



Dialogue,
diplomacy only
tools to end West
Asia crisis: EAM

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India enters
strong
new global
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Gavaskar Slams
Franchise Over
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Signing



War skyrockets Mideast oil prices to global top

ABU DHABI

Middle Eastern oil prices have soared to unprecedented levels, becoming the most expensive globally, as trading volumes decline due to the US-Israeli war on Iran.

The surge in prices for key crude grades, which determine the pricing of millions of barrels shipped from the Middle East to Asia, is driving up costs for Asian refineries, forcing them to seek alternatives or further reduce production in



the coming months. Cash Dubai was assessed at a record

\$157.66 per barrel on Tuesday for May-loading cargoes, S&P

MOST EXPENSIVE GLOBALLY

Cash Dubai records \$153.25 barrel, surpassing Brent futures' all-time high of \$147.50 in 2008.

Platts Dubai crude price hits \$153.24/bbl, surpasses Brent's 2008 high

Dubai's premium jumps to record \$56.01/bbl

Oman's premium nears \$51/bbl

Global Platts said, surpassing Brent futures' all-time high of

AFRICA, AMERICA AS ALTERNATIVES

Spot premiums for crude from the Americas and Africa have risen as Asian refiners scramble for supply. As per traders, premiums for Brazilian spot crude hit records of \$12-\$15 a barrel to dated Brent. Premiums for April-loading West African crude on a free-on-board basis were up about \$1 a barrel from a month ago, with most cargoes sold, one of the traders said.

\$147.50 in 2008. That put Dubai's premium to swaps at \$60.82 a barrel on Monday versus an average of 90 cents in Feb.

Oman crude futures hit a

record high of \$152.58 per barrel, setting their premium to Dubai swaps at \$55.74 a barrel compared to just 75 cents on average in February.

Dubai prices are distorted given their wide price gap with Murban futures which settled at \$114.03 a barrel on Tuesday, three trade sources said.

Data from analytics firm Kpler revealed that Middle East crude oil exports to Asia fell to 11.665 million barrels per day in March, down from nearly 19 million barrels per day in February and a drop of about 32% from March 2025 levels, due to disruptions to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz caused by the war.

MOJTABA SHUTS DOOR ON US CEASEFIRE DEAL

WASHINGTON/TEHRAN

The war between Iran and Israel entered its 18th day on Tuesday, with both sides intensifying their rhetoric and military operations. Several explosions were reported in Dubai and Doha earlier in the day.

The US embassy in Baghdad was also targeted in a drone attack today. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia intercepted two drones.

Further, Iran's top commander, Gholamreza Soleimani, has been eliminated in an Israeli airstrike. "Under precise intelligence guidance, the Air Force carried out a targeted strike yesterday in the heart of Tehran, eliminating Gholam Reza Soleimani, commander of the Basij unit

over the past six years," Israeli Air Force tweeted. Israel has also targeted senior Iranian official Ali Larijani in an overnight airstrike inside Iran, it stated.

'Let the right time comes'

Meanwhile, the Supreme Leader of Iran Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei rejected proposals for reducing tensions, or for a ceasefire with the United States that were conveyed to Tehran by two intermediary countries, Reuters quoted a senior Iranian offi-

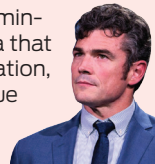
It's not the right time for peace until the US and Israel are brought to their knees, accept defeat, and pay compensation

—Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, Supreme Leader of Iran



Top US counterterrorism official resigns over Trump's war

WASHINGTON: Joe Kent, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, announced his resignation on Tuesday, citing his concerns about the justification for military strikes in Iran and saying he "cannot in good conscience" back the Trump administration's war. Kent said on social media that Iran "posed no imminent threat to our nation, and it is clear that we started this war due to pressure from Israel and its powerful American lobby."



cial on Tuesday.

Khamenei's stance for revenge against the US and Israel was "very tough and serious" in his first foreign policy session, the official said, without clarify-

ing whether the leader attended in person.

The senior official said the supreme leader had said it was not "the right time for peace until the United States and Israel are brought to their knees, accept defeat, and pay compensation".

Is Iran's security chief dead?

TEHRAN

Iran's security chief Ali Larijani has been killed in an airstrike, Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz said on Tuesday although, there's no official confirmation from Tehran. According to Katz, General Gholam Reza Soleimani was also targeted in the attack and has been eliminated.

As per reports, Larijani was targeted in strikes carried out by the Israeli military last night across



Iran. If confirmed, Larijani would be the most senior Iranian official to be killed after Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the former Supreme Leader of Iran eliminated by Israel and the US on February 28.

Earlier on Saturday, the US offered a reward of up to \$10 million for information on senior Iranian military and intelligence officials, including Larijani, as part of a list of 10 figures linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Centre pushes states to clear city gas projects

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday asked states to expedite approvals for piped gas projects to enable faster rollout and ease pressure on cooking gas availability.

The government is now pushing for the use of alternative cooking mediums like induction cookers due to the West Asia crisis which has blocked India's access to about 60% of LPG. Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said, "Situation remains a matter of concern, but we are providing supplies as before to the domestic consumers."



LS revokes suspension of 8 Oppn MPs

NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Tuesday revoked the suspension of eight Opposition Members of Parliament (MPs) through a voice vote, with immediate effect.

Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju moved the motion after Congress Chief Whip K. Suresh expressed regret for the "inadvertent indiscretion" by some of the members. It was endorsed by Dharmendra Yadav of the Samajwadi Party and Supriya Sule of the NCP (SP).

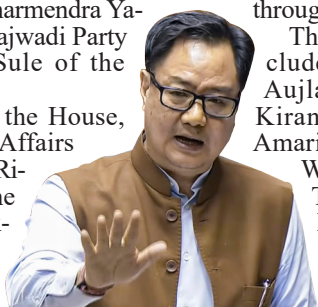
Speaking in the House, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju stressed the need for a "Laxman Rekha" to ensure smooth

proceedings, a point that found agreement across both treasury and Opposition benches.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla also underscored the importance of maintaining decorum, stating that placards, posters, photographs, or AI-generated images should not be displayed inside the House or within the Parliament complex.

Rijiju subsequently moved a motion to revoke the suspension, which was passed through a voice vote.

Those reinstated include Gurjeet Singh Aujla, Hibi Eden, C Kiran Kumar Reddy, Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, Manickam Tagore, Prashant Padole and Dean Kuriakose from the Congress,



RS polls: BJP, Cong win 1 seat each in midnight cliffhanger

CHANDIGARH: Haryana Rajya Sabha election on Monday concluded with the Congress and the BJP winning one seat each in as the counting of votes for the contest ended past midnight. Sanjay Bhatia (BJP) and Karamvir Boudh (Congress) were declared winners by the returning officer. The final tally revealed a close shave for the opposition as Boudh polled 28 votes and Nandal 16 votes. In the 90-member House, 88 votes were polled after two INLD MLAs abstained. Returning officer Pankaj Agrawal declared five ballots invalid, four from the Congress and one from the BJP.

along with S Venkatesan of the CPI(M).

The eight MPs had been suspended on February 3 during the first half of the ongoing Budget session, with the action originally set to last until the session's conclusion on April 2.

Cong suspends 3 Odisha MLAs for cross-voting

BHUBANESWAR

The opposition Congress in Odisha on Tuesday suspended three of its MLAs for voting for BJP-backed Independent candidate Dilip Ray, helping him win the Rajya Sabha polls, according to a party statement. These MLAs are Ramesh Chandra Jena of Sanakhemundi, Dasarathi Gomango of Mohana and Sofia Firdous of Barabati-Cuttack. They voted for Ray during the Rajya Sabha polls on Monday. Announcing their suspension, the state Congress in a social media post stated, "Those who betray Congress are betraying the nation."

Karnataka HC seeks govt reply on LPG shortage

BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Tuesday directed the union and state governments to respond by March 23 regarding the allocation, stock and other aspects pertaining to the supply of commercial LPG cylinders in the state.

Justice Sachin Shankar Magadam gave this direction after hearing a petition filed by the Bangalore Hotels Association and others.

K Sathish, counsel for the petitioners, submitted that the state government's new pri-

ority-based allocation of 1,000 commercial LPG cylinders per day to the hotels in the entire state does not meet the requirements. He noted that Bengaluru alone has 40,000 hotels and restaurants and this allocation is less than 5% of the regular supplies.

There is an acute shortage of cylinders at least in Bengaluru, if not throughout the state. Many restaurants have closed in and around Bengaluru. A huge population is dependent on hotel food, and a supply chain would be affected, the petitioners stated.

Sri Lanka switches to 4-day work week amid fuel crisis

COLOMBO: All Wednesdays will now be a holiday in Sri Lanka as the country moves to a 4-day work week to conserve its scarce fuel reserves amid the prolonged West Asia war. State institutions will operate only four days a week starting Wednesday (March 18), said Commissioner-General of Essential Services Prabath Chandrakerthi. The new measures will also apply to schools and universities and will remain in place indefinitely. "We are also asking the private sector to follow suit and declare every Wednesday a holiday from now on," Chandrakerthi said. However, essential services, including hospitals, ports and emergency services, will continue to operate as usual. A four-day work week "would be applicable to schools, universities and the judiciary," he said.

PAK AIR STAKES ON AFGHAN HOSPITAL KILLS 400, WOUNDS 250

KABUL

At least 400 people have been killed and around 250 injured in a Pakistani airstrike on a hospital in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul on Monday night, a Taliban spokesperson said on Tuesday.

Afghan deputy government spokesperson Hamdullah Fitrat said the airstrike hit the Omid Addiction Treatment Hospital around 9 pm, destroying a large section of the 2,000-bed facility.

Meanwhile, Pakistan refuted the allegations and termed them baseless, adding that no hospital was targeted in Kabul.

Afghan government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid condemned the strike, accusing Pakistan of "targeting hospitals and civilian sites to perpetrate horrors".

"The Pakistani military regime has once again violated Afghanistan's airspace and targeted a drug rehabilitation hospital in Kabul, resulting in the death and injury of addicts who were undergoing treatment," he posted on X.

Pakistan's Information Minister Attallah Tarar said the Pakistani military had "carried out precision airstrikes" targeting military installations in Kabul and the eastern province of Nangarhar.



India bashes Pakistan's 'cowardly' attack

New Delhi: India on Tuesday condemned Pakistan's airstrikes on a hospital in Kabul, calling it a "barbaric" and "cowardly" act of violence. The statement came after the Taliban regime accused Pakistan of killing at least 400 people in an airstrike on a drug rehabilitation hospital. The Foreign Ministry stated, "This is a cowardly and unconscionable act of violence that has claimed the lives of a large number of civilians in a facility which can by no means be justified as a military target."

"Technical support infrastructure and ammunition storage facilities at two locations in Kabul were destroyed," he added.

KERALA POLLS

CONG RELEASES NAMES FOR 55 SEATS

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Ending a long wait, the Congress on Tuesday evening released its first list of 55 candidates for the upcoming Assembly elections in Kerala.

The party retained most sitting MLAs while leaving several constituencies, including many in Thiruvananthapuram, undecided over fielding candidates. As per the list issued by the AICC, all sitting MLAs have largely been renominated except in two constituencies - Palakkad and Thripunithura. The sitting seat of Perumbavoor has been left vacant.



The Palakkad seat, which had seen controversy involving Rahul Mamkootathil, has now been allotted to Ramesh Pisharody. No candidate has been



announced in Thripunithura, where K Babu had stepped aside. M Vincent will contest from Kovalam. A final decision on Eldhose

Kunnappilly's candidature in Perumbavoor is still pending. IC Balakrishnan will contest from Sulthan Bathery.

The party has not announced a candidate in the Kannur constituency. Sunny Joseph will contest from Peravoor, K Muralaeddharan from Vattiyoor, T Siddique from Kalpetta, and K M Abhijith from Nadapuram. It has fielded Sajeev Joseph from Irikkur, Abdul Rasheed from Dharmadam and K P Saju from Thalassery. Shanamol Usman will contest from Aroor, Bindhu Krishna from the Kollam constituency and Ramya Haridas from Chi-

rayinkeezhu. Aisha Potty will contest from Kottarakkara. Several constituencies, especially in Thiruvananthapuram district, including Nemom and Kazhakkottam, remain undecided. Candidates have been announced in only three constituencies in the Thiruvananthapuram district. Notably, the party is yet to finalise candidates in several constituencies, particularly where factional disputes persist. The high command's earlier directive that MPs should not contest Assembly elections has also delayed announcements in a few seats.

QUICK READ

Bengaluru man slits throat of underage fiancé

BENGALURU

A minor girl was allegedly murdered by her fiancé in an abandoned house in eastern Bengaluru's DJ Halli area on Tuesday morning. The suspect, identified as Sabeel (20), had reportedly been engaged to the victim despite her being underage. According to police, the incident took place around 6.30 am, when Sabeel allegedly took her to the house and killed her by slitting her throat before fleeing the spot. The incident came to light after Sabeel's family members discovered the body lying in a pool of blood and alerted the police. A case has been registered at the DJ Halli police station, and a search is underway to trace the suspect. The exact motive behind the murder is yet to be ascertained.

QUICK READ



MPRACS awarded first place in state by NCDC

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
The Hoskote Town Multi-purpose Primary Rural Agricultural Cooperative Society has been awarded first position in Karnataka State as the best primary agricultural cooperative society for the year 2025 and a cash prize of Rs. 35,000 by National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC). The President of the Society, K Satish, and the Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officer Narayana Sharma, received the award from the said person at the NCDC ceremony held at the RICM in Bangalore and congratulated the selection committee, the Board of Directors and the staff who are continuously working for the progress of the Society, and the members of the association who are cooperating.

‘Will discuss with MPs on approvals for irrigation projects’

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
The central government has pending approval for the state’s irrigation projects. Therefore, I, H.K. Patil and M.B. Patil will meet all the MPs of Karnataka and discuss it, said DCM DK Shivakumar. He spoke to the media at Kempegowda International Airport on Tuesday before leaving for Delhi. We will inform you about the discussion points after they come. We will urge the central government to take a decision on irrigation issues together, he said.

Man brutally assaults his friend after partying

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
A youth was brutally assaulted by a gang in a car on March 14 at around 10.30 pm. The Kumbalagodu police have registered a case and are investigating. Muniraju, the accused Jeevan and Kishore were friends of each other. They had a party together before the incident. A heated argument ensued between Kishore and Jeevan, who attacked Jeevan and fled from the spot. Jeevan had called his friends to avenge the attack on him. Jeevan said that Muniraju was also involved in the previous fight. On the night of March 14, Muniraju, who was riding a two-wheeler, was intercepted by Jeevan and his gang in a car. The gang fled the spot after tying a cloth over Muniraju’s face and brutally assaulting him with sticks and deadly weapons. The Kumbalagodu police are investigating the case.

AI facial recognition attendance in schools, PU colleges from May

With ₹2.16 cr funding, the system which will be introduced in government schools and PU colleges aims to improve tracking and reduce the 22.02% dropout rate

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The Department of School Education and Literacy will roll out an AI-based facial recognition attendance system in government schools and PU colleges from May, with full integration into SATS. In a major move towards digital monitoring in education, the Department of School Education and Literacy is preparing to introduce an AI-based facial recognition attendance system in government schools and pre-university colleges from May 2026, coinciding with the start of the next academic year. The department has instructed the Centre for e-Governance to develop a dedicated application and complete installation across all schools



within the first week of May. For the implementation of this system, a total of Rs 2,16,87,232 has been allocated, and the Education Commissioner is expected to release the funds soon. The move is aimed at strengthening attendance tracking across institutions. Officials have directed that the application must be capable of capturing student attendance

in all types of environments, including low-light conditions, ensuring that no student’s attendance is missed. The system will be designed to record attendance using facial recognition technology, improving accuracy and reducing manual errors. The department has made it clear that student registration and attendance must be fully integrated with the Student

Achievement Tracking System (SATS) software. To enable this, the required student data will be provided by the respective heads of departments to the Centre for e-Governance. Currently, the dropout rate in secondary education stands at 22.02 percent, which has been a concern for authorities. Education activists believe that this new system will help the department track students more effectively, identify those who stop attending classes, and take steps to bring them back into the education system. With this step, the Department of School Education and Literacy aims to improve attendance monitoring, enhance accountability, and ensure that students remain connected to their education.

Menstrual leave: HC says no coercive action against employers

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The High Court has directed the government not to issue show cause notices to employers who grant one day of paid leave per month to female employees working in companies registered under various labour laws in the state during their menstrual cycle. The bench headed by Justice Anant Ramnath Hegde issued this instruction while hearing a petition filed by the Karnataka Employers’ Association, Bangalore Hotels Association and others challenging the notification issued by the State Labour Department

on November 20, 2025. During the hearing, the counsel for the petitioner said that the government is issuing show cause notices regarding the implementation of the notification issued by the government. This is causing problems for employers. The bench said that the case is sub-judice. In such a situation, it questioned why the show cause notice was issued to the employer. It also said that the show cause notices should be stayed. It also said that no coercive action should be taken against the petitioner. Senior advocate Prof Ravi Varma Kumar, who appeared on behalf of the Bangalore

women’s lawyers, appealed to the bench that there are no issues in the government notification that would cause problems for employers. According to the information we have, no show cause notice has been issued to any employer. If there is any such document, the petitioner can place it before the court. Then the court can decide. Earlier, the counsel for the petitioner said that there is no objection to providing protection to women. However, the government has moved to implement the notification without keeping the interests of the industry in mind. The government has failed to maintain equality between workers and employers. Without issuing a preliminary notification, without issuing a media statement, the notification has been issued directly against the employers. He explained that the menstrual leave policy is against the interests of the hotel industry in many ways. The bench, after hearing the arguments, adjourned the hearing to March 24.

Court case on, wait for 1-km link road to NICE gets longer

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The opening of a newly-built one-km link road connecting Deepanjali Nagar Junction with NICE Road at Clover Leaf near Outer Ring Road remains uncertain, with the PWD unlikely to grant nod amid an ongoing legal dispute with the project operator. The PWD took Nandi Infrastructure Corridor Enterprises (NICE) Ltd to court, alleging violations of the framework agreement governing the project. According to the department, the agreement required the operator to construct a concrete road capable of withstanding heavy traffic movement but operator deviated from the agreed terms. Sources said the NICE operator approached the PWD about a month ago, seeking approval to open the road. PWD Principal Secretary Amlan Aditya Biswas said they have not met the technical requirements of building the road.



Wrinkled by ‘war’, Bengaluru’s isthriwalas feel the heat

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The geopolitical crisis thousands of kilometres away in West Asia is now having an unlikely impact in the heart of India’s tech capita, unpressed clothes. Across central Bengaluru, dozens of roadside pressers/ironers say they are struggling to keep their irons hot, as commercial LPG cylinders have become scarce amid the ongoing supply crunch. The shortage has forced many to turn away customers and delay deliveries. I have started reducing the number of new orders for ironing, said P Muthulakshmi (51), who runs a pushcart ironing stall on Rhenius Street in Richmond Town. At this stage, I have fuel left barely for a week. Luckily for us, we took a new cylinder not long back. I work with my son; hence, we re-



quire two cylinders at a time. Now that he has gone to our hometown in Tamil Nadu, the consumption is less.” Many of these small ironing stalls switched from coal-fired irons to LPG-powered ones during the peak of the Covid pandemic in 2021, when coal became difficult to source. Muthulakshmi too made the transition then, investing

nearly Rs 16,000 in LPG-powered iron boxes. The switch made work far easier.”Earlier, we used coal, which took at least 30 minutes to heat up. In the afternoon, if I want to take a break, this process has to be repeated. With LPG, it is as easy as heating a dosa tawa, she said. But now, the very convenience that helped them survive the pandemic is threatening their livelihood. Around Richmond Town, several pressers say their irons may soon go cold if fresh cylinders do not arrive. P Satyanarayan, who has been ironing clothes in the area for nearly 30 years, says the crisis has forced them to think of alternatives. I know it is expensive, but I’m willing to pay the bills if they can provide us with electric connections.

That is the only way to survive now, he said, adding that he has even sought help from MLA NA Haris to facilitate power connections for roadside ironing stalls. For some families, the situation is already critical. G Subramaniam (46) and his wife G Bhavani (38), say the LPG will last barely two more days. “Both of us have been in this profession for the past two decades. We left whatever we had in Andhra and came to Bengaluru in search of a better living. But if this is the case, the only solution is to shut the cart and go back home. We already asked the customers to wait 15-20 days. With these ironers not taking clothes, customers are worried as Richmond Town is dotted by college students and young professionals for whom pressed clothes make a big difference.



Amid industrial park push, many existing KIADB plots lie idle

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

The state government has announced new industrial parks in the latest budget, but a significant number of existing Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) estates lie underutilised, raising questions about whether expanding capacity makes sense before fixing existing infrastructure. As per data from KIADB, as of January 13, of approximately 2,050 developed plots across 13 industrial areas in and around Bengaluru, only 1,908 were allotted. The contrast between older and newer industrial zones is telling. Established areas like Kumbalagodu Phases 1 and 2 (set up in 1979 and 1982) and Doddaballapur (1983) have allotted all 347 plots, while a few others earmarked for aerospace, IT, and hardware sectors have seen 574 plots allotted. But plot allotment is only the first step. On all allotted plots, a mere 543 units are currently in production, the rest are either under construction, awaiting implementation, or simply idle. All 134 units across Kumbalagodu’s two phases are operational, while all 114 units in Doddaballapur’s general industrial area are running. The IT Sector Park, spanning 1,175 acres and set up in 2009, tells a different story. Despite 250 developed units, only 36 are currently in production. The newest area in Devanahalli launched in 2022 has 115 allotted units but just one operational. The IT and aerospace sectors carry the highest burden of allotted but not implemented units, 79 and 73, respectively. The aerospace parks, which register a high number of work-

‘Growth demands better connectivity’

Uma Reddy, President of the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI), acknowledged the state’s strong industrial legacy rooted in institutions like HAL and BEL, but stressed that growth now demands better connectivity, upgraded infrastructure, and development of plots beyond Bengaluru. The pattern is difficult to ignore: new parks keep getting announced while existing ones see units sitting idle and businesses quietly leaving. Until infrastructure gaps are addressed, fresh announcements risk being real estate exercises dressed up as industrial policy.

ing industries, have received over 100 new land requests, including from international investors, officials said. However, KIADB Chief Executive Officer M Mahesh remains upbeat. Many industries are thriving. We’re seeing strong interest in software, manufacturing, aerospace, defence, automobiles, solar, and semiconductors. We are among the top Foreign Direct Investment destinations, he told, adding that idle units would be addressed soon. In his budget speech, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had said, during the first half of 2025-26, FDI equity inflows to the state stood at \$9.4 billion, accounting for 26.7% of the nation’s total inflows.

195 graft cases against senior officials in 41 months, Lokayukta report

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Opposition leader R Ashoka alleged corruption is widespread under the Congress govt and quoted a Lokayukta report which said 195 cases were registered against senior government officials over the past 41 months to bolster his claim. In a statement, Ashoka said the cases involving IAS, IPS and KAS officials show the scale of alleged irregularities in the administration and is a reflection of the functioning of the government. Quoting from the report, he said Karnataka Lokayukta registered the cases between September 2022 and February 2026. Of these, 104 cases relate to raids linked to disproportionate assets, while in 91 cases, officials were caught red-handed while accepting

bribes, he said. He said investigations in 89 cases are still at a preliminary stage. An IAS officer and an IPS officer are among those facing corruption charges, while 12 KAS officials also face charges. The report clarifies that no official has been convicted or cleared of charges. Ashoka also criticised the government for failing to ensure timely payments to sugarcane growers. He said sugar factories are required to clear dues within 15 days of procurement, but in Belagavi district alone, some Rs 1,554 crore remains unpaid even after the 2025-26 sugar season ended. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, if you spend your time only securing your chair, who will respond to the hardship of farmers, Ashoka asked.

TEST OF TECH ERA

BU goes digital with first-ever online exams for DODE courses

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

In a major step towards digital education, Bangalore University has introduced its first-ever online examination system through the Directorate of Online and Distance Education (DODE). The exams began on March 11, 2026, marking a significant shift in how distance education is delivered and assessed. A total of 870 students are appearing for these examinations from their homes.

Among them, 697 students are from Bengaluru, while 123 are from other parts of Karnataka and 48 students are from other states across India. Expanding its reach beyond the country, one student is writing the exam from Dubai and another from Australia, highlighting the university’s growing national and international presence. Out of the total candidates, 479 are women and 391 are men, showing strong participation by women in distance education programmes. In



terms of social categories, 361 students belong to Backward Classes, 122 to Scheduled Castes, and 17 to Sched-

uled Tribes, reflecting inclusive access to higher education. Before the exams, all class-

es for these students were conducted online between 5:00 PM and 9:00 PM, making it easier for working professionals and those with other responsibilities to attend and continue their studies. To maintain fairness and transparency, the university has adopted a hybrid monitoring system. The exams are being supervised using advanced Artificial Intelligence tools along with manual proctoring. Question papers are released online at the scheduled

time. Students write their answers in printed answer booklets, then scan and upload their scripts after completing the exam. These answer sheets are evaluated by the university’s Examination Section. Additionally, 45 trained manual proctors have been assigned through a random system to monitor candidates throughout the exam process. The examinations include a wide range of programmes such as M.A. (English, Kannada, Hindi, History, Eco-

QUICK READ

Driver killed after Omni rams moving lorry

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
An Omni car rammed into a moving lorry from behind in the wee hours of Tuesday morning. The driver of the car died on the spot while another person was admitted to the hospital with minor injuries. The deceased has been identified as 37-year-old Rajanna of Tarikere in Kunigal taluk. He was currently living in Abbigeri in Bengaluru. The accident took place around 5 am when they were travelling from Bengaluru to Kunigal. The police and toll staff removed the vehicle using a crane and sent the body to Nelamangala General Hospital for post-mortem. A case has been registered at Kudur police station and further investigation is underway.

Debt-ridden hotel owner commits suicide

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
A hotel owner has committed suicide due to debt on Hesaraghatta Road in Bengaluru. Gu-rulingappa (47) is the deceased and is known to be the owner of Basaveshwara Khanavali of Uttara Kannada, which was famous for its corn roti. His body was found hanging from a saree inside the hotel. It is learnt that he had taken a loan of more than Rs 25 lakh. The case came to light when the vegetable vendor came near the hotel on Tuesday morning. The police visited the scene and conducted an investigation. The body has been sent to Victoria Hospital for a post-mortem examination, and a case has been registered at the Bagalagunte police station.

Moodbidri case: Victims approach KSCW

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
The sexual assault case against a Moodbidri police inspector has taken a new turn. The women have approached the Karnataka State Commission for Women (KSCW) for justice in connection with the case. The victims expressed their anguish over the injustice meted out to them and demanded immediate action against the culprits. State Women's Commission chairperson Nagalakshmi Choudhary met the victims and listened to their cries. On this occasion, the affected women shared in detail the ordeal they went through. Chairperson Nagalakshmi Chowdhary met the victims and assured that strict legal action would be taken against the guilty. The incident has sparked widespread debate across the state.

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
A customer at Theo Cafe was shocked after being charged an additional 5% as “gas charge” for a mint lemonade, triggering widespread criticism online.
An unusual billing incident at a popular cafe in Bengaluru has triggered anger among customers, after an extra “gas charge” was added to a simple beverage order.
The incident took place at Theo Cafe, where a customer had visited for refreshments. The customer ordered a mint

‘CONNECTIONS BY BLR’ LAUNCHED AT KIA

KIA introduces a new transfer system focused on ease, efficiency and comfort as passenger traffic continue to grow

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
In a major step to improve passenger convenience, Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) has launched ‘Connections by BLR’, a new service designed to make flight transfers smooth and stress-free.
The initiative has been introduced by Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL), which said the system is built around three key ideas - Ease, Efficiency and Experiential travel.
According to BIAL, the new service aims to solve common problems faced by passengers during connect-

ing journeys. Developed in collaboration with airlines and other stakeholders, it standardises the transfer process across terminals.
This move is expected to strengthen Bengaluru Airport’s role as a major transfer hub, especially with rising passenger traffic and expanding infrastructure.
One of the key highlights of the project is that Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 will be connected through a dedicated walkway, making movement between terminals easier for passengers.
The airport has introduced several facilities to enhance the transfer experience such



as, dedicated transfer desks in all terminals for passenger assistance, easy-to-follow colour-coded signage (Blue and Yellow), special transfer zones for smoother move-

ments, free inter-terminal shuttle service with minimal waiting time, multiple lounge options for comfort and relaxation, curated retail and food and beverage op-

tions within transfer areas, sleeping pods for short rest during layovers, transit hotels in both Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 with boutique rooms for longer stays.
BIAL revealed that international transfer traffic has increased by over 30% year-on-year, showing strong growth potential.
Currently, around 15 percent of total passengers are transfer travellers, and this number is expected to increase to 20% by 2026. Officials say smooth transfers are becoming crucial for both passengers and airline network planning.
The airport’s growth is

supported by several ongoing infrastructure projects, including West Cross Taxiway, Terminal 1 refurbishment, Terminal 2 expansion.
These developments are helping KIA emerge as a preferred transfer gateway in the region.
At present, Bengaluru Airport connects to 114 destinations, including 80 domestic and 34 international cities.
Top domestic routes include Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Pune. Key international connections include Singapore, London Heathrow, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Kuala Lumpur.

Drunk driving spike: 732 cases in a weekend!

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
Traffic police intensify crackdown as cases rise sharply. Joint Commissioner of Police Karthik Reddy directs daily enforcement amid growing accidents linked to drunk driving.
Bengaluru is witnessing a steady rise in drunk driving cases, prompting traffic police to step up enforcement across the city. Despite strict penalties, violations continue to increase, raising concerns over road safety.
During the recent weekend, traffic police conducted drunk-and-drive checks at nearly 140 locations across the city. Officials said that over 50,000 people were screened, leading to the registration of as many as 732 cases in just two days.
Authorities pointed out that offenders caught driving under the influence are fined ₹10,000, but the higher penalty has not acted as a strong deterrent. Many motorists



‘Don’t limit checks to just weekends’
Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Karthik Reddy has directed all traffic police personnel in the city to conduct drunk driving checks on a daily basis, instead of limiting them mainly to weekends. The order has been communicated to all traffic police units, marking a shift towards stricter, continuous monitoring.

continue to take the risk, especially during weekends.
Data from the traffic police shows that more than 2,000 drunk driving cases have been recorded in the past one month alone, indicating a worrying trend. Officials say this increase is also contributing to a rise in road accidents in the city. Police sources confirmed that drunk driving is one of the key reasons behind increasing accidents in Bengaluru, making it a serious public safety issue.
In response to the growing problem, the Traffic Wing has decided to tighten enforcement further.

Swamiji lauds MLA’s service in Co-op Dept

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
The credit for rendering radical service through the Cooperative Department goes to MLA ST Somashekar, who is a rare politician who believes that deeds speak louder than words, expressed his appreciation, said Sri Nirmalanandanath Maha Swamiji, President of Adichunchanagiri Mutt.
Speaking at the closing ceremony of the STS Cup-2026 cricket tournament organised at the Ganesh playground in the suburb of Kengeri, he said that ST Somashekar has the will to organize any program in a very neat and successful manner. He wished that their pro-people work would continue in this way.
International cricket referee K Srinath praised the tournament, which brought together 317 teams consisting of more than 5 thousand athletes, as an unforgettable achievement.
I am just an excuse for the success. MLA ST Somashekar said that the success was achieved due to the efforts of the leaders and activ-

ists of 12 GBA wards and 17 Gram Panchayats of the constituency, including GBA, Police, Health Department, BESCOM, and the hard work for 7 days.
On this occasion, Sri Nirmalanandanath Maha Swamiji was brought in a full kumbha and chariot by thousands of women on the main road of Kengeri Suburban.
The winning teams were Royal Fighters first, Immadi Pulakeshi Someshwara team second, Basaveshwara Cricketers, third place, RK Boys fourth place, Srinivasapur Cricket team was given the last place and given trophies and cash prizes. Each participating team was given a cash prize including the distribution of a TVS Rider bike and a Man of the Series EV bike.
NPS School founder Director Nishant Somashekar, KP Nanjundi, ST Srinivas, block presidents, ward presidents, gram panchayat, taluk and zilla panchayat presidents, vice presidents, members and activists were present at the programme

CM wishes students ahead of SSLC exams

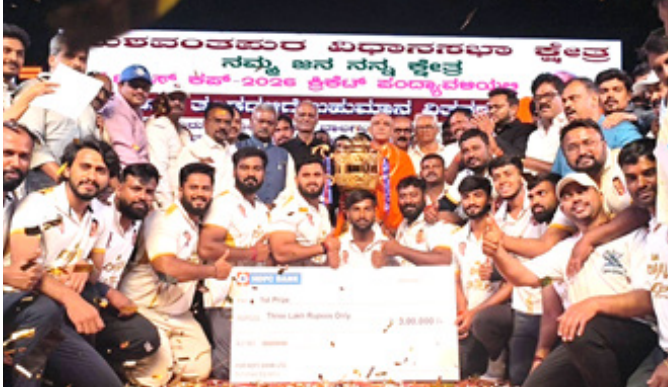
CH NEWS, BENGALURU
The SSLC exams are starting from March 18, and the Chief Minister wished all the students appearing for the exams in the House.
Currently, 8,65,968 children are appearing for the SSLC exams. Many reforms have been made in the education sector, and the exams are held in three stages. Even if they fail in the first stage of the exam, there is an opportunity to appear for the second and third stages of the exam, so that no student can face the exam without anxiety, he told the students appearing for the SSLC exams to write the exam with courage.
Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa wished the students appearing for the SSLC examination and said that earlier, children used to appear for the examination under pressure. Now, many reforms have been implemented in the education sector. He advised the students to appear for the examination without any anxiety as the examinations are being conducted in three phases and wished them well.
Opposition Party Leader R Ashoka wished the students appearing for the SSLC examination and advised them not to give mental torture to their children. Recently, there have been news reports that the question paper is being leaked on social media. The Education Minister held a press conference in this regard and asked them to warn about this.

8 IAS officers get notices for not replying to MLA

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
The Chief Secretary to the Government has issued show cause notices to 8 IAS officers for not answering questions from MLAs in the House.
On the instructions of CM, CS Shalini Rajneesh has taken action. The notice has been issued after the department officials did not give a proper reply. There was a lot of embarrassment in the House. Yesterday, Speaker Khader also walked out of the House expressing dissatisfaction. Therefore, a notice has been issued to the concerned officials.
Notices have been issued by Chief Secretary to all the additional chief secretaries, principal secretaries and secretaries of all the departments. If they do not respond within a week, they must explain why they could not send the reply. Notice to officers of Animal Husbandry Department Secretary R Vinodh Priya, Housing Department Secretary KP Mohan Raj, Transport Department Secre-



tary NV Prasad, Horticulture and Sericulture Department Secretary R Girish, Public Utilities Department Secretary Am-lan Aditya Biswas, Revenue Department Rajendra Kumar Kataria have been issued.
Officials have been instructed to provide clarification in writing immediately. Only 84 out of 230 questions were answered in the budget session.
On Monday, Speaker UT Khader also expressed his dissatisfaction. He walked out of the House, saying that it was not for ministers to run the House. Later, after convincing the Speaker by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and some Ministers, Khader arrived for the session.



Give answers within stipulated time in coming days: Khader to officials

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
In the proceedings of the Assembly, MLAs submit questions to attract the attention of the government. But the departments are not submitting the answers within the stipulated time.
Speaker UT Khader instructed the officials in the Assembly to provide the answers within the stipulated time in the coming days.
During the proceedings of the Assembly on Tuesday, various departments

were not providing the answers within the stipulated time. He explained to the House how many answers have been submitted by each department.
The Personnel and Administrative Reforms Department has given 6 answers to 22 attention-grabbing instructions, the Finance Department has given 6 answers to 33, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Department has not given a single answer to 9, the Youth Empowerment Department

has not given a single answer to 10. The Cooperation Department has not given a single answer to 12. The Information and Public Relations Department has given one answer to one. The Water Resources Department gave 4 answers to 33, the Urban Development Department 8 answers to 23, Home dept gave 26 answers to 35, the Law Dept gave 3 answers to 5, Tourism Dept gave 1 answer to 25, and the Minor Irrigation Dept gave 13 answers to 19.

‘Gas Charge’ on lemonade sparks outrage in B’luru



lemonade, expecting a regular bill similar to what is usually charged at cafes, including

the customer was surprised to find an additional 5% charge labelled as “gas charge,” amounting to ₹17. This unexpected fee left the customer confused and upset.
Reacting strongly, the customer shared a photo of the bill on social media and criticised the cafe. The post quickly went viral.
The customer questioned the logic behind the extra charge, asking how gas is even required to prepare a lemon juice. “Is the juice being made on a gas stove?” the customer asked, expressing frustration over

what they described as an unreasonable fee.
As the post gained traction online, several users joined the discussion and criticised the cafe’s pricing. Many questioned whether restaurants are now overcharging customers under different names.
Some users even described such charges as daylight robbery, raising concerns about transparency in billing practices. The controversy comes at a time when there are concerns about gas supply due to global tensions involving Israel,

Cong leader robbed during morning walk in city

CH NEWS, BENGALURU
A Congress leader who had arrived in Bengaluru for official work faced a shocking incident of robbery and assault during an early morning walk.
The victim has been identified as Shivakumar Bali, the General Secretary of the Congress party from Kalaburagi. This was reportedly his first visit to Bengaluru, which unfortunately turned into a bitter experience.
Shivakumar Bali had come to the city to meet a minister

at the Vidhana Soudha. During his stay, he had checked into Shobha Lodge in Gandhinagar.
After completing his work, he was preparing to return to his hometown the same day.
On the day of his departure, Bali stepped out around 5:00 AM for his routine morning walk. After finishing his walk, as he was passing near Rajkumar International Hotel, a group of unidentified men intercepted him.
The accused had reportedly been following him before stopping him suddenly.

QUICK READ



Lorry and milk tanker crash leaves one dead

SINDHANUR

A fatal head-on collision between a lorry and a milk tanker near Hanchinala Camp claimed one life and left several injured on Tuesday morning. Sheikh Abdullah, 23, the lorry driver from Raichur, died on the spot. The tanker driver, Srikanth, is in critical condition, while others, including Isak and Rajasab, were injured. A bike following the lorry also crashed, causing minor injuries to three riders. The vehicles were badly damaged, and the injured were taken to a public hospital. Police officials visited the site, and a case has been registered.

Worker killed after electric pole falls during work

BELTHANGADY

A 40-year-old worker, Shivappa, died after an electric pole fell on him during installation work in Kokkad village. Shivappa, a resident of Mahaveer Colony, had been working as a labourer under a contractor for several years. The accident occurred near a local temple while he was reportedly working without safety equipment. He suffered severe injuries and died on the spot. Authorities said a case has been registered at the local police station. The incident has raised concerns about lack of safety measures at work sites and need for strict enforcement.

Raid on hotels: Illegal LPG cylinders seized

DAVANAGERE

Officials conducted a raid in Jagalur town and seized 20 domestic LPG cylinders being used illegally in hotels and tea shops. The action followed instructions from Deputy Commissioner Gangadharaswamy, who directed Tahsildar Kalim Ullah to inspect establishments after receiving complaints. During the raid, several outlets were found using domestic cylinders meant for household use. Authorities stated that such usage is not allowed in commercial places like hotels. However, owners reportedly cited shortage of commercial cylinders as the reason. The seized cylinders have been taken into custody, and further action is expected against those violating the rules.

Protest Demands Railway Underbridge be Opened Soon

GADAG

Residents led by protest committee president Ganesh Singh Baili, along with barangay president Mallikarjun Ailey, secretary Harish Pujara, and Mahesh Koti, urged railway authorities to open the underbridge in front of Abdul Kalam Shadi Mahal for public traffic. They met Hubballi railway officer T.V. Bhushan and requested him to consult with his team and resolve the issue promptly. The officials reportedly promised to address the matter within a week. The protest marks the first phase of efforts by local leaders to ensure smoother traffic flow and better connectivity for residents in the area.

Railway promotion exam postponed after Kannada protests

Protesters demanded Railway exams include Kannada, criticizing the department for neglecting regional candidates and calling for cancellation and retesting

HUBBALLI

The South Western Railway has postponed its departmental promotion examination following protests by pro Kannada organizations demanding the inclusion of Kannada as an exam language.

The exam was scheduled for hundreds of railway employees seeking promotion to posts such as Goods Train Manager through a Computer Based Test. However, members of Karnataka Rakshana Vedike staged protests at examination centers, especially

in Keshwapur, opposing the conduct of exams only in Hindi and English.

Protesters said the Railway Department has been ignoring the interests of Kannada speaking candidates. They demanded that the exam be conducted in Kannada and called for cancellation of the current test along with a fresh examination that includes the regional language option.

Due to the agitation, railway authorities immediately postponed the exam. Officials confirmed that candidates who had arrived at centers were asked to return, and a



new date for the examination will be announced soon.

Railway Recruitment Cell Chairman Asif Ansari issued an official order regarding the postponement of the exam.

Authorities also stated that a final decision on allowing Kannada as a language option will be taken by higher officials. The protest was led by the Karnataka Rakshana Ve-

dike faction headed by T.A. Narayana Gowda, who had earlier warned of strong action if the demands were not met. The organization has been actively campaigning for greater use of Kannada in government and public sector examinations.

Candidates expressed mixed reactions, with some supporting the demand for Kannada while others were concerned about the sudden postponement and uncertainty regarding the new exam date. Officials assured that further updates will be communicated soon to all candidates.

DC orders action to control KFD spread

SHIVAMOGGA

Deputy Commissioner Prabhulinga Kavalikatti has directed officials to take strict measures to control the spread of Kyasanur Forest Disease and ensure quick treatment for fever cases in the district.

Chairing a health review meeting, he said KFD spreading ticks are active from November to May, with higher risk between January and March. People in Sagar, Soraba, Hosanagar and Thirthahalli areas were advised to be careful, especially those visiting forests or farms. He asked them to use protective oil and take safety measures.

Officials were instructed to monitor hotspot areas, especially places where monkey deaths have been reported. Fever cases should be treated immediately and surveys must be conducted. All taluk hospitals were directed to reserve ten beds for such cases.

Health, forest, veterinary and rural departments were asked to work together to control the disease. Vaccination for cattle and awareness campaigns were also stressed.

Officials said over 5,200 tests were conducted, with 59 positive cases and one death reported. Several monkey deaths were identified as hotspots and preventive steps have been taken.

The Deputy Commissioner also highlighted dangers of dog bites and snake bites. He said rabies can be fatal if untreated, and people must seek immediate medical care. Over 3,900 dog bite cases and 47 snake bite cases were reported this year, with no deaths so far. He stressed cleanliness, safe drinking water and early control of diseases like dengue, malaria and tuberculosis.

Officials were also asked to work towards AIDS control targets by improving detection and treatment in the district.

MP seeks details on ADIP scheme measures

DAVANAGERE

Member of Parliament Dr. Prabha Mallikarjun raised important questions in Parliament regarding welfare measures for differently abled persons under the ADIP scheme. During the Question Hour, she sought detailed information from the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

The MP asked whether there had been any revision in subsidy amounts under the scheme in recent years and requested reasons for any increase in expenditure. She also raised questions about employment opportunities for differently abled persons, including the current status of reservation in government jobs.

Dr. Mallikarjun specifically asked for complete data on the total number of posts sanctioned, the number of posts filled, and the number of vacancies reserved for differently abled candidates in



Dr. Mallikarjun requested detailed data on government posts for differently abled candidates, while Dr. Virendra Kumar highlighted expanded skill development programs improving their employment opportunities.

government departments.

Responding to her queries, Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Dr. Virendra Kumar said the government has taken several steps to improve employment and economic opportunities for differently abled persons.

He said skill development programs like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana have been expanded to include more beneficiaries.

The Minister also stated that financial support in the form of low interest loans is being provided to encourage

entrepreneurship among differently abled individuals. In addition, platforms such as Divya Kala Melas have been created to help them display and sell their products.

He further informed that reservation in education has been increased from three percent to five percent, while reservation in government jobs has been raised from three percent to four percent.

The Minister said these measures aim to promote self reliance, equal opportunities and social inclusion for differently abled persons across the country.

Money doubling scam busted; 7 arrested in Gokak

BELAGAVI

Police have uncovered a money doubling scam in Gokak city, arresting seven people, including two police constables from Maharashtra. The operation was carried out following a raid near Hanuman Mandir in Srinagar area of the city.

According to District Superintendent of Police K. Ramarajan, the accused were cheating people by promising to multiply their money four times. They used a fake method involving chemicals, where genuine currency notes were painted black and shown as if they could be converted into multiple notes. Victims were convinced that blank papers treated with chemicals would turn into real currency.

During the process, the accused collected real money from victims and replaced it with bundles of chemically treated blank sheets. They then instructed victims to wash the sheets at home, claiming it would reveal real notes. However, this was a



trick to escape after collecting cash.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Jayashree Kamble, Manisha Gaikwad, Ujjwala Bilane, Anant Nalawade, Parashuram Badakari, and Imran Junedi. Police said Nalawade is a constable at Thane City Police Station, while another accused, Dildar Sheikh, a Crime Branch constable, is also involved. One more accused, Mehboob Desai, is still absconding. Police have registered a case and launched further investigation. Officials have warned the public not to fall for such schemes and to report suspicious activities immediately.

CID officials from Bengaluru began investigating Belthangady cooperative society, accused of cheating depositors, following complaints filed May 22, 2025

CID begins probe into ₹40 cr fraud case

BELTHANGADY

The Crime Investigation Department (CID) has begun its probe into an alleged ₹40 crore fraud involving the Shree Rama Credit Cooperative Society, where customers claim their deposits were not returned.

A team of CID officials from Bengaluru arrived in Belthangady on Tuesday morning and officially launched the investigation. The case relates to serious allegations that the society cheated several depositors by withholding their money.

The cooperative society, located on Junior College Road in Belthangady, has been operating for nearly 25 years. Complaints were first filed on May 22, 2025, by 13 customers, including Dayanand Nayak, at the Belthangady police station. Based on the complaint, a case was registered



the next day under the Karnataka Protection of Interest of Depositors Act, 2004.

Initially, the case was handled by local police and later transferred to the Mangaluru Sen Police Station. Considering the large amount involved, the Dakshina Kannada Superintendent of Police handed over the case to the CID for a detailed probe.

A total of 14 people, including the society's CEO, presi-

dent, vice president, directors, and staff members, have been named as accused in the case. Officials stated that the CID team, led by Inspector Harish from Bengaluru, has started collecting evidence and recording statements.

Authorities have assured strict action against those found guilty, while affected customers are hoping for justice and recovery of their deposits.

Udupi hosts vocational education exhibition and career fair

UDUPI

To guide students on future career options, the District Education and Training Institute organized a Vocational Education Exhibition and Career Fair at the new Ravindra Mandapam of MGAA College in the city. The event aimed to help high school and pre-university students choose courses aligned with their interests and abilities.

Principal Ashok Kamath welcomed the attendees and highlighted the need for career guidance in today's competitive era. He said students often face confusion about which field to pursue after class X or PUC, and the institute plans to set up a dedicated Career Guidance Unit to provide information on educational institu-



tions and job-oriented courses across the district.

Deputy Director of Public Education Department Lokesh C stressed the importance of technology-based courses amid the rise of artificial intelligence, pointing out the potential for job loss in traditional fields. He encouraged students to explore ITI courses and other skill-based opportunities.

Zilla Panchayat Project Director Vijayakumar delivered a special lecture. Various government de-

partments, banks, and educational institutions set up stalls to provide guidance to students, parents, and the public.

The fair attracted students from class 9 to undergraduate level along with their parents. Other officials present included Deputy Director of Undergraduate Education Maruti, Deputy Director of Social Welfare Narayana Swamy, institute lecturers, and education staff. Dr. Kishore Kumar Shetty delivered a speech and proposed the vote of thanks.

BALANCED DIET AWARENESS

Cereals key to balanced and healthy life: Dr. Uday Kumar Shetty

UDUPI

Zilla Panchayat Chief Planning Officer Dr. Uday Kumar Shetty said that including cereals in daily food can help people maintain balanced and healthy lives. He explained that cereals are rich in nutrients like fiber and iron, making them an important part of a healthy diet.

He was speaking at a district level workshop and Cereal Festival held at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Auditorium in Rajatadri, Manipal. The event was organized under the



National Edible Oil Campaign and National Food Security and Nutrition Campaign.

Dr. Shetty said both central

and state governments have introduced several schemes to support agriculture and increase production. He noted that although many people

depend on agriculture, its contribution to the country's economy is still limited. He stressed the need to strengthen the agriculture sector to

match the growth of industries and services.

He encouraged farmers to focus on organic farming and use modern technology to improve quality and production. He said young farmers should take more interest in agriculture and adopt scientific methods.

Experts at the event highlighted the importance of traditional food habits and the health benefits of cereals. They encouraged farmers to grow and promote local varieties and increase awareness among the public.

Speakers also said value addition in agricultural products can help farmers earn better income.

The festival included exhibitions and sales of cereal products, along with awareness programs.

A technical guide on oilseed schemes was released during the event. Farmers, women achievers and winners of cooking competitions were honored.

Officials, agricultural experts, farmers and women from across the district attended the program.

QUICK READ



Authorities seize 30 illegally used gas cylinders

CHIKKABALLAPURA
In a joint operation, the Food and Police Departments seized 30 domestic cooking gas cylinders being used illegally for commercial purposes across the district. A case has been registered under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, and the LPG (Regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order, 2000. District Collector G. Prabhu warned the public not to use domestic cylinders for business activities and said strict action will be taken against violations. Authorities urged citizens to follow the regulations to ensure safe and lawful use of cooking gas. The operation aims to prevent misuse and protect public safety.

Sri Devara Dasimayya Jayanti to be celebrated on March 23

CHITRADURGA
The Sri Devara Dasimayya Jayanti ceremony will be held on March 23 at 11 am in the District Collector's Office Hall, organized jointly by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Kannada and Culture Department, and Municipal Council. Planning and Statistics Minister D. Sudhakar will inaugurate the event, while MLA K.C. Virendra Pappi will preside. Several dignitaries, including MPs, MLAs, and heads of development boards, will attend. Dr. Gayathri, Kannada professor, will give a lecture, and Bhagyamma K.H. with her team will perform a song. The event aims to honor the legacy of Sri Devara Dasimayya and promote local culture.



Puneeth Rajkumar remembered as timeless inspiration figure

DEVANAHALLI
The 51st birth anniversary of Puneeth Rajkumar was celebrated with great enthusiasm at the old bus stand in Devanahalli. The event was organized by the Jaibhuvaneshwari Auto Car Drivers and Owners Association, where fans gathered to pay tribute to the late actor. PVCS State Executive President Dasarabeedi Murali said that Appu is no longer just a person but a feeling cherished by millions across the world. He praised the actor's humility, humanity, and dedication to social service. Puneeth supported orphan girls through Shaktidham Ashram in Mysore and was involved in eye donation, blood donation, and other charitable works. Murali noted that the actor remains a role model for youth and a lasting symbol of kindness. Floral tributes were offered, a cake was cut, and food was distributed during the celebration. Association members and fans attended, remembering his legacy with deep respect and admiration.

Street food vendors must get license now: B. C. Shivanandamurthy

Deputy Commissioner mandated all food-related businesses follow legal rules, with inspections ensuring hygiene, health checks, and safety across 1,500 district units



MANDYA
Additional District Magistrate Dr. B. C. Shivanandamurthy has directed all street food vendors and food business operators in the district to obtain licenses or registration under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. Speaking at a district review meeting held at the Deputy Commissioner's office, he said it is mandatory for all those involved in food production, storage, distribution and sale to follow the rules under the law. This includes fair price shops, schools under the Akshara Dasoha

scheme, milk cooperatives, warehouses, fruit sellers, roadside vendors, meat shops, hotels, restaurants, caterers and canteens. He noted that around 1,500 food processing units are operating in the district and instructed food safety officers to conduct regular inspections in their respective areas. Officials were also told to ensure proper hygiene and health check-ups of cooks and staff working in kitchens and storage units. Dr. Shivanandamurthy emphasized that strict action should be taken against unauthorized food units. He also

directed officers to collect food samples every month and send them for testing. Items like grains, spices, fruits, vegetables, oils, bakery products, milk items and beverages will be checked for quality and safety. He said legal action is already underway, with several cases registered in courts related to food safety violations. Highlighting the large number of street vendors, he urged them to comply with the rules to ensure public health. He warned that use of harmful substances like artificial colors or chemicals will invite strict penalties.

District launches campaign to protect girls from cervical cancer

CHIKKABALLAPURA
District authorities have launched a major health campaign to protect girls from cervical cancer, stressing that their wellbeing is key to the district's future. District Magistrate G. Prabhu chaired a meeting on immunization and HPV vaccination programs at the District Office and directed officials to ensure full coverage for eligible girls. He said the aim is to make the district free from cervical cancer through timely vaccination and awareness. Officials were instructed to vaccinate all 14 year old girls free of cost under the HPV program. Awareness campaigns will be conducted in schools and villages to inform parents and children about the importance of the vaccine. Health authorities said the HPV vaccine is safe and effective, with no major side



effects. Vaccination will be carried out every Wednesday from 9 am to 2 pm at primary health centers, community health centers, urban health units and district hospitals. In the district, about 13,432 girls are eligible for vaccination, and over 4,800 doses have already been supplied. Steps are being taken to complete the remaining vaccinations during the special drive planned between March and May 2026. Parents have been urged to take their children to the nearest health centers and ensure they receive the vaccine on time. Officials said proper records will be maintained and vaccination certificates will be issued. The campaign carries the message that protecting girls' health today will secure a better future for the district. Several department officials attended the meeting and assured full support.

Ankanahalli Dairy gives bonus to milk producers

RAMANAGARA
In a move to support local dairy farmers, the Ankanahalli Milk Producers Cooperative Association is distributing an incentive of ₹1 per liter of milk to producers, said Pavitra S. Mahesh, the association's president. Speaking at a press conference at the association's office in Kailancha Hobli, Mahesh explained that rising costs of cattle feed and poor mango harvests have caused financial strain for farmers. "One kante of fodder now costs ₹300, and with Ugadi approaching, this bonus is intended to help our milk producers," she said. The association has supplied 978,738 liters of milk from 167 farmers this year. With the ₹1 per liter incentive, nearly ₹9.78 lakh is be-

ing transferred directly to farmers' bank accounts. Additionally, three staff members are receiving ₹5,000 each as part of the incentive program. Mahesh highlighted that local cooperative associations are key to farmers' economic progress. The Ankanahalli Dairy generates profits of ₹14-15 lakh annually, which are used to provide bonuses and support farmers. She said the association has deposited about ₹50 lakhs in BDCC Bank and other accounts, ensuring funds are available to help producers. The press conference was attended by the association's vice president D. Nagaraju, directors B. Chandru, A. Gopi, K. Shivaramu, K. Ramesh, L. Ramaiah, P. Ramesh, secretary G. Yogananda, milk tester Kempegowda, S. Prasad, and other members.



Venkatappa praised Shivakumar, KPCC President, for completing six years, highlighting his dedication to party strengthening and public service

DK Shivakumar leadership inspires youth, says Venkatappa

DEVANAHALLI
Congress leader and social worker V. Venkatappa has said that the political guidance of D.K. Shivakumar is very important for the youth of the state. Speaking to reporters at Dyavarahalli village in Devanahalli taluk, Venkatappa praised Shivakumar's leadership and his role in the state government. He described him as a strong and people-friendly leader who has been working actively for the welfare of the public. Venkatappa pointed out that Shivakumar, who is also the President of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee,



has successfully completed six years in the position. He said this reflects his dedication and commitment to strengthening the party and serving the people. He further stated that Shivakumar has shown effective

leadership and has contributed to good governance in the state. According to him, such leadership is necessary to guide young people who are interested in entering public life and contributing to society. Venkatappa expressed hope that Shivakumar will continue his service for many more years and take up more development projects for the benefit of the state. He added that his experience and leadership will help in bringing further progress and stability. He concluded by wishing that Shivakumar continues to serve the people with the same dedication and works towards the overall development of Karnataka.

KSRTC WINS BIG AWARDS FOR INNOVATIVE TRANSPORT

BENGALURU
The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has received two prestigious national awards for its innovative and inclusive transport services at the Elets Mobility Excellence Awards 2026. KSRTC was recognized in two categories. The first award, for Innovation in Citizen Engagement and Inclusive Mobility, was given for the Dhvani Spandana initiative. The second award, for Outstanding Public Transport Digitisation Initiative, was for the AWATAR 4.0 project, which now includes UPI-based digital payments. The Dhvani Spandana system, implemented in 200 Mysuru City Transport buses in collaboration with GIZ Germany, helps visually impaired passengers travel inde-



pendently. The on-board navigation and identification system reduces their reliance on others, giving them confidence and safety while commuting. The AWATAR 4.0 project is KSRTC's digital ticket booking system, allowing passengers to check seat availability and book tickets anytime via mobile or web. With the new UPI payment feature, ticket booking is now faster, fully cashless, and more transparent. The awards were presented at a ceremony organized by Elets Techno-media at Novotel Hotel, Hyderabad. Gayithri K M received the awards on behalf of KSRTC from K. Ilambarithi and Dr. Ravi Gupta. With these awards, KSRTC has set a new benchmark in making public transport smarter, safer, and more user-friendly for everyone.

Vijayapura gears up for SSLC exam safety

VIJAYAPURA
The Vijayapura district administration has completed all preparations to ensure a smooth and fair conduct of the SSLC examinations starting March 18. Examinations will continue until April 2 across 137 centres in the district, officials said. District Collector Dr. Anand K. confirmed that seven Block Education Officers and designated SSLC nodal officers will supervise the exams to maintain transparency and prevent malpractice. Question papers will be transported securely under police supervision along assigned routes to

reach examination centres on time. To enhance transparency, CCTV cameras have been installed at all centres, and a web-casting system at the Zilla Panchayat hall will allow observers to monitor each exam room in real time. Mobile phones are strictly prohibited for staff on duty. Police arrangements have been strengthened around examination centres and during the transportation of question papers, ensuring students can appear without fear. Additionally, a 200-metre restricted zone has been imposed around each centre, closing xerox shops, cyber cafés, and coaching centres until exams conclude.

Chikkaballapura welcomes Ugadi with traditions

CHIKKABALLAPURA
Chikkaballapura is all set to celebrate Ugadi, the Hindu New Year, marking the first day of the Chaitra month, known as Sri Parabhava Nama Samvatsar. Ugadi, derived from "Yuga" and "Adi," signifies the beginning of a new age and the renewal of life and nature. Traditionally, devotees take a ritual bath early in the morning, decorate their homes with garlands, and offer a mix of neem and jaggery



to the gods. This symbolic mixture represents health, wealth, and the ability to face life's challenges with balance. Family members share the

neem-jaggery prasad to strengthen bonds and celebrate togetherness. Married sons and daughters-in-law are specially invited, fostering unity and the spirit of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam." The festival also has historical and cultural significance. It is believed that Lord Brahma began creation on this day, and Lord Vishnu, in his Rama avatar, defeated Ravana. Devotees consult the Panchanga to understand auspicious times, planetary positions, and blessings for the year. Temples perform special

rituals, including Rudra Parayana, Vishnu Sahasranama, and Abhishekam. Festive foods like Obbattu, Hollige, or Purana Poli are prepared, symbolizing prosperity and continuity of tradition. Across Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, Ugadi is celebrated with prayers, new clothes, temple visits, and cultural activities. Despite modern changes, the festival preserves ancient values, offering joy, spiritual renewal, and a connection to India's rich cultural heritage.

QUICK READ



Mandya Women's College wins inter-college softball

MANDYA

Students of Mandya Women's Government College have won the 2025-26 Inter-College Softball Tournament of Mandya University, held at the Government College for Women, Madur. The team emerged as champions, bringing pride to the college. Principal Professor Gururaj Prabhu K., Director of Physical Education Dr. Lokesh K.R., Gazetted Manager Ravikiran K.P., and the entire sports committee, along with teaching and non-teaching staff, congratulated the players. Their efforts and teamwork were praised for achieving this victory. The college community celebrated the success, recognizing the students' dedication, skill, and sportsmanship in representing their institution with excellence.

Villagers demand action on Devikera drainage issues

SURPUR

Residents of Devikera village are angry over worsening drainage and poor sanitation. Overflowing drains are causing foul smells, stagnant water, and a rise in mosquitoes, raising health concerns. Village leader Ganesh Hosamani said the drinking water trough for cattle is damaged and needs urgent repair, especially with summer approaching. Despite earlier cleaning, drains have clogged again, making daily life difficult. Villagers have urged authorities to inspect the area and take immediate action to fix the problems. They warned that if the issues remain unaddressed, they may organize protests to demand timely solutions.

New health center work begins in Bavagi

The MLA said the new facility will offer essential medical services locally, ensuring timely treatment for villagers and nearby residents

BIDAR

A new health and wellness center will soon come up in Bavagi village of Bidar South constituency, with MLA Dr. Shailendra Beldale performing the foundation ritual for the project.

The center is being constructed at a cost of ₹65 lakh with the aim of improving healthcare services in rural areas. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Beldale said the project is an important step towards strengthening public health and rural development in the region.

He said the new facility

will provide basic medical services to villagers and people from nearby areas, reducing the need to travel to distant towns even for minor health issues. The MLA added that access to timely and proper treatment is very important for rural communities.

Dr. Beldale described the health center as not just a building but a symbol of commitment to the well being and health security of the people. He assured that more development works will be taken up in the coming days to improve public services in the constituency.

He also instructed contrac-

tors and officials to complete the construction work quickly while maintaining good quality. Regular monitoring has been ordered to ensure the project is completed on time.

Local leaders and residents welcomed the initiative and expressed happiness over the upcoming facility. They said the health center will be very useful for the village and surrounding areas.

Medical Officer Renuka Jadhav and several local leaders, including Rajkumar Patil, Jagannath Chidri and others, were present during the ceremony along with health department staff and villagers.



Students urged to follow Putina ideals



MANDYA

District Collector Dr. Kumar urged students to follow the values and ideals of noted Kannada poet Purohita Thirunarayana Narasimhachar and develop a deep understanding of the country's culture and history.

He was speaking at a seminar organized at Nalvadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar Kalamandir to mark the 121st birth anniversary of the poet. The event was jointly conducted by the Kannada and Culture Department, Dr. P.T. Trust and Mandavya First Grade College.

Dr. Kumar said students should cultivate the habit of reading books and learn about language, heritage and traditions. He stressed that the teachings of great personalities should be passed on to the younger generation to build strong values in society.

He described Purohita Thirunarayana Narasimhachar as a renowned poet, scholar and lyricist of the Kannada

renaissance period. He noted that the poet, a native of Melukote, had strong knowledge of Sanskrit and English and made significant contributions to literature.

The Deputy Commissioner said literature plays an important role in shaping society and guiding young minds. He encouraged students to read and understand literary works to gain knowledge and develop their thinking.

Speakers at the program highlighted the importance of preserving cultural values and respecting parents. They said students should balance modern education with traditional knowledge.

Experts also spoke about the literary achievements of the poet and his contribution to devotional and lyrical works. They said his writings continue to inspire generations.

Several writers, officials and members of literary organizations attended the program and paid tribute to the poet.

DC G. Prabhu highlighted women achievers' contributions, self-help groups, and their vital roles in society and milk production

WOMEN ACHIEVERS INSPIRE CHANGE AT DISTRICT EVENT

CHIKKABALLAPURA

International Women's Day was celebrated with enthusiasm in the district, with officials highlighting the importance of women's achievements and empowerment in society.

District Commissioner G. Prabhu, who inaugurated the event at Kannada Bhavan, said the true purpose of the day is to remember women achievers and follow their ideals in daily life. He noted that women play a key role in shaping families and society.

He recalled the contributions of historic figures like Jhansi Rani Lakshmbai, Sarojini Naidu, Kittur Rani Chennamma, Rani Abbakka and Onake Obavva, saying their courage and achievements continue to inspire generations.

The Commissioner said more than 10,000 women self help groups are active in the district, with about 1.20



lakh women participating. These groups are contributing greatly to social and economic development. He added that women play a major role in milk production, carrying out nearly 90 percent of the work in the sector.

Speaking about the future, he said the age of artificial intelligence has created equal opportunities, where knowledge and skills matter more than physical strength. He expressed confidence that women will achieve greater

success in the coming years.

District Guarantee Scheme Implementation Authority Chairman N. Ramesh highlighted government schemes supporting women. He said significant funds have been spent under various programs like Grihalakshmi, Shakti and Annabhagya in the district.

Other officials praised the growing role of women in all fields. Many officers, staff members and women group representatives attended the program.

Leaders thank seer for solving water issues

CHAMARAJANAGAR

Leaders from Ramapura, Martalli and Ajjipura areas of Hanur assembly constituency met the seer of Suttur Mutt and expressed their gratitude for efforts taken to address drinking water problems in their region.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Dattatreya Kumar said the people of the constituency are thankful for the guidance and support provided by Sri Sri Deshikendra Swamiji in resolving long standing water issues.

He said the blessings of the seer have given confidence to the people and leaders working for development.

Dr. Kumar stated that many leaders from the region visited the mutt with devotion and offered their respects. He added that with the guidance of the seer, important steps have been taken to improve water

supply in the constituency.

He said that in the recent state budget, a grant of ₹490 crore has been announced for the Udhure Halla drinking water project and for filling lakes to prevent water shortage in Hanur constituency. Leaders expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister, ministers and public representatives for supporting these projects.

Dr. Kumar said the project is expected to provide a long term solution to drinking water problems and benefit thousands of people in the region. He expressed hope that the project will be completed successfully with continued support and blessings.

He also said that the involvement of spiritual leaders in development activities brings strength and unity among people. Leaders from the constituency thanked the seer for his constant encouragement.

Compensation plan proposed for social exclusion victims

CHITRADURGA

District Magistrate T. Venkatesh has announced that a proposal will be sent to the government seeking compensation for dependents of victims affected by past social exclusion cases in the district.

Speaking at the District Awareness and Supervision Committee meeting, he said a detailed list of victims and their families from six villages has been prepared after a joint survey by officials. The incidents date back to 2013-14 in different taluks.

Officials identified 45 direct victims and about 200 dependents after verifying records, including police complaints and voter lists. The report will be submitted within a week for rehabilitation support under relevant legal



provisions.

The meeting also expressed concern over the rising acquittal rate in cases registered under the Prevention of Atrocities Act. More than 300 cases have been filed since 2021, but only a few have resulted in conviction.

Authorities said witness statements often change due to local settlements, weaken-

ing cases in court. Between May 2025 and February 2026, only one case ended in conviction, while ten resulted in acquittal. Over 150 cases are still under investigation.

Officials highlighted that compensation has been provided to several victims, and efforts are ongoing to complete investigations within a fixed time.

Hunsur Govt School begins annual enrollment drive

HUNSUR

Hunsur City Government Boys Higher Primary School has launched its enrollment drive for the next academic year.

Admission applications were distributed by SDMC President A.S. Shubha, Vice President Mohammad Rafique, District President Purushottam, Alumni Association President Ramesh, Headmaster Suresh, and teaching staff.

Over a hundred parents collected applications at the school premises on the first day. Speaking to reporters, Purushottam highlighted challenges such as rising private school fees and declining

enrollment in government schools, emphasizing that strengthening public schools is the key solution. Headmaster Suresh said the school aims to provide quality education for children from all sections of society.

Literary figure Dr. Madhu Prasad stressed that teachers must go beyond traditional teaching to meet societal educational needs. Teacher Narasimha noted the strong community connection with the school. The enrollment drive saw active participation from school officials, teachers, alumni, and members of the SDMC, reflecting the community's commitment to nurturing government education.

The program also honored senior journalists of the district for their contributions to the profession. Srinivas emphasized that DVG's philosophy of truth, morality, and knowledge remains relevant and serves as a guiding light for media professionals and society alike.

Several officials from the association were present, including Vice Presidents Shafiullah and Muniveeranna, General Secretary Ramesh, Treasurer Muniraju, Directors Sunil, Jagadish, Srinivas

Gandhi, Taluk Vice Presidents Narasimha and Harsha P., and former directors Shantamurthy, Jyotishparappa, Vinay, Nagaraj, and D.N. Narayanaswamy. Members of the association participated actively in paying homage and celebrating DVG's enduring legacy.

The event highlighted DVG's contribution to Kannada literature, journalism, and philosophy, reaffirming his status as a modern omniscient thinker whose work continues to shape moral and intellectual values.



found poetry. Srinivas added that DVG, awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1967, was a modern all-rounder in

Kannada literature and philosophy, whose ideals continue to inspire today's young journalists.

MEDIA INSPIRATION EVENT

DVG's life philosophy celebrated by journalists

DEVANAHALLI

Devotional tributes were paid to D. V. Gundappa on his birthday at the Working Journalists' Association of Bangalore Rural District in Pattana.

Speaking at the event, District President G. Srinivas said that DVG, born in Devanahalli, was a great Kannada writer, journalist, and thinker. He highlighted DVG's famous work Mankutimmana Kaggera, describing it as a source of life lessons conveyed through simple yet pro-

IN THE COURT OF SCCH 25 AT BANGALORE MVC No: 7531/2025 PETITIONER: Sajan K.S. -V/-S- RESPONDENT: Kataria Automobiles Pvt. Ltd. & another. NOTICE TO RESPONDENT NO.1 Kataria Automobiles Pvt. Ltd., O/at: No. 202, SF Ratara arcade BS Adani School, Survey No. 195 to 212 Makarba, Ahmedabad, Gujarat-380051, (owner of the Bharath Benz Vehicle bearing Reg No: GJ-01-JT-2656) Whereas the above named petitioners have filed the petition against respondents for seeking the relief for road traffic accident. Take notice that the petitioner has filed the above case against you and other respondents for claiming compensation of Rs 60,00,000/- for the injured/Death in the Road Traffic Accident, In RTA occurred. On 09-09-2025 at about 10-15 A.M., when your Insured Bharath Benz bearing Reg. No: GJ-01-JT-2656 hit the deceased K.S. Saraswathy kalimada. Due to that K.S. Saraswathy kalimada sustained injuries near Devarahoshalli Village, B.M. Road Express way, NH 275, Channapattana Taluk, Bengaluru south Dist. You are by Summoned to appear before this Hon'ble Court in person or pleader on 18-05-2026 Day of 11-00 A.M., if you fail to appear the above case will be decided ex parte. Issued as per the order and seal of this Hon'ble court on this Day of 12-03-2026 with the seal of this Hon'ble Court. By Order of the Court, Assistant Registrar, Court of Small Causes, Bengaluru. Advocate for petitioner: Hemanth, Advocate, Opp. British Liquors, Ramnagara Town, Ramnagara, Bengaluru. Date: 12-03-2026

IN THE COURT OF SCCH 25 AT BANGALORE MVC No: 7532/2025 PETITIONER: Sajan K.S. -V/-S- RESPONDENT: Kataria Automobiles Pvt. Ltd. & another. NOTICE TO RESPONDENT NO.1 Kataria Automobiles Pvt. Ltd., O/at: No. 202, SF Ratara arcade BS Adani School, Survey No. 195 to 212 Makarba, Ahmedabad, Gujarat-380051, (owner of the Bharath Benz Vehicle bearing Reg No: GJ-01-JT-2656) Whereas the above named petitioners have filed the petition against respondents for seeking the relief for road traffic accident. Take notice that the petitioner has filed the above case against you and other respondents for claiming compensation of Rs 60,00,000/- for the injured/Death in the Road Traffic Accident, In RTA occurred. On 09-09-2025 at about 10-15 A.M., when your Insured Bharath Benz bearing Reg. No: GJ-01-JT-2656 hit the deceased K.P. Somiah kalimada. Due to that K.P. Somiah kalimada sustained injuries near Devarahoshalli Village, B.M. Road Express way, NH 275, Channapattana Taluk, Bengaluru south Dist. You are by Summoned to appear before this Hon'ble Court in person or pleader on 18-05-2026 Day of 11-00 A.M., if you fail to appear the above case will be decided ex parte. Issued as per the order and seal of this Hon'ble court on this Day of 12-03-2026 with the seal of this Hon'ble Court. By Order of the Court, Assistant Registrar, Court of Small Causes, Bengaluru. Advocate for petitioner: Hemanth, Advocate, Opp. British Liquors, Ramnagara Town, Ramnagara, Bengaluru. Date: 12-03-2026

QUICK READ



Storms, gusty winds forecast in several districts of Chhattisgarh

Raipur

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a ‘Yellow Alert’ for several districts in Chhattisgarh as the state experiences a sudden shift in weather patterns. On Tuesday, the Met department warned of potential storms, strong gusty winds, thunderstorms, and lightning strikes, urging residents to exercise caution. The alert covers all districts under the Surguja and Bilaspur divisions, along with Rajnandgaon, Kabirdham, Bemetara, Raipur, Balodabazar, Narayanpur, and Sukma. These areas are at risk of sudden weather deterioration, with thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds reaching speeds of 30-50 kmph likely at isolated to scattered places. The activity is attributed to an active weather system, including influences from a trough extending across central India and possible remnants of broader seasonal disturbances affecting the region.



Advocate after HC orders removal of posts on Hardeep Puri’s daughter

New Delhi

Senior Advocate Mahesh Jethmalani on Tuesday said the Delhi High Court’s direction to take down social media posts linking Himayani Puri, daughter of Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, to American financier and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein was a vindication against a defamatory campaign targeting her. The Delhi High Court granted interim relief to Himayani Puri and directed social media intermediaries, including X, Google, YouTube, Meta and LinkedIn, as well as unidentified John Doe entities, to remove allegedly defamatory posts and URLs within 24 hours. Senior Advocate Mahesh Jethmalani, representing Himayani Puri, said the court’s order establishes that the online allegations were part of an unfounded and malicious attempt to tarnish her reputation.

Mayawati accuses SP, Cong of politicising Kanshi Ram’s legacy

The SP, Congress, and other political outfits are trying to claim association with Kanshi Ram to strengthen their position among Dalit voters ahead of the polls

LUCKNOW

In a strongly worded statement, Mayawati alleged that parties which had ignored Kanshi Ram during their time in power are now raising demands to celebrate his birth anniversary and confer upon him the Bharat Ratna purely for vote-bank politics.

She termed these demands as opportunistic and politically motivated, accusing rival parties of attempting to appropriate the legacy of the BSP founder for electoral advantage.

Taking to social media platform X, Mayawati said that the SP, Congress, and other political outfits are trying to claim association with Kanshi Ram to strengthen their position among Dalit voters. She emphasized that such efforts would not succeed, as the BSP continues to represent and uphold the ideology established by its founder.



She also targeted the Congress, stating that when it was in power at the Centre, it failed to confer the country’s highest civilian honour on Kanshi Ram. However, the party is now demanding the award from another government, which she described as contradictory and politically driven.

Mayawati further alleged that both SP and Congress have historically worked to weaken the BSP and undermine its influence. She asserted that as Kanshi Ram’s political successor, she remains committed to protecting the party’s core principles and organisational strength.

The BSP chief also claimed that the renewed focus on Kanshi Ram by opposition parties reflects a decline in the relevance of their own leaders, forcing them to invoke BSP icons to remain politically relevant. She accused previous SP-led governments of diluting or reversing initiatives introduced during BSP rule in honour of Kanshi Ram.

Citing Kanshi Ram’s book Chamcha Yug, she criticised what she described as sycophantic politics practiced by rival parties. The political row gained further momentum after Akhilesh Yadav demanded that Kanshi Ram be awarded the Bharat Ratna, calling him a transformative leader of social justice. Similarly, Rahul Gandhi had earlier supported the demand, adding to the intensifying political discourse ahead of the elections.

TMC releases first list of candidate for Bengal polls

KOLKATA

With elections scheduled in two phases in April for the 294-member West Bengal Assembly, the TMC has fielded candidates in 291 constituencies, leaving three seats in the North Bengal hills—Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Kurseong—for its ally, the Bharatiya Gorkha Prajatantrik Morcha (BGPM).

The party, led by Mamata Banerjee, is aiming to retain power for another term.

Banerjee confirmed that she will contest from Bhabanipur, her traditional stronghold in south Kolkata. The seat is expected to witness a battle royale as Suwendu Adhikari, representing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has also been nominated from the same constituency in addition to his current seat, Nandigram. This marks the second direct electoral contest between the two leaders.

In the 2021 Assembly elections, Adhikari had defeated Banerjee in Nandigram, after which she secured a victory from Bhabanipur in a by-election and continued as Chief Minister for a third consecutive term. The renewed face-off between the two leaders is expected to be one of the most closely watched battles in the state.

Meanwhile, the BJP has already released its first list of 144 candidates. At Nandigram, the TMC has fielded Pabitra Kar, a former BJP leader and close associate of Adhikari, who joined the party shortly before the announcement of candidates. Expressing confidence, Banerjee stated that her party is aiming to win at least 226 seats in the upcoming elections. She also asserted that the BJP would lose its political ground in West Bengal after the polls.



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one seat. This time, however, the Left Front and the Indian National Congress are contesting separately, potentially altering the electoral dynamics.

Banerjee also issued a note of caution to Narendra Modi, indicating that the upcoming elections would be fiercely contested. The political landscape in West Bengal is now set for an intense and high-stakes electoral battle.

ECI transfers 19 senior police officers

KOLKATA

The large-scale reshuffle includes two Additional Directors Generals (ADGs), four Commissioners of Police, 12 Superintendents of Police (SPs), and a Deputy Commissioner of Kolkata Police. The move is seen as a significant administrative step by the ECI to maintain neutrality in the state’s law enforcement machinery during the election period.

As per the orders, Dr Rajesh Kumar Singh has been appointed as the new ADG, South Bengal, while K. Jayaraman will take charge as ADG, North Bengal. Among the key commissioner-level changes, Dr Pranab Kumar has been posted as the Commissioner of Asansol-Durgapur in West Burdwan district, and Akhilesh Kumar Chaturvedi has been appointed Commissioner of the Howrah Police Commissionerate in Hooghly district.

Amit Kumar Singh will serve as the Commissioner of Barrackpore Police Commissionerate in North 24 Parganas, while Sunil Kumar Yadav has been named the Commissioner of Chandannagar Police Commissionerate in Hooghly.

At the district level, several new SPs have been appointed. Pushpa has been posted as SP of Barasat Police District, while Jaspreet Singh will head Cooch Behar district. Surya Pratap Yadav takes charge as SP of Birbhum, and Rakesh Singh has been appointed SP of Islampur Police District.

Sachin, a 2013-batch IPS officer, has been made SP of Murshidabad Police District, while Alaknanda Bhowal (2017-batch IPS) will serve as SP of Basirhat Police District. Anupam Singh has been posted as SP of Malda, and Anshuman Saha will take charge of East Midnapore district.

Ram rejects ‘baseless’ allegations of party MLAs on RS poll absence row

PATNA

Bihar Congress president Rajesh Ram on Tuesday strongly denied allegations that he had directed party MLAs to abstain from voting in the Rajya Sabha elections terming the claims completely baseless. After Congress MLA from Forbesganj, Manoj Vishwas, alleged that he abstained from voting in the Rajya Sabha elections on the directions of Bihar Congress State President Rajesh Ram, the latter issued a strong rebuttal, terming the allegation completely baseless.

Responding sharply, Rajesh Ram said, Let me make it absolutely clear that I am among the most loyal members of the party. Posts may come and go, but a person’s reputation is built with great difficulty. I categorically deny these allegations. He further stated that he had made repeated efforts to contact the MLAs ahead of the voting.

I was in constant touch with them. I called them multiple times and even went to their residences, sat there, and requested them to meet me. However, I could not meet anyone. Even after that, I kept calling and sending messages, stressing that the party’s reputation was at stake and urging them to respond at least once. Despite all efforts, they neither answered my calls nor replied to my messages. And today, such allegations are being made, he told IANS.

Reaffirming his commitment to the party, Rajesh Ram added, We are loyal soldiers of the Congress party. We have worked at the grassroots level and earned our positions through dedication. While holding this responsibility, I can never betray the party.

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Expressing confidence, Banerjee stated that her party is aiming to win at least 226 seats in the upcoming elections. She also asserted that the BJP would lose its political ground in West Bengal after the polls.

In the 2021 elections, the TMC had secured 215 seats, while the BJP won 77. The Left Front and the Congress had failed to open their accounts, with only the All India Secular Front (AISF) managing to win one seat. This time, however, the Left Front and the Indian National Congress are contesting separately, potentially altering the electoral dynamics.

Banerjee also issued a note of caution to Narendra Modi, indicating that the upcoming elections would be fiercely contested. The political landscape in West Bengal is now set for an intense and high-stakes electoral battle.

Oppn slams Maha, Centre over LPG supply cut

MUMBAI

NCP (SP) Legislative Party leader Jayant Patil led the attack, alleging that the government has not been transparent about the situation despite directions from Legislative Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar to provide a detailed briefing on gas supplies.

Speaking to reporters, Patil said the administration has failed to take both the public and political stakeholders into confidence regarding its strategy to address the crisis.

He claimed that the so-called double engine government has been unable to tackle supply chain disruptions, resulting in widespread shortages and long waiting queues for LPG cylinders across Maharashtra. While authorities have highlighted the arrival of two emergency LPG tankers to ease the situation, Patil dismissed the move as insufficient to meet the state’s daily demand.

They fail to realise that Maharashtra requires multiple such vessels every day to meet its consumption needs, he said, stressing that the current measures fall far short of addressing the scale of the crisis.



Patil also raised concerns over India’s diplomatic and trade situation, linking the shortage to global supply disruptions. He pointed to the reported blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, a key maritime route for energy imports, and questioned whether India’s foreign policy approach has contributed to the current predicament.

India has historically shared strong ties with Iran. The public must question why a friendly nation is now seen as obstructing maritime trade routes, he remarked.

The criticism from opposition parties comes amid growing public frustration over supply shortages, with many households struggling to secure LPG cylinders. The government is yet to issue a comprehensive response addressing both the immediate crisis and the broader concerns raised.

EVIDENCE TAMPERING CASE

Kerala High Court refuses to quash former MLA Antony Raju’s conviction

KOCHI

In a major setback ahead of the Assembly elections, the Kerala High Court on Tuesday rejected a plea by former MLA Antony Raju, from Thiruvananthapuram Central, seeking a stay on his conviction in a case involving tampering of court evidence.

The ruling effectively bars the former minister from contesting the polls, triggering ripples in the state capital.

He ceased to be a legislator from January 4, after the Nedumangad Magistrate Court sentenced him to three years’ imprisonment in the case and on Tuesday, he got another jolt



when the High Court refused to stay the order.

Raju is the sole legislator of the Janadhipathy Kerala Con-

gress and was the State Transport Minister until 2024 December after making way for another ally as part of the agreement in the ruling Left Democratic Front.

A bench led by Justice Nirmaljit Kaur dismissed the plea, meaning the disqualification under the Representation of the People Act will continue.

Without a stay on conviction, Antony Raju cannot file his nomination, closing the last available legal window for his participation in the election.

However, the last date for filing of nomination is 23rd March, leaving him a few more days, as he can now approach

either the Division Bench of the Kerala High Court or the apex court to get a stay.

The case, often referred to as the controversial underwear case, dates back to 1990. Antony Raju, then a junior lawyer, was accused of tampering with material evidence, an undergarment in a narcotics case, to help the accused.

Subsequent scientific examinations established that the evidence had been altered after being taken from the court. After years of legal proceedings across multiple levels, the trial court conviction has now come back to haunt him at a crucial political juncture.



KARNATAKA NEERAVARI NIGAM LIMITED

(A Government of Karnataka Enterprise)

Office of the Executive Engineer, Kalasa Project Division,

Khanapur, Belagavi – 591302

The tender Notification No: KNNL/KPD/KNP/PB/TND/2025-26/2170

Date: 16.03.2026.

SHORT TERM: PERCENTAGE TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Through Kpp-portal only)

1. Percentage tender is invited from The Firm registrar with of company through KPP-Portal according to standard tender document rules in prescribed form on behalf of Managing Director, Karnataka Neeravari Nigam Limited, Bengaluru.

Sl No	Name of Work	Amount put to tender (Including of GST) (In Lakhs)	Category / Class of Contractors
1	Consultancy Services For Third Party Inspection, Supervision And Submission of Reports etc Complete For The Work Of Hangaraga Tank Filling Scheme in Belagavi Taluka, Belagavi Dist. (W.I. No. KNNL/2025-26/SE0411)	72.74	The registrar of the Firm/ Company with the register of companies.

2. Details and Tender documents may be downloaded through website www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in/index.seam and Filled bids for the above works may be submitted through the KPP portal until 25.03.2026, 4:00 PM.

3. Technical bid will be opened on 26.03.2026 at 4.30 PM in the office of the Executive Engineer, KNNL, Kalasa Project Division Khanapur

4. For further details such as, EMD amount, time limit, cost of tender form, eligibility for work, terms and conditions of tender visit our website www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in or contact the EE, KPD, Khanapur during office hours on any working day.

Sd/-Executive Engineer,

KNNL, Kalasa Project Division,

Khanapur, Belagavi

DIPR/BGM/2104/DeshpandePublicity/2025-26

QUICK READ



Youth from Rajasthan dies in Iran-Israel conflict

Jaipur

Another youth from Rajasthan has lost his life amid the ongoing conflict involving Iran, the US, and Israel. Vikram Verma (22), a native of Sikar district, was killed in a drone attack in Oman on March 14, and his body reached his village on Tuesday after four days. His last rites were performed in a sombre and grief-stricken atmosphere. He belonged to Agloi village in the Khandela area of the district. Sikar ADM Ratan Kumar confirmed that a resident of Sikar has died in the Israel-Iran war and his body has reached his village in Khandela.

Gujarat allocates ₹59.14 cr for women-focused 'pink toilets'

Gandhinagar

Gujarat has allocated Rs 59.14 crore in the 2026-27 state budget for the construction of pink toilets for women across urban areas, as part of an expanded push under the 'Nirmal Gujarat 2.0' programme to strengthen sanitation infrastructure and public hygiene. The initiative, to be implemented in municipal corporations, municipalities and urban pilgrimage sites, is among four new components introduced under the cleanliness campaign for the upcoming financial year. The facilities are intended to provide safe, clean and modern sanitation spaces for women in high-footfall urban locations.

Telangana minister for appointing Jagga Reddy as PCC chief

Hyderabad

In a development that may send ripples within the ruling Congress party in Telangana, state minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy has demanded that senior leader Jagga Reddy should be made the state Congress chief. In an informal chat with mediapersons in the Assembly lobbies, the minister for roads and buildings said Jagga Reddy should be appointed president of Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC). The minister stated that Jagga Reddy is a mass leader and if he is made TPCC chief the Congress party will win 100 seats in the next Assembly elections. He compared Jagga Reddy to P. Janardhan Reddy (PIR), who was leader of Congress Legislature Party (CLP) in combined Andhra Pradesh Assembly between 1994 and 1999.

Two criminals, STF jawan killed in encounter in Bihar

PATNA

Two dreaded criminals and a Special Task Force (STF) jawan were killed in an encounter at Ramdiha village under Chakia police station limits in Bihar's East Champaran district early Tuesday. Police said that two suspects were arrested following the encounter, as the raid was conducted based on intelligence inputs related to a threat to kill police personnel. Notably, the audio clip had gone viral on social media recently. Police said that the notorious criminal, Kundan Thak-

Chouhan defends G RAM G Act, slams Oppn

He launched a sharp attack on the oppn in RS, accusing them of indulging in petty politics over renaming of the scheme.

NEW DELHI

Participating in a heated debate, Chouhan dismissed criticism regarding changes to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). He argued that the scheme was originally introduced as NREGA without Mahatma Gandhi's name and claimed that the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) later added the name for political gain. According to him, such moves reflected a pattern of politicizing welfare schemes for electoral mileage

rather than focusing on effective implementation.

The Union Minister further alleged that several government schemes have historically been named after leaders from the Gandhi family, including former Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and Rajiv Gandhi. He said this practice promoted a one family narrative in governance, sidelining broader contributions and achievements.

The debate intensified when Congress MP Pramod Tiwari countered Chouhan's remarks by citing the Narendra Modi



Stadium in Ahmedabad as an example of naming institutions after current leaders. Respond-

ing to this, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju intervened, clarifying that the stadium was named

by a private entity and not through government funding, thereby distinguishing it from public welfare schemes.

Chouhan also brought attention to allocations made by the Rural Development Ministry to West Bengal, suggesting that the Centre has been consistent in supporting states irrespective of political differences. However, Trinamool Congress MP Sukhendu Shekhar Roy raised a point of order, questioning whether the Supreme Court had directed the Centre to release pending funds to the state, adding another layer of

contention to the discussion.

Defending the government's flagship programmes, Chouhan highlighted the success of Ayushman Bharat, stating that it has provided crucial healthcare support to millions of economically vulnerable families. In a pointed remark aimed at the opposition, he questioned their track record, saying, 'Whose poverty did you eliminate? You only engaged in vote-bank politics, underscoring the government's claim of prioritizing development over political considerations.'

1,100 observers deployed for Assembly polls in 5 states

KOLKATA

According to the ECI notification, a total of 557 general observers, 188 police observers, and 366 expenditure observers have been appointed for the poll-bound states.

Among them, West Bengal will see the highest deployment, with a general observer assigned to each of its 294 Assembly constituencies, making it the only state with such extensive coverage.

In comparison, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala, and Puducherry will have fewer general observers than their respective number of constituencies. This highlights the Commission's focus on West Bengal, which is set to witness a closely watched electoral contest.

West Bengal will also have the highest number of police observers at 84, followed by Tamil Nadu with 40, Assam with 35, Kerala with 17, and



Among them, West Bengal will see the highest deployment, with a general observer assigned to each of its 294 Assembly constituencies.

Puducherry with four. Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu will have the largest deployment of expenditure observers at 151, with West Bengal following at 100, indicating heightened monitoring of poll expenses in these states.

The Commission has directed all appointed observers

to reach their respective Assembly constituencies by March 18. Upon arrival, they will make their contact details public and designate a fixed time each day to meet candidates, political parties, their representatives, and members of the public to address election-related grievances.

The ECI stated that these Central Observers are appointed under the powers granted by Article 324 of the Constitution and Section 20B of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Their role is to assist in conducting elections smoothly while ensuring adherence to guidelines and maintaining the integrity of the electoral process at the ground level.

West Bengal's Assembly elections will be held in two phases on April 23 and April 29, with the heavy deployment of observers underscoring the Commission's intent to maintain strict vigilance throughout the polling process.

SCB hospital fire: Toll touches 12, Oppn demands minister's resignation

BHUBANESWAR

In the wake of the tragic fire incident at the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, Odisha that claimed 12 lives, the Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Indian National Congress on Tuesday launched a massive protest in the Odisha Assembly, demanding the immediate resignation of Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling on moral grounds.

As proceedings of the Question Hour began on Tuesday, the Opposition party members along with posters, rushed to the podium of the Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy, raising anti-government slogans and demanding the resignation of the health minister.

The House was first adjourned until 12 noon and subsequently until 4 p.m. as the ruckus continued.

Speaking in the House during the zero-hour proceedings, Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik said, Yesterday, I visited SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack. What I witnessed was not just a scene of a tragic accident, but a stark reminder of the crumbling safety standards in our state's premier



healthcare institution.

Expressing his deepest condolences to the bereaved families, Patnaik further added that the patients who came to the hospital with the hope of recovery met a horrific end due to administrative negligence.

Demanding the resignation of Health Minister Mahaling on moral grounds, the former Chief Minister noted, The Health Department cannot hide behind enquiries while families mourn. A judicial enquiry is welcome, but it does not absolve the leadership of its responsibility. Therefore, I demand the immediate resignation of the Health Minister, Dr. Mukesh Mahaling. He must take moral responsibility for this catastrophic lapse in safety oversight.

He also raised objections to the announcement of Rs 25 lakh as ex-gratia for families of deceased patients describing the amount as inadequate.

SEBI mulls easing nomination norms for demat, mutual fund accounts

NEW DELHI

India's market watchdog, the Securities and Exchange Board of India, on Tuesday issued a consultation paper proposing changes to nomination norms for demat accounts and mutual fund folios, seeking public comments.

The regulator said the proposals aim to modify its January 10, 2025, circular on nomination facilities in the securities market to improve the ease of investor onboarding and align processes with banking norms. Under the existing framework introduced last year, single-holding investors were allowed to authorise one nominee (excluding minors) to operate their accounts in case of physical incapacitation, provided they remain mentally capable of contracting.

However, nominees are not permitted to update key account details such as bank information or contact details.

The current rules mandate investors to provide at least one personal identifier of the nominee, such as PAN, driving licence number or the last four digits of Aadhaar, along with full contact details, relationship status, and date of birth in case of minors.

India diversifies LPG imports amid Gulf tensions

Continued from page 1

During an inter-ministerial briefing, Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry Joint Secretary (Marketing and Oil Refinery) Sujata Sharma stated that while a significant portion of India's LPG imports continues to come from Gulf countries, oil marketing companies (OMCs) have now started procuring LPG from the United States as part of a broader diversification strategy.

She noted that the government is actively working to expand sourcing options to strengthen energy security.

Sharma highlighted that crude oil supplies have also increased due to diversification efforts, helping maintain stability in fuel availability despite geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. She reiterated that there is no dry out at any LPG distributor and that supplies to consumers remain consistent nationwide.

Commercial LPG distribution, which had faced temporary disruptions, has now been partially restored, with several states resuming normal supply. To further ease pressure on domestic LPG demand, the government has activated alternative fuels such as kerosene and coal.

Addressing concerns over panic buying, Sharma said there has been a noticeable decline in panic-driven bookings. On

March 13, there were 89 lakh panic bookings. It has come down to 70 lakh today, she said, adding that refill distribution rates remain unchanged. Consumers have been urged to avoid hoarding and refrain from purchasing LPG through black-market channels.

The ministry also confirmed that refineries are operating at full capacity, with adequate stocks of petrol and diesel available across the country. Additionally, the adoption of digital booking platforms has improved demand management and distribution efficiency.

In a related development, the Indian-flagged LPG tanker 'Nanda Devi' arrived at Vadinar Port in Gujarat on Tuesday, marking the second such arrival on the west coast this week after 'Shivalik' docked at Mundra Port a day earlier. Both vessels carried critical LPG supplies and navigated through the strategically sensitive Strait of Hormuz, where maritime movement has been impacted by ongoing tensions involving Iran, the United States, and Israel.

The arrival of these shipments reflects coordinated diplomatic and logistical efforts by India, including engagement with regional authorities and naval support, to ensure the safe passage of energy supplies and maintain uninterrupted fuel availability for the country.



14 held for holding Iftar party on boat in Ganga in Varanasi

LUCKNOW

14 Muslim youngsters were arrested by Kotwali police on Tuesday in Varanasi for allegedly conducting an Iftar party on Bajra and disposing of waste bones in Biryani into the River Ganga on Tuesday.

The video went viral on social media. Following the

backlash, Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha's city president Rajat Jaiswal lodged a complaint at Kotwali police station against unidentified persons for hurting religious sentiments.

Acting swiftly, the police registered a case and arrested 14 people within eight hours of the submission of the

complaint.

People observing the fast were invited to the ghats, where a large boat had been pre-booked. The group had the boat ride from Assi Ghat to Namoh Ghat. During the journey, those fasting first offered namaz on the boat and then broke their fast with dates and fruits.

POLICY-DRIVEN GROWTH MODEL

NDC team studies Gujarat economic model

GANDHINAGAR

A delegation of officers from the National Defence College (NDC) in New Delhi on Tuesday engaged with Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel in Gandhinagar to study the state's economic development model as part of a national-level programme on economic security.

The visit formed part of an ongoing study course under national security and strategic studies, in which 122 officers are participating.

The batch comprises 61 of-



ficers from the Indian Armed Forces, 20 from civil services, and 41 foreign military officers from partner countries.

A 17-member team, led by Rear Admiral Sandeep Singh Sandhu, is currently on a study tour of Gujarat, with

visits scheduled to GIFT City, the Statue of Unity, the Indo-Israel Centre of Excellence in Agriculture and Jamnagar.

The team includes officers from the three wings of the armed forces, members of the

Indian Revenue Service, Communication Services, and foreign military officers.

During the interaction, the officers expressed interest in understanding Gujarat's approach to economic growth, particularly in areas such as women's empowerment, balanced regional development and infrastructure expansion.

Officials said the discussion focused on the state's policy-driven development and its integration with broader national economic priorities.

Addressing the delegation, Patel said Gujarat had

emerged as a policy-driven state and a role model of development under the guidance of PM Modi.

Through the Vibrant Summit, Gujarat has become a preferred destination for global industrial investors, he said.

He said tourism initiatives such as the Statue of Unity had boosted local economies, while infrastructure measures, including round-the-clock electricity supply, road connectivity, and an extensive canal network carrying Narmada waters to Kutch, had supported overall development.

Dialogue, diplomacy only tools to end West Asia crisis: EAM

By advocating for a peaceful resolution in Mideast while securing its economic interests in Europe, India continues to navigate a complex geopolitical landscape with a focus on long-term stability, states MEA



NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar concluded a high-stakes visit to Brussels, where he delivered a firm message to European leaders: dialogue and diplomacy are the only viable paths to ending the escalating conflict in West Asia.

Attending the EU Foreign Affairs Council at the invitation of EU High Representative Kaja Kallas, Jaishankar's visit comes at a time when regional instability—following the recent conflict involving the US, Israel, and Iran—has severely threatened global energy security.

During his two-day mission, Jaishankar engaged with the EU's top brass, including

European Council President Antonio Costa and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. The discussions spanned a "Ten Point Agenda" aimed at solidifying the India-EU Strategic Partnership, which both sides now view as a stabilizing force in a multipolar world.

The Ministry of External Affairs noted that this visit reaffirmed India's role as a "leading power" capable of bridging gaps between major global blocs. By advocating for a peaceful resolution in West Asia while simultaneously securing its economic interests in Europe, India continues to navigate a complex geopolitical landscape with a focus on long-term stability.

QUICK READ



Indian Embassy services remain smooth during Ramadan

Kuwait City
The Indian Embassy in Kuwait has confirmed that all consular services are continuing as usual during Ramadan. Its four Indian Consular Application Centres (ICACs) operate from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, located in Kuwait City, Jleeb Al Shouyakh, Fahahheel, and Jahra. The Embassy urged Indian nationals to use its 24x7 helpline (+965 6550 1946) or email community.kuwait@mea.gov.in for emergencies. Social media channels also provide updates. Officials emphasized that routine services like passports and visas remain uninterrupted. This ensures convenience for the large Indian community in Kuwait, even during altered working hours, maintaining smooth and accessible support for all citizens.

Tibet honors father who died for freedom

DHARAMSHALA

A quiet community in exile gathered to remember a father and monk who gave everything for his beliefs.

The Central Tibetan Administration held a moving tribute for Sonam Dhargyal, a man whose desperate act of protest years ago continues to echo through the hearts of Tibetans.

Sonam was a forty-four-year-old farmer and a father of three children. On this day in 2012, he set himself on fire in a crowded market to draw the world's attention to the loss of religious freedom in his homeland. His death sparked a wave of mourning, bringing thousands of people together to weep and pray. They remembered him not just as a monk, but as a brave soul who missed his family but loved his culture more.

For many living under strict rules, such tragic acts are a final cry for help. Since 2009, many monks and ordinary citizens have taken similar paths, hoping to protect their ancient traditions and language from being erased. Most of these protesters share a single, deep wish: to see the Dalai Lama return home to Tibet from his long exile in India.

Key outcomes of Brussels visit

The visit highlighted several strategic priorities to deepen the bond between New Delhi and Brussels:

- **India-EU FTA:** Both sides are moving toward the final implementation of the landmark Free Trade Agreement—dubbed the "mother of all deals"—which was firmed up in January 2026.
- **Energy & Maritime Security:** With the Strait of Hormuz currently disrupted, leaders discussed protecting global shipping lanes and the role of the EU's naval mission, Aspides.
- **Connectivity (IMEC):** Strengthening the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor was identified as a critical alternative to traditional trade routes currently under threat.
- **Technology & Defense:** Upgrading the Trade and Technology Council (TTC) and deepening defense industrial collaboration to secure supply chains.

STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS: INDIA-EU TIES

Area	Strategic focus
Trade	Unlocking the full potential of the newly concluded FTA to boost exports.
Connectivity	Operationalizing IMEC to bypass chokepoints like the Suez Canal.
Global Stability	Aligning stances on the Ukraine war and the West Asia crisis.
Technology	De-risking supply chains in semiconductors and green energy.

Pakistan aviation faces crisis amid rising fuel costs

KARACHI

Pakistan's aviation sector is under severe strain as soaring fuel prices hit airlines and pilot training programs. Rising tensions between Iran, Israel, and the US have disrupted oil markets, with the Strait of Hormuz closure pushing jet fuel costs sharply higher. Domestic airfares have risen by

Rs10,000–15,000, while international tickets surged up to Rs150,000. Over 1,600 flights from Karachi and other airports were canceled in 17 days. Pilot schools face steep fuel costs of around Rs670 per litre, raising training expenses by nearly Rs1 million. Experts warn that continued price hikes may halt small aircraft operations and deepen the crisis.

Rebel attacks spark major fear across Baloch



BALUCHISTAN

A wave of violence has swept through the region this week as a local rebel group claimed responsibility for several deadly strikes.

The Baloch Liberation Army stated that their coordinated attacks over the last few days targeted military convoys and bases, leaving many families mourning. These bold operations have turned quiet roads into scenes of chaos and smoke.

The trouble began in the Kharan district. Rebels used rockets and heavy weapons to ambush a line of military vehicles. According to reports, fourteen soldiers lost their lives in that single clash, while many others were left with serious injuries. In a separate incident nearby, a supply truck carrying food was stopped and set on fire. While

the vehicle was destroyed, the drivers were luckily released without being harmed.

The violence did not stop there, explosions were reported near a local airport and a Coast Guard checkpoint. In the coastal town of Gwadar, three specific officers were named among the dead after a surprise raid. Another blast, triggered by a remote-controlled device, reportedly destroyed a military truck and killed ten more people.

These tragic events highlight the long-standing tensions that have made life difficult for people living in this area. While security forces are now working hard to investigate every site and protect the public, local residents remain on high alert. The community is gripped by fear, wondering if peace will ever return to their streets after such a dark and destructive week of fighting.

ANTI-TERRORISM LAWS

GILGIT

Legal proceedings across Gilgit-Baltistan came to a complete standstill as lawyers launched a massive strike.

The boycott was called by the High Court Bar Association to protest the recent detention of senior advocate Ehsan Ali and several other activists. From the highest courts to local branches, lawyers refused to attend hearings, leaving many citizens without help and bringing the justice system to a halt.



The anger stems from the government's use of anti-terrorism laws against members of the legal community.

Tharoor-led panel to review safety of stranded Indians

NEW DELHI

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs is scheduled to meet to address the urgent crisis facing Indian citizens in West Asia. Led by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, the panel will focus on the safety, security, and potential repatriation of thousands of Indians currently caught in the middle of a rapidly expanding regional conflict.

Senior officials from the Ministry of External Affairs will provide a detailed briefing on the government's current contingency plans.

The situation in the Gulf has deteriorated sharply following the February 28 killing of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, in joint strikes by the United States and Israel. Since then, the region has seen a wave of retaliatory at-



Parliamentary panel, led by Shashi Tharoor, reviews Indian citizens' safety in West Asia amid escalating regional conflict

tacks, with Iran targeting American assets in various Gulf nations. These hostilities have crippled major supply chains and severely disrupted the Strait of Hormuz, a critical waterway for global energy and trade.

Adding to the instability, new leadership has emerged in Tehran under Mojtaba Khamenei, while recent Israeli airstrikes reportedly claimed the lives of other high-ranking Iranian officials. These events have left Indian workers and families across

the region in a precarious position. The committee plans to scrutinize how prepared the government is to launch large-scale evacuations if the violence escalates further.

Beyond the immediate security threat, the panel will also discuss digital safety and India's global engagement following a recent AI Summit. However, the primary focus remains the humanitarian challenge in West Asia. The committee's goal is to ensure that every Indian citizen abroad remains protected during this period of unprecedented international tension,

Silent skies shattered as drones haunt Baghdad

TEHRAN: The peaceful skies over Baghdad turned into a zone of fear as several drones buzzed near the United States Embassy. The sight of these flying machines caused instant panic across the city. Video footage showed at least one drone gliding over the high-security area, with some describing its movement as bold and free. Local security teams reported that four drones tried to strike the embassy directly. Fortunately, Iraq's air defense systems jumped into action, shooting them down before they could hit their main targets. The debris fell in various spots; one landed on a



popular street, while another hit the fence of the Al-Rasheed Hotel. While the explosions were loud and terrifying, officials confirmed that no one was hurt and no major buildings were destroyed. However, the day was not without tragedy. In a nearby neighborhood, reports indicated that an air raid killed four people.

Israel strikes down top Iranian military leader

TEL AVIV

In a move that has sent shockwaves across the Middle East, the Israeli military confirmed that a high-ranking Iranian commander was killed in a daring airstrike. Gholamreza Soleimani, the head of Iran's Basij paramilitary unit, was targeted while hiding in a makeshift tent. Officials say he was trying to avoid being spotted, but the precision strike found him and his deputy, Seyyed Karishi. The Israeli Defence Forces described this mission as a major win against terrorism. They claim Soleimani spent the last six years leading violent crackdowns on innocent people and protesters. By removing him,



military leaders believe they have struck a heavy blow against the forces that enforce strict control within Iran. The strike is being called one of the most bold and direct actions taken inside Iranian borders in recent history. The violence didn't stop there. Other strikes reportedly targeted high-level political figures and leaders of militant groups hiding in Tehran. While the fate of some officials remains a mystery, the message from Israel is clear: they are willing to take huge risks to stop those they see as a threat. Experts are now watching the region closely, fearing that these attacks could lead to a much larger fight.

European leaders at the Yushan Forum warn democracies to unite against China's assertiveness, emphasizing human rights, regional security, and preserving the rules-based international order

Global democracies urged to stand against China's defiance

TAIPEI

Prominent European leaders issued a stark warning at the annual Yushan Forum, calling on democratic nations to unite against China's increasing disregard for international norms. The forum, a key platform for Indo-Pacific security dialogue, featured former senior officials who argued that Beijing's growing assertiveness now poses a direct threat to global stability, human rights, and the future of the rules-based international order.

Christoph Heusgen, former chairman of the Munich Security Conference, characterized

China as a major challenge to the global system. He cited long-standing human rights concerns in Xinjiang and Tibet, alongside escalating military pressure on Taiwan and territorial disputes with Japan. Heusgen urged democracies to act with a "unified power," emphasizing that the global community must be governed by the rule of law rather than coercion.

The Tech-Security Nexus Jan Lipavsky, the former Czech Foreign Minister, highlighted that today's geopolitical crises—from the war in Ukraine to Middle East tensions—are being reshaped by rapid technological advances.

He noted that AI, autonomous systems, and mass-produced drones are shifting the balance of power.

The forum takes place at a time of high regional tension. Just this week, Taiwan's Ministry of Defense detected multiple People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft and naval vessels operating around the island. As the world navigates a complex "G2" dynamic between a shifting U.S. administration and a defiant Beijing, the speakers at the Yushan Forum concluded that only a solid front of democratic values can ensure a stable, law-governed international future.

Legal uproar in GB after senior lawyer's arrest

argue that lawyers are being unfairly targeted for their political beliefs. Ehsan Ali, who is a well-known community leader, was taken into custody after authorities claimed he gave speeches that were critical of the state during a recent gathering.

Concerns are growing not just over the arrests, but over the health of those being held. Ali is over seventy years old and is currently suffering from a serious chest infection. His legal team has filed an urgent request for him to receive medical treatment,

warning that his life could be at risk if he remains in a cell without a doctor.

This strike has caused a major disruption in daily court business, sparking a debate over the balance between police power and human rights. The legal community has made it clear that they will not return to work until their colleagues are treated fairly and given proper medical care. The region remains tense as the standoff continues.



Iran Seeks Shift of WC Matches From USA to Mexico Amid Tensions

Iran cites security concerns, ongoing conflict while negotiating venue change with FIFA

TEHRAN

Iran is in talks with global football body FIFA to relocate its group-stage matches at the FIFA World Cup 2026 from the United States to Mexico, citing security concerns linked to escalating tensions in West Asia. The development was confirmed by Iran's embassy in Mexico, with football federation chief Mehdi Taj stating that the team would not travel to the United States if safety could not be guaranteed. He indicated that negotiations were underway with FIFA to

ensure Iran's matches are held in Mexico instead.

Iran, preparing for its fourth consecutive World Cup appearance, had been scheduled to play two group matches in Los Angeles and one in Seattle. Their base camp was also planned in Tucson, Arizona. However, the worsening geopolitical situation and concerns over visa approvals and logistical arrangements have cast doubt over those plans.

Iranian officials have criticised the U.S. administration, led by Donald Trump, alleging a lack of cooperation re-

garding visas and security assurances for the delegation. The concerns have intensified following recent military escalations involving the United States and Israel, which have further strained relations.

The tournament, set to be co-hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19, will be the largest in World Cup history, featuring 48 teams. Any change in match venues would require coordination among host nations and FIFA, posing logistical and organisational challenges.

There are also growing fears that Iran could withdraw entirely if its demands are not met — a move that would mark a rare disruption in modern World Cup history and force FIFA to identify a replacement team at short notice. As discussions continue, the situation underscores how global sporting events are increasingly affected by geopolitical developments, with teams, organisers and governing bodies navigating complex security and diplomatic challenges ahead of major tournaments.

English Clubs Face Uphill Battle After Champions League Reality Check

MANCHESTER

English clubs are staring at a daunting challenge in the UEFA Champions League as they attempt to overturn heavy first-leg defeats in the round of 16, exposing a stark reality check after dominating earlier stages of the competition. Teams from the Premier League failed to secure a single win in the first legs, leaving several sides on the brink of elimination. Manchester City, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur face particularly steep tasks, trailing by three goals against Real Madrid, Paris Saint-Germain and Atletico Madrid respectively.

While Arsenal and Liverpool remain in contention after more balanced first-leg results against Bayer Leverkusen and Galatasaray, Newcastle United are daring to dream of a major upset after holding FC Barcelona to a draw.

Despite their financial dominance, English clubs have struggled to translate domestic strength into European success in recent years. Only three of the last 13 Champions League titles have been won by English



Premier League giants trail heavily, seek revival in decisive second-leg clashes

teams, highlighting a widening gap at the latter stages of the competition.

One of the key factors cited is fixture congestion. Unlike other major European leagues, the Premier League does not have a winter break and includes multiple domestic competitions, leading to player fatigue.

Former UEFA president Michel Platini famously described En-

glish teams as "lions in winter, lambs in spring," a sentiment that continues to resonate.

Additionally, stylistic differences have played a role. The Premier League's increasingly physical and high-intensity approach contrasts with the more controlled, technical style seen in European competitions. Managers like Pep Guardiola have acknowledged the challenge of adapting to different tactical demands at the highest level. Financially, clubs like Real Madrid and Paris Saint-Germain rival or surpass English teams, further levelling the playing field.



K'taka Women's Team bags Bronze Medal in Women's Team Championship

BENGALURU

Women: Semifinal: RBI bt Karnataka 3-1 (Diya Chitale bt Kushi Viswanath 11-6, 11-5, 11-8, Ayhika Mukherjee bt Tanishka Kalbhairav 11-5, 11-4, 11-7, Nikhat Banu lost to Trupti Purohit 16-18, 16-14, 11-8, 8-11, 7-11, Diya bt Tan-

ishka 11-5, 10-12, 11-8, 11-6).

Quarterfinals: Karnataka bt Tamil Nadu 3-1 (Tanishka bt Nithyashree Mani 10-12, 11-8, 11-5, 11-9, Kushi lost to Seelena Deepthi 11-6, 11-7, 6-11, 7-11, 13-15, Trupti bt Yashini Sivasankar 11-8, 11-5, 11-8, Tanishka bt Seelena Deepthi 11-9, 11-6, 6-11, 11-7).

Serbian star pulls out, missing chance to extend record at Miami tournament

Djokovic Withdraws From Miami Open With Shoulder Injury Setback

MIAMI

Tennis great Novak Djokovic has withdrawn from the upcoming Miami Open due to a right shoulder injury, dealing a blow to fans and organisers ahead of the prestigious event.

The 24-time Grand Slam champion, widely regarded as one of the sport's greatest players, was expected to headline the tournament where he holds a record six men's singles titles. His withdrawal means he will miss the opportunity to pursue a historic seventh crown at the Miami event.

Djokovic, 38, recently competed at Indian Wells, where he suffered a defeat to rising British star Jack Draper despite taking the opening set.

The Serbian also participated

in the doubles competition alongside Stefanos Tsitsipas, but the pair exited in the second round.

While the exact severity of the shoulder injury has not been disclosed, the decision to withdraw suggests concerns over fitness as Djokovic looks to manage his schedule and remain competitive for the remainder of the season.

The Miami Open has historically been one of Djokovic's most successful tournaments, with his six titles making him the most decorated men's player in the event's history. He came close to adding another trophy last year but finished runner-up after losing in the final to Jakub Mensik.

The tournament is set to begin this week, with qualifying rounds already underway.

Djokovic's absence opens the field for other top contenders and emerging talents to make their mark on the hard courts in Florida.

His withdrawal also raises questions about his short-term fitness and preparation for upcoming tournaments in the tennis calendar. However, given his experience and track record, Djokovic is expected to prioritise recovery to ensure he remains in peak condition for major competitions later in the year.

Fans will now have to wait longer to see the Serbian star return to action, as he focuses on regaining full fitness.



Current Indian Side Strongest Ever T20I Team: Ponting

DUBAI

Former Australia captain Ricky Ponting has hailed the present Indian team as the strongest T20I side ever assembled, crediting its depth, experience and consistency following their latest world title triumph.

India underlined their dominance by winning the ICC Men's T20 World Cup for a third time, defeating New Zealand by a massive 96 runs in the final at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. The victory also made India the first team to successfully defend the T20 World Cup crown.

Ponting, a three-time World Cup winner, said India's sustained excellence in white-ball cricket sets them apart from any previous T20I side. "It's really hard to argue against it. If you look at their record across ICC events over



the last five or six years, it's quite remarkable," he said.

India's consistency has been striking, with the team losing only two matches across their last four major ICC tournaments since late 2023. Their only setbacks came in the 2023 ODI World Cup final against Australia and a Super Eight defeat to South Africa in the recent T20 World Cup. Ponting emphasised that the squad's depth and experience were evident even before the tournament began. He also highlighted the role of the Indian Premier League in preparing players for high-pressure situations.

"The IPL games are every bit as big as international games anyway, so this Indian team came in well primed with great balance and a great squad," he said, noting that players are accustomed to performing under intense scrutiny.

According to Ponting, India's only loss in the tournament proved to be a turning point. "You win 12 matches on the trot, there's bound to be an off day. It might just be the shake-up India needed," he observed.

Afghanistan Cricketers Condemn Deadly Kabul Air Strikes, Call for Justice

KABUL

Afghanistan's leading cricketers have strongly condemned the deadly air strikes in Kabul, voicing anguish over reported civilian casualties and urging international intervention following the escalation of tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Among those who spoke out was star all-rounder Rashid Khan, who expressed deep sorrow over the loss of innocent lives. In a social media post, he described attacks on civilian areas, including homes, hospitals and educational institutions, as unacceptable and called for a thorough investigation by global



bodies such as the United Nations. Veteran cricketer Mohammad Nabi also reacted emotionally, sharing accounts of devastation near a medical facility where victims had gathered for treatment. He highlighted the human toll of the strikes, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan,

when families were preparing for fasting.

T20I captain Ibrahim Zadran added his voice, describing the fear and destruction witnessed in Kabul. He recounted hearing explosions and seeing flames rising from a hospital, expressing solidarity with families affected and

calling for justice for the victims.

According to Afghan authorities, the air strikes targeted a major rehabilitation hospital in Kabul, leading to extensive damage and a significant number of casualties. Officials reported that hundreds were killed and many more injured, with rescue teams continuing efforts to control fires and recover victims from the site.

The incident has further strained already fragile relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan's Taliban administration, with both sides previously trading accusations over security concerns along their shared border.

Sania Mirza Returns to India After Tense Days in Dubai Amid Conflict

HYDERABAD

Former Indian tennis star Sania Mirza has returned to India after experiencing anxious days in Dubai, where escalating tensions in West Asia created an atmosphere of uncertainty for residents.

Mirza, who lives in Dubai with her son Izzaan Mirza Malik, travelled back to Hyderabad ahead of Eid, citing concerns arising from the ongoing conflict involving Iran, the United States and Israel. Speaking about her experience, she revealed that the situation became unsettling after hearing fighter jets flying overhead and witnessing nearby interceptions.



"We heard fighter jets above our house and saw interceptions. There was debris that fell around 400-500 metres from where we live," Mirza said, describing the tense environment in her neighbourhood of Al Barsha. While she clarified that she

did not feel directly unsafe, the unpredictability of the situation prompted her to take precautionary steps.

The presence of her young son played a key role in her decision. Mirza explained that the uncertainty was difficult for a child to process, as he began asking questions about the developments around them. "You don't want your child going through that," she said, emphasising the emotional impact of the situation despite no immediate danger.

Dubai has long been Mirza's primary residence, and her son attends school there. However, she noted that plans regarding their return would

depend on how the situation evolves in the coming days. For now, she expressed relief at being back in Hyderabad, surrounded by family during the holy month of Ramadan.

Mirza also shared that spending the last week of Ramadan in Hyderabad is a cherished tradition, allowing her family to celebrate Eid together. She highlighted the comfort of being in a familiar environment during uncertain times and expressed hope that conditions in the region would stabilise soon.



QUICK READ

Madras high court reserves verdict on CCTV tender

Chennai

The Madras High Court has reserved its verdict on petitions challenging a CCTV tender issued for the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. The case raises concerns about fairness in a high-value public contract. The petitions were filed by Innovatiview India Limited and I-Net Secure Labs Private Limited, who argued that the eligibility rules were too strict and limited competition. The tender, worth about Rs 120 crore, involves installing nearly 1.5 lakh cameras at polling stations and counting centres for live monitoring. A bench led by Chief Justice Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari heard arguments and said the decision would come soon due to urgency. Petitioners claimed conditions like high turnover requirements and restrictions on joint ventures were unfair. The Election Commission defended the rules, stating they were necessary to ensure smooth execution of such a large and sensitive project during elections.

FPI outflows ease in FY26 amid market volatility

Mumbai

Foreign portfolio investor (FPI) outflows from Indian equity markets have slowed in FY26, with net selling at Rs 96,974 crore so far, lower than Rs 1.27 lakh crore in FY25, the government informed Parliament. Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said FPI flows remain unstable due to global and domestic factors. The year began positively, with inflows between April and June. However, heavy selling followed from July to September. October saw a brief recovery, but outflows resumed in later months. January recorded the highest outflow, while February saw temporary inflows. Selling again picked up in March. Despite these fluctuations, overall outflows remain lower than last year. The government clarified that such movements do not indicate reduced global confidence in India. Instead, FPI trends are influenced by global tensions, trade uncertainties, currency changes, and shifting investment strategies across emerging markets.

IndiGo faces profit pressure as fuel costs rise

New Delhi

IndiGo may face short-term pressure on profits due to rising fuel prices linked to the ongoing West Asia conflict. Fuel costs have increased sharply after recent tensions pushed crude oil prices close to \$100 per barrel. As a result, airlines are dealing with higher expenses and longer flight routes due to airspace restrictions. The report noted that IndiGo does not hedge fuel prices, making it more exposed to sudden cost increases. However, its short booking cycle of 30 to 45 days may help the airline gradually pass on higher costs to passengers. Despite challenges, IndiGo's strong position in India's domestic market provides some stability. The airline earns most of its revenue within the country and holds a leading market share. Experts say rising fuel prices, longer routes, and currency fluctuations may continue to affect profitability in coming months.

India enters strong new global trade era

India enters global trade phase with strong fundamentals, rising services exports, boosting international economic partnerships.

NEW DELHI

Union Minister Piyush Goyal announced that India is entering a bold new phase in global trade, marked by strong economic fundamentals and expanding international footprints.

Speaking in the Lok Sabha, Goyal reassured lawmakers that despite global shifts, the nation's financial health remains robust. He noted that while merchandise exports have stayed flat recently, they have not declined, and the second week of March has already shown a positive turn toward stabilization.

A key highlight of the minister's address was the consistent growth of services exports. He explained that a significant surplus in services,



combined with record-breaking foreign direct investment and high remittance inflows, effectively offsets the country's goods trade deficit. This balance ensures that India remains a top destination for global investors and trade partners. Goyal emphasized that there is "growing enthusiasm" worldwide to build deeper economic ties with India, specifically with developed nations.

The government is now focusing on "balanced" trade

agreements designed to protect domestic interests while opening new doors. Unlike past deals that sometimes challenged local industries, these new pacts aim to benefit Indian farmers, fishermen, and small business owners. Specifically, Goyal mentioned that a highly anticipated trade deal with the United Kingdom is nearing completion and could be operational as early as next month.

Goyal concluded by stating that these strategic partnerships will create vast opportunities for Indian exporters. By focusing on practical, fair, and modern trade policies, the government intends to secure long-term economic benefits and strengthen India's position as a leading player in the global market.

UPI expands across Sri Lanka for tourists

NEW DELHI

NPCI International, the global arm of India's digital payments leader, announced that it is significantly expanding the acceptance of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) across Sri Lanka. This strategic move aims to provide a seamless payment experience for the growing number of Indian travelers while boosting the island nation's digital economy. By integrating India's UPI with Sri Lanka's "LankaQR" infrastructure, tourists can now pay at shops and hotels by simply scanning a code. India remains Sri Lanka's largest source of tourism, with visitor numbers climbing from 4.16 lakh in 2024 to over 5.3 lakh in 2025. Whether visiting for weddings, shopping, or spiritual tours, Indian travelers can now use their familiar UPI-enabled apps at major retail outlets, supermarkets, and hospitality chains. This collaboration reduces the heavy reliance on physical cash and offers travelers transparent, real-time exchange rates without the hassle of traditional currency exchange. The initiative is a win-win for both nations. While tourists enjoy a faster way to pay, Sri Lankan merchants gain access to a massive digital customer base and better cash management tools. NIPL CEO Ritesh Shukla stated that the company is focused on building these "payment corridors" to simplify cross-border trade and strengthen the economic bond between the two neighbors.



Centre grants ₹1,789 cr to boost rural local bodies in 5 states

NEW DELHI

The central government announced a massive financial boost by releasing more than ₹1,789 crore to strengthen rural local bodies across five states.

These funds, issued under the 15th Finance Commission, are designed to empower village-level governance in Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, and Maharashtra. This major investment aims to help local councils manage their own development needs and improve the quality of life for millions of rural residents.

In this latest rollout, Madhya Pradesh received the largest share, totaling over ₹735 crore to support thousands of village and district panels. Gujarat followed with roughly ₹509 crore, while Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and Maharashtra also received significant portions.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj explained that these "untied grants" give local leaders

the freedom to spend money on specific community needs, though the funds cannot be used for salaries or office costs.

Beyond general improvements, a portion of the money is "tied" to essential health and environmental goals. These include maintaining clean water supplies, managing household waste, and harvesting rainwater. By focusing on these basics, the government hopes to ensure that rural areas remain "open defecation free" while building better infrastructure for the future.

Officials emphasized that these installments are part of a broader strategy to make local governments more self-reliant. By putting more resources directly into the hands of village leaders, the Centre aims to bypass red tape and address local problems faster. This funding represents a critical step in modernizing India's grassroots democracy and ensuring every village has the tools to thrive.

Mudra Loans empower small business owners nationwide

NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted the transformative success of the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana in the Rajya Sabha.

She reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing collateral-free credit to small-scale entrepreneurs, allowing millions to launch or expand businesses without the burden of providing security.

Since its 2015 launch, the scheme has disbursed over ₹32 lakh crore through 52 crore loans, with a staggering 68% of beneficiaries being women.

The program offers three main tiers: Shishu for small startups, Kishor for mid-stage growth, and Tarun for larger ventures up to 10 lakhs.

Recent data shows that while some loans face recovery challenges, the program remains a vital pillar for financial inclusion. For instance, the non-performing



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlights Mudra Yojana's impact, empowering entrepreneurs with collateral-free loans, boosting women participation, and driving financial inclusion, job creation, and grassroots economic growth.

asset rate for the Tarun category sits at a manageable

7.92%. Banks are currently active in recovery efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability of this massive credit lifeline.

Minister Sitharaman also addressed the new "Tarun Plus" category, which doubles the loan limit to ₹20 lakh for proven borrowers. Although disbursement for this newer tier is currently low, she urged patience, noting the category is only about a year old. She explained that as more entrepreneurs demonstrate strong repayment discipline, they will naturally graduate to these higher funding levels.

By focusing on the non-corporate and non-farm sectors, the Mudra scheme continues to drive grassroots economic empowerment. The Finance Minister emphasized that these loans are not just financial tools but instruments of self-reliance that foster job creation and gender-inclusive growth across India's diverse economy.

Government extends export relief amid Gulf tensions

NEW DELHI

The Indian government has officially extended emergency relief measures for export cargo until March 31 as conflict continues to disrupt the vital Strait of Hormuz.

The move follows prolonged uncertainty in the region involving Iran, Israel, and the United States. Initially set to expire on March 23, the extension aims to protect Indian exporters from rising logistical hurdles and shipping delays caused by the ongoing military tensions in the Persian Gulf.

Under the new guidelines issued by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, international transshipment facilities have been ex-



panded to all notified ports and airports nationwide.

Previously, these benefits were limited to a few locations like Chennai and Cochin. The government is also allowing diverted liquid and bulk cargo to be stored temporarily within customs areas to prevent port congestion and help manage rerouted shipments effectively.

To simplify the process for returning containers, officials have removed the require-

ment for standard import documents, provided the container seals remain intact. However, any signs of tampering will trigger a full physical inspection. Additionally, a new feature in the digital customs system will allow for the easy cancellation of shipping bills to ensure that export incentives are not wrongly claimed during this chaotic period.

The Strait of Hormuz is a lifeline for India's trade with the Gulf Cooperation Council, which accounted for over \$178 billion in trade last year. As this waterway remains a primary route for 16% of India's global trade, these measures are seen as essential for maintaining economic stability during the regional crisis.

Indian summer sowing crosses 36L hectares

NEW DELHI

India's summer farming season is off to a roaring start, with the total sown area already crossing 36.22 lakh hectares as of mid-March.

The recent data released by the Ministry of Agriculture shows that planting is in full swing across the country. This crucial period, which runs from March to June, acts as a vital bridge between the larger winter and monsoon seasons, helping to ensure a steady food supply and boosting the overall rural economy.

Rice remains the king of the summer fields, covering over 26 lakh hectares so far. Farmers are also busy planting pulses like moong and urad, as well as oilseeds and coarse cereals like maize and bajra. While the typical summer target is around 75 lakh hectares, experts note that last year's massive expansion to 83 lakh hectares suggests this year could see similar record-breaking growth. Key agricultural states like West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh are currently leading the cultivation efforts.

The government's latest reports also bring good news for food security. Production for both the winter and monsoon crops is estimated to be significantly higher than last year, with wheat and rice hitting impressive new milestones. Although these summer figures are still being finalized, they reflect a positive trend in Indian farming. Officials believe that the increased acreage and better crop management will lead to a highly productive year. As the season progresses, these early numbers provide a hopeful outlook for stable food prices and a prosperous year for India's hardworking farming communities.

Indian household savings rise to new highs

NEW DELHI

Minister of State for Finance, Pankaj Chaudhary, informed the Rajya Sabha that Indian household savings have climbed significantly, reaching 21.7% of the nation's GDP in the 2024-25 fiscal year.

This marks a notable increase from the 20% recorded just two years prior. The Minister attributed this growth to a new series of economic estimates and government policies designed to boost personal income, improve skilling, and generate more stable employment opportunities across the country.

During his address, Chaudhary emphasized that higher savings are essential for fueling national investments and protecting families against financial shocks. He pointed out that recent tax reforms, including exemptions for annual incomes up to ₹12 lakh and a more balanced GST structure, have left more disposable cash in the hands of

citizens. These measures are intended to encourage a healthy cycle of consumption and investment while reducing the public's reliance on high-interest credit.

In a separate update on the cost of living, the Minister shared encouraging news regarding inflation. He revealed that there has been no food or fuel inflation during the 2025-26 period. In fact, retail food prices actually dropped by nearly 1% between April and January, a sharp contrast to the high inflation seen in previous years.

While global oil prices have recently spiked above \$100 per barrel due to tensions in West Asia, domestic fuel inflation has remained in negative territory. Chaudhary concluded by noting that while global factors remain unpredictable, India's domestic agricultural output and improved supply chains have successfully kept basic living costs stable for most households.

India services sector set for \$6 trillion

NEW DELHI

India's services sector is on the brink of a massive explosion, with experts predicting it will nearly triple in value to reach \$6 trillion by 2035. A new report by OmniScience Capital reveals that this powerhouse industry, which currently contributes about \$2.2 trillion to the nation's GDP, is expected to maintain a steady growth rate of over 10% annually.

As India marches toward becoming a \$10 trillion economy, the services sector is set to become its most dominant force, accounting for nearly 60% of total economic output.

The report identifies financial services, real estate, and business services as the primary engines behind this rapid climb. These specific areas have seen a three-year growth spurt of 14%, outperforming almost every other part of the economy. Additionally, consistent government spending on public administration and defense has provided a stable foundation for this upward trend. India's influence is also expanding globally; the country's share of world services exports has more than doubled since 2005, reaching 4.3% last year. Key industries are already scaling up to meet this future demand. Logistics is projected to become a \$1 trillion opportunity on its own, while IT services continue to show structural strength despite global market pressures. The rise of digitalization and formal business practices is also fueling professional services.

TAX DISPUTE

Maruti Suzuki hit with ₹5700 cr tax order

NEW DELHI

Maruti Suzuki India Limited, the country's largest automaker, announced that it has received a draft tax assessment order demanding ₹5,786 crore.

The notice, issued by the Income Tax Authority, concerns the financial year 2022-23. Despite the high figure, the company quickly reassured investors and the public that the demand would not impact its overall financial health or daily operations.

In a formal regulatory filing, the carmaker explained that the authorities have proposed certain "additions and disallowances" to the income the company originally reported.

This means the government is questioning specific deductions or income claims made in previous filings. Maruti Suzuki has already stated that it disagrees with the assessment and plans to file a formal objection before the Dispute Resolution

Panel to contest the massive bill.

Interestingly, the stock market appeared unfazed by the news. Shares of Maruti Suzuki actually rose by 1.82% during the session, trading at ₹12,986. Investors seem more focused on the company's strong operational performance. In the first nine months of the current fiscal year, the automaker sold over 1.4 million vehicles, marking a nearly 4% increase compared to last year.

Looking forward, senior executives remain optimistic about the industry's growth, predicting a positive fourth quarter. While the tax dispute moves through the legal system, the company continues to see steady demand for its compact cars and utility vehicles. This situation highlights the complex regulatory landscape large corporations navigate, even while maintaining a dominant and profitable position in the competitive Indian automotive market.

Gavaskar Slams Franchise Over Pak Player Signing

Indian legend criticises controversial Hundred deal involving Pak spinner Abrar Ahmed

NEW DELHI

Sunil Gavaskar has strongly criticised an Indian-owned franchise for signing Pakistani cricketer Abrar Ahmed in England's The Hundred, calling the move insensitive amid ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan. Players from Pakistan have not featured in the Indian Premier League since 2009 due to strained diplomatic relations. Despite speculation of an informal "shadow ban" at the recent Hundred auction in London, franchises linked to IPL teams did not refrain from signing Pakistani players. The controversy intensified after Sunrisers Hyderabad, associated with Sunrisers Hyderabad, secured Abrar Ahmed for £190,000. The

move triggered widespread backlash on social media, with many questioning the ethics of engaging Pakistani players through Indian-owned entities. In a strongly worded column, Gavaskar alleged that payments made to Pakistani players could indirectly benefit Pakistan's state machinery. He argued that taxes paid by such players to their government could contribute to military funding, thereby affecting Indian soldiers and civilians. He further stressed that ownership links to Indian businesses make such transactions particularly concerning. Other franchises in The Hundred, including MI London, Manchester Super Giants and Southern Brave, also have ownership ties to IPL stakeholders. However, only

one other Pakistani player, Usman Tariq, was picked during the auction, by Birmingham Phoenix. The England and Wales Cricket Board has maintained that all franchise selections are based purely on performance and cricketing merit, dismissing political considerations. India and Pakistan have not



played a bilateral series for over a decade, meeting only in international tournaments. Referring to the current situation, Gavaskar expressed hope that the decision could still be re-considered, urging stakeholders to act with greater awareness and responsibility.

WADA Considers Rule to Bar Trump, U.S. Officials From Global Events

NEW YORK

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is weighing a controversial proposal that could bar Donald Trump and other U.S. government officials from attending major international sporting events, sparking widespread debate over whether such a rule could realistically be enforced. The proposal, under discussion at a WADA executive committee meeting, is the latest development in a long-running dispute between the United States and the anti-doping watchdog. The

U.S. has withheld \$7.3 million in dues over 2024 and 2025, citing dissatisfaction with WADA's handling of several issues, including a doping case involving Chinese swimmers. WADA, established in 1999, oversees global anti-doping regulations and works alongside bodies like the International Olympic Committee and governments linked through UNESCO agreements. Compliance with WADA rules is typically a prerequisite for participation in major events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games.

However, experts question whether WADA can enforce restrictions on sovereign leaders, particularly within their own countries. Critics argue that preventing a sitting or former U.S. president from attending events hosted on American soil would be logistically and legally impossible.

Proposal raises legal, political questions over authority, enforcement, and global implications

practical. Former U.S. officials have dismissed the idea as unrealistic, noting that host governments are ultimately responsible for security, infrastructure and access at global events. Any attempt by WADA to override national authority could trigger broader diplomatic tensions and undermine cooperation in international sport. The dispute reflects growing friction between WADA and U.S. authorities, who have long demanded greater transparency and accountability. The passage of the Rodchenkov Act and bipartisan support in Congress for withholding funds underscore the depth of concern in Washington. While WADA has indicated the rule may not apply retroactively to upcoming events like the 2026 World Cup or the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, ambiguity remains. With a final decision expected later this year, the proposal's future — and its potential global fallout — remains uncertain.



Iranian Women Footballers Begin New Chapter After Asylum in Australia

BRISBANE

Two Iranian women footballers have made their first public appearance since being granted asylum in Australia, joining a training session with Brisbane Roar in a moment that signals both relief and uncertainty following a dramatic international episode. Fatemeh Pasandideh and Atefeh Ramezaniadeh were seen training in Brisbane, smiling and wearing club colours as they integrated with the professional squad. The club, which competes in the A-League Women, welcomed the players and pledged continued support as they adjust to their new circumstances. Their appearance comes after a turbulent period that began during the AFC Women's Asian Cup, when Iran's national team travelled abroad shortly before conflict escalated back home. The players



drew global attention after some remained silent during the national anthem in an act widely interpreted as protest or mourning. Following their team's exit from the tournament, Australia extended humanitarian visa offers to several members of the Iranian squad. Initially, multiple players accept-

ed asylum, but most later reversed their decisions and re-joined the team as it departed for Oman. Pasandideh and Ramezaniadeh were among the few who remained in Australia. The Brisbane Roar Football Club had earlier offered the players "a place to train, play and belong," reinforcing its

commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment. The athletes are currently staying at an undisclosed location under government assistance and have not spoken publicly, though they have expressed gratitude on social media. Meanwhile, Iranian officials have dismissed concerns over player safety, insisting that all team members would be welcomed back. However, the episode has highlighted the complex intersection of sport, politics and personal security, drawing reactions from global stakeholders including FIFA. As the remaining Iranian squad returns home, the future for Pasandideh and Ramezaniadeh remains uncertain, but their presence on the training field in Brisbane marks a significant step toward rebuilding their careers and lives.

LA 2028 Olympic Football to Begin Early Across Seven US Cities

LOS ANGELES

Football competitions at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics will kick off four days before the opening ceremony, with matches set to be staged across seven cities in the United States in a move aimed at improving player recovery and logistics. The revised schedule, approved by the International Olympic Committee, will see men's and women's tournaments begin on July 10. The early start provides teams with additional rest days compared to previous Olympic editions, including breaks after the group stage and quarterfinals to ease travel de-

mands across host venues. Group-stage matches and quarterfinals will be held in New York City, Columbus, Nashville and St. Louis. These cities will host a bulk of early fixtures, with multiple matchdays scheduled between July 10 and July 17, followed by quarterfinal clashes around July 20 and 21. As the tournament progresses, matches will shift to California venues. Knockout rounds will take place in San Jose, San Diego and Pasadena, ensuring a streamlined finish to the competition. The iconic Rose Bowl in Pasadena will host the final stages, including both men's and women's gold medal matches on July 28 and 29.

The venue carries historic significance, having previously staged the 1994 FIFA World Cup final, the 1999 Women's World Cup final and the 1984 Olympic gold medal match. San Diego is set to host the highest number of fixtures, including semifinals and bronze medal matches, while San Jose and Pasadena will stage key knockout games. Organisers believe the expanded schedule and geographic spread will enhance player welfare while showcasing the sport to a broader audience across the country. The complete match schedule, including specific fixtures and timings, is expected to be released later this year.

Former World No. 39 Matosevic Banned Four Years for Doping Violations

SYDNEY

Former Australian tennis player Marinko Matosevic has been handed a four-year ban after an independent tribunal found him guilty of multiple anti-doping rule violations, the International Tennis Integrity Agency announced on Tuesday. Matosevic, once ranked world No. 39 and a competitor at all four Grand Slam tournaments, was found to have committed five violations between 2018 and 2020. These included the use of a prohibited method through blood doping, facilitating another player to engage in doping practices, and providing advice on evading detection during drug testing. The tribunal also determined that Matosevic used and possessed Clenbuterol, a substance typically prescribed for asthma and other respiratory conditions but sometimes misused by athletes for its performance-enhancing effects. Initially denying the charges, the 40-year-old later admitted to blood doping shortly before the scheduled hearing. His admission contributed to the tribunal's findings, which resulted in a comprehensive suspension from all tennis-related activities. Under the ruling, Matose-

vic is barred from participating in or attending any events sanctioned by the ITIA, including tournaments organised by the ATP Tour, WTA Tour and Tennis Australia, until 2030. The ban also prohibits him from coaching or working with professional players during this period. Matosevic had recently transitioned into coaching, working with Australian players



Chris O'Connell and Jordan Thompson. Authorities clarified that there is no evidence linking either player to any anti-doping violations. The case underscores the continued efforts of tennis authorities to enforce strict anti-doping regulations and maintain the integrity of the sport.

KKR Dealt Blow as Harshit Rana Likely to Miss Majority of IPL

KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders have suffered a major setback ahead of the upcoming Indian Premier League season, with young pacer Harshit Rana set to miss a significant portion of the tournament due to a knee injury. According to reports, Rana is still recovering from surgery he underwent last month after sustaining a ligament strain in his right knee during a T20 World Cup warm-up match against South Africa national cricket team. The injury forced him to leave the field after bowling just one over and subsequently ruled him out of the global tournament. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has not yet provided a clear timeline for his return, with the pacer currently undergoing rehabilitation under medical supervision. Sources indicate there is "no firm date of return," raising con-

cerns over his availability for most of the IPL season. Rana's absence is a significant blow for KKR, who were banking on his pace and form after his recent rise in international cricket. He was recently honoured with the Best International Debutant award at the BCCI Naman Awards, underlining his growing importance in India's fast-bowling setup. The franchise is already dealing with multiple injury concerns in its pace department. Sri Lankan speedster Matheesha Pathirana is recovering from a calf strain, while Bangladeshi left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman has been released from the squad due to geopolitical considerations. To address the shortage, KKR have signed Zimbabwe fast bowler Blessing Muzarabani as a replacement. Muzarabani is expected to join the squad soon after opting out of his stint with Islamabad United in the Pakistan Super League. KKR's remaining pace options include Vaibhav Arora, Akash Deep, Umrin Malik and Kartik Tyagi, along with all-rounders Cameron Green and Ramandeep Singh. KKR will begin their IPL 2026 campaign against Mumbai Indians on March 29 before hosting Sunrisers Hyderabad, Punjab Kings and Lucknow Super Giants in the early phase of the tournament.



Suryakumar Apologised to Mitchell After Arshdeep Throwing Incident in Final

NEW DELHI

India's T20 World Cup-winning captain Suryakumar Yadav has revealed that he personally apologised to New Zealand batter Daryl Mitchell following a controversial on-field incident involving pacer Arshdeep Singh during the tournament final. The episode occurred when Arshdeep threw the ball back towards the striker's end, striking Mitchell on the pads. The incident led to a brief confrontation between the players, with Mitchell visibly displeased and umpires stepping in to defuse tensions. The International Cricket Council later penalised Arshdeep, fining him 15 per cent of his match fee and handing him a demerit point for breaching the Code of Conduct. While the pacer eventually issued a public apology after the match, Suryakumar

said he felt it was important to step in immediately as captain. Speaking about the moment, Suryakumar described it as a "heat of the moment" reaction but stressed the importance of setting the right example on the field. He said he approached Mitchell personally to apologise, regardless of whether the act was intentional or not. "As a leader, the example you set on the ground is very important," Suryakumar explained, adding that he told Mitchell he was sorry on behalf of his teammate. He also mentioned that he later spoke to Arshdeep, reminding him of the standards expected in international cricket. The situation eventually cooled, with Arshdeep and Mitchell shaking hands after the match, which India won convincingly by 96 runs to retain the T20 World Cup title.