

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI THURSDAY 8 AUGUST 2024



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MVA to sound poll bugle for Maharashtra Assembly elections on August 16



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Many flee as Russia battles major border attack from Ukraine

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Serena Williams fumes as she's denied access to 'empty' Paris restaurant



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WINDOWS



Taapsee Pannu during the promotions of her new film *Phir Aayi Hasseen Dillruba* in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

Centre likely to table bill to curb powers of Waqf Board today

New Delhi: The government is likely to introduce the controversial bill to amend the law governing Waqf in the Lok Sabha on Thursday. Opposition parties, meanwhile, on Wednesday demanded that the Waqf (Amendment) Bill be sent to Parliament's standing committee for scrutiny after it is introduced. "They will bring the Waqf Board amendment bill tomorrow. We, along with the Congress and the NCP, said in one voice that the bill should be discussed in detail and sent to the standing committee. The Speaker asked us to raise these points when the bill is tabled in Parliament tomorrow," said TMC MP Sudip Bandopadhyay. **Full report on Page 3**

Atishi will hoist tricolour at Delhi gov't 1-Day event

New Delhi: Jailed CM Arvind Kejriwal has written to the L-G, saying Cabinet minister Atishi will hoist the national flag at the Delhi government's Independence Day event, the AAP said, even as the L-G office denied receiving any communication. **Full report on Page 2**

Helicopter crashes close to Kathmandu: 5 killed

Kathmandu: Four Chinese tourists and a Nepali pilot were killed on Wednesday when a helicopter crashed in the mountains in the northwest region of the capital, officials said. A police official said all five persons, including the pilot, on board were killed in the crash. — PTI

COUNTERPOINT



We don't need a porter... our heavyweight lifter can carry all our luggage!

WEATHER

Max: 31°C
Min: 26°C
RH: 84%
Rain: 70%
Forecast: Rain

ASTROGUIDE

Krodhi: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Shravana Shukla Chavithi till 12.37 am
Star: Uttaraphalguni till 11.34 pm
Varjyam: Seshavarjyam up to 6.26 am
Durmuhurtam: 10.15 am to 11.05 am; 3.19 pm to 4.10 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
SUNSET TODAY 7.06 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.47 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 9.50 AM
MOONSET TODAY 9.20 PM

■ **Hasina will stay in Delhi** ■ **India's HC in Dhaka; families back**
■ **Nobel laureate plea for calm; says '2nd Victory Day possible'**

Yunus will take oath as interim govt head today

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI with agency inputs NEW DELHI/DHAKA, AUG. 7

Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus-led interim government in Bangladesh will take the oath on Thursday, Army Chief Gen. Waker-Uz-Zaman said. Addressing a press conference in Dhaka on Wednesday, Gen. Zaman said the interim government is likely to be sworn in at 8 pm on Thursday and the advisory council may have 15 members. Meanwhile, amid large-scale violence following the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina government, Mr Yunus appealed to his countrymen to shun violence and "make the best use of their new victory".

In the wake of the total collapse of law and order in Bangladesh, including its capital Dhaka, families of Indian diplomats and non-essential staff of the Indian high commission (HCI) in Dhaka returned on a commercial flight to New Delhi on Wednesday. All Indian diplomats continue to remain stationed at the Indian high commission. According to reports, a special Air India flight brought 205 people, including six infants, from Dhaka to New Delhi on Wednesday morning. The Indian government sources on Wednesday said, "The high commission of India in Dhaka continues to remain functional. Our diplomats and officials continue in Dhaka. Non-essential staff and families have returned this morning... All the helplines of HCI Dhaka are working."

The Bangladesh Army had taken charge following the resignation and departure of Ms Hasina, who had fled her country to India on Monday. The beleaguered former Prime Minister continues to stay put in New Delhi at a safe location. There are indications ■ **Turn to Page 4**

PAGE 6
■ **Khaleda says love, peace will help rebuild B'desh**
■ **Bangladesh garment factories reopen**
■ **'Some police officials violated human right'**



Supporters of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party gather to attend a mass rally in support of Opposition leader and party chairperson Khaleda Zia in Dhaka on Wednesday. — PTI

Attacks on minorities rise, students patrol the streets

■ **Police forces missing** ■ **Stop attacks: BNP**

SANJAY BASAK NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

As reports of the targeting of minorities continue to emanate from Bangladesh in the absence of security forces, students have reportedly hit the streets yet again to maintain law and order. Reports in the Bangladesh media said while the police forces have gone missing from the streets of Dhaka and adjoining areas, students have taken on "security duties at various police stations, churches and temples". Bangladesh Nationalist Party acting chairman Tarique Rahman, son of former Prime Minister Khaleda

AI & IndiGo operate spl flights to Dhaka

New Delhi: Air India and IndiGo operated special flights to Dhaka, bringing more than 400 people amid a volatile situation in the Bangladesh capital. A special Air India flight brought 205 people from Dhaka to New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

■ **More on Page 4**

Zia, in a video message at a party rally in Bangladesh, exhorted people to stop targeting the minorities and police personnel. In another recorded message, BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia

said that she wanted "love and peace instead of destruction and revenge to rebuild the country". Bangladesh Army chief Gen. Waker-Uz-Zaman told the Bangladesh media that the situation would return to normal in a couple of days. As an uneasy calm prevailed over riot-torn Bangladesh, the local media, students' outfits and the intelligentsia have come down heavily on attacks on minority establishments across the country. There is also an uproar in Bangladesh's media over the attack and plundering of one of the nation's famous folk

■ **Turn to Page 4**

'N-E insurgents may try re-enter Bangla, take new Dhaka govt aid'

Assam CM urges Modi to intervene diplomatically

MANOJ ANAND GUWAHATI, AUG. 7

Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said that the Central government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi should try to take the help of the new government in Bangladesh and ensure the insurgent groups of the Northeast are not allowed to re-enter Bangladesh. Recalling the role played by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

■ **THE ASSAM CM** said the current developments in Bangladesh are worrisome and Sheikh Hasina's leadership was instrumental in eradicating the N-E insurgent camps from her country

in dismantling terrorist camps in Bangladesh, he told reporters: "The current developments in Bangladesh are worrisome. Sheikh Hasina's leadership was instrumental in eradicating the Northeast insurgent

camp from her country." He feared that with the fall of Hasina's government, the militants might once again exploit the situation, posing a renewed threat to regional stability. Amid the ongoing political unrest in Bangladesh, Mr Sarma, while raising concern over the illegal infiltration from the border, said: "I hope the Central government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi will rope in new government in

■ **Turn to Page 4**

Rajapaksa's son will stand in Sri Lanka Prez polls Sept. 21

Colombo, Aug. 7: The man who is considered the heir apparent to the powerful Rajapaksa family in Sri Lanka will contest the presidential election in September, his political party said Wednesday, in an apparent bid to regain his family's lost power after a humiliating setback two years ago during an unprecedented economic crisis in the Indian ocean island nation. The Sri Lanka Peoples' Front said the 38-year-old lawyer Namal Rajapaksa, the eldest son of former strongman president Mahinda Rajapaksa, will



Namal Rajapaksa

be its candidate in the September 21 election, the first since the nation plunged into its worst economic crisis. The election is seen as key to Sri Lanka's efforts to conclude a critical debt restructuring programme

and completing the financial reforms agreed to under a bailout programme by the IMF. The nominations for polling will be accepted on August 15.

The Rajapaksa family has dominated Sri Lankan politics since the country gained independence from Britain in 1948, producing a dozen of lawmakers from three generations over seven decades. Mahinda Rajapaksa ruled as president from 2005 to 2015, appealing to the nationalist sentiment of the island's Buddhist-Sinhalese majority. — AP

Phogat disqualified from Olympics as 'overweight'

■ **PM asks IOA chief P.T. Usha to 'explore all options'**

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI/PARIS, AUG. 7

An entire nation's hopes were crushed under the weight of 100 grams. With hours to go before her gold medal bout on Wednesday, Vinesh Phogat stood on the scale — for her 50 kg category bout, she was 100 gm overweight, leading to an automatic disqualification on perhaps the biggest day of her sporting career. Dehydrated after three gruelling bouts on Tuesday, a desperate Vinesh merely had "small amounts of water", cut her hair and stayed up all night working out to ensure that she didn't go over the prescribed limit for her weight. It wasn't enough and no amount of pleading by the Indian officials to get her some more time to shed those 100 gm could change the rules. So that's how it stayed, ending Vinesh's resilient run, during which she took down the reigning gold medalist only to be beaten by her own battered body.



Indian Olympics Association president P.T. Usha meets wrestler Vinesh Phogat after the latter was hospitalised amid dehydration following her disqualification from the Olympics Games in Paris on Wednesday. — PTI

■ **DEHYDRATED AFTER 4 bouts on Tuesday**, a desperate Vinesh merely had "small amounts of water" and stayed up all night working out to ensure that she didn't go over the prescribed limit for her weight

As she recovered from the emotional and physical trauma of the turn of events at a polyclinic in the Olympic games village, a slugfest ensued in faraway Delhi, where politicians traded barbs

on just who was responsible for the mess.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi offered her support, calling her a "champion among champions" in a social media post and sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya declared that a "strong protest" had been lodged with the international body — United World Wrestling (UWW).

Mr Modi asks India Olympic Association (IOA) president P.T. Usha to seek a ■ **Turn to Page 2**

EC in Srinagar on 2-day visit for review of J&K poll plans

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, AUG. 7

The Election Commission, comprising Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and election commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Dr Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, will be arriving in Srinagar on Thursday on a two-day visit of Jammu and Kashmir for threadbare discussions with the stakeholders before deciding the Assembly election dates in the Union territory. The last Assembly polls in the erstwhile state of J&K were held in 2014. The state was brought under Governor's Rule following the PDP-BJP coalition government collapse in June 2018. J&K was split into the Union territories of J&K and Ladakh in August 2019 when its special status envisaged in Article 370 was also withdrawn by the Centre.

A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court had on December 11 set a deadline of September 2024 for the EC to hold Assembly polls in the UT. ■ **More on Page 3**

FM says indirect tax review soon; LS clears Budget

LTCG modified, relief to home buyers

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

In a big relief to home buyers, Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said that the much-talked-about long-term capital gains (LTCG) tax proposal on real estate is being amended to give taxpayers the option to compute tax liability under the old system or at reduced rates without indexation and pay the lower of the two. After the government relaxed the just-introduced new capital gains tax on real estate, the Lok Sabha passed the Finance Bill 2024. The Rajya Sabha will take up the Finance Bill for discussion on Thursday.

"There has been substantial tax relief for the middle class in the last two years. And the rollover benefit will be available to taxpayers who buy new immovable property, utilising the capital gains on the sale of old property," Ms



Nirmala Sitharaman

■ **THE BUDGET**, presented on July 23, 2024, had proposed a lower 12.5% rate of LTCG tax, down from 20%, while doing away with the indexation benefit

Sitharaman said while replying to a debate on the Finance Bill in the Lok Sabha.

The government's move to hand out "substantial tax relief" comes after sharp criticism from various corners, including the Opposition as well as tax professionals, when the finance minister, in her 2024-25 Budget speech, proposed to remove indexation ■ **Turn to Page 4**



Markswoman Manu Bhaker, who created history as the first Indian to win two medals in a single Olympic Games in Paris, on her arrival at the airport in New Delhi on Wednesday. ■ **Report on Page 8** — PTI

Elections for 12 RS seats from 9 states Sept. 3

New Delhi, Aug. 7: Elections to 12 vacant Rajya Sabha seats in nine states will be held on September 3, the Election Commission said on Wednesday. Ten Rajya Sabha seats fell vacant as the sitting members, including Union ministers Piyush Goyal, Sarbananda Sonowal and Jyotiraditya Scindia, were elected to the Lok Sabha. Bypolls are also being held for two seats in Telangana and Odisha. — PTI ■ **More on Page 3**

IN BRIEF

Elderly couple dies as house collapses

New Delhi: An elderly couple died and their 45-year-old son was injured after the roof of their house collapsed in the Prem Nagar area of Delhi's Rohini, fire services officials said on Wednesday. Fire officials received a call around 3 am about a roof collapse. "We immediately rushed three fire tenders and a rescue team to the spot. Three people were brought out from the rubble and rushed to a nearby hospital," a Delhi fire services official said. Doctors declared Sukhran (85) and his 75-year-old wife Gayatri Devi dead and their son Vinod suffered injuries, the official said. "Vinod is getting treatment at Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital. We have informed the local police," he added.

DU extends choice filling for UG courses

New Delhi: The Delhi University has extended the last date for filling the programme preferences and college combination for its 2024-25 undergraduate admissions till Friday, an official statement said. The choice filling phase of the common seat allotment system-UG Phase-II has been extended till 11:59 pm on August 9, it said.

Student's ear hurt after being slapped

New Delhi: A 12-year-old boy sustained eardrum injury after he was allegedly slapped by a manager in a private school for poor handwriting in the Khajuri Khas area of Northeast Delhi, officials said. According to the police, the matter was reported on July 20 after the boy complained of pain in his ear and told his parents that he was allegedly slapped by the school principal's son over poor handwriting. "We registered an FIR and launched an investigation into the matter. But we got to know that the family members had settled the matter with the school administration," a senior police officer said.

ANOTHER TOWER OF CHINTELS PARADISO TO BE VACATED

Gurgaon: Gurgaon district magistrate Nishant Kumar Yadav on Wednesday ordered the residents of Tower J of Chintels Paradiso society in Sector 109 to vacate their flats within 15 days, citing an IIT audit report that declared the flats "unsafe". The orders were issued by Mr Yadav, who is also the deputy commissioner, under Section 163 of Indian Civil Defence Code, according to an official release. The structure audit report of IIT-Delhi released on January 5 had declared the tower J of Chintels Paradiso Group Housing Society "unsafe for habitation", based on which the tower will have to be vacated within 15 days of the DM's order and hand over the vacant possession of the builder, it said. Tower J is among the six towers of the society that were declared unsafe in the audit report. — PTI

Phogat disqualified from Olympics

Continued From Page 1 comprehensive review of Vinesh's disqualification from the Olympics. In a message to the wrestler, she remains a champion in the hearts of 1.4 billion people." The Opposition parties, however, sensed a conspiracy in the shocking reversal of fortunes for the wrestler, who was, till recently, the face of a fierce protest against "government inaction" on the sexual harassment allegations against former Wrestling Federation of India head Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. The INDIA bloc MPs even held a protest on Parliament premises. Members of Opposition parties like the Congress, TMC, NCP(SP), JMM, RJD and SP also walked out of both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi termed Vinesh's disqualification from the Olympics "unfortunate". "It is unfortunate that Vinesh Phogat, India's pride, who reached the finals after defeating world champion wrestlers, was disqualified

on technical grounds. We have full hope that the Indian Olympic Association will strongly challenge this decision and provide justice to the daughter of the country," Mr Gandhi said. "Vinesh is not one to give up. We are confident that she will come back stronger to the wrestling arena..." Mr Gandhi said. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said: "India's pride, Vinesh Phogat defeated world champions but has been disqualified due to technical reasons. She went through a lot. From protesting at the footpath for justice to reaching the pinnacle podium of the Olympics." Amid all the drama, a dream lay shattered and a country stood shocked, with many unable to fathom just how things could go this bad for Tuesday's showstopper in a matter of hours. This was Phogat's third Olympic appearance. The first in Rio 2016 ended with her being stretched off due to a career-threatening injury, while the second

outing in Tokyo also halted painfully with an unexpected early loss. "It's part of the game," a brave Vinesh told the Indian coaches who met her after her shock disqualification from the Paris Olympics. "We are providing Vinesh all medical and emotional support," IOA president said in a statement. "The Wrestling Federation of India has filed an appeal to UWW to reconsider the decision to disqualify Vinesh and IOA is following that up in the strongest possible manner," Usha said. The protests and appeals can continue, but the cold fact is that Cuban wrestler Yusneily Guzman Lopez, who lost to Vinesh in the semifinals, replaced her in the final. Contingent's chief medical officer Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala wore a dejected look as he tried to explain the process of weight cutting. He said that every possible trick was used to ensure that Vinesh could be within the prescribed limit.

heinous offences itself explains the brutality caused by CCL and his criminal psychology which existed at the time of the offence," it added in its order dated August 3. The court said the CCL was an adolescent (over 16 years) when he committed the crime here and did not have the psychological maturity of an adult and so he could not be compared to an adult offender in the strictest manner. "The option of treating the CCL as an adult offender only provides that if there is no reformation in the CCL, then he could be directed to undergo a longer or remaining sentence, as in case of major accused persons, but it does not mean that CCL has to be sentenced like an accused in each and every aspect," the court said. — PTI

Court asks for reply by August 9 on bail petitions of 4 co-accused CBI takes over Rau's probe, visits site

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

The CBI on Wednesday said that it has taken over the probe into the deaths of three civil services aspirants at a coaching centre in Delhi wherein Shreya Yadav from Uttar Pradesh, Tanya Soni from Telangana, and Nevin Delvin from Kerala drowned after water gushed into the basement of Rau's IAS Study Circle in Old Rajinder Nagar here following heavy rains on July 27.

The Central agency took over the case from the Delhi police late Tuesday evening following a Delhi high court order. It has re-registered a case against Abhishek Gupta, owner of Rau's IAS Study Circle, in



CBI officials investigate at the coaching centre at Old Rajinder Nagar in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

accordance with the laid down procedure, the officials said. The three civil servant aspirants were studying in the library set up in the basement when water flooded it resulting in their deaths. The CBI has booked

Gupta for culpable homicide not amounting to murder, causing death by negligence, voluntarily causing hurt, negligent conduct, and common intention. The Delhi high court had castigated the police and the Municipal

Corporation of Delhi (MCD) over the students' deaths, saying it was unable to fathom how they could not come out of the basement. It also sought to know whether the doors were blocked or staircases narrow.

"What's your line of looking? How did the children drown? You have done an investigation now. We are on August 2. Why were they not able to come out of the basement? It doesn't get flooded immediately. Water takes at least two-three minutes to fill a basement, it can't happen in a minute. Why were they not able to come out?" the court had asked. The court had also asked the Central Vigilance Commission

(CVC) to nominate a senior officer to oversee the probe by the CBI into the criminal case.

To ensure the public has no doubt over the investigation, the Delhi high court on August 2 transferred the probe from the city police to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

On the other hand, a Delhi court issued a notice to the CBI on bail applications of four jailed co-owners of a coaching centre.

Principal district and sessions judge Anju Bajaj Chandna directed the central probe agency to file its response by August 9, when the court will hear the bail applications of four accused — Parvinder Singh, Tajinder Singh, Harvinder Singh and Sarbjit Singh.

CM was present with Bibhav after Maliwal assault, says chargesheet

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

The police has told a Delhi court that they were probing the "larger conspiracy" behind the "brutal attack" on Raja Sabha MP Swati Maliwal by chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar.

In the chargesheet, the police also said that Kumar and Mr Kejriwal were "together" at the chief minister's official residence "for a significant period of time" after the alleged offence was committed.

Kumar, who is in judicial custody, is accused of assaulting AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal on May 13 at the chief minister's residence. "The complainant, in her subsequent supplementary statement recorded after the bail hearing qua the accused before the Delhi high court on July 10, 2024, had stated that the manner in which the entire AAP leaders and workers came in support of the accused (Kumar), against one of their own MP, shows that there is a larger conspiracy behind the attack and had urged the police to probe into it," the final report said.



Bibhav Kumar

It said her statement was "relevant for the present investigation in view of the complete U-turn being publicly taken by two responsible persons of the party regarding the same incident in the days following the commission of the crime."

The chargesheet, which runs into around 500 pages and has statements of about 50 witnesses, was filed in a city court on July 16 and its cognisance was taken on July 30.

"Investigation has brought out the fact that the accused and the CM were together at the scene of crime i.e., the CM's Delhi residence, immediately after the commission of the crime for a significant period of time and, as such, the contrarian public stands taken by responsible public servants in the following days also needs to be examined in its correct perspective to decipher if there was a

larger conspiracy behind the brutal assault on the complainant/victim at the hands of the accused," it said. The final report said that "selective footages" of CCTV cameras were leaked to the media before the relevant recording devices could be seized and this necessitated a probe to find whether there was a "conspiracy" behind the offence.

It said there was "sufficient evidence," both oral and documentary, against Kumar.

"It is also relevant to mention here that accused Bibhav Kumar, as brought out by the investigation carried out so far, appears to be a repeat offender since he has previously been involved in a similar case (registered in 2007) under IPC Sections 353, 506, and 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace)," the final report said.

SC to cops: File reply by Aug 21 in Bibhav's bail

New Delhi, Aug. 7: The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Delhi police to file its response by August 21 on the plea of Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar for grant of bail in the AAP Rajya Sabha member Swati Maliwal assault case. Additional solicitor-general S.V. Raju, appearing for the Delhi police, told a bench of Justices Surya Kant, Dipankar Datta and Ujjal Bhuyan that he needed three weeks' time to file a reply. Senior advocate Singhvi, appearing for Mr Kumar, opposed the grant of three weeks and said chargesheet has already been filed in the case.

The apex court then asked Mr Raju to file response by August 21 and posted the matter for hearing on August 27. The top court had earlier come down heavily on Mr Kumar saying "Is this kind of goon supposed to work in the CM's residence?" — PTI

Man gets life term for brutal rape, murder of 5-yr-old

New Delhi, Aug. 7: A Delhi court has sentenced a 25-year-old man to life imprisonment for raping and battering to death a 5-year-old girl in 2017, observing the "brutality" showed his criminal bent of mind. Additional sessions judge Amit Sahrawat was hearing a case against the man who was a juvenile at the time of the offence and was now tried as an adult offender. The bench found the man guilty of committing the offences of rape and murder.

"In the present case, the aggravating factors against the child in conflict with law (CCL) are that firstly he has committed rape of a child, just of about 5 years, and thereafter mercilessly caused the death of the said child by hitting stones on her head," the court said. "The causation of such

Urgently recruit docs, decongest Asha Kiran: HC

New Delhi, Aug. 7: The Delhi high court on Wednesday asked the secretary of the social welfare department to act with alacrity in taking urgent steps, among others, for the recruitment of staff, including doctors, for the city government-run Asha Kiran shelter home for the intellectually disabled.

The Asha Kiran shelter home had recently witnessed the death of 14 inmates.

A bench headed by acting chief justice Manmohan lamented the recent deaths of the mother-son duo who fell in an open drain as well as the three UPSC aspirants who drowned in a coaching centre's flooded basement, and asked the officer, who said certain approvals and clearances were required for decongestion and recruitment, to ensure that "human lives don't get lost in the procedure."

"We have lost 14 lives in 20 days. Human lives today don't have a cost. Day before, we dealt with the USPC matter where three children lost their lives. Yesterday, we dealt with a case where two people lost their lives. You must act with alacrity. We may lose someone in the process," the court said.

The secretary, who was earlier directed to visit the shelter home and file a report, said the establishment has to be decongested as there were 961 inmates there against a capacity of 570 persons.

THIS IS an emergency. Fourteen lives have been lost...Recruit the best. Don't let us down. Let it be a limited contract so that you can initiate the process for permanent recruitment. In one year, you can complete the process', the bench said

The court was also informed that there were 12 vacancies in the medical cadre and positions were vacant in the non-medical cadre as well.

The bench, also comprising justice Tushar Rao Gedela, asked the secretary to recruit people on a contractual basis to deal with the "emergency" and "move the file" before the competent authorities for requisite sanction, adding that if the same is not given, it will pass a judicial order.

"Decongestion is the top priority. Doctors visiting the dormitory (in Asha Kiran) and the shortage of staff, medical as well as non-medical staff, has to be addressed and we should empower the secretary to employ staff on a contractual basis," the court said. "This is an emergency. Fourteen lives have been lost...Recruit the best. Don't let us down. Let it be a limited contract so that you can initiate the process for permanent recruitment. In one year, you can complete the process," it added. — PTI

RAKSHA BANDHAN SPECIAL TRAINS

For the convenience of passengers, Northern Railway will run following Raksha Bandhan Special Trains as per schedule given below:-

| 04412/04411 Hazrat Nizamuddin-Indore Jn.- Hazrat Nizamuddin Superfast Exp. Spl. Train | | 02 Trips |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Train No. 04412 | STATIONS | Train No. 04411 |
| ARR. DEP. | | ARR. DEP. |
| --- | 23:15 Hazrat Nizamuddin | 04:40 --- |
| 13:00 --- | Indore Jn. | --- 15:00 |

Days of Run : 04412 Ex. Hazrat Nizamuddin on 14.08.2024 (Wednesday) and 04411 Ex. Indore Jn. on 15.08.2024 (Thursday);
Accommodation : AC 2 Tier-Cum-3 Tier, Sleeper & General
Stoppages: Mathura, Bharatpur Jn., Gangapur City, Sawai Madhopur Jn., Kota, Ramganj Mandi, Sharnagar, Nagda & Ujjain Jn. Station.

| 04087/04088 New Delhi-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-New Delhi Reserved Exp. Spl. Train | | 04 Trips |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Train No. 04087 | STATIONS | Train No. 04088 |
| ARR. DEP. | | ARR. DEP. |
| --- | 23:45 New Delhi | 09:30 --- |
| 11:40 --- | Shri Mata Vaishno Devi. Katra | --- 21:20 |

Days of Run : 04087 Ex. New Delhi on 14.08.2024 & 16.08.2024 (Wednesday & Friday) and 04088 Ex. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra on 15.08.2024 & 17.08.2024 (Thursday & Saturday);
Accommodation : AC 2 Tier-Cum-3 Tier, Sleeper & General
Stoppages: Sonapat, Panipat, Karnal, Kurukshetra Jn., Ambala Cantt., Dhandari Kalan, Jalandhar Cantt., Pathankot Cantt., Jammu Tawi & Martyr Captain Tushar Mahajan Stations.

| 04081/04082 New Delhi-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-New Delhi Reserved Exp. Spl. Train | | 02 Trips |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Train No. 04081 | STATIONS | Train No. 04082 |
| ARR. DEP. | | ARR. DEP. |
| --- | 22:15 New Delhi | 09:30 --- |
| 09:55 --- | Shri Mata Vaishno Devi. Katra | --- 21:20 |

Days of Run : 04081 Ex. New Delhi on 14.08.2024 (Thursday) and 04082 Ex. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra on 16.08.2024 (Friday);
Accommodation : AC 2 Tier-Cum-3 Tier, Sleeper & General
Stoppages: Sonapat, Panipat, Karnal, Kurukshetra Jn., Ambala Cantt., Dhandari Kalan, Jalandhar Cantt., Pathankot Cantt., Jammu Tawi & Martyr Captain Tushar Mahajan Stations.

| 04085/04086 New Delhi-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-New Delhi Reserved Exp. Spl. Train | | 02 Trips |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Train No. 04085 | STATIONS | Train No. 04086 |
| ARR. DEP. | | ARR. DEP. |
| --- | 23:45 New Delhi | 06:25 --- |
| 11:40 --- | Shri Mata Vaishno Devi. Katra | --- 18:10 |

Days of Run : 04085 Ex. New Delhi on 17.08.2024 (Saturday) and 04086 Ex. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra on 18.08.2024 (Sunday);
Accommodation : AC 2 Tier-Cum-3 Tier, Sleeper & General
Stoppages: Sonapat, Panipat, Karnal, Kurukshetra Jn., Ambala Cantt., Dhandari Kalan, Jalandhar Cantt., Pathankot Cantt., Jammu Tawi & Martyr Captain Tushar Mahajan Stations.

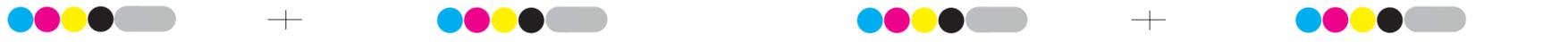
| 04080/04079 Delhi Jn.-Varanasi-Delhi Jn. Reserved Festival Express Special Train | | 04 Trips |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| Train No. 04080 | STATIONS | Train No. 04079 |
| ARR. DEP. | | ARR. DEP. |
| --- | 21:10 Delhi Jn. | 13:35 --- |
| 14:30 --- | Varanasi | --- 19:45 |

Days of Run : 04080 Ex. Delhi Jn. on 14.08.2024 & 18.08.2024 (Wednesday & Sunday) and 04079 Ex. Varanasi on 15.08.2024 & 19.08.2024 (Thursday & Monday);
Accommodation : AC 2 Tier-Cum-3 Tier, Sleeper & General
Stoppages: Ghaziabad, Moradabad, Bareilly, Lucknow & Maa Belha Devi Dham Pratappgarh Jn. Stations.

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SHORT TAKES

Opp. may protest against price rise

New Delhi: INDIA bloc MPs are likely to hold a meeting in the Central Hall of the Samvidhan Sadan on Friday, sources said. This will be the first such meeting of the INDIA bloc in Parliament, which will be attended by MPs from different parties that constitute the alliance. The Opposition MPs are likely to stage a protest in the Parliament complex over the price rise on Thursday. The INDIA bloc, which has 243 MPs in the Lok Sabha against the 293 of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), has been putting up a united front against the government in Parliament. On Tuesday, INDIA bloc MPs staged a protest at the gate of the Parliament building, demanding the government to withdraw 18 per cent GST on life and health insurance premiums. They had also staged a protest on the first day of the first session of the 18th LS while holding copies of the Constitution. — PTI

Tension in Haryana dist; Net, mobile shut

Chandigarh: The Haryana government on Wednesday suspended mobile internet services in Sirsa district till Thursday midnight, citing apprehensions about possible breach of peace due to the succession dispute in Dera Jangmalwari, following the demise of the sect chief Bahadur Chand Vakil. After Vakil's death on August 1 at a private hospital following prolonged illness, two factions led by Virender Singh and Gurpreet Singh respectively are involved in the tussle for control of the Dera which has followers in Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. On Thursday, "Antim Ardas" (final prayers) will be performed and a large number of his followers are likely to reach the Dera. The suspension came to stop the spread of misinformation and rumours through social media platforms. — PTI

MP Cabinet set to go paperless

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday decided to introduce an e-Cabinet system in the state. The state Cabinet, which met here under the chairmanship of chief minister Mohan Yadav, decided to promote e-government and e-governance by introducing the e-Cabinet system. "The e-governance will help the government promote a paperless system in the government. Relevant government rules will be changed for the purpose", state urban development minister Kailash Vijayvargiya said, while briefing the deliberations in the Cabinet meeting. In another significant decision, the Cabinet approved reorganisation of the directorate of financial management information system under the finance department.

BYPOLL FOR VACANT RAJ RS SEAT ON SEPT. 3

Jaipur, Aug. 7: The bypoll for a Rajya Sabha seat in Rajasthan, which had fallen vacant due to the resignation of Congress' K.C. Venugopal, will be held on September 3. The Election Commission announced the election schedule for 12 vacant RS seats on Wednesday. State chief electoral officer Naveen Mahajan said the nomination process will start with the release of notification on August 14. As per the schedule, the nomination papers can be filled till August 21. Scrutiny of nomination papers will be done on August 22, while candidates will be able to withdraw their names till August 27. If necessary, voting will be held on September 3 from 9 am to 4 pm. The counting of votes will be held from 5 pm on the same day. According to the official statement of the commission, this bypoll is being held for the seat vacated after K.C. Venugopal left the Rajya Sabha membership. The term of the new member on this seat will be till June 21, 2026. At present, there are 115 BJP and 66 Congress MLAs in the 200-seat state Assembly. — PTI

Govt may table bill to curb Waqf powers in LS today

Opp. demands sending it to Parliament committee after it is tabled

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

The government is likely to introduce the controversial bill to amend the law governing Waqf in the Lok Sabha on Thursday. Opposition parties, meanwhile, on Wednesday demanded that the Waqf (Amendment) Bill be sent to Parliament's standing committee for scrutiny after it is introduced. "They will bring the Waqf Board amendment bill tomorrow. We, along with the Congress and the NCP, said in one voice that the bill should be discussed in detail and sent to the standing committee. The Speaker asked us to raise these points when the bill is tabled in Parliament tomorrow," said TMC MP Sudip Bandopadhyay. The issue was raised during the business advisory committee meeting. The bill was circulated among Lok Sabha members on Tuesday night ahead of its introduction. The government will not



Rajya Sabha member Sudha Murthy with Shiv Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi and NCP MP Supriya Sule during the Parliament Monsoon Session on Wednesday. — PTI

press for the passage of the bill after it is introduced in the Lok Sabha on Thursday, sources said. The House may form a panel in the absence of the standing committee. Mr Bandopadhyay said that the Waqf Board amendment bill is not something which can be debated in just 2-3 hours. "It is a broad-based bill. It should be discussed in the standing committee in detail... then it can be debated in the next session (in the House)," he added. The controversial Waqf (Amendment) Bill, which will be introduced by minorities affairs minister Kiren Rijji, has proposed several changes in the present act, including ensuring the representation of Muslim women and non-Muslims in such bodies.

C'garh rail infra developed in last 10 yrs: Vaishnav

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

Railway minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Wednesday said Chhattisgarh has seen significant development in its railway infrastructure in the last ten years, with 58 express trains and 128 passenger trains covering the state. During the Question Hour in the Lok Sabha, BJP MP from Raipur Brijmohan Agrawal asked about the number of trains operating in Chhattisgarh over the past three years, and the current stage of revenue generation from these operations. Responding to Mr Agrawal queries, Mr Vaishnav said, "Three years ago, there were 56 mail express trains and 121 passenger trains operating in the state."

Opp. MPs walk out, seek justice for athlete IOA has strongly taken up Phogat matter: Mandaviya

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 7



Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann interacts with Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat's uncle Mahavir Phogat in Charkhi Dadri in Haryana on Wednesday. — PTI

Union sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya in a statement in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday said that the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has lodged a strong protest with the United World Wrestling (UWW) after Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat was disqualified from the Paris Olympics for being "overweight" in the 50 kg category. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also asked IOA chief P.T. Usha to take "appropriate action". Mr Mandaviya said the government had provided all possible assistance to Phogat according to her requirements, which included personal staff. The Opposition parties walked out from the Lok Sabha over the Phogat issue. "Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat has been disqualified from the Paris Olympics due to being overweight by 100 gm. Vinesh was playing in the 50 kg category and her weight had to be 50 kg for the competition. According to the rules and regulations of the UWW (United World Wrestling), for all competitions, weigh-ins are organised every morning for the respective category," Mr Mandaviya said. "On August 7, the weight for 50 kg women's wrestling was determined at 7.15-7.30 am (Paris time) for wrestlers participating in repechages. Vinesh's weight was found to be 50 kg and 100 gm. Therefore, she was declared ineligible for the competition," he said.

Earlier as the news of Phogat's disqualification broke, Opposition MPs protested in the House during the Zero Hour demanding a statement from the government over the issue. Some MPs also trooped into the Well of the House raising slogans demanding that the sports minister should answer. As Opposition MPs protested, Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal intervened and said the minister would make a statement in the House at 3 pm over the issue.



Plastic waste float around the Vizhinjam fishing harbour posing a threat to marine life in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. — PTI

Govt: K'taka, HP, Assam got highest funds for flood relief

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

The Centre on Wednesday informed the Rajya Sabha that it has granted the highest allocation to Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and Assam under the National Disaster Response Fund in the last two years, 2022-2024. The funds were given for relief and rehabilitation of people affected by natural disasters. In a written reply, Union minister of state for home Nityanand Rai said while ₹941 crores was approved by the Centre's high-level committee for Karnataka, ₹873 crores and ₹594 crores were approved for Himachal Pradesh and Assam for floods and landslides in 2022-24. He said ₹939 crores were released to Karnataka from the NDRF, ₹812 crores to Himachal and ₹160 crores to Assam in the last two years. He also said that Tamil Nadu has been given ₹276



Rescue operation underway at the cloudburst-hit Rajban village in Mandi on Wednesday. — PTI

crores for floods and cyclone, Sikkim ₹267 crores for floods and landslides and Nagaland ₹68 crores in the last two years. The minister said during 2024-25 (as of July 31), inter-ministerial Central teams (IMCTs) have been constituted for on-the-spot assessment of damages due to cyclonic storm Remal in Mizoram and Manipur, floods and landslides in Assam and landslides in Kerala. Mizoram and Manipur have submitted memorandums for additional financial assistance from the NDRF for ₹216.73 crores and ₹711.43 crores, respectively. "Additional financial assistance from the NDRF is considered as per the established procedure," he said.

Rahul: Declare Kerala tragedy a national disaster

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday urged the government to declare the recent calamity in Kerala's Wayanad a national disaster. Speaking during the Zero Hour, the Congress MP also demanded higher compensation for the people affected. Emphasising the need to declare the Wayanad landslides a national disaster, the Leader of the Opposition said, "I saw it with my own eyes. I visited many different places where the disaster took place. In some cases, an entire family is gone, with just one person remaining, sometimes an adult or a child." "With more than 200 dead and a vast number missing, the eventual casualty count may exceed 400," the Lok Sabha Opposition leader added. — PTI

MVA to sound poll bugle for Maha polls on Aug. 16

Top alliance leaders discuss seat-sharing, CMP

SONU SHRIVASTAVA MUMBAI, AUG. 7

Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) want to sound Maha Vikas Aghadi's poll bugle for Maharashtra Assembly election with a joint meeting of office-bearers of all alliance parties on August 16. Earlier, the Congress had said the alliance's election campaign will be launched with an event on former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's birth anniversary on August 20. The Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) have asked for the joint meeting of the MVA office bearers at Shantimukhananda Hall in Mumbai. Maharashtra Congress leader Nana Patole, senior Congress leader Balasaheb Thorat, Leader of the Opposition Vijay Wadetiwar, NCP (SP) president Jayant Patil, Rajesh Tope, Anil Deshmukh, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Ambadas Danve and Vinayak Raut



Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi being greeted by Shiv Sena(UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTI

Prithviraj Chavan has been working on the manifesto of the MVA. "We held a positive discussion. The state-level joint meeting of party office bearers of alliance parties in MVA will be held in Shantimukhananda auditorium in Mumbai on August 16. The MVA will sound poll bugle on August 16 through this joint meeting," he said. The Congress leader said in addition to this, there would be a function on August 20 to celebrate the birth anniversary of former PM late Rajiv Gandhi. "Lok Sabha leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi will come to Mumbai to attend the birth anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi. We will invite all other party leaders to attend it," he said. The Congress leader further said that there would be the next meeting of MVA at the end of this month and seat sharing talks would start at that time.

Poll team to arrive in Srinagar today to discuss schedule EC sets ball rolling for J&K election

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, AUG. 7

The entire body of the Election Commission of India comprising Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and election commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Dr Sukhbir Singh Sandhu will be arriving here on Thursday on a two-day visit of Jammu and Kashmir for threeday discussions with the stakeholders before deciding the Assembly election dates in the Union territory. The last Assembly elections in the erstwhile state

of J&K were held in 2014. The state was brought under Governor's Rule following the PDP-BJP coalition government collapse in June 2018. J&K was split into the Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in August 2019 when its special status envisaged in Article 370 was also withdrawn by the Centre. A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court had on December 11 last year while upholding the power of the President to abrogate Article 370, saying that the provision was a temporary measure

► OFFICIAL SOURCES here said the EC will hold a meeting with the representatives of political parties here on Thursday meant to ensure J&K's integration into India, set a deadline of September 2024 for the EC to hold Assembly polls in the UT. While some Kashmir political parties are pessimistic towards the intent of the government at the Centre, Union minister G. Kishan Reddy, who was in Jammu earlier this

week to address a BJP rally organised on the fifth anniversary of the abrogation of Article 37, confirmed that J&K Assembly elections would be held in September. Mr Reddy, the election in-charge of the BJP in J&K, said he and his party were sure that the people will vote for it to form a government of its own for maintaining the "development tempo and rooting out terrorism." Official sources here said the EC will hold a meeting with the representatives of political parties here on Thursday.

Tribunal confirms 5-yr ban extension on Simi

New Delhi, Aug. 7: A judicial tribunal has confirmed the five-year extension of the ban imposed on Students Islamic Movement of India (Simi), saying the outfit has not abandoned its objective of "Jehaad" for the cause of Islam and that it continues to work for establishment of Islamic rule in India. The tribunal, consisting of Delhi high court judge Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav, was constituted under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, after the Centre on January 29, 2024, decided to extend the ban on Simi for five years. The tribunal was set up on February 16 for adjudicating whether or not there was sufficient cause

for declaring Simi an outlawed organisation. On July 24, the tribunal by exercising the powers conferred by sub-section (3) of section 4 of the UAPA passed an order confirming the declaration of ban on Simi, an official notification said. The tribunal cited a host of reasons for the confirmation of ban on SIMI, saying the group continues to work for establishment of Islamic Rule in India, as part of furthering the objectives of the proscribed terrorist organisation ISIS/Daish. The stated objectives of Simi are "Jehaad" (religious war) for the cause of Islam, destruction of nationalism and establishment of Islamic rule or Caliphate, the notification said. — PTI

Govt of India is responsible for defending Manipur: MP

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

Congress Lok Sabha member from Inner Manipur Angomcha Bimol Akoijam on Wednesday said that the Government of India is responsible for defending Manipur and must take stern action against communal and divisive forces that have wreaked havoc in the state. Raising the issue during Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, Mr Akoijam said that divisive elements as well as "foreign powers" and "illegal immigrants" were disrupting peace efforts in the state that has been facing a crisis for 14 months. "Peace efforts have

been made and there was an agreement achieved by two communities in the district of Jiribam, mediated by the security forces. Unfortunately, they were subverted by communal, divisive and sectarian forces," Mr Akoijam said. He mentioned that the Government of India has a "historical, political, moral and legal responsibility to defend Manipur as an entity that existed before the commencement of this Constitution as stated in schedule one of the Constitution". "In the instrument of accession signed by the then maharaja of the state on August 11, 1947, the defence of the state

was handed over to the Government of India, and therefore the Government of India must take stern action against these divisive forces aided by foreign elements," he said. Mr Akoijam stated there is a need to take the necessary steps to delineate citizens from non-citizens. "I appeal to this House as well as the Government of India to make sure that Article 19 works in the state of Manipur and that people have the capacity to move freely on the highways as well as territories within the state. It should not be restricted because one belongs to one community or the other," he said.

Sharad Pawar to start yatra across Maha to counter Ajit

AGE CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, AUG. 7

Ahead of Maharashtra Assembly polls, NCP(SP) chief Sharad Pawar will take out state-wide "Shivswarajya Yatra". The yatra will begin from Shivneri, the birthplace of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, in Pune on August 9. The NCP (SP) said that

the yatra would expose misdeeds of the BJP-led Mahayuti government. The NCP's yatra assumes significance in the backdrop of Ajit Pawar-led NCP's "Jan Samman Yatra" which is to be launched from Nashik on Thursday. In the coming days, there is likely to be a clash over "Samman" versus Swabhiman" yatras.

SHORT TAKES

Beer found in health centre, 1 suspended

Bulandshahr (UP): A probe was ordered after pictures of beer cans and water bottles in the vaccine freezer of a primary health centre in the Khurja area of Uttar Pradesh district surfaced on social media, officials said on Wednesday. Chief medical officer Vinay Kumar Singh said beer cans and water bottles were found in the vaccine freezer of the primary health centre located at Dharga on Monday. As a rule, nothing other than vaccines can be kept in the freezer, he said and added that storing beer cans and water bottles in the freezer was a serious matter. On the basis of the district immunisation officer's report, primary health centre immunisation officer Hari Prasad was prima facie found guilty and suspended. Attempts are underway to find out who put the beer cans and water bottles in the freezer, Mr Singh said. — PTI

5 of family killed in Rajasthan road crash

Jaipur: Five members of a family were killed and a minor girl was injured when a truck rammied into a motorcycle in Rajasthan's Chittorgarh district, police said on Wednesday. The incident occurred on the Chittorgarh-Nimahera highway on Tuesday night. Six people were riding on the bike. Two of the deceased worked as labourers at a factory and were returning from work when the accident took place. Nimbahera Sadar SHO Sanjay Sharma said an information was received at 10 pm last night that a heavy vehicle hit a bike near Bahawlia village, which is about seven kilometers away from the city. "Five, including a woman and an eight-year-old girl, were killed on the spot whereas another one-year-old girl was hurt," he said. — PTI

N-E insurgents may try re-enter Bangla: Assam CM

Continued From Page 1
Dhaka and ensure that Northeast insurgents are not allowed to re-enter Bangladesh." He said that if the unrest continues in Bangladesh, some people may try to cross over to India so it was necessary that border security was strengthened. Reflecting on the gravity of the situation, Mr Sarma said: "In these uncertain times, as we vigilantly monitor our borders with Bangladesh, my thoughts often turn to the future of Assam. I pray for the strength and endurance to navigate the present with courage, hoping that our efforts today will lay the foundation for a brighter tomorrow. We must have the resolve to protect our religion and culture." Some time back, Mr Sarma had claimed that Hindus will be reduced to a minority in Assam by 2041.

Attacks on minorities rise, students patrol the streets

Continued From Page 1
Rahman) was instrumental in our liberation war against the then Pakistani regime." A local TV channel, News 24, and other visual media went on to telecast peace marches by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). As the police forces were going through a major overhaul, efforts were on to restore law and order in the country. Md Mainul Islam has been appointed as the inspector-general of police. The contractual appointment of Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun as IGP was cancelled on Tuesday. However, the Bangladesh TV channels continue to report that with police forces missing from Dhaka and adjoining areas, the students have taken on "security duties". A Bangladeshi newspaper Kaler Kontho reported that over the past couple of days at least 470 police stations were plundered and set ablaze. The Daily Star, in a news report published on Wednesday, said: "With many police stations unmanned and arms and ammunition looted, there is a sense of serious insecurity among people in the capital and elsewhere in the country." Panic seemed to have gripped police personnel after former PM Hasina fled the country. A local news portal bdnews24.com reported: "To save their lives, many top police officials, along with other officers, have gone into hiding."

CBI raids 15 C'garh areas over PSC scam

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY RAIPUR, AUG. 7

The CBI on Wednesday conducted searches at 15 places in Chhattisgarh linked to the accused in the infamous Public Service Commission (PSC) scam, which surfaced during the previous Bhopesh Baghel government.

The alleged scam involved the recruitment of "ineligible" family members of politicians, PSC officials and public servants in the "Class 2" posts of the Chhattisgarh government.

The alleged scandal sparked public outrage during the previous Congress government in the state, leading the BJP to make it a major poll issue in the December 2023 Assembly polls.

As per sources in the CBI, the searches took place at six locations and at premises linked to those who benefited from the scam.

The premier investigating agency in its FIR has named 16 candidates who were appointed as deputy collectors, deputy superintendents of police and other Class 2 jobs in the state government.

Prominent among those whose premises were searched by the CBI on Wednesday were Amrit Xalxi, secretary to the former governor of Chhattisgarh, senior Congress leader Rajendra Shukla and ex-chairman of Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission Taman Sonwani.



Maratha reservation activist Manoj Jarange Patil addresses a rally in Solapur on Wednesday. — PTI

C'garh approves new tiger reserve, will be 3rd largest

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY RAIPUR, AUG. 7

The third largest tiger reserve in the country is set to come up in Chhattisgarh, with the Vishnu Deo Sai government notifying the "Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve", spread over an area of 2829.387 sq km. The state Cabinet, which met in Raipur under the chairmanship of chief minister Sai, gave the stamp of approval to notify the tiger reserve comprising Guru Ghasidas National Park and Tamor Pingla Wildlife Sanctuary in Chhattisgarh. This will be the fourth tiger reserve in Chhattisgarh.

"Following the recommendations of the state wildlife board and the concurrence of the National Tiger Conservation Authority, under the ministry of environment, forest and climate change, the Cabinet has decided to notify the Guru Ghasidas-Tamor Pingla Tiger Reserve," a press release issued by the state government said.

As per the latest census report, Chhattisgarh has 17 tigers. The previous Raman Singh government had sent a draft to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) recommending the creation of a new tiger reserve by integrating

Tiger kills 56-yr-old woman in MP's Kanha National Park

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, AUG 7

A 56-year-old woman was killed by a tiger in Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh, police said on Wednesday.

The incident took place in a forest falling under the Kanha Tiger Reserve late on Monday evening, according to Baihar police station in-charge Ramakrishna Raghuvamsi.

The tribal woman's daughter and her neighbour however had managed to flee the spot and informed the local villagers about the incident.

The NTCA had approved the proposal in 2021. However, the notification of the tiger reserve was delayed due to the presence of coal blocks, oil blocks and methane gas blocks in the regions.

As per police, a tribal woman Kalavati Dhruve along with her daughter and a neighbour went to the forest on the fateful day to collect forest produce. A tiger suddenly attacked her and then dragged her into the forest, police said.

The tribal woman's daughter and her neighbour however had managed to flee the spot and informed the local villagers about the incident.

The NTCA had approved the proposal in 2021. However, the notification of the tiger reserve was delayed due to the presence of coal blocks, oil blocks and methane gas blocks in the regions.

AI & IndiGo operate spl flights to Dhaka

Non-essential staff at Indian high commission return

New Delhi, Aug. 7: Air India and IndiGo operated special flights to Dhaka, bringing more than 400 people amid a volatile situation in the Bangladesh capital. A special Air India flight brought 205 people, including 6 infants, from Dhaka to New Delhi on Wednesday morning, an official said.



Passengers come out after the Air India flight from Dhaka arrived at the airport in New Delhi, early Wednesday. — PTI

IndiGo's special flight flew from Dhaka to Kolkata on Tuesday to bring back Indian nationals from Bangladesh, the airline said in a statement. The Air India chartered flight, which took off for the Bangladesh capital late Tuesday, was operated with an A321 neo aircraft. The flight brought back 205 people — 199 adults and 6 infants — from Dhaka.

Air India operated the flight, which took off from the national capital without any passengers, at a very short notice despite infrastructure challenges at the airport there, said the official in the know of the developments.

"Following the temporary closure of Dhaka airport, IndiGo operated a special flight 6E 8503 from Dhaka to Kolkata on

August 06, 2024. This flight was conducted to bring back Indian nationals from Bangladesh," the airline said in the statement.

A source in the know said the IndiGo special flight carried more than 200 passengers from Dhaka to Kolkata.

The carrier also said normal flight operations between India and Dhaka are scheduled to resume on Wednesday and it has contacted all affected customers, providing updates and offering alternative travel arrangements.

IndiGo operates one daily flight from Delhi,

Mumbai and Chennai to Dhaka and two daily services from Kolkata.

Air India will be commencing its scheduled operations — two daily flights from the national capital — to Dhaka on Wednesday.

Non-essential staffers at the Indian high commission in Dhaka and their family members are returning to India on a voluntary basis through commercial flights, official sources said on Wednesday. However, all Indian diplomats at the mission are operating from the Bangladesh capital, the said. — PTI

Amarnath Yatra crosses 5L mark in first 40 days

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, AUG. 7

With a couple of thousand more devotees paying obeisance at Amarnath on Wednesday, the number of pilgrims who visited the revered cave-shrine tucked away in the Kashmir Himalayas at a height of 3,888 metres, so far, during the annual yatra has touched 5.07 lakh mark.

Last year, a little over 4.5 lakh pilgrims had prayed and had the darshan of the fully formed natural Shivaling or icelingham of Lord Shiva at Amarnath.

The Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) and the J&K government had expected the number of pilgrims this year to exceed those in 2023.

The 52-day-long yatra started from both traditional Pahalgam (Anantnag district) and shorter Baltal (Ganderbal district) routes on June 29 and it will conclude on August 19, coinciding with Shravan Purnima and Raksha Bandhan.

SC: Judges should exercise caution in court observations

Expunges Punjab & Haryana HC judge's remarks against apex court

RAKESH K. SINGH NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

Stating that it is pained by the "scandalous" and "unwarranted" observation of high court judge Justice Rajbir Sehrawat, the Supreme Court on Wednesday expunged it and said due caution should be exercised while making remarks in an era of live streaming of court proceedings.

The matter related to a contempt matter of Justice Sherawat of the Punjab and Haryana HC, who had recently made strong observations against the SC. Taking suo motu note of the remarks by the high court judge, the SC said his observations were scandalous, unwarranted and a matter of grave concern.

A five-judge bench headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud, however, refused to initiate proceedings against Justice Sehrawat for his remarks. The apex court also advised him to observe

"judicial discipline" and exercise caution in future while dealing with orders of the apex court and division benches.

Stressing that the Constitution was supreme and not the HCs or apex court, the bench said the observations by Justice Sehrawat were wholly unnecessary for the conduct of the proceedings before the high court.

The special bench said: "We are of the view that the observations which were made in the order...were totally unnecessary for the ultimate order which was passed. Gratuitous observations in regard to previous orders passed by the SC...are absolutely unwarranted. Compliance with orders passed by the SC is not a matter of choice, but a matter of bounden constitutional obligation bearing in mind the structure of the Indian legal system and the authority of the SC, which heads the process of judicial adjudication in the country."

J&K to promote offbeat places to end overcrowding at popular spots

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, AUG. 7

With the influx of tourists in the scenic Kashmir surpassing all previous records, its popular resorts have been overcrowded and, therefore, the government is planning to promote more offbeat destinations by making them accessible and creating necessary infrastructure.

Stating this, Union minister of Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said that soaring plains temperatures have driven millions to overcrowded hill stations (in J&K, Uttarakhand, and HP) and in view of this the government has initiated measures to promote the offbeat destinations.

About Kashmir, he said,



An artisan demonstrates her work on the occasion of 10th National Handloom Day at Kashmir Haat in Srinagar on Wednesday. — PTI

"The popular tourist destinations are witnessing a huge rush of visitors, and it is therefore necessary to divert both domestic and foreign tourists towards virgin and offbeat destinations." The Centre, he said, is committed to provide all required support to improve road and mobile connectivity to the less explored destinations

across the country and has asked all the states including the J&K administration to come up with a roadmap to improve infrastructure, network connectivity, and roads to make the less-explored destinations more accessible to both domestic and foreign tourists.

Mr. Shekhawat who was talking to reporters after presiding over the 25th Annual National Convention of Tourist Guides Federation of India held at the lakeside Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre here also said that the government has started online modules to enhance skills of guides even as new training programs are being set-up for the new guides.

Lok Sabha clears Budget

Continued From Page 1

benefit in the calculation of LTCG on the sale of immovable properties. The Budget, presented on July 23, 2024 had proposed a lower 12.5 per cent rate of LTCG tax, down from 20 per cent, while doing away with the indexation benefit. In the LS, the finance minister began her address by listing out all the measures that have been taken by the Modi-led government for the middle class. Apart from a substantial relief to the middle class, she also said that there would be a comprehensive review of the rate structure of indirect taxes in the next 6 months as well.

The major amendment in the bill relates to the restoration of indexation benefits on the sale of properties bought prior to July 23. Now individuals or Hindu undivided families (HUFs) who bought houses before July 23 can opt to pay LTCG tax under the new scheme at the rate of 12.5 per cent without indexation or claim the indexation benefit and pay 20 per cent tax.

"Taxpayers can compute liability on the sale of land and buildings acquired before July 23 on the lower of the new and old LTCG tax rates... The current amendments ensure there will be no additional tax burden with regard to the LTCG tax on real estate sales. We did not remove the indexation benefit on LTCG tax to increase revenue; rollover provision exists if capital gains are invested in new properties," she added. "The indexation benefit was proposed to be removed from the Budget to bring all asset classes under one rate and not to enhance revenue," the Union finance minister said.

On Tuesday, the government distributed a circular proposing significant relief for individuals who bought houses before July 23 by giving them

the option to choose between two tax rates for the LTCG tax.

In her reply, Ms Sitharaman said that without drastically increasing taxes, the Modi government has brought in a simplified taxation regime and eased compliance. "The middle class benefited from various tax proposals in the Budgets brought by the Modi government," she said.

Lauding the PM's efforts during the Covid breakout, the finance minister said that PM's direction to me was in total contrast to what was happening in developed countries — no tax on citizens to meet Covid expenditure. "The country has moved away from the days of tax terrorism. The fearless appeal scheme — Vivaad Se Vishwas — brought relief to a large number of taxpayers," she said. "The pending litigation and demands sorted under the Vivaad Se Vishwas scheme helped middle-class and small businesses. Besides, increasing the LTCG tax exemption limit to ₹1.25 lakhs from 1 lakh will help the middle class invest in the stock market as well," she said.

Ms Sitharaman also noted that the effective tax on annual income of ₹15 lakhs was reduced to 10 per cent in 2023 and further reduced this year as well under the new I-T regime. "On income tax returns, the average processing time of income tax returns has reduced from 93 days in 2013 to 10 days now. Also, 7,754 tax appeals will be withdrawn from various judicial forums due to an upward revision of the monetary limit for filing appeals," she said. On ITR, the minister said as many as 5.25-crore taxpayers or 72.8 per cent of individuals, choose the new I-T regime. The finance minister further said that the customs duty cut on labour-intensive leather and textile sectors will promote trade and employment.

Yunus to take oath as interim head

Continued From Page 1

that Ms Hasina will continue to remain in Delhi till she is able to fly to a safe European destination amid indications of reported hesitation and reluctance on the part of Britain to grant her asylum, citing rules.

Ms Hasina's US-based son Sajeb Wazed Joy has reportedly said she is going to stay in Delhi "for a little while". Ms Hasina's sister Sheikh Rehana, who also fled her country along with her, and her daughter Saima Wazed, who is the World Health Organisation regional director for Southeast Asia and is based in New Delhi, are accompanying her.

In a video interview with German broadcaster Deutsche Welle, Mr Joy, when asked about Ms Hasina's reported plans to seek asylum in a third country, said, "These are all rumours. She has not made a decision on that yet. She is going to stay in Delhi for a little while. My sister is with her. So she is not alone."

Mr Joy when asked if he has any plans to join politics, laughed it off by saying, "There is no such plan right now. This is the third time a coup d'état was staged against our family."

According to reports, Ms Hasina's niece and Ms. Rehana's daughter Tulip Siddiq is a member of the British Parliament.

As reported, Britain, according to media reports, has made it clear that it has no provision in its immigration rules for someone to be allowed to travel to seek asylum or temporary refuge. It has also been reportedly suggested that those who need asylum should claim it in the first safe country they reach. This, in Ms Hasina's case, will mean India, which could put both her and New Delhi in a quandary.

The British government, according to reports, has indicated that Ms Hasina may not get legal protection against any possible probe into the massive violent protests in her country.

Ms Hasina has been a close friend of New Delhi for decades. On Tuesday, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar had told an all-party meeting that the former Bangladesh PM is in a state of shock after her sudden ouster from her country and that the Indian government is giving her time to recover before it speaks to her over various issues, including her future plans.

New Delhi is expected to continue seeking engagement with a new government in Bangladesh, whether interim or post-elections, and therefore could be wary that a new government in Dhaka may not take kindly to Ms

Hasina being given shelter for a long time in India.

On Wednesday, Mr Yunus, the 84-year-old economist and the designated head of Bangladesh's interim government, fervently appealed to everybody "to stay calm" and "refrain from all kinds of violence" as the country witnessed a major reshuffle in the security establishment following the ouster of the Hasina government.

Mr Yunus, whose name was first proposed for the top job by the coordinators of the Students Against Discrimination movement, congratulated the "brave students" who took the lead in making what he called "our second Victory Day possible".

"Let us make the best use of our new victory. Let us not let this slip away because of our mistakes," said Mr Yunus, who will return home from Paris on Thursday to take charge. "I fervently appeal to everybody to stay calm. Please refrain from all kinds of violence." He appealed to all students, political parties and non-political people to stay calm. "This is our beautiful country with lots of exciting possibilities. We must protect and make it a wonderful country for us and for our future generations," he said in a statement. "Let us not miss the chance by going into any senseless violence. Violence is our enemy. Please don't create more enemies. Be calm and get ready to build the country," he said.

THE ASIAN AGE

8 AUGUST 2024

Harris, Walz get ready to battle Trump, Vance

It is all set for a battle royale as the US Democratic Party, much energised after Kamala Harris took over the nomination for the presidential election when White House resident Joe Biden threw in the towel because of old age, is ready to face the Republican Party's Donald Trump. Keeping her ideological credentials intact, Ms Harris chose the left-liberal leaning progressive governor of Minnesota as her running mate. Kamala Harris and Tim Walz versus Donald Trump and J.D. Vance is the billing for the big fight now.

It is not without old fears resurfacing and new anxieties building that the US heads to its November 5 date with democracy. As one assassination bid on Mr Trump failed and other conspiracies against both candidates were spotted and squashed in time, the events are seen as symbolic of a postmodern United States, with its endless arguments over gun control in an increasingly fractious world beset by divisiveness of all kinds.

How much has changed even as battle lines were being drawn for these crucial elections that may have repercussions for the world at large became apparent in the popularity polls closing to a point where it might be difficult to call out who is the clear favourite. The thumping lead Mr Trump seemed to enjoy in the immediate aftermath of a sniper falling in his lone wolf attempt on the former President seems to have thinned out as Joe Biden decided over a weekend that his critics were right about his age working against him.

Kamala Harris, with the highest communication skills, is a different proposition for the convicted felon of a former President. Indeed, Mr Trump was lording it over a fumbling Mr Biden whose cognitive abilities were seen folding up against the challenge of the job besides having to handle the campaign in which the debate appearance proved decisive as the worst fears over his mental fitness emerged. The odds have changed with the gap between the leading contenders in public rating closing in to negligible percentages.

In deciding to pick Tim Walz from Minnesota rather than John Shapiro of Pennsylvania, who might have struggled to attract votes at a time when Israel has stoked conflicting feelings and loyalties in the US with its war on the Palestinians, Kamala's instincts may have led her to the better option. There may be huge unknowns as the campaign cranks up to speed, but with support and dollars pouring in, Kamala and Walz may have given the Democrats their best shot at retaining the power of the presidency.

Campaign speeches about the candidates and their deputies are bound to get even more interesting as the representatives of both parties feel no need to observe any courtesies, or even acceptable taste in deeply personal attacks. But that is par for the course in politics, more so in the land of free speech where no-holds-barred campaigns light up the period to the polls.

Never the one to back down, Mr Trump, who brought race and "birthism" into his speeches once Kamala's name came on to the ticket, had also made an unusual pick for running mate in Mr Vance, a politician who had had the nastiest things to say of him. The verbal battles have been sharp enough already as the country with the world's biggest economy and its most powerful military goes to the polls in 2024, the year of notable elections round the world.

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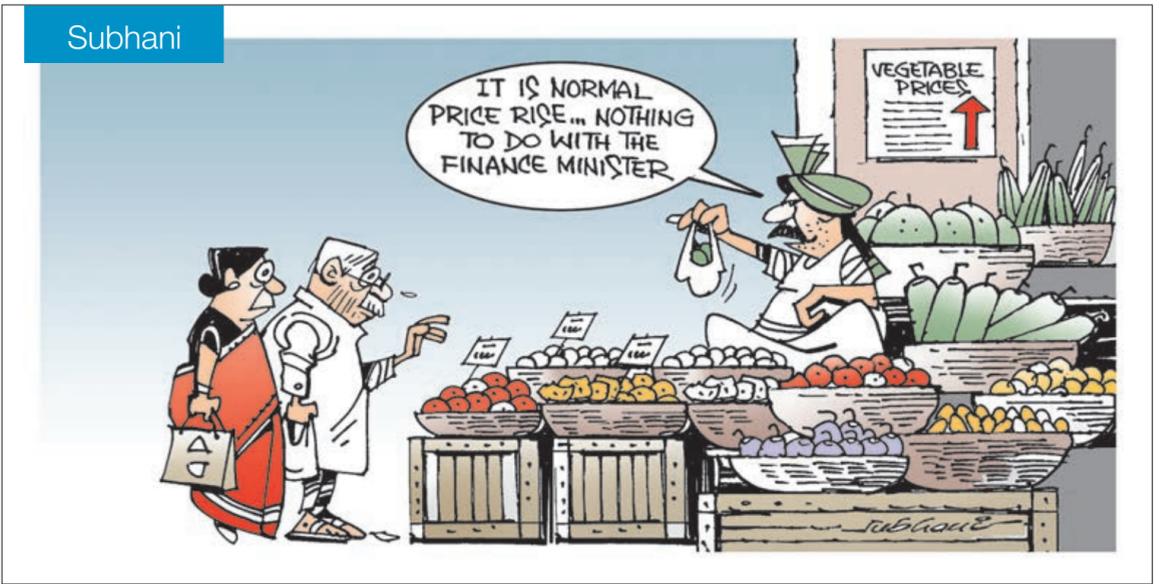
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Subhani



Caste, data & sub-quotas: No wriggle room for PM



Shikha Mukerjee

Childish truculence is writ all over the Narendra Modi-led new minority government's reaction that the water leaking in the grand lobby of the new Parliament building was a minor matter, a "so what, huh!" event. For the far bigger and more political consequential matter of the Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe sub-categorisation by state governments, enabled by the landmark order of the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, the "so what" posture will not do.

Judged by the Supreme Court of 2024, identifying SCs and STs by "different degrees" of economic and social backwardness relative to other groups within SCs and STs is necessary to fulfil the promise of equality and justice. The court held that some SCs and STs even after reservation kicked in have been left behind. By identifying these sub-castes and listing them for reservation benefits, the necessary correction would have been made to satisfy the principle of equality, the judgment held.

The Supreme Court has sensibly recognised that "the inclusion [in the presidential list] does not automatically lead to the formation of a uniform and internally homogenous class which cannot be further classified". By recognising that there are the relatively worse off within the SC/ST communities, the Supreme Court has obviously opened the door compelling the states to identify the "creamy layer" within.

The decision is pointed; relative deprivation or discrimination or backwardness must be "quantifiable and demonstrable" with adequate data to verify the social and economic condition of the group. By adding that notifications categorising

In Bihar, where elections are due in early 2025, the quantifiable and demonstrable test of relative deprivation is a time bomb waiting to explode for the Nitish Kumar-led JD(U)-BJP alliance

backward classes" in relation to that state or Union territory, fits into the new order of things.

A Centrally-controlled list that had stalled the inclusion of Madigas in Telangana as a sub-category within the SC group, the Paswans in Bihar, the Jatavs in Uttar Pradesh and the Arundhatiyars in Tamil Nadu as sub-categories has now been removed. The reactions of the chief ministers of Tamil Nadu and Telangana, M.K. Stalin and A. Revanth Reddy, confirm the political impact of the Supreme Court's decision.

In Bihar, where elections are due in early 2025, the quantifiable and demonstrable test of relative deprivation is a time bomb waiting to explode for the Nitish Kumar-led Janata Dal (United)-BJP alliance. Having fought with the Modi government over the legitimacy of its caste survey, what will Nitish Kumar do now? He has the data. Will he insist on using it to identify sub-castes and Muslims within these sub-castes and offer them reservations?

Chest-thumping posturing that amendments to the Constitution that violate its sanctity will be defeated because these are conspiracies by the Congress and the Opposition to pamper vote banks and divide the people will not work either. The judgment is perfectly clear that categorisation henceforward has to be based on data.

The BJP's problems are not limited to managing its allies like Nitish Kumar or N. Chandrababu Naidu of Andhra Pradesh, where the Madigas have hailed the Supreme Court decision. Neither friend nor foe par-

ties like the Bahujan Samaj Party have chipped in with its demand that listed reservation beneficiaries should be put into the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution.

The BJP is now in a fix. Its aversion to data is evident in its stubborn and harmful delays on announcing the start of the population census. The Modi government has withheld data on the Caste Survey of 2011, releasing bits and pieces that fit its political purposes over the years. However much it may be a "sensitive domestic issue" as RSS leader Ram Madhav has described it, the Sangh Parivar cannot duck addressing it. To say nothing or worse do nothing in BJP-ruled states would alienate the sub-castes demanding separate listing as a quick fix on their grievance of relative deprivation. To do something would require the Modi government to conduct a caste survey.

There are voices that are growing louder from within the BJP ranks that have welcomed the expansion of the list of identified SCs and STs. The reaction of a BJP stalwart from Varanasi, Bizay Sonkar Shastri, who was the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes chief during Atal Behari Vajpayee's government, was unambiguous: "those who have not got the benefit for long" need to be helped, he said. The cleavages within the BJP are now out in the open.

The data in the 14-year-old socio-economic caste census of 2011 is now outdated. A new census on caste is necessary to meet the condition laid down by the Supreme Court. The Modi government has a choice; it can notify that the long-delayed Census, including a caste census, be held immediately, or it can stop attacking the states, albeit all Opposition-ruled, that have either conducted such surveys or will now do so. The time for eating his cake and having it too on data is clearly over for the Prime Minister.

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist based in Kolkata

LETTERS ALMOST VICTORIOUS

What might have happened had Vinesh Phogat won a gold medal in Paris? Had Vinesh Phogat won the Olympic gold in Paris it would have meant a fresh start for the sport of wrestling in India. Had Vinesh Phogat won the gold medal, it would have changed the lives of millions of Indian girls. Had Vinesh won gold, entire families would have been liberated. Mothers would no longer blackmail and slutshame daughters, having lost the power of precedent, parents would no longer be able to stunt their youngsters. Had Vinesh Phogat won gold, the whole of India would have become unstoppable. Had Vinesh won, there would have been no looking back.

Priyanka Mathur
Noida

ISLAMIST USA?

INDIA'S diplomatic challenges appear to be increasing following the exit of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. While the Narendra Modi government did a good thing by sheltering Hasina, this could lead to an increase in anti-India sentiments in Bangladesh. Sheikh Hasina had under her control those anti-India elements, but with no chance of her returning to Bangladesh, and the West turning its back on her, India's ability to secure its interests in Bangladesh will evidently become difficult. Britain is unwilling to provide Sheikh Hasina sanctuary, and America not only cancelled her visa but also applauded the Army there, knowing full well that it is willing to have fundamentalist forces participate in the interim administration.

Abhijit Roy
Jamshedpur

ALL TOO 'VIRTUOUS'

A POST is doing the rounds in social media about how 'God' has taken revenge on the people of Wayanad for killing a pregnant elephant four years ago by planting firecrackers inside pineapples! I wonder if the creator of the post had been a farmer and invested precious money, time and energy to nurture the crops; would he then have welcomed the marauding elephants with garlands and fruits? Even if that act was "unpardonable", for the "sin" of a few, how can 'God' kill around 400 innocent citizens! It is indeed sad to witness proliferation of such foolish, bigoted talk.

Kajal Chatterjee
Kolkata

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Preety Sudan's challenge is to clean up and reform UPSC

Preety Sudan has her work cut out for her as she steps into the role of UPSC chairperson. Taking over from Dr Manoj Soni, who resigned unexpectedly amidst a storm of controversy, she faces the daunting task of restoring the commission's credibility. Mr Soni resigned for personal reasons and left five years before his term was scheduled to end. His departure coincided with a scandal involving trainee IAS officer Pujya Khedkar, who is accused of fraudulently taking the civil services examination 12 times, well beyond the permitted attempts. This scandal has severely tarnished the UPSC's image, and Sudan's leadership will be crucial in navigating the aftermath.

A retired 1983-batch IAS officer from the Andhra Pradesh cadre, Ms Sudan brings a wealth of experience. Having served as the Union health secretary during the Covid-19 pandemic, she was instrumental in shaping the country's response to one of the most significant health crises in recent history. Appointed as a member of the UPSC in 2022, Ms Sudan now steps into the chairperson's role with the formidable challenge of steering the commission towards greater transparency and much-needed reforms.

Her tenure, which will last until March 2025,

is relatively short, but the expectations are high. The UPSC, once a symbol of integrity in Indian bureaucracy, now finds itself in desperate need of a larger cleansing. Ms Sudan's experience, particularly her strategic acumen displayed during the pandemic, will be essential in restoring trust and ensuring that the UPSC emerges stronger from this crisis.

SURPRISE SHAKEUP AT BSF

In a move that took many by surprise, the ministry of home affairs suddenly removed BSF director-general Nitin Agrawal and his deputy, special DG (west) Y.B. Khurania, sending them back to their state cadres without warning. Agrawal, from the 1989 Kerala cadre, had only been in the top job since last June, while Mr Khurania, a 1990 Odisha cadre officer, was in charge of the BSF's operations along the Pakistan border.

This abrupt move has set tongues wagging, with many wondering what's really behind it. The timing is especially curious — Mr Agrawal was still two years away from retirement, so the decision has left many puzzled. Some believe it's a response to the recent spike in militant activity in Jammu and Kashmir, a region where the BSF is on the frontlines.

There were already whispers that Mr Khurania might be heading back to take on the role of director general of police (DGP) in his home state, but the sudden removal of both officers at the same time has fuelled speculation that this could be about more than just routine transfers. With rising concerns over border security, especially with increasing infiltration incidents, some think this shakeup could be a direct response to those challenges.

The government hasn't said much about the reasons behind the move, but it's evident that the situation is far from straightforward. As events unfold, we'll likely get a better sense of what prompted this unexpected change in leadership at the BSF.

PM CONFIDANT NOW PUDUCHERRY L-G

President Droupadi Murmu recently appointed new governors for several states, including Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Telangana, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh. The lieutenant-governors of Puducherry and Chandigarh were changed. Among these appointments, the most intriguing is that of K. Kailashnathan, one of Gujarat's most influential bureaucrats, who has been named lieutenant-governor of Puducherry.

Kailashnathan, widely known as KK, has been a pivotal figure in the administrative corridors since his retirement as additional chief secretary of Gujarat in 2013. His appointment now as the lieutenant-governor of Puducherry underscores his continuing importance to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

KK's administrative journey is marked by his seamless transition from retirement to becoming the chief principal secretary to the chief minister of Gujarat, a role specifically created for him. During his tenure, he served under four chief ministers — Narendra Modi, Anandiben Patel, Vijay Rupani, and Bhupendra Patel. Despite this, KK has consistently been seen as a trusted confidant of Mr Modi, effectively acting as a vital link between Ahmedabad and New Delhi.

KK's influence in Gujarat's administrative landscape has been enduring, and his latest appointment merely highlights the trust and reliance that the Central leadership continues to place in him.

Love them, hate them ignore them at national peril, is the babu guarantee and Dilip's belief. Share significant babu escapades at dilipcherian@hotmail.com.



SHORT TAKES

PUNCHING DANISH PM: POLISH MAN GETS JAIL TERM

Copenhagen, Aug. 7: A Polish man was sentenced to four months in prison on Wednesday for punching Danish PM Mette Frederiksen while she walked through Copenhagen in June, in a case that raised concern over the safety of public officials in the Nordic country. The 39-year-old was found guilty of assault on a public servant and sentenced to prison, after which he will be deported from Denmark and banned from returning for six years, the court ruled. He punched Frederiksen after a chance encounter and while she walked across a public square.

SON OF NORWAY'S CROWN PRINCESS ASSAULTS, NABBED

Oslo, Aug. 7: The 27-year-old son of Norwegian Crown Princess Mette-Marit was arrested at the weekend on suspicion of assaulting a woman, police said on Wednesday.

Mette-Marit's son Marius Borg Hoiby was born in 1997 from a relationship prior to her 2001 marriage to Norway's future king Crown Prince Haakon. Police said they were called to an Oslo address early Sunday after an overnight altercation in an apartment.

A man in his 20s was arrested over the incident and released from custody the following day.

Police said he was suspected of causing "bodily harm and damage".

GERMAN HOTEL COLLAPSE KILLS 2, TRAPS ONE

Kroev, Aug. 7: A hotel in Germany's picturesque Moselle wine valley collapsed overnight, killing two people, local police said on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, rescuers worked urgently to extricate one remaining guest who was trapped in the rubble.

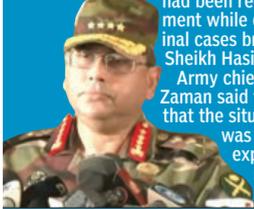
One woman's body was recovered but emergency responders have not yet been able to reach the body of the second victim, a male, rescue operation chief Joerg Teusch told reporters.

Six people were rescued during the day in a complex operation as the two-storey building was unstable after its upper floor caved in late on Tuesday, said police and rescuers.

CHINA, SAUDI, UAE TO ROLL OVER PAK'S \$12B DEBT

Islamabad, Aug. 7: China, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have agreed to roll over cash-strapped Pakistan's \$12 billion debt for one year, as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is likely to approve its \$7 billion bailout package later this month. After a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance on Tuesday, finance minister Muhammad Aurangzeb told reporters that there was no delay in the IMF Executive Board meeting, which is going to take place by the end of this month to approve the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility, the *Express Tribune* reported on Wednesday. The Executive Board is scheduled to meet on August 28 to approve the \$7 billion package.

YUNUS HEADS HOME, GOVT TO BE SWORN IN TODAY: Muhammad Yunus, 84, the Nobel Peace laureate tapped to lead an interim government in Bangladesh called for calm and boarded a flight on Wednesday to return home, a day before his new government is expected to be sworn in. "Let us make the best use of our new victory," he said before departing Paris, where he had been receiving medical treatment while out on bail from criminal cases brought under ex-PM Sheikh Hasina. Army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman said that he was hopeful that the situation in the country was improving and was expected to become normal in the next 3-4 days.



THINGS TO KNOW

FIVE CHALLENGES FOR CARETAKER GOVT

The interim government is set to be civilian-led, but what control the Army may also exercise is unclear. It was their decision not to join police and other security forces in suppressing protests with deadly force, ending their once rock-solid loyalty to the premier, that brought her downfall.

SECURITY
More than 400 people were killed during weeks of clashes between protesters and security forces. Since Hasina fled, rights groups and diplomats in Bangladesh have raised concerns over reports of attacks on minorities, including Hindus.

ECONOMY
Bangladesh has recorded average annual growth of more than six per cent since 2009. The country overtook India in per capita income terms in 2021. However, 18 million Bangladeshis aged 15 to 24 are out of work.

ELECTIONS
"Part of the reason the protest movement in Bangladesh gained such widespread support was the fact the country has not held a competitive election in 15 years," said International Crisis Group analyst Thomas Kean.



Vendors sell fruits at a market in Dhaka on Wednesday as the situation in Bangladesh gradually returns to normal after mass protests forced long-time prime minister Sheikh Hasina to flee. — AFP

JUSTICE
Since Hasina fell, the police chief and a top general have been sacked. Many protesters will demand Hasina — currently in India — and her allies face justice.

Get ready to build country, says Yunus

Authorities scramble to bring law and order under control; major reshuffle in security establishment

Dhaka, Aug. 7: Bangladesh's Muhammad Yunus, who is set to lead an interim government after the premier was ousted, called for calm and urged people to use the opportunity to build a better nation as the country witnessed a major reshuffle in the security establishment after the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina government.

"I fervently appeal to everybody to stay calm. Please refrain from all kinds of violence," the Nobel-winning microfinance pioneer said in a statement, a day ahead of his expected return to the country from Europe.

His appeal comes as a top police official called on every member of the police force to resume their duties gradually and maintain law and order in the violence-hit nation, amid reports of attacks on security personnel and their offices.

"Be calm and get ready to build the country. If we take the path of violence everything will be destroyed." The 84-year-old will lead a caretaker government after mass protests forced longtime PM Sheikh Hasina to flee, the presidency has said.

"This is our beautiful country with lots of exciting possibilities," he added. "We must protect and make it a wonderful country for us and for our future generations." Hasina fled by helicopter on Monday after more than a month of student-led protests, which started as a campaign against civil service job quotas but escalated into demands the leader quit.

"I congratulate the brave students who took the lead in making our Second Victory Day possible, and to the people for giving your total support to them," Yunus added.

"Let us make the best use of our new victory. Let us not let this slip away because of our mistakes." He has said he wants to hold elections "within a few months".

In January, he and three colleagues from one of the companies he founded were sentenced to jail terms of six months — but immediately bailed pending appeal — by a Dhaka labour court, which found they had illegally failed to create a workers' welfare fund. All four had denied the charges and, with courts accused of rubber-stamping decisions by Hasina's government, the case was criticised as politically motivated. — Agencies



Bangladesh Nationalist Party activists gather near a poster of BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia, during a rally in Dhaka, on Wednesday. — AFP

Khaleda says love, peace will help rebuild B'desh

Dhaka, Aug. 7: A day after her release from house arrest, Bangladesh's former prime minister and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia on Wednesday thanked the people of the country for their "struggle to make possible the impossible" and said it is not "anger" or "revenge" but "love and peace" which will rebuild the nation.

In her first public speech since 2018, delivered via video link at the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) rally in Nayapaltan, 79-

year-old Zia appealed for calm. She thanked people as they fought and prayed for her to be released from imprisonment, *The Daily Star* newspaper reported. "I have been released now. I want to thank the brave people who were in a do-or-die struggle to make possible the impossible. This victory brings us a new possibility to come back from the debris of plunder, corruption and ill-politics. We need to reform this country as a prosperous one," Zia said.

Urging all to strengthen the hands of the youths, she said, "Youths are our future. We need to build a democratic Bangladesh to fulfil their dream, and for which they shed their blood...No destruction, no anger and no revenge, we need love and peace to rebuild our country."

Zia was sentenced to 17 years in prison for graft in 2018 under the rule of Sheikh Hasina, 76, who resigned as prime minister on Monday and fled to India. — PTI

HASINA TO STAY IN DELHI 'FOR A WHILE', SAYS SON

Dhaka, Aug. 7: Bangladesh's ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India following mass protests against her government, is going to stay in Delhi for a little while, her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy said on Wednesday.

Hasina, the 76-year-old Awami League leader, landed at an airbase near Delhi on Monday and later shifted to a safe location in Delhi under tight security. She is accompanied by her sister Sheikh Rehana.

In a video interview with German broadcaster *Deutsche Welle*, Joy was asked about Hasina's reported plans to seek asylum in a third country.

"These are all rumours. She has not made a decision on that yet. She is going to stay in Delhi for a little while. My sister is with her. So she is not alone," Joy said.

Hasina's daughter Saima Wazed is World Health Organisation's regional director for the South-East Asia Region, which has its headquarters in New Delhi.

Hasina's plan to travel to London has hit a roadblock following the UK's hesitation to provide her refuge. Rehana's daughter Tulip Siddiq is a member of the British Parliament.

Joy, who spoke on the current volatile situation in Bangladesh, was also asked if he has any plan to join politics. — PTI

Some cops found violating rights

Dhaka, Aug. 7: A top police official in Bangladesh on Wednesday said that the casualties of policemen in the recent violence occurred due to some unprofessional and overly ambitious officials who violated human rights.

Addressing a press briefing at the Police Headquarters, newly-appointed inspector general of police Md Mainul Islam said some unprofessional officers did not follow the accepted principles of applying force and violated human rights.

"It is because of them [unprofessional officials] that this ongoing violence and casualties have occurred," he was quoted as saying by *The Daily Star* newspaper. Many police officials have been injured, killed, and tortured because of some unprofessional and overly ambitious officials, he said.

Islam assured that every murder would be properly investigated. On taking

At this juncture, I sincerely call upon all the police members to dedicate themselves to discharging respective duties as members of the forces, for the needs of the country and the nation.

— MD MAINUL ISLAM
Inspector General of Police

action against the police officials who he said violated human rights, he said, "Action will be taken against those involved as per police regulations." He apologised to the countrymen, saying police could not perform their duties as per the expectations in the students' logical movement against discrimination.

"At this juncture, I sincerely call upon all the police members to dedicate themselves to discharging respective duties as members of the forces, for the needs of the country and the nation." he said. — PTI

Hundreds gather at border, seek refuge

Jalpaiguri, Kolkata, Aug. 7: Hundreds of Bangladeshi nationals gathered at the international border with India in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district on Wednesday, seeking to cross over claiming that they were under attack in their country.

The incident happened near Dakshin Berubari village in the Jhaptala border outpost area, they said, adding that the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) later took them back. These people belonged to five villages in Bangladesh's Panchagarh district, which shares border with Jalpaiguri.

"The Bangladeshis had gathered at the border, but none were able to enter India as the border was completely sealed. They were later taken back by the BGB," a BSF official said. A local said that those gathered across the barbed wire were pleading to let them in.

"But we are helpless. They recounted their hor-

rific experiences," he said. Bangladesh plunged into uncertainty after weeks of violent street protests over job quota forced Sheikh Hasina to quit as prime minister and flee.

Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin dissolved Parliament on Tuesday and appointed Nobel laureate Yunus as the head of an interim government.

Trade between India and Bangladesh, which has halted since August 5, resumed partially through several land ports in West Bengal on Wednesday. Trade, mostly of perishable goods, resumed in land ports at Hili, Changanabandha, Mahadipur, Fulbari, and Gojandanga.

Export from Petrapole, South Asia's largest land port in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, is expected to commence on Thursday, officials said after a meeting between the land port authorities of the two countries. — PTI

Russia fights Ukrainian border incursion as thousands escape

Moscow, Aug. 7: Russia was battling a major cross-border incursion from Ukraine for a second day on Wednesday, with authorities evacuating several thousand civilians due to fighting, officials said.

The incursion began on Tuesday morning, with the Russian defence ministry announcing it had deployed air and artillery firepower to try to quash Ukrainian troops breaking into the Kursk border region.

"The operation for the destruction of Ukrainian Army units is continuing," the defence ministry said on social media on Wednesday.

"The enemy's movement further into Russian territory has been prevented," it added. Kursk regional governor Alexei Smirnov said "several thousand" people had been evacuated from the region and all mass gatherings had been cancelled.

"Over the course of the last day, with our help, several

Over the course of the last day, with our help, several thousand people left the shelling zone by personal transport. The situation in the region is under control, Russian President Vladimir Putin has pledged to support the region "on all fronts."

— ALEXEI SMIRNOV
Kursk regional governor

thousand people left the shelling zone by personal transport," Smirnov said in a video message on *Telegram*.

But he added: "The situation in the region is under control". Russian President Vladimir Putin has pledged to support the region "on all fronts", he said in the video.

Ukraine has not claimed responsibility for the incursion, the most serious in months. Ukrainian presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak alluded to the attacks, on social

media, without specifically mentioning them.

Moscow had used its "border regions with impunity for massive air and artillery attacks", he said. Five people have been killed and 24 wounded since the fighting began, 13 of whom were hospitalised, according to Russian officials.

The defence ministry said there had been losses on the Ukrainian side of 260 soldiers and 50 armoured vehicles, including seven tanks and eight armoured personnel carriers. The claim could not be independently verified.

Kursk sits just across from Ukraine's northeastern Sумы region and has been subjected to regular Ukrainian shelling attacks since the conflict began in February 2022.

Rybar, a Russian *Telegram* channel with military links, said that Ukrainian forces had made small inroads across the border and occupied several settlements. — AFP



Garment factory workers break for lunch in Dhaka on Wednesday after former prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled Bangladesh. — AFP

"We lost a total of four days, it is too early to make an estimate of the loss. There was little physical damage to factories," Miran Ali, vice president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and



A Palestinian girl recovers a tray from items scattered on the floor in Deir el-Balah, on Wednesday. — AFP

Oct. 7 mastermind Hamas new leader

Jerusalem, Aug. 7: Hamas named the alleged mastermind of the deadliest attack in Israeli history as its new leader, further inflaming regional tensions as the Gaza war entered its 11th month on Wednesday. Yahya Sinwar's appointment angered Israel at a time when it is bracing for potential Iranian retaliation for the killing of his predecessor Ismail Haniyeh.

Israeli foreign minister Israel Katz said Sinwar's

promotion was "yet another compelling reason to swiftly eliminate him and wipe this vile organisation off the face of the earth". Sinwar — the Palestinian militant group's leader in Gaza since 2017 — has not been seen since the October 7 attack, after which Israel called him a "dead man walking".

A Hamas official said that Sinwar sent a message that the organisation "continues its path of resistance". — AFP

Thai court bans popular politician, dissolves party

Bangkok, Aug. 7: Thailand's Constitutional Court on Wednesday ordered the dissolution of the anti-establishment opposition party Move Forward, ruling its campaign to amend a law that protects the monarchy from criticism risked undermining the democratic system.

The disbandment of Move Forward, which won most seats in the 2023 election, is the latest setback for Thailand's major political parties that are embroiled in a two-decade battle for power against a nexus of influential conservatives, old money families and the royalist military.

The decision, which included 10-year political bans for 11 party executives, comes six months after the same court ordered Move Forward to drop its plan to reform a law on royal insults, rul-



Pita Limjaroenrat

ing it was unconstitutional and tantamount to undermining the system of governance with the king as head of state.

In a unanimous ruling that cited the court's Jan. decision, the judges said Move Forward had improperly used the monarchy to gain an election advantage, putting the palace in conflict with the people.

"The action of the accused is therefore an action that may antagonise the democratic system with

the king as the head of state," they said.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn has been on the throne for seven years.

The monarch is enshrined in the Constitution as being in a position of "revered worship". Meanwhile, the palace is seen by royalists as sacrosanct. Perceived insults of the monarchy are punishable by up to 15 years in prison. The Move Forward party has repeatedly denied seeking to undermine the royal family. The party had no immediate comment on the ruling and was due to give a press conference later on Wednesday.

Though the dissolution is likely to anger millions of young and urban voters who backed Move Forward and its progressive agenda, the impact of the ruling is expected to be limited. — Reuters

quick BITES

| INDICATORS | | % |
|------------------------|------------|-------|
| Sensex | 79,468.01 | 1.11 |
| Nifty 50 | 24,297.50 | 1.27 |
| S&P 500* | 5,314.89 | 1.43 |
| Dollar (₹) | 83.95 | 0.03 |
| Pound Sterling (₹) | 106.69 | 0.02 |
| Euro (₹) | 91.61 | 0.01 |
| Gold (10gm)* (₹) | 69,201.236 | 0.34 |
| Brent crude (\$/bbl)* | 78.66 | 2.85 |
| IN 10-Yr bond yield | 6.862 | -0.01 |
| US 10-Yr T-bill yield* | 3.933 | 0.046 |

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Coromandel appoints new MD and CEO

Coromandel International elevated S Sankarasubramanian as its managing director and chief executive officer with immediate effect. He served the Murugappa Group company as its executive director - nutrient business. He joined Murugappa Group in 1993 when he began his career at EID Parry (India) in the corporate finance division. Later, in 2003, he joined Coromandel International Ltd, the statement added.



Blue Star Q1 net profit rises to ₹168.7 crore

Blue Star has reported a two-fold increase in consolidated net profit at ₹168.76 crore in the first quarter ended June 2024, helped by a robust demand for cooling products and cost management efforts. The company had posted a net profit of ₹83.37 crore in April-June quarter of previous fiscal, Blue Star said. Its revenue from operations was up 28.72 per cent to ₹2,865.37 crore in the June quarter. It was at ₹2,222.6 cr in year-ago period.

Stock exchange NSE's Q1 net up 39% to ₹2,567 cr

Stock exchange NSE reported first quarter consolidated profit of ₹2,567 crore up 39 per cent year on year and consolidated revenue at ₹4,510 crore up 51 per cent YoY. Apart from trading revenue, the revenue from operations was also supported by other revenue lines which mainly includes data centre and connectivity charges, clearing services, listing services, index services and data services, said NSE.

Saraswati Saree IPO price band fixed at ₹152-160

Maharashtra-based Saraswati Saree Depot on Wednesday has announced ₹160 crore initial public offering (IPO) in the price band of ₹152 to ₹160 per equity share of ₹10 face value. The public issue opens on August 12 and closes on August 14. The net proceeds from fresh issue (₹104 crore) will be used to meet working capital requirement and for general corporate purposes, the company said.

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India a beacon of stability in volatile world: Ambani

New Delhi, Aug. 7: In the world of volatility and uncertainty, India is shining as a beacon of stability and prosperity, said Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) chairman Mukesh Ambani in the firm's annual report. RIL is ready for the next growth phase and is now pivoting a green pathway, targeting net zero carbon emissions from its operations by 2035. It is also consolidating its telecom business, Ambani said.

The launch of Jio 4G mobile telephony services in 2016 supplied Indian homes with affordable, high-speed 4G data. This year, Jio it further enhanced the digital infrastructure by rolling out its True5G network across India. It also launched affordable smartphone smartphar.

He said Reliance Retail is positioned to serve the consumption needs in the country. Its new commerce initiative is not just home deliveries of groceries and electronics but also supports small merchants and kirana shop owners, he said.

RIL is continuing to invest in fossil fuels. Its gas field in Bay of Bengal meets about 30 per cent of India's needs the refinery at Jamnagar in Gujarat ensures a steady supply of fuel to both India and off-shore markets.

Reliance chemically recycles plastic waste-based pyrolysis oil into circular polymers. Polyester and polyolefins are recycled and converted into PET bottles and plastic waste into road



● **RELIANCE RETAIL** is positioned to serve the consumption needs in the country. Its new commerce initiative is not just home deliveries of groceries and electronics but supports small merchants, kirana shop owners as well.

laying material.

"The development of the Dhirubhai Ambani Green Energy Giga Complex in Jamnagar is progressing rapidly," he said. This will be one of the largest integrated renewable energy manufacturing facilities. Besides generating electricity from renewable sources, it will make solar modules and electrolyzers used in green hydrogen.

The group entered into an agreement with The Walt Disney Company for a JV.

He drew nil salary from RIL for the fourth year. With a net worth of \$109 billion, Ambani is the 11th richest in the world. He and his family own 332.27 crore shares or 50.33 per cent stake in Reliance. This stake would have earned him and his family ₹3,322.7 cr in dividend income for 2023-24 for which the company had declared a ₹10 per share dividend. — PTI

UPI TRANSACTIONS CROSS 500 MN TWICE IN AUGUST

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, AUG. 7

A couple of times in August, unified Payments Interface (UPI) crossed the milestone of processing 500 million transactions on a daily basis. This is a significant jump in daily volume as the Indian government has set the ambitious target of clocking 1 billion transactions per day by 2026-27.

"0.5 bn/day. Time to revise the India Vision from 1 billion / day to 100 bn/month," said NPCI CEO Dilip Asbe on X. As per NPCI, UPI crossed 500 million transaction counts on August 2 and August 5. The previous was on July 2, 2024, according to UPI data.

Salary growth across sectors stayed positive

Mumbai, Aug. 7: The overall job market showed a positive momentum as hiring activity in July rose by 11 per cent compared to the same month of last year, a report said on Wednesday.

According to the Foundit Insights Tracker (fit), the salary growth across sectors has been positive and consistent over the past year, led by the IT soft-

ware and services sector followed by retail, advertising, market research and PR.

However, auto, BFSI, and travel and tourism witnessed a decline.

Coimbatore has emerged as the leader in job growth among India's Tier-II cities, with a 24 per cent increase in hiring, followed by Jaipur with a 23 per cent rise.

TRAI PLANS TO STRENGTHEN RULES TO CURB PESKY CALLS

FC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

The government on Wednesday said that the Centre would review and strengthen regulations to curb pesky, spam calls, according to telecom regulator telecom regulatory authority of India (Trai) chief Anil Kumar Lahoti.

The crackdown on pesky calls has figured high on agenda of Trai, and the regulator has been hardening its stance on the issue, amid rising consumer complaints around unsolicited communications from unauthorised telemarketers.

"We had an interaction with service providers on spam calls and that is the next thing on our table. We will plug any loopholes that people are finding in existing regulations to tighten (the checks on) spam call issues," Lahoti said on the sidelines of India SatCom 2024 organised by Broadband India Forum (BIF).

Trai on Tuesday held a meeting and conveyed a strong message to service providers and their telemarketers to take effective measures to curb bulk communications using voice calls.

Asked about the rising instances of fraud and scams over calls, and actions that are being proposed, Lahoti said that a joint committee of regulators is working collectively to address the issue.

Govt mulls lower weight to food in inflation index

Revisions based on results of new consumer spending surveys

New Delhi, Aug. 7: An Indian government panel tasked with revising the nation's consumer price index (CPI) is considering a substantial cut in the weighting of food, according to a person familiar with the matter, a move that could curb inflation spikes in the country.

The panel, under the statistics ministry, is discussing a proposal to reduce the weight of food in the consumer price basket by as much as 8 percentage points, according to the person.

The food and beverage category makes up 45.86 per cent of the current CPI basket. The CPI is currently based on consumer spending patterns surveyed in 2011-2012, which economists say are outdated and may be distorting the official inflation data the RBI uses to set interest rates. More surveys show consumers are spending less of their



● **THE CPI** is currently based on consumer spending patterns surveyed in 2011-2012, which economists say are outdated and may be distorting the official inflation data the RBI uses to set interest rates.

budget on food than they did a decade ago.

Bloomberg Economics estimates inflation in June was 70 basis points higher than it would have been using new weights.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept interest rates unchanged for more than a year, and stuck to a relatively hawkish stance given inflation is above its 4 per cent target. The RBI will likely hold again on Thursday.

Food is a big driver of inflation in India given its high weighting in the CPI

basket.

In June, food prices rose 9.36 per cent from a year earlier, pushing up the headline inflation rate to 5.08 per cent. Excluding food and energy costs, inflation was 3.15 per cent.

A revision of the CPI, which currently has some 299 items, would see redundant items such as horse cart fares, prices for video recorders, audio and video cassettes likely weeded out. The panel is also discussing including consumer electronic products, such as smartphones

in the updated index, the person said.

The changes to the CPI weights and the base year, which are under consideration now, will likely only be implemented by January 2026. The revisions are based on results of new consumer spending surveys, which the statistics ministry is still finalising. The process is expected to be completed by 2025.

India's chief economic adviser V Anantha Nageswaran, a finance ministry official, last month argued the RBI's inflation target should exclude food. Economists, however, said removing food from CPI target wasn't appropriate for India.

Pronab Sen, India's former chief statistician, said the RBI's interest rates can't directly affect food prices and the government should use fiscal policy interventions to target food inflation instead. — Bloomberg

Stock markets see continued selling by FPIs

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, AUG. 7

The Sensex gained 874.94 points or 1.11 per cent to close at 79,468 while Nifty-50 gained 304.95 points or 1.27 per cent closing at 24,297.50.

Mid-cap and small-cap stocks outperformed the large caps, the BSE mid-cap index gained by 2.63 per cent while BSE small-cap index gained by 2.39

per cent.

However, the markets is witnessing continued selling by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) and on Wednesday too FPIs were net sellers by ₹3,314.76 crore while domestic institutions were net buyers by ₹3,801.21 crore.

"Broad-based buying brought back smiles after recent portfolio slaughter. Despite this, key indices showed little traction

● **MID-CAP AND SMALL-CAP** stocks outperformed the large caps, the BSE mid-cap index gained by 2.63 per cent while BSE small-cap index gained by 2.39 per cent.

post-opening, with traders seemingly opting to keep positions light ahead of the RBI policy announcement," said Rajesh

Bhosale, equity technical analyst, Angel One.

"After three days of decline, Nifty witnessed a good recovery and traded in positive territory throughout the session. Global factors and headwinds are likely to persist which could continue to impact Indian markets over next few days," said Siddhartha Khemka, head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Employees prefer work-life balance, career progression

New Delhi, Aug. 7: Job-switching intent has stabilised since last year, however, employers still need to offer a holistic benefits package with a healthy combination of work-life balance, adequate career progression opportunities, and a flexible and favourable work environment, to retain top talent, according to Randstad Employer Brand Research (REBR) 2024.

Meanwhile, it said Microsoft has emerged as India's most 'attractive employer brand', followed by TCS and Amazon in the second and third place respectively. Microsoft scored very high on financial health, good reputation, and



career progression opportunities, the top 3 employee value proposition drivers for organisations, as per the survey.

Others in the list include Tata Power in the fourth position followed by Tata Motors, Samsung India, Infosys, L&T, Reliance, and Mercedes-Benz.

"The insights from this year's findings reflect the changing expectations of the workforce. As talent increasingly prioritises work-life balance and

equity," Randstad India managing director and chief executive officer Viswanath PS said.

The majority of the workforce received some form of inflation compensation this year. The findings also indicate talent's strong inclination towards leveraging AI in their work, which presents a strong case for employers to consider investing in upskilling their workforce in new-age technologies.

On the impact of artificial intelligence, the survey said, around half of respondents use AI daily or regularly, with this trend being most pronounced among Gen Z (60 per cent). — PTI



TATA MOTORS' CURVV EV PRICE STARTS AT ₹17.49L

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, AUG. 7

Tata Motors on Wednesday introduced a new vehicle Curvv EV priced at ₹17.49 lakh. Bookings for new SUV coupe to start on Aug. 12.

Curvv EV is Tata Motor's first entry into the emerging sports utility vehicle (SUV) coupe market in the country.

"Today marks a milestone in our SUV journey with our foray into the fast-growing mid SUV segment. With India's very first SUV Coupe Curvv EV, we are pushing further the boundaries of design, safety and technology," said Shailesh Chandra, managing director, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicle and Tata Passenger Electric Mobility.

Tata Motors also launched SUV coupe with petrol and diesel engine options. It is available in five trim variants: Creative, Accomplished, Accomplished+S, Empowered+, and Empowered+A.

Goyal moots relooking free trade agreements

FC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 7

Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday suggested the Bay of Bengal initiative for multi-sectoral technical and economic cooperation (BIMSTEC), a seven-member countries bloc, for to re-look and re-examine the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) as the talks for the pact is progressing at slow pace.

The seven members are five South Asian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka) and two Southeast Asian countries (Myanmar and Thailand).

The bloc has been negotiating a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) since 2004. "The members can think of negotiating a preferential trade agreement instead of a full-fledged free trade pact," the minister said.

So far over 20 rounds of talks have been held. The last one was held in 2018. "I would like to raise a few fundamental issues about where we stand and what are the possibilities of making this FTA a reality," Goyal said here at CII event.

"So far 22 rounds of talks have been held for the agreement and this itself raises a question on



whether "we need to pause and have a relook at the track where we are going. The last round of negotiations took place some six years ago, which means something is holding back this FTA," he added.

The minister said that the reasons for slow progress could be the non-trade barriers or trade barriers coming in the way of normal trade and the possible impact of other regional FTAs on the BIMSTEC region could be the cause of the delay. "It could be the trade practices or current trade relationships that could be a reason for this FTA not taking place," the minister said.

Goyal also asked the business leaders of the seven countries to think whether they need this agreement. He also suggested the member nations to consider trade in local currencies to balance out trade imbalances.

Samsung chips pass tests for use in AI

Singapore/Seoul, Aug. 7: A version of Samsung Electronics' fifth-generation high bandwidth memory (HBM) chips, or HBM3E, has passed Nvidia's tests for use in its artificial intelligence (AI) processors, sources briefed on the results said.

The qualification clears a major hurdle for the memory chipmaker.

Samsung and Nvidia have yet to sign a supply deal for the approved eight-layer HBM3E chips but will do so soon, the sources said, adding that

they expect supplies would start by the fourth quarter of 2024.

Samsung's 12-layer version of HBM3E chips, however, has yet to pass Nvidia's tests, they said.

Samsung said that the testing of its products was proceeding as planned, adding that it was "in the process of optimising its products through collaboration with customers."

Nvidia's approval of Samsung's latest HBM chips comes amid rising demand for GPUs due to GenAI boom. — Reuters

HIGH DEMAND Online sales have become increasingly salient for top global brands

India hub for global lifestyle brands

New Delhi, Aug. 7: India is emerging as a hub for global lifestyle brands, with 90 per cent of the top 50 global brands active and many others lined up for launch in the country, driven by robust online sales and a burgeoning e-lifestyle market, according to study by global consultancy firm Bain & Company and lifestyle e-commerce platform Myntra.

"Half of lifestyle brands already have India revenue greater than \$30 million. Scaled, global fashion brands in India have

demonstrated robust growth, seeing a 20 per cent uptick YoY over 2018-23," the study E-Styling India: Decoding India's Online Fashion and Lifestyle Shopping Trends, said.

Over 60 varied lifestyle brands were launched or planned to be launched in India over the past year.

"These include scale (\$1 billion global revenue) and midscale brands; these also include luxury brands, new age brands and specialised East Asian brands," it said.

The study further revealed that online chan-



● **INDIA'S E-LIFESTYLE** market has come of age in the last few years, with a diverse shopper base 2 in 3 online shoppers are from beyond top 50 cities, 1 in 2 are from non-affluent segments.

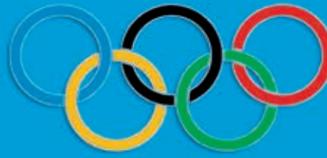
nels are the top choice for global brands making foray into the Indian market, which offers multifaceted benefits like a large customer base and market trend insights. "Online sales have

become increasingly salient for top global brands operating in India. This is driven by access to a large customer base (175 million e-lifestyle shoppers), access to granular customer insights and 360-

degree operations support (e.g., inventory integration)," the study said.

Brands like H&M and Mango leveraged online platforms to achieve a better reach in tier-2 cities and navigate operational challenges in the country.

"India's e-lifestyle market has come of age in the last few years, with a diverse shopper base 2 in 3 online shoppers are from beyond top 50 cities, 1 in 2 are from non-affluent segments, and 1 in 3 are Gen-Z," said Shyam Unnikrishnan, partner at Bain & Company. — PTI



| MEDAL TABLE | | | | |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|
| COUNTRY | G | S | B | T |
| USA | 24 | 31 | 32 | 87 |
| China | 23 | 22 | 16 | 61 |
| Australia | 15 | 12 | 10 | 37 |
| France | 13 | 16 | 19 | 48 |
| Great Britain | 12 | 15 | 19 | 46 |
| South Korea | 11 | 8 | 7 | 26 |
| Japan | 11 | 6 | 12 | 29 |
| Italy | 9 | 10 | 7 | 26 |
| Netherlands | 9 | 5 | 6 | 20 |
| Germany | 8 | 5 | 4 | 17 |
| India | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |

GOLDENEYE

Indian hopes ride on Chopra as he plans an encore

Paris, Aug. 7: His stunning monster throw of 89.34m in the qualification round made quite a statement but a tough challenge awaits defending champion Neeraj Chopra as he seeks another piece of history in the Paris Olympics men's javelin throw final round here on Thursday. Just like he did at the same stage in the Tokyo Olympics three years back, Chopra needed just a few seconds to top the qualification round with his opening throw but the similarity ends there.

This time, the quality of the field is better than Tokyo with nine throwers crossing the automatic final round qualification mark of 84m in Paris as against six in Tokyo. Out of the nine, five made it to the final round with their first throws and thus will have a lot in their tanks for the medal round.

The 26-year-old Chopra knows it too well, having been in the global circuit for more than eight years.

"In the final, everyone has a different mindset and different situation. It will be a good competition. Whoever qualifies automatically is the best in preparation," Neeraj told journalists after his 'lightening' appearance on the field. He was in a hurry to go back to the Games Village and take rest to prepare for his best for the final round, as a lot is at stake on Thursday.

Chopra will have a chance to become only the fifth man in Olympic javelin throw history to defend the title.

Eric Lemming (Sweden; 1908 and 1912), Jonni Myrta (Finland; 1920 and 1924), Jan Zelezny (Czech Republic; 1992, 1996 and 2000) and Andreas Thorkildsen (Norway; 2004 and 2008) are the only ones to have defended the men's javelin gold medals in the Olympics.

If he wins gold, and for that matter a medal, he will become the most decorated Indian in Olympics in individual sport.

Shuttler P. V. Sindhu



This time, the quality of the field is better than Tokyo with nine throwers crossing the automatic final round qualification mark of 84m in Paris as against six in Tokyo. Out of the nine, five made it to the final round with their first throws and thus will have a lot in their tanks for the medal round.

(one silver, one bronze), wrestler Sushil Kumar (one silver, one bronze) and shooter Manu Bhaker (two bronze) have won two Olympic medals each post Independence.

The tremendous effort,

which was the second best of his career, also set aside concerns surrounding Chopra's fitness after he revealed that he had been battling an adductor niggle in the build-up to the Games. His personal best

continues to be 89.94m achieved back in 2022.

His 89.34m throw may also raise hopes of millions of Indian fans to see Chopra cross the elusive 90m mark on Thursday.

—PTI

HARMAN'S BOYS LOOK TO BOUNCE BACK TO DEFEND THEIR BRONZE

Paris, Aug. 7: A heart-wrenching defeat in the semifinals, notwithstanding, a demoralised Indian men's hockey team will have to regroup quickly and aim for a second consecutive podium finish at the Olympics when it takes on Spain in the bronze medal play-off here on Thursday.

The Indians played bravely against Germany, putting their defence under pressure from the start and in the process took the lead in the seventh minute through a penalty corner conversion by skipper Harmanpreet Singh.

But the Germans came back strongly in the second quarter and fourth quarters to secure the close win, courtesy some silly defensive lapses from the Indians.

The Indians too were guilty of wasting too many scoring chances, including as many as 10 penalty corners, while converting two, one directly and another through variation.

The opposition teams seemed to have found out a way to deny one of the world's best drag-flicker Harmanpreet as he managed to be on target just once on Tuesday.

—PTI

We even cut Vinesh hair: Medical officer

Paris, Aug. 7: India's Chief Medical Officer at the Paris Olympics, Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala, on Wednesday revealed that cutting off Vinesh Phogat's hair was among the "drastic measures" taken to help the wrestler stay within the prescribed weight limit for her gold medal bout in the 50kg category.

However, none of it was enough to prevent her disqualification as she was found 100gm overweight at the time of morning weigh-in. She was set to take on USA's Sarah Hildebrandt after three exhausting bouts on Tuesday.

"...small amounts of water had to be given to prevent dehydration. Her post participation weight

was found to be increased. The coach initiated the normal process of weight cut that he has always employed with Vinesh and felt confident that it would be achieved," Pardiwala said in a statement issued by the Indian Olympic Association.

"However, Vinesh was found to be 100 grams over her 50kg weight category, and hence, she was disqualified. All possible drastic measures, including cutting off her hair, were used. However, she was not below her allowed weight of 50kg."

Pardiwala said there are several factors involved in losing weight before any competition and the process has its after-effects as well.

—PTI

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VINESH'S DISQUALIFICATION

India's Vinesh Phogat lost a sure-shot Olympic medal in the women's 50kg freestyle wrestling event after being found over-weight by 100 grams. Here is a ready reckoner on what led to her disqualification.

Q: What was Vinesh Phogat's original weight category before Paris?

Vinesh had always competed in the 53kg category. This time Antim Panghal qualified in that division and Vinesh had to slash weight to compete in the 50 kg category.

Q: What is the permissible weight in any category?

For Olympics, Asian Games, World Championships and Asian Championship, no wrestler gets even one gram concession. For the Ranking Series and Invitational events, one gets a concession of 2kg which means that in these events, one can be 52kg on the bout day even if they are contesting in 50kg category. Sadly for Vinesh, Olympic rules are strict.

Q: Has Vinesh ever been disqualified from an international event for being over-weight?

Yes. She was once disqualified from an Olympic qualifying event prior to 2016 Rio Olympics for being over-weight by 400 grams.

Q: What are the rules of weigh-in during Olympic Games?

In Olympic Games, the competition is held across two days and on both days, competing wrestlers need to undergo weight check. On the first day of the competition, the wrestler needs to wear his singlet (wrestling apparel) and get his/her weight measured multiple times in a 30 minute window.

Also the medical examination should clear them of any contagious diseases, their nails need to be clipped.

Those who qualify for the gold medal, bronze medal play-offs and repechage bouts again have to come for weigh-in on the second day.

But on the second day, the window for weigh-in is only 15 minutes and on the morning of the competition. This is where Vinesh's weight was found to be 50.1 kg. Once the 15 minute window was over, Vinesh's medal hopes were dashed.

Q: If Vinesh weighed within permissible limits on Day 1, how did she become "over-weight" on Day 2?

Vinesh had three bouts of six minutes each on the first day. Eighteen minutes of combat sports can drain a wrestler and he/she needs enough amount of hydration and nourishment.

As per Indian contingent's medical head Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala, every wrestler cuts his/her weight to fight in lesser categories. In case of Vinesh, she fought in 53kg mostly with a natural weight of 55 to 56 kg.

Once Vinesh came into 50kg category, she had to shed at least 6kg before every competition. The sudden weight-cut is an extremely difficult process. After first day, she gained around 1.5 kg after replenishment.

Once she had cut it, she couldn't do it in permissible time which was very less. Sudden weight cuts can also cause some serious physical ailments and doctors don't permit that.

Q: Why do you need a second day weigh-in if there is one on Day 1?

This is believed to have been done by United World Wrestling (UWW) to curb the doping menace when they changed the competition format for world and continental events from one to two days in 2018.

Normally, the athletes do weight cutting going into the weigh-in day and once they are cleared, they hydrate and nourish themselves to gain energy and a bit of mass. The ones on higher end of weight spectrum are beneficiaries.

Also for a single day event, it was believed that some wrestlers were using supplements between bouts and two-day event and double weigh-in was to put a spanner on that.

Q: Could Vinesh have saved her medal if she would have withdrawn citing injury?

No, she would have still been disqualified. A popular theory doing the rounds is that her team should have declared her injured and retained the silver. But the rule wouldn't have permitted her to do so.

The rule states that if a wrestler sustains injury during the competition on the first day, he/she doesn't need to appear on the second day for weigh-in.

However, if a wrestler gets injured after the competition on first day or contracts any disease or illness, he still needs to appear for the weigh-in before he/she can give a walkover.

Vinesh wasn't injured during the competition on first day so she had to appear for the weigh-ins.

Q: Can India appeal against the decision?

Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Sanjay Singh has written a letter to the IOC to consider giving Vinesh the silver medal. Even six-time world Champion and 2012 London Olympic gold medalist Jordan Burroughs of USA has urged authorities to award silver to Vinesh and give a second day concession.

But losing semi-finalist Yusneylis Guzman Lopez of Cuba has already been nominated for the final. So the decision won't be overturned.

LANKA CRUSH INDIA TO WIN ODI SERIES 2-0

Colombo, Aug. 7: Sri Lanka crushed India by 110 runs in the third ODI here on Wednesday to clinch a commanding 2-0 win in the three-match series. The hosts had earlier won the second ODI by 32 runs after the first ended in a thrilling tie. Chasing 249, India once again began well but crumbled against Sri Lankan spinners as Duniath Wellalage (5/27) led the attack for the hosts with a fine spell.

India were bowled out for 138 in 26.1 overs with skipper Rohit Sharma (35) and Washington Sundar (30) waging lone battles.

Earlier, all-rounder Rryan Parag took 3/54 on debut but Sri Lanka still managed a competitive 248/7 riding on Avishka Fernando's composed 96 and Kusal Mendis 59; Rryan Parag 3/54; beat India 138 in 26.1 overs (Rohit Sharma 35; Washington Sundar 30; Duniath Wellalage 5/27).



Manu's focus shifts to LA Games

New Delhi, Aug. 7: Paris Olympics double medalist pistol shooter Manu Bhaker on Wednesday said that she has already set her sights on the 2028 Los Angeles Games and she will keep working hard to produce consistent results in the future.

The 22-year-old Bhaker won a bronze each in the women's 10m air pistol and 10m air pistol mixed team event, in which she had paired with Sarabjot Singh, to script Olympic history for the country.

"After the end of one Olympics I already have the next one on my mind for which the journey has already started, so after Paris, the journey of it (LA Olympics) has already begun, so after a little break I will get back to preparing for it," Bhaker said.

"I hope my performance stays good like this time and I keep working hard and keep giving good performances."

Bhaker became the first Indian in post Independence era to win two medals in a single edition of the Olympics. She had also come close to winning a third bronze in 25m pistol before finishing a creditable fourth.

"In next three months, first lot of people want to meet me, then I would like to spend time with my family, then rest for a while and work on my fitness, then restart shooting again," she added.



Markswoman Manu Bhaker with her personal coach Jaspal Rana being welcomed upon her arrival at the airport in New Delhi on Wednesday. —PTI

ing welcome by hundreds of supporters and her family after her arrival here on Wednesday.

The youngster will return to Paris on Saturday to be one of India's flag-bearers at the Olympics Closing Ceremony on Sunday.

'NEXT THREE MONTHS, MANU WON'T TRAIN'

Coach Jaspal Rana, who played a pivotal role in

but she will not train in shooting," he said. Meanwhile, actor John Abraham met Bhaker and said the shooter had made India proud. Abraham, 51, shared a picture with the Olympian and her medal on his Instagram page.

"Had the pleasure of meeting @bhakermanu and her lovely family. She has made India proud!!! Respect," he captioned the post. —PTI

short takes

Annu fails to reach javelin throw final

Experienced Indian javelin thrower Annu Rani once again failed to impress on the global stage as she made a qualification round exit from the Olympics with an extremely poor performance on Wednesday. The 31-year-old national record holder opened her event with 55.81m and could not improve upon that mark in her next two attempts, which measured 53.22m and 53.55m, to finish at 15th among 16 competitors in Group A and 26th overall.

Annu, who has been training abroad in the build-up to the Olympics, has a season's best of 60.68m and her national record stands at 63.82m.

In another below-par show, national record holder 100m hurdler Jyothi Yarraji failed to book an automatic semifinal spot after finishing seventh in her round one heat race.

Women paddlers go down to Germany

Archana Kamath gave a brief resistance but that was not enough as India lost 1-3 to technically superior Germany in the women's table tennis team event quarterfinals of the Paris Olympics on Wednesday. Indian table tennis campaign ended with the loss.

The Indian duo of Sreeja Akula and Archana lost the opening doubles match 5-11, 11-8, 10-12, 6-11 to the German pair of Yuan Wan and Xiona Shan. Sreeja and Archana were holding the fort till the third game but they lost it in deuce. Thereafter, they lost the match.

In the first singles, star Indian Manika Batra was not at her best as she won the first game but lost the next three (11-8, 5-11, 7-11, 5-11) against Annett Kaufmann as Germany took 2-0 lead in the tie.

It was at this point that Archana gave India a glimmer of hope as she held off Germany charge briefly with a 19-17, 1-11, 11-5, 11-9 win over Xiona Shan in the second singles. But in the third singles, Kaufmann blanked Sreeja 11-6 11-7 11-7 to seal the tie for Germany and book a semifinal berth.

Antim's repechage hopes dashed, exits

India's biggest wrestling medal hope at the Paris Games, Antim Panghal ended her Olympic campaign with a humiliating 0-10 defeat to Turkey's Yetgil Zeynep in the women's 53 kg category.

The 19-year-old debutant's hope of remaining in contention for a bronze medal via repechage were also dashed after Zeynep lost to Annika Wendle of Germany in the quarterfinals.

INDIA TODAY

GOLF

■ **Women's Individual:** Aditi Ashok and Diksha Dagar — 12.30 pm.

ATHLETICS

■ **Women's 100m hurdles Repechage Round:** Jyothi Yarraji — 2.05 pm.
 ■ **Men's javelin throw final:** Neeraj Chopra — 11.55 pm.

WRESTLING

■ **Men's 57kg freestyle 1/8 Finals:** Aman Sehrawat — 2.30 pm.
 ■ **Women's 57kg freestyle 1/8 Finals:** Anshu Malik — 2.30 pm.

HOCKEY

■ **Men's Bronze medal match:** India vs Spain — 5.30 pm.

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