



Alliance Issue Clear, No Confusion: H D Kumaraswamy

We have not discussed the alliance issue till now. We will discuss it when it is necessary. We are not going to discuss personal statements, said HD Kumaraswamy.

BENGALURU

We are completely open on the issue of alliance. We should not allow any confusion among the people, said Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy.

Speaking at the party office JP Bhavan, he said, responding to the GBA elections, all parties are preparing for the GBA, Zilla and Taluk Panchayat elections. Now there is an atmosphere for elections. We have also called a meeting for the Bangalore GBA elections. We are discussing what our next move should be. We have not discussed the alliance issue till now. We will discuss it when it is necessary. We will discuss it at that time. We are not going to discuss personal statements, he said.

Each party discusses in its



own way. Some people talk, but that is not final. There are two years left for the assembly elections. There are still four to five months left for the Zilla Panchayat elections. Let's discuss when that time comes. It is unnecessary to reply to personal statements, he said.

Responding to the opposition of BJP leaders from Man-

dya and Hassan to an alliance with JDS, Kumaraswamy said, I will not discuss the statements of individuals. Each party discusses it in its own way. Some talk about it. Some talk is not final. The assembly elections are two years away. The local body elections are 4-5 months away. Let's discuss when that time comes. It is unnecessary

for me to respond to those who speak personally, Kumaraswamy said in response to the statements of Preethan Gowda and Narayana Gowda.

Speaking on the issue of the scheming Narayanaswamy's statement that Kumaraswamy can become the Chief Minister if he wants after winning 113 seats, he said, I have told you a hundred times so far. My opinion is that such a corrupt, bad government in the state should be removed. Becoming the Chief Minister is not something that happens later. My opinion is that a good government, a pro-people government should come to this state. We need a government that responds to the sentiments of the people. My agenda is to remove such a corrupt government, he said.

QUICK READ



Cylinder blast in early morning; house wall collapses

Bengaluru

In an incident took place in Yelahanka, in which two couples from Bagepalli were injured. Krishnamma-Raju are the injured husband and wife. A gas cylinder exploded due to a gas leak in a house in Chowdeshwari Layout, Yelahanka, at around 6 am on Sunday. It is not yet clear how the explosion occurred. However, locals are saying that the gas may have leaked when the gas was turned on or the lights were turned on in the morning. A portion of the wall of the house was shattered due to the intensity of the explosion. Later, the locals admitted the injured couple Krishnamma-Raju to the hospital. Krishnamma-Raju from Bagepalli had recently entered into married life. The Yelahanka police have also visited the spot and inspected it and have taken further action.



Mahashivarathri, special pooja at Avimuktheshwara temple

Bengaluru

On the occasion of Mahashivarathri, special abhisheka, flower decoration and pooja was performed at the historical Avimuktheshwara temple in Hoskote town. The rituals started early morning at 4 am. Thousands of devotees visited the temple, offered prayers and had darshan of the deity. With the cooperation of donors, prasad was distributed to all devotees. Former MP BN Bachegowda, MLA Sharath Bachegowda and other dignitaries visited the temple.

Biklu Shiva murder case: MLA Byrathi Basavaraj sent to 7-day CID custody

BENGALURU

The 42nd ACJM Court judge has ordered the remand of BJP MLA Byrathi Basavaraj, the fifth accused in the murder of rowdy shooter Shivaprakash alias Biklu Shiva, in the Bharathinagar police station area, to CID custody for 7 days.

Byrathi Basavaraj was produced at the Koramangala residence of the city's 42nd ACJM court judge. During this, DySP Gautham, the investigating officer of the case, submitted the MLA's angiogram report before the judge. After examining the report, the judge issued an order remanding Byrathi Basavaraj to CID custody.

Rowdyshooter Biklu Shiva alias Shivaprakash was murdered at night in front of a

house near Halasuru Lake in Bengaluru on July 15. 8-9 assailants who came in a car beat Shivaprakash to death with deadly weapons and fled the scene.

An FIR was registered at Bharathinagar police station against Jagadish, Kiran, Vimal, Anil and Byrathi Basavaraj and others on the complaint of Shivaprakash's mother Vijayalakshmi, alleging that a murder had taken place in connection with a land dispute. Facing the threat of arrest, MLA Byrathi Basavaraj had approached the High Court seeking anticipatory bail. The bench that conducted the hearing dismissed the application and said that an application could be filed in the trial court. Later, the trial court also dismissed the antic-

ipatory bail application.

Due to this, Bairathi had approached the Supreme Court challenging the High Court order refusing to grant anticipatory bail. Last Thursday, the Supreme Court also dismissed his petition and upheld the High Court order. The order was given by a division bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant.

After this, the police had taken Byrathi Basavaraj into custody on February 12 when she landed in Bengaluru from Ahmedabad. As soon as Byrathi's arrival came to light, a team led by ACP Sriharsha of Devanahalli division was waiting to arrest her. At 6.45 pm that evening, Byrathi was taken into custody and handed over to the CID.



A priest performs pooja at Mahalingeshwara Temple on the occasion of Mahashivaratri at New Thippasandra, HAL 3rd stage, in Bengaluru on Sunday.



Devotees offer pooja on the occasion of Mahashivaratri at Shiva Temple on old Airport Road, in Bengaluru on Sunday.



JD(S) supreme HD Devegowda with his son Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy and others offered prayers at Tirumala Giri Temple on the occasion of Mahashivaratri at JP Nagar in Bengaluru on Sunday.

PRECAUTION AGAINST HEATWAVE

Summer checks in early, parts of state on heat alert

BENGALURU

When Percy Bysshe Shelley famously wrote 'If winter comes, can spring be far behind', in his 'Ode to the West Wind', it was an invocation to the West Wind to emerge as a powerful vehicle of change and rejuvenation. However, on Saturday, as mid-Feb max-imum temperatures in parts of Karnataka saw an abnormal surge, triggering heatwave alerts in northern Karnataka and the coastal areas, it was perhaps time to pen an 'Ode to the East Wind' as meteorologists cited an absence of

moisture-laden winds "sweeping in from the Bay of Bengal" as the reason behind this unusual spike in heat. So, 'if spring comes with such a scorcher, can a torturous summer be far behind', is the question to ask. On Saturday, Bengaluru logged a maximum of 31.4 degrees Celsius, the highest so far this year, and we're not even into the summer months while areas around the city's airport touched 32 degrees. Coastal and north-interior regions also saw elevated readings: 32.75 degrees in Udupi, 32.6 degrees in Mundgod and 32.4

degrees in Haliyal. The maximum average temperature for February in Bengaluru is around 29 degrees Celsius, while for the rest of the state it's between 29 and 31 degrees. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an Orange Alert for Uttara Kannada, where temperatures are likely to hover between 33 and 34 degrees over the next two days.

A Yellow Alert has been sounded for adjoining Udupi district, warning of possible heatwave conditions. In Bengaluru, maximum temperatures are expected to remain

Bandipur Tiger Reserve May Add 119 Tigers: National Authority

BENGALURU

For over a decade, the issue of human-wildlife conflict resurfaced whenever incidents involving tigers rose, with the state govt and forest officials often attributing attacks on humans to reserves running out of space. However, a recent analysis by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), based on data submitted by Karnataka, challenged the claim. The review found that three key tiger reserves, Bandipur, Nagarahole and Biligiri Ranga Temple (BRT) reserve, currently had tiger populations well within their estimated carrying capacities.

The issue came into sharp focus in the first week of Jan this year when chief minister Siddaramaiah chaired a meeting to reconsider the ban on jungle safaris in tiger reserves. The first question he posed to officials was about the reasons for the sudden rise in conflict.

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre attributed the surge to high tiger density in Bandipur and Nagarahole. Bandipur had just 12 tigers when it was notified as a tiger reserve in 1972, but the population has now crossed 200! Experts estimate that each tiger requires about 10sqkm of territory.



The issue may be examined in a comprehensive manner, taking into account ecological data, long-term conservation objectives and best national practices, so that tiger management in the state continues to remain science-based, balanced and sustainable.

With two reserves together spanning roughly 900sqkm, the area is effectively supporting nearly double the optimal population density, resulting in the likelihood of tigers straying into the human habitats, Khandre briefed the Chief Minister.

Amid what it described as an unusual and unprecedented rise in tiger capture incidents across Karnataka, NTCA reviewed the draft conservation plans for Bandipur, Nagarahole, and BRT reserve to assess how many tigers these landscapes can scientifically sustain. During

A sudden spike in human-wildlife conflict towards the end of the last year once again reignited a long-running debate over the carrying capacity of Karnataka's tiger reserves.

September-December 2025, Karnataka rescued and rehabilitated 27 tigers. Following its analysis, NTCA wrote to the chief wildlife warden of Karnataka, stating, as per the available scientific assessments, the tiger populations in these reserves remain within their estimated carrying capacities. The analysis, compared with the figures of the 2022-23 tiger census report, revealed that Bandipur had enough space to accommodate an additional 119 tigers, Nagarahole 35, and BRT 34. NTCA also cautioned against routine captures of tigers. In high-density landscapes, occasional dispersal of tigers beyond the protected areas is a natural ecological process and may not always warrant capture, and such situations are often better addressed through intensified monitoring and appropriate conflict-mitigation measures in accordance with NTCA guidelines.

CMO row, BJP's Sunil Kumar demands forensic probe into 'fake' transfer note

BENGALURU

MLA V Sunil Kumar has called for a forensic investigation into an allegedly forged document purportedly linked to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), raising concerns about the integrity and functioning of the administration. The demand follows the registration of a police case on Friday after the CMO lodged a complaint regarding the circulation of a fake note on social media. The document falsely claimed that a district health and family welfare officer in Mandya had been appointed as the deputy commissioner of excise in Mysuru. The case has been registered against an unidentified individual at the Vidhana Soudha police station under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) related to forgery and the use of forged documents. The CMO has alleged that the act was carried out with malicious intent to defame the chief minister and the Congress-led government in the state. In a post on X, Sunil Kumar questioned the functioning of the office, stating, if the letter bearing the Chief Minister's signature itself is fake, should we not reflect on how the Chief Minister's Office is functioning. Sunil Kumar said the incident raises serious concerns about administrative oversight.

This clearly shows that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is now focussed only on the



chair and not on the functioning of his office, he alleged. Calling for a forensic examination, Kumar said, "If this letter is fake, then the authenticity of the signature on it must also be established. Therefore, the signature should be subjected to examination by the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) to determine whether it is genuine or forged. It would not be surprising if this turns out to be a major 'letterhead' scam operating within the Chief Minister's Office. He further questioned how the document came to light. Why did the Chief Minister sign a letter without a date. Who were the persons who got the letter signed. What benefit did they derive from it. All these aspects should come out through an investigation. Otherwise, the investigation ordered by Siddaramaiah would appear to be a 'kill the messenger' tactic, he said. Stating that he had cited the letter believing it to be genuine, Kumar added, like Siddaramaiah, I too am a person in public life, a responsible MLA in the opposition. Believing the letter I received to be genuine, I cited it as an example of administrative lapses in the government.

Bengaluru advocate questions man for urinating in driveway, beaten up

BENGALURU

An advocate was allegedly assaulted by a cop and two others for objecting to the policeman urinating in the driveway of his office building on Church Street. The complainant, Adarsh Gangal, registered an FIR with Cubbon Park police, identifying the accused as Satish. However, the FIR does not mention Satish as a policeman. We are told that the man, who was urinating, was a policeman in uniform, a senior police officer said.

According to Gangal, he came across the person urinating in the driveway of Kalpak Arcade around 9 pm while walking out of the building after work. Two more men were standing nearby and consuming alcohol. I asked him to use a public toilet. Looking in my direction, he gestured to wait and continued his act. Afterwards, he abused me and tried to snatch my mobile when I tried to call police. The other two persons held me, and one of them hit me on my face, breaking my spectacles. Gangal's complaint read. A senior police officer said, we are looking for the persons. The person, who is believed to be a policeman, is not from the jurisdictional Cubbon Park police station. This is for sure, he said.



between 29 and 31 degrees over the next two days.

C S Patil, Scientist at IMD Bengaluru, warned of a harsh summer ahead. Summer is

likely to reach its peak in April-May across Karnataka, with parts of north Karnataka witnessing 43 to 45 degrees Celsius. In Bengaluru, mer-



QUICK READ

Techie loses ₹93 lakh in stock scam

Davanagere
A 38-year-old female techie from Siddaveerappa Block fell victim to a ₹93 lakh stock trading fraud. She invested the money in stages after receiving a message in a WhatsApp group called "VIP Rudra Shares," believing it promised high returns. When the promised profits never arrived, she realized she had been cheated. Authorities at Sen Police Station have registered a case and begun investigating the scam. Officials warned investors to remain cautious of online investment schemes and verify sources before transferring money, highlighting the rising risk of cyber fraud targeting unsuspecting individuals.

SRS demo classes help parents understand learning

Hubballi
Sri Raghavendra English Medium School in Dollars Colony launched a Demo Parent Class campaign to guide parents on modern teaching methods and their role in children's education. Hundreds of parents attended sessions showcasing how concepts, language skills, and values are taught. Teachers highlighted English communication, confidence building, and value-based learning. The initiative also emphasized mental health, joyful learning, and individualized assessments. Parents appreciated the transparency and gained insight into supporting children at home. The program strengthened school-family collaboration, reinforcing the idea that quality education thrives when parents and teachers actively work together.

Sevalal Jayanti strengthens unity says Ballari Mayor

The programme, organized by district administration, Zilla Panchayat, and others, urged society to follow elders' guidance and teach values to younger generations

BALLARI

Mayor P. Gadeppa said that Jayanti celebrations of great personalities are not mere events but symbols of social unity and collective strength. He was speaking after inaugurating the Sant Sri Sevalal Jayanti programme held at Dr. Joladarashi Doddanagouda Theatre in the city on Sunday. The programme was organized jointly by the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, Kannada and Culture Department, and the Metropolitan Corporation. The mayor said society must follow the path shown by elders and social leaders. He added that it is everyone's duty to pass on the messages and values of



great personalities to the younger generation. Gadeppa said the Metropolitan Corporation has decided to celebrate the Jayantis of around 28 great personalities in a meaningful manner. He said discussions have already been held with MLAs and corporators regarding these

programmes. He assured that special funds will be allocated in the corporation budget to support cultural, religious, and social development activities. District Guarantee Scheme Implementation Authority Chairman K.E. Chidanandappa said Saint Sri Sevalal Ma-

haraj is remembered as a spiritual guide who won people's hearts through his teachings. He said Sevalal preached values such as truth, non-violence, sacrifice, and freedom from addiction, which remain relevant even today. In a special lecture, Prof. S. Shantanayaka of the Karnataka Banjara Culture and Language Academy stressed that education is the strongest tool to bring marginalized communities into the mainstream. He urged students to learn science, technology, and English along with traditional studies. Devotional music was presented by D. Sandhyarao's troupe. Officials, community leaders, and the public attended the programme.

PSI Mantesh Kumbara urged wise technology use for learning, encouraged reading and curiosity, and warned parents about cyber and sexual crimes

SIRSI

Value-based education is the real gateway to success and plays a key role in shaping responsible citizens, speakers said at a parents' awareness programme held in Sirsi on Sunday. The event focused on guiding parents to ensure a bright and secure future for their children through balanced learning. Ganesh Sannalingannavar, President of Sri Jayanthi Vidyavardhaka Sangha, said children are the builders of tomorrow and need more than textbook knowledge. He stressed that education must include values such as discipline, honesty, respect, and social responsibility to help students succeed in life. Addressing the gathering,

PSI Mantesh Kumbara urged parents and students to use mobile phones and technology wisely. He said technology should be used to gain knowledge, not only for entertainment. He encouraged daily reading habits, curiosity, and the courage to ask questions. He also warned about rising crimes, cybercrime, and sexual offences, advising parents to closely monitor their children's activities. Presiding over the programme, P.R. Raghavendra Suntrahalli, President of the International School, said schools must function with the sole aim of securing children's futures, without selfish motives. He noted that private schools have grown due to a lack of development in government schools and called for



equal respect for the mother tongue along with English. He informed that the school currently runs LKG and UKG classes and plans to expand up to Class 5 soon. Along with quality education, the school also focuses on sports, yoga, and music, especially for rural children. Former gram panchayat

vice-president Siddu Nergal, BJP Yuva Morcha district president Prem Kumar Naik, Sudarshan Andagi, school director Pooja Raghavendra, parents, teachers, students, and members of the public attended the programme. Several guests were felicitated for their service, adding warmth and purpose to the event.



Free transport offered during Siddha Rudhra fair

HUBBALLI

The city of Hubballi is bustling with activity as devotees gather for the annual Sri Guru Siddha Rudhra festival. The revered Ajjana fair draws visitors not only from Karnataka but also from neighboring states, with some pilgrims traveling on foot while others arrive in buses or private vehicles. To accommodate the large influx of devotees, local auto drivers and bus owners have generously offered free transport services during the festival. For the past 35 years, this tradition has continued, providing easy access to the Sidharoodha Math. This year, around 600 to 700 autos are participating, ferrying passengers from key locations including the railway station, old bus stand, Hosur bus stand, Chennamma Circle, Gokul Road, airport, and Kes-

hwarpur area. Organizers have also arranged free food and water for devotees arriving on foot, ensuring their comfort and safety. Pilgrims expressed gratitude, praying for strength to serve others and continue the tradition of devotion. The festival atmosphere is marked by devotion, joy, and community spirit. Many visitors praised the selfless service of the city's drivers and volunteers, saying it reflects the true spirit of Shivaratri. The city administration, along with local residents, has worked to ensure smooth arrangements, enabling devotees to participate in rituals and prayers without worry. As the fair continues, Hubballi stands as an example of faith, generosity, and hospitality, uniting communities in celebration of spirituality and service.

Murder accused escapes from police custody

HUBBALLI

Prajwal, the accused in the Mallik murder case, escaped from police custody, raising serious questions about security arrangements at the Hubballi sub-jail. Prajwal had been arrested by Bendige police on November 13 after Mallik suffered fatal injuries in an attack on Mantur Road. Earlier, he was transferred from Hubballi to Bijapur jail following a Hyderabad incident and brought back for trial in an-

other case. During his stay at the police station, Prajwal reportedly offered fruit to the personnel and fled unnoticed. The Hudha Police Commissioner, N. Shashikumar, said a case has been registered against the accused, and disciplinary action has been initiated against two personnel for negligence. A special team has been formed to trace him, and authorities expect his arrest soon. The incident has sparked discussions on custody security protocols and police accountability in the city.

BDC Bank must support farmers, says Minister

BELAGAVI

Public Works Department and district in-charge minister Satish Jarkiholi said the BDC Bank should give loans to farmers, whether the bank makes profit or loss. He clarified that recent remarks made by BDC Bank chairman An-nasaheb Jolle were misunderstood and created unnecessary confusion. Speaking to reporters at the Deputy Commissioner's office, the minister said BDC Bank is meant mainly for farmers. He stressed that loans must be provided strictly according to the guidelines of Reserve Bank of India and NABARD. He explained that banks cannot lend freely without following these rules. Satish Jarkiholi said the power to increase the credit limit for farmers does not lie with BDC Bank. Only RBI and NABARD can take such decisions. He added that banks also provide loans to



private companies, including sugar factories, to strengthen the financial health of the bank. Reacting to political questions, the minister said he would not comment on statements made by MLC Channaraja Hattiholi about Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar. On development works, he said MLAs have already demanded funds for their departments and no separate demand was made for Belagavi district. However, required development works will be taken up using departmental grants, and he expressed confidence about getting more irrigation funds. On electoral roll revision, Jarkiholi said the process is being done as per Election Commission directions. Around 70 percent of the work is complete, and BLOs are visiting homes to create awareness. He assured that no voter names have been removed and the revision will continue till 2028.

Shivalinga, Nandi idols vandalized on Shivaratri

GADAG

In a shocking incident on Maha Shivaratri, unidentified miscreants vandalised a Shivalinga and Nandi idol near Shingatalur in Mundaragi taluk, triggering anger among residents. The idols of Sri Ramalingeshwara and Nandi, situated on the village outskirts, were found damaged on Saturday morning when devotees gathered for special prayers and preparations. The water bowl of the Shivalinga, the face of the Nandi idol and the Honnathemma Devi idol behind the temple were defaced. Villagers suspect the offenders entered the premises at night and carried out the act deliberately, hurting religious sentiments on the sacred festival. Residents condemned the incident and demanded immediate arrest of those responsible, urging a thorough probe. Police visited the spot, began inquiries and tightened security in the area to maintain peace and prevent further tension. Authorities appealed for calm confirming close monitoring of situation continuously now.



Modern animal birth control centre opens in Gangavathi

GANGAVATHI

A well-equipped Animal Birth Control Centre was inaugurated on Sunday to humanely control the rising stray dog population in Gangavathi city. The facility has been set up at the municipal waste treatment plant premises in Hirejantakal and is the first of its kind in the district. On the very first day, more than 40 stray dogs underwent sterilisation. The centre has been started with a first-phase grant of ₹9.90 lakh from municipal funds to manage and maintain operations. Officials said the project aims to reduce the growing number of stray dogs while ensuring their safety and health. Currently, the city has over 5,000 stray dogs. In the first phase, 1,950 dogs have been identified, and more than 850 of them will be sterilised. The centre can safely handle sterilisation of 30 to 50 dogs every day. Dogs are caught carefully, treated, and released only after full recovery. Assistant Executive Engineer of the Sanitation Department Sharanappa said around ₹1,650 is spent per dog. This

Over 5,000 stray dogs exist, 1,950 identified, 850+ to be sterilised daily; each costs ₹1,650 including treatment, feeding, veterinary care, and rabies vaccination

includes catching, treatment, food, medicines, and veterinary charges. Rabies vaccination is given immediately after neutering, with animal safety kept as the top priority. The process takes four days. Dogs are kept at the centre on the first day, sterilised on the second day, monitored on the third day, and released on the fourth day after recovery. Food is provided carefully, starting with normal meals, followed by porridge, eggs, rice, and chicken pieces. Only six to eight dogs are kept in each room. The centre provides clean filtered drinking water, fans, night lighting, and round-the-clock staff security. Officials said the centre reflects a humane and scientific approach to animal welfare and public safety.

Mahashivratri draws thousands to Tarali Mutt



SIDDAPUR

Mahashivratri was celebrated with deep devotion and spiritual fervor at Sri Samsthana Tarali Mutt in Siddapur taluk. As part of the celebrations, 1008 Satyanarayana Vrat Kalashas and a grand Dharma Sabha were organized, drawing thousands of devotees from different places. Early in the morning, special Rudrabhisheka rituals were performed at the Shiva temple. This was followed by the installation of 1008 Satyanarayana Vrat Kalashas and a mass Satyanarayana Katha Shravan. Devotees patiently participated in the rituals, offered prayers, and received blessings and prasada, creating a peaceful and sacred atmosphere throughout the mutt premises. Addressing the gathering, Sri Yogendra Swamigal said discipline and unity are essential for building a strong society. He urged people to avoid hatred and negative thoughts and develop a broad and pos-

itive mindset. He said society should take pride in contributing to the progress of the state and work together for the development of Tarali Mutt. Inaugurating the Dharma Sabha, Bheemanna Naik said public support is vital for the growth of religious institutions. He announced that a grant of Rs 30 lakh has been sanctioned for the construction of a hall, as promised earlier. He assured efforts to improve infrastructure in Siddapur taluk and appealed for collective cooperation. Social activist B.R. Naik also spoke on the occasion. Taluk Guarantee Implementation Committee President K.G. Nagaraj, Vasantha Naik Manamane, Harish Naik Hasviguli, V.N. Naik, C.R. Naik, and many other community members were present. The Mahashivratri celebrations at Tarali Mutt highlighted faith, unity, and collective responsibility, leaving devotees spiritually enriched and hopeful for continued social harmony and development.

VOICES OF PEOPLE

Young poets must reflect people's lives: Madari

VIJAYANAGAR

Senior litterateur A.M. Madari said young poets of the modern age must become the true voice of common people and reflect their struggles through poetry. He was speaking while inaugurating the youth poets' conference held at Virupaksheshwar Vedithe as part of the Hampi Utsav. Madari said the lives of street labourers and ordinary people, which are often ignored in literature, should



find a place in poems. He stressed that meaningful language, style, and form are important, but real literature is born only when pain, hard-

ship, and lived reality are expressed honestly. He noted that traditions like Vachana, Janapada, Dasavani, and Navodaya literature continue

to guide young writers. He warned poets against flattery and blind praise of those in power. Writers should have self-respect and moral courage to question injustice, he said. Poetry should ease the burden of the mind and help mental well-being, not deepen social wounds. As many as 38 young poets recited their poems during the meet. Their works touched on themes such as the Vijayanagara Empire, present-day politics, religious conflict, fatherhood, the girl child,

and women's sensitivity. Poems by Mugila Hakki, A y a n n a N a y a k a Pamanakallur, B.M. Priyanka, Sheikh Muhammad Shaji, Dr. Anasuya Y.T., Shweta Bali, and Renuka Helaweta drew strong appreciation for addressing social realities. The session was presided over by Dr. K. Rabindranath. Several writers, officials, and scholars attended. The youth poetry meet added a powerful literary voice to the Hampi festival by linking history with today's social concerns.

QUICK READ

FOUND SAFE

Missing woman found safe with lover
HASSAN

A mysterious disappearance case in Belur taluk ended on a happy note after police found 29-year-old Priyanka safe in Kunigal. She had gone missing from Belur bus stand on February 12 while heading to a wedding. Her clothes were later found near Kalkere Lake, raising fears of foul play. Family members had filed a complaint, suspecting danger as she was wearing gold ornaments worth Rs 20 lakh. Acting swiftly, Belur police tracked her mobile location and found her with her lover at a lodge in Kunigal. Police have now closed the missing case.

Bus brake failure causes multiple accidents

MYSURU

A series of accidents occurred near the Mysuru City Transport Bus Stand due to a government bus brake failure. One bus collided with another, which then hit an auto moving ahead. Two buses and the auto were damaged in the incidents. Traffic at the site was temporarily stopped as authorities worked to clear the vehicles. No casualties have been reported so far. Officials are inspecting the buses involved to determine the cause of the brake failure and ensure public safety, while commuters are advised to take alternate routes until the situation is resolved.

Tiger found dead in Gundal Reservoir

CHAMARAJNAGAR

The body of a male tiger, estimated to be 5 to 6 years old, was found in the Gundal Reservoir on Sunday. Forest officials suspect the tiger may have died after getting caught in a snare. Officials from BRT Tiger Reserve reported that the carcass was discovered during a patrol in the Gundal branch of the Kollegal Wildlife Zone. Authorities believe the animal became trapped near the reservoir and died. Following National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) guidelines, a post-mortem will be conducted by the Veterinary Officer in the presence of the NTCA representative, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, and the Chief Wildlife Warden. The body will then be cremated. A case has been registered under the Wildlife Protection Act, and the Forest Department has launched an investigation into the incident to determine the exact cause of death.

Ravikumar mocks Yathindra, backs Shivakumar leadership

Ravikumar praised D.K. Shivakumar's strategy, predicted his Chief Ministership, and compared the Congress team to a strong cricket team

MANDYA

MLA Ganiga Ravikumar sparked political discussion with a satirical remark, saying Yathindra Siddaramaiah is the "high command" of the party. Speaking to reporters in Mandya, Ravikumar said the high command can issue notices to leaders, but leaders cannot question the high command, adding a sharp tone to his comments.

Referring to statements by D.K. Shivakumar, Ravikumar said he fully agreed that Yathindra holds significant influence. He remarked that while leaders are told not to speak, Yathindra continues to give statements, which he described sarcastically as acting



like the "Supreme Court." Ravikumar said it is difficult to place Yathindra anywhere in the power structure, claiming he appears stronger despite being asked to remain silent. Strongly supporting D.K. Shivakumar, Ravikumar said

no one can stop him from becoming Chief Minister. He praised Shivakumar's political skills, calling him a master strategist who knows when to act and when to wait. Comparing the Congress team to the Indian cricket team, he

said it is strong and experienced, not weak. He added that answers to political questions will come very soon.

Reacting to statements by H.D. Kumaraswamy, Ravikumar mocked his claim of removing a corrupt government. He said Kumaraswamy failed to protect his own government and accused him of being confused between ruling and opposition roles.

On the ARAI unit issue, Ravikumar said land and facilities have already been provided and urged Kumaraswamy to bring the industry. He stressed that constituency development is his priority and cooperation will continue without political criticism.

Madhubangarappa instructed officials not to evict farmers, advised filing appeals for pending Forest Rights applications, and assured careful government review

Minister assures Yadamane farmers over notices

SHIVAMOGGA

School Education and Literacy Minister Madhubangarappa has assured farmers of Yadamane village in Karur hobli of Sagar taluk that there is no need to panic over notices issued by the Forest Department. He said the government has no intention of evicting farmers and will protect their interests.

In a statement, the minister said he immediately spoke to senior Forest Department officials after learning about the notices served to several farming families. He clarified that the notices were based on decisions taken during the 2012-13 BJP government and



are part of implementing an earlier order.

"I have instructed officials not to take any harsh action or forcibly evict farmers under any circumstances," he said. Many farmers have applied under the Forest Rights Act, but some applications are pending due to incomplete

documentation. He advised concerned committees to file appeals and assured that the government would review each case carefully. Madhubangarappa emphasized that the state government is committed to safeguarding farmers and vulnerable families. He urged the residents of Yadamane not to worry, promising that due process will be followed and no injustice will be allowed. The minister's statement has brought relief to several families who were anxious about possible eviction. Local officials are expected to hold discussions soon to clarify procedures and assist farmers in completing necessary formalities under the law.



Family retaliates after husband attacks wife

UPPINANGADY

A shocking incident in Dakshina Kannada has left the local community reeling after a 73-year-old man, K.C. Varghese, was beaten to death by family members following an attack on his wife. Police have arrested three individuals in connection with the case, including Varghese's son, K.V. Thomas, his wife's brother, C.T. Raju, and a relative named Chakochha.

The case initially registered as an unnatural death on February 9 at Uppinangady Police Station was later reclassified as murder after medical reports confirmed serious head and body injuries. Police investigation revealed that Varghese had assaulted his wife, prompting her to leave the house and sit at a distance. A local witness alerted her son, who quickly sent her to the hospital.

Upon learning about the attack, Raju called Chakochha and involved Thomas in a plan to confront Varghese. The two men returned to Varghese's home and reportedly beat him with a stick. Afterward, they instructed Thomas to take him to the hospital, where initial claims suggested he had fallen and suffered a fatal head injury.

However, a thorough investigation confirmed the assault as the cause of death. All three accused have been produced before the court, and police continue to probe the case from all angles, ensuring that justice is served while examining the circumstances that led to this tragic family confrontation.

Mandya chemical tank blast kills two workers

MANDYA

A massive explosion at Keerthi Chemicals Industries near Karekate village in Basaralu claimed two lives and critically injured three others on Sunday morning.

The blast, between 8:30-8:45 AM, involved a chemical tank, mutilating the Bihar-origin workers' bodies. One survivor lost a hand; all injured were rushed to Mandya's MIMS Hospital. Factory staff fled post-incident; identities remain unconfirmed. Basaralu police registered a case, inspected the site, and are probing causes while tracing victims. Eyewitness G. Prakash recounted: "Four years back, a leak here ruined farmers' crops, sparking protests that shut the plant a month ago. We heard the boom, found the bodies, and saw ambulances take the injured. Police are investigating." This tragedy revives safety concerns at the controversial factory.



ed Shivani Shantaram, Shantaram Bhatkal, Kiran Chandavar, and other owners of the agency, along with hundreds of local devotees.

The annual barefoot pilgrimage has grown in popularity over the years, drawing families, young people, and elderly devotees alike. Participants described the experience as spiritually uplifting, with the early morning chants and collective devotion creating a unique sense of unity.

Organizers emphasized safety and coordination throughout the journey, ensuring that all devotees could complete the trek smoothly. For many, walking to MurudeshwaronMahashivratri has become an essential tradition, blending faith, endurance, and community spirit.

Thousands walk barefoot to Murudeshwar Temple

BHATKAL

Thousands of devotees from across the taluk participated in a barefoot journey from Bhatkal to the world-famous Murudeshwar Temple on the auspicious occasion of Mahashivratri. Covering a distance of around 18 kilometers, the devotees began their walk in the early hours, chanting "Om Namah Shivaya" as they made their way to the temple.

The padayatra was led by Tahsildar Nagendra Kola Shetty, who, along with staff from the revenue department, started the march at around 4 a.m. They reached Murudeshwar by 7 a.m. and offered their prayers to Lord Shiva. "This was my first time joining the padayatra with my team," the Tahsildar said. "I prayed for long life and good health for all devotees."

This year marked the 16th consecutive year the padayatra was organized under the guidance of Ranjan Gas Agency for community welfare. Key participants includ-

tend support to those facing financial difficulties.

Former Urban Development Authority chairman Ibrahim Kodijal explained the importance of Ulama-Umara coordination for social harmony. LMRA Education Group president Sheikh Muhammad Irfani spoke about the need to build a drug-free society.

Advocate Sarfaraz explained the Waqf Property Act and the importance of maintaining proper documents. Minority Welfare Department officer Jitendra Kotian briefed participants on welfare schemes, while Minority Development Corporation district manager Yashodhara spoke about available financial facilities.

District Swachhta Ambassador Sheena Shetty highlighted the dangers of waste accumulation and the importance of maintaining clean surroundings.



Minister defends school work video amid outrage

MANDYA

Video showing government school students allegedly made to do plaster and construction-related work in Mandya district has gone viral, sparking public anger. Responding to the issue, Minister N. Chaluvaryaswamy defended certain activities while warning against misuse of children.

The incident occurred at a government higher primary school in Nalkundi village of Nagamangal taluk. The viral video shows students carrying cement and sand for school construction work, reportedly under the direction of teachers. Local residents strongly objected, saying it is illegal and unsafe to involve children, especially girls, in such hard labour.

The minister said he had sought details from officials and clarified the government's stand. He stated that making children plant saplings, clean school premises, or take part in light activities within the school compound is not a crime. However, he stressed that forcing children to do heavy construction work or taking them outside the school for labour is wrong and against rules.

Chaluvaryaswamy said the

Ullal Ulama workshop focuses on community development



KONAJE

Stressing the need for discipline and transparency, Waqf Board member Syed Ashraf Thangal Adur said all activities of Ulama-Umara Sangams must strictly follow rules and support overall community development. He was speaking at an information workshop for Ullal taluk-level Ulama, Umara Sangam, and Jamaat representatives held at a private hall in Konaje.

The programme was jointly organized by the District Waqf Advisory Committee, Dakshina Kannada District Minority Welfare Department, Minority Development Corporation, and several social and religious organizations. Addressing the gathering, U.T. Khader said Jamaats should actively share information about government schemes meant for community growth. He urged leaders to identify students with higher education and ex-

Seminar on ending untouchability to be held in Afzalpu

AFZALPUR

A seminar focused on the eradication of untouchability in the district to be held on February 20 at Guru Bhavan, opposite the town's tehsil office. The event is jointly organized by the District Social Welfare Department, Kalaburagi, and the Samrat Ashoka Charitable Trust, Mallabadi, according to Trust President Yallappa Doddamani. The program will be inaugurated by MLA M.Y. Patil, while former minister Malikayya V. Guttedar will perform the photo worship. BJP

leader Nitin V. Guttedar will oversee the release of the constitution proposal, and KKRTC Chairman Arunkumar Patil will also be present. Several dignitaries and officials are expected to attend, including District Social Welfare Department Joint Director Preeti Doddamani, Tahsildar and Taluk Magistrate Sanju Kumar Dasar, T.P.M. Executive Officer Veeranna Kaulagi, T.S.K.E. Assistant Director Ashok Nayak, Field Education Officer Irpanna Gudami, and Municipal Chief Officer Fakhroddin.

DISCIPLINE AND PROGRESS

Saint Sri Sevalal guided society through peace path'

SHIVAMOGGA

Saint Sri Sevalal worked for social progress and showed society the path of peace, said Additional District Collector Abhishek V. He was speaking after inaugurating the Sant Sri Sevalal Jayanti programme held at Kuvempu Ranga Mandira on Sunday.

The event was jointly organized by the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, Mahanagara Palike, Kannada and Culture Department, and Zilla Banjara Sangha, Shivamogga. Abhishek V said Sevalal



strongly opposed alcoholism and bad habits, and taught people to lead disciplined and meaningful lives. He added that following Sevalal's prin-

ciples can bring positive change to society.

He explained that on Sevalal Jayanti, devotees in various thandas wear garlands

and take vows to stay away from evil practices, similar to the traditions followed by Ayyappa devotees. He also announced that in coming days, meritorious students from the community will be honored for academic excellence.

Ganesh T, head teacher of a government high school, delivered a special lecture on the history of the Banjara community. He said research shows its roots date back to the Indus Valley civilization. He highlighted that Saint Sri Sevalal was born on February

15, 1739, and stood alongside reformers like Kanakadasa and Purandaradasa.

Sevalal loved animals, travelled widely, and was known as an able organizer and thinker. He preached five key values—truth, kindness, honesty, non-stealing, and freedom from vices—for social growth.

Officials including Hanuma Nayak, Umesh H. Rekhyanayak, community leaders, and devotees attended the programme, making the celebration meaningful and inspiring for all present.

QUICK READ

Two detained for insulting National Flag, Bhagavad Gita

RAICHUR

Market Yard police have detained two individuals for allegedly posting a photo on social media showing them trampling the National Flag and the Bhagavad Gita with their feet. The accused, Nawaz and Sohail from L.B.S. Nagar, were reported by Karthik Reddy after the image appeared on WhatsApp. Both have been summoned to the Market Yard Police Station for questioning. Authorities are investigating the incident under relevant laws, highlighting the seriousness of disrespecting national symbols and religious texts.

Bidar south MLA offers prayers at Papanasha Temple

BIDAR

Dr. Shailendra Beldale, MLA from Bidar South, visited the famous Shri Papanasha Temple with his family on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri. He offered special prayers, participated in the Prasad distribution, and prayed for the well-being of all devotees. The event was attended by Nagesh Sidda, media coordinators, and assistants accompanying the MLA. Dr. Beldale expressed devotion and emphasized the blessings of Lord Mahadev for peace and prosperity in the community. The temple witnessed a vibrant celebration as devotees joined in the rituals and festive activities.

Man steals phones and cash in Chikkaballapur

CHIKKABALLAPUR

A man pretending to help a rider who had fallen unconscious near Anjani Theatre, Chintamani Nagar stole his iPhone, watch, and cash. The victim, Krishnamurthy, was riding a two-wheeler when he lost consciousness.

Local residents noted the thief's vehicle number and tracked the stolen phones to Varadanayakanahalli Gate, Shidlaghatta taluk. Murali, Banni, and Vishwanath were apprehended around 7 pm when the iPhone was switched on. Vijay and friends from Chintamani Nagar caught the suspects, and locals gathered to reprimand them for stealing in the name of their village. The 112 emergency service was contacted, and the thieves were handed over to Shidlaghatta Rural Police Station. Krishnamurthy lodged a formal complaint, and the police are investigating the case. Authorities praised the vigilance of local residents in recovering the stolen items and ensuring the suspects faced justice.

Parameshwara slams officials over tanker water supply

Parameshwara blamed officials for water storage delays, warned they'd be held accountable for complaints, and urged swift action to prevent future hardships

TUMAKURU

District in-charge Minister G. Parameshwara expressed strong displeasure after learning that tanker water is already being supplied in the city. He questioned officials during a review meeting held at the Deputy Commissioner's office and said the situation showed poor planning.

The minister said it is unacceptable that tanker supply begins even before peak summer. He asked what steps the municipal corporation had taken to store water in advance. He said the problem has grown because officers



failed to take early precautions.

Parameshwara said delays in water storage works were due to a slow approach by officials. He warned that continued public complaints would make officers directly respon-

sible. He asked them to act quickly to prevent hardship during the coming months.

He also directed officials to closely monitor drinking water distribution in all wards. Priority should be given to regular supply, leak repairs, and protection of existing sources. He stressed coordination between departments to manage the crisis.

Speaking about summer events, the minister said fairs and festivals in rural areas need prior permission. He warned that if any event is held without approval and problems occur, concerned officials will be accountable.

The district collector instructed departments to prepare an action plan. Officials were told to assess storage levels, repair infrastructure, and create contingency plans. The meeting focused on preventing panic and ensuring fair distribution.

Residents have raised concerns about early tanker dependence. The minister assured that strict monitoring would follow and that negligence would not be tolerated. He urged officers to work with urgency to safeguard drinking water for all citizens. Immediate measures were ordered to secure supply.

Road work near Kote trench by Balammana Lake is ongoing; officials must keep the site open, and Balakrishna urged swift project completion

MLA Balakrishna promises major Magadi development

MAGADI

MLA H.C. Balakrishna has promised that Magadi town will see significant development if given another year, as he performed a Bhoomi Puja for upcoming infrastructure projects in the 20th Ward.

The Minority Development Corporation has announced the construction of a concrete road and Charam D work at a cost of ₹4 crore. Work at Gauramanakere is also set to begin soon, with the tender process already underway. Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar is expected to lay the foundation stone after the tender process is completed. Funds for minority wards have been provided by Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan.

Road improvements are underway near the Kote trench in front of Balammana Lake, with officials instructed to keep the work site open to en-



sure smooth progress. Balakrishna urged authorities to expedite projects without delays.

Addressing local issues, he criticized the BJP over bus fare hikes, saying the central government's tax policies have burdened citizens, and increases in petrol and diesel prices led the transport department to raise fares.

Several officials and community leaders attended the Bhoomi Puja, including Municipal President Ramya Narasimhamurthy, Vice Pres-

ident Riyaz, Standing Committee President Shivakumar, and members K.V. Balu, Rahmat, Shabir, Mamatha Guruswamy, along with Municipal Chief Officer Shivarudraiah and others.

Balakrishna emphasized that with continued support from the state government and active participation from citizens, Magadi's development projects will transform the town into a modern and well-planned urban center, benefiting residents and future generations.



Mysuru police bust MDMA network, three arrested

MYSURU

Continuing its crackdown on narcotic crimes, Mysuru police have arrested three individuals and seized over 40 grams of MDMA, valued at around ₹4 lakh. The operation highlights the city's ongoing efforts to curb illegal drug sale and distribution.

The first arrests were made by Mandi Police, who apprehended Mohammed Kareem and Nishad Pasha, recovering 3.14 grams of MDMA.

A case was registered under Section 22(b) of the NDPS Act, and both accused were remanded to judicial custody.

Further investigation led to the arrest of Mohammed Roshan, 22, a car spray-painting worker from Ghousia Nagar, who had supplied MDMA to Pasha and had been absconding.

Police recovered 41.31 grams of MDMA from him. Roshan, already having a previous NDPS case registered at Udayagiri Police Station, was produced before the court and remanded to judicial custody.

Police said Roshan procured MDMA from an unknown source in Bengaluru through social media and sold it in Mysuru.

Authorities are now monitoring his distribution network and plan further action.

City Police Commissioner Seema Latkar commended the efforts of Mandi Police Station Inspector R. Divakar, PSI Raju K, and the team for their meticulous work.

Police officials emphasized that operations will continue against those involved in the sale, transport, and consumption of narcotics, aiming to maintain safety and prevent drug-related crimes across Mysuru.



KSRTC revises bus luggage charges from today

BENGALURU

The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has announced a revision in luggage charges carried in its buses, which will come into effect from February 16, 2026. The decision follows a rise in diesel prices, staff costs, and other operational expenses, according to an official circular issued from the corporation's head office.

KSRTC officials clarified that whenever bus fares are revised, luggage charges are usually revised as well. However, although bus fares were increased in January 2025, luggage rates were not changed at that time. The present revision addresses that gap. The previous revision of luggage charges was done in December 2021.

As per the rules, passengers can carry luggage free of cost up to 30 kilograms. Any luggage beyond this limit will attract charges based on the distance travelled, measured in chargeable stages. The revised rate list applies to all categories of KSRTC buses and vehicles.

Under the new structure, luggage charges start from Rs. 6 for journeys between one

KSRTC officials said luggage charges are revised with bus fares; January 2025 fare hike didn't adjust luggage rates, now corrected; last revision was December 2021.

and five stages and gradually increase based on distance. For example, luggage carried for 16 to 20 stages will be charged Rs. 25, while for 31 to 35 stages the rate will be Rs. 37. For longer distances of 76 to 80 stages, the charge will be Rs. 76, and for 156 to 160 stages it will go up to Rs. 145.

KSRTC has stated that the updated charges will be integrated into the Electronic Ticketing Machine (ETM) software to ensure smooth implementation across all divisions. Apart from the revised rates, there will be no other changes to existing luggage rules or procedures.

All divisional controllers, traffic officers, and unit managers have been instructed to strictly implement the new rates and submit follow-up reports. The corporation has advised passengers to take note of the changes while planning their journeys.

Sant Sevalal ideals guide today's young generation: Kantaraj

CHITRADURGA

Sub-Divisional Officer Kantaraj said Sant Sevalal was a great spiritual leader who worked for the welfare of all humanity and not just one community. He said it is everyone's duty to pass Sevalal's philosophy to today's children so that society moves on the right path.

He was speaking at the Sant Sevalal Jayanti programme organised jointly by the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, Kannada and Culture Department, and the municipal council at the Deputy Commissioner's

office hall in the city.

Kantaraj said Sant Sevalal urged the Lambani community to give up deep-rooted superstitions and move towards education and knowledge.

He explained that Sevalal was not only a social reformer but also had deep knowledge of Ayurveda and naturopathy. He taught people to live in harmony with nature and protect all living beings.

The values of non-violence, truth, and education shown by Sevalal are very important for the present generation, he added.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, DEVINDRA UMANNA PARIT S/o UMANNA SHETTY, R/o 159, Word No 20, Ambedikar Street, Jigani, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560105, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as DR DEVINDRA SHETTY.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, KANAKA MAHALAKSHMI (old name), a resident of Flat No 018, Sai Charita Green Oaks, Phase 2, Horamavu, Bangalore - 560043, Karnataka INDIA, have changed my name to (GIVEN NAME OR FIRST NAME) KANAKA SURNAME MAHALAKSHMI (NEW Name) vide affidavit dated 12-02-2026, sworn advocate and notary Mohammed Hussain K.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, RAJAB MOHAMMAD HASAN S/o MAHAMMAD HASAN R/o 2-131/8, Muhammad Mansion, Bada, Uchila, Udipi, Karnataka-574117, have changed the name of my minor daughter HUSNA aged 17 years and she shall hereafter be known as HUSNA FATIMA.

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact:
080-41209042

CHANGE OF NAME
It is for general information that I, SNEHA DAS CHOUDHURY D/o VISWANADHAM VANGADA, Ex. wife of MRINMOY DAS CHOUDHURY, R/o No. 1/7, Keeni Cottage, Main Lane, Near St Hopkins College, Subbanna Gardens, Aduodi, Bangalore South, Bangalore, Karnataka - 560030, declare that I got divorce from my husband vide court decree Petition No. A-2637/2024, dated 23.09.2025. Further I have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SNEHA VAGANDA.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, SRINIVASA K S/o KITTAPPA, R/o RF ROAD, VENUGOPALASWAMY TEMPAL ROAD, Ward 17, Malur, Kolar, Karnataka-563130, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SRINIVASAPPA KITTAPPA.

ORGAN DONATION HEROES

Vijayapura hospital performs first kidney transplant

VIJAYAPURA

Doctors at BLDE Association B.M. Patil Super-speciality Hospital and Research Centre have successfully conducted their first kidney transplant, marking a milestone in the city's healthcare services. The transplant was carried out on a patient under the State government's Jeevan Sarthakate Scheme.

The organs were donated by a 30-year-old brain-dead patient, Balam Krishna Bagalkot, who had suffered serious injuries in an accident



on February 9. Following his declaration as brain-dead on Friday, hospital officials counseled his family, who

agreed to donate his two kidneys and eyes. One kidney was transplanted locally, while the other was transport-

ed to Kalaburagi using a zero-traffic system. The two corneas will help patients suffering from vision loss.

The surgery team included S.B. Patil, Dilip Javali, Vinaya Kundargi, Santosh Patil, Santosh Alalmath, Manju Prasad, and Organ Donation Consultant Shantesh Salagare, along with nursing staff. Hospital administrators and medical directors, including Vijayakumar Kalyanapugol, praised the Bagalkot family for their generosity, noting that the donation has given life and hope to four patients.

Currently, 5,905 patients are awaiting organ transplants, including kidneys, livers, hearts, lungs, and combined organs. Officials urged more families to consider organ donation to save lives.

The hospital management and BLDE Association leadership, including M.B. Patil, B.M. Patil, Y.M. Jayaraj, Arun Inamdar, and R.V. Kulkarni, congratulated the surgical team and thanked the donor family, emphasizing the impact of organ donation on improving and saving lives across the state.



QUICK READ

MSDE to position skilling at core of India's inclusive AI vision**NEW DELHI**

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) will participate in the India AI Impact Summit 2026 with a dedicated pavilion centred on the vision of AI for Inclusive Development, positioning skilling at the heart of India's AI journey, according to an official statement issued on Sunday. As the summit brings together global leaders, policymakers and technology pioneers in what is being recognised as one of the largest AI gatherings in the Global South, MSDE's presence will underscore India's commitment to ensuring that artificial intelligence strengthens livelihoods rather than displacing them.

Fire at luxury residential building in Tollygunge**KOLKATA**

A fire broke out in a luxury residence in the Tollygunge area of south Kolkata on Sunday afternoon, causing several Bengal film industry luminaries, who stay there, to come out onto the street below. However, no injuries were reported in the incident, which covered the multi-storey building in black smoke. The fire broke out in Tower 2 of Diamond City Residence, where several stars, including film couple Yash and Nusrat, actress and Trinamool Congress MLA Sayantika Banerjee, have flats. It was learnt that Yash and Nusrat came down with their children in panic. The residents have been evacuated to a safe place. Four fire engines were pressed into service after receiving the news.

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta announces 'Aadhaar' number of all land parcels**NEW DELHI**

In a landmark initiative to curb land disputes, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Sunday that each land parcel in the city will be assigned a 14-digit Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) akin to the Aadhaar number to citizens. This step forms part of the government's commitment to modernising Delhi's land records and freeing citizens from long-standing land disputes. The system is also referred to as 'Bhu Aadhaar', she added. For citizens, the greatest benefit will be ease and convenience. Instead of navigating multiple documents to establish land ownership, a single number will provide comprehensive details of the property, the Chief Minister said.

KTR Alleges Cong Anarchy In Civic Polls

BRS leader accuses Congress of coercion after hung verdicts in municipalities

HYDERABAD

K. T. Rama Rao, Working President of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), on Sunday accused the ruling Indian National Congress in Telangana of indulging in anarchy to secure power in 34 municipalities that returned hung verdicts in the recent civic elections.

Addressing media persons after participating in Sevalal Maharaj Jayanti celebrations at Telangana Bhavan, Rama Rao alleged that the Congress was resorting to unethical practices such as kidnapping and luring Corporators and Councillors, sending police personnel door-to-door, and

deploying goons to influence elected representatives. He claimed that such tactics were being used to gain control of municipalities where no party secured a clear majority.

The election of Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons in municipalities, as well as Mayors and Deputy Mayors in municipal corporations that went to polls last week, is scheduled to take place on Monday. These posts will be decided by the newly-elected Councillors and Corporators.

Responding to questions regarding BRS extending support to the Communist Party of India (CPI) in Kothagudem municipality, Rama Rao stated that the decision was made



keeping in mind the interests of workers of the Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL). He asserted that BRS aims to stop the alleged exploitation taking place in Singareni.

Rama Rao accused both the

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress of acting as partners in the exploitation of Singareni and functioning in a manner detrimental to the organisation. He noted that CPI and Congress are already in alliance and sharing the

Mayor's post in Kothagudem was therefore not surprising. However, he expressed uncertainty over why the CPI-affiliated All India Trade Union Congress supported the arrangement, stating he could not comment on the pressures behind the decision.

The BRS leader reiterated that regardless of political alignments, his party would continue to fight for the rights of Singareni workers. He also credited former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao with upholding tribal self-respect by forming 3,146 new gram panchayats and providing leadership opportunities to tribal youth across the state.

**5 Lawrence Bishnoi gang members arrested****NEW DELHI**

Five members of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang have been arrested in connection with the recent killing of a 35-year-old businessman in outer north Delhi's Bawana industrial area, an official said on Sunday.

Acting on specific intelligence, police intercepted some of the suspects earlier in the day.

When challenged, the accused allegedly opened fire at the police team in a bid to escape, prompting the personnel to retaliate in self-defence, leading to a brief encounter, the official added.

During the exchange of fire, one of the accused sustained a bullet injury to his leg and was overpowered.

Three accused were apprehended during the encounter, while two others were arrested subsequently, taking the total number of arrests in the case to five, police said, adding that none of their personnel sustained serious injuries during the operation.

Vaibhav Gandhi, a plastic granules manufacturer, was shot dead around 12.50 pm on February 9 near his factory in Sector 4 of the DSIDC industrial area.

Investigators had said that four men were involved in the attack. The assailants allegedly first attempted to snatch the keys of the victim's car and forcibly took away his laptop bag when he resisted before shooting him at close range.

T'gana Police Urge Maoists To Surrender

HYDERABAD

The Telangana Police Department on Sunday made a renewed appeal to top underground leaders and cadres of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) to shun violence and return to the mainstream of society, assuring them of a peaceful, secure, and dignified life with their families under the state's rehabilitation framework.

Director General of Police B. Shivadhar Reddy reiterated the appeal earlier made by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, urging underground Maoists to give up arms and reintegrate into society. In an official statement, the police chief highlighted that sustained efforts by the Telangana Police, coupled with the effective implementation of the government's Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy, have yielded significant results over the past two years.

According to the DGP, as many as 588 Maoist leaders and cadres across various organisational levels have rejoined normal life during this period.

All of them have availed the benefits under the Surrender & Rehabilitation Policy of the Government of Telangana. Today, they are living safely and happily in their native villages with their families, he stated, emphasising the government's commitment to

**DGP appeals to underground Maoists to rejoin mainstream under rehabilitation policy.**

their long-term welfare and security.

The DGP further claimed that the positive outcomes of the policy have inspired underground Maoists from neighbouring and other states to surrender before the Telangana Police and opt for peaceful reintegration. He described this as evidence of the credibility, compassion, and effectiveness of the state government's rehabilitation initiatives.

In the statement, the police chief extended a sincere and renewed appeal to all remaining underground Maoist leaders and cadres, including the 15 cadres reportedly still active from Telangana, to come forward and embrace a peaceful future. He assured them that the government remains committed to supporting their transition back into society through lawful and constructive means.

CM says statement linked to municipal poll responsibility, not arrogance.

Revanth Clarifies 'Nene Raju' Remark Context

HYDERABAD

A. Revanth Reddy on Sunday clarified that his remark Nene Raju, Nene Mantri (I am the king, I am the minister) was misinterpreted, stating that it was made in the specific context of municipal election results and not out of arrogance or a claim to absolute authority.

The Chief Minister explained that he had only meant that, as both the Chief Minister and the Municipal Administration Minister, he was responsible for the outcome of the recently concluded municipal elections. He had made the remark on Friday during an interaction with the media in New Delhi, where he also stated that there was no competition for the Chief Minister's post either in state politics or within the In-

dian National Congress.

Addressing Sant Sevalal Jayanti celebrations at Banjara Bhavan in Hyderabad on Sunday, Revanth Reddy said his comments were wrongly portrayed. I do not see myself as a ruler. My intention is to serve the people, he said, adding that he remains committed to public service.

Highlighting the party's performance, the Chief Minister claimed that the Congress achieved 85 to 90 per cent results in the municipal elections. He remarked that he is neither one to become arrogant in victory nor to lose heart in defeat, and asserted that he would continue working for the welfare of the poor. In an apparent attack on opposition leaders, he said, Some people think that they

are born to rule, indicating that his government believes in democratic responsibility rather than entitlement.

Paying rich tributes to Sant Sevalal, the Chief Minister described him as a guiding force for nearly 15 crore members of the Lambada community across the country. He

noted that the Lambada community played a crucial role in the Telangana movement and said the Congress government has taken the responsibility of officially celebrating Sevalal Jayanti. Revanth Reddy further emphasised that tribals, along with Dalits, must receive priority and due respect, reiterating his government's commitment to inclusive development and social justice.



PM Modi to inaugurate AI Impact Expo 2026 Today

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate India AI Impact Expo 2026 at the Bharat Mandapam here on Monday, according to a PMO statement. The Expo will be held from February 16 to 20, alongside the India AI Impact Summit, at the same venue.

Spread across 10 arenas covering more than 70,000 square metres, it will bring together global technology firms, startups, academia and research institutions, Union Ministries, state governments, and international partners.

The event will also feature 13 country pavilions, showcasing international collabora-

tion in the AI ecosystem. These include pavilions from Australia, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Serbia, Estonia, Tajikistan, and African countries.

Hosting over 300 curated exhibition pavilions and live demonstrations, structured

across three thematic chakras - People, Planet and Progress, the Expo, in addition, will feature over 600 high-potential startups, many of them building globally relevant and population-scale solutions. These startups will demonstrate working solutions that are already deployed in real-world settings.

Big hawala racket busted in J&K, 8,000 accounts with anti-India activities frozen

JAMMU

Security agencies have uncovered a rapidly expanding network of so-called mule accounts in Jammu and Kashmir that investigators believe forms the financial bedrock of international scam syndicates. Authorities are concerned that money funnelled through these accounts may ultimately support separatist or anti-national operations, news agency PTI reported.

Over the past three years, officials have identified and frozen more than 8,000 such

accounts across the region, revealing an intricate system of laundering illicit funds.

Investigators describe mule accounts as the most vulnerable yet indispensable component in the cybercrime pipeline. In response to the growing threat, central security agencies have directed the Jammu and Kashmir Police and other enforcement bodies to engage with banks to stem the proliferation of these accounts.

Authorities are also working to track down intermediaries—commonly called mul-

ters—who act as facilitators in the financial fraud chain.

According to officials, after the National Investigation Agency (NIA) launched a crackdown in 2017 on illegal financial flows into the region, anti-national networks appear to have adapted their methods.

Instead of relying on traditional channels, they are suspected of turning to what officials describe as a digital hawala system.

In this updated model, commissions earned by mule account holders and mulers may be diverted toward activities detrimental to national security.

Kanwariyas thrash man for objecting to lighting agarbatti at UP petrol pump

BIJNOR

A group of Kanwariyas allegedly assaulted the son of a petrol pump owner in Uttar Pradesh's Bijnor after he objected to them lighting incense sticks near fuel dispensers, with some of the accused later attempting to give the incident a communal colour. A video of the assault went viral on social media, with claims that the man had desecrated their Kanwar, an allegation that police have since termed false. According to officials, the incident occurred on

February 10 when several Kanwariyas were camping at a petrol pump in Bijnor. During their halt, they began lighting agarbattis (incense sticks) as part of their worship. The petrol pump owner's son reportedly asked them to stop, citing safety concerns over open flames at a fuel station.

The objection reportedly triggered an argument that quickly escalated into violence. Viral footage shows the young man being surrounded and beaten, desperately trying to shield himself as he is struck repeated-

ly. While recording the incident, one of the accused is also heard falsely claiming that the victim was a Muslim, in an apparent attempt to communalise the situation.

The man was eventually rescued by a police officer present at the spot. He sustained serious injuries and was later admitted to a hospital for treatment.

Police said they are analysing the viral video to identify those involved in the assault. No attempt of any kind was made to desecrate the Kanwar.

CM SCHOOL INSPECTION

Chief Minister Singh Praises Sainik School Achievements

IMPHAL

Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Sunday lauded the outstanding national-level performance of the Sainik School Imphal during his visit to the campus in Imphal. Accompanied by MLA L. Susindro Meitei, the Chief Minister held discussions with the Principal, Col A. Rajiv, and senior officials of the institution. During the meeting, the Principal presented a detailed briefing on the functioning of the school and highlighted several pressing concerns. These included deteriorating infrastructure, water supply issues, the need to strengthen the perimeter wall,



pending construction of the girls' hostel, and sound clarity problems in the Vikram Batra Auditorium.

The Principal also outlined the school's recent accomplishments, noting excellent perfor-

mances in competitive examinations and the active participation of cadets in various national-level events. The achievements, he said, reflect the dedication of both students and faculty despite existing

constraints.

After reviewing the presentation, the Chief Minister assured that the issues raised would be taken up with the concerned authorities for prompt action. He emphasised that the concerns would be addressed on priority, stating that students are the pillars of society and must be given due importance and adequate facilities.

Singh appreciated the efforts of the school administration for maintaining high academic and disciplinary standards and acknowledged the institution's significant role in shaping disciplined and capable youth. During his visit, he conducted

a detailed inspection of multiple sections of the campus to assess infrastructure needs and identify areas requiring construction, renovation, and repair.

The Chief Minister also interacted with members of the Alumni Association, staff, and students, encouraging them to continue striving for excellence in academics and extracurricular pursuits.

He further met student Memota Keisham, who had earlier participated in an interaction with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the ninth edition of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha', and commended her confidence and achievements.

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**KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT STOCK (SECURITIES)**

Finance Department, Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru

NOTICE

1. Aggregate Amount : Total Rs.9,000 crore. **1.** Rs.2,000 crore 7-Year 6-Month Tenure. **2.** Rs.2,000 crore 11-Year Tenure. **3.** Rs.2,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.19% SGS 2032. **4.** Rs.2,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.55% SGS 2035. **5.** Rs.1,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.56% SGS 2036.

2. Method of Issue : By auction, through RBI (PDO), Mumbai

3. Date of auction : February 17, 2026

Government of Karnataka invites subscription to the above securities. Copies of the Notification and Application forms may be obtained from PDO, RBI, Bangalore. Non-competitive bidding facility has been introduced by RBI to encourage participation of retail investors. The Government stock up to 10% of the notified amount of the sale will be allotted to eligible individuals and institutions. Sample Tender Forms and the revised scheme of Non-competitive bidding facility is available on the website www.rbi.org.in.

Sd/- (Ikram Shariff)
Joint Secretary to Government
(Budget & Resources), Finance Department

DIPR/CP/5638/Zen/2025-26

Yogi Adityanath Offers Prayers On Mahashivratri

Chief Minister performs Rudrabhishek at Gorakhnath Temple in Gorakhpur

GORAKHPUR

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday offered prayers at the historic Gorakhnath Temple in Gorakhpur on the auspicious occasion of Mahashivratri.

The Chief Minister, who also serves as the head priest (Mahant) of the temple, performed the traditional Rudrabhishek of Lord Shiva in accordance with Vedic rituals. The ceremony was conducted amid the chanting of sacred mantras, creating a spiritually charged atmosphere within the temple premises.

After completing the rituals, Yogi Adityanath shared a message on social media platform X. He stated that on the auspicious occasion of Mahashivratri, illuminated by the welfare consciousness of restraint, meditation and Shiva, he performed



Rudrabhishek with proper rituals and prayed for the welfare of humanity. Concluding his message, he invoked Har Har Mahadev.

Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister had extended greetings to devotees and residents of the state. In his message, he congratulated people on the sacred festival dedicated

to the worship of Mahadev and prayed that the blessings of Baba Bholenath bring peace to every heart, strength to every life and auspiciousness to every path.

Mahashivratri, one of the most significant festivals in the Hindu calendar, is observed in reverence to Lord Shiva and commemorates the

sacred union of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. The festival symbolises devotion, self-discipline and spiritual awakening.

Across the country, celebrations were marked by deep devotion and enthusiasm as lakhs of devotees thronged prominent Shiva temples from the early hours of Sunday. Long queues of worshippers, special pujas, night-long prayers and holy dips in sacred rivers were witnessed at major pilgrimage centres.

Authorities made elaborate security and administrative arrangements to ensure smooth darshan and effective crowd management at key temples. Police personnel and volunteers were deployed in large numbers to regulate queues and maintain order, while medical and emergency services were kept on standby to assist devotees during the celebrations.

Rekha Gupta Offers Prayers On Mahashivratri

UDAIPUR

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta offered prayers on Sunday at the revered Shri Amar-kh Mahadev Temple in Rajasthan's Udaipur on the occasion of Mahashivratri, describing the festival as an opportunity for the awakening of Shiva-consciousness within the soul.

Taking to social media platform X, the Chief Minister said she was blessed to perform worship and rituals of Devadhidev Mahadev at the ancient temple located in Amber, Udaipur. She noted that the sacred site has been a living centre of austerity, detachment and Shiva consciousness for centuries, holding deep spiritual significance for devotees.

In her message, Gupta described Mahashivratri as a holy festival symbolising inner awakening and spiritual elevation. This holy festival of Mahashivratri is an opportunity for the awakening of Shiva-consciousness within the soul. Shiva is the void,



Delhi Chief Minister visits Udaipur temple, shares spiritual message

Shiva is the infinite, and Shiva is the very foundation from which the flow of creation, balance and transformation begins, she wrote.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by Delhi Cabinet Ministers Ashish Sood and Ravindra Indraj, as well as MLA Anil Sharma, along with other BJP leaders from Rajasthan.

Gupta also offered prayers for the well-being of the people of Delhi and the entire na-

tion. She said she prayed to Devadhidev Mahadev to continue showering blessings upon Delhi and all citizens, and to grant strength to remain committed to the path of service and welfare of humanity.

Extending greetings to the public, the Chief Minister conveyed heartfelt wishes on Mahashivratri and concluded her message with the traditional invocation, Har Har Mahadev. Mahashivratri, one of the most significant festivals in the Hindu calendar, is observed with devotion across the country, marked by temple visits, special rituals and night-long prayers dedicated to Lord Shiva.

QUICK READ

TN fireworks industry seeks policy support, formal recognition

Chennai

The fireworks industry of Tamil Nadu, grappling with prolonged regulatory and market challenges, has stepped up efforts to secure policy support from the Centre to help revive the sector. A senior representative of the industry said the sector has been passing through a difficult phase in recent years, impacted by tighter regulations, seasonal restrictions and reduced access to institutional benefits. In response, the association representing fireworks manufacturers has initiated discussions with senior government officials, including Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Secretary Amardeep Singh Bhatia to press for corrective measures.

Six arrested from Kolkata in two different theft cases

Kolkata

Six accused in two different cases were arrested in Kolkata on the same day as Police Commissioner Supratim Sarkar made surprise visits across the city to monitor the law and order situation, police sources said on Sunday. Four of the arrested are residents of Gujarat. They have been arrested on charges of theft. According to the police, the four accused were arrested from the Hastings area by the 'Watch' branch of the Intelligence Department in Lalbazar (Kolkata Police headquarters).



Pawan Kalyan launches Jana Sena's membership drive

AMARAVATI

Jana Sena Party president and Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Sunday launched party's membership drive at the party's central office in Mangalagiri. The actor-politician took first membership after donating Rs 2 crore for registration.

Speaking on the occasion, he said those who understand the party's ideology and take the party's aspirations forward are important to the organisation. The party needs such people, he said.

He recalled that Jana Sena started with 150 people. When the first phase of active membership was started in 2021, we registered 90,000 members. Before the elections, that number reached six lakh. After the elections, we achieved 12.98 lakh membership, he said.

The Jana Sena leader said that from those who do small businesses to those who work on daily wages and those who are educated, many people enrolled as members.

Pawan Kalyan announced that those who come forward to deeply understand the party's

ideology and work in accordance with the party's ideologies, ideals and aspirations and take up the party membership will be called Udyami.

Those who provide more strength to the party's struggle, inspire the new generation, get attracted by the party's ideologies and register themselves as members will be known as 'Sadhak'.

The Jana Sena chief said that those who indirectly contribute their time, financial, technical service and intellectual support to the public and political struggle of the Jana Sena Party will be called Pradatha.

Jana Sena said the programme was organised in the presence of those who had registered highest number of members in the previous membership registration.

Chairman of the party's political affairs committee, Narendla Manohar, political secretary of the party president, Pidugu Hariprasad, the party's general secretary, Ram Talluri, chairman of the party's programme management committee, Kalyanam Shiva Srinivas and others participated in this programme.

New structure aims to ease congestion in South Chennai

Stalin Opens Central Kailash L-Shaped Flyover

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. K. Stalin on Sunday inaugurated the newly constructed L-shaped flyover at Central Kailash, a key traffic junction connecting Adyar and Guindy in south Chennai. After declaring the flyover open for public use, the Chief Minister inspected the structure in an official vehicle. Sardar Patel Road, one of the busiest arterial roads in the city, links Adyar with Guindy and also serves as the starting point of Rajiv Gandhi Road (Old Mahabalipuram Road) at the Central Kailash junction. The intersection has long been known for heavy congestion, particularly during peak hours, with traffic converging from multiple directions, including vehicles heading to-



ward IIT Madras, the Adyar Cancer Institute, and the IT corridor along OMR.

Constructed at a cost of ₹60.68 crore, the 652-metre-long flyover has been designed with two lanes supporting single-direction traffic flow. Officials said the structure allows uninterrupted travel for vehicles moving from Adyar to Guindy and from Rajiv Gandhi Road to-

ward Guindy, effectively bypassing the signal at Central Kailash.

The distinctive L-shaped design curves at the junction of Sardar Patel Road and Rajiv Gandhi Road, enabling seamless merging of traffic without interfering with cross-movement at ground level. The project is expected to significantly reduce bottlenecks and improve safety at

one of South Chennai's most critical intersections.

With rapid expansion of IT parks, educational institutions and commercial establishments along OMR and surrounding areas, traffic density at Central Kailash has increased sharply in recent years. The State Government stated that the flyover forms part of a broader initiative to modernise urban infrastructure and decongest major traffic corridors across Chennai.

Commuters and local residents have welcomed the development, expressing hope that the new structure will substantially cut travel time and enhance overall road safety. Authorities expect a marked improvement in traffic flow in the coming days as vehicles begin using the flyover regularly.

ECI identifies five Bangladesh-bordering districts in Bengal

KOLKATA

With the hearing session on the claims and objections to the draft voters' list in West Bengal concluded and the scrutiny of the supporting identify documents scheduled to continue till February 21, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has identified five districts in the state where the instances of uploading of unlisted documents had been abnormally high so far. The five districts are Cooch Behar, Malda, Murshidabad, North 24 Parganas, and South 24 Parganas. All five districts have international borders with Bangladesh, with South 24 Parganas mainly having coastal borders.

PM Modi to address BJP's mega rally in Kolkata next month

KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address a mega rally organised by the West Bengal unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata next month. Although the date of the rally is yet to be fixed, a formal announcement in the matter will be made soon after the Holi festival on March 4, said a state committee member of BJP in West Bengal.

The Election Commission of India is also slated to announce the polling dates for the West Bengal Assembly scheduled later this year, soon after the Holi festival. The finalisation and announcement of the rally date to be attended by the Prime Minister will also happen at

the same time, the state committee member said.

He also said that before the actual date of the rally, the state unit of the BJP will organise parallel 'Ratha Yatras' in multiple organisational districts in the state to make people aware of the mega rally in Kolkata. Before the mega rally at Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata next month, the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, will be coming to West Bengal by the end of this month.

The Union Home Minister will be on an official programme of the Border Security Force. But during that meet, he will also be chairing an organisational meeting with the core leadership of the party in West Bengal. However, no public programme of the Union Home Minister has



been scheduled this time, the state committee member of the BJP said.

He also said that the state leadership is also working hard to complete the final list of recommendations of party candidates for the 294 Assembly constituencies in the state and forward the same to the central leadership for the latter to take a final decision in the matter.

Three killed after car collides with railway bridge structure in Jetpur

RAJKOT

Three people were killed and another seriously injured after a car crashed into a railway bridge and split into two at Jetpur city in Rajkot district early Sunday, police said. The mishap occurred on the Jetalsar Junction railway bridge when four friends were returning from the Maha Shivratri fair at Bhavnath in Junagadh.

Muskan Bagda (21) of Raydi village and Arun Vala (20) from Navagadh died on the spot, while Jaydeep Chauhan, who suffered critical injuries, later succumbed at hospital. The fourth occupant, Amit Parmar, is undergoing treatment in Junagadh.



Preliminary investigation suggests the driver lost control while crossing the bridge, and the vehicle rammed the structure with such force that it split into two parts and was flung to opposite sides of the road.

Police rushed to the scene after alerts from locals and motorists. A crane was used to remove the wreckage, and traffic, which was briefly disrupted, was later restored. A case has been registered and further inquiry is under way to ascertain the exact cause.

KOLKATA

Acting on confidential information, the Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate has busted an illegal SIM box racket operating in the Rajarhat area near Kolkata and arrested one person in connection with the case, officials said on Sunday.

Officers of the Commissionerate's Intelligence Department conducted a raid at Rajarhat. Though the apartment appeared to be an ordinary residence from the outside, investigators discovered sophisticated telecom equipment being used for illegal operations inside.

During the search, police



recovered nine SIM box machines and more than 2,500 active SIM cards. The team also seized multiple keypad mobile phones and Android devices, networking equipment used for VoIP routing and GSM termination, rout-

ers, cables, power units and other accessories. The scale of the seizure indicates an organised and well-equipped setup.

According to intelligence sources, the racket was facilitating illegal international calls into India. Using SIM

box devices, Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) calls originating from abroad were converted into local or domestic calls and routed directly into Indian telecom networks. This process effectively bypassed authorised international gateway exchanges and telecom regulatory systems.

Police sources said that such illegal routing causes significant revenue losses to the government and telecom service providers, as international call charges and applicable taxes are evaded. The operation also raises security concerns because it makes tracking the origin of calls more difficult.

During the raid, police ap-

prehended Abir Sheikh, also known as Monirul Islam Sajib, who was allegedly caught red-handed while operating multiple SIM box devices in an active state. Investigators said that during initial interrogation, the accused confessed to his involvement in the racket.

Preliminary investigations suggest that the operation may be linked to a larger interstate or international network. Authorities are now probing the financial transactions behind the racket, the source of the SIM cards and the possible involvement of other individuals. Further investigation is underway to uncover the full extent of the illegal telecom network.



QUICK READ

Bangladesh election signals shift to multiparty politics

DHAKA

Bangladesh's 13th Parliamentary Election represents a return to genuine multiparty politics after years of disputed or largely one-sided contests, accompanied by a referendum that endorsed sweeping constitutional reforms, but the victorious Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) must now address deep-seated concerns in a nation scarred by political violence, as per a report. Securing more than two-thirds of the seats, the BNP is expected to tackle issues ranging from corruption allegations and minority reassurance to concerns among Awami League supporters and rising youth unemployment.

Security officer at Munich event nearly stops Pak Army Chief Asim Munir

MUNICH

An awkward moment played out for Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir in Germany when a security officer at the Munich Security Conference briefly stopped him over the positioning of his identity card. Field Marshal Munir was in the German city along with his delegation to attend the conference. A video clip circulating widely on social media shows the security official asking the Pakistani Army Chief to ensure that his identification card was clearly visible from the front. The incident reportedly occurred just a few steps before the entry point to the conference venue.

Numbers throng Nepal's Pashupatinath Temple on Mahashivaratri

KATHMANDU

A massive crowd of devotees queued from early morning to offer prayers and worship Lord Shiva at the Pashupatinath Temple in Kathmandu on Sunday on the occasion of Mahashivaratri, one of the most revered Hindu festivals in Nepal. Pashupatinath is venerated as one of the supreme Shiva pilgrimage sites, alongside Kedarnath and Kashi Vishwanath. Devotees, particularly from Nepal and India, as well as from other regions, visit the Pashupatinath Temple during the festival. From early morning, thousands of pilgrims from across Nepal and neighbouring India lined up to offer worship at the sacred temple premises, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Nine Palestinians Killed in Gaza Airstrikes

At least nine Palestinians died in fresh Israeli airstrikes across Gaza Sunday

JERUSALEM

At least nine Palestinians were killed in Israeli airstrikes in the northern and southern parts of the Gaza Strip on Sunday, according to Palestinian civil defence and health officials.

The strikes come amid renewed tensions, with Israel's military stating that the action was taken in response to what it described as ceasefire violations by Hamas.

Medical sources on the ground reported that an Israeli airstrike targeted a tent encampment sheltering displaced families in northern Gaza, killing at least four people. The camp was reportedly housing civilians who had fled earlier rounds of fighting. In a separate inci-



dent in Khan Younis in southern Gaza, health officials confirmed that five more people were killed in another strike.

The Israeli military defended the operations, saying they were launched after what it termed a blatant violation of the ceasefire agreement by Hamas in the Beit Hanoun

area. An Israeli military official stated that militants had emerged from a tunnel east of the designated Yellow Line, an area demarcated under the October ceasefire agreement to separate Israeli- and Hamas-controlled zones.

According to the official, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) carried out what were

described as precise strikes that complied with international law. The military further alleged that Hamas had committed more than six violations of the ceasefire since it came into effect in October. These violations reportedly included deploying armed fighters east of the Yellow Line.

Crossing the yellow line in the vicinity of IDF troops, while armed, is an explicit ceasefire violation, the official said, adding that such actions demonstrate a systematic attempt to harm Israeli troops.

The developments mark another escalation in the fragile truce, raising concerns about the durability of the ceasefire and the safety of civilians in the conflict-hit Gaza Strip.



Rubio Visits Eastern Europe to Boost Ties

MUNICH

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio began a two-day trip to eastern Europe on Sunday, aiming to deepen diplomatic and strategic cooperation with Slovakia and Hungary. The visit comes at a time when both nations, led by conservative governments, have maintained relatively warm ties with U.S. President Donald Trump, even as they have occasionally found themselves at odds with other European Union members.

According to the U.S. State Department, the trip is focused on strengthening energy cooperation and discussing key bilateral issues, including defense spending and commitments to NATO. Speaking to reporters before departing last week, Rubio described both countries as strong and cooperative partners of the United States, emphasizing their close working relationship with Washington.

Rubio, who also serves in a dual capacity as Trump's national security adviser, began his visit in the Slovak capital, Bratislava. There, he met with Slovak President Peter Pellegrini to discuss regional security and economic collaboration. The talks were seen as

Rubio visits Slovakia and Hungary to strengthen bilateral and NATO ties amid EU tensions.

an effort to reinforce transatlantic ties amid ongoing geopolitical uncertainty in Europe.

Later on Sunday, Rubio was scheduled to meet Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, who recently traveled to Florida to meet President Trump. Analysts say the meeting could further underline the alignment between Washington and Bratislava on key strategic and political issues.

The diplomatic tour follows Rubio's participation in the Munich Security Conference, where global leaders gathered to address pressing international security challenges.

On Monday, Rubio is expected to travel to Budapest for talks with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. Orban, who faces a closely watched election in April and trails in several opinion polls, remains one of Europe's most prominent conservative leaders. Rubio's visit signals Washington's continued engagement with central European partners at a critical political moment for the region.

Lai Vows Stronger Defence Amid Tensions

YILAN

Lai Ching-te on Sunday pledged to strengthen Taiwan's defence capabilities and safeguard the island's security in the year ahead, delivering the message as part of his Lunar New Year address.

Lai has proposed an additional \$40 billion in defence spending to counter growing pressure from China, which views the democratically governed island as its own territory. However, Taiwan's opposition parties, which hold a majority in parliament, have declined to review the proposal.

Instead, they have advanced more limited plans that would fund only some of the U.S. weapons systems Lai seeks to acquire.

In his address, recorded at the high-altitude Hsiaohsuehshan Radar Station in Taiwan's central mountain range, Lai expressed gratitude to the armed forces for protecting the island around the clock. The radar station plays a key role in monitoring regional airspace and maritime activity.

We will continue to strengthen our national defence and public security efforts, safeguarding national security and maintaining social stability, Lai said in a video message shared on his social media accounts.

The footage showed Lai interacting with officers stationed at the radar facility, underscoring his administration's emphasis on military preparedness.

Kallas says EU govts hesitant to commit to timeline despite Zelenskiy's demand.

EU Not Ready to Set Ukraine Membership Date

MUNICH

European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said on Sunday that EU member states are not prepared to provide Ukraine with a concrete date for membership, despite a renewed call from President Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference, Kallas acknowledged Ukraine's aspirations but indicated that consensus among EU governments remains out of reach. My feeling is that the member states are not ready to give a concrete date, she said during a panel discussion. There's a lot of work to be done.

Zelenskiy reiterated that securing a clear timeline for joining the European Union is crucial as part of broader security guarantees in any final peace package with Russia. Ukrainian officials view EU membership as a key pillar for long-term stability and

economic recovery following the war.

Diplomats have indicated that a potential 2027 accession date was tentatively included in a 20-point peace framework discussed among the United States, Ukraine, and the EU. The proposed timeline was seen as a measure to support Ukraine's post-war economic prosperity and integration into European institutions.

However, several EU governments consider such a deadline unrealistic. Accession to the bloc is a merit-based process that depends on a candidate country's progress in aligning its laws, governance structures, and economic standards with EU requirements. Officials argue that setting a fixed date could undermine the integrity of the accession framework.

Latvian President Edgars Rinkevics echoed Kallas's remarks, noting that while there



is broad political support for Ukraine's eventual membership, there is little readiness to commit to a specific timeline. He also expressed limited optimism about an imminent peace agreement.

The comments underscore the delicate balance EU leaders face as they seek to support Ukraine's ambitions while maintaining established accession rules and managing differing views among member states.

Lula Carnival Tribute Sparks Political Controversy

BRASILIA

When Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva learned that a samba school in Rio de Janeiro would dedicate its carnival parade this year to his life story, the Brazilian president was visibly emotional. The tribute was set to portray his journey from factory worker to head of state, a narrative that has defined his political career. Lula reportedly broke into tears before smiling for photographs while holding the school's flag. However, as Rio's world-famous carnival approached, what began as a celebratory homage quickly turned into a political controversy. Opposition parties and politicians have filed multiple lawsuits alleging that the parade amounts to an illegal form of early campaigning ahead of Brazil's presidential election later this year.

Critics argue that the high-profile tribute could give



Lula undue visibility and an electoral advantage, effectively serving as campaign promotion months before the official campaign period begins. They claim that featuring the president's personal and political rise during one of the country's most widely watched cultural events blurs the line between cultural expression and political messaging.

Lula, who is seeking a fourth nonconsecutive term in office in October, has not publicly indicated that he orchestrated or encouraged the tribute. Supporters maintain that carnival parades often

celebrate prominent Brazilian figures and historical milestones, and that the samba school's choice reflects Lula's significance in Brazil's social and political history.

Brazil's carnival, particularly in Rio de Janeiro, is not only a cultural spectacle but also a powerful platform capable of shaping public discourse. With millions of viewers and extensive media coverage, the parade's themes often resonate far beyond the Sambadrome.

As legal challenges move forward, Brazil's electoral authorities may need to determine whether the tribute constitutes early political advertising or remains within the bounds of artistic and cultural expression. The dispute highlights the intense political climate leading up to October's vote, where Lula's bid for another term is expected to draw strong support as well as fierce opposition.

Australia Invests Billions in AUKUS Shipyard



SYDNEY

Australia announced on Sunday that it will invest \$3.9 billion (\$2.76 billion) to advance construction of a major shipyard that will play a key role in delivering nuclear-powered submarines under the trilateral AUKUS defence agreement with the United States and Britain.

The pact, unveiled in 2021, represents Australia's largest-ever defence investment. Under the agreement, U.S.-commanded Virginia-class submarine vessels will be based in Australia from 2027. Beginning around 2030, several of these submarines are expected to be sold to Australia. In the longer term, Britain and Australia will jointly develop and build a new class of AUKUS nuclear-powered submarines.

Prime Minister Anthony

Albanese described the \$3.9 billion allocation as a down payment toward establishing the new submarine construction yard at Osborne, a suburb of Adelaide in South Australia state.

Investing in the submarine construction yard at Osborne is critical to delivering Australia's conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines, Albanese said in a statement. Official projections estimate the total cost of the program will reach \$30 billion over the coming decades.

The Osborne facility will serve as the primary site where Australia's defence company ASC Pty Ltd and Britain's BAE Systems will jointly construct Australia's future fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, the core element of the AUKUS arrangement.

TAIWAN CHINA TENSIONS

Taiwan Rebukes China Over Security Claims

TAIWAN

Taiwan's Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung on Sunday sharply criticized China, calling it the real threat to regional security and accusing Beijing of hypocrisy in claiming to uphold United Nations principles of peace. His remarks came in response to comments made by China's top diplomat during the Munich Security Conference.

China considers democratically governed Taiwan as part of its territory, a position firmly rejected by the govern-



ment in Taipei. Taiwan maintains that only its people have the right to determine their future and that its sovereignty does not belong to Beijing.

Addressing the annual se-

curity forum, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi warned that certain countries were attempting to split Taiwan from China. He also blamed Japan for escalating tensions over

the island and stressed the importance of adhering to the principles of the United Nations Charter.

In a strongly worded statement, Lin said that whether viewed through historical facts, objective reality, or international law, Taiwan's sovereignty has never belonged to the People's Republic of China. He accused Wang of boasting about upholding the purposes of the U.N. Charter while blaming other nations for regional instability.

Lin further alleged that China has recently carried out

military provocations in areas surrounding Taiwan, actions he said openly violate the U.N. Charter's principle of refraining from the threat or use of force.

This once again exposes a hegemonic mindset that does not match its words with its actions, Lin stated.

The exchange highlights deepening tensions between Taipei and Beijing, as diplomatic rhetoric and military activities continue to strain cross-strait relations and raise broader concerns about stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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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 adds over 50,000 MW new power capacity in 10 months of FY 26

New Delhi
A record 52,537 MW of electricity generation capacity has been added in the country up to January 31, during the current financial year, which represents an 11 per cent increase over the corresponding figure for 2024-25, according to an official statement issued on Sunday. Renewable energy accounts for as much as 39,657 MW of this total capacity, which includes 34,955 MW of solar power and 4,613 MW of wind power. This marks the highest ever capacity addition in a single year, surpassing the previous record of 34,054 MW achieved during FY 2024-25.

TCS' market cap falls over Rs 90,000 crore this week

Mumbai
The market valuation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) tumbled by Rs 90,198.92 crore to Rs 9,74,043.43 crore this week, emerging as the biggest laggard among India's top companies amid a broader bearish trend in equities. The combined market capitalisation of six of the top 10 most valued firms declined by more than Rs 3 trillion during the week, as stock markets remained under pressure. The BSE benchmark index fell by 953.64 points, or 1.14 per cent reflecting weak investor sentiment. Among the major losers were TCS and Infosys, both of which saw sharp erosion in their valuations.

Strong global response highlights India's rise as hub for responsible AI

New Delhi
The government on Sunday said the overwhelming global participation in the India AI Impact Summit 2026 underlines India's growing role as a hub for responsible artificial intelligence innovation, guided by the vision of People, Planet and Progress. Ahead of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, which will be held in New Delhi from February 16 to 20, the finalists of three flagship Global Impact Challenges AI for ALL, AI by HER and YU-VAI have been announced. These challenges were launched to promote innovative and socially impactful AI solutions aligned with global priorities, Ministry of Electronics & IT said.

AI seen as catalyst, not threat, at India summit: Rubrik CEO

WASHINGTON
As India prepares to host the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi next week, Bipul Sinha, Chairman and Chief Executive of Rubrik, cast the gathering as a pivot point for a country seeking to move the global artificial intelligence debate away from fear and toward practical outcomes that reshape governments, businesses and daily life. Sinha told IANS in an exclusive interview that the timing of the summit could not be better, arguing that India is now examining artificial intelligence across the different layers of the stack, starting from the energy layer all the way to the agents and how agents will get deployed. But, he stressed, AI is going to be all about solution, not just the

Amit Shah Launches CBDC-Based PDS Initiative

India leads global digital transactions, says Home Minister Amit Shah.

GANDHINAGAR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said India accounts for more than half of the world's total digital transactions, as he launched the country's first Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Public Distribution System (PDS) in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Speaking at a function held at Mahatma Mandir, Shah highlighted India's rapid digital transformation over the past decade. He said that nearly 60 crore people lacked bank accounts ten years ago, but today the country is at the forefront of digital payments globally. Extending greetings on the occasion of Mahashivratri, he emphasised that technology-driven gover-



nance has strengthened welfare delivery systems. The Union Minister inaugurated a transparent and technology-enabled PDS based on CBDC, integrated with Aadhaar-based biometric authentication and the Reserve Bank's payment systems. He said the new system would eliminate leakages in the distribution of subsidised food grains. With a technology-based system like CBDC, corruption and the role of middlemen will be completely

eliminated, Shah stated, adding that the model would be implemented across the country within the next three to four years. As part of the programme, Shah also launched the 'Annapurta' Grain ATM in the Sabarmati zone of Ahmedabad. The machine can dispense up to 25 kilograms of food grains within 35 seconds, ensuring accuracy in weight, pricing and quality. The initiative is aimed at enhancing efficiency and transparency in ration distribution. Additionally, the government introduced distribution of 'chana' and 'tur' dal in sealed one-kilogram packs to ensure quality and hygiene. The 'Garima Poshan' - Suposhit Garudeshwar Taluka' campaign was also launched to

promote nutritional security among beneficiaries. Referring to welfare measures under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, Shah said that 81 crore people are receiving free ration. He added that digitisation would further improve transparency and accountability in the system. Highlighting achievements over the past decade, Shah said four crore houses had been constructed under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, tap water connections provided to 13 crore households, gas cylinders distributed to around 13 crore homes and toilets built in 12 crore households. He also noted that 2.91 crore women had become 'Lakshmi Didis', reflecting the government's push for inclusive development.

Partnership deepens with security, technology and people-to-people cooperation focus.

India Japan Ties Enter Dynamic New Phase

TOKYO

The long-standing and resilient partnership between Japan and India is entering a new and dynamic phase, marked by deeper security collaboration and expanding cooperation in advanced technologies, according to a recent report. The bilateral relationship, which has steadily strengthened over the years, is now witnessing renewed momentum driven by shared strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region and growing people-to-people engagement. A report by Japan Forward highlights that cultural exchanges, increasing Japanese investments in India, and collaboration in innovation and manufacturing are adding fresh energy to ties. Both nations share a common vision of maintaining a free, open and



rules-based Indo-Pacific amid rising global uncertainties. During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Japan in August 2025, then Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba underscored the remarkable progress achieved in bilateral relations over the past decade. He emphasised the importance of strengthening security cooperation in response to evolving geopolitical challenges. Japan and India, which share fundamental values, share the responsibility to

maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific region, Ishiba stated. He added that as the international situation becomes increasingly uncertain, both countries must work together to ensure regional peace and stability. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to elevating the Special Strategic and Global Partnership. Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that the two nations aim to build a

EAM Jaishankar amid US claims on Russian oil buys

MUNICH

Amid repeated assertions from the United States regarding New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil, India, reaffirming its strategic autonomy, has conveyed a clear message on the global stage that its energy decisions will be determined by availability, cost, and risk considerations. The remarks come against the backdrop of fresh US sanctions targeting Russia's oil sector and claims by President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio that India has agreed to halt additional imports of Russian crude. Addressing the Munich Security Conference on External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar rejected suggestions that a recent India-US trade understanding would undermine India's long-standing commitment to strategic autonomy. His comments followed Rubio's statement that Washington had received assurances from New Delhi that it would refrain from purchasing more Russian oil after the latest round of US sanctions on Moscow's energy exports. The United States has imposed additional sanctions on Russia's oil. In our conversations with India, we've gotten their commitment to stop buying additional Russian oil. Europe has taken its set of steps moving forward, Rubio was quoted as saying during the conference, by Russian news agency TASS. Earlier this month, President Trump had made a stronger assertion while announcing what he described as a breakthrough following months of trade tensions.

World's second underwater tunnel having rail movement facility to be built under Brahmaputra: Assam CM

GUWAHATI

Set to become a global engineering landmark, the Numaligarh tunnel under the Brahmaputra will be the world's second underwater tunnel capable of facilitating rail movement, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday, describing the project as a game-changer for connectivity and strategic logistics in the Northeast. Addressing reporters, Sarma said the Gohpur-Numaligarh tunnel project, with an estimated cost of Rs 18,622 crore, will be constructed beneath the Brahmaputra river and designed to carry both road and rail traffic. Once completed, it will drastically reduce travel time between northern and



Upper Assam while also strengthening defence and freight movement across the region. The Chief Minister said the tunnel's ability to support rail operations places it among a very small group of such projects globally, underlining its technological and strategic importance. He added that the tunnel would improve year-round connectivity, including during

Bill Gates to Visit Andhra Pradesh on Monday

AMRAVATI

Founder Chairman of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill Gates, will visit Andhra Pradesh on Monday as part of a high-level engagement with the State Government. Gates will lead a delegation from the Foundation for detailed discussions with Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan and Minister for Information Technology Nara Lokesh. According to official sources, the discussions will focus on strengthening collaboration in key sectors such as education, public health and agriculture. With the cooperation of the Foundation, the State Government plans to further expand various ongoing projects in these sectors. The visit is expected to reinforce the State's push towards technology-driven governance and development.



Gates Foundation chief to review governance, health and agriculture initiatives.

As per the schedule, Bill Gates will arrive at the State Secretariat at 10 a.m. and later visit the Real Time Governance Society (RTGS) Centre. During the visit, he will observe the utilisation of advanced technology in governance and public service delivery. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu will brief Gates on the State's real-time governance policies and their outcomes. Following this, the Chief Minister, Cabinet colleagues and senior officials from different departments will hold a detailed meeting with the Gates Foundation delegation. Naidu will also make a comprehensive presentation on the reforms undertaken to achieve the goals of Swarnandhra Vision-2047. The presentation will cover public health, agriculture, educa-

tion and other sectors. Key projects such as MedTech initiatives, expanded diagnostic services and the Sanjeevani programme will be explained in detail. The State Government will demonstrate the Sanjeevani project, which is being implemented in collaboration with the Gates Foundation. The initiative aims to strengthen public healthcare systems through digital innovation and improved access to medical services. Later in the day, the delegation will visit a farm near Undavalli village in Amara-vati to examine farming practices supported by drones and artificial intelligence technology. The visit will highlight the State's efforts to modernise agriculture using cutting-edge tools. Two days ago, the Chief Minister had stated that the Sanjeevani project would significantly enhance public health services. Speaking in the Assembly during the discussion on the motion thanking the Governor's address, he said that with support from the Gates Foundation, digital health records would be created, paving the way for personalised medicine and improved healthcare delivery across Andhra Pradesh.

INDIA AI EXPANSION

Sam Altman Hails India as AI Leader

WASHINGTON

In a major endorsement of India's expanding influence in artificial intelligence, Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, has described India as a potential full-stack AI leader and announced plans to deepen the company's presence and partnerships in the country. Altman's remarks come ahead of the Global AI Impact Summit 2026, scheduled to begin on February 16 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. In a recent media interaction, he said India has emerged as OpenAI's second-largest user base globally after the United States, reflecting the country's rapid adoption of AI technologies. He revealed that India now accounts for 100 million weekly active users of ChatGPT, with the country



also recording the largest number of student users worldwide. This surge highlights the growing integration of AI tools in education, research and daily life. India also ranks fourth globally in the adoption of Prism, OpenAI's free tool designed for scientific research and LaTeX-based collaboration. According to Altman, this demonstrates the country's strong engagement in

advanced research and academic innovation. Stressing the company's commitment, Altman said OpenAI aims to build AI in India, with India, and for India. He underlined that many of its tools have been made freely accessible to ensure inclusivity, regardless of income levels, educational background or familiarity with technology. Last year, OpenAI opened

its first office in Delhi and plans to expand further in 2026. Altman also shared that more than 200 nonprofit leaders across four Indian cities were recently trained to use ChatGPT to improve operational efficiency and social impact. The OpenAI chief is expected to visit India next week, where he may announce new partnerships with the government to broaden AI access and adoption nationwide. Outlining a three-part strategy, Altman said AI progress depends on Access, ensuring tools are available to all; Adoption, integrating AI into schools, clinics and small businesses; and Agency, empowering individuals with the skills and confidence to leverage AI for informed decision-making and innovation.

KARNATAKA AT 1,000 DAYS: Medical Education Reform and Yuva Nidhi Boost Youth Empowerment



A Yuva Nidhi registration or job fair event filled with youth applicants. ▶ CHNEWS

From Promise to Program: The Yuva Nidhi Scheme

The Yuva Nidhi scheme — launched as one of the state government’s key welfare guarantees — aims to provide a safety net to unemployed Karnataka graduates and diploma holders by offering a monthly unemployment allowance of ₹3,000 for degree holders and ₹1,500 for diploma holders for up to two years or until they secure employment.

According to recent data, the scheme has benefitted well over 2 lakh young people across the state, and hundreds of thousands more have registered to receive this support as part of efforts to alleviate the economic burden of joblessness.

But the government’s vision goes beyond financial support. Recognising that an allowance alone cannot guarantee employment, the programme incorporates a complementary Yuva Nidhi Plus component — linking beneficiaries to skill training oppor-

tunities that enhance job readiness in emerging sectors like technology, contemporary services, and health-adjacent careers.

“We appeal to the beneficiaries to take up skill training and secure good jobs,” said Dr. Patil, emphasising that youth must use the educational and employment resources available to them. “Training will help them find jobs easily in the coming days.”

While the Yuva Nidhi scheme has provided economic stability, an ongoing challenge has been encouraging beneficiaries to participate fully in vocational training programmes.

Across Karnataka, job fairs with hundreds of employers offering tens of thousands of job openings have been organised in collaboration with the Yuva Nidhi programme, giving beneficiaries access to real employment avenues.

MEDICAL EDUCATION: A Parallel Drive for Excellence and Expansion

On the medical education front, Minister Patil has overseen a series of reforms aimed at expanding infrastructure, improving quality, and addressing staffing gaps — a response to Karnataka’s growing healthcare needs. Over the last few years, the department has progressed on several fronts:



Dr. Sharan Prakash Patil addressing a press conference on Yuva Nidhi and skill development. ▶ CHNEWS

Expanding educational access: Proposals to establish government medical colleges in all districts are underway, with the intention of providing affordable, quality medical education to students from rural and economically weaker backgrounds. Enhancing care facilities: Plans for superspecialty hospitals, trauma care centres, and dedicated organ transplant units in districts are part of a broader objective to decentralise advanced healthcare. Staffing initiatives: Recruitment drives for professors, lecturers, and nursing staff have been intensified to fill long-standing vacancies within government medical institutions. Super speciality healthcare access: In early 2026, the government allocated land and announced plans for a 1,000-bed multi-speciality hospital in Bengaluru.

Karnataka Medical Education Department – Key Achievements

- **Expansion of Medical Education Infrastructure:** Several new government medical colleges opened and additional MBBS seats added, increasing opportunities for aspiring doctors across the state. New colleges in districts like Ramanagara and Kanakapura have widened access to medical education.
- **Increase in PG Training Capacity:** Government medical institutions such as the Haveri Institute of Medical Sciences (HIMS) received approval for postgraduate seats (17 PG seats) in various specialties, strengthening specialist training locally.
- **Policy Initiatives for Medical Professionals:** The government announced steps to make term insurance mandatory for all doctors, officers and staff in medical colleges and related institutions, enhancing social security for healthcare workers.
- **Strengthened Collaborations:** The department signed important agreements like the MoU with the Azim Premji Foundation to establish a large (≈1,000-bed) charitable transplant hospital in Bengaluru, aimed at expanding advanced clinical services tied with medical education and research.
- **Improved Access to Professional Courses:** Regulatory changes (e.g., lowering of qualifying cut-offs for **NEET-PG counselling **) have helped more medical graduates qualify and compete for postgraduate training in Karnataka colleges.
- **Promoting Research & Innovation (Support Environment):** While many achievements are at individual institutions, there’s a supportive ecosystem for medical research & multidisciplinary units recognized nationally, reflecting growing emphasis on research capacity in government medical colleges.



Empowering the Workforce: How Santosh S. Lad is Redefining Labour Welfare in Karnataka

Karnataka Ministry of Labour: Transforming Worker Welfare Under Santosh Lad

In the bustling and diverse economy of Karnataka, the labour force — especially in the unorganised and platform-based sectors — forms the backbone of growth, sustenance, and social stability. Over the past 1000 days, the Karnataka Ministry of Labour, led by Santosh S. Lad, has embarked on a series of landmark reforms designed to expand social security, legislate modern work realities, and empower the state’s vast army of workers. From pioneering bills for gig workers to issuing smart cards for unorganised labour and extending menstrual leave rights to women employees, the ministry’s work has shifted gears to meet 21st-century labour challenges head on.



A MODERN VISION FOR WORKERS' PROTECTION

When Santosh S. Lad took charge of the labour portfolio in May 2023, he inherited a department grappling with structural challenges — a large unorganised workforce, limited statutory protections for platform-based work, and uneven access to welfare measures. In response, the ministry under his leadership has sought to re-imagine labour welfare as a comprehensive and inclusive system rather than a patchwork of fragmented schemes.

A cornerstone of this vision came with the Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers (So-

cial Security and Welfare) Bill, 2025, which positions Karnataka among the first Indian states to legislate on the rights and welfare of gig workers — a rapidly expanding segment of the workforce. The bill, passed by the Karnataka Legislative Assembly, extends across eight distinct services provided by aggregators, including ride-sharing, food delivery, logistics, and e-market services. It requires platform aggregators to contribute to a welfare fund and mandates protections related to occupational health, safety and income stability. Minister Lad, in defending the mea-

sure, noted the real vulnerabilities of this workforce: “Some gig workers were putting in 16-hour shifts to earn around Rs 1,600 to Rs 1,800. Due to the kind of work, these workers will face health problems in the future...” — explaining the need for statutory protections and a welfare mechanism. This progressive legislation — backed by extensive stakeholder consultations and legislative support — aims to bring transparency, accountability and economic security to a labour segment that operates on algorithmic and non-traditional employment models.

Social Security and Smart Cards for Unorganised Workers

A major thrust of the Ministry’s work has been expanding access to social security for unorganised workers — traditionally among the most vulnerable in the labour market. Over the past three years, the Labour Department has identified over 91 unorganised sectors and registered more than 3.1 million workers statewide, ensuring they receive benefits ranging from insurance to educational support. To streamline welfare delivery, the department has issued smart cards that serve as gateways to entitlements such as medical aid, life insurance, accident compensation, pensions and educational grants.

Speaking at an event in Be-



lagavi, Minister Lad highlighted the scale and urgency of the initiative: “90% of workers nationally, and 73% in Karnataka belong to the unorganised sector. It is our responsibility to extend welfare schemes to this large workforce. The

smartcard is a step toward inclusive growth.” These smart cards are not just identification tools; they represent a digital and rights-based approach to social security — a major shift from earlier attrition-prone paper-based systems.



Affordable Housing and Worker Welfare

In July 2025, Minister Lad inaugurated three housing complexes dedicated to unorganised sector workers near the Hindalco area in Yamunapur. These complexes, envisioned as temporary yet subsidised shelters for workers, provide safe and affordable accommodation, marking a crucial intervention in housing security — one of the most pressing needs of unorganised labourers.

According to department data, such housing initiatives complement broader welfare

efforts, as workers with secure accommodation are more likely to access government services, enrol in insurance schemes, and achieve economic stability.

Expanding Welfare Through Novel Policies

The Lad-led ministry has also been at the forefront of gender-sensitive labour reforms. In October 2025, Karnataka formally approved a menstrual leave policy granting one day of paid menstrual leave every month to working women across public and private sectors. This policy not

only affirms the department’s commitment to gender equity but also aligns labour welfare with broader social and health objectives.

In his address around the policy rollout, Minister Lad underscored its significance, saying employers must recognise the unique challenges women face in the workplace and implement this humanitarian measure in letter and spirit.

Cultural and Creative Sector Welfare

Beyond the traditional labour sectors, Karnataka has also

extended protections to film and cultural workers — a workforce often devoid of formal contracts or social security. Through the enactment of the Karnataka Cinema and Cultural Activities Welfare Act, the department seeks to institutionalise benefits such as life and accident insurance, educational grants for children, and funeral expense coverage for cinema and arts workers.

This law recognizes a long-standing oversight in labour welfare: creative professionals are integral to Karnataka’s cultural economy but, until

recently, lacked statutory protections. Under Lad’s direction, this legislative change marks a significant extension of the ministry’s reach.

Outreach and Awareness Drives

The department has also prioritised ground-level awareness campaigns to ensure that workers know their rights and access benefits. From road safety awareness sessions for transport workers to district-level “Aarivu” programmes that encourage registration and enrolment, the ministry has sought to bridge

information gaps that often hinder welfare uptake.

Institutional Reforms and Departmental Accountability

Another dimension of progress has been administrative efficiency and internal accountability. The Labour Minister has taken disciplinary action against errant department officials in cases of misconduct, underscoring a drive toward transparent governance. This has included suspension of officials accused of corruption tied to welfare distribution,

signalling a zero-tolerance stance on misuse of public benefits.

Towards Inclusive Growth and Dignity

At its core, the Ministry of Labour’s work under Santosh Lad reflects a shift from reactive welfare to proactive labour empowerment. By legislating for emerging forms of work, digitising access to entitlements, and broadening the ambit of social security, the ministry has worked to ensure that economic growth translates into social justice for workers.

UEFA Nations League: England, Spain headline blockbuster group

European heavyweights renew rivalries in post-World Cup competition draw

BRUSSELS

European champions Spain will face England in a marquee Group A3 clash after the draw for the 2026/27 UEFA Nations League was made in Brussels.

Spain, who defeated England in the Euro 2024 final and lifted the Nations League title in 2023, are set to renew hostilities with Thomas Tuchel's side in what promises to be one of the standout



ties of the competition. Croatia and the Czech Republic complete Group A3.

The Nations League will take centre stage in European international football following the 2026 World Cup, before attention shifts to qualifying for Euro 2028. Group matches will be played home and away between September and November this year. The top two teams in each League A group will advance to the quarter-finals in March 2027,

with the finals scheduled for June. Elsewhere, Group A1 features a heavyweight showdown between France and Italy, alongside Belgium and Turkey. Group A2 brings together Germany and Netherlands, renewing another classic rivalry, with Serbia and Greece also in the mix.

Reigning champions Portugal headline Group A4, where they will face Denmark, Norway and Wales. Portugal won the inaugural edition in 2019

and reclaimed the trophy last year.

The draw also outlined groups across Leagues B, C and D, with promotion and relegation adding further intrigue.

With several continental heavyweights drawn together, the upcoming edition promises high-intensity clashes and a competitive pathway to the finals, potentially hosted by one of the four qualified teams.

Silver weighs draft lottery overhaul to curb NBA tanking

INGLEWOOD

National Basketball Association Commissioner Adam Silver says the league is prepared to consider sweeping changes — including revoking draft picks — to combat what he views as a rise in aggressive tanking this season.

Speaking at his annual All-Star weekend address at the Intuit Dome, Silver acknowledged that several teams appear to be prioritizing draft positioning over competition. The league recently fined the Utah Jazz \$500,000 and the Indiana Pacers \$100,000 for sitting healthy players in moves deemed detrimental to competitive integrity.

“Are we seeing behavior that is worse this year than in recent memory? Yes,” Silver said, adding that teams have been put “on notice.”

Beyond financial penalties, Silver revealed the NBA's competition committee is reviewing potential structural reforms to the draft lottery to reduce incentives for losing. Among the more severe options under consideration is the forfeiture of draft picks for teams found deliberately tanking.

“The league is 80 years old,” Silver said. “It’s time to take a fresh look at whether this system is antiquated.”

The commissioner acknowledged the dilemma at the heart of the issue: struggling teams often feel compelled to bottom out because high draft picks are critical to rebuilding. That dynamic, Silver admitted, can misalign incentives for teams and frustrate paying fans. Silver also addressed other league matters. Expansion discussions are expected to intensify this year, with Seattle and Las Vegas wide-viewed as leading candidates. Meanwhile, he confirmed the Los Angeles Clippers are cooperating with an external investigation into a possible salary-cap circumvention involving Kawhi Leonard.

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Anthony Kim claims LIV Adelaide in stunning comeback victory

ADELAIDE

Anthony Kim completed one of golf's most improbable comebacks Sunday, firing a closing 9-under 63 to win LIV Golf Adelaide — his first professional victory in nearly 16 years.

The 40-year-old American, who stepped away from com-



petitive golf for 12 years while battling drug and alcohol struggles, finished at 23-under-par at The Grange Golf Club to secure a three-shot triumph. Kim had not won since the 2010 Houston Open and only regained his place on the LIV circuit after navigating a qualifying event last month.

“For it to actually happen is pretty insane,” Kim said. “Nobody else has to believe in me but me.”

Playing in front of a vibrant Australian crowd, Kim surged ahead with four consecutive birdies from Nos. 12 through 15, draining putts from 17, 11, 14 and 17 feet. He added another clutch 15-footer on the 17th to stretch his lead before calmly parring the final hole.

Spain's Jon Rahm, who began the day tied for the lead

with Bryson DeChambeau, closed with a 71 to finish second. DeChambeau shot 74 to share third with England's Tyrrell Hatton and American Peter Uihlein at 17-under.

Once ranked as high as No. 6 in the world in 2008 and a member of the victorious U.S. Ryder Cup team that year, Kim's career had long appeared derailed. His best LIV finish prior to Sunday was a tie for 25th.

In the team competition, Australia's Ripper GC — featuring Cameron Smith, Lucas Herbert, Marc Leishman and Elvis Smylie — captured their second straight Adelaide title. Rahm's Legion XIII finished second, while Kim's 4Aces placed third.

For Kim, however, the week belonged to redemption — and a long-awaited return to the winner's circle.

Akshay Bhatia's birdie burst weathers Pebble Beach storm for lead

PEBBLE BEACH

Akshay Bhatia unleashed a blistering run of birdies before surviving punishing coastal winds to seize a two-shot lead at the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am.

Bhatia raced out with six birdies in his opening seven holes at Pebble Beach Golf Links, building a five-shot cushion by the turn. But as conditions deteriorated along the Pacific cliffs, the course bared its teeth. The temperature dropped, the wind stiffened and scoring became survival.

“All in all, weird day,” Bhatia said after posting a 4-under 68. “It just played so much harder for some of the guys late.”

He went out in 30 but came



home in 38, managing two bogeys over his final 11 holes without a birdie. Even so, his 19-under 197 total was enough to stay in front heading into a forecast of heavy wind and rain.

Collin Morikawa made the day's biggest move, soaring 25 spots with a dazzling 62

that featured 11 birdies. The two-time major champion is tied for second with Jake Knapp (66) and Sepp Straka (67).

Knapp electrified the gallery with an eagle on the first hole after holing out from 130 yards and closed with another eagle at the par-5 18th. Meanwhile, Sam Burns also holed out for eagle early but settled for a 72 to sit five back alongside Tommy Fleetwood and Maverick McNealy.

Defending champion Rory McIlroy struggled to a 72 and trails by 10 shots, while world No. 1 Scottie Scheffler posted a bogey-free 67 but remains eight behind.

With worsening weather looming, Pebble Beach promises one final stern test — and Bhatia holds the edge.

Italian star eyes second gold; Shiffrin trails after opening run

Winter Olympics: Brignone leads giant slalom, Shiffrin seventh

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO

Federica Brignone put herself on course for a second gold medal at the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics, clocking the fastest time in the opening run of the women's giant slalom on Sunday.

The 35-year-old Italian, who captured super-G gold last week, blazed through the 51-gate course in 1:03.23 in the Dolomites above Cortina to establish a commanding lead over the 76-strong field. Brignone, the reigning world champion in giant slalom, showed no lingering effects from the broken left leg she suffered last year, an injury that required surgery and months of rehabilitation.

“I tried to attack, to be clean and intelligent on the terrain changes,” Brignone said after her run. “It all came naturally to me.”

Germany's Lena Duerr sits second, 0.34 seconds behind, while Brignone's teammate Sofia Goggia is third,

0.46 back. Defending Olympic champion Sara Hector is part of a trio tied for fourth alongside Norway's Thea Louise Stjernesund and Albania's Lara Colturi.

American star Mikaela Shiffrin, the 2018 Olympic champion in the event, is seventh, just over a second off the pace. Shiffrin is seeking her first Olympic medal in eight years and is looking to rebound after narrowly missing the podium in the combined earlier at these Games.

Brignone, competing at her home Olympics, appeared in complete control, recording top split times across multiple sections of the course. With four Olympic medals already to her name, she now stands poised to add another — and potentially secure a second gold in less than a week.

Vonn says latest leg surgery successful after Olympic crash

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO

Lindsey Vonn said her latest surgery on a broken left leg “went well” and that she will soon return to the United States following her dramatic crash in the Olympic downhill. The 41-year-old American is recovering at a hospital in Treviso after being airlifted from the course last Sunday, just 13 seconds into her run. Vonn revealed earlier this week that she sustained a “complex tibia fracture” requiring multiple procedures. She confirmed her third surgery had been successful.

In an Instagram message, Vonn expressed gratitude for the outpouring of support but

urged fans not to feel sorry for her.

“Please, don't be sad,” she wrote. “Empathy, love and support I welcome with an open heart, but please not sadness or sympathy. I hope instead it gives you strength to keep fighting, because that is what I am doing and that is what I will continue to do. Always.”

Her latest setback came just nine days after she ruptured the ACL in the same left knee during another crash. Vonn had entered the Milan-Cortina Games as one of the most compelling comeback stories, returning to Olympic competition after nearly six years of retirement.

Tottenham appoint Igor Tudor as interim manager until season end

LONDON

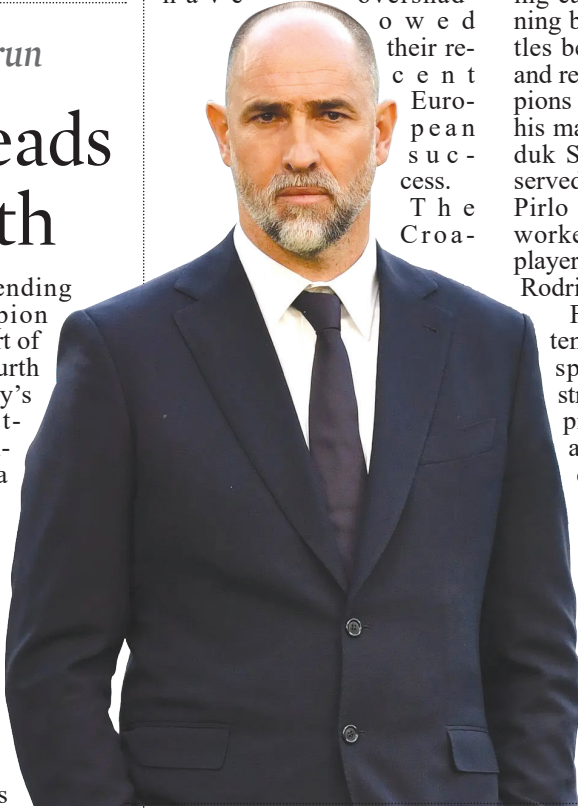
Tottenham Hotspur are set to appoint Igor Tudor as interim manager until the end of the season following the dismissal of Thomas Frank, British media reported.

Tudor, 47, reportedly agreed to a short-term deal after Spurs parted ways with Frank with the club sitting 16th in the Premier League, just five points above the relegation zone. The North London side are seeking stability during a turbulent campaign in which domestic struggles have overshadowed their recent European success. The Croatian most recently managed Juventus, guiding the Serie A giants to a fourth-place finish last season before being dismissed in October after an eight-match winless run across all competitions. Tudor has also coached Galatasaray and Olympique de Marseille, building a reputation for an aggressive, high-pressing style and rapid transitions. His first assignment could hardly be tougher: a North London derby against Premier League leaders Arsenal on Feb. 22.

A former central defender, Tudor spent much of his playing career at Juventus, winning back-to-back Serie A titles between 2001 and 2003 and reaching the 2003 Champions League final. He began his managerial career at Hajduk Split in 2013 and later served as assistant to Andrea Pirlo at Juventus, where he worked with current Spurs players Dejan Kulusevski and Rodrigo Bentancur.

Frank had joined Tottenham after a successful spell at Brentford but struggled to replicate that progress at a club balancing league survival concerns with Champions League ambitions. Spurs have reached the last 16 in Europe's elite competition, and Tudor's immediate task will be to steer them clear of relegation danger while maintaining momentum on the continental stage.

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Keshad Johnson wins Slam Dunk crown after thrilling final duel

INGLEWOOD

Keshad Johnson of the Miami Heat soared to the Slam Dunk title at NBA All-Star, edging San Antonio rookie Carter Bryant despite Bryant delivering a perfect 50 on his first dunk in the final round.

Johnson sealed the victory with a spectacular free-throw-line takeoff, gliding in for a one-handed windmill jam after beginning his run from behind the judges' table. His earlier between-the-legs slam had already put him in strong position, earning one of the night's top scores.

Bryant electrified the crowd with a flawless opening dunk in the final, bouncing the ball, catching it between his legs and finishing with authority for a perfect 50 from all five judges. But he faltered on his second attempt, missing twice on a reverse try off the glass before settling for a safer finish that lacked the same impact.

Johnson accepted the trophy from Hall of Famer Julius Erving after an exuberant, dance-filled celebration that matched his high-flying performance.



Three-time champion Mac McClung did not compete this year, leaving the spotlight open in the four-man field. Lakers big man Jaxson Hayes and Orlando's Jase Richardson were eliminated in the opening round.

In the 3-point contest, Damian Lillard captured his third career title, tying Larry Bird and Craig Hodges for the most in event history. Lillard scored 30 points in the final to defeat Phoenix's Devin Booker, who finished with 27.

The festivities unfolded at the Intuit Dome, where celebrities including Spike Lee and Magic Johnson watched Johnson rise above the rim — and the competition — for his first dunk crown.

NBA unveils new All-Star format amid questions over effort

INGLEWOOD

The National Basketball Association is rolling out its fourth All-Star Game format in four years, hoping a fresh twist can restore competitiveness and fan interest to its midseason spectacle.

Sunday's showcase at the Intuit Dome features a three-team, round-robin tournament: veteran American stars (“Stripes”), younger U.S. standouts (“Stars”) and a World team made up of international talent. The teams will play 12-minute games, with the top two advancing to a final.

The idea hinges on pride — particularly national pride. French phenom Victor Wembanyama believes the global growth of the league gives the format a competitive edge.

“We’ve seen that many of the best players have been increasingly foreign players,” Wembanyama said. “Anything that gets closer to representing a country brings up



the pride.”

Not everyone is convinced. Kawhi Leonard said he prefers the traditional East vs. West matchup, arguing that no format can force players to compete harder. Minnesota guard Anthony Edwards was similarly noncommittal.

The World roster boasts elite talent such as Luka Doncic and Nikola Jokic, though injuries have sidelined stars including Giannis Antetok-

ounmpo and Shai Gilgeous-Alexander. LeBron James, appearing in his record 21st All-Star Game, will suit up despite minor injury concerns.

The NBA abandoned its long-running East-West rivalry in 2018 in favor of captain-selected teams, briefly returned to the conference format and experimented with a four-team mini-tournament last year. That event, high-

lighted by Stephen Curry earning MVP honors on his home floor, drew mixed reviews.

Now, with television ratings under scrutiny and players often criticized for lackluster defense, the league hopes this nationality-based twist can spark intensity. Whether pride and novelty are enough to transform what has become a glorified exhibition remains the pressing question.



England target Super Eights berth against Italy

Bazballers seek momentum, Italy aim for historic upset in Kolkata

KOLKATA

Two-time champions England will aim to seal their Super Eights berth when they face T20 World Cup debutants Italy in their final Group C clash at Eden Gardens on Monday. The contest adds a fresh chapter to a long-standing sporting rivalry better known on the football field. From the drama of the UEFA Euro 2020 Final at Wembley to now the cricket arena, England and Italy bring competitive edge into unfamiliar territory. England head into the match with renewed confidence after a tense win over Scotland. The biggest boost

came from Tom Banton's composed half-century in a tricky chase, where he shelved extravagant strokes to play a measured knock that kept the campaign alive. Skipper Harry Brook admitted his side has not yet hit top gear but hopes consistency begins with Italy. Phil Salt and Jos Buttler have provided starts without converting them, while Brook himself will look to anchor the innings. England's bowling unit, however, found rhythm in the previous outing. Jofra Archer exploited bounce with the new ball, and the spin duo of Adil Rashid and Liam Daw-

son tightened the screws in the middle overs. Italy, meanwhile, arrive with momentum of their own after a commanding 10-wicket victory over Nepal — their maiden win of the tournament. The Mosca brothers, Justin and Anthony, struck unbeaten fifties, while the Manenti siblings have contributed with both bat and ball. Leg-spinner Crishan Kalugamage adds variety to the attack. With Scotland also in contention, an upset could shake up Group C. England start favourites, but Italy's fearless approach ensures a compelling showdown.

Australia weigh Smith option for must-win Sri Lanka clash

PALLEKELE

Injury-hit Australia are considering drafting veteran batter Steve Smith into their XI for a crucial T20 World Cup Group B encounter against Sri Lanka on Monday, as the former champions fight to keep their campaign alive. Australia's hopes of progressing to the Super Eights hang in the balance after a shock 23-run defeat to Zimbabwe left them third in the group with two points from two games. The 2021 champions must now win their remaining fixtures against Sri Lanka and Oman to avoid depending on other results. Captain Mitchell Marsh remains under an injury cloud with internal bleeding, having missed consecutive matches. Smith, 36, has joined the

squad as cover but is yet to be officially added to the 15-man roster. Australia, however, have room to include him without replacing anyone following Josh Hazlewood's injury-enforced exit. Smith's experience and strong record against spin could prove vital on Sri Lankan surfaces, particularly after Australia were bowled out for 146 against Zimbabwe following a top-order collapse. Stand-in

skipper Travis Head expressed confidence, recalling a similar turnaround during the 2023 ODI World Cup campaign.

Australia have also been hampered by the absence



of pace spearheads Mitchell Starc (retired), Pat Cummins (injured), and Hazlewood. While Nathan Ellis has impressed, others have struggled for consistency. Sri Lanka, led by Dasun Shanaka, top Group B after wins over Oman and Ireland. However, they too have suffered a setback with star spinner Wanindu Hasaranga ruled out due to a hamstring injury. Teams facing selection challenges, Monday's clash promises high stakes and little margin for error.

Indian Racing League: Goa leg ends with thrilling street showdown



GOA

The curtains came down on a pulsating weekend of high-speed action as Round 4 of the Indian Racing League (IRL) concluded with the Goa Street Race on Sunday. Organised under the banner of the Indian Racing League and forming part of the Indian Racing Festival, the two-day spectacle was held on a custom-built FIA-certified street circuit adjacent to the Manohar International Airport. The event drew enthusiastic crowds who braved the afternoon heat to witness edge-of-the-seat racing. International drivers Raoul Hyman and Alister Yoong emerged victorious on the opening day, setting the tone for a fiercely contested round. Among Indian racers, Divy Nandan of Hyderabad Black Birds, Chennai Turbo Riders' Aqil Alibhai, and Kings Bengaluru's Ruhaan Alva impressed with competitive performances. Alva, representing

a team backed by actor Kichcha Sudeep, secured a podium finish in Race 2. A defining feature of the league continues to be its inclusive format. Each team fields four drivers — an experienced international racer, an emerging overseas talent, an Indian driver, and a female competitor — with two drivers sharing a car as Driver A and Driver B. The structure aims to raise standards while nurturing domestic talent and promoting gender representation in Indian motorsport. Speaking at the closing press conference, league chairman Akhlesh Reddy emphasised that the format is designed to create a sustainable ecosystem for Indian racing. Beyond podium finishes, the Goa Street Race underscored the league's ambition to blend elite motorsport with accessibility in iconic destinations. The IRL caravan now heads to Navi Mumbai for its season finale, scheduled for the last week of February.

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi: Prodigy faces examination of a different kind

TEZPUR

For most teenagers, board exams are a daunting milestone. For 14-year-old cricket sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, they represent another test of temperament — this time away from the roar of the crowd and under the quiet scrutiny of an examination hall. The young batting prodigy, who has already drawn national attention for his exploits on the cricket field, now stands at the crossroads of sport and academics as the CBSE board examinations approach. His unconventional academic journey — marked by frequent travel for matches and training camps — has required careful coordination between family and school authorities. At Modern Public School, Principal Anjali confirmed that his admit card has been

received, leaving the final decision to the student. "It will be up to him whether to appear for the exams or not," she stated, underlining the institution's support. If he does take the papers, Vaibhav will write them at Podar International School, where Principal Akhwari Neilkishor Sinha has made it clear that no special concessions will be granted. "In the exam hall, he will be treated like any other pupil. He has to use his own pen, own brain, and own skill," Sinha remarked, even while praising the youngster's rise from humble beginnings. His schedule is packed — Mathematics on February 17, followed by English, Science, Hindi, and Social Science through early March. Meanwhile, local authorities have arranged additional security at the exam centre, anticipating public curiosity.



Winter Olympics: Canadian curlers face double-touch controversy

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO

A simmering controversy erupted at the Winter Olympics as Canadian curlers faced allegations of illegal "double-touch" violations during round-robin action at the Milan-Cortina Games. Veteran curler Marc Kennedy denied any wrongdoing after Swedish rival Oskar

Eriksson accused him of touching the stone again after release — a breach under curling rules. The accusation surfaced following Canada's 8-6 victory over Sweden and quickly spiraled, with footage circulating online that appeared to show Kennedy's finger making contact with the granite rock after delivery. Kennedy insisted he has

never sought unfair advantage. "I've never gone onto the ice intending to cheat," he said, suggesting the episode might have been a "premeditated" attempt to catch Canada out. Governing body World Curling issued him a verbal warning over his heat-finger exchange with Swedish players but has not formally charged him. The body does

not use video review for in-game infractions. In a further twist, Canada's women's team was also accused of a similar violation, this time involving skip Rachel Homan during their match against Switzerland. Homan dismissed the claim outright, saying there was "zero percent chance" of an infraction.



West Indies thrash Nepal, enter Super Eights

MUMBAI

West Indies became the first team to qualify for the Super Eights in the T20 World Cup with a commanding nine-wicket win over Nepal at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday. Led by skipper Shai Hope, the Caribbean side chased down a modest 134 with ease, finishing at 134 for 1 in just 15.2 overs in their Group C clash. Hope remained unbeaten on 61 off 44 balls, striking five fours and three sixes, while Shimron Hetmyer provided solid support with an unbeaten 46 off 32 deliveries. The duo stitched together an unbroken 91-run stand for the second wicket to seal victory with 28 balls to spare. Earlier, Jason Holder returned impressive figures of 4/27 to restrict Nepal to 133 for 8. The only resistance came from Dipendra Singh Airee, who played a valiant knock of 58 not out off 47



Hope, Hetmyer shine as Windies seal dominant Mumbai victory

balls, laced with three fours and three sixes. His determined effort, along with Sompal Kami's late cameo of 26 not out, lifted Nepal from a precarious 46 for 5. Nepal's innings never truly gathered momentum. Early strikes from Akeal Hosein and Holder derailed their top order, and poor shot selection compounded their troubles. Airee's fighting half-century was the lone bright spark for the Rhinos, whose fans once

again turned up in large numbers but left disappointed. In reply, West Indies lost Brandon King early but faced little resistance thereafter. Nepal's bowlers failed to apply pressure on a batting-friendly surface, allowing Hope and Hetmyer to dictate terms comfortably. With three wins in three matches, West Indies now sit atop Group C and carry strong momentum into the next stage of the tournament.

Proteas captain praises bowlers, confident after dominant Ahmedabad victory

SA near full potential after NZ rout, says Markram

AHMEDABAD

South Africa skipper Aiden Markram said his side moved "a lot closer" to realising their full potential after a comprehensive win over New Zealand in the T20 World Cup. Playing before a packed house at the Narendra Modi Stadium, the Proteas produced a clinical display with both ball and bat to edge nearer to the Super Eights. South Africa restricted New Zealand to 175 on what Markram felt was a 200-plus surface, before chasing down the target with authority. "Definitely a lot closer to the fullest potential tonight. I thought pretty much all areas were really good," Markram said after the victory. He credited the bowlers for reading the conditions astutely and executing their variations with conviction. Markram explained that field placements were largely bowler-driven, allowing flexibility between

pace-on and pace-off options depending on how opposition batters approached their innings. "It's not a set plan. If a guy's teeing off, you need to play with his swing through change of pace. The conviction behind what they did tonight was key," he noted. The skipper highlighted the importance of attitude, particularly when New Zealand threatened through a partnership between Mark Chapman and Daryl Mitchell. "You can't drift away when there's a stand building. It starts with the man at the top of his mark. That mindset helps you break partnerships," he said. In the chase, Markram led from the front with an unbeaten 86, benefiting from improved batting conditions under lights and a hint of dew.



WTT Star Contender Chennai 2026: Sathiyam storms into quarters, Desai-Ghorpade in mixed final

CHENNAI

India's campaign gathered momentum at the WTT Star Contender Chennai 2026 as Sathiyam G produced a stirring comeback to enter the men's singles quarterfinals, while the mixed doubles pair of Harmeet Desai and Yashaswini Ghorpade booked their place in the final. Competing at the Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University, Sathiyam fought back from a 1-2 deficit to edge past Romania's Eduard Ionescu 3-2 (9-11, 11-3, 10-12, 11-7, 11-5). Displaying composure under pressure, the Indian ace dominated the decider to script his first-ever men's singles quarterfinal appearance at a WTT Star Contender event. He will next face Czechia's Lubomir Jancairik, who defeated India's Manush Shah. In mixed doubles, fourth seeds Desai and Ghorpade were clinical in their all-Indi-

an semifinal, brushing aside wild cards Payas Jain and Syndrela Das 3-0 (11-9, 11-6, 11-9). The duo looked in control throughout, combining sharp returns with effective placement to seal a comfortable win. They will now meet the Romanian pairing of Ionescu and Bernadette Szocs in the title clash. The contest adds intrigue, with Ghorpade and Szocs having previously been teammates in the Ultimate Table Tennis league. Elsewhere, Snehit Suravajula's impressive run ended with a 3-1 loss to top seed Oh Junsung, while India's women's singles challenge concluded after qualifier Nithya Mani bowed out against Cheng I-Ching of Chinese Taipei. With Sathiyam and the mixed doubles pair still in contention, Indian hopes remain alive heading into the business end of the tournament.

