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At least 17 people were killed as Moscow and Kyiv exchanged heavy air attacks, with President Vladimir Putin warning of...

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The electronics ministry has notified a five-year, Rs 62,500-crore Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme aimed at pushing the industry beyond assembly...

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Tribunal upholds censure of Poonch Brigadier over 2023 custodial deaths

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Armed Forces Tribunal has dismissed a Brigadier's challenge to the 'severe displeasure' recorded against him over the deaths of three civilians in Army custody in Poonch in December 2023, ruling that grief over slain soldiers could not justify the treatment of detainees.

The Armed Forces Tribunal has upheld the "severe displeasure" recorded against a serving Army Brigadier over the deaths of three civilians in custody in Poonch in December 2023, ruling that grief over the killing of...

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Cabinet clears High Court bench for Ladakh

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Union Cabinet has approved a sitting bench of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in Leh, a long-standing demand aimed at bringing justice closer to residents of the...

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Aug 20 approved the establishment of a sitting bench of the High Court of Jammu...

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Nine-judge bench keeps 1978 test for 'industry' disputes

A nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court has ruled that pending disputes under the Industrial Disputes Act will continue to be decided under...

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A pre-dawn fire in a building housing several hotels in central Kolkata killed at least nine people, including a four-year-old child, with most victims...

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A Hong Kong court has convicted veteran activists Lee Cheuk-yan and Chow Hang-tung under the national security law for organising the city's banned annual...

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Fresh Israeli strikes killed at least 16 Palestinians in Gaza, prompting a joint condemnation from Turkey, Egypt and Qatar, even as Israel advanced controversial...

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The Centre has amended the Citizenship Rules to let district collectors grant citizenship under Section 6B to eligible non-Muslim minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and...

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Romanian F-16 jets destroyed an explosive marine drone near the Neptun Deep gas field in the Black Sea, as Russia announced the arrest of...

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Tarun Tejpal moves Supreme Court against conviction

Former Tehelka editor Tarun Tejpal has approached the Supreme Court challenging his conviction in a 2013 sexual assault case, one of the highest-profile prosecutions...

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Jammu division leads new industrial units in J&K

Jammu division accounts for nearly two-thirds of the industrial units registered under the Centre's flagship New Central Sector Scheme in Jammu and Kashmir, official...

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REGIONAL

Heavy rains flood Jammu, snap highways as MeT warns of more downpours

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



A sharp spell of rain lashed the Jammu region on Sunday, waterlogging city neighbourhoods, collapsing a building at Shaheedi Chowk and blocking the Jammu-Kishtwar highway, as the w...

Heavy rain hammered Jammu and its adjoining belts through Sunday, disrupting normal life, submerging low-lying neighbourhoods and triggering a mudslide that briefly severed the Jammu-Kishtwar National Highway, even as the Meteorological Department cautioned that the wet spell would persist in bursts over the coming days. According to the weather office, Jammu city recorded the highest rainfall in the Union Territory in the 24 hours ending 8.30 am on Sunday, logging 66 mm. Udhampur received 56 mm, Poonch 45 mm, Kokernag 42 mm and Qazigund 32.6 mm, the department said, with the intensity concentrated over the Jammu division and the Pir Panjal foothills. In the winter capital, sheets of water pooled across Tallab Tillo, Bhagwati Nagar, Krishna Nagar and the arterial Canal Road, stranding commuters and stalling vehicles through the morning rush. Residents complained that choked drains turned lanes into channels within minutes of the downpour, a recurring monsoon grievance in the city's older colonies. The rain also brought down a structure at Shaheedi Chowk around 7.30 am. Officials said the house had been abandoned months earlier after structural cracks appeared and had been vacated in time; the collapse damaged household items left behind but caused no injuries. No casualties were reported from anywhere in the division through the day, authorities confirmed. Traffic bore the brunt of the weather. A mudslide at Ragi Nallah blocked the Jammu-Kishtwar National Highway, with restoration crews pressed into service to clear the debris. The Jammu-Poonch National Highway was hit near Bhagwati Nagar, while the Jammu-RS Pura road was disrupted near Kulliyān and on the Bajalta stretch, slowing movement on key links to the border belt and the Pir Panjal. In the higher reaches, the administration in

Ramban issued a safety advisory as thunderstorms and intense showers swept the district, asking residents and travellers to avoid rivers, nullahs and slide-prone slopes. Flash-flood reports also came in from Thathri in Doda district, part of a pattern of localised inundation across the hill districts of Poonch, Rajouri, Reasi, Udhampur, Doda and parts of Ramban that received the sharpest showers. The Sunday deluge landed in a season that has already proved unusually destructive. Officials have recorded more than 35 cloudburst events across Jammu and Kashmir this year, with 31 lives lost to cloudbursts, flash floods and rain-triggered landslides, the Jammu division accounting for the heaviest toll. Poonch, Rajouri, Kathua, Doda and Kishtwar have figured repeatedly among the worst-hit districts. The MeT office said the rain would gradually taper before returning. It forecast hot and humid conditions with scattered rain and thundershowers between Aug 24 and 28, followed by a wider spell of light to moderate rain and thundershowers at scattered to many places from Aug 29 to 31. Forecasters flagged the continuing risk of thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds touching 60 kmph at isolated places, alongside the persistent threat of localised flash floods, landslides and mudslides in vulnerable hilly terrain. Disaster-management teams and highway agencies remained on alert through the evening, with restoration work reported on the blocked stretches. Officials urged the public to heed weather bulletins and district advisories, avoid travel during heavy spells and stay clear of swollen watercourses, warning that saturated slopes across the Jammu region and the Pir Panjal remain primed for sudden slides after any fresh burst of rain.



REGIONAL

In Delhi, LG briefs PM Modi and Shah on Nasha Mukt J&K drive

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha met Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi and presented him a coffee-table book documenting the Nasha Mukt Jammu Kashmir Abhiyan, the administration's 100-day campaign against drug abuse, officials said. The meeting followed the LG's call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi a day earlier, on Aug 23, when he presented the Prime Minister the same volume and briefed him on the drive. Sinha also gave the Home Minister a detailed presentation on the overall situation in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. The book, produced by the Department of Information and Public Relations, chronicles a campaign that combined enforcement, awareness drives and community mobilisation across all districts, drawing in students, youth groups, civil society and officials. The LG had led anti-drug rallies across the Union Territory during the 100-day push, which the administration has projected as a model for tackling the narcotics menace in the region.



REGIONAL

Sinha opens new SKUAST facilities, calls farming youth's next frontier

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha inaugurated a clutch of new facilities at the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), Jammu, and launched a Startup Outreach Programme aimed at carrying incubation and mentoring to farmers and youth in remote villages. The new facilities include the Unnati Girls Hostel, a Centre for AI and ML in Agriculture, a Centre for Mushroom Research and Innovation, an Advanced Sericulture Laboratory and a Centre for Digital Media and Publication, officials said. Describing agriculture and allied sectors as "the next big frontier for innovation," Sinha urged the youth to study their own fields, farmers, climate and local problems rather than copy foreign models. "Your degree is not your destination; it is like a runway for your flight of success," he said, adding that a self-reliant Jammu and Kashmir meant a region where every young citizen becomes an employer in some form. Under its incubation drive, SKUAST-Jammu has selected more than 150 students for idea incubation and supported 56 startups, officials said, with eight enterprises and farmer producer organisations felicitated at the event.

REGIONAL

Eight terror associates held in Shopian, Pulwama sweeps

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Security forces arrested eight suspected terror associates in separate operations across south Kashmir, recovering arms, grenades and other incriminating material, police said. In Shopian district, a joint search by police and the Army in an orchard at Imamsahib, launched on a tip-off, led to the recovery of a grenade, two AK magazines, four mobile phones and posters linked to a banned outfit. Three suspected overground workers were arrested and identified as Ashiq Hussain Kumar, Arif Kumar and Harris Manzoor. In Pulwama district, two more suspected overground workers, named as Latif Ahmad Deedad and Aejaz Ahmad Bajad, were held in the Yarwan forest area, with a pistol, 12 rounds of ammunition and a hand grenade recovered from them. Further arrests took the tally across the operations to eight, police said, adding that the sweeps involved police, the Army and the CRPF. Cases have been registered under the Arms Act and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Officials described the operations as a significant step in disrupting terror networks and pre-empting attempts to disturb peace, and said investigations were on to trace the source of the recovered weapons and the handlers behind the module.

REGIONAL

Assembly staff protest GAD deputation order, seek review

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

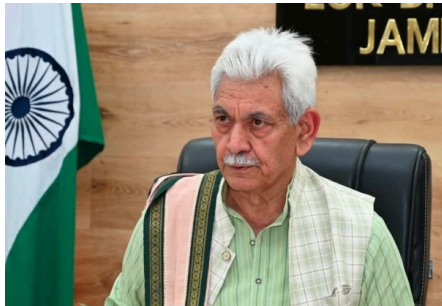


Employees of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly staged a protest against a General Administration Department (GAD) order relating to the deputation of a deputy secretary, demanding that the decision be reviewed. The order concerned the deputation of Deputy Secretary Bilal Ahmad Mir, and the protesting staff argued that the move cut across the Assembly secretariat's own administrative arrangements, according to The Chenab Times. The employees pressed for the order to be reconsidered and for the secretariat's autonomy in staff matters to be respected. The protest came at a sensitive moment for the elected dispensation, with the Legislative Assembly's autumn session scheduled to begin on Sept 21. The friction over the deputation order underscored the still-evolving equations between the Union Territory's administrative machinery and the Assembly secretariat under the elected government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, an arrangement that has repeatedly tested the lines between the two since the House was constituted. The staff said they would escalate the matter if their concerns were not addressed.

REGIONAL

Sainik Board clears veteran welfare steps, ECHS tie-ups

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha chaired the 81st meeting of the Jammu and Kashmir Rajya Sainik Board at Lok Bhavan, clearing a set of measures on veteran welfare, grievance redressal, healthcare and institutional strengthening, officials said. The board approved the establishment of a Zonal Sainik Welfare Organisation at Kishtwar to bring services closer to ex-servicemen in the Chenab valley, and pushed for smoother coordination on pension matters for veterans and their families. It also cleared the empanelment of AIIMS Jammu, GMC Rajouri, GMC Doda and Government Hospital Kupwara with the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme to widen healthcare access. Officials said the meeting also weighed proposals on education incentives, psychological counselling, skill development and welfare infrastructure. Sinha reaffirmed the administration's commitment to honouring the sacrifices of veterans and ensuring a life of dignity for them and their families.



REGIONAL

At 10, IIM Jammu must turn growth into discoveries: LG Sinha

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

As the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu marked a decade, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said the institute's rapid growth must now be converted into "new discoveries," and challenged it to define bold, distinctive ideas that turn the boardrooms of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh into living case studies. "Great institutions are great because the nation looks to them for answers," Sinha said, outlining four priorities for the institute: a distinctive academic identity built on indigenous case writing, experiential learning through tangible student projects, research focused on border economies and frontier entrepreneurship, and placements approached as nation-building. IIM Jammu is now the fifth IIM to hold both AMBA and EFMD accreditations, officials said, and has forged academic partnerships with institutions across more than a dozen countries, including France, Morocco, South Korea, Greece, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, Poland, Sweden, Taiwan and Brazil. Its annual research output, they added, has grown from two papers in 2017 to about 350 in 2026, a marker of the institute's expanding footprint since it was set up in the Union Territory.

MORE FROM THIS SECTION

REGIONAL

Lifelong learning now essential, says LG Sinha

The Lieutenant Governor said rapid technological change has made lifelong learning essential for people to adapt to an evolving world.

REGIONAL

Budha Amarnath yatra swells as Poonch gives fifth batch a grand welcome

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Roughly 4,000 devotees in the fifth batch of the Shri Budha Amarnath Ji Yatra were welcomed at Poonch's College Ground base camp as the 12-day pilgrimage to the Pir Panjal shrine g...

The Shri Budha Amarnath Ji Yatra reached full stride this week as the fifth batch of roughly 4,000 devotees poured into Poonch, where the district administration, police and townsfolk turned out in strength to welcome the pilgrims at the College Ground base camp, officials said. Deputy Commissioner Poonch Ashok Kumar Sharma, Additional Deputy Commissioner Tahir Mustafa Malik and Additional Superintendent of Police Ajay Sharma led the reception on Friday, joined by members of the Yatra Management Committee, civil society representatives and enthusiastic locals. Food stalls and refreshment counters set up by voluntary societies and religious organisations lined the ground, lending the arrival a festive, traditional-hospitality air, according to Jammu Links News. The 12-day pilgrimage to the Himalayan shrine was flagged off on Aug. 17 by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha from the Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas in Jammu, from where pilgrims undertake the nearly 230-km journey to Poonch. The cave-like shrine, at Rajpura in Mandi tehsil about 25 km northeast of Poonch town, sits at roughly 4,600 feet in the Pir Panjal range and houses a self-manifested white-stone Shivling revered by devotees who arrive from across the country during the holy month of Shravan. The yatra runs until Aug. 28 and culminates on Raksha Bandhan with the traditional Chhari Mubarak procession to the shrine. The Poonch administration has launched a dedicated portal for advance registration of pilgrims and, with the Rajouri district administration, established langars and reception counters at key transit points including Sunderbani, Nowshera and Rajal along the Jammu-Rajouri-Poonch National Highway (NH-144A). Multi-layer security has been thrown across the route, with personnel from the Army, Jammu and Kashmir Police, the CRPF, the CISF and other agencies deployed at halting points, parking lots and sensitive stretches. Convoys of pilgrims have been escorted along the highway as forces intensified area-domination and sanitisation drills through the belt, officials said. "Comprehensive arrangements have

been put in place to facilitate the yatris throughout their spiritual journey," the Deputy Commissioner said, adding that departments had been directed to ensure uninterrupted water and power supply, first-aid facilities, sanitation, mobile toilets and smooth traffic management for the duration of the pilgrimage. The scale of this year's turnout has again underscored the yatra's growing draw. Successive batches, each numbering in the thousands, have been received at the College Ground before moving on to the shrine, with the Health Department running round-the-clock medical camps and ambulance cover along the route. The pilgrimage comes barely a month after flash floods on July 19 battered the twin border districts of Poonch and Rajouri, damaging roads, water schemes and power lines. The Border Roads Organisation and civil agencies have since worked to keep NH-144A open, clearing landslides and boulders so that yatra convoys and local traffic could move, even as intermittent monsoon showers slowed restoration in places. Since the yatra began, successive batches have been flagged off from Jammu under police escort, with the first batch of more than 2,000 pilgrims received at Poonch on Aug. 17. Officials said reception counters at Sunderbani, Nowshera and Rajal had served thousands of meals, while the administration deployed duty magistrates and medical teams at each halt to oversee the passage of the convoys through the Pir Panjal. For Poonch, a Muslim-majority district that has long hosted the Hindu pilgrimage, the yatra remains a marker of the region's shared traditions, with local traders, transporters and volunteers pitching in at langars and reception points. Civil society members who welcomed the fifth batch said the pilgrims' arrival was as much a community occasion as a religious one. Officials said the arrangements would continue for the remaining batches until the concluding Chhari Mubarak, appealing to pilgrims to follow the registered schedule and cooperate with security checks along the mountainous route.

REGIONAL

Pilgrims praise medical cover, langars on Rajouri leg of yatra

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Pilgrims on the Budha Amarnath yatra have praised the food, medical cover and security along the Rajouri leg of the route, as the district administration ran round-the-clock arrangements at transit points, news agency ANI reported on Sunday. "The arrangements are excellent and very safe. Food is available everywhere. People are welcoming," said Pradip Thakre, a pilgrim from Maharashtra, as convoys passed through Rajouri on the Jammu-Rajouri-Poonch National Highway. The Health Department set up dedicated medical camps at halting points, with 24/7 ambulance services and night-duty medical teams deployed to attend to yatris, officials said. Dr Meena Kumari, Block Medical Officer, Sunderbani, and Priyanka Manhas of the Health Department were among those overseeing medical stalls providing first aid and basic treatment. Langars and reception counters set up by the administration and local volunteers offered meals and rest to the passing pilgrims.

REGIONAL

Sixth batch of 2,000 offers prayers at Budha Amarnath shrine

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The sixth batch of the Shri Budha Amarnath Ji Yatra, comprising about 2,000 devotees from across the country, offered prayers at the Himalayan shrine in Mandi tehsil of Poonch on Sunday, performing puja and jalaabhishek of the self-manifested Shivling, Amar Ujala reported. The pilgrims made their way to the temple at Rajpura, about 25 km from Poonch town, where they carried out the ritual anointing of the white-stone Shivling revered during the month of Shravan. Many devotees said they had prayed to Lord Shiva for a drug-free India. Free meals were arranged for the batch by the temple management committee and religious organisations before the pilgrims began their return journey towards Jammu. Vivek Kulkarni, a national functionary of the Bajrang Dal, and Seema Sharma, a national coordinator of the Indraprastha outfit, were among those accompanying the batch, the report said. The yatra, flagged off from Jammu on Aug. 17, is scheduled to conclude on Aug. 28 on Raksha Bandhan with the Chhari Mubarak procession to the shrine.

REGIONAL

Eight hurt as bus, car collide on Rajouri-Poonch highway

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Eight people were injured, three of them seriously, when a passenger bus and a car collided head-on at Dalian village in the Nowshera area of Rajouri district on Monday, police said. The accident took place on the Jammu-Rajouri-Poonch National Highway, one of the busiest routes in the Pir Panjal region. Of the eight injured, five sustained minor injuries and were stated to be stable, while three had multiple injuries, according to Greater Kashmir. All the injured were shifted to the Sub District Hospital, Nowshera, where doctors attended to them. The condition of the seriously injured was being monitored, officials said. Police reached the spot, cleared the wreckage and restored traffic on the highway, which had been briefly disrupted. A case has been registered and an investigation launched to ascertain the cause of the collision, the report said. Road accidents are frequent on the winding, landslide-prone highway, which carries heavy passenger and yatra traffic through the mountainous belt.



REGIONAL

White Knight Corps Commander reviews LoC preparedness in Poonch sector

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Corps Commander of the Army's White Knight Corps, Lt Gen P.K. Mishra, reviewed operational preparedness and the evolving security situation along the Line of Control in the Poonch sector on Monday, the Army said. Accompanied by the General Officer Commanding of the Ace of Spades Division, Maj Gen Manoj Raran, the Corps Commander visited forward positions and interacted with troops and field commanders, according to Greater Kashmir. He was briefed on the ground situation and the security dynamics in the sector, which abuts the LoC in the Pir Panjal belt. The Corps Commander complimented the troops on their high morale, professionalism and operational readiness, and asked them to maintain high standards of preparedness, continuously enhance capabilities and remain ready to meet emerging challenges, the report said. The visit comes amid a heightened vigil across the Poonch-Rajouri range, where security forces have stepped up counter-infiltration and area-domination measures in recent months.



REGIONAL

Fed up with delays, Rajouri villagers repair flood-hit road themselves

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Frustrated by what they called the administration's failure to permanently restore a flood-damaged road, residents of a cluster of villages in Rajouri district have taken up the repairs themselves on the Gambhir Mughalan-Patrara stretch, Greater Kashmir reported. The road, which serves about a dozen villages and more than 10,000 people, was battered in the July 19 flash floods. Villagers said the Public Works Department carried out only temporary patch-up work five days after the floods, leaving the stretch vulnerable to repeated mudslides that kept blocking access. After keeping vehicles off the road in protest, residents began clearing debris and repairing the damaged surface on their own. "We cannot keep watching people suffer. Vehicles frequently get stuck in several feet of mud and commuters, including patients, students and employees, are left helpless," local resident Mohammad Shahzad Pathan was quoted as saying. There was no immediate response from the Public Works Department, the report said. Residents demanded a permanent restoration of the road before the next spell of rain sets in.

REGIONAL

Poonch Jal Shakti orderly dismissed over 2017 narcotics case

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Jammu and Kashmir government has dismissed an orderly of the Irrigation and Flood Control Division, Poonch, from service over his involvement in a nearly nine-year-old narcotics case, ordering that he also be barred from future government employment, according to Daily Excelsior. The employee, Vimal Kumar, son of Chuni Lal and a resident of Jhullas village in Tehsil Haveli of Poonch, was serving as an orderly in the division when the order was issued on Aug. 24. The dismissal takes effect immediately. The action stems from FIR No. 37/2017, registered at Police Station Poonch under Sections 8, 20, 21 and 29 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. The case pertains to the alleged recovery of 4.470 kilograms of poppy straw, locally known as bhukki, on April 1, 2017. Kumar remained in judicial custody from April 1 to June 13 that year, a period of 74 days, and was placed under suspension by the Executive Engineer of the division on April 3, 2017. The dismissal order was issued by Shaleen Kabra, Financial Commissioner and Additional Chief Secretary of the Jal Shakti Department. Officials said the action was in line with a wider administrative drive to remove employees booked in drug-related cases from government rolls.

MORE FROM THIS SECTION

REGIONAL

Budha Amarnath pilgrim dies of cardiac arrest at Poonch

Dinesh Prasad, 68, of Gaya in Bihar, died of a suspected cardiac arrest at Poonch after complaining of chest discomfort at a pilgrims'...

REGIONAL

Srinagar rolls out five ICT labs in government schools to narrow digital divide

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Deputy Commissioner Akshay Labroo inaugurated five ICT labs set up in Srinagar's government schools under a CSR initiative funded by NTT DATA and implemented by ELFA International,...

Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Akshay Labroo on Tuesday inaugurated five state-of-the-art Information and Communication Technology (ICT) labs set up in government schools across the district, in a push to narrow the digital divide for students in the summer capital's public education system. The labs, established under a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative funded by technology firm NTT DATA and implemented by ELFA International, are meant to give pupils in government schools hands-on access to computers and digital learning tools. The five labs have come up at Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Nawakadal; Government Boys High School, Dara; Government Boys High School, Panzinata; Government Boys High School, Bakshipora; and Government Girls High School, Balhama, according to the district administration. Several of the beneficiary schools cater to students from the city's older quarters and its rural periphery, where many families cannot afford private computer coaching. "Access to digital tools can significantly enhance student motivation, strengthen foundational competencies and broaden learning opportunities," Labroo said at the launch, adding that technology-enabled education could help students "acquire the confidence, skills and competencies needed to participate meaningfully in an increasingly digital world." The Deputy Commissioner said the initiative reflected a growing effort to route private-sector CSR funding into public schools, which have seen renewed enrolment in Kashmir in recent years as the government has upgraded infrastructure. He urged school heads to ensure the new facilities were put to regular use and properly maintained, and asked teachers to fold the labs into everyday classroom teaching rather than treating them as showpiece installations. Officials said each lab has been provided with computer systems and digital learning material intended to build computer literacy from the school level, with a focus on students in remote and under-served pockets of the district. The labs, they said, would support computer-literacy modules and digital content for pupils across secondary grades. The launch was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioners Mir Imtiyaz-ul-Aziz and Aadil Fareed, ELFA International's CEO

and President Nawab Mehran Khan, Chief Education Officer Ghulam Mohi-ud-din Bhat and principals of the beneficiary schools. ELFA International, which implemented the project, works on technology-driven education programmes, while NTT DATA provided the funding under its CSR commitment. Officials said the model — a corporate donor pairing with an implementing agency and the district administration — could be replicated in more government schools if the first set of labs delivered results on the ground. The rollout comes as the Jammu and Kashmir administration pushes digital initiatives across sectors, from AgriStack farmer registration to online delivery of revenue services. In education, officials have repeatedly flagged the gap between well-equipped private schools and government institutions, particularly in access to computers and the internet — a gap the ICT labs are meant to help bridge. Government schools in Srinagar have in recent seasons drawn back students from private setups, and administrators say sustaining that trend depends on offering comparable facilities. Officials said the choice of schools was deliberate, spanning both the congested downtown belt around Nawakadal and Dara and outlying pockets such as Balhama and Panzinata, so that the first tranche of labs reached students with the least prior exposure to computers. Teachers at the beneficiary schools, they added, would be oriented on running the labs so that the systems are used through the academic day rather than kept locked outside examination periods. The administration is separately mapping other government schools that could be taken up in future phases as more CSR partners come on board. Labroo asked education officers to monitor usage and report back on how the labs were being put to work, and said the administration would look to onboard more CSR partners to expand digital infrastructure in schools across Srinagar. Equitable access to technology, he said, was central to preparing government-school students for higher education and the job market. The Deputy Commissioner also directed that maintenance and upkeep of the equipment be built into the school routine so that the labs remained functional well beyond the inauguration.



REGIONAL

Anantnag pushes for full farmer-profile saturation under AgriStack

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Deputy Commissioner Anantnag Dr. Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat on Wednesday chaired a review of AgriStack implementation, directing revenue and agriculture officials to fast-track digitisation of farmer records and set time-bound targets for full saturation of farmer profiles across the district. Officials told the meeting that of about 5,02,985 total entries in the district, 3,04,720 had been completed, taking overall progress to roughly 60.5 per cent. More than 84 farmer-ID registration camps were operational, with 2,830 registrations completed so far, they said. Bhat instructed officers to "expedite the process and set time-bound targets for achieving 100 per cent saturation of farmer profiles," stressing quality control and accuracy verification before data is incorporated. AgriStack, he said, would serve as an important foundation for modernising the agriculture sector and improving delivery of farmer-centric services. The Deputy Commissioner called for close coordination between revenue field staff, tehsildars and agriculture officers to clear bottlenecks and complete pending work. The review was attended by both Additional Deputy Commissioners, the ACR, SDMs, tehsildars and agriculture department officers.

REGIONAL

Budgam DC orders fast-track sanctioning, disbursal of pending cases

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Deputy Commissioner Budgam has directed departments and lending institutions to fast-track the sanctioning and disbursal of pending cases, pressing officials to clear a backlog that has kept scheme benefits from reaching eligible applicants across the district. Chairing a review, the Deputy Commissioner called on concerned officers to dispose of pending applications in a time-bound manner and to remove procedural bottlenecks holding up sanctions, according to Kashmir Reader. The administration has been pushing self-employment and financing schemes in the district, and officials have repeatedly flagged delays at the bank-linkage and disbursal stage as a hurdle for beneficiaries. The Deputy Commissioner asked departments to coordinate closely with banks so that sanctioned cases are not held up at the disbursal stage, and sought regular progress reports to track clearance of the pending list. Officers were told that beneficiary-facing schemes must translate into on-ground disbursal rather than remaining stuck in files. The direction follows a series of district-level reviews in Budgam this month, ranging from rural sanitation and solid-waste management to progress under Mission YUVA and agriculture programmes, as the administration presses departments to accelerate delivery during the working season. Officials said compliance on the pending cases would be monitored in subsequent meetings.



REGIONAL

Kulgam at 96.87% Aadhaar saturation, but child, biometric-update gaps remain

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Deputy Commissioner Kulgam Shahzad Alam on Friday chaired a meeting of the District Level Aadhaar Monitoring Committee to review enrolment saturation, the functioning of enrolment centres and the Mandatory Biometric Update campaign in the district. Overall Aadhaar saturation in Kulgam stands at 96.87 per cent, officials told the meeting, but enrolment among children aged 0-5 years remains low at 53.10 per cent. A total of 9,865 Mandatory Biometric Update (MBU) cases are pending among students, they said. Alam directed officials to expedite enrolment of left-out children, operationalise non-functional Aadhaar centres, complete pending biometric updates in schools and dispose of pending applications on the State Verification Portal at the earliest, with compliance reports to be submitted to the district administration. The meeting was attended by ADC Kulgam Vikar Ahmad Giri, ACR Reyaz Ahmad Shah, CPO Malik Suheel, Chief Education Officer Fayaz Ahmad Mir, and officers of social welfare, statistics, the lead bank, the postal department and UIDAI.

REGIONAL

Bandipora reviews Chota Amarnath Yatra, plans 'Zero Waste' pilgrimage

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Deputy Commissioner Bandipora Indu Kanwal Chib on Thursday reviewed arrangements for the Maha Dhyaneswar Yatra, popularly known as the Chota Amarnath Yatra, scheduled for August 28, directing officials to run the pilgrimage as a "Zero Waste Yatra." The Deputy Commissioner said the yatra would be conducted under the Swachhta 50-50 campaign, with swachhta bags provided to pilgrims for collection and disposal of waste along the route. She directed departments to ensure sanitation was maintained across the pilgrimage track and at the Sharda Mandir and Kaloosa points. The review covered security along the track, medical facilities at Sharda Mandir and Kaloosa, transportation, electricity, drinking water, deployment of fire tenders, refreshment stations and availability of ponies. Chib asked all concerned departments to complete their arrangements before the pilgrimage

REGIONAL

Langate traders meet DC Kupwara, flag market issues

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



A delegation of the Langate Trade Body, led by its president Lateef Ahmad Ganie, met the Deputy Commissioner Kupwara on Wednesday and raised a range of issues concerning the Langate market and the local trading community. The delegation highlighted concerns affecting traders and the general public, with particular focus on problems related to the Dand Kadal area, and pressed for administrative intervention to address them. The Deputy Commissioner gave the delegation a patient hearing and assured that the issues raised would be duly considered, according to Daily Headlines Today. "Regular interaction between the administration and local stakeholders is important for resolving public issues effectively," Ganie said after the meeting, welcoming the engagement with the district administration. The trade body sought continued dialogue to take up pending grievances of the Langate business community.

REGIONAL

Shopian DDC orders speedy completion of approved projects

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



District Development Commissioner Shopian Shishir Gupta on Friday convened a review meeting to assess the status of approved projects across the district, directing executing agencies to complete requisite formalities and accelerate execution of works. The review covered development initiatives under urban development, tourism, health and culture, officials said. Gupta stressed focused efforts, effective monitoring and accountability at every level, and asked agencies to ensure timely completion of the sanctioned works. The Additional District Development Commissioner was directed to closely monitor progress and facilitate timely completion. The meeting was attended by ADDC Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone, the Chief Executive Officer of the Shopian-Dubjan-Peer Ki Gali Development Authority, assistant executive engineers and other departmental representatives, who briefed the chair on the physical and financial status of ongoing works.

MORE FROM THIS SECTION

REGIONAL

Ganderbal pushes My Bharat sign-ups for youth job-card holders

A District Advisory Committee at Ganderbal reviewed My Bharat portal registrations, directing officers to sign up all eligible job-card...

REGIONAL

Chatroo minor's death convulses Chenab Valley as protests enter fourth day

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



The death of a teenage schoolgirl from Chatroo, allegedly sexually assaulted by a government teacher, triggered a fourth day of shutdowns and marches across Kishtwar, Doda and Bhad...

Anger over the death of a teenage schoolgirl from Chatroo swept across the Chenab Valley for a fourth consecutive day on Monday, as students, traders, tribal groups and civil society members poured onto the streets demanding justice in a case that has convulsed Kishtwar and the neighbouring districts of Doda and Ramban. According to Greater Kashmir, the minor was allegedly sexually assaulted by a government school teacher and later became pregnant. Her condition deteriorated sharply after an alleged attempt to terminate the pregnancy, and she died while being shifted for specialised medical treatment, the newspaper reported, citing officials and family accounts. Police have arrested the accused teacher and his brother. A First Information Report has been registered under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, officials said. The teacher has been suspended from service and a departmental inquiry ordered. Protests that began on Friday showed no sign of easing. Demonstrations were reported from Chatroo, Kishtwar town, Mughal Maidan, Doda, Bhaderwah, Satingal, Gool and the Bhalessa belt, where shutters came down and markets stayed closed for parts of the day. The marches were led by students' groups, members of the tribal community, trade bodies and rights activists, who carried placards and blocked stretches of road at several points before dispersing peacefully. Protesters pressed a common set of demands: a transparent, time-bound investigation; a fast-track trial with day-to-day hearings; the strictest legal punishment for all found guilty; and a thorough probe into every person alleged to have been involved or to have looked the other way. Several speakers said the case had exposed gaps in the protection of children in the valley's remote schools and called for closer monitoring of teaching staff posted in far-flung areas. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah directed the Education Department to expedite its inquiry and to ensure "stringent and exemplary

action wherever wrongdoing is established," according to Greater Kashmir. Former Union minister and Democratic Progressive Azad Party chief Ghulam Nabi Azad condemned the rape and death of the girl and sought exemplary punishment, joining a chorus of political voices from across the spectrum urging that the family be given justice quickly. District officials appealed for calm and assured protesters that the case was being pursued on priority. Additional police were deployed at sensitive points in Kishtwar and Doda to prevent any flashpoint as processions moved through town centres. Officials said the investigation was being supervised by senior police officers and that medical and forensic evidence had been secured. Much of the anger has been directed at the system that placed the accused in a classroom. Protesters demanded fresh background checks for staff serving in the valley's isolated schools and swifter grievance mechanisms for students and parents. Several women's collectives that joined the marches said the tragedy must not be allowed to fade once the immediate outrage subsided, and pressed for counselling and legal support for the bereaved family. The Chenab Valley, a cluster of hill districts strung along the river of the same name, has seen recurring civil-society mobilisation over women's and children's safety in recent years, and community leaders warned that the agitation could widen if the case were seen to drift. Trade associations in Bhaderwah and Kishtwar indicated they would keep markets shut in solidarity until they were satisfied that the trial would be fast-tracked. As of Monday evening, the two accused remained in custody and the departmental inquiry against the suspended teacher was under way, officials said. Protest organisers announced they would decide their next course of action after reviewing the pace of the investigation, keeping one of the most emotive episodes of the year in the Jammu region firmly at the centre of public attention.



REGIONAL

Samba tops J&K rainfall as heavy showers, flood alert hit Jammu plains

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The plains of the Jammu region took a heavy soaking in the 24 hours to Tuesday, with Samba recording 85 mm of rain, the highest in Jammu and Kashmir, according to figures cited by Kashmir Observer. Kathua followed with 76.6 mm, while Reasi logged 39 mm and Udhampur 32.2 mm. The Meteorological Centre cautioned that "intense heavy showers could trigger localised flash floods, mudslides and landslides, particularly in hilly areas," and flagged the risk of shooting stones and landslides at vulnerable locations along hill roads. Residents in low-lying and slope-side pockets were advised to stay alert and follow local advisories. There were no reports of loss of life or damage to property in the affected districts, officials said. Flash floods were reported from parts of the Kashmir Valley during the same spell, but the plains districts of Samba, Kathua, Reasi and Udhampur largely escaped major damage, with drainage channels and nullahs running high but holding. The wet spell added to an already sodden monsoon across the Jammu region, keeping district administrations on guard for sudden run-off from the Shivalik foothills.



REGIONAL

Srinagar-Jammu highway back to two-way traffic after rain damage in Ramban belt

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Srinagar-Jammu National Highway was open for regulated two-way traffic on Monday, though movement remained slow at vulnerable stretches in Ramban and Udhampur districts, officials of the Traffic Control Unit, Ramban, said. A 30-to-40-metre section at Dewal in Udhampur, damaged and left with an uneven surface by recent rains, was being managed through single-lane traffic, while the Maroog-Kishtwari Pather stretch in Ramban had restricted single-lane portions because of ongoing construction. Erosion at Dewal and Dhramthal had reduced the down tube to a single lane at multiple points, officials said. The National Highways Authority of India has deployed men and machinery to repair the damaged sections and improve road surfaces. Authorities advised passengers and light vehicles to travel between Ramban and Banihal only during daylight hours. Kashmir-bound oil and gas tankers will remain restricted between 7 am and 7 pm because of widening work on the Digdol-Khooni Nalla axis, the traffic unit said, urging commuters to check the day's advisory before setting out on the landslide-prone stretch.



REGIONAL

Cordon-and-search operations sweep Udhampur, Reasi, Kathua after suspect sightings

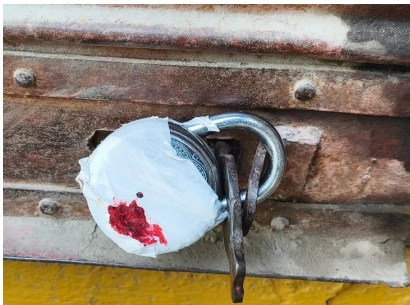
BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Security forces launched cordon-and-search operations across Udhampur, Reasi, Kathua and Doda districts after two separate sightings of suspected armed men in Udhampur, officials said, throwing a fresh spotlight on the forested infiltration corridor that runs through the Jammu region. The immediate trigger, The Tribune reported, was an incident late on Monday in Udhampur's Talot village, where two suspects reportedly knocked on the door of a resident, Prakash Chand, and asked for food before moving on. Two days earlier, two to three suspects had been sighted in the Jophar area of Ramnagar in the same district. Joint teams of the Jammu and Kashmir Police Special Operations Group, the Army and the Central Reserve Police Force fanned out to comb dense forest belts. Searches were pressed in the Sadini forests of Reasi and in villages near the International Border in the Hiranagar sector of Kathua, officials said. Security agencies say militants often use thickly wooded stretches to move undetected between parts of the Union Territory, sneaking in from the border in Kathua and pushing towards the mountains of Udhampur, Reasi, Doda and Kishtwar. Officials said the operations remained under way in all the affected districts, with additional troops rushed in to seal likely escape routes. The heightened alert coincided with a visit by the Northern Command chief to forward areas, where the top commander stressed continued vigilance and innovative approaches to counter emerging security challenges, according to official accounts.

REGIONAL

JMC seals 46 shops at Indira Chowk over four-year rent default

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



The Jammu Municipal Corporation sealed 46 shops in the vegetable market at Indira Chowk on Monday after their allottees failed to pay rent for more than four years despite repeated notices, officials said. "The 46 allottees of the open spaces at Indira Chowk had not been paying rent for more than four years," Deputy Commissioner (North) Sanjay Badyal was quoted as saying by Greater Kashmir, adding that the corporation acted only after warnings went unheeded. The sealing prompted a quick response from the traders. A delegation of affected shop owners submitted a written request promising to clear their outstanding dues and pay advance rent, following which the corporation agreed to lift the sealing subject to compliance, officials said. The civic body did not disclose the total amount of arrears involved.

REGIONAL

Land subsidence forces evacuation of families in Ramban's Rajgarh belt

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Three families were evacuated after land subsidence cracked several houses at Kulthi Chakka Kundi village in Tehsil Rajgarh of Ramban district, along the banks of the Chenab, officials said on Sunday. Ten people from the three families were moved to safer locations, and cracks appeared in three residential houses, with damage reported in five more, according to Greater Kashmir. Administrative and rescue teams relocated the affected families and pitched temporary tents, while State Disaster Response Force personnel stayed on site to monitor the fragile ground. "Cracks had developed in the residential houses of Chaat Ram, Chaman Lal and Bhushan Lal due to land subsidence over the past couple of days," Tehsildar Rajgarh Major Singh was quoted as saying. Heavy rain was blamed for the subsidence. Some residents speculated that water releases from the Baglihar Hydroelectric Power Project may have contributed, but officials said the exact cause of the subsidence and cracking was yet to be established and that a technical assessment was under way.

REGIONAL

Around 60 road projects cleared for Banihal-Gool as MLA lays foundation stone

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



About 60 road projects have been sanctioned for the Banihal-Gool constituency in Ramban district under various schemes, MLA Sajjad Shaheen said on Sunday, framing the clearances as an overdue push to open up its far-flung hamlets. Shaheen, of the National Conference, laid the foundation stone of the four-kilometre Nachlana-Talab road, estimated to cost Rs 7.53 crore, one of the projects cleared under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, NABARD and Union Territory sector programmes, according to Greater Kashmir. "Banihal-Gool is witnessing a visible change in its developmental landscape," he said, adding that the area was "finally receiving several facilities and infrastructure projects that had remained pending for decades." The legislator also listed a series of power-sector upgrades in the constituency. The Banihal receiving station has been augmented from 6.3 MVA to 10.6 MVA and the Sangaldan station from 3.15 MVA to 6.3 MVA, while an expansion of the Khari station from 3.15 MVA to 6.3 MVA and the installation of an additional 50 MVA transformer at Grid Station Tethar are under way, he said.

MORE FROM THIS SECTION

REGIONAL

Two fall into Chenab at Kishtwar's Bunjwah, search launched

A search and rescue operation was under way after two persons fell into the Chenab at Murnall Nalla in Kishtwar's Bunjwah area.

NATIONAL

Supreme Court eases three-year practice rule for entry into lower judiciary

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



In a 2:1 ruling, the Supreme Court cut the mandatory Bar practice for civil judge aspirants from three years to one and let training and clerkship count toward eligibility, reworki...

The Supreme Court has substantially diluted the three-year minimum practice requirement it had imposed on candidates seeking to enter the lower judiciary, cutting the mandatory period at the Bar to a single year and ruling that time spent in judicial training and as a law clerk can count toward the eligibility threshold. The decision reworks a contested order of May 2025 that had made three years of practice a hard condition for appointment as a civil judge (junior division), a change that had drawn protests from thousands of recent law graduates who said it locked them out of the judicial services examination. According to LiveLaw, which reported the outcome, a Bench decided the matter by a 2:1 majority. The majority held that while prior exposure to the working of courts remains valuable for a fresh judicial officer, the requirement had to be applied in a way that was fair to recent graduates and did not unnecessarily narrow the pool of candidates available to the subordinate judiciary. To that end, the Court reduced the compulsory practice to one year and provided that a year of institutional training and a year of law clerkship could be reckoned toward the exposure a candidate must demonstrate. The Court also granted transitional relief, waiving the prior-practice condition for Civil Judge (Junior Division) recruitment examinations until March 2027, so that selections already under way are not stalled while states amend their service rules. It declined, however, to treat a post-graduate degree in law as equivalent to practice at the Bar, rejecting a plea that academic qualifications alone could substitute for courtroom experience. The 2025 judgment had reversed nearly two decades of practice under which many states allowed fresh graduates to sit the judicial services examination directly. Petitioners had argued that the blanket three-year bar was arbitrary, that it disproportionately affected candidates from modest backgrounds who could not afford to spend three unpaid or low-paid years in litigation, and that it did nothing to guarantee the quality it claimed to

protect. State high courts and public service commissions, which conduct the recruitment, had sought clarity after the earlier order threw pending selection cycles into confusion. Legal commentators said the recalibration attempts a middle path between two competing concerns that have long shadowed judicial recruitment: the worry that very young entrants join the bench with little sense of how a trial actually runs, and the countervailing risk that a rigid experience filter drains the subordinate judiciary of talent and diversity at a time when trial courts are chronically short-staffed. India's district judiciary carries the overwhelming bulk of the country's pending cases, and vacancies at the entry level have repeatedly been flagged as a drag on disposal rates. The controversy has run for years. When the three-year condition was first mooted, several high courts and bar bodies backed it, arguing that a magistrate who decides bail, records evidence and sentences the accused should not be encountering a courtroom for the first time from the bench. Others countered that many of the country's ablest judicial officers had joined straight from law school and learned on the job, and that the real fix for inexperience lay in longer, better structured training after selection rather than a blanket bar before it. The majority's formula, by folding training and clerkship into the count, appears to gesture at that second view while preserving the principle that some grounding in practice should precede appointment. The matter was cited in law reports as *Bhumika Trust v. Union of India*. The Court left it to the states and their high courts to align their recruitment rules with the modified framework, and indicated that the eased conditions would govern selection processes conducted in the interim. The ruling is expected to be studied closely by the several high courts that had put civil-judge recruitment on hold pending clarity, and by the tens of thousands of candidates who register for those examinations each year across the country.



NATIONAL

Centre notifies Rs 62,500-crore scheme to deepen mobile phone manufacturing

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has notified a Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme worth Rs 62,500 crore, a five-year programme running from 2026-27 to 2030-31 that seeks to deepen the making of handsets and their components in India. The scheme is the government's latest effort to move the sector beyond final assembly and toward local value addition. According to details reported in summaries of the notification, the scheme targets raising domestic value addition in mobile phones from about 23 per cent now to between 35 and 40 per cent, by incentivising the sourcing and manufacture of components within the country. It is expected to create around 60,000 direct jobs, with the government projecting production worth roughly Rs 39 lakh crore and exports of over Rs 15 lakh crore over the scheme's life. The programme is structured along two tracks, one aimed at large manufacturers and global electronics contract makers, and another meant to support Indian-owned mobile brands through a differentiated incentive structure. It follows earlier production-linked incentives that helped make India a major site of handset assembly, and reflects a stated shift toward building a domestic components base rather than importing parts for assembly at home.

NATIONAL

Supreme Court calls Uttar Pradesh Gangsters Act 'stillborn', quashes case

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Supreme Court has held that the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters Act, in the form in which it was invoked, does not create an independent, substantive criminal offence, and on that basis quashed proceedings that had been launched under the law. The Court described the legislation as 'stillborn' for failing to define a substantive offence, a characterisation reported by legal news outlets covering the judgment. The case arose from a challenge to action taken against two advocates named in a police 'gang chart' prepared under the rules framed under the Act. The Court reasoned that a gang chart cannot by itself fasten criminal liability where the parent statute does not spell out a punishable offence. The ruling is significant because the Gangsters Act has been used widely in Uttar Pradesh, and civil-liberties lawyers have long complained that it is deployed to keep the accused in custody on thin material. By insisting that a substantive offence be clearly defined before penal consequences follow, the Court reaffirmed a basic principle of criminal law. The matter was reported in law journals as *Shiv Pratap Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh*. Legal observers said the state may need to revisit how the law is drafted and applied if it is to survive future scrutiny.



NATIONAL

Amit Shah chairs Southern Zonal Council meeting in Mahabalipuram

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Union Home Minister Amit Shah chaired the 31st meeting of the Southern Zonal Council at Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu, the periodic forum that brings the southern states and the Union government to a common table to take up inter-state and Centre-state matters. The zonal councils are statutory bodies created under the States Reorganisation Act of 1956 to promote cooperation among states grouped by region and to help resolve disputes over boundaries, water sharing and the sharing of resources. The Home Minister chairs each council, while the chief ministers and senior ministers of the member states take part. The Southern Zonal Council groups Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Puducherry, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep. Meetings of the council typically review the progress made on issues raised at earlier sittings and place fresh matters on the agenda for the Centre and the states to pursue together. The government has stepped up the frequency of zonal council meetings in recent years, casting them as a working mechanism for what it calls cooperative federalism. Successive sittings have taken up questions ranging from the settlement of pending inter-state matters to coordination on internal security, welfare delivery and infrastructure, with the stated aim of narrowing differences through dialogue rather than litigation.

NATIONAL

Bribery presumption applies only after demand is proved, says top court

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Supreme Court has held that the statutory presumption available to the prosecution in a corruption case cannot be pressed into service until an initial demand for illegal gratification is first established beyond reasonable doubt. Interpreting the presumption under Section 20 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, the Court ruled that the provision does not relieve the prosecution of its foundational burden. Only once the demand and acceptance of a bribe are proved, it held, does the presumption operate to infer that the money was taken as a corrupt inducement, according to Verdictum. The distinction matters in trial courts, where investigating agencies have at times leaned on the recovery of tainted currency alone to secure convictions. By anchoring the presumption to prior proof of demand, the Court reaffirmed a line of authority that treats demand as the gravamen of the offence. The matter was reported in law journals as *Rafikmiya Ahmedmiya Malek v. State of Gujarat*. Lawyers said the ruling reinforces safeguards for public servants while leaving intact the state's ability to prosecute where demand is clearly made out.

NATIONAL

Supreme Court orders release of 105-year-old life convict

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Supreme Court has directed the premature release of a 105-year-old man serving a life sentence for a murder committed in 1988, closing one of the longest-running individual sentences to come before the Court in recent memory. The order, reported in the Court's daily proceedings for the day, followed a plea seeking his release on grounds of extreme old age and the long period already spent behind bars. Courts have, in a series of cases, treated advanced age and prolonged incarceration as weighing heavily in favour of premature release, particularly where the convict no longer poses any threat and continued imprisonment serves little penological purpose. The intervention adds to a growing body of orders in which the Supreme Court has pushed states to act on the cases of elderly and long-serving prisoners rather than leave them to languish through routine remission procedures. Prison-reform advocates have pointed to such cases as evidence that remission systems move too slowly, leaving very old convicts in jail long after any purpose of the sentence has been served.

NATIONAL

Only statutory authority, not police, can probe sex-determination cases

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Supreme Court has held that the police cannot independently investigate offences under the law that prohibits prenatal sex determination, ruling that the power to act rests only with the statutory Appropriate Authority designated under the Act. The Court read the scheme of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act as vesting the machinery of complaint and investigation in the specialised authority the statute creates, rather than in the ordinary police, according to a report by Verdictum. Proceedings begun without the involvement of that authority, it indicated, do not conform to the law's requirements. The PCPNDT Act was enacted to combat sex-selective abortion and the skewed sex ratio it has produced in parts of the country. By channelling enforcement through a dedicated authority, Parliament sought to bring expertise to bear and to guard against misuse of the criminal process against clinics and doctors. The matter was reported in law journals as *State of Uttar Pradesh v. Dr. Brij Pal Singh*. Public-health lawyers said enforcement of the law must follow the specific procedure the statute lays down.

MORE FROM THIS SECTION

NATIONAL

Court closes old pleas against 'The Kerala Story', allows fresh petitions

The Supreme Court closed the 2023 batch of pleas against the film 'The Kerala Story' while permitting fresh petitions seeking guidelines...

NATIONAL

ISRO to quit building rockets and satellites, hand production to private sector

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



In the deepest restructuring of India's state-run space programme in decades, IN-SPACe chief Pawan Goenka said ISRO will stop manufacturing launch vehicles and satellites and hand...

The Indian Space Research Organisation will stop manufacturing launch vehicles and satellites and hand that work to private industry and public-sector undertakings, a top government official said on August 22, in what amounts to the deepest restructuring of India's state-run space programme since it was founded. Speaking at Business Today's India@100 Economy Summit in New Delhi, IN-SPACe chairman Pawan Goenka said the agency would retreat from routine production and concentrate instead on research, new technologies and scientific missions. "ISRO will not make any launch vehicles and will not manufacture any launch vehicles. That will all be done by the private sector or PSU," Goenka said, according to remarks reported by ETV Bharat. He said mature, proven technologies would be progressively transferred out of ISRO so that the agency could focus on the frontier work that industry cannot yet undertake on its own. The comments are the clearest articulation yet of a policy that has been taking shape since the space sector was thrown open to private participation. IN-SPACe was created in 2020 as a single-window regulator and promoter to authorise private launches, share ISRO facilities and smooth approvals; since then a clutch of Indian companies has flown test rockets, built satellites and won foreign customers. Goenka said the government now wants that ecosystem to graduate from experimentation to industrial-scale production. Goenka, who heads the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre, said 120 technologies had already been passed to industry. The shift, he argued, was essential if India is to build the roughly \$44-billion space economy it is targeting by 2033, a goal officials say cannot be met by a single government agency acting as designer, builder and operator all at once. The

transition has already begun with the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle, whose production and technology rights have been handed to Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. Under the new template, ISRO would develop and prove a system, then license it to a company or public-sector firm for series production and commercial sale, mirroring the way space agencies elsewhere have offloaded routine launch work to contractors. The plan would leave ISRO free to pursue its most ambitious programmes — the Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission, planetary and lunar exploration, next-generation heavy-lift rockets and the proposed Bharatiya Antariksh Station — while the assembly-line business of churning out workhorse boosters and communications satellites moves to the market. Officials have framed the move as a way to multiply national launch capacity rather than shrink it. Not everyone is convinced. Former ISRO chairman G. Madhavan Nair has publicly questioned whether Indian industry yet has the scale, capital and quality systems to take over launch-vehicle production without eroding the reliability that has made the agency's rockets a trusted commercial ride, according to reports. Critics note that private firms have so far flown only small experimental vehicles, and that building a human-rated or heavy-lift rocket is an order of magnitude harder. Goenka acknowledged the handover would be gradual and that ISRO would keep specialised infrastructure and remain the anchor customer and certifying authority for years to come. But the direction of travel, he made clear, is settled: the state will design and the private sector will build. For a programme long defined by self-reliant, in-house engineering, it is a striking philosophical turn — one India's growing crop of space start-ups has lobbied hard to see.

NATIONAL

Rajnath lays foundation for Rs 3,500-crore GRSE, Yantra India expansion in Bengal

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on August 23 laid the foundation stone, via video link from Kolkata, for five brownfield expansion projects at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) and Yantra India Ltd, an investment of nearly Rs 3,500 crore aimed at scaling up warship building in West Bengal. Three of the projects will expand GRSE's yards at Kidderpore, Shalimar in Howrah and Raichak in South 24 Parganas — the last a new 32-acre hub with a 200-metre dry dock — while two will upgrade Yantra India's Metal and Steel Factory at Ishapore. The government said the projects would strengthen indigenous shipbuilding, ship repair and metallurgical capacity while reviving Bengal's industrial base and creating work for ancillary MSMEs. GRSE chairman Cmde P.R. Hari called it "a historic day" for the shipyard. The expansion is part of a wider drive for self-reliance in defence manufacturing.

NATIONAL

Record August rain floods Delhi as IMD issues red warning

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



A relentless spell of monsoon rain battered Delhi and its suburbs on August 25, prompting the India Meteorological Department to issue its highest 'red' warning for the capital as waterlogging paralysed roads and disrupted flights. The IMD, which stresses that a red warning means 'take action' rather than a cause for panic, forecast heavy to extremely heavy showers at isolated places after one of the wettest Augusts on record. Through August 24, the Safdarjung station had logged 246.2 mm of rain, 29% above normal, while Ayanagar recorded 266.3 mm, 66% above normal, and the Ridge station 243 mm. The downpour, which the IMD linked to a western disturbance meeting a monsoon trough running from a low over Gangetic West Bengal, forced 26 flight cancellations, 15 diversions and more than 390 delays the previous day and snarled traffic across Delhi, Gurugram and Noida.

NATIONAL

Cabinet clears Rs 3,591-crore four-laning of Bihar's NH-22 toward Nepal border

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



The Union Cabinet cleared a Rs 3,590.73-crore project on August 19 to widen a key stretch of National Highway 22 in north Bihar to four lanes, part of a burst of infrastructure approvals as the state heads into an election year. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved upgrading the Muzaffarpur-Sitamarhi-Sonbarsa section, a corridor that runs toward the Indo-Nepal border, to be built on the Hybrid Annuity Model, under which the government funds part of the cost upfront and the rest is linked to performance. The government said the widened highway would decongest a heavily used route, speed freight movement and improve access to the border, feeding into the PM Gati Shakti master plan that aligns road, rail and logistics projects on a single platform. Bihar has drawn a steady stream of central infrastructure announcements this year. The Muzaffarpur-Sitamarhi-Sonbarsa upgrade is expected to cut travel times across a densely populated farming belt and support cross-border trade with Nepal, officials said, though the Cabinet note did not specify a completion deadline for the four-laning work.



NATIONAL

India test-fires first 100% indigenous AK-203 'Sher' rifle at Amethi

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

India has test-fired its first assault rifle built entirely from domestically sourced parts, a milestone the manufacturer hailed as complete indigenisation of the AK-203 programme. The Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL) plant at Korwa in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh, produced and fired the first AK-203 'Sher' rifle made wholly with Indian components and raw materials, including burst-fire trials, the company said on August 23. "We have successfully produced and fired the first AK-203 (Sher) rifle made with 100% Indian components and input materials," said Major General S.K. Sharma, IRRPL's chief executive and managing director, calling the result "extremely encouraging" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat in action." The joint venture between India's Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Ltd, Munitions India Ltd and Russia's Rosoboronexport and Kalashnikov was set up to build more than six lakh rifles for the armed forces. Sharma said user trials with the Indian Army are scheduled for September, clearing the way for bulk induction of the 7.62 mm weapon that is replacing the ageing INSAS rifle.



NATIONAL

Rs 70,000-crore Project 75(I) submarine deal moves to Cabinet for final nod

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Defence Ministry has moved its long-delayed Rs 70,000-crore project to build six new conventional submarines to the Cabinet Committee on Security for final approval, taking Project 75(I) to the brink of a contract after more than two decades of false starts. The programme, cleared by the Finance Ministry on May 28, would see Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd in Mumbai build six 3,000-tonne diesel-electric attack submarines in partnership with Germany's ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems, defence news outlet Army Recognition reported on August 19. The boats will carry German hydrogen fuel-cell air-independent propulsion, giving them up to 21 days of continuous submerged endurance, and indigenous content is set to rise from 45% on the first hull to 60% by the last. The first submarine is required within seven years of signing, with the contract targeted for September. The deal, meant to replace India's ageing Sindhughosh- and Shishumar-class boats amid an expanding Chinese and Pakistani undersea presence, has been in procurement for over 25 years.



NATIONAL

Navy's sail ship INS Sudarshini docks in Lisbon on Lokayan 26 voyage

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Indian Navy's sail training ship INS Sudarshini made a stately entry up the Tagus river into Lisbon on August 22, the latest port call in Lokayan 26, a marathon transoceanic voyage the three-masted barque began in January. The Defence Ministry said the visit — the ship's 15th port of call in seven months at sea — was aimed at deepening India's maritime ties with Portugal through crew exchanges, cross-deck visits and engagements with the Portuguese Navy and the Indian diaspora. Sudarshini reached the Portuguese capital after a 19-day Atlantic crossing from Boston to Ponta Delgada in the Azores. The Lokayan 26 expedition, the Navy says, will carry the ship across some 22,000 nautical miles to 18 foreign ports in 13 countries over about ten months, bearing what the service calls a message of friendship while showcasing traditional sailing and seamanship. The voyage is part of India's broader effort to project soft power and naval reach across the Atlantic and Mediterranean.

MORE FROM THIS SECTION

NATIONAL

Cabinet approves four rail multitracking projects across four states

The same day's approvals added about 410 km of track in West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to ease freight congestion.

BUSINESS

Sensex, Nifty log second straight weekly loss as oil, hawkish RBI weigh

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Indian benchmarks ended flat on Friday but slipped for a second week running as costly crude, firmer bond yields and a hawkish turn in the RBI's policy minutes kept buyers cautious...

Indian equity benchmarks closed a listless week on a flat note Friday, but still logged their second straight weekly loss as elevated crude prices, hardening bond yields and a hawkish turn in the Reserve Bank of India's latest policy minutes kept buyers cautious. The 30-share BSE Sensex ended almost unchanged at 77,540.83, up a token 3.11 points, while the Nifty 50 added 20.15 points, or 0.08 per cent, to settle at 24,252. For the week the Sensex shed 0.60 per cent and the Nifty 0.50 per cent, extending the previous week's decline. The week capped a subdued August for Indian equities, which have struggled for direction since scaling record highs at the start of the year, buffeted by global rate and trade uncertainty. The broader market held up better than the frontline indices on Friday, with the Nifty Midcap 150 edging up 0.08 per cent and the Smallcap 250 gaining 0.41 per cent, signalling that domestic investors were still selectively buying beyond the heavyweights. Sectoral trends were mixed. Buying in metal and realty counters offset selling across information technology, fast-moving consumer goods, automobiles, media and pharmaceutical stocks. Power Grid, HDFC Life, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Nestle were among the biggest gainers on the Nifty, while Maruti Suzuki, Infosys, ITC, HCL Technologies and Trent dragged the index. IndiGo and ONGC also ended lower. The mood was set less by earnings than by global cues. Brent crude held above \$93 a barrel, up about 4 per cent for the month after a 24 per cent surge in July, reviving worries about India's import bill and imported inflation. Stalled talks between the United States and Iran and rising US Treasury yields, with American public debt crossing \$40 trillion, added to the risk-off tone, analysts said. At home, the release of the

RBI Monetary Policy Committee's August minutes proved the bigger talking point. The minutes, read as distinctly hawkish, pushed the yield on the benchmark 10-year government bond to a two-month high and tempered expectations of any near-term rate cut. The MPC had held the repo rate at 5.25 per cent at its August 3-5 meeting, but several members flagged that inflation could accelerate in the coming months. Deputy Governor Poonam Gupta noted that no further easing was possible and that a case for a hike could emerge in 2026-27, with inflation seen peaking near 5.9 per cent in the December quarter. SBI Research described the August minutes as the most hawkish in a year. Retail inflation is already testing the central bank's comfort zone. Consumer price inflation rose to 4.45 per cent in July, a 19-month high and the second consecutive reading above the RBI's 4 per cent target, government data showed, driven by firmer food, restaurant and personal-care prices. Precious metals offered a striking counterpoint to equities. Gold scaled a fresh record during the week, with standard 24-carat gold quoted at Rs 1,64,730 per 10 grams on Thursday before easing on profit-taking, as jittery investors sought safe havens and festive and wedding-season demand held firm. Silver tracked the rally, trading near Rs 2,47,900 a kilogram. Market watchers said direction next week would hinge on the trajectory of crude, the rupee and foreign portfolio flows, with few domestic triggers left in a largely concluded earnings season. The rupee stayed under pressure through the week as the costlier oil bill and firm US yields weighed on the currency, dealers said. "Elevated global bond yields, surging crude prices and persistent inflation fears are keeping sentiment in check," one strategist said.

BUSINESS

Gabriel India seals deal for stake in ADAS venture HL Klemove

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Auto-components maker Gabriel India has firmed up its move into advanced braking and driver-assistance systems, executing agreements to acquire a significant minority stake in HL Klemove India. The company said it signed a joint-venture agreement and a share-purchase agreement on Friday to pick up just under 30 per cent, one share short of that threshold, in HL Klemove India Pvt Ltd, part of a technology tie-up in the fast-growing advanced driver-assistance systems, or ADAS, segment. The transaction is scheduled to be completed on Monday. The deal followed shareholder approval secured earlier in the week. At Gabriel India's 64th annual general meeting on Tuesday, investors cleared all 15 resolutions on the agenda, and a scrutiniser's report dated Wednesday confirmed that the resolutions, set out in a notice issued in July, had passed with the requisite majority under the Companies Act and SEBI's listing regulations. Analysts see the tie-up as an attempt by the Anand Group company to move up the value chain as Indian carmakers increasingly fit safety and automation features, a segment long dominated by global suppliers.

BUSINESS

Hail-hit growers press for market intervention, cold storage

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Even as apple prices firm up, growers across Kashmir have renewed demands for a government safety net after hailstorms damaged orchards in several districts this month. Fruit grower bodies have asked the administration to roll out the Market Intervention Scheme for hail-hit orchards, under which agencies procure produce at a floor price to shield farmers from distress sales. The growers' association reported extensive hail damage across north, central and south Kashmir, warning that a section of growers could see quality, and therefore returns, sharply reduced despite the otherwise buoyant market. Growers in Sopore have also sought a waiver of trade tax, a subsidy on pesticides and greater investment in controlled-atmosphere cold storage, which allows fruit to be held back and sold when prices are favourable. Horticulture is the mainstay of the Valley's rural economy, supporting lakhs of families and contributing a substantial share of Jammu and Kashmir's income. Officials said the government was monitoring the situation and was committed to ensuring remunerative prices and smooth movement of the crop during the peak season.

BUSINESS

India Inc's Q1 sales stay resilient even as profit growth turns uneven

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



India Inc entered the new financial year on a firmer footing, with corporate revenues showing surprising resilience through the June quarter even as profit growth turned uneven, an analysis of first-quarter results showed. Aggregate sales across companies that reported earnings for the April-June quarter of 2026-27 rose about 24 per cent from a year earlier, pointing to healthy underlying demand, according to a Business Today analysis. Operating margins improved in several sectors: chemicals posted the biggest expansion at 2.8 percentage points, followed by textiles, steel and the gems and jewellery segment. By the end of July, more than 760 listed companies had declared results, with the reporting season effectively wrapping up by mid-August, the deadline for filing June-quarter numbers. Heavyweights across autos, banking, metals and consumer goods featured in the final batches. While the top line held up, analysts cautioned that earnings growth was slower and patchier than sales, as higher input and financing costs squeezed some sectors, a picture that reinforced the market's cautious tone through the week.



BUSINESS

RBI minutes turn hawkish, put a rate hike back on the radar

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Reserve Bank of India's rate-setting panel kept its policy rate on hold this month, but the minutes of the meeting, released this week, revealed a markedly hawkish undercurrent that has revived talk of a rate hike rather than a cut. The six-member Monetary Policy Committee, headed by Governor Sanjay Malhotra, had unanimously voted at its August 3-5 meeting to leave the repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent and retain a neutral stance. But the minutes showed several members warning that headline inflation is likely to climb from current levels in the months ahead. Deputy Governor Poonam Gupta said no further easing was possible and that a case for a hike could emerge in 2026-27, with inflation seen peaking around 5.9 per cent in the December quarter. Malhotra said the committee wanted "greater clarity" on the inflation outlook before acting. SBI Research called it the most hawkish set of minutes in a year, and government bond yields firmed in response.



BUSINESS

Firm rates lift Kashmir apple growers as Himachal crop shrinks

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Apple growers in north Kashmir's Sopore, home to one of Asia's largest fruit mandis, are drawing encouraging rates as the 2026 harvest gathers pace, offering relief to an orchard economy battered by weather in recent seasons. Traders said arrivals of early varieties from Shopian, Pulwama, Kulgam, Baramulla and Sopore had exceeded expectations, with the benchmark mandi rate hovering around Rs 10,000 a quintal and quality fruit fetching between Rs 80 and Rs 120 a kilogram. The main commercial Delicious crop is expected to reach markets later this month and through September. The Kashmir Fruit Growers and Dealers Association attributed the firm prices largely to a sharp decline in Himachal Pradesh's crop this year, which has opened space for Kashmiri fruit in national markets. Growers, however, remain anxious over recent hailstorms that damaged orchards in parts of the Valley, and are pressing for smoother highway connectivity to move the perishable produce quickly.



BUSINESS

Gold hits fresh record before easing on profit-taking

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Gold prices touched a fresh record in India this week before a modest pullback, as global uncertainty and steady festive demand kept the safe-haven metal in favour. Standard 24-carat gold was quoted at Rs 1,64,730 per 10 grams on Thursday, an all-time high, with silver climbing to about Rs 2,47,900 a kilogram. Prices eased the following day on profit-taking, with 24-carat gold slipping to Rs 1,63,400 and silver to Rs 2,43,610, tracking a dip in Comex futures. Dealers said physical demand at the retail counter had held up despite the elevated prices, supported by the ongoing wedding and festive season across several parts of the country. Jewellers, however, reported some resistance to fresh buying at record levels, with many customers opting for lighter pieces or exchange purchases. Bullion has been among the year's best-performing assets, drawing investors wary of volatile equities, firm crude prices and geopolitical tensions.

MORE FROM THIS SECTION

BUSINESS

Brent above \$93 keeps pressure on import-dependent India

Crude prices stayed elevated through the week, stoking worries about India's trade deficit and imported inflation.

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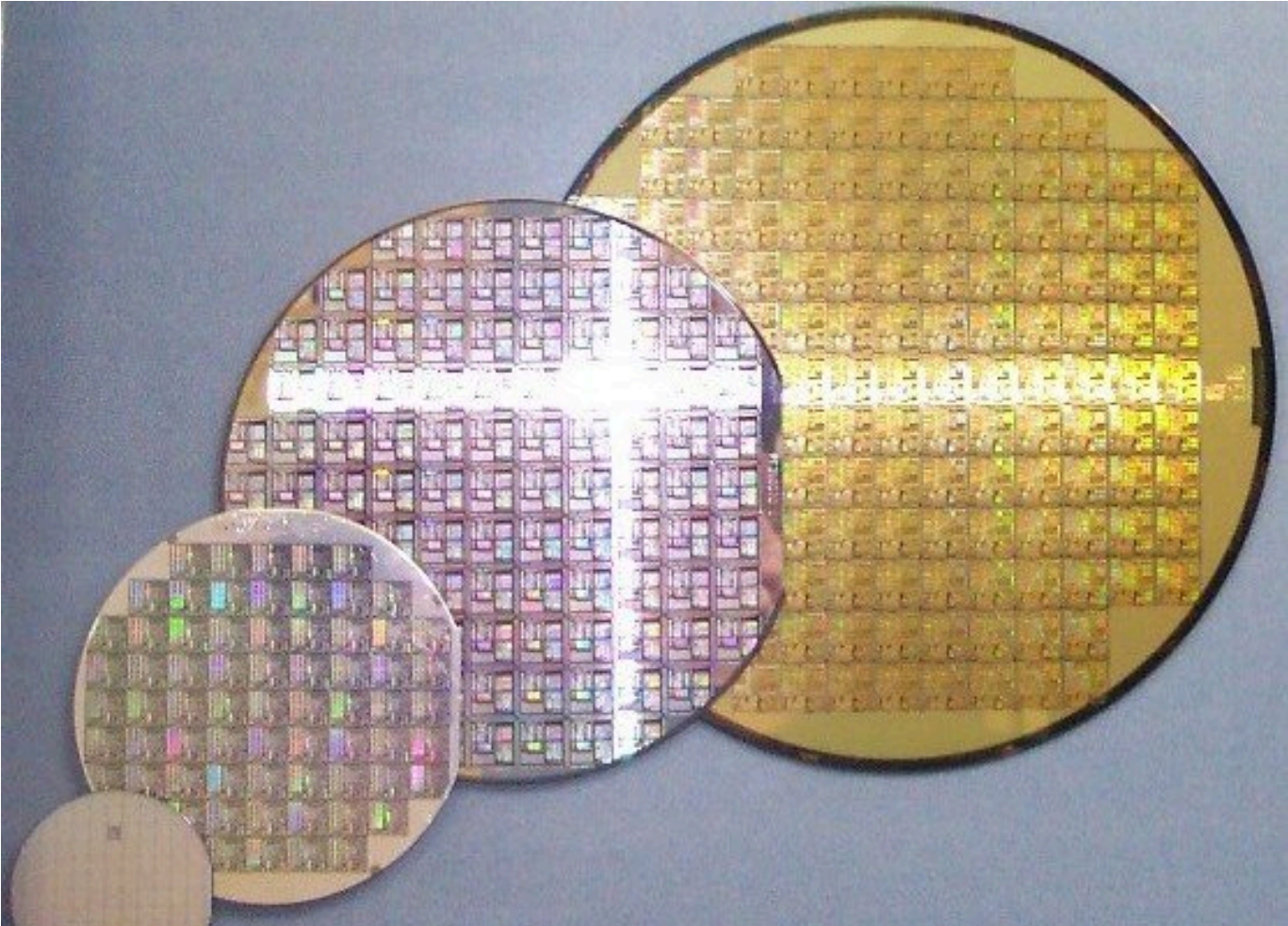


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TECHNOLOGY

India's chip push shifts from building fabs to making them work

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



As the first plants near production, India's semiconductor drive is entering a harder phase focused on yields, supply chains and materials rather than groundbreakings, an industry...

India's semiconductor drive is entering a more demanding phase, moving beyond the race to attract fabrication plants toward the far harder task of making them run at competitive quality, an industry review published on Aug 21 found. The next tests, it said, are manufacturing yields, resilient supply chains and locally made materials rather than fresh groundbreakings. The shift comes as New Delhi widens its support through Semicon 2.0, a programme with an allocation of about 1.275 trillion rupees, or roughly 13.23 billion dollars, announced on July 15. Where the first mission concentrated on chip fabrication and assembly, the second broadens government backing across chip design, display manufacturing, advanced packaging, semiconductor equipment, speciality materials, research and engineering services, and talent development. Yield, the share of usable chips from each silicon wafer, is emerging as the decisive metric. Tata Electronics' fabrication plant at Dholera in Gujarat needs yields of 75 to 80 per cent to be viable and 85 to 90 per cent to be fully competitive, the review noted, with a realistic timeline of 24 to 30 months to reach stable output as production scales. Reaching those numbers, not merely switching on the line, will determine whether India's fabs can hold their own against established plants in Taiwan, South Korea and China. States are already rewriting old rules to help. Gujarat has approved 12-hour work shifts for Micron Technology's assembly and test plant at Sanand, a signal that administrations are reshaping decades-old labour norms to suit round-the-clock chip operations. Supply chains are the other pressure point. A South Korean-Indian joint venture, Indichem, is targeting production of semiconductor materials free of Chinese inputs, while 20 companies have bid under India's scheme to manufacture rare earth magnets at home, a segment in which the country currently imports almost its entire requirement from China. Reducing that dependence is central to the strategy, given the sector's exposure to export controls. Some Indian firms are also trying to leapfrog rather than merely catch up. Kaynes Semicon is exploring silicon

photonics, co-packaged optics, post-quantum security and neuromorphic computing under the India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, treating gaps in conventional chipmaking as an opening to move into emerging technologies where global leaders are not yet entrenched. The government's showcase remains on the calendar. India will host the fifth edition of Semicon India 2026 from Sept 17 to 19 at Yashobhoomi in Dwarka, New Delhi, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi expected to inaugurate the event. Organisers say it will draw more than 500 exhibitors and over 290 international companies and delegations from more than 40 countries, underscoring the diplomatic and commercial weight India is placing on the sector. Of the plants cleared so far, two to three facilities are expected to begin commercial production by the end of 2026, with the remaining projects likely to come online in 2027 and 2028. That staggered timeline means the coming year will test whether approvals and incentives translate into chips shipped at scale. For a country that has watched successive attempts at a domestic chip industry stall over four decades, the review's message was pointed: the easy, visible wins of laying foundation stones are giving way to the unglamorous engineering of yields, materials and skilled workers that ultimately decide whether an industry endures. Talent is the quiet constraint running beneath all of it. Fabs and packaging plants need thousands of process engineers and technicians trained on live equipment, a workforce India is still building, and Semicon 2.0's explicit focus on skills and research reflects an acknowledgement that hardware alone will not close the gap with incumbents. The wider geopolitical backdrop adds urgency: with the United States, China and the European Union all pouring subsidies into chips and tightening controls on advanced tools and materials, India is trying to carve out a durable place in a supply chain that has become as much about statecraft as about silicon. The coming 18 months, the review suggested, will show whether the country's ambitions survive first contact with the industry's hardest problems.

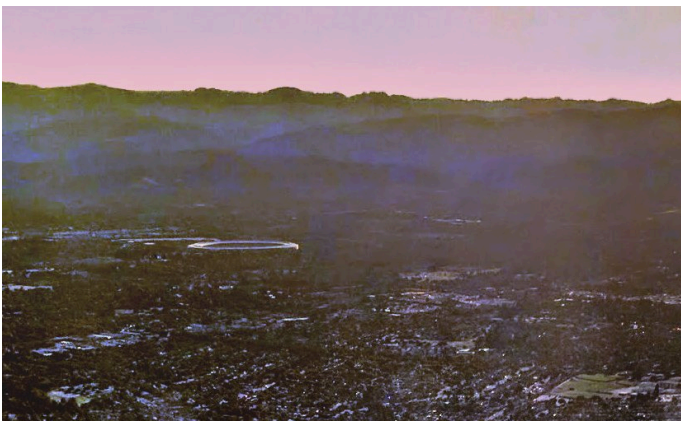


TECHNOLOGY

SpaceX marks 100th orbital mission of the year with Starlink launch

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

SpaceX notched its 100th orbital mission of 2026 in the early hours of Aug 22, launching a Falcon 9 rocket from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California and adding another batch of broadband satellites to its Starlink network. The rocket lifted off from Space Launch Complex 4 East at 12:25 a.m. local time, carrying 29 Starlink satellites on the Starlink 15-20 mission to low Earth orbit, according to Spaceflight Now's launch coverage. The reused first-stage booster, designated B1100, was flying for the ninth time and landed on the droneship "Of Course I Still Love You" in the Pacific about eight and a half minutes after liftoff. The recovery marked the 653rd landing of a Falcon booster overall, a measure of how routine SpaceX's reusable rockets have become. The company chief executive, Elon Musk, said the network now has more than 11,000 Starlink satellites in orbit, underscoring the pace at which the constellation has expanded. Reaching 100 orbital missions in a single year is a record cadence for the company and for any launch provider, reflecting a launch roughly every few days across its California and Florida pads.



TECHNOLOGY

Nvidia strikes \$7 billion deal for AI coding startup Poolside

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Nvidia has structured a 7 billion dollar arrangement with the artificial intelligence coding startup Poolside, an unusual deal that secures technology and talent without a conventional takeover, tech outlets reported on Aug 21. Under the terms, Nvidia will pay about 6 billion dollars to license Poolside's technology and invest a further 1 billion dollars at a 12 billion dollar pre-money valuation, the reports said. Roughly 109 Poolside employees received job offers from Nvidia as part of the transaction. The structure lets the chipmaker fold in sought-after engineering talent and intellectual property in AI-assisted software development while sidestepping a traditional acquisition, an approach several large technology companies have used to draw regulatory scrutiny. Poolside builds AI models aimed at writing and completing computer code, a fast-growing corner of the AI market where Nvidia's chips already dominate the underlying computing. The deal is among the largest of a string of AI tie-ups reported during the week as chip and cloud giants raced to lock up models, talent and infrastructure.

TECHNOLOGY

ChatGPT reaches into Apple's Messages and adds a Linux app

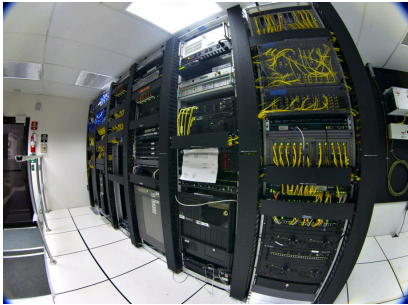
BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

OpenAI rolled out a batch of ChatGPT updates on Aug 20 that pushed the assistant deeper into everyday desktop software and, for the first time, onto Linux computers. The most visible change lets ChatGPT work inside Apple's Messages app on Macs powered by Apple silicon, where, with the user's permission, it can read, search, summarise and help draft messages. OpenAI also opened a public preview of a ChatGPT desktop app for Linux, extending official support beyond Windows and macOS to an operating system favoured by developers. The release added smaller features across the product, including interactive quizzes, new controls over project memory settings, improved personalised suggestions, and smoother dictation and text-composer behaviour on Android. OpenAI's companion coding tool, Codex, gained read-only chat sharing and the ability to change a project's site URL without redeploying. The steady drip of integrations reflects a broader industry push to embed AI assistants inside the applications people already use rather than confining them to a standalone chatbot window.

TECHNOLOGY

Broadcom lines up over \$60 billion in debt for AI chip build-out

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Broadcom is arranging more than 60 billion dollars in debt financing to support a build-out of artificial intelligence chip infrastructure, a figure that could approach 100 billion dollars once junior financing is included, according to reports on Aug 21. The financing is structured to underpin AI computing capacity tied to major customers, with the reported arrangements linked to infrastructure serving Anthropic and other large AI companies. The scale reflects how the cost of building data centres packed with specialised chips has pushed even cash-rich technology suppliers to raise vast sums in the debt markets. Broadcom's move came alongside other outsized AI deals reported during the week, as chipmakers and cloud providers competed to secure the computing power needed to train and run ever-larger models. Analysts have increasingly questioned how much of the borrowing will pay off, warning that the boom carries growing financial risk if demand for AI services fails to keep pace with the spending.

TECHNOLOGY

Google lets readers pick preferred sources in AI search results

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Google has rolled out a "Preferred Sources" button that lets readers raise the prominence of news outlets they trust within AI-generated search results and the Top Stories carousel, the company confirmed in reports on Aug 21. The feature allows a user to mark chosen publishers as preferred, after which stories from those outlets are more likely to appear when they search for related topics. Google is pitching it as a way to give people more control over the mix of sources surfaced by its increasingly AI-driven results pages. The change lands amid a tense standoff between Google and news publishers, many of whom say AI-generated summaries at the top of search results are siphoning away the clicks and advertising revenue that fund their journalism. By letting readers favour specific outlets, Google is signalling a partial response to those complaints, though publishers have argued that far bigger questions about traffic and compensation remain unresolved.

TECHNOLOGY

Google's open Gemma models cross one billion downloads

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Google said on Aug 20 that its family of open Gemma artificial intelligence models has passed one billion cumulative downloads, the first time the company has put a running total on adoption of the models since they launched in early 2024. Outside developers have built more than 100,000 distinct variants on Gemma's openly available weights, Google said, adapting them to specific languages, tasks and hardware. The company calls the wider ecosystem of those fine-tuned and derivative models the "Gemmaverse." The milestone was disclosed in an official post by Clement Farabet, a vice-president at Google DeepMind, and Olivier Lacombe, a product director, who argued that what the community builds with the models matters more than the download tally itself. Google pointed to uses spanning from satellite operations to medical research as evidence of the range. Notably, the one billion figure does not include Gemma's integration into Android and the Chrome browser, meaning the models' actual reach is larger than the headline count suggests. Open models, whose weights can be downloaded and run privately, have become a competitive front against closed systems from rivals such as OpenAI, offering developers and governments more control over cost, data and deployment. The disclosure landed as Google pressed its case that openly released models can seed a broad developer base while still steering users toward its paid cloud services.

MORE FROM THIS SECTION

TECHNOLOGY

Nevada clears up to 5,000 Tesla robotaxis for Las Vegas

Nevada regulators approved permits for as many as 5,000 Tesla robotaxis to operate in Las Vegas, one of the largest driverless fleets yet...

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HEALTH

SKIMS faculty promotions cleared after four-year wait

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



The J&K government has approved long-delayed promotions for 54 faculty members at SKIMS Soura and SKIMS Bemina under the Assessment Merit Promotion Scheme, ending a wait that for s...

The Jammu and Kashmir government has cleared long-pending promotions for 54 faculty members at the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Soura, and SKIMS Medical College and Hospital (MC&H), Bemina, ending a wait that for some doctors had stretched beyond four years, Greater Kashmir reported.The promotions were approved through two government orders — No. 631-JK (HME) and No. 632-JK (HME) — both issued on August 18 under the Assessment Merit Promotion Scheme (AMPS). Of the 54 faculty, 50 belong to SKIMS Soura, the Union Territory's premier tertiary-care and referral institution, and four to SKIMS MC&H Bemina, according to the orders.The elevations cover a broad sweep of clinical and diagnostic disciplines, including anaesthesiology, general medicine, pathology, microbiology, medical oncology, respiratory medicine, paediatric surgery, urology, neonatology, orthopaedics, paediatrics, dentistry and human genetics, the report said. Several promotions have been given effect from July 1, 2022, underlining the scale of the delay; in at least one case, a professor of rheumatology, the promotion is effective from July 1, 2021.Faculty at SKIMS had for years complained that the AMPS process, designed to reward in-service teachers with time-bound career progression, had stalled in a tangle of committee reconstitutions and administrative bottlenecks. The delay, doctors said, had left senior clinicians serving in junior grades long after they became eligible, eroding morale at institutions that carry an enormous patient load from across Kashmir, Ladakh and the Chenab and Pir Panjal belts.According to Greater Kashmir, the clearance matters beyond the individuals concerned. Because promotions vacate the lower posts they leave behind, the orders pave the way for fresh recruitment of assistant professors and other faculty at institutions that have remained chronically understaffed and overstretched. SKIMS had advertised 68 assistant professor posts in 2025, and the promotion logjam had been one of the

factors complicating that recruitment.The promotions had also drawn litigation. Court intervention in 2024 had focused attention on the administrative delays affecting faculty advancement and, by extension, the functioning of the institutes, the report noted. Faculty bodies had repeatedly petitioned the administration to operationalise AMPS, warning that the stagnation was pushing specialists to look outside the government system.SKIMS Soura functions as the apex referral centre for J&K, running super-speciality departments in cardiology, nephrology, neurology, gastroenterology, medical and surgical oncology and organ transplantation, among others. Its faculty strength directly shapes both patient care and the postgraduate and super-speciality teaching that feeds specialists into the wider health system. Administrators have argued that timely promotions are essential to retaining that talent and to sustaining the institute's teaching accreditation.The Bemina medical college, a newer sister institution, has been building its faculty base as it expands undergraduate and postgraduate intake. The four promotions there, though fewer in number, are seen as important to stabilising departments that are still maturing.Health and Medical Education administrators have signalled that the AMPS exercise will now be pursued more regularly so that eligible faculty are not left waiting for years, according to the report. Faculty representatives welcomed the orders but urged the government to ensure the resulting vacancies are filled quickly, cautioning that promotions alone will not ease the staffing crunch unless recruitment keeps pace.For patients, the immediate effect is indirect but real: a fuller, better-motivated senior faculty is central to running specialty clinics, emergency services and complex surgeries at Soura and Bemina, both of which routinely operate beyond sanctioned capacity. The desk will track the recruitment the promotions are expected to unlock.

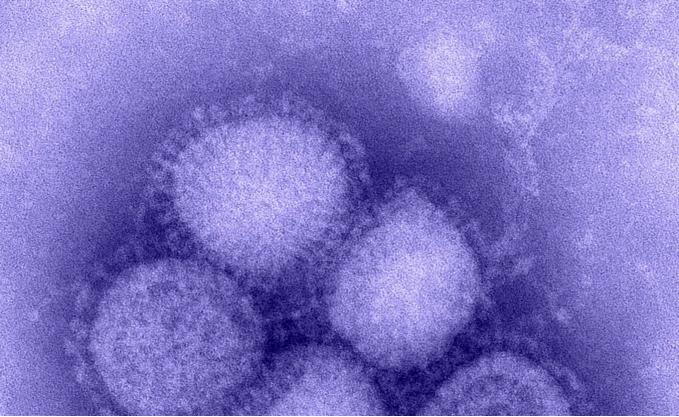


HEALTH

Strike at five new GMCs ends after government vows recruitment rules

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Patient care at five of Jammu and Kashmir's newer government medical colleges was disrupted this week as non-gazetted employees launched an indefinite strike over the government's long delay in framing their recruitment and service rules, before calling it off on an official assurance.The protest hit the GMCs at Baramulla, Anantnag, Rajouri, Doda and Kathua. Employees at Doda, Rajouri and Kathua stopped work from August 17, and colleagues at Baramulla and Anantnag joined the indefinite strike from August 18, the Daily Excelsior reported. More than 3,300 non-gazetted staff — nursing, paramedical, clerical and multitasking employees — were affected by the impasse.The workers said the Service Recruitment Rules governing their posts had remained unframed for close to six years, leaving them without clarity on promotions, seniority and career progression. Outpatient and support services at the five institutions were pared back during the agitation, with patients bearing the brunt.The employees ended the strike after the administration assured them that the recruitment rules would be finalised by September 30, according to the report. Staff bodies warned they would resume the agitation if the deadline slipped.



HEALTH

No new H1N1 strain behind swine-flu rise, says ICMR

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

There is no new strain of the H1N1 influenza virus behind the rise in swine-flu cases across India, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has said, urging calm even as caseloads climbed in several cities.Delhi's tally of Influenza-A cases crossed 2,300 this year, of which more than 1,777 were H1N1, with 114 fresh H1N1 cases recorded on a single day last week, ThePrint reported, citing ICMR sources. Karnataka has reported more than 4,000 cases.The virus in circulation is the A/Missouri/11/2025 (H1N1) pdm09-like strain — part of clade 6B.1A.5a2a, subclade D.3.1.1 — which has been circulating since 2025, ICMR sources said. The strains are "well matched" with the vaccine recommended for the Northern Hemisphere.Seasonal influenza is largely self-limiting, ICMR said, though young children, the elderly and those with underlying conditions face higher risk. Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda reviewed preparedness and called for continued surveillance.

HEALTH

GMC Jammu plans corridor to link its associated hospitals

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



The Jammu and Kashmir government has proposed building a dedicated corridor, or over-bridge, to connect the Government Medical College and Hospital (GMC&H) Jammu with its associated hospitals, a move officials described as a step to "revolutionise" patient care in the Jammu division, the Northlines reported.GMC Jammu, one of the region's busiest tertiary-care hubs, runs a network of associated hospitals spread across the city, and patients and attendants often have to move between separate campuses for admissions, diagnostics and specialist referrals. The proposed link is intended to ease that movement and cut the time lost in transferring patients between facilities, according to the report.The proposal, reported on August 21, is part of a wider push to upgrade infrastructure at the medical college and reduce congestion at its hospitals, which routinely handle heavy outpatient and emergency loads from Jammu, Samba, Kathua, Udhampur, Reasi and the Chenab valley.Officials said detailed planning would follow. The desk could not independently confirm a timeline or cost for the project.

HEALTH

AIIMS Vijaypur starts nursing batch, opens 40 resident posts

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Vijaypur, in Jammu marked two milestones this week as it continued to scale up academic and clinical operations, according to the institute's official notices.Classroom teaching for the first-year B.Sc (Hons) Nursing batch commenced on August 19, taking forward the institute's expansion of health-professional education. Separately, AIIMS Vijaypur invited online applications for 40 tenure-based Senior Resident and Senior Demonstrator posts across a range of departments and specialties, with the application window open until August 27 and interviews tentatively slated for the first week of September.AIIMS Vijaypur, one of the newer AIIMS institutions established under the central government's programme to widen access to tertiary care, has been progressively adding faculty, resident doctors and teaching programmes as it moves toward full operational strength in the Jammu region.

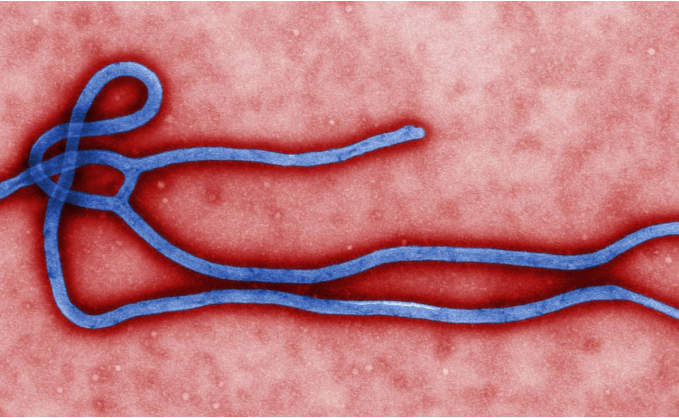
HEALTH

US to route \$600 million to Gavi for global vaccine push

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



The United States will route \$600 million appropriated by Congress to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, in a move set to bolster immunisation programmes across the developing world, according to a global health update published by the George W. Bush Presidential Center on August 20.The funds, covering fiscal years 2025 and 2026, are meant to support Gavi's delivery of vaccines against some 20 diseases in more than 50 low-income countries, the update said. A large share of the money is expected to expand access to malaria vaccines, which the WHO has prequalified and which are being rolled out across parts of Africa.Gavi, a public-private partnership, is one of the biggest funders of childhood immunisation in poorer nations, and US contributions have historically been central to its budget. The alliance had faced uncertainty over Western funding, making the confirmed transfer significant for programmes that depend on predictable financing.Public-health experts say sustained donor support is critical to maintaining vaccination coverage and guarding against resurgent outbreaks of preventable disease.



HEALTH

WHO tightens Ebola guidance as DRC risk stays 'very high'

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The World Health Organization has tightened its guidance for containing an outbreak of Ebola disease caused by the Bundibugyo virus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, keeping the risk to the country assessed as "very high."Meeting for the second time on August 24 under the International Health Regulations, WHO's emergency committee said the risk remained very high for the DRC and high for nine neighbouring countries, while low for the rest of the world. The outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern in May.There are no approved vaccines or therapeutics against the Bundibugyo virus, though clinical trials are under way, WHO said. Its revised recommendations urge the DRC to maintain a national health emergency, run dedicated isolation and treatment centres, report cases to WHO daily, trace contacts for 21 days, staff round-the-clock road checkpoints and enforce safe, dignified burials.Even if vaccines and treatments become available, they "will not be a substitute" for core public-health measures, the committee said.

MORE FROM THIS SECTION

HEALTH

J&K sanctions Rs 15.20 lakh grant for AYUSH boards

The J&K government has released Rs 15.20 lakh in grant-in-aid to the Union Territory's AYUSH boards for 2026-27 to sustain their...

INTERNATIONAL

US declares global economic war on Iran, vows to cut off every 'lifeline'

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent launched 'Operation Economic Outcast', blacklisting some 60 entities across five countries and threatening any nation that keeps trading with Tehra...

The United States on Monday declared an open-ended campaign to strangle Iran's economy, with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent unveiling what he branded "Operation Economic Outcast" and vowing to pursue Tehran's revenue in every corner of the globe."Around the globe, our objective is to sever every economic lifeline that sustains this tyrannical regime until Tehran stands alone," Bessent told reporters, casting the drive as an "economic D-day" that he likened to the Allied operations of World War II.The Treasury said its opening salvo blacklisted about 60 entities, vessels and individuals spread across the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, China, Singapore and Switzerland, striking at five sectors it called vital to the Iranian state: digital assets, technology, gold, aviation and shipping. Washington also threatened secondary penalties against any government or company that continues to do business with Iran, warning that the world's firms must now choose between the American market and Tehran.Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, appearing alongside Bessent, argued that money, not missiles, was now the sharper weapon. "Economic pressure, we know, hurts them the most right now," he said.The announcement marks a new phase in the war that the United States and Israel opened against Iran in late February, a conflict that killed Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in its opening hours and triggered waves of Iranian missile and drone retaliation across the region. A ceasefire brokered by Pakistan has largely held since April, but repeated flare-ups and a near-total closure of the Strait of Hormuz have kept the region on edge and roiled global energy markets.Iran dismissed the measures as more of the same. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Washington had run out of ideas. "They cannot think of any other solution, so they repeatedly put forward the same old plans," he said, according to Iranian state

media. Tehran has kept the Strait of Hormuz, the artery through which a fifth of the world's oil flows, largely shut for much of the past five months, and its parliament this week advanced a plan to levy service fees on shipping using the waterway.Bessent's campaign lands as the diplomatic track sputters. Iran has set out three conditions for ending the war: firm guarantees against future aggression, recognition of what President Masoud Pezeshkian calls Iran's "legitimate rights", and reparations. Tehran has also demanded a halt to Israeli strikes in Lebanon as a precondition for wider talks, an obstacle that has repeatedly stalled a memorandum of understanding the two sides came close to signing in the spring.The economic offensive carries risks for Washington as much as for Tehran. The Hormuz disruption has already pushed pump prices in the United States up by nearly a dollar over the year, and forecasters at the US Energy Information Administration do not expect Middle East oil output to return to pre-war levels until early 2027. Analysts warn that squeezing Iran's oil exports harder could tighten supply further and lift crude prices at a politically awkward moment for President Donald Trump.Washington has leaned on China, by far the largest buyer of Iranian crude, to back the pressure campaign, though Beijing has shown little appetite to comply. Tehran, meanwhile, has warned neighbouring states against joining the American effort, cautioning that any country that helps enforce the sanctions could find itself drawn into the confrontation.For now, both capitals appear dug in. Bessent framed the sanctions as a road map to force Iran back to the table on American terms; Araghchi cast them as proof that Washington has nothing new to offer. Between them lies a shuttered strait, a fragile ceasefire and a war that, six months on, shows no sign of a durable end.



INTERNATIONAL

Russia and Ukraine trade deadly strikes as Putin threatens 'far more destructive' hits

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Russia and Ukraine exchanged heavy air attacks on Saturday, killing at least 17 people, as President Vladimir Putin warned of "far more painful and far more destructive" retaliation against Ukrainian infrastructure.Russian strikes killed at least seven people across Ukraine, hitting railway infrastructure in Kyiv and targets in the Zaporizhia region, where three died and 15 were wounded, officials said. The barrage came a day after a strike on a shopping centre in Kryvyi Rih left 16 dead and more than 130 injured.Ukrainian attacks on Russia and occupied territory killed at least 10, according to local authorities, striking an oil refinery in the Samara region, a logistics centre in Chapayeysk and a bus in Sevastopol, Crimea. Casualties were also reported in Krasnodar, Belgorod and Luhansk.Putin accused Kyiv of trying to "damage our economy" and said Ukraine had opened "a Pandora's box" with strikes deep behind the front. France pledged to accelerate military aid and Germany announced \$58m in additional humanitarian assistance as the war neared its four-and-a-half-year mark.



INTERNATIONAL

Pakistan reports 'significant progress' in Tehran talks to end Iran war

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Pakistan said it made "significant progress" in talks in Tehran aimed at ending the US-Israel war on Iran, as Islamabad pushed to revive a stalled mediation effort.Army chief Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi held a day of meetings on Monday with President Masoud Pezeshkian, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Supreme National Security Council secretary Mohsen Rezaei, officials said.The discussions focused on preventing further escalation, reopening the Strait of Hormuz and reviving the "Islamabad memorandum" ceasefire framework signed in June. "Significant progress was made, and the meeting concluded on a highly positive note," Naqvi said.Pezeshkian pushed back at Washington's pressure. "The United States must correct its tone and approach in dealing with Iran instead of dictating terms," he was quoted as saying. Pakistan brokered the April ceasefire that has largely held despite repeated flare-ups, and Islamabad has positioned itself as a rare interlocutor trusted, to differing degrees, by both Tehran and Washington. Pakistani officials acknowledged the framework they were trying to restore had already filtered.

INTERNATIONAL

US hits Canada with 50% tariffs after trade talks collapse

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



The United States imposed 50 percent tariffs on about \$20bn worth of Canadian goods on Saturday after negotiators failed to reach a trade deal, sharply escalating a dispute between the two neighbours.The levies took effect at 12:01am Eastern time as President Donald Trump's deadline expired, hitting electronics, industrial machinery and dairy products, or roughly 5 percent of Canadian exports. Trump also said tariffs on Canadian autos and steel would double to 50 percent from January.Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney called the move "a miscalculation" and pledged to match it "dollar for dollar", saying he recalled his negotiators after last-minute American demands proved unacceptable. "They asked too much and they offered too little," he said. The collapse followed three days of talks in Washington and marks one of the sharpest ruptures yet between the longtime allies and trading partners.

INTERNATIONAL

US national debt tops \$40 trillion, months ahead of forecasts

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



The US national debt surpassed \$40 trillion for the first time on Tuesday, a milestone reached months earlier than forecasters had expected and one that has intensified warnings about the country's long-term finances.Total public debt stood at just over \$40 trillion, according to Treasury data, roughly \$117,000 for every person in the country and about \$297,000 per household. The debt has doubled since early 2017 and has risen by \$3.8 trillion since President Donald Trump began his second term in January 2025.Analysts said the pace quickened partly because of lost revenue tied to Trump's tariff refunds and higher borrowing costs as bond yields rose. Interest payments alone now run to about \$1.1 trillion a year. "Federal debt is already raising the cost of living and choking out other spending and investment," said Margaret Spellings of the Bipartisan Policy Center, warning it threatened "Americans' long-term prosperity".

INTERNATIONAL

Oil holds near \$85 as shut Strait of Hormuz keeps pump prices high

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



Oil prices held near \$85 a barrel this week as the near-total closure of the Strait of Hormuz stretched into a sixth month, keeping global energy markets on edge and US pump prices close to record highs.Brent crude, which spiked toward \$90 earlier in August on fears the strategic waterway would stay shut, has hovered between \$80 and \$85 amid faint hopes of a negotiated reopening. The strait, through which about a fifth of the world's oil passes, has been largely blocked for most of the past five months by Iranian action and retaliatory US strikes.The disruption has pushed US petrol prices up by nearly a dollar over the year, past the \$4-a-gallon mark. The US Energy Information Administration said it does not expect Middle East output to return to pre-war levels until early 2027, and forecast Brent to average \$87 a barrel this year.



INTERNATIONAL

Israeli strikes kill four-year-old in Gaza as Netanyahu threatens over kites

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

At least three Palestinians, among them a four-year-old boy, were killed in Israeli strikes across Gaza on Sunday, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatened to escalate attacks over kites and balloons launched from the enclave.Muhammad Abdel Salam Taha, four, was killed and six others wounded in a strike on a warehouse in az-Zawayda, medics said, while two people died on Salah al-Din Street in central Gaza. A journalist, Ezz el-Din al-Batsh, 33, was among at least 10 wounded in Khan Younis.Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz warned in a joint statement that if "launches toward Israel do not stop immediately", the military would intensify strikes and evacuate areas from which "kites, drones and balloons" are flown. The army said it had inspected four kites launched over the weekend and found nothing suspicious.Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem dismissed the threats, calling the kites "children's toys" and the warnings "fabricated pretexts". More than 1,280 Palestinians have been killed since the US-brokered ceasefire took hold, according to Gaza authorities.

MORE FROM THIS SECTION

INTERNATIONAL

China puts Typhoon Maysak flood toll at 159 in Guangxi

Chinese officials said flooding triggered by Typhoon Maysak killed 159 people and left 10 missing in the southern region of Guangxi.

SPORTS

Edmund hat-trick powers East Bengal to record-equalling Durand Cup title

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



East Bengal tore Mohun Bagan Super Giant apart 4-1 in the Kolkata derby final, an Edmund Lalrindika hat-trick sealing a record-equalling 17th Durand Cup and capping a golden year f...

East Bengal ripped through their oldest rivals on Sunday, thrashing Mohun Bagan Super Giant 4-1 in the Durand Cup final to lift their 17th title and draw level with the Mariners as the most successful club in the tournament's history.On a raucous night at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan in Salt Lake, where a full house had gathered for the 135th edition's grand finale, it was a red-and-gold rout that few had forecast. Winger Bipin Singh set the tone with a 10th-minute opener, and from there Edmund Lalrindika took the game by the scruff of the neck, striking three times in a first-half blitz to leave the Kolkata derby settled long before the interval.Edmund's treble arrived in a devastating 33-minute spell. He doubled the lead in the 11th minute, moments after Bipin had struck, and made it 3-0 in the 22nd. His third, in the 44th, was the goal that turned a contest into a coronation, sending the East Bengal end into raptures as Mohun Bagan's defence unravelled. The hat-trick made the young forward the story of the night and the most talked-about name in Indian football's showpiece week.Mohun Bagan, chasing a title that would have moved them clear at the top of the honours list, were second best throughout. Manvir Singh pulled one back to spare his side a heavier defeat, but the goal was scant consolation on an evening when the champions of the Indian Super League were comprehensively outplayed in their own backyard. The 4-1 scoreline was the most emphatic in a Kolkata derby final in living memory.For East Bengal the triumph completes a remarkable turnaround. Having ended a 22-year wait for a major trophy with their maiden Indian Super League crown in the 2025-26 season, the club has now added the country's oldest football competition to its cabinet,

and done so by beating the neighbours who have defined its rivalry for more than a century. The 17th Durand Cup title pulls them level with Mohun Bagan, both clubs now standing atop the roll of honour of a tournament first played in 1888.The final drew one of the largest crowds of the campaign, the terraces a wall of red and gold and green and maroon long before kick-off, and the win will reverberate well beyond Bengal. East Bengal go into the new season as double holders of sorts, carrying the Durand shield alongside their league standing, and as one of two Indian clubs set to fly the flag in continental competition in the months ahead.The Durand Cup, run under the aegis of the Indian Army and the All India Football Federation, has grown into a genuine pre-season marquee, this year fielding 24 teams across six groups drawn from the ISL, the I-League and the services. Mohun Bagan had swept through the earlier rounds in imperious fashion, including an eight-goal group-stage demolition, and started the final as many pundits' favourites. Instead they ran into an East Bengal side that had saved its best for the biggest night.For the neutral, the match was a reminder of why the Kolkata derby remains the beating heart of Indian club football, a fixture that can empty a city into a single stadium. For East Bengal's supporters, it was simply the sweetest kind of victory: a derby, a final and a record, all won in the space of 90 one-sided minutes. As the trophy was lifted under the floodlights, the celebrations spilled out into the streets of Kolkata, a fan base that had waited more than two decades for silverware now savouring two major honours inside a single, unforgettable year.

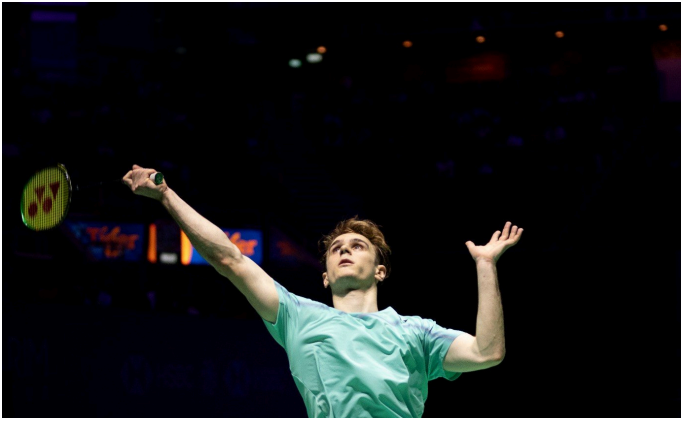


SPORTS

India crush Sri Lanka by 165 runs in Galle to go one up

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

India began their tour of Sri Lanka with a statement, sealing the first Test at Galle by 165 runs on the fifth morning to take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series.Devdutt Padikkal was the architect of the win, his fluent 167 anchoring India's first innings of 462 after KL Rahul had chipped in with 82. The left-hander added 44 in the second innings and was named Player of the Match, his second hundred of an increasingly assured red-ball career.If Padikkal set up the game with the bat, it was left-arm spinner Manav Suthar who finished it. The youngster claimed his second five-wicket haul in as many Tests, ripping through the Sri Lanka lower order in a burst of four wickets in ten balls to complete a ten-wicket match. Sri Lanka, who had made 284 in reply, were bowled out for 206 chasing a distant target.There was resistance from the hosts, GS Dinusha making a first-innings century and Niroshan Dickwella top-scoring with 80, but India's spinners proved too much on a turning surface. The sides move to the Sinhalese Sports Club in Colombo for the second Test.



SPORTS

Lanier stuns Naraoka to win maiden world title in New Delhi

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

Alex Lanier produced a masterclass to win the men's singles crown at the BWF World Championships in New Delhi on Sunday, thrashing Japan's Kodai Naraoka 21-11, 21-11 to become the first French player to be crowned world champion.The 20-year-old was relentless at the Indira Gandhi Arena, controlling the tempo from the front court and never allowing the Japanese to settle. Two identical 21-11 games in barely 40 minutes underlined the gulf on the day and confirmed Lanier's rise from promising junior to the top of the world game.India, hosting the championships for the first time, saw the Indira Gandhi Arena packed through the week even as the home challenge faded before the medal rounds. The tournament, staged from August 17 to 23, drew the sport's biggest names to the capital and delivered a men's final few had predicted.South Korea's An Se-young captured the women's singles title on the same evening, while China dominated the doubles disciplines, taking both the mixed and women's crowns. For Lanier, though, the night belonged to France, a country that had never before produced a singles world champion in badminton.

SPORTS

J&K Sports Council opens football trials for junior girls

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



The Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council has announced football selection trials to assemble the union territory's teams for the forthcoming national championships, opening a fresh pathway for young players across both divisions.Divisional trials for the junior girls' category were scheduled for August 23 and 24 at 9 a.m., at the Mini Stadium synthetic turf at Parade Ground in Jammu and the synthetic turf football stadium at the TRC in Srinagar. The category is open to players born between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2012, with the UT-level trials to follow at the TRC Srinagar on August 26 and 27.The Council also set out a schedule for the sub-junior boys, whose divisional trials are slated for September 1 to 3, followed by UT-level selection on September 7 and 8. All aspirants must be permanent residents of Jammu and Kashmir and were asked to carry original birth certificates, Aadhaar cards and passport-sized photographs.Officials said the phased trials were designed to widen the net for talent from the districts and to ensure that representative sides are picked on merit ahead of national-level competition. Contact numbers were circulated for players seeking to register for the divisional rounds.

SPORTS

India in command in Colombo as Padikkal makes it two in two

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



India tightened their grip on the second Test at the Sinhalese Sports Club on Tuesday, reducing Sri Lanka to 265 for eight in reply to a first-innings 503 for nine declared, and moving to within touching distance of a series clean sweep.Devdutt Padikkal, already the player of the series in the making, followed his Galle century with a second hundred in as many matches, while captain Shubman Gill weighed in with a half-century as India piled up their runs and declared to give the bowlers time to work.Sri Lanka's reply was kept afloat largely by Sonal Dinusha, unbeaten on 85, and a fluent 80 from Sooriyabandara, but wickets fell steadily around them. Prasidh Krishna led the attack with three for 47 and shared the spoils with left-arm spinner Manav Suthar, the pair combining for six wickets to keep India in the driving seat.With the hosts still 238 runs adrift and only two wickets standing at stumps on the third day, India will resume expecting to wrap up the innings quickly and press for the victory that would complete a 2-0 series triumph.

SPORTS

East Bengal, FC Goa to carry India's flag into AFC competition

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026



India will be represented by two clubs on the continental stage in the 2026-27 season, with East Bengal and FC Goa set to fly the flag in AFC competition once the domestic calendar gives way to Asian club football.East Bengal qualified by virtue of their maiden Indian Super League crown last season, the title that ended a 22-year drought and set up the golden run capped by Sunday's Durand Cup final win over Mohun Bagan. FC Goa join them after claiming a record third AIFF Super Cup, beating East Bengal 6-5 on penalties in a dramatic December 2025 final.The two berths keep Indian club football on the Asian map at a time when the domestic game is enjoying a surge in interest, with packed houses through the Durand Cup pointing to a healthy appetite for the season ahead. The AFC's continental competitions proper are due to begin in mid-September, giving both clubs a short window to build after the pre-season silverware.For East Bengal in particular, the continental campaign will be a chance to test a squad that has swept the biggest prizes at home against opposition from across Asia, and to measure how far the club's revival has truly travelled.



SPORTS

Chinar Premier League enters knockouts before 6,000 at Baramulla

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Chinar Premier League 2026 entered its knockout phase on Wednesday with a spectacular ceremony at the General Bipin Rawat Stadium in Baramulla, drawing a crowd of about 6,000 that included schoolchildren and sports enthusiasts from across the valley.Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo inaugurated the knockout stage, with Commissioner Secretary Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary as guest of honour. The opening knockout fixture pitted Sheeri Blasters against Downtown Bijbera, marking the start of the decisive rounds of what has grown into Kashmir's largest grassroots cricket competition.The scale of the tournament has been striking. The league phase alone featured 1,600 players across 79 teams, playing 81 matches at eight venues, with 32 sides emerging from 130 applicants to reach the knockouts. Organisers put the cumulative viewership of the league stage at more than 1.6 million."The CPL 2026 has emerged as a major sporting platform, bringing together the young athletes from Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh and providing them an inclusive space to connect, compete and showcase their talent," Dulloo said. Spearheaded by the Indian Army in partnership with local cricket bodies, the tournament has been pitched as an exercise in community engagement and social cohesion as much as competitive sport. The ceremony featured patriotic performances by local school bands before the cricket resumed.

MORE FROM THIS SECTION

SPORTS

An Se-young reclaims world crown without dropping a game

The South Korean swept to a second world title in New Delhi, beating Japan's Akane Yamaguchi in the final.

PUBLIC NOTICES · TENDERS · AUCTIONS · RECRUITMENT

JAMMU POWER DISTRIBUTION CORPORATION LTD (JPDCL), O&M DIVISION POONCH Ref: JPDCL/PNC/2026-27/NIT-58/FLD Restoration of flood-damaged 11kV and LT distribution network in Poonch The Executive Engineer, O&M Division JPDCL Poonch, invites online tenders from eligible and registered electrical contractors for restoration of the flood-damaged 11kV and LT distribution network, including re-erection o... Type: Works Last date: 27 Aug 2026 Est. cost: ₹ 2.15 crore EMD: ₹ 4.30 lakh Location: Mandi, Poonch Contact: Executive Engineer, O&M Division JPDCL Poonch · Refer NIT PDF	RURAL ENGINEERING WING (REW/RDD) RAJOURI Ref: REW/RDD/RAJ/2026-27/NIT-72/FLD Restoration of flood-damaged rural roads and culverts in Budhal and Kandi blocks The Executive Engineer, Rural Engineering Wing (RDD) Rajouri, invites online percentage-rate tenders from eligible registered contractors for the restoration of flood-damaged rural roads, reconstruction of washed-out cul... Type: Works Last date: 30 Aug 2026 Est. cost: ₹ 1.85 crore EMD: ₹ 3.70 lakh Location: Budhal, Rajouri Contact: Executive Engineer, REW (RDD) Rajouri · Refer NIT PDF	PWD (R&B) DIVISION POONCH Ref: PWD/R&B/PNC/2026-27/EMG-34 Emergency restoration of flood-damaged Loran–Sawjian road and protection works The Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Division Poonch, on behalf of the Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, invites online item-rate tenders from eligible registered contractors of appropriate class for emergen... Type: Works Last date: 2 Sep 2026 Est. cost: ₹ 3.40 crore EMD: ₹ 6.80 lakh Location: Mandi, Poonch Contact: Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Division Poonch · Refer NIT PDF
JAL SHAKTI (PHE) DIVISION RAJOURI Ref: JSD/PHE/RAJ/2026-27/NIT-33/FLD Restoration of flood-damaged rising mains and intake works in Darhal and Kandi The Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti (PHE) Division Rajouri, invites online tenders from approved and eligible contractors for the restoration of flood-damaged rising mains, repair of intake and infiltration works, and rec... Type: Works Last date: 2 Sep 2026 Est. cost: ₹ 2.10 crore EMD: ₹ 4.20 lakh Location: Darhal, Rajouri Contact: Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti (PHE) Division Rajouri · Refer NIT PDF	JAL SHAKTI (PHE) DIVISION RAJOURI Ref: JSD/RAJ/2026-27/FRW-19 Restoration of flood-damaged water supply schemes in Thanamandi and Darhal blocks The Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti (PHE) Division Rajouri, on behalf of the Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, invites online item-rate tenders from eligible registered contractors for the restoration of f... Type: Works Last date: 5 Sep 2026 Est. cost: ₹ 2.10 crore EMD: ₹ 4.20 lakh Location: Thanamandi, Rajouri Contact: Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti (PHE) Division Rajouri · Refer NIT PDF	SAMAGRA SHIKSHA, POONCH Ref: SS/PNC/2026-27/NIT-09/REP Repair and restoration of flood-affected school buildings in Poonch district The Chief Education Officer-cum-District Project Coordinator, Samagra Shiksha Poonch, invites online tenders from eligible and registered contractors for the repair and restoration of flood-affected government school bui... Type: Works Last date: 5 Sep 2026 Est. cost: ₹ 95.00 lakh EMD: ₹ 1.90 lakh Location: Poonch Contact: District Project Coordinator, Samagra Shiksha Poonch · Refer NIT PDF
PDD ELECTRIC DIVISION POONCH Ref: PDD/PNC/2026-27/REST-22 Restoration of flood-damaged 11kV and LT lines in Surankote and Mendhar The Executive Engineer, PDD Electric Division Poonch, on behalf of the Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, invites online tenders from eligible registered electrical contractors for the restoration of flood... Type: Works Last date: 8 Sep 2026 Est. cost: ₹ 1.65 crore EMD: ₹ 3.30 lakh Location: Surankote, Poonch Contact: Executive Engineer, PDD Electric Division Poonch · Refer NIT PDF	DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES JAMMU Ref: DHS/J/2026-27/EQP-41 Supply of ambulances and emergency medical equipment for Pir Panjal district hospitals The Director, Health Services Jammu, on behalf of the Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, invites online tenders from eligible manufacturers and authorised suppliers for the supply of advanced life-support... Type: Supply Last date: 10 Sep 2026 Est. cost: ₹ 4.20 crore EMD: ₹ 8.40 lakh Location: Poonch / Rajouri Contact: Director, Health Services Jammu · Refer NIT PDF	EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, PDD DIVISION MENDHAR Ref: PDD/Mendhar/NIT/2026-27/33 Restoration of flood-damaged 11kV and LT distribution network in Mendhar sub-division Re-stringing of 11kV/LT lines, replacement of damaged poles and distribution transformers in Mendhar, Balnoi and Sagra following August flood damage. Type: Works Last date: 16 Sep 2026 Est. cost: Rs 1.24 crore EMD: Rs 24,800 Location: Poonch Contact: Executive Engineer, PDD Mendhar · 01965-225037
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, PWD (R&B) DIVISION POONCH Ref: PWD/Poonch/NIT/2026-27/58 Restoration of flood-damaged Poonch–Mandi–Loran carriageway and protection works Reconstruction of washed-out carriageway stretches, RCC breast walls and cross-drainage on the Poonch–Mandi–Loran road damaged in the August 2026 flash floods. Type: Works Last date: 18 Sep 2026 Est. cost: Rs 312 crore EMD: Rs 62,400 Location: Poonch Contact: Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Poonch · 01965-220145	EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, JAL SHAKTI (PHE) DIVISION RAJOURI Ref: JS/Raj/NIT/2026-27/41 Restoration of flood-damaged water supply schemes in Budhal and Kandi belt Repair of intake works, rising mains and distribution networks of rural water supply schemes damaged by monsoon flooding across Budhal, Kandi and Darhal. Type: Works Last date: 20 Sep 2026 Est. cost: Rs 1.86 crore EMD: Rs 37,200 Location: Rajouri Contact: Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Rajouri · 01962-262048	PWD (R&B) DIVISION JAMMU Ref: PWD/R&B/JMU/2026-27/NIT-118 Construction of RCC bridge and approaches over Tawi tributary at Nagrota The Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Division Jammu, invites online item-rate tenders from eligible and appropriately registered contractors for the construction of an RCC bridge with approaches, protection works and allied... Type: Works Last date: 8 Sep 2026 Est. cost: ₹ 6.75 crore EMD: ₹ 13.50 lakh Location: Nagrota, Jammu Contact: Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Division Jammu · Refer NIT PDF
JAL SHAKTI (PHE) MECHANICAL DIVISION ANANTNAG Ref: JSD/PHE/MECH/ANT/2026-27/NIT-24 Supply of DI/HDPE pipes and specials for water supply schemes The Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti (PHE) Mechanical Division Anantnag, invites online tenders from eligible manufacturers and their authorised dealers for the supply of DI and HDPE pipes of assorted diameters together wi... Type: Supply Last date: 10 Sep 2026 Est. cost: ₹ 1.40 crore EMD: ₹ 2.80 lakh Location: Anantnag Contact: Executive Engineer, PHE Mechanical Division Anantnag · Refer NIT PDF	SHRI MATA VAISHNO DEVI UNIVERSITY (SMVDU), KATRA Ref: SMVDU/S&P/2026-27/NIT-47 Supply and installation of laboratory equipment for the School of Engineering The Registrar, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Katra, invites online tenders from eligible manufacturers and authorised suppliers for the supply, installation, testing and commissioning of laboratory equipment and ins... Type: Supply Last date: 12 Sep 2026 Est. cost: ₹ 85.00 lakh EMD: ₹ 1.70 lakh Location: Katra, Reasi Contact: Registrar, SMVDU Katra · Refer NIT PDF	GOVERNMENT MEDICAL COLLEGE (GMC) JAMMU Ref: GMC/JMU/PROC/2026-27/NIT-96 Supply of hospital equipment and surgical consumables for associated hospitals The Principal-cum–Dean, Government Medical College Jammu, invites online tenders from eligible manufacturers and authorised distributors for the supply of hospital equipment, patient-monitoring systems and surgical consu... Type: Supply Last date: 14 Sep 2026 Est. cost: ₹ 1.60 crore EMD: ₹ 3.20 lakh Location: Jammu Contact: Principal-cum–Dean, GMC Jammu · Refer NIT PDF
UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU Ref: JU/ESTATE/AMC/2026-27/NIT-31 Annual maintenance contract for HVAC and lift installations on main campus The Registrar, University of Jammu, invites online tenders from eligible and experienced firms for the comprehensive annual maintenance contract of HVAC systems, lifts and allied electro-mechanical installations at the m... Type: Service Last date: 15 Sep 2026 Est. cost: ₹ 55.00 lakh EMD: ₹ 1.10 lakh Location: Jammu Contact: Registrar, University of Jammu · Refer NIT PDF	EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, R&B DIVISION KISHTWAR Ref: RB/Kishtwar/NIT/2026-27/27 Landslide clearance and restoration of Chenab-belt link roads in Kishtwar Mechanical clearance of landslide debris and restoration of blacktop on Kishtwar–Dachhan and Kishtwar–Chatroo link roads blocked by August monsoon landslides. Type: Works Last date: 24 Sep 2026 Est. cost: Rs 2.05 crore EMD: Rs 41,000 Location: Kishtwar Contact: Executive Engineer, R&B Kishtwar · 01995-259023	J&K PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION (JKPSC) Ref: JKPSC/ADVT/2026/28 Recruitment of Medical Officers (Allopathic) in the Health & Medical Education Department The J&K Public Service Commission invites online applications from eligible candidates for direct recruitment to the posts of Medical Officer (Allopathic) in the Health & Medical Education Department, Union Territory of... Type: Recruitment Last date: 11 Sep 2026 Est. cost: N/A Location: Jammu & Srinagar Contact: Secretary, J&K Public Service Commission · jkpsc.nic.in
J&K SERVICES SELECTION BOARD (JKSSB) Ref: JKSSB/ADVT/2026-27/62 Recruitment of Junior Engineers (Civil) in various UT departments The J&K Services Selection Board invites online applications from eligible candidates for direct recruitment to the posts of Junior Engineer (Civil) in various Union Territory departments against advertised vacancies. Ca... Type: Recruitment Last date: 13 Sep 2026 Est. cost: N/A Location: Jammu & Srinagar Contact: Secretary, J&K Services Selection Board · jkssb.nic.in	J&K SERVICES SELECTION BOARD (JKSSB) Ref: JKSSB Advt. Notification No. 08 of 2026 dated 21-07-2026 Recruitment to 145 posts of Junior Assistant / Panchayat Accounts Assistant across divisions (Advt. No. 08 of 2026) J&K Services Selection Board (JKSSB) invites online applications from eligible candidates for recruitment to 145 posts of junior assistant / panchayat accounts assistant across divisions (adv. notification no. 08 of 202... Type: Recruitment Last date: 15 Sep 2026 Est. cost: N/A Location: Jammu & Kashmir (UT) Contact: Secretary, J&K Services Selection Board · jkssb.nic.in	JAMMU AND KASHMIR SERVICES SELECTION BOARD (JKSSB) Ref: JKSSB/Advt/09 of 2026 Recruitment to 320 posts of Junior Assistant across UT departments Direct recruitment to 320 posts of Junior Assistant (Divisional/District cadre) through online application and written examination; reserved-category quotas as per rules. Type: Recruitment Last date: 22 Sep 2026 Est. cost: — EMD: As per notification Location: Jammu & Kashmir (UT-wide) Contact: Secretary, JKSSB · 0191-2470102

REGIONAL

Tribunal upholds censure of Poonch Brigadier over 2023 custodial deaths

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Armed Forces Tribunal has upheld the ‘severe displeasure’ recorded against a serving Army Brigadier over the deaths of three civilians in custody in Poonch in December 2023, ruling that grief over the killing of soldiers could not justify the treatment meted out to the detainees. In an order pronounced on Aug 20, the tribunal’s Chandigarh bench dismissed the challenge brought by Brigadier P Acharya, who commanded a Rashtriya Rifles sector in the Pir Panjal region at the time of the incident. The case goes back to Dec 21, 2023, when militants ambushed an Army party in the Dhera Ki Gali belt of Poonch, killing four soldiers. Two of the bodies were found mutilated.

In the hours that followed, troops detained nine residents of Topa Peer village and questioned them at a nearby camp. Three of the men – Safeer Ahmad, 45, Mohammad Showkat and Shabir Ahmad – died, their families alleging they had been tortured. The deaths triggered outrage across the twin districts of Poonch and Rajouri and drew national attention to interrogation practices in the militancy-hit belt. According to the tribunal, the officiating commanding officer of the Rashtriya Rifles battalion had directed a company commander to use ‘slightly harsh’ methods on the suspects to extract information.

The bench, comprising Justice Sudhir Mittal and Lt Gen Ranbir Singh, further recorded that Brigadier Acharya had himself displayed anger, struck a suspect and failed to rein in officers under his command. The Army’s disciplinary process ended with the General Officer Commanding of the Nagrota-based 16 Corps awarding him a ‘severe displeasure’ in July 2024, effective for two years. Acharya had moved the tribunal arguing that the punishment was excessive and that the action against him was procedurally flawed. Rejecting that plea, the bench held that the Army authorities had acted within the law and that due process had not been violated, leaving no ground for judicial interference. ‘In the conflict between human emotions and the requirements of discipline, which is in large measure based on the law declared by the Supreme Court, human emotions must yield,’ the tribunal observed.

It acknowledged the provocation the unit had faced – ‘having lost their brothers-in-arms, and that too in a brutal manner, made their blood boil, and development of emotions of revenge is quite natural’ – but held that this could not license the conduct that led to the deaths. In the months before the attack, the Poonch-Rajouri belt had witnessed a string of ambushes on security convoys, and the four soldiers were killed as troops moved between forward positions along the forested Pir Panjal ridges. The mutilation of the bodies had further inflamed tempers within the unit, according to the tribunal’s account of events. In the immediate aftermath, the Army evacuated injured villagers to a military hospital, ordered a court of inquiry and moved a senior officer out of the sector within days. The Poonch custodial deaths became one of the most closely watched accountability cases to emerge from the region in recent years.

The Army had paid compensation to the bereaved families and assured residents that the guilty would be held to account, while its Northern Command issued fresh instructions on the handling of civilians during cordon-and-search operations. Rights groups and local political leaders had repeatedly demanded that the findings be made public and that criminal, not merely administrative, action follow. The tribunal’s order confirms the departmental censure but stops short of the criminal prosecution some families had sought. For the residents of Topa Peer and the surrounding villages of the Pir Panjal, the ruling reopens memories of a grim winter and renews questions over how counter-militancy operations are conducted in a region that has seen repeated deadly ambushes.

Legal observers said the judgment was significant for affirming that operational grief cannot dilute the disciplinary obligations of command.

REGIONAL

Cabinet clears High Court bench for Ladakh

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Aug 20 approved the establishment of a sitting bench of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in the Union Territory of Ladakh, a move the government said would significantly ease access to justice for people living in one of the country’s most remote regions. Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced the decision, calling it a step towards taking the judiciary to the doorstep of citizens. Until now, litigants from Leh have had to approach the Jammu wing of the High Court, while cases from Kargil are heard by the Srinagar wing – journeys that can take a day or more across high mountain passes that remain snowbound for months. Officials said around 500 cases from Ladakh are pending before the two wings and would benefit from a bench within the Union Territory. The Cabinet clarified that the decision does not create a separate High Court for Ladakh.

The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh will remain the common High Court for both Union Territories, with the newly approved bench providing a place of sitting inside Ladakh itself. The bench is expected to begin functioning initially from an Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre in Leh until permanent premises are readied. The demand for a dedicated bench has been raised for years by the Ladakh Bar and by public leaders from Leh and Kargil, who argued that the distance and cost of travel effectively denied justice to ordinary residents. Local associations welcomed the approval as recognition of Ladakh’s distinct administrative status since its separation from Jammu and Kashmir in 2019.

NATIONAL

Nine-judge bench keeps 1978 test for ‘industry’ disputes

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

A nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court on Aug 20 delivered its long-awaited verdict on the meaning of ‘industry’ under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, holding that all pending disputes will continue to be governed by the ‘triple test’ laid down in the 1978 Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board v A Rajappa case. The court also made clear that cases already decided will not be reopened. The 1978 test treats an activity as an industry where there is systematic activity, organised cooperation between employer and employees, and the production or distribution of goods or services to satisfy human wants, with the absence of a profit motive held to be no bar. The bench, led by Chief Justice Surya Kant, resolved a reference in State of Uttar Pradesh v Jai Bir Singh that had been pending since 2005 and before the nine-judge bench since 2017. While the judges were unanimous that the older test must govern legacy disputes, they differed on whether the definition needed refinement.

The Chief Justice, with three colleagues, suggested that a ‘discernible commercial character’ could be read into the third limb, but framed the observation as hypothetical and binding on no current case. Justices B V Nagarathna, P S Narasimha and others opposed reopening a provision that has since been replaced by the Industrial Relations Code, 2020. The court held that the 2020 Code, which now excludes charitable institutions, domestic service and sovereign functions, must be interpreted on its own terms. Labour lawyers said the ruling preserves certainty for thousands of workers whose cases have been stuck for years, while leaving the newer statute’s scope to be tested afresh.

NATIONAL

Nine killed in Kolkata hotel fire

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

At least nine people, including two women and a four-year-old child, were killed and six injured in a fire that swept through a five-storey building housing several hotels and guest houses in central Kolkata early on Aug 19. The blaze broke out around 1.45 am and was brought under control within about an hour, but by then thick smoke had trapped guests on the upper floors. Most of the victims died of smoke inhalation, West Bengal minister Koushik Chowdhury said, noting that several people were unable to escape and that some rooms lacked windows. Firefighters deployed multiple engines and struggled to reach the top floors through dense smoke, while police and disaster-management teams rescued about 80 people from the building, which stands close to the state fire department’s headquarters. Officials said a short circuit may have triggered the fire, though the exact cause is under investigation.

Some of those killed were identified as Bangladeshi nationals. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief at the deaths, and the state government announced fire-safety inspections at hotels across West Bengal in the wake of the tragedy.

INTERNATIONAL

Hong Kong convicts Tiananmen vigil organisers under security law

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

A Hong Kong court has convicted prominent pro-democracy figures Lee Cheuk-yan and Chow Hang-tung under the Beijing-imposed national security law over their role in organising the city’s annual vigils marking the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, in a verdict handed down around Aug 20 that rights groups called another blow to the territory’s dwindling civil liberties. The two were leaders of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, the group that for three decades organised the candlelight vigils in Victoria Park on June 4 to remember those killed when Chinese troops crushed the pro-democracy protests in Beijing. The gatherings, once drawing tens of thousands, were among the largest commemorations of the event held anywhere until authorities banned them, initially citing the pandemic, and the Alliance disbanded in 2021. Lee Cheuk-yan, a former lawmaker and long-time labour activist, and Chow Hang-tung, a barrister who became the group’s convenor after other leaders were jailed, were already in custody on related charges. The prosecution under the sweeping security law, enacted in 2020, has been closely watched abroad as a measure of how far Beijing has moved to silence dissent in the former British colony.

Western governments and human-rights organisations have repeatedly criticised the crackdown, while Chinese and Hong Kong officials insist the law has restored stability.

INTERNATIONAL

Israeli strikes in Gaza draw regional condemnation

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

At least 16 Palestinians were killed in Israeli strikes across Gaza in the days to Aug 21, drawing a joint condemnation from Turkey, Egypt and Qatar, the three states that have mediated efforts to hold a fragile ceasefire. The mediators urged Israel to meet its obligations under the truce and to halt operations they said were endangering civilians. The strikes came as Israel pressed ahead with settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank. Authorities opened tenders for about 1,200 new homes in the E1 area east of Jerusalem, a corridor whose development critics say would sever the northern and southern West Bank, and 30 ‘pioneer families’ moved into the Kadim settlement.

Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Canada and Norway jointly called the E1 plans ‘unacceptable,’ and the European Union was reported to be preparing a package of sanctions. Tensions widened on the diplomatic front, with the United States said to be moving to bar Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas from addressing the UN General Assembly in September. Aid agencies warned that the renewed strikes and the settlement push were deepening uncertainty over the ceasefire and the flow of humanitarian relief into the shattered enclave.

NATIONAL

Citizenship rules amended, collectors empowered to grant status

BY RAJESH KHAJURIA · 24 AUG, 2026

The Union government has amended the Citizenship Rules, 2009, empowering district collectors to grant citizenship under Section 6B of the Citizenship Act to eligible members of non-Muslim minority communities who migrated from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The revised mechanism has been extended to Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, in addition to several border states. Section 6B is the provision through which citizenship is conferred under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act framework to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from the three neighbouring countries who entered India on or before the cut-off date. By vesting district-level officers with the authority to receive and decide applications, the government said it aimed to make the process faster and more accessible for applicants living outside major cities. The inclusion of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh is significant because eligible migrant families, including West Pakistan refugees who have lived in the Jammu region for decades, have long sought a clear route to citizenship.

Officials said applications would be verified at the district level before status is granted. The move is expected to be closely watched in Jammu, where the question of long-resident migrant communities has been a recurring political issue.