

स्लीमगार्ड ५ साल
स्वच्छता बढ़ाओ, तंदुरुस्ती बढ़े

स्लीमगार्ड बड़ी तोड़फोड़ + दीवार को लीकेज से बचायें

जगह बचाये

स्लीमगार्ड फ्लश टैंक कहाँ..?

BUSINESS AS USUAL
By UNNY

No BJP state will have a more agreeable Raj Bhavan than Bihar and Andhra.

Cloudburst in Himachal: 5 of school's sports stars still missing

SAURABH PARASHAR
SAMEJ (KULLU), AUGUST 4

AT A time when all eyes are on the Paris Olympics, teachers at a government school in Himachal's Kullu are facing up to the possibility that five of their own state medal prospects, including four members of an extended family, may never step into the school's courts again.

These promising sportspersons from the Government Senior Secondary School in Samej — three state-level volleyball

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

AN EXPRESS SERIES - PART 1

Jammu flares up, frames challenge: reset counter-terror grid, fill 'vacuum'

Will take some time for security grid to 'mature and manifest', patience and perseverance required: Army officer

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA, ARUN SHARMA, DEEPTIMAN TIWARY & PVAIDYANATHAN IYER
POONCH, JAMMU, SRINAGAR, NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

ON JUNE 19, two terrorists were killed by the Army in an encounter in Sopore in north Kashmir's Baramulla district. The two had crossed from Pakistan into Rajouri-Poonch in Jammu and were behind the December 21 killing of four soldiers in an ambush in Thanamandi last year.

Their cellphones, a probe revealed, had clips of a T20 cricket match in Abu Dhabi, details that suggested a "level of education not very common and a good family background", and their use of weapons reflected they were among the "most highly trained terrorists seen in 20

5 YEARS SINCE AUG 5

AN EXPRESS SERIES

SECURITY

TOMORROW

Securing the Valley: what has worked

years", said an official. The story of how these two



Security personnel conduct a search operation in J&K's Poonch on Sunday. ANI

terrorists moved from Jammu to Kashmir is illustrative of a significant security shift five years since August 5, 2019, when the state lost its special status and later split into two, downgraded to a Union Territory and put under an unprecedented security

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

L-G: Progress made, Raj Bhavan for fine balance with elected UT govt

PVAIDYANATHAN IYER
SRINAGAR, AUGUST 4

THE GOVERNMENT has brought peace and development to Jammu and Kashmir, and ensured that all institutions such as schools and colleges, hospitals and businesses carry on with their normal routine 365 days a year, J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said ahead of August 5, marking five years of the end of the special status of the erstwhile state of J&K and its subsequent division into two Union Territories.

In an hour-long interview to *The Indian Express* (detailed transcript to be published tomorrow), Sinha, who took charge of J&K four years ago in August 2020, said: "There should be no doubt about elections. The Prime



MANOJ SINHA
J&K LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

Minister recently said that Assembly elections would be held at the earliest."

Asked if an elected government would be able to function smoothly with most powers including law and order vested with the L-G, Sinha said: "I will work to achieve a fine balance

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Sree josh!

Amul Saver the taste

1 man short, India script thrilling fightback to enter hockey semifinals



MIHIR VASAVDA
PARIS, AUGUST 4

Olympic universe. About 10 km from Notre Dame, it is the site of one of the greatest sporting spectacles, the 100 and 400m races of the 1924 Paris Olympics immortalised in the movie *Chariots of Fire*.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

FULL COVERAGE PAGES 18, 19, 20

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SWAMI VIVEKANAND SUBHARTI UNIVERSITY Revolutionizing Higher Education: Trends, Transformations, and the Subharti Paradigm



Prof. (Dr.) Shalya Raj
Chief Executive Officer



THE landscape of higher education is undergoing significant transformation, driven by technological advancements, shifting student preferences, and global factors. This dynamic higher education panorama is changing at an unprecedented rate, challenging conventional norms and giving rise to fresh trends that are molding the university experience. Successfully navigating through these transformations demands a proactive stance; utilizing valuable insights, and implementing effective marketing strategies. This is crucial for ensuring success not only for educational institutions but also for marketing firms operating in this rapidly evolving space.

Analyzing the dimensions and growth patterns within the global higher education sector, Swami Vivekanand Subharti University is actively addressing the repercussions of the pandemic on higher education and its enduring effects. It is delving into the incorporation of technology into higher education, examining its influence on teaching methods, learning experiences, and student involvement. To facilitate this, university introduces adaptive learning platforms and tailor-made educational journeys. Embracing alternative credentials beyond the conventional educational routes, University's Pre-PhD coursework curriculum is meticulously crafted to cater to diverse student demographics, fostering an inclusive academic environment. This proficiency stems from our comprehension of student behaviors, enabling us to formulate strategies that resonate with students and contribute to the establishment of a strong brand identity. This operationalizes through our social platforms, enhancing engagement and recruitment efforts.

This period signifies the convergence of innovation and education, as educators within universities consistently assess the impact of educational technology tools such as AI, virtual reality, and learning management systems. They strive to revolutionize learning, fostering online education and flexible methodologies. Recognizing the imminent need for personalized, career-focused education, ongoing learning, active alumni engagement, and an increasing emphasis on sustainability and social impact, Subharti is proactively offering interdisciplinary studies and practical skills tailored to evolving industries. The institution continually explores partnerships with industries, other educational entities, and technology firms to enrich its offerings and broaden its reach. In this technologically driven era, the challenge of accessing quality education

persists due to escalating costs, and Subharti addresses this issue by consistently developing and refining new financial models, scholarships, and enhancing online educational platforms. In response to the evolving needs of learners seeking a holistic and forward-thinking education, university is undergoing a significant transformation. Its focus extends beyond the mere dissemination of knowledge to empowering individuals to navigate the dynamic challenges of the contemporary world. In alignment with



the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is swiftly adapting to offer more flexible and accessible learning experiences. This involves transcending geographical constraints through student exchange programs with leading universities from diverse nations worldwide.

In tune with the Indian knowledge system, the university is embracing adaptability by integrating interdisciplinary studies, practical skill-based programs, and experiential learning opportunities. This strategic approach aims to equip students with the skills demanded by rapidly evolving industries. In the midst of global competition, the university actively seeks collaborative ventures, creating a wealth of opportunities for academic and research advancement. Adopting a learner-centric approach, these collaborations extend to countries such as Russia, South Korea, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and more, allowing students to explore their interests and strengths. The overarching goal is to facilitate continuous up skilling and reskilling throughout their careers. To achieve this, the university has adjusted its pedagogy to offer short professional courses and micro-credentials, ensuring that

learning remain continuous and adaptable to evolving career prospects.

University best practices champion lifelong learning by involving alumni in continuous education, nurturing enduring connections with graduates that integrate sustainability and social impact. Dr. Shalya Raj, CEO of Subharti, is a staunch advocate of lifelong learning. She acknowledges the shift from traditional subjects to specialized areas and emphasizes that the higher education landscape is undergoing a transformative phase. This necessitates adjustments in student expectations, tackling challenges of access and affordability, harnessing technology, and preparing for a future centered on personalized learning to create a more inclusive environment.

Amidst these changes, there is a clear call to promote inclusivity and diversity, reshaping the higher education landscape. Subharti is unwaveringly committed to fostering diverse and inclusive environments, recognizing the value of varied perspectives and backgrounds. The institution underscores this commitment by commemorating unsung warriors, freedom fighters, and torchbearers from India's history. Every building, corner, street, stadium, and auditorium is named after these heroes, symbolizing the importance of their contributions. The Entrepreneur Development Cell, Research and Incubation Center, and University Chairs at Subharti instill a profound sense of social responsibility and sustainability in students. This collective effort not only nurtures individual growth but also actively contributes to the larger goal of nation-building; aligning with the vision of a developed Bharat by 2047.

The future of higher education unfolds as a seamless integration of both physical and digital learning realms. This dynamic journey is intricately shaped by the interplay of technology, data, and a global perspective. At Subharti, the mentor-mentee didactic approach serves as a guiding principle, offering insights, tracking performance, predicting success, and personalizing the learning journey for students. The focus is on ensuring that education is meticulously tailored and responsive to the unique needs of students in this data-driven century. In the contemporary landscape, obtaining a degree transcends mere certification; it's about acquiring the knowledge and skills essential for thriving in a rapidly changing world.

India, with its vast population and diverse educational landscape, is emerging as a prominent hub for higher education, and Subharti proudly stands as a testament to the growing demand for quality education. The institution is dedicated to enriching the educational odyssey of students, fostering growth, discovery, and success.



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Once again, Pragati Maidan tunnel shut for traffic at night

It closes around 12 am, opens by 6-6.30 am

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

DESPIITE CLAIMS of having completed repairs by Public Works Department (PWD) officials, the Pragati Maidan Tunnel is closed for traffic movement at night, causing difficulties for commuters travelling between Central Delhi and Noida, Ghaziabad, and Southeast Delhi to ITO, India Gate, and other places.

The 2.1 km-long tunnel, which was opened as part of the Pragati Maidan corridor redevelopment project in 2022, closes around midnight and opens in the morning by 6-6.30 am. Earlier, officials said following the repair work inside the tunnel, they closed the stretch during the late night hours.

A PWD official said: "There are electricity issues at night... Power outages take place inside the tunnel frequently, due to which lights and CCTV cameras shut down... Also, there is no network inside the stretch... So, it is closed for traffic at night to avoid any kind of toward incident... The department is working to address these issues..."

Another senior PWD official said: "The tunnel has been closed at night for the last two months... For a while, it was open for some days but then the stretch needed maintenance which is difficult to carry out in the day... So, the tunnel is closed at night, and maintenance work and cleaning activities... are carried out during these hours."

A few months after the inauguration, the tunnel suffered issues like seepage from the walls and waterlogging. The tunnel was also closed for about a month last year due to waterlogging.

In February, calling the tunnel a "potential threat to the life of the passengers", the PWD issued a notice to L&T Construction, which executed the project, to deposit Rs 500 crore in fine. It also flagged "flaws and design deficiencies".

The PWD had also formed a five-member expert committee to vet the methodology employed to resolve the water leakage issues inside the main Pragati Maidan tunnel, and the repair works started on March 20.

Following this, the tunnel was closed for three days, and then during the late-night hours, every day.

ACCUSED BROKE INTO THEIR VASANT KUNJ HOME; HELD Retd IRS officer, wife injured in knife attack by burglar

ARNABJIT SUR
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

A RETIRED IRS officer and his wife were attacked with a knife by a burglar who broke into their duplex flat in Vasant Kunj a little after midnight Sunday, police said. The accused was arrested from Meerut within 12 hours.

DCP (Southwest) Rohit Meena said on August 3, they received a PCR call at Vasant Kunj police station regarding the incident in D Block. The retired officer, 61-year-old Abhay Kumar Singh, and his wife Anupama were sleeping in their room on the second floor while his son, a practicing lawyer at the Delhi High Court, and house help were in other rooms on the third floor.

Around 1 am, Singh woke up on hearing a loud noise from the balcony adjacent to their room and saw a man sneaking in through the sliding door. Singh started shouting and roused his wife. The accused then attacked both of them with a knife," said the DCP.

Hearing the commotion, his son and house help locked the thief in one of the rooms but he



The retired officer's house in D Block of Vasant Kunj. The burglar entered through the balcony, said police. Amit Mehra

escaped through the balcony of their flat.

Describing the incident, Singh said, "My wife and I were sleeping in our room downstairs when we heard someone entering through the balcony... when we confronted the man (accused), he pointed a sharp object at us and kept saying he would kill us... we tried to catch him but he stabbed me in the eye and my wife in the forehead... we were bleeding profusely."

Following this, Singh added, "My son and house help rushed

into the room and started shouting to alert our neighbours... we rushed outside and locked him in our room... even as blood was pouring out from my eyes... A few neighbours heard us and switched on their lights."

He said the burglar managed to get out from the balcony, jumped onto a neighbouring building and escaped.

Police soon arrived and crime and forensics teams were called to the spot. Six police teams were constituted to nab the accused. Twelve hours later, Jitender, 38,

was arrested from Meerut.

Police also said they recovered three laptops and a laptop bag from another man, a receiver named Arun, who got them from Jitender. Arun lived in Raj Nagar in Palam village, said police. However, the laptops don't belong to Singh's family, added police.

According to the DCP, Jitender climbed up an abandoned building near their building and entered through the balcony. "The couple were alerted by the sound of the sliding door opening," said an officer said, quoting from Singh's statement.

The DCP said as the family locked Jitender in the couple's room, he was not able to steal valuable items and managed to take a bag that had a few clothes and a swimming costume.

While Singh sustained stab injuries to his left eye and fingers, his wife sustained injuries on her forehead. Both were initially taken to Fortis from where they were referred to AIIMS.

Police said that Jitender has been in and out of jail for 14 years for various crimes, including burglary, robbery and attempt to murder in Delhi and UP.

After high-speed chase by cops, Parsvnath CEO arrested at IGI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

IT WAS around noon on Saturday when the Delhi Police received a tip-off that the Managing Director and CEO of Parsvnath Developers, Sanjeev Kumar Jain, was allegedly set to flee the country.

A few weeks ago, on July 18, a non-bailable warrant had been issued against Jain by the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) in connection with a consumer complaint; Jain was a no-show, said officials.

So when the Shahdara district's Special Task Force (STF) got the tip that Jain would head to Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, it wasted no time. Several STF teams quickly set off for DLF Phase 2 in Gurgaon, where Jain lived, in half a dozen police vehicles, said an officer.

The officer added that by the time they reached his residence, Jain had already left in his private vehicle. The vehicles set course for the airport.

A few kilometres leading up to the IGI Airport, they spotted Jain's vehicle. What followed next was a high-speed chase — the police vehicles stayed close behind Jain, tailing him all the way to the airport, from where they finally arrested him, said police.

DCP (Shahdara) Surender

In a high-speed chase, police vehicles tailed Sanjeev Kumar Jain all the way from Gurgaon Phase 2 to the airport, from where they arrested him

Choudhary said the STF apprehended Jain from the airport on August 3.

The DCP said that a non-bailable warrant had been issued against him by the Joint Registrar, NCDRC, in the matter of an execution application in a consumer complaint of 2017, filed by Rajat Babbar & Anr Vs Ms. Parsvnath Developers Pvt. Ltd. The non-bailable warrant was issued against Jain on July 18, but he did not appear before the commission.

Four non-bailable warrants and one bailable warrant from the National Commission were pending at Shahdara police station against Jain, said police.

"After sincere efforts, alleged accused Sanjeev Kumar Jain, Director of Parsvnath Developers Ltd, was apprehended on August 3 and consequently arrested in all non-bailable warrants issued against him," said the DCP.

On August 4, Jain was produced before the NCDRC, he added.

Schools can't force textbooks other than those prescribed by NCERT, SCERT: DoE

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

THE DELHI government's education department has directed the heads of all recognised private schools that they cannot force children of elementary classes to use textbooks other than those prescribed by NCERT and SCERT.

The Delhi government's directive came in a circular to ensure the implementation of Section 29 of the Right to Education Act, 2009, which mandates the curriculum and evaluation procedures for elementary education be laid down by an academic authority specified by the government.

The Directorate of Education (DoE) said no child should be discriminated against, harassed, or neglected based on carrying books published by the National or State Council of Educational Research and Training, and said causing "mental or physical suffering" would attract the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015.

"Many schools have their publications till Class 8 and are charging high prices. But, we have made sure to follow NCERT

for all classes in our school," said Sudha Acharya, principal of ITL Public School, Dwarka. She said that while it had been intimated previously, few schools continued to not follow it.

Calling the directions "unworkable", Ashok Agarwal, National President of All India Parents' Association, said: "In such matters, authorities cannot control private schools as the schools can easily convince parents to have private publications books in addition to NCERT prescribed books." He further blamed the government for "lack of credibility" as he alleged, "The govern-

ment is responsible for creating the present exploitative situation."

Meanwhile, Tania Joshi, principal of The Indian School on Josip Broz Tito Marg, called the practice followed by the school as a "win-win situation". She explained, "We purely follow the NCERT textbooks. For our teachers, we have different publishers' textbooks to make worksheets because with this, teachers' resources remain unlimited."

The circular also stated that schools must display the directions on their website and notice board, and should also be shared with parents for information.



The tunnel was built as part of the Pragati Maidan corridor redevelopment project and opened in 2022. Archive

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Unaudited / Reviewed Financial Results (Standalone & Consolidated) for the Quarter ended 30th June 2024 ₹ in Lakh

Sr. No.	Particulars	Standalone				Consolidated			
		Quarter ended		Year ended		Quarter ended		Year ended	
		30.06.2024 (Reviewed)	31.03.2024 (Audited)	30.06.2023 (Reviewed)	31.03.2024 (Audited)	30.06.2024 (Reviewed)	31.03.2024 (Audited)	30.06.2023 (Reviewed)	31.03.2024 (Audited)
1	Total Income from Operations (Net)	18,24,002	17,91,303	15,82,108	66,80,434	18,38,365	18,08,020	15,92,604	67,30,647
2	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	2,38,405	1,73,120	2,92,779	10,09,907	2,57,604	1,87,192	2,87,982	10,37,305
3	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	2,38,405	1,73,120	2,92,779	10,09,907	2,57,604	1,87,192	2,87,982	10,37,305
4	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	1,70,273	1,43,891	1,55,107	6,31,792	1,88,828	1,57,389	1,56,155	6,56,446
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit/(Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	Refer Note 3				Refer Note 3			
6	Paid up Equity Share Capital	4,55,341	4,55,341	4,10,431	4,55,341	4,55,341	4,55,341	4,10,431	4,55,341
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)				57,50,856				59,15,264
8	Securities Premium Account	20,28,559	20,28,559	16,25,453	20,28,559	21,87,466	21,91,809	17,95,218	21,91,809
9	Net Worth	56,85,045	55,11,842	44,17,489	55,11,842	58,67,507	56,76,495	45,25,082	56,76,495
10	Paid up Debt Capital/ Outstanding Debt*	11.45%	11.93%	19.33%	11.93%				
11	Outstanding Redeemable Preference Shares	-	-	-	-				
12	Debt Equity Ratio*	0.32	0.30	0.23	0.30				
13	Earnings Per Share (of ₹ 10/- each) (for continuing and discontinued operations) -								
	1. Basic (in ₹):	3.74	3.16	3.78	14.90	4.15	3.46	3.81	15.49
	2. Diluted (in ₹):	3.74	3.16	3.78	14.90	4.15	3.46	3.81	15.49
14	Capital Redemption Reserve	-	-	-	-	50	50	50	50
15	Debenture Redemption Reserve	Not Applicable	Not Applicable						
16	Debt Service Coverage Ratio	Not Applicable	Not Applicable						
17	Interest Service Coverage Ratio	Not Applicable	Not Applicable						

* Debt represents borrowings with residual maturity of more than one year. Outstanding Debt represents Total borrowings of the Bank.

Notes:

- The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 and Regulation 52 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange websites (BSE: <https://www.bseindia.com> and NSE: <https://www.nseindia.com>) and the website of the Bank (<https://www.bankofindia.co.in>).
- For the other line items referred in regulation 52(4) of the Listing Regulations, pertinent disclosures have been made to the Stock Exchange(s) (National Stock Exchange and Bombay Stock Exchange) and can be accessed on the URL (NSE: <https://www.nseindia.com> and BSE: <https://www.bseindia.com>).
- Information relating to Total Comprehensive Income and Other Comprehensive Income is not furnished as Ind AS is not yet made applicable to banks.

Place : Mumbai
Date : 03.08.2024

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Sd/- (Subrat Kumar)
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Trouble in UP BJP, India's 3rd medal in Paris, and digitising 34 cr papers

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FROM PAGE ONE FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Jammu flares up, frames challenge: reset counter-terror grid, fill 'vacuum'

As a series in *The Indian Express* will reveal, this is one of the key challenges that touches many aspects of daily life here — from society to politics, economics to development — amid a concerted push for elections promised by September with an Election Commission team visiting next week.

Yet, many fingers in the security establishment remain crossed after the surge of terror incidents in Jammu (see box) as it works on how to, as Union Home Minister Amit Shah put it, "replicate" the Valley's success on the ground in Jammu.

Interviews with a range of officers in the Army, administration and police reveal that this is easier said than done with one common response being: it will need "patience and effort". For, it will take time to crank up in Jammu since the Army moved some forces out of there to eastern Ladakh in 2021 to address the China challenge after the Galwan attack in June 2020 triggered the protracted stand-off along the Line of Actual Control.

Officials admit it was a "mistake" — not to deploy the paramilitary — the CRPF or the BSF — to fill the "vacuum" created in the "counter-terrorism (CT) grid" in Jammu after the Army thinned its presence. "We may be paying for it now. We lowered the guard in Jammu because of many years of peace and when we moved some troops out, that strained the already thin networks on the ground. This vacuum allowed the terrorists to come in, operate and activate a support system in Jammu."

'Maturing' the counter-terror grid

A redeployment over the last 3-4 weeks has brought the security personnel numbers in Jammu back up: In addition to 3,000 Army soldiers and 2,000 personnel from the BSF, the government Saturday decided to deploy two battalions of Assam Rifles in Jammu over the next three months, including in the upper reaches of Poonch-Rajouri. The police are reactivating their human intelligence network, intensifying surveillance of those who crossed over the borders in the 1990s and are settled down in Pakistan.

"The situation is tense," said another officer in the security establishment, acknowledging that the killing of 52 armed forces personnel since mid-2021 has kept the Army on the edge. "There is concern, but the infiltrators are still in a nascent state of settling down; it is not like the 1990s and early 2000s," this officer said.

Setting up a CT grid is a task cut out. "The security forces will have to set up camps and take positions in the hills, where the infiltrators take refuge. Establishing a grid will take a while. Patience and perseverance is required. The grid will take time to mature and manifest," the officer said.

Intensifying its efforts to build intelligence, the J&K Police has "indexed" 4,300 persons who went from Jammu and settled down in Pakistan. "While 85-90 per cent of these people are harmless, some 400-500 persons are under huge pressure from Pakistan to reconnect with locals in Jammu, make OGVs (over ground workers), help infiltrators with local transport, etc. They are under close watch" said a police officer.

What is not lost on the security establishment also is the possible "indirect role" of China in the spate of terror attacks in Jammu. "This could be telecommunication support and equipment... We all know the links between China and the Pak Army so there could be equipment, like guns, that are from there."

With the year witnessing a shift in terror activity from the Poonch-Rajouri sectors to the interior regions of Kathua and Doda, the need for realignment of the boundaries of the Northern Command has also gained urgency.

As a first step, a Division under a Corps of the Western Command (which doesn't undertake counter-terror operations) will be brought under the Nagrota-headquartered XVI Corps of the Northern Command (which is also responsible for countering terrorism in J&K). The move was discussed when Army chief General Uday Kumar visited the region on July 3-4 to review

TERROR TOLL IN JAMMU

	2019*	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024**
Incidents	3	14	21	19	23	13
Terrorists killed	3	18	11	14	22	5
Security forces killed	0	1	14	5	20	13

*Aug 5 onwards; **Up to July 31 Source: J&K Police

the "prevailing security dynamics".

"We are reconfiguring ourselves. We are plugging the gaps. We will detect and defeat their new mechanism of operation. In certain places, which we had vacated (because of prolonged peace), we are again asserting our presence. Militarily, defeating them is just a question of time," said R R Swain, Director General of J&K Police.

Defence sources estimate about 80-90 terrorists, including 60-70 foreign nationals, are operating in the Valley. And an estimated 90-100 terrorists, of whom 55-60 are suspected to be foreign terrorists, are operating in Jammu, in areas south of Pir Panjal. That frames the challenge today — and has its roots in 2020.

Roots of today's Jammu challenge

Almost a year after August 5, 2019, that saw a sprawling crack-down in the Valley, and amid the India-China standoff at the LAC, there was evidence that Pakistan-based groups had turned their focus to Jammu, establishing contact with surrendered militants and their old contacts. In 2021, Pakistan pushed militants across the border into Jammu, the plan was to not only target security forces but also "communalise" the violence, a task given to recruits from the Valley.

A senior defence official said while there was a constant pressure on terrorists operating in the Valley, the same could not be said of Jammu.

"Areas south of the Pir Panjal range started getting denuded of troops as the two additional divisions deployed there were moved out to their original locations and the Uniform Force of the Rashtriya Rifles, which was specially raised for the area, was moved out to

achievement," said a senior officer. "We never felt that the security grid in Jammu needs to be as tight as in Kashmir." On the ground, this translated into reduced contact of the forces with the public which, coupled with a general dependence on tech intelligence, has led to poor collection of human intelligence.

Many reasons are attributed to what is seen as a growing chasm between security forces and the local population of Gujjar-Bakarwals, who have traditionally been the eyes and ears of the forces. These range from anti-minority rhetoric in the national political discourse to the Centre's decision to grant reservations to Pahadis, perceived as an injustice to their own community by Gujjar-Bakarwals.

The killing of three Gujjars in custody following a terror ambush on an Army convoy in December last year has not helped either.

Said a resident of Marrah, who along with many of his co-villagers left their lucrative jobs in Saudi Arabia in 2002-03 and fought terrorists alongside the Army in the Hill Kaka area: "We continue to move into the forests but no one gives us information about militants. Our own community members criticise us for exposing them to militant threats for the sake of those who care little for them," he said.

Acting DGP Swain disagrees. "The problem is not information. The problem is turning it into action. Mobile networks are not available everywhere. So even if a militant has been spotted, or he has taken food from someone, the person is able to inform the police only hours later. A gap of three-four hours between information and organised action can be too much in the hilly terrains of Jammu," he said.

What has also compounded the challenge is the limited contact between the infiltrators and the locals. Said a senior officer: "They often disappear into the upper reaches of Poonch-Rajouri and avoid direct contact with locals. Their handler from Pakistan is the point of contact for both the militant and the local. The telecom networks are sparse and not easy to intercept."

• Progress made, Raj Bhavan for fine balance: L-G

with the elected government and ensure smooth functioning. Is peace and development not the objective of all? Doesn't everyone want this? If this is the objective, then where is the possibility of a clash?"

The Lieutenant Governor said that the policy of zero tolerance to terror has ensured that the Valley is peaceful. "You can see it in Srinagar... There are people enjoying the night ambience in Lal Chowk, Polo View and the Jhelum river front. There is a presence of security forces, but compared with the past it's much less," he said.

Sinha said Pakistan couldn't digest the message India sent to the world when it organised global events like the G20 tourist working group meeting in Srinagar, the peaceful conduct of Lok Sabha elections, and the state of normalcy in the Valley.

"The terror incidents that Jammu has seen in the last couple of months are regrettable, but they are signs of desperation by the neighbour and definitely by design," he said.

While it is true there has been infiltration from across the borders into the Jammu division, there is very low recruitment in the Valley. "If you look at overall numbers such as killings of civilians, or that of security personnel, there has been a sharp drop. In Kashmir division particularly, almost all top militant commanders have been eliminated by the security forces. Recruitment (of local militants) is also at its lowest levels. This is the biggest achievement," he said.

As far as the increased number of terror incidents in Jammu is concerned, he said it has been decided at the highest level to move additional paramilitary, police and Army personnel at appropriate positions to tackle the situation there.

"We have a strategy in place and I am confident we will eliminate the terrorists and the terror ecosystem just like we did in the Valley," Sinha said.

He said the general elections which witnessed a record voter turnout of 58.46 per cent showed that the people of Jammu and Kashmir have faith in democracy. "They have come out of the sloganeering mindset and believe in *jamhooriyat*," Sinha said.

• Grim news for Himachal school

players and two district-level shuttlers — are among the 33 people from their village who are on the list of 59 still missing after the cloudbursts that devastated the Shimla region last Wednesday night.

According to officials, the students were in their homes when they were washed away along with family members four nights ago. Today, the school's physical education demonstrator Ravinder Singh told *The Indian Express* that they now fear the worst.

These missing students, he said, include sisters Ritika Kedarta (17) of Class 12 and her sister Radhika (15) of Class 10; Arun Kedarta (13) of Class 10 and his sister Arushi (12) of Class 9; and Anjali Kumari (14) of Class 10. Ritika, Radhika, Arun and Arushi belong to an extended family in Kanradar village, separated by a river from Samej. Anjali's family hails from Jharkhand.

"Ritika, Radhika and Anjali are excellent volleyball players — well-built and tall with powerful shots. Anjali's skill in jumping high close to the net and hitting the ball strongly with her right hand makes her the perfect forward player. The sisters Ritika and Radhika have a very good understanding of each other's game. Coordination between two players on the court is a must if they want to beat the opponents. Ritika is excellent in service while Radhika never misses a chance to convert the opponent's shot into a point," Ravinder Singh said.

"Arun and Arushi are district-level champions in badminton. Arushi was part of the block team that won the overall district trophy in June. Badminton players from 22 schools had participated in that block-level sports meet. Arushi was also selected to represent Kullu district at the state-level games in September," Singh said.

According to the school's faculty, Ritika and Anjali were part of the Kullu district volleyball team for the state championships twice, in 2022 and 2023. Radhika represented Kullu in the 2022 edition of the state championship.

"Everyone in class wanted to copy Ritika who had something special," said Dikshika Thakur, a classmate. "She was also diligent about her studies. Hours before the tragedy, Ritika and I had a long chat on WhatsApp about a supplementary test in economics."

Sandeep Kumar, Director of Youth Services and Sports, Himachal Pradesh, said, "My staff



(Clockwise from top left) Badminton players Arushi and Arun; and volleyball players Ritika and Radhika

informed me about the five students when we were discussing the damage in schools after the cloudbursts. Four of them are girls excelling in volleyball, which is largely dominated by men."

The Samej school's vice-principal Kamla Nand Thakur said, "Ritika is among the strongest girls in our school. She led the march past of our school's contingent in the Independence Day parade at the district level. Besides playing volleyball at the state level, Anjali is also an excellent kabaddi player who led the school team at the district level."

The village panchayat pradhan Mohan Kapatia said, "The sisters Ritika and Radhika and the siblings Arun and Arushi, along with Anjali, are household names in our village. It was not only the school, they made the entire panchayat proud with their achievements at the district and state levels. Ritika and Radhika were the only ones present in their house when the cloudburst hit. Arun and Arushi were washed away along with their parents and other family members."

Of the five cloudbursts that were reported that night, three were in Kullu, and one each in Mandi and Shimla. Samej, where the school is located, is in Kullu district while Kanradar, where four of the five missing students hail from, is in Shimla district.

The Samej school's faculty members said that "almost 80 percent" of its infrastructure was washed away and classes for the 63 remaining students were suspended for two weeks.

On Friday, CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu visited the village and promised the students a better school. "I am pained to see children who are yet to see life after missing in the tragic incident."

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• One man short, India script thrilling fightback to enter hockey semifinal

One hundred years later, the only venue from that era in use for the 2024 Olympics has potentially become a site for another sports epic — with the Indian hockey team at the centre.

On Sunday, India booked a second consecutive Olympics semifinal berth in memorable fashion, beating Great Britain in a penalty shoot-out despite being a man down for most of the match.

The drama came from a controversial send-off — an occurrence as rare in hockey as a floodless monsoon in Mumbai — which triggered a feeling of injustice among the Indians who fought for 43 minutes despite the disadvantage.

It was a massive show of courage combined with tactical acumen and a defensive masterclass not commonly associated with Indian hockey. And at the end of a drama-filled two hours, India savoured one of their most famous wins, winning 4-2 after the scores were level 1-1 in regulation time.

"Because of the way we fought, this is the greatest win I have enjoyed since I started playing for India," former captain Manpreet Singh, playing in his fourth Olympics, said. "This is the toughest 60 minutes I have spent on a hockey field, especially given what's at stake," coach Craig Fulton said. "It is a statement win."

The performance highlighted India's eighth day of competition at this Olympics with two bronze medals from shooter Manu Bhaker, one of them in a team event with Sarabjot Singh, and another from Swapnil Kusale to show so far.

It also came on a day when the country's badminton star Lakshya Sen went down 20-22, 14-21 to defending Olympic champion Victor Axelsen in the singles semifinals and Tokyo Games bronze medallist boxer, Lovlina Borgohain, crashed out in the last-8 stage.

The hockey quarterfinal against Britain was a battle of equals for 17 minutes. But in the second minute of the second quarter, defender Amit Rohidas did what could be called the equivalent of the Zinedine Zidane head-butt during the final of the 2006 football World Cup.

In a duel for possession with Will Calnan, Rohidas lifted his stick, which hit the Britain attacker on his head. The referee halted play and after consulting the video umpire, deemed that Rohidas' actions were intentional, and he was shown a straight red card. In the last 11 years, there have only been four instances of a player being sent off in a major tournament — and never in the Olympics.

The Indian players protested, their coach argued with match officials and the Indian spectators boomed in unison. It's almost unheard of in international hockey that a team plays three-quarters of a match with one man less and emerges victorious. But this Indian team rose to the challenge.

Before coming to Paris, they had spent three days in the Swiss Alps performing stunts that the team's mental coach Paddy Upton said were "genuinely scary" and had "consequences much worse than losing a hockey match". It was designed to foster a spirit of oneness among players and make them perform when dragged out of their comfort zones. In a nutshell, it was to prepare them for moments like these.

Harbouring an us-against-the-world attitude, they turned the setback of losing one player into motivation and launched into attack mode, combining anger with artistry to raid the British 'D'. Within five minutes of the red card, captain Harmanpreet Singh put India ahead with his trademark drag-flick.

When Britain scored, two

minutes before half-time, it felt like the floodgates would open. But what followed after India emerged from the dressing room for the second half was a defensive masterclass that converted even the neutrals in the stands.

The Indian players fought for every loose ball, bent so low to stop Britain's passes that they had bruises on their knuckles, and did well not to crumble under relentless pressure from the opposition who attacked from all sides.

There were two minutes when at the start of the fourth quarter India were down to nine men. But even though they had two men less, India did not lose their shape and thwarted every British attack — there were 24 of them, an average of one every two-and-a-half minutes.

When the hooter sounded after 60 minutes, India's players celebrated the 1-1 tie as if they had won the match. Hardik Singh punched the air and Vivek Sagar Prasad bent and kissed the surface. Fulton smiled — for the first time this morning — and goalie Sreejesh walked with a swagger, knowing the match was now in his territory, penalty shootouts.

The veteran goalkeeper had been involved in 22 shootouts and on 12 of those occasions, India had won. On Sunday, he denied two rival players to put India in the driver's seat for the first time in the match. After Olympics debutant Raj Kumar Pal beat the British goalkeeper to score the goal that sealed the result, there was a downpour of emotions.

The British players sank to the blue turf in tears, a look of disbelief plastered on their faces. Around them, one or two Indian players were doing a Sourav Ganguly — removing their shirts and waving it in the air — while a few others embraced each other and high-fived. The spectators — mostly from the Netherlands, Belgium, Britain and India — rose to give the players a standing ovation as they left the field.

"Today, we played for all those who believe in hockey India ki hai (hockey is India's own)," vice-captain Hardik Singh said.

Hardik was mobbed for selfies and autographs. So were the others. Amidst the commotion, coach Fulton heard the sound of his daughter from behind a curtain that separated the spectator's area and the field of play. He rushed to the fence, saw her tiny feet on the other side, bent and touched them. Fulton could only see her shadow on the curtain and she could only hear his voice — a moment of solitude in the middle of all the chaos.

Joyous scenes straight out of a movie script.

India 'strongly advises' citizens against travel to Bangladesh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

AS NEARLY 100 people were killed and hundreds were injured in clashes in Bangladesh, India Sunday "strongly advised" its citizens against travelling to the neighbouring country.

A statement by the Ministry of External Affairs said on Sunday: "In view of ongoing developments, Indian nationals are strongly advised against travelling to Bangladesh till further notice."

"All Indian nationals presently in Bangladesh are advised to exercise extreme caution, restrict their movements and remain in contact with the High Commission of India in Dhaka through their emergency phone numbers," it said.

Massive protests began last month in Bangladesh over a job quota system, leading to violence and the deaths of at least 150 people. India has called the protests an "internal matter" of Bangladesh. It had brought about 4,500 Indians back home.



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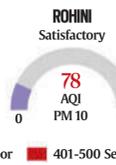
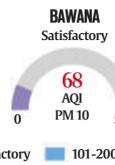
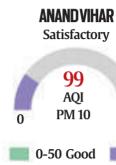
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BRIEFLY

Man dies after tree branch falls on him

New Delhi: A cyclist died in North Delhi's Khyber Pass area after a tree branch fell on him Sunday, police said. Immediately after the incident, the victim, Anees, was taken to a nearby hospital where doctors declared him dead on arrival, they said. A senior police officer said, "A PCR call about the death of a man after a branch of a tree fell on him was received at Civil Lines police station around 9.30 pm." Inquiry revealed that Anees was cycling on the main road near Khyber Pass when a branch broke off a tree due to strong wind and fell on his head, a police officer said.

For 24x7 power, Atishi unveils new transformers

New Delhi: The Delhi government has always remained committed to improving the city's power infrastructure, Power Minister Atishi said Sunday after inaugurating two new transformers in Srinivaspuri and Kalkaji. The two 630 KVA transformers have been installed to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply for residents, the government said in a statement. **PTI**

VERDICT TODAY ON DELHI GOVT'S PLEA

L-G bid to appoint aldermen: AAP, BJP set eyes on SC ruling

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

WITH THE Supreme Court set to pronounce its verdict Monday on a plea by the AAP-led Delhi government challenging Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena's move to nominate 10 aldermen in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), without the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, both the AAP and the BJP are gearing up to face its significant political ramifications.

The judgment by a bench of Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala, which had reserved its verdict in the matter on May 17, 2023, is expected to resolve the protracted impasse over the constitution of the MCD's Standing Committee, that would have a crucial bearing on the functioning of the civic body in the coming days.

In January last year, Saxena had appointed 10 aldermen or nominated members to the MCD under the powers granted to him by the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act (DMC), 1957. The Act mandates the Administrator (L-G) to appoint people with special knowledge or experience in municipal administration to assist the MCD in taking decisions of public importance.

The appointments came days after the December 2022 MCD polls, in which the AAP defeated the BJP — which had been ruling the MCD for 15 years — winning 134 seats as against the BJP's 104



For the last year and a half, the MCD's functioning has been crippled in the absence of a standing committee. *Archive*

in the 250-member MCD House.

A major row erupted between the AAP and BJP after all 10 members nominated by L-G Saxena turned out to be BJP members; AAP leaders accused the BJP of allegedly trying to control the MCD without securing a majority. AAP subsequently challenged the appointments in the Supreme Court.

"If BJP manages to get a majority in the (MCD's) Standing Committee, which effectively makes all big decisions of the Corporation, by this illegal act of the L-G, it would be an attack on democracy. It is not about 10 aldermen, but about the will of the people," a senior AAP leader said.

Though aldermen don't have voting rights in House meetings or Mayor polls, they play a key role in electing the members of the Standing Committee — the body that controls the MCD's purse strings for any project worth over Rs 5 crore — by virtue of being members of the 12 ward

committees. Their role has become more crucial in the present House, given the slender majority the AAP has in the MCD.

For about one-and-a-half years, the MCD has been functioning without this crucial body, even as the AAP and the BJP continue to blame each other for Delhi's "poor" civic amenities and infrastructure. The MCD came under fire recently after three UPSC aspirants drowned in the basement of a coaching centre in Old Rajinder Nagar.

BJP leaders, on the other hand, blame the AAP for not constituting the Standing Committee and said the appointment of aldermen does not directly affect the constitution of the panel as claimed by the AAP. The BJP has also accused the AAP of allegedly stalling governance in the MCD for political gains.

Before reserving its verdict in the case, the apex court had observed that "giving this power (to

appoint aldermen) to the Lt-Governor would effectively mean he can destabilise democratically elected Municipal Committees because they (aldermen) will have voting powers also".

In its plea, the Delhi government sought quashing of the orders and notifications dated January 1, 2023, and January 4, 2023, issued by the L-G, naming 10 persons as nominated members of the MCD under the DMC Act, 1957.

Senior Advocate A M Singhvi, who appeared for the Delhi government, had relied on two Constitution bench judgments, including one on control over services, to emphasise that the L-G has to act "on the aid and advice" of the council of ministers. He argued that in the last 30 years, this was the first time the L-G had nominated members on his own.

Representing the L-G, then Additional Solicitor General Sanjay Jain said there is a distinction between the L-G's role under Article 239AA, which grants special status to Delhi, and his role as MCD administrator. He contended it was a statutory power specifically granted by the DMC Act.

The L-G contended that "the governance of municipalities is independent of the regime of governance of the elected state governments", and that the exercise of powers by him as MCD administrator is distinct from those which require him to act "in accordance with the aid and advice" of the council of ministers.

DEATHS AT ASHA KIRAN SPARKS ROW OVER MEDICAL STAFF HIRING

Bharadwaj accuses L-G of delay; his office says 'press conference minister is searching for alibis'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

DELHI HEALTH Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj Sunday accused L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena of inaction in the recruitment of medical staff in government hospitals despite several requests to expedite filling the vacancies.

The L-G House hit back, calling Bharadwaj a 'Press Conference Minister' and pinned the blame on Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for not convening a meeting of the National Capital Civil Services Authority (NCCSA) — in charge of transfer and posting of officials — as its chairman even he was out on bail. The CM was arrested in connection with the excise policy case and was granted interim bail by the Supreme Court during the Lok Sabha election.

The L-G's office and the Delhi government have been trading barbs after reports on the deaths of at least 14 inmates at Asha Kiran Home — a government-run shelter for the intellectually challenged — in July surfaced.

In a press briefing Sunday, Bharadwaj claimed the recruitment of doctors falls under the jurisdiction of the services department, which comes under the L-G. "I was shocked when the L-G office said yesterday that the responsibility of filling vacant posts is of the elected government," said Bharadwaj. He also said he had requested the L-G via letters to hire doctors on a contract basis to meet the shortage of doctors and specialists in sev-



Health minister Saurabh Bharadwaj; L-G V K Saxena



eral government-run hospitals. An official at Raj Niwas responded: "Any service matter, including appointments, postings, transfers, and disciplinary actions are decided by the NCCSA headed by the CM and put up to L-G. CM Kejriwal has not convened a single meeting of NCCSA since ages, even when he was out on bail and authorised by the SC to do so."

The L-G House official added: "Ten years of misgovernance masqueraded by advertisements and propaganda has begun to implode and Press Conference Minister Bharadwaj is frantically searching for alibis... It will be in the interest of the public health system in Delhi if he indulges in governance rather than doing three-four press conferences a day."

Bharadwaj said: "I joined as the Health Minister in March 2023, and in April 2023, I wrote to the L-G to fill 292 vacancies of doctors and 234 vacancies of specialists."

In the letter dated April 19, 2023, the minister alleged that the transfer of doctors from the central health services has led to the shortage, thereby affecting

the quality of health services, and requested the L-G to ensure that the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) fills the vacant posts at the earliest.

Bharadwaj also accused the L-G of conspiring not to recruit medical professionals: "In Delhi government hospitals, as part of a conspiracy, recruitment of doctors, specialists, nurses, ANMs (Auxiliary Nurse Midwives), and operation theatre technicians is on halt."

He added that in June 2024, he wrote a letter to the health secretary to provide the status of posts and recruitments while also flagging that the process of recruitment through the UPSC and Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board (DSSSB) was "very slow".

The latest letter written by the Health Minister in this regard was a week ago on July 26, according to a statement by the Aam Aadmi Party Sunday.

"About a week ago, I again wrote a letter to the L-G... I requested that doctors should be hired for Delhi government hospitals on a contract basis as soon as possible," said Bharadwaj.

UNDER AMITABH KANT PACKAGE

16 builders yet to pay 25% dues to Gr Noida Authority, registry of thousands of flats stuck

DHEERAJ MISHRA
NOIDA, AUGUST 4

SEVEN MONTHS after the Uttar Pradesh government approved implementing recommendations of the Amitabh Kant panel on legacy stalled real estate projects, the registry of thousands of flats in Greater Noida continues to remain in limbo. This is because 16 big builders, who account for around 38% of net land dues, have not paid any amount to date to the Greater Noida Industrial Development Authority (GNIDA), said officials.

The committee was set up last March by the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry and was chaired by Kant, the former NITI Aayog CEO. It provides several waivers to builders including a two-year zero-period relief, taking into account the Covid pandemic; this translates into a 20% waiver of total outstanding land dues. However, there is a condition that flat registry will begin only after the builder pays 25% of the outstanding amount (land dues) within 60 days.

Data from the GNIDA shows that registration of about 85,000 flats is pending in its jurisdiction alone. Of this, only 4,000 flats

A total of 98 builders have been roped in under the plan

have been registered. The 16 builders account for 1,272 crore net land dues after the zero-period benefit, which is around 38% of total land dues of Rs 3,413 crore. The 25% outstanding amount that they have to pay is Rs 289 crore.

Officials said in the case of one of the 16 builders, a court case is pending against the stay on recovery certificate issued by the authority. While another has sought a review of the dues, that of a third builder is being rechecked, they said.

"A complete list of such builders with details of their properties is being prepared for further action — cancellation of plots, attachment of the builder's properties — under the package," said Saumya Srivastava, OSD (Builders), Greater Noida Authority.

A total of 98 builders have been roped in under the plan; 52 builders have paid 25% of the dues, said officials. Data shows that in 13 projects, there are no dues on the builder after applying the Kant formula.



HOMES TO RUBBLE

A demolition drive was carried out in Khyber Pass by the Land and Development Office, in Civil Lines, Sunday. *Praveen Khanna*

Drain deaths: DDA accuses MCD of 'shifting responsibility'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

THE Delhi Development Authority (DDA) Sunday accused the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) of trying to "shift responsibility" in the death of a woman and her child in a drain in Delhi's Ghazipur last week.

A political and inter-agency

blame game has erupted since the deaths, with the BJP and AAP blaming each other. While DDA comes under the Centre, MCD is governed by AAP.

The "open drain" where the accident took place was transferred to the MCD on April 13 this year and falls entirely under its jurisdiction, the DDA, which is headed by the Lieutenant Governor, said in a statement.

AAP alleged that the drain comes under DDA.

Referring to a document that leaders of the MCD shared, DDA said that "at no point did the DDA officials, either in writing or verbally, acknowledge/ accept that the claimed accident spot pertains to the DDA".

"Therefore, the facts presented in the report of the executive engineer, MCD, on

August 1, claiming that the DDA accepted that the site of the incident pertains to it, are entirely incorrect and a blatant attempt to shift responsibility," it said.

MCD had earlier alleged that the DDA was responsible for the section of the drain where the drowning took place amid a heavy downpour Wednesday.

'Choked drains': No end to blame game between AAP & L-G

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

WITH HEAVY rains and water-logging in Delhi claiming several lives in the city over the past few days, a blame game has erupted between the office of the Lt-Governor and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) yet again.

Lt-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena visited three drains in Nizamuddin, flagging their state as "appalling and shameful". His office said the drains were choked with silt, sludge and debris.

Hitting back, the AAP said in a statement, "Now that the monsoon is almost over, the L-G has come forward just to pay lip service and engage in dirty politics. It would have been better if he had taken action against the Chief Secretary and the PWD Secretary, as well as any other officers involved in the wrongdoing... There is still time for the LG to take action..."

The AAP as well as Delhi government ministers have alleged that senior bureaucrats have not followed instructions to desilt drains despite complaints.

In a series of posts on X, Saxena said he visited and inspected the Barapullah, Kushak and Sunehri drains and the historic Barapullah Bridge at Nizamuddin Sunday. "It requires urgent corrective measures to ensure smooth flow of water to

mitigate flooding," he said. These three arterial drains are under the Irrigation and Flood Control Department and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). Saxena said the drains carry stormwater into Yamuna and have not been desilted and unclogged for years, despite claims to the contrary.

"Only five out of the 12 bays under culverts at Barapullah, 3 out of 6 bays at Sunehri and 4 out of 7 bays at Kushak drains are open with the remaining lying completely choked... leads to backflow and flooding," the L-G said on X.

He instructed them to clear encroachments on Barapullah and restore the bridge to its original state in a week.

Accompanied by officials of the drain-owning agencies like MCD and Irrigation and Flood Control, Saxena oversaw the commencement of the desilting works and directed the agencies to complete the works within 15 days, L-G House officials said in a note. He also asked officials to monitor the drains through CCTV cameras and to take action against those found dumping waste into the drains.

The clogging of the Barapullah drain leads to backflow of water and flooding of areas like Nizamuddin, Lodhi Road, Jangpura, CGO Complex and other adjoining parts, they said.

NESTLED AMID THE RIDGE

A Sufi saint, 2 mosques from two periods: Story behind Muradabad ki Pahadi

VIDHEESHA KUNTAMALLA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

ON THE pathway that leads to the DDA Biodiversity Park near Vasant Vihar is a gate that opens to a brick path, flanked by the lush vegetation of the Ridge, going uphill. When you reach the top, there is a verdant garden, the centerpiece of which is two structures — their ivory domes distinctly shaped — that stand side by side.

This is Muradabad ki Pahadi. Named after a 14th-century saint Syed Murad Ali, not much is

known about the site. The two structures, however, are unique as they date back to two different periods of history — the Tughlaq and Lodhi dynasties. Their walls are adorned with intricate arches and ornate doorways. The path leading up to one of them is covered with red polished tiles, with mats for people to sit and offer prayers.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, author and historian Rana Safvi says, "This area was named Muradabad Ki Pahari after him (Syed Murad Ali baba). It has nothing to do with the city of Moradabad, which is named after Prince Murad Baksh, son of

Emperor Shah Jahan. His tomb is old and survives in its ruinous original state but his grave seems to have been renovated. The date of his death on it is given as 732 Hijri or 1331 AD. The tomb is inside the madarsa compound and he is still revered by people of all faiths... locals come here often to offer flowers and pay their respects."

One of the mosques, says Safvi, seems to date back to the Lodhi period "as it has a lotus kalash which was developed under the Lodhis and was being built in domes".

Speculating on the site's development, Safvi writes in her



book, *The Forgotten Cities of Delhi*, "Whether the madarsa and kharraqah developed around it, or if it was already present in his lifetime, is not clear. My guess would be that the first building was (built) after his passing away during the period of Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlaq, as the solid architecture seems to date back to it."

The madarsa, now known as the Abdul Mannan Academy, continues to serve the community.

Muradabad ki Pahadi in South Delhi's Vasant Vihar.
Praveen Khanna

Safvi notes in her book, "According to Maulvi Rashid, the imam here, his father Maulana Abdul Mannan got the papers, searched for it, and established a madarsa 40 years ago. It is he who got it restored as he was fond of heritage preservation. Friday congregational prayers are held here and it is popular with the embassy staff of Islamic countries, who have their offices in Vasant Vihar."

Rameen Khan, founder of City Tales, which conducts heritage walks in Delhi, writes about the site's origin on Instagram: "Back in the 14th Century, a Sufi

saint by the name of Syed Murad Ali Shah made the forest his abode... When he passed away in 1331 AD, the place earned the name Muradabad ki Pahari."

Khan continues, "The grave still stands in a domed pavilion. However, the monuments standing beside it are the ones that elicit awe. It is a rare sight to see a Tughlaq-era mosque called Qasai wala Gumbad standing side by side a Lodhi-era mosque which now goes by the name of Shahi Masjid..."

Why these mosques were built alongside is still a mystery to all.

Himanta: Will curb land sale to Muslims, law soon for life term in 'love jihad' cases

Assam CM says his government wants to 'protect rights of indigenous people'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
GUWAHATI, AUGUST 4

ASSAM CHIEF Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Sunday said that the state government has decided to soon introduce a law against "love jihad" with a life imprisonment penalty. The Chief Minister also announced several other decisions taken by the BJP government.

Sarma was speaking in Guwahati at a BJP state executive meeting, where he announced a string of decisions that he said were aimed at "protecting the rights of indigenous people" and of fulfilling the promises made before the 2021 elections.

"At the time of elections, we had spoken about love jihad. In the coming days, we will bring a new law that will introduce life imprisonment as a penalty for love jihad cases," he said.

"Love jihad" is a term used by the Hindu right-wing to allege that Muslim men coerce Hindu women into converting to Islam by luring them into romantic relationship. States including Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma addresses BJP state executive meeting at Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra in Guwahati on Sunday. ANI

have introduced "love jihad" laws.

He also said that the state government will introduce different measures to curb the sale of land to Muslims in the state.

He said that the state would make the chief minister's consent necessary for land transactions between Hindus and Muslims.

"Earlier, there was inter-religious land transfers. Hindus' lands were bought by Muslims, Muslims' lands were bought by

Hindus. The government cannot prevent such transactions but the it has decided that for the land of a Hindu to be bought by a Muslim and vice-versa, there can be land sale permission only after the chief minister's consent is taken," he said.

Sarma also said that the state government would specifically introduce restrictions on sale of land to a "particular community" in Lower Assam's Goalpara region.

"Undivided Goalpara was an

integral part of Assam, of great importance to the Koch Rajbongshi community. But people from a particular community kept snatching land from our indigenous people there and today we are in the minority in our own land. The government has decided that within the next few days, we will bring a law that in Undivided Goalpara district, no one can sell our land to members of a particular community. The land that continues to remain with tribal people, SC people, OBC people there, we will not let it be transferred anymore," he said.

He also said that the land sale in important centres of Assam's neo-vaishnavite culture in Barpeta, Majuli and Batadrava will also be restricted to "native" people.

Sarma also said that "indigenous youth" accounts for the lion's share of the one lakh government job appointments promise that the government is working to deliver. To add to this, he said that the state government will introduce a "domicile policy" only making people born in Assam to be eligible for government jobs here.

The next Assembly session in Assam will begin on August 22.

Jarange says he will contest Assembly polls as Independent

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, AUGUST 4

FED UP with state government's dilatory tactics on his demand for reservation in OBC category for Maratha community, activist Manoj Jarange-Patil on Sunday said he will prefer to contest Assembly election as an independent candidate.

"I don't believe in joining any alliances. I will contest an independent candidate," he told reporters in Jalna today. He did not reveal the constituency from where he would contest.

Jarange once again reiterated that he would field candidates in all 288 seats. "We have invited applications from aspirants," he said. He said they were losing hope in the government. "The government sends delegations and makes promises but does not keep its word," he said.

Jarange said he has been demanding that all cases against Maratha youths be withdrawn. "The government promised but is yet to act on it," he said.

Meanwhile, BJP leader Narayan Rane said he will go to Marathwada and confront Jarange. To this, Jarange hit back, saying Rane will find it difficult to return to Konkan.

In Govt's 100-day plan: Launching ₹5,000-cr projects in AMRUT 2.0

Will cover water supply, sewage treatment and parks

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

UNDER THE Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 2.0, cities are likely to initiate projects worth Rs 5,000 crore, covering water supply, sewage treatment, and rejuvenation of water bodies and parks, as a part of the 100-day agenda of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, during its third term.

Launched in 2021, AMRUT 2.0 aims to provide tap water supply to all households across 4,800 statutory towns in the country. With the tendering process completed and the contractors selected, the projects are set to start on the ground soon, sources said.

With the aim of universal tap water supply, the first iteration of AMRUT covered 500 cities in the country. Expanding the coverage to all statutory towns, AM-

RUT 2.0 was approved with a Central assistance of Rs 66,750 crore from 2021-2022 until 2025-2026, with the total estimated outlay at Rs 2.99 lakh crore.

With two years to go, work on 50 per cent of the projects is yet to start on the ground.

In a reply to the Lok Sabha on July 25 this year, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) had said that as many as 4,065 projects worth Rs 77,317.40 crore out of the total 8,205 projects worth Rs 1.82 lakh crore had been awarded, while 4,410 projects worth Rs 1.05 lakh crore were in the stage of floating tender or preparation of detailed project report (DPR). Around 50 per cent of the approved projects relate to the management of water supply, sewerage and septage, showed MoHUA data.

Projects covering rejuvenation of water bodies, development of parks, groundwater recharge and urban flood miti-

gation are also being implemented under AMRUT 2.0.

Under the 100-day agenda, cities also aim to commission sewage treatment plants (STPs) with a total capacity of 500 million litres a day (MLD) that would benefit around 6 lakh households, and 150 MLD of water treatment plants for 2 lakh households, sources said. These projects are nearing completion and are likely to be commissioned within the 100-day period, they added.

All the cabinet ministries were earlier directed to draw up their agendas before the Lok Sabha elections. The government's 100-day agenda comprises approval for long-pending proposals including notification of the Delhi Master Plan 2041, and the incubation of eight greenfield cities to the tune of Rs 1,000 crore each in the country, as recommended by the 15th Finance Commission report tabled in Parliament in February 2021.

Jairam targets govt over NTA: Future of youth reduced to revenue-raising

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

THE FUTURE of India's youth has "ultimately become a mere revenue-raising exercise" for the Government, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said Sunday, pointing to the Education Ministry's data on the revenue and expenditure of the National Testing Agency (NTA).

According to the data, presented by Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar in Rajya Sabha on July 31 in response to a question by Congress MP Vivek K Tankha, the NTA collected a total fee income of ₹3,512.98 crore in six years from 2018-19 to 2023-24. Of this, the data showed, the NTA spent ₹3,064.77 crore.

Sharing Majumdar's Rajya Sabha reply on X, Congress's communications head Jairam Ramesh wrote that the NTA "therefore netted a profit of ₹448 crore in the last six years." "This corpus, however, has not been used to build the agency's capabilities to conduct tests itself, or to strengthen regulatory and monitoring capabilities for its vendors. The future of millions of India's youths has ultimately become a mere revenue-raising exercise for the non-biological PM's government," he wrote.

According to Majumdar's reply, the NTA, set up in 2018, was "self-supporting through the examination fee collected." The data showed that in 2018-19, the NTA collected ₹101.51 crore, while in 2023-24 the revenue was ₹1,065.38 crore. The expenditure in 2018-19 was ₹118.43 crore, which rose to ₹1020.35 crore



Congress communications head Jairam Ramesh. File

in 2023-24.

The NTA conducts three top undergraduate admissions entrance exams — JEE-Main, NEET-UG and CUET-UG.

To Tankha's question whether the NTA outsourced work related to exams to private agencies, Majumdar said operational and security measures were involved in conducting the exams which involved "engagement of specialised/experienced agencies for providing services like capturing of biometric, frisking, CCTV surveillance, AI analytics with a view to identify any potential impersonation".

Alleging that NTA was "at the very heart of the NEET scandal", Ramesh wrote: "It is a body of the Education Ministry whose only purpose is to function via outsourcing to private vendors. Not only do these vendors very often have dubious credentials but the NTA itself is headed by a person who presided over the Madhya Pradesh Public Service Commission, which has seen mega-scams."

In the ongoing Budget Session of Parliament, Opposition members have been demanding a discussion on the NEET paper leak issue. Many Opposition leaders have called for scrapping of NEET as well as NTA.

Bengal minister says will resign but won't apologise to woman officer he threatened

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, AUGUST 4

IN AN unprecedented move, the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal on Sunday asked its minister Akhil Giri to resign and apologise to a woman forest officer whom he had threatened to beat with a stick a day ago in Purba Medinipur district.

Giri, who holds the portfolio of the State Correctional Administration (jail) Department, said he would resign from the ministry but added that there was "no question of apologising" to the woman officer.

Speaking to reporters at Kanthi in Purba Medinipur district, Giri said: "The party's image may have been tarnished because of my remarks. So, the party asked me to resign. I will send my resignation letter to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee tomorrow (Monday) in the Assembly. That is not a big thing for me. I will remain a normal foot soldier and MLA of the party."

Regretting for making the remarks, Giri, who is the TMC MLA from Ramnagar, said he said it in an "agitated" state.

Earlier in the day, state TMC chief Subrata Bakshi asked Giri to resign from the council of ministers and also directed him to apologise to the officer, saying the party doesn't approve of his behaviour.

दिल्ली सरकार
शाप की सरकार

Inauguration of a NEW SCHOOL BLOCK

Sant. Eknath Sarvodaya Kanya/Bal Vidyalaya, J&K Block, Dilshad Garden, Delhi

World class schooling facilities for children of highly dense areas near Dilshad Garden of North East Delhi

- Ground plus 3 storey structure
- Library and Lift
- Classrooms equipped with modern furniture
- Multi-purpose Auditorium
- State of the art Laboratories
- Staff rooms with modern amenities

Inauguration Ceremony

Monday, 5th August, 2024

Chief Guest

Atishi,
Minister, Education and
Public Works Department, Delhi

Guest of Honour

Ram Niwas Goel,
Speaker, Delhi Legislative Assembly
MLA, Shahdara Constituency

Directorate of Education, Government of NCT of Delhi

8 GOVT & POLITICS



DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



Former PM H D Deve Gowda at the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya in New Delhi on Sunday. Express

HIS OWN GALLERY

TWO YEARS after its inauguration, the Prime Ministers' Museum on Sunday saw former PM H D Deve Gowda visiting his own gallery, one of the 14 dedicated to all Indian PMs so far. Officials say he was overwhelmed with the experience. Even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi had inaugurated the museum in April 2022, the gallery dedicated to his own tenure only came up later — in February this year.

POST-COVID PRECAUTION

THE PANDEMIC may have officially ended two years ago, but Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati's staff still wear facemasks when she is around. On Sunday, when Mayawati addressed the press at the party office in Lucknow on the recent Supreme Court verdict on sub-classification of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for reservation purposes, her security staff from UP Police came wearing facemasks. Some of the staff at the party office were also seen covering their faces with handkerchiefs. Insiders say Mayawati is very cautious about air-borne infections and she even ensures that the area around her house and office is dust-free.

IN & OUT

EVER SINCE the BJP returned to power at the Centre, its leadership seems to be keener on keeping the coalition intact. In Karnataka, when BJP state chief B Y Vijayendra announced a padyatra between Bangalore and Mysore to highlight the "scams" of the Congress government in the state, ally JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy, who is also a Union minister, announced he won't take part in it. However, the BJP leadership intervened to ensure that Kumaraswamy attended the march. However, some BJP leaders, including Basanagouda Patil Yatnal, Satish Jarkiholi and Arvind Limbavalli, didn't take part in the march. According to one senior party leader, their (those who didn't take part) act was like a "kala teeka on the padyatra to keep evil eye off".

'BJP ALONE HAS MORE SEATS THAN ENTIRE OPP BLOC'

Opp can make all noise it wants, PM Modi will win 4th term: Shah

HINA ROHTAKI
CHANDIGARH, AUGUST 4

AT A Chandigarh event that Congress MP Manish Tewari and Mayor Kuldeep Kumar boycotted, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday lashed out at the Opposition parties for raising questions about the strength of the NDA government at the Centre, saying the alliance will not only complete its term but also form the government in 2029. He said Narendra Modi will return as prime minister for a fourth term in 2029.

Shah made the remarks while addressing a gathering here after inaugurating the 24x7 Manimajra water supply project. The Opposition thinks that with a little success, it has won the Lok Sabha elections... But they do not know that the BJP won more seats in this election than the number of seats the Congress got in the past three elections... The BJP alone has more seats than the



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with BJP leader Kirron Kher in Manimajra, Chandigarh, on Sunday. Jasbir Malhi

total number of seats which their whole alliance has," Shah said. "The Opposition may try and make as much noise as it wants to. Let me make it clear that in 2029, it is again PM Modi who is coming to power," the BJP leader added. Lauding the Modi government for its works, he said, "I want to say that the 10-year period from 2014 to 2024 will be inscribed in golden letters in the history of our coun-

try's development." "Be it giving a befitting reply to the enemies by surgical and air strikes, abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, building Ram temple in Ayodhya, setting up a road network and transformation of British-era railway stations, all these were possible because of PM Modi," Shah said. "This is the reason why the people of this country have yet

again given Modi another chance to lead the country. In a way they have put a stamp on all his works. And the people of this country are all set to get Modi again as PM in 2029."

Chandigarh Mayor Kuldeep Kumar, who, along with MP Manish Tewari, was conspicuous by his absence at the event told The Indian Express, "Our names were not even there on the invitation card. Moreover, we chose to boycott the event because we need 24/7 supply of water by paying an additional tariff and imposing monetary burden on people... We have been speaking of free 20,000 litres of water to every family."

At a separate gathering to launch the e-evidence, Nyay Setu, Nyay Shruti and e-summon systems to augment the criminal justice apparatus, Shah also spoke on the recently rolled-out criminal laws and called them the "biggest" reform of the 21st century aimed at ensuring justice.

SCHEDULED CASTE SUB-CLASSIFICATION

Amend Constitution to overturn top court verdict on sub-quota, Mayawati tells BJP

People of SC, ST communities faced atrocities as a group, says BSP leader

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW, AUGUST 4

STATING THAT her party doesn't agree with the recent Supreme Court's verdict allowing sub-classification within Scheduled Castes, BSP chief and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati on Sunday asked the ruling BJP to amend the Constitution to overturn the judgment.

In a landmark verdict, the Supreme Court on Thursday held that states are constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes, which form a socially heterogeneous class, for granting reservation for the uplift of castes that are socially and educationally more backward.

"The sub-classification of people within Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) has been permitted. Our party doesn't agree with it at all... Because the atrocities faced by the people of SCs and STs have been faced as a group and this group is equal in which it would not be right to do any kind of sub-classification," Mayawati said at a press conference here.

Asking the ruling BJP to amend the Constitution to overturn the top court's verdict, the BSP chief said: "... we have to tell the BJP government at the Centre that if your intention is clear then whatever decision has come, you people should amend the Constitution in Parliament and bring it in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution."

"I do not accept the decision taken by the Supreme Court because Parliament also has the right to overturn it. If they do not overturn it, then whether it is the Congress, the BJP, or other parties, their intentions are not clear in the matter of reservation for SCs, STs and OBC."

"The Centre and the BJP, who say that they are the supporters



BSP chief Mayawati in Lucknow. Vishal Srivastava

of the SC-ST community, should advocate for them properly... which they did not. The Congress also adopted a vague attitude on the matter," she added.

Calling the Supreme Court's judgment "vague," she said the court has not yet set any standard. "In a way, under the guise of this, the state governments will make the reservation that SCs-STs have been getting till now, ineffective. People will not get the benefit of it," she said.

Mayawati further said, "The reservation that SCs-STs have got is on the basis of equalising educational, social and economic disparity. The social perspective has not changed regarding them, so it is important for them to get reservation."

Mayawati said, "Those who say that SCs-STs have become economically strong, then I think only 10 or 11 per cent of the people must have become strong, the condition of the rest 90 per cent is very bad. With this decision of the Supreme Court, about 90 per cent of the people who need reservation will be left far behind. If they are removed according to this decision, it will be very bad."

The former chief minister said, "We have appealed to the honourable Supreme Court to reconsider its decision, otherwise if the reservation facility given by the most revered Baba Saheb to make crores of Dalits and tribals stand on their feet in this country is abolished, it will become very difficult."

Mamata speaks to Soren over water release

Kolkata: A day after the West Bengal government alleged a flood-like situation has been created in three-four districts of the state, CM Mamata Banerjee Sunday spoke with Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren, requesting him to look into the issue of release of water from dams. "I discussed with him the case of sudden and huge release of water from Tenughat, which has already started flooding Bengal. I told him that Jharkhand waters have been flooding Bengal, and this is man-made! I requested him to please take care of this," Banerjee posted on X. ENS



AIR MIGHT

Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel during a multinational military exercise — Pitch Black 24 — in Canberra, Australia. PTI

Amid talk of Bill to amend Wakf Act, Muslim Personal Law Board urges BJP allies, Opp leaders to oppose move

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

AMID REPORTS that the government is likely to bring a Bill to amend the Wakf Act 1995 and government sources indicating the same, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board has termed the proposed move as "unacceptable".

Government sources said as many as 40 amendments to the Act are under consideration to curtail the powers of the wakf boards through a Bill, likely to be tabled in Parliament this week.

The Wakf Act 1995 was aimed at better administration

of 'auqaf' (assets donated and notified as wakf).

A government source on Sunday said that "the Bill also proposes to repeal a few clauses of the Act".

"Among the major amendments that are likely to be proposed by the draft legislation include the restructuring of wakf boards, changing the composition of boards and ensuring verification of the land before the board announces it as a wakf property," the source added.

"It also proposes to seek fresh verification of the disputed land claimed by the state wakf boards," the source said.

The All India Muslim

Personal Law Board released a statement on Sunday saying it "deems it necessary to make it clear that any change to the Act that alters the nature of wakf properties or makes it easier for the government or any individual to usurp the same will not be acceptable".

"Likewise, reducing or restricting the powers of wakf boards will not be tolerated," said the statement released by spokesperson Dr S Q R Ilyas.

"The Board considers it important to clarify that wakf properties are donations made by Muslim philanthropists dedicated to religious and charitable purposes; the government has

enacted the Wakf Act only to regulate them," the spokesperson said. He further said that the Wakf Act and wakf properties are protected by the Constitution of India and Shariat Application Act, 1937.

"Therefore, the government cannot make any amendment that would change and alter the nature and status of these properties," said the spokesperson.

The Board also "strongly appealed to the allies of the NDA and other Opposition parties to reject any such move in Parliament".

In a statement, AIMIM president and MP Asaduddin Owaisi said that the Central government

wants to take away wakf boards' properties from Muslims.

"The first thing is that when Parliament is in session, then the Central government has informed the media and not Parliament. On the basis of the reports in the media, it shows that the Modi government wants to take away the autonomy of the wakf board. And it wants to interfere against the will of wakifs on how to run the wakf properties. This is against freedom of religion," said Owaisi.

A source in the government said that the 40 amendments to the Wakf Act will include bringing in a provision to include women in these bodies.

Netaji painting to rice pot, 250 gifts to Presidents on auction from today

DIVYAA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

BOOKS, TRIBAL jewellery, furniture, idols and sculptures are among 250 objects which will go under the hammer Monday as part of a special auction of gifts and mementoes received by various Indian Presidents.

The auction, to be held by Rashtrapati Bhavan on the E-Upahar portal from August 5-26, the base prices of the articles range from ₹2,700 to ₹4 lakh. The proceeds will be donated to help children, Rashtrapati Bhavan officials said.

Among the items is a memento received by President Droupadi Murmu from the Andaman Nicobar Command in February — six models of ships and submarines utilised by the Navy encased in an acrylic glass cover, symbolising the command's maritime presence. The



A rice padi (pot); memento from the Andaman Nicobar Command among items

15-kg model is now up for grabs at a base price of ₹7,500.

A shell craft painting of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, weighing over 14 kg, received by Murmu, which commemorates the anniversary of the momentous hoisting of the Tricolour by Bose in Port Blair, has the highest starting price of ₹4.02 lakh.

There's also a replica of Karnataka's Hoysaleswara Temple presented to Murmu by Vice Admiral RB Pandit, which also has a base price of ₹1.5 lakh.

A round marble plate received by former President Pratibha Devisingh Patil has a base price of ₹6,000. A rice padi (metal pot) received by former President Pranab Mukherjee, by the Jain community of Haryana, capable of holding around 1.5 kg of rice, is also available for bidding at ₹3,500 onwards. The lowest base price of ₹2,700 is for a trophy received by Mukherjee, featuring a crystal globe.

A pair of deer made from thread and cardboard, presented to Dr APJ Abdul Kalam in 2005 during the National Convention of Small, Agro, and Rural Industries is also among the items for bid, for almost the same price as the metal pot.

Jaapi, a traditional conical multi coloured headgear, received by former President Ram Nath Kovind, from Assam, is available at ₹3,000 onwards, while a metal pen holder is available at a base price of ₹2,800.

India, but others like Thakur calling him an "accidental Hindu".

Thakur also tried to put Rahul on the defensive, questioning the Congress's OBC credentials, since Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi had "opposed" affirmative action for the backward classes.

It is true that Nehru was not for reservation; he had set up the Kakasaheb Kalelkar commission to look into the conditions of the "socially and educationally backward classes". The Kalelkar report, which made a case for anything between 25-40% as reservation for the OBCs in central government services, was not even tabled in Parliament. Finally, the central government left it to the states to take the decision. Some states like Karnataka opted for 50% quota, while a state like Punjab went in for only 5%.

The Mandal Commission, also known as the Second Backward Classes Commission, was set up in 1979, which submitted its report in late 1980 when Indira Gandhi was back in power. She too put it on the backburner — relying more on an upper caste-Dalit-Muslim constituency she had carved. The committee she set up to recommend what "action" should be taken on "Mandal" carried on for eight years — and outlived her! But she understood the value of the "backward card", having won her 1978 by-election from Karnataka's Chikmagalur thanks to the successful OBC-SC-ST-minority coalition the Congress had forged. And this win put her on the comeback trail in the wake of the post-Emergency debacle.

Rajiv Gandhi who wanted to take India into the 21st century, was dead against reservation as the way to do it: for two and half hours he spoke in Parliament against the Mandal report, fearing it would unleash caste wars. It was Vishwanath Pratap

Singh, who as the Prime Minister in 1990, implemented the Mandal recommendations, allotting 27% reservation to the OBCs in government jobs, in a bid to save his beleaguered government.

While a party cannot fully delink itself from its past, it would be less than fair to hold its present leadership responsible for the decisions made in the past.

The BJP was known as the Brahmin-Bania party when it was led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L K Advani and others. But Narendra Modi, an OBC leader himself, widened the party's base to include the OBCs, particularly the extremely backward classes (EBCs) among them, and sections of Dalits.

Nor can Rahul Gandhi be blamed for wanting to increase the Congress's catchment area by speaking for the "submerged" sections (SCs, STs, minorities and OBCs, who together account for

up to 90% of India's populace) just because his forebears did not do so.

Sitharaman, however, had a point when she returned the ball back at Gandhi, who had waved at her a picture of the "halwa" group of officials who had worked on the Budget while saying that it did not comprise any faces from the SCs or OBCs. How many SCs were there among the top nine at the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Sitharman shot back. Charity, she said, begins "at home".

It goes without saying that had Nehru, Indira or Rajiv provided reservations for the OBCs when they were in power, the story might have been different today. Rahul laments their abysmal presence in bureaucracy, corporates or media. But till it happens, and even as it is encouraged, the processes of governance cannot come to a halt.

A word on the political impli-

cations of the judgment of the seven-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, allowing sub-classification of the SCs and STs for the quota purposes.

Socially, this landmark verdict may bring the reservation benefits to the more deprived, albeit largely leaderless, of the SC/ST communities, thereby ensuring greater equity and justice.

But politically, it could open a Pandora's box, and trigger a reaction from the dominant groups who have benefited from the quota policy so far now that a case has been made for excluding the "creamy layer" amongst the SCs/STs.

Can there be a renewed demand for a "quota within a quota" — now conceded by the apex court as a key principle — in the Women's Reservation Bill (which provides for one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies)? Can the judgment also lead to the sub-classification of the

OBCs in the future? That has been pending since the Rohini Commission submitted its report last year.

It is not just the regional outfits but also major national parties which are eyeing the OBC vote today, with the Congress a more recent entrant to the game.

While the BJP may hope to gain from a division among the OBCs and SCs and win back, say, the support of the non-Yadav OBCs, especially of the EBCs, the Opposition INDIA bloc may prefer an overarching alliance as it did in UP with the creation of the PDA (Pichde, Dalits, Alpasankhyak). Either way, the OBCs are likely to emerge as the pivot of politics in the months to come — and caste will decide political alignments.

Neeraja Chowdhury, Contributing Editor, The Indian Express, has covered the last 11 Lok Sabha elections. She is the author of How Prime Ministers Decide

Quota in quota may set off political churn, from poll maths to alliances to women Bill

It is not just regional outfits but also major national parties which are eyeing the OBC vote today, with the Congress party a more recent entrant to the game



THE NEERAJA CHOWDHURY COLUMN

Weekly insight into what's changing in national politics — and why

CASTES is back at the centre of the political narrative. This was seen during the debate on the Budget in Parliament, where Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav led the charge against the ruling BJP for "neglecting" SCs, STs and OBCs — and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and ex-minister Anurag Thakur gave it back in equally hard-hitting speeches.

The irony couldn't be missed: Gandhi used religious (Hindu) symbolism to attack the BJP when he referred to "chakravayuh" from the Mahabharata to say that the

youth, farmers, women and the poor, had been "trapped" by the BJP in a "chakravayuh" which, too, was handled by six people, he alleged, naming Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, NSA Ajit Doval, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and Adani and Ambani.

Thakur chose to fight on what has been the Opposition's turf, given its demand for a national caste census. It showed that the BJP is worried about the perceived loss of its support among the OBC and Dalit communities in the recent Lok Sabha elections.

Sharpening his attack on Gandhi, Thakur said "those who do not know about their caste were talking about a (caste) census". It was ostensibly meant to underline Rahul's mixed ancestry with his grandmother Indira Gandhi a Brahmin, grandfather Feroze Gandhi a Parsi, mother Sonia of Italian origin — some would say a symbol of a plural

9 EXPRESS NETWORK

Hurts when India calls protests Bangladesh internal affair... it can spill over, says Nobel laureate Yunus

UNDERLINING THAT the situation in Bangladesh was due to the "absence of democracy", and cautioning that the turmoil will "spill over" to the neighbouring countries as well, Nobel laureate and Grameen bank founder **PROF MUHAMMAD YUNUS** has said that India's position on the protests — calling it Bangladesh's internal matter — "hurts".

The 84-year-old, who has had a frosty relationship with Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina and is facing cases of alleged corruption in Bangladesh courts — charges he has denied — spoke to **SHUBHAJIT ROY** over Zoom from Paris, where he is an advisor for the Olympic Games 2024. Edited excerpts:

Today, the government feels that they are all powerful because they are all powerful. They control, I shouldn't say 'they', I should say 'she', because there is no 'they' here in Bangladesh. It is one country, one party, one leader, one narrative country. The moment you deviate from this, you're in serious trouble. I'm in trouble forever, since the Hasina government is in power.

On his statement that the Bangladesh government is not elected

You should go and ask people who live in Bangladesh, did you vote?... Check random 10 people and see what answer you get.

On the charge that Opposition was behind the protests

That is what the government says. The government is a lie-making factory, continuously lying and lying and lying, and they just start believing in their own lies.

Bangladesh is a young country and an aspirational society, where did things go wrong?

Bangladesh has 170 million people, and two-thirds are young people who have never



voted. They did not get the chance to cast their first vote... If they had voted, all these things would have been resolved.

So, the problem is the disappearance of democratic norms and protocols, rule of law, human rights, sharing views, freedom of writing, all disappeared completely... These young people are frustrated. They felt very strongly about the quota system. This is not the first time they are

THE WORLD

91 KILLED, HUNDREDS INJURED AS FRESH PROTESTS SWEEP BANGLADESH P14

demonstrating against the quota system... But the government responded in a very insulting way, which incited the young people.

Whether there are foreigners involved, or intelligence agencies or opposition parties, you (the government) can make up all the fictions you want to feel immune from your shortcomings. Anybody can see streets are full of police, full of army. How come opposition leaders and supporters are not captured by any camera. Are they invisible people? Instead, cameras capture police and military with guns shooting at students... Nobody sees the Jamaat (Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh) guy.

On India's response that the turmoil was Bangladesh's internal matter

I believe in the dream of

SAARC. SAARC started with great enthusiasm, but disappeared. We want to have a friendly relationship with all member countries. We want to feel like a family... like the European Union. We are a real family. So, when India says it's internal affairs, it hurts me. If there is a fire in the brother's house, how can I say it is an internal affair? Diplomacy has a much richer vocabulary than saying it is their internal affair.

If something is happening in Bangladesh... it doesn't need experts to tell that it will not be contained within the borders of Bangladesh, it will spill over to neighbours... It is a fire that we are playing with, it cannot be contained within... (and) in politically charged times, they (the migrants) may present themselves in unacceptable roles.

So, what do you want India to tell Bangladesh?

India should applaud Bangladesh for every transparent election and do otherwise for deviating from transparent elections. We see elections held in India at regular intervals. Their success drives home what a fail-

ure we are. We blame India for not encouraging us to achieve this goal through the diplomatic channels. It pains us to see the opposite. We cannot forgive India for this.

Bangladesh is a very creative country. We did find our own solution by inventing a caretaker government, but that could not continue for obvious reasons (the system, in which a selected government took over during the transition from one elected government to another, was in place 1996-2008 and abolished by Hasina's party in 2011).

If anything else is not available, we can go back to the caretaker system until we find a better formula.

Have you shared these concerns with anyone in the Indian government?

My relationship with Indian political leaders is more focussed on microcredit, entrepreneurship of youth, social business. I have not discussed political issues. Now I feel I should. I can discuss how our relationship can be improved for mutual benefit.

FULL INTERVIEW www.indianexpress.com



Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in Haryana's Thanesar on Sunday.

Haryana to buy all 23 crops at MSP, says Saini

Announces waiver of ₹133 crore of canal water irrigation charges dues

SUKHBIR SIWACH
CHANDIGARH, AUGUST 4

LAUNCHING THE BJP's poll campaign ahead of Haryana Assembly elections, CM Nayab Singh Saini Sunday said the state government would procure all 23 crops at MSP announced by the Centre and announced the waiving of ₹133 crore in outstanding canal water irrigation charges.

Saini said, "I am happy to state that in the past 10 years, the state government purchased 14 crops at MSP. All crops in Haryana will now be bought at MSP by our government."

"The waiving of the outstanding amount of ₹133.5 crore from the previous abiana (irrigation water cess) and discontinuing the water cess for the future will provide a relief to the farmers of nearly ₹54 crore annually," the chief minister said.

The chief minister further announced the payment of pending compensation of ₹137 crore within a week to farmers who suffered crop damage because of natural calamity in Rohtak, Nuh, Fatehabad and Sirsa before 2023 by their Deputy Commissioners within a week.

The CM made announcements at the party's 'Vijay Shankhnaad' rally in Kurukshetra's Thanesar. Saini said such rallies would be held in all Assembly constituencies.

The decision of the Haryana

government is likely to put pressure on other states, especially Punjab, to announce similar measures for the farmers.

Haryana finance minister JP Dalal, who was earlier holding the agriculture portfolio, told *The Indian Express*: "We will procure all the crops, be it groundnut or methi (fenugreek), on the MSP announced by the Centre. Thus far, the state government has been procuring 14 crops at the MSP and making payments directly into the bank accounts of the farmers."

Welcoming the announcement, Bhartiya Kisan Union (Chaduni) spokesperson Rakesh Bains said, "The farmers have been struggling for the same for long. However, we urge the government to introduce a law to guarantee the purchase of all crops on the MSP."

Prominent farmer leader in Haryana and Bhartiya Kisan Union (Chaduni) president Gurnam Singh Chaduni said the BJP government made these announcements "fearing the loss of farmers' votes. The BJP government fears farmers' entry into politics. This is just the beginning."

Chaduni has announced that his Sanyukt Sangharsh Party would contest the Assembly polls and he will contest from Pehowa in Kurukshetra.

Speaking at the rally, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan praised Saini for accelerating progress in Haryana.

92 LS poll petitions filed in 2024, down from 138 in 2019

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

A TOTAL of 92 election petitions challenging the outcome of 2024 elections were filed in 79 Lok Sabha constituencies, down from 138 petitions filed in 2019, as per Election Commission sources.

A citizens' group Vote for Democracy had recently said in its report that there had been a jump of nearly 5 crore votes from turnout figures reported from 7 pm-8.45 pm on polling days and final figures EC released. It said the EC had not "been forthcoming with any credible reasons for the hike".

On Sunday, the EC, without naming anyone, said on X, "False campaigns are being run by some (other than candidates) in furtherance of design to discredit largest elections ever held in the history of mankind in the most transparent manner involving candidates/stakeholders at every stage of elections."

"Unfounded attempts are made to compare approx turnout fig at 7 pm on poll day (when many PS might be closing poll &/or voters waiting in queue) with 'End of Poll' turnout available a day after poll day. Electoral data & outcomes are strictly as per statutory forms & procedures u/RPA [Representation of the People Act], EC said.

According to EC sources, states had reported 92 petitions filed in various HCs so far.

"While legitimate means to challenge an electoral outcome by a candidate or elector is through an Election Petition u/RPA 1951, no EP is reportedly filed on such grounds. A lesser number of EPs have been reportedly filed in 79 PCs in GE 2024 as against 138 EPs in GE 2019," the EC said in another post on X.

Congress leader Pawan Khera had called for an EC clarification on the report.

On July 27 in a post on X, Khera said: "...If the report is incorrect, @ECISVIEP must clarify its stance on it and restore the faltering faith of the people in the democratic process. But if what is said in the report is true, then the political history of Indian democracy is seeing its turning point."

Another Congress leader Sandeep Dikshit had said Saturday that the report had "raised suspicions" and that the EC should respond.

Faced with questions about the delayed release of turnout data during polls, the EC in a press release on May 25 had said voter turnout data was shared with candidates through their polling agents in the form of Form 17C, a statutory requirement under the RP Act, and to the general public through its Voter Turnout App.

Mumbai: Society chairman booked for 'biting off member's thumb at meeting

Mumbai: The chairman of a housing society in Dahisar area of Mumbai was booked Sunday after he allegedly bit off a member's thumb during a meeting over a dispute. Police have lodged an FIR.

Police said the incident took place at Amarnath Society in

theft daily in 2023.

It was the tragic death of Dr Deepak Amrapurkar in 2018—who slipped into a manhole while wading through the rain water and whose body was recovered nearly two days later in Worli—that gave a whiff of malady surrounding the stolen covers. In the wake of Amrapurkar's death, the Bombay HC directed the civic body to devise a uniform mechanism to redress citizens' grievances related to bad roads and potholes.

Who is stealing manhole covers?

"In most cases, the thefts are done by petty thieves and miscreants looking to make a quick buck. Since cast iron material is valuable, anti-social elements who steal the covers sell them off in scrap market," said a senior BMC official. Covers fetch anywhere from ₹1,000 to ₹1,200.



No Fresh Air

Garbage washed ashore at Mumbai's Versova beach on Sunday. Sankhadeep Banerjee

'Will raze criminals to ground': BJP leaders meet Ayodhya rape victim

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, AUGUST 4

A THREE-MEMBER delegation of BJP leaders Sunday met the 12-year-old rape victim from Ayodhya and her family members, a day after a bakery run by key accused in the case, purportedly a member of SP, was demolished by the authorities.

CM Yogi Adityanath and other BJP leaders have claimed that the key accused is "a team member" of SP's newly elected Faizabad MP Awadhesh Prasad. Demanding an increase in the compensation for the alleged rape victim from the state government, the delegation assured the family that Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre and Yogi Adityanath-led BJP dispensation in UP "will raze all such criminals to the ground".

Rajya Sabha MP Baburam Nishad, who was part of BJP delegation, "We have gone to the depth of the matter. We are going

to report our findings to our central leadership in Delhi. I will also expose in Rajya Sabha the leaders with such a mindset." Nishad said the delegation will submit a report to K Laxman, national president of the BJP's OBC Morcha.

UP MoS (Independent) Narendra Kashyap and Rajya Sabha MP Sangeeta Balwant Bind also comprised the delegation.

Later, Nishad said he will request Adityanath to increase the compensation ₹5 lakh to ₹25 lakh. Justifying the action taken against the key accused in the case, Narendra Kashyap said they have assured the family the Central and state governments will come heavily on such elements.

Bind claimed that her blood boiled when she heard the girl's ordeal and alleged that the accused had committed similar crimes earlier too.

"The girl's mother told us a few things about the incident. We were angry as the SP has stood with the person who has committed such a heinous

crime," Bind told *PTI*.

"We also came to know that the crime has been committed by the 'nagar adhyaksh' (city unit president) of SP, and there was another person involved in this case who used to make videos and blackmail her. After speaking to some villagers, it was revealed that the SP's 'nagar adhyaksh' had committed similar crimes earlier as well," Bind said.

Referring to the demolition of an "illegal" property of the accused, Bind also said that the CM is giving a message that strict action will be taken against those involved in such crimes.

The police on July 30 arrested the key accused, who ran a bakery in a locality in Ayodhya district, and his employee in connection with the case.

Meanwhile, Nagina MP Chandra Shekhar Azad said, "We want strict action against the accused. I do not support bulldozer action because crime is committed by an individual and an entire family should not be made to suffer."

Manipur police officer suspended for 'assaulting' video journalist

Imphal: A police officer in Manipur was suspended for allegedly assaulting a local TV channel's video journalist covering a protest on August 1.

An order was issued by Imphal East district SP Saturday, stating that sub inspector Nikhil Singh has been suspended for "grave misconduct until further notice." The incident pertains to the alleged assault of a video journalist M Rameshchandra, who was covering a protest rally of the Internally Displaced Persons on August 1.

Following the incident, journalist bodies, including All Manipur Working Journalist Union and Editor's Guild Manipur, threatened they will boycott government-related news if government fails to take action against Singh and submitted a memorandum demanding action within 48 hours. **ENS**

Husband among 17 given jail term for stripping woman in Rajasthan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR, AUGUST 4

NEARLY A year after a 20-year-old pregnant woman was stripped and paraded naked in Rajasthan, a court sentenced 14 men, including her husband, to seven-year imprisonment while noting it was a "heinous crime" similar to the one in Manipur.

Chief Judicial Magistrate, Pratapgarh, Ramkanya Soni Saturday also sentenced three women involved in the case to five-year imprisonment, Special Public Prosecutor Manish Nagar said.

While observing that women are revered in the country as goddesses and that the ancient scrip-

tures also mention honouring women, he said violence and atrocities are continuing on women in 'kalyug'.

"It was a serious crime committed against the woman by the accused... Such crimes cause emotional hurt to the women. Strict steps are necessary to curb crime against women then only crime will reduce," the judge said in the order. He was apparently referring to two women being paraded naked in Manipur last year.

The court sentenced Kanha Meena, Khetia Meena, Motiya alias Motilal Meena, Punia Meena, Kesra alias Kesrimal Meena, Suraj Meena, Pintu Meena, Nathulal Meena, Manaram alias Veniya Meena, Netia Meena, Rupa

Meena, Gautam Meena, Ramlal Meena, Ramesh Meena to seven-year imprisonment. Three women — Indra Meena, Mirki Meena and Jhumli Meena — were sentenced to five-year imprisonment.

On September 1 last year, a video of the woman being stripped and then paraded naked surfaced. The incident had happened on August 31 in Pratapgarh, when the accused allegedly found the victim at the house of a man she was purportedly in a relationship with. The woman, who was seven months pregnant, was later dropped at her father's house. Later, she approached the police along with her mother, and lodged a complaint against the accused, including her husband.

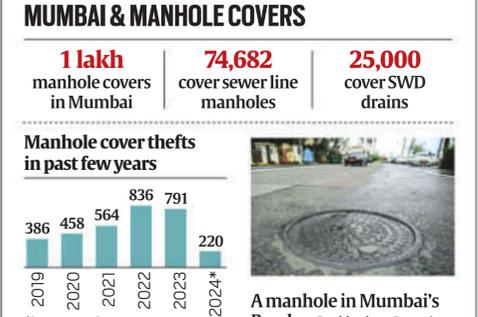
As thieves strip Mumbai roads of manhole covers, BMC plans sensors

NAYONIKA BOSE
MUMBAI, AUGUST 4

A YEAR after launching the pilot smart manhole cover project, which found itself in doldrums owing to technical issues, BMC is eyeing to resurrect the project with the civic body appointing agencies to install smart sensors over manhole covers in B ward's Sandhurst Road and D ward's Grant Road on a trial basis.

This comes in the wake of the rising manhole cover thefts which has seen an exponential rise since the outbreak of pandemic.

Data obtained by *The Indian Express* shows that in 2023, Mumbai saw 791 cases of manhole thefts as against 836 cases in 2022, significantly higher than the previous years — 564 cases in 2021, 458 in 2020 and 386 in 2019. Mumbai lost an average of over two manhole covers to



According to civic activists, cast iron — remoulded for reuse — is often bought at a rate of ₹20-32/kg. "Often, resale value can also be as low as ₹200 because since the covers are heavy to lift, vagrants are often unable to remove the whole thing and just

run away with broken pieces of the cover," said an official.

There are three primary types of covers: circular, rectangular and scrapper, a combination of two rectangular covers. The circular ones cost around ₹8,000, rectangular ones cost

₹10,000 - ₹15,000 and scrapper cost range to ₹35,000. Most thefts, according to officials, emerge in the internal swaths of the city which bear a deserted look during the night. Civic data showed that in 2023, the maximum number of thefts were reported in the K/West (Andheri, Juhu, Versova) ward where 91 covers were replaced.

"Unlike railway items which come with the Railways insignia, most manhole covers don't have any symbol, which makes them untraceable to the source and scrap dealers readily purchase them," said an official.

Trial and error

A few years ago, for instance, BMC came up with the idea of installing metal chains, tying the cover to the sewage drain. Officials noticed thieves not only broke the covers but also steal the chains. "Considering the worth of cast

iron, we also started manufacturing and placing FRP manholes, which have much less resale value. We noticed the miscreants — in their attempt to steal and sell — would end up breaking the cover and even steal the rod handles installed to lift the covers for repair works," said an officer.

The BMC also tried replacing the cast iron material with ductile iron covers, which being difficult to remould do not hold significant resale value. The official said, "Since ductile iron resembles cast iron, a thief would fail to see the difference and try to steal it anyway."

Smart manholes

As per Bombay HC directives, the BMC started installing protective grills across the city's flood-prone areas, to reduce the risk of people falling into the drains, with 1,900 manholes covered until last year.

However, in 2023, the HC pulled up the BMC for failing to install protective grills over all 74,000 covers in the city, questioning why only 2.5% of the covers had been covered in five years. The HC directed the BMC to install permanent grills at all manholes ahead of monsoon 2024. "We have managed to cover nearly 99% of manholes with protective grills and the key idea is to ensure that even if there is a stolen cover case, at least nobody would fall inside," said a senior official.

Meanwhile, last year, BMC had launched a "smart manhole project" across 14 locations of the city, a first-of-its-kind initiative in the country, wherein sensors were installed over the covers. If moved, sensors were slated to ring alarms and send alerts to a control room.

The project, however, failed to take off after the mechanism faced technical challenges. The contract of the agency who had been roped in to implement the pilot project was terminated even as the search for a better technology remained afoot.

Now, the BMC is eyeing to once again implement the smart manhole sensors at two locations in B ward's Sandhurst road and D ward's Grant Road.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, a senior official said, "Some vendors are expressing their willingness to make similar products using the latest technology which may be reliable and cost effective. While the final prototype is yet to be readied, we may try out the technology at B ward and D ward."

Maintaining that the plan is at a preliminary stage, he said, "If we find that our past problems are resolved and the solution is feasible at low cost, we may implement the project on a pilot basis in some locations." **FULL REPORT ON** www.indianexpress.com



THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE
NEVER THINK THAT WAR, NO MATTER HOW NECESSARY, NOR HOW JUSTIFIED, IS NOT A CRIME.
— ERNEST HEMINGWAY

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA
BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

AUGUST 5, 2024

Five years on, the democratic deficit in J&K must be addressed, politics needs to build on gains in governance, economics

ON AUGUST 5, 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the abrogation of Article 370 and end of "special status" for the state of Jammu and Kashmir, and subsequently, Parliament used its powers under Article 3 of the Constitution, for the first time, to withdraw statehood and create two Union Territories. In doing so, the Centre sent out three messages. First, that solutions to J&K's fraught political and security situation lay not with the elected state government but with Delhi's political establishment and its appointees. Second, change of status quo vis-a-vis a "disputed territory" reset the parameters of deterrence vis-a-vis Pakistan. Finally, with Parliament dissolving an elected legislature, it underlined an asymmetric federalism. Five years on, after the Supreme Court put its seal of approval on the constitutionality of the process, two questions loom: Did the abrogation achieve its ends? What is the way forward to bridge the democratic deficit in the UT?

On the economic and governance fronts, there have been gains. Last-mile delivery of services has improved, more than 1,000 public utility services have been digitised; major projects in the PM's development package are complete or near completion; an estimated Rs 6,000-crore worth of investments are on the ground. The number of tourists visiting the UT went up from 3.4 million in 2020 to 21.1 million in 2023. The first half of 2024 saw a 20 per cent increase over 2023. On the security front, peace has held in the Valley, although strong-arm control has worked more than winning hearts and minds. Recently, however, both the theatre and character of conflict are changing — infiltrators from across the border are more active in the Jammu sector. Pakistan, its partnership with China and its sponsorship of terror, cannot be wished away. This international dimension to the region's security continues to be a challenge. Despite the detention of several elected leaders in August 2019, the people of J&K have shown their faith in the ballot. In the 2024 general election, voter turnout in an incident-free poll stood at 58.6 per cent — the highest in 35 years. And yet, it's politics that remains the most significant work in progress.

Too often, the security situation has been cited as a roadblock to restoring statehood. It is important to recognise that a view that sees democracy and security as antithetical to each other is a narrow and limiting one. Undoubtedly, restoring statehood requires a calibrated approach. But it is a process that must begin with alacrity, with clear timelines — SC's September deadline to hold elections could be a starting point. The Centre needs to realise that the solution to J&K's problems must involve the man and woman on the street in J&K. Of late, there have been protests regarding water and power in some towns — these need to be heard, not quelled. For, it is only through people's involvement in the governance process that alienation can be addressed. As a series of reports from the ground marking five years of August 5 will show, from the rooms where security strategy is discussed, to the classrooms where future citizens are moulded, there is a consensus that people need to be involved in their governance — they are the primary stakeholders. For the government in New Delhi, fulfilment of this aspiration — while continuing to deal with terrorism with an uncompromising fist — should be the primary metric for judging the success of August 5, 2019.

Waiting for a new politics



HASEEB A DRABU

Five years after abrogation of Article 370, Kashmir is a metaphor for assertive integration, homogenisation

THE JAMMU AND Kashmir Budget 2024-25, just presented to the Parliament, provides a good occasion to take stock of the situation after the abrogation of Article 370. The key driver of growth, the rate of public investment (as a percentage of GSDP), has declined sharply to 6.43 per cent in 2022-23 from 9.75 per cent in 2017-18. This despite an increase in the borrowings — the liabilities of the government on a per capita basis — have doubled in five years. Fiscal management hasn't improved: After getting legislative approval to borrow Rs 4,000 crore last year, the UT government borrowed Rs 13,000 crore, that is, three times more. The tax incidence and efficiency has declined from 6.83 per cent to 5.60 per cent (own tax as percentage of GSDP). The unemployment rate was 18.3 per cent compared to 8 per cent nationally at the end of February 2023 as per CMIE.

As it turns out, the abrogation of Article 370, five years to the day, may not have resulted in enduring peace in J&K. The massive influx of tourism may not have opened the floodgates of developmental prosperity. The neoliberal industrial policy doesn't seem to have triggered an investment boom.

The compelling achievement of BJP, post abrogation, is the absence of a counter-hegemonic view on Kashmir. Today, there is no alternative narrative on Kashmir. The rather rich and robust liberal view, that once dominated, dissipated overnight on August 5, 2019. Historically, political parties have had divergent views on Kashmir; be it the communists, the federalists, and, of course, the Congress. Not anymore. There is a consensus across political parties on the abrogation, even as some quibble on the modalities.

After changing the rule book for Kashmir, the rules of the game in Kashmir have been decisively changed. A peaceful parliamentary election without any incidents of violence. The highest turnout in three decades and more. Not even the customary call for a boycott. No bandh either. No reports of the Army herding out people to vote. All headlines, except the spurt in terrorist violence in Jammu, go in

favour of the BJP. What has not made news is the existential anxiety underlying everyday life in Kashmir: An experience rather than expression of an uncertain future. The constitutional amendments, followed by legislative changes, executive fiat and administrative orders have eroded the social capital of Kashmir. Only a few Kashmiris have access to power, fewer still have influence over power and hardly any are in power. The personal despair and economic distress at the lower-income level is showing up as deviant social behaviour of the youth. By all local accounts, Kashmir is not very far from *udta* Punjab.

The relentless social media and platform communications — the outpouring of joy and celebration laced with spite — on the revocation of the special status of J&K has revealed that the special position of J&K in the Union was against the "collective conscience of India". The revocation was, for the majority of Indians, a personal triumph.

Not so long ago, holidaying in Kashmir was either a cherished memory or an unfulfilled desire on the bucket list of middle-class Indians. For the rich and famous, it was an indulgence in summer and an adventure during winter. Post the abrogation of Article 370, going to Kashmir has become a national duty. Indeed, watching a commercial film on Kashmir has become a patriotic obligation. The religious fervour of pilgrimages often gets subsumed by the extensive state patronage. A selfie with the tricolour af flutter on the Ghanta Ghar in Lal Chowk is a trending display picture on social media. Kashmir, the erstwhile symbol of assimilation and accommodation, has become a metaphor for assertive integration and aggressive homogenisation.

The Valley-centric political parties have been put on the back foot. With their core ideological premise of "accession on the basis of autonomy" having been completely dismantled, they find themselves at the short end of the stick. For now, in line with the popular sentiment, their main electoral plank is restoration of autonomy, a tried and tested tactic. Status quo ante has been a political obsession

of these parties. If prior to 2019 the demand was for the restoration of the 1953 position, now it is for the pre-2019 position, which in itself is a huge comedown.

While restoration of J&K's erstwhile position as a fully empowered representative state government is undoubtedly a powerful rallying point for mobilising support, it cannot be the governance agenda, let alone a legislative objective in the extant structure. The role of the government of J&K has been redefined and its remit reduced. As such, how is a pre-2019 position going to be negotiated and navigated? The curt message of Indira Gandhi to Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in 1975 — "hands of a clock don't turn back" — has reverberated long in political corridors to be ignored.

There should be no illusion either that any national party will even engage on the revival of Article 370, let alone restore it, the INDIA alliance, included. Today, there is no appetite for the conclave politics of Farooq Abdullah, who, in 1983, hosted 59 state leaders from 17 regional parties in Srinagar. A resolution on specific provisions of Article 356 and Art 360 was passed that helped dilute the impending 48th amendment. The same cannot be done now for Article 370. Only the restoration of statehood will find support nationally.

Today, India, both as a polity and society, is battling it out to recalibrate its foundational balance as a nation. Kashmir played a distinctive role in the construct of a post-colonial Indian nationhood. Even now, despite its bruised identity, it can become an important element in building a national counter-narrative. This might then be the right time for the political leadership of Kashmir to be transformative; revisit their ideological moorings and reinvent their politics. The election, sooner than later, will make the government representative of the people. The challenge will be to make the state an embodiment of their social interest — plural, progressive, and devolved.

The writer is former finance minister of Jammu & Kashmir

DOCTOR'S AID

New software can extend specialist care for diabetics in underserved areas. It does not lessen need for professionals

DURING THE COVID pandemic, when lockdowns made physical interaction with healthcare providers difficult, digital technologies provided timely relief to a section of people with chronic ailments. The emergency pushed healthcare professionals and policymakers to recognise the potency of telemedicine in managing diseases such as diabetes, in which constant doctor-patient engagement is particularly crucial. A digitally connected healthcare ecosystem, it's now recognised, can improve treatment outcomes, especially in large parts of rural India where the lack of specialists often comes in the way of timely diagnosis and medication. A software, developed by doctors and technicians at AIIMS, Delhi, is a significant initiative in this respect. It can extend specialised diabetes consultation to primary healthcare centres (PHCs) in rural areas.

Studies have suggested that India's diabetes burden — already the second highest in the world — is underreported because close to 50 per cent of patients, in both rural and urban areas, are unaware of their condition. Much time is lost before arriving at a diagnosis because the general physician at PHCs or small clinics cannot always join the dots between the diabetic's symptoms. The software is one step towards addressing these deficits. It requires the local-level healthcare professional to feed-in patient data on risk factors like blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar. It then processes the information to suggest the treatment.

All this, however, does not attenuate the significance of the attending physician. The doctor will need to adapt the software's advice based on the patient's lifestyle. The digital intervention's potency, therefore, is related to the quality of analogue care. The country's diabetes management system requires accessible PHCs run by quality professionals empowered by digital resources. The AIIMS software will also become more potent if it is synced with the electronic repository of the National Health Programme for Non-Communicable Diseases. Data portability will be in line with the Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission's objective of facilitating seamless interaction between medical experts. A second caveat: Given the asymmetrical relation between patients and health service providers, the system should be insulated against data confidentiality breaches.



ADITI NARAYANI PASWAN

Who Is A 'PRIVILEGED DALIT'?

Creamy layer definition cannot be based on just economic criteria

THE RECENT JUDGMENT of the Supreme Court regarding sub-classification among SC and ST groups vis-a-vis granting reservation raises a more fundamental question. Why do we need reservation for Dalits? I would like to share a snippet from my experience of living with caste.

I lived in a rented accommodation as a student at Delhi University. One day, tired of Delhi's water woes, I asked my landlady if I could call somebody and get our water tank cleaned. Unsurprisingly, my landlady replied, "Ab C****" (using a term for members of the Jatav community) *tanki mein jayenge aur hamare pani ko ganda karenge?* "I was quick to remind her that she used a Dalit's rental money to run her house, yet she thought our touch would "pollute" her water tank. But money, I learnt, is beyond the pale of purity and pollution. And in this instance, money did help me get accommodation — but it stripped me of my dignity.

While caste-based reservation was not meant to be an indefinite constitutional guarantee by BR Ambedkar to Dalits, it is the most important tool for social empowerment of the most marginalised. One can argue that there is a need to revisit reservation in the context of changing caste dynamics. While the thought behind the Supreme Court's verdict is noble, the question of implementation remains.

How do we define who is most marginalised among the marginalised? Reservation was meant to abolish "untouchability and provide access to justice". The manifestation of untouchability has changed from its physical aspects to more intangible forms. Why are a majority of applicants for academic posts un-

der the SC/ST category declared as "not found suitable"? How many law firms or chartered accountant firms are owned and run by the SC and ST communities? And why do we still have reported cases of deaths from manual scavenging in the country, though the practice has been constitutionally abolished? Why did a Dalit IPS officer still need police protection to ride a mare as part of a procession in his village in Haryana as recently as 2022? Reservation should eradicate caste-based discrimination and its benefits should trickle down to the ones who need it the most. In the absence of a clear manual to define the most marginalised, this reform could well end up being manipulated at the state level for electoral and political gains.

The judgment on the issue by a seven-judge bench in *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh*, which affirmed sub-categorisation among SCs, took place in a broader context. Globally, there has been a rise in conservatism, especially in relation to affirmative action. The US Supreme Court in June 2024 held that race-based affirmative action in higher educational institutions was illegal. The promise of reservations for Dalits in India was that of equality, dignity and justice. This recent judgment made me introspect on whether economic parity puts me on the same pedestal as my fellow upper-caste colleagues. But, tragically, marginalisation is more complex than that: Marginalisation manifests in various forms, and it is imperative to account for these parameters when assessing and addressing issues of privilege and exclusion, rather than reducing it to economic status. From a social justice perspective, economic

progress does not take away the indignity faced by a so-called "privileged Dalit". Sub-classification per se is not bad. However, in India today, it seems to be in direct conflict with the inherent idea and goal of social inclusion. In my experience, mere economic advancement does not guarantee social mobility. No targeting and exclusion of the creamy layer is possible without a caste survey with targeted data collection. We need to charter a discourse based on empirical and anthropological data of every community. States need to do comprehensive evidence collection and statistical evaluation of substantial data. However, this data collection should not be a mere analysis of the economic advancement and progress of a particular Dalit community.

Affirmative actions were envisioned as a mechanism that could provide a level-playing field to these communities in the social institutions of education and employment. It was ammunition to help provide political representation, recognition of their oppression, redistribution of intellectual resources, and social rehabilitation, ultimately resulting in a better social standing for these communities. It was aimed at dismantling the structural and generational privilege that facilitates caste-based discrimination and determines access to a better life.

It would do well for us to remember that reservation challenges the total hegemony of dominant factions in the society, and what the dilution of this principle would mean for those who continue to be oppressed.

The writer is assistant professor of Sociology, Lakshmbai College, Delhi University

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



AUGUST 5, 1984, FORTY YEARS AGO

PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi accused some foreign powers of working against the country's interest by sowing seeds of discord and inspiring riots. Addressing a public meeting, she said some foreign nationals were being misled and pressured to work on parochial lines. Mrs Gandhi urged Congressmen to teach a lesson to the opposition during the Lok Sabha elections as it was against national interest to permit parties to spread regionalism.

been luring Janata Party members with promises of office if they crossed over and helped him form an alternate ministry in the state, Chief Minister Rama Krishna Hegde told *The Indian Express*. In an interview, Hegde said Bangarappa has sent word to "my party members that if they joined him they would all be made ministers."

OLYMPIC MILESTONE
RISING 19-YEAR-OLD INDIAN track star Shiny Abraham ran the race of her life to qualify for the 800 metres women's semi-final — the first ever Indian woman to achieve the distinction — on the opening day of the track and

field events of the 23rd Olympics at the Coliseum Stadium in Los Angeles. In the 20 km walk, Asian gold medalist Chind Ram finished 22nd in a field of 38.

FLOOD RELIEF IN UP
THE ARMY WAS called in Gorakhpur district in Uttar Pradesh for flood relief following a breach in Sohgauna-Malauni embankment, the district magistrate, RPSinha said. The PAC had been provided with motor boats to help the marooned villagers. Flood situation in Ballia and Azamgarh districts of the state continued to be grim with the Army assisting the civil authorities in rescue and relief operations.

11 THE IDEAS PAGE

J&K task isn't finished

Abrogating Article 370 was a necessary but not sufficient condition for ending terrorism



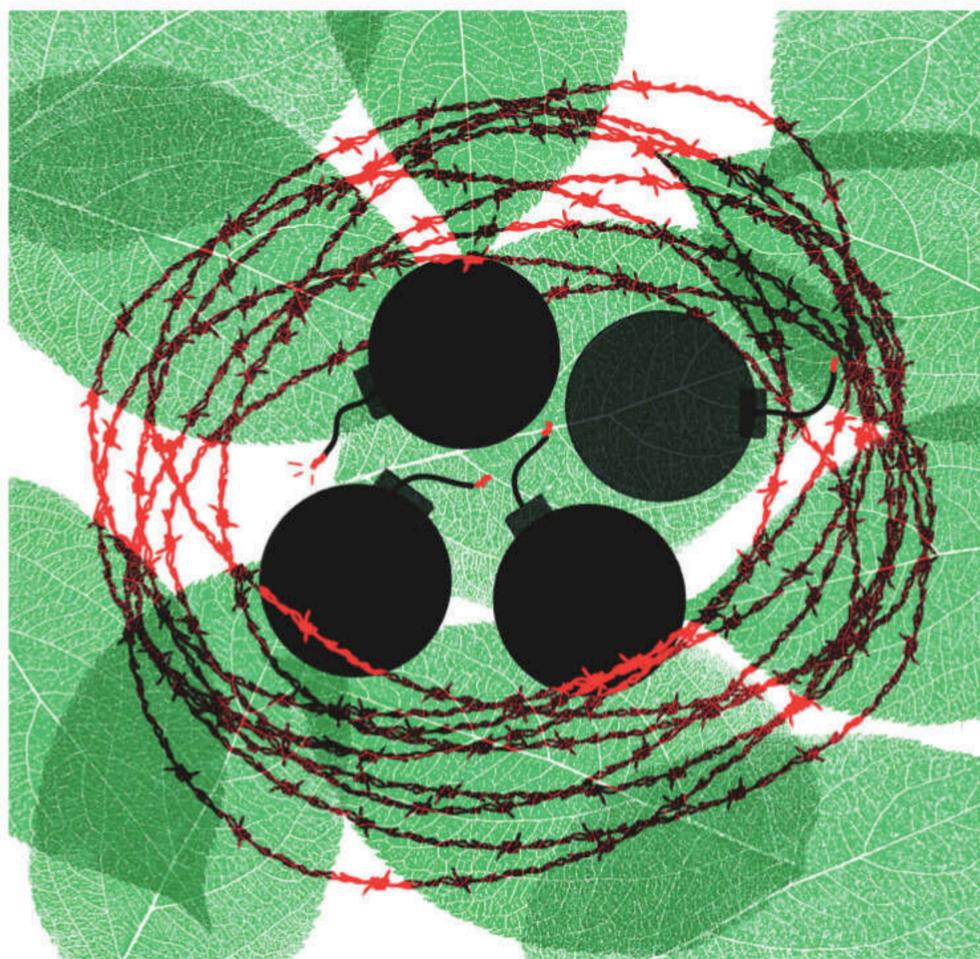
M N SABHARWAL AND MANISH SABHARWAL

OSAMA BIN LADEN was killed 54 kilometres, as the crow flies, from the J&K Police post in Teethwal, exactly 23 years after the first Kalashnikov exported by Pakistan was recovered in Kupwara by J&K Police counter-intelligence officer Hameed Iqbal. The poet Muzaffar Razmi's lament, "Yeh waqt bhi dekha hai tareekh ke safahon ne/Lamhon ne khata ki thi sadiyon ne saza payee" (history has witnessed many tragedies when mistakes made in moments bring suffering for years) seems written for Bin Laden's location, ideology and terrorism. The pain, tears and blood in J&K have been caused by Pakistan's terror factory, radical Islam, Cold War geopolitics, fraught federalism, and separatist politics. But this pain was also helped by the khata (mistake) of Article 370, which was abrogated exactly five years ago today. The decline in violence since validates why it had to go. Let's remember the five interconnected forces that created terrorism in the Valley.

Troubled Pakistan: No Pakistani Prime Minister has completed a full term because its "garrison state" uses the false threat of India to establish its supremacy over the state and society. But the military's incompetence — losing every war it has fought and destroying its economy — is now fuelled by its partnership with religion. The military peddled propaganda about a conspiracy to destroy the Pakistani *Quom* by *Hanud-Yahud-Nasara* (Hindus, Jews and Christians) is military self-interest masquerading as national interest. The narrative of Pakistan Islam *ka qila hai* (Pakistan is the fortress of Islam) attracted financing for its "Islamic" nuclear bomb that supposedly deterred India from conventional warfare and justified their terror factory.

Cold War Geopolitics: Kashmir became a pawn in Cold War chess games, with 13 UN resolutions supporting Pakistan in the decade after our mistaken 1948 reference. India didn't compromise its sovereignty, but Pakistan embraced America: It joined the Baghdad Pact in 1955, the U-2 spy aircraft shot down by Russia took off from Rawalpindi in 1960, and Henry Kissinger used a Pakistan Air Force plane for the secret meeting for the US rapprochement with China arranged by Yahya Khan in 1971. It is hard to imagine terrorism in J&K without Americans abandoning the Afghan Mujahideen they had armed through Pakistan with weapons to fight against the USSR.

Radical Islam: India has more Muslims than Pakistan, many Hindus and Buddhists live in Jammu and Ladakh, and the practically Sufi Ahle-et-Quad Islam sect of Kashmir has nothing in common with Wahhabis. Kashmiri practices of veneration of *ziarats*, shrines and relics are considered *parasti* (idol worship) by Wahhabis. Sheikh Abdullah — whose grandfather was a Hindu — suggested Kashmiri Muslims' religion was a mixture of Rishi worship, Buddhism, Shaivism, and Sufism with a veneer of Orthodox Islam. Yet, Pakistan's claims on Kashmir are religiously rooted in the eternal conflict between *Dar-ul-Islam* (house of Islam) and *Dar-ul-Harb* (house of infidels). Kashmiri syncretism has deep roots in literary works like Rajatarangini and historical figures like Nooruddin Noorani, Lal Ded, and Habba Khatun. We were sad that Kashmiriyat didn't prevent the attacks on Valley Hindus, but radical Islam's tools of terror, guns and religious conser-



CR Sasikumar

vatism don't have deep Valley roots.

Fraught Federalism: Many of Delhi's most powerful — Prime Ministers, governors, the Home, Defence, Foreign and Finance Ministries — have had intense engagements with J&K since independence because of Pakistan attacking Kashmir in 1947, our United Nations reference in 1948, Article 370 in 1950, three wars with Pakistan, and three Delhi Accords (1952, 1975 and 1987). Most other state governments only deal with Delhi obliquely, remotely, and infrequently. J&K, however, has found it more challenging to find the *madhyam marg* (middle path) between centrifugal and centripetal power. Every Indian Prime Minister had been a constant political and administrative presence in J&K, but nobody made the two decisions — abrogating Article 370 and cross-border military strikes — that only Delhi could make till recently.

Separatist Politics: Before he died in Srinagar jail, Syama Prasad Mookerjee wrote to Sheikh Abdullah, "There cannot be a republic within a republic. India has been torn into two by the two-nation theory. You are now developing a three-nation theory... this cannot be good for your state or India". He was right. Article 370 made soft separatism a profitable local political strategy. State Home Minister Ali Mohammad Sagar described the legal Rajatarangini cooperative society set up by All India Service officers as "the East India Company" in the state assembly. Politicians in the rest of India were not less corrupt, self-centred, or myopic, but they changed the status quo of power, caste, and class because of competitive politics breeding ideas, realism and compromise. In con-

Kashmir became a pawn in Cold War chess games, with 13 UN resolutions supporting Pakistan in the decade after our mistaken 1948 reference. India didn't compromise its sovereignty, but Pakistan embraced America: It joined the Baghdad Pact in 1955, the U-2 spy aircraft shot down by Russia took off from Rawalpindi in 1960, and Henry Kissinger used a Pakistan Air Force plane for the secret meeting for the US rapprochement with China arranged by Yahya Khan in 1971. It is hard to imagine terrorism in J&K without Americans abandoning the Afghan Mujahideen they had armed through Pakistan with weapons to fight against the USSR.

trast, J&K suffered "elite capture" and became a closed society, economy, and polity.

Pakistan's two-instalment strategy for Kashmir — independence followed by annexation — has failed. This strategy was financed by over-invoicing America for their 1980s proxy war in Afghanistan. America refused to believe that radical Islam would turn their attention to them until 9/11, even though the ideologies of Jaish-e-Mohammed's Masood Azhar and Lashkar-e-Taiba's Hafiz Sayeed echoed Osama Bin Laden. The FBI and American embassy officers deputed to Kashmir in 1995 to help find Americans kidnapped by Pakistan-based Al Faran dismissed our intelligence that Western countries were the next target of radical Islam, saying, "Don't try to internationalise an India-Pakistan conflict". But terrorism has no religion and knows no boundaries.

Recent attacks on the army in the Jammu region show desperation and remind us that the job of ending terror in J&K is far from finished. Risk-taking to restore peace must continue by making J&K Police the frontline of fighting terror, shutting down the UN office in Srinagar, encouraging new politicians, restoring statehood starting with the Delhi Model, isolating Pakistan geopolitically, and creating jobs. Abrogating Article 370 was always a necessary, but not sufficient condition for ending terrorism. But as every practitioner of strategy knows, necessary comes before sufficient.

M N Sabharwal is former Director General of J&K Police and CRPF and Manish Sabharwal is an entrepreneur. Their latest book is Kashmir Under 370

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Guantánamo Bay should never have been opened. This was the conclusion... of the US general tasked with setting up the detention camp, Michael Lehnert. Even without considering the moral and legal case, he concluded that many detainees had... insufficient evidence linking them to war crimes." — THE GUARDIAN

Intention vs implementation

SC judgment on sub-quota will lead to greater inclusion, but caste-based inequality cannot be erased by economic status alone



FAIZAN MUSTAFA

IF THE EWS reservation departed from the historical context of reservation i.e. untouchability, the Supreme Court's verdict in *State of Punjab vs Davinder Singh* (2024) by a seven-judge Constitution Bench could pave the way for yet another novel way to approach the reservation debate as Justice Pankaj Mishra suggested a relook at the reservation scheme. Justice Bela Trivedi, in her powerful dissenting opinion, recalled JJ Hunton's (1931) statement that depressed classes were those with whom contact entailed "purification" for upper-caste Hindus and those who suffered social disabilities such as being denied access to temples, wells, schools and suffered the stigma of "untouchability". After their inclusion in the SC/ST lists, these groups were constitutionally deemed homogenous. The majority of six judges have held otherwise and rejected homogeneity within SCs and STs.

In 2005, a constitution bench in *E V Chinnaiah* said that Dalits are most backward and they are a homogenous group and therefore no sub-classification can be made. The relative backwardness amongst them was considered of not much significance. *Davinder Singh* has overruled it. It has given power to state governments to provide for different percentages of reservation within the Dalit communities. Constitutionally speaking, it may be based on correct interpretation of the Constitution, but in all likelihood, it would be presented by the social justice lobby as a device to tinker with the existing reservation policies. The sub-categorisation in spite of its laudable objective of substantive equality, due to inherent flaws, may not really achieve it.

CJ, in his judgment, has rightly held that there is nothing in the Constitution that prevents states from making such a sub-classification and Article 341 in no way limits this power as it merely gives the President the right to notify certain castes/tribes as SCs and STs. There can be no quarrel with the finding that SCs and STs historically and empirically are indeed a heterogeneous class and the government should have the power to classify them on the basis of some rational principle of differential. But the judgment goes on to say that the inadequacy of representation is to be demonstrated by the state as the basis of backwardness. From the parameters of social, economic and educational backwardness that the Mandal Commission applied for OBCs and that apex court and high courts had been religiously insisting upon, the Supreme Court now says that the "inadequacy of representation" is a vital yardstick of backwardness. From "untouchability" to poverty among upper castes for the EWS reservation (2019), we have come to the "inadequacy of representation" criteria in determining backwardness. But then inadequacy of representation may be the result of backwardness, not the cause of it.

The CJ's conclusion about the efficiency of administration to promote inclusion and equality is a big positive of this judgment. Similarly, the finding that all seats under a quota cannot be reserved for a single group within the SCs and STs will

also curb states' powers.

Justice Trivedi was clear in her observations that the nine-judge bench in *Indra Sawhney* (1992) ruled on sub-classification among OBCs and not SCs and STs. In para 781 of *Indra Sawhney*, Justice Jeevan Reddy observed that "at the outset, we may state that for the purpose of this discussion, we keep aside the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes." If this is so, how can a seven-judge bench overrule a nine-judge bench judgment? In fact, extending the observations primarily made in the context of OBC reservation has led to a situation where the exclusion of the creamy layer could be extended to even SC/ST reservation.

Historically speaking, several judgments diluting reservation have been reversed by constitutional amendments. After *Dorairajan* (1951) struck down reservation in admissions, Nehru immediately responded by amending the Constitution and inserting Clause (4) in Article 15. In *Indra Sawhney* (1992), the Court said that in the future, reservation benefits cannot extend to promotions. The 77th amendment overturned it. The 81st amendment reversed rulings on "carry forward" and permitted the state to treat unfilled posts as a separate category so that the 50 per cent upper limit on reservation did not come in the way. The 82nd constitutional amendment in Article 335 was passed to empower the state to relax qualifying marks in any examination or lower standards in matters of promotion of SCs and STs. The 85th constitutional amendment overturned *Virpal Singh Chauhan* (1995) and *Ajit Singh* (1999) to give consequential seniority to SC/ST promoted candidates. If the Dalit lobby is able to speak in one voice, the latest judgment may meet the similar fate.

The aforementioned amendments were challenged by several general candidates leading to the *M Nagaraj* (2006) in which the Court observed: SC/ST reservation in promotions was hedged by three constitutional requirements — backwardness, inadequacy of their representation in public employment and overall efficiency of administration. Ironically, no petitioner in *Nagaraj* had disputed the backwardness of Dalits. In *Jarnail Singh* (2017), the SC overruled *Nagaraj* on the collection of data to prove Dalit backwardness. The latest judgment brings back the collection of such data.

Davinder Singh favoured the exclusion of the "creamy layer" of SCs and STs from reservation though this was not an issue at all before the Court. Justices Gavai and Vikram Nath favoured such an exclusion. Justice Mishra said that reservation should be confined to one generation and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma supported this view. However, in *Ashok Thakur* (2008), the apex court clarified that the creamy layer doctrine has no relevance in SC/ST reservation. Who can deny that caste is nothing but a permanent socio-cultural identity that is neither erased in one generation nor by the newly acquired economic status. Even the high profile Dalit achievers are not given equal respect and their legitimate due share. Moreover, is it not a fact that SC/ST reservation was not aimed at enhancing economic status but achieving social justice?

The judgment has unintentionally strengthened the Opposition's argument for a caste census to determine the share of different groups in the reservation pie.

The writer is vice-chancellor of Chanakya National Law University, Patna. Views are personal

It takes skill and scale

Budget puts India on a path of growth led by the young



GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT

THE GREAT INDIAN philosopher Swami Vivekananda is known to have said, "Give me 100 energetic young men and I will transform India". Vivekananda's belief wasn't misplaced. Skill has defeated scale several times in history — be it a handful of skilled Macedonians led by Alexander who conquered almost all of Asia or the small group of highly motivated and trained Marathas under Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj who brought Aurangzeb's massive army to its knees. But imagine what can happen if skill and scale were to be combined. For instance, think of Shivaji's army being 10 times its size with each soldier being the most skilful. The Budget for 2024-25 is a vision document to bring skill and scale together. The workforce it envisions would be led by the youth.

The Economic Survey 2023-24 highlights India's demographic opportunity: A median age of 28. Many young Indians are entering the workforce or are poised to do so. However, there is a significant challenge: Only 51 per cent of Indian graduates are employable. This figure is an improvement from 34 per cent in 2017-18, thanks to government-led skill development initiatives. However, vocational training still does not

get the respect it deserves in society. The Ministry of Skill Development's 2022-23 report reveals that skill training is often seen as a last resort for those who have failed to do well in the realm of formal education.

To address this, the Budget introduces a groundbreaking initiative: The government will provide Rs 5,000 per month to one crore graduates for interning with 500 top companies in India with training expenses covered by the CSR funds of these companies. This move aims to make skilling lucrative and socially acceptable while alleviating the challenges faced by industry. By incentivising such extensive skilling, the Budget seeks to position India as a global skill and manufacturing hub. This is the marriage of skill and scale, akin to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's highly skilled soldiers but with their numbers in millions.

The Budget also tries to incentivise the development of climate-resistant varieties of 32 crops — a critical step given the country's vulnerability against climate change-induced disasters. It also proposes measures to support Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) through the National Policy for Co-operation for FPO's, self-sufficiency in oilseeds and vegetables, promo-

tion of natural farming among one crore farmers and the development of digital infrastructure for agriculture.

A significant announcement to handhold industries to hire aggressively and increase their productivity is the announcement of three new schemes with regards to the Employee Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). Like the production linked incentive, the government has come up with employment linked incentives — it will provide direct benefit transfers of one month's salary, up to Rs 15,000, to first-time employees in three instalments. It will also reimburse employer EPFO contributions up to Rs 3,000 per month for any new hires. The schemes will encourage industries to shift their focus towards hiring, manufacturing and expansion on a priority basis.

On the housing front, the Budget has made significant allocations for constructing 3 crore houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural) and for 1 crore houses in urban areas for the poor and middle class. The PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana aims to provide free electricity up to 300 units to one crore households.

In healthcare, the Budget exempts three essential cancer medicines from customs

duty, making them more affordable for millions of patients. Women's empowerment sees a significant boost, with a 218.8 per cent increase in funding compared to a decade ago. The establishment of women's hostels aims to increase female workforce participation.

The middle class, which has grown significantly over the last decade, will benefit from a comprehensive review of the Income Tax Act of 1961. The standard deduction will increase from Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000, putting more savings into the hands of middle-class families.

Prime Minister Modi's focus on developing eastern states is reflected in the new Purvodaya Scheme. The scheme comprises initiatives to develop Odisha as a tourist destination and attract more tourists to the Nalanda, Rajgir, Bodhi Gaya, and Vishnupad temple complexes.

The vision of the Budget is to combine skill and scale. By focusing on employment and giving the youth the opportunity to lead, the Budget provides a pathway to growth

The writer is Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Government of India, MP (Lok Sabha)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AAP-BJP FEUD

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'State's government, Centre's rule' (IE, August 3). The unfortunate death of three civil services aspirants underscores the long-standing feud between the AAP government and the BJP. The BJP's desire to wrest control of the Delhi administration is an open secret. In the past, the BJP called for full statehood for Delhi. But it is now seeking to undermine the Delhi government that has been elected by its people. While the AAP, elected by the people, is answerable to them, the Lt Governor, a Centre appointee, is not. How can a government, elected by the people, fulfil its promises when the LG, appointed by the Centre, rules the roost?

SH Quadri, Bikaner

Michael Grant Ignatieff's "politics of enemies". He referred to Narsimha Rao's gesture to send BJP MP Atal Bihari Vajpayee to the UN as an example of good conduct not displayed by Rahul. However, the writer forgot to mention that BJP coined terms like "tukde tukde gang", which has not been recorded in the MHA and used it to label political dissidents as anti-national.

LR Murmu, New Delhi

NATURE'S FURY

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Before the landslide' (IE, August 3). Much of the damage in Wayanad could have been avoided had the Kerala government implemented the recommendations of the Western Ghats Ecology Experts Panel. In its report submitted in 2012, the Gadgil committee identified over 13,000 sq km, located across 12 of Kerala's 14 districts, as Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) and had warned that time was running out to save the Western Ghats. However, successive governments ignored the obvious signs of environmental damage. No development should have taken place in these highly sensitive areas.

Khokan Das, Kolkata

DIVISIVE POLITICS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Rahul's politics of enemies' (IE, August 3). The writer castigated Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi for conflating his "halwa ceremony" comment with caste identities during the speech on budget. He equated Rahul's strident advocacy for caste census and social justice with

BRIEFLY

KARNATAKA
3 engineering students dead in road accident

Bengaluru: Three engineering students died and another was injured in a road accident on Kolar-Bangarpet Road early Saturday. The deceased have been identified as Prajwal, Basavana Gowda and Harshavardhan; Sai Gagan sustained minor injuries, police said. All the four students from Reva University in Bengaluru — aged between 20 and 22 years — were traveling from Kolar to Bengaluru at 2.30 am on Saturday when Prajwal lost control of their Audi while attempting to overtake a truck, and their car hit a tree on Kolar-Bangarpet Road. The car was mangled, with the four thrown 10-15 feet from the vehicle. Three died on the spot, as Gagan sustained injuries. **ENS**

RAJASTHAN
BSF constable dies by suicide in Barmer dist

Jaipur: A 50-year-old Border Security Force (BSF) constable posted on the India-Pakistan border in Rajasthan's Barmer district allegedly died by suicide on Sunday morning, police said. Constable Banarasi Lal, who was a resident of Jammu and Kashmir, was in the 83 Battalion of the BSF. Lal shot himself with his service rifle at a watch tower on Sunday on duty. Sub-Inspector Vishan Singh (Bakhasar police station), said. The suicide reason is yet to be ascertained, Singh added. **PTI**

UTTAR PRADESH
7 killed in road mishap on Etawah e-way

Etawah: Seven persons were killed and 25 injured after a bus and a car collided on the Lucknow-Agra Expressway in Etawah's Usrahar early Sunday. Speaking to the media, Superintendent of Police Sanjay Kumar said that the bus with Nagaland number plate was on its way to Delhi from Uttar Pradesh's Rae Bareilly when it collided with the car coming from the wrong lane at around 12.45 am on Sunday. The bus, with about 60 on board, fell into a 20-feet roadside ditch and flipped over. The 25 injured have been hospitalised, police said. **PTI**

Wayanad landslides: It was her call that first alerted rescuers, when they got to her, it was too late

SHAJU PHILIP
MEPPADI (WAYANAD),
AUGUST 4

SOON AFTER the first of a series of devastating landslides hit the hilly Meppadi panchayat in Kerala's Wayand at around 1 am on Tuesday, Neethu Jojo woke up to water gushing into her house. At 1.30 am, she alerted Wayanad Institute of Medical Sciences (WIMS) in Meppadi, after which the first rescue team was sent to the spot. The rescuers, however, took hours to reach her area in Chooralmala village — one of the worst hit — as the roads were blocked by debris. By the time they reached, the next landslide had buried her. On Saturday, her body was recovered and laid to rest. She was among at least 220 people killed in the landslide. Several others are still missing, with of-

ficials saying chances of finding anyone alive now are slim.

Neethu worked as an executive at WIMS, which lost four members of its staff to the tragedy. A staffer at the hospital recalled her distress call: "We are in danger. There has been a landslide in Chooralmala. Water is gushing inside the house. Someone please come and save us," Neethu had said.

The hospital quickly alerted fire and rescue services, and a team was soon dispatched to Chooralmala. As water started getting into more houses, rescuers started getting more calls, but the team that was already on its way found the going tough as it had to clear the road of uprooted trees, branches and other debris before it could proceed to the affected areas.

Meanwhile, at Neethu's house — her husband Jojo Joseph, their five-year-old son, and her parents also lived there



Neethu Jojo's body was recovered on Saturday

— several people in the neighbourhood gathered as they feared they may not be safe in their own homes.

With the rescuers yet to arrive and more muddy water gushing inside, Neethu made increasingly more frantic calls for help. At the same time, Jojo was planning to move the family and their neighbours up a hill to a safer spot.

Then, the second and more devastating landslide struck at around 4 am. Along with the gushing water came massive boulders that wreaked havoc in the village, and took with it a portion of Neethu's house — the portion she was in.

Jojo managed to gather the family and some others in the village and head up the hill, but Neethu was nowhere to be found.

It was on Saturday that her body was dug up from the mud and debris.

At WIMS, staffers mourned four of their own. Apart from Neethu, the hospital also lost nursing assistants Shafeena A M and Divya S, as well as Bijesh R from the engineering wing.

"We still cannot forget Neethu's call for help," said a staff member.

Recalling the day of the landslide, she said, "It is a difficult time for our staff, who were dealing with seriously injured persons admitted to our hospital. On the first day, we thought the members of staff caught in the landslides might survive with injuries. But not all of them did. They were familiar faces in the hospital."

Eight unidentified laid to rest after all-religion prayer

Meppadi: Eight unidentified bodies of the Wayanad landslide victims were buried after an all-religion prayer at a plantation here on Sunday. With the recovery of three more bodies, the toll in Tuesday's tragedy rose to 221.

The bodies were buried after collecting DNA samples, which would be matched with the DNA samples collected from the close relatives of the missing persons; a process which began on Sunday after a counselling session. Even though 1,300 uniformed persons, 1,700 volunteers conducted searches with excavators and modern equipment, only two bodies were recovered on Sunday.

With 200 persons reportedly missing, surveys to ascertain their details have been initiated. **ENS**

MADHYA PRADESH

9 minors die in wall collapse at religious event



Rescue work underway at Sagar district on Sunday. **PTI**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHOPAL, AUGUST 4

NINE CHILDREN died and two were injured on Sunday after a wall collapsed on them while they were participating in a religious event in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district, officials said. It took place in Shahpur village, under the Rehli Assembly constituency, at around 8.30 am near the premises of a temple.

According to local MLA Gopal Bhargava, a "Parthiv Shilving Nirman" (making Shilving out of clay) event was taking place in a tent near a dilapidated house there, when a wall of the house collapsed. District Collector Deepak Arya said the nine children who died were between 10 and 15 years of age. Two injured children were taken to hospital.

The wall of the house collapsed due to heavy rain, said Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, directing authorities to provide "proper treatment" to the injured. He also suspended Shahpur Nagar Panchayat's Chief Municipal Officer (CMO) and a sub-engineer, and directed civil bodies across Madhya Pradesh to identify dilapidated buildings and take action.

"Today, I am saddened to hear the news of nine innocent children dying due to the collapse of the wall of a dilapidated house due to heavy rain in Shahpur of Sagar district. I pray to God to grant peace to the souls of the deceased children. I pray for the speedy recovery of the other children in-

jured in the accident. I express my deepest condolences to the families who have lost their innocent children," he said in a post on X.

Announcing financial assistance, his post also said: "The families of the deceased children will be given financial assistance of Rs 4 lakh each by the government."

The deceased were identified as Dhruv Yadav (12), Nitesh Patel (13), Ashutosh Prajapati (15), Prince Sahu (12), Parv Vishwakarma (10), Divyansh Sahu (12), Dev Sahu (12), Vansh Lodhi (10) and Hemant (10). Among those injured was Kushi Patwa, whose mother Basanti Patwa said the child sustained injuries to her head and both knees.

"She was making a Shilving in the morning when the wall collapsed. There were many children who were buried inside the wall," Basanti said. Sumit, who was also injured, said he was making a clay Shilving when the wall collapsed. "I got some injuries, but I don't feel any pain anymore," he said. Sangeeta, who lost her nephew, called for those responsible to be sent to jail. "This was a wall made up of bricks and it was a pretty old structure."

This comes a day after four school students and a woman were killed when a wall of a dilapidated house fell on them in Rewa, Madhya Pradesh. Another student and her mother suffered injuries. The students were returning home from school early due to heavy rainfall when the wall of the house, located 20 metres from the school, collapsed on them.

Concept of passive Governor is gone; politician Mamata not my cup of tea: Bose

ANJALI OJHA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

STATING THAT the concept of "passive Governor" is gone, West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose said that while the elected Chief Minister should be the "front face" of government, the nominated Governor should be in the background as a "friend, philosopher and guide" to the elected representatives.

Bose, who was in Delhi to attend the Governors' Conference, said the Governor is a custodian of the Constitution, guardian of federalism, and "not a rubber stamp". Bose, who has had frequent run-ins with the TMC government in the state, also delved into their strained relations. He said that he respects CM Mamata Banerjee as an individual and has professional relations with her but the "politician Mamata Banerjee" is not his cup of tea.

Talking about the Governors' Conference, Bose called it "transformational" and in line with the vision of the Narendra Modi-led Central government. "In keeping with PM Modi's concept of transformational India, I would say it was transformational Governors' Conference where now we will see there will be a new rhythm for the working of the Governors. A new style, a new grammar, a new chemistry between the elected representatives and Governor," Bose said in an interview to PTI.

"The Governor's conference decided, endorsed by President (Droupadi Murmu) and others, that Governors should remain as



Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose. File

an effective link... Governors have to get involved in the implementation of the projects and programmes meant for the good of the people," he said.

"The Governor should be active. The concept of passive Governor has gone... The concept of active Governor is coming in. It is a very delicate exercise," he said.

He stressed that the Governor, being the custodian of the Constitution in the state, should be ever vigilant so that democracy does not die down.

"Democracy should not give way to mobocracy by political interference. That is the role of the Governor... He (Governor) is an umpire in this process. He is a link between the Centre and the state. He is a custodian of the Indian Constitution. And he is the guardian of federalism in this country. The Governor has a role to play. The Governor is not a rubber stamp," he said.

Asked about his relationship with Banerjee, Bose said: "Which Mamata Banerjee? There are three Mamata Banerjees in front of me... One is the individual Mamata Banerjee. I have a very good relationship with her. Second is the Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. I have professional relations with her. Third is the politician Mamata Banerjee, that's not my cup of tea," he said.

"During polls, she mixed up the issues. The CM merged with the politician, made certain statements. I also became an individual, not the Governor. I sued her for damages, for defamation. That is the complexity of the relationship," he said. "Otherwise, Mamata Banerjee is my friend. The CM is my colleague and I am not a politician," he said. **-PTI**



Army personnel distribute medical aid and essential food items among people affected due to cloudburst at Samej Khadd village of Rampur area in Shimla district on Sunday. **ANI**

HELP AT CLOUDBURST SITE

Army personnel distribute medical aid and essential food items among people affected due to cloudburst at Samej Khadd village of Rampur area in Shimla district on Sunday. **ANI**

Artist, connoisseur Sara Abraham, who took art to the people, dies

VANDANA KALRA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

IN THE India of the 1970s, when patronage for art was rather limited, as were its promoters, artist and art connoisseur Sara Abraham aspired to take it to greater heights by reaching out to the people through the 'Kala Yatra' — a "travelling art gallery" that took the form of exhibitions in different cities.

Abraham was a visionary who had the foresight to draw people to art and educate them on the different ways of viewing and appreciating it. She died in Chennai on Sunday.

"Her impact on the art world will be felt for years to come, as her legacy lives on through the artists she championed and the galleries she helped establish. She will be deeply missed by all who knew her, but her spirit and dedication to the arts will con-



Art connoisseur Sara Abraham. Manisha Gera Baswani

tinue to inspire future generations of artists and art lovers," said Kerala Lalithakala Akademi Chairperson Murali Cheeroth. Showing keen interest in drawing as a child, the Kerala-born artist's zeal towards the pursuit was initially honed at the Government School of Arts and Crafts, Madras, and under stalwarts such as D P Roy Choudhury and KCS Paniker.

During her initial years as an artist, she is known to have dab-

bled in portraits. Based in Mumbai following her marriage, she found herself in the midst of a still nascent art market where artists were finding their feet.

Soon, she began collecting art. It was reportedly a discussion with M F Husain that also led to the birth of her travelling art initiative that went to several cities across India, including Chennai, Kochi and Kolkata. Her own collection included, among others, works by Bikash Bhattacharjee, K G Subramanyan, A Ramachandran and Husain.

"She was unique in her ability to amalgamate both the beauty and the business of art. She had the eye of a connoisseur, the mind of a collector and the heart of an artist," said artist Manisha Gera Baswani. She recalled how, over the years, Abraham had always been the first to wish on her birthday. "I will miss the 6.30 am 'happy birthday' call from Sara aunty," she said.

LAKHIMPUR KHERI

Clash over stray cattle in UP leaves 2 dead, 9 held

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, AUGUST 4

TWO PERSONS were killed and 11 injured in a clash between two groups over driving away a stray animal at Rada Bazar village, Lakhimpur Kheri's Gola sub-division, police said. Nine persons were arrested on Saturday.

The deceased were identified as Ramjeet Singh (45) and his brother-in-law and neighbour Ram Laxhan (42). All other wounded, except one with critical injuries, were discharged after receiving medical aid, it is learnt.

A case of murder and rioting has been registered against 27

people by name. Police said Ramjeet's sons Kaushlendra and Lokendra drove away a stray animal through the village after it entered their fields on Friday. The animal inadvertently entered Santram's home and damaged some household items, they said.

Santram and his family members then thrashed Kaushlendra and Lokendra, but the matter was resolved. In the evening, Santram and others attacked Ramjeet and Laxhan with sticks and other objects. Ramjeet's family retaliated against them. Ramjeet and Laxhan, who had sustained head injuries, died during treatment. Raids are underway to nab other accused, police said.

MPs FLAG 'AGEING' PARLIAMENT

A look at how the 18th Lok Sabha is India's oldest ever

ANJISHNU DAS
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

IN THE recent general election, India elected its oldest ever Lok Sabha with the average age of MPs climbing to 56. The disparity between the average age of India's politicians and its population has become a subject of discussion in Parliament during the ongoing Budget session.

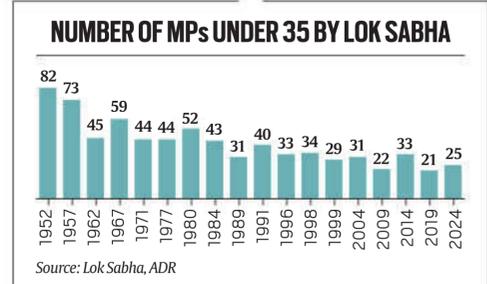
While in the Rajya Sabha AAP MP Raghav Chadha on Thursday called for the minimum age to contest elections to be dropped from 25 to 21, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor introduced a private member's Bill in the LS to reserve 10 seats in the Lower House for MPs younger than 35. Chadha, 35, said the average age of India's population deserves representation in the House. "At least 65% of our population is below 35 years and 50% below 25 years," said Chadha, who is among the youngest MPs. "When the first

Lok Sabha was elected after Independence, 26% of members were below 40 years. When our 18th Lok Sabha was elected two months ago, 12% of the members were below 40 years."

It's not the first time that a proposal for lowering the age for contesting polls has been made in House. Last August, the parliamentary standing committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice recommended lowering the minimum age for contesting an Assembly poll from 25 years to 18 years.

Age profile of LS

The first LS, elected in 1952, was the second youngest on record with the average age of MPs at 46.5 years. The first House had a record 82 MPs aged 40 or under and no MPs older than 70. Since then, the average age of MPs has risen consistently. In 1998, the average age dipped to the lowest ever at 46.4 years. Prior to the 2024 LS polls, the highest average age was recorded after the 1999 elections at 55.5 years. This time, the aver-



age age of the MPs in the 18th LS hit a record high of 56. In the current LS, there are just 25 MPs under 35, of whom only seven are under 30. Only two previous LSs have had fewer MPs below the age of 35 — in 2019 at 21 and in 2009 at 22. The number of MPs aged 35 or less has consistently declined since the first LS.

In contrast, there are now 380 MPs who are 51 or older. Of them, as many as 53 are older than 71 years and 161 MPs are aged 61 to 70 years. At 30.6%, the 51-60 age group has the largest representation in the House. The oldest

sitting MP T R Bалу of the DMK has been elected from Tamil Nadu's Sripurambudur. At 82, he is the only MP older than 80.

There are three MPs aged 25, the youngest eligible age to contest the LS polls — the Samajwadi Party MPs Priya Saroj from Machhlisnahr and Pushpendra Saroj from Kaushambi in Uttar Pradesh, and the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas)'s Jambhavi Choudhary from Samastipur in Bihar. In comparison with the MPs, the average age of Indians is just 27.8 years old, as per the 2011 Census.

How MPs' minimum age was decided

The debates in the Constituent Assembly, which drew up the Constitution, suggest several of India's early leaders were in favour of a lower age requirement for becoming an MP.

Article 84, which sets the eligibility criteria for parliamentarians, was introduced as an amendment to the Draft Constitution in the Constituent Assembly by B R Ambedkar on May 19, 1949. In his provisions, Ambedkar recommended 25 years as the minimum age for the Lower House but set the bar at 35 for the Rajya Sabha. Ambedkar argued that merely being a voter, whose eligibility criterion was 21 years until 1988, was not enough to serve in the House. Though the minimum age for becoming an MP in the LS was accepted, several members of the Constituent Assembly said 35 years was too high a bar in the case of the Rajya Sabha.

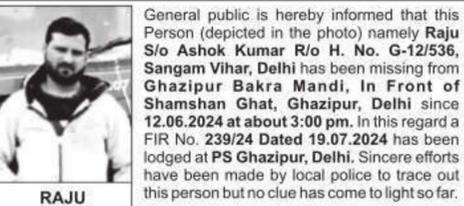
G Durgabai, a freedom fighter, feminist and social worker, proposed that the limit for a Rajya Sabha MP be lowered to 30.

"Wisdom does not depend on age... Our boys and girls are now more precocious and the educational curriculum is now so broad-based that it will educate them very well in respect of their civic rights and duties. I think we must give a chance to these younger people to be trained in the affairs of the state," Durgabai said.

Shibban Lal Saxena, an educator and freedom fighter said: "Our country of 300 million may produce precocious young men fit to occupy the highest positions at an age younger than 25 and they should not be deprived of the opportunity."

Ambedkar argued, in response, that reducing the minimum age for the Upper House would be inconsistent with the provision that set the minimum age for the vice-president, who would preside over the Rajya Sabha, at 35. However, he finally agreed to Durgabai's amendment for a limit of 30 years and, shortly afterwards, it was adopted by the Constituent Assembly. The same criteria of 25 and 30 years for the two Houses were later applied to the state legislatures as well.

SEARCH FOR MISSING



General public is hereby informed that this Person (depicted in the photo) namely **Raju S/o Ashok Kumar R/o H. No. G-12/536, Sangam Vihar, Delhi** has been missing from **Ghazipur Bakra Mandi, In Front of Shamshan Ghra, Ghazipur, Delhi** since **12.06.2024 at about 3:00 pm**. In this regard a **FIR No. 239/24 Dated 19.07.2024** has been lodged at **PS Ghazipur, Delhi**. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out this person but no clue has come to light so far. His physical description is as under:-

Sex: Male, **Age:** 34 years, **Height:** 5' 5" ft., **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Medium, **Identification Mark:** Om Tattoo on Hand and Hanuman Tattoo on Neck, **Wearing:** Green Colour Shirt & Grey Jeans and Brown Sleepers in his feet. Any person is having information or clue about this missing boy may kindly inform to the following numbers:-

SHO Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> **PS: Ghazipur, Delhi**
E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in **Ph.: 011-22610068**
Tel. No.: 011-24368638/24368641 **Mob.: 8750870625**
Fax No.: 011-24368639 **DP/9902/ED/2024**

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority

NOIDA Administrative Building, Sector - 6, Noida - 201301 (U.P.)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.in

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from eligible firm/contractors for the following job against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these website for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

A) Rs. 30.00 Lacs to 100.00 Lacs)

S. No.	Job No.	Sale Start Date	Sale End Date	Tender Opening Date and Time
(1)	Job No. - 03/E-TENDER/SPO/2024-25 Name of Work: Stitching of Summer Uniform (Safari Suit and Suit & Salwar) for Contract Staff of Noida Authority, Estimated Rs. 97.38,300.00	06.08.2024	12.08.2024 upto 5:00 P.M.	13.08.2024 11.00 AM

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In SC verdict, how CJI underlined concept of substantive equality

APURVA VISHWANATH & AJYO SINHA KARPURAM
 NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

THE SUPREME Court's landmark verdict on sub-classification of the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) quota marked a milestone for equality jurisprudence. In his opinion, written for himself and Justice Manoj Misra as part of the 6-1 majority verdict, Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud underlined the concept of "substantive equality" — the principle that the law must account for the different backgrounds and historical injustices faced by persons or groups.

"The Constitution... today advances a more substantive reading of the equality provision, expanding the sphere and the scope of reservation to ensure that the benefits trickle down to those who need it the most," the CJI wrote (*The State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh*, 2024).

The concept of substantive equality is key to understanding how the court interpreted the law on reservations.

SC on reservations

In a string of rulings given over the last seven years, CJI Chandrachud has referred to substantive equality to stress that reservation is a facet of merit, and not an exception to the merit rule. In the sub-classification judgment delivered on August 1, the CJI traced the history of the ways in which the top court has interpreted affirmative action.

AS LIMITING EQUALITY: The SC initially took a formal and limiting approach, in which it viewed reservations as an exception to the principle of equal opportunity. Emblematic of this was the court's view in *The State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan* (1951) where it held that reservation of seats in educational institutions was unconstitutional — there was no express provision that allowed this, like Article 16(4) of the Constitution did for public employment.

In another ruling given in April 1951, *B Venkataramana v. The State of Madras*, the top court held that only Harijans and backward Hindus can be considered as "backward classes" for reservation in public jobs.

This led to Parliament enacting the first amendment to the Constitution in June that

year, which inserted Article 15(4), which is essentially an exception to Article 29 that prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, language, or any of them with respect to admission into educational institutions.

This formalistic reading was also in evidence in *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India* (1992) (Mandal judgment), in which the court observed that Articles 15(4) and 16(4) are special provisions — or, in other words, an exception to the principle of equality — while prescribing a cap of 50% on the total seats to be reserved.

ASA FACET OF EQUALITY: In 1958, the State of Mysore reserved 75% seats in educational institutions for all communities except the Brahmin community. This was challenged before the SC in *M R Balaji v State of Mysore* (1962), in which the court for the first time prescribed a 50% ceiling for reservation. This limit is contested — but it has endured, with the exception of the 10% Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quota introduced in 2019.

In its decision in *State of Kerala v. N M*

Thomas (1975), the SC made an "expansive and substantive reading of the equality code", CJI Chandrachud said. The court upheld a Kerala law in which the qualifying criteria for government jobs was relaxed for SC and ST candidates. It held that the law was not an exception to the principle of equality of opportunity.

AS LIMITING EFFICIENCY: Article 335 of the Constitution, which provides for reservation for SCs and STs in services and posts, states that the reservation must be taken "consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration". In the discourse on reservation in the SC that put emphasis on "maintaining efficiency of service", reservation was effectively seen as being detrimental to "efficiency", while "merit" (unreserved posts) was equated with efficiency.

This view was reflected in a string of rulings in which the SC shot down reservations in promotions. In the 1992 *Indra Sawhney* judgment, the SC held that reservations in promotions would dilute efficiency in administration.

In 1995, a constitutional amendment was

introduced to allow reservations in promotions and to undo the "catch-up rule" that was upheld in a string of rulings. The court had held that the practice was a constitutionally valid practice to maintain "efficiency".

Under the catch-up rule, a reserved-category person was promoted earlier over his superior in the general category due to reservation, the general-category person was allowed to regain seniority over — or "catch up" with — the reserved-category person.

The Constitution (Seventy-seventh) Amendment Act, 1995 inserted Article 16(4A) to allow "consequential seniority", which meant that the seniority attained by a reserved-category candidate over his peer in the general category by being promoted earlier would be retained for the next promotion. The law on consequential seniority was upheld in 2006 on the ground that the efficiency of administration was only relaxed, not "obliterated", by the rule.

"The understanding of the Courts at the end of this phase was that the scope of reservation must be expanded to ensure substantive equality in spite of its dilution of efficiency," the CJI said in his ruling.

No quota-merit binary

Drawing from observations and dissenting opinions in other rulings, CJI Chandrachud in his rulings has reframed the quota-versus-efficiency question. In essence, it sees reservation as reflecting the mandate of substantive equality enshrined in the Constitution, and not as a concessionary exception to the equality rule.

Addressing the criticism that the dilution of the evaluating standards or the qualifying marks for SCs/STs leads to "inefficiency," the CJI has argued that "securing higher marks in an examination does not contribute to higher efficiency and... securing a minimum mark (and not the highest) in the examination is sufficient to maintain efficiency of administration".

The CJI's majority opinion states that the stereotype that reservation leads to inefficiency in fact makes promotions inaccessible to SC/ST candidates — the reason why the state introduced reservations in promotions. The constitutional amendments "are an emphatic repudiation of the binary of reservation and merit", CJI Chandrachud has argued.

EXPLAINED SPORT

5 SPORTS THAT ARE NO LONGER PART OF THE OLYMPICS

VANDANA KALRA
 NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

THERE ARE 32 different sports at the ongoing 2024 Paris Olympics, including tennis, volleyball, soccer, and various genres of wrestling, aquatics, gymnastics, and cycling. Over the years, however, there have been many sports and events that have disappeared from the Olympic schedule. Here is a look at five such events.



A tug-of-war bout at the 1912 Olympics. Wikimedia Commons

1 LIVE PIGEON SHOOTING (1900)

Live pigeon shooting was held for the first (and last) time at the 1900 Olympic Games in Paris. Live pigeons were set free in the air and competitors had to kill the maximum number of birds possible. During the event, nearly 300 pigeons were killed and Leon de Lunden of Belgium won the gold medal.

In the following years, Olympic officials decided to not use the living targets. Instead, they introduced clay pigeons which were thrown into the air at different speeds and heights as targets.

2 HOT AIR BALLOONING (1900)

The event of hot air ballooning, introduced as a demonstration sport, had multiple contests over several months at the 1900 Olympic Games. Pilots competed in different categories, including the distance travelled, altitude reached, and the best photograph taken from a balloon.

French balloonist Henry de La Vaulx won the distance race by flying his balloon 768 miles from Paris to Poland, then ruled by Tsarist Russia. When he landed, Russian police took him into custody for not putting in a passport request.

3 TUG-OF-WAR (1900-1920)

Tug-of-war took place at five Olympic Games between 1900 and 1920. According

to the rules, an eight-man team had to pull their opponents six feet to win. If either side failed to achieve this goal, judges would give the struggle a further five minutes and then declare the team, which had made the most progress, the winner.

At the 1908 Olympic Games in London, a controversy erupted after the British team was accused of wearing heavier than usual boots, making it hard for them to be tugged over.

4 PLUNGE FOR THE DISTANCE (1904)

The event required an athlete to dive into a pool from a standing position, and coast underwater without moving their body for as long as possible.

"After 60 seconds had passed — or competitors had floated to the surface, whichever came first — referees measured the distance the athletes had drifted," according to a report by *Time* magazine.

5 RUNNING DEER SHOOTING (1908-1924)

No live deer was involved in the event, but competitors had to shoot a wooden deer mounted on a cart on rails. The target used to be 100 metres away and competitors had 4 seconds to shoot the deer as it moved through the track.

At the 1920 Olympic Games, Sweden's Oscar Swahn, 72, won the silver medal in the event, becoming the oldest Olympic medallist.



HARISH DAMODARAN

CULTIVATING RICE using less water and not burning the leftover straw after harvesting, and wheat without any ploughing and land preparation, has been the holy grail for agricultural scientists and policymakers concerned over the ecological footprint of the two cereal grain crops.

There has been some breakthrough with the breeding of varieties/ hybrids, both in the public and private sectors, that can "tolerate" the application of a herbicide, Imazethapyr, to control weeds and grasses that affect the growth of crop plants by competing for nutrients, water and sunlight.

In the current kharif season, two basmati varieties (Pusa Basmati 1979 and Pusa Basmati 1985) and two non-basmati rice hybrids (Sava 134 and Sava 127), developed by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) and Savannah Seeds Pvt Ltd respectively, have been commercially planted. These varieties contain a mutated acetolactate synthase (ALS) gene that enables farmers to spray Imazethapyr to control weeds such as *Echinochloa colona* (*jangli chawal*), *Cyperus rotundus* (*motha*) and *Trianthema portulacastrum* (*pathar-chatta*).

In the coming rabi (spring-winter) season, Mahyco Pvt Ltd is expected to launch wheat varieties called Goal and Mukut, which too, are amenable to application of Imazethapyr in order to control *Phalaris minor* (*gulli danda*), *Chenopodium album* (*bathua*) and other such major weeds. The company, which is based in Jalna, Maharashtra, and Savannah Seeds (the South Asian subsidiary of the Texas-headquartered RiceTec Inc.), have formed a joint venture to take their Imazethapyr-tolerant 'FullPage' direct seeded rice (DSR) and 'FreeHit' zero-tillage (ZT) wheat technologies to farmers for "more climate-smart and sustainable" cropping.

How do rice and wheat farmers control weeds now?

Currently, farmers flood their paddy



A farmer in his direct-seeded rice field in Haryana's Jind district. Harish Damodaran

fields, and do 3-4 ploughings for wheat — mainly to control weeds.

In normal rice cultivation, paddy seeds are raised into young plants in nurseries before being uprooted and replanted in the main field around 30 days later. The field is first "puddled", or tilled in standing water, to break up the clods and churn the soil to make it soft.

For the first 2-3 weeks after transplanting, the field has to be irrigated every 1-2 days to maintain a water depth of 4-5 cm. This is necessary to prevent weed growth — water acts like a natural herbicide, preventing weed seeds from germinating, and killing already-emerged seedlings. Farmers continue giving water once a week over the remaining 105-110 days of the crop. (The total crop duration from seed to grain is 155-160 days.)

In all, the traditional puddling-cum-transplantation route requires up to 30 irrigations, each of which consumes more than 200,000 litres of water per acre. Puddling alone consumes water equivalent to three irrigations. The labour cost of transplanting is between Rs 4,000 and Rs 5,000 per acre.

To grow wheat, farmers burn the stubble from the previously-harvested paddy crop. They also plough the field, initially twice using a harrow or cultivator, followed by an irrigation and either one more ploughing with a rotavator, or two with a harrow/ cultivator. All this is done before sowing the wheat seeds, primarily for weed management.

And how do the herbicide-tolerant solutions work?

DSR and ZT wheat basically replace water and repeated field ploughings with the chemical herbicide Imazethapyr to take care of weeds.

DSR seeds can be sown directly, without the need for nurseries, puddling, transplanting, and flooding of fields. Only laser leveling of land before sowing, which costs about Rs 1,200 per acre, is recommended to ensure uniform placement of seeds and fertiliser, as well as distribution of water. Overall, there is a roughly 30% saving of water, apart from labour costs of transplanting and weed management, and fuel used for puddling.

Mahyco claims that 'FreeHit' ZT technology makes it possible to sow wheat directly, without burning the paddy stubble or even preparing the land. Farmers can use a tractor-mounted Super Seeder machine with rotavator that cuts the standing stubble and mixes it in the soil.

Alternatively, they can use a Happy Seeder without rotavator that only cuts and leaves the crop residue on the field. Either way, sowing is done with no tillage, saving costs and time.

Imazethapyr is to be sprayed along with Metribuzin, a selective herbicide already used in wheat, when the crop is about 25 days old.

Are the Imazethapyr-tolerant rice and wheat hybrids/ varieties genetically

modified (GM) crops?

No, they just have an ALS gene that has undergone mutation. This gene is already present in rice and wheat — it is not introduced from soil bacteria or other unrelated species, as is the case with Monsanto's 'Bollgard' Bt cotton and the still-to-be-approved GM hybrid mustard bred by scientists at Delhi University's Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants.

The ALS gene codes for an enzyme (protein) that helps synthesise essential amino acids for plant growth and development. Imazethapyr sprayed on normal paddy and wheat binds itself to the ALS enzymes, inhibiting their production of the amino acids. The herbicide will then kill the crop along with the weeds, as it cannot distinguish between the two.

The IARI, Savannah Seeds, and Mahyco-bred varieties/ hybrids, however, contain a mutated ALS gene whose DNA sequence — the order of chemical bases or "letters" that spell out the instructions to a cell's protein-making machinery — has been altered using a chemical mutant or radiation. As a result, the ALS enzymes no longer have binding sites for Imazethapyr and the amino acid synthesis isn't inhibited. The plants can now "tolerate" the herbicide, which only kills the weeds.

But aren't farmers already growing rice through DSR?

DSR cultivation at present is based on two herbicides: one "pre-emergent" (Pendimethalin, applied within 24 hours of sowing) and the other "post-emergent" (Bispyribac-sodium, after 20-25 days). But these are not effective against all weeds. Imazethapyr is a broad-spectrum herbicide with a wider weed-control range. It is also safer, as the ALS gene is not present in humans and mammals, and the chemical will not bind itself to them.

IARI has distributed 200 quintals of seeds of its two Imazethapyr-tolerant basmati varieties for planting this season. At 8 kg/ acre, this can cover 2,500 acres. Savannah Seeds' rice hybrids have been planted on 15,000 acres across Punjab, Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

The adoption of DSR and ZT — conferring benefits of reduced water and fuel consumption, plus no environmental pollution from crop residue burning — is likely to be better with herbicide-tolerant technologies. And their not being GM may help, too.

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West-Russia prisoner swap: How prisoners become geopolitical pawns

ARJUN SENGUPTA
 NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

EVAN GERSHKOVICH, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter, and Paul Whelan, a former US Marine, were among the 16 people — opposition politicians, journalists, and Putin critics — released by Moscow on Thursday in the biggest prisoner swap between Russia and the West since the Cold War. Russia received eight freed individuals in return, the most prominent being Vadim Krasikov, who was serving a life sentence for murdering a Chechen dissident in Berlin in 2019.

Prisoners as leverage

Rival groups — whether they be tribes, nation states, or criminal gangs — have since times immemorial used prisoners as leverage against the enemy, to get something valuable in return.

In the pre-modern world, where prisoners of war (PoWs) or conquest were often et-

ther killed or reduced to slavery, some lucky (rich) prisoners would be freed for monetary compensation. This is mentioned in Homer's *Iliad*, and was prevalent in medieval Europe, where captured knights commanded varying sums of money based on social status.

Multiple international treaties, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions, govern the treatment and exchange of PoWs today. But there is no way to enforce these rules. This means that PoWs remain pawns in international power politics. For instance, Russia has at times held back the release of Ukrainian PoWs to flame domestic tensions against Volodymyr Zelensky's government in Ukraine, *Politico* reported.

No set price of freedom

Things are slightly different with prisoner swaps like the one from last week. No written doctrine guides such exchanges.

Article 2(1) of the United Nations Charter, establishes the "principle of the sovereign equality" of all UN members. This includes

respecting laws of each country. While the fairness of a country's legal system may be (and often is) questioned, at a principle level, countries can punish foreigners for breaking the law. Thus, the price of a prisoner's freedom varies on a case-to-case basis, depending on who the prisoner is, and what their captor can get in return for their release.

Gershkovich's arrest in March 2023 garnered global attention, with him being a journalist with the largest newspaper in the US (by print circulation, 2023). There was thus significant pressure on the Biden administration to bring him back.

In some cases, a prisoner holding sensitive information can expedite their release. The most famous such prisoner swap involved downed American spy plane pilot Francis Gary Powers and convicted KGB operative Rudolf Abel in 1962. This exchange was pictured in Steven Spielberg's 2015 film *Bridge of Spies*, starring Tom Hanks.

Some people — like Fredrick Pryor, the other American freed in the Powers-Abel swap — get plain lucky. Pryor was caught on the wrong side of the Berlin Wall in 1961. How he became a part of the Powers-Abel deal is unclear, but it is unlikely he would have been freed in just six months had it not been for the high-profile swap which he became a part of.

Prisoners also become diplomatic tools for neighbouring countries, like India-Pakistan, and India-Sri Lanka. Fishermen who might have strayed into the other country's waters are routinely arrested, and later freed in acts of goodwill.

No easy decision

Democracies are more likely to cave in to public pressure to bring citizens back, and often end up incurring massive costs for this.

In 2016, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian journalist and charity worker, was arrested in Tehran, and sentenced to five years in prison for allegedly plotting to over-

throw the government. Her husband, Richard Ratcliffe, campaigned tirelessly for her release, and pressure mounted on the Tory government to do something. The problem was that Iran wanted Britain to pay roughly 400 million pounds, in exchange for Zaghari-Ratcliffe's freedom. This was money Iran's Shah government had paid Britain for an order of more than 1,500 tanks and armoured vehicles in 1970, which was cancelled after the Revolution of 1979. Britain finally paid Iran back for the undelivered vehicles in 2022, to secure Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release.

Experts argue that such hefty payments set a bad precedent, acting as encouragement for hostile regimes to arbitrarily take prisoners. In fact Zaghari-Ratcliffe's arrest might have been prompted by the US paying Iran \$400 million for undelivered military equipment in return for four Iranian-Americans, just months before.

Such criticisms have been made about the recent swap as well; more specifically about the differing profiles of the people

freed by the two sides. Russia mostly released jailed dissidents, while the West ended up freeing convicted fraudsters, criminals, and a hitman. This was also the case during the 2022 swap which freed US basketball player Britney Griner. Griner, who had been sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in Russia after being caught possessing cannabis oil, was swapped for the notorious arms dealer Viktor Bout, who is nicknamed "merchant of death".

Ultimately, the price of a prisoner's freedom is not just limited to what is paid for them in the particular exchange. By paying a high price for their citizens' release, a country increases the probability of others being unjustly imprisoned in the future by captors hoping to secure similar inducements.

But there are no easy answers to this dilemma. As US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told *CNN* on Friday: "You've got to make these tough decisions... That's what you have to do when you have people in harm's way over there. It's not easy".

TOP OF THE WORLD



Vladimir Putin with Kim Jong Un in 2023

NORTH KOREA

Putin offered aid after floods: Pyongyang

Seoul: Russian President Vladimir Putin has offered humanitarian aid to North Korea, which has been hit by heavy rain and flood, Pyongyang's state media KCNA said Sunday. Relations between the two countries have grown closer, and Putin made the offer in a message to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un delivered Saturday via the Russian embassy in Pyongyang. The Russian leader's message expressed sympathy and support. Putin displayed "his willingness to provide immediate humanitarian support for the recovery from the flood damage," KCNA said. **REUTERS**

NIGERIA

President calls for peace amid rising protests

Abuja: Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu called on Sunday for a suspension of protests against a cost of living crisis, saying this would create an opportunity for dialogue, his first public comments since citizens took to the streets last week. Amnesty International has said at least 13 people were killed in clashes with security forces on the first day of protests Thursday. Police denied using excessive force and said seven people had died as of Saturday. In a televised broadcast, Tinubu called for an end to violence in several states since the protests started, saying he was always open for dialogue. **REUTERS**

RUSSIA

2 dissidents sent to Germany seek to return

Bonn: Two of the Russian dissidents who were freed from prison and arrived in Germany as part of last week's major East-West prisoner swap say they are already thinking about returning to Russia, but vow to continue political activism even from abroad. "As people who were actually deported, who were kicked out of the country, we all have a great desire to return," dissident Andrei Pivovarov said in Bonn Saturday. Ilya Yashin, an opposition activist jailed in 2022 for criticising President Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, also expressed his desire to return home. **REUTERS**

VIOLENCE OVER JOB QUOTA: INDEFINITE CURFEW IMPOSED

95 killed, hundreds injured as renewed anti-govt protests sweep Bangladesh

JULHAS ALAM
DHAKA, AUGUST 4

DOZENS OF people were killed and hundreds injured Sunday as renewed anti-government protests swept across Bangladesh, with protesters calling for the prime minister to resign and the prime minister accusing them of "sabotage" and cutting off mobile internet in a bid to quell the unrest. The country's leading Bengali-language newspaper, *Prothom Alo*, said at least 95 people, including at least 14 police officers, died in the violence. *Channel 24* reported at least 72 deaths. The military announced a new indefinite curfew, including in capital Dhaka and other divisional and district headquarters.

Demonstrators are demanding PM Sheikh Hasina's resignation following protests last month that began with students calling for an end to a quota system for government jobs. Those demonstrations left more than 200 dead. As the renewed violence raged, Hasina said the protesters who engaged in "sabotage" and destruction were no longer students but criminals.

The ruling Awami League party said the demand for Hasina's resignation showed that the protests have been taken over by the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the banned Jamaat-e-Islami party. Also Sunday, the government announced a holiday from Monday to Wednesday. Courts were to be closed indefinitely. Mobile internet service was cut off, and Facebook and messaging apps, including WhatsApp, were inaccessible. Junior Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mohammad Ali Arafat said Sunday that the services were severed to help prevent violence.



A shopping centre set afire by anti-government protesters in Dhaka on Sunday. AP

At least 11,000 people have been arrested in recent weeks. The unrest has also resulted in the closure of schools and universities across the country, and authorities at one point imposed a shoot-on-sight curfew.

Protesters called for a "non-cooperation" effort, urging people not to pay taxes or utility bills and not to show up for work on Sunday, a working day in Bangladesh. Offices, banks and factories opened, but commuters in Dhaka and other cities faced challenges getting to work.

The demonstrators attacked Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, a major public hospital in Dhaka's Shahbagh area, torching several vehicles. Video footage showed protest-

EXPRESS NETWORK

HURTS WHEN INDIA CALLS BANGLADESH PROTESTS INTERNAL MATTER: YUNUS P9

ers vandalising a prison van in the chief metropolitan magistrate's court in Dhaka. Other videos showed police opening fire on the crowds with bullets, rubber bullets and tear gas. The protesters set fire to vehicles and the ruling party's offices. Some carried sharp weapons and sticks, according to TV footage. In Dhaka, police fired tear gas to disperse hundreds who blocked a major highway. Protesters at-

tacked homes and vandalised a community welfare office in the area, where hundreds of ruling party activists took up positions. Some crude bombs were detonated, and gunshots were heard, witnesses said. At least 20 people were hit by bullets in the area.

At least 18 people were killed in the northwestern district of Sirajganj. That figure included 13 police officers who died after a police station was attacked by protesters, according to police headquarters in Dhaka. Another officer was killed in the eastern district of Cumilla, police said.

Jamuna TV said clashes took place across more than a dozen districts, including Chattogram, Bogura, Magura, Rangpur, Kishoreganj and Sirajganj. **AP**

Hasina: Those engaging in sabotage are terrorists

AGENCIES
AUGUST 4

BANGLADESH PRIME Minister Hasina Sunday said those engaging in "sabotage" across the country in the name of protest are not students but terrorists, asking people to deal with them with iron hands.

Hasina called a meeting of the National Committee on Security Affairs, the highest policy-making authority of national security, the Dhaka Tribune newspaper

EXPLAINED

Pressure on military to stay neutral

AS THE chaos escalates, all eyes are on the military — which, after a history of staging coups, has been brought to heel by Hasina. Army chief Gen Wakeruz-Zaman Sunday gathered senior officers for a meet, seen as an attempt to reinforce its neutrality. Meanwhile, in an indication of growing pressure on the Army, dozens of ex-officers — including a former army chief — held a news conference in Dhaka and called on the military to withdraw its forces. On Sunday, the army cracked down on protesters in some parts but was also seen protecting them from govt supporters in other places.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

reported citing sources from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The meeting was attended by the chiefs of the Army, Navy, Air Force, police, and other top security officers.

"I appeal to the countrymen to suppress these terrorists with a firm hand," she said.

Southport stabbings: Violence flares again, PM Starmer condemns far-right 'thuggery'

REUTERS
LONDON, AUGUST 4

BRITISH PRIME Minister Keir Starmer Sunday condemned "far-right thuggery" after days of violent anti-immigration protests culminated in an attack on a hotel, saying perpetrators would face the full force of the law.

Violent protests have erupted in towns and cities in Britain after three girls were killed in a knife attack in Southport in northwest England last week. The murders were seized on by anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim groups as misinformation spread that the suspect was an immigrant and a radical Islamist. Police have said the suspect was born in Britain and are not treating it as a terror incident. The protests have spread



Police clash with protesters in Rotherham on Sunday. AP

through cities including Liverpool, Bristol and Manchester on Saturday, resulting in dozens of arrests as businesses were van-

dalised and looted and several police were injured.

On Sunday, hundreds of anti-immigration protesters gathered

by a hotel near Rotherham, northern England, which Britain's interior minister said was housing asylum seekers.

The protesters, many wearing masks or balaclavas, threw bricks at police and broke several hotel windows, a witness said, before setting nearby bins on fire and pushing them into the hotel.

"I utterly condemn the far-right thuggery we've seen this weekend," Starmer said in a statement. "Be in no doubt, those that have participated in this violence will face the full force of the law." He said the disorder was targeting people because of the colour of their skin or faith.

Protesters also gathered by a hotel in Aldershot while others marched in Middlesbrough.

The interior ministry said mosques would be offered extra security arrangements.

No forgiveness, says Maduro as poll results spark more protests



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro

REUTERS
CARACAS, AUGUST 4

THOUSANDS MARCHED across Venezuela on Saturday over its contested election, as President Nicolas Maduro said some 2,000 people had been arrested during protests against the results.

Venezuela's electoral authority, proclaimed Maduro winner in last Sunday's vote, saying on Monday he obtained 51% compared to 46% for opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez. The published polls result sparked widespread allegations of fraud and protests.

"This time there will be no forgiveness," Maduro told supporters at a rally in Caracas, where he said some 2,000 people had been detained in connection to "crimes" during the protests. He pledged "maximum punishment." Maduro's supporters said they were defending democracy.

Finally deploying F-16s: Zelenskyy

UKRAINIAN PILOTS have started flying F-16s for operations within the nation, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Sunday, confirming the long-awaited arrival of the US-made fighters over 29 months since Russia's invasion. **REUTERS**

Strikes on Gaza kill 18 and stabbing in Israel kills 2 as fears of wider war spike

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TEL AVIV, AUGUST 4

ISRAELI STRIKES early Sunday killed 18 people in Gaza, including four who were sheltering in a tent camp for displaced Palestinians inside a hospital complex, while a stabbing attack carried out by a Palestinian killed two people in a Tel Aviv suburb.

Tensions have soared following nearly 10 months of war in Gaza and the killing of two senior militants in separate strikes in Lebanon and Iran last week.

A woman in her 70s and an 80-year-old man were killed in the stabbing attack, according to Israeli officials, and two others were wounded. The police said the attack was carried out by a Palestinian militant, who was "neutralised".

In Gaza, an Israeli strike earlier Sunday hit a camp housing displaced Palestinians in the courtyard of Al-Aqsa Hospital, killing four people, including one woman, and injuring others, Gaza's Health Ministry said.



After an Israeli strike on a tent camp in central Gaza, Sunday

Another strike flattened a house in northern Gaza, killing at least eight people, including three children, their parents and their grandmother, according to the ministry. Another three people were killed in a strike on a vehicle in Gaza City.

In 'multi-front war' with Iran: Netanyahu

Israel is already in a "multi-front war" with Iran and its proxies, PM Benjamin Netanyahu told a Cabinet meeting Sunday, as the US and allies prepared to defend Israel from an expected counterstrike and prevent an even more destructive conflict.

ACROSS US, NUMBER OF EMPTY CHURCHES ARE RISING, ATTRACTING BUSINESS OWNERS FOR THEIR ARCHITECTURAL PECULIARITY

As American youth move away from faith, churches become malls and restaurants

ELLEN ROSEN
AUGUST 4

LISA TOFANO was baptized, confirmed and married at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church on Lake Opeka in Des Plaines, Ill. When she and her husband, John, visited the church last fall, however, it wasn't to worship but rather to celebrate their 34th wedding anniversary at what the church had become: the Foxtail on the Lake, a restaurant. The transformation was not

easy: The shuttered church needed an 18-month, \$6 million gut renovation, and a new 3,000-square-foot kitchen, before it could start offering items like paella, said David Villegas, a managing partner of Foxtail, who said he had been "a bit nervous" before the restaurant's opening in November about the reaction of former parishioners. For Tofano, though, "a church is more about the people than the building".

Across the country, the number of empty churches and other houses of worship is sharply ris-

ing, and these structures, often architectural gems, have become huge draws for business owners.

Eileen Lindner, a sociologist and Presbyterian minister who is a former editor of the Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches, which analyses census data on religious organizations and houses of worship, said that she expected as many as 100,000 Protestant church properties to close by 2030. That figure, which may come close to 20 percent of all existing Protestant churches, is a significant increase over the



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Illinois was turned into a restaurant. NYT

past decade, Lindner said.

The closings stem largely from a drop in church attendance during the Covid pandemic, and fewer people, especially younger adults, affiliated with religious organizations than in the past. The decline has been happening for decades. In the late 1940s, 76 percent of Americans said they belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque, but by 2020 that number had dropped to 47 percent, Gallup polling found.

With their vaulted ceilings and

stained glass windows, the architectural forms of churches have long attracted business owners, despite structural problems that can add significantly to renovation costs. And most who choose to renovate try to retain some reference or vestige of the church that the building once housed.

When a product design consulting firm, argodesign, outgrew its offices in Austin, Texas, its founders were deliberate in their search for a new space. They saw potential in an abandoned 1930s-era church with a "rose window,"

a round shape often found in churches, near the city's bustling downtown South Congress area. The structure could accommodate up to 70 employees and had a parking space for a car the team had constructed together, said Sonia Prusaitis, the general manager of the office. The firm moved into the property in 2022.

Around the world, houses of worship have been converted to restaurants, breweries, hotels, art centers, theaters and even sports complexes. Some abandoned churches have been transformed

into mixed-use developments, blending retail and residential space, and affordable housing.

Although the costs of adaptive reuse — the renovating of existing buildings for new uses — can eclipse new construction, the renovation can sometimes be done more quickly since there's no outside structure to build. And the construction is considered more sustainable since the bricks, concrete and other materials are generally re-purposed rather than ending up in a landfill. **NYT**

15 ECONOMY

MARKET WATCH

MCAP OF 8 OF TOP-10 VALUED COS DROPS

Eight of the top-10 most valued firms together lost Rs 1,28,913.5 crore in market valuation last week, with IT majors Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys emerging as the biggest laggards, amid weak trend in equities. **PTI**

IN 2010, INSURANCE INDUSTRY & FINANCE MINISTRY PLANNED A CATASTROPHE POOL

Natural catastrophes: Insurance cover proposal hangs fire for over a decade

GEORGE MATHEW
MUMBAI, AUGUST 4

WHILE THE country has suffered heavily in terms of human fatalities and economic losses due to natural catastrophes every now and then, proposals by the insurance industry to bring the population and properties in the country under a catastrophe insurance plan has been hanging fire for the last 13 years.

A host of proposals, including the latest from the Standing Committee on Finance of the Lok Sabha in February this year, for an insurance catastrophe pool (INCIP) which would have mitigated the sufferings of the people are stuck with the governments and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) with no decision taken about the complex issue of implementing the scheme across the country. That too at a time when several landslides, cloud bursts and floods have hit several states like Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Uttarakhand over the years.

Through over 350 people died and nearly 200 others are still missing in the major landslide that occurred in Wayanad, Kerala, on July 30, people are unlikely to get benefits as they are largely uninsured. Properties worth hundreds of crores were destroyed in the landslide. Insurance sources said normally less than 10 per cent of the people and property are covered in any region in India, leaving a huge gap without protection. They will have to depend on the government and other agencies



Landslide-hit Chooralmala, in Wayanad district in Kerala. Over 350 people died and many others are missing in a major landslide that occurred in Wayanad on July 30. **PTI File**

for compensation and rebuilding of houses. The global average for insurance protection is 54 per cent.

In February 2024, the Standing Committee on Finance of the 17th Lok Sabha recommended that the government should explore options as to how homes and properties, especially those of economically vulnerable groups, can be insured in areas susceptible to catastrophic damages with the aid of Central/State Government. "This may require a specialised insurance business to be set up by one of the public sector general insurance companies with subsidised premiums for disaster-prone areas. Such insurance businesses have been established in many other areas, such as Florida which is subject to regular hurricane damage," the committee said.

In 2010, after Cyclone Nilam hit Tamil Nadu, the insurance industry and the Finance Ministry jointly planned to set up an exclu-

sive catastrophe pool to cover the losses that occur in natural disasters. The proposal for the INCIP would have cost up to Rs 5,000 crore, if applied across India, and brought down the present undefined bill to rebuild lives after the catastrophes, providing a big comfort to citizens, the government and the insurance sector.

However, a natural catastrophe insurance plan is yet to take shape, said an insurance sector official. The Standing Committee also proposed that IRDAI should set up a working group with all concerned stakeholders to examine all these issues in detail and then provide appropriate policy recommendations to address this important set of issues.

Insurance companies, especially public sector GIC Re, had proposed catastrophe bonds — or Cat bonds which are common in developed countries — to raise funds for meeting claims. Even

this has failed to fructify.

"NatCat (natural catastrophe) risks are largely uninsured and the governments (State/Centre) often provide some monetary compensation/relief when a catastrophe strikes. The recent tragedy in Wayanad is an example. There will be cries for having a NatCat Insurance Scheme but it will be soon be forgotten till the next NatCat strikes," said KK Srinivasan, former Member, IRDAI.

A major challenge will be to formulate a voluntary common catastrophe rate for the entire market. If the rates are too low, premium will not be sufficient to cover the risk and the pool will not be viable, officials said.

India has been ranked third after the US and China in recording the highest number of natural disasters since 1900. By disaster type, India is marred mostly by floods.

"What we need is a public-private solution, say a Disaster Pool, for natural disaster risk involving the insurance sector could offer many benefits over government crisis loans and grants," says a report prepared by State Bank of India last year. "If we consider 2020 floods in India, the total economic loss was of \$7.5 billion (Rs 52,500 crore) but insurance cover of only 11 per cent," the SBI report said.

Apart from human losses, there is huge economic loss due to these disasters. Since 1900, India has suffered an economic loss of \$150 billion (where the loss is reported) with largest loss from floods (\$92.1 billion) followed by storms (\$44.7 billion), the report said. In India the intensity and frequency of natural calamities, especially cyclone, have

CAT bonds fail to take off

Mumbai: Public sector GIC Re which was earlier planning to raise funds through CAT (catastrophe) bonds found it unviable as the interest rates in India are high. In developed countries like the US and Europe, reinsurers mobilise funds through Cat bonds at lower costs so that they can pay huge catastrophe losses. A CAT bond is a security that pays the issuer when a predefined disaster risk is realised. **ENS**

increased manifold. "Further, the cyclones in west coast (Maharashtra, Gujarat) in increasing, which has not been witnessed in the past. However, around 8 per cent of the total losses are covered. So, there is around 93 per cent protection gap during the period 1991 to 2022. So, early intervention is needed to close the protection gap, which are in all lines of insurance," the SBI report said.

The Standing Committee said that the natural disasters can cause a lot of damage to infrastructure in India, a country that faces many natural hazards because of its demographic and geographic features. Also, many houses are not safe enough to resist earthquakes and floods. These factors make them very prone to damages resulting from natural disasters.

'EV industry needs another 2-3 years of FAME subsidy for fast-paced growth'

INDIA'S E-SCOOTER market has grown nearly 29 per cent year-on-year since FY19. Ather Energy, in which Hero MotoCorp owns a 38 per cent stake, is the third-largest player after Ola Electric and TVS Motor with almost 12 per cent market share, according to an industry report by JMK Research. In a conversation with AGGAM WALLA, SWAPNIL JAIN, co-founder and CTO of Ather, discussed the tapering down of electric vehicle (EV) subsidies, importance of "inorganic growth", ways to boost charging infrastructure, and Ather's supply chain strategy.



THE EXPRESS
INTERVIEW
WITH
SWAPNIL JAIN
CO-FOUNDER & CTO,
ATHER ENERGY

In the recent Union Budget, allocation for scheme for Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) was reduced to Rs 2,671 crore for FY25 from Rs 4,807 crore revised estimate for FY24. At the same time, allocation for the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for automobiles and auto components went up to Rs 3,500 crore from Rs 484 crore. Will the benefits of incentivising auto components manufacturing trickle down to OEMs like Ather?

Incentivising auto components definitely helps the industry because the auto component players also have to do a fair amount of investments for the EV industry to grow and with them getting the incentives indirectly helps us as well. They would be able to spend more because there are uncertainties in any new industry and you need some sort of incentivisation for the industry to jump in.

Evidently, the FAME scheme is tapering down. How do you see this development?

Any sort of a support system has to taper and industry has to take control on its own. Tapering is definitely something we were expecting as well. But having some amount of subsidy is important, not necessarily from a monetary perspective, but also from the message it gives that EVs are important for the government. It helps in general keeping some sort of a motivation in the industry that the sector is critical.

How many more years of FAME would be needed to make the EV industry more self-sustaining?

It's not about self-sustainability. I would add that the more important thing is that you have to grow the industry. I would say at least two to three years (of FAME) is required for the industry to continue to keep growing. The subsidies have to be there from that perspective... Basically, you're

repo rate steady at 6.5 per cent, all external benchmark lending rates (EBLR) that are linked to the repo rate will not increase, giving relief to borrowers as their equated monthly instalments (EMIs) will not increase. However, lenders may raise interest rates on loans that are linked to the marginal cost of fund-based lending rate (MCLR), where the full transmission of a 250 bps hike in the repo rate between May 2022 and February 2023 has not happened.

When is RBI expected to cut repo rate?

Economists expect the RBI to deliver the first cut in the repo rate in December 2024. Bank of Baroda's Economist Aditi Gupta believes that the RBI is likely to monitor incoming data and continue to exercise caution before deciding on cutting rates.

"We believe that the nearest possibility of a rate cut is December 2024," she said.

Icra's Chief Economist and Head of Research and Outreach, Aditi Nayar, said that if the food inflation outlook turns favourable on the back of a normal distribution of rains in the second half of the monsoon season, and in the absence of global or domestic shocks, a stance change is possible in October 2024. "This could be followed by a 25 bps rate cut each in December 2024 and February 2025, with an extended pause thereafter," Nayar said.

Deutsche Bank's projection of 6.9 per cent y-o-y and the latest Economic Survey's projection of 6.5-7 per cent. In the June 2024 policy, the RBI raised its FY25 real GDP forecast by 20 bps to 7.2 per cent, from an earlier estimate of 7 per cent. It has projected CPI to be at 4.5 per cent in the current fiscal.

"As far as CPI inflation is concerned, we think there could be some upside risks to RBI's forecast of 4.5 per cent average for FY25, particularly after the July telecom tariff hike, but it is not clear to us whether the RBI will revise its CPI forecast higher at this stage," Das said. "Our own CPI inflation forecast for FY25 is slightly higher at 4.6 per cent average, factoring in the telecom tariff hike and other risks, particularly related to food inflation," he noted.

What happens to lending rates if repo rate is left steady?

With RBI expected to leave the

RBI'S RATE-SETTING PANEL IS SCHEDULED TO MEET FROM AUGUST 6 TO 8

Why Monetary Policy Committee is likely to keep repo rate steady

HITESH VYAS
MUMBAI, AUGUST 4

THE RESERVE Bank of India's (RBI) six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), which is scheduled to meet from August 6-8, is likely to keep the repo rate — the key policy rate — unchanged at 6.5 per cent, due to risks from higher food inflation. Experts said that the six-member MPC is also expected to continue with the monetary policy stance of withdrawal of accommodation.

What is expected?

In the monetary policy, which will be announced on August 8, the rate-setting panel of the RBI is likely to maintain status-quo for the ninth consecutive policies, market experts said.

"We expect the RBI MPC to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at the August 8 meeting at 6.50 per cent, with a 4:2 vote in favor, retain the monetary policy stance of 'withdrawal of accommodation', sound relatively optimistic on growth, and continue to reiterate the commitment to the 4 per cent headline inflation target," Goldman Sachs said in a report. In the June policy, two external members — Ashima Goyal and Jayanth R Varma — voted for a 25 basis points (bps) reduction in the repo rate — the rate at which the RBI lends money to banks to meet their short-term funding needs. One basis point is one-hundredth of a percentage point.

Will RBI revise GDP and inflation projections?

Deutsche Bank's Chief Economist (India & South Asia) Kaushik Das said that the RBI is expected to keep its FY25 real GDP (gross domestic product) growth forecast unchanged at 7.2 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y). The RBI's inflation forecast is higher than the



The RBI has been raising concerns over elevated food inflation over the past many months as it could derail the disinflation path. Headline inflation, as measured by year-on-year (y-o-y) changes in the all-India consumer price index (CPI), edged up to 5.1 per cent in June 2024 from 4.8 per cent in May. The increase in inflation is attributed to food inflation which firmed up to 8.4 per cent in June compared to 7.9 per cent in the previous month.

Under the flexible inflation targeting regime, the RBI has to maintain CPI in the 2-6 per cent range. It has been targeting to bring inflation down to 4 per cent on a durable basis.

INQ Holdings, SBI MF, Citigroup biggest buyers in Adani Energy's \$1-bn QIP

New Delhi: A unit of Qatar Investment Authority, SBI Mutual Fund, and foreign investment funds Nomura and Citigroup were the biggest buyers of shares in Adani group's power transmission unit's \$1 billion QIP, as per an exchange filing by the company.

The Rs 8,373.10 crore qualified institutional placement (QIP) of Adani Energy Solutions Ltd (AESL), which closed last week, saw over 120 investors seek shares in the firm that is into power transmission, distribution and smart metering business. Billionaire Stanley Druckenmiller's family office-led

investment firms were among the companies that sought shares of AESL in the QIP.

Giving details of allottees who got more than 5 per cent of shares, it said INQ Holdings LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of QIA, cornered 15 per cent of the shares sold. Two Mauritius funds of Citigroup bought 8.88 per cent of the shares sold while four SBI funds — SBI Infrastructure Fund, SBI Large & Midcap Fund, SBI Long term Advantage Fund Series IV and SBI Magnum Children's Benefit Fund — together took home 7.93 per cent of the shares. **PTI**

Need policy framework to support all clean tech in cars, says Bhargava

New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki India chairman RC Bhargava has called for a policy framework that promotes all clean technologies, resulting in petrol and diesel cars being replaced by vehicles using such eco-friendly technologies.

In his address to shareholders in the company's annual report for 2023-24, Bhargava said that some states like Uttar Pradesh have already taken steps in this direction. "We now await a policy framework that would lead to the promotion of all technologies that result in petrol and diesel cars

being replaced by cars using other technologies," he said.

Bhargava countered the view in some quarters that Maruti has been slow in manufacturing electric vehicles. "We decided to adopt a more diversified approach to meeting national objectives and did not want to put all our eggs in one basket," Bhargava said.

According to Bhargava, a major national objective for the car industry is to reduce carbon and greenhouse emission and the dependence on imported fuel. **FE**

BRIEFLY

After record profits, fuel retailers see slump

New Delhi: After reporting record profits, state-owned fuel retailers Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), BPCL and HPCL posted up to 90 per cent slump in their June quarter earnings as margins fell and they booked under-recovery on the sale of domestic cooking gas LPG at government-controlled rates. IOC reported 81 per cent drop in standalone net profit in April-June to Rs 2,643.18 crore as opposed to a profit of Rs 13,750.44 crore a year back, according to a company filing. Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) posted 90 per cent drop in profit to Rs 633.94 crore as compared to an earning of Rs 6,765.50 crore in April-June 2023 and Rs 2,709.31 crore in the preceding March quarter. Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) net profit dropped to Rs 2,841.55 crore in April-June from Rs 10,644.30 crore a year back and Rs 4,789.57 crore in January-March, its filing showed. **PTI**

'Discouraging retail play in F&O may help banks'

New Delhi: Regulatory moves discouraging retail investors' derivative market bets may help banking system garner the much-needed deposits, SBI Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara has said. He said Budget announcements like the tweaks on short-term and long-term capital gains will not lead to much gains from a deposit accretion perspective. **PTI**

Fed foolish not to have cut interest rates: Elon Musk

Bengaluru: Tesla CEO Elon Musk said on Sunday the Federal Reserve needs to cut interest rates and that it was foolish for it not to have done so already. Musk's comment, which was made in response to a post on the social media site X, followed a run of weak data last week that has sparked worries the Fed may have left interest rates elevated for too long, resulting in damage to the economy. **REUTERS**

Foreign portfolio investors put in ₹32,365 crore in equities in July

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 4

FOREIGN INVESTORS infused Rs 32,365 crore into Indian equities in July on the back of expectation of continued policy reforms and sustained economic growth and better-than-expected earnings season.

However, they pulled Rs 1,027 crore from equities in the first two trading sessions of this month (August 1-2), data with the depositories showed.

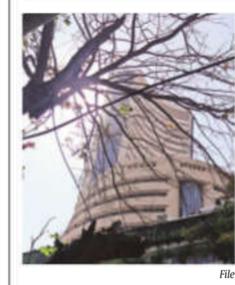
There has been a mixed trend with respect to FPI flows following the budget announcement on increase in capital gains tax on equity investments.

Going forward, developments in the US economy and markets will set the trend for FPI in August, V K Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

"Weaker-than-expected employment data along with slowing economy has made it certain that the US Fed is expected to cut rates in September. The more important question here is the extent of cut. Currently, there is strong commentary getting built for maybe a 50 basis points rate cut in interest rates," Vaibhav Porwal, co-founder of Dezerv, said.

According to the data with the depositories, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have made a net in-

FPIs PULL OUT ₹1,027 CR FROM EQUITIES ON AUG 1-2



THE NET inflow of Rs 32,365 crore in equities in July by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) came following an inflow Rs 26,565 crore in June driven by political stability and the sharp rebound in markets

HOWEVER, THEY pulled Rs 1,027 crore from equities in the first two trading sessions of this month (August 1-2)

flow of Rs 32,365 crore in equities in July. This came following an inflow Rs 26,565 crore in June driven by political stability and the sharp rebound in markets.

Before that, FPIs withdrew Rs 25,586 crore in May on poll jitters and over Rs 8,700 crore in April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields.

The resurgence in FPI investment can be attributed to sustained economic growth, government's focus on infrastructure development, better-than-expected earnings season that has improved corporate India's balance sheet, Himanshu Srivastava, associate director - Manager Research at Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

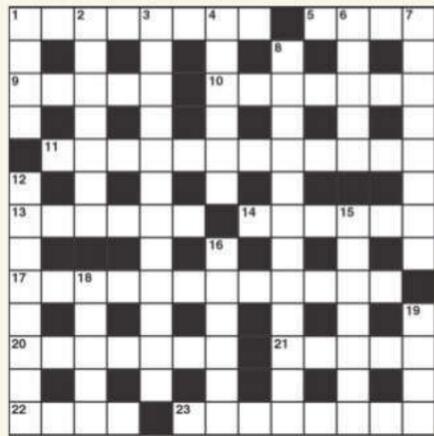
Additionally, upward revisions in India's GDP forecast by IMF and ADB, and a slowdown in China, also works in India's favour, he added.

Apart from equities, FPIs invested Rs 22,363 crore in the debt market in July. This has pushed the debt tally to Rs 94,628 crore this year so far.

RBI interest rate decision, macroeconomic data and global trends would guide markets' movement this week, analysts said. Besides, trading activity of foreign investors and the last batch of Q1 earnings announcements would also guide trends in equities.

HSBC PMI (Purchasing Managers' Index) for the services sector is scheduled to be announced on Monday.

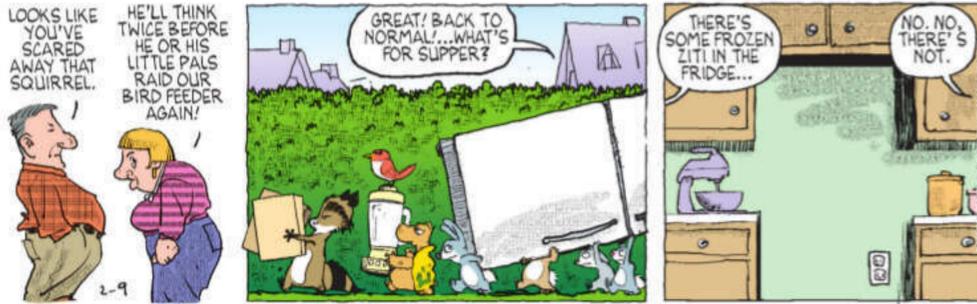
CROSSWORD 5434



- ACROSS**
- The problem of race (8)
 - It is coupled with circumstance in March (4)
 - Establish a lead in tennis? (3,2)
 - One who guarantees a receipt for example (7)
 - Sporadic localities (4,3,5)
 - Love duets translated and put out (6)
 - They will be less than the normal fare (6)
 - A party diversion that gives rise to conjectures (8,4)
 - Said to have succeeded in golf and to fight on (4,3)
 - Girl from the US taking the morning off (5)
 - Generous allowance to the Poles (4)
 - Pipes of pipes (8)
- DOWN**
- This oven has ring for roasting (4)
 - Artistic subjects of no apparent standing (7)
 - Fear arrest (12)
 - About half a dozen fish, quick! (6)
 - Unusual chore for painters (5)
 - Preserve disorder, being obstinate (8)
 - Gambling like a rookie on the course (7,5)
 - Remote chance a sniper may take (4,4)
 - Get together for getting in the harvest (7)
 - Quickly take a few notes maybe (6)
 - Girl's measurements (5)
 - Fish deep in the sound (4)

Solutions Crossword 5433 Across: 1 Makeshift, 8 Repel, 9 Parting, 10 Averse, 11 Heresy, 12 Bull's-eye, 15 Painless, 16 Tender, 20 Asking, 21 Orange, 22 Erato, 23 Newsprint Down: 2 Awake, 3 Either, 4 Honeybee, 5 Travel, 6 Spared, 7 Blue Peter, 11 Helpmates, 13 Listless, 14 Sick pay, 16 London, 17 Unfair, 19 Egg on

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBES by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given clue. No culture can live, if it attempts to be... - Mahatma Gandhi (9)

LXEEI EFRWCU
 EIKLS CENOVX

SOLUTION: EXCLUSIVE - Mahatma Gandhi
 Answer: No culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive.

SUDOKU 5643

Difficulty Level 1s
 Instructions
 To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

8	9	7	1	3				
5			4					
	3			9	5	4		
8	2		5			9		
1	7	2	6	4	8			
4		8		2	6			
2	6	1			7			
				9				6
5	3	2	4	1				

Difficulty Level
 1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius

SOLUTION SUDOKU 5642

7	1	6	4	5	2	3	9	8
4	9	8	3	1	6	2	7	5
2	3	5	7	8	9	1	6	4
8	4	2	1	6	3	7	5	9
6	7	9	2	4	5	8	1	3
1	5	3	9	7	8	4	2	6
5	2	4	8	9	7	6	3	1
9	8	7	6	3	1	5	4	2
3	6	1	5	2	4	9	8	7

विशेष शाखा पुलिस मुख्यालय मध्य प्रदेश भोपाल

क्रमांक-विशा/स्टोर/2024-25(282), दिनांक 01/08/2024
निविदा सूचना का शुद्धि पत्र (Corrigendum)
 विशेष शाखा पुलिस मुख्यालय को निविदा सूचना क्रमांक SB/Store/2024-25 (213), Bhopal, Dated 24-06-2024 द्वारा HHMD & Portable DFMD के क्रय हेतु ई-निविदा सूचना जारी की गई है। उपरोक्त आमंत्रित निविदा के माध्यम से क्रय किये जाने वाले उपकरण के तकनीकी मापदंड में "आंशिक संशोधन" के संबंध में "शुद्धि पत्र" (Corrigendum) जारी किया गया है जो website <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgep/app> पर तथा विभाग की वेबसाइट www.mppolice.gov.in पर उपलब्ध है।
 हस्ता./- उप पुलिस महानिरीक्षक, गुणवर्ता, म.प्र. भोपाल दूरभाष क्र.-0755-2443654
 G-14460-24 Email: sec25-sb@mppolice.gov.in

विशेष शाखा पुलिस मुख्यालय मध्य प्रदेश भोपाल

क्रमांक-विशा/स्टोर/2024-25(280), दिनांक 01/08/2024
निविदा सूचना का शुद्धि पत्र (Corrigendum)
 विशेष शाखा पुलिस मुख्यालय को निविदा सूचना क्रमांक SB/Store/2024-25 (207), Bhopal, Dated 19-06-2024 द्वारा Monocular & Other 3 Items के क्रय हेतु ई-निविदा सूचना जारी की गई है। उपरोक्त आमंत्रित निविदा के माध्यम से क्रय किये जाने वाले उपकरणों के तकनीकी मापदंड में "आंशिक संशोधन" के संबंध में "शुद्धि पत्र" (Corrigendum) जारी किया गया है जो website <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgep/app> पर तथा विभाग की वेबसाइट www.mppolice.gov.in पर उपलब्ध है।
 हस्ता./- उप पुलिस महानिरीक्षक, गुणवर्ता, म.प्र. भोपाल दूरभाष क्र.-0755-2443654
 G 14442/24 Email: sec25-sb@mppolice.gov.in

Online Tender Document for M.P. Police POLICE HEADQUARTER, M.P., BHOPAL

No. PHQ/15/GPC/2558-1/2024 Bhopal, Dated: 30/07/2024
"ONLINE TENDER NOTICE"

Online tender are invited by Deputy Inspector General of Police (Provisioning) Police Head Quarter, Bhopal on behalf of DGP MP Bhopal for FSL Items on website <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgep/app>

Sr	Name of Equipment	Quantity	EMD Paid Online Through mptenders.gov.in	Tender Fees (Rs.)
1	Rapid DNA profiling Machine (Bench Top Instrument for Fragment Analysis Direct for sample based on capillary Electrophoresis)	01	5,40,000	10,000/-

- Cost of tender document (Tender Fee) is non refundable and cannot be exempted in any condition & must submit online through website <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgep/app>.
- Tender document can be download from the website of MP Police (www.mppolice.gov.in)
- Bids shall be submitted online only at MP Tenders website: <https://mptenders.gov.in/nicgep/app>
- Critical Date Sheet:

Published Date	30/07/2024 Time 18:00 PM
Bid Document Download Start Date	31/07/2024 Time 12:00 PM
Pre Bid Meeting Date	07/08/2024 Time 12:00 PM
Bid Submission Start Date	13/08/2024 Time 11:00 AM
Bid Submission End Date	20/08/2024 Time 14:00 PM
Bid Opening Date	21/08/2024 Time 16:00 PM
- Intending Bidders are advised to visit this website regularly till closing date of submission to keep themselves updated as any change/ modification in the tender will be intimated through this website only by corrigendum / addendum/ amendment.
- Bids will be opened as per date/time as mentioned in the Tender Critical Date Sheet. After online opening of Technical-Bid the results of their qualification as well Price-Bid opening will be intimated later.

Sd/- (Sandeep Dixit) A.I.G. (Provisioning) For: Director General of Police M.P.

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE JAMMU & KASHMIR 5 August 1964

	Shaheed Constable Hari Singh 10-BN 20-10-1938 To 05-8-1964		Shaheed Constable Nafe Singh 10-BN 18-05-1940 To 05-8-1964
--	--	--	--

On August 5, 1964, Shaheed Constable Hari Singh and Shaheed Constable Nafe Singh of the 10th Battalion were on patrol duty near the ceasefire line in Chhamb. During an indiscriminate firing from the enemy side, they sustained severe injuries. The brave troopers succumbed to their injuries while fighting the enemy. The nation will forever remain indebted to their supreme sacrifice.

CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE ASSAM 05 August 2001

	Shaheed Inspector Mahesh Chand Sharma 30-06-1952 To 05-08-2001 1 Bn		Shaheed Constable Ranji Mishra 10-08-1974 To 05-08-2001 1 Bn
	Shaheed Constable Jagdish Prasad Sharma 01-10-1974 To 05-08-2001 1 Bn		Shaheed Constable Kailash Yadav 06-05-1972 To 05-08-2001 1 Bn
	Shaheed Constable Dharam Pal Singh 01-04-1971 To 05-08-2001 1 Bn		Shaheed Constable Bhagwan Singh 05-01-1971 To 05-08-2001 1 Bn

Shaheed Constable Sunil Kumar 04-06-1969 To 05-08-2001 1 Bn
Shaheed Hc/Armer T. N. Sonawane Aws Guwahati
 On August 5, 2001, CRPF troops from the 1st Battalion were traveling with an ATT team to another location of the same battalion in Bijni District, Bongaigaon. While passing through Abadipora, Silbara, a massive IED explosion orchestrated by the militants destroyed the front truck of the convoy. The explosion created a crater 6 feet deep and 12 feet wide, leaving no opportunity for retaliation. This cowardly attack claimed the lives of eight brave soldiers who were martyred in the service of a grateful nation.

UJVN LIMITED

H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006, Telephones: 0135-2763808, Fax-0135-2763508, CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvn.com
e-Tender Notice Dt: 03.08.2024
 Office of the Executive Engineer (Civil-Maintenance), Vyasi Project, Dakpathar, invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:
e-Tender No. & Name of work: 08/2024-25/EE(C-M)Vyasi Project, "Repair, Maintenance & Strengthening of existing approach road from Barwala Lakhwar road to surge shaft (chainage 0.00 - 930.00 m) and internal road from Guard room to BL road via Hathiyari sub-station (chainage 0.00-300 m) of Vyasi HEP (2X60 MW) at Hathiyari, Dehradun".
Estimated cost: Rs. 15991429.00(GST extra)
Date of availability of bid document on website: 05.08.2024 From 17:00 Hrs.
Last date for submission of bids on website: 28.08.2024 Upto 17:00 Hrs.
 For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal <https://uktenders.gov.in>
 Executive Engineer (Civil-Maintenance)
 "Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

Classifieds

PERSONAL

- I, Sudesh Kumar Singla, S/o Laxman Das, R/o DB-270/1, Shiv Colony, Near Railway Road, Palwal (Haryana), have changed my name to Sudesh Kumar. 0040741935-3
- I, Jamila Khatoun W/O, Mohd Akram Abbasi R/o C-58 Jal Vayu Vihar Sector 21 Noida Gautam Budh Nagar Uttar Pradesh 201301 have changed my name to Jamila Shaheen. 0040741821-1
- I Vilas Sayabanna Gurav S/O, Sayabanna Krishnappa Gurav R/o Sec 21, Noida have changed my name to Vilas Gurav. 0040741801-1
- I, Akansha Sharda W/o Sh. Satya Prakash Pathak, R/O C-168, LGF Sarvodaya Enclave, New Delhi-110017, do hereby declare that Vihan Arora and Vihan Sharda Pathak are same boy. Henceforth I have changed my minor Son's name from Vihan Arora (DOB: 13.07.2015) to Vihan Sharda Pathak for all future purposes 0040741930-1
- I, SANJEEV KOTHIALA, S/O RAVINDER LAL KUTHIALA, ADDRESS:F1/1D,MIG FLATS,HARI NAGAR,NEW DELHI-110064,changed my name to SANJEEV KUTHIALA. 0040741935-2
- I, PRIYANSHI AGGARWAL, D/O ATIT AGGARWAL, R/O-SHOBHASHREY HOUSE,NO.3, DEVI VIHAR,NEAR-JHAJJAR CHUNGI,SECTOR-22,ROHTAK, HARYANA-124001,inform that in my PASSPORT (U1591622), my name PRIYANSHI wrongly written. My correct name is PRIYANSHI AGGARWAL for all future purposes. 0040741946-2
- I, Arun Munny S/o Varinder Kumar, R/O-Flat-4104, Ebony tower, mahagun, Sector-1-C, Gaur City-2, Greater Noida, West, Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar-Pradesh, 201009, have changed my name to Arun Manni. 0040741946-4
- I, ANAMIKA CHANDRA, W/o Sh. VIKAS CHANDRA, R/O-B-33, ALLAHABAD BANK APARTMENT, MAYUR KUNJ, MAYUR VIHAR EXTN., CHILLA, DELHI-110096, have changed my name from ANAMIKA to ANAMIKA CHANDRA after marriage for all future purposes. 0040741946-1

DAY TODAY BY PETER VIDAL

- ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)**
 You may look upon differences of opinion as helpful developments which are bound to lead to the clarification of difficult and unresolved issues. Feelings can get in the way of harmonious solutions, so stick to the facts.
- TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)**
 There's an optimistic mood abroad, but you're still facing a series of misjudgements and miscalculations. You may look back on this week's minor blunders and laugh but, at the time, they may not be so funny. At least, other people probably won't think so.
- GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)**
 Mercury, a planet with a special place in your horoscope, is the star of the week, forming and reforming a series of intricate patterns with a whole sequence of planets. Therefore, you must expect sharp changes of mood and sudden alterations in your plans.
- CANCER (June 22 - July 23)**
 You may have to backtrack on domestic arrangements over the coming week. At times you will imagine that control over your personal affairs is slipping from your hands, a delusion resulting from Mercury's motion.
- LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)**
 Most of you will experience some misunderstanding or other this week, which is all the more reason to be straight about your intentions and clear about your arrangements. Relations at work will be passionate, so avoid falling out with those who feel equally strongly.
- VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sep 23)**
 Financial questions will loom even larger this week than last. Today's indications look decidedly optimistic and you may be tempted to rush into rash commitments. However, by tomorrow the picture will start to look very different indeed, perhaps because reality will hit.
- LIBRA (Sep 24 - Oct 23)**
 A serious set of relationships from Mercury to various major planets is going to force you to change your mind. Some consolation will be offered by the fact that many of your friends and colleagues will themselves be undecided, perhaps because emotions are too strong.
- SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 23)**
 An intriguing aspect between Venus and Pluto is expected in the near future. You may already be beginning to feel the consequences, eagerly anticipating a future meeting or encounter. One word of warning for the week is to keep a close eye on your cash.
- SAGITTARIUS (Nov 24 - Dec 23)**
 You could be playing a dangerous game if you are still refusing to inform other people about your arrangements or your genuine feelings. When they eventually find out the real situation, they may have cause to complain, and you might be forced to back-track.
- CAPRICORN (Dec 24 - Jan 20)**
 Professional plans may come unstuck, although this could work to your advantage. If you are given extra space to think again, you will be able to make sure that next time around your interests are given a higher priority. One thing to be said in your favour is that you learn from your mistakes.
- AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)**
 Do question your own beliefs, but please don't let other people undermine you or persuade you to lower your standards. The underlying pressures at the moment are very uncertain, but they do indicate that your interests could be best served by being selfless.
- PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)**
 Your romantic aspirations will be directed overseas. Perhaps this is because you're planning a major trip to a distant location. Or perhaps you're awaiting news of a loved one far away. At the very least this is an ideal moment to build bridges and mend emotional fences.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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 Amit Kumar, Advocate GNA & Associates D-28, Jangpura Extension New Delhi-110014
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 Nachiketa Joshi (Advocate-on-record) Office No-F-4, LGF Iajpur Nagar-3 New Delhi-110024 Supreme Court of India Date-05/08/2024

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17 IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM



ANDHRA PRADESH MINISTER FOR HRD, IT, ELECTRONICS AND REAL-TIME GOVERNANCE

WHY NARA LOKESH

Nara Lokesh is the National General Secretary of Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Andhra Pradesh Minister for HRD, IT, Electronics and Real-Time Governance. An MBA from Stanford, he has big plans for Andhra Pradesh, including in areas of education, AI and agriculture. An integral ally of the National Democratic Alliance government, Lokesh speaks about TDP's role, both in the state and the Centre.



Illustration: Suvajit Dey

'Politics is not T20, it is a test match. It requires a lot of patience and stamina'

Nara Lokesh, National General Secretary of TDP and the Andhra Pradesh Minister for HRD, IT, Electronics and Real-Time Governance, on their mega project of skill census, on the financial crisis in the state and decentralised development plans. The session was moderated by Nikhila Henry, Assisant Editor, Politics

Nikhila Henry: Hyderabad is considered to be an IT hub and is credited to your father Chandrababu Naidu. Now you have the capital Amaravati, will it be a hub of something? If so, what will it be?

Before I answer about Amaravati, I think we should look at how Naidu has designed investments for Andhra Pradesh. Between 2014 and 2019, we had 13 districts and each district had a specific focus area. Chittoor, which is also part of the Rayalaseema region, was made the Electronics Manufacturing Cluster (EMC). Kadapa was the sports capital. Kurnool was the renewable energy and cement capital. Prakasam was supposed to be the paper capital but the project got stalled because of a change of government. As for Amaravati, it is part of Guntur on the banks of River Krishna. This is a great opportunity for us to make it the educational capital of Andhra Pradesh. All the regulatory agencies will be based there and that's how we see the entire economic activity being kick-started there... I know erstwhile Hyderabad, all investments came to one single city and it became a megapolis. The way we've always looked at Andhra Pradesh is to look at one capital but decentralised development. And that's always been our push.

Nikhila Henry: So you will be focusing on Visakhapatnam as well?

I'll be focusing on every district. Let's take automotive and look at it from a sectoral perspective. So anything related to automotive will come to Anantapur because Kia and all its ancillaries are already based out there. Similarly, electronics... From a panel manufacturer to a lithium-ion battery manufacturer to housing... the entire ecosystem, we wanted to bring into the 100-km radius of Tirupati. And the entire renewable energy, the pump storage projects, the solar wind was to come from Kurnool district and cement manufacturing too, because the mines are there. Vizag lends itself well to IT. There are already investments in. We signed a massive agreement with Adani to do a 15 billion-dollar investment with renewable energy-backed data centers and then work got stalled in the previous YSRCP (Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party) administration. We are reviving all those agreements and kick-starting the entire ecosystem.

ON AMARAVATI

THIS IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO MAKE AMARAVATI THE EDUCATIONAL CAPITAL OF ANDHRA PRADESH. WE ARE WORKING ON A PLAN, SPECIFICALLY TARGETING AI - IN POLITICS, BUSINESS, MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT

Nikhila Henry: How is this decentralisation different from what YSRCP had promised the state of Andhra Pradesh?

As you have said, it was promised and not delivered. Naidu has already delivered on that promise... We have proved that decentralised development works. Ecosystem cluster-based development is the way forward... We don't believe in creating multiple capitals and more overheads for the government... It doesn't work, it has to be thematic and focused, in terms of attracting investments for that particular district in that particular sector.

Liz Mathew: Now that you are part of the NDA and an ally of the BJP, do you think that you will be able to extract more political leverage from them when it comes to political decisions?

Fundamentally, TDP has been an ally to BJP and this goes back to Vajpayee ji's time. Even back then our support has been unconditional and we continue to support BJP unconditionally. Of course, ideologically, we will have opinions and we will sit as partners and resolve those issues.

Vikas Pathak: Do you support the delimitation that has been proposed?

This issue came up even during Vajpayee ji's time, as well. South India went for family planning quite early and that is where south India has to a certain degree, a disadvantage if you go based on population and this is something we're going to definitely discuss as an NDA ally. When the framework is put out, we're going to put our opinion forward. It's very important to protect the interests of all the states. It's not just an Andhra issue.

Nikhila Henry: You are an educationist yourself, are there educational projects for young students of Andhra Pradesh?

What I am trying to look at is, what are the skills required, not for tomorrow but for day after, and what are the sectors where you're going to see growth. It's quite clear that AI is here. We are excited about making Andhra Pradesh the AI capital of India... I've given myself a 100-day time to look at the entire curriculum from KG to PG... I am looking at best practices in different parts of India... And after talking to unions, teachers and other stakeholders, we will have an action plan for the government education system, cutting across universities. It will be put before the public for further improvement... On the parallel side, we have a mega project called the skill census, where we are taking the family as a unit, to understand their skills... The question is, what is the value creation that we are doing... One part is transforming, creating thought leaders for the next generation but also looking at jobs that will get created.

Pushkar Banakar: Going forward, how do you see the issues being solved between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh?

We are siblings. There's really no rivalry. I think we can have a healthy competition be-

tween the two states. The bifurcation was hurried. A lot of contentious issues such as institutions, assets and liabilities are stuck. Then there's water sharing issues. We'll sit across the table and resolve these issues and also those related to law and order.

Manoj CG: In 2018, you walked out of the NDA, you even moved a no-confidence motion against the Modi government.

ON DELIMITATION

SOUTH INDIA WENT FOR FAMILY PLANNING QUITE EARLY AND THAT IS WHERE SOUTH INDIA HAS TO A CERTAIN DEGREE, A DISADVANTAGE, IF YOU GO BASED ON POPULATION... IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF ALL THE STATES

But you have been repeatedly saying that your support to the NDA government is unconditional. So, what changed between 2018 and now?

In the past, there were certain contentious issues on which we disagreed and definitely we fought over it, and parted ways. But then looking back at the entire journey as a political party we believe that was against the interests of the state. Being a new state, we definitely need the support of the Central government, we need the hand holding. Due to the lack of that support even the state suffered, and the people of Andhra Pradesh, too.

So we see the need to be part of the national alliance and in turn we will get the requisite support that was promised to us as part of the bifurcation.

Ritika Chopra: What do you think of the NEET exam controversy? And do you think there should have been a re-exam?

I think everyone agrees there was a leak. The government of India itself agreed there was a leak. Action was taken but if you look at it, examinations need to be standardised. So it gives students across the board, across states, an equal opportunity. That's very important as a nation.

Ritika Chopra: What, in your opinion, should be done to strengthen this exam in particular?

I am a believer in computer adaptive testing. It is proven across the globe. It ensures that there's no exam leaks. Like the SATs, I think you should look at a technology-based intervention. Andhra has done some good work in that sense. Historically, we have done computer-adaptive testing. Even in our District Selection Committee (DSC), for teachers, recruitment is being done through TET (Teacher Eligibility Test). It can be a robust model and might be the way forward for the nation.

Vidhatri Rao: In 2019, former chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy directed all the Telugu-medium schools in the state to be converted into English-medium schools. At the time, the TDP had opposed the move. Now that you are in power, do you have any plans to change this policy?

In the past, I have supported the need for English medium schools. We were not against that, however, we said that it should be a gradual transition. We have to ensure that the local language and regional languages are protected. It's not just about Telugu medium because Andhra borders Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. So, we have Tamil, Odia and Kannada medium schools in Andhra... The biggest problem is that there is no capacity in the field... Between 2019 and 2024, we lost close to 72,000 students in the government education system. We really need to improve quality, link it to learning outcomes, use technology to measure outcomes, engage with parents better, like having PTMs, hold sports fairs and craft competitions to ignite young minds to think creatively, beyond the textbook.

Vidhatri Rao: The AI supply chain is huge - what's that one part you want to focus upon?

I'm extremely greedy, I would like to have a role in the entire supply chain. If you look at the industry, there's a huge opportunity in server assembly, the manufacturing, the boards and so on, that will go to Chittoor. The entire education will happen in Amaravati. Naidu and I are working on a plan. Hopefully, we'll be able to unveil it to India in the next 120 days, specifically targeting AI - in politics, business, media and entertainment...to look

at the entire ecosystem.

P Vaidyanathan Iyer: We were hearing about a scheme a week being launched with the YSR government and we heard that the state finances were hugely stretched. How are you looking at the state's finances now? You are raising demands for a special package and a special category status. Even this Rs 15,000 crore is not coming from the Budget. The FM said that she will get it with the help of multilateral financial institutions. There is no allocation as such

at the entire ecosystem.

P Vaidyanathan Iyer: So are you going to review their many schemes?

Our approach is not to stop the schemes or any decision of the erstwhile government. I think that's the wrong way of looking at things... The Polavaram Project is a great example of that. The YSRCP government said they will do reverse tendering. They didn't save much but then they destroyed the coffers. Thousands of crores of rupees disappeared because they delayed it... I truly believe that the state's responsibility is not just about pushing a button. You have to create policies. You have to get investments. You have to get the next generation job ready.

ON EDUCATION

BETWEEN 2019 AND 2024, WE LOST CLOSE TO 72,000 STUDENTS IN THE GOVERNMENT EDUCATION SYSTEM. WE NEED TO IMPROVE QUALITY, LINK IT TO LEARNING OUTCOMES, USE TECHNOLOGY TO MEASURE OUTCOMES, ENGAGE WITH PARENTS BETTER

from the government of India's exchequer for Andhra Pradesh.

Firstly, they were launching a scheme a week and also a scam a week - the liquor, the sand. So, I think the government was over-fixed about just pushing a button. I believe the role of government is far beyond just welfare. The TDP party symbol cycle has two wheels - one is the development wheel and the other is the welfare wheel. The development wheel should move the welfare wheel. That's something that we have proved. It's not that YSRCP has invented welfare, in fact TDP introduced welfare in Andhra Pradesh under the leadership of NTR... I think the FM was very clear that the Rs 15,000 crore is going to be arranged by a multilateral agency but will be paid for by the government of India. So, it's a grant, where the financial obligation does not rest on the state. So that's a great break for us because we are really cash strapped.

P Vaidyanathan Iyer: So are you going to review their many schemes?

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Nikhila Henry: It has been a roller coaster ride between two governments and the debt seems to be at the centre of it. Is Andhra Pradesh facing a debt crisis?

When Naidu was in power, welfare did happen and huge industrial investments came into Andhra Pradesh. We meet all our debt obligations, all our financial obligations like pensions, government employees, salaries, TADAs on the first of every

month. Then came the YSRCP government. It rakes up four times more debt than the TDP and stalls the entire economic growth engine... they couldn't even meet the salary or the pension obligations of employees... So, are we in a debt crisis? I would say we are in a financial crisis. I really don't know how deep it is to classify it as a debt crisis but as a responsible government, our job is to now revive the economic engine.

Nikhila Henry: Another allegation from the YSRCP is that their workers are being attacked in Andhra Pradesh. The post-poll violence is still continuing. Is that the case?

It's absolutely false. It's being used by Jagan. His party is on a ventilator and he's using this as oxygen and nothing beyond that. There were three of TDP *kariyakartas* have been killed and I have all the documentation related to it. If Jagan believes 31 people have been killed then he should give me their names, their location and the reason or how they have been killed. He doesn't have anything.

Liz Mathew: Naidu used to come to Delhi to meet Modi and Shah several times but they refused. Naidu was also in jail under Jagan government. How do you feel now?

We take our victories the way we take our defeats, with a lot of balance. The people of Andhra Pradesh have been very kind and have given us an amazing victory and it's important to meet their aspirations... Yes, I was in Delhi when Naidu was arrested... Even today if you ask Jagan, do you have any proof, there's absolutely no evidence... It's just been a witch hunt, the people understood that and gave us a resounding mandate. We need to now set the state in the right direction, bring back law and order, grow the entire economy, create jobs. That's our agenda... Politics is not T20, it is a test match. It requires a lot of patience and stamina.

P Vaidyanathan Iyer: How do you look at the need for freebies, because your prominent partner, the BJP, has a very different view on freebies and you always link it with development?

Fundamentally, post bifurcation, Andhra Pradesh had one of the lowest per capita incomes in south India. Freebies in isolation don't work, they result in inflation... Freebies shouldn't come at the cost of development and vice versa, so it's important that the government balances both... Midday meals are partially funded by the Central government and MGNREGA is another example. So there are ways that we can create assets for the nation... It's very important if you want to create a vibrant ecosystem that is self-sufficient.

Performance-linked incentive is a support from the state... So yes, both welfare and development should go together and that's the way Naidu looked at it. Even in his first and second terms, we call it the golden era of Andhra Pradesh, between 1994 and 2004. He began Deepam, which was a scheme where free gas connections were given to women with a free stove and all that. But then there are two ways to look at it. It's a freebie, but it resulted in improving the health of the women in rural areas. They didn't have to burn wood and inhale all the smoke. So, that's the way we look at it as the Telugu Desam Party.

18 SPORT



A measure of how much pressure India had to withstand against Great Britain

Shots taken on goal
GBR **21** | **8** IND

Penalty Corners conversion
GBR **0/10** | **1/4** IND

It felt to us that the clock was ticking in slow motion.
Even one second felt like 10
HARDIK SINGH, VICE-CAPTAIN

Attacking circle entries
GBR **24** | **8** IND

Possession
GBR **54%** | **46%** IND

India fortified with iron will and steel

Belief, courage, and tactical tweaks — how India plotted a 10-man heist over Great Britain



EXPRESS AT OLYMPICS

MIHIR VASAVDA
PARIS, AUGUST 4

SOMEWHERE in the Alps, Team India was forewarned about facing a scenario 'when shit happens.'

Such a moment, the coaches cautioned the players, would take place without warning, disrupt their best-laid plans and require them to improvise. "It always happens in big tournaments. You can't predict what and when, and you can't prepare for it. But mentally, you should be ready," says Paddy Upton, the men's team psychologist.

In the 17th minute of the quarterfinal against Britain, it did happen. Going shoulder to shoulder in a battle for possession with Will Calnan, Amit Rohidas raised his stick dangerously and it hit the Brit on his head. Calnan fell to the ground and the umpire brandished the Indian defender a red card — only the fourth time in the last 11 years that a player has been sent off at a major tournament.

India went on to win, 4-2 via penalty shootout, but it wasn't before they were put through a whole lot of adversity. India of old would have probably crumbled in such a situation. But on Sunday, at the sun-bathed Stade Yves-du-Manoir, they showed tactical dexterity not commonly associated with the Indian team.

Rohidas has a dual role in the team — he is one of the central figures in the defence and during penalty corners, he is the first rusher; sprinting towards the drag-flicker to block his angles, even if it means taking a blow. His suspension triggered a series of tactical and personnel changes. India started the match cautiously, employing a half-court press and trying to find an answer to Britain's close, aggressive man-marking.

Calm rejigging

But immediately after the red card, two things happened. Captain Harmanpreet Singh, who was playing unusually high up the field, retreated to deep defence. Joining him in the backline was Manpreet Singh, usually a central midfielder. To plug the hole in the back line, Fulton had to sacrifice his playmaker.

"We practice different match situations and plan how we should play if someone gets a green or yellow card (leading to 2 or 5-minute suspensions). But this isn't a common situation, to play almost three quarters with one man less," Manpreet said. "It was unexpected. But we train to play with structures in case of one man down and in that, I had to fall back in defence to cover up."

Then, the next instinct was to score a goal. That, Fulton said, was crucial so that Britain would chase the game and they could lay a defensive trap to frustrate the opponents. "We needed something to defend so they'd come (to attack) and that would help our tactic. Then we needed to push it as far as possible," Fulton said.

Harmanpreet's goal ticked that box, within five minutes of Rohidas's red card. From that moment, India changed their shape, aware that it would be impossible for them to attack with a man short.

So, the forward line retreated deep into their half, forming the first line of defence. The midfielders, a few paces behind them, created a second layer and the defenders were within a high-fiving distance of the goalkeeper. Marshalling the men in front of him was goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, playing his last international tournament.

Think of how a team would structure it-

Champs Belgium out after PC drama

Paris: World No.1 Belgium were dramatically knocked out by Spain, ranked 8th in the world. Spain had a 3-1 lead with 3 minutes to go, Belgium then scored their 2nd of the match to make it a dramatic finish. But it didn't end there. With the clock running out, Belgium made a circle entry but a Penalty Corner wasn't given. Spain started celebrating their win. Belgium then surrounded the referee asking for a PC because they had burned their review just a minute back. Then the official from the far side walked up to the umpire on the near side and told him a PC must be given, which is not unusual in hockey. So, Spain had to regather themselves to defend a penalty corner from the legendary Hendrickx who had just scored earlier. But the Spanish goalkeeper made the save and the ball went out of the circle. **ENS**

self on an entire field in a 4-3-2 system. India crunched that whole thing in their defensive third. The triple layer protected the central areas of the pitch, blocking the direct passing lines towards the goal. "We wanted to ensure that we did not allow them to play balls from the central areas. It was okay if they entered from the side because the worst that would happen was conceding a penalty corner. But we had faith in Sreejesh; he is one of the best goalkeepers," vice-captain Hardik Singh said.

There are plans on paper and then there's execution of those plans. In the past, India's players have been notorious for throwing well-thought-out plans out of the window at the first sign of stress. And there couldn't have been more pressure on them than Sunday when an Olympic semifinal berth was at stake. There was no precedent, either. Never in the Olympics has a team been reduced to 10 men. To progress to the last four, India had to improvise their plan and execute it to perfection. For once, they did. "We dug deep, Sree was immense. But when you talk about the defence, it's also about showing love for your teammate by covering him and helping him," Fulton said.

If Britain got behind Lalit Upadhyay and Gurjant Singh, they would run into Vivek Sagar Prasad and Raj Kumar Pal. If they beat them, there would be Sumeet and Sanjay. Standing like a rock at the back, behind all of them, was Sreejesh. This one time when Sreejesh was beaten, Manpreet and Jarmanpreet Singh were there to stop the ball from going in.

This wasn't blind defending, there was a structure and method to it. "It wasn't pretty, it's never going to be pretty with 10 men," Fulton admitted. But it worked. Britain forayed into India's circle 24 times. They scored just once. They had nine penalty corners. Each time, they were thwarted.

There were times when it looked like India would not be able to last physically and mentally in the searing heat of Paris. Especially when the clock ticked down in the final quarter. "It felt to us that the clock was ticking in slow motion. Even one second felt like 10," Hardik said, breathing heavily and sweating profusely. "But that's life, whenever adversity hits you, you have to come back stronger. But today, we played for those who believe in hockey India ki hai (hockey's home is India). By the end of the 60-minute grind, the players were battered, bruised. Fulton, his voice gone hoarse, reiterated the words said in the Alps: "When shit happens, get together."



Goalkeeper PR Sreejesh is mobbed by teammates after India beat Great Britain 4-2 in the penalty shootout to enter the semifinals. **PTI**

Sreejesh: Avenger and Superman rolled into one

MIHIR VASAVDA
PARIS, AUGUST 4

LIKE AN Avenger grabbing his gears before flying off to protect the planet, PR Sreejesh takes his helmet, picks up his stick, hangs the heavily padded glove on it and swaggers onto the field to save his team. He smiles at his teammates; and stares in the direction of the opponents.

This walk, the 25 steps from the dugout to the goal, is when the showman transforms into a saviour.

When Conor Williamson started his bending run into the 'D' from the right, Sreejesh lunged forward, shuffled his feet and slid. The attacker is pushed away from the goal and the ball is put over it. Phil Roper tried to deceive, first going wide out, then coming in; dribbling and hoping that Sreejesh would commit. Like a giant bird flapping its wings, Sreejesh marched out but the goalkeeper didn't fall for the bluff. When Roper goes for a reverse hit, Sreejesh falls on his backside and stops the ball from going in.

The quarterfinal against Britain, which India won 4-2 via penalty shootouts, was the 23rd time Sreejesh stood in the goal for India for a shootout.

His success rate is staggering — on 13 of those occasions, he has led India to a win. "Superman," exclaimed one British coach, watching from the stands.

The 'superman's' last-second intervention, against Germany in the bronze medal playoff, paved India's path to the podium for the first time in three decades in Tokyo. In his final tournament, he brought India a step closer to another Olympic medal.



India's Sumit hugs goalkeeper Sreejesh after the shootout against Britain. **PTI**

It's tough to imagine an Indian side without Sreejesh. With him in the goal, the players have a sense of wearing a bullet-proof vest, allowing them to indulge in risks they otherwise might not.

Like the whole strategy on Sunday when, after being down to 10 men, they pushed Britain to wider areas knowing full well that their runs from the baseline could result in penalty corners. "But if we conceded penalty corners, it was okay because we had faith in Sreejesh. He is one of the best goalkeepers," vice-captain Hardik Singh said.

Coach Craig Fulton said Sreejesh was 'immense'. Manpreet Singh, the only other player in this squad to play in four Olympics, is ready to take any number of blows if it means Sreejesh walks into the sunset with a medal hanging around his neck.

They are all in awe of the goalkeeper. And Sreejesh's love language is different. It comes in an 'R' rated version.

Some of the words he barked from under

SHOOTOUT	
GREAT BRITAIN	INDIA
✓ J Albery	✓ Harmanpreet
✓ Z Wallace	✓ Sukhjeet
✗ Williamson	✓ Lalit U
✗ P Roper	✓ Raj Kumar

Full time 1-1; India win in penalty shootout 4-2

the helmet might not have registered to most in the stands. The smattering of Indians, though, let out a chuckle. For players on the field, it was a warning. "I know how to keep this defence on its toes," he says. "When they hear (the words) I speak, they are doing something wrong. It's a motivation for them."

Manpreet chips in: "Even his abuses are sweet to the ears. In fact, when he doesn't abuse, I wonder what's wrong. With him in goal, I am at peace."

MS in shootout

Especially during tie-breakers. Sreejesh in shootouts is like MS Dhoni in death overs — even with odds stacked against them, their presence brings a sort of reassurance.

In an *Indian Express Idea Exchange* last year, Sreejesh explained his mindset going into a shootout. "The mental thing is the only thing that happens in a shootout. The goalkeeper and the striker have just eight seconds. So it's tricky, you can't show that you are overconfident or show that you are afraid. Your emotions have to be neutral. So when I prepare for a penalty shootout, I look at the

opponent, look at his (striker's) speciality. I just keep things to myself. I tell myself, 'It's about you and those eight seconds. Not that player.'"

After beating Britain, he shed light on his planning for a shootout: to remain non-committal, so that for eight seconds, the attacker is thinking of ways to beat him; and transfer the pressure on the opponent. "Just kill those eight seconds — when you do that, automatically pressure goes on the opposition and they try something wrong." Like Williamson and Roper on Sunday.

"But you need support from your players," Sreejesh is quick to add. "They scored four goals and that gives me confidence, takes the pressure off me. It's not about me, it's about them. They make my job really easy."

Last year, during the World Cup, Sreejesh was on song against New Zealand. But the strikers faltered, and India lost. On Sunday, they had a 100 per cent record. Twice, India's penalty takers were distracted just before they embarked on their run. Harmanpreet Singh had to restart his run because the broadcasters weren't prepared. When Sukhjeet stepped up, there was a small hold-up because the Britain goalkeeper had a computer on the touchline with notes on India's forwards.

Those notes didn't come in handy for him. Harmanpreet Singh was all power; Sukhjeet Singh beautifully turned around the goalkeeper and beat him; Lalit Upadhyay got his wrists to do the magic and Rajkumar Pal scooped the ball into an empty net.

Their skills are backed up by Sreejesh's swagger. The 'superman' was once again the saviour.

WHAT TO WATCH

INDIA VIEWFINDER: Lakshya Sen's quest for bronze, Sable takes to the track

BADMINTON
MEN'S SINGLES BRONZE MEDAL MATCH: 6 PM

LAKSHYA SEN
History beckons for Lakshya, still. No Indian male shuttler has ever come this far, Lee Zii Jia stands in between him and a podium place.

SHOOTING
SKEET MIXED TEAM QUALIFICATION: 12.30 PM
ANANT NARUKA, MAHESHWARI

Gold/Silver Medal Match will be played between pairs in positions 1 & 2 and the Bronze match between teams in positions 3 & 4.

WRESTLING
WOMEN'S FREESTYLE 68KG: 6.30 PM

NISHA DAHIYA
And here come the grapplers. In a sport where India have won a medal in each of the last four editions, Nisha Dahiya will kick things off.

ATHLETICS
WOMEN'S 400M: 3.25 PM,
MEN'S SC 3000M: 10.34 PM
AVINASH SABLE AND KIRAN PAHAL

Track & field action continues and all eyes will be on Avinash Sable. On the fast purple tracks of Stade de France, can the Indian steeplechaser better the National Record again? Late entrant Kiran is also in action.

SAILING
WOMEN'S DINGHY, MEN'S DINGHY: 3.45 PM ONWARDS

VISHNU SARAVANAN AND NETHRA KUMANAN
In races 7 & 8, Nethra Kumaran finished 21st and 31st. Overall she is placed 25th. Vishnu did better with 7th & 24th in his 2 races, and moved up to 18th. We are now into the last couple of races in sailing before the medal rounds.

TABLE TENNIS
WOMEN'S TEAM ROUND OF 16: 1.45 PM

Manika Batra and **Sreeja Akula** — along with Archana Kamath — begin their team event campaign against Romania in the round of 16.

WORLD VIEWFINDER: Duplantis and Biles — record-breakers in their sport — will be in action

ATHLETICS
MEN'S POLE VAULT FINAL: 10.30 PM

ARMAND DUPLANTIS
Sweden's Armand Duplantis, world record-holding pole vaulter, will attempt to defend his Tokyo title as the heavy favourite after making light work of qualification.

BADMINTON
MEN'S SINGLES FINAL: 6 PM
VIKTOR AXELSEN

After ending Sen's dream run, Axelsen bids to defend his title against the in-form Kunlavut Vitidsarin of Thailand in the final.



ARMAND DUPLANTIS
MEN'S POLE VAULT

ARTISTIC GYMNASTICS
WOMEN'S BALANCE BEAM, FLOOR EXERCISE: 4.08 PM

SIMONE BILES
That diamond necklace of a GOAT seems to be suiting Simone Biles, on the prowl for more medals after scoring three golds this Games.

FOOTBALL
MEN'S SEMIFINAL, 9.30 PM
SPAIN VS MOROCCO

After thhe big-ticket European Championships victory, Spanish football looks to keep the winning run going as they take on surprise semifinalists Morocco

Also keep track of:

BADMINTON: Women's singles gold medal match: An Se Young vs He Bingjiao; 2.25 pm; ATHLETICS: Women's 800m: Keely Hodgkinson, Mary Moraa; Final; 01:17 am (Tuesday); GYMNASTICS: Men's Parallel Bars final; 3:15 pm

Gold ambition down the Sen

Axelsen takes down Lakshya in two games but Indian still in running for Paris bronze



Lakshya Sen dives to retrieve a shuttle during his Paris 2024 semi-final against Viktor Axelsen. PTI

SHIVANI NAIK
AUGUST 4

WHEN THIS pin dropped, the silence was heard.

A lifetime of dedication aside, Lakshya Sen had poured his heart and skill into an exquisite cross court smash, glorious in its placement and power, to put the legendary Viktor Axelsen on the ropes in the Olympic semifinal. Paris had paused to admire the rise of the princeling, the stumble of the King.

From leading 17-11, Sen had allowed the Danish defending champion a re-entry into the first set while still leading 19-17, but that aggressive air-scything smash with a turned racket-face had been perfection and put him on the verge of a statement making opener at 20-17. There was buzz of a grand upset in the air, when the tables turned in a matter of seconds and the reverse of alchemy unfolded as Sen's gold-ambition got downgraded. Perfection turned into a plummet when a nervy Sen sent off a horrid serve to make it 20-18. Axelsen went on to win the match 22-20, 21-14 in 53 minutes, after Sen had wowed, and troubled his opponent, and did everything right, except winning the finish.

Those critical moments when Sen could not close out a 20-17 lead are best described by the great Dane who superbly hijacked his Indian dream. Axelsen was asked specifically what he was thinking, staring at a 17-20 scoreline. "At 17, I tried not to think," he said plainly. "Because if you start to think, then you'll have problems. I think Lakshya thought a lot about it," he clinically diagnosed his opponent's sudden plunge, as he first sent two returns long to allow Axelsen to level at 20-20. The Dane earned those errors on the back of massive clutch defense as Sen put him under the pump.

And then, the 30-year-old who's assured of his third Olympic medal making him an all-time great, pulled off the unlikely of tricks. He began swivelling his serve stance, taking over 6-7 seconds rather than the quick, routine throw-in, delaying the start of the rally just a little, and that boggled the Indian who moments before had reckoned he had the set in his pocket. The two dawdle serves shook Sen's composure so much, he dumped a return into the net to give away the first set 22-20. It was the most disarming of triggers.

For a country that's never had a male player in the Olympic semifinals, this was a big moment. For a shuttler who's spent all his life since age 8, wanting to live this moment where he could potentially be halfway into an Olympic final, those closing-out seconds were nerve shredders. The gray-eyes of Axelsen had ginked at the realisation.

"It was a big thing for Lakshya obviously. I know what the occasion does, you start to think I have momentum, I have a big chance. But again it's so natural to think like that," he said later scribbling Sen's possible thought bubbles. "I've been there myself. He got a little bit nervous. And when you (opponent) get nervous, I know I have to strike and I have to keep shuttle in court, and then play right shots because maybe he will make mistakes because

Experience made a difference today. Lakshya played better than I did in big parts of the game. He could've won the match. But I won the match here today"



VIKTOR AXELSEN
ON HIS SEMI-FINAL VS SEN

of nerves. And that's what happened. Sen had the watching world's attention on him. But he couldn't summon elite ruthlessness. "The 17 serve miss didn't rankle, not really," he insisted. "But I was a bit nervous in the end. From 20-20, the next two points, I made easy mistakes from my side," he said.

Till that moment, he had Axelsen dancing to his tunes. His crosscourt smashes were zooming across the Dane, and his backline clears and lifts were dropping pin-point. At 11-10 his cross caught a crescent of the sideline, and at 18-13, Sen's overhead deception sent a vicious down the line that had completely wrong-footed Axelsen, as he dictated rallies in the first set. The Dane had been sailing wide and long trying to avoid Sen's retrieves, and for the first time this Olympics, someone was not intimidated by the big Axelsen smash. Forced to dig deep, the World No 2, put in the defensive workrate clambering back to 19-17, from

where he did his little serve variation. All along, Axelsen had also been trying to exploit Sen's forehand lateral reach. Because he can't impart a whip to that shuttle that comes at ear-level, Sen can be pinned there, forced to linger and contrive a limp return, before attacking his backhand side. Axelsen kept at the tactic through the second.

Sen took a 7-0 lead in the second. But the lost opportunity of the opening set seemed to make him pull his punches. "Losing 3 game points was not really playing on my mind. I got a good start in the second. I was just trying to play the same game. He changed a little bit and I was very very passive after having a good lead. In the second set especially after a good lead maybe if I had attacked a bit more... After he got back into the game it was difficult for me," he said, as Axelsen smashes rained all around him and he was a goner.

Sen led 11-10, and was pulled 14-21 in a few minutes thereafter. Just like that. The moment had passed him by. "Tomorrow I have everything to play for," he said.

While acknowledging he was pushed hard, Axelsen lauded the fight calling Sen a 2028 LA gold contender. "Experience made a difference today. Lakshya played better than I did in big parts of the game. He could've won the match. But I won the match here today," he said. Being a contender and a legend entails suspension of active-thinking at the most crucial juncture, and allowing instincts, muscle memory and experience to take over. Sen thought he had the first set, when he ought not to have been thinking at all.

BRONZE MEDAL MATCH Sen a favourite, but closing games out remains a worry

LAKSHYA SEN has twice been in 19-19 situations in third set deciders with his bronze medal playoff opponent Lee Zii Jia, and come off a winner both times. At the high stakes semis and quarters of the All England. As such, the Indian starts a favourite against the Malaysian to take India's first men's singles Olympic medal in badminton.



Lee Zii Jia. Reuters

The Indian holds a 4-1 head to head advantage over the temperamentally fragile Lee Zii Jia, currently ranked No 7. Denied an Olympic final by Viktor Axelsen, despite a stunning start to both sets, Sen is likely to regroup quickly and aim for that bronze. Carrying on calmly in the same vein could get the job done, but he will need to be wary of endgame jitters.

Lee Zii Jia plays an attacking, all-out game, and fancies tight control at the net. Sen's defense will take care of most of the steep smashes, and his net game can out-

smart the Malaysian. But in both the All England instances, the deciders wound up at 19-19, from where a mentally sturdier Sen broke the fragile Lee's resolve. Undergoing several seasons of struggle, Zii Jia is now far more settled with his country's authorities and that's brought solidity to his game. A former All England champion when he broke out on the circuit, the Malaysian has played with far more reassurance in his attack. Sen will start as favourite given how he's fought all through the Games.

Yet, if it comes to the Olympic medal crunch, at 17-17, his coaching unit would do well to guide him through the closing-out phase. Sen has won only 4 of the 11 19-19 situations he's been in, in 2024. Closing out after taking a lead has been a concern, even against opponents not named the great Viktor Axelsen.

SHIVANI NAIK

Lovlina loses to Qian as boxing campaign ends medal-less in Paris

SHASHANK NAIK
AUGUST 4

LOVLINA BORGHAIN lost a close 4-1 decision to China's multiple-Olympic medalist Li Qian in the Women's 75kg category to bring an end to her's and India's boxing programme at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games on Sunday. Earlier in the night, 71 kg light-middleweight hopeful Nishant Dev too had lost his bout via split decision (4-1) to Mexico's Marco Verde. They were the only two Indians to even make the quarterfinals, bringing the curtains down on a poor showing in Paris after nine boxers had qualified for Tokyo and one had brought a medal back.

When Borgohain made her way to the ring on Sunday, she was a picture of confidence. Both she and Li Qian have met twice last year and once this year - with the Indian winning in New Delhi, and the Chinese boxer winning in Hangzhou and crucially, taking a 2-3 split

decision in the Czech Republic at the 2024 Grand Prix. Going by results over the past year, Borgohain knew the gap was there to be closed.

At 34, it was clear the Chinese boxer would be conservative with her energy. And Qian was exactly that, not going for the kill early on. Borgohain too decided to keep things slow and not really push the pace. Where many Indian boxers went full throttle from the first round, Borgohain chose to be conservative and that might have been the difference on Sunday. Qian took the first by the account of three judges - a late Lovlina flurry at the end of the first not deemed to have been good enough to win her the round.

The second round, one where the Indian needed to win, turned into some of Qian's best work. The Chinese veteran started going for more than one punch at a time, and at the end of those combinations closing the distance and not allowing for the opponent to unfurl her arms. Even though the round was nowhere near as close, three judges for Qian and two for



Li Qian lands a punch on Lovlina Borgohain at the Paris Olympics. Reuters

Lovlina was the tale of the second. In the third, Qian had managed her strength better while the Indian faded - four of the five judges gave it to the Chinese and brought an end to India's boxing campaign. For Lovlina, the 75kg category has come with many challenges despite

a World Championship gold at home with a reduced number of countries participating.

Late on Saturday night, Nishant Dev went down fighting to Mexico's 2023 Pan American Games champion Marco Verde in the quarterfinals of the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. Dev took the first round, according to the judges but then lost rounds two and three, according to the scorecards, a result that has since led to an Indian public outcry over judging at the Paris Boxing programme, being carried out by the Paris 2024 Boxing Unit.

Dev's confidence before the Olympics was palpable. The 23-year-old has publically said that it wasn't a medal he was hunting for but to go all the way and become the first Indian boxer to win a gold medal at the Olympics. Both Dev and Verde had faced each other once before, at the 2021 World Championships - over there Dev narrowly took a 3-2 decision win.

Just like their previous fight, this one too started off close with both boxers landing some

huge shots on each other - but it seemed Dev's hits were landing cleaner. Towards the end of the first though, referee Emil Gurbanaliev ordered a standing eight count for Dev. While this should have resulted in judges giving the round to the Mexican, the scorecards went 4-1 in favour of Dev. Verde, knowing he was behind, changed strategy in the second and chose to not give Dev any space.

No room for any hooks, no space to escape - Verde made it a fight in a phone booth. It was smart from the Mexican's corner knowing that allowing space would make the second round be scored similar to the first. Dev, who seemed to have overcome this change in direction of the fight and landed clearer shots, found that only two judges gave him the second. Spent from two furious rounds of boxing, the 23-year-old wasn't able to generate power, nor was he able to escape Verde's constant closing of distance in the third and the referees gave the Mexican the bout 4-1 and a first-ever bronze medal to boot.

In 5th attempt, Djokovic wins Paris gold; beats Alcaraz at Roland Garros

NAMIT KUMAR
AUGUST 4

AS 'SERVE to Win', the autobiography/lifestyle guide/cookbook authored by Novak Djokovic in 2013, somewhere in between the chapters in which he gives horrifying accounts of his war-torn upbringing and prescribes eating honey from bees that feed on the Manuka trees of New Zealand, he reveals his favourite proverb. Roughly translated to English, it goes: "When nothing hurts, put a little stone in your shoe and start walking."

On Sunday, Djokovic completed the set. In a vintage performance of brutal, precise shot-making and the perfect combination of resolute defence and calculated aggression, he defeated Carlos Alcaraz, the reigning Roland Garros and Wimbledon champion, 7-6(3), 7-6(2) to win the gold medal at the Paris Olympics - the one tennis achievement that has evaded a resume that contains 24 Majors, all nine Masters 1000 titles, and triumphs at the ATP Finals and Davis Cup.



Novak Djokovic defeated Carlos Alcaraz 7-6, 7-6 in the Paris Olympics final at Roland Garros on Sunday. Reuters

With revenge on his mind against the world's best player, Djokovic put up one of the most ruthless, clinical performances he has ever played in a final.

grudgingly polite Parisian crowds would witness every bit of that aptitude this past week.

On four previous attempts in Beijing, London, Rio, and Tokyo, Djokovic had come close but left with only a single Olympic bronze. Playing to join history-makers - only Steffi Graf, Andre Agassi, Rafael Nadal and Serena Williams have won the 'career Golden Slam' (all four Majors and Olympic gold) - the Serb produced his best tennis in the year gone by. With revenge on his mind against the best player in the world, he put up one of the most ruthless, clinical performances he has ever played in a final.

After winning four Majors, including the

French Open and Wimbledon back-to-back, Alcaraz's star has risen at a pace faster than the hefty expectations that have followed him ever since he became a teenage World No. 1. On Sunday, he was not even mildly off the pace, but on an intense, high-wired afternoon, Djokovic found his very best at the crucial moments, and typically found another gear to go to in the two tiebreakers, to outplay him for the win.

This was an enthralling baseline contest; the first set alone lasted nearly 100 minutes. Unlike the beleaguered straight-sets loss at Wimbledon a month ago, Djokovic went toe-to-toe with Alcaraz from the baseline even when the Spaniard was finding big mileage behind his forehand and moving with speed to cover all corners of the court.

Both players failed to blink - Alcaraz saved five break points and Djokovic saved eight - but it was the mammoth ninth game of the first set in which Djokovic raised his level, saving five break points, and never looked back. As it went to a breaker, Djokovic locked down and Alcaraz let his level fall just enough for the

Serb to take advantage.

Neither player let their levels fall too much in the second, even as the Spaniard faced a mountain to climb. A few fascinating, intense exchanges followed and a second breaker ensued in which Alcaraz raised his baseline game only for Djokovic to up the ante further and slap a few huge groundstrokes and see out the win.

Ultimately, the precision of Djokovic's racket - the pinpoint T-serves, the lunging forehand winners, the error-free tiebreakers - propelled him to a deserved win.

That same vague parlour debate may be triggered once again, a presumption that it had been put to bed last year itself would have been fair. But by finding his best tennis against the best player in the world to win the one title that has eluded him, there could be no louder statement of intent from Djokovic that he still belongs at the top of the pile in men's tennis - even if he is competing with those closer to his children's age than his. Especially when history is on the line.

A few pesky pebbles would make it into his boots over the next six months. After a sluggish start to 2024, recovery from a knee injury, and subsequent surgery, a few weeks prior to Wimbledon may have been a big hurdle, but he responded by reaching the final. Humiliation from a 16-years-younger challenger in the summit clash may have fuelled all sorts of uncertainty, but Djokovic found a

new source of motivation to thrive on.

Adversity into steel

Few players, if any, have shared Djokovic's aptitude of turning adversity into steel. The be-

Both boxers in gender eligibility row assured of bronze medal

REUTERS
PARIS, AUGUST 4

LIN YU-TING beat Svetlana Kamenova Staneva of Bulgaria by a unanimous decision in a featherweight quarter-final fight on Sunday to ensure Taiwan's third boxing medal at the Paris Olympics.

Lin and Algeria's Imane Khelif have been at the centre of a social media storm at the Games due to them being disqualified during the 2023 World Championships after falling foul of unspecified International Boxing Association (IBA) gender eligibility rules.

"I know all of Taiwan's people are standing behind me and supporting me, and I will carry this energy to the end," Lin said after her win. "I received a lot of supporting messages. I did not read them because I shut down my social media platforms."

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) said on Sunday that the IBA tests carried out on the two fighters last year were illegitimate and lacked credibility.

"Those tests are not legitimate tests. The tests themselves, the process of the tests, the ad hoc nature of the tests are not legitimate," IOC spokesperson Mark Adams told a press conference.

The boxing tournament in Paris is being organised by the IOC, which stripped the IBA of international recognition in 2023 over governance and finance issues.

On Friday, the Bulgarian Olympic Committee said it had voiced its concerns over the two boxers' presence at the tournament during a meeting with the IOC's Medical and Scientific Commission on July 27.

In Sunday's bout, the taller Lin attempted to sit back and let her opponent come to her in the first round, a strategy which had mixed results as she was struck with a few big shots.

In the second round, double world champion Lin was more direct and took the fight to Staneva, who showed her frustration by grappling Lin and pushing her on to the canvas.

With a 3-0 lead heading into the final round, Lin once again tried to be evasive and found herself on the floor when she was accidentally tripped by Staneva, who held open the ropes for the Taiwanese boxer to exit the ring at the end of the fight.

Lin, who will face Turkey's Esra Yildiz in the semi-finals on Wednesday, is assured of a medal, adding to the efforts of compatriots Wu Shih-yi and Chen Nien-chin from Saturday.

In a statement released after the fight in support of Lin, the Taiwan Olympic Committee said it was "already clear" that the boxer was eligible for the Paris Olympics on the basis of the IOC's rules.

"The delegation stands firmly by the athlete with full support and strongly condemns the malicious online abuse and personal attacks and calls for an immediate stop on those behaviours," it said.

Khelif enters semis

Algerian Khelif is also assured of at least bronze after winning her welterweight quarter-final against Hungary's Luca Anna Hamori by unanimous decision on Saturday.

The debate over Khelif's and Lin's participation in the tournament rocketed after the Algerian won her round-of-16 bout in 46 seconds on Thursday, when her Italian opponent Angela Carini pulled out of the fight.



Lin Yu-Tin ensured Taiwan's third boxing medal at the Olympics. Reuters

Speed has a new address: St. Lucia

Growing up, I used to be on the field struggling. With no shoes, running barefoot, running in my school uniform, running all over the place. I hope this gold medal will help Saint Lucia build a new stadium, to help the sport grow.

JULIEN ALFRED

Julien Alfred storms to women's 100m gold to win island country's first-ever medal

SANDIP G
AUGUST 4

SAINT LUCIANS flaunt their Nobel prize distinction. The country has the highest number of Nobel laureates per capita, the writer Derek Walcott and economist Sir Arthur Lewis. What it did not possess was an Olympic medallist — one among the 70 countries that had never medalled in the Games. That was until Saturday night though, before Julien Alfred ripped past the finish line in 10.72 seconds, like a straight-lined blur, an apparition dressed in sky blue jersey to claim gold.

The sprinter she bolted ahead to win the gold was none other than World Champion Sha'Carri Richardson of the United States.

The sprinter from Cicero, five kilometres from the business town of Castries, the capital of the country likened to Helen of Troy for the numerous wars the British and French waged to conquer it, began her day watching Usain Bolt's London run, a routine since she began to run. When she was young, she would scribble in her diary: "I want to be like Bolt."

On Saturday, she would then note in her diary: "Julien Alfred, Olympic champion".

After the race — a near perfect exhibition of controlled acceleration and impossible composure from the moment the pistol fired — she attempted a Bolt-like slingshot act and flunked it, perhaps realising that she was too emotional to pull off a rehearsed piece of celebration, when her tears of joy and torrent of sweat blended with Parisian showers on the purple tracks of the Stade de France in Saint Denis.

She ran to a corner, took the bib off and pointed to her name to the audience of the packed arena. She soon wrapped herself in her country's flag and drowned in the pounding rain.

Gasping for breath, not out of exhaustion but out of disbelief, she groped for words to capture the moment. Memories rolled back to her childhood: "Growing up I used to be on the field struggling with no shoes, running barefoot, running in my school uniform, running all over the place."

All she knew when she was a child was to run. Her mother, Joanna, would narrate her journey to MBC Television: "My late husband and I used to leave her and the other kids at home, and the neighbours used to tell us that they would see Julien running really fast past their houses. But there was nothing like an academy or something like that in the neighbourhood. Moreover, we didn't have the money either. We wanted her to study so that she can live a dignified life."

But the physical education teacher, Simeon Stephen, at the Leon Hess Comprehensive Secondary School — her senior was the West Indies swashbuckler Johnson Charles, who has a stand named after him in the Darren Sammy Stadium — saw a burning spark in her. "He saw the potential in me and made me run with the boys. He would teach me the technique and the importance of mental strength, to keep fighting and never give up," she would say of Stephen, who died two years ago.

The family couldn't afford high-quality running shoes. But she was made to do with those from her seniors, or when there was none, she would run barefoot. But Stephen would give her the first pair of proper shoes, before she joined an athletics club run by a former athlete Cuthbert Modeste. "Aunt Karen too was another big influence. She always encouraged me and used to tell my parents to support me," Alfred would tell *St Lucia Times*.

Her aunt too didn't live to see her niece's moment of glory, but the most shocking



St. Lucia's Julien Alfred exults as she wins the women's 100 metre final pipping World Champion Sha'Carri Richardson (2nd from L) at the Stade de France. Reuters

HOW THEY FINISHED

Pos.	Name	Time	RT
1.	J Alfred (St Lucia)	10.72	0.144s
2.	S Richardson (USA)	10.87	0.221s
3.	M Jefferson (USA)	10.92	0.114s

RT: Reaction time

She ran to a corner, took the bib off and pointed to her name to the audience of the packed arena. She soon wrapped herself in her country's flag and drowned in the pounding rain.

death of her life was her father's, when she was only 12. "I decided to quit running, because I felt it was not viable. I had to help my mother out, besides we didn't have much infrastructure here," she would tell the world athletics website.

Island with 180K people

The island country of only 180,000 people, starved of sportsmen and sporting glory but for cricketer Darren Sammy, who has an entire stadium and an avenue beside it named after him.

The other main sports venue it possessed was the skeleton of a stadium. With Chinese investment, construction had begun to repurpose the George Odium National Stadium, a football arena into a multipurpose facility, but the work has been stalled for nearly decades. But under Saudi Arabia's initiative work has resumed. "We barely have the facilities. The stadium is not fixed. I hope this gold medal will help St Lucia build a new stadium, to help the sport grow," Alfred would say.

But Stephen insisted on her applying for a scholarship at the St Catherine High School in Kingston, Jamaica, where former athlete Marlon Jones coached. She did and flew to

the island of her idol Bolt in 2015. Two years later, she would make another big leap and joined the Leon Hess Comprehensive Secondary School in Texas to train under the legendary Edrick Floréal. He not only polished her technique, especially her head position at the starting position, but also worked on her fitness. A piece of advice became her guiding light too: "Being the fastest woman doesn't play as much of a role as being the strongest woman." He made her work so hard at the gym that she could run three rounds of the 60m race a day with the same energy. I got better because I dedicated myself to running more with longer workouts, which I hated before." Soon, she would set the NCAA circuit on fire, setting the 60m indoor world record, besides a clutch of marks at the collegiate level in the USA.

The World Championship in Budapest was a disappointment — she finished fifth in the 100m and fourth in the 200m. "Iron sharpens iron," she would say. A year later, the irony lady from Castries wore her country its first Olympic medal, of golden hue no less. The girl who wanted to be Bolt has transformed into a Bolt-like figure of inspiration in her island too. And would occupy a space as hallowed in their history as the two Nobel Laureates.

Inspired Bol leads Dutch mixed team to relay glory

REUTERS
PARIS, AUGUST 4

FEMKE BOL ran a stunning last lap to lead the Netherlands to victory in the Olympic 4x400 metres mixed relay on Saturday, glorious redemption for the 24-year-old who fell just before the line in the same race at last year's World Championships.

Bol got the baton in fourth place, around 20 metres behind the leading United States, but ate up the ground in a spectacular 47.93 seconds leg before passing American Kaylyn Brown just before the line.

"I just went for it," Bol said. "We just wanted a medal this time, we didn't think it would be gold, just a medal. Well, we got gold and are the Olympic champions. It is absolutely crazy for a small country like ours."

The Dutch team of Eugene Omalla, Lieke Klaver, Isaya Klein Ikkin and Bol clocked three minutes 7.43 seconds, missing the world record time the Americans set in Friday's heats by just two-hundredths of a second.

The U.S. took the silver medal in 3:07.74 and Britain claimed bronze in 3:08.01.

"We did exactly what we needed to do," said Vernon Norwood, who ran the lead-off leg for the U.S. "We are still world record holders and I can't be more proud of us."

The 24-year-old Bol, asked what was going through her mind rounding the bend into the home straight while the jam-packed Stade de France crowd cheered her on at an ear-splitting level, said: "Just keep going, keep going."

"And my general anger from (the worlds in) Budapest. That and my teammates cheering me. And the atmosphere in this stadium is absolutely incredible. It's crazy. So everything together."

Victory was within the Netherlands' grasp at last year's worlds before Bol crashed spectacularly to the track. She bounced back to win the 400 hurdles in Hungary, however, and led the Dutch women's 4x400 team to victory.

LaFond wins triple jump

Thea LaFond made history for the Caribbean island nation of Dominica by winning gold in the triple jump on Saturday to claim the country's first-ever Olympic medal.

Jamaica's Shanieka Ricketts took silver and American Jasmine Moore claimed bronze.



Femke Bol



Thea LaFond

SECOND ODI

Slow pitch, hard hands and guiles of leg-spinner Vandersay down India

VENKATA KRISHNA B
AUGUST 4

THE SCRIPT was eerily similar to the first ODI a couple of nights back. Unlike Friday, it was not a collective effort, but the solo act of the new protagonist Jeffrey Vandersay. For nearly nine years, while toiling hard in the domestic circuit, the leg-spinner has been in and out of the side unable to grab a headline moment. Thanks to Indian top-order, soon after the sunset in the Colombo skies, the 34-year-old opened the old wounds for Rohit Sharma & Co, with his six-wicket haul giving Sri Lanka a 32-run win. A first ODI series win against India since 1997 is in Sri Lanka's sight, provided they don't lose the final match on Wednesday.

Chasing 240 — 10 more than what was needed on Friday — on an even slower pitch, India knew they had a job in their hands. In conditions where spinners were in the game throughout, they had to reread the textbooks and pick the right manual for pitches like this. Head coach Gautam Gambhir could have lent them some of his. But with an army of

spinners testing them with turn and bounce, sowing seeds of doubts, India's batting line-up with the exception of Rohit froze again. When Vandersay came on to bowl in the 12th over, India were comfortably placed at 80/0. By the time he finished his first spell in the 24th over, India were reduced to 147/6. Vandersay's game-changing spell read: 7-0-26-6.

It was as good as Ajantha Mendis 6/13 against India in the 2008 Asia Cup final at Karachi. The one difference though is there is nothing mysterious about Vandersay. The only question though is why he hasn't been a regular in a team that has fallen off the pecking order. Since getting his international cap in 2015, he had played only 22 ODIs and 14 T20Is before this Sunday. His lone headline moment came in 2018 when he was handed a one-year suspension by the Sri Lankan board for a night-out in St Lucia. If Wanindu Hasaranga didn't pick up an injury in the first ODI, he would not even been in the dressing room as he joined on Saturday as a replacement.

But from the moment he came on, it was inevitable his overs would determine the



Sri Lanka's Jeffrey Vandersay (L) claimed a match-winning 6-33. PTI

course of the match. Rohit and Shubman Gill had already targeted Dunith Wellalage. Even Akila Dhananjaya wasn't spared early on as India's intent to not let the Lankan spinners settle went according to their blueprint.

But Vandersay's arrival change that a bit. Having seen him bowl a quiet first over, Rohit went for a reverse-sweep — a rare instance of him rushing through the shot — which was caught brilliantly by a diving Pathum

Nissanka at backward point.

Procession begins

A procession ensued. Off his next over, Gill and Virat Kohli would poke him tentatively. Then in the next over, Vandersay consumed Gill, whose thick edge was pouched by a diving Kamindu Mendis at slip. Three balls later, he trapped Shivam Dube in front. India reacted by promoting Axar Patel, but it made little difference.

Off his fifth over, he trapped Kohli with a leg-spinner with the batsman guilty of playing the wrong line.

The match was slipping away from India's grip. They needed a calm head to tide through this testing spell, but Vandersay was in no mood to settle for anything less. He continued to keep it simple and he would be rewarded with the dismissal of Shreyas Iyer in his sixth over.

By the time Rahul was out in the next over, the game was in Lanka's bag. Axar and Washington would try to delay the inevitable, but Charith Asalanka's part-time off-spin finished the job that Vandersay began.

Their batting collapse overshadowed the bowling efforts of Axar, Washington and Kuldeep Yadav. In the 29 overs between them, they conceded only 101 runs and picked up 6 wickets with the off-spinner being the pick of the lot. They were more economical than the three main Lankan spinners, but the difference was how well the hosts' batting line-up applied themselves collectively on the pitch.

None of them touched 50 with Avishka Fernando's and Kamindu Mendis 40 being the top-score. But they all eschewed the risky shots and happily went for the deft touches and worked the spinners around for singles and twos. Against the seamers, especially in the death overs, they opened up. At the end of the 40 overs, Sri Lanka had just 161 on board and had just four wickets left. But a couple of big overs off Mohammed Siraj and Arshdeep and a 12-run over from Axar would propel their total beyond India's reach. **BRIEF SCORES:** Sri Lanka 240/9 in 50 overs. (Avishka 40, Kamindu 40, Wellalage 39; Washington 3/30, Kuldeep 2/33) bt India 208 in 42.2 overs (Rohit 64, Axar 44; Vandersay 6/33, Asalanka 3/20) by 32 runs.

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