



LEISURE | P2



INTERNATIONAL | P10



BUSINESS | P11



SPORTS | P12

SlR in state next month

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Meanwhile, nearly 5,000 Electoral Photo Identity Cards (EPIC) issued from Gujarat were

removed. The remaining 2,0000 EPIC numbers overlapped with Karnataka, Jharkhand and

6 MTPA JSW-POSCO steel plant likely in Odisha

The HoA was signed in Mumbai in the presence of Lee Ju-tae,

Earlier, in January this year, the two conglomerates had announced the establishment of an integrated steel plant with a production capacity of 5 MTPA.

'Skibidi', 'tradwife' among 6K additions to Cambridge Dictionary

The word 'Broligarchy' is a merger of 'bro' and 'oligarchy', primarily refers to a powerful group of men who are extremely rich, and was coined for tech leaders Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg

“It’s not every day you get to see words like ‘skibidi’ and

Meanwhile, new entries like “work wife” and “work spouse” acknowledge workplace relationships where two people help and trust each other, Cambridge Dictionary said.

SHORT TAKES

Maoist-miners nexus suspected: Police

Crucial meet on GST reforms August 20

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will attend a crucial meeting of a state ministerial panel August 20 to put forth the Centre's proposal for sweeping goods and services tax (GST) reforms that will slash tax rates and lead to reduction in prices of common use items. The two-day meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on GST rate rationalisation is scheduled August 20-21 here, sources said. The meet will deliberate on the Centre's proposal for GST reforms of reducing the number of tax slabs in GST to two – 5% and 18%, and a 40% special rate on a select few items.

Minor gangraped in Sambalpur; 3 held

Sambalpur: A 14-year-old girl was allegedly gangraped by five persons in Sambalpur district, police said Monday. According to police, the incident took place in Jujumura area between 6:30pm and 7pm Sunday when the victim had gone outside to attend nature's call. Based on a complaint by the victim's family at Jujumura (Sambalpur), an investigation was initiated on Monday (7th) and a team of 10 police officers, including an officer-in-charge (OIC) and an officer-in-charge (POC) of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was registered, an officer said. Sambalpur SP Mukesh Kumar Bhamo said, "Soon after receiving the complaint, Jujumura police swung into action and arrested three persons, including two juveniles, who confessed to committing the crime."

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES

Today will be as agreeable as any day can be. You are satisfied with what you have, says Ganesha. Besides, you have already planned on what you desire and are moving towards it. A date of romantic nature may turn out to be interesting or it may lead to a controversy; you have to decide on it.

TAURUS

This day is meant for taking some time out from your busy schedule, and seeking some fun and relaxation. So says Ganesha. It is possible that you will be getting together with your friends and family members for a fun filled evening followed by a great dinner and a late night movie.

GEMINI

You know where you are headed, and will redouble your efforts to reach your goals today. You are full of energy and enthusiasm, which helps you to achieve all your targets. You will receive unexpected gains owing to your hard work.

CANCER

A restless or irritating mood is indicated. Keep you cool and be calm even in adverse circumstances, suggests Ganesha. If you do so, you will always succeed in life. It is difficult to wriggle out of adversity, if you have hot temper.

LEO

You will be able to influence people with your co-operative and accommodating attitude today. You will have discussions on various topics with people who come into contact with you. You will also come into contact with people who share the same mental wavelength as you do, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

Ganesha says don't let set-backs cow you down today as you will emerge stronger from each one of them. It will be your logic and reasoning abilities that will aid you in gaining the perfection in completing your work. You may look forward to spending the evening with your beloved or a special friend.

LIBRA

Ganesha says that today you will get worried over petty matters and be tense. To get mental peace keep yourself occupied with religious or spiritual activity. Along with that if you go to some religious place you will gain mental peace, which will stay with you for a long time.

SCORPIO

According to Ganesha, you will be soaked in your work today. During the day, you may be loaded with duties and responsibilities, however, evening has a different story to reveal. Exciting as ever, a get away with friends may be liberating and relaxing.

SAGITTARIUS

A day to full of caution, warns Ganesha. There are chances that your heart will find its partner, forcing you to fall in love. You may be cupid's next prey. However, watch your steps, as the initial stages of a relationship may be fragile and need to be handled with care.

CAPRICORN

It has become difficult for you to bear the heavy weight of responsibilities on your shoulders. But, be prepared for some more; the weight is about to get heavier as more responsibilities are going to be added. You will no longer enjoy the work, and it will bring down your efficiency level to an extent, feels Ganesha.

AQUARIUS

You may receive some good news from the foreign shores today. The day will bring on a positive note and it will remain like that for the whole twenty-four hours. You'll be in a mood to merry and it will be transformed to everyone around you, says Ganesha.

PISCES

Those who work hard to move towards their goals will do well today. It is a good day for business. You will be able to do a lot of new things in your job-business today. With Ganesha's blessings you will definitely succeed, but you need to work hard without getting disappointed.

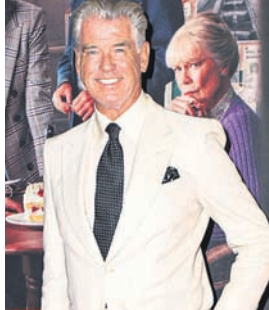


SHARON STONE ON DATING RUMOURS WITH NELLY

Basic Instinct actress Sharon Stone has confirmed she once went on a date with American rapper, actor Nelly - but they didn't go out for a second time. Stone, when she appeared on Watch What Happens Live with Andy Cohen, was asked about the rumour she had once dated Nelly.

BROSNAN DOESN'T SEE HIMSELF 'AS AN OLD MAN'

Former James Bond star Pierce Brosnan has admitted he still doesn't see himself 'as an old man' even as he is now in his 70s. "I don't see myself as an old man at all. But I'm getting older, that's for sure," the 72-year-old told Saga.



Italy impact on Ananya

Mumbai: Actress Ananya Panday has revealed that Italy had a huge impact on her style and that she came back wanting to experiment more, trust her instincts, and not shy away from bold silhouettes.

Asked what's one travel destination that had a big impact on your style and why, Ananya told this agency: "I'd say Italy! Being in one of the world's fashion capitals was incredibly inspiring - the energy, the style, the way people carried themselves with such ease and confidence. I came back wanting to experiment more, trust my instincts, and not shy away from bold silhouettes or unexpected pairings."

Ananya said that the trip didn't just refresh her wardrobe; it reshaped how she expresses herself.

"Even now, I revisit those memories when I need a creative spark - they've earned a permanent place on my mood board and in my mindset," said Ananya.

Revealing her go-to style and beauty hacks when she's on the move or traveling for shoots and holidays, Ananya said that she wants to be comfortable yet still be "put together."

"When I'm traveling, whether it's for work or a getaway, I want to feel comfortable but still put together," said Ananya, who has hosted Airbnb's Original experience.

ANS



Priyanka's career turning point

New Delhi: Actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas says the 2009 film *Kaminey*, which also marked her first collaboration with the filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj, remains a turning point in her career.

Jonas went down memory lane and shared a picture from the film on her Instagram handle on Monday.

Also starring Shahid Kapoor in the dual role, the film was released on August 14, 2009. It followed a rivalry between a pair of twins, Charlie and Guddu, both played by Kapoor. Jonas essayed the role of Sweetie Bhope in the film.

The 43-year-old actor said she was shooting for her film *Dostana* in Miami when she got a call from the filmmaker.

The actor admitted she had been eager to collaborate with him for a long time but always thought he wouldn't cast her because of her "commercial" image. After the conversation, Bhardwaj visited her in Miami.

"I was filming for in Miami, Florida... cool evening after wrapped shoot, saw a missed call Vishal Bhard-What?? I had want-work with him for-and never thought would cast me because of my "commercial" image at the time...He said he'd like to come see me, and he did. To Miami," she wrote in the post.

AGENCIES



Sreeleela wants to live characters

Mumbai: Popular south Indian actress Sreeleela has earned recognition for her acting skills, screen presence, and performances in popular songs like *Kissik*. Taking her fame a step ahead, the actress has announced her debut in the Hindi film industry.

Now, as she prepares for this highly anticipated Bollywood debut, excitement among fans is at an all-time high. In a recent interview, the actress shared her thoughts on authenticity in acting. She said, "I feel like the moment we start acting instead of living the character, it's not authentic anymore. Especially in Hindi cinema, the scripts I've heard are a little more real, a little more my age, very close to my character. In the past, I've played many characters that weren't completely like me - I tapped into different roles. But these last couple of films feel like me. I'm excited to bring my authentic self to every screen, no matter what language."

Coming to her upcoming project, it is a romantic musical in the lines of films like *Aashiqui* and is directed by Anurag Basu. Starring Kartik Aaryan as the male lead, an announcement teaser featuring the chemistry between the two actors has already created a buzz with audiences waiting to catch more of the pair's fresh on-screen chemistry in the film.

AGENCIES



Reflecting on her journey, the actress said, "My journey has been inspiring and humbling. I have been blessed to have so many interesting and different opportunities across languages. I look back at my work today and smile. It wasn't easy of course. I did have doubts, I did feel like I was falling short of my own expectations and that of others."

In her career spanning 20 years and counting, the actress has worked across several film industries of India.

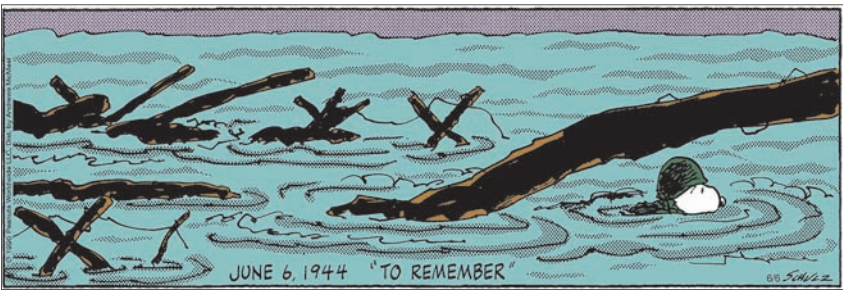
When asked how she would define herself, the actress said, "There's a method to madness. All you have to do is go with it".

"It also depends on the project and the set up if it's chaotic or relaxed. One can't broadly classify it as differences in the different languages. Although, South India filmmaker's love making rooted films. You find more of those in the South or even for that matter in other regional languages other than Hindi cinema.

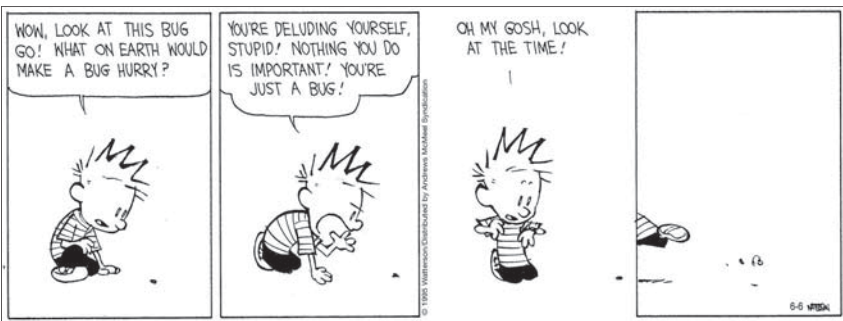
Also in my opinion of actors. The best is to not compare different industries of India", she added.

ANS

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

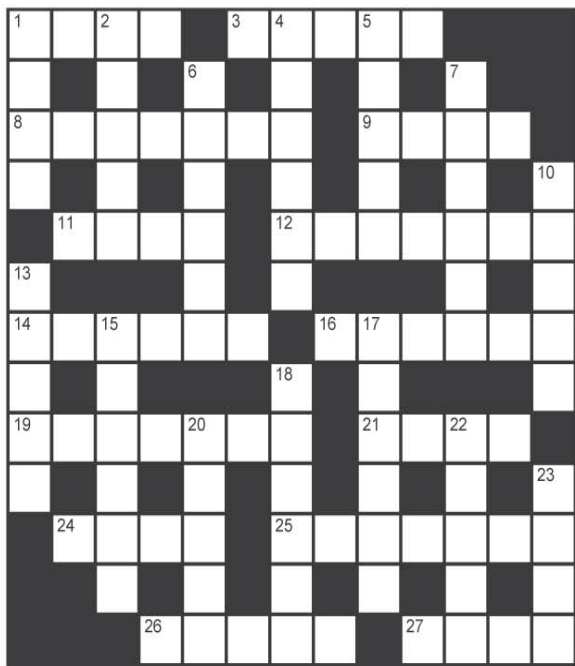


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across

- Blow off steam?
- Matter of debate
- Atrophies
- Like a crone
- Iridescent gem
- Overshadow
- Development
- Counselor
- Execute a law
- Exercise unit (3,2)

Down

- Peddle
- Begrudge
- Doctor's domain on a ship
- Banquet
- Dehydrated
- Fanatic
- Slipshod
- Whiskers
- Cousin of a bittern
- Scandalise
- Warning, maybe
- Head count
- Jingle
- Majestic
- Sort

SUDOKU

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

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

H	A	R	B	O	U	R	L	U	G	E	S
A	O	S	E	L	R	T					
S	C	A	L	P	E	L	A	B	O	D	E
T	R	I	M	U	L						
E	N	S	U	E	C	H	A	N	N	E	L
Y	S										
R	E	V	I	S	E	Q	U	A	S	A	R
E	I	T	T								
J	U	B	I	L	E	E	I	N	G	O	T
O	R	E	N	L	A	E					
I	N	A	N	E	A	V	I	A	T	O	R
C	T	R	N	S	E	N					
E	N	E	M	Y	T	S	E	T	S	E	S

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

CPI(M) slams private power distribution, smart meters

IGNOU: DECE course material now in Odia

Left party warns Odisha government's power reforms will burden consumers, calls for state-wide agitation and public participation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 18: The Odisha unit of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has strongly criticised the state government's decision to hand over electricity distribution to private companies and implement smart meters statewide.

The CPI(M) state committee called the move "anti-people and pro-corporate," claiming it would benefit large companies at the expense of ordinary consumers, including workers, farmers, middle-class families, the poor, and small traders.

In an official statement, CPI(M) state secretary Suresh



Chandra Panigrahy said the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC) will hold a public hearing August 29, 2025, to address grievances on power-related issues. The party plans to raise public concerns at the hearing and stage state-wide protests.

As part of its agitation plan, CPI(M) announced protests, campaigns, and meetings August 28 in the northern districts under TPCODL, with similar programmes scheduled the next day in southern, central, and western districts of Odisha.

"Our demand is clear to stop

the privatisation of electricity distribution, cancel smart meter installation, and revive government-owned distribution companies that can provide affordable and regulated service," Panigrahy said.

The Left party has also appealed to electricity consumers, workers, farmers, students, youth, women, and democratic organisations to join the movement. It warned that corporate entry into power distribution would lead to higher tariffs, advance payments through smart meters, and denial of affordable electricity to the poor.

The CPI(M) ended its statement with slogans: "Electricity for People – Not for Profit" and "Stop Privatisation – Protect People's Rights."

With Odisha's power sector at the center of a heated debate, the CPI (M)'s campaign is expected to add pressure on the state government ahead of the crucial OERC hearing later this month.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 18: In a move to promote inclusive education, IGNOU has launched its Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education (DECE) study materials in Odia. The release ceremony was held Monday in Bhubaneswar, attended by Deputy Chief Minister Pravatī Parida, Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj, and IGNOU Vice-Chancellor Uma Kanjilal.

The initiative follows a June 9 MoU between the Odisha Higher Education Department and IGNOU, aimed at offering a wide range of IGNOU programmes in Odia, from undergraduate and certificate courses to vocational and management degrees, including BBA and MBA.

Parida welcomed the introduction of the DECE pro-



gramme in Odia, noting it will particularly benefit Anganwadi workers, trainers, and pre-school educators by allowing them to study in their mother tongue. She added that offering the curriculum in Odia makes learning simpler and more accessible, and will also be valuable for individuals, organisations, voluntary groups, and private playschools involved in child education and nutrition.

Minister Suryabanshi Suraj said the Odia DECE textbook was launched within 100 days

of signing the MoU. He added that over 41,000 students have already applied for the Odia materials, highlighting strong demand among early childhood educators and aspirants statewide.

The one-year DECE programme, open to all 10+2 pass students, provides essential knowledge and skills for caring for children up to six years old. Its curriculum combines theory and practice across four areas: Organizing Child Care Services, Child Health and Nutri-

tion, Services and Programmes for Children, and Project Work in a Childcare Setting.

The course is especially useful for kindergarten teachers, anganwadi workers, ECCE trainers, and those planning to work in or set up child care centres. It fosters a holistic understanding of child development, health, nutrition, and early education within India's socio-cultural context.

Supported by neuroscience highlighting the importance of early brain development, the programme covers stimulation, nutrition, safety, and education, helping build a strong foundation for children.

The Odia translation makes this initiative more accessible to grassroots educators and caregivers in Odisha, aiming to enhance the quality of early childhood care and education across the state.

Cuttack auto driver held for abusing minor girl

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, August 18: The Cuttack Urban District Police Monday arrested an auto-rickshaw driver for allegedly abusing a minor girl inside his vehicle earlier this month, an officer said.

According to the police, the incident took place August 8 when the victim and her friend had hired an auto rickshaw to travel from Badambadi to Jagatpur on the outskirts of the city.

On the way, the victim asked her friend to get some water as she was feeling nauseous. When her friend went to buy a bottle of water from a roadside shop in Chauliaganj area, the driver allegedly abused her, police said.

Though the incident took place August 8, the matter came to light recently after a police complaint was filed by the survivor's family, they said.

"Acting on the complaint lodged at Chauliaganj police station, we arrested the accused driver and seized the vehicle after verifying CCTV footage," Cuttack DCP Khilari Rishikesh Dnyandeo said.

Nalanda Public School holds Synapse 2025 Quiz in Cuttack



POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, August 18: The 9th edition of the inter-school quiz competition "Synapse: The Junction of Qriosity 2025", presented by Nalanda Public School and powered by Dambaru, was held at Sarala Bhawan, Cuttack, in association with Team Quizard and Team White Canvas.

The programme was inaugurated by Satyabrata Rath of Prelude and Samyak Mohanty, founder of Dambaru. Team Quizard members Siddharth, Pritiman, Manasweta, Shantanu, Abhishek, and Ayanshu, along with 37 organising committee members including Indranil, Shatabdi, Prateek, Aleeva, Mrutyunjay, and Rabmit, played key roles. Mayor Subash Singh attended the prize distribution as chief guest, while, Principal of

Nalanda Public School Nirakesh Sharma, and chairman of SS Associates Prabhu Charan Mohanty were guests of honour.

Sai Pratyaya Sahu and Rajalakshmi Ghadei of Raghunathjiu High School secured first place in the quiz. Second place and the Best Girl Team award went to Asima Baral and Amrita Guru of SSSVM Nayabazar, while Somprajay Maharana and Sai Satyajit Sahu of Secondary Board High School claimed third place.

In the English Quiz, Swarit Kumar Swain and Ankit Kumar Swain of DAV Public School, CDA, were champions. First runners-up were Adweya Sarangi and Swastika Mishra of KIIT International School, while Aadesh Mohanty and Pransu Prusty of Sai International School finished second runners-up.

BIITM holds 'SPARK 2025' MBA orientation prog

Bhubaneswar: The Biju Patnaik Institute of Information Technology & Management Studies (BIITM), Bhubaneswar, inaugurated its MBA induction and orientation programme, 'SPARK 2025', Monday, welcoming the new batch of management students with inspiring sessions, industry insights, and alumni interactions. Principal Mihir Ranjan Nayak welcomed the new students, encouraging them to pursue their MBA journey with focus and determination. Joining the event as chief guest, Additional Commissioner of Police, Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Narasingha Bhol, urged students to embrace sincerity and resilience, advising them to "stay open, confident, and supportive of one another as you navigate challenges and growth." Guest of honour B. Ravindran, CEO of IMGEX India Limited, encouraged students to view the programme as the foundation of their careers, saying, "Cherish these two years and aspire to become future leaders, CEOs, and policymakers."

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, August 18: BJD chief Naveen Patnaik, who is undergoing treatment at a private hospital here for dehydration, is now stable and has been shifted from the observation room to a cabin, according to a hospital bulletin.

Patnaik, who was admitted to SUM Ultimate Medicare Sunday due to dehydration, in a video message thanked people for their good wishes.

"The doctors and staff in the Sum Ultimate Medicare are taking wonderful care of me. If u want to see me, you are more than welcome to come Naveen Niwas in Bhubaneswar. Thank



You," the Leader of the Opposition in Assembly said in the message.

In a post on X, Patnaik said, "Thank the people of #Odisha for the good wishes. I would like to thank the doctors and medical staff for taking wonderful care of me. I am recovering well and will meet the people soon."

Patnaik issued the message to people as a large number of his supporters and well-wishers

from different parts of the state gathered outside the hospital and wanted to meet him.

The hospital, in a bulletin at 6pm, said, "Shri Naveen Patnaik was shifted to a cabin from the observation room of Sam Ultimate Medicare on Monday afternoon. His health is improving and his condition remains stable. Mr. Patnaik is feeling fresh and his treatment is continuing."

BJD vice-president Sanjay Das Burma said, "Patnaik is now stable and has recovered from the dehydration problem."

Meanwhile, BJD workers offered lamps at Shree Lingaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar, praying for Patnaik's speedy recovery.

Badagada to unveil 61-ft Lalbaug-style Ganesh idol

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 18: The Badagada Ganesh Mahotsav Committee will showcase a 61-ft idol inspired by Maharashtra's famed Lalbaugcha Raja during this year's seven-day Ganesh Mahotsav.

The idol, part of celebrations organised by the Bright Star Youth Association, Badagada residents, and the committee, will feature silver-crafted shoes and a silver chariot carrying Ganesha's mouse, crafted by skilled Cuttack silversmiths at considerable expense.

The celebration reflects the dedication of Badagada resi-



dents, who have expanded the puja from humble beginnings into a major cultural festival. The tradition started in 1985 with a 5-ft idol near Badagada High School. Over the years, the idol has grown steadily: 35-

ft in 2018, 40-ft in 2019, 51-ft in 2022, 55-ft in 2023, 57-ft in 2024, and now an impressive 61-ft in 2025.

The massive, lifelike idol, crafted by skilled artisans, serves as both a devotional sym-

bol and a source of pride for the village. Secretary Sangram Martha said the festival will feature elaborate cultural programmes and public gatherings, with a focus on peace, order, and community participation, and invitations extended to dignitaries and cultural performers.

The entire village is coming together in unity, with organizers urging residents to actively contribute to the success and spiritual grandeur of this year's Ganesh Mahotsav. Several Olywood singers, including Antara Chakraborty, Humane Sagar, Barnali Hota, and Kuldeep, will perform during the programme from August 27 to September 2.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Ganesha Pradhan (26), S/o- Tutu Pradhan, Vill-Karapada, PO- Karapada, PS-Digapahandi, Ganjam declared by this affidavit No- A/1879 /16-08-25 that now onwards I shall be known as Ganesh Pradhan for all future purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate, Kanas, dated- 12.08.2025, I Titikshya Baliyarsingh D/o- Swapna Rani Baliyarsingh, Vill.-Dochhian, P.O.- Adal, P.S.- Gadisagoda, Dist.- Puri, Odisha, PIN- 752019, declare that I have changed my name from Diptikshya Baliyarsingh to Titikshya Baliyarsingh. Henceforth, I shall be known as Titikshya Baliyarsingh for all purposes. Titikshya Baliyarsingh

BJD slams govt, seeks ₹3,100 MSP on paddy

Thousands join BJD rally in Bargarh as party slams ruling BJP for 'anti-farmer' policies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bargarh, August 18: Calling the ruling BJP 'anti-farmer', opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Monday held a farmers' rally in Bargarh, Odisha's rice bowl, demanding a minimum support price (MSP) of ₹3,100 per quintal for paddy, simplification of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) norms, and an end to farmer exploitation during procurement.

The rally, attended by thousands of farmers from all the districts of the state's western region, criticised the BJP government's agriculture policy in Odisha.

Speaking at the event, BJD MLA and farmers' wing leader Prasanna Acharya alleged that in the last 14 months under the "double-engine government", the problems of Odisha's farmers have only intensified.

"The BJP promised a lot, but farmers have only faced



increasing exploitation and systemic failures," Acharya claimed.

The party submitted a memorandum to Bargarh DC, to be conveyed to the President of India, highlighting urgent farmer issues.

"The state government had imposed a complicated registration process for farmers, which clearly reflected its anti-farmer stance. This complex process was intended to exclude farmers from selling their paddy. BJD had opposed this decision, and due to the

collective voice of the farmers under the party's leadership, the state government hastily withdrew the decision on Sunday," the memorandum said.

It also alleged that farmers were not getting the benefits of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana introduced by the BJP government.

The insurance companies get benefit while farmers suffer, the BJD claimed, adding that there is huge deduction on weight of paddy at the government mandis.

"The BJP's election prom-

BJD alleges BJP govt exploited farmers, failed to implement promised schemes

Party submits memorandum highlighting urgent farmer issues to Bargarh DC

BJD cites unfulfilled PM pledge on MSP, urges legal backing for farmers' rights

ises, such as procurement without deductions, middlemen-free mandis, and payments within 48 hours have become a joke," it said, alleging that the BJP government has denied benefits to sharecroppers and marginal farmers in the CM Kisan Scheme.

The Swaminathan Commission had recommended providing Minimum Support Price (MSP) at 1.5 times the cost of production, the party said, adding that the BJP government did not implement it.

"During an election rally in Bargarh, Prime Minister had promised an MSP of ₹3,100 per quintal for paddy. That promise, however, has vanished into thin air. Hence, the BJD demand that MSP be fixed in line with the Swaminathan Committee's recommendations and be made a legal right," the memorandum added.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	87.39 ▼ 0.22	SENSEX	81273 ▲ 676.09	GOLD	₹99,490 ▼ ₹348
EURO	102.23 ▼ 0.24	NIFTY	24876.95 ▲ 245.65	SILVER	₹113,775 ▼ ₹168

WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	32.0°	31.8°	Generally cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershower
Min Temp	25.5°	23.8°	
Humidity	91%	95%	
Rainfall	24.8mm	10.4mm	

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Police, villagers clash during lovers' rescue



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, August 18: A clash broke out between police and villagers in Biripali village under Bangomunda police limits of Bolangir district when officers tried to rescue a couple, a video of which later went viral on social media.

According to sources, a man from Biripali had earlier lodged a complaint at Bangomunda police station after his minor daughter went missing. During investigation, police learned that the girl was in a relationship with a youth from the same village. As both belonged to different castes, their families opposed the marriage,

prompting the couple to elope. After the missing complaint was filed, the duo returned and was staying at the youth's house. Based on information from the girl's family, a police team went to rescue the couple August 15. At the time, some agitated villagers attempted to attack the couple by throwing mud and manhandling them. Police personnel were also jostled as they tried to protect the duo, leading to a scuffle between villagers and cops. Despite the resistance, police managed to safely rescue the couple and bring them to Bangomunda police station. The incident came to light after a video footage of the confrontation went viral. Bolangir SP Abhilash G said a case had been registered based on a complaint by the girl's father and action would be taken against those involved in the attack.



UNIQUE PROTEST: Residents plant paddy saplings on a muddy road to draw attention of the administrative officials to its condition and civic woes at Bhaluhuruda village of Kaptipada block in Mayurbhanj district, Monday

OP PHOTO

SHAME IN SAMBALPUR

MINOR GANGRAPED; 2 JUVENILES AMONG 3 ARRESTED, 2 ABSCONDING



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, August 18: A 14-year-old girl was gangraped by five persons when she had gone out to attend nature's call at a village under Jujumura police limits in Sambalpur district Sunday evening. Following a complaint, police immediately launched raids at various locations and arrested three persons including two minors late Sunday night. Two others involved in the crime are absconding as police have launched a manhunt to trace and arrest them. The incident has spread shockwaves in the area. The accused were identified as Susant Mirdha, 21, and two minors from the same village. The two absconding accused will soon be arrested, police said as they continued raids at various places. The prime accused was produced in court Monday and remanded to judicial custody after rejection of his bail plea.

The two minor accused were produced before a juvenile justice board. This was stated here by Sambalpur Superintendent of Police Mukesh Kumar Bhamoo during a press conference held at the district police headquarters Monday morning. The SP said that the survivor, a student of Class IX, stays with her family in a village under Jujumura police limits. The incident occurred when she had gone out to attend nature's call to a creek near her village Sunday evening. The five accused picked her up to a deserted place and took turns to rape her before absconding. Later, the girl returned home and narrated her ordeal before the family members. Apprised, family members visited Jujumura police station with her and lodged a complaint Sunday night. Jujumura police registered a case (174/2025) based on the complaint and statements of the survivor under Section

70(2) of Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (gangrape of minor) and Section 6 (sexual assault) of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and launched an investigation. Police conducted the medical examination of the survivor. Teams led by Redhakhole SD-PO Prasant Kumar Meher conducted raids at various places and arrested three of the five accused late Sunday night. The SP said that police have taken the matter seriously due to sensitive nature of the case. The rest of the accused will be arrested soon and chargesheet will be filed in the court in time where strong evidences will be presented against the accused persons for speedy trial in the case, he added. A similar incident happened in Angul district August 3 when a woman was gangraped when she had gone out to answer nature's call near Bagdia. In that case, three persons, including two minors, were arrested. This comes amid a conspicuous surge of violent crimes against women in the state, which has put the ruling dispensation in a fix with the Opposition upping the ante over its failure to safeguard women. Questions have also been raised in various quarters over the efficiency and ability of the Odisha Police.

Malkangiri airport boundary caves in yet again amid rain



POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, August 18: A portion of the boundary wall of Malkangiri airport collapsed again Monday following heavy overnight rain in the district. About 30 feet of the wall gave way, marking the third such incident since the airport's inauguration one-and-a-half years ago. The repeated collapses have raised questions about the quality of construction, with critics alleging the work was rushed to meet election deadlines. The first collapse of the boundary wall had left several people injured. A second incident occurred months later. Political parties in the district have since alleged that substandard work and hurried construction were responsible. The airport, located about 5km from Malkangiri town, was inaugurated in January last year, but commercial flight services have yet to begin. Most of the construction remains incomplete, further delaying the launch of air connectivity.

Recovery of explosives: Police suspect Maoist-miners nexus

PNN & AGENCIES

Tumudibandha, August 18: Following the recent recovery of over 9 tonnes of explosives and 4,000 detonators from Kandhamal district, the Odisha Police Monday said it was suspecting a nexus between the Maoist groups and mining companies. Additional Director General (ADG), Anti-Naxal Operation, Sanjeev Panda said the explosives recovered from Tumudibandha area Saturday night resemble another dump of such materials from a Maoist camp in Gumma reserve forest last month, where 600 detonators of the same brand were recovered. "We strongly suspect that the explosives being procured for mining explosion activities are getting diverted to the Maoists. There appears to be a nexus be-



tween them, and the police have been investigating the matter," the ADG said. The materials were stored unlawfully and may have originated from commercial mining firms operating in the region, he said. A report from Phulbani said that Tumudibandha police seized explosive materials including 4,000 detonators, 276 kg of gelatin sticks, 100 kg of apex buster, 43 packets of wire and batteries.

The police also seized two vehicles, ₹4 lakh in cash and six mobile sets. Three people were arrested in this connection, said Balliguda SDPO Ramendra Prasad. The explosive materials were seized while conducting a check at Rampur Square on the night of Independence day, he said. Earlier this year, Maoists allegedly stole a large cache of explosives from a stone quarry in Sundargarh district. Joint combing operations by Odisha and Jharkhand forces and CRPF later recovered the stolen material from the Saranda forest in the neighbouring state. The investigation is ongoing, with police examining procurement records and supply chains linked to mining operations in Kandhamal and surrounding districts, police said.

Ganjam police lead state in Op Garuda

CHHATRAPUR: Ganjam police district has emerged as the top performer in the state during the recently concluded Operation Garuda, a special enforcement drive carried out from August 1 to 16, officials said. Under the directive of Superintendent of Police Subhendu Kumar Patra, the crackdown targeted illegal firearms, narcotics, illicit liquor, gambling, and absconding suspects. The drive resulted in the arrest of 98 accused persons, seizure of 14 pistols, 63 bullets, 15 magazines, and recovery of ₹94,710 from gambling operations. Police also confiscated 4,540.66 litres of illicit liquor, 163.64 kilograms of ganja (cannabis) and three vehicles, including cars and motorcycles. In addition, 398 wanted persons with pending arrest warrants were apprehended during the operation. Notices were served to 176 identified troublemakers under Sections 126 and 129 of the BNS. Police also tracked down 537 antisocial and disorderly elements who had gone underground. Officials said the comprehensive crackdown not only disrupted criminal networks but also strengthened law and order across Ganjam, making it the leading district in the state's enforcement effort.

TIGER PUGMARKS SPARK PANIC IN BORDER VILLAGES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, August 18: Panic has gripped fringe villages of Jharsuguda district after fresh tiger pugmarks were spotted in the Bagdihi forest range Monday morning. According to reports, villagers in Bhukalapada, Ganjudihi, Karilakhman and Jammamal noticed the pugmarks and immediately alerted forest officials. A Forest department team confirmed that the pugmarks belonged to a Royal Bengal Tiger. Officials from the Bagdihi and neighbouring Bamra ranges have also been deployed. Residents have been advised not to venture out alone in the morning or evening. Sources said the tiger had killed a calf in Lanjabahal forest of Sundargarh Sunday, before likely crossing over from neighbouring Chhattisgarh.



same animal had moved into Jharsuguda. This marks the first confirmed tiger movement into the district, he added. To monitor the big cat's activity, the Forest department has installed 20 trap cameras across strategic locations. Patrol teams from Jharsuguda and Bamra ranges have also been deployed. Residents have been advised not to venture out alone in the morning or evening. Sources said the tiger had killed a calf in Lanjabahal forest of Sundargarh Sunday, before likely crossing over from neighbouring Chhattisgarh.

In a first, Didayi girl cracks NEET

BALASORE: Achieving a rare feat, a girl from the Didayi tribal community of Malkangiri district, who dreamed of becoming a doctor, has cracked the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET). Champa Raspada, a resident of Amilbeda village in Muduliguda, has become the first woman from her community to qualify for MBBS. She has been offered admission to Fakir Mohan Medical College and Hospital, Balasore. Champa was provided free coaching at IRODOV Classes, a private institute in Balasore. High school teacher Utkal Keshari Das, a native of Sahada village in Balasore and currently posted in Malkangiri, played a crucial role in bringing her to Balasore for coaching. Interestingly, the same institute had earlier trained Mangala Muduli from Malkangiri, who last year became the first person from the Bonda tribal community to clear NEET. Teacher Utkal Keshari Das had also been instrumental in guiding him to IRODOV Classes.

En masse death of 73 buffaloes triggers fear

PNN & AGENCIES

Rajnagar, August 18: Bloat-ed carcasses of as many as 73 buffaloes were found floating in the Brahmani River triggering panic in Eakamania village under Aul block in Kendrapara district even as scientists from the state-run Animal Diseases Research Institute (ADRI) have begun an investigation into the mysterious death of these bovine animals. The death of the buffaloes was reported Sunday afternoon. So far, carcasses of 44 buffaloes have been retrieved. On being informed, a team of veterinary officials and scientists from ADRI, Phulnakhara, Cuttack has reached the village to ascertain the exact cause of en masse death of buffaloes. Such en-masse death of buffa-



loes was never reported in this part of the state, said the Chief District Veterinary Officer (CDVO), Kendrapara, Manoj Kumar Patnaik. The bovine death will adversely affect the economy of the riverside village as cattle farmers here used to supply milk yield to urban areas and had attained a degree of self-sufficiency, said local residents.

Doctors travel by air to treat critically ailing in Malkangiri

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/Malkangiri, August 18: A team of doctors from SCB Medical College and Hospital, Odisha's premiere government-run health unit, Monday flew to the far flung Malkangiri district on the southernmost tip of the state to provide critical healthcare facilities as part of air health service under the Mukhyamantri Vayu Swasthya Seva scheme. The panel of doctors who travelled by air from Bhubaneswar's Biju Patnaik Inter-

national Airport to Malkangiri Monday morning began attending the patients requiring laparoscopic surgery besides nephrology and neurology treatment. The panel of doctors will provide treatment to about 250 patients during their four-day stay in the remote district, said an official of the state's Health and Family Welfare department. It may be recalled here that the previous BJD government had launched Mukhyamantri Vayu Swasthya Seva in 2021 in



an attempt to expand the free specialised healthcare facility to poor and backward section

people in the remotest corners of the state. Shortage of adequate num-

ber of doctors is a major area of concern in state's tribal-dominated districts such as Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada and Kalahandi districts. The doctors mostly shy away from serving in these remote locations principally due to abysmal lack of hospital infrastructure and diagnostic facilities. The scheme, akin to air ambulance service, envisages coming to the rescue of poor people in need of specialised treatment, which is conspicuous by its absence.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/25-26/
E-Tender/58, Dt. 12.08.2025

(1) Tender No. e-tendersouthkur-197-2025, Dtd.: 05.08.2025

DESCRIPTION : ALL REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE OF P.WAY ZONAL WORKS FOR A PERIOD UPTO 30/9/2026 FROM KM. 457.200 TO 515.00 BETWEEN KHURDA ROAD TO BALUGAON UNDER SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER (P.WAY)/KALUPARAGHAT OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 125.69 Lakh, EMD : ₹ 2,12,900/-

(2) Tender No. e-TenderSouthKUR-199-2025, Dtd.: 05.08.2025

DESCRIPTION : ALL REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE OF P.WAY ZONAL WORKS FOR A PERIOD UPTO 30/9/2026 FROM KM. 572.13 TO 631.20 BETWEEN GANJAM - JHADUPUDI UNDER SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER (P.WAY)/BRAHMAMPUR OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 125.84 Lakh, EMD : ₹ 2,12,900/-

(3) Tender No. e-TenderSouthKUR-200-2025, Dtd.: 05.08.2025

DESCRIPTION : ALL REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE OF P.WAY ZONAL WORKS FOR A PERIOD UPTO 30/9/2026 FROM KM. 631.20 TO 678.33 BETWEEN ICHHAPURAM - PALASA STATION UNDER SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER (P.WAY)/SOMPETA OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 125.78 Lakh, EMD : ₹ 2,12,900/-

(4) Tender No. e-tendersouthkur-198-2025, Dtd.: 05.08.2025

DESCRIPTION : ALL REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE OF P.WAY ZONAL WORKS FOR A PERIOD UPTO 30/9/2026 FROM KM. 515.00 TO 572.13 BETWEEN GANGADHARPUR - GANJAM STATION UNDER SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER (P.WAY)/RAMBHA OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 125.42 Lakh, EMD : ₹ 2,12,700/-

Completion Period : 12 (Twelve) Months (for all SI. Nos.)

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

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website : www.irops.gov.in

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

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg) / PR-487/Q/25-26 | Khurda Road

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No. ELOP-T-09-2025

NAME OF WORK : ISSUE OF WALKIE-TALKIE SETS, SAFETY ITEMS AND POC SAFETY DEVICES TO THE CREW AND GUARDS AT ALL THE CREW LOBBIES OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION (EXCEPT THE COACHING LOBBIES SUCH AS BHUBANESWAR & PURI) ROUND THE CLOCK FOR A PERIOD OF 02 YEARS.

Advised Value : ₹ 1,87,65,292.40, EMD : ₹ 2,43,800/-, Cost of Tender Document : ₹ 5,900/-, Period of Completion : 730 Days.

Bidding Start Date : 20.08.2025

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1600 Hrs. of 03.09.2025.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Complete information including e-Tender documents and corrigendum is available in website www.irops.gov.in

Sr. Divl. Electrical Engineer (OP)/ PR-488/Q/25-26 | Khurda Road

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. ST/OT/AMC/VEHICLEKUR/489, Dt.: 11.08.2025

NAME OF WORK : HIRING OF THREE NOS. OF MULTI-UTILITY OF ROAD VEHICLE LIKE TATA 207-DI OR EQUIVALENT ALONG WITH DRIVER ROUND THE CLOCK FOR MOVEMENT OF SIGNALING & TELECOMMUNICATION STAFF AND MATERIALS UNDER SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER (TELECOM) / CONTROL / KHURDA ROAD, SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER (SIGNAL) / SOUTH / KHURDA ROAD, SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER (SIGNAL) / PURI IN CHARGE FOR MAINTENANCE OF SIGNALLING AND TELECOMMUNICATION ASSETS, ATTENDING BREAKDOWN AND ROUTE DETENTION FOR PERIOD OF 33 MONTHS.

Tender Value : ₹ 58,41,000.00, EMD : ₹ 1,16,800/-, Tender document cost : ₹ 5,900/-

Bidding Start Date : 19.08.2025.

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1100 Hrs. of 02.09.2025.


No manual offers sent by Post/ Courier/ Fax or in person accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website : www.irops.gov.in

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigendum issued for this tender.

Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer, PR-486/Q/25-26 | Khurda Road

Vain indeed is all overweening pride in the conquest even of the entire universe if one has not conquered one's own passions.

SRI AUROBINDO



Plastic Threat

More than 400 million tons of plastic are produced globally each year, half of which is for single-use items. Nearly half, or 46 per cent, ends up in landfills, while 17 per cent is incinerated and 22 per cent is mismanaged and becomes rubbish. Plastic pollution has reached the most remote and inaccessible parts of our planet under constant and relentless assault from diverse sources. It has been found in Greenland's ice cap, near the summit of Mount Everest and in the deepest depths of the western Pacific Ocean. Nature programmes have pressed the alarm bell over a human-made crisis that has become an environmental scourge posing a serious threat to human health. Yet global production of plastic is all set to cross one billion tons a year by 2060, after increasing by more than 200 times over the past 75 years.

This is the sordid reality that has forced delegates from 184 countries to gather at the United Nations in Geneva to deliberate for 10 days, from 5 to 15 August, and negotiate a deal to combat plastic pollution. The chair of the meet, Luis Vayas Valdivieso, produced a draft text based on the few areas of convergence, in an attempt to find common ground. But it ended up infuriating virtually all the stakeholders. The battle against plastic has unfortunately turned into a war between the vested interests determined to protect their trade and those fighting for reducing production of plastic instead of merely managing recycling of waste.

The delegates became divided into two groups. One of these comprises ambitious countries that clamour for bold action like curbing production and phasing out toxic ingredients. The other is called the so-called Like-Minded Group, with Gulf countries taking the lead, which insist on applying no brakes on production of plastics and instead are ready to use technology for managing waste. The agenda of the meeting was to find a legally binding instrument on tackling plastic pollution, but the outcome has proved to be highly disappointing.

Valdivieso's draft text was doomed to be torn into pieces as waste paper since it did not limit plastic production or address chemicals used in plastic products, which were contentious issues at the talks. About 100 countries wanted to limit production and at the same time tackle cleanup and recycling. Many at the meet said it is essential to address toxic chemicals. But, oil-producing countries vehemently opposed, arguing that it would be enough for the time being to eliminate plastic waste. The larger bloc of countries seeking more ambitious actions shook their heads in disbelief at the outcome as they considered absence of legally binding action meant the menace would continue unchecked.

The watered-down, compromised text means humans and nature will continue to bear the brunt of pollution inflicted on them by oil-producing states. The UN meeting turned out to be a missed opportunity to limit fossil fuel-based manufacturing of plastic. During five rounds of negotiations over three years, a petrochemical bloc led by Russia and Saudi Arabia has stalled and obstructed attempts to agree to a reduction in production. In fact, a media investigation has revealed how the corporate lobby has penetrated such forums to scupper and sabotage negotiations to curb the menace.

It is a pity that the Geneva meet ended without any consensus on a text of the instrument that could be binding on all nations to take steps to curb the plastic menace. The Committee only agreed to resume negotiations at a future date to be announced. Such an outcome was only expected after the return of Donald Trump to the White House for the second time. On the first day of assuming office in January, Trump withdrew the US from the Paris climate agreement giving a fillip to producers of fossil fuel. Such Trumpian actions seem to have given great hope to the wrong kind of people and corporates that mean no good to no one.

FOCUS

TAXATION

GST REFORM MUST WIDEN NET



The current GST structure is difficult to administer and regressive in effect. There are also cases of prevalence of inverted duty structures under GST, where inputs are taxed at higher rates than finished goods



Ajit Ranade

IN PRACTICE WORLDWIDE, FOOD AND MEDICINES ARE EXEMPT. A RATIONAL, EFFICIENT SYSTEM SHOULD HAVE ONLY ONE RATE FOR ALL GOODS AND SERVICES

The nationwide GST was rolled out eight years ago with much fanfare in a special midnight session of Parliament. It was hailed as a landmark reform of the tax system. It unified the country as a common economic market with one system of indirect taxes, eliminating inter-state frictions and also leakages. The passage of GST reform was achieved as a grand bargain with the Union government giving up its right to impose excise and service taxes, and all the states surrendering their right to impose state-level sales taxes, value added tax and other sundry taxes such as octroi. This grand bargain and persuasion of state governments to surrender their taxing autonomy was achieved by promising them reimbursements of tax shortfalls. This is the GST compensation clause in the original Act of 2017, which expired in 2022. Now the states are afraid that they will face a steep fall in their tax share of GST.

The unified national tax system was implemented by giving up VAT, entry tax and octroi. Previously, states could adjust these taxes to meet their unique fiscal needs. Now, their ability to independently mobilise resources is curtailed and that is a cause for worry. After eight years, the GST is still like a work in progress despite the great efforts of the GST Council with representatives of all states. In this light it is very welcome that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his Independence Day address, announced a landmark reform of GST as a major "Diwali gift" for the citizens. He promised next-generation GST reforms aimed at reducing the tax burden on the common people, especially the middle class and MSMEs. The government's proposal revolves around three pillars: structural reforms, rate rationalisation, and ease of living.

Let's be clear that GST as a unified, nationwide, indirect tax has certain drawbacks, from both the design and implementation perspective. The design flaw is that an indirect tax like GST is inherently re-

gressive. That's because the tax paid does not depend on the income of the person, but on the value of the item being purchased. Hence the poor feel the pinch of GST more than the rich. Direct taxes like income tax and wealth tax are more fair than indirect taxes. Fairness means the "fraction" of your income paid as taxes, goes up with income, not down. To reduce this unfairness, the GST design has multiple slabs. A zero or 5% slab on items consumed by the poor. And a high slab for items consumed by the rich. This is to make GST fair, by using the consumption choices of the poor as a proxy for their income. But it is paternalistic. It implicitly dictates what poor people should consume. What if poor households have aspirations? The divide between essentials and non-essentials is anyway not sharp, nor static, nor something the State should determine. With GDP growth, poor households move into the middle-income slab and the middle-income households into the rich. So instead of catching their income, we try to get them through GST.

In practice worldwide, food and medicines are exempt. A rational, efficient system should have only one rate for all goods and services. This is seen in the EU nations, Singapore, Australia and other countries. There are some tweaks, but the broad principle is one median rate, one very low rate for essentials (food, medicine) and one very

high rate for sin goods (tobacco, liquor) and super luxury goods. From an implementation perspective the flaws in India are as follows. We have multiple slabs, large exemptions from parts of GDP, inverted duties, and finally an excessive burden of compliance especially on small businesses. The GST system in India has retained a complicated system of multiple tax slabs (0%, 5%, 12%, 18%, 28%, a penal sin tax rate and various cesses). This complexity leads to frequent disputes over the classification of goods and services, confusion among taxpayers, and litigation. The legal cases have already clogged the system. The current GST structure is difficult to administer and regressive in effect. There are also cases of prevalence of inverted duty structures under GST, where inputs are taxed at higher rates than finished goods. This leads to accumulated credits, cash flow problems for businesses, and discourages domestic manufacturing.

Large parts of GDP such as agriculture, petroleum products, electricity, alcohol and real estate remain outside its ambit. Selective exemptions fragment the tax base, reduce revenue, and undermine the spirit of GST reform. The burden on small businesses and MSME's is severe since they have to pay GST upfront but their customers delay payments. There are also delays in refunds and technical glitches which hurt busi-

ness liquidity and confidence. Additionally frequent changes in rates and rules, along with a complex filing system, pose additional burdens and lead to further tax litigation.

Under the proposed reforms announced by the PM on Independence Day, the most significant change is the move from the current multi-slab GST system to a simplified two-slab structure: a "standard" and a "merit" rate, with special rates for a select few items. This will make compliance easier for businesses, reduce litigation and classification disputes, and bring much-needed stability and predictability to GST rates. Taxes on daily-use items and aspirational goods are expected to drop, boosting consumption and benefiting MSMEs. Lowering these rates will help make Indian exports more competitive globally and aid job creation. The government also plans to introduce seamless, technology-driven registration, pre-filled GST returns, and faster refunds. It is advisable that the median rate be 15% and not 18 which is too burdensome. In fact, the GST median rate should come down from 15 to even 12 as suggested by the original Kelkar task force on tax reforms.

Finally, a comment on federalism. The Constitution gives states greater expenditure responsibilities (like health and education) but fewer independent revenue streams. GST has accentuated this imbalance, forcing states to rely heavily on Central transfers. States need some taxing power for funding local development and public welfare. There is a perception that GST has undermined India's federal spirit and eroded the fiscal autonomy of states. We need to explore how to restore greater fiscal space and autonomy to states, enabling them to design policies suited to their specific economic, social, and regional needs. We also need to tilt the balance away from indirect taxes toward direct taxes, to reduce inequality.

WISDOM CORNER

- Every experience is a paradox in that it means to be absolute, and yet is relative; in that it somehow always goes beyond itself and yet never escapes itself.

TS ELIOT

The power for creating a better future is contained in the present moment: You create a good future by creating a good present.

ECKHART TOLLE

A happy life must be to a great extent a quiet life, for it is only in an atmosphere of quiet that true joy dare live.

BERTRAND RUSSELLX

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1919:** Afghanistan gains independence from the United Kingdom. The Central Asian country came under British control in 1859. The country was considered to be a buffer for the British trade in opium and as a frontier to protect their interests in India. Despite trying several times to consolidate their rule over Afghanistan, the Afghan people remained hostile to British control and in 1919, King Amanullah declared Afghanistan to be independent from Britain's protection. The declaration launched a war called the Third Anglo-Afghan War, which ended with the signing of the Rawalpindi Treaty on this day. The treaty granted Afghanistan independence from the British.
- 1934:** Some 90 per cent of German voters approved a referendum that made Adolf Hitler "Führer und Reichskanzler" ("leader and chancellor").
- 1936:** Soviet officials began the Great Purge of prominent Old Bolsheviks—real or potential political rivals and critics of Joseph Stalin—as the first show trial opened, resulting in the execution of Lev Kamenev and others.
- 1945:** A commando force formed by Vo Nguyen Giap, under Vietnamese nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh, entered the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi.
- 1960:** Sputnik 5 is launched by the USSR. The Soviet spacecraft carried two dogs, Strelka and Belka, who became the first living beings to survive in space.
- 1960:** American pilot Francis Gary Powers was sentenced to 10 years' confinement by the Soviet Union for espionage following the U-2 Affair, but he was later released (1962) in exchange for the Soviet spy Rudolf Abel.
- 1991:** Mikhail Gorbachev, the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1985-91) and president of the Soviet Union (1990-91), was briefly ousted in a coup by communist hard-liners.

SPECTRUM DIPLOMACY

India's concerns at SCO Summit

The ensuing Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit is scheduled for August 31-September 1, 2025 in Tianjin, China. Incidentally, it will mark the SCO's 25th anniversary. The SCO was founded on 15 June, 2001, in Shanghai. As of now, the SCO consists of 10 member states: Belarus, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The SCO is an intergovernmental organisation focused on political, economic, and security cooperation. Its secretariat is based in Beijing.

Key goals of the SCO include: i) combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism through the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure and ii) enhancing economic integration and infrastructure connectivity, often aligned with China's Belt and Road initiative (BRI). The SCO supports projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). India has an open objection to CPEC, a flagship BRI project, which passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Interestingly, India joined the SCO in 2017. As India is comparatively a new entrant, not many in India know about the SCO as much as the public knows about G20 and BRICS. As chair of the SCO, India hosted the 23rd SCO Summit virtually on 4 July, 2023. Due to geopolitical considerations, amid tensions with some members, India preferred virtual format. As the event in India was held online, it did not elicit the kind of public enthusiasm as was witnessed during the G20 Summit.

In the context of the ensuing SCO Summit, a layman is intrigued as to why the SCO remained completely impervious to the recent conflict between the two member countries. We did not hear any news about the SCO issuing any statement.

The multilateral forum SCO will provide opportunities to the Heads of Governments to hold bilateral talks on the sidelines of the 2025 Tianjin Summit. A thaw in Indo-China ties is also being anticipated as an outcome of bilateral meetings. India and Pak premiers will also be face to face. The SCO is significant for India because both China and Pakistan are also members.

The 2024 SCO Summit was held on 3-4 July, 2024 in Astana, Kazakhstan. Prime Minister Modi did not attend the summit in person. India was represented by the EAM who delivered the PM's message. However, PM Modi and the Chinese President did meet later that year on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, marking their first structural bilateral meeting since 2019. The meeting focused on border disengagement and stabilising bilateral ties.

As India now shares one multilateral platform – the SCO - with Pakistan, is there a possibility of reviving another multilateral forum comprising both India and Pakistan - the SAARC? Whereas, the SCO is dominated by the "bigger economy," India had been in the lead position in the SAARC.

Multilateral forums give leaders of member countries opportunities to hold bilateral meetings with each other on the sidelines. India has deftly utilised summits of G20, BRICS, BIMSTEC, G7 for holding bilateral meetings. India will host the QUAD summit later in 2025.


On the flip side, SCO and BRICS – groupings comprising nations from the Global South – are perceived to be challenging the established global order. Critics view the SCO as a China-Russia-led counterweight to Western alliances like NATO. India has to do a tightrope walk for maintaining and developing strategic ties with the West while being an active member of the SCO and BRICS.

L

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TO THE EDITOR

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



B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Missed opportunity

Sir, The E20 (20 per cent ethanol blending in petrol) has been rolled out, yet the price of petrol remains stubbornly high. The whole pitch behind blending 20 per cent ethanol with petrol was that it would cut costs, reduce dependence on crude oil imports, and give some relief to the common man's pocket. Yet, despite the switch, the price per litre of the essential fuel is almost unchanged. If the economic benefit is not visible to the people, then what exactly is the point of this exercise? Is it just for claiming "implementation success" and ticking boxes in policy reports? Ethanol blending is not a bad move — it can help the environment and farmers who produce sugarcane and maize. But if the final price to the consumer stays the same, then the core promise is broken. For the middle-class family struggling with rising expenses, what matters most is how much less they have to spend on fuel. If the E20 move doesn't translate into real savings, it becomes yet another hollow announcement. Implementation should be measured by impact, not by ceremonies and slogans. Until the benefit reaches the people, ethanol blending will remain a missed opportunity rather than a real reform.

Noopur Baruah, TEZPUR (ASSAM)

Dignity at stake

Sir, This refers to the news report "EC, Cong face off," **Orissa POST** August 18. I think, it is a serious blow to the Election Commission of India (ECI) that Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi still believes that the poll body is in collusion with the ruling party at the Centre to indulge in manipulating electoral rolls, which he precisely calls "vote theft." Such a grave allegation against the ECI has neither been addressed properly nor any punitive action has been taken against Rahul Gandhi by declaring that the allegations levelled are false and concocted. This hampers the dignity of the Commission and this has never happened in the past.

Arun Gupta, KOLKATA



Khelo India Water Sports Fest to bolster Dal Lake’s iconic profile

Union Sports Ministry’s endeavour to promote sports activities in Jammu and Kashmir has already established Gulmarg as a top winter sports hub. The ski resort has already hosted five iterations of the Khelo India Winter Games and now Dal Lake will be aspiring to become a water sports destination

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, August 18: The first-ever Khelo India Water Sports Festival is all set to reveal the iconic Dal Lake in a new avatar. Jammu and Kashmir’s quest to emerge as a sporting destination will get a major boost when Dal Lake hosts its maiden major national-level Open competition, from August 21-23.

More than 400 athletes from 36 states and Union Territories will be taking part in three medal events – rowing, kayaking and canoeing.

For decades, Dal Lake has remained central to Kashmir tourism, art, and culture, and with the hosting of the maiden Khelo India Water Sports Festival, the lake is readying to add to its credentials as a national treasure. The KIWSF is being jointly hosted by the Sports Authority of India and the Jammu & Kashmir Sports Council.

The Union sports ministry’s national sports policy, the Khelo Bharat Niti, is giving new

hope to athletes, coaches and the overall sports ecosystem. The policy will not only enable promotion of sports but bolster commercial benefits for stakeholders associated within the ecosystem. Particularly, the House Boats owners are really looking forward to the Games.

“This is not just an event—it is the beginning of a new era for water sports in our country. On behalf of all athletes, I extend our heartfelt gratitude to our Prime Minister Narendra Modi and sports minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, and the entire Khelo India team for making water sports a priority and giving it the recognition it truly deserves,” said Bilquis Mir, a well-known name in the world of canoeing and kayaking and an Olympic judge.

The Khelo India Water Sports Festival 2025 will also showcase three demonstration events – water skiing, dragon boat race, and the crowd-favorite shikara sprint. This has generated enthusiasm both among the segments of society around



Dal Lake as well as water sports athletes.

But there are bigger aspirations lurking around the KIWSF. For example, Mohsin Ali, a young water sports athlete, is preparing to participate in the kayaking event. He is a J&K state champion and has won 15 medals, including three gold medals at the national events. Ali, like many others, is training hard. “I am hopeful of fetching a gold medal at these games

that we are hosting,” he said.

“When I started paddling here as a 10-year-old in the 1990s, I dreamt of one day representing India. That dream came true when I became the first woman from India to participate in a World Cup,” says Biquis Mir, adding: “I am confident that this event will be thrilling and will serve as a great inspiration for our young athletes who dream of representing India on the big-

gest stage.”

There are more voices that see the water sports festival as a game-changer. Muhammad Imtiyaz, a water sports coach, said: “It was the Khelo India Winter Sports Games that turned Gulmarg into the winter sports hub in the country. Similarly, Khelo India Water Sports Festival will bring Jammu and Kashmir into the consciousness of the water sports athletes across the country,” he said.

For Dal Lake, the festival is both a sporting milestone and a civic statement. The lake is a living water body, which is protected, managed, and celebrated as central to culture, livelihoods, ecology, and water sports. The different government agencies have also stepped up the lake management with activities like de-weeding to meet the demands of both ecology and the event.

Dal’s cultural signatures have been woven into the Khelo India Water Sports Festival’s design language, with the mas-

cot featuring the Himalayan Kingfisher, a bird that can be found looking for its prey in the waters of Dal Lake, and the logo featuring a Shikara on the Dal Lake.

Muhammad Rafiq Malla, a Shikarawalla who ferries tourists in his boat and is himself a water sports athlete, is excited about the Khelo India Water Sports Festival. “The Khelo India Water Sports Festival will not only offer opportunities to sports enthusiasts but also to people living in Dal Lake like me,” he said.

“While I would love to watch the young water sports athletes coming from all over the country to participate in the Khelo India Water Sports Festival in Dal Lake, I would also like to see these athletes enjoy their visit in Jammu and Kashmir and explore the Dal Lake’s vibrant interiors, watch Dal dwellers carry lotus flowers and vegetables from floating gardens in their wicker baskets and be mesmerized by the Zabarwan range,” added Malla.

Kerala bars education panel members over book error on Netaji

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, August 18: Kerala General Education Minister V Sivan-kutty on Monday said panel members responsible for a factual error on Subhas Chandra Bose in a teachers’ hand-book draft would be barred from future academic work.

In a Facebook post, Sivan-kutty admitted that a “historical inaccuracy” had crept into the description of Netaji in the draft of the revised Class 4 Environmental Studies teachers’ handbook.

He said the error was made by members of the Kerala State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) panel.

Once the matter was brought to notice, the SCERT was directed to correct the mistake and reprint the hand-book with accurate historical details. The corrected version has since been uploaded on the official website, he added.

“The state government’s approach is not like that of the Centre, which distorts historical facts for political purposes. Throughout this curriculum revision, we have followed the policy of presenting historical facts that uphold constitutional goals realistically to children, and we will continue to do so,” Sivan-kutty claimed.

The minister added that the SCERT has been instructed to debar the textbook compilation panel members responsible for the error from further academic activities.

His clarification came amid media reports that the Class 4 teachers’ handbook had wrongly stated that Netaji fled to Germany, “fearing the British.”



‘WHY PAY TOLLS?’ Kerala highway mess: SC slams NHAI for jams



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 18: The Supreme Court, Monday, questioned the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on why commuters should pay tolls when it takes 12 hours to travel from one end of the National Highway 544 in Kerala to the other during weekends.

A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) BR Gavai and Justices K Vinod Chandran and NV Anjaria also asked whether the NHAI should compensate people for their patience and fuel lost while waiting 12 hours in a traffic snarl.

The CJI Gavai-led Bench was hearing a clutch of petitions, including a special leave petition (SLP) filed by the NHAI, chal-

lenging a Kerala High Court decision to temporarily suspend toll collection at the Paliyekkara Toll Plaza on the Edappally-Man-nuthy National Highway, near Kochi, citing the authorities’ failure to resolve the severe traffic congestion in the area.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the NHAI, told the court that a lorry had overturned, causing the traffic jam.

To this, Justice Chandran, who said he travels the stretch, said: “The lorry did not fall down on its own. It fell into a pothole and got turned over.”

“In fact, some payment has to be made by the NHAI to commuters for their patience and the fuel they lost in the traffic block. The road is in such a

state of disrepair,” added Justice Chandran, referring to the media reports on traffic jams.

In a similar vein, CJI Gavai asked the Solicitor General: “Why should a person pay ₹150 toll if it takes 12 hours to get from one end of the road to the other end?”

SG Mehta responded that service roads were available for commuters where underpass construction was underway, but the monsoon had impacted the construction.

After hearing the submissions of the parties, the court ordered, “Heard Mr Tushar Mehta, learned Solicitor General of India, appearing for the petitioner(s)...and Mr Jayanth Muth Raj, learned senior counsel, appearing for the respondent (s). Arguments concluded. Judgment is reserved.”

While considering a batch of petitions seeking a stay on toll collection until the traffic snarls are addressed, the Kerala High Court had observed: “Toll can only be collected after resolving the traffic issues.”

“If the roads are in poor condition, how can toll collection be justified?” a bench of Justices Muhammad Mustaque and V Harishankar Menon had asked. It had noted that although the NHAI had created service roads as an alternative, those too remained in a poor state, contributing to the present crisis.



A woman checks her cash, recovered during a search and rescue operation at cloudburst-hit Chisoti village, in Jammu and Kashmir’s Kishtwar district

PTI PHOTO

Demand drives coconut shell prices to record high in Kerala

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kottayam, August 18: Once discarded as waste, coconut shells in Kerala have turned into a lucrative commodity, with prices hitting record highs on the back of rising industrial demand from other states and even overseas.

The price of coconut shells has seen a significant jump, rising to a record high of up to ₹35 per kg in some parts of Kerala in the past few months.

Interestingly, a year ago, coconuts in the state were sold for ₹30-40 a kg (now ₹80-90), while today their shells are fetching up to ₹35 a kg in many parts of Kerala.

The price escalated from

ONCE WASTE, NOW ‘GOLD’

The sudden rise in value has made the coconut shell a ‘gold price’ commodity, with the small-scale entrepreneurs now engaging in online-based collection businesses



₹5 per kg at the beginning of this year, creating a lucrative market for coconut traders and farmers.

Traders involved in the trade have confirmed that the price surge is a result of high demand from both domestic and

foreign markets. Subair, a trader in southern Kerala’s Kollam city, said that he is selling the coconut shells to traders from Tamil Nadu who, in turn, export to China and Taiwan, adding that its prices touched ₹33 in Kollam. According to him,

the shells are used to produce activated carbon for water purification, cosmetics, and various industrial applications.

Murugan, a trader in Erattupetta of Kottayam district, said that the jump in the price of coconut shells up to ₹35 a kg made it a high-value product.

Households in Kerala have also begun storing coconut shells to sell them to local traders at higher rates after the recent surge in their prices.

The sudden rise in the prices of coconuts and coconut oil, both essential in the daily life of Keralites, has upset the household budget across the state. In the state, a kg of coconut costs around ₹80-90, while coconut oil is priced at ₹400-500 per kg.

Soldier’s compassion gives voice to silent child



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kathua, August 18: In the remote village of Duggan in Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian Army has become a beacon of hope for a struggling family. Akshay Sharma, a young boy from a poor household, remained silent for eight long years due to a cleft lip and palate condition.

The boy had undergone sur-

gery at the age of three. But despite that, he was still unable to speak. Reeling under poverty, his parents were unable to afford further treatment. So, they had nearly given up hope of ever hearing their son’s voice.

Defence Public Relations Officer in Jammu, Lieutenant Colonel Suneel Bartwal, said that everything suddenly changed one day. An Army doctor, posted in the

area, happened to meet Akshay. Moved by the family’s hardships due to poverty, the doctor took an interest in the treatment of the boy.

He conducted a preliminary assessment. After deep examination, he reached the conclusion that with the right therapy, Akshay might be able to speak.

However, in the absence of specialised medical facilities in the remote village, the Army doctor

took it upon himself to study speech therapy techniques and began working with Akshay in his free time.

After treatment, the Army doctor started training the boy to speak out. And in the process, he first taught him to form sounds. This was followed by the boy being trained to speak words. Eventually, the boy started speaking simple sentences. Months of dedicated practice and perseverance finally led to Akshay beginning to speak with some amount of confidence.

The moment was emotional when he called out to his parents for the first time. Tears welled up in their eyes. It wasn’t just a sound for them. It was a miracle for the parents. A dream they had long buried came alive. Their home, once filled with silent prayers, now echoed with the joyful sounds of Akshay’s voice.

Needless to say, the soldier’s act of compassion touched the entire community. The Army doctor’s kindness has left a lasting impact on Duggan. It reminded everyone in the region that the Indian Army doesn’t just guard the nation’s borders. It also heals hearts, uplifts lives, and brings hope in the most unexpected moments, just when it’s needed the most.

Special NIA court frames charges against former bar prez in advocate murder case

Jammu: A special NIA court has framed charges under UAPA against former president of the Kashmir wing of the High Court Bar Association (HCBA), Mian Abdul Qayoom, in connection with the assassination of advocate Babar Qadri in September 2020. Qayoom, 77, an executive member of separatist amalgam Hurriyat Conference, was arrested on June 25, 2024, as the principal conspirator behind Qadri’s killing, allegedly by terrorists of the proscribed ‘The Resistance Front’ (TRF), a proxy of Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba. Earlier, Qayoom’s habeas corpus petition and his challenge to the arrest and remand process in the case were dismissed by the Jammu and Kashmir High Court in February, reaffirming the legal propriety of the arrest and investigation.

He was taken into custody by the State Investigation Agency (SIA) of the Jammu and Kashmir Police, which took over the case in July 2023, after collecting evidence against him. “In a significant development in the high-profile murder case of Qadri, the special designated court under the NIA Act has formally framed charges under Sections 16, 18, and 38 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against Qayoom,” an official said. He said the charges pertain to terrorism and conspiracy to commit a terrorist act.



GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA					
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BHANJANAGAR					
No.4308 / RWDBNJ/Dated 16.08.2025					
1st CORRIGENDUM TO TENDER CALL NOTICE					
IDENTIFICATION NO.09/RWDBNJ/2025-2026 T.O. LETTER NO.4180 DATED 05.08.2025					
No.O-612: The following modifications to the Online Tender/09/RWDBNJ/2025-2026 are made under unavoidable circumstances.					
Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender for bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date of opening of Tender
1	2	From	To	5	6
		As per TENDER CALL NOTICE			
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Bhanjanagar	Online Tender/ 09/ RWDB- NJ/2025-2026	18.08.2025 10.00 AM	02.09.2025 to 3.00 PM	30.08.2025 Upto 3.00 P.M.	03.09.2025 at 11.00 AM
		As per 1st Corrigendum			
		26.08.2025 10.00 AM	11.9.2025 to 3.00 PM	09.9.2025 upto 3.00 PM	12.9.2025 at 11.00 AM
All other terms and conditions of the said tender call notice shall remain unchanged.					
OIPR-25174/11/0032/2526		Sd.-/ Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division, Bhanjanagar			

of the day **Quote**

Regular monitoring and a focus on high-quality workmanship are essential to ensure the public benefits swiftly from these initiatives. Well-planned urban growth is gaining pace under the state government's push for structured development

BHAJANLAL SHARMA | RAJASTHAN CM

Where are those who claimed that Uttar Pradesh has become mafia-free? The truth is, Uttar Pradesh has not become 'mafia-free', instead the smaller mafias have merged into a 'mega mafia'

AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

Money culture (distributing money to woo voters) in elections is a big menace for the state. We should work collectively to shun this practice, which affects our state. This should be discussed in the public forum and people must be made aware of its negative impact through community participation

PEMA KHANDU | ARUNACHAL CM

SHORT TAKES

3 dead as tempo rams RTC bus

Thanikallu (Andhra Pradesh): Three persons—one of them a child—were killed and 10 others injured when a tempo traveller collided with a Road Transport Corporation bus in Sri Satya Sai district Monday, police said.

Yamuna water levels crosses danger mark

New Delhi: The Yamuna in Delhi crossed the danger level, reaching the mark of 205.36 metres at 2 pm Monday at the Old Railway Bridge, officials informed. The warning mark for the river in the city is 204.50 metres, while the danger mark is 205.33 metres, and evacuation of people starts at 206 metres. The Old Railway Bridge serves as a key observation point for tracking the river's flow and potential flood risks.

2 booked for raping Class XII student

Ballia (UP): Two men have been booked for allegedly raping a Class XII student when she was returning home after attending the Independence Day celebration at her school here, a police officer said Monday. A case has been registered against Amarjit Singh (35), who hails from the minor girl's village, and his uncle Gautam Singh (45), he said.

Nara Lokesh meets Union ministers

New Delhi: Andhra Pradesh IT and Electronics Minister Nara Lokesh called on several Union ministers Monday and briefed them on various development priorities of the state. In his meeting with Union Chemicals and Fertilisers Minister J P Nadda, Lokesh highlighted the severe urea shortage in the state during the ongoing Kharif season and requested immediate allocation to support farmers.

SC grants bail to Partha Chatterjee

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Monday granted bail to former West Bengal minister Partha Chatterjee in teacher recruitment case investigated by the CBI but said he would be released after the trial court records statements of material witnesses.



The EC did not respond to those either and is now claiming it received no such complaints

ASHOK GEHLOT
SENIOR CONG LEADER

WEEK AFTER SC ORDER, BOY INJURED IN STRAY DOGS ATTACK

A five-year-old boy was injured in a stray dog attack in Udaipur district of Rajasthan, police said. The incident occurred Sunday evening when the child was mauled by three dogs while playing near his home, the police said



EAM holds meet with Wang Yi

In his opening remarks at a meeting with Wang, the external affairs minister pitched for taking forward the de-escalation process in the border areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh that witnessed over a four-year face-off between the militaries of the two nations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 18: India and China should adopt a "candid and constructive" approach in moving ahead in the ties that must be based on mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interest, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar conveyed this to his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi Monday.

In his opening remarks at a meeting with Wang, the external affairs minister pitched for taking forward the de-escalation process in the border areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh that witnessed over a four-year face-off between the militaries of the two nations.

Jaishankar held wide-ranging talks with the Chinese foreign minister shortly after he landed in Delhi on a two-day visit that came days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned trip to China to attend the annual summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Wang's visit is largely seen as part of ongoing efforts by the two neighbours



to rebuild their relationship after it came under severe strain following the deadly Galwan Valley clashes in 2020.

In his remarks, Jaishankar also mentioned fighting against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations as another major priority. "Having seen a difficult period in our relationship, our two nations now seek to move ahead. This requires a candid and constructive approach from both sides," the external affairs minister said.

"In that endeavour, we must be guided by the three mutuals

- mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interest. Differences must not become disputes, nor competition conflict," he said. The Chinese foreign minister is in India primarily to hold a fresh round of Special Representatives (SR) dialogue on the boundary question with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. The SR talks will be held Tuesday. Wang and Doval are the designated special representatives for the boundary talks.

The talks covered economic and trade issues, pilgrimages,

people-to-people contacts, river data sharing, border trade and connectivity.

The external affairs minister also dropped enough hints of discussion on international situation. "The fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is another major priority. I look forward to our exchange of views," he added.

The external affairs minister said New Delhi expects that the discussions would contribute to building a stable, cooperative and forward-looking relationship between India and China -- "one that serves both our interests and addresses our concerns".

In the SR talks, both sides are expected to deliberate on new confidence-building measures besides reviewing the overall situation along the LAC.

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

Putin dials Modi; briefs him on Alaska summit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday conveyed to President Vladimir Putin India's consistent position for a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict when the Russian leader apprised him on the summit talks he held with US President Donald Trump.

Trump and Putin met in Alaska for nearly three hours Friday but the much-anticipated summit ended without a ceasefire deal.

Following the phone conversation with Putin, Modi said India has consistently called for a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict and supports all efforts in this regard.

"Thank my friend, President Putin, for his phone call and for sharing insights on his recent meeting with President Trump in Alaska," the Prime Minister said in a social media post.

"India has consistently called for a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict and supports all efforts in this regard. I look forward to our continued exchanges in the days to come," he said.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said Putin shared his assessment of his meeting with President Trump.

"While thanking President Putin, the Prime Minister underlined India's consistent position for a peaceful resolution of the conflict through diplomacy and dialogue. He reiterated that India supports all efforts in this regard," it said.



Banaras Locomotive Works, Varanasi commissioned India's first 70m removable solar panel system, 28 panels, 15KWp, between railway tracks

PTI PHOTO

Soldier assaulted; NHAI imposes ₹20L fine on toll plaza

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Meerut/New Delhi, August 18: An Army jawan returning to duty after leave was allegedly assaulted by toll plaza employees in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut district, prompting the arrest of six people, a hefty penalty and blacklisting proceedings against the toll operator by NHAI and a strong condemnation from the Indian Army.

The incident, which also sparked outrage on social media after its video surfaced, occurred Sunday evening at

the Bhuni toll plaza in Sarurpur area, when Kapil, a soldier from Gotka village posted in Srinagar, was on his way back to duty.

His car was caught in a long queue, and when he asked the toll staff to clear the way faster, an altercation broke out. The argument escalated, and Kapil was beaten up by toll plaza employees, officials said.

On the basis of CCTV footage and a complaint filed by the soldier's family, police registered a case and arrested six employees. Superintendent of Police



(Rural) Rakesh Kumar Mishra said efforts are on to identify and nab others involved.

Taking cognisance of the incident, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on Monday imposed a penalty of

EC publishes list of names deleted from Bihar voter list

The development came after the Supreme Court directed the EC to publish the deleted names by August 19 and file a compliance report by August 22



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, August 18: The Election Commission (EC) Monday came out with the names of 65 lakh people who were removed from the draft electoral rolls published as part of the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise, officials said.

The development came after the Supreme Court directed the EC to publish the deleted names by August 19 and file a compliance report by August 22.

The EC published the names of 'ASD' (Absentee, Shifted, and Dead) voters across polling booths, and also online as directed by the apex court, they said.

According to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Bihar, ASD lists have been displayed at polling booths in Rohtas, Begusarai, Arwal, Siwan, Bhojpur, Jehanabad, Lakhisarai, Banka, Darbhanga, Purnea and other places.

A statement issued by Bihar CEO Vinod Singh Gunjyal said, "In light of the interim order passed by the Supreme Court August 14, 2025... it is hereby notified that the list of such electors whose names were included in the Electoral Roll of the year 2025 (before the draft publication) but are not included in the draft roll published August 1, 2025,

along with reasons (Deceased/Permanently Shifted/Absent/Repeated Entry), has been published on the websites of the Chief Electoral Officer, Bihar, and all District Election

Officers of the State of Bihar."

All such electors, whose names are not included in the draft roll, may obtain information about their entry and the reasons thereof by using their EPIC number in the published list, he said.

The list relating to such electors not included in the draft roll published August 1, 2025 has also been displayed at all block offices, panchayat offices, urban local body offices, and at the polling stations. Through these, such electors can obtain information regarding their entries along with the reasons, the CEO said.

Any person dissatisfied may file a claim along with a copy of their Aadhaar card, he said.

The Supreme Court, in an order August 14, directed the Election Commission to publish an enumerated, booth-wise list of around 65 lakh electors not included in the draft electoral roll, published August 1, during the ongoing SIR exercise in Bihar, where assembly elections are due later this year.

Leader of the Opposition in Bihar Assembly, Tejashwi Yadav, slammed the EC over the ongoing SIR and wrote in a post on X Monday, "The current Chief Election Commissioner wants to perform better than Anil Masih, who was the Presiding Officer in the Chandigarh Mayor election. The responsibility of saving the Election Commission's credibility now lies not with the officials but with the public.."

Govt introduces Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 in LS

NEW DELHI: The government Monday introduced a new Bill in the Lok Sabha to decriminalise as many as 288 provisions relating to minor offences under different laws with a view to promote ease of living and improve business climate. This is the second Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill. Earlier in 2023, the government enacted a similar law decriminalising 183 provisions in 42 central acts, administered by 19 ministries and departments. Introducing the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill 2025, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said it seeks to enhance trust-based governance for ease of doing business. The Bill was then referred to the Select Committee of the Lok Sabha for scrutiny.

Rainfall statistics mislead as cloudbursts ravage Himalayan states

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 18: A spate of cloudbursts, flash floods and landslides across the Himalayan states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand this monsoon has again laid bare the mountain's risk to short, violent spells of rain.

It has also shown that seasonal rainfall in the "normal" category may not always signal safety.

The India Meteorological Department's (IMD) district-wise rainfall data till August 17 this season shows a striking contrast -- several districts that saw deadly cloudbursts or flash floods are in the "normal" to "below-normal" rainfall bracket. Examples include Kishtwar and Kathua in Jammu division and Uttarkashi in Uttarakhand. The IMD classifies rainfall as "large excess" if it is 60 per cent or more above the season's

normal, "excess" if it is between 20 per cent and 59 per cent and "normal" if within 19 per cent. Rainfall that is 20 to 59 per cent below normal is "deficient", while 60 to 99 per cent below is termed "large deficient".

Himachal Pradesh has received 613.6 mm of rainfall so far this monsoon, 18 per cent above the Long-Period Average (LPA) of 519.5 mm. Jammu and Kashmir recorded 362.9 mm, 6 per cent below the LPA of 385.2 mm. Uttarakhand received 947.9 mm, 14 per cent above the LPA of 830.1 mm. Despite these variations, all three states fall in the "normal" rainfall category this season.

In Jammu and Kashmir, Kishtwar has received only 86.5 mm of rainfall so far against a normal of 301.5 mm, a shortfall of 71 per cent. Despite this, it has been among the worst-affected this year, with a cloudburst-triggered flash flood August 14 killing at least 60 people



and leaving many missing. Kathua has recorded 854.6 mm of rainfall so far this monsoon, 5 per cent below the normal of 898.6 mm, but cloudbursts in the Rajbagh and Janglote areas August 17 caused flash floods and landslides that killed at least seven people and damaged infrastructure, including rail tracks and the Jammu-Kathua highway.

In Reasi district, heavy rains and high water levels in the Chenab river washed away a crucial road patch. Schools were shut across parts of Jammu division amid landslide and flash-flood risk. In Rajouri and Poonch, swollen rivers and streams have led to inundations and landslide damage.

While Reasi recorded 23-per cent surplus rainfall, Poonch

2 more bodies recovered in Kishtwar cloudburst

CHISOTI (J&K): Two more bodies were recovered from the debris in this cloudburst-hit village in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district, taking the death toll in the natural calamity to 63, officials said, as a large-scale search continued for the fifth day Monday despite intermittent rains. Donning rain coats, the rescue teams were working at multiple locations, especially the major impact spot near a langar (community kitchen) site, sifting through the rubble using machinery, including earth movers, and sniffer dogs.

recorded slightly above normal and Rajouri gauged 66 per cent of precipitation.

Uttarkashi has recorded near-normal seasonal rainfall, around 3 per cent above

average. However, on August 5, a cloudburst over the upper Kheer Ganga (Kheer Gad) catchment triggered a debris-laden flash flood that devastated Dharali and the adjoining Harsil area, causing widespread destruction.

Rudraprayag also saw a cloudburst-linked devastation in parts of Kedarghati in late July -- houses and vehicles came under debris as rivers swelled. The district has recorded 999.2 mm of rainfall this monsoon season so far, 11 per cent below the normal of 1,125.9 mm.

Multiple cloudbursts, flash floods and landslides have been reported in Mandi and Kullu districts of Himachal Pradesh, which have recorded 69 per cent and 47 per cent above-normal rainfall this monsoon season so far, with the State Emergency Operation Centre reporting hundreds of roads cut off earlier this month.

With the early warning and alerts we have received for the rains over the past 2 days, I'm expecting the @mybmc to put out: How many pumps were put into action. How many pumping stations were working at full capacity? How many new flooding spots were reported this year and why?

AADITYA THACKERAY | SENA (UBT) LEADER

It was very unfortunate the way the Opposition created a ruckus in the House and did not allow it to function

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

Earlier, we used to think that there would be an Anurag Thakur, a Sambit Patra or a person named source making comments but we finally saw the CEC

PAWAN KHERA | CONGRESS' MEDIA AND PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT HEAD

X

POST OF THE DAY

BREAKING NEWS
India Bloc is planning to bring an impeachment motion against CEC Gyanesh Kumar.

Rahul Gandhi has already spoken to a few non NDA parties. Expect fireworks in the coming weeks

@Politixc2029

SHORT TAKES

PM chairs meet on next-gen reforms

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday chaired a high-level meeting, which included top Union ministers, secretaries and economists, to deliberate on the roadmap for the next generation reforms, one of the key announcements he had made in his Independence Day address. Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Piyush Goyal and Lalan Singh attended the meeting.

3 held for 'abetment' of woman's suicide

Kochi: Three people, including the parents and an associate of the prime accused, were arrested Monday in connection with the alleged abetment of suicide of a 23-year-old woman. According to police, the woman wrote in her suicide note that she faced "persistent harassment over religious conversion", which drove her to take the extreme step.

Four dead in fire at electronics store

New Delhi: A massive fire broke out in an electronics shop in west Delhi Monday afternoon, leaving four people dead and another injured, officials said. The fire erupted at 'Mahajan Electronics' on the second floor of a four-storey building in Raja Garden area, which was reported to the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) around 3.08 pm, they said.

4-day-old infant dies in GMCH

Guwahati: A four-day-old infant died at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) here Monday morning after being found hanging from the wires of a medical device inside the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). With the newborn's family members alleging negligence against the on-duty staff, the Assam government ordered an inquiry into the incident.



In the name of a mental health survey, Kalyani AIIMs is indirectly surveying for the NRC. If any organisation reaches your house in the name of a survey, please verify it with the state government first

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

CWC WARNS OF FLOODING ACROSS MULTIPLE STATES

The Central Water Commission (CWC) on Monday issued a nationwide flood advisory warning of severe flooding in several states, with the Yamuna in Delhi expected to swell further and reach 206 metres by early Tuesday morning



Patanjali joins elite league with AEO tier-2 status in FMCG sector

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 18: Patanjali Foods Limited has been awarded the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Tier-2 certificate by the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the Ministry of Finance – Indian Customs.

The certification, considered one of the most prestigious in global trade, recognises the highest standards of honesty, transparency, quality, and supply chain security.



Only a select group of Indian companies hold this distinction, and in the FMCG sector, very few enjoy this status. With this recognition, Patanjali joins the league of India's leading corporates.

The AEO Tier-2 status entitles the company to more than 28 international trade benefits, including duty deferred payment, bank guarantee waiver, direct port delivery (DPD), and 24x7 customs clearance facilities.

Speaking on the development Swami Ramdev, co-founder of Patanjali, said, "Today is a day of pride not only for the Patanjali family but for every Indian. This certificate further strengthens our resolve to build the nation and take 'Make in India' to the global summit."

Acharya Balakrishna, Managing Director of Patanjali Foods, added, "This achievement reflects the collective efforts of our employees and consumers. It will strengthen India's exports promote Ayurveda and indigenous products globally, and help establish Patanjali among the world's top FMCG brands."

CAG: Rlys understated working expenditure

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 18: Railway's total earnings and expenditure from its operations when compared with its cross subsidising records showed that it understated its expenditure in the financial year (FY) 2022-23 by more than ₹5,000 crore, the Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) report, recently tabled in the Parliament, has revealed.

The auditor found that while the Railways, after working out its earnings and expenditures, presented a net profit of ₹2,517.38 crore, when the loss in passenger services was compensated with the profit from freight services it showed a net loss of ₹5,257.07 crore. The audit showed that Railways' total working expenditure (including appropriation to various funds) stood at ₹2,37,659.58 crore whereas its earnings from passenger, coaching, freight and other services were ₹2,40,176.96 crore generating a surplus of ₹2,517.38 crore.

Rains wreak havoc across states

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Mumbai, Aug 18: Heavy rains wreaked havoc across several states Monday with Maharashtra being the worst-hit where seven people were killed and more than 200 stranded even as multiple landslides in Himachal Pradesh led to closure of 400 roads.

In Mumbai, relentless downpours brought the city to a standstill, prompting the civic body to declare a holiday for schools and colleges. Several parts of the country's financial capital received more than 100 mm rainfall in nine hours Monday. "So far, 7 lives have been lost. Some rivers in Konkan have risen to an alarming level, and Jalgaon has reported extensive losses," Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis posted on X after reviewing the rainfall situation. Fadnavis said he reviewed the rainfall situation across the state at the State Emergency Operation Centre.

"All Divisional Commissioners and District Collectors joined the meeting through video conferencing and shared updates from their respective regions. Instructed that citizens staying in relief shelters must be provided with food, clean drinking water, blankets and other essential facilities on priority. "Heavy rains have been recorded in Ratnagiri, Raigad and Hingoli. The Meteorological Department has warned of heavy rainfall from August 17-21, and instructions have been issued to remain fully vigilant," he said. In Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar division, 800 villages are affected by heavy rains, he said.

Five persons are reported missing from Mukhed taluka of Nanded district, around 600 km from Mumbai, Fadnavis told reporters earlier.

Incessant rains in Mumbai also resulted in hardships to those visiting a hospital in Chembur hit by waterlogging.



In Mumbai, relentless downpours brought the city to a standstill, prompting the civic body to declare a holiday for schools and colleges. Several parts of the country's financial capital received more than 100 mm rainfall in nine hours Monday

Several people were seen carrying ailing kin on their backs to gain access to the Maa General Hospital, which is run by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

The situation was brought under control by evening, an official said.

In Nanded district, more than 200 people were stranded in floods amid incessant rains, forcing authorities to call the Army for rescue and relief efforts.

Many flights were affected due to poor weather conditions in Mumbai, with some executives "go-arounds" and one flight diverted. The heavy downpour led to low visibility and increased congestion on access roads, causing inconvenience to both arriving and departing passengers, an airport official said.

Fadnavis said Mumbai received 177 mm rain in six to eight hours Monday and asked citizens to observe all precautions since more is expected

through the day along with high tides.

District collectors of Nanded, Latur, and Bidar are coordinating with each other to carry out rescue operations, he said.

"One NDRF team, one military unit, and a police team are working in coordination for the rescue efforts. A military unit from Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar has also been dispatched," Fadnavis said.

As heavy rains lashed Mumbai Monday, waterlogging was reported in several pockets, leading to traffic jams.

The BMC declared a holiday for all schools and colleges in the city operating in the second shift (post 12 pm).

Later, the civic body also announced holiday for all schools as well as colleges in the metropolis Tuesday amid forecast of heavy rains.

In Thane district, heavy downpours triggered a landslide in a hilly area in Kalyan damaging four houses, officials said. Nobody was injured.

SNIPPETS

Opposition stages walkout in Rajya Sabha

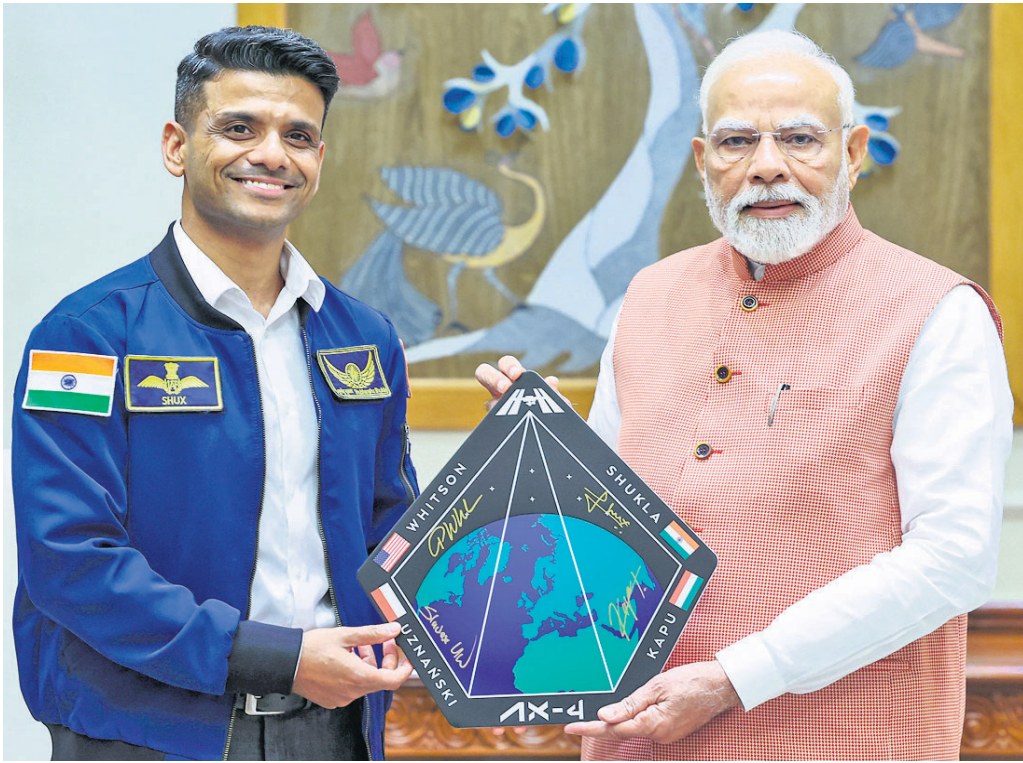
New Delhi: Opposition MPs Monday staged a walkout in the Rajya Sabha demanding discussion on electoral rolls revision in Bihar. As the House reassembled at 2 pm, BJD's Sasmit Patra, who was in the Chair, informed the legislators that the Business Advisory Committee had decided to allot three hours for discussion on the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2025. He also said that the committee has allotted one hour for consideration and passage of the Indian Institutes of Management (Amendment) Bill 2025, after it is approved by the Lok Sabha. Patra then asked Union Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to introduce the Indian Ports Bill, 2025, which was mentioned in the listed agenda of the House. Sonowal moved the bill amid the din.

Hoax bomb threats shake Delhi schools

New Delhi: At least 32 schools in the national capital received bomb threats Monday, triggering panic and prompting student evacuation, before officials declared them hoax. Delhi Fire Services stated that between 7.30 am and 12.25 pm, they received calls from 32 schools informing about the threat e-mails. Multiple teams of Delhi Police, including the bomb disposal squad and dog squad, were rushed to the campuses. A thorough search operation was carried out in each of the campuses before the police confirmed that the threats were fake. "Search operation is completed and nothing suspicious was found," the officer said, adding that cyber forensic teams have begun work to trace the IP address of the sender.

Sitharaman to attend GoM meeting tomorrow

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will attend a crucial meeting of a state ministerial panel August 20 to put forth the Centre's proposal for sweeping GST reforms that will slash tax rates and lead to reduction in prices of common use items. The two-day meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on GST rate rationalisation is scheduled August 20-21 here, sources said. The meet will deliberate on the Centre's proposal for GST reforms of reducing the number of tax slabs in Goods and Services Tax (GST) to two – 5 and 18 per cent, and a 40 per cent special rate on a select few items.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla, at his residence in New Delhi. Shukla returned to India following his landmark visit to the International Space Station (ISS) as part of the Axiom-4 mission

PTI PHOTO

Courts shouldn't rush to invalidate elections: SC

The top court noted the issue in the election petition was whether non-disclosure of income as shown in income tax return for four financial years of the last five financial years in the Form 26 affidavit by the returned candidate would amount to a corrupt practice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 18: The Supreme Court has said courts should not rush to invalidate elections by adopting a "highly pedantic" approach just because a returned candidate didn't disclose certain information about assets, unless it influences the poll's outcome.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh, therefore, dismissed an appeal against an October 2024 order of the Telangana High Court which rejected an election petition related to the 2023 legis-

lative assembly polls in Telangana.

The top court noted the issue in the election petition was whether non-disclosure of income as shown in income tax return for four financial years of the last five financial years in the Form 26 affidavit by the returned candidate would amount to a corrupt practice.

"In the light of the legal position explicated, on examination of the facts in the peculiar background obtaining in the case, we hold that the non-disclosure of income in the income tax return for four financial years by



respondent 1 (returned candidate), is not a defect of substantial character," the bench said August 14.

It noted the defect of non-disclosure was not of a substantial nature and, as a result, the returned candidate Kova Laxmi was held to have not indulged in a corrupt practice.

The order said whether or not the non-disclosure of assets was of a substantial character, courts must determine it based on specific facts of each case in line with a previous verdict.

"Merely because a returned candidate has not disclosed certain information related to the assets, courts should not rush

to invalidate the election by adopting a highly pedantic and fastidious approach, unless it is shown that such concealment or non-disclosure was of such magnitude and substantial nature that it could have influenced the election result," it said.

The bench said in the case at hand, it was not demonstrated that such concealment or non-disclosure of certain information related to assets was of a substantial nature, materially affecting the result of the election of returned candidate.

Referring to a previous verdict of the apex court, the bench said it observed a case of non-disclosure of assets, amounted to a corrupt practice.

"But the non-disclosure of income as per income tax return in the present case, as discussed above, is not of a substantial nature to be considered a corrupt practice," the bench said.

"The true test," the bench said, "would be whether the non-disclosure of information about assets in any case is of consequential or inconsequential import, finding of which will be the basis for declaring the election valid or void as the case may be".

It said judicial intervention in election disputes concerning disclosure of information was prompted by the quest for "sanitising the electoral process" by eliminating polluting elements by making candidates' criminal antecedents public.

The verdict pointed out the disclosure requirement as far as assets and educational qualification was concerned, should not be unreasonably stretched to invalidate an otherwise validly declared election over minor technical non-compliances of non-substantial character and nullify people's mandate.

of the day

quote

Well, if you look at the oil that's going to China and being refined, a lot of that is then being sold back into Europe. Europe's also buying natural gas still. Now, there are countries trying to wean themselves off it, but there's more Europe can do with regard to their own sanctions

MARCO RUBIO | SECRETARY OF STATE, US

With parliamentarians' support, cooperation, and foresight, it would be possible to address the common crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and air pollution (in the HKH region)

RAMCHANDRA PAUDEL | PRESIDENT, NEPAL

I also instructed the Israeli Embassy in Canberra to carefully examine any official Australian visa application for entry to Israel

GIDEON SAAR | FOREIGN MINISTER, ISRAEL

SHORT TAKES

Myanmar's EC sets Dec 28 to hold polls

Naypyidaw: Myanmar's military-appointed election commission announced Monday that elections will begin December 28, setting a date for polls that critics have denounced as a sham intended to normalise the army's 2021 seizure of power even as armed conflict rages throughout much of the country. The Union Election Commission said in a statement sent to journalists that the elections will be conducted in phases over several days and that a full schedule will be released soon. A separate statement from the commission, published Saturday in the state-run Myanma Alinn newspaper, said that all 330 townships in the country have been designated as constituencies for the election.

Chinese FM Wang Yi to visit Pak this week

Islamabad: China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi will arrive in Islamabad this week to attend the Pakistan-China strategic dialogue and hold meetings with the civil and military leadership to discuss bilateral ties as well as key regional and international developments, a media report said Monday. The top Chinese diplomat will undertake a two-day visit beginning August 21, The Express Tribune newspaper reported, citing official sources. In Islamabad, Wang will review the current state of bilateral ties between the two countries and discuss key regional and international developments, the paper said.

'US would help with Ukraine's security'



REUTERS

Washington, August 18: President Donald Trump said Monday that the United States would help Europe in providing security for Ukraine as part of any deal to end Russia's war in Ukraine, as he and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy began a hastily arranged White House meeting to discuss a path to peace.

But he also suggested to reporters that he no longer believed reaching a ceasefire was a necessary prerequisite for striking a peace agreement, backing a position staked out by Russian President Vladimir Putin and opposed by Zelenskyy and most European leaders.

The two leaders took questions from the media in the Oval Office before meeting in private, six months after their last appearance there descended into disaster when Trump and Vice President JD Vance upbraided Zelenskyy in an extraordinary apubic dressing-down.

This time, Trump and Zelenskyy struck a far more convivial tone, despite the US president's movement toward Russia in recent days following his summit in Alaska with Putin. And Zelenskyy was backed by the leaders of Britain, Germany,

France, Italy, Finland, the European Union and NATO, who traveled to Washington to demonstrate solidarity with Ukraine and push for strong security guarantees for the country in any post-war settlement.

"When it comes to security, there's going to be a lot of help," Trump told reporters, adding that European countries would be involved. "They are a first line of defence because they're there, but we'll help them out."

Trump greeted Zelenskyy outside the White House, shaking his hand and expressing delight at Zelenskyy's black suit, a departure from his typical military clothes. When a reporter asked Trump what his message was to the people of Ukraine, he said twice, "We love them." Zelenskyy thanked him, and Trump put his hand on Zelenskyy's back in a show of affection before the two men went inside to the Oval Office.

Trump is pressing for a quick end to Europe's deadliest war in 80 years, and Kyiv and its allies worry he could seek to force an agreement on Russia's terms after the president Friday in Alaska rolled out the red carpet - literally - for Putin, who faces an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court for

ZELENSKIY ACCUSES RUSSIA OF ATTACKS TO UNDERMINE TRUMP TALKS

TRUMP PRESSURES UKRAINE TO COMPROMISE, WARNS AGAINST NATO ASPIRATIONS

EUROPEAN LEADERS SEEK STRONG SECURITY GUARANTEES FOR UKRAINE

war crimes.

Trump said he liked the concept of a ceasefire, but they could work on a peace deal while the fighting continued.

"I wish they could stop, I'd like them to stop," he said. "But strategically that could be a disadvantage for one side or the other."

He also said he believes Putin wants to end the war and that he hopes the three leaders can soon organize a trilateral meeting. Putin has not committed to such a meeting, though Zelenskyy said he is ready to sit down.

"We need to stop this war, to stop Russia and we need support - American and European partners," Zelenskyy told reporters. The European leaders were to meet with Trump later Monday, according to the White House. Such a high-level gathering at the White House on

Bolivia heads to runoff after right turn in presidential vote

REUTERS

La Paz, August 18: Bolivians decisively repudiated the leftist party which has ruled the country for most of the past two decades in a first-round presidential election vote, likely paving the way for more market-friendly policies for its crisis-wracked economy.

Centrist senator Rodrigo Paz secured 32.18% of the vote, while Eduardo del Castillo of the Movement for Socialism, MAS, had just 3.16%, according to initial results released by the electoral tribunal Sunday night.

Conservative former president Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga of the Alianza coalition was second with 26.94%, with over 92% of the ballots counted.

If no candidate obtains more than 40% of the vote with a 10-point lead, there will be a runoff October 19. Full official results will be announced within seven days.

The result marked a drastic shift for a country which since 2006 has mostly been dominated by the interventionist MAS party led by the charismatic Evo Morales, although his once tight grip on the leftist coalition had already faded.

"Bolivia is not just asking for a change in government, it's asking for a change in the political system," Paz said in a speech broadcast Sunday night. "This is the beginning of a great victory, of a great transformation," he added, as his supporters chanted "renewal."



A firefighter carries out a controlled burn in the village of San Martino de Alvaredos, Lugo area, Galicia region, Spain



PAKISTAN REPORTS 2 MORE POLIO CASES

Pakistan has reported two new poliovirus cases, taking the tally of the crippling disease to 21 this year, health authorities said Monday. Pakistan is the only country other than Afghanistan, where polio remains endemic

Pakistan monsoon death toll hits 657



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Peshawar, August 18: At least 657 people died and nearly 1,000 were injured since late June in rain-related incidents in Pakistan, according to officials.

In a media briefing Sunday, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Spokesperson Tayyab Shah said that heavy monsoon rains are expected to persist until August 22. He warned that two to three more monsoon spells are expected to hit the country in September. Shah noted that this year, monsoon rainfall had been 50 to 60 per cent heavier than last year.

This year's monsoon season ranks among the most destructive in recent memory, he said.

According to NDMA, 657 people - 171 children, 94 women, and 392 men - died and 929 others were injured in rain-related incidents across Pakistan since June 26.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the worst-hit province with 390 deaths - 288 men, 59 children, and 43 women.

In Punjab, 164 people - 70 children, 63 men, and 31 women - died in rain-related incidents since June 26.

While Sindh recorded 28 deaths, including 14 children and 4 women; in Balochistan, 20 people, including 11 children, died.

At least 32 people, including eight children, died in Gilgit-Baltistan, while 15 people, including five minors, were killed as heavy rains lashed

Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Eight people, including 4 children, died in Islamabad.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Director General Asfandyar Khattak in a press conference Sunday said around 150 people are missing from Buner and Shangla districts.

According to officials, 84 people, including 21 members of a family preparing for a wedding, were killed in flash floods triggered by cloudbursts in Buner.

Rescue operations are underway and five armed forces helicopters are at the disposal of the provincial government, Khattak said, adding that the provincial government has released PKR 1.5 billion for relief activities.

The PDMA DG said 33 trucks of non-food items had reached Buner, eight had reached Swat, and seven had reached Bajaur, while additional supplies were also being dispatched.

Meanwhile, investigators have recovered the black box of the helicopter that crashed during a rescue operation near Peshawar, officials said Monday. The MI-17 helicopter had crashed August 15 while transporting relief supplies to flood-affected residents in the Salarzai area of Bajaur, resulting in the death of all five crew members.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed federal ministers to supervise relief operations in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Son of Norway's crown princess charged with rape, domestic violence

REUTERS

Oslo, August 18: The son of Norway's crown princess has been charged with rape, domestic violence, assault and other crimes following a year-long police investigation, a prosecutor said Monday.

Marius Borg Hoiby, 28, son of Crown Princess Mette-Marit and stepson to Crown Prince Haakon, is expected to stand trial early next year and could face up to 10 years in prison if found guilty of the most serious charges, the prosecutor said.

Hoiby denies the most serious accusations against him, but plans to plead guilty to some lesser charges in court when the trial starts, his lawyer Petar Sekulic told Reuters.

"He does not agree with the claims regarding rape and domestic violence," Sekulic said of his client.

Hoiby does not have a royal title and is outside the line of royal succession. "It is up to the courts to hear this case and to reach a decision," the royal palace said in a statement.

Police in November 2024 held Hoiby in detention for one week as part of the investigation.

He was charged Monday with 32 criminal offences, including one count of rape with sexual intercourse and three counts of rape without intercourse, some of which he filmed on his telephone, the prosecution said.

"It's up to the judges to decide if he is guilty," Prosecutor Sturla Henriksboe told a press conference.



Hamas accepts new Gaza truce plan with Israel, hostage release

THE PALESTINIAN HEALTH MINISTRY SAID MONDAY THAT MORE THAN 62,000 PALESTINIANS HAVE BEEN KILLED IN THE 22-MONTH WAR IN GAZA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cairo, August 18: Hamas has agreed to a 60-day ceasefire proposal with Israel that includes the release of half the hostages held in Gaza and Israel's release of some Palestinian prisoners, an Egyptian official source said Monday.

Senior Hamas official Basem Naim confirmed the group's approval of the proposal, writing on Facebook: "The movement has handed over its approval to the new proposal presented by the mediators."

Israeli media quoted Israeli sources as saying the Hamas response had been received.

There was no official response from Israel, but in a video from his office Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, "I, like you, hear the reports in

the media, and from them you can get one impression - Hamas is under immense pressure."

The Egyptian official source stated that the agreement included a suspension of Israeli military operations for 60 days and outlined a framework for a comprehensive deal to end the nearly two-year conflict.

A source familiar with the negotiations said the proposal closely mirrored an earlier plan put forward by US special envoy Steve Witkoff, which Israel had accepted.

The mediators met Hamas representatives in Cairo Sunday, and Sheikh Mohammed



bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, the Qatari prime minister, joined the discussions Monday and met both Egyptian President el-Sisi and Hamas representatives, said an official briefed on the meetings.

Israel's plans to seize control of Gaza City have stirred alarm abroad and at home, where tens

of thousands of Israelis Sunday held some of the largest protests since the war began, urging a deal to end the fighting and free the remaining 50 hostages held in Gaza since the Hamas attack October 7, 2023. Israeli officials believe 20 are alive.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said Monday that more

than 62,000 Palestinians have been killed in the 22-month war in Gaza. At least 60 people were killed in the past 24 hours, bringing the death toll from the Israel-Hamas war that started Oct 7, 2023, to 62,004. Another 156,230 have been wounded, it said.

The Health Ministry said 1,965 people have been killed while seeking aid from aid convoys or killed close to aid distribution sites. At least seven Palestinians were killed attempting to access aid on Monday morning.

PALESTINIANS FLEE EXPECTED GAZA CITY ATTACK

Thousands of Palestinians fearing an imminent Israeli ground offensive have left their homes in eastern areas of Gaza City, now under constant Israe-

li bombardment, for points to the west and south in the shattered territory.

Netanyahu has described Gaza City as Hamas' last big urban bastion. But, with Israel already holding 75% of Gaza, the military has warned that expanding the offensive could endanger hostages still alive and draw troops into protracted and deadly guerrilla warfare.

In Gaza City, many Palestinians have also been calling for protests to demand an end to a war that has demolished much of the territory and for Hamas to intensify talks to avert the Israeli ground offensive.

An Israeli armoured incursion into Gaza City could displace hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom have been uprooted multiple times during the war.

business

of the day quote

I think what the banks are currently looking for is some clarity on the AGR front. So that is where we are engaged with the government. Given that the government has made the conversion, they are today the largest stakeholder in the company



AKSHAYA MOONRA | CEO, VODAFONE IDEA

By reducing the trading unit, revising expiry schedules, and streamlining delivery processes, the exchange aims to provide market participants with greater flexibility, improved liquidity, and a product structure that matches global benchmarks



PRAVEENA RAI | MANAGING DIRECTOR, MCX

Fertiliser sales have really picked up early this season with robust growth at retail and farmer levels. The water availability across our marketing areas has been quite good



SURESH KRISHNAN | CEO, PARADEEP PHOSPHATES LTD

SHORT TAKES

Tata Capital profit doubles

New Delhi: Non-banking financial company Tata Capital Monday reported more than doubling of its consolidated net profit to ₹1,040.93 crore for the quarter ended June 2025. In the same quarter last year, the IPO-bound company had reported a profit of ₹472.21 crore. Total income rose to ₹7,691.65 crore for the quarter under review from ₹6,557.40 crore in the April-June quarter of FY2025, Tata Capital said in a regulatory filing. According to the updated draft red herring prospectus (DRHP), the proposed IPO of 47.58 crore shares comprises a fresh issue of 21 crore equity shares and an offer for sale (OFS) of 26.58 crore shares. Under the OFS component, Tata Sons will offload 23 crore shares, while the International Finance Corporation (IFC) will divest 3.58 crore shares.

NBCC expects net to double

New Delhi: State-owned NBCC Ltd expects its revenue to reach around ₹25,000 crore in 2027-28, more than double from the last financial year, on the back of a huge order book of ₹1.2 lakh crore. Replying to a query regarding projected revenue, the company's management said, "This year ₹14,000 crore to ₹15,000 crores. Next year, there will be ₹18,000 crores to ₹19,000 crores. And 2027-28 around ₹25,000 crores." During 2024-25, NBCC Ltd posted a net profit of ₹557.42 crore and a total income of ₹12,272.99 crore. The NBCC management said that its consolidated order book stood at ₹1.2 lakh crore at the end of the April-June quarter of this fiscal and expressed confidence that the same will cross ₹2 lakh crore in the next 2-3 years. NBCC has reported a 26 per cent increase in its consolidated net profit to ₹135.03 crore for the first quarter of the current fiscal on higher income. Its net profit stood at ₹107.19 crore in the year-ago period.

IHCL, Madison sign pact

New Delhi: The Indian Hotels Company Monday said it has signed an agreement with Madison, the hospitality platform of Terminus Group and JV Ventures, for ten new hotels to be operated under the Ginger brand spread across the southern states of India. Madison will invest approximately ₹500 crore in the construction of ten hotels with over 1,000 keys within the next three years. The ten new hotel sites will primarily be greenfield and brownfield projects, and this partnership has commenced with the signing of a 75-key Ginger hotel in Genome Valley in Telangana, Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) said in a statement.



'Make in India' should not transform into 'Make all that India needs' as it would hurt investments in the country and impact productivity

D SUBBARAO | FORMER RBI GOVERNOR

MFs' foreign assets drop

FY25 witnessed volatilities in the global markets because of continuing geopolitical tensions amid tensions between Ukraine-Russia and in Israel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, August 18: Indian mutual funds' overseas assets dropped 5.6 per cent to \$8.3 billion in FY25, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said Monday. At the end of FY24, Indian mutual funds held assets of over \$8.81 billion in foreign assets, as per the central bank's annual survey of foreign assets and liabilities of mutual funds. "Overseas assets of MFs declined 5.6 per cent and stood at \$8.3 billion in March 2025, due to lower holdings of foreign equity securities," the RBI said.



There was a 3.9 per cent drop in equity securities held abroad by MFs at market value in US at ₹44,500 crore, while the same in Ireland and Taiwan also witnessed declines. Over 95 per cent of the overseas equity investment of the MFs were concentrated in the US, Luxembourg, and Ireland, the RBI said. It can be noted that FY25 witnessed volatilities in the global

markets because of continuing geopolitical tensions amid tensions between Ukraine-Russia and in Israel, while change of guard in US and the newer way of looking at trade policies by President Donald Trump also led to some nervousness among investors. The flows into MFs' equity schemes surged nearly 25 per cent to ₹29.45 lakh crore in FY25, indicating stronger pref-

LIC's special campaign for lapsed policies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 18: Insurance behemoth Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) Monday announced the launch of a month-long campaign for revival of individual lapsed policies. This special drive, to be carried out from August 18 to October 17, 2025, is extended to all non-linked policies with very attractive concession in late fee. Concession is being offered in late fee for all Non-Linked Insurance Plans up to 30 per cent of late fee up to a maximum amount of ₹5,000 if eligible for revival under the scheme, LIC said in a statement.



There is a 100 per cent waiver of late fee for Micro Insurance Policies to facilitate affordable restoration of risk cover, it said. Under this Special Revival Campaign, policies can be revived within 5 years from date of the first unpaid premium subject to satisfying the policy terms and conditions, it said.

SEBI extends margin pledge implementation deadline

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 18: Security Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Monday extended the deadline for the implementation of framework pertaining to the process of margin obligations via pledge and re-pledge within the depository system to October 10. This was scheduled to come into effect from September 1, 2025. The extension came after SEBI received representation from depositories - CDSL and NSDL - requesting for an extension of time to carry out system developments and to ensure system readiness by carrying end-to-end testing. "Based on the same and in order to ensure smooth implementation without any disruption to the market players and investors, it has been decided to extend the timeline for implementation to October 10, 2025," the regulator said in its circular. Under the framework, SEBI introduced a mechanism where clients' securities, upon invocation, will be blocked for early



pay-in within the client's demat account. The move will reduce chances of brokers misusing securities while ensuring a clear transaction trail. Also, a single instruction in the form of 'pledge release for pay-in' where the pledge will be released and the pay-in block will be set-up immediately in the client's demat account. Further, depositories will provide the necessary functionality for the 'pledge release for pay-in' system to ensure compliance with the new norms. Once implemented, brokers will no longer need physical or electronic instructions to process un-pledging and delivery, as the system will automatically validate the pay-in to the extent of the client's obligation.

Govt to mull FDI regime for startups

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 18: The commerce and industry ministry is working on a 100-day reforms agenda which may include proposals such as further liberalising FDI regime, easing investments from neighbouring countries, and more tax benefits for startups, an official said. The proposals may also include easing certain environmental norms for the leather and footwear industry, liberalised rules to promote exports through e-commerce hubs, and integrating lab testing and certification requirements for various sectors, the official said. The government is embarking on the next 100-day agenda of transformation to take India on a fast track to developed nation. In Lokmat global economic convention, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that in the next 100 days, the government will follow the clarion call given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi August 15 to take India forward on a fast-tracked pathway. These proposals would help

SWIGGY, BOUNCE TO DEPLOY E-SCOOTERS

Food delivery major Swiggy Monday said it has partnered with electric mobility firm Bounce for the deployment of the latter's e-scooters in its delivery fleet in various cities in a phased manner. In the first phase, Bounce will deploy e-scooters across Delhi NCR and Bengaluru over the next three months, Swiggy said in a statement. These vehicles will be available on the Bounce' mobile app as well as Swiggy's Delivery Partner app at special pricing exclusively for Swiggy and Instamart delivery partners, it said



Sensex jumps 676 points amid GST reform buzz

BSE SENSEX

AUGUST 18, 2025



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, August 18: Stock markets rose sharply Monday, with Sensex closing higher by 676 points and Nifty climbing 1 per cent on heavy buying in auto and consumer durables stocks, buoyed by plans for big bang reforms in the GST regime by Diwali. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 676.09 points or 0.84 per cent to settle at 81,273.75. During the day, it zoomed by 1,168.11 points or 1.44 per cent to 81,765.77. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 245.65 points or 1 per cent to end at 24,876.95. Intra-day, it surged 390.7 points or 1.58 per cent to 25,022.

The global rating agency S&P's upgrade of India's sovereign credit rating, as well as US-Russia talks over the Ukine war, also boosted market sentiment, analysts said. Among Sensex firms, Maruti zoomed the most by 8.94 per cent. Bajaj Finance rallied over 5 per cent, UltraTech Cement by 3.71 per cent, and Bajaj Finserv by 3.7 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra, Hindustan Unilever and Trent were also among the gainers. However, ITC was the biggest

loser, dropping by 1.26 per cent. Eternal, Tech Mahindra and Larsen & Toubro also declined. The BSE auto index jumped 4.26 per cent to 56,233.33. Hyundai Motor India jumped 8.45 per cent, Ashok Leyland by 8.12 per cent, TVS Motor by 6.58 per cent and Hero MotoCorp by 5.9 per cent. The Centre has proposed a 2-tier GST structure of 5 per cent and 18 per cent, besides a 40 per cent special rate on a select few items to the GoM on GST rate rationalisation. The BSE small-cap gauge jumped 1.39 per cent while midcap index climbed 1 per cent. Among BSE sectoral indices, auto surged 4.26 per cent, consumer durables (3.08 per cent), consumer discretionary (2.74 per cent), realty (2.19 per cent), commodities (1.96 per cent), metal (1.95 per cent) and services (1.30 per cent). IT, power, teck and BSE Focused IT were the laggards. As many as 2,560 stocks advanced while 1,629 declined and 176 remained unchanged on the BSE. In Asian markets, Japan's Nikkei 225 index and Shanghai's SSE Composite index settled in positive territory while South Korea's Kospi and Hong Kong's Hang Seng ended lower.

BoM, SBI Card to launch credit card

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 18: State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) and SBI Card Monday announced the launch of a co-branded credit card with a host of benefits. The Bank of Maharashtra-SBI Card co-branded credit card has been designed to provide a premium and highly-rewarding shopping experience for discerning customers across segments, a joint statement said. The card has been launched in three variants, Bank of Maharashtra SBI Card ELITE, Bank of Maharashtra SBI Card PRIME, and Bank of Maharashtra SimplySAVE SBI Card, it said. This partnership aims to provide enhanced value and convenience, catering to the diverse lifestyle and evolving needs of the customers across the country, it said. The co-branded credit card offers a host of benefits, including accelerated reward points, fuel surcharge waiver, utility bill payments, exclusive discounts on travel, dining, shopping, and contactless payment capabilities for a seamless payment experience, it said. "The card will allow our customers to access a world-class credit card platform backed by the strong brand equity of both organizations. We are confident that this collaboration will deepen customer engagement and enhance value," BoM MD & CEO Nidhu Saxena said. "Driven by customer-centricity, at SBI Card, we are constantly exploring strategic collaborations that enhance value for customers and strengthen our portfolio," SBI Card MD & CEO Saila Pande said. The credit card will be available on RuPay as well as VISA payment platforms and will be accepted across millions of merchant outlets globally, it said, adding, customers can apply for the credit card through the bank's branches.



boost the country's exports and foreign direct investments (FDI). During April-July 2025-26, exports increased by 3.07 per cent to \$149.2 billion, while imports rose 5.36 per cent to \$244.01 billion. The trade deficit during the first four months of 2025-26 was \$94.81 billion. FDI into India rose by 13 per cent to \$50 billion in 2024-25. In July 2024, a pre-budget Economic Survey has made a strong case for seeking foreign direct investments from China to boost local manufacturing and tap the export market. At present, the bulk of the FDI coming into India falls under the automatic approval route, however, FDI from countries sharing land borders with India needs mandatory govern-

GST reduction to help AC makers gain ground

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 18: The appliance makers expect a good churn in the festive season, led by the government's proposal to reduce the GST slab on air-conditioners from the current 28 per cent to 18 per cent, which will reduce the price from ₹1,500 to ₹2,500 depending on the models. Moreover, this reduction in price, which has come after the government's recent Income tax cut and repo rate revision, will not only help in increasing penetration of ACs but also premiumisation, where people will buy energy-efficient models due to cost advantages.



Besides, this will also help to bring the GST slabs on TV screens above 32 inches from the current 28 per cent to 18 per cent. Terming it as a 'great move', Blue Star Managing Director B Thiagarajan has asked the government to implement

the changes quickly as people have put their purchase of Room Air Conditioners on hold. "Nobody will buy RAC (room ACs) now in August; wait till September or October 1. So, in between what will happen in between? The dealers will not

buy and customers will not buy" Thiagarajan said. On being asked about the price benefit to the customer, he said, "This will be around 10 per cent", as the GST is levied on the final pricing. Panasonic Life Solutions India Chairman Manish Sharma said the industry was expecting around 12 per cent GST on energy-efficient products and rest in the 18 per cent bracket. This will result in reduction of ₹1,500 to ₹2,500 depending on the end consumer prices of an AC, depending on the models, he said. Similarly, Godrej Appliances said the proposed reduction in tax slabs will significantly help

to boost consumption and drive appliances demand. "The AC penetration level in India is still low at 9 to 10 per cent. Therefore, GST reduction from 28 to 18 per cent on ACs can help to make it more affordable to the masses and improve the quality of life for many Indians," said Kamal Nandi, business head & EVP, Appliances Business at Godrej Enterprises Group. However, he also suggested that the government should seriously consider bringing 32 inches smart TV under 5 per cent, which will be a game changer as 38 per cent in this segment is coming from the unorganised sector.

SC to decide ISL fate

After 11 ISL clubs send warning of shutdown, Supreme Court agrees to hear plea on AIFF-FSDL row over non-renewal of contracts of ISL clubs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 18: The Supreme Court Monday agreed to hear on August 22 a matter involving a row between the All India Football Federation (AIFF) and FSDL over the fate of 11 Indian Super League (ISL) clubs due to the non-renewal of their contracts with the national federation and the tournament's organisers.

The 11 ISL clubs have warned the AIFF that they "face the real possibility of shutting down entirely" if the ongoing impasse regarding the future of the top-tier domestic competition is not resolved soon.

A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and AS Chandurkar agreed to hear the plea after amicus curiae and senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan submitted that during the tenure of the contract, Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) has to honour it by conducting the ISL.

"If it does not, the AIFF should be directed to terminate the contract and float a tender. Otherwise the players suffer and after repeated non-payment, we can be sanctioned by the FIFA," Sankaranarayanan said.

The bench said it would hear the matter Friday.

The clubs wrote a letter to AIFF President Kalyan Chaubey last week, saying the crisis arising out of the non-renewal of the Master Rights Agreement (MRA) between the national federation and the ISL organisers,



FSDL, has "paralysed professional football in India".

"Over the past 11 years, through sustained investment and coordinated effort, clubs have built youth development systems, training infrastructure, community outreach programmes and professional teams that have elevated India's footballing credibility both domestically and internationally," the clubs wrote in the letter.

"This progress is now in imminent danger of collapse. The current standstill has created immediate and severe consequences. With operations suspended and no certainty on league continuity, several clubs face the real possibility of shutting down entirely," they said.

The crisis surfaced after FSDL, the ISL organisers as well as the AIFF's commercial partner, put the 2025-26 season "on hold" on July 11 due to uncertainty over the renewal of the MRA, prompting at least three clubs to either pause first-team operations or suspend player and staff salaries.

"The 2025-26 ISL season is at risk of not taking place at all. This is not merely an administrative deadlock -- it is

an existential crisis for Indian football. We write to you in the gravest of circumstances," the clubs wrote.

The letter was signed by Bengaluru FC, Hyderabad FC, Odisha FC, Chennaiyin FC, Jamshedpur FC, FC Goa, Kerala Blasters FC, Punjab FC, North-East United FC, Mumbai City FC and Mohammedan Sporting. Kolkata heavyweights Mohun Bagan Super Giant and East Bengal did not sign the letter.

The clubs said the impasse will also impact India's readiness for international matches, adding that "without a functioning league, our national team will be severely disadvantaged in upcoming AFC and FIFA tournaments".

They also said that without the ISL, they will not be able to play a minimum number of competitive matches for participating in continental competitions, thereby risking the suspension of Indian clubs from Asian Football Confederation (AFC) tournaments.

On April 30, the top court reserved its verdict on the issue of finalisation of the AIFF draft constitution prepared by former apex court judge L Nag-

eswara Rao.

The draft constitution, prepared by Justice Rao on the top court's directions, proposed some radical changes, including a person holding the office for a maximum period of 12 years during his lifetime, subject to serving a maximum of two successive terms of four years each. While it said a four-year cooling-off period had to be observed after eight years as an office-bearer of the AIFF, it also mentioned that a person cannot remain a member of the sports body after attaining 70 years of age.

According to the draft constitution, the executive committee of the AIFF would have 14 members who would be under the age and tenure restrictions. There will be one president, two vice-presidents (a man and a woman), one treasurer and 10 other members, the draft said.

Of the 10 other members, five would be eminent players, including two women.

The draft constitution also has provisions for the removal of the office-bearers, including the president, through a no-confidence motion, which the existing constitution of the AIFF does not have.

SHORT TAKES

B'desh may replace Pak in Asia Cup hockey



New Delhi: Bangladesh is likely to replace Pakistan in the men's Asia Cup hockey tournament to be held in Rajgir, Bihar from August 29 if the latter fails to confirm participation in the next couple of days, a top Hockey India official told PTI Monday. The Indian government had already said that it will provide visas to the Pakistani players for Asia Cup, but the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) has refused to travel citing security concerns. The organisers have already approached Bangladesh to fill up Pakistan's place in the eight-team tournament, but Hockey India said the exact scenario will be clear in the next 48 hours.

Neymar in tears after 6-0 defeat at home



Sao Paulo: Santos fired its coach, Cleber Xavier, after a 6-0 home loss to Vasco Da Gama that saw Neymar leave the field in tears after the match. "The club thanks the coach for the services provided," Santos said of Xavier, who only took over in April, "and wishes him luck in the continuation of his career." The result on Sunday left Santos — famously the club of Brazil great Pele and now Neymar — in 15th place in the 20-team Brazilian top flight, two points above the relegation zone. Neymar was consoled on the field by a member of Santos' backroom staff after a game that saw Vasco's Philippe Coutinho score twice.

Sri Sri University scripts history; double gold in badminton c'ship

POST NEWS NETWORK

Ranchi, August 18: Sri Sri University of Cuttack, Odisha is brimming with pride as its Badminton Men's and Women's Teams emerged winners at the prestigious Inter College Badminton Championship 2025, organized by the Cuttack District Badminton Association August 16-17 at the Biju Patnaik Indoor Stadium, Christ College, Cuttack.

In a stellar display of sporting excellence, Arijit Sahoo of Sri Sri University, in partnership with Omkar Patel of Ravenshaw University, secured the gold medal in the Men's Doubles category. Adding to the glory, Riddhima Banwale and Shreya Patel clinched the gold medal in the Women's Doubles category. This remarkable feat has now qualified all three Sri Sri University players for the State Level Badminton Championship, marking yet another



proud chapter in the institution's sporting journey.

Extending their warm felicitations, President Professor Rajita Kulkarni, Vice Chancellor Professor Tejpartap, Director Operations Swami Satyachaitanya, Executive Registrar Professor Anil Sharma and Deputy Director Dr Malay Malla congratulated the champions for their dedication, teamwork, and stellar performance. They expressed confidence that these young athletes will continue to shine and bring further laurels to the university at the upcoming state level events.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jalandhar, August 18: Hockey Association of Odisha, Manipur Hockey, and Hockey Jharkhand won their matches of the day, while Hockey Madhya Pradesh and Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu played out a draw to end the pool stage on Day 7 of the 15th Hockey India Junior Men National Championship at the Surjit Singh Stadium here Monday.

Hockey Punjab, Hockey Mad-



hya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh Hockey, Hockey Jharkhand, Hockey Haryana, Manipur Hockey, Hockey Association of Odisha, and Hockey Karnataka are the eight teams that have qualified for the Quarterfinals.

In the first fixture of the day, Hockey Association of Odisha enjoyed a commanding 10-0 win over Hockey Andhra Pradesh. Pradip Mandal (12', 44'), Bilkan Oram (24', 35'), Deepak Pradhan (27', 57'), Karan Lakra (56', 59') scored braces for their side

while Pratap Toppo (10') and Yojin Minz (60') also contributed with a goal each.

In the next match, Manipur Hockey defeated Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu Hockey 5-1 in Pool C to claim three points.

In the third fixture of the day, Hockey Jharkhand beat Hockey Maharashtra 5-3 in Pool B.

In the last Division 'A' pool match, Hockey Madhya Pradesh and Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu played out an entertaining 3-3 draw. Mohd Konain Dad (4', 14') and Tushar Parmar (9') scored crucial early goals for Hockey Madhya Pradesh. Vishal S (23') scored the first goal for his side while Manimaran V (51', 59') scored two late goals for Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu to force a tie.

The Quarterfinals of the 15th Hockey India Junior Men National Championship will be played August 20, 2025.

stakeholders going forward.

But then to assume this will happen smoothly is oversimplification of the issue. Under Suryakumar Yadav's able leadership, the Indian T20 squad has a phenomenal 85 per cent record, winning 17 of its last 20 games. None of these games featured Gill and Jaiswal.

But there's a catch too.

Before Gill and Jaiswal became busy with Test commitments in the past one year, they were playing T20 Internationals and were doing well including impressive IPLs. Gill was in fact vice captain to Surya before he had to forego T20Is due to Tests. Axar Patel, the Delhi Capitals skipper, became Surya's deputy and performed decently even though he is not considered a long-term leadership candidate.

However, Axar will certainly feel shortchanged if Gill supercedes him as Surya's deputy.

On Tuesday, if selectors pick Gill in the 15, then they have to play him in the eleven which means one among Sanju, Abhishek or Tilak will have to

ignored for longest time.

But then selectors can pick only 15 and those in decision-making positions of T20 team have an interesting perspective. One important member of team management feels that it would be unfair on anyone who has been a first XI regular during the past season to be deprived to accommodate a bigger brand name or star.

The other school of thought is that Indian cricket works well with one all-format captain who also becomes the biggest marketing brand -- in this case Gill, who is an obvious choice for a lot of

something that doesn't need to be mended. For the top three positions, there are six cricketers of similar pedigree available.

Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson and Tilak Varma have been phenomenal in national colours through last season but then the ones who are equally good, if not better, happen to be Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Sai Sudharsan (the IPL Orange Cap winner).

In bowling, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravorthy and Ravi Bishnoi are jostling for one slot. And the craftiest of them all Yuzvendra Chahal has been

ASIAN SHOOTING

Girish's gold helps India end opening day with five medals

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, August 18: Girish Gupta's gold in the 10m air pistol men youth event, in which he led an Indian 1-2, ensured the country ended competition Day One of the 16th Asian Shooting Championship Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun in Shymkent, Kazakhstan, on a profitable note.

The 17-year-old shot 241.3 in the final to finish ahead of compatriot Dev Pratap. The 14-year-old shot 238.6 for silver.

India thus earned two gold and three silver medals on Day One after Kapil Bainsla had won the junior men's air pistol gold and both the senior and junior men's teams had won silver medals each.

Day two Tuesday has the women's air pistol finals across categories, on schedule.

Earlier in the day, Kapil

Bainsla from Palwal, Haryana, won India their first gold of the event, firing 243.0 in the 10m air pistol men junior final, leaving Uzbekistan's Ilkhombek Obidjonov 0.6 behind in second. Kapil's compatriot Jonathan Gavin Antony won bronze, shooting 220.7, bowing out after the 22nd shot of the 24-shot final.

Kapil had shot 579 to finish fourth in qualification and made the top eight alongside Jonathan, who was second with 582. Mukesh Nelavali was just two inner 10s less than Jonathan, to finish third and make it three Indians in the final.

Korean Kim Dooyeon topped the board, also shooting 582, but with at least six shots in the inner 10-ring more than Jonathan.

It was Ilkhombek, who then was the fastest off the blocks in the final, with Kapil chasing him all through, before

going past him after the 15th shot for the first time. The Uzbek regained the advantage after the 20th shot, and going into the final two, was a full point ahead of Kapil.

The young Indian then finished with a 10.8 and 10.6, while Ilkhombek, after shooting a 10.4 for his 23rd, buckled to finish with a 9.4, handing Kapil the title. Kapil and Jonathan also combined with Vijay Tomar to win the team silver in the event with a total of 1723. Korea won gold with 1734, and host Kazakhstan won bronze.

In the senior men's final, Anmol Jain, the only Indian in the fray, finished sixth with 155.1.

China's Hu Kai won gold, while China also won the team gold in the event. Anmol, along with Aditya Malra and Saurabh Chaudhary, won the team silver with a combined effort of 1735.



National-level triple jumper Sheena latest to be caught for doping

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 18: Triple jumper Sheena Varkey, who has won multiple national-level medals and even represented the country internationally, has been suspended by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) after testing positive for a prohibited substance.

The 32-year-old had also competed in the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023.

"Sheena Varkey has been suspended," a well-placed source told PTI but did not divulge the details of the banned substance in question.

Varkey, who hails from Kerala, had won a silver medal at the Uttarakhand National Games this year and a bronze in the Federation Cup after that. In 2018, she had won a silver medal at the Asian Indoor Championships.



The latest failed test continues the alarmingly regular dope setbacks for India's athletes.

On August 11, National Games gold-winning discus thrower Gagandeep Singh was among a bunch of athletes across sports who were handed three-year bans by NADA after they accepted their offence within 20 days of being charged. Representing Services, Singh had won gold in men's discus with a best throw of 55.01m at the Uttarakhand National Games on February 12. He later tested positive for testosterone metabolites and was handed provisional suspension.

As per the 2023 testing figures released by the World Anti-Doping Agency, India's positivity rate for banned substances stood at 3.8 per cent -- 214 Adverse Analytical Findings (AAF) from 5606 samples.