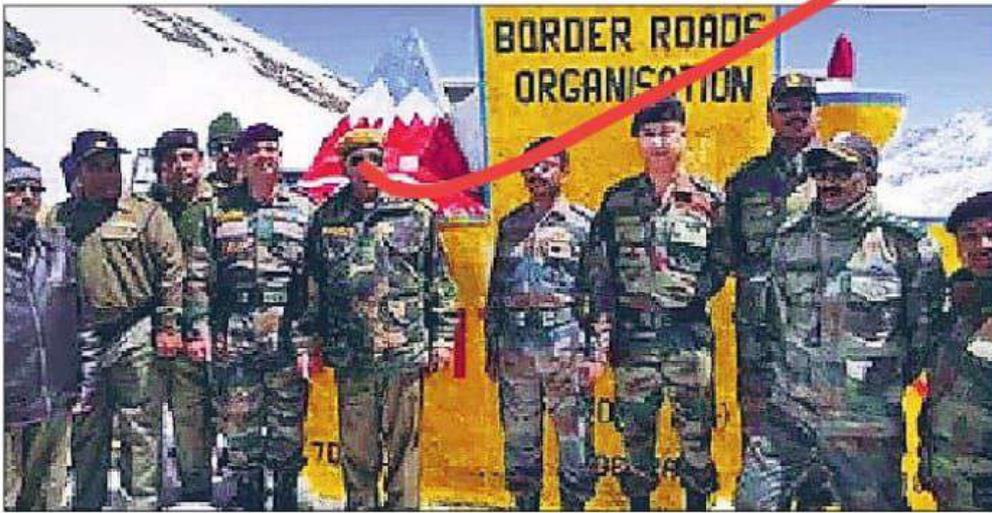


BRO plans tunnels, passes to ensure for all-weather connectivity in eastern Ladakh



LEH, Aug 3 (PTI)

IN A move to bolster strategic infrastructure, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is in the advanced planning stages of constructing numerous tunnels and high-altitude passes to ensure all-weather road connectivity in eastern Ladakh, a senior officer said on Saturday.

The BRO is also aggressively adopting new technologies to accelerate project execution in

this high-altitude region, where the working season is restricted to just a few months due to harsh winter conditions.

“Primarily, Ladakh is linked by two national highways – NH 1 and NH 3. We are responsible for NH 3. The Rohtang tunnel has already come up and we are planning on a few tunnels along passes like Baralacha and Tanglang,” Col. Deepak Palande, director, works and resources, Project Himank, told PTI here.

BRO’s Project Himank was raised for the development of road communication in Ladakh region. It ensures the maintenance of communication and access to strategic areas close to the Line of Actual Control with China.

Col. Palande said the planning of these tunnels is at a “very advanced stage”.

“The alignments are almost approved and the final survey is on. The detailed project report will be made soon,” he added.

He said each tunnel will have a different timeline, varying from five to seven years.

“It is a very complex project. It depends on soil composition, soil content, rock content, technical surveys, geo survey reports, GSI-GTI reports. All these reports come into play,” the officer said.

The tunnels will help in ensuring all-weather road connectivity to eastern Ladakh, the area under Project Himank, he added.

Number of Jan Dhan accounts crosses 55 crore: FM Sitharaman

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (IANS)

THE number of bank accounts for the poor under the Prime Minister's Jan Dhan Yojana have crossed the 55 crore mark with "most of these accounts belonging to people who had never even seen the door of a bank", Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Sunday.

In a post on X, the Finance Minister said, "With the scheme completing 10 years and KYC being mandatory for these accounts, I have urged banks to proactively reach out to people and simplify this process. In this regard, starting from July 1, 2025, banks have launched this campaign, under which approximately 1 lakh Gram Panchayats have been covered so far."

She urged all Jan Dhan account holders to come forward to participate in these

camps and complete their KYC process.

According to RBI data, 56 per cent of the Jan Dhan accounts belong to women, and the total amount in these deposits has surpassed Rs 2.5 lakh crore as of May 21.



Speaking at a seminar on financial inclusion recently, RBI Deputy Governor M. Rajeshwar Rao said the launch of Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) is a watershed moment in India. The Jan Dhan Yojana -- Aadhaar-Mobile phone, which comprises the

'JAM Trinity', has provided a quantum leap in the country's endeavour to ensure access to banking services for all adults, making it the world's largest financial inclusion programme.

PMJDY is one of the biggest financial inclusion initiatives in the world, according to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, and a target of opening another three crore such accounts has been fixed for the current year.

The average bank balance per account in March 2015 was Rs 1,065, which has now increased to Rs 4,352. Around 80 per cent of the accounts are active, according to the official data.

As many as 66.6 per cent of Jan Dhan accounts have been opened in rural and semi-urban areas, and 29.56 crore belong to women account holders.

Tribunal begins hearing cases against Hasina

Ahsan Tasnim



Sheikh Hasina is being tried in the cases, which include killings, murder and torture, during the 'July mass uprising' that led to her ouster in Aug last year

Dhaka: The Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) on Sunday started trial in cases of "crimes against humanity" against former PM Sheikh Hasina, with the attorney general calling for maximum punishment for the Awami League leader who is being tried in absentia.

Hasina is being tried along with former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and former police IG Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun in the cases, which include killings, murder and torture during the "July mass uprising" that led to her ouster in Aug last year. "We have taken an oath on

the blood of Mugdho and Abu Sayeed (both student leaders)," attorney general Md Asaduzzaman said in the ICT before the submission of opening statement in the cases against the three accused. "People want justice—justice through the legal framework—for the crimes committed," he said. Mugdho was allegedly killed by security forces in Dhaka and Sayeed in Rangpur during the uprising.

He said Hasina — who fled

to India following her govt's fall in Aug last year — could be likened to the head of an "association of autocrats".

"If Goebbels wanted to study lies or complete a PhD in falsehood, Hasina could have been his teacher," he said, referring to Nazi party chief propagandist Paul Joseph Goebbels. Describing the tribunal session as a historic moment, he said, "We are here today for justice. We seek the highest pu-

nishment under the law."

ICT's chief prosecutor Muhammad Tajul Islam claimed in his opening statement that Hasina was the central figure in the alleged crimes against humanity during the "July mass uprising". "As PM, leader of the Awami League, and head of the ruling 14-party alliance, she held absolute power," Tajul said. "All major decisions were taken by her. She was the nucleus of the crimes committed during that period." Tajul argued that the crimes were aimed solely at preserving Hasina's grip on power. "The other accused were fully aware that their own survival and rewards were contingent on Hasina remaining in control," he said.

Western Railway locals to get indigenous 'Kavach' safety boost by end of 2026

MUMBAI, Aug 3 (PTI)

IN A major boost to commuter safety on one of the world's busiest suburban rail networks, Western Railway is set to equip its Mumbai local trains with the indigenous anti-collision system Kavach by the end of next year, officials said on Sunday.

Kavach is a state-of-the-art electronic system developed under 'Make in India' initiative that is presently being installed on Delhi-Mumbai as well as some other trunk routes.

The indigenously designed Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system, which will automatically control the speed of

trains, prevent collisions, and ensure safe operations even when human error might pose a threat, will replace the Auxiliary Warning System (AWS) presently used as an onboard safety device by Western Railway, officials said.

WR, which runs more than 1400 suburban services daily on the Churchgate-Virar-Dahanu segment with a fleet of 110 electrical multiple units (EMUs), has a daily ridership of over 30 lakh.

The AWS functional in all these suburban locals has an audible warning system that alerts the driver about the aspect of the upcoming signal along with additional features like

speed monitoring and braking assistance, an official said.

"The AWS panel in the motor-man's cab has an alarm, a vigilance button, and red, yellow, or blue lights. If the alarm sounds, the motorman must press the button within four seconds, or the brakes will activate and stay locked until the train stops completely," he said.

However, as per railway officials, the AWS often falls short in preventing critical safety incidents such as Signal Passed at Danger (SPAD) and signal jumping. Its limited automation and reliance on manual response reduce its effectiveness in averting potential accidents, they added.

US penalty risk on Russian oil may add USD 9-11 bn to India's import bill

NEW DELHI, Aug 3 (PTI)

INDIA'S annual oil import bill could rise by USD 9-11 billion if the country is compelled to move away from Russian crude in response to US threats of additional tariffs or penalties on Indian exports, analysts said.

India, the world's third-largest oil consumer and importer, has reaped significant benefits by swiftly substituting market-priced oil with discounted Russian crude following Western sanctions on Moscow after its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Russian oil, which accounted for less than 0.2 per cent of India's imports before the war, now makes up 35-40 per cent of the country's crude intake, helping reduce overall energy import costs, keep retail fuel prices in

check, and contain inflation.

The influx of discounted Russian crude also enabled India to refine the oil and export petroleum products, including to countries that have imposed sanctions on direct imports from Russia. The twin strategy of Indian oil companies is posting record profits.

This is, however, now under threat after US President Donald Trump announced a 25 per cent tariff on Indian goods plus an unspecified penalty for buying Russian oil and weapons. The 25 per cent tariff has since been notified but the penalty is yet to be specified. Coming within days of the European Union banning imports of refined products derived from Russian-origin crude, this presents a double whammy for Indian refiners.

Sumit Ritolia, Lead Research



Analyst (Refining & Modeling) at global real-time data and analytics provider Kpler termed this as "a squeeze from both ends".

EU sanctions - effective from January 2026 - may force Indian refiners to segment crude intake on one side, and on the other, the US tariff threat raises the possibility of secondary sanctions that would directly hit the shipping, insurance, and financing lifelines underpinning India's Russian oil trade.

"Together, these measures sharply curtail India's crude procurement flexibility, raise compliance risk, and introduce significant cost uncertainty," he said. Last fiscal, India spent over USD 137 billion on import of crude oil, which is refined into fuels like petrol and diesel.

For refiners like Reliance Industries Ltd and Nayara Energy - who collectively account for a bulk (more than 50 per cent in 2025) of the 1.7-2.0 million barrels per day (bpd) of Russian crude imports into India - the challenge is acute.

While Nayara is backed by Russian oil giant Rosneft and has been sanctioned by the EU last month, Reliance has been a big fuel exporter to Europe.

As one of the world's largest diesel exporters - and with total refined product exports to

Europe averaging around 200,000 bpd in 2024 and 185,000 bpd so far in 2025 - Reliance has extensively utilised discounted Russian crude to boost refining margins over the past two years, according to Kpler.

"The introduction of strict origin-tracking requirements now compels Reliance to either curtail its intake of Russian feedstock, potentially affecting cost competitiveness, or reroute Russian-linked products to non-EU markets," Ritolia said. However, Reliance's dual-refinery structure - a domestic-focused unit and an export-oriented complex - offers strategic flexibility. It can allocate non-Russian crude to its export-oriented refinery and continue meeting EU compliance standards, while processing Russian barrels at domestic unit for other markets.

Day 3: Forces tighten noose around terrorists

SRINAGAR, Aug 3 (PTI)

THE anti-terrorist operation in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir entered the third day on Sunday as security forces tightened the noose around the ultras engaged in the gunbattle with them.

“The encounter has entered third day as intermittent exchange of firing has been going on since Sunday morning,” an official said.

He said the security forces were using all means, including drones, to track down the terrorists.

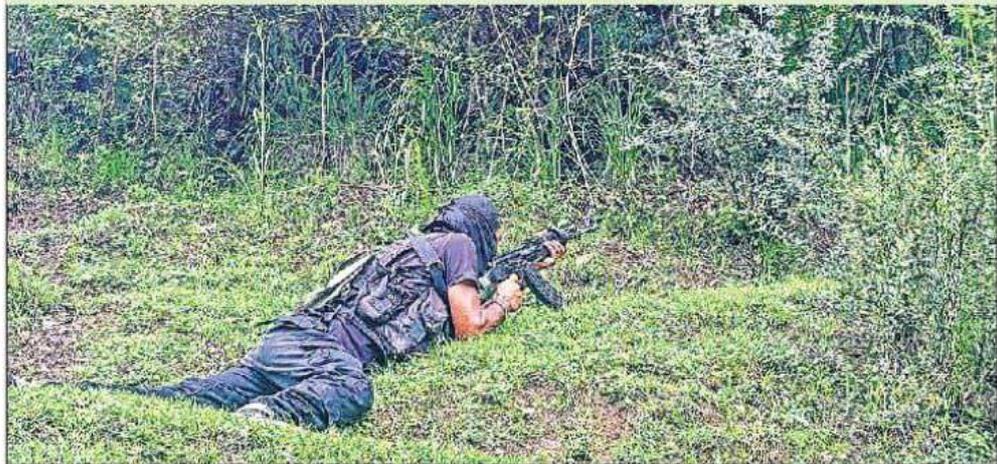
Two terrorists have been killed in the encounter which began on Friday after security forces launched a cordon and search operation in a forest area at Akhal in the south Kashmir district, following specific intelligence inputs about the presence of terrorists there.

After an initial exchange of fire between the two sides on Friday evening, the operation was halted for the night, the officials said.

The cordon was strengthened, and additional reinforcements were rushed to the area.



Security personnel keep a vigil amid an ongoing encounter between security forces and terrorists in a forest area at Akhal, in Kulgam district, J&K on Sunday. (PTI)



Firing resumed on Saturday morning, during which two terrorists were killed, the officials said. The identity and group affiliation

of the slain terrorists are being ascertained, they added, noting that the operation is still underway.