



Rumours suggest Pooja Hegde may star opposite Pawan Kalyan in OG 2. While the makers have not confirmed the casting, the speculation has sparked excitement among fans.

Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Tuesday directed officials to resume safari and eco-tourism activities in Bandipur and Nagarhole national parks with strict safety measures in place.



INSIDE

Good morning

The moment you accept responsibility for everything in your life is the moment you gain the power to change anything in your life.

BRIEFS

India Signs Mobility Pacts with 26 Nations

> Vikrama Vahini | Delhi
India has signed 28 Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreements (MMPAs) or equivalent arrangements with 26 countries, with talks underway with several more nations, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Tuesday.

Speaking at the Human Resource Mobility Forum organised by the Ministry of External Affairs, Jaishankar said India views mobility as a key pillar of international cooperation, built on mutual benefit, shared responsibility and long-term sustainability.

He also stressed the need for countries to work together to combat illegal migration and human trafficking, noting that trusted mobility pathways can help strengthen economies and improve global workforce movement.

Jaishankar added that India is actively expanding structured migration frameworks with partner countries, aimed at ensuring safe, legal and orderly movement of people for employment and skill development opportunities.

14 Children Killed in Lahore Roof Collapse

> Vikrama Vahini | Lahore
At least 14 schoolchildren were killed and 20 others injured after the roof of a private tuition centre collapsed in Lahore's Kahna Nau area on Tuesday, police said.

The incident occurred when more than 30 children, aged between seven and 13 years, were attending classes in an under-construction building. Rescue teams recovered 14 bodies from the debris, while the injured, including a teacher, were shifted to hospital for treatment.

Police said the contractor and building owner have been taken into custody as part of the investigation. Officials added that a portion of the structure was still under construction at the time of the collapse.

Punjab authorities have ordered a probe into safety lapses, while Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Asif Ali Zardari expressed grief over the tragedy and directed medical support for the injured.

Rescue officials said the operation was completed after several hours of search and clearance work, with emergency teams using heavy equipment to remove debris from the collapsed structure. Authorities have also begun a detailed structural inspection of nearby buildings in the area to prevent any further risk, while local residents have demanded strict action against those responsible for violating construction safety norms.

Modi Talks Peace With Iran President

Leaders Discuss West Asia Stability, Peace and Maritime Security

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday held a telephonic conversation with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, during which the two leaders discussed recent developments in West Asia and the way forward for regional stability, according to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The Prime Minister reiterated India's consistent position that all disputes must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy, and stressed the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the region.

During the discussion, President Pezeshkian briefed Prime Minister Modi on the evolving situation in West Asia. The two leaders exchanged views on ongoing diplomatic efforts and regional developments.

The PMO statement said Modi welcomed the understanding reached so far and expressed hope that continued engagement would lead to lasting peace in



the region.

Prime Minister Modi strongly reiterated the importance of freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, calling it vital for both India and the global economy.

He underlined that secure maritime routes and unhindered trade flow are essential for global stability and economic cooperation.

Modi reaffirmed India's position that all issues must be addressed through peaceful means and sustained diplomatic engagement.

He also emphasised the need for continued international efforts to ensure long-term peace, stability, and security in West Asia.

President Pezeshkian briefed the Prime Minister on recent developments and future steps being considered by Iran in the region. The Iranian President also extended an invitation to Prime Minister Modi for the upcoming burial ceremonies of Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

According to official sources, India is likely to be represented at the ceremonies by Bihar Governor Ata Hasnain and Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita. The ceremonies are scheduled to be held from July 5 to July 9.

The conversation comes amid heightened diplomatic activity in West Asia, with India continuing to engage key regional players to promote stability, energy security and safe maritime trade routes.

VB-G RAM G Act Rolls Out Today

The Centre has announced that the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 will come into effect from July 1, guaranteeing up to 125 days of wage employment to eligible rural households under a revamped rural job scheme. The Ministry of Rural Development said all preparations have been completed for nationwide rollout, with ₹95,692 crore allocated for smooth implementation and timely wage payments.

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

The Centre on Tuesday announced that the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 (VB-G RAM G Act) will come into force from July 1, with all administrative, financial and technical arrangements completed for its nationwide implementation.

The Ministry of Rural Development said the new law provides a statutory guarantee of up to 125 days of wage employment to eligible rural households, replacing the existing framework that guaranteed 100 days of employment.

Higher Employment Guarantee
According to the ministry, the new Act aims to strengthen rural livelihoods by expanding employment opportunities while focusing on sustainable development and asset creation in villages.

To ensure a smooth transition, the Centre has



made an interim allocation of ₹95,692.31 crore to States and Union Territories for timely wage payments and uninterrupted execution of rural development works.

Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the government's priority is to ensure that no eligible rural worker remains without employment.

"The Centre and the States have completed all administrative, financial and technical

preparations to implement the Act successfully," he said.

Existing Job Cards to Remain Valid

The ministry clarified that existing e-KYC verified job cards will continue to remain valid until new Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards are issued under the revised framework.

Gram Panchayats will continue to play a central role in implementing the programme. The scheme will prioritise works related to natural resource management, water conservation, agriculture and allied activities, rural infrastructure development and women's empowerment.

States Prepare for Implementation

Officials said 29 States and Union Territories have already made budgetary provisions for implementing the Act, while 24 States have notified their respective VB-G RAM G schemes in line with the central legislation. **PG2**

SIR ROLLOUT SPARKS POLITICAL CLASH

> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

The launch of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls witnessed political confrontation in parts of Bengaluru on Tuesday, with Congress and BJP representatives clashing over the conduct of the exercise.

Bengaluru's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls witnessed political tensions between Congress and BJP agents, causing delays in Chamaraajpet as officials intervened to restore order and begin the process.

The most notable incident was reported from the Chamaraajpet Assembly constituency, where Congress and BJP agents engaged in a heated argument, delaying the commencement of the SIR process.

Congress representatives alleged that election officials had held discussions only with BJP representatives while ignoring their party.

They also objected to the start of the exercise, claiming that only 14 of the 31 Booth Level Officers (BLOs) assigned to the constituency had reported for duty. The Congress agents insisted that the revision process should begin only after all the designated officials were present. BJP workers and agents, on the other hand, urged officials to proceed with the available staff without further delay.

The disagreement led to protests by both sides, creating a tense atmosphere and disrupting the scheduled start of the exercise.

The confrontation left election staff caught in the middle, resulting in a delay in the SIR

programme in the constituency.

Senior officials later intervened, held discussions with representatives of both parties and ensured that the revision process commenced.

Similar disruptions were reported from a few other parts of Bengaluru during the rollout of the SIR exercise.

In some areas, residents faced difficulty in filling out the Enumeration Forms distributed by Booth Level Officers (BLOs), while technical glitches were also reported from certain parts of the State during the initial phase of the programme.

Election officials said the enumeration process will be closely monitored and any gaps in staffing or technical issues will be addressed immediately to ensure smooth completion of the exercise.

BESCOM to Issue Average July Bills

> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (BESCOM) has announced that it will not conduct regular meter readings for the month of July as its field staff will be deployed for the door-to-door verification of beneficiaries under the Gruha Jyothi scheme.

In place of actual readings, consumers will receive average electricity bills for July, calculated based on their consumption over the previous three months. The utility said the average billing will be communicated through SMS and email.

However, the average billing system will not apply to certain categories, including High Tension (HT) consumers, Low Tension (LT) users

with load above 40 HP, solar rooftop consumers, and temporary connections, who will continue to receive bills based on actual meter readings.

BESCOM said normal meter reading and billing will resume from August, and any difference arising from the estimated billing will be adjusted in subsequent bills once actual readings are taken.

The company has urged Gruha Jyothi beneficiaries to cooperate with officials during the verification exercise and keep documents such as Aadhaar card, voter ID, PAN card, ration card, and caste certificate ready for inspection.

Consumers can contact the BESCOM helpline at 1912 or approach the nearest sub-division office for assistance.



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Editorial

Beyond Names, Deliver Results

India's rural economy still rests on the strength of its villages, and any programme that guarantees employment while creating productive assets remains vital for millions of farming families. With the Union Government replacing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) branding with 'Viksit Bharat-G Ram G' and introducing a revised framework, the focus has naturally shifted to what the changes will mean on the ground. The government argues that the new guidelines are intended to plug leakages, improve transparency, strengthen accountability, and ensure that public money reaches genuine beneficiaries. A greater financial role for the states is also expected to encourage better implementation and closer monitoring of projects. If these reforms succeed in reducing corruption and improving efficiency, they could significantly strengthen rural livelihoods and infrastructure.

However, the renaming of such a well-known welfare programme has triggered predictable political controversy. Opposition parties argue that changing the identity of a flagship rural employment scheme amounts to erasing an important legacy rather than addressing its shortcomings. Governments, irrespective of political affiliation, have every right to reform policies to meet changing needs. At the same time, welfare programmes that directly impact millions should not become casualties of political symbolism. The real debate should not revolve around what the scheme is called but whether it delivers timely wages, creates durable rural assets, and offers meaningful employment during agricultural distress. Political narratives may dominate headlines, but beneficiaries ultimately judge a scheme by its effectiveness rather than its title.

For rural India, employment security, transparent implementation, and faster payments matter far more than branding exercises. Whether the programme carries the name of Mahatma Gandhi or the banner of Viksit Bharat, its success will be measured in the lives it improves and the opportunities it creates. Strong monitoring, digital transparency, strict action against corruption, and cooperation between the Centre and the states must remain the guiding principles. India's development journey cannot be complete unless its villages prosper alongside its cities. If the revised scheme genuinely empowers farmers, agricultural labourers, and rural households while eliminating past irregularities, the reform will deserve public support. In the end, names may change with governments, but the commitment to rural development must remain constant, inclusive, and above politics.

-Editor

SIR DRIVE BEGINS: DKS LEADS BY EXAMPLE

Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Tuesday launched the Statewide Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls by filling and submitting his Enumeration Form at his Sadashivanagar residence, urging citizens to complete the verification process to safeguard their voting rights.

Shivakumar, accompanied by his wife Usha Shivakumar, completed the form in the presence of officials from the Bengaluru South district administration. Addressing the media later, he said the SIR exercise had formally begun across the State and appealed to all eligible voters to participate.

He said voters could update their mobile numbers if the previously registered number was no longer in use. Once the updated number is registered, a One-Time Password (OTP) would be sent to that number during the verification process.



The Deputy Chief Minister also clarified that voters would be allowed to correct their names and other details in the electoral roll. Booth Level Officers (BLOs), Booth Level Agents (BLAs) and supervisory officials have already been coordinating through WhatsApp groups to facilitate the process, he said.

Shivakumar stated that only one member of a family needs to sign and submit the

applications on behalf of all eligible family members. He added that voters wishing to update their photographs could submit a new photograph along with the Enumeration Form.

He said first-time voters would be required to provide proof of residence and assured that the State Government would facilitate the issuance of necessary certificates wherever required. He urged citizens to ensure that

their names remain on the electoral rolls to continue exercising their democratic rights.

Responding to concerns that many people, particularly those unfamiliar with digital applications, may face difficulties using the online system, Shivakumar said he had also taken assistance while completing the process. He advised such voters to obtain the forms from BLOs and complete the procedure offline.

Highlighting the significance of the exercise, Shivakumar said electoral roll verification was becoming increasingly important. Referring to welfare delivery, he remarked that government benefits should primarily reach the State's genuine residents and eligible voters.

"We can extend our guarantee schemes to the people of Karnataka. Why should we provide them to voters of other States? Our priority is to ensure that the benefits reach the people of our State," he said.



Karnataka Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Eshwar B. Khandre meets Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil and Union Minister of State for Railways and Jal Shakti V. Somanna in New Delhi on Tuesday to discuss various rural drinking water projects in the State.

"Bandipur Safari to Resume, Mekedatu Issues to Be Resolved"

Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Tuesday directed officials to resume safari and eco-tourism activities in Bandipur and Nagarahole national parks with strict safety measures in place.

Safari to Restart with Precautions

Chairing the Standing Committee meeting of the Karnataka State Wildlife Board at Vidhana Soudha, where he serves as Chairman, the Chief Minister instructed officials to restart safari operations while ensuring full safety of tourists.

Officials informed the meeting that tiger and leopard density in safari zones of Bandipur and Nagarahole is relatively high compared to human-wildlife conflict areas.

Considering this, the CM stressed that all necessary precautionary measures must be strictly followed.

Wildlife Movement and Corridor Concerns

Officials also highlighted that infrastructure such as the BMC corridor and Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway has disrupted traditional elephant and big cat movement routes.

This has led to increased wildlife movement towards Channarayana and Ramanagara regions, contributing to rising human-wildlife conflict.

They further noted that conditions related to wildlife crossings, including underpasses and overpasses, were not fully implemented during expressway construction, despite being part of



Bengaluru Targets Stray Dog-Free Future

Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Greater Bengaluru Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda has directed officials to prepare a mission-mode plan to achieve 100% Animal Birth Control (ABC) coverage across the city within three years by doubling the annual sterilisation capacity from 45,000 to 90,000 stray dogs.

Reviewing animal welfare initiatives on Tuesday, the Minister said that despite sterilising nearly 8.8 lakh dogs since 2007 and spending around ₹42 crore over the past five years, the stray dog population remains a major challenge.

He instructed officials to expand



infrastructure, appoint more contract veterinarians and involve experienced implementing agencies.

The Minister also announced that 64,130 saplings will be planted across Bengaluru this financial year with active participation from Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs).

Officials have been directed to

ensure proper monitoring and maintenance of every sapling.

Krishna Byre Gowda urged citizens to use the 'Sahaya' app to report hazardous trees and clarified that the ongoing footpath clearance drive is aimed at improving pedestrian safety and not removing street vendors, except on roads where encroachments severely obstruct public movement.

Officials said the proposed expansion of the Animal Birth Control programme will also include improved tracking of sterilisation data and better coordination with civic bodies to control stray dog population effectively.

VB-G RAM G Act Rolls Out July 1

From PGI

Opposition Raises Concerns

The rollout of the new legislation has drawn criticism from opposition parties and rural employment activists, who have expressed concerns that changes in the existing employment guarantee framework could affect its demand-driven nature and the role of States and Panchayats.

The Centre, however, maintained that the new framework would provide stronger livelihood security, improve rural asset creation and offer a more comprehensive approach to employment generation.

The national launch of the Act will be held on July 2 at Mukkavaripalli village in

Obulavaripalle Mandal of Andhra Pradesh's Tirupati district, where Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards will be distributed and awareness material related to the mission will be released.

Officials said the rollout is expected to significantly expand the scope of rural employment programmes by integrating them with skill development and local infrastructure projects, ensuring longer-term livelihood support for rural households.

The government also plans to closely monitor implementation through digital tracking systems and periodic reviews to ensure transparency, timely wage disbursement and effective utilisation of funds across States.

NEWS



Karnataka Chief Minister launches the Statewide Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls by filling out the Enumeration Form at his residence, encouraging eligible citizens to actively participate in the voter verification and revision process.

KHADER ORDERS FIRST-AID CENTRES AT METRO STATIONS

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Karnataka Health Minister U.T. Khader on Tuesday outlined the key healthcare initiatives and challenges in the state, including plans to establish first-aid centres at metro stations and address the shortage of doctors through contractual recruitment.

Speaking at a press briefing, the minister stressed the urgent need for developing a vaccine for Kyasanur Forest

Disease (KFD), which is prevalent in regions such as Shivamogga and Chikkamagaluru. He said the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has been asked to accelerate research on the disease.

Khader said metro stations across the state should be equipped with basic emergency medical facilities, including stretchers, oxygen supply, and trained nursing staff, to handle urgent health situations. Khader

also highlighted the need to ensure dignified end-of-life care for patients suffering from incurable diseases, including cancer, focusing on providing a painless and peaceful environment during their final stages. The minister said the government is working on strengthening the healthcare system through both infrastructure improvements and policy reforms to ensure better medical services across Karnataka.



HEALTH & Lifestyle

Kidney Cancer Risks Extend Beyond Smoking

Smoking is widely known as a major risk factor for kidney cancer, but doctors say several other health and lifestyle conditions also significantly contribute to the disease.

Risk Factors Beyond Tobacco

Experts say kidney cancer risk is influenced by multiple factors, including obesity, high blood pressure, chronic kidney disease, long-term dialysis, family history, and exposure to certain workplace chemicals. Smoking remains important, but it is only part of a broader risk profile.

Dr Tarang Krishna, Managing Director of Cancer Healer Center, said many patients are unaware that metabolic and lifestyle-related conditions can also increase risk. He stressed that maintaining overall health is key to prevention.

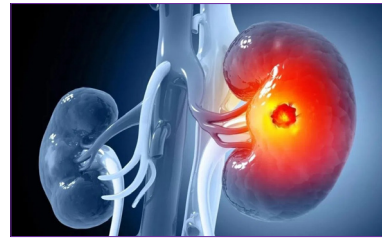
Lifestyle and Prevention Advice

Doctors recommend quitting tobacco, maintaining a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet, and keeping blood pressure under control to reduce risk. While kidney cancer cannot be fully prevented, lifestyle management plays a major role in lowering chances of developing it.

Myths About Symptoms and Diagnosis

Experts also warned that kidney cancer is often misunderstood. Dr Uday Bhaskar M, Senior Consultant - Urology, Bengaluru, said many cases are detected incidentally during scans done for other conditions.

He added that blood in urine, even



if it appears once, should not be ignored and requires medical evaluation.

Importance of Early Detection

Doctors emphasised that kidney cancer is not always linked only to smokers and that early detection significantly improves treatment outcomes. They urged people not to wait for severe symptoms and to seek timely medical advice for better recovery chances.

Experts further said that kidney cancer often progresses silently in its early stages, making routine health check-ups and imaging tests important for timely detection.

They added that increased awareness among high-risk groups can help identify the disease before it advances.

Doctors also stressed the need for regular monitoring of blood pressure, kidney function and overall metabolic health, especially among individuals with long-standing lifestyle-related conditions, to reduce long-term complications and improve survival outcomes.

SCIENCE & Technology

Legal Teams Embrace Domain-Specific AI

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Legal and compliance professionals are increasingly cautious about adopting artificial intelligence due to the high stakes involved, where incorrect outputs can lead to regulatory penalties, contract violations or long-term legal liability. Experts say domain-specific AI systems, built on verified legal data and auditable frameworks, are emerging as a more reliable alternative to general-purpose AI tools.

Unlike most business functions where AI errors may cause minor disruptions, mistakes in legal and compliance work can result in serious consequences, including regulatory action or financial liability. This makes accuracy and accountability critical in AI adoption within the sector.

General AI models are trained on vast internet data and can produce fluent responses, but experts warn that fluency does not always mean correctness. In legal contexts, even plausible but incorrect answers can be risky, as legal interpretation depends heavily on jurisdiction, entity type and regulatory framework.

Specialised AI tools are designed to operate within defined legal and compliance boundaries, using validated statutes, case law and regulatory notifications. These systems aim to reduce ambiguity by aligning outputs with established legal standards and organisational compliance requirements.

Experts note that legality is context-dependent, with obligations varying across sectors, jurisdictions and corporate structures. General AI systems often struggle to account for these nuances.

Regulators are increasingly focusing on decision-making processes, especially where AI is involved.



Health Minister U.T. Khader has taken serious note of the oxygen cylinder explosion incident reported in the Operation Theatre of Chigateri District Hospital, Davanagere. He has held discussions with senior state-level health officials and ordered the formation of a high-level inquiry committee to investigate the incident in detail. In addition, a parallel local-level probe will be conducted under the leadership of the Deputy Commissioner. The government will review both reports and initiate appropriate action as per rules.

US-Iran Talks Clouded by Confusion

> Vikrama Vahini | Tehran

Confusion emerged over proposed US-Iran talks in Qatar on Tuesday, with Washington indicating that discussions were scheduled in Doha, while Tehran denied that any negotiations had been planned in the coming days.

US President Donald Trump said his special envoy Steve Witkoff and former adviser Jared Kushner were travelling to Doha for high-level discussions, along with technical-level talks on the sidelines. He also claimed that Iran had requested the meeting, though he did not provide further details.

Two US officials confirmed that Witkoff and Kushner were en route to Qatar as part of ongoing diplomatic efforts aimed at building on a fragile ceasefire framework and advancing a broader agreement between the two sides.

However, Iran's Foreign Ministry rejected the claims, stating that no formal negotiations with the United States were scheduled.

He added that Iran and the US were not yet at the stage of final agreement talks and that discussions were still

US President Donald Trump said that Iran had requested a meeting and that discussions would take place in Doha, Qatar, involving his special envoy Steve Witkoff and former adviser Jared Kushner. He stated that the US remained open to diplomatic engagement and that talks were part of ongoing efforts to advance a broader agreement, adding that technical-level discussions would also continue alongside the high-level meetings.



focused on implementing earlier commitments under a 14-point memorandum of understanding signed on June 17.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian reiterated that Tehran would honour its commitments if Washington did the same, but warned that Iran would respond firmly to any threats.

Student Shoots for Four Golds



> Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

P. Abhaya Surya, a Class X student of St. Joseph's School, has won four gold medals at the Karnataka State Shooting Championship held in Bengaluru, delivering an impressive performance in the 10-metre Open Air Sight Rifle event.

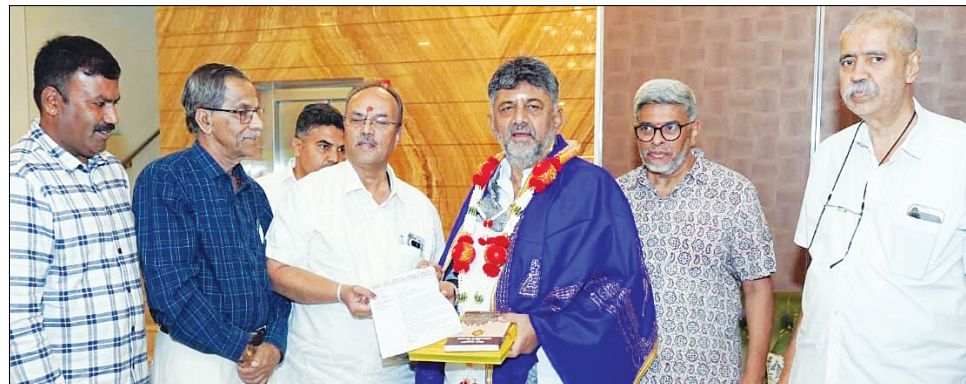
Abhaya Surya secured gold medals in the Men's, Men's Junior, Youth, and Sub-Youth

(Boys) categories, emerging as one of the standout performers of the championship.

Following his remarkable achievement, the young shooter was felicitated by former Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Urban Development Minister Dr. Yathindra Siddaramaiah, who congratulated him and wished him success in his future sporting career.

Abhaya Surya is the son of K.V. Prahbakar, Media Adviser to former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, and Meera.

The young marksman's success has been widely appreciated, with many expressing hope that he will continue to excel at national and international shooting competitions, bringing further laurels to Karnataka.



Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar receives a delegation from the Akhila Karnataka Brahmana Mahasabha at his residence in Bengaluru on Tuesday. Mahasabha President S. Raghunath, General Secretary Dr. Sathyaprakash, A. Shankar, Chandrashekhar and Purushotham extended greetings and invited him to attend the Maha sabha, to which he assured his participation within the next two weeks.

Cabinet Expansion in 15 Days: MB Patil

> Vikrama Vahini | Bagalkote

Karnataka Large and Medium Industries Minister M.B. Patil on Tuesday said that the state cabinet expansion is likely to take place within the next 15 days.

Speaking to reporters after a district disaster management meeting in Bagalkote, Patil said the current arrangements are temporary and a cabinet expansion will be undertaken soon.



He assured that representatives from the district are likely to get ministerial representation once the expansion is finalised.

However, he clarified that the final decision rests entirely with the Congress high command.

"It is the high command's decision. Whatever they decide will be final; I have no role in it," he said, responding to questions on the district's lack of cabinet

representation.

Water Supply Priority Amid Drought: Referring to the prevailing drought and disaster management efforts in the district, the minister said there is no shortage of funds for drinking water supply.

"If required, we will temporarily pause other projects, but providing drinking water to people is our top priority," he said, stressing the government's commitment to addressing water scarcity issues on a priority basis.

Gen Dhiraj Seth takes over as Army Chief

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

General Dhiraj Seth on Tuesday assumed charge as the 31st Chief of the Army Staff, succeeding General Upendra Dwivedi.

Nearly 40 years of service

Commissioned in 1986 after graduating from the National Defence Academy, General Seth has served for nearly four decades in key operational and command roles, including leadership of strike formations and major Army commands.

Focus on modernisation

As Vice Chief, he was closely involved in Army modernisation efforts, including

integration of new technologies, improved combat readiness and capability development.

Key priorities ahead

His tenure is expected to focus on force restructuring, expansion of drone and electronic warfare systems, greater use of artificial intelligence, and strengthening indigenous defence production under Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Strategic challenges

He will also oversee preparedness along the northern and western borders while advancing joint operations and theatre command reforms with the other armed forces.



ENTERTAINMENT

Ranveer Singh Starts 'Pralay' Prep

> Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Actor Ranveer Singh is gearing up for his next big project titled Pralay, a large-scale zombie thriller reportedly mounted on a budget of around ₹300 crore. The film is expected to begin shooting in September 2026, with major portions planned in Australia.

The project comes after the success of Dhurandhar and will mark Singh's collaboration with debutant director Jai Mehta. According to industry reports, pre-production work is already underway, with the actor actively involved in early creative

discussions and preparation. **Large-Scale Production Planned in Australia**

Sources suggest that a significant part of the film will be shot in Australia, where the production team is currently developing the visual design and technical framework. The film is expected to rely heavily on VFX, with international technicians also being brought on board for the

shoot schedule.

A source quoted in a report said Ranveer Singh will begin shooting in the second half of 2026 and has already started intense preparation for the physically and emotionally demanding role.

Zombie Thriller with Global Appeal

Pralay is described as a survival-based zombie apocalypse story centered around a married couple struggling to survive as civilisation collapses. The film aims to build a larger fictional universe within the genre, with director Jai Mehta reportedly working closely with writers on the screenplay and world-building.

₹300 Crore Budget and High Expectations

With an estimated budget of ₹300 crore, Pralay is expected to become the most expensive standalone film in Ranveer Singh's career. Industry reports also suggest that the actor has shown strong confidence in the script and the director's vision.

Cast and Creative Details

While an official announcement is still awaited, actress Kalyani Priyadarshan is reportedly being considered for the female lead, marking her Bollywood debut. The film is currently in advanced pre-production stages, with the team focusing on technical planning and international collaboration. Director Jai Mehta, speaking to Variety India, said the project aims to deliver something new for Indian cinema, describing it as a film "India hasn't seen before."

Industry observers say Pralay could mark a major shift in large-scale Indian genre filmmaking, with its combination of high-end VFX, international locations and survival horror storytelling. If executed as planned, the film is expected to position Ranveer Singh in a new global action-oriented space while expanding the reach of Indian cinema in the zombie-thriller genre.

CBFC TRIMS VIOLENCE IN ALIA'S ALPHA

> Vikrama Vahini | Mumbai

The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) has granted clearance to Alia Bhatt and Sharvati-starrer Alpha, one of the most anticipated films in the Yash Raj Films Spy Universe, after directing the makers to modify several violent scenes and dialogues. The action-packed spy thriller has been awarded a U/A 16+ certificate ahead of its scheduled theatrical release on July 3.

Violent Scenes Modified: According to the CBFC certification details issued on June 29, the Hindi version of the film, accompanied by English subtitles, received approval only after the filmmakers implemented a series of suggested changes.

The certification board expressed concern over the intensity of certain violent sequences and the use of objectionable language in the film. Rather than deleting scenes entirely, the board allowed the makers to replace them with alternative shots that reduced the graphic impact while preserving the narrative.

One of the most significant changes involved a prolonged stabbing sequence appearing around the 1 hour 36 minutes mark. The original visuals were replaced with less graphic footage to tone down the violence. Additional action scenes appearing around the 25th and 38th minutes were also modified,

while an abusive word used in one dialogue was completely removed.

Other Compliance Requirements: Apart from editing the action sequences, the CBFC directed the production team to revise the opening disclaimer and provide English subtitles for all songs featured in the film. The board also instructed the makers to display statutory warnings related to smoking and alcohol consumption wherever applicable and to comply with legal formalities concerning child artistes by submitting parental consent documents.

These changes were incorporated before the film received its final certification.

Runtime Confirmed: Following the modifications, Alpha has been cleared with a final runtime of 140 minutes and 48 seconds, making it approximately 2 hours and 21 minutes long.

Major Film in YRF Spy Universe: Produced by Yash Raj Films, Alpha is regarded as one of the studio's most ambitious additions to its expanding Spy Universe. The film features Alia Bhatt in her first full-fledged action role, alongside Sharvati, and is expected to showcase high-octane action sequences, espionage, and international-scale production values. With the censor process now complete, Alpha is all set for a worldwide theatrical release on July 3, with strong expectations from audiences and trade analysts alike.



BUSINESS

Indo-US Trade Deal Nears Final Stage

> Vikrama Vahini | Kolkata

Kolkata: About 99% of the negotiations for the India-US trade deal have been completed, with only the final 1% remaining, US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor said, expressing confidence that the long-pending agreement will be sealed soon.

Deal in Final Stage

Speaking at the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum Leadership Summit, Gor said the discussions are in their final phase and only a few issues remain unresolved on both sides.

"We are in the final steps on this deal. Most of it is complete. There are a few items that remain on both sides. It's in the last 1%," he said.

Long Negotiation Process

The negotiator noted that while questions are often raised about the duration of the negotiations, the timeline is not unusually long compared to global trade deals. He cited the European trade agreement, which took nearly two decades to conclude.

Trade Growth and Future Targets

Gor highlighted the rapid growth in bilateral trade, which has increased from \$20 billion to \$220 billion over the past two decades. He said the proposed deal aims to further expand trade and push it towards a target of \$500 billion in the coming years.

Key Issues in Talks

The negotiator noted that while questions are often raised about the duration of the negotiations, the timeline is not unusually long compared to global trade deals. He cited the European trade agreement, which took nearly two decades to conclude.

Officials familiar with the discussions said both sides are working on resolving a few sensitive regulatory and tariff-related issues that remain pending before the agreement can be formally concluded.

They added that technical teams are continuing parallel consultations to ensure a balanced outcome for both economies.

Experts said the proposed deal, once finalised, is expected to significantly strengthen strategic and economic ties between India and the United States, while also boosting investment flows, technology cooperation and market access across key sectors.

SPORTS

India Announce Women's Squad for Asian Games



Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

The Indian women's cricket team for the 2026 Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, has been announced, with Harmanpreet Kaur appointed captain and Smriti Mandhana named vice-captain.

All-rounder Shreyanka Patil, who suffered an injury during the Women's T20 World Cup, has been included in the squad. However, her participation will depend on receiving fitness clearance before the tournament. If she fails to recover in time, a replacement will be named. The cricket competition at the 2026 Asian Games will be held from September 17 to October 3 in the T20 format. Eight women's teams will compete in the tournament. India, along with Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Japan, has earned direct qualification, while China, Malaysia and Thailand qualified through the qualifying tournament.

As one of the top-ranked teams, India will enter the competition directly at the quarter-final stage on September 17. According to reports, India is likely to face one of the lower-ranked qualifying teams—Thailand, Malaysia or China—in its opening match.

Harmanpreet Kaur (Captain), Smriti Mandhana (Vice-Captain), Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh (WK), G. Kamalini (WK), Bharati Fulmali, Shri Charani, Renuka Singh Thakur, Kranti Goud, Arundhati Reddy, Radha Yadav, Nandini Sharma and Shreyanka Patil (subject to fitness clearance).

India Set for Left-Handed Blitz Against England

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

India could unveil a left-hand-heavy batting line-up in the opening T20 International against England, beginning on July 1 at Chester-le-Street, with as many as six left-handed batters likely to feature in the playing XI.

The five-match T20 series will be followed by a three-match ODI series.

Teenage opener Vaibhav Suryavanshi is expected to make the playing XI after wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson struggled in the recent T20 series against Ireland. If selected, Vaibhav is likely to open the innings alongside Abhishek Sharma.

His inclusion would give India six left-handed batters in the line-up, providing a different tactical approach against England's bowling attack.

The likely left-handed batters are Vaibhav Suryavanshi, Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube and Axar Patel. If Washington Sundar replaces Axar Patel as the all-rounder, the team will still retain six left-handed batters. Shreyas Iyer is expected to be the only specialist right-handed batter in the top order.

CHIKKABALLAPUR HOMESTAY DEATH SPARKS 'LOVE JIHAD' ALLEGATIONS

Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

A 26-year-old woman was found dead at a homestay near Nandi Giridhama in Chikkaballapur district, prompting a police investigation amid allegations of assault, drug abuse and "love jihad" raised by her family.

The victim, identified as Sai Surabhi, was found dead inside the homestay, while her boyfriend Mohammed Sanjith Ali was discovered seriously injured in an alleged suicide attempt and has been admitted to Chikkaballapur District Hospital under police supervision.

Police suspect that the woman was assaulted and killed before the accused attempted to take his own life. However, officials said the exact motive is yet to be established and forensic examination is underway.

According to police, the couple had been in a live-in relationship in Bengaluru after meeting

through a cab booking service. The woman had earlier told police she was an adult and had chosen her partner voluntarily when her family objected to the relationship.



Following the incident, the woman's family alleged that the accused introduced her to drugs, subjected her to abuse and had prior criminal cases, including under the NDPS Act. They also claimed she had previously undergone rehabilitation treatment.

The family further alleged threats and accused the man of concealing his marital status, calling the case a "love jihad" incident and demanding strict action.

Police, however, said all allegations remain under verification and no conclusions have been drawn.

Investigators are examining forensic evidence, witness statements and other material to determine the sequence of events and motive.

Europe Swelters in Record Heatwave

Vikrama Vahini | London

Europe is battling a severe heatwave that has shattered temperature records across multiple countries, while viral social media videos have captured dramatic scenes of roads melting, tram tracks bending and everyday objects warping under extreme heat. Temperatures have crossed 40°C in several regions, with Germany recording over 41°C, the Czech Republic surpassing 40°C, and Hungary reaching 41.8°C. Slovakia has reported a new national high of 41°C, while Denmark experienced its hottest day since 1874. The United Kingdom also recorded its hottest June day on record.

Widely circulated videos show people frying eggs and bacon using only sunlight, tram tracks deforming under heat stress, and shoes and plastic objects melting after being left outdoors.

The World Health Organisation



(WHO) said more than 1,300 excess deaths have been reported since June 21, linked to extreme temperatures across Europe. Several countries have also reported rising cases of heat-related illnesses and drownings as people attempt to cope with the conditions.

Authorities in some cities, including Berlin, have deployed water sprays to help residents cool down amid the ongoing heat crisis. Meteorologists have warned that further heatwaves could return in the coming weeks, raising concerns over continued public health risks and infrastructure strain.

Ethanol Blending Still in Trial Phase: Centre

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

The Centre on Tuesday informed the Supreme Court that ethanol blending with petrol is currently in an experimental phase and its full impact and outcomes will become clear only within the next year.

Appearing for the Centre, Attorney General R. Venkataramani said the ethanol blending programme is an ongoing policy experiment and that its effectiveness will be assessed once sufficient data is available over the coming year.

BPCL challenged the Karnataka High Court order before the Supreme Court. A vacation bench of Justices M.M. Sundresh and Sheel Nagu heard the matter and stayed the Karnataka High Court's order. The apex court directed that the status quo be maintained in the current ethanol allocation process. The court also issued notices to the Centre and concerned distilleries, seeking their responses in the matter.

Hidden Gold Busted at Delhi Airport

Bangladeshi national arrested at Delhi IGI Airport after customs officials recovered ₹1.47 crore worth of gold hidden inside a washroom flush-panel cavity; probe underway into possible international smuggling links.

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

Customs officials at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport have arrested a Bangladeshi national after recovering gold worth around ₹1.47 crore hidden inside a washroom at the airport.

The passenger had arrived from Dubai on June 27 and was intercepted based on specific intelligence inputs, officials said.

During questioning, the accused allegedly admitted to concealing the gold inside an airport washroom. Acting on the information, customs officers searched the area and recovered three oval-shaped packets hidden inside the cavity behind a flush-button panel, wrapped in a dark



blue sock.

The seized gold weighed approximately 1,141.5 grams and was confiscated under the Customs Act.

Officials said the accused is under arrest and further investigation is underway to trace possible links to an international gold smuggling network, including the intended recipients of the consignment and the suspect's travel and financial records.

GRUHA JYOTHI VERIFICATION DRIVE BEGINS JULY 1

Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

The Karnataka Energy Department will launch a statewide door-to-door verification drive for beneficiaries of the flagship Gruha Jyothi Yojane (GJY) from July 1, aiming to update beneficiary records and ensure that only eligible consumers continue to receive the scheme's benefits.

The verification exercise will be carried out by meter readers and field staff of all five Electricity Supply Companies (ESCOMs)—BESCOM, MESCOM, HESCOM, GESCOM and CESC. Officials will visit the homes of beneficiaries to verify their details, inspect records and collect the required information using a dedicated mobile application and declaration form.

The Gruha Jyothi Scheme, launched in July 2023, provides eligible domestic consumers with free electricity up to the prescribed limit. The government said the verification exercise is intended to ensure transparency, eliminate discrepancies in beneficiary records and strengthen the implementation of the scheme.



The Karnataka Energy Department will begin a statewide door-to-door verification of Gruha Jyothi beneficiaries from July 1. Consumers have been asked to keep essential documents ready as ESCOM officials verify eligibility and update beneficiary records across all five power distribution companies.

Documents to Be Verified

During the house-to-house visits, beneficiaries have been asked to keep the necessary documents ready for verification. These include an Aadhaar card (for verification purposes only), a recent passport-size photograph, Voter ID card, PAN card, tenancy or rental agreement wherever applicable, ration card and caste certificate.

Officials clarified that the verification process will be completed on-site through the mobile application after checking the relevant documents and obtaining the beneficiary's

declaration. The Energy Department has appealed to all Gruha Jyothi beneficiaries to cooperate with the visiting officials, stating that physical verification at the consumer's residence is mandatory for updating records.

The drive will be conducted simultaneously across the jurisdictions of all five ESCOMs and is expected to cover lakhs of households benefiting from the Gruha Jyothi scheme. Officials said the verification is part of the government's efforts to maintain an accurate beneficiary database and ensure that welfare benefits reach only eligible consumers.

Twin Systems to Drench India

Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

India's southwest monsoon is expected to regain momentum this week with the formation of two low-pressure systems and a favourable shift in the monsoon trough, bringing widespread rainfall to several parts of the country, including the long-awaited revival of monsoon conditions over north India.

After a slow advance and a prolonged rainfall deficit during June, meteorologists expect the developing weather systems over the Bay of Bengal and central India to significantly enhance monsoon activity across large parts of the country.

Northern India, including Delhi-NCR, Haryana and Rajasthan, has continued to experience hot and humid conditions with only isolated thunderstorms providing temporary relief. Although moisture levels have increased, the absence of a well-organised monsoon circulation has delayed the onset of widespread rainfall.

According to weather experts, the monsoon trough, the low-pressure belt that plays a crucial role in India's seasonal rainfall, has remained unusually close to the Himalayan foothills instead

of its normal position.

This has shifted the main rain-bearing zone away from the Indo-Gangetic plains, delaying active monsoon conditions over Delhi and neighbouring states.

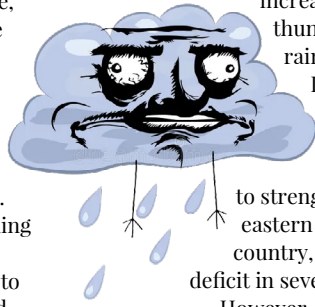
Forecast models indicate that the monsoon trough will gradually move southwards over the next few days. As it returns closer to its normal position, atmospheric instability is expected to increase, leading to

thunderstorms and widespread rainfall across Punjab, Haryana, Delhi-NCR, Rajasthan and western Uttar Pradesh.

The twin low-pressure systems are also expected to strengthen rainfall over central, eastern and western parts of the country, helping reduce the rainfall deficit in several regions.

However, meteorologists have warned that the revival of monsoon activity could also increase the risk of localised flooding, waterlogging, traffic disruptions and other rain-related incidents in areas receiving prolonged heavy rainfall.

If the forecast remains on track, the first week of July is expected to mark the transition from scattered pre-monsoon showers to widespread and sustained monsoon rains across much of India.



Fake ID Racket Busted in Kozhikode

Vikrama Vahini | Kozhikode

Three Bangladeshi nationals were arrested in Kerala's Kozhikode district for allegedly entering and staying in India using forged identity documents.

Police said the arrests were made during a surprise inspection at a migrant workers' camp in Mavoor's Kalpally area based on a tip-off. The operation was led by Mavoor Station House Officer Mohammed Rafeeq.

The accused have been identified as Mohammad Wula Hossain, Mohammad Hasan Ali and Mohammad Mehdi Hasan. Officials said fake identity cards were recovered from them, and preliminary verification confirmed their Bangladeshi nationality.

Police have seized mobile phones and other documents for forensic examination to trace the source of the forged IDs and identify those who may have assisted them.

According to officials, the trio had been staying in rented accommodation and working as daily-wage labourers at construction sites for the past few weeks. They have been booked under provisions of the Immigration and Foreigners Act.

Intelligence Bureau and local police teams are investigating possible local links, including employers and intermediaries who may have provided housing and work.

Influencer Couple Vandalises Vietnam Restaurant

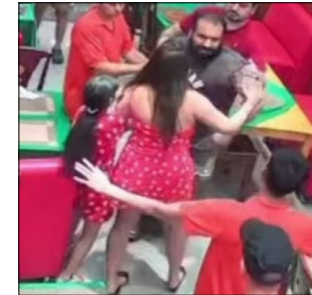
Vikrama Vahini | Ho Chi Minh City

An Indian family has been accused of creating a disturbance and damaging property at an Indian restaurant in Vietnam following a dispute over their children's behaviour, according to CCTV footage shared online by the restaurant owner.

The incident took place at Bombay Bites in Ho Chi Minh City, where staff reportedly requested the family to stop their children from throwing tissue papers and items around the dining area.

The footage shows children scattering tissues, throwing glasses and creating a mess inside the restaurant. The situation escalated when a man, believed to be the father, was seen arguing with staff and allegedly smashing glasses on the floor.

A staff member was also seen walking away in distress as tensions increased. The video further shows physical



altercations between members of the family and restaurant staff before others intervened.

The restaurant owner, Aishwarya Khanna Singh, who shared the video on social media, alleged that the family later damaged property and behaved aggressively while claiming to be influencers. She also alleged that the couple appeared to be intoxicated.

The incident has sparked widespread outrage online, with many users criticising the family's behaviour and calling for accountability. Some also raised concerns about discipline and public conduct, particularly in front of children.

Amarnath Yatra Begins with Huge Devotee Rush

Vikrama Vahini | Jammu

Thousands of devotees turned up on the first day of token distribution for the annual Shri Amarnath Yatra at the Tawi Riverfront Centre in Jammu, ahead of the pilgrimage scheduled to begin on July 3.

Officials said the heavy rush of pilgrims marked a strong start to the registration process, with the day's quota of tokens successfully allocated.

The token distribution was supervised by Deputy Commissioner Jammu Rakesh Minhas, along with Senior Superintendent of Police Joginder Singh and other officials.

Minhas said arrangements have been made to ensure a smooth and safe pilgrimage experience, including accommodation, resting facilities, sanitation infrastructure with over 100 toilets and bathrooms, and 24x7 community kitchen (langar) services at the venue.

He added that 18 counters have been set up for transparent token distribution and registration, while additional centres including Gita Bhawan, Mahajan Hall, Shri Ram Mandir Purani Mandi and the Railway Station will continue to function for pilgrims.

SpiceJet Halts Tamil Nadu Operations

Vikrama Vahini | Chennai

SpiceJet has suspended all its domestic and international flight operations from Tamil Nadu permanently due to severe financial constraints, according to reports.

The airline has been facing a financial crisis over the past few years, leading to a reduction in its fleet size and gradual scaling down of services across less profitable and high-cost routes.

As part of the restructuring, the airline had already discontinued several services, including its daily Chennai-Shivamogga flight, marking the end of its remaining operations linked to Tamil Nadu.

Tree Falls on School Bus; 1 Dead, 10 Injured

Vikrama Vahini | Mumbai

A tragic incident occurred in Chembur area of Mumbai on Tuesday when a large tree fell on a school bus carrying students home, killing one child and leaving at least 10 others seriously injured.

According to officials, the incident took place on 11th Number Road in Chembur when the school bus was passing through the area. A tree suddenly collapsed and fell directly on the vehicle, trapping several children inside.

A 10-year-old boy died in the incident, while around 10 other students sustained serious injuries. Rescue officials said one more child is still trapped inside the bus and efforts are underway to safely evacuate him.

Fire brigade teams and emergency responders rushed to the spot immediately and launched a rescue operation. The injured children were shifted to nearby hospitals for treatment.

Local residents alleged that similar incidents have occurred in the area earlier as well and accused the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) of failing to take timely action despite complaints regarding the removal of dangerous trees.

Officials said preliminary assessment suggests that heavy rain and weakened tree roots may have contributed to the collapse. The civic authorities have launched an inquiry into the incident and ordered inspection of other trees in the surrounding areas to prevent further accidents.

Meanwhile, grieving parents and locals gathered near the site demanding strict action against civic negligence.

Police have cordoned off the area and traffic was diverted as clearing operations continued to remove the fallen tree and recover the damaged bus.