

TRICOLOUR ESTATE

THE NEWS THAT MATTERS

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Vikram-1 Creates History

New Delhi, July 18: India achieved a historic milestone in its space programme on Saturday as Skyroot Aero-space successfully launched Vikram-1, the country's first privately developed orbital rocket, under Mission Aagaman. The rocket lifted off from ISRO's First Launch Pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR), Sriharikota, making India only the third country after the United States and China to have a private company capable of launching a rocket into orbit. Named after Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, the four-stage Vikram-1 is designed to provide rapid, on-demand launch services for small satellites. The rocket is carrying its mission to a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) at an altitude of around 450 km. Skyroot described the achievement as a major step towards its vision of offering a "cab service to space", enabling customers to book dedicated satellite launches with greater flexibility and speed. Mission Aagaman follows the successful launch of the Vikram-S suborbital rocket in 2022, which was India's first privately built rocket to reach space. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the Skyroot team, calling the mission "a historic new frontier for India's space journey" and saying it reflected the innovation, determination and entrepreneurial spirit of India's youth while highlighting the success of the country's space sector reforms.

RBI Begins Process for Polymer Banknotes

New Delhi, July 18: India has taken the first formal step towards introducing polymer banknotes, with the Reserve Bank of India's currency printing arm inviting global Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for the supply of polymer substrate sheets embedded with advanced security features. Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Pvt. Ltd. (BRBNMPL) has invited domestic and international manufacturers to submit bids by August 18 for producing opacified polymer substrate sheets used in banknote printing. The tender does not specify the denominations proposed for polymer notes or the timeline for their introduction. Polymer banknotes, made from durable plastic films, are more resistant to wear and tear and have a longer lifespan than conventional paper currency. The tender also lays down strict security conditions. Suppliers must obtain government security clearance, keep operations in China and Pakistan separate from the India contract, avoid sourcing raw materials from the two countries, and ensure India-specific substrates are not supplied to any third country. Last month, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the proposal to introduce polymer currency notes was under examination and remained at a preliminary stage, with no final decision taken yet.



Sonam Wangchuk Shifted to Hospital

New Delhi, July 18: Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk was shifted from Delhi's Jantar Mantar protest site to Safdarjung Hospital on Saturday after completing 20 days of his indefinite hunger strike over the alleged NEET paper leak. Delhi Police said the action was taken in compliance with the Delhi High Court's directions and on medical advice after Wangchuk's health deteriorated. He is reported to be conscious and in stable condition. Doctors had earlier warned that Wangchuk's condition had become critical after he reportedly lost over eight kilograms during the fast, raising concerns about possible organ failure. The Delhi High Court had directed authorities to conduct daily medical examinations and ensure all necessary steps were taken to protect his life. Police also appealed to protesters to vacate Jantar Mantar peacefully, stating that minor commotion occurred during the shifting process but was brought under control. The 59-year-old activist has been demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, holding him morally responsible for the alleged NEET paper leak. Protesters have also announced a march to Parliament on July 20, the opening day of the Monsoon Session, seeking broader educational reforms.



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9 Dead in Ahmedabad Firecracker Blast

Ahmedabad, July 18: The death toll in the explosion and fire at an allegedly illegal firecracker manufacturing unit in Ahmedabad's Ramol area has risen to nine, officials said on Saturday. According to hospital authorities, several victims succumbed to severe burn injuries after being admitted for treatment. Among the deceased are two men, three women and three children, while one woman remains under treatment in stable condition. The explosion occurred at a firecracker manufacturing unit in Mehmodpura on Ramol-Gatrad Road, triggering a massive fire and trapping several people under the debris. Personnel from the nearby Rapid Action Force (RAF) camp joined firefighters in rescue operations. Fire and emergency teams later brought the blaze under control, while cooling operations continued. Police are investigating the unit, which is suspected to have been operating illegally. The exact cause of the explosion is yet to be determined. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel expressed condolences over the tragedy and announced ex gratia assistance for the families of those killed and the injured.



5 Drown While Fishing in Godavari

Polavaram, July 18: Five persons, including three women, drowned in the Godavari River while fishing near Gollagudem village in Yetapaka mandal of Andhra Pradesh's Polavaram district on Saturday. The victims, identified as Lakshmi, Bharathi, Suseela, Balaraju and Ramesh, had entered the river with hand-held fishing nets, hoping for a larger catch due to increased floodwater flow downstream of Bhadrachalam. Local residents, with the help of boats, recovered all five bodies during a search operation. Yetapaka police have registered a case and launched an investigation. The bodies have been shifted to the Chintoor Government Hospital for post-mortem examination.

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EDITORIAL

Roadmap to a
Developed Nation

India stands at a defining moment in its development journey. With one of the world's fastest-growing economies, a youthful population, expanding digital infrastructure, and increasing global influence, the country has the opportunity to transform itself into a developed nation by the end of this decade. However, achieving the vision of India@2030 requires more than rapid economic growth. It demands a comprehensive roadmap that combines prosperity with inclusion, sustainability, innovation, and good governance. Economic growth remains the cornerstone of this vision. India aims to become one of the world's largest economies by expanding manufacturing, strengthening exports, attracting investments, and promoting entrepreneurship. Initiatives such as Make in India, Digital India, Startup India, and the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme have created a strong foundation. Yet, the true success of economic growth will depend on generating quality employment and improving the standard of living for millions of citizens. Infrastructure development is equally crucial. Modern highways, railways, ports, airports, logistics corridors, and high-speed digital connectivity can significantly improve productivity and reduce the cost of doing business. Smart cities, efficient public transport, and sustainable urban planning will play a vital role in supporting rapid urbanisation while ensuring a better quality of life.

India's greatest strength is its young population. To fully harness this demographic advantage, investments in education, skill development, research, and innovation are essential. Schools and universities must prepare students for emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, semiconductor manufacturing, robotics, biotechnology, renewable energy, and advanced manufacturing. A skilled workforce will be the engine that drives India's future economy. Agriculture also requires transformation. Climate-resilient farming, efficient irrigation, crop diversification, food processing, and better market access can enhance farmers' incomes while strengthening national food security. Scientific farming and digital technologies can improve productivity without compromising environmental sustainability. Healthcare, social security, and financial inclusion must remain central to development. Affordable healthcare, quality education, clean drinking water, digital services, and inclusive welfare programmes will ensure that growth benefits every section of society. Development cannot be considered complete if it leaves behind rural communities, women, or economically weaker sections.

Climate action is another defining priority. Expanding renewable energy, protecting forests, conserving water resources, promoting electric mobility, and building climate-resilient infrastructure are essential for achieving sustainable development. Economic progress and environmental protection must move together. India's global standing is also rising steadily.

Telugu Films Shine at 72nd National Awards

New Delhi, July 18: The 72nd National Film Awards were announced on Saturday, with Telugu cinema emerging as one of the biggest winners, bagging honours across major categories. 'Article 370' was named Best Feature Film, while Rajkumar Periyasamy won Best Director for the Tamil film 'Amaran'. Mammooty (Bramayugam) and Kartik Aaryan (Chandu Champion) shared the Best Actor award, while Yami Gautam won Best Actress for 'Article 370'. Among Telugu films, 'Kalki 2898 AD' received the Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment award. Sukumar won Best Original Screenplay for 'Pushpa 2: The Rule', while

Raghunetha Adhulauri received Best Dialogues for 'Lucky Baskhar'. 'Committee Kurrollu' was adjudged Best Telugu Film, and '35 Chinna Katha Kadu' won Best Children's Film. Young actor Arun Dev Pothula from the same film shared the Best Child Artist honour. Other Telugu winners included 'Kalki 2898 AD' for Best Production Design, 'Pushpa 2' for Best Costume Design, and 'Committee Kurrollu' for Best Make-up Artist. The awards recognise films certified between January 1 and December 31, 2024. The winners will receive their awards from the President of India at a ceremony to be held at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Army Coaching Helps
30 Assam Students Clear NEET

Guwahati, July 18: A free residential coaching programme supported by the Indian Army has helped 30 of 45 students qualify in NEET 2026 in Assam's Tinsukia district. The initiative, run by the National Integrity and Educational Development Organisation (NIEDO) with support from the Army's Red Shield Division under the Spear Corps, provides coaching and mentorship to meritorious students from economically weaker sections. Among the successful candidates, Roshan Kujur from Dighaltarrang Tea Estate scored 402 marks despite losing his father at a young age and growing up in financial hardship. His family is supported by his elder brother, who runs a small shop. Army officials said the programme aims to help talented but underprivileged students pursue medical education and has become an important educational initiative in Upper Assam. They added that the success reflects the students' hard work, faculty support, and the Army's commitment to youth empowerment and inclusive development.

Aadhaar App Crosses
4 Crore Downloads

New Delhi, July 18: The government-backed Aadhaar App has crossed 4 crore (40 million) downloads, highlighting the growing adoption of digital identity services across the country, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology said on Saturday. The app allows users to update Aadhaar details, download e-Aadhaar, manage biometric security, and update address, mobile number and email without visiting an Aadhaar centre. According to the ministry, the app has facilitated over 11.65 lakh address updates, nearly 49 lakh mobile number updates, and around 12.5 lakh email updates since the email update feature was introduced on July 1. Residents have also used the Biometric Lock/Unlock feature more than 1.91 crore times, enhancing the security of their Aadhaar information. The government said email updates, which earlier cost ₹75, have been made free through December 31, 2026, as part of efforts to promote digital services under the Digital India Mission.



US Airstrikes Kill 50 in Iran

Tehran, July 19: At least 50 people have been killed and around 500 injured in Iran since the latest wave of US airstrikes began, according to Iran's Health Ministry. Officials said 12 civilians died in the last 24 hours, while 460 injured people have been discharged from hospitals. Another 37 people remain under treatment. The US Central Command (CENTCOM) said its forces carried out a seventh consecutive night of strikes, targeting Iranian surveillance facilities, military logistics infrastructure, underground weapons depots and maritime capabilities. Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei criticised the United States, calling the US President's commitments "worthless" and accusing Washington of repeatedly violating agreements. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) claimed it targeted the US naval fuel support pier at Al Ahmadi Port in Kuwait and the Sheikh Isa Air Base in Bahrain. It also warned countries hosting US forces that they could face retaliatory attacks if their territory is used against Iran. Regional media reported that Jordan intercepted Iranian missiles, Bahrain thwarted several aerial attacks, and Kuwait reported damage to a power and desalination plant following an Iranian strike.

Former PM Deve Gowda's
Wife Passes Away at 85

Bengaluru, July 18: Chennamma (85), wife of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, passed away at a private hospital in Bengaluru on Saturday following a massive cardiac arrest. She had been admitted with breathing complications and was recovering when she suffered the cardiac arrest, the hospital said in a statement. Family members, including H.D. Deve Gowda, Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, and MLA H.D. Revanna, rushed to the hospital. Her mortal remains will be kept at the family's Padmanabhanagar residence in Bengaluru on Sunday for the public to pay their last respects. The final rites will be held in Hassan district on Monday. Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, former Chief Ministers Siddaramaiah, Basavaraj Bommai, and B.S. Yediyurappa expressed condolences over her demise.

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Sindhu Enters Japan Open Final

Tokyo, July 18: Indian badminton star P.V. Sindhu advanced to the Japan Open 2026 women's singles final after China's Chen Yufei retired injured during their semifinal on Saturday. Sindhu had already won the first game 21-19 and was leading 15-10 in the second when Chen, the world No. 4 and former Olympic champion, withdrew with a suspected hamstring injury. The 31-year-old Indian displayed aggressive shot-making and controlled the match from the outset. Despite Chen levelling the first game at 19-19, Sindhu held her nerve to take the opener before dominating the second game. The final marks Sindhu's first title clash of the 2026 season and caps an impressive comeback after rising from World No. 18 to No. 9 this year. Sindhu will face either Akane Yamaguchi of Japan or Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia in Sunday's final as she bids for the Japan Open title.

Missing Shooter Damayanti Returns Home

Kolkata, July 18: National-level shooter Damayanti Sen, who had been missing for nearly 48 hours, returned home safely on Saturday after being found near Ramkrishnapur Ferry Jetty in Howrah. Morning walkers identified the 15-year-old shooter and alerted her family. Her father, Dhruvajyoti Sen, reached the spot and brought her home. Damayanti had gone missing on Thursday after leaving home to buy household items. She was later seen in CCTV footage at Howrah Station and on Friday at the Mahesh Rath Yatra in Hooghly. Police had formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) and launched a massive search operation. However, the circumstances surrounding her disappearance remain unclear, with neither her family nor investigators revealing details about where she was during the two days. Recently selected for Indian national team trials, Damayanti's safe return has brought relief to her family, neighbours and the shooting fraternity.



Shakira Praises Messi Before Final

Colombian singer Shakira has gone viral after sharing a heartfelt Instagram message praising Lionel Messi ahead of Argentina's FIFA World Cup 2026 final against Spain. Calling Messi's performances at the age of 39 "beyond extraordinary," Shakira hailed his dedication, discipline and ability to defy age. "What Leo Messi is doing is beyond extraordinary... It proves that a person is not defined by age or by what others say," she wrote. She also praised Antonela Rocuzzo, saying Messi's wife has been a constant source of strength and inspiration throughout his career. Antonela later reshared Shakira's post on her Instagram account. Meanwhile, Messi dismissed criticism suggesting Argentina had benefited from favourable officiating during the tournament. "We've been the best over these past four years, whether people like it or not. We've proved that nothing was handed to us," Messi said after Argentina's 2-1 semifinal victory over England, in which Enzo Fernandez and Lautaro Martinez scored after the team fell behind. Argentina will now face Spain in Sunday's World Cup final, with Messi also in contention for the Golden Boot award.



Lord's ODI Decider:
Rohit Under Spotlight

India and England will battle for the ODI series in the deciding match at Lord's on Sunday, with veteran opener Rohit Sharma set to remain the centre of attention amid speculation over his international future. Rumours had suggested the Lord's ODI could be Rohit's final appearance for India, but BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia dismissed the reports, stating that the match would not mark the end of the former captain's ODI career. The series is level at 1-1, with England bouncing back in Cardiff through an unbeaten 99 by Joe Root. Root has scored 175 runs without being dismissed in the series, while England's other batters have struggled for consistency. India, meanwhile, will look for stronger performances from their experienced batting line-up after failing to capitalise in the second ODI. The visitors will be forced into at least one change, with Washington Sundar ruled out due to a hamstring injury. KL Rahul is expected to return after recovering from illness, while Kuldeep Yadav is likely to replace Sundar. England may recall Josh Tongue, while Jos Buttler will be under pressure to improve his modest ODI record against India. Lord's is traditionally a difficult venue for chasing teams, with conditions generally favouring the side batting first. The winner of Sunday's contest will clinch the ODI series.



Ananya Pandey

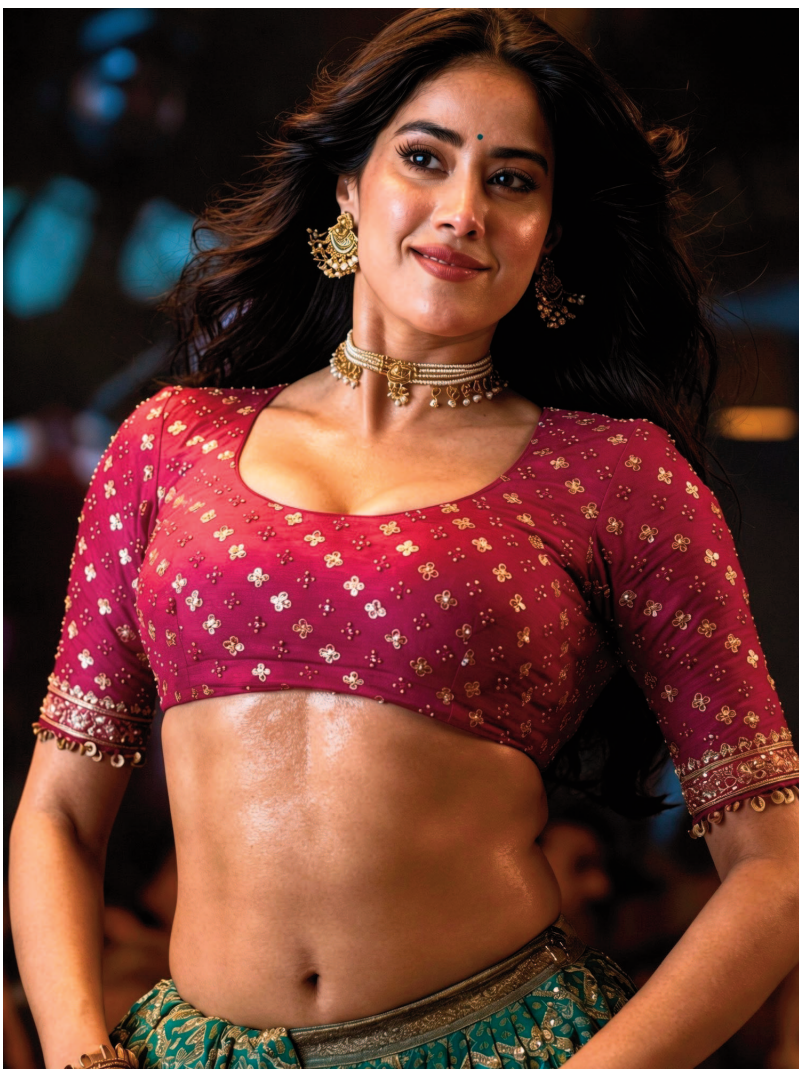


Here is Priyanka's Look From Varanasi

Mumbai: Filmmaker S.S. Rajamouli unveiled the first-look poster of Priyanka Chopra from his upcoming film Varanasi on the actress' 44th birthday. Priyanka will portray Mandakini, with Rajamouli describing her character as: "Grace when she smiles. Fire when she doesn't." The poster shows the actress in an all-black outfit with a fierce look. Also starring Mahesh Babu and Prithviraj Sukumaran, Varanasi is scheduled to release on April 7, 2027. Set across 512 AD and 2027 AD, the fantasy-action drama follows a community guarding an ancient secret capable of saving the world. After an asteroid named Shambhavi strikes Earth, a scientist, Kumbha (played by Prithviraj), becomes paralysed while attempting to retrieve a powerful artefact. The film features music by M.M. Keeravani, the Oscar-winning composer of RRR, and is produced by Sri Durga Arts and Showing Business.

Janhvi Kapoor Signs New Film

Mumbai: Actress Janhvi Kapoor has signed a new untitled film with Paggla director Umesh Bist, nearly a month after the controversy surrounding her role in Peddi. The film will be jointly produced by Balaji Motion Pictures and Sikhya Entertainment, with shooting expected to begin in October-November. The makers are yet to announce the title, cast and storyline. Umesh Bist is also set to direct Paggla 2, which will reportedly feature Sanya Malhotra reprising her role. Janhvi has remained silent on the controversy over Peddi, where critics accused the film of objectifying her character, Achiyamma, through camera angles and romantic sequences. Following the backlash, director Buchi Babu Sana apologised and removed the controversial scenes from the film. The debate also prompted several film personalities to call for stronger and more meaningful female characters in mainstream cinema.



Rakul Joins Food Safety Challenge



Rakul Preet Singh has joined the #What'sOnYourPlate campaign linked to the upcoming film The India Story, promoting awareness about food safety and quality. Accepting the challenge from Kajal Aggarwal, Rakul shared a picture of her healthy meal on social media and urged people to pay attention to the quality of the food they consume every day. She also nominated Jackky Bhagnani and Tamannaah Bhatia to continue the campaign, while Kajal reshared Rakul's post in support of the initiative. The campaign encourages people to share photos of their meals to spark conversations on food quality, pesticide use in agriculture, and public health. Presented by Zee Studios in association with MIG Productions & Studios, The India Story stars Kajal Aggarwal and Shreyas Talpade. Directed by Chetan DK and produced by Sagar B. Shinde, the film is scheduled for a worldwide release in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil on July 24, 2026.



‘Toxic’ Trailer On August 8

The makers of Yash-starrer Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups are expected to unveil the film's trailer on August 8, accompanied by a grand launch event in Bengaluru. Directed by Geetu Mohandas, the film is slated for a worldwide theatrical release on August 26, 2026. The action drama features an ensemble cast including Nayanthara, Kiara Advani, Tara Sutaria, Rukmini Vasanth, and Huma Qureshi. Shot simultaneously in Kannada and English, the film will also be released in multiple languages. It is jointly produced by KVN Productions and Monster Mind Creations. Ahead of the trailer launch, the makers recently released the song Tabaahi, featuring Yash and Kiara Advani.