The incident occurred on Friday evening in Bodarwar market when Govind Sahni was heading to buy vegetables near his home. Police said Subhash, a resident of a Dalit settlement in the area, along with family members, stopped Sahni and attacked him. His mother Subhadra found him unconscious and bleeding and rushed him to the Community Health Centre in Kaptanganj, where doctors declared him dead. Police have launched raids to arrest the accused and sent the body for post-mortem.

Newlywed woman disappears from bus stand

MORADABAD

In a strange incident in Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad district, a newly married woman went missing from a bus stand while her husband had gone to buy snacks for her. The incident happened on March 9 when Pritam Singh from Amroha was returning with his wife Rimjhim after bringing her from her maternal home following Holi celebrations. The couple got down at Bilari bus stand to change buses. Rimjhim asked her husband to buy pakodas from a nearby stall. When Pritam returned, the 18-year-old woman had disappeared. Police have registered a missing case and are checking CCTV footage and mobile phone location to trace her.

Disrespect to Prez was insult to entire tribal community: PM

The PM criticised alleged protocol breach during Prez Murmu's recent Bengal visit

KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said that the alleged insult to President Droupadi Murmu during her recent visit to West Bengal was an insult to the entire tribal community of the country.

Addressing a massive rally at the Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata, Modi said the incident showed disrespect towards a leader who rose from a tribal background to occupy the highest constitutional office in the country. The rally marked the conclusion of the Bharatiya Janata Party's "Parivaran Yatra" ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections in the state.

The Prime Minister accused



the Trinamool Congress government of ignoring the development needs of tribal communities in West Bengal. According to him, the ruling party had repeatedly insulted and neglected tribal people.

The controversy relates to President Murmu's visit to Darjeeling district last week to attend the International

Santal Conclave. Reports suggested there was a protocol issue when police denied permission for the originally proposed venue at Phansidewa and instead shifted the event to a smaller location at Gosaiapur.

It was also reported that neither Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee nor any member

of the state Cabinet was present to receive the President during the visit.

The Prime Minister said the development saddened the President and raised concerns about respect for constitutional offices.

Without naming the Chief Minister directly, Modi also criticised recent remarks made by her about political unity among communities.

He said such statements could create divisions in society. Banerjee, however, rejected the criticism and said the President was being influenced by the BJP.

The Prime Minister said the people of West Bengal would respond through the ballot in the upcoming Assembly elections.

'HP BUDGET WILL FOCUS ON SELF-RELIANCE, WELFARE'

SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday said the state budget to be presented on March 21 will focus on financial self-reliance while protecting welfare schemes and benefits for people.

Speaking to media persons in Shimla before a special pre-budget meeting at the state secretariat, the Chief Minister said the upcoming budget will not include cuts in social welfare schemes, salaries or pensions of government employees.

He said the government has been holding consultations with different groups while preparing the budget so that the state can gradually move towards financial



stability and self-reliance.

Sukhu noted that Himachal Pradesh is facing financial pressure after the Sixteenth Finance Commission decided to stop the Revenue Deficit Grant that the state had been receiving for nearly 70 years.

According to him, this decision could lead to an annual loss of ₹8,000 crore to ₹10,000 crore for the state between 2026 and 2031.

Vijay weighs Perambur or Tiruchy East to contest

CHENNAI

Actor-turned-politician Vijay is yet to decide the constituency from which he will contest the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, with Perambur and Tiruchirappalli (East) emerging as the top choices.

Sources in his party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), said both constituencies are being seriously considered as Vijay prepares to contest his first Assembly election as a political leader.

According to senior party leaders, Vijay is likely to choose a relatively small constituency so that he can campaign across the State for other candidates of the party.

Perambur in North Chennai has become a strong possibility after Vijay reportedly hinted at it during meetings with party aspirants.

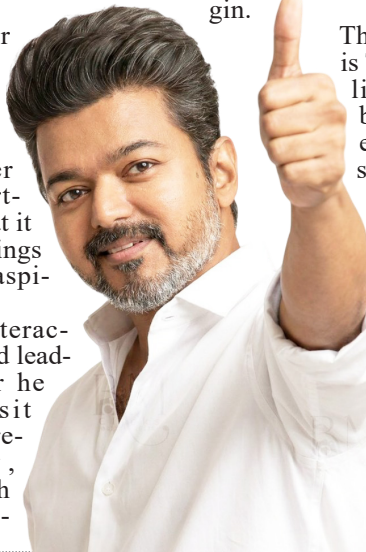
At one interaction, he asked leaders whether he should visit Perambur frequently, which sparked spec-

ulation about his potential candidature from the seat.

The TVK chief has been holding consultations with party leaders and aspirants since March 10 as part of preparations for the Assembly polls. Earlier, party cadres passed a resolution urging him to contest from Perambur.

Perambur is known for housing the Integral Coach Factory and has around three lakh voters with a socially diverse population. The constituency has mostly been a stronghold of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and its allies. In the 2021 elections, DMK candidate R. D. Shekar won the seat with a large margin.

The other option is Tiruchirappalli East, an urban constituency represented by Inigo Irudayaraj of the DMK. The final decision is expected soon as Tamil Nadu moves closer to the Assembly elections.



Gujarat's ₹2902 cr budget for skills and labour welfare

GANDHINAGAR

The Gujarat government has allocated ₹2,902 crore to the Labour, Skill Development and Employment Department in the 2026-27 state budget to strengthen youth skills, improve job opportunities and enhance welfare for workers across the state.

Labour Minister Kunvarji Bavaliya announced the allocation during a press conference at the state Legislative Assembly on Saturday. He said the budget aims to support the vision of "Viksit Gujarat 2047" and contribute to the national goal of "Viksit Bharat 2047" and an Atmanirbhar India.

Under the Namo Gujarat Skill and Employment Mission, ₹226 crore has been allocated to improve youth employability. The PM Setu Scheme has received ₹200 crore to upgrade Industrial Training Institutes through a hub-and-spoke model. Another ₹40 crore has been set aside for the Namo Kaushalya Laxmi Scheme, which encourages female students to join ITI courses. Women trainees will receive ₹15,000 for one-year courses and ₹24,000 for two-year courses.

The government has also expanded labour welfare pro-

KEY ALLOCATIONS

- ₹226cr for Namo Skill Mission
- ₹200cr for PM Setu ITI upgrade
- ₹200cr for Shramik Annapurna meal booths
- ₹150cr for Shramik Basera worker housing

grammes. ₹200 crore has been allocated under the Shramik Annapurna Yojana to open 300 new booths offering meals to workers for ₹5.

The Shramik Basera Yojana has received ₹150 crore to provide affordable housing for construction workers. Additionally, ₹160 crore has been allocated to expand the Dhanvantari Arogya Rath programme by adding 50 mobile health units.

The state will also provide ₹3.5 lakh accident insurance support to construction workers in case of death or permanent disability. The Agariya Housing Scheme has received ₹25 crore to provide houses with solar panels and basic facilities for salt pan workers.

Officials said Gujarat has 559 operational ITIs with 2,18,516 seats and continues to expand skill training and employment initiatives across the state.

The budget aims to advance the long-term vision of 'Viksit Gujarat 2047' and contribute to national development goals.



Kerala CM inaugurates new 5-storey health centre building

KANNUR

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday inaugurated the new five-storey building of the Iriveri Community Health Centre at Chakkarakkallu in Kannur district. The facility was constructed at a total cost of ₹20 crore to improve healthcare services in the region.

Speaking at the event, Vijayan said Kerala has gained global attention for its achievements in the health sector. He noted that the state's neonatal mortality rate is around 5 percent, which is lower than the 5.6 percent reported in the United States. He added that Kerala's strong public

health system played a crucial role during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chief Minister said the state government has implemented development projects worth ₹500 crore in the health sector in Kannur district. As part of these efforts, 14 health institutions have been upgraded to Family Health Centres.

Highlighting reforms introduced since the Left Democratic Front government came to power in 2016, Vijayan said the Aardram Mission helped transform the public healthcare system and made quality treatment more accessible, especially for poorer sections.

The new health centre building was constructed with funds from multiple sources, including the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Rural Infrastructure Development Fund and state plan funds.

The facility includes an X-ray unit, pharmacy store, oxygen room, laundry section, ambulance parking and other service areas in the basement. The ground floor houses the emergency department, laboratory and physiotherapy services, while upper floors include outpatient departments, wards, dental and eye examination rooms, and other medical facilities to serve patients in the region.

LPG CRISIS

TN announces power subsidy to eateries for switching from LPG to electric stoves



CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. K. Stalin has announced a subsidy of ₹2 per unit of electricity for eateries that switch from LPG to electric stoves, following a shortage of LPG supplies in the state.

The decision was taken during a review meeting held at the Secretariat on Saturday

to discuss the impact of the LPG shortage on industries and the food sector. Officials said the disruption was linked to tensions in the Gulf region after the United States and Israel launched a joint military strike on Iran, which later led to restrictions on ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz. To reduce the impact on restaurants, tea shops and

cloud kitchens, the state government will offer the power subsidy for additional electricity consumed when they switch from LPG to electric cooking equipment. The subsidy will continue during the period of commercial LPG restrictions.

The government has also announced financial support for Micro, Small and Medium

Enterprises to purchase electric equipment such as stoves and heaters. Under the Unemployed Youth Employment Generation Programme, entrepreneurs can receive a 25 percent subsidy up to ₹3.75 lakh. The Tamil Nadu Women Entrepreneurship Development Scheme offers a similar subsidy up to ₹2 lakh for loans up to ₹10 lakh.

To ensure industries continue operations, factories that normally use LPG or CNG will be allowed to temporarily use alternative fuels such as kerosene, biomass and high-speed diesel. Meanwhile, the state assured that petrol and diesel stocks are sufficient for about one month and urged people not to panic or rush to fuel stations unnecessarily.

QUICK READ



6,000 kg Meth worth Rs 36,000 cr destroyed

SRI VIJAYA PURAM

The Andaman and Nicobar Police have destroyed over 6,000 kg of methamphetamine valued at about Rs 36,000 crore in the international market. Officials said the disposal was carried out in phases over nine months, from June 26, 2025 to March 12, 2026. The drugs were earlier seized by the Indian Coast Guard on November 23, 2024, after intercepting a vessel with six Myanmar crew members in Indian waters near the islands. The meth, packed in around 1,500 packets, was later destroyed at the INHS Dhanvantri incineration facility in Minnie Bay under the supervision of a high-level drug disposal committee and senior police officials.

Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain sworn in as Bihar Gov

PATNA

Lt Gen (Retd) Syed Ata Hasnain was sworn in as the Governor of Bihar at a ceremony held at Lok Bhavan in Patna. Patna High Court Chief Justice Sangam Kumar Sahoo administered the oath of office and secrecy. The event was attended by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, members of his cabinet and several senior officials. Hasnain earlier served as Military Secretary of the Indian Army, where he handled senior-level personnel management. Before that, he commanded the Army's 15 Corps in Jammu and Kashmir. After retirement, he remained active in public life, serving as Chancellor of the Central University of Kashmir and later as a member of the National Disaster Management Authority.



Hasnain thanks PM after Bihar oath

PATNA

Newly appointed Bihar Governor Syed Ata Hasnain on Saturday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi after taking the oath of office at Lok Bhavan in Patna. Speaking to reporters after the ceremony, Hasnain said he felt honoured to be entrusted with the responsibility of serving the people of Bihar. He expressed gratitude to the prime minister for nominating him to the constitutional post and said his priority would be the welfare and development of the state. Hasnain also spoke about the importance of democratic values and public service. He said India is a strong democracy where governance is centred on the needs of the people. Referring to his earlier role in Jammu and Kashmir, he said being known as the "People's General" during his military service there was a great honour, and he hoped to bring the same approach to his new role.

Spreading panic amid war: Modi tears into Cong in Assam

He remarked that in such circumstances political parties are expected to act responsibly, but alleged that the Congress had failed to rise to the occasion.

SILCHAR

Addressing a public rally in Silchar, Assam, on Saturday, Modi said the central government is making efforts to reduce the impact of ongoing wars in different parts of the world on Indian citizens. At the same time, he criticised the Congress party, accusing it of acting irresponsibly and trying to spread fear among people. Modi said that when the world is facing conflicts, the government's priority is to ensure that the lives of citizens remain stable and secure. However, he alleged that instead of cooperating during such times, the Congress party is trying to create panic by spreading rumours and misinformation.

The Prime Minister also criticised the Congress for its past policies related to the Northeast region. According to him, the party ignored the development needs of the region for many decades. He said the Barak Valley suffered due to decisions taken during the time of independence and partition, which cut off the region's access to the sea. Modi claimed that Barak Valley was once known as a strong industrial centre but gradually lost its strength due to lack of proper attention and development under earlier governments. He said that even though Congress ruled the country for many years after independence, the region did not receive the development it de-



served. He further accused the Congress of misleading the youth of Assam in the past, pushing them towards violence and unrest. In contrast, he said the Bharatiya Janata Party government is working to create opportunities and bring stability for young people in the state. Modi said the BJP believes in focusing on areas that were neglected earlier and aims to bring development to every region. During the event, he also launched several development projects worth Rs 23,550 crore as part of his two-day visit to Assam ahead of the upcoming assembly elections.

Give BJP a chance to make Punjab drug-free: Shah

MOGA

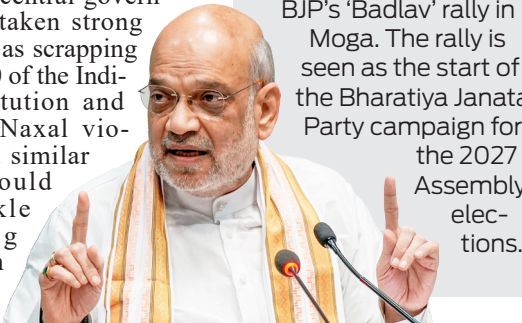
Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday urged the people of Punjab to support the Bharatiya Janata Party in the 2027 Assembly elections, saying the party could help make the state free from drugs and corruption. Speaking at a "Badlav" rally in Killi Chahlan village of Moga district, Shah said Punjab is currently facing several challenges, including drug abuse, increasing debt, religious conversions, corruption and the growing influence of gangsters. He also claimed that many industries are moving out of the state due to the present situation. Shah strongly criticised the Aam Aadmi Party government led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. He alleged that the administration is affected by corruption and described it as an "ATM" for party chief Arvind Kejriwal. According to him, the state government has not been able to resolve key problems faced by the public. The Union minister said Punjab has already given op-

He conveyed that under PM Modi's leadership, the BJP is equipped to deliver Punjab from the shackles of addiction, financial disarray, and lawlessness.

portunities to parties such as Indian National Congress, Shiromani Akali Dal and AAP to govern the state. Now, he said, people should give the BJP a chance to bring change and development. He also pointed out that the BJP earlier served as a junior partner in the state government with the Akali Dal, but this time the party aims to form its own government. Shah added that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the central government has taken strong steps such as scrapping Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and reducing Naxal violence, and similar efforts could help tackle the drug problem in Punjab.

SHAH ATTACKS AAP GOVT IN PUNJAB

Chandigarh Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday criticised the Aam Aadmi Party government in Punjab, accusing it of pushing the state into corruption, drugs and crime. In a post on X, Shah said people of Punjab now want "badlav" or change. He alleged that the government led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had failed to maintain law and order and that development had stalled. Shah said he was eager to meet people at the BJP's 'Badlav' rally in Moga. The rally is seen as the start of the Bharatiya Janata Party campaign for the 2027 Assembly elections.



TVK rules out alliance with NDA ahead polls

CHENNAI

The Tamilaga Vetti Kazhagam (TVK), led by actor-turned-politician Vijay, on Saturday rejected reports suggesting a possible alliance with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Tamil Nadu. Party leaders said the reports about a potential electoral pact were only media speculation and had no basis. TVK Joint General Secretary C T R Nirmal Kumar said there was no possibility of an alliance with the NDA. He stated that the party had already declared the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as its ideological opponent. Nirmal Kumar said rumours about negotiations were spreading through the media and social media, and party members should rely only on official announcements. He clarified that a virtual meeting held with district secretaries on March 13 was meant to review the party's organisational strength and discuss possible alliance strategies, not negotiations with the NDA. He also questioned whether the BJP would accept Vijay as the chief ministerial candidate if such rumours



were true. Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu BJP president Nainar Nagenathan avoided giving a clear answer when asked by reporters about talks with TVK. Instead, he said his focus was on issues affecting people, including law and order and the safety of women in the state. According to sources in TVK, district secretaries told party General Secretary N Anand during the virtual meeting that the party's chances of victory could improve if it contested elections with allies. However, the leadership has not announced any formal alliance plans. The developments come as political parties in Tamil Nadu begin preparing strategies for the upcoming elections in the state.



Yogi attends massive religious gathering at Songal

KAITHAL

A large number of saints and devotees gathered in Songal village for a major religious event. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said a massive gathering of saints and devotees had assembled in Songal village after many years, highlighting the spiritual importance of the place. Addressing a Dharm Sabha during a religious programme in Songal village in Kaithal district of Haryana, the chief minister said he felt honoured to attend the event and receive blessings from the saints present there. Yogi Adityanath described the land of Songal as spiritually significant and said it had played an important role in preserving religious traditions for generations. According to him, gatherings of saints and devotees help strengthen India's spiritual and cultural heritage. He said such events also bring together people from different regions and promote unity and harmony among devotees. The chief minister appreciated the organisers and local residents for arranging the Dharm Sabha and Bhandara, which saw participation from many saints, spiritual leaders and followers. The programme included religious discourses and a community feast where devotees joined prayers and spiritual discussions. Yogi Adityanath offered his respects to the saints and emphasised the importance of protecting and promoting India's rich spiritual traditions.

LPG crisis triggers migrant worker exodus from Kerala

KOCHI

A severe LPG shortage in Kerala has forced many restaurants and hotels to shut down, leading to a large number of migrant workers returning to their home states ahead of Ramadan and upcoming elections. Industry representatives said many migrant workers from West Bengal and Assam have begun leaving early due to a lack of work after restaurants closed. With Ramadan approaching and assembly elections due in their states, many workers are choosing to return home sooner than expected. G Jayapal, state president of the Kerala Hotel and Restaurant Association, said restaurant owners are trying

to keep their workers, fearing they may not return until after the elections. He said many small restaurant operators are struggling to retain staff when their businesses remain closed due to the LPG shortage. Jayapal added that most hotel and restaurant workers in Kerala are migrants from other states. While some establishments are trying to use alternative cooking fuels, smaller outlets are finding it difficult to continue operations. According to Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development official Binoy Peter, nearly half of Kerala's migrant workforce comes from Assam and West Bengal. He said many workers in the hospitality sector have already started travelling home.



Train reservations to these states are already full, with long waiting lists reported. Experts say the current movement is also linked to workers wanting to vote in the upcoming assembly elections. Labour suppliers say the shortage has already begun

affecting workplaces. Shibin, owner of KLR Facility, said he earlier supplied 25 migrant workers to a mall in Thiruvananthapuram, but only five remain now. He said companies are temporarily hiring local workers until the situation improves.

RARE PLANT REDISCOVERY

Rare plant species rediscovered in AP after 189 years

ITANAGAR

Scientists from the Botanical Survey of India have rediscovered a rare plant species in Arunachal Pradesh nearly 189 years after it was last recorded. The discovery was made during a field survey in Lohit district, officials said on Saturday. The plant, known as Henckelia monophylla, had not been documented since the early 19th century. Experts say the rediscovery is an important addition to the botanical records of the Eastern

Himalayas and highlights the rich biodiversity of the region. Henckelia monophylla belongs to the Gesneriaceae family and is a perennial herb that usually grows in humid forest environments. Plants of the Henckelia genus generally have upright or slightly creeping stems and simple leaves that are ovate or lance-shaped. They produce flowers in small clusters along the stem, often with tubular or funnel-shaped structures and delicate colours.



The plant's fruits develop as elongated capsules that contain many tiny seeds, allowing the species to reproduce efficiently in favourable ecological conditions. Bota-

nists say that such rediscoveries are rare and show the importance of continuous scientific surveys in remote forest regions. Researchers believe that Arunachal Pradesh remains one of India's most important biodiversity hotspots. The state's forests and mountains are home to many unique plant and animal species that are still being studied and documented by scientists. Chief Minister Pema Khandu congratulated the research team for the achievement. In

a message shared on X, he said the rediscovery of Henckelia monophylla after nearly two centuries highlights the extraordinary natural wealth of the state. Khandu added that such scientific findings contribute to global botanical knowledge and also remind people about the ecological treasures found in Arunachal Pradesh. He also extended his best wishes to the scientists for their continued work in studying and conserving the region's unique plant species.



QUICK READ

Ven students rake stir beyond campus after Maduro's capture

Santiago de León de Caracas

For years, student activism in Venezuela carried significant risks. Demonstrations were largely confined within university campuses, where limited autonomy offered a degree of protection. Those who attempted to protest on public streets faced the possibility of beatings, detention or even worse treatment by security forces. International bodies, including the United Nations, have previously condemned the use of torture against detainees in the country, citing methods such as electric shocks, asphyxiation and sleep deprivation. The atmosphere began to change after a U.S. military operation on January 3 that captured Maduro and transferred him to the United States to face criminal charges. The operation triggered political upheaval inside Venezuela and opened space for renewed civic activism, including protests led by students and civil society groups.

Explosion at Amsterdam Jewish school 'a deliberate attack': Mayor

Amsterdam

According to local authorities, the explosion occurred at a Jewish school located in an upscale residential neighbourhood in the southern part of Amsterdam. The blast damaged a rainpipe and left burn marks on the building's exterior wall, though the structural impact was relatively limited. Femke Halsema said the incident was being treated with the utmost seriousness by city officials and law enforcement agencies. She described the explosion as a deliberate act targeting the Jewish community and stressed that authorities would take immediate steps to strengthen security. Following the attack, the mayor announced that security measures at Jewish institutions across the city would be increased. These measures are expected to include additional police patrols and enhanced monitoring around schools, community centres and religious sites.

US STRIKES MILITARY ASSETS ON KHARG ISLAND OIL EXPORT HUB

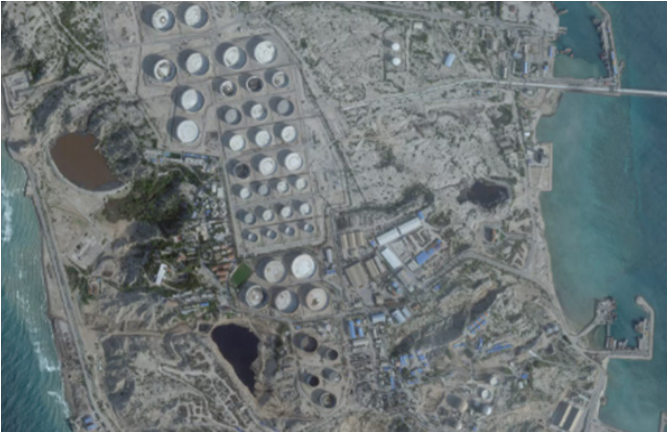
Tehran threatens to reduce US-linked oil facilities in the region to a 'pile of ashes' if oil structures on the island are attacked.

WASHINGTON

United States President Donald Trump has said the country's military bombed military installations on Iran's Kharg island, warning the area's critical oil facilities could be next if Iran continues to block the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran, in turn, threatened on Saturday to reduce US-linked oil facilities to "a pile of ashes" if oil structures on the island were attacked, as the US-Israel war on Iran, now in its punishing third week, spilled over into a global oil price crisis already in the making.

US Central Command spoke later in the day of what it described as a large-scale



precision strike. "U.S. Forces successfully struck more than 90 Iranian military targets," CENTCOM said.

State media outlet IRNA, citing a senior provincial offi-

cial, said exports from the island were continuing normally despite the US attack.

Kharg island is where more than 90 percent of Iran's oil is exported. Crude oil prices

have surged more than 40 percent since the war began.

Trump said on Friday that US forces had "totally obliterated" all military targets on Iran's Kharg island oil export hub, describing it in a social media post as "one of the most powerful bombing raids in the History of the Middle East". He provided no evidence of that.

The US president said he had chosen not to "wipe out" oil infrastructure on the Iranian island, for now.

"However, should Iran, or anyone else, do anything to interfere with the Free and Safe Passage of Ships through the Strait of Hormuz, I will immediately reconsider this decision," he added.

Iran drone strike triggers blaze at UAE's Fujairah port

DUBAI

Industry and trade sources said some oil-loading activities at Fujairah were halted after the drone incident caused a fire at the facility.

The suspension occurred just hours after the United States carried out strikes on military targets at Iran's Kharg Island oil export terminal, further intensifying tensions between Washington and Tehran.

In response to the U.S. attack, Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned that American-linked assets in the United Arab Emirates could become legitimate targets. These include ports, docks and military facilities believed to be associated with U.S. operations in the region.

Fujairah holds strategic importance in global energy markets. Located outside the Strait of Hormuz, the emirate serves as a major outlet for the UAE's Murban crude oil exports. The terminal handles about one million barrels of Murban crude per day, equivalent to roughly one percent of global oil demand. However, it remains unclear how significantly the latest disruption will affect overall oil shipments from the facility.

According to officials from Fujairah's media office, the fire broke out after debris fell during the interception of a drone. Authorities confirmed that no injuries were reported in the incident, though emer-



The suspension occurred just hours after the United States carried out strikes on military targets at Iran's Kharg Island oil export terminal.

gency teams responded quickly to contain the blaze and secure the affected area.

The attack comes during a period of heightened instability in global energy supply. Earlier this week, the International Energy Agency warned that the world could be facing the largest oil supply crisis in history due to the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The vital shipping route along Iran's coast has seen severe disruptions since the United States and Israel launched airstrikes on Iranian targets on February 28.

The escalating conflict has already forced several oil-producing countries in the region, including the UAE, to scale back production. With tensions continuing to rise, markets are closely watching developments in the Gulf, where any further disruption could have major consequences for global energy supply and prices.

China courts Paraguayan lawmakers as Beijing seeks to undermine Taiwan ties

PARAGUAY

Paraguayan opposition lawmaker Leidy Galeano said a government-sponsored trip to China last year left a lasting impression on her, reinforcing the idea that Paraguay could be missing out on significant economic opportunities by maintaining diplomatic relations with Taiwan instead of Beijing.

Galeano, a member of the newly formed Yo Creio party, was part of a delegation that toured six Chinese cities on what participants described as an all-expenses-paid visit organized through the Chinese consulate in São Paulo.

Reflecting on the experience, Galeano said the scale

of development she witnessed in China made her think about similar possibilities for Paraguay. She noted that Chinese officials repeatedly emphasized the economic advantages Paraguay might gain by shifting its diplomatic stance away from Taiwan.

According to individuals familiar with the visits, the trips included lavish banquets, stays in luxury hotels, and tours of prominent landmarks such as the Great Wall. Some Paraguayan lawmakers view these invitations as part of a coordinated campaign by Beijing to cultivate political support in Paraguay and encourage a diplomatic switch.

Despite its relatively small population of around 6.4 mil-



lion and its landlocked geography, Paraguay holds strategic importance in the geopolitical contest between China and Taiwan. It remains Taiwan's last diplomatically in South America and one of only 12 countries worldwide that still formally recognize Taipei.

A decision by Paraguay to establish diplomatic relations with Beijing would represent a symbolic victory for China

N. Korea fires 10 ballistic missiles into sea amid US-S. Korea military drills

YEONCHEON

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missiles were launched from an area near the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, at around 1:20 p.m. local time (0430 GMT). The projectiles were fired toward the sea off the country's east coast, a direction commonly used by North Korea during weapons tests.

Japan's coast guard also reported detecting what it believed to be a ballistic missile that landed in the sea. According to Japan's public broadcaster NHK, citing military sources, the projectile appeared to have fallen outside Japan's exclusive economic zone, indicating no immediate threat to Japanese territory.

The launches took place as

U.S. and South Korean forces continued their annual large-scale military exercises in South Korea. Washington and Seoul describe the drills as defensive in nature and intended to strengthen their readiness against potential threats from North Korea. However, Pyongyang has historically criticized such exercises, viewing them as preparations for invasion and often responding with missile tests.

North Korea has conducted a wide range of missile tests over the past two decades as part of its effort to develop advanced weapons capable of delivering nuclear warheads. Analysts believe the country has successfully developed nuclear weapons and continues to improve its missile de-

livery systems.

Due to its nuclear and missile programs, North Korea has been subject to multiple sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council since 2006. These sanctions were designed to restrict the country's access to materials, technology and financial resources that could support its weapons development.

Despite the economic pressure created by these restrictions, Pyongyang has remained defiant and continued to pursue its military capabilities. Saturday's missile launches underscore the persistent security challenges in the region, even as diplomatic efforts and calls for dialogue occasionally emerge from both sides.

Russian missile strikes kill 4, damage energy infra in Ukraine

KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the primary target of the strikes was energy infrastructure in the Kyiv region. He added that the attacks also damaged residential buildings, schools and businesses, highlighting the continued risks faced by civilians as the conflict enters its fourth year.

According to Zelenskiy, the assault extended beyond the capital region and affected several parts of the country, including the Sumy, Kharkiv, Dnipro and Mykolaiv regions. The attack involved a massive wave of around 430 drones and 68 missiles launched overnight by Russian forces. Ukrainian air defence systems managed to intercept and destroy most of the incoming



projectiles, limiting the scale of destruction in some areas.

Despite these interceptions, the Kyiv region suffered casualties and significant damage. Mykola Kalashnyk, head of the regional military administration, confirmed that the four fatalities occurred in the Kyiv region. He also reported that at least 15 people were wounded and damage was recorded in four separate districts.

Ukraine's energy ministry said the strikes and shelling also disrupted electricity supply in several areas. Consumers in six regions were left

without power following the attacks on energy infrastructure and front-line locations, further straining the country's already fragile power grid.

In a message posted on social media, Zelenskiy warned that Russia may attempt to take advantage of global geopolitical tensions to intensify its attacks. He suggested that developments in the Middle East conflict could be used by Moscow to divert international attention while escalating military operations in Ukraine.

The Ukrainian president urged Kyiv's allies to increase the production and supply of critical air defence systems and weapons, stressing that stronger defensive capabilities are essential to protect civilians and vital infrastructure from ongoing Russian strikes.

BEIJING'S 'HARASSMENT'

Booming Taiwan can well afford more military spending: Prez

CHIAYI

Speaking on Saturday during an event marking the 30th anniversary of Taiwan's first direct presidential election, Lai stressed that the island's booming economy provides the financial capacity to support the eight-year defence spending plan.

He said the additional funding is essential to improve Taiwan's military preparedness in the face of increasing pressure from China.

The proposed defence package, however, has faced obstacles in parliament, where opposition parties hold a majority. Lawmakers from the opposition bloc argue that the government has not provided enough details about how the funds would be spent and have warned they will not approve what they describe as blank cheques.

Despite the political debate,



Lai reiterated his administration's determination to safeguard Taiwan's sovereignty and democratic system. He noted that the anniversary of Taiwan's first direct presidential election is a reminder of the island's democratic progress and the external pressures it has faced over the years.

That election in 1996 came during a period of intense tensions across the Taiwan Strait when China fired missiles into nearby waters in an attempt to influence the vote. The incident highlighted Beijing's opposition to Taiwan's democratic system and its claim over the island.

Lai said the defence plan also reflects the evolving glob-

al security framework, pointing to the United States' national security strategy, which emphasizes collective defence and burden-sharing among allies and partners. Taiwan's strengthened military capabilities, he suggested, would contribute to regional stability.

Taiwan's economic performance has provided strong backing for the government's argument that such spending is manageable. The island is a global technology powerhouse and the dominant producer of advanced semiconductors, a sector that has surged due to rising global demand for artificial intelligence technologies.

Driven by this tech boom, Taiwan's economy recorded its fastest growth in 15 years in 2025, strengthening the government's position that the country has the financial resources to invest significantly in national defence.

Prince Harry spokesperson brands new biography a 'deranged conspiracy'

LONDON

The claims appear in a new book by royal biographer Tom Bower, extracts of which were published in The Times.

Bower, known for writing several biographies about the British royal family, describes growing tensions within the monarchy following the high-profile 2018 wedding of Harry and Meghan.

According to the book, members of the royal family became concerned about the influence Meghan had on Harry. Bower alleges that Camilla, Harry's stepmother and the wife of King Charles III, once told a friend that Meghan had brainwashed Harry. However, Harry's spokesperson swiftly dismissed the claims, describing them as unfounded and conspiratorial.

Harry and Meghan, known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, stepped back from



their official royal duties in 2020 and relocated to California in the United States. Their departure marked a major turning point in their relationship with the royal family and has since been followed by a series of public disagreements, interviews and media reports detailing internal tensions.

Bower's book suggests that the rift between the couple and the rest of the royal family began shortly after their wedding. It claims that Harry's older brother, Prince William, and his wife Catherine, Princess of Wales were particularly concerned about Meghan's influence and saw her as a potential threat to family unity.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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

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

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

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

QUICK READ

India's \$250 million line of credit helps boost yields at Kenya farms

New Delhi

Precision agriculture is helping millions of Kenyan small land holders boost yields as the country cuts fertiliser waste and spot nutrient gaps through satellite data, drones and AI tools, a new report has said, adding that a \$250 million line of credit from India routed via EXIM Bank for hand tractors and smart irrigation is the game-changer for the country. An opinion piece from India Narrative, written by a Kenyan agronomist, said that satellite data from the Kenya Space Agency enables farmers to "monitor soil humidity, spot nutrient gaps and pinpoint pests with accuracy, cutting water and fertiliser waste by up to 30 per cent."

China fuel export halt raises concerns over Aus aviation fuel supply

Beijing

Australia's vulnerability to liquid fuel shortages and price spikes has intensified after reports that China has asked its oil refiners to halt fuel exports, raising concerns over aviation fuel supplies and potential disruptions to flight operations, according to a new report. The Conversation said in its report that development comes amid continuing uncertainty over the Iran conflict and its impact on global oil supplies. The Australian Financial Review reported that China had notified refiners to stop fuel exports, casting doubt over at least two cargo shipments bound for Australia, it said. At the same time, two transport ships were reportedly blown up in the Strait of Hormuz, increasing the likelihood that vessels may avoid the passage while the conflict continues.

S. Korea, Japan to hold policy dialogue on trade, supply chain

Seoul

South Korea and Japan agreed on Saturday to establish a regular communication channel between their industry ministries to better manage various trade, economic security and supply chain issues, Seoul's industry ministry said. The agreement was made at a meeting between South Korean Industry Minister Kim Jung-kwan and his Japanese counterpart, Ryo-sei Akazawa, held on the sidelines of the inaugural Indo-Pacific energy security ministerial meeting in Tokyo, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Resources. The two countries will comprehensively monitor and manage various economic issues, including trade cooperation, economic security, supply chains and mineral resources, through the envisioned policy dialogue amid a rapidly shifting global trade and geopolitical environment, the ministry explained

PM Modi Inaugurates Adani's Haldia Bulk Terminal

AHMEDABAD

The newly-commissioned Haldia Bulk Terminal has been designed to handle dry bulk cargo with an annual capacity of 4 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA). Located on the Hooghly River, the fully automated terminal features direct rail connectivity, representing a major upgrade for bulk cargo movement through India's eastern ports.

Developed as a next-generation facility, the terminal introduces full mechanisation and advanced automation systems aimed at improving operational efficiency and re-

Centre warns against storing petrol in loose containers

NEW DELHI

In a post on social media platform X, the ministry stated that there is no shortage of fuel and that all petrol pumps across India currently have adequate stocks.

It emphasized that petrol and diesel are readily available at retail outlets nationwide and that supplies are being maintained regularly by oil marketing companies.

The ministry also cautioned consumers against storing fuel in loose containers or other inappropriate vessels, highlighting that such practices can pose serious safety risks. Officials stressed that petrol and diesel are highly flammable substances and must only be handled and stored using approved containers and safety protocols.

According to the ministry, an incident recently came to light at a retail outlet in Tamil



Nadu where petrol was reportedly dispensed into a loose container. Authorities said this practice is unsafe and strictly against safety guidelines followed at fuel stations.

Following the incident, the petrol pump involved has been suspended and appropriate action has been initiated against those responsible. The ministry reiterated that fuel dispensing norms are designed to ensure the safety of

both consumers and petrol pump staff, and any deviation from these guidelines will not be tolerated.

Authorities have also directed all petrol pump operators and dealers across the country to strictly adhere to prescribed safety standards while dispensing fuel. The ministry warned that violations of safety norms will attract strict action, including suspension or cancellation of operating licenses.

The govt issued advisory, stating there is adequate availability of petrol and diesel and urged consumers not to engage in unsafe storage practices

assured that petrol and diesel are sufficiently available at retail outlets across the country and urged consumers not to store fuel in loose or inappropriate containers due to safety concerns.

Earlier, the government had also appealed to the public to avoid panic buying of petrol, diesel, or LPG, reiterating that adequate stocks of fuel are available across the country. Officials clarified that there have been no reports of fuel dry-outs at any of the nearly one lakh retail outlets operated by oil marketing companies.

Iran allows Indian ships to pass through Strait of Hormuz, envoy cites historic ties

TEHRAN

Speaking at the India Today Conclave in New Delhi, Ambassador Mohammad Fathali confirmed that Iranian authorities had allowed Indian ships to transit the key maritime route amid heightened tensions in West Asia. However, he declined to disclose operational details such as the number of vessels granted passage or the duration of the arrangement.

"Yes, we have allowed, but let me not tell you how many. As an Ambassador of Iran to India, I will follow this issue in the future as well because Iran and India have historical relations. Of course, as an Ambassador, I have done my best. There was some delay, but it happened," Fathali said while responding to questions



about the movement of Indian vessels through the strait.

His remarks come amid reports that two Indian liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) tankers have already been permitted to cross the Strait of Hormuz despite the ongoing regional conflict. The two vessels—Shivalik and Nanda Devi—are currently en route to India and are expected to arrive in the country within the next few days. Both ships are owned by the state-run Shipping Corporation of India Limited.

The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most strategically significant mari-

time passages, serving as a critical chokepoint for global energy trade. Nearly 20 percent of the world's oil and gas exports pass through this narrow waterway connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

Following the safe transit of the two LPG carriers, several more tankers are reportedly awaiting clearance to pass through the conflict-affected region after Iran granted safe passage to Indian-flagged vessels. Reliable sources indicated that more shipments may soon cross the strait under similar arrangements.

During his address, Ambassador Fathali also defended Iran's decision to target US military bases in several Gulf countries. He claimed that a Tomahawk missile, allegedly launched

from a US base in the region, had struck a girls' school in Iran, resulting in the deaths of around 170 students.

"We have announced that you will not actually be touched... Your assets, whatever you have inside your country. But we asked them what we should do when one of our schools, including the children, was hit by American Tomahawk missiles," the envoy said. He added that while Iran respects neighbouring countries, it would respond by targeting American bases in the region if attacks continue.

The developments come amid escalating tensions in West Asia, raising concerns about the safety of international shipping routes and the stability of global energy supplies.

Akasa Air joins airlines imposing fuel surcharge amid Middle East crisis

NEW DELHI

After Air India and IndiGo, Akasa Air on Saturday introduced a fuel surcharge on its flights, following a rise in aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices amid evolving geopolitical developments in the Middle East.

In a post on X, the airline said the surcharge will range from Rs 199 to Rs 1,300 across its domestic and international routes.

The surcharge will apply to all bookings made from 12:01 am on March 15, 2026, while tickets booked before that time will not be affected.

"Given this impact, Akasa Air will introduce a fuel surcharge ranging from Rs 199 to Rs 1,300 on our domestic and international routes for all bookings made with effect

from 00:01 hours on March 15, 2026," the airline said.

The carrier added that the fuel surcharge will be charged on a per-sector basis and will vary depending on the duration of the flight.

Akasa Air said the decision comes as aviation turbine fuel prices have risen significantly due to geopolitical developments in the Middle East. Fuel accounts for a substantial share of airline operating costs and directly affects industry-wide expenses.

Despite the increase, the airline said it remains focused on maintaining efficient operations and competitive fares.

"At Akasa Air, we remain focused on offering warm and efficient customer service, reliable operations and affordable fares while maintaining

the highest standards of operational efficiency," the airline said.

The airline added that it will continue to closely monitor the operating environment and review the fuel surcharge periodically.

Meanwhile, IndiGo on Friday announced a fuel surcharge on both domestic and international flight tickets starting March 14. In a statement, the airline said the surcharge will range between Rs 425 and Rs 2,300 depending on the route.

Earlier, Air India and Air India Express also announced the introduction of a fuel surcharge on flight tickets. According to the airline group, a fuel surcharge of Rs 399 per ticket on domestic flights came into effect from March 12.

Sharp fuel price hike in Pak turns painful for millions ahead of Eid

LAHORE

The sharp increase in fuel prices in Pakistan are turning painful during Ramadan, when household budgets are already under strain because the rise in the prices of basic necessities disproportionately affects middle-class families, according to a new report.

The sharp Rs 55 per litre increase in fuel prices is sending ripple effects across the country, raising transportation costs, driving up food prices and putting additional burden on households during the holy month, said the Dawn report.

"The timing of the increase has, therefore, intensified public anger. Ramadan is traditionally a period when governments are expected to provide relief through targeted support for essential goods.



India's FTAs with targeted partners drive 92% trade growth

NEW DELHI

The report highlighted that India's trade growth with FTA partners has far outpaced its overall merchandise trade growth with the rest of the world, which increased by 41.5% during the same period.

Analysts attribute this surge to India's shift from a traditionally defensive trade policy to a more growth-oriented strategy focused on countries with strong trade complementarities.

According to the report, India's recent trade agreements are not speculative deals but are based on existing and rapidly expanding trade corridors that gained momentum during the post-COVID economic recovery. "India's recent FTAs are not speculative exercises. They are rooted in trade corridors that were already growing rapidly during the post-COVID recovery," the report noted.

The study also forecasts that India's trade with countries with which it has signed FTAs since 2021 is expected to more than double by 2030. This projected growth will likely be driven by deeper tariff reductions, improved services provisions, and increasing investments that could expand productive capacity across

multiple sectors.

India's trade strategy has increasingly focused on partners where economic interests are aligned, logistics networks are efficient, and trade complementarities already exist. Instead of creating entirely new trade relationships, New Delhi has prioritised strengthening ties with countries where bilateral trade was already expanding.

As a result, the share of FTA partners in India's total trade basket has risen significantly—from about 11–12 per cent in FY21 to nearly 16.5 per cent in FY25. The report described this shift as a deliberate strategy to prioritise economies with high trade intensity and strong alignment with India's strengths in sectors such as manufacturing, energy processing, pharmaceuticals, services, and investment-led growth.

The report also highlighted the importance of India's FTA with the United Kingdom signed in 2025. The agreement has improved market access for Indian businesses, addressed barriers in services and professional mobility, and strengthened investment linkages in areas such as technology, finance, advanced manufacturing, and clean energy.

Instead, households are confronting a cost shock that is quickly eroding purchasing power just as families begin planning for Eid expenses," the report lamented.

Moreover, the price hike impact is particularly severe for millions of daily wage earners and gig workers whose incomes are modest and uncertain.

Pakistan's heavy dependence on imported fuel makes domestic prices highly vulnerable to international shocks.

"Fuel prices are never an isolated economic phenomenon. In an import-dependent economy like Pakistan's, they act as a powerful transmission channel through which cost pressures spread across almost every sector," said the report.

Transport fares have begun

rising across cities within hours of the announcement. For millions who rely on public transport or motorcycles to commute to work, this translates into an unavoidable increase in daily expenses.

The report further stated that households in Pakistan are confronting a cost shock that is quickly eroding purchasing power just as families begin planning for Eid expenses.

In Peshawar, the petrol and diesel price hike has pushed up commodity prices and inter-city travel costs, while petroleum dealers report a noticeable decline in fuel sales.

Meanwhile, in Karachi, the increase in petroleum prices has pushed up transport fares across several modes of travel, putting further pressure on already strained household budgets.

I-T Dept urges taxpayers to ignore erroneous 'significant transactions' emails

NEW DELHI

The Income Tax Department on Saturday asked taxpayers to ignore certain emails containing incorrect information about "significant transactions" sent during the ongoing Advance Tax e-Campaign for assessment year (AY) 2026–27. In a post on X, the department said it received reports from taxpayers that some emails included inaccurate transaction details. Acknowledging the issue, the department apologised for the inconvenience and thanked taxpayers for flagging the problem. Officials said the matter is being addressed with the service provider responsible for the communication system. Until the issue is resolved, taxpayers have been advised to ignore the earlier email communication related to the Advance Tax e-Campaign for AY 2026–27. The department clarified that such messages are only facilitative reminders for taxpayers to review financial information and ensure advance tax compliance. Taxpayers can verify their transaction details through the e-Campaign tab on the Compliance Portal available on the Income Tax e-Filing Portal.

Teenager becomes first North East chess grandmaster

Sixteen-year-old Mayank Chakraborty from Assam becomes India's 94th Grandmaster, first from the North East region

CHENNAI

History was written on the chessboard as sixteen-year-old Mayank Chakraborty officially became India's 94th Grandmaster. Hailing from Assam, the young prodigy has achieved a monumental milestone by becoming the first player from the North East region to earn the prestigious title. His journey to the top culminated in a brilliant performance at the Young Talents tournament held in Sweden, where he dominated a field of

international competitors.

Mayank secured his final requirement for the title with one round still to play. He clinched the status after defeating Philip Lindgren in the eighth round, showing nerves of steel far beyond his years. Not only did he earn the title, but he also went on to win the entire tournament outright. Finishing with seven points out of nine, he ended a full point ahead of his closest rivals from England and Norway. His live rating has now surged past the 2500 mark,



proving his elite status.

The chess world is buzzing over Mayank's "performance rating" of 2670 during the

event, a score that reflects world-class play. This achievement is a proud moment for Indian sports, highlighting the growing talent emerging from every corner of the country. By breaking barriers for the North East, Mayank has turned into an overnight inspiration for thousands of aspiring players in his home state. As he returns to India, the teenager carries not just a trophy, but the dreams of a region finally represented at the highest level of chess.

Iconic cricket duo celebrates twenty five years

NEW DELHI

It has been exactly twenty-five years since cricket history changed forever at Eden Gardens. To mark this massive anniversary, batting legend VVS Laxman shared a heartfelt tribute to his partner, Rahul Dravid. He posted a classic photo online, remembering their incredible stand against Australia in 2001. Laxman called it a career-defining moment built on pure faith and teamwork.

Back then, India faced a terrifying Australian side led by Steve Waugh. The visitors had won sixteen matches in a row and seemed unstoppable. After India was forced to follow on in Kolkata, the situation looked hopeless. That is when Laxman and Dravid stepped onto the crease and stayed there. Together, they put up a staggering 376-run partnership that stunned the world's best bowling attack.

Laxman played a masterpiece, scoring 281 runs, while Dravid fought hard for a gritty 180. What makes this story truly human is the physical pain they endured. Dravid was battling a viral fever, and Laxman was struggling with a severe back injury. Despite the exhaustion, they batted through an entire day without losing a single wicket. Their bravery wore down the Australians and allowed India to declare.

In the final act, Harbhajan Singh and Sachin Tendulkar took crucial wickets to seal a miracle win. Today, that match is still whispered about as the greatest comeback in Test history. It reminds every fan that no matter how dark the scoreboard looks, patience and a good friend can turn the tide of any game.



KKR HONORS LEGENDS WITH BOLD NEW THREADS

KOLKATA

The Kolkata Knight Riders are bringing their storied past to life this season. The three-time champions just revealed their fresh jersey for the 2026 IPL, and it is much more than just a uniform. Titled "Lines of Legacy," the new look uses the team's classic purple and gold to tell a deeper story.

Every stripe on the fabric represents a famous moment from the team's history. Fans will see artistic nods to Brendon McCullum's wild 158-

run knock from the very first IPL game in 2008. There is also a tribute to Rinku Singh's incredible five sixes in a single over, a feat that still feels like magic. When you look closely, these special lines curve and blend together to form the letters KKR in a modern, abstract style.

CEO Venky Mysore explained that this design lets supporters literally wear the team's greatest memories on their sleeves. To get everyone talking, the club launched a funny social media film called

"Kya Line Hai?" featuring actor Rajat Bedi and comedian Anirban Dasgupta. The video uses local humor to connect with the heart of Kolkata's passionate cricket fans.

By turning history into fashion, the franchise is bridging the gap between its legends and the new generation of players. As the purple brigade prepares for another big season, this jersey serves as a powerful reminder of the brilliance and grit that defined them. It is not just gear; it is a celebration of every roar from the stands.

Soukouna strikes late to grab dramatic win

JAIPUR

Rajasthan United FC finally tasted victory in the 2025-26 I-League season after a nail-biting 3-2 win over Namdhari Sports Academy at Vidhyadhar Nagar Stadium kept fans on the edge of their seats until the very last second. French star Amadou Soukouna became the hero of the hour, scoring a clinical winner during injury time to break the deadlock.

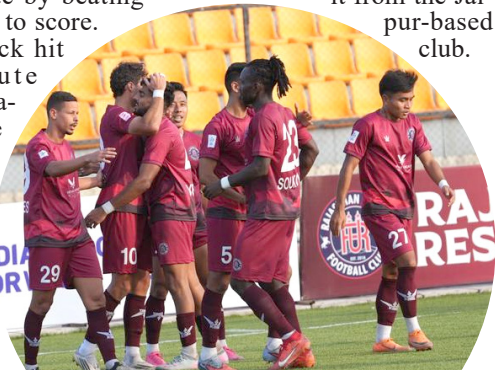
The home side started with high energy and found their rhythm early. In the 13th minute, Soukouna pounced on a defensive mistake following a long ball to slot home the opener. Rajasthan looked comfortable and doubled their lead in the 57th minute. This

time, Pedro Astray was the quickest to react, calmly tucking away a rebound inside the box. At 2-0, the game seemed safely tucked away for the hosts.

However, Namdhari staged a brave late comeback that stunned the local crowd. Manvir Singh sparked hope in the 83rd minute by beating the offside trap to score. Just as the clock hit the 90-minute mark, Najib Ibrahim found the net to level the game at 2-2. It felt like a heartbreaking draw for Rajasthan, but Soukouna had other plans. In

a final surge during stoppage time, he rose highest to head home the winning goal.

This vital victory pushes Rajasthan United up to fourth place in the standings with four points. Meanwhile, Namdhari remains in ninth place. It was a classic display of grit and never-say-die spirit from the Jaipur-based club.



Triple jumpers take center stage in Bengaluru

BENGALURU

The National Open Jumps Competition is set to electrify Bengaluru, with the men's triple jump taking the spotlight. As the first major track and field event of the 2026 season, the meet serves as a vital proving ground for athletes eyeing the Commonwealth and Asian Games. While some big names have withdrawn, the field remains packed with elite talent ready to soar at the Anju Bobby High Performance Centre.

National record holder Praveen Chithravel is the man to watch. Having leaped a massive 17.37 meters previously, he enters the competition as the heavy favorite. He faces stiff competition from Abdulla Aboobacker, the 2022 Commonwealth Games silver medalist. However, the triple jump field is missing defending champion Eldhose Paul, who is currently recovering from knee surgery. Their rivalry is expected to be the highlight of the two-day event.

The long jump category saw a string of last-minute ex-



its. High-profile stars like Shaile Singh and Jeswin Aldrin opted out earlier, but the biggest blow came when Murali Sreesankar withdrew due to viral fever. The 26-year-old now hopes to return for the Indian Athletics Series in April. Despite these absences, fans can still cheer for high jump ace Sarvesh Anil Kushare and pole vault sensation Dev Meena, who recently pushed the national record to 5.40 meters.

For these athletes, every centimeter counts. This meet is not just about medals; it is about finding the rhythm needed for a grueling international calendar. Bengaluru's thin air and passionate crowd provide the perfect backdrop for these stars to begin their journey toward global glory.

Amateur star Lavanya Gupta wins golf title

GURUGRAM

In a stunning display of skill, amateur golfer Lavanya Gupta outshined the professionals to win the fifth leg of the Women's Pro Golf Tour. Competing at the prestigious DLF Golf and Country Club, the young talent maintained her composure through three tough rounds. She finished with a total score of 1-over 217, securing a dominant five-shot victory. Her consistent play throughout the week proved that she belongs among the very best in the sport.

The final day was far from easy, as difficult course conditions tested every player's nerves. Lavanya started her round with six straight pars, showing great discipline. Even after a double bogey on the tenth hole, she did not panic. Instead, she stayed calm and leaned on her steady technique to protect her lead. While her rivals struggled to keep up, Lavanya's ability to bounce back from mistakes was the key to her success on the green.

Professional golfers Durga



Nittur and Jasmine Shekar both finished tied for second place with a score of 6-over 222. Both players had strong starts but unfortunately lost momentum during the final stretch of the match. Meanwhile, seasoned pro Aman-deep Drall took the fourth spot. The tournament featured 57 talented participants competing for a total prize purse of Rs 18 lakh. With this win, the amateur star has sent a clear message to the field. The tour now moves to the Jaypee Wishtown Golf Course, where the next exciting battle begins on March 17.

JAIPUR POLO team gallops into major final

JAIPUR

The Jaipur Polo Team continued their incredible winning streak by crushing Jaigarh 6-2 in the Shree Cement Cup semi-final. From the very first whistle at the pitch, Jaipur displayed a master-class in riding and clinical finishing. Maharaja Sawai Padmanabh Singh was the undisputed star of the show, firing in four goals to take his tournament total to ten. His teammate, Kr. Pratap Singh Kanota, set the pace early by opening the scoring and adding another to complete the dominant tally.

By the end of the first chukker, Jaipur had already raced to a 3-0 lead, leaving their opponents struggling to find any rhythm. Their superior teamwork and passing kept the pressure high, stretching the advantage to a massive 5-0 by halftime. Jaigarh attempted a brave comeback in the third period, showing more urgency and better coordination to find the net twice. However, Jaipur's defensive press remained solid, ensuring they kept a comfortable four-goal cushion heading into the final stages of the match.

The closing minutes were a controlled affair as Jaipur focused on keeping possession to protect their lead. This victory puts the team on the brink of their tenth trophy of an extraordinary season. Just days ago, they clinched their ninth title by narrowly defeating Krishna Polo 6-5.5 in the SMS Gold Vase final. As they prepare for the ultimate showdown, the Jaipur squad looks unstoppable. Fans are now eagerly waiting to see if they can reach that historic double-digit trophy mark.



Jaipur Polo Team dominated Jaigarh 6-2 in Shree Cement Cup semi-final, led by Maharaja Sawai Padmanabh Singh, staying on course for a historic tenth trophy

Alcaraz shines as Svitolina stuns tennis world

CALIFORNIA



The Indian Wells Open reached a fever pitch as the world's top tennis stars collided in a series of high-stakes matches. World number one Carlos Alcaraz led the charge, delivering a master-class performance to secure his spot in the semi-finals. The Spanish sensation dispatched Britain's Cameron Norrie in straight sets, winning 6-3, 6-4. Alcaraz showed incredible poise, controlling every rally and playing with massive confidence during the most critical moments of the game.

He is now set for a blockbuster semi-final clash against former champion Daniil Medvedev. The Russian star earned his place by defeating Jack Draper 6-1, 7-5. Meanwhile, Germany's Alexander Zverev and

Italy's Jannik Sinner also moved forward. Sinner was particularly dominant, crushing American Learner Tien 6-1, 6-2 to round out a star-studded men's final four.

The women's draw provided even more drama as Elina Svitolina pulled off a massive upset. She defeated former world number one Iga Swiatek in a thrilling three-set battle that ended 6-2, 4-6, 6-4. While top seed Aryna Sabalenka managed to survive a tough challenge from Canada's Victoria Mboko, the spotlight remained on Svitolina's grit. Other winners included Linda Noskova and Elena Rybakina, who both showed championship form.

This tournament has been full of surprises, starting earlier this week when Jack Draper shocked the legendary Novak Djokovic. As the semi-finals approach, the energy in California is electric, with fans eager to see if the young guns can keep up this incredible momentum toward the trophy.

India storms into final against fierce England

HYDERABAD

The Indian women's hockey team has marched into the grand final of the FIH World Cup Qualifiers after a gritty performance. Playing at the G.M.C. Balayogi Ground, the home heroes secured a hard-fought 1-0 victory over a stubborn Italian side. The match remained a tense deadlock for the first half, with India creating several scoring chances through penalty corners. Captain Salima Tete and star forward Navneet Kaur kept the Italian defense under constant pressure throughout the opening periods.

The breakthrough finally arrived in the 40th minute when Manisha Chauhan found the back of the net. Her clinical strike proved to be the winner, sparking celebrations across the stadium. India will now face England in the tournament's final match. England earned their spot earlier in the



day by defeating Scotland 2-0, thanks to goals from Lottie Bingham and Darcy Bourne. Both teams are now eyeing the championship trophy in what promises to be an electric showdown between two top-tier international rivals.

In the classification matches for lower rankings, Uruguay dominated Austria with a convincing 3-0 win. Manuela Vilar opened the scoring

early, while Teresa Viana added a double to seal the result. Meanwhile, Wales pulled off a tight 2-1 victory against South Korea, led by two crucial goals from their captain, Elizabeth Bingham. As the tournament reaches its climax, all eyes are on the Indian Eves. They have shown incredible heart and defensive discipline, proving they are ready to fight for the ultimate glory on home soil.

Brijesh and Hack grasp lead in Ahmedabad

AHMEDABAD

The leaderboard is tightening up at the Kalhaar Blues and Greens Golf Club as the Indorama Ventures Open hits its midpoint. Brijesh Kumar and American pro Jhared Hack moved into a shared lead after a gripping second round. Both golfers sit at seven-under 137, showing remarkable consistency under pressure. Brijesh climbed the ranks with a solid three-under 69, while Hack

stayed steady with a two-under 70 to keep his nose in front alongside his rival.

Brijesh provided the highlight of the day on the very last hole. After a round featuring five birdies, he sank a spectacular 20-foot putt on the 18th to finish with a flourish. His calm approach helped him overcome two bogeys earlier in the day.

Meanwhile, Hack relied on his power, picking up crucial birdies on the par-5 holes to maintain his momentum. Both

players admitted feeling confident as they head into the weekend, knowing the margin for error is razor-thin.

Just one shot behind the leaders is India's Dhruv Sheoran, who occupies third place alone at six-under. A dense pack of four golfers, including international stars Clement Sordet and Pierre Pineau, are tied for fourth. It was a tougher day for early leader Rashid Khan, who tumbled down the standings after carding a 74.

CHINNASWAMY STADIUM has passed the IPL safety test

M. Chinnaswamy Stadium gears up for IPL 2026 as KSCA completes successful security drill ahead of RCB's return

BENGALURU

The M. Chinnaswamy Stadium is buzzing with life again as it nears a long-awaited return to the IPL spotlight. The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) conducted a major mock drill to prove the venue is safe and ready for the 2026 season. Under the watchful eyes of a government expert committee, over 50 personnel spent

hours testing new crowd-control measures and security upgrades. This rehearsal is a crucial step toward hosting the defending champions, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, later this month. The stadium has undergone a massive transformation to ensure fan safety. In response to previous concerns, the KSCA has widened several gates and added new entrances along Cubbon Road to prevent overcrowding. Tech upgrades are also

a highlight, with the number of surveillance cameras jumping from 160 to a whopping 500. Officials have also mapped out clear emergency exits and partnered with local hospitals for quick medical support. Most major work is now finished, with only small tasks like putting up signs remaining. KSCA President B.K. Venkatesh Prasad shared his excitement, describing the drill as a great success. He believes the final government

approval, expected on March 16, is now just a formality. The timing is perfect, as the RCB stars are set to arrive at the ground tomorrow to begin their training camp. The stadium's first big test comes on March 28, when RCB takes on Sunrisers Hyderabad in the season opener. With five home games scheduled for Bengaluru this year, the city is ready to turn into a sea of red once more.



Indian racer to tackle Nurburgring in Porsche

NURBURG

Indian speedster Akshay Gupta is shifting his career into high gear this season. The 33-year-old from Ahmedabad has officially stepped up to the elite GT4 category for the 2026 Nurburgring Langstrecken-Serie (NLS). Trading his previous production-class machinery for a powerful Porsche Cayman GT4 CS, Gupta has joined the highly respected Sorg Rennsport team. This move marks a significant milestone as he becomes the only Indian driver to compete in the full championship for three straight years. Gupta will race in the Cup3 class, a category famous for having the largest and most

competitive fields in endurance racing. Since all cars in this class are identical, the outcome depends purely on driver skill and strategy. After securing six podiums and two wins over the last three seasons, Gupta feels ready for the challenge. He will share the cockpit with German drivers Darian Donkel and Aaron Wenisch, aiming to clinch the Pro-AM championship title. The season kicks off today at the legendary "Green Hell" circuit in Germany. This year's series is extra special, with Formula 1 champion Max Verstappen also set to compete in later rounds. For Gupta, the 2026 calendar includes ten grueling races, highlighted by the world-famous Nurburgring 24 Hours in May.



Indian youth boxers clinch five big medals



BANGKOK

India's youth boxing stars have guaranteed themselves at least five medals at the World Boxing Futures Cup in Thailand. A series of explosive quarter-final wins during the matches has paved the way for the national team to reach the semi-finals. Leading the charge, Gunjan dominated Azerbaijan's Gular Huseynova with a 5-0 unanimous victory in the 48kg category. Her teammate Joyshree Devi was equally impressive, forcing the referee to stop her match against Japan's Yura Kanemaru in the very first round. The men's division also saw success as Ambekar Meetei battled through a tough 4-1 win over Japan's Akira Uekubo. Later in the evening, Chandrika Pujari showcased her power by stopping her Spanish opponent in

the second round, while Radhamani Longjam outclassed England's Siobhan Haley with a smart 4-1 performance. While Sahil Duhan faced a narrow loss to France, the five remaining Indian boxers have already secured bronze and are now fighting to upgrade their medals to gold. This tournament is a vital training ground for young athletes born between 2008 and 2009. It offers high-level international experience and serves as a major step toward the Youth Olympic Games in Dakar later this year. With the semi-finals starting today, the Indian camp is confident and full of energy. These young warriors are not just winning matches; they are proving that India's boxing future is in very safe hands. Every punch thrown in Bangkok is bringing them closer to global recognition and hometown pride.



NEW DELHI

Is the legendary "Thala" finally ready to hang up his gloves? Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan believes the upcoming 2026 IPL season could be the final time we see MS Dhoni in the iconic yellow jersey. At 44, Dhoni has already arrived at the Chennai Super Kings training camp, working closely with captain Ruturaj Gaikwad. Pathan suggested that while Dhoni remains as fit as ever, his role this year might shift toward a master mentor. Speaking on the 'Game Plan' show, Pathan noted that CSK feels incomplete without Dhoni's presence. He expects

Irfan Pathan hints that the 2026 IPL may be MS Dhoni's final season, with CSK focusing on mentorship while the legend continues to inspire on and off-field

the veteran to focus on grooming the next generation of stars, including young talents like Ayush Mhatre and the newly traded Sanju Samson. The goal is simple: ensure the leadership baton is passed smoothly while chasing a record-breaking sixth title. Even if his on-field minutes decrease, his wisdom in

the dugout will be the team's greatest weapon. With 278 matches and 5,439 runs under his belt, Dhoni's legacy is already set in stone. Last season, he mostly thrilled fans with quick-fire cameos in the final overs, but CSK CEO Kasi Viswanathan recently confirmed that the legend is available for every single game in 2026. Whether he plays as a keeper or an impact sub, the excitement in Chennai is reaching a fever pitch. As the season opener on March 28 approaches, every fan is savoring what could be the final chapters of cricket's most beloved story.

Call to support non-cricket sports at grassroots

NEW DELHI

Minister of State Raksha Khadse has issued a powerful call to diversify India's sporting culture. Speaking at the Golden Jubilee of the Sports Journalists Federation of India (SJFI), she urged the media to give non-cricket sports more recognition. Addressing a large gathering at the Major Dhyani Chand Stadium, Khadse emphasized that strengthening talent at the grassroots level is essential for India's future as a global sporting powerhouse. The four-day convention, hosted by the Delhi Sports Journalist Association, returns to the capital after over twenty years. Khadse praised journalists for their role in inspiring the younger generation and shaping the nation's sports culture. She highlighted that media coverage helps families understand how children can build careers in



emerging fields like sports science and sports tourism. By shining a light on lesser-known disciplines, journalists act as a bridge between government initiatives and hidden talent in rural areas. Khadse also stressed the importance of women's participation in sports journalism, calling the profession a critical pillar of democracy. The event, attended by Sports Secretary Hari Ranjan Rao, included a traditional

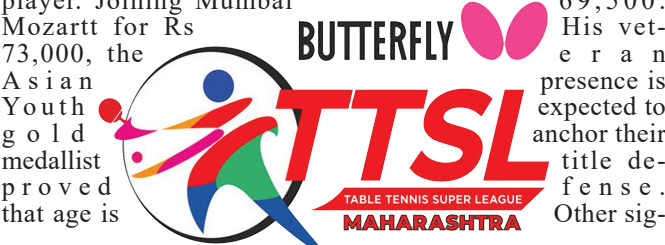
lamp-lighting ceremony and the unveiling of prestigious trophies for inter-zonal competitions. DSJA President Abhishek Tripathi thanked the Sports Ministry for their support in organizing the massive event after a twenty-three-year gap. As the convention continues, the focus remains clear: it is time to look beyond the cricket pitch and celebrate every athlete who wears the national colors.

Teen star dominates Maharashtra table tennis auction

MUMBAI

The Butterfly Table Tennis Super League Maharashtra 2026 auction concluded with a mix of veteran experience and youthful energy. Teenage sensation Divyanshi Bhowmik stole the headlines for the second year running, becoming the most expensive player. Joining Mumbai Mozartt for Rs 73,000, the Asian Youth gold medalist proved that age is

no barrier to value in this professional league. Meanwhile, Jash Modi followed closely behind, secured by Bayside Spinners TTC for an impressive Rs 71,000. Defending champions Phantom Stars made a statement of intent by signing Commonwealth Games gold medalist Sanil Shetty for Rs 69,500. His veteran presence is expected to anchor their title defense. Other significant deals included Reeth Rishya joining PBG Pune Jaguars and Shouren Soman moving to NPV Smashers, both for Rs 61,500. Even the new teams showed ambition, with Jolly Friends Sports Club picking up legend Madhurika Patkar for Rs 51,500 to lead their debut season. Eight teams utilized a Rs 2.5 lakh purse to build balanced squads across six categories, from U-13 boys to veterans. The tournament, scheduled from April 30 to May 3, features a unique format where every game won earns a team point.



Indian women's cricket participation doubles in years

NEW DELHI

A groundbreaking study by the BBC and Collective Newswire reveals that women's participation in cricket has doubled across India since 2020. Surveying fourteen states, researchers found that ten percent of women now play the sport, up from just five percent four years ago. The growth is even more explosive among young women aged fifteen to twenty-four, where participation skyrocketed from six percent to sixteen percent.



states like Uttar Pradesh, the number of female players surged tenfold, proving that the "gentleman's game" is rapidly becoming everyone's game. The rise of the Women's Premier League (WPL) has played a massive role in this shift. Viewership for profes-

sional women's cricket nearly doubled, with audiences now following the national team out of genuine pride rather than just a general interest in sports. Furthermore, one in four young women now views sports as a viable career path. While cricket leads the way,

badminton is also gaining ground in states like Punjab and Telangana. However, the report highlights that hurdles still remain. Roughly thirteen percent of women avoid sports due to safety concerns, and many still cite a lack of time as a major barrier. Shockingly, the study noted a slight increase in regressive stereotypes regarding the appearance of female athletes. Editor-in-Chief Rupa Jha noted that while the data shows inspiring progress, these social barriers require urgent action. As India celebrates its sporting heroes, this study proves that the next generation of girls is ready to step onto the pitch and change history.

Teenager becomes the youngest pole sitter in F1 history

SHANGHAI

Italian sensation Kimi Antonelli made Formula One history by becoming the youngest driver ever to secure a pole position. At just 19 years old, the Mercedes rookie delivered a stunning performance during qualifying for the Chinese Grand Prix. He clocked a lap that was 0.222 seconds faster than his teammate and championship leader, George Russell. This victory shatters the long-standing record held by Sebastian Vettel, who was 21 when he set the mark in 2008. The session was a rollercoaster for the Mercedes team. While Antonelli re-

mained calm and precise, George Russell faced a mechanical nightmare. His car stopped on the track during the final phase due to battery and gearbox issues. However, his mechanics pulled off a miracle to get him back out for one last lap, allowing him to secure second place for a front-row lockout. Russell described the result as "damage limitation" after a stressful afternoon. Behind the Mercedes duo, Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton took third place, while Charles Leclerc followed in fourth. The McLaren pair of Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris will start fifth and sixth. It was a rough day for reigning champion

Max Verstappen, who could only manage eighth for Red Bull. Meanwhile, the Williams team struggled significantly, with Alex Albon expressing his deep frustration over the radio. As the grid prepares for Sunday's race, all eyes are on the teenage star Antonelli to see if he can turn this historic pole into a maiden victory.



Pakistan cricket board denies fining WC stars

LAHORE

The Pakistan Cricket Board has stepped forward to clear the air regarding rumors about their national team. Despite the disappointment of the squad's early exit from the T20 World Cup, officials confirmed that no players have been forced to pay fines for their performance on the field. The news comes after several reports circulated claiming that every player was hit with a massive bill of five million rupees. However, PCB spokesperson Amir Mir spoke to the media to shut down these claims. He explained that while the board is



unhappy about the team missing the semifinals, they are not taking money back from the athletes at this time. Instead of punishment, the board is looking at how to handle future rewards. Currently, top players earn a significant amount of money through their central contracts

and match fees. Between sponsorship deals and a share of international revenue, a player can make nearly seven crore rupees. The board wants to ensure that these big incentives are better tied to how well the team actually plays during major tournaments. Mr. Mir noted that the goal is to make players more accountable, but he stressed that no final decisions have been made. The board remains focused on supporting the squad while they figure out a fair formula for the future. For now, the players can breathe a sigh of relief as they head home. While their trophy cabinet might be empty this year, their bank accounts remain untouched as the board focuses on improvement rather than penalties.



Inside the *Coastal Mansion* of *Rishab Shetty*

A Blend of Culture, Luxury, and Cinema

Popular actor and filmmaker Rishab Shetty, best known for the film *Kantara*, lives in a beautiful coastal mansion in Kundapura, Karnataka. The property, reportedly worth around Rs 12 crore, stands amid green landscapes and is located close to the famous Maravanthe Beach along the Arabian Sea. The house originally belonged to Shetty's great-grand-uncle and has been carefully restored while preserving the family's traditional style.

Visitors entering the mansion are welcomed by wide laterite steps and large Burma-teak doors that highlight coastal architecture. A brass temple bell hangs near the entrance adding a spiritual touch. At the centre of the home is a skylit atrium where a mas-



sive granite tulasi katta weighing about 300 kilograms stands proudly. The space is decorated with Yakshagana headgear and film memorabilia and meaningful props from Shetty's life and career. Among them are a rifle prop used in *Kantara* and a cricket bat signed by Yuvraj Singh. These items quietly tell the story of the actor's journey from coastal Karnataka to national fame.

The mansion also includes several creative spaces. One of the most unusual is the Rain Room designed with

glass walls and a simulated rainfall atmosphere. Shetty often uses this quiet setting to think about stories and write film scripts. The house further features a private screening room with comfortable Italian leather recliners facing a large 150-inch retractable screen supported by Dolby Atmos sound system.

The projector in the room has been playfully named Seleyaraya after the forest spirit from *Kantara*. Outside the house a garage holds several vehicles including an Audi Q7, Mahindra Thar, Jeep Compass and a Royal Enfield Classic 350 motorcycle. Interestingly their horns are tuned to local folk music. Close to the residence stands Shetty's production facility set up in a renovated rice mill where new film projects are developed.

RajKummar Rao, Keerthy Suresh Team Up For Thriller *Raftaar*

Actors Rajkummar Rao and Keerthy Suresh are set to share screen space in an upcoming thriller-drama titled *Raftaar*. The film was officially announced on Saturday by Amazon MGM Studios through its social media platform. According to the announcement, the film is expected to release in theatres on July 24, 2026.

The makers describe *Raftaar* as a gripping and intense drama that will keep audiences on the edge of their seats. The story unfolds in the highly competitive education industry and revolves around a rapidly growing start-up. It focuses on the lives of two ambitious individuals whose dreams of success slowly begin to clash.

As the company expands and gains attention, the pressure of money, power, and influence starts affecting their personal and professional lives. The relationship between the two central characters is tested as they struggle to balance ambition, trust, and rivalry in a demanding environment.

The film is directed by Aditya Nimbalkar and produced by Patralekhaa under the banner of Kampa Film. The story and screenplay have been written by Rohan Narula, while Tarun Bali serves as the executive producer.

Apart from Rao and Suresh, the movie features a strong supporting cast including Anurag Thakur, Rohan Verma, Tanya Maniktala and Rajat Kapoor in important roles. The makers have not yet revealed further details about the storyline or production schedule.

Meanwhile, Rajkummar Rao has several upcoming projects. He will soon appear in *Nikam*, a film based on the life of noted public prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam.

Keerthy Suresh was last seen in the Telugu film *Revolver* Rita, directed by J.K. Chandru. The film also featured R a d h i k a Sarathkumar, Sunil, Ajay Ghosh and John Vijay in key roles.

Couple Friendly Now Streaming On Amazon Prime Video

The Telugu romantic drama *Couple Friendly* has officially arrived on the OTT platform Amazon Prime Video after completing its theatrical run. The film was originally released in cinemas on February 14 to coincide with Valentine's Day and has now become available for streaming for audiences at home.

Directed by debutant Ashwin Chandrasekar, the movie stars Santosh Sobhan and Manasa Varanasi in the lead roles. The film focuses on the modern-day challenges faced by young couples trying to balance love, careers and personal ambitions.

The story is set mainly in Chennai and follows Siva, a young man from Nellore who moves to the city to build a career in interior design. During his journey, he meets Mithra, an independent and ambitious professional woman.



Carmeni Selvam Telugu Teaser Highlights Money, Family, and Ambition

The teaser of the upcoming Telugu film *Carmeni Selvam* has been released, offering a glimpse into a contemporary drama focused on money, family, and modern ambitions. Produced by Pathway Productions, the film features a strong ensemble cast including Samuthirakani, Gautham Vasudev Menon, Lakshmi Priyaa Chandramouli and Abhinaya. The teaser suggests a story that reflects how people chase success and deal with financial pressures in modern life.

The teaser begins with a voiceover by Samuthirakani saying there are many ways to make money. Soon after, different voices present conflicting ideas about wealth and success. Some encourage overspending, others suggest taking bold loans or investing in cryptocurrency, while a few even hint at risky shortcuts. These dialogues present a humorous but sharp look at how society today views money and success.

Rather than delivering a serious message, the teaser

maintains a light tone with irony and humour. It hints that the story may explore how financial choices and responsibilities shape the lives of ordinary people in a world driven by loans, credit cards and EMI payments.

The visuals show Samuthirakani as a family man living with his wife, played by Lakshmi Priyaa Chandramouli, and their young son. However, a few scenes show him alone in a foreign location, raising curiosity about his journey and personal struggles. Meanwhile, the

presence of Gautham Vasudev Menon in an undisclosed role adds further intrigue to the narrative.

The teaser ends with a striking line from Samuthirakani advising that those who want to appear rich should spend like the wealthy, even if they must borrow money to do so.

The film is written and directed by Ram Chakri, with cinematography by Yuvaraj Dakshan and music by Music Cloud Technologies. *Carmeni Selvam* is scheduled to release in theatres on April 3, 2026.

Ustaad Bhagat Singh Gets Benefit Shows, Ticket Price Hike

The upcoming Telugu film *Ustaad Bhagat Singh* starring Pawan Kalyan is set for a grand theatrical release on March 19. Ahead of its release, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has granted permission for special benefit shows and a temporary increase in ticket prices during the film's opening days.

According to reports, theatres in Andhra Pradesh can screen early morning benefit shows starting around 4 am or 5 am on the day of release. The ticket price for these special shows has been fixed at Rs 500. The government order also allows theatres to increase ticket prices for the first 10 days after the film's release.

Under the new guidelines, single-screen theatres can raise ticket prices by Rs 100, while multiplex theatres can increase them by Rs 125. In addition, cinema halls are permitted to run up to five shows per day during this period with the revised ticket rates. The makers had reportedly requested these permissions from the state government, which later approved the proposal.

The film is directed by Harish Shankar and marks his reunion with Pawan Kalyan after their blockbuster *Gabbar Singh*. The movie is described as a cop action

thriller and features Sreeleela and Raashii Khanna as the female leads.

The film is also expected to face competition at the box office from *Dhurandhar*: The Revenge starring Ranveer Singh and directed by Aditya Dhar.

Meanwhile, the situation in Telangana remains uncertain regarding ticket price hikes. In the past, the Telangana High Court had struck down a government order allowing ticket hikes for the film *They Call Him OG*. Because of that ruling, makers may avoid requesting similar permissions in Telangana, where theatres are expected to begin shows from around 7 am without any price increase.



Dhurandhar 2 Early Reviews Spark Debate Among *Ranveer* Fans

Alleged early reviews of the upcoming film *Dhurandhar*: The Revenge have gone viral on social media, creating excitement and confusion among movie lovers. The film, directed by Aditya Dhar and starring Ranveer Singh in the lead role, is scheduled to release later this week and has already generated massive buzz online.

In recent days, several posts claiming to be the first reviews of the film have circulated widely. One viral message described the movie as the *Baahubali 2* of this era, comparing it with the blockbuster *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion*. Another post gave the film a four-star rating and praised Ranveer Singh's performance, claiming he appears in beast mode throughout the movie with intense screen presence.

However, many fans quickly questioned the authenticity

of these reactions. Several social media users pointed out that the film has not yet received certification from the Central Board of Film Certification, making it unlikely that anyone outside the team has watched the movie. Fans also noted that official preview screenings have not yet taken place, which further raised doubts about the credibility of the circulating reviews.

Many supporters of Ranveer Singh warned others not to trust unverified posts and labelled them as fake reviews created to gain attention online. Comments questioning how viewers could watch the film before its certification quickly spread across social media platforms. So far, the only person who has publicly shared a reaction to the film is actress Yami Gautam, who is also the wife of director Aditya Dhar. She revealed that she had already watched the film and described it as beyond extraordinary.

