

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Tuesday, 18 August, 2026

UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

Navin's new team announced

Vasundhara Raje becomes Vice President

New Delhi

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) National President Nitin Naveen announced his new team on Monday. Thirteen individuals, including former Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje and senior leader Ram Madhav, have been appointed as National Vice-Presidents, while eight leaders—including former Union Minister Smriti Irani, Vinod Tawde, and Harish Dwivedi—have been entrusted with the responsibility of National General Secretary. According to the BJP's press release, Vasundhara Raje Scindia, Tirath Singh



PM congratulates BJP's new team; focus to remain on strengthening the organization

New Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday congratulated the newly appointed national office-bearers of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the leaders entrusted with

various responsibilities within the party. He expressed confidence that the new team would focus on public service while strengthening the organization. In a post on the social media

platform X, Modi congratulated the newly appointed national office-bearers. He noted that the new team embodies a blend of organizational experience, energy, and a strong connection.

Rawat, Ram Madhav, Baijayant 'Jay' Panda, D. Purandeswari, Rekha

Verma, Varshaben Narendrabhai Doshi, Bharati Pravin Pawar,

Manpreet Singh Badal, Lal Singh Arya, M. Nagaraj, Tariq Mansoor,

and Madhuchandra Kar have been appointed as National Vice-

Presidents. B.L. Santhosh will serve as the National General Secretary (Organization). Shiv Prakash and Saudan Singh have once again been assigned the responsibility of National Joint General Secretary (Organization). Vinod Tawde, Sunil Bansal, Biplob Deb, Smriti Irani, Satish Poonia, Gajendra Patel, Harish Dwivedi, and Sanjay Bhatia will serve as National General Secretaries. Piyush Goyal has been appointed as the National Treasurer. The party has appointed eight General Secretaries from a total of seven states with the highest representation.

BRICS Talks Climate Change



New Delhi. A meeting of senior officials from the Environment Working Group and the Contact Group on Climate Change and Sustainable Development was held at Bharat Mandapam on Monday, as part of India's BRICS presidency. The meeting was chaired by Tanmay Kumar, Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Representatives from BRICS member nations—Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Russia,

South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates—participated in the event. Detailed deliberations took place regarding shared issues concerning environmental protection, climate change, and sustainable development. Speaking on the occasion, Tanmay Kumar noted that over the past two decades, BRICS has evolved from a platform for economic cooperation into a significant collaborative forum for addressing environmental challenges such as pollution.

100 Atal Canteens Pledge Fulfilled; Nutritious Meals for 5



New Delhi Two MQ-9B armed drones will be leased from the US for the Indian Navy for a period of 30 months. This course of action was adopted after the deal to purchase 31 MQ-9B armed drones from the US could not be finalized. An agreement worth approximately ₹1,943 crore was signed in New Delhi on Monday. Acquiring these drones will enhance India's capability to tackle current and future threats by enabling unmanned surveillance and reconnaissance patrols over maritime routes; specifically, it will facilitate easier surveillance along the border with China. The agreement to lease two MQ-9B SeaGuardian High-

Altitude Long-Endurance (HALE) Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems from General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. was signed today in the presence of A. Anbarasu, Additional Secretary and Director General (Acquisition) in the Ministry of Defence. The MQ-9B armed drones are equipped with advanced systems, state-of-the-art sensors, and sophisticated payloads that will boost the Indian Navy's maritime capabilities. These systems will provide continuous intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance coverage over vast areas of the maritime domain, thereby strengthening India's ability to monitor and respond.



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis met Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Monday.

Ground vehicle collides with microlight aircraft

Jaipur. A collision occurred between an NCC microlight aircraft and a vehicle belonging to the ground handling agency, Indo Thai, at Jaipur International Airport on Monday morning. The incident took place while the microlight aircraft was being moved from the hangar towards the runway via the apron area for a training flight. Although the aircraft sustained damage, the Wing Commander (pilot) and the trainee NCC cadet on board remained safe.

Indian Army contingent departs for Thailand to participate in military exercise

New Delhi. An Indian Army contingent departed for Thailand on Monday to participate in the 15th edition of the India-Thailand joint military exercise 'Maitree'. This exercise will enhance the capabilities of both nations to conduct joint operations against insurgency and terrorism in jungle and urban environments, in accordance with Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. According to the Ministry of Defence,



the exercise will be held from August 18 to 31 at the Vibhavadi Rangsit Camp in Surat Thani, Thailand. The previous edition of this exercise was conducted in September 2025 at Umroi, Meghalaya. The contingents from both the Indian Army and the



General of the NTA, and other senior officials to review the steps taken by the agency following recent issues concerning the UGC-NET examination. During the meeting, the Minister was apprised

of the efforts being made to improve the NTA's overall system. According to the Ministry of Education, more than 50 NTA employees have been removed as part of the reform process.

Additionally, advertisements have been issued for 10 new professional leadership positions—including Chief Technology Officer (CTO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Information Security Officer (CISO), General Manager (Exam Security), and General Manager (R&D and Psychometrics)—and appointments to these roles are underway. The Ministry stated that subject matter experts from the private sector are also being engaged.

CBI files charge sheet in Twisha Sharma death case

Bhopal

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed a 636-page charge sheet in a special court in Bhopal regarding the suspicious death of the well-known actress Twisha Sharma. Retired District Judge Giribala Singh and her son, Samarth Singh, have been named as accused in the case. Following the submission of the charge sheet in the court of Judicial Magistrate First Class Shobhana Bhalave, lawyers representing both sides have

begun examining the documents and evidence presented by the CBI. The lawyers will cross-verify the facts recorded in the charge sheet against the available evidence. The future course of judicial proceedings will be determined based on the facts and evidence included in the charge sheet. Charges have been framed against former judge Giribala Singh under Sections 80(2), 85, 108, and 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Govt to Form Banking Panel Soon

New Delhi.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated on Monday that the central government would soon constitute a high-level committee on 'Banking for a Developed India' (Viksit Bharat). The objective of this committee is to conduct a comprehensive review of the banking sector, aligning it with the goal of transforming India into a developed nation by 2047. The Finance Minister made these remarks while addressing a two-day Public



Sector Bank (PSB) Conclave in the national capital, New Delhi. Sitharaman expressed hope that the announce-

ment regarding the formation of this high-powered committee to review the banking sector would be made

soon. She noted that the goal of 'Viksit Bharat 2047' is not far off. There could be no better time to discuss the

banking system for a 'Developed India,' especially given that all Public Sector Banks (PSBs) and financial institutions have embraced the path of reform while overcoming various challenges. In her address, she highlighted that the level of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in the history of Indian banking is currently at an all-time low; therefore, there could not be a stronger position from which to advance banking reforms.

13 Devotees Fall Ill in Ujjain Temple

Ujjain.

A massive crowd of devotees thronged the Nagchandreshwar Temple in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh, on the rare occasion coinciding with the third Monday of the holy month of Sawan and Nag Panchami. Chaos ensued as pressure built up within the barricaded area near the Harsiddhi Temple due to the scramble for darshan (viewing the deity). Thirteen devotees suddenly fell ill amidst the crush; they have been admitted to the Ujjain District Hospital for treatment. The conver-



gence of a Sawan Monday and Nag Panchami on the same day drew a sea of devotees to the Mahakal and Nagchandreshwar temple complexes. Amidst this, the overcrowding in the barricaded zone opposite Harsiddhi Temple led to pushing,

shoving, and conditions causing breathlessness. Thirteen devotees—including Sagar (15, son of Manshish, from Kisanpura), Sajiv Nonu Chaudhary (36, from Darbhanga, Bihar), Khushi (20, daughter of Madhav Rao, from Bada Ganesh).

SC seeks Centre, AERB response on challenge to nuclear accident liability caps under SHANTI Act

New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Central government and the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) on a public interest litigation by former civil servants and nuclear scientists challenging provisions of the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Act, 2025 (SHANTI Act), including the statutory caps on the liability of nuclear plant operators and the Centre in the event of a nuclear accident, exemption of suppliers from liability and the framework governing appointments to the regulatory AERB. Seeking response, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant, Justice Joyimalya Bagchi and Justice V. Mohana



indicated that statutory limits on compensation would not fetter the powers of a constitutional court to award fair and just compensation. "Irrespective of provisions of the Act, nothing shall preclude a constitutional court to determine the amount of fair and just compensation.... Central government owes certain liability

under the Act," CJI Kant observed. Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioners, pointed out that the legislation also placed a cap on the government's liability. Responding to the submission, the Chief Justice observed that a ceiling prescribed by Parliament would not bar a constitutional court

from determining fair and just compensation. Bhushan urged the bench to clarify that the statutory caps would not restrict the Court's power to determine the liability of an operator, supplier or the government. He contended that limiting liability could reduce the incentive for operators and suppliers to maintain stringent

safety standards.

Referring to an earlier five-judge Constitution Bench judgment laying down the principle of absolute liability for enterprises engaged in hazardous activities, Bhushan contended that the statutory cap was inconsistent with that principle. He also questioned the exemption granted to nuclear equipment suppliers from liability.

Citing the Chernobyl and Fukushima nuclear accidents, Bhushan submitted that a catastrophic nuclear incident could render large areas uninhabitable for decades and result in losses running into lakhs of crores of rupees, making the liability ceilings under the Act inadequate.

The petitioners also questioned the independence of the AERB,

alleging a conflict of interest in the appointment process since the Atomic Energy Commission, associated with the operation of nuclear power plants, has a role in selecting the regulator's members.

Under the SHANTI Act, the liability of private operators ranges from ₹100 crore for smaller nuclear installations to ₹3,000 crore for larger plants.

Bhushan also drew a comparison between nuclear and solar power, referring to the government's assessment of India's solar potential at 3,343 GW against peak electricity demand of around 256 GW, and contended that solar power was cheaper and carried significantly lower accident risks.

Shravan key to self-transformation through Shiva's principles: Niranjananand



New Delhi

The month of Shravan offers an opportunity to move beyond ritual worship of Lord Shiva and bring the principles associated with him into everyday life, said Padma Bhushan Swami Niranjananand Saraswati. As Shravan begins, devotees offer water to Shivlings, chant "Om Namah Shivaya", observe fasts and practise restraint. But the deeper question, Swami Niranjananand said, is whether Shiva remains confined to the temple or becomes a guiding principle in one's life. "Shiva is not merely to be worshipped. The Shiva principle has to be understood. Shiva is not merely to be understood either. The Shiva principle has to be experienced. And the Shiva principle is not merely to be experienced. It has to be expressed in one's own life," he said. Of Shiva — from Yogi and Sannyasi to Bholanath, Mahakal, Nataraj and Neelkanth — he said Shiva represents a principle rather than merely a particular personality. The word Shiva signifies that which is benevolent and auspicious. According to him, the expression of the Shiva principle lies in moving "from unrest to peace, from ignorance to knowledge, from bondage to freedom, from selfishness to service, and from ego to surrender."

He said the meditating form of Shiva offers an important lesson in managing the mind. While circumstances and people may not always behave as one expects, the first step should be to observe one's own reaction rather than immediately trying to change the situation. "If you get angry quickly, observe the anger. If you have a habit of complaining, observe the complaint. If you have a habit of criticising, observe the criticism," he said, stressing that awareness of one's reactions can become the beginning of transformation. Swami Niranjananand also drew a lesson from Shiva as Neelkanth, who is believed to have contained the poison that emerged during the churning of the ocean. He said the story could be applied to everyday life, where people often face insult, criticism, disappointment and failure. Instead of passing that "poison" on through anger or criticism, or carrying it within as resentment, he urged people to recognise, observe and transform it.

Allahabad High Court Celebrates 80th Independence Day with Flag Hoisting and Patriotic Programme

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: The Allahabad High Court celebrated the 80th Independence Day with a simple yet impressive ceremony on the Court premises on Saturday morning. Hon'ble Chief Justice Arun Bhansali hoisted the National Flag at 8:45 am after the singing of Vande Mataram. The ceremony was followed by the National Anthem. Judges along with their spouses, former judges, the Advocate General, Additional Advocate General, Additional Solicitor General of India, members of the Bar, officers and staff



of the Court attended the programme. The CRPF band presented a special performance, while the CRPF and police personnel presented the Guard of

Honour. Later, Chief Justice Arun Bhansali and other judges paid floral tribute to Mahatma Gandhi by garlanding his bust. The Court premises

were beautifully illuminated in the colours of the Tricolour, adding to the patriotic atmosphere of the Independence Day celebrations.

Kapil Mishra meets Nigerian Minister, discusses farmer welfare and food security

New Delhi

Delhi Minister for Art and Culture Kapil Mishra on Monday held a meeting with Nigeria's Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Security, Dr Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi, and discussed agricultural development, farmer welfare, food security and management of agricultural produce. The meeting, attended by the Nigerian minister's delegation, focused on sharing experiences and expertise in agricultural management and strengthening cooperation between India and Nigeria. Officials from Delhi's Development Department gave a

presentation on the current status of agriculture in the national capital and various schemes and initiatives being implemented by the Delhi government and the Centre for the welfare of farmers. The Delhi Agricultural Marketing Board (DAMB) also briefed the Nigerian delegation on the management of the supply and marketing chain for grains, vegetables, fruits and flowers through mandis. The presentation covered the process through which agricultural produce reaches markets and the role of the mandi system.

"Country knows Kejriwal was Naxal in his political ideology, & corrupt in his politics"

New Delhi

Delhi BJP president Harsh Malhotra today called out Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal, for calling himself a Dimagi Naxal, while claiming to be a patriot and a person who wants to change the system, saying that what AAP chief said was something absurd. Malhotra, sharpening his attack on AAP leader, alleged that there is no doubt that Kejriwal has a politically Naxal mindset, and the proof of this is that in Delhi, where the BJP is in power, he comes forward in support of stu-



dent protests, but in Punjab, where his own party is in power, and in Jharkhand, where an allied government is in power, he remains silent when students face police lathi-charges during protests. The Delhi BJP chief said that Kejriwal's claim that he wants to change the "rotten system" and

make India corruption-free is completely false. He claimed that the people of Delhi and Punjab are witnesses to how much systemic change Kejriwal and his governments have brought about in both states, or how much corruption they have actually prevented. According to Malhotra, the country has not forgotten that in the very first year of his government, Arvind Kejriwal allegedly disrupted the Republic Day arrangements on the then Rajpath, and a few years later staged a sit-in at the Lieutenant Governor's residence.

Delhi Police bust major drug network, 2 held

New Delhi

The North-West District Anti-Narcotics Squad of Delhi Police has busted an interstate drug syndicate and arrested two alleged drug traffickers. Police recovered 1.525 kg of charas (hashish) and 3.8 kg of ganja from their possession. The seized charas is estimated to be worth around 50 lakh in the international market. Police, acting on a tip-off, a trap was laid near Bhalswa Metro Station on June 11. At around 1:15 pm, officers apprehended a suspect identified as Nitish Kumar (23), currently residing in Bhalswa Dairy and origi-

nally from Nawada district, Bihar. A search of his bag led to the recovery of 1.525 kg of charas packed in three packets. An FIR was registered at Jahangirpuri Police Station under Sections 20/29 of the NDPS Act, and further investigation was initiated. During the investigation, police gathered crucial information about other members of the syndicate. Acting on these leads, another accused, Sudama Kumar (22), was arrested near Jahangirpuri Metro Station on June 16 while allegedly delivering a consignment of 3.8 kg

Indian, US navies conclude eighth EOD exercise in Kochi

New Delhi

The Indian and US navies have concluded the eighth edition of their bilateral Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) exercise at the Southern Naval Command in Kochi, aimed at enhancing operational skills, interoperability and cooperation in specialised maritime operations. The exercise, which concluded on August 14, involved intensive professional interactions, exchanges of operational best practices and demonstrations by EOD teams

from both navies, the Ministry of Defence said. The training focused on key aspects of explosive ordnance disposal, including dealing with real-time threats from improvised explosive devices (IEDs), render-safe procedures, mine neutralisation and the use of unmanned underwater systems. As part of the cross-training programme, naval personnel also participated in specialised diving exercises covering wreck location and salvage, the use of specialist equipment and slither-

ing operations. The exercise provided the two navies with an opportunity to share expertise and operational experience in handling explosive and underwater threats, while strengthening the capabilities of their diving teams. The engagement also sought to deepen mutual understanding and improve interoperability between the two navies during specialised maritime operations. The successful conclusion of the exercise underscored the commitment of India.

AIIMS launches eye training programme, targets training 100 ophthalmologists

New Delhi

AIIMS Delhi has launched a structured retina training programme to boost the diagnosis and management of retinal diseases by training more than 100 ophthalmologists from the public health system over the next three years. "The need for strengthening retinal care capabilities is underscored by gaps in the availability of specialised expert-



ise," said Dr Radhika Tandon, Chief of the Dr Rajendra Prasad Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences

(RPC), AIIMS, at the launch of the Modular Retina Training Program on Monday. The pro-

gramme, housed at the National Retina Skill Development Centre at the RP Centre, has been developed in collaboration with the Roche India Healthcare Institute.

According to AIIMS, the initiative seeks to equip general ophthalmologists with practical skills for the early detection, diagnosis, and management of retinal diseases. The training will be

delivered through eight structured modules using a dedicated Retina Skill Lab equipped with optical coherence tomography (OCT) systems, fundus cameras and specialised microscopes. AIIMS said the facility is designed to provide hands-on clinical training alongside classroom instruction. Dr Tandon said the initiative aims to expand retinal care expertise beyond specialist cen-

tres by training ophthalmologists working in the public health system, which could help reduce preventable vision loss.

According to the Vitreo-Retina Society of India (VRSI), there are around 1,700 retinologists in the country, a number considered insufficient to meet the growing burden of retinal diseases such as diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration.

'Dimaagi Naxals' remark shows Modi's desperation, says Jairam Ramesh

New Delhi

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh on Saturday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his reference to "dimaagi Naxals" in his Independence Day address, calling the remark a "sure sign" of the Prime Minister's desperation.

Ramesh said Modi had earlier used the term "urban Naxals" for his opponents and had now introduced the description "dimaagi Naxals", arguing that the change reflected the Prime Minister's growing political anxiety. "First He called his opponents 'urban naxals.' Now He calls them 'dimaagi naxals.'

Independence Day Celebrated with Grandeur at Kriyayoga Ashram, Swami Yogi Satyam Gives the Message of “True Freedom



Akhand Bharat Sandesh Prayagraj

Guruji Swami Shree Yogi Satyam celebrated Independence Day with all residents and practitioners at Kriyayoga Ashram and Research Institute with all glory. The flag-hoisting ceremony took place at the Mahavatar Babji Vatvraksh site on the premises of Kriyayoga Ashram and Research Institute. This same blessed site was also host to the thousands of students from the nearby Inter-college – Lalla Manmohan Das Intercollege, along with the teachers of the Intercollege. Lead by the cadets and their band, the students

marched along smartly with all energetic fervor as they came into the Kriyayoga Ashram premises with the Indian flags in their hands, and with the continuous chanting of “Bharat Mata ki Jai” and “Vande Mataram”. Guruji Swami Satyam welcomed all students and teachers and explained about the incomplete Independence that was gained in the midnight hour. “We want Independence in the morning hour,” stated Guruji Swami Shree Yogi Satyam. Explaining that the morning hour represents Awakening of wisdom within, to bring a complete and



perfect life, where we can solve all problems of life simply and quickly. Guruji explained this awakening is possible with Kriyayoga Meditation. With the practice of Kriyayoga Meditation, one can awaken the knowledge centers within to bring True Independence of self. Kriyayoga was lost in the dark ages of Kalyuga and was re-discovered by Mrityunjay Mahavatar Babaji in the dawn of Dwapara

Mahavatar Babaji taught the Kriyayoga science to his disciple – Yogavatar Lahiri Mahasaya, which was then taught to Gyanavatar Swami Sri Yukteswarji. Swami Sri Yukteswarji is the Guru of Paramahansa Yogananda, who went to America in 1920 to spread the teachings of Kriyayoga Meditation in the West. Since then, the Kriyayoga teachings have been spread all over the worldwide through the worldwide centers established by

Paramahansa Yogananda – Self-Realization Fellowship. In India, Kriyayoga is being spread by the Indian counterpart center founded by Paramahansa Yogananda – Yogoda Satsanga Society (YSS). Along with YSS, Kriyayoga Satsanga Samiti and Yuga Satsanga Samiti founded by Guruji Swami Shree Yogi Satyam is actively and effectively spreading Kriyayoga in India and



worldwide. The thousands of students and teachers were served Independence Day snacks and a 4 page write-up about Kriyayoga and True Independence during the visit to Kriyayoga Ashram. Following the program at Kriyayoga Ashram and Research Institute, Guruji Swami Shree Yogi Satyam, along with few devotees, attended the Independence Day celebrations at Lalla Manmohan Das

Intercollege. Guruji gave a short talk to all present the importance of attaining Real Independence. Guruji explained that the practice to attain Real Independence (Kriyayoga) was also practiced by Mahatma Gandhi – the Father of the Nation, who was able to bring a big movement in India through his attunement with Kriyayoga practice. A beautifully composed song was played for all during the ses-

sion, which was sung by the monks and young spiritual aspirants – the Kriyayoga Angels, promoting the concept of Real Independence (Azaadi) through Kriyayoga. Attending the vibrant celebrations were devotees from all over India and also foreign devotees from all over the world – Canada, USA, France, Switzerland, Brazil, Singapore. The principal welcomed all attendees and snacks and tea were served to all.

Officials Puled Up for Lapses in Grievance Redressal at Samadhan Diwas, One-Week Deadline Set for Action

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj. Strict instructions were issued to officials during the Sampooma Samadhan Diwas held at Karchhana Tehsil on Monday to improve arrangements and ensure timely and quality disposal of public grievances. The Additional Commissioner (Administration), Prayagraj Division, participated in the programme as directed by the Divisional Commissioner and inspected the arrangements. During the inspection of the attendance register, irregularities were found. Officials were directed to maintain a properly organized register containing the names, designations, signatures and arrival times of all officials present. The salary of officials absent without prior permission will not be drawn until they provide a satisfactory explanation and obtain approval from the District Magistrate. The Additional Commissioner also expressed displeasure over complaints not being properly entered in the register and complainants not being provided receipts. Officials were instructed to register every application and provide the complainant with a duly signed receipt. Directions were also issued to ensure proper seating arrangements for complainants and to hear their applications in an



orderly manner, one by one. A total of 154 applications were received during the Samadhan Diwas. Of these, 130 were related to revenue matters, five to police, six to development, two to electricity and 11 to other departments. Eight complaints were resolved on the spot. The remaining cases were directed to be disposed of within one week, and in special circumstances, within a maximum period of 15 days. Officials were instructed to contact complainants by telephone after disposal of their cases to confirm whether the grievance had actually been resolved. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate was directed to personally investigate 13 serious cases and submit an action-taken report within one week. Officials were further instructed to personally review the quality of grievance disposal. In cases where the dispos-

al was found to be unsatisfactory or merely procedural, legal and disciplinary action would be taken against the responsible officer or employee. Complaints related to illegal occupation of Gram Sabha or public-use land were ordered to be personally investigated by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate and the Tehsildar. In special circumstances, a field or record-based inquiry may be conducted by the Naib Tehsildar, but such cases should not be assigned to any officer below the rank of Naib Tehsildar. Officials were also instructed to speak with complainants after disposal of their grievances and ensure their satisfaction. If a complainant remained dissatisfied, the matter would be re-examined and appropriate action taken to ensure a genuine and satisfactory resolution.

Akhand Bharat Sandesh Prayagraj.

A Sampooma Samadhan Diwas was held at Sadar Tehsil on Monday under the chairmanship of District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma. The DM heard the grievances of citizens and directed officials to ensure their timely and quality disposal. A total of 119 complaints were received, of which six were resolved on the spot. The District Magistrate inspected the stalls set up by various departments at the tehsil premises to provide information about government schemes and programmes. He directed officials to widely publicize the schemes and ensure that eligible beneficiaries receive their benefits. During the event, three women participated in a traditional baby-shower ceremony and the Annaprashan ceremony of two children was also conducted. While hearing public grievances, the DM instructed revenue, police and other concerned officials to conduct ground-level investigations and ensure that every complaint is resolved within the prescribed time frame. He



warned that negligence or delay in taking action would invite strict action against the responsible officer. Complaints Related to Land and Encroachment Taken Up Kamla Devi, wife of Suresh Chandra and a resident of Jalalpur Ghosi, complained that her land measuring 0.4570 hectares, recorded in the name of her husband, had allegedly been illegally occupied by Anuj Kumar Singh and his associates. She requested removal of the alleged encroachment and restoration of possession. The DM directed the SDM

Sadar to investigate the matter and take necessary action. Najma Begum, a resident of Gayauddinpur, complained that her mutation proceedings had been stalled after an allegedly incorrect report was submitted by Lekhpal Akhilesh Kumar regarding land purchased by her.

She requested that the matter be investigated by another Lekhpal. The DM directed the SDM Sadar to get the matter examined by another Lekhpal and take appropriate action. Ajit Kumar, a resident of Bechu

Ka Pura, Gohri, Soraon, complained that his neighbour Shivcharan had allegedly blocked a government-built drain by dumping soil into it. The complainant requested that the drain be cleared and action be taken against the person responsible. The DM directed the SDM Soraon and the Station House Officer of Phaphamau to inspect the site and remove the encroachment from the government drain. Revenue Complaints Account for Largest Share Of the 119 complaints received during the Samadhan Diwas, 54

were related to the Revenue Department, 23 to the Police Department, 21 to the Municipal Corporation and 21 to other departments. Six complaints were resolved on the spot. The DM directed all concerned officials to take possession of the remaining complaints immediately and ensure their disposal within the prescribed time limit. He emphasized that complainants should not be forced to make repeated visits to government offices. The District Magistrate said grievance redressal is among the government's top priorities and that no negligence or indifference would be tolerated. He instructed officials to prepare separate lists of complaints, forward them to the concerned departments and regularly monitor the progress of disposal. Chief Development Officer Harshika Singh, Chief Medical Officer Dr. A.K. Tiwari, District Development Officer G.P. Kushwaha, Project Director Bhupendra Singh, Tehsildar Suresh Chandra Shukla and other concerned officials were present during the programme.

Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya Hoists National Flag at Police Lines in Prayagraj on 80th Independence Day

Akhand Bharat Sandesh Prayagraj :

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya hoisted the national flag at the Reserve Police Lines in Prayagraj on the occasion of the 80th Independence Day. He extended greetings to the people and paid tribute to freedom fighters, martyrs and national heroes who made sacrifices for the country's independence. During the

programme, Maurya inspected an exhibition based on the Tricolour and visited stalls set up by self-help groups. Cultural performances by school-children added a patriotic spirit to the celebrations. Addressing the gathering, the Deputy CM said the double-engine government was committed to fulfilling the needs of people in both the country and the state. He urged citizens to contribute towards



the goal of making India self-reliant and developed by 2047, when the nation will complete 100 years of independence. Maurya remembered Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Chandrashekhar Azad, Ashfaqulla Khan, Rani Lakshmi Bai and other freedom fighters. He also congratulated soldiers guarding the nation's bor-

ders, police personnel, farmers, workers, scientists, women and youth for their contribution to nation-building. He said the participation of citizens in the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign reflected the country's strong spirit of patriotism. He also praised those who participated enthusiastically in Tiranga Yatras. The Deputy CM said that patriotism was above all forms of devo-

tion and described Vande Mataram as a powerful symbol of national pride. He congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for promoting the singing of all six stanzas of the national song and remembered its writer Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. Maurya also appreciated the Uttar Pradesh Police and PAC personnel for maintaining law and order in the state. He concluded his address with slogans of

“Bharat Mata Ki Jai” and “Vande Mataram”. MLC Surendra Chaudhary, BJP leaders Nirmala Paswan, Rajesh Shukla, Avadhesh Gupta and Vikram Bhaduria, Police Commissioner Piyush Mordia, District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma, Additional Police Commissioner Ajay Pal Sharma and several administrative and police officials were present at the programme.

Editorial

Trump would be discussing the US's potential exit

After the United States and Iran had agreed on a two-week ceasefire. Obviously, the pause in the West Asia war was going to dominate the press conference at the White House. During the press briefing, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt dropped a bombshell. In response to a question, she casually revealed that President Donald Trump would be discussing the US's potential exit from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with Secretary General Mark Rutte later that day. Trump has been angry over the fact that several European NATO members refused his call to support the US-Israeli military campaign against Iran. Only days earlier, he had signalled how far he was willing to go, saying America's membership was not "beyond reconsideration". Then came the meeting itself. Trump and Rutte spoke privately for nearly two hours, described afterwards as a blunt and tense exchange. If there had been hope that diplomacy might cool tempers, it faded quickly. Within minutes, Trump took to Truth Social and delivered a pointed message: "NATO WASN'T THERE WHEN WE NEEDED THEM, AND THEY WON'T BE THERE IF WE NEED THEM AGAIN."

The Leaked Messages

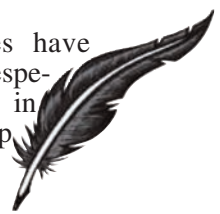
One could see it coming. Last year, in an accidentally leaked WhatsApp chat, Vice President JD Vance and War Secretary Pete Hegseth called the Europeans "free-loading". There is a strong feeling in the Trump administration that Europe has taken the US for a ride for far too long. "Yeah I think they've been freeloaded," Trump had told reporters back then, when asked if he agreed with Hegseth, who was quoted as saying in the leaked Signal chats. A user identified as Vance had even said, "I just hate bailing Europe out again", and a user identified as Hegseth replied: "I fully share your loathing of European freeloaded. It's PATHETIC." Will the US, however, really leave the 32-nation alliance? If America, its most powerful member, were to leave, defence experts in Europe believe the consequences would extend far beyond the continent.

The Unmistakable Numbers

To understand the scale of such a move, it is important to begin with what the US currently provides to NATO. Around 1 lakh highly trained American troops are stationed across Europe. The US has air bases in Germany and Italy, naval facilities in Spain, intelligence hubs, logistics networks, missile defence systems and rapid response units across Europe. These forces are deeply integrated into NATO command structures and would be among the first to respond during a crisis. Needless to say, their presence acts as a deterrent in a big way, particularly against Russia. It is to be noted that the American role is not limited to troops. The US makes up the backbone of NATO's nuclear deterrence. It is no secret that American nuclear weapons are stationed in several European countries under NATO's nuclear-sharing arrangement. More important than the weapons is the guarantee behind them. The credibility of NATO rests on the assumption that the US would come to Europe's defence. If Washington were to withdraw, that assumption would certainly weaken. Even if treaties remained, the psychological impact would be immediate, because deterrence depends as much on perception as on capability.

America Is, After All, The Strongest

The first impact of a US withdrawal would, therefore, be operational. European militaries are bound to face capability gaps. The US currently provides much of NATO's airlift capacity, intelligence-gathering, missile defence and long-range strike capability. European forces have strengthened since 2014, especially after Russia's actions in Crimea (Ukraine), but the gap remains large.



That's the tragedy for the daughter of Bangladesh's founding father

Kavya

The sins of fathers shall be visited upon the sons—this ominous pronouncement in the Bible has now come true for Tulip Siddiq, a 42-year-old minister in the British government, but with a twist. In her case, it wasn't her father's sins that visited upon her but those allegedly committed by her aunt, the deposed prime minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina Wazed. And it cost Siddiq her job. Slapped with a range of corruption charges by Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Committee (ACC), which forced an internal government inquiry, Siddiq has

strenuously denied any wrongdoing—except that of ignorance about benefiting from dubious transactions. But she has paid the price and resigned as UK treasury minister on Tuesday, though she stressed that an independent review found she had "not breached the ministerial code". If the sins of aunts can impact nieces, then can daughters escape their mothers'? Ever since Siddiq's case hit the headlines, the spotlight has slowly but surely turned to Sheikh Hasina's daughter, Saima Wazed, also known as Putul, who was elected regional director of the World

Health Organisation's Southeast Asia branch amid considerable controversy in February 2024. An editorial in the eminent medical journal The Lancet had earlier questioned if she was fit for the job, as she only held a master's degree in psychology while rival aspirants were doctors with years of public health experience. The ACC has now initiated a probe into how she got the job: on her own merit or her mother's intervention as prime minister. All eyes are now on Putul and whether she'll be forced to follow in her cousin's footsteps. What does it all mean

for 77-year-old Sheikh Hasina, who has been sheltering in New Delhi since fleeing Dhaka on 5 August after a violent student uprising against her 15-year continuous tenure as Bangladesh's prime minister? There is no doubt that the charges being hurled at her, her family, and her friends are coloured by political prejudice from those now in power in Bangladesh. But some of the mud will stick. That's the tragedy for the daughter of Bangladesh's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—even her staunchest supporters admit her chances of ever returning

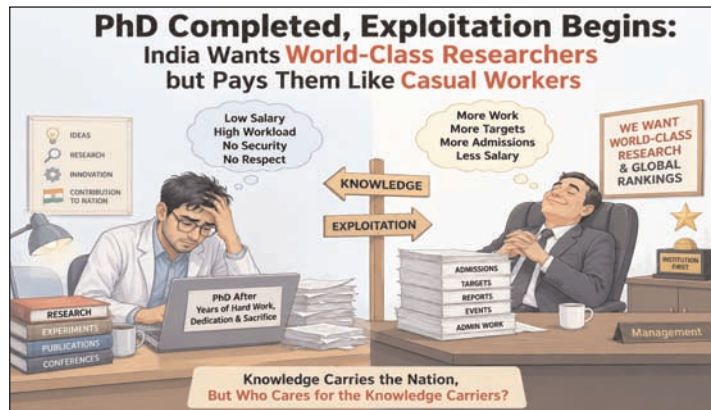
PhD Completed, Exploitation Begins: India Wants World-Class Researchers but Pays Them Like Casual Workers



Prof. R.K. Uppal
[PhD, D.Litt.]
Giddarbaha, Muktsar, Punjab

A PhD is supposed to be the highest symbol of academic achievement. It represents years of study, research, experimentation, writing, rejection, revision and intellectual struggle. It demands patience, discipline and a commitment to creating new knowledge. Yet, for thousands of highly qualified scholars, completing a PhD does not necessarily bring professional security, financial dignity or academic freedom. Instead, it can mark the beginning of another struggle—the struggle for a decent salary, stable employment and recognition. India wants world-class researchers, but does it want to pay them like world-class professionals? This contradiction deserves serious national attention. India frequently speaks about becoming a knowledge economy, building a research-driven nation, promoting innovation and competing with advanced economies. Universities are encouraged to increase research output, publish papers, secure patents, attract students and contribute to national development. But behind these ambitious objectives are teachers and researchers who often work under intense pressure for salaries that do not adequately reflect their qualifications, workload or responsibilities.

A person who spends five or more years pursuing doctoral research does not merely acquire another certificate. A PhD represents specialized expertise. The researcher learns to identify problems, analyses evidence, develop arguments, conduct



independent investigation and generate knowledge. Such individuals should be treated as valuable intellectual capital. Unfortunately, in many academic workplaces, qualification and compensation do not move together. A PhD holder may be expected to teach several courses, supervise dissertations, publish research papers, attend meetings, prepare documentation, participate in admissions, organize events, complete administrative assignments and meet institutional targets. In some institutions, academics are also expected to contribute to student recruitment, promotional activities and other responsibilities far removed from their core academic role.

The question is simple: Can world-class research emerge from an environment where researchers are continuously overworked and economically undervalued? The problem becomes even more serious when institutions treat highly qualified academics as inexpensive labour. The language of "experience," "exposure," "future opportunities" and "academic commitment" can sometimes become an excuse for offering inadequate compensation. Passion for teaching and research should never become a justification for exploitation. Academics have families, financial commitments and professional aspirations. They require decent salaries just like professionals in other sectors. Intellectual work is work. Research is work. Teaching is work. Mentoring students is work.

Academic administration is work. A PhD does not eliminate the need for a livelihood.

There is another disturbing consequence of underpaying researchers: talented young people may begin to avoid academic careers altogether. If highly educated scholars observe that years of doctoral study led to uncertain employment and low financial returns, many will understandably choose careers outside academia. Some may move abroad. Others may enter corporate employment, government services or unrelated professions.

This creates a dangerous cycle. India invests in educating talented people, but inadequate academic opportunities may push those talents away from universities. The country then complains about a shortage of high-quality researchers and globally competitive institutions. If India wants to retain its intellectual talent, it must make academic careers attractive.

This does not mean every PhD holder should automatically receive a high salary. A doctoral degree alone cannot guarantee exceptional compensation. Academic pay should also consider teaching quality, research contribution, innovation, experience, institutional responsibility and performance. But there must be a fundamental principle of fairness and dignity. A PhD holder should not be expected to perform the responsibilities of a senior academic while being compensated at a level that barely reflects professional qualifications. The issue is partic-

ularly important in the expanding private higher-education sector. Private institutions have played an important role in increasing access to higher education, but growth must not come at the expense of faculty welfare. Universities and colleges cannot build their reputation solely through buildings, advertisements, rankings and admission numbers. Their greatest asset is their faculty. A university without respected and adequately supported teachers is only an infrastructure project—not a knowledge institution. Faculty members should be given transparent employment contracts, reasonable workloads, timely salaries, opportunities for professional development, research support and academic freedom. Institutions should also establish clear salary structures and promotion policies so that academics know how their careers can progress. There is also a need to rethink the obsession with quantity. Counting publications, conferences, admissions and administrative targets cannot be the only measure of academic success. Research should be judged by originality, relevance, quality and impact. Teaching should be judged by learning outcomes and student development. Academic excellence cannot be reduced to numbers on a spreadsheet.

The government and higher-education regulators also have a responsibility. Policies encouraging research and innovation must be accompanied by mechanisms that strengthen the academic workforce. Funding should reach researchers and institutions efficiently. Young scholars should have pathways from doctoral research to stable academic and research careers. India cannot simultaneously demand global research standards and local-level compensation. The contradiction is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore. If researchers are expected to produce internationally competitive work, they need internationally competitive research environments. If teachers are expected to shape future generations, they need professional dignity. If universities want innovation, they must give academics the time,

resources and security required to innovate.

Most importantly, society needs to change its attitude toward academic work. Teaching is sometimes treated as a noble profession, but nobility should not mean economic sacrifice without limits. Researchers are often praised for their contribution to society while their material circumstances are overlooked. Respect without remuneration is incomplete respect. The purpose of higher education is not merely to produce degrees. It is to create knowledge, develop critical thinkers, solve social and economic problems and prepare future generations. PhD holders are central to this mission.

Therefore, India must ask a difficult question: What kind of knowledge economy are we building if the people producing knowledge cannot build secure lives for themselves? The answer requires more than speeches about innovation and Viksit Bharat. It requires institutional reform, fair compensation, professional respect and accountability. A PhD holder carries much more than a degree. They carry knowledge, expertise, responsibility and expectations. But they should not have to carry the additional burden of exploitation. India cannot demand world-class researchers while offering them third-class working conditions. If we truly want world-class, we must first create world-class conditions for the people who teach, research and innovate within them. Stop celebrating PhDs only at convocations. Start valuing PhD holders in the workplace. Because a nation that wants to become a knowledge superpower must understand one fundamental truth: You cannot build a world-class knowledge economy by underpaying the people who create its knowledge.

(The author is the Principal of GGS College of Management and Technology, Giddarbaha (Punjab), and a Research Professor at the Indian Institute of Finance, New Delhi)

Will Israel-Hamas Ceasefire Really Lead To Peace?

Rajesh Sharma

On January 20, 1981, on the day Ronald Reagan took over as the new US president, Iran freed 52 American hostages it had been holding for over a year. That projected Reagan as a strong leader sending a powerful signal to US allies and its foes. His predecessor, Jimmy Carter, did all the negotiations and tried his best to have the hostages released while he was still the president. But Tehran would not let him take the glory. Forty-four years on, Donald Trump is taking the credit for the Gaza ceasefire deal, which will come into effect a day before his inauguration, cementing his reputation as a tough leader. Biden can say that the deal happened under his watch. But there is no doubt that it was Trump whose pressure led to achieve the goal. He declared on his social media platform Truth Social: "This EPIC ceasefire agreement could have only happened as a result of our Historic Victory in November, as it signalled to

the entire World that my Administration would seek Peace and negotiate deals to ensure the safety of all Americans, and our Allies." Days after he threatened that there better be a Gaza deal by his January 20 inauguration or "all hell would break out", his special envoy to the Middle East, Steven Witkoff, landed in Tel Aviv last Saturday. It was the Sabbath, the day of rest for Jews. But Witkoff insisted on meeting the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, that day. At their meeting, he conveyed Trump's message that the incoming President of the United States wanted to end the Gaza war and demanded that a ceasefire agreement be signed immediately. The format of the three-stage deal announced on Wednesday was proposed by Biden in May last year and was later also endorsed by the UN Security Council. But both Hamas and Israel kept dragging the negotiations over it. In Israel, Netanyahu refused to give any concessions to Hamas and continued.

Investors line-up for Excitel's \$200-million equity deal

Raj Shamani

Extension of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for solar energy value chain, increased allocation towards PM Suryaghar Muft Bijlee Yojana, and greater thrust to distribution and transmission infrastructure are likely to be the key features of the upcoming Budget, as far as the energy sector is concerned. Sources said these proposals figured not only in the budget wish lists of the industry, but also in the respective recommendations from the ministries of power and renewable energy to the finance ministry, ahead of the Budget. "Given the success of PM Suryaghar scheme with almost 600,000 installations in just nine months since its launch, one could probably see additional allocation to target more households," said Ashwin Jacob, partner at Deloitte India. "As far as evacuation of power from offshore wind projects is concerned, we would want to see the VGF or budgetary support to continue or get enhanced," he added. "We hope to see a decisive increase in funding to accelerate the green energy transition. Priorities must include scaling renewable energy by addressing grid and transmission challenges, advancing Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) for grid stability and reliable power, doubling energy efficiency and digitalizing the energy sector through AI, smart meters, and data-driven solutions. Streamlining rooftop solar programs with simplified approvals, financing, and monitoring is equally vital," said Saurabh Kumar, Vice President – India, Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP). Sharat Goyal, CEO of Impact Infracap also expects the government to remove restrictions on state wise caps on roof top capacity for net-metering for industrial establishments. "Further, adoption of batteries to substitute use of diesel generators for back-up power

should receive incentives and policy support given their role in reducing dependence on imports," he said. While the government is increasingly working towards enhancing the country's RE capacity, the distribution and transmission infrastructure for its evacuation still needs to be strengthened. With the peak demand for power growing at a rate of 8-9% annually, the industry is looking forward to strengthening of climate resilient infrastructure augmentation. "One can expect new allocations towards augmentation of power distribution infrastructure, especially in high density/ urban load centres, in view of the sharp rise in peak demand over the last few years," said Anujesh Dwivedi, Partner at Deloitte India. He noted that there may be some allocation towards supporting the preparatory work especially on the listing of power utilities, or some incentive mechanism for promoting initiatives on private sector participation or listing of utilities at the state level because they are increasingly being seen as the much needed structural reforms the sector needs. The industry is optimistic of a wider coverage of the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme by including smart metering in infrastructure definition.

"This would direct more financing for a sector which seeks to bring down India's transmission and distribution losses to 12% and improve recovery for state utilities," Goyal said. Goyal also noted that power transmission despite significant potential has not seen any notable monetisation events which could address the latent investor demand. "Government should announce a time-bound privatisation programme for assets owned by PGCIL," he said. The sector also sees the PLI scheme for solar value chain to continue with possible reduction in the duty structures for solar equipment. Jacob highlighted.

K Ravi takes over as BCIC President in Golden Jubilee year

Bengaluru

The Bangalore Chamber of Industry and Commerce (BCIC) on announced the appointment of chartered accountant K Ravi as its President for 2026-27, with Dr Prashanth Reddy assuming office as Senior Vice President during the Chamber's Golden Jubilee year.

The industry body, which represents more than 850 companies across manufacturing, technology, biotechnology, engineering, healthcare, food processing and services, said the new leadership will guide BCIC as it celebrates 50 years of industry leadership, policy advocacy and economic development since its inception in 1976.

A Fellow Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), Ravi is Senior



Partner at K.R. Kumar & Co. and K. Ravi & Associates and Director of VR e-Biz Solutions Pvt Ltd. He has over three decades of experience in taxation, corporate advisory, governance and international business. Ravi is the first practising chartered accountant to have served as President of the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI) in its 104-year history. His leadership roles have also included President of the Karnataka State Chartered Accountants Association (KSCAA),

Past President of Rotary Bangalore Orchards and Past Governor of the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA), Florida, USA-Bangalore Chapter. A long-time BCIC member, Ravi has previously chaired the Chamber's International Business Committee, co-chaired its Start-up Committee and served on the M a n a g i n g Committee. He has also led business delegations to Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Israel, Oman, Malaysia and Canada. On assuming office,

"India is large, diverse and evolving, making it strategically important

Bengaluru

Figaro, one of India's leading olive oil brands owned by global olive oil major Deoleo, on unveiled a refreshed brand identity, redesigned packaging and a new nationwide campaign featuring actor-comedian Sunil Grover as it seeks to strengthen its position in India's growing olive oil market. The company said the rebranding is aimed at reinforcing Figaro's positioning as a multipurpose olive oil brand while accelerating category growth in India, a strategic market

for Deoleo. The campaign will be rolled out across television, digital, influencer and retail platforms. India's olive oil market is currently estimated at around Rs 880 crore and continues to witness sustained growth, presenting significant opportunities to increase household penetration and expand category adoption, the company said. A key element of the brand refresh is Figaro's focus on its multipurpose proposition, which now contributes nearly 48 per cent of the brand's

business in India.

, making it the largest segment in its portfolio. The redesigned packaging features a contemporary look across tins and bottles, improved product navigation, stronger emphasis on purity credentials and a redesigned ergonomic bottle with a flip-top cap. "India is large, diverse and evolving, making it strategically important for the long-term growth of the category. We continue to see significant headroom for expansion and remain committed to investing

Rajasthan distribution companies ordered by the Court to pay Adani Power 186 crore

Delhi: The appeal that the electricity distribution companies in Rajasthan had lodged against the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity's (APTEL) decision in favor of Adani electricity Rajasthan Ltd, which had asked them to pay 186 crore in compensation,

has been rejected by the Supreme Court. Jaipur Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd (JVNL) and other state discoms filed appeals, but a bench of justices Rajesh Bindal and M M Sundresh decided on May 23 that the petitions had no validity. The decision made by APTEL in

April 2024, which identified a new tax imposed by Coal India Ltd (CIL) as a "change in law" event under the PPA between Adani Power and the discoms, was affirmed by the court. To offset costs associated with moving coal from the mine to the destination.

Siemens brings the future of Intelligent Home Living to Pune

Pune

BSH Home Appliances Pvt. Ltd., a subsidiary of BSH Hausgeräte GmbH and a global leader in premium home appliances, on announced the opening of its exclusive Siemens Brand Store in Pune in partnership with Cheryl Enterprises Private Limited.

Located at Solitaire Business Hub-1, Baner, the new Brand Store brings Siemens' vision of intelligent living to Pune through an immersive destination where meaningful innovation, connected technologies and sophisticated design come together to redefine the modern kitchen.

More than a retail space, it enables homeowners, architects and designers to experience how intelligent appliances work together as an integrated ecosystem, anticipating needs, simplifying everyday routines and creating enriching experiences that elevate everyday living, a release stated.

Pune has emerged as one of India's most progressive home markets, recording over 4.28 lakh homes sold between 2021 and 2025, the highest residential sales in the country during the period. Nearly half of all new residential launches are now concentrated in the premium and luxury segments, reflecting changing consumer aspirations and increasing investment in thoughtfully designed homes.

As homeowners increasingly embrace modular kitchens and connected living, kitchens are evolving from functional spaces into intelligent environments where architecture, technology and everyday experiences come together seamlessly. This transformation is positioning Pune among India's fastest-growing markets for built-in and integrated home solutions. This transformation is being driven not only by new homebuyers but also by a growing segment of existing homeowners undertaking premium kitchen renovations and upgrading to integrated appliance solutions. Demand is particularly strong among young professionals, dual-income households.

Home Credit India to acquire 100 pc stake in Varthana Fin

Chennai

Home Credit India, part of TVS Venu, has agreed to acquire 100 per cent stake in Varthana Finance Private Limited through an all-cash transaction, subject to receipt of applicable regulatory approvals, including approval from the Reserve Bank of India, and fulfilment of customary closing conditions.

The proposed acquisition marks another step in TVS Venu's long-term approach to build and scale high-quality financial services businesses that serve India's



evolving credit needs across customer segments. With the addition of Varthana's specialised education-finance franchise to its

growing financial services platform, the Group will expand its presence into a complementary secured and longer-tenure lending

segment. The transaction will strengthen TVS Venu's position in India's financial services sector and create opportunities to support Varthana's next phase of growth, according to a company statement issued on Wednesday. Sudarshan Venu, Chairman, TVS Motor Company, said, "India's financial services sector continues to offer significant opportunities for long-term growth, driven by rising formalisation, expanding credit access and the increasing need for specialised lending solutions.

Amazon to invest Rs 1 lakh cr in Telangana by 2034: Revanth

Hyderabad

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on said Amazon is expected to invest Rs 1 lakh crore in Telangana by 2034, describing the foundation-laying ceremony for the company's data centre at Future City as a major milestone in the state's drive to attract global investments and establish Future City as an international busi-

ness hub.

Addressing the gathering after laying the foundation stone, the Chief Minister said the project would catalyse attracting more Fortune 500 companies to Telangana. He recalled that the 'Telangana Rising Global Summit', held in December 2025, witnessed participation from corporate representatives of major companies

from 108 countries.

Revanth Reddy said the state's 'Telangana Rising 2047' vision aims to transform Telangana into a USD 1 trillion economy by 2034 and a USD 3 trillion economy by 2047, while increasing the state's contribution to India's GDP from 5 per cent to 10 per cent as part of the Centre's Viksit Bharat 2047 mission.

India's imported inflation climbed to 8.13% in June 2026, reflecting the growing impact of

New Delhi

India's imported inflation climbed to 8.13% in June 2026, reflecting the growing impact of global price pressures and reinforcing the need for exchange rate stability to prevent imported costs from feeding into domestic inflation, according to SBI Research's latest Ecwrap report.

The report said headline retail inflation (CPI) rose to 4.38% year-on-year in June from 3.93% in May, marking a 45-basis-point increase. The rise was driven mainly by higher food prices and a sharp increase in transport and services inflation. Core inflation, which excludes food and fuel, also firmed up to 4.20%, indicating that



inflationary pressures are becoming more broad-based across the economy. SBI Research expects average CPI inflation to remain around 5% in FY27, with inflation likely to average 5.1% in the second quarter, 5.7% in the third quarter and 5.1% in the fourth quarter. Given this outlook, it believes the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to maintain a prolonged pause in policy rates during the current financial year. The

report said the sharp rise in imported inflation has made exchange rate management increasingly critical, especially after the RBI unveiled measures in June to attract foreign currency inflows and strengthen external balances. SBI estimates that Foreign Currency Non-Resident Bank [FCNR(B)] deposits mobilised under the RBI's latest scheme have already reached \$8-9 billion at the system level.

SEBI and the Exchange are in advanced negotiations

Delhi: In order to reach a consent settlement in the co-location case that is presently pending before the Supreme Court, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is in advanced negotiations with the NSE. A



Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) decision that lessened the initial sanctions levied against NSE in 2019 has been appealed by SEBI. According to someone with knowledge of the situation, "the discussion on the most important

issue of resolving the co-location case started, around one and half months ago." "The amount that NSE should pay to SEBI in order to settle the lawsuit is one of the consent terms that are currently being negotiated by both parties.

Stock Markets give up sharp morning gains, Sensex sheds 130 points

New Delhi

The Indian Stock Markets on ended marginally lower after giving up most of their sharp morning gains. At close, Sensex rose 130 points, or 0.17%, to close at 77,185.43, while the Nifty 50 ended at 24,078.50, rising 26 points, or 0.11%. The overall market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms rose to Rs 481 lakh crore from Rs 479.5 lakh crore in with investors wealth grew by about Rs 1.5 lakh



crore. Among the sectors, the ones ending with healthy gains were Nifty PSU Bank was up 0.95%, Consumer Durables up by 0.73%, and Oil and Gas up by 0.69%, Nifty Bank climbed 0.51%, while the Financial Services

index rose by 0.59%. On the losing end were Nifty Metal cracked by 1.11%. IT, FMCG, Media, and Realty indices fell 0.67%, 0.49%, 0.46%, and 0.38%, respectively. Indian rupee closed at 96.2550 per dollar against its previous

session close of 96.20. On Nifty, the top gainers were UltraTech Cement, Eternal, and HDFC Life Insurance Company, while Hindalco Industries, Power Grid Corporation of India, and Tata Steel ended as the top laggards in the index. Shares of cement companies like UltraTech Cement, Ambuja Cements, Shree Cement and other cement rose up to 3 percent. UltraTech Cement

rose 3 percent, while Shree Cement gained 2.5 percent and Ambuja Cements advanced 1.4 percent. Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities on Rupee said, "Rupee traded largely flat near 96.25, as the Dollar Index slipped below \$101 after softer-than-expected US CPI data, providing some relief to emerging market currencies.

BRIEFS

DEAN TO CAPTAIN ENG IN IRELAND ODIs

CHARLIE Dean will captain England in the upcoming three-match ODI series against Ireland, with the all-rounder handed another opportunity to lead the side after deputising during the team's recent series against New Zealand. Sciver-Brunt and Danni Wyatt-Hodge are looking after their fitness and recovery, whereas Sophie Ecclestone, Lauren Bell and Amy Jones have not been chosen for the series.

Alice Capsey, who served as England's reserve wicketkeeper at the most recent T20 World Cup, will now take on the role of wicketkeeper in Jones' absence. The two players in the squad who have not yet played at international level are Grace Potts and Kira Chathli, both of whom have been part of the England set-up during the summer. Charis Pavely, who has already taken part in two T20 matches, might get the opportunity to play in her first ODI, while Tilly Corteen-Coleman will aim to build on the two ODIs she has already played, both of which were against New Zealand. **England squad:** Maia Bouchier, Alice Capsey (wk), Kira Chathli, Tilly Corteen-Coleman, Charlie Dean (c), Sophia Dunkley, Lauren Filer, Dani Gibson, Jodi Grewcock, Freya Kemp, Ryana MacDonald-Gay, Charis Pavely, Grace Potts, Mady Villiers, Issy Wong.

RASOOLI TO LEAD AFGHANISTAN IN ASIAN GAMES

MIDDLE-ORDER batter Darwish Rasooli has been named captain of the Afghanistan squad for the men's cricket event in the upcoming 20th Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan.

The games are scheduled to take place at the Korogi Sports Park from September 17 to October 3. In-form top-order batter Mohammad Akram has earned his national call-up on the back of an impressive SCL campaign, where he emerged as one of the stand-out performers with 339 runs across eight innings, featuring a century and two half-centuries. Joining him is all-rounder Ismat Alam, who was adjudged the Player of the Tournament for his stellar dual contribution of 294 runs and nine wickets.

Afghanistan Squad: Darwish Rasooli (c), Mohammad Ishaq (wk), Mohammad Akram, Hassan Eisaikhil, Khalid Taniwal, Imran Mir, Faisal Khan Shinozada, Najibullah Zadran, Farmanullah Safi, Ismat Alam, Karim Janat, Nangyal Kharoti, Arab Gul Momand, Faridoon Dawoodzai, and Abdullah Ahmadzai.

WARNER TO FEATURE IN WCL WITH BRAVO, DE VILLIERS, YUVRAJ

THE third season of World Championship of Legends (WCL) starting October 3 will feature former Australian opener David Warner alongside stars of yesteryear such as Yuvraj Singh, Dwayne Bravo and AB de Villiers to name a few, organisers stated in a release.

While the venue is yet to be announced, the tournament is scheduled to be held from October 3-18.

India Champions won the first season against Pakistan Champions, while South Africa Champions won the second season against Pakistan Champions.

"Following two record-breaking seasons, WCL 2026 will have more star power, more intensity, more national pride and more unforgettable cricketing moments. The third season has already added Bangladesh Champions to the tournament," the release stated. (Agencies)

Bowlers give India massive advantage



Indian players celebrate a wicket against Sri Lanka. (PTI)

■ By R Kaushik
GALLE, Aug 17

CERTAIN quarters questioned the wisdom of selecting three left-arm spinners, two of them conventional, in India's playing XI for the first Test against a left-heavy Sri Lankan batting line-up. Manav Suthar and Ravindra Jadeja emphatically put that debate to bed, sharing seven wickets to extend the visitors' dominance on the moving day at the Galle International Stadium.

Just about the only time India looked somewhat short of ideas on Monday was when Sonal Dinusha, playing his fourth Test, and Niroshan Dickwella, making a comeback after nearly three hours, produced an entertaining alliance of 146 in a little over two

JGI JAIN SPORTS

and a half hours.

The left-handed duo used contrasting methods to put the Indian bowling to sword, but by the time they came together, Sri Lanka had lost their first five wickets for just 90 after bowling India out for 462 in the first over of the day. Hard as centurion Dinusha and Dickwella tried, there was only so much they could do even when the left-arm spinning trio – wristie Kuldeep Yadav was the third wheel – drifted on to their pads repeatedly.

Sri Lanka had little else to show either side of that alliance, a second collapse of five for 48 ter-

minating their innings at 284 and giving India a massive 178-run advantage.

A day of unrelenting sunshine devolved into an evening of gloom as dark clouds gathered immediately after Suthar had Lahiru Kumara stumped to end the Sri Lankan first innings. India will hope to build quickly on their potentially decisive edge on the

morrow and give themselves enough time to prise out the ten wickets needed for 12WTC points because Monday offered enough evidence that once the Kookaburra softens, the threat quotient to batters drops dras-

tically.

In the morning, Mohammed Siraj put India in business with the wicket of Nishan Madushka in the first over before ceding centre stage to Suthar and Jadeja. Suthar struck paydirt with his first ball in this country, producing a ripper that Dinesh Chandimal could only follow into Rishabh Pant's gloves.

That was the cue for India to jump all over the Sri Lankan top order, with the stylish Lahiru Udara, Kamindu Mendis and skipper Dhananjaya de Silva failing to make a notable contribution.

As a quick end loomed, Sri Lanka found saviours in Dinusha and Dickwella. The latter's first scoring stroke on his surprise comeback was a delicately glanced four off Kuldeep, and

SUTHAR, JADEJA SHARE 7 WICKETS TO BUNDLE OUT LANKA FOR 284 GIVING VISITORS A HUGE 178-RUN LEAD

while he was busy at the crease, he kept his usual tempestuousness at bay. The 25-year-old Dinusha was solid and unperturbed, a picture of calmness as he picked off the bowlers when they fed his pads and used the slog-sweep to terrific effect.

Shubman Gill was a little short on creativity in the middle session when India failed to pick up a wicket, even though Siraj produced a stunning burst that sadly went unrewarded. Then, after doing all the hard work, Dickwella was felled by a beauty from Prasidh Krishna that took his outside edge on its way to Pant, and the wheels came off

again.

Dinusha hung around long enough to bring up a richly deserved hundred but fell next ball, trapped in front. Like any good side worth its salt, India were all over the Lankan lower order like a bad rash the moment they sensed an opening as Jadeja and Suthar joined hands to rule out late fireworks. Along the way, Jadeja stormed the record books with the scalp of Keshara Nuwantha, becoming only the fourth member of the 350 wickets-4,000 runs Test club as he joined Kapil Dev, Daniel Vettori and Ian Botham in a rarefied club.

The Hitavada Scoreboard

INDIA 1ST INNINGS (overnight 460-9)		D Chandimal c Pant b Suthar	4
K Yadav Not Out	13	K Mendis c Gill b Yadav	14
P Krishna c Dickwella		D de Silva c Rahul b Jadeja	21
b A Fernando	2	S Dinusha lbw b Jadeja	100
Extras: (b 4, lb 3, nb 4, w 1)	12	N Dickwella c Pant b Krishna	80
TOTAL: (All out, 116.4 overs)	462	K Nuwantha c Gill b Jadeja	2
Fall of wickets: 1-47, 1-197*, 2-236, 3-307, 4-319, 5-357, 6-377, 7-432, 8-447, 9-447.		P Jayasuriya c Jurel b Suthar	10
Bowling: Fernando 17.4-1-63-2, Kumara 13-1-76-0, Nuwantha 39-1-175-3, Jayasuriya 39-6-109-4, de Silva 4-0-15-0, Dinusha 4-0-17-0.		L Kumara st Pant b Suthar	10
SRI LANKA 1ST INNINGS		A Fernando Not Out	0
N Fernando c Padikkal b Siraj	0	Extras: (b 8, lb 2, nb 4, w 2)	16
L Igalagamage c Jaiswal b Suthar	27	TOTAL: (All out, 79.4 overs)	284
		Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-27, 3-53, 4-59, 5-90, 6-236, 7-243, 8-274, 9-274.	
		Bowling: Siraj 9-3-29-1, Krishna 14-0-47-1, Suthar 21-4-1-76-4, Yadav 14-0-65-1, Jadeja 21-5-57-3.	

Jadeja completes 350 Test wickets, joins Kapil Dev in elite club

GALLE, Aug 17 (ANI)

RAVINDRA Jadeja on Monday entered an elite group in Test cricket as the India all-rounder completed 350 wickets in the longest format during the first Test against Sri Lanka in Galle.

The 37-year-old Jadeja became only the fifth Indian bowler to reach the mark in Tests, joining Anil Kumble (619), Ravichandran Ashwin (537), Kapil Dev (434) and Harbhajan Singh (417).

Among left-arm spinners, Jadeja now sits third for Test wickets behind Sri Lanka's Rangana Herath (433) and New Zealand's Daniel Vettori (362).

Jadeja reached the landmark when Sri Lanka batter Keshara Nuwantha attempted to attack an away-turning delivery, only to mistime his shot. Shubman Gill completed the catch, giving Jadeja his 350th Test wicket.

The milestone also saw Jadeja

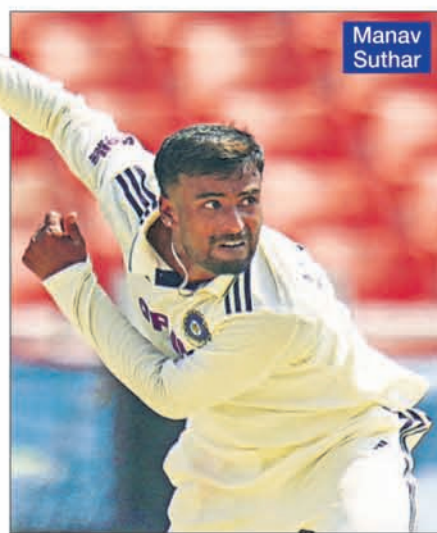
join former India captain Kapil Dev as the only Indians to have amassed more than 4,000 Test runs and 350 wickets. Jadeja began the match with 4,095 runs and 348 wickets from 89 Tests.

Overall, Jadeja became only the fourth player to achieve the combination of 4,000-plus runs and 350-plus wickets in Test cricket, joining Kapil Dev, England's Ian Botham and New Zealand's Daniel Vettori.

Kapil finished his illustrious Test career with 5,248 runs and 434 wickets, while Botham and Vettori collected 5,200 runs and 383 wickets, and 4,531 runs and 362 wickets, respectively.

Jadeja had already made an impact earlier in Sri Lanka's innings, dismissing skipper Dhananjaya de Silva for 21. Before the end of day's play, he achieved another significant achievement despite contributing only 13 runs with the bat.

CoE sessions, Kookaburra balls, learning from Jadeja



GALLE, Aug 17 (PTI)

MANAV Suthar on Monday gave another glimpse of his exceptional talent with a four-wicket haul against Sri Lanka in the first Test, but the seeds of the left-arm spinner's success was sown in a pre-series stint at the BCCI Centre of Excellence.

Suthar trained for 10 days at the CoE with Kookaburra balls, with winds wafting across

SECRET OF SUTHAR'S SL CONQUEST

the open field -- the training session closely mirrored the conditions at Galle.

Suthar underlined the importance of that training where the coaches also focused on his approach to the crease.

"I was practising with the Kookaburra ball after the Afghanistan Test. So, my plan was pretty simple to bowl in good areas, right length, right speed as the wicket here offers some bounce too which makes it mandatory to bowl at the right line," said Suthar in the post-day press conference.

Suthar's 4 for 76 spell kept the Lankans in check throughout the day, even when centurion Sonal Dinusha and Niroshan Dickwella (80) resisted the Indian bowlers for the whole of the post-lunch session.

The fightback was unexpected as India had reduced the hosts to 99 for five at lunch. But the young spinner said the key was to remain patient and keep bowling in the right areas repeatedly.

"Our main focus was to get wickets in the first session. We didn't get wickets in the second session but we got results in the third session. So, our focus was to keep bowling consistently in good areas.

"They (SL batters Dinusha and Dickwella)

were rotating the strike well. So, we needed to plan accordingly. So, our focus was on how we can create opportunities by bowling stump to stump line and find the right pace to bowl for this wicket," he said.

However, Suthar also benefited from the presence of an experienced campaigner at the other end - fellow left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja who also completed 350 wickets in Test cricket en route to a three-wicket haul.

"There are a lot of things that I can learn from him. He uses the (bowling) crease so well. His consistency while bowling at stumps is world class. So I would like to learn from him that no matter what the batsman is doing.

"How long can I bowl on the stump? Can you get a false shot? So there's a lot to learn from him," he noted.

The 24-year-old also said he observed the way Lankan spinners bowled on this pitch for the first two days.

"They bowled well yesterday. They varied their pace and I feel that on this wicket, the more consistent you are, the more purchase you get. So that's what we were trying to do," he added.

Smriti's willpower, Harmanpreet's big shots stand-out factors for Perry

MUMBAI, Aug 17 (PTI)

SMRITI Mandhana's 'incredible willpower' and a 'super-strong mind' and India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's tenacity are the qualities of the Indian superstars that stand out to her, said Australia legend Ellyse Perry on Monday.

Perry hailed Smriti's approach to the game and said she has got all the qualities.

"What makes Smriti so successful? Her amazing skill," Mandhana told 'JioHotstar'.

"She has got incredible willpower and a super-strong mind. The way she approaches the game, the way she prepares, the way she knows herself, the way she thinks about things, and the way that she likes challenges. She's got it all."

Talking about Harmanpreet, the veteran all-rounder said, "Harman, I think her greatest strength is her tenacity. She's a great competitor, and when she's going, she hits some of the biggest shots in the women's game."

Perry also gave a thumbs-up to the inaugural ICC Women's Champions Trophy, which will be held next year.

"It is another great opportunity for the women's game and for all the teams competing," Perry said.

"From my perspective, it's a new event, so it's always exciting to be a part of something like that and a new

spot on the calendar, which will be great for everyone."

"You want to play every game well. This tournament will be physically and mentally a huge challenge, and preparing for those matches, everyone is going to have to be spot on. But the mindset remains the same; you just want to win every game."

"You just naturally evolve as you grow as a person. Over the many years, there have been a number of different experiences, things to learn, people to work with, and new avenues to explore."

"Incrementally, as that happens, you add new things or change the way you do things. Often, they're only small changes, but over a long period of time, there's always something new or a way to learn more," she added.

"The landscape of women's cricket is really different these days. You walk into a very different environment as a young professional, but those girls are so well prepared for that," she said.

"So I don't think there is any one piece of advice. It is probably just as much as they would learn from current players, I learn from them. They have got a different experience, a different energy and a different way of going about things. So, it is just about supporting each other and having a really open mind to learn from each other," Perry added.



Smriti Mandhana (L) and Harmanpreet Kaur. (Above) Ellyse Perry.

Babar in doubt for start of desperation Tests in England

LEEDS, Aug 17 (AP)

TWO teams desperate for success meet when England and Pakistan begin a three-Test series on Wednesday in Leeds.

Neither has won a series of two Tests or more in almost two years. England's last such triumph was in December 2024 in New Zealand. Pakistan's last was in October that same year at home against England.

ENG VS PAK

First Test

Aug 19 from 3.30 pm

England's Ashes series in Australia unravelled in less than 11 days. England were blown away as coach Brendon McCullum overestimated and underprepared his side, and captain Ben Stokes lost faith in Bazball. England had a chance to wipe the slate clean but McCullum and Stokes stayed. In June, Stokes over-celebrated a win against New Zealand achieved on a trashy Lord's pitch and was suspended, and the nonsense Kiwis ruthlessly came from behind and took the series.

CENTCOM destroys IRGC surveillance tower along Gulf of Oman

Washington

The US said it destroyed an IRGC surveillance tower on Iran's south-eastern coast on Wednesday, releasing declassified footage of the strike as part of its campaign to militarily weaken Tehran's hold over the Strait of Hormuz.

In a statement posted on X, CENTCOM said American forces had targeted the Chah Bahar Shahid Kalantari Port surveillance tower in the port city of Chabahar.

"On July 16, U.S. forces successfully destroyed the Chah Bahar Shahid Kalantari Port surveillance tower, part of a maritime surveillance network along Iran's Gulf of Oman coastline used for decades by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard



Corps (IRGC) to track and target commercial vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz," CENTCOM said. The US military said the destruction of the tower would reduce the IRGC's ability to monitor and coordinate attacks against commercial shipping passing through the strategic waterway. "The destruction of the tower directly degrades IRGC's ability to coordinate

attacks on innocent civilian crew members," CENTCOM added. "Furthermore, the strike protects freedom of navigation in regional waters for all vessels, except for ships attempting to violate the ongoing US naval blockade against Iran."

According to CENTCOM, the facility was part of Iran's wider maritime surveillance network along its Gulf

of Oman coastline that was used to track vessels moving through the Strait of Hormuz. The strike comes amid Washington's continuing efforts to strengthen its influence over the strategic shipping lane, which has been the epicentre of mounting tensions between the two countries and remains one of the world's most important routes for global energy shipments.

Fear grips shippers as crews once again become reluctant to traverse Strait of Hormuz

Tehran/Washington

Since the collapse of the US-Iran memorandum of understanding, ship crews operating around the Strait of Hormuz have become increasingly reluctant to make the journey, according to Dimitris Maniatis, chief executive of Greek maritime risk management firm Marisks. "Vessels that were trapped inside the Persian Gulf for a very long time, belonging to owners that were extremely risk-averse, managed to exit, and everybody was very joyful about that," he said during a briefing for maritime intelligence group Lloyd's List on Thursday. "With the recent events, everything has changed. We've gone back to the worst-case scenario. Nobody is willing to move." Maniatis pointed to the sharp decline in transits through the strait, as well as a rise in deadly attacks on commer-



cial vessels since the ceasefire collapsed.

"All this resonates with crews, and right now they're just not very happy to go through, no matter what is promised to them," he said. "It's not about money anymore, it's not about any other higher calling, it's purely about the fear that is governing the decision-making right now."

The concerns have led to oil

prices climbing to their highest levels in a month, with Brent crude, the international benchmark, rising around 1% on Thursday to trade at about \$85 a barrel. US benchmark crude also gained a similar amount, trading just below \$80 a barrel. Oil prices continued to climb on Friday, with Brent crude moving above \$85 a barrel amid the ongoing Iran war.

Iran accuses US of striking civilian infrastructure amid collapse of peace talks



Tehran/Washington

Iran today accused the US of targeting civilian infrastructure in its latest wave of air strikes, since the peace talks between the two countries collapsed. According to Iranian state media and provincial authorities, several civilian sites, including bridges, a railway station and an airport, were hit during overnight attacks. The BBC confirmed that one bridge in Hormozgan province had been struck. CENTCOM has not released a detailed list of targets but said the operation was intended to "further degrade Iranian military capabilities". President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to target Iranian bridges and power stations in an effort to force Tehran back to the negotiating table, leading to subsequent retaliation by Tehran where it conducted several attacks on

Israel as well as US installations and allies in the Gulf. The latest attacks marked the sixth consecutive night of US air strikes on Iranian territory. Iranian state media and local officials said Iranshahr Airport in south-eastern Iran, a railway station and six bridges in Hormozgan province were among the sites hit on Thursday night. Provincial authorities in Hormozgan said seven people were killed in the attacks. Night-time footage has surfaced showing a damaged Gariveh Bridge with a ball of flames on top of it, while daylight images, similarly show a crumbled stretch of road with rubble around the broken bridge. When asked about the reported strikes on civilian infrastructure, CENTCOM said it had nothing further to add beyond its earlier statement.

IRGC vows to continue carrying out strikes on US targets until stability

Tehran/Washington

Iran will continue carrying out what it described as "effective and targeted strikes" against the US until stability is restored, said the commander of the IRGC's Aerospace Force on Friday. "Every inch of territory is equally important," Brigadier General Seyyed Majid Mousavi said. "Our effective and targeted strikes against the enemy, launched from across Iran, will continue until security and calm are restored along the southern coastline and in the Strait of Hormuz." Earlier, the IRGC



claimed to have launched a "surprise attack" on a US special forces base at al-Tanf in southeastern Syria, alleging that helicopters were destroyed and casualties inflicted in retaliation for recent American strikes, though this was denied by Damascus. The US military has previously said its forces withdrew from the base earlier this year following

a long-running deployment as part of the US-led coalition against terrorist groups. The IRGC also claimed it had launched a fresh series of attacks against US military facilities across West Asia on Friday, although there was no immediate confirmation from US officials regarding any damage or casualties. In separate statements, the powerful paramili-

tary force said it had destroyed US radar facilities on Oman's Salamah Rocks in the Strait of Hormuz, targeted American logistical support centres in Kuwait with drones and struck a US military base in Bahrain. The IRGC further claimed that several US refuelling aircraft and fighter jets had been destroyed in Jordan, while additional aircraft sustained significant damage. The US military did not immediately comment on the latest claims, which Iranian officials have previously been accused of exaggerating.

Chants & boos disrupt JD Vance's national guard lunch

Carolina : Vice President JD Vance's lunch event with national guard troops at Union Station on Wednesday was disrupted by a wave of protests, as demonstrators voiced opposition to the Trump administration's security deployment in the capital. Vance, joined by defence secretary Pete

Hegseth and White House deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller, met National Guard members - many from red states such as South Carolina, Ohio, and Mississippi - at a Shake Shack inside the station. The visit was intended as a gesture of appreciation for troops deployed to patrol Washington, DC.

Trump claims US electoral system under siege; highlights role of China, Deep State, illegal migrants

Washington

US President Donald Trump in his Thursday primetime speech portrayed the US electoral system as being under siege by foreign actors and illegal migrants who continue to manipulate its many vulnerabilities, besmirching the integrity of American elections, reports Axios. During the 25-minute

speech from the East Room of the White House, Trump primarily focused on two objectives, namely building support for the SAVE America Act, which would require proof of citizenship to register to vote, and revisiting his longstanding claims about the 2020 election, which he lost to Joe Biden. Focusing on alle-

gations involving China and the American "Deep State", Trump, citing newly released "raw" intelligence claimed that Beijing had carried out "the largest compromise of election data in history" during the 2020 election by obtaining 220 million US voter files and creating "ballots for Biden". However, voter registra-

tion lists containing names and addresses are publicly available in most US states, and access to such information does not itself indicate interference in election outcomes. Trump also accused the US "Deep State" of withholding documents detailing Beijing's activities from him during his first term.

"We're going to give them hope back," Burnham said in his first speech as party leader

Andy formally becomes Labour leader ahead of moving into Downing Street

London

Newly elected MP Andy Burnham was officially declared leader of Britain's governing Labour Party today, clearing the final hurdle before becoming the country's prime minister next week. The centre-left party announced the result of the leadership contest to replace outgoing Prime Minister Keir Starmer, in which Burnham stood as the sole candidate. The outcome looked inevitable after Burnham manged to

secure an overwhelming 379 nominations from Labour's 403 MPs in the House of Commons by Thursday evening. "We're going to give them hope back," Burnham said in his first speech as party leader. "This is a proud moment you have given me and my family today, and an emotional one, but it is one for which I am ready." Burnham said Labour must begin by acknowledging that "this generation of politicians" had failed to challenge a



political culture and economic model that "simply doesn't work well enough for ordinary people". "We pledge to them to be better," he said. Accepting the leader-

ship, Burnham outlined five priorities that he said would help "make us better". His first pledge was to work "relentlessly" to create a culture of "one Labour team," promising to

respect different viewpoints within the party and build a leadership team reflecting voices from across Labour. His second objective was to "build a new politics", arguing that many people had become frustrated with "today's politics" and had switched off from the process. Acknowledging public disappointment, he said, "We haven't been good enough," and pointed that voters in Makerfield had given Labour another chance, but warned that this was the party's

"last chance" to change course. As party leader, Burnham said that Labour must focus on solving problems rather than scoring political points, including addressing long-neglected issues such as social care. Starmer had long faced mounting pressure to step down as premier following Labour's poor performance in local elections in May. He will remain prime minister until Monday, when he formally submits his resignation.

Syrian govt. says it intercepted advanced weapons shipment bound for Hezbollah

Damascus

The Syrian government said on Thursday that state security forces had intercepted a shipment of "advanced weapons" being smuggled into the country and likely destined for Hezbollah in neighbouring Lebanon. Issuing a statement, Syria's Interior Ministry said specialised security units had "thwarted an attempt to smuggle a large shipment of advanced weapons along the Syrian-Iraqi border, seizing it before it could be brought into Syrian

territory." According to the ministry, security forces identified a vehicle parked near the border under suspicious circumstances before proceeding to search it, leading to the seizure of a cache of advanced weaponry which reportedly included long-range missiles, guided anti-tank missiles and drones. "Preliminary investigations, based on the evidence and indications gathered during the operation, established that the shipment was intended to pass through Syrian territory."

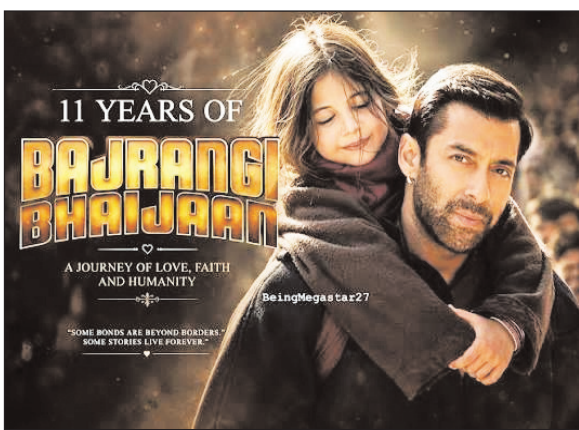
SK Films celebrates 11 years of 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan'

Mumbai

The makers have marked the 11th anniversary of "Bajrangi Bhaijaan" by paying tribute to the much-loved film with a nostalgic social media post celebrating its timeless story and unforgettable characters.

Directed by Kabir Khan and produced under the banner of Salman Khan Films, "Bajrangi Bhaijaan" was released in 2015. The film starred Salman Khan, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Harshaali Malhotra and Nawazuddin Siddiqui in lead roles. The movie is considered one of the most successful and well-known films of Khan's career.

To mark 11 years of the film's release, Salman Khan Films shared a special carousel post on social media, featuring many memorable scenes from the film. The post read, "Every swipe is a memory



Alia Bhatt In Tumbbad 2: Is She The Right Choice For The Film? Netizens

Days after the release of Alpha, the makers of Tummbad 2 officially announced that Alia Bhatt has been onboarded for the film. Rumors that the actress will be part of the sequel have been doing the rounds for a while now. The film is a sequel to the 2018 horror film Tummbad, which was critically acclaimed and became a cult classic. It became a defining film in India's mythological horror genre. Now, the cast of Sohum Shah's film has become bigger with Alia Bhatt and Nawazuddin Siddiqui.

Every frame is an emotion Every scene tells a story Every moment lives on Here's to 11 years of Bajrangi Bhaijaan" The story of "Bajrangi Bhaijaan" revolves

around Pawan Kumar Chaturvedi, aka Bajrangi, who travels to Pakistan, crossing borders and facing many difficulties, to reunite Munni, a mute Pakistani girl, with her

Ricky Kej's melodies take 'Wild Tamil Nadu' to Green Oscars

Mumbai

Three-time Grammy Award-winning composer Ricky Kej has added another international honour to his career after the wildlife documentary "Wild Tamil Nadu", featuring his original score, secured a nomination in the Sustainability Award category at the Wildscreen Panda Awards 2026, widely regarded as the "Green Oscars" of wildlife filmmaking. The Wildscreen Panda Awards, often referred to as the "Green Oscars," recognise films that leave a lasting impression on audiences with outstanding cinematography, sound, music, and a powerful conservation message. This year, "Wild



Tamil Nadu" has been nominated alongside several other prestigious wildlife films from around the world. Directed by renowned wildlife filmmaker Kalyan Varma and narrated by actor Arvind Swamy, the documentary takes viewers on a journey

through the diverse natural landscapes of Tamil Nadu. Set amidst pristine forests, mist-shrouded mountains, mangroves, grasslands, and beaches, the film showcases the behavior of rare wildlife and highlights the deep connection between nature.

Teaser of 'Prem Keetanu' is out

The teaser of "Prem Keetanu" has been officially unveiled, giving audiences a glimpse into a fun-filled story about friendship, youthful dreams and the unpredictable chaos of growing up. Gaurav Verma has produced the film in association with Fars Films and presented it in association with Bhavana Studios.

Directed by Apurv Singh Karki, "Prem Keetanu" stars Veer Paharia, Aafia Syed, Aparshakti Khurana, Rakesh Bedi and Nikhil Vijay in lead roles. The film will release in theatres worldwide on October 2. The teaser offers a humorous look at the lives of today's youth, their friendships, dreams, and fun. The upbeat music, along

with scenes of chaos and mischief, energises the teaser. The teaser doesn't reveal much about the film's plot. Karki said, "I am very excited to bring 'Prem Keetanu' to audiences. It's a story of heart, satire, friendship, and the little things that make our lives memorable as we grow up. I had a lot of fun exploring this world and these characters."

Deepika completes challenging action sequences for 'Raaka' during pregnancy



Mumbai

Actress Deepika Padukone has once again showcased her dedication towards her craft by continuing work on her upcoming sci-fi fantasy action film "Raaka" during her pregnancy, reportedly completing several demanding sequences in her seventh month. According to media reports, Padukone is currently busy shooting for director Atlee's ambitious science-fiction fantasy action film. It is reported that she is continuously shooting within the stipulated eight-hour working period and is busy completing important portions of the film before going on maternity leave. According to reports, she completed some physically challenging action sequences.

Rakul Preet Singh accepts the 'What's on Your Plate' challenge, raising awareness

Mumbai

Actor Satyajeet Dubey has revealed that he chose to be part of the upcoming science-fiction film "Simulacra" purely on instinct, saying his decision was driven more by the director's creative vision than by logic or careful calculation.

During the trailer launch of the film "Simulacra", Dubey said that his decision to be a part of director Pankaj Sawant's first feature film was influenced by the creative belief and vision of the director.

The 35-year-old actor said, "I'm always open to working with filmmakers who bring fresh ideas and a different vision. When I met Pankaj, he narrated the film's story to me in detail



and showed me audio-visual references. I didn't fully understand the story at first, but the world he was trying to create on screen

and the passion with which he wanted to tell it resonated with me." He said that saying yes to the film was based solely on his

gut feeling. "After that, we all had only one goal: to make the best film possible. I tried to give my 100 percent as an actor and collaborator."

Dubey said he's eager to see the audience's reaction to the film after its release. He said, "After a while, you can't look at your own work objectively. Ultimately, it's the audience who determines how much people connect with a film. I'm excited to see how people experience this film and what new conversations it sparks." Produced by Shrikant Kadam, Praveen Pingat, and Pankaj Sawant under the banner of Philisia Films, "Simulacra" is a high-concept science-fiction film starring Dubey and Akshara.

Mirzapur: The Movie' unveils new Vaaroon Forever posters ahead of Aug 18 release

The makers of "Mirzapur: The Movie" have unveiled two fresh posters for "Vaaroon Forever", giving fans a first look at the upcoming track ahead of its release on August 18. "Vaaroon Forever" is a new version of the franchise's popular song 'Vaaroon'. Released in 2020, this soulful track became an integral part of the world of "Mirzapur". The original song was sung by Romi, while the music was composed by Anand Bhaskar and the lyrics were written by Ginni Dewan. This time, Romi



will be joined by popular singer Shreya Ghoshal. Anand Bhaskar and Ginni Dewan have also returned for this new version. They have presented the song in a new musical style while retaining the spirit of the original. Fans' excitement

for "Vaaroon Forever" has increased following the release of two new posters. The song will be released on August 18. A revamped retelling of an old favourite, the track will attempt to combine the nostalgia of "Mirzapur" with a new musical.

Johnny Depp in discussions to return as Captain Jack Sparrow

The next "Pirates of the Caribbean" film could steer the franchise in a new direction, with Margot Robbie's character reportedly set to take the lead while Johnny Depp's Captain Jack Sparrow may return in a smaller role.

"We're talking with Johnny, we're working on a screenplay, and



hopefully we can get this done," producer Jerry Bruckheimer told DEADLINE. The last Pirates of the Caribbean, 2017's Dead Men Tell No Tales, was the lowest-grossing in the franchise with USD 795.9M worldwide. Through five movies, the rich Disney live-action franchise has minted USD 4.5 billion at the global box office. Depp first brought Captain Jack Sparrow to life in

Gore Verbinski's 2003 film "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl". Directed by Gore Verbinski, the film also starred Orlando Bloom as Will Turner and Keira Knightley as Elizabeth Swann. He continued his role in the movie's 2006 sequel, "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest," and the third film of the franchise, "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End,"

Gurpreet Ghuggi recalls Akshay Kumar's support during Punjab floods

Actor

Gurpreet Ghuggi has opened up about Akshay Kumar's support for families affected by last year's floods in Punjab, recalling how the film star stepped forward to help without seeking any publicity. The 55-year-old actor said, "Akshay Paaji contacted me and asked how he could help. At that time, people were getting food and other essential items, so I told him that the real help would be for those in need after the flood, as



many people's homes were destroyed."

He said a team has been formed to identify families in need, and homes are being constructed in Gurdaspur and Amritsar districts.

Kumar had promised to build 100 homes for the affected families, of which 80 have been completed, and the remaining work is expected to be completed soon. Ghuggi

said, "This is all possible because of Akshay Paaji." He explained that this work is being done under the Hari Om Foundation, established by Akshay Kumar in memory of

his late father, Hari Om Bhatia. Recalling Kumar's generosity, Ghuggi said, "Akshay paaji is just playing the role of a monster on screen; in real life he is a wonderful person." He said that Kumar didn't want his name to be revealed regarding the help. Akshay had said, "There's nothing wrong with that. I don't feel comfortable helping someone and then telling people about it." It is worth noting that Ghuggi has worked with Kumar.

Aamna Sharif to spend birthday with family, new projects

Mumbai

Actress Aamna Sharif says she plans to celebrate her birthday in an intimate setting with family and close friends this year, choosing meaningful

moments over a grand celebration.

She said that every birthday makes her realise how lucky she is. She said that she will start her special day with gratitude and pos-

itive thinking, follow her fitness routine and wants to make this day more special by helping the needy. The 42-year-old actress said, "This year my wish is simple. To stay healthy,

to continue growing as an actor and a person, and to continue receiving the love of the audience. I couldn't ask for a better birthday gift than this." Sharif has garnered a cult follow-

ing among audiences over the years with her beauty and acting chops. She has showcased her acting prowess in projects like "Ek Villain" and "Aadha Ishq."