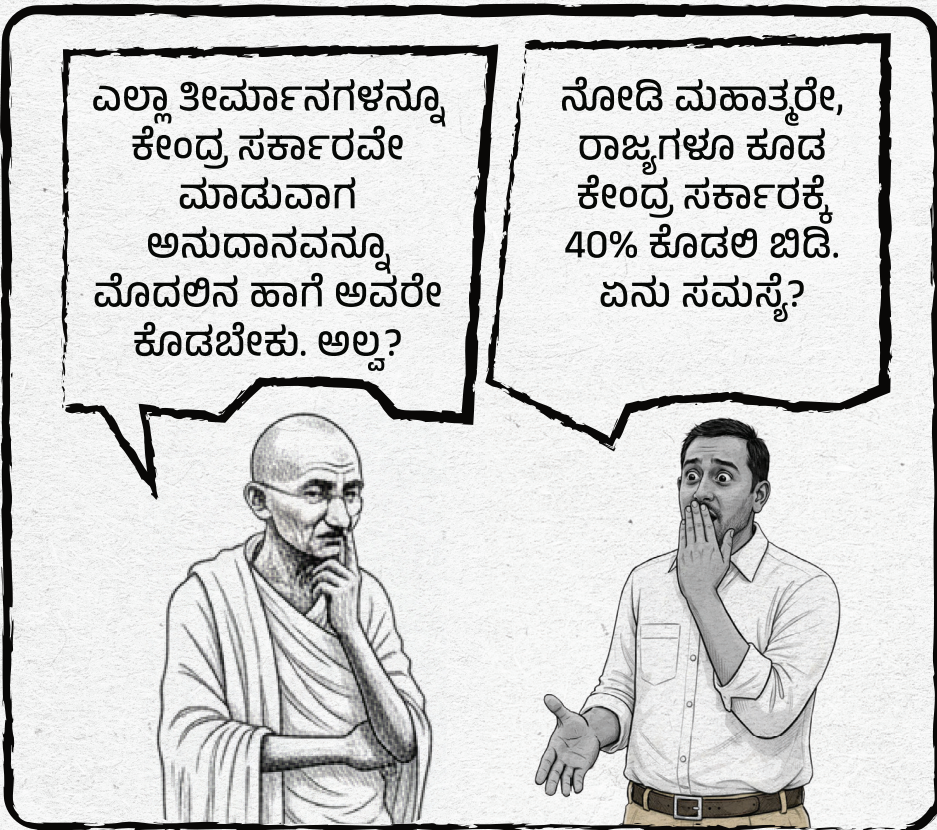
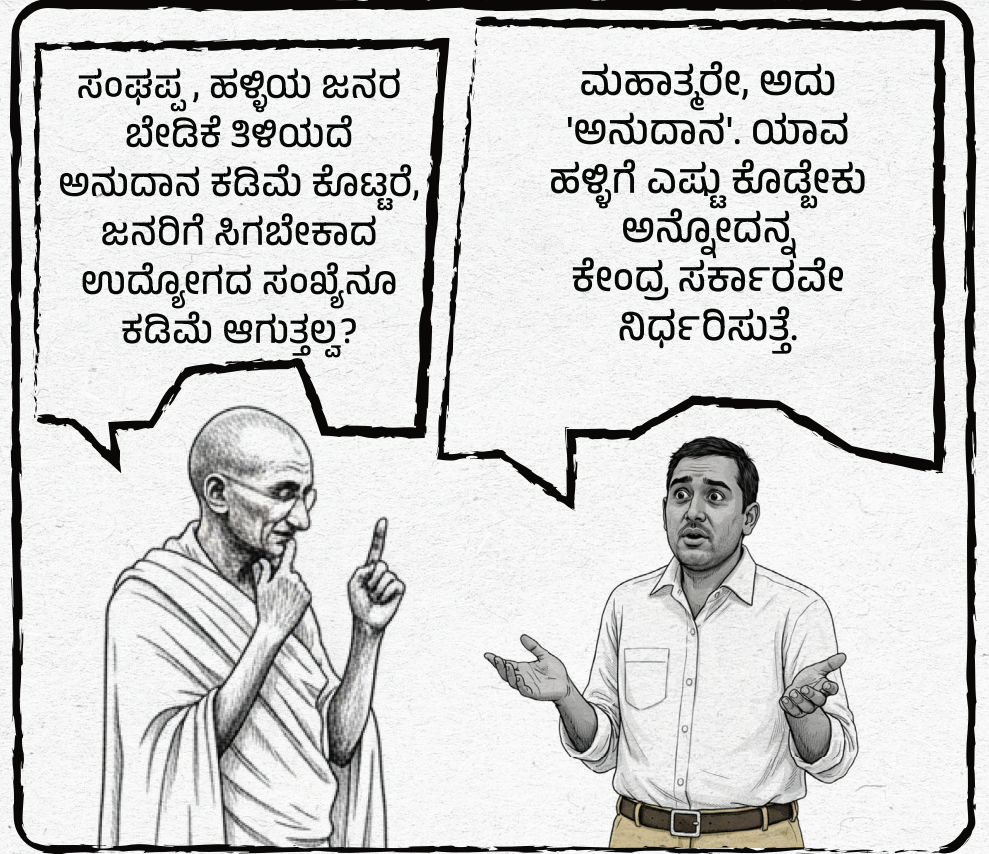
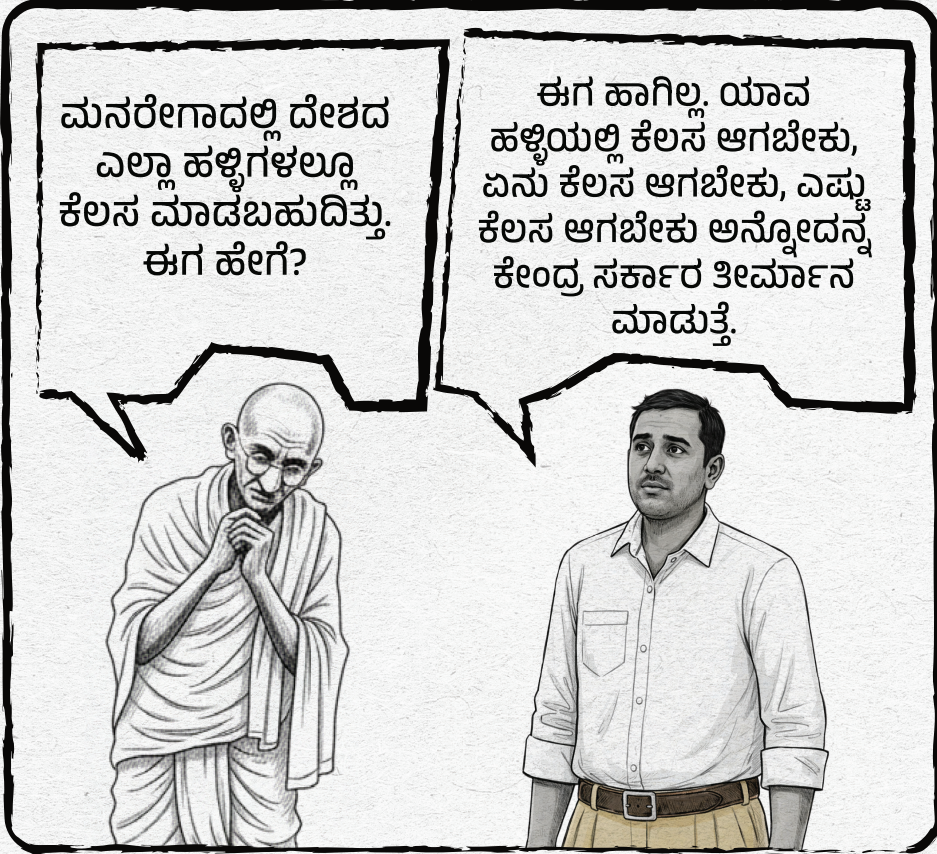
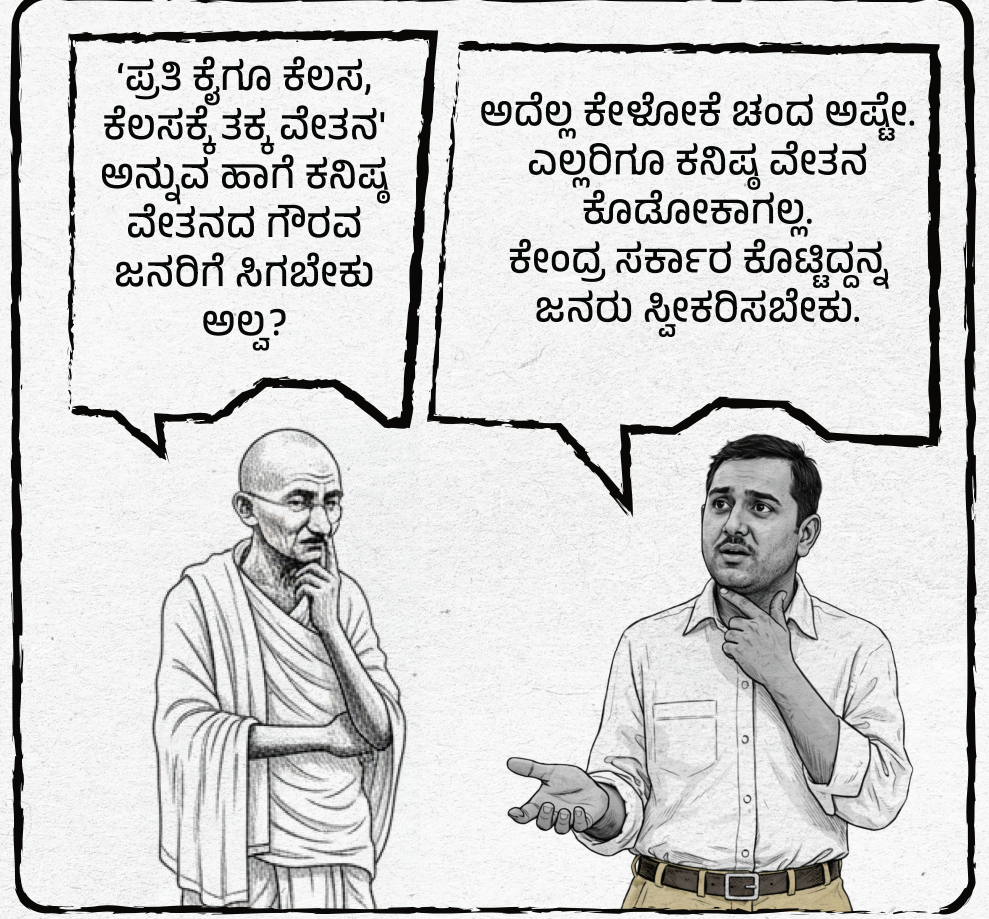




ಕೇಂದ್ರ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಜಾರಿಗೆ ತಂದಿರುವ ವಿಬಿ-ಗ್ರಾಮ್ ಜಿ ಗ್ರಾಮ ಪಂಚಾಯತಿಗಳ ಅಧಿಕಾರ ಹಾಗೂ ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಖಾತ್ರಿಗೆ ಮರಣ ಶಾಸನ!

ಮನರೇಗಾ ಪುನರ್ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆ, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದ ಮೇಲಿನ ತೆರಿಗೆ ಭಯೋತ್ಪಾದನೆ, ಗ್ರಾಮೀಣ ಜನರ ಜೀವನೋಪಾಯ ಮತ್ತು ಪಂಚಾಯತಿಗಳ ಅಧಿಕಾರ ಕಸಿಯುವ ಕುತಂತ್ರ ನಿಲ್ಲುವವರೆಗೂ
#ಗ್ರಾಮಸಂಗ್ರಾಮನಿರಂತರ!

QUICK READ



Two accused surrender in rowdy-sheeter Auto Naga murder case

Bengaluru

Two key accused in the murder of rowdy-sheeter Auto Naga have surrendered before the Madanayakanahalli police, officials said. Abhi of Byregowdanahalli and Chetan alias Chethu of Hanumanthapur presented themselves at the police station around 4 am on Wednesday, three days after the incident at Balaji Sarovar Farmhouse near Nagarur. Earlier, another accused, Pawan, had surrendered on the day of the murder. Police said efforts are on to trace the remaining accused, Umesh and Kiran, who are currently absconding.



Young man injured after being hit by lorry in Rajajinagar

Bengaluru

A young man was seriously injured after a lorry loaded with iron overturned and fell on him in Rajajinagar. The incident occurred near the ESI Hospital when the victim, identified as Bambam, a native of Bihar, was travelling along the roadside. His leg got trapped under the overturned vehicle, leaving him in severe pain. Local residents and police rushed to the spot and made repeated efforts to free him. A crane was later brought in to lift the lorry, and rescue operations were underway at the time of reporting.

IISc study reveals how Staphylococcus toxin pierces human cell membranes

Researchers capture real-time assembly of deadly bacterial toxin on human cell membranes

BENGALURU

Scientists at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) have uncovered crucial details about how Staphylococcus aureus, a common yet potentially deadly bacterium, damages human cells. The findings are particularly significant as infections caused by S. aureus are becoming increasingly difficult to treat due to rising antibiotic resistance and the absence of an approved vaccine.

S. aureus is responsible for a wide spectrum of illnesses, ranging from mild skin infections to severe and sometimes fatal conditions such as pneumonia, bloodstream infections and sepsis. One of the bacterium's most potent weapons is alpha-hemolysin, a toxin that attacks host cells by punching holes, or pores, in their membranes, ultimately leading to cell death.

Although alpha-hemolysin has been studied for decades, most earlier research relied on artificial systems such as detergents or simplified lipid membranes. These environments do not accurately reflect the complexity of real human cell membranes. To bridge this gap, the IISc team, led by Somnath Dutta from the Molecular Biophysics Unit, set out to observe how the toxin behaves in a more realistic biological setting.

In the new study, the researchers used a combination of advanced techniques including fluorescence microscopy, electron microscopy, cryo-electron microscopy and mutation-based analysis to examine the interaction between alpha-hemolysin and red blood cells. This multi-pronged approach allowed them to visualise, in unprecedented detail, how the toxin assembles directly on the surface of human cells. The study captured the step-by-step process by which alpha-hemolysin transitions from a soluble, harmless form into a destructive pore-forming structure. Importantly, the team identified several intermediate stages in this transformation. Among these was an arch-shaped assembly of the toxin, which appears to be a critical step before the formation of a complete pore.

The researchers also observed subtle but clear changes in the shape of the cell membrane as the toxin assembled, providing visual evidence of how membrane damage begins. According to IISc, these observations offer valuable insight into the early events that lead to cell injury and death.

Understanding these intermediate stages is crucial, the researchers said, because they represent potential targets for medical intervention. Drugs or antibodies designed to block the toxin at these stages could prevent pore formation altogether. The findings therefore open new avenues for the development of anti-virulence therapies or vaccines aimed at neutralising alpha-hemolysin, offering hope in the fight against increasingly drug-resistant S. aureus infections.



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Writer Usha Devi passes away

BENGALURU

Eminent writer Usha Devi (86), popularly known by her pen name Kulasekhari, passed away following age-related health issues. She is survived by two daughters and a son. A founding member of the Karnataka Writers' Association, Usha Devi remained closely associated with the body for 47 years and played a key role in nurturing literary activity in the State. A prolific author, her notable works include poetry collections Kshithija, Sankalpa, Bikkugalu, Shataranja and Ekala. Her other writings span genres such as the novel There Is Only One Life, the play Mangala Mangalya, the biography The Memory of a Dying Girl and the autobiography I Am Nothing and Not Like Everyone Else.



Karanth Layout sites carved from graveyard? BDA denies allegations

BENGALURU

The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has found itself at the centre of a controversy after social media posts alleged that residential sites in the sprawling Shivaram Karanth Layout were carved out of what appeared to be a graveyard. The civic body has strongly denied the claims, calling them "impossible" and legally untenable.

The controversy erupted after photographs shared on X by user Sunil Reddy went viral, sparking widespread reactions and sarcastic commentary from netizens. One user quipped that the sites appeared to be "pre-booked by spirits," while another remarked that it could be the "most peaceful layout in the city." The images, reportedly taken in Sector 1 of Shivaram Karanth Layout and tagged to BDA Commissioner P. Manivannan, showed site numbers marked close to what looked like burial spots.

Sector 1, located near an engineering college at Ramagondanahalli along the Yelahanka-Doddaballapur Road, has witnessed visible development in recent months. Roads have been laid, a lake has been developed, and yellow boards indicating site numbers have been installed along pavements, suggesting the area is being readied for allotment.



The timing of the allegations is significant. BDA is preparing for its first major site allotment since Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout in 2016. More than 5,000 sites in Phase I of Shivaram Karanth Layout were slated for allotment in January 2024, although around 7,000-8,000 sites remain tied

Citizens blame BDA for failing to protect allottees by acquiring land unfit for housing

up in litigation filed by land losers. As preparatory work progressed, prospective buyers began visiting the layout to assess what could soon become their future neighbourhoods. It was during one such visit that a prospective allottee reportedly stumbled upon the site that triggered the controversy.

Responding to the allegations, Commissioner Manivannan dismissed them outright. "Nobody can acquire a graveyard. This is not a

graveyard," he said, adding that it was possible a farmer who previously owned the land may have buried a deceased person there. He also pointed out that the Supreme Court has clearly ruled that graveyards and cremation grounds cannot be acquired by any agency.

Another senior BDA official questioned the authenticity of the viral images, saying the authority was examining whether the photographs were genuine or possibly AI-generated. "We are trying to ascertain the veracity of these images," the official said.

While BDA has maintained that the possibility of sites being carved out of a graveyard is "zero," citizens have blamed the authority for failing to safeguard the interests of site allottees by allegedly acquiring land unsuitable for residential purposes. Even as officials insist there is no wrongdoing, the episode has added an eerie and embarrassing twist to one of Bengaluru's most closely watched housing projects.

Milk booth owner attacked by rowdy for objecting to public nuisance

BENGALURU

A 42-year-old milk booth owner was allegedly attacked with a knife by a rowdy-sheeter and his associates after he objected to them creating a public nuisance in Avalahalli on Mysuru Road. The main accused, Seena alias Havalali Seena (24), a resident of Avalahalli, has been arrested by Byatarayanapura police.

The injured man, identified as M.C. Vinay, is also a resident of the area. According to the complaint, Vinay had called a friend, also named Vinay, to join him for a post-dinner walk. Around 9 pm, the two were walking towards the 36 'D' BMTC bus stand in Muneshwara Block, Avalahalli, when they noticed Seena and two associates shouting loudly and causing a disturbance.

The complainant confronted the group and asked them to leave the spot. Shortly thereafter, Vinay received a call from his wife asking him to return home. At that moment, Seena



and his associates allegedly pushed him, causing his mobile phone to fall to the ground. When Vinay turned back, Seena reportedly abused him in filthy language, dared him to object again and threatened to kill him.

As Vinay bent down to pick up his phone, Seena allegedly attacked him with a knife, striking him on the right side and front of his head. When Vinay's friend tried to intervene, he was also assaulted. Hearing their cries, local residents rushed to the scene, forcing the assailants to flee.

Police said Seena is a rowdy-sheeter with multiple cases registered against him at Hanumanthanagar, Girinagar and Byatarayanapura police stations. Further investigation is underway.

BENGALURU WALKATHON LAUNCH



Dr G Mahantesh, Founder and Managing Trustee of Samarathanam Trust for Disabled, Manoj Nagpal, Managing Director of VP Professional Services, and other dignitaries at the press conference for the Bengaluru Walkathon "Health for All" held at Press Club, Bengaluru, on Wednesday

▶ CH PHOTO

HC quashes narcotics Act case against techie

BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has quashed criminal proceedings under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act against a Bengaluru-based techie, holding that the case was initiated solely on the confession statement of a co-accused and that allowing it to continue would amount to an abuse of the process of law.

Justice M. Nagaprasanna passed the order while allowing a petition filed by Junaid Hussain Haveri, a native of Hubballi who works in Bengaluru. The case arose from a June 20, 2023 operation by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), during which officers intercepted a Speed Post parcel suspected to contain narcotics. The parcel, sent from Coimbatore and addressed to Junaid at Marathahalli Colony, allegedly contained silver foil with 50 blot papers bearing printed patterns, believed to be LSD.

The NCB conducted a controlled delivery by replacing the original contents with a dummy parcel. Junaid's former roommate, Abhay Kumar, received the parcel and signed for it. In his statement, Abhay claimed that Junaid had asked him to accept the parcel and hand it over later. Based on this statement, Junaid was summoned under Section 67(2) of the NDPS Act.

Junaid contended that he had no knowledge of the parcel's contents and had merely requested Abhay to receive it. He argued that there was no evidence showing that he had either received the parcel or transferred any money linked to the alleged offence. He also pointed out that mandatory procedures under Sections 50-A and 2(vii)(b) of the Act, governing controlled deliveries, were not followed. The High Court had already quashed proceedings against Abhay in January last year due to procedural violations.

Bomma Condoles the Death of Maharashtra DCM Ajit Pawar

BENGALURU

Former Chief Minister and Member of Parliament Basavaraj Bommai has expressed deep sorrow over the tragic and untimely death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash. Describing the incident as extremely painful, Bommai said the news had left him deeply shocked and saddened.

In a post on social media platform X, Bommai noted that Ajit Pawar had carved out a distinct identity for himself in Maharashtra politics through decades of public service. He said Pawar played a



crucial role in the state's political landscape and development, particularly after aligning with the BJP and supporting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development-oriented governance. Bommai added that Pawar's demise was not only a great loss to Maharashtra politics but also to the National Democratic Alliance. He extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members, colleagues and admirers, and prayed that God grant them the strength to endure the immense loss. He also prayed for the departed leader's soul to rest in eternal peace.

WEEKLY POLICE REVIEW



City Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh with senior officers during a property parade and weekly review meeting at the Commissioner's Office in Bengaluru on Wednesday

▶ CH PHOTO

ANOTHER EXPRESSWAY

Faster B'luru-Vijayawada link planned via 10-lane NH-44

BENGALURU

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is set to further strengthen Bengaluru's regional connectivity by planning a faster road link between the city and Vijayawada through a major upgrade of National Highway-44. After connecting the eastern parts of Bengaluru with the Bengaluru-Chennai Expressway at Hoskote, NHAI is now preparing a Detailed Project Report (DPR) to link the northern parts of the city with the proposed Vijayawada expressway.

As part of the plan, the existing Bengaluru-Hyderabad NH-44 will be widened into a 10-lane highway over a 90-km stretch. This section will feature a six-lane main carriageway running from Devanahalli in Karnataka to Kodikonda in Andhra Pradesh. From Kodikonda, the road will seamlessly merge with the greenfield stretch of the Bengaluru-Kadapa-Vijayawada expressway, passing through Kadapa before heading towards Vijayawada.



The greenfield portion of the expressway, being developed by NHAI, will span 342 km between Kodikonda and Muppavaram in Andhra Pradesh. In addition, brownfield upgrades will be undertaken on existing stretches, including the Bengaluru-Kodikonda section of NH-44 and the Addanki-Vijayawada

stretch on NH-16.

According to a senior NHAI official, the Bengaluru-Kadapa-Vijayawada expressway is expected to significantly cut travel time between the two cities from the current 11-12 hours to around six to seven hours. "Upgrading NH-44 for a length of 90 km from Devanahalli to Kodikonda is a key component of this expressway project," the official said. The expansion will pass through Devanahalli and Chikkaballapura districts before crossing into Andhra Pradesh.

The draft DPR for the project is expected by February, and road widening will begin from the Bengaluru end, near Kannamangala Gate close to Devanahalli. Most of the land required for the 10-lane expansion is already in NHAI's possession, except at three

locations where new railway overbridges will be required.

In parallel, NHAI is also implementing safety measures along the busy Bengaluru-Hyderabad highway. Considering heavy traffic volumes and a rise in road accidents, barriers and highway streetlights will be installed between the trumpet interchange and Devanahalli. Barriers measuring 1.5 metres will be placed along a 12.5-km stretch, while streetlights will cover around 12 km.

With rapid urbanisation in Devanahalli and expanding industrial activity, traffic between the STRR intersection and Hebbal has risen sharply. Median barriers beyond the trumpet interchange and improved lighting are expected to enhance safety and visibility, officials said.



Govt committed to true social justice: Prez Murmu

P7



Washington Senate officially honours India's R-Day

P9

P10

Rosenior: Palmer staying, Chelsea deny United links



'Comeback King' Ajit Pawar dies in air crash

'Pilot failed to sight runway, attempted go-around, then circled and landed with clearance; incident occurred; probe ordered with AAI assistance'

MUMBAI

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and NCP chief Ajit Pawar died after his aircraft crashed during an emergency landing attempt at Baramati airport on Wednesday morning, leaving a void in the state's fractured political scenario and throwing his party into uncertainty.

Four others, including Pawar's personal security officer Vidip Jadhav, two pilots -- Sumit Kapur and Sambhavi Pathak -- and a flight attendant Pinky Mali, also died in the crash.

The small aircraft, which took off from Mumbai around 8.10 am, crashed near Baramati airport half an hour later. According to reports, Pawar was to attend four important public meetings ahead of the local body polls next month.

The leader (66) was the nephew of veteran politician and NCP founder Sharad Pawar, and the cousin of Lok Sabha member Supriya Sule. He is survived by wife Sunetra, and sons Parth and Jay.

"Five people on board the Mumbai to Baramati charter plane, which crash-landed, have died," the DGCA stated.

The aircraft, a Bombardier Learjet 45, crashed during its second landing approach on the table-top runway. The 16 years old aircraft belonged to Delhi-based charter company VSR.



Funeral in Baramati today

Pune: The last rites of Ajit Pawar will be held with full State honours at Vidya Pratishthan in Baramati of Pune at 11 am on Thursday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah are expected to attend the funeral. The state government declared a public holiday on Wednesday and also announced a three-day period of state mourning.

The aircraft was reduced to ashes, with visuals showing it completely shattered and debris scattered all around. Initial visuals showed a massive blaze and smoke billowing from the spot. Such was the impact of the crash that the body of the NCP leader was identified through his watch and clothes. The visibility at Baramati air-

port was poor when the aircraft carrying Ajit Pawar crashed, said Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu.

It is perhaps a twist of fate that Ajit Pawar, who was born in Baramati and built his career from the constituency, died in Baramati, where he was scheduled to address four public meetings ahead of the ZP polls.

'No conspiracy, purely an accident'



Mumbai: It was purely an accident, said an emotional Sharad Pawar, ruling out any conspiracy in the plane crash that killed his nephew Ajit Pawar on Wednesday morning. "There's no conspiracy involved; it's purely an accident. Maharashtra has suffered a huge loss with the passing of Ajit Pawar. A capable leader has left us today. Maharashtra has lost a great personality today. This loss can never be compensated," Sharad Pawar, Ajit's uncle, said in his first comments on the tragedy.

'Dada' who never made it to CM's chair

MUMBAI

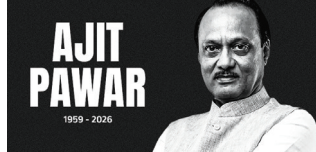
The passing of Ajit Anantrao Pawar, one of Maharashtra's most influential yet controversial yet controversial political figures, marks the end of a long and tumultuous political career that spanned over three decades.

The nephew of Sharad Pawar, a towering figure in Indian politics and founder of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), he spent almost all his political life under his uncle's shadow. Ajit Pawar cut his teeth in politics in cooperative movements — a defining feature of Maratha politics. His father, Anantrao Pawar, died when Ajit was just 18, prompting him to shoulder responsibilities at a young age.

In 1991, he was elected chairman of the Pune District Cooperative Bank, a post he held for 16 years, further solidifying his base in cooperative politics. That same year, he entered electoral politics by winning a seat in the Lok Sabha from Baramati, one of Maharashtra's key constituencies — a seat he would retain in various capacities for decades.

Soon, he became an MLA from Baramati, a stronghold he would represent uninterruptedly, winning with significant margins.

Over his career, Pawar served as Deputy CM under multiple



tained engagement with economic and infrastructural policy in Maharashtra.

However, his politics has always been entrenched in controversies. Opposition leaders, mainly the BJP, alleged that Ajit Pawar was involved in a ₹70,000-crore irrigation scam.

Known popularly as "Dada" among supporters, Ajit has sought to build his legacy outside his uncle's shadow. He nearly did that when he engineered a coup d'état to break the National Congress Party, founded by Sharad Pawar on July 2, 2023, and aligned with the NDA. That gave him some respite from the corruption allegation. However, he never became the 'saheb' of the masses as his uncle is.

Ajit Pawar's record as Deputy CM of Maharashtra

Order	Post	Tenure	Government/Coalition
1	Deputy CM	11 November 2010-25 September 2012	Congress-NCP
2	Deputy CM	7 December 2012-28 September 2014	Congress-NCP
3	Deputy CM	November 23, 2019-November 26, 2019	Devendra Fadnavis Government (3 days)
4	Deputy CM	December 30, 2019 - June 29, 2022	Uddhav Thackeray (MVA) Government
5	Deputy CM	July 2, 2023 - Present	Eknath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis government



ವಾರ್ತಾ ಮತ್ತು ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ಸಂಪರ್ಕ ಇಲಾಖೆ
Dept. of Information & Public Relations



ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಚಲನಚಿತ್ರ ಅಕಾಡೆಮಿ
Karnataka Chalanachitra Akademi



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QUICK READ

Heartbroken couple ends lives in Malaprabha

Belagavi

Tragedy struck in Malapur village, Ramadurga taluk, when married man Jagadish Yallappa Kaval-ekar (27) and girlfriend Gangamma Tyapi (25) jumped to their deaths from a bridge into the Malaprabha River on January 26 night. The pair, in love for three years, faced family opposition. Jagadish wed another woman just a year ago, shattering their dreams. Locals spotted the bodies on the riverbank Wednesday morning and alerted police. Ramadurga officers and fire brigade fished them out swiftly. Families grieve the desperate lovers' fatal choice. Police registered a case and began probing the sad saga.

Car-scooter crash injures two in Bhatkal

Bhatkal

Two people were injured in a car-scooter collision near City Light Cross in Navayat Colony on National Highway-66 on Wednesday morning. The victims, 20-year-old Syed Umar Rashad Sheikh from Madina Colony and 40-year-old Tauseef from Azad Nagar, Bhatkal, were first treated at Bhatkal Government Hospital and later referred to Mangalore Hospital for further care. The accident occurred around 11 am when a speeding car, overtaking a lorry from the Udupi-Sirsi route, hit the scooter, throwing it several meters and causing injuries to the rider. A case has been registered at Bhatkal Town Police Station, and investigations are ongoing.

Export management training program scheduled on Feb-23

Dharwad

A six-day Export Management Training Program for aspiring entrepreneurs will be held from February 23 to 28 at the Karnataka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Hubli. The program is organized under the Central Government's RAMP scheme in collaboration with Visvesvaraya Business Promotion Centre and District Industrial Center Dharwad. Participants include MSME owners, students, and representatives of institutions teaching export business. The training fee is ₹5,900. Interested candidates can register online through the Visvesvaraya Business Promotion Centre website or Google Form by February 10. For more details, contact Deputy Director T.S. Mallikaraju at 8073707446 or 9742709229.

Work and service lead to inner peace: Bommai

Bommai praised Naveen Savanur's service to the poor and lauded Virupakshappa Ballari's social contributions

HAVERI

Former Chief Minister and Member of Parliament Basavaraj Bommai said that adopting work and selfless service in life brings inner peace and mental calmness.

Speaking after celebrating his 66th birthday at Jyothi Residential School for Mentally Challenged Children in Ijarilakamapura, he distributed clothes, books, and sweets to students. He said the institution has cared for such children with patience and love since 2009.

Bommai praised social worker Naveen Savanur for serving poor and helpless people without expecting anything in return. He also appreciated BJP District President Virupakshappa Ballari for



strengthening the party and supporting social causes.

He lauded Basavaraj Arabagonda and his team for building the Haveri Milk Producers' Unit and working for district development.

"Birth and death are not in our hands, but we can choose how we live," Bommai said. "God lives in honest work. Whenever we help the poor or care for children with special needs, that itself becomes service."

He said Sadashiva Swamiji

of Hukkeri Mutt inspires people through padayatra in villages to remove social evils. Such efforts, he noted, will guide future generations.

Bommai added that linking the Varada and Bedti rivers is an important struggle for regional growth.

Calling special children "children of God," he said caring for them is a test of humanity. He thanked the Jyothi institution for allowing him and his son Bharat to join the celebration. Sri Sadashiva Mahaswamiji, leaders, and officials attended the event and blessed the children. They wished the students success, health, and happiness, and promised continued support for the school's service activities in the years ahead, bringing hope to many families across.

Hosamani said the association will support women employees facing injustice, harassment, health or maternity issues, regardless of membership



WOMEN WORKERS FORM BODY TO DEFEND RIGHTS

BELAGAVI

A new association has been formed to protect the rights and welfare of women employees working in government offices across Karnataka, said Veena Hosamani, Vice President of the Karnataka State Government Women Employees Association.

Speaking at a press conference on Wednesday, she said the organization was started in 2023 and now has units at both district and taluk levels. Though women are part of the larger State Government Employees' Association, some personal and workplace issues faced by women are difficult to discuss openly in mixed groups, she explained.

Hosamani said the association will step in whenever women employees face injustice, harassment, or official difficulties, even if the affected person is not a registered member. She added that problems related to health, maternity needs, and requests such

as menstrual leave often require a supportive platform where women feel comfortable sharing concerns.

The association also plans to conduct health check-up camps, yoga sessions, cultural programs, sports activities, and awareness events aimed at improving both physical and mental well-being of women staff. "Our goal is to build confidence and create a support system," she said.

Geeta Dalwai, President of the district unit, said office-bearers for the Belagavi district branch will be appointed by the end of November 2025. The formal inauguration of the district unit is expected to take place by the end of February 2026. Leaders said the association will work closely with departments while firmly raising its voice whenever the dignity or rights of women employees are affected. They urged women staff across the state to join the platform and seek guidance, unity, and timely help without fear.

Dharwad residents protest alleged road encroachment scandal

DHARWAD

A controversy has emerged in Dharwad over a vehicle showroom allegedly linked to BJP leader Arvind Bellad, with concerns that a public road may have been encroached. Residents claim a 24-metre-wide road, shown in older survey records across survey numbers 31, 32, and 33, previously ran where the showroom now stands. They allege the road was gradually blocked, causing travel difficulties, and that earlier complaints to authorities were not addressed.

Police contacted the Hubballi-Dharwad Urban Development Authority for records, which reportedly confirmed a road alignment had existed in the area. However, officials later stated the 24-metre road was not part of the final 2019 master plan and could not confirm any encroachment. Unsatisfied, Lokayukta police have issued notices to the Authority and municipal corporation, seeking detailed replies by January 29.

Activists allege earlier responses may have been influenced by powerful interests, while Bellad's supporters maintain that construction followed legal procedures. Residents demand clarity on land records and road access, and state to join the platform and seek guidance, unity, and timely help without fear.

Mahila Congress protests over MGNREGA name change

KOPPAL

Members of the District Mahila Congress staged a protest at Gandhi Circle in Koppal opposing what they called attempts to remove Mahatma Gandhi's name from the MGNREGA scheme. The demonstrators demanded that the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act scheme continue with its original name and structure.

District Mahila Congress President Jyoti M. Gondabala led the protest. She alleged that the move to change the scheme's name reflects anti-people and divisive politics by the central government. Protesters wore black bands as a mark of opposition and raised slogans condemning the reported decision. She warned that if the government fails to reconsider, the agitation would be expanded into a larger people's movement.

Gondabala also accused the Centre of weakening state governments by altering centrally sponsored schemes. She said invoking Mahatma Gandhi's ideals



Mahila Congress President Jyoti Gondabala led protests, accusing Centre of divisive politics, wearing black bands, raising slogans, and warning of expanded agitation if decision stands

while changing the scheme's identity goes against the spirit of rural welfare.

KPCC spokesperson Shailaja Hiremath said the scheme was created to improve the lives of rural families and provide employment security. Any change that reduces its focus on workers' welfare

would harm poor households, she said. She further alleged that centralization of powers in the new structure could benefit contractors and large private interests rather than laborers.

During the protest, leaders submitted an appeal addressed to the President of India through the District Collector. Grade-2 Tahsildar Gavisiddappa Mannur received the memorandum on behalf of the administration. Several Mahila Congress members and local leaders participated in the demonstration, expressing solidarity and urging the government to protect the scheme's identity and purpose.

Haveri theater built, yet never sees performances



HAVERI

A high-tech theater built in Googikatte near the Haveri bus stand has remained non-operational for over four years despite being inaugurated by then CM Basavaraj Bommai. Constructed at a cost of around Rs. 5 crore, the theater was intended to promote arts and provide a platform for local performers.

The theater, the largest in the surrounding districts, has instead fallen into neglect. Theater enthusiasts and workers expressed disappointment, saying the building has become a hub for anti-social activities. Alcohol bottles, broken glass, gutka remnants, and even excrement litter the premises. Miscreants have damaged the windows and doors, leaving the once-promising structure in disrepair.

Local artists lament that no theater activities have been conducted, and the lack of maintenance has turned the facility into a safe haven for hooligans. Many feel a regular theater would have been more practical than a high-tech setup.

The municipal council attempted to lease the building, but initial tenders failed. Last June, a contractor secured a 10-year lease, but due to complications, the contract was cancelled. A new contractor, Basavaraj from Bijapur, has now taken the lease but has delayed operations.

Municipal Commissioner Kantaraju has instructed the contractor to start the theater within 15 days, warning that failure to do so will lead to the contract being cancelled. Residents hope that the theater will finally serve its intended purpose as a cultural hub.

Farmers demand transparency on Tungabhadra Dam

HOSAPETE

Farmers in Hosapete have urged the authorities to clarify the funding and progress of the Tungabhadra Dam crest gate replacement project. The Karnataka State Farmers' Association and Green Army, led by President R. Madhav Reddy Karur, submitted a petition to the Tungabhadra Mandal office, expressing concern over confusion about the grant and project delays. Farmers said they had already sacrificed their second crop while awaiting the completion of the crest gates. Gate expert Kanhaiya Naidu revealed that the Karnataka government had returned ₹10 crore previously allocated for the project, causing worry among the farming community. Farmers demanded immediate transparency on whether funds meant for Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka had been deposited with the Tungabhadra Board and the current status of gate installation. Mandal official Dumadhav Reddy responded, saying 17 gates are expected to be installed by February, and all remaining gates will be completed by April. He assured that there is no shortage of funds and cited delays in new chain link procurement due to steel quality issues.

Dharwad Medical PG student dies by suicide

DHARWAD

A tragic incident occurred at the Institute of Mental Health and Neurological Sciences (DIMHANS) in Dharwad, where a medical postgraduate student, Dr. Pragya Palegar (24), committed suicide in her hostel room. Dr. Pragya was a first-year Psychiatric PG student and a native of Shivamogga.

The incident came to light on Wednesday morning when her roommate, Priya, returned to the room after staying elsewhere the previous night. Dr. Pragya had joined DIMHANS only two weeks ago, and her parents had visited her the day before but returned to Shivamogga in the evening. Suburban police visited the hostel immediately

after receiving information and began investigating the circumstances surrounding the suicide. Authorities have stated that the exact reasons behind the incident will be determined after completing the inquiry. The college and hostel authorities have expressed shock over the sudden loss of the young student. Counseling and support mea-

sures are being discussed for fellow students and staff affected by the incident.

The tragic death has raised concerns about mental health and student well-being in high-pressure academic environments. Police have urged anyone with information about the case to come forward to assist the investigation.

Action planned over property tax misuse case

BALLARI

Urban Development Minister Bhairati Suresh said the government has begun steps to take legal action against officials accused of misusing property tax money in the Ballari Municipal Corporation. He was replying during the Question Hour in the Legislative Council to a query raised by member Y.M. Satish.

The Minister said a committee headed by a retired judge will be formed to examine the issue and recommend legal action. The case relates to property tax collected from apartment plot owners in Ward No. 18/19 near Anantapura Road under Zonal Office-1 limits.

According to the findings, Form-2 documents were issued for nearly 35 plots. While issuing these documents, officials collected tax amounting to Rs. 2,80,179 from the property owners. However, the money was not deposited into the corporation's official account.

Instead, the amount was allegedly misappropriated and fake entries were created using forged Ballari One receipts. The irregularity came



to light during an internal review, prompting further inquiry by higher authorities.

Suresh said the entire tax amount has now been returned to the municipal corporation along with 18 percent interest. He added that disciplinary action has been initiated against the officers who failed in their duties.

Charge sheets have already been issued to the concerned staff, and notices have been served asking them to submit written explanations. Based on their responses, further legal and departmental action will be taken.

The Minister said the government is committed to transparency and accountability in urban local bodies. He assured that strict measures will be taken to prevent such misuse of public money in the future. Officials said audits will be strengthened across municipalities.

YOUNG TALENT TRIUMPHS

Hubballi student shines among Veer Gatha winners

HUBBALLI

Saanvi Yaragoppa, a Class 7 student of V.S. Pillay English Medium School in Hubballi, has made Karnataka proud after being named among the 100 Super Winners of Veer Gatha 5.0, a national competition organised by the Ministry of Defence with the Ministry of Education.

She was honoured at a special ceremony in New Delhi on January 24, where students from across India were awarded for creative works that paid tribute to the courage and sacrifice of Indian heroes. Saanvi received a cash prize of Rs 10,000, along with a medal and an official certificate.



The event was attended by senior leaders including Raksha Rajya Mantri Sanjay Seth and Minister of State for Education and Skill Development Jayant Chaudhary, along with top officials from both ministries.

Veer Gatha 5.0 saw participation from more than 1.9 crore students representing over two lakh schools nationwide. The competition invited children to share stories of bravery through essays, drawings, poems and other cre-

Saanvi honoured after National achievement win

Saanvi Yaragoppa, a Class 7 student of V S Pillay English Medium School in Hubballi, received a warm welcome at Hubli Airport after winning national recognition in Veer Gatha 5.0. She was named among the top 100 Super Winners, bringing pride to her school, family, and the entire city. Union Minister and Dharwad MP Pralhad Joshi led the felicitation and praised her talent and hard work. MLA Mahesh Tinginakai and Mayor Jyothi Patil also congratulated her and called her success inspiring for young students. Leaders wished her a bright future and said her achievement made Hubballi proud.

ative forms, helping build a strong sense of patriotism.

As part of her achievement, Saanvi also witnessed the Republic Day Parade at Kartavya Path as a special guest.

Her success has brought joy to her school, teachers, family and the people of Hubballi, showcasing young talent from the region with national recognition.

QUICK READ



Kundargi youth makes state wKho-Kho team

Bagalkot

Prajwal, a player from Maruteshwara Kho-Kho Club in Kundargi village, Bilagi taluk, has been selected for the Karnataka state Kho-Kho team. He will represent the state in the 35th National Kho-Kho Championship for boys and girls under 14, scheduled from January 31 to February 4 in Kurukshetra, Haryana. Club office-bearers, senior players, village elders, and well-wishers congratulated Prajwal and wished him success in the national tournament. His achievement has brought pride to Kundargi village and is seen as an inspiration for young athletes in the region to pursue sports at higher levels.

Karnataka invites applications for Balgaurava Award

Koppal

Karnataka Bala Vikas Academy has invited applications for the Balgaurava Award for children under 18 who achieved outstanding success at state, national, or international levels in 2024-25. Achievements in sports, music, dance, acting, painting, science, and other fields are eligible. Interested candidates must submit applications with self-attested documents and personal details by February 20 to the Academy's head office at Yojanadhikari, Behind Chandrika Layout, KHB Colony, Lakmanahalli, Dharwad-580004. Late applications or those from previous winners will not be considered. For details, contact the Academy at 0836-2465490 or mobile numbers 8050392209, 7204396275, 9448981944.

Police appeal for information on missing boys

Koppal

The Women's Police Station in Koppal has issued an appeal to trace two boys who went missing from Kalvari Chapel's faith home on January 8 at 9:45 am. Authorities suspect possible kidnapping and registered a case under Section 137(2) of the IPC, Case No. 04/2026. The missing boys are Dinesh Baba Ningappa, 17, from Gorebal, Raichur, 158 cm tall, thin, wheatish, wearing a dark gray sweater and black pants; and Kumaraswamy Tham. Yamanurappa from Maranal, 167 cm, medium build, dark complexion, in a light green shirt and cream pants. Anyone with information should contact Koppal Women's Police Station or the listed officers immediately.

Koppal Council calls public for budget meeting

KOPPAL

The Koppal Municipal Council will hold a preliminary meeting on January 31 at 11 am in the Municipal Council Office Hall to discuss the city's budget for 2026-2027.

As per Section 287 of the Karnataka Registered NGOs, Trade and Commercial Associations, and Municipalities Act, 1964, all urban local bodies must prepare and present their own budgets. The meeting will be chaired by Koppal District Commissioner Dr. Suresh B.

District launches drive to spread Leprosy awareness

Health officials said the campaign will use visits, rallies, schools, and sessions to detect leprosy early and reduce discrimination

GADAG

A district-level meeting was held at the Gadag Deputy Commissioner's office to prepare for the Touch Leprosy Awareness Campaign, which will run from January 30 to February 13. The campaign is part of the National Leprosy Eradication Programme and aims to spread awareness and remove fear and stigma about the disease.

District Collector C.N. Sri-dhar chaired the meeting and asked all departments to work together to make the campaign successful. He stressed the need for proper planning, public participation, and awareness activities in both urban and rural areas.

District Health Officer Dr. Rajendra Basarigida said leprosy is caused by a bacterium called Mycobacterium leprae.



He explained that the disease is completely curable if treated on time. Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT), the standard treatment for leprosy, is available free of cost at all primary health centres and designated leprosy hospitals across the district.

Health officials said the campaign will include door-to-door visits, awareness rallies, school programmes, and information sessions to help

people identify early symptoms and seek treatment without delay. They also said the drive aims to end social discrimination against people affected by leprosy.

During the meeting, officials released pamphlets and posters related to leprosy awareness and prevention. These materials will be distributed widely during the campaign period.

District Survey Officer Dr. Venkatesh Rathod, District RCH Officer Dr. Meenakshi, District Family Welfare Officer Dr. Y.K. Bhajantri, Epidemiologist Praveen Nidagundi, Dr. H.L. Giraddi, District Health Education Officer Roopsena Chavan, and other health staff attended the meeting and shared their plans for campaign activities across the district.

The scheme promotes family care, offering foster placement, basic needs, education, emotional support, and vocational training for children

Gadag promotes foster care for children

GADAG

The Gadag district administration is encouraging families to provide temporary care for children in need under the Guardianship and Foster Care Scheme. This initiative follows the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act-2015 and its 2021 amendment.

Government-run children's homes and voluntary organizations in Gadag help boys and girls who lack parental care. Under Section 44 of the Juvenile Justice Act, the Child Welfare Committee can place children with non-relative families for a temporary or extended period of up to one year. Care may continue until the child reaches 18, depending on an assessment of their needs.

The scheme emphasizes that every child deserves to grow up in a family environment.



Children who cannot be adopted between ages 6 and 8, or children with special needs, can be placed in foster care. Foster families are responsible for providing food, clothing, shelter, education, protection, and emotional support. Age-appropriate vocational training is also offered to support the child's growth.

Families or organizations willing to offer a nurturing en-

vironment can register for foster or group foster care by obtaining the application form from the District Child Protection Officer's office in Gadag. For details, contact the Child Welfare Committee at 08372-246344, District Child Protection Department at 08372-250758, or the Child Helpline toll-free at 1098, said District Child Protection Officer Rafe-ka A. Hallur.

Gadag to celebrate Shri Madiwala Machideva Jayanti

GADAG

A grand programme to mark Shri Madiwala Machideva Jayanti will be held on February 2 at 3 pm at the auditorium of the Gadag District Administration building. The event is being jointly organised by the Gadag District Administration, Zilla Panchayat and the Kan-nada and Culture Department to commemorate the life and teachings of the revered saint.



Several senior leaders, ministers and public representatives will participate in the celebrations. Legislative Council Speaker Basavaraj Horatti and Minister for Kannada and Culture and Backward Classes Welfare Shivaraj S. Thangadgi will attend as chief dignitaries. District In-charge Minister Dr. H.K. Patil, who also handles portfolios including Law, Justice, Human Rights, Parliamentary Affairs, Legislation and Tourism, will preside over

the function. Government Chief Whip Salim Ahmed, Rona MLA G.S. Patil, Haveri MP and former Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, and MP P.C. Gaddigowdara will be among the chief guests. Other dignitaries expected to attend include D.R. Patil, C.C. Patil, Dr. Chandru Lamani, S.V. Sankanur, Pradeep Shettar, Akbarsabha Babarji and B.B. Asuti. District In-charge Secretary Ramandeep Chaudhary and Belagavi Regional Commissioner Janaki K.M. will attend as special invitees. A special lecture on the life and values of Shri Madiwala Machideva will be delivered by Sujatha Sharanappa Madiwal of Shirgum-pi Government High School.

Officials said the programme aims to spread awareness about the saint's teachings and promote social harmony and service. The public has been invited to attend in large numbers.

Submit your books for prestigious Moon Award

KOPPAL

The Karnataka Bala Vikas Academy has invited submissions for its prestigious Children's Book Moon Award, which honours outstanding children's books published in 2024 and 2025. Seven categories, including poetry, stories, plays, novels, scientific articles, translations and literary criticism, will be considered. Authors and publishers must send four copies of each book to the Academy's Dharwad office by February 20. Late entries will not be accepted. For further information, contact 8050392209, 7204396275 or 9448981944, the Academy said.



Experts warn against mobile use for children

HARAPANAHALLI

Zonal Resource Person Manjunath Kovi warned that excessive use of mobile phones is harming the physical and mental health of children today. He spoke at the third-year anniversary program of the Government Upgraded Model Primary School in Uchchangidurga village, emphasizing that mobile devices have become a modern addiction.

Kovi urged parents to take an active role in limiting their children's screen time, including reducing TV and mobile use, especially with upcoming exams. He highlighted that children's growth, focus, and mental well-being are at risk if proper limits are not set.

The school anniversary celebration also included a sports meet, where winners were congratulated, and various cultural programs such as dance and drama performed by the students. The event brought together teachers, students, and community members to celebrate the school's achievements and encourage participation in extracurricular activities.

The school anniversary featured a sports meet, cultural programs like dance and drama, uniting teachers, students, and the community to celebrate achievements and promote extracurricular participation

lar activities.

Gram Panchayat President Geeta Kumaraswamy, Vice President Madralli Kenchappa, SDMC President K. Dadarappa, head teacher Sadeva, and local leaders including MM Chandrappa, Kottureshappa, Sivakumar, Bhagyamma, Kurudi Revanasiddappa, Somesekhar Gowda, Siddappa, Siddeshwar Patil, Matihalli Shekharappa, Manjappa, and Yuvraj were present.

The program highlighted the importance of community involvement in education and health awareness, sending a strong message about protecting children from harmful technology while nurturing their talents through sports and cultural activities.

Hospet activists highlight importance of constitutional vigilance



VIJAYANAGAR

As part of the 77th Republic Day celebrations, several progressive and pro-Constitution organisations gathered at Jai Bhim Circle in Hospet city and publicly read the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.

Somashekhar Banthamane, member of the Kannada University Syndicate and district coordinator of the Constitution Protection Committee, said the Constitution written under the leadership of Dr B.R. Ambedkar protects equality and justice. He said people must stay alert when any attempt is made to weaken constitutional values.

Banthamane also criticised reported moves to rename the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act scheme. He said changing names would not help development and alleged that many rural and backward communities depend on such welfare programmes for survival. He questioned how funds would be managed when states are already facing financial pressure. He further alleged that

some recent policy steps at the national level could affect the rights of marginalised communities. He said citizens would respond democratically if they felt their rights were threatened.

T. Vasudev, President of the Vijayanagar District Babashe-b Ambedkar Sangh, said public awareness about the Constitution is very important. He noted that their organisation works to educate people about legal rights and social justice.

During the event, members of the Wake Up Karnataka organisation released an awareness booklet related to electoral and constitutional issues. Participants raised slogans supporting constitutional values and social equality.

Several activists, students, and local leaders took part in the programme, which remained peaceful. Organisers said similar awareness activities would continue across the district in the coming weeks. They urged citizens to read the Constitution and defend democratic principles through peaceful and lawful means.

HEALTHY HARVEST HUB

Koppal Horticulture fair offers direct fruit sales

KOPPAL

The Koppal Horticulture Department has announced a five-day Fruit Exhibition and Sales Fair from February 12 to 16 at the premises of the Joint Director of Horticulture Department. The fair aims to provide consumers with fresh fruits directly from farmers and help growers get fair prices for their produce.

Grape, pomegranate, watermelon, fig, and guava farmers in the district who wish to participate must register in advance with the Horticulture Department to reserve their sales stalls. Stalls will be allotted on a first-come, first-



served basis. Participants are required to submit land title deeds along with details including name, address, survey number, crop, varieties, and cultivated area.

Officials have urged farmers to take part in large numbers to ensure wider consumer access and fair pricing for their products. The fair will give growers an opportunity

to sell directly to buyers without middlemen, promoting local horticulture and supporting livelihoods.

For registration and additional information, farmers can contact the Central Assistant at the Joint Director's office at 8095359179, the Senior Assistant Director in Koppal at 9611888607, or representatives in Gangavathi (9480257282), Kushtagi (9743518608), and Yelaburga (9945644338), according to an official release.

The event is expected to attract buyers and sellers alike, creating a lively marketplace that celebrates Koppal's rich horticultural produce.

QUICK READ

Dog guards teens' bodies through blizzard in HP

CHAMBA

A pet Pitbull named Sheru stayed beside the bodies of two missing boys during a snowstorm in Himachal Pradesh. 19-year-old Viksit Rana and 14-year-old Piyush Kumar went trekking on January 23 to shoot videos for a vlog. After three days of searching, rescue teams found Viksit's body with Sheru sitting loyally beside him. Piyush's body was discovered later. The boys and Sheru were airlifted and returned to their families. Locals praised Sheru's courage and loyalty.

Man kills co-worker over beef dispute in UP

VARANASI

A man was arrested for allegedly killing his co-worker over a beef-related dispute in Varanasi. Virendra, 31, strangled Aftab Alam after claiming the victim "tricked" him into eating beef and taunted him. Alam's body was found on January 8 in Mahagaon village with blood from his nose and mouth. Police investigation and CCTV footage revealed Virendra's involvement. Authorities recovered the rope, Alam's Aadhaar, ATM card, and phone. Virendra confessed and said revenge drove him. Police are still searching for his accomplice.

Contaminated water causes 62-year-old's death

INDORE

A 62-year-old man, Khubchand Bandhaiya, died in Indore's Bhagirathpura area, with his family blaming contaminated drinking water. Locals say this is the 29th death in a month-long diarrhoea outbreak. Bandhaiya had been treated for vomiting and diarrhoea but passed away at home. His son claimed authorities did not send an ambulance despite requests. A state government report linked 16 deaths in Bhagirathpura to the water crisis. The community remains concerned as the outbreak continues to affect residents.

Govt committed to true social justice: Prez Murmu

The President highlights growth, social justice and vision of Viksit Bharat as she addresses Budget Session in Parliament

NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu addressed the joint sitting of Parliament on Wednesday, marking the start of the Budget Session, and reaffirmed the government's commitment to "true social justice." She highlighted key achievements over the past decade, including welfare measures for women, Dalits, and Adivasis, with social security benefits reaching nearly 95 crore citizens and 25 crore lifted out of poverty. Murmu also paid tribute to Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, calling his death in a recent plane crash an "irreparable loss."

On development, the President lauded India's infrastructure and engineering milestones, including expanded railway connectivity, Vande Bharat trains, near-complete electrification, and record-breaking projects such as the Chenab and Pamban Bridges. She cited growth in manufacturing, electronics, agro-commodities, and fisheries, emphasizing the strengthening of India's foundation across sectors.

Regarding national security, Murmu highlighted Operation Sindoor, anti-Maoist campaigns, and the suspen-



Cong lambasts Centre

The Congress sharply criticized the Modi government after President Murmu's Parliament address, calling it "insipid" and full of "hollow promises." The speech, marking the Budget session, highlighted Viksit Bharat, Swadeshi campaigns, and the VB-G RAM G Act. Congress leaders, including KC Venugopal and Manish Tewari, said it merely repeated past achievements without vision. Opposition protests demanded the Act's repeal and reinstatement of MGNREGA, highlighting concerns over rural employment and accountability.

sion of the Indus Water Treaty, noting that fear and distrust have reduced from 126 districts to eight, with nearly 2,000 Maoists surrendering last year. She also referred to Mission Sudarshan Chakra to further enhance defence readiness.

The President celebrated India's rich heritage, commemorating the 350th martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the 150th birth anniversary of tribal leader Birsa Munda, and the contributions of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, inspiring younger generations towards a Viksit Bharat (Developed India).

The Economic Survey will be tabled on Thursday by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, followed by the Union Budget presentation on Sunday, marking key financial steps for the coming year.

KEY POINTS

- The current government has hastened the development of the country.
- In the last 10-11 years, India has strengthened its foundation in every sector.
- Social security benefits are now available to nearly 95 crore citizens of the country and that 25 crore Indians have escaped poverty in the last 10 years.
- The government has built a 'corruption-free' system, which is commendable.
- Indian Railways an example of infrastructural growth.
- The trust on Indian defence platforms has increased.
- The security forces have also taken decisive action against Maoist terror.
- When the country remembers the contribution of its ancestors, the new generation gets inspiration.

A milestone visit concludes: European Presidents depart from India

NEW DELHI

European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen concluded their landmark three-day state visit to India this week, achieving 13 significant outcomes to strengthen India-EU ties. Costa departed on Wednesday, while von der Leyen left on Tuesday evening, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

The visit was described as "highly successful," resulting in agreements to enhance trade, security, defence, clean energy, mobility, science, and disaster management cooperation. MEA said these outcomes will expand European market access for Indian goods and services, create jobs, and support national



progress.

A highlight of the visit was the signing of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), hailed as the "Mother of All Deals."

The FTA is a modern, rules-based trade partnership aimed at addressing global challenges while deepening market integration between India, the world's fourth-largest economy, and the EU, the second-largest. With this deal,

India becomes the third Asian country, after Japan and South Korea, to secure a comprehensive trade agreement with the EU.

The leaders also signed a Security and Defence Partnership, marking the first overarching defence and security framework between India and the EU. This agreement is designed to enhance cooperation across strategic, regional, and global security areas.

India condemns terrorism, reflects on holocaust lessons

NEW DELHI

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Wednesday drew a parallel between the October 2023 Hamas terror attack on Israel and India's own experiences with cross-border terrorism, referencing the April 2025 attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, which killed 26 people. Addressing the International Holocaust Remembrance Day event in New Delhi, Misri said India immediately empathises with nations facing terrorism, recalling the killing of around 1,200 Israelis and the abduction of hundreds during the Hamas attack. He emphasised that India condemned the attack and reaffirmed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement of solidarity with Israel.



10-year pact to bolster India-US defence partnership

NEW DELHI

A United States Congressional delegation led by Mike Rogers, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, along with US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor, met Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh on January 27. The meeting focused on enhancing India-US defence cooperation under the recently signed 10-year Major Defence Partnership Framework Agreement.

Officials discussed strengthening the defence industry, expanding military-to-military exercises, advancing information sharing, and collaborating on technology and regional security. The discussions highlighted the importance of a strong bilateral defence relationship for ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

US Ambassador Gor said the long-term agreement would significantly deepen defence cooperation. "Joint exercises will continue, additional sales are in progress. This is a strong relationship," he tweeted, thanking Defence Secretary Singh for hosting the delegation.

The framework, signed in October 2025 by Defence

US Congressional delegation and Ambassador met India's Defence Secretary to discuss deepening military ties and defence industry cooperation under the 10-year Major Defence Partnership Framework Agreement.

Minister Rajnath Singh and US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth during the ADMM-Plus in Kuala Lumpur, sets a unified vision for the next decade. It aims to strengthen strategic convergence and establish defence as a major pillar of India-US relations.

Rajnath Singh described the agreement as a signal of growing cooperation, ensuring a free and rules-based Indo-Pacific. Hegseth called it a cornerstone for regional stability, emphasizing enhanced coordination, tech cooperation, and information sharing.

The India-US defence partnership continues to expand through joint exercises, defence industry collaboration, science and technology initiatives, and coordination with global and regional partners, solidifying ties for strategic and security interests over the coming decade.

SC appoints Justice Kaul as mediator in TN temple dispute

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday appointed former judge Sanjay Kishan Kaul as principal mediator to resolve a 120-year-old dispute between two Sri Vaishnava sects over rituals at the historic Sri Devarajaswamy Temple in Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu.

The conflict involves the Thenkalai and Vadakalai sects, with the Thenkalai historically performing prayers inside the sanctum sanctorum. Vadakalai members had challenged the Madras High Court's December ruling that upheld the Thenkalai's exclusive rights to perform ceremonial worship, arguing that it violated their constitutional freedom of religion under Article 25.

A bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant noted that senior counsels on both sides had agreed to explore mediation to allow daily rituals to continue amicably. Justice Kaul, former Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, will be assisted by two experts familiar with



Tamil, Sanskrit, temple rituals, and its history. The case is next scheduled for March 13.

Senior advocates CS Vaidyanathan, Satish Parasaran, and Arvind P. Datar appeared for the petitioners, emphasizing that the high court had relied on pre-Constitution precedents granting hereditary rights to the Thenkalai sect, which were rendered obsolete by the 1971 Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Amendment Act.

Counsel for the respondents highlighted that the Thenkalai ritual recitals date back over 300 years and are integral to temple tradition.

Israeli envoy confirms PM Modi's upcoming visit plans

NEW DELHI

Israeli Ambassador to India Reuven Azar confirmed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has received an official invitation to visit Israel, with dates to be announced later. Speaking at an event marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day in New Delhi, Azar described India-Israel ties as a strong strategic partnership and said 2025 was a productive year, marked by



a bilateral investment treaty, security agreements, financial protocols, and progress toward a free trade deal. He noted counter-terrorism cooperation as a key pillar and expressed optimism for deeper ties in 2026. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri drew parallels between India's experiences with cross-border terrorism and the October 2023 Hamas attacks, reaffirming India's support for Israel and calling for global condemnation of terrorism.

ABB secures major Mumbai Metro traction supply deal

MUMBAI

Global technology company ABB has won a major contract from Titagarh Rail Systems to supply advanced traction systems and Train Control and Management Systems (TCMS) for Mumbai Metro's expansion. The order covers 40 metro trains, each with six coaches, set to operate on Metro Line 5 (Orange Line) and Metro Line 6 (Pink Line), improving connectivity and reducing travel time across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Line 5 will connect Thane and Kalyan

via Bhiwandi, while Line 6 will run between Swami Samarth Nagar and Vikhroli. ABB will deliver an integrated solution including traction converters, auxiliary converters, traction motors, and TCMS software. Of the total trains, 22 will serve Line 5 and 18 will be deployed on Line 6. The equipment will be manufactured in India, with converters produced in Bengaluru and traction motors in Vadodara. Local engineering, testing, and maintenance teams will support operations. ABB said the project marks its first entry into the 25 kV AC metro

segment in India and strengthens its partnership with Titagarh Rail Systems, which began in 2023. The order also includes phased co-production of traction components and industrial collaboration, aligning with the Centre's Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives. ABB highlighted that the project will help deliver energy-efficient and low-emission urban mobility solutions for Mumbai, reinforcing its growing presence in India's metro sector and supporting sustainable infrastructure development in rapidly expanding cities.

SHAKTI DIALOGUE

NCW's 'Shakti Samvaad' at Bharat Mandapam from today

NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Women (NCW) will host 'Shakti Samvaad', a two-day interactive meeting with State Women Commissions, at Bharat Mandapam on January 29-30. Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta will inaugurate the event.

Shakti Samvaad aims to strengthen coordination between NCW and State Women Commissions, share best practices, and build their capacities. This is the third



national-level edition this year, after successful meetings in Ayodhya and Mumbai, reflecting NCW's commitment to cooperative federalism in women's rights. State Women Commis-

sions from across India will participate, making it a pan-India dialogue. The event will also see the release of NCW's book, Safarnama, sharing staff testimonials, and prize distribution for an online poster-making contest on 'Stay Safe Online'.

Over two days, discussions will focus on improving complaint handling, investigation mechanisms, helpline systems, reviewing state-specific laws, and strengthening engagement with NCW in legislative matters. Participants will also deliberate on advancing 'Bal Vivah Mukht Bharat', planning district-level Jan Sunwai, and sharing

innovative practices adopted by State Women Commissions.

NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar said, "Shakti Samvaad is not just a meeting; it is a shared resolve. When NCW and State Women Commissions come together, coordination is faster, and solutions are more grounded." She added that continuous dialogue is key to ensuring women-centric laws and services reach every woman.

The two-day event is expected to result in actionable outcomes and stronger institutional collaboration, furthering the safety, rights, and dignity of women across India.

IN THE COURT OF THE II ADDITIONAL CIVIL JUDGE & J.M.F.C AT DODDABALLAPUR
Emis.No. 1202/2025
Smt. LALITHAMMA, Aged about 42 years, W/o. Late. Suresh S.Agni, Rlat. # 4/2, Sanjeevappa Road, Chikkabommasandra, Bangalore-560065, Now at Doddaballapur
PETITIONER.
 Vs/
 The Registrar Birth & Death, CMC Doddaballapur.
RESPONDENT.
PAPER DRAFT PUBLICATION
 Whereas, the petitioner has filed the above petitioner under section 13(3) & 14 of birth and death Act rules 1969, directing the respondent to issue the death Certificate of petitioner's mother ADI LAKSHAMMA W/o. Late. Pandurangaiah who was reportedly died on 08-10-1993, at his Residency at Veerabhadranapalya, Doddaballapur town, Bengaluru Rural District.
 Hence you are hereby summoned to appear before this court either in person or through an advocate duly instructed on your behalf on 03.03.2026 at 11 A.M. to answer or oppose the case thereto.
 Take notice, if you fail to appear on the above said date and time, the case will be heard and decided ex-parte.
 Given under my hand and the seal of the court on 24.01.2026
 By the order of the court
 Chief Ministerial Officer, II Additional Civil Judge & JMFC Doddaballapur
 Advocate for Petitioner: Date:30-12-2025.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, SUNDARAMMA C W/o Mahadevamurthy P. aged about 49 years, residing at No. 197/1, Sri Bhagyalakshmi Nilaya, Near Surya Bakery, Hebbala 1st Stage, Metagalli Post, Mysore City have changed my name from **SUMA** to **SUNDARAMMA C.** before the Notary Public C L Basavaraj, Advocate and Notary Mysore vide affidavit dt: 28-01-2026

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 To place a classified ad contact:
080-41209042

MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCE LIMITED

FORMERLY MANAPPURAM HOME FINANCIAL PRVT LTD

Regd Office : 8/59 A , Padmarajabuilding, Near Sreerama Swami Temple, Cherpu - TPV Taluk,
Thiruvallur, Thrissur, Kerala 680561 | Phone No.: 0487-3520504, Website: www.manappurahomefinance.in

POSSESSION NOTICE FOR Immovable Property

Whereas, the undersigned being the authorised officer of Manappuram Home Finance Ltd ("MAHOFin") under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest ("SARFESI"), 2002 (Act of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(1)(c) read with rule 9 of the security interest enforcement rules, 2002 issued thereunder hereby summons you as borrower or co-borrowers and/or guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the notice and interest therein within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and public at general notice by way of publication of this possession notice so that all persons who are interested in land in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(1)(c) of the said "Act" [read with rule 9 of the said rules]. The borrower in particular and the public in general have been cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings relating thereto subject to the charge of the Manappuram Home Finance Ltd as mentioned below for each of the respective properties:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower and Co-Borrower / Leaseholder / Beneficiary Branch	Description Of Secured Asset In Charge Of Which Interest Has Been Created	Date of Demand Notice Issued/Auction Date	Date of Possession
1	Nannappa S, Maheshwari N, Siddeetha N, NNH000002535/ Vivekananda Circle	Property No. 1566/I Unique No. 15080010320020982/UmmattunivillageAndGrampanchayathChamaranjagataluk And District – West-Channarayana Sub-District-P.O.Umuthar Chamanrajang,Karnataka, Pin:571316, Site Measuring 33-45 Sq Meters Building 33.00 Sq.Meters, East-Side belongs To Nanjanamma,West-House Belongs To Rajamma W/O Ramiah,South-Road, North-House Belongs To MahadevanadaW/O Puttarangaliha	21-10-2025 & Rs.492571/-	24-01-2026
2	Zakir Hussain M.D., Vaseem Unissa M, K.P Pradheep Kumar, Mohammed Saifan Hussain, NNH0003003151/ Tumkur	Khattha No. 1194/1113/3745 Measuring East To West 20 Feet And North To South 6 feet Mallika Pura Badavane Sakki Municipality, Tumkur Dist. West-Channarayana Main Road, Tumkur Po, Siria, Tumkur, Karnataka, Pin: 571237; East-House of Shahan Jati of Same Property, West-Multi-Storey Property of Property of Waheed Khan, North-House of Syed Sardar	21-10-2025 & Rs.527167/-	24-01-2026
3	Sannaiah Basavegowda, Ramkritha S, Mathesha CB, MHALDOLANS NNH00007087/ Mysore	Property No. 37-522-209/B/1, 7/H Ward, Assessment No. 162/I, Hosk Kurbara Street, Sinh Cross Road, Karand No. 22, Kollegal Town, East-Channarayana, Kollegal Devanapatti, Chamranjanga, Karnatka, Pin: 571440 Measuring E-W 5.48x41.1 Meter & N-S 83.83X89 Meter, East Side Property No. 37-522-209/P.L.D. 37-139-37/ Property of Harish, South-37-522-209-Sinh Cross Road, North-Pid No. 37-522-209C	21-10-2025 & Rs.429050/-	24-01-2026
4	Lakshmi A, Mutthanna N, NNH0117003216/ Shimoga	Property No. 5-5-30A/81, Sy. No. 870/I Unique No. 54B, Gola Village, East-West-28°10'23"S road,Ward No. 13 Indira Nagar Simhanthur,(Tp)Simhanthur District Raichur,Near Mazd, Sindhur,Po Sindhi,Raichur, Karnataka, Pin: 594128,East-Property No. 5-5-30A/81, South-South-Property No.39-512-456/I, North-Corner Plot No. 39-512-456/N	21-10-2025 & Rs.280852/-	24-01-2026
5	Manjunatha B.B, Karanshimba B, NNH0050070788/ Shimoga	Property No. 102/T.A., Total 45.52 Sq.meter, Murud Godnokoppa, Shikarpura Tq, Shikarpura Tp, Shikarpur, P.O.Hosaganodkoppa, Shimoga, Karnataka, Pin: 577427; East-House Colony Bullasa Madhavareddy, West-Property of Hanumanthappa, South-Panchayathi Road, North-Property of Thrukammna	21-10-2025 & Rs.515166/-	24-01-2026
6	Usha Rani, MALOMLONS NNH0005007521/ Shimoga	Property No. 18/B Katha No. 09/H No. 18/B, Ward No.18,Hiduru Colony,Bullasa,Madhavarreddy, East-Side,Including 20+22,BhadrahyTown/Shimoga, Shimoga, PO Bhadrachalli, Shimoga, Karnataka, Pin: 577301, East-Consequence Road, West-Road of Property of Q.No. Hudco H-8/C, North-North-Property of Qt.No. Hudco H-8/L	21-10-2025 & Rs.146436/-	24-01-2026
7	Praveenkumar V, Nekadu Nedilava B, Yakkad, Sasappa Ningappa Yakkad, Ranganatha Mutuguri, NNH00260032513/ Hubli	Property No. 15140002007021195, Survey No: 54/B, Sub-Township To Village, East And North-East, Including 11.50Mr&Building 6.34Sq.Mt, Hampagi Villlage, Mundargate Taluk Gadga DIST, Bus Stop, Mundargi, P.O. Hampgi, Gadga, Maharashtra, India. Property of Mallappa Mutugar, West-Property of Nagari Yakrad, South-Property of Veerahabadurga Holahamnappa, North-Road	21-10-2025 & Rs.361807/-	24-01-2026
8	Praveen Nagappa Karagaadi, Jayappa Nagappa Karigi, Vinaya Nagappa Murugi, NNH00260011392/ Hubli	Residential Property Bearing Vp No. 1346/4 Part of Plot No. 7/P.D. No. 15193004000102667, total measuring 28.56 sq mtrs and 12sq ft, Located At Kadwadigudi Village/Gudageri Village Tk.Kundgol, Dist:Dharwad, KarnataKa, Pin: 581107, East-Common Passage, West-Property of Shivragoda I Muniswamy, South-Property of Shenkoppa Alagawadi, North-Partagee of S B Bagodi,	21-10-2025 & Rs.477129/-	24-01-2026
9	Asha K, Kuruma K, Sarojamma K, Krishna K, MHALD00428513/ Hubli	All That Piece And Parcel of Property No.761/10, As Per Form No. 118 Unique No. 152100501800040179, Situated At E-W Measuring 120 Ft Measure Line Along Measuring 120 Ft Square Measures Doddayangal Village, Karaadhalige nagannamas taluk Mandya/Karnataka, Pin: 571432, East-Road, West-Survey No Land, South-Galli And House of Channahai, North-Canal Galli And House of Shivhana	21-10-2025 & Rs.419451/-	24-01-2026
10	Nagaraju U, Manjala N.S, Suresh N.S, NNH0030016197/ Tumkur	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property bearing Katha No. 35/S, East-E-Katha No. 35/S, East-Side,Measuring E-W 9.14 Meters And N-S 6.09 Meters, Situated At Tirimpura Village, Kasaba Hobli, Tumkur Taluk, Tumkur District, Karnataka, Pin: 572106, East-Site No. 23, West-Road, South-Site No. 31, North-Road	21-10-2025 & Rs.517415/-	24-01-2026
11	Jainabi Jeyaramanudinetti Beppu, Khajwanindinetti Begaitkar, Dharmadam Padar, NNH00260031419/ Hubli	Residential Property Bearing Gp No. P6, Property Number NNH00260031419, Situating East To 10 Mr And North To 10Mr, total measuring 100SQ.Mt, Situated At Kaladegi Village, TKto Dist:Raichur, Karnataka,Pin:594128,East-Road, West-Plot No. P7, South-Road, North-Plot No. P9	21-10-2025 & Rs.255135/-	24-01-2026
12	Sumithra NR, Suresh K.B., Siddarama S, Sunanta KB, MALCOLONS NNH0005007093/ Mysore	All That Piece And Parcel of Property Bearing B, Hosuru Gandee Theruvodu Paakegoppa, West-Property of FormNo.3AND11 Unique No.152100404700420003 Situated At I. Kebballaha, Manyala Taluk Karnataka Pin: 571448, Within The West-Fast-Passage Road of Grampanchayatyi, Measuring East To West 13.28 Meters And North To South: 10.66 Meters, East-Galli And Land Mariyanna, West-Road, South-East-Property of K.N. Boralingegowda, North-Own Site	21-10-2025 & Rs.518757/-	24-01-2026
13	Marutaa Harijan, Sreekanth Harijana, Ganeshdatta Maligaile, NNH00260033071/ Tumkur	Residental Granthana Property Bearing Vp No.29/I, Property No.151700Z0250100029, total measuring 34.82 Mr And Building Area Measuring 25.12 Mr, Situated At Kunthanolsoli Withinn Suraleshwara gram Panchayati, Tk. Harapa & Dist. Havne, Karnataka-591104, East-Property of Hennakke Parasappa Hegde, West-Property of Maharudrapa Kusunar Rs North-To Gram Panchnayathi Road, North-Property of Lalitadas Gadgilappa Harvad,	21-10-2025 & Rs.428263/-	24-01-2026
14	Kuruma M, Madegowda P, Shivaikumaru C, COC9OCLONS NNH0005007024/ Mysore	All That Piece And Parcel of the Property Bearing No. 31-2-A-511-ZZZA, S.A. No. 46/A-46/A, Situated At Ward No. 31, Kurubara Beddi, Ramasamudram Sidder & N-S: 4.3Q6868 Meter, Karnataka-571342, East-Property of Siddabasappa & Pathway West-to-Land of Dorswany, South-House of Siddogawa, North-House Of Maresh	21-10-2025 & Rs.502037/-	24-01-2026
15	Madhushtree D, Abhishek U, Geetha V, MHAL0051016414/ Shimoga	All That The Piece Or Parcel of Site Along With Structure	20-10-2025 & Rs.459437/-	24-01-2026
16	Shrirangalinga AH, Manjula R, Hanumantharaju S, NNH0003002553/ Tumkur	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing Katha No. 188 And E-Katha No. 152500300500320442 Measuring East To West: 12.192 Meters And North To South: 9.144 Meters, Situated At Jampanur Taluk Village, C.N. Durga Hobli, Koratagere Taluk, Tumkur District, Karnataka- 571219, East-Road, West-Property of Veerahadrashai, South-Remainning Property North-Remainning Property	21-10-2025 & Rs.530264/-	24-01-2026
17	Pakkiragouda Hubballi, Pakkiragouda Hubballi, Pakkiragouda Hubballi, Kannaiya Hubballi, NNH0088028275/ Belgaum	Residential Property Bearing G. P. No. 302/I Out Of RDH No. 150400301600100314 Total measuring 10.32 Sq. Mtrs. 10.32 Sq. Mtrs. West-3.36 Meters And North-South: 30.74 Mtrs. With Including Built Up Area Measuring: 70.20 Sq Mtrs. Situated At Kadkodoli To&Dist BelagaviWithin The Jurisdiction Of Sub-Jangir Belagavi Tk & Dist: Belagavi Near Bus Stop Belgaum Belgaum/Karnataka,Pin:591107, Kadkodoli, East-Side-Property of ArjunHubballi, West-BY Property of Shivaji Lakshmi, South-BY Property of Vitthal Damdnar, North-BY Government Road	21-10-2025 & Rs.523712/-	24-01-2026
18	Mangalamma N, Sannamma N, Narayana V, Sannamma N, NNH009002111/ Vivekananda Circle	All That Piece And Parcel of Property Bearing Talakuda Grampanchayathi Janger No. 861 Property No. 3/480A As Per Form No. 9 And 11 A Unique No. 1522001020020031 Situated At Talakuda Sub-District T. Narasiputa Taluk Mysuru District, Within The Jurisdiction Of Talakuda Grampanchayathi Measuring East To West: 4.87 Meters And North To South: 7.01 Meters Main Road Trimmakudali Narasipur Mysore Karnataka Pin:571222 PO Talakuda East-House of Late, North-East-West-Road, South-Side of Sundramma, North Property of Ganesh	21-10-2025 & Rs.355914/-	24-01-2026
19	Padma T, Ches Gowda S, Rajanna T, MMH00930026979/ Tumkur	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing Katha No. 1681 And E-Katha No. 152500070302002002 Measuring East To West: 4.57 Meters And North To South: 12.19 Meters, Situated At Kurubarahalli Village, Rukkannapata Hobli Kurubarahalli, Tumkur District, Karnataka- Under The Limit of Kurubarahalli Grampanchayathi, Kurubarahalli Village And Post, Sira-572115, Near Main Road Sira Tumkur District, Karnataka-572115, East-Road, East-House of Sujatha, West-House of Enappa, South-Road, North-House of LakshmiKannappa	21-10-2025 & Rs.516897/-	24-01-2026
20	Lakshmi Bal Lokesh Naik G, NNH002002113/ Vinayagarr Ramnagar	Property No. 50, P.D. No. 1529003004003003828, Total measuring 12.69 Sq.Mtrs, 12.69 Sq.Mtrs, East-Side,Measuring 88.26 Sq. Meters, Bacheenahatti Village, Bacheenahalli Gram Panchayathi, Magadi Taluk & District Raichur, Karnataka-592122, East-Side, West-House of Geethabai, South-Road, North-Side of Late Rajasekharaiah	21-10-2025 & Rs.453910/-	24-01-2026
21	Ranganatha T, Manjula R, Hanumakutta T, NNH0003001642/ Tumkur	Property Bearing Katha No. 61/61, E- Katha No. 152500302201000662, Measuring East To West: 14.8362 Meters And North To South: 6.70560000000000004 Meters, Bargaude Village, Chennelga Grampanchayathi, Kolata Hobli Koratagere Taluk Tumkur District, P.O. Pathanagahalli, Tumkur, Karnataka, Pin:572129, East-Road, West-Property of Asewshah, South-Vacant Site, North-Property of Thimmakka	21-10-2025 & Rs.520572/-	24-01-2026
22	Lakshmi S, Shankar S, Ches Gowda S, Nagaraju S, MMH0030021959/ Tumkur	All That Piece And Parcel of The Property Bearing Katha No. 111/1 And E-Katha No. 152500402005000115, Situated At Bargaude Village, Chennelga Grampanchayathi, Kolata Hobli Koratagere Taluk Tumkur District, Karnataka- 572123, East-Road, North-House of Narasimha, West-Road, South-15 Feet Galli, North-Own Remaining	21-10-2025 & Rs.402170/-	24-01-2026

Date: 29/ January 2026 |

Place: KARNATAKA |

Sd/- Authorised Officer Manappuram Home Finance Ltd

QUICK READ



Magnitude 6 quake hits Moro Gulf Philippines

Manila

A 6.0 magnitude earthquake struck the Moro Gulf in the Philippines on Wednesday, the National Center of Seismology (NCS) reported. The tremor occurred at a depth of 40 km at 12:17 PM IST. The Philippines lies along the Pacific Ring of Fire, where the Philippine Sea and Eurasian tectonic plates meet. Experts say earthquakes in the region are caused by stress along these plates. Offshore quakes may lift the seafloor, sometimes triggering tsunamis that affect nearby coasts.

Explosion derails Jaffar Express in Sindh Province

Karachi

An explosion hit the Jaffar Express in Sindh on Monday, derailing four train coaches, officials said. The blast occurred near Abad railway station as the train traveled from Quetta to Sukkur. A Baloch armed group claimed responsibility. The Jaffar Express, which connects Quetta, Punjab, and Peshawar, has faced repeated attacks in the past year. Authorities have increased security, adding special coaches for military personnel, but no details on casualties were released at the time of reporting.

Baloch reports new enforced disappearances

Quetta

Families in Balochistan and Karachi report fresh enforced disappearances, blaming Pakistani security forces. Several young men were allegedly taken from Gwadar, Kharan, Quetta, Khuzdar, Turbat, Panjgur, and Karachi during separate operations. In Jiwani, two brothers remain missing after a raid. In Quetta, a doctor, student, and teacher were reportedly detained. Raids in Khuzdar involved alleged assaults on women, leaving children traumatised. The whereabouts of those taken from their homes are still unknown, raising concerns among local communities and human rights groups.

Washington Senate officially honours India's R-Day

Bill Gates praised India's innovations, while the Consul General led Republic Day celebrations in Seattle with cultural performances

WASHINGTON

In an exceptional gesture in honour of India's 77th Republic Day, Washington State Senate convened a special session and adopted Resolution Number 8674 celebrating the Republic Day of India.

The Senate Resolution was piloted by Indian-American Washington State Senator Manka Dhingra and also supported from the floor of the Senate by another Indian-origin State Senator Vandana Slatter.

The resolution acknowledged India's strong traditions of democracy, the contributions of the large Indian-American population in the State and the role of Indian Consulate in Seattle in fostering a stronger multifaceted relationship with the State.

Shared priorities like agriculture, trade, technology, and



emerging technologies were also emphasised. To mark the occasion, the Consulate General of India hosted a reception at the State Capitol, attended by senators, representatives, and dignitaries, with cultural performances celebrating India.

Other Northwest states, including Alaska, Nebraska, Oregon, and South Dakota, also issued proclamations rec-

ognising India's Republic Day. Montana Governor Greg Gianforte praised Indian Americans' contributions to the state's cultural, educational, and economic life. South Dakota Governor Larry Rhoden and Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen highlighted strong US-India relations and shared values.

Bill Gates lauded India's global impact in health, agri-

culture, digital infrastructure, and AI innovation. US Representative Kim Schrier conveyed Republic Day greetings and wished for continued friendship between the peoples of India and Washington.

In Seattle, the Consul General unfurled the Indian tricolor atop the Federal Reserve building, attended by Mayor Katie Wilson and a Montana delegation. The programme featured patriotic poems and a Kuchipudi dance performance. A later evening reception at Bell Harbor Conference Center recognised six newly elected Indian American city council members for public service. Cultural exhibits representing all 28 Indian states were displayed, and the newly co-located offices of the Indian Consular Application Centre were inaugurated, providing streamlined consular services in a single location.

Saudi Crown Prince rejects military action against Iran

RIYADH

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman stated on Tuesday that the Kingdom will not permit any military actions against Iran from its airspace or territory, amid reports of a US naval buildup in the region. The Crown Prince made the remarks during a phone call with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, who updated him on Iran's nuclear talks and domestic developments.

The Crown Prince stressed that Saudi Arabia respects Iran's sovereignty and supports resolving disputes through dialogue to maintain regional security and stability. "The Kingdom will not allow attacks or military operations against Iran from any party, regardless of origin". Iran's President thanked the Crown Prince for his commitment to peace.

The statement comes as US President Donald Trump highlighted a growing US military presence near Iran, describing an "armada floating beautifully toward Iran," while leaving the possibility of negotiations open. Tensions remain high amid ongoing nationwide protests in Iran over economic hardship, inflation, and governance issues.



'Saudi Arabia will not allow its airspace or territory to be used for attacks on Iran, emphasizing dialogue and regional stability'

Human Rights Activist News Agency (HRANA) reports that after 31 days of unrest, 6,221 people have died, including 5,858 protesters and 100 children. Over 42,000 individuals have been arrested, more than 11,000 severely injured, and 261 forced confessions were publicly broadcast. Protests have been recorded in 201 cities across 31 provinces, with 656 related incidents documented.

Saudi Arabia's stance reflects a focus on diplomacy and dialogue while urging respect for Iran's sovereignty, even as international military movements and domestic unrest continue to escalate tensions in the region.

Japanese Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi will meet South Korean counterpart Ahn Gyu Back to boost security cooperation

Japan Defence Minister To Meet South Korean Counterpart

TOKYO

Japanese Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi is scheduled to meet South Korean Defence Minister Ahn Gyu Back in Yokosuka on January 30, aiming to strengthen bilateral ties and address regional security challenges. The meeting will take place at Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Force base, according to South Korea's Defence Ministry.

The talks come amid rising tensions over North Korea's missile and nuclear programme. On Tuesday, North Korea launched two ballistic missiles toward the Sea of Japan. One missile reached an altitude of about 80 kilometres and flew roughly 350 kilometres. South Korea's military detected the launches from northern Pyongyang. Japanese officials confirmed



that the missiles fell outside Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone, and no damage was reported. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi ordered authorities to ensure the safety of vessels and aircraft following the launches.

Koizumi's discussions with Ahn are expected to emphasise the importance of cooperation in responding to threats from North Korea, including missile and nuclear developments. Strengthening personal relations between the two ministers is also a key objec-

tive, promoting smoother communication and trust.

Earlier this month, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung visited Japan and met with Prime Minister Takaichi. Lee stressed that cooperation between Japan and South Korea is vital amid a complex international environment. He highlighted six decades of bilateral relations since normalisation and expressed hope for further collaboration in the future. Takaichi welcomed the partnership, emphasising efforts to enhance regional stability and strengthen ties between the two countries.

The Yokosuka meeting is expected to build on recent diplomatic engagements and foster closer coordination on defence and security matters, reinforcing the importance of regional cooperation in East Asia.

Bribery: S. Korea's ex-first lady jailed for 20 months

SEOUL

A South Korean court on Wednesday sentenced former First Lady Kim Keon Hee to 20 months in prison for accepting luxury gifts from the Unification Church in exchange for business favours. The Seoul Central District Court acquitted her of stock manipulation and Political Funds Act violations. She was also ordered to forfeit 12.8 million won (\$9,000).

The ruling makes Kim and her husband, former President Yoon Suk Yeol, the first former presidential couple in South Korea to receive prison sentences with criminal convictions. Yoon has already been sentenced to five years for charges related to his 2024

martial law attempt.

The court found Kim guilty of accepting a Chanel bag and Graff necklace in July 2022 from a Unification Church official seeking business favours. Another Chanel bag she received in April 2022 was not considered a bribe, as no requests were made. "The defendant misused her position to seek profit and failed to reject high-end luxury goods," the court said.

Kim had also been charged with conspiring to manipulate stock prices of Deutsch Motors, and receiving free opinion polls before the 2022 election, but the court ruled she did not benefit economically or participate as an accomplice.

The special counsel said it



will appeal the verdict, describing it as difficult to accept, while Kim's lawyers indicated they are considering next steps. Kim has been in custody since August 2025 and denied all charges, which included involvement with a shaman to obtain gifts worth 80 million won.

The case highlights ongoing scrutiny of political figures in South Korea and the legal consequences of corruption and influence through high-value gifts.

Adani, Embraer sign pact to manufacture aircraft in India



SÃO PAULO

Indian conglomerate Adani Group and Brazilian aircraft maker Embraer announced a strategic agreement on Tuesday to manufacture aircraft in India, strengthening the country's aerospace sector.

The two companies plan to set up an aircraft assembly line in India and collaborate across multiple areas of the aviation value chain. The partnership will include pilot training, aircraft maintenance, and development of technical and engineering skills, supporting both domestic needs and industry growth. Financial details of the agreement were not disclosed.

In a joint statement, Adani and Embraer said the initiative aims to enhance India's technological and manufacturing capabilities while creating direct and indirect jobs. Embraer is a global leader in regional jets, executive planes, and military aircraft. The Adani Group has a strong

presence in infrastructure, airports, defence, and energy, making the collaboration significant for India's role in global aerospace supply chains.

Industry experts see the agreement as part of India's strategy to attract foreign investment, promote high-value manufacturing, and reduce dependence on imports. The project aligns with government initiatives such as "Make in India" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat," especially in defence and civil aviation.

The collaboration also reflects the growing globalisation of the aerospace industry, as manufacturers seek new markets and cost-efficient production hubs. For India, the pact marks another step in becoming a competitive destination for advanced aircraft manufacturing, skill development, and technological innovation, reinforcing the country's ambition to emerge as a global aviation hub.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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5	9		3		6

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

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

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

FORCED MARRIAGE

Minor Christian girl forcibly converted, married

ISLAMABAD

A 13-year-old Christian girl from Sahiwal, Punjab, was allegedly abducted, forcibly converted to Islam, and married off, raising serious human rights concerns. The Voice of Pakistan Minority (VOPM) reported the girl, a sixth-grade student, had no ability to consent to these life-altering actions.

Her parents are disabled and poor, relying on daily earnings from small jobs. The mother suffered a leg fracture, and the father works selling eggs. The family says they feel powerless, and the girl's

disappearance has caused immense distress.

Community members and VOPM criticised the incident as a severe violation of children's and human rights. According to reports, the alleged abductor is Ali Haider, from the Muslim Jatt community. After taking the girl, he reportedly forced her conversion to Islam and coerced her into marriage.

Days have passed without progress in recovering the girl, while the family faces repeated threats, reportedly intended to intimidate them from seeking legal help. VOPM stated, "It is cruelty



layered on cruelty: first, the child is taken, then the parents are threatened. Fear becomes a cage for struggling

families." Human rights activists say forced conversion for marriage occurs where power is

unequal and perpetrators feel no accountability. VOPM urged Pakistani authorities to act immediately to rescue the girl, ensure her safety, protect her family from threats, and conduct a transparent legal investigation. The body emphasised that this must be treated as a serious crime against a minor, not a private matter to be ignored or suppressed.

The case highlights ongoing vulnerabilities of religious minorities and children in Pakistan, and the urgent need for stronger protections and enforcement of laws to prevent exploitation and abuse.

Malaysian football chiefs resign over naturalization scandal

FAM leadership steps aside after FIFA sanctions over forged documents scandal

KUALA LUMPUR

The entire executive committee of the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) resigned on Wednesday following a major scandal involving the naturalization of seven foreign-born players, a controversy that led to FIFA sanctions and raised serious questions about governance in Malaysian football.

All committee members, elected just 11 months ago for the 2025–2029 term, stepped down with immediate effect in what FAM described as a unanimous and voluntary decision aimed at protecting the association's credibility and integrity.

The mass resignation followed FIFA's ruling last September that fined FAM about \$450,000 and suspended the seven players for one year after concluding that fake documents had been submitted to



support their eligibility. The players — Facundo Garcés, Rodrigo Holgado, Imanol Machuca, João Figueiredo, Gabriel Palmero, Jon Irazabal and Héctor Hevel — were also individually fined.

The footballers, hailing from Argentina, Brazil, the Netherlands and Spain, had represented Malaysia in international matches, including a successful 2027 Asian Cup qualifier against Vietnam.

Malaysian officials initially maintained the players were eligible under FIFA rules, claiming each had a Malaysian-born grandparent. FIFA investigators, however, said original documents obtained from the players' countries of origin contradicted those claims.

In a statement, FAM said resigning after just 11 months into a four-year mandate underscored that service to Ma-

laysian football outweighed holding office. The move, it said, was intended to safeguard the association's reputation and allow FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) to conduct a comprehensive review of governance, administrative and procedural matters without distraction.

"The executive committee recognizes the importance of collective responsibility," FAM said, stressing the need to restore confidence among supporters and stakeholders.

Acting FAM president Mohamad Yusoff Mahadi said secretary-general Noor Azman Rahman would oversee daily operations, with a congress expected to be convened to appoint new leadership. Meanwhile, the Court of Arbitration for Sport has temporarily lifted FIFA's ban on the players while an appeal is reviewed.

Prass stunner fires Hoffenheim to win as Leipzig slip late at St Pauli

BERLIN

A stunning long-range strike from Alexander Prass helped Hoffenheim tighten their grip on third place in the Bundesliga with a gritty 2-0 victory away at Werder Bremen, while RB Leipzig were held to a dramatic 1-1 draw at St Pauli after conceding a late penalty.

Hoffenheim, who narrowly avoided relegation last season, continued their remarkable resurgence with goals from Prass and Grischka Proemel, extending their strong run to just one defeat in the last 13 league matches. The win keeps them in the Champions League places, three points behind Borussia Dortmund.

Prass broke Bremen's resistance just before halftime with a spectacular long-range effort that flew past the goalkeeper, underlining Hoffenheim's confidence and attacking intent. Their task became tougher early in the second half when Wouter Burger was sent off following a VAR review for a dangerous challenge.

Despite being reduced to 10 men, Hoffenheim maintained their intensity and doubled their lead just two minutes later. Proemel reacted quickest to



Hoffenheim strengthen Champions League push while Leipzig drop points after stoppage-time penalty

a rebound from a Vladimir Coufal cross to finish from close range and effectively seal the contest. Bremen thought they had a lifeline when Romano Schmid produced a clever backheel, but the effort was ruled out for a narrow offside.

"The numbers don't come from nothing," Proemel told. "We play intense football and run so much. We know the Champions League is still a long way away, but we have to keep this up."

In Hamburg, Leipzig ap-

peared set to claim all three points when Yan Diomande's deflected strike gave them a 66th-minute lead — their first-ever goal at St Pauli's Millerntor Stadium. However, deep into stoppage time, captain David Raum slipped and fouled Martijn Kaars in the box. The forward converted the resulting penalty to earn St Pauli a vital point in their relegation battle.

"For us it's extremely unlucky, but it's a penalty," Leipzig midfielder Christoph Baumgartner admitted.

Both matches had been rescheduled from early January due to severe winter weather, with the final delayed fixture set for early March.

Mourinho praises former player Arbeloa ahead of Champions League meeting with Real Madrid

Real Madrid's Alvaro Arbeloa like one of my 'children', says Jose Mourinho

LISBON

Benfica coach Jose Mourinho has described Real Madrid manager Alvaro Arbeloa as "one of my children", insisting he holds nothing but admiration and affection for his former player.

Mourinho coached Arbeloa during his spell at Real Madrid between 2010 and 2013, a period marked by intense pressure and dressing-room divisions. The Portuguese tactician said his recent comments about being surprised by inexperienced coaches leading major European clubs were misunderstood and were never intended as criticism of Arbeloa, who recently replaced Xabi Alonso at the Madrid helm.

"There is one problem — both Arbeloa and Cristian Chivu are my children," Mourinho said at a news con-



ference. "They are not just ex-players of mine, they are special. From a human point of view, Alvaro is one of my favourites. He may not be the greatest player in Real Madrid's history, but he is one of the best men I've coached."

Mourinho explained that his remarks stemmed from personal experience, recalling how he himself was unexpectedly appointed Benfica coach in 2000. "The last thing I would do is put pressure on him," the 63-year-old said. "I want everything to go well for him and for him to have a fantastic coaching career."

The veteran manager added

that he has not spoken to Arbeloa since his appointment but felt no need to. "He knows I wish him luck. No call is necessary," Mourinho said, acknowledging that while both coaches want to win on the night, mutual respect remains intact.

Mourinho admitted he could not yet judge Arbeloa's coaching qualities, having not closely followed Madrid's youth or reserve sides, but stressed that personal happiness was what mattered most. "Coaching today is a very difficult mission," he noted. Arbeloa, for his part, said he was "emotional and proud" to hear Mourinho's words, calling the Portuguese manager a great friend and mentor. Real Madrid can secure qualification for the last 16 with a win, while Benfica must triumph and rely on other results to stay alive in the competition.

Rohit Sharma pins T20 World Cup hopes on Arshdeep, Hardik

NEW DELHI

Former T20 World Cup-winning captain Rohit Sharma has identified left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh and all-rounder Hardik Pandya as pivotal to India's success in the upcoming tournament. Highlighting Arshdeep's prowess with the new ball and at the death, Rohit praised his ability to swing the ball and take crucial wickets early and late in the innings. He also stressed Hardik's dual role as a finisher and versatile bowler, which provides balance to the side. Rohit underscored the importance of tactical team selection, especially managing Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravathy together, while advising spinners like Kuldeep to use DRS reviews judiciously. India, defending champions, are favorites in the February–March event across India and Sri Lanka, with their deep batting and bowling lineup offering a strong edge.

Tata Steel Masters: Gukesh loses, Arjun draws quickly



WIJK AAN ZEE

Indian players had mixed results as the Tata Steel Masters progressed on Wednesday. World champion D Gukesh's struggles continued with a ninth-round loss to Germany's Matthias Bluebaum, while Arjun Erigaisi settled for a quick draw against American Hans Moke Niemann, leaving the Indians mid-table.

Gukesh, playing White, chose the Bishop's Opening but gained little. Bluebaum seized the initiative, trapped Gukesh's light-squared bishop and won exchange for a piece before converting smoothly, forcing resignation on move 37. Gukesh stays on four points, level with Pragganandhaa and Arjun.

Top seed Arjun tried to complicate matters in an English Opening, but Niemann defended accurately and repeated moves after 22.

Uzbek leader Nodirbek Abdusattorov drew with Javokhir Sindarov to remain first on six points. Sindarov shares second with Jorden van Foreest and 14-year-old Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus, who won again.

Palmer going nowhere, insists Rosenior as Chelsea dismiss United links

NAPLES

Chelsea head coach Liam Rosenior has firmly dismissed speculation linking Cole Palmer with a move away from Stamford Bridge, calling reports of interest from Manchester United "unrealistic" and insisting the England international remains happy at the club.

The 23-year-old attacking midfielder, a Manchester native, joined Chelsea from Manchester City in 2023 and quickly emerged as the club's stand-out performer across his first two seasons in London. Recent reports suggested Palmer could be tempted by a return to the north of England and a move to the club he supported as a boy, but Rosenior was unequivocal in his response.

Asked ahead of Chelsea's Champions League trip to Napoli whether Palmer was "untouchable" and content at the club, Rosenior replied: "Yes and yes. It's simple. I'm not surprised at the timing. A new manager comes in and all of a sudden there are people looking to unsettle. It's not true." "There's no reason for an assurance," he added.

"It's so unrealistic. It's come from nowhere, there's nothing in it. There's no reason to have the conversation."

Palmer's influence this season has been curtailed by recurring injury issues. He has managed five goals and no assists in 13 appearances across all competitions, while an ongoing groin problem forced him to miss Chelsea's last two matches.

However, he has been included in the squad that travelled to Italy, offering Rosenior a timely boost. Chelsea currently sit

eighth in the Champions League table and are likely to require a win in Naples to secure direct qualification for the last 16 via a top-eight finish. The Blues face familiar opposition in Napoli coach Antonio Conte, the last man to guide Chelsea to Premier League glory in the 2016–17 season.

Despite Napoli's struggles — the Serie A champions have won just two of their opening seven European matches — Rosenior expects a stern test. "The re-

sults haven't followed the performances that Antonio's team have given," he said. "We know it's going to be a very difficult game in a very special atmosphere."



Chelsea boss labels Cole Palmer exit talk unrealistic ahead of crucial Napoli clash

Delhi Dangal Warriors overpower Tiigers of Mumbai to stay alive in semifinals race

NEW DELHI

Delhi Dangal Warriors kept their Pro Wrestling League 2026 semifinal hopes alive with a commanding 6-3 victory over Tiigers of Mumbai Dangals in Match 13.

In an action-packed encounter, Delhi produced dominant performance across categories to claim two crucial match points. The win takes them to four points from four matches, placing them fifth on the standings and firmly in contention for the knockout stage. Mumbai, meanwhile, ended their PWL 2026 campaign without registering a single team victory.

Delhi's success was built on wins by Turan Bayramov, Anjali, Anastasiya Alpyeeva, Karla Godinez Gonzalez, captain Sujet Kalkal and Ronak. Tiigers of Mumbai Dangals managed three individual wins through Jyoti Sihag, Mukul Dahiya and a forfeit in the final bout,

but the damage had already been done.

Anastasiya Alpyeeva was named Player of the Match for her emphatic performance, while Jyoti Sihag earned the Fighter of the Match award for her spirited comeback win despite her team's defeat.

Delhi set the early tone in the 74kg men's bout as Bayramov edged past Deepak in a tight tactical contest, using superior mat control and decisive push-outs to seal the win. The momentum continued in the 62kg women's category, where Anjali produced an aggressive display to defeat Olha Padoshyk 19-10, highlighted by two four-point throws during the Power Minute.

The lead was extended further when Anastasiya Alpyeeva secured a swift fall against Jyoti Berwal in the 76kg women's bout. Captain Sujet Kalkal then underlined Delhi's dominance with a controlled 9-2 victory over Ali Rahimzade in the 65kg men's category, taking the scoreline to 5-0.

Mumbai finally responded through Jyoti Sihag in the 53kg women's bout and Mukul Dahiya in the 86kg men's contest, but Delhi had already sealed the tie.

With one match remaining, Delhi Dangal Warriors remain in the hunt for a semifinal berth, while Tiigers of Mumbai Dangals bow out of the season winless.

SURYAKUMAR YADAV jumps five spots to seventh in latest ICC T20I rankings

DUBAI

India captain Suryakumar Yadav climbed five places to reach seventh position in the latest ICC men's T20I batting rankings, released on Wednesday, following an impressive run in the ongoing five-match home series against New Zealand.

The former world No.1 batter produced scores of 32, 82 not out and 57 not out in the first three matches of the series, which India currently lead 3-0. Suryakumar's consistency and match-winning ability at the middle order have helped him regain momentum just days ahead of the T20 World Cup.

India continue to dominate the upper echelons of the batting rankings, with Abhishek Sharma holding on to the top spot and Tilak Varma placed third, underlining the

depth and form of the top-ranked T20I side. The rankings update comes barely 10 days before the World Cup, providing a major confidence boost for the hosts.

Ishan Kishan, who blasted a rapid 76 off 32 balls in the second T20I at Raipur, has re-entered the rankings at 64th position. Other Indian batters to make notable gains include Shivam Dube, who jumped nine places to 58th, and Rinku Singh, who surged 13 spots to 68th.

Among other teams, Afghanistan batters made significant progress after their 2-1 series win over the West Indies in Dubai. Ibrahim Zadran climbed two places to 13th, while Rahmanullah Gurbaz moved up three spots to 15th. Player-of-the-Series Darwish Rasooli leapt 29 places to 87th after scoring 156 runs.

South Africa captain

Aiden Markram's unbeaten 86 lifted him into the top 20, while West Indies' Brandon King and New Zealand's Glenn Phillips also recorded sharp rises.

In bowling rankings, Afghanistan spinner Mujeeb ur Rahman moved to ninth, while India's Jasprit Bumrah and Ravi Bishnoi advanced to 13th and 19th respectively. Hardik Pandya registered gains across batting, bowling and all-rounder charts, highlighting his growing impact.

In ODIs, England batters Harry Brook and Joe Root climbed after their series win in Sri Lanka, while Adil Rashid and Dunith Wellalage made strides among bowlers.

Indian skipper's prolific New Zealand series boosts rankings as teammates dominate charts



Rahul Dravid blames spin troubles on lack of turnaround time

BENGALURU

Former India head coach Rahul Dravid has attributed the national team's growing struggles against spin bowling to the lack of adequate turnaround time between formats, saying the modern schedule leaves little room to rediscover and sharpen difficult skills.

Once famed for their mastery against spin, Indian batters have recently found themselves under pressure on turning tracks across formats. India suffered a 3-0 home Test whitewash against New Zealand in 2024 and a 2-0 defeat to South Africa last year, while earlier this month they lost an ODI series to New Zealand for the first time in bilateral 50-over contests.

Dravid said constant movement between formats has taken a toll on

Former India coach links batting struggles against spin to packed multi-format schedules.

players who feature in all three versions of the game.

"One of the things I've noticed, even as a coach, is that players are just moving from one format to the other all the time," Dravid said. "We would reach a Test series three or four days before the first match and realise that some players hadn't played red-ball cricket for four or five months."

Dravid contrasted the situation with his own era,

when players had extended preparation time before Test series. "In my generation, there were only two formats. I remember having almost a whole month to prepare for Tests," he said, adding that developing skills like playing spin requires sustained practice. He also referred to Shubman Gill's recent comments highlighting the challenge of adapting across formats.

Despite concerns in longer versions, Dravid backed India as favourites for the upcoming T20 World Cup starting February 8.



'Extremely lucky' Djokovic into Melbourne semi-finals as Musetti retires

MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic admitted he was "extremely lucky" to reach the Australian Open semifinals on Wednesday after Lorenzo Musetti retired injured despite holding a commanding two-set lead in their quarterfinal clash.

The fifth-seeded Italian was in complete control, leading 6-4, 6-3, 3-1, when he was forced to withdraw following treatment on his upper right leg. Musetti's movement was badly restricted, leaving him with little option but to concede the match and allow Djokovic a dramatic reprieve.

The retirement keeps alive the Serbian great's quest for a record 25th Grand Slam title. Djokovic, a 10-time champion in Melbourne, will now face either defending champion Jannik Sinner or American eighth

seed Ben Shelton for a place in the final.

"I feel really sorry for him. He was the far better player — I was on my way home tonight," Djokovic said after the match. "He was in full control. It's so unfortunate. He should have been the winner today, no doubt. I am extremely lucky to get through this one." Before Musetti's injury, Djokovic endured one of his most error-strewn performances in recent memory. The 38-year-old racked up 18 unforced errors in the opening set alone and 32 overall, struggling to find rhythm off both wings as Musetti dictated play with pace, variety and superb court coverage. The Italian recovered from an early break to reel off four straight games in the first set, eventually taking it in 54 minutes.



AIDEN MARKRAM POWERS SA TO WIN OVER WEST INDIES

PAARL

Aiden Markram produced a captain's knock to power South Africa to a comprehensive nine-wicket win over the West Indies in the first T20 International at Boland Park, giving the hosts a confident start to the three-match series.

Chasing a competitive target of 173 for seven, Markram struck a career-best 86 not out off 47 balls, laced with nine fours and three sixes, as South Africa reached the target with 13 balls to spare. The win came despite the Proteas resting several key players who had featured in the SA20 final, including first-choice opener Quinton de Kock.

Markram laid the foundation with an aggressive opening stand of 83 off 47 balls alongside Lhuan-dre Pretorius, who made a fluent 44. Pretorius, not part of South Africa's T20 World Cup squad, was handed the opening role in De Kock's absence and seized his

opportunity. After Pretorius' dismissal, Ryan Rickelton joined Markram and the pair added an unbroken 93-run partnership off 62 balls, with Rickelton contributing a calm 40 not out.

Earlier, West Indies struggled to build momentum despite Shimron Hetmyer's 48 off 32 balls. No other batter crossed the 30-run mark, and stand-in captain Roston Chase admitted his side fell short.

"We didn't have big partnerships and then we were poor with the ball in the powerplay," Chase said. He was leading the side in the absence of regular captain Shai Hope, who missed out after suffering a knee injury.

Left-arm spinner George Linde was named Player of the Match for his crucial spell of three for 25. Sharing the new ball, Linde returned in the final over to dismiss Hetmyer and Jason Holder while conceding just five runs.

Markram said he was encouraged by the squad's depth ahead of the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka next month. "There are a lot of guys putting their hands up. It's a good space to be in," he said, as South Africa underlined their readiness despite missing several first-choice players.

Dominant Pegula sets up Australian Open semi-final against Rybakina

MELBOURNE

Jessica Pegula stormed into the Australian Open semi-finals with a commanding 6-2, 7-6 (7/1) victory over fellow American Amanda Anisimova on Wednesday, setting up a last-four clash against Elena Rybakina at Melbourne Park.

The sixth-seeded Pegula was clinical in an all-American quarterfinal, capitalising on a barrage of errors from Anisimova, who finished with 44 unforced mistakes compared to Pegula's 21. The win ended fourth seed Anisimova's bid to reach a

Grand Slam final and underlined Pegula's growing belief that her maiden major title may finally be within reach. Yet to drop a set in the tournament, the 31-year-old has looked assured throughout her Melbourne campaign. Her best Grand Slam result to date remains a runner-up finish at the 2024 US Open, where she lost to Aryna Sabalenka, but Pegula appears

determined to go one step further this time. "It's awesome to reach my first Australian Open semi-final," Pegula said after the match. "I feel like I play really good tennis here and I like the conditions. I knew she was going to step it up in the second set, so I just told myself to keep holding serve." Pegula made a flying start on Rod Laver Arena, breaking Anisimova to love in the opening game and racing to a 5-1 lead inside 20 minutes. Her serve proved a major weapon as she sealed the

opening set in just 30 minutes, firing down six aces. The second set was more competitive, with both players holding serve for long stretches.



A powerful rivalry: Sabalenka, Svitolina set for Australian Open semifinal showdown

MELBOURNE

Aryna Sabalenka and Elina Svitolina are set for a compelling Australian Open women's semifinal, a matchup shaped as much by elite tennis as by a complex backdrop both players would prefer to leave off court.

World No.1 Sabalenka, a 27-year-old from Belarus, is chasing a third Australian Open title in four years and arrives in blistering form. Known for her explosive power and booming groundstrokes, she has already won titles in Brisbane this season and is riding a 10-match winning streak in 2026. With 22 career titles, including back-to-back Australian Open crowns in 2023 and 2024 and successive US Open triumphs, Sabalenka has become the dominant force on hard courts.

Across the net will stand Svitolina, the 31-year-old Ukrainian returning to the Top 10 for the first time since her maternity break in 2022. Her run to the semifinals has been emphatic, highlighted by a stunning 59-minute demolition of third seed Coco Gauff in the quarterfinals. The Auckland title earlier this month marked

her 19th career trophy and capped an impressive comeback after a mental health break in late 2025.

Both players are frequently asked about Russia's war on Ukraine, but both have consistently said they want the focus to remain on tennis. Svitolina has spoken of trying to bring moments of joy to people back home, while Sabalenka has said she supports peace. Ukrainian players do not shake hands with Russian or Belarusian opponents, a stance understood on both sides. On court, Sabalenka leads their head-to-head 5-1 and is contesting her 14th Grand Slam semifinal, having reached seven finals. Svitolina, playing her fourth major semifinal, is still chasing her first Grand Slam final appearance. "She's very powerful and consistent," Svitolina said. "I'll have to find the small opportunities and be ready to take them."

Sabalenka, unfazed by the occasion, expects a fight. "Whoever makes it there is an incredible player," she said.

Racing prodigy Atiqa Mir makes stunning WSK debut in Italy

LA CONCA (ITALY)

Eleven-year-old racing prodigy Atiqa Mir announced her arrival on the global karting stage with a sensational debut in the WSK Super Master Karting Series, becoming the first Indian to secure second place in qualifying in a fiercely competitive, male-dominated field.

Competing in the OKNJ category for the first time after stepping up from the mini class, Atiqa showcased remarkable speed and composure against 37 experienced drivers at the La Conca circuit. One of the youngest competitors on the grid and the only female entrant, the Formula 1 Academy-supported racer narrowly missed out on pole position, finishing just a tenth of a second

adrift of Finland's Leo Latinen. Atiqa clocked an impressive 49.76 seconds during qualifying and was briefly on course for pole before being edged out in the closing moments. Despite missing an extra flying lap that allowed Latinen to snatch top spot, her P2 finish marked a historic achievement — the first time an Indian driver has qualified second on debut in the OKNJ class. Starting from the front row, Atiqa delivered consistent performances in the heat races, finishing fourth, sixth and seventh, and also recorded the fastest lap in the opening heat. However, her weekend took a dramatic turn in Sunday's pre-final when a mechanical failure prevented her kart from starting on the pre-grid.

