



Actress Mouni Roy, spotted in a simple no-makeup look in Mumbai, expressed anger after photographers continued clicking pictures despite her requests to stop filming.



₹2

NATIONAL FUDGE DAY



Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Wednesday defended the proposed Bidadi Integrated Township Project, asserting that the project was conceived and approved during the JD(S)-BJP coalition government led by former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy.

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BJP Eyes Edge with Women’s Quota, Delimitation

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

The BJP-led NDA government is stepping up efforts to secure the required two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha to pass the Women’s Reservation Bill and Delimitation Bill during the upcoming Parliament session. The government needs support from at least two-thirds of MPs present and voting to clear the proposed constitutional amendments. With changing political equations, the NDA is looking to gain support from opposition parties, including the NCP (Sharad Pawar faction) and the DMK.

NCP Offers Conditional Support

The Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar faction) has indicated that it may support the bills if the government agrees to a 50 per cent uniform

increase in Lok Sabha seats for all states under the delimitation process.

DMK Role Becomes Crucial

The DMK, which has 22 Lok Sabha MPs, has emerged as a key factor in the government’s strategy. Support from the Tamil Nadu-based party, along with NCP-SP and other smaller parties, could help the NDA reach the required numbers.

Changing Lok Sabha Numbers

The NDA’s strength has increased in recent months following political shifts, including changes involving the Trinamool Congress and Shiv Sena factions.

The ruling alliance currently has around 332 MPs supporting the bill, and needs further backing to reach the two-thirds threshold.

Women’s Reservation Bill Faces Fresh Test

The Women’s Reservation Bill, introduced earlier, failed to secure the required majority in the previous attempt, receiving 298 votes in favour and 230 against.

The upcoming monsoon session will provide another opportunity for the government to push the legislation, which seeks to reserve 33 per cent of seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women.

Final Numbers Remain Uncertain

While the NDA has improved its position, the support of parties like DMK and NCP-SP could prove decisive. However, the government may still need additional backing or abstentions from some opposition MPs to successfully pass the constitutional amendments.

Good morning

Go forward in life with a twinkle in your eye and a smile on your face, but with greater and strong purpose in your heart.

BRIEFS

PM Modi’s Three-State Visit Today

► **Vikrama Vahini | Delhi**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Haryana, Chandigarh and Punjab on July 17, where he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for multiple development projects worth more than ₹26,000 crore.

During the visit, the Prime Minister will also flag off India’s first hydrogen-powered train, marking a major milestone in the country’s clean energy and railway innovation efforts.

According to an official statement, Modi will begin his visit from Jind in Haryana, where he will flag off the hydrogen train service between Jind and Sonapat.

The train has been designed, engineered and integrated in India using indigenous technology, highlighting the country’s growing capabilities in advanced railway engineering.

PG2

Rahul Gets Court Relief, Faces Fresh Notice

► **Vikrama Vahini | Sultanpur**

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi received relief from a Sultanpur court on Wednesday after it rejected a petition seeking a forensic examination of his voice sample in a 2018 defamation case linked to his remarks against Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

The MP-MLA court dismissed the revision petition filed by BJP leader Vijay Mishra, who had sought a voice test as part of the proceedings.

Rahul Gandhi’s counsel Kashi Prasad Shukla said Additional District Judge Rakesh Yadav rejected the plea, observing that the application was filed after a significant delay and lacked sufficient merit.

Meanwhile, another court in Hathras issued notice to Gandhi in connection with a complaint related to the 2020 Boolgarhi rape case.

The two court developments came on the same day, with one providing relief to the Congress leader while the other requiring his response in a separate legal matter.

SIR Deadline Extended

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has extended the timeline for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in several states, including Delhi, Karnataka, Telangana and Punjab. The final voter lists will now be published in October under the revised schedule.

The EC informed the respective Chief Electoral Officers about the changes, citing the need for additional time to complete verification and address claims and objections.

Karnataka SIR Timeline Revised

In Karnataka, the house-to-house verification by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) has been extended until August 8. The draft electoral roll will be published on August 17.

The period for filing claims and objections will continue until October 15, while the final voter list is scheduled to be released on October 19.

Delhi Final Roll on October 19

In Delhi, the SIR process has been extended by



12 days. BLOs will continue door-to-door verification until August 8, instead of the earlier deadline of July 29. The draft voter list will now be published on August 17, and the final electoral roll will be released on October 19.

Telangana, Punjab Get Revised Dates

In Telangana, the verification process will continue until August 3, with the draft voter list scheduled for release on August 10. Claims and objections can be filed until September 9, and the final list will be published on October 12.

EC Revises SIR Timeline Across States

- * Election Commission extends SIR exercise in Delhi, Karnataka, Telangana and Punjab.
- * Final voter lists will be published on October 12 and October 19 depending on the state.
- * Karnataka: BLO house-to-house verification extended till August 8; final voter list on October 19.
- * Delhi: Draft roll on August 17 and final

electoral roll on October 19.

- * Telangana & Punjab: Final voter lists to be released on October 12.
- * Haryana & Andhra Pradesh: SIR process extended by 10 days; final rolls on October 3.
- * Extension aims to provide more time for voter verification, corrections and claims disposal.

Punjab will also follow a revised schedule, with BLO verification extended until August 3. The draft roll will be released on August 13, and the final voter list will be published on October 12.

Haryana, Andhra Pradesh Also Included

The EC has extended the SIR exercise in Haryana and Andhra Pradesh by 10 days. Door-to-door verification in both states will continue until July 24,

while draft lists will be issued on July 31.

Citizens can submit corrections and objections from July 31 to August 30, with the final electoral rolls scheduled for publication on October 3.

The revised schedule aims to ensure accurate voter lists ahead of upcoming elections and provide sufficient time for verification and correction of electoral records.

US STRIKES IRAN, HORMUZ TENSIONS ESCALATE

► **Vikrama Vahini | Washington**

The United States has launched a fresh wave of strikes against Iranian military targets near the Strait of Hormuz, with the US Central Command (CENTCOM) saying the operation aimed to weaken Iran’s ability to threaten commercial shipping in the strategic waterway.

The latest action marks the second major US strike operation against Iran, targeting missile and drone sites, naval capabilities and coastal defence systems used by Tehran’s forces.

US Targets Iranian Military Capabilities

CENTCOM said US fighter aircraft, drones and naval vessels carried out precision strikes against dozens of Iranian military locations during a seven-hour operation.

The US military claimed the targets were linked to attacks on commercial vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world’s most important energy routes.

The strikes coincided with the US decision to resume a naval blockade on vessels travelling to and from Iranian ports and coastal areas.

Iran Launches Retaliatory Attacks

Following the US strikes, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) claimed



to have launched missile and drone attacks on US military positions in Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan.

Iranian state media reported that the attacks were carried out under “Operation Nasr 2” as retaliation for American strikes on Iranian territory.

The IRGC claimed it targeted US military infrastructure, including air defence systems, communication facilities and drone bases.

Regional Tensions Escalate

The latest exchange has intensified fears of a wider conflict in the Middle East, with major concerns over the safety of global shipping and energy supplies.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) condemned Iranian attacks on Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan, saying the strikes had affected military facilities and injured personnel.

Religion Question Sparks US Mall Stabbing

► **Vikrama Vahini | Washington**

A shocking hate-motivated attack has been reported at a shopping mall in Utah, United States, where an Indian-origin man was stabbed 15 times after an attacker allegedly questioned his religion and targeted him because he was Muslim.

The incident took place at Valley Fair Mall in West Valley City, where the victim, identified as Sohail, was working at a kiosk. According to police, the accused approached him and asked, “Are you Muslim?” After Sohail confirmed his faith, the attacker allegedly launched a deadly knife assault with the intention of killing him.

The accused, identified as 48-year-old Peter Michael Larsen, reportedly approached Sohail’s kiosk and initially asked for a bottle of water. During the conversation, Larsen allegedly asked Sohail where he was from. When Sohail replied that he was from India and shared his name, the accused questioned his religion.

A nearby jewellery store employee, Luna Nunez, who witnessed the incident, said Larsen suddenly pulled out a knife and attacked Sohail when he turned around to hand over the water bottle.

PG2

SIT Gives Clean Chit in Dharmasthala Probe

► **Vikrama Vahini | Mangaluru**

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the alleged Dharmasthala mass burial case has concluded that there is no evidence to substantiate the allegations and has submitted its nearly 7,000-page final report before the Belthangady court.

The report marks the conclusion of a year-long investigation launched by the Karnataka government following allegations of mass burials, sexual assaults, murders and an alleged cover-up that had attracted nationwide attention.

The SIT was constituted on July 15, 2025, after former sanitation worker C.N. Chinnayya, popularly known as the “Mask Man of Dharmasthala,” alleged that he had been forced to assist in burying several bodies between 1995 and 2014, claiming many victims were women and female students.

During the investigation, the SIT excavated 15 locations identified by Chinnayya, collected skeletal remains and soil samples for forensic examination, questioned numerous witnesses



and examined documentary and historical records.

According to the final report, the evidence gathered did not support the allegations. Investigators also cited inconsistencies in Chinnayya’s statements, leading to his arrest on charges of perjury during the investigation. He was later granted bail.

In subsequent court proceedings, Chinnayya reportedly withdrew his allegations, stating that they were false and had been made at the behest of certain activists.

He also alleged that he had been promised financial benefits to implicate Dharmasthala Dharmadhikari Dr. D. Veerendra Heggade. Chinnayya later approached the Karnataka High Court, claiming he had been coerced into making the allegations.

PG2

‘Godzilla’ El Niño Threatens Record Global Heat

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

A powerful El Niño has officially developed in the Pacific Ocean, with scientists warning it could become one of the strongest climate events in more than 150 years, raising the risk of extreme heat, droughts, floods and marine disruptions across the world.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has forecast a 63 per cent chance that the phenomenon will intensify into a very strong El Niño between November 2026 and January 2027.

Rapid Shift Raises Concerns

The rapid transition from La Niña conditions to El Niño has surprised climate scientists. Experts say the event, combined with human-driven global warming, could amplify weather extremes and place additional stress on agriculture, water resources and marine ecosystems. Scientists are also closely monitoring a persistent North Pacific marine heatwave, which may be strengthening the developing El Niño, although research is still underway.

Potential Global Impact

Climate experts believe the 2026 event could rival or even exceed the powerful 1997–98 and 2015–16 El Niño episodes.



A strong El Niño typically brings heavier rainfall to parts of North and South America, while increasing the likelihood of drought and hotter conditions across Australia, Indonesia and parts of Southeast Asia. It is also expected to contribute to a rise in

global temperatures, with its peak impact likely to be felt in 2027.

Experts Urge Preparedness

While forecasts may still change, scientists have urged governments and communities to begin preparing for possible weather-related disruptions. They caution that the impacts of El Niño are likely to be more severe than in previous decades because of rising global temperatures caused by climate change.

Global Weather Patterns Under Watch

Scientists are closely tracking ocean temperatures and atmospheric changes to understand the intensity and duration of the developing El Niño. The phenomenon could influence monsoon patterns, food production and disaster preparedness strategies in several countries, depending on how strongly it develops in the coming months.

Need for Early Action

Governments and climate agencies are being advised to strengthen early warning systems, manage water resources efficiently and prepare for possible climate-related challenges. Experts stress that better planning and adaptation measures will be crucial to reduce the impact of extreme weather events.

Editorial

Beyond Drought Relief

The alarming rise in global temperatures this year has once again highlighted the devastating impact of the El Niño phenomenon. Across Europe, relentless heatwaves have claimed thousands of lives, while India too is witnessing unprecedented climatic extremes. Bengaluru, known for its moderate weather, has recorded its highest monsoon-season temperature of 33°C after 123 years, underscoring the severity of the changing climate. These are no longer isolated weather events but clear indicators of a larger climate crisis. Karnataka is particularly vulnerable, with erratic rainfall, depleting groundwater reserves, and shrinking water levels in reservoirs threatening both agriculture and drinking water supplies. Reduced crop production could fuel inflation, pushing food prices beyond the reach of ordinary households and placing an additional burden on an already strained economy.

The immediate response of governments is understandably focused on relief measures. Karnataka Chief Minister's appeal to the Prime Minister for a central drought assessment team and subsequent financial assistance is a necessary step to address the current crisis. However, such interventions offer only temporary relief. Climate variability is becoming a recurring reality rather than an exception, and governments can no longer afford to treat every drought or flood as an isolated disaster. Short-term compensation packages, while important, do little to enhance resilience against future climate shocks. The challenge demands a transition from reactive governance to long-term climate adaptation strategies that address the root causes of water scarcity and environmental degradation.

The need of the hour is a comprehensive and sustainable water management policy. Every drop of rain that reaches the Western Ghats and the coastal belt should be scientifically harvested and stored instead of flowing into the sea. Investments in rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, inter-basin water conservation, and efficient irrigation systems must become national priorities. Equally important is the promotion of environmentally sustainable energy projects and climate-resilient agricultural practices that reduce dependence on unpredictable rainfall. Urban planning must also integrate water conservation as a core objective. Climate change is no longer a distant environmental concern; it is an economic, social, and developmental challenge. Governments at both the Centre and the State must seize this moment to build permanent solutions rather than rely solely on periodic drought relief. Only a long-term vision can protect livelihoods, ensure water security, and prepare India for an increasingly uncertain climate future.

-Editor

Footpath Drive Clears 5.55 km Across Bengaluru

► **Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**

The footpath encroachment clearance drive continued across Bengaluru on Tuesday, with civic authorities making 5.55 km of footpaths encroachment-free to improve pedestrian safety and ensure obstruction-free movement.

The drive was carried out under the direction of Greater Bengaluru Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda and the guidance of BNCC Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar.

In Byatarayanapura Division, officials cleared 1.20 km of footpath on Kogilu Main Road from Ettige Factory to Bellahalli Junction and 1 km on Agrahara Layout Main Road from Agrahara Village Junction to the BBMP Office.

In Pulakeshinagar Division, 1.35 km of footpath was cleared on Promenade Road between Haines Road and St. John's Church Road. In Dasarahalli



Division, authorities removed encroachments along 2 km of Kammagondanahalli Main Road.

During the operation, officials removed 11 shops and kiosks, 25 pushcarts, 10 temporary sheets and roof projections, 18 steps and ramps, and 19 advertisement boards. They also cleared 35 tonnes of debris, soil, and waste. The drive was carried out using three JCBs, five tractors, two tippers, one other machinery unit, and a team of 46 staff and workers.

BJP Slams Govt Over Bidadi Land Move

► **Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**

Karnataka Legislative Council Opposition Chief Whip N. Ravikumar on Tuesday accused Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar of adopting a "double standards" approach in the proposed Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township (GBIT) project at Bidadi, alleging that the government announced a review committee while simultaneously moving ahead with the second land acquisition notification.

Addressing the media, Ravikumar claimed the Congress government was misleading farmers by promising a high-level committee



to examine the project even as the Greater Bengaluru Development Authority (GBDA) proceeded with the next stage of land acquisition.

He alleged that the move amounted to a betrayal of farmers protesting against the project.

Rejecting the Chief Minister's claim that the township proposal originated during the tenures of former Chief Ministers H.D. Kumaraswamy and B.S. Yediyurappa, Ravikumar said the current situation was different and accused the government of prioritising the interests of builders and the real estate sector over those of farmers.

Religion Question Sparks US Mall Stabbing

► **From PGi**

Nunez tried to stop the attack by throwing objects, including shoes and a chair, at the accused to protect Sohail. Other shoppers also rushed to help and managed to restrain the attacker until police arrived.

Sohail suffered around 15 stab wounds and is currently undergoing multiple surgeries in a hospital. His condition has been described as critical.

During questioning, Larsen allegedly admitted that he attacked Sohail after confirming he was Muslim and said his intention was to kill Muslims.

Police have charged him with attempted murder and possession of a dangerous weapon. He is currently being held at the Salt Lake County Jail.

Authorities are investigating the incident as a possible hate-driven attack.

Janaagraha Questions K'taka's ULB Fund Claims

► **Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**

Public policy organisation Janaagraha has accused the Karnataka government of overstating financial devolution to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) by including welfare scheme spending and allocations to government-controlled agencies as transfers to civic bodies.

In its report "A Story of Reversal of Karnataka's Fiscal Decentralisation," Janaagraha said that while the 2026-27 Budget shows ₹34,052 crore as devolution to urban local bodies, only ₹4,972 crore has actually reached Karnataka's 327 urban local bodies.

The organisation alleged that expenditure on welfare schemes like Annabhagya and Gruhalakshmi, along with funds allocated to urban development authorities and water boards, has been counted as local body devolution despite not being directly transferred to elected civic



He further alleged that despite the government's assurance that land would be acquired only from consenting farmers, survey operations had been carried out with police protection and that protesting farmers had faced police action and criminal cases.

Ravikumar demanded the immediate withdrawal of the second land acquisition notification, cancellation of cases registered against protesting farmers, and suspension of all survey activities until the proposed committee submits its report.

Warning of intensified agitation, he said the BJP and JD(S) would jointly launch statewide protests if the government failed to halt the land acquisition process.

bodies.

Janaagraha Senior Manager Manisha Marulasiddappa said the Fifth State Finance Commission had recommended devolving 60% of the state's divisible revenue to local governments, but the government accepted only 50%.

The report also highlighted a decline in untied grants for civic infrastructure, which fell from ₹990 crore in 2011-12 to ₹75 crore in 2026-27, affecting urban development and maintenance works.

Janaagraha warned that delays in conducting urban local body elections could impact Karnataka's eligibility for grants from the 16th Finance Commission, as many civic bodies currently lack elected councils.

The organisation urged the state government to explain its accounting practices and strengthen financial autonomy of urban local governments for better civic governance.

SIT Gives Clean Chit in Dharmasthala Probe

► **From PGi**

The SIT's final report was submitted before the Belthangady court after a detailed investigation covering multiple aspects of the allegations. The report stated that the team did not find sufficient material evidence to establish claims of mass burials, murders or sexual offences as alleged.

As part of the probe, investigators carried out excavation exercises at the locations pointed out by Chinnayya and conducted forensic analysis of the collected samples. The SIT also recorded statements from several individuals and reviewed available records related to the allegations.

With the submission of the final report, further proceedings

will now depend on the court's examination of the findings. The case has remained a subject of public debate, with authorities maintaining that the investigation was conducted through legal and forensic procedures. With the submission of the final report, the Belthangady court will now examine the SIT's findings and decide the future course of legal proceedings in the case.

The SIT's conclusion has brought a significant development in the high-profile case, which had triggered widespread discussions across Karnataka and beyond. Authorities said the findings were based on evidence collected during the investigation, while the court's decision will determine the next stage of the matter.

BJP to Protest Bidadi Township Project July 17

► **Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**

B.Y. Vijayendra on Tuesday accused the Congress government of pursuing "deceit and duplicity" over the proposed Bidadi Township Project and announced that the BJP will stage a protest at Freedom Park on July 17 demanding the project's complete withdrawal.

In a statement, Vijayendra alleged that the government was misleading farmers by announcing a three-member committee while simultaneously issuing the final notification for land acquisition. He termed the move a betrayal of farmers and said the BJP would strongly oppose any attempt to acquire agricultural land against their wishes.



The BJP leader said the party was not against development but opposed the forcible acquisition of fertile farmland that serves as the livelihood of farmers. He demanded that the township project be scrapped entirely in view of the ongoing protests by farmers in Bidadi.

Vijayendra also accused Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar of prioritising real estate interests over farmers' welfare and alleged that the Congress government was ignoring the concerns of affected landowners. Targeting Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Vijayendra questioned his silence on the issue and urged him to intervene and direct the state government to withdraw the township project.

He further alleged that attempts were being made to intimidate protesting farmers through anti-social elements and said the BJP would continue its agitation until the project is withdrawn.

NEWS

ASHOK SLAMS PRC MOVE, SEEKS CBI PROBE

► **Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**

Karnataka Leader of Opposition R. Ashok on Tuesday accused the Congress government of attempting to issue Permanent Resident Certificates (PRCs) to illegal immigrants, including those from Bangladesh, to create a vote bank, and said the BJP has submitted a memorandum to Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot seeking immediate intervention.

Speaking to reporters after meeting the Governor, Ashok alleged that the proposed PRC system could enable illegal immigrants to access government welfare schemes such as ration cards, health benefits and housing assistance through forged documents.

He claimed the move would pose a threat to national security and harm the interests of local Kannadigas.

Ashok argued that matters relating to citizenship, migration and identification of foreigners fall exclusively under the jurisdiction of the Central Government, and alleged that the state's proposal violates the federal structure and constitutional provisions. He also sought a high-level inquiry into birth certificates issued through courts and Lok Adalats after the commencement of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

The BJP leader said the party had urged the Governor to direct the state government to withdraw the proposal and clarify whether the Centre had been consulted before issuing the notification.

Referring to the Bengaluru stampede during the RCB victory celebrations, Ashok alleged that the state government had failed to fix accountability.

He claimed only police officers were suspended while ministers and senior officials escaped action. He said the BJP would order a CBI probe into the incident if it comes to power in the state.

Ashok also demanded that the government declare drought in affected regions and immediately provide relief to farmers, including support for fodder, drinking water and irrigation, while seeking details on the utilisation of SDRF funds.

HEALTH & Lifestyle

Cold-Pressed vs Refined Oil

As health awareness continues to grow, cold-pressed (wood-pressed) oils are making a comeback in Indian kitchens. Once a household staple, these traditionally extracted oils are now gaining popularity as a healthier alternative to refined cooking oils.

Nutrition experts say cold-pressed oils are extracted at low temperatures using traditional wooden presses, helping retain natural antioxidants, Vitamin E and healthy fats that may be lost during intensive refining processes.

Health Benefits

Cold-pressed oils made from groundnut, sesame, coconut and sunflower seeds contain healthy fats that, when consumed in moderation, may support heart health, reduce inflammation and promote healthy skin.

Sesame oil is rich in antioxidants such as sesamol and contains calcium, while groundnut oil provides beneficial unsaturated fats. Coconut oil contains medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs), which are known to provide quick energy.

How They Differ from Refined Oils

Unlike cold-pressed oils, refined oils undergo high-temperature processing and chemical refining to improve shelf life and appearance.

While this makes them more stable for storage, the process may reduce some of their natural nutrients and flavour.

Cold-pressed oils retain more of their original aroma and nutritional properties but generally have a shorter shelf life and require proper storage.

SCIENCE & Technology

BRICS Forum Pushes AI-Era Worker Protection

► **Vikrama Vahini | Hyderabad**

The 15th BRICS Trade Union Forum has called for stronger protection of workers' rights as artificial intelligence (AI), automation, gig work and digital platforms continue to transform workplaces. The three-day forum, held in Hyderabad from July 14 to 16 under India's BRICS Presidency, adopted a declaration themed "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability."

The forum brought together representatives of trade unions from BRICS member and partner countries and stressed that the future of work must remain inclusive, equitable and centred on labour rights, social protection and skill development.

A key focus of the declaration was the rapid expansion of AI, robotics and digital technologies in workplaces. The forum cautioned that automation could lead to job displacement, increased workplace surveillance, algorithm-driven management and widening inequality if not properly regulated.

It emphasised that AI systems should not make final decisions on recruitment, performance evaluation, disciplinary action or dismissal without meaningful human oversight. The declaration underscored that technology should complement human labour rather than replace it.

The forum welcomed the adoption of the ILO Convention on Decent Work in the Platform Economy, 2026, and urged BRICS nations to align their labour laws with the convention.

SC to Decide Bengaluru Civic Poll Timeline on July 17

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

The future of elections to Bengaluru's five proposed municipal corporations is likely to become clear on July 17, when the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear the Karnataka government's plea seeking an extension of the deadline for conducting the polls.

The state government has requested the court to extend the deadline from August 31 to December 31, citing administrative difficulties due to the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant, along with Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohan, is expected to hear the matter after senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the state, requested that the case not be removed from the hearing list.

The Karnataka government has argued that officials are currently engaged in house-to-house voter verification under the SIR exercise, making it difficult to deploy the nearly 60,000 personnel required to conduct elections to the five



civic corporations. It also noted that Bengaluru has around 1.03 crore voters and nearly 40 lakh households, making simultaneous management of both exercises challenging.

Meanwhile, organisations affiliated with the Sangh Parivar have opposed the extension and urged the Supreme Court to direct the state to complete the civic elections by August 31, as previously ordered.

The court's decision is expected to determine the immediate future of the Greater Bengaluru civic polls. Sources said that if the extension is granted, the state government may consider restructuring the proposed five corporations into two or three civic bodies before conducting elections.

UGCET Round 1 Results Out

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

The Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) on Wednesday announced the final results of the first round of seat allotment for admission to various professional undergraduate courses, including engineering.

Out of the total 1,41,872 seats available across different courses, 1,22,512 seats have been allotted in the first round, while 19,374 seats remain vacant, according to KEA officials.

In the engineering stream, 90,748 seats have been allotted out of 91,724 seats, leaving only 976 seats vacant. The authority also confirmed that all 361 veterinary seats have been filled in the first round.

KEA Executive Director H. Prasanna said that seat allotment has been completed for courses other than medical, dental, AYUSH and pharmacy programmes.

Candidates who have secured seats have been advised to complete the required process, including selecting their choice options, paying the prescribed fees and reporting to the allotted colleges.

B'luru's Hottest July in 112 Years

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Bengaluru has recorded its hottest July day in 112 years, with the maximum temperature touching 33.6°C, as a weak south-west monsoon continues to push temperatures well above normal across Karnataka.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Tuesday's temperature surpassed the previous July record of 33.3°C, which was first recorded in 1914 and equalled in 1926.

The city's average maximum temperature in July is around 28.3°C, making this year's reading more than 5°C above normal.

Meteorologists attributed the unusual heat to below-normal rainfall and reduced monsoon activity across the state.

The prolonged dry spell has led to rising daytime temperatures not only in Bengaluru but also in several districts of Karnataka, where temperatures are currently 3-4°C above seasonal averages.



The IMD has warned that temperatures across the state could rise by another 3-5°C between July 15 and July 19 if dry weather persists.

Meanwhile, a yellow alert has been issued for Karnataka's coastal districts for Wednesday and Thursday due to the possibility of hot and humid weather conditions.

Weather officials have advised residents to stay hydrated, avoid prolonged exposure to the afternoon sun and take necessary precautions as the weakened monsoon continues to affect weather conditions across the state.

Deve Gowda's Wife Chennamma Hospitalised

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Chennamma, wife of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, was admitted to a private hospital in Bengaluru after she experienced a sudden health issue, causing concern among family members and supporters.

According to sources, Chennamma was shifted to Manipal Hospital after she developed severe breathing difficulties. Her health condition reportedly worsened after 10 pm, following which immediate medical attention was provided.

Doctors at the hospital are currently monitoring her condition and providing necessary treatment. Medical sources said that there is no immediate cause for concern and that her condition is being managed under expert supervision.

The news of Chennamma's hospitalisation led to concern among well-wishers and supporters of the Deve Gowda family.

Further details regarding her health condition are expected from hospital authorities.

HAKKI PIKKI TRIBE STRANDED ABROAD AGAIN

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Six members of Karnataka's Hakki Pikki tribal community have reportedly been stranded in Fiji after being detained by customs officials at the airport while attempting to return to India.

The group, comprising Manish, Krishna Kumar, Malini, Chandran Vasu, Sanjana Chandran and Harish Sampath, all from Pakshirajapura village in Hunsur taluk of Mysuru district, had travelled to Fiji to sell traditional herbal medicines and Ayurvedic oils.

According to reports, the six were stopped by customs officials on July 12 after allegedly failing to declare cash exceeding the permissible limit under



Six members of Karnataka's Hakki Pikki tribal community from Mysuru are stranded in Fiji after customs officials detained them over alleged cash declaration violations. The group had travelled for herbal oil trade and has sought government help for safe return to India.

Fiji's regulations. Their return tickets were cancelled, leaving them stranded

at the airport for the past two days.

The Hakki Pikki community, a traditional nomadic tribal group from Karnataka, is known for manufacturing and selling herbal oils and traditional medicines, which have a market in several African, Asian and Pacific countries. Many members of the community travel abroad on tourist visas, but often engage in commercial activities, leading to legal complications in foreign countries.

The community has faced similar crises in the past. During conflicts in Sudan and Yemen, several Hakki Pikki members were stranded overseas and were later evacuated by the Indian government under Operation Kaveri.

Kalaburagi Jail Escape: 8 Suspended

► Vikrama Vahini | Kalaburagi

Eight officials of Kalaburagi Central Jail have been suspended following the escape of three inmates due to alleged security lapses.

Jail Superintendent Rakesh Kamble, Assistant Superintendent B. Suresh, Jailor Shrimantgowda Patil and five warders were suspended by Prison Department DGP Alok Kumar.

Police have arrested one escaped inmate, while a search operation using drones is underway to trace the remaining two prisoners.

The incident has raised concerns over security arrangements at the prison. Officials said strict measures will be taken to prevent such escapes in the future.

GBIT Land Acquisition Enters Second Phase

► Bengaluru

The Karnataka government on Wednesday issued the second phase of final land acquisition notifications for the proposed Greater Bengaluru Integrated Township (GBIT) project near Bidadi, amid continuing protests and support from local residents and farmers.

The latest notifications cover around 4,940 acres across four villages in Ramanagara taluk, including Bannigiri (775 acres), Aralalasandra (1,460 acres), K.G. Gollarapalya (315 acres) and Hosur (2,390 acres).

The move comes as farmers and residents continue to hold

demonstrations both in favour of and against the ambitious township project.

The first phase of final notifications was issued last month for acquiring 499 acres across three villages in Ramanagara and Harohalli taluks.

The GBIT project is being promoted as India's first AI-powered integrated township, aimed at boosting urban development, infrastructure and investment around Bengaluru. However, the proposed land acquisition has triggered political debate and opposition from sections of farmers concerned about losing agricultural land.

Fake MNC Jobs Scam Hits Thousands of Unemployed Job Seekers

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

A job scam targeting unemployed youth has come to light in Bengaluru's Whitefield area, where a group allegedly cheated thousands of job seekers by promising employment in reputed multinational companies. The accused collected money from candidates on the pretext of providing high-paying jobs and allegedly duped them of lakhs of rupees.

Whitefield police have busted the fraud network and arrested the key accused, while efforts are underway to trace other members involved in the scam.

Fake Company Used to Lure Job Seekers

According to police, the accused set up a fake company office in Whitefield and advertised job opportunities in

reputed organisations across different states through online and offline platforms.

Candidates were asked to pay an entry fee ranging from ₹2,000 to ₹3,000 for attending recruitment tests.

The applicants were made to appear for examinations in batches of 30 to 40 people and were later told that they would be contacted

after the results.

Candidates Cheated After Tests

Several candidates who did not receive any response after the tests contacted the company. The accused allegedly gave excuses, claiming that the candidates had failed the examination or that the vacancies had already been filled.

Many victims ignored the issue, assuming that they had lost only a few thousand rupees.

The fraudsters allegedly used this to continue the scam for several years and collected lakhs of rupees from job seekers.

Police Investigation Reveals Fraud

The scam came to light after some candidates demanded copies of their examination papers. When the company staff failed to provide proper answers, the candidates became suspicious and approached the Whitefield police.

ENTERTAINMENT

Vijay's Final Film to Release on July 23

► Vikrama Vahini | Chennai

The makers of Jana Nayagan, the final film starring Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay, have officially announced that the much-awaited movie will hit theatres on July 23, 2026, after receiving certification from the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) following months of delay.

Produced by KVN Productions and directed by H. Vinoth, the film is billed as Vijay's farewell to cinema after his entry into full-time politics. The announcement was made on social media along with a new poster featuring Vijay in a khadi outfit holding a sword, symbolising the film's central theme of resistance and leadership.

Delayed by Censor Clearance

Jana Nayagan was originally slated for release in January 2026, but its release was postponed after the CBFC withheld certification during an extended review process. The certification involved multiple rounds of scrutiny, revisions and referrals.

The producers later approached the Madras High Court and subsequently the Supreme Court, seeking clearance for the film.

Following the legal proceedings, the CBFC granted the film an 'A' certificate after directing the makers to implement 12 cuts. The movie has a total runtime of 3 hours and 3 minutes.

Story and Cast

The film revolves around an ordinary man who rises against injustice and gradually becomes an unexpected leader, emerging as a symbol of resistance.

Besides Vijay, the film features Pooja Hegde, Bobby Deol, Mamitha Baiju, Gautham Vasudev Menon, Prakash Raj, Narain, Priyamani and Sunil in key roles.

With the release date now confirmed, Jana Nayagan is expected to be one of the biggest Tamil film releases of the year, marking the end of Vijay's acting career before he devotes himself entirely to public life.

The film's announcement has generated widespread excitement among Vijay's fans, who have been eagerly awaiting his final appearance on the big screen. Social media platforms witnessed a surge of reactions after the release date reveal, with supporters calling the movie a special milestone in the actor's career.

Industry observers believe Jana Nayagan could attract massive attention due to Vijay's transition from cinema to politics. The film's themes of justice, leadership and public resistance have further increased curiosity among audiences ahead of its theatrical release.

The makers are planning a grand promotional campaign ahead of the release, with expectations of a strong box-office response across Tamil Nadu and other regions.

'HAIWAAN' FIRST LOOK: AKSHAY-SAIF ENTER A DARK WORLD



► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

The first look of the much-awaited thriller 'Haiwaan', starring Akshay Kumar and Saif Ali Khan, has been released, creating excitement among fans. Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Priyadarshan, the film promises a gripping and intense cinematic experience filled with suspense, drama and high-stakes action.

The makers unveiled a series of character posters featuring the lead actors, offering a glimpse into the dark and mysterious world of the film. The posters showcase Akshay Kumar and Saif Ali Khan in intense avatars, hinting at the powerful roles they will portray in the thriller. In one poster, Akshay Kumar is seen wearing a beanie cap with the film's title displayed prominently in a bold red design. Another poster features Saif Ali Khan with a serious and sharp expression, while another glimpse shows Akshay in a sinister avatar against a red backdrop.

Sharing the first look on social media,

Akshay Kumar wrote, "One sees everything, one misses nothing, Haiwaniyat ab nahin rukegi!" He also announced that 'Haiwaan' will arrive in theatres on September 11, 2026.

Ahead of the first look release, Akshay Kumar teased fans with a cryptic message, suggesting a shift from his usual entertaining roles to a darker and more intense character. His post read, "Bahut Hasaa Liya. Ab Kal Se Haiwaniyat Shuru" (You've laughed enough. From tomorrow, the brutality begins).

He further wrote, "Kal, raat 8 baje. Aur iss baar, mazaak nahi hoga" (Tomorrow at 8 PM. And this time, there will be no jokes), raising curiosity among audiences about the film's theme and storyline.

Apart from Akshay Kumar and Saif Ali Khan, 'Haiwaan' also features Boman Irani, Saiyami Kher and Shriya Pilgaonkar in important roles. The film is expected to explore a dark and intense narrative under Priyadarshan's direction.

BUSINESS

India's Tech Manufacturing Boost

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

The Union Cabinet-approved Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS), also known as the second phase of the Mobile Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, is set to transform India's electronics manufacturing sector by moving beyond mobile phone assembly and encouraging domestic production of components and technology development.

With a budget outlay of ₹62,500 crore, the scheme aims to make India a global electronics manufacturing hub and promote the growth of Indian-owned mobile brands in international markets.

60,000 Direct Jobs Expected

According to Union Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav, the scheme is expected to create around 60,000 direct jobs over the next five years from financial year 2026-27 to 2030-31. It is also expected to generate lakhs of indirect employment opportunities across the electronics supply chain.

₹30 Lakh Crore Production Target

The government has set an ambitious target of producing mobile phones worth around ₹30 lakh crore during the five-year period. The scheme also aims to achieve mobile phone exports worth nearly ₹15 lakh crore, strengthening India's position in the global electronics market.

Incentives for Manufacturers

To attract investments and encourage local manufacturing, the scheme offers various incentives to companies: 2.25% to 5% basic production incentive for manufacturing mobile phones in India. Additional 1.5% incentive for using locally manufactured components.

Extra 3% incentive for Indian companies investing in their own designs and research capabilities. Beyond Assembly: Focus on Components and Innovation

Unlike the earlier PLI scheme, the new initiative focuses not only on assembling smartphones but also on developing a complete electronics ecosystem, including manufacturing of key components within India.

The government aims to reduce dependence on imports, encourage domestic innovation and help Indian companies develop their own technologies and patents.

SPORTS

Kohli Breaks Sachin's World Record

► **Vikrama Vahini | Birmingham**

Indian batting star Virat Kohli added another milestone to his illustrious career by breaking a long-standing record held by legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar during the first ODI against England.

India defeated England by six wickets in the opening ODI after chasing down a target of 259 runs in 45.2 overs. Although Kohli scored only five runs after coming in at No. 3, he created two major world records in the match.

Most Runs After 300 ODI Innings

Kohli became the first batter in ODI history to score the most runs after completing 300 innings. Before this, the record belonged to Sachin Tendulkar, who had scored 12,015 runs in his first 300 ODI innings.

Kohli surpassed the mark with an impressive tally of 14,802 runs in 300 ODI innings, becoming the highest run-scorer after 300 innings in one-day international cricket.

Rare International Cricket Milestone

The Indian star also achieved another historic feat by becoming the first cricketer in the world to play 300 ODI innings, 100 Test innings and 100 T20 International innings.

The latest achievements further strengthen Kohli's position among the greatest batsmen in cricket history. Despite scoring just five runs in the match, his record-breaking performance once again highlighted his remarkable consistency and longevity in international cricket.

ICC Plans World Cup Team Cut

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is reportedly considering a major change to the format of the 2027 ODI World Cup, with discussions underway to reduce the number of participating teams from 14 to 12.

The proposal was discussed during the ICC Annual Conference held recently in Edinburgh, Scotland. The possible change has sparked debate within the cricket community, especially among emerging and associate nations.

The 2027 World Cup was earlier planned with 14 teams as part of ICC's push to expand cricket globally. However, the governing body is now considering a 12-team format to maximise commercial opportunities during upcoming broadcast rights negotiations.

Reports suggest ICC is also exploring changes to the tournament structure, including replacing the traditional Super Six stage with a new Super Seven format.

The proposed format could increase the possibility of high-profile clashes, including more India-Pakistan encounters, which attract huge television audiences and advertising revenue.

The possible reduction in teams has drawn criticism from smaller cricket nations. Associate countries have expressed disappointment, arguing that limiting World Cup participation could slow the growth of cricket globally.

The ICC had faced criticism earlier for allowing only 10 teams in the 2019 and 2023 ODI World Cups.

BSF TIGHTENS VIGIL ALONG SUNDARBANS BORDER

► **Vikrama Vahini | Kolkata**

Border Security Force (BSF) Director General Praveen Kumar has directed officials to strengthen surveillance along the India-Bangladesh border in the Sundarbans following a three-day inspection of the sensitive riverine frontier.

The visit comes amid the Centre's continued focus on enhancing security along the eastern border, where large stretches consist of rivers and waterways, making conventional border fencing impractical.

During the review, the BSF chief inspected several vulnerable locations and assessed existing



security arrangements.

He instructed senior officers of the South Bengal Frontier and Eastern Command to deploy additional personnel, intensify river patrols and strengthen monitoring in areas vulnerable to infiltration and cross-border smuggling.

Praveen Kumar also called for the deployment of modern patrol boats equipped for night

BSF Director General Praveen Kumar has ordered enhanced surveillance along the India-Bangladesh border in the Sundarbans after a three-day security review. The force will strengthen river patrols, deploy advanced boats and improve monitoring to tackle infiltration and smuggling threats.

operations and directed officials to install high-capacity lighting systems to improve visibility and surveillance along the waterways.

As part of the visit, the BSF chief interacted with residents of border villages and urged them to cooperate with security agencies by reporting any suspicious activities related to infiltration or smuggling.

He assured them of the force's support and said complaints against BSF personnel, if any, would be addressed appropriately.

While expressing satisfaction with the overall security arrangements, Kumar emphasised the need for continuous vigilance to safeguard one of India's most strategically important and geographically challenging border regions.

Nepal Jails Ex-Ministers in Refugee Scam

► **Vikrama Vahini | Kathmandu**

A Nepal court has sentenced two former cabinet ministers and 14 others to prison in a major fake Bhutanese refugee scam that involved fraudulently portraying Nepali citizens as Bhutanese refugees eligible for resettlement in the United States.

The Kathmandu District Court convicted former Deputy Prime Minister and Energy Minister Top Bahadur Rayamajhi, former Home Minister Bal Krishna Khand, and 14 others on charges including offences against the state, fraud and organised crime.

Rayamajhi was sentenced to four years in prison, while Khand received a two-year jail term as an accomplice.

Several former bureaucrats and

intermediaries were also convicted and awarded prison sentences.

According to prosecutors, the accused forged official documents to falsely identify Nepali citizens as displaced Bhutanese refugees.

The scam, which surfaced in 2023, triggered widespread public outrage and exposed alleged links between politicians, government officials and criminal networks. Investigators said more than 800 Nepali citizens were cheated, paying millions of rupees for fake refugee documents.

The verdict is being viewed as one of Nepal's most significant anti-corruption rulings in recent years and a major step towards holding senior political leaders accountable.



Bidadi Plan Was JD(S)-BJP's Idea: DKS

► **Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**

Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Wednesday defended the proposed Bidadi Integrated Township Project, asserting that the project was conceived and approved during the JD(S)-BJP coalition government led by former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy.

Displaying official records, cabinet decisions and gazette notifications dating back to 2006, Shivakumar said the Congress government was only implementing decisions taken by previous administrations.

"This is not my dream project. It is not my project. I am only continuing the decisions taken by previous governments," he said.

'Project Approved in 2006'

Shivakumar said the township proposal was first approved on September 23, 2006, when the JD(S)-BJP government decided to develop five integrated townships, including Bidadi. He claimed the previous government had approved the project under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, invited global tenders, expanded the project area and imposed restrictions on development within the notified zone.

According to the Chief Minister, subsequent BJP governments also continued



Karnataka CM D.K. Shivakumar defended the Bidadi Integrated Township Project, saying it was originally approved during the JD(S)-BJP government in 2006 and that his government is only continuing earlier decisions. He assured farmers that land acquisition would not be forced and promised fair compensation.

the land acquisition process and revised compensation, indicating bipartisan support for the project over the years.

Targets Kumaraswamy

Accusing Kumaraswamy of political hypocrisy, Shivakumar said the former Chief Minister was now opposing a project that had originated under his own government.

"You initiated the project, approved the files and imposed restrictions. Today you are protesting the same project," he remarked.

Shivakumar also alleged that members of Kumaraswamy's family had purchased land within the notified township area while ordinary farmers were restricted from developing their land.

Assures Farmers

Seeking to allay fears among farmers, the Chief Minister said no land would be acquired forcibly and participation in the project would remain voluntary.



darshan slots, accommodation availability, Arjitha Sevas, ticket releases, cancelled ticket availability, various darshan categories and waiting times. Authentic information is also broadcast through SVBC.

The Additional EO said devotees seeking booking-related assistance can contact the TTD Call Centre (153257) for official guidance.

He further appealed to devotees not to transfer money to unauthorised persons under any circumstances and to immediately report any agents or middlemen offering illegal booking services to the TTD Vigilance Complaint Cell (9866898630).

Iran Threatens Wider Shipping Disruption

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

Tensions between Iran and the United States escalated on Wednesday after Iran warned it could disrupt key maritime routes beyond the Strait of Hormuz, while US President Donald Trump renewed a naval blockade on Iranian ports following fresh attacks on commercial shipping.

Iran Warns of Wider Disruption

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said that if Iranian ports continue to remain under blockade, regional energy exports would also be affected, signalling the possibility of expanding the conflict to other strategic shipping routes.

Bab el-Mandeb in Focus

Security analysts believe Iran could rely on its Houthi allies in Yemen to target vessels passing through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a vital waterway connecting the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden. The route is crucial for global trade and oil exports from the Gulf region.

The Houthis have repeatedly attacked commercial ships in the Red Sea since the regional conflict intensified and have warned of further attacks if military



operations against Yemen continue.

Fresh US-Iran Military Escalation

The renewed blockade follows allegations by the United States that Iran was involved in attacks on commercial shipping despite previous diplomatic efforts.

The US also carried out fresh strikes on Iranian military targets near the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran responded with missile attacks on US-linked targets in Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan, while claiming that dozens of civilians and military personnel were killed in recent American strikes.

Global Energy Concerns Rise

Iran has maintained that the Strait of Hormuz will remain closed until what it described as the end of US aggression. President Trump has warned of further military action targeting Iran's energy infrastructure if hostilities continue.

HMDA Engineer Arrested; ₹100 Crore Assets Found

► **Vikrama Vahini | Hyderabad**

The Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has arrested B. Ravinder, Chief Engineer of the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA), in a disproportionate assets case after uncovering properties and valuables allegedly acquired through illegal means.

According to the ACB, the registered value of the seized properties is around ₹9.24 crore, while the current market value is estimated to exceed ₹100 crore due to rising real estate prices in Hyderabad's western growth corridor.

The ACB also recovered ₹3.82 lakh cash, bank deposits of ₹45.05 lakh, 1.44 kg gold jewellery worth ₹36.7 lakh, 12.5 kg silver, household items, electronic gadgets and four luxury vehicles including Innova Hycross, Tata Safari, Innova Crysta and Mahindra XUV. Ravinder has been sent to judicial custody. The ACB said further investigation is underway to identify additional assets, financial transactions and suspected benami properties linked to the officer.

HDK BLAMES CONG FOR BIDADI REVIVAL

► **Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**

Union Minister and JD(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy on Wednesday accused the Karnataka government of reviving the controversial Bidadi Integrated Township project after keeping it dormant for nearly two decades, rejecting Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar's claim that the project originated during the JD(S)-BJP regime.

Responding to the Chief Minister's remarks, Kumara swamy said his government had proposed satellite townships only after consulting farmers and had assured that no land would be acquired without their consent. "I never denied proposing five satellite townships, including one near Bidadi. But every decision was taken after discussions with farmers and local represen tatives. No farmer was to be displaced against his or her will," he said.

Questions Congress' Stand

Kumaraswamy questioned why successive Congress governments had not implemented the project if it was genuinely considered important.

"If the project was so essential, why did the Congress keep it in cold storage for nearly 20 years? Why has it suddenly become a priority now?" he asked.

He also clarified that he had



announced in the Assembly in August 2007 that the proposed DLF township project would not be pursued and said developments that took place after his resignation could not be attributed to him.

'Government Under Pressure'

The former Chief Minister dismissed the Congress government's reliance on old cabinet decisions and High-Level Clearance Committee (HLCC) records, saying they reflected only administrative discussions and not final approval. Referring to the state government's decision to constitute a committee to examine the project, Kumaraswamy said it showed the government itself was uncertain about its stand.

The Bidadi township proposal has triggered widespread protests from farmers, with both the ruling Congress and the opposition JD(S) and BJP trading charges over the project's origin and the ongoing land acquisition process.

Madan Mitra Joins TMC Rebel Camp

► **Vikrama Vahini | Kolkata**

In a significant political development in West Bengal, senior Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader and Kamarhati MLA Madan Mitra on Wednesday joined the Ritabrata Banerjee-led rebel camp, while asserting that he remains a member of the TMC.

Mitra announced his resignation from all national and state committees of the Mamata Banerjee-led party and also stepped down as the TMC chief whip in the West Bengal Assembly.

Addressing reporters after meeting Ritabrata Banerjee in the Assembly, Mitra said, "I have only changed my room, not my house. I am very much in the TMC," indicating that he was not leaving the party despite distancing himself from its organisational structure.

He also confirmed that he would participate in the July 21 Martyrs' Day programme organised by the Ritabrata Banerjee faction.

Mitra's move comes amid growing dissent within the ruling party, with several leaders reportedly aligning with the rebel camp in recent weeks. Political observers view the development as a setback for Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, although Mitra has denied quitting the TMC.

The political buzz intensified after Mitra recently visited the residence of rebel MLA Sandipan Saha, further fuelling speculation over internal divisions within the party.

US Tariff Threat: India Faces 100% Levy Risk

► **Vikrama Vahini | Washington**

The possibility of the United States imposing a 100% tariff on countries importing Russian crude oil has raised concerns, with India being closely watched due to its significant purchases of Russian energy.

Earlier, the US had proposed a tougher sanctions bill aimed at financially pressuring Russia amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. The bipartisan bill introduced by Republican Senator Lindsey Graham and Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal had proposed tariffs as high as 500% on countries, including India and China, that purchase Russian oil and energy products.

However, the latest version of the proposed legislation has reportedly reduced the maximum tariff on third-party countries buying Russian crude oil and natural gas to 100%.

The move is part of Washington's broader efforts to restrict Russia's energy revenues and increase economic pressure over the Ukraine war. The impact of the proposed tariff measures on countries such as India remains a matter of discussion.

Delhi to Turn Dairy Waste into Clean Energy

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG) plants in Delhi for the scientific management and utilisation of cattle dung.

The agreement was signed in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, with the aim of preventing dairy waste, especially cow dung, from entering the Yamuna river and converting it into a useful resource for clean energy generation and sustainable agriculture.

Under the initiative, cattle dung will be processed to produce compressed bio-gas, which can be used as an alternative energy source. The project is also expected to support organic farming by providing nutrient-rich by-products for agricultural use.

Addressing the gathering, Amit Shah said the partnership between MCD and NDDB could become a model for other major cities in the country. He highlighted that scientific waste management can help improve urban cleanliness while also increasing the income of livestock farmers.