

Good morning

You can't always have a good day. But you can always face a bad day with a good attitude.

BRIEFS

Sachin's Merit Message

➤ **Vikrama Vahini | Delhi**

Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar has called for a fair and transparent education system, stressing that hard work should be rewarded and merit should always prevail. His message came amid ongoing protests over alleged irregularities in the NEET-UG examination process.

In a post on X, Tendulkar shared a lesson from his father, saying, "Failure is okay, cheating is not. Never take shortcuts." He urged society to create an environment where honesty is encouraged and students' efforts are valued.

Calling youth the nation's biggest strength, Tendulkar said parents, teachers, institutions and authorities have a collective responsibility to protect students' dreams and confidence.

His remarks came as student protests continued in Delhi, with demonstrators demanding accountability over the NEET controversy.

Former cricketer Irfan Pathan and environmental activist Sonam Wangchuk also expressed support for students seeking a fair examination system.

Iran Warns UK Over US Strikes

➤ **Vikrama Vahini | Tehran**

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has warned that British military bases could become "legitimate targets" if they are used by the United States for attacks against Iran, escalating tensions between Tehran and Washington.

The IRGC claimed that the US has shifted its military operations from naval missile strikes to long-range B-1 bomber missions launched from RAF Fairford in the UK.

Iran said any facility used to launch attacks on its territory would be considered a target.

The warning comes amid continued US strikes against Iranian military infrastructure and rising tensions over regional security. The US has said its operations are aimed at protecting shipping routes and reducing threats to commercial vessels in the region.

Iran has previously warned countries hosting US military facilities that they could be drawn into the conflict.

The latest statement has raised concerns over a possible wider escalation, as diplomatic tensions continue to mount between Iran, the US and its allies.

The UK has not confirmed Iran's allegations regarding the use of its bases for attacks. Meanwhile, international observers have urged restraint from all sides to prevent the conflict from spreading further across the region.

PM's Strict Stand on NEET Row

Modi Promises Fast-Track Justice on Paper Leaks

NEET-UG Paper Leak Row: Centre announces fast-track courts, reshuffles Education Ministry officials, while Delhi HC sets up a dedicated court to ensure speedy trials in examination fraud cases. The moves come amid nationwide protests and demands for greater transparency in the education system.

➤ **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday broke his silence on the ongoing NEET-UG 2026 paper leak controversy, assuring students that the government will establish fast-track courts to ensure speedy trials and strict punishment for those involved in examination malpractices.

Amid continuing protests led by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) at Jantar Mantar in Delhi, PM Modi said protecting the future of the country's youth remains the government's highest priority. He warned that those responsible for damaging students' careers would not be spared.

Fast-Track Courts to Speed Up Trials

In a post on social media platform X, the Prime Minister said the government has decided to set up fast-track courts to deliver swift justice in paper leak cases. He stated that necessary directions have been issued to concerned authorities to take immediate steps.

PM Modi said strict action against those involved in examination fraud would help restore confidence among students and strengthen the credibility of the education system.

Protests Continue in Delhi

The Prime Minister's remarks came as protests over the alleged NEET-UG paper leak continued in the national capital. The demonstrations, which began at Jantar Mantar, later spread to areas near Parliament Street and Tolstoy Marg.

Thousands of students and supporters participated in the protests, demanding accountability and reforms in the examination process. Opposition leaders also joined the demonstrations and continued their demand for the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Centre Defends Action on Paper Leak

The government has maintained that it acted promptly after reports of the paper leak emerged.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced the setting up of fast-track courts to ensure speedy trials and strict punishment in NEET-UG paper leak cases, stressing that protecting the future of students is the government's top priority. The move comes amid nationwide protests demanding accountability and reforms in the examination system. The government said the initiative aims to restore students' confidence and strengthen transparency in the examination system.

Education Ministry Sees Major Shake-Up

➤ **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

Amid growing protests and political controversy over the alleged NEET-UG paper leak, the Central government on Thursday carried out a major bureaucratic reshuffle in the Education Ministry, replacing key officials handling higher and school education.

Rajasthan cadre IAS officer Naresh Pal Gangwar has been appointed as the new Secretary of Higher Education, replacing Dr. Vineet Joshi. Joshi has been transferred to the Panchayati Raj Department as part of the administrative changes.

The Centre has also appointed T. K. Anil Kumar as the new Secretary of School Education, replacing the existing official. The changes come

at a time when the Education Ministry is facing intense scrutiny over alleged irregularities in the conduct of the NEET-UG examination.

The NEET paper leak controversy has triggered nationwide protests by students and opposition parties, with demands for accountability, transparency and strict action against those responsible.

The government has maintained that investigations are underway and assured that guilty persons will face stringent action.

The reshuffle is being seen as a significant administrative move amid efforts to restore confidence in the examination system and address concerns raised by students and stakeholders.

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju earlier said that several accused persons were arrested and legal action was initiated.

Rijiju stated that the government also prioritised the interests of students by ensuring the

examination process continued smoothly and results were announced without unnecessary delay.

Focus on Protecting Students' Future

The Centre said the proposed fast-track courts are part of wider measures aimed at preventing

KPSC Recruitment Scam Row Deepens

➤ **Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**

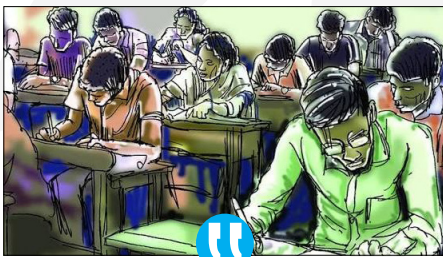
Fresh allegations of corruption have surfaced in the Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC), with more than 50 candidates alleging serious irregularities in the recruitment of 400 Veterinary Officers and seeking cancellation of the selection process.

The recruitment examination was conducted on January 8, and the results were announced on July 17. Soon after the results were declared, several candidates questioned the transparency of the recruitment and lodged a complaint at the Vidhana Soudha Police Station in Bengaluru.

Alleged ₹80-Lakh Bribe for Posts

In their complaint, the candidates alleged that some Veterinary Officer posts were sold through middlemen for ₹80 lakh each. They further claimed that nearly 60 per cent of the recruitment process was affected by irregularities.

The complainants also alleged the involvement of certain KPSC members, including suspended Chairman Shivashankarappa Sahukar, in the alleged malpractice. However, these allegations have



More than 50 candidates have alleged corruption and irregularities in the KPSC Veterinary Officer recruitment process, claiming posts were offered for money and demanding cancellation of the selection. Police have received a complaint seeking a detailed probe into the alleged malpractice, while the KPSC is yet to respond.

not been officially established or proven.

Candidates Demand Probe

The candidates have sought a comprehensive police investigation into the recruitment process and demanded that the results be cancelled if the allegations are found to be true. Student leader Kanth Kumar called for strict action against those allegedly

involved and claimed that candidates were approached by intermediaries offering government posts in exchange for money.

Questions Raised Over Merit List

The complainants also questioned the merit list, alleging that unusually high scores had raised doubts about the fairness of the evaluation process.

They argued that many deserving candidates were overlooked despite performing well in the examination.

The latest complaint has once again brought the KPSC under scrutiny, following the recent suspension of its Chairman over separate allegations. Police are expected to investigate the matter, while the KPSC is yet to issue an official response to the fresh allegations.

The controversy has sparked demands from candidates and aspirants' groups for greater transparency in government recruitment examinations.

They urged authorities to ensure an independent inquiry and take strict action against anyone found guilty to restore confidence in the selection process. **PG2**

Special Court for Exam Leak Cases

➤ **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

The Delhi High Court on Thursday notified a dedicated fast-track court to handle criminal cases related to examination paper leaks and the use of unfair means in public examinations.

The move follows Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement that fast-track courts would be established to ensure speedy trials and strict action against those involved in paper leak cases.

According to a notification issued by the High Court administration, the court of judicial officer Anu Grover Balliga will function as a "Specially Designated Fast Track Court" with immediate effect.

The designated court will conduct trials of offences under the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, along with related criminal cases. The step aims to ensure quicker disposal of cases and strengthen measures against examination malpractice.

examination irregularities and ensuring strict punishment for offenders.

The government reiterated that safeguarding the aspirations and future of millions of students remains a key priority.

NANDINI GHEE, BUTTER PRICES HIKED

➤ **Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**

Consumers in Karnataka are set to face another price shock as the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) has increased the prices of its popular Nandini ghee and butter products. The revised rates will come into effect from tomorrow across all KMF outlets.

The price of Nandini ghee has been increased by ₹15 per kg, rising from ₹700 to ₹715, while the price of butter has gone up by ₹22 per kg.

KMF said the price revision was necessary due to the rise in milk processing, transportation, operational and production costs. The federation added that the move would help reduce losses of milk unions and maintain benefits provided to dairy farmers.

The price hike is expected to impact households as well as commercial users such as hotels, sweet manufacturers and bakeries that depend heavily on Nandini dairy products. Industry sources said the increase in ghee and butter prices may lead to a marginal rise in the prices of sweets, bakery items and other food products in the coming days. **PG2**



FCRA Bill Triggers Political Storm

➤ **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**

The proposed Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 has triggered a political debate, with the Centre defending the legislation as a step towards greater transparency and national security, while Opposition parties and church organisations have expressed concerns over its impact on charitable and religious institutions.

The Bill seeks to tighten regulations governing foreign donations received by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), charitable trusts, educational institutions, hospitals and religious organisations.

Stricter Rules Proposed

Under the proposed amendments, organisations whose FCRA registration is cancelled or not renewed will no longer be permitted to use foreign funds or assets created through such



contributions. The government will also have the authority to appoint an administrator to manage assets

through the designated State Bank of India branch in New Delhi and proposes reducing the permissible limit for administrative expenses funded through foreign donations from 50 per cent to 20 per cent.

Opposition parties, including the Congress, Trinamool Congress and CPI(M), have criticised the proposed legislation, alleging that it grants excessive powers to the government and could adversely affect organisations involved in education, healthcare and welfare activities.

Church bodies, including the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC) and organisations from Mizoram, have also urged the Centre to reconsider the amendments, stating that stricter regulations could make it difficult to operate schools, hospitals and orphanages serving rural communities.

Centre Defends Bill

The Centre has maintained that the amendments are intended to ensure transparency, prevent misuse of foreign funds and safeguard national security.

It said the proposed changes would strengthen oversight and ensure that overseas contributions are used only for legitimate charitable and social purposes.

The Bill is expected to be introduced during the ongoing Monsoon Session of Parliament, while Opposition parties continue to demand wider consultations before it is taken up for consideration.

The proposed reforms have intensified the debate over balancing regulatory control with the freedom of organisations engaged in social and humanitarian work.

SPIRITUAL

5 Plants for Shiva's Blessings

With the holy month of Sawan set to begin on July 30, 2026 in North India, devotees across the country are preparing to observe one of the most spiritually significant periods dedicated to Lord Shiva. The month is marked by fasting, temple visits, chanting of mantras and special pujas, with many believers also following Vastu Shastra to bring positivity and divine blessings into their homes.

According to Vastu traditions, planting certain sacred plants during Sawan is considered highly auspicious. These plants are believed to promote peace, prosperity, spiritual growth and protection from negative energies while strengthening one's connection with Lord Shiva.

Among the most revered is the Bael Tree (Bel Patra), whose trifoliate leaves hold a special place in Shiva worship. Offering Bel leaves to the deity is believed to bring prosperity, happiness and inner peace. Vastu recommends planting the tree in the north or west direction of the house.

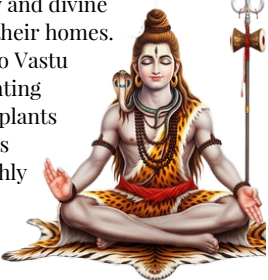
The Tulsi (Holy Basil) plant, though primarily associated with Goddess Lakshmi, is also considered beneficial during Sawan. Daily prayers offered to Tulsi are believed to attract wealth, harmony and positive energy. It is best placed in the northeast direction or the central courtyard of the home.

Another sacred plant is the Shami Plant (Prosopis), which is linked to both Lord Shiva and Lord Shani. It is believed to remove negativity, promote financial stability and provide spiritual protection. Worshipping the Shami plant is also said to reduce karmic burdens and encourage personal growth.

The Lakshmana Plant (Ban Kalmi) is regarded as a symbol of prosperity and domestic harmony. Easy to cultivate in gardens or pots, it is believed to invite abundance and happiness into the household when planted during the holy month.

The Datura Plant (Moonflower) also holds great significance in Shiva worship. Its flowers and fruits are traditionally offered to Lord Shiva, symbolising the destruction of ego, anger and negativity.

Devotees believe that planting these sacred plants during this period not only enhances the natural environment but also invites divine grace, peace and abundance into their homes, making Sawan an ideal time to strengthen both spiritual and environmental harmony.



Karnataka Woos Tourism Investors

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Karnataka Energy and Tourism Minister K. J. George on Thursday said the State Government is committed to making Karnataka one of India's most investor-friendly tourism destinations by simplifying policies and extending full support to private investors.

Speaking after inaugurating the 26th Indian International Travel Mart (IITM) 2026 in Bengaluru, the Minister invited domestic and international investors to explore opportunities in Karnataka's tourism sector.

The three-day event has brought together over 850 tourism stakeholders, participants from 16 States and more than 26 international tourism organisations, facilitating business partnerships and investment opportunities.

George said the government is introducing



investor-friendly measures, including single-window clearances, subsidies and various incentives, to encourage investments in tourism. He assured investors that the government would provide all necessary support for projects such as resorts, adventure tourism and cruise tourism.

Highlighting Karnataka's tourism

potential, he said the State offers diverse experiences ranging from heritage, wildlife and nature tourism to coastal, spiritual, wellness and adventure tourism.

He added that the government has been actively promoting Karnataka through roadshows, travel marts and investor outreach programmes across India and abroad.

BJP SEEKS GOVERNOR'S INTERVENTION OVER MLA ATTACK

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

A BJP delegation on Thursday submitted a memorandum to Karnataka Governor condemning the alleged attack on BJP legislators during a protest outside the KPCC office and sought immediate action against those responsible.

The delegation, led by State BJP President B. Y. Vijayendra, Leader of the Opposition R. Ashok, and Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council Chhalavadi Narayanaswamy, urged the Governor to direct the Director General of Police to register non-bailable cases against the accused

and ensure their immediate arrest.

The BJP also sought action against senior police officers present at the scene, alleging they failed to provide adequate security to the legislators. The party demanded an inquiry into the incident, suspension of the officers found responsible, and enhanced security for Opposition leaders.

In its memorandum, the BJP further alleged a deterioration in law and order in Karnataka and requested the Governor to submit a special report to the President of India on the prevailing constitutional situation in the State.



Karnataka Launches Mega Recruitment Drive

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

The Karnataka government will begin a mega recruitment drive for more than 70,000 vacant posts across various departments from August, with the first phase covering nearly 7,900 Police Constable posts.

The schedule for the police recruitment examinations was announced following a high-level meeting chaired by Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Rajender Kumar Kataria, who directed officials to ensure a transparent, fair and malpractice-free recruitment process.

Police Exam Schedule Announced

According to the schedule, the written examination for 3,991 Civil

Police Constable posts will be held on August 12, followed by 1,600 Armed Police Constable posts on September 7, and 2,314 Special Police Constable posts in the KSRP, IRB and KSISF on September 20.

Strict Action Against Malpractices

Kataria warned that the government would adopt a zero-tolerance policy against examination malpractices. Cyber Crime units and Intelligence agencies have been directed to monitor social media and digital platforms to prevent question paper leaks, impersonation and the use of electronic gadgets during examinations.

Candidates found involved in any unfair practices will face

KPSC Recruitment Scam Row Deepens

► From PGi

Several candidates have also appealed to the state government to closely monitor the investigation and prevent any further irregularities in public service recruitment.

They said a transparent selection system is essential to protect the interests of genuine aspirants who spend years preparing for government examinations.

The allegations have added fresh pressure on the KPSC, which plays a key role in conducting recruitment for various state government posts. Authorities are expected to examine the complaints and take further action based on the findings of the investigation.

CSR Must Begin with Schools: CM

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Thursday urged industries to prioritise Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives towards strengthening primary education and announced that the state government would establish a dedicated team to monitor CSR projects across Karnataka.

Addressing the Global CSR and Sustainability Summit 2026 organised by the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI), Shivakumar said CSR should be viewed as an investment in sustainable development rather than charity.

He credited former Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee for introducing the CSR framework and praised industries for contributing to Karnataka's growth.

The Chief Minister called on corporates to adopt government schools, improve educational infrastructure and support rural education so that students need not migrate to Bengaluru for quality schooling.

He also encouraged companies to provide skilled professionals in addition to financial support.

Shivakumar announced that a dedicated government team would monitor nearly 10,000 CSR initiatives across the state, ensuring effective implementation in districts including Mysuru, Hubballi and other regions.

Highlighting Karnataka's rapid



CM D K Shivakumar urged industries to focus CSR funds on strengthening primary education, called on companies to adopt government schools, and announced a dedicated team to monitor nearly 10,000 CSR projects across Karnataka.

urbanisation, he said Bengaluru's population has grown to nearly 1.4 crore, while the state's urban population now stands at 43 per cent.

He noted that Karnataka remains a global hub for education, technology and innovation, with a strong IT ecosystem employing around 26 lakh people.

The Chief Minister stressed the need for balanced regional development beyond Bengaluru and called for equal importance to employers and employees to ensure sustainable industrial growth.

Concluding his address, Shivakumar said Karnataka's continued progress depends on strong industry, quality education and responsible CSR investments, with primary education remaining the government's immediate priority.

NEWS

ASHOK ALLEGES PRE-PLANNED ATTACK

► Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru

Leader of the Opposition R. Ashok on Thursday alleged that the attack on BJP legislators and party workers near the KPCC office was a pre-planned act carried out despite them being under police protection.

Speaking during a BJP protest near the Gandhi statue at Vidhana Soudha to condemn Wednesday's incident, Ashok questioned how eggs were thrown at the BJP leaders' bus while it was under police custody.

He asked whether the police had failed in their responsibility to ensure the safety of those under their protection.

Criticising the state



government, Ashok alleged that the attack on BJP leaders, including Harish, Ashwath Narayan, Ramamurthy and party workers, was a "pre-planned act of hooliganism."

He also accused the government of failing to maintain

law and order.

Recalling an earlier incident, Ashok alleged that Congress leader B. K. Hariprasad had once obstructed the Governor at Vidhana Soudha, claiming it reflected a pattern of such actions.

NANDINI GHEE, BUTTER PRICES HIKED

► From PGi

The Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF) clarified that the revised prices were implemented after reviewing the increasing input costs and overall market conditions.

The federation said the decision was taken to ensure the sustainability of dairy operations and support the interests of milk producers across the state.

Nandini ghee and butter are among the most widely used dairy products in Karnataka, with demand coming from both individual consumers and commercial establishments.

The latest price increase is likely to affect monthly household budgets, especially during festivals and occasions when demand for dairy products rises.

Hotel owners and sweet manufacturers have

expressed concern that the increased cost of raw materials could put additional pressure on their businesses. Many traders said they may be forced to adjust prices of food items if production costs continue to rise.

The KMF has assured that it will continue efforts to maintain the quality and supply of Nandini products while balancing consumer needs and the welfare of dairy farmers.

Consumers are now waiting to see whether the price hike will have a wider impact on other dairy-based products in the market. The price revision has drawn mixed reactions from consumers, with many expressing concerns over the rising cost of essential food items.

However, KMF maintained that the increase was unavoidable due to growing expenses and aimed at ensuring a stable dairy supply chain in the state.

HEALTH & Lifestyle

Too Much TV May Shrink Your Brain

Watching television for long hours during middle age may have a negative impact on brain health, with a new study suggesting that excessive TV viewing is associated with shrinkage in brain regions responsible for memory, learning and decision-making.

The findings, published in the journal Alzheimer's & Dementia, indicate that passive screen time may be more harmful than simply sitting for long periods while engaged in mentally stimulating activities.

Study Tracks Brain Changes

Researchers analysed the television-viewing habits of nearly 1,700 middle-aged adults and compared them with MRI brain scans taken about 20 years later.

The study found that people who watched television excessively had reduced brain volume in areas linked to memory, planning and visual processing compared to those who watched less.

Key Findings

According to the study, excessive television viewing was associated with: Reduced size of brain regions involved in memory formation.

Shrinkage of the frontal lobe, which controls planning, decision-making and problem-solving. Reduced volume in the occipital lobe, responsible for processing visual information.

Increased damage to white matter, which has been linked to ageing, stroke, dementia and cognitive decline.



Passive Screen Time More Harmful

Researchers noted that prolonged sitting alone was not the primary concern. People engaged in mentally demanding tasks, such as office work, did not show the same degree of brain shrinkage.

Instead, the study suggests that passive screen time, such as prolonged television viewing without mental engagement, may be particularly harmful because it provides little cognitive stimulation.

Experts Recommend Active Lifestyle

The researchers stressed that the study does not prove television directly causes dementia but highlights a strong association between excessive TV viewing and reduced brain volume.

Experts recommend maintaining brain health through regular reading, solving puzzles, learning new skills or languages, engaging in social interactions, exercising regularly, getting adequate sleep and following a healthy diet to reduce the risk of cognitive decline.

SCIENCE & Technology

10,000-km Monsoon Cloud Spans Asia

► Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi

A massive 10,000-km-long monsoon cloud band stretching from India to South Korea has been captured in satellite imagery, marking one of the strongest phases of the 2026 southwest monsoon.

According to meteorologists, the rain-bearing cloud system extends across northern India, the Himalayan region, China and East Asia, reflecting the scale and intensity of the current monsoon pattern. Over the past two days, India has received 170-180 per cent above the normal daily monsoon rainfall, making it the wettest spell of the season so far.

Experts said the giant cloud band formed as moisture-laden winds from the Indian Ocean interacted with the active monsoon trough and other weather systems across Asia. The convergence of warm, humid air has triggered widespread rainfall and thunderstorms over a vast region.

Heavy rainfall has been reported in several parts of the country, including Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi-NCR, Rajasthan, and parts of eastern and northeastern India. Low-pressure systems over the Bay of Bengal continue to strengthen the ongoing monsoon activity.

While the rains are expected to improve seasonal rainfall, support kharif crop cultivation and replenish reservoirs, authorities have issued alerts for flash floods, waterlogging, landslides and rising river levels, particularly in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

Weather experts have forecast that the active monsoon phase is likely to continue over the coming days, bringing widespread rainfall across large parts of the country.

SPORTS

Vaibhav's 18-Ball Fifty Rewrites History



► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**
Teenage batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi produced a sensational knock against Zimbabwe, smashing a half-century off just 18 balls to become the youngest player to score a T20 International fifty. The 15-year-old reached the milestone at the age of 15 years and 118 days, surpassing previous records and registering his maiden half-century in international cricket.

After a disappointing debut series against England, where he failed to cross the 20-run mark in three matches, Vaibhav made a remarkable comeback with an explosive innings in the opening T20I against Zimbabwe.

Chasing Zimbabwe's modest target of 126 runs, India opened with Abhishek Sharma and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. While Abhishek departed for just one run, the young batter dominated the bowling from the outset, playing a series of fearless attacking strokes.

Vaibhav reached his fifty in just 18 deliveries, hammering four boundaries and four sixes in a breathtaking display of power-hitting. He was dismissed immediately after completing the landmark, finishing with 50 runs off 19 balls. Earlier, Zimbabwe posted 125 for 7 in 20 overs, with Wesley Madhevere scoring 39 and Marumani contributing 27.

Vaibhav's record-breaking innings not only guided India towards the target but also marked the arrival of one of the country's brightest young cricketing talents on the international stage.

WTC Final 2027 Schedule Announced by ICC

► **Vikrama Vahini | London**
The International Cricket Council (ICC) has announced that the 2027 ICC World Test Championship (WTC) Final will be played at The Oval, London, from June 9 to 13, 2027. England will host the final as part of its hosting rights for the 2027, 2029 and 2031 editions.

The Oval will host the WTC Final for the second time after staging the 2023 title clash, where Australia defeated India.

The race for the 2027 final remains open, with all nine Test-playing nations still in contention. Several crucial Test series in the coming months—including West Indies vs Pakistan, Australia vs Bangladesh, India vs Sri Lanka, and England vs Pakistan—are expected to play a key role in shaping the WTC standings.

The ICC also released the schedule for the 2027 Ashes, which will begin on June 18 at Nottingham, with the remaining Tests to be played at Lord's, Edgbaston, Southampton and The Oval. The upcoming Test series are expected to intensify the competition as teams battle for a place in the prestigious WTC Final.

Shah Backs PM's Fast-Track NEET Plan

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**
Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday endorsed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposal to establish fast-track courts for the trial of those accused in the NEET-UG paper leak case, describing it as a reflection of the government's commitment to safeguarding the future of India's youth.

In a post on social media platform X, Shah said the welfare and bright future of students remain the Modi government's highest priority. He stated that expediting hearings and ensuring strict punishment for those involved in paper leak cases would strengthen public confidence in the examination system.

'Milestone in protecting students' future'
Calling the initiative a significant step, Shah said fast-track courts would ensure speedy justice against those who jeopardise the careers of students through examination malpractices.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah backed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposal for fast-track courts to try NEET paper leak cases, calling it a landmark step to protect students' future, even as protests over the controversy continue across the country. He said speedy trials and strict punishment for the accused would reinforce the credibility of the examination system and reflect the Centre's commitment to safeguarding the interests of students.

His remarks came hours after Prime Minister Modi proposed the setting up of fast-track courts to ensure swift trials in paper leak cases and strict action against the guilty.

Protests Continue Over NEET Issue
The Centre's response comes amid ongoing protests at Jantar Mantar over the NEET paper leak controversy, with demonstrators demanding accountability and reforms in the examination system. The Congress has extended support to the

protests, with Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi participating in demonstrations and demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. Opposition parties also continued to raise the issue in Parliament, insisting that discussions should take place only after the minister steps down.

The Centre has maintained that it is willing to engage in dialogue while pursuing strict legal action against those responsible for the paper leak.

Bengal Verifies Birth, Death Records

► **Vikrama Vahini | Kolkata**
The West Bengal government has launched a statewide verification drive of birth and death certificates following allegations that forged documents were issued in previous years.

Chief Secretary Manoj Agarwal said the exercise aims to improve transparency, identify irregularities and strengthen the registration system across the state. He assured citizens holding genuine certificates that they have nothing to worry about, as the verification is only a procedural exercise.

According to the government, complaints regarding fake birth and death certificates prompted the verification drive. Officials have been directed to scan and examine registration records and investigate any suspected cases of manipulation.

Agarwal said birth certificates are vital documents used for

several official purposes and alleged that some forged certificates had been used to obtain benefits and manipulate school records.

He added that irregularities detected during recent verification exercises highlighted the need for a comprehensive review.

The Chief Secretary said all records would be scanned, verified and returned to the respective registrars after the exercise. He emphasised that only government officials would carry out the verification and that no contractual staff would be involved.

Following the government's directive, police and administrative officials have begun inspecting records maintained by municipal bodies and gram panchayats in districts including Birbhum, Purulia and Jhargram.



DELHI HC SEEKS STRAY DOG ACTION REPORT

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**
The Delhi High Court has initiated a suo motu Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to monitor the implementation of the Supreme Court's directions on managing stray dogs in the national capital and sought a detailed action report from the Delhi government and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).

A division bench of Justice Dinesh Mehta and Justice Rajneesh Kumar Gupta directed the authorities to submit a status report on the measures taken by July 31, ahead of the next hearing scheduled for August 3.

The court observed that while animal welfare must be protected, the concerns of the general public also need to be addressed, noting the increasing number of dog bite incidents and the need to strike a balance between public safety and animal rights.

The bench also expressed concern over the presence of stray dogs within the Delhi High



Court premises and sought clarity on the issue.

The proceedings follow the Supreme Court's May 19 directions asking all High Courts to monitor compliance with guidelines on stray dog management.

The Supreme Court also directed authorities to establish designated feeding zones, permitted euthanasia of rabid or severely aggressive dogs in accordance with the law, and made state Chief Secretaries personally responsible for ensuring compliance with its directions.

480 Pakistan-Linked Accounts Blocked

► **Vikrama Vahini | New Delhi**
Delhi Police have blocked around 480 Pakistan-based social media accounts for allegedly spreading fake news and misinformation linked to the ongoing student protests in India.

Officials said the accounts were attempting to exploit the situation by circulating rumours and edited content to mislead the public, particularly students. Police urged people not to trust or share unverified posts and warned that many of the accounts were also active during Operation Sindoor, with the aim of creating confusion and provoking unrest.

Cyber experts are monitoring coordinated online campaigns to curb the spread of false narratives.

Authorities urged citizens to rely only on official sources and report suspicious social media content.

K'TAKA TIGHTENS EXAM SECURITY

► **Vikrama Vahini | Bengaluru**
Amid growing concerns over question paper leaks and examination malpractices, the Karnataka government has stepped up security measures to ensure transparent and fair recruitment examinations for more than 70,000 vacant posts across various departments.

A high-level meeting was held to review preparations for the upcoming recruitment process, with officials instructed to implement strict measures to prevent any irregularities and maintain the credibility of the examinations.

The meeting, chaired by Additional Chief Secretary of the Home Department Rajendra Kataria, stressed the need for complete coordination among government departments and district administrations to conduct the examinations smoothly. Officials have been directed to ensure tight security at examination

centres, safe transportation of question papers, proper traffic management and emergency arrangements on exam days.

The government has instructed cyber crime and intelligence agencies to closely monitor social media platforms and digital channels to detect and prevent attempts to circulate leaked question papers or false information related to examinations.

Authorities will keep a strict watch on online activities to identify those involved in spreading examination-related fraud or misinformation.

The government has warned that strict action will be taken against anyone involved in question paper leaks, impersonation, copying or other unfair practices.

Officials said offenders will face severe punishment, including imprisonment, under the Karnataka Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2023.



Kashmir on High Alert After Terror Attack

► **Vikrama Vahini | Srinagar**
Security has been intensified across Jammu and Kashmir following the killing of a police head constable by terrorists at a crowded market in Anantnag. Security forces have launched a massive search operation to trace the attackers.

Head Constable Ashiq Hussain Qureshi of the 3rd Battalion of the Indian Reserve Police was shot dead at Lal Chowk in Anantnag. Following the attack, security forces increased checking at major roads, strengthened checkpoints and began searches in several areas.

Officials said operations are underway to identify those who provided support to the attackers. Several suspects have been detained for questioning in Srinagar, Budgam, Baramulla and Ganderbal districts.

43 Inches Rain Triggers Flood Crisis in Gujarat



► **Vikrama Vahini | Valsad**
Heavy rainfall has disrupted normal life in Gujarat's Valsad district, with Umaragaon taluk receiving over 43 inches of rain within 28 hours, leading to severe waterlogging and flood-like conditions.

Umaragaon recorded 35 inches of rainfall between 6 am yesterday and 6 am today, followed by another 8.7 inches in just four hours. Nearby Kaprada taluk also received more than 32 inches of rain.

The overflowing Auranga River has crossed the danger level, flooding low-lying areas, homes, shops and roads.

Residents from affected areas are being shifted to safer locations, while schools and colleges have been declared closed as a precautionary measure.

Teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) have been deployed for rescue operations. Officials are closely monitoring the situation and providing emergency assistance.

British Airways Pilots Fall Ill After Hyderabad Meal

► **Vikrama Vahini | Hyderabad**
Three pilots of a British Airways flight from Hyderabad to London Heathrow fell ill due to suspected food poisoning, prompting the airline to launch an investigation into the incident.

The pilots of flight BA276 reportedly became unwell after consuming food and bottled water during their overnight stay in Hyderabad. One of the pilots suffered severe stomach pain and was unable to continue duties while the aircraft was flying at around 30,000 feet.

The flight landed safely in London, following which the affected pilot was provided oxygen support and medical treatment. The other two pilots also experienced mild illness but managed to operate the flight safely without affecting passenger safety.

Preliminary reports suggest that the pilots had breakfast at a five-star hotel in Hyderabad before the flight and had consumed locally supplied bottled water. The exact cause of the illness is yet to be confirmed.

British Airways said the health and safety of its crew members remain a priority and that it is reviewing the hotel accommodation and food arrangements provided to staff in Hyderabad.

Railway Hosts Community Forum for Students

► **Vikrama Vahini | Hubballi**
The Hubballi Division of South Western Railway organised a "Community Forum" (Samudayik VEDI) programme at the Railway English Medium High School on Gadag Road, Hubballi, on Wednesday to promote multilingual learning, sports and holistic student development.

The programme was presided over by Additional Divisional Railway Manager and Additional Chief Rajbhasha Officer Prem Chandra, who highlighted the importance of learning multiple languages for personal and professional success. He stressed that proficiency in regional languages as well as Rajbhasha Hindi helps people communicate effectively, build stronger social connections and explore India's diverse culture, tourism and knowledge systems.

The chief guest, noted Kannada litterateur and Divisional Personnel Officer C. M. Muniswamy, shared his literary journey with students and emphasised that knowledge of multiple languages broadens creativity and enables writers to produce quality literature.

Former Under-19 international cricketer Anant Bhagavat and national-level athlete Basavaraj M. K. interacted



with students, encouraging them to actively participate in sports and extracurricular activities for their overall personality development.

Railway English Medium High School Principal E. Nagappa welcomed the dignitaries and spoke about the importance of language, sports and Karnataka's rich cultural heritage. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks after active participation by students and faculty, while officials from the South Western Railway Rajbhasha Branch coordinated the event.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, who interacted with the speakers and gained valuable insights

into the importance of language skills, sportsmanship and personality development.

Speakers emphasised that learning multiple languages not only enhances communication skills but also opens doors to diverse career opportunities and strengthens national integration.

The event concluded with appreciation for the South Western Railway's initiative in organising programmes that promote education, cultural awareness and holistic development. Students and teachers lauded the forum for providing an opportunity to interact with distinguished personalities from the fields of literature, sports and public service.