



Donald Trump threatens more strikes on Iran oil hub

P8



Fuel Price Freeze Pressures State Oil Companies

P9

Pole vaulters Dev, Kuldeep clear CWG mark in season opener

P12



WHEN WAR RAGES WITH NO END IN SIGHT..

INDIA BARS LPG REFILLS FOR PNG HOMES

NEW DELHI

The Central Government has barred households with piped cooking gas (called PNG) connections from retaining or obtaining subsidised domestic LPG connections, even as the sector regulator pushed city gas distributors to accelerate PNG rollout to ease pressure on cooking gas supplies amid global energy supply crisis.

In a notification issued on March 14, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas amended the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (Regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order, 2000, under the Essential Commodities Act, making it mandatory for consumers with PNG connections to surrender their domestic LPG connections.

The amended order also prohibits government oil companies and their distributors from providing domestic LPG connections or refilling cylinders for consumers who already have a PNG supply.

“No person having a piped natural gas (PNG) connection and also having a domestic LPG connection shall retain a domestic LPG connection, or take refills of domestic LPG cylinders from any Government oil company, or through their distributors. Such persons will be required to immediately surrender their domestic LPG connection,” the order said. Those having PNG connections have also been barred from obtaining a domestic LPG connection.

For government oil companies, the order prohibited them from “providing a domestic LPG connection, and/or supplying domestic LPG



Sri Lanka rolls out fuel rationing system

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka on Sunday rolled out a fuel rationing system through QR code in view of a possible crisis situation due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia. Cars are allowed 15 litres per week, while buses are allowed 60 litres per week, the Ministry of Energy said. The QR rationing is introduced as a measure in view of hoarding by the consumers despite the continuous availability of enough fuel for 4 months, it said. Long queues were reported at several filling stations across the country after the government relaunched the National Fuel Pass (QR code) system.

cylinder refills to a consumer who already owns a PNG connection”.

The move is aimed at prioritising LPG supplies for households that do not have access to piped gas.

PNG expansion push

In a related advisory, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has asked city gas distribution (CGD) companies to expedite conversion of households to domestic PNG (DPNG) and prioritise consumers in areas

where pipeline infrastructure has already been laid. The regulator said India’s total natural gas consumption is around 189 million metric standard cubic metres per day (mmscmd), of which about 97.5 mmscmd is produced domestically. Out of the average 13.94 mmscmd of administered price mechanism (APM) gas allocated to the CGD sector, about 3.63 mmscmd is used in the domestic PNG segment, while the rest is consumed in the compressed natural gas (CNG) segment for vehicles.

‘Import LPG from other nations to address crunch’

BENGALURU

Amid reports of LPG shortage in the parts of Karnataka, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, on Sunday, said that he has written to the central government urging it to consider alternative measures, including importing cooking gas from other countries to ensure uninterrupted supply.

The chief



minister said that state government has already addressed the matter in the legislative assembly and has taken it up with the Centre, emphasising on the need for immediate steps to prevent disruptions in the supply.

According to the PTI report, Siddaramaiah said, “The government has already given replies twice, both in the Legislative Assembly and the Legisla-

tive Council. I have also written a letter. Regarding this shortage, I have said that efforts should made to explore alternatives, such as bringing LPG from other countries to avoid the shortage. Even now, I am urging the central government.”

He warned that any interruption in LPG availability could affect daily life as a large number of people depend on eateries for their meals.

‘LPG bookings fall to 77L, no fuel shortages’

NEW DELHI

LPG refill bookings have declined to about 77 lakh from 88.8 lakh earlier, indicating some easing of panic buying, even as the government said there is no shortage of petrol, diesel or cooking gas, and supplies remain stable despite the West Asia conflict.

In a daily update on the impact of the war, the government said the share of online LPG bookings has risen to about 87% from 84%, attributing the increase to a campaign by oil marketing companies (OMCs) promoting digital booking and discouraging people from queuing up at LPG dealerships for panic buying.

All domestic “refineries are operating at high capacity and maintaining adequate crude oil inventories,” it stated. “The country remains self-sufficient in the production of petrol and diesel, requiring no imports to meet domestic demand.” OMCs have reported no dry-outs at fuel retail outlets or LPG distributorships, and petrol, diesel and LPG supplies are being maintained regularly.

“LPG bookings have shown a decline, with about 77 lakh bookings recorded yesterday (on Saturday) compared to 88.8 lakh bookings on March 13, 2026,” it added.

Iran vows to hunt down Netanyahu until he is alive

TEHRAN

Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) on Sunday issued a direct threat to assassinate Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, dismissing rumours of his death as false.

The vow comes amid an escalating war involving Iran, Israel, and the United States, with both sides trading military strikes and public threats.

The Guards vowed to “pursue and kill” Netanyahu as it continued strikes on Israel on the 16th day of the war in the Middle East. “If this child-killing criminal is alive, we will continue to pursue and kill him with full force,” it stated amid social media posts raising questions about the whereabouts of Netanyahu, who has reportedly not been seen in public for a few days.



Several users have flagged concerns over his March 12 video, which made it seem like he had six fingers on one of his hands, raising suspicion of it being edited using artificial intelligence (AI). In the video, 76-year-old Netanyahu had issued a veiled threat to kill new Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei and defended the Israeli military’s operations.

The confrontation now risks further destabilising the region, drawing in Gulf states and impacting global security and energy markets.

Middle East continues to bear the brunt of Iran war

Saudi Defense Ministry said it intercepted seven drones in Riyadh and eastern region on Sunday. The Qatari Ministry of Defense announced that it intercepted four ballistic missiles and a number of drones from Iran. Kuwait’s Ministry of Defence reported intercepting two drones that targeted Ahmad Al-Jaber Air Base, resulting in material damage within the base’s vicinity. UAE’s foreign ministry condemned Iran’s attack on UAE Consulate General in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

SHORTS FROM WAR FRONT

UAE intercepts 4 ballistic missiles, 6 drones launched from Iran	Fujairah oil terminal resumes loading operations after drone strike	Israel approves emergency military funding as war rages	Hamas official killed in Israel strike in south Lebanon's Sidon	Women's football team captain withdraws Australia asylum bid: Iran state media	Hezbollah claims 'advanced' missile strike on Israeli air base south of Tel Aviv	Gulf countries report new attacks after Iran warns major UAE ports to evacuate
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‘NO SCOPE FOR CEASEFIRE UNLESS...’: IRANIAN FM

TEHRAN

After both the US and Iranian leadership publicly dismissed the possibility of a ceasefire, Iran FM Abbas Araghchi laid out conditions for ending the war. “This war will end when we are certain it will not be repeated and that reparations will be paid. We experienced this last year: Israel attacked, then the US... they regrouped and attacked us again,” he said, referring to Iran’s war with Israel and the US in June 2025.



‘Avoid action that could widen the war’

He urged other countries and regional neighbours to refrain from any action that could widen the scope of the war. In a telephonic conversation with his French counterpart, Jean-Noel Barrot, on Sunday, Araghchi called on other countries to “refrain from any action that could lead to escalation and expansion of the conflict,” the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on X.

UAE orders arrests of 35, including 19 Indians

Abu Dhabi: The UAE has taken action against 35 people, including 19 Indians, for sharing misleading video content online that served to “harm national defence measures” amid Iranian attacks on the country. The accused, who are of various nationalities, have been referred for expedited trials, on the orders of UAE Attorney General Hamad Al Shamsi. Such acts are punishable at least one year in jail and fines starting at Dh100,000 (\$27,230).

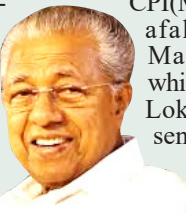
CPI(M) announces 81 candidates; CM Vijayan, 11 ministers in fray

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and 11 of his cabinet colleagues were among the 81 candidates announced by the ruling CPI(M) on Sunday for the April 9 Assembly polls in the state.

The list was released by CPI(M) state secretary M V Govindan at a press conference here soon after the schedule of the election was declared by the Election Commission in New Delhi.

Of the 81 candidates announced, six are party-backed independents. The independent candidates



for the five constituencies-Koduvalli, Kottakkal, Kondotty, Tirur and Palakkad-will be declared soon, he said.

All ministers from the CPI(M) are among the 56 sitting MLAs to seek mandate again. CPI, the second largest constituent in the Left Democratic Front, also decided to field the four incumbent ministers among the 25 candidates. A surprise candidate of CPI(M) is footballer Sharafali at Nilambur in Malappuram district, which is part of Wayanad Lok Sabha seat represented by AICC leader Priyanka Gandhi V a d r a . The

CPI(M) could be expecting that the footballer could influence the fans of Malappuram. Sitting MLA Aryadan Shoukath of the Congress is most likely to seek mandate from Nilambur again.

Vijayan (80) is seeking mandate from his home constituency Dharmadam in Kanur for the third consecutive term, with exemption from the general norm not to give more than two consecutive terms as well as relaxations in age.

Many others were also given relaxation in the maximum two consecutive term norm to ensure that the party wins maximum number of seats amid a possible BJP wave in some constituencies.

Poll dates for Bengal, TN, Kerala, Assam, Puducherry out

New Delhi: The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Sunday announced the dates for assembly polls in four states and a Union Territory. The upcoming elections are crucial for both the ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the opposition’s INDIA bloc. Of the states/UTs going to the polls, the NDA is in power in Assam and Puducherry, while the TMC rules West Bengal. The Left is in power in Kerala, and the India bloc’s DMK-Congress alliance is in power in Tamil Nadu.

BJP tried ‘Op Lotus’ on Odisha Cong MLAs in Bengaluru: DKS

BENGALURU

Two people were arrested for allegedly attempting to bribe Odisha Congress MLAs, who are staying in a resort near here, as part of BJP’s “Operation Lotus,” Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar claimed on Sunday.

He alleged that the BJP has planned “Operation Lotus” and was offering Rs five crore to all Odisha MLAs, who were flown here ahead of the 16 March Rajya Sabha polls in that State.

Eight MLAs, along with some other Odisha Congress unit office bearers are camping in the resort.

They have been flown to Bengaluru with apprehensions of horse trading during the

Rajya Sabha elections in favour of ruling BJP’s Rajya Sabha candidate.

Shivakumar, also Congress’ Karnataka chief, said two persons were apprehended at the private resort for attempting to buy over Odisha Congress MLAs. “Four people have come. One local person named Suresh helped them; they contacted him (an MLA) online. In the morning they picked up our MLA. Our MLA told us that they offered Rs five crore for each vote. He (Congress MLA) said he is not for horse-trading,” Shivakumar told reporters.

“The cheque and everything should be seized. A complaint will be filed at the

police station. After that, whatever legal action is required will be taken,” he added. Shivakumar said those caught have accepted that they came for the “same purpose”.

“They have admitted it and the process is on to trace others. This is the great Operation Lotus carried out by BJP friends in Karnataka,” the DCM said.

Operation Lotus is a term used by Congress to claim about attempts to topple a non-BJP government by the BJP whose party symbol is lotus. It also involves getting the votes on MLAs from other parties for their Rajya Sabha candidate.



Bypolls to 8 assembly seats on April 9, 23; counting on May 4

NEW DELHI

Bypolls to five assembly seats in Goa, Karnataka, Nagaland and Tripura will be held on April 9 and in another three constituencies of Gujarat and

Maharashtra on April 23, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gynaesh Kumar announced on Sunday.

Addressing a press conference for announcement of poll schedule, Kumar said the

counting of votes for bye-elections will be held on May 4 for all eight constituencies. The bypolls in all eight constituencies were necessitated due to death of sitting MLAs.



QUICK READ



Four cases booked for illegal LPG cylinder hoarding in Bengaluru

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
Police have registered four separate cases in Bengaluru after detecting illegal stockpiling of LPG cylinders amid a reported supply shortage linked to the ongoing conflict in West Asia. Cases have been filed at Peenya, RMC Yard, Kengeri and Chikkajala police stations after transporters were found allegedly storing cylinders illegally and selling them at inflated prices in the black market. The shortage has severely affected the hotel industry, forcing several eateries to shut temporarily while others have reduced breakfast and lunch menus. Residents are also facing difficulty in obtaining domestic cylinders, leading to long queues at gas agencies.

Man accused of harassing woman, creating ruckus at hostel

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
A young man has been booked for allegedly harassing a woman staying in a hostel in Indiranagar and creating a disturbance on the premises. According to police, the woman, a native of Kerala residing in the hostel, filed a complaint against Manu Sharma at the local police station. In her complaint, she alleged that the accused repeatedly pressured her to enter into a relationship. Sharma reportedly entered the hostel's gaming zone, created a ruckus and abused the woman with obscene language. He is also accused of assaulting the woman and her friend during the incident.

Husband charged after woman's suspicious death in Yelahanka

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
A 22-year-old married woman was found dead under suspicious circumstances in Yelahanka, and her husband has been charged with murder, police said. The deceased, Shruti, was allegedly subjected to dowry harassment by her husband, Pawan Kalyan, and his family for the past one-and-a-half years, according to her relatives. Family members claimed that disputes had arisen earlier over dowry demands and a compromise had once been reached between both sides. However, they alleged that the harassment continued. Shruti's family has accused her husband and in-laws of killing her and staging the death as suicide by hanging.

Parrot astrologer held for cheating IT officer of gold, silver

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Police have arrested a man accused of cheating a senior Income Tax Department officer of gold and silver jewellery worth several lakhs of rupees on the pretext of performing religious rituals to improve his career prospects.

The accused, identified as Shekhar, described by police as a parrot astrologer who offered roadside fortune-telling services, had allegedly taken 194 grams of gold ornaments and 1.3 kg of silver ornaments from the



officer and later absconded. He was traced and arrested in Tamil Nadu after remaining on the run for several weeks. According to police, the complaint was filed by a 55-year-old officer working with the Income Tax Department of India in Bengaluru. The case was registered at the Bharathinagar Police Station. Investigators said the incident began last December when the officer met Shekhar near Sri Circle in Bharathinagar, where the accused used to sit offering parrot astrology readings to passers-by.

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a prosecution complaint in a major ₹27.68-crore Transferable Development Rights (TDR) fraud case in Bengaluru, naming a real estate firm director along with several civic officials and intermediaries.

The complaint, submitted by the ED's Bengaluru Zonal Office, names Ratan Lath, director of Valmark Realty Holdings Private Limited (VRHPL), along with 19 others, including staff from the Bruhat Bengaluru Ma-

hanagara Palike (BBMP). The case originates from a 2019 FIR registered by the Karnataka Anti-Corruption Bureau.

According to investigators, the accused allegedly generated illegal profits by fraudulently obtaining and selling Development Rights Certificates (DRCs) through manipulation of land records and misuse of the city's TDR mechanism. The system allows landowners who surrender land for public infrastructure projects to receive additional building rights that can be used or sold elsewhere.



The ED stated that TDR brokers K Suresh, K Gautham and B S Surendranath, along with associates, allegedly conspired with former landowners and civic officials to secure development rights certificates fraudulently. Investigators said the group concealed previous property transactions, manipu-

lated land records such as Record of Rights, Tenancy and Crops (RTC), and falsely projected certain layouts as agricultural land eligible for TDR benefits.

In one instance, authorities found that heirs of landowners were falsely projected as current owners despite the land

being under third-party possession. Through powers of attorney and fabricated inspection reports, the accused allegedly created the impression that the properties were eligible for development rights.

Officials also discovered cases where neighbouring properties and existing buildings were misrepresented to justify issuing high-value DRCs. In one example, a plot was valued at ₹1.26 crore to justify issuing development rights covering more than 10,600 square metres.

ED raids conducted at nine

locations, including the office of VRHPL and the residence of its director, reportedly uncovered evidence linking builders, brokers and fake applicants in the conspiracy. Investigators alleged that the illicit proceeds were routed through multiple bank accounts and later used for property purchases and business expenditures.

The agency is now examining similar irregularities in areas affected by road-widening projects in Bengaluru and said it aims to curb systemic corruption linked to misuse of the TDR framework.

Monthly EMI option proposed for Bengaluru property tax payments

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The Fifth State Finance Commission of the Government of Karnataka has proposed introducing a monthly EMI facility for property tax payments in Bengaluru to make compliance easier for taxpayers and improve civic revenue collection.

The recommendation, tabled in the Karnataka Assembly, suggests allowing property owners to pay their annual taxes in monthly instalments rather than a single lump sum. At present, residents under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) do not have such an option and often rely on bank EMI facilities through credit cards or online payment systems.

The commission noted that spreading tax payments across the year could help residents manage finances better while ensuring steady revenue



Plan aims to ease taxpayer burden and improve revenue collection for city authorities.

inflow for civic bodies. To encourage timely payment, it also recommended incentives such as the five per cent rebate previously offered by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) for early tax payment.

The report also called for periodic amnesty schemes

that would allow property owners to voluntarily disclose unassessed buildings without facing heavy penalties. Officials believe such measures could significantly expand the tax base in the city.

Bengaluru currently has around 20.5 lakh properties, but nearly five lakh remain outside the tax net. According to the commission, identifying and bringing these properties into the system could generate an additional ₹700 crore to ₹1,000 crore annually for the five corporations un-

der the Greater Bengaluru Authority.

To strengthen enforcement, the report recommended door-to-door surveys and the integration of property records with GIS-based e-khata systems. Drone surveys are already being carried out in several zones to detect unassessed structures and identify property modifications that may affect tax calculations.

Authorities have also been advised to cross-check property tax records with electricity connections from BESCOM and building licence databases to ensure accurate assessments.

If implemented, the monthly EMI system could modernise property tax administration in Bengaluru while stabilising civic finances and supporting growing infrastructure needs across the rapidly expanding city.

BAMUL seeks probe into ₹1 milk sale by quick-commerce platforms

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The Bangalore Urban, Rural and Ramanagara District Cooperative Milk Producers' Societies' Union Ltd (BAMUL) has urged the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to investigate steep discounts offered by quick-commerce platforms on milk and other dairy products, warning that such pricing could harm the cooperative dairy ecosystem.

In a letter addressed to the competition regulator and Narendra Modi, BAMUL president D. K. Suresh expressed concern over reports that some online platforms have started selling milk at as low as ₹1 per litre as part of promotional campaigns.

Suresh said such aggressive discount-driven strategies could disrupt the traditional supply chain and threaten the livelihood of farmers who depend on co-operative networks for stable prices and assured procurement of milk.

According to BAMUL, predatory pricing by large digital platforms could weaken milk cooperatives that operate on thin mar-

gins while ensuring fair payments to producers. If such practices continue unchecked, they may undermine the financial stability of the cooperative system that supports millions of dairy farmers across the country.

The union also warned that thousands of small neighbourhood retailers could be affected, as dairy products form a major part of their daily sales. Heavy discounts offered online could divert customers away from local stores, impacting their income and sustainability.

Suresh urged the CCI to examine whether the steep price cuts amount to predatory pricing or abuse of dominant market position by digital commerce companies. He stressed that protecting India's dairy ecosystem is vital, as it plays a key role in rural employment and has helped the country become one of the world's largest milk producers.

BAMUL said timely regulatory intervention would help maintain fair competition while safeguarding farmers' interests and the long-standing cooperative dairy model.



K'taka to run 2,000 extra buses to ease Ugadi, Eid festival rush

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) will operate around 2,000 additional buses across the state to manage the expected surge in passenger traffic during the upcoming festival holidays.

With Ugadi falling on March 19 and Eid al-Fitr likely to be celebrated on March 20 or 21, the transport corporation has planned special services on March 18, 19 and 20 to accommodate travellers heading to their hometowns.

Most of the additional buses will operate from the Kempe-

gowda Bus Station at Majestic to major destinations across Karnataka and neighbouring states. Key routes include Dharmasthala, Kukke Subramanya, Shivamogga, Hassan, Mangaluru, Kundapur, Sringeri, Horanadu, Davanagere, Hubballi, Dharwad, Belagavi, Vijayapura, Gokarna, Sirsi, Karwar, Raichur, Kalaburagi, Ballari, Koppal, Yadgir, Bidar, Tirupati, Vijayawada and Hyderabad. Additional services will also depart from the Mysuru Road Bus Station towards Mysuru, Hunsur, Periyapatna, Virajpet, Kushalanagar and Madikeri to cater to passengers travelling to the southern parts of the state.

TRAFFIC CHAOS

Rule violations worsen traffic congestion on Tannery Road

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Persistent traffic congestion on Tannery Road has become a daily ordeal for commuters and residents, with narrow road space and frequent violation of traffic rules by motorists worsening the situation throughout the day.

The problem becomes particularly severe during morning and evening peak hours when vehicles from multiple neighbourhoods converge at the busy junction near the statue of B. R. Ambedkar.



Traffic flows into the area from Fraser Town, Richards Town, Giddappa Block, Periyar Nagar and Pillanna Udyan, while buses travelling from Nagawara and Kogilu

towards Shivajinagar and Majestic also pass through the same stretch.

With vehicles arriving from four directions at the roundabout, motorists often rush

through the intersection without waiting, resulting in long traffic snarls. Residents say that although the road is narrow, congestion could be reduced if drivers showed patience and followed traffic instructions.

However, many motorists—especially two-wheeler riders and auto drivers—often ignore directions given by traffic police and push forward, aggravating the chaos. Since there are no traffic signals at the roundabout, officers manually regulate the

flow, but rule violations make the task difficult.

Local resident Syed Ijad said vehicles frequently line up for kilometres in all four directions whenever there is a minor block. According to him, the situation remains unchanged even late at night.

"The problem cannot be solved if drivers refuse to follow basic rules. Even when police ask them to stop, many people move ahead impatiently," he said, expressing frustration over the recurring congestion.

QUICK READ



Siddaramaiah slams Centre over ‘stepmotherly’ LPG supply

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
Karnataka is being treated like a “stepmother” in the supply of LPG cylinders, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah alleged on Sunday, urging the Centre to ensure adequate supply to the State. Speaking to reporters in Bengaluru, the Chief Minister said the State government has written to the Centre seeking alternative arrangements, including importing gas from abroad, to overcome the shortage. Responding to questions on the disruption in LPG supply, Siddaramaiah said the issue had already been discussed in the legislature. He pointed out that a large section of the population depends on hotels for food and warned that shortages could affect daily life.

UVCE invites applications for guest lecturer posts

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
The University Visvesvaraya College of Engineering (UVCE) has invited applications for the post of guest lecturers. According to a release, eligible candidates who can teach the subject of Education (Pedagogy) to second-semester M.Tech students may apply for the position. Interested applicants can download the application form from the official website of the college. The filled-in application form must be submitted on or before March 23. Authorities said candidates should ensure that all required documents and qualifications are attached while submitting the application. For further details, applicants may contact the Registrar at UVCE, located at K.R. Circle in Bengaluru.

RPF conducts training to strengthen passenger safety

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
The Railway Protection Force (RPF), Bengaluru Division, organised a one-day training programme on Quick Reaction Team (QRT) operations and crowd management to enhance passenger safety at railway stations and on trains. The programme aimed to improve the operational preparedness and tactical response capabilities of RPF personnel, especially during periods of heavy passenger movement. Officials said the training also focused on strengthening coordination between the RPF and central armed police forces such as the Rapid Action Force and Central Reserve Police Force during emergencies and law-and-order situations. The sessions included theoretical briefings and practical demonstrations covering crowd control strategies.

K’taka clears ₹4,824 cr investment proposals, 14,525 jobs expected

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
The State-Level Single Window Clearance Committee (SLSWCC) has approved investment proposals worth ₹4,824.31 crore in Karnataka, paving the way for new industrial and infrastructure projects across the State. The approvals were granted during the 158th meeting of the committee, chaired by Industries Minister M. B. Patil. A total of 37 projects across 13 districts—including Vijayapura, Bagalkot, Chitradurga, Kolar and Ramanagara—received clearance. According to the government, the proposed investments span diverse sectors such as IT infrastructure, sugar manufacturing, technical textiles, compressed biogas, aerospace, jewellery production, electronics, software development and hospitality. These projects are expected to generate around 14,525 employment opportunities in the State. Among the major projects approved is an IT infrastructure development initiative by Bagmane Constructions Private Limited worth ₹494.65 crore.

LPG shortage hits hotels, sambar disappears from menus

Commercial LPG shortage disrupts hotels, weddings, industries and Indira Canteens, forcing service cuts and price hikes

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Star hotels, small eateries and catering services across Bengaluru are grappling with a severe shortage of commercial LPG cylinders, forcing many establishments to cut services, alter menus and increase food prices.

Hotel industry representatives say the crisis has affected not only small restaurants but also several premium hotels in the city. Some five-star establishments have reportedly cancelled regular events and reduced food services after struggling to secure commercial cylinders required for large-scale cooking.

Many restaurants have begun modifying their menus to manage the shortage. Dishes that require long cooking times or heavy gas usage are being limited, while a few hotels have raised prices to cope with rising operational costs.

In smaller eateries, the shortage has led to unusual adjustments in daily service. Some outlets that typically serve idli with sambar and chutney have temporarily removed sambar from the menu, offering only chutney in an effort to conserve gas. A few establishments are experimenting with alternatives such as induction stoves while waiting for regular supplies to resume.



The LPG crisis is also affecting large social gatherings. Wedding caterers say they are facing difficulties as ceremonies often require multiple cylinders for preparing meals for large crowds. According to catering experts, a

wedding with around 2,500 guests can require seven to eight commercial cylinders for cooking different meals. With the wedding season expected to intensify after Ugadi, many families are reportedly arranging domestic cylinders from relatives and friends as marriage halls ask organisers to bring their own supply.

Public welfare services have also felt the impact. Several Indira Canteens that provide subsidised meals to thousands of people daily have temporarily shut after their central kitchens ran out of gas cylinders. Authorities said discussions are under way with oil companies to restore supplies soon.

Meanwhile, demand for domestic LPG cylinders has surged, leading to long queues outside gas agencies across the city.

Industries in the Peenya Industrial Area are also facing disruptions as many manufacturing processes depend on LPG for operations such as heat treatment, welding and food processing. Industry representatives warn that prolonged shortages could reduce production and increase costs, affecting thousands of workers in the sector.

Cybercriminals weaponising psychology with AI, warns DGP Pronab Mohanty

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Cybercriminals are increasingly combining psychological manipulation with advanced technologies such as Generative AI to execute sophisticated frauds, Director General of Police Pronab Mohanty has warned.

Speaking at the ‘CCIO Impact Advocacy Meet-Up 2026’ at the Bangalore International Centre, Mohanty said cybercrime has evolved beyond technical hacking and now involves carefully designed psychological tactics aimed particularly at the middle class and affluent professionals.

Addressing cybercrime first responders, the DGP said even highly educated individuals and professionals are falling victim to scams such as so-called “digital arrests” and complex financial frauds carried out through social engineering.

“Cybercrime is no longer just a technical breach; it is



Mohanty urged citizens to avoid clicking on unsolicited links and to remain sceptical of unknown online interactions. He said nearly 99 per cent of cyber frauds can be prevented through basic precautions and early reporting via the national cybercrime helpline 1930.

an assault on human psychology,” he said, highlighting how criminals exploit fear, urgency and trust to

deceive victims online.

Mohanty pointed to the growing threat of deepfakes and AI-generated content, which make it increasingly difficult for people to distinguish between real and fabricated images or videos. Referring to an experiment conducted by The New York Times titled “Identify the AI,” he noted that even experts often struggle to differentiate between genuine and synthetic visuals as AI technology rapidly improves.

“Today you may detect a deepfake, but two months later the AI will have by-

passed your detection. It is a constant game of cat and mouse,” he said.

The event, organised by the Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ISAC) and CopConnect with support from Zscaler, recognised the work of Cyber Crime Intervention Officers (CCIOs), volunteers who help bridge the gap between victims and law enforcement agencies.

Mohanty stressed that cybersecurity must involve the entire ecosystem, including government agencies, academic institutions and civil society. He also acknowledged the role of nearly 23,000 “self-defenders” trained by ISAC across the country in spreading awareness and preventing cyber fraud.

The meet-up concluded with discussions on expanding the CCIO network to strengthen India’s cyber resilience and create a safer digital environment.

Property dispute: Son held for attacking mother

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A man has been arrested for allegedly attacking his elderly mother during a violent dispute over family property in Tilaknagar, police said on Sunday.

The accused, identified as Prakash, was arrested by personnel of the Tilaknagar Police Station in connection with the incident that took place on March 12. The victim, Lakshmi, sustained severe head injuries and is currently undergoing treatment in hospital.

According to police, Lakshmi had three sons. Her husband and second son had already passed away. A long-standing dispute over property division had been ongoing between the eldest son Prakash and the youngest son Ramesh for several years.

Police said the matter had even reached court, with a legal battle between the brothers continuing since 2016. Investigators stated that Prakash had been insisting that the property should be transferred entirely to him, which led to frequent arguments within the family.

On March 12, Prakash allegedly barged into the house and began quarrelling with Ramesh over the issue. During the altercation, he reportedly damaged household items and created a disturbance inside the house.

When their mother Lakshmi tried to intervene and stop the fight, Prakash allegedly attacked her with a walking stick he was holding. The blow reportedly struck her on the head, causing severe bleeding and leaving her unconscious.

Ramesh immediately rushed his mother to Jayanagar General Hospital for treatment after finding her lying in a pool of blood. Doctors said she had sustained a serious head injury and remained in critical condition.

Following the incident, Ramesh filed a complaint with the Tilaknagar police. Based on the complaint, police registered a case and launched a search for the accused, who had fled after the attack.

Prakash was later traced and taken into custody. Police said he is being interrogated and further investigation into the incident is under way.

Cow culture symbol of India’s service tradition: K. Gopalaiah

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Former minister and MLA K. Gopalaiah said cow culture represents India’s tradition of service and values, and efforts to promote it across the country are commendable.

He was speaking at a preparatory meeting for the State-level Go Samman Abhiyan organised under the leadership of Sri Siddarudha Mission Ashram at Mahalakshmi-puram on Sunday. The meeting brought together seers from various mutts, cow protection activists and devotees from different districts.

Gopalaiah said cow protection is considered a sacred duty in Indian culture and families should encourage the

practice of rearing and caring for cows. He added that feeding cows daily has been part of his personal routine.

The campaign will be carried out across the country in four phases. Memorandums will first be submitted to tahsildars on April 27, followed by representations to district collectors, chief ministers and governors in subsequent phases.

Key demands include declaring the cow as “Rashtra Mata”, banning cow slaughter through a uniform national law and protecting grazing lands exclusively for cattle.

Several seers and representatives of cow protection organisations attended the meeting.



ERADICATE DRUG MENACE

Karnataka prisons to introduce drug tests for inmates

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The Karnataka Prisons Department has decided to introduce drug testing for inmates across prisons in the State in a bid to curb the smuggling and consumption of narcotic substances inside jails.

The move follows repeated incidents of drugs being smuggled into prisons. On March 9, prison authorities reported an attempt at the Parappana Agrahara Central Prison, where a staff member allegedly tried to bring narcotic substances into

the facility. In another case reported at Ramanagara prison, an inmate who had been lodged in the jail for about 12 days was caught attempting to smuggle ganja hidden inside his sleeves. According to officials, the prisoner initially tried to mislead authorities by claiming he had quit drugs long ago and that the incident was accidental. However, a medical examination later confirmed that he was under the influence of narcotics. Taking note of

such incidents, Director General of Prisons Alok Kumar decided to implement systematic drug testing in prisons across Karnataka. Officials said the initiative aims to identify drug users within jails and disrupt the supply chain of narcotics entering correctional facilities.

“This initiative is probably the second of its kind in the country after Punjab,” Kumar said, adding that tackling drug abuse inside prisons is essential to prevent-

ing crimes linked to narcotics in society. Under the plan, inmates will be screened for substances such as ganja, heroin and cocaine. In the first phase, selected groups of prisoners across jails will undergo testing. The tests will be conducted by prison medical officers using special testing kits supplied by the department, with technical support from the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS).

Officials said the exercise will help authorities understand the pattern and scale of sub-

stance abuse within prisons so that targeted interventions can be implemented.

During the ongoing process, around 20 inmates reportedly refused to undergo testing, while some others attempted to manipulate results by diluting urine samples with water.

Authorities clarified that inmates who test positive will not face criminal charges. Instead, they will be provided counselling and medical treatment. Prisoners found to be severely addicted may be admitted for rehabilitation.



LPG shortage hits Sunday business, non-veg hotels cut menus

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The ongoing shortage of commercial LPG cylinders has severely affected hotel operations in Bengaluru, with several non-vegetarian restaurants reporting sharp disruptions even on Sunday, typically one of the busiest days for the food business.

Hotel owners said many eateries, particularly in Rajajinagar, remained closed due to the lack of cylinders. Several establishments that managed to stay open were forced to drastically reduce their menu and operate with limited cooking.

Popular outlets such as Rajanna Military Hotel have also been affected,

with management reportedly cutting down several regular dishes because of the shortage.

Restaurant operators said commonly ordered items like dosa, chapati, parota, keema and kebabs have been temporarily removed from the menu in many hotels. Instead, a limited number of dishes such as idli, soup and biryani are being prepared using the small amount of gas available. In some places, hotels have turned to traditional wood-fired stoves to continue basic cooking. However, this method allows them to prepare only a few items, forcing eateries to keep their menus extremely limited.

QUICK READ

Uniforms distributed to students at Bannikuppe Government School

HUNSUR

The Madilu Rural Development and Service Organization distributed uniforms to students of Bannikuppe Government Higher Primary School in Hunsur taluk.

State Mahila Congress General Secretary and President of the organization, D.M. Triveni, personally handed out the uniforms. Speaking to reporters, she described the initiative as a small service aimed at supporting the education of children in rural areas. "If a smile appears on the faces of parents and children, that is the meaning of our service," she said.

Congress leader Prasanna Kumar, the school headmaster, fellow teachers, and parents of the students attended the event.

Channarayapatna BCM Hostel manager dies by suicide

HASSAN

BCM Hostel manager Lokesh (45), a Dasarakoppal resident, was found hanging at his home, sparking a mysterious investigation. Recently promoted from warden roles at two Guddenahalli hostels, Lokesh managed the BCM Hostel in Channarayapatna. The sudden act stunned colleagues and family, with no suicide note or clear motive identified.

Neighbors alerted police after discovering the body. Hassan Pension Mohalla station registered the case, with teams probing personal, professional, or financial stressors. Preliminary inquiries suggest possible hidden pressures amid his career shift.

The community mourns the loss, questioning mental health support in hostels. Police urge information on potential triggers while offering counseling resources.

Women urged to reject superstition, embrace self-reliance

YADGIRI

Women should stay away from superstitions and build confident, self-reliant lives, said social worker Bharathi Sharanabasappa Darshanapura while inaugurating the International Women's Day celebration in the city on Sunday.

The event was organized by the Hemareddy Mallamma Women's Development Organization, where Bharathi Darshanapura lit the ceremonial lamp and addressed a gathering of hundreds of women. She stressed that discrimination against women must end and outdated traditions should be abandoned.

She criticized harmful practices such as excluding widows from auspicious events and preventing them from wearing flowers or traditional symbols. Such customs, she said, cause deep

Music helps build peaceful and positive life: N. S. Boseraju

Boseraju said music promotes calm, balance, and emotional well-being, praising efforts to support artists and preserve cultural traditions

RAICHUR

Karnataka Minister N. S. Boseraju said that music is not only an art form but also an important tool that can bring peace and positive change in human life. He was speaking after inaugurating the state-level Mahantashree Award ceremony and folk music celebration held in Raichur. The event was organised at the Pandit Siddarama Jambaladinini Rangamandir as part of the 16th anniversary celebrations of the Matoshree Mahathamma Shivabassappa Gonal Foundation and Pratibha Sugama Sangeet Sanstha. Boseraju said music has the power to change the way people think



and feel. According to him, listening to and learning music helps people lead calmer and more balanced lives. He also praised efforts made to support artists and preserve cultural traditions. The minister appreciated the work of organiser Sharanappa Gonal for recognising talented musicians and

presenting awards every year. He said such initiatives encourage artists and give them respect in society. Boseraju also suggested that more artists should be identified and honoured in the coming years. During the event, several awards were presented to achievers from different fields.

These included the Vijay Mahanta Anugraha Award, Mahanta Kayakayogi Award, Guru Rakshe Award, Adarsh Couple Award, Mahantashree Award, Mahanta Puraskar Award and Best Educational Institution Award. Among those honoured was B. Venkatasingh. Leaders and artists present at the programme included C. Somashekar, S. Balaji, Basavanthraya Kuri, international clarinet artist Narasimhalu Vadavati and several folk performers. Speakers at the event said music can reduce stress and create harmony among people. They stressed the importance of promoting cultural programs that inspire younger generations.

Former MLA H.P. Manjunath personally assisted injured worker Madesh Nayak and coordinating with the hospital

Leopard attack victim awaits officials' care, help

HUNSUR

A labourer injured in a leopard attack in Kanagalu village of Hanagodu hobli in Hunsur taluk has reportedly not received visits from officials or public representatives even four days after the incident, leaving villagers upset and worried. The injured worker, Madesh Nayak, son of Mahadevanayakar, was attacked while collecting buds from a Buruga tree on his land. According to villagers, a leopard suddenly appeared and attacked him, causing serious injuries. Local people rushed him for treatment, and he was admitted to Krishna Rajendra Hospital in Mysuru on the same day. Though a forest department staff member visited the hospital once, villagers say no senior officials or elected representatives have come to check on his health so far.

Residents of Kanagalu vil-



lage expressed anger over what they called neglect by authorities. They said the situation could have been far worse if the leopard attack had resulted in a death. Villagers urged the Forest Department and local leaders to pay attention to the issue and take steps to prevent similar incidents in the area.

Meanwhile, former MLA H. P. Manjunath stepped forward to help the injured worker personally after learning about the incident.

Manjunath spoke to the hospital dean, Drakshaini, over the phone to enquire about Madesh Nayak's condition and the treatment being provided. He also sent his brother, Dr. H. P. Srinath, to the hospital to meet the victim and check on his recovery.

Dr. Srinath visited the patient at the hospital and assured support during his treatment. Villagers said such gestures brought some comfort to the injured worker and his family.

Justice V. Sreeshananda receives Lavanagiri Award

DHARWAD

High Court Judge V. Sreeshananda was conferred with this year's Lavanagiri Award during the Lavanagiri Festival, held as part of the Sri Guru Virupaksheshwara Jathra Mahotsava at Uppina Betageri village in Dharwad taluk.

The Lavanagiri Award is presented annually to recognize outstanding contributions in public service and social impact. Speaking after receiving the honor, Justice Sreeshananda praised Uppina Betageri, noting the presence of three thousand ascetics and the devotion of the local community, reflecting the legacy of Kumar Virupaksha Swamiji.

The award ceremony was attended by retired judge Mahadevappa Kudavakkaligera, senior advocate Chakalabbi, P.H. Neeralak-eri, president of the Karnataka Thinkers Forum, and other religious leaders and dignitaries.



Digital studio planned to encourage students' scientific talent

SHIVAMOGGA

School Education and Literacy Minister and District In-charge Minister S. Madhu Bangarappa said a digital studio will soon be established to provide students a platform to display their scientific and academic talents.

He spoke while attending the "I Am a Scientist" training workshop organized for Gram Panchayat library supervisors by the Zilla Panchayat Shivamogga at the Sannidhi Center for Pastoral Renewal Church in Malligenahalli on Saturday evening.

The minister said ₹15 lakhs has already been allocated to set up the digital studio. Through this initiative, students will be encouraged to create short videos showcasing their innovative ideas, scientific experiments and academic learning. These videos will later be shared on platforms like YouTube so that students' talents can reach a wider audience.

Bangarappa said the initiative will also help reduce students' excessive interest in social media reels and motivate them to focus more on education, creativity and sci-

entific thinking. He added that such platforms will inspire young minds to explore science and technology.

Hemanth N said the workshop aims to transform rural knowledge centres into active science learning hubs. Librarians participating in the training were taught practical scientific activities, including designing and building simple telescopes.

Using these telescopes, students and librarians will be able to observe stars, satellites and planets such as Jupiter more closely. Science clubs will also be started across Shivamogga district to encourage curiosity and interest in astronomy among rural students. Scientists, librarians and officials attended the programme and expressed hope that the initiative will inspire students to explore the wonders of science and space.

Camp highlights link between Kannada literature, farming



BENGALURU

L. N. Mukundaraj said that women who nurtured agricultural life should be regarded as the original mothers of society, and forgetting this truth in the name of male supremacy amounts to ignoring history itself.

He spoke at the concluding ceremony of a two-day camp on "Kannada Literature and Farming Life," jointly organised by the Karnataka Sahitya Academy and the K. S. Mud-dappa Memorial Trust at Muddushree Dibba in Keremegaladoddi village of the taluk.

Mukundaraj said the camp was not meant to discuss the technical details of agriculture but to highlight how deeply farming life is connected to the tradition of Kannada literature. Explaining the essence of poetry from ancient to modern times, he stressed that literature has always reflected the values and struggles of

rural life and agriculture.

Folk scholar and Trust President Dr. M. Byre Gowda said a time will come when farmers will be able to decide the price of their crops just as companies fix prices for their products. He expressed concern that excessive use of chemical fertilisers and toxic pesticides by multinational companies is harming soil fertility and weakening traditional farming practices. He also pointed out that untimely rains, water wastage and environmental imbalance are serious challenges for agriculture. Referring to the works of Kumara Vyasa, he said farming has long been central to Kannada cultural and literary traditions. Scholars, farmers and participants shared their experiences during the camp. A dialogue session with successful farmers was held in the presence of thinker Dr. Manjunath Adde along with several writers, activists and academicians.

Ramesh Bandisiddegowda apologizes over remarks on Swamiji

MANDYA

MLA Ramesh Bandisiddegowda on Sunday expressed regret over his recent remarks related to Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji, saying he never intended to hurt the respected religious leader.

Speaking to reporters in Mandya, the legislator said he was not in a position to speak critically about the seer. He added that if his words had caused any pain or misunderstanding, he was ready to apologise sincerely.

Bandisiddegowda explained that his comments had been misunderstood and taken in a different way than he intended. According to him, he only meant to encourage positive work and did not accuse the seer of mismanaging the Math. He said the institutions established by Balagangadharanatha Swamiji were being managed with dedication and



respect under the leadership of Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji. He also mentioned that many television channel heads had told him that the Math was being run with great discipline and care.

The MLA stressed that he had great respect for the seer and the religious institution. He clarified that he had never directly mentioned the Swamiji's name while making the remarks during a programme.

Bandisiddegowda said some of his statements were twisted by others, which created unnecessary controversy. He appealed to devotees of the Math to put the issue behind them and maintain harmony. The controversy began after he reportedly said during a BGS programme in Srirangapatna that the seer was "going astray," which drew criticism from devotees and followers.

JUSTICE FINALLY SERVED

High Court convicts four in 2009 triple murder

BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has convicted four people in the 2009 triple murder of retired Indian Institute of Science professor Purushottam Lal Sachdev, his wife Rita Sachdev and their son Deepak Sachdev, bringing justice nearly 17 years after the shocking crime. A division bench comprising H. P. Sandesh and Venkatesh Naik T delivered the verdict on February 27, overturning a 2016 acquittal by a sessions



court. The court sentenced the four accused to life imprisonment for criminal conspiracy, murder and destruction of evidence under the Indian Penal

Code. The murders came to light on February 16, 2009, when the professor's adopted son and nephew Anurag Sachdev could not contact the

family and asked neighbour Rajesh Diwan to check on them. Finding the door locked from outside, the neighbour looked through a window and saw the body of Munna lying on the floor before alerting police. Officers from RT Nagar Police Station broke open the door and discovered the bodies inside the house.

Investigations later focused on the family's domestic help Suchitra Haldar and her husband Deepak Haldar, who had disappeared after the murders. The case was later handled by

the Central Crime Branch Bengaluru under inspector C. W. Poovaiah. After an extensive search stretching nearly 2,000 km, the accused were traced to West Bengal's South 24 Parganas where they were living under false identities. Police later arrested their accomplices Mohammed Sarbal and Bidan Shikari. The High Court ruled that evidence including motive, recovery of stolen articles and the conduct of the accused formed a complete chain proving the crime beyond reasonable doubt.



QUICK READ

RSS calls for peace amid tensions in West Asia

NEW DELHI

The Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (RSS) has called for peace amid tensions in West Asia while also outlining plans to expand its organisational presence across the country as it approaches its 100th year, RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale said on Sunday. Addressing the media during the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS) meeting, Hosabale said the organisation hopes ongoing conflicts in West Asia will end soon and emphasised the need for peace. Whatever is happening is unpeaceful. Our organisation wants peace in the world.

LG hands over appointment letters to kin of 50 terror victims

SRINAGAR

To help rebuild their lives, Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday gave compassionate appointment letters to 50 next of kin of terror victims in the union territory. The L-G called the government effort 'Sharansthi' (Support), adding that the initiative will help affected families rebuild their lives through employment opportunities. The compassionate appointment letters were given by the L-G to the members of the victim families under the compassionate appointment rules of the UT government at the Lok Bhawan auditorium in Srinagar. The L-G said on the occasion, Many terror victim families have been waiting for a long time. By providing employment, we are bringing a new ray of hope and offering them an opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Adhikari clarifies on contesting from Nandigram, Bhabanipur

KOLKATA

The Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the West Bengal Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari, on Sunday clarified about the possibilities of him being asked by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leadership to contest simultaneously from two Assembly constituencies in the upcoming elections in the state. One of the two constituencies will surely be Nandigram in East Midnapore district, where Adhikari is a two-time legislator first from 2016 to 2021 for the Trinamool Congress and then from 2021 to date for the BJP. The second constituency is Bhabanipur in South Kolkata, where the current elected legislator is the Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee. When asked about this possibility in the afternoon.

UP SUB-INSPECTOR EXAM ROW

Won't tolerate undignified remarks on caste, sect or community: Yogi

The UP CM issued immediate instructions to the chairpersons of all recruitment boards in the state to ensure that no objectionable or undignified content appears in any exam paper

LUCKNOW

The issue surfaced after a question in the Sub-Inspector recruitment examination, conducted for recruitment in the Uttar Pradesh Police, triggered political and social backlash. The examination began on Saturday across various centres in the state.

The controversial question asked candidates, Avsar ke anusaar badal jaane wala (Who changes according to the situation)? Among the multiple-choice options given in the paper was the word Pandit, which drew strong objections from several quarters. Critics alleged that the inclusion of the term in such a context could be interpreted as

disrespectful to a particular community.

Following the controversy, the Chief Minister issued immediate instructions to the chairpersons of all recruitment boards in the state to ensure that no objectionable or undignified content appears in any examination paper. In a statement released by the Chief Minister's Office, Adityanath emphasised that comments or references affecting the dignity or religious sentiments of any individual, caste, sect or community are unacceptable under any

circumstances.

He directed officials to treat the matter seriously and ensure that strict guidelines are followed while preparing examination content. The Chief Minister also instructed authorities to issue clear directives to all individuals involved in drafting and vetting question papers for recruitment examinations.

Adityanath further warned that paper setters responsible for such lapses should face strict consequences. He said that if

any paper setter is found repeatedly involved in such incidents, they should be black-listed from future assignments.

To prevent similar controversies in the future, the Chief Minister also ordered officials to include a specific clause in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with paper setters. This clause will hold them accountable for ensuring that question papers do not contain content that could offend social or religious sentiments.

The move is aimed at strengthening oversight in recruitment examinations and ensuring that the process remains fair, respectful and free from controversies.



Scindia launches 'Samriddh Gram' Phygital pilot in MP

NEW DELHI

Union Minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia inaugurated the Samriddhi Kendra, an integrated phygital (physical plus digital) service centre at Umri in Guna under the Department of Telecommunications' Samriddh Gram Phygital Services Pilot Initiative.

The initiative leverages high-speed broadband connectivity created under BharatNet to transform digital infrastructure into a platform that delivers citizen-centric services in rural India.

The Samriddhi Kendra has been designed as a single-window service hub where villagers can access multiple facilities in one place. These include healthcare services, education and skill development programmes, agricultural assistance, financial services and various e-governance facilities.

Speaking at the launch event, Scindia said the initiative aims to bring new opportunities directly to villages by combining advanced technology with essential public services.

Farmers will be able to access real-time insights on soil



moisture, nutrients and crop health through digital tools, making agriculture smarter and more productive, he said.

He added that the centre will also simplify access to essential government services. From obtaining certificates to accessing e-banking facilities, villagers will now be able to avail themselves of these services within the Samriddh Gram itself.

This is truly a programme of the future, one that ensures progress reaches every village and every citizen, Scindia stated.

The Union Minister also highlighted the improvements the initiative will bring to rural healthcare. According to him, facilities such as on-site

diagnostics and tele-consultations with doctors from cities like Delhi and other parts of the country will make medical services faster and more accessible for villagers.

Blood test reports will be produced in less than 30 minutes, Scindia noted, emphasising that the integration of digital technology with physical infrastructure will significantly improve the quality and speed of services in rural areas.

The Samriddhi Kendra initiative is part of the government's broader effort to bridge the digital divide and ensure that the benefits of digital connectivity translate into tangible development for rural communities.

Nemom firmly shut out for BJP: Kerala Min

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala General Education Minister V Sivankutty on Sunday said the Bharatiya Janata Party will have no footing in the Nemom constituency, and expressed confidence that the ruling Left Democratic Front will sweep all 14 Assembly seats in Thiruvananthapuram district in the upcoming Assembly election. Speaking to reporters, Sivankutty, who represents the Nemom Assembly seat, said the BJP's prospects will be firmly shut this time too and that the Left Front will retain its strong presence across the capital district. There is no reason for the people not to vote for the Left. This is a government that has delivered for everyone and implemented programmes benefiting all sections of society, he said, defending the record of the government led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Nemom has remained one of the most politically significant constituencies in Kerala since 2016, when veteran BJP leader and former Union Minister of State O. Rajagopal scripted history by winning the seat and opening the party's account in the 140-member Kerala Legislative Assembly for the first time.

BJP slams DMK govt over handling of sexual assault cases in TN

CHENNAI

BJP National Spokesperson C. R. Kesavan strongly criticised the state administration led by Chief Minister M. K. Stalin, alleging that the government has failed to ensure the safety and security of women.

Drawing a sharp comparison, Kesavan said the situation in Tamil Nadu resembled the historical account of Nero, who was said to have played music while Rome burned. Nero merrily played the fiddle when Rome was burning, and when brutal sexual assaults and violent attacks are happening in broad daylight on our mothers, daughters and sisters in Tamil Nadu, the DMK government led by M.K. Stalin, who is also the Home Minister,

is busy making reels, he said. He further alleged that the state government has completely failed in its responsibility to protect women. According to him, the rising incidents of sexual assault have created fear among women across the state and raised serious concerns about law and order.

The government has utterly failed in its responsibility, and women in Tamil Nadu do not feel safe or secure. The sexual assaults on women have shaken the conscience of the entire country. This is the pa-

The party accused the govt of being incompetent, inconsiderate and utterly insensitive in dealing with sexual assault cases in the poll-bound state.

thetic state of affairs in Tamil Nadu, Kesavan told IANS.

The BJP leader also criticised leaders of opposition parties for what he described as their silence on the issue. He questioned why leaders from parties allied with the DMK had not publicly expressed concern.

Kesavan specifically named senior leaders such as Sonia Gandhi, Mamata Banerjee, and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, accusing them of hypocrisy. He said these leaders often issue statements, write editorials or raise concerns in Parliament about women's issues in other contexts, but have remained silent regarding incidents in Tamil Nadu. According to Kesavan, they should have directly spoken to Chief Minister Stalin to express their concern and demand action.

The remarks come amid intensifying political exchanges in Tamil Nadu as the state prepares for upcoming elections, with women's safety and law and order emerging as key issues in the political debate.



LPG cylinder blast in Chennai kills 2 kids



CHENNAI

A tragic cooking gas cylinder explosion at a house in Navalur near Chennai on Sunday claimed the lives of two children and left four others seriously injured, authorities said. The incident occurred at a residence on 2nd Street in Chamundeswarar Nagar, a residential locality in Navalur on the southern outskirts of the city.

The explosion triggered panic in the neighbourhood as the force of the blast partially collapsed the house and damaged two adjacent homes.

The victims were identified as Theeran, aged one-and-a-half, and four-year-old Krishika. Both children were inside the house when the explosion occurred and sustained severe injuries in the blast. Despite rescue efforts, they succumbed to their injuries. Four others

were injured in the incident and are currently undergoing treatment at a nearby hospital.

The injured include the children's parents, Sanjay (31) and Sonia (26), Sonia's mother Chitra (46), and a neighbour's child, Pradeep (7), who was also present in the vicinity when the explosion took place.

Medical officials said some of the injured had sustained burn injuries and trauma caused by falling debris.

According to preliminary information from the police and fire department, the blast occurred when a domestic cooking gas cylinder exploded inside the house. The impact of the explosion was powerful enough to bring down parts of the structure, trapping the occupants under debris and causing damage to neighbouring houses.

POWER INFRA BOOST

Udangudi power plant Unit-1 to begin operations by June

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu is set to significantly strengthen its power generation capacity with the Udangudi Supercritical Thermal Power Project beginning power production, marking a key milestone for the state's energy infrastructure.

Tamil Nadu Power Generation Corporation Limited (TNPGL) has announced that the first unit of the 2x660 MW Udangudi thermal power project is expected to begin full commercial operations by June. The Rs 13,077-crore project, one of the state's major power generation initiatives, has already begun producing



around 400 MW of infirm power following successful coal synchronisation in February. TNPGL officials said the generation capacity will be gradually increased in the coming weeks as part of the final testing process.

According to TNPGL Man-

aging Director M. Govinda Rao, the utility plans to ramp up the output of the first unit to its full capacity of 660 MW shortly. We will run the plant at its full capacity of 660 MW from next week and address any technical issues that may arise during the process. Be-

fore commercial commissioning, the plant must run continuously at full load for 72 hours without interruption, which we expect to achieve by June, he said.

Officials explained that the initial phase of power production, known as infirm generation, is part of the standard commissioning procedure in thermal power projects. During this stage, the plant is tested under varying loads to ensure operational stability and identify potential glitches before full-scale commercial operations begin.

The Udangudi project is expected to play a crucial role in meeting Tamil Nadu's rising

electricity demand, particularly during the peak summer months when power consumption increases sharply across the state.

Launching the project ahead of the summer demand surge was possible because of the dedicated efforts of engineers, technical teams and all personnel involved in the project, Govinda Rao added.

Construction of the Udangudi supercritical thermal power plant began in 2018. The project includes modern supercritical technology designed to improve efficiency and reduce emissions compared with conventional coal-based power plants.

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KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT STOCK (SECURITIES)

Finance Department, Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru

NOTICE

1. Aggregate Amount: Total Rs.10,00,000 crore 1. Rs.2,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.44% SGS 2033. 2. Rs.2,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.36% SGS 2034. 3. Rs.2,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.42% SGS 2035. 4. Rs.2,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.44% SGS 2036. 5. Rs.2,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.54% SGS 2039.

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

3. Date of auction : March 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
DIP/CP/6244/Zen/2025-26



QUICK READ



Telangana Congress chief challenges KTR for drug test

HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president Mahesh Kumar Goud on Sunday challenged BRS working president K. T. Rama Rao for a drug test. Stating that all Congress MLAs and MLCs are ready to undergo a drug test during the Assembly session beginning on Monday, the Congress leader dared KTR and all BRS legislators if they were ready for the test. Alleging that the use of drugs was rampant during Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) rule in the state, he said suspicions have arisen about KTR and his followers after former MLA Pilot Rohit Reddy tested positive after a police raid on an alleged drug party at his farmhouse at Moinabad.

70 Indian students evacuated from Iran land in Delhi: Assn



SRINAGAR

The J&K Students Association (JKSA) said on Sunday that the first batch of 70 Indian students evacuated from Iran via Armenia has safely landed in Delhi. Nasir Khuehami, national convener of the JKSA, said: The first batch of more than 70 Indian students the majority of them from Jammu and Kashmir, along with several pilgrims who had been stranded in Iran amid the ongoing war-like situation in the region, safely arrived at Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi, on a commercial flight this morning as part of the evacuation process.

2.74 cr voters in Kerala to decide fate of 957 candidates

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

With a total electorate of 2.71 crore spread across 140 Assembly constituencies, Kerala is set to go to the polls on April 9 after the Election Commission of India (ECI) announced the election schedule on Sunday. The poll panel unveiled the election calendar at a press conference in New Delhi, detailing the dates for filing nominations, scrutiny of papers, withdrawal of candidature, polling and counting of votes. With the announcement of the schedule, the Model Code of Conduct came into immediate effect across the state. The elections will be conducted on the basis of the final electoral roll prepared and released on February 20, following the Special Intensive Revision, according to the office of Chief Electoral Officer Rathan U. Kelkar. Incidentally, Kelkar has called a meeting of all political parties on Monday at 3 p.m.

Mamata clears DA arrears payout ahead of polls

The announcement came ahead of the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct, which comes into effect once the poll schedule is declared

KOLKATA

The announcement was made through a statement posted on the Chief Minister's social media handle on Sunday afternoon. Notably, the declaration came just about an hour before the Election Commission of India announced the polling schedule for five states and Union Territories, including West Bengal.

In her statement, Banerjee said the state government had fulfilled its commitment to employees and pensioners across various sectors.

I am happy to announce that our Maa-Maati-Maanush government has delivered on its promise to all its employees and pensioners, and to lakhs of teachers and non-teaching staff of our edu-

cational institutions, as well as employees and pensioners of our other grant-in-aid institutions such as panchayats, municipal bodies and other local bodies. They will start receiving their ROPA 2009 DA arrears from March 2026 onwards as per the modalities detailed in the notifications issued by our Finance Department, the Chief Minister said in her statement.

Earlier this year, the Supreme Court directed the state government to clear 25 per cent of the pending DA arrears for the period between 2008 and 2019 by March 31. The court also instructed the government to follow a phased approach in settling the

dues. As per the order, the state must ensure that DA payments to its employees are aligned with those received by Central government employees while gradually clearing the accumulated arrears since 2008 under

the ROPA 2009 pay structure. The issue of pending DA has been a long-standing dispute in West Bengal, with state government employees demanding parity with Central government employees for several years.

Earlier this month, several government employee organisations staged a cease-work protest, alleging that the state government had been reluctant to fully comply with the Supreme Court's directive regarding DA payments. With the latest announcement, the state government has indicated that the process of clearing the arrears will begin from March 2026 as per the guidelines issued by the Finance Department.



GUJARAT CM LAUNCHES DEVPT PROJECTS WORTH RS 1,100 CR

AHMEDABAD

The projects include irrigation schemes, road infrastructure, and initiatives related to health, education and water supply. According to the state government, these works are aimed at strengthening development and improving living conditions in tribal areas across eastern Gujarat.

During the programme, Patel highlighted the development vision for tribal communities articulated by Narendra Modi, stating that the government is committed to prioritising the welfare of historically deprived communities.

The Prime Minister's resolve to give priority to the deprived and ensure the holistic development of tribal communities is being realised in Gujarat, the Chief Minister said while addressing the gathering.

Officials said that projects worth Rs 732 crore covering 112 development works were launched in Panchmahal district. In Dahod district, projects worth Rs 367 crore involving more than 1,200 works were undertaken as part of the initiative.



One of the key projects inaugurated during the visit was a lift irrigation pipeline scheme valued at around Rs 406 crore. The project is designed to transport water from the Panam Reservoir to 130 ponds across 79 villages in the talukas of Shehera, Godhra, Kalol, and Ghoghamba.

Authorities said the scheme is expected to provide irrigation facilities for nearly 86,000 hectares of agricultural land. Under the project, water will be lifted from a height of about 236 feet from the reservoir and distributed through a pipeline network spanning approximately 205 kilometres.

Addressing the event, Patel

emphasised that water availability plays a crucial role in development, particularly in the tribal belt where agriculture remains a major livelihood source.

He noted that irrigation infrastructure in the region has expanded significantly in recent years. From Ambaji to Umargam, irrigation facilities have been provided to 2.23 lakh acres of land through 11 lift irrigation schemes implemented at a cost of Rs 3,160 crore, the Chief Minister said.

The government said the new projects are expected to boost agricultural productivity, improve access to basic services, and accelerate overall development in Gujarat's tribal districts.

'Cong a '4-C' party of corruption, commission, communal riots, criminal politics'

AHMEDABAD

Vishwakarma made the remarks during the third day of the party's organisational tour in South Gujarat, where he addressed a large gathering of party workers and local leaders.

Criticising the Congress, he said the opposition party had spent decades in power but failed to address the real concerns of people.

Congress means '4-C' — corruption, commission, communal riots and criminal politics, he said, contrasting the opposition's record with what he described as transparent and corruption-free governance under the BJP.

The Gujarat BJP chief also accused opposition leaders of spreading rumours and focusing on protests rather than raising issues through parliamentary debate. Referring to recent political exchanges over LPG prices, he alleged that Congress leaders were circulating misinformation among the public.

He also criticised an incident in which opposition members were seen sitting on the steps of Parliament of India, saying that such actions reflected their preference for protest politics over constructive debate.

Instead of raising people's concerns in Parliament, opposition leaders spread rumours and only work to protest outside Parliament, Vishwakarma said while addressing party workers.

Highlighting the BJP's governance approach, he



Gujarat BJP chief Jagdish Vishwakarma said the party spent decades in power but failed to address the real concerns of people.

said the party had worked on the principles of no casteism, no dynastic politics and no appeasement. According to him, BJP workers remain connected with the public throughout the year rather than interacting with people only during elections.

He also emphasised the leadership of Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, and Bhupendra Patel, stating that under their guidance the government was committed to doubling farmers' income.

Describing South Gujarat as an important hub for agriculture and cooperative activities, Vishwakarma said the region's achievements in the cooperative sector had become a model for the country.

He also highlighted several infrastructure projects in the area, stating that about 76 small and large bridges had been constructed in the local Assembly segment over the past decade at a cost exceeding Rs 500 crore.



Bengal votes on April 23, 29; results on May 4

KOLKATA

Elections for the 294-member West Bengal Assembly will be conducted in two phases on April 23 and April 29, while the results will be declared on May 4, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar said on Sunday.

In the first phase, scheduled for April 23, polling will be held in 152 Assembly constituencies. In the second phase, on April 29, polling will be conducted in the remaining 142 constituencies.

Polling in the first phase will cover Assembly constituencies across 16 districts, while the second phase will cover constituencies in nine districts.

The last few Assembly elections in West Bengal were held in seven phases.

After discussing with all stakeholders concerned, the Commission also felt it necessary to conduct the polls in West Bengal in two phases this time.

All necessary arrangements will be made to ensure that the polling process is free, fair and completely violence-free, the CEC said on Sunday.

During the recent visit of the full bench of the Election Commission of India (ECI) to West Bengal earlier this month, all political parties -- except the ruling Trinamool Congress -- had pleaded for a single-phase or two-phase polling.

By announcing a two-phase polling schedule for West Bengal on Sunday, the Commission, in a way, accepted the suggestions of the opposition parties in the state.

FIT INDIA MOVEMENT

Sood leads 'Sundays on Cycles' at Connaught Place

NEW DELHI

Delhi Education and Sports Minister Ashish Sood, on Sunday, participated in the Sunday on Cycle fitness event organised at Connaught Place's Block E in New Delhi, under the Fit India Movement of the Fit India government.

Addressing the participants during the programme as the chief guest, Minister Sood said that Sundays on Cycles has the potential to become a major people's movement that will not only inspire citizens to stay fit but also contribute to making the



city environmentally healthier. He noted the programme aims to inspire citizens to adopt a healthy and active lifestyle.

The programme was organised with the support of

the Sports Authority of India, Raahgiri Foundation, and the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C).

The objective of the event was to promote the importance of regular physical ac-

tivity and encourage cycling as a simple and effective way to maintain fitness and good health.

Minister Sood said that under the Fit India Movement, and with the objective of integrating fitness into daily life, the Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya, launched the Fit India Cycling Drive in Delhi on December 17, 2024.

This cycling initiative has now evolved into a regular nationwide public movement, with Sunday on Cycle events being organised across the country.

As of now, the campaign has been conducted at more than 2.5 lakh locations, with nearly 2.7 million cyclists actively participating.

Minister Sood added that this initiative was also mentioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the 117th episode of Mann Ki Baat.

In light of the Prime Minister's call to combat obesity, it is essential that balanced physical activity becomes an integral part of our daily fitness routine and that awareness about the importance of regular exercise and sports continues to grow.



QUICK READ

Israeli forces kill 4 Palestinians in West Bank

Jerusalem

Israeli forces killed four Palestinians, including a mother, father and two children, as they drove in the occupied West Bank on Sunday, Palestinian health authorities said. A mother and father, ages 35 and 37, and two of their children, ages 5 and 7, were shot in the head in the village of Tammun, while two of their other children sustained injuries, Palestinian health authorities. The Palestinian Health Ministry also said one Palestinian was killed in an attack by settlers overnight. Israeli settlers in the West Bank are taking advantage of curbs on movement imposed during the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran to attack Palestinians, with military roadblocks preventing ambulances from reaching victims quickly, rights groups and medics say.

Explosion at Amsterdam Jewish school was deliberate attack

Amsterdam

An explosion caused minor damage to a Jewish school in Amsterdam early on Saturday, in what the city's mayor or described as "a deliberate attack against the Jewish community". The explosion at the school in an upscale residential neighbourhood on the south side of Amsterdam damaged a rainpipe and charred an outer wall. It caused no injuries. This is a cowardly act of aggression against the Jewish community," Halsema said. Jewish people in Amsterdam are increasingly confronted with antisemitism. This is unacceptable." The school is the only one specifically for orthodox Jews in the Netherlands, and is largely fenced off by a pointed, metal outer wall due to earlier threats.

Republicans close varsity chapter over 'antisemitism'

Florida

The Florida Federation of College Republicans disbanded its University of Florida chapter and asked the school to remove it as a student organization due to alleged misconduct that includes antisemitism, the university said on Saturday. The request was based on the federation's own investigation that uncovered a "pattern of conduct that violated its rules and values, including a recent antisemitic gesture," the university wrote in a post on X. The federation asked the school to "deactivate" its Republican chapter while the group tries to restart the chapter with new leadership, the university wrote.

Trump threatens more strikes on Iran oil hub

Donald Trump warns Iran of additional attacks as conflict escalates and tensions rise across the Strait of Hormuz.

WASHINGTON

The ongoing conflict between the United States and Iran has intensified as U.S. President Donald Trump warned of additional strikes on Iran's key oil export facility at Kharg Island. The warning comes as the U.S.-Israeli military campaign against Iran enters its third week, raising fears of further instability in the Middle East.

Speaking to NBC News on Saturday, Trump claimed that recent U.S. strikes had already "totally demolished" significant parts of the island's infrastructure. He added that more attacks could follow, saying the United States might strike the facility again "a few more times just for fun." The statement marks a significant escalation in Washington's rhetoric and signals the possibility of continued military action.

Kharg Island plays a critical role in Iran's oil exports and is considered one of the most important energy facilities in the region. Any disruption to operations there could have major consequences for global oil markets. The island's strategic importance is further amplified by its proximity to the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow



row waterway through which a large share of the world's oil supply is transported.

Trump also urged U.S. allies to deploy naval forces to secure the Strait of Hormuz, warning that the vital shipping route must remain open to ensure the steady flow of global energy supplies. Military analysts say increased naval deployments could heighten tensions further, particularly if Iranian forces attempt to challenge the presence of Western warships in the area.

Meanwhile, Iranian officials have vowed to intensify their response to the ongoing military campaign. Tehran has repeatedly condemned the strikes and warned that any further attacks on its critical infrastructure would provoke stronger retaliation.

Diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the crisis have also faced obstacles. According to reports from Reuters, the Trump administration has rejected attempts by several Middle Eastern allies to initiate negotiations aimed at ending the conflict. The move has complicated attempts to open diplomatic channels and reduce tensions.

Despite the ongoing hostilities, Trump suggested that Tehran might be willing to negotiate a settlement to end the war. However, he added that the conditions offered so far were "not good enough," indicating that a breakthrough in talks may still be far away. As the conflict drags on, concerns continue to grow over the potential impact on global energy supplies and regional stability.

French voters head to polls nationwide as parties gauge strength before next year's presidential election.

French mayoral polls seen as political strength test

PARIS

Voters across France headed to polling stations on Sunday to elect mayors in nearly 35,000 municipalities, in a closely watched vote that could provide early signals about the political climate ahead of the country's presidential election next year.

Political analysts say the municipal elections will serve as a key test of the strength of the far-right as well as the resilience of traditional political parties.

Mayors play an important role in France's political system, overseeing local administrations that range from large metropolitan cities to tiny villages with only a few dozen residents. As community leaders who directly interact with citizens, mayors are often regarded as the most trusted elected officials in the country. Polling stations opened at 8 a.m. local time and will close at 8 p.m., with vote counting expected to begin shortly afterward.

In many medium and large



cities, the election could proceed to a second round on March 22 if no candidate wins an outright majority in the first round. Such runoff elections are common in the French municipal voting system and often lead to shifting alliances between political groups.

A major focus of the election is the performance of the far-right National Rally (RN), a party known for its anti-migration stance and euro-sceptic policies. The party has gained significant national support in recent years but has historically struggled to convert that popularity into strong results in local municipal elections.

RN has fielded candidates

in several hundred municipalities across the country. While party officials are not expecting a sweeping victory, they hope to secure a few notable wins in important towns and cities. Such victories could help strengthen the party's national profile and provide momentum ahead of the presidential race.

Local elections in France often influence broader political trends, especially when they take place close to national elections. Strong municipal performances can boost campaign networks, mobilize grassroots supporters, and enhance a party's credibility among voters.

Meanwhile, mainstream political parties are aiming to maintain their dominance in local governments and prevent further growth of the far-right movement. The results of Sunday's voting will therefore be closely analyzed by political strategists, as they may offer valuable clues about voter sentiment and the evolving balance of power in French politics.

US-China trade talks resume in Paris

PARIS

Senior economic officials from the United States and China are preparing to begin a new round of trade discussions in Paris on Sunday as both countries attempt to strengthen a fragile trade truce. The talks are expected to address several contentious issues and lay the groundwork for an upcoming meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing later this month.

The negotiations will be led by U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and China's Vice Premier He Lifeng, with participation from U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. Officials from both sides are expected to focus on resolving remaining tensions related to tariffs, technology exports, and access to key raw materials.

A major topic of discussion will be the United States' tariff policies on Chinese goods and the broader impact these measures have had on bilateral trade. Another key issue involves the supply of rare earth minerals and specialized



Senior officials from United States and China meet in Paris to resolve trade issues ahead of Trump visit.

magnets produced in China, which are critical for industries ranging from electronics to renewable energy and defense manufacturing in the United States.

The talks will take place at the Paris headquarters of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, an international body consisting mainly of advanced economies. Although China is not a member of the organization and continues to describe itself as a developing country, the venue has frequently hosted high-level economic discussions involving major global powers. American officials are also

Kim Jong Un oversees rocket launch amid tensions



SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un personally supervised a large-scale rocket launch exercise involving 12 powerful 600mm-calibre multiple rocket launchers, according to the state-run Korean Central News Agency.

The test took place shortly after the United States and South Korea began their annual joint military drills, further heightening tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

During the drill, North Korea launched a series of rockets aimed at a target island located in the Sea of Japan. State media reported that the rockets struck a target approximately 364.4 kilometres away with "100 percent accuracy." The exercise was intended to demonstrate the destructive capability of the country's tactical weapons systems and to warn adversaries operating within the weapons' estimated 420-kilometre strike range.

Images released by state media showed Kim observing the tests alongside his daughter,

Kim Ju Ae, who is widely believed by analysts to be a potential successor. Her continued appearances at high-profile military events have drawn attention from international observers and sparked speculation about her future role within the North Korean leadership structure.

According to KCNA, Kim said the exercise was meant to send a clear message to what he described as hostile forces, emphasizing the ability of North Korea's tactical weapons to strike targets quickly and effectively. The report added that the test would "give enemies a deep understanding" of the destructive power associated with such weapons systems.

Meanwhile, South Korea's military reported that North Korea fired more than ten ballistic missiles into waters off its east coast on Saturday. The launches were detected from an area near Pyongyang at around 1:20 p.m. local time. According to officials in Seoul, the missiles traveled roughly 350 kilometres before landing in the sea.

Russia downs dozens of Ukrainian drones near Moscow

MOSCOW

Russian air defence forces intercepted dozens of Ukrainian drones targeting areas near Moscow and other regions on Saturday, according to officials. Authorities said the attacks were part of a wider wave of drone operations carried out by Ukrainian forces amid the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said that Russian air defence units successfully downed 65 drones that were heading toward the capital throughout the day. Writing on the messaging platform Telegram, Sobyanin explained that the interceptions occurred over an 11-hour period beginning around noon local time. Emergency crews and security personnel were dispatched to examine the debris from the drones at locations where fragments fell.

Officials stated that no major damage or casualties were immediately reported in the Moscow region. However, the continued targeting of the capital highlights the increasing reach of Ukrainian drone operations deep into Russian territory.

In a separate statement, Alexander Bogomaz, the governor of the border region of Bryansk Oblast, reported that Russian air defence systems had also intercepted a large number of drones in his region. Bogomaz said that 128 drones were shot down by defence units, although he did not specify the exact time frame during which the interceptions occurred.

The Bryansk region, located close to the Ukrainian border, has frequently been targeted during the conflict due to its strategic infrastructure and military facilities. Earlier this week, Ukrainian forces claimed they had struck a major plant in the region believed to produce components used in missile manufacturing.

Following that attack, Bogomaz said seven people were killed, though he did not provide details about the specific facility that had been hit. The incident underscored the growing intensity of cross-border strikes between the two countries.

According to the latest report from the Russian Ministry of Defence, air defence units intercepted a total of 280 Ukrainian drones across various parts of central and western Russia during a 10-hour period that ended at 9 p.m. on Saturday.

AIR DEFENSE

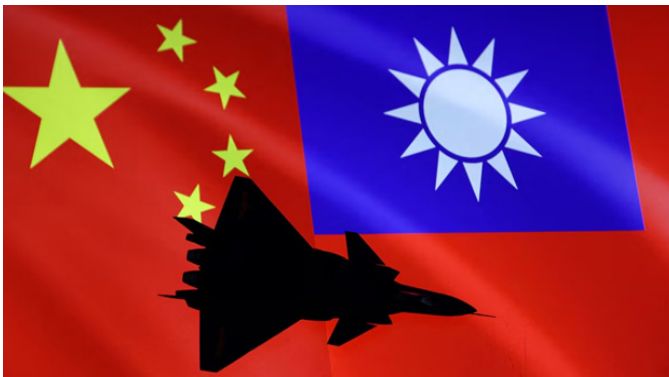
China resumes air activity near Taiwan

TAIWAN

Taiwan's defence authorities reported a renewed surge of Chinese military aircraft operating near the island on Sunday, marking the end of an unusual two-week lull in such activities. Officials in Taiwan said the return of large-scale flights by China's air force has drawn attention from security analysts and policymakers in Taipei.

According to the island's defence ministry, a total of 26 Chinese military aircraft were detected around Taiwan in the 24 hours leading up to Sunday morning. Most of the aircraft were concentrated in the Taiwan Strait, a narrow and strategically important body of water that separates Taiwan from mainland China.

The ministry's daily update said the flights included fighter jets, drones and other military aircraft typically deployed by China during pa-



trols around the island. Such missions have become a routine part of Beijing's military pressure campaign against Taiwan, which China considers part of its territory despite the island being governed democratically.

The latest activity follows a period of unusual quiet that lasted more than two weeks. Taiwan's military last reported a large-scale presence of Chinese aircraft on February 25, when it detected 30 aircraft during what Beijing de-

scribed as a "joint combat readiness patrol." After that date, reports of Chinese military aircraft dropped sharply.

From February 27 onward, Taiwan's defence ministry said it detected no Chinese military aircraft for several days, a rare occurrence given the normally frequent patrols conducted by Chinese forces. The next sighting occurred on March 7, when only two aircraft were spotted flying far to the southwest of the island. Since then, the ministry re-

ported only sporadic and small-scale movements until the renewed surge detected on Sunday. The unexplained pause in large-scale operations had sparked speculation among officials and analysts in Taipei about Beijing's intentions.

China frequently conducts such air operations as part of its broader military strategy aimed at asserting sovereignty claims over Taiwan and testing the island's defence readiness. The activities also serve as a signal of Beijing's growing military capabilities in the region.

Observers say the resumption of larger patrols suggests that Chinese forces may be returning to their previous pattern of near-daily military pressure around Taiwan. The situation remains closely monitored by Taiwan's military and its international partners as tensions continue to shape security dynamics in the region.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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Fill a 9x9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3x3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.





From the Middle East War?

When unprovoked U.S.–Israel airstrikes on Iran began on February 28, 2026, triggering one of the most dangerous crises the Gulf region has seen in decades, millions of ordinary Indians did not immediately grasp what it meant for them. Within days, however, the answer was written in plain sight — in the kilometre-long queues outside LPG gas agencies in Pune, in the darkened dhabas of Lucknow where tea vendors had switched back to charcoal chulhas, and in the ₹60 hike that landed quietly on every household cooking gas cylinder on March 7, 2026. The Middle East war was no longer a distant headline. It had arrived at India’s kitchen table.



PETROL AND CRUDE OIL: THE INVISIBLE PRESSURE

The petrol crisis has been less dramatic than the LPG shortage but no less significant. Petrol and diesel stations across India remain mostly functional as of mid-March 2026, but global oil price spikes from the West Asia crisis have created sustained upward pressure on fuel costs. Brent crude, which major banks like J.P. Morgan and the World Bank had projected would average around \$60 per barrel in 2026 due to an anticipated global supply glut, has instead surged past \$100 per barrel following the opening strikes on Iran, touching \$120 as markets began pricing in sustained Hormuz disruption. Some analysts have not ruled out \$150 if the conflict deepens. Citi Bank estimates that sustained oil prices in the \$90–100 per barrel range would push India’s retail inflation up by as much as 50 basis points. The Indian rupee, already under pressure as global investors flee to safe-haven dollar assets, weakens further when oil prices rise — a doubly punishing dynamic for an import-dependent economy. India’s current account deficit, which stood at 1.3% of GDP at the end of December 2025, is at risk of widening, which



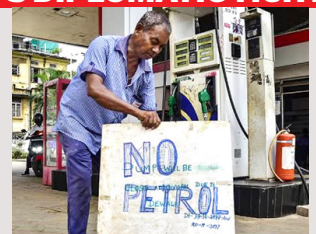
in turn further pressures the rupee and raises the landed cost of every barrel imported. Making matters worse, Russia — which had served as India’s ‘budget-friendly’ crude oil saviour in 2024 and 2025, with deeply discounted supplies after Western sanctions isolated Moscow — has become an unreliable backstop in 2026. Fresh rounds of US sanctions and the expiration of key price-cap waivers have made Russian oil harder to settle financially. While a temporary 30-day US waiver in early 2026 allowed some stranded tankers to discharge

their cargo at Indian ports like Jamnagar and Vadinar, the long-term reliability of Russian supply is clouded. This convergence — Middle East disruption plus compromised Russian access — is forcing Indian refiners to source increasingly expensive Atlantic Basin crude from the US and West Africa, with significantly higher freight overheads. As of mid-March 2026, an estimated 130 million barrels of oil are stranded in the Middle East Gulf, inaccessible to India while Iran maintains its blockade of the Strait of

Hormuz. India scrambled on diplomatic channels: Prime Minister Narendra Modi called Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian within hours of Tehran’s supreme leader vowing to keep the strait closed, with New Delhi’s stated priorities being the safety of Indian nationals and ‘unhindered transit’ of energy. Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar held multiple calls with his Iranian counterpart. Meanwhile, 28 Indian ships carrying approximately 800 Indian seafarers remained stranded in the strait as of mid-March.

INDIA’S DIPLOMATIC TIGHTROPE

India’s response to the conflict has been, as analysts describe it, measured and restrained — a diplomatic balancing act that reflects the extraordinary complexity of New Delhi’s strategic alignments. India has developed an increasingly close relationship with the United States and has grown its ties with Israel, including hosting Prime Minister Modi’s historic visit to Jerusalem in late February 2026 just days before the conflict erupted. At the same time, India maintains significant economic ties with Iran, including investments in the Chabahar Port project — a strategic infrastructure asset in eastern Iran that provides India an alternative trade route to Afghanistan and Central



Asia bypassing Pakistan. US sanctions had previously forced India to replace Iranian oil with Arab Gulf supplies. The 2026 conflict now threatens the Chabahar investment itself, as US pressure mounts. India’s Foreign Minister Jaishankar’s multiple calls to his Iranian counterpart have centred on one immediate priority: keeping Indian ships and seafarers safe, and keeping energy corridors open. The broader geopolitical messaging from New Delhi has been de-es-

calatory, reflecting the recognition that India cannot afford a prolonged shutdown of the Gulf’s energy arteries regardless of its bilateral relationships with any of the parties to the conflict. India also has a profound human stake in Gulf stability that goes beyond oil tankers and LNG cargoes. Millions of Indian citizens live and work across Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait. Their remittances represent a significant and steady source of foreign exchange for India’s economy. Any major escalation that displaces this workforce, or disrupts remittance flows, would compound the energy shock with a balance-of-payments crisis.

THE RENEWABLE ENERGY IMPERATIVE: CRISIS AS CATALYST

There is, amid the crisis, a silver lining that India’s policymakers are already attempting to leverage. Sustained oil prices above \$85–100 per barrel historically accelerate clean energy transitions in energy-importing nations — and India in 2026 is better placed to benefit from that dynamic than at any prior point in its history. The government is expected to use the current crisis to push through accelerated renewable energy auction rounds, faster environmental clearances, and enhanced Production-Linked Incentive disbursements targeting not just solar modules but the full value chain: cells, wafers, and eventually polysilicon. India’s battery storage capacity is projected to jump dramatically, from 507 MWh in 2025 to 5 GWh in 2026 —

though the current crisis has exposed the acute vulnerability of that transition plan to disruptions in China-dependent supply chains for batteries and solar components. India’s electricity system is, comparatively, insulated from the immediate crisis because it runs predominantly on domestically produced coal. But if the conflict drags on and energy costs remain elevated, even electricity bills will eventually feel the pressure. To answer the question posed in this article’s title directly: yes, India faces a very real and immediate energy threat from the Middle East war. It is not hypothetical, not a scenario being modelled by think tanks — it is happening right now. LPG cylinders are being sold on black markets across India. Restaurants are shutting



down or reverting to firewood. Ships carrying Indian oil are stranded. Prices are rising at the pump and in the kitchen. The rupee is weakening. Fiscal buffers are eroding. Diplomatic channels are working overtime. But the crisis is also a clarion call that India’s policymakers have been reluctant to fully heed for decades: the country’s energy security architecture, built on the assumption of uninterrupted Gulf supply, is fundamental-

ly fragile. True energy security requires not just diversification of import sources but the development of strategic reserves for LPG and LNG comparable to those India maintains for crude, an acceleration of domestic renewable energy deployment, a reduction of dependence on any single maritime chokepoint, and a genuine whole-of-government approach that treats energy as a strategic asset rather than a utility procurement exercise.

THE LNG DIMENSION: A \$107 BILLION EXPOSURE

While LPG and crude oil have dominated headlines, India’s vulnerability to the Middle East conflict extends deeply into liquefied natural gas as well. India consumes approximately 195 million standard cubic metres of natural gas per day, with roughly half of that imported. Before the current disruption, around 60 million standard cubic metres per day came from the Middle East — a flow that has now been severely compromised. South Asia as a region faces a combined LNG infrastructure exposure of approximately \$107 billion, according to data from the Global Energy Monitor’s Asia Gas Tracker. India alone is pursuing the world’s second-largest expansion of LNG terminal capacity. This massive bet on gas as a transition fuel is now being re-evaluated in light of the Middle East conflict, which has exposed the fundamental fragility of LNG supply chains dependent on Gulf producers and the Hormuz chokepoint. Qatar, which plays an outsized role in global LNG supply, has been forced to declare force majeure following Iranian attacks on the massive Ras Laffan energy hub — the same facility that also provides a third of the world’s helium supply. This secondary shock has reverberated through semiconductor manufacturing, medical imaging, and high-tech industries globally and India’s rapidly expanding technology and manufacturing sectors are no exception.



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Fiscal Consequences: Subsidies Under Strain

The energy shock from the Middle East conflict arrives at a particularly difficult moment for India’s public finances. For fiscal year 2025–26, New Delhi has already budgeted approximately 2 trillion rupees (roughly \$24 billion) primarily for subsidies on LPG cooking gas and fertilisers. This was calibrated assuming a relatively benign oil price environment. As Brent crude surges past \$100 per barrel, government economists estimate that the subsidy bill could balloon by an additional ₹300–500 billion (\$4–6 billion) — and that is assuming the rupee holds its value. If the rupee slides further as the oil shock deepens, as it historically does, the fiscal arithmetic becomes even more unfavourable. Five Indian states — Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, and Puducherry — are due to go to the polls in the first half of 2026. Cooking gas prices are a historically charged political issue in Indian elections, and any government decision to pass through higher LPG costs to consumers will carry significant electoral consequences. This political constraint limits the government’s flexibility to let market forces adjust, making the subsidy burden heavier but also leaving fiscal buffers more strained. The fertiliser dimension compounds the pain. The Gulf is a major artery for urea, ammonia, and sulfur — key inputs for India’s agricultural sector. Conflict-related disruption has already tightened global fertiliser supplies, with urea prices up approximately 30% in a single month. For India, which supports hundreds of millions of farmers, higher fertiliser costs ultimately feed through into food inflation, creating a feedback loop where the energy shock intensifies food price pressures for the country’s most economically vulnerable households.



Man City held by West Ham, suffer major blow to Premier League title hopes



City slip nine points behind leaders Arsenal after frustrating draw at West Ham

LONDON

Manchester City suffered a damaging setback in their Premier League title challenge after being held to a 1-1 draw by struggling West Ham United at the London Stadium.

Pep Guardiola's side took the lead through Bernardo Silva in the first half, but a quick equaliser from Konstantinos Mavropanos ensured the points were shared, leaving City nine points behind league leaders Arsenal.

The result came only hours after Arsenal secured a dramatic 2-0 victory over Everton with two late goals, further increasing the pressure on the defending champions. Although City still have a game in hand, their recent form suggests the title race may be slipping away.

Back-to-back draws against relegation-threatened sides — West Ham and Nottingham Forest — have exposed weaknesses in a City squad that has undergone expensive rebuilding over the past 18 months.

City began brightly and eventually broke the deadlock in the 31st minute when Silva's attempted

cross from the left unexpectedly looped over goalkeeper Mads Hermansen and dropped into the far corner. The Portuguese midfielder's goal, only his second in the league this season, gave the visitors a brief advantage.

However, the lead lasted just four minutes. West Ham capitalised on a defensive lapse when City goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma misjudged a corner from Jarrod Bowen, allowing Mavropanos to head home from close range via the underside of the crossbar.

City struggled to create clear chances despite dominating possession for long stretches. Star striker Erling Haaland continued his recent scoring drought, managing only three goals in his last 12 league appearances and again looking largely ineffective.

Substitutes Rayan Cherki and Jeremy Doku were introduced in the second half to inject urgency into the attack. Cherki nearly made an instant impact, setting up Haaland for a low shot that Hermansen pushed away, while his late free-kick struck the crossbar.



Arsenal tighten title grip; teen makes Premier League history

LONDON

Arsenal strengthened their hold on the Premier League title race after a dramatic 2-0 victory over Everton, highlighted by a historic goal from teenage prodigy Max Dowman.

The 16-year-old midfielder produced a stunning solo effort to become the youngest goalscorer in Premier League history, capping a memorable day for the North London club. Arsenal's victory, combined with a slip-up by second-placed Manchester City, extended the Gunners' lead at the top of the table to nine points.

It could prove to be a defining moment in Arsenal's quest for their first English league title since 2004.

The breakthrough at the Emirates Stadium came late in the match. With Everton defending resolutely, Arsenal finally broke the deadlock when Viktor Gyokeres finished from close range after a cross from Dowman created confusion in the Everton defence.

Dowman's delivery from the right was misjudged by Everton goalkeeper Jordan Pickford and struck substitute Piero Hincapie before bouncing across the goalmouth for Gyokeres to tap in.

The teenage sensation then produced a moment of brilliance deep into stoppage time. Collecting the ball in his own half after an Everton corner was cleared, Dowman

Arsenal extend title lead as teenager Max Dowman becomes youngest Premier League scorer.

surged forward, dribbled past two defenders and calmly slotted into an empty net.

Pickford had ventured upfield in search of an equaliser, leaving the goal unguarded as Dowman completed the memorable run. At just 16 years and 73 days old, he etched his name into league history with the goal.

Dowman's breakthrough season has already attracted widespread attention. Earlier in the campaign he became the youngest player to appear in the UEFA Champions League, underlining his rapid rise in European football.

Elsewhere on Saturday, Manchester City's title hopes suffered another setback after a 1-1 draw against West Ham United, leaving Pep Guardiola's side struggling to keep pace with the leaders.

In another London fixture, Chelsea fell 1-0 to Newcastle United after an early strike from Anthony Gordon.

Meanwhile, relegation-threatened Burnley drew 0-0 with AFC Bournemouth, leaving them eight points from safety with only eight matches remaining.

Brighton & Hove Albion also secured a narrow 1-0 victory over Sunderland thanks to a fortunate goal from Yankuba Minteh.

England defeat India to win Women's Hockey WC Qualifiers title



HYDERABAD

England women's national field hockey team capitalised on India's missed opportunities to defeat the hosts 2-0 and clinch the title at the FIH Women's Hockey World Cup Qualifiers at the G.M.C. Balayogi Stadium.

Despite an energetic start by the India women's national field hockey team, England proved more clinical in front of goal. A penalty corner strike by Grace Balsdon in the first quarter and a deflected effort from Elizabeth Neal in the third ensured the European side emerged champions.

India began the match brightly, responding to head coach Sjoerd Marijne's call for an aggressive approach. Within the opening minute, Suchila Chanu launched an aerial pass that found Navneet Kaur inside the circle. Her shot struck the foot of England defender Flora Peel, prompting India to successfully review the decision and earn an early penalty corner.

However, Miriam Pritchard produced a crucial goal-line clearance to deny Navneet's effort.

India maintained possession in the opening stages and created several half-chances. Navneet combined well with Sunelita Toppo before delivering a clever pass to Lalremsiami, whose attempt failed to connect cleanly. While India controlled midfield exchange-

es, the team struggled to convert its dominance into goals.

England, on the other hand, remained patient and looked to test Indian goalkeeper Bichu Devi Kharibam whenever possible. In the 12th minute, Sophie Hamilton fired a shot that Bichu Devi blocked with her left foot. Moments later, England broke the deadlock. After winning a penalty corner, Balsdon delivered a powerful low strike that beat the goalkeeper, giving the visitors the lead despite Navneet's attempt to intervene on the line.

India nearly equalised early in the second quarter when Lalremsiami surged into the circle from the left and set up Ishika Chaudhary, whose shot narrowly missed the far post. England briefly thought it had doubled its lead through Anna Toman from another penalty corner, but the goal was ruled out for dangerous play.

The decisive moment came in the 43rd minute when Neal's shot deflected off Manisha Chauhan and looped into the net, doubling England's advantage. The visitors controlled the final quarter while India defended resolutely to avoid further damage.

Although the defeat marked India's second successive loss in a major final after the Women's Hockey Asia Cup in 2025, the team had already secured qualification for the next Women's FIH Hockey World Cup, offering some consolation.



Chelsea's top-four hopes dented after narrow Premier League defeat to Newcastle

LONDON

Chelsea suffered a damaging setback in their push for a top-four finish in the Premier League after losing 1-0 to Newcastle United at Stamford Bridge. A first-half goal from Anthony Gordon proved decisive as Newcastle secured an important victory that left Chelsea's hopes of qualifying for next season's UEFA Champions League in jeopardy.

The defeat leaves Chelsea in fifth place in the league standings, trailing third-placed Manchester United and fourth-placed Aston Villa by three points while having played a game more than both rivals.

Chelsea's disappointing display came just days after their heavy 5-2 defeat against Paris Saint-Germain in the first leg of the Champions League round of 16, raising further concerns about their form during a crucial stage of the season. Newcastle, meanwhile, entered the match in confident mood after securing a com-

mendable 1-1 draw against FC Barcelona in European competition earlier in the week.

The visitors made a bright start and took the lead in the 18th minute. Tino Livramento delivered a precise pass that split Chelsea's defence, allowing Joe Willock to surge through the middle unchallenged. Willock then squared the ball to Gordon, who calmly finished into the empty net.

Chelsea supporters grew increasingly frustrated as their team struggled to create clear chances despite enjoying spells of possession.

Newcastle continued to threaten, with Willock forcing a sharp save from Chelsea goalkeeper Robert Sanchez, while Jacob Ramsey also tested the Spanish shot-stopper with a deflected effort.

Sanchez, who returned to the starting lineup due to injury to Filip Jorgensen, endured a nervous moment after a misplaced pass nearly led to another Newcastle opportunity before Wesley Fofana intervened.

MCA ANNOUNCES RETURN OF T20 MUMBAI LEAGUE, LAUNCHES INAUGURAL WOMEN'S COMPETITION

MUMBAI

The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) on Sunday announced the return of the T20 Mumbai League for its fourth season while also unveiling the inaugural T20 Mumbai Women's League, marking a significant step in promoting women's cricket in the city.

The trophies for both the men's and women's tournaments were unveiled by Indian

captain Rohit Sharma, who is also the face of the league, during a glittering launch event attended by several cricket administrators and players. Among those present were Mumbai and India player Sayali Satghare, MCA president Ajinkya Naik, Maharashtra cabinet minister and former MCA president Ashish Shelar, and league governing council chairman Rajdip Gupta. Speaking at the launch, Rohit

Sharma expressed happiness at the league's growth and its role in nurturing young cricketers. He noted that several players who featured in earlier editions of the tournament had progressed to the Indian Premier League and even represented India at the international level. Sharma added that the inclusion of women's teams would make the competition even bigger and provide more opportunities for aspiring players.



Rishabh Yadav stays focused on Asian Games, 2028 Olympics despite performance dip

KOLKATA

Indian compound archer Rishabh Yadav remains optimistic about his future prospects despite a recent dip in form, setting his sights firmly on the upcoming Asian Games and the historic inclusion of compound archery at the 2028 Summer Olympics.

The 23-year-old had a breakthrough season in 2025, winning medals at major international competitions including the World Archery Championships, World Games and multiple Archery World Cup stages. However,

his recent results have been modest, finishing sixth in the first Open selection trials for the Asian Games and the opening two World Cup stages earlier this year.

Reflecting on his performance, Yadav said the difference between him and the top-ranked archers was minimal. During the qualification rounds, he averaged 708 points, only slightly behind national teammate Ojas Deotale, who averaged 711. Several of Yadav's matches in the round-robin stage were decided by shoot-offs, where he unfortunately lost on multiple occasions.

"In sports, the performance graph goes up and down," Yadav said, acknowledging that fluctuations are a natural part of an athlete's journey. He recently joined the national training camp in Kolkata in preparation for the first stage of the Asia Cup (archery), scheduled to begin in Bangkok on March 23. Yadav expressed gratitude to his long-time mentor Abhishek Verma for guiding him through challenging phases in his career. He now aims to perform strongly in the second round of selection trials to secure a place in India's squad for the Asian Games.

Real Madrid crush Elche as Guler's stunning long-range strike steals the show



MADRID

Real Madrid delivered an emphatic 4-1 victory over Elche CF in La Liga, highlighted by a spectacular long-range goal from Arda Guler, while Atletico Madrid secured a narrow win over Getafe CF.

Madrid's dominant performance at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium came days after their impressive victory over Manchester City in the UEFA Champions League, continuing an excellent run of form for the Spanish giants.

The breakthrough arrived late in the first half when German defender Antonio Rudiger fired home from close range after Elche goalkeeper Matias Dituro parried a free-kick from Federico Valverde.

Valverde soon doubled the advantage before the break with a superb curling effort into the top corner. The Uruguayan midfielder has enjoyed a remarkable week, having scored a hat-trick against Manchester City in European competition earlier.

Madrid continued to dominate in the second

half and extended their lead when young defender Dean Huijsen headed home from a precise cross delivered by teenager Daniel Yanez.

The moment of the night, however, came late in the match when Turkish playmaker Guler spotted Dituro off his line and launched a stunning strike from nearly 70 yards near the halfway line. The audacious effort sailed over the goalkeeper and into the net, leaving spectators and teammates stunned.

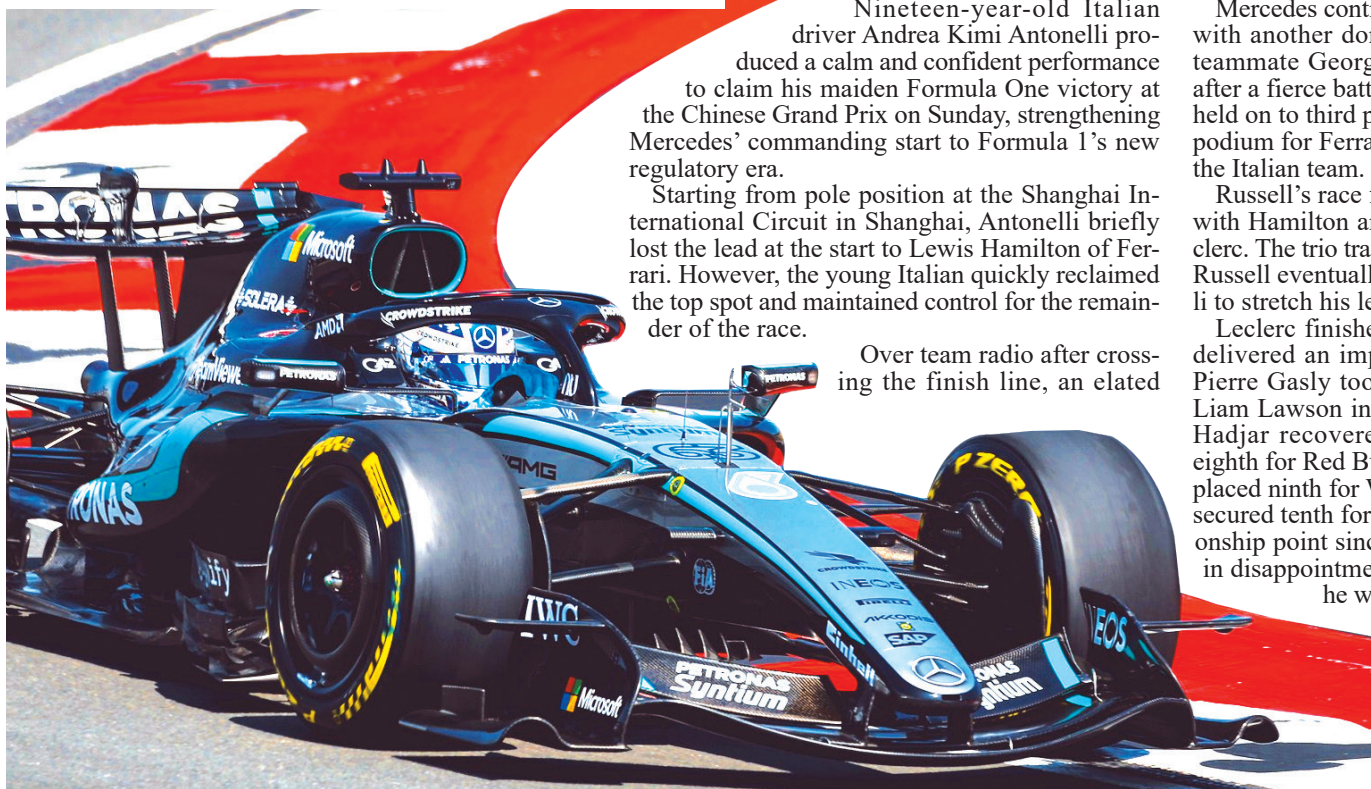
"Elche goalkeeper was caught out of position and Arda produced a moment of brilliance," Madrid forward Braham Diaz said after the match.

Elche managed a consolation goal when Madrid substitute Manuel Angel inadvertently diverted the ball into his own net while attempting to clear.

Real Madrid coach Alvaro Arbeloa rotated his squad during the match, resting several key players including Vinicius Junior as the team prepares for the Champions League return leg against Manchester City next week.

Antonelli becomes second-youngest F1 winner with Chinese Grand Prix triumph

Teenager Antonelli wins Chinese Grand Prix, extending Mercedes' early season dominance emphatically



SHANGHAI

Nineteen-year-old Italian driver Andrea Kimi Antonelli produced a calm and confident performance to claim his maiden Formula One victory at the Chinese Grand Prix on Sunday, strengthening Mercedes' commanding start to Formula 1's new regulatory era.

Starting from pole position at the Shanghai International Circuit in Shanghai, Antonelli briefly lost the lead at the start to Lewis Hamilton of Ferrari. However, the young Italian quickly reclaimed the top spot and maintained control for the remainder of the race.

Over team radio after crossing the finish line, an elated

Antonelli celebrated with his crew, shouting: "We did it! We did it!" as cheers erupted from the Mercedes garage.

The victory made Antonelli the second-youngest driver ever to win a Formula One race, behind only Max Verstappen, who famously won the 2016 Spanish Grand Prix at just 18 years old.

Mercedes continued its strong start to the season with another dominant 1-2 finish as Antonelli's teammate George Russell secured second place after a fierce battle with the Ferrari pair. Hamilton held on to third place, earning his first Grand Prix podium for Ferrari after his high-profile switch to the Italian team.

Russell's race featured a thrilling multi-lap duel with Hamilton and Ferrari teammate Charles Leclerc. The trio traded positions several times before Russell eventually pulled clear, allowing Antonelli to stretch his lead at the front.

Leclerc finished fourth, while Oliver Bearman delivered an impressive drive for Haas in fifth. Pierre Gasly took sixth for Alpine, followed by Liam Lawson in seventh for Racing Bulls. Isack Hadjar recovered from an early spin to finish eighth for Red Bull. Further back, Carlos Sainz Jr. placed ninth for Williams, while Franco Colapinto secured tenth for Alpine, earning his first championship point since 2024. Verstappen's race ended in disappointment when his car lost power while he was running sixth, forcing the four-time champion to return slowly to the pits — another setback for the Dutch driver, who has been among the most vocal critics of Formula One's new car regulations.



McLaren's Norris, Piastri fail to start Chinese Grand Prix after technical issues

SHANGHAI

Reigning Formula One champion Lando Norris and his McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri were unable to start the Chinese Grand Prix after both cars developed technical problems just minutes before Sunday's race.

Piastri had qualified fifth on the grid, while Norris was set to begin the race from sixth place at the Shanghai International Circuit in Shanghai. However, their hopes of competing ended before the formation lap.

Norris remained in the pits and never left for the starting grid as engineers attempted to resolve a mechanical issue with his car. Soon after, Piastri was withdrawn from the grid following a team radio message indicating an electrical problem with his vehicle.

McLaren later confirmed that separate technical faults had struck both cars.

"Unfortunately we identified separate issues on both cars which prevented them from starting the Chinese GP, with Oscar's being removed from the grid shortly before the formation lap. We will now work to identify each issue," the team said in a statement.

The setback marked the second time this season that Piastri failed to start a race. The Australian driver was also unable to compete in the opening round of the season in Australia after crashing before the race began.

The unexpected double withdrawal dealt a major

Technical failures sideline McLaren duo Norris and Piastri before start of Chinese race.

blow to McLaren's hopes of scoring valuable early-season points and left fans disappointed as both drivers had been in strong positions on the grid. Attention then shifted to the front of the field, where teenage sensation Andrea Kimi Antonelli was aiming to convert his historic pole position into a maiden Formula One victory. The 19-year-old Italian had become the youngest driver in Formula One history to secure pole position for a Grand Prix. Antonelli started alongside his Mercedes teammate George Russell, who managed to recover from earlier technical difficulties during qualifying to record the second-fastest lap.

Mercedes entered the race seeking to maintain its dominant start to Formula One's new era of regulations after Russell won the season-opening Australian Grand Prix and also triumphed in the sprint race in Shanghai on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Lewis Hamilton of Ferrari briefly overtook Antonelli at the start before the Italian reclaimed the lead soon afterward.

The race went ahead just hours after Formula One confirmed that the upcoming Bahrain Grand Prix and Saudi Arabian Grand Prix scheduled for next month had been cancelled due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia.



No team bigger than ICC, says Jay Shah after Bangladesh exits T20 WC

MUMBAI

Jay Shah, chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC), issued a firm response to the controversy surrounding the ICC Men's T20 World Cup after Bangladesh national cricket team withdrew from the tournament citing security concerns in India, while Pakistan national cricket team threatened to boycott the event in solidarity.

Shah said the tournament had faced uncertainty before it began but stressed that no single team was bigger than the governing body of world cricket.

"This ICC World Cup was very important because there was a lot of chatter before the start of the tournament about whether certain teams would participate and how the World Cup would go ahead," Shah said. "As ICC chairman, I can say that no team is bigger

than the organisation and no single team makes an organisation. An organisation is a combination of all teams," he added, without directly naming Bangladesh or Pakistan.

Bangladesh eventually pulled out of the tournament despite security assurances from the ICC. The team was replaced by Scotland national cricket team in the competition.

Despite the controversy, Shah said the 2026 T20 World Cup proved to be a massive success, breaking multiple global viewership records. According to the ICC chief, the tournament recorded 7.2 million concurrent viewers, the highest in the history of the event.

Shah also praised the performances of several associate teams that impressed during the tournament by challenging established cricketing nations.

Pole vaulters Dev, Kuldeep clear CWG mark in season opener

BENGALURU

Indian pole vaulters Dev Kumar Mee-na and Kuldeep Kumar made an impressive start to their season by clearing the Commonwealth Games qualification standard at the National Open Jump competition in Bengaluru.

Representing Madhya Pradesh, both athletes successfully cleared 5.25 metres on Day 1 of the meet, achieving the mark required for selection to the upcoming Commonwealth Games scheduled to be held in Glasgow in July-August.

However, their participation in the Games will still depend on final approval from the Athletics Federation of India selection committee, which has mandated further participation in upcoming events such as the Federation Cup and the Inter-State Championships later this year.

Coached by Ghanshyam Yadav, the two pole vaulters also attempted to improve the national record in the event. The current record of 5.40 metres, set by Dev in July last year, remains the benchmark for Indian pole vaulting.

Both athletes raised the bar to 5.41 metres in an effort to break the record and also achieve the qualification standard for the Asian Games, which stands at 5.45 metres. Despite three attempts each, neither athlete was able to clear the height, though Kuldeep registered a new personal best during the competition.

Tamil Nadu's M Gowtham finished third in the pole vault event with a best clearance of 5.10 metres.

"I am happy with the outcome as we came here with the mentality to clear the Commonwealth mark at

least," Dev said after the competition. He admitted there was some disappointment about missing the Asian Games qualification mark but remained optimistic about the season ahead.

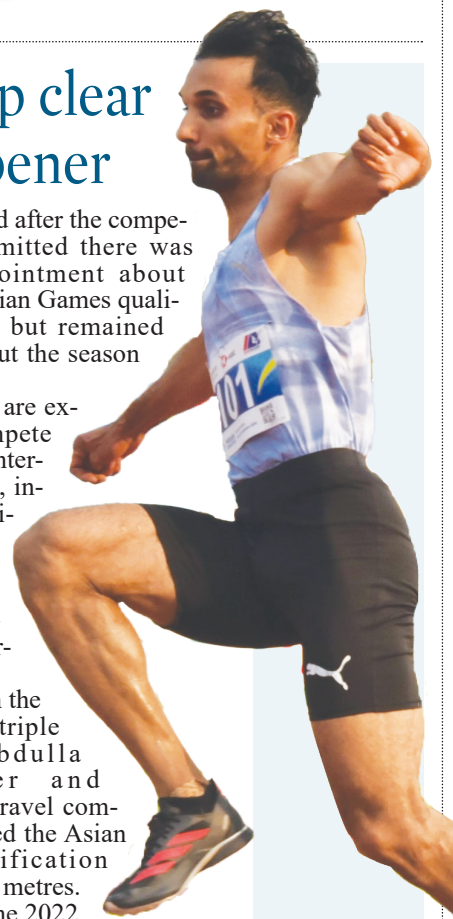
The athletes are expected to compete in upcoming international meets, including a possible event in Taiwan, where they will attempt to improve their performances.

Elsewhere in the competition, triple jumpers Abdulla Aboobacker and Praveen Chithravel comfortably crossed the Asian Games qualification mark of 16.28 metres. Aboobacker, the 2022 Commonwealth Games silver medalist, clinched gold with a jump of 16.83 metres, while national record holder Praveen secured silver with 16.72 metres.

Tamil Nadu's Gailey Venister also surpassed the qualifying mark with a jump of 16.48 metres to finish third.

In the high jump final, Sarvesh Anil Kushare won gold with a clearance of 2.14 metres but narrowly missed the Asian Games qualifying standard of 2.19 metres despite attempting the height in his final attempts.

Paralympic star Nishad Kumar also made a surprise appearance in the able-bodied event, clearing 2.10 metres to finish fifth.



ICC reprimands Pakistan's Salman Agha over reaction to controversial run-out

DHAKA

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has reprimanded Salman Agha of the Pakistan national cricket team for his angry reaction following a controversial run-out during the second One-Day International against the Bangladesh national cricket team in Dhaka on Friday.

The incident occurred when Agha was run out at the non-striker's end in unusual circumstances that quickly sparked debate over the spirit of the game.

After teammate Mohammad Rizwan played a shot that travelled towards Agha, the Pakistan batter moved away from his crease and bent down to collect the ball with the intention of returning it

to the bowler. However, Bangladesh captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz circled around behind him, grabbed the ball and broke the stumps while Agha remained outside his crease.

The dismissal led to widespread discussion among players and fans about whether the action adhered to cricket's traditional principles of sportsmanship.

Visibly upset by the decision, Agha reacted angrily after being given out, throwing down his gloves and helmet on the field. The ICC later confirmed that the behaviour violated its Code of Conduct relating to the abuse of equipment or clothing during an international match.

As a result, Agha received an official reprimand and one demerit point on his disciplinary record.

In a statement, the ICC said the Pakistan batter had accepted the sanction imposed by match officials, meaning there was no need for a formal hearing.

Bangladesh captain Mehidy defended his decision after the match, saying he believed Agha might attempt to run if the opportunity arose.

F1 cancels April races in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia amid escalating Iran war



SHANGHAI

Formula One and its governing body, the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), announced Sunday that the upcoming Bahrain Grand Prix and Saudi Arabian Grand Prix will not take place in April due to growing security concerns linked to the ongoing conflict involving Iran.

The decision was revealed in Shanghai just hours before the start of the Chinese Grand Prix, following escalating tensions in the Middle East after the United States and Israel launched a series of attacks on Iran. The strikes triggered retaliatory actions from Iran, with both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia reportedly affected by the fallout.

"Due to the ongoing situation in the Middle East region, the Bahrain and Saudi Arabian Grands Prix will not take place in April," Formula One said in a statement. Officials

confirmed that although alternative venues were considered, no replacement races would be scheduled for those dates.

The Bahrain race had originally been set for April 12, while the Saudi Arabian event was scheduled for April 19 in the coastal city of Jeddah.

Formula One president and chief executive Stefano Domenicali described the decision as difficult but necessary given the current security situation.

"While this was a difficult decision to take, it is unfortunately the right one at this stage considering the current situation in the Middle East," Domenicali said.

FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem emphasized that safety remained the governing body's top priority.

"The FIA will always place the safety and well-being of our community and colleagues first," he said, adding that the decision was taken after careful consideration.