



Prashanth Neel's upcoming action drama Dragon starring Jr NTR and Rukmini Vasanth, unveiled a 4-minute glimpse on the actor's birthday, showcasing a gritty 1960s backdrop, intense KGF-style action, and a striking villainous shade for Jr NTR, with Rukmini Vasanth also appearing in a key role.

The Supreme Court has directed the Karnataka government to conduct elections to all five municipal corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) on or before August 31, observing that there appeared to be attempts to delay the polls.



Good morning

A goal is not always meant to be reached, it often serves simply as something to aim at.

BRIEFS

Railways Suspect Sabotage in Train Fires

Vikrama Vahini | Delhi
The Indian Railways has raised concerns over a series of recent train fire incidents, suggesting possible sabotage by anti-social elements based on preliminary investigations.

The suspicion follows a fire reported in a coach of the Mithila Express at Howrah station, where railway staff acted swiftly to contain the blaze before it escalated.

According to the Ministry of Railways, multiple similar incidents have been reported across the country, prompting a detailed probe by the Railway Protection Force and other agencies. Officials cited four separate cases from Amarpura, Kota, Sasaram and Howrah. **PG2**

Assam to Bring UCC Bill in First Session

Vikrama Vahini | Guwahati
Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said that his government is preparing to introduce and pass legislation on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) during the upcoming session of the state Assembly.

Sarma stated that the government is committed to implementing the UCC and described it as a key legislative priority for the new Assembly.

"UCC is our resolve. In the first session of the 16th Legislative Assembly, we will pass this important law," Sarma told reporters.

The four-day Assembly session is scheduled to be held from May 21 to May 26, during which the proposed legislation is expected to be tabled.

Goyal Backs Modi, Slams Rahul Remark

Vikrama Vahini | Delhi
Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday strongly criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his remarks targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of "hating India" and being unable to accept the "global respect" the country has earned under the Prime Minister's leadership.

Goyal's response came after Gandhi, in a post on social media platform X, claimed that an "economic storm" was affecting the country while the Prime Minister was "busy handing out candies in Italy."

In his post, Gandhi alleged that farmers, youth, women, labourers, and small traders were "in tears," while the Prime Minister was "laughing and making reels" and the BJP was "clapping along," calling it "not leadership, but a farce."

Kedarnath Landslide: 10,000 Rescued

A landslide triggered by heavy rainfall blocked the Kedarnath Yatra route in Uttarakhand, stranding thousands of pilgrims. Joint SDRF and NDRF teams carried out overnight rescue operations, safely evacuating over 10,000 devotees despite challenging weather conditions.

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi
A massive landslide triggered by heavy rainfall disrupted the Kedarnath Yatra route, leaving thousands of pilgrims stranded between Sonprayag and Gaurikund in Uttarakhand. Swift action by rescue teams ensured the safe evacuation of over 10,000 devotees overnight.

Massive Landslide Blocks Key Route

The incident occurred in the Munkatiya area along the crucial Sonprayag-Gaurikund stretch, where debris from the landslide blocked the main road, halting movement on the Kedarnath pilgrimage route. Continuous rainfall and unstable terrain worsened



the situation, cutting off connectivity for pilgrims heading towards the shrine. **Swift Rescue Operation by SDRF, NDRF**

Joint teams of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) launched an immediate rescue operation

after receiving alerts around 9:16 p.m. The SDRF team from Sonprayag, led by Sub-Inspector Ashish Dimri, reached the spot with necessary equipment and began evacuation efforts without delay. **Pilgrims Evacuated Amid Challenging Conditions**

Despite heavy rain and poor visibility, rescue personnel worked tirelessly through the night, guiding stranded pilgrims safely across the affected zone. Officials said the timely response helped prevent casualties and ensured the safety of thousands under extremely difficult conditions.

Debris Cleared, Road Partially Restored
After completing the evacuation,

authorities deployed heavy machinery to remove debris and restore road connectivity. The route was reopened for limited vehicular movement in the early hours of Wednesday, although full clearance is still underway.

Advisory Issued for Devotees

Officials have urged pilgrims to stay updated through verified sources before resuming their journey, as landslides remain a recurring threat in the region during the monsoon. The Kedarnath Yatra, one of India's most significant pilgrimages dedicated to Lord Shiva, attracts lakhs of devotees every year to the Himalayan shrine located at over 3,500 metres altitude.

Iran Warns of Wider War Amid Trump 'Big Hit' Threat

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Tensions between the United States and Iran have escalated sharply after Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) warned that any renewed conflict could spread far beyond the Middle East, following remarks by US President Donald Trump hinting at further military action.

In a statement, the IRGC said that if aggression against Iran is repeated, the resulting regional war would "extend beyond the region," adding that Tehran would respond with "crushing blows in places you cannot imagine."

The warning came after President Trump suggested the possibility of another "big hit"



against Iran if ongoing negotiations fail. "I hope we don't have to go to war, but we may have to give them another big hit," Trump said, adding that a decision on possible action could come within days, including "Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or early next week."

US Vice President JD Vance also weighed in on the situation, stating that while military action remains

an option, diplomatic talks with Tehran had made "a lot of progress," suggesting that a deal could still be possible if negotiations continue.

According to recent reports, a ceasefire has been in place since April 8 following earlier hostilities between the two sides.

The conflict is said to have begun earlier this year amid escalating tensions involving the United States and Israel, with military operations reportedly targeting key Iranian leadership and facilities, claims that remain highly disputed and unverified across independent sources.

Iran has, meanwhile, reiterated its position on maintaining its nuclear programme. **PG2**

UP Satisfaction High, Punjab Mixed: Pollster

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

With less than a year to go for the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, public sentiment appears to favour the ruling BJP, with voters largely satisfied with the performance of the Yogi Adityanath government, according to Axis My India chief Pradeep Gupta.

In contrast, Punjab is witnessing a more fluid political situation, with public satisfaction towards the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) described as "mixed", amid signs of a fragmented four-cornered political contest emerging in the state.

Speaking in an interview on Wednesday, Gupta shared insights based on recent field surveys conducted by his organisation in both politically significant states, which are set to go to polls in early 2027 and are seen as crucial in shaping the national political landscape. According to him, Uttar Pradesh continues to show relatively strong voter approval for the incumbent government. **PG2**

Pick of the Day

GRSE Launches 'Sanghamitra', First Next-Gen Offshore Patrol Vessel for Indian Navy in Kolkata

INDIA SIZZLES AT 47.6°C AMID HEATWAVE CRISIS

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Large parts of India continued to reel under intense heatwave conditions on Tuesday, with temperatures soaring far above normal across northern, central and

western regions. Uttar Pradesh's Banda remained the hottest location in the country, recording a blistering 47.6°C for the second consecutive day.

Major Cities Under Heat Stress
The national capital Delhi recorded

temperatures between 42°C and 44°C, while Ahmedabad and Nagpur witnessed highs ranging from 41°C to 43°C. Jaipur and Lucknow reported temperatures hovering around 40°C to 41°C. Across Maharashtra's Vidarbha

region, severe heat conditions persisted.

Southern cities also experienced discomfort, with Hyderabad and Chennai recording temperatures in the mid-to-high 30s, while Mumbai

remained humid despite slightly lower temperatures. Kolkata too saw mercury levels in the high 30s. **PG2**



Suryastra Test Successful

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Defence company Nibe Ltd has successfully tested its long-range rocket system "Suryastra" at the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur, marking a significant boost to India's indigenous defence capabilities.

During the trial, two variants of the rocket were tested—one with a range of 150 km and another capable of striking targets up to 300 km. According to officials, both versions successfully hit their designated targets with high precision.

The system demonstrated strong accuracy, with a margin of error of around 1.5 to 2 metres, indicating highly precise targeting capability.

Suryastra is described as a multi-calibre, long-range rocket launcher system developed in India, designed to engage strategic enemy positions at extended distances. These include command centres, radar installations, air defence systems, ammunition depots, logistics



hubs, and troop concentrations.

Defence experts note that the system enhances the Indian Army's ability to conduct long-range strikes without relying on aircraft or cruise missiles in certain operational scenarios, thereby enabling quicker response times and potentially reducing operational costs.

Mounted on a mobile truck platform, the launcher can fire and rapidly relocate, improving survivability by reducing vulnerability to enemy detection systems such as radar and drones.

In modern warfare, where surveillance through satellites and unmanned systems has increased battlefield transparency, mobility and precision strike capability are considered critical. Systems like Suryastra are designed to meet these evolving requirements.

The development also aligns with India's push for self-reliance in defence manufacturing under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative, while strengthening the country's long-range strike and border response capabilities.

Farakka Talks on Ganga Water Heats Up

Vikrama Vahini | Kolkata

Bangladesh has sent a technical delegation to Kolkata for a meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission and a scheduled visit to the Farakka Barrage, where the flow of the Ganga is monitored before it splits into the Bhagirathi-Hooghly system.

The visit comes at a sensitive time, just months ahead of the expiry of the 30-year Ganga Water Sharing Treaty in December this year, with

discussions gaining political and strategic importance in both countries.

The Bangladeshi delegation, led by Joint Rivers Commission member Md Anwar Kadir, includes senior officials from the Water Resources Ministry, Foreign Ministry, and hydrological agencies. Officials said the engagement is part of routine technical consultations, though expectations around the treaty renewal have heightened diplomatic attention. **PG2**

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Editorial
Diplomacy Beyond Austerity

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent appeal for national restraint, prudent spending, and economic discipline comes at a time when global uncertainty is reshaping political and economic equations. Rising fuel prices, supply-chain disruptions, geopolitical conflicts, and inflationary pressures have compelled governments across the world to revisit priorities. In such a climate, calls for "mitavayaya" or austerity naturally resonate with citizens. Yet, critics who question the continuation of the Prime Minister's foreign visits overlook a crucial reality: in the modern world, diplomacy itself is an investment. India today is not an isolated economy functioning within domestic boundaries; it is an emerging global power whose prosperity and security are deeply connected to international engagement.

Foreign visits by the Prime Minister are no longer ceremonial exercises of symbolism. They are strategic missions aimed at securing energy partnerships, technology collaborations, defence cooperation, export opportunities, and geopolitical support. In periods of global instability, personal engagement between world leaders often determines the speed and success of bilateral agreements. India's interests in crude oil procurement, semiconductor manufacturing, defence production, trade diversification, and overseas investments demand constant diplomatic outreach. Modi's interactions with leaders across Europe, West Asia, the United States, and Indo-Pacific nations have strengthened India's standing in the global order.

At a time when nations are reorganising alliances and supply chains, India cannot afford diplomatic silence in the name of austerity alone. Fiscal discipline is necessary for governance, but strategic engagement is equally essential for long-term national growth. A strong foreign policy often translates into economic benefits at home — reduced energy vulnerability, expanded trade markets, foreign direct investment, and employment generation. Therefore, the Prime Minister's overseas engagements should not merely be viewed through the lens of expenditure. They must be understood as instruments of national interest. True prudence lies not in isolation, but in balancing domestic responsibility with global leadership.

-Editor

BWSSB AMONG WORLD'S TOP 5 AT GLOBAL WATER SUMMIT

> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

In a major global achievement for India's urban infrastructure sector, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has secured a place among the world's top five water utilities at the Global Water Summit 2026 held in Madrid, Spain.

BWSSB made history by becoming the only Indian water utility to be recognised across three major global categories, drawing international attention for Bengaluru's innovative and sustainable water management practices.

Global Recognition for Water Sustainability

The Board's widely acclaimed "Five Pillars" strategy—focused on water conservation, wastewater recycling, reuse, and integrated urban water governance—was highlighted as a model for achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal-6 (clean water



and sanitation for all). In this category, BWSSB stood alongside leading global utilities such as Aguas Nuevas (Chile), Indah Water Konsortium (Malaysia), SANASA (Brazil), and Sanepar (Brazil), underlining its growing global stature.

Among Top Contenders for 'Utility of the Year'

BWSSB was also named among the top five contenders in the prestigious "Utility of the Year" category. The recognition was based on its performance over the past

three years in areas such as urban water supply, sanitation, infrastructure expansion, adoption of technology, and sustainable governance.

Its inclusion alongside globally reputed utilities from the United States, Brazil and Saudi Arabia is being seen as a significant milestone for India's public service sector.

Cauvery Stage-V Project Earns Global Acclaim

The Board's flagship Cauvery Stage-V Drinking Water Project also secured a place among the top five

projects globally in the "Water Project of the Year" category. The project, designed to meet Bengaluru's growing water demand, was recognised alongside major international infrastructure initiatives from China, the Philippines and Serbia.

This recognition reinforces Bengaluru's emergence as a global case study in large-scale urban water management and infrastructure development.

Leadership and Vision

BWSSB Chairman Ram Prasath Manohar, who represented the utility at the summit, engaged with global experts and policymakers, sharing insights into Bengaluru's evolving water strategies.

He credited the leadership of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar for driving transformative initiatives under the 'Brand Bengaluru' vision.

Railways Suspect Sabotage in Train Fires

> From PGi

In Amarpura, bedding inside a coach was allegedly set on fire, while in Kota, flames were detected near the washroom area of a Rajdhani Express. In Sasaram, an unidentified person reportedly threw a burning object into an empty coach.

Authorities believe the pattern across these incidents points to coordinated mischief that could pose a serious threat to passenger safety and disrupt railway operations.

The concern comes in the wake of a recent fire in the B-1 coach of a Delhi-bound Rajdhani Express near Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh. Although all 68 passengers were safe, the incident disrupted nearly 18 trains, with several services halted at nearby stations.

Railways has urged passengers to remain vigilant during travel and report any suspicious activity through the helpline number 139. Officials emphasised that ensuring passenger safety remains a top priority as investigations continue into the incidents.

R. ASHOK SLAMS CONGRESS OVER BBMP POLL DELAY, LAND GRAB CLAIMS

Opposition leader R. Ashok has accused the Congress government of deliberately delaying BBMP elections over fear of defeat and targeting farmers' land for acquisition.

> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Leader of the Opposition R. Ashok on Tuesday launched a sharp attack on the Congress government, accusing it of deliberately delaying the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) elections out of fear of defeat and attempting to acquire farmers' land for vested interests.

Addressing a press conference, Ashok alleged that the government has repeatedly postponed the civic polls despite being fully aware of public dissatisfaction. He claimed that internal surveys conducted by the ruling party indicated likely defeat, especially after the proposed division of Bengaluru into multiple administrative zones. "The delay is a betrayal of Bengaluru's citizens."

The elections must be conducted within the court-mandated deadline," he said, asserting that the BJP is fully prepared for the polls.

He further accused the government of shifting blame onto opposition parties to justify the delay.

According to him, reasons such as surveys and spatial data exercises are merely excuses to buy time. Ashok also criticised the state government over rising prices, including milk, electricity, alcohol, and property tax, stating that these decisions have increased the

burden on citizens and eroded public support for the Congress.

Raising concerns over land acquisition in Bidadi, Ashok termed the move as "anti-farmer" and alleged that fertile agricultural land is being targeted unnecessarily.

He claimed that despite the availability of large tracts of government land, the administration is attempting to acquire private farmland, which could displace farmers. He also alleged that the move is aimed at facilitating large-scale projects for financial gains.

The BJP leader also criticised what he described as "politics over branding Bengaluru," taking a dig at proposals to extend the city's name to other regions.

He said such moves would not bring development and accused the government of diverting attention from civic issues such as poor infrastructure, garbage management, and potholes.

Ashok further alleged that administrative confusion over property documentation systems like A-Khata and B-Khata has added to public distress.

He maintained that the overall governance failures and internal conflicts within the ruling party have led to administrative paralysis in the state.



Farakka Talks on Ganga Water Heats Up

> From PGi

The current treaty, which governs water sharing at the Farakka headwaters on a 50:50 basis, is under review amid growing concerns over declining river flow due to reduced glacial melt and rising water demand on both sides.

However, political rhetoric in Dhaka has added tension to the discussions.

Earlier this week, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir stated that the future of India-Bangladesh relations would depend significantly on the outcome of Ganga water negotiations, reflecting growing

expectations within Bangladesh.

Former Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Veena Sikri noted that pre-set political positions before formal talks could complicate negotiations, stressing that water-sharing agreements must be handled through structured dialogue.

Officials and experts on the Indian side believe the treaty may require an overhaul, citing environmental changes and increased population-driven demand. However, they suggest that a short-term extension could be a more practical outcome if a comprehensive revision proves

difficult. Analysts also point to broader regional dynamics influencing the talks, including Bangladesh's growing engagement with China and Pakistan.

Recent diplomatic and defence-related exchanges have raised strategic concerns in New Delhi, particularly regarding infrastructure projects near sensitive border regions.

The discussions at Farakka are expected to play a key role in shaping future India-Bangladesh relations as both sides prepare for a critical phase in water-sharing negotiations.

Iran Warns of Wider War Amid Trump 'Big Hit' Threat

> From PGi

resisting US demands for a complete dismantling of its remaining nuclear infrastructure.

Tehran has also maintained strategic control over the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global energy route, during periods of heightened tension.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned on social media platform X that any renewed conflict would bring "surprises," referencing Iran's claimed military capabilities and past incidents, including the alleged downing of an F-35 fighter jet.

Meanwhile, political resistance to further escalation appears to be growing in Washington, with the Republican-led Senate advancing procedural steps on a resolution aimed at ending hostilities and encouraging a return to negotiations.

UP Satisfaction High, Punjab Mixed: Pollster

> From PGi

suggesting a comfortable position for the ruling party at this stage. He, however, cautioned that electoral dynamics could still shift closer to the polls.

On Punjab, Gupta noted that while the AAP government retains a support base, overall satisfaction levels are uneven, reflecting voter uncertainty and a more competitive political environment.

He indicated that opposition consolidation and emerging alliances could further influence the electoral outcome. Both states are considered

politically important due to their size and representation in the Lok Sabha, making their electoral trends closely watched by national parties.

Gupta added that voter sentiment is dynamic and subject to change based on governance performance, local issues, and campaign developments in the run-up to the elections.

He also observed that early survey trends often reflect only a snapshot of voter mood and not the final electoral mandate. Political realignments in the final phase of campaigning, he added, can significantly alter the outcome.

NEWS

"Satellite Tech to Unveil Lakkundi Heritage"

> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Karnataka Tourism Minister H. K. Patil has announced that satellite imaging technology will be used to identify and unveil the historic "101 wells and 101 temples" of Lakkundi, in collaboration with the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS).

Speaking at a high-level meeting held at Vidhana Soudha with scientists and experts, the minister said that more than 70 monuments, including 32 temples, 28 wells and seven other structures, have already been identified in Lakkundi since 2023. He added that efforts are underway to complete the identification and public unveiling of all 101 wells and 101 temples by December 31, 2026, with support from local communities.

The government is also preparing a proposal to include Lakkundi in the UNESCO World Heritage list. As part of this initiative, extensive archaeological explorations have been carried out. Over 1,500 artefacts were discovered during the first phase in November 2024, while more than 1,800 artefacts have been unearthed in the ongoing second phase that began on May 2, 2026.

Officials said that the total number of artefacts



identified across both phases is expected to cross 5,000 by June 30, which will be documented and displayed in an open-air museum. The government has already begun restoration and development work on key heritage structures, including the unveiling of select temples and wells, and has initiated conservation projects worth ₹10 crore for six monuments.

Former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chairman Kiran Kumar welcomed the initiative and assured support for the use of satellite technology in heritage mapping. Experts and officials emphasised that these efforts would help position Lakkundi as a globally recognised heritage destination while preserving its rich historical legacy.

INDIA SIZZLES AT 47.6°C AMID HEATWAVE CRISIS

> From PGi

Night temperatures offered little relief, remaining nearly 5°C above normal in several regions, including Delhi and parts of Jammu and Kashmir, worsening overall heat stress for residents.

According to the India Meteorological Department, heatwave to severe heatwave conditions are expected to persist across northwest and central India over the coming days.

Experts attribute the extreme heat to multiple factors, including

strong solar radiation, dry winds, and low-pressure zones over Rajasthan and adjoining Pakistan.

The urban heat island effect has further intensified temperatures in cities due to reduced green cover and increased concrete structures.

Scientists have also linked the current heatwave to climate change and a potential return of El Niño conditions. The World Meteorological Organization estimates a 62-80% probability of El Niño developing between May

and August. The IMD has projected that the 2026 southwest monsoon is likely to be below normal, at around 92% of the long-period average, raising concerns about water availability and agriculture.

Doctors and authorities have advised citizens to stay hydrated, avoid outdoor activities during peak afternoon hours, and remain vigilant for symptoms of heat-related illnesses such as heatstroke, especially among children, the elderly, and those with health conditions.

HEALTH & Lifestyle

MILK-SOAKED RAISINS: HEALTH BENEFITS EXPLAINED

Health experts say that consuming raisins soaked in milk regularly may offer multiple health benefits, as the combination enhances nutrient absorption and supports overall wellness. Raisins, commonly used in Indian sweets like payasam and halwa, are now increasingly consumed after soaking overnight.

While water-soaked raisins are popular, nutritionists suggest that soaking them in milk can provide added advantages due to the nutrient-rich combination of calcium, protein, iron, and fiber.

Helps in Managing Anaemia and Blood Pressure

Raisins are rich in iron and potassium, which are essential for maintaining healthy blood levels and regulating blood pressure. When soaked in milk overnight, their nutrients become easier to digest and absorb.

Regular morning consumption may help reduce symptoms of anaemia and support stable blood pressure levels due to potassium's regulating effect.

Improves Digestion and Gut Health

The dietary fiber present in raisins helps ease constipation and supports healthy digestion. Soaking them in milk softens their texture, making them easier to consume on an empty stomach.

Health experts note that this practice may also promote the



growth of beneficial gut bacteria, improving overall digestive health.

Supports Heart and Skin Health

Raisins contain antioxidants and healthy compounds that may help reduce bad cholesterol levels, supporting heart health. The nutrients also contribute to improved skin condition by reducing dryness, acne, and blemishes, resulting in a healthier and more radiant appearance.

May Aid Weight Management

Due to their high fiber content, soaked raisins can help increase satiety, keeping the stomach full for longer periods.

This may reduce overeating and support weight management efforts when combined with a balanced diet and lifestyle.

Experts Advise Moderation

While the benefits are notable, health professionals caution that excessive consumption may have adverse effects. It is recommended to consume soaked raisins in moderation and consult a healthcare professional for personalized dietary advice.

SCIENCE & Technology

DRDO Clears Trials of Drone-Launched Missiles

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully completed development trials of the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Launched Precision Guided Missile (ULPGM)-V3 system, marking a significant advancement in India's indigenous defence capabilities.

The trials were conducted at a DRDO test range near Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh in both Air-to-Ground and Air-to-Air modes. Officials confirmed that the system was tested in its final operational configuration using an advanced Ground Control System (GCS) equipped with automated launch and control features.

The ULPGM-V3 system has been developed by the Research Centre Imarat in Hyderabad, with support from other DRDO laboratories, including the Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL), Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL), and High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL).

The missiles have been produced in collaboration with Bharat Dynamics Limited and Adani Defence Systems and Technologies Limited.

The missile system was integrated with drones developed by Newspace Research and Technologies, a Bengaluru-based firm, for the trials. The entire project has been executed within India's domestic defence ecosystem, involving multiple MSMEs and industrial partners, ensuring readiness for large-scale production.

The ULPGM-V3 missile is designed for versatile combat roles. In Air-to-Ground mode, it can target tanks and armoured vehicles, while in Air-to-Air mode, it can engage drones, helicopters, and other aerial threats.

WRONG PARLE STOCK SOARS ON VIRAL MELODY MEME

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

A viral video featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifting Melody toffees to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has unexpectedly triggered a stock market frenzy, sending shares of Parle Industries to the upper circuit.

The surge, however, appears to be driven by confusion among retail investors. Parle Industries, a listed company involved in infrastructure, real estate and paper waste trading, has no connection with Parle Products, the actual manufacturer of Melody toffees and other popular brands like Parle-G.

Meme Buzz Drives Market Reaction

The rally began after a video from Modi's Italy visit went viral on social media. In the clip, Meloni praised the toffee gifted by Modi, who responded with "Melody," sparking a wave of memes online. The internet quickly revived the popular "Melodi" meme trend, blending the leaders' names with the well-known confectionery.

The social media buzz soon spilled over to Dalal Street, where investors appeared to mistakenly buy shares of Parle Industries, pushing the stock to its upper circuit limit.

No Link to Melody Maker

Market experts clarified that Parle Industries is not an FMCG company and has



no involvement in the production or sale of confectionery products. The Melody brand is owned by Parle Products, a privately held company not listed on the stock exchange.

Lesson for Investors

The episode highlights how viral trends and brand familiarity can influence investor behaviour, sometimes leading to misplaced bets. Analysts have cautioned investors to verify company fundamentals before making trading decisions, especially during sudden market movements driven by social media trends.

Uttara Kannada Lifts Water Sports Ban

► Vikrama Vahini | Karwar

The district administration in Uttara Kannada has withdrawn within 24 hours the ban imposed on water sports activities in the Arabian Sea, Aghanashini River, and Sharavathi backwaters, bringing relief to tourists and tourism stakeholders.

The Tourism Department had earlier imposed restrictions citing adverse weather conditions, stating that the ban would remain in force until the end of the monsoon season.

However, the order was revoked shortly after it was issued, allowing adventure water sports to resume at major tourist destinations including Gokarna, Murudeshwar, Karwar, Honnavar, and Dandeli.

According to officials, the initial decision was taken without proper consultation with the district administration, leading to a review of the order. Following this, Uttara Kannada Deputy Commissioner Lakshmi Priya directed the immediate withdrawal of the ban.

The sudden reversal has brought relief to homestay operators, resort owners, and water sports operators who depend heavily on tourism-driven income in the coastal and riverine regions of the district.

HDK Pushes E-Bus, E-Truck Adoption Drive



► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H. D. Kumaraswamy on Tuesday chaired a high-level stakeholder consultation in the national capital to accelerate the adoption of electric buses and electric trucks across India, marking a significant push towards clean and sustainable mobility.

The meeting brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including fleet operators, aggregators, transport leaders, financial institutions, leasing firms and industry representatives involved in the growing electric vehicle ecosystem. The consultation aimed to address operational challenges, encourage faster deployment of electric commercial vehicles and strengthen collaboration between the government and industry.

Senior officials from the Ministry of Heavy Industries, including Secretary Kamran Rizvi and Additional Secretary Dr. Hanif Qureshi, also participated in the discussions, sharing insights on policy direction and the future roadmap for electric heavy mobility.

Addressing the gathering, Kumaraswamy emphasised that electric buses are set to become the backbone of passenger transport, while electric trucks will play a key role in transforming logistics and freight movement in the country. He noted that India is witnessing a decisive shift towards cleaner and more efficient transportation systems.

The Union Minister highlighted the importance of collaborative policymaking, stating that the government is committed to working closely with stakeholders to ensure that the transition to electric mobility is practical, inclusive and commercially viable. He added that feedback from operators and industry players is crucial in shaping effective policies.

Kumaraswamy also underlined that the initiative aligns with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to promote sustainability, innovation and efficient public infrastructure. He described the push for electric buses and trucks as not only an environmental necessity but also an economic and strategic priority for the country.

KGF History-Sheeter Arrested at Wedding

► Vikrama Vahini | Kolar

In a dramatic operation, Andersonpet police arrested a history-sheeter during his daughter's wedding ceremony for allegedly violating externment orders and obstructing police duty.

The accused, Stanley (68) of Loordhnagar under Andersonpet limits, has multiple criminal cases pending against him and was recently externed to Alanda town in Kalaburagi district until May next year. Police said he had returned to KGF in violation of the order.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team led by Sub-Inspector Manjunath B reached St. Joseph Church in Suisaipalyam, where Stanley was attending the ceremony. He was taken into custody despite alleged resistance and verbal abuse from him and his family members.

A fresh case has been registered against him for obstructing police officials. Stanley and his son Lenin were earlier arrested in an extortion case involving threats to a local trader.

Police sources said Stanley and his son Lenin were earlier booked in an extortion case filed by a local decoration shop owner, Mohammed Ssqplain, who accused them of intimidation and demanding money. The duo was remanded to judicial custody in that case.

HC Seeks Decision on Class 1 Age Relaxation Within a Week

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court has directed the School Education Department to reconsider the issue of age relaxation for Class 1 admissions for the 2026-27 academic year and submit its recommendation within one week.

A bench headed by Justice S.R. Krishna Kumar issued the direction while hearing a petition filed by six minor students and their parents, who raised concerns over difficulties caused by the recently prescribed age criteria. The court asked the department to examine the matter from all perspectives and take an appropriate decision within the stipulated time.

The petitioners had challenged a government order issued on March 28 this year, which fixed the minimum age for Class 1 admission. They argued that although the children had not completed six years of age, they had successfully completed pre-primary education during



the 2025-26 academic year and were academically, socially and mentally prepared to enter Class 1.

The plea highlighted that the current rule could adversely affect nearly five lakh students across the state, forcing them to repeat UKG and lose an academic year. The petitioners urged the court to allow a one-time relaxation in the minimum age, permitting children aged 5 years and 5 months to be eligible for admission in the upcoming academic year.

During the hearing, counsel representing the state submitted that, if granted reasonable time, the authorities would consider the concerns raised and issue a suitable order.

SC Sets Aug 31 Deadline for B'luru Civic Polls

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

The Supreme Court has directed the Karnataka government to conduct elections to all five municipal corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) on or before August 31, observing that there appeared to be attempts to delay the polls.

A three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice Vipul M. Pancholi issued the directive while hearing an interim application filed by the State Election Commission seeking postponement of the elections.

During the hearing, the court remarked that the state government seemed to be making efforts to defer the elections. Taking note of the overall circumstances, the bench granted a final deadline of August 31 for conducting polls to the five corporations.

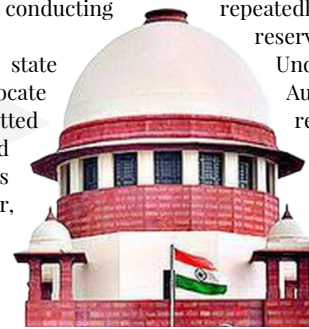
Appearing for the state government, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi submitted that the Supreme Court had earlier directed that elections be held by June 30. However, citing staff shortages, he sought an extension of 60 days, stating that funds had already been allocated in the

budget and only additional time was required due to manpower constraints.

Opposing the plea, senior advocate Parameshwar, representing the petitioner Ranganath, argued that the court had already granted multiple extensions and that the government was reluctant to conduct elections. He urged the court to grant no more than a brief extension of 15 days. Senior counsel K.N. Phaneendra, appearing for the State Election Commission, informed the court that the GBA Chief Commissioner had sought time until December, and requested that no further opportunity be given to delay the process.

The last BBMP elections were held in 2015, and the term of elected representatives ended in 2021. Since then, elections have been repeatedly delayed citing reasons such as reservation issues and ward delimitation.

Under the Greater Bengaluru Authority, the city has been reorganised into multiple corporations, including Bengaluru North, South, East, West and Central. The Supreme Court has now made it clear that elections to all these bodies must be completed within the stipulated deadline.



ENTERTAINMENT

Big B Breaks Silence Amid Health Rumours

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Veteran actor Amitabh Bachchan on Wednesday put to rest rumours about his health after reports surfaced claiming that he had been hospitalised in Mumbai.

Speculation began on Tuesday night after unverified reports suggested that the 83-year-old actor had been admitted to a hospital due to health complications.

However, sources close to the actor clarified that he had only visited a hospital for routine medical tests and returned home shortly thereafter.

Rumours Sparked by Unverified Reports

The confusion reportedly began after a claim circulated online stating that Bachchan had been admitted for treatment related to past health issues. The reports quickly gained traction on social media, raising concern among fans.

Family members and sources, however, dismissed the claims, stating there was no hospital admission and that the visit was purely precautionary.

Cryptic Blog Post Draws Attention

Amid the rumours, Bachchan shared a cryptic post on his personal blog, which drew widespread attention. In the post, he wrote metaphorically about silence and voices, saying, "When the eagle becomes quiet, parrots begin to speak," a line many interpreted as a response to the ongoing speculation.

He further reflected on his interactions with fans, expressing gratitude for their continued love and support. The actor described the joy of meeting well-wishers and the emotional connection he shares with admirers across generations.

Fans Reassured

The clarification regarding his health has come as a relief to millions of fans across the country. Bachchan, one of India's most celebrated film icons, continues to remain active professionally and socially, regularly engaging with audiences through his blog and public appearances.

The incident once again highlights how quickly misinformation can spread online, prompting calls for verification before sharing sensitive news related to public figures.

New Films, Series Hit OTT This Week

► Vikrama Vahini | Delhi

A fresh lineup of films and web series is set to premiere this week across major OTT platforms, including Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Apple TV, SonyLIV, Zee5, and JioHotstar, offering viewers a mix of drama, thriller, romance, and comedy.

On Amazon Prime Video, courtroom drama System, starring Sonakshi Sinha and Jyothika and directed by Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari, releases on May 22. The story follows a lawyer who forms an unlikely alliance to win high-profile cases. The platform also releases Jack Ryan: Ghost

War on May 20, continuing the action-packed spy saga.

SonyLIV will stream Malayalam romantic comedy Madhuvidhu on May 22, exploring interfaith marriage challenges in a chaotic love story. On Zee5, the Tamil drama Warrant premieres on May 22, portraying the transformation of a small-town constable driven by suppressed rage.

Netflix brings multiple titles this week, including The Boroughs (May 21), a supernatural series set in New Mexico, Ladies First (May 22), a parallel-world comedy-drama, and Gabby's

Dollhouse: The Movie (May 22), a family-friendly fantasy adventure.

Apple TV will release Maximum Pleasure Guaranteed on May 20, a dark comedy thriller about a newly divorced woman and an unusual virtual relationship.

The new season of SkyMed premieres on JioHotstar on May 22, continuing the story of an air ambulance crew operating in remote Northern Canada.

The diverse releases are expected to attract audiences across genres and platforms throughout the week.

HOMBALE-JR NTR COLLABORATION BUZZ

► Vikrama Vahini | B'luru

Leading production house Hombale Films has sparked speculation in the film industry after extending birthday wishes to Telugu superstar Junior NTR, popularly known as Jr NTR, amid growing buzz over potential future collaborations.

The social media post, which also praised the recently released glimpse of his upcoming film Dragon, has led to widespread discussions that the production house may be planning a major strategic association with the actor.

Industry observers believe the gesture could indicate either a possible co-production or acquisition of distribution rights for Dragon. Hombale Films has already expanded its footprint across multiple film industries, including Kannada, Hindi and Tamil, with major investments in pan-India projects.

The production house, known for backing big-budget films such as Salaar, has been actively strengthening its presence in the national cinema market. Its recent involvement in acquiring distribution rights for high-profile projects has further fuelled speculation about its interest in Jr NTR's upcoming ventures.

Reports also suggest that informal discussions may already be underway regarding a possible collaboration between Hombale Films and Jr NTR

for a future project, although no official confirmation has been made by either party.

Meanwhile, the promotional momentum around Dragon has attracted significant industry attention, with multiple production houses showing interest in its release strategy and distribution network.

Film trade analysts say that Hombale Films' public engagement with Jr NTR's birthday and promotional content could be a calculated move reflecting its long-term expansion strategy in the pan-Indian film market.

However, insiders maintain that until an official announcement is made, all such speculation remains unconfirmed.



BUSINESS

Gold Falls, Silver Rises on West Asia Tensions



► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Gold prices declined in futures trade on Wednesday, while silver registered marginal gains, reflecting mixed trends in the precious metals market amid ongoing geopolitical tensions in West Asia.

Gold futures fell by Rs 614, or 0.39%, to Rs 1,58,466 per 10 grams on the Multi Commodity Exchange, weighed down by weak global cues and subdued spot demand. Analysts said the decline was also influenced by a slight dip in international prices, where gold futures in New York eased by 0.1% to \$4,475.04 per ounce.

Market experts noted that gold has witnessed significant volatility in recent months due to the West Asia conflict, fluctuations in the US dollar, and rising crude oil prices. While the metal had earlier surged as a safe-haven asset, the latest fall indicates profit-taking and softening demand at elevated price levels.

In contrast, silver prices moved higher, gaining Rs 80, or 0.03%, to Rs 2,70,199 per kilogram in futures trade. The uptick was driven by fresh buying interest among traders, with July delivery contracts showing increased activity on the exchange. Globally, Comex silver futures rose by 1.54% to \$74.87 per ounce.

Analysts said both gold and silver remain elevated overall due to continued investor interest in safe-haven assets amid geopolitical uncertainty, concerns over energy supply disruptions, and currency fluctuations. Recent increases in import duty on precious metals have also added to domestic price dynamics, keeping the market sentiment cautious.

Market participants are now closely monitoring upcoming global economic data, including US inflation figures and central bank policy signals, which could further influence the movement of precious metal prices.

SPORTS

Kohli Thanks Rahul Dravid for Career Support

> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru
Indian cricket star Virat Kohli has expressed deep gratitude to former India head coach Rahul Dravid, saying he remains "eternally indebted" for the support he received during a challenging phase of his career.

Speaking at a sports summit in Bengaluru, Kohli revealed that he had struggled with "imposter syndrome" despite his remarkable success in international cricket. He admitted that, for a long period, he doubted his own achievements and often felt mentally overwhelmed by expectations and self-doubt.

Kohli said that during his most difficult phase, both Rahul Dravid and former batting coach Vikram Rathour stood firmly by him, helping him regain confidence and mental balance. He credited Dravid's understanding of the pressures of top-level cricket for providing crucial emotional support.

The former India captain noted that leadership responsibilities had left him with little time to reflect on his mental well-being, and it was only later that he realised the emotional strain he had been carrying.

Kohli said Dravid reminded him of his achievements and reignited his hunger for the game, helping him rediscover the joy of batting and competition.

He added that the guidance and support he received during that phase played a key role in sustaining his long and successful international career, calling Dravid a "constant pillar of strength" during testing times.

Dhoni Returns to Ranchi Without Playing a Match

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi
Chennai Super Kings (CSK) have been knocked out of the IPL 2026 playoff race, adding to fans' disappointment as former captain MS Dhoni reportedly did not feature in a single match this season.

With the league stage nearing its conclusion and CSK already eliminated after managing only six wins from 13 matches, expectations that Dhoni would play at least one game have been left unfulfilled. Reports suggest that he has now returned to his residence in Ranchi.

CSK's final league match is scheduled against Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad, but Dhoni is unlikely to take part in the game. His absence throughout the season has come as a major setback for fans who were hoping to see him back in action, especially in the closing stages of the tournament.

Sources indicate that Dhoni's participation in IPL 2026 was uncertain from the beginning, with speculation over his role in the squad. However, no official confirmation regarding his retirement has been made.

There remains a slim possibility that Dhoni could feature if CSK had qualified for the playoffs, but with the team already out of contention, that scenario is no longer possible.

Earlier, CSK captain Rituraj Gaikwad had hinted that Dhoni would play the final league match, raising expectations among supporters. However, latest reports now confirm that he will not be part of the playing XI.

PILOT SAVES SIX IN CHAR DHAM HELICOPTER SCARE

> Vikrama Vahini | Tehri Garhwal
A major tragedy was averted during the Char Dham Yatra after a helicopter carrying pilgrims from Badrinath to Dehradun struck an 11,000-volt high-tension power line in Uttarakhand's Tehri Garhwal district on Tuesday morning.

The incident occurred near the Satyana-Naugaon area in the Saklana region around 9:30 a.m., when the helicopter, operated by Trans Bharat Aviation, was en route to Dehradun. According to reports, the pilot altered the route mid-flight following instructions, during which the aircraft's rear rotor got entangled with the power line over the Chamba-Arakot stretch.



Eyewitnesses said the helicopter began to shake violently and lose stability mid-air, creating panic among passengers. Despite the critical situation, pilot Anupama Chaudhary displayed exceptional composure and skill, successfully controlling the aircraft and executing an emergency landing in a nearby field.

All six passengers on board — including

members of the Suri family and others — escaped unharmed. Local police and rescue teams quickly reached the spot and shifted the passengers safely to Dehradun by road.

Officials, including Dhanaulti Tehsildar Mohammad Shadab, praised the pilot's presence of mind, stating that her timely action prevented a potential disaster. However, the incident has raised fresh concerns over aviation safety during the Char Dham Yatra, especially in challenging mountainous terrain.

Experts have called for stricter safety protocols, improved coordination with power authorities, and better route planning to prevent such incidents in the future.

8th Pay Commission Likely from April 2027

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi
The 8th Pay Commission is likely to bring revised salaries and pensions for central government employees by April 2027, according to emerging timelines shared by employee representatives.

Dr. Manjeet Singh Patel, National President of the All India NPS Employees Federation, said the revised pay structure could start reflecting in employees' bank accounts around April-May 2027.

Timeline for Implementation
The Union government approved the formation of the 8th Pay Commission in October 2025, with its official notification issued in November 2025.

The commission has been given 18 months to submit its final report. Based on this schedule, the report is expected by mid-2027, paving the way for implementation soon after.

Nationwide Consultations Underway
The commission is currently holding consultations across



different states to gather feedback and demands from employees.

Key Demands by Employees
Central government employees have put forward several demands, including a higher fitment factor of 3.83, increase in pension to 67% of last drawn salary, and family pension to 50%. Other demands include raising the minimum basic pay to Rs 69,000 per month, restructuring pay levels, and increasing the annual increment rate from 3% to 6%.

Awaiting Official Announcement
While no official implementation date has been announced yet, the expected timeline has raised hopes among lakhs of central government employees and pensioners awaiting salary revisions under the new pay commission.

SATHEESAN HOLDS KEY PORTFOLIOS IN KERALA CABINET

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi
The Kerala government on Tuesday announced the allocation of portfolios for the newly formed cabinet, with Chief Minister V. D. Satheesan retaining control of several key departments, including Finance, Law, General Administration and Ports.

According to an official notification, the Chief Minister will oversee as many as 35 departments, centralising significant administrative and policy responsibilities within his office. The move is being seen as an effort to ensure streamlined governance and faster decision-making in the state.

Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala has been assigned the crucial Home and Vigilance portfolios, along with three additional departments, placing him in charge of internal

security and anti-corruption mechanisms.

Among other key allocations, Shamsudheen will handle General Education, while Roji M John has been given Higher Education. A. P. Anil Kumar will oversee Land and Revenue, and P. K. Kunhalikutty has been entrusted with Industries, IT, Textiles and additional departments.



The portfolio distribution follows the recent swearing-in of the new government. Officials indicated that further details regarding remaining departmental responsibilities may be announced shortly, completing the cabinet's administrative framework. The allocation reflects a strategic balance of experience and responsibility aimed at strengthening governance and policy implementation across the state.

India-Italy Upgrade Ties to Strategic Partnership

> Vikrama Vahini | Rome
India and Italy on Wednesday elevated their bilateral relationship to the level of a "Special Strategic Partnership," with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni announcing a major expansion of cooperation in defence, trade, technology, and manufacturing sectors.

The announcement came after bilateral talks held at Villa Pamphili in Rome, during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Italy as part of his five-nation tour. Both leaders addressed the media following the discussions, highlighting a new phase in India-Italy relations.

'Historic Day' for Bilateral Relations: Meloni
Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni described the visit as a "historic day" in the relationship between the two countries. She noted that this was Prime Minister Modi's first bilateral visit to Italy since assuming office in 2014, while the last such visit by an Indian Prime Minister took place in 2000. She said the engagement would add new momentum to bilateral ties.

Expansion of Defence and Economic



Cooperation
Prime Minister Modi said both countries aim to strengthen defence collaboration through joint production and supply chain integration. He emphasized the vision of "Develop in India and Italy and deliver to the world," reflecting growing industrial cooperation between the two nations.

He added that more than 1,000 Indian and Italian companies are currently operating in each other's markets, underlining the depth of economic engagement.

Boost to Trade Targets and Investment
The two leaders set an ambitious target of expanding bilateral trade to over €20 billion by 2029. Officials said the focus would be on

boosting investments, enhancing market access, and strengthening supply chain resilience between the two countries.

Focus on Emerging Technologies
India and Italy also agreed to deepen cooperation in emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, space technology, and digital infrastructure.

Both sides emphasized the importance of ensuring human-centric artificial intelligence, aligning India's "MANAV" approach with Italy's ethical framework for AI development.

Support for IMEC Connectivity Project
The leaders reiterated their commitment to the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), aimed at strengthening connectivity between Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. They said the initiative would enhance regional trade and logistics links and provide a new dimension to global cooperation by connecting the Indo-Pacific and Mediterranean regions. The agreement is expected to further deepen strategic convergence between the two nations across geopolitical and economic fronts.

GEORGE SLAMS RAIL OFFICIALS OVER DRAINAGE DELAY

> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru
Energy Minister and Sarvagannagar MLA K. J. George on Tuesday directed Railway Department officials of the Banaswadi Division to coordinate effectively with the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) and extend full cooperation for ongoing drainage works near Banaswadi Railway Station.

Inspection of Drainage Works Near Railway Underpass
After inaugurating several developmental works in residential areas of his constituency, the Minister visited the worksite near Banaswadi Railway Station, where K-RIDE is executing infrastructure projects. During the inspection, he expressed displeasure over delays and lack of coordination between agencies.

Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) officials reportedly informed the Minister that railway authorities were not responding to repeated requests, causing obstacles in executing drainage-related works. Taking serious note of the issue, George instructed railway officials to ensure better coordination, stating, "You officials receive salaries wherever you are posted. Work with responsibility and respond to people's concerns. Coordinate with GBA officials and complete the works in time."

He also added that Union Minister of State for Railways V. Somanna is expected to visit



Sarvagannagar soon, during which officials will be briefed about the ongoing issues. He urged senior railway authorities to intervene and resolve the coordination gaps at the earliest.

Push for Sports and Cultural Infrastructure
As part of broader constituency development initiatives, the Minister also performed the groundbreaking ceremony for an auditorium dedicated to sports and cultural activities in Banaswadi and for sports infrastructure development near Kacharakannahalli Lake.

Review of Civic and Infrastructure Works
George inspected white-topping road works on Hennur 80 Feet Road and directed officials to expedite the project. He also reviewed stormwater drain works in Nagawara Nanda

Gokula Layout, Jai Bharat Nagar, and Maruthi Sevanagar, stressing timely completion.

Condolences Paid to Former Corporator
During his visit, the Minister also called on the family of late K. B. Mohan, former Corporator of Maruthi Sevanagar Ward, and expressed condolences over his demise. He paid tribute to Mohan's service and contribution to public life and the Congress party.

Officials and Party Leaders Present
Several Congress leaders, including block presidents from Hennur, Banaswadi, HBR Layout, Maruthi Sevanagar, and K. G. Halli, along with senior officials from GBA, BWSSB, and BESCOM, accompanied the Minister during the visit.

Bhojshala Tension: Authorities Seek Calm

> Vikrama Vahini | Dhar
The Dhar district administration has appealed for peace and strict adherence to court directives ahead of a proposed gathering by Hindu groups at the Bhojshala complex on Friday, following the Madhya Pradesh High Court's recent verdict on the disputed site.

In a statement on Wednesday, officials urged all parties to maintain calm and ensure that law and order are not disturbed in the sensitive area, which has long been a focal point of legal and religious contention.

On May 15, the Madhya Pradesh High Court ruled that the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque complex is a temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati.

Prior to the verdict, Hindus were allowed to perform worship at the medieval-era monument only on Tuesdays. Following the court's decision, members of Hindu organisations gathered at the complex on Tuesday (May 19) and celebrated the ruling with religious rituals, including prayers, processions, and fireworks as part of "mahasatyagraha" and "mahavijay mahotsav" programmes.

With another gathering scheduled for Friday, authorities have stepped up precautionary measures and called for restraint to prevent any untoward incident.

Bengaluru Traffic Curbs Today

> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru
The Bengaluru Traffic Police have announced traffic diversions and parking restrictions in and around Freedom Park on May 21 in view of a Youth Congress protest scheduled to be held against the Centre over alleged NEET UG question paper leak and related student deaths.

Protest at Freedom Park
The Youth Congress has called for a large-scale protest at Freedom Park on Thursday, following allegations linked to the NEET UG examination, which reportedly triggered public outrage and student distress incidents.

As a precautionary measure, traffic restrictions will be in effect from 7:30 am to 4 pm on May 21 in central Bengaluru.

Traffic Diversions Announced
Movement of vehicles between Freedom Park Junction and Kanakadasa Circle will be temporarily restricted. Commuters approaching Freedom Park from K.G. Road via Mysore Bank Circle have been advised to take a right turn and proceed via Palace Road and Maharani Underpass Road.

Traffic police have urged motorists to follow designated alternative routes to avoid congestion in the area.

Alternate Route Arrangements
Temporary two-way traffic has been permitted from Subbanna Junction to MTR Junction, allowing vehicles towards Gandhinagar to use this route as an alternative.

India's Multi-Domain Defence Outreach Expands

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi
Multilateral military exercise PRAGATI 2026 commenced at Umroi Military Station in Meghalaya on Wednesday, bringing together armed forces from 12 friendly nations in a major display of regional defence cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.

The participating countries include Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. The two-week exercise is being conducted under the banner PRAGATI—Partnership of Regional Armies for Growth and Transformation in the Indian Ocean Region.

The exercise aims to enhance military cooperation, improve interoperability, and strengthen coordination in joint operations and intelligence sharing among participating armies. It focuses on counter-terrorism operations in semi-mountainous and jungle terrain, along with joint planning and tactical drills to boost operational readiness.

Strict Rules for College Educational Tours

> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru
The Department of Collegiate Education has issued strict guidelines for educational tours conducted by government degree colleges in Karnataka, following recent incidents involving student travel accidents.

Educational tours, considered an important part of student learning and exposure, have come under scrutiny due to safety concerns arising from recent mishaps. In response, the department has prioritised student safety and introduced comprehensive regulations.

As per the new rules, prior approval from the department is now mandatory for all educational tours, including one-day local visits and longer outstation trips. Colleges are also required to inform the nearest police station before commencing any tour.

The guidelines strictly prohibit students from visiting risky locations such as rivers, seas, waterfalls, dense forests, and steep hilly areas.

Further safety measures include mandatory consent letters from parents, compulsory presence of at least one permanent faculty member during trips, and strict instructions for students to remain within their group at all times.