

Two labourers killed in Leh blast

Excelsior Correspondent
 LEH, Aug 16: Two labourers hailing from Jharkhand were killed and another injured in a mine blast at Lukung in this district in the Union Territory of Ladakh this evening.
 As per reports, one of the labourers reportedly stepped over the mine near fencing of ITBP camp after unloading cement at Lukung and got injured.
 Two seriously injured labourers succumbed to their injuries
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Rahul on 2-day visit to Ladakh from today

Excelsior Correspondent
 LEH, Aug 16: Congress leader and MP Rahul Gandhi is reaching here tomorrow on a two-day visit.
 This was stated by Tsering Namgyal, Leader of Opposition in Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Leh.
 He said Rahul Gandhi will reach Leh tomorrow noon.
 He will meet senior Congress leaders during his two-day visit to Ladakh.

When Assembly polls will be held, asks Omar

SRINAGAR, Aug 16:
 National Conference leader Omar Abdullah has offered a backhanded compliment to the Jammu and Kashmir administration, saying the "queues" outside the Independence Day function venue were "excellent" but asked when Assembly elections will be held.
 "Excellent. So when can these same people expect to be queuing outside polling booths for assembly elections?" Omar said in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter.
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NC supports Cong candidate

Excelsior Correspondent
 KARGIL, Aug 16: As part of its alliance with Congress for Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Kargil elections, the National Conference today announced support to Congress candidate from Parkachik constituency.
 *Watch video on www.excelsiornews.com

The National Conference will not field its candidate from Parkachik, the NC leaders said.
 Talks between NC and Congress leaders are going on for seat sharing on 26 constituencies of the LAHDC Kargil.

Indo-Pak, Sino-Indian troops exchange sweets

Excelsior Correspondent
 JAMMU, Aug 16: Indian troops yesterday exchanged greetings and sweets with their Pakistani counterparts in Poonch, Jammu and Samba districts of the region on the occasion of the
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Does President have powers to suspend some provisions? Can Parl enact law to divide J&K into 2 UTs during Prez rule, asks SC

NEW DELHI, Aug 16:
 The Supreme Court today asked whether Parliament could have enacted the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, which divided the erstwhile State into two Union Territories, during the subsistence of President's Rule in 2018-2019.
 The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill was tabled and passed by the Rajya Sabha on August 5, 2019 and was tabled and passed by the Lok Sabha the next day. It received presidential assent on August 9, 2019.
 A five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud posed this question to senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, appearing for

Modi sets tone for 2024, exudes confidence of return PM calls for war against corruption, dynastic politics, appeasement

NEW DELHI, Aug 16:
 Setting the tone for his 2024 re-election bid, Prime Minister Narendra Modi today called for waging a war against the "three evils" of corruption, appeasement and dynastic politics, stepped up the OBC outreach with a mega scheme and exuded confidence he would return to address the nation from the Red Fort next year.

Showing his politics of "perform, reform and transform" as against the previous "politics of instability", Modi, in his last Independence Day address from the ramparts of the Red Fort here before the next Lok Sabha polls, also spoke of a resurgent India globally on his watch, projecting the country's rising global profile to emerge as 'Vishwa-Mitra' (universal friend).
 The next five years are a period of unprecedented development and will prove to be a golden period in realising the dream of a developed India by 2047, he asserted, assuring people of "Modi ki guarantee" that the country will become the third largest economy in the next five

years. Everything done in 'Amrit Kaal'—the period until 2047, the centenary of India's Independence—will have an impact on the next 1,000 years, he said in his address to mark the country's 77th



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the nation from the ramparts of Red Fort on the occasion of Independence Day celebrations in New Delhi. (UNI)

engaged in traditional skills, including carpenters, masons and goldsmiths.
 The scheme, mainly benefiting people belonging to the OBC category, will be launched on

situation in the northeast state, which has been hit by ethnic violence, was improving and asserted that solution to its problems can be found only through peace. "The nation is with Manipur," he said at the outset of his 90-minute address.

Warning people against opposition parties without naming any, the prime minister strongly denounced corruption, dynastic politics and appeasement as the three evils that have harmed the country immensely, and said these perversions became such a part of the system over the decades that people began ignoring them.
 "We have to look these evils in the eye and wage a war against them. We can't tolerate corruption in any form to realise the dream of a developed nation."
 "Like termites, corruption has completely hollowed out the systems of the country and its capabilities."
 The Prime Minister asserted that it was important to fight corruption in every sector and it was his lifelong commitment to pursue this fight.
(Contd on page 4 Col 3)

Vishwakarma Jayanti that falls on September 17.

With retail inflation soaring to 7.44 per cent, Modi also asserted that his Government will be taking more measures to tackle price hike to minimise its burden on people.

Touching upon the volatile situation in Manipur, he said the

Govt to take decision soon, term expires on Sept 18 With lot of work pending on RBA category, Sharma Comm seeks 6 months extension

Sanjeev Pargal
 JAMMU, Aug 16: With lot of work yet to be done on deletions and additions of Backward Areas, the Jammu and Kashmir Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Commission has sought an extension of six-month term in its tenure beyond September 18, 2023.

Justice (Retd.) G D Sharma-led Commission comprising Rup Lal Bharat and Munir Khan has sent a request to the Union Territory Government for its extension by another six months, official sources told the Excelsior.
 The Commission has completed its task on grant of reservation to Paharis, Paddari tribe, Koli and Gadda Brahmins, Other

Backward Classes (OBCs) and Valmikis as Scheduled Castes (SCs).
 However, as per the sources, the Commission is yet to complete the task on deletion of backward areas which have developed over the years and include which are backward in real terms but were not part of backward areas.
 Sources said the Government is expected to take a decision soon on Commission's call for extension in its term by six months.

Residents of Backward Areas (RBA) had 20 per cent reservation in Jammu and Kashmir which was later brought down to 10 per cent following uproar that influ-

ential persons including politicians have got included their villages in the RBA category to avail benefits of reservation in Government jobs and educational institutions.
 The Commission had invited representations from people in support of their claims for inclusion of their areas as backward.
 As per the sources, a number of villages which were earlier declared as backward, have developed over the years as review of the areas wasn't carried out for past quite some time.

The Commission is likely to recommend exclusion of such villages from the list of back-

ward. In their place, it could include the villages which are genuinely backward but hadn't been included in the list of RBA.
 "To complete the task, the Commission needs time and in view of this as well as some other factors, it has sought extension of six months from the Government," sources said.
 "In 1995 when the then Commission declared backward areas, it was mentioned that a review will be carried out after every five years as some areas may develop during that time which can be excluded from the list of RBA while left out areas can be included," sources said.
 However, they said, the review was not carried out for last 28
(Contd on page 4 Col 7)

No cellular shutdown, no barricades in Valley Thousands participate in I-Day celebrations across Kashmir

Excelsior Correspondent
 SRINAGAR Aug 16: After over three decades, thousands of Kashmiris thronged Bakshi Stadium here yesterday to participate in the Independence Day celebrations as authorities put no restrictions on the movement of people in Srinagar and other parts of Kashmir with no security barricades.
 Srinagar and most of the towns in Kashmir used to present a garrison look with iron barricades and concertina wire blocking the roads and thousands of gun-toting security men guarding the streets across the Valley but yesterday to the pleasant surprise of the people here all this was done away with.



People celebrating Independence Day at city centre Lal Chowk in Srinagar.

People in thousands carrying the national flags watched the Independence Day celebrations in

HP rains death toll reaches 71

SHIMLA, Aug 16:
 At least 71 people have died in the past three days and 13 are still missing in Himachal Pradesh after devastating rains pounded the state, with Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu terming the work of rebuilding infrastructure a "mountain-like challenge".
(Contd on page 4 Col 7)

Searches in Poonch

Excelsior Correspondent
 MENDHAR, Aug 16: Security forces today conducted a search operation in nearly a dozen villages near the Line of Control (LoC) ahead of the annual Budha Amarnath yatra in Poonch district, officials said.
 This was the second time in the
(Contd on page 4 Col 3)



Soldiers keeping vigil on Line of Control at Machil in Northern Kupwara district on Wednesday. (UNI)

'Aim to work for welfare of people' LG warns of befitting reply for any attempt of aggression

Fayaz Bukhari
 SRINAGAR, Aug 16: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha warned of befitting reply to any attempt of aggression and said that his administration is committed to safeguard the national interest.

Sinha said this during his address at the Independence Day function here yesterday. "We believe in peace and mutual goodwill. We are fully committed to safeguard national interests and if provoked, we are capable of giving a befitting response to any attempt of aggression," he added.
 The LG said that terrorism is one of the gravest threats to peace and progress. "The ideology of terrorism and separatism is cancer for society and all its forms have to be completely eliminated. We need to identify the remaining elements and isolate them. We need to stop using double standards for terrorism," he said.
 Sinha said that the administration is determined to strike the last nail in the terror ecosystem. "A terrorist has to be called a terrorist. We are determined to take decisive and tough action against terrorism and strike the last nail in the coffin



LG Manoj Sinha taking salute at Independence Day Parade at Bakshi Stadium in Srinagar.

of the terrorist-secessionist ecosystem," he said.
 The LG lauded the security forces for their role in curbing terrorism in the J&K. "I want to assure our brave soldiers guarding the borders that citizens of Jammu and Kashmir and the entire nation stand shoulder to shoulder with you," he said.
 Sinha said sincere efforts have been made for the welfare of the people and ensuring peace in everyone's life.
 "I have dedicated every moment of my life to keep those promises and to usher Jammu and Kashmir in a new era of
(Contd on page 4 Col 5)

832 perform darshan at cave shrine Holy mace taken to historic Shankaracharya temple

Avtar Bhat
 JAMMU, Aug 16: In connection with ongoing annual Amarnath Ji yatra, Chhari Mubarak the saffron robbed holy mace of Lord Shiva was today taken to historic Shankaracharya temple on Gopadari hills for special prayers and rituals.
 *Watch video on www.excelsiornews.com



Mahant Deependra Giri and a group of Sadhus offering pooja at Shankaracharya Temple in Srinagar on the occasion of 'Haryali-Amavasya' (Shravan Amavasya) on Wednesday.

as per age-old customs and traditions. The summit of the hill is crowned with a picturesque edifice. This hill was called Jetha
(Contd on page 4 Col 7)

Cabinet approves Digital India extension 10,000 e-buses to be deployed in 169 cities

NEW DELHI, Aug 16:
 Cabinet today approved extension of Digital India project with an outlay of Rs 14,903 crore, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.
 The Minister said that the extended Digital India project will add on to the work done under the previous version of the scheme.
 "Prime Minister in the cabinet meeting has approved Digital India programme with outlay of Rs 14,903 crore," Vaishnaw said.
 He said that under the project 5.25 lakh IT professionals will be reskilled and upskilled and 2.65 lakh persons will be trained in IT.
 Under the extended Digital India project, nine more super computers will be added under the National Supercomputing

Mission (NCM).
 The Minister said that already 18 super computers have been deployed under NCM.
 Meanwhile, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved seven multi-tracking projects of Indian Railways at an estimated cost of around Rs 32,500 crore and these will bring down the travel time for passengers, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.
 The proposed projects, which will be fully funded by the Centre, will help increase the existing line capacity, smoothen train operations, reduce congestion and facilitate ease of travelling and transportation.
 The projects covering 35 districts in nine States -- Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Telangana, Andhra
(Contd on page 4 Col 3)

In-depth discussion on Eastern Ladakh In 2-day military talks, India, China agree to resolve remaining issues

NEW DELHI, Aug 16:
 In a rare two-day military talks, India and China agreed to resolve the remaining issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh in an expeditious manner besides maintaining peace and tranquility in the border areas, a joint statement said yesterday, a day after conclusion of the dialogue.
 The readout on the 19th round of Corps Commander-level meeting described the talks as "positive, constructive and in-depth" but it did not indicate any immediate breakthrough in the disengagement of troops in the remaining friction points.
 It was for the first time, the high-level military talks on the bor-

der row spanned two days, people familiar with the matter said, adding the discussions totalled around 17 hours over two days.
 The talks were held at Chushul-Moldo border meeting point on the Indian side of the LAC on August 13 and 14, a week before Prime Minister Narendra Modi travels to Johannesburg to attend a summit of BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) where he is set to come face-to-face with Chinese President Xi Jinping.
 "The two sides had a positive, constructive and in-depth discussion on the resolution of the remaining issues along the LAC in the Western Sector. In line with the guidance provided by the leadership, they exchanged views in an

open and forward looking manner," a statement said.
 "They agreed to resolve the remaining issues in an expeditious manner and maintain the momentum of dialogue and negotiations through military and diplomatic channels," it said.
 "In the interim, the two sides agreed to maintain the peace and tranquility on the ground in the border areas," the statement released simultaneously in Delhi and Beijing said.
 It is learnt that in the talks, the Indian side strongly pressed for resolving the lingering issues at Depsang and Demchok.
 A statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) following the 18th round of military
(Contd on page 4 Col 3)