

# THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI FRIDAY 9 AUGUST 2024



## CITY | 2

**AAP will highlight how Kejriwal being 'punished' for working: Sanjay Singh**



## NATION | 3

**Rahul holds meeting with party's LS MPs to discuss issues confronting nation**

## DELHI AGE | 16

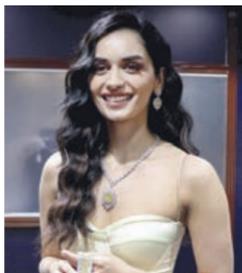
**Akshay Kumar donates ₹1.21cr to Haji Ali Dargah renovation project**



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### WINDOWS



Bollywood actress Manushi Chhillar during the India International Jewellery Show organised by the Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council in Mumbai on Thursday. — PTI

### Kejriwal's custody till Aug. 20 in excise case probed by CBI

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Thursday extended the judicial custody of chief minister Arvind Kejriwal till August 20 in a corruption case registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the alleged excise scam. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja extended Mr Kejriwal's custody after he was produced before the court through video conference. The court is likely to consider on August 12 a supplementary chargesheet filed by the CBI against Mr Kejriwal in the case. The judge had sent Mr Kejriwal to judicial custody in June, saying his name has surfaced as one of the "main conspirators" and the investigation was still in progress.

### Jaishankar in Maldives today amid tense ties

New Delhi: External affairs minister S. Jaishankar is set to pay an official visit to the Maldives from August 9 to August 11. This visit marks the first high-level engagement by India with the Maldives since Mohamed Muizuz assumed the presidency late last year. Full report on Page 3

### Swift concerts nixed in Vienna amid terror plot

Vienna: Organisers have cancelled three Taylor Swift concerts in Austria following the arrest of two suspects planning a terror attack during her highly anticipated Eras Tour. The cancellation has left fans heartbroken, while also drawing renewed attention to the risks. Full report on Page 6

### COUNTERPOINT



Shun hardware and avail software to loot banks, dad!

### WEATHER

Max: 32°C  
Min: 27°C  
RH: 80%  
Rain: 60%

Forecast: Thunderstorms

### ASTROGUIDE

Krodhi: Dakshinayana  
Tithi: Shravana Shukla Panchami till 3.14 am (Saturday)  
Star: Hastha till 2.43 am (Saturday)  
Varjyam: 9.04 am to 10.53 am  
Durmuhurtam: 8.33 am to 9.24 am; 12.47 pm to 1.38 pm  
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon  
SUNSET TODAY 7.06 PM  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.48 AM  
MOONRISE TOMORROW 10.43 AM  
MOONSET TODAY 9.46 PM

## Landmark Waqf Bill sent to JPC after heated LS debate

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

The contentious Waqf (Amendment) Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Thursday and referred to a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) after a heated debate, with the government asserting the proposed law did not intend to interfere with the functioning of mosques and the Opposition calling it targeting of Muslims and an attack on the Constitution. Among the BJP's allies, while the Shiv Sena and JD(U) strongly backed the Waqf (Amendment) Bill in Lok Sabha and the TDP supported the proposed law but called for sending it to a parliamentary committee, the LJP (Ram Vilas) chose not to speak in the House. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said he will talk with leaders of all parties about constituting the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). Soon after Union minor-



Union home minister Amit Shah speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon Session in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

SP CHIEF Akhilesh Yadav said the bill was being introduced to appease the BJP's hard-core supporters. "What is the point of including non-Muslims in Waqf Boards when this is not done in other religious bodies?" he asked.

ity affairs minister Kiren Rijiju sought leave to introduce the bill, the Opposition INDIA bloc members strongly protest-

ed the introduction of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill. Congress MP K.C. Venugopal, who had submitted notice to oppose its introduction, accused the government of violating the right to freedom of religion and claimed the legislation was being brought with an eye on the upcoming Assembly polls. "This is a draconian law and a fundamental attack on the Constitution. People taught the BJP a

lesson in the Lok Sabha polls for its divisive politics, but it is continuing with the same, keeping in mind the upcoming Assembly elections in states such as Maharashtra. It is a direct attack on freedom of religion. Next you will go for Christians, then Jains," Mr Venugopal said. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said the bill was being introduced to appease the BJP's hard-core supporters. "What is the point of including non-Muslims in Waqf Boards when this is not done in other religious bodies?" Mr Yadav asked. "The truth is that the

Turn to Page 4

## Sitharaman defends Budget as Parliament passes Finance Bill

Allocations to states, key sectors not reduced: FinMin

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

Attacking the Opposition parties for questioning the growth of the Indian economy, Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said that the multiplier effect of capital spending has helped the country become the world's fastest-growing economy and the 2024-25 Budget is aimed at promoting investments and creating jobs for the youth in the country.



"The Union Budget balances different overriding imperatives, including growth, employment, capital expenditure and fiscal consolidation. Besides, India's middle class is getting smarter when it comes to their savings

and is diversifying their portfolios for better returns. We have tried to balance all these without compromising on any one sector," she said in the Rajya Sabha while responding to the Finance Bill discussion. After the debate and the Union finance minister's reply, Parliament also completed the Budget exercises, with the Rajya Sabha returning the Appropriation Bill and Finance Bill to the Lok Sabha. After a brief

Turn to Page 4

## Uproar in RS over Phogat row, Opp. walks out

Dhankhar leaves House briefly after spat with Derek Cong politicising disqualification: Nadda

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

The uneasy relations between Rajya Sabha Chairman and the Opposition parties once again surfaced on Thursday, as Jagdeep Dhankhar left the House for a while after heated arguments with TMC leader Derek O'Brien and some other Opposition MPs who were disallowed to raise the issue of disqualification of wrestler Vinesh Phogat from the Paris Olympics. Following the commotion, the INDIA bloc members

AMID THE din, Mr O'Brien stood up to raise his point but could not be heard because of the uproar in the House. As the uproar continued, the Opposition parties staged a walkout.

walked out from the Rajya Sabha. Soon after the listed papers were tabled in the House in the morning, Rajya Sabha Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge stood up to raise Ms Phogat's issue, who was disqualified for being 100 gm overweight and



Jagdeep Dhankhar sought to know "who is behind" it. However, Mr Dhankhar did not allow him to raise the issue. "It is an important issue. It is not an issue of a particular individual," Mr Kharge said. However, Mr Dhankhar did not allow the Leader of the Opposition to raise the

issue and went ahead with the scheduled Zero Hour listings. Amid the din, Mr O'Brien stood up to raise his point but could not be heard because of the uproar in the House. Responding to Mr O'Brien, Mr Dhankhar cautioned the TMC member, saying "You are shouting at the Chair. Your conduct is the ugliest in the House. I condemn your actions. Next time I will show you the door."

As the uproar continued, the Opposition parties staged a walkout. "They (the Opposition) think they are all wise. They think they are the only ones whose hearts are bleeding. The entire nation is in pain because of our girl. The entire nation is feeling the pain, from the President to the Prime Minister to myself and many more. Everyone is sharing that situation, but to... politicise it is the greatest disrespect to that girl. That girl has a long way to go," Mr Dhankhar said. The Leader of the House and BJP president J.P. Nadda also condemned

Turn to Page 4

## Huge anti-racism protests sweep across UK to counter violent stir

London, Aug. 8: A massive turnout of anti-racism counter-protesters swarmed the streets of London and other UK cities in an effort to outnumber the far-right violent mobs causing mayhem over the past week, described by Scotland Yard as a "show of unity from communities". Fears of violence at several planned extremist rallies targeting immigration lawyers and agencies across London and other cities abated as thousands of specialist police officers patrolled the streets

THE UK government, however, cautioned that there is intelligence that more far-right action could take place in the next few days

and counter-protesters waving placards reading "Smash Facism & Racism" and "Stop the far right" turned out in hordes for peace marches. The UK government, however, cautioned that there is intelligence that more far-right action could take place in the next few days even as

there was relief that violent disorder was averted overnight. "Last night more than 1,000 officers were deployed across the capital ready to respond. Their efforts and the strength of unity demonstrated by London's communities resulted in a largely peaceful evening," said metropolitan police chief Mark Rowley, who revealed that dawn raids were carried out early on Thursday to arrest suspected violent offenders from the past few days. —PTI

More on Page 6



Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin (left) administers the oath of office to Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus (centre) as the head of the nation's interim government in Dhaka on Thursday. — AP

## Yunus takes oath as head of interim govt in Dhaka

Cabinet sworn in, includes 2 student leaders Modi urges new govt to protect all minorities

AGE CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS NEW DELHI/DHAKA, AUG. 8

Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus on Thursday took oath as head of an interim government in Bangladesh. Mr Yunus, 84, was administered the oath of office by President Mohammed Shahabuddin at a ceremony at the presidential palace "Bangabhaban". The economist-turned-politician was appointed as the head of the interim government on Tuesday after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled to India following widespread protests against her government over a controversial quota system for jobs.

Minutes after Mr Yunus was sworn in, Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated him. He also strongly raised the need for the new interim government in Bangladesh to ensure the protection of minorities, including Hindus, in the strife-torn country. Mr Modi said: "India remains committed to working with Bangladesh



A crowd gathers in front of the President's residence during the oath-taking ceremony of the interim government in Bangladesh on Thursday. — AP

THE ECONOMIST-turned-politician was appointed as the head of the interim government on Tuesday after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled to India

to fulfil the shared aspirations of both our peoples for peace, security and development." The Prime Minister posted on X: "My best wishes to Professor Muhammad Yunus on the assumption of his new responsibilities. We hope for an early return to normalcy, ensuring the safety and protection of Hindus and all other

minority communities." Mr Modi's message to Dhaka signals that New Delhi is keen to continue its friendship with the people of Bangladesh, irrespective of the government in power there. According to media reports from Dhaka, Mr Yunus oath-taking ceremony at the presidential palace in Dhaka was attended by political leaders, civil society leaders, Army Generals and diplomats. "I will uphold, support and protect the constitution," Mr Yunus was quoted as saying while he was administered the oath by Mr Shahabuddin. Turn to Page 3

## RBI's key rate kept intact at 6.5%; forecast for GDP 7.2%

Mumbai, Aug. 8: Interest rates on home, auto and other loans are unlikely to be altered after the Reserve Bank of India on Thursday expectedly kept the benchmark rate and stance unchanged for the ninth straight policy meeting, saying it cannot afford to look through persisting high food inflation. Retaining its unambiguous focus on inflation, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), which consists of three RBI and three external members, kept the benchmark repo rate unchanged at 6.50%. RBI revised down its April-June GDP growth forecast to 7.1 per cent (from 7.3 per cent earlier), while retaining the full year (2024-25) projection at 7.2 per cent. Four out of the six members of MPC voted in favour of the rate decision. The panel, whose four-year term for the external members ends in October, also decided to retain a policy stance at "withdrawal of accommodation" to aid MPC's focus on bringing inflation towards its 4 per cent target. Inflation climbed to 5.08 per cent in June, driven by the food component. —PTI

More on Page 7

## After 52 yrs, India win successive hockey bronze



India's goalkeeper P.R. Sreejesh celebrates with teammates after India won the hockey bronze medal against Spain at the Olympics Games in Colombes on Thursday. The Indian team clinched a second successive bronze medal at the Olympics for the first time in 52 years with a 2-1 win, giving Sreejesh a fitting farewell. Report on Page 8 — PTI

IN BRIEF

**Jamia suspends ex-officiating V-C**

**New Delhi:** Jamia Millia Islamia officiating vice-chancellor Mohammad Shakeel has suspended with immediate effect his predecessor Egbal Hussain over alleged charges of "misuse of power" in a case involving the selling of a land on which the university has pre-emptive right, an official order on Thursday said. The varsity has initiated an inquiry against Mr Hussain, who was serving as the faculty of law at the university, which is likely to be headed by a sitting or retired judge of the high court, it said. Mr Hussain has been barred from visiting the faculty of law and the office of the estate officer until further orders. "...The officiating vice-chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia, in terms of powers vested in him under Statute 37(1) of the Statute of University, hereby places professor Egbal Hussain, Faculty of Law, JMI, under suspension with immediate effect, pending inquiry against him on the matter," the order read. "During the period of suspension professor Egbal Hussain (under suspension), shall not leave the headquarters without prior approval of the competent authority," it added.

**Man jumps to death in front of Metro**

**New Delhi:** A 50-year-old man committed suicide by jumping in front of a train at Yamuna Bank Metro station here, disrupting services briefly on the Blue Line, officials said. According to a suicide note recovered from the man's possession, he took the extreme step due to financial hardship and health issues, the police said. "On Thursday, a call was received from the Metro station controller, Yamuna Bank, that a man had jumped in front of a train. A police team rushed to the spot and the man was taken to the LBS Hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead," a senior police officer said.

**Woman alleges rape by lawyer in chamber**

**New Delhi:** A 21-year-old woman has alleged that she was raped by a lawyer inside his chamber at Tis Hazari Court in North Delhi, the police said on Thursday. The woman in her complaint said that the accused called her on the pretext of giving her a job on July 27 but forced himself on her, they said. The woman said the lawyer threatened her of dire consequences if she told anyone about the assault. He gave her ₹1,500 and asked her to leave, an officer said, citing woman's complaint.

**'We will highlight his good work in door-to-door campaign' Kejriwal jailed for good work is AAP's Delhi election plank**

**AVINASH PRABHAKAR JHA NEW DELHI, AUG. 8**



Sanjay Singh

In a crucial meeting held on Thursday to discuss the upcoming Haryana and Delhi Assembly polls, the Aam Aadmi Party has decided to reach out to the public highlighting how Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal is being "punished" for working for the people. The meeting was attended by party's Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, AAP Delhi state convenor Gopal Rai, AAP national general-secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak, and

Delhi ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj. AAP upper house MP Sanjay Singh said that the AAP in its campaign strategy will highlight how Delhi chief minister is being "punished" for working for the people. Mr Singh said that the meeting in Haryana has already been started. "Scheduled 45 meetings in 15 days will be completed by August 12," he said. The Haryana Assembly polls are due later this year. "Last week also there was a meeting. We have prepared many plans how we will begin our campaign at the booth level and reach out to people on the basis of the work done in education and health", said Mr Singh. He said that we will aware public about whatever is happening with us. "Mr Kejriwal is diabetic and his sugar levels have gone down several times in jail. They are playing with his life by arresting him in different cases," he said.

Mr Singh alleged that Mr Kejriwal was arrested in a fake case by the CBI. The Delhi chief minister is being punished for working for Delhi. We will highlight this through our door to door campaign, he added. After the Lok Sabha poll results, AAP Delhi convenor Gopal Rai had said his party's alliance with the Congress was only for the Lok Sabha elections and had hinted that the ruling party in the city will go solo in next year's Assembly polls in Delhi. Last month, the party had announced that it will contest all 90 Assembly seats in Haryana.

**Khedkar seeks advance bail in cheating case, moves Delhi HC**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 8**



Puja Khedkar

Former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, who has been accused of cheating and wrongly securing OBC and disability quota benefits, on Thursday approached the Delhi high court seeking anticipatory bail in the criminal case against her.

Her plea for pre-arrest bail is scheduled for hearing before Justice Subramonium Prasad on Friday.

Ms Khedkar allegedly misrepresented information in her application for the UPSC Civil Services Examination, 2022 to get reservation benefits. On July 31, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) cancelled Ms Khedkar's candidature and debarred her from future exams. On August 1, a sessions court here had denied anticipatory bail to her and said there are serious allegations against her which "require a thorough investigation".

**L-G nod to prosecute IAS for 'forging' signs of secys**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 8**

Delhi lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena has granted sanction to prosecute IAS officer Udit Prakash Rai for allegedly forging the signatures of the chief secretaries of Delhi and Andaman & Nicobar administration on his annual performance appraisal reports (APAR) during different periods of his posting. The L-G has also recommended the case to the MHA for further action.

A 2007 IAS officer, Mr Rai had allegedly forged the signatures of his reviewing authority—the chief secretary of A&N and Delhi—between 2017 and 2021. A criminal case of forgery has also been registered against him at IP Estate police station, on the complaint of the special secretary (Vigilance), GNCTD.

Raj Niwas in a statement said that Mr Rai in his APARs for the periods from April 1, 2017, to Oct. 8, 2017, and from Oct. 9, 2017, to March 31, 2018, had also forged the signatures of his then-reporting authority, S.C.L. Das, the then principal secretary (Revenue) in A&N

A 2007 IAS officer, Udit Prakash Rai had allegedly forged the signatures of his reviewing authority—the chief secretary of A&N and Delhi—between 2017 and 2021

administration, and the signature of the reviewing authority, Anindo Majumdar, the then chief secretary of A&N. "Further, in the APAR for the period from April 1, 2019, to July 30, 2019, Rai forged the signatures of the reporting authority, Vikram Dev Dutt, the then principal secretary (Revenue) in A&N administration, and the signature of the reviewing authority, Anindo Majumdar, the then chief secretary of A&N. "It may be noted that during these periods, Rai was posted as DM in the Andaman & Nicobar administration," said the statement.

Further upon his transfer to Delhi, Mr Rai was posted as director (Education) in the GNCTD. "In the successive APARs for the period from August 31, 2020, to March 31, 2021, he forged the signatures of his reporting authority, H.

Rajesh Prasad, the then principal secretary (Education), GNCTD, and the signature of the reviewing authority, Vijay Kumar Dev, the then chief secretary of Delhi," read the statement.

It further said that during the course of the investigation, it came to light that Mr Rai deliberately filled his APARs manually and not online, through the SPARROW Portal, citing technical glitches.

However, during the inquiry, two officers, namely Anindo Majumdar and Vijay Kumar Dev, denied having reviewed the APARs of Mr Rai and confirmed that the signatures on his APARs were forged. Even the FSL report confirmed that the specimen signatures and handwritings of Anindo Majumdar and Vijay Kumar Dev did not match with those on Mr Rai's APARs.

Accordingly, the matter was earlier placed before the L-G and viewing the seriousness he had recommended for initiating disciplinary and criminal action against Mr Rai, now posted in Mizoram and under suspension.

**Only Delhi gov't invests 25% of budget on edu, says Atishi**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 8**



Delhi minister and AAP leader Atishi addresses a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

The Arvind Kejriwal government is the only one in the country that spends 25 per cent of its total budget on education, Delhi education minister Atishi said on Thursday and claimed that the AAP dispensation transformed the city's academic landscape since taking office.

Ms Atishi alleged during a press conference that government schools faced severe shortcomings, including shortages of classrooms, boards, power supply and washrooms, before the AAP took over. "Since 2015, the Delhi government has built 22,711 new classrooms," she said. "The transformation of Delhi's government schools, according to the AAP leader, has placed them ahead of many private schools in terms of infrastructure."

She accused the BJP-ruled Centre of targeting chief minister Kejriwal and his former deputy Manish Sisodia, both of whom have been jailed in what she described as a "false case".

Despite these obstacles, the minister assured that the work to provide high-quality education to Delhi's children would continue unabated. "The BJP may have put Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia in jail, but they cannot stop our mission to improve education in Delhi. The work of providing excellent infrastructure in our government schools is ongoing and will continue," she said. Meanwhile, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said that the city minister highlights

the construction of a few rooms as her success in education, while the results of Class 10th and 12th in Delhi government schools continue to decline. He claimed that more than half of the schools in the city are without principals, and over 30 per cent of the teaching positions are vacant. "On the other hand, science is not taught in more than 750 out of 1,030 Delhi government schools, and co-commerce is not taught in over 500 schools, depriving poor students of a good education", city BJP chief said.

**SC to hear today petition seeking Neet postponement**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 8**

The Supreme Court agreed to hear on Friday a plea seeking postponement of the Neet-PG examination, scheduled for August 11, which claimed that candidates have been allocated centers in cities, which are highly inconvenient for them to reach. Taking note of the submissions of lawyer Anas Tanwir on the issue, a bench comprising Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said the matter will be listed on Friday.

The plea said many candidates have been allocated cities which are highly inconvenient for them to reach. It said the test cities were allotted on July 31 and the specific centres will be declared on August 8.

**Saxena holds meet on traffic; Delhiites to get challans on WhatsApp**

**AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 8**



V.K. Saxena ensure putting in place a system where traffic challans are issued on WhatsApp, was further directed to expedite the process," a Raj Niwas official said.

In a series of actions to get rid of heavy traffic in the national capital, Delhi lieutenant-governor V.K. Saxena directed the agencies to expedite the process of issuing the traffic challans on WhatsApp. He also directed the installation of AI-based automatic number plate recognition cameras to fetch information on traffic violations and consequent issuance of challans through SMS and WhatsApp and realisation without human interface.

In a meeting held with the special commissioners of traffic (Zone I and II) and commissioner of transport to review the issues related to traffic on Thursday, Mr Saxena also asked the officials to submit a plan to shift ISBT Kashmir Gate to decongest traffic. "Traffic police, which was earlier directed to

ensure putting in place a system where traffic challans are issued on WhatsApp, was further directed to expedite the process," a Raj Niwas official said. The L-G directed the traffic police to enhance the sensibility and presence of personnel on roads and asked the traffic police to constitute joint teams with the transport department to check the overloading of commercial vehicles and overcrowding of passenger buses. He also called for integrating the requirements of the traffic police in this project for better coordination between the transport department and the traffic police and to avoid duplication of work by both departments.

**'TRAINS HANDLING PLAN' TO UNDERTAKE UPGRADATION WORK**  
In order to further upgrade the existing infrastructure at Sanehwal station on Sanehwal - Amritsar Jn. section, Northern Railway will undertake the Pre-Non-Interlocking and Non-Interlocking work from 13.08.2024 to 27.08.2024. To execute this work suitable traffic blocks will be taken. As a result, following 'Traffic Handling Plan' will be adopted during the above mentioned period:-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS		
Train No. & Train Name	Date(s) of Cancellation (from originating station)	
12411/12 Chandigarh - Amritsar Jn. - Chandigarh Intercity Exp.	24.08.2024 to 26.08.2024	
14505 Amritsar Jn. - Nangal Dam Express	14.08.2024 to 26.08.2024	
22430 Pathankot - Delhi Jn. Express	14.08.24 to 27.08.24 except 16.08.24 & 23.08.24	
22429 Delhi Jn. - Pathankot Express	13.08.24 to 26.08.24 except 15.08.24 & 22.08.24	
04652 Amritsar Jn. - Jaynagar Special	14, 16, 18, 21, 23 & 25.08.2024	
04651 Jaynagar - Amritsar Jn. Special	16, 18, 20, 23, 25 & 27.08.2024	
04654 Amritsar Jn. - New Jalpaiguri Superfast Spl.	14.08.2024 & 21.08.2024	
04653 New Jalpaiguri - Amritsar Jn. Superfast Spl.	16.08.2024 & 23.08.2024	
12497/98 New Delhi - Amritsar - New Delhi Shane Punjab	20.08.2024 to 26.08.2024	
12242 Amritsar - Chandigarh Express	24.08.2024 to 27.08.2024	
12241 Chandigarh - Amritsar Express	23.08.2024 to 26.08.2024	
14614/13 Firozpur Cantt. - Chandigarh - Firozpur Cantt. Exp.	24.08.2024 to 26.08.2024	
14506 Nangal Dam - Amritsar Jn. Express	14.08.2024 to 26.08.2024	
14503 Kalka - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Express	23.08.2024	
14504 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Kalka Express	24.08.2024	
04579 Ambala Cantt. Jn. - Ludhiana Jn. MEMU	14.08.2024 to 26.08.2024	
04504/03 Ludhiana - Ambala Cantt. - Ludhiana MEMU	14.08.2024 to 26.08.2024	
04582 Ludhiana Jn. - Ambala Cantt. Jn. MEMU	14.08.2024 to 26.08.2024	
04591/92 Ludhiana - Chheharta - Ludhiana MEMU	14.08.2024 to 26.08.2024	
04690/89 Jalandhar City - Ambala Cantt. - Jalandhar City DMU	24.08.2024 to 26.08.2024	

SHORT TERMINATION/SHORT ORIGINATION OF TRAINS		
Train No. & Train Name	Train to short terminate at / originate from	Date(s) from originating station
14630 Firozpur Cantt. - Chandigarh Sutlej Express	at Ludhiana	13 to 25.08.2024
14629 Chandigarh - Firozpur Cantt. Sutlej Express	from Ludhiana	14 to 26.08.2024
22551 Darbhanga - Jalandhar City Antyodaya Express	at Ambala Cantt.	24.08.2024
15531 Saharsa - Amritsar Jansadharan Express	at Chandigarh	18 & 25.08.2024
22552 Jalandhar City - Darbhanga Antyodaya Express	from Ambala Cantt.	25.08.2024
15532 Amritsar - Saharsa Jansadharan Express	from Chandigarh	19 & 26.08.2024

DIVERSION OF TRAINS		
Train No. & Train Name	Diverted Route	Date(s) from originating station
12357 Kolkata Terminal - Amritsar Jn. Durgiana Express	Via Ambala Cantt. - Rajpura - Dhuri Jn - Ludhiana	17.08.2024, 20.08.2024 & 24.08.2024
22125 Nagpur - Amritsar Jn. AC Express	Via Ambala Cantt. - Rajpura - Dhuri Jn - Ludhiana	17.08.2024
12317 Kolkata Terminal - Amritsar Jn. Akal Takht Express	Via Ambala Cantt. - Rajpura - Dhuri Jn - Ludhiana	18.08.2024 & 25.08.2024

REGULATION OF TRAINS		
Train No. & Train Name	Regulation of Trains at Station	
12920 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Dr. Ambedkar Nagar Malwa Express	Train will be Regulated by 125 min. in Firozpur Cantt. on 26.08.2024	
14650 Amritsar Jn. - Jaynagar Saryu Yamuna Express	Train will be Regulated by 105 min. in Firozpur Cantt. on 26.08.2024	
12476 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Hapa Express	Train will be Regulated by 80 min. in Firozpur Cantt. on 26.08.2024	

For any kind of information, passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways Website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

**75 Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav**

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**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)

1. N.I.T No. : GSU\_DLI\_SNT\_05 dated 07.08.2024

2. Name of work with its location : Indoor works along with Provision of Electronic Interlocking (EI) based Automatic Signalling in Sahibabad-Ghaziabad Section

3. Approx. Cost of work : Rs. 4.11.05.115.49/-

4. Bid Security deposit : Rs. 3,70,500/-

5. Completion period of work : 08 Months

6. Date and time for submission of tender and opening of tender : Upto 11:30 hrs. on 30.08.2024. Opening of tender at 11:30 hrs. on 30.08.2024.

7. Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc. : Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

No. : GSU\_DLI\_SNT\_05 Dated: 07.08.2024 2441/2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

**पावरग्रिड POWERGRID**

**NOTICE**

1. Approval under Regulation-86 of CERC (Conduct of Business) Regulations 1999 and CERC (Terms and Conditions of Tariff) Regulations 2019 (i) Truing up of Transmission tariff for 2019-24 tariff block and (ii) Determination of Transmission tariff for 2024-29 tariff block for assets under Start-up Power to DVC and Mathon Right Bank Generation Projects in Eastern Region.

2. The beneficiaries of the above mentioned Transmission system are: (i) Bihar State Power (Holding) Company Ltd., (ii) West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd., (iii) Grid Corporation Of Orissa Ltd., (iv) Damodar Valley Corporation, (v) Power Department, Govt Of Sikkim, Gangtok, (vi) Jharkhand Biji Viran Nigam Ltd., (vii) NTPC Ltd., (viii) Haryana power Purchase Centre and (ix) Delhi Transco Ltd.

3. Tariff details:

a) 2019-24 block

Asset detail	DOC/ECOD	Completion Cost as on 31.03.2024	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Combined Asset	30.01.2011	37250.01	5330.50	5157.10	4985.15	4819.45	3184.32

b) 2024-29 block

Asset detail	Completion Cost as on 31.03.2029	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Combined Asset	37250.01	AFC	3074.51	3053.76	3032.45	3011.05

4. A copy of the application made for determination of tariff is posted on the website of the applicant at [www.powergrid.in](http://www.powergrid.in)

5. The suggestions and objections, if any, on the proposals for determination of tariff contained in the application be filed by any person, including the beneficiary before the Secretary, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, 3 & 4th floor, Chandrakot Building, Janpath, New Delhi - 110 001 (or other address where the office of the Commission is situated), with a copy to the applicant at the address of its corporate office within 30 days of publication of this notice.

Place: GURUGRAM Sd/-  
Date: 09.08.2024 General Manager (Commercial)

**POWER GRID CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED**  
(A Government of India Enterprise)  
Registered Office: B-9, Qutab Institutional Area, Katwaria Sarai, New Delhi 110 016  
Corporate Office: Saudamini, Plot No.2, Sector-29, Gurugram, Haryana - 122 001

A MAHARATNA PSU

SHORT TAKES

Will strengthen Cong in Jharkhand: Kharge

New Delhi: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday vowed to strengthen the party organisation in Jharkhand to ensure that the INDIA bloc government is re-elected in the poll-bound state. Mr Kharge made the remarks in a post after he met Congress leaders from the state, including Jharkhand unit chief Rajesh Thakur and AICC in-charge of state Ghulam Ahmad Mir. "Today, in a meeting with the leaders of @INCJharkhand, we vowed that by going to the people in the upcoming Jharkhand elections and strengthening the organization, we will once again form the government of INDIA in the state," Mr Kharge said in a post in Hindi on X. "It is our resolve to protect water, forests, land and tribal culture of the people of Jharkhand," he said. The meeting comes a day after the Jharkhand Congress leaders met Congress general secretary, in-charge of organisation, K.C. Venugopal. — PTI

Hooda says Vinesh should be sent to RS

New Delhi: Former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Thursday said he would have nominated wrestler Vinesh Phogat to the Rajya Sabha if the Congress had the numbers in the state Assembly. The grappler bid adieu to her international wrestling career on Thursday, saying she did not have the strength to continue. "There are Rajya Sabha polls soon... We don't have a majority, else I would have nominated her. She has made us all proud," Mr Bhupinder Singh Hooda said. His son Deepender Hooda, a Lok Sabha MP, said one seat in the Rajya Sabha from Haryana fell vacant after his election to the Lower House. Vinesh Phogat should be sent to the Upper House, he said.

Uddhav meets Sonia ahead polls in Maha

New Delhi: Ahead of the Assembly elections in Maharashtra, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray met with Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi on Thursday, following earlier meetings with Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday. According to insiders, the meeting with Sonia Gandhi was a courtesy call. This meeting gains significance ahead of crucial seat-sharing discussions among the three parties — Congress, Sena (UBT), and NCP(SP). Discussions are underway to determine whether the alliance will project former chief minister Uddhav Thackeray as its face in the upcoming state Assembly elections, scheduled for October with 288 seats at stake.

'EC VISIT SHOWS CENTRE READY FOR J&K POLLS'

Srinagar, Aug. 8: National Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Thursday said the visit of an Election Commission team to Jammu and Kashmir shows the Centre's willingness to hold Assembly elections in the Union territory. The three-member EC team led by Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar arrived here this morning to review preparedness for Assembly polls, weeks before the Supreme Court's September 30 deadline for holding elections in the Union territory. "If they were not ready (for Assembly elections), I do not think Prime Minister Narendra Modi or home minister Amit Shah and all the other ministers would have announced that elections will take place," Mr Abdullah said. "If they were not ready, they would not have said so and that is why the Election Commission is coming," Mr Abdullah said, responding to a question about the Centre's readiness to hold Assembly elections. He said Kashmir is the country's starting point and there will be a problem in all of India if those ruling from Delhi continue with their current policies.

'Interests of people of Bangladesh foremost in our mind' Not aware of Hasina's plan: MEA

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

India on Thursday said the interests of the people of Bangladesh are "foremost" in its mind, thereby indicating that New Delhi is looking to build a relationship with the new government that takes office in Dhaka. India also hoped for an early restoration of law and order in Bangladesh. As far as India is concerned, the interests of the people of Bangladesh are foremost in our mind, external affairs ministry

spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing. To another question on reports of attacks on minority communities in the troubled neighbouring nation, the MEA spokesperson said that New Delhi is monitoring the situation. "It is the responsibility of every government to

ensure the welfare of all its citizens", he said, adding that India hopes for an early restoration of peace. On the future course of action of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who remains holed up in New Delhi after she was ousted from power on Monday, Mr Jaiswal said: "We do not have any update on her plan."

He added that it is "not appropriate" to comment on these but pointed out that "it is for Sheikh Hasina to take things forward". The comment is being seen as a clear indication that Ms Hasina's

stay in India may be only temporary amid reports that the new government in Dhaka may seek the extradition of Ms Hasina. Meanwhile, New Delhi said external affairs minister S. Jaishankar had spoken to his British counterpart David Lammy on the developments in Bangladesh but gave no details. New Delhi said it is in touch with Bangladesh authorities on the issues of safety of both Indian diplomatic missions and Indian nationals. It added that some of the Indians still there have expressed a desire to return to India.

Jaishankar to begin his 3-day Maldives visit from today

New Delhi, Aug. 8: External affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will pay a three-day visit to the Maldives beginning Friday, in a first high-level trip from New Delhi after the island nation's pro-China President, Mohamed Muizzu, assumed office nearly nine months ago. Mr Muizzu visited India in June and attended the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union council of ministers. "External affairs minister S. Jaishankar will pay an official visit to Maldives from August 9-11," the MEA said. "The visit follows the recent visit of the President of the Republic of Maldives Mohamed Muizzu to India for the swearing-in ceremony of the new Cabinet and Council of Ministers," it added. "Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour and an important partner in India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and our Vision 'SAGAR', that is, Security and Growth for All in the Region," the MEA said. — PTI



Namoo Ghat gets submerged following rains in Varanasi on Thursday. — PTI

Maha deputy CM says seat-sharing agreement will be finalised soon 3 Mahayuti allies to keep existing seats: Ajit

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, AUG. 8

Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday hinted at the possible seat-sharing arrangement within the ruling Mahayuti constituents for the upcoming Vidhan Sabha polls saying all three parties will retain seats where they have sitting MLAs. "The Mahayuti has decided to retain winning seats of the respective parties. However, if there is a need to change seats, all three parties in Mahayuti are

prepared for that. The seat-sharing agreement will be finalised soon," said Pawar in Dindori in Nashik district, from where he kicked-started his 'Jan Sanman Yatra.'

Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) is part of the Mahayuti alliance along with the Shiv Sena and BJP. Following the dismal performance in the Lok Sabha polls, the seat-sharing arrangement among the Mahayuti parties is expected to be a major issue among its constituents. Ajit Pawar's NCP fared badly in



Ajit Pawar

the polls, it contested four Lok Sabha seats, but could win the sole seat of Raigad. The Mahayuti also won only 18 out of 48 seats in Maharashtra, with the BJP winning nine seats and the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv

Rahul holds meet with party's Lok Sabha MPs

Discusses Supreme Court verdicts, Bangla, China issues

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha (LoP) and former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday held a meeting with the party's MP in the Lower House to discuss a wide range of issues including the Bangladesh and Chinese issues.

Chairing the meeting with Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi and party's general secretary in-charge of organisation K.C. Venugopal at the Parliament House Annex, Mr Gandhi called upon them to raise issues of the people. "Discussed important topics with my fellow MPs in the meeting," the Leader of the Opposition wrote in a social media post after the meeting. Mr Gogoi, while referring to the meeting, said, "Today, a meeting of the Congress MPs of the Lok Sabha was held. Rahul Gandhi was present. Discussion was held on several issues. Discussion was held on ongoing situation in Bangladesh, China issue, judgements of the Supreme Court and



Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi meets visitors during the Monsoon Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Thursday. — PTI

CONGRESS WANTS the time given to its members should be properly utilised and people-centric points should be made and they should actively participate in all discussions and make an impact in the House.

today's business in Parliament." Insiders claim that a mechanism will be put in place where the number of questions a member puts will be seen. The notices given by members, calling attention to

motions given. All this will be evaluated in the mechanism and the member's productivity will be ascertained. Congress wants the time given to its members should be properly utilised and people-centric points should be made. With the strengthening of the Opposition numbers, the Congress wants its members to be seen taking on the government on the Floor of the House. Hence the Congress wants its members to actively participate in all discussions and make an impact in the House.

Govt withdraws Waqf Properties Bill from RS, Opp. condemns

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

The government on Thursday withdrew the Waqf Properties (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Bill 2014, which sought to provide for a mechanism for the eviction of unauthorised occupants from waqf properties, in Rajya Sabha. The Waqf Properties (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Bill, 2014 was introduced in Rajya Sabha on February 18, 2014 by erstwhile minority affairs minister K. Rahman Khan. It was referred to the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice on March 5, 2014.

Assets dedicated for religious or charitable purposes are referred as Waqf properties. Minister of minority affairs Kiren Rijju sought the leave of the House to withdraw the bill and the withdrawal was approved by voice vote in Rajya Sabha by the members. CPI(M) MP John Brittas and IUML MP Abdul Wahab opposed the withdrawal of the bill in the Upper House.

Himanta: Edu best weapon to combat child marriage

Guwahati, Aug. 8: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday asserted that education is the best weapon to combat the social menace of child marriage. Launching the ₹1,500 crore 'Nijut Moina Scheme' to provide financial assistance to girl students from higher secondary to post-graduate level in government and aided institutions, the chief minister said that most girls drop out of schools after class 10 and

their parents then marry them off. The scheme has been launched to curb child marriage by increasing the enrolment of girl students in higher education. The 'Nijut Moina' scheme is aimed at protecting children's rights to education and health, empowering girls to make informed choices, delaying marriage till they gain emotional, mental and physical maturity and reducing teenage motherhood incidences, Sarma said. — PTI

First discussion between states since Lalduhoma came to power Mizoram, Assam border talks today

Aizawl, Aug. 8: Mizoram and Assam will hold ministerial-level talks on Friday to address a longstanding border dispute between the two northeastern states, an official said. The meeting is scheduled to take place at the state guest house in Aizawl at 4 pm, they added. The Mizoram delegation will be led by home minister K. Sapdanga, while Assam's team will be headed by border protection and development minister Atul Bora, officials said. This will be the first border

discussion between both the states since the Zoram People's Movement, led by CM Lalduhoma, came to power in December last year. Following the talks, Mr Bora and his team will have a courtesy meeting with Lalduhoma before departing for Guwahati on Saturday. Mr Sapdanga has expressed optimism that the talks could lead to a positive resolution of the border dispute. He noted that both states have adhered to the status quo on disputed areas since border discussions began in August 2021.

THE HOME minister of Mizoram expressed optimism that the talks could lead to a positive resolution of the border dispute. Despite an agreement in February for talks between Mr Lalduhoma and Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, scheduling conflicts due to the Lok Sabha elections delayed the discussions. The border dispute involves three Mizoram districts—Aizawl, Kolasib, and

Mamit—which share a 164.6 km boundary with Assam's Cachar, Karimganj, and Hailakandi districts. The dispute originates from two colonial-era demarcations — the 1875 notification under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR) and the 1933 Survey of India map. Mizoram claims that 509 square-miles within the inner line reserved forest, as per the 1875 notification, falls within its territory, while Assam regards the 1933 map as its constitutional boundary. — PTI

Non-bullet injuries on 3 youth killed in encounter: Report

Guwahati, Aug. 8: There were wounds and bruises on the bodies, including in private parts, of the three youths who were killed in an alleged encounter with the Assam police in Cachar district last month, according to post-mortem and inquest reports. A set of government documents such as post-mortem and subsequent final opinion, inquest reports and state affidavit, which have been accessed by PTI, suggest that there were many wounds, bruises and injuries on the bodies of the trio that were not caused by bullets. Alleging torture and extrajudicial killing, the family members had filed a writ petition before Gauhati high court and demanded an independent inquiry by CBI with officials from outside the state conducting the probe, besides a compensation of ₹1 crore each, the petitioners' advocate Debasmitta Ghosh said. "The post-mortem report clearly states that there were many antemortem

ASSAM

wounds on the three bodies. There were bruises on the private parts of the youths. These wounds can't be inflicted only by encounter," she said. The deceased youths, termed as suspected Hmar militants by the Assam police, were Lallungawi Hmar (21), Lalbukung Hmar (33) and Joshua (32). While Joshua hailed from Manipur, the other two were from Cachar. The Assam police had claimed that the trio were killed in a fierce encounter with security forces in Cachar district on July 17 and several sophisticated firearms were seized from the spot. As per the final opinion on the basis of the post-mortem, conducted at a hospital, there were "multiple pressure abrasions... Over the dorsal aspect of right forearm, 2 cm below elbow joint, reddish in colour" and these were "antemortem and caused by blunt force impact" on Lallungawi's body. — PTI

LS takes up new aviation bill, to replace 90-year-old Aircraft Act

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

The Lok Sabha on Thursday took up the Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak Bill 2024, which seeks to replace the 90-year-old Aircraft Act with the government claiming that it would address the current discrepancies in the aviation law and help the industry grow. During the debate on the bill, Opposition MPs raised concerns over rising airfare and questioned why the government is unable to control it.



K.R. Naidu

Aviation minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu said the bill would address the current discrepancies in the aviation law and help the industry grow. He said that the Aircraft Act, 1934 - which the new bill seeks to replace - has become outdated due to its numerous amendments over the years. Mr Naidu explained that the 1934 Act had undergone 21 amendments, resulting in ambiguities and contra-

dictions, particularly regarding the powers and functions of internal organizations like the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). He pointed out that these issues have created confusion within the aviation sector, making it difficult for the relevant authorities to operate effectively. "Because of this, the whole structuring of the Act itself has led to a lot of ambiguity and contradictions in terms of powers and functions of certain internal organizations," he said.

MP Cong's '11-6 office hrs' notice draws BJP criticism

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, AUG. 8

A notice board displaying the time of opening and closure of the state Congress headquarters here has created a flutter in the political circles here with the ruling BJP calling it the 'corporatisation' of the grand old party. It was informed in the notice board that the party would function for six days a week from 11 am to six pm and it would remain closed on Sundays. The notice has not only

invited derision from the Bharatiya Janata Party but also created a flutter in the Congress. "I wonder why the Congress party felt to function like a corporate body instead of a political party by choosing to work for six days in a week and seven hours daily. The party leadership may have thought it is wise not to devote whole time to rebuild the party since it hardly has any future. Hopefully, the 'work time' for the party is not reduced in coming days", state Bharatiya Janata Party secretary Rajneesh Agrawal quipped.

Yunus takes oath as head of interim govt in Dhaka

Continued from Page 1 According to reports, more than a dozen members of his Cabinet, whose titles are advisers, not ministers, also took the oath, as the caretaker government will now seek to restore peace and prepare for elections. The new Cabinet reportedly includes Nahid Islam and Asif Mahmud, top leaders of the Students Against Discrimination group, which led the week-long protests that ousted Ms Hasina. Others include

former foreign secretary Touhid Hossain and former attorney-general Hassan Ariff. Award-winning environmental lawyer Syeda Rizwana Hasan and top law professor and writer Syeda Rizwana Hasan were also reportedly sworn in. Adilur Rahman Khan, a prominent human rights activist who was sentenced to two years in jail by the Hasina government, also reportedly took the oath as an adviser.

Hours before taking charge as the head of Bangladesh's new interim government, Mr Yunus, who reached Dhaka from Paris on Thursday, said that restoration of law and order is the priority of the new government. He urged all to refrain from any violence amid reports of attacks on minorities and others in his country. Mr Yunus also hailed the successful protests by students as a "second independence" for Bangladesh,

which gained its freedom from Pakistan. Amid efforts to form an interim government in Bangladesh, Sajeeb Wazed Joy, son of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who fled her country on Monday, told news agencies his mother will definitely return to her country once democracy is restored, either as a "retired or active" politician. Mr Joy said, "Yes, it is true that I had said she (Ms Hasina) wouldn't return to

Bangladesh. But a lot has changed in the last two days following continuous attacks on our leaders and party workers across the country. Now we are going to do whatever it takes to keep our people safe; we are not going to leave them alone." He added: "The Awami League is the largest and oldest political party in Bangladesh, so we cannot just walk away from our people. She will definitely return once democracy is restored."

SHORT TAKES

ED official held for taking ₹20L bribe

**New Delhi:** The CBI on Thursday arrested an assistant director of the ED for allegedly taking a bribe of ₹20 lakhs from a Mumbai-based jeweller. The ED had conducted searches at the premises of the jeweller, Vipul Harish Thakkar, on August 3 and 4. According to CBI officials, assistant director Sandeep Singh Yadav allegedly threatened to arrest Mr Thakkar's son if he did not pay him ₹25 lakh. During negotiations, the amount was reduced to ₹20 lakhs and later Mr Thakkar approached the CBI, they added. "The verification of the complaint in the presence of independent witnesses, prima facie revealed a criminal conspiracy hatched by assistant director Sandeep Singh Yadav in the ED HQ, New Delhi, with unknown others to obtain undue advantage," the CBI FIR stated.

Uproar in RS over Phogat row, Opp. walks out

**Continued from Page 1**  
the behaviour of the Opposition members towards the Chair. He accused the Congress of politicising the Phogat disqualification issue. "The Opposition does not have a solid issue to discuss," he said. Mr Nadda also emphasised the whole country is behind Ms Phogat and even the Prime Minister has described the wrestler as a "champion of champions". After Mr Nadda spoke, Mr Dhankhar expressed his anguish over the conduct of the Opposition members and left the House, saying he was not in a position to remain in the House for the time being. Before leaving the Rajya Sabha, Mr Dhankhar said the behaviour of the Opposition members has crossed all limits by creating anarchy in the House and disrespecting the prestige of the Chair. "They are not challenging me. They are challenging the post of Chairman. And they are challenging the Chair, as they think that the person who is sitting on this Chair is not capable," he said. Mr Dhankhar rued that he did not get the desired support from the House despite making all efforts. "I am not running away from the oath. But what I have seen today, the way a member has behaved, the way the Opposition benches have conducted, I am not finding myself in a position to sit here for some time," the chairman said, adding he was leaving the House "with a heavy heart". After Mr Dhankhar left the House, deputy Chairman Harivansh chaired the Zero Hour proceedings. Later, Mr Dhankhar chaired the Question Hour. After returning to the Chair, Mr Dhankhar said when a scene is created in the House and it becomes the epicentre of disruption for the entire nation, then it is a bounden duty to sometimes take a tough decision.

Ex-CM & CPM veteran Buddhadeb dies at 80

Mortal remains to be taken to Bengal Assembly today

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, AUG. 8

CPI(M) veteran and former West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee breathed his Thursday morning last at his Kolkata home. He was 80 and is survived by his wife Meera and daughter Suchetan. Bhattacharjee became the CM of the state in 2000 after CPI(M) patriarch Jyoti Basu vacated the post. He remained the CM till 2011 when the CPI(M)-Left Front rule came to an end in the state.

Known as a gentleman politician, Bhattacharjee was instrumental in pushing the "Do It Now" philosophy into governance and the I-T industry.

His second stint as the CM, however, witnessed a fierce agitation by Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee over forcible land acquisition by the state government for industrialisation at Singur and Nandigram.

According to his family, his condition worsened on Wednesday night. Once his condition became stable, it was decided that he would be admitted to Woodlands Hospital for treatment on Thursday morning.

The former CM, however, fell ill as respiratory distress shot up after having breakfast at his Palm Avenue residence in Karaya and was given a nebulizer. But he suffered a cardiac arrest and passed away at around 8.20 am.

"Saddened by the passing of Shri Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, former CM of West Bengal. He was a political stalwart who served the state with commitment. My heartfelt condolences to his family and supporters. Om



Former West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's wife Mira mourns his death at their residence in Kolkata on Thursday. — PTI

He'll be remembered for his work: Mamata

**Kolkata, Aug. 8:** West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee said that her predecessor Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, who died Thursday morning, will be remembered for his work.

After visiting the south Kolkata residence of Bhattacharjee, Ms Banerjee said that her government declared a holiday on Thursday.

"He will remain in the minds of the people... He will be remembered for his work," she told reporters.

The TMC supreme said that her predecessor, against whose government she had fought a political battle till the defeat of the CPI(M)-led Left Front in 2011, had a lot of contributions.

Maintaining that a man is remembered for his



work, the CM said that Bhattacharjee's demise is a loss to the state. Ms Banerjee said that she spoke to his wife Mira, who told her that Bhattacharjee complained of breathlessness after having breakfast. "I express my condolences to his wife Mira, their child Suchetan, the CPI(M) party, the Left Front and all co-citizens," she said. She had also visited Bhattacharjee a few times when he was ill. "Though I belong to a different political party, I have my heartfelt sympathies to the (CPI(M) party)," she said. — PTI

Shanti." Prime Minister Narendra Modi said. Bhattacharjee's mortal remains were later taken to Peace World, a mortuary in central Kolkata. On Friday, it will be taken to the Assembly and the CPI(M) state head office on Alimuddin Street before being donated for medical research.

Efforts on to reform existing excise policy, says minister No new liquor shop in Odisha now

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 8

Odisha's new BJP government, headed by chief minister Mohan Charan Majhi, has honoured the public demand to contain the spread of liquor sales in the state. On Thursday, it announced that no more new liquor shops will be allowed to open.

Speaking to the media, state excise minister Prithiviraj Harichandan said, "We have decided that no new liquor shop will be opened in the state. Besides, efforts are on to reform the existing excise

policy." "Illegal sale of liquor in our state poses a major challenge for us. To restrict it, we have made some changes to the excise policy. However, this is an interim excise policy which will last for seven to eight months," Mr Harichandan added. As we try to make the excise policy spontaneous, many changes can be expected in the coming year, he informed.

After the BJP came to power in the state defeating the Naveen Patnaik-led Biju Janata Dal (BJD) that ruled Odisha for over 24 years, people demanded complete prohibition. According to experts, the Patnaik government's over-reliance on excise revenue had led to an unbridled proliferation of liquor sales in the state. The 2000-2001 fiscal, the very first year of Mr Patnaik's rule saw the state earning an excise revenue of ₹135.35 crores. In 2023-24, the state collected ₹6,186.36 crore excise and ₹2,585 crore VAT on liquor, making the total excise revenue for the year ₹8,771.36 crores. The BJD government had set a target to achieve excise revenue of ₹10,000 crores for the year 2023-24 given the sector's substan-

tial growth during the last two years. The growth in the excise sector has been enormous in 2022-23 with 15 per cent more collection than last year. The government had set a target of ₹6,495 crores from excise revenue in the 2022-23 Budget, which was revised to ₹6,882 crores later. The collection at the end of the financial year has been 27 per cent more than the revised estimate. Around 10 to 15 per cent growth in excise revenue has almost become the norm in Odisha for the last couple of years.

ministry has constituted a nine-member committee to evaluate the impact of the disaster and submit a report accordingly. "The Union government has responded positively to our request for a comprehensive rehabilitation package. I have also written a detailed letter to him, outlining our urgent needs and expressing our gratitude for the support received so far," he added. The chief minister said the state government has decided to take immediate steps, including disbursement of financial aid from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), to those affected by the landslides. "We have allocated an initial amount to provide immediate relief to the families who have lost their kin. Each family of the deceased will receive compensation of ₹10 lakhs," he said.

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Mumbai college hijab ban: SC to hear plea today

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG 8

The Supreme Court will hear on Friday a plea challenging a Bombay high court verdict upholding a Mumbai college's ban on hijabs, burqas and naqabs inside the campus.

Taking note of the submissions of a lawyer that term exams begin on Thursday and students from the minority community are bound to face difficulties due to instructions on the dress code, the SC bench said, "It is coming up tomorrow (Friday), I have listed it already."

Lawyer Abiha Zaidi, appearing for the petitioners, had sought an urgent hearing on grounds of the beginning of the unit tests.

The HC on June 26 refused to interfere with the decision of the Chembur Trombay Education Society's N.G. Acharya and D.K. Marathe College imposing the ban.

Modi in Wayanad tomorrow, will visit disaster-hit regions

AGE CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 9

Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan has expressed hope that Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to the disaster-hit Wayanad district on Saturday will take a favourable stance towards the state's demand for a comprehensive rehabilitation package for the people affected by the devastating landslides.

The chief minister said the Centre has informed the state government that the PM will visit Wayanad on Saturday to assess the situation personally. The state has already appealed to the Centre to declare this disaster a national calamity, given its severity, he said.

Mr Vijayan said in response to the state's demand, the Union home

ministry has constituted a nine-member committee to evaluate the impact of the disaster and submit a report accordingly. "The Union government has responded positively to our request for a comprehensive rehabilitation package. I have also written a detailed letter to him, outlining our urgent needs and expressing our gratitude for the support received so far," he added. The chief minister said the state government has decided to take immediate steps, including disbursement of financial aid from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), to those affected by the landslides. "We have allocated an initial amount to provide immediate relief to the families who have lost their kin. Each family of the deceased will receive compensation of ₹10 lakhs," he said.

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SC concerned over pension grievances of dist judges

Apex court ask govt to resolve issue soon

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, AUG. 8

The Supreme Court on Thursday flagged meagre pensions to district judges and directed the Centre to resolve these issues at the earliest.

A bench headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud said: "We, being the guardian of the district judiciary, urge you (the attorney general and the solicitor general) to sit together with the amicus curiae and find a way out."

"District judges are only getting ₹15,000 as pension. District judges come to high courts and generally they are elevated to HCs at the age of 56 and 57 years and they retire with pension of ₹30,000 per month," the bench also comprising justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said. The CJI said very few high court judges get arbitration matters and moreover, at the age of 60 years, they cannot go for the legal practice. "Look at their social profile also... They do not get arbitration matters," the bench said. Referring to a case of a district judge who was elevated to the high court and who was suffering from cancer but was not getting pension at par with high court judges, the CJI said the top court had to intervene to provide relief. Some of these are "extremely hard cases". And several petitions are being filed by district judges, he added. Attorney-general R. Venkataramani and solicitor-general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, sought some time to argue the case related to pension aspects of district court judges.

OBITUARY BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARJEE (1944-2024)

Left pragmatist who tried to make WB future ready

His passing away is a politically consequential moment. It prompts not just the routines of reviewing Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's career from student leader to chief minister to his downfall that ended the 34 years of uninterrupted CPI(M)-led Left Front rule in West Bengal and installed Mamata Banerjee in power. His end is an event demanding a re-examination of his legacy, to look again at his convictions and his grand design for a brave new West Bengal that he dreamed would confidently stride into the 21st century and the new millennium, in a great leap forward. History, he felt, was waiting to be



made when he became chief minister in 2000, aged 56. He had plans and a vision to hoist West Bengal to the top of wealth, achievement and development and end the curse of declining fortune in which it had been enveloped soon after Independence in 1947. The world was curious about Bhattacharjee's plans to transform West Bengal, stigmatised as a turbulent state where the "Reds" were in power. Legendary US secretary of state Henry Kissinger made a private visit to Kolkata and met Bhattacharjee, to talk about the civil nuclear deal to which the CPI(M) was adamantly opposed, and to see what was happening under the chief minister's

watch. Commenting on his visit to West Bengal, Kissinger said: "I wanted to see the vitality of the state which has a population of over 60 million as well as a Communist government dedicated to bringing private investment. I think Paulson had also visited the state for the same reason." Earlier, then US treasury secretary Henry Paulson had met

Bhattacharjee. Though Bhattacharjee said nothing after the 2007 meeting, he wrote in *Phire Dekha*: "We talked. He asked why Communism was not adapting to the changing conditions in the world. I replied: the Communists are changing, but have the Americans revised their outlook and policies?"

Mr Bhattacharjee's exit imposes a responsibility on West Bengal's leadership to review and reconsider how "future ready" is the state. The crises of unemployment and job opportunities, low investments and disinterested investors, urgent upgrades in infrastructure and the lack of money to get it done, the disappointing conversion of potential into actuality continue to

keep West Bengal poorer than it should be, heavily in debt instead of rich and buoyant, shabby instead of snazzy. All this deeply disturbed Bhattacharjee, and his concern remained even though he had retired from political life. The concrete conditions, despite more schools, colleges, universities, medical universities, engineering colleges, professional courses, malls, hotels, roads, demolition-reconstruction-urbanisation, have not fundamentally changed, he felt. "Our reality is our own," he believed and Bhattacharjee was determined to change reality. He launched a transformation programme at breathless speed and came a cropper after winning an

impressive mandate of 235 seats of the total 294 seats in the Assembly in 2006. The popular opposition that Mamata Banerjee successfully harnessed ended his dreams of an automobile hub, an industrial complex in Singur and Nandigram. Instead, violence by his police and his party tarnished his image, broke the trust of an electorate that turned to the alternative, Trinamul Congress, and its promise of "poriborton" (change). The CPI(M) lingers as a sick person desperately hoping for a revival. Will Bhattacharjee's end fan the embers or will young voters shrug and say: "They don't make men like him any more?"

■ SHIKHA MUKERJEE

Waqf Bill sent to JPC after heated debate

**Continued from Page 1**  
BJP has brought this bill to appease its hardcore supporters," the SP chief said, adding that it was brought with an eye on the polls.

A heated exchange took place between Union home minister Amit Shah and Mr Yadav when the SP chief said that he heard that the rights of Lok Sabha Speaker are being curtailed and the Opposition will have to fight for him.

Mr Shah rose to respond to Mr Yadav and said, "This is an insult to the Chair. The rights of the Speaker do not belong to the Opposition but to the whole House. Don't speak in a roundabout way. You are not the protector of the Speaker's rights." Mr Birla also said that Mr Yadav and other members of the House must not comment on the Chair.

NCP(SP) MP Supriya Sule said her party opposed the bill as it is against a particular minority community. "Look at what is happening in Bangladesh. There is so much pain. It is the moral duty of a country to protect minorities," she said.

"The government should clarify the intent and the timing of the bill. We object, withdraw this Bill. Let's discuss it and then bring a bill that is fair and just," Ms Sule said.

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimen chairperson Asaduddin Owaisi claimed that the House did not have the competence to make the amendments. "It is a grave attack on the basic structure of the Constitution as it vio-

lates the principle of judicial independence and separation of powers. You are enemies of Muslims and this bill is evidence of that," Mr Owaisi said.

Strongly defending the bill and hitting out at the Congress, Mr Rijiju said that the Wakf Act of 1995 did not serve its purpose and the amendments are necessitated as the Congress could not achieve the reform it should have.

"Because you couldn't do it, we have to bring these amendments. Some people have captured Wakf Boards and this bill has been brought to give justice to ordinary Muslims," he said, claiming that many leaders in the Opposition have privately told him that state Wakf Boards had turned into a mafia.

Mr Rijiju noted that in the earlier law, there was no provision to challenge or review the order or judgement of the tribunal and now, provision is being made for verdicts to be challenged at higher courts.

"In our country, no law can be a super law and can't be above the Constitution. However, in the 1995 Wakf Act, there are provisions that are above the provisions in the Constitution. Shouldn't that be challenged?" he asked.

Hitting out at the Congress, Mr Rijiju said, "The wrongs that you have done, now we are correcting those."

He asserted the government has conducted thorough consultations at all levels and cited cases such as an entire village in Tamil Nadu being declared Wakf land to underline the need for reforms in the law.

Accusing the Opposition of misleading Muslims, Mr Rijiju said that they shouldn't see such issues through the prism of religion.

"Similarly, the Surat municipal corporation headquarters was declared Wakf property," he said and asked how this is possible.

He assured Wakf Board income will be used only for the welfare of the Muslim community. "It is my good fortune that, being non-Muslim, I am getting the opportunity to bring a bill for the welfare of Muslims," he said.

Mr Rijiju also introduced a bill to repeal the Mussalman Wakf Act 1923. Its statement of objects and reasons stated that the colonial-era legislation has become outdated and inadequate for effective management of Wakf property in modern India.

Backing the amendment bill, the NDA allies said that it is aimed at bringing transparency in the functioning of the Wakf Boards and not an attempt to interfere with the running of mosques.

JD(U) leader and Union minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh said, "Several members are making it sound as if the amendment in the Wakf Board law is anti-Muslim. How is it anti-Muslim? Here an example of Ayodhya is being given. Can you not differentiate between a temple and an institution?"

"This isn't an attempt to interfere with (functioning of) mosques. This law is for the institution to make it transparent," he said.

Speaking with the media, LJP chief and Union minister Chirag Paswan said his party supports the

Bill. He said it is aimed at bringing transparency to the Wakf Board and refuted the Opposition's claim that it is anti-Muslim.

TDP MP G.M. Harish Balayogi said his party will not mind if the bill is sent to a parliamentary panel. "I appreciate the concern with which the government has brought this bill. When purpose and power get misused, it is the responsibility of the government to bring reforms and introduce transparency in the system," he said.

The TDP MP said there is a requirement for the government to regulate and streamline the purpose.

The Bill to amend the law governing Wakf Boards proposes far-reaching changes in the 1995 Act, including ensuring representation of Muslim women and non-Muslims in such bodies.

According to its statement of objects and reasons, the bill seeks to omit Section 40 of the current law relating to the powers of the board to decide if a property is Wakf property. It provides for a broad-based composition of the Central Wakf Council and state Wakf Boards and proposes to establish a separate board of Aqaf for Boharas and Aghakhans.

The amendment bill provides for representation of Shias, Sunnis, Bohras, Agakhans and other backward classes among Muslims. The Wakf (Amendment) Bill also aims at renaming the Act as the Unified Wakf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act 1995.



THE ASIAN AGE

9 AUGUST 2024

Vinesh will always remain synonymous with courage

One of the greatest tales in the long-running saga of sport in Indian society in the modern era ended like a Greek tragedy, much to the chagrin of a billion sports fans. Vinesh Phogat, who richly deserved a medal for her stubborn persistence towards proving that the system is crooked in a society that fails to protect its women from harassment, is now appealing to the international arbitration court for an Olympic medal that was hers save for her being 100 grams overweight at the scales for her 50-kg classification wrestling final at the Paris Olympics.

The Vinesh Phogat saga had much in it to illustrate how the seeming normality of sport is a myth in an abnormal, male-dominated society. Her failure to manage her physicality according to the rules could be termed her only one as she did the unimaginable in beating the wrestler Yui Susaki who had never been beaten in a major competition in an 82-0 record. She downed two more champions on her way to the summit, all in the space of one great day in which she exhibited all her fighting qualities, her nous and tactical understanding of her sport.

Of course, the rules should not bend for anyone, though the principle may be anathema to a sentimental Indian society with its known disdain for rules and regulations where the exception seems to always slay the rule. The Olympic rules that allow persons of doubtful gender definitions compete as women in the boxing ring can be questioned, but that is not germane to the issue of classification by weight in wrestling.

**She had been busy fighting for nearly half a year in 2023 to expose the venality of a powerful politician-sports administrator against whom the normal rules against sexually harassing female athletes did not seem to apply**

The question that needs to be answered is how in a disqualification of this type an athlete loses even the record she had set on the day that she was qualified to fight and won the right to a medal, which is why Vinesh's plea for a joint silver medal seems justified. Circumstances had forced the doctory wrestler with the blazing eyes to go for the tougher lower 50-kg category as another athlete, Antim Panghal, had qualified in that slot based on her world championship performance.

Vinesh had been busy fighting for nearly half a year in 2023 to expose the venality of a powerful politician-sports administrator against whom the normal rules regarding dealing with those accused of sexually harassing women did not seem to apply. And then she had to tend to mend the torn ligament that had stopped her in Tokyo, before taking the 50-kg route for a dab at Olympic glory in Paris.

The story of her valiant efforts to get under 50 kg on the scale on the morning of the final has been well and voluminously told. A whole night's battle against body weight may, however, be classified as a minor challenge in her life for a gutsy sportswoman who saw her father killed when young and who fought every inch of her way up in life and career. For someone who was dragged around by police personnel at the Jantar Mantar protest site by her hair, the fight for justice in any field was something that came naturally.

Having to shed some of that hair and shorten her wrestling uniform were small sacrifices she made at the end in her despair to get to the mat for the final. Her name will now onwards be synonymous for a sportsperson who not only excelled in her chosen discipline but also stood up for justice for all sportswomen who have had to endure the creepy presence of pervers among administrators. Even a sparkling Olympic medal pales in comparison to the cause of safety of sportspersons that she fought for.

No surprises: RBI sticks to line

As expected, the Reserve Bank of India-led Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent. The policy stance continues to be the withdrawal of accommodation, which means the rate of interest will remain elevated to keep inflationary expectations in check. Though the country's economic growth continued to be resilient, the central bank flagged rising consumption-focused loan portfolio and growth in alternative investments.

Retail inflation rose to 5.1 per cent in June 2024, owing to higher-than-expected food inflation. Food items together have a weight of around 46 per cent in consumer price index based inflation and have contributed to 75 per cent of the retail inflation in June.

As food takes away more than 50 per cent of a poor family's income in India, the RBI under the Narendra Modi era has been rightly focusing its attention on keeping the inflation in control without running after higher economic growth. However, the government should also take note that monetary policy cannot address food shortages. In spite of India's tremendous strides in technology and farming, it is a matter of shame that the country has not been able to fix the issue of vegetable prices that have contributed to 35 per cent of the retail inflation in June.

While the RBI continues to expect a 7.2 per cent growth for the current financial year, it admitted that certain high frequency indicators showed lower than anticipated corporate profitability, general government expenditure and core industries output. However, on the positive side, manufacturing activity continues to pick up on the back of improving domestic demand, while the services sector remains buoyant. Private corporate investment is gaining steam on the back of expansion in bank credit. The spillovers from protracted geopolitical tensions, volatility in international financial markets and geoeconomic fragmentation, however, pose risks on the downside.

THE ASIAN AGE

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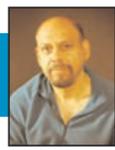
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Subhani



The Dragon's bear hug: A strategic blunder by US?



Indranil Banerjee

The United States might well have committed its biggest strategic blunder in recent history by pushing China into the welcoming arms of Russia. A series of Western trade curbs, geopolitical alliances to contain Chinese assertiveness, curbs on hi-tech flows, sanctioning of businesses and increased military patrolling in sensitive areas such as the Taiwan Straits have combined to rattle Beijing in recent times. But what could have been the proverbial straw on the camel's back was the Nato secretary-general's recent threats of possible asset seizure for Beijing's continued support of Russia's war effort in Ukraine. Far from intimidating Beijing, however, this appears to have rebounded and only tightened the growing bonds between Moscow and Beijing.

The Moscow-Beijing hug is now strategic. Russian President Vladimir Putin's May 2024 visit to Beijing, where he received an unprecedented welcome from Chinese President Xi Jinping, was an indicator of changing times. The two leaders met face to face again as recently as in July this year during a SCO summit at Astana, where Mr Putin declared that relations between China and Russia, which constitute a "comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation", are now "experiencing their best period in history". President Xi Jinping added that their two countries "should continue to uphold the original aspiration of friendship for generations to come".

The two leaders have made it unequivocally clear that they are striving for a more "fair" and "equitable" world, implying that the current world order dominated by the Western powers needs to be realigned.

The military dimensions of this Russia-China entente cordiale is unmistakable. Not only has Mr Putin pointed to Beijing's consistent support for its policies regarding Ukraine but has paved the way for closer military cooperation. The interception of two Russian Tupolev-95 and Chinese Xi'an H-6 strategic bombers over the Alaskan Air Defence Zone on July 24 this year is indicative of how far military ties have progressed. The flight of Russian and Chinese bombers over the neutral waters of the Bering Sea that separates Alaska from the Russian mainland forced the North American Aerospace Defence Command (Norad) to dispatch six fighters to intercept and monitor them.

The encounter passed off peacefully but the portents were clear: the United States for the first time in history had witnessed a joint military patrol by China and Russia on the very edge of its territory. This reflects a massive shift in geopolitical realignments that have occurred in recent times.

The emergence of a Russia-China military axis cannot be good news for the West. Last week, the US Commission on the National Defence Strategy submitted a report to the Senate Armed Services Committee warning that the US is not prepared for a war with countries like Russia and China. The report identified China as the principal adversary, given that its military was beginning to outpace that of the United States. Significantly, the report also pointed out that the US is no longer the sole international superpower and could be severely tested in a fight against powers such as Russia, Iran and North Korea. The Russia-China axis in the circumstances would be formidable.

For the first time in more than five decades, the world is witnessing the unravelling of a global strategic engagement put together by former US President Richard M. Nixon and China's Chairman Mao Zedong over fifty years ago. Justifying the United States' historic rapprochement with Communist China in 1972, President Nixon had observed: "We must cultivate China during the next few decades while it is learning to develop its national strength and potential. Otherwise, we will one day be confronted with the most formidable enemy that has ever existed in the history of the world."

**When Kissinger passed away in late November last year, the Chinese government lamented that it had lost an 'old friend of the Chinese people' but others saw it as a 'watershed moment'**

Their common enemy at that time was the then Soviet Union. Both Washington and Beijing had begun making conciliatory approaches after the March 1969 border clashes between the Soviets and the Chinese — triggered by Chinese troops ambushing and killing dozens of Soviet border guards on Damansky Island (much like the Galwan outrage in Ladakh). Subsequent clashes had continued for seven months and it was during this period that Nixon made his intentions clear about seeking a breakthrough with China. Back-channel negotiations led to Henry Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing in 1971 (facilitated by Pakistan) and ultimately to President Nixon's historic visit to China in February 1972.

This opened a new era not just in US-China relations but marked a turning point in global geopolitics. The Soviet Union was contained, even hemmed in from both the west and the east. The Washington-Beijing alliance emerged as the strongest pole in the world. The subsequent rise

of China thanks to Western tech and capital flows is now history.

The joint flight of Russian and Chinese bombers in what is being euphemistically called a "routine patrol" near Alaska indicates that the wheel has turned full circle for the Russia-China relationship.

Western attempts at intimidation and coercion, far from driving a wedge between Moscow and Beijing, have only hammered the two former Eurasian rivals closer. The two sides have stepped up military cooperation including joint naval exercises like the one held in July in the South China Sea. China has also begun sending its PLA Navy towards the exclusive economic zone of the US near the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska, and has proclaimed itself a "near-Arctic state" with vital interests in that region.

Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov has hinted at further complications when he said that Russia and China should "jointly counter interference by forces from outside this region in the affairs of Southeast Asia..." This region, especially its seas, has become a region of intense great power rivalry. The matter is complicated by the Taiwan issue and US power projections in the Indo-Pacific. What Mr Lavrov is suggesting is extending the area of conflict with the United States into this region as well.

It is difficult in the circumstances to deny that a new era is dawning in international politics. When Kissinger passed away in late November last year, the Chinese government lamented that it had lost an "old friend of the Chinese people", but others saw Kissinger's death as a "watershed moment" for their country. One Chinese commentator remarked: "From now on, it's the beginning of our rise and for the US to go down". While that could be wishful thinking, it certainly points to heightened great power rivalry from now on.

*The writer is an independent commentator on political and security issues*

LETTERS

NOT A CONSPIRACY

The Indian Olympic Association has rightly planned to express strong objections to technical shortcomings found in the rules and regulations of United World Wrestling. Vinesh Phogat being a strong contender for the Olympic gold medal had left no stones unturned in reducing weight and burnt a lot of calories but all in vain. The accountability also rests on the shoulders of her support team and coach. But describing the incident as a conspiracy is a political agenda. The whole country extends moral support to Vinesh Phogat. Her case need to be represented logically, legally and diplomatically at UWW and other related platforms by the Narendra Modi government.

**Yugal Kishore Sharma**  
Faridabad, Haryana

WHAT OBJECTIONS?

IT SEEMS STRANGE that the political view of a number of our citizens have become so clouded that they actually seem to be glad that Vinesh Phogat was disqualified from fighting for the gold medal at the Paris Games. As expect the wrestler has announced her retirement from the sport and what could have been a grand farewell after winning a medal is now reduced to a time for lamenting what might have been. Questions about the role of the support staff especially her coach and dietician will come under the scanner. Sports Minister Mandaviya informs us that IOA has "strongly" taken up the matter. The people are entitled to know what exactly they have done.

**Anthony Henriques**  
Mumbai

TECH PRECEDENT

THE US FEDERAL court's ruling against Google's illegal maintenance of its online search monopoly sends a strong message to Big Tech, paving the way for potential remedies and setting a precedent for ongoing cases against Amazon, Apple, and Meta. This landmark decision underscores the need for regulators to balance innovation with fair competition, addressing the anti-competitive practices that have enabled tech giants to dominate the market and stifle the emergence of new companies.

**Amarjeet Kumar**  
Hazariabagh

Zahid Hussain



Did close ties between India & Hasina fuel Dhaka anger?

People's power has toppled one more authoritarian regime. Another bloody day in Bangladesh ended in triumph for the uprising in that country. Defying a nationwide curfew, hundreds of thousands of people came out onto the streets, bringing an end to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed's back-to-back 15-year rule. The military has now taken charge, putting in place an interim administration. But can this end the political turmoil that has shaken the South Asian nation? The situation continues to unfold.

It all started with protests by students against a controversial job quota system, which soon turned into a mass movement against a regime that, under Ms Hasina Wajed, had secured a fourth straight term in office a few months ago through a controversial electoral exercise. The government had virtually established a one-party system. The enforcement of draconian laws had turned Bangladesh into an authoritarian state.

But student protests broke the fear. The use of coercive power by the administration to crush the demonstrations exacerbated the anger. Hundreds of protesters were killed by the security forces, turning the streets into battlegrounds. Bangladesh has not witnessed such violence in its over 50-year history. The protests broke the myth of the Hasina Wajed government's invincibility.

Within weeks, it turned into a mass uprising, breaking the hold of an authoritarian regime. It united all kinds of Opposition forces. The events of the past weeks also exposed the fault lines in the system. It was an implosion waiting to happen. It just needed a trigger, which was provided by the student protests. The allocation of 30 per cent of government jobs to families of freedom fighters had been abolished following protests in 2018, but was restored this year. It was seen as a move to pack institutions with Awami League loyalists.

It was not just the political repression and worsening human rights situation, but also the rising cost of living and growing unemployment among the youth that fuelled the unrest. Not surprisingly, Gen Z has been at the vanguard of the movement that ultimately led Hasina Wajed to step down and flee the country. Although Bangladesh has been one of the fastest-growing economies in the region over the past many years, the gap between the haves and have-nots has also widened there. Inflation, which touched double digits in recent months, has also fuelled discontent.

Hasina Wajed entered politics after the assassination of her father and founder of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, in a military coup in 1975. She lived in exile in India for several years before returning to the country in 1981. She first became PM after her Awami League party swept

the elections in 1996. But she lost the next election to her rival, Khaleda Zia. The two women dominated Bangladesh politics for several years.

Hasina won the 2008 elections, which took place after two years of a military-backed "technocratic government". This phase marked her authoritarian grip over power. She jailed her opponents, including her main rival, Khaleda Zia. Her government executed many Opposition leaders after dubious trials for being "collaborators" during Bangladesh's war of independence.

Her party won four successive elections, all marred by allegations of rigging. The last elections held in January this year were boycotted by the main Opposition parties. It reportedly saw the lowest turnout of voters in the country's history. Human Rights Watch said the country's prisons were full of Opposition activists arrested in a crackdown before the elections.

With virtually no presence of the Opposition parties in Parliament, it paved the way for a one-party system. The recent elections marked the beginning of the downfall of Hasina Wajed's rule. What happened in Dhaka this week, with angry mobs ransacking the former Prime Minister's residence and destroying statues of Mujibur Rehman, was a manifestation of the public rage against authoritarianism. The spectacle of uncontrolled mobs ruling the streets in the absence of

any leadership has been alarming.

Notwithstanding the destruction of the democratic process, Bangladesh saw unprecedented economic growth during her rule. From a basket case, Bangladesh emerged as a model for Third World countries. The country also fared well in human development indicators. Yet, the economic slowdown of recent months and spiralling inflation raised questions about medium- and long-term economic prospects, adding to the social and political unrest.

Hasina Wajed's rule saw Dhaka becoming very close to New Delhi. Her party's association with it goes back to India's role in the 1971 war. Hasina Wajed's exile in India after the assassination of her father also brought her closer to the Indian leadership. But her pro-Indian stance drew criticism from the Opposition, particularly the religious parties. In her ouster, New Delhi has lost a close regional ally.

The Bangladesh Army, which has now taken control of the country, has a long history of coups. It is now becoming increasingly clear that the military will back an interim government comprising technocrats. However, it remains to be seen if such an arrangement can work in the highly volatile situation.

—By arrangement with Dawn



SHORT TAKES

**CATALAN REBEL LEADER EVADES ARREST IN SPAIN**

**Barcelona, Aug. 8:** Former Catalan separatist leader Carles Puigdemont defied an arrest warrant to appear at a rally in Spain's Barcelona on Thursday after seven years of self-imposed exile and then vanished, sparking a frantic search by police to apprehend him. Amid a heavy police presence, Puigdemont spoke to a crowd of thousands of followers in the Catalan capital from a platform near the Catalan parliament, telling them he aimed to revive the independence drive that plunged Spain into political crisis in 2017.

**7.1 QUAKE IN JAPAN TRIGGERS TSUNAMI ALERT**

**Tokyo, Aug. 8:** An earthquake with a magnitude of 7.1 hit southwestern Japan on Thursday, triggering tsunami advisories, the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) said, but there were no immediate signs of major damage.

There have been no reports of abnormalities at nuclear power plants following the quake, and the government is checking for damage and casualties, chief Cabinet secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters.

The quake occurred at around 4:43 p.m. (07:43 GMT) off Miyazaki prefecture on the western major island.

**AMNA BALOCH SET TO BE PAK'S NEW FOREIGN SECY**

**Islamabad, Aug. 8:** Amna Baloch, a seasoned diplomat, is set to become Pakistan's new foreign secretary, according to a media report on Thursday.

Baloch, who is currently posted as Pakistan's Ambassador to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg, will assume her office on September 11 to replace Dr Syrus Sajjad Qazi upon his retirement.

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif approved the recommendations of Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar in his capacity as the foreign minister for the appointment of a new foreign secretary.

**UTAH MAN WHO KILLED WOMAN PUT TO DEATH**

**Salt Lake City, Aug. 8:** A Utah man who killed his girlfriend's mother by cutting her throat was put to death by lethal injection on Thursday in the state's first execution since 2010.

Taberon Dave Honie, 48, was convicted of aggravated murder in the July 1998 death of Claudia Benn.

Honie was 22 when he broke into Benn's house in Cedar City after a day of heavy drinking and drug use and repeatedly slashed her throat and stabbed her in other parts of her body. Benn's grandchildren, including Honie's then 2-year-old daughter, were in the house.

**N. KOREAN CITIZEN CROSSES WATERS TO DEFECT: MEDIA**

**Seoul, Aug. 8:** South Korean media says a North Korean resident escaped to the South across waters on the western portion of the border between the two countries and expressed intent to resettle in the South.

South Korea's *Yonhap* news agency said the unidentified individual crossed an estuary where the Han River meets the Yellow Sea and was taken by South Korean troops at the South's border island of Gyeongju. South Korean defence minister Shin Won-sik said South Korea's National Intelligence Service was investigating related matters.

**ROMANIAN BIZMAN HIRED HUNTER BIDEN**

**Washington, Aug. 8:** Hunter Biden was hired by a Romanian businessman accused of corruption who was trying to "influence US government policy" during Joe Biden's term as vice president, prosecutors said on Wednesday.

Special counsel David Weiss' team said that Hunter Biden's business associate will testify at the upcoming federal tax trial of the President's son about the arrangement with the executive, Gabriel Popoviciu, who was facing criminal investigation at the time in Romania.

**STUDENTS SAVED BANGLADESH: YUNUS**

Protect that freedom, says Nobel laureate upon return to country to lead new interim government

**Dhaka, Aug. 8:** Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus made an emotional return home to Bangladesh on Thursday to lead a new interim government after weeks of student protests forced Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to resign and flee to neighbouring India. Bangladesh student leaders Nahid Islam and Asif Mahmud, who led the protests that toppled PM Sheikh Hasina, will be part of the caretaker government, the *Prothom Alo* newspaper reported.

A harsh critic of Hasina, Yunus, 84, arrived in Dhaka following medical treatment in Paris after protesters backed him for the role in a caretaker government tasked with holding elections for a new leader.

"The country has the possibility of becoming a very beautiful nation," Yunus told reporters at the airport, where senior military officers and student leaders greeted him.

The student protesters had saved the country, he said, adding: "Whatever path our students show us, we will move ahead with that." Yunus became emotional, choked and seemed to hold his tears back as he referred to a student he said had been shot during the protests and that sacrifice could not be forgotten.

"Now again we have to rise up. To the government officials here and defence chiefs — we are a family, we should move ahead together," he said.

The economist, known as the "banker to the poor", received the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for founding a bank that pioneered the fight against poverty through small loans to needy borrowers. Yunus is set to be sworn in as chief of a team of advisers at 1430 GMT at the official residence of President Mohammed Shahabuddin.

Nahid Islam and Asif Mahmud, two student



Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus meets government officials as Army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman watches, upon Yunus's arrival at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka, on Thursday. — AFP

**Hasina will come back when democracy restored, says son**

**Kolkata, Aug. 8:** Sheikh Hasina, who quit as prime minister and fled Bangladesh, will be back in the country as soon as democracy is restored, his son Sajeeb Wazed Joy said on Thursday and blamed Pakistan's intelligence agency, ISI, for fuelling the ongoing unrest in the country.

In an exclusive interview with PTL, Joy said although 76-year-old Hasina would definitely return to Bangladesh, it is not yet decided whether she will be back as a "retired or active" politician.

He also asserted that the members of the Sheikh Mujib (Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) family will neither abandon its people nor leave the beleaguered



A volunteer manages road traffic in Dhaka, as an interim government is set to take over. — AP/PTI

Awami League in the lurch. He expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government for protecting

his mother and appealed to India to help build international opinion and exert pressure for the restoration of democracy. — PTI

after she resigned following weeks of violence that killed about 300 people and injured thousands.

In a Facebook post, her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy said the party had not given up, however, and was ready to

hold talks with opponents and the interim government. "I had said my family will no longer be involved in politics but the way our party leaders and workers are being attacked. — Reuters

**HOW STUDENT PROTESTS BROUGHT IN A NEW LEADER**

**JULY 1: BLOCKADES BEGIN:** University students build barricades blocking roads and railway lines to demand reforms to a quota system for sought-after public sector jobs. Sheikh Hasina, who won a fifth term as prime minister in January after a vote without genuine opposition, says the students are "wasting their time".



People walk past a vandalised car in Dhaka following days of mass uprising by students. — AP/PTI

**JULY 16: VIOLENCE INTENSIFIES**

Six people are killed in clashes, the first recorded deaths in the protests, a day after bitter violence when protesters and pro-government supporters fought in Dhaka with sticks and hurled bricks at each other. Hasina's government orders the nationwide closure of schools and universities.

**JULY 18: HASINA REBUFFED**

Students reject an olive branch from Hasina, a day after she appeals for calm and vows that every "murder" in the protests would be punished. Protesters chant "down with the dictator" and torch the headquarters of state broadcaster Bangladesh Television and other government buildings. Days later, the Supreme Court rules the job quota decision was illegal.



**AUG. 5: HASINA TOPPLED:** Hasina flees Dhaka by helicopter as thousands of protesters storm her palace, with millions on the streets celebrating, some dancing on the roof



of armoured cars and tanks. Bangladesh army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman announces that the military would form an interim government.

**AUG. 8: YUNUS TO LEAD** Nobel peace prize winner Yunus, 84, flies to Dhaka to lead a caretaker government.



**RUSSIA BATTLES INCURSION FOR A THIRD DAY**

**Moscow, Aug. 8:** Russian forces were battling Ukrainian troops for a third day on Thursday after they smashed through the Russian border in the Kursk region, an audacious attack on the world's biggest nuclear power that has forced Moscow to call in reserves.

In one of the biggest Ukrainian attacks on Russia of the two-year war, around 1,000 Ukrainian troops rumbled through the Russian border in the early hours of Aug. 6 with tanks and armoured vehicles, covered in the air by swarms of drones and pounding artillery, according to Russian officials. Ukrainian forces swept through the fields and forests of the border towards the north of the border town of Sudzha, the last operational trans-shipment point for Russian natural gas to Europe via Ukraine. — AFP

**U.S.-RUSSIAN WOMAN FACES TREASON JAIL**

**Moscow, Aug. 8:** Russian prosecutors have requested a 15-year prison sentence for a dual US-Russian national charged with "treason" for making a donation to a pro-Ukraine organisation.

Ksenia Karelina, who lives in the United States, was arrested in February while visiting family in Russia, accused of providing financial assistance to the Ukrainian army.

"The prosecution requested a sentence of 15 years imprisonment in a general regime penal colony," Russian state-run news agencies quoted Karelina's lawyer, Mikhail Mushailov, as saying on Thursday.

She donated around \$50 to a United States-based pro-Ukraine charity after Russia launched its full-scale military offensive in 2022, US media reported, citing her family and employer. — AFP

**Anti-racism stir sweeps Britain**

**London, Aug. 8:** Thousands of police and anti-racism protesters gathered on streets across Britain on Wednesday to challenge expected far-right groups that failed to materialise following more than a week of violent racist attacks targeting Muslims and migrants.

Britain has been hit by a series of riots that erupted early last week after three young girls were killed in a knife attack in Southport, northwest England, triggering a wave of false messaging online that wrongly identified the suspected killer as an Islamist migrant.

Posts online had said far-right, anti-Muslim protesters would target a list of immigration centres, migrant support centres and specialist law firms on Wednesday, prompting many businesses to close early and some shops to board up windows.

The reports prompted the deployment of thousands of police officers, and crowds of protesters massed in towns and cities, including London, Bristol, Birmingham, Liverpool and Hastings, holding banners saying "Fight racism", "Stop the far right" and "Will trade racists for refugees".

The protesters comprised Muslims, anti-racist and anti-fascist

groups, trade unionists, left-wing organisations, and locals appalled at the riots that had hit the country.

By 9 pm (2000 GMT) there were no reports of any serious disorder. Police said around 50 people in Croydon, south London, had thrown bottles and were trying to cause disruption.

Waste collector Stetson Matthew, 64, who joined thousands of demonstrators in Walthamstow, northeast London, said people had the right to protest but that the targeting of ethnic minorities had put the country on edge.

"Everybody has the right to do what they need to do but what they must do is to put their voices across peacefully, amicably, without any stress or violence," he said.

One woman who joined a counter protest in Hastings, southeast England, said she was relieved to see a large turnout.

"I felt I absolutely had to be here tonight to take a stand, and it is much easier for me to come as a white woman than for some of my non-white friends, so I'm here in solidarity," said 37-year-old Lucy, a flower grower.

Riots erupted when groups of a few hundred mostly men clashed with police. — Reuters

**LARGE SHALLOW GAS FIELD FOUND IN DISPUTED SCS**

**Beijing, Aug. 8:** China has confirmed the discovery of a major gas field, estimated to be over 100 billion cubic metres, in the disputed South China Sea, which is expected to add fuel to the current round of military, diplomatic tensions between Beijing and other claimants in the region.

The original gas in place (OGIP) of the Lingshui 36-1 gas field — the world's first large, ultra-shallow gas field in ultra-deep waters — has been estimated at more than 100 billion cubic metres, state-run China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) announced. — PTI

**IS' attempt to attack Austria show of Taylor Swift foiled**

**Vienna, Aug. 8:** The 19-year-old Austrian who masterminded a foiled plot to attack Taylor Swift fans at a concert in Vienna with a bomb or knife had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State militant group, authorities said on Thursday.

The main suspect, who has North Macedonian roots, made a full confession in custody, Austria's general director for public security Franz Ruf told a news conference.

He swore loyalty to the IS militant group's leader on the internet and kept chemicals and technical devices at his Ternitz home in preparation for an attack, Ruf added.



Taylor Swift

The 19-year-old, whose name was not given, was planning an attack with an explosive or knife among the estimated 20,000 "Swiftie" fans set to gather outside the stadium, said national intelligence head Omar Hajjawi-Pirc-

hner. "There is currently no information that other concerts are subject to an explicit threat," he said at the news conference.

Two other Austrian youths aged 17 and 15 were also detained on Wednesday over the foiled plot.

Swift's three concerts in Vienna, due to start on Thursday for a sold-out 65,000 audience each, were cancelled, to the consternation of fans, many of whom had travelled far.

"It's just heartbreaking, just frustrating. But at the end of the day I guess it's for everyone's safety," said Mark del Rosario, who had flown from the Philippines. — Reuters

**Israel revokes Norway envoys' status**

**Oslo, Aug. 8:** Norway said on Thursday that Israel's decision to revoke the diplomatic status of Oslo's envoys to the Palestinian Authority was an "extreme action" that would "have consequences".

Foreign minister Espen Barth Eide said the action — which Israel said was taken in response to what it said was Oslo's "anti-Israel behaviour" — demonstrated that the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was "actively working against a two-state solution" for

Israelis and Palestinians. "Today's decision will have consequences for our relationship with the Netanyahu government."

"We are considering what measures Norway will take to respond to the situation that the Netanyahu government has now created," Eide said.

Israel's foreign minister Israel Katz had on Thursday ordered the "termination of any representation on behalf of the Norwegian Embassy in Israel vis-a-vis the Palestinian Authority". — AFP

**AIR FRANCE EXTENDS SUSPENSION OF FLIGHT TO BEIRUT UNTIL SUNDAY**

**Paris, Aug. 8:** Air France has extended the suspension of flights between Paris and Beirut until at least on Sunday "due to the security situation" in Lebanon.

Air France and its lowest-cost subsidiary, Transavia, have halted flights to the Lebanese capital since July 29 after Israel vowed to retaliate following rocket fire from Lebanon that

killed 12 people in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights. Transavia has also extended the flight suspension until Sunday.

"The resumption of operations will be subject to a further assessment of the local situation," Air France said.

"Air France reiterates that the safety of its customers and crews is its top priority," it said. — AFP

**RECORD | BROKEN Effects to continue till global greenhouse gas emissions reach net zero '24 may be hottest ever, says EU monitor**

**Paris, Aug. 8:** It is "increasingly likely" 2024 will be the hottest year on record, despite July ending a 13-month streak of monthly temperature records, the EU's climate monitor said on Thursday.

The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said last month was the second warmest on record books going back to 1940, only slightly cooler than July 2023. Between June 2023 and June 2024, each month eclipsed its own temperature record for the time of year. "The streak of

record-breaking months has come to an end, but only by a whisker," said Samantha Burgess, deputy director of C3S.

Last month the global average temperature was 16.91 degrees Celsius, only 0.04°C below July 2023, according to C3S's monthly bulletin.

But "the overall context hasn't changed, our climate continues to warm," said Burgess.

"The devastating effects of climate change started well before 2023 and will continue until global

greenhouse gas emissions reach net zero," she said.

From January to July global temperatures were 0.70°C above the 1991-2020 average. This anomaly would need to drop significantly over the rest of this year for 2024 not to be hotter than 2023 — "making it increasingly likely that 2024 is going to be the warmest year on record", said C3S.

July 2024 was 1.48°C warmer than the estimated average temperatures for the month during the period 1850-1900, before

the world started to rapidly burn fossil fuels.

This has translated into punishing heat for hundreds of millions of people. The Earth experienced its two hottest days on record with global average temperatures at a virtual tie on July 22 and 23 reaching 17.°C, C3S said.

The Mediterranean was gripped by a heatwave scientists said would have been "virtually impossible" without global warming as China and Japan sweated through their hottest July on record. — AFP



Over the past decade, water temperatures along Australia's Great Barrier Reef have been the warmest in the past 400 years, a major study said. — AFP

## quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	78,886.22 -0.73
Nifty 50	24,117.00 -0.74
S&P 500*	5,296.98 1.87
Dollar (₹)	83.96 0.00
Pound Sterling (₹)	106.40 0.27
Euro (₹)	91.74 0.14
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	69,459.494 0.72
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	78.69 0.46
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.877 0.015
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	3.98 0.013

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

### Brookfield Trust net profit in Q1 hits ₹37.3 crore

Brookfield India Real Estate Trust has posted a net profit of ₹37.35 crore in June 2024 quarter against a loss of ₹27 cr in year-ago period. The company's net operating income jumped 93 per cent to ₹439.9 crore from ₹227.5 crore in the year-ago and declared a distribution of ₹216 crore for the June 2024 quarter. Total income rose to ₹590.91 crore from ₹320.73 crore during the period under review.



### ABB India PAT rises 50% in Q1 to ₹443 crore

ABB India posted a 50 per cent rise in consolidated profit after tax (PAT) to ₹443 crore during the June quarter from ₹296 crore PAT during the same period of preceding fiscal 2023-24, on account of higher revenues. The company follows Jan. to Dec. as the fiscal year. The PAT in Jan.-June or H1 rose to ₹902 crore from ₹541 crore in first half of last year. Its revenues rose to ₹2,831 cr from ₹2,509 cr in year-ago period.

### Nazara acquires Fusebox Games for ₹228 crore

Nazara Technologies announced the acquisition of Fusebox Games, an IP-based gaming studio in the UK, for ₹228 crore in an all-cash deal. "We see a large opportunity in building an IP based global gaming business that benefits from our core base in India where we can support global studios through enhanced user acquisition strategies, data analytics, live operations," Nitish Mittersain, CEO, Nazara said.

### JSW Energy arm gets order for 230 MW power

JSW Energy on Thursday said its arm received a letter of award from Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) for supplying 230 MW of power from its renewable energy project. The energy supply order has been secured by wholly-owned subsidiary JSW Neo Energy Ltd, JSW Energy said, adding that the company received the letter of award following a tariff-based competitive bidding process.

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## RBI leaves rates untouched

### India's GDP to grow 7.2% and inflation is forecast at 4.5% for FY25

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, AUG. 8

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) continued to maintain a status quo on rates and policy stance to ensure sustained cooling of inflation. This is the ninth consecutive time the repo rate, the rate at which RBI lends money to banks to meet short-term funding needs, has been held unchanged at 6.5 per cent.

The MPC retained its forecasts for India's economic growth in FY25 at 7.2 per cent and inflation at 4.5 per cent for FY25.

Four out of six members voted to make no changes in interest rates and policy stance to ensure that inflation progressively aligns to the target, while supporting economic growth, said RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said.

A status quo in repo rate means that all external benchmark lending rates (EBLR) that are linked to the repo rate will remain

#### KEY OBSERVATIONS

● GDP growth forecast for FY25 retained at 7.2%.

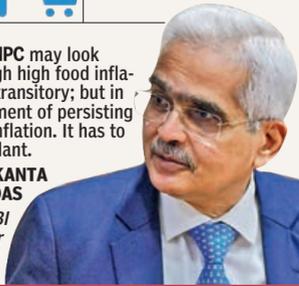
● RETAIL INFLATION projection also retained at 4.5% for FY25.

● GLOBAL ECONOMIC outlook remains resilient although with some moderation in pace.

● DOMESTIC economic activity continues to sustain its momentum  
● FOREX reserves rises to historic high of \$675 billion  
● INDIAN FINANCIAL system remains resilient, gaining strength  
● NEXT MEETING of the MPC is scheduled from October 7 to 9.

● THE MPC may look through high food inflation if it is transitory; but in an environment of persisting high food inflation, it has to remain vigilant.

—SHAKTIKANTA DAS  
RBI governor



unchanged providing relief to borrowers.

The RBI has hiked policy rates by 250 basis points between May 2022 and February 2023, since then it has kept the repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent to align inflation to the 4 per cent target.

Das said that the Reserve Bank cannot ignore food

inflation while formulating the monetary policy.

He said that the weightage of food in the overall consumer price inflation, which stands at 46 per cent currently, was done in 2011-12, and needs to be revisited, and added that the national statistical office is working on it.

The RBI's status quo is

in contrast to the shift in monetary policy stance of major global central banks.

While the European Central Bank and Bank of England have initiated a rate cut, the Bank of Japan has raised its policy rate, and the US Federal Reserve is likely to cut rates this September following a

sharp weakening in the country's labour market.

Since the last monetary policy meeting, Consumer Price Index inflation (CPI) has risen, though trending within the Monetary Policy Committee's tolerance range of 2-6 per cent. It rose to 5.1 per cent in June from 4.8 per cent in the previous month. Moreover, food inflation was considerably above the headline reading, and surged to 9.4 per cent in June from 8.7 per cent in the previous month.

Das said that India's vulnerability remains low given the benign current account deficit and record-high foreign exchange reserves which has improved the country's ability to mitigate external shocks.

"We expect the RBI to begin cutting interest rates from October at the earliest, lest weather and international commodity prices play spoilsport. Overall, we expect two rate cuts this fiscal year," said DK Joshi, chief economist at Crisil Limited.

## RBI plans to clear cheques in hours

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, AUG. 8

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday proposed to introduce 'Delegated Payments' in UPI. With Delegated Payments, users would be able to allow those without UPI accounts to pay via their accounts upto to set limits. This product is expected to add to the reach and usage of digital payments across the country.

RBI also enhanced the limit for tax payments through UPI from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh per transaction. This has been done as direct and indirect tax payments are common, regular and high value.

The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has a very large user base of 42.4 crore individuals. There is potential for further expansion of the user base, said RBI.

The RBI also announced plans for faster clearance of cheques from the current two working days to a few hours now. At present,

● THE CENTRAL bank also announced a public repository of digital lending apps to aid customers in verifying the claim of digital lending app's.

cheque clearing through the Cheque Truncation System (CTS) operates in a batch processing mode and has a clearing cycle of up to two working days. RBI proposed to introduce continuous clearing with 'on-realisation-settlement' in CTS. Cheques will be scanned, presented, and passed in a few hours and on a continuous basis during business hours. Guidelines for this will be issued shortly.

The central bank also announced a public repository of digital lending apps to aid customers in verifying the claim of digital lending app's (DLAs) association with lenders. It also decided to increase the frequency of reporting of credit information from monthly intervals to fortnightly basis.

## Sensex, Nifty-50 fall after rate sensitive sectors drag

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, AUG. 8

Market continued to be volatile as Sensex and Nifty-50 fell on Thursday by 0.7 per cent each. Rate sensitive sectors reality, consumer durable, capital goods and auto fell as RBI maintained status quo on interest rate while banks closed mixed.

The Sensex fell 581.79 points or 0.73 per cent closing at 78,886.22 while Nifty-50 index fell 0.74 per cent or 180.50 points closing at 24,117.

Global cues dominated



market movement as there was bigger fall in BSE IT index (-1.82 per cent), metal (-2.02 per cent) and oil & gas (-1.46 per cent). The rate-sensitive sectors that fell included BSE realty (-1.22 per cent), consumer durable (-1.17 per cent), capital goods (-

0.89 per cent), and auto (-0.34 per cent). Nifty Bank index gained 0.08 per cent while BSE Bankex gained 0.07 per cent. Nifty PSU banks index fell 0.78 per cent, the top losers included Indian Bank (-2.55 per cent), PNB (-1.66 per cent), Uco Bank (-1.35 per cent), Union Bank (-1.13 per cent) and Bank of Baroda (-1.07 per cent).

"The domestic market reversed its earlier gains on RBI's decision to hold the current rates," said Vinod Nair, head, research, Geojit Financial Services.

## NSE adds 1-cr investors in 5 mths, hits 10-cr mark

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, AUG. 8

The unique registered investor base on the NSE crossed the 10-crore (100 million) mark on August 8. The last crore was added in just over five months. The total number of client codes (accounts) registered with the exchange

stands at 19 cr; NSE said.

"Investor registrations at NSE have seen an accelerating trend over the last few years. It took over 25 years for the registered investor base to hit the 4-crore mark in March 2021. The subsequent 1-crore increments (from 4 crore to 10 crore) have come through at an accelerated

pace, taking an average of 6-7 months, with NSE said.

The investor base has seen more than 3x jump in the last five years on digitalisation, rising investor awareness, financial inclusion, and sustained market performance.

"The number of investors onboarded on the exchange has

## RBI flags concerns on top-up loans, low bank deposits

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, AUG. 8

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday expressed concern about alternative investment avenues becoming more attractive to retail customers.

This could pose structural issues for banks as this trend is resulting in banks facing challenges on the funding front, with deposits trailing loan growth, he said.

"Banks are taking greater recourse to short-term non-retail deposits and other instruments of liability to meet the incremental credit demand. This may potentially expose the banking system to structural liquidity issues," said RBI governor at the monetary policy press conference on Thursday.

With credit growth outpacing deposit growth, banks have raised their term deposit rates in addition to mobilising funds through higher issuances of certificates of deposit (CD).

He called on the banks to mobilise deposits through innovative products by leveraging their branch network.

The Reserve Bank of India governor also highlighted potential risks in rapid growth in home equity loans (top-up home loans) without following regulatory prescriptions, along with the growth in personal loans.

Das said the regulatory prescriptions relating to loan-to-value (LTV) ratio, risk weights and monitoring of end use of funds are not being strictly adhered to by certain entities in this regard.

Banks and non-bank financial companies



● RESERVE BANK of India governor also highlighted potential risks in rapid growth in home equity loans (top-up home loans) without following regulatory prescriptions, along with the growth in personal loans.

(NBFCs) have also been offering top-up loans on the other collateralised loans like gold loans.

That said, the governor maintained that the financial sector remains sound and that the central bank's past regulatory measures to clamp down on non-banking financial companies and unsecured lending are also yielding results.

"With increased activity levels in the top-up loan segment, Reserve Bank of India's caution to lenders on calibrating underwriting norms and closer monitoring of the end use is a step in the right direction. Such loans not only raises concerns on over-leveraging but it also raises suspicion on the quality of such borrowers as they may also use such top-up loans to service the existing loans," said Anil Gupta, senior vice-president, co group head - financial sector ratings, Ica Limited.



### MERCEDES-BENZ BETS ON MODELS PRICED ABOVE ₹1CR

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, AUG. 8

Mercedes-Benz, the German-based luxury car maker, on Thursday introduced two new models the CLE 300 Cabriolet and the AMG GLC 43 Coupe which priced at ₹1.10 crore and ₹1.11 crore respectively.

"We are launching two highly desirable top-end vehicles for the Indian customers seeking performance and lifestyle vehicles," said Santosh Iyer, managing director and chief executive officer, Mercedes-Benz India.

"We are debuting the AMG GLC 43 SUV Coupe with the exclusivity of 'one man, one engine' in India, making cutting edge motorsports technology," he noted.

The CLE Cabriolet features a 2.0-litre four-cylinder turbo-petrol engine paired with a 48V mild-hybrid system, delivering 258hp and 400Nm of peak torque. Powering the AMG GLC 43 4Matic Coupe is a 2.0-litre 4-cylinder turbo-petrol engine with 48V mild-hybrid tech. It produces 421hp and 500Nm of torque.

## LIC Q1 net profit rises 10% to ₹10,461 crore

New Delhi, Aug. 8: Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) on Thursday reported a 10 per cent rise in its net profit to ₹10,461 crore in June quarter.

The state-owned life insurance behemoth had a net profit of ₹9,544 crore in the year-ago period.

The total income increased to ₹2,10,910 crore during the latest June quarter as against ₹1,88,749 crore in the year-ago period, LIC said in a regulatory filing.

During the quarter under review, the first-year premium rose to

₹7,470 crore as against ₹6,811 crore in the year-ago period, it said.

The Life Insurance Corporation earned ₹56,429 crore from renewal premiums as against ₹53,638 crore a year ago.

Net income from investments during the quarter rose to ₹96,183 crore as compared to ₹90,309 crore in the April-June period of previous fiscal.

Solvency margin of Life Insurance Corporation of India increased to 1.99 per cent as compared to 1.89 per cent in the same quarter a year. —PTI

## Recruitment in IT sector to grow 8.5% on addition of new job roles

Mumbai, Aug. 8: With IT companies gradually coming out of the slump and actively ramping up their hiring efforts, a report on Thursday said that recruitment is set to surge with an estimated 8.5 per cent increase in job roles within the industry by next year.

The demand for skilled IT talent is growing after a slow period late last year and early this year, according to a report by hiring platform Indeed.

The report further revealed that almost 70 per



cent of all tech jobs currently on Indeed platform are for software roles.

The dominance of software roles on Indeed is driven by the rapid adoption of technologies by companies like AI, machine learning, and blockchain which has further amplified the need

for specialised software development, it said.

The thriving tech start-up ecosystem also plays a significant role, as new ventures prioritise hiring developers to build and scale their products, the report added.

"Companies are actively ramping up their hiring efforts. We can also expect global capability centers to significantly contribute to this uptick in hiring, particularly in software roles," Indeed India head of sales Sashi Kumar added. —PTI

#### NEW | CODE

Tech companies release software that is compact than current LLMs

## Now, small language models to train AI

New York, Aug. 8: For years, tech giants like Google and start-ups such as OpenAI have been racing to build ever bigger and costlier artificial intelligence (AI) models using a tremendous amount of online data.

Deployed in chatbots like ChatGPT, this technology can handle a wide range of complex queries, from writing code and planning trips to drafting Shakespearean sonnets about ice cream.

Mark McQuade is betting on a different strategy. Arcee.AI, the start-up he co-founded last year,

helps companies train and roll out an increasingly popular - and much tinier - approach to AI: small language models.

Rather than try to do everything ChatGPT can, Arcee's software helps accomplish a more limited set of day-to-day corporate tasks that without requiring as much data.

Fueled by the billions in venture capital, start-ups one-upped each other to develop more powerful large language models (LLMs) to support AI chatbots and other services, with Anthropic chief executive Dario Amodei



predicting it will eventually cost \$100 billion to train models compared to \$100 million today.

That thinking certainly still exists, but start-ups are now attracting investors and customers by embracing a smaller -

and more affordable - approach.

Big tech companies are learning to think small, too. Alphabet's Google, Meta, OpenAI and Anthropic have all recently released software that is more compact and nimble

than LLMs.

The momentum around small models is driven by a number of factors, including new technological improvements, a growing awareness of the immense energy demands associated with LLMs and a market opportunity to offer businesses a more diverse range of AI options for different uses.

Given that investors are increasingly worrying about the high cost and uncertain payoff of AI ventures, more tech companies may choose to build the small language models. —Bloomberg

SANGEETHA G.  
CHENNAI, AUG. 8

India will have to create 70 lakh non-agri jobs per year till 2034, amidst challenges from technological advancements like artificial intelligence and automation. Besides, there is also a need to shift the excess farm labour to non-farm jobs that have a higher value-added per worker (VAPW).

As per periodic labour force survey, India is estimated to have created 1,140 lakh jobs between 2017-18 and 2022-23, implying a CAGR of 4.4 per cent, higher than that of 0.9 per cent in population over this period, which boosted worker-population ratio and dampened the unemployment rate.

However, the headline numbers mask several underlying issues, finds ICRA. For instance, nearly 53 per cent of the job creation between 2017-18 and 2022-23 stemmed from the agriculture sector, which saw a decline in VAPW during this period.

Besides, the salaried jobs rose at a tepid CAGR of 2.6 per cent between FY18 and FY23, compared to 6.4 per cent growth in self-employed segment.

While the unemployment rate declined to 3.2 per cent in FY23 from 6.1 per cent in FY18, the rate in urban areas remained elevated at 5.4 per cent.

The three-part 'Employment-Linked Incentive' scheme and a skilling programme with outlay of ₹2 lakh crore over five years announced in the FY25 Budget aims at addressing some of the issues prevailing in the Indian labour markets, it said.

**MEDAL TABLE**

COUNTRY	G	S	B	T
China	28	25	17	70
USA	27	35	33	95
Australia	18	14	11	43
France	13	18	21	52
Great Britain	13	17	20	50
South Korea	12	8	7	27
Japan	12	7	13	32
Italy	10	11	9	30
Netherlands	10	5	7	22
Germany	9	6	5	20
India	0	0	4	4

**short takes**

**Grand welcome for shooter Swapnil**

India's bronze medallist at Paris Olympics in 50m rifle 3 positions event, shooter Swapnil Kusale on Thursday returned home to a grand welcome and crediting his family and coaches for his success. Kolhapur's Kusale has so far been one of India's two individual medal winners — both in shooting — at the Games and his bronze was the third in addition to Manu Bhaker and Sarabjot Singh's tally in the sport.

Kusale received a warm reception on his return to the country and proceeded to the famous Dagdusheth Halwai Ganpati temple in the city to seek the lord's blessing.

"This medal is not mine, it is for the whole country and Maharashtra. It is for everyone who supported me, the government, the national federation. I am lucky that I could bring glory to Maharashtra," he told the media at the Balewadi Sports Complex during a felicitation event.

**Haryana to felicitate Vinesh like medallist**

The Haryana government will felicitate wrestler Vinesh Phogat — who was disqualified from the Olympics for being overweight ahead of her gold medal bout in the 50 kg category — like a medallist, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said on Thursday. She will be offered the same reward that the state government offers to Olympic Games silver medallists, the chief minister added.

Phogat on Thursday bid adieu to her international wrestling career, saying she did not have the strength to continue.

Announcing her decision to retire on social media, the 29-year-old — disqualified after being found 100 gm overweight ahead of Wednesday's gold medal bout — sought forgiveness from everyone who supported her.

Saini said in a post on X, "Our brave daughter of Haryana, Vinesh Phogat, performed brilliantly and entered the final of the Olympics. She might not have been able to compete in the final due to some reason but she is a champion for all of us."

**Sable finishes 11th in 3000m steeplechase**

India's Avinash Sable failed to keep pace with the best in the business as he finished 11th in the Paris Olympics men's 3000m steeplechase final race here on Wednesday.

The 29-year-old Sable clocked 8 minutes 14.18 seconds while crossing the finish line after running in the lead briefly in the dramatic race. Sable had recently broken his own national record with a time of 8:09.91 seconds at the Paris Diamond League.

He has been training abroad for a long time in preparation for the Paris Games on funding from the government.

Soufiane El Bakkali of Morocco defended his title, clocking his season's best of 8:06.05 while Kenneth Rooks (8:06.41) of USA and Abraham Kibiwot (8:06.47) of Kenya took silver and bronze respectively.

World record holder Lamecha Girma of Ethiopia did not finish the race as he fell on the track towards the end.

Meanwhile, triple jumpers Praveen Chitravel and Abdulla Aboobacker failed to reach the finals after producing disappointing performances of 16.25m and 16.49m respectively.

Paris, Aug. 8: The Indian men's hockey team clinched a second successive bronze medal at the Olympic Games for the first time in 52 years with a come-from-behind 2-1 win over Spain, giving veteran goalkeeper P. R. Sreejesh a fitting farewell here on Thursday.

It was tense last few minutes for the Indians as they faced two short corners within the last minute but the defence stood tall and soaked in the pressure.

India, who claimed the bronze in Tokyo Games after a hiatus of 41 years, lived up to the expectations despite not having a perfect build-up to the Games.

The last time India won back-to-back Olympic medals was in 1968 (bronze) and 1972 editions (bronze).

The bronze medal was also a desperate wait for the Indian contingent in Paris, which has endured six fourth-place finishes so far, apart from heart-breaking disqualification of wrestler Vinesh Phogat.

Spain went ahead with skipper Marc Miralles (18th) converting a penalty stroke while India captain Harmanpreet Singh (30th, 33rd) stole the limelight with a brace.

Shrugging off their heart-wrenching 2-3 defeat against Germany in the semifinal, India came out all guns blazing to dominate the possession in the first quarter.

It was an offensive start from India as they penetrated Spain's defence regularly in the first 15 minutes and created the first scoring chance of the match in the sixth minute.

Vice-captain Hardik Singh created a fine move from the right and passed the ball into the D to Sukhjeet Singh, whose shot went just wide of the left side Spanish goal as the Europeans survived.

The Spanish came with more purpose and intensity in the second quarter and pressed hard on the Indian goal. They took the lead in the 18th minute through a penalty stroke conversion by Miralles after Manpreet Singh conceded an unnecessary foul inside the D.

Spain kept up the tempo and secured back-to-back penalty corners in the 20th minute but the Indians defended stoutly. In the 28th minute, Spain secured another penalty corner after Borja Lacalle hit the post but it went in vain.

Still trailing, India pressed hard on the Spain defence and secured their first penalty corner in the 29th minute but could not convert.

Just 21 seconds from half-time, Manpreet compensated for his fault by earning India another penalty corner and this time Harmanpreet was bang on target.

India got another penalty corner in the 35th minute but Harmanpreet's fierce stroke was blocked by Spain goalkeeper Luis Calzado.

Mandeep Singh's terrific run from the left flank resulted in another short corner but Spanish on-ruhsers Jordi Bonastre took a blow on his left knee to deny India.

Sreejesh then foiled an attempt from Spain as India kept its 2-1 lead till the end of third quarter.

Hardik had to be taken off the field five minutes after the fourth quarter after he collided with a rival player to suffer a hand injury.

This was after India yet again made a short corner save. It was Manpreet, who mistakenly landed the ball on Hardik's foot. — PTI

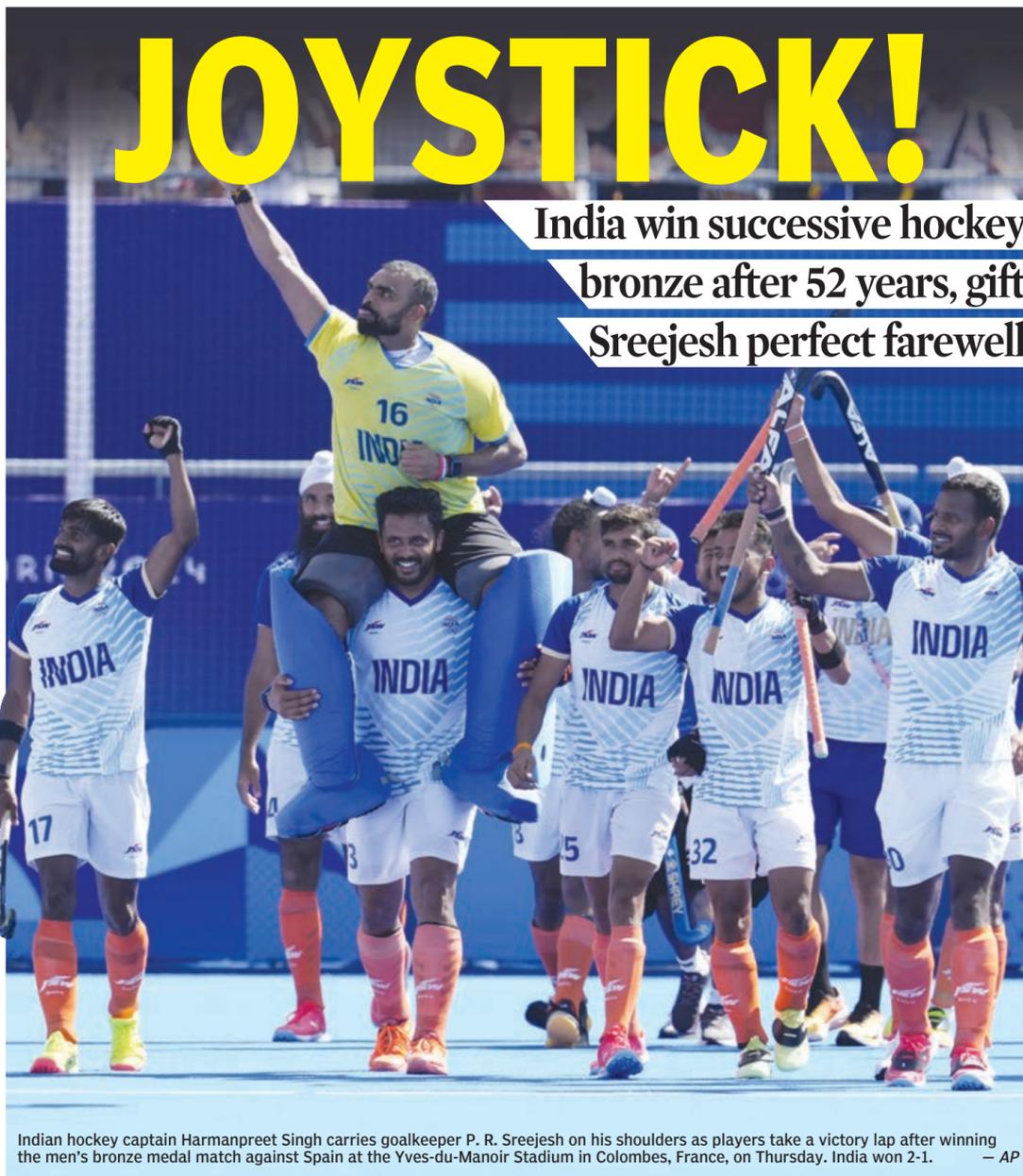
Paris, Aug. 8: Her long-cherished Olympic dream shattered by a cruel twist of fate, a crestfallen Vinesh Phogat bid adieu to her international wrestling career on Thursday, saying that she doesn't have the strength to continue anymore.

The 29-year-old, who was disqualified for being 100gm overweight ahead of her 50kg category gold medal bout in the Olympics on Wednesday, announced her decision on social media, seeking forgiveness from everyone who supported her.

Addressing her mother Premalata, Vinesh, a three-time Olympian, wrote, "Ma, wrestling has won, I have lost. Please forgive me, your dreams and my courage, everything is broken."

"I don't have any more strength now. Goodbye wrestling 2001-2024. I shall be indebted to you all. Forgive (me)," added the two-time world champion bronze-medallist.

Her stunning decision comes a day after Vinesh



Indian hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh carries goalkeeper P. R. Sreejesh on his shoulders as players take a victory lap after winning the men's bronze medal match against Spain at the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium in Colombes, France, on Thursday. India won 2-1. — AP

**Sreejesh rules out reconsidering retirement**

Paris, Aug. 8: "This is the better way to finish," said iconic Indian goalkeeper P. R. Sreejesh on Thursday, ruling out any possibility of reversing his decision to retire from international hockey after inspiring the team to a second successive bronze medal in the Olympic Games here.

With Sreejesh playing in his last match, India beat Spain 2-1 in the third-place play-off to win back-to-back bronze medals at the showpiece.

The last time, an Indian hockey team pulled off consecutive Olympic podium finishes was way back in 1972.

"I think this is the better way to finish an Olympic Games, with a medal. We are not going home empty-handed, that's a great thing," Sreejesh said on 'Jio Cinema'.

He asserted, when asked if he may reconsider. The 36-year-old from Kerala, whose illustrious career spanned 18 years,



Harmanpreet Singh (centre) celebrates after scoring against Spain. — AP

"I respect the sentiments of people (who may have wanted him to continue). But some decisions are hard, but taking a decision at right time makes the situation more beautiful," Sreejesh said after the match.

"So, my decision stays,"

**INDIA'S HOCKEY MEDALS AT GAMES**

- 1928, Amsterdam GOLD
- 1932, Los Angeles GOLD
- 1936, Berlin GOLD
- 1948, London GOLD
- 1952, Helsinki GOLD
- 1956, Melbourne GOLD
- 1960, Rome SILVER
- 1964, Tokyo BRONZE
- 1968, Mexico City BRONZE
- 1972, Munich BRONZE
- 1980, Moscow GOLD
- 2021, Tokyo BRONZE
- 2024, Paris BRONZE

**Broken Vinesh decides to bow out of ring**

Paris, Aug. 8: Her long-cherished Olympic dream shattered by a cruel twist of fate, a crestfallen Vinesh Phogat bid adieu to her international wrestling career on Thursday, saying that she doesn't have the strength to continue anymore.

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Her stunning decision comes a day after Vinesh



Olympic gold medalist shooter Abhinav Bindra meets wrestler Vinesh Phogat in Paris on Thursday. — PTI

appealed against her disqualification from the Olympic finals in the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS), demanding that she be awarded a joint silver medal.

An ad-hoc division of CAS, which has been set up here for resolution of any disputes arising during the Olympic Games, will take up her appeal in the next few hours.

She spent a good part of the day at a polyclinic inside the Games village owing to severe dehydration caused by her desperate measures to make the

**WFI PREZ TO WRESTLER: DON'T RETIRE IN SAD STATE OF MIND**

Paris, Aug. 8: Wrestling Federation of India chief Sanjay Singh on Thursday urged a crestfallen Vinesh Phogat to not take decisions like retirement from the sport in "a sad state of mind" as he looks to meet the grappler personally.

Her long-cherished Olympic dream shattered by a cruel twist of fate, Vinesh bid adieu to her international wrestling career, stating that she doesn't have the strength to continue anymore.

"I got to know about her retirement through social media and I am also shocked to learn she decided to retire on her own," Sanjay Singh said.

"So I would urge her on behalf of the Wrestling Federation of India to not make decisions in a sad state of mind and make a rational decision once she has recovered from the debacle mentally. We will also talk to her." — PTI

cut, which included going hungry, avoiding fluids and staying up all night to sweat it out.

Cuban wrestler Yusneylis Guzman Lopez, who lost to Vinesh in the semifinals, replaced her in the final against American Sarah Ann Hildebrandt. Hildebrandt won the bout to claim gold and Vinesh is now banking on CAS to be a joint silver-medallist with Lopez.

However, the sport's international governing body, United World Wrestling (UWW) has made it clear on its part that the current weigh-in rule will not be changed as of now. — PTI

**ANTIM LIKELY TO GET 3-YEAR BAN FOR INDISCIPLINE AT OLY**

Paris, Aug. 8: Wrestler Antim Panghal, who caused embarrassment to the Indian Olympic contingent by trying to facilitate her sister's entry into the athletes' village through her accreditation card, is likely to be banned for three years by the IOA, a source said on Thursday.

Panghal had crashed out of the Olympics after losing her opening bout in the women's 53kg category on Wednesday.

"IOA officials discussed the issue that caused embarrassment to all. It is considering a three-year ban on everyone involved, including the coaches," a source in the Indian contingent said.

"First, we need to ensure that she reaches home. The decision will be announced only after she reaches India," the source added.

Panghal is set to take a flight to Delhi this evening.

The IOA decided to send

her and her support staff back after the disciplinary breach was brought to its notice by the French authorities.

Speaking before her flight back to India, the 19-year-old said, "I did not intend to do anything wrong. I was not well and there was confusion. All of this happened due to confusion."

Later, in a video, she admitted that she had to go to the police station but only for the verification of her accreditation card.

"A lot is being spread about me, that's not true. I had high fever, and had taken permission from my coach to go to the hotel with my sister."

"I needed some of my belongings which were in the Games Village. My sister took my card and asked the officials there if she could take my belongings. They took her to the Police Station for accreditation verification." — PTI

**AMAN LOSES IN SEMIS, TO FIGHT FOR BRONZE**

Paris, Aug. 8: Young Indian grappler Aman Sehrawat lost to Japanese top-seed Rei Higuchi in the 57kg freestyle semifinal bout as the country's hopes of winning a gold from wrestling suffered a big blow at the Olympics here on Thursday. The 21-year-old Aman will now play for the bronze medal.

Aman, who had raised hopes of securing a place in the final following two big victories against opponents in the earlier rounds, was no match for the 28-year-old Higuchi — the 2016 Rio Olympics silver medallist — as the Japanese toyed with the Indian to stamp his technical superiority with a 10-0 win in just over two minutes.

Higuchi's superior technique was evident in the first few seconds when he attacked Aman's legs to take a 4-0 lead. The Japanese kept up the pressure on the Indian, targeting Aman's legs and effecting regular throw downs with ease to garner six more points to end the contest. Aman had earlier rekindled the country's hopes, demolishing former world champion Zelimkhan Abakarov of Albania by technical superiority to seal a place in the semifinals. — PTI

**LIFTER CHANU MISSES MEDAL, FINISHES 4TH**

Paris, Aug. 8: Indian weightlifter Mirabai Chanu came tantalisingly close to clinching a second Olympic medal but a faltered lift in her final attempt cruelly snatched the dream from her grasp, leaving her with a fourth place finish in the women's 49kg event here on Wednesday.

Mirabai, who turns 30 on Thursday, lifted a total of 199kg (88kg+111kg) at the South Paris Arena. It was 3kgs less than what she heaved at the Tokyo Olympics (202 kg) for a silver medal.

Mirabai could manage only three lifts out of six attempts. She had only one successful lift in the clean and jerk section.

The former world champion had done well to keep herself in medal contention after the snatch event but her failure to lift 114kg in her final clean and jerk attempt cost her dearly.

Had she succeeded she would have bagged the bronze medal. — PTI

