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Slot 'happy' to welcome Salah back at Liverpool after AFCON



PM Modi to visit Bengal, address rallies amid SIR row

KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit West Bengal today and tomorrow, January 17-18, to attend government programmes and address political rallies, amid a bitter dispute over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and the Enforcement Directorate's raid on TMC-linked consultancy I-PAC.

On January 17, Modi will reach Malda around 12:45 pm, flag off India's first Vande Bharat Sleeper Train between Howrah and Guwahati, and dedicate rail and road projects worth over Rs 3,250 crore. The PM will lay foundation stones for new railway lines, freight and maintenance facilities, and electrification projects.

On January 18, he will visit Singur in Hooghly district, inaugurating and flagging off development projects worth around Rs 830 crore. Singur, the former site of Tata Motors' Nano plant, remains politically symbolic. BJP leaders hope Modi's address will un-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi begins a two-day West Bengal visit today, unveiling major infrastructure projects and addressing rallies amid sharp political tensions.

derscore industrial growth and investments, contrasting on TMC's land-acquisition legacy.

The TMC has accused the BJP and Election Commission of harassing citizens through SIR, while BJP claims it is essential to remove illegal voters. The ED-I-PAC controversy further intensified political tensions, with Mamata Banerjee alleging attempts to steal election strategies.

Modi's two-day visit combines governance announcements, political messaging, and infrastructure inaugurations, aimed at bolstering BJP's visibility ahead of upcoming state polls, while addressing the contested electoral environment in Bengal.



BJP sweeps Maharashtra civic polls as Uddhav-Raj reunion falters

The BJP-led MahaYuti secured a sweeping victory in Maharashtra's municipal polls

MUMBAI

The reunion of Thackeray cousins Uddhav Thackeray and Raj Thackeray failed to stem the BJP-led Maha Yuti's sweeping victory in Maharashtra's municipal corporation elections, with the saffron party delivering a decisive blow in key urban centres, including Mumbai.

The Bharatiya Janata Party emerged as the single largest party in the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), ending decades of Thackeray family dominance and paving the way for its first-ever Mayor in India's richest civic body, with support from ally Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena.

Despite a joint push by Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and MNS president Raj Thackeray, the BJP, led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, maintained a firm grip on Mumbai. The only consolation for the Thackerays was the relatively weak performance of Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, whose party slipped to third place in the BMC. However, Fadnavis also succeeded in asserting dominance over



"The results of various municipal corporation elections indicate that NDA's bond with the people of Maharashtra has further deepened. Our track record and vision for development have struck a chord."

—Narendra Modi, Prime Minister



"BJP offered a developmental agenda. We put it before the people and they responded positively."

—Devendra Fadnavis, Maharashtra CM

his other deputy, Ajit Pawar, as the BJP outperformed both factions of the NCP even in their traditional strongholds like Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad.

The results offered little relief to the Congress and the I.N.D.I.A. bloc, extending their post-2024 Assembly election slump. In Mumbai's

227 wards, the BJP won or led in 90 seats, followed by Shiv Sena (UBT) with 57, Congress with 15, and smaller tallies for other parties. Across Maharashtra, the BJP posted commanding wins in Nagpur, Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad, while AIMIM expanded its footprint in several cities.

JOYFUL CITY FEST



Chief Minister Siddaramaiah inaugurates 'Bengaluru Habba 2026' at the steps of Vidhana Soudha, flagging off a colourful folk art procession in the presence of ministers, artists and dignitaries.

Gauri Lankesh murder accused elected to JMC

MUMBAI

In a development that has triggered widespread reactions, Shrikant Pangarkar, an accused in the murder of journalist-activist Gauri Lankesh and the Nalasopara arms and ammunition haul case, has won the Jalna Municipal Corporation (JMC) elections in Maharashtra as an independent candidate.

Pangarkar secured victory from Ward 13 of the JMC. While the BJP contested the seat, the Shiv Sena led by Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, which fought the elections independently in



Jalna, did not field a candidate in this ward. His win has drawn attention due to his legal background and past political associations.

Gauri Lankesh was shot dead outside her Bengaluru residence on September 5, 2017. She was the editor of Lankesh Patrike, founded by her father P Lankesh, and later ran Gauri Lankesh Patrike. Pangarkar was granted

bail by the Karnataka High Court in September 2024. Ahead of the October 2024 Assembly elections, Pangarkar was briefly inducted into the Shiv Sena and appointed campaign in-charge for Jalna.

QUICK READ

'Bengali-speaking migrants targeted in BJP-ruled states'

KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday alleged that migrant workers from the state are being harassed and tortured in BJP-ruled states merely for speaking Bengali. Referring to protests in Murshidabad's Beldanga, she said the anger of the minority community was justified, as it stemmed from repeated attacks on migrant labourers outside West Bengal.

Don't certify JD(S)'s future: HDK counters Priyank Kharge

BENGALURU

Union Minister and JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy launched a scathing attack on Karnataka minister Priyank Kharge, saying he has no authority to issue "certificates" on whether the Janata Dal (Secular) will survive or collapse. Kumaraswamy asserted that it is the people of the state who will ultimately decide the party's future, not Congress leaders.

Reacting to Priyank Kharge's remark that JD(S) is nearing extinction, Kumaraswamy said there was no need for such certification from him. He mocked the Congress by referring to what he called a "lease-based" system within the party, alleging that several leaders, including ministers and even the Chief Minister, were effectively "borrowed" from JD(S).

He suggested Priyank Kharge should instead question his own party's internal contradictions. Kumaraswamy also took a swipe at Congress leadership tussles, claiming one faction believes its "lease period" is over and demands the chief minister's post, while another insists on continuing in office.

citizens are presently in Iran. In light of the recent developments, we have issued two or three advisories," he said. The advisories caution Indian nationals in India against travelling to Iran at this time and urge those already in the country to leave using whatever means are available.

Jaiswal emphasised that the government remains fully committed to the safety and well-being of Indian citizens abroad. "We are keeping a close watch on the situation, and as far as our citizens are concerned, we will do whatever is required to ensure their welfare," he stated.



Family members of Indians in Iran have been advised that they can complete the registration on behalf of their relatives through the MEA's online portal at <https://www.meacers.com/request/home>.

MEA URGENT ADVISORY

9K Indians asked to leave Iran by MEA

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday said it has advised around 9,000 Indian citizens currently residing in Iran to leave the country in view of the evolving situation there, adding that the developments are being closely monitored. Most of the Indians living in Iran are students.

Responding to queries on the safety of Indians in Iran, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the government has issued multiple advisories over recent days.

"Approximately 9,000 of our

Government of Karnataka
Medical Education Department

A Historic event of Signing of MoU between Department of Medical Education, and Azim Premji Foundation for construction and maintenance of 1000 bedded Super Specialty and Human Multi-organ Transplant Hospital.
17-01-2026, Saturday 11.00 A.M
Banquet Hall, Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru.

Inauguration :
Sri. Siddaramaiah
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of Karnataka,

Hon'ble Invitees:
Smt. Nirmala Seetharaman, Hon'ble Central Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Government of India.
Sri. D.K Shivakumar, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Government of Karnataka
Kum. Shobha Karandlaje, Hon'ble Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Labour and Employment, Government of India.
Sri. Basavaraja S Horatti, Hon'ble chairman of Karnataka Legislative Council
Sri. U.T. Khadar Hon'ble Speaker of Karnataka Legislative Assembly

Chairmanship
Dr. Sharanaprakash R Patil
Honble minister for Medical Education and Minister for Skill Development Entrepreneurship and Livelihood, Government of Karnataka.

Special Invitees :
Sri. Azim Premji Chairman Wipro company and Azim Premji Foundation

Honorary Presence :
Dr. Shalini Rajaneesh IAS Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka

All Hon'ble Ministers, Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assembly and Council,

Welcomed by
Sri Mohammad Mohsin, IAS Additional Chief Secretary to Government Medical Education Department
Dr. B L Sujatha Rathod Director of Medical Education, Medical Education Department
Dr. Nagesh. N.S Director, Institute of Gastroenterology Sciences and Organ Transplant, Bengaluru.

A Warm Welcome to All

QUICK READ



COCA invoked against jailed rowdy Gubbachi Seena

Bengaluru
In a major crackdown on organised crime, the Whitefield police have invoked the Karnataka Control of Organised Crime Act (COCA) against Sarjapur-based rowdy sheeter Gubbachi Seena and another rowdy, Karthik. The move comes as part of intensified efforts to curb rowdiness in the city. Despite being lodged in jail, Gubbachi Seena allegedly continued to run criminal operations from behind bars. Recently, videos and photographs showing him consuming alcohol and celebrating his birthday inside the prison went viral, raising serious questions about jail security and supervision. Police said Seena also allegedly threatened a builder over the phone while in custody, prompting the registration of a case at the Varthur police station. Citing his repeated involvement in anti-social activities and his ability to orchestrate crimes from jail, investigators booked him under COCA, which allows stricter action against organised offenders.

Rowdiness rises in Rajajinagar, women express frustration

Bengaluru
Residents of Rajajinagar, especially women, are increasingly frustrated with rising rowdiness in the area. Earlier, when Padmavathi served as corporator in Prakash Nagar, officials visited homes and addressed grievances. Now, many feel there is no one to listen to their concerns. “MLA S Suresh Kumar is a good man, but no one listens to us here,” said Madhumati, a local resident, during a survey ahead of the upcoming GBA elections. The sentiment reflects widespread worry over safety and lack of effective governance in the neighbourhood.

Man and woman brawl after minor accident on Kerekodi road

Bengaluru
A minor collision between a car and a bike on Kerekodi main road around 8 pm on Thursday escalated into a scuffle between the drivers, causing traffic congestion. Both vehicles sustained mirror damage during the incident. Attempts by passing motorists to mediate failed, and a video of the fight quickly went viral, sparking public outrage. The Girinagar police have registered a case and are investigating the matter, collecting statements and details of those involved. Authorities have urged road users to remain calm and avoid letting minor accidents escalate into conflicts.

Land acquisition for Business Corridor hits roadblock

Alternate compensation schemes offered only as ex-gratia, final choice rests with farmers

BENGALURU

The Bengaluru Business Corridor (BBC) project has hit a compensation impasse as decades-old land awards clash with soaring property values. Officials say alternate schemes can only be offered as ex-gratia, with the final decision resting with farmers.

The project, earlier known as the Peripheral Ring Road, was notified in 2008-09. The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) had passed compensation awards of Rs 20-30 lakh per acre for 948

acres and 14.5 guntas, part of the first phase of 1,810 acres. However, acquisition stalled for nearly 15 years due to farmer opposition, leaving large tracts of land in limbo.

With the Congress government treating the corridor as a key decongestion initiative, land acquisition is back on the agenda. But the 2008-09 award, which cannot be legally withdrawn, has created a legal hurdle. Officials fear farmers covered under the old award may seek higher cash compensation in courts, straining project finances.



Meanwhile, land prices in areas like Varthur and Gunjur have surged, with farmers demanding Rs 15-40 crore per

acre. In response, BDA has begun negotiating payouts under a new framework, offering up to Rs 15.6 crore per

acre in select villages. Around 100 acres have already been acquired with farmer consent.

Farmers are being offered five options: cash, residential plots, commercial plots, Transferable Development Rights (TDR), or Floor Area Ratio (FAR). Detailed village-wise compensation details, including TDR and FAR, are published on the BDA website. Four district collectors have been appointed to fast-track acquisition once consent letters are received.

BCC Chairman LK Atheeq

said the government expects most landowners to choose ex-gratia packages. Many are opting for commercial plots at a 65:35 ratio (8,385 sq ft per acre) along with TDR. A revised Detailed Project Report (DPR) is underway.

Under current rules, tenders can only be floated after 80% of land acquisition is completed. BDA has requested government approval to call tenders after reaching 60% acquisition, aiming to accelerate project development while managing compensation-related challenges.

State mulls new sandbox plan for tech startups

BENGALURU

The Karnataka IT-BT department is exploring the creation of a regulatory sandbox for startups, following amendments to Karnataka Innovation Authority (KIA) rules. The sandbox will allow innovators to test technologies under a guided framework, ensuring alignment with existing policies while also recommending changes where necessary, said IT-BT Director Rahul Shankanur. The plan is in early stages, with meetings already underway to define its scope and operational framework.

The initiative aims to prevent regulatory conflicts, such as the bike-taxi impasse, by enabling technology development to occur alongside legal compliance. Air taxis in Bengaluru, for example, are technically market-ready but must adhere to DGCA rules and no-fly zones before commercial deployment. A proposed KIA rule amendment to enable the sandbox is expected during the budget session.

Prashanth Prakash, Chairperson of Startup Vision Group, Karnataka, highlighted the potential benefits, not-



If someone wants to develop a technology for which regulations do not exist, they can experiment in this sandbox.

ing that sandboxes provide startups with the flexibility to navigate regulations while bridging gaps between policy and innovation. “Karnataka has a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem, and many innovators want to experiment here first,” he said, emphasizing the importance of implementation and follow-through.

Industry veteran Mohandas Pai expressed caution, citing past regulatory sandboxes that stalled due to bureaucratic inertia. “A Secretary may push reforms, but once transferred, the

system collapses,” Pai said. He urged a cabinet-backed approach with active government engagement and a long-term vision for the sandbox.

Pai recommended that the sandbox be structured as a 10-year programme, with a two-month response window for all issues emerging from experiments. A formal review mechanism must be in place to ensure continuity, prevent lapses with government changes, and secure the sandbox as a sustainable tool for innovation in Karnataka’s tech ecosystem. If implemented effectively, the sandbox could position Karnataka as a leading state for experimentation, offering startups both freedom and regulatory clarity while shaping future policies for emerging technologies.

HC directs state, Centre to halt devpt at Roerich estate

BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has directed both the state and central governments to ensure that no development activities take place on the Roerich and Devika Rani estate on the outskirts of Bengaluru. A division bench, comprising Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice CM Poonacha, issued the order on a PIL petition filed by RR Nagar I Care Trust. The next hearing in the matter is scheduled for February 16.

The petitioner challenged a December 24, 2024 notification that approved an eco-tourism and cultural hub project at the estate. The state’s counsel requested time to file a statement of objections, while Deputy Solicitor General H. Shanthi Bhushan, representing the Centre, stated that no proposal regarding the project had been received and, at this stage, implementation could not proceed.

The trust argued that the proposed 450-car parking facility and visitor accommodations would severely impact the local ecology, as the estate borders the Bannerghatta forest range and lies along an elephant corridor. The petitioner highlighted that both the master plan and central eco-tourism rules mandate the protection of ecological and wildlife areas. The petition also called for scientific profiling of environmental, ecological, and wildlife fac-

tors on the estate and the preparation of a management plan consistent with conservation objectives.

Additionally, the petitioner sought that the contiguous area of the estate be declared a Biodiversity Heritage Site or considered for a conservation reserve designation to protect the remaining land.

The case has drawn attention after the tourism department moved ahead with plans for the eco-tourism hub despite forest department concerns. A recent event highlighted the risks: as part of the Creative City Bengaluru festival, the estate will host 25 artists from Russia and Austria for a two-day sketching event. Citing the presence of wild animals, the estate board requested additional forest and security personnel for the artists’ safety.

Conservationists called the request ironic, noting that the same risks were downplayed when planning the larger eco-tourism project. “If extra protection is needed for a two-day event, imagine the dangers and security costs if thousands of tourists visit daily,” a conservationist said, urging the government to reconsider the project to prevent threats to life and ecology.

The High Court order effectively puts all development on hold until further proceedings, underscoring the judiciary’s focus on balancing heritage, conservation, and tourism interests.



‘We are open to alliance with BJP in GBA local body polls’

BENGALURU

Union Minister and JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy on Friday said his party is open to exploring an alliance with the BJP for the upcoming Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) and other local body elections, while maintaining that no final decision has been taken yet.

Clarifying former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda’s recent statement that there is no alliance in local body elections, Kumaraswamy said the party has kept its options open. “We are open to the issue of an alliance in GBA and local body elections. Our view

is that there should be no confusion about alliances. What kind of political developments will take place in the coming days and what decision BJP leaders take at the local level will also matter. We will take a decision after assessing all these factors,” he said.



ONE CITY. MANY CULTURES

Drumbeats and Unity Mark the Opening of BLR Habba 2026

BENGALURU

Bengaluru marked a colourful beginning to BLR Habba 2026 on Friday evening as Chief Minister Siddaramaiah inaugurated the festival by playing the traditional Dollu and Nagari drums on the steps of Vidhana Soudha. The iconic seat of power was transformed into a vibrant cultural stage, symbolising the festival’s aim of bridging the city’s global tech identity with its deep-rooted heritage.

Addressing the gathering, Siddaramaiah drew upon the teachings of Basavanna and Sufi saints, calling on citizens to uphold Manushyatva—the shared humanity that transcends caste and religion. “We are humans first. Birth is accidental and death is

certain; what matters is how we live in between,” he said. Stressing cultural integration, he urged Bengaluru’s 1.4 crore residents to learn Kannada to better connect with the land and its people.

Organised by the Department of Kannada and Culture in collaboration with private partners, including the Unboxing BLR Foundation, BLR Habba will run for 20 days, with 10 days of major events. Secretary C J Manjunath announced that more than 150 programmes will be held across 30 locations such as Freedom Park, Malleswaram, and Whitefield. Events include Thindi Habba (food festival), Nataka Hubba (theatre), and Rasthe Hubba (street arts), featuring over 800 artistes from India and abroad.



Pongal Festival: Special train service announced

BENGALURU

In view of the surge in passenger traffic during the Pongal festival, Southern Railway has announced a one-trip special train service between Kottayam and Bengaluru Cantonment. The move aims to provide additional travel convenience to passengers heading to and from Karnataka and Kerala during the festive season.

Train No. 06147 Kottayam-Bengaluru Cantonment Special Express will depart from Kotta-

yam at 12.30 am on January 18 and arrive at Bengaluru Cantonment at 3.30 am on January 19. For the return journey, Train No. 06148 Bengaluru Cantonment-Kottayam Special Express will leave Bengaluru Cantonment at 10.20 pm on January 19 and reach Kottayam at 10.50 am on January 20. The special express will have stoppages at Emakulam Town, Aluva, Thrissur, Palakkad, Podanur, Tiruppur, Erode, Salem, Kuppam, Bangarpet and Krishnarajapuram stations in both directions, Southern Railway said.

QUICK READ

**Fire breaks out during Sankranti celebrations at city temple****Bengaluru**

A fire broke out in front of a temple during Sankranti celebrations, triggering brief panic among devotees. The incident occurred while firecrackers were being burst as part of the festivities. The temple premises had been decorated with grass, flowers and banners, including one bearing the name of Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, which caught fire. Devotees and local residents standing in queue for darshan acted swiftly and managed to douse the flames before they spread. Thanks to their timely response, no casualties were reported and major damage to property was averted.

Car blocks ambulance access at hospital, delays treatment**Bengaluru**

An illegally parked private car obstructed the movement of an ambulance to the emergency department of Nelamangala Government General Hospital, delaying treatment to an injured man on Thursday. Shivakumar, who sustained injuries in an auto accident near Talekere, was brought to the hospital after an hour-long ambulance journey. However, the ambulance was forced to wait due to the obstruction. Hospital staff alerted the traffic police after the car owner could not be traced. The Nelamangala traffic police later imposed fines on private vehicles parked inside the hospital premises and warned against such violations that could endanger lives.

Auto overturns after hitting divider, elderly passenger killed**Bengaluru**

An elderly passenger was killed on the spot after an autorickshaw overturned near Talekere in Nelamangala taluk. The accident occurred when the driver, allegedly under the influence of alcohol, lost control of the vehicle, rammed into a highway divider and overturned. The deceased has been identified as 71-year-old Hanumaiah, a resident of Thimmegowdappalya near Hulikallu in Magadi taluk. Police rushed to the scene and shifted the body to Nelamangala General Hospital for post-mortem. The autorickshaw driver has been taken into custody and a case registered at the Nelamangala traffic police station.

Sun rays illuminate Shiv Lingam at Gavi Gangadhareshwara Temple

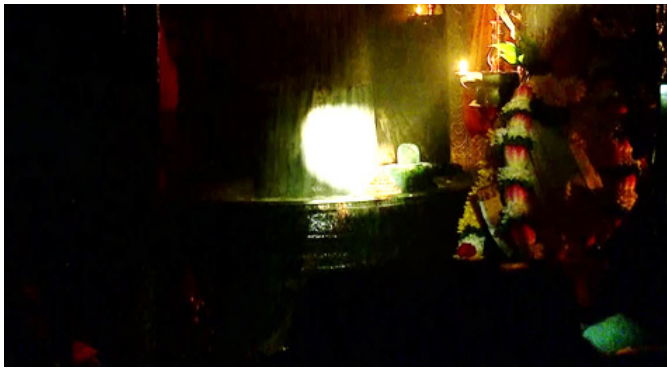
The rare celestial phenomenon drew lakhs of devotees seeking blessings

BENGALURU

A divine spectacle unfolded at the historic Gavi Gangadhareshwara Temple in Gavi-pura, Guttahalli, as the rays of the setting sun touched the sacred Shiv Lingam during Makar Sankranti, drawing lakhs of devotees from across the city and beyond.

The much-awaited phenomenon occurred between 5.19 pm and 5.26 pm, lasting precisely six minutes and six seconds. During this brief but spiritually charged window, priests performed special abhishekam with milk and tender coconut water on the Shiv Lingam, while devotees chanted “Om Namah Shivaya,” soaking in what many described as a moment of divine purification.

The sun’s rays entered the sanctum sanctorum through the horns of the Nandi idol and gently illuminated the Shiv Lingam — an architectural and astronomical marvel



that the temple is renowned for. Though the rays directly touched the Lingam for about two minutes, the overall event remained visible for several minutes, captivating thousands gathered within the temple complex.

Temple authorities made elaborate arrangements to manage the massive turnout. LED lighting was installed outside the temple to enhance visibility, while large LED screens were set up within the premises to allow devotees standing in long queues —

stretching nearly 200 metres — to witness the moment. Police and volunteers ensured crowd control and smooth movement of devotees.

Last year, cloudy weather had prevented the phenomenon, making this year’s occurrence especially significant for devotees. Many termed it a “rare blessing” and expressed gratitude for being able to witness it in person.

Makar Sankranti marks the sun’s transition from Dakshinayana to Uttarayana — from its southward to northward

journey — and is considered highly auspicious in Hindu tradition. The festival was celebrated with great fervour across Karnataka, including Bengaluru, where devotees thronged temples from early morning.

Special pujas and abhishekams were conducted at temples for peace, harmony and prosperity. As per directions from the Religious Endowments Department, sesame and jaggery (ellu-bella) were distributed to devotees after naivedya in Muzrai temples. Commissioner Sharath instructed that the mixture be packed in envelopes bearing the temple name and government logo, with a minimum of 50 grams per devotee.

Large crowds were also seen at temples such as the Anjinappa Temple near Mysore Bank Circle on Mysore Road, reflecting the festive spirit and deep-rooted traditions associated with Sankranti.



Like Mumbai, our victory in GBA elections is certain, says BJP

BENGALURU

Buoyed by the party’s strong performance in recent local body elections in Maharashtra, senior BJP leaders on Friday exuded confidence of a decisive victory in the upcoming elections to the five municipal corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA). Leader of the Opposition R. Ashoka said the people of Bengaluru, like those of Mumbai, would bless the BJP with an emphatic mandate, marking the beginning of the Congress party’s decline in Karnataka.

Referring to the BJP–Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction) alliance’s success in Maharashtra, Ashoka said the party’s victories in Pune, Nagpur and other major urban local bodies, including the prestigious Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), reflected public endorsement of BJP’s development-oriented politics. “The people have once again recognised the BJP’s commitment to governance and growth. A similar verdict awaits the Congress in Karnataka during the GBA elections,” he asserted.

Former Chief Minister and MP Basavaraj Bommai echoed these sentiments, stating that the results in Maharashtra’s urban local bodies demonstrated the electorate’s trust in the BJP-led alliance. Congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP national president J.P. Nadda, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Bommai said their leadership had played a crucial

Former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis following the BJP and its allies’ strong showing in the Maharashtra local body elections. He said the victory was a result of people appreciating the pro-people initiatives of the NDA government at the Centre and the BJP-led government in Maharashtra. Yediyurappa thanked educated voters, party workers and leaders for their efforts and congratulated the winning candidates.

cial role in securing the unprecedented victory.

Bommai expressed confidence that the BJP–JD(S) alliance would replicate this success in Bengaluru. “The upcoming GBA elections will mark the beginning of the end for the Congress in the state. Urban voters are increasingly favouring development, transparency and decisive leadership, which the BJP represents,” he said.

BJP leaders also pointed to issues such as civic infrastructure, governance reforms and fiscal discipline as key factors that would influence voters in Bengaluru’s municipal elections. According to them, the party’s performance in other metropolitan regions has strengthened cadre morale and boosted confidence at the grassroots level ahead of the polls.

Husband’s petition for divorce from estranged wife dismissed

BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has dismissed a divorce petition filed by a man from Belthangady taluk, holding that the wife living separately for a few years cannot, by itself, be treated as desertion. The court observed that mere physical separation, without proof of intent to abandon the marriage, does not constitute grounds for divorce.

A Division Bench comprising Justice Jayant Banerjee and Justice T.M. Nadaf upheld the order of the trial court, which had earlier rejected the husband’s plea seeking dissolution of marriage on the ground that his wife had left him and was residing with her parents. The Bench noted that the wife had consistently stated she bore no ill will towards her husband and that her stay at her parental home could not be interpreted



as abandonment.

The court further pointed out that the husband failed to place convincing evidence to establish that the wife had deserted him without reasonable cause. On the contrary, during the trial, it emerged that the wife had gone to her native place with the knowledge and permission of her husband, weakening his claim of desertion.

The petitioner had also alleged that the child born to the wife was not his. However, the Bench observed that the trial court had directed the husband to pay maintenance to both the wife and the child, an order that remained unchallenged. This,

the court said, undermined his allegation regarding the child’s parentage.

Further, the wife had approached the Kannur Family Court seeking maintenance, which was granted for the period between 2013 and 2016. The High Court noted that the husband did not contest this maintenance order either, indicating acceptance of the marital and parental relationship during that period. Taking into account all these aspects, the Bench concluded that there was no justification to interfere with the trial court’s decision. It ruled that the husband had failed to prove desertion or any other legally sustainable ground for divorce. Accordingly, the High Court dismissed the petition, reiterating that separation alone, without evidence of intent to sever marital ties permanently, cannot be a basis for dissolving a marriage.

Karunya Ram’s sister faces another financial fraud

BENGALURU

Samruddhi, sister of actress Karunya Ram, has landed in further legal trouble after the Kengeri police registered yet another case against her in connection with an alleged financial fraud.

The latest case was booked following a complaint by a city resident, adding to the list of accusations already levelled against her. According to the police, the complainant, Kapil, alleged that Samruddhi had taken ₹4 lakh from him on the assurance of repayment.

While a small portion of the amount was returned nearly two months later, the balance remained unpaid. Kapil claimed that whenever he sought repayment of the remaining sum, Samruddhi allegedly kept postponing it, offering various excuses.

Police expose real face of gang of thieves, 2 minors held

BENGALURU

The Sampigehalli police have busted a gang involved in daylight house thefts after discovering that the suspects, initially believed to be young men, were in fact two minor girls disguised as boys. The arrests followed an investigation into a theft reported earlier this month under the Sampigehalli police station limits.

The incident occurred on the 13th of the month at the residence of Sangamesh, an autorickshaw driver, in Agrahara Layout near Yelahanka. According to the police, the theft took place while Sangamesh was away from home. On returning, he noticed that gold ornaments had been stolen and immediately alerted the police.

Based on the complaint, a case was registered and a de-

tailed investigation was launched. Officers collected CCTV footage from the area, which showed two youths entering and leaving the house during daytime hours. The footage also helped police identify the two-wheeler used in the crime.

Using the vehicle number and other technical inputs, the police traced the suspects to Tannery Road and arrested them. It was only after the accused were brought to the police station that officers realised the supposed boys were actually girls dressed in male attire to avoid suspicion.

During interrogation, it emerged that both accused are minors. The police have recovered the stolen gold ornaments from them. Officials said the disguises were used to facilitate house raids without drawing attention from neighbours or passersby.

Mother, 4-year-old daughter die after self-immolation

BENGALURU

A tragic incident was reported from Sanjay Nagar on Thursday evening, where a 29-year-old woman and her four-year-old daughter died after the woman allegedly set herself and the child on fire following a dispute with her husband. The incident occurred around 7.30 pm at Krishnappa Layout, sending shockwaves through the neighbourhood. The deceased have been identified as Seetha (29) and her daughter Srushti (4). According to the police, Seetha and her husband Govind Bahadur, natives of Nepal, were employed as domestic help at a house in Sanjay Nagar. The couple had been provided accommodation in a small house adjacent to their workplace. Police said Govind Bahadur frequently travelled to Nepal and had not returned for the past five to six months.

Maharashtra local body polls: BJP celebrates victory at party office

BENGALURU

Celebrations broke out near the state BJP office in Bengaluru on Friday following the party and its allies securing a strong victory in the Maharashtra local body elections. BJP workers marked the occasion by bursting crackers and distributing sweets, hailing the results as a clear endorsement of the party’s leadership and governance.

Speaking to the media, City North District BJP president S Harish said the BJP-led alliance had registered a massive lead in Mumbai’s civic body, describing the outcome as a moment of pride for the party. He took a swipe at the Congress, recalling its earlier claims that it would win if elections were held using ballot papers. “Especially in our state, they have already been



defeated. Now they are once again alleging EVM manipulation,” he said. Harish added that after nearly three decades, the prospect of a BJP mayor leading Mumbai was a cause for celebration.

City Central District BJP president Saptagirigowda echoed similar sentiments, stating that the BJP alliance’s victory in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, the richest civic body in the country, reflected the people’s trust

in the party. “The people of Mumbai have shown who the real Shiv Sena is,” he said, alleging that politics of hypocrisy had been carried out in the name of the party for years.

BJP leaders said the Maharashtra results would energise party cadres ahead of upcoming elections elsewhere, including in Karnataka, and reaffirmed their confidence in the BJP’s growing appeal in urban centres.

GLOBAL KANNADA RECOGNITION

Internationally Acclaimed Kannada Director Anooya Swamy honoured

BENGALURU

A new milestone has been etched in the history of the Kannada film industry with Bengaluru-based young director Anooya Swamy’s short film Pankaja becoming the first Kannada short film to be officially selected for the prestigious Sundance Film Festival in the United States. The achievement has brought international recognition not only to the filmmaker but also to grassroots talent from Karnataka.

Anooya Swamy, who is

currently pursuing postgraduate studies in film and television in New York, returned to Bengaluru with a strong desire to tell a story rooted in her homeland. Staying true to realism, she chose Padmashree, a third-grade student from the government school in Agara, Bengaluru, to play the lead role. Actress Harshani essays the role of the girl’s mother, lending emotional depth to the narrative.

The international recognition has sparked celebrations at the Agara government



school, where Padmashree studies. On Friday, the film team screened Pankaja for students and teachers at the

Teachers and students alike expressed joy that one of their own had become part of a globally recognised film.

Sharing her excitement, Padmashree said she was thrilled that the film would be screened in America. “I was not scared during the shooting at all. Everyone supported me and helped me a lot. I am very thankful to Anooya for giving me this opportunity,” she said. Her performance has once again highlighted the immense potential among students from government schools.

Director Anooya Swamy, speaking on the occasion, said the project was deeply personal. “I was born and brought up in Agara. I always wanted my first short film to be made in the place where I grew up,” she said. Emphasising her belief in realism, she added that she deliberately avoided casting well-known faces. “When newcomers are given opportunities, they bring honesty and naturalness to their performances. That belief has now been validated,” she said.

Pankaja explores sensitive

themes such as trauma, grief and emotional ambiguity with subtlety and restraint. The film was shot across multiple locations in Bengaluru, including HSR Layout, Malleshwaram, Agara, a police station and stone quarries. Over 50 technicians contributed to the project, reflecting a strong collaborative effort.

Agara government school headmaster Rangaswamy congratulated Anooya Swamy on her remarkable achievement, calling it a matter of pride for Kannadigas and the entire Kannada film fraternity.



QUICK READ

Woman found dead in farmhouse

BAGALKOT

A woman was found dead at a farmhouse in Hirepadasalagi village, Jamkhandi taluk, on January 15 around 5 pm, raising suspicion of strangulation. The victim, identified as Yamanavva, was discovered in a sleeping position with visible injury marks on her neck and chest. Bagalkot Superintendent of Police Siddhartha Goyal, Deputy SP Sayyad Roshan Jamir, and local police inspected the scene. Authorities have set up a trap to catch the accused, and investigations are ongoing within Savalagi police station limits. Police urged locals with information to come forward as they probe the mysterious death.

Haveri police launch AI system to curb violations

HAVERI

Haveri city police are introducing AI-powered cameras to catch traffic rule violators and send fines directly to vehicle owners' homes. The new Integrated Traffic Management System (ITMS) will soon operate on six major city roads, detecting offenses such as speeding, triple riding, mobile use while driving, and not wearing helmets. SP Yashoda Vantagodi said the system captures vehicle number plates, faces, and colors, helping enforce rules and prevent accidents. Citizens have welcomed the move, noting it will promote safer driving and reduce accidents. The ITMS may also assist in detecting thefts and other crimes in the city.

Red Cross announces board member elections

MANGALURU

The Indian Red Cross Society, D.K. District Branch, has issued a notification for the election of 10 members to its Board of Directors. Nominations will be accepted from January 29 to February 4, between 11 am and 3 pm, with scrutiny scheduled for February 5 at 11 am and February 7 at 3 pm. If required, elections will take place on February 22 at the Centenary Building from 8 am to 5 pm, and vote counting will be held on February 23. Candidates and members can find details on the organization's website or contact the office directly.

S.R. Patil reviews guarantee schemes in Gadag

GADAG

Karnataka State Guarantee Schemes Implementation Authority Vice Chairman S.R. Patil (Byadgi) is on an official visit to Gadag district. He will chair a progress review meeting of the district's guarantee schemes at Gadag Zilla Panchayat Hall on January 17 at 11 am. Patil will stay in Gadag to oversee local developments and is scheduled to leave for Byadgi on January 18 at 5 pm. The tour aims to assess the implementation of various state guarantee programs and ensure their effective delivery to citizens in the district. Officials will accompany him during the visit.

Devpt projects worth ₹4,586 L to be inaugurated in Gadag

These initiatives aim to offer quality education, secure housing, and equal opportunities for minority students, creating long-term improvements

GADAG

In a major move to strengthen education and housing for minorities, Gadag district will see the groundbreaking and public dedication of development projects worth ₹4,586 lakh on Saturday (today). The programs, organized by the Minority Welfare Department, will be led by Housing, Minority Welfare and Waqf Minister B.Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan, Legislation and Tourism Minister Dr. H.K. Patil. The Karnataka Maulana Azad Public School (English Medium) in Gangimadi will witness the inauguration of newly completed facilities

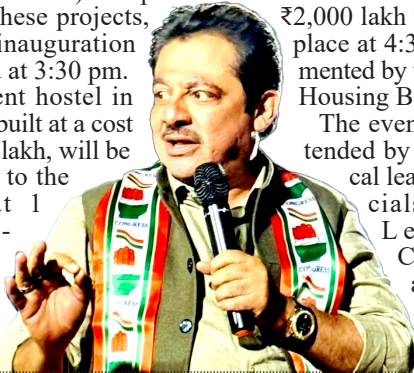
costing ₹235 lakh. Additionally, ₹142 lakh has been allocated for constructing extra classrooms at the same school.

The Karnataka Rural Infrastructure Development Corporation (KRIDL) is implementing these projects, with the inauguration scheduled at 3:30 pm.

A student hostel in Betageri, built at a cost of ₹1.209 lakh, will be dedicated to the public at 1 pm, providing safe and secure accom-

modation for minority students. Girls' Morarji Desai Residential School in Harthi village will be inaugurated at ₹1,000 lakh, while the groundbreaking for a new Navodaya-model Morarji Desai Residential School at ₹2,000 lakh will also take place at 4:30 pm, implemented by the Karnataka Housing Board (KHB).

The events will be attended by senior political leaders and officials, including Legislative Council MLA and Government Chief Whip Salim



Allama Prabhu Bettadoor urged respecting local communities and Gavi Math, emphasizing their wisdom should guide decisions without harm

Opposition plans to protest over toxic factory hazards

KOPPAL

Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, Leader of the Opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Council, announced that he will raise concerns about the ongoing protest against Baldota and other toxic factories during the upcoming special session on January 22. He warned the government to take action and emphasized the importance of public health in the city and surrounding villages.

Narayanaswamy visited the protest site on Friday, marking the 78th day of the indefinite dhama organized by the District Bachao Andolan Samiti and the Environmental Protection Forum. The protest highlights environmental hazards and community concerns in Bhagyanagar and 20 nearby villages affected by industrial pollution. The opposition leader expressed strong sup-



port for the demonstrators, saying, "People's health must come first. It is not right for ministers to shift responsibility to the center. The factories must be canceled."

The protest also focuses on the protection of Basapur Lake, which is community property, Narayanaswamy noted. "No government built this lake, and it must not be exploited or sold. Our struggle will continue even after the session," he said.

Allama Prabhu Bettadoor, general convener of the protest platform, urged that the

voices of local communities and religious institutions, like Gavi Math, be respected. "Do not hurt the revered people of this area. Their wisdom and power must guide decisions," he said.

Retired principal B.G. Kari-gara and several local leaders, including Mallikarjuna B. Gonal, S.B. Rajur, Shambhulingappa Harageri, Dr. Basavaraj Cavatar, Ganesh Horatatal, and Kanakappa Chaluvadi, joined the protest, showing cross-party and community solidarity. Participants vowed to intensify their efforts until their demands for environmental safety, public health, and protection of local resources are fully addressed.

The session on January 22 will be closely watched as the opposition pushes for government accountability on industrial pollution and citizens' safety in Koppal and nearby villages.



Stray dog attack leaves child fighting for life

KAMPLI

A young child was seriously injured after being attacked by a group of stray dogs while playing near her home in the Harijanakeri area of Kampli, officials said.

The child, identified as C.S. Akshata, suffered severe bites to her ears, lips, and other parts of her body. She was initially taken to the town's community health center, but due to the seriousness of her injuries, she was transferred to BIMS Hospital in Bellary, where doctors stitched her

wounds. She remains under treatment and has not yet fully recovered.

Akshata's grandfather, C.S. Virupakshi, expressed deep distress over the incident, saying the family is struggling to pay for the medical expenses. He urged the government to provide immediate assistance and compensation for the child's care.

Residents of the area say stray dog attacks are a growing problem in the town. Several children have been bitten in the past, and locals are frustrated that municipal au-

thorities have taken little action to manage the stray dog population.

Community members, including C.S. Chennaiah, called for urgent steps to prevent further attacks and ensure children can play safely. Officials have yet to announce any measures to address the stray dog menace in Kampli.

The incident has sparked widespread concern among parents and local residents, highlighting the urgent need for stronger municipal intervention.



MP Raghavendra highlights broad devpt progress across

SHIVAMOGGA

Shivamogga Lok Sabha Member of Parliament B.Y. Raghavendra on Friday said he has been largely successful in ensuring all-round development of the constituency during his tenure. He was speaking at an interaction organised by the Working Journalists Association and Press Trust at Patrika Bhawan.

Raghavendra said this is his fourth term as MP and credited public support, journalists' guidance and cooperation from the central government for the progress made.

He said several development works have been completed under central schemes, while more projects are planned for the coming period.

He highlighted achievements under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Swachh Bharat initiative, including toilets, cleanliness drives, LPG connections, drinking water supply, housing, highways, rural roads, railway expansion and mobile connectivity across villages in the constituency.

On rail connectivity, he said public demand for a Vande Bharat train to Shivamogga remains high. However, the service will begin only after the Koteangur railway terminal is completed, as it will handle maintenance and operations.

The terminal, he said, will act as a second rail hub for the city and help start new trains to major cities including Bengaluru.

Raghavendra said 75 percent of land acquisition for a new railway line is complete, and tenders will be floated once 90 percent is achieved. He added that underpass works at Gundappa Shed and Vidyanagar will begin soon, while a flyover near Freedom Park has received budget approval.

Demand rises to hold Shivamogga corporation elections

SHIVAMOGGA

Former Deputy Chief Minister K.S. Eshwarappa on Friday urged the state government to immediately hold elections for the Shivamogga Municipal Corporation, saying the city has gone two years without elected representatives.

Speaking at a press conference, he said the delay violates democratic principles and Supreme Court directives. "When the State Election Commissioner G.S. Sangreshi visited Shivamogga in May 2025, a delegation requested elections. The commissioner confirmed the voter list revision was complete but is still waiting for the government's ward reservation list. Yet, the list has not been released," he said.

Eshwarappa warned that without action, the Rashtrakhand Balagha, led by K.E. Kantesh, would approach the court to ensure elections are conducted immediately. He added that city administration is suffering from a lack of accountability, corruption is rising, and development work is stalled.

He also criticised the government for failing to release promised funds. "Minister Bhairathi Suresh said 200 crores would be allocated to the corporation, but nothing has arrived. Minister Jamir's promised 12 crores for shelter

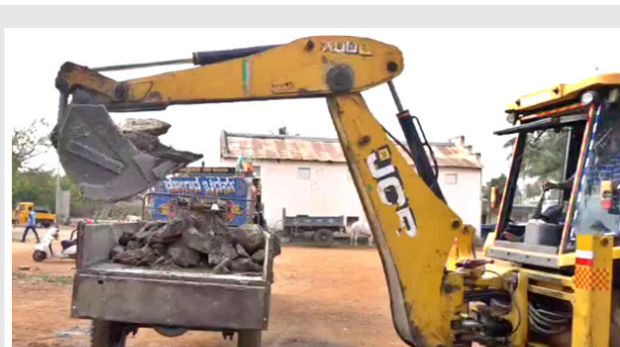


Eshwarappa warned that without action, Rashtrakhand Balagha led by K.E. Kantesh may seek court intervention, citing rising corruption, stalled development, and lack of city administration accountability.

facilities has not been delivered. The government's inaction leaves people frustrated and distrustful of both the Election Commission and Lokayukta," he said.

The former minister demanded that the state release the ward reservation list without further delay and the Election Commission issue a notification to hold elections in line with the court's direction.

Prominent figures at the press conference included K.E. Kantesh, Vishwas, Mohan Jadhav, Kuberappa, Govinda, Shankar Naik, and Lokesh. Eshwarappa emphasised that prompt elections are essential to restore democracy and ensure proper development in Shivamogga.



EXCAVATION BEGINS AT LAKKUNDI VILLAGE SITE

GADAG

Excavation work has resumed at Lakkundi village near the Sri Kote Veerabhadreshwar temple following a special pooja ceremony, officials said on Friday.

Gadag District Collector C.N. Sridhar performed the Bhoomi Puja to mark the start of the excavation. The ritual included chanting mantras, lighting camphor, and worshipping tools like shovels, pickaxes, and hammers. "Excavation had started last year but was paused due to the rainy season. With summer here, work has resumed under the State Archaeological Department, district administration, and Lakkundi Heritage Development Authority," Sridhar said.

The first phase covers a 10×10 meter area and is expected to last three to four months. Officials stressed that there is no confirmed link between this excavation and the treasure found recently, though hopes remain high for new discoveries. Authorities and experts attending the event included Gadag District

Superintendent of Police Rohan Jagadish, State Archaeological Department Director R. Sejeshwar, Lakkundi Authority Commissioner Sharanu Gogeri, and retired archaeologist T.M. Keshav. The excavation follows the recent discovery of gold ornaments weighing 470–700 grams, found in a copper pot while digging a house foundation. The treasure is valued at roughly Rs 60–70 lakh, prompting the government to conduct a full-scale excavation.

Lakkundi, a historical village ruled by the Kalyana Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Hoysalas, Kalachuris, and the Vijayanagara Empire, is renowned for its temples and sculptures. It is believed the village once had 101 temples and 101 wells. Archaeologists hope the dig will uncover inscriptions, sculptures, relics, and possibly more treasures.

Preparations, including cleaning, measurement, and boundary marking, have been completed. Excavation will run daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., aiming to shed light on Lakkundi's rich historical and cultural heritage.

HAPPIEST EMPLOYEES

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES URGED TO STAY PHYSICALLY FIT

MANDYA

Mandya District In-charge Minister and Agriculture Minister N. Chaluvarayaswamy emphasized the importance of physical fitness for government employees, saying it improves health and helps relieve mental stress. He made the remarks during the inauguration of the Mandya District Level State Government Employees Sports and Cultural Competitions 2025-26 at Sir M. Visvesvaraya District Stadium. The event, organized

by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Youth Empowerment and Sports Department, and Karnataka State Government Employees Association (District Branch), was inaugurated with the traditional hoisting of the sports flag and lighting of the lamp. Minister Chaluvarayaswamy encouraged employees to actively participate in sports and cultural programs not only at the district level but also at state and national levels, highlighting that physical strength supports mental well-being.



Ravikumar, MLA from the Madhya Vidhan Sabha constituency, praised the initiative and said that participating in such events is more important

than winning prizes. He noted that employees' enthusiasm and involvement in competitions enhance team spirit, camaraderie, and overall morale.

District Government Employees Association President Nagesh K introduced the participants who had arrived from all seven taluks of Mandya district, representing various departments. The program also saw the presence of key officials including Deputy Commissioner Dr. Kumar, Zilla Panchayat CEO K.R. Nandini, District Superintendent of Police Shobharani V.J., Additional Deputy Commissioner B.C. Shivananda Murthy, State Senior Vice President Shambhu Gowda S.,

Indian Red Cross Society President Dr. Meera Shivalingaiah, State Small Industries Development Corporation Vice President Vijayalakshmi Raghunandan, and Mandya Urban Development Authority Chairman B.P. Prakash.

Minister Chaluvarayaswamy concluded by urging employees to take full advantage of such sports and cultural competitions, saying that active participation strengthens the body, sharpens the mind, and promotes overall productivity and well-being.

QUICK READ



One-Day workshop organized for MSME entrepreneurs

CHIKKABALLAPUR
A one-day awareness workshop for MSME entrepreneurs under the RAMP scheme will be held on January 17 at 10:30 am at Stree Shakti Bhavan, behind Saraswati School, Shidlaghatta Town. The workshop will focus on Business Development Service Providers (BDSPs) and aims to help local entrepreneurs enhance their skills and business opportunities. MSME entrepreneurs in the district are encouraged to participate and benefit from the program. For further details, participants can contact the Joint Director of the District Industries Centre, Chikkaballapur, at 08156-273303. Officials emphasized that the session will provide practical guidance and valuable insights for small businesses.

Madiwala Machideva Jayanti to be celebrated on February 1

CHITRADURGA

Preparations are underway to celebrate Madiwala Machideva Jayanti on February 1 in a simple yet meaningful manner, officials said on Friday. The event will be organized jointly by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Kannada and Culture Department, and Chitradurga Municipal Corporation. Deputy Divisional Officer Venkatesh Naik, presiding over a preliminary planning meeting at the Sub-Divisional Officer's office hall, said the Jayanti aims to honor the life and teachings of Madiwala Machideva while promoting cultural awareness among residents. The program will begin at 11 a.m. at the District Collector's office hall. Dr. Prof. Mahantesh will deliver a special lecture on Madiwala Machideva, highlighting his contributions and legacy.

CHCLASSIFIEDS

To place a classified ad contact: 080-41209042

AFFIDAVIT

I, **SRI NATARAJ**, aged about 52 years, son of late **NANJUNDAPPA**, residing at No. 819, Ward No. 15, behind KEB, Dasara Beedi, Devanahalli Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District – 562110, That I am a permanent resident of the above-mentioned address. That my Aadhaar number is 2769 0774 5219, and in my School Transfer Certificate, Bank Passbook, PAN Card, and Passport, my name is recorded as **Nataraj (Nataraja) @ Nataraja (Nataraja)**. That the signatures appearing on my PAN Card and Passport belong to me, and both the above-mentioned names refer to one and the same person, that is myself. I solemnly affirm that the contents of this affidavit are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. Solemnly affirmed and signed before Advocate **H. PRAKASH** at Devanahalli on this 08th day of January 2026.

Special registration drive for unorganized workers

Eligible participants include home-based, street, domestic, and manual workers across sectors like construction

CHIKKABALLAPUR

The Labour Department has launched a special registration drive for unorganized workers in the district under the Pradhan Mantri Shramyogi Maan-Dhan (PMSYM) Pension Scheme. The drive, running from January 15 to March 15, aims to provide social security and financial support to workers in the unorganized sector.

Eligible participants include home-based workers, street vendors, domestic workers, hot meal preparers, porters, brick kiln workers, shoemakers, rag pick-

ers, weavers, rickshaw pullers, landless laborers, mechanics, fishermen, agricultural and construction workers, beedi and handloom workers, leather workers, blacksmiths, tailors, audiovisual workers, and NREGA workers.

Under the scheme, the Central Government contributes to the pension account alongside the subscriber. Beneficiaries will receive a guaranteed minimum monthly pension of Rs. 3,000 after turning 60. Workers must be between 18 and 40 years old, earn up to Rs. 15,000 per month, and not be covered under ESI, PF, or NPS. They should also

have a bank account and Aadhaar number.

Workers can register at the nearest Common Service Center by submitting their initial contribution, Aadhaar card, bank details, nominee information, and a mobile number.

District Labour Officer Shabana Azmi urged all eligible unorganized workers to take advantage of this scheme and secure financial stability for their future. The drive is expected to benefit thousands of workers in the district and strengthen social security coverage for the unorganized sector.



Shri Guru Siddharth Meswar remembered for shaping society

TUMAKURU : Shri Guru Siddharth Meswar was not just an individual, but a powerful force in shaping society, said Sub-District Magistrate Nahida Jamjam during a birth anniversary function held in his honor. The event was organized jointly by the District Magistrate, Zilla Panchayat, Mahanagara Palike, Kannada and Sanskrit Department, and all Sangh Sansthan of the Bhovi Samaj in the district. It celebrated the life, teachings, and public service of Siddharth Meswar, emphasizing his dedication to social equality, hard work, and community welfare. Nahida Jamjam highlighted that Meswar's life embodied the principle of discipline and effort. "He showed how society can improve when we believe in God and follow righteous values," she said, urging today's youth to adopt his ideals and lead value-based, hardworking lives. Siddalingappa, President of the Kannada Sahitya Parishad, said the event's purpose was to inspire the younger generation to follow Meswar's vision. He spoke about Meswar's lifelong service to neglected workers, his efforts to provide basic facilities like lakes, wells, and buildings, and his focus on fairness and social justice.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **AMIT KHALIFA S/o CHANDAN KHALIFA** R/o NO-22, 1st Floor, Balaji layout, 5th Main Road, Anandnagar, Bangalore, Karnataka-560032, Permanent Address: Pipra, Damodarpur, Chakia Pipra, East Champaran, Bihar-845416, have changed the name of my minor daughter **SHAFQA ZOHIRA** aged 10 years and she shall hereafter be known as **NAIRAARIYAN**.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **SUSHMA K V W/o KANIYAR RAMASWAMY SRINIDHI**, R/O 2306, 21st Cross, Near Shastry Bakery K R Road, BSK 2nd Stage, Bidarahalli, Bangalore South, Bangalore, Karnataka-560070, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as **KERALAPURA VENUGOPAL SUSHMA**.

NAME CHANGE

I, **RIZWAN BASHA SUBHAN**, resident of # 23, A 5th Cross, 1st Main Road, Valmikinagar, Mysore Road, Bangalore-560 026, have changed my name to **RIZWAN BASHA**, vide affidavit dated: 13.01.2026, before Notary **N.NAGAPPA**, Bangalore.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Manjunatha J S/o** Jayaramappa, aged about 44 years, residing at Patrenahalli Village, & Post, Nandi Hobli, Chickballapur Taluk & District. I have Changed my Son's name from **P.M. HARSHITH GOWDA** TO **HEMHAN KUMAR GOWDA P.M** for all the purposes vide affidavit dated 14/01/2026 sworn before K H Venkatappa, Advocate & Notary, Chickballapura

Town Municipal Council Chikodi

SL:TMC:CKD:CMIDP:2025-26 Date:14.01.2026

Town Municipal Council Chikodi (KPP Portal) Tender notification 3rd call

Town Municipal Council Chikodi invites tender for Civil license contractors in KW- -2 and KW-3 Document for work under CMIDP Grant 1) Indent No 54005 Rs. 56.00 lakh (CAT-I), 2) Indent No 54034 Rs. 57.00 lakh (SC), 3) Indent No 54040 Rs. 67.00 lakh (CAT-II(A), 4) Indent No 54048 Rs. 64.00 lakh (SC), 5) Indent No 54049 Rs. 54.00 lakh (Others), 6) Indent No 54051 Rs. 50.00 lakh (Others), 7) Indent No 54052 Rs. 85.30 lakh (ST), 8) Indent No 54054 Rs. 63.00 lakh (Others), 9) Indent No 54055 Rs. 21.00 lakh (Others). Work period 3 month.

Sl. No:1Last Date & Time for Tender document download:14.01.2026, Sl. No :2Last Date & Time for receipt of tenders:29.01.2026 @ 4.00 PM, Sl. No :3Date & Time for Opening of Technical Bid:31.01.2026 @ 4.00 PM, Sl. No :4: Date & Time for Opening of Financial Bid:02.02.2026 @ 11.00 AM, Sl. No :5: Number of days to extend: 2 Days.

Above tender work details are in available KPPP website www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in and TMC website www.chikoditown.mrc.gov.in.

Sd/-Chief Officer
TMC Chikodi

DIPR/BGM/RO-NO-1644/KSMCA/2025-26

BENGALURU NORTH CITY CORPORATION

Office of the Executive Engineer, Yelahanka Zone-2, Dasarahalli Division, MEI Layout, Hesaraghatta Main Road, Bagalagunte, T. Dasarahalli, Bengaluru - 560073.

No: BNCC/EE/DD/TEND/03/2025-26 Date: 16-01-2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Two Cover System) (Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal only)

The Executive Engineer, Dasarahalli Division, Yelahanka Zone-2, BNCC, Bengaluru invites tenders from registered Agencies for the Services detailed below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Service
1	Operation, Supervision and Maintenance of Mens and Womens Gym Building (2nd and 3rd Floor) in Ward No. 17, J.P. Park, Rajarajeshwarninagara Constituency. EMD Amount (in Rs.): 97,800/-

Calendar of Events: 1) Tender Documents may be Downloaded from the GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Website: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> from **21-01-2026 onwards**. 2) Last Date and Time for Tender Queries: **26-01-2026 upto 4.00 PM**. 3) Date of Pre Bid Meeting: **27-01-2026 at 3.00 PM in the Office of the Chief Engineer, Yelahanka Zone-2**. 4) Last Date for Submission of Tender Document: **31-01-2026 upto 4.00 PM**. 5) Date of Opening of Technical Bid: **02-02-2026 at 11.00 AM**. 6) Date of Opening of Financial Bid: **Will be intimated to the Technically Qualified Bidders**. Further details can be had from the above office.

Sd/- Executive Engineer
Dasarahalli Division, Yelahanka Zone-2, BNCC.

BANGALORE URBAN ZILLA PANCHAYATH

Executive Engineer, Panchayath Raj Engineering Division

1st Floor, Zilla Panchayat Building, S. Kariyappa Road Banashankari (Near Banashankari Temple), Bangalore-560070

No.EE/PRED/BNG(U)/TND/AE-1/34/2025-26 Dated: 13.01.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION (through KPPP Portal only) (SINGLE COVER SYSTEM)

Tenders are invited through KPPP Portal by the Executive Engineer, P.R.E.D. Bangalore Urban, For **PMSHRI Grants Works**. The work details can be obtained from the KPPP Website The Tender Documents can be obtained and submitted on or before **Dated: 30.01.2026 upto 4.00 pm**. Further details can be obtained from web site at <http://www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in> or contact this office during office working hours.

Sd/- Executive Engineer
Panchayath Raj Engineering Division
Bangalore Urban Dist.,Bangalore.

DIPR/CP/5057/SA/2025-26

Rural Drinking Water & Sanitation Division

Office of the Executive Engineer, RDWS&SD, Panchayath Bhavan, 3rd Floor, Ramanagara Division, Bengaluru South District - 562 159. E-mail : eerdsdwdmr2017@gmail.com

Tender Notification No. : 08/E.E./R.D.W.S. & S.D./RMG/ Tender/JE/OS/1857/2025-26 Date : 16-01-2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION

The Rural Water Supply And Sanitation Division Ramanagara is inviting on behalf of Governor of Kamataka State invites Tenders from eligible tenderers, for the works details below as per **Standard Bid Document. Two Cover Tender** procedure as per Rule 28 of the KTPP act shall be followed. The Tenders are required to be Submitted through E-Procurement mode through **E-portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>**. Providing Man Power Services on **Outsource basis** for Rural Drinking Water Supply & Sanitation Division & Sub-Divisions in Bengaluru South District. Schedule is given below.

1) Amount put to Tender Rs. 72.96 Lakhs, E.M.D. : Rs. 1,46,000.00/-, 2) Period of Contract : 12 Months, 3) Last Date for Submission of Tender : 31-01-2022 Upto 5.30 p.m., 4) Opening of Technical Bid of the Tender : 02-02-2026 at 11.00 a.m. Onwards. 5) Opening of Financial Bid of the Tender : 04-01-2026 at 11.00 a.m. Onwards.

For further particulars details may avail from the office of the undersigned during office hours on all working days and may visit the Website : <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
R.D.W. & S. Department, Ramanagara Division,
Bengaluru South District.

DIPR/Ramanagar/572/Manipal/2025-26

RTA approves vehicle billboards in Chitradurga

CHITRADURGA

The Regional Transport Authority (RTA) meeting held on Friday at the District Collector's Office Hall approved the installation of billboards on vehicles, including those of the Chitradurga Regional Oilseed Growers Cooperative Union, for advertising their products. The meeting was chaired by Deputy Commissioner T. Venkatesh. A total of 56 agenda items were discussed during the session, three of which related to requests from cooperative unions and private companies to display advertisements on their vehicles. The RTA approved the proposals and decided a fee of Rs. 750 for medium-class vehicles

and Rs. 2,000 for heavy goods vehicles. The meeting also addressed 19 road transfer matters, including 16 general transfers and three posthumous transfers. The authority listened to the arguments of lawyers representing vehicle owners and approved the requests.

In addition, 33 road concession issues were examined. Fifteen of these involved road expansion or reduction matters. Lawyers representing Majalu Vahana concession holders were given time until January 31 to submit their written documents, after which each case will be decided according to the law. The Secretary was instructed to schedule hearings for 17 other concession matters

and examine requests from private promoters before taking action. One concession holder requested withdrawal of their application, which was approved by the RTA. The meeting also granted posthumous transfer authority to the RTA Secretary under the Karnataka Motor Vehicle Rules, following a request from the Private Bus Owners Association. The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner T. Venkatesh, District Superintendent of Police Ranjith Kumar Bandaru, Regional Transport Officers, Secretary Bharath M. Kalisinghe, RTO Superintendent C.D. Hemanth Kumar, bus association representatives, High Court lawyers, and KSRTC legal officers.

BANGALORE WEST CITY CORPORATION

Office of the Executive Engineer, Malleshwaram Division, 2nd cross, Jaladarshini Layout, MSR Nagar, Mathikere, Bangalore-560 054. Ph: 080-22975610

No:EE/MLM/ Kppp /12/2025-26 Date: 16-01-2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through GOK e-Procurement Portal Only) (Single Cover & Two Cover)

Tender for the following work on item rate basis are invited as Standard Bid Documents KW-1, 2, 3 & 4 by the Executive Engineer Malleshwaram Division on behalf of the Commissioner, BWCC from the registered contractors of Bangalore West City Corporation or equivalent registration with BBMP/ CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES or any State Government Organizations may apply through e-procurement portal as per schedule of events. The Tender Document can be downloaded from the GOK e-Procurement Website (<https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>) on payment of prescribed fee (Non-Refundable) as prescribed by E-Procurement Portal (Including Vat) in the form of e-Payment through e-Procurement Platform. The Tenderer should accompany a copy of the valid Registration Certificate and shall be submitted through e-Procurement Portal Only.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work/Estimate Cost in lakhs/Amount Put to tender/EMD amount in Rs./Category
	Single Cover System
1	Repairs and Maintenance to BBMP Existing open Gym and Childen Equipment in Ward NO.58(65) Kadumalleshwara. CALL-2. Est Cost : Rs.5.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 4.11 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 5,200/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 60 days , Category : CAT-II(A) .
2	Upgradation of Executive Engineer, BBMP Office at Jaladarshini layout in ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : Rs.10.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 8.53 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 10,700/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 120 days , Category : CAT-II(A) .
3	Maintenance of BBMP Building in Mathikere Sub Division. Est Cost : Rs.12.50 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 10.31 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 12,900/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 365 days , Category : SC .
4	Maintenance of All Zonal building pertaining to Malleshwaram Sub Division. Est Cost : Rs.12.50 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 10.95 Lakhs , EMD : Rs.27,400/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 365 days , Category : Others .
5	Upgradation of Mathikere sub division office BBMP building at Nethaji circle in ward No:54(old 36) Mathikere. Est Cost : Rs.15.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 13.29 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 16,700/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 120 days , Category : ST .
6	Comprehensive development like Waterproofing of roof, Painting, repairs to all the toilets and other civil allied works for BBMP Quarters ward No 55 (old-45), Malleshwaram. Est Cost : Rs.15.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 12.29 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 30,800/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 90 days , Category : Others .
7	Comprehensive development like Waterproofing of roof, Painting, repairs to all the toilets and other civil allied works Dri Rama Krishna Hegde BBMP Complex in ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : Rs.15.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 12.28 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 15,400/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 90 days , Category : CAT-II(A) .
8	Comprehensive development like Waterproofing of roof, Painting, repairs to all the toilets and other civil allied works for BBMP Building at Subedarpalaya & other civil allied works in ward No 55 (old-45), Malleshwaram. Est Cost : Rs.20.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 16.40 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 41,000/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 90 days , Category : Others .
9	Providing additional Open Gym Equipments and 8th main and other civil works in ward No 55, (Old -45), Malleshwaram. Est Cost : Rs.20.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 19.12 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 47,800/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 90 days , Category : Others .
10	Comprehensive Development like providing concrete bed for basket ball court and other civil allied works at Poorna Prajna in ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : Rs.20.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 16.36 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 20,500/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 90 days , Category : SC .
	Calendar of events for single cover system: 1. Tender documents may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal : From 23-01-2026 16.30 Hrs onwards . 2. Last Date & Time for uploading tender documents : On 06-02-2026 upto 16:00 Hrs . 3) Opening of tender : On 09-02-2026 at 11.00 Hrs .
Sl. No.	Name of the Work/Estimate Cost in lakhs/Amount Put to tender/EMD amount in Rs./Category
	Two cover system
11	Comprehensive development like providing open gym equipment and other civil allied works to Triangle Park RMV 2nd stage ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : Rs.25.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 23.49 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 58,800/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 90 days , Category : Others .
12	Comprehensive Development of public place near New BEL Road & other civil allied works in Ward No-54 (old-36), Mathikere. Est Cost : Rs.35.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 28.78 Lakhs , EMD : Rs.36,000/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 90 days , Category : CAT-II(A) .
13	Comprehensive Development like providing Children equipment, benches and other civil allied works at 13th A Main road Malleshwaram in ward No 55 (old-45), Malleshwaram. Est Cost : Rs.35.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 30.68 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 38,400/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 90 days , Category : SC .
14	Comprehensive development like providing open gym equipment and other civil allied works to Basavana park ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : Rs.35.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 32.93 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 41,200/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 90 days , Category : CAT-II(A) .
15	Comprehensive Development like Retaining wall come side drain, grill work, benches, shelter for gazebo, resetting of pavers, painting and other civil allied work to East west park in ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : Rs.40.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 33.12 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 82,800/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 60 days , Category : Others .
16	Comprehensive Development works at Malleshwaram and surrounding area in ward No 58(65) Kadumalleshwara. Est Cost : Rs.40.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 32.79 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 41,000/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 90 days , Category : CAT-II(A) .
17	Comprehensive development like providing Indoor Gym Equipment, flooring for basement room, all round rain water Channels and other civil allied works at Beagles in ward no.56 (Old-35), Aramanenagar. Est Cost : Rs.70.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 66.84 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 83,600/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 90 days , Category : CAT-II(A) .
18	Maintenance and repairs to BBMP building at parsi garden and Bangalore One office in Ward No-57(64). Est Cost : Rs.155.00 Lakhs , Amount Put to Tender : 127.70 Lakhs , EMD : Rs. 2,00,000/- . Stipulated Period of Completion : 270 days , Category : Others .
	Calendar of events for Two cover system: 1. Tender documents may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal : From 23-01-2026 16.30 Hrs onwards . 2. Pre-Bid Meeting : On 30-01-2026 at 16.00 Hrs . 3. Last Date & Time for uploading tender documents : On 06-02-2026 upto 16:00 Hrs . 4. Opening of technical document : On 09-02-2026 at 11.00 Hrs . 5. Financial opening : Opening date will be intimated through KPP Portal .
	Sd/- Executive Engineer, Malleshwaram Division, Zone-2, Bangalore West City Corporation.

QUICK READ



1 more Arrested in Manipur Petrol Pump Blast Case Imphal

With the arrest of one more person by the security forces, the total number of accused apprehended in connection with the bomb explosion at a petrol pump in Manipur's Bishnupur district has risen to two, officials said on Friday. A police official said that security forces arrested Pukhrambam Bimol Meitei alias Inaobi (41) from the Lamphel Sana Keithel area under Imphal West district. Pukhrambam Bimol Meitei, a resident of Kakching district, is an accomplice allegedly involved in causing the explosion at Moirang Thana Leikai in Bishnupur district on January 8.

Tension in Bengal's Beldanga

Tension prevailed at Beldanga in Murshidabad district of West Bengal on Friday after the body of a local migrant worker, who was allegedly killed in neighbouring Jharkhand, reached his native village. The deceased migrant worker was identified as Alauddin Sheikh (36), a resident of Sujapur-Kamarpur village panchayat under Beldanga in Murshidabad district. Sheikh was staying in neighbouring Jharkhand and earning his livelihood as a street hawker. His family members alleged, the news of his demise was received from Jharkhand. Jharkhand Police informed the family that Sheikh's body was found hanging in his rented room.

HC stays Ranchi Police probe against ED officials

The Jharkhand High Court on Friday stayed with immediate effect the Ranchi Police probe into the alleged assault on money-laundering accused Santosh Kumar at the Enforcement Directorate (ED) office in Ranchi. The interim order was passed by a Bench of Justice Sanjay Kumar Dwivedi while hearing a criminal writ petition filed by the ED challenging the FIR and subsequent police action against its officials. During the hearing, the High Court observed that the functioning of a federal investigating agency cannot be obstructed under the guise of a vpolice investigation.

Gujarat Pushes Infrastructure Drive, Launches ₹112 Cr Project

Gujarat govt advances urbanisation agenda as Navsari launches a ₹112-crore project to upgrade water, drainage infrastructure

AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat government, led by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, continues to press ahead with its broader vision of strengthening urbanisation and improving ease of living across the state. With rapid city expansion bringing newly merged peri-urban areas into municipal limits, the state administration has prioritised bridging long-standing gaps in essential civic services through focused infrastructure investments.

In line with this approach, the Navsari Municipal Corporation (NMC) has launched a major ₹112-crore integrated water supply and drainage project to address chronic shortages of drinking water and inadequate sewage systems in its peripheral zones. The initiative assumes added significance as Navsari was officially upgraded to a municipal corporation on January 1, 2025, following the merger of the former Navsari-Vijalpor municipality with four adjoining villages—Aru, Dharagiri, Dantej and



Hansapor. For years, these peri-urban areas struggled with outdated and insufficient water

pipelines, coupled with the absence of underground drainage networks. The lack of proper

sanitation infrastructure frequently resulted in unhygienic conditions, waterlogging and health concerns, particularly affecting children and elderly residents. Civic officials noted that residents often depended on temporary or unreliable arrangements, highlighting the urgent need for a permanent solution.

The newly launched project aims to comprehensively resolve these issues by establishing a modern and integrated water and sewage network. Designed to directly benefit

more than 25,000 residents, the ₹112-crore initiative will be implemented in phases. Key components include the laying of new water supply pipelines, construction of an upgraded drainage network, installation of overhead water tanks and underground sumps, development of a sewage pumping station, and the setting up of a fully equipped Sewage Treatment Plant (STP). In addition, a new water treatment plant will be established to ensure the supply of safe and adequate drinking water.

Delhi High Court Seeks CBI Response on Rabri Devi's Plea

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday issued notice to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on a petition filed by former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi, challenging a trial court order that directed the framing of criminal charges against her and her family members in the IRCTC hotel scam case.

After a brief hearing, a single-judge Bench presided over by Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma sought the response of the CBI and listed the matter for further hearing on January 19. In her plea, Rabri Devi argued that the trial court had failed to properly appreciate the material placed on record and had erroneously framed charges against her based merely on presumptions, without sufficient legal grounds.

Rabri Devi, who is the wife of Lalu Prasad Yadav, contended that she had been wrongly implicated in the case and that the order directing the framing of charges deserved to be set aside. Her petition forms part of a series of legal challenges mounted by members of the Yadav family against the trial court's decision in the high-profile corruption case.

The development comes just days after the Delhi High

Delhi High Court issued notice to the CBI on Rabri Devi's plea challenging charges in IRCTC scam.

Court issued notice on a similar plea filed by her son, Tejashwi Yadav, an RJD leader and former Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar. Tejashwi Yadav had challenged the same trial court order that directed the framing of charges against him and other family members in the IRCTC hotel scam case.

While issuing notice on Tejashwi Yadav's criminal revision petition, along with his application seeking a stay on the trial court proceedings, Justice Sharma had directed the CBI to respond and ordered that his plea be heard together with a similar petition filed by Lalu Prasad Yadav.

In an order passed on October 13, 2025, Special Judge (PC Act) Vishal Gogne of the Rouse Avenue Courts cleared the way for the trial of Lalu Prasad Yadav, Rabri Devi, Tejashwi Yadav and other accused. The court directed that charges be framed under Sections 420 (cheating) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code, along with relevant provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, after the accused pleaded not guilty.



Jagan flays Naidu after YSRCP activist's murder

AMARAVATI

YSR Congress Party president Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Friday reacted strongly to the murder of a YSRCP activist allegedly by TDP men in Andhra Pradesh's Palnadu district, warning Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu that he will certainly have to pay the price. Jagan accused Chief Minister Naidu of indulging in the politics of violence.

Mr. Chandrababu Naidu, the people will never forgive you for indulging in the politics of violence. You will certainly have to pay the price for such incidents. Never forget that what you sow today will inevitably be reaped tomorrow, YS Jagan posted on 'X'.

Online movie streaming services

The YSRCP leader was reacting to the death of Manda Salman in Pinneli village under Gurazala Assembly constituency after he was allegedly assaulted by Telugu Desam Party (TDP) workers and leaders.

Salman was grievously injured, slipped into a coma, and, after battling for life in the hospital for three days, succumbed to his injuries on Thursday. Mr. Chandrababu Naidu,

are you even fit to govern? How many lives will you sacrifice for a political vendetta? Even while holding the Chief Minister's post, will you indulge in such lawlessness under the guise of the Red Book Constitution and political governance? asked the finr CM.



Indian Youth Driving Innovation: PM Modi

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that India's youth are increasingly focused on solving real-world problems, as he marked the completion of 10 years of the Startup India mission. Addressing entrepreneurs, innovators and policymakers at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, the Prime Minister praised startup founders for charting new paths and enhancing India's global reputation as an innovation-driven economy.

Lauding the entrepreneurial spirit of the country's young population, PM Modi said India's startups are driven by innovation and enterprise and are shaping a self-reliant and



resilient economy. India's youth are focused on solving real problems. Driven by innovation and enterprise, India's startups are shaping a self-reliant and resilient economy, he said, addressing a packed audience.

Reflecting on the progress achieved over the past decade, the Prime Minister described Startup India as nothing

short of a revolution. In just 10 years, the Startup India Mission has become a revolution. Today, India is the world's third-largest startup ecosystem, he said, underlining the scale and speed of growth witnessed since the programme's launch in 2016.

PM Modi noted that a decade ago, India had fewer than 500 startups. Today, that number has soared to over 2,00,000, he said. He also highlighted the sharp rise in unicorns, recalling that India had only four unicorns in 2014. Now, the country boasts more than 125 active unicorns. This remarkable growth has captured the world's attention, he added.

He said Indian startups are

working across more than 50 sectors, including deep tech, space tech, drone technology, quantum computing, agritech, and artificial intelligence and machine learning. According to the Prime Minister, startups are no longer just scaling up into unicorns, but many existing unicorns are now launching initial public offerings and generating large-scale employment opportunities across the country.

I see before me the future of a new and emerging India, PM Modi said, while commending young entrepreneurs for their courage to dream and innovate. Recalling the situation a decade ago, he said there was little scope for individual innovation and enterprise.

Sankranti is example of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat': HM Amit Shah



NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday attended the third International Kite Festival 2026 in the national capital and said that Makar Sankranti has become a powerful example of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat,' reflecting India's cultural unity amid diversity.

The event was also attended by Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, along with several senior officials and a large gathering of citizens.

Addressing the gathering, Union Home Minister Amit Shah extended greetings to the people of the country, particularly farmers, on the occasion of Makar Sankranti and other harvest festivals celebrated across India.

I want to congratulate the countrymen, especially our farmers, on the festivals of Makar Sankranti, Pongal, Lohri, Magh Bihu, and Ut-

tarayan. Uttarayan is celebrated under different names in different parts of the country. It is an important festival because we all depend immensely on the Lord Sun, he said.

Explaining the significance of the festival, HM Shah said that Makar Sankranti is celebrated when the sun enters the zodiac sign Capricorn.

In many parts of the country, this day is also known as 'Khichdi Utsav'. It is primarily a festival of farmers. From this day, farmers begin their New Year, marking a new agricultural cycle, he added. The Home Minister praised the efforts of the Delhi government and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) for organising the third edition of the International Kite Festival. He said the initiative needs to be expanded and popularised through sustained efforts.

The beginning that has

been made should be taken forward in a way that makes the Kite Festival more accessible to the public. This festival has the potential to connect people from all over the country to Delhi and, in the future, become a nationwide celebration, Shah said.

He suggested forming a dedicated committee to expand the festival, enhance public participation, and transform it into a grand and comprehensive cultural event.

Delhi's Kite Festival should become the centre of kite festivals across the country, he added. Referring to the venue, Baansera, the Home Minister said it exemplifies how determination can transform a vision into reality. Baansera is a demonstration of how strong resolve can turn an idea into a beautiful, tangible space. Today, it has become a very attractive place for the people of Delhi.

BJP announces election of next national president

NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday formally announced the election process for choosing its next national president as part of the party's ongoing Sangathan Parv 2024. In an official statement, Rajya Sabha member and BJP national election incharge Dr K. Laxman outlined the detailed timetable for the organisational exercise.

He said the electoral roll for the presidential election will be published on Friday. According to the schedule, nominations will be filed on January 19 between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. at the party headquarters in New Delhi. The scrutiny of nomination papers will be conducted on the same day from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. The window for withdrawal of nominations has been fixed between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Dr Laxman further stated that a formal press communication will be issued at 6.30 p.m. on January 19, following the completion of the withdrawal process. He added that the name of the new BJP national president will be officially announced on January 20 between 11.30 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. at the party headquarters in the national Capital. BJP's working president Nitin Nabin is set to take over as the next national president, with his elevation expected to be formally announced on January 20. Nabin is a five-time member of the Bihar Assembly and a former Minister in the government of Bihar.

INDIGO REFUND ASSURANCE

IndiGo Clears Refunds for Flight Cancellations: DGCA

NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Friday said low-cost carrier IndiGo has claimed to have fully processed and cleared all refunds related to the cancellation of its flights during the disruption period between December 3 and 5 last year.

According to the aviation watchdog, the airline informed the regulator that refunds for all IndiGo flight cancellations during December 3–5, 2025, have been credited back to passengers to



the original source of payment. In addition, passengers whose flights were cancelled within 24 hours of the scheduled departure time during the above period may claim compensation, where applicable, the DGCA said in an official

notification.

As an added relief measure, IndiGo has also extended a special 'Gesture of Care' (GoC) initiative for affected passengers. Under this scheme, eligible passengers will receive two travel vouchers worth ₹5,000

each, with a combined value of ₹10,000. The vouchers will be valid for a period of 12 months, the airline said.

The DGCA noted that the GoC benefit applies to passengers whose flights were either cancelled or delayed by more than three hours during the December 3–5 disruption window. Passengers have been advised to check their eligibility and submit the necessary details to avail of the vouchers. The regulator also urged travellers to ensure that accurate contact details, including mobile numbers and

email addresses, are provided at the time of booking, whether tickets are purchased directly through the airline's website or via travel agents.

The large-scale cancellations during the three-day period had caused widespread disruption to domestic air travel, leaving tens of thousands of passengers stranded across the country. IndiGo had cancelled thousands of flights amid what officials later described as poor pilot roster planning and inadequate preparedness for tighter safety regulations.

ASSAM POLL MEET



Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Karnataka DCM DK Shivakumar, AICC leaders and senior Congress functionaries attend a meeting on Assam elections at AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge's residence in New Delhi on Friday.



QUICK READ

Pakistan intensifies detention of Afghan refugees

Kabul

Pakistani authorities have stepped up arrests of Afghan refugees in Islamabad, moving dozens, including a journalist, to temporary camps amid ongoing deportation efforts. Refugees report harassment, raids, and fear, with many lacking legal protection despite living in Pakistan for years. Human rights groups, including Amnesty International, urged Islamabad to respect international refugee laws and ensure safety, warning of risks to women, journalists, and activists if deported. Since 2023, Pakistan's "Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan" has forced nearly 1.5 million Afghans back, with 778,000 in 2025 alone. Experts say these actions deepen humanitarian concerns and threaten the rights of vulnerable populations.

Seoul bus crash injures thirteen pedestrians

Seoul

A bus veered off the road near Seodaemun Station in western Seoul on Friday, striking pedestrians and a building, leaving two seriously injured and 11 others hurt. Victims include a woman in her 50s with a broken leg and a man in his 30s with head injuries. Authorities are testing the bus driver for drugs, though no signs of alcohol were found. Witnesses described chaotic scenes as the vehicle hit a car, motorcycle, and pedestrians. Police have deployed over 270 personnel to secure the area and are investigating the cause. Traffic and rescue operations continue.

Greek court clears aid workers of smuggling charges

Lesbos

A Greek court acquitted 24 aid workers involved in refugee rescues on Lesbos of migrant smuggling and money laundering charges, ending a multi-year trial that rights groups called politically motivated. Defendants included Sarah Mardini, a Syrian refugee who helped save lives in 2015, and Sean Binder, a German volunteer. Arrested in 2018, some spent over 100 days in pre-trial detention. Lawyers described the ruling as "courageous" after nearly 2,900 days of legal delays. The case had discouraged humanitarian efforts. Observers urged Greece to stop criminalizing aid, focus on saving lives, and uphold international refugee protections.

Putin Talks With Netanyahu, Iran's Pezeshkian Amid Protests in Iran

The protests in Iran began December 28 over inflation and currency collapse, spreading nationwide to over 280 locations

MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke separately with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Friday as large protests continued across Iran against its leadership.

According to the Kremlin, Putin and Netanyahu discussed rising tensions in the Middle East, with a focus on Iran. During the call, Putin offered Russia's help in mediation and said he supported stronger political and diplomatic efforts to protect stability and security in the region. The discussion came as Israel closely watches events unfolding inside Iran.

Later the same day, Putin held a phone call with Iranian President Pezeshkian. Krem-



lin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Russia would continue efforts to reduce tensions and avoid further escalation in the region. Moscow has long tried to keep working relations with both Israel and Iran, even as regional pressures increase.

The calls followed massive protests in Iran that began on

December 28. Demonstrations first erupted over record inflation and the sharp fall of Iran's currency. Since then, the unrest has spread nationwide, with reports of protests in more than 280 locations.

Iranian authorities initially admitted that economic hardship had triggered public anger. However, official lan-

guage later hardened. Senior leaders warned that those helping enemies of the Islamic Republic would face harsh punishment. Some officials also accused foreign-backed groups of trying to fuel chaos.

In recent days, the protests appeared to weaken after the government shut down internet access and launched a tough security crackdown. Activists say more than 3,400 people have been killed during the unrest, according to a US-based human rights group.

Regional tensions remain high as international leaders watch closely. While concerns of possible US retaliation linger, President Donald Trump has suggested the violence may be slowing, raising cautious hopes of de-escalation.

Machado presented the medal to thank Trump for supporting Venezuelan freedom; Trump will keep it, Nobel rights remain hers

Trump accepts Nobel medal from Venezuela opposition

WASHINGTON

Former US President Donald Trump accepted a Nobel Peace Prize medal from Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado during a meeting at the White House, drawing global attention to Venezuela's political future.

Machado presented the medal as a gesture of gratitude, saying it recognised Trump's commitment to the freedom of the Venezuelan people. A White House official confirmed that Trump plans to keep the medal, though the Nobel honour legally remains with Machado.

Trump later posted on social media that the gesture reflected mutual respect, thanking Machado for what he called a meaningful presentation. The White House also shared photographs showing Trump holding the framed medal with a message praising his leadership.

The meeting lasted a little over an hour and marked the first in-person interaction between Trump and Machado. She later described the discussion as excellent but did not share details.

The gesture came as Machado seeks to influence US policy towards Venezue-



la. Trump has earlier ruled out installing her as Venezuela's leader, instead backing a more cautious approach.

Trump has openly expressed interest in winning a Nobel Peace Prize in the past and has linked it to his diplomatic efforts. However, the Norwegian Nobel Institute has clarified that prizes cannot be transferred or shared.

After the White House meeting, Machado met lawmakers from both parties on Capitol Hill, where she has found stronger support.

Some US senators raised concerns that political repression in Venezuela continues despite recent changes. They warned that demo-

cratic progress remains uncertain.

Trump has said his priority is securing US access to Venezuelan oil and rebuilding the country's economy, rather than pushing immediate political change.

He has also praised Venezuela's interim leadership, which critics say may slow democratic reforms.

Machado, banned from contesting Venezuela's last election, continues to seek an active role in shaping the country's future amid ongoing uncertainty.

The meeting highlighted the complex balance between diplomacy, democracy, and economic interests in US-Venezuela relations.

BANGLADESH RELIGIOUS STRIFE

UK MP raises alarm over rising minority violence in Bangladesh

LONDON

A senior British lawmaker has raised serious concerns over rising violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh, warning that the situation has become deeply troubling ahead of national elections next month.

Speaking in the House of Commons, UK Conservative Party leader and MP Bob Blackman said minorities, especially Hindus, are facing growing attacks across the country. He claimed that Hindu men are being killed on the streets, while homes and temples are being set on fire. Other religious communities are also facing similar violence, he added.

Blackman said he had earlier raised the issue during a parliamentary debate, after which the Leader of the House contacted the Foreign Secretary regarding the worsening conditions in Bangladesh. He described the situation as disastrous and urged urgent attention.



The lawmaker also expressed concern over the political climate ahead of the February 12 elections. He pointed out that the Awami League, one of Bangladesh's major political parties, has been banned from contesting the polls despite having strong public support.

According to Blackman, the exclusion of a major party raises serious doubts about whether the elections can truly be called free and fair. He further warned that extremist groups are demanding a referendum that could permanently alter

Bangladesh's constitution.

Blackman called on the UK Foreign Secretary to make a statement in Parliament next week, explaining what steps the British government plans to take to protect minorities and support inclusive and democratic elections in Bangladesh.

His remarks follow a joint statement last week by four UK parliamentarians from different parties, who criticised the ban on popular political parties under the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus.

The lawmakers said the interim administration, which is unelected, ignored advice from the United Nations, the UK, and other allies. They warned that elections held without key political parties cannot be considered democratic.

The MPs urged the international community to closely monitor developments in Bangladesh and press for the protection of minority rights and democratic principles.

Yoon Suk Yeol sentenced to five years for abuse, obstruction

SEOUL

Former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol was sentenced to five years in prison on Friday after being found guilty on multiple charges linked to obstruction of justice and abuse of power.

The Seoul Central District Court delivered its first ruling related to Yoon's short-lived declaration of martial law in December 2024, a move that triggered political turmoil and legal action.

The court said Yoon ordered the Presidential Security Service to block investigators attempting to detain him in January last year. He was also accused of excluding Cabinet members from a key meeting, drafting and later destroying documents linked to the martial law order, and deleting records from secure military phones.

Judges found him guilty on most charges, though he was cleared of violating the rights of two Cabinet members and ordering false press statements. The court said the former president showed no remorse and described the nature of the crimes as serious.

Special prosecutors had sought a ten-year sentence, calling Yoon's actions a grave misuse of state institutions to hide wrongdoing. The court, however, handed down a re-



The court stated Yoon ordered the Presidential Security Service to block investigators, excluded Cabinet members, drafted and destroyed martial law documents, and deleted records from secure military phones

duced five-year term.

The ruling also confirmed that investigators acted within their legal authority while probing the former president, rejecting claims of political targeting.

The verdict is expected to influence another major case, in which Yoon faces charges of leading an insurrection through the martial law decree. Prosecutors earlier demanded the death penalty in that case.

The court is scheduled to rule on the insurrection charges on February 19. Yoon is currently facing eight separate trials involving the martial law attempt, corruption allegations linked to his wife, and the death of a marine.

Canada and China cut tariffs, reset ties

BEIJING

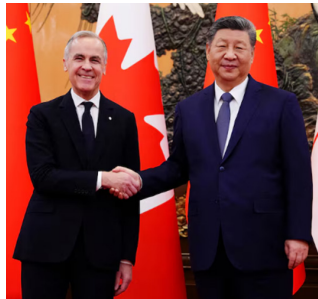
Canada and China have agreed to sharply reduce tariffs on electric vehicles and canola in a major step toward repairing strained trade relations, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said on Friday.

Under the new arrangement, Canada will allow imports of Chinese electric vehicles at a tariff rate of 6.1 per cent, a sharp cut from the earlier 100 per cent duty imposed in 2024. Carney said the move would help Canada rebuild cooperation with its second-largest trading partner.

He added that the agreement would also open doors for Chinese investment in Canada's clean energy and automobile sectors, supporting jobs and long-term growth.

China, in return, is expected to significantly lower tariffs on Canadian canola seed by March 1. Current combined tariffs stand at around 84 per cent, but are expected to fall to nearly 15 per cent, offering major relief to Canadian farmers.

Carney said China is a four billion dollar market for Canadian canola, and easing restrictions would unlock nearly three billion dollars in export orders. Tariffs on other products such as canola meal, lob-



ster, crab, and peas are also expected to be removed for the rest of the year.

The two countries also agreed to restart high-level economic talks and boost cooperation in agriculture, oil, gas, and green energy. Canada welcomed further Chinese investment and said it plans to double its energy grid capacity over the next 15 years.

Carney said Canada aims to expand liquefied natural gas exports to Asia, targeting 50 million tonnes annually by 2030.

Analysts said the deal reflects Canada's effort to diversify trade ties amid tensions with the United States. While Ottawa remains a close US ally, experts believe the agreement signals a more practical approach toward China.

Both sides said the reset would help remove trade barriers and build a more stable economic relationship going forward.

Israel troops face mental health crisis

JERUSALEM

Israel is facing a sharp rise in post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide cases among its soldiers as the war in Gaza continues into its second year, according to official reports and health experts.

Data from Israel's Defence Ministry shows PTSD cases among troops have increased by nearly 40 per cent since 2023. Officials warn the number could rise much further in coming years if the conflict continues and trauma remains untreated.

The war, which began after the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack, expanded into heavy fighting in Gaza and along the Lebanon border. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers and reservists were deployed in some of the fiercest combat Israel has seen.

Health providers say many soldiers are struggling with intense fear, constant alertness, and memories of violence. Some also face moral injury, caused by the emotional burden of accidental harm to civilians during combat operations.

Clinical experts say soldiers often carry guilt and distress from split-second decisions made under fire. Living with the feeling of having harmed innocent people can be deeply damaging and difficult to heal.

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.



QUICK READ

Seoul shares hit records, rally continues again

Seoul

South Korean shares closed at a new record on Friday, rising for the eleventh straight session as strong buying continued in semiconductor stocks. The KOSPI index ended above 4,800 points, showing steady investor confidence since the year began. Foreign and institutional investors led purchases, while retail investors sold shares. Samsung Electronics and SK hynix gained, supporting the market. Energy and cosmetics stocks also rose. However, some automobile and biotech shares fell. The Korean won weakened against the US dollar. Market experts said optimism over earnings and global chip demand supported the rally during uncertain global economic conditions.

Anthropic names Irina Ghose to lead India

New Delhi

US artificial intelligence company Anthropic has appointed Irina Ghose as its India Managing Director as it plans to open its first office in the country. Ghose brings over thirty years of experience in growing technology businesses and previously led Microsoft India. She said India can shape how AI is built and used responsibly. Anthropic said her leadership will help expand teams, work with policymakers, and support businesses. India is the company's second largest market for its Claude AI platform, with strong demand for technical applications nationwide. The move highlights growing global interest in India's AI ecosystem.

Indians show strong faith in nation's direction

New Delhi

A new global report says 81 percent of Indians believe the country is moving in the right direction, far above the global average. The study surveyed people across twenty countries and found Indians highly optimistic and engaged. Many respondents expect companies to act responsibly, support local communities, and follow strong environmental and social values. India ranked among the world's most positive nations. Experts said people now judge businesses by real impact, not promises. For companies, understanding local expectations is key. The findings highlight India as both demanding and full of opportunity for future growth and trust.

FUNDING FIGHT FRICTION

Pakistan's IMF ties fuel hope and anger

New Delhi



Pakistan remains locked in a tense relationship with the International Monetary Fund, relying on its loans to keep the economy afloat while public anger against the lender keeps growing.

Pakistan's government continues to approach the IMF for emergency funding as foreign reserves shrink and debt payments rise. At the same time, political leaders and former ministers openly blame IMF conditions for worsening daily life.

Local media reports say IMF-backed policies have pushed up power prices, added heavy taxes, slowed factories, and deepened poverty across the country.

Critics argue that instead of

Pakhtunkhwa, hundreds of units are reported to have stopped operations, especially during the last five years.

The textile sector, once the backbone of exports, has suffered badly, with mills closing and thousands of workers losing jobs.

Major global companies have also reduced or ended operations, raising fears about investor confidence.

Experts warn that without stable policies and trust, Pakistan will struggle to attract investment and rebuild its weakened economy. Many believe balanced reforms, local growth, and social support are vital to break the cycle of dependence and public anger before economic pressure turns into deeper crisis.

focusing on education, science, and technology, Pakistan followed short-term fixes that damaged long-term growth.

They point to falling exports, rising poverty, and a growing number of skilled young people leaving the country in search of better fu-

tures abroad.

Industry has been hit hard, with many factories shutting down due to high energy bills, taxes, and uncertain policies.

Business groups claim more than half of units in key industrial zones have closed in recent years.

In provinces like Khyber

Export incentives extended to postal shipments

The move will boost MSME competitiveness in smaller towns, enhance exports, and leverage the postal network effectively

New Delhi

The government has extended export incentives to goods sent through postal shipments to strengthen India's e-commerce and MSME sectors, officials said on Friday.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs announced that export benefits under Duty Drawback, Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products, and Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies will now apply to postal exports made electronically from January 15.

The move is expected to improve the competitiveness of micro, small, and medium enterprises, especially those based in smaller towns and remote areas. Officials said it will also give a strong push to exports using the postal network.

According to the Finance Ministry, the decision creates a level playing field for exporters who rely on the postal route and supports the growth of cross-border e-commerce in an inclusive manner.



India currently has 28 Foreign Post Offices notified under the Customs Act, which handle international postal trade. Over the years, the government has taken several steps to simplify postal and courier-based exports.

The Postal Export Electronic Declaration and Processing Regulations introduced in 2022 enabled complete digital processing of export declarations. This was followed by the Postal Import Regulations in 2025 to allow electronic handling of imports.

In September 2024, automated refund of integrated GST for postal exports was also rolled out, reducing delays and paperwork for

exporters.

To further support e-commerce exports, the government launched the Hub and Spoke model in partnership with the Department of Posts. Under this system, more than 1,000 Dak Niryat Kendras have been set up across the country.

These centres help MSMEs and small exporters with booking, aggregation, and processing of export parcels.

Officials said the latest decision reflects the government's continued focus on digital reforms and policy support to help MSMEs access global markets and grow exports through simpler, faster channels.

India meets record power demand, shortages fall

New Delhi

India successfully met a record peak power demand of 242.49 gigawatts during the financial year 2025-26, while national energy shortages dropped to a historic low, the government said on Friday. According to the Ministry of Power, energy shortages declined to just 0.03 per cent in FY26, a sharp improvement from 4.2 per cent recorded in 2013-14. Officials said the improvement was driven by major additions to power generation and transmission capacity.

India's total installed power capacity has more than doubled over the last decade, rising from 249 gigawatts in March 2014 to 509.743 gigawatts by November 30, 2025. Between January and November 2025 alone, 55.57 gigawatts of new capacity was added. Per capita electricity consumption also increased strongly, reaching 1,460 kilowatt hours in 2024-25. This marks a rise of over 52 per cent compared to 957 kilowatt hours in 2013-14, reflecting growing household and industrial demand.

Power supply reliability has improved across regions. Average electricity availability in rural areas increased from 12.5 hours in 2014 to 22.6 hours, while urban areas now receive about 23.4 hours of supply daily. Since April 2014, India has added 178 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity, including large hydro. This includes major additions in solar, wind, biomass, and hydro power.

India gains as global markets enter reflation phase

New Delhi

India is set to gain as global markets move into a reflationary phase, according to a new report that highlights the country's growing role in world economic growth.

The report by Equirus Wealth says India is expected to contribute more than 15 per cent of global incremental GDP growth between 2025 and 2030, making it one of the strongest engines of expansion worldwide.

It notes that global investors are slowly rethinking their heavy exposure to the United States driven by artificial intelligence stocks and are now looking to diversify across Asian markets.

Foreign institutional investors have pulled out nearly 18 billion dollars from Indian markets in 2025, leaving the

country underrepresented in many global portfolios. This has created room for fresh inflows if sentiment toward emerging markets improves.

The report points out that nearly 75 per cent of the MSCI Emerging Markets index is focused on just four economies, China, India, South Korea, and Taiwan.

Within this group, India is expected to stand out due to policy-led growth, improving liquidity conditions, and early signs of a weaker US dollar.

Equirus Wealth believes India's contribution to global growth during the next five years will be larger than the combined contribution of Japan and Germany. The current reflation phase is described as different from earlier cycles, driven not by excess liquidity but by controlled inflation and policy support.

India fintech funding climbs, ranks third worldwide

New Delhi

India's fintech sector raised 2.4 billion dollars in 2025, ranking third globally after the United States and the United Kingdom, according to a new industry report.

Data from market intelligence platform Tracxn showed funding rose two per cent from 2.3 billion dollars in 2024, highlighting steady investor interest despite global uncertainty.

Early-stage funding saw the strongest growth, jumping to 1.2 billion dollars in 2025. This marked a 78 per cent rise from 667 million dollars in 2024 and a 56 per cent increase compared to 2023.

Seed-stage funding, however, declined to 177 million dollars, falling 40 per cent from last year and 30 per cent from 2023 levels.

Late-stage funding also



dropped, reaching 1 billion dollars in 2025, down 26 per cent from 1.4 billion dollars recorded in both 2023 and 2024.

The report noted four funding rounds of over 100 million dollars during the year, led mainly by brokerage and financial services platforms.

Merger and acquisition activity slowed, with 22 acquisitions recorded in 2025. This was a 21 per cent decline from 2024 and a 31 per cent drop compared to 2023.

Exit activity also weakened, as the sector saw only four

initial public offerings, half the number recorded in the previous year.

Despite this moderation, Tracxn said India's fintech ecosystem remained resilient. Three new unicorns were created in 2025, a sharp rise from earlier years.

Bengaluru remained the top fintech hub, accounting for 42 per cent of total funding, followed by Mumbai at 29 per cent.

Experts believe focused innovation and long-term confidence will continue to support India's fintech growth ahead.

Assam sees silver revolution in poultry sector growth

GUWAHATI

Assam is steadily moving towards a "Silver Revolution" in the poultry sector, with egg production rising sharply across the state, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Friday.

The Chief Minister said egg production in Assam recorded a strong 28 per cent growth during the 2024-25 financial year, showing clear results of the government's focused push in the poultry sector.

He said the increase is helping ensure regular and affordable access to eggs, an important source of protein and nutrition for people across Assam. The growth also supports better public health outcomes, especially among vulnerable groups.

According to the Chief Minister, the rise in production is the result of continuous policy support, including incentives for poultry farmers, better access to quality chicks and feed, and improved veter-



He said the increase ensures regular, affordable egg access, a vital protein source across Assam, improving nutrition, public health outcomes, and supporting vulnerable populations statewide

inary and extension services.

These steps have helped local farmers increase output while reducing the state's dependence on eggs imported from outside Assam.

CM Sarma said eggs play a key role in fighting malnutrition, particularly among children, pregnant women, and economically weaker sections of society. Higher local pro-

duction strengthens nutrition schemes such as mid-day meals and other welfare programmes.

He also highlighted the growing role of the poultry sector in rural employment. Thousands of small and marginal farmers, women self-help groups, and rural entrepreneurs are earning additional income through poultry farming.

The sector has emerged as an important part of Assam's rural economy, helping families diversify income and gain financial stability.

The Chief Minister said the government will continue to invest in infrastructure, promote scientific poultry practices, and improve market access to sustain growth.

Efforts are also being made to support value addition, cold storage facilities, and fair pricing for farmers. Calling it a step toward a self-reliant Assam, CM Sarma said strengthening livestock and allied sectors remains a priority.

For the first time, India will export its green energy products to Germany, Japan, and Singapore, boosting leadership

India launches first green ammonia mega project

AMARAVATI

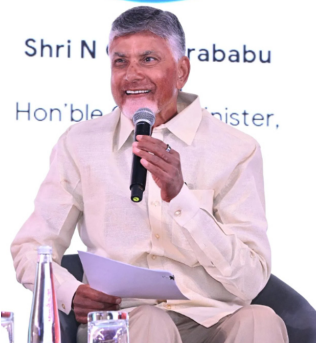
India's Andhra Pradesh government on Friday announced that the state will host India's first and the world's largest green ammonia project at Kakina.

The project, led by clean-energy firm AM Green, will set up a green hydrogen and green ammonia complex with a planned capacity of 1.5 million tonnes per annum at the coastal location.

The first major equipment erection ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, with Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan expected to attend.

The project involves an investment of 10 billion dollars, making it one of the largest clean-energy investments ever undertaken in India.

Officials said the project will create up to 8,000 jobs



Lokesh said the project moves Andhra Pradesh closer to becoming a global green-energy hub.

The plant is being developed by converting an existing ammonia-urea facility and will be completed in three phases, reaching full capacity by 2030.

AM Green has signed long-term supply agreements with global buyers and plans to support clean shipping, power generation, and green hydrogen goals.

The integrated system includes large-scale solar and wind power, energy storage, hydrogen production, ammonia manufacturing, and port-based exports, showcasing Andhra Pradesh's complete clean-energy value chain.

The project is expected to boost investment, technology, skills, exports, growth, sustainability, and long-term energy security nationwide.

Shri Nara Chandrababu Naidu, Hon'ble Chief Minister,

during the construction phase and generate high-skill employment during operations across allied sectors like renewable energy, logistics, storage, and port services.

For the first time in India's history, green energy products made domestically will be exported to markets such as Germany, Japan, and Singapore, strengthening India's position as a clean-energy exporter.

State IT Minister Nara

CSIR skill programme trains over two lakh

New Delhi

The CSIR Integrated Skill Initiative has trained more than two lakh workers across India, strengthening national efforts to improve employable skills, the Ministry of Science and Technology said on Friday.

The flagship programme, run by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, aims to connect scientific knowledge with real industry needs. During its first and second phases, over 1.90 lakh people received training through more than 5,200 skill-based programmes.

Special focus was given to rural citizens and women to ensure inclusive growth and wider participation. The initiative supports India's larger goals of Skill India and Atmanirbhar Bharat by building a capable and self-reliant



workforce.

The third phase of the programme was launched in June 2025 under the leadership of CSIR Director General Dr. N. Kalaiselvi. This phase places stronger emphasis on advanced skills, closer links between academia and industry, and faster development.

In its first year alone, the third phase has trained more than 14,000 people through over 425 programmes con-

ducted across 37 CSIR laboratories nationwide.

The initiative serves a wide range of beneficiaries, including students, researchers, technical staff, working professionals, farmers, school dropouts, ITI diploma holders, and rural communities.

Training is designed to meet real-world industrial, social, and entrepreneurial needs rather than remaining limited to theory.

New Upcoming Trains in India: A Revolution in Rail Travel



Indian Railways stands at the threshold of a remarkable transformation. As 2026 unfolds, the national transporter is rolling out an ambitious expansion plan that promises to redefine how millions of Indians travel. From semi-high-speed sleeper trains to enhanced connectivity across remote regions, the railway network is experiencing its most significant upgrade in decades.

TAG 2026: The Comprehensive Railway Overhaul

Beyond the headline-grabbing Vande Bharat Sleeper, Indian Railways has implemented an extensive timetable revision known as TAG 2026 (Timetable of Trains 2026). This comprehensive restructuring represents one of the largest operational upgrades in recent history, touching nearly every aspect of the railway network. Under TAG 2026, Indian Railways has introduced 122 new trains across various categories. The composition of these new services reflects a balanced approach to serving different passenger segments. The breakdown includes 60 Mail/Express trains, with eight introduced under the TAG-Time on Demand (TAG-TOD) framework that offers more flexible travel options. Additionally, 28 new Vande Bharat chair car trains were added to enhance semi-high-speed connectivity across the country. The expansion also includes 26 Amrit Bharat trains, a fully non-AC service

designed to provide quality travel experiences to the common man at affordable fares. Thirteen of these trains were introduced in 2025 alone, bringing the total to 30 Amrit Bharat services running across the network. These trains have been specially designed to enhance comfort for general travelers without escalating fares, making modern train travel accessible to a wider demographic. Premium services have not been neglected either. The new additions include two Rajdhani trains, two Jan Shatabdi trains, two Humsafar trains, and two Nammo Bharat Rapid Rail services. The Nammo Bharat trains, in particular, are aimed at easing congestion on high-demand shorter routes, providing rapid connectivity between nearby cities. But introducing new trains is only part of the story. Perhaps even more impressive is the speed enhancement program that has touched 549 trains across the network.



This massive undertaking has resulted in travel time reductions ranging from a few minutes to over an hour. The breakdown shows 376 trains speeded up by 5 to 15 minutes, 105 trains by 16 to 30 minutes, 48 trains by 31 to 59 minutes, and remarkably, 20 trains arriving more than 60 minutes earlier than their previous schedules. The South Western Railway zone led this transformation, speeding up 117 trains, the highest among all zones.

THE HISTORIC LAUNCH: VANDE BHARAT SLEEPER EXPRESS

The most anticipated addition to India's railway fleet is undoubtedly the Vande Bharat Sleeper train, set to make its debut on January 17, 2026. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off this groundbreaking service, marking a new chapter in overnight rail travel across the country. Unlike the existing Vande Bharat chair car services, this sleeper variant is specifically designed for long-distance journeys exceeding 1,000 kilometers. The inaugural route will connect Kamakhya in Guwahati with Howrah Junction in Kolkata, covering approximately 966 kilometers in just 14 hours and 30 minutes. This represents a significant improvement over conventional trains on the same route, offering passengers a faster, more comfortable alternative to both traditional railways and air travel.

Each Vande Bharat Sleeper train comprises 16 fully air-conditioned coaches, including 11 AC three-tier coaches, four AC two-tier coaches, and one AC first-class coach. The total capacity stands at 823 passengers, with 611 berths in three-tier, 188 in two-tier, and 24 in first-class accommodation. The train will operate six days a week, with stops at strategic locations including Rangiy, Barpeta Road, New Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, New Cooch Behar, New Jalpaiguri, and Kishanganj. What sets this train apart is its focus on passenger comfort and safety. The sleeper coaches feature ergonomically designed berths with improved cushioning, automatic doors connecting coaches through vestibules for easier movement, and advanced sus-

pension systems that significantly reduce noise and vibration even at speeds of 180 kilometers per hour. During trial runs, the train's stability was so impressive that glasses of water placed on tables didn't spill even at maximum speed. The fare structure has been designed to remain competitive while offering premium services. Third AC tickets will start at approximately Rs 2,300, second AC at Rs 3,000, and first AC around Rs 3,600. For shorter distances, fares begin at Rs 960 for 3AC, making it an attractive option for various budget segments. All passengers will have confirmed berths with no waiting lists, eliminating the uncertainty that often plagues train travel in India.



Safety features include the Kavach anti-collision system, India's indigenous automatic train protection technology that prevents collisions through real-time monitoring and automatic braking. The train also incorporates crash buffers, deformation tubes, and fire barrier walls to ensure passenger security. Indian Railways plans to introduce 10 Vande Bharat Sleeper trains during the financial year 2025-26, with routes likely to include New Delhi to Howrah, Sealdah to New Delhi, New Delhi to Pune, New Delhi to Mumbai, and New Delhi to Secunderabad. By the end of 2026, 12 such trains are expected to be operational, expanding connectivity to states like Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, and Assam. Future expansions may include routes to Kerala, connecting Thiruvananthapuram with Chennai, Bengaluru, and Mangaluru.



Zone-wise Expansion and Improvements

The TAG 2026 implementation varied significantly across railway zones, reflecting regional priorities and infrastructure capabilities. The East Central Railway recorded substantial expansion with 20 new trains introduced, 20 trains extended, and 12 trains speeded up. The Northern Railway added 20 new trains, extended 10 existing services, and speeded up 24 trains, demonstrating a balanced approach to both new services and efficiency improvements. The North Western Railway introduced 12 new trains, extended six routes, increased frequency on two services, and speeded up 89 trains. This zone's focus on speed enhancement reflects its strategic importance in connecting western India with the northern regions. The Western Railway introduced 10 new trains and extended 10 routes while speeding up 80 services, maintaining its reputation as one of the busiest and most dynamic zones. The South Western Railway, apart from leading in speed enhancements, also introduced eight new trains and extended six routes while converting eight trains to superfast category. In eastern India, the

Eastern Railway introduced six new trains, extended four routes, and speeded up 32 services. The East Coast Railway added four new trains, extended four routes, and speeded up three services. The Northeast Frontier Railway introduced 10 new trains and speeded up 36 services, significantly improving connectivity to the northeastern states. The Southern Railway introduced six new trains, extended four routes, converted two to superfast, and speeded up 75 trains. The Central Railway added four new trains, extended six routes, and speeded up 30 services. Even smaller zones like the North Central Railway contributed with two new trains, four extensions, two frequency increases, and one speed enhancement. Additionally, 86 train routes were extended under TAG 2026, improving connectivity to smaller towns and cities. Eight trains saw their frequencies increased, and 10 trains were converted to superfast category, offering faster travel options on key routes.

Infrastructure Modernization and Electrification

The train additions are supported by massive infrastructure investments. Between April and November 2025, Indian Railways commissioned over 900 kilometers of new track lines. This achievement is part of a larger trend: during 2014-25, a total of 34,428 kilometers of new track was laid at an average of 8.57 kilometers per day, more than double the average daily commissioning of 4.2 kilometers per day during 2009-14. Track renewal has been another major focus area. In 2025, rail renewal was undertaken across 6,880 kilometers of track, with complete track renewal done for 7,051 kilometers. This systematic renewal ensures safer, faster, and more comfortable travel while extending the life of existing infrastructure. Electrification has reached remarkable milestones. Over 99 percent

of the broad-gauge network is now electrified, positioning India among the world's leading nations in railway electrification. This achievement surpasses electrification levels in the United Kingdom at 39 percent, Russia at 52 percent, and even China at 82 percent. A total of 14 railway zones and 25 states and union territories have achieved 100 percent electrification, reflecting a commitment to green operations and environmental sustainability. Speed improvements have been systematically implemented across the network. Sectional speed has been increased to 130 kilometers per hour over 599 track kilometers, covering parts of the Golden Quadrilateral, Golden Diagonal, and other major routes. Additionally, speeds of 110 kilometers per hour have been achieved over 4,069 track kilometers, combining infrastructure upgrades with advanced track machinery.

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Station Redevelopment and Passenger Amenities

The transformation extends beyond trains and tracks to stations themselves. The Amrit Bharat Station Scheme has gained momentum, with 155 out of 1,337 planned stations already redeveloped. These modernized stations feature improved amenities that rival airport facilities, including modern and wider entrances, upgraded toilets, escalators, lifts, and food courts. Sustainability initiatives have been integrated into station development. More than 2,626 stations now operate on solar power, reducing the environmental footprint of railway operations. Free Wi-Fi is available at 6,117 stations, ensuring connectivity for passengers throughout their journey. These improvements reflect a commitment to both passenger convenience and environmental responsibility.



Manufacturing Excellence and Indigenous Development

The expansion has been supported by ramped-up domestic manufacturing. In the financial year 2025-26, up to November 2025, more than 4,224 high-tech Linke Hofmann Busch coaches were produced, representing an 18 percent increase over the corresponding period the previous year. Between 2014 and 2025, coach production increased 18-fold compared to 2004-14, ensuring a steady supply of modern rolling stock. The Integral Coach Factory in Chennai plays a central role in this manufacturing revolution. The facility not only produced the first Vande Bharat Sleeper trainset but continues to work on additional units. Each Vande Bharat Sleeper coach costs between Rs 8 crore and Rs 8.5 crore, which is notably lower than most metro coaches that typically cost Rs 10 crore to Rs 10.5 crore.

Indian Railways has placed major orders to support future expansion. In December 2024, an order for propulsion electrics for 50 rakes of 24-car Vande Bharat Sleeper trainsets was awarded to two leading Indian manufacturers. Medha will supply propulsion systems for 33 rakes, with the order expected to be fulfilled within two years. Full-scale production of 24-car Vande Bharat Sleeper trainsets will commence in 2026-27, further strengthening India's self-reliance in railway technology. Close to 200 Vande Bharat trains, including both chair car and sleeper versions.

ways is demonstrating that large-scale modernization is both possible and sustainable. As 2026 progresses, millions of passengers will experience faster journeys, improved comfort, and better connectivity. The combination of new trains, speed enhancements, infrastructure upgrades, and station modernization creates a comprehensive ecosystem that positions Indian Railways as a vital driver of national growth and development.



CHALLENGES AND THE ROAD AHEAD

Despite substantial progress, challenges remain. As of 2025, 60 percent of Indian Railway tracks are still not suitable for speeds exceeding 130 kilometers per hour, which is slowing down the transition to high-speed operations. The Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project has lagged behind schedule, and passenger grievances regarding overcrowding, maintenance delays, and punctuality increased during peak festival seasons in 2025. The Railway Ministry has announced plans to invest Rs 5.4 lakh crore to upgrade the railways by 2030, with comprehensive improvements including complete electrification, upgraded lines with higher speeds, expansion of new lines, railway station upgrades, and development of a large high-speed train network. The Research Design and Standards Organisation is undertaking all research, design, and standardization work, while the National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited oversees

high-speed rail development. The upcoming trains and railway improvements represent more than just additions to India's transport infrastructure. They symbolize a nation's commitment to providing world-class travel experiences while maintaining accessibility and affordability for all citizens. From the revolutionary Vande Bharat Sleeper trains that will transform overnight travel to the comprehensive TAG 2026 implementation that touches hundreds of services, Indian Rail-

ways is demonstrating that large-scale modernization is both possible and sustainable. As 2026 progresses, millions of passengers will experience faster journeys, improved comfort, and better connectivity. The combination of new trains, speed enhancements, infrastructure upgrades, and station modernization creates a comprehensive ecosystem that positions Indian Railways as a vital driver of national growth and development.

RCB proposes AI video analytics FOR CROWD MANAGEMENT

Franchise offers full funding for advanced surveillance to enhance safety, crowd control

BENGALURU

The Indian Premier League franchise Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) on Friday proposed the installation of advanced Artificial Intelligence-enabled video analytics technology at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium to improve crowd management and fan safety. In a formal communication to the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), the franchise suggested deploying between 300 and 350 AI-powered cameras across the stadium premises.

RCB said it is willing to bear the entire one-time cost of the project, estimated at around ₹4.5 crore. The proposal, announced through a statement on social media



platform X, is aimed at strengthening surveillance and assisting authorities in preventing overcrowding and safety lapses during major events.

According to the franchise, the proposed system would help the KSCA and law enforcement agencies manage crowd movement more efficiently. The AI-based cameras

are expected to enable real-time monitoring of entry and exit points, ensure disciplined queuing, track unauthorised access and significantly enhance overall spectator safety during matches and events.

The initiative falls under RCB Cares, a programme launched by the franchise following the tragic stampede

outside the Chinnaswamy Stadium on June 4 last year. The incident occurred during RCB's IPL victory celebrations after the team won its maiden title in 18 years.

Eleven fans lost their lives and at least 50 others were injured in the chaos, prompting authorities to impose severe restrictions on events at the venue.

Since then, no professional cricket match has been hosted at the stadium. Police recently denied permission to stage Vijay Hazare Trophy matches there, citing concerns raised by a review committee. Those matches were subsequently shifted to the BCCI's Centre of Excellence near Devanahalli.

With uncertainty continuing over the stadium's immediate future, RCB has even explored alternative venues, including inspections of the Pune stadium for IPL 2026 matches. The franchise hopes the proposed AI-driven solution will help restore confidence among authorities and pave the way for the return of top-level cricket to Bengaluru's iconic venue.



ICC T20 WC 2026: ICC delegation likely to visit B'desh for final talks

DHAKA

With doubts continuing over Bangladesh's participation in the ICC T20 World Cup 2026, an International Cricket Council (ICC) delegation is likely to visit the country in the coming days for a final round of discussions with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB). The talks are expected to play a decisive role in determining Bangladesh's involvement in the marquee tournament, scheduled to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka from February 7 to March 8.

According to a report, the proposed visit follows a recent video conference between senior ICC officials and the BCB leadership to address the ongoing impasse. The virtual meeting focused primarily on Bangladesh's travel plans for its World Cup fixtures, particularly those slated to be held in India.

The BCB was represented in the meeting by its president Aminul Islam, vice-presidents Shakawat Hossain and Faruque Ahmed, cricket operations chairman Nazmul Abedeen, and chief executive officer Nizam Uddin Chowdhury. During the discussions, the BCB is understood to have reiterated its concerns over player safety and security

while travelling to India, formally requesting the ICC to relocate Bangladesh's matches to a neutral venue.

The situation has been further complicated by strained diplomatic relations between India and Bangladesh. Recently, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) asked IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders to release Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman from its IPL 2026 squad, a move seen as reflective of the broader standoff between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh cricket is facing turmoil on the domestic front as well. The BCB has been grappling with internal unrest after senior national players revolted against director Najmul Islam over controversial remarks. Although Najmul was removed from his role as head of the finance committee, the unrest led to the postponement of two Bangladesh Premier League matches scheduled for January 15.

Amid administrative instability and unresolved security concerns, the ICC's proposed visit is expected to be a critical step toward finding a resolution. A final decision on Bangladesh's participation is likely to follow the outcome of these high-level talks.

Uncertainty persists as ICC plans crucial in-person discussions with BCB over participation



Goan club players back management with salary reduction amid Indian football crisis

FC Goa players, including India captain Sandesh Jhingan, accept pay cut

NEW DELHI

FC Goa players, including India captain Sandesh Jhingan, along with members of the support staff, have agreed to take a pay cut for the truncated 2025-26 Indian Super League (ISL) season, the club announced. The decision comes amid ongoing financial uncertainty and administrative turmoil in Indian football, with the revised ISL season set to begin on February 14.

In a statement posted on social media platform X, the AIFF Super Cup champions said the club had held "honest and difficult conversations" with its players and staff regarding the challenges facing Indian football. The management described the players' response as a "selfless" act that reflected unity and commitment during a period of crisis.

"In a moment of real uncertainty for Indian football, our first-team players and technical staff stepped forward and chose to support the club by agreeing to reduce their remuneration," FC Goa said. "This was not an easy decision, but it was taken in the best interest of the club."

The club added that it was deeply grateful for the solidarity shown by the squad, underlining that FC Goa stands for more than just results on the pitch. Apart from Jhingan, the club's roster also includes India internationals Udanta Singh and Boris

Singh.

The development comes as ISL clubs grapple with the financial burden of staging a shortened season following a nearly six-month hiatus. Earlier this month, Bengaluru FC owner Parth Jindal had appealed to players to make sacrifices, warning that franchises could face closure without their support.

The 2025-26 ISL season was thrown into uncertainty after the All India Football Federation's former commercial partner terminated the Master Rights Agreement in December. After government intervention, all 14 clubs have confirmed participation in a condensed league featuring 9 with 1 matches, each team playing 3 games.



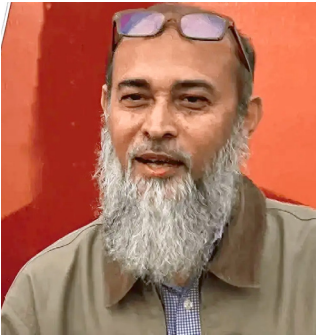
Board acts amid backlash as BPL matches postponed despite Najmul's removal

BCB removes director Najmul Islam from key post after players' revolt

DHAKA

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has removed Najmul Islam from his position as chairman of the finance committee following strong protests from senior national players over controversial remarks, plunging Bangladesh cricket into renewed uncertainty. Despite the decision, two Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) matches scheduled for the day were postponed, reflecting the severity of the crisis.

Najmul was stripped of his finance portfolio but remains a BCB director. In an official statement, the board said the decision was taken "in the



best interest of the organisation," adding that the BCB president would serve as acting finance committee chairman until further notice. The board stressed that player welfare remained its top priority and urged cricketers to continue participating in the

BPL with professionalism.

The controversy stemmed from Najmul's comments regarding Bangladesh's potential withdrawal from next month's ICC T20 World Cup in India due to security concerns. He dismissed questions over player compensation, saying players did not deserve remuneration after failing to win an ICC title. The remarks triggered widespread backlash, prompting the Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) to demand his removal. Earlier, the BCB issued Najmul a show-cause notice over his "objectionable comments," asking him to respond within 48 hours.

MELBOURNE

World number two Iga Swiatek on Friday said completing a career Grand Slam at the Australian Open would be a dream achievement, but stressed that it is not her primary focus as she begins her campaign in Melbourne. The Polish star underlined that her approach remains firmly rooted in taking one match at a time rather than chasing milestones. Swiatek, 24, has already built an impressive Grand Slam résumé, winning four French Open titles along with triumphs at the US Open and Wimbledon. However, the Australian Open remains the only major missing from her collection. Despite reaching the semi-finals at Melbourne Park on two occasions, she has yet to advance to the final.

"Since the beginning of the year, many people have been talking to me about it," Swiatek said when asked about the prospect of completing the set of all four majors. "But I'm really just

focusing on day-by-day work. This is how I've always operated, and it's helped me achieve what I have so far."

She acknowledged that winning Grand Slams is never easy and said she has deliberately avoided setting expectations for herself in Melbourne. "Obviously it would be a dream come true," she said. "But it's not something I wake up thinking about. I'm more focused on how I want to play and what I need to improve."

Swiatek will begin her Australian Open campaign against Chinese qualifier Yuan Yue, coming off a mixed start to the 2026 season. While she was part of the Polish team that won the United Cup in Sydney, her singles form has been inconsistent. She suffered



Career Grand Slam 'a dream' for Swiatek but not key focus in Melbourne

Nervous Madison Keys vows to enjoy the ride in Melbourne title defence

MELBOURNE

Defending champion Madison Keys on Friday admitted to feeling nervous ahead of her Australian Open title defence but said she is determined to embrace the pressure and enjoy the experience at Melbourne Park. The American, who claimed her maiden Grand Slam crown here last year, believes stepping out of her comfort zone will be key to her campaign.

Keys produced a stunning performance 12 months ago to defeat Aryna Sabalenka in a memorable final, lifting her first major trophy at the age of 29. However, she was unable to build sustained momentum through 2025 and returns to Melbourne this year ranked ninth in the world. Her preparations have been

far from ideal. On Thursday, Keys hit close to 50 unforced errors in a warm-up loss to teenage Canadian Victoria Mboko in Adelaide, underlining the work still to be done ahead of her opening match against Ukraine's Oleksandra Oliynykova.

"One of my big goals this year is to force myself to be a little uncomfortable on court," Keys said. "We've been working on new things, and now the hard part is actually trying to implement them in matches, especially in big moments."

She explained that the off-season was focused on evolving her game and adding new dimensions, even if it meant short-term discomfort. "As uncomfortable as it can feel, I'm really trying to push myself to grow and improve," she added.

Keys conceded that returning as the defending champion brings added nerves, but she is making a conscious effort to enjoy the journey rather than shy away from the expectations.

"I'm trying to embrace it and soak it all in," she said. "So often you look back and regret not finding the fun parts, even in stressful and pressured moments."

The 30-year-old said seeing reminders of her triumph around Melbourne Park has been special. "There's a really cool photo of me holding the trophy," she smiled. "That's something you dream of, and getting to experience it is really fun."

She added that spotting her name among past champions would be another moment to cherish — preferably captured on camera and shared with her mother.



Amanda Anisimova targets third Slam final in a row after breakout year

MELBOURNE

Amanda Anisimova said Friday that she is embracing heightened expectations at the Australian Open, drawing confidence from a breakthrough 2025 that saw her reach back-to-back Grand Slam finals. The American believes the lessons learned from her deep runs at Wimbledon and the US Open will be crucial as she bids to make a third consecutive appearance in a major final.

Anisimova, 24, was named the WTA's most improved player last season after surging 32 places in the rankings to

reach a career-high world number four. Her rise was powered by standout performances on the biggest stages, beginning with a run to the Wimbledon final and followed by another appearance in the title match at the US Open.

Although she suffered a heavy defeat to Iga Swiatek in the Wimbledon final, Anisimova showed resilience later in the year by defeating the six-time Grand Slam champion in the quarter-finals at Flushing Meadows. She then overcame Naomi Osaka in the semi-finals before pushing world number one Aryna Sabalenka

hard in the final, eventually falling 6-3, 7-6 (7/3).

"I'm coming off a great year with a lot of confidence," Anisimova said. "I played a lot of matches, learned a lot about myself, and identified areas where I can still improve."

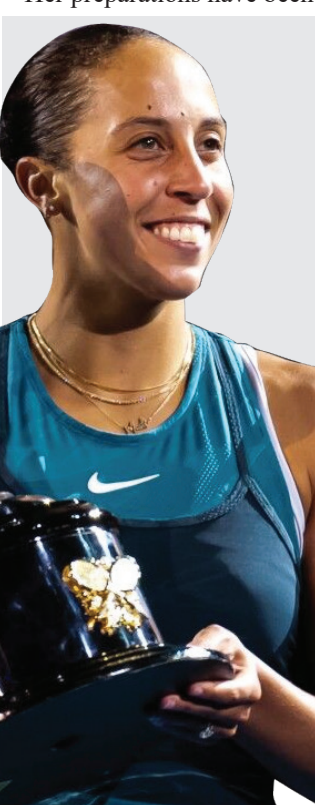
She added that expectations no longer feel like a burden. "There are expectations, but I use them as motivation," she said, noting that her focus this season is on gaining an extra edge and improving physically and mentally.

After making her first appearance at the WTA Finals, Anisimova had a

brief

off-season in Miami before opening her 2026 campaign at the Brisbane International, where she exited in the round of 16.

Reflecting on her recent Grand Slam experiences, Anisimova said familiarity with high-pressure situations would help. "Being in those positions before makes things a little easier the next time," she said. "But this is a new Slam, and I'm just taking it one match at a time."



Elsewhere, Bologna snapped a long winless run by coming from behind to beat Hellas Verona 3-2 in a dramatic encounter. Bologna had not won since November but surged ahead with three first-half goals before holding on, despite an own goal late on, to claim a morale-boosting victory.