

7 DEFECTED AAP MPS LISTED UNDER BJP IN RS

Saffron party's strength in Upper House increases to 113, just 10 short of simple majority

NEW DELHI

In a transformative shift for the Upper House, Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan on Monday formally accepted the merger of seven defected AAP MPs with the BJP.

The decision effectively decimates the AAP's strength in the Rajya Sabha from 10 members to just three, while propelling the BJP's individual tally to a dominant 113.

The seven MPs — Raghav Chadha, Ashok Mittal, Harbhajan Singh, Sandeep Pathak, Vikramjit Sahney, Swati Maliwal, and Rajinder Gupta — are now listed among the BJP lawmakers in the 'Party Position in the Rajya Sabha (as on April 24)'. Sanjay Singh, N D Gupta and Sant Balbir Singh are the three AAP MPs left in the party.

This comes even as AAP floor leader Sanjay Singh petitioned Radhakrishnan on Sunday seeking the disqualification of seven MPs citing the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution dealing with defections.

But by reaching the seven-member threshold, the group claims to fulfill the two-thirds requirement under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, a legal maneuver designed to bypass disqualification under the Anti-Defection Law.

The Chairman will now have to decide on the petition



AAP to move court

The AAP will move court if seven of its former MPs are not disqualified under the anti-defection law, Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said on Monday, after the Chairman of the Upper House accepted their merger with the BJP. Reacting to the decision, Singh said the seven MPs had submitted a letter seeking recognition of their merger with the BJP, which was accepted by the Chair. He alleged that the objections raised by the AAP, including its demand for their disqualification under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, had not been considered.

after a detailed hearing of both sides and give an order whether the merger as claimed by seven MPs is as per law.

The merger fundamentally alters the legislative math in the 245-member Rajya Sabha. With the addition of seven MPs, the BJP is now at 113, just 10 short of the majority mark of 123.

With the broader NDA bloc reaching 149, including seven nominated and two independent MPs, on its side with non-BJP parties accounting for 27 MPs — AIADMK five,

JD(U) four, NCP four, TDP, Shiv Sena and UPPL (two each) and RPI(A), JD(S), AGP, NPP, MNF, RLD, RLM and PMK (one each), the government is significantly closer to a simple majority on its own.

The Opposition I.N.D.I.A. bloc has 75 MPs — Congress 29, Trinamool Congress 13, DMK eight, Samajwadi Party four; RJD, CPI(M) and National Conference (three each), JMM and Muslim League (two each) and NCP(SP), Shiv Sena (UBT), Kerala Congress (M), DMDK,

AAP LOST 7	
Raghav Chadha	
Ashok Mittal	
Harbhajan Singh	
Sandeep Pathak	
Vikramjit Sahney	
Swati Maliwal	
Rajinder Gupta	
LEFT WITH 3	
Sanjay Singh	
ND Gupta	
Sant Balbir Singh	

MERGER ALTERS LEGISLATIVE MATH	
➔ RS strength:	245
➔ BJP:	113
➔ Simple majority:	123
➔ Short of	10
➔ NDA bloc:	149

MNM and Independent (one each). The AAP, which has come out of the bloc, also is part of the group in Parliament, taking the total to 78.

YSR Congress (seven), BJD(six), BRS (three) and BSP (one) are unattached though the BJD has been cooperating with the Opposition. There is one vacancy in the Rajya Sabha.

In the elections to be held for vacancies arising in June and July, the NDA is expected to gain another five seats and could be inching towards two-thirds mark of 163.

Dinesh backs Cabinet shake-up, inclusion of senior MLAs

HUBBALLI

Opining that a Cabinet reshuffle has taken place as the government is nearing three years, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Monday stated that senior and experienced MLAs who are not in the Cabinet should also get a chance.

"There is an expectation of Cabinet reshuffle, but the party's high command and the chief minister will make a decision. Those who lose the ministerial berth should not feel it as an insult. All should be broad-minded. There are several MLAs who have not yet got the opportunity," the Minister opined.

"We are all loyal workers of the party, and we obey the high command's decision," he noted.

Regarding the matter of power sharing, Dinesh said the ball is in the court of the high



command, and nobody interferes in that. There is no confusion and it does not affect the functioning style of the government. We are all working together. Everybody including MLAs, ministers, DCM and CM will accept what the high command says, Dinesh said.

Reshuffle row intensifies

A cabinet reshuffle row has intensified in the state as senior Congress MLAs demand

The Health Minister supports the reshuffle as government nears three years, saying senior MLAs who haven't yet received an opportunity should be included, but high command will take a call on it.

a shake-up after three years of government, putting pressure on Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and the Congress high command.

MLAs are demanding a cabinet revamp to accommodate experienced members, with over 25 legislators reportedly visiting Delhi to lobby for positions.

This ongoing unrest is seen as a major challenge for the Karnataka Congress leadership, which is trying to manage the conflicting demands of senior leaders and newer MLAs.

'Historic shift': Ladakh gets 5 new dists

SRINAGAR

Ahead of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's two-day visit to Ladakh from April 30, the Union Territory (UT) administration on Monday approved the creation of five new districts, a move framed as administrative reform

fulfilling the aspirations and long pending demand of the people of Ladakh," he said in a post on X.

The proposed districts—Zaskar

X, calling it a "historic step" aimed at taking governance closer to people in remote areas and improving administrative efficiency in the vast region.

"A historic day for Ladakh. I have approved the notification for creation of five new districts in Ladakh, fulfilling the aspirations and long pending demand of the people of Ladakh," he said in a post on X.

The proposed districts—Zaskar

NEW DISTRICTS	
Zaskar & Drass in Kargil	
Sham, Nubra & Changthang in Leh	
No. of districts rose to 7 from 2	

and Drass in Kargil region, and Sham, Nubra and Changthang in Leh—will increase the total number of districts in Ladakh from two to seven.

0% DUTY ON 100% EXPORTS India–NZ seal historic deal

NEW DELHI

India and New Zealand on Monday signed the long-awaited Free Trade Agreement (FTA), marking a significant step in strengthening bilateral economic ties.

The pact is set to come into force later this year after ratification by New Zealand's Parliament, while negotiations for the agreement had formally begun in March 2025 during the visit of New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, who described it as a "once-in-a-generation" opportunity to expand trade, investment flows and labour mobility between the two countries.

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and New Zealand Trade Minister Todd McClay signed the agreement, which is being described as one of India's fastest concluded bilateral trade deals. Under the pact, New Zealand has committed to invest around \$20 billion in India over the next 15 years while easing trade barriers and simplifying regulatory standards.

➔ More on page 11



FTA DETAILS

- **DUTY-FREE ACCESS:** 100% of Indian exports gain duty-free access to New Zealand, boosting sectors like textiles, leather, gems, and engineering goods.
- **INVESTMENT COMMITMENT:** New Zealand committed to \$20 billion in investments in India over the next 15 years.
- **LABOUR MOBILITY & VISAS:** Introduction of 5,000 "Temporary Employment Entry Visas" for Indian professionals and a Working Holiday Visa program for 1,000 young Indians annually.
- **STUDENT & EDUCATION MOBILITY:** Includes a dedicated annex for student mobility, facilitating easier, longer post-study work visas.
- **FAST-TRACK NEGOTIATION:** Concluded in just nine months, it is considered one of India's fastest negotiated trade deals.
- **SENSITIVE SECTOR PROTECTION:** India has protected its domestic dairy and agricultural sectors from tariff reductions

NCB launches 'Op WIPE' to curb online drug sales

BENGALURU

In a major push against the rising threat of online drug trafficking, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has launched Operation WIPE (Web-based Illicit Activities Prevention & Enforcement) to prevent the misuse of digital platforms for the illegal sale of pharmaceutical drugs regulated under the NDPS Act.

The operation marks a shift towards proactive enforcement, focusing on monitoring the surface web to detect and remove illegal drug listings before they lead to trafficking. It is supported by intelligence inputs from the International Narcotics Control Board's SNOOP (Scanning Novel Opioids on Online Platforms) programme. The NCB said its technical teams will continue monitoring online platforms using advanced tools and international intelligence inputs to detect emerging threats.

Rallies in Bengal were like pilgrimage: PM Modi



KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said his campaign in West Bengal felt more like a spiritual journey than a political exercise, as he addressed voters on the final day of campaigning for the second and last phase of the state assembly polls.

In an audio message and an open letter to the people of the state, Modi expressed gratitude for the support he received during rallies and roadshows, and voiced confidence that the BJP would form the next government.

"Despite addressing so many rallies amid the intense heat, I did not feel even the slightest fatigue during this election campaign in West Bengal. These rallies, these road shows... I felt as if I was on a pilgrimage."

The Prime Minister credited his energy to the devotion of people and blessings of Goddess Kali. "Whenever I

Despite addressing so many rallies amid the intense heat, I did not feel even the slightest fatigue during this election campaign in West Bengal. These rallies, these road shows... I felt as if I was on a pilgrimage. —Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

went among the devotees of Maa Kali... Perhaps Maa Kali herself kept filling me with continuous energy," he said.

Drawing a comparison with his earlier spiritual experience ahead of the Ram temple consecration in Ayodhya, he said he felt a similar sense of divine strength during the campaign.

WANNA BEAT THE HEAT?

Keep an onion in your pocket: Scindia

NEW DELHI

As India is struggling with heatwave, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia advised people to follow an age-old remedy of beating the heat by keeping an onion in pocket.

Scindia, while addressing a gathering at Pichhore-Shivpuri in his Guna constituency, said that keeping an onion in pocket during peak summer helps in regulating body temperature.

He even pulled out an onion from his pocket to back his statement.

I don't use AC in my car or live in an air conditioned environment. I just keep an onion in my pocket and everything is fine.

—Jyotiraditya Scindia, Union Minister

"I don't use AC in my car or live in an air conditioned environment. I just keep an onion in my pocket and everything is fine," he said.

"Keep an onion in your pocket; nothing will happen even in 51-degree heat," he added.

An elderly man present

Bengaluru too hot to handle
Bengaluru, historically celebrated for its mild 'air-conditioned' climate, now increasingly relies on artificial cooling as temperatures soar. The IMD data indicate a 1.5 degrees Celsius increase in minimum temperature during April-May, pushing households to use AC even at night. While Bengaluru's maximum temperature hovers around 36 degrees Celsius, the Kalyana Karnataka region faces 42-44 degrees Celsius. Coastal regions, though below 40 degrees Celsius, suffer from high humidity and dehydration, making conditions harsher.

pocket; nothing will happen even in 51-degree heat," he added.

An elderly man present

among the crowd also took out an onion from his pocket in a gesture of support for Scindia's statement.

QUICK READ



KEA releases CET 2026 answer key, invites objections till April 30

Bengaluru
The Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) has published the answer key for the 2026 Common Entrance Test (CET) on its official website, allowing candidates to review their responses. The CET exam was conducted on April 23 and 24 across the state. KEA has invited objections, if any, to the published key answers, with the deadline set for April 30. Candidates can submit objections through the online link provided by KEA. Officials have instructed applicants to mention accurate details such as question number and version code while raising objections. KEA clarified that objections with incomplete information will not be considered, and the final decision of subject experts will be binding.

Laptop worth Rs 59,000 stolen from locked house in Ashok Nagar

Bengaluru
A 41-year-old woman has lodged a complaint with Ashok Nagar police after her HP laptop worth Rs 59,000 was allegedly stolen from her locked house on Anthony Nichols Street. According to the complaint, the incident occurred after the family left home. The woman said she locked the house around 10.15 am before leaving for work. About an hour later, her younger son returned and found the laptop, purchased for his elder brother's studies, missing along with its bag. After failing to locate it, the family suspected theft. Police have registered a case under BNS Section 305 and are examining CCTV footage.

Six minors riding one scooter sparks outrage after viral photo in city

Bengaluru
A photo showing six minors riding a single scooter on Padarayanapura main road has triggered outrage on social media, raising concerns over safety and parental negligence. The image, reportedly captured by a biker, was shared on X and quickly went viral. Netizens criticised parents for allowing underage children to ride vehicles, calling for strict action against those responsible. The incident is said to have occurred around 10:45 am on April 26 near an auto gas station in Gouripalya. The scooter reportedly bore registration number KA05-JZ-9065. Authorities are expected to look into the matter following public outrage.

RCB vs GT match scare as 240 CCTV cameras switched off at Chinnaswamy

Two staff disable CCTV systems before match, police restore within minutes

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A major security scare was averted at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium ahead of the IPL clash between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Gujarat Titans after nearly 240 CCTV cameras inside the venue were deliberately switched off hours before the match. The incident occurred on Friday, with the game scheduled for 7:30 pm. According to police, the CCTV network was disrupted around 11:30 am, affecting surveillance coverage at entry gates, surrounding zones, and key spectator areas including the D Corporate stands. The sudden outage raised immediate security concerns given the



scale of the event and expected crowd turnout. Investigations revealed that two individuals, identified as Manjunath and Abdul Kalam, were responsible for disabling the system. Both were employees of IVS Digital Solutions, a

subcontracted firm tasked with installing CCTV and cabling infrastructure at the stadium. Police said the accused allegedly entered the premises using a deactivated access card and gained unauthorised entry into the CCTV server

room. Once inside, they switched off the surveillance system. The disruption was quickly detected as the cameras were also being monitored from the police control room. Officials immediately alerted Central Division Deputy Commissioner of Police Akshay, following which emergency measures were initiated. Police teams acted swiftly to restore the system, bringing all cameras back online within 20 minutes. By match time, full surveillance coverage had been reinstated, ensuring there was no compromise to public safety. A case has been registered at Cubbon Park Police Station, and the accused have been detained for questioning. Pre-

liminary inquiries suggest that the act may have been triggered by salary-related grievances, with reports indicating the staff were upset over unpaid wages. Further investigation revealed that another employee, Srinivas, was also linked to complaints regarding pending payments. Police said all individuals involved are working professionals who had come to Bengaluru for employment. Authorities have issued notices to the accused and are continuing their probe into the incident. Despite the alarming lapse, the swift police response ensured that the high-profile IPL match proceeded smoothly with full security arrangements in place.

Woman faces smear campaign after Lokayukta complaint in Basavanagar

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A Bengaluru woman has alleged a coordinated smear campaign against her after she filed a complaint with the Karnataka Lokayukta, with over 50 defamatory banners appearing across Basavanagar. The complainant, Sathyavani, a GBA ticket aspirant residing in Talacauvery Layout, had earlier approached authorities alleging encroachment of a rajakaluve (storm-water drain) in Vibhutipura. She had also taken up the issue of illegal banner installations in the locality, leading to their removal. However, soon after her actions, unidentified individuals allegedly erected dozens of banners targeting her. The posters, displayed across Basavanagar and surrounding areas, contain serious allegations, accusing her of cheating people, collecting money fraudulently, and making false promises, including offering jobs in reputed companies. Some banners also claim that she has been obstructing construction activities in the area. Residents expressed concern over the scale and nature of the campaign, which has raised questions about intimidation tactics against civic complainants.

Sathyavani has alleged that the harassment is directly linked to her complaint on encroachment and her efforts to address civic violations. Despite CCTV footage reportedly capturing individuals installing the banners, she claimed that no significant action has been taken so far. She has since filed a formal complaint at the HAL Police Station, seeking action against those responsible. However, she has accused the police of delayed response and inaction despite the seriousness of the matter. In addition, Sathyavani has filed another complaint with the Lokayukta against the GBA Commissioner, questioning the handling of her earlier grievances.

‘Bumper gift’ likely for DKS by May 15: MLA Ranganath

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

Amid renewed speculation over leadership changes in the state Congress, Kunigal MLA Dr Ranganath has hinted that Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar may receive a “bumper gift” from the party high command, possibly around his birthday on May 15. Speaking to reporters, Ranganath expressed confidence that Shivakumar would soon be entrusted with a “good position,” fuelling fresh discussions about a possible change in the Chief Minister’s post. “We must do our work sincerely and leave the results to God. DK Shivakumar is working with full commitment for the party, and we believe he will be rewarded appropriately,” he said. Ranganath’s remarks have reignited debate over the widely discussed power-sharing arrangement within the Congress leadership in Karnataka. While he stopped short of confirming

any formal agreement, he acknowledged that such a perception exists among party workers and the public. “There is a belief that an agreement exists, but the high command must clarify its nature and remove confusion,” he noted. Adding intrigue, the MLA suggested that significant developments could unfold soon. “May 15 is his birthday. We hope he receives some good or ‘sweet’ news by then,” he said, sparking speculation across political circles. At the same time, Ranganath praised Chief Minister Siddaramaiah for providing stable governance, while reiterating that many in the party wish to see Shivakumar assume the top post in the future. “Whatever decision the high command takes, we will abide by it. The right time will come for everything,” he added, quoting a philosophical line to underline patience.

He also dismissed allegations made by Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy regarding the health of former minister D Sudhakar, stating that there was no attempt to hide information. Ranganath clarified that Sudhakar had been undergoing treatment for complications related to a long-standing condition and required medical intervention. In a related development, Ranganath hinted at internal discussions on a possible cabinet reshuffle. He said some party leaders have already visited Delhi to meet the high command, while another delegation is expected to follow soon. The comments come at a time when political activity within the Congress appears to be intensifying, with multiple signals pointing toward possible organisational or leadership changes in the near future.



550 ex-servicemen to guard prisons after repeated security lapses

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

In response to a series of security breaches, the Karnataka government has approved the deployment of 550 ex-servicemen as prison guards to strengthen surveillance and discipline across correctional facilities. The move follows multiple incidents, including a terror suspect allegedly accessing a mobile phone inside jail and viral videos showing inmates partying within Bengaluru Central Prison. Officials said the decision aims to plug critical gaps in prison security and restore order. Alok Kumar, Director General of Police (Prisons), has written to the State Ex-Servicemen Welfare Society to initiate the recruitment process. The arrangement, estimated to cost around Rs 20 crore annually,



is expected to be temporary until more than 1,200 vacant jail warden posts are filled. Authorities said the ex-servicemen will be strategically deployed in vulnerable areas, particularly near prison perimeters where contraband such as mobile phones and drugs have reportedly been smuggled by being thrown over compound walls. Investigations into recent breaches revealed that such activities

were more common in zones with limited guard presence. The recruitment will be carried out on a contract basis, with the finance department granting exemption under Rule 4(g) of the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements (KTPP) Act, allowing the process to bypass conventional tendering. Applicants must be below 45 years of age, meet strict physical fitness standards, and complete a 3 km

run within 20 minutes. They must also have a clean record with no criminal background. Kumar said the selected personnel would undergo specific training before deployment. He added that they would be assigned roles that minimise direct interaction with inmates, focusing instead on surveillance and perimeter security. Sources indicated that 455 ex-servicemen will be posted across seven central prisons, including about 250 at Parappana Agrahara Central Prison in Bengaluru. The remaining personnel will be deployed across eight district prisons in the state. The prison department plans to assess the effectiveness of this measure and submit a report to the government, which will determine whether the arrangement should be extended or modified in the future.

25-year-old techie dies after sudden brain stroke, family in shock

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A 25-year-old tech professional from Hassan district died after suffering a sudden brain stroke while speaking with her mother, leaving her family and community in shock. The deceased, Shweta, had returned home from work on April 25 and was reportedly smiling and chatting with her mother when she suddenly collapsed. Family members said she became unresponsive and lost her ability to speak within moments. She was rushed to a hospital and later shifted to Bengaluru for advanced treatment. By the time she was admitted, doctors said she had slipped into a coma due to severe brain damage. Despite efforts by medical teams, she did not regain consciousness. Amid their grief, Shweta’s parents initially decided to donate her organs after being

informed that her brain function had failed. However, doctors later said organ donation could not be carried out. She passed away on Sunday morning without responding to treatment. Her body has since been shifted to her hometown in Hassan for final rites. The incident has left her parents devastated, as she was their only daughter. The case has also triggered concern among locals, coming in the wake of recent reports of sudden health emergencies among young people in the region. While Shweta was said to be healthy with no known medical history, her sudden death due to a brain stroke has raised anxiety. Doctors note that such incidents, though rare, can occur due to underlying conditions that may go undetected, highlighting the importance of regular health check-ups even among young individuals.

ISRO to open astronaut cadre to civilians, 4 slots in next batch

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

In a significant shift in India’s human spaceflight programme, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to open its astronaut cadre to civilians for the first time, with four of the ten slots in the upcoming second batch expected to be filled by specialists from non-military backgrounds. The move marks a transition from the initial phase of the Gaganyaan mission, where the focus was primarily on ensuring safe crewed flights using experi-



enced military test pilots. The first batch of astronauts—Air Commodore Prashanth B Nair, Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, Group Captain Ajit

Krishnan, and Group Captain Angad Prathap—were all drawn from the Indian Air Force’s elite test pilot pool. According to sources, ISRO’s as-

tronaut selection and management committee has recommended that the second batch include six mission pilots from military aviation backgrounds and four civilian experts from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. The inclusion of civilians reflects ISRO’s long-term vision of building a diverse and sustainable astronaut corps capable of supporting scientific missions and future space station operations. While civilians will be inducted in the second batch, they are expected to be-

gin flying only from the fourth crewed Gaganyaan mission. This phased approach aligns with global practices, where space agencies initially rely on military-trained astronauts until technologies mature and mission risks are reduced. The expansion of the astronaut pool is also linked to increasing mission frequency. The committee initially estimated a requirement of seven astronauts for operational needs but later raised the number to ten, factoring in potential international collaborations and attrition.

Man posing as Infosys executive dupes restaurateur of Rs 3 crore

CH NEWS, BENGALURU

A Mysuru-based restaurateur has alleged that he was duped of over Rs 3 crore in a land scam by a man who posed as an executive of Infosys and convinced him to invest in a purported land deal in Attibele. The complainant, Bharath CS (32), told police that he was introduced in early 2025 to the accused, Gagan Deep

(31), a resident of Chikkaballapur, through a mutual contact. The meeting reportedly took place during a visit to the Assistant Commissioner’s office. According to the complaint, Gagan Deep claimed to be a regional head in Infosys’s corporate social responsibility division. Bharath said he cross-verified the claim through a relative of a state minister, which made the offer appear credible.

QUICK READ

Gram Panchayat objection deadline extended

Vijayapura
The deadline to submit objections on the draft plan for deciding elected member seats in gram panchayats has been extended till May 2 at 5:30 pm. Officials said the draft was published in the Karnataka Gazette on April 18, 2026, inviting public suggestions across the state. The hearing earlier scheduled for April 27 has been postponed to May 5 in Bengaluru. It will be held at the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department office in two sessions. Citizens who submitted objections can attend with valid ID proof. Authorities said the process aims to ensure fair representation in local governance.

KREIS opens applications for PUC admissions

Vijayapura
The Department of Social Welfare has invited applications for first-year Pre-University (PUC) Science admissions for 2026–27 in Karnataka Residential Educational Institutions Society (KREIS) colleges. Seats are available in PCMB and PCMC streams at Morarji Desai Residential Science PU College, Maragur, and the upgraded residential school at Nalatwad. Eligible students can apply online through the official KREIS website before April 30, 2026 (Thursday). Officials said 50 percent of seats are reserved for residential school students, while the rest are open to others. Applicants can seek details from nearby institutions or helpline numbers provided by the department for guidance

PM reply to wedding invite delights Raichur family

Raichur
A simple wedding invitation from Kanihal village in Sindhanur taluk turned into a memorable moment after Prime Minister Narendra Modi responded with a congratulatory letter. Rajesh Nayak had invited the Prime Minister to his wedding with Savita, held on April 13, without expecting a reply. To his surprise, the Prime Minister wished the couple happiness in their married life. The family expressed joy, calling it an unforgettable moment. The gesture quickly spread on social media and drew praise from locals, who said it made the wedding even more special for the entire community.

Boy dies after falling into water filled pit

Yadgir
A 15-year-old boy drowned in a water-filled pit near the Krishna River at Chaudeshwarihal village in Surpur taluk. The deceased, identified as Sharanabasava, had gone to the riverbank to give water to sheep when he reportedly slipped into the pit formed by sand extraction. Villagers and family members rushed to the spot and searched for him with the help of swimmers. After several hours, his body was recovered. Locals alleged that illegal sand mining caused the dangerous pit. Police visited the area and began an inspection. An investigation is underway to determine the exact cause of the incident.

Unseasonal rains devastate Vijayapura’s hardworking fruit farmers

Heavy unseasonal rainfall has devastated over 34 hectares of high-value fruit crops and ruined livelihoods across Vijayapura district.

VIJAYAPURA

A wave of unpredictable and heavy rainfall has left a trail of heartbreak across the horticulture fields of Vijayapura. Between late March and mid-April, sudden downpours shattered the dreams of local farmers, destroying over 34 hectares of high-value crops just as they were ready for the market.

The damage has hit the grape industry the hardest, with 21 hectares of vineyards ruined. For many growers, the



grapes were nearly ripe for harvest, representing months of heavy investment and back-breaking labor. Other

wrecked 14 drying sheds, destroying 107 metric tonnes of raisins and disrupting the entire supply chain.

Horticulture Officer Bhoviddoddi Rahulkumar confirmed that a detailed damage report is ready for government submission. However, the crisis has exposed deep scars in the farming community. Many growers lacked insurance due to complicated paperwork or a lack of awareness, leaving them staring at total financial ruin. Farmers are now voicing their frustration, claiming

they receive plenty of weather warnings but very little actual help to protect their land.

Agricultural experts warn that these "climate shocks" are becoming a new, dangerous normal. As the district waits for relief funds, the message from the ground is clear: farmers need more than just sympathy. They are demanding faster compensation, better insurance, and modern tools like protective netting to ensure that one afternoon of rain doesn't wipe out a lifetime of work.

Pranavananda Swamiji urges Shivakumar be named CM

KALABURAGI

The long-simmering leadership debate in Karnataka reached a fever pitch as Pranavananda Swamiji, head of the most backward class maths, issued a bold ultimatum to the Congress high command, appoint D.K. Shivakumar as Chief Minister immediately or face "serious consequences." Speaking at a press conference in Kalaburagi, the influential seer expressed deep frustration over the perceived delay in a leadership transition. He highlighted that Shivakumar has spent the last three days in New Delhi, reportedly waiting for a decision from the party's central leadership.

Families of two young men killed by lightning received five lakh rupees each in compensation from Minister Eshwar Khandre.

FAMILIES RECEIVE COMPENSATION AFTER FATAL LIGHTNING STRIKE

BIDAR

In a heart-wrenching incident from Bhalki taluk, the families of two young men who were killed by lightning have received financial support from the state. District in-charge Minister Eshwar Khandre visited Navadgi village to personally offer his condolences to the family of Revansiddha Koli, one of the victims. During his visit, the minister handed over a compensation cheque of Rs 5 lakh as immediate relief.

The tragedy occurred on



April 23 when Revansiddha and another youth, Yallaling from Jevargi taluk, sought shelter under a tree during a heavy downpour. Both were

struck by lightning and died instantly. Minister Khandre confirmed that a similar compensation of Rs 5 lakh has been arranged for Yallaling's

family as well.

Describing the loss of these two young lives as deeply unfortunate, the minister stressed the urgent need for better safety awareness. He instructed district officials to educate rural communities about the dangers of standing under trees during thunderstorms. This incident serves as a painful reminder of how quickly nature can turn deadly. By providing this aid, the government hopes to support the grieving families as they navigate through this incredibly difficult time.

New welfare demands to protect single women

KALABURAGI

A powerful call for justice echoed through Mahmad Haskhan Bhavan as single women from across the region gathered for their first-ever convention. B. Malamma, a leader for the Karnataka State Single Women Protection Association, demanded that the government stop ignoring the "silent suffering" of thousands of women living without partners.

The convention highlighted the harsh reality for widows, divorcees, and unmarried women who often face a toxic mix of financial ruin and so-

cial bullying. Malamma pointed out that while men are often encouraged to move on and remarry, women are frequently cast aside, excluded from community events, and denied their basic property rights. "Single women are exploited through old customs and face constant harassment," she stated, urging a total shift in how society treats them.

The group presented a bold list of demands to ensure these women can live with dignity. They are asking the state for a monthly pension of at least ₹6,000, free housing, and access to interest-free

loans to start their own businesses. Beyond financial help, they are calling for 33 percent of the state budget to be specifically earmarked for the welfare of single women, alongside educational support for their children.

By drawing attention to these struggles, the association hopes to transform single women from "destitute victims" into empowered citizens. The message to the government was clear, it is time to move beyond small patches of aid and implement a comprehensive protection scheme that covers every woman standing alone.

Tragic crash kills siblings returning from fair

RAICHUR

A night journey turned into a nightmare near Attanur village as a speeding tipper lorry collided with a motorcycle, killing two siblings on the spot. The victims, identified as 30-year-old Anjaneya Nayak and his 11-year-old sister Yashoda, were residents of Shakhapur who were simply heading home after visiting a local fair. The accident occurred when the heavy truck, traveling from Manvi, slammed into the bike carrying the siblings and two other passengers.

Struggle for survival: street vendors demand justice



RAICHUR

The ongoing battle for the livelihoods of street vendors in Raichur reached a boiling point as activists called for urgent government intervention. D.H. Poojar, convener of the Street Vendors' Struggle Committee, has urged the Deputy Commissioner to hold a high-level meeting immediately to address the growing crisis that has left local sellers in financial ruin for over 16 months.

The tension escalated following a controversial demolition drive on April 24. Poojar alleged that despite verbal assurances from MLA Hampanagouda Badarli, city officials used a JCB machine to destroy several small shops that had been set up near the government orchard. "The vendors were forcibly re-

moved even though they were following safety guidelines," Poojar stated during a press meet. He dismissed rumors that the shops would block highway traffic, insisting that sufficient space remains for vehicles.

The situation has now reached the highest levels of the state government. MLA Badarli recently met with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to request that the Horticulture Department land be rented out to vendors in small, 10x10 foot plots. The MLA has reportedly asked local authorities to halt any further evictions until a formal decision is made. Activists argue that the vacant land is currently being wasted as a dumping ground. They believe converting it into a vending zone will help hardworking families rebuild their lives.

Questions raised over high cost traffic tents

VIJAYAPURA

As the summer heat intensifies, a well-meaning initiative by the Vijayapura Mahanagar Palika to provide shade at traffic signals has landed in the middle of a financial controversy. While commuters appreciate the shield from the sun, many are questioning if the project's 12 lakh price tag is a genuine public service or a seasonal scam.

Hulsur honors workers for successful survey completion

HULSUR

In a heartening gesture of appreciation, the Hulsur Tahsildar's office hosted a special ceremony to honor the dedicated individuals who successfully completed the first phase of an important government survey. A total of 36 enumerators and supervisors were felicitated for their hard work and timely execution of the project. The event, held under the leadership of



Tahsildar Shivanand Metre, highlighted the vital role these frontline workers play in gathering data that shapes future develop-

ment. Speaking to the gathering, Tahsildar Metre praised the officials for their efficiency and commitment.

Passengers injured as bus crashes into field

SINDHANUR

A routine commute turned into a scene of terror for over fifty passengers when a state-run bus veered wildly off the road and crashed into a field near Jalihal. The Kalyan Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC) vehicle was traveling from K. Basapur to Sindhanur when a mechanical failure caused the driver to lose total control of the steering.

Initial reports suggest that an axle wire snapped mid-journey, sending the heavy vehicle careening away



from the asphalt and into the soft soil of a nearby farm. While the majority of the passengers were left shaken, six to seven individuals sustained

minor injuries. Tragically, one woman suffered serious wounds and required immediate medical attention. Despite the chaos and the potential for

a far worse disaster, every passenger on board miraculously survived the frightening ordeal.

The accident has ignited a wave of fury among local residents and regular commuters. Many have criticized the transport department for its perceived negligence regarding vehicle maintenance. Angry locals alleged that the authorities are deploying aging, unsafe buses on rural routes while ignoring necessary safety checks. "We are risking our lives every time we board these old vehicles," one witness remarked.

QUICK READ

Libraries and temples urged to share manuscripts

CH NEWS, Gadag
The Ministry of Culture, Government of India, under the Gyana Bharatham Mission, has started a project to protect old handwritten manuscripts across India. The initiative will survey, conserve, digitize, register, translate, and publish these rare documents. A single national platform will give public access to this heritage. In Gadag district, libraries, temples, trusts, monasteries, ashrams, and private collectors are requested to voluntarily share manuscripts. Experts have been appointed for collection and review. For details, contact listed coordinators or the Tourism Department office in Gadag. This project aims to preserve cultural knowledge using modern technology for future generations across the nation.

Gram Panchayat objection deadline extended in Karnataka

CH NEWS, Udupi
The period for public objections to the draft notification fixing positions of elected members of Gram Panchayats in Karnataka under Section 5(1) has been extended until May 2 at 5.30 pm. The review adalat scheduled for April 27 on gram panchayat member numbers in 31 districts has been postponed. It will now be held on May 5 at the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department, Gate No. 2, Bengaluru, from 2.30 pm to 5 pm. Objectors may attend with Aadhaar or government ID, said the Karnataka Panchayat Delimitation Commission in a statement issued on Monday.

Crop insurance claims rejected, Objections invited now

CH NEWS, Udupi
Under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana for the 2024-25 monsoon season, certain crop insurance proposals have been rejected as they did not match the crops registered by farmers and the official crop survey report. The rejected list has been displayed on notice boards at the Assistant Director of Agriculture office in Udupi, Farmers Contact Centre in Brahmavar, and concerned Gram Panchayats. Farmers who have objections may submit them within 15 days with valid supporting documents. Submissions can be made to the nearest Farmers Contact Centre in Kapu or Brahmavar or to the Assistant Director of Agriculture office in Udupi.

MLA Venkatesh reviews development works in Pavagada meeting

MLA reviewed rural roads, grants, fodder supply, and directed officials to ensure water availability and basic infrastructure upkeep

PAVAGADA

The third-quarter KDP progress review meeting was held on Monday at the Taluk Panchayat Hall in Pavagada under the chairmanship of MLA H V Venkatesh.

During the meeting, the MLA issued strict instructions to officials to review the delay in Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) works in several villages of the taluk and resolve issues at the earliest. He said water supply problems in rural areas must be addressed without delay. The MLA also discussed issues related to rural roads, government grants, and



fodder supply. He instructed officials to monitor these works closely to ensure that public services are not disrupted. In a separate session with Gram Panchayat Development Officers, he directed

them to take immediate steps to prevent drinking water shortages in villages. He stressed that priority should be given to basic infrastructure development and maintaining cleanliness in rural

areas.

Officials present in the meeting included GP Deputy Secretary Eshwarappa, TP EO Madhusudan, Tahsildar Y Ravi, and Guarantee Scheme Implementation Committee Taluk President K S Papanna, along with other departmental officers. The meeting focused on improving coordination between departments and speeding up pending development works. Officials assured that necessary action would be taken to resolve the highlighted issues and ensure better delivery of services to rural residents in the coming days.

Social Welfare officials conducted hostel training, stressing record-keeping, administration skills, and practical application for better management efficiency

WORKSHOP HELD ON HOSTEL MANAGEMENT SKILLS

CH NEWS, GADAG

A one-day workshop focusing on hostel and residential school management was held in Gadag to improve administrative efficiency among Social Welfare Department staff. The programme covered topics such as record management, food safety, e-marking, and bill preparation.

The workshop was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner C.N. Sridhar in collaboration with the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, Social Welfare Department, and Health and Family Welfare Department.

Speaking at the event, Deputy Director of the Social Welfare Department Dr. Nanda Hanabharatti urged participants to make full use of the training and apply the knowledge in daily hostel operations.

Experts conducted sessions on different aspects of man-



agement. B.M. Badigera spoke on maintaining proper records in hostels, while Udayakumar Yalivala explained hostel administration procedures.

Gopal T. Lamani discussed food procurement systems, and Mallikarjuna Hosur guided participants on bill preparation. Health officials also addressed food safety practices, with inputs from district treasury and health education officers.

Officials said the training was aimed at improving trans-

parency, efficiency, and quality in hostel management across the district.

Several departmental officers, hostel supervisors, and administrative staff attended the programme, including representatives from the Backward Classes Welfare Department and Health and Family Welfare Department.

The workshop concluded with a call for better coordination among departments to ensure smooth functioning of residential facilities for students in the district.

Religious send-off held for Hunsur Hajj travellers

HUNSUR

A special guidance and felicitation programme was organised for Hajj pilgrims of Hunsur taluk at Jamia Masjid on Nagar Bazaar Road. During the event, pilgrims were honoured with shawls, garlands, and religious books before their journey. Speaking at the programme, Salim Attari, head of the Dawah Islamic State, advised the pilgrims to make full use of their time during the holy pilgrimage. He said that pilgrims should dedicate their days to prayer and worship without wasting time and should focus on strengthening their devotion to Allah. He reminded the pilgrims that they are going to a sacred place and should carry out all religious duties with sincerity and patience. He also noted that the weather at the holy sites is very hot and pilgrims should remain calm and committed to their faith without fear. Attari said that Hajj is a special opportunity granted by Allah and urged pilgrims to perform their rituals with devotion and discipline to ensure a successful pilgrimage.

Radhika Rajanna elected unopposed as Panchayat Chief

MAGADI

In a smooth political development, Radhika Rajanna has been elected unopposed as the president of Belagumma Gram Panchayat in Magadi taluk. The election was held on Monday, and officials confirmed that no other nominations were filed.

Returning Officer Renukesh announced that the election became unanimous after the earlier president Uma Narasimha Murthy resigned from the post. As no rival candidates came forward, Radhika Rajanna was declared elected without contest.

Soon after the announcement, supporters and local leaders celebrated the victory by bursting crackers and congratulating her.

Speaking after her election, Radhika Rajanna said the Gram Panchayat plays a key role in delivering basic facilities to rural people. She added that in many cases, local bodies are more important than higher levels of government in solving daily issues.

She said she plans to visit all villages under the panchayat limits, meet officials, and directly hear public grievances. She also highlighted that many residents still struggle to get e-account services and are unable to access government welfare schemes, which she aims to address on priority.

Radhika said her election was possible due to the support of all members and assured that she would work for overall development.



She added that she wanted to prove the role women can play when given leadership responsibilities.

Member Chandrakala Venkatesh said the leadership rotation system within the panchayat has given opportunities to many members, and expressed confidence in Radhika's experi-

ence and ability.

Officials, including PDO Satish, Secretary Krishnapa, and several elected members, attended the event and extended their congratulations.

The meeting ended with hopes for faster development in the rural region under the new leadership.



Awareness drive highlights wildlife protection and laws

CH NEWS, HAVERI

An awareness programme on protection of birds and animals along with key social laws was held in Haveri under the joint initiative of the District Judiciary, Legal Services Authority, Bar Association, prosecution department, and the organisation "Water for Voiceless".

Inaugurating the programme, District and Sessions Judge Biradar Devendrappa stressed the importance of water conservation and protection of wildlife during the intense summer season. He said that maintaining ecological balance is a shared responsibility and urged citizens to provide water to thirsty birds and animals.

He explained that water plays a vital role in sustaining life and recalled earlier times when people had to travel long distances for drinking water. He said increasing water scarcity today calls for better conservation, reuse, and responsible usage.

District Bar Association President Siddana Gowda, who presided over the event, said humans are closely connected to nature and even small acts like providing water to animals can help main-

Bar Association President Siddana Gowda urged environmental care, saying humans must support nature by keeping water bowls for animals during summer

tain environmental balance. He urged people to keep water bowls outside homes during summer.

Public Relations Officer Ranjana Chandrashekar spoke about the importance of providing water sources for birds and animals and encouraged participants to support conservation efforts.

Legal experts also educated participants about important laws, including the Child Marriage Prohibition Act, POCSO Act, and Dowry Prohibition Act, highlighting their role in protecting society and vulnerable groups.

Member Secretary of the District Legal Services Authority Srishailaja H.V. welcomed the gathering.

Officials, prosecutors, lawyers, court staff, and members of the public attended the programme, which aimed to promote environmental awareness along with legal literacy among citizens.

Strict CCTV monitoring planned for PUC exams

MANDYA

The Second PUC Supplementary Examination will be conducted from April 30 to May 13 under strict supervision to ensure transparency and prevent malpractice, said Deputy Commissioner Dr Kumar.

Chairing a review meeting at the District Collector's office, he said a total of 2,877 students will appear for the examination across seven centres in the district. He instructed officials to conduct the exams without any loopholes and with full discipline.

Dr Kumar said that all examination centres will be under CCTV surveillance, and cameras have already been installed in classrooms. He added that webcasting will also be monitored from the District Collector's office, and officials have been assigned for supervision.

He directed that Xerox and cyber centres within 200 metres of examination centres should remain closed during

exam days to prevent unfair practices. He also said that question papers will be transported securely from the district treasury with police protection.

To ensure safety, route officers have been appointed, and GPS tracking will be installed in vehicles carrying question papers.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed the need to provide basic facilities such as drinking water, seating arrangements, clocks in exam halls, uninterrupted power supply, and medical support at centres. He also instructed that bus services for rural students should run on time without delays.

Students will not be allowed to carry mobile phones or smart devices inside examination halls, and strict action will be taken against any violations, including recording or filming during the exams.

Officials from the education department and other departments attended the meeting.



Hanagal housing review sparks development push drive

HANAGAL

Hanagal MLA Srinivas Mane held a municipal meeting on Monday and directed Chief Officer Y K Jagadish to review names of housing beneficiaries and correct records for issuing revised rights. He said a proposal has been sent to the government to allot

plots to landless families in reserved municipal land. He urged quick approval so eligible people can receive sites without delay.

The MLA noted that Rs 1.5 crore has already been collected from auction of corner plots and asked officials to use this money for development works in the town.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION WORK

District governor highlights Rotary service legacy

HUNSUR

The Rotary Club, a global network of professionals and entrepreneurs, continues to serve society with dedication and has completed 121 years of international service, said Rotary District Governor P.K. Ramakrishna during an official programme held in Hunsur.

The event was organised at the Rotary Bhavan on 25-26 April, where achievers from various fields were honoured for their contributions to society. The governor said the or-



ganisation, founded by Paul Harris in 1905, works with a mission of service in areas such as health, education,

cleanliness, peace, and environmental protection.

He said Rotary has played a major role in global initiatives

like polio eradication, clean drinking water projects, and support for Anganwadi development. He added that recognising and honouring social achievers is an important part of Rotary's service tradition.

Assistant Governor Rajegowda Tirumalapur said the organisation works closely with communities and supports women's self-reliance and development-oriented activities in coordination with government efforts. Homeopathic doctor Dr. Raghupathi V. Rao said Rotary's strengths lie in service-mindedness

rather than financial power. He highlighted its work in healthcare, drinking water supply, education, and mother-child welfare. Rotary Club President H.R. Krishnakumar said several service initiatives have been carried out in Hunsur, including clean drinking water projects, school development, Anganwadi support, and public welfare programmes. During the programme, several achievers were honoured for their contributions, including educators, doctors, and social workers.

QUICK READ

Belagatta students to receive talent awards honour

CH NEWS,Chitradurga Students in Belagatta will be honored through a talent award program organized by the 1990–91 SSLC alumni group of Sri Maruti Rural High School, called Geletanada Gangothri. The event will be held on April 28 at 10:30 am at Sri Narahari Sadguru Kalyana Mantapa in Belagatta village of Chitradurga taluk. Students who scored highest marks in the 2025–26 PUC and SSLC exams will be awarded. A procession will begin from the village Anjaneya temple to the venue. Organizers said the aim is to encourage education and motivate students to perform better. Dr B M Gurunath and Nagaraj invited the public.

District ensures fair conduct of board examinations

CH NEWS,Gadag The Karnataka School Examination and Evaluation Board will conduct the Second PUC Annual Examination-2 from April 30 to May 13, 2026, between 10:15 am and 4:15 pm. To stop cheating and maintain order, district administration has declared a 200-meter restricted zone around seven exam centres in Gadag. During exams, gatherings of more than five people are banned. Shops with Xerox and photocopy services will remain closed in this area. Loudspeakers are not allowed. Mobile phones and electronic devices are prohibited for students and staff. Media can record student arrival exit outside centres to protect exam privacy fairness throughout schedule.

Chitradurga to celebrate Lord Buddha Jayanti

Chitradurga The Lord Buddha Jayanti celebration will be held on May 1 at 10:30 am in front of Chitradurga City Stadium, jointly organized by District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Kannada and Culture Department, and Municipal Council. Inauguration will be done by Planning and Statistics Minister and District In-charge Minister D. Sudhakar. Leaders including T. Raghumurthy, B.G. Govindappa and Govind M. Karajol will attend the event. A procession will begin at 9 am from Ambedkar Circle to Veeravante Onake Obavva Stadium with Buddhist chants. The program promotes peace and teachings of Lord Buddha, said Kannada and Culture Department officials in an official statement.

CH NEWS,CHITRADURGA

The Second Pre-University Course (PUC) Examination-2 will be conducted in Chitradurga district from April 30 to May 13, with officials confirming all preparations are complete to ensure a smooth and orderly conduct of the exams. A total of 4,270 students have registered for the examination this year, which will be held across six designated centres in the district. Additional Deputy Commissioner B. T. Kumaraswamy instructed



Talwar community protest over ST certificate delay in Kalaburagi

Talwar leaders said SC inclusion in 2020 exists, but certificate issuance has recently stalled in their region

KALABURAGI

A massive protest was held in Kalaburagi demanding Scheduled Tribe (ST) certificates for the Talwar community, with hundreds marching from Jagat Circle to the District Collector's office. Members of the Karnataka State Talwar Samaj alleged that eligible people from their community are being denied ST certificates in Kalaburagi and Yadgiri districts, even though the facility is being issued in 29 other districts of Karnataka. Protesters accused the district administration and District In-charge Minister Priyank Kharge of delaying or blocking the issuance of certificates and demanded immediate action. They also expressed anger over what they called political interference in the process. Community leaders claimed



that although the Talwar community was included in the Scheduled Caste category in 2020 and later provided eligibility for certificates, the issuance process has been stopped in recent years in the region. They said that due to the delay, students are unable to access education benefits and job seekers are losing opportunities in government recruitment due to lack of valid certificates. Talwar Samaj state president Sardara Rayappa said the situation has created confusion and hardship, questioning whether there is proper governance in the district. He alleged that certificates are being withheld despite eligibility. Another leader Shivakumar Natikar said the community has been facing issues for the past two years and accused officials of ignoring government orders regarding certificate issuance.

Protesters also claimed that after the recent political changes and election results, government benefits for the community have been reduced in the district. Several community leaders, activists, and religious figures joined the protest, demanding equal rights and immediate resolution of the issue. They warned that continued delay would lead to further agitation and urged the government to ensure fair implementation of reservation benefits. Officials have not yet issued a detailed response, but the protest ended peacefully after submitting a memorandum to the district administration. The demonstration highlighted growing dissatisfaction among the community and increased pressure on authorities to resolve the long-standing certificate issue in Kalaburagi district.

JDS workers join Congress in Yadgir drive

YADGIR

Several workers from the Janata Dal (Secular) joined the Congress party in a formal programme held at the District Congress office in Yadgir, with leaders calling it a boost to the party's strength in the region.

Mandya Court awards life term in wife murder case

MANDYA

The 2nd Additional District and Sessions Court in Mandya has sentenced a man to life imprisonment and imposed a fine of ₹1 lakh for murdering his wife over suspicion of her character. The accused, Ajmal Khan (39), originally from Ramnagara Town Extension Layout and a resident of Dhangu village in Halagur taluk of Malavalli, was found guilty of killing his wife Salma Begum. According to the case details,



Bangarappa slams BJP MLC over SSLC remarks

SHIVAMOGGA

School Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa on Monday strongly criticised BJP MLC and former minister H. Vishwanath for his remarks on SSLC exam results, saying his comments insult teachers and parents by claiming that malpractice improved pass percentages. He said the department introduced webcasting during SSLC exams for the first time in India which helped stop cheating and improve fairness in the process. He added that even CBSE and other boards are now following Karnataka's measures. He said he respects Vishwanath's age but does not consider his comments valuable. Responding to criticism about SSLC results in Kalaburagi Bangarappa said the district showed major improvement ranking second in the state with a 28.2 percent rise compared to last year. He also accused BJP leaders of targeting AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge and RDPR Minister Priyank Kharge because the district ranked last in some lists. He said several steps helped improve results including

Bangarappa dismissed Vishwanath's remarks, highlighted Kalaburagi's SSLC improvement, and accused BJP of targeting Kharge leaders over district performance rankings

hard work by teachers and officials across the department. For the first time a mega parent-teacher meeting was held and students needing support were given special attention. The department also conducted three preparatory exams at the state level and based on student performance teachers provided extra classes to help them perform better in final exams Bangarappa said these combined efforts of teachers parents and officials created a better learning environment and helped students score improved marks in the SSLC examination across Karnataka this year and said critics should acknowledge the progress made by the education department instead of spreading misinformation about exam malpractices during the SSLC results discussion in Shivamogga press meet held on Monday.

PREPARATORY MEETING HELD AHEAD OF EXAMINATIONS

CHNEWS,CHIKKABALLAPUR

With the Second PUC Examination-2 set to begin from April 30, District Magistrate G. Prabhu has directed officials to ensure a fair, transparent, and smooth conduct of exams across the district. He issued these instructions during a preparatory meeting held at the District Magistrate's office on Monday. A total of five examination centres have been set up in Chikkaballapur district, located in Chikkaballapur, Bagepalli, Gauribidanur, Shidlaghatta, and Chintamani. Around 5,353 students have registered for the examination. The District Magistrate said



that admit cards have already been distributed online and instructed chief superintendents of all centres to take full responsibility for smooth conduct of exams. He emphasized that basic facilities such as

students and staff not to believe rumours on social media regarding question paper leaks and urged officials to remain highly alert as question papers and answer sheets are handled under strict security. The exams will be conducted under CCTV surveillance and webcasting. The use of mobile phones, smart watches, Bluetooth devices, earphones, and other electronic gadgets has been strictly banned inside examination halls. He further directed that Xerox shops near examination centres should remain closed on exam days and that a 200-metre radius around centres will be declared a restricted zone to prevent crowding.

Global conflicts linked to imperialist policies: Somashekhar



KALABURAGI

K Somashekhar said socialist revolution is possible through Shivdas Ghosh thoughts at SUCI (C) foundation day event in Kalaburagi. He was keynote speaker at 78th foundation day held at Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar Bhavan. He recalled party history saying Shivdas Ghosh founded SUCI (C) on April 24 1948 based on communist principles. He said other communist parties failed in struggle direction while SUCI became voice of workers and oppressed. He said capitalism is in crisis worldwide and imperialist war policies are making common people's lives difficult. He also expressed concern over Gaza violence affecting global peace. He said struggles in Sri Lanka Bangladesh and Nepal are inspiring but lack ideology and leadership. He added many movements go astray without real communist party and only Shivdas Ghosh ideology can guide people. He said socialist revolution is solution to country's problems and warned youth fighting spirit is weakening due to bad habits and cultural decline. He also criticized central and state government policies. District Secretary RK Veerabhadrappe gave introduction Ramanna Ibrahimpur presided and many leaders attended program which began with garlanding Shivdas Ghosh portrait and ended with International Anthem. He emphasized that unity of workers and farmers is needed to build a strong socialist movement in society. He said the party will continue to educate people through meetings and public awareness programs across regions. He said attendees listened carefully and the message focused on equality justice and socialist change inspiring discussion among participants in Kalaburagi meeting which concluded peacefully with slogans supporting workers unity and democratic rights under guidance of party leaders present at the foundation day celebration event in the city hall.

PUC Exam-2 set to begin across Chitradurga district



disciplined and transparent manner, following all rules set by the Karnataka School Examination and Evaluation Board. He also directed officials to remain alert and ensure peaceful conditions at all centres. As a precautionary measure, prohibitory orders will be enforced within a 200-metre radius of all examination centres during exam days. Xerox shops and computer centres will remain closed in these restricted zones to prevent malpractice or disturbances. Deputy Director of School Education (PU) K. Thimmaiah said that preparations have been completed and detailed arrangements have been made for smooth execution.

He explained that among the 4,270 candidates, 2,540 are reappearing after failing in Exam-1, while others include repeat candidates from previous years, improvement candidates, and private registrants. The examination will be conducted in Government PU Colleges located in Chitradurga city, Challakere, Hiriyur, Hosadurga, Molakalmuru, and Holalkere. Authorities have also arranged additional police security at all centres to ensure strict monitoring and safety.



QUICK READ

Kumta faces major power cut on April 29

Karwar

Due to emergency maintenance on the 33KV Gokarna line in Kumta subdivision, power will be cut in Gokarna section on April 29 from 10 am to 1 pm. Also conductor replacement work on the 11KV Bada and 11KV Masura lines and new 11KV line work on Mirjana and Katagala lines will cause outage from 10 am to 5 pm. Consumers are requested to cooperate said Kumta HESCOM Assistant Executive Engineer in a statement. Residents are advised to plan daily activities accordingly during the scheduled power interruption across affected areas. Officials have appealed for public cooperation.

Young software engineer dies suddenly after collapse

Young software engineer dies suddenly after collapse

Hassan

A 25-year-old software engineer Shweta BG collapsed while speaking to her mother and later died in a Bengaluru hospital despite treatment. She worked in Hassan for three years and fell ill at home after returning from work. Doctors suspected brain bleeding. She had complained of headaches in recent months. Family rushed her for care, but her condition worsened. Colleagues said she was dedicated and rarely took leave. Doctors advised organ donation, but delay prevented it.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, PREM KUMAR P T S/o THIMMAIAH PB R/o No 13 Kavery Nivasa, Behind Sai Lakshmi Residency, Harokythanahalli, Harokythanahalli Bengaluru Karnataka - 562123, have changed the name of my minor son DITHIN P P aged 17 years and he shall hereafter be known as AGASTYA P P.

IN THE COURT OF THE II ADDL. CIVIL JUDGE AND JMFC AT DODDABALLAPURA C.Misc. No. 126/2020

Between: 1. Sri. Ramanjanappa, S/o late. Ramappa, aged about 58 years, 2. Sri. Shivalingaiah, S/o late. Ramappa, aged about 55 years, 3. Smt. Parvathamma, D/o late. Ramappa, aged about 48 years, All are R/o Gundappanayakanahalli Village, Arudi Post, Sasalu Hobli, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District-561204...Petitioner.

AND: The Tahsildar, The Registrar of Birth and Deaths, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District...Respondent

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that a petition has been made to this court under Section 13(3) and 14 of birth and death's act, 1969, r/w rule 9 (3) of Karnataka Registration of Births and Deaths, 1959 for issuance of death certificate of Ramappa S/o. late Goravanna is the father of the Petitioners who died on 15.09.1983 at Gundappanayakanahalli Village, Sasalu Hobli, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District. Any person/who have objection for the same are hereby called to appear in this court, in person or by pleader duly instructed on 29/05/2026 at 11:00 A.M. forenoon to show cause against the petitioners, failing which is matter will be heard and treated as no objections from anybody. Given under my hand and seal of the Court on this 24/04/2026.

By order of the Court, Chief Ministerial Officer, P.T. Civil Judge & JMFC, Doddaballapura Advocate for Petitioners: Shivakumara. G.S

PUBLIC NOTICE

The General Public is hereby informed that my client is intending to purchase the below-mentioned schedule of property from its owners, namely: Mrs. Sulochana Jackson, W/o Bishop Dr. M. Francis Jackson and Bishop Dr. M. Francis Jackson, S/o Mr. Murugesh Both residing at: No. 12, 3rd Main, Appaiah Layout, Saraswatipuram, Bangalore North, Bangalore - 560008. If any person(s) has any objection, claim, interest, or dispute in respect of the above intended sale transaction, such person(s) may contact the undersigned along with documentary proof substantiating their claim/objection/dispute within fifteen (15) days from the date of this publication. Failing which, my client shall proceed to complete the sale transaction with the above-mentioned owners, treating that there are no third-party claims, objections, or disputes in respect of the schedule property. Thereafter, no claims, objections, or disputes shall be entertained.

SCHEDULE OF PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of dry land property measuring 3.06 acres out of 5.10 guntas (out of 4.13 acres plus 37 guntas of kharab), bearing: Survey No.: 6 (Six). Situated at: Garudarahalli Village, Beth-amangala Hobli, Then Bangarpet Taluk, now K.G.F. Taluk. Boundaries: East: Survey No. 8, West: Survey No. 4, North: Survey No. 7, South: Road and remaining land measuring 1.07 acres in the same Survey No.6

T.G. Manmatha Reddy P. Suvarna Reddy Advocates Kolar 563101 Mobile: 9008122611 Mobile: 9008122622

Massive FMD vaccination drive launched

Separate syringes for each animal ensure safety; vaccinators will visit villages door-to-door to immunise livestock everywhere

CH NEWS, DAVANGERE

Dr. Prabha Mallikarjun launched the ninth round of the foot-and-mouth disease vaccination campaign under the National Livestock Disease Control Program in Davanagere on Monday through the Zilla Panchayat, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services Department at her home office. She said foot-and-mouth disease is a contagious viral disease affecting

livestock and causes heavy financial losses to farmers. She said the free vaccination drive for cattle, buffaloes and calves under the national program will continue till May 22. Officials said separate syringes and needles will be used for each animal to ensure safety during vaccination. Vaccinators will visit villages and go door to door to immunise livestock in all areas.

She urged farmers not to miss the opportunity and to cooperate with staff to protect animals and prevent losses. The aim is to make Karnataka a foot-and-mouth disease free state through strong vaccination coverage and awareness efforts. About 2,48,000 cows, buffaloes and pigs above four months of age will be vaccinated in the district. She said the campaign is part of a national effort to improve livestock health and

support farmers' income stability. She appealed to local administrations and veterinary staff to ensure full coverage without any lapse across the district. Weeks-long awareness programs will also be conducted to educate farmers about disease prevention and benefits of vaccination. Officials said the drive will strengthen rural animal health services and reduce economic burden on farmers by preventing outbreaks in the coming seasons across Karnataka districts with better coordination between veterinary departments and local bodies. She



thanked staff and urged continued cooperation from farmers for successful completion of the vaccination campaign across district.

Official orders quick action on water crisis

CH NEWS, KARWAR

Zilla Panchayat CEO Dr Dileesh Shashi directed officials of Rural Drinking Water and Sanitation Department to respond quickly to drinking water problems during summer and ensure immediate solutions. He chaired District Water and Sanitation Committee meeting held at Zilla Panchayat hall on Monday. Drinking water shortage has been reported in 41 Gram Panchayats and tankers are supplying water in 17 villages. 98 private borewells identified for supply and officials instructed to act immediately in affected villages. Pipelines in rural water systems must be maintained and water samples tested regularly to prevent contamination. He reviewed Jal Jeevan Mission works and directed departments to complete pending approvals and borewell permissions quickly. 745 works completed 685 handed to Gram Panchayats with 77.85 percent progress and financial progress 54.76 percent. He



instructed officials to complete ongoing works at the earliest and ensure safe drinking water supply. The meeting was attended by district officials and engineers from the Rural Drinking Water and Sanitation Department. He emphasized urgent response system for villages facing shortage especially during peak summer conditions across district. He also stressed regular water quality checks to prevent health risks among rural population. Officials were asked to monitor supply systems and ensure accountability in tanker distribution process. He said no village should suffer without drinking water and immediate action must be taken. Dr Zilla

Drinking water shortage reported in 41 Gram Panchayats; tankers supply 17 villages. Officials act on borewells, Jal Jeevan Mission progress, and ensure safe water urgently

Panchayat Deputy Secretary Allah Bhakash Chief Accountant Anand Sahab Habib Executive Engineer Satyappa and other departmental officers attended the review meeting and supported implementation plans for improving rural drinking water supply across Karwar district in summer season ensuring safe drinking water access for all residents.

Australian Consul General visits Mangaluru city

MANGALURU

Australian Consul General Hilary McGeachy visited Mangaluru, highlighting growing cultural and educational ties between Australia and coastal Karnataka. The visit focused on strengthening people-to-people connections and promoting cooperation in education and community development. During her visit, McGeachy met Most Rev. Dr Peter Paul Saldanha, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Mangaluru. The meeting was described as warm and friendly, with discussions centred on shared values such as service to society, education, and cultural understanding. As a symbol of goodwill and friendship, both sides exchanged gifts, including a cricket ball, reflecting the common passion for cricket in both India and Australia. The Consul General also visited St Aloysius High School, a well-known Jesuit institution in Mangaluru. She toured the campus and learned about the school's long-standing contribution to quality education and the



overall development of students in the region. Officials noted that the visit reflects Australia's efforts to build stronger relationships at the grassroots level, especially in areas like education, skill development, and cultural exchange. McGeachy, who is the first Australian Consul General based in Bengaluru since 2023, has been actively engaging with Karnataka and Telangana to expand bilateral cooperation. Local observers said such visits help create new opportunities for collaboration between institutions in both countries and strengthen academic and cultural ties.

Strict guidelines issued for PUC Exam-2

CH NEWS, HAVERI

Preparations for the Second PUC Exam-2, scheduled from April 30 to May 13, are underway in Haveri, with officials instructed to ensure a smooth, transparent, and malpractice-free conduct of examinations. Additional District Magistrate Dr. Nagaraj A. chaired a review meeting at the District Magistrate's office and directed all officials to strictly follow examination guidelines and maintain confidentiality. He said the exams will be conducted in seven centres across the district and stressed that officers, route supervisors, observers, and room invigilators must work in coordination and take full responsibility for their duties. He warned against any irregularities and said students should be allowed to write exams in a fear-free environment. A three-member committee has been formed in each taluk, consisting of the Tahsildar, Field Education Officer, and Principal, to handle question paper distribution. GPS tracking has been made mandatory for vehicles carrying question papers, which will be transported under police protection. The ADM also instructed officials to ensure proper cleanliness in examination halls, along with basic facilities such as lighting, fans, drinking water, toilets, and clocks. Special care has been advised while assigning invigilators, ensuring subject relevance and avoiding conflicts of interest, especially where supervisors' children are appearing for exams. Security arrangements will include police deployment and health staff at all centres. CCTV surveillance has been made compulsory for handling question papers and answer scripts. The use of mobile phones, smart devices, and other electronic gadgets has been strictly banned inside examination centres.

CH CLASSIFIEDS

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IN THE COURT OF THE ADDL. CIVIL JUDGE & JMFC AT DODDABALLAPURA C.Misc. NO 119/2026

BETWEEN: SRI LINGAPPA S/O LATE DODDANANJAPPA, aged about 73 years, residing at Talagavara village, kasaba Hobli, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bangalore Rural District.

-petitioner

AND: The Tahsildar, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bangalore Rural District -respondant

PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas the petitioner have filed above petition for obtaining Death Certificate of Late parvathamma w/o lingappa, is the wife of petitioner, Who died on 15-06-1987 at Talagavara village, kasaba Hobli, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bangalore Rural District. If there are any persons, having claim, they may appear before Hon'ble court in person or through pleader on this 10.06.2026 at 11 A.M, failing which the petition will disposed of according to law. Given under my hand and seal of the Court on 24.04.2026

By Order of the Court, Chief Ministerial officer, P.T. Civil Judge & JMFC Doddaballapura Advocate for petitioner: Prakash, Advocate Doddaballapura.

IN THE COURT OF THE II ADDL. CIVIL JUDGE AND JMFC AT DODDABALLAPURA C. Misc. No. 127/2026

Between: 1. Smt.Rajamma, D/o late. Chikkahanumanthaiah, aged about 68 years, 2. Sri. Lakshmiptaiah, S/o late Chikkahanumanthaiah, aged about 65 years, 3. Smt. Rathamma, D/o late. Chikkahanumanthaiah, aged about 62 years, 4. Sri. Prema Chandraiah, S/o late. Chikkahanumanthaiah, aged about 60 years, 5. Smt. Lakshamma, D/o late. Chikkahanumanthaiah, aged about 60 years, All are R/o Gundappanayakanahalli Village, Arudi Post, Sasalu Hobli, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District-561204...Petitioner

AND: 1. The Tahsildar, The Registrar of Birth and Deaths, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District, 2. Smt. Jayalakshamma, W/o late. Lingappa, aged about 60 years, 3. Sri. Mahesha, S/o late. Lingappa, aged about 40 years, Respondents 2 & 3 are R/o No.1576, 39th Main, D Group, Sriganadhada Kavali, Annapooraneshwarinagar, Nagarabhavi, Bengaluru-560091...Respondents

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to General public that a petition has been made to this court under Section 13(3) and 14 of birth and death's act 1969, r/w rule 9 (3) of Karnataka Registration of Births and Deaths, 1959 for issuance of death certificate of Chikkahanumanthaiah S/o. late Goravanna is the father of the Petitioners and father in law of 2nd Respondent and grand father of the 3rd Respondent who died on 23/04/1983 at Gundappanayakanahalli Village, Sasalu Hobli, Doddaballapura Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District. Any person/who have objection for the same are hereby called to appear in this court, in person or by a pleader duly instructed on 29/05/2026 at 11:00 A.M. forenoon to show cause against the petitioners, failing which is matter will be heard and treated as no objections from anybody. Given under my hand and seal of the Court on this 24/04/2026.

By order of the Court, Chief Ministerial Officer, P.T. Civil Judge & JMFC, Doddaballapura Advocate for Petitioners: Shivakumara. G.S

Vedavyasa Kamath hailed the verdict against Mohatmmmed Shariq and called upon Congress to introspect over its soft approach towards terrorism.

Mangaluru blast verdict draws political reactions

MANGALURU

BJP MLA Vedavyasa Kamath has welcomed the special NIA court's decision to sentence Mohammed Shariq to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment for his role in the Mangaluru cooker bomb blast that targeted the historic Kadri Manjunatha Temple. The legislator stated that individuals inspired by ISIS, like Shariq, should serve as a strong deterrent for anyone considering the path of terrorism. He urged Congress leaders, who had earlier described such accused persons as "innocent brothers" and downplayed the



incident as a "minor event," to undertake serious self-reflection. Kamath questioned how the state could be protected when Congress continues to display a lenient attitude towards terrorists and terrorism. He added that the court verdict delivers a strong and unforgettable lesson to all those who choose the path

of terror.Referring to the innocent victim of the blast, Purushottam Poojary, the MLA noted that the BJP government had already provided him with Rs. 5 lakh compensation and a new auto-rickshaw to help rebuild his life. He described the compensation as one form of justice and the court's punishment as another.

NMPA BOOSTS TRADE LINKS WITH MYSURU REGION

MANGALURU

NMPA held a business meeting with exporters and trade groups from Mysuru and Nanjangud to improve trade and shipping links. The event aimed to support export growth better logistics and stronger connection between industries and the New Mangalore Port Authority. It was inaugurated by NMPA

Chairman Sushil Kumar Singh along with senior officials from the Ministry of Ports and Customs. Officials explained government plans for improving port facilities reducing delays and building a strong national logistics network. Trade leaders from Mysuru Chamber of Commerce shared concerns and requested better transport links and faster cargo move-

ment. The port authority highlighted its expansion projects improved infrastructure and focus on customer friendly services for exporters. Customs officials assured cooperation to simplify procedures and make export processes smoother for all businesses in the region. The meeting also released a Golden Jubilee book marking fifty years of NMPA service to

the nation. Industry participants took part in an open discussion about challenges in trade transport and port connectivity issues. Officials said such meetings will help improve coordination and strengthen Karnataka's role in international trade growth. They added that NMPA is working to become a key gateway for exports from Karnataka and nearby regions.

HIGHWAY SAFETY PETITION

Committee seeks action on frequent highway accidents

HOSAPETE

A petition was submitted to the District Collector by the Karunada Kalila Action Committee Vijayanagar seeking urgent steps to prevent frequent accidents on National Highway 50 near the outskirts of Hosapete. They demanded completion of the incomplete bridge and flyover work near Danapur to ensure safe movement of public vehicles. The committee said heavy traffic of iron ore lorries and growing inter state vehicle movement have increased road risks in the region.



They pointed out that accidents are caused by poor signage unsafe slopes missing speed breakers lack of police patrols and no proper speed control systems. The group urged au-

thorities to install CCTV cameras enforce speed limits conduct drunk driving checks and improve safety at construction sites. They also demanded action against lorry drivers who

violate traffic rules and cause repeated accidents on the highway. The committee warned that if authorities fail to respond they may launch road blockades on National Highway 50 to press their demands for immediate action and safety improvements. Local leaders including P Venkatesh Gujjal Ganesh M Dadakhalandar Manjunath and Wadiraj said they have been repeatedly raising concerns about unsafe road conditions in the area. They said the government must act quickly to complete pending infrastructure works.

QUICK READ

Uzbek former first daughter goes on trial in Switzerland

Zurich
The trial of Gulnara Karimova, daughter of a former Uzbek president, and Swiss private bank Lombard Odier on money laundering charges began on Monday in Switzerland's Federal Criminal Court, in a case dating back two decades. Karimova is accused of taking bribes and running a criminal organisation known as The Office that allegedly channelled hundreds of millions of dollars to accounts in Switzerland between 2005 and 2013. Geneva-based Lombard Odier and an ex-employee of the bank are suspected of having played a decisive role in enabling the concealment of proceeds of Karimova's alleged criminal activity. Karimova, a daughter of the late Islam Karimov, who was president for 25 years, is in prison in Uzbekistan. She and Lombard Odier have denied any wrongdoing.

EU extends sanctions against Myanmar by a year

Brussels
The European Union on Monday extended its sanctions against Myanmar until at least May 2027, in an effort to maintain pressure on the country's military rulers more than five years after their coup toppled an elected government. The measures include asset freezes, travel bans and an arms embargo for 105 individuals and 22 entities. They were first imposed after the February 2021 military coup and the subsequent crackdown on dissent. The EU reiterates its strongest condemnation of the actions taken by the Myanmar military since the 2021 coup, the EU Council said, citing what it described as continuing grave human rights violations and widespread restrictions on fundamental freedoms.

King Charles jets to US for trip overshadowed by shooting

London
Britain's King Charles and Queen Camilla arrive in the United States later on Monday for a four-day trip, a tour which has taken on even greater prominence after the White House Correspondents' dinner shooting and amid acrimony between the close allies. The state visit, by far the most high-profile and consequential of Charles's reign, marks the 250th anniversary of the U.S. declaration of independence from British rule, and is the first to the country by a British monarch for two decades. It begins with a private meeting with self-proclaimed.

Oil prices rise amid stalled US-Iran peace talks

Mediators indicate that negotiations are still active, even as disagreements over key issues

WASHINGTON

Efforts to ease tensions between the United States and Iran continue behind the scenes despite a breakdown in direct diplomatic engagement. Mediators indicate that negotiations are still active, even as disagreements over key issues, particularly Iran's nuclear ambitions, keep both sides at a distance. Sources from Pakistan, which has been acting as a mediator, confirmed that diplomatic channels remain open between Washington and Tehran. However, hopes for a breakthrough suffered a setback after former US President Donald Trump abruptly cancelled a planned visit by his envoys to Islamabad. The visit was expected to facilitate face-to-face discussions with Iranian representatives, marking a critical step toward

de-escalation. Iranian officials have reportedly proposed a phased approach to negotiations. According to sources in Tehran, the initial priority would be to halt ongoing hostilities and address disruptions to shipping in the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz. Broader discussions, including those concerning Iran's nuclear program, would be deferred to a later stage. This proposal, however, appears unlikely to satisfy US demands, which insist that nuclear issues must be addressed upfront as a precondition for any agreement. Diplomatic activity over the weekend highlighted both urgency and complexity. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi made multiple visits to Islamabad while also traveling to Oman, another key player in regional mediation efforts. On Monday, he arrived in Russia to



meet President Vladimir Putin, a longstanding ally of Tehran, in a move seen as strengthening Iran's diplomatic backing. Meanwhile, economic repercussions are becoming evident. Global oil markets reacted swiftly to the continued uncertainty, with Brent crude prices rising approximately 2.5 percent to around \$108 per barrel. The increase reflects concerns over potential disruptions in one of the world's most critical energy corridors. Speaking in a tele-

vised interview, Trump reiterated Washington's stance, emphasizing that Iran must abandon any pursuit of nuclear weapons before meaningful talks can proceed. He suggested that communication channels remain open, but made it clear that the terms for engagement are non-negotiable. As both sides remain entrenched in their positions, the path to a diplomatic resolution appears increasingly uncertain, leaving global markets and regional stability hanging in the balance.

Shipping traffic through Hormuz remains muted

London :
Shipping activity through the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz remains significantly reduced as tensions between the United States and Iran continue without resolution.



According to shipping data released on Monday, at least seven vessels, primarily dry bulk carriers, crossed the Strait of Hormuz in the past 24 hours. This figure is far below normal levels and highlights the continuing disruption caused by the standoff between Washington and Tehran. Before the conflict escalated in late February, the waterway typically saw an average of around 140 vessels passing through daily. The recent ships included vessels departing from Iraqi ports, along with one dry bulk carrier originating from an Iranian port.

Russian drone attack on Odesa wounds 14: Officials

ODESA

An overnight Russian drone attack on Ukraine's southern city of Odesa wounded more than a dozen people, including two children, and damaged residential buildings, Ukrainian officials said on Monday. The strikes caused the worst damage in the historic central Prymorskyi district, where residential buildings, a hotel and facilities were damaged, said Serhiy Lysak, the head of the local military administration, on Telegram. Most of the injured people were located there, Lysak said. The regional governor, Oleh Kiper, said the number of injured rose to 14. Odesa, a major Black Sea port and a focal point for Ukrainian ex-

ports, has been a repeated target of Russian attacks during more than four years of Russia's war. It was an extremely difficult night, Lysak said, adding that high-rise residential buildings, private homes and vehicles came under attack in two other districts. He posted photographs of a damaged building with shattered windows.

We made it through. Old buildings are the strongest, Volodymyr Taban, 68, a resident of the damaged building, told Reuters as he cleared debris. Ukraine's seaports authority said that port infrastructure of the Greater Odesa hub came under attack, and a Ramco Nauru-flagged vessel sustained minor damage as it moved through a Ukrainian maritime corridor.

SANTA FE

Authorities in New Mexico have intensified efforts to uncover the extent of alleged abuse linked to the late financier and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein at his remote ranch property.

Officials are now working to identify how many local women and girls may have been victims over the years.

The investigation centers on Epstein's sprawling Zorro Ranch, where multiple individuals have claimed they were transported and subjected to abuse by Epstein and his associates. While earlier accounts largely involved victims brought in from outside the state, authorities have now confirmed contact with several New Mexico residents who allege they were also abused



at the property.

Marianna Anaya, a state lawmaker involved in the inquiry, stated that the Truth Commission established to investigate Epstein's activities has been approached by local individuals claiming to be victims. This marks the first time officials have publicly acknowledged outreach from residents within the state regarding alleged abuse at the ranch.

As New Mexico probes Epstein, local survivors come forward

property. The Truth Commission is collaborating with the New Mexico Department of Justice to support survivors and assess whether viable criminal cases can be pursued against individuals linked to Epstein. Although Epstein himself died in 2019 while awaiting trial, investigators continue to examine the role of alleged co-conspirators who may still face legal consequences. The inquiry reflects a broader effort to provide justice to survivors and ensure accountability for those involved. Officials have emphasized that outreach from victims is a critical step in building cases and understanding the full extent of the abuse network that may have operated at the secluded ranch for more than two decades.

Philippines-US stage counter-landing drills with allies

PALAWAN

As simulated enemy boats and unmanned craft closed in on the shores of Palawan island facing the South China Sea, Philippine and U.S. forces conducted counter-landing drills on Monday, repelling a mock assault by using live fire against designated targets and intercepting threats. The display of advanced weapons capabilities and operational readiness was part of the annual Balikatan or shoulder to shoulder exercises, bringing together forces from the Philippines, the United States, Australia and New Zealand to rehearse coastal defence manoeuvres and test their ability to work together to protect territorial waters. Philippine military chief Romeo Bravner underscored the location's strategic value, noting that Palawan faces the South China Sea and lies opposite the Kalayaan Island Group.

US dinner shooting suspect to appear in court

WASHINGTON

A man accused of attempting a violent attack at a high-profile Washington dinner attended by former US President Donald Trump is set to appear in federal court.

Cole Tomas Allen, a 31-year-old resident of Torrance, California, is scheduled to make his first appearance before a federal judge in Washington.

The court proceeding follows his arrest after an alleged attempt to attack attendees at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner, an annual gathering that brings together journalists, politicians, and prominent public figures.

According to officials, Allen is expected to face charges including assault on a federal officer and the use of a firearm during a violent crime. Jeanine Pirro, the top federal prosecutor in Washington, in-

dictated that formal charges would be filed shortly. Meanwhile, Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche stated that additional charges, potentially including attempted assassination, remain under consideration as investigators continue to examine the case.

Authorities revealed that Allen allegedly carried out the attack at the Washington Hilton, where the event was being held. He is said to have traveled from California by train and booked a room at the hotel prior to the incident. Investigators also reported that he left behind a manifesto outlining intentions to target senior officials from the Trump administration, with indications that Trump himself may have been among the intended targets.

The incident unfolded when Allen allegedly fired a shotgun at a Secret Service agent stationed at a security checkpoint inside the hotel. The

Allen is expected to face charges including assault on a federal officer and the use of a firearm during a violent crime

agent was struck, but a protective tactical vest prevented serious injury. Law enforcement officers quickly subdued the suspect within the security perimeter, averting what officials described as a potential catastrophic attack.

The gunfire caused immediate chaos inside the ballroom, with attendees scrambling for cover as security personnel rushed to evacuate key figures. Trump, who was scheduled to address the gathering later in the evening, was swiftly escorted away from the stage. Officials confirmed that Allen was also armed with a handgun and multiple knives at the time of his arrest. He was later taken to a hospital for evaluation.

Russia summons German envoy over lawmaker's meeting with Chechen exile

MOSCOW

Russia's foreign ministry said on Monday it had summoned the German ambassador over a meeting in Kyiv between a German lawmaker and a Chechen separatist who Moscow says leads a terrorist organisation.

Russia said it had lodged a complaint with German Ambassador Alexander Lambsdorff over what it said were talks between Bundestag deputy Roderich Kiesewetter and Akhmed Zakayev, whom Moscow says leads the outlawed Chechen Republic of Ichkeria.

The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria won de facto independence from Moscow after the first Chechen War in the mid 1990s, but its leadership later went into exile. Ichkeria is the historical

name for Russia's southern region of Chechnya, which was devastated by two bloody wars between Russian troops and Chechen separatists following the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991.

Russia designates Ichkeria as a terrorist organisation and treats any related structures or representatives as outlawed.

A strong protest has been expressed with the ambassador regarding the recent meeting in Kyiv, the foreign ministry said, adding that Moscow viewed the contacts as interference in Russia's internal affairs and warned Berlin of negative consequences for actions it described as hostile.

A spokesperson for the Foreign Office in Berlin called the allegations completely unfounded and baseless.



VATICAN CITY

Pope Leo and new Archbishop of Canterbury Sarah Mullally met for the first time on Monday, in a symbolic encounter at the Vatican in which the leaders of the long-separated Catholic Church and Church of England exchanged gifts and prayed together.

Mullally, the first woman to serve as spiritual leader of the world's 85 million Anglicans, was welcomed by Leo, the first U.S. leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics, into his

formal office at the Vatican's ornate apostolic palace.

The two, who lead Christian denominations that split from each other in acrimony in 1534, met privately before going together to a 17th century chapel where they recited prayers in unison.

In formal remarks to Leo, Mullally thanked the pope for his new, forceful speaking style, which the pontiff used on a four-nation Africa tour to sharply denounce war and despotism and which attracted the ire of

U.S. President Donald Trump.

The world needed this message at this time – thank you, the archbishop said. It reminded us that despite our sufferings, people long for life in all its fullness, and countless people are working each day for this vision of the common good.

Leo told Mullally that progress had been made in drawing the Catholic Church and Church of England together but lamented that new problems have arisen in recent decades,

without specifying those problems.

We must not allow these continuing challenges to prevent us from using every possible opportunity to proclaim Christ to the world together, said the pope.

Mullally, visiting Rome this week, was installed as the new Archbishop of Canterbury in March, in a historic shift that was met with mixed reactions from the global Anglican Communion, particularly among more conservative provinces in Africa and Asia.

Ahead of the meeting, Mullally told ITV News that she felt very humbled, very privileged to meet Leo. There is a long relationship and fellowship between the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church, we will continue to build on that relationship, she said.

The Church of England broke away from the Catholic Church in 1534, sparked by Pope Clement VII's decision to refuse King Henry VIII's request for an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon.



RPL EXPANDS, INTRODUCES WOMEN'S TEAMS IN HISTORIC STEP

Rugby Premier League adds women's franchises marking major expansion milestone in India sport

HYDERABAD

The Rugby Premier League has announced a landmark expansion with the introduction of women's franchises in its second season, marking a significant step forward for rugby development in India and strengthening opportunities for female athletes at the professional level.

Building on the success of the inaugural 2025 edition, the league will now feature women's teams alongside the men's competition, expanding its reach and ambition. Four existing men's franchises—Chennai Bulls, Delhi Redz, Mumbai Dreamers, and Kolkata Banga Tigers—will field women's sides in the upcoming season, signalling a structured push toward gender inclusion in the sport.

The inclusion is being viewed as a transformative moment for Indian rugby, aimed at building a sustainable ecosystem that supports both men's and women's participation at a high-performance level. Officials have emphasised that the move is designed not only to broaden the player base but also to elevate the competitive standard of the league.

The league will be held from June 16 to 28 at Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad, continuing its partnership with HSBC as title sponsor. The first season, staged in Mumbai, featured six men's franchises and played a key role in increasing visibility for rugby in the country.

With the expansion, the league is expected to attract greater attention from fans, broadcasters, and young athletes, especially women who now have a clearer professional pathway within the sport. The introduction of women's teams is also expected to inspire grassroots participation and strengthen the overall rugby structure in India.



Rahul Bose, president of Rugby India, welcomed the development, calling it a long-awaited and visionary step that aligns with the federation's long-term goals. He highlighted the growing pool of talented women players and expressed optimism about the impact the league will have on their development.

Sujoy Ganguly, Chief Marketing Officer at GMR Sports, described the expansion as a natural progression of the league's evolution, stressing its commitment to nurturing talent across both genders while enhancing the entertainment and competitive value of the tournament.

The player draft and auction for both men's and women's teams, including new franchises Hyderabad Heroes and Bengaluru Bravehearts, is scheduled to take place in Hyderabad on April 30, setting the stage for an expanded and more inclusive second season.

Simons suffers heartbreaking injury setback ending Spurs season and World Cup hopes

Simons ruled out of season and WC after devastating injury blow

LONDON

Xavi Simons has been ruled out of the remainder of the season and this summer's World Cup after suffering a serious knee injury, leaving the Tottenham Hotspur midfielder "heartbroken" following a major setback in both club and international football.

The 23-year-old was stretched off in visible distress during Tottenham Hotspur's narrow 1-0 Premier League victory over already relegated Wolves. Simons was seen clutching his right knee after a challenge and immediately required medical attention, raising fears of a significant ligament injury.

In an emotional statement posted on social media, Simons confirmed that his season had come to an abrupt end, with early reports suggesting a possible ACL injury that could sideline him for several months.

Describing the moment as one of the most painful of his career, Simons said life had felt "cruel" and admitted he was struggling to come to terms with the situation. He expressed deep disappointment at being unable to continue fighting for his team during a critical stage of the campaign.

Simons also confirmed that the injury had ended his hopes of representing the Netherlands at the upcoming World Cup in North America, calling the timing especially



difficult after what he described as a strong personal season. The midfielder has been a key figure for both club and country, earning 34 international caps and establishing himself as one of Europe's most promising young playmakers.

His absence is a major blow for Tottenham Hotspur, who are currently battling to secure Premier League safety.

Under new manager Roberto De Zerbi, Spurs sit just two points above the relegation zone with four matches remaining, and Simons was expected to play a central role in their survival push.

For the Netherlands national team, his injury is equally damaging, with Simons widely expected to be part of their squad for the tournament set to begin on June 11.

FIFA plans prize money boost for expanded 2026 WORLD CUP

VANCOUVER

FIFA is set to increase prize money for the 2026 World Cup, with discussions underway to enhance financial rewards for all 48 participating teams in what is expected to be the most lucrative edition of the tournament yet.

The proposal, which is expected to be reviewed at the upcoming FIFA Council meeting ahead of the 76th FIFA Congress in Vancouver, reflects the organisation's strong financial position and rising global revenues. FIFA has indicated that it is in active consultation with national associations to expand the prize pool and overall financial contributions linked to the tournament.

In its earlier announcement in December, FIFA had already revealed a 50 percent increase in prize money compared to the previous edition, with a base allocation of \$655 million earmarked primarily for performance-based payments to participating nations. However, officials have now confirmed that further increases are being considered as revenues for the 2023-2026 cycle are projected to exceed \$11 billion.

Under the existing structure, the tournament winners are set to receive \$50 million, while runners-up would earn \$33 million. Teams exiting at

the group stage are guaranteed \$9 million each, along with an additional \$1.5 million allocated to every qualified nation to support preparation costs.

The expanded 48-team format for the 2026 edition, to be co-hosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada, has significantly boosted commercial opportunities, contributing to FIFA's record financial outlook. According to its latest financial report, 93 percent of projected revenues have already been secured,



underlining the scale and success of its global operations.

FIFA stated that the increased prize money is part of a broader effort to strengthen the global football ecosystem. This includes enhanced development funding through its FIFA Forward programme, which aims to support all 211 member associations. The governing body emphasised that the 2026 World Cup will set new benchmarks not only in sporting terms but also in financial distribution, ensuring wider benefits across the football community.

Sinner cruises in Madrid as Gauff battles illness to stay alive

MADRID

World number one Jannik Sinner continued his dominant run at the Madrid Open, advancing to the round of 16 with a comfortable straight-sets win, while American star Coco Gauff showed remarkable resilience to fight through illness and stay alive in the tournament.

Sinner extended his winning streak to 19 matches with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over Danish qualifier Elmer Moller in just 77 minutes at the Caja Magica. The Italian, who is chasing a maiden clay Masters 1000 title, controlled the match from the start, breaking serve four times and barely facing trouble on his own delivery.

The top seeds have

Jannik Sinner continues winning run while Coco Gauff overcomes illness score

now won 24 consecutive Masters 1000 matches, underlining his consistency at the highest level. Despite not yet securing a major clay title at this level, Sinner continues to look increasingly comfortable on the surface as the tournament progresses.

He will next face Britain's Cameron Norrie in the round of 16, with confidence high following another composed performance. Sinner said his focus remained on staying calm and serving effectively in key moments, which he identified as the key to his victory. Elsewhere in the draw, Lorenzo Musetti also advanced with a straight-sets win over Tallon Griekspoor, setting up an intriguing clash with Jiri Lehecka.

However, the biggest talking point of the day came from Gauff's gritty performance. The world number three struggled visibly due to a stomach virus that has been affecting several players in Madrid this week. Despite vomiting during the match and requiring medical attention, Gauff managed to overcome Sorana Cirstea 4-6, 7-5, 6-1 in a physically draining two-hour battle. At one point, she looked in severe discomfort but continued to fight through each game.

Gauff admitted after the match that she was unsure how she completed the contest, but said her determination to avoid withdrawing kept her going. She added that she is hoping to recover quickly as the tournament progresses. The illness outbreak has already impacted several players, including withdrawals and retirements earlier in the week, adding an unexpected challenge to the Madrid draw.



Badminton set for major shake-up with new scoring system from 2027

KUALA LUMPUR

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) has approved a significant change to the sport's scoring system, introducing a new format aimed at making matches more engaging, faster-paced, and appealing to younger audiences.

From January 2027, badminton matches will shift from the current best-of-three games to 21 points format to a revised structure where each game will be played to 15 points. The move marks one of the most notable rule changes in recent years and is part of a broader effort to modernise the sport.

BWF president Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul described the decision as a major milestone, emphasising the need to evolve badminton in line with changing audience expectations. She said the new system is designed to create more intense matches, with high-pressure situations arising earlier in each game.

According to the federation, the 3x15 format is expected to improve match scheduling by ensuring more consistent durations, which could benefit broadcasters, tournament organisers, and players alike. It is also seen as a step toward enhancing player welfare by potentially reducing physical strain over long matches.

Officials believe the shorter format will lead to tighter contests and more dramatic finishes, keeping fans engaged from the opening rally to the final point. The change is also intended to make the sport more accessible and exciting for new audiences, particularly younger viewers.



Leeswadtrakul acknowledged that the decision may face resistance from traditionalists who are accustomed to the existing format. However, she stressed that the core essence of badminton—its skill, tactics, and physical intensity—would remain unchanged.

The move follows ongoing discussions within the global badminton community about how best to balance tradition with innovation. With increasing competition from other fast-paced sports and entertainment formats, governing bodies have been exploring ways to enhance the spectator experience.

The revised scoring system will be implemented across international competitions from 2027, giving players and stakeholders time to adapt. As badminton enters a new phase, the focus will remain on preserving its competitive spirit while ensuring it stays relevant in a rapidly evolving sporting landscape.

Chelsea edge Leeds to reach FA Cup final amid turbulent season

LONDON

Chelsea FC overcame a difficult week to seal a place in the FA Cup final with a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Leeds United at Wembley Stadium.

Argentine midfielder Enzo Fernández scored the decisive goal in the 23rd minute, meeting a well-delivered cross from Portuguese winger Pedro Neto with a precise header. The early breakthrough proved enough for Chelsea to secure their spot in next month's final, where they will face Manchester City.

The victory comes in the wake of significant upheaval at the club, with former coach Liam Rosenior dismissed earlier in the week following a string of poor Premier League results. Despite the off-field uncertainty, Chelsea produced a composed and disciplined performance to keep their cup hopes alive.

Chelsea dominated the opening half, controlling pos-

session and creating several chances, but were unable to extend their lead. Leeds, however, grew into the contest and posed a serious threat, especially in the second half.

Goalkeeper Robert Sánchez played a crucial role in preserving the lead, making key saves to deny Brenden Aaronson and Anton Stach. His composure under pressure ensured

Chelsea held firm against a determined Leeds side pushing for an equaliser. Interim coach Calum McFarlane, who took charge following Rosenior's departure, guided the team effectively through a tense semi-final. He is now set to lead Chelsea into the FA Cup final scheduled for May 16. For Leeds United, the defeat marked the end of a spirited cup run. Despite their resilience and improved second-half display, they were unable to find a breakthrough against a well-organised Chelsea defence.



Three UP athletes under doping cloud after syringes found at U-20 meet

BENGALURU

Three athletes from Uttar Pradesh, including two minors, have come under suspicion for possible doping violations after syringes were allegedly found in their hotel room during the National Junior Federation Competition in Tumakuru. The incident reportedly unfolded when a strong smell of medicines from a room at a hotel near Mahatma Gandhi Stadium raised concerns among officials. Upon inspection, a plastic bag containing syringes was discovered, prompting immediate action and raising serious questions about potential substance abuse.

The athletes—one a 19-year-old 400m runner and the other two competing in the 5000m and 1500m events—had all participated in the meet but failed to progress beyond the qualifying rounds. Following the discovery, authorities identified the occupants and alerted the Na-



tional Anti Doping Agency (NADA).

However, by the time anti-doping officials reached the hotel, the athletes and an accompanying adult had reportedly absconded. Sources indicated that the adult, believed to be a former athlete, is suspected of influencing the youngsters, raising further concerns about exploitation and misuse of substances at the junior level.

The case comes at a time when India is under increased scrutiny over doping practices. Recently, World Athletics'

Musk-Altman face off in court over OpenAI's mission shift

Tech tycoons are poised to face off in a high-stakes trial revolving around alleged betrayal, deceit and unbridled ambition that blurred the bickering billionaires' once-shared vision for AI development

NEW DELHI

A high-stakes legal battle between tech leaders Elon Musk and Sam Altman has begun in a United States federal courtroom, where a jury will examine whether OpenAI's transformation into a commercial powerhouse violated its founding principles.

The trial, opening with jury selection in Oakland, California, centers on allegations that OpenAI deviated from its original nonprofit mission. Founded in 2015 with support from Musk and others, the organization was initially envisioned as a safeguard against unchecked artificial intelligence development, prioritizing benefits for humanity over profit.

Musk, widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in technology, filed the lawsuit in August 2024 against Altman and senior ex-



ecutive Greg Brockman. The complaint accuses OpenAI's leadership of steering the organization toward a profit-driven model without his knowledge, effectively abandoning its founding commitments. The company is now reportedly valued at around \$852 billion, reflecting its rapid commercial expansion.

Central to Musk's argument is the claim that OpenAI aligned itself closely with major corporate investors, in-

cluding Microsoft, thereby shifting away from its original purpose. Musk has also pointed to governance concerns, seeking structural changes within the organization, including the removal of Altman from its board and financial remedies directed toward its nonprofit arm.

OpenAI has strongly rejected these allegations, describing the lawsuit as baseless and suggesting it is driven by Musk's competitive ambi-

tions. The company highlighted xAI's launch of rival AI venture xAI in 2023 as a potential conflict of interest.

The case will be overseen by Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers, with a jury serving in an advisory capacity.

Musk, who invested approximately \$38 million in OpenAI during its early years, had initially sought damages exceeding \$100 billion, though the claim has since been reduced following pre-trial rulings.

The courtroom clash marks a dramatic turn in the relationship between Musk and Altman, who were once collaborators in shaping the future of artificial intelligence. As proceedings unfold, the case is expected to examine broader questions about the ethics, governance, and commercialization of AI in an increasingly competitive global landscape.

Google to open world's first AI campus in Seoul

SEOUL

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung met with Demis Hassabis on Monday to explore cooperation on the responsible use of artificial intelligence and expand global partnerships in the rapidly evolving sector.

During the discussions, President Lee emphasized his government's strong commitment to advancing artificial intelligence, including plans to significantly increase investment in the field.

Hassabis, who leads Google DeepMind, was in South Korea to strengthen collaboration with the government, particularly on initiatives aimed at accelerating AI-driven scientific and technological innovation.

Both leaders agreed that artificial intelligence has the potential to address some of the world's most pressing challenges. These include sluggish economic growth, the escalating climate crisis, and ongoing healthcare concerns. At the same time, they acknowledged the risks associated with misuse of the technology, such as its potential application in warfare or its role in widening social and economic inequalities.

The conversation also focused on the transformative impact of AI on employment. President Lee highlighted the importance of preparing for shifts in the job market as automation and intelligent systems become more widespread. Hassabis echoed these concerns, stressing the need for a new economic framework that redefines work and ensures fair distribution of wealth in an AI-driven future.

A key proposal discussed during the meeting was South Korea's plan to establish a global AI hub. The initiative aims to foster collaboration among governments, interna-



This marks the first time Google and DeepMind have established an overseas hub dedicated to AI research, development, and coordination

tional organizations, and private companies to ensure that the benefits of AI are shared broadly. President Lee invited DeepMind to play a central role in this effort, positioning the company as a strategic partner in the country's vision for global AI cooperation.

Hassabis underlined the importance of applying AI to fields that enhance human well-being, particularly in science and medicine, while maintaining strict safeguards. He emphasized that ensuring AI systems operate within clearly defined ethical boundaries will be critical to their long-term success. DeepMind is widely recognized for breakthroughs such as AlphaGo, the AI system that defeated legendary Go player Lee Sedol in Seoul in 2016, marking a historic moment in artificial intelligence. Hassabis has also gained global recognition for his contributions to AI-driven protein structure prediction, earning him the 2024 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

AGI by 2030: DeepMind CEO

Google and DeepMind will establish the world's first dedicated "AI Campus" in Seoul within this year. During a meeting with President Lee Jae-myung, DeepMind CEO Demis Hassabis projected that Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) could materialize as early as 2030, and both concurred on the need for AI safety measures and universal basic income. The AI Campus will link to the government's K-Moonshot Project, serving as a collaboration hub for biotech, climate, energy, and other scientific fields, with at least 10 Google researchers dispatched to South Korea. Hassabis also plans to expand partnerships with major Korean firms including Samsung Electronics and Hyundai Motor. The initiative positions South Korea's semiconductor and manufacturing capabilities, alongside its skilled workforce, as a core pillar of global AI strategy.

QUICK READ



Goldman raises Brent forecast to \$90 amid Hormuz crisis

New Delhi

Analysts at Goldman Sachs have raised their forecast for Brent crude the international oil benchmark to \$90 per barrel for the fourth quarter, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude pegged at \$83 per barrel, as the prolonged closure of the Strait of Hormuz continues to tighten global supply, according to multiple reports. The brokerage said the disruption has triggered 'extreme' inventory drawdowns, with an estimated 14.5 million barrels per day of crude production losses from the Persian Gulf pushing global stockpiles to decline at a record pace of up to 12 million barrels per day in April.



RBI Guv Sanjay Malhotra visits financial literacy camp

Dehradun

Sanjay Malhotra, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, on Monday visited a financial literacy camp organised by the CRISIL Foundation at its Centre for Financial Literacy (CFL) in Sahaspur, Dehradun district. The camp was conducted for members of self-help groups from the gram panchayats of Bhopalpani, Badasi and Soda Sarauli. During his visit, Malhotra emphasised the importance of financial literacy in empowering citizens and strengthening long-term financial stability. He encouraged people to improve financial awareness and take advantage of various pension and insurance schemes offered by the Government of India. Highlighting the need for wider outreach, the RBI Governor urged CFL officials to intensify efforts to educate all sections of society, particularly those living in remote and underserved areas, to ensure greater financial inclusion.

INDIA'S PV SALES RISE 16% TO 4.4 LAKH UNITS IN MARCH

NEW DELHI

India's passenger vehicle market witnessed strong momentum in March 2026, with wholesale volumes rising sharply amid robust domestic demand and supportive policy measures.

According to a report by ICRA, passenger vehicle wholesale volumes in India increased by 16 percent year-on-year to 4.4 lakh units in March 2026. The sector also recorded a 6 percent sequential rise, reflecting consistent production by original equipment manufacturers to meet growing consumer demand.

The report projects that wholesale volumes will expand by 4 to 6 percent in the financial year 2027. This growth is expected to be supported by revised Goods and Services Tax rates and a steady pipeline of new vehicle launches. However, analysts caution that the high base of the previous fiscal year and concerns over a weak mon-



soon could moderate the pace of expansion.

Retail sales have shown even stronger performance, registering a 21 percent year-on-year increase in March. This surge has been attributed to consumer interest in newly launched models and the continued positive impact of GST rate adjustments. Overall retail volumes rose by 11 percent during the financial year, reaching an all-time high of 4.6 million units.

Data from the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations indicated a significant improvement in inventory

levels. Dealer stock declined to around 28 days by March 2026, compared to over 50 days a year earlier, suggesting healthier demand and improved supply-demand balance.

A key trend shaping the market is the dominance of utility vehicles, which accounted for 68 percent of total passenger vehicle volumes in FY26. While this segment continues to lead growth, demand for smaller car categories such as mini and compact vehicles has shown signs of recovery following tax reductions.

Assocham inks pact with India-NZ business council to boost trade

NEW DELHI

Leading business chamber ASSOCHAM on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the India New Zealand Business Council to create a structured action plan for industry-led initiatives under the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The move aims to help businesses in both countries fully benefit from new opportunities under the pact.

According to a statement,

stronger connectivity and people-to-people ties will play a key role in unlocking the partnership's full potential. Greater coordination between trade and industry bodies is expected to simplify procedures and reduce bottlenecks, making bilateral trade smoother. Improved air connectivity and tourism cooperation are also seen as important drivers of economic growth.

The FTA, concluded on December 22, 2025, in just nine months and signed recently, marks a major step in bilateral

relations between India and New Zealand. Current trade stands at about \$1.3 billion in goods and \$634 million in services, with both sides targeting \$5 billion in the next five years. A strong Indian diaspora of nearly 300,000 in New Zealand continues to support closer ties.

The agreement offers 100% duty-free access for Indian exports and includes a \$20 billion investment commitment over 15 years, boosting trade in textiles, pharmaceuticals, machinery, and raw materials.

OPENING NEW VISTAS

India-NZ ink landmark free trade agreement

NEW DELHI

India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday expressed optimism about unlocking the full potential of the newly concluded India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA), highlighting its role in strengthening bilateral economic ties and creating new opportunities for businesses in both nations.

Speaking at the India-New Zealand Business Forum alongside his counterpart Todd McClay, Goyal emphasized the complementary strengths of the two economies. He noted that India's large consumer market,

skilled workforce, digital capabilities, and manufacturing base align well with New Zealand's expertise in agri-technology, clean energy, and financial technology. Business leaders from both countries showcased strong enthusiasm, underlining the scope for deeper cooperation in trade, investment, and innovation.

The FTA, concluded in a record nine months, is being seen as a landmark step in bilateral relations. Current trade between the two countries stands at approximately \$1.3 billion in goods and \$634 million in services. Both sides have set an ambitious target to increase this figure to \$5 bil-



lion within the next five years. The Indian diaspora in New Zealand, numbering nearly 300,000 people, continues to play a key role in fostering economic and cultural connections.

One of the most significant aspects of the agreement is the provision for duty-free ac-

cess for 100 percent of India's exports to New Zealand. This marks a substantial shift from the existing tariff structure, where duties of around 10 percent were applied to several product categories, including textiles, leather goods, ceramics, carpets, automobiles, and auto components.

The move is expected to enhance the competitiveness of Indian exports in the New Zealand market.

The agreement also includes a major investment commitment, with New Zealand set to invest \$20 billion in India over the next 15 years. This mirrors similar

large-scale commitments seen in other recent trade agreements, reinforcing India's strategy of attracting long-term foreign investment while diversifying its economic partnerships across the Indo-Pacific region.

In addition, the FTA introduces provisions aimed at facilitating mobility for professionals and students. For the first time, New Zealand has signed an arrangement covering student mobility and post-study work opportunities. Indian students will be allowed to work up to 20 hours per week during their studies, along with extended post-study work visas, enhancing educational and employment prospects abroad.

LSG captain Rishabh Pant urges team reset after Super Over defeat loss

LUCKNOW

Lucknow Super Giants captain Rishabh Pant called for collective accountability after his side's heartbreaking Super Over defeat to Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL 2026 clash. The match at Ekana Stadium produced the first Super Over of the season, ending in a dramatic finish that left LSG stunned and bottom of the table. In a tense chase of 156, LSG finished at 155, with Mohammed Shami striking a six off the final ball to force the tie. In the Super Over, they batted first but could

manage only one run while losing two wickets as Sunil Narine dismissed Nicholas Pooran and Aiden Markram in quick succession. Pant said the team needed a break to refresh and return stronger, stressing that pressure is constant in the IPL but execution and calmness are key. He urged players to take collective responsibility rather than relying on individual performances. The LSG skipper also explained the decision to send Nicholas Pooran in the Super Over despite his poor form, saying the team backed him in a high-pressure situation

Pant said the team should take a short break to refresh, stressing calm execution, pressure handling, and collective accountability over individuals.

and trusted his ability to deliver when it mattered most. He admitted there were no excuses for the defeat and acknowledged the lack of positives in the current phase, but expressed confidence that the team will bounce back strongly after the short break. KKR posted 155 for 7, recovering from 93 for 7 thanks to a brilliant unbeaten 83 from Rinku Singh off 51 balls. Mohsin Khan's five for 23 kept LSG

in control early, but late hitting pushed KKR to a fighting total. Chasing the target, LSG



lost early wickets including Mitchell Marsh cheaply, while Rishabh Pant and Aiden Markram attempted to rebuild with cautious batting. However, regular strikes in the middle overs derailed their momentum and left them under pressure. In the Super Over, LSG collapsed for just one run as Narine struck twice to seal the contest. Rinku Singh then finished the chase with a boundary on the first ball, handing KKR a thrilling win and pushing LSG to the bottom of the IPL 2026 standings reflecting intense competition in IPL 2026.

Langer defends sending out-of-form Pooran to face Narine in Super Over

LUCKNOW

Lucknow Super Giants head coach Justin Langer defended the decision to send out-of-form Nicholas Pooran to face Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Sunil Narine in the Super Over of their IPL 2026 clash, saying the management believed he remained the best option despite recent struggles.

Pooran, who has struggled for runs throughout the season with a highest score of just 22, was dismissed off the very first delivery of the Super Over, bowled by Narine. LSG collapsed to 1 for 2, leaving KKR needing just one ball to complete a dramatic victory.

Langer explained the call, noting that Pooran had faced Narine more than most batters in world cricket and the team felt his experience gave him the best chance in a high-pressure moment. He said numbers supported the belief that Pooran traditionally plays spin well, even if form was lacking.

LSG captain Rishabh Pant also supported the decision, saying the team had collectively agreed to back their senior batter in the Super Over, trusting his ability to handle pressure despite a lean run of form.

Langer, however, admitted that the plan failed as Narine struck immediately, repeating

'We backed Pooran believing experience outweighed form in Super Over call decision'

a rare historical twist as he had also dismissed Pooran in a Super Over during the 2014 Caribbean Premier League. He praised Narine's execution and the conditions that favoured spin on a slow black-soil wicket.

Mohsin Khan's standout spell of 5 for 23 was highlighted by Langer as a positive, with the coach suggesting the pacer could soon be in contention for higher honours if he maintains fitness. Rinku Singh's late blitz for KKR, including four consecutive sixes, ultimately proved decisive in posting 155.

KKR players, including Rinku Singh and Rovman Powell, celebrated the narrow win as the team climbed the points table, while LSG slipped further after another close finish went against them. The result added pressure on the Lucknow franchise, which has struggled to convert tight games into wins this season, prompting renewed focus on execution, temperament, and adaptability ahead of upcoming fixtures.

Langer reiterated that the team would take lessons from the defeat and return stronger after the scheduled break.



Mbappe injury blow leaves Real Madrid sweating over El Clasico availability

MADRID

Kylian Mbappé has suffered a hamstring setback, leaving Real Madrid sweating over his availability for the crucial El Clasico clash against FC Barcelona next month.

The French forward picked up the injury during Madrid's 1-1 draw with Real Betis, showing visible discomfort late in the second half before being substituted in the 81st minute. He immediately headed down the tunnel, raising concerns among the coaching staff.

In a statement, Real Madrid confirmed that Mbappe has sustained a semitendinosus muscle injury in his left leg. While the club has not provided a definite recovery timeline, sources indicate that his participation in upcoming fixtures remains uncertain.

Head coach Alvaro Arbeloa admitted the situation remains fluid. "He felt some discomfort. We will assess him over the next few days and see how he progresses," he said after the match.

Mbappe's potential absence would be a major setback for Madrid at a critical stage of the season. The 27-year-old has been in outstanding form, leading the La Liga scoring charts with 24 goals and playing a pivotal role in keeping his side in the title race.

Raghuvanshi fined after emotional outburst following obstructing the field dismissal incident

KKR's Angkrish Raghuvanshi fined for emotional reaction after dismissal incident

KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders batter Angkrish Raghuvanshi has been fined 20 per cent of his match fee and handed one demerit point after an emotional on-field outburst during his team's IPL 2026 clash against Lucknow Super Giants.

The incident took place during the fifth over when Raghuvanshi was given out for obstructing the field following a third-umpire review.

The decision triggered a visibly frustrated reaction from the young batter, who struck the boundary cushion with his bat before throwing his helmet into the dugout area. The Indian Premier League confirmed the sanction on Monday, stating that Raghuvanshi had breached Level 1 of the Code of Conduct for Players and Team Officials. According to



the official statement, he was found guilty under Article 2.2, which deals with the abuse of cricket equipment or fixtures during a match. The league further added that Raghuvanshi admitted to the offence and accepted the sanction imposed by the match referee, bringing the matter to a close without the need for a formal hearing.

Despite the incident, KKR went on to win the high-pressure encounter against Lucknow Super Giants via a Super Over, capping off a dramatic contest that had swung both ways during regulation play. The dismissal itself added to the intensity of an already charged match situation, with players from both sides awaiting the third umpire's decision before Raghuvanshi was adjudged out for obstructing the field.

INDIA BLANK AUSTRALIA 5-0 TO SEAL THOMAS CUP QUARTERFINAL BERTH

HORSENS

India delivered a commanding performance to crush Australia 5-0 and storm into the quarterfinals of the Thomas Cup 2026 in Horsens, Denmark, on Monday.

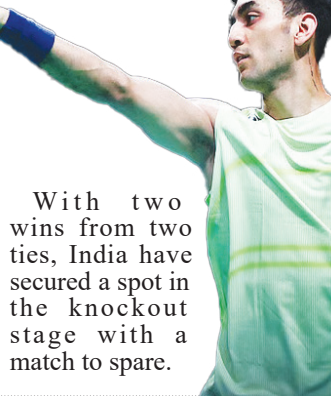
Having begun their campaign with a 4-1 win over Canada, the Indian men's team needed one more victory to confirm progression—and achieved it in emphatic fashion.

The team made a single change, bringing in HS Prannoy in place of Kidambi Srikanth, while maintaining their dominant rhythm.

Lakshya Sen set the tone early with a composed 21-14, 21-16 win over Ephraim Stephen. Sam in the opening singles match. Youngster Ayush Shetty followed it up with a one-sided 21-8, 21-6 victory

against Shrey Dhand, doubling India's lead within minutes.

The experienced doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty then sealed the tie, defeating Rizky Hidayat and Jack Yu 21-14, 21-16 with a controlled display. Prannoy justified his inclusion with a confident 21-11, 21-17 win over Rishi Honda Boopathy, while the pair of Hariharan Amsakuranan and MR Arjun completed the clean sweep with a 21-12, 21-10 victory in the final doubles match.



With two wins from two ties, India have secured a spot in the knockout stage with a match to spare.

CHENNAI

Gujarat Titans skipper Shubman Gill admitted that his side still has one key area to fix despite a dominant eight-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings in their IPL 2026 clash. GT comfortably chased down 159 with 20 balls to spare at Chepauk, powered by a superb 87 off 46 balls from Sai Sudharsan, while Gill contributed 33 and Jos Buttler remained unbeaten on 39. The result reflected a near-complete performance from the Titans, but the captain was quick to point out a lingering issue. Gill

said the team has struggled with "finishing innings" in recent matches and stressed that improving in the final overs will be crucial as the tournament progresses. While pleased with the overall display, he noted that execution in the closing phase of innings needs sharper focus. He added that apart from a brief period in the final overs, GT controlled most aspects of the match. The decision to bowl first after winning the toss worked in their favour as they restricted CSK to 158 for 7, with Kagiso Rabada starring with 3 for 25 and earning the Player of the Match award. Gill also spoke about some tactical confusion during the middle overs, particularly regarding spin options and the

limited use of Rashid Khan, but said the team still managed to stay in control. He credited the fast-bowling unit for maintaining pressure and executing plans effectively in helpful conditions. Sudharsan, who continued his fine form, described the knock as a confidence-building effort, especially after his previous century, and highlighted the importance of spending time at the crease in challenging conditions early in the innings.

Rabada, meanwhile, emphasised discipline and process, saying consistency and continuous improvement remain key to success. He also praised the growing synergy among GT's pace attack, which has become a defining feature of the team's strategy.

CSK skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad admitted his side struggled to adapt to unpredictable Chepauk conditions, which saw variable bounce and difficult batting phases, leading to regular wickets and a lack of partnerships.



Rinku Singh answers Sehwa's challenge with explosive IPL finish

LUCKNOW

Three years after being told he would never repeat his iconic finish, Rinku Singh delivered another explosive reply with the bat, powering Kolkata Knight Riders in a thrilling IPL 2026 encounter against Lucknow Super Giants. In a high-pressure match at Ekana Stadium, Rinku smashed an unbeaten 83 off 51 balls, including a stunning sequence of four consecutive sixes in the final over, guiding KKR to a competitive total of 155 for 7. His late assault completely changed the momentum of the innings after KKR were in deep trouble early on. The performance came as a direct response on the field to a famous remark made three years ago by former India opener Virender Sehwag, who had said that Rinku would never be able to recreate his legendary five-sixes finish from 2013. That historic moment had come against Gujarat Titans in 2023, when Rinku stunned

the cricketing world by hitting five consecutive sixes in the final over to seal an impossible chase. At the time, Sehwag had called it a once-in-a-lifetime feat.

But in Lucknow, Rinku once again showed his finishing power under pressure. Walking in after early wickets left KKR struggling, he rebuilt the innings with controlled aggression before launching a brutal assault in the death overs. He targeted experienced pacer Mohammed Shami in the 19th over before turning his attention to spinner Digvesh Rathi in the final over.

The result was a sequence of clean, fearless hitting that included seven fours and five sixes in his innings, pushing KKR to a fighting total. The knock also underlined Rinku's mental strength, coming in a season where he has faced personal hardship following the passing of his father earlier this year. Despite the emotional setback, he has continued to deliver crucial performances for his team.



Gavaskar urges BCCI to tighten IPL rules, calls delays 'taking liberty too far'

NEW DELHI

Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar has written to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), urging stricter measures to control match delays in IPL 2026, saying the current situation is "taking liberty too far" as games continue to stretch well beyond the intended T20 duration.

Despite repeated efforts by the BCCI, including fines and potential match bans for captains over slow over-rate offences, the problem has persisted throughout the season. Several matches have now extended beyond four hours, significantly longer than the original three-hour format designed for T20 cricket.

One of the longest games this season, between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Mumbai Indians, lasted an exhausting 4 hours and 22 minutes, sparking renewed debate over the need for stricter enforcement of time regulations. Gavaskar, in his

column, highlighted concerns over unnecessary interruptions during play, particularly the frequent entry of reserve players and support staff onto the field. He argued that such practices disrupt the flow of the game and go against the spirit of maintaining a clear playing area.

He pointed out that even minor acts, such as reserve players carrying drinks or multiple coaching staff entering the field during strategic time-outs, contribute to delays. According to him, only essential personnel should be allowed on the field, and even that should be strictly limited. Gavaskar also referenced a principle shared with him by legendary commentator Richie Benaud, emphasizing that the field of play should remain sacred and restricted only to players and match officials.

He further added that even those with broad access credentials should respect boundaries and avoid unnecessary entry onto the ground.



"Get him tested in lab": Pakistan experts stunned by Vaibhav Sooryavanshi

NEW DELHI

Teen sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi continues to dominate IPL 2026 conversations, with his extraordinary performances for Rajasthan Royals now drawing stunned admiration from across the border, where experts have gone as far as calling him "non-human" and "unreal".

At just 15 years of age, Sooryavanshi has emerged as one of the most destructive batters of the season, currently sitting among the top run-scorers with 357 runs in eight matches, including a blazing century and a strike rate exceeding 234. His fearless approach against some of the world's best bowlers has made him one of the

most talked-about young talents in global cricket.

The hype surrounding the youngster has now reached Pakistan, where cricket analyst Nouman Niaz made sensational remarks during a discussion, joking that Sooryavanshi's ability should be scientifically examined. In a light-hearted but amazed tone, Niaz suggested that the teenager appears so advanced that he "should be sent to a lab," even joking about the possibility of an artificial intelligence chip behind his performances.

His comments came after another explosive innings where Sooryavanshi continued to display his remarkable timing and power.

er. Niaz further expressed disbelief at the youngster's consistency, stating that even his "slow" innings looked superior to most modern batting standards.

Beyond the humour, the analyst also broke down Sooryavanshi's technique, pointing out that while he may not yet possess a fully developed classical structure, his wrist work, hand speed, and natural hitting arc make him exceptionally difficult to contain. He added that such talent at this age is rare and could develop into something extraordinary in the coming years. Sooryavanshi's rise has been rapid, with several match-winning and high-impact innings already this season for Rajasthan Royals. His ability to dominate both pace and spin has made him a key figure in their batting lineup despite his youth.

