



## Bebo in soup

Actor Kareena Kapoor Khan faces backlash as netizens dig out her old interviews where she criticised other actors

LEISURE | P2



## No consensus

Delegates discussing the world's first legally binding treaty to tackle plastic pollution fail to reach consensus

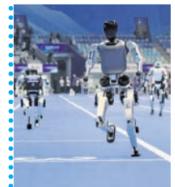
INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Trump softens stance

Donald Trump indicates that the US may not impose secondary tariffs on countries continuing to procure Russian crude oil

BUSINESS | P11



## Robot Olympics

China kicks off World Humanoid Robot Games, looking to showcase its advances in AI and robotics with 280 teams from 16 countries

SPORTS | P12

## Trade talks: US team may defer Aug 25 India visit

**New Delhi:** A US team, which was scheduled to visit India from August 25, for the next round of negotiations for the proposed bilateral trade agreement is likely to defer the meeting to a later date, an official said. So far, five rounds of talks have been completed for the proposed bilateral trade agreement and a US team is scheduled to visit India for the sixth round of talks. The negotiations were scheduled from August 25-29. "This visit is likely to be rescheduled," the official, who did not wish to be named, said. Deferment or rescheduling of the meeting assumes significance as the US has announced a staggering 50 per cent duty on Indian goods. The US is pressing for greater market access in politically sensitive areas such as agriculture and dairy sectors, which India cannot accept as it affects the livelihood of small and marginal farmers. India has stated that it will not compromise the interests of farmers and cattle rearers. While the 25 per cent tariff on Indian goods entering the US has come into effect from August 7, an additional 25 per cent, was announced on India as penalty for buying crude oil and military equipment from Russia, will come into effect from August 27.

## Man detained for bid to climb Srimandir

**Puri:** A man from Jharkhand's Ranchi has been detained for attempting to climb the Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri Saturday, police said. The man, Pancham Mahot, had already climbed around 5-7 feet on the south side of the 12th-century shrine when personnel of the Shree Jagannath Temple Police (JTP) stopped him, they said. The man appears to be mentally unstable, as per preliminary investigation, a police officer said. Earlier, a person from Ganjam had climbed the temple a few days ago, sparking security concerns. On August 13, a man had written "threatening messages" on the walls of the Budhi Maa Thakurani temple along the Heritage Corridor of Puri, police said.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Now when the PM says he'll do something great for us, my heart sinks

## Man burnt alive by kin

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, August 16:** Initial reports of a self-immolation bid by a 42-year-old man in Khurda district has allegedly turned out to be a case of a cold-blooded murder, with police arresting three members of the victim's family Saturday.

The deceased, Jyotiranjan Mathia of Saripur village under Baliana police station limits, succumbed to burn injuries at AIIMS Bhubaneswar a day after being admitted, police added.

According to the FIR filed by his wife Bijayalaxmi Behera, Jyotiranjan's father, stepmother, and stepbrother — along with others — allegedly poured petrol on him and set him ablaze Friday.

The motive is believed to be a longstanding family property

# POWER PLAY



US President Donald Trump greets his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

AP/PTI PHOTO

## Trump shifts stance on Ukraine peace after meeting Putin

REUTERS

**Washington, August 16:** US President Donald Trump said Saturday Ukraine should make a deal to end the war with Russia because "Russia is a very big power, and they're not," after hosting a summit with President Vladimir Putin that failed to yield a ceasefire.

In a major shift, Trump also said he had agreed with Putin that negotiators should go straight to a peace settlement - not via a ceasefire, as Ukraine and its European allies, until now with US support, have been demanding.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he would travel to Washington Monday, while Kyiv's European allies welcomed Trump's efforts but vowed to back Ukraine and tighten sanctions on Russia.

Trump met with Putin for nearly three hours in Alaska Friday at the first US-Russia summit since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

"It was determined by all that the best way to end the horrific war between Russia and Ukraine is to go directly to a Peace Agreement, which would end the war, and not a mere Ceasefire Agreement, which often times do not hold up," Trump posted on Truth Social.

MORE P10

## Partition: NCERT blames Cong

*A fresh political row has erupted over the NCERT's special module on the Partition Horrors Day for students of Classes VI to XII which blames the Partition of India on the Indian National Congress, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and Lord Mountbatten. The Congress has called for the "book to be burned" for misrepresenting historical facts. The NCERT has often been accused by historians, academics and Opposition parties of distorting history at the behest of the party in power. These accusations stem from perceived political, ideological, and cultural biases in how historical events and figures are presented in school textbooks.*

PNN & AGENCIES

**New Delhi, August 16:** A special module released by the NCERT to mark "Partition Horrors Remembrance Day" has held Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Congress and then Viceroy

Lord Mountbatten responsible for India's partition.

The module has also noted that post-Partition, Kashmir emerged as a new problem, which had never existed in India before and created a challenge for the country's foreign policy. It has also flagged that some countries keep giving aid to Pakistan and exert pressure on India in the name of the Kashmir issue.

"India's Partition happened due to wrong ideas. The party of Indian Muslims, the Muslim League, held a conference in Lahore in 1940. Its leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, said that Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literatures," the module said.

In a section titled "culprits of Partition," the NCERT module said, "Ultimately, on August 15, 1947, India was divided. But this was not the doing of any one person. There were three elements responsible for the Partition of



India: Jinnah, who demanded it; second, the Congress, which accepted it; and third, Mountbatten, who implemented it. But Mountbatten proved to be guilty of a major blunder."

"He preponed the date for the transfer of power from June 1948 to August 1947. He persuaded everyone to agree to this. Because of this, complete preparations could not be made before the Partition. The demarcation of the Partition boundaries was also done hastily. For that, Sir Cyril Radcliffe was given on-

ly five weeks. In Punjab, even two days after 15 August 1947, millions of people did not know whether they were in India or in Pakistan. Such haste was a great act of carelessness," it said.

While the module blames Jinnah, it also quotes him saying he never thought it would happen or that he would see Pakistan in his lifetime.

"Later, even Jinnah admitted that he had not expected Partition to happen. He told his aide, 'I never thought it would happen. I never expected to see Pakistan in my lifetime,'" it said.

The module quotes Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as saying that the situation in India had become explosive. "India had become a battlefield, and it was better to partition the country than to have a civil war."

It cites Mahatma Gandhi's stance, noting that he opposed Partition but would not resist the Congress' decision through violence.

## An ancient whale with Pokémon face, predator bite

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Wellington, August 16:** Long before whales were majestic, gentle giants, some of their prehistoric ancestors were tiny, weird and feral. A chance discovery of a 25 million-year-old fossil on an Australian beach has allowed paleontologists to identify a rare, entirely new species that could unlock mysteries of whale evolution.

Researchers this week officially named Janjucetus dullardi, a cartoonish creature with bulging eyes the size of tennis balls, in the Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society. Unlike today's whales, the juvenile specimen was small enough to fit in a single bed.

Boasting fiendish teeth and a shark-like snout, however, this oddball of the ocean was nasty, mean and built to hunt.

"It was, let's say, deceptively cute," said Erich Fitzgerald, senior curator of vertebrate paleontology at Museums Victoria Research Institute, and one of the paper's authors.

"It might have looked for all the world like some weird kind of mash-up between a whale, a seal and a Pokémon but they were very much their own thing."

The rare discovery of the partial skull, including ear bones and teeth, was made in 2019 on a fossil-rich stretch of coast along Australia's Victoria state, Jan Juc Beach, a cradle for some of the weirdest whales in history, is becoming a hotspot for understanding early whale evolution, Fitzgerald said.

Few family trees seem stranger than that of Janjucetus dullardi, only the fourth species ever identified from a



group known as mammalodontids, early whales that lived only during the Oligocene Epoch, about 34 to 23 million years ago. That marked the point about halfway through the known history of whales.

The tiny predators, thought to have grown to 3 metres in length, were an early branch on

## 12 new NACs in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 16:** The Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department Saturday released a draft notification for the establishment of 12 new Notified Area Councils (NACs) across seven districts in the state.

The department has issued this notification to solicit feedback and objections from residents and stakeholders within a designated timeframe. This initiative is part of the state's urban development strategy aimed at fostering economic growth and enhancing development in smaller urban centres by improving infrastructure and services for residents.

The proposed NACs are Palahara in Angul district, Birmaharajpur in Subarnapur district, Simulia and Basta in Balasore district, Betnoti, Bangiriposi, and Chitrada in Mayurbhanj district, Bissam Cuttack in Rayagada district, Bamra and Rengali in Sam-

balpur district, and Tihidi and Dhusuri in Bhadrak district.

These proposed NACs are intended to improve urban governance and development in the respective areas. The Odisha government has resolved to establish 21 new NACs in the state. An NAC is formed to oversee rapidly developing towns that have not yet achieved municipal status. NACs facilitate the provision of enhanced civic amenities and focused development.

In May, H&UD Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra stated that the government aims to expand urban coverage in the state from the current 17 per cent to 30 per cent by introducing new NACs and municipalities.

In February last year, prior to the general elections, the then state government had established 34 NACs in 20 districts to manage civic body administration in those areas and upgraded five NACs into municipalities.

the body," said Fitzgerald.

That mystery will remain tantalizingly unsolved unless a specimen is uncovered with more of its skeleton intact, which would be something of a miracle. Even the partial skull that allowed the initial identification this week was an astonishing discovery.

Janjucetus dullardi was named by researchers after an amateur fossil hunter who doesn't mind its looks in the slightest.

"It's literally been the greatest 24 hours of my life," said Ross Dullard, who discovered the skull while fossil hunting at Jan Juc Beach. After Wednesday's confirmation of the new species, the school principal walked like a rock star onto campus with "high fives coming left, right and centre," he said.

# leisure



**DENZEL WASHINGTON NOT AFRAID OF CANCEL CULTURE**  
Hollywood star Denzel Washington has shared his thoughts on cancel culture, which he is not afraid of. Washington said he doesn't care about being 'followed,' adding, "You can't be canceled if you haven't signed up. Don't sign up."

**SOPHIE TURNER SHARES HER 'SUPER CATHARTIC' PROCESS**  
The *Game of Thrones* star Sophie Turner, whose split from Joe Jonas earlier made headlines, has shared that filming *Trust* was a super cathartic process for her. The 29-year-old actress was in the midst of her divorce from Joe during the film's shoot.



**FORTUNE FORECAST**

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**ARIES**  
Now at last you have realised that you have been preoccupied with work at the cost of your family life. Making up to them now is going to take a lot more effort. Ganesha says be ready to open your purse strings for either eating out, going out for a movie or shopping at the best places.

**TAURUS**  
You are likely to turn excessively self centred today, says Ganesha. This could cause you to be very insecure. You will have a tendency to control and dominate others. There is all likelihood that you will thereby jeopardize important relationships. You are advised to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of all those you come across.

**GEMINI**  
The day promises sensitivity and compassion for you, predicts Ganesha. You may plan a trip with your family members. You may also invest your money in various financial companies, as securing the future of your family will be foremost on your mind. Moreover, you will also save some hefty amount to meet future needs.

**CANCER**  
A day to indulge in fantasy. Your ideas will be fantastic. Your status and prestige go up. People will praise your efforts. (Your efforts will be appreciated). A day of creativity and success, with Ganesha's blessings in tow.

**LEO**  
Agreed that home is where the heart is. But today, your home is where your troubles will be. The faster you try to run away from them, the quicker they seem to catch up with you, says Ganesha. So, scouting off may not be the best solution. Some people around you may try to blow things out of proportion; the best way to keep them in check is with a smile.

**VIRGO**  
Children will be a source of a lot of appreciation today, in and out of the classroom. Your logical abilities will become stronger. Ganesha advises you to stay peaceful, flow with the tide and enjoy yourself, regardless of what happens in the day.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says those of you who are married or in love will experience a good time today. As you spend more time with your life partner by going out for a drive or for dinner, you will come closer to them. Today is a day full of joy, vigor and happiness for you.

**SCORPIO**  
Being a workaholic may divert your attention from your family and you may have to bear the consequences. It's time to sort differences with your spouse. But, all this while, you need to be calm and patient. Watch your words in case of any arguments, warns Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Good Samaritans around you may give unsolicited, but valuable advice. Take it as a hint, and consider it for your betterment. Take your decision after following the advice, and this may definitely yield benefits, says Ganesha.

**CAPRICORN**  
You want to enhance your knowledge by exploring foreign shores, but luck hasn't favoured you yet. Ganesha predicts today to be a favourable day for you to try again for higher studies. If associated with the Stock Market or speculation, you are likely to make profits. You will come across many opportunities, but you need to identify and explore them to the fullest.

**AQUARIUS**  
Meeting people from different walks of life, having a good conversation with them and widening the horizon of your knowledge - this will be the highlight of today for the Bull. At work, you will have a busy day with plenty of meetings, discussions, planning and execution, feels Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
Today you will get attention from the opposite sex and this will play an important role in your success in the near future. Due to the favourable alignment of the planets you will receive more than your expectations. Ganesha feels that even though you are a calculative and cautious person, you will tend to be aggressive, outgoing and willing to take risks today.

## Kangana's period talks

**Mumbai:** Kangana Ranaut is known to highlight her views on some social issues and strived for women empowerment.

In a recent interview, she opened up on the struggle to maintain a good menstrual hygiene while being a politician.

She expressed that while as an actor she gets all the privileges and luxury, life is different as a politician and that's how it is.

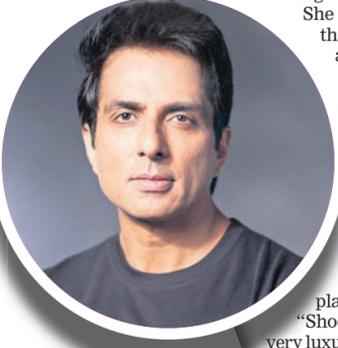
She explained, "Shooting is a very luxurious place. There are vans for actresses. You can change the pads as much as you want. You can take a shower. But the way I am now, in this political line, we travel for 12 hours a day."

There is no place where women can go to the toilet."

When asked about her views on debate about women not entering temples or the kitchen during periods, Kangana said, "I never argued about going to the temple during this because I myself used to feel so dirty. I feel that if you have no other choice, then go. I stay alone in my house so I have to go. So people who don't have any option will have to enter the kitchen."

She continued: "During a woman's mourning state, negative energy comes out of her body. That's why most women cannot tolerate someone even breathing next to them during that time. In that state, if you don't cook for someone, it's only better."

AGENCIES



## Sonu wins hearts again

**Mumbai:** Actor and philanthropist Sonu Sood has once again captured hearts with his generosity, this time pledging to support the education of two young brothers from Darbhanga, Bihar. A recent video of the siblings went viral, showing the elder brother pedalling a bicycle carrying the Indian tricolor, with his younger brother seated behind, proudly holding the flag.

The video's emotional resonance moved Sood to act. Announcing his decision on social media, he shared, "From Monday, both brothers will go to school. I'm sending the number. Pack your school bags."

The elder brother's story touched many. After their father passed away, their mother works in Mumbai as a domestic help while their elder sister manages household responsibilities. To support the family, the elder boy had to leave school and work in a cap-making factory. Despite the hardships, he vowed that his younger brother's education would never be compromised.

By stepping in, Sonu Sood has ensured that both brothers will now return to school, relieving them of the financial and logistical burden that had previously forced them to prioritize survival over education.

This latest gesture reinforces Sood's commitment to social responsibility, demonstrating how one individual's timely intervention can transform lives.

As the video continues to circulate, fans and followers have lauded Sood's initiative, highlighting the enduring impact of his philanthropy across India.

AGENCIES

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AGENCIES



## Old interviews land Kareena in soup

**Mumbai:** Netizens have dug out Kareena Kapoor Khan's old interviews slamming her fellow Bollywood celebs.

In a viral Reddit thread, snippets of Bebo's old interviews have been shared, calling her a 'mean girl'. After losing Shah Rukh Khan-starrer *Devdas* to Aishwarya Rai Bachchan,

she had called filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali a 'confused director' with no morals and principles. In another interview, Kareena claimed that Sridevi never had a historical hit. Apart from this, Kareena had called Salman Khan a 'bad actor'.

Well, netizens are now having a field day trolling Bebo. One such internet user stated, "Pooh in real life!", whereas another wrote, "I always point that out. Her fans pass her mean behaviour as 'Sassy' and call her real life 'Poo' as if it's an achievement."

## Odia actress Sonali shines at SRFF, bags Best Actress trophy

**Bhubaneswar:** Sonali Sharmishta Mohanty, an Odia actress working across multiple Indian languages, has recently been honoured with the Best Actress award at the New York-based Socially Relevant Film Festival (SRFF) for her performance in the Magahi feature film *Swaha - In the Name of Fire*. Directed by Abhilash Sharma, the film also won the Best Narrative Feature Film award at the event.

Reacting to her recent success, Sonali said, "I feel this achievement is not just a personal milestone but also a proud moment for Odisha, as it showcases our talent on the world stage."

Born in Nanpur village of Jajpur district, Sonali completed her schooling at Nandkishore Vidya Mandir, Kusupur, and earned an engineering degree from Centurion University, Khurda.

She has acted in various Indian languages and dialects, including Odia, Hindi, Magahi, Maithili, Rajasthani, and Malayalam. Some of her notable works include: *Baby John, Jajabara 2.0, Anthony, A Life Inside Me, The Jengaburu Curse, The Face of the Faceless, Ratri Ke Yatri, Delhi Crimes Season 2, Paani, There is no human, Decoupled, Kalira Atita* and *Tribhanga*. Sonali is also a leading model, appearing in TV commercials for brands like Amazon, Rasna, Rapido, Kotak, HDFC, Jio Cinema, Zomato, and Giva.

As per the plot of the movie, it tells the story of a Dalit family in rural Bihar, struggling with poverty, caste discrimination, and the supernatural. The husband, a hardworking day



laborer, leaves home in search of work. The wife, suffering from postpartum depression, is unable to feed her baby. While the husband faces a perilous journey, the wife battles her inner demons—isolated, helpless, and unable to communicate with him. What initially appears to be a common struggle for millions in the Dalit community quickly spirals into disaster.

Shot largely in black and white, the film's haunting visuals contribute to its timeless, eerie atmosphere.

PNN



**PEANUTS**



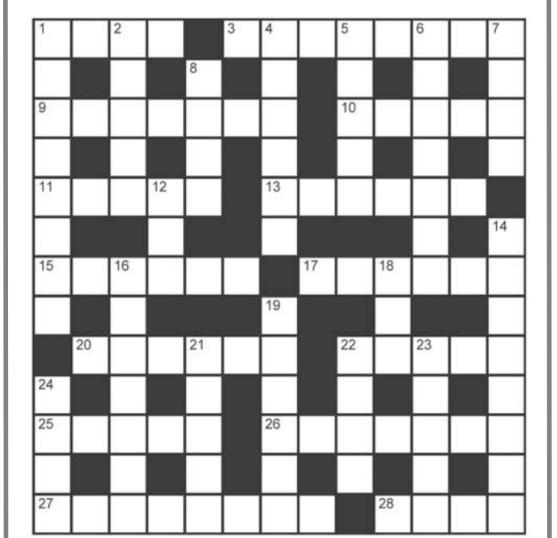
**CALVIN AND HOBBS**



**BREVITY**



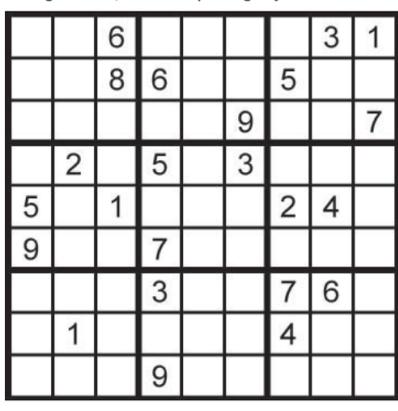
**FUN POST CROSSWORD**



- Across**
- 1 In addition
  - 3 Forebear
  - 9 Mild powdered seasoning
  - 10 Subsided
  - 11 Separately
  - 13 Purchasers
  - 15 Examine (4,2)
  - 17 Desk item
  - 20 Doctrines
  - 22 Acts
  - 25 French farewell
  - 26 Urge
  - 27 Junkets and pies
  - 28 Cross to bear
  - Down**
  - 1 Ovation
  - 2 Old photo colour
  - 4 Close at hand
  - 5 Hostile force
  - 6 Knights' tunics
  - 7 Engine parts
  - 8 Clue
  - 12 Lobster coral
  - 14 Salted pub treats
  - 16 Horror movie characters
  - 18 Citrus drink
  - 19 Help out
  - 21 Armistice
  - 22 Gratuities
  - 23 Parachute material
  - 24 Lyric poet

**SUDOKU**

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



**SOLUTIONS**



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown

## Robust monitoring, evaluation needed for THR scheme: CM



**Bhubaneswar, August 16:** A robust monitoring and evaluation system is needed to ensure the effective implementation of the Take-Home-Ration (THR) scheme, aimed at preventing malnutrition in the state, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said here Saturday.

Reviewing various programmes of the Women and Child Development (W&CD) department at Lok Seva Bhawan, Majhi stressed the need for major improvements in the entire process—from preparation of food to packaging and distribution.

To combat malnutrition, the state is implementing

several initiatives, including the Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP), the Adolescent Nutrition Scheme, and the Chief Minister's Sampurna Pushti Yojana.

Under the THR scheme, chhatua (a fortified food mix) is produced and distributed by 546 self-help groups across Odisha. Currently, 43,92,700 beneficiaries are receiving chhatua and other nutritional supplements under different schemes, an official of W&CD department said.

Highlighting that the health of women and children is crucial for the state's development, the Chief Minister said these schemes must not be neglected under any circum-

stances.

"In a bid to ensure the effective implementation of the THR scheme in Odisha, a robust monitoring and evaluation system is the need of the hour," Majhi said.

Majhi further directed officials to ensure the construction of Anganwadi centres in areas where they lack permanent buildings, with land acquisition if necessary.

He also directed to expand the coverage of the Chief Minister's Sampurna Pushti Yojana, complete 100 per cent construction of Anganwadi centres in DMF districts with necessary funds to be allocated from the respective resources.

## CUO-COATS pact to boost tribal research, devpt

**Bhubaneswar, August 16:** The Central University of Odisha (CUO), Koraput and the Council of Analytical Tribal Studies (COATS) have inked a pact to collaborate on research and development initiatives, and academic exchanges focusing on tribal communities mostly living in state's schedule areas, particularly the erstwhile Koraput, Bolangir and Kalahandi (KBK) districts, officials said Saturday.

The pact, which will remain effective for the next three years and may be renewed for another three years with mutual consent, was signed by CUO acting VC NC Panda and COATS Director PC Mohapatra here.

Speaking at the event, Panda emphasised the importance of the partnership in advancing social science research with a special focus on tribal studies.

He further highlighted the need to preserve the culture and traditions of tribal communities while working towards improving their economic conditions. "This collaboration aims to foster research that enhances education, economy, and cultural standards among tribal populations. The MoU is timely and essential as it will enable both institutions to jointly contribute to the development and welfare of tribal life and livelihood in the Koraput region," he said.

The partnership signifies a strong commitment to addressing the challenges faced by marginalised tribal groups through focused research and development efforts, CUO officials said.

## Fresh low-pressure area likely around August 18

**Bhubaneswar, August 16:** A fresh low-pressure area is expected to develop over the northwest and adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal around August 18 and under its influence, heavy to very heavy rainfall, accompanied with thunderstorms and lightning, is very likely in several districts of Odisha August 18 and 19, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Saturday.

"Due to the formation of a low-pressure area, there is a possibility of heavy to very heavy rainfall, along with thunderstorms and lightning, in various districts of Odisha between August 18 and 19," the regional centre of the IMD said.

The existing low-pressure system over south Odisha and adjoining north Andhra Pradesh has now moved to south Chhattisgarh and its neighbourhood. The associated upper-air cyclonic circulation extends up to 7.6km above mean sea level and tilts south-westwards with height, it said.

It is expected to move west-northwestwards, gradually weaken, and reach Gujarat around the morning of August 18 as a remnant cyclonic circulation, the weatherman said.

The IMD has already issued yellow and orange alerts for many districts in Odisha for the five days beginning Saturday.

The sea condition is expected to remain rough to very rough along and off the south Odisha coast, the west-central Bay, and the northwest Bay of Bengal between August 18

## RAIN BATTERS LIFE

Normal life was affected in parts of Odisha, particularly in the southern districts of Koraput and Malkangiri, due to low pressure-induced heavy rain leading to landslides and submergence of major roads, officials said Saturday.

Rainwater was flowing around three feet above a bridge on NH 326 in MV-96 village in Malkangiri district, snapping vehicular movement between Malkangiri, Motu, and Jeypore.

Interstate vehicular movement between Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh was also severely affected as rainwater was flowing on the NH, a Revenue department official said, adding that trucks carrying

essential items were stranded.

Koraput received 26.7mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours till 8.30am Saturday, triggering landslides on hilly roads. A landslide blocked the Baijaghati-Kerenga hill road, disrupting connectivity between Damanjodi and Narayanpatna areas, officials said.

The landslide occurred early on Saturday and efforts were underway to clear the road, they said. In last 24 hours, Koraput, Nuapada, Jajpur, Kendrapara and Cuttack districts received excess rainfall while more than normal downpour was recorded in Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh and Bolangir districts, they added.



Women use umbrella as rain lashes Bhubaneswar PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

## Over 57% Odisha Yatri users women

**Bhubaneswar, August 16:** Over 57 per cent of Odisha Yatri users between October 2024 and July 2025 were women, reflecting a confidence in Odisha's public transport ecosystem, official sources said Saturday.

The app, launched by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi in January 2025, began its pilot operations in October 2024.

According to the data, month-on-month usage trends reveal a steady female preference, peaking at 61.63 per cent in January 2025. Even in the latest data for

July 2025, women accounted for 55.38 per cent of users, significantly surpassing male ridership.

"Of the 2.57 lakh passengers who used the platform between October 2024 and July 2025, more than 1.48 lakh (a little over 57 per cent) were female users—a remarkable indicator of enhanced accessibility, safety, and gender inclusion in the state's mobility landscape," according to state government data. Transport officials attribute this shift to a combination of factors, including verified drivers, real-time trip tracking, improved last-mile connectivity, and a robust grievance redressal

system. The app's integration with enforcement and transport authorities has created a safe and accountable commuting experience, especially for women and other vulnerable groups.

"The data speaks for itself — women are not just participating; they are leading the adoption of Odisha Yatri. This reflects the government's strong commitment to gender-responsive, inclusive transport," said Commerce and Transport department Principal Secretary Usha Padhee.

Further strengthening its community-oriented approach, Odisha Yatri, in collaboration with

the State Transport Authority, provided free auto rides to over 30,000 pilgrims during this year's Rath Yatra in Puri.

Looking ahead, plans are underway to expand Odisha Yatri to more cities across the state and introduce ambulance and boating services under the platform, ensuring wider reach and impact, Transport department sources said.

Notably, Odisha Yatri is a state government-backed, zero-commission ride-hailing app designed to offer affordable and reliable transportation options in Odisha.

## MUSICAL ENSEMBLE

Artistes perform during Nupur's annual day celebration 'Mallhar 2025' at Bhanja Kala Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Saturday



PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

## 'Aasa School Jiba' to prevent school dropouts

**Bhubaneswar:** The School and Mass Education (S&ME) department has launched a state-wide initiative titled 'Aasa School Jiba' (Let us go to school) to curb the problem of school dropouts during the 2025-26 academic year. As part of the campaign, special meetings involving parents, teachers, and school management & development committees (SMDCs) were held across the state. The meetings aimed to reintegrate out-of-school children into the mainstream education system, ensure enrolment in age-appropriate classes, and prevent students from discontinuing their studies. Preventive measures to overcome challenges hindering children's education were also discussed. During the sessions, parents took a 'group pledge' to cooperate with schools, ensure that no child is excluded from the education system, and contribute to building a safe, inclusive, and joyful learning environment that upholds every child's right to education. Senior officials of the S&ME department attended the meetings in various districts, monitoring the process and extending necessary guidance and support.

### BIGGEST SHOPPING FESTIVAL

## THAILAND INTERNATIONAL SHOPPING FESTIVAL

### LAST DAY TODAY

10.00 AM TO 9.00 PM

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# Mob kills, cremates Rayagada man over witchcraft suspicion



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rayagada, August 16:** A 40-year-old man was allegedly killed by fellow villagers on suspicion of practising witchcraft in Burusubadi village under Badaalubadi panchayat and Seskhal police limits of Rayagada district, police said Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Ramarao Jilakara, 40, of Burusubadi.

According to police, a group of villagers tied Ramarao to an electric pole in the village square August 8, assaulted him and allegedly forced him to consume poison. Later, they carried his body on a cot to a cremation ground and set it on fire. Family members were also allegedly threatened with dire consequences if they spoke out.

Ramarao's younger brother, Dharma Jilakara, lodged a complaint at Seskhal police station August 12. In his statement, Dharma said that another villager, Kasana Jilakara, had died of some illness August 7. After the funeral, villagers accused Ramarao of practising witchcraft and causing Kasana's death. Out of fear, Ramarao and his family fled to a relative's house in nearby Kunjabadi village.

However, when Ramarao

returned home around 10-11pm August 8, a group of villagers, including Bijay Jilakara, Prabha Mandangi, Rajesh Mandangi, Burusha Mandangi, Partha Jilakara, Gameya Jilakara, Anksha Mandangi, Prakash Mandangi and Bombeya Mandangi, allegedly tied him to the pole, beat him, forced him to drink poison, and later cremated the body without informing his family.

Based on the complaint, police registered a case (73/2025) under various sections (189,190,191, Clause II of 103,296, 238, 351) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Police arrested 12 people and produced them in court August 13, Rayagada SDPO Gourahari Sahu said Saturday. Police have also announced plans to conduct awareness programmes to prevent such incidents.

The deceased's brother further said that this was not the first such case. In 2023, following the death of a villager named Ishwar Mandangi, the same group of villagers had threatened Ramarao's family, accusing them of witchcraft. At the time, Ramarao had sought police protection and villagers were made to sign an undertaking saying no harm would be done to his family.

Dharma also recalled that nearly 20 years ago, their father, Pedeya Jilakara, was killed by villagers under similar suspicion of practising witchcraft.

Community leaders and intellectuals have condemned the incident, pointing out that even as society moves toward modernity, people in remote areas still fall prey to superstition and witch-hunting, underlining the need for strong awareness campaigns.

# 'Lagna' set for Nuakhai festival

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, August 16:** The 'lagna' or auspicious moment for Nuakhai, the main agrarian festival of western Odisha, was fixed Saturday.

According to calculations by scholars and astrologers, this year the festival will be celebrated August 28, Thursday, on the fifth day (Panchami) of lunar fortnight (Shukla Pakhya) of Odia 'Bhadra' month.

The puja for Goddess Samalei, the presiding deity, will be performed in the auspicious moment of Libra ascendant (Tula Lagna) between 10.33am and 10.55am. Following tradition, the first offering of the newly harvested rice 'Nabanna' will be offered to the presiding deity before people across the region partake the ritual meal.

The date was formally set during a ceremony held Saturday at 4.30pm in the Brahmapura temple at Jhaduapada in



Sambalpur. The event, organised by the Brahmapura Trust Board, brought together priests and astrologers from various parts of the district.

The collective decision was first offered to the deity of Brahmapura temple through special prayers performed by temple priest Santosh Panda. Sanjay Kumar Mishra, a member of the temple trust board, later

announced the date and time of the festival for the public.

Afterward, scholars, astrologers, trust board members and officials joined a procession through the city before reaching the Samalei Temple at dusk. There, they offered special prayers to the goddess and offered the Nuakhai Lagna to the deity.

Samalei temple chief priest

Ambika Prasad Ray, along with temple trust board chairman Sanjay Kumar Babu and other priests, accepted the 'Lagna' in accordance with the tradition.

The event was coordinated with the support of Brahmapura Temple Trust Board president-member Saroj Kumar Dalpat, Srimantra Mishra, Sushant Kumar Purohit, Milu Panigrahi, Pranaranjan Panda, Partha Sarathi Mishra, Shubhendra Kumar Panda, Abhishek Mishra and Praveen Kumar Dixit.

Among those who participated were Shree Shree Brahma Pandit Mahasabha president Rabinarayan Panda, Pandits Sachidananda Mishra Karasharma, Jitendra Kumar Nanda, Krushnachandra Panigrahi, Chandrakant Panigrahi, Maheshwar Nayak, Sarit Kumar Padhi, Gopinath Panda and Shashank Shekhar Mishra, along with several other scholars from various parts of the district.

# Ashram chief priest held on rape charges



PNN & AGENCIES

**Dhenkanal, August 16:** Police Saturday arrested the head priest of an ashram on charges of raping of a 35-year-old woman inmate, officials said.

The alleged incident took place at Mathakargola Ashram under Kamakhyanagar police station in Dhenkanal district, police said.

According to police, a woman inmate of the 'ashram' alleged that chief priest Madhu Mangal Das alias Madan Mohan Parida (47) raped her while she was sleeping in a room on the ashram's premises August 4.

The survivor in her FIR also alleged that the chief priest also abused her when she objected to his move.

Das was arrested on charges of rape and produced before the court which sent him to jail for 14 days, said Suryamani Pradhan, the additional SP of Dhenkanal district.

Das, while being taken to judicial custody, pleaded innocence and alleged that he was framed by some people.

Other ashram inmates said the woman was initially engaged in worshipping the deity and maintaining the temple. However, the chief priest later reassigned her to duties in the ashram's dining hall. Following this, the woman alleged that he sexually abused her forcibly in the ashram.

# Man arrested from TN for circulating obscene videos of Nuapada girl

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nuapada:** Odisha Police has arrested a 22-year-old man for allegedly posting obscene pictures and videos of a 25-year-old woman of Nuapada district on social media platforms. The accused, identified as Minajun Islam, a native of Assam, was arrested from Tiruppur area in Tamil Nadu August 12 and brought on transit remand to Nuapada Friday, a police officer of Komana police station said.

The arrest was made on the basis of a written complaint lodged by the victim with Komana police station August 9, the officer said. The police officer said the accused and the woman had been in a relationship when the victim was working in the Tiruppur area of Tamil Nadu. During the period, the accused allegedly recorded explicit videos of her without her knowledge. Later, the man allegedly uploaded the videos on social media, the officer said. A team from Komana police station visited the area in Tamil Nadu and arrested him. After producing him at the local court there, the accused was brought to Komana Friday, the police said.

# Unregulated parking outside malls disrupts road traffic

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Semiliguda, August 16:** Normal life in Semiliguda of Koraput district is facing severe disruption due to persistent congestion of the road caused by unregulated parking outside major shopping malls, sources said Saturday.

People visiting major shopping malls in the town are parking their vehicles in front of these facilities causing major inconvenience to the commuters and general public at large. Although these commercial establishments have designated parking spaces, poor management and lack of enforcement have led to customers and delivery vehicles occupying public roads to park their vehicles which result in frequent traffic jams all through the day.

This also adversely impacts thousands of commuters, local



traders, transport operators, and even emergency services. The situation worsens during peak shopping hours when the roads become almost impassable, affecting business and travel across the town.

Rajendra Prasad, chairman of Sunabeda Municipality, acknowledged the issue. He said, "We are aware of the traffic congestion caused by unregulated parking outside these malls. The municipality has already raised this issue with the Koraput district administration. However, the matter is yet to resolve due to a lack of coordinated action." He added that a joint meeting

involving the traffic department and mall authorities will soon be convened to ensure better parking management and smoother traffic flow. He assured that necessary steps would be taken soon.

Expressing strong concern, Saroj Samal, President of Neelanchal Market, said that residents, commuters and local business owners are bearing the brunt of administrative inaction. "If the authorities continue to ignore the issue, we will be forced to stage a protest demanding immediate corrective action," he warned.

Despite repeated complaints, visible enforcement is still missing. As frustration grows among locals, the demand for strict and swift intervention becomes louder. Observers said that, without immediate administrative action, the issue risks snowballing into a full-scale civic problem.

# Elderly man killed over palm reading

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhawanipatna/Junagarh, August 16:** An elderly man was brutally killed Saturday at Cheramuhul village under Talajaring panchayat and Junagarh police limits in Kalahandi district following an argument over palm reading, police said.

The victim was identified as Rath Kandapan, 60, of Talajaring. Police said Kandapan had gone to a nearby forest to collect firewood when he met Ratna Majhi, 40, of the same village. Known locally for reading palms, Kandapan reportedly read Majhi's palm and made remarks that enraged him. Majhi then allegedly went home, returned with an axe and struck Kandapan on the head before dumping the body in a dried up well, police said.

Junagarh police, along with a scientific team, reached the scene and began an investigation. Kalahandi Superintendent of Police Nagraj Deverakonda was also present. The victim's wife, Purnima, lodged a written complaint naming Majhi as the assailant. Police have registered a case (552/25) and detained the accused for questioning.

After post-mortem examination, the body was handed over to the family members, Junagarh IIC Sesadeb Behera said.

# Kandhamal VHP leader's death anniversary passes off peacefully

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Phulbani, August 16:** The 17th death anniversary of VHP leader Swami Laxmananda Saraswati passed off peacefully in Kandhamal district amidst tightened security arrangements Friday, official said.

While security was especially tightened around Saraswati's ashrams at Chakapada and Jalespeta, the entire district was placed under a security blanket as the VHP leader's assassination August 23, 2008 led to large-scale violence that claimed 38 lives.

Saraswati's death anniversary is observed according to the Hindu calendar, Jalespeta ashram head Swami Jeevan Muktananda Puri said.

The monk and four of his associates were gunned down while they were celebrating Janmashtami at Jalespeta ashram under Tumudibandh police station in the district.

Kandhamal SP Harisha BC said security was tightened up across the district in view of Saraswati's death anniversary, which in previous years



had sparked violence in the region.

Apart from two ashrams, armed police were also deployed at vulnerable points, the SP said, adding that no report of any untoward incident was received from any place so far. Though it was claimed that Maoists were involved in the killing of Saraswati and his associates, the VHP continued to demand the arrest of the mastermind of the mass murder.

The state government is committed to arresting all culprits responsible for the killings, Kandhamal MP Sukant Panigrahi said.

Meanwhile, opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Congress criticised the BJP government in the state for not making public the report of the commission that probed the killing of the VHP leader.

Soon after the BJP came to power in the state last year, Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan assured that the inquiry commission report on the killing of Saraswati would be made public.

Justice Sarat Chandra Mohapatra was appointed as the one-man commission to probe Saraswati's killing and the subsequent riots in 2008.

However, he passed away in 2012 before completing the inquiry. Then, Justice AS Naidu was appointed to head the panel, which submitted its report in two volumes to the home secretary in December 2015.

However, the findings of the commission have not been made public either by the previous BJD government or the present BJP regime.

# Woman paraded with garland of slippers over unpaid loan

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Boinda, August 16:** A woman was allegedly humiliated and paraded with a garland of slippers around her neck Thursday in a village under Handapa police limits of Kishorenagar block in Angul district after failing to repay a loan taken from the village fund, police said Saturday.

On being informed, police registered a case (310/25) and launched an investigation, Handapa police IIC Namita Nayak said. The incident has spread shockwaves in the area with people from various quarters condemning the incident. Action will be taken against the

perpetrators after the investigation gets completed, she added.

Police said the woman had borrowed money from the village fund a year ago but was unable to clear the dues. A village meeting was convened Thursday, where villagers including women demanded re-payment with 30 per cent interest.

When the woman pleaded her inability to pay the full amount immediately, some villagers allegedly warned her she would be humiliated if she failed to comply. According to the complaint, one woman forcibly placed a slipper garland around her neck and made her walk around the village.

# Ex-headmaster awarded 4-yr RI for misappropriating govt funds

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Phulbani:** A former headmaster of a primary school in Kandhamal district has been sentenced to four years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) and fined ₹50,000 for misappropriating government money. The Special Vigilance Judge, Phulbani, Saturday sentenced Subash Chandra Nayak, former headmaster-cum-secretary of Rangapaju UP School under Tumudibandha block in Kandhamal, to undergo four years of rigorous imprisonment and pay a fine of ₹50,000. Nayak was charged with misappropriating government funds meant for constructing a classroom in the school. He was taken into judicial custody to serve his sentence. Following the conviction, Odisha Vigilance has announced that it will move the competent authority for Nayak's dismissal from service. The former headmaster had been absconding from the school after committing the offence.

# Vedanta strengthens community health with monsoon initiatives

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 16:** Vedanta Aluminium, India's largest producer of aluminium, launched a series of targeted monsoon health initiatives to strengthen community well-being in Rayagada and Kalahandi districts. These efforts are being implemented through the company's Mobile Health Unit (MHU) programme under its community initiatives.

Over 1,500 community members received free malaria testing, guidance on symptom recognition, and preventive measures such as sanitation, use of mosquito nets, and eliminating stagnant water. These are critical steps in



curbing seasonal disease outbreaks. A monsoon preparedness session was also held with 80 Self-Help Group (SHG) women from five villages, covering household hygiene, access to safe drinking water, precautionary measures to prevent snake bites, and essential

first-response measures for timely treatment, empowering participants with actionable knowledge to safeguard families during the monsoon. Vedanta Aluminium has provided quality healthcare to more than 20,000 residents in over 35 remote villages across

the districts of Rayagada and Kalahandi. Over the past two years, more than 2,000 free health camps have been organised, bridging critical healthcare gaps in underserved regions.

Rajiv Kumar, CEO, Vedanta Aluminium, said, "At Vedanta Aluminium, we are committed to proactive health interventions. Our initiatives go beyond addressing seasonal challenges, they focus on strengthening long-term well-being, raising awareness, and ensuring access to quality healthcare for all. Through our Mobile Health Unit, we bring accessible healthcare on wheels and run regular awareness sessions to help build healthier communities."

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**EAST COAST RAILWAY**

File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/25-26/E-Tender/59 Dt.12.08.2025

Tender No. eTender/EastKur-188-2025 Dtd.: 31.07.2025

**DESCRIPTION :** PROPOSED PWAY LINKING WORK AND EXTENSION OF BRIDGE NO. 462DN IN CONNECTION WITH PROVISION OF ONE ADDITIONAL LOOP AT NEW GARHMADHUPUR (NGMP) STATION OF KHURDA ROAD (KUR) DIVISION.

Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 180.49 Lakh, EMD : ₹ 240,300/-, Completion Period : 9 (Nine) Months.

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 22.08.2025.

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg) / PR-483/Q/25-26 Khurda Road

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**

File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/25-26/E-Tender/56, Dt. 11.08.2025

(1) Tender No. eTender-NorthKUR-196-2025, Dtd.: 05.08.2025

**DESCRIPTION :** SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF TRACK MOUNTED AUTOMATIC (HYDRAULIC TYPE) GAUGE FACE LUBRICATOR ON 40 NOS. CURVE LOCATIONS OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 350.43 Lakh, EMD : ₹ 3.25,200/-

(2) Tender No. eTender-NorthKUR-194-2025, Dtd.: 05.08.2025

**DESCRIPTION :** YARD IMPROVEMENT/UPGRADATION WORKS ON DIFFERENT YARDS OF NAYAGARH - JAKHAPURA SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 745.38 Lakh, EMD : ₹ 5.22,700/-

(3) Tender No. eTender-NorthKUR-195-2025, Dtd.: 05.08.2025

**DESCRIPTION :** YARD IMPROVEMENT/UPGRADATION WORKS ON DIFFERENT YARDS OF BHADRAK - JENAPUR SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 749.29 Lakh, EMD : ₹ 5.24,700/-

Completion Period : 60 (Sixty) Months (for Sl. No. 1) and 18 (Eighteen) Months (for Sl. No. 2 & 3).

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 28.08.2025 (for all the Tenders).

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg) / PR-481/Q/25-26 Khurda Road

FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY

# CLIMATE LIFELINE



**High-impact interventions such as coastal defenses, underground power lines, and mangrove restoration are sidelined in favour of more conventional infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, and ports**

**F**or emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs), investing in resilience is not a luxury; it is an imperative. Climate disasters and ecological degradation are impeding their economic prospects and straining their finances. Perhaps more importantly, these shocks are exacerbating unsustainable debt burdens at a time when donor countries are slashing development aid, making it harder for EMDEs to finance investments in climate adaptation.

The problem is structural. Existing macro-fiscal tools – such as the debt-sustainability frameworks used by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and, by extension, sovereign credit ratings – account for climate- and nature-related risks but do not sufficiently recognize the economic benefits of reducing those risks. Natural disasters – climate-related or otherwise – are (rightly) treated as threats to fiscal stability. But the investments required to mitigate their effects are seen only as adding to the debt burden, rather than as critical for reducing losses or as driving the development of growth-enhancing strategic assets. For example, investments in flood-resilient infrastructure in Vietnam have not only reduced damage costs but also boosted land values, improved public health, and increased worker productivity. And investments in nature-based solutions such as restoring mangroves or wetlands can simultaneously address climate, food, and water challenges, and boost infrastructure performance.

As a result, high-impact interventions such as coastal defenses, underground power lines, and mangrove restoration are sidelined in favour of more conventional infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, and ports. These perverse incentives are reflected in EMDEs' planning and budgeting processes. The environment ministries that oversee Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) under the Paris climate agreement tend not to engage systematically with finance ministries, meaning that these resilience strategies are not fully integrated into medium- and long-term national financial planning. That leaves NDCs and NAPs at risk of being aspirational, rather than actionable.

standing of the potential macro-economic effects can help guide assessments of the financing required to reduce those risks. The paper offers a new typology to help categorize investments by risk type and sector, which would streamline the process. Once policymakers have identified which investments are needed, they must assess their impact on the economy's growth trajectory. Spending on resilience measures can reduce future losses from climate disasters, boost productivity, and raise incomes. These benefits must be incorporated into forecasting models, as is already done for traditional infrastructure investments. Factoring climate resilience into macroeconomic planning should strengthen, not diminish, a country's growth narrative. When done well, this empowers finance ministries to engage more effectively with donors, credit-rating agencies, markets, and international financial institutions, all of which play a critical direct or indirect role in supporting resilience and adaptation efforts.



*Pepukaye Bardouille and Mahmoud Mohieldin*

## CLIMATE AND NATURE SHOCKS ARE NOW AN ECONOMIC REALITY, NOT A DISTANT THREAT

Meanwhile, the degradation of natural ecosystems through deforestation and biodiversity loss has aggravated food and water insecurity and increased climate risks by eliminating natural carbon sinks. These dynamics create formidable obstacles – namely, limited fiscal space and high capital costs – that trap countries in a vicious cycle of vulnerability. Breaking free requires a significant scaling-up in financing for climate-adaptation efforts. To that end, the Sharm El-Sheikh Adaptation Agenda, launched in 2022, proposes 30 adaptation targets in key sectors such as agriculture, public health, and infrastructure with the goal of spurring inclusive, effective, and equitable action by 2030. The proposed outcomes are not merely defensive; they create jobs, boost productivity, and improve creditworthiness. Unfortunately, these benefits are not reflected in current mac-



When mind is still, then truth gets her chance to be heard in the purity of the silence.

SRI AUROBINDO

# Freedom Under Siege

**W**e celebrated Independence Day this month, the culmination of our freedom struggle. Independence and freedom from what? From alien rule and from oppressive laws — no matter who imposes them on us? The governor of Maharashtra, CP Radhakrishnan, is currently examining a legislation passed by the state called the 'Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill'.

I have written to the governor, on behalf of Amnesty International India, and asked him to not sign it and instead to deny his assent. Framed as a countermeasure against those who have come to be called "urban naxals," the Bill threatens constitutionally and internationally protected human rights. Naxalism is seen as a decades-old rural and communist-inspired movement. "Urban naxalism" in the present discussion presumably refers to alleged support for this movement by intellectuals, academics and others. The term "urban naxalism" has no legal definition in Indian law. With its vague language, discriminatory focus, absence of judicial oversight, and high potential for misuse, the Bill risks criminalizing legitimate dissent in one of our largest states.

The Bill introduces vague, overboard, and ideologically biased provisions that pose an immediate threat to international and constitutionally protected rights and will criminalize dissent in the state.

As may be expected, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has asserted that the law will not be used to suppress government critics. However, if the term "urban naxalism" has no legal definition in India, then what is it? It is a rhetorical and politically charged phrase – popularized in media and political discourse, not jurisprudence. Its very vagueness allows it to be weaponized against civil society, often conflating peaceful dissent with sedition or terrorism. There is a troubling precedent. The Bhima Koregaon case, in which 16 activists were arrested under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act UAPA, demonstrates how this label has been used to detain individuals for years without trial. Many of those accused were not linked to any act of violence, but merely to the expression of critical views, advocacy for marginalized communities, or the defense of civil liberties.

Notably, the arrests began in 2018 during Fadnavis' earlier tenure as chief minister. Seven years later, trials have yet to commence, bail remains denied to six of the activists, and one of the accused, Father Stan Swamy, died in custody.

The urban naxal narrative has dangerously blurred the line between non-violent political opposition and violent extremism. Such conflation is not only incompatible with India's constitutional values but also violates its international legal obligations.

The law has other troubling elements, such as discrimination. Its opening paragraphs identify "Left Wing Extremist organizations or similar organizations" as its focus. This singles out ideologies for criminalization and violates Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees equal protection under the law regardless of political opinion, and which India is a signatory to.

Punishing membership to an organization solely based on ideas without proof of incitement or participation in violence is also violative of Indians' rights.

The law defines "unlawful activity" using imprecise and subjective terms such as "menace to public order" or "tendency to interfere with the administration of law." These definitions could encompass peaceful protest or civil disobedience, the foundational elements of our freedom struggle.

Section 3 empowers the executive to declare organizations "unlawful," with no provision for prompt and impartial judicial review. The Advisory Board tasked with reviewing such declarations comprises only government appointees, meaning they will be kangaroo courts.

Sections in the law permitting searches and seizures based on an officer's "opinion" or "personal knowledge" strip away judicial safeguards and open the door to arbitrary action. This violates the rights guaranteeing fair trial and due process in searches, protecting individuals against unlawful interference with one's home, property, and privacy. Section 14 prohibits appeals, while Section 17 provides blanket immunity to government officials, even in cases of abuse. Such clauses eliminate accountability.

As has become the fashion, colonial style oppression on jailing people is present in this law also. Section 15 renders all offences under the Bill non-bailable and cognizable, despite the vagueness of their definitions. This facilitates prolonged pre-trial detention without judicial scrutiny.

On top of everything else, the law isn't needed: India already possesses very restrictive counterterrorism and criminal laws, including the UAPA, MCOCA, and Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which criminalize the same or similar alleged conduct. The new Bill adds another weapon to suppress dissent, turning the legal process itself into punishment and further eroding civil liberties.

If signed and enforced, the law under the guise of security represents a grave and unnecessary expansion of state power at the cost of fundamental rights. Far from safeguarding Maharashtra, it criminalizes dissent, debate, and accountability. The misuse of vague terms like "urban naxal" has already caused immense harm. Assenting to this Bill would legitimize a framework that enables abuse and impunity over justice.

This is why I have urged the governor, with the utmost respect, to withhold assent to the Bill. The observance of Independence Day should not be restricted to the symbolism of flag raising and saluting and long speeches. What should be observed is our continuing commitment to freedom, the protection of civil liberties, the preservation of human rights and access to justice. This law is a violation of all of these and for this reason one hopes it is not inflicted on Indians.



Aakar Patel

## The observance of Independence Day should not be restricted to the symbolism of flag raising and saluting and long speeches. What should be observed is our continuing commitment to freedom, the protection of civil liberties, the preservation of human rights and access to justice



Piotr Opalinski

## A COHESIVE EU IS BETTER POSITIONED TO SAFEGUARD MARITIME ROUTES CRITICAL FOR INDIA'S TRADE AND ENERGY FLOWS

**I**n 2024, global military expenditure surpassed \$2.4 trillion, according to SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), an all-time high. Asia, home to some of the world's fastest-growing economies, also saw defence budgets expand. India, China, Japan, and South Korea have been modernising their armed forces, investing in conventional capabilities alongside cyber, space, and AI-based systems to meet both regional and global challenges.

This surge is driven not only by regional rivalries but also by a shifting global order, with the post-Cold War security architecture under strain. From the Indo-Pacific to Eastern Europe, nations are preparing for a world where deterrence, resilience, and alliances matter more than ever.

While India has strengthened its maritime presence to protect the Indian Ocean sea lanes, Europe faces its largest land war since 1945. Russia's invasion of Ukraine reshaped the EU's security posture – and Poland, on NATO's eastern flank, has emerged as a determined advocate for collective defence and credible deterrence. It did so, while holding the rotating presidency of Council of European Union from January to

June 2025. Although the presidency's core role is coordinating policy making, Warsaw placed security at the heart of its agenda. Moreso, as its tenure came at a crucial moment: when the Eastern borders remained tense amid Russia's aggression in Ukraine; Hybrid threats, from cyberattacks to disinformation, were intensifying; Transatlantic cohesion faced challenges, while global partners assessed Europe's long-term security commitments.

Given its history, from partitions and invasions to the Cold War, Poland launched its flagship EU presidency initiative: the SAFE (Security and Allied Foreign Engagement) Project – aimed at strengthening Europe's defences while engaging partners beyond the continent.

SAFE, sought to improve the EU's ability to counter emerging threats through four pillars. One, EU-NATO Synergy i.e. aligning the EU's common security and defence policy with NATO planning so that both institutions reinforce each other. Two, Cyber resilience, whereby creating a pan-European cyber shield integrating national CERTs with AI-driven threat detection to counter large-scale attacks in real time. Three, defence industrial boost,

i.e. coordinating investment in Europe's defence manufacturing, from missile systems to drones, to reduce dependence on external suppliers and ensure rapid mobilisation. And four, ensuring global partnerships beyond Europe by expanding security dialogues with strategic partners such as India, Japan, and ASEAN to build collective resilience.

For Indian readers, Europe's security debates may seem distant, yet the dynamics are interconnected. There are shared challenges in hybrid warfare, wherein India and Europe face cyber intrusions, propaganda campaigns, and economic coercion. SAFE's cyber framework could inform Indo-European initiatives to protect democratic institutions and critical infrastructure.

At same time, it involves defence industrial cooperation. Poland's push for a stronger European defence industry aligns with India's Atmanirbhar Bharat vision. Joint ventures could develop drones, missile defence, and AI-based command systems for both continental and maritime applications.

Besides, there is the aspect of geopolitical connectivity. Stability on Europe's eastern flank affects NATO's Indo-Pa-

cific posture. A cohesive EU is better positioned to safeguard maritime routes critical for India's trade and energy flows.

Though SAFE is an EU initiative, New Delhi should welcome it as it opens paths for deeper India-Poland cooperation. SAFE is built on the idea that security is indivisible. A crisis in one region inevitably sends ripples worldwide. COVID-19, supply chain disruptions, and Europe's energy crisis after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, all proved the global nature of modern security challenges.

India's ambition to serve as a security provider – from humanitarian aid to maritime policing – aligns with Europe's goal of becoming a more capable strategic actor. SAFE offers both sides a framework to strengthen their own security while contributing to the global commons. In fact, for mid-sized powers like India and Poland, coalition-building is a strategic multiplier. SAFE can unite countries with shared democratic values, complementary economies, and converging priorities.

The writer is an expert, Centre for International Relations, Poland  
INFA

SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

# EU's security initiative safe for Asia too

## US double standard

**Sir,** US President Trump's Alaska summit with Vladimir Putin was heralded as a push for peace. He had thundered that unless Russia declared a ceasefire in Ukraine, tariffs would double. Yet, when the two finally met — inside a limousine rather than across a negotiating table — the focus shifted, inexplicably, from ceasefire to trade. This exposes a troubling double standard. On one hand, Trump penalises India with harsh tariffs, threatening our manufacturers and exporters. On the other, he engages an ICJ-indicted leader accused of fuelling the Ukraine war — not to press for peace, but to discuss commerce and energy. While he faults India for its choices, he legitimises Russia by negotiating trade. Does such moral posturing carry any scruple? The leader of the world's most powerful democracy is expected to uphold principle, not convenience. The world was promised a lion's roar for peace, but witnessed instead the timid purr of a cat content with trade. Such duplicity erodes US credibility and sends a chilling message: for Washington, principle is negotiable..  
**Gopalswamy J, CHENNAI**

## Regional security concerns

**Sir,** On the eve of Pakistan's Independence Day, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced the launch of the country's Army Rocket Force Command, signaling its intent to enhance missile warfare capabilities. Modeled on China's PLA and supported by Iran's expertise, the force aims to integrate ballistic and cruise missile systems, with an eye on striking both strategic and civilian targets in potential conflicts. Islamabad projects this as a counterbalance to India's conventional superiority. In response to it, New Delhi has already unveiled the Sudarshan Chakra defence system, to deal with missile threats through layered air defence and countermeasures. For India, the development underlines the urgency of accelerating indigenous missile defence programmes, strengthening intelligence, and deepening strategic partnerships with allies. While Pakistan's move heightens risks of escalation, India's response must remain calibrated—reinforcing deterrence without being drawn into an arms race.  
**RS Narula, PATIALA**

# Letters

## TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: [edit@orissapost.com](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

**OrissaPOST**  
B-15, Rasulgah Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

## WISDOM CORNER

**Love, friendship and respect do not unite people as much as a common hatred for something.**  
ANTON CHEKHOV

**You cannot catch a child's spirit by running after it; you must stand still and for love it will soon itself return.**  
ARTHUR MILLER

**We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.**  
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

UTTARKASHI DISASTER

# Expert team explains formation of lake in Bhagirathi at Dharali



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Uttarkashi, August 16:** A team of geological experts have explained how a temporary lake was formed in the Bhagirathi river following the recent flash floods in Uttarkashi's Dharali village, which also caused large-scale damage to the neighbouring Harshil town.

Efforts are underway at present to manually puncture the lake to facilitate outflow of water in a phased and controlled manner to prevent flooding downstream.

The team conducted a geological inspection of the disaster-affected areas of both Dharali and Harshil, studied the possible dangers and measures for rescue, an official release here said.

The team observed that a local stream named Telgad in Harshil near the Army camp became active due to heavy rainfall during the August 5 disaster, in which, according to the administration, one person died and 68 others are missing.

The camp bore the brunt of the disaster, which demolished structures besides leaving nine of its personnel missing, including a junior commissioned officer and eight jawans.

A large amount of debris and water came and accumulated in the stream at its point of confluence with the Bhagirathi River and formed a large fan-shaped deposit (alluvial fan) of sediments, the team of experts said.

This fan obstructed the original channel of the Bhagirathi River and formed a temporary lake on the right bank of the river.

The length of the newly formed lake was about 1,500 metres, and its estimated depth was 12 to 15 feet.

The flooding not only submerged a portion of the national highway and a helipad, but

also posed a serious threat to Harshil town.

This event also significantly altered the topography of the Bhagirathi River, as the sand dune located on the right bank was eroded, while fresh sediment was deposited on the left side, exposing the northern part of the town.

The continued bedrock erosion in this area had already caused partial structural damage to the camp, including the loss of a portion of the Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam Guest House.

Inspection by the geological team August 12 revealed that the left bank of the Bhagirathi River was blocked by a saturated alluvial fan.

Due to its high moisture content, the fan was weak, which prevented heavy machinery such as JCBs from being deployed — the only equipment available locally.

Based on the field data and available resources, the geologists prepared a plan for debris clearance and partial restoration of water flow.

The plan involved creating small diversion channels of about 9-12 inches deep to gradually release the stagnant water.

During discussions with Uttarkashi District Magistrate Prashant Arya and Inspector General (SDRF) Arun Mohan Joshi, it was emphasised that the lake outflow channels should be opened in three or four stages to avoid sudden flooding downstream.

Work was immediately started by the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and the Irrigation Department, Uttarkashi.

Through careful execution of the plan on two successive days, the teams engaged in the exercise were able to facilitate controlled water drainage from the lake.

# In a first, Maha tribal hamlets hoist Tricolour

*There is no government school or a gram panchayat office in these remote hamlets, hence, a flag-hoisting never took place in the last seven decades*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Nandurbar, August 16:** Ganes Pava had a challenging task on the eve of Independence Day. Managing with a feeble mobile network in his North Maharashtra hamlet, where electricity is yet to reach, he downloaded a video explaining how to tie a flag to a pole, so that it unfurls without a hitch.

On Friday, leading a group of about 30 children and locals, the 20-something Pava ensured that his remote Udadya hamlet, nestled in the Satpura range in Nandurbar district, witnessed its maiden flag hoisting.

The hamlet, around 500km from Mumbai and about 50km from the nearest tehsil, has a population of 400, but has no government school. Pava teaches at an informal

school run by the NGO YUNG Foundation.

"This region is endowed with natural beauty, fertile soil, and the Narmada River flows through it. But being a hilly belt, it is difficult to reach," says Sandeep Deore, founder of the YUNG Foundation.

The foundation, which has been implementing education interventions in the region for three years, decided that the national flag should be hoisted in the hamlets of Udadya, Khaparmaal, Sadri and Manjipada on Independence Day this year.

More than 250 children enrolled in the four schools run by the foundation were present at the flag-hoisting ceremonies Friday, besides local villagers.

There is no government school or a gram panchayat office in these hamlets, hence,



FIRST TIME SINCE INDEPENDENCE

a flag-hoisting never took place in the last seven decades.

The idea was not only to achieve a first but also to educate the local people about their democratic rights, said Deore.

The tribals here live a very independent life, but all of them may not know things like the rights guaranteed by our Constitution, he said.

They often get fleeced or exploited while working as labourers or in day-to-day transactions, Deore pointed out.

Many settlements, including Sadri, don't have road connectivity. Bhuvaansingh Pavra, a resident of Sadri, said people have to either walk for several hours or depend on a boat that plies on the Narmada to visit other villages in the area.

The school of YUNG Foundation operates on his land. The lack of education is the biggest problem, and the next generation should not suffer from it, he said.

The electricity grid has not

reached any of the hamlets, and a majority of households depend on solar panels.

Locals here speak the Pawari dialect, quite different from standard Marathi or Hindi, making it difficult for outsiders to communicate with them.

Deore said it was difficult initially to win the trust of the people, but once they were convinced about the genuineness of the cause, it was easy to secure their cooperation.

The foundation depends on donations to pay its teachers and procure basic infrastructure for its schools. But it cannot implement a mid-day meal scheme, like in government schools, as these are informal schools. The anganwadi workers appointed by the government often stay away from these remote hamlets. There are, however, exceptions like Ajmibai, an anganwadi worker at Khaparmaal, who stays in the village allotted to her and does her job diligently.



People walk along waterlogged railway tracks during rain, at Mahim, in Mumbai, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

## Min claims world record as Govindas form 10-layer human pyramid at Thane

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thane, August 16:** A Govinda squad formed ten layers of a human pyramid at a Dahi Handi event organised in Thane Saturday, organisers claimed.

Maharashtra Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik praised the feat, stating that it is a world record in forming human layers during the festival.



Sarnaik announced a prize of ₹25 lakh for the Konkani Raja Govinda Team. The event was organised by the Pratap Sarnaik Foundation and Sanskriti Yuva Pratishthan, headed by his son Purvesh Sarnaik. The minister stated, "The Govinda team has formed ten layers. We are continuing the traditions associated with Shiv Sena chief Balasaheb Thackeray and Anand Dighe."

The Dahi Handi festival is celebrated across Maharashtra to mark the birthday of Lord Krishna. The day is marked by troupes of young men and women scrambling to form human pyramids to break dahi handis (pots of curd) suspended in the air with ropes.

## Village becomes first to set up local-level human rights panel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahilyanagar, August 16:** The Soundala gram sabha in Ahilyanagar district has become the first in Maharashtra to establish a human rights protection committee to safeguard and create awareness about human rights at the village level.

The gram sabha resolved to set up a Gramin Manav Adhikar Sanrakshan Samiti (Village Human Rights Protection Committee) during a meeting held August 14.

Village sarpanch Sharad Argade said that the move aligns with the state government's directive to establish such committees in rural areas under the framework of the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC).

According to the resolution, the committee will work in coordination with SHRC officials to address complaints related to human rights violations, spread awareness about rights and duties, and guide citizens on how to seek legal remedies.

The panel comprising 11 members, including elected representatives, social workers, women, teachers and persons with disabilities, will also collaborate with the police and other agencies to address violations and recommend corrective measures.

As per the resolution, Argade will serve as the committee's chairperson, while gram sevak Pratibha Gorakshan Pisote has been named secretary.

The resolution mandates the committee to undertake

training, organise awareness programmes, and coordinate with authorities to ensure effective implementation of human rights protections in the village.

Gram sabhas are grassroots-level democratic institutions in each village panchayat that ensure the effective functioning of panchayats by promoting transparency and accountability in administration, enhancing people's participation in the planning and implementation of schemes.

# When Navi Mumbai villagers shared dry fish with 'Veeru'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

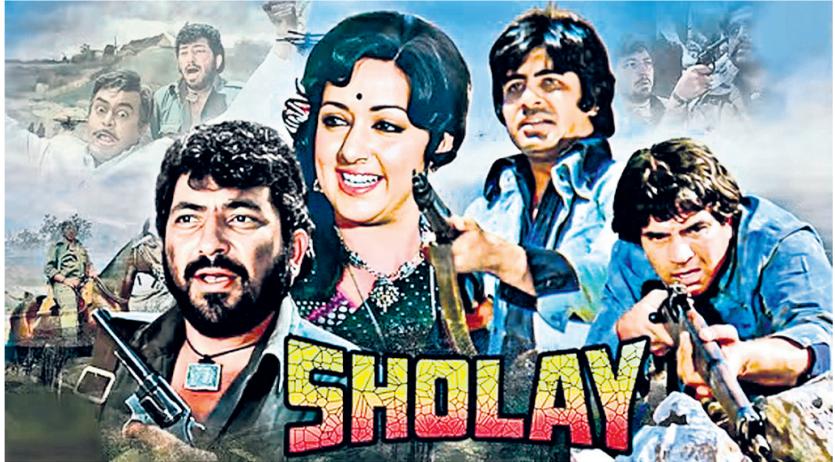
**Mumbai, August 16:** Long before its release on Independence Day in 1975, the cast and crew of Sholay had already enthralled the residents of many Navi Mumbai villages that drew filmmakers for their bucolic settings.

Half a century later, residents of the villages along the Panvel-Uran road still cherish the memories of the shooting of the film, which went on to become a cult classic, even though urbanisation has changed the face of those 'lights, camera, action' sites.

The Agris and Kolis, the dominant communities of the region who then depended on paddy farming and fishing for livelihood, would throng the sets every single day of the shooting, which began in the area around 1972.

"Dharmendra, who played Veeru, at times mingled with the locals and enjoyed 'jawla sukut' (dry fish) and 'tandul bhakri' (rice flour flatbread) shared by the Agri people. Dharmendra would exchange his biryani or the meal specially cooked for him with the locals," recalled Sanjay Shelar (62).

Not just the superstar, the crew members also had their fair share of exchanges with the locals. They would pass on their drinks to the villagers, who got them home-made brew, he said. Many scenes of the Ramesh



Sippy masterpiece were shot along the Panvel-Uran road, said Shelar. Most of Sholay was, however, filmed in a rocky hill range, about 50 km from Bengaluru.

The film crew, including actors Dharmendra, Sanjeev Kumar, Amitabh Bachchan, Jaya Bachchan and Hema Malini, would stay put at Pravin Hotel in Old Panvel. Space was created behind the hotel to keep the horses, Shelar said.

The scene in which 'Basanti' (Hema Malini) picks up 'Jai' (Amitabh Bachchan) and 'Veeru' from the railway station to take them to Ramgad was shot near Panvel railway station, he said.

Hundreds of youths and children would skip work and school to watch Team Sholay in action, with the 'Dream Girl' (Hema Malini) drawing the maximum attention, Shelar said, recalling that he and his friends would cycle to the shooting sites.

The scene in which Veeru aims at mangoes with a pistol was filmed in the mango grove of Chinchpada. In this scene, Veeru tries to flirt with Basanti under the guise of giving her shooting lessons, prompting Jai, lazing under a tree, to quip "Lag gaya nishana." A vehicle garage has replaced the mango grove today.

The iconic sequence, show-

ing dacoits of Gabbar Singh (Amjad Khan) attempting to rob a moving train, chasing it on horseback, opening fire, and fighting with Jai and Veeru, was filmed entirely on and along the Panvel-Uran railway line near 'Bambavi Pada', commonly known as Bombay Pada, Shelar said.

The exaggerated narration of Soorma Bhopali (Jagdeep) in a sawmill of how he supposedly fought off a group of dacoits was also shot in this area, said Shelar. "The sawmill is operational even today," he added.

Prabhakar Mundkar, a resident of Bambavi Pada, said he used to sell watermelons to the villagers, who would

crowd around the film sets. The high-voltage scene showing the train smashing through a pile of logs on the tracks was shot in their village, he recalled.

That old track is still active today, allowing goods trains to transport containers.

Janardhan Nama Patil, an 82-year-old resident of Bambavi village, vividly remembers the shooting of Sholay in the region. He recalled the filming of the sequence in which horses chase a train, Veeru fights dacoits, and burning coal is hurled onto a wagon, triggering a fire.

Naresh Gaikar (56), who spent his childhood in Uran, said that the producers had created a village near Bambavi Pada, where the shootings used to take place.

"Towards the movie's climax, the Gabbar gang abducts Basanti. A small boy shows Veeru the path taken by the dacoits. That boy was from Owala village in the vicinity," said Chandrakant Patil, another resident of Bambavi village.

The last exchange of fire between Jai and the dacoits on a small wooden bridge was created in this area, he said.

Though the locals continue to cling to those memories, Patil rues that the idyllic surroundings of the 70s are all gone.

"We can proudly say that our villages were so beautiful that producers and directors used to choose them as shooting locations," Patil said.

## 2 German Shepherds emerge as ray of hope for family of missing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Uttarkashi, August 16:** After the devastating flash flood devoured almost half of Dharali village in Uttarkashi district, demolishing buildings in its bustling market area and sweeping away people, 'Phantom' and 'Coco' have emerged as a ray of hope for people eagerly waiting for a clue about their relatives who went missing after the disaster.

Defying heavy rains, cold winds, dangerous paths, rivers and streams, the two trained German Shepherds of the SDRF

keep trying to find life all day in the area where over 60 people are still missing and likely buried under debris.

Using his experience to the fullest, eight-year-old Phantom keeps searching for people under the mounds of debris. Meanwhile, an intensive search is still underway in the area, officials said. NDRF Assistant Commandant RS Dhapola said ground penetrating radar (GPR) is being used to find people who are feared trapped under rubble. He said this electrical detector gives information about any element buried up to 40 metres.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA** No. A-512  
**e-Procurement Notice Online Tender**  
BID Identification No. SEMIDBNJ-02/2025-26

Name of Work	: Civil Construction Works
No. of Work	: 12 Nos.
Estimated Cost	: Rs.8.40 Lakh to 32.00 Lakh
Period of Completion	: 06 (Six) Calendar Months
Date & Time of availability of Bid Documents in the portal	: From 21.08.2025 to 30.08.2025 upto 17.30 hours
Date for Opening of Bid	: 01.09.2025 at 11.00 A.M.
Lottery Date if required	: 04.09.2025 at 11.30 A.M.
Name & Address of the OIT	: Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Bhanjanagar

Further details & corrigendum if any can be seen from the website: [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in).  
Sd./- Superintending Engineer  
M.I. Division, Bhanjanagar  
OIPR-32287/11/0014/2526



**The Prime Minister's use of the Independence Day speech to glorify the RSS is tantamount to insulting the day itself**  
PINARAYI VIJAYAN | CHIEF MINISTER, KERALA

## MISRI BEGINS NEPAL VISIT

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri will pay a two-day visit to Nepal beginning Sunday as part of the preparations for Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's planned trip to India next month. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Misri is travelling to the Himalayan country following an invitation from his Nepalese counterpart, Amrit Bahadur Rai



## of the day quote

This higher dependency on the US market clearly implies that tariff impact on Tamil Nadu will be disproportionately greater than for most other Indian states. Hence this tariff has significant implications for Tamil Nadu's manufacturing sector and employment scenario



MK STALIN | CHIEF MINISTER, TAMIL NADU

We are witnessing the mythological history of 5,000 years. On the occasion of Shri Krishna Janmashtami, devotees from the country and the world have gathered here with devotion. Shri Krishna resides in the holy soil and dust of Mathura. It is rare to find such devotion anywhere else in the world



YOGI ADITYANATH | CHIEF MINISTER, UTTAR PRADESH

Today, we have transferred financial assistance of ₹76 crore into the bank accounts of 2,020 families



NAYAB SINGH SAINI | HARYANA CHIEF MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### MP urges MEA help for Indians in Spain

**Chandigarh:** AAP Lok Sabha MP from Punjab, Malvinder Singh Kang, has written to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, seeking his urgent intervention to resolve the problems being faced by several Indian nationals stranded in Spain due to delays in passport renewal and re-issuance at the Indian Consulate there. In the letter, Kang said routine matters such as damaged, lost, or expired passports have escalated into a "humanitarian emergency", leaving countless citizens, including many from Punjab, stranded in Spain for more than six months.

### Naga Guv cremated with military honours

**Chennai:** Nagaland Governor and former BJP leader La Ganesan, who died after a brief hospitalisation, was cremated here Saturday with full military honours. Chief Minister MK Stalin placed a wreath on behalf of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin paid floral tributes to the mortal remains on the behalf of Tamil Nadu government. Members of the Armed Forces, representing the Army, Navy and Air Force, brought the casket by serving as pallbearers and following a gun salute, the body of the Nagaland governor was cremated.

### Thar mows down biker in Delhi

**New Delhi:** A 40-year-old man was killed after his motorcycle was hit by a Thar SUV in west Delhi's Moti Nagar area late, police said Saturday. Bhikshu Lal was found lying in a pool of blood Friday night after the SUV rammed into his two-wheeler near the Sudarshan Park locality. He succumbed to his injuries on the spot, police said.

### 4 of music band killed in road mishap

**Shivpuri (MP):** Four members of a Gujarat-based music band were killed and 11 other persons were injured Saturday in a collision between a mini bus and a small truck in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh, police said. Members of the music band had performed at a programme in Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi and were returning to Gujarat when the accident occurred.

# Deadlines for Prez, Guv assent violate Constitution

*The note filed by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta has argued that the apex court imposing fixed timelines would dissolve the delicate equilibrium that the Constitution has established and negate the rule of law*



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 16:** Imposing fixed timelines on governors and the president to act on bills passed by a state Assembly would amount to one organ of the government assuming powers not vested in it by the Constitution and lead to a "constitutional disorder", the Centre has told the Supreme Court.

The Centre has said this in the written submissions filed in the Presidential Reference raising constitutional issues on whether timelines could be imposed for dealing with bills passed by a state Assembly.

"The alleged failure, inaction or error of one organ does not and cannot authorise another organ to assume powers that the Constitution has not vested in it. If any organ is permitted to arrogate to itself the functions of another on a plea of public interest or institutional dissatisfaction or even on the justification derived from the Constitution ideals, the consequence would be a constitutional disorder not envisaged by its framers," it has said.

The note filed by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta has argued that the apex court imposing fixed timelines would dissolve the delicate equilibrium that the Constitution has established and negate the rule of law.

"The perceived lapses, if any, are to be addressed through constitutionally-sanctioned

mechanisms, such as electoral accountability, legislative oversight, executive responsibility, reference procedures or consultative process amongst democratic organs etc. Thus, Article 142 does not empower the court to create a concept of 'deemed assent', turning the constitutional and legislative process on its head," the note says.

The positions of the governor and president are "politically plenary" and represent "high ideals of democratic governance". Any perceived lapses, the note says, must be addressed through political and constitutional mechanisms, and not necessarily through "judicial" interventions.

The perceived issues, if any, deserve political answers and not necessarily judicial, Mehta has submitted.

Challenging the decision of the apex court, Mehta has contended that Articles 200 and 201, which deal with the governors' and president's alternatives after receiving a state bill, deliberately contain no timelines.

"When the Constitution seeks to impose time limits for taking certain decisions, it

specifically mentions such time limits. Where it has consciously kept the exercise of powers flexible, it does not impose any fixed time limit. To judicially read in such a limitation would be to amend the Constitution," Mehta has said.

Despite the proliferation of checks and balances, there are certain zones that remain exclusive to either of the three organs of the State and cannot be trespassed upon by the others, the note says, adding that the high plenary positions of governors and the president fall within that zone.

"The gubernatorial assent is a high prerogative, plenary, non-justiciable power which is sui generis in nature.

Although the power of assent is exercised by the person at the apex of the Executive, however, the assent itself is legislative in nature."

The top court has fixed a time schedule for hearing the Presidential Reference and proposed to start the hearing from August 19.

A five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) B R Gavai has asked the Centre and states to file their written submissions.

## The top court has fixed a time schedule for hearing the Presidential Reference and proposed to start the hearing from August 19

## J&K CLOUDBURST

# Explosives used to blast giant boulders to speed up rescue efforts

*Chief Minister Omar Abdullah visited Chisoti village Saturday morning and announced an ex-gratia assistance from the chief minister's relief fund to the affected families as a 'measure of solidarity and immediate relief'*



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kishtwar/Jammu, August 16:** Explosives were used to blast giant boulders hampering the ongoing rescue and relief operations in the disaster-hit Chisoti village in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district on the third day Saturday, officials said.

Army has also deployed additional troops to intensify the efforts, they said. A total of 60 persons, including three CISF personnel and a Special Police Officer, have died and 82 people were reported missing in the cloudburst and the resultant flash floods that struck the remote village in Padder sub-division Thursday afternoon. Around 167 people have been rescued so far, some critically injured.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah visited Chisoti village Saturday morning and announced an ex-gratia assistance from the chief minister's relief fund to the affected families as a "measure of solidarity and immediate relief". He also assured them long-term support.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh, accompanied by Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police Nalin Prabhakar, also visited the devastated village late Friday night and reviewed the ongoing rescue and relief ef-

orts jointly carried out by the Police, Army, National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Response Force, Border Roads Organisation, civil administration, and local volunteers.

So far, 50 bodies have been identified and handed over to their next of kin after completion of legal formalities.

The disaster struck Chisoti -- the last motorable village en route to the Machail Mata temple -- at around 12.25 pm August 14. It flattened a makeshift market, a langar (community kitchen) site prepared for the yatra, and a security outpost.

At least 16 residential houses and government buildings, three temples, four water mills, a 30-metre-long bridge, and over a dozen vehicles were damaged in the flash floods which dumped giant boulders at various spots, especially around the worst-hit langar site.

Racing against time since the chances of digging out the survivors alive fade with every passing hour, the rescuers expedited the operation in the evening by using explosive substances to blast the oversized boulders that could not be shifted with earth-movers or other equipment.

The annual Machail Mata yatra, which began July 25 and was scheduled to conclude September 5, remained suspended for the third consecutive day Saturday. The 8.5-kilometre trek to the 9,500-foot-high shrine starts from Chisoti, located about 90 kilometres from Kishtwar town.

# MUMBAI DAHI HANDI TURNS DEADLY

*At least one 'govinda' -- as the participants who form breathtaking human pyramids to reach and break the 'handi' filled with 'dahi' or curd are called -- fell to his death while 75 others were injured across the city*



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, August 16:** 'Dahi Handi' was celebrated with fervour across the Mumbai metropolitan region Saturday amid heavy rains as troupes of 'govindas' competed with each other to break curd-filled pots hung high above the ground, and political parties tried to use the festival to woo the youth ahead of civic elections.

At least one 'govinda' -- as the participants who form

breathtaking human pyramids to reach and break the 'handi' filled with 'dahi' or curd are called -- fell to his death while 75 others were injured across the city.

As the festival which marks Krishna Janmashtami -- birth of Lord Krishna -- came ahead of the coming local body polls in Maharashtra, political parties used the occasion to mobilise

formation of pyramids while others were discharged after treatment, civic officials said, adding that two including a nine-year-old boy were critical.

Aryan Yadav (9), resident of Tanaji Nagar, was seriously injured and undergoing treatment at a civic-run hospital at Kandivali. Shreyas Chalke (23), another critically injured govinda, was under treatment at the government-run GT hospital.

As many as 48 govindas were injured in the island city, while 17 were injured in the eastern and 10 in western parts of the metropolis, the officials said. Three injuries were reported in the neighbouring Thane city.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who visited several 'Dahi Handi' events across the city, took a veiled swipe at the Shiv Sena (UBT) while asserting that the victory of the ruling alliance was imminent in upcoming local body polls, including in Mumbai.

# India welcomes Putin-Trump summit on Ukraine conflict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 16:** The world wants to see an early end to the conflict in Ukraine, India said Saturday, welcoming the summit talks between US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, in Alaska that ended without a ceasefire deal.

After an almost-three-hour meeting with the Russian president, Trump said "some great progress" has been made, but did not provide any details.

It was the first US-Russia summit since Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

"There's no deal until there's a deal," Trump said after the summit.

As leading world capitals analysed the Putin-Trump summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, thanking Ukraine's

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for his Independence-Day greetings to India, wished "our friends in Ukraine a future marked by peace, progress and prosperity".

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) welcomed the summit in Alaska and commended Putin and Trump for the initiative to bring peace to Ukraine.

"India welcomes the Summit meeting in Alaska between US President Donald Trump and President Vladimir Putin of Russia," the MEA said in a statement.

"Their leadership in the pursuit of peace is highly commendable," it added.

The MEA said India appreciates the progress made in the summit.

"The way forward can only be through dialogue and diplomacy. The world wants to see an early end to the conflict in Ukraine," it said.

# Controversial film 'The Bengal Files' trailer launch stopped by Kolkata police

*Agnihotri alleged that it was an attack on the democratic rights of people, as the censor board had cleared the film and 'the Calcutta High Court stayed a ban on it'*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, August 16:** Kolkata Police Saturday stopped the trailer launch of "The Bengal Files", based the 1946 Calcutta Riots, its director Vivek Agnihotri claimed.

The trailer of the controversial film was slated to be screened at a five-star hotel in the metropolis in the afternoon. Police personnel present at the venue refused to comment on the issue.

Agnihotri, however, alleged that it was an attack on the democratic rights of people, as the censor board had cleared the film and "the Calcutta High Court stayed a ban on it".

The screening of the trailer was first stopped by a represen-

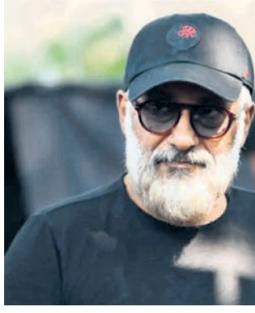
tative of the hotel around 1 pm, who said that permission had been granted for only a press conference, he said.

"If the hotel authorities wanted to stop the screening, why had they given permission to hold the press meet in the first place? How can a film's press meet be held without screening of its trailer?" Agnihotri said.

As the trailer was shown again a little later, "suddenly five-six Kolkata Police officers entered the banquet hall where the programme was being held and stopped the screening midway," the director claimed.

The filmmaker was also seen engaged in a heated argument with the police personnel and a hotel staff.

Agnihotri indicated that the



screening was stopped at the behest of the ruling Trinamool Congress and "someone at top". He alleged ruling party also exerted pressure on the hotel management to halt the trailer midway.

He asserted that "The Bengal



Files", "which is based on facts and has passed the censor hurdle", was being prevented from screening by the regime run by Trinamool Congress.

Asked if he meant the administration helmed by Mamata Banerjee, he told reporters,

"I merely said someone at the top level."

In a post on X, he said, "With anguish I inform you: Today West Bengal police, on orders of 'top authorities', illegally stopped the trailer of #TheBengalFiles. First theatres, now even a private hotel. Who fears the truth of Hindu genocide? And why? Democracy is dead in Tagore & Vivekananda's land."

"The trailer is now being seen all over the country, but since it is based in Bengal, we wanted its launch here. They don't want the atrocities on Bengali Hindus in 1946 and the fightback of people like Gopal Mukherjee to be shown in cinema. If it is a part of history, do you want to change history?" he told reporters.

"There can be only one reason behind such a move, to ignore the conspiracy to divide Bengal again," Agnihotri said.

The trailer was later screened at the BJP party office in Salt Lake before party functionaries and the media.

"The Bengal Files" delves into the communal violence in undivided Bengal during the 1940s.

The film is scheduled to release in theatres September 5. Producer Abhishek Agarwal told PTI that "no force can stop us to release the film September 5."

"We are taking advice from legal experts. The trailer launch programme had no legal hurdles. We will move the court soon after today's development," he said.



Change is imminent in the municipal corporation. We have broken the 'handi' (pot) of sins of those who looted the civic body and started the 'handi' of development

DEVENDRA FADNIS | CHIEF MINISTER, MAHARASHTRA

## SHUKLA TO RETURN HOME TODAY

Astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla is set to return to India Sunday after his historic visit to the International Space Station (ISS) and is eager to share his experiences with friends and colleagues back home as ISRO eyes its maiden human spaceflight in 2027. Shukla, who has been in the US, training for the Axiom-4 mission to ISS for the past one year, is expected to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and travel to his hometown Lucknow soon after



## Chinese Foreign Min Wang Yi to visit India

Wang's visit comes days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned trip to China to attend the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

"At the invitation of National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, Member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit India on August 18 and 19," the MEA said in a statement.

"During his visit, he will hold the 24th round of the Special Representatives' (SR) talks on the India-China boundary question with India's SR, NSA Doval," it added.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will also hold bilateral talks with his Chinese counterpart.

Doval travelled to China in December last year and held the SR talks with Wang, weeks after Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping decided to revive various dialogue mechanisms between the two sides at a meeting in the Russian city of Kazan.

Modi is expected to travel to China later this month to attend the SCO summit.

According to the plan, the prime minister will embark on a visit to Japan around August 29 and after concluding the trip, will travel to the northern Chinese city of Tianjin for the summit to be held August 31 and September 1.

Modi's visit to China is being planned amid efforts by the two neighbouring countries to repair their bilateral ties, which came under severe strain following the deadly clashes between Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan valley in June 2020.

New Delhi, August 16: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will pay a two-day visit to India beginning Monday to hold border talks with National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced Saturday.

Wang's visit comes days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned trip to China to attend the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

The Chinese foreign minister is visiting India primarily to hold the next round of Special Representatives' (SR) dialogue on the boundary question.

Wang and Doval are the designated special representatives for the boundary talks.

## Rahul to embark on 'Voter Adhikar Yatra'

The leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, along with RJD's Tejashwi Yadav and other Mahagathbandhan leaders, will undertake the 16-day and 1,300 km-long yatra from Sasaram, which will conclude with a rally in Patna September 1



We will not accept that the Election Commission becomes a compartment of this so-called 'double engine'. We are fighting against this and will continue to do so in the future

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sasaram (Bihar), August 16: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will embark on a 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' across Bihar from here Sunday, with his party asserting it will fight for the "one person, one vote" principle and not accept the Election Commission becoming a "compartment" of the BJP's "so-called double engine".

The leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, along with RJD's Tejashwi Yadav and other Mahagathbandhan leaders, will undertake the 16-day and 1,300 km-long yatra from Sasaram, which will conclude with a rally in Patna September 1.

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "16 days, 20+ districts, 1,300+ km. We are coming among the people with the Voter Adhikar Yatra. This is a fight to protect the most basic democratic right - 'one person, one vote'."

"Join us in Bihar to save the Constitution," he added.

Addressing a press conference at the Indira Bhawan in New Delhi, Congress' media and publicity department head,

Pawan Khera, said, "Whenever Rahul Gandhi ji has set out for a yatra, the democracy of this country has turned a page. 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' will be a historic march. It will prove to be a milestone in the history of our democracy.

"We will not accept that the Election Commission becomes a compartment of this so-called 'double engine'. We are fighting against this and will continue to do so in the future," he added.

The party has been protesting against the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleging the EC's exercise is aimed at "disenfranchising voters" in Bihar ahead of the Assembly elections due later this year.

The Congress urged the people of Bihar to join the 'yatra' for their rights and entitlements so that democracy can

get a direction from Bihar. He added that the 'yatra' has been planned to fight for the right of 'one person-one vote'. "It is possible to breathe freely in independent India because we have the power to vote. Rahul Gandhi has started a struggle so that every citizen of the country can breathe freely," Khera said.

"This conspiracy was not just to snatch votes. It was a conspiracy to snatch your and our identity. Today, the right to vote is being snatched from the Dalits, the deprived, the oppressed, the exploited, the minorities; tomorrow their participation will be snatched," Khera alleged.

He claimed that a conspiracy was being hatched to attack the poor, against which the people of the country have raised their voice. The 'yatra' will pass through Aurangabad, Gaya, Nawada, Nalanda, Sheikhpura, Lakhisarai, Munger, Bhagalpur, Katihar, Purnea, Araria, Supaul, Madhubani, Darbhanga, Sitamarhi, East Champaran, West Champaran, Gopalganj, Siwan, Chapra and Ara.

## POST OF THE DAY



Pakistan gave gallantry awards to soldiers who participated in their response to India's Op Sindoor. Out of these, 155 were posthumous, meaning at least 155 Pakistani soldiers were killed in Indian attack. But the actual number should be much higher, since not every death gets a gallantry award. Normally, the posthumous award-to-death ratio is about 1: 10 to 1: 30. That would put the toll in thousands. But even if we assume Pakistan awarded every single casualty, 155 deaths is still massive. So, as Air Marshal AK Bharti said, we just hit the target and didn't count the body bags. Pakistan did it for us. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

@theskindoctor13

## SHORT TAKES

### Jaishankar holds talks with SK foreign min

New Delhi: India and South Korea Saturday resolved to expand their strategic partnership by boosting cooperation in the areas of semiconductor, clean energy, defence and artificial intelligence. Ways to ramp up the overall bilateral cooperation figured prominently in talks between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his visiting South Korean counterpart, Cho Hyun. "Held productive discussions on advancing our bilateral cooperation in trade, manufacturing, maritime and people-to-people exchanges as well as new opportunities in AI, semiconductors, clean energy and defence," the external affairs minister said in a post on X. Jaishankar said he and Hyun also exchanged perspectives on the Indo-Pacific region and contemporary global developments.

### 5 killed in fire mishap at plastic factory

Bangalore: A family of four and another man were carried to death after fire broke out at a plastic articles manufacturing unit in Nagarathapet, near KR Market here, police said. Police have identified the victims as Madan Singh (38) and Sangeetha (33) and their two children Rithesh (7) and Vihaan (5) and neighbour Suresh Kumar (26). Madan Singh was a native of Rajasthan and had been renting the building for nearly 10 years. He ran a small manufacturing unit that made plastic kitchen items as well as mats and steel kitchen utensils. He was residing on the top floor of the building.



An artiste of Kendra Dance Repertory prepares behind the stage before their performance, a dance drama depicting the journey of Lord Krishna, on the occasion of 'Janmashtami' festival, at Kamani Auditorium, in New Delhi, Saturday

## Partition happened due to Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League: Cong

The Congress dubbed the RSS as 'the biggest villain' in the country's history, and said that the coming generations would not forgive them

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 16: The Congress Saturday alleged that the partition of India happened because of the 'jugabandi' of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League, as it accused the ruling BJP of interfering in institutions while trying to distort the country's history.

The Congress also dubbed the RSS as "the biggest villain" in the country's history, and said that the coming generations would not forgive them.

The Congress said that as a special NCERT module to mark the "Partition Horrors Remembrance Day" held Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Congress and the then Viceroy Lord Mountbatten responsible

for India's partition.

Congress spokesperson and head of party's media and publicity department Pawan Khera said the book does not mention anything about the Hindu Mahasabha for forming coalition governments with the Muslim League and both propagating, in pre-partition days, that Hindus and Muslims cannot live together in one country.

"The partition happened because of the Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League's 'jugabandi'. If there is anyone which is the biggest villain in history, it is the RSS. Generations will not forgive them for the contribution," Khera told reporters when asked about the NCERT book.

"The manner in which they are trying to interfere in in-



stitutions and are trying to distort the history, we would not sit quiet. Can they remove these pages of 1938, 1940 and of

## SC to hear plea over Haridwar temple receiver appointment August 19

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 16: The Supreme Court is slated to hear August 19 a plea filed by the "sevayat" of the Maa Chandi Devi temple in Haridwar, seeking a stay on an order of the Uttarakhand High Court directing the Badri Kedar Temple Committee to appoint a receiver for overseeing the shrine's management.

A "sevayat" is a priest actively involved in the daily rituals and management of a temple.

A bench of Justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and SVN Bhatti issued a notice to the Uttarakhand government in the matter July 28 and sought a reply within two weeks. The top court had earlier said any decision taken by the Badri Kedar Temple Committee would be subject to the outcome of the petition. The plea of Mahant Bhawani Nandan Giri, filed in the top court through advocate Ashwani Dubey, has contended that the Uttarakhand High Court had, without any evidence and complaint, delegated the control of the temple to a committee despite there being a panel consisting of the district magistrate (DM) and senior superintendent of police of Haridwar that was constituted by it in 2012.

The petitioner has also argued that the direction to appoint the receiver was passed during an anticipatory bail plea hearing of an accused in a criminal matter.

The Maa Chandi Devi temple was founded in the 8th century by Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya and since, it is stated that the petitioner's ancestors have been managing and looking after it as 'sevayat'. There is neither a single complaint nor the question of mismanagement or misappropriation has ever been flagged by the committee consisting of the DM and the SSP appointed by the high court, the plea has said.

## IndiGo's Bangkok-Mumbai flight suffers tail strike

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, August 16: An IndiGo aircraft operating its Bangkok-Mumbai flight suffered a tail strike while attempting to land at the airport here Saturday, prompting aviation safety regulator DGCA to order a probe into the incident, sources said.

Both the pilots of the Airbus A321neo have been derostered pending investigation, they said. "On August 16, an IndiGo Airbus A321 aircraft tail touched the runway while executing a low-altitude go-around due to unfavourable weather conditions in Mumbai," IndiGo spokesperson said in a statement.

The airline flight 6E 1060 departed from Bangkok at 12.12 am ( local time) against its scheduled departure time of 11.40 pm (local time) and finally landed at the Mumbai airport at 3.04 am against its scheduled arrival time of 2.50 am, as per flight tracking website flightradar24.com.

"Thereafter the aircraft carried out another approach and landed safely," the airline said.

"We will be undertaking an investigation on this incident," a senior Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) official told PTI.

Heavy downpour pummeled Mumbai and its suburbs, with some parts recording more than 200 mm rainfall in the wee hours of Saturday, inundating low-lying areas and affecting the transport services including movement of local trains and flights.

Incessant rain continued to lash parts of the city in the morning with occasional heavy spells. The downpour began around 1 am and continued into the early hours of the day, causing waterlogging in low-lying areas of the western and eastern suburbs.

According to the IMD, several parts of Mumbai recorded more than 200 mm of rainfall between 8.30 am Friday and 5.30 am Saturday.

pay his respects, as the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League were "together in seeking partition".

Khera claimed that in 1938, the Hindu Mahasabha held its annual convention on the banks of Sabarmati in Gujarat, where it was clearly stated that Hindus and Muslims cannot stay together in one country.

In 1940, he said, in its Lahore convention, the Muslim League took this forward and repeated this statement, but the NCERT module does not mention about them.

"When the Quit India Movement was launched in 1942, Congress leaders resigned from the provincial Assembly and took to the streets. At that time, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League en-

tered into a coalition and jointly formed governments in NW-FP, Bengal and Sindh. Has the NCERT module written this that the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League formed joint coalition governments?" the Congress leader asked.

The BJP slammed the Congress for questioning the NCERT's module on the Partition of India and said the opposition party is in pain because the "truth" has been brought out.

Calling the Congress the "Rahul-Jinnah party", BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia took on Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, and alleged that his thinking was similar to that of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan.



**This (Mayan rainforest) is one of Earth's lungs, a living space for thousands of species with an invaluable cultural legacy that we should preserve with our eyes on the future**  
CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM | PRESIDENT, MEXICO

## HISTORIC FIRST FOR TRICOLOUR

The Indian tricolour was hoisted at Seattle's iconic 605-foot-tall Space Needle on India's 79th Independence Day, the first time that a foreign nation's flag was raised at the popular American destination. Consul General of India in Seattle Prakash Gupta along with Mayor of Seattle Bruce Harrell and other select dignitaries from the Seattle city leadership, joined the historic and landmark occasion.



## of the day quote

**I call upon everyone to remain vigilant so that no one can undermine the existing order, fraternity, and communal amity in society. I believe that the ideals and teachings of Lord Sri Krishna will further strengthen the bonds of mutual goodwill and brotherhood**  
MUHAMMAD YUNUS | CHIEF ADVISER, BANGLADESH



**I am deeply saddened to learn that many precious lives were lost in the flood that occurred in the northern part of India. On behalf of the Government of Japan, I pray for the souls of the victims and extend my deepest condolences to the bereaved families**  
ISHIBA SHIGERU | PM, JAPAN



**Nepal-India relations are special in characteristics. We have open borders and there is cultural and civilisational proximity**  
PRAKASH MAN SINGH | DEPUTY PM, NEPAL



# European leaders rally behind Ukraine

*The red carpet treatment, the lack of concrete decisions for Ukraine and, most significantly, neglecting the significance of sanctions — a policy that could turn the tide in Kyiv's favour — have felt like a betrayal for Ukrainians who have borne enormous suffering in the almost three-and-a-half years since Russia's full-scale invasion*

REUTERS

**Berlin, August 16:** Several European leaders Saturday jointly pledged to continue support for Ukraine and maintain pressure on Russia until the war in Ukraine ends, after a summit in Alaska between U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The joint statement from leaders including German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was issued after Trump briefed them on his talks with Putin.

It said the next step must be talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and that they were ready to work with Trump and Zelenskyy towards a three-way summit with European support.

Trump said after his talks with Putin that Ukraine should agree a deal to end the war with Russia.

He said he had agreed with the Russian leader that the best way to do this was to go straight



to a peace settlement rather than via a ceasefire, something hitherto opposed by Kyiv and its European allies.

The European statement - also signed by EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, Finnish President Alexander Stubb and European Council President Antonio Costa - said Ukraine must have "ironclad" security guarantees to defend its territorial integrity.

"It will be up to Ukraine to make decisions on its territory.

International borders must not be changed by force. Our support to Ukraine will continue. We are determined to do more to keep Ukraine strong in order to achieve an end to the fighting and a just and lasting peace," the statement said.

"As long as the killing in Ukraine continues, we stand ready to uphold the pressure on Russia. We will continue to strengthen sanctions and wider economic measures to put pressure on Russia's war economy until there is a just and lasting peace."

## Russia readying N-powered cruise missile test, Ukrainian military intel

**London:** Russia is preparing to test its new nuclear-capable, nuclear-powered cruise missile and if successful, plans to use the results to bolster its negotiating position with the West, Ukrainian military intelligence said Friday. Andriy Yusov, a spokesperson for the service, issued the written statement to Reuters just before US President Donald Trump was due to hold talks in Alaska with Russian President Vladimir Putin on ending Moscow's war in Ukraine. He did not give an assessment of the possible timing of the test in the statement, given in response to questions submitted by Reuters for a report published on Tuesday that Moscow was preparing to test the 9M730 Burevestnik cruise missile. He did not say how his service arrived at its assessment. It has for years received intelligence from the United States and its NATO allies, and it has its own networks inside Russia. The researchers said imagery from Planet Labs, a commercial satellite firm, showed extensive activities at the site, increases in personnel and equipment and the presence of ships and aircraft associated with previous tests of the weapon dubbed the SSC-X-9 Skyfall by NATO.



## Russian politicians hail Alaska summit as victory for Moscow

In the early hours of Saturday morning following a summit in Alaska between the leaders of Russia and the United States, senior politicians in Moscow were quick to trumpet the meeting as a win for Russia and its narrative of the war in Ukraine. "The meeting in Alaska confirmed Russia's desire for peace, long-term and fair," said Andrei Klishas, a senior lawmaker from President Vladimir Putin's United Russia party. He portrayed the summit as a coup for Russia and a loss for Ukraine and its European allies, who have been pushing for an unconditional ceasefire. "The tasks of the SMO will be accomplished either by military or diplomatic means," Klishas wrote, using the acronym for Special Military Operation, the Kremlin's term for the war. "A new architecture for European and international security is on the agenda, and everyone must accept it." The highly-anticipated summit Friday in Anchorage yielded no agreement to resolve or pause the conflict, now in its fourth year, although both Putin and US President Donald Trump described the talks as productive. The two men met for nearly three hours before giving a brief media appearance and boarding separate planes home. Dmitry Medvedev, a former Russian president known for his hawkish views, said the summit proved that it was possible to hold talks without conditions - as Moscow has insisted - while the fighting in Ukraine rages on. Russia's flagship Channel One morning state news bulletin on Saturday stressed the pageantry around the summit, its global profile, and the warm welcome extended to Putin, who had been ostracized by Western leaders since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. "The Red carpet, handshakes and footage and photographs that are in all global publications and TV channels," it said, saying it was the first time that Trump had met a visiting leader off their plane at the airport. Its correspondent in Alaska said the two leaders had obviously agreed about a lot of things, but did not say what those things were. "The very fact of the meeting in Alaska, its tone, and its outcome represent a significant and joint success for both presidents, each of whom made a tremendous personal contribution to achieving the best possible result at this time," Konstantin Kosachyov, a chair of the foreign affairs committee of Russia's upper house of parliament, wrote on Telegram.

## Israeli settlement plan breaks int'l law: UN

REUTERS

**Washington, August 16:** The UN human rights office said Friday an Israeli plan to build to build thousands of new homes between an Israeli settlement in the West Bank and near East Jerusalem was illegal under international law, and would put nearby Palestinians at risk of forced eviction, which it described as a war crime.

Israeli far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich Thursday vowed to press on a long-delayed settlement project, saying the move would "bury" the idea of a Palestinian state.

The UN rights office spokesperson said the plan would break the West Bank into isolated enclaves and that it was "a war crime for an occupying power to transfer its own civilian population into the territory it occupies".

About 700,000 Israeli settlers live among 2.7 million Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel annexed East Jerusalem in 1980, a move not recognised by most countries, but has not formally extended sovereignty over the West Bank.



A man performs a pyrotechnic show at the Palace of Versailles before the fireworks display in Versailles, outside Paris PTN PHOTO

## China hands over third Hangor-class sub to Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Beijing, August 16:** China has delivered the third of the eight new "advanced" Hangor-class submarines to Pakistan as part of Beijing's efforts to upgrade Islamabad's naval strength to support its growing presence in the Indian Ocean, India's backyard.

The launching ceremony of the third Hangor-class submarine was held in Wuhan, Central China's Hubei province, Thursday, the state-run Global Times reported Saturday.

The second of the eight submarines China is building for Pakistan was handed over in March this year.

This is in addition to four modern naval frigates that China supplied to Pakistan in the last few years as part of its efforts to boost Pakistan's naval strength amid the Chinese navy's steady expansion in the Arabian Sea, where it is developing the Gwadar port in Balochistan, as well as in the Indian Ocean.

Speaking at the launch of the third submarine, Pakistan's Deputy Chief of Naval Staff Project-2 Vice Admiral Abdul Samad said the Hangor-class submarine's cutting-edge

weaponry and advanced sensors would be instrumental in sustaining regional power equilibrium and ensuring maritime stability, the daily quoted a Pakistan defence statement as saying.

According to a recent report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), China supplied over 81 per cent of Pakistan's military hardware.

Some of Pakistan's key orders in the past five years include the country's first spy ship, the Rizwan; more than 600 VT-4 battle tanks, and 36 J-10CE 4.5-generation fighters, according to the SIPRI database.

China supplied the first delivery of multi-role J-10CE fighter jets to the Pakistan Air Force in 2022, adding to its JF-17 fighters jointly manufactured by both countries. Pakistan used these fighter jets in the recent conflict with India.

Zhang Junshe, a Chinese military affairs expert, told the Global Times that the Hangor-class submarine is characterised by its strong underwater combat capabilities, including comprehensive sensor systems, excellent stealth characteristics, high mobility, long endurance and formidable firepower.



## World's first treaty to curb plastic pollution hits wall

REUTERS

**Geneva, August 16:** Delegates discussing the world's first legally binding treaty to tackle plastic pollution failed to reach consensus, diplomats said Friday, voicing disappointment and even rage that the 10-day talks produced no deal.

Delegates had been seeking a breakthrough in the deadlocked United Nations' talks in Geneva, but states pushing for an ambitious treaty said that the latest text released overnight failed to meet their expectations.

The chair of the negotiations Ecuador's Luis Vayas Valdivieso adjourned the session with a



pledge to resume talks at an undetermined later date, drawing weak applause from exhausted delegates who had worked into the early hours.

French ecology minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher told the meeting's closing session that she was "enraged because de-

spite genuine efforts by many, and real progress in discussions, no tangible results have been obtained."

In an apparent reference to oil-producing nations, Colombia's delegate Haendel Rodriguez said a deal had been "blocked by a small number of

Delegates fail to reach consensus on plastic pollution treaty

Oil-producing nations had opposed ambitious deal, delegates say

Path forward for future negotiations unclear

Of course we cannot hide that it is tragic and deeply disappointing to see some countries trying to block an agreement

Magnus Heunicke | Danish environment minister

states who simply did not want an agreement."

Diplomats and climate advocates had warned earlier this

month that efforts by the European Union and small island states to cap virgin plastic production - fuelled by petroleum, coal and gas - faced opposition from petrochemical-producing countries and the U.S. under President Donald Trump.

US delegate John Thompson from the State Department declined to comment as he left the talks.

The path forward for the negotiations is uncertain.

More than 1,000 delegates have gathered in Geneva for the sixth round of talks, after a meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) in South Korea late last year ended without a deal.



**For New Delhi, the choices ahead are stark - negotiate, retaliate, diversify markets, or trade concessions such as ending purchases of Russian oil for tariff relief. Each option carries a different mix of gains and risks**  
AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

## TABLET MARKET SHINES

India tablet PC market grew 20 per cent year-on-year in the June 2025 quarter, with Apple cornering almost one-third market share, CyberMedia Research said in a report. According to the CyberMedia Research (CMR) Tablet PC India Market latest report, Apple's iPad supplies in the Indian market grew 10 per cent year-on-year in the June 2025 quarter



## of the day quote

**We started Ola Electric four years ago. (Today) We will show you the vision for New India, a strong India, a self-sufficient India in the electric vehicle space. We want to be the number one electric vehicle company in the world**



**BHAVISH AGGARWAL** | FOUNDER-CEO, OLA ELECTRIC

**The investment intent is crystal clear: Indian enterprises want AI embedded into the fabric of decision-making. The challenge is ensuring that these investments mature into governed, measurable programmes rather than isolated experiments**



**JATINDER SINGH** | EXECUTIVE EDITOR AND RESEARCH LEAD, CIO&LEADER

**Today, I am honoured to unveil our bold new vision for 2027 that will become the backbone of our next generation of world-beating SUVs, engineered right here in India, for India and the world**



**ANISH SHAH** | CEO AND MD, MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA

## RESULTS CORNER

### Patanjali Foods revenue jumps 24%

**New Delhi:** Patanjali Foods Limited has posted a robust 24% year-on-year growth in its standalone revenue from operations for the quarter ended June 30, 2025, touching ₹8,899.70 crore, despite a challenging urban demand environment and rising competition from regional and new-age D2C players. The company reported an EBITDA of ₹334.17 crore, translating to a margin of 3.75%, while profit after tax stood at ₹180.39 crore with a 2.02% PAT margin. Gross profit grew 23.81% YoY to ₹1,259.19 crore, with margins at 14.13% on a total income basis. The FMCG segment, including Home and Personal Care, contributed ₹2,299.69 crore, or 25.56% of total revenue. The HPC segment, integrated into the company in November 2024, reported ₹639.02 crore in revenue and ₹119.50 crore EBITDA, anchored by strong performance in dental care (₹1,660.67 crore), Biscuits contributed ₹451.40 crore, or 8.24% YoY, led by the ₹1,000 crore "Doodh" brand which grew 15% YoY. Ghee sales rose 23% to ₹256.98 crore, while nutraceuticals revenue surged 37.6% to ₹17.31 crore.

### Reliance Industries' gross debt rises 7%

**New Delhi:** Reliance Industries Limited's (RIL) gross debt and net debt for the financial year 2024-25 stood at ₹3.47 lakh crore (\$40.7 billion) and ₹1.17 lakh crore (\$13.7 billion) respectively, according to the company's integrated Annual Report 2024-25. The company had registered ₹3.24 lakh crore in gross debt in FY24. Despite a strong internal cash flow generation, India's biggest private sector conglomerate's leverage remains noteworthy, underscoring the capital-intensive nature of its operations. Meanwhile, the Mukesh Ambani-led company reported capital expenditure for the financial year at ₹1,31,107 crore (\$15.3 billion). In FY 2023-24, capex stood at ₹1,31,769 crore. According to the company's annual report, in FY25, investments were largely directed towards new O2C projects, Retail store expansion, augmenting Digital Services infrastructure and building manufacturing assets in New Energy.

# Trump softens stance on Russian oil buy

The US president signals that the country may not impose secondary tariffs on India over Russian oil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New York, August 16:** President Donald Trump has indicated that the US may not impose secondary tariffs on countries continuing to procure Russia crude oil.

There were apprehensions that additional secondary tariffs would have hit India in case the US decided to enforce them.

"Well, he (Russian President Vladimir Putin) lost an oil client, so to speak, which is India, which was doing about 40 per cent of the oil. China, as you know, is doing a lot...And if I did what's called a secondary sanction, or a secondary tariff, it would be very devastating from their standpoint. If I have to do it, I'll do it. Maybe I won't have to do it," Trump said Friday.

The US president made the remarks in an interview with Fox News aboard Air Force One en route to Alaska for a high-stakes summit meeting with Putin. The meeting concluded without any agreement on ending the Russia-Ukraine war.

On Wednesday, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent had said if "things don't go well"



between Trump and Putin at the summit meeting, then secondary sanctions on India for purchasing Russian oil could go up.

In an interview with Bloomberg, Bessent said, "I think everyone has been frustrated with President Putin. We expected that he would come to the table in a more fulsome way. It looks like he may be ready to negotiate."

"And we put secondary tariffs on the Indians for buying

## Easing US-Russia tensions, S&P rating booster to influence FII sentiments

**Mumbai:** The latest development around easing of tensions between the US and Russia indicates that the secondary tariff of 25 per cent imposed on India is unlikely to come into effect after August 27, analysts said Saturday, adding that this would boost FII sentiments. Another positive factor to influence foreign investors is S&P Global raising India's credit rating from BBB- to BBB. Going forward, the FII activity will be influenced by the action on the tariff front, said Dr VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited. The analyst noted that despite the massive buying by domestic institutions, the Indian market has been underperforming for the past 6 weeks amid trade-related concerns and FIIs' outflows. "India has been underperforming most markets during the last six weeks. This underperformance is despite the massive DII buying aided by robust inflows into mutual funds," Vijayakumar said. FIIs have sold equity for ₹24,190 crore through the exchanges till August 14; however, this selling has been completely eclipsed by the massive DII buying of ₹55,790 crore, he added. The tepid earnings growth, elevated valuations and modest projection of 8 to 10 per cent earnings growth for FY26 have emboldened the bears to increase short positions, impacting the market. According to analysts, sustained FII selling in IT stocks has pulled the IT index down. However, banking and financials continue to be relatively resilient due to fair valuations and institutional buying.

**Trump imposed tariffs totalling 50% on India, including 25% for Delhi's purchases of Russian oil that will come into effect from August 27**

# 'Next Gen GST precursor to eventual single tax slab GST'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 16:** Describing the proposed GST tax reforms as 'Next Gen GST', senior government officials Saturday said that the two-slab tax regime will eventually pave the way for a single sales/services tax rate, hopefully by 2047.

They said the proposed new GST regime, which slashes tax rates and assigns just two slabs of 5 per cent and 18 per cent, will boost the economy and also serve to mitigate tariff threats.

The proposed two-slab regime, if approved by the GST Council, will replace the current four slabs in the goods and services tax (GST) regime, doing away with the 12 per cent and 28 per cent slabs. Calling it the "next Gen GST", one government official said "it is a game changer reform. In the pantheon of economic reforms seen in India, it's right up there." The officials spoke on condition of anonymity.

They said the new structure would mean that almost all of the common use items will move to the lower tax bracket, leading to price cuts, which in turn would boost consumption.

"Lower taxes means it will put more money in people's pockets. It will obviously lead to more consumption," the official said.

The Centre's proposal for a 5 and 18 per cent tax rate on merit and standard goods and a 40 per cent tax for sin goods, has been a "large canvas exercise" to ensure stability in tax rates, the officials said, explaining the rationale behind the exercise.

The changes that have come about after nearly six months



**The proposed two-slab regime, if approved by the GST Council, will replace the current four slabs in the goods and services tax (GST) regime, doing away with the 12% and 28% slabs**

of deliberations and dozens of meetings, have been conceived in a way so as to ensure that demand for tax tweaks do not come and also input tax credit (ITC) do not get accumulated in the system.

Once the Centre's proposal is accepted by the Group of Ministers (GoM) and is approved by the GST Council, it will end the flux of tax rates and ensure stability, the officials said.

"What we have suggested is a 'Next Gen GST' keeping the needs of the middle class, poor, farmers, and MSMEs in mind. Also, it has been ensured that tax on daily use items are low," the official told PTI.

"Once the system is put in place and India becomes a developed nation, we can think about a single rate GST," said the official, adding that a sin-

gle rate structure is suitable for developed countries where income and spending capacities are uniform.

"The ultimate aim is to move to a single slab structure," the official said, adding that the time, however, is not right at present.

The official said that during the process of overhaul, every due process is being followed. The Centre has taken the steering role but is protecting constitutional obligations by sharing it with the Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalisation.

"We have looked at every item, item by item and in some cases we have gone back and forth 3-4 times. Whether it is pesticide for use by farmers or pencils for students or some raw material or intermediaries for MSMEs, every item has been discussed threadbare and categorised in the merit or standard slab," the official added.

As many as 99 per cent of the items in the 12 per cent category such as butter, fruit juices and dry fruits would move to 5 per cent tax rate. Similarly, electronic items like ACs, TVs, fridges, and washing machines as well as other goods like cement will be among the 90 per cent of the items that would move from 28 per cent to lower 18 per cent slab.

The move comes after US President Donald Trump slapped a 25 per cent tariff on all goods India exports to the US, and planned doubling of the levy to 50 per cent from August 27 to punish New Delhi for its oil purchases from Russia. The tariffs are likely to impact \$40-billion of non-exempt Indian exports such as that of gems and jewellery, textiles and footwear.

## MIDCAP AND SMALLCAP INDICES RALLY LAST WEEK

Over 20 stocks gain 10-50%

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, August 16:** BSE mid and smallcap indices ended a three-week losing streak, even as Indian benchmark indices also broke a six-week losing pattern - gaining 1 per cent this week.

The BSE midcap indices increased by 1 per cent, while the BSE small-cap index rose by 0.4 per cent for the week.

Over 20 major small-cap and mid-cap stocks saw gains ranging from 9.85 per cent to 54.96 per cent, with most clustering between 10-20 per cent. The weekly gains follow positive inflation data from the US and



India, in-line earnings, rupee appreciation and falling oil prices.

As the June quarter (Q1 FY26) earnings are out, the revenue moderation took average net profit expansion YoY for the benchmark Nifty 50 companies (excluding financials and oil and gas) to mid-single digits.

On the earnings front, though, the Nifty50 Q1 FY26 earnings were in line with the market estimates. The overall trend was mixed during the quarter, as the revival expected from urban demand is yet to gather momentum.

## EMPOWERING YOUTH

### TPCODL's Project Daksh and Odisha Green Jobs Academy changing lives

**BHUBANESWAR:** TP Central Odisha Distribution Limited (TPCODL), a joint venture of Tata Power and the Government of Odisha, is transforming lives through its innovative CSR initiatives, Project Daksh and the Odisha Green Jobs Academy. These programs provide rural youth and women with job-ready skills, paving the way for employment and financial independence. Launched in September 2023, TPCODL's Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) across Angul, Khordha, and Cuttack districts offer short-term, industry-aligned courses that meet National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) Level 3 standards. The centers provide training in high-demand skills like facility management, plumbing, electric vehicle service, and solar panel installation. A total of 440 young men and women have been trained and certified to date. All have been placed with top companies. Project Daksh focuses on practical skills for formal employment, while the Odisha Green Jobs Academy promotes sustainable trades like solar energy and EV maintenance. Testimonials from beneficiaries and trainers highlight the programs' impact. Priti Gochhayat, a certified Security Guard, shares her newfound confidence and independence. Tushar Ranjan Ojha, a trainer, notes the transformation of rural youth into skilled workers with better-paying jobs. Arvind Singh, CEO, TPCODL, reaffirmed the company's commitment to building local capacities and empowering youth, particularly women. He highlighted that with its expanding reach and growing impact, TPCODL's vocational training initiatives are not only creating careers but also transforming lives.



# ChatGPT beats all competitors in revenue generation

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICES

**New Delhi, August 16:** Individual users worldwide have spent \$2 billion on the ChatGPT mobile app through iOS and Android platforms since the AI application's launch in May 2023, according to a report Saturday.

In 2025, revenue of the application grew 673 per cent year-over-year.

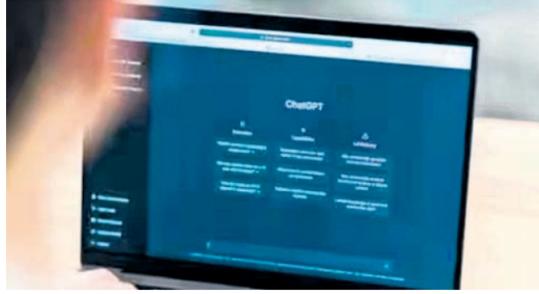
The app has clocked 318 million downloads in 2025, 2.8 times higher than during the same period last year, TechCrunch reported.

India has the highest lifetime installs at 13.7 per cent,

while the US followed with 10.3 per cent. American users, however, accounted for over 38 per cent of ChatGPT's global revenue. Average spending per download in the US is \$10, while in Germany it stood at 5.3 per cent.

ChatGPT Users make payments for premium features, such as a ChatGPT Plus subscription at \$20 per month, which provides access to advanced models like GPT-5, higher usage limits, and enhanced functionality.

ChatGPT outperformed all competitors in lifetime revenue per install, averaging \$2.91. Anthropic's Claude followed at



\$2.55, while Elon Musk's Grok stood at \$0.75. Microsoft's Copilot app lagged at just \$0.27.

Analysts suggested Grok's underperformance is due to its

late mobile launch. The stand-alone iOS app of xAI was only available to users from January 2025, with Android support added in March. The delay has

In 2025, revenue of ChatGPT grew 673% YoY

The app clocked 318mn downloads in 2025, 2.8 times higher YoY

India has highest lifetime installs at 13.7%, followed by US with 10.3%

hindered its momentum in the app economy.

Meanwhile, Musk, the founder of xAI, claimed that OpenAI's ChatGPT ranks first on the Apple Store because of Apple's favouritism, while his apps, X and xAI's Grok, are sidelined.

## SBI raises home loan rates by 25 basis points for new borrowers



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, August 16:** Despite the RBI's repo rate cut to 5.5 per cent, aimed at easing borrowing costs, India's largest mortgage lender, State Bank of India (SBI), has increased home loan rates by 25 basis points for new borrowers.

The bank raised the upper band of interest rates by 25 basis points. SBI's interest rates for home loans have increased from the earlier band of 7.50 per cent-8.45 per cent to a new band of 7.75 per cent-8.70 per cent. The new rates will particularly impact customers with low credit scores, as the maximum interest rate limit has been raised.

Public sector banks like Union Bank of India, Bank of India, Bank of Maharashtra, and Central Bank of India offer loans starting at 7.35 per cent and going up to 10.10 per cent or more, depending on the borrower's credit profile.

Other public sector banks may follow SBI's lead. The repo rate was cut three times consecutively to provide relief to the public. The reduction in the repo rate by the RBI leads to lower interest rates on loans, including home loans, benefiting the public indirectly.

The bank had earlier released a report saying that the RBI's cutting the repo rate will make home loans cheaper. The change will be felt immediately in loans linked to the External Benchmark Lending Rate (EBLR), which account for around 60 per cent of all loans given by Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs), as per the data compiled by State Bank of India (SBI) Research.

As of August 2025, SBI home loans predominantly link to the External Benchmark Lending Rate (EBLR) for new borrowers, aligning with the RBI's repo rate plus a spread. Looking ahead, SBI warned that although lower rates benefit borrowers, banks might continue to face pressure on their profit margins.

## EMPOWERING YOUTH

### TPCODL's Project Daksh and Odisha Green Jobs Academy changing lives

**BHUBANESWAR:** TP Central Odisha Distribution Limited (TPCODL), a joint venture of Tata Power and the Government of Odisha, is transforming lives through its innovative CSR initiatives, Project Daksh and the Odisha Green Jobs Academy. These programs provide rural youth and women with job-ready skills, paving the way for employment and financial independence. Launched in September 2023, TPCODL's Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) across Angul, Khordha, and Cuttack districts offer short-term, industry-aligned courses that meet National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) Level 3 standards. The centers provide training in high-demand skills like facility management, plumbing, electric vehicle service, and solar panel installation. A total of 440 young men and women have been trained and certified to date. All have been placed with top companies. Project Daksh focuses on practical skills for formal employment, while the Odisha Green Jobs Academy promotes sustainable trades like solar energy and EV maintenance. Testimonials from beneficiaries and trainers highlight the programs' impact. Priti Gochhayat, a certified Security Guard, shares her newfound confidence and independence. Tushar Ranjan Ojha, a trainer, notes the transformation of rural youth into skilled workers with better-paying jobs. Arvind Singh, CEO, TPCODL, reaffirmed the company's commitment to building local capacities and empowering youth, particularly women. He highlighted that with its expanding reach and growing impact, TPCODL's vocational training initiatives are not only creating careers but also transforming lives.



# No Chhetri in Jamil's 35

## Indian star striker missing in list of 35 probables named by new coach Jamil for CAFA Nations Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 16: Talismanic striker Sunil Chhetri has been left out of the 35 probables named by newly-appointed Indian football team head coach Khalid Jamil for the upcoming CAFA Nations Cup in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

It's unlikely that he was dropped on the basis of his form in the four matches he played after coming back from his international retirement.

However, it's also not known whether Chhetri himself requested not to consider him for the tournament, to be held later this month, or if he was rested as his Indian Super League (ISL) side Bengaluru FC is yet to start pre-season training.

Bengaluru FC recently suspended salaries for its first-team players and staff, including that of Chhetri, due to uncertainty surrounding the ISL's future.

However, Jamil's list of probables includes other Bengaluru FC players like goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, defenders Chinglensana Singh, Rahul Bheke, Roshan Singh Naorem, and midfielder Suresh Singh.



All India Football Federation (AIFF) officials are not willing to comment on the matter, saying "the question should be asked to the head coach".

The 41-year-old Chhetri took international retirement after playing against Kuwait in June last year but made a return for national duty in the match against Maldives in March this year following a request from the then India head coach Manolo Marquez to help the team in the Asian Cup qualifiers third round.

Chhetri has played four matches since then and scored once - in the team's 3-0 win over Maldives. India drew Bangladesh 0-0

It's unlikely that Chhetri was dropped on the basis of his form in the four matches he played after coming back from his international retirement

All India Football Federation officials are not willing to comment on the matter, saying "the question should be asked to the head coach"

and lost to Hong Kong 0-1 in the Asian Cup qualifiers, leaving the country in a difficult position to qualify for the continental showpiece in 2027.

In between India lost 0-2 to Thailand in an international friendly match. Marquez quit after the string of poor performance of the team.

The players will begin training in Bangalore from Saturday with 22 players having reported to the camp so far.

The remaining 13 other players are expected to join the camp after completing their Durand Cup engagements with their respective clubs.

Out of the remaining 13, seven - Anirudh Thapa, Deepak Tangri, Lalengmawia Ralte, Liston Colaco, Manvir Singh, Sahal Abdul Samad, Vishal Kaith - are from Mohun Bagan, three - Anwar Ali, Jeakson Singh, Naorem Mahesh Singh - are from East Bengal and one - Jithin MS - from NorthEast United.

Placed in Group B of the CAFA Nations Cup, India face co-host Tajikistan on August 29, Iran September 1 and Afghanistan September 4.

The third-place match and the final will be played September 8 in Hisor and Tashkent (Uzbekistan), respectively.

The AIFF has urged all the clubs to release national team players for the tournament, so that the national team can prepare for the upcoming Asian Cup Qualifiers match against Singapore (home and away) in October.

## IPL 2025 CONTROVERSY

# CSK defends Brevis signing after R Ashwin's 'extra fee' claims

### Brevis' signing was in compliance with rules: CSK clarify after Ashwin's remarks spark controversy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, August 16: Chennai Super Kings Saturday issued clarification regarding the signing of Dewald Brevis midway through the IPL 2025 season, saying the signing process of the South African batter was in "complete compliance with the rules and regulations" of the league.

A raging controversy was sparked as former India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, currently in the CSK roster, hinted in his YouTube channel that the five-time IPL champions were willing to pay "extra" to avail Brevis's services.

"Chennai Super Kings categorically clarifies that all actions taken by the franchise during the signing process of Dewald Brevis as a Replacement Player during TATA Indian Pre-



mier League (IPL) 2025 were in complete compliance with the rules and regulations of IPL," the CSK said in a statement.

"In April, 2025, Dewald Brevis was signed for a league fee of INR 2.2 Cr as a replacement player for the injured Gurjapneet Singh, who was picked up at the IPL 2025 Player Auction held at Abadi Al Johar Arena, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia for a price of INR 2.2 Cr," the statement further added.

The IPL rules in vogue state that the signing of a replacement player should not exceed the price of the player he will be replacing on the roll.

In that scenario, the originally unsold Brevis was paid Rs 2.2

crore by CSK, over and above his base price of Rs 75 lakh, to sign him April 18.

The controversy broke out when Ashwin said the CSK was ready to pay more to sign Brevis, who had cracked a brilliant hundred against Australia in a T20I match earlier this week after a few other IPL teams talks with the SA batter were hindered by the price.

"I will tell you something about Brevis. He had a great time last IPL. A few teams left him because of the price. When he was supposed to be signed as a replacement, he was supposed to be signed at the base price.

"But what happens is you talk to the agents and the player will say, if you give me X amount extra, I will come," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel. "... And CSK were ready to pay him, hence he came. In the back half, the CSK combination was strong. They will go with Rs 30 crore in IPL 2026 mini auction," Ashwin added.

It may be recalled that Ashwin is reportedly in talks with the Super Kings about his future in the franchise.

## SHORT TAKES

### Ahlawat makes cut as Shubhankar suffers

Copenhagen: Veer Ahlawat played a strong second round to sneak inside the cut line at the Danish Golf Championship on the DP World Tour. Ahlawat shot (73-68) to be 1-under and Tied-45th getting into the weekend while Shubhankar Sharma despite two rounds of even par once again failed to make the cut which was kept at 1-under. Having shot 2-over 73 on the first day Ahlawat needed a strong second round buy an early double on the Par-4 13th, his fourth hole, set him back further. Ahlawat fought back with five birdies in six holes from 16th. After an early double bogey on the 13th hole, two consecutive birdies on the 16th and 17th holes helped him bring the round back under control. He began the front nine with three consecutive birdies.

### Delhi HC stays EFI's proposed EOGM

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has restrained the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) from holding the proposed Extraordinary General Meeting (EOGM) Sunday and noted that there are serious disputes about virtually every facet of the functioning of the sports body. EFI Secretary General Col Jaiveer Singh had on August 2 issued a notice for the EOGM on August 17 but the Rajasthan Equestrian Association (REA) approached the court for a stay. The Court Friday stayed the EOGM, saying, "There appeared to be no rationale to further confound the uneasy state of affairs in EFI by convening an EOGM" and set October 13, 2025 as the next date of hearing.

# WINNING START FOR REDS

## Late Salah, Chiesa goals give Liverpool 4-2 win in thrilling opener

REUTERS

Liverpool, Aug 16: Liverpool talisman Mo Salah and substitute Federico Chiesa struck late goals as the Premier League champions began the defence of their title by beating Bournemouth 4-2 in a thriller on the opening night of the season at Anfield Friday.

On a bittersweet evening charged with emotion after the July death of Liverpool forward Diogo Jota, newcomer Hugo Ekitike bagged a goal on his league debut to put the hosts ahead after 37 minutes and Cody Gakpo doubled the lead in the 49th.

But Antoine Semenyo, who was the target of racist abuse in the first half that led to a pause in the game, pulled one back for the visitors in the 64th minute and completed a double 12 minutes later to rock Liverpool and shock the home fans.

However, Chiesa came off the bench and sent the Anfield faithful away happy with an 88th-minute strike after goalkeeper Djordje Petrovic swatted away a ball into the box by Salah, who scored himself deep into added time to wrap up the three points.

"Fantastic," Liverpool boss Arne Slot said of Italian forward Chiesa's goal. "He came in in the end because we needed a goal. For him then to score in such a moment is special. "It's even more special because the fans have supported him. It's nice he gives them



- Champions give up two-goal lead but rally to win
- Ekitike and Gakpo put Liverpool ahead at Anfield
- Semenyo suffers racist abuse before scoring twice
- Evening starts with emotional tributes for Jota

something in return with a great goal."

With Liverpool ahead again, Salah chipped the ball past the defence before cutting inside and firing into the bottom corner with a 94th-minute goal that put the Egyptian joint-fourth with Andy Cole on the all-time Premier League scorers' list with 187.

An emotional Salah pointed to the heavens and flapped two hands to mimic Jota's shark goal celebration.

He headed for The Kop stand after the final whistle, and wiped away tears while applauding the fans who were singing their Jota song to the

tune of "Bad Moon Rising."

The night started with an emotional minute's silence for Jota and his brother Andre Silva, who died in a car crash. Fans fought back tears as they sang "You'll Never Walk Alone."

Ekitike, who has joined from Eintracht Frankfurt, was the most impressive of Slot's close-season signings in a spending spree topping 300 million pounds (\$406.53 million).

The game was halted for several minutes after Bournemouth's Ghana international Semenyo reported the racist abuse.

"It's totally unacceptable," Bournemouth captain Adam Smith said. "Kind of in shock to be honest that it happened. In this day and age it shouldn't be happening.

"I don't know how Ant's played on to be honest and come up with those goals ... Something has to be done. We'll support him in there and hopefully he'll be ok."

## BCCI brings like-for-like injury replacement rule in domestic cricket

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 16: The BCCI has amended its playing conditions, introducing a provision for "serious injury replacements" in multi-day domestic tournaments for the upcoming season.

The move comes in the wake of injuries to Rishabh Pant and Chris Woakes during the recently-concluded Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy Test series between India and England that ended 2-2.

"If a player sustains a serious injury during the course of the relevant match, a Serious Injury Replacement may be permitted in the following circumstances," stated the newly-introduced rule communicated to the state associations.

It further adds: "The serious injury must have been sustained during play and within the playing area described in clause 1.2.5.2.

Pant sustained a foot fracture in the fourth Test in Manchester after attempting a reverse sweep, while Woakes dislocated his shoulder in the series-decider at The Oval.

The incident reignited a debate on whether replacements should be allowed when players suffer serious injuries. While India head coach Gautam Gambhir was in favour of it, England captain Ben Stokes wasn't for it.

## Top seed Hemanth lifts Saipan International badminton crown



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 16: Top seeded Indian Tanya Hemanth capped off a strong run at the Saipan International 2025 with a straight-game win over Japan's Kanae Sakai in the women's singles final Saturday.

The 21-year-old, ranked 86th in the world, defeated the unseeded Sakai 15-10, 15-8 at the Oleai Sports Complex in Northern Mariana Islands to secure her fourth international series title.

The Saipan International is part of the Badminton World Federation's trial events for the experimental 3x15 scoring system, where each game is played to 15 points instead of

the conventional 21.

Hemanth, who had earlier triumphed at the India International (2022), Iran Fajr International (2023) and Bendigo International (2024), added another feather to her cap with Saturday's victory.

She had also finished runner-up at the Azerbaijan International last year, losing to compatriot Malvika Bansod in the final.

En route to the title in Saipan, Hemanth overcame Japan's Ririna Hiramoto in the semi-finals, Singapore's Lee Xin Yi Megan in the quarter-finals, beat Japanese player Nodoka Sunakawa in the round of 16. She had received a bye in the opening round.

# Boral's incredible feat Robots race, play football, crash at 'robot Olympics'

### Veteran two-wheeler driver becomes first man to conquer highest motorable roads in India on a moped

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata, August 16: Veteran motorcyclist and Guinness World Record holder Subrata Boral has become the first Indian rider to conquer the highest motorable passes in the country on a moped, the TVS XL 100.

This is the first example of the highest motorable passes being reached on a 100cc two-wheeler. Boral, has recently completed the feat and returned to Kolkata.

He achieved this incredible feat without any back-up. In the process, the highest motorable roads that he reached were Umling La (19,024 ft), which incidentally is the highest motorable road in the world. Among the other highest motorable roads that he conquered were Marsimik La (18,313 ft), Chang La (17,586 ft), Khardung La (17,582 ft), Norbu La (17,132 ft), Rezag La (16,420 ft), Tsaga La (15,260 ft), Sapi La (14,426 ft),



Photu La (13,479 ft) and Namik La (12,139 ft).

Overall, he travelled on the TVS XL 100 for 2,758 kilometres in a journey which started July 15 and lasted 21 days. The veteran 55-year-old rider started his expedition from the Khyber Himalayan Resort in Gulmarg, Jammu & Kashmir.

Marking 40 incredible years on two wheels, Boral began his motorcycling journey in 1985 on a classic VIP Majestic Moped and officially earned his license in 1989 at the age of 19. Since then, he has logged several lakh kilometres across the diverse landscapes of India and beyond.

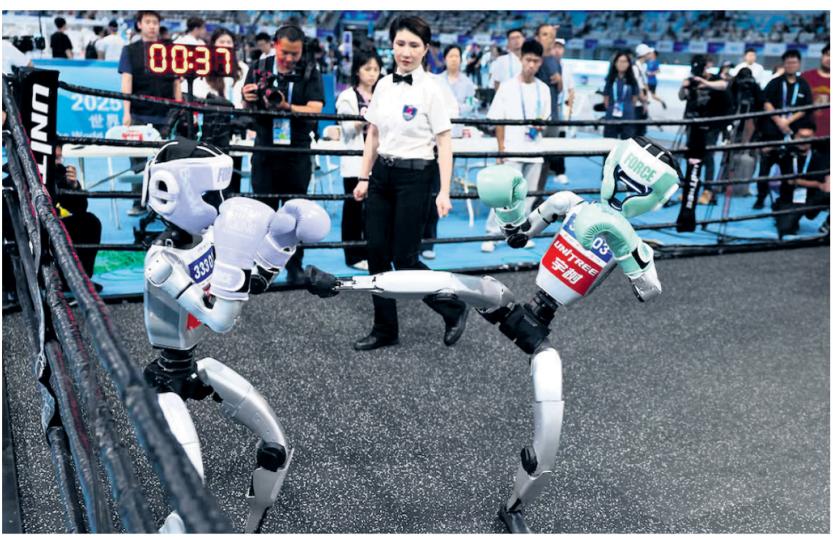
### Despite frequent tumbles requiring human assistance to help robots stand, many managed to right themselves independently, earning applause from audiences

REUTERS

Beijing, August 16: China kicked off the three-day long World Humanoid Robot Games Friday, looking to showcase its advances in artificial intelligence and robotics with 280 teams from 16 countries.

Robots competed in sports such as track and field, and table tennis, as well as tackled robot-specific challenges from sorting medicines and handling materials to cleaning services.

Teams came from countries including the United States, Germany and Brazil, with 192 representing universities and 88 from private enterprises such as China's Unitree and Fourier Intelligence. Competing teams used robots from Chinese manufacturers such as Booster Robotics.



"We come here to play and to win. But we are also interested in research," said Max Polter, a member of HTWK Robotics football team from Germany, affiliated with Leipzig University of Applied Sciences.

"You can test a lot of interesting new and exciting approaches in this contest. If we try

something and it doesn't work, we lose the game. That's sad but it is better than investing a lot of money into a product which failed."

At the robot games in Beijing, which charged 128 to 580 yuan (\$17.83-\$80.77) for tickets, humanoid robots crashed into each other and toppled over repeat-

edly during football matches, while others collapsed mid-sprint during running events.

During one football match, four robots crashed into each other and fell in a tangled heap. In the 1500-metre running event, one robot suddenly collapsed while running at full speed, drawing gasps and

280 teams from 16 countries compete in Beijing robot games

Games provide data for practical robot applications, organisers say

China invests billions in robotics amid tech competition with US

cheers from spectators. Organisers said the games provide valuable data collection opportunities for developing robots for practical applications such as factory work.

Football matches help train robots' coordination abilities, which could prove useful for assembly line operations requiring collaboration between multiple units, commentators said.

China is investing billions of dollars in humanoid and robotics as the country grapples with an ageing population and growing competition with the US over advanced technologies.

It has staged a series of high-profile robotics events in recent months, including what it called the world's first humanoid robot marathon in Beijing, a robot conference and the opening of retail stores dedicated to humanoid robots.