

# 575 trees face felling for 'Reshme Bhavan' in Okalipuram; proposal before GBA

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BENGALURU

THE Department of Sericulture has proposed felling 575 trees to construct a 'Reshme Bhavan' complex on 4.2 acres of land in Okalipuram, close to Majestic and near Lulu Mall Bengaluru. The proposal is currently under examination by the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA).

According to official documents, the project is planned on land located at Survey Nos. 12, 14 and 17

in Muddenahalli, Okalipuram, within the premises of the Joint Director's office. The site reportedly has 628 trees in total, of which 575 are proposed to be removed, leaving only 53 trees to be retained.

The Sericulture Department has described the project as a prestigious government initiative and has sought an early No Objection Certificate (NOC) for clearance. It has also informed that its existing office has been shifted to the



Mysore Sugar Company Reshme Bhavan has been entrusted to the Public Works Department (PWD). In October 2024, the State Cabinet approved approximately Rs 528 crore for the project. Subsequently, the PWD approached the GBA for necessary clearances.

While GBA has permitted land clearance in principle, the Karnataka High Court has laid down specific guidelines governing tree felling in Bengaluru.

Under Section 8(3) of the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, no tree within GBA limits can be cut without approval from the Dep-

uty Conservator of Forests (DCF), who has jurisdiction over trees in the area. As part of the process, an expert tree committee will inspect the site. Citizens have been invited to submit suggestions and objections within 10 days.

The trees listed in the proposal include Silver Oak, Neem, Tabebuia, Mahogany, Jackfruit, Gulmohar, Rain Tree and Ashoka. Environmentalists warn that if permission is granted, one of Okalipuram's last remaining

green pockets could soon disappear.

## Environmental Concerns Raised

Environmental activist express concern over the shrinking green cover in Bengaluru. "The city's green cover has reportedly declined drastically over the decades. There must be zero tolerance for tree felling. Globally accepted standards suggest that cities should aim for at least 30% green cover. We cannot afford to

lose even a single tree; instead, we must focus on restoration," they said.

They also questioned the need to locate Reshme Bhavan within central Bengaluru. "Why should Reshme Bhavan be in the heart of the city? Establishing it outside Bengaluru could help distribute development more evenly across the state," they argued. With public objections now invited, the final decision on the proposal rests on statutory approvals and environmental scrutiny.

## GOVT JOB VACANCY BACKLOG

# K'taka CM blames BJP as Dharwad protests intensify

BENGALURU

AS protests by government job aspirants intensified in Dharwad, with many taken into preventive custody, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday blamed the previous BJP regime for the large backlog of vacant posts.

According to protesters, who staged a massive demonstration in Dharwad earlier in the day, around 2.8 lakh posts remain vacant across various government departments in Karnataka, while fewer than 5,000 recruitments have been made in the last three years. In a press statement, Siddaramaiah said that when the Congress assumed office in 2023, over 2.64 lakh government posts were vacant.

He said the backlog was the result of "prolonged inaction under the previous BJP government, which failed to initiate timely recruitment or create a



structured roadmap to fill vacancies." "It is deeply unfortunate that BJP leaders are choosing to mislead innocent students even now to serve their narrow political interests," the CM said.

He alleged that, instead of encouraging aspirants to stay focused on their preparation and future, opposition leaders were "attempting to instigate unrest."

The chief minister said the current situation was largely due to recruitment irregularities and alleged

corruption during the BJP regime between 2019 and 2023, which eroded trust in the system and led to a significant backlog. "Our government is committed to restoring credibility, transparency, and stability in the recruitment process," he said.

Siddaramaiah added that several recruitment processes had to be temporarily stalled due to legal challenges related to internal reservation, which are under consideration in courts. He said

the government had chosen to act responsibly within the framework of law rather than rush decisions that could jeopardise the careers of thousands of candidates.

"Despite these structural and legal constraints, our government has moved with determination and integrity. In the last 2.5 years alone, more than 40,000 recruitments have been completed across departments," he said. Siddaramaiah said the government was conscious that many aspirants had waited

for years due to delays beyond their control. Recognising this hardship, he said the government had relaxed the upper age limit by more than five years for upcoming recruitments to ensure that deserving candidates are not excluded due to systemic delays.

"I want to assure that the process of filling the remaining vacancies is ongoing and will be further accelerated in a transparent, systematic, and time-bound manner," he said.

On the protests, the chief minister said he had taken serious note of the situation. "I understand the anxiety, frustration, and uncertainty that many government job aspirants are experiencing," he said.

He reiterated that the government is taking necessary administrative and policy measures to accelerate recruitment and strengthen institutions to prevent such backlogs in the future.

## Penalty for vacant sites

# BDA unveils new graded slabs from 2.5% to 10%



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BENGALURU

THE Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has revised the penalty structure for owners of vacant sites who fail to commence construction within the stipulated time. Under the new framework, a graded penalty slabs ranging from 2.5 per cent to 10 per cent will be imposed depending on the size of the plot.

According to a circular issued on February 11, the revised penalty will apply to all allottees who have not be-

gun construction within the timeframe specified in their lease-cum-sale agreement. The decision was taken at the Authority's meeting held on December 30. As per the revised structure, the 'vacant site penalty' will be calculated as a percentage of the prevailing guidance value of the property, based on the plot size.

Sites measuring up to 600 square feet will attract a penalty of 2.5 per cent. Plots between 601 and 1,200 square feet will face a 5 per cent penalty, while those between 1,201 and 2,400 square feet will be charged 7.5 per

cent. For sites larger than 2,401 square feet, the penalty will be 10 per cent. The new rates will come into effect retrospectively from September 23, 2024.

Site owners who are unwilling to pay the penalty may surrender their plots to the Authority. In such cases, 12.5 per cent of the amount paid will be deducted and the remaining balance will be refunded. However, the revised penalty structure will not apply to sites allotted in Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout and Arkavathi Layout, the BDA clarified.

## Consumer panel orders Samsung to repair phone at half cost



HANS NEWS SERVICE  
CHIKKAMAGALURU

IN a consumer rights ruling, the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission has ordered Samsung India Electronics Private Limited to repair a defective premium smartphone by charging only half of the Rs 39,041 originally demanded for motherboard replacement.

The complainant, K S Rathan Kumar from Mudigere taluk, had purchased a Galaxy S24 Ultra handset which allegedly became non-functional during the warranty period. When he approached the service centre, he was informed that the motherboard had failed and that repairs would cost Rs 39,041.

Claiming that the refusal to repair the phone free of cost amounted to deficiency in service, he approached the Commission last August. The complaint named Samsung Smart Plaza in JP Nagar, Sara Mobiles and Electronics in Bengaluru, and Samsung India Electronics Pvt Ltd.

After hearings, the Commission directed the company to complete the repair by collecting only 50 per cent of the estimated amount from the complainant.

The order was delivered by Commission President N R Chennakeshava along with members E Prema and Dr Manjunath M Bamanakatti.

# Mangaluru Int'l Airport bags top global honour

ADJUDGED 'BEST AIRPORT AT ARRIVALS - GLOBALLY' FOR 2025

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
MANGALURU

IN a major boost to Karnataka's aviation profile, Mangaluru International Airport has been adjudged the 'Best Airport at Arrivals - Globally' for 2025 by Airports Council International World.

According to a press release here today from the airport, the prestigious Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Award is based entirely on passenger feedback gathered in real time under ACI's global survey programme, widely regarded as the aviation industry's most credible yardstick for service excellence.

The arrivals category measures the end-to-end inbound journey — from immigration



clearance and baggage delivery to terminal ambience, cleanliness, signage and overall passenger comfort.

This is the second year in a row that the airport has secured the global distinction, placing it among just six airports worldwide recognised in this category for 2025.

Managed by Adani Airport Holdings Limited, the airport has in recent years invested

in digital initiatives, process optimisation and service training to enhance passenger experience. Officials said the focus on operational efficiency and infrastructure modernisation has significantly improved arrival processes and turnaround times.

The award will be formally presented at ACI World's Airport Experience Summit in Istanbul in September 2026.

# 'Mahadevappa may have information on CM change'

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU

DEPUTY Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Tuesday said that Minister HC Mahadevappa may have some information regarding a possible change in the Chief Minister in the State, which could be the reason behind his remarks on the issue of a Dalit Chief Minister.

Responding to questions from the media near his official residence at Kumara Park and Suttur Mutt in Bengaluru, Shivakumar said he had seen Mahadevappa's statement but had no other information about any leadership change. "Mahadevappa is also part of our high command. He may have some information about a change in the Chief Minister. But I have no such information," he said.

When asked whether the party high command had summoned him or the Chief



Minister to Delhi, Shivakumar clarified that he had not received any call. "I have to go to Delhi in connection with my department's work. Funds to the tune of Rs 1 lakh crore are being discussed under the Urban Development Ministry, but it is being said that major cities may not be covered. I will discuss this with our Urban Development Minister and ask officials to prepare proposals for second- and third-tier cities," he said.

On being questioned about remaining silent over statements made by some Ministers despite being KPCC president, Shivakumar said it was the Chief Minister's responsibility to control Ministers and MLAs. "The Chief

Minister must control Ministers and legislators. As far as party matters are concerned, I am conveying information to Delhi," he said.

Asked about remarks made by senior leader Rajanna regarding G. Parameshwara, Shivakumar responded briefly, saying, "He is a senior leader."

On reports that the high command might call him for discussions, Shivakumar said he was currently in Kumarapura and had no further information.

Speaking about senior leader Satish Jarkiholi, Shivakumar said they shared similar views and discussed party matters every week. "He is a senior leader who has worked as a working president with me. We speak weekly. We are like-minded and are working on plans to bring the party back to power," he said.

Commenting on demands by newly elected MLAs seek-

ing at least five ministerial berths for first-time legislators, Shivakumar said he had read about the letter in newspapers but had not received it personally. "Everyone aspires to become a Minister. Even Narendra Modi did not become Chief Minister without being an MLA. There is nothing wrong in asking. I too became a Minister when I was first elected. A new generation must grow. How long can we continue holding on to positions? I have been a Minister for 36 years. New ideas and new faces must enter the Cabinet. The party will take a decision on this," he said.

He clarified that he had not claimed to be forming the Cabinet and that the Chief Minister had spoken about Cabinet expansion. "Whenever expansion is discussed, some write letters, some go to Delhi, and some express their aspirations. That is natural," he said.

# Great backyard bird count: St Aloysius' Mangaluru campus tallies 32 bird species

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
MANGALURU

ST Aloysius (Deemed to be University) in Mangaluru wrapped up its Campus Bird Count 2026 between February 13 and 16, joining the countrywide Great Backyard Bird Count coordinated by Bird Count India and eBird. The exercise, held on the university's 145-year-old, 37-acre campus in the city centre, recorded a total of 32 bird species.

Since earning Deemed to be University status two years ago, the institution has taken part in this citizen-science effort every year starting from 2019, steadily feeding observations into national databases.

This year's survey was led by assistant professors Kiran Vati K and Glavin Thomas Rodrigues from the zoology department, with enthusiastic involvement from faculty and students



who methodically surveyed varied habitats across the grounds.

Sightings included familiar city and woodland residents like Rock Pigeon, Greater Coucal, Asian Koel, and Asian Palm Swift. Raptors such as Black Kite and Brahminy Kite were seen gliding overhead or resting in trees. Water-associated birds—Little Cormorant and Eastern Cattle Egret—highlighted the campus's links to surrounding ecosystems.

Among arboreal species noted were White-throated Kingfisher, White-



cheeked Barbet, Malabar Flameback, and Rose-ringed Parakeet. Seasonal migrants Ashy Drongo and Green Warbler appeared during the count window.

Evidence of active breeding stood

out: nests belonging to Red-whiskered Bulbul were located, and the Indian Golden Oriole, a periodic breeder in peninsular India, was spotted making use of the campus's suitable cover.

Gardens and dense tree canopy supported insect-eaters and nectar seekers, including Common Tailorbird, Gray-breasted Prinia, Pale-billed Flowerpecker, Purple-rumped Sunbird, Purple Sunbird, and Loten's Sunbird. Additional highlights encompassed Chestnut-tailed Starling, Common Myna, Jungle Myna, Orange-headed Thrush, Oriental Magpie-Robin, and White-rumped Munia.

The university's unbroken participation since 2019 has built a robust record of long-term avian trends. The ongoing presence of resident birds, passage migrants, and nesting pairs demonstrates how carefully maintained urban green pockets can sustain diverse wildlife.

# K'taka HC bars coercive action against Ranveer

BENGALURU

IN a relief to Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh, the Karnataka High Court on Tuesday directed police not to take any coercive steps against him in a case related to allegedly mocking a local deity.

Hearing his petition seeking quashing of an FIR for allegedly mocking the deity of coastal Karnataka during an event in Goa, the bench of Justice M Nagaprasanna gave the direction to the Bengaluru police.

The bench also reprimanded the actor for his behaviour and said hurting religious sentiments will not be tolerated. It directed him to cooperate with the investigation.



During the Filmfare Awards event in Goa, Singh imitated actor-director Rishabh Shetty's role showing him under the 'Avesham' of Goddess Chavundi in 'Kantara Chapter-1'.

He even called Chavundi Goddess as a ghost. Alleging that this act of the actor has hurt his religious sentiments, a lawyer approached a city court to book a case against the actor. On the court's direction the city police registered an FIR against the 'Dhurandhar' lead.