

Good morning

The secret of being happy is accepting where you are in life and making the most out of everyday.

BRIEFS

Delhi to Get K'taka Bhavan-4

> Vikrama Vahini | B'luru
Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Saturday announced that the state Cabinet has approved the construction of Karnataka Bhavan-4 in New Delhi, which will be dedicated to civil services aspirants preparing for IAS, IFS, IRS and other competitive examinations.

Briefing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Shivakumar said the facility is not intended for legislators or officials but exclusively for students from Karnataka who are preparing for competitive exams in the national capital.

The Cabinet also cleared several other key decisions, including approval for 620 new buses for state transport corporations and significant investments in healthcare infrastructure across the state.

India, S. Korea Boost Digital Ties

> Vikrama Vahini | Delhi
India and South Korea on Saturday held bilateral talks to strengthen cooperation in digital governance, e-governance, public administration, capacity building and citizen-centric service delivery.

The discussions took place during a meeting between South Korean Minister of Interior and Safety Yun Hojung and Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh. The two leaders, accompanied by their respective delegations, held talks for more than an hour. According to an official statement, both sides explored opportunities to enhance collaboration in digital transformation, governance reforms and administrative capacity building.

The meeting reflects the growing partnership between India and South Korea in the areas of digital innovation and efficient public administration, with both countries expressing interest in expanding institutional cooperation.

Hormuz Closure Escalates Tensions

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi
Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya headquarters, the country's top military command, has announced the closure of the Strait of Hormuz to vessel traffic, citing alleged ceasefire violations by the United States and Israel. The announcement was made through Iran's official news agency Mehr, which reported that the move was in response to what Tehran described as a "clear breach of trust" and continued violations of ceasefire commitments in southern Lebanon.

Iran said the decision marks the "first step" in its response and warned that further action could follow if such violations continue. The military command claimed that recent developments amounted to a breach of the ceasefire memorandum and said the closure was a direct countermeasure.

However, US Vice President JD Vance stated that Washington had not seen any evidence of disruption to maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and expressed confidence that ceasefire arrangements would remain intact. His



remarks contrasted with Iran's announcement, highlighting differing assessments of the situation.

The Strait of Hormuz is a vital global energy route through which a significant share of the world's oil and gas exports pass. Any disruption in the waterway is closely monitored due to its potential impact on global energy prices and supply chains.

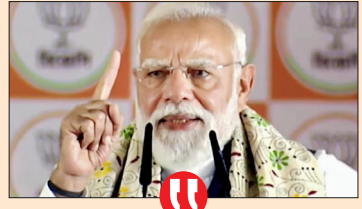
Meanwhile, diplomatic efforts continue in the region. A new round of talks between US and Iranian officials is expected in Switzerland, focusing on a possible interim nuclear agreement, even as tensions remain high over recent developments.

Modi Hits Out at Past Bengal Regimes

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday criticised previous governments in West Bengal, alleging that years of poor governance had slowed the state's development and forced people to migrate in search of better opportunities.

Addressing a public gathering in Hooghly district during the Paschimanga Divas celebrations in Tarakeswar, Modi said that those who had "misused and looted public money" were now being held accountable and were being made to return the funds. He also said West Bengal was now witnessing positive change, with growing public confidence and renewed hopes for faster development.

Criticism of Earlier Governments
Without naming any party, the Prime Minister said earlier regimes had followed policies that discouraged investment and growth, causing the state to lag behind in development. He also referred to border fencing issues, alleging that land transfer delays under a previous government had slowed the project,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused previous governments in West Bengal of stalling the state's growth through poor governance and corruption, while highlighting the Centre's push for development through PM-Kisan benefits, crop insurance for 50 lakh farmers, and infrastructure projects worth hundreds of crores.

Launch of Crop Insurance Scheme in Bengal
The Prime Minister also announced the rollout of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) in West Bengal, aimed at providing crop insurance coverage to nearly 50 lakh farmers during 2026-27.

He said the initiative would help protect farmers from crop losses due to natural calamities and improve agricultural stability in the state.

Infrastructure and Development Projects
Modi inaugurated and laid foundation stones for multiple projects across sectors including railways, agriculture, rural development, fisheries, and animal husbandry. Railway projects worth around ₹590 crore were announced, along with the inauguration of 49 road projects under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana across several districts of West Bengal.

He said these initiatives would boost connectivity, improve rural infrastructure, and accelerate overall development in the state.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with trainees during his visit to the Skilling Centre at Pahadpur village in Odisha, appreciating President Droupadi Murmu's vision of making skill development a cornerstone of rural transformation. He praised the initiative for equipping young people with industry-relevant skills, creating new opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship and self-reliance, and highlighted it as a model for inclusive rural development.

COCHIN SHIPYARD GRAFFITI TRIGGERS SECURITY PROBE

> Vikrama Vahini | Kochi
A multi-agency security investigation has been launched after the words "I Love Pakistan" were found engraved inside a vessel under repair at Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL).

The inscription was reportedly noticed about two weeks ago during maintenance work. Following an internal inquiry, the shipyard filed a complaint with the Ernakulam Town South Police, after which central agencies also joined the probe.

Investigators are examining

whether the graffiti was made while the vessel was docked at the shipyard or prior to its arrival. Statements of employees and contract workers with access to the vessel have been recorded, but the absence of CCTV coverage in the concerned area has complicated the investigation.

Given the strategic importance of the facility, authorities are also assessing whether the incident has any wider security implications. The probe is continuing on all possible angles. **PG2**

Airtel Accounts Flagged in Grihalakshmi Probe

■ Government to strengthen beneficiary verification, stop leakages in welfare schemes ■

> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru
Alleged misuse of funds under Karnataka's flagship Grihalakshmi scheme through Airtel Payments Bank-linked accounts has triggered a fresh round of scrutiny into welfare disbursements, with the state government ordering stricter monitoring and tighter verification mechanisms.

The issue was discussed during a review meeting on the implementation of guarantee schemes chaired by Chief Minister DK Shivakumar at Vidhana Soudha on Saturday. Officials informed the meeting that instances had been detected where UPI accounts created through the Airtel Payments Bank application—accessible to Airtel SIM users—were allegedly being used to divert or misuse the ₹2,000 monthly assistance provided under the scheme.

Taking serious note of the findings, the Chief



The Karnataka government has ordered stricter monitoring of the Grihalakshmi scheme after alleged misuse of funds through Airtel Payments Bank-linked accounts surfaced. Chief Minister DK Shivakumar also directed officials to eliminate irregularities, including payments to deceased beneficiaries, and strengthen verification to ensure welfare benefits reach only genuine recipients.

Minister directed officials to ensure that funds released under all welfare schemes reach only genuine beneficiaries within Karnataka.

He warned that any diversion of funds outside the state or misuse through digital payment platforms would not be tolerated and must be stopped immediately.

"Money sanctioned under government schemes, including Grihalakshmi, must reach only the intended beneficiaries," Shivakumar said, instructing officials to strengthen real-time monitoring and verification systems.

The review meeting also highlighted another concern, with officials reporting that in some cases, scheme benefits were still being credited to bank accounts of deceased beneficiaries. The Chief Minister termed this a serious lapse and called for immediate correction of beneficiary databases.

Officials noted that safeguards introduced in other guarantee schemes had helped reduce

irregularities and suggested that similar verification systems be implemented across all welfare programmes to prevent leakages.

To enhance transparency and beneficiary awareness, the government is also planning to introduce a voice-message alert system that will notify Grihalakshmi beneficiaries immediately after funds are credited to their accounts. The initiative aims to improve accountability and ensure direct communication with beneficiaries.

The developments come amid intensified efforts by the state government to ensure that welfare funds under Karnataka's flagship guarantee schemes are delivered accurately, efficiently, and without any misuse or diversion.

The government has also ordered a comprehensive audit of all digital payment channels linked to welfare schemes to identify possible loopholes.

Bangladesh Hindus Protest Ram Image Desecration

> Vikrama Vahini | Dhaka
Thousands of members of Bangladesh's Hindu community staged large-scale protests across the country on Friday, chanting 'Jai Shri Ram' and demanding swift action against those allegedly involved in the desecration of an image of Lord Ram during a demonstration in Gaibandha district earlier this month. The protests also highlighted growing concern over the suspension of a major Lord Ram statue project in northern Bangladesh following alleged threats from Islamist groups.

The demonstrations were held in Dhaka and several other districts, drawing participation from Hindu organisations, students, religious leaders, and members of the community. Protesters carried torches, raised religious slogans, and urged the government to ensure

justice and protect minority religious rights.

Massive Protests Across Dhaka
The protest movement was spearheaded by the Hindu Mahajot, which organised rallies, torchlight processions, and a human chain near the National Press Club in Dhaka. Hundreds of protesters later gathered at the Shahbagh intersection before marching through the capital.

Demonstrators alleged that during a public protest opposing the construction of a Lord Ram statue in Palashbari, a picture of Lord Ram was deliberately insulted. Community leaders claimed that although a police complaint had been registered, no arrests had been made, triggering widespread anger among Hindus.

Protesters submitted a 72-hour ultimatum to the authorities, demanding immediate arrest of those



responsible and warning of intensified statewide protests if no action was taken.

Ram Statue Project Halted After Threats
The controversy has been further intensified by the suspension of an ambitious temple project in Palashbari of Gaibandha district. The project includes an 8-foot statue of Lord Ram, a 50-foot statue of Lord Krishna, and a 30-foot statue of Lord Shiva, making it one of the largest Hindu religious complexes proposed in

Bangladesh. According to the temple management committee, nearly 80 per cent of the construction work had already been completed before the project was halted. Committee president Haridas Chandra Das said construction was suspended after those associated with the project reportedly received threats from Islamist groups.

He appealed to the Bangladesh government to provide adequate security to workers and devotees and allow the project to resume without further delay.

Temple Committee Seeks Government Protection
In an official statement, the temple committee said the decision to temporarily stop construction was taken solely to maintain law and order and prevent any escalation of communal tensions.

The committee reiterated its commitment to completing the project peacefully and urged authorities to ensure the safety of all those involved in the construction.

Concerns Over Minority Rights
The latest developments have once again drawn attention to the security and rights of Bangladesh's Hindu minority, which constitutes around eight per cent of the country's population. Community leaders said incidents targeting Hindu religious symbols and places of worship have created growing anxiety among minorities. With additional protest programmes already announced, Hindu organisations have vowed to continue their agitation until those responsible for the alleged desecration are arrested and the suspended temple project is allowed to proceed under government protection. **PG2**

Panchatantra Stories

The Donkey and the Washerman

Shuddapatta was a poor washerman who lived in a small village. He owned a donkey that helped him carry clothes to and from the river. However, he was careless and did not take proper care of the animal. There was little grass in the surroundings, and the washerman rarely managed to feed the donkey properly. As a result, the donkey became weak, thin, and exhausted. Shuddapatta often worried about its condition but did not know how to improve it.

One day, while walking through a nearby forest, Shuddapatta came across a dead tiger lying unattended. As he looked at it, an idea struck him. He thought that the tiger's skin could be useful. If he dressed his donkey in the tiger's skin, he could take it to nearby fields at night. The farmers, thinking it was a tiger, would stay away in fear. This way, the donkey could eat freely and regain its strength.

Shuddapatta carefully skinned the tiger and covered his donkey with it. That night, he led the disguised donkey into the barley fields. As expected, the farmers were terrified when they saw what they believed was a tiger roaming among the crops. They quickly hid in their houses, and no one dared to chase it away. The donkey happily ate the fresh crops to its heart's content and returned safely.

This became a daily routine. Every night, the washerman dressed the donkey in the tiger's skin and sent it to the fields. Over time, the donkey regained its strength and became healthy again. Shuddapatta was pleased, as he no longer had to worry about feeding it.

However, as days passed, the donkey began to behave more confidently. One night, while eating in the field, it heard the braying of another donkey from a distance. Unable to control its instincts, it responded with a loud bray.

The farmers, who were watching from hiding, immediately realized the truth. The sound was not of a tiger, but of a donkey disguised in a tiger's skin. Angry at being deceived, they rushed out with sticks, chased the donkey away, and beat it until it died.

The washerman learned a painful lesson that night. The disguise had protected the donkey for a while, but it could not change its true nature. The wise say, one should never pretend to be what one is not, for truth will eventually be revealed.

Ancient Wisdom Meets Modern Wellness

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

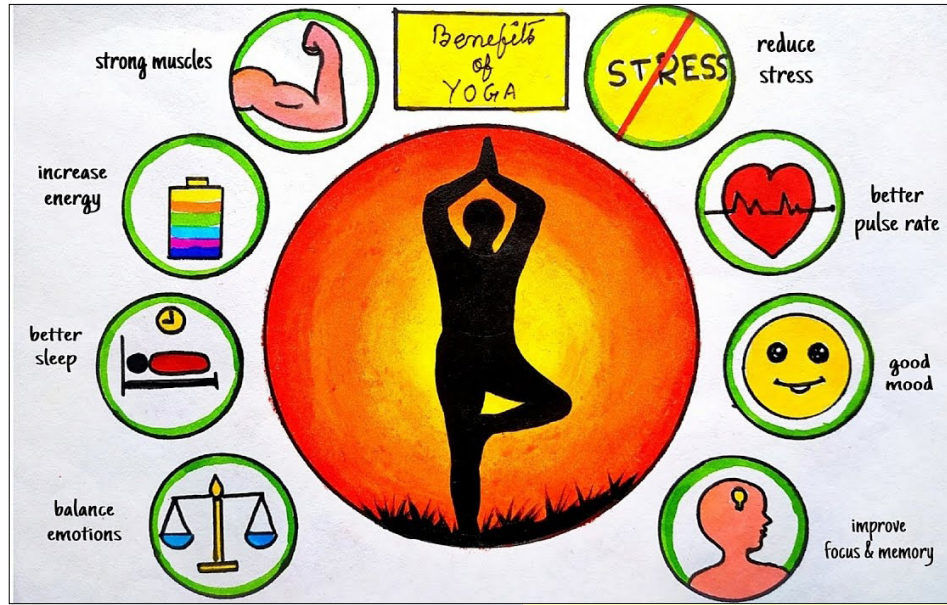
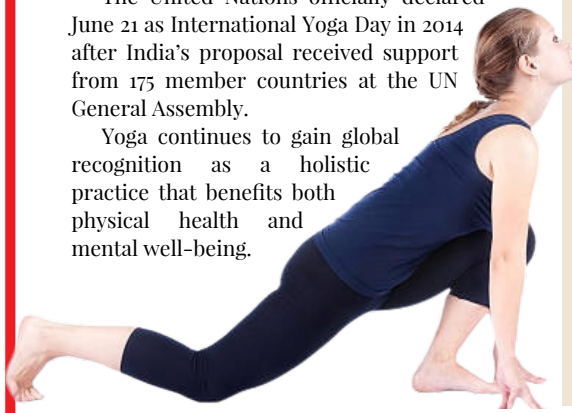
International Yoga Day 2026 offers an opportunity to rediscover the ancient Indian practice of yoga, its profound health benefits, and its diverse forms that promote physical strength, mental clarity, and emotional balance.

Yoga, a 5,000-year-old discipline originating in India, is derived from the Sanskrit word "yuj", meaning union. It signifies the harmony between body, mind, and consciousness. Over the centuries, yoga has evolved from a spiritual practice into a globally recognised wellness system, embraced by millions for improving health, reducing stress, and enhancing overall well-being.

International Yoga Day is observed annually on June 21, and the 2026 edition marks its 12th global celebration. This year's observance is being led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Kolkata, highlighting India's continued role in promoting yoga worldwide. The theme for this year, "Yoga for Healthy Ageing," focuses on maintaining physical fitness, mental alertness, and independence throughout life.

The United Nations officially declared June 21 as International Yoga Day in 2014 after India's proposal received support from 175 member countries at the UN General Assembly.

Yoga continues to gain global recognition as a holistic practice that benefits both physical health and mental well-being.



Ancient Roots of Yoga

Yoga's origins trace back to ancient India, with evidence suggesting practices dating between 5,000 and 8,000 years ago. Early depictions of yoga-like postures have been found in Indus Valley Civilisation artefacts. The practice is also referenced in the Rig Veda, one of Hinduism's oldest sacred texts.

The philosophy of yoga was later systematised by Sage Patanjali around the 2nd century BCE in his Yoga Sutras, which introduced the concept of Ashtanga Yoga, or the eightfold path of spiritual discipline. Classical yoga philosophy is also reflected in ancient texts such as the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita.

Benefits of Yoga

- * Reduces stress and anxiety, improves mental calmness
- * Improves flexibility and body strength
- * Enhances posture and reduces back/neck pain
- * Improves breathing and lung capacity
- * Supports better sleep quality
- * Boosts concentration and focus
- * Helps in weight management and fitness
- * Improves blood circulation and heart health
- * Promotes overall physical and mental well-being

Evolution of Yoga Traditions

Over time, yoga evolved into multiple traditions and schools of thought. Between 700 and 1900 CE, Hatha Yoga emerged, focusing on physical postures and breath control as a means to prepare the body for spiritual growth. Other major paths include Bhakti Yoga (devotion), Karma Yoga (selfless action), Jnana Yoga (knowledge), and Raja Yoga (meditation and mental discipline).

Yoga for Healthy Living

The theme "Yoga for Healthy Ageing" highlights the importance of staying active and mentally balanced as life expectancy increases worldwide. Experts emphasise that regular yoga practice can help improve flexibility, boost immunity, and maintain emotional stability across all age groups.

As International Yoga Day 2026 is celebrated across the world, yoga continues to stand as a powerful symbol of India's ancient wisdom and its enduring relevance in modern life.

What Yoga Means Today

In modern understanding, yoga is a holistic practice that integrates the body, breath, mind, and emotions. According to Patanjali, yoga is defined as "chitta-vritti-nirodha"—the calming of mental fluctuations.

Today, yoga is widely recognised as a preventive health practice that supports longevity, improves mobility, reduces stress, and enhances mental well-being. It is increasingly being adopted as a global public health tool to promote healthier lifestyles.

JAYANAGAR TOWING DRIVE TO BEGIN NEXT WEEK



Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru
The towing of illegally parked vehicles across the Jayanagar Zone will commence from next week, Bengaluru South City Corporation Commissioner K.N. Ramesh announced on Friday.

The announcement came after Greater Bengaluru Authority Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao and Bengaluru South City Corporation Commissioner K.N. Ramesh inspected three newly procured towing vehicles that will be deployed for the enforcement drive.

Commissioner Ramesh said the initiative aims to curb illegal parking on major roads in the Jayanagar Zone, which has been causing inconvenience to motorists and pedestrians. A total of

three towing vehicles will be pressed into service as part of the operation.

He said the towing vehicles, procured by the Bengaluru South City Corporation on an outsourcing basis, have received fitness certificates from the Transport Department. Following their official handover to the Traffic Police, enforcement operations will begin from next week.

The Commissioner added that the drive is intended to improve traffic movement, reduce congestion, and ensure safer access for pedestrians by preventing improper roadside parking. Chief Engineer Basavaraj Kabade, Executive Engineer Janardhan of the TEC Division, and other officials were present during the inspection.

COCHIN SHIPYARD GRAFFITI TRIGGERS SECURITY PROBE

From PGI

Officials said nearly 100 personnel, including permanent staff and contract workers, had access to the vessel during the repair period, making the identification of the responsible individual challenging. The lack of continuous surveillance in key sections has further slowed the investigation process.

Security agencies are also reviewing past incidents at the shipyard, including earlier espionage-related cases and reported thefts during major defence vessel construction projects, to check for any possible link or pattern.

Authorities have assured that the investigation is being treated with high priority, and all technical, forensic and procedural evidence is being examined to determine whether the act was an isolated incident or a deliberate attempt to test security systems.

Commissioner Inspects Footpath Development Works



Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Bengaluru West City Corporation Commissioner Dr. Rajendra K.V. on Friday inspected development works at Ittamadu Lake (Chikkalasandra Lake) and directed officials to remove garbage and take up immediate restoration measures.

Following complaints of waste dumping, the Commissioner ordered the cleaning of the lake area and instructed officials to carry out fencing, install proper lighting, deploy security marshals, and set up CCTV surveillance for continuous monitoring.

He also directed a detailed survey of the lake and emphasized long-term development of the water body.

Footpath Development Review
As part of the corporation's initiative to develop 10 km walkable

footpaths in each ward within a month, the Commissioner inspected footpaths in Yediur and Basavanagudi wards.

He instructed officials to ensure pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, including steps where footpaths are higher than road level, and asked that compound gates opening onto footpaths be modified to open inward to avoid obstruction.

Hospital Visit

The Commissioner also visited Modi Hospital in Basavanagudi ward and reviewed facilities, including staffing levels, patient load, and service arrangements, issuing necessary directions to health officials.

Senior engineers and officials accompanied the Commissioner during the inspection visits.

NEWS

Kumaraswamy on Cross-Voting Row

Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy on Saturday said that cross-voting in the Legislative Council elections would not affect the JD(S)-BJP alliance and asserted that the results should not be seen as an indication of the 2028 Assembly elections.

He accused the Congress of attempting to create differences between the alliance partners and claimed that inducements were offered to influence voting, including large cash promises and constituency development funds.

Kumaraswamy said the alliance leadership had jointly finalised the candidate after consultations with senior BJP leaders, including the state and national leadership, leaving no scope for internal disagreement.

He maintained that the Council election outcome was not reflective of public sentiment and reiterated confidence that the JD(S)-BJP alliance would return to power in the 2028 elections.

The Union Minister further alleged that some legislators were influenced by financial offers during



the polls, leading to cross-voting.

He added that action would be taken against those responsible at an appropriate time and said he would brief the BJP national leadership on the developments during his visit to New Delhi.

Kumaraswamy also stated that MLAs who see better political prospects elsewhere are free to leave the party, but should do so openly rather than weakening it from within. He said the alliance would focus on strengthening its position ahead of the 2028 Assembly elections and forming a government that reflects the aspirations of the people of Karnataka.



Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje and former Deputy Chief Minister and MLA Dr. C.N. Ashwath Narayan inaugurate the Bharatiya Yantra Kreedha Mahotsav (BKYM)-2026 at Beagles Basketball Stadium, Malleswaram, on Friday. The national-level robotics competition will select India's team for the Robotics Olympics, with 20 teams from across the country participating.

BNCC Phone-in Gets 67 Grievances, Action Ordered

Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Bengaluru North City Corporation (BNCC) held its weekly phone-in grievance programme on Friday, during which Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar personally heard public complaints and directed officials to resolve issues on priority.

A total of 47 calls were received, registering 67 grievances related to various civic departments. The majority of complaints were related to road maintenance (40) and solid waste management (7), followed by forest issues (6), e-Khata services (4), and smaller numbers from electrical, health, parks, property tax, and veterinary departments.

The Commissioner instructed officials to conduct field inspections and take immediate corrective measures, especially in areas with repeated complaints.

Since its launch on September 26,



2025, the programme has received 1,804 calls, with 2,320 grievances registered so far. Of these, 1,808 have been resolved, while 260 remain pending and under review.

Officials from BWSSB, BESCOM, BMRL, and the Traffic Police also participated in the programme and were directed to address grievances falling under their jurisdiction.

The BNCC said the initiative is aimed at ensuring direct communication with citizens and improving the efficiency of civic services across the city.

Bangladesh Hindus Protest Ram Image Desecration

From PGI

Security has been tightened in several sensitive areas following the protests, with local authorities deploying additional forces to prevent any escalation of tensions and ensure law and order is maintained.

Meanwhile, government officials have urged all communities to remain

calm and avoid spreading rumours, stating that investigations into the alleged desecration incident are already underway.

Political leaders and civil society groups have also called for dialogue and restraint, emphasising the need to uphold communal harmony while addressing the concerns raised by the minority community.

SCIENCE & Technology

AI Data Centre Boom Faces Climate Heat Risk

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

India's ambitious expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud data centre infrastructure could face growing challenges from climate change, particularly extreme heat and related operational disruptions, according to a new report.

The study by Cross Dependency Initiative (XDI) highlights that India ranks 11th globally in terms of climate exposure for planned data centres. It warns that rising temperatures, infrastructure stress, and extreme weather events could impact the reliability and efficiency of digital infrastructure being rapidly developed across the country.

The report, titled Global Analysis of Planned Data Centres for Physical Climate Risk and Resilience, assessed 2,595 planned data centre projects worldwide, examining risks from direct physical damage, heat-related operational disruptions, and failures in supporting systems such as power, transport, and water networks.

In India, states including Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Karnataka have been identified among the most vulnerable regions to heat-related operational risks for future data centre projects. The report notes that extreme heat may not physically damage facilities but can significantly reduce efficiency by increasing cooling demands and straining power supply systems.

XDI further stated that over 75% of planned data centres in countries such as India, Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia, and Spain fall under high-risk categories for heat-induced disruptions. It cautioned that such risks are likely to increase as global temperatures continue to rise.

OIL SLIDES AS US-IRAN CEASEFIRE EASES SUPPLY FEARS

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Global oil prices declined to near pre-conflict levels on Friday after markets reacted positively to a ceasefire Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Iran, easing concerns over prolonged disruption in Middle East energy supplies.

Brent crude, the global benchmark, traded at USD 77.89 per barrel, reflecting a marginal rise of 0.58 per cent from the previous close of USD 77.44. During intraday trade, prices moved within a narrow band, touching a high of USD 78.07 and a low of USD 76.62, indicating stabilising market sentiment.

The easing of prices marks a significant reversal from recent weeks when geopolitical tensions had pushed crude values higher amid fears of supply disruptions.

Ceasefire Calms Market Sentiment



The decline followed the announcement of a 14-point ceasefire agreement between the US and Iran. The agreement is seen as a key de-escalation step in a region critical to global energy security.

The deal reportedly includes measures to halt military actions, ensure maritime safety, and establish a framework for continued diplomatic negotiations in the coming weeks.

Strait of Hormuz Concerns Ease

A major factor influencing market sentiment was the reduced risk to

shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global oil transit route. Nearly one-fifth of global oil supply passes through this narrow waterway connecting the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea.

During the conflict, traders had priced in the risk of disruptions to oil shipments, attacks on energy infrastructure, and higher transportation costs, leading to a spike in crude prices.

With the ceasefire in place, those fears have largely eased, and market participants now expect uninterrupted oil flows from the region.

Relief for Import-Dependent Economies

The fall in crude prices is expected to benefit major oil-importing nations such as India, which relies heavily on imported energy to meet domestic demand. Lower oil prices are likely to ease inflationary pressure, reduce import bills, and provide some fiscal relief.

NEET 2026 Re-Exam: 22 Lakh to Appear

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Over 22.79 lakh candidates will appear for the NEET-UG 2026 re-exam on June 21, amid unprecedented nationwide security arrangements.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) has deployed CCTV surveillance, AI-based monitoring, biometric verification, and heavy police presence at examination centres across 551 cities in India and 14 abroad.

Strict measures, including signal jammers, GPS-tracked question paper transport, and Section 144 restrictions around centres, have been put in place following earlier allegations of paper leaks and irregularities. The CBI continues its investigation into the case.

Authorities said all centres are fully prepared to ensure a smooth, fair and incident-free examination process.

BJP Slams Congress Over Mekedatu Double Stand

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

The long-pending Mekedatu dispute has once again sparked a political confrontation, with the Karnataka BJP on Saturday accusing the Congress of adopting contradictory positions on the inter-state water-sharing issue.

Karnataka BJP President Vijayendra Yediyurappa alleged that the Congress was "caught between its commitments in Karnataka and alliance compulsions in Tamil Nadu" following the neighbouring state's Assembly resolution opposing the Mekedatu balancing reservoir project.

Reacting to Tamil Nadu's resolution against the proposed drinking water project across the Cauvery, Vijayendra said the Congress-led government in Karnataka has consistently



supported the initiative, while its alliance partners in Tamil Nadu have opposed it, exposing what he termed as "double standards".

He said the Mekedatu project is crucial for meeting Bengaluru's future drinking water requirements and ensuring optimal utilisation of Karnataka's share of Cauvery waters. He added that no state should be deprived of its rightful share of resources.

BJP Seeks CBI Probe Into Gruha Lakshmi Irregularities

The BJP has alleged major financial and administrative irregularities in Karnataka's Gruha Lakshmi scheme, citing CAG audit findings that point to possible ghost beneficiaries, duplicate bank accounts, and large-scale data manipulation. Opposition leader R. Ashoka has demanded a CBI probe, raising concerns over the use of public funds and the integrity of one of the state's key welfare guarantees.

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Karnataka's flagship Gruha Lakshmi scheme has come under scrutiny after the BJP on Saturday alleged financial and administrative irregularities in its implementation, citing audit findings and demanding a CBI investigation.

Leader of the Opposition R. Ashoka claimed that observations from a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audit pointed to serious lapses in the disbursement of funds under the scheme, which provides monthly financial assistance to women heads of households.

According to Ashoka, the audit flagged ₹46.52 crore being disbursed without proper beneficiary bank account details and identified 19,020 cases where multiple beneficiaries were linked to identical bank account numbers. He alleged that these findings indicated possible ghost beneficiaries, fraudulent transactions, and weak verification mechanisms.

He further claimed that over 10 lakh beneficiary records had been modified multiple times, raising concerns over

data integrity and the possibility of manipulation in the database.

The Gruha Lakshmi scheme is one of the key welfare guarantees of the Congress government and has been widely promoted as a flagship programme aimed at empowering women.



Calling the welfare guarantees a "Graft-antee Model," Ashoka alleged that systemic lapses had weakened public trust and questioned the lack of timely corrective action despite earlier concerns being raised.

He demanded a CBI probe into the matter, stating that taxpayers deserve clarity on how public funds were utilised and who benefited from the alleged irregularities.

The BJP said it would continue to press for accountability, indicating that the issue could escalate into a major political controversy in Karnataka.

The ruling Congress has yet to issue a detailed response to the fresh allegations, while the controversy is expected to intensify in the coming days.

ED Raids Bengaluru Firms, Freezes ₹6 Crore

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has conducted raids on five Bengaluru-based companies over allegations of illegal foreign money transfers using virtual digital assets.

Officials said searches were carried out at six locations linked to the firms, and bank accounts holding around ₹6 crore were frozen during the operation under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999.

The companies are suspected of facilitating unauthorised overseas transactions in violation of regulatory norms. Investigations are ongoing.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER ORDERS SWIFT GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

A public grievance redressal meeting was held at the C.I.M.S. Auditorium in Jayanagar on Friday under the leadership of GBA Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao and Bengaluru South City Corporation Commissioner K.N. Ramesh.

Over 53 residents and representatives from various RWAs, including areas such as HSR Layout, Koramangala, Kasavanahalli, and Judicial Layout, raised civic issues related to stormwater drains, waste management, road conditions, encroachments, and public infrastructure.

The Chief Commissioner directed officials to prioritize and resolve the issues on an urgent basis and instructed that such grievance meetings be conducted regularly to ensure timely resolution of civic problems.

Officials were also asked to strengthen coordination with citizens through ward-level WhatsApp groups and



increase field inspections to address complaints effectively.

Commissioner K.N. Ramesh also briefed residents on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and urged public cooperation with Booth Level Officers during the verification process.

Senior officials from various departments were present at the meeting.

Joshi Memorial Hall to Open on Today

► Vikrama Vahini | Belagavi

The newly constructed Shri Jagannathrao Joshi Memorial Hall, built by Janakalyan Trust, is set to be inaugurated on June 21 at Sangha Sadan on New Goods Shed Road in Belagavi.

The inauguration ceremony will be led by RSS Sarsangchalak Dattatreya Hosabale, in the presence of Karanjimath seer Guru Siddha Mahaswamiji. North Karnataka Prant Sanghachalak Basavaraj Dambal will preside over the programme, which is scheduled to begin at 11 am. Organisers have appealed to attendees to arrive on time and ensure the smooth conduct of

the event.

The memorial hall has been built in honour of senior RSS ideologue and freedom movement participant Shri Jagannathrao Joshi, who played a significant role in the organisation of the Jana Sangh and later the BJP in Karnataka. Known as "Karnataka Kesari," Joshi was widely respected for his oratory skills, organisational leadership and contributions to public life.

Born in Nargund of Dharwad district on June 23, 1920, Joshi completed his higher education before briefly joining government service. He



later resigned to dedicate himself fully to national service and became a full-time RSS pracharak based in Belagavi.

He was a key figure in strengthening the Jana Sangh and BJP in Karnataka and also played an active role in the Goa Liberation Movement, where he was closely associated with the freedom struggle and political mobilisation efforts. He was elected twice to the Lok Sabha from Madhya Pradesh and later served as a Rajya Sabha member from 1978 to 1984.

The memorial hall, constructed over an area of 26 guntas, has been

developed as a modern multi-purpose facility. It includes accommodation capacity for around 200 people, seating arrangements for 550 participants, and a dining hall that can cater to nearly 1,000 people.

Organisers said the facility is equipped with a modern kitchen and infrastructure suitable for training programmes, cultural events, spiritual gatherings, and social development workshops.

With the inauguration of the new facility, Belagavi is expected to gain a prominent venue dedicated to cultural, educational and social initiatives under the name of Jagannathrao Joshi.

ENTERTAINMENT

Priyanka Confirms Angelina Jolie Collaboration

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Global star Priyanka Chopra has added another milestone to her international career by confirming that she will be collaborating with Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie. While the actor chose not to reveal details of the project, the announcement has sparked excitement among fans worldwide.

Speaking during an interaction with Fortune India, Priyanka said she would soon be working with Jolie but declined to disclose whether the collaboration was for a feature film, commercial venture, or humanitarian initiative.

During the conversation, Priyanka also named Angelina Jolie, Penelope Cruz, and Salma Hayek among the women who have inspired her throughout her journey in the entertainment industry.

Return to Indian Cinema with 'Varanasi'

Alongside her growing Hollywood career, Priyanka is preparing for her long-awaited return to Indian cinema after a seven-year hiatus with filmmaker S.S. Rajamouli's ambitious pan-India action-adventure film Varanasi.

The mega-budget project, reportedly being made at a cost of ₹1,200-1,400 crore, is among the most expensive Indian films ever produced. The film has been shot across multiple international and domestic locations, including Georgia, Antarctica, Africa, Hyderabad, and other destinations.

"We are trying to create something extremely ambitious. It will be a massive global



release, and audiences around the world will get to see what we have been working on for the past three years," she said. Varanasi is scheduled for a worldwide theatrical release on April 7, 2027.

Packed International Schedule

Priyanka's global lineup remains equally impressive. She is set to star alongside Orlando Bloom in an upcoming international co-production and will also feature in acclaimed filmmaker Mira Nair's biographical drama Amri.

She will also appear in director Nicholas Stoller's comedy Judgment Day, sharing screen space with Hollywood stars including Will Ferrell, Zac Efron, and Regina Hall.

Choosing Projects on Her Own Terms

Having established herself successfully in both Bollywood and Hollywood, Priyanka said she now enjoys the freedom to choose projects that reflect her creative vision. Reflecting on her journey, she said that during the early years of her career, opportunities were limited, but today she has reached a stage where she can create and select projects that truly inspire her. Priyanka also

revealed that her husband, singer Nick Jonas, recently reminded her of a quote by Beyoncé, saying that she has now reached "the other side of the sacrifice"—a phase where years of hard work have given her the freedom to shape her own career.

With major international collaborations and a highly anticipated return to Indian cinema, Priyanka Chopra continues to strengthen her position as one of the most influential Indian actors on the global stage.

Cocktail 2 Opens Strong at ₹13.5 Cr, Beats Original Film



► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Homi Adajania's Cocktail 2, starring Shahid Kapoor, Kriti Sanon, and Rashmika Mandanna, has registered a strong opening at the Indian box office, collecting an estimated ₹13.50 crore net on its first day despite receiving mixed reviews from critics and audiences.

Released across more than 3,000 screens nationwide, the film managed to cross the double-digit mark on day one, offering a positive boost to the romantic drama genre, which has struggled in the post-pandemic box office landscape.

Industry trackers noted that the film showed steady traction through the day, supported by advance bookings and strong star appeal. According to Saavn, Cocktail 2 sold over 1.6 lakh tickets for its opening day, generating approximately ₹5.57 crore gross in advance sales alone. With additional contributions from spot bookings and improved occupancy during evening shows, the total collections rose further to ₹13.50 crore net.

Trade analysts said the opening reflects the continued influence of franchise value and ensemble star casts in drawing audiences, even when critical reception is mixed.

However, they also cautioned that the film's weekend performance will depend heavily on word-of-mouth.

Beats original Cocktail's opening

The film has surpassed the opening-day collection of the 2012 original Cocktail, which starred Saif Ali Khan, Deepika Padukone, and Diana Penty. Directed by Homi Adajania and written by Imtiaz Ali, the original film had opened at ₹10.47 crore and later emerged as a box office success with a worldwide gross of around ₹125 crore.

While Cocktail 2 has recorded a higher nominal opening, analysts pointed out that inflation-adjusted comparisons place the benchmark higher.

About Cocktail 2

Cocktail 2 is described as a spiritual successor rather than a direct continuation of the 2012 hit. It introduces a new storyline and fresh characters while retaining the thematic essence of modern relationships and emotional conflicts that defined the original film.

With its strong opening, the film has positioned itself as one of the notable Bollywood launches of the season, though its long-term performance will depend on audience retention in the coming days.

BUSINESS

Rupee Rises on India-US Trade Hopes

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

The Indian rupee strengthened by 20 paise to 94.20 against the US dollar in early trade on Friday, supported by rising optimism over progress in India-US trade negotiations and steady global cues.

The domestic currency opened at 94.30 in the interbank foreign exchange market and later appreciated to 94.20. On the previous trading session, the rupee had closed at 94.40, gaining 10 paise.

Forex traders said sentiment remained positive amid expectations of improved foreign inflows and easing crude oil prices following the US-Iran peace developments, which helped reduce pressure on global energy markets.

A key boost came from signals of progress in India-US trade talks after discussions between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump at the G7 Summit. Officials indicated that both sides have directed negotiators to fast-track an interim trade agreement, with further talks expected in the coming weeks.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said trade was a major focus of the leaders' meeting, while US Trade Representative Jamie Green is expected to visit India soon to advance negotiations.

Analysts noted that the Reserve Bank of India is also actively managing forex flows, with expectations that it may utilise dollar inflows to strengthen reserves and adjust its forward positions. This, they said, could moderate the pace of rupee appreciation even as underlying sentiment improves.

In global markets, Brent crude declined 0.85% to USD 79.17 per barrel, while the US dollar index edged up slightly to 100.92, keeping currency movements broadly stable.

Market observers said the rupee's movement is likely to remain range-bound in the near term, with global crude prices, foreign portfolio inflows, and progress on trade negotiations serving as key drivers.

They added that any sustained breakthrough in India-US trade talks could further strengthen investor confidence and support the domestic currency.

SPORTS

Neeraj Chopra Makes Comeback, Qualifies for CWG



► Vikrama Vahini | Doha

India's star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra made a strong return to competition at the Doha Diamond League 2026, finishing fourth with a best throw of 85.69 metres.

Returning after a long injury layoff, Chopra achieved the Commonwealth Games qualification mark with a second-round throw of 82.77 metres, confirming his entry into the 2026 Games.

The event was won by Sri Lanka's Ramesh Pathirige (88.68m), followed by Grenada's Anderson Peters (86.38m) and USA's Curtis Thompson (85.99m). Chopra's return is seen as a positive sign ahead of upcoming international events.

Chopra opened with a foul throw but gradually found rhythm in his second and third attempts. His best effort came in the third round, where he recorded 85.69 metres.

He also registered throws of 83.45 metres in the fourth attempt before another foul in the fifth round. Under Diamond League rules, he did not get a sixth attempt as he finished outside the top three.

Despite missing the podium, his consistent throws and qualification mark have boosted expectations for India's medal prospects in upcoming global athletics meets.

Jaiswal Ton Powers India to 3-0 ODI Sweep

► Vikrama Vahini | Chennai

India registered a dominant 9-wicket victory over Afghanistan in the third and final ODI at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on Friday, completing a 3-0 clean sweep of the series.

Chasing a target of 219, India cruised to victory in 28.4 overs, powered by a commanding opening stand between Rohit Sharma and Yashasvi Jaiswal. The duo added 170 runs for the first wicket, effectively sealing the contest early.

Rohit Sharma scored 79 off 60 balls before being dismissed, while Jaiswal remained unbeaten on 110 off 86 deliveries, striking 14 boundaries and three sixes to guide India home comfortably. Earlier, Afghanistan were bowled out for 218 after opting to bat first. Despite a solid century from captain Hashmatullah Shahidi (102 off 131 balls) and a 50-run contribution from Azmatullah Omarzai, the rest of the batting lineup failed to make an impact.

Indian pacer Prasad Krishna starred with the ball, claiming 5 for 23 in 8.2 overs, registering his maiden five-wicket haul in ODIs. He was well supported by Gurjapneet Brar, Harsh Dubey, and Prince Yadav, who picked up one wicket each, while skipper Shubman Gill contributed with two run-outs.

Shinde Hints at More Defections, Uddhav Offers to Quit

► Vikrama Vahini | Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Friday offered to step down as party president if party workers no longer had confidence in his leadership, as the party grappled with a fresh wave of internal rebellion. His remarks came after six of the party's nine Lok Sabha MPs skipped a crucial parliamentary party meeting in New Delhi, fuelling speculation of another split.

Addressing party workers during the Shiv Sena foundation day celebrations in Mumbai, Thackeray said he had led the organisation for more than a decade and had endured constant political attacks.

"If the allegations against me are true and party workers believe I have failed, I am ready to resign. I have no desire to cling to any post," he said.

Thackeray maintained that he would welcome any loyal party worker as the next Shiv Sena president but asserted that he would never allow the party to fall into the hands of "traitors."

Rejecting speculation about a possible



merger with the Congress, Thackeray said the Shiv Sena (UBT) had not merged with the BJP even after remaining its ally for nearly 30 years, making such claims baseless. Instead, he alleged that the Maharashtra BJP was moving closer to the Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde.

The former Maharashtra Chief Minister also apologised to party supporters for electing MPs who now appeared ready to switch sides and accused the BJP of encouraging defections to weaken democracy.

At a separate Shiv Sena foundation day programme, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde intensified his attack on Thackeray and

hinted that more leaders could leave the Shiv Sena (UBT) in the coming days.

Describing the current political developments as only the beginning, Shinde remarked, "This is just the trailer; the picture is still to come," suggesting that additional defections were likely.

He questioned why senior leaders and workers continued to leave Thackeray's camp and said political leadership should be earned through commitment rather than inherited through family lineage.

Recalling his 2022 rebellion against Thackeray, Shinde claimed he had faced threats from party leaders at the time but remained committed to his political stand.

He also criticised Thackeray's leadership style, saying a true leader should remain among party workers and lead from the front instead of distancing himself from the organisation.

Shinde further targeted the Opposition INDIA bloc and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi while praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi for completing 12 years in office.

Meloni Fires Back at Trump

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

A verbal spat between US President Donald Trump and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has escalated following comments made during the G7 Summit, triggering diplomatic ripples.

The controversy began after Trump claimed that Meloni had been eager to take selfies with him and was seeking closer ties to boost her political image. He also suggested that her popularity in Italy was declining, remarks that drew sharp criticism.

Responding firmly, Meloni rejected the allegations, saying her association with Trump had brought her no political or personal benefit.

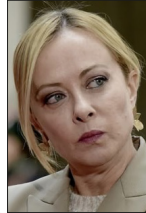
She asserted that her standing in Italy was based on

the trust of her people and not external relationships, adding that her country's decisions are guided solely by national interest.

The exchange comes after Trump's social media posts on Truth Social, where he repeated claims about Meloni's alleged requests for photographs and questioned Italy's diplomatic stance on several global issues.

The dispute has drawn attention in international political circles, with concerns that it could strain US-Italy relations.

In a related development, Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani reportedly cancelled a scheduled visit to the United States, signalling growing diplomatic unease.



Delhi 'Baby Bazaar' Scam Uncovered

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Delhi Police have busted an alleged baby trafficking racket operating across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat, in which infants were reportedly sold for lakhs of rupees.

Investigators said newborn boys were being sold for up to ₹8 lakh, while girls were priced lower at around ₹4 lakh.

The racket allegedly sourced babies from poor families and sold them to childless couples after forging birth records and hospital documents.

The case came to light after police received a tip-off about suspicious movement of infants in the Paharganj area. A woman identified as Jyoti was arrested after



a police decoy operation, which led to the exposure of the network.

Following her interrogation, several associates were arrested, and at least five infants below one month of age were rescued. Authorities said the gang used a private hospital in Rohini as a key link to create fake birth certificates and facilitate illegal adoptions.

Police said further investigation is underway to identify the full extent of the network and other possible beneficiaries involved in the racket.

Bengaluru Division Wins SWR Volleyball Championship

► Vikrama Vahini | Hubballi

Bengaluru Division emerged as the champions of the South Western Railway Inter-Unit Volleyball Championship, which concluded on Friday at the Railway Sports Ground in Hubballi after two days of competitive matches.

The tournament, organised by the South Western Railway Sports Association (SWRSA), was held from June 19 to 20, 2026, and witnessed enthusiastic participation from eight teams across the zone, showcasing the sporting spirit and talent of railway employees.

The participating teams included Bengaluru Division, Mysuru Division, Hubballi Division, Headquarters, Hubballi Workshop, Ashokapuram Workshop, KJM Shed, and the Railway Protection Force (RPF).

The matches were conducted in a league-cum-knockout format,



drawing strong competition and close finishes throughout the event.

After a series of intense league

and knockout encounters, Bengaluru Division and Mysuru Workshop advanced to the final. The title clash turned out to be a

closely contested match, with both sides displaying strong teamwork, coordination, and determination.

In the end, Bengaluru Division held its nerve in crucial moments to defeat Mysuru Workshop and secure the championship title. Mysuru Workshop put up a spirited performance but had to settle for the runners-up position.

The valedictory ceremony was graced by South Western Railway General Manager P. Ananth, who attended as the chief guest.

He presented the championship trophy to Bengaluru Division and the runners-up trophy to Mysuru Workshop, while congratulating all participating teams for their efforts and sportsmanship.

Speaking on the occasion, railway officials highlighted that the tournament served as an important platform to encourage fitness, unity, and camaraderie among employees across divisions.

Praja Seva Dept to Address Grievances

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Friday announced the launch of a new "Praja Seva Department" aimed at addressing public grievances and complaints related to governance and public movements.

Speaking at a press briefing after the Cabinet meeting, the Chief Minister said the new department will be headed by a senior IAS officer and will function as a dedicated platform to receive, examine, and resolve public petitions in a structured manner.

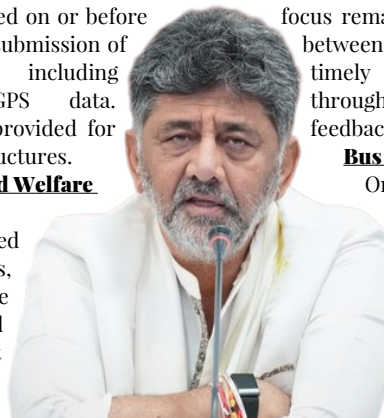
He said district in-charge ministers will conduct weekly Janaspandana meetings with local MLAs under the new system to ensure faster grievance redressal.

15-Day Window for Electricity Connections

The Chief Minister also announced a 15-day window for obtaining electricity connections for all buildings completed on or before May 31, 2026, subject to submission of required documents including photographs and GPS data. Exemptions have been provided for rural and agricultural structures.

Major Infrastructure and Welfare Approvals

The Cabinet approved several major projects, including a ₹100 crore super-speciality hospital at Yadgiri, upgrades at Karwar Medical Sciences Institute, and ₹60 crore



for equipment at Bengaluru Medical Research Hospital.

Approval was also given for the purchase of 620 new buses at a cost of ₹235 crore and the establishment of 11 electric bus depots across transport corporations.

Additionally, ₹80 crore was sanctioned for constructing Karnataka Bhavan-4 in New Delhi to support students preparing for competitive examinations, with reservation provisions for SC, ST, and other communities.

Other Key Decisions

The government also cleared housing projects, urban development initiatives, and extended timelines for land acquisition projects in Devanahalli. A new official team will be formed to study central government schemes and improve Karnataka's participation in them. The Chief Minister said the government's focus remains on improving coordination between departments and ensuring timely delivery of public services through e-governance and media feedback monitoring.

Bus Fare and Fuel Policy Review

On possible bus fare revisions, Shivakumar said the government will review the issue carefully, balancing public interest and the financial sustainability of transport corporations. He noted concerns over fuel price differences and said a detailed report has been sought.

Why Kolkata Was Chosen for Yoga Day This Year

► Vikrama Vahini | Kolkata

India will mark this year's International Yoga Day celebrations at the historic Red Road in Kolkata, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi leading the national event from the venue on June 21.

The government has chosen Kolkata due to its strong historical and cultural link with India's spiritual and yoga traditions, particularly its association with Swami Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Mission. Officials said the city symbolises the global spread of Indian philosophy and is well suited for a mass yoga demonstration.

The theme for International Yoga Day 2026 is "Yoga for Healthy Ageing." The event at Red Road is expected to see participation from thousands of yoga enthusiasts, with lakhs joining virtually across India and abroad.

Red Road, located near the Maidan area, offers a large open space suitable for mass gatherings. The programme will follow the Common Yoga Protocol and begin early in the morning, with security and logistical arrangements in place for smooth conduct.

The government has also planned simultaneous yoga events at several iconic locations across the country as part of the nationwide celebration.

No Drinking Water Crisis: 11 TMC Stored in Dams

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Karnataka Water Resources Minister Ramalinga Reddy on Saturday assured that there will be no drinking water shortage in the state, including Bengaluru, for the next two months despite below-normal rainfall.

He said the KRS reservoir currently has around 11 TMC of water storage and expressed confidence that expected rainfall in the coming days would further improve the situation.

The Minister urged the public not to panic, stating that the state has sufficient water reserves to meet drinking water needs for the immediate period.

Remarks on Mekedatu Project

Reddy also defended the Mekedatu drinking water project, stating that it is a crucial initiative for Bengaluru and surrounding regions.

He criticised Tamil Nadu's opposition, calling it unnecessary and politically motivated. He said the project is designed exclusively for drinking water purposes and would not affect irrigation needs.

According to him, the project could supply 4-75 TMC of water to Bengaluru and also

generate 400 MW of power.

Cauvery Water Sharing

The Minister said Karnataka is bound by existing agreements to release Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu and clarified that the state follows all tribunal and court directions.

He added that Karnataka has so far released water as required and is currently managing limited storage, with priority given to drinking water needs.

Call for Dialogue

Reddy urged both Karnataka and Tamil Nadu to resolve water disputes through dialogue rather than legal battles, stating that prolonged court cases have delayed solutions to long-pending irrigation issues.

He reiterated that Karnataka has already won legal clarity on Mekedatu-related cases and remains committed to implementing the project in the interest of both states.

The Minister also said the government is closely monitoring reservoir levels and rainfall patterns to ensure uninterrupted water supply during the dry spell. He added that emergency contingency plans are in place if there is any sudden drop in water availability.



Jigajinagi Clarifies RSS Remark Row

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

BJP MP and former Union Minister Ramesh Jigajinagi on Friday clarified his controversial remarks linking Dalits and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), saying his statement was being misinterpreted and taken out of context.

Responding to criticism over his comments that triggered political debate, Jigajinagi said he did not intend to convey any negative meaning and urged that the issue not be "blown out of proportion."

He said his remarks were made in a broader political context and reiterated that he has always worked for all communities without discrimination. He also stated that he has supported

leaders across party lines and helped in providing opportunities, including tickets and ministerial positions. Jigajinagi further said that society should move forward together without divisions and expressed disappointment over attempts to link his past statements with the current controversy.



Farmer Offers World's Costliest Mango to Ram Lalla



► Vikrama Vahini | Ayodhya

A rare and expensive Japanese mango variety, "Miyazaki," considered one of the world's costliest fruits, was offered as prasad to Ram Lalla at the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya by a local farmer. Farmer Omprakash Singh, who has cultivated the premium mango organically in his orchard, presented the first harvest of around a dozen fruits as an offering to Lord Ram. The Miyazaki mango, known globally for its deep red colour, high nutritional value and strict cultivation process, can fetch up to ₹2-3 lakh per kg in international markets.

Originating from Japan's Miyazaki region, the fruit is often called the "Egg of the Sun" for its unique colour transformation from purple to ruby red as it ripens. It is rich in antioxidants, vitamins A and C, and is grown under highly controlled conditions with special protective coverings for each fruit.

Officials said the offering reflects growing local interest in cultivating exotic fruit varieties in India, though large-scale production remains limited due to strict climatic and technical requirements.