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Rajnath Singh slams Rahul Gandhi over Modi 'hug' jibe

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday strongly criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his recent remarks about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's practice of hugging foreign leaders, calling the comments "shameful" and "indecent".

SOUTH KOREA PROPOSES TALKS TO OFFICIALLY END WAR WITH NORTH

WORLD | PAGE



KRITHI SHETTY TURNS UP THE SULTRY GLAM QUOTIENT



SCAN FOR E-PAPER



OM NAMO VENKATESAYA

Total pilgrims : 78,956
Tonsures : 31,014
Hundi kankulu : 4.46 CR
Laddu sale : 4.0 Lac
Ammarasidams : 280 Lac
Aashwinthosai : 5,201
Waiting Compartments : Outside line at Silathoranam.
Approx. Darsan Time for Saravadarshanam (with out SSD Tokens) : 18 - 20 H.

IN SHORT

5 Army personnel missing, four labourers killed as flash floods

Itanagar (TSIT): Five Army personnel reportedly went missing after a flash flood swept away two shelters at an Army camp in Arunachal Pradesh's Dibang Valley district, while four people were killed in a landslide at a road construction site in Upper Subansiri district, officials said on Saturday. Officials of the State Emergency Operations Centre said that both incidents occurred late on Friday evening following heavy rainfall.

■ CM Revanth Unveils Telangana Rising 2047 Roadmap

CM says welfare, development & social justice are driving Telangana's transformation

Hyderabad, TSIT BUREAU:

Chief Minister A.Revanth Reddy on Saturday said Telangana was moving rapidly from "destruction to development" and that the Congress Government had laid strong foundations for a globally competitive State through welfare, development and social justice.Addressing the 80th Independence Day celebrations, the Chief Minister extended greetings to the people and paid tributes to Mahatma Gandhi, Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru, freedom fighters and Telangana martyrs.He said Independence would have real meaning only when the poor were free from hunger, farmers from debt, women achieved economic freedom, youth secured employment and weaker sections received equal opportunities.

Revanth Reddy said the People's Government had completed 32 months in office and had restored damaged systems while expanding welfare and creating new infrastructure. Telangana's per capita income in 2025-26 stood at Rs.4,18,931, nearly 91 per cent above the national average, he said.Highlighting farmer welfare, the Chief Minister said crop loans of up to Rs.2 lakh had been waived for nearly 25 lakh families. He said the government had spent



around Rs.1.70 lakh crore on agriculture and farmer welfare in 32 months and provided Rs.36,000 crore under Rythu Bharosa.

He said women's empowerment remained a priority, with free RTC travel, free electricity up to 200 units for eligible households, subsidised LPG cylinders and large-scale credit support to women's self-help groups. The Chief Minister said more than 15 lakh new ration cards had been sanctioned and smart ration card distribution was being launched across the State. He said 4.50 lakh Indiramma houses were being taken up in the first phase with Rs.5 lakh assistance per house, while another

2.50 lakh houses would be sanctioned in the second phase.On employment, Revanth Reddy said more than 72,000 government jobs had been filled in the first two years. He also highlighted the Young India Skills University, modernisation of ITIs and plans to upgrade polytechnic colleges.In education, the government had sanctioned 105 Young India Integrated Residential Schools, while Rs.1,000 crore had been allocated to Osmania University. Chief Minister said healthcare infrastructure was also being expanded, including the construction of a new Osmania General Hospital at Goshamahal at a cost of Rs.2,700

crore, super-speciality hospitals and new government medical colleges. On infrastructure, he said the government was taking up a 360-km Regional Ring Road, 6,092 km of HAM roads and Hyderabad Metro Phase-II covering 122.9 km.

Revanth Reddy said the Musi rejuvenation project, expansion of airports and development of Bharat Future City would play a major role in Telangana's future growth.

He said Telangana had emerged as a preferred investment destination, attracting Rs.1.29 lakh crore through Invest Telangana and investment commitments worth Rs.5.75 lakh crore at the Telangana Rising Global Summit-2025.The Chief Minister said Telangana's IT exports had reached Rs.3.97 lakh crore in 2025-26, while Hyderabad now had more than 355 Global Capability Centres.Outlining the long-term roadmap, Revanth Reddy said Telangana aimed to become a \$1 trillion economy by 2034 and a \$3 trillion economy by 2047, with the State contributing 10 per cent to India's GDP.He said the government would develop Bharat Future City over nearly 30,000 acres as a net-zero smart city and global investment destination.Calling for the cooperation of all sections, the Chief Minister said the government's goal was to make Telangana a national model and place it prominently on the global stage.

I-Day speech: 'State interests will be protected,' says CM Vijay

CHENNAI (TSIT):

Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay, in his Independence Day address at Fort St George on Saturday, struck a different note by focusing largely on his government's welfare measures and achievements, while asserting that the TVK government would stand firm on Tamil Nadu's interests and state rights and work towards ensuring a transparent and corruption-free administration.

Addressing the gathering from the ramparts of Fort St George after hoisting the national flag, Vijay said the government would work with the Centre only on administrative matters concerning the welfare of Tamil Nadu.

Earlier, Vijay arrived at Fort St George after leaving his Neelankarai residence



around 8 am. He received the ceremonial guard of honour and inspected the police parade in an open jeep before proceeding to the Fort ram-

parts. He hoisted the Tricolour at around 8.45 am, marking his first Independence Day flag-hoisting ceremony as Tamil Nadu Chief Minister.

Sangolli Rayanna's life is an inspiration to the youth: CM D.K Shivakumar

Bengaluru (TSIT):

"Sangolli Rayanna sacrificed his life at a young age in the country's freedom struggle, and his life is an inspiration to the youth," CM D.K Shivakumar said.

On the occasion of Sangolli Rayanna's birth anniversary, Shivakumar paid floral tributes to the Rayanna statue near Majestic and later spoke to the media.

"Such leaders should be born again to protect the integrity, unity and peace of the country. Siddaramaiah has developed this historic area so that the names of such heroes will remain etched in history. The circle, flyover and railway station in the central part of Bengaluru have been named



after Sangolli Rayanna. "Only such heroes attain the heaven of bravery through a heroic death. Rayanna asserted that freedom is our right. His birth and death anniversaries will remain forever in the pages of the country's history. We remember him, and the youth should emulate his footsteps," he said.

Instead of changing names, Cong worked to change economic conditions: Kharge's swipe at Centre on I-Day

New Delhi (TSIT) : Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday took a swipe at the NDA government at the Centre during his Independence Day address at the party headquarters, saying that instead of changing names, the Congress "worked to change people's economic conditions".

Kharge listed the contributions made by former and late Prime Ministers belonging to the Congress party, towards building India's economy, military and education sectors, while claiming that "90 per cent" of the progress in India has been brought by the party.

Speaking on the occasion of the 80th Independence Day celebrations at Indira Bhawan, Kharge said: "Today's historic day is not merely a day to commemorate the struggle for Independence, but also an occasion to ask: To what extent has the dream of India



envisioned by our freedom fighters been fulfilled? In its 141-year history, the Congress party fought against foreign colonial rule for 62 years. Millions of people made immense sacrifices and laid down their lives."

He emphasised that the youth played an integral role, not only during the freedom struggle but also in nation building after independence. Highlighting the contribu-

tion of India's first Prime Minister, he said: "Jawaharlal Nehru ji laid the foundation of a modern, democratic, and secular India, and he built institutions like IITs, IIMs, Public Sector Units, as well as basic infrastructure. He referred to irrigation projects as the temples of modern India. Nehru ji did a lot for the country but still he didn't have an iota of arrogance within him."

CM Naidu calls for collective efforts to build Swarna Andhra by 2047

Visakhapatnam (TSIT) Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu extended his Independence Day greetings to the people of Andhra Pradesh and Telugu people across the world, calling upon them to collectively work towards building a developed India and a prosperous Andhra Pradesh by 2047. Addressing the 80th Independence Day celebrations, the Chief Minister said the sacrifices of freedom fighters had secured the country's freedom and the best tribute to them would be to build a stronger future. He urged people to think not about what the country could do for them, but about what they could contribute to the nation. Naidu said providing irrigation to every acre remained a key priority. Nearly Rs.25,000 crore had been spent on irrigation projects in the last 26 months, while an irrigation calendar had been prepared to complete 36 major projects with an estimated investment of Rs.35,000 crore over the next three years. He said



Phase-I of the long-pending Veligonda project would soon be launched and 89 per cent of Polavaram works had been completed. The project would be completed by March next year and dedicated to the nation before the Pushkarams, he said. Stressing the importance of development along with welfare, Naidu said the government was rapidly developing ports, fishing harbours, airports, highways and railway infrastructure. Railway works worth Rs.64,000 crore and highway projects worth

Rs.38,000 crore were currently under way, positioning Andhra Pradesh as a major logistics hub.

Amaravati and Rural Development

Describing Amaravati as a symbol of the self-respect of the people of Andhra Pradesh, Naidu said works worth around Rs.50,000 crore were in progress. The capital would be developed as a green, blue, carbon-neutral and deep-tech city of global standards. He said strengthening villages was essential for the State's progress. Andhra Pradesh had conducted 13,326 Gram Sabhas in a single day and secured 13 national Panchayat awards in two years. More than 9,600 km of CC roads had been constructed under the 'Palle Panduga' programme.

Green Energy and Women Empowerment

Naidu said the government had set a target of increasing the State's green cover to 50 per cent and had already developed mangrove forests over 1,400 hectares. He said electric-

ity tariffs had not been increased during the last two years and Andhra Pradesh was targeting 160 GW of green energy capacity. More than 4.12 lakh households had benefited from rooftop solar installations under the PM Surya Ghar scheme. He said women's economic empowerment was a major priority, with one lakh self-help group members already transformed into entrepreneurs and a target of five lakh entrepreneurs by next year. The 'Swayam AP' brand had also been launched for DWCR products.

Tourism, Governance and Law and Order

Tourism was being promoted as a major source of employment and income, with 107 MoUs involving investments of Rs.19,390 crore signed during the last two years. Beach tourism, temple tourism and homestays were being encouraged, he said. The Chief Minister said revenue reforms were being implemented to resolve land disputes and protect property rights.

Indian community celebrates Independence Day in Hong Kong

Hong Kong, Aug 15 : The Indian Association in Hong Kong has organised a gala evening reception to celebrate the 80th Independence Day, which was attended by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) and India's Consul General Rajesh Naik.

"An evening of honour, pride and celebration! Marking a historic milestone, Indian Association in Hong Kong organised a gala evening reception to celebrate India's 80th Independence Day in Hong



Kong. The event was honoured by the esteemed presence of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR, John Lee Ka-chiu, alongside Consul General Rajesh Naik, the patron, and Vishal Melwani, the President of India Association," the Consul General of India in Hong Kong said on Friday on social media platform X. In his address, the Chief Executive lauded the dynamic Indian commu-

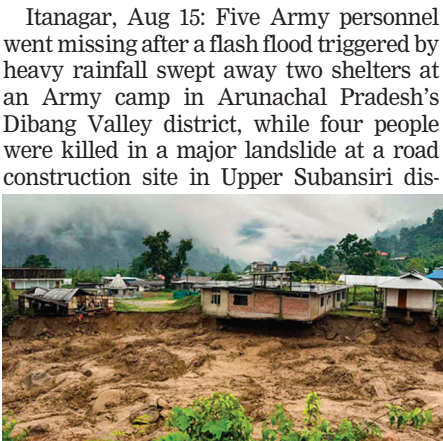
nity for their significant and long-standing contributions to Hong Kong's socio-economic fabric.

"He also highlighted the steadily growing bilateral relations between India and Hong Kong, emphasising our shared focus on trade, economic growth, and enduring partnerships," the Consul noted on X. Delivering his remarks, Consul General Rajesh Naik reflected on India's rapid economic strides, technological innovations, and inclusive growth guided by the overarching vision of a 'Viksit Bharat'.



President, Smt. Droupadi Murmu paying homage to the bravehearts on the occasion of 80th Independence Day celebrations at National War Memorial, in New Delhi....

Five army personnel missing after flash flood in Arunachal



Itanagar, Aug 15: Five Army personnel went missing after a flash flood triggered by heavy rainfall swept away two shelters at an Army camp in Arunachal Pradesh's Dibang Valley district, while four people were killed in a major landslide at a road construction site in Upper Subansiri district, officials said on Saturday. According to the State Emergency Operations Centre, both incidents occurred on Friday evening.

The landslide occurred at the Keojaring-Buchang road cutting site in Upper Subansiri, where several people were reportedly trapped under the debris.

Four people — Tadu Baki, Taji Rai, Markosh Basumatari and Babul Ali — were reported dead. The body of Babul Ali has been recovered, the district disaster man-

agement officer said.

Personnel from Nacho Police Station have been deployed for search and recovery operations. Fire and Emergency Services personnel are being mobilised from Daporijo, while a State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) team will assist in the operation.

In Dibang Valley, two shelters at the 5th Grenadier's Pasu Pani Army Camp were washed away by a flash flood caused by heavy rainfall on Friday evening.

Officials said seven Army personnel were swept away in the flood, of whom two were subsequently rescued. Five remain missing. They have been identified as Havaldar Upendar and Army personnel Kundan, Vinod, Aditya and Samunda. Two search and rescue teams from the 5th Grenadier have been deployed to trace the missing personnel. Teams from the 58th Battalion of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, 62 RCC of the General Reserve Engineer Force, local volunteers and the Arunachal Pradesh Police have also been sent to assist in the search operation. An SDRF team from Pasighat is proceeding to Anini to assist in the rescue efforts.

Tirupati celebrates 80th Independence Day with grand parade and cultural programmes

Tirupati, August 15: The 80th Independence Day was celebrated with patriotic fervour at the Police Parade Ground in Tirupati.

State Endowments Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy hoisted the National Flag and inspected the ceremonial parade along with District Collector Dr. S. Venkateswar and SP L. Subbarayudu.

The celebrations featured impressive police and cultural performances, tableaux showcasing government welfare and development programmes, and a dog show by the Police Department's Clues Team. The family member of freedom fighter



Raghava Raju Ramalingaraju was also felicitated. APIIC won the first prize in the tableau competition, followed by the School Education Department's Samagra Shiksha tableau and

APSPDCL. In cultural programmes, MJPA PBC Welfare School (Girls) secured first prize, followed by VIDVAS EM School and APTWRS School.

Awards and service medals were presented to police personnel and 165 employees from various departments for outstanding service.

District Collector Dr. S. Venkateswar later distributed financial assistance of 1,031 crore to 74,956 members of 10,351 SHGs through DRDA and SERP, and 150 crore to 13,020 members of 1,298 SHGs through MEPMA. Medical equipment worth 35 lakh was also handed over to Tirupati RUYA Hospital.

TTD Additional EO C.C. Satish among employees honoured on Independence Day



Tirupati, August 15: The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) celebrated the 80th Independence Day with grandeur at its Administrative Building in Tirupati. TTD Chairman B.R. Naidu hoisted the National Flag at the Parade Ground and received the guard of honour from TTD security personnel.

As part of the celebrations, 38 officers and 287 employees from various departments, including SVIMS and SVBC, were honoured for outstanding service with five-gram Srivari silver dollars and appreciation certificates. TTD Additional Executive Officer C.C. Satish was among those who received the best employee award.

Cash awards were also presented to 62 meritorious children of TTD employees. As many as 33 Intermediate students received 4,116 each, while 29 Class X students were awarded 2,116 each for their academic performance.

Students of the SV College of Music and Dance presented patriotic cultural programmes, including performances of "Ye Desamegina, Endu Kaledina," "Bhavatu Bharati" and "Adivo Alladivo," which drew applause from the gathering.



TTD chairman office staff received best employes of the year

Pilgrim service, Sanatana Dharma are TTD's priorities: B.R. Naidu

Tirupati, August 15: TTD Chairman B.R. Naidu said serving devotees visiting Tirumala and preserving Sanatana Dharma were the organisation's primary commitments. Addressing the 80th Independence Day celebrations at the TTD Administrative Building, he said TTD would work to take the glory of Lord Venkateswara across the world while giving priority to education, healthcare and religious services.

Annapprasadam kitchen, introduction of 32 additional electric buses and the upcoming SV Museum with advanced 3D and 7D presentations.

He said TTD was also accelerating the development of Sri Kodandarama Swamy Temple at Ontimitta and Srivari temples in several cities, besides improving facilities at local TTD temples.

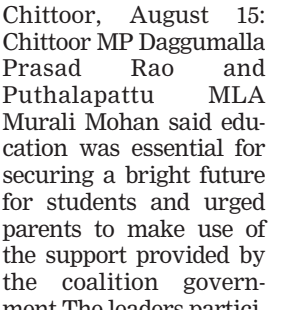
Highlighting education and healthcare, Naidu said 161.40



Naidu said TTD was preparing comprehensive arrangements for the annual Srivari Brahmotsavams from September 15 to 23 and Navaratri Brahmotsavams from October 12 to 20. He outlined several development initiatives, including a 120 crore modern

crore was being invested in developing TTD educational institutions and medical facilities at SVIMS, BIRRD and other hospitals were being strengthened. The Sri Padmavati Super Speciality Hospital for children would soon provide advanced healthcare.

Education is key to students' bright future: Chittoor MP, MLA



Chittoor, August 15: Chittoor MP Daggumalla Prasad Rao and Puthalapattu MLA Murali Mohan said education was essential for securing a bright future for students and urged parents to make use of the support provided by the coalition government. The leaders participated in the Independence Day celebrations at Thadakada Zilla Parishad High School in Thavanampalle mandal and hoisted the National Flag. They paid tributes to freedom fighters

and recalled their sacrifices.

The MP and MLA later inaugurated an RO water plant established for the benefit of school students. Addressing the gathering, they said the government was introducing several reforms in the education sector to improve opportunities for students. They also advised schoolchildren to enhance their awareness of technology and prepare themselves for future challenges.

Centre defends palm oil use in packaged foods

New Delhi, Aug 15: Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Prataprao Jadhav has defended the use of palm oil in packaged foods, saying it is a standardised edible oil permitted under India's food safety regulations and meets safety standards based on scientific assessments and internationally recognised Codex norms.

Responding to parliamentary questions on the use of palm oil in processed foods such as snacks, biscuits and namkeen, Jadhav said India's food safety standards are based on scientific opinions from independent risk assessment bodies, including the Scientific Panels and Scientific Committee of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

Under Sub-regulation 2.2 of the Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011, palm oil is classified as a standardised edible fat. Its use as an edible oil ingredient in packaged foods, including bakery products, snacks and savouries, is therefore permitted under the existing regulatory framework.

The Ministry said palm



oil is regulated by FSSAI under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

Jadhav said India's food safety standards are framed on the basis of scientific assessments and harmonised with internationally accepted Codex Alimentarius standards, ensuring that permitted food ingredients comply with established safety parameters.

"The FBOs are mandated to comply with the defined standards. These food safety standards are made based on the scientific opinion provided by independent risk assess-

ment bodies, i.e. Scientific Panels and the Scientific Committee and are harmonised with internationally accepted Codex standards," the Minister said.

The Ministry also highlighted the importance of transparency in the use of edible oils in packaged foods. Under the Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2020, Food Business Operators (FBOs) are required to declare the specific name of the edible oil used in a product instead of using generic terms such as "edible vegetable oil". The

requirement allows consumers to identify the particular oil used in packaged food products and make informed dietary choices. The Centre's clarification comes amid questions over the health implications of palm oil and its use in processed foods compared with other edible oils. The government reiterated that all food manufacturers are required to comply with standards prescribed by FSSAI and that permitted ingredients are subject to established food safety and risk assessment procedures.

Ebola outbreak spreads to sixth province in DRC

Kinshasa, Aug 15: The ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has spread to a sixth province, with confirmed cases rising to 4,665, the government said on Friday.

The health zone of Buta in the northern province of Bas-Uele has been added to the list of affected areas,

taking the number of affected health zones across the country to 54, according to the latest update issued by public health authorities.

The outbreak is now affecting six provinces — Bas-Uele, Haut-Uele, Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tshopo — with north-eastern Ituri continuing to

be the main epicentre, Xinhua News Agency reported.

A total of 2,184 deaths have been recorded among confirmed cases, putting the case fatality rate at 46.8 per cent. Meanwhile, 965 people have recovered since the outbreak began.

The DRC declared the Ebola outbreak on May 15,

identifying the causative virus as the Bundibugyo ebolavirus. Amid the rapidly escalating outbreak, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) has called for support for the immediate implementation of the DRC government's decision to deploy the Ervebo vaccine.

EDITORIAL

INDIA AT 80: THE NATION THAT STOPPED WAITING

India marks its 80th Independence Day today, and with it, eight decades of a nation's argument with its own destiny. Every anniversary is an occasion to celebrate; this one is an occasion to reckon, with the battles fought within our borders and beyond them, with the price paid for the freedom we now take for granted, and with the distance travelled from a fragile young republic to a civilisation that once again speaks in its own voice. There was a time, not so long ago, when India was reduced in the Western imagination to a curiosity: the land of snake charmers, a country whose poverty was assumed and whose potential was doubted. Visitors from the West arrived expecting to be unimpressed and often were. We had no seat at the high table of diplomacy; at best, we were permitted to stand at its edge, non-aligned by policy and, in truth, unaligned with power itself. The world's trajectory was decided elsewhere. India watched and waited. That India no longer exists. Today's India is not non-aligned; it is multi-aligned, courted rather than courting. We are among the world's five largest economies, and when we choose to deepen economic ties with a nation, the relationship reshapes not just our future but theirs. We no longer wait at the edge of the table; we help set its terms. The West, out of old habit, still offers its sermons on democracy. But India's answer is no longer rhetoric, it is our young population building, launching, and governing a future of its own making. Indian private enterprise now reaches into space without waiting on the state's permission or purse. A generation once caricatured for its restlessness is, in fact, laying the foundations of what may well be remembered as the Indian century. None of this arrived without cost. For nearly four decades, half of independent India's life, the nation has fought a war that was never formally declared: Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and beyond. From Pulwama to Pahalgam, the intent behind these attacks was never only to kill civilians and spread fear. It was to slow India down, to choke a rising power in its own blood before it could rise further. Pakistan, having failed its own people, chose instead to export chaos to ours. That strategy has not gone unanswered. The surgical strikes of 2016, following the Uri terror attack, and the Balakot airstrikes of 2019, following the Pulwama attack, announced a new doctrine of response. But Operation Sindoor in 2025, launched after the Pahalgam attack, marked a paradigm shift, a demonstration that India's patience has limits, and its reach does not. The image of a base near Rawalpindi in flames is one that Pakistan's military establishment will not soon forget. India intends that it shouldn't. Alongside this external vigilance came an internal reckoning. The abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 closed a chapter of manufactured separatism that had defined Jammu and Kashmir for over three decades, opening instead a slow, uneven, but real path toward development and opportunity. Change in J&K was never going to arrive overnight after decades of neglect, but it has, finally, begun to arrive. Elsewhere, in the forests and hinterlands of the Red Corridor, another war quietly turned.

Tracing India's Journey Through PM Modi's Independence Day Speeches

There is a simple way to measure the distance India has travelled in the last decade: listen to the prime minister's Independence Day speeches. Things have changed; it is undeniable. But what has also changed is the very nature of what Prime Minister Narendra Modi has to talk about. In the early years of the Modi government, the speeches were often about problems that we may today consider as ordinary: toilets, electricity, poverty, roads, bank accounts, fertiliser shortages. But the prime minister's tone was urgent when he addressed them. The challenge was to fix what was broken, reach those who had been left out. Over the years, his vocabulary began to change. The conversation moved from access to aspiration, from plugging gaps to building capabilities, from solving immediate problems to creating systems that could prevent those problems from defining India again. From dignity to delivery and onwards to dreams - that has been the trajectory our nation has taken in just about 13 years of PM Modi's leadership. Perhaps that is also why the length and sweep of his Independence Day addresses have become a phenomenon in themselves. For a prime minister whose working life is famously relentless, the sheer time devoted to presenting the nation's journey from the Red Fort is telling. These are not simply annual speeches; read together, they become something closer to a running record of the country's transformation. And there is no better starting point than the promise PM Modi made in 2023. He said, in part, "When I came in 2014, I came with a promise of change. Through reform, perform, transform, I have turned this promise into belief. Based on my performance, you blessed me once again in 2019. The next five years will be the years of unprecedented development." It will be impossible to analyse every change, but using the Independence Day speeches as a lens, let's look backwards before looking forward. If "unprecedented development" was the promise, the Independence Day speeches provide an unusually revealing way of asking: what happened to the prob-



lems that once occupied the prime minister's attention? The answer lies in how India moved from firefighting to future-proofing. When Poverty Became A Possibility We Could Defeat In 2014, poverty was presented as a national challenge requiring a national resolve. PM Modi asked, "If the people of India could remove such a big empire without the power of the government, without weapons and even without resources, then friends, it is the need of the hour to eradicate poverty, can we not overcome poverty? Can we not defeat poverty?" Seven years later, in the midst of a once-in-a-century pandemic, he said, "The way India has kept the stoves burning in the poor households by providing free food grains to 80 crore countrymen continuously for months during the pandemic is not only astonishing to the world but also a matter of discussion." Readers should appreciate that a decade is a minuscule period in the trajectory of a billion-plus nation. And by 2023, the vocabulary had moved beyond simply fighting poverty, to measuring people who had escaped it: "In my first five-year term, 13.5 crore of my fellow poor brothers and sisters have been freed from the chains of poverty and entered the new middle class. There can be no greater satisfac-

tion in life than this." By 2026, when PM Modi reiterated how 25 crore people had risen out of poverty, it was nothing less than a declaration that we were finally and perhaps for the first time in our history arresting the backward slide and beginning to move forward. The courage to dream big and achieve big is the hallmark of the new India, and the world has been forced to take note of our efforts. The welfare reached the people, and the nation reached for the stars. Few contrasts capture the transformation better than the distance between the 2014 and 2026 speeches. In 2014, the prime minister spoke about something as fundamental as sanitation and dignity: "Can't we just make arrangements for toilets for the dignity of our mothers and sisters?" That was the India that needed to solve first-order problems. But the same national conversation eventually reached semiconductors. This year, announcing seven to eight new semiconductor plants in the pipeline, the prime minister hinted at technological sovereignty. In today's digital world and the age of technology, we understand the importance of chips. Whether it is electronic goods, medical equipment or transportation systems, chips are indispensable to all of them. Without chips, the entire world could come to a standstill.

We were still building, but the 'what' had changed dramatically. We once built for our most basic needs. Today, it builds for the world's most advanced ones. Similarly, in 2016, PM Modi spoke of basic rural infrastructure, that rural roads are a perpetual issue in our country. Every rural citizen craves for pakka roads. In 2025, India's Gaganyaan aimed at becoming aatmanirbhar with tasks like building our own space station. This year, PM Modi spoke about how a homegrown startup was able to send a rocket to space in a first attempt. We are still thinking of connectivity, but in a little over a decade, it has moved from the gamin ilaaka (rural areas) to the great beyond, as outer space is often referred to. There are far too many examples that can be sought out, as they should be - because they show us how far we have come, and how we are going to continue ahead at full steam - all aboard the reform express. Startup India, the prime minister's flagship initiative that redefined how young India viewed the future, is a perfect example. In 2015, it was a resolve. "I have to provide strength to startups and, therefore, I resolve that in the coming days 'Startup India' and 'Stand-up India' will be there." A year later, the resolve had become an

ambition to ensure that no district or block was left untouched by startups. By 2021, startups were becoming unicorns; by 2023, India had entered the world's top three startup ecosystems. And by 2025, more than 300 Indian startups were operating in the space sector alone. Nari Shakti Becomes Changemaker Consider once the significance of this journey for India's women, our Nari Shakti. They had to wait for darkness due to lack of toilets - something that the prime minister spoke of in his very first Independence Day address. By 2018, he declared that institutional doors into the armed forces, including the Permanent Commission, had been thrown open to them. By 2023, women in villages were becoming entrepreneurs, technology users and leaders. It is indeed fulfilling to see that while on the one hand our CEOs are dominating the global business landscape, on the other hand one crore mothers and sisters joined women self-help groups and are becoming 'lakhpati didis'. By 2025, PM Modi told us that our Nari Shakti is dominating startups, space, sports and the armed forces and in 2026, he assured that soon, we will see six crore 'lakhpati didis' bolstering our rural economy. We have moved beyond simply empowering women by making them leaders and epicentres of transformation. From ensuring basic dignity towards ensuring 33 per cent representation in parliament and state assemblies. Are these not women-led development in action? The real story of these speeches, then, is not merely what India has achieved, but how profoundly its sense of possibility has changed. PM Modi's speeches are perhaps the clearest measure of change. They show how a nation acquired the confidence to solve problems that once seemed impossible. That is the real audacity of a nation's ambition: to dream bigger, and having travelled far enough to have the confidence and the conviction to transform those dreams into reality.

NOAKHALI TO PARLIAMENT, WHAT GANDHI, NEHRU, JINNAH AND FAIZ WERE DOING ON AUG 15, 1947

On February 20, 1947, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee announced that the British would leave India. On June 3, Viceroy Lord Louis Mountbatten published a plan to transfer power in the next 72 days. The task included the partition of the subcontinent, dividing its army, civil service, railways, police and postal system, and apportioning the respective share of assets down to the office equipment, etc. Mountbatten had a tear-off calendar at his table that showed how many days were left to complete the task. On August 15, 1947, the country's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, made a ringing speech inside Parliament at midnight, saying, "Long ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge..." Minutes after the historic speech, Nehru arrived at the Viceregal Palace (now Rashtrapati Bhavan) to formally invite Mountbatten to become independent India's Governor-General, and handed him an envelope that supposedly contained the names of his Council of Ministers. Perhaps in the excitement of independence, someone had sealed the envelope without putting the list inside. An 'Inauspicious' Day For Mountbatten Some astrologers had considered August 15, 1947, to be inauspicious, but for Mountbatten, it was a red-letter day. In 1945, Tokyo



was surrendered by the Japanese Army, where Mountbatten was serving as Allied Supreme Commander. August 15, 1945, is remembered as Victory over Japan (V-J) Day. Across the border, Pakistan came into being on August 14. It was the 26th day of the ongoing month of Ramazan when Mohammad Ali Jinnah hosted a lunch for Lord Mountbatten, while many in the newly created Islamic state were observing fast. Interestingly, Pakistan should have come into existence on August 15. The Indian Independence Act, promulgated on July 18, 1947, in the British Parliament, reads, "As from the fifteenth day of August, nineteen hundred and forty-seven, two independent Dominions shall be set up in India, to be known respectively as India and Pakistan." Thus, legally, Pakistan should have come into existence on August 15, 1947. But August 14 became

the official date because Mountbatten had to travel from Karachi to New Delhi. At the time of our country's independence, Mahatma Gandhi was walking barefoot from village to village in Noakhali district of Bengal, in a hostile atmosphere created by riots, making people take a pledge not to kill others. He carried holy books, appealing to Hindus as well as Muslims to ensure peace. There was a moving incident in a village, where Gandhi reportedly asked the local Hindus and Muslims to come out of their hutments for a common prayer and a common pledge for peace. But nobody turned up. Gandhi waited for half an hour in vain. He then came up with an ingenious plan. He approached young boys with a ball and remarked, "Small kids from this village, your parents are frightened of each other, but what fright can you have? Elderly Hindus and Muslims might be fright-

ened of one another. But children are innocent. You are children of God. I am inviting you to play the game of ball." After playing with them for half an hour, Gandhi told villagers, "You have no courage, but if you want that courage, induct it from your children." The Visit To Kingsway Hospital When Gandhi returned to Delhi, he learnt that his disciple, Subhadra Joshi, was hospitalised at Kingsway Hospital in Delhi. Gandhi came to visit her. He asked Subhadra how many innocent lives had been lost in Delhi due to the communal violence. When Subhadra speculated that the figure could be more than a thousand, Gandhi asked if it included some Congress peace-workers too. Subhadra recalled that Gandhi was dismayed to hear her reply, 'none', and he wondered how he could believe that she and the other Congress peace-workers had tried to save innocent lives.

ATTACK ON SUKHBIR BADAL: TIME TO HEAL, TIME TO RETHINK PANTHAK POLITICS

A sacred Sikh space in the Deccan has become the setting for a question Punjab can no longer avoid. What happens when religious identity, grievance and violence begin appearing too closely together? The motive behind the attack on Sukhbir Singh Badal remains under investigation. But the incident raises questions about the direction of Sikh public discourse. I was in Nanded in June, walking through a city where Sikh history feels inseparable from the cultural world around it. Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Sahib is a holy centre of enormous importance, associated with Guru Gobind Singh's final days in 1708 and the continuing Sikh presence in the Deccan. That experience challenged the neat categories through which many of us in Delhi have understood Sikhi. Sikhs in the Deccan have absorbed the cultural landscape around them without surrendering their own identity. Then, back in London, came the news that Sukhbir Singh Badal had been attacked inside a gurdwara in Nanded by Jaspal Singh, identified by police as a Nihang. Badal reportedly suffered a penetrating wound to his hand and underwent surgery. A Faith That Leaves Room For Mercy The question is larger than Badal. He carries political baggage. The sacrilege incidents of 2015, during the Akali-BJP government, caused a wound that cannot be dismissed in religious life. The controversies around the handling of those cases



and the religious pardon granted to Sirda Dera chief Ram Rahim by the then Jathedar of the Akal Takht for an earlier instance of blasphemy, followed by its revocation, remain embedded in Sikh memory. Badal later sought Panthak and religious forgiveness for wrongdoings committed during his years in power. Sikhi gives considerable space to confession, correction and forgiveness. Gurbani places daya at the heart of the Sikh moral imagination. "Make compassion the cotton, contentment the thread, modesty the knot and truth the twist." — Guru Nanak, Ang 471, Sri Guru Granth Sahib The Guru turns daya into the material from which the sacred thread of the soul is made. Compassion is foundational. Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru, describes the Divine as: "The Supreme Being is the treasure of mercy, compassionate

and forgiving." So what should religious wrongdoing produce? A demand for accountability, repentance and justice. The answer cannot be presumed to be violence. And in Nanded, with the motive still unknown, it would be irresponsible to presume that it was. The Nihangs And A Damaging Headline There is another uncomfortable part of this story. The Nihang order has a long and important place in Sikh history, associated with martial service, protection of Sikh institutions and distinctive traditions. In recent years, however, Nihangs have repeatedly entered public headlines for the wrong reasons. In England, the murder of 18-year-old Henry Nowak by Vickrum Digwa became entangled in public discussion about Sikh identity, the kirpan and the convicted attacker's association with Nihang traditions. Sikh

organisations condemned the murder. The case also generated wider hostility and misinformation around Sikhs in Britain this year. Now Nanded brings the Nihang identity back into headlines, this time through an attack on the head of the Shiromani Akali Dal inside a gurdwara. This recurring association with acts of violence in public discourse should concern the Sikh community. A tradition known for the kirpan, a symbol whose name is traditionally linked to kirpa, or grace, cannot allow a sword used as an attacking weapon to become its most visible public language. Looking Beyond The Panthak Space Badal is at his strongest when he acts as a public figure for Punjab in all its diversity. Last year, when floods ravaged the state, he was on the ground. During the farmers' agitation, he stood beside farmers.

FRANCE'S TOP COURT BLOCKS SOCIAL MEDIA BAN FOR UNDER-15S



France's top court has struck down a ban on social media for under-15s, saying it infringed upon freedom of expression. The legislation was backed by French lawmakers in July, making it the first European country to block young people from the platforms, after concerns over the harmful effects on children's mental health. Friday's ruling by the Constitutional Council overrides the ban, which Emmanuel Macron had pledged would be introduced in stages from September. Responding to the news, the French president immediately asked Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu to prepare a new draft that would take into account all the council's points. After lawmakers voted through the bill last month, Lecornu referred parts of the legislation to the council - a nine-member authority that checks whether a law complies with the constitution - for review. The Constitutional Council said it had found that Article 1 of the legislation "constitutes an infringement that is neither appropriate, necessary, nor proportionate" to the freedom of expression and communi-

cation for under-15s. The ruling also raised concerns over the law's requirement to provide proof of age to access online services and said it failed to establish "the legal safeguards necessary". Macron's office said after the ruling that the French government would work "as quickly as possible" to propose a new draft and said the president was determined to see the reform implemented by early 2027. The original legislation had envisaged that from September all those under-15 would not be able to open accounts, and verification would be required on all new accounts. And from January, this would have applied to all existing accounts. Opponents have repeatedly questioned the law's viability and raised concerns over privacy, the efficacy of age-verification tools, the risks of young people bypassing them, and how quickly the ban has been designed and brought in. Australia was the first country to introduce last December a social media ban for those under-16, although it is widely acknowledged that many in the country continue to use the platforms.



■ Powerful magnitude 7.7 earthquake kills at least 47 in Indonesia

US AIRCRAFT CARRIER ON WAY TO RELIEVE USS LINCOLN AFTER ISSUES REPORTED ABOARD

A US aircraft carrier is headed to the Middle East to replace the USS Abraham Lincoln, on which thousands of sailors have reportedly faced food shortages and difficult conditions on an extended, nine-month deployment. The USS George Washington, which was near Malaysia on Thursday, could arrive in the region in about nine days, BBC analysis shows. Family members of sailors aboard the Lincoln have expressed concern about their mental health deteriorating due to the conditions, with some sailors having reportedly attempted to jump overboard. While the US Navy has acknowledged supply challenges, it has denied that a mental health crisis was taking place on the Lincoln, which has 5,000 aboard. US President Donald Trump denied that family members



were concerned about the welfare of their relatives and dismissed the possibility that the deployment had been too long. "Not nearly long enough," he told reporters on Friday. Trump also confirmed that another ship will replace the Lincoln, although he did not identify it by name. The USS George Washington left a naval facility in Yokosuka, Japan in May to patrol the Pacific region and is now head-

ed to replace the Lincoln, CBS News, the BBC's US partner, reported, citing a US official. Tracking data compiled by BBC Verify shows that at its last recorded speed, the vessel would reach Dugm port in Oman, about 500 miles off the coast of Iran, around 22 August. Once it arrives in the Middle East, it will be the third aircraft carrier in the area. The USS George HW Bush is also there. No US aircraft carrier will remain in the Pacific. The Lincoln has been at sea since 11 December on a deployment that was initially scheduled to end in May, tracking data compiled by BBC Verify shows. Earlier this week, the Military Times and Stars & Stripes reported that the families of multiple sailors reported that their loved ones had considered jumping overboard due to conditions on the vessel. The conditions have reportedly included poor sanitation, infrequent ports-of-call, broken plumbing, exhaustion and shortages of fresh food. In an interview with the BBC, a relative of a sailor on the Lincoln claimed that their family member had lost 65lbs (29kg) since the ship headed out to sea and had been suffering from exhaustion because of the constant noise of aircraft and the ship's vibrations.

SOUTH KOREA PROPOSES TALKS TO OFFICIALLY END WAR WITH NORTH



South Korea's president has proposed talks with its northern neighbour on officially ending the war between the two that is technically still active. Lee Jae Myung suggested a "multi-layered security system" to avoid flare-ups along the countries' de-facto border, known as the demilitarised zone (DMZ), and offered to discuss practical ways of halting Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions. North Korea has continually tested ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads, which has been perceived in Seoul and nearby Japan as an attempt to intimidate and project power. The conflict between the two occupants of the Korean peninsula has been effectively frozen since an armistice was signed in 1953. However, there have been clashes and tensions along the DMZ in the decades since, along with accusations from both sides of provocations, including dropping balloons carrying rubbish and propaganda. Lee, who became South Korean president last year after his predecessor Yoon Suk Yeol was impeached for attempting to declare martial law, has sought to thaw relations with North Korea and its ally China, which had soured under Yoon. "Let us put down our intentions to threaten each other and begin discussions to end the long-running war as the directly involved parties," he told a ceremony marking Liberation Day, which commemorates the peninsula's liberation from Japanese

rule. Lee expressed hope that the two nations "will sit face-to-face for peaceful coexistence and mutual growth", adding this could serve as a forum for discussing "effective ways to halt the advancement of the North's nuclear capabilities". North Korea declared itself a nuclear power in 2022 and vowed never to relinquish its weapons, of which it is estimated to possess dozens. Lee has previously said Pyongyang was producing 15 to 20 more warheads annually, telling the BBC last year he would back a deal between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to freeze production. He said this was a "realistic" goal, while Seoul continued to push for full denuclearisation. Trump is the only western leader to have met Kim, which happened during the US president's first term. Though he has turned his attention to other regions since returning to the White House, Trump said last August that he hoped to meet Kim again when "appropriate". North Korea has yet to react to Lee's offer. The authoritarian regime's state news agency carried news of Kim marking the country's own Liberation Day commemorations with a wreath-laying and guard of honour. Pyongyang has previously rebuffed Lee's offers of engagement, criticising a deal for the US to build South Korea a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines and denouncing joint drills between the two allies.

Activists try to deliver aid to Palestinians in homes besieged by Israeli settlers

Activists have tried to deliver supplies to Palestinians whose homes in the occupied West Bank have been besieged for days by Israeli settlers. The group left water and food near one of the houses in Qusra where two Palestinian families have been trapped since Sunday, with their power and water supplies cut off. Two of the residents said Israeli forces had prevented the activists from delivering the aid directly to them, and the supplies had to be left outside. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) denied this. Also on Friday, a number of settlers returned to set up a tent near the site - a day after an operation to disperse them from the area. It was later removed by Israeli forces. The IDF said Qusra was a "closed military zone" and so Israeli civilians - who were among the activists - could not enter the area. "But they weren't prevented from transferring aid to the Palestinian homes in Qusra." It said in a further statement that Israeli civilians had erected a tent in the



Qusra area earlier on Friday, "and IDF soldiers operated to remove it while protecting the local residents". About a dozen Palestinian households were told to leave their properties during the operation to disperse settlers on Thursday, including members of the Abu Ridi and Hassan families living in two of their three besieged homes. Qusra Mayor Abdul Azim Wadi told the BBC that Israeli forces were using some of the vacated Palestinian houses as barracks. The Israeli military said the aim was "to protect the residents" and soldiers

had been "instructed that the Qusra residents will remain in their homes". A spokesman had previously described the settlers' actions as "deplorable" and "unacceptable", adding that the government would investigate and arrest those responsible. The situation in Qusra began on Sunday when settlers blocked the road to the Palestinian families' gates and cut off their power and water supplies. The first Israeli soldiers who came to the site prayed with the settlers - an act for which the Israeli military said they would be disciplined. An

attempt by Israeli security forces to dislodge the settlers on Wednesday led to confrontations with a bigger group. Palestinian security camera video shared with the BBC showed confrontations between Israeli soldiers and border police and a large crowd of settlers. The security forces used tear gas and stun grenades. It is not clear exactly what the settlers in Qusra want. In the past, settlers have forced Palestinians out of their homes and seized their properties. Their stated aim is to empty the area of its Palestinian residents. Settlements are illegal under international law, but the Israeli government has promoted their recent rapid expansion. The case is the latest to draw attention to the relative impunity of settlers and how Israeli forces are struggling to deal with rising settler violence. Since January 2023, 127 Palestinian communities in the occupied West Bank have experienced full or partial displacement, including 47 that have been entirely displaced.

FAMILY STRANDED AT SEA FOR 16 HOURS AFTER JET SKI CAPSIZED IN THAILAND



A French family was left stranded at sea for more than 16 hours overnight after their rented jet ski capsized off the coast of Thailand. A 50-year-old father and his sons, five and seven, were left "pale" and "exhausted after swallowing a lot of seawater" before being rescued, local government official Amorn Chomchoey told AFP. All three were taken to hospital for checks but were discharged shortly afterwards, Chomchoey said. The father had rented the jet ski for a 45-minute ride on Koh Samui, one of Thailand's most popular islands for tourists, at

around 17:00 local time (10:00 GMT) on Thursday, the Bangkok Post reports. Rescuers were alerted after the jet ski was not returned at the agreed time. People used speedboats and more jet skis to comb the waters surrounding Koh Samui and towards the nearby island of Koh Phangan searching for the family, the Bangkok Post reports. Search efforts had to be suspended overnight before the family were found still drifting at sea the following day, Thai media report. The father and sons were found by rescuers at around 10:00 local time on Friday, according to AFP.



Eleven killed in Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon, authorities say

Many Canadians are boycotting the US, so this is where they're travelling instead

Prior to US President Donald Trump's re-election, Kent Truscott and his family, from London, Ontario, had taken multiple trips south of the border, including to California and most recently New York in 2023. But since late 2024, "my family and I have completely decided to boycott the United States", he told BBC. That meant cancelling a trip last spring to Texas to watch the SpaceX Starship launch with his brother. The two had planned to fly down from Toronto, rent a car and stay a week to watch the launch, likely spending "thousands of dollars". Truscott and his wife decided to spend that money in Canada instead - the Atlantic provinces of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, to be exact. Their



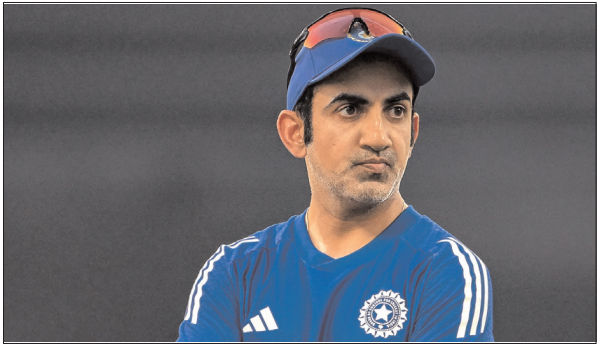
decision is a response to US tariffs and the president's comments about annexing their country. More than a year after Trump's return to the White House, many Canadians like Truscott are still holding firm on their boycott on travel to the US. Even with a slight uptick in road trips to the US in April, Canadians made 800,000 fewer trips that month com-

pared to the same time in 2024, before Trump was elected, according to national data. The boycott has meant a loss of about C\$3.3bn (\$2.35bn; £1.75bn) in travel revenue for the US last year - money that Canadians have instead chosen to spend overseas or exploring their own country. That financial void has been felt by a number of

American cities and states, who have urged Canadians to return through targeted advertisements and special deals. In July, New York City's tourism board said it will offer Broadway tickets and hotel rooms to Canadian tourists at a 30% discount. The BBC spoke to a few Canadians about why they have chosen to avoid the US, where they have gone instead and what it would take for them to return. Not everyone is driven solely by Trump's treatment of Canada, with some noting that the declining Canadian dollar has also made the US less affordable. But many say they feel their country's relationship with the US has hit a breaking point, and that it would take a lot for them to return, if at all.

India's 2011 World Cup-Winning Coach's Big Verdict On Gautam Gambhir Amid Criticism

Coach Gary Kirsten, who was in charge when India won the 2011 Cricket World Cup, has backed Gautam Gambhir amid criticism. The India head coach has been under the scanner for the team's poor performances, especially in Test and T20Is. Under Gambhir, the team suffered white-washes at the hands of New Zealand and South Africa. Of late, the Indian cricket team was clean swept by Ireland in a two-match T20I series before being outplayed by England by a 4-0 margin in yet another disappointing outing in the format. Kirsten said he enjoyed working with Gambhir during his stint as India coach. He added that he was confident of Gambhir's success as a coach as well. "He's a fantastic coach. He's had incredible success. He has won a T20 World Cup (2026) and the ICC Champions Trophy (2025). He's also had success in the IPL (Gambhir was the team



mentor for the 2024 IPL champions, Kolkata Knight Riders). His record speaks for itself. I really enjoyed working with him when he was a player. He's a smart cricketer and I knew he'd have success as a coach," Kirsten told Times of India. Kirsten coached India from 2008 to 2011, which included the World Cup glory that saw the side defeat Sri Lanka in the final to clinch the prestigious trophy after a wait of 28 years. Gambhir, who was active as an international cricketer from 2003 to 2016, also played under Kirsten's coaching. "It was a great three years

and a privileged one to work with Indian players. There was a lot of skill in that dressing room. What I appreciated was that they accepted me into their space and felt I could add value," Kirsten added. In April this year, Kirsten took over the role of head coach for the Sri Lanka national team. "I've approached the Sri Lankan role with the same seriousness," he said. India and Sri Lanka are set to play a two-match Test series, starting August 15 in Galle. The second and final game of the series will begin on August 23 in Colombo.

Nationwide Talent Hunt To Be Launched With Olympics 2036 In Focus:PM Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said India is a strong contender to host the 2036 Olympics and to ensure that the country also has a strong presence in the mega-event, a nationwide talent hunt would be launched to identify prospects in the age group of 5 to 15. Addressing the country from the ramparts of Red Fort on the 80th Independence Day, Modi said the government's flagship Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), which was launched in 2014, has been a major success in providing support to athletes. "India is making space for itself in the world of sports. We hear our national anthem frequently and see our tri-colour going up very often. TOPS has achieved great success. Whether it is Khelo India Games, University Games, Beach Games, Winter Games, or sports training, sports medicine, sports nutrition, India is moving ahead at great pace," he said. "India's performance is improving, and we are strong contenders to become an Olympic host in 2036. We are hosting the CWG in 2030. There are about 40 disciplines in Olympics,



with nearly 350 events. It is sad that we don't compete in at least two third of these events because we are not even able to qualify. "We have decided that in 2036, we should have participation in at least three fourth events. We are launching a nationwide talent hunt for children aged 5 to 15 to identify prospects in every corner of the country. They will get special training to become world class athletes," he added. The fate of India's 2036 bid is expected to be

known only in 2029. PTI had reported in January this year that plans to start a talent hunt with the 2036 Games in view were in the brainstorming stage so that the country finds its footing in disciplines like aquatics and cycling. Both these competitions offer over a 100 Olympic medals combined but none so far for India. It's an approach that China adopted for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. It drastically improved its performance in disciplines that it did

n't do well previously, such as boxing, canoeing and archery, for a record tally of 100 medals in that edition. Driving India's expansion plan would be aquatics, cycling, rowing and gymnastics. Aquatics, which includes swimming, diving, waterpolo, artistic swimming, and open water swimming, will offer 55 of the more than 350 overall medals that will be up for grabs across 36 disciplines in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. But India is not expected to get any of these. Ditto for rowing, which has 45 medals at stake in Los Angeles across 15 events, and cycling, where 22 events will throw up 66 medals. India is hosting the 2030 CWG in Ahmedabad, which is also in the race to host the 2036 Olympics. The talent hunt programme will rely heavily on Artificial Intelligence which will be used for fitness battery tests, which are a series of exercises to measure cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, speed and agility, flexibility and balance along with movement. "Not every school-going kid would know his sporting capabilities or take to sport naturally.

BCCI To Take Big Call On Ajit Agarkar's Future After Sri Lanka Test Series. Big Details Emerge

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) office bearers are set to meet selection committee chairman Ajit Agarkar after India's Test series against Sri Lanka to discuss his future, according to a report by The Indian Express. Agarkar will complete three years as chairman in September and is eligible for a one-year extension. The report claimed that the meeting will take place amid differences of opinion between the selectors and the BCCI regarding Rohit Sharma's future. While the selectors had reportedly informed Sharma that they were looking to replace him in the squad after the England series in July, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia said that Sharma will "continue to represent the country as long as he is in the scheme of things". The report further claimed that the BCCI wants the selectors to assess Sharma's future on a series-by-series basis in the lead-up to the 2027 ODI World Cup. However, Saikia's



comments reportedly left the selectors unhappy. Earlier, former India head coach Ravi Shastri has lauded Rohit Sharma for his brilliant century against England in the third and final ODI at Lord's, stating that the opener has 'shut everyone up' on speculations about his future in the 50-over format. Rohit made a sublime 138 – the first ODI century hit by an

Indian batter at Lord's and quashed speculations about the end of his 50-over set-up. He shared stands of 147 and 113 with skipper Shubman Gill (77) and Virat Kohli (74), though it went in vain as India lost by 27 runs and suffered a 2-1 series defeat. "He didn't need to do so, but he shut up everybody, because when you get those kinds of rumours floating

■ The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) office bearers are set to meet selection committee chairman Ajit Agarkar after India's Test series against Sri Lanka to discuss his future, according to a report by The Indian Express. Agarkar will complete three years as chairman in September and is eligible for a one-year extension.

around, it's sometimes irritating. When a player has done that much, you don't have to prove anything to anyone." "If he has the desire to play and work hard at his game and he's still enjoying it, I think he should be given the opportunity for as long as he wants. The day will come when he'll feel that he'll go, but when you have that kind of quality, you're thinking of dropping him and then he produces anything like this - first time ever, it was a special innings," said Shastri on Sky Sports.

Record Signing Yan Diomande Included In Real Madrid Squad For Schalke Friendly

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho on Saturday named new record signing Yan Diomande and stars Kylian Mbappe and Jude Bellingham in his team's squad for the first time, to face German side Schalke in a friendly this weekend. Los Blancos take on Schalke on Sunday in Gelsenkirchen in their final friendly before they kick off their La Liga season on August 22 at Espanyol. Marc Cucurella, Thibaut Courtois and Ibrahima Konate were also named in the squad for the first time under Mourinho, following holidays after playing with their countries at the World Cup like Diomande, Mbappe and Bellingham. Madrid have overhauled their squad after two straight seasons



without winning a major trophy, signing several players including Diomande, for 140 million

euros (\$162 million) including bonuses from RB Leipzig, as well as Cucurella and Konate.

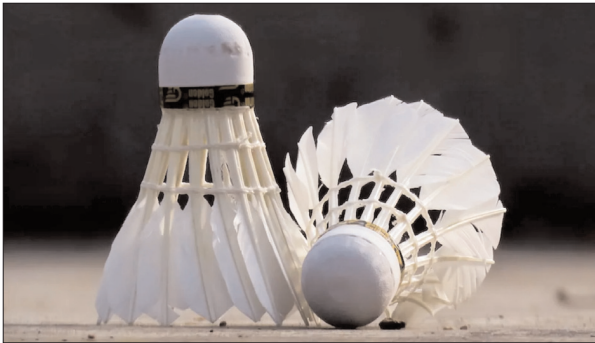
'Commitment To Growth': Hero MotoCorp's Long Partnership With World Hockey

The connection between Hero MotoCorp and hockey goes back a long way. It was back in 2010 when the company became a major sponsor for International Hockey Federation (FIH) by backing the men's Hockey World Cup in New Delhi. They expanded their support by becoming the official title sponsor for the inaugural Hockey India League (HIL) starting in January 2013. Since then, they have been a close associate of the global hockey body and they once again signed on as the title Sponsor of the Hockey India League for three seasons, starting from 2024-25.



IGI STADIUM COMPLETELY RENOVATED, DELHI READY TO HOST BEST-EVER WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS: BAI SECRETARY

After drawing criticism over the state of facilities during the India Open earlier this year, the Badminton Association of India (BAI) on Thursday said the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium has undergone a complete renovation and is ready to host the "best-ever" edition of the BWF World Championships. The India Open came under scrutiny after players raised concerns over the condition of the venue, including its cleanliness, training facilities and air quality. The tournament also witnessed unusual disruptions, with matches briefly halted due to bird droppings and even a monkey entering the spectator stands. The controversy erupted after Danish shuttler Mia Blichfeldt criticised the condition of the warm-up



and practice areas at the K.D. Jadhav Indoor Hall and the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium during the India Open, drawing attention to the poor state of the facilities. "We've worked on every issue that came up then, and I'm happy to say those problems have been resolved completely. I'm confident this will be one of the best World Championships ever," BAI secretary general

Sanjay Mishra told PTI on the sidelines of the draw ceremony for the World Championships, which begin in New Delhi on August 17. "I would especially like to thank the Sports Ministry and SAI because they've worked very hard. Under the guidance of our president, Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, all the preparations are progressing well," he added.

Venus Williams Falls Again At Cincinnati Open, Singles Skid Hits 13 With 6-2, 6-2 Loss To Qualifier



Venus Williams' losing streak in singles play has reached 13 matches. The seven-time major champion was defeated 6-2, 6-2 by Emiliana Arango on Friday in the first round of the Cincinnati Open. The 46-year-old Williams received a wild-card entry to the WTA 1000 event. She has not won a singles match since July 2025. Arango, a 25-year-old qualifier from Colombia ranked 95th, needed 1 hour, 5 minutes to defeat Williams on the grandstand court at Lindner Tennis Center. Williams had her serve broken in the first game of the match and faced an uphill battle the rest of the way. Arango was 4 of 5 on converting break points and won 71% of her first-serve points. Williams was unable to convert on her lone break opportunity and was only 41% on first-serve points. "That kind of eased my nerves a little bit of having maybe a little bit of breathing room. And then I think I just did a good job of staying on it, trying to make her play as much as possible." Arango said

about getting ahead early. Arango will face No. 7 seed and defending Cincinnati champion Iga Swiatek in the second round. Williams' last singles victory came last year in Washington, when she defeated Peyton Stearns. "I think that at all times I was really controlling the point, but unfortunately didn't finish it the way I wanted to," said Williams, who is making her 11th appearance in the tournament. "The encouraging part is that I'm controlling the shots, but I have to just get a little more consistent on that last part." Williams will remain in Cincinnati to play doubles with her sister, Serena, after they received a wild-card entry. They last played doubles together at the 2022 U.S. Open. The Williams sisters were slated to play doubles at Wimbledon before an injury to Serena. They will play Marta Kostyuk and Peyton Stearns in the first round. The doubles portion of the tournament starts Sunday. "I'm excited and hope that we can both go into it fresh, on our toes and ready.

Inter Miami Seek Privacy As Lionel Messi Trains For Major League Soccer Matches

Inter Miami officials have appealed to fans and media to give time to their Argentine legend Lionel Messi as he recovers following the passing of his father, Jorge Messi, and gets ready for upcoming action in Major League Soccer (MLS). As the clock ticks down to the club's season opener, Inter Miami coach Guillermo Hoyos has emphasised the need for privacy as Messi navigates a return to football. Jorge Messi, 68, died on August 8 at a hospital in the central Argentine city of Rosario. "I think every-

thing needs to unfold gradually; there is deep pain involved, and this isn't something that changes overnight," Hoyos told the media on Friday. "So, I believe silence is the best approach: silence, tranquillity, and peace, allowing him to find his own moments. We need to stand by him, sharing in that silence. To me, silence is important, and that helps one eventually find a way forward. He is truly a wonderful person, and he has a wonderful family," he added. Messi reached Rosario last

weekend and, according to reports in Argentina, attended a private memorial service. He returned to Miami and rejoined Inter Miami for the Leagues Cup game against Club Leon on Wednesday at Nu Stadium. Messi started the match against Leon on the bench before coming on as a half-time substitute to play the second 45 minutes. "There are no words," Hoyos said about Messi's commitment to the team. "I can't find a label for his worth as a person. We aren't talking about his

value as a player, but his worth as a wonderful human being with a huge heart. Sometimes, words just aren't enough." Messi trained with the team on Friday morning as Inter Miami prepared to face Nashville SC on Saturday in MLS action. After the match at Geodis Park, Miami will travel to play Philadelphia Union next Wednesday. Inter Miami officials have appealed to fans and media to give time to their Argentine legend Lionel Messi as he recovers following the passing of his father, Jorge Messi.





Hit Machine Adivi Sesh Unveils ‘AH’ First Look; Actor Rahul Vijay’s Intense Avatar Sets the Tone for a Gripping Thriller

The passionate production houses Star Box Stories and Ripple Slide Studios are making their debut with an intriguing thriller starring Rahul Vijay and Archana Iyer. Produced by Kanaka Rao Tonangi, Abhishek and famous editor-director Garry BH, the film is directed by Sai Baali and is gearing up for a grand release soon. The makers have now unveiled the much-awaited title and first look, adding further excitement around this promising project. The film’s title, ‘AH’, was unveiled by Hit Machine Adivi Sesh, and the title immediately grabs attention with its intriguing presenta-

tion. The words surrounding the title, Ammayi, Adrushyam and Anveshana heighten curiosity and hint at a gripping thriller revolving around girls going missing and the investigation that follows. Adding another layer of mystery are the words Anumaanam, Ashangikham and Amaanusham, suggesting that there is much more to the story than what meets the eye. The intriguing title design and these thought-provoking words have made the film a subject of curiosity even before its release. The first look further elevates the intrigue. Rahul Vijay is seen sitting at a location with a

latthi in his hand, while the ground around him is filled with blood. The intense visual, combined with the Charminar in the background, hints that the thrilling narrative is set against the backdrop of Hyderabad. Rahul Vijay’s striking appearance and the dark, suspenseful atmosphere of the first look promise an engaging and gripping cinematic experience. Archana Iyer joins Rahul Vijay as the female lead, while Sai Baali is at the helm as director. The technical team includes Sri Charan Pakala as music director and Monish Bhupathi Raju as cinematog-

rapher. Abhinav V Kunapareddy Co-Producing the film and also handling the editing works with Garry BH. With an intriguing title, a curiosity-filled title design, a striking first look and a narrative that appears to delve deeper than a conventional missing-girls thriller, ‘AH’ has already created considerable interest. The combination of mystery, investigation, suspense and the intense visual world introduced through the first look raises expectations on what the film has in store. ‘AH’ is gearing up for a grand release soon, and more details from this intriguing thriller are eagerly awaited.

KRITHI SHETTY TURNS UP THE SULTRY GLAM QUOTIENT



Krithi Shetty is turning heads with her latest pictures, and this time, she is all about sultry glamour. Dressed in a figure-hugging black halter-neck dress, the actress flaunts her toned look while keeping her style elegant and classy. In one picture, she poses against a wall, leaning slightly forward and giving the camera an intense gaze, while her long wavy hair falls over one shoulder. Another picture sees her relaxing on the floor beside a sofa, with one hand resting on her hair as she strikes a stylish pose. Her minimal makeup, soft expressions and black outfit add to the sensual mood of the photoshoot.

The Uppena actress, who has been exploring films across different industries, is currently gearing up for some interesting projects. She will next be seen in director Anil Ravipudi’s upcoming Telugu multi-starrer, which is yet to receive its official title. Krithi is paired opposite Nandamuri Kalyan Ram in the film, which also stars Venkatesh Daggubati and Keerthy Suresh. The film is expected to be a festive release and is scheduled to hit theatres during Sankranthi 2027. Meanwhile, Krithi’s photos have also caught the attention of her fans, as she confidently flaunts her stylish look and striking presence.

REBEL STAR PRABHAS, CREATIVE DIRECTOR HANU RAGHAVAPUDI

Prestigious Banner Mythri Movie Makers, T Series Presents’ Most-Awaited Pan India Project Fauzi New Poster Turns Independence Day Into A Tribute To Sacrifice Rebel Star Prabhas’s most-awaited Pan India Project Fauzi will be hitting the screens worldwide on December 3, 2026. The grand period action spectacle is directed by creative filmmaker Hanu Raghavapudi, produced by Mythri Movie Makers, and presented by T-Series, the film is bankrolled by Naveen Yerneni, Y. Ravi Shankar, and Bhushan Kumar. From the title poster to pre-look to first look, every promotional material has only heightened the antici-



tion surrounding the movie. The makers of Fauzi have marked Independence Day

with a poster that carries a strong emotional and historical undertone.

‘AASMAAN’ Should Bring Meghamsh a Great Success, I Wish That as a Mother: Shanti Srihari at First Look & Motion Poster Launch

Presented by Mrs. Kondaru Srinivasa Rao under the Sri Kleemkara Celluloid banner, AASMAAN stars Meghamsh Srihari in the lead role and is directed by Ram Nandan. The film is produced by Kondaru Venkatesh and Mannem Srikanth. AASMAAN is being made in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Arabic. On the occasion of the birth anniversary of late actor Srihari, the makers unveiled the film’s first look and motion poster on Saturday. The motion poster has generated curiosity around the film.



It features Meghamsh standing with a torch in his hand inside a giant palm. The forehead of the person to whom the palm belongs, along with a uniquely designed bindi,

can also be seen. People holding torches surround the palm, raising intriguing questions about the identity of the person and Meghamsh’s character in the film.



PREITY MUKHUNDHAN OWNS THE FRAME IN GOLD

Tamil actress Preity Mukhundan, who has tasted back-to-back success with Blast and Idhayam Murali, has an exciting lineup coming up. She will next be seen in the Telugu film Emo Emo Idi opposite Roshan Meka, directed by Sailesh Kolanu. Apart from this, Preity also has the Tamil film Dashamakan in her kitty and is set to make her Hindi debut opposite Kartik Aaryan in Naagzilla. Amid this busy schedule, the actress has surprised fans with a striking new photoshoot,

dressed in a beige corset-style outfit with intricate embroidery and a matching polka-dot skirt, styled with dramatic fringe detailing on the shoulder. The dramatic lighting and vintage-inspired styling give the pictures a bold, editorial feel, quite different from her usual looks.



20,000 Students Unite in Tirupati for Grand Tiranga Rally on Independence Day

Tirupati, August 15, 2026: Marking the spirit of Independence Day and reinforcing the message of ‘Har Ghar Tiranga’, over 20,000 students from Mohan Babu University and Sri Vidyanikethan International School came together for a grand Tiranga Rally in Tirupati. The rally witnessed the participation of students from Mohan Babu University and Sri Vidyanikethan International School, who marched together carrying a spectacular 100-foot-long Indian Tricolour. The sight of thousands of students walking together with the national flag created a powerful display of patriotism, unity and national pride. Vishnu Manchu, Pro-Chancellor of Mohan Babu University, joined the students during the



rally, along with the Vice-Chancellor, faculty and staff members. His participation encouraged the students to

come together and celebrate the values embodied by the national flag. The rally was organised in the spirit of the

‘Har Ghar Tiranga’ campaign, encouraging the younger generation to celebrate Independence Day with pride and strengthen their connection with the nation. “Speaking on the occasion, Vishnu Manchu, Pro-Chancellor, Mohan Babu University said*, “Tiranga is a symbol of the sacrifices of our freedom fighters and the hopes and aspirations of every Indian. Seeing thousands of students from Mohan Babu University and Sri Vidyanikethan International School come together with such enthusiasm is deeply inspiring. As educational institutions, it is our responsibility to nurture young minds who are not only academically strong, but also conscious of their responsibility towards the nation.”

SHRIYA ENJOYS SUNNY DAY IN PETERSBURG



Shriya Saran, who once ruled the big screen alongside top heroes like Prabhas, Mahesh Babu and Rajinikanth in Telugu and Tamil cinema, continues to remain a strong presence in the industry even at 43. The actress was last seen in Mirai and is currently busy shooting for the Hindi thriller Drishyam 3 alongside Ajay Devgan. Amid her packed schedule, Shriya took time off for a family vacation to St. Petersburg with her husband Andrei Koscheev and their daughter Radha.

PART 1 WAS A DISASTER, PART 2 IS HEADING TOWARDS BLOCKBUSTER!

Emraan Hashmi’s Awarapan 2 is turning out to be one of the biggest surprises at the box office this year. Despite receiving mixed reviews from critics, the film has opened strongly and is now heading towards super-hit status. Interestingly, the first Awarapan was a box-office failure. However, the film slowly gained a cult following through its songs, emotional story, and Emraan

Hashmi’s performance, which helped it earn a loyal fan base over time. According to trade estimates, the film has been made on a budget of less than Rs 50 crore by Vishesh Films. In a remarkable start, it reportedly recovered nearly half of its budget on the very first day. Trade circles are expecting First Weekend collections to touch the Rs 50 crore mark, which would put the film on a strong path. If the current trend continues, Awarapan 2 could recover its entire budget within its first weekend itself, which is huge. Another surprising aspect is its performance in South Indian cities, especially Hyderabad. Despite facing competition from Vishwanath & Sons, the

film is attracting strong occupancy. All eyes are now on its first weekend box office numbers. The new version of Tera Mera Rishta from Awarapan 2 may have arrived with fresh voices, but for many listeners, the song still belongs to Pakistani singer Mustafa Zahid. A clip of Saaj Bhatt and Subodhh Sharma performing the reimaged track from Awarapan 2 is doing the rounds on social media. However, instead of discussing the new rendition, fans flooded the comments section with Mustafa’s name. “Only Mustafa Zahid,” read several comments, while another user wrote, “Not able to beat Mustafa Zahid.” One fan simply declared, “Sorry, only Mustafa Zahid.”