

HIRIYUR BYPOLL PREPARATION

JD(S) seeks BJP support as NDA begins seat-sharing talks

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BENGALURU

EVEN before the Election Commission announces the schedule for the Hiriyrur Assembly by-election, political activity has intensified in Karnataka, with the ruling Congress, BJP and JD(S) quietly preparing for the high-stakes contest. The bypoll was necessitated following the demise of Karnataka Planning and Statistics Minister and Congress MLA D Sudhakar, who represented the Hiriyrur constituency in Chitradurga district.

The JD(S), an ally of the BJP in the NDA, has emerged as the most proactive player, staking claim to contest the seat as part of the alliance's seat-sharing arrangement. Union Minister and JD(S) state president H D Kumaraswamy has reportedly initiated discussions with the BJP leadership, requesting that the Hiriyrur constituency be allotted to his party for the bypoll. According to party sources, Kumaraswamy has already held multiple

rounds of meetings with JD(S) leaders from Chitradurga district and Hiriyrur to assess the party's organisational strength and electoral prospects. He is learnt to have assured local leaders that he would secure the party ticket through negotiations with the BJP leadership, while asking them to focus on strengthening the organisation and preparing for the election campaign.

The JD(S) believes the constituency presents a realistic opportunity for the NDA. In the 2023 Assembly election, the BJP secured around 60,000 votes, while the JD(S) polled nearly 38,000 votes. Party strategists believe that if the alliance votes are consolidated, the NDA could mount a formidable challenge against the Congress candidate in the bypoll.

Community equations are also expected to play a crucial role in candidate selection. JD(S) leaders are said to be considering a candidate from influential Vokkaliga or Yadava communities, which have a significant presence in



the constituency. Beyond winning the by-election, the regional party also sees the contest as an opportunity to strengthen its claim over Hiriyrur ahead of the next Assembly election, ensuring the seat remains with JD(S) within the alliance framework.

The BJP, meanwhile, has also begun organisational preparations. State BJP president B.Y. Vijayendra has reportedly held discussions with local leaders regarding booth-level mobilisation, alliance coordination and possible candidates.

However, senior BJP leaders have indicated that the final decision will be

taken jointly with JD(S) after consultations within the NDA. State BJP in-charge Radha Mohan Das Agrawal recently confirmed that discussions with JD(S) leaders on seat-sharing were underway and that a joint meeting of alliance leaders would decide which party would contest the bypoll.

The impending by-election has also fuelled speculation over Kumaraswamy's increasing involvement in Karnataka politics despite serving as a Union Minister. Over the past few weeks, he has intensified his criticism of the state government and actively participated

in political programmes across Karnataka.

Responding to questions about his political future, Kumaraswamy clarified that while he would continue as a Union Minister and Member of Parliament, he would remain actively involved in Karnataka politics whenever necessary. With the Congress looking to retain a prestigious seat held by late minister D. Sudhakar and the NDA eager to test its electoral strength after the BJP-JD(S) alliance, the Hiriyrur bypoll is shaping up to be one of Karnataka's most closely watched political contests in the coming months.



Footpath clearance drive to continue across B'uru: CM

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

KARNATAKA Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Friday said the ongoing footpath encroachment clearance drive will continue across all five civic zones of Bengaluru, adding that nearly 435 km of footpaths have been reclaimed since the campaign began on July 1.

After inspecting the encroachment removal drive at various locations in the city along with Urban Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, the Chief Minister addressed the media near Ashoka Pillar in Jayanagar.

Shivakumar said authorities have removed 9,878 encroachments so far. The operation included the clearance of 1,340 shops, around 1,800 pushcarts, 2,267 metal sheet extensions, 2,300 steps and ramps, 2,662 pillars and signboards, and 2,247 sheds that had occupied pedestrian pathways. He added that debris has been cleared and repair works on damaged footpaths are also being taken up simultaneously.

The Chief Minister assured street vendors that the

government was not against them and would provide designated spaces for their livelihood.

"The poor are our own people. We want street vendors to earn a living, but businesses cannot operate anywhere on public or private property. We will identify suitable locations where they can carry out their trade without causing inconvenience to pedestrians or traffic," he said.

He further stated that the government would restart the process of issuing identity cards to street vendors after an earlier initiative was stalled due to a court order.

Shivakumar alleged that a "large mafia" was behind many of the encroachments and claimed that organised groups had been collecting money from vendors illegally. "We have information that rowdy elements are extorting money from street vendors."

The police and Greater Bengaluru Authority officials have been given full freedom to act. Our objective is a clean Bengaluru, and the entire country is watching the city's transfor-

mation," he said. The Chief Minister said the drive was aimed at improving pedestrian safety, noting that more than 900 pedestrians have lost their lives in Bengaluru over the past three years. "This is not being done for anyone's personal benefit. When there are no usable footpaths, people are forced to walk on roads, creating safety risks and traffic congestion. Our priority is the safety and convenience of citizens," he said. "Vendors will be provided appropriate locations where they can conduct business without inconveniencing the public. They can operate during the day and vacate the space in the evening," he said.

On the long-pending redevelopment of the Jayanagar Market, the Chief Minister said the government would take a decision soon. "Half of the market building has already been constructed, and the remaining work will be completed shortly under an appropriate scheme. We are committed to protecting public assets while ensuring better civic infrastructure for citizens," he added.

LTS concludes Global Engineering Intelligence open hack

BENGALURU : L&T Technology Services (LTS), a global leader in Engineering Intelligence Solutions and Engineering Research & Development (ER&D) consulting, has successfully concluded Engineering Intelligence (EI) OpenHack 2026, a first-of-its-kind global innovation challenge that brought together nearly 4,000 engineers across India, the United States and Europe to develop AI-driven engineering solutions for real-world industrial challenges.

The hackathon was conducted simultaneously across nine locations—Bengaluru, Mysuru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Pune, Vadodara, Mumbai, Dallas and Munich—with more than 770

teams participating. India's First Healthcare AI Conclave Opens

Bengaluru : India's first national conclave dedicated exclusively to Healthcare and Artificial Intelligence (AI) commenced in Bengaluru on Friday, bringing together leading clinicians, AI researchers, hospital administrators, policy-makers, technology companies and healthcare innovators to explore the transformative role of artificial intelligence in modern medicine. Hosted by Global Healthcare Academy, the two-day HAI Conclave 2026 is centred on the theme "Building Future-Ready Health Ecosystems."

Absconding robbery accused held after 41 court warrants

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A Kerala resident accused in a 2017 armed robbery in Karnataka's Dakshina Kannada district has been arrested after remaining absconding for nearly five years and ignoring repeated summons from the trial court, police said on Friday.

The accused, Nelson C.V. (38), a resident of Thrissur district, was arrested by Puttur Town police from Mijoor in Kerala on July 8. He was later produced before the jurisdictional court.

The case dates back to December 22, 2017, when three armed men allegedly entered a house in Puttur town, threatened the occupants with a pistol and a knife, and robbed them of gold jewellery valued at around Rs

2.88 lakh and Rs 6 lakh in cash before fleeing.

Investigators said Nelson was later arrested in the case and had obtained conditional bail. However, he allegedly stopped appearing before the trial court from August 27, 2021.

His continued absence prompted the court to issue 41 arrest warrants over the years.

Acting on fresh leads, a police team tracked him down in Thrissur district and took him into custody before producing him before the court.

Police said a separate case has also been registered against him under Section 269 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, for repeatedly violating bail conditions and failing to comply with court directions.

Officials said further legal proceedings are under way.

Police detain 8 Bangladeshi workers from construction site



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MANGALURU

EIGHT Bangladeshi nationals allegedly staying in India illegally were detained from a construction site in Mangaluru after police uncovered what they suspect was an organised network facilitating illegal migration and employment.

The operation was conducted by Surathkal police on July 9 following specific

intelligence inputs regarding the presence of foreign nationals at an under-construction building.

Police verified the identity documents of 54 labourers working at the site and identified eight men as Bangladeshi citizens. Investigators said the workers had entered India about three months ago by crossing the international border through Murshidabad district in West Bengal without valid

passports or visas. According to police, the men later obtained colour photocopies of Aadhaar cards bearing West Bengal addresses, with their photographs affixed, and used them while seeking employment. They had reportedly been working at the construction site in Mukka for nearly two months.

Detailed verification of their Bangladeshi National Identity Cards, birth certificates and family documents

confirmed that they were citizens of Bangladesh, police said.

The matter has been reported to the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO), Bengaluru, which will initiate legal proceedings, including detention and deportation if required.

Police are now probing the network that facilitated the workers' illegal entry into India and their subsequent employment in Karnataka.

House of Berunda launches premium coffee brand

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BENGALURU

THE House of Berunda has officially unveiled Berunda Coffee, a premium Karnataka estate coffee brand inspired by the state's royal heritage and world-renowned coffee-growing legacy. The launch, held at an exclusive soirée in Bengaluru, showcased three signature coffee blends named after the iconic elephants of the Mysore royal household, reflecting a unique blend of history, craftsmanship and sustainability. The launch ceremony began



with a traditional Ganesh Aarti, followed by the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by Maharajkumari Kamakshi Devi Wadiyar

of Mysore and Coffee Board Chairman M.J. Dinesh. The evening also featured a Bharatanatyam performance by the

Tharang Academy of Art and was attended by dignitaries including Maharajkumar Aatmanya Dev of the Wadwan royal family, Peru's Consul General Vikram Iyer, coffee experts, hospitality professionals and celebrated barista champions.

Guests sampled the brand's debut collection comprising Drona, Arjuna and Gajendra. Drona is a medium-dark Arabica-Robusta blend developed for traditional South Indian filter coffee, while Arjuna is a medium-light washed Arabica sourced from the B R Hills.

Sakleshpur fair: 72-kg giant jackfruit steals the show, may enter Guinness records

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HASSAN

A massive 72-kg jackfruit became the biggest attraction at the Jackfruit and Mango Fair held in Sakleshpur, with visitors thronging the venue to catch a glimpse of what could potentially be one of the world's heaviest jackfruits. The unusually large fruit, displayed by farmer H B Pratap Kumar from Hebbanahalli village, drew widespread attention from horticulture experts, farmers and fruit lovers alike.

Pratap Kumar showcased three giant jackfruits harvested from a single tree

at the exhibition organised at Srinivasa Convention Hall. The fruits were so heavy that two people were required to lift one onto the weighing scale, leaving visitors amazed by their extraordinary size and weight. According to horticulture officials, information available in public records indicates that the current recognised heavy-weight jackfruit weighed 54.43 kg and was reported from Florida, USA, in 2024. If the weight of the Sakleshpur fruit is officially verified, it could surpass the existing record by a significant margin and become a contender for

inclusion in the Guinness World Records.

Senior Assistant Director of the Department of Horticulture B E Bhanu Prakash said the department is verifying the details of the fruit. He noted that commercially cultivated jackfruits generally weigh between 20 and 25 kg, while fruits weighing 60 to 80 kg are extremely rare. He added that the department would examine the fruit's characteristics before initiating the process for a possible world record claim. Speaking on the occasion, Pratap Kumar said the unique jackfruit variety was planted by his father,

Basavalingappa, about 23 years ago after sourcing the sapling from the Halebeedu region. For nearly a decade, the tree has consistently produced exceptionally large fruits weighing between 60 and 80 kg, with around 15 fruits harvested from a single tree every season.

He revealed that the family had harvested an 80-kg jackfruit last year, while the fruits displayed at this year's fair weighed 72 kg. The tree is cultivated entirely through natural farming methods without the use of chemical fertilisers. Locally known as 'Makke Halasu' in the Mal-

nad region, the variety is known for its sweet, thick bulbs measuring nearly 12 centimetres in length.

Pratap Kumar said he has never commercially sold the fruits, preferring instead to share them with friends and visitors. His long-term goal is to conserve and popularise this rare jackfruit variety so that it can benefit more farmers in the region.

The giant fruit has become the highlight of the Sakleshpur fair, underscoring the rich horticultural diversity of Karnataka and the remarkable potential of naturally cultivated indigenous fruit varieties.

