

One terrorist killed in encounter with security forces in Kulgam district

Peerzada Ashiq

SRINAGAR

A terrorist was killed in an ongoing anti-terror operation by security forces in Kulgam district of south Kashmir on Saturday.

“Intermittent and intense fire fight continued through the night. Alert troops responded with calibrated fire and tightened the noose while maintaining contact. One terrorist has been neutralised by the security forces so far. Operation continues,” the Army’s Chinara Corps said in a post on X.

Security forces on Friday evening engaged a group of hiding terrorists in a firefight in the jungles of south Kashmir’s Kul-



High vigil: Security personnel stand guard amid an encounter between terrorists and security forces at Akhal in Kulgam. PTI

gam. “An encounter has started at Akhal area of Kulgam (south Kashmir). The police’s Special Operations Group, Army and CRPF are on job,” a police spokesman said.

This is the third encounter in J&K this week.

Six terrorists were left killed in these encounters, including all the three involved in the Pahalgam terror attack.

Post offices across India to accept digital payments soon

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

Even as India Post phases out its “Registered Post” service and merges it with Speed Post, the Department of Posts has indicated that it will firm up its logistics for transporting mail and upgrade its IT systems.

A key initiative has been integrating Unified Payments Interface (UPI) at the time of booking Speed Post, which will prevent individual post offices from declining digital payments.

One way in which India Post has said it will firm up its domestic mail transport is by ensuring that mail bags have enough room on flights across India.

The Hindu had first re-

ported on July 9 India Post’s intention to reserve such “hard blocks” on passenger flights’ spare room in the cargo hold. On July 17, the postal department issued the tender to this effect, inviting airlines to bid for these hard block contracts.

UPI request

Post offices across the country have also been upgrading their IT systems in phases. Aside from accepting UPI in a so-called “collect mechanism”, where a mail article is booked as soon as a UPI request is paid, the new system also includes more fields in tracking, such as the next post office a particular package or letter is headed



Post offices across the country have also been upgrading their IT system in phases. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

to while in transmission.

This new Advanced Postal Technology (APT) system has been rolled out in some of the major metro cities, such as Delhi and Chennai. Large parts of

bookings on Saturday as they also undertook the upgrades. Over 86,000 post offices have been upgraded to the new systems so far, representing over half the postal network in India.

Better user experience

The APT application is designed to offer an enhanced user experience, faster service delivery, and a more customer-friendly interface, reflecting our unwavering commitment to delivering smarter, efficient, and future-ready postal operations,” the Ministry of Communications said in a statement.

Chandra Sekhar Pemasani, the Minister of State for Communications,

reviewed some of the upgrade work earlier this week. Postal officials said the APT was “designed to introduce real-time track and trace capabilities, customised services for bulk customers, electronic proof of delivery, OTP-based authentication, digital payments, and open API integration,” according to a statement.

Two officials told *The Hindu* that the department was working on an email-like system that would allow letters to be redirected seamlessly when addressees shift their residence. The DIGIPIN initiative, which allows for more precise latitude-longitude data in a PIN code, has also been launched this year.

Mumbai will transition on August 4, the department said.

In Delhi, over a dozen post offices were upgraded last month, and over 400 post offices did not accept

Marathi made mandatory, but nothing wrong with learning another Indian language: CM

Devendra Fadnavis wades into language debate again, says he opposes mindset that rejects native languages and lays out red carpet for English; on cue, Thackeray cousins criticise Maharashtra CM

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, speaking to the media in Nagpur, said on Saturday that there is nothing wrong in Marathi students learning another Indian language instead of valorising English.

"I firmly believe that Marathi must be compulsorily taught in Maharashtra, and we have already made it mandatory. But if Marathi students in Maharashtra also get a chance to learn another Indian language along with Marathi, what is wrong with that? I oppose the mindset that rejects Indian languages and lays out the red carpet only for English," he said, emphasising that Marathi was essential for the State's cultural and linguistic identity.

The Chief Minister's comments came amid an ongoing 'Marathi versus Hindi' debate in the State, with the Opposition claiming success in getting the Mahayuti government to



Proud moment: Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis along with other dignitaries felicitating Grandmaster and Women's World Cup champion Divya Deshmukh during a ceremony in Nagpur on Saturday. PTI

shelve its plan to introduce Hindi as a third language from Classes 1 to 5.

On cue, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and his cousin, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) leader Raj Thackeray - both of whom were at the forefront of resisting what they called "Hindi imposition" - criticised Mr. Fadnavis for his comments.

"The Chief Minister of Maharashtra thinks about how schoolchildren can learn Hindi. But he does not think how people who

come to Maharashtra for work can learn Marathi,"

Mr. Raj Thackeray said while addressing the foundation day of the Peasants and Workers Party, an event also attended by Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut.

'Don't impose language'

Mr. Uddhav alleged that the Fadnavis government is trying to "finish Marathi" in Maharashtra.

"We have no hatred towards any language but do not impose any language

on us," he said at a separate event in Shivalay, the Sena (UBT)'s office.

The government had issued two government resolutions (GRs) about the three-language policy for students of Classes 1 to 5 in line with the National Education Policy, 2020.

The GRs were withdrawn after an outcry from several quarters. On July 5, the Thackeray cousins had made a joint appearance at a rally after decades to celebrate the rollback of the Hindi language GRs.

Odisha, Chhattisgarh likely to end Mahanadi water dispute amicably

Odisha proposal for 'mutually beneficial settlement' under consideration: Sai

SUJIT BISOI

BHUBANESWAR, AUGUST 2

WITH ODISHA and Chhattisgarh having BJP governments, both the states are likely to go for an "amicable solution" in the long-standing dispute over Mahanadi water sharing.

The issue is pending with the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal formed by the Centre in March 2018 following a Supreme Court direction.

Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi, who chaired a meet over the issue on July 23, wrote to his Chhattisgarh counterpart Vishnu Deo Sai two days later seeking a "mutually beneficial settlement". Sai responded to Majhi on Friday saying the former's proposal is under "active consideration".

In his letter, Majhi proposed a joint committee led by officials of the Central Water Commission and comprising officials from both the states to facilitate dialogue and technical negotiations to reach a "mutually beneficial settlement".

"With our collective effort and active cooperation of both states and the Central Water Commission, we can achieve a just, equitable, and timely resolution to this pressing issue. Such a resolution will not only bring about peace and stability but also foster greater cooperation,



Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi; Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai

trust, and goodwill between Odisha and Chhattisgarh, paving the way for future collaborations," Majhi said in his letter.

Official sources said chief secretaries of both states held initial discussions on the issue.

River Mahanadi that flows through Chhattisgarh and Odisha is a major source of water for agriculture, industry and hydropower generation.

Official sources said the Mahanadi has a total catchment area of 141,600 sq km, of which 53.9% is in Chhattisgarh, 45.73% in Odisha and a very small part in Madhya Pradesh.

As the river caused massive flooding, Odisha in 1953 built a 25-km long earthen dam at Hirakud in Sambalpur district to reserve water for irrigation facilities in western region of the state and for power generation. Odisha in 2016 claimed a minimum flow of 12.28-million-acre feet of Mahanadi water at Hirakud dam.

ISRO targets 2027 launch for LVM3 semi-cryogenic stage

Tiki Rajwi

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is aiming for a 2027 launch for its first LVM3 launch vehicle equipped with a semi-cryogenic propulsion stage. “Right now we are on track. The power head tests [on the engine] are progressing with great success. Five to six tests have been completed. We have set the launch target for the first quarter of 2027,” ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan said during a visit to Thiruvananthapuram.

Formerly known as GSLV Mk III, the three-stage LVM3 had its first experimental flight in December, 2014, and is ISRO’s most powerful rocket to date. The semi-cryogenic



V. Narayanan

stage is designed to enhance payload capability while keeping costs down, Mr. Narayanan said.

Currently capable of lifting 4200 kg payloads to the geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO), the LVM3 will see significant changes when it is fitted with the semi-cryogenic stage. The L110 core stage, which uses liquid propellant, will be replaced by the semi-cryo

stage which uses a propellant combination of refined kerosene and liquid oxygen (LOX). The propellant loading in the cryogenic upper stage, which uses a Liquid Hydrogen-LOX combination, will increase from 28 tonnes to 32 tonnes.

Mr. Narayanan described the semi-cryogenic engine as a “very complex one” that uses special materials to withstand high temperatures and oxidiser-rich combustion. Whereas the liquid-fuelled Vikas engine gives a nominal thrust of 80 tonnes, the SE2000 semi-cryogenic engine is designed to supply 200 tonnes, he said.

Once perfected, the semi-cryogenic engines will see use in ISRO’s future launch vehicles.

Indians in Ireland urged to take 'reasonable precautions'

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of racist attacks on foreigners in Dublin, the Embassy of India in Ireland has issued an advisory for citizens urging them to take "reasonable precautions". The advisory came soon after an Indian national took to social media, on July 31, reporting that he became the latest victim of an attack by teenage gang members.

"There has been an increase in the instances of physical attacks reported against Indian citizens in Ireland recently. The Embassy is in touch with the authorities concerned of Ireland in this regard. At the same time, all Indian citizens in Ireland are advised to take reasonable precautions for their personal security and avoid deserted areas, especially

In the latest incident, a Multimodal AI Scientist was assaulted by teenage gang members

in odd hours," said the Indian Embassy in Ireland in the advisory. The announcement urged Indian citizens to contact 0899423734 in case of emergency.

The Hindu had earlier reported that an Indian employee working with Amazon was assaulted by teenage gang members on July 19. Indian Ambassador Akhilesh Mishra had said the incident had caused "widespread concern and fear" among the 90,000-strong Indian community in Ireland. The latest incident took place on July 31 when Dr. Santosh Yadav, a Multimodal AI Scientist,

was assaulted, leaving him with a fractured cheekbone and other injuries. Dr. Yadav took to social network LinkedIn to share images of the injuries, and said, "This is not an isolated incident. Racist attacks on Indian men and other minorities are surging across Dublin."

Ambassador Mishra has said the Indian mission is in touch with the wider Indian community. "The recurrence of attacks on innocent, highly qualified technical experts and professionals has caused widespread fear among the community all over Ireland. Well-being of the Indian community is a matter of high priority to the embassy and the Ministry of External Affairs. The matter has been taken up with the relevant Irish authorities in Dublin and also in Delhi."

Turkiye starts supplying Azerbaijani gas to Syria

Agence France-Presse

ISTANBUL

Turkiye on Saturday turned on a supply of natural gas from Azerbaijan to Syria, whose infrastructure was ravaged by civil war, with annual deliveries expected to reach up to two billion cubic metres.

Syria's Islamist authorities, who toppled President Bashar al-Assad in December, are seeking to rebuild the battered country where power cuts can last for more than 20 hours a day.

Speaking at a ceremony attended by Syria's Energy Minister, Azerbaijan's Economy Minister and the head of Qatar's development fund, Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said the initiative would help normalise Syria.

Bangladesh interim government to unveil 'July Declaration' on August 5

The Yunus govt. wants to give constitutional recognition to the student-led uprising that led to Hasina's ouster; the plan has sparked debate among political parties – not only over the declaration's content but over whether it should be legitimised

Press Trust of India

DHAKA

The Bangladesh interim government of Muhammad Yunus on Saturday said it would unveil on August 5 the “July Declaration”, coinciding with the first anniversary of the ouster of then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League regime.

“The interim government has finalised the draft of the July Declaration. It will be presented on Tuesday, August 5, 2025, before the nation,” Mr. Yunus's press wing said.

The Yunus-led interim government wants to give constitutional recognition to the student-led uprising



Glory moment: Anti-government protestors celebrate in Shahbag near Dhaka university area in Dhaka on August 5, 2024. AFP

that took place last year in July-August, which led to the ouster of Sheikh Hasina. This recognition is known as the July Declaration.

while, said the much-anticipated July Declaration was now a “reality”.

The Students Against Discrimination (SAD) led last year's violent campaign that eventually toppled the Awami League regime, prompting Ms. Hasina to flee the country on August 5, 2024. However, the idea for the July Declaration arose to SAD leaders by the end of December last year.

Mr. Yunus's government initially preferred to distance itself from the move, calling it a “private initiative”, but in a surprise announcement later said the government itself would prepare the “proclamation of July uprising”.

The proponents of the declaration say it is aimed at “unifying the nation around last year's core values of anti-fascism, democratic resurgence, and state reform” but it sparked debate among political parties – not only over its content alone but also over whether it should be granted constitutional status.

Former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury said there was no scope to bring any change in the political process outside parliament, which does not exist in the country.

Information adviser Mahfuj Alam, whom Mr. Yunus earlier called the “main brain” or the mastermind of what is dubbed the July uprising, mean-

Attacks in China, Japan raise concerns about xenophobia in both countries

Associated Press

A Japanese woman living in China was attacked and injured by a man in a Suzhou subway station, Japanese media outlets said, hours after two Chinese men were seriously injured in violence in Tokyo.

The attacks on Thursday raised concern about xenophobic sentiment in both China and Japan that have been blamed for assaults in both countries. It

was the third attack involving Japanese living in China since last year. In the two previous cases in China, Chinese authorities have



A Japanese woman who was with her child was injured in an attack at the Suzhou subway station in eastern China on Thursday. AP

insisted they were isolated incidents.

The Japanese broadcaster NHK did not identify the woman injured in Suz-

hou by name but, citing the Japanese Consulate General in Shanghai, said she was with her child inside a subway station when

the attack took place.

The child was not injured, and the mother had returned home after reportedly getting treated at a hospital, NHK reported.

The Japanese news agency Kyodo said the suspect had been detained.

In Tokyo earlier on Thursday, two Chinese men were seriously injured in attacks, and four men wielding unspecified weapons remained at large, according to a statement released by the Chinese Embassy in Japan.

The identities of the assailants had remained unclear.

Indonesia's Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki erupts again

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JAKARTA, AUGUST 2

MOUNT LEWOTOBI Laki Laki, one of Indonesia's most active volcanoes, erupted for a second straight day, sending a column of volcanic materials and ash up to 18 kilometers (11 miles) into the sky early Saturday and blanketing villages with debris. No casualties were immediately reported.



Volcanic materials and ash went 18 km into the sky. *AP*

Another eruption Friday evening had sent clouds of ash

up to 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) high and had lit up the night sky with glowing lava and bolts of lightning. The two eruptions happened in a span of less than five hours.

Indonesia's Geology Agency recorded an avalanche of searing gas clouds mixed with rocks and lava traveling up to 5 kilometers (3 miles) down the slopes of the mountain. Drone observations showed deep movement of

magma, setting off tremors that registered on seismic monitors.

Volcanic material, including hot thumb-sized gravel, was thrown up to 8 kilometers (5 miles) from the crater, covering nearby villages and towns with thick volcanic residue, the agency said. It asked residents to be vigilant about heavy rainfall that could trigger lava flows in rivers originating from the volcano.

Exporters fear tariffs likely to dent high volume U.S. market

Exporters demand reintroduction of interest subvention scheme, moratorium on loans, among other steps, to boost resilience

M. Soundariya Preetha
COIMBATORE

Exporters of textiles, garments and engineering goods fear the 25% U.S. tariff will not only lead to loss of orders but also put them in a quandary as no other market offers such high-volume demand as the U.S. for several products.

Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal met delegations from the textile and engineering export councils on Saturday and discussed the possible impact of the tariff and the measures required from the government.

"We have impressed upon the Minister that for some textile products, 60% to 70% exports go to the U.S., said a textile exporter. "Similarly, for products such as bed linen, India is the largest supplier in the U.S. We cannot get such high volume orders from any other market and if we lose the U.S. buyers, firms supplying these products will be hit hard and will not be able to get back these buyers,"

No new orders

At present, many U.S. buyers are not placing new orders as they want to see if there will be a change in tariff. Some



No substitute: For some textile products, 60% to 70% exports go to the U.S. and no other market offers similar volumes, say exporters.

buyers are asking Indian suppliers to bear the additional cost, exporters say.

Volume game

In the case of engineering goods too, the U.S. has been the leading buyer of some of the products for several years. "Exporters have already explored the other markets. Hence, it will be difficult to find new markets that will give similar volume orders.

"Competing countries for engineering goods have relatively lower tariff. Countries with tariffs higher than India are really not competitors. Exports to the U.S. are going to face challenges. Hence, there should be a detailed study now on the product lines that will be hit by the 25% tariff," said an engineering exporter.

At the meeting on Saturday, the delegations pointed out given the current tariff situation, the government should reintroduce the interest subvention scheme. Banks charge 8.5% to 9% interest. Indian exporters, mainly micro, small and medium-scale enterprises suffer 2% to 3% disadvantage because of the high interest rates in India compared with the competing countries.

Now, they will face higher cost disadvantage due to tariffs. Hence, the government should resume the interest subvention scheme. Exporters have also sought other supportive steps such as a moratorium on loan repayment from the government so that they can supply at competing prices to the U.S. buyers, they said.



The Centre has "not given any direction to oil firms" to cut back imports from Russia.

India will keep buying Russia oil, say govt. sources

Reuters

India will keep purchasing oil from Russia despite U.S. President Donald Trump's threats of penalties, two Indian government sources said, not wishing to be identified due to the sensitivity of the matter.

"These are long-term oil contracts," one of the sources said. "It is not so simple to just stop buying overnight."

Mr. Trump last month indicated in a Truth Social post that India would face additional penalties for purchases of Russian arms and oil. On Friday, Mr. Trump told reporters that he had heard that India would no longer be buying oil from Russia.

The New York Times on Saturday quoted two unnamed senior Indian officials as saying there had been no change in Indian government policy, with one official saying the government had "not given any direction to oil companies" to cut back imports from Russia.