

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Published from Prayagraj and circulated in Lucknow, Kanpur, Chitrakoot, Kaushambi, Pratapgarh, Jaunpur, Varanasi, and Ghazipur.

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Friday, 14 August, 2026

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

Monsoon Session Marred by Uproar, Ruling and Opposition Blame Each Other

Proceedings of both Houses of Parliament adjourned sine die; Opposition chose to avoid discussion

New Delhi

Amidst massive uproar and a persistent deadlock, proceedings in both Houses of Parliament—the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha—were adjourned sine die on Thursday, marking the conclusion of the Monsoon Session. Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned indefinitely amidst the commotion; earlier, as soon as the House convened, opposition members began creating a ruckus. Today was the final day of the Monsoon Session. While House proceedings usually continue until the evening, they



were adjourned today at approximately 11:05 AM. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah also attended the House on this concluding day; this marked Amit Shah's first appearance in the House since July 20. Meanwhile, in the Rajya Sabha, the Mines and Minerals

(Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, was passed on the session's last day. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge raised the issue of an alleged 'purification' ritual that took place following his event in Haldwani. Immediately thereafter, Rajya Sabha

Rijiju: Govt Ready for Debate, Opposition Disrupted House

Eleven bills were introduced in the Lok Sabha and two in the Rajya Sabha. Meanwhile, the Lok Sabha passed 12 bills, and the Rajya Sabha also passed or returned 12 bills. Rijiju claimed that the government was prepared for a discussion in the House and wanted to answer the opposition's questions, but the opposition chose to avoid the debate. The productivity of the Lok Sabha stood at 19 percent, while that of the Rajya Sabha was 39 percent.



Although the Lok Sabha faced disruptions, some opposition members participated in the debate in the Rajya Sabha, despite walkouts by certain

opposition parties. During the session, the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) of both Houses; the opposition had been demanding the withdrawal of this bill. The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026—which entails stringent penal action for cases of examination paper leaks—was passed.

proceedings were also adjourned sine die. 12 Bills passed during Parliament's Monsoon Session; quality of debate unsatisfactory:

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Proceedings in both Houses of Parliament—the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha—were adjourned

sine die on Thursday. Although the Monsoon Session was marred by uproar and deadlock, the government succeeded.

Congress Hails Bill Stalls as Major Victory



New Delhi

Congress has described the government's inability to push forward many important bills due to opposition unity and pressure during the monsoon session of Parliament as its biggest achievement. Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said the One Nation, One Election Bill, the Developed India Education Foundation Bill and the 130th Constitutional Amendment Bill could not come up in this session, while the FCRA Amendment Bill was sent

to the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). However, he expressed concern over the amendment bills related to Mines and Minerals and National Cooperative Development Corporation being passed without discussion.

Jairam Ramesh said in a press conference at the Congress headquarters here that the monsoon session of 2026 was a complete washout. Comparing it with the 2015 monsoon session, he said that at that time Vyapam scam was the major issue and this time there were issues related.

Nihang attacks Sukhbir Singh Badal in Nanded



Nanded

Reports are emerging of an attack on Shiromani Akali Dal leader and former Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab, Sukhbir Singh Badal, in Nanded. A Nihang attacked Badal at a Gurudwara in Nanded. He sustained an injury to his hand during the attack and has been admitted to Yashomati Hospital. The Nanded police provided this information. What did the police say? According to the police, Badal was attacked near a Gurudwara, after which he was hospitalized. A video going viral on social media shows Badal entering a building with a cloth tied around his right

hand. Security personnel also injured in the attack. The attack took place at Gurudwara Mata Sahib Kaur in Nanded. It is reported that one of Badal's security personnel, Santosh Kendre, was also attacked. Preliminary information suggests that a *kirpan* (ceremonial sword) was used in the attack on Sukhbir Badal. Sukhbir Badal had visited Takht Sri Hazur Sahib with his wife. Earlier in the day, Sukhbir Badal had visited Takht Sri Hazur Sahib in Nanded with his wife, Harsimrat Kaur Badal. Harsimrat Kaur Badal is an Akali Dal MP. The attack occurred around 11:00 AM.



Full-Dress Rehearsal Held at Red Fort for 80th I-Day

Rahul Meets Ken-Betwa Project-Affected Families

New Delhi. Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, met a delegation on Thursday that was protesting against the Ken-Betwa river-linking project in Madhya Pradesh. He listened to the grievances of the delegation members and assured them that he would raise their concerns at the appropriate level. Rahul Gandhi assured the affected people that no injustice would be allowed to happen to them.

SC: Health Must Come Before Business Interests

New Delhi

On Thursday, the Supreme Court reprimanded the Central Government and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) for the delay in implementing front-of-pack warning labels on packaged food products containing high levels of sugar, salt, and saturated fat. The apex court stated that public health—particularly the health of children—cannot be compromised. A bench comprising Justice JB



Pardiwala and Justice K. Vinod Chandran questioned the Centre's reluctance to implement stringent nutritional warnings. The bench remarked that if the government failed to take action, it would issue further orders in the matter. The court

directed the Additional Solicitor General, appearing for the Centre, to ensure compliance with its directives.

"We are concerned about the health of citizens, especially growing children," the bench observed. The court also asked the FSSAI if it did not want the country's people—particularly growing children—to remain healthy. Additionally, the court sought details of the steps taken so far and questioned.



of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government enacted stringent laws to curb irregularities in the NEET examination, established fast-track courts, and introduced provisions for

DMRC: Metro Services to Start at 4 AM on Independence Day

New Delhi

To facilitate the movement of special guests, invitees, and the general public attending the Independence Day celebrations, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) will commence metro services at 4:00 AM on Saturday from all terminal stations across its network. This information was conveyed via a press release on Thursday. According to the release, metro services on all lines will operate at 30-minute

intervals until regular services begin as per the scheduled timetable for August 15. To ensure hassle-free travel for special guests and invitees, the DMRC has provided 130,000 specially pre-issued QR tickets to the Ministry of Defence. Additionally, invitees holding valid physical admit cards issued by the Ministry of Defence will be provided with these special pre-issued QR tickets at designated metro stations.

CM Hands Appointment Letters to 1,368 Teachers

New Delhi

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta distributed appointment letters to newly appointed teachers at an event held at Bharat Mandapam on Thursday. In this phase, the Chief Minister handed over appointment letters to a total of 1,368 teachers, comprising 1,015 TGTs, 236 PGTTs, and 117 music teachers. Extending her best wishes to the new appointees, the Chief Minister remarked that this occasion was not merely about handing out appointment letters;



it was an opportunity to reinforce the commitment to ensuring quality education for lakhs of children in Delhi and

their families. Delhi's Education Minister Ashish Sood, senior officials from the Directorate of

Education, and other dignitaries were present at the event. The Chief Minister stated that the induction of these new

teachers signifies enhanced academic support, guidance, and expanded opportunities for thousands of students studying in Delhi's government schools. This recruitment drive marks a significant step towards filling vacancies and strengthening the teaching workforce in government schools. She emphasized that the government's objective extends beyond constructing school buildings; it aims to ensure that every classroom has qualified.

'Purification' controversy in Rajya Sabha

New Delhi

On Thursday, Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, raised the issue of an alleged 'purification' ritual performed at the Ramlila Ground in Haldwani, Uttarakhand, following an address by the Congress President. Describing it as an act of untouchability, he demanded that a case be registered against those responsible. Kharge stated that the ground underwent 'purification' after the rally held on August 8, reflecting a mindset



akin to untouchability. He alleged that the BJP played a role in this incident and insisted that action be taken against those responsible. In response, Leader of the House J.P. Nadda stated that the BJP does not endorse such activities.

Condemning the incident, he assured that BJP National General Secretary Nitin Naveen would treat the matter seriously. Nadda said, "Strict action will be taken against anyone found guilty following an investigation."

Madrasa Anwar-ul-Uloom Students Take Out Tricolour March Ahead of Independence

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: Students of Madrasa Anwar-ul-Uloom, located on Mirza Ghalib Road, took out a Tricolour march on Thursday as part of Independence Day celebrations. Carrying the national flag, the students marched through the locality while raising patriotic slogans. Members of the madrasa staff also participated in the procession. The march began from the



madrasa premises and passed through several nearby roads. The students displayed great enthusiasm as they walked with the Tricolour in their hands. The patriotic slogans and the sight of students carrying the national flag created an atmosphere of patriotism in the area. During the programme, the madrasa staff spoke to the students about respecting the national flag and highlighted the importance of national unity and

integrity. The procession returned to the madrasa after passing through various routes, where it was formally concluded. Principal Maulana Jawwad-ul-Haidar Rizvi, Maulana Razi Haider, Maulana Zargham Haider, Maulana Mohammad Abbas, Maulana Shahryar Rizvi, Maulana Shazan Jawwadi, Maulana Muntazir Hussain, Javed Rizvi, Kamal Haider and Mohammad Rizvi were among those present.

Springdales School DK hosts 21st Dr A K Saha Memorial Young Scientists Inter-School Contest

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

PRAYAGRAJ: Around 90% of the artifacts currently kept in the reserve collection of the Allahabad Museum will gradually be put on public display, with exhibition themes planned to change every three months to offer visitors a fresh experience. Divisional Commissioner Dr Lokesh M inspected the museum complex in his capacity as Director of the Allahabad Museum and reviewed various galleries. He also held a meeting with officials and staff to assess the museum's arrangements, requirements and challenges. During the meeting, officials informed him that nearly 90% of the museum's artifacts are currently kept in reserve. The Divisional Commissioner directed officials to display ancient and historically significant artifacts, particularly old and stone



sculptures, in a phased manner. He said bringing these heritage objects before the younger generation would provide them with an opportunity to understand India's history and culture. He also directed that the themes of the displayed artifacts be changed every three months so that visitors get to see something new during each visit. While

inspecting the Natural History Gallery, the Divisional Commissioner reviewed old bird specimens and other remains. He directed officials to prepare a proposal for replacing extremely old specimens as per the prescribed rules. He also ordered the museum to organise an exhibition of paintings and photographs by local artists during the

monsoon season till August 25. An on-the-spot oil and canvas painting activity will also be organised for school students. To give the Allahabad Museum a modern and world-class look, Dr Lokesh M directed officials to prepare an action plan after studying the facilities and management systems of leading museums in Patna and Bengaluru. He also asked officials to invite the Patna Museum team to Prayagraj for an exchange of experiences and ideas. The Municipal Commissioner was directed to conduct a mega cleaning drive on the museum premises, undertake necessary tree pruning and complete required maintenance work. The Divisional Commissioner also stressed the need for extensive promotion of the museum's activities and exhibitions through social media to attract more visitors.

CISF recovers over 428 Metric Tonnes of illegal coal in Jharkhand, West Bengal; Four FIRs registered

New Delhi

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has intensified its crackdown on illegal coal mining, theft, unauthorised storage and transportation under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, recovering more than 428 metric tonnes of illegally mined and transported coal during coordinated operations in Jharkhand and West Bengal. According to the CISF, the enforcement drive was carried out between July 4 and July 8 as part of the Government of India's "Zero Coal Leakage" initiative. The opera-

tions followed the empowerment of designated CISF officers under Sections 22, 23B and 24 of the MMDR Act, enabling the force to take direct enforcement action against illegal mining activities. The operations, conducted in coordination with Coal India subsidiaries, local police and district administrations, covered the coalfields of Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL), Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL) and Central Coalfields Limited (CCL). During the drive, CISF recovered 428.34 metric tonnes of illegally mined, stored or trans-

ported coal, registered four FIRs, seized one Hyva truck, more than 13 motorcycles and other equipment allegedly used in illegal mining and transportation, besides apprehending several offenders. At BCCL in Dhanbad, intelligence-based raids were conducted in Katras, Block-II, Basantimata (Kargil), Kustore, Sijua, Jealgora, Barora, Govindpur and NTST areas. Acting on specific intelligence inputs supported by drone surveillance and field verification, CISF recovered 319.54 metric tonnes of illegally stored coal.

Yuva Shakti, Vande Mataram among key highlights of 80th Independence Day

New Delhi

Yuva Shakti and the sesquicentenary of Vande Mataram will be among the defining features of the 80th Independence Day celebrations, which will be led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from the historic Red Fort. Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, briefing the media here on Monday on the preparations for the celebrations, said youth power had been consciously chosen as this year's major theme, with the focus aligned with the government's vision of

Viksit Bharat@2047. "Every year will obviously have a new highlight," Singh said, adding that the emphasis on youth had been decided well in advance and was not prompted by any recent developments. The incorporation of Vande Mataram into the ceremonial sequence will be one of the major changes this year. The Prime Minister's arrival will be followed by Vande Mataram. Later, the Prime Minister will unfurl the national flag, followed by the national anthem. Singh said this would be the first time

that Vande Mataram would be incorporated into the Independence Day ceremony in this sequence. Asked whether the practice would continue at future national functions, he said the Ministry of Home Affairs' guidelines indicate that the national song would form part of the protocol for national functions. The 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram is also being marked through a nationwide series of musical performances. From August 8 to August 15, bands of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Indian Coast Guard,

NCC and several Central Armed Police Forces and other security organisations are conducting performances at 343 prominent locations across the country. At the Red Fort celebrations, My Bharat volunteers, youth achievers and students will be among the invitees, along with beneficiaries associated with various government programmes. The government has also invited what it describes as "architects of Viksit Bharat@2047", citizens who have contributed to the development.

Old Delhi Welcomes Renaming of Redevelopment Body, Eyes Heritage Revival

New Delhi

The General Secretary of Chandni Chowk Nagrik Manch Praveen Shankar Kapoor, who is also the spokesperson of the Delhi BJP, has expressed gratitude towards Chief Minister Rekha Gupta for fulfilling the long-pending demand of the residents and traders of Old Delhi by renaming the Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation, which was constituted for the development of the area, as the Indraprastha Heritage Redevelopment Corporation. Kapoor said that the then Congress government had established the Shahjahanabad



Redevelopment Corporation in the early 2000s, promising special status and focused development for Old Delhi. However, despite the passage of 25 years, no significant development took place. Although the main Chandni Chowk road was beautified, the project eventually deteriorated because it remained

entirely under the control of officials, Kapoor added. He further said that earlier this year, Chief Minister Gupta took charge of the Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation and, as her first initiative, included and commenced the redevelopment of the Marghat Wale Hanuman Temple area. Now, in

response to the long-standing demand of the people of Old Delhi, the Corporation has been renamed the "Indraprastha Virasat Punarvikas Nigam," a decision that is widely welcomed. Kapoor said that the residents of Old Delhi are hopeful that, under the leadership of the Chief Minister, the journey of development in the area will now be revived in harmony with the region's rich Ganga-Jamuni composite cultural heritage. The Chandni Chowk Nagrik Manch, is a prominent local traders' and residents' body in Old Delhi.

PMLA court takes cognisance of ED chargesheet in Rs. 1,992 crore JVL Agro bank fraud case

New Delhi

A Special PMLA Court in Prayagraj has taken cognisance of the chargesheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with the bank fraud case involving JVL Agro Industries Ltd and others. The chargesheet was filed before the Special Court (PMLA) in Lucknow on November 25, 2025. The court has taken cognisance against 25 accused persons and entities. The ED initiated its investigation based on an FIR and chargesheet filed by the Central Bureau of

Investigation (CBI), Lucknow, regarding offences under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code in connection with the alleged bank fraud committed by JVL Agro Industries Ltd., its promoters and other associates. The investigation under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) revealed that JVL Agro Industries Ltd., under the control of its promoter, Satya Narayan Jhunjhunwala, conspired with his associates to fraudulently divert and siphon off working capital funds through a network.

Delhi: DoE, IGL, & NGO in CM's presence sign tripartite MoU for 'Catch The Rain' across CM Shri Schools

New Delhi

Delhi Government has inked an important tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on under the 'Catch the Rain' initiative between Indraprastha Gas Limited (IGL), the Directorate of Education and Ehsaas NGO. The MoU was signed in the presence of Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, and as part of the agreement, rainwater harvesting project will be implemented across 75 CM Shri Schools in the national capital. The project will be implemented under



IGL's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, and includes the audit and restoration of existing rainwater harvesting systems on school campuses, as well as the installation of new rooftop rainwater harvesting systems. Water conservation and environmental awareness programmes will also be

organised for students and teachers, officials said. Speaking on the occasion, CM Gupta has said that water conservation is not merely an environmental necessity, but the foundation of a secure future for coming generations. She said the Delhi government is promoting education and environmental conserva-

tion together, and this initiative will be an important step towards promoting sustainable water management in government schools. Gupta has clearly stated that the government's goal is to make its schools exceptionally good, so that parents prefer enrolling their children in state schools, rather than private. According to Gupta, the initiative is an important step towards effectively implementing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Catch the Rain' vision in Delhi and that the government

CBI registers Rs. 133.52 crore Bank fraud case, conducts searches in Mumbai & Kochi

New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) today conducted searches at multiple premises linked to the directors of a private company in Mumbai, Maharashtra, and Kochi, Kerala, in connection with an alleged bank fraud of Rs. 133.52 crore. The CBI registered the case on July 9 based on a complaint filed by the State Bank of India (SBI), SAM Branch, Mumbai, against the directors of the private company, along with

unknown public servants and private individuals, for allegedly causing a wrongful loss of approximately Rs. 133.52 crore to the bank. According to the CBI, the accused directors of Furnace Fabrica (India) Ltd. — A.R. Basheeruddin, Badri Prasad, Nezee Basheeruddin, Raiz Basheeruddin and Sanam Basheer — entered into a criminal conspiracy and allegedly obtained higher credit facilities from SBI by submitting false financial information.

Prayagraj Remains Draped in Tricolour on Fifth Day of Har Ghar Tiranga Campaign



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

PRAYAGRAJ:

Prayagraj continued to celebrate the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign with patriotic fervour for the fifth consecutive day on Thursday. Several programmes, including a tricolour march, a motorcycle rally and cultural performances, were organised across the city. Hundreds of people participated in a tricolour foot march that began from Maharshi Bharadwaj Park near

Balson Crossing. Carrying the national flag and raising patriotic slogans, the participants marched towards Gate No. 3 of Chandrashekhar Azad Park, where the rally concluded. The march was jointly organised by the district administration and the Culture Department. Personnel from Civil Defence and Home Guards, members of Bharat Scouts and Guides, and students of Crosssthaite Girls

College participated in the event. Chief Warden Annu Bhaiya addressed the students and recalled the sacrifices made during India's freedom struggle. He urged people to celebrate Independence Day programmes with enthusiasm and a strong sense of patriotism. He also highlighted Prayagraj's contribution to the freedom movement. Several prominent participants, including journalists Ahirwar, Neeraj Mishra, Ghulam Sarwar, Rakesh Verma,

Rajiv Dwivedi, Praveen Singh, Ashish Vajpayee and Rakesh Mehrotra, were present during the march.

Enthusiasm Runs High During Tricolour Bike Rally

A tricolour motorcycle rally was organised at 8:30 am, beginning from Patthar Girjaghar and proceeding towards Hanuman Temple in Civil Lines. The rally returned to Patthar Girjaghar, where it concluded. The event, organised under the aegis of

Amar Ujala, saw participation from Civil Defence, the Culture Department, officials of various government departments and members of trade organisations. State minister Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi was the chief guest.

Cultural Programme Held at Azad Park

A cultural programme was organised at Chandrashekhar Azad Park at 5 pm. Preeti Singh, a registered artist with the Culture Department, presented the Dhediya folk

dance. Patriotic songs were also performed, creating an atmosphere of national pride.

Regional Tourism Officer Aparajita Singh honoured artist Preeti Singh by presenting her with an angavastram and a bouquet. Manuscript Officer of the Culture Department Ghulam Sarwar, Regional Archives Officer Rakesh Kumar Verma, Harishchandra Dubey and other officials and employees were also present at the programme.

Two Teachers Injured After Battery Rickshaw Overturns in Prayagraj

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

PRAYAGRAJ: Two teachers were injured after a battery-powered rickshaw overturned near Barethia village under the Jari outpost area on Thursday morning. The incident occurred at around 9 am when the e-rickshaw reportedly went out of control and overturned near the village. The injured were identified as Manorama Gupta, a teacher from Bajla, and Pramila Bind, a Shiksha Mitra from Barethia. Both women were on their way to Ghurpur to attend a Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) training programme when the accident occurred. Local residents rushed the injured teachers to a private nursing home, where they are currently undergoing treatment.

Toll Plaza Barrier Damaged, Two Vehicles Seized in Prayagraj

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

PRAYAGRAJ: Police in Nawabganj have seized two vehicles allegedly involved in an incident at a toll plaza where the barrier was damaged and the vehicles fled without paying the toll. The action was taken in connection with FIR No. 337/2026 registered at Nawabganj police station under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act. During the investigation, police recovered a black Mahindra Thar (UP70 GW 2525) from the residence of its owner, Mohammad Musharraf, in Fatehpur Atrampur. A Maruti Swift (UP70 ER 5467) was also recovered from the residence of its owner, Mohammad Wasif, in Mohammadpur Tali Ibrahimapur, Bamrauli. Both vehicles have been taken into police custody and seized in connection with the case. Further legal proceedings are underway. The police team involved in the operation included Inspector Jagdish Kushwaha and Sub-Inspectors Santosh Kumar Yadav, Vinay Kumar Yadav and Rajnesh Kumar Sharma.

Speeding Ertiga Rams Into Bike on Rewa Highway, 48-Year-Old Rider Dies

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

PRAYAGRAJ: A 48-year-old motorcycle rider was killed after a speeding Maruti Ertiga allegedly rammed into his bike from behind on the National Rewa Highway near Barethia village under the Jari outpost area on Thursday morning.

The accident occurred around 8 am when Pankaj Jha (48), son of Vijay Jha and a resident of Mungari village under Karchhana police station, was returning home on his motorcycle. He had gone to visit his sister at Kapdaura village in the Naribari area of Bara. According to local residents, as Jha reached near Barethia village, a speeding Ertiga travelling from Madhya Pradesh towards Prayagraj hit his motorcycle from behind with considerable force. The impact threw the



rider towards the highway divider, leaving him critically injured. People present at the spot rushed Jha to a nearby nursing home for treatment. However, he succumbed to his injuries during treatment. On receiving information, Jari outpost police reached the spot and informed the deceased's family. Police took custody of the body and sent it for post-mortem examination. Necessary action has

also been initiated regarding the damaged motorcycle and the Ertiga involved in the accident. Police said the occupants of the Ertiga were travelling from Maharashtra to Prayagraj to take a holy dip in the Ganga. They were reportedly safe after the accident. The death triggered grief among the family members of Pankaj Jha. Police are conducting further legal proceedings in the case.

Food Department Raids Sweet Shops in Prayagraj, Contaminated Items Destroyed

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Prayagraj: The Food Safety and Drug Administration Department conducted inspections at several sweet shops and food establishments across Prayagraj for the third consecutive day on Thursday, following directions from the Divisional Commissioner. During the inspections, officials collected food samples from eight establishments after finding doubts over their quality. At some shops, food items found to be spoiled or contaminated were destroyed on the spot. Notices were also issued to establishments where irregularities were found. A sample of boondi laddoo was collected from Amrit Sweets



in Atarsuiya and Rameshwar Sweet House and Cake Shop. At Jagdish Sweet House in Baradari, Soraon, officials collected a sample of chhena cream. They also destroyed 5 kg of chocolate bricks, 2 kg of kaju katli, 5 kg of imarti and 2 kg of sugar syrup after finding

them in poor and contaminated condition. Inspections were also carried out at food establishments in Holagarh Mod, Soraon and Nahar Dadouli, where samples of milk cake and besan were collected. Shopkeepers were issued notices for deficiencies found

during the inspections. At Bachcha Sweets in Chak Niratul, a sample of boondi laddoo was collected. Officials also directed the shopkeeper to stop using newspaper for packing food items. Samples of boondi laddoo were further collected from Nand Sweet House at Jalalpur Chauraha in Handia, Kalash Sweet near Rambagh Hanuman Temple, and a sample of besan laddoo was collected from Shanti Sweet in Chaufatka. Officials said all the collected samples would be sent to a laboratory for testing. Further action will be taken against the concerned establishments based on the laboratory reports and as per food safety standards.

Publicity Vehicle Flagged Off Ahead of National Lok Adalat in Prayagraj

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

PRAYAGRAJ: Preparations for the National Lok Adalat scheduled to be held on September 12 have been intensified in Prayagraj. On Thursday, In-charge District Judge and District Legal Services Authority Chairman Diwakar Dwivedi flagged off a publicity vehicle to spread awareness about the event across various tehsils. The vehicle will travel through rural and urban areas to inform people about the National Lok Adalat. Through loudspeakers, residents will be briefed about the process of resolving cases through the Lok Adalat and the benefits of settling disputes



through mutual compromise. Pamphlets and posters will also be distributed as part of the awareness campaign.

Officials said various types of cases can be settled through mutual consent and compromise during the National Lok Adalat. The initiative aims to pro-

vide litigants relief from lengthy judicial proceedings and facilitate a simple and speedy resolution of disputes. National Lok Adalat Nodal Officer and First Additional District Judge Abhay Pratap Singh, District Legal Services Authority Secretary Pradipti Singh, Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel Vikas Gupta and panel advocates were present during the flag-off ceremony. The District Legal Services Authority has appealed to people to make use of the National Lok Adalat on September 12 and come forward to settle their pending disputes through mutual agreement.

CL Model Public School in Amilia Ordered to Shut Down Over Lack of Documents

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

PRAYAGRAJ: The Education Department has intensified its crackdown on schools allegedly operating without proper recognition in Prayagraj district. As part of an inspection drive being conducted on the directions of the Prayagraj District Magistrate, the Block Education Officer of Shankargarh inspected CL Model Public School located



in Amilia Tarhar village under the Lalapur area. During the inspection, the school management failed to produce the required documents and records before the officials. Finding the available documentation insufficient, the Block Education Officer ordered the closure of the school. The school management was also directed not to resume operations until all required documents and

recognition-related records are made available and the necessary formalities are completed. The Education Department's action has caused concern among operators of schools allegedly running without recognition in the area. Officials said inspections of unrecognised schools would continue and action would be taken as per government rules and guidelines.

NOTICE

This is hereby informed to the general public that in the documents of Virat Kesarwani, issued by the St. Joseph College, Tashkand Marg, Civil Lines, Class 9 G, Session 2026, the father's name has been mentioned as Umesh Kesarwani, which is incorrect. The correct name of the father is Umesh Chandra Kesarwani. Hence, he should be known and recognized by the name Umesh Chandra Kesarwani in place of Umesh Kesarwani.

Umesh Chandra Kesarwani
Add: 914/1064, University Road, Katra, Prayagraj

Information

This is to inform the general public that my daughter's correct name is Manshi, daughter of Surjeet, as listed in her birth certificate. Due to an error, my daughter's name has been listed as Manisha Prajapati on her Aadhaar card number 503171410629, which is incorrect. In the future, my daughter should be known and recognized by her correct name, Manshi, daughter of Surjeet. It is hereby certified that I have personally completed all the various formalities related to the above. Sarita Prajapati, W/O Surjeet, resident of village Garhi Bazaar, Post Andhawa, West Sharira, Kaushambi, Uttar Pradesh 212214

Editorial

Iran and Israel weren't always enemies. In fact, they were allies

The war in the Gulf has entered its fourth week today. But the forces that are fighting each other were not always in conflict, although it is alluring to think of the current war as inescapable between irreconcilable national projects. All geopolitics is complex, and its history is heart-breaking. Regions exist in a world created by their inherited state of brokenness, the trauma of dealing with violence and the undying desire to strive for a higher ideal while protecting their interests. Looking back at history—if you still read books—you can almost feel the Zeitgeist staring back at you. Step back, for once, from the Strait of Hormuz tensions, Iran's drone strikes on Gulf infrastructure, the parallel war near Israel's border with Lebanon, a powerful yet unpredictable US and the whole world stressed about energy prices. There was a time, not long ago, when Iran and Israel were partners, finding mutual benefit in cooperation. Israel even helped source American defence equipment for Iran, who learnt from Tel Aviv about drones against Soviet air defences in Syria. The story that follows now seems to belong to another universe, but I'll unwind it, showing how cooperation, competition, rivalry, national interest, ideology, and oil have rewritten the texture of war—all emanating from one Original Sin—the promise of Palestinian statehood. No, don't give up on it right away. Palestine might never have a state, yet its quest has been used, abused and exploited by everyone in the Gulf and the Levant—Arab monarchies, to the Baathists, to the Muslim Brotherhood—and by Israel itself. We need a starting point to come back to the present. Let's begin with the 1970s. In the 1970s, the world looked different. Mossad (and the West) trained SAVAK (Shah's feared intelligence service). In Tehran, lived the largest Jewish community in the Middle East. Jews looked upon the Persian kings as saviours and Iran—the only major non-Arab state in the Middle East—had close ties with the US, something like today's strategic partnerships. Then came the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and the Shah fled. Fifty-two Americans were held hostage for 444 days. You'd think that ended Iran-Israel ties. Reasonable guess—but wrong. Part of the reason was back-channel negotiations. The Ronald Reagan administration tried to get their hostages in lieu of weapons (sourced from Civil wars in Nicaragua) to the Ayatollahs—later exposed as the Iran-Contra Affair—a fascinating story of intelligence services “sleeping with your enemy”. Then came the eight-year Iran-Iraq war from 1980 to 1988, where American and Israeli interests started to diverge. Saddam Hussein, Ba'athist, ambitious, expansionist and hostile to Israel, dominated the Arab world. Israel saw him as a new Arab leader, a new Nasser in the making and decided to back Iran to counter Iraq. And soon, the best strategy was to prolong the Iran-Iraq war. Here, the US-Israeli approach to the Iran-Iraq war sees a further drift. The US wanted the hostages back and then to see the Ayatollah regime weakened. But Israel wanted a strong enough Iran to contain Saddam. That was the era before Ayatollahs chanted death to Israel, even when they were chanting death to America. Israel supplied Iranians spare parts for Iran's 200 F-4 Phantom fleet, acquired during the West-friendly regime of the Shah and even sent their own Phantom fleet engineers to keep the Iranian fleet flying. Meanwhile, the Gulf Monarchies backed Saddam against Shia Iran, in line with the USA. And the Palestinian cause? Largely sidelined. Run down by the long asymmetrical war—a drain on both sides, more so on Iran—the Iranians take up the Palestinian question as a tool of influence across local populations—both Shia and Sunni—in the Gulf and Levant.



The Inside Story Of The Decline Of Bengal

Half a century ago, far removed from the cacophony of today's reality, Calcutta - now Kolkata - glistened with the promise of progress and prosperity. It stood as an emblem of industrial might, a city that whispered to the ambitions of a newly independent nation. A journey from Asansol-Burnpur, twin cities where I spent my school days, southwards to Calcutta, was a route that spoke volumes about the industrial trajectory. The ancient national highway, the Grand Trunk Road, besides which my school, St Patrick's, as well as my home, lay, wove through booming towns where manufacturing giants thrived-

Barakar, Kumardhubi, Kulti, Burnpur, Asansol, Raniganj, Durgapur-each a cog in the vast ecosystem of Bengal's surging economy. From my home, which lay at the border between Asansol and Burnpur, I could observe the glow of the Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO) factory, first incorporated in 1918. Its precursor was Bengal Iron Works Company, established in 1875, at Barakar, which later became part of IISCO. I grew up in an atmosphere rich with the scent of melting iron and the promise of intricately forged steel. The foundries and factories that lined our path to the Burnpur Club, where I participated in debat-

ing competitions, were more than mere brick and mortar; they were the lifeblood of a society intertwined with ambition and enterprise. The Durand Institute, walking distance from my school, where I learnt to appreciate art, culture, music and dance, combined the best of cosmopolitan Anglo-Indian tradition with that of Rabindra Sangeet. As you drive eastward, the landscape transformed into a montage of colliery towns like Nirsra, Sitarampur, Jamuria, Pandaveswar, Chinakuri, and Raniganj, once basking in the glow of ownership by titans like the Tatas and Bird & Company and smaller ancillary units owned by Marwari,

Gujarati and Punjabi entrepreneurs. Other nearby industrial hubs, with many mining and manufacturing workers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, included Neamatpur, Satgram, and Mugma. Westwards, the journey would take you to Bihar, industrial hubs of Dhanbad, Bokaro and Jamshehpur. After the IISCO plant of Burnpur, Durgapur's steel plants and chemical factories were the crown jewels of this industrial kingdom of Bengal. Calcutta stood firm with its deep-water ports in Kidderpore Docks and Budge Budge wharves, which served as a key hub for petroleum products. Calcutta was not just a metropolis those days.

not only on Israel and US diplomatic and military installations but also on civilian targets across the Gulf, including airports, hotels, and energy infrastructure. Trump now says he is surprised by Iran's retaliation, despite his military commanders' warning him beforehand of the exact scenario. On Tuesday, Trump's top counterterrorism official, Joe Kent, resigned over the war, urging the president to “reverse course.” He claimed that Trump “started this war due to pressure from Israel and its powerful American lobby.” If you look at their public statements, Moscow and Beijing have only provided diplomatic support to Iran.

the oil-rich Arab states continue to be a major source of energy and employment for the Indian diaspora. Without getting into the minefield of Shia-Sunni conflict, India engaged with Iran on port and connectivity projects by getting the Chabahar project and a window to Afghanistan and Central Asia. The US-Israel war on Iran and the counterattacks by Tehran have upset the delicate diplomatic matrix. It is this delicate balance that India has reconstructed through deft diplomatic manoeuvres and back channel talks. Besides diplomatic parleys, two more factors could have played a significant role in turning the situation in India's favour, albeit temporarily. New Delhi has taken into consideration certain changes that have occurred in the region after the war began. One is that the prospects of regime change appear to be bleak, even assuming that it was the primary objective of America and Israel. The elimination of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has not resulted in a power vacuum, leading to the sudden and total collapse of the regime in Tehran. Mojtaba Khamenei's appointment as Iran's new Supreme Leader, an

unprecedented move considering that this is the first time in the Islamic Republic of Iran since the 1979 revolution that the power has passed on from father to son, has stabilised the regime. No questions about Mojtaba's rank in the religious order, his knowledge of the scriptures, or his lack of political and administrative experience have been raised. The regime in Tehran is fighting an existential battle. To its relief, the street protests are off, or probably too few to be reported. The old regime under a new leader has to fight a war and also stabilise the economy. Economic woes can directly trigger social unrest and allow dissidents to muster people for a road show against the regime. Any business, trade in oil and revenue at this time will boost its morale and give it breathing space. Tehran needs India just as much, or probably more than, India needs the gas refill. In such circumstances, New Delhi making a quick and decisive move toward securing passage for its supplies was definitely a winning move. Another aspect that merits attention here is the unending nature of the current conflict. There is certainly a realisation among all the involved parties.

The parallel defection dramas playing out in Bengal and Maharashtra should worry us as voters

Arati R Jerath

The parallel defection dramas playing out in West Bengal and Maharashtra should worry us as voters. They not only serve as a grim reminder of the growing crisis in an electoral democracy but also make a mockery of our choices in the polling booth. Defections are not new. But the rate at which political parties have been splitting and regrouping in recent years -- as MPs and MLAs scurry around like headless chickens looking for new sanctuaries -- turns the spotlight on the anti-defection law. There are too many loopholes in the law, having been mutilated to further the interests of a self-seeking political class. Beyond the law, however, shenanigans of resort politics and horse trading that accompany every defection episode pose a deeper and more fundamental question: should defections be allowed at all? Can we, in all conscience, as a democracy that is supposed to reflect the will of the people, sanctify the movement of MPs or MLAs from one party to a rival party after showering it with abuse the other day? Consider the sordid saga unfolding in West Bengal. Within days of the defeat of Mamata Banerjee and her Trinamool Congress, 20 of her 28 MPs elected to the Lok Sabha just two years ago under her name and on her party symbol are preparing to jump ship. The BJP



doesn't want them in the party, but is ready to accommodate them in the NDA. The defection formula that has been worked out for them is a master class in creative interpretation of a supposedly law. The MPs will merge into a little-known party born in 2023, the Nationalist Citizens Party of India. It is registered with the Election Commission as an 'unrecognized' party, does not have a symbol of its own, and has fought only one election, the Tripura assembly polls in 2023, in which it bagged just 0.03 percent of the votes. The NCPI neither contested the 2024 Lok Sabha elections nor the recent assembly polls in West Bengal, despite being registered in Howrah. With the merger of 20 Trinamool rebels, the party will transform overnight from anonymity into one of the largest blocs in the Lok Sabha. This is unprecedented in parliamentary history. On the other side of the country in Maharashtra, Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena is splintering. Two

years after they fought a bitter battle with Eknath Shinde's faction in 2024 to determine which Sena is the real inheritor of Balasaheb Thackeray's mantle, six of Thackeray's nine MPs are in the process of crossing the floor to merge with the rival Sena. The danger to electoral democracy from unprincipled about-turns is two-fold. One is the debasement of the mandate MPs and MLAs receive. Every defection invalidates the choice of voters. We vote for one party only to wake up one morning and find that our elected representative has decided to shift to a party we did not vote for. This is not just betrayal. It is the erasure of our choices as voters. The other is the breakdown of the party system. Political parties are fundamental building blocks of our parliamentary model of democracy. When leaders sent by recognized parties to Parliament or state assemblies switch horses mid-stream for personal gains or whatever other reasons they offer to justify their decision,

they pave the way for institutional erosion. In West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool received 41% of the popular vote and won 80 seats. Today, 60 MLAs are poised to flee. If the Trinamool is reduced to nothing but a rump, that vote share becomes a meaningless number as the party faces extinction, not through the ballot but because of the narrow interests of a few. The irony is that the anti-defection law was passed in Parliament in 1985 through a constitutional amendment. The purpose was to protect and stabilize the party system which had become vulnerable to erosion through defections. Studies have shown that between 1967 and 1983, there were more than 2,700 defections in state assemblies, leading to chaos as parties disintegrated overnight and many simply disappeared from the political map. The most famous defection was that of a Haryana MLA named Gaya Singh in 1967. He switched parties three times in two weeks, leading to the coinage of the notorious phrase 'Aaya Ram Gaya Ram'. By 2003, it was evident that the anti-defection law needed further tightening. It was amended again that year to ban a 'split' and only recognize a 'merger'. In other words, rebel MPs or MLAs could break away from the mother party if they merged into another party. In a bid to make the law more

stringent, the amendment raised the number required for a merger from one-third of the party's strength in the House to two-thirds. It is obvious that even this hasn't stemmed the malaise of defections. They continue unabated as the lust for power and other benefits make politics increasingly transactional. Perhaps, the time has finally come to consider banning defections altogether. Any elected representative wanting to switch parties is free to do so but he or she must first resign and seek re-election. Maybe that will make MPs and MLAs think twice before jumping ship. The problem is this: who will bell the cat? Can the party that rules at the Centre be expected to initiate a path-breaking reform of this nature? The short answer is no because history tells us that the biggest beneficiary of defections is the ruling party. Of the 2,700 defections that took place between 1967 and 1983, 1,900 of them were to the Congress, which enjoyed unbridled power for most of those years. And now, since coming to power in 2014, it is the BJP that has emerged as the chief gainer of defections, according to a study by the Association for Democratic Reforms. The ball then rolls into the court of voters. They will have to show their disapproval by rejecting defectors at election time.

The Russia-China Axis That Has Made Iran So Difficult For Trump

Earlier this month, Donald Trump described the United States and Israel's ongoing war with Iran as a "little excursion" that he said would finish pretty quickly. "We took a little excursion because we felt we had to do that to get rid of some evil," Trump told Republican lawmakers in Florida. But the war has already gone into its third week, with Iran appearing to be setting its tone, course and even duration. There is no doubt that Iran has suffered significant losses. Its Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was assassinated, along with over 40 senior officials, on the first day of the war. The National Security

Advisor, Ali Larijani, was killed on Monday, and the Intelligence Minister, Ismail Khatib, a day later, in Israel's policy of decapitating Iran's regime with the aim of inciting an uprising. Khamenei's son and the new Supreme Leader, Mojtaba, has not been seen in public since his appointment amid reports that he has been seriously injured. Relentless American and Israeli attacks have destroyed a large part, if not most, of Iran's military infrastructure. Israel has also inflicted major damage on Iran's oil and gas facilities in an attempt to cripple its economy. But these setbacks have not deterred Iran, which has escalated the war with attacks

not only on Israel and US diplomatic and military installations but also on civilian targets across the Gulf, including airports, hotels, and energy infrastructure. Trump now says he is surprised by Iran's retaliation, despite his military commanders' warning him beforehand of the exact scenario. On Tuesday, Trump's top counterterrorism official, Joe Kent, resigned over the war, urging the president to “reverse course.” He claimed that Trump “started this war due to pressure from Israel and its powerful American lobby.” If you look at their public statements, Moscow and Beijing have only provided diplomatic support to Iran.

India is successfully walking West Asia tightrope. Modi has skilfully avoided taking sides

The Strait of Hormuz, named after the Zoroastrian God Ahura Mazda, or Hormizd, has been a choke point in the current war against Iran. It has been a crucial link between India and Iran ever since a few thousand Parsis left Iran some 1,200 years ago with sacred ash from the Fire Temple. This was probably India's first diplomatic outreach centuries ago. And now, in the middle of an impasse, the Strait of Hormuz was once again opened for Indian oil tankers to pass through. The greatest victory is that which is won without fighting a war, it is said. India probably did just that, managing a significant diplomatic tightrope. The West Asia conflict is a complex one. Though not a party to it directly, taking sides would have not only been rash but also detrimental to a policy structure that was built and nurtured through years of hard work and diplomatic finesse. In spite of changes in governments, New Delhi's core foreign policy formulations on West Asia have not witnessed any major shift. While India supported the Palestinian cause and favoured a negotiated settlement, it also kept upgrading its security ties with Israel. Israel is one of India's major defence partners, but

the oil-rich Arab states continue to be a major source of energy and employment for the Indian diaspora. Without getting into the minefield of Shia-Sunni conflict, India engaged with Iran on port and connectivity projects by getting the Chabahar project and a window to Afghanistan and Central Asia. The US-Israel war on Iran and the counterattacks by Tehran have upset the delicate diplomatic matrix. It is this delicate balance that India has reconstructed through deft diplomatic manoeuvres and back channel talks. Besides diplomatic parleys, two more factors could have played a significant role in turning the situation in India's favour, albeit temporarily. New Delhi has taken into consideration certain changes that have occurred in the region after the war began. One is that the prospects of regime change appear to be bleak, even assuming that it was the primary objective of America and Israel. The elimination of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has not resulted in a power vacuum, leading to the sudden and total collapse of the regime in Tehran. Mojtaba Khamenei's appointment as Iran's new Supreme Leader, an

unprecedented move considering that this is the first time in the Islamic Republic of Iran since the 1979 revolution that the power has passed on from father to son, has stabilised the regime. No questions about Mojtaba's rank in the religious order, his knowledge of the scriptures, or his lack of political and administrative experience have been raised. The regime in Tehran is fighting an existential battle. To its relief, the street protests are off, or probably too few to be reported. The old regime under a new leader has to fight a war and also stabilise the economy. Economic woes can directly trigger social unrest and allow dissidents to muster people for a road show against the regime. Any business, trade in oil and revenue at this time will boost its morale and give it breathing space. Tehran needs India just as much, or probably more than, India needs the gas refill. In such circumstances, New Delhi making a quick and decisive move toward securing passage for its supplies was definitely a winning move. Another aspect that merits attention here is the unending nature of the current conflict. There is certainly a realisation among all the involved parties.

K Ravi takes over as BCIC President in Golden Jubilee year

Bengaluru

The Bangalore Chamber of Industry and Commerce (BCIC) on Wednesday 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, health-care, 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 Managing Committee. He has also led business delegations to Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Israel, Oman, Malaysia and Canada.

Figaro ropes in Sunil Grover for new campaign

Bengaluru

Figaro, one of India's leading olive oil brands owned by global olive oil major Deoleo, on Wednesday 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.

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 (JVVNL) 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 Wednesday announced the opening of its exclusive Siemens Brand Store in Pune in partnership with Chery Enterprise 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 Wednesday 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 business 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.

New Delhi, Jul 15 (UNI) India's imported inflation climbed to 8.13% in June 2026, reflecting

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 Ecowrap 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 Wednesday 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 & 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

ASHWIN HAILS IRELAND'S SERIES WIN OVER INDIA



WITH the inaugural European T20 Premier League (ETPL) scheduled to get underway on August 26, Dublin Guardians captain and mentor Ravichandran Ashwin has welcomed Ireland's recent 2-0 series victory over India, pointing to the result and the nature of the pitches as encouraging signs for cricket's global expansion.

"Two things made me very happy. One was that a team ranked 10th could beat a team ranked first. I think the sport should be like that. It is also a lesson that the FIFA World Cup has taught us. For this game to become a truly global sport, with more nations coming to the fore and with cricket set to feature in the Olympics in the next couple of years, I see it as a huge positive," Ashwin told 'JioStar'.

GARDNER REQUESTS FOR PRIVACY

AUSTRALIA women's team vice-captain Ashleigh Gardner on Thursday broke her silence regarding her ongoing personal controversy and urged the public to respect her privacy, while confirming that Cricket Australia (CA) has retained her as the vice-captain.

"While my separation from my wife is a personal matter, I understand my current relationship status needed to be addressed by Cricket Australia given my position as vice-captain.

"I am grateful that the CA Board has chosen to support my continued leadership. I look forward to playing a strong role as a leader and providing the best possible support for my team-mates in the season to come," Ashleigh wrote.

AYODHYA, VIHANGA RETURN TO SL SQUAD

PACERS Mithali Ayodhya, Chethana Vimukthi and off-spin bowling all-rounder Dewmi Vihanga have made a return to Sri Lanka's squad for the upcoming Women's Asia Cup, to be held in the UAE from August 28 to September 13. Sri Lanka squad: C Athapaththu (captain), I Dulani, S Kavindi, V Gunarathne, H Samarawickrama (vice-captain), K Dilhari, Nilakshika Silva, Hasini Perera, Kaushini Nuthyanga (wk), Dewmi Vihanga, S Dassanayaka, Chamudi Praboda, Chethana Vimukthi, Kawya Kavindi and Mithali Ayodhya

SL COACH DIES IN PLAYER ALTERCATION

A 62-YEAR-OLD coach, who once mentored former Sri Lanka cricket captain Kusal Mendis in his schooldays, has died due to an altercation with players during a cricket match in Colombo.

Police said Thursday, a 17-year-old school player was arrested on Monday on suspicion of assaulting Sumith Fernando and was put under child probation custody till August 17 after he was produced before a Colombo court on Tuesday.

(Agencies)

With World Test Championship points on mind India sweat with a sense of quiet purpose



(L to R), India's Dhruv Jurel, Sarfaraz Khan and Rishabh Pant during a practice session ahead of their first Test against Sri Lanka, in Galle. (Pics: PTI)

■ By R Kaushik
GALLE, Aug 13

INDIA have won more Tests than they have lost in Sri Lanka (9-7), yet paradoxically, they went 22 years and five jousts between series triumphs in the Emerald Isle. It's one of those astonishing quirks that cricket keeps throwing up from time to time, reiterating that strength on paper or

an array of superstars is no guarantee for success.

Between 1993, when Mohammed Azharuddin led his side to a 1-0 victory in a three-match showdown, and 2015 when they bounced back from a crushing loss in Galle to secure a 2-1 triumph under Virat Kohli, India tilted at the Sri Lankan windmill without much joy. For all the so-called similarity in con-

ditions between the two countries, touring Sri Lanka offers a unique challenge. Apart from the surfaces that play slower and with lesser bounce than back home, the humidity can be enervating. India had another first-hand taste of how much of a factor it could be over the next fortnight at a focused, full-tilt training session at the Galle International Stadium on

Thursday morning.

After a concentrated fielding and catching stint, the players moved over to the adjacent nets, aiming to get their game in order ahead of the first of two Tests starting on Saturday. There was a sense of quiet purpose, though how can there not be banter and leg-pulling when the effervescent Sarfaraz Khan is around? In the international wilderness for a while, the right-handed Mumbai kar has earned a surprise call-up as Sai Sudharsan's

replacement, mainly because of his reputation as an excellent player of the turning ball, which has been India's kryptonite at home in recent times.

Shubman Gill, in his second overseas outing as the Test captain, is well aware of the magnitude of the task ahead of his wards over the next two weeks. The immediate objective will be World Test Championship points, because India are well off the pace with just four victories from nine fixtures spread across three series. At exactly halfway through their league campaign, India are in the bottom half of the nine-team table and need a concert-

ed push so that by the time the Aussies come calling in January, they are still in the race and can, at least theoretically, bank on home comfort to push their case further.

Sri Lanka aren't as formidable on paper as in the past when they boasted such luminaries as Aravinda de Silva, Sanath Jayasuriya, Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara, among the batting crew, and the impressively outstanding Muttiah Muralitharan, who signed off in

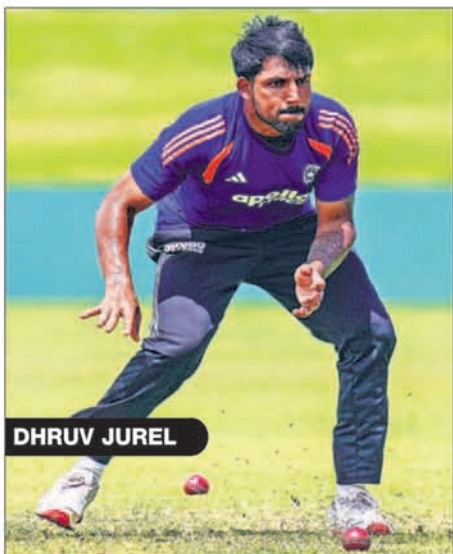
tion even though they too were brimful with special skills. It took a terrible 63-run loss after leading by 192 runs in the first innings in Galle in 2015, for the Indians to wake up from their slumber.

They have won all five Tests thereafter on Sri Lankan soil, a grand achievement which will now come under serious threat with the hosts also having all to play for following a 0-1 loss in the West Indies last month.



India's head coach Gautam Gambhir (L) and chief selector Ajit Agarkar during a practice session ahead of the first Test against Sri Lanka.

Jurel seeks Rahul's tips for Galle



DHRUV JUREL

GALLE, Aug 13 (PTI)

DHRUV Jurel was a picture of concentration in the nets at the sweltering Galle, mulling almost everything that came his way from pacers and spinners alike.

Prior to that, he was an active presence in the fielding practice session, taking some tumbling catches at the cordon.

Jurel's enthusiasm actually belied the career cross-road that he is standing currently.

After a rather assured 100 against the West Indies at Ahmedabad in October last year, his next Test outings have produced - 44, 6, 14, 13, 0, 2, 19. More worryingly, he has been dismissed five times by spinners in those seven outings, and he will face an even more daunting task in the first Test here against the Sri Lankan tweekers, led by the irrepressible Prabath Jayasuriya.

Rahul prepared extensively for this tour on specially prepared muddy pitches at

Mumbai, and Jurel would certainly have wanted to pick his brain.

India's bowling coach Morne Morkel underlined Rahul's role as a senior pro in the side.

"You can explore and discuss and come up with the best combination. Experience is always handy. I think KL, the last couple of years the way he's been leading up front with batting has been exceptional.

"That's a sort of communication that we expect from him, to speak to the guys here in the preparation at the nets as to what to expect here," said Morkel.

"I think the guys have learned a lot about their games individually over the last couple of months and that's one of the reasons why we've come out here 10 days earlier to give them the best opportunity to prepare.

"Now it is all about figuring out how they're gonna score on the surface here," Morkel said, alluding to the spin-friendly nature of the Galle surface.

Knew would get India call-up one day: Nabi

GALLE, Aug 13 (PTI)

AMID a prolonged wait for his maiden India Test call-up, Jammu and Kashmir pacer Auqib Nabi never lost faith, continuing to perform with the belief that his chance to represent the country would eventually arrive.

That opportunity finally came when Nabi was drafted into the Indian squad as a replacement for injured pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah for the two-Test series against Sri Lanka, beginning on Saturday.

Nabi, who played a key role in Jammu and Kashmir's historic maiden Ranji Trophy title triumph last season, said he always believed that consistently putting in strong performances would eventually earn him a national call-up.

"Yes, I had expectations. But the mindset of a cricket player should be of performing and that the other people are watching," Nabi told fellow uncapped player Saransh Jain in a video shared by the BCCI.

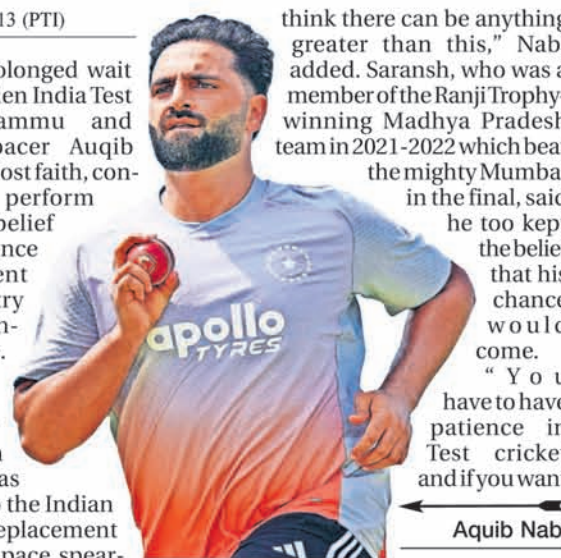
"I knew that I would get the call-up today or tomorrow because when you are doing well for so many years, you are meant to get the returns from the hard work."

"So I would bowl with the mindset that my job is to take wickets and perform and the rest is up to the one above. I felt great when my name came up. My family is very happy and I don't

think there can be anything greater than this," Nabi added. Saransh, who was a member of the Ranji Trophy-winning Madhya Pradesh team in 2021-2022 which beat the mighty Mumbai in the final, said he too kept the belief that his chance would come.

"You have to have patience in Test cricket and if you want

Aquib Nabi



to play Test cricket for India, you have to have patience in that too," the 33-year-old Saransh said.

"I made my debut at Ranji Trophy in 2014-15. It's been a long journey.

"There was a lot of hard work and sacrifices. But I had the belief that one day, I will definitely play for India and for this achievement my family has a big role to play in it."

"My dad, who is a Ranji Trophy player, told me the same thing. You just have to have patience, things will automatically come to you," he added.

Nabi added, "I was at the airport.

"We had to go to a camp in CoE and I was about to board a flight to Bangalore. I got a call asking where I was. I told them that I was going to Bangalore and I was at the airport.

They told me that I didn't have to go there; I had to come to Sri Lanka and that I was selected."



Saransh Jain also in line to make India debut.

Hasan takes 6-55 as Aus dismissed for 198

AUS VS DESH
1ST TEST, DAY ONE

DARWIN, Aug 13 (AP)

THE Bangladesh bowlers overshadowed Australia's Big Four getting back together on Day One of the first Test as the host was dismissed for 198 and Hasan Mahmud took a career-best 6-55 on Thursday.

And just to show the flurry of wickets wasn't entirely down to the conditions, Bangladesh's top-order batters combined to reach 96-1 at stumps and cut the first-innings deficit to 102.

"Excited to play in Australia," Hasan said of Bangladesh's first test match in Australia since 2003. "To get the opportunity to play in these conditions as well ... I just tried to maintain the process and just follow what the captain was saying."

He stuck to the script with a consistent line and length, strik-

ing in his sixth and seventh overs to remove openers Jake Weatherald (23) and Travis Head (22) after Australia won the toss



and raced to 45 without loss on a green-tinged pitch.

Brief scores

BANGLADESH: 96 for 1 (Mominul Haque 35, Tanzid Hasan 32) trail AUSTRALIA: 198 (Steven Smith 71; Hasan Mahmud 6-55, Ebadot Hossain 2-39, Taskin Ahmed 2-55) by 102 runs.

England scrap midnight curfew on men's team under Root

LONDON, Aug 13 (AP)

THE midnight curfew imposed on the England men's team has been scrapped under newly appointed captain Joe Root.

The restriction was put in place by England managing director Rob Key after controversial late-night incidents on the winter tours of New Zealand and Australia. Former Test captain Ben Stokes was out past the curfew following a match against New Zealand in June, leading to his temporary suspension and then sudden retirement from Test cricket - a chain of events that has sparked the return of Root for a second spell as skipper.

The latest new era for English cricket begins next week with a three-match Test series



against Pakistan, and Root told the 'Sky Sports' Cricket Podcast: "There's not going to be a curfew.

"I don't think this needs to be a big deal, to be honest," he said. "My view on curfews is I don't think they work, and if you want guys to take responsibility

on the field they've got to be able to feel they can be grown adults off it and make good strong decisions off it.

"That's for us as a team to manage well, and self-police well, for me and Flem (Stephen Fleming) to manage well in many ways. But ultimately you're grown adults, you know what it takes to play for England, you know what your responsibilities are off the field and we need to make sure we don't find ourselves with any little situations off the field."

If Rohit, Virat score runs why should we look at their age, says Harbhajan

NEW DELHI, Aug 13 (PTI)

IF LIONEL Messi can, why can't Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, wondered India spin great Harbhajan Singh as he backed the talismanic veterans to play the ODI World Cup next year provided they have the conviction to continue. In a podcast interview with PTI at its headquarters, the 46-year-old former off-spinner offered his views on the never-ending debate surrounding Rohit and Kohli's future as one-format players on the wrong side of



Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh.

30s. During the interview, Harbhajan also revealed that his autobiography is ready and is expected to be released later this year.

"Whoever the player is, I believe the marker should be performance, not age," Harbhajan said, asserting that Kohli and Rohit will carry a far heavier burden of expectations than an exciting-but-relatively-untested youngster like Vaibhav Sooryavanshi at the World Cup.

Given the resolve Rohit and Kohli have shown so far, Harbhajan said they were

capable of pulling off what a 39-year-old Messi managed at the recent football World Cup. Rohit will turn 40 and Kohli will be 39 when the ODI World Cup takes place in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

"Virat may be 39 but if he is still beating those 20-year-old guys on the field, it (his age) doesn't matter. Look at Lionel Messi.

At 40 (39), five men fail to stop him. If a player has that kind of fitness and skill where even five opponents can't keep him at bay, then we know that skill always takes precedence," he reasoned.

"This change was first brought in by Virat Kohli when he became the captain in 2014-15. Before that we won't

think that we can go for a chase of 400 on the final day. Virat told the boys, 'let's at least try. We might lose but if we keep trying one day we will surpass that 400 plus in last innings.'

"If we have to get 10 wickets on last day, we will go for it. The winning mentality and not settle for draw is what Virat Kohli got," he remembered.

"But his biggest contribution was bringing in fitness culture. 90 per cent credit for creating the fitness revolution goes to Kohli.

"My idea of fitness was endurance but Virat made this team believe that if you are fit, you can fly around," Harbhajan pointed out.

Therefore, Harbhajan's advice to head coach Gautam Gambhir would

be to trust the duo's experience.

"GAMBHIR IS BADHIYA BANDA" UNDER Gambhir's tutelage, India won the T20 World Cup, the Champions Trophy and the Asia Cup but the Test team suffered crushing defeats against Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, the last two being whitewashes on home turf.

"Why is Gautam getting so much flak? I have never understood why when a team doesn't do well, people always tend to blame the coach.

The Gautam that I have known, was a very passionate player of his time, one who always put the team first," Harbhajan said when asked to decode the man behind the combative public persona.

'T20 LEAGUES PUSHED INTL CRICKET TO THE BACKSEAT'

THE death of bilateral international cricket is a real possibility because of the exploding popularity of T20 leagues, led by IPL, which showcases the creme de la creme of global talent in one carnival-like celebration, former India great Harbhajan Singh has said. "Already it has happened, 70 per cent (people are watching club cricket instead of international cricket)," Harbhajan said. "If India plays Australia then there is good viewership but if India is playing Sri Lanka or Afghanistan, the viewership is not there. Australia playing England, the viewership is there but not for an England Bangladesh series," he added.

Shipping firms note 'growing loss of confidence' globally in using Hormuz

Washington/Tehran

Shipping firms have noted a "growing loss of confidence" among shippers globally in using the southern route through the Strait of Hormuz, close to Oman's coast which has been highly promoted by the US, business intelligence firm Kpler said Wednesday.

"The absence of Omani route transits highlights a growing loss of confidence in that corridor, while shipping continues to favour Iranian approved routing," the firm said.

As per the firm, there was a slight increase in strait transits (21 in total) on Tuesday, but that all of the ships used the northern shipping lanes close to Iran, which Iranian officials had urged vessels to take in coordination with



its military until Tehran declared the strait completely closed early this week.

While the Strait of Hormuz remains technically navigable, Kpler warned that "the operating environment is becoming increasingly complex and unstable," which has in turn also greatly pressurised global energy markets and led to rising fuel prices.

Additionally, despite

a small number of ships having managed to pass through the strait, Kpler noted that the security environment along the waterway had deteriorated considerably since the renewed US-Iran tensions.

"The security outlook deteriorated further as three additional attacks off Oman were verified, bringing the reported toll to 56 confirmed incidents and 17 seafarer fatalities," the com-

pany said.

International benchmark Brent crude remained above \$85 a barrel on Wednesday as intensified military activity in and around the Strait of Hormuz continued to disrupt the movement of oil and gas through one of the world's most important maritime chokepoints.

Brent crude surged to \$86 a barrel on Tuesday, its highest level in a month, after President Donald Trump announced that the US would reinstate its naval blockade of Iranian ports and vessels associated with Iran.

Early on Wednesday, Brent was trading at around \$85.50 a barrel, while the US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was trading just below \$80.

Iranian state media declares Strait of Hormuz to remain closed to all commercial vessels



Tehran

Iran's state broadcaster IRIB reiterating the Islamic Republic's stance on Wednesday said that the Strait of Hormuz remains closed to all commercial traffic, claiming that two vessels attempting to transit the waterway without coordinating with Iranian authorities were intercepted and forced to stop after warning shots were fired.

According to the report, the ships were trying to pass through the strait "illegally" by failing to obtain Iranian approval. The state media further claimed that all vessels in the area were stationary at anchorages in the Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, with no ships actively moving toward the strategic waterway. The statement directly contradicts the repeated assertions made by US President Donald Trump,

who said on Tuesday, while announcing the resumption of a US naval blockade on Iranian ports and vessels, that the critical Strait of Hormuz "is open to ALL Ship traffic except for Iran."

While the strait remains technically operational, Washington and Tehran continue to disagree strongly whether the waterway is actually open or closed, as maritime traffic through the waterway - despite the US assurances of providing security via the alternate route close to Oman - has effectively fallen down to a near zero as a result of Iranian threats and attacks on commercial shipping. Recently, almost no vessels have been found transiting the strait with their location transponders switched on, though some have made the passage previously without broadcasting their locations.

Lebanon and Israel agree framework for pilot zones after Rome talks

Rome

Lebanon and Israel have completed a new round of US-mediated negotiations in Rome, reaching agreement on the implementation of the "pilot zones" in southern Lebanon outlined in a recent framework deal, a US official said on Wednesday.

"Talks concluded after two days of productive and positive discussions," the official said, adding that participants had "agreed on the structure and guidelines for the pilot zone process, to be finalized and implemented in the coming days." The negotiations, brokered by



Washington and held in the Italian capital, focused on a framework agreement reached last month following five rounds of talks in Washington. Lebanese negotiators had been seeking progress on an Israeli military withdrawal from southern Lebanon as part of the

Iran threatens to block additional energy export routes across West Asia post US strikes

Tehran/Washington

Iran has threatened to block additional energy export routes across the region as the US launched a new wave of strikes against Iranian military targets.

The warning was issued by Iran's powerful paramilitary - theocratic guard, the IRGC, which declared that the Strait of Hormuz would remain closed until Washington halted what it described as "acts of aggression."

It further warned that all other oil and gas export corridors serving the interest of Washington and its allies could be targeted. The threat comes after the US military launched operations against Iranian targets on Wednesday, with CENTCOM announcing that it had successfully carried out drone, air and naval strikes after conducting another seven-hour operation overnight. In a statement, CENTCOM said Wednesday's strikes had "further degraded Iran's ability to attack commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz." According to US officials, a 90-minute strike package targeted Iranian coastal defence systems as well as cruise missile storage and launch facilities on Greater Tunb Island. The



military escalation comes a day after US President Donald Trump threatened further action against Tehran should it refuse to return to the table. "I'll save the energy targets for last, but ultimately we'll hit energy targets," Trump said during an interview with Fox News host Bret Baier that aired on Tuesday evening.

Trump's remarks followed his decision to abandon a proposed 20% charge on cargo transiting the Strait of Hormuz, saying instead that Gulf states would pursue "massive" trade and investment agreements with the US. A previous threat by Trump to target Iran's civilian infrastructure in April drew massive criti-

cism from UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, who said that deliberately targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure is viewed as a war crime under international law. Washington formally reinstated its blockade on Iranian ports and coastal shipping on Tuesday evening, after it was previously lifted under a memorandum of understanding signed between Tehran and Washington last month. Responding to the renewed blockade, the IRGC warned Washington that it should "expect the closure of other oil and gas export routes that serve the interests of the United States and its allies."

Palestinian and Board of Peace officials meet in Brussels to discuss post-war Gaza recovery

Brussels

Authority and Board of Peace officials met on the sidelines of a donor conference in Brussels this week to discuss coordination on Gaza's recovery and reconstruction, according to a statement from the Board's technocratic National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG). Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa, Finance Minister Istifan Salameh and Mustafa's adviser Omar Awadallah met with Board of Peace High Representative for Gaza Nikolay Mladenov, NCAG head Ali Shaath and NCAG Finance Commissioner Bashir Al-Rayes. The discussions focused on coordinating efforts aimed at "improving humanitarian conditions and preparing the necessary circumstances to initiate the recovery and reconstruction process in the Gaza Strip," the statement said.

The committee also welcomed a new EU initiative expected to provide around \$1 billion for Gaza's recovery efforts. The programme was announced on Monday ahead of the donor gathering, which brought together more than a dozen donor countries, alongside the European Investment Bank and the World Bank.

Shaath praised progress on the "Gaza Team" initiative, which is intended to support the NCAG's recovery plans under US President Donald Trump's 20-point plan.

zones. Lebanon and Israel, which maintain no formal diplomatic relations, entered negotiations after the Iran-backed Hezbollah militia drew Lebanon into the wider regional conflict by launching attacks on Israel in March this year as retaliation for the killing of former Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. The pilot zones are expected to serve as the first stage of the framework agreement, with Lebanese forces taking control of the areas as part of a broader plan to stabilise the border region.

Ukraine achieves 2,884-km ballistic missile strike capability, says Zelenskyy

Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday announced a major advancement in the country's defence capabilities, saying Ukraine has developed operational ballistic missiles and deep-strike systems capable of hitting targets up to 2,884 kilometres away. The announce-

ment, made during his Ukrainian Statehood Day address, comes as Kyiv seeks to expand its ability to strike strategic targets and strengthen its defence independence amid the ongoing war with Russia. Addressing the nation on Ukrainian Statehood Day, Zelenskyy said Ukraine's new missile capabilities had reached

a range of 2,884 kilometres, citing the distance to Russia's Omsk oil refinery as an example. He said the weapons were aimed at disrupting Russia's war infrastructure and the resources supporting its military campaign, while accusing Moscow of targeting civilian areas in Ukraine. "These are not merely systems under develop-

ment, but real capabilities that are already operational," Zelenskyy said, adding that Ukraine was targeting facilities supporting Russia's war effort rather than civilian infrastructure. Zelenskyy also announced that Ukraine was moving closer to an agreement that could allow it to produce Patriot missile systems.

The reported exchange came after Trump's meeting with Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa

Trump repeatedly urged Netanyahu to withdraw Israeli forces from Syria and southern Lebanon

Washington/Jerusalem

Jul 15 (UNI) US President Donald Trump has urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to withdraw Israeli troops from Syria and begin redeploying forces from southern Lebanon, according to a report by Axios citing US and Israeli officials.

The reported request marks the latest point of contention between the two leaders, with Trump pushing for a reduction



in Israel's regional military footprint while Netanyahu's government argued for maintaining

its deployments. According to Axios, Trump told Netanyahu during a phone call on

Thursday that Israel's military presence in southern Syria risked fuelling further instability. "They don't want you there. You should redeploy," Trump reportedly told the Israeli leader. The president is also said to have delivered a similar message regarding Israeli forces in southern Lebanon.

The reported exchange came after Trump's meeting with Syrian President Ahmad al-

Sharaa on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Türkiye last week.

The push comes amid Washington's efforts to implement a US-backed framework agreement reached between Israel and Lebanon last month. Under the arrangement, Jerusalem had agreed to withdraw its troops from two pilot zones in southern Lebanon and allow the Lebanese army to assume control. However, Israeli forces

have yet to begin the withdrawal process.

Israel maintains that its deployments in southern Syria and Lebanon are necessary to prevent cross-border attacks similar to the Hamas-led terror attack on October 7, 2023. Several senior members of Netanyahu's coalition have advocated a long-term military presence in the areas, with some also calling for Jewish settlements to be established there.

US-Iran talks in Switzerland postponed

Geneva/Beirut

Talks scheduled for today between the US and Iran have been postponed. Meanwhile, Israeli attacks on Lebanon continue despite the announcement of a US-Iran peace agreement. At least 18 people have been killed in the latest strikes. According to a report by the US news channel ABC News, the Swiss Foreign Ministry stated, "The talks involving the US, Iran, Qatar, and Pakistan have been postponed. Switzerland remains ready to facilitate future discussions.

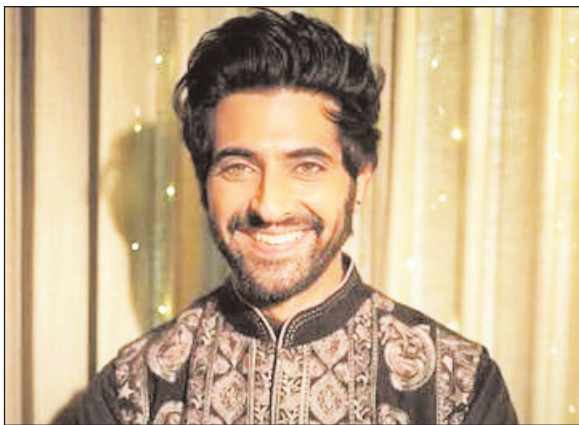
Preparatory work for this continues at Bürgenstock. No further information can be provided at this time." The Swiss ministry noted that the White House announced late Thursday night that US Vice President JD Vance would not travel to Switzerland for initial talks regarding the implementation of the agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) reached with Iran. This development has derailed the Swiss government's preparations for the meeting.

Akshay to pull off 70's Bollywood looks for 'Toxic'

Akshay Oberoi has unveiled a striking retro-inspired look for his upcoming film "Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-ups", paying tribute to the timeless style and larger-than-life screen presence of Hindi cinema's legendary stars from the 1970s.

Speaking about his look in the film, Oberoi shares, "The retro mustache and classic hairstyle weren't just styling choices. They were inspired by the timeless style and charisma of the stars from the '70s. I've always admired the effortless screen presence of actors like Amitabh Bachchan, Vinod Khanna, Shatrughan Sinha, and Danny Denzongpa. There was something incredibly powerful and distinctive about that era, and I wanted to capture a bit of that spirit through my character."

According to the



Jahnvi Kapoor to join forces with 'Pagglait' director Umesh Bist

Actress Jahnvi Kapoor is set to collaborate with "Pagglait" director Umesh Bist for an untitled feature film, marking their first venture together. The yet-to-be-titled project will be produced by Ekta Kapoor's Balaji Motion Pictures in association with Guneet Monga's Sikhya Entertainment. The project is expected to commence principal photography between October and November this year. Known for his gripping, subtle yet powerful storytelling, Bist's impressive work includes web shows "The Trial" Season 2, "Gyaarah Gyaarah" and "Kaun? Who Did It?".

actor, seeing himself in the mirror instantly transported him to another era, with every element of the look, from the hairstyle to the moustache, carefully

crafted to evoke nostalgia while remaining relatable to contemporary audiences, according to Variety India. During the 1970s, Amitabh Bachchan

Bigg Boss Hindi unveils first look of landmark season 20 with a reimagined iconic Aankh

The countdown to the landmark 20th season of Bigg Boss Hindi has begun, with the makers unveiling the show's first official teaser featuring a striking new version of its iconic 'Aankh' (eye) emblem. The show will soon air on JioHotstar and Colors. According to the makers, the new "Aankh," introduced to mark 20 years of Bigg Boss Hindi, symbolises the show's legacy and its new chapter. Inspired by two decades of memorable moments, the design serves as a portal into the world within the



house, reflecting relationships, emotions, shifting alliances, and unexpected twists.

The multifaceted look of the new emblem reflects the evolving equations and the changing journeys of the contestants in the Bigg Boss house. Designed with a premi-

um metallic gold wordmark, the new identity reflects the show's grand and cinematic style.

The producers have stated that every twist in the 20th season can change the contestants' fortunes, and every decision can set the game in a new direction.

Badshah returns as rap supremo in 'Hustle 5'

Rapper and music producer Badshah is set to reprise his role as rap supremo in the fifth season of India's popular rap reality show "Hustle", where he will once again mentor aspiring artists from across the country.

According to information released by the makers, Badshah will be

mentoring the next generation of rap artists in "Hustle 5". His return was announced through a special promo film in which an artificial intelligence (AI) version of Badshah calls himself the perfect rap supremo. After this, the real Badshah enters and says, "Prompts won't do it! Hustle 5 guys, let's keep

it real." On his return, Badshah said that while technology can recreate many things today, it can never match the emotions, hard work, and sincerity of an artist. He said that this is the true essence of "Hustle," and he is excited to return to the platform once again and discover new and talented artists.

Jacqueline reinforces her versatility with 'Welcome to the Jungle' success and AI avatar launch



Bollywood actress Jacqueline Fernandez has once again underlined her versatility and impressive presence in the entertainment industry with the success of the film 'Welcome to the Jungle' and the launch of her AI avatar. Over the years, Fernandez has not only strengthened her presence in commercially successful films but has also made her mark in technology, music, fashion and international platforms. Her presence in films like 'Welcome to the Jungle', 'Housefull 5' and 'Fateh' has established her as one of the trusted and popular actors in the industry. The 40-year-old actress has also taken a step towards embracing digital entertainment and new technologies by launching her AI avatar. This is being seen as a significant milestone in her career, placing her among a select few Indian actors striving to embrace both traditional cinema and emerging technologies.

New poster of 'The India Story' released, highlighting the dangers of pesticide farming

The makers of The India Story, featuring Kajal Aggarwal and Shreyas Talpade, have released a striking new poster that reinforces the film's focus on food safety and the health risks associated with excessive pesticide use in agriculture.

The poster effectively depicts the effects of increasing pesticide use in the agricultural sector. The poster gives the message that the food that reaches our plate often carries hidden dangers that can have long-term effects on human health.

Speaking about the film's message, Aggarwal said that



"The India Story" tackles an important topic, inspiring

people to be more conscious about their food choices.

She said the project appealed to her because it highlights an everyday issue that isn't discussed often enough.

Talpade said that this story is not just about farming practices, but also about the health and future of future generations. He expressed hope that the film will spark meaningful discussion and raise awareness on this topic. Presented in association with Zee Studios and MIG Productions & Studios, the film is directed by Chetan D.K., written and produced by Sagar B. Shinde. The film is set to release worldwide in Hindi, Telugu, and Tamil on July 24.

Prabhas becomes the country's most loved star, securing the first position



Pan-India star Prabhas has secured the top spot in Ormax Media's "Stars India Loves" rankings for June 2026, emerging as the country's most-loved male film star.

Prabhas has surpassed several big stars of Indian cinema to top the ranking, which reflects the preferences of audiences across the country. This achievement underlines his immense popularity and strong fan base among audiences across languages and regions. The 46-year-old actor, who gained national and international recognition with the "Baahubali" franchise,

has consistently proven his star power with films like "Salaar" and "Kalki 2898 AD." His powerful screen presence, ability to portray diverse characters, and relatable appeal to audiences across the country have made him a major pan-India star of Indian

cinema. This honour comes at a time when Prabhas has had a very successful 2026. His film "Kalki 2898 AD" recently received recognition at the National Awards. Audiences are also generating tremendous excitement for his upcoming films "Fauji,"

Anurag backs Chaar Diwaari ahead of North American Premiere at Fantasia

Acclaimed filmmaker Anurag Kashyap is set to present "Chaar Deewari" (The Four Walls), a psychological horror short directed by Syed Shadan, ahead of its North American premiere at the Fantasia International Film Festival 2026 in Montreal, Canada, on July 30.

Produced by Shivaik



Gupta and Shadan, 'Chaar Deewari' is among the select Indian films selected for the Fantasia International Film Festival this year. The film has been selected in the 'Fragments d'Asie' section of the festival. Fantasia is counted among the largest and most prestigious genre film festivals in the world. The film's story revolves around a man who rents a simple house to live in, but soon realises that a horrifying secret lurks within its walls. Filled with psychological tension and suspense, the film explores fear, loneli-

ness, and unseen secrets. Kashyap said about the film, "Chaar Diwaari creates a strange uneasiness within the audience right from the beginning. The film slowly takes you into the very fear that you want to escape from. I liked this film very much." Ranjan Singh said that "Chaar Diwaari" is a powerful short thriller, with a mysterious and intense atmosphere that captivates the audience. He added that premiering at a prestigious platform like Fantasia is a major achievement for the film. Shadan said the film was inspired by the idea of what would happen if the walls.

Manjummel Boys is dubbed in Hindi, a remake or sequel won't be honest: Chidambaram

Filmmaker Chidambaram, acclaimed for crafting the survival thriller "Manjummel Boys," dismissed the idea of remaking or pushing out a sequel, as it wouldn't be an 'honest' approach towards the audience.

Despite garnering numerous lucrative bids to remake the Malayalam blockbuster in other languages and to multiply the franchise, he had simply declined them. Explaining why "Manjummel Boys"



should not be remade, Chidambaram, whose last release was "Balan: The Boy", says the film's cultural specificity is what made it resonate with audiences.

"Manjummel Boys is dubbed in Hindi. A remake won't be hon-

est, I think. That's why I refused the idea of a remake." The director admitted that the offers were financially attractive. "The offer was tempting. But it's the conviction and your core belief that will hold you back." According to the 38-

year-old filmmaker, even if he tries to recreate the film, it would lack the original essence as it is based on real-life events. The remake will definitely lose its appeal, making the film a hollow money-making tool, according to Variety India. The filmmaker also revealed that several people pitched him survival dramas inspired by "Manjummel Boys," but he has no interest in repeating himself. "A lot of producers came to me. They'd

say there was a cable car accident in Manali, make it like Manjummel Boys. However, I don't want to do that again."

As for a sequel, Chidambaram joked that he sees no reason to put the characters through another life-threatening ordeal. "Manjummel Boys 2" came up in conversations again. Why are we so cruel? These boys need to go again and fall somewhere. Go through that. Only then will 'Manjummel Boys 2' happen,".

Romantic track 'Tujhsa Koi Dooja Nahin' strikes chord with listeners

The newly released Hindi romantic single, Tujhsa Koi Dooja Nahin, has made an impressive start, drawing widespread appreciation from music lovers across digital platforms.

Presented by Hungama

House Pvt. Ltd., the song has emerged as a favourite among fans of contemporary romantic music. The song is receiving positive response on YouTube and other music platforms. Priyanka Sarkar has lent her voice to the song,

while its lyrics and music have been composed by Pranav Vats. The video of this romantic song has been directed and shot by Ashok Mehta. The video features the pair of Diljaan Wadia and Komal Soni, whose performance is

being appreciated by the audience.

The song is produced and creatively directed by Sanjay Bhushan. Released under the Wildfire Media label, the video was shot in Alibaug, Maharashtra, where the beautiful loca-

tion lends a captivating visual appeal to the song.

The technical team includes editing and colour coordination by Jeetu Raj, music composition by Ankush Karmakar, sound mixing and mastering by Arvind Sonu.