



Over 44,000
Voters Excluded
from Bhabanipur
Draft Electoral Roll



Modi Jordan
Crown Prince
highlight
civilisational ties

Elon Musk
nears becoming
world's first
trillionaire



I am CM till high command decides: CM Siddaramaiah

BELAGAVI

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said in the state Assembly that he will continue as CM as long as the Congress high command desires, amid questions over leadership and allegations of discrimination in farm loan distribution. He emphasized the party's five-year mandate and expressed confidence in returning to power after the 2028 assembly elections.

He stated, "We [Congress] are in power, and I am the Chief Minister for as long as the high command desires." BJP's V Sunil Kumar remarked, "Earlier, you said you would serve a full five-year term as CM." Siddaramaiah replied, "I am the CM now, and I will continue to be so moving forward."

The exchange took place during Question Hour when Kunigal Congress MLA HD Ranganath highlighted that only a few farmers in his constituency had received cooperative crop loans. A known supporter of Shivakumar, Ranganath remarked, "I'm not angry, but this discrimination needs to be corrected." Responding, Siddaramaiah, who also holds the



Siddaramaiah says he will remain Karnataka CM as long as high command wishes, dismissing leadership tussle amid farm loan discrimination row

cooperation portfolio, assured him, "Trust me, any instances of discrimination will be addressed."

The situation escalated when leader of opposition R Ashoka suggested the discrimination was intentional and referenced Ranganath's support for Shivakumar's chief ministerial ambitions.

"Don't add fuel to the fire. Opposition is meant for adding fuel," the chief minister responded to Ashoka's comments. "It means there is fire. Ashoka retorted.

Karnataka Assembly clears 12 bills

Belagavi

The state Assembly on Tuesday passed 12 bills, including the Karnataka Rent (Amendment) Bill. The other bills that were cleared are the Karnataka Land Revenue (Second Amendment) Bill, the Greater Bengaluru Governance, the Sri Malai Mahadeshwaraswamy Kshethra Development Authority (Amendment) Bill, the Chandraguthi Shree Renukamba Kshethra Development Authority Bill and the Shree Chamundeshwari Kshethra Development Authority and Certain Other Laws (Amendment) Bill. The Karnataka Cine and Cultural Activists (Welfare) (Amendment) Bill, Karnataka Labour Welfare Fund (Amendment) Bill, Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowment (Amendment) Bill, Karnataka State Universities (Second Amendment) Bill, Bayaluseeme Development Board (Amendment) Bill and Malnad Area Development Board (Amendment) Bill were also cleared.

VB-G RAM G Bill introduced in LS amid Opposition protest

Lok Sabha introduces controversial VB-G RAM G Bill 2025, replacing MGNREGA, sparking opposition over Gandhi name removal

NEW DELHI

The controversial Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, 2025, which seeks to replace MGNREGA, was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, sparking sharp criticism from opposition parties. The opposition objected to the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name from the rural job guarantee law, the proposed requirement for states to bear 40% of expenditure.

Introducing the Bill, Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan defended the bill, asserting that the Modi government has significantly increased investment in rural welfare compared to previous administrations. He highlighted that the scheme now provides 125 days of guaranteed work, up from 100, emphasizing that it has not been weakened.

Addressing concerns over the renaming, Chouhan stated that Mahatma Gandhi's legacy remains in the nation's heart. Chouhan underscored that over Rs 8 lakh crore has been spent on rural



welfare under the Modi government, compared with Rs 2.13 lakh crore during Con-

gress' tenure, highlighting the administration's commitment to uplifting the poor.

What the bill proposes?

The bill guarantees 125 days of wage employment annually to rural households with adults willing to do unskilled manual work.

Gram Panchayats will prepare 'Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans' using PM Gati Shakti, supported by an integrated rural infrastructure stack.

Focus areas include water security, core infrastructure, livelihood assets, climate-resilient works, and ensuring farm labour availability during peak seasons.

Modi ji has a deep dislike for two things - the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and the rights of the poor. MGNREGA is the living embodiment of Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Gram Swaraj. It has been a lifeline for millions of rural Indians.

—Rahul Gandhi, Congress MP

Several opposition MPs including Priyanka Gandhi, KC Venugopal and Manish Tiwari strongly objected the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name and demanded that the bill be referred to a parliamentary committee for detailed scrutiny.

"We don't understand the government's obsession with renaming every scheme. Whenever this is done, the center has to spend money. Priyanka Gandhi said.

Shashi Tharoor also attacked the government and said that the new bill "represents a deeply regrettable and retrograde step" for the country.

SC quashes FIR against K'taka Oppn leader R. Ashoka

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday quashed a 2018 FIR against senior BJP leader and former Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister R Ashoka concerning alleged irregularities in the regularisation of unauthorised land occupation. A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Vipul M. Pancholi observed that the proceedings were politically motivated, mala fide, and lacked proper sanction. The complaints, mostly filed by Congress members, were delayed, with the first lodged five years after the alleged period and subsequent gaps unexplained. The court noted that Ashoka, as Chairman of the Committee (1998–2007), acted within his official powers, which must be exercised fairly and for public welfare.

The High Court's 2018 order rejecting the quashing of the FIR was set aside.



Suspect in Bondi Beach shooting native of Hyderabad: T'gana Police

HYDERABAD

One of the alleged perpetrators of the Bondi Beach mass shooting in Sydney, Sajid Akram, has roots in Hyderabad, Telangana, but his radicalisation has no connection to India, said state police.

The shooting occurred on December 14, 2025, during a public Hanukkah event at Bondi Beach and left 15 people dead, along with one of the attackers. Australian authorities are treating the incident as a terrorist attack. The assailants have been identified as Sajid Akram, 50, and his 24-year-old son, Naveed Akram, who reportedly acted under the influence of ISIS-inspired ideology.

According to Telangana police, Sajid Akram completed his B.Com in Hyderabad before migrating to Australia in November 1998 in search of employment. He later married Venera Grosso, a woman of European origin, and settled permanently in Australia. The couple have two children—a son, Naveed, and a daughter—both born in Australia and holding Australian citizenship.



Authorities Examine Philippines Visit

Australian investigators on Tuesday confirmed that both suspects had travelled to the Philippines last month and said the nature and purpose of the visit are under scrutiny. Philippine immigration officials stated that the two men arrived in Manila on November 1, travelled onward to Davao in the country's south, and departed on November 28—just weeks before the Bondi Beach attack. Officials said the father entered the Philippines using an Indian passport, while the son travelled on an Australian passport.

While Sajid Akram continues to hold an Indian passport, police said he maintained minimal contact with his relatives in Hyderabad over the past 27

years. He visited India only six times after migrating, mainly for family and property-related matters, and did not return even after his father's death.

PM proposes doubling India-Jordan trade to USD 5 bn in 5 yrs

AMMAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his visit to Jordan, proposed doubling bilateral trade between India and Jordan to USD 5 billion over the next five years. Speaking at the India-Jordan Business Forum alongside King Abdullah II, Modi highlighted the immense potential for collaboration in sectors such as digital public infrastructure, IT, fintech, health-tech, and agri-tech. He invited start-ups from both nations to explore joint ventures in these areas.

Modi emphasized India's rapid economic growth, with the country on track to become the world's third-largest economy, offering opportunities for Jordanian companies to benefit from a 1.4 billion-strong consumer market, robust manufacturing base, and stable policy environment. He also noted India as



Jordan's third-largest trading partner, underscoring the importance of building long-term partnerships beyond mere trade numbers.

King Abdullah II highlighted the potential of combining Jordan's free trade agreements with India's economic strength to establish an economic corridor linking South and West Asia. Modi further stressed complementarities in pharma, medical devices, agriculture, renewable energy, infrastructure, and green financing, suggesting Jordan as a hub for

West Asia and Africa.

The forum saw participation from business leaders in sectors including health, pharma, fertilisers, textiles, logistics, energy, defence, and manufacturing. Representatives from FICCI and the Jordan Chamber of Commerce, working under an existing MoU, also attended, aiming to promote trade and economic cooperation. Both leaders called for leveraging historical trust and contemporary partnerships to convert opportunities into shared growth and prosperity.

QUICK READ

Cong to hold protests against VB-G RAM G Bill

WB Sports Min steps down after Messi event chaos

NEW DELHI

The Congress will hold protests across the country on Wednesday against the Centre's rural employment bill VB-G RAM G that seeks to replace MGNREGA, claiming it was a "BJP-RSS conspiracy" to dismantle a rights-based welfare scheme and attack Mahatma Gandhi's legacy, workers' rights and federal responsibility. The opposition party's general secretary, organisation, K C Venugopal, in a letter to all state Congress presidents, urged them to organise protests at all district headquarters. These protests must be held with portraits of Mahatma Gandhi, symbolising resistance to the erasure of his name and values, and highlight how the proposed law will impact the crores of beneficiaries of MGNREGA, he said in the letter. its own agenda.

KOLKATA

Following widespread criticism over mismanagement at the Salt Lake Stadium during Lionel Messi's December 13 event, West Bengal Sports Minister Aroop Biswas resigned from the sports and youth affairs portfolio on Tuesday. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accepted his resignation and will temporarily oversee the department. Biswas, however, will continue as the state's power minister. Chaos had erupted at the high-profile event after spectators complained they could barely see the football icon, triggering clashes with police. In his resignation letter, Biswas said he was stepping aside to allow a fair probe. The government also issued show-cause notices to senior police and administrative officials as criticism mounted against the ruling Trinamool Congress.

PRESIDENT IN MANDYA

'India needs power of tech and strength of values'

MANDYA

President Droupadi Murmu, inaugurated the 1066th Jayanthi celebrations of Adi Jagadguru Sri Shivarathreeshwara Shivayogi Mahaswamiji on December 16, 2025, at Malavalli in Mandya district, Karnataka. Speaking at the event, the President highlighted that saints across ages have guided humanity through wisdom and compassion, showing that true greatness lies in service, sacrifice, and spiritual strength rather than authority or wealth. She described Adi Jagadguru Sri Shivarathreeshwara Shivayogi Mahaswamiji as a beacon of inspiration and light. She praised the JSS Mahavidyapeetha, established



Suttur Math Society has given higher priority to the education of children from underprivileged sections. During my last visit to the Suttur Jatre, I requested the Math Swamijis to hold the Jayanthi Mahotsav of Suttur Adi Jagadguru Sri Shivarathreeshwara Shivayogi Mahaswamiji in our district.

—HD Kumaraswamy, Union Min

Suttur Math is a center of devotion and positive energy and one of the most renowned Math in the country. It has played a significant role in social and religious progress.

—Thawar Chand Gehlot, Karnataka Governor

under the guidance of Suttur Math, as a distinguished institution contributing to education, healthcare, women em-

powerment, rural development, cultural preservation, and inclusive social progress, with outreach across India

and abroad. The President emphasized that in times of rapid change and uncertainty, spiritual guidance is vital for fostering social harmony, ethical leadership, youth empowerment, and inner resilience. Stressing the importance of youth, she said India's future will be shaped not only by their skills and knowledge but also by their integrity and sense of purpose. As we move towards the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047, we need both, the power of technology and the strength of values she added. She urged institutions like Suttur Math to continue inspiring young minds, nurturing responsible citizens, and guiding the architects of tomorrow's India.



QUICK READ

Three-day inter-collegiate math fest

BENGALURU

The Department of Studies and Research in Mathematics at Dr. Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University (BCU) will host an inter-collegiate mathematics fest titled Math-O-Mania on December 19, 20 and 22 at the university campus. The three-day event will feature a range of activities aimed at promoting mathematical thinking and creativity among students. Competitions and sessions include Ganita Jnana Sabha, Model-O-Math, Mathtoon, Brainy Bytes and several other math-centric events. The fest is expected to attract students from colleges across the city, providing a platform to showcase young mathematical talent and innovative problem-solving skills.



KEA Announces Final Stray Vacancy Round Results

BENGALURU

The Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) on Tuesday released the final results of the online stray vacancy round for admissions to medical and dental courses. In this round, 73 medical and 34 dental seats have been successfully allotted. However, 26 medical seats remain unfilled. KEA Executive Director H. Prasanna stated in a press release. Candidates who are yet to secure admission can participate in further rounds or wait for special allotments. The authority urged students to keep track of updates on the official KEA portal to ensure timely application and confirmation of seats.

Survey for New Road in Bellandur Lake Buffer Zone: Rao

Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao directs survey for road construction

BENGALURU

Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao has instructed officials to conduct a detailed survey and submit a report for constructing a road in the Bellandur Lake buffer zone. During a visit to various areas under the Eastern and Southern Municipal Corporations, Rao emphasized that the new road could help reduce traffic congestion in this busy corridor. The proposed road, approximately 1 km long and 24 m wide, aims to facilitate public movement and recreational spaces, easing the traffic load on Bellandur Lake Bund Road. Rao urged officials to accelerate work and ensure completion within the stipulated timeframe. Additionally, plans for a 1.4 km buffer road



as an alternative to Wind Tunnel Road are progressing. The land, owned by HAL, has received HAL officials' consent, and a tender has been invited. A government proposal for construction approval is underway, with Rao instructing rapid commencement of work. The 2.6 km buffer road connecting Ejipura Inner Ring

Road to Sarjapur Outer Ring Road was also inspected. On sections with Defense Department land, an RCC barrier has been constructed. Rao observed ongoing dirt road construction using JCBs, Itachis, and bulldozers, directing B-Smile officials to expedite the project. Eastern Municipal Corporation Commissioner

DS Ramesh, Additional Commissioner Lokhande Snehal Sudhakar, Bismel Technical Director BS Prahlad, Additional Director of Urban Planning Department Girish, Chief Engineer Lokesh, and other officials were present during the inspection.

With these initiatives, the civic administration aims to improve traffic flow, enhance accessibility, and provide safer commuting routes around Bellandur Lake, balancing development needs with environmental considerations.

The survey report and subsequent construction approvals will determine the final alignment and implementation timeline, ensuring the project supports urban mobility while preserving the ecological buffer around the lake.

‘8 Lakh Farm Parcels Transferred to Legal Heirs in Special Drive’

BENGALURU

As part of a special Pauti Khata campaign, ownership of over eight lakh agricultural land parcels across Karnataka has been officially transferred from deceased owners to their legal heirs, with the process ongoing for another 42 lakh properties. The initiative, spearheaded by the revenue department, aims to address issues arising from outdated land records that had prevented farmers from accessing state and central government benefits.

The exercise follows the statewide integration of records of rights, tenancy, and crops (RTC) last year, which identified more than 50 lakh agricultural parcels still listed under deceased owners. Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda highlighted that the lack of formal ownership transfer had affected

numerous farmers and prompted the government to launch a campaign ensuring proper mutation of land records in favor of heirs. Gowda presented the details to the legislative council while responding to an unstarred question raised by BJP legislator CT Ravi.

Of the 50.2 lakh parcels identified as eligible, 5.7 lakh were transferred through Bhoomi kiosks in 2024. After the launch of the e-Pauti portal in June 2025, another 2.4 lakh parcels have been transferred. Village administrative officers (VAOs) oversee the process, collecting family trees, death certificates, and other relevant documents, while verifying identities via e-KYC. The revenue department has mandated a 17-day timeline for issuing Pauti Khata, including a 15-day notice period,

with objections handled under the Land Revenue Act.

Minister Gowda warned that officials denying rightful ownership transfers despite valid submissions would face action under the Sakala Services Act.

Village accountants are conducting door-to-door verification, publicly displaying names of claimants to ensure transparency and prevent false claims, particularly to protect women's inheritance rights.

Officials said the campaign will help curb corruption, reduce repeated visits to village and taluk offices, streamline land transfers, save farmers' time, and prevent future disputes among heirs, ultimately updating records and making inheritance-related changes more transparent and efficient.

The campaign demonstrates the government's focus on modernizing land administration, ensuring rightful ownership, and providing farmers with the legal clarity necessary to access benefits and manage agricultural properties effectively.

Dodgy Rental Agreements Uncover Elaborate Tax Evasion Scheme

BENGALURU

Investigations into a complex property scam in Bengaluru reveal how paired lease and rental agreements were used to mask large deposits, trigger tax evasion, and leave homeowners and sub-tenants in financial and legal turmoil. The elaborate arrangement, allegedly orchestrated by Catena Homes India Private Limited, highlights how a property management model collapsed, exposing owners to unpaid EMIs, frozen accounts, and mounting legal battles. For years, city residents have been wary of tenants or property management firms exploiting owners, but the latest scam adds a new layer — cheating the government through house rent allowance (HRA) exemptions. Authorities are now scrutinising dual agreements that show standard rental terms while hiding hefty upfront payments. One property owner, requesting anonymity, said, "I entered an agreement with Catena Homes and received rent only for a few months.



African Monkeys Arrive at Bannerghatta Zoo

BENGALURU

Bannerghatta Biological Park has successfully brought eight black-capped capuchin monkeys (Sapajus Apella) from the Induna Primate and Parrot Park in South Africa. The group comprises four males and four females, arriving safely at Bengaluru airport on Sunday night. The new arrivals are now able to observe other species at the park, enhancing their adaptation to the environment.

The zoo follows strict protocols for international animal exchange. All animals were health-checked and quarantined in South Africa, with advance NOCs obtained from Animal Control Services prior to import. Upon reaching India, the capuchins have been placed in a designated quarantine facility and will move to the zoo for public display after completing quarantine and health assessments.

Bannerghatta Biological Park, known for its successful breeding and conservation programs, anticipates a surge in visitors over the Christmas and New Year holidays. Although the park usually closes for a weekly holiday on Tuesdays, it will remain open on December 30, allowing tourists to enjoy the zoo, safari, and butterfly park. Tickets are

Four Asian elephants — three females and one male, namely eight-year-old Suresh, nine-year-old Gauri, seven-year-old Shruti, and five-year-old Tulsi — were recently sent to Japan's Himeji Central Park. This initiative highlights Bannerghatta Biological Park's role in introducing new animals both nationally and internationally, while promoting awareness among animal enthusiasts. This latest exchange emphasizes the park's ongoing commitment to biodiversity, animal welfare, and educational outreach, strengthening its position as a leading institution for wildlife conservation and cross-border collaboration.

available online via the park's official website.

The arrival of these monkeys follows previous successful overseas animal exchanges. Bannerghatta has gained recognition for its efforts in bringing international species to India, marking milestones in conservation and animal exchange programs.



Buffer Zone Dispute Leaves Site Owners in Limbo

BENGALURU

More than 1,500 families who purchased plots in Banashankari 6th Stage layout, developed by Bangalore Development Authority (BDA), are trapped in a long-standing limbo after a sudden forest land claim stalled construction and property transactions. Despite holding valid allotments, tax receipts, and decades-old ownership documents, many owners remain unable to build.

Banashankari 6th Stage, formed in 2001, consists of over 20,500 sites across 14 blocks. The current dispute focuses on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th blocks, where the forest department claims parts of the layout encroach on the BM Kaval Agara forest land buffer zone of 100 metres. The site owners, however, insist the buffer-zone circular applies only to new land grants and allege the claim is a misinterpretation.

A 49-year-old owner from 4th Block said, "I invested over Rs 1.5 crore in 2016-17, yet even after nearly a decade, we cannot sell or start construction. Authorities know

about our plight, but there is no discussion on alternatives or remedies. Many of us have taken home loans and paid EMIs, yet nothing has moved. It is distressing to see the insensitivity toward people who invested their lifetime savings." Meanwhile, BDA stated the matter has been escalated to the government level in coordination with the forest department. Officials said detailed discussions are planned in January 2026, after which a legal opinion will be sought from the law department. Since the dispute involves only government departments, the resolution is expected to take three to six months.

A senior BDA official noted that the issue surfaced only after the layout was developed and sites were allotted, emphasizing that the authority is working within legal parameters while the families remain in financial uncertainty. The ongoing deadlock underscores the challenges homeowners face when administrative and legal interpretations clash, leaving long-term investors in a frustrating limbo.

State Government to Revive Probe into Chilume Trust Case

BENGALURU

The Karnataka government is set to revive investigations into the 2022 Chilume Trust case, which has surfaced amid allegations of voter data manipulation ahead of the 2023 Assembly elections. The case involves an NGO, allegedly linked to the BJP, which was roped in by the erstwhile BBMP to conduct Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) activities.

Following a chargesheet in the Aland Assembly constituency voter fraud case, in which a former BJP MLA is named the prime accused, the State has now turned its focus to Chilume Trust. Allegations



include voter data theft and irregularities in handling Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT).

On November 27, 2025, senior advocate Prof. Ravi Verma Kumar was appointed to represent the State in a writ petition before the High

Court. Two FIRs linked to the case, filed at Halasuru Gate and Kadugodi Police Stations, remain presently stayed.

The revival of the probe is seen as a significant step by the State to ensure transparency in electoral processes and address concerns about misuse of voter information.

EMPOWERING GIRLS

St Teresa's Celebrates a Century of Empowering Girls

BENGALURU



A rare 1960 photograph captures children at St Teresa's Educational Institution in Chamaraajpet, excitedly greeting then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru as he paused in an open car. Six decades later, the school marks its centenary this December, celebrating a century-long legacy of empowering girls through education.

Founded in 1925 by French sisters of the Salesian Missionaries of Mary Immaculate (SMMI), the institution aimed to educate girls from economically disadvantaged

backgrounds. Arriving in India in 1914 amid World War I, the sisters immersed themselves in local languages, culture, and customs, recognising education as a tool to eradicate social evils. Initially, they taught children, women, and adults informally under trees and open spaces, said Sr Prema Joseph, Principal of St Teresa's Degree College.

Education formally began in 1919 with one Tamil-medium student. By 1925, the school building named 'Saint Teresa School' was established. Today, the institution educates over 3,000 students,

mostly from economically weaker sections and minority communities. Kannada-medium education is free, while English-medium education is offered at minimal fees. "We have seen thousands of girls step into the world, achieving remarkable heights, which sustains our popularity," Sr Prema said. The school has also opened a branch affiliated with the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations.

Aparna Addanki, Alumni President, said the school has been the foundation for generations, instilling values, discipline, and life skills.

"We aim to strengthen our alumni community to uphold the spirit of our school—rooted in faith, friendship, and lifelong commitment to growth. We are proud to carry forward its legacy into the next century," she added.

St Teresa's centenary is not just a celebration of years, but of a vision that has empowered countless girls, creating pathways for education, equality, and societal transformation. The institution continues to stand as a beacon of hope and learning, bridging tradition with modernity while nurturing the leaders of tomorrow.

QUICK READ

Celebrate Memories, Music with Playback Legends

Dharwad

A musical evening will be held in loving memory of legendary singers from India's film industry. The program is presented by Miracle Karaoke Singing Studio, Dharwad. It will take place on Sunday at 3.30 pm at Dr. Patil Puttappa Sabha Bhavan, Naddoja, Karnataka Vidyavardhaka Sangha. Popular singers Gangamma, known from Zee Kannada Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, and Mumbai-based Seema Chakravarthy will perform. Entry is free. Interested people can collect passes by calling 6360582701 or 7019066901, the organizers announced. The event aims to celebrate music, memories, and unity among families, students, seniors, and local culture lovers.

Tractor-bus collision kills driver, injures many

Koppal

A tragic road accident occurred at 3 am on Tuesday, on National Highway 50 near the second bridge of the Tungabhadra River. A tractor carrying devotees collided with a private VRL bus coming from Bengaluru to Afzalpur. The tractor driver, Kenchappa, died on the spot. Around fifteen passengers in the tractor were injured. The devotees were traveling from Honnenahalli village of Harapanahalli Talagi gram panchayat in Ballari to Huligemma temple. The injured were shifted to Munirabad and Koppal district hospitals. Munirabad PSI Sunil inspected the scene. Police later cleared the damaged tractor and bus.

Bomb threat sparks fear in Karwar offices

Karwar

A bomb threat email was sent to the Tahsildar office in Karwar, following a similar threat in Bhatkal, Uttara Kannada district. Tahsildar Narona reported the matter to police, who suspect the messages may have been sent by a person with mental health issues. Officials believe the threat is likely fake, but investigations are ongoing to determine if other government offices in the district also received similar emails. Earlier, Bhatkal police received two bomb threats and arrested two people. Authorities are probing why multiple offices in Uttara Kannada are repeatedly targeted, raising concerns about public safety.

Lingasugur Amrut-2.0 water project nears completion

BELAGAVI

The improved water supply project under the AMRUT-2.0 scheme in Lingasugur town, Raichur district, is progressing steadily and is expected to be completed by May 2026, Urban Development and Urban Planning Minister B S Suresh informed the Council on Tuesday. Replying to a question from member Sharanagouda Bayyapur during the Question and Answer session, Minister Suresh said that administrative approval for the project has been granted at a total cost of Rs. 93.76 crore, which includes Rs. 89.10 crore for the project and Rs. 4.66 crore for maintenance. The work officially began on May 18, 2024. The project, aimed at improving the town's water supply, has been awarded through

Lokayukta Finds Gold, Property in Dharwad Raid

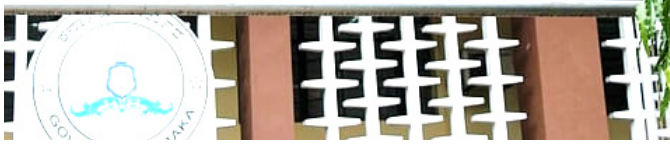
During the raid at Rajashekar's Silver Arch residence, police seized his passbook as he flushed Rs 50,000

DHARWAD

In a major anti-corruption operation, Lokayukta police on Tuesday raided the house of Rajashekar Bijapur, Deputy Director of Vigilance of the Belagavi Agriculture Department, in Dharwad. During the search, officials found 300 grams of gold in his possession and discovered details of his luxurious properties. Rajashekar owns a lavish farmhouse with a swimming pool in Yarikoppa, Dharwad taluk. He also has a flat in Bangalore and has invested in an under-construction apartment in Sanmati Nagar, Dharwad, as well as a water sports facility in Shiggavi taluk, Haveri district. During the raid at Rajashekar's Silver Arch residence, Lokayukta police re-

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಲೋಕಾಯುಕ್ತೆ

KARNATAKA LOKAYUKTA



ported that he flushed Rs 50,000 in cash into the toilet. Officials seized his bank passbook and are verifying his statements. Rajashekar waited outside his house for about half an hour while the investigation began. After searching the Silver Arch residence, Lokayukta officials took Rajashekar to another property in Rani

er they were acquired legally. Lunch was provided for officials during the ongoing search, reflecting the detailed and careful nature of the operation. This investigation comes amid wider efforts by the Lokayukta to check corruption and illegal accumulation of wealth among government officials. Authorities emphasized that every step is being documented, and action will be taken based on verified evidence. The case has drawn attention in Dharwad and across the state, highlighting the vigilance against misuse of public office and unaccounted wealth. The Lokayukta's investigation continues, and further updates are expected once all properties and assets have been thoroughly examined.

B.C. Patil criticizes Hate Speech Bill, CM speculations in Haveri

HAVERI

Former Agriculture Minister B.C. Patil, while addressing a gathering in Haveri city, strongly criticized the recently proposed bill against hate speech and commented on political developments in the state. Patil questioned the rationale behind labeling critical remarks as hate speech. "Those who criticize the government or speak against leaders are being called hateful. Yet, provocations and inflammatory speeches by others go unnoticed. This law seems to be made to satisfy certain interests rather than address real issues," he said. On the subject of political ambition, Patil ridiculed MLA Basavanagouda Patil Yatnal's claim of aspiring to become the next Chief Minister. "Is stating 'I will be the CM' the future of governance? Leadership is not claimed by words; it is decided by the party high command. No MLA can instantly become a big leader by making statements," he remarked, adding that the high command decides all

Patil criticized the CM-Deputy CM tussle, calling the government inactive, development stalled, administration detached, and corruption unchecked, while officials remain ineffective amid ongoing turmoil



leadership positions. Patil also criticized the ongoing tussle between the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister over the state leadership. He said, "The government has been in turmoil for months. Officials are inactive, development has stalled, and the administration appears detached. Amidst this, corruption and scams continue unchecked from morning to night." The former minister's comments highlight growing dissatisfaction over governance issues, political infighting, and proposed legislation in Karnataka. He urged leaders to focus on administrative responsibilities rather than personal ambitions and questioned the effectiveness of the new hate speech law.

Administrative Officers were assigned to Dakshina Kannada towns to oversee functions and maintain governance until elections conclude

Ward reservation process underway for urban councils

BELAGAVI

The state government has begun the process of fixing ward-wise reservation for urban local bodies whose terms have expired, Municipal Administration and Haj Minister Rahim Khan announced in the Council on Tuesday. During the Question Hour, responding to member Pratap Simha Nayak, Minister Khan said that the five-year term of councils for 187 urban local bodies—including Pattana Panchayats, Municipalities, and Nagara Sabhas—has come to an end. To ensure smooth functioning, Administrative Officers have been appointed in these bodies under Government Notifications issued on November 6, 19, and December 5, 2025, in accordance with Section 389 of the Karnataka Municipal Councils Act, 1964. "These appointments are temporary and aim to maintain daily operations and development works in the respective urban local bodies until newly elected councils take charge," the Minister said. He further informed that Administrative Officers have already been assigned to urban local bodies in Ullal, Puttur, Bantwal, Moodbidri, Belthangady, Sulya, and Mulki in Dakshina Kannada district. Their role includes overseeing administrative functions, ensuring ongoing projects are not delayed, and maintaining proper governance until the election process concludes.

The move reflects the government's focus on uninterrupted administration and development in urban areas, even as the process of finalizing ward-wise reservations continues. Residents and officials are expected to cooperate with the temporary arrangements to ensure smooth governance and timely completion of civic projects. Minister Khan assured that once the ward reservations are finalized and elections held, full powers will be restored to the newly elected councils, restoring regular democratic administration in all affected urban local bodies.



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Karnataka cabinet rejects Kasturirangan report recommendations

BELAGAVI

Karnataka's Cabinet has decided to reject the recommendations of the Dr. Kasturirangan Committee report and the draft notification issued by the Union Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change to declare the Western Ghats as an eco-sensitive zone. The state government's stance has been formally communicated to the Central Government, said Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre on Tuesday. Speaking in the Legislative Council in response to a question from member Ivan D'Souza, Minister Khandre clarified that since the Kasturirangan Committee's report has not been implemented, there is no immediate impact on the people living in the coastal and Malnad regions of the state. He emphasized that the state government firmly opposes the draft notification issued by the Centre based on the committee's recommendations. The decision aims to safeguard the livelihoods and interests of residents in the Western Ghats region while balancing environmental concerns. Minister Khandre added that the government's position reflects its commitment to ensuring that policy decisions affecting local communities are carefully examined before implementation. He said that the government will continue to engage with the Central authorities on environmental regulations to protect both ecological interests and the socio-economic well-being of residents.

Kannada learning made compulsory in ICSE, CBSE

BELAGAVI

Education Minister S. Madhu Bangarappa on Tuesday announced that all educational institutions following ICSE, CBSE, IBIGCS, and other curricula have been instructed to emphasize compulsory learning of Kannada. The move aims to strengthen students' language skills while ensuring compliance with state regulations. Responding to a question from member N. Ravikumar in the Legislative Council, the Minister said notices have been sent through Deputy Directors (Administration) and Field Education Officers to schools that are not following the Kannada Language Learning Act. As part of enforcement, fines have been imposed on The Bangalore Inter School in Dommasandra, Anekal taluk of Bangalore South Educational District, and Innovative School in Doddakanhalli for violations. The Kannada Language Learning Act, implemented in 2015, along with rules framed in 2017, mandates Kannada to be taught as either the first or second medium in schools. Departmental rules now require schools to follow these guidelines when registering new private schools or renewing recognition. Minister Bangarappa explained that schools wishing to integrate other curricula with the state syllabus must submit a letter of undertaking, assuring that Kannada will be taught according to the Act. Only then is a no-objection certificate issued, ensuring that schools maintain Kannada instruction while teaching additional curricula.

RAT FEVER CASES UNDER CONTROL ACROSS KARNATAKA STATE

BELAGAVI

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Tuesday informed the Legislative Council that rat fever cases in Karnataka are under control. Till the end of November 2025, a total of 2,134 confirmed cases were reported across the state, slightly lower than 2,164 cases recorded during the same period last year, marking a 1% decrease. Replying to a question from Member Pratap Simha Nayak on spot identification, Minister Rao said that while most districts show a stable trend, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts may experience a slight increase in cases. For early and accurate detection of rat fever, the District Public Health Laboratory in Dakshina Kannada has been designated as a "Regional Leprosy Laboratory" by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Delhi. The laboratory conducts ELISA-based IgM tests and MAT (Microscopic Agglutination Test) IgG tests, considered the highest standard for serological analysis. It also receives and tests samples from other districts in the state. Minister Rao added that sufficient quantities of ELISA and ONKHI test kits have been purchased, ensuring no shortage for diagnostics. Treatment protocols for rat fever are being strictly followed according to disease symptoms. Required medicines are stocked adequately, and steps have been taken to prevent shortages, ensuring timely treatment for patients. The government continues to closely monitor the situation, emphasizing preventive measures, awareness campaigns, and prompt medical attention to keep rat fever cases under control across Karnataka. Authorities have urged residents to report symptoms early and seek medical help without delay.

PROTEST AGAINST NEGLIGENCE

North K'taka farmers plan massive protest in Belagavi

HUBBALLI

Farmers in North Karnataka are preparing for a major protest in Belagavi on December 18, claiming that their livelihoods are under threat and their demands have been ignored. The protest, organized under the Karnataka State Farmers' Association and the Green Army, comes amid growing frustration over low crop prices, delays in the Mahadayi water project, and perceived government negligence. Thousands of farmers plan to participate in the "Belagavi Chalo" protest, demanding fair crop prices, timely implementation of irrigation projects, and attention to developmental issues in the region. They expressed disappointment over the annual winter session held at Suvarna



Soudha in Belagavi, saying it has become a ritualistic event with large expenses but little actual progress for North Karnataka. Farmers allege that despite years of cultivation, major crops like sugarcane and maize are sold at inadequate prices, leaving them in financial distress. The Mahadayi project, which promises irrigation benefits, has faced repeated delays, with the state and central governments blaming each other, leaving farmers helpless. "The development of North

Karnataka has become a mirage. Crores are spent on meetings, but no concrete work reaches the farmers," said a representative of the protesting farmers. The organizers have appealed to authorities to listen to the farmers' grievances and take immediate steps to address long-standing issues. They warned that if their demands are ignored, the protest could intensify, highlighting the urgent need for government action to secure the livelihoods of farmers in the region.

QUICK READ

Koppal shops seized over unpaid rent dues**Koppal**

Koppal Municipality has closed two commercial shops in Jayaprakash Market due to non-payment of rent, officials said. The market has 15 leased shops, and tenants who failed to pay dues were first issued notices. Of the total pending rent, Rs. 8,94,000 has been recovered from 13 tenants. The remaining two tenants did not comply despite repeated reminders and were subsequently sealed by the municipality on December 15. Municipal Commissioner Venkatesh Naganura confirmed the action, emphasizing strict adherence to rental rules and recovery procedures to ensure fair operations and timely collection from all commercial tenants.

Application period extended for Chanakya Scheme fees**Koppal**

The Karnataka State Brahmin Development Board has extended the deadline for fee reimbursement under the Chanakya Administrative Training Scheme for 2025-26. Eligible Brahmin graduates undergoing civil services training, including IAS and KAS, from economically backward families can now apply until 5 pm on December 31. The scheme refunds training fees directly to students through DBT, with a maximum limit of Rs. 1 lakh. The District Skill Development Officer said the extension aims to ensure all eligible candidates benefit from the program, helping them pursue administrative careers without financial constraints and supporting their professional growth in civil services.

KCCDC extends deadline for community loans applications**Koppal**

The Karnataka Christian Community Development Corporation (KCCDC) has extended the application period for its 2025-26 loan and subsidy schemes to December 20. The programs include the Arivu Educational Loan (Rs. 50,000-5 lakh), Foreign Education Loan (up to Rs. 20 lakh), Swavalambi Sarathi Subsidy (Rs. 75,000-3 lakh for vehicles), Shramshakti Loans and Women's Special Scheme (Rs. 50,000 each), Vryvi Protsaka Yojana (Rs. 1 lakh), Ganga Kalyan Yojana (Rs. 3-4 lakh for small farmers), and Business Enterprise Direct Loans (up to Rs. 20 lakh). Applications must be submitted online at kccdcnline.karnataka.gov.in. For details, contact the District Manager at 08539-225008.

Food Minister Reviews Ration System, Shops Updated

Muniyappa emphasized transferring ineligible BPL cards, safeguarding eligible ones, and prioritizing 3,517 new SC/ST fair price shops

BELAGAVI

Food Minister KH Muniyappa held a progress review meeting on Tuesday with district-level officials of Belagavi and Kalaburagi at the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha auditorium. The meeting focused on improving the Public Distribution System and ensuring fair ration distribution across the state.

The minister instructed officials to complete the revision of ration cards within a month and issue new cards promptly. He emphasized that ration beneficiaries must complete eKYC for their cards. If eligible families are mistakenly shifted to APL during the revision, they should visit the Tahsildar's office for verification to be restored to BPL. Officials were told to visit homes of beneficiaries, verify cards, and report accurate information within a week.



Muniyappa also stressed that ineligible BPL cards should be transferred to APL according to Central and State Government guidelines. However, eligible beneficiaries' cards should not be canceled under any circumstances. Priority will be given to sanctioning Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe fair price shops, with about 3,517 new

shops being opened under internal reservation for the first time in the country.

Fair price shop owners were instructed to install e-pass systems and electronic weighing machines and to distribute ration on time. Officials assured that shop owners would receive their retail profits without delay. Around 13 lakh ineligible ration cards

were identified for transfer to APL. The minister directed officials to study criteria from other states, review them, and apply improvements locally.

Under the Minimum Support Price scheme, millet is being purchased at Rs 4,886 per quintal. Farmers have registered to sell 6 lakh metric tons, benefiting 2.57 lakh farmers with a total of Rs 3,000 crore. Legal Metrology inspections in 71 sugar factories in Belagavi and Kalaburagi have corrected previous issues for sugarcane growers, preventing weighing fraud. Mediation fees of about Rs 50,000 crore have been collected so far.

The meeting was attended by Government Secretary Prasad N.V., Commissioner M. Kanagavalli, Controller M.S.N. Babu, Corporation Director Jagadish, joint directors, ration distributors, and other officials from the department and associations.

Minister Khandre shares latest elephant and tiger statistics

BELAGAVI

Karnataka is home to 6,395 elephants and 563 tigers, according to a recent wildlife census, said Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre. The data covers national parks and wildlife sanctuaries across the state. The minister, responding to a question by MLC Dr. Thimmaiah, said the government has taken several measures to prevent human-wildlife conflict. Animals that have previously caused harm to humans are specifically identified and captured to reduce risks.

To enhance protection, staff from poaching camps in conflict-prone areas have been temporarily redeployed to forest boundaries. These teams will patrol these regions continuously for the next three months. Additionally, Rapid Response Teams (RRT) have been formed in each wildlife zone, equipped with Rapid Response Vehicles, drones, and other resources for immediate action during conflicts.

The state has also installed real-time GSM surveillance cameras with Garuda Soft-

To strengthen protection, poaching camp staff were redeployed to forest boundaries for three months, while Rapid Response Teams with vehicles, drones, and resources ensure immediate conflict action

ware along forest boundaries in areas with network coverage. Camera traps are being placed in tiger reserves and forest edges to monitor wildlife movement.

Efforts to prevent elephants from leaving forest areas include constructing and maintaining solar fences, elephant check ditches, and barricades using railway tracks. So far, 428 km of railway barricades have been built in high-conflict zones.

Specialized task forces, including Elephant and Leopard Task Forces, are operational. In addition, the government is developing water resources and habitats inside forest areas and exploring a five-year strategic plan to further reduce human-wildlife conflicts.



DC urged teachers to improve results, adopt successful methods, focus on low-performing schools, and support aided schools

Teach children in a simple way, DC urges Koppal schools

KOPPAL

Deputy Commissioner Dr. Suresh B. Itnal has urged teachers in Koppal district to teach lessons in a way that children can easily understand. He said this is important to improve SSLC exam results for 2025-26.

Dr. Itnal spoke at a meeting with head teachers, SSLC nodal officers, and education officials from all taluks. He said that when lessons are explained simply, students pay attention and enjoy learning. "In the past, teachers treated children like their own and took special care to teach difficult subjects," he said. Subjects like mathematics and old Kannada can be understood easily if simplified.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized that teachers should focus on improving results this year. Schools with good past results should

be visited, and their teaching methods adopted. Schools with low results need special attention. He also said aided schools, which often lack proper teachers, should receive extra care.

Counseling children, boosting their confidence, and taking extra classes in the mornings and evenings were advised as key steps to help students who are falling behind. Teachers should work without ego and focus on helping students learn better. Complaints about absent or careless teachers must be addressed promptly. Schools with zero results in exams will be asked for explanations.

Deputy Director of School Education Somashekar Gowda Patil added that all headmasters must ensure teachers

are present and classes are conducted effectively. Only three months remain before the SSLC exams, so efforts should be serious and continuous.

Dr. Itnal also highlighted that the Akshara Dasoha program is not just about food—it is about children's health and well-being. Headmasters should check cleanliness, organize awareness programs on child marriage, child labor, and safety, especially for girls.

The meeting was attended by Zilla Panchayat Deputy Secretary T. Krishnamurthy, Field Education Officers, subject inspectors, SSLC nodal officers, and head teachers of all government and aided schools. Everyone agreed to work together to improve learning and exam results in the district.



Cop suspended over teacher assault

HAVERI

Following a public assault on a teacher accused in a POC-SO case, the Haveri District Superintendent of Police has suspended two police officials for negligence in duty. CPI Devanand and Head Constable Mallikarjuna of Savanur were relieved of their duties after failing to control the crowd during a procession targeting the teacher.

The incident occurred on December 10 in Savanur town when the accused teacher, Jagadish, was publicly humiliated. Locals garlanded him

with slippers and paraded him from a school to the police station. Eyewitnesses claimed that the police present did not intervene to stop the mob, triggering widespread criticism of the Savanur police station staff.

A POC-SO case had been registered against the teacher, while complaints and counter-complaints were filed against 22 people involved in the attack. Many pro-Hindu organizations condemned the public assault, calling it an act of moral policing and warning against taking the law into one's own hands. They criticized

the act of publicly garlanding and humiliating the teacher, stating that legal procedures should handle such cases.

Local MLA Yasir Khan Pathan emphasized that the teacher's mistakes are being addressed legally, and neither side should take the law into their hands. He called the public attack "inhuman" and stated that both those involved in the assault and other wrongdoers will face punishment. He also urged residents not to shut down Savanur town, asserting that justice will be served through proper legal channels.

HERITAGE ON DISPLAY



Yakshagana artists showcased their performance at Suvarna Soudha in Belagavi on Tuesday

▸ CH PHOTO

Davanagere schools face challenge in daily nutrition supply

DAVANAGERE

The Meal Scheme in Davanagere district is feeding around 1.21 lakh children in 1,499 government and aided schools, but providing eggs and bananas every day has become a challenging task for teachers.

The program aims to fight malnutrition and improve students' health and learning. Children in primary and high schools receive eggs and bananas six days a week—two days funded by the government and four days by the Azim Premji Foundation. Each egg costs Rs 6, but daily price fluctuations make it difficult for teachers to manage

supplies. Sometimes, teachers even spend their own money to cover the difference.

In each school, a teacher is appointed to manage the hot meals, supported by 3,244 kitchen staff. They carefully record which children receive eggs and which receive bananas. Bananas are often provided to children who do not eat eggs, and schools sometimes adjust distribution if eggs break or spoil during transport.

Education Officer Manjunathaswamy M. said, "We are emphasizing eggs for nutritional development. Around 70% of children currently consume eggs, and we aim to increase this to 75-80%."

Gadag sees legal reforms, shop registration drive

GADAG

The Gadag Betageri Municipal Corporation has issued an important notice for all shop owners and business operators in the city. Authorities have said that registration under the Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, 1961, and Rules 1963 is compulsory. This rule applies to all shops and commercial units, whether they have workers or not. Those who have already registered or renewed their registration up to December 31, 2025, are exempted.

According to the notification released by Second Circle Labour Inspector Umesh



S. Hullannavar, all remaining shop owners must apply online through the Karnataka government's e-Karnika portal. Applicants need to submit the required documents and pay the prescribed fee to re-

ceive their registration or renewal certificate. Officials have warned that strict legal action will be taken against those who fail to comply with the rule.

Meanwhile, Gadag district

recorded a major success during the National Lok Adalat held on December 13. The program was conducted as per the directions of the Supreme Court of India, the Karnataka High Court, and the Karnataka State Legal Services Authority. Fourteen benches were set up across the district to settle disputes through mediation.

During the Lok Adalat, 4,560 pending court cases and 52,487 pre-litigation disputes were resolved, bringing the total number of settled cases to 57,047. Compensation worth over Rs. 12.31 crore was awarded in pending cases, while pre-litigation cases saw settlements worth over

Rs. 3.25 crore.

A special highlight of the event was the reunion of eight couples from family court cases. The couples exchanged garlands, and sweets were distributed, creating an emotional and positive atmosphere.

The event saw the participation of several judges, lawyers, government officials, mediators, and department representatives from across the district and talukas. Member Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority, C.S. Shivanagoudra, thanked all officials, departments, banks, insurance companies, and the media for their support in making the Lok Adalat a success.

QUICK READ

Fatehpur shivers at 4 degrees C; dense fog to persist across Rajasthan

Jaipur

Rajasthan witnessed sharp temperature contrasts on Tuesday, with Fatehpur in Sikar district emerging as the coldest place in the state, the Meteorological department said on Tuesday. The town recorded a minimum temperature of 4 degrees Celsius, marking the lowest overnight temperature. Other regions also experienced chilly conditions, with Nagaur at 5.6 degrees C, Lunkaransar at 7 degrees C, Dausa at 6.2 degrees C, Baran at 7.9 degrees C, Sirohi at 6.6 degrees C, Churu at 6.8 degrees C, and Sri Ganganagar at 10.4 degrees Celsius.

BJP targets Uddhav Sena ahead of Mumbai civic polls

Mumbai

The Bharatiya Janata Party, which has declared its strong resolve to unfurl the saffron flag atop the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation in the upcoming civil polls, has stepped up its attack on the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena, claiming that the Marathi Manos has chosen an auspicious moment to defeat the party and end its 25-year rule in the civic body. Maharashtra Minister for Cultural Affairs and BJP in-charge of the BMC elections, Ashish Shelar, took to X to target the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray).

Giriraj Singh backs Supriya Sule, says if votes stolen, Cong did it

New Delhi

Union Minister Giriraj Singh on Tuesday backed NCP(SP) MP Supriya Sule for dismissing the opposition's allegations of Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) rigging, asserting that if there had ever been vote theft in the country, it was carried out by the Congress in the era of ballot papers. Speaking to reporters outside Parliament, Giriraj Singh said that accusations of rigging were being raised without evidence. If votes were stolen, it was Congress that did it; they used to snatch ballots. That is why Supriya Sule is speaking correctly, the Union Minister said, endorsing her remarks.

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta vows to tackle legacy problems of pollution, waterlogging

NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday inspected the desilting of Sunehri Pul and the progress on Barapullah Bridge Phase-3, reiterating the government's commitment to finding permanent solutions to legacy problems like waterlogging and pollution. Talking to reporters, she said, The previous government inflicted pain on the city through their apathy and failure, and our efforts are a salve to the wounded capital.

What we are doing today should have been addressed by the previous governments. Our measures will take some time to show results, she said, pointing to delisting of drains to prevent waterlogging and road repairs and installation of mist sprayers, among other steps, to counter pollution.

She hit out at the previous

Kolkata air pollution tops Delhi, prompting wider monitoring calls

Kolkata's air quality crisis has intensified, overtaking Delhi, prompting experts to demand expanded real-time pollution monitoring infrastructure nationwide.

KOLKATA

Kolkata has witnessed a worrying deterioration in air quality over the past week, with pollution levels consistently surpassing those recorded in Delhi for seven consecutive days. The development has triggered renewed concern among environmentalists and public health advocates, who are urging authorities to strengthen the city's air quality monitoring network to better reflect ground realities in densely populated and traffic-heavy zones.

Green technologist and environmentalist Somendra Mohan Ghosh has called for the installation of at least 20 automatic air quality monitoring stations across the Kolkata metropolitan area. According to him, the existing network



of just seven automatic stations is insufficient and poorly located, failing to capture accurate, real-time pollution data from the city's most affected neighbourhoods. Ghosh stressed that areas such as Moulali and Shyambazar, known for heavy congestion and high population density, remain underrepresented in current monitoring efforts.

He pointed out that in the absence of automatic stations in these locations, authorities often rely on manual monitoring machines, which do not provide continuous or real-time data. Automatic stations are crucial to understanding the true extent of pollution exposure faced by residents, Ghosh said, adding that real-time data would help

policymakers respond more effectively to pollution spikes and design targeted mitigation strategies.

A major concern raised by environmentalists is that most existing automatic monitoring stations are situated in eco-sensitive or relatively less congested zones. While these locations may show comparatively better air quality, they do not accurately reflect conditions in crowded residential and commercial areas where people are exposed to higher pollution levels on a daily basis. The severity of the situation became evident between December 6 and December 11, when Kolkata consistently recorded higher pollution levels than the national capital. On December 11, the city's Air Quality Index (AQI) touched a hazardous 439 at 6.04 p.m.

Indian Army soldier died in explosion near Line of Control Kupwara

Soldier killed in Kupwara road construction explosion near LoC

SRINAGAR

A soldier of the Indian Army was killed in an explosion in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district, officials confirmed on Tuesday. The incident occurred on Tuesday in the Putaha Khan Gali area of Trehgam, which lies close to the Line of Control (LoC), an area known for heightened security and frequent patrols due to its proximity to the border.

The deceased soldier has been identified as Havaldar Zubair Ahmad of the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry (JAKLI). According to officials, the explosion took place during road construction work being carried out in the area. The soldier was critically injured in the blast and was immediately evacuated to a military hospital in the Drugmulla area of neighbouring Baramulla district. However, doctors declared him dead on arrival.

Officials stated that the ex-



plosion appeared to be accidental, though further details were awaited. Preliminary information suggested that the blast could have been triggered by an old landmine or explosive device in the area. Such incidents are not uncommon in regions close to the LoC, where landmines have historically been laid as part of anti-infiltration measures.

Security sources explained that soldiers sometimes accidentally step on pre-planted landmines while patrolling or during operational activities near the LoC. Over time, adverse weather conditions such as rain, snowfall, and soil ero-

sion can cause these mines to shift from their original locations. These displaced explosives are technically referred to as drift mines and pose a serious threat to both security personnel and civilians.

As part of a robust anti-infiltration strategy, areas close to the border and LoC fencing are often mined to prevent unauthorized crossings from across the line. While these measures are crucial for national security, they also increase the risks faced by troops deployed in these challenging terrains, particularly during construction or maintenance work.

SC issues notice on Justice Varma's plea challenging 3-member probe panel

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued notice on a plea filed by Allahabad High Court Judge Justice Yashwant Varma, challenging the impeachment proceedings initiated against him. Justice Varma has been at the centre of controversy since burnt cash was discovered on March 14 in an outhouse of his official residence, which had been allotted to him while he was serving in the Delhi High Court.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Augustine George Masih sought responses from the office of the Lok Sabha Speaker and Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Secretariats

and posted the matter for further hearing on January 7.

In his writ petition filed under Article 32 of the Constitution, Justice Varma has questioned the constitution of the three-member statutory inquiry committee announced by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to probe allegations arising out of the discovery of burnt currency at his official residence earlier this year.

On August 12, the Lok Sabha had read out the impeachment motion against Justice Varma, marking the beginning of proceedings under Articles 124(4), 217 and 218 of the Constitution for his possible removal.

The Speaker informed the

House that he had received the motion on July 31, backed by senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad and supported by 146 Lok Sabha members and 63 Rajya Sabha members. He said he had found substance as per the rules in the motion and admitted it for discussion.

Birla also announced the formation of a three-member committee comprising Supreme Court judge Justice Arvind Kumar, Madras High Court Chief Justice Maninder Mohan Shrivastava, and senior advocate B.V. Acharya to investigate the charges. The committee will soon give its report, and till then the motion will remain pending, he said.



OPS Camp Renaming Move Fuels Speculation Over Possible New Political Party

CHENNAI

Speculation is mounting in Tamil Nadu's political circles following a significant move by the political camp led by former Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam (OPS). The group has renamed the ADMK Workers' Rights Retrieval Committee as the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Workers' Rights Retrieval Kazhagam, a change that has triggered widespread debate about the possibility of a new political outfit taking shape.

Statements released by the OPS-led group since December 14 have prominently featured the new name, prompting varied interpretations even among its own functionaries. While one section of leaders and supporters sees the renaming as a clear signal that Panneerselvam is preparing to formally launch a separate political party, another section has sought to play down the move, calling it more of a technical or procedural adjustment rather than a major political declaration.

Functionaries who are cautious about drawing far-reaching conclusions argue that the addition of the word Kazhagam is in tune with the prevailing political environment in

Renaming by the OPS-led camp has reignited political speculation, raising expectations of a potential new party launch soon.

Tamil Nadu. According to them, the revised name could be useful while engaging in negotiations related to alliances or seat-sharing arrangements with other parties, should the need arise. They stress that the change does not automatically translate into the formation of a full-fledged political party.

These leaders also underline the challenges involved in launching and sustaining an independent political organisation. Building a strong party structure, mobilising financial resources, and establishing a robust grassroots presence across the state are complex tasks that require time and sustained effort. In their view, the OPS camp may be focusing on maintaining political relevance and bargaining power rather than immediately announcing a new party.

Despite these differing interpretations, enthusiasm remains high among a section of OPS loyalists.

MP eliminates distinction between permanent and temporary govt employees

BHOPAL

In a significant decision of reform for state government workforce, the Madhya Pradesh cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav, has abolished the distinction between permanent and temporary employees, simplifying employee classifications from ten categories, including regular, contractual, outsourced, and part-time, to just five, said Rajendra Shukla, deputy chief minister after cabinet meeting on Tuesday. This move addresses long-standing issues related to retirement benefits, probation periods, and job security disparities that affected thousands of workers across departments, he said.

Previously, the multi-tier system created inequalities in perks, promotions, and social security, often leaving contractual and temporary staff vulnerable.

The streamlined categories aim to provide uniform relief, enhance administrative efficiency, and ensure equitable treatment for all employees,

the deputy chief minister said.

The cabinet also approved a Rs 1,782 crore special rehabilitation package for families displaced by the Upper Narmada, Raghavpur, and Basania multipurpose projects in Anuppur, Mandla, and Dindori districts.

These initiatives, with a total cost of Rs 5,512 crore, will irrigate about 71,967 hectares and generate 125 MW of electricity, boosting agriculture and power supply.

In another eco-friendly decision, the government sanctioned Rs 48 crore to establish six 'Van Vigyan Kendras (Forest Science Centres)' in the first phase from 2025-26 to 2029-30, modelled after Krishi Vigyan Kendras.

These centres will promote forestry extension, agroforestry, and income generation from non-forest areas, with NGOs allowed to set them up under Forest Department oversight. The deputy chief minister clarified that initially there will be six such centres, and later they will be augmented further according to need.

**OPP-MPS-PROTEST-GANDHI**

Opposition MPs Protest in Parliament Against VB-G RAM G Bill, Accuse Govt of Insulting Mahatma Gandhi

NEW DELHI

Several opposition Members of Parliament staged a protest within the Parliament House complex on Tuesday, turning the spotlight on the contentious VB-G RAM G Bill, which has emerged as a fresh flashpoint between the government and the Opposition. The protesting MPs accused the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government of insulting Mahatma Gandhi and demanded the immediate withdrawal of the proposed legislation.



The protest took place shortly after the government introduced the bill in the Lok Sabha, seeking to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee

Act (MGNREGA), 2005. Opposition leaders described the move as an attack on one of the most significant social welfare legislations aimed at providing guaranteed employ-

ment to rural households across the country.

Senior Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, DMK leader T.R. Baalu, and Revolutionary Socialist Party MP N.K. Premchandran were among those who gathered near the Mahatma Gandhi statue in the Parliament House complex. The leaders raised slogans condemning the government, including Gandhi ji ka ye apmaan nahi sahega Hindustan, asserting that the country would not tolerate what they

termed an insult to the Father of the Nation.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra strongly criticised the government, alleging that the proposed bill was a deliberate attempt to dismantle the rural employment guarantee framework established under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. She said MGNREGA has been a lifeline for millions of rural families, especially during times of economic distress, and accused the NDA government of trying to finish off the scheme under the guise of reform.

Madhya Pradesh CM Transfers Rs 160 Crore to Over 7,200 Sambal Yojana Beneficiaries

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav transferred Rs 160 crore to Sambal beneficiaries, reinforcing Madhya Pradesh’s strong commitment to workers’ welfare.

BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Tuesday transferred Rs 160 crore with a single click to 7,227 beneficiaries under the Sambal Yojana, providing crucial ex gratia assistance in cases of death and disability. The amount was directly credited to the bank accounts of eligible beneficiaries under Sambal 2.0, reflecting the state government’s emphasis on transparency and timely delivery of welfare benefits.

Addressing the programme from Bhopal, the Chief Minister said the government was firmly committed to ensuring that every eligible individual or family affected by unforeseen circumstances receives support without delay. He underlined the vital role played by workers in the development of both the state and the nation. When workers meet with accidents, suffer serious injuries or lose their lives, it causes immense pain to their families. The government recognises their contribution and stands firmly with them through the Sambal scheme,



Yadav said. The Sambal Yojana is a flagship welfare initiative aimed at supporting workers in the unorganised sector across Madhya Pradesh. Since its inception, more than 1.82 lakh workers have been registered under the scheme, making it one of the most comprehensive social security programmes for informal sector workers in the state. Under its provisions, the government

provides Rs 4 lakh as compensation in case of accidental death and Rs 2 lakh in the event of natural death. For permanent disability, beneficiaries receive ex gratia assistance of Rs 2 lakh, while Rs 1 lakh is granted for partial permanent disability. In addition to death and disability benefits, the scheme offers Rs 5,000 towards funeral expenses and Rs 16,000 as maternity assistance for women workers, further strengthening the social safety net for vulnerable families.

Over 44,000 Voters Excluded from Bhabanipur Draft Electoral Roll

KOLKATA

The draft voters’ list published on Tuesday in West Bengal has revealed that a total of 44,770 voters have been excluded from the Bhabanipur Assembly constituency in south Kolkata, where Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is the elected legislator. The exclusions are based on a comparison with the previous voters’ list prepared in October 2025, according to officials familiar with the data.

Bhabanipur has drawn particular attention as it is a politically significant constituency represented by the Chief Minister herself. Among the excluded voters, booth number 260 has emerged as a focal point, as it is the polling booth where both Mamata Banerjee and Trinamool Congress (TMC) General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee cast their votes. From this booth alone, 127 voters have been removed from the draft list. Officials clarified that of these 127 excluded voters, 13 were deceased, while the remaining names were removed on grounds such as relocation, untraceability, duplication, or other eligibility-related reasons deemed suitable for exclusion under election norms. Election authorities maintain that such revisions are part of the routine electoral roll updating process.



Revised draft electoral rolls in Bhabanipur reveal large-scale voter exclusions, intensifying political debate ahead of West Bengal elections.

Bhabanipur holds added political significance due to its electoral history. In the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections, Mamata Banerjee contested from Nandigram but was defeated by BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari by a margin of just under 2,000 votes. Subsequently, she returned to the Assembly by winning the Bhabanipur by-election, enabling her to retain the Chief Minister’s post for a third consecutive term. The constituency is also one of the seven Assembly segments under the Kolkata (Dakshin) Lok Sabha seat. During the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, although TMC candidate Mala Roy won from Kolkata (Dakshin) for the second time.



Thirty-Four Maoist Cadres Surrender in Bijapur, Marking Major Boost to Anti-Naxal Operations

RAIPUR

In a significant breakthrough for anti-Naxal operations in Chhattisgarh, as many as 34 Maoist cadres, including seven women, surrendered before senior police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officials in Bijapur district on Tuesday. The surrendered cadres were carrying a cumulative bounty of Rs 84 lakh, officials said, terming the development a major success in the state’s ongoing campaign against left-wing extremism. The surrendered Maoists are primarily associated with the South Sub-Zonal Bureau and also include members linked to key Maoist formations such as the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee (DKSZC), the Telangana State Committee, and the Andhra-Odisha Border (AOB) Division. Security officials said the presence of cadres from multiple committees reflects the weakening organisational structure of Maoist groups operating in the region. Among those who laid down arms were several senior operatives, including a Divisional Committee Member (DVCN) of the Keralapal

Area Committee, who carried a bounty of Rs 8 lakh. The group also comprised members of the People’s Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), Area Committee Members (ACMs), platoon leaders, militia commanders, and office-bearers of frontal organisations such as the Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sangh (DAKMS) and the Chaitanya Natya Manch (CNM). Police officials said the cadres cited growing disillusionment with Maoist ideology and internal exploitation as reasons for surrendering. They pledged allegiance to the Indian Constitution and expressed a desire to lead peaceful lives within the mainstream of society. As part of the state’s rehabilitation policy, each surrendered cadre was provided an immediate incentive of Rs 50,000 and assured further assistance for rehabilitation, skill development, and livelihood support. The surrender was facilitated by sustained joint operations and outreach efforts by the District Reserve Guard (DRG), Bastar Fighters, Special Task Force (STF), CoBRA units, and CRPF battalions.

Vibrant Gujarat conference in Veraval signed major investment MoUs, strengthening industrial growth and employment prospects in Gir Somnath.

Vibrant Gujarat Conference in Veraval secures Rs 270 crore MoUs

AHMEDABAD

As part of the Gujarat government’s efforts to realise the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047, a district-level Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference (VGRC) was organised at Asopalav Lawns in Veraval, located in Gir Somnath district. The event was held as a flagship programme under the broader Kutch-Saurashtra Regional Conference and aimed at strengthening regional investment opportunities and accelerating inclusive economic development.

The conference witnessed the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) worth more than Rs 270 crore with various industrial units. These agreements reaffirmed investors’ confidence in Gir Somnath district and their commitment to enhancing industrial development, infrastructure creation, and employment generation in the region. Officials stated that the investments are expected to create new job opportunities and stimulate allied sectors in the coming years.

Addressing the gathering, District Panchayat President



Manjula Muchhar highlighted the evolution of the Vibrant Gujarat initiative. She said the summit, envisioned by then Chief Minister and current Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has grown from a seed into a banyan tree, transforming into a globally recognised investment platform. She noted that Vibrant Gujarat has played a pivotal role in showcasing the state’s industrial potential and attracting both domestic and international investors over the past two decades.

Emphasising the district’s unique strengths, Muchhar said that under the ‘One District, One Product’ (ODOP) initiative, fish and Kesar mango have been identified as Gir

Somnath’s key products. She added that the district has around 120 industrial units already operational in Veraval, reflecting a steadily expanding industrial base. Beyond industry, Gir Somnath holds immense potential in agriculture, coconut cultivation, fisheries, and allied sectors, supported by favourable natural resources.

Muchhar also underlined the district’s strong spiritual and cultural identity, pointing to its significance as a major pilgrimage destination. She said that the combination of industrial growth, agricultural strength, and tourism potential makes Gir Somnath a promising hub for balanced and sustainable development.

NIA arrests final offender, accomplice in 2019 Ramalingam killing

NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has nabbed the last of the six absconding proclaimed offenders (POs) and also arrested one more harbourer in the Ramalingam murder case, the agency said on Tuesday. Mohammed Ali Jinnah of

Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu was declared a PO and also carried a reward of Rs. 5 lakh for his arrest since Ramalingam was hacked to death in Thanjavur (TN) on February 5 2019, allegedly by members of the banned Popular Front of India (PFI). NIA investigations have revealed the role of Jinnah, a

former district president of PFI, Thanjavur district, in conspiring, supervising and coordinating with other accused in the brutal killing, the agency said in its press note. The agency, which caught Jinnah on the basis of information received from the ATS unit of the Tamil Nadu police on Tuesday, also arrested As-

math, who had harboured the POs in the case for the past several years. Just five days ago, NIA had arrested two more absconding POs and three other harbourers in the case RC-06/2019/NIA/DLI. The agency, which had taken over the probe from Thiruvaidaimaruthur police on

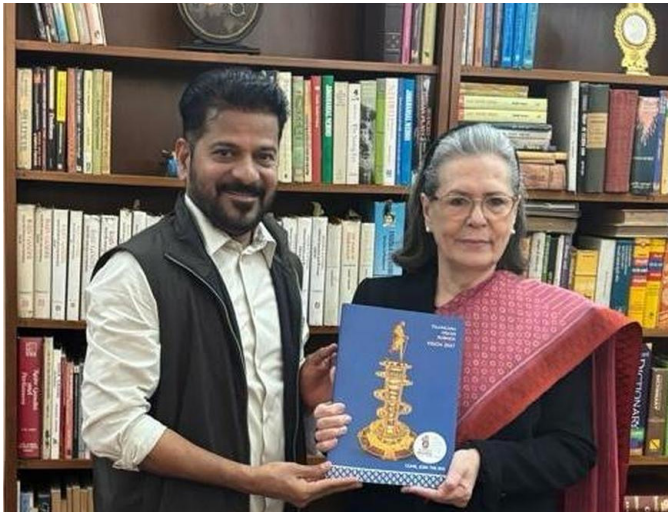
March 7, 2019 and filed the chargesheet in August 2019, is continuing to investigate the conspiracy behind the murder. Earlier in August, the NIA searched nine locations in Tamil Nadu and arrested Imthathullah, proprietor of Ambur Biryani Hotels in Kodaikanal, from Dindigul district.

REVANTH-SONIA-TELANGANA-VISION

Revanth Reddy Meets Sonia Gandhi, Presents Telangana Rising 2047 Vision Document

HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Tuesday met Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi and formally presented her with the Telangana Rising 2047 Vision Document. The meeting focused on the state government’s performance over the past two years, its ongoing welfare initiatives, and its long-term roadmap for economic growth and development, according to an official statement issued by the Chief Minister’s Office (CMO). During the interaction, Revanth Reddy briefed Sonia Gandhi on the key welfare schemes implemented by the Congress-led government since assuming office. He also highlighted measures being undertaken to strengthen infrastructure, boost employment, attract investments, and ensure inclusive growth



across urban, peri-urban, and rural regions of the state. The Chief Minister outlined future plans aligned with the Telangana Rising 2047 Vision, which aims to position the state as a major economic and development hub in the coming decades. Sonia Gandhi appreciated

the performance of the Telangana government and lauded Revanth Reddy’s vision for the state’s future. She extended her best wishes to the Chief Minister and expressed confidence that he would lead Telangana on a progressive path in line with the goals set out in the Vision Document.

Emphasising the importance of balanced and inclusive development, she conveyed hope that the state would emerge as a model for sustainable growth. The Telangana Rising 2047 Vision Document, unveiled at the concluding session of the Telangana Rising Global Summit, sets an ambitious target of transforming Telangana into a \$3 trillion economy by 2047. As an interim milestone, the state aims to achieve a \$1 trillion economy by 2034. The document lays out a comprehensive roadmap to achieve these targets through structural reforms, sectoral growth strategies, and region-specific planning. A key feature of the vision is the division of the state into three sector-focused zones: CURE (Core Urban Region Economy), PURE (Peri Urban Region Economy), and RARE (Rural Agri Region Economy).

J&K L-G Sinha inaugurates 108-ft National Flag mast on Vijay Diwas in Akhnoor

JAMMU

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor (L-G) Manoj Sinha, on Tuesday, inaugurated a 108-feet National Flag mast on Vijay Diwas at Kachrial in Akhnoor area of Jammu district, Defence Ministry officials said. Defence Ministry Spokesperson, Lieutenant Colonel Suneel Bartwal in a statement said, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha inaugurated 108-Foot National Flag Mast at Kachrial in Akhnoor on Vijay Diwas. In a solemn and inspiring ceremony marking the observance of Vijay Diwas, the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today inaugurated a towering 108-feet National Flag Mast at Kachrial in Akhnoor. The majestic Tricolour has been dedicated to the heroes of the historic Battle of Chhamb and serves as a symbolic remembrance of the extraordinary valour and supreme sacrifices exhibited by



the Indian Armed Forces during the 1965 and 1971 wars, the Defence Ministry Spokesperson added. The region of Chhamb was a pivotal and crucial battleground in both India-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971 which was marked by fierce and unrelenting fighting by Indian Army. Facing overwhelming enemy strength, Indian soldiers against daunting odds and in the face of relentless assaults displayed exemplary courage by offering stubborn resistance in the battered landscape despite suffering heavy losses. The intensity and ferocity of operations in the region of Chhamb during both 1965 and 1971 wars has been given

a special mention in annals of Indian military history, the Defence Ministry Spokesperson said. The inauguration ceremony witnessed the presence of senior military and civil officials, war veterans, Veer Naris, students and local residents, who gathered to honour the fallen heroes. The momentous event included hoisting of the National Flag, National Anthem, patriotic renditions and cultural program which included display of traditional Khukuri Martial Arts by Gorkha Regiment to commemorate the supreme sacrifices by those who laid down their life in line of duty, the Defence Ministry Spokesperson added.

QUICK READ

New Zealand food inflation slows to 4.4 per cent

Wellington

New Zealand's food prices rose 4.4 per cent in the year to November 2025, following a 4.7 per cent increase in the 12 months to October 2025, Stats NZ reported Tuesday. Higher grocery prices, up 4.6 per cent, drove the annual rise, followed by meat, poultry, and fish, which climbed 7.7 per cent annually, said the Statistics Department. The average price of a two-litre bottle of milk rose 15.8 per cent annually, while sirloin beef steak surged 26.7 per cent, and white loaf bread jumped 53.2 per cent annually, it said.

Rights body slams Bangladeshi journalist's arrest

Paris

A leading international human rights organisation strongly condemned the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government for adopting an authoritarian and fascistic path in Bangladesh, accusing it of suppressing freedom of expression instead of protecting it. The criticism came after senior Bangladeshi journalist Anis Alamgir was reportedly taken into custody by the Detective Branch (DB) of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) without specific charges and subsequently arrested under the country's Anti-Terrorism Act. In its statement, Justice Makers Bangladesh in France (JMBF) stated that the arrest of Alamgir under the harsh and controversial Anti-Terrorism Act solely for criticising the Yunus-led interim.

Ethiopia's reforms make attractive investment destination

Addis Ababa

India's Ambassador to Ethiopia, Anil Kumar Rai, highlighted the significance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, stating that it comes at a time when the African nation is witnessing an economic transformation, making it an attractive investment destination. On Tuesday, Rai said, This visit is taking place at a time when Ethiopia has overcome many economic challenges and implemented very liberalised policies. All this has been possible because of the rigorous homegrown economic reforms implemented under the able guidance of Abiy Ahmed, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia.

Modi Jordan Crown Prince highlight civilisational ties

PM Narendra Modi's Jordan visit highlighted cultural diplomacy, economic cooperation and historic ties through high-level engagements bilaterally

AMMAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jordan witnessed a symbolic and culturally significant moment on Tuesday when Crown Prince Al Hussein Bin Abdullah II personally drove him to the Jordan Museum in Amman. The gesture underscored the warmth of bilateral relations and reflected the strong personal rapport between the leadership of the two nations. At the museum, Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan, Vice-Chair of the Jordan Museum, provided a special guided tour to the two leaders, showcasing Jordan's rich historical and archaeological heritage.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) highlighted the visit as an exploration of ancient civilisational links between India and Jordan. In a post on X, the MEA spokesperson noted that the



visit reflected centuries-old connections and shared cultural values between the two nations. The Crown Prince, who is a 42nd-generation direct descendant of Prophet Mohammad, played a key role in hosting Prime Minister Modi during the cultural engagement.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Modi addressed the India-Jordan Business Forum in Amman, where he outlined key areas for enhancing trade, business and investment co-operation. Jordan's King Abdullah II and Crown Prince Al Hussein Bin Abdullah II were also present at the forum, un-

derlining the importance Jordan attaches to its economic partnership with India. The Prime Minister emphasised opportunities in sectors such as renewable energy, digital infrastructure, water management and technology-driven services.

During bilateral discussions at the Al Husseiniya Palace, Prime Minister Modi proposed increasing India-Jordan bilateral trade to USD 5 billion. He also called for collaboration between Jordan's digital payment ecosystem and India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI), highlighting India's experience in building scalable digital public infrastructure. The visit resulted in the finalisation of several Memorandums of Understanding across diverse fields including culture, renewable energy, water management and digital public infrastructure.

India Jordan discuss civil nuclear energy cooperation

AMMAN

India and Jordan on Tuesday held a general discussion on the possibility of using nuclear energy as a clean form of power, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, highlighting a potential new area of cooperation between the two countries. The discussion took place during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ongoing visit to Jordan, which marks his first full-fledged bilateral visit to the West Asian nation.

Addressing a special media briefing on the visit, Secretary (South) in the MEA, Neeha Malhotra, said both sides acknowledged that civil nuclear energy is increasingly being viewed as a clean and viable source of power, particularly in the context of global climate change concerns. She clarified that while there were no specific agreements or detailed plans finalised, the two countries broadly exchanged views



India and Jordan explored nuclear energy cooperation during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, focusing on clean energy prospects.

on the subject. Civil nuclear energy is supposed to be nowadays a very, very clean energy, and there were general discussions with the Jordanian side on the possibility of the use of nuclear energy as a clean form of energy, Malhotra said. She added that both India and Jordan are of the opinion that nuclear energy can play an important role as nations search for sustainable solutions to meet growing energy demands while addressing climate challenges.

Prime Minister Modi met King Abdullah II of Jordan at the Al Husseiniya Palace in Amman, where a wide range of bilateral issues were discussed.

Sri Lanka reopens most schools after Cyclone Ditwah nationwide

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka on Tuesday reopened the majority of government and government-approved private schools across the country following temporary closures caused by Cyclone Ditwah, according to senior officials from the Ministry of Education. The move marks a significant step in restoring normalcy after severe weather disrupted daily life, particularly in several central regions of the island nation.

Ministry of Education Secretary Nalaka Kaluwewa said that 9,929 out of a total 10,076 schools have resumed operations. However, 147 schools remain closed due to prevailing emergency conditions in areas that were most affected by the cyclone. These schools are located in the Uva, Central and North Western provinces, where heavy rains, flooding and landslides caused widespread disruption. Authorities stated that schools in these regions will reopen only after safety conditions improve.

To ease the burden on students and families affected by the disaster, the government has announced free transport services for schoolchildren for the remainder of the year. The Sri Lanka Transport



Board and the Sri Lanka Railway Department will jointly provide these services, ensuring uninterrupted access to education for students traveling from disaster-hit areas.

In a significant academic decision, the Ministry of Education has also prohibited third-term examinations for students in Classes 6 to 10 for the 2025 academic year. Officials said the move was taken to reduce stress on students whose studies were disrupted by the cyclone and related emergencies. The second phase of the third school term had originally been scheduled to begin on December 8. However, authorities postponed the reopening of schools as Cyclone Ditwah caused extensive damage and created safety concerns across several provinces.

Beyond the education sector, the Sri Lankan government has begun implementing broader recovery measures, particularly to revive tourism, a key pillar of the country's economy.

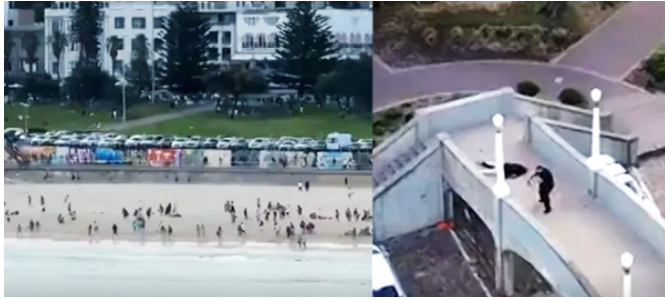
Sri Lanka reopened most schools after Cyclone Ditwah, while authorities announced transport relief and broader recovery measures

Sydney Mourns Victims of Bondi Beach Terror Attack Targeting Jewish Community

SYDNEY

Sydney residents came together in grief and solidarity, laying flowers and lighting candles in memory of those killed in a terror attack that targeted the Jewish community at the city's iconic Bondi Beach. The attack occurred on Sunday evening as people gathered to celebrate the first night of Hanukkah, turning a peaceful religious observance into a scene of chaos and tragedy.

According to authorities, around 1,000 people were assembled on a grassy area at Archer Park near Bondi Beach when two gunmen opened fire at approximately 6:47 p.m. local time. Witnesses described scenes of panic as families and



children fled in all directions to escape the gunfire. Emergency services rushed to the scene, while police cordoned off the area and launched a large-scale security operation.

Australian police later identified the suspects as a father and son — 50-year-old Sajid Akram and his 24-year-old son, Naveed Akram. Both

were linked to the deadly shooting, which officials have described as an act of terrorism. The attackers were taken into custody following the incident, and investigations are continuing into their background and possible connections. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the shooting appeared to have been in-

Pak firm to eradicate terrorism: PM Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said that the nation would always stand united, firm and unwavering in its resolve to eradicate the scourge of terrorism.

He made the statement through a post on his X handle in connection with the anniversary of the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar on December 16, 2014. The attack claimed

about 150 lives, mostly students. "Today, we pay tribute to the victims of the Army Public School Peshawar incident, who sacrificed their precious lives for the future of our beloved homeland. The sacrifice of these innocent children and teachers is forever etched in our national conscience," he said.

He added that the incident serves as a constant reminder of "our shared responsibility to defeat terrorism".



Plan to build church for war dead in city park sparks rare protest

LONDON

Plans to build a church in honour of Russia's war dead in a riverside park in the southern city of Krasnodar have sparked a rare protest by local people, who publicly appealed to President Vladimir Putin to prevent it from going ahead. Video posted online showed a resident reading the appeal to a large crowd, who chanted their approval. The message urged Putin to preserve the park in the Yubileiny district, next to the Kuban river, as a green space for their children and grandchildren to enjoy.

We are not against religion. We are in favour of the law, it said. The authorities are not listening to us. We are forced to shout. Yubileiny is against this development.

It was not clear when the public meeting took place. Protests of any kind are rare in Russia, which has intensified a clampdown on virtually all forms of dissent since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Authorities have

said the planned church will be dedicated to the heroes of the special military operation, the term by which the Kremlin refers to the war. But the war link was not the focus of people's objections.

Alexander Safronov, a Communist member of the local parliament, said: Residents are not opposed to the church in principle, but they do not want the embankment to be developed.

Spas, a conservative religious TV channel, has said Krasnodar needs more churches and has attacked the opponents of the project as raving Communists. Safronov said the channel had poured lies and filth on the protesters, but this had only increased their number.

The issue sparked lively discussion in a Krasnodar chatroom on Russian social network VK, with some residents complaining that there were more than enough churches in the city already. Prayers alone won't fix what is happening in this country, one person posted.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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

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

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

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Poland detains student over alleged terror plot

WARSAW

Polish security services have detained a university student on suspicion of preparing a mass attack targeting a Christmas market, authorities said on Tuesday, underscoring heightened security concerns during the festive season across Europe. According to Jacek Do-

brzynski, spokesperson for Poland's special services, the suspect has been identified as Mateusz W., a student at the Catholic University of Lublin. Investigators believe the student intended to carry out an attack using explosives and had also planned to establish links with a terrorist organisation. The aim of the crime was

to intimidate many people and support Islamic State, Do-brzynski said in a post on social media platform X. He added that during the investigation, officers of Poland's Internal Security Agency seized electronic data carriers and items related to Islam, which are now being analysed as part of the ongoing probe.

Jose Antonio Kast wins Chile presidential runoff

SANTIAGO

Chile has elected conservative hardliner Jose Antonio Kast as its new president, marking the country's sharpest political shift to the right since the end of military dictatorship in 1990. Kast secured a decisive victory in presidential runoff, winning 58.30 per cent of the vote against leftist candidate Jeannette Jara, who received 41.70 per cent, with over 95 per cent of ballots counted. Conceding defeat, Jara ac-

knowledgeed the voters' verdict and stressed respect for democratic processes. Democracy has spoken loud and clear, she said, adding that she had personally contacted Kast to congratulate him and wish him success for the good of Chile. Her remarks aimed to underline political stability following a polarising campaign.

Kast's victory was driven largely by public anxiety over rising crime rates and increasing migration, issues that dominated the election discourse.



Throughout his decades-long political career, Kast has maintained a firm right-wing stance, advocating strict law-

and-order measures. His proposals include building border walls, deploying the military in high-crime areas, and deporting migrants living in Chile illegally. These positions, once viewed by many voters as extreme, have gained traction amid growing security concerns. This was Kast's third attempt at winning the presidency and his second appearance in a runoff election. He previously lost to leftist President Gabriel Boric in 2021. However, changing pub-

lic sentiment, particularly frustration over crime, immigration and economic uncertainty, helped Kast broaden his appeal beyond his traditional conservative base.

Supporters gathered at Kast's campaign headquarters in Santiago on Sunday evening to celebrate the win, waving Chilean flags and chanting slogans. Some supporters wore red caps bearing the slogan Make Chile Great Again, echoing populist imagery seen in other countries.



A Geological Drama Unfolding Toward the Indian Subcontinent

Deep beneath the savannas and highlands of East Africa, the Earth’s crust is tearing itself apart. This isn’t science fiction or an apocalyptic prophecy, it’s geology in action, a slow-motion continental breakup that’s been unfolding for millions of years. The African continent is splitting, and in a geological plot twist that seems almost too dramatic to be true, scientists predict that parts of East Africa may eventually drift toward and collide with the Indian subcontinent. This isn’t a matter of “if” but “when,” though that “when” is measured in tens of millions of years.

The East African Rift: A Continent’s Fault Line

The East African Rift System is a developing divergent tectonic plate boundary where the African plate is splitting into two tectonic plates the Somali plate and the Nubian plate at approximately six to seven millimeters per year. To put this in perspective, that’s roughly the rate at which your fingernails grow. Yet over geological timescales, this glacial pace adds up to dramatic transformation. The Great Rift Valley extends from the southern Turkish Hatay Province in Asia, through the Red Sea, to Mozambique in Southeast Africa, spanning an astounding distance of approximately 6,000 to 7,000 kilometers. This massive geological feature is more than just a valley it’s a window into the planet’s dynamic interior, where convection currents in the mantle drive the surface above into motion. The rift system consists of two main branches. The Eastern Rift Valley, also known as the Gregory Rift, runs through Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania, characterized by volcanic activity and dramatic landscapes. The Western Rift Valley, or Albertine Rift, passes through Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi, hosting some of Africa’s deepest lakes. These two arms embrace Lake Victoria, which sits between them like a geological witness to the continent’s gradual divorce.



Why Is Africa Splitting Apart?

The forces tearing Africa apart originate from deep within the Earth. The primary driving force is believed to be a mantle plume, referred to as the African Superswell, bringing hot asthenosphere to shallow crustal levels. Think of it as a massive bubble of superheated rock rising from deep in the mantle, pushing against the lithosphere from below like a geological jackhammer. This upwelling causes the overlying crust to heat, expand, and eventually crack. As the lithosphere stretches and thins, faults develop and blocks of crust drop down relative to others, creating the characteristic rift valley topography a series of elongated depressions bounded by steep faults, interspersed with volcanic peaks. The African Rift Valley began forming approximately 20 to 25 million years ago, starting in the Afar region of Ethiopia and gradually extending southward. The process continues today, evidenced by frequent earthquakes, active volcanoes like Mount Kilimanjaro and Erta Ale, and dramatic surface ruptures that occasionally appear, capturing international attention. In 2018, a massive crack suddenly opened in Kenya’s Rift Valley, stretching several kilometers and swallowing portions of a highway. While dramatic, geologists believe heavy rainfall may have revealed a pre-existing weakness in the rock rather than representing a sudden tectonic event. Still, it served as a stark reminder that beneath our feet, the Earth remains restless.



Africa’s Great Split



The Birth of a New Ocean

If the current trends continue, the East African Rift will eventually evolve into something far more dramatic: a new ocean. Scientists estimate it will take at least five to ten million years for the Afar region to become fully submerged. When that happens, water from the Indian Ocean will flood into the widening rift, transforming the valley into a narrow sea similar to the Red Sea today. Over tens of millions of years, seafloor spreading would create new oceanic crust along the rift’s center, forming a mid-ocean ridge. Eventually, the African continent will become smaller, and there will be a large island in the Indian Ocean composed of parts of Ethiopia and Somalia, including the Horn of Africa. This new landmass, encompassing present-day Somalia, parts of Kenya, Ethiopia, and Tanzania, would drift as the newly formed ocean basin expanded. This scenario isn’t unprecedented. The Red Sea provides a perfect example of continental rifting in a more advanced stage. Millions of years ago, the Arabian Peninsula was firmly attached to Africa. Rifting caused them to separate, and the Indian Ocean flooded the gap, creating the Red Sea. Today, the Arabian and African plates continue to move apart, and the Red Sea slowly widens.



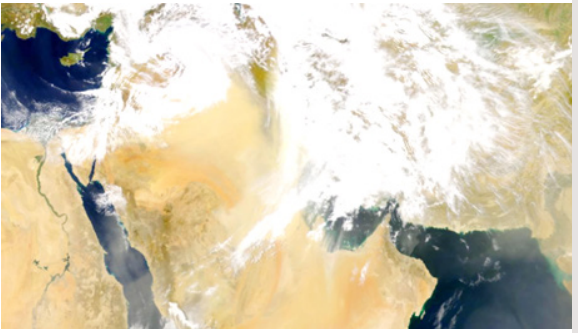
India’s Journey: The Fastest Plate on Earth

To understand the eventual convergence between East Africa and India, we must first appreciate India’s remarkable geological history. The Indian subcontinent has one of the most dramatic tectonic stories ever recorded. India traveled approximately 1,200 miles in 150 million years a record until it collided with Asia. India was once part of the ancient supercontinent Gondwana, joined with Africa, Australia, Antarctica, and South America. Starting around 200 million years ago, this massive landmass began fragmenting. India broke away, first from Africa, then from Antarctica, shedding Australia and Madagascar along the way. For about 20 million years, India existed as an island continent, racing northward across the ancient Tethys Ocean. What made India’s journey extraordinary was its speed. After the extinction event that killed the dinosaurs, India was moving at approximately 20 centimeters per year in relation to Africa, faster than any tectonic plate had moved before or since. This blistering pace (by geological standards) puzzled scientists for decades. The mystery was partially solved when researchers discovered evidence of double subduction zones. India raced toward collision starting 80 million years ago because of two short subduction zones, one in front of the other, that emerged between the tectonic plates. These zones essentially pulled India northward like conveyor belts, accelerating its motion until it finally crashed into Asia around 40 to 50 million years ago. The collision was cataclysmic in slow motion. Because both the Indian and Eurasian plates contained thick continental crust of similar density, neither could subduct beneath the other. Instead, the crust crumpled upward, creating the Himalayas the world’s highest mountain range and the vast Tibetan Plateau. Marine fossils found at Mount Everest’s summit bear silent testimony to this collision: rocks that once lay at the bottom of the Tethys Ocean now crown the planet’s highest peak.



The Future: When East Africa Meets India

The Indian plate is currently moving northeast at five centimeters per year, continuing to push into the Eurasian plate. This ongoing collision causes the Himalayas to rise by several millimeters annually and triggers earthquakes across the region. But what happens when the Somali plate breaks free from Africa and begins its own journey? Around 200 million years in the future, Somalia, Madagascar, and India will collide with each other, creating the Somalaya Mountains. This prediction, developed by researchers at Utrecht University, is based on modeling future tectonic plate movements and applying the rules of mountain formation observed throughout Earth’s history. The scenario unfolds like this: As the East African Rift continues to widen, the Somali plate (carrying Somalia, parts of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania) will separate completely from the Nubian plate (the rest of Africa). Meanwhile, the Indian plate, which has been moving northward for tens of millions of years, may shift its trajectory eastward as it encounters resistance from the Eurasian plate. The geometry of plate boundaries plays a crucial role. The westerly side of the Indian plate shares a divergent boundary with the African plate called the Central Indian Ridge. As new oceanic crust forms along this ridge, it pushes the plates apart. However, complex forces including the pull of subducting slabs, mantle convection, and interactions with neighboring plates will determine the exact trajectories of these landmasses. When the Somali plate and Indian plate eventually converge, neither will easily subduct beneath the other due to their continental crust composition.



A Reminder of Earth’s Impermanence

The story of Africa’s split and eventual collision with India serves as a humbling reminder of Earth’s dynamic nature. The continents we know, the mountains we climb, and the oceans we sail are merely temporary arrangements snapshots in an ongoing process of creation and destruction that has shaped our planet for billions of years. The rifting right now is very slow, about the rate that one’s toenails grow, as geophysicist Ken Macdonald aptly notes. Yet this incremental process, repeated across millions of years, can split continents, raise mountains higher than clouds, and completely redraw the map of our world. Understanding these processes isn’t merely academic curiosity. The same forces splitting Africa and pushing India northward trigger earthquakes that affect millions of people today. Volcanic eruptions along the East African Rift, while spectacular, pose real hazards to nearby populations. The slow deformation of the Himalayas makes South Asia one of the world’s most seismically active regions. Moreover, studying plate tectonics provides crucial insights into Earth’s past and future habitability. The movement of continents influences climate patterns, ocean chemistry, and the carbon cycle—all factors that have allowed complex life to flourish on our planet for hundreds of millions of years.



Conclusion

In the grand theater of planetary evolution, Africa’s split and eventual union with India represents just one act in an endless play. The same processes that are tearing Africa apart today once split Pangaea, creating the Atlantic Ocean. The same forces pushing India northward once drove it away from Antarctica, carrying a cargo of unique species on a 150-million-year voyage. These tectonic dramas proceed at nature’s own pace, indifferent to human timescales. Yet they shape everything—from the air we breathe to the ground beneath our feet, from the distribution of mineral resources to the very existence of mountain ranges that inspire wonder. As we observe Africa’s gradual division and contemplate its future collision with India, we’re witnessing nothing less than the Earth reinventing itself, as it has countless times before and will countless times again. In the patient geology of our restless planet, we find both a record of deep time and a preview of changes yet to come a reminder that the only constant in Earth’s long history is change itself. The rifting continues, millimeter by millimeter, year after year. Somewhere in the Afar Depression, magma rises from the mantle. In the Himalayas, India presses northward still, lifting mountains higher. And far in the future long after we’re gone new mountains will rise where ocean basins lie today, and the map of Earth will be drawn anew.



The Implications: Reshaping Geography, Climate, and Life

The collision between East Africa and India will profoundly reshape our planet, though these changes will unfold over timescales incomprehensible to human experience. The formation of new mountain ranges will alter atmospheric circulation patterns, affecting monsoon systems and creating rain shadows. Ocean currents will shift as new landmasses block or redirect their flow, redistributing heat around the planet. Biodiversity hotspots will face unprecedented challenges and opportunities. Species endemic to the Somali plate will find themselves transplanted to new latitudes, encountering different climates and competing with Asian flora and fauna. Some will thrive in their new homes; others will face extinction. New ecological niches will emerge in the rising mountains, driving evolutionary innovation. For human civilizations—assuming our species persists that long—the changes will require adaptation on continental scales. New maritime routes will emerge as old ones close. Coastal cities will find themselves landlocked or submerged as sea levels respond to tectonic changes. The economic and political geography of the world will be fundamentally rewritten.



Green's Record Bid, Big Snubs Highlight Dramatic IPL 2026 Auction

Record buys, shocking snubs, and cautious spending define IPL 2026 auction

ABU DHABI

The IPL 2026 mini-auction in Abu Dhabi delivered high drama, bold gambles and plenty of surprises as franchises recalibrated their squads ahead of the new season. Headlining the day was Australian all-rounder Cameron Green, whose blockbuster ₹25.20 crore move to Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) rewrote the record books and set the tone for a frenetic opening phase.

KKR flexed their financial muscle early, locking horns with Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in a fierce bidding war for Green. With Rajasthan Royals briefly in the mix, the contest escalated rapidly before narrowing to KKR and CSK. When KKR landed the decisive bid, Green became the most expensive overseas player in IPL history, surpassing Mitchell Starc's previous record. The three-time champions followed up by snapping up Sri Lankan speedster Matheesha Pathirana for ₹18 crore, signalling aggressive intent despite heavy early spending.



CSK, though missing out on Green, remained one of the auction's power players. The five-time champions spent cautiously, adding West Indies spinner Akeal Hosein for ₹2 crore while retaining a substantial purse for later rounds. Mumbai Indians, by contrast, operated on a tight budget and focused on familiarity, bringing back Quinton de Kock at his base price of ₹1 crore to bolster their top order.

Several franchises adopted a value-driven approach. Delhi Capitals quietly strengthened their overseas core with David Miller and Ben Duckett, while Lucknow Super Giants secured Wanindu Hasaranga and Anrich Nortje at

base prices, reinforcing their bowling options without overspending. Royal Challengers Bengaluru made a targeted move by acquiring Venkatesh Iyer for ₹7 crore, a significant drop from his previous auction valuation.

One of the biggest talking points of the day, however, was the long list of high-profile unsold players. Indian batters Prithvi Shaw and Sarfaraz Khan again failed to attract bids, despite strong domestic performances. England's Liam Livingstone, expected by many to trigger a bidding war, also went unsold, underlining the unforgiving nature of the auction and the premium placed on

recent IPL form and specific team needs.

Country-wise trends revealed Australia dominating the auction narrative, with Green's deal inflating average valuations. Sri Lankan players drew healthy interest, while South Africa led in player count with multiple signings at modest prices. Indian spinners remained in demand, highlighted by Rajasthan Royals' ₹7.2 crore buy of Ravi Bishnoi.

As the auction progressed, contrasting strategies became evident. KKR set the early tempo with headline-grabbing buys, CSK and Sunrisers Hyderabad waited patiently with loaded purses, and teams like Mumbai Indians and Rajasthan Royals were forced into precision shopping.

In the end, the Abu Dhabi auction reinforced what makes the IPL unique: fortunes can change in minutes, reputations offer no guarantees, and one raised paddle can redefine a season. With squads still evolving, the true winners may only be known once the action shifts from the auction table to the field.

DC Break Bank for Uncapped Star Auqib Nabi Dar at ₹8.4 Cr

ABU DHABI

Uncapped all-rounder Auqib Nabi Dar emerged as one of the biggest surprises of the IPL 2026 mini-auction in Abu Dhabi after being snapped up by Delhi Capitals for a hefty ₹8.4 crore on Tuesday.

Dar, who entered the auction with a modest base price, triggered an intense bidding war as multiple franchises looked to invest in young Indian talent. His ability to contribute with both bat and ball, coupled with strong recent performances in domestic cricket, quickly pushed his value upward, with DC eventually having the final say.

The Capitals' aggressive move underlined their intent to strengthen their Indian core ahead of the new season. Team officials see Dar as a long-term prospect who can add balance to the side, particularly in conditions that reward seam-bowling all-rounders.

Dar's sale was among the

standout moments of the day, highlighting the premium franchises are willing to pay for uncapped Indian players with multi-dimensional skills.



Abhinav Bindra voices concern over Messi's India tour management

NEW DELHI

Olympic gold medalist Abhinav Bindra expressed unease over the handling of Lionel Messi's recent tour of India, highlighting what he described as chaotic management and misplaced spending priorities. While events in Hyderabad and Mumbai proceeded smoothly, large portions of the visit were marked by long queues, frustrated fans, and limited access to the football legend, prompting Bindra to speak out on social media.

"His recent visit to India unfolded parts of it felt chaotic and left me quietly uneasy," Bindra posted on X, reflecting on the tour's organisational shortcomings. He noted that millions were spent on fleeting moments of proximity, photographs, and short interactions with Messi—a sum that, he suggested, could have been channelled toward developing sports infrastructure at the grassroots level.

Bindra emphasised that his concern was not with Messi himself, whose story he described as "transcending sport," noting his journey from a child overcoming physical challenges to one of football's greatest icons. "I hold profound respect and admiration for what he represents—perseverance, humility, and an uncompromising pursuit of greatness," he wrote. However, he urged society to reflect on broader objectives, asking whether India is nurturing a sporting culture or merely celebrating global icons. Bindra stressed that even a fraction of the investment in celebrity appearances could improve access to playgrounds, provide better coaching, and support young talent.

While acknowledging the economics of sport and the appeal of global branding, Bindra called for a balance between admiration for elite athletes and long-term investment in domestic sporting foundations. His remarks have sparked discussions on social media about prioritising sustainable development over high-profile celebrity visits, prompting reflection on how India can better leverage such events to strengthen its sporting ecosystem.



MANCHESTER

Manchester United squandered three separate leads as Bournemouth battled back relentlessly in a pulsating 4-4 Premier League draw at Old Trafford.

Manchester United missed the chance to climb to fifth despite producing arguably their most fluent attacking display under manager Ruben Amorim. While United have lost just once in their last 10 matches, defensive lapses again proved costly at home. The hosts started brightly

Man Utd blow lead three times in 4-4 Bournemouth thriller

United squander three leads as Bournemouth fight back in eight-goal home draw

and were rewarded in the 13th minute when Amad Diallo nodded into an empty net after goalkeeper Djordje Petrovic failed to hold Matheus Cunha's header. Bournemouth struck back against the run of play as Antoine Semenyo shrugged off Luke Shaw and fired low past Senne Lammen to level.

United regained control late in the first half when Casemiro headed in from Bruno Fernandes' corner, Petrovic again at fault. But the second period unravelled spectacularly. Evanilson struck just 37

seconds after the restart, slotting home Marcus Tavernier's pass, before Tavernier himself curled a fine free-kick to turn the match on its head.

The Red Devils responded with renewed urgency. Fernandes produced a sublime free-kick to make it 3-3, and Cunha swept in his second goal for the club after Adam Smith failed to clear, restoring United's lead for a third time.

Yet Bournemouth refused to yield. Eli Junior Kroupi pounced six minutes from time to equalise once more,



punishing slack marking inside the box. In stoppage time, David Brooks twice went close to snatching a dramatic winner, but Lammen produced two outstanding saves to preserve a point.

Amorim admitted frustration after full-time, lamenting dropped points despite an improved performance. Bournemouth, whose winless run now extends to seven matches, edged up to 13th, while United moved into sixth on goal difference after an unforgettable, chaotic night at Old Trafford.

Satwik-Chirag face 'group of death' at BWF World Tour Finals

HANGZHOU

Indian badminton stars Satwik-sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will face a stern test of form and resilience when the season-ending BWF World Tour Finals commences on Wednesday, with the duo drawn in the notoriously competitive "group of death." The prestigious tournament features the top-eight players or pairs from the World Tour calendar, with Satwik and Chirag, currently world No. 3, the only Indian representatives.

Placed in Group B, the Asian Games champions open their campaign against China's Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang, Paris Olympic silver medallists, before facing Indonesia's Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Shohibul Fikri, a pair renowned for pace and attacking prowess. Their final group match on Friday will pit them against long-time rivals Malaysia's Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik, the Paris Olympic bronze medallists and second seeds.

Head-to-head statistics highlight the challenge ahead.



Satwik and Chirag trail the Chinese pair 3-7, though they won their most recent encounter at the China Masters. They have lost their only previous meeting with the Indonesian duo at the Australian Open quarterfinals, while Aaron and Soh have consistently posed difficulties throughout their careers. With only the top-two pairs advancing from the group, the margin for error is minimal.

Despite not claiming a title this year, Satwik and Chirag have demonstrated resilience, returning from injury to secure a World Championships bronze and runner-up finishes at the Hong Kong Open and China Masters. They also reached semifinals in multiple other tournaments, showcasing consistency on the tour.

Roma beats Como to tighten Serie A title race

ROME

Brazilian full-back Wesley Frana scored the only goal as Roma edged past Como 1-0 at the Stadio Olimpico, moving within three points of Serie A leaders Inter Milan. The summer signing from Flamengo delivered the breakthrough on the hour mark, converting Matias Soule's pass with a precise low shot off the far post.

The first half was dominated by strong defensive displays, with neither side able to generate significant scoring opportunities. Como goalkeeper Jean Butez made the only notable save during the opening 45 minutes, keeping his side level. Roma's attacking threats struggled to find space until the second half, when the game briefly opened up.

Roma nearly scored earlier in the second half as Bryan Cristante had a goal disallowed, but chances remained limited for both teams. Despite the narrow margin, Roma's victory ended a brief poor run of form, giving manager Jos Mourinho a boost and reinforcing their challenge for the Serie A title.

The win lifts Roma into fourth place, signaling their

Wesley Frana's strike secures narrow victory, keeping Roma close to Inter Milan

intent to close the gap on Inter Milan, while Como remain seventh, six points adrift. It was the second consecutive defeat for Cesc Fbregas' side, though both losses came against teams above them in the standings.

Frana's decisive goal underscores Roma's strategic recruitment and squad depth, with the Brazilian adding attacking versatility from the back. As Serie A approaches the midpoint of the season, Roma's win keeps the title race competitive and

highlights the importance of seizing tight matches against defensively solid opponents.

With momentum restored, Roma now prepares for a critical run of fixtures that could define their championship aspirations, aiming to maintain pressure on the league leaders and challenge for silverware in multiple competitions.



I have become more ambitious as a player: Praggnanandhaa

MUMBAI

Barely home for most of the year, R Praggnanandhaa has criss-crossed continents in pursuit of elite competition, a grind that culminated in qualification for the 2026 Candidates via the FIDE Circuit route. The 20-year-old sealed the spot after topping the 2025 Circuit standings, underlining a season marked by both volume and quality.

Praggnanandhaa admitted the relentless schedule has taken its toll. "I have hardly been home this year," he said, adding that even short breaks barely feel like rest before the next tournament begins. Yet, the decision to play extensively was deliberate, driven by a clear goal of maximising Circuit points through classical events.

What has stood out in 2025, he explained, is a shift in mindset. "I'm more ambitious. When I play, I want to win tournaments," he said, crediting years of hard work finally translating into results.

That ambition has yielded



Indian chess star Praggnanandhaa says ambition, consistency powered his qualification for Candidates.

tangible rewards, with victories at marquee events such as Tata Steel Masters, Superbet Chess Classic Romania, UzChess Cup Masters and the London Chess Classic Open.

Praggnanandhaa also acknowledged inspiration from compatriots, notably world champion D Gukesh and 2800-rated Arjun Erigaisi. Rather than pressure, their success has fuelled his own push in critical mo-

ments. "Now I see it as inspiration," he said.

Reflecting on conversations with coach R.B. Ramesh after a relatively modest 2024, Praggnanandhaa pointed to incremental improvements—greater confidence, sharper decision-making and a stronger will to press for wins.

Having featured in the previous Candidates, he believes experience will count. "I'm stronger than two years back," he said. With renewed ambition and belief, Praggnanandhaa heads into the next phase of his career convinced he belongs among the world's elite.

KSCA Reconstitutes Cricket Advisory Committee

KSCA, led by Venkatesh Prasad, forms new Cricket Advisory Committee and appoints selection panels for men's junior and senior teams

BENGALURU

The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), under its newly elected Managing Committee headed by former India pacer Venkatesh Prasad, has constituted a high-profile Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) comprising several distinguished former cricketers and administrators. The CAC includes Anil Kumble, Javagal Srinath, Sunil Joshi, Vijay Bharadwaj and Jayshree Doraiswamy. In its first meeting, the committee recommended the selection panels for the ongoing domestic season, which were subsequently approved by the KSCA Managing Committee. For the Senior and Under-23 men's teams, the selection panel will be chaired by Amit Verma, with S. Prakash, Tejpal Kothari and Sunil Raju as members. The Junior men's selection panel, covering the Under-19, Under-16 and Under-14 categories, will comprise G.K. Anil Kumar, C. Raghavendra, G.N. Umesh and D.S. Ananth. KSCA also announced changes in the coaching setup for the Un-



der-23 men's team. Ganesh Satish has been appointed as coach, replacing Somashekar Siruguppi, while Deepak Chougule takes over from S.R. Deepu. Meanwhile, the Women's Selection Committee is under review, with the association stating that decisions in this regard will be taken shortly. In another key development, the Managing Committee has nominated former KSCA treasurer Vinay Mruthyunjaya as the association's official spokesperson and Chairman of Public and Member Relations.

KSCA forms CAC, revamps selection panels

The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), under its newly elected Managing Committee led by former India pacer Venkatesh Prasad, has constituted a high-profile Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC). The committee includes Anil Kumble, Javagal Srinath, Sunil Joshi, Vijay Bharadwaj and Jayshree Doraiswamy. The CAC has recommended selection panels for the ongoing domestic season, approved by the Managing Committee. Amit Verma will chair the Senior and Under-23 men's selection panel, while G.K. Anil Kumar heads the junior men's panel. Ganesh Satish has been appointed Under-23 coach. Vinay Mruthyunjaya is KSCA spokesperson.



Pressure builds on SURYAKUMAR as India chase series win against SA

LUCKNOW

Pressure is mounting on India's T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav as the hosts look to seal the five-match series against South Africa in the fourth T20I here on Wednesday. While vice-captain Shubman Gill's struggles have drawn attention, the skipper's continued lack of runs has also become a major talking point.

The third T20I in Dharamsala, played during a modest chase of 118, was expected to offer Suryakumar a chance to re-

Skipper's prolonged lean patch under spotlight as India aim to clinch series

gain rhythm. Instead, the ease and assurance that once made him the world's top-ranked T20 batter were missing.

Once again, he perished playing his trademark pick-up shot, underlining an ongoing technical and confidence-related struggle. Suryakumar, however, struck a defiant note after the match. "I'm batting beautifully in the nets and trying everything in my control. I'm not out of form, just out of runs," he said, expressing confidence that scores would follow.

Statistics, though, paint a worrying picture. The Indian captain has averaged under 15 this season and is yet to register a half-century in 2025 — the longest such drought of his career. Only twice in the past year has he managed to bat beyond 20 deliveries, a concern with the T20 World Cup less than two months away.

Gill's issues compound India's selection headaches. His move to the opening slot has unsettled the top order, especially after Sanju Samson was pushed down and later dropped despite a promising partnership with Abhishek Sharma. Gill's scratchy run-ball 28 in Dharamsala did little to ease doubts.

India lead the series 2-1 but face decisions around team balance. Jasprit Bumrah's availability remains uncertain, though Arshdeep Singh's return to form is a positive. South Africa, inconsistent since last year's World Cup final, must win to stay alive.

The stage is set for a decisive contest, with leadership and form firmly under scrutiny.



Winning medals consistently adds responsibility: Pistol ace Anish

CHENNAI

For Anish Bhanwala, learning has never stopped. Even when he is away from the firing line, the 23-year-old closely follows the sport, studying the finest details of elite performances with a student's curiosity. That eagerness, combined with growing maturity, has powered a remarkable phase in his young career.

The shooter from Karnal, Haryana, burst onto the international scene as a teenager, lining up against the world's best at the 2018 Asian Games just days before turning 16. Seven years on, the boyish talent has evolved into a composed competitor with steely resolve. That transformation was evident in his recent run of three successive silvers — at the Asian Championships, World Championships and the World Cup Final.

Anish credits his surge in confidence to the Asian Championships, where he shot 35 hits out of 40 in the final, his best international performance to date. "That kind of confidence only comes from winning," he said, explaining how it carried into a strong World Championships qualification score of 585 while working closely with coach Harpreet Singh.

A technical tweak also played a key role.



Sr National Archery Ojas and Aditi bag compound gold

HYDERABAD

Maharashtra's Ojas Pravin Deotale once again showcased his big-match temperament as he clinched the men's individual compound gold at the Senior National Archery Championship, held at the Hyderabad Public School. In a gripping final, Ojas edged out Delhi's seasoned campaigner Abhishek Verma, producing a performance marked by precision, patience and nerve. The much-anticipated title clash lived up to expectations, with both archers locked in an intense battle from the very first end. Ojas, known for his calm demeanour and infectious energy, stayed razor-sharp under pressure against the vastly experienced Abhishek. Cheered on by archers and coaches from across the country, neither competitor dropped a single point through the regulation five ends, as both finished tied on a perfect 150.

With scores level, the contest moved into a shoot-off, where Ojas held his composure to deliver the decisive arrow and seal the gold medal. The victory underlined his growing stature in Indian archery and reaffirmed his consistency on the domestic circuit.

In the women's individual compound event, Aditi lived up to her billing, securing gold after a confident display through the knockout rounds. Aditi showed excellent control and rhythm in the final, outshooting her opponent to stand atop the podium and add another major title to her resume.

Ashes: Stokes tells England to 'show a bit of dog' in must-win Adelaide Test

Stokes calls for steel as England battle to keep Ashes hopes alive in Australia

ADELAIDE

England captain Ben Stokes has delivered a blunt rallying cry to his side, urging them to "show a bit of dog" as they prepare for a must-win third Ashes



Test against Australia at Adelaide Oval starting Wednesday. Trailing 0-2 after heavy eight-wicket defeats in Perth and Brisbane, England must snap a 17-match winless run in Australia to keep the five-Test Ashes alive.

The tourists have made one change, bringing in Josh Tongue for Gus Atkinson, while backing off-spinning all-rounder Will Jacks ahead of Shoaib Bashir. Stokes admitted to "raw" dressing-room conversations following the Gabba loss, reiterating that Australia is "no place for weak men." But he stressed that the talking is over. "What's been said has been said. All that stuff's done now," Stokes told reporters. "It's about what gets seen out on the field in Adelaide this week." The 34-year-old, described last week by former England captain Alastair Cook as the most competitive player he has encountered, wants visible fight in every passage of play. "It's about fighting in every

situation, understanding what's required for your team," Stokes said. "Look at your opposition and show a bit of dog."

That gives you the best possible chance." Asked about the squad's response, Stokes said the group had reacted exactly as he hoped, with clarity around expectations heading into the contest. He pointed to England's gritty Lord's victory over India in July as the template—an occasion where perfect execution and relentless mentality delivered a narrow win deep into day five. England's tour has unfolded amid intense media scrutiny and hostile crowds, a confronting experience for several newcomers. Stokes acknowledged the challenge but believes the shock factor has passed.

"Everyone's experienced it now, probably at its highest level," he said. "For the next three games, there won't be any surprises." With the series on the line, England's resolve—and Stokes' call for bite—will be tested under the Adelaide lights.

Ashes: Aus skipper Cummins, spinner Lyon back for 3rd Test

ADELAIDE

Australia have recalled skipper Pat Cummins and veteran spinner Nathan Lyon for the third Ashes Test in Adelaide starting Wednesday, while fit-again opener Usman Khawaja has been left out as selectors eye a series-sealing win.

Khawaja, who turns 39 this month, missed the opening Test in Perth due to back spasms and was ruled out of the second in Brisbane with injury. Although he has since recovered, Australia opted to continue with Travis Head and Jake Weatherald at the top of the order, a decision

that places the 85-Test veteran's immediate international future in doubt.

Asked if Khawaja still had a path back into the side, Cummins was non-committal but encouraging. "Potentially, yeah," he said, adding that the selectors were focused on picking the best team for each match rather than sticking rigidly to combinations. Cummins also pointed out Khawaja's versatility, noting his past success both at the top and in the middle order.

As expected, Cummins returns after missing the first two Tests with a back injury and will lead an attack that



AUSTRALIA XI:

Jake Weatherald, Travis Head, Marcus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Cameron Green, Josh Inglis, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins (capt), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Scott Boland.

Manisha targets medal at 2028 Olympics

AHMEDABAD

At 28, Asian champion Manisha Bhanwala has taken a calculated gamble in pursuit of her Olympic dream, moving down a weight category to strengthen her medal prospects at the 2028 Los Angeles Games. The 62kg gold medalist has dropped to the fiercely competitive 57kg division, a shift she believes will give her the best chance to succeed on the sport's biggest stage. Manisha made the transition after competing at the World Championships in September, carefully managing her fitness and conditioning to adapt to the demands of the lower weight class. The early signs have been encouraging. She dominated a strong field at the Haryana State Championships and followed it up with a composed and convincing gold medal performance at the National Championships here, establishing herself as a front-runner in the 57kg category. "I'm satisfied with how my body has responded to the change," Manisha said after her national triumph.



WTL 2025: Indian players learn from world's best

BENGALURU

Indian tennis players will get a rare opportunity to observe and interact closely with some of the sport's biggest global names when the fourth edition of the World Tennis League (WTL) gets underway here on Wednesday. Being staged in India for the first time, the four-day event promises both high-quality competition and invaluable learning exposure for the country's leading professionals and emerging talents.

The tournament features a star-studded lineup headlined by former world No. 1 and US Open champion Daniil Medvedev, currently ranked 13th. The Indian contingent — including Sumit Nagal, D. Suresh, Ankita Raina and Sahaja Yamalalpalli — will share the court and dressing rooms with elite performers such as Denis Shapovalov (world No. 23) and Gael Monfils (world No. 67).

Younger players like Shrivalli Bhamdipaty and Maaya Rajeshwaran Revathi are also expected to treat the competition as a classroom, using the experience to fine-tune their skills ahead of the new season. Regular interaction with established stars could help Indian players add fresh tactical and mental dimensions to their game.

Another major attraction is Nick Kyrgios, whose current ranking of 652 reflects long

injury layoffs rather than ability. The mercurial Australian, who has limited match play over the past two years, will be keen to test his fitness as he eyes a return at the Australian Open in 2026. A glimpse of his trademark shot-making would be a major draw for fans.

The women's field is equally strong, led by world No. 14 Elina Svitolina, No. 25 Paula Badosa and No. 26 Marta Kostyuk, all proven performers on the Grand Slam stage.

The league features four teams — Hawks, Falcons, Kites and Eagles — each comprising two men and two women. Matches will be played in a round-robin format, with the top two teams advancing to Saturday's final, making WTL 2025 both competitive and instructive for Indian tennis.