



### Meme storm

Actor Janhvi Kapoor's chant at a 'Dahi Handi' event sparks memes and hilarious reactions across social media

LEISURE | P2



### EU backs Ukraine

European leaders including from Germany, France and Britain will accompany Volodymyr Zelenskyy to meet Donald Trump in Washington

INTERNATIONAL | P10



### Margin rules

SEBI is looking to review margin framework under MTF, in a bid to streamline risk management at clearing corporations

BUSINESS | P11



### Bayern claim title

Luis Díaz scores for Bayern Munich to win German Supercup on his debut

SPORTS | P12

# CP Radhakrishnan NDA's VP nominee



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 17:** The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Sunday named Maharashtra Governor Chandrapuram Ponnusamy Radhakrishnan, a seasoned BJP leader belonging to a key OBC caste from Tamil Nadu with an RSS background, as its vice-presidential candidate. BJP president JP Nadda made the announcement following a meeting of the party's parliamentary board, which included Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and consultation with the party's allies. Nadda appealed for unanimous election of Radhakrishnan, 67, to the constitutional position, saying BJP leaders had spoken to the opposition parties over the last week and will reach out to them again. Opposition leaders had

told the BJP interlocutors that they can make up their mind only after being told of the ruling alliance's nominee, Nadda said, adding that his party will speak to them to reach a consensus over Radhakrishnan, whom he lauded as a "statesman".

In Radhakrishnan, the BJP has trusted a leader with a proven organisational and ideological commitment, a far cry from its choice of his predecessor, Jagdeep Dhankhar.

In his reaction, Modi said on X, "Thiru CP Radhakrishnan Ji has distinguished himself with his dedication, humility and intellect. During the various positions he has held, he has always focused on community service and empowering the marginalised. He has done extensive work at the grassroots in Tamil Nadu."

Reacting to the announcement of his name as the NDA's vice-presidential nominee, Radhakrishnan thanked leaders from the BJP and its allies, including Modi.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will oversee the vice-presidential election, while Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju will be the polling agent.

The last date for filing nomination is August 21.



**SKILFUL DEMO:** A demonstration of fire, rescue, equipment and disaster response systems in progress at Odisha Fire & Disaster Academy, Baramunda in Bhubaneswar Sunday **PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK**

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I'm all for simplification... like 5% on bhajan sandhya and 18% on standup comedy shows

## Gunshots outside Elvish Yadav's home

PRESS TRUST OF INDI

**Gurugram, August 17:** Two masked men fired more than two dozen shots outside YouTuber Elvish Yadav's residence in Sector 57 of Gurugram early Sunday morning, police said.

The incident was captured on CCTV that showed two bike-borne masked men arriving outside the house and opening fire from a distance. After a few seconds, one of them leaned over the main gate and continued to shoot before both fled.

Yadav was not at home when the shooting happened around 5:30am. However, some family members were inside but no one was injured in the incident, they said.

Meanwhile, 'Bhau gang' claimed responsibility for the firing. After getting information, a police team reached the spot and collected forensic evidence, and are scanning CCTV footage from the area.

The attackers shot more than two dozen rounds at the YouTuber's home in Sector 57 and fled from the spot. The bullets struck the ground and first floors of the house, the police said.

In a post on social media, gangsters Neeraj Faridpur and Bhau Ritoliya, members of 'Bhau gang' claimed responsibility for the attack.

The police, however, have not given any confirmation about the claims in the post.

# EC, Cong face-off 2 die in Nuapada septic tank

PNN & AGENCIES

**New Delhi, August 17:** *The Election Commission (EC) and the Opposition came face-to-face Sunday, with the latter stepping up its attack on the apex poll body and accusing it of colluding with BJP to "steal elections".* **Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, launching the 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar, alleged a conspiracy to manipulate the upcoming Bihar Assembly polls through Special Intensive Revision (SIR). He warned that the INDIA bloc would resist any such attempt. Rubbishing the allegations, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said updating voter rolls is EC's legal duty. "If no declaration under oath is given within seven days, the claims will be considered baseless and invalid," Kumar said.**

The Congress leader Sunday claimed the whole country now knows that the EC is "stealing" elections in collusion with BJP and asserted that INDIA bloc will not let their "latest conspiracy" to steal Bihar Assembly polls succeed, as he embarked



on his 1,300-km 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar.

Gandhi alleged that Assembly and Lok Sabha polls were being "stolen" across the country and there was a "conspiracy" in Bihar to do the same through the SIR of electoral rolls. Addressing the gathering at Bihar's Sasaram during the launch event, Gandhi said while he was asked to submit an affidavit after his press conference exposing "vote chori", no such demand was made from BJP leaders who made claims in their presser.

"In the whole country, Assembly and Lok Sabha elections are being stolen and their latest conspiracy is to delete and add voters through SIR to steal the elections in Bihar," Gandhi charged. Hitting back at Gandhi, the CEC served a seven-day ultimatum on the Congress leader to submit a signed affidavit to back his claims, else his

allegations will be considered baseless and invalid. "Give an affidavit or apologise to the nation. There is no third option. If an affidavit is not given within seven days, this means that all allegations are baseless," said Kumar. He admitted that there could be discrepancies in the electoral rolls and asserted that SIR was the only way to correct this. He, however, contended that a person being present in multiple voter lists does not automatically mean that he or she also voted multiple times.

Kumar also said the poll panel has already identified and corrected more than three lakh cases of multiple people having the same voter identity card numbers, but the duplicate voter issue of one person being listed as a voter at multiple places can be resolved only through exercises like SIR. To the Opposition's question on the timing of the roll revision, Kumar said it is EC's legal duty to correct the voter list before every election.

Kumar said the EC cannot discriminate among political parties, and both ruling and Opposition parties are equal before the poll authority. **P9**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Khariar, August 17:** Two laborers died of suspected asphyxiation while working inside an under-construction septic tank at Khariar town in Nuapada district Sunday, police said.

According to reports, the labourers were removing the false ceiling inside the tank of one Gobind Sahu of Ward No-10 in the afternoon, when the incident occurred. The deceased were identified as Raghunath



Hati, 27, a resident of Chhata village, and Basudev Bhoi, 35, a native of Kutenmunda – both under Khariar police station.

"One of them had stepped into the septic tank through a hole to remove the false ceiling

## Naveen hospitalised; condition stable

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, August 17:** BJD chief and Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Naveen Patnaik was admitted to a private hospital here Sunday due to dehydration.

His health condition is stated to be stable.

"Shri Naveen Patnaik was admitted to SUM Ultimate Medicare, Bhubaneswar, at 5:15pm today due to dehydration. His condition is stable and he is responding well to treat-



ment," a bulletin issued by the private hospital said.

The 78-year-old former CM had complained of uneasiness Saturday night and some doctors had visited his residence, Naveen Niwas, party leaders said. BJD leaders had earlier said that he was admitted due to age-related ailments.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan prayed for speedy recovery of Patnaik. **More P3**

and became unconscious. When there was no response from him, another worker entered the tank and he also became unconscious," said Sahu.

Khariar Fire department responded to the emergency, rescuing the workers from the tank and rushing them to Khariar sub-divisional hospital, where doctors declared them dead.

"We have seized the bodies and post-mortem will be conducted Monday," said Dillip Kumar Sahu, inspector in charge of Khariar police station.

## J&K cloudburst, landslide claim 7

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, August 17:** Seven members of four families, including five children, were killed in two separate incidents of cloudburst and landslide in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir early Sunday, officials said.

The calamity struck Jodh Ghati village of Rajbagh and Bagra village of Janglote amid heavy overnight rains in the district, leading to increase in the level of water bodies and submerging many low-lying areas, they said.

The cloudburst in Kathua came three days after flash floods triggered by cloudburst struck Chisoti village in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir August 14, leaving 61 people dead and more than 100 injured.

Officials said while five persons, including a man and his two minor sons, lost their lives in Jodh Ghati which was hit by the cloudburst, snapping access to the village and causing damage to several mud houses, a mother-daughter duo lost their lives in landslide triggered by rains at Bagra village of Janglote.

Officials identified the deceased as Surmu Din, 32, his sons Fanu, 6, and Shedu, 5, Zulfoon, 15, and Tahu, 2, all residents of Jodh Ghati, and Renu Devi, 39, and her daughter Radhika, 9, of Janglote.

# Robots may deliver human babies; all @ ₹12L

AGENCIES

**Beijing/New Delhi, August 17:** If everything goes as per plan, Chinese scientists are expected to develop a prototype of humanoid robot that can give birth to a human baby by next year. The first-of-its-kind surrogate robot being created under a project led by Dr Zhang Qifeng of Kaiwa Technology in Guangzhou, aims to mimic pregnancy inside an artificial womb, according to a report by 'The Telegraph'.

The report said the baby would grow inside the robot's body in a womb-like space filled with artificial amniotic fluid. Zhang is in talks with Guang-

dong authorities to draft laws and rules for this technology.

The baby would grow for nine months and receive nutrients through a tube before birth. Zhang, a PhD graduate from Singapore's Nanyang Technological University, said the technology has reached a "mature stage".

"Now, it needs to be implanted in the robot's abdomen so that a real person and the robot can interact to achieve pregnancy, allowing the fetus to grow inside," the newspaper quoted him as saying.

"A prototype is expected to go on sale next year for around 1,00,000 yuan (more than ₹12 lakh)," it said, adding that the



humanoid can replicate the entire pregnancy journey, from conception to delivery.

However, the details of how fertilisation actually happens remain unclear. Experts have not explained how a foetus will be implanted. But, they claim

that the idea is built on earlier experiments where premature lambs survived in "biobags" for weeks, the publication added.

The innovation has raised major legal and ethical debates. But, if proven successful, it could change medicine and family life forever.

It may provide a solution for rising infertility in China, which jumped from 11.9 per cent in 2007 to 18 per cent in 2020. Supporters see it as a radical step forward while critics worry about its moral impact.

Supporters believe artificial wombs could protect women from health risks linked to pregnancy and free them from the physical strain of carrying

a child. While the debate continues, the question remains whether such machines can ever truly replace human gestation.

However, critics argue that the technology is "problematic" and unethical because it removes the natural bond between mother and child. Medical experts doubt whether science can copy complex processes like maternal hormones.

Radical feminist Andrea Dworkin once warned that artificial wombs could mean "the end of women", the newspaper reported. Researchers from The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia earlier cautioned that such technology could make pregnancy seem like a disease.



# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

**GaneshaSpeaks.com**  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

**ARIES**  
Ganesha predicts that today you will look up to your family for happiness. Towards the later part of the day, however, there are possibilities of a platonic affair blossoming. Those who are already caught up in a romantic affair, says Ganesha, will experience some thrilling times.

**TAURUS**  
Ganesha sees you preferring your outer appearance, having a good time over getting internally organized. You will seek your comfort level from creature comforts, not from within. You are due to spend most of the day, dressed in your best and going out to your favourite haunts for good food and company.

**GEMINI**  
You will be able to improve your social standing and status tremendously today. You will spend all your energies in making your heart's desires come true. You may end up proposing to that special someone and will find your life partner. You may finally decide to take the decision to tie the knot and settle down, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
Though the day will spring a lot of challenges, you will be up to it every single time. Your mind will be sharp, and will run like an athlete taking part in a marathon. All you need is a little self-belief. And there will be no stopping you once you set your mind free. You may experiment with the interiors of your house.

**LEO**  
You will think of decorating or renovating your house today. You will likely buy some new decorative articles for your house today. You will take a huge business related or financial risk today but due to Ganesha's blessings it will transform into substantial gain for you.

**VIRGO**  
You will look up to your family to put you in high spirits, says Ganesha. However, you will have to loosen your purse strings and blow up some money on them to win their appreciation. Later in the evening you may start writing an account of a platonic affair.

**LIBRA**  
The ghosts of 'old lovers past' are in the air. There is every possibility that you might end up reliving an old romantic affair; maybe even get treated to your heart's content by your soul mate. Everything is possible in love. The afternoon may bring with it mixed fortunes. But remember to put on your party hat in the evening.

**SCORPIO**  
The company of like-minded people will keep you in cheery spirit throughout the day. The day promises to be lively and vibrant as you will engage in one activity after another. But Ganesha warns that being over enthusiastic may be detrimental to your health.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Immersed in a pool of thoughts, you are busy in the mood of introspection today. Besides this, you are on a creative high and may think of giving your lovely abode, a makeover. Doing up the interiors will take up most of your time. At work, your superiors are in awe of you due to your commendable efforts, says Ganesha.

**CAPRICORN**  
You are performing a tightrope walk and Ganesha congratulates you for rightly balancing the your personal and professional life both. Your hands will be full with assignments, projects, and domestic demands, and multitasking is the only way to handle everything together. You may feel negative from within but you will not let that emotion come on your face, feels Ganesha.

**AQUARIUS**  
The day begins on a dull note which may disturb and disappoint you. But, all is not wrong as you will receive some unexpected good news by the end of the first half of the day. It may become difficult for you to complete the work before deadlines and maintain the quality of output both, predicts Ganesha, so learn the art of time management.

**PISCES**  
You will harbour feelings of attraction towards those of the opposite sex, and are also likely to benefit from them. You will find lady luck favouring you. Post afternoon should see you struggling with a tough decision. Overall, the day ought to be routine, with nothing exceptional lurking to surprise you, says Ganesha.



## BAUTISTA TO STAR IN ROAD HOUSE 2

Actor and former wrestler Dave Bautista has officially joined the cast of the upcoming film *Road House 2* from Amazon MGM Studios. Besides, Bautista, Leila George has boarded the project as the female lead, according to the entertainment news outlet *Variety*.

## JENNIFER HOLLAND TALKS ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Jennifer Holland, who is currently gearing up for the release of *Peacemaker season 2*, has discussed her marriage with James Gunn and his constant attention to the DC Universe. She told *People* magazine that there is 'very little' work-life balance in their marriage.



## Why Maddy avoids 'sleazy' onscreen pairings

plained that while many younger actresses may be open to working with him, it is crucial for him to avoid roles that might give viewers the impression he is enjoying himself under the pretext of the film rather than serving the story. "If people feel that *ye picture ke bahaane aish kar raha hai*, then the characters don't earn respect," he remarked. Hence, for him, maintaining authenticity and dignity on screen is essential.

Most recently, Madhavan was seen opposite Fatima Sana Shaikh in *Aap Jaisa Ko*, which premiered on OTT July 11. His next big release is Aditya Dhar's multi-starrer *Dhurandar*, featuring Ranveer Singh, Sanjay Dutt, Akshaye Khanna, and more, slated for a December 2025 release.

AGENCIES



# Janhvi draws flak

**Mumbai:** Janhvi Kapoor is busy promoting her upcoming film *Param Sundari* and recently attended a grand Dahi Handi event in Ghatkopar, Mumbai, organised by MLA Ram Kadam. The actress received a warm welcome from a massive crowd gathered for Janmashtami celebrations. She even participated in breaking the traditional Dahi Handi matki, but it was her choice of words during the moment that caught everyone's attention and soon became the talk of social media.

When asked to break the matki with a coconut, Janhvi enthusiastically shouted, "Bharat Mata Ki Jai." While her chant drew cheers, it also confused many, who felt it sounded more like an Independence Day celebration than a Janmashtami ritual. The clip

quickly went viral, sparking a meme fest online. Some users joked, "Happy Janma-Swatantra Day," while another quipped, "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav 2.0." Others added witty comments like, "Never let them know your next move!" and "Achha hua Amrendra Bahubali nahi boli." Meanwhile, as Janhvi exited the venue, she was mobbed by fans. Though visibly uncomfortable, she maintained her composure and handled the situation gracefully. Directed by Tushar Jalota and produced by Dinesh Vijan, *Param Sundari* co-starring Sidharth Malhotra, releases in theaters August 29, 2025.

AGENCIES



## Ankita's message to every woman

**Mumbai:** Popular television actress Ankita Lokhande said 'keep shining' to every woman who has been told she is too much.

Dropping a string of sizzling photos of herself posing in a black bodycon jumpsuit, the *Pavitra Rishta* actress shared on her IG: "To every woman who has ever been told she's too much. Too loud, too ambitious, too bold. Thank you for never dimming your light. Keep shining. The world needs more of your fire. #noneedofvalidation."

Despite being a strong-headed woman herself, Ankita badly misses the presence of her late father, Shashikant Lokhande.

Wednesday, she remembered her father on his death anniversary with a special post. Ankita said that while it has been three years since her dad left for heavenly abode, it still feels like yesterday.

She took to her Instagram handle and posted a throwback family picture featuring Ankita, her mother, and her late father.

"Some wounds don't get healed.. You just learn to hold them gently.. Three years have gone by, yet it still feels like yesterday.. I'm so grateful to have had a father like him my hero, my friend, my biggest strength," Ankita captioned the post.

Ankita revealed that she holds on tightly to all the lovely memories with her father.

ANS



## Malaika shuts age-shaming trolls

**Mumbai:** Malaika Arora, admired for her bold personality and unapologetic candor, recently opened up about facing online trolling and age-shaming. In a recent interview, the actress addressed being called "buddhiya" and revealed how deeply such remarks can sting. "How can you even say something like that to somebody? *Kabhi kabhi ye trigger karta hai*, because it is extremely insensitive. People only see the brave, happy persona, but they don't realise there are so many things that can actually upset or trigger you," Malaika shared.

While the comments can be hurtful,

Malaika chooses to turn negativity into motivation. She explained that rather than allowing trolls to bring her down, she uses their criticism as fuel to prove herself. "Go ahead and say what you want. I will show you I can be better, that I can do anything under the sun," she said, highlighting her resilience.

Malaika also spoke about her son Arhaan Khan, whom she described as her "biggest supporter." His advice often helps her stay grounded. "He'll tell me, 'What's the big deal mom? Don't let it affect you,'" she revealed.

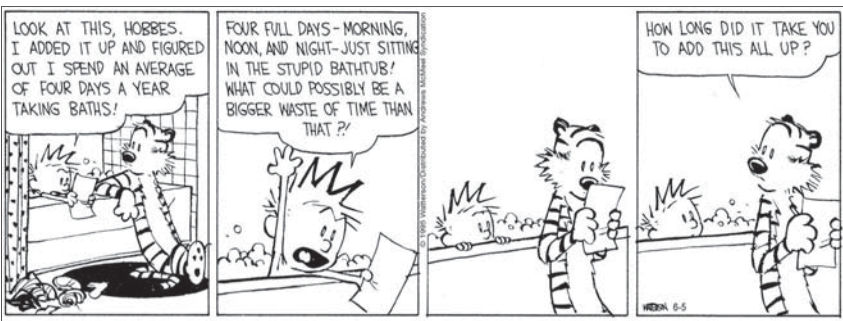
On another note, Malaika was recently dropped as a witness in Saif Ali Khan's 2012 Taj Hotel case. Professionally, she was last seen in *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan*.

AGENCIES

## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

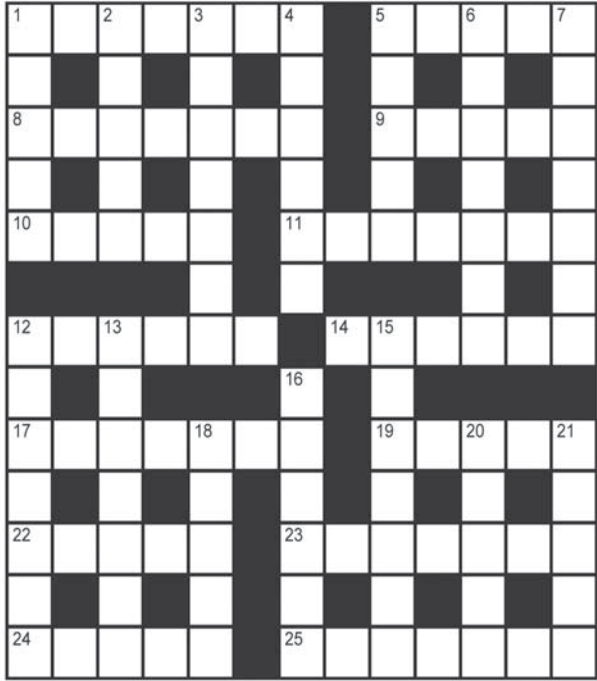


## BREVITY



## FUN post

## CROSSWORD



- Across**
- Seaport
  - Toboggans
  - Surgical knife
  - Dwelling
  - Come to pass
  - TV station
  - Amend
  - Celestial body
  - Special celebration
  - Bullion unit
  - Fatuous
  - Aeronaut
  - Foe
  - African pests
  - Andean animal
  - Coffee pot
  - First-rate
  - Be ecstatic
  - Shake
  - Employ
  - Boarder
  - On one's guard
  - Airport terminals
  - Sea swallows
- Down**
- Undue speed
  - Serengeti sounds
  - Fish hawks
  - Antiquities

## 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.

2		4						
7	1		6			4		2
		9		3			6	
1			8		6			
								3
		7		9	3			
	5		2					
				7	8	3		
							1	5

## SOLUTIONS

### CROSSWORD

ALSO	ANCESTOR
P E H E N A O	
P A P R I K A	E B B E D
L I N R M A S	
A P A R T	B U Y E R S
U O Y	D P
S I Z E U P	E R A S E R
E O A	D E
E M O T E S	T E N E T
B B R S	I Y Z
A D I E U	I M P U L S E
R E C S S	O L
D E S S E R T S	O N U S

### SUDOKU

7	5	6	4	2	8	9	3	1
1	9	8	6	3	7	5	2	4
4	3	2	1	5	9	6	8	7
6	2	4	5	1	3	8	7	9
5	7	1	8	9	6	2	4	3
9	8	3	7	4	2	1	5	6
2	4	9	3	8	1	7	6	5
3	1	7	2	6	5	4	9	8
8	6	5	9	7	4	3	1	2

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW







# Heavy rain likely as low pressure forms in Bay



AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, August 17:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Sunday issued a warning for heavy rainfall across various parts of Odisha over the next few days due to the formation of a low-pressure area in the Bay of Bengal. The low-pressure area formed over the Bay of Bengal off northern Andhra Pradesh and southern Odisha coasts at 8.30am Sunday. “Under the influence of the upper air cyclonic circulation over west central and adjoining northwest Bay of Bengal off north Andhra Pradesh and south Odisha coasts, a low-pressure area has formed over the same region at 8.30 hrs IST of today, 17th August 2025,” informed the IMD in its bulletin Sunday. The IMD further predicted that the cyclonic circulation

**IMD predicted the cyclonic circulation is likely to concentrate into a depression during subsequent 24-hours and cross south Odisha-north Andhra Pradesh coasts around morning August 19**

is likely to concentrate into a depression during subsequent 24-hours and cross south Odisha-north Andhra Pradesh coasts around morning August 19. The IMD predicted that the low-pressure system is expected to bring heavy rainfall to

several areas of the state, particularly in the southern region. The weatherman issued orange warning predicting heavy to very heavy rainfall along with thunderstorm to occur at one or two places over the southern Odisha districts, Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Gajapati,. Similarly, yellow warning of heavy rainfall has been issued by the agency for Ganjam, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Subarnapur, Boudh, Nuapada, Bolangir, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur districts. The IMD has issued a red warning alerting about extremely heavy rain fall at one or two places over the districts of Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur Monday. The IMD has also anticipated that districts such as Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Gajapati, Nabarangpur, and Kalahandi may experience damage to plantations, horticultural crops and crops. Additionally, kutchra houses, walls, and huts could be affected, along with the possibility of road flooding, waterlogging in low-lying areas, and occurrences of localised landslides, mudslides, land or mud slips, and sinking of land or mud.

## Odisha launches direct Bhub–Jharsuguda flights

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 17:** In a significant step towards enhancing regional connectivity and fostering inclusive growth, the state government commenced direct flight services between Bhubaneswar and Jharsuguda under the pioneering B-MAAN (Building and Management of Aviation Assets and Network) scheme here Saturday. The service, operated by Star Air with a 76-seater aircraft, is a key initiative under state’s new destination policy, designed to strengthen air links within the state and boost economic opportunities. The flights will operate every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, with daily flights commencing from August 24, 2025. The inaugural flight was flagged off by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi from Bhubaneswar’s Biju Patnaik International Airport.

## G-20 YOUTH SUMMIT IN SOUTH AFRICA Odia youth heads Indian delegation

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 17:** In a remarkable achievement, Odia youth Omm Priyadarshi Chhotaray has been nominated to head the Indian delegation for the upcoming G-20 Youth Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, scheduled from August 18 to 22. Representing the Central government, he will present India’s perspectives on the economy, environmental sustainability, and youth entrepreneurship before the twenty leading nations, while also engaging in deliberations on pressing global challenges. The Indian delegation will also meet heads of state from different countries to discuss matters of national interest. Reflecting on India’s leadership role, Omm said, “The country’s G-20 Presidency in



2023 advanced the vision of universal unity. This year, the theme ‘One Earth, One Family, One Future’ will form the foundation of the discussions.” Previously serving as treasurer of the G-20 Youth Group, Omm has represented India at several international forums including BRICS, CoP, and the Commonwealth. He is currently an advisor to the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs.



**BOOST FOR ATHLETES:** Sports Minister Suryabanshi Suraj, along with other dignitaries, launches ‘Meet Ur Expert’, an exclusive mobile application for the benefit of sportspersons at Kalinga Stadium Tennis Centre in Bhubaneswar Sunday

PGC BIKASH NAYAK

# RTPS Act set to transform citizen services in state

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 17:** The Right to Public Service (RTPS) Act is not just an instrument of service delivery. It is a commitment to redefine governance itself, said Housing and Urban Development department principal secretary Usha Padhee at a meeting on RTPS Act, with a focus on strengthening urban governance and citizen-centric service delivery in the state. “By embedding accountability, efficiency, and transparency at every level, we aim to create cities where citizens’ rights become the responsibility of the service providers, Padhee added. Delivering a special presentation, Centre for Youth and



Social Development (CYSD) co-founder and mentor Jagad-ananda highlighted the transformative potential of the RTPS Act. Drawing parallels with the Right to Information Act, he noted that RTPS could serve as a catalyst in urban governance. He emphasised the need for capacity building,

system re-engineering, effective record-keeping, and citizen-oriented reforms to take this forward. Senior officials including BDA vice-chairman N Thirumala Nayak, Municipal Administration director Arindam Dakua, BMC commissioner Chanchal Rana, additional secretaries Rabintra Kumar Sahoo, and S Routray, along with other officers of the department, participated in the deliberations at Kharavela Bhawan. The meeting reaffirmed the department’s commitment to building a governance framework that puts citizens first and ensures timely, transparent, and accountable public services across urban Odisha.

## Temporary cancellation of trains due to safety works

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 17:** In order to enhance safety, improve operational efficiency, and increase train handling capacity, East Coast Railway (ECoR) will undertake Pre-Non Interlocking (Pre-NI) and Non Interlocking (NI) works at Rahama, Badabandha, and Paradeep stations under Khurda Road Division. These essential works are being carried out for the commissioning of the Auto-Signalling System between Rahama-Paradeep section and to facilitate the provision of an additional loop line at Badabandha Station. Train no 68435 / 68436 – Cuttack–Paradeep–Cuttack MEMU Passenger and Train no 58405 / 58406 – Cuttack–Paradeep–Cuttack Passenger will remain cancelled in both directions from August 16 to 20.

# Governor lauds state’s rich cultural heritage

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 17:** Governor Hari Babu Kam-bhampati, accompanied by First Lady Jayashree Kam-bhampati, visited Sudarshan Art and Crafts Village in City Sunday and keenly observed the sculptures by Padma Vibhushan Sudarshan Sahoo. Sahoo explained the beginning to end process of the stone sculptures, starting from how stones are sourced, the time



and dedication required for each creation, and the techniques behind creating the

sculptures that have brought Odisha global recognition. Governor admired the preci-

sion, creativity, and hard work reflected in the artistes’ works, calling them living examples of Odisha’s centuries-old artistic tradition. Deeply impressed by the legacy, Kam-bhampati described Odisha as a land of art and culture where traditional craftsmanship continues to thrive with great vibrancy. He praised the contribution of artisans in safeguarding the state’s cultural identity and promoting it globally.

# Court’s stray dogs rulings opposed

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, August 17:** Several animal welfare organisations, animal rights activists, and concerned citizens gathered at Lower PMG Square, Sunday afternoon here, expressing strong opposition to recent court rulings on stray dogs. Demonstrators voiced their concerns over recent hearings by the Supreme Court and the Rajasthan High Court, claiming a regressive and unrealistic approach to stray dog management. Holding placards and banners, with slogans promoting compassion and coexistence, the protestors called out that such rulings ignore India’s cultural and ecological traditions of living harmoniously with animals. The event was organised and coordinated by Animal Welfare Trust Ekamra (AWTE) and Speak for Animals Trust. Participants voiced



for a community-led, humane solutions—particularly the effective implementation of the Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme—rather than mass removal or indefinite sheltering of stray dogs. “Coexistence with animals is deeply rooted in our culture and represents the most sustainable path forward,” said one of the organiser while addressing the gathering. Activists argued that the ABC programme, which involves sterilising and vac-

cinating stray dogs before releasing them back to their original locations, remains the most practical and ethical method of population control. However, the initiative is poorly implemented across the country. AWTE founder Purabi Patra pointed out the logistical and financial challenges of long-term sheltering proposals and said, “When we are in a race to become a developed country and we don’t want to see dogs on the road, we

should ensure that we have the capacity to match infrastructure and resource need for sheltering. Many countries have successfully implemented the Animal Birth Control programme. We should learn from them.” “Neutered dogs stay healthy and become docile, saving the enormous costs of lifetime care. Rather than an unfeasible sheltering plan, focusing on successful ABC programmes is a more humane and practical solution,” she added. A joint appeal to both the public and policymakers was made by the protestors to uphold a balanced, compassionate, and ecologically informed approach towards animal welfare. Demonstrators stressed that protecting stray dogs does not come at the cost of public safety—but both goals can be met through science-based, community-supported strategies.

WEATHER			FORECAST
	BBSR	CTC	
Max Temp	32.2°	31.4°	Light to moderate rain or Thundershower very likely
Min Temp	25.1°	24.2°	
Humidity	85%	91%	
Rainfall	22.2mm	7.0mm	

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Comriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar-8093344951, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jaggama-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.





**COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** Students and teachers of Panchayat Government High School at Balaramprasad village under Odapada block in Dhenkanal district take out an awareness rally aimed at bringing dropouts back to schools, Sunday

## Denied liquor, man beats wife to death

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kalimela, August 17:** In a horrific incident at Ginipali village under the jurisdiction of MV-79 police station in Malkangiri district's Kalimela block, a man allegedly killed his wife in a drunken rage after she refused to give him liquor.

The victim, identified as 38-year-old Prabhati Kunja, was beaten to death with a hoe by husband Bhima Kunja, who was arrested and forwarded to court Sunday.

According to police, Bhima, a habitual drinker, frequently abused his wife. On the day of the incident, Prabhati had hired labourers to work on their farmland and, following



local custom, prepared liquor for them but did not allow Bhima to get drunk. Enraged, Bhima attacked Prabhati while she was working on the field. He beat her with a hoe handle and dragged her back home. There,

he continued the assault by brutally beating her and went on to insert a stick into her private parts, leading to her death.

Two village girls who witnessed the attack and attempted to intervene were threatened by Bhima, who chased them with a knife. Villagers eventually subdued him and handed him over to the police. Bhima, who has two sons and a daughter, was arrested and sent to court on charges filed under a case (125/25) registered at MV-79 police station. The couple's children are said to be devastated by their mother's death.

A forensic team from Nabarangpur visited the crime scene to collect evidence, and an investigation is ongoing.

## Man awarded 20-yr RI for raping minor

**Nabarangpur:** A POCSO court in Nabarangpur district has sentenced a man to 20 years rigorous imprisonment for raping a minor girl. Additional District and Sessions Judge-cum-special POCSO Judge, Basudev Acharya, Saturday imposed a fine of ₹10,000 on the convict Tiken-dra Jani and sentenced him to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment, said Sachidananda Swain, special public prosecutor of the court. The District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) has been directed by the court to provide compensation of ₹14.5 lakh to the victim, said Swain. According to the prosecution, Jani engaged in a physical relationship with the girl after luring her with a promise of marriage. He subsequently refused to marry the victim when she became pregnant. On the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim's family at Papadahandi police station September 12, 2024, the accused was arrested and forwarded to the court.

## Kalahandi youth scales Mt Kilimanjaro in record time

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhawanipatna, August 17:** Rahul Pradhan, a young mountaineer from Kalahandi, has set a new record by successfully scaling



Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa. Climbers usually take five to six days to ascend the 5,895-metre tall peak. However, Rahul became the first Indian to complete the climb in just 15 hours and 53 minutes. He also scaled the peak at night, adding to the challenge. On Independence Day, Rahul hoisted the Tricolour atop Mount Kilimanjaro after his successful ascent. Last year, he had achieved a similar feat by summiting Europe's Mount Elbrus in 22 hours on Independence Day and unfurling the Tricolour there.

Rahul's latest success has drawn widespread praise from various quarters in the district.

## Female police constable found hanging from tree

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, August 17:** The body of a female police constable was found hanging from a tree near the Nuapada railway station, officials said Sunday.

Her husband and mother-in-law were arrested on the charge of abetment to suicide.

After spotting the body Saturday, locals informed the police, who brought the body down and sent it for post-mortem examination, they said.

The deceased constable sent a purported video message to several people hours before her body was found, stating that she was planning to end her life because of "torture" by her husband and in-laws.

"We have registered a case of abetment to suicide. We are verifying the video," said a police officer. The police arrested the constable's husband and mother-in-law and forwarded them to court, he said.

"During investigation, it was found that the constable's husband and mother-in-law were harassing her. So we have arrested them," said the police officer of Nuapada police station.

**Sonepur, August 17:** Two dairy farmers from Odisha have accused Chhattisgarh Police of harassment and extortion while they were transporting cows under the state government's flagship Mukhyamantri Kamadhenu Yojana.

According to complaints filed by women beneficiaries of the scheme, the incident occurred in Mahasamund district of Chhattisgarh under Balda police limits. The victims were identified as Kalakanhu Nayak of Katapali village and Parakhit Dehery of Bagiabahal village in Tarbha police station area of Subarnapur district. Their

wives, Kavita Nayak and Deepa Dehery, are registered beneficiaries under the scheme through the Go Sugam portal.

As per the government guidelines, the farmers had travelled to Mahasamund Monday to buy cross-bred cows. Kalakanhu purchased two cows with a calf, while Parakhit bought one cow with a calf. The animals were certified by local veterinary officials, tagged, and loaded onto a pickup van along with valid health documents for transportation to Odisha.

However, Balda police intercepted the vehicle, alleged the papers were forged and accused the farmers of illegal cattle transport. They allegedly de-



manded a bribe of ₹1 lakh. When the farmers could not pay the amount, police detained them along with the vehicle and the cattle at the station from 1pm, without providing them any food or water.

The farmers said that police threatened to frame them in false cases unless they paid. Ultimately, the two farmers and the vehicle owner were forced

to pay ₹60,000 and the cattle and the van were released late at night. The police reportedly withheld the farmers' ATM cards and other documents.

The incident has been brought to the notice of Subarnapur Collector Nriparaj Sahu and senior veterinary officials, but no action has been taken so far.

The farmers alleged that the prolonged detention caused the cows and calves to fall sick due to hunger and exhaustion. They said harassment by police and cattle mafia in neighbouring states has become common whenever Odisha farmers try to bring improved breeds from outside. Similar incidents were earlier reported from Bargarh

and Dunguripali areas.

Kalakanhu, a differently-abled farmer from Katapali, said he had pinned hopes on the government scheme, which provides 70 per cent subsidy for cross-bred cows, to sustain his family through milk production. "We followed all procedures and bought cows legally. Still, we were tortured physically, mentally and financially," he said.

Confirming the development, Tarbha Block Development Officer Shyam Sundar Panda said both farmers have lodged written complaints. The matter has been reported to the Chief District Veterinary Officer for further action.

## Dairy farmers allege torture, extortion by Chh'garh Police

POST NEWS NETWORK

## Bedridden disabled woman awarded enhanced pension

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rayagada, August 17:** A bedridden woman with disability in Rayagada, who was deprived of full pension, has finally received the entitled amount after a report in this connection was published in OrissaPOST.

Renuka Naik, 20, of Nehru Nagar in Rayagada, has been paralysed since birth due to a neurological condition.

She had been receiving a monthly pension of ₹1,200 based on her 2013 disability certificate, which recorded 80 per cent disability. After the formation of the new BJP government, the pension for persons with 80

per cent or more disability was raised to ₹3,500 per month. However, despite being issued a new certificate March 26 this year showing 90 per cent disability, Renuka continued to receive only ₹1,200 until this week.

She had never received government assistance for her medical treatment.

Her case drew attention after lawyer Gauri Patnaik, for whom Renuka's mother works, provided her with a modern bed and flagged the issue. Odia daily Dharitri (August 10) and English daily OrissaPOST (August 13) carried reports highlighting how Renuka was denied the higher pension despite possessing the updated certificate.

Following the reports, Rayagada Executive Officer Kuldeep Kumar, acting on instructions from senior officials, visited Renuka's home August 14 and handed over the revised pension of ₹3,500 in the presence of Patnaik. District Social Security Officer Srikant Panigrahi and the executive officer also apprised Sub-Collector Ramesh Jena, who approved the enhanced pension.

Social activists noted that many persons with disabilities in the district face similar issues because welfare schemes fail to reach them. They have demanded a district-wide survey to identify all eligible beneficiaries and ensure they receive government support.

August 22, and the examination will be conducted on September 21, he said.

Chaturvedi said Vision IAS has taken similar initiative in the interiors of aspirational districts of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

In Odisha, this is the first such venture in Kalahandi district, the official said. Kalahandi is an aspirational district identified by the NITI Aayog for focused development under the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP).

The selected students will be provided coaching by experts in Bhawanipatna from the first week of October, he added.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nayagarh, August 17:** The population of leopards is on the rise in Mahanadi wildlife division of Nayagarh district, Forest officials said. Once counted at 17, the number of leopards has now climbed to 35.

Alongside the growth in numbers, reports suggest the presence of rare melanistic leopards in the division. During the 2023 tiger census in the state, a camera trap in the Mahanadi Wildlife Division captured images of a black leopard, a rare genetic variant. Environmentalists and locals expressed happiness after reports indicated that more than one black tiger may be roaming the forests of Nayagarh.

However, Forest authorities have maintained secrecy over the findings and clarified that presence of only one black leopard has been officially confirmed.

The first recorded sighting of black leopard in Odisha was in 2015. It was again spotted in 2021 through camera traps in the Banigochha (West) forest range of Daspalla. The then Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Sushant Nanda, highlighted the rare occurrence on social media, sparking wider attention in November 2023.

Later that year, the animal was again captured by camera traps in the Chhamundia forest area under Gania block. In 2015 and 2022, authorities had referred to the animal as a "black cheetah," a description carried in the media. But in 2023, officials confirmed it to be a black-coloured leopard, strengthening reports of a unique and rare lineage thriving in the Nayagarh forests.



According to the 2017-18 tiger census, Nayagarh was home to 17 leopards. The census, conducted every four years, was last held in 2021-22. However, the exact number of the animals was not disclosed.

On the other hand, enumeration of tigers is also carried out in June and December every year. Authorities use trap cameras to track the population of tigers, the rare melanistic tiger, elephants and other wildlife.

The Mahanadi Wildlife Division has now estimated that by 2025, the forest area could house 30-35 leopards, including one melanistic. Yet, from 2017 to 2025, no comprehensive data is available on the total population of the big cats or the number of animal deaths in the division.

"We currently have one black leopard and 30 to 35 regular leopards in our forest," said Amaresh Pradhan, Divisional Forest Officer of the Mahanadi Wildlife Division. "The department is focusing on preventing poaching of tigers and other wildlife. I am new to this post, but priority is being given to ensuring the animals' safety," he added.

However, repeated seizures of leopard hides from the Daspalla range have raised trou-

bling questions as to which jungle these leopards are being poached in.

Authorities are yet to determine whether the poaching is taking place inside the Mahanadi Wildlife Division, Nayagarh Forest Division, or other adjoining forests.

The failure to trace the kingpins behind the poaching networks has further fueled allegations that wildlife protection efforts are being compromised.

Wildlife activists have accused the Forest and Wildlife departments of negligence, pointing out that the Odisha Police's Special Task Force (STF) has seized tiger hides in multiple operations from Daspalla forest range without the knowledge of the local forest authorities. The failure to trace the kingpins behind the poaching networks has further fueled allegations that wildlife protection efforts are being compromised.

Over the past five years, the STF has seized more than seven hides of the felines in Nayagarh alone. In a recent case about two months ago, the STF recovered the hide of a 10-year-old leopard killed in Banigochha and arrested two accused, identified as Gangadhar Nayak and Rakesh Nayak.

## Probe begins as ranger's bribery video goes viral



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Buguda, August 17:** A video showing Buguda ranger Pradip Kumar Mishra allegedly receiving bribe from timber mafia has gone viral, sparking widespread discussion.

The video, shot inside the Buguda forest division office, purportedly shows the timber mafia handing over ₹5,000 bribe to Mishra in order to release his seized vehicle. However, the identity of the mafia, the exact timing of the payment, and the reasons behind it remain unclear. When questioned about the viral clip, Mishra said the video appeared to be one and a half to two years old. He claimed the money was collected as compound fees and suggested that someone who recorded the clip back then may have released it now to serve personal interests after their demands were not met.

Ghumusar South forest division Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) Pradip Behera confirmed that an inquiry has been initiated following the viral video. Since the video is old, a thorough investigation will be carried out to uncover the facts, and appropriate action will be taken accordingly, he added.

### RAJIV GANDHI NATIONAL AVIATION UNIVERSITY

(A Central University)  
FURSATGANJ, DIST. - AMETHI, UTTAR PRADESH  
**NOTIFICATION**

Sub : Inviting applications for affiliation for the year 2026-2027  
The Rajiv Gandhi National Aviation University (RGNAU) invites applications for Affiliation as prescribed in Section 4 of Rajiv Gandhi National Aviation University Act 2013 (No. 26 of 2013) from the Colleges/Management of the Country for the academic year 2026-2027.

The details of the courses offered by RGNAU and application form are available on RGNAU official website <https://rgnau.ac.in/en/affiliation.html>

The hard copy of application along with the supporting documents and application/affiliation fees to be submitted to the "Office of the Registrar, Rajiv Gandhi National Aviation University, Fursatganj, Dist. Amethi, Uttar Pradesh - 229302" within the last date as prescribed in the Schedule-I (Revised) of Affiliation Calendar 2026-2027.

Registrar  
Rajiv Gandhi National Aviation University

cbc 03110/12/0003/2526





## Road To Peace?

US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin’s much-anticipated summit in Anchorage, Alaska on 15 August was warm on words but cold on outcome as it concluded without any agreement on ending Moscow’s war in Ukraine that has been raging since February 2022. The talks lasted just over two and a half hours, far shorter than the expected six to seven hours of discussions. Also, the scheduled lunch never took place, while journalists were barred from asking questions. The two leaders, nonetheless, showered praises on each other. Admittedly such a long drawn conflict cannot be sorted out in one meeting between two countries alone when multiple other interests are involved.

Putin demonstrated a keen ability to say what Trump wants to hear, all the while offering little in terms of actual concessions. He supported Trump’s unverified claim that had Trump been president four years ago instead of Democrat Joe Biden, the war in Ukraine would never have happened. “I’m quite sure it would indeed be so,” Putin remarked. Putin also echoed another claim close to Trump’s heart: that the 2020 election, won by Biden, was rigged.

Trump reciprocated by eulogising “Vladimir,” calling him “a strong guy (...) tough as hell.” He described the meeting as “very productive,” highlighting “many points that we agreed on.” However, there was clear change of Trump’s stance after the summit. Despite having warned Russia just days earlier of “very severe consequences” if it didn’t secure a ceasefire in Ukraine, Trump wrote on his Truth Social as he flew home from Alaska that it had been “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 also told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy after the summit that Putin had offered to freeze most front lines if Kyiv ceded all of Donetsk, the industrial region that is one of Moscow’s main targets. Russia already controls a fifth of Ukraine, including about three-quarters of Donetsk province, which it first entered in 2014. Trump went on to advise Zelenskyy on Fox News: “Make a deal!” Based on how both Trump and Putin framed the discussions in Anchorage, it seems the “deal” being proposed is unlikely to favour Kyiv. Echoing Trump, Putin expressed hope that the Europeans “won’t throw a wrench in the works” or attempt “backroom dealings” that could sabotage any progress.

In Europe, the summit was seen as a major diplomatic breakthrough for Putin, who has been eager to emerge from geopolitical isolation. Indeed, Putin’s reputation was rehabilitated on the world stage after the summit. Despite being the aggressor in Ukraine and facing war crime charges from the International Criminal Court, the Russian president was given a spectacular reception by the US. After years of being sidelined by the West, this was Putin’s first visit to the US in a decade; and he was greeted by American fighter jets, a red carpet, and a ride in the Beast, the iconic armoured car of the PoTUS.

All eyes are now on the crucial meeting slated for 18 August in Washington which was initially fixed between Trump and Zelenskyy, but now will also have a group of European and NATO leaders in attendance. The delegation includes European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, among others. The European leaders are joining Zelenskyy in an apparent effort to prevent a repeat of the heated encounter the Ukrainian president faced when he met Trump in the Oval Office in February. European leaders standing with Zelenskyy demonstrates the continent’s backing for Ukraine.

As matters stand, the road to peace has been laid. What remains to be seen is how long it will take to reach the destination.

### WISDOM CORNER

The snow goose need not bathe to make itself white. Neither need you do anything but be yourself

LAO TZU

When you arise in the morning, think of what a precious privilege it is to be alive - to breathe, to think, to enjoy, to love

MARCUS AURELIUS

He who learns but does not think, is lost! He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger

CONFUCIUS

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

**1227:** Genghis Khan—a warrior and ruler of genius who, starting from obscure and insignificant beginnings, brought all the nomadic tribes of Mongolia into a rigidly disciplined military state—died at age 65.

**1786:** The city of Reykjavik was designated the administrative capital of Iceland.

**1990:** Indian political leader Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, one of the world's leading women in public life in the 20th century, was born in Allahabad.

**1920:** On this day in 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified after Tennessee—by just one vote—became the 36th state to approve it, capping the 72-year fight to win women the right to vote in the United States.

**1936:** Federico García Lorca, who is widely considered the most important Spanish poet and playwright of the 20th century, was murdered (this day or August 19) by Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War.

**1958:** Lolita is first published in the US. The highly controversial novel written by Russian-American novelist Vladimir Nabakov detailed an adult man's obsession over 12-year-old Dolores Haze, who he secretly calls Lolita.

**1969:** The Woodstock Music and Art Fair—a legendary rock festival near Bethel, New York, that attracted some 400,000 fans—ended.

### LOL

#### THE DENTIST

A couple of old guys were golfing when one said he was going to Dr. Taylor for a new set of dentures in the morning. His friend remarked that he had gone to the same dentist a few years before. “Is that so?” the first said. “Did he do a good job?” “Well, I was on the course yesterday



### SPECTRUM H-1B SQUEEZE

## Creating homegrown jobs imperative

It’s a complex scenario. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his Independence Day speech, announced a ₹1 lakh crore job-generation plan through Employees Provident Fund (EPF) incentivisation. A welcome move—not yet an alternative to the Donald Trump-led assault on the H-1B visa.

This could be an indigentous way to create jobs, but it needs far more ingenuity. The focus must be on revitalising industry, ensuring fair wage policies, and securing long-term employment. India must evolve a system capable of generating enough quality jobs to counter US arm-twisting on the visa issue.

The H-1B debate is now particularly critical for low-paid jobs. Highly skilled applicants at higher wage levels (Level 3 and 4) may still secure better deals, but US corporate preference for low-wage Indian hires over American workers has triggered political pushback. Complaints have mounted over the years, and any US president—Trump or otherwise—might have acted similarly.

India needs to create conditions that keep its IIT graduates, thriving on taxpayers’

money, and other top talent from flocking abroad. The government spends ₹10–15 lakh per student during a four-year IIT B’Tech programme, with the total IIT budget for FY25 at ₹9,660 crore. Yet 30–36% of IIT graduates migrate each year, according to LinkedIn and Threads data, and a National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) study. Among those who remain, an estimated 70% work for MNCs.

Indian nationals dominate the programme, receiving 72% of H-1B visas, followed by 12% for Chinese citizens. The majority of H-1B visa holders work in STEM fields like data science, AI, machine learning, and cybersecurity, with 65% in computer-related jobs.

The US visa-type problems could crop up anywhere. The UK has also put its foot down on jobs till the free trade agreement with India comes into force. India needs to retain its talent pool not by force or new laws but by making job conditions better than elsewhere. Narayan Murthy of Infosys suggesting 70-hour weekly shifts or SN Subrahmanyam of L&T suggesting a 90-hour work week without a weekly off for Indian professionals have been

doing great disservice to Indian techies.

The country needs to restore 48-hour week, 8-hour a day, instead of the amended Industrial Disputes Act’s impractical 12-hour shifts. Such draconian moves would promote brain drain and invite ignominy to Indian workers world over.

The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has issued warnings against hiring practices that disproportionately favour migrant workers—a practice that may amount to national origin discrimination. Tech companies—including Amazon, Google, and Microsoft—have reportedly advised H-1B employees to avoid international travel, fearing possible visa denials or re-entry issues. The prolonged green card backlogs, particularly for Indian nationals, further exacerbate stress and impact workforce morale, says The Washington Post.

Despite the stereotype of H-1B workers being “cheap labour,” data tells a different story. Average annual salaries for Indian H-1B professionals in tech hover around \$132,000. In some engineering fields, H-1B workers actually earn more

than US-born peers. Additionally, visa sponsorship costs, including government and legal fees, can run up to \$34,900, or even \$50,000 when applying for permanent residency.

The H-1B visa dynamics are shaping a complex battleground—where legal scrutiny, worker vulnerabilities, and economic stakes intersect. The EEOC warnings and past misconduct are harbingers of tougher times. How do we balance US labour protection with fair treatment of Indian H-1B professionals who are highly skilled and contribute significantly to the economy—both in dollars and innovation?

The way out is that India itself should create an economy with high demand and opportunities absorbing talents in an industry that is humane and honours job laws and does not remain tucked to profit-making alone. It needs proper laws that ensure wages and job safety. Once Indians, known for their mettle, are treated better at home, they are expected to be in demand across the world. India needs to revamp its labour laws and not scrap it for petty profits of employers.

INFA

### 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, Rasulgarih Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### A fabulous fifty

Sir, The one and only “Style Mannan (style king)” and the only “Thalaivar (leader)” of Tamil cinema and Indian cinema Shivaji Rao Gaikwad alias Superstar Rajinikanth celebrates fifty years of cinema this week. Making his debut in 1975 in eminent director K Balachandrar’s “Apoorva Ragangal” (the film was released on 18 August, 1975), the living legend is truly a lesson to be read, inspired and emulated. His ups and downs in life, his super stardom, his spiritualism, his simple life, humbleness and his rising as a phoenix everytime there was a low make for a motivational book. His unique style of acting, his mesmerising screen presence, his voice and dialogue, his bond with his fans make him the “Super Style Star of Indian Cinema.” Many of us belong to a generation that grew watching the hits of this “young man who never turns old.” An endless list of around 170 movies in a career spanning over five decades, and this includes films in Tamil, Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, and Malayalam, making him a pan-Indian star. I wish Rajinikanth many more years of splendid entertaining. Long live Thalaivar! .

M Pradyu, KANNUR

### Deal-making Trump

Sir, Donald Trump’s Alaska summit with Vladimir Putin highlighted the danger of treating diplomacy like a property deal. His advice to Ukraine — “make a deal, Russia is very big and you’re not” — trivialises a war over sovereignty and security. Peace is not a commodity; it is built painstakingly, with credibility, trust, and sustained negotiation. A mediator must inspire confidence in both parties, not issue threats or headlines. He must present multiple frameworks — Plan A, B, and C — so compromise feels like balance, not capitulation. Trump, however, leans on bluster and boasts. His oft-repeated claim that he “stopped the India-Pakistan war” was flatly questioned in India itself; New Delhi denied any such intervention. If such exaggerations define his approach, why should Ukrainians or Europeans trust him with their future? Peace is won through patience and persuasion, not red carpets and soundbites. Unless Trump proves he can deliver more than theatrics, his “deal-making” will remain posturing, not peace-making.

Gopalaswamy J, CHENNAI



FROM HILLS TO ISLANDS

# One man’s solar dream lighting up Manipur’s remotest corners

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Imphal, August 17:** As the sun dips behind the remote hills of Manipur, life in many villages once slipped into darkness. Women finished their chores early, children struggled to study under kerosene lamps, and health workers relied on noisy diesel generators to attend to emergencies.

But in recent years, the quiet glow of solar lamps has begun to change that story. At the centre of this transformation is Seth Moirangthem, a 38-year-old from Imphal East district.

His startup, SNL Energy Solutions Ltd, has brought clean, affordable electricity to thousands of households scattered across the state's remote hilly areas and to the fishing communities living on the islands in the Loktak lake in Bishnupur district.

“Back in 2015, while traveling to Ukhrul, Tamenglong and Senapati, I realised how people struggled without access to power,” Seth recalled.

“That was also when I met people associated with the Selco Foundation in Bengaluru, and the idea of solar energy solutions struck me,” he told PTI.

Seth, an Arts graduate from Manipur University, said he was provided technical training by the Selco Foundation.

The challenges, he admitted, have been daunting. Solar equipment is purchased in Guwahati and trucked in through Manipur’s highways.



“Periodic blockades, bandhs and now the ethnic violence often disrupt supplies. Installation takes only a few hours, but getting the material there can take days,” he said.

Still, by relying on local partners, Seth and his team have managed to continue lighting up homes in places few power lines reach.

For residents, the change has been dramatic. Luithui, a villager in Ukhrul, said solar energy has given women fresh opportunities. “They can run sewing machines and power looms late into the evening. Children, too, study without straining their eyes.”

Health workers echo the sentiment. At Jessami Primary Health Centre in Ukhrul, near the Nagaland border, health worker K Makweiron said life without solar back-up was tough.

“Earlier, we used diesel generators. They were expensive and deafening. With solar panels, we finally have a reliable, quiet solution to serve patients,” she said.

On the small islands in the Loktak lake, home to thousands of fisherfolk, the arrival of solar

energy has been a blessing.

“Candles and kerosene lamps were dangerous for our thatched huts,” said fisherman P Keshojit Meitei. “Now our homes are safe, and the nights feel alive.”

Beyond lighting homes, SNL Energy Solutions -- named after the biblical phrase 'Salt and Light' -- has provided street lamps in the remote hilly areas of Tamenglong and Churachandpur districts.

To make the technology affordable, Seth has tied up with NGOs and microfinance institutions, offering families the option of paying in small monthly instalments.

“A 40-watt panel is enough for a few bulbs. For power looms and sewing machines, a 1-kilowatt panel is better. Since those cost more, we spread out payments through EMIs,” he said.

Officials of the Manipur State Power Distribution Company Limited (MSPDCL) admit that solar is bridging a crucial gap.

“Most major villages are connected to the grid, but many remote households and settlements on Loktak lake remain off-grid due to terrain and connectivity issues. In such areas, solar is a lifeline,” said an MSPDCL officer.

With plans to expand into Assam and Nagaland, Seth's enterprise is growing.

From loom-filled courtyards in Ukhrul to the islands in Loktak, his solar panels are rewriting nightly routines.

*Hailing from Shillong, Lamare has earned the distinction of being India's first female downhill mountain bicyclist, a title she has earned through years of grit, resilience and unwavering passion*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Shillong, August 17:** In a quiet corner of the northeast, 28-year-old Anissa Lamare is re-defining what it means to go off the beaten track – both literally and metaphorically.

Hailing from Shillong, Lamare has earned the distinction of being India's first female downhill mountain bicyclist, a title she has earned through years of grit, resilience and unwavering passion.

Lamare began her mountain biking journey in December 2015, venturing into a sport that was virtually non-existent for women in the country at that time.

With no professional infrastructure, female competitors, or national recognition, the odds were stacked high. Yet, the former literature student from Meghalaya persisted, becoming a pioneer in one of the most extreme and male-dominated cycling disciplines.

“I wasn't just racing, I was paving the way for others,” Lamare told PTI.

Downhill mountain biking, a sport that involves racing down steep, rugged trails at high speed, demands strength, technical skill and mental endurance.



Lamare had to master these on her own, often training without access to proper trails or coaching support.

She participated in her first competitive event in India with no separate women's category, racing against male riders as the lone female participant.

Her breakthrough on the international stage came in October 2023, when she represented India in the Elite Downhill category at the 28th Asian Continental Mountain Bike Championships held in Ponnudi, Kerala.

Competing against seasoned athletes from across Asia, Lamare finished ninth – a commendable feat for her debut on the continental stage.

She followed it up with a silver medal in the Open Women's category at the Pokhara Enduro Race in Nepal.

Lamare also competed in the EnduroLK race in Sri Lanka and was invited to represent Team Al Waal in Oman – a

testament to her growing reputation in the global mountain biking community.

“I have no plans to relax yet. I am preparing for the next race in Nepal again this December,” she said.

Outside the track, Lamare is also making strides as an entrepreneur. In 2021, she co-founded Pedal Compass, an athlete-centric mountain bike shop in Shillong.

It specialises in mountain bikes, authentic cycling gear, precision servicing, and offers rental services of e-bikes and e-scooters to tourists who want to explore the city.

She took full ownership of the business in 2023, transforming it into a hub for local cycling enthusiasts, and a key source of financial independence that enables her to support her sporting ambitions.

Through Pedal Compass, Lamare also seeks to build a community around mountain biking in Meghalaya. She is

currently working on a plan to develop dedicated biking trails in the region and promote the sport among young girls.

In 2021, Lamare's inspiring journey was featured in a national advertisement campaign by Haier India titled 'Perform Big, Silently'.

The campaign celebrated Indian women achievers across various fields, including mountaineer Arunima Sinha, special forces trainer Dr Seema Rao, and chess Grandmaster Harika Dronavalli.

The advertisement, which aired across digital and television platforms, underscored Lamare's story as a symbol of quiet determination and excellence.

Her story was also featured in a documentary film by Kopal Goyal under the 'Project Wild Women' series, which profiled 15 women in India breaking gender norms in adventure sports.

Despite limited financial support and minimal institutional backing, Lamare has carved out a space for herself at the intersection of sport, business and advocacy.

She remains focused on continuing her competitive journey, expanding her business, and building a sustainable ecosystem for mountain biking in the northeast.

Her long-term goal is to establish Meghalaya as a premier destination for downhill and enduro mountain biking, while mentoring the next generation of riders, particularly women.

As the lone woman at the starting line becomes a leader of a movement, Anissa Lamare's journey is not just about sport, it's about changing narratives in silence.

## Assam govt carries out eviction drive in Biswanath district

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Tezpur, August 17:** The Assam government Sunday began an eviction drive in Biswanath district, displacing 309 families, officials said.

The eviction drive was started in the morning to clear encroachment on nearly 175 bigha or 23 hectare of land in the Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) in Japariguri, they said.

“The eviction drive is going on peacefully. There were 309 families who had encroached on 175 bigha of land. Notices were issued to them on August 1 to vacate the areas within 15 days,” District Commissioner Simanta Kumar Das said.

He said all the families have already left the area, and many of them had dismantled their houses. “We demolished the remaining houses. There was also one big tea garden. That is being dismantled now for the forestation drive later,” he said.

The DC said 600 security personnel were deployed, and 20 excavators, along with dozens of tractors, were used during the eviction drive.

The encroachers were mostly from the Bengali-speaking Muslim community, another official said.

Visiting the site, All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU) General Secretary Kuddus Ali Sarkar alleged that the Himanta Biswa Sarma government has been evicting people in an “inhuman manner”.

Supporting the state government's steps to evict encroachments on public land, several ethnic organisations have started 'Miya Kheda Andolan' (movement to drive out Miyas) in the state.

'Miya' is originally a pejorative term used for Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam, and the non-Bengali-speaking people generally identify them as Bangladeshi immigrants. In recent years, activists from the community have started adopting this term as a gesture of defiance.

In his Independence Day speech, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that “aggression” has changed the demography of lower and central Assam, and now efforts are being made for it in upper and north Assam, in an apparent reference to the community.

## TERROR LINKS

### Radicalised chef remanded to 14-day judicial custody

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dharmavaram (Andhra Pradesh), August 17:** A 42-year-old chef from Dharmavaram in Sri Satya Sai district has been remanded in judicial custody for 14 days after being arrested for allegedly being active in WhatsApp groups linked to Pakistan-based terrorist organisations and possessing jihadi propaganda material, police said Sunday.

The accused, identified as Sheik Kothwal Noor Mohammad, was produced before the Kadiri court on Saturday and later shifted to Kadapa Central Jail.

District Superintendent of Police (SP) V Ratna said Mohammad was taken into custody after a raid at his residence, following inputs from



the Counter-Intelligence Cell.

Police seized a mobile phone and a book containing alleged jihadi literature during the search.

The phone has been sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) for analysis, Ratna added. “In the process of curbing terrorist ideology and keeping surveillance on suspects, we arrested a person who was allegedly participating in WhatsApp groups linked to terrorist organisations and in

possession of jihadi propaganda books,” Ratna told reporters.

A case was registered at Dharmavaram I Town Police Station under Sections 152, 196(1)(a), 196(2) r/w 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Sections 13, 38, and 39 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

According to police, Mohammad is an Indian citizen and a native of Dharmavaram. His forefathers were also from the same place, ruling out concerns about foreign origin.

“He was allegedly a member of several WhatsApp groups run by Pakistan-based terrorist organisations where radical ideology and anti-national propaganda were circulated,” Dharmavaram in-charge Deputy SP U Narsingappa said.

# More than 12L women in AP use ‘Stree Shakti’ free bus service in first 30 hours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Amaravati, August 17:** Over 12 lakh women used the free bus travel facility in Andhra Pradesh within the first 30 hours of the launch of 'Stree Shakti' scheme, an official source has said.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu launched 'Stree Shakti' (women's power) August 15 at Pandit Nehru Bus Station in Vijayawada. The scheme offers free travel on select bus services to all girls, women and transgender persons holding Andhra Pradesh domicile status.

“Stree Shakti free bus service launched by the Andhra Pradesh government is a grand success. In the past 30 hours, over 12 lakh women travelled free of cost in APSRTC buses,” the source told PTI Saturday.

Incidentally, the Chief Minister is keenly reviewing the free bus service regularly while it has been estimated that the beneficiaries have saved up to Rs 5 crore on the first day of 'Stree Shakti' implementation.

'Stree Shakti' is estimated to cost Rs 1,942 crore annually and Rs 162 crore per month, with the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) set to recover the



amount by submitting the issued zero-fare tickets to the state government for reimbursement.

This scheme will allow the beneficiaries to travel across the state in the five categories of Pallevvelugu, Ultra Pallevvelugu, City Ordinary, Metro Express and Express services of APSRTC.

Following requests from women, Naidu directed officials to extend free bus services on ghat routes as well, though

this facility was not offered by APSRTC initially, owing to expected rush, the source added.

According to A Appala Raju, Executive Director (operations) of APSRTC, around 76,000 beneficiaries availed the free bus service on the first day and around five lakh by 3 pm on Saturday while the total free ridership in the first 30 hours was over 12 lakh.

The monetary value of the five lakh zero-fare tick-

ets issued till 3 pm today, starting from 12 midnight, is about Rs 2.5 crore. Raju said the response was good today. But noted that many beneficiaries may not have availed the free service owing to Janmashtami festival.

He anticipated a similar trend Sunday and said Monday, being a working day, could reflect the scheme's actual demand.

Starting Monday, August 18, the southern state is expecting a large number of women employees availing the free bus ride. In addition to Aadhar cards, the government is expected to accept other identity documents which establish local domicile status of the beneficiaries for issuing the zero-fare tickets.

The APSRTC officials are also likely to accept photocopy of Aadhar while the government is considering allowing soft copies displayed on mobile phones, said the source.

Ration card and driving license are also accepted by bus conductors. According to Raju, zero-fare tickets issued by APSRTC conductors are updated in real-time on the road transportation corporation's systems as the transporter's ticketing system is a web-based one.

## Guwahati traffic cops switch back to white uniform after 8 years

**Guwahati:** The Guwahati Traffic Police personnel have resumed wearing white uniform from Saturday, after a gap of eight years to ensure uniformity across the state and enhance operational efficiency, officials said. The city traffic police force's uniform was changed to navy blue trousers and sky blue shirts in 2017 from the white ones that they had been wearing for decades. The decision to move back to the white uniform was taken following a comprehensive review by the police department on functional requirements, field conditions, and feedback from stakeholders, including police personnel, road safety experts and members of the public, an official release said. The white uniform, long associated with traffic management in Guwahati, has historically symbolised approachability.

## Nara Lokesh to meet Union Ministers to push AP projects



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Amaravati, August 17:** Andhra Pradesh's Minister for Information Technology and Human Resources Development, Nara Lokesh, will meet Union Ministers in Delhi Monday to discuss key pending projects of the state with the Central government.

Lokesh, who is the son of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, will hold meetings with Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

The state government is expected to present a set of proposals to each of these ministries during the discussions, according to a statement from the minister's office.

Since the formation of the coalition government in the state, Minister Lokesh has already met Union Ministers on multiple occasions and has been actively pursuing the state's interests.

His efforts have helped bring new projects to Andhra Pradesh and ensure quicker approvals from the Centre, it said.

The HRD Minister is said to be making a concerted push to place Andhra Pradesh on par with the most developed states in the country. During his visit, Lokesh is also expected to meet Union Railway, IT and Electronics Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and thank him personally for sanctioning a Semiconductor Manufacturing Unit to the state.

**Lokesh, who is the son of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, will hold meetings with Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar**

The Union Cabinet August 12 approved a semiconductor facility in Andhra Pradesh.

Advanced System in Package Technologies (ASIP) will be tying up with APACT Co. Ltd, South Korea, for an annual capacity of 96 million units. These will be used in mobile phones, set-top boxes, automobiles and other new-age electronics applications, and will greatly contribute to an Atmanirbhar Bharat, Lokesh had said while thanking the Prime Minister for sanctioning the facility.

The Union Cabinet decided to set up new semiconductor manufacturing units under the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM). These units will come up in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Punjab. The cumulative investment will be around Rs 4,600 crore.



of the day


quote

Some mischief mongers are unable to stand this and are making baseless allegations



M K STALIN | TN CM

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Kolhapur (then) for a programme organised by Pudhari newspaper, a request for the circuit bench was placed before him



DEVENDRA FADNIS | MAHARASHTRA CM

I am proud to see the names of two players from Meghalaya in the 23-member Indian National Squad for this year's SAFF U-17 Women's Championship



CONRAD K SANGMA | MEGHALAYA CM

SHORT TAKES

Five girls go missing from school hostel

Umaria: Five girls have gone missing from the hostel of a government-run school in Madhya Pradesh's Umaria district, prompting the authorities to constitute a special investigation team to trace them, officials said Sunday. The girls, who were Class 8 students, were reported missing from Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Girls' Hostel in the Ginjri area in Pali town in the morning, an official said.

Yamuna swells in Yamunanagar

Yamunanagar (Haryana): A rise in the water level of the Yamuna River here Sunday prompted authorities to open the floodgates at the Hathnikund barrage. Incessant rain over the past few days has caused the river to swell. An official of the irrigation department here said that all 18 gates of Hathnikund barrage were opened for the first time in this monsoon season, and 1.16 lakh cusecs of water was discharged from the barrage.

Man found dead in canal

Erode (Tamil Nadu): A 30-year-old man was found dead here, with his body discovered in a white gunny bag floating in a canal, police said. Villagers in Attayampalayam near Chitode spotted a floating bag in the Kanjikoil canal Sunday morning and alerted the authorities. A police team rushed to the spot, retrieved the bag, and found the man dead with visible head injuries.

Fire destroys seven houses

Itanagar: A fire broke out in Arunachal Pradesh's Tirap district, gutting seven houses and partially damaging two others, an official report said Sunday. The fire broke out around midnight Saturday at Lazu village. Troops of the Assam Rifles, stationed at Lazu, were the first to respond.

Constable commits suicide at home

Mumbai: A 45-year-old police constable has allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself at his residence in Mumbai, an official said Sunday. The incident took place in Andheri area Saturday afternoon, he said, adding the reason behind the extreme step was not yet known. After being alerted, security personnel reached the residence of constable Mukesh Dattatreya Dev at New Police Lines in Andheri (East) and found him hanging.



PM Modi's announcement about reducing Goods and Services Tax rates and simplifying the tax structure is highly welcome. This step toward tax simplification will, in the coming days, greatly benefit traders and consumers

BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | BJP MP

Wang Yi to meet PM during 2-day India visit

*Before calling on the Prime Minister, Wang will hold separate talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval that could see both sides deliberate on a range of key issues including border situation, trade and resumption of flight services*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 17:** Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his two-day visit to India beginning Monday, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

The meeting, to be held Tuesday, assumes significance as it is taking place days before Modi's planned trip to China to attend the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Before calling on the Prime Minister, Wang will hold separate talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval that could see both sides deliberate on a range of key issues including border situation, trade and resumption of flight services.

The Chinese foreign minister's visit is largely seen as part of ongoing efforts by the two neighbours to rebuild their relationship after it came under severe strain following the deadly Galwan Valley clashes in 2020.

The two sides are expected to discuss new confidence-building measures for durable peace and tranquillity along their contested border during Wang's visit, people familiar with the matter said on Sunday.

Wang's trip is also seen as important as it comes amid increasing tensions in India-US relations following President Donald Trump doubling tariffs on Indian goods to 50 per cent that included an additional penalty of 25 per cent for purchas-



ing Russian crude oil.

According to details released by the MEA, the Chinese foreign minister will land in New Delhi at around 4:15 pm Monday. He will meet Jaishankar for bilateral talks at around 6 pm.

Wang and NSA Doval are scheduled to hold a new edition of Special Representatives (SR) dialogue on the boundary question at 11 am Tuesday.


According to the MEA, Wang will call on PM Modi at his 7 Lok Kalyan Marg residence at 5:30 pm Tuesday. The Chinese foreign minister will be in India primarily to hold the 24th round of SR dialogue with NSA Doval. Wang and Doval are the designated special representatives for the boundary talks.

Both sides are expected to deliberate on new confidence-building measures besides reviewing the overall situation along the Line of Actual Control, the people cited above said.

Though the two sides disengaged troops from the friction points, they are yet to de-escalate the situation by pulling back the frontline forces from the border. Each side currently has around 50,000 to 60,000 troops along the LAC in the eastern Ladakh region.

The Chinese foreign minister will also meet External Affairs Minister Jaishankar. It is learnt that the two sides will also use the opportunity to lay the ground for Prime Minister Modi's visit to China to attend the annual summit of the SCO to be held August 31 and September 1.

As per the plan, the prime minister will embark on a visit to Japan around August 29



PM Modi's announcement about reducing Goods and Services Tax rates and simplifying the tax structure is highly welcome. This step toward tax simplification will, in the coming days, greatly benefit traders and consumers

BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | BJP MP

Student found dead in hostel of BITS Pilani Goa campus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Panaji, August 17:** A 20-year-old student of the BITS Pilani campus in Goa has been found dead in his hostel room, police said Sunday.

According to police, the report of the post-mortem conducted at the district hospital in Margao has remained inconclusive, and the viscera were sent for toxicological tests to ascertain the exact cause of his death.

The student, Kushagra Jain, was found lying unresponsive on his bed in a sideward sleeping position in the hostel room at Vasco in South Goa district at around 11 am Saturday, a senior police official said.

Police said that they have taken into custody various materials, including cans of energy drink, found in the deceased student's hostel room.

A case of unnatural death has been registered, and statements of students and the institute's management have been recorded. Jain, a native of Uttar Pradesh, was a third-year student of economics and computer science.

Quoting students whose statements were recorded, the police official said Jain played table tennis on the campus on Friday night before returning to his room.

The room was locked from inside, and when there was no response from him Saturday morning, the authorities were informed, the official said.

PARCEL BOMB PLOT FOILED

A 20-year-old electrician from Chhatisgarh allegedly planted an improvised explosive device (IED) in a music system speaker and sent it as a gift to the husband of a woman he was infatuated with, police said Sunday



KISHTWAR CLOUDBURST

Search op continues; death toll rises to 61

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chisoti (J&K), August 17:** The death toll due to a cloudburst in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district rose to 61, as rescuers continued operations for the fourth day Sunday, effecting three more blasts to blow up boulders around a major impact spot, officials said.

Army engineers have started working on a Bailey bridge to restore connectivity to Chisoti village and the Machail Mata shrine and further intensify the rescue efforts. With the recovery of another body from the debris, the officials Sunday said the death toll has risen to 61.

The cloudburst struck Chisoti, the last motorable village en route the Machail Mata temple, August 14, leaving over 100 injured, other than the fatalities.

The number of missing persons has come down to 50, while the bodies of three persons still remain unidentified. The flash floods triggered by the cloudburst left a trail of destruction, flattening a makeshift market, a langar (community kitchen) site for the Machail Mata Yatra, damaging 16 houses and government buildings, three temples, four water mills, a 30-metre-long bridge, and more than a dozen vehicles.

The rescuers conducted



three more controlled explosions within a span of 45 minutes to blow up giant boulders hampering the search operation, especially near the worst-hit langer site, the officials said. Despite overcast conditions, the joint teams of police, Army, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Border Roads Organisation (BRO), civil administration, and local volunteers are continuing the rescue efforts.

The rescuers are utilising more than a dozen earth-movers and other heavy equipment, while the NDRF has mobilised its resources, including dog squads, to speed up the rescue operation.

General Officer Commanding of the Army's counter-insurgency Delta Force, Major General A P S Bal, said Army engineers conducted a survey of the area after the need for a bridge was felt.



A transgender carrying 'Bonam', an offering, on her head performs rituals at Hussain Sagar lake on the occasion of 'Ganga Teppotsavam' in Hyderabad, Telangana

8 charred to death in car-SUV collision

*The horrific accident occurred on a highway near Dedadara village in Wadhwan taluka at around 3:40 pm when the car was headed towards Surendranagar city from Kadu village*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Surendranagar, August 17:** Eight persons, including five women and two children, were charred to death after the car carrying them collided with an SUV, landed in a roadside ditch, and burst into flames in Gujarat's Surendranagar district Sunday, police said.

The horrific accident occurred on a highway near Dedadara village in Wadhwan taluka at around 3:40 pm when the car was headed towards Surendranagar



city from Kadu village.

Three individuals travelling in the SUV escaped with minor injuries, police said.

Soon after the crash, the car landed in a roadside ditch and turned into a ball of fire, trapping all the occupants even as locals looked on helplessly.

"All eight persons in the car were charred to death. Three others travelling in the SUV escaped with minor injuries and were rushed to a hospital," said DIG, Surendranagar, Girish Pandya.

He said the front portion of the SUV was badly damaged due to the impact of the collision.

A police official said the fire reduced the car

to a burnt shell, and local fire brigade personnel struggled to extricate the bodies.

The deceased individuals included two girls, aged 10 months and 13 years respectively, five women in the age group of 35-55 years, and the driver.

"All eight bodies were taken to the Surendranagar government hospital for postmortem," Pandya said.

The accident caused a massive traffic jam on the highway.

Delhi man rapes his mother for having 'bad character'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 17:** A 39-year-old man allegedly raped his mother in central Delhi's Hauz Qazi area after she returned from a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, police said Saturday.

According to officials, the complainant, accompanied by her 25-year-old daughter, approached the Hauz Qazi police station and alleged that her son, identified as Md Firoz alias Suhel, had assaulted and sexually abused her on multiple occasions this month.

"The woman stated that she



had travelled to Saudi Arabia July 25 with her husband, aged 72, and their daughter for pilgrimage. During the trip, her son allegedly called on her husband's phone and accused her of having a 'bad character', demanding that his father return immediately to Delhi and divorce her," a senior police officer said.

Smoking status must be captured in cancer trials: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 17:** A group of experts from AIIMS Delhi, McMaster University in Canada and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in France has stressed the need to record smoking status in cancer clinical trials, warning that continued tobacco use can reduce treatment efficacy and patient survival.

In a commentary published in the Lancet Oncology this month, the seven authors, including Dr Abhishek Shankar from AIIMS Delhi, said knowledge of smoking status during therapy could influence

clinical decisions.

They argued that addressing barriers to tobacco-use assessment and embedding smoking cessation initiatives into oncology research protocols will improve trial outcomes, enhance therapeutic efficacy and save lives.

The researchers cited the 2014 US Surgeon General's report 'The Health Consequences of Smoking -- 50 Years of Progress', which for the first time concluded there was a causal link between cigarette smoking and adverse cancer-related outcomes, including higher all-cause and cancer-specific mortality.



This report underscores the need to systematically capture smoking status in clinical trials, to refine estimates of efficacy of novel therapies and to better understand the impact of continued tobacco use

across treatment modalities and disease sites.

Since 2014, research has increasingly shown that continued tobacco use negatively impacts patients receiving surgery, radiotherapy or systemic

therapies. The mechanisms by which tobacco smoke worsens outcomes remain unclear but may include tumour hypoxia, altered drug metabolism, stimulation of signalling pathways by nicotine and changes to the immune system, including reduced natural killer cells, the authors noted.

They cited how the dose of erlotinib has to be doubled (from 150 mg to 300 mg daily) to achieve therapeutic concentrations in patients who continue smoking.

Meta-analyses of lung, head and neck, hormone-responsive and other cancers show that quitting smoking after diagno-

sis results in longer survival, with early quitting offering the greatest benefits. The authors stressed that the survival advantage of quitting could even exceed the impact of the therapy under investigation.

They also cautioned that failure to collect smoking data risks confounding trial results, especially if treatment groups are unbalanced for tobacco use. The commentary pointed out that the 2020 US Surgeon General's report recommended structured cessation efforts as standard cancer care, though it said more data was needed to confirm a causal link with improved survival.



of the day

quote

Drugs are a serious national problem. The fight against narcotics is ongoing in Haryana, and it is heartening to see the immense public support it is getting

**O P SINGH** | DIRECTOR GENERAL OF HARYANA NCB



Eknath Shinde (current deputy CM) had won a lottery. Not everyone has to win the lottery, but Shinde won it. However, what matters is how a person achieves a position and retains it, and common people observe this

**GANESH NAIK** | MAHARASHTRA FOREST MINISTER & BJP MLA



The freedom fighters of the country, who shed blood, sweat and tears for their motherland, must be turning in their graves upon hearing the statement of Narendra Modi, who seems to be such a dangerous man

**MALLIKARJUN KHARGE** | CONGRESS PRESIDENT



SHORT TAKES

Jobless teachers call for March

**Kolkata:** A section of members of the Deserving Teachers' Rights Forum, a platform of West Bengal's school teachers rendered jobless by the April 3 Supreme Court order, Sunday gave call for a march to WBSSC headquarters August 18, demanding that the council take an initiative to end the legal wrangle and with that, the sufferings of "untainted" teachers. One of the members of the forum, allegedly under tremendous mental stress, died of cerebral arrest August 5.

Rainy spell continues

**Mumbai:** The rainy spell continued in Mumbai Sunday amid an 'orange alert' by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), though with less intensity than the previous day, officials said. As per the civic body, six short circuits, 19 tree or branch falls, and two wall collapse incidents were reported in the metropolis during the day. Nobody was injured in these accidents, it said.

5 kids drown while bathing

**Muzaffarpur (Bihar):** Five children drowned while taking a bath in a water-filled pit in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district Sunday, police said. The deceased have been identified as Mohd Annas (15), Hidayatullah (14), Mohd Hamza Ali (12), Mohd Rahman (12) and Mohd Abbu Talim (12). Speaking to reporters, Allay Vats, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Muzaffarpur (East), said, "The incident took place in Katra area when the five children entered the pit to take a bath. They slipped into deep waters and started drowning."

IndiGo flight makes sudden 'go around'

**Guwahati:** An IndiGo flight from Dibrugarh to Guwahati Sunday made a sudden 'go around' seconds before landing at Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International (LGBI) Airport here, officials said. There has been no impact on the carrier or any passenger due to this move of the flight, a source from the airline told PTI. "Go around is absolutely a normal phenomenon during the landing of an aircraft if the pilot faces any issue. He may decide to make a second attempt for various reasons, for the safety of the passengers and there is nothing to worry about," the company source said. In the second attempt, the plane landed safely at LGBI Airport in Guwahati, he added.



The state government allocated 8.26 per cent of its first budget to the health sector, reflecting our commitment to the vision of a healthy India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi

**BHAJANLAL SHARMA** | RAJASTHAN CM

UP GETS ITS FIRST GREEN HYDROGEN PLANT

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Sunday inaugurated the state's first and the country's second green hydrogen plant at Khanimpur village in Gorakhpur district, set up by Torrent Gas and Torrent Power, an official statement issued said



Can't share machine-readable voters list: CEC cites SC order



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 17:** Citing a 2019 Supreme Court judgment, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar Sunday said that the voter list in machine-readable format cannot be shared with political parties.

He also said there was a difference between machine-readable and searchable formats.

Addressing a press conference here, Kumar said that the voter list available on its website can be searched using a voter card number and can also be downloaded.

He said the machine-readable format is barred as it can be edited and can lead to its misuse.

The Congress has been demanding the voter list in machine-readable format, saying it will help it flag flaws.

The CEC said that in 2019, the top court had sided with its stand that a machine-readable format cannot be shared as it could compromise voters' privacy.

Officials pointed out that the issue was already raised by the Congress before the Supreme Court in a writ petition in 2018 filed by Kamal Nath, the then president of the Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee.

Referring to the Supreme Court verdict in Kamal Nath vs Election Commission of India, (2019), the officials said

'AI, deepfakes real challenge before election commission'

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar Sunday said artificial intelligence and deepfakes pose a real challenge for the poll panel, which will try its best to tackle them within the framework of law. He also indicated that machine-readable electoral rolls could result in breach of voters' privacy.

that the top court had observed that it found force in the submission of EC.

Clause 11.2.2.2 of the Election Manual uses the expression "text mode". The draft electoral roll in text mode has been supplied to the petitioner, the apex court had said.

"The clause nowhere says that the draft electoral roll has to be put up on the Chief Electoral Officer's website in a 'searchable PDF'.

"Therefore, the petitioner cannot claim, as a right, that the draft electoral roll should be placed on the website in a 'searchable mode'. It has only to be in 'text mode' and it is so provided," the apex court had observed.



Children play in rainwater collected on a road in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

NDA allies welcome Radhakrishnan's nomination for VP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 17:** BJP's allies in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Sunday welcomed the decision to nominate Maharashtra Governor C P Radhakrishnan, a seasoned BJP leader from Tamil Nadu who has an RSS background, as its vice-presidential candidate.

BJP president J P Nadda made the announcement following a meeting of the party's parliamentary board, which included Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and consulting the party's allies.

Radhakrishnan belongs to the influential Gounder caste, an OBC community, in Tamil Nadu, which will go to polls next year.

After the announcement, TDP president and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu extended his party's support to the NDA nominee.

"Congratulations to Hon'ble Shri C P Radhakrishnan Ji on being announced as the NDA's Vice Presidential candidate," Naidu said in a post on X.

Union minister and Lok Jan-shakti Party (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan also extended "full support" to Radhakrishnan on behalf of his party.

"Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the National Democratic Alliance has always prioritised the policy of social justice, inclusion, and development for all. The nomination of Radhakrishnan is a living example of this resolve," Paswan posted on X.

EC publishes names of 65L deletions after SC order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 17:** The list of names deleted from Bihar's draft electoral rolls following special intensive revision has been posted on the websites of district magistrates following the Supreme Court's orders, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said Sunday.

Hearing a bunch of petitions challenging the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in poll-bound Bihar, the Supreme Court had last week asked the Election Commission (EC) to publish details of 65 lakh deleted names from the voters list with reasons of non-inclusion to enhance transparency in the process.

Addressing a press conference here, Kumar said that within 56 hours of the top court directive, the names of voters that were not included in the draft electoral roll have been posted on district websites. He also underlined that the election system for parliament and assembly elections in India is a multi-layered, decentralised construct as envisaged by law.

Based on the guidelines issued by the Election Commission, Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), who are SDM-level officers, prepare and finalise the Electoral Rolls (ER) with the help of Booth Level Officers (BLOs).



EROs and BLOs undertake the responsibility for the correctness of Electoral Rolls, it said. After the publication of the draft electoral rolls, their

digital and physical copies are shared with all political parties and put on the EC website for anyone to see.

Following the publication

Yogi govt's 'school pairing' policy sparks political row

The "school pairing" policy announced in June by the Adityanath government, seeks to merge more than 10,000 primary and upper primary schools with fewer than 50 students into nearby institutions, usually within the one-kilometre radius

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, August 17:** What began as an administrative exercise to merge under-enrolled schools in Uttar Pradesh has snowballed into a veritable political flashpoint, sparking protests, poster wars, FIRs and heated exchanges in the state's Assembly.

The "school pairing" policy announced in June by the Adityanath government, seeks to merge more than 10,000 primary

and upper primary schools with fewer than 50 students into nearby institutions, usually within the one-kilometre radius. Officials say the move will strengthen infrastructure, ensure adequate teacher strength and provide larger peer groups for students, but the Opposition brands it "a disguised closure" of government schools that will push marginalised and rural children out of the education system. Over the past six weeks, the issue has refused to



fade, surviving courtroom scrutiny, a government clarification blitz, multiple street protests, FIRs against political workers and poster wars.

The issue flagged by Opposition in the recently concluded

session of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly also led to heated discussions, with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stoutly defending the decision.

The policy followed a sharp decline in government school

enrolments after the COVID pandemic. In 2022-23, enrolments stood at 1.92 crore, but have since dropped to just more than one crore in the current academic session.

Additional Chief Secretary (Basic Education) Deepak Kumar said the move follows models in Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat and is in line with the National Education Policy 2020.

The policy also faced legal challenges but the Allahabad High Court dismissed the pleas, ruling that the Act allows flexibility and has no evidence of rights violations. While the government won in court, it continues to battle political barbs. Opposition campaign against the move spearheaded by Samajwadi Party (SP) chief

Akhilesh Yadav has found support from nearly all opposition, including Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

Yadav has branded the move a "deep-rooted conspiracy" to deprive PDA (Backward classes, Dalits, and minorities) of education and, by extension, their political voice.

In rural areas, SP workers have launched "PDA Pathshalas" -- informal teaching centres for children whose schools have been merged. Some of these centres featured "politicised alphabets" such as "A for Akhilesh" and "M for Mulayam Singh Yadav," prompting the government to accuse the party of misusing children for propaganda.

PM inaugurates 2 highway projects worth ₹11K crore



The two projects have been developed under the government's comprehensive plan to decongest the capital, with the objective of improving connectivity, cutting travel time, and reducing traffic in Delhi and its surrounding areas

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 17:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday inaugurated the Delhi section of the Dwarka Expressway and Urban Extension Road-II worth nearly ₹11,000 crore to reduce traffic congestion in the national capital and its surrounding areas.

The two projects have been developed under the government's comprehensive plan to decongest the capital, with the objective of improving connectivity, cutting travel time, and reducing traffic in Delhi and its surrounding areas.

These new projects are expected to significantly reduce travel time from Sonipat, Rohtak, Bahadurgarh and Gurugram to IGI Airport when completely operational.

"Dwarka Expressway and UER-II will benefit people of Delhi-NCR...The government is making efforts to remove all difficulties of the people in Delhi," Modi said after inaugurating these projects.

The Prime Minister said the government is making Delhi a

model of growth that reflects the spirit of a developing India.

"Dwarka Expressway and Urban Extension Road have been constructed exceptionally well. Following the development of the Peripheral Expressway, Urban Extension Road is now poised to significantly benefit Delhi," he said.

Modi pointed out that what sets the Urban Extension Road apart is its unique contribution to addressing the city's mounting garbage problem.

"Millions of tonnes of waste have been repurposed in a scientific and sustainable manner for its construction. This innovative approach has not only reduced the towering heaps of garbage but also turned waste into a valuable resource for infrastructure development," the Prime Minister said.

Speaking at the event, Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said these two projects will reduce traffic jams in Delhi by 50 per cent.

The 10.1 km long Delhi section of Dwarka Expressway has been developed at a cost of around Rs 5,360 crore. The section will also provide multi-modal connectivity to Yashobhoomi, Delhi Metro Blue and Orange lines, the upcoming Bijwasan railway station and Dwarka cluster bus depot.

The stretch has been divided into two parts -- package I: 5.9 km from Shiv Murti intersection to the Road Under Bridge (RUB) at Dwarka Sector-21, and package II: 4.2 km from Dwarka Sector-21 RUB to the Delhi-Haryana Border -- providing direct connectivity to Urban Extension Road-II.



# international

## of the day quote

Those who today call for an end to the war without defeating Hamas are not only hardening Hamas's position and delaying the release of our hostages, they are also ensuring that the horrors of Oct. 7 will be repeated

**BENJAMIN NETANYAHU** | PM, ISRAEL

I encourage you not to distinguish between those who assist and those who are assisted, between those who seem to give and those who seem to receive, between those who appear poor and those who feel they have something to offer in terms of time, skills, and help

**POPE LEO XIV** | CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADER

We have the lowest numbers of shooting incidents and shooting victims seven months into the year that we've seen on record in the city of New York

**JESSICA TISCH** | POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMISSIONER, NEW YORK

## SHORT TAKES

### Bolivia heads to polls

**La Paz:** Bolivians headed to the polls Sunday to vote in presidential and congressional elections that could spell the end of the Andean nation's long-dominant leftist party and see a right-wing government elected for the first time in over two decades. The election Sunday is one of the most consequential for Bolivia in recent times — and one of the most unpredictable. Even at this late stage, a remarkable 30 per cent or so of voters remain undecided. Polls show the two leading right-wing candidates, multimillionaire business owner Samuel Doria Medina and former President Jorge Fernando "Tuto" Quiroga, locked in a virtual dead heat.

### Hundreds held in US

**Washington:** Pro-democracy activists and labor groups held hundreds of rallies and other events across the United States Saturday protesting the Trump administration's push for Texas to redraw its congressional map in favor of Republicans. Former Congressman Beto O'Rourke was among those who spoke Saturday in Texas, from which dozens of Democratic state lawmakers fled to deny Republicans the quorum needed to vote on a redistricting plan that President Donald Trump had demanded. "They do this because they are afraid," O'Rourke told an audience Saturday, speaking of those attempting redistricting. "They fear this power they see here today."

### Flash flood claims 9

**Beijing:** Nine people were killed and three others reported missing after a flash flood swept through a wild camping site in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, state-run media said Sunday. The disaster struck Saturday morning in the upstream area of a river in Urad Rear Banner in Bayannur City, leaving 13 campers unaccounted for. As of Sunday evening, one person had been rescued while nine others were confirmed dead. Three campers remain missing, according to the city's emergency management bureau, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. More than 700 rescuers have been dispatched to the site urgently to search for the missing, the report said.



The talk started with politics, especially on rumours that there is some effort to change the president of Pakistan as well as the prime minister

**ASIM MUNIR** | ARMY CHIEF, PAKISTAN

## WILDFIRES SIZZLE SPAIN

Spain battled 14 major fires driven by high winds and aggravated by heat Friday as authorities warned of "unfavourable conditions" to tackle flames that have already killed seven people and burned an area the size of London



# EU leaders join Zelenskyy in DC talks

EUROPEAN POWERS WANT TO HELP SET UP A TRILATERAL MEETING BETWEEN TRUMP, PUTIN AND ZELENSKYY TO MAKE SURE UKRAINE HAS A SEAT AT THE TABLE TO SHAPE ITS FUTURE

REUTERS

**London, August 17:** European leaders including from Germany, France and Britain will accompany Volodymyr Zelenskyy to meet Donald Trump in Washington, they said Sunday, seeking to bolster him as the US president presses Ukraine to accept a quick peace.

Ahead of the Washington talks Monday, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer were hosting a meeting of allies Sunday to shore up Zelenskyy's position, hoping in particular to lock down robust security guarantees for Ukraine that would include a US role.

President Trump is leaning on Ukraine to strike an agreement after meeting Vladimir Putin Friday in Alaska. According to sources, the US and Russian leaders discussed proposals for Russia to relinquish tiny pockets of occupied Ukraine in exchange for Ukraine ceding a swathe of fortified land in the east and freezing the front lines elsewhere.

At face value, some of Putin's demands would be hugely difficult for Ukraine to accept, setting the stage for potentially fraught talks about ending Europe's deadliest war in 80 years, which has killed or wounded more than 1 million people.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will also travel to Washington, as will Finland's President Alexander Stubb, whose access to Trump included rounds of golf in Florida earlier this year. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who is an admirer of



many of Trump's policies, will also go to Washington, her office said.

European allies are keen to avoid a repeat of Zelenskyy's last Oval Office meeting, in February. That went disastrously, with Trump and Vice President JD Vance giving the Ukrainian leader a strong public dressing-down.

"The talks will address, among other things, security guarantees, territorial issues, and continued support for Ukraine in its defence against Russian aggression," the German government said in a statement about the Washington trip. "This includes maintaining pressure on sanctions."

Macron, Merz and Starmer will host a virtual meeting of the "coalition of the willing" - a grouping of allies of Kyiv - from 1300 GMT Sunday. Von der Leyen will host Zelenskyy in Brus-

ZELENSKYY FLIES TO WASHINGTON MONDAY TO MEET TRUMP

MERZ, MACRON, STARMER, MELONI, VON DER LEYEN TO ACCOMPANY HIM

PUTIN WANTS SWATHES OF UKRAINE LAND IN PEACE DEAL, SOURCES SAY

TRUMP MET PUTIN IN ALASKA FRIDAY

PUTIN WARNED EUROPE AGAINST 'BEHIND-THE-SCENES INTRIGUE'

sels from where the two leaders will also dial in.

European powers want security guarantees for Ukraine with US involvement, and the ability to crank up pressure on Moscow if needed.

"They will spell out what they consider essential in terms of security guarantees: what they can do

themselves, what falls to the coalition of volunteers, and also what they expect from the United States," a European government official said. "Indeed, they expect a very robust commitment."

Trump said Friday that Ukraine should make a deal to end the war with Russia because "Russia is a very big power, and they're not".

After the Alaska summit with Putin, Trump phoned Zelenskyy and told him that

# Serbia unrest: Offices torched, clashes erupt

SERBIA'S POPULIST LEADER VOWS TOUGH RESPONSE TO PROTESTERS FOLLOWING RIOTS



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Belgrade, August 17:** Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic Sunday announced tough measures against anti-government protesters following days of riots in the streets throughout Serbia that have challenged his increasingly autocratic rule in the Balkan country.

In one of his frequent TV addresses to the public, Vucic accused the anti-government demonstrators of "pure terrorism" and reiterated his claims that months of persistent protests against his rule have been orchestrated in the West and aimed at destroying Serbia.

"Our country is in grave danger, they have jeopardized all our values, normal life, each in-

dividual," Vucic said, alleging an elaborate scheme that would eventually install "anarcho-leftist" authorities in the future. He did not offer any concrete evidence for his claims.

"Unless we undertake tougher steps it is a question of days when they (protesters) will kill someone," Vucic said. "I am saying this for history."

The stern warnings came after five consecutive nights of clashes between the protesters on one side and police and Vucic's loyalists on the other. Angry protesters on Saturday evening torched Vucic's governing Serbian Progressive Party offices in a town in western Serbia, and of other ruling coalition allies.

The demonstrators Saturday evening also clashed with police in Belgrade, the capital, and in the northern city of Novi Sad. Riot officers used tear gas against demonstrators who hurled stun grenades, flares and bottles at them.

The clashes this week marked a major escalation following more than nine months of largely peaceful demonstrations that started after a concrete canopy collapsed at a train station in Serbia's north, killing 16 people.



REUTERS

**Cairo, August 17:** Palestinian militant group Hamas said Sunday that Israel's plan to relocate residents from Gaza City constitutes a "new wave of genocide and displacement" for hundreds of thousands of residents in the area.

The group said the planned deployment of tents and other shelter equipment by Israel into southern Gaza was a "blatant deception".

The Israeli military has said it is preparing to provide tents and other equipment starting from Sunday ahead of its plan to relocate residents from combat zones to the south of the enclave "to ensure their safety".

Hamas said in a statement



her husband and two dogs from Ohio. "Dogs and cats both, they just bring so much enjoyment to our lives," she said.

Inspired by the bond he shared with his dogs, Huneck wanted to create a space where other animal lovers could cele-



In this image via the Indian Embassy, Berlin a girl performs 'mallakhamb' during 'Bharat Parade', organised to celebrate India's 79th Independence Day, at Brandenburg Gaten in Berlin Sunday

PTI PHOTO

## Misri holds talks with Nepal's top leadership on boosting relations

**KATHMANDU:** Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri Sunday called on Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli and President Ramchandra Paudel and discussed ways to further strengthen bilateral ties across various sectors. Misri arrived here earlier in the day for a two-day visit to the Himalayan nation on the invitation of his Nepalese counterpart Amrit Bahadur Rai. During his meeting with Oli, which took place at the Prime Minister's Office at Singhdurbar, matters of mutual interest were discussed to further deepen bilateral relations. Misri "reaffirmed the deep civilizational ties and strong India-Nepal partnership, and discussed ways to further strengthen cooperation across various sectors," the Indian embassy here said in an X post. Indian Ambassador to Nepal Naveen Srivastava was also present at the meeting. The foreign secretary separately called on President Paudel and conveyed "greetings of the Indian leadership, apart from briefing Hon'ble President on the progress in bilateral ties," the embassy said in a separate post. He will meet Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba and also hold a bilateral meeting with Nepalese Foreign Secretary Rai later in the day. Misri will also meet top leaders of major political parties including Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba and Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda."

# Hamas rejects Israel's Gaza relocation plan

THE PLAN HAS RAISED INTERNATIONAL ALARM OVER THE FATE OF THE DEMOLISHED STRIP, WHICH IS HOME TO ABOUT 2.2 MILLION PEOPLE

has also caused a hunger crisis, internally displaced most of Ga-

za's population and left much of the enclave in ruins.

## Israeli protesters face arrests, water cannons

**Jerusalem:** Israeli police blasted crowds with water cannons and made dozens of arrests Sunday as protesters demanding a hostage deal escalated their campaign with a one-day nationwide strike that blocked roads and closed businesses. The "day of stoppage" was organised by two groups representing some of the families of hostages and bereaved families, weeks after militant groups released videos of emaciated hostages and Israel announced plans for a new offensive. Protesters fear further fighting could endanger the hostages who were seized by Hamas October 7, 2023 — the attack that triggered the war — and are believed to still be alive in captivity. Israel believes that some 20 are still alive, with Hamas holding the remains of about 30 others. "We don't win a war over the bodies of hostages," protesters chanted. They gathered at dozens of points throughout Israel, including outside politicians' homes, military headquarters and on major highways, where they were sprayed with water cannons as they blocked lanes and lit bonfires. Some restaurants and theatres closed in solidarity. Police said they had arrested 38 people as part of the nationwide demonstration — one of the fiercest since the uproar over six hostages found dead in Gaza last September.



# Massive mountain park celebrates bond between dogs, their humans

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**St Johnsbury, August 17:** Anne Pace has been hearing about Dog Mountain for years, but until earlier this month, had never made a trip to the park.

"I really wanted to see this place," she said, during a visit to the grounds with her one-year-old border collie, Tam. "I put a note up for my previous border collie. He was my best buddy."

Set on 150 acres tucked away on a hillside in St Johnsbury, Vermont, Dog Mountain has

become a destination for dog lovers looking to explore nature, take in art, or pay tribute to a pet.

The park was created 25 years ago by Vermont folk artist Stephen Huneck and his wife, Gwen, and features hiking trails, swimming ponds, an art gallery and a Dog Chapel where visitors can add to the thousands of photos and notes to pets that cover the chapel walls.

"It is absolutely breathtaking. That's a lot of love when you think about each picture that's here," said Vanessa Hurley, who was visiting with

brate their beloved pets, gallery manager Pam McCann said.

"Dog Mountain is really a pilgrimage place and a sanctuary," she said.

Huneck's sculpture, prints and furniture are featured in the gallery and scattered throughout the park, including inside the chapel he built himself. With black labs and golden retrievers carved into the ends of each pew and images of his own dog, Sally, in the stained-glass windows, his love of dogs is evident in every detail.

Scott Ritchie and his wife, Julie, have been travelling the

country in an RV with their three large dogs and thought Dog Mountain would be the perfect place for them to stretch their legs. They enjoyed it so much on their first visit, they decided to come back the next day.

"It's very rare you see something like this anywhere. We've been travelling all over the US for five and a half months. Just a beautiful area," he said.

McCann says the park was made for visitors like Ritchie. "That's what it's for, people who really care and people who are very connected to everything around them," she said.



of the day

quote

E-commerce company is a "big believer" in customer-centricity and adherence to local laws, and is fully prepared to address any findings and ensure consumers remain well supported

**SAMIR KUMAR** | AMAZON INDIA HEAD

Cooking oil is often discarded after being used for frying at home or in restaurants. However, a refinery of IndianOil has now won a certification to use the same oil to produce sustainable aviation fuel (SAF)

**ARVINDER SINGH SAHNEY** | CHAIRMAN, INDIAN OIL

The recent imposition of additional US tariffs is expected to have a direct and substantial impact on India's employment landscape. This will especially impact those industries relying heavily on the US market for business continuity and growth

**RP YADAV** | CHAIRMAN, WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

SHORT TAKES

FinMin to review Q1 performance of banks

**New Delhi:** The Finance Ministry has called a meeting of the chiefs of public sector banks (PSBs) Wednesday to review their financial performance for the first quarter of the current financial year. Together, the 12 PSBs reported a record profit of Rs 44,218 crore -- reflecting an 11 per cent growth over the same quarter previous year. In comparison, these banks had earned Rs 39,974 crore in the June quarter of 2024-25 -- marking an increase of Rs 4,244 crore in absolute terms. The State Bank of India (SBI) remained the biggest contributor, accounting for 43 per cent of the total profits. The bank posted a net profit of Rs 19,160 crore in the first quarter of FY26. Among other banks, the Indian Overseas Bank recorded the highest growth in profit in percentage terms, with a 76 per cent jump to Rs 1,111 crore. The Punjab & Sind Bank followed with a 48 per cent rise in profit to Rs 269 crore. The Central Bank of India also reported a 32.8 per cent growth in net profit to Rs 1,169 crore, while the Indian Bank posted a 23.7 per cent rise to Rs 2,973 crore. The Bank of Maharashtra registered a 23.2 per cent increase in profit to Rs 1,593 crore. However, the Punjab National Bank (PNB) net profit dropped 48 per cent to Rs 1,675 crore compared with Rs 3,252 crore in the same quarter previous year.

Mcap of five firms climbs

**New Delhi:** The combined market valuation of five of the top-10 most valued firms increased by Rs 60,675.94 crore last week, with State Bank of India and HDFC Bank emerging as the lead gainers in line with a positive trend in equities. In a holiday-shortened last week, Sensex climbed 739.87 points or 0.92 per cent, and the Nifty edged higher by 268 points or 1.10 per cent. From the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India and Infosys saw an addition in their valuation, while Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever Ltd, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and Bajaj Finance faced erosion from their market capitalisation (mcap). The valuation of State Bank of India jumped Rs 20,445.82 crore to Rs 7,63,095.16 crore, the most among the top-10 firms. The mcap of HDFC Bank surged Rs 14,083.51 crore to Rs 15,28,387.09 crore. Infosys added Rs 9,887.17 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 6,01,310.19 crore. Reliance Industries retained the title of the most valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, TCS, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever, LIC and Bajaj Finance.



Government policies must incentivise sustainable farming to support India's smallholder farmers, as they face intensifying climate challenges like erratic monsoons, droughts, and floods

**PETRA LAUX** | CEO, SYNGENTA GROUP

IPHONE 17 PRODUCTION BEGINS IN INDIA

Taiwanese electronics giant Foxconn's Bengaluru factory, its second-largest manufacturing unit, has commenced operation with production of iPhone 17 recently at a small scale, sources aware of the development said. Foxconn is the largest manufacturer of iPhones, and the second-biggest facility outside China in Devanahalli near Bengaluru, being set up at an investment of \$2.8 billion (about Rs 25,000 crore)



SEBI plans to review MTF margin rules

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 17:** Security Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is looking to review the margin framework under margin trading funding (MTF) in a bid to streamline risk management at clearing corporations. In its annual report for 2024-25, SEBI said a "comprehensive review exercise is being undertaken with respect to the currently applicable margining framework."

Alongside this, a review of MTF and the scrips eligible under it is also under consideration. Margin trading lets investors buy shares even if they do not have the full amount. They can purchase shares by paying only part of the price, while the rest is covered through a margin deposited in cash or as shares kept as collateral.

In addition to the review of margin rules, SEBI is also considering changes to the regula-



tory framework for angel funds. The review will focus on fund-raising processes, investment conditions, and operational aspects, with the objective of facilitating ease of doing business and streamlining regulatory requirements.

Angel funds play a pivotal role in channelizing the capital of angel investors to startups in need of funding.

The board has further proposed to review the classification of REITs and InvITs as hybrid instruments. This move comes in response to representations from various stakeholders, the presence of equity-like features in these instruments, the development of the market ecosystem over the last decade, and global practices.

A review of the regulatory

BIZ BUZZ

Central Bank of India celebrates 79th Independence Day

**Bhubaneswar:** Central Bank of India, Regional Office Bhubaneswar celebrated 79th Independence Day with patriotic pride and great fervour, August 15, 2025. The national flag was hoisted by Pankaj Kumar, Regional Head in presence of all Staff & their family members. Kumar emphasised the significance of the day. Further, he urged all staff members to contribute towards the economic growth. The programme concluded with different cultural activities conducted by the staff & their family members.

**UCO Bank inaugurates Lochapada branch**

**Bhubaneswar:** UCO bank's Lochapada branch inaugurated by Ashwani kumar, 14th August 2025 in the presence of Goutam Patra, Chief General Manager Business Development, and Convenor SLBC Odisha. Among other dignitaries Krishan Pal Singh, Deputy Zonal Head Bhubaneswar Zone and Suman Parida, Branch Head Lochapada branch were present. Ex staffs of UCO bank and other customers were also present in this programme.

India bets on mature node chip making

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, August 17:** India's semiconductor dream is beginning to take shape, with the government and industry focusing on mature-node manufacturing instead of chasing cutting-edge technology.

The country is aiming to build capacity in the 28nm to 65nm range, which is widely used in sectors like automotive, telecom, and industrial electronics.

According to a detailed analysis by Bastion Research, India's approach is a smart move, as it positions the country to fill a critical gap in the global chip supply chain.

While giants like TSMC and Samsung dominate the advanced nodes of 5nm and 3nm, India is building its strength in the mature nodes that are essential for high-demand industries.

The report compared India's current stage to Taiwan and South Korea's semiconductor journey in the 1970s to 1990s. The analysis further pointed out that India's role in system integration within the semiconductor value chain is evolving rapidly.

With a strong pool of talent and growing ecosystem, India is excelling in integrating semiconductor components into advanced systems for industries such as automotive electronics, consumer devices, telecommunications, and medical technologies.

The report noted that India already delivers world-class integration services and is steadily scaling up operations to meet global demand.

The global "China +1" strategy is also working in India's favour. As companies diversify their supply chains away from China, India is increasingly being seen as a reliable and cost-effective partner.

This trend is expected to help India capture a bigger share of the global semiconductor market.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 17:** Gold prices are likely to witness a phase of consolidation in the coming week as traders weigh a mix of global economic indicators, cues from central banks and shifting geopolitical dynamics, analysts said. "In the week ahead the focus will be on US housing data, CPI numbers from the UK and the Euro zone and the provisional data on manufacturing/ services PMI from across regions," Pranav Mer, Vice President,

EBG - Commodity & Currency Research, JM Financial Services, said.

Pranav Mer noted that safe-haven demand has eased after Washington and Beijing agreed to extend trade negotiations for other 90-days.

Meanwhile, US-Russia talks to end war in Ukraine had some progress but ended without any conclusion.

According to Mer, weaker US macroeconomic data have highlighted a slowdown in the economic activity, but a firm producer and import price data have kept inflation con-

cerns alive, leaving Fed officials divided on the timing of interest rate cuts.

Last week, the most traded gold futures for October contract declined by Rs 1,648 per 10 grams or nearly 2 per cent on Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). Prathamesh Mallya, DVP-Research, Non-Agri Commodities and Currencies at Angel One, said gold prices retreated last week as futures on the MCX slipped nearly 2 per cent.

He added that "prices declined from highs of Rs 1,02,000 to lows of Rs 1,00,000 per 10

Samsung's Make in India move

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 17:** Korean electronics major Samsung has started production of laptops in India at its Greater Noida factory, sources aware of the development said.

Samsung has been making feature phones, smartphones, wearables, and tablets at its Greater Noida factory.

"Samsung has expanded its manufacturing portfolio. It has started manufacturing laptops in India at its Greater Noida factory. It has plans to start manufacturing more devices in the country," a source said.

Union electronics and IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, after a meeting with Samsung Southwest Asia President and CEO JB Park, and Samsung Southwest Asia Corporate Vice President SP Chun, had said on Saturday that "Samsung continues to expand manufacturing of its advanced technology devices

FPIs dump ₹21,000cr in equities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 17:** Foreign investors offloaded Indian equities worth nearly Rs 21,000 crore in the first half of August, pressured by US-India trade tensions, lacklustre first-quarter corporate earnings, and a weakening rupee.

With this, the total outflow by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) in equities reached the Rs 1.16 lakh crore mark so far in 2025, according to data with the depositories.

The FPI activity will be influenced by the action on the tariff front ahead.

The recent easing of tensions between US and Russia, coupled with the absence of fresh sanctions, suggests that the proposed 25 per cent secondary tariff India is unlikely to take effect after August 27, a clear positive for the market, Vaqar-javed Khan, CFA - Senior Fundamental Analyst, Angel One, said. Also, S&P has upgraded India's credit rating from BBB- to BBB, a move that could further boost FPIs' sentiment, he added.

According to the depository's data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) withdrew a net sum of Rs 20,975 crore from equities this month (till August 14).



This came after a net withdrawal of Rs 17,741 crore in July. Before that, FPIs invested Rs 38,673 crore in the preceding three months from March to June.

"The sustained outflows are being driven primarily by a confluence of global uncertainties. Heightened geopolitical tensions and ambiguity surrounding the interest rate trajectory in developed economies, particularly the United States, have contributed to a risk-averse sentiment," Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

Adding to this caution is the recent strengthening of US dollar, which tends to reduce

in Bharat, driven by talent and innovation."

Samsung plant was one of the first global electronics manufacturing facilities set up in India in 1996.

Earlier this year, Samsung Electronics President and Head of Mobile eXperience (MX) Business TM Roh had shared that the company has started preparation for manufacturing laptops in India.

Globally, Samsung has its second largest mobile phone manufacturing unit in India and it is the second largest exporter of the handsets from the country after Apple.

While Samsung is the second largest smartphone player in India both in terms of value and volume share as per a Counterpoint Research report, the company is yet to make its mark in the laptop segment.

Samsung is also the second largest player in the tablet PC segment with a share of 15 per cent, according to the CyberMedia Research report.

the relative attractiveness of emerging market assets like India's, he noted.

Additionally, tepid earnings growth and elevated valuations have contributed to the outflow, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments, said.

On the sectoral front, sustained 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.

On the other hand, FPIs invested Rs 4,469 crore in the debt general limit, and pumped Rs 232 crore into the debt voluntary retention route during the period under review.

Gold prices may see consolidation next week

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, August 17:** Gold prices are likely to witness a phase of consolidation in the coming week as traders weigh a mix of global economic indicators, cues from central banks and shifting geopolitical dynamics, analysts said. "In the week ahead the focus will be on US housing data, CPI numbers from the UK and the Euro zone and the provisional data on manufacturing/ services PMI from across regions," Pranav Mer, Vice President,

EBG - Commodity & Currency Research, JM Financial Services, said.

Pranav Mer noted that safe-haven demand has eased after Washington and Beijing agreed to extend trade negotiations for other 90-days.

Meanwhile, US-Russia talks to end war in Ukraine had some progress but ended without any conclusion.

According to Mer, weaker US macroeconomic data have highlighted a slowdown in the economic activity, but a firm producer and import price data have kept inflation con-

cerns alive, leaving Fed officials divided on the timing of interest rate cuts.

Last week, the most traded gold futures for October contract declined by Rs 1,648 per 10 grams or nearly 2 per cent on Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). Prathamesh Mallya, DVP-Research, Non-Agri Commodities and Currencies at Angel One, said gold prices retreated last week as futures on the MCX slipped nearly 2 per cent.

He added that "prices declined from highs of Rs 1,02,000 to lows of Rs 1,00,000 per 10

grams after US President Donald Trump clarified that gold imports into US would not face tariffs, in turn threatening the upside momentum of the precious metal".

Going forward, Mallya added, developments from US-Russia discussions will be critical. "If not, the possibility of increased tariffs on India will dent the macros and in turn lift gold prices in the week ahead," he added.

Saturday, Comex gold futures for December contracts ended lower at USD 3,382.60 per ounce in New York.

At the same time, optimism surrounding a potential ceasefire in Ukraine gained traction, particularly after a high-profile meeting between US President Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Alaska.

Also, the extension of US-China tariff truce signalled easing trade tensions further capping demand for gold as a safe-haven asset. Overall, the near-term outlook for gold will hinge on how incoming data and central bank commentary shape market sentiment, analysts said.

Digital rush: How UPI challenges Indian businesses

RACHNA MAHESHWARI,OP

**Bhubaneswar, August 17:** Unified Payment Interface (UPI) is gaining traction worldwide, but behind the glory of convenience, there is a hidden harsh truth of UPI-led businesses. Digital transformation has transformed various lives from bad to worse. Businesses have seen huge negative impact.

Pratikhya Kanungo, Director of Kalinga Packers Private Limited has said, "Cash has not really disappeared from markets. People prefer cash over digital payments and we are facing challenges in running business since deals are dependent on UPI. Vendors are not used to do business in cash credit payments anymore."

Adarsh Khandelwal, owner of a prominent jewelry shop has highlighted the difficulty of doing business in UPI era. He mentioned, "Our vendors are not educated enough to understand the digital payment cycle. Sometimes, we need cash, to order on urgent basis, but we wait or deny since there is no way out."

Recently, in Karnataka, thousands of small traders received Goods and Service Tax (GST) notices on cumulative UPI transactions, often inflated by micro-payments crossed statutory limits. A vegetable seller from Haveri, was in shock with Rs 29 lakh GST demand as his business annual sales barely touched subsistence levels. Post such incident many traders have changed the payment



method "to cash only" fearing automated tax triggers and expensive litigation.

However, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman clarified that Central GST authorities have not issued notices solely based on UPI transactions, the damage to trust remains. Traders still face state-level enforcement. Additionally, the confu-

sion between exempt goods and taxable turnover persists.

Revised rules restrictions

Although UPI transactions for individuals are largely free, but the recently revised rules have changed the mindset of small business owner because there is a conversation around introducing merchant fees, known as Merchant Discount Rate (MDR). This news has restricted small shopkeepers to do business especially in competitive sectors like groceries, street food, and small services.

There are some larger payment gateways have already introduced charges for certain categories or high-volume business accounts, it clearly shows that there will be no such "free-

bees" on payment gateways.

Rising dependency and expense

UPI needs infrastructure; internet, electricity and mobile phone are the basic need for the usage of digital payment gateways. There are places where people haven't seen electricity, but to run a business they need wi-fi and mobile phone. Network dropouts and slow speeds remain common in India. Businesses depending solely on UPI face awkward moments and sometime leads to payment failure.

Privacy concerns

Every UPI transaction contributes to a detailed financial footprint. Small traders fear that full financial visibility may

invite not only tax scrutiny but also targeted lending offers.

Conclusion

UPI has been transformative, but its rapid penetration has outpaced the preparedness of India's smallest businesses. Recent case of GST demand is a prime example of poor execution of digital adoption.

The promise of UPI can only be fulfilled if the government and fintech ecosystem address these anxieties otherwise, it could end up alienating the very people it sought to include. Current scenarios clearly point out that the cash has moved up to the rich while the lower and middle class are the ones left to carry the burden of digital India.



# Bayern reign supreme

LUIS DÍAZ SCORES FOR BAYERN MUNICH TO WIN GERMAN SUPERCUP ON HIS DEBUT

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Berlin, August 17:** Luis Diaz scored and won a title on his Bayern Munich debut after a 2-1 win over Stuttgart in the German Supercup.

Harry Kane also scored for the Bundesliga champion to win the least important trophy of the season, opening the scoring in the 18th minute when the ball dropped kindly for him to shoot inside the left post.

"To start with a trophy is the most important thing," Kane said after winning just his second career team title. The Bundesliga in May was his first.

Bayern dominated the early stages but Stuttgart fought back with Nick Woltemade drawing a good save from Manuel Neuer.

Woltemade was and possibly still is a summer transfer target for Bayern. The clubs have so far been unable to agree on a fee despite the player's openness to the move.

"The file is closed," Stuttgart chief executive Alexander Wehrle said before the game.

Diaz joined Bayern from Liverpool last month and remains the club's biggest deal of the offseason.

Neuer produced an outstanding reflex save to deny Jamie Lewelling two minutes before Diaz scored in the 77th when Lewelling was receiving off-field treatment after clashing knees with Bayern's Sacha Boey.

"Undoubtedly painful, but still, and perhaps unpopular, but he needs to feel the pain on the field and not two meters away from it," Stuttgart coach Sebastian Hoeneß said.

Lewelling recovered and headed Stuttgart's answer in stoppage time.



It's the fourth year that German soccer officials have staged what was the traditional curtain-raiser for the season on the same weekend as the first round of the German Cup, forcing the participants to postpone their cup games.

Stuttgart starts its title defense at Eintracht Braunschweig August 26 with Bayern playing third-division side Wehen Wiesbaden the following day.

**German Cup games**  
Wolfsburg routed fifth-tier

SV Hemelingen 9-0 in the first round of the German Cup, and other Bundesliga teams also enjoyed big wins over lower-league opposition.

Two-time champion Leipzig twice came from behind to beat fourth-tier SV Sandhausen 4-2 with new signings Ezechiel Banzuzi and Yan Dione scoring.

Heidenheim won at 10-man fourth-tier Bahlinger SC 5-0, Hoffenheim won at third-division Hansa Rostock 4-0, and Freiburg won at fourth-tier club Sportfreunde Lotte 2-0.

Hamburger SV, which clinched its return to the Bundesliga last season, survived a scare at fifth-tier Pirmasens, equalizing late to send the match to extra time, where Ransford-Yeboah Königsdörffer headed the winner for 2-1.

Königsdörffer was playing for Hamburg only because a proposed early August move to Nice broke down after his medical check with the French team.

Bochum also needed a late goal to level before prevail-

ing at nine-man Dynamo Berlin 3-1.

St Pauli needed penalties to get past fourth-tier Hamburg rival Eintracht Norderstedt, while fourth-tier Bavarian team FV Illertissen upset Miroslav Klose's Nuremberg by winning 6-5 on penalties after their game ended 3-3 with extra time.

Also, second-division side Darmstadt won at fourth-tier Lübeck 2-1, and third-division Energie Cottbus won 1-0 to upset Hannover, which is playing in the division above.

## KOLKATA DERBY

# East Bengal knock out Mohun Bagan

Massive brawl hogs limelight as EBFC beat MBSG to enter semis against Diamond Harbour in Durand Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



**Kolkata, August 17:** A revamped East Bengal, inspired by Greek striker and substitute Dimitrios Diamantakos' double strike, stunned archrivals Mohun Bagan 2-1 in a fiery Kolkata Derby to storm into the semifinals of the 134th IndianOil Durand Cup here Sunday.

Diamantakos, brought on as an 18th-minute substitute after Moroccan forward Hamid Ahad limped off injured, turned out to be the gamechanger.

The 32-year-old first converted from the penalty spot in the 38th minute before doubling East Bengal's lead seven minutes into the second half with a sharp finish that left the ISL champions' defence flat-footed.

Though Anirudh Thapa pulled one back with a stunning long-range strike in the 68th minute, East Bengal's resolute backline, held firm to script their first top-level Derby

win over Mohun Bagan in more than 18 months.

With the victory, East Bengal set up a blockbuster semifinal clash against fellow Kolkata side Diamond Harbour FC here on August 20.

The debutants Diamond Harbour FC earlier shocked ISL outfit Jamshedpur FC 2-0 in Jamshedpur.

For 16 times champions East Bengal, this was not just about progression in the Durand Cup

but also about ending a painful run against their bitter rivals. Since their 3-1 win in the Super Cup January 19, 2024, they had lost four straight top-level derbies to Mohun Bagan.

At the ISL level, Mohun Bagan still remain unbeaten in 10 meetings (nine wins, one draw), but this Durand Cup triumph -- their first over Bagan since the CFL developmental league encounter -- was a revenge for the 2023 Durand Cup final de-

# Alcaraz to face defending champion Sinner for title

World number one Jannik Sinner and hotrival Carlos Alcaraz will face off in a major final for the fourth time this season at the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Washington, August 17:** World number one Jannik Sinner and hot rival Carlos Alcaraz will face off in a major final for the fourth time this season after both booked straight-set wins into the title match at the ATP-WTA Cincinnati Open Saturday.

Defending champion Sinner ruthlessly subdued 136th-ranked qualifier Terence Atmane 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 while Spanish second seed Alcaraz defeated an ailing Alexander Zverev, who was suffering badly from the 32 Celsius heat and humidity, by 6-4, 6-3.

Alcaraz and Sinner have played for trophies this season in Rome, Roland Garros and Wimbledon, with the Italian winning their most recent at the All England Club last



month.Sinner, celebrating his 24th birthday, ended Frenchman Atmane's dream run and will now try to become the first man since Roger Federer in 2014-15 to win back-to-back titles in Cincinnati.

Sinner, tuning up for the US Open in his first tournament since winning Wimbledon, hasn't dropped a set en route to the final. "It's a very, very tough challenge every time you play a new opponent," Sinner said. "In the later stages of the tournament, the pressure is on, they deserve to be there."

Alcaraz will also be playing in his second Cincy final after losing to Novak Djokovic in 2023.

The Spaniard increased his ATP season match win lead to 53 in a year of five titles.

Alcaraz said he is keen to try and take his Wimbledon revenge on Sinner in the unorthodox Monday final.

# Chimaev UFC dominance sends stark warning to rivals

Relentless Chimaev beats du Plessis to win UFC middleweight title

REUTERS

**Chicago, August 17:** Khamzat Chimaev's total dominance of Dricus du Plessis to win the UFC middleweight title in Chicago Saturday was reflected in some jaw-dropping statistics that paint a stark picture of the challenge faced by any challenger hoping to dethrone him.

Apart from the last couple of minutes of the final round, the Chechen-born Chimaev, who began training in MMA while living in Sweden before moving to Abu Dhabi and fighting un-

der the flag of the United Arab Emirates, utterly smothered his South African opponent.

Despite being the champion, Du Plessis came into the fight as the betting underdog and it quickly became apparent why. Having built his career on his suffocating wrestling, the 31-year-old Chimaev immediately took the champion down and the punishment began.

In all, Chimaev fired off a whopping 567 strikes over the course of five five-minute rounds, landing a stunning 529 of them. Du Plessis managed a



mere 68, and landed only 45.

Nothing the challenger did was either unexpected or fancy. He took the fight to the mat

with a double-leg takedown and then advanced to a crucifix position, trapping the right arm of Du Plessis with his legs and ly-

ing across his opponent's torso to control his other arm.

That left Du Plessis almost defenceless as Chimaev fired short left hands at his head, knowing that one wrong move by the man on the bottom while trying to escape could put him in a worse position, or even see him knocked out.

To his great credit Du Plessis, who is also 31, never quit but by the end of the third round he was so far behind on the scorecards that he needed a finish. He somehow found the energy to go on the offensive in the final two minutes of the fight, but to no avail.

Incredibly for such a one-sided fight, the toughness of Du Plessis managed to keep the

## ASIA CUP

# Pak drop bombshell; Babar, Rizwan axed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lahore, August 17:** Pakistan Sunday left out seasoned batters Babar Azam and Mohammed Rizwan while announcing their 17-member squad for Asia Cup and the preceding tri-series in the UAE later this month.

Babar and Rizwan, who helped Pakistan to their first-ever win over India in an ICC tournament in the 2021 T20 World Cup in the UAE, have been away from the format for a while.

Both Babar and Rizwan made their last appearance in the shortest formats in December 2024.

In the lead-up to the Asia Cup which will be played in T20 format in the UAE from September 9, the Salman Ali Agha-led side will play a tri-series against Afghanistan and the hosts UAE at Sharjah from August 29 to September 7.

Pakistan head coach Mike Hesson said Babar has been asked to improve certain aspects of his game.

"I think it's really harsh to challenge a player on their form on three games. Babar played nicely in the first ODI but missed out on the next two," Hesson told reporters durign a media interaction. "There's no doubt Babar's been



## Pakistan squad:

Salman Ali Agha (c), Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Hasan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Haris (wk), Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Waseem Jnr, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Salman Mirza, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sufyan Moqim.

# Odisha begin junior hockey nat'l with win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jalandhar, August 17:** Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana secured victories in division A of the junior men's national hockey championship while Chandigarh and Delhi earned promotion to division A, here Sunday.

In the first division A fixture of the day, Odisha came back from a goal deficit to edge past Karnataka 2-1.

Nitesh Sharma (37') scored the opening goal for Karnataka but Ritik Lakra (50') and Aryan Xess (51') scored in the final quarter to help Odisha bag three points in their first match of the tournament.



Haryana registered a dominant 5-0 victory over Manipur in Pool C. Sunil (15'), Chirag (27'), Navraj Singh (50'), Rahul (56') and Ansh Kamboj (59') were the goalscorers for Haryana.

Uttar Pradesh blanked Jharkhand 2-0 in Pool B. Ujjwal Pal (26') scored from a penalty corner in the second quarter followed by a field goal from Satyam Pandey (32') in the third quarter to seal the win for UP.

Punjab enjoyed a 3-2 win over Madhya Pradesh in Pool A. Om Rajnesh Saini (3'), Love-nor Singh (14') and Japnit Singh (41') scored goals for Punjab. Mohd Anas (19') and Sohail Ali (39') scored the two goals for MP.

Chandigarh and Delhi won in Pool A and Pool B respectively to earn promotion to division 'A' for the next year.

Himachal and Assam were relegated to division C.