

Shivakumar sworn-in as Karnataka CM; 11 Ministers retained in Cabinet

13 Cabinet Ministers, including Deputy CM Parameshwara, take oath; senior legislators and loyalists of Siddaramaiah find place in the new Cabinet; ex-CM's son Yathindra also included; caste arithmetic worked out but no women representation

Sharath S. Srivatsa
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BENGALURU

The Congress government in Karnataka turned a new leaf on Wednesday with its eight-time legislator and Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee President D.K. Shivakumar sworn in as the 25th Chief Minister of the State. Amid confusion and pushback in the party on creation of the Deputy Chief Minister's post, senior Dalit leader G. Parameshwara was sworn in as the deputy leader. A six-time MLA, Mr. Parameshwara had served as Deputy Chief Minister in the H.D. Kumaraswamy-led coalition government.

In a subdued but packed ceremony at Glass House in Lok Bhavan in Bengaluru and in the presence of a host of party leaders and religious heads among others, Mr. Shivakumar, who



Power shift: Newly-sworn-in Karnataka Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar (right) with outgoing leader Siddaramaiah during the oath-taking ceremony in Bengaluru on Wednesday. PTI

took over the reigns of the State from veteran OBC leader Siddaramaiah, was sworn in along with 13 Cabinet Ministers including Mr. Parameshwara. Mr. Shivakumar, who led the Congress to victory in 2023 elections as the KPCC chief, will have little less than two years term before the next

Assembly election.

The Congress, which held hectic parleys over the last two days amid growing pressure from Cabinet hopefuls, finally released the list of leaders just hours ahead of the swearing-in ceremony. Belying expectations that young and fresh faces would be inducted,

the party has gone with seniors barring Yathindra Siddaramaiah, son of Mr. Siddaramaiah, who is making his debut as a Cabinet Minister.

Among those to take oath included U.T. Khader, who earlier resigned from the post of Speaker.

With an exception to Mr. Khader, who was a Minister in Mr. Siddaramaiah's first term, and Mr. Yathindra, all others sworn in on Wednesday served under Mr. Siddaramaiah in the second term. Those inducted to Cabinet include K.H. Muniyappa, K.J. George and Priyank Kharge.

Senior leader Satish Jarhohi, who hails from the Valmiki community and represents the Scheduled Tribes (ST), has found a place in the Ministry.

Three Ministers – M.B. Patil, Eshwar Khandre, and Sharan Prakash Patil – represent the Veerashaiva-Lingayat community, while

the Dalit community is represented by Mr. Kharge, Mr. Parameshwara, and Mr. Muniyappa. As the Chief Minister belongs to the Vokkaliga community, six-time MLA Krishna Byre Gowda's induction is viewed as balancing community representation. Ramalinga Reddy, an eight-time legislator, belongs to the Reddy Vokkaliga community.

Notables missing

The party has ensured representation for the Kuruba community (OBC), to which Mr. Siddaramaiah belongs, by inducting Byrathi Suresh, two-time MLA, and Mr. Yathindra.

Notable persons missing in the first batch are H.C. Mahadevappa, H.K. Patil, Santosh Lad, Dinesh Gundu Rao, and B.Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan, who served in the previous Cabinet.

No woman legislator has been inducted into the Cabinet.

Centre approves scheme to cut pollution levels in Delhi-NCR

Two-year programme with financial outlay of ₹9,585 crore aims at contributing to improved air quality index in the region by encouraging vehicle owners to transition to BS-VI variants or EVs; it will benefit 1.91 lakh trucks, 16,329 buses, says govt.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a two-year scheme aimed at reducing air pollution in the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) by accelerating the transition to cleaner transport technologies.

With a total financial outlay of ₹9,585 crore, including ₹5,041 crore from the Centre and an estimated ₹1,601 crore in tax concessions from the participating States, the scheme seeks to incentivise owners of trucks and buses registered in the Delhi-NCR that comply with BS-IV or earlier emission norms to replace them with BS-VI or stricter emission-compliant vehicles, or electric vehicles (EVs).

By speeding up the transition to cleaner transport technologies, the scheme



The scheme will be funded through the National Capital Region Planning Board and implemented by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. FILE PHOTO

is expected to reduce vehicular emissions and contribute to improved air quality index (AQI) across the Delhi-NCR, read an official statement.

The scheme will be funded through the National Capital Region Planning Board under the Ministry of Housing and

Urban Affairs and implemented by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Govt. vehicles excluded
The move will benefit approximately 2.07 lakh (1.91 lakh trucks and 16,329 buses) owners in Delhi-NCR

(comprising Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh), it stated.

For BS-III or older vehicles, scrapping at registered vehicle scrapping facilities is mandatory. BS-IV vehicles may either be scrapped or sold outside the NCR in non-National Clean Air Programme ci-

ties/towns". Owners must then purchase and register a BS-VI or stricter norms-compliant or an EV within the NCR. However, in Delhi, light goods vehicles purchased under the scheme must be electric while buses must be compliant with BS-VI norms, run on CNG, or be electric only. Government vehicles are excluded from the scheme.

The Centre will provide 5% interest subvention on loans for five years, monthly fuel vouchers worth up to ₹4,800 depending on vehicle category, and lump-sum benefits for EV purchases or Certificate of Deposit trading.

State governments will waive registration fees and grant up to 100% motor vehicle tax concessions for new vehicles and 50% for used vehicles for 10 years. They will also waive pending liabilities on old vehicles under the scheme.

Over 40,000 students apply to CBSE for re-evaluation

Almost 5,000 students applied for verification alone; CBSE asks students to complete application process by midnight of June 6, makes available a visual guide and tutorial video to assist them

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

More than 40,000 Class 12 students have applied to get their answer sheets verified and re-evaluated, as of noon on Wednesday, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) said.

"The portal has accepted 4,924 applications for verification and 39,056 applications for re-evaluation (total of 43,980) as of 12 p.m. (on Wednesday)," the CBSE said in a statement.

The Board said students can pay for their applications using the payment gateways of the State Bank of India, Canara Bank, Bank of Baroda, or Indian Bank, all of which are available on the verification and re-evaluation portal. "Students need not have an account with these banks to complete payment but can use any of these payment gateways to make pay-



The Board said the outcome of the requests would be communicated after the completion of the process. FILE PHOTO

ments," the CBSE said.

The portal was launched after a delay on June 2, although the Board had earlier said that applications for verification and re-evaluation of answer books were expected to begin by May 29.

This follows concerns raised by students and parents regarding the new on-screen marking evaluation system deployed by the CBSE this year.

On-screen marking is a

digital evaluation process where answer sheets are scanned and uploaded so that evaluators can assess them virtually. However, students complained that the scans were blurry, pages were missing, and even mixed up with other answer sheets.

As more students started applying to see their answer sheets, repeated glitches popped up, including in the online payment process. Ethical hackers

exposed vulnerabilities in the OnMark platform, showing that they could access students' answer sheets and their personal data. Questions have been raised about the tender process for the on-screen marking system contract, which was awarded to a company with a dodgy record.

The Board said the outcome of the requests would be communicated after the completion of the process and advised candidates to submit their applications by midnight on June 6.

A visual guide and tutorial video have been made available to help students complete the process, it added.

Aadhaar-based verification of applicants was introduced for security reasons, the Board said, despite the fact that making such verification mandatory goes against a Supreme Court ruling.

28 lakh women to get monthly dole as Bengal govt. rolls out Annapurna Bhandar scheme

Shiv Sahay Singh

KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday rolled out the Annapurna Bhandar scheme that will provide monthly aid of ₹3,000 to eligible women in the 25 to 60 age group in the State.

Mr. Adhikari handed over cheques to five beneficiaries at the State Secretariat to mark the launch of the direct benefit transfer scheme. He said 28,25,769 women have been approved to receive aid.

Beneficiaries have been given 90 days to register under the scheme.

Doubling the aid of ₹1,500 provided by the previous Trinamool Congress government under its Lakshmir Bhandar scheme to ₹3,000 was one of the promises made by the BJP during the campaign for



CM Suvendu Adhikari (right) handing over cheques to beneficiaries at the launch of the Annapurna Bhandar scheme on Wednesday. PTI

the Assembly poll.

Women and Child Development Minister Agnimitra Paul said fresh applications are being considered due to “corruption” in the implementation of the Lakshmir Bhandar scheme under which 2.2 crore women received aid.

Chief Secretary Manoj Agarwal said the list of beneficiaries of the new scheme will be made pu-

blic and people can file objections if non-deserving persons are receiving aid.

The newly elected BJP government had come under Opposition attack over the introduction of a “tedious” 11-page application form for the Annapurna Bhandar scheme and the declaration that existing beneficiaries of the Lakshmir Bhandar scheme will have to apply afresh.

Centre mulls policy to boost E85 fuel uptake

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The government is actively examining supportive policy framework to accelerate affordable adoption of E85 fuel, said Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri.

Speaking at the launch of Hero MotoCorp's flex-fuel motorcycles on Wednesday, he said that E85 (85% blending of ethanol with gasoline), fuel would be "substantially cheaper than normal fuel [variant]".

"If 1% of annual petrol vehicle sales in India during ethanol supply year 2026-27 shifts to E85, over four crore litres of ethanol demand would be generated, [and] nearly ₹266 crore



Hardeep Singh Puri

estimated payments would be made to distillers," he said, adding that about ₹195 crore would be earned in foreign exchange savings, approximately 0.28 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of crude oil imports would be reduced, net CO2 reduction of nearly 0.86 LMT will be achieved, and nearly ₹160 crore would go directly to farmers.

Russia delivers fourth squadron of the S-400 air defence system

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

India has received the fourth squadron of the Russian-made S-400 air defence system, strengthening the country's long-range air defence network. The system arrived from Russia as scheduled in May, and is expected to be deployed in an operational area shortly, sources in the defence sector said.

The delivery is part of a \$5.43-billion agreement signed between India and Russia in 2018 for the acquisition of five S-400 regimental systems. Three S-400 squadrons have already been inducted into service; the fourth has now arrived, following delays linked to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The remaining squa-



The delivery is part of a \$5.43 billion agreement signed between India and Russia in 2018. AFP

dron under the original contract is expected to be delivered in 2027, officials said. Deliveries are now back on schedule.

The S-400 will be integrated with AI-enabled decision-support capabilities aimed at improving threat prioritisation and target selection, senior defence officials said.

“AI-enabled targeting will assist operators in identifying and prioritising aerial threats. All incoming targets will be displayed on the system, and AI will provide recommendations based on the nature of the threat. However, the final engagement decision will remain with the operator,” a senior official said.

Nepal is a priority partner, says Modi after meeting RSP chief

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Nepal's ruling Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) chairperson Rabi Lamichhane on Wednesday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who called the neighbouring country a "priority partner".

The meeting came a day after Mr. Lamichhane called on External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Home Minister Amit Shah and discussed development and security partnerships between the two countries. The meetings came even as official sources here said that Nepal's Foreign Minister, Shisir Khanal, is expected to arrive in India this week.

"Delighted to meet the Chairman of the Rastriya Swatantra Party of Nepal Mr. Rabi Lamichhane. I welcome and fully share his desire to work closely together for a shared and prosperous future. Nepal is a priority partner under our Neighbourhood First policy and we look forward to collaborating with the new government to elevate



Bilateral talks: Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with Nepal's Rastriya Swatantra Party chairperson Rabi Lamichhane. PTI

the special and multifaceted relationship between our two countries to greater heights," Mr. Modi said in a social media post, sharing photographs of the meeting, which was attended by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, Mr. Jaishankar, and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.

Shared prosperity

Mr. Lamichhane said the hour-long meeting with Mr. Modi was a "great delight" and pledged to work for "development diplomacy".

"By focusing on shared civilisational bonds, digital corridors, and seamless

connectivity, we can truly build a partnership defined by progress and mutual trust. RSP looks forward to translating these possibilities into reality for people of Nepal and India - for our shared prosperity," he said in a social media post.

The Embassy of Nepal, in a social media post, said the meeting covered "digital corridors and connectivity".

The warm welcome extended to Mr. Lamichhane at the Indira Gandhi International Airport on Monday and the subsequent top-level meetings have taken place against the back-

drop of the early days of the Prime Minister Balendra Shah-led government, which came to power in March and attracted attention for introducing customs duties on imported Indian goods worth more than 100 Nepal rupees. This was followed by a reignition of the Kalapani-Limpiadhura-Lipulek border dispute, which on Tuesday drew a response from the External Affairs Ministry that negated the role of third parties in Nepal-India border issues. Mr. Lamichhane's visit is therefore being viewed as an attempt to keep the ties on a smooth track.

U.S. moots 12.5% tariff for 'forced labour' on India, 53 other nations

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan

WASHINGTON

The U.S. government has proposed to levy a tariff of 12.5% on imports from 54 countries, including India, that it says have "failed to impose and effectively enforce" prohibitions on the import of goods produced using **forced labour**.

In response, the Indian government has said it "remains engaged" with the U.S. regarding this development and the finalisation of an Interim Agreement on trade. The office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) had, in March this year, launched an investigation under Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act of 1974 to look into whether its trade partners were taking enough steps to stop the import of goods made using forced labour.

U.S. moots tariff for 'forced labour' on India

The latest tariff announcements, as part of this investigation, are not final as yet.

Countries, including India, can submit requests to take part in public hearings by June 22, submit written comments by July 6, and participate in the public hearings on July 7.

According to trade experts, investigations under Section 301 were seen as a tool for the U.S. to impose tariffs on its imports after the country's Supreme Court in February struck down the reciprocal tariffs – including the 50% levied on India – that had been imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump.

According to the report released by the USTR, India is one of the 54 countries that were investigated and that were found to have “failed to impose and effectively enforce” prohibitions on the import of goods produced using forced labour.

“The results of this investigation indicate that the acts, policies and practices of India related to the failure to impose and effectively enforce a forced labour import prohibition are unreasonable and burden or restrict U.S. commerce,” the report said.

The proposed tariffs put India in the same tariff bracket as several of its competitors, including Bangladesh, China, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. “India remains engaged with the U.S. on the matter as a part of Section 301 proceedings,” the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a statement on Wednesday.

Iran strikes Kuwait's main airport, Bahrain base after U.S. hits Qeshm

Embassy of India in Kuwait says an Indian national was killed in the strike; 63 others wounded; the attack occurred soon after the airport had reopened following a months-long closure; U.S. targeted Iran's ground control station on Qeshm Island

Associated Press

DUBAI

Kuwait briefly shut its main airport on Wednesday after Iranian drones heavily damaged a passenger terminal, killed one person and wounded dozens – the latest in back-and-forth attacks by Iran and the U.S. that test a fragile ceasefire.

The strike reinforced the risks to residents and travellers in Gulf countries that had considered themselves relative havens before the war, now in its fourth month.

A spokesperson for Kuwait's Defence Ministry, Brig. Gen. Saud Abdulaziz



Unsafe haven: Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad al-Abdullah al-Sabah inspecting the Kuwaiti airport after an attack on Wednesday. AFP

Al-Otaibi, said “a number of hostile drones” targeted a passenger building at Kuwait International Airport. It had opened only on Monday after a months-

long closure because of the war.

India's embassy said the person killed was an Indian national. In a post on X, the Embassy of India in

Kuwait said it is “closely coordinating” with the Kuwaiti authorities to extend all possible support to the bereaved family.

Authorities said 63 people were wounded, including passengers and workers, and some suffered serious injuries.

Kuwait's Defence Ministry said it destroyed over a dozen missiles and a similar number of drones from Iran. The airport partially reopened later, with Kuwait Airways flights resuming at a different terminal, according to civil aviation authorities.

The Foreign Ministry said Kuwait will “neither accept nor tolerate” the at-

tacks and was kicking out two Iranian diplomats.

The U.S. military said U.S. and Bahraini forces intercepted missiles aimed at the Gulf kingdom, home to the U.S. Navy's 5th fleet.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard acknowledged that it targeted the headquarters of the 5th Fleet and U.S. military facilities in another country, but did not name Kuwait.

The U.S. military also said it launched strikes on an Iranian military ground control station on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's Foreign Ministry condemned the U.S. strikes on the island.

Hormuz to nuclear issue: Rubio's testimony tempers expectations

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, June 3

A FIVE-hour-long testimony by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio to the US Congress Tuesday provided clues about where the West Asia war is headed amid a fragile peace and uncertain ceasefire talks with Iran.

Appearing before the Senate for the first time since the war began on February 28, a combative Rubio spoke about a range of issues linked to the conflict.

Nuclear talks

Rubio tried to project optimism about the ceasefire talks with Iran, claiming that Tehran was willing to discuss some aspects of its nuclear programme — previously a no-go area. The US wants Iran to cap its programme and give up its estimated 440 kg of highly enriched uranium.

He cautioned, however, that there was no guarantee that any agreement would be “acceptable to the Senate or acceptable to the American people”. His open-ended assessment is an official acknowledgement that both sides still have wide differences on several issues.

Rubio's statement came a day after Iran's

state-affiliated *Tasnim News Agency* reported that Tehran would stop exchanging messages with Washington through intermediaries, pointing to Israel's military operations in Lebanon as a ceasefire violation.

Sanctions relief

Rubio said US negotiators have not offered sanctions relief to Iran in exchange for reopening the Strait of Hormuz. Any such relief, he said, was tied to Tehran giving up its nuclear programme.

Iran's main demand has been relief from the crushing economic sanctions imposed by the US, which had led to widespread protests in January. Its biggest leverage during the conflict has been its control over the Strait of Hormuz. Iran closed the narrow waterway, through which a fifth of the world's energy normally flows, in response to the US-Israeli attack.

Tehran is hoping that Trump, who faces midterm elections later this year, will buckle under the pressure of the spiralling gas and fuel prices and agree to its demands.

A rift with Israel?

Asked where the US stands on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's goal

Mojtaba Khamenei's fate

● Rubio said he believes that Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, is alive and is 'increasingly engaging' in leadership matters amid negotiations.

● By all accounts, however, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps is in control, and has access to the new Supreme Leader.

of seizing 70% of Gaza, Rubio said that was not part of President Donald Trump's 20-point plan to end the conflict between Israel and Hamas and rebuild the devastated territory.

This can be seen as a rebuke to the Israeli PM, who has consistently pushed the limits of the wars in Gaza as well as West Asia. Rubio's statement comes after Trump reportedly ripped into Netanyahu over his plans to attack Lebanon capital Beirut, for attacking Lebanon, and jeopardising the Iran peace talks.

China's role

Rubio said China hasn't provided help to Iran that “in any way impeded our operations”. He told lawmakers that Iran has Chinese military equipment from their previous ties but said the US has seen no indication that anything provided has “changed the dynamic in the battlefield”.

This is an important statement and assessment from the US Secretary of State and acting National Security Advisor, especially in the backdrop of US President Donald Trump's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping last week in Beijing.

From India's perspective, this is an im-

portant lesson since China had provided live intelligence to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor in May last year. This shows that Beijing is mindful of its ties with the US, and worked accordingly. It did not do the same with New Delhi.

Russian oil waiver

Rubio said that the US would like to end the sanction waivers granted to countries purchasing Russian oil. The US granted a waiver from sanctions on the purchase of Russian oil in March and extended it twice. The last extension was granted on May 17 for one month.

India, which has been reeling under shortage of gas and fuel, has been buying Russian energy to meet its demands and reduce the inflationary impact.

Rubio's words, therefore, are hanging like Damocles' sword — especially at a time when India is negotiating a trade deal with the US. India doesn't want to return to the tariff wars which began after the US slapped 50% “reciprocal” tariffs on India: for high tariffs on US products and buying Russian energy.

FULL REPORT ON

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM/EXPLAINED

WHO says Ebola response catching up as confirmed Congo cases hit 344

Reuters

Geneva, June 3

THE WORLD Health Organization said on Wednesday that the world is "catching up" with the Ebola outbreak in Democratic Republic of Congo, where there have been 344 confirmed cases of the disease and 60 confirmed deaths, although challenges remain.

"The outbreak had a big head start, and we're still behind, but under the leadership of the government of DRC, we're catching up," WHO Direc-

tor-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said during a press briefing.

The outbreak, linked to the Bundibugyo strain of the virus, has spread to neighbouring Uganda where 15 cases have been confirmed, including one death, the agency said.

Access to testing has also improved, which is why hundreds of cases that were initially suspected as Ebola have now been ruled out, the WHO said. The most common tests used for Ebola do not detect the Bundibugyo strain causing this out-

"The outbreak had a big head start, and we're still behind, but under the leadership of the government of DRC, we're catching up"

GENERAL TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS

WHO DIRECTOR-GENERAL

break, which caused a backlog. "What the field team is

doing, is looking to clear the backlog. So the lab so far has done 1,445 tests that cleared almost all the backlog we had, and every day as the surveillance improves, there are new suspect cases," said Abdirahman Mahamud, WHO director of health emergency alert and response operations.

There are 116 suspected cases awaiting testing, he said.

He said a team is also working through the 220 suspected deaths to ascertain the likelihood of the deaths being caused by Ebola.

Six people have recovered in the DRC and two in Uganda, showing Ebola patients can survive if they have access to care and seek treatment as soon as possible, the agency said.

The outbreak response continues to face challenges in scaling up testing capacity and tracing contacts, while blanket travel restrictions imposed by some countries are disrupting supply chains and hampering efforts, the agency said.

Only about 45% of contacts have been followed up, and to stay ahead of the outbreak,

that figure needs to rise above 90%, Tedros said.

Tedros also said the outbreak may have started as early as January, and teams were still investigating that, but stressed that the focus now should be on trying to contain it.

That will cost WHO at least \$115 million over the next three months, of which around 35% is currently raised, the agency's emergencies head Chikwe Ihekweazu said, adding that a "lot more" would be required in funding for the duration of the response.

THAILAND

Ex-PM Thaksin freed from prison after royal pardon



Former PM Thaksin Shinawatra after his release from prison on Wednesday. AP

THAILAND'S FORMER Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra formally completed all his obligations related to a prison sentence on Wednesday, when a royal pardon ended his four-month probation early. The 76-year-old billionaire populist, who was a dominant force in Thai politics for more than two decades, was released from a Bangkok prison last month to cheering crowds. There has since been speculation that he might continue to exert his strong influence over the Pheu Thai Party, which is part of the governing coalition. AP