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INDIAN INVESTORS ARE INCREASINGLY TRUSTING MUTUAL FUNDS: ANANTH NARAYAN GOPALAKRISHNAN, WHOLE TIME MEMBER OF SEBI

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TEAM SHER-E-LUDHIANA GEARED UP FOR PRO PANJA LEAGUE DEBUT, WITH GREAT KHALI AS BRAND AMBASSADOR

Punjab announces Rs 1 cr cash prize for Punjabi players in Indian Hockey team

CHANDIGARH: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Thursday congratulated the Indian Hockey team for creating history by bagging the Bronze Medal in Paris Olympics games.

In a congratulatory message, the Chief Minister said that the Indian players have made the entire country proud by exhibiting the best game and trouncing Spain by 2-1. He said that the Indian Hockey players displayed one of the finest games in this prestigious match and steered their team to victory.

Bhagwant Singh Mann said that India has won two consecutive medals in Tokyo and Paris after a gap of 52 years. Prior to this, the Indian Hockey squad had won two consecutive medals in 1968 at Mexico and 1972 at Munich.

The Chief Minister reiterated that this historic win will pave way for restoring the pristine glory of national game in the country.



Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the entire team has made the entire country feel proud by this spectacular victory against Spain adding that this victory will go down in golden words in the annals of sports history. Showering heaps of praise on the team, he said the team has once again upheld the glorious legacy of the great Hockey players produced from the country adding that 10 players from state, who displayed finest hockey during these Olympics, will be rewarded with cash prizes worth Rs 1 crore each as per policy of state government.

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Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus assumes charge of Interim Govt in Bangladesh



DHAKA: Nobel Peace Prize winning economist Muhammad Yunus sworn in as the head of the country's caretaker government on August 8, three days after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was forced to quit and flee the country following violent protests.

Muhammad Yunus, 84, was recommended for the role by student protesters and returned to Dhaka on Thursday from Paris.

A 16-member council of advisers was announced to assist Yunus in running the state's affairs. Md Nahid Islam and Asif Mahmud, two key organisers of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, were also part of the advisory council.

"The country has the possibility of becoming a very beautiful nation," an emotional Yunus told reporters at the airport. "Whatever path our students show us, we will move ahead with that."

The student-led movement that ousted Hasina grew out of protests against quotas in government jobs that spiralled in July, provoking a violent crackdown that drew global criticism.

Ensure safety of minorities says Indian PM Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday extended best wishes to Muhammad Yunus as he took oath as the head of an interim government in Bangladesh, hoping for early return of normalcy and ensuring safety of Hindus and other minority communities in that country. In a post on X, Modi said, "India remains committed to working with Bangladesh to fulfil the shared aspirations of both our peoples for peace, security and development."

RBI Maintains Repo Rate At 6.5%, Signals Cautious Stance on Inflation



NEW DELHI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor, Shaktikanta Das, announced in the bi-monthly monetary policy statement that the repo rate, the central bank's rate for short-term loans to banks, will remain unchanged at 6.5 per cent. The decision reflects a cautious approach amid evolving economic conditions.

Governor Das highlighted that inflation and growth are currently balanced, but emphasised the need for vigilance concerning food prices. In the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting, a majority of members voted to maintain the current rates, with four in favor and two against. Governor Das indicated that while the overall inflation trajectory is moderating, vigilance is necessary. The RBI will maintain a flexible approach to liquidity management.

He underscored the resilience of the Indian financial system, which continues to gain strength from broader macro-economic stability.

The Indian Rupee has remained largely stable in August. However, Das cautioned banks about potential structural liquidity issues due to declining deposits and raised concerns over the rising disbursements of top-up home loans, urging lenders to take corrective actions.

The Governor also noted that the Current Account Deficit is expected to remain manageable during this fiscal year. India's forex reserves have reached a record high of USD 675 billion as of August 2.

SKM expresses deep solidarity with Vinesh Phogat in her hour of trial



NEW DELHI: The Samyukta Kisan Morcha expresses deep dismay at the disqualification of Vinesh Phogat, who had bravely fought her way into the finals of the wrestling event of the Paris Olympics. SKM supports her appeal to grant her Silver Medal.

SKM has also condemned the attitude of the Indian Olympic Association and the Government of India for this entire episode. The social media platforms of Vinesh Phogat running on social media show that many officials of the Wrestling Federation of India and the Indian Olympic Association were trying to stop her from going to the Olympics. The people of the country are also well aware that Vinesh Phogat, who raised her voice against sexual harassment against the then BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, a favourite of the central government, was already a thorn in the eyes of the Modi government.

Expressing deep sorrow over the decision of Vinesh Phogat, who brought laurels to the country, to retire from wrestling, SKM called her a great player of the country.

SKM solidly stands with Vinesh in her hour of trial. Even though Vinesh was disqualified by the Olympic Association, no one can take her place as an Olympic gold medalist in the hearts of the people of India.

Face-off between Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and Jaya Bachchan in Rajya Sabha

NEW DELHI: Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and actor-politician Jaya Bachchan were involved in a face-off on Friday after Bachchan raised objection to his "tone" while giving her floor to speak and the former asserting that even a celebrity like her needs to follow decorum.

Opposition parties also staged a walkout following the exchanges between Dhankhar and Bachchan, a Samajwadi Party MP. Later, while talking to reporters in the Parliament complex, Bachchan said she was upset with the tone of the Chairman, and also the way the mic of Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge was



switched off when he stood up to speak in the House.

The trouble started when the SP member wanted to make a point on an ongoing heated discussion between Opposition parties and the Chairman in the Rajya Sabha over certain remarks made by BJP MP Ghanshyam Tiwari on Kharge

a few days ago. Dhankhar allowed her saying, "Jaya Amitabh Bachchan, make your point."

Bachchan rose to say: "I, Jaya Amitabh Bachchan, want to say I am an artist. I understand body language and expressions. Forgive me but your tone is not acceptable. We are colleagues, sir. You may be sitting in the

Chair, and I remember when I went to school..." On this, a visibly angry Dhankhar interrupted, saying "Enough of it." "You may be anybody, you may be a celebrity, you have to understand the decorum, no, nothing doing...Never carry an impression that only you build reputations...we live up to reputations, nothing doing," he said.

When an Opposition party member raised an objection to how Dhankhar could call Bachchan a celebrity when she was a senior Member of Parliament, the Chairman retorted: "(Does) a senior member of Parliament has a licence to run down the reputation of the Chair... to question the tone and tenor?"

Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill introduced in LS



NEW DELHI: Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary on Friday introduced in the Lok Sabha the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, which seeks to give customers an option to increase the number of nominees per bank account to four, from existing one, among others.

Another proposed change relates to redefining 'substantial interest' for directorships, which could increase to Rs 2 crore instead of the current limit of Rs 5 lakh, which was fixed almost six decades ago. Congress member Manish Tewari opposed the introduction of the Bill saying the power to legislate with regard to cooperative societies vests with state governments.

Responding to opposition's remarks, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the banking regulation act and the cooperative banks do have a relationship and hence any amendment has to be taken

through this route. "There is no attempt to undermine the cooperatives, particularly cooperatives dealing with everything other than banks. Banks, cooperatives with a licence for banking will have to have a rule and therefore we have shown this," Sitharaman said.

The Bill also seeks to give greater freedom to banks in deciding the remuneration to be paid to statutory auditors. It also seeks to redefine the reporting dates for banks for regulatory compliance to the 15th and last day of every month instead of the second and fourth Fridays. The Bill, which was approved by the Union Cabinet last week, proposes to amend the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, the State Bank of India Act, 1955, the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970, and the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1980.

SGPC President raises sharp questions to CM Bhagwant Mann about sacrilege cases

Punjab government saving Ram Rahim, Honeypreet and Pradeep Kler: Dhmi

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

The President of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Harjinder Singh Dhmi, has questioned to the Chief Minister (CM) of Punjab Bhagwant Mann, in the cases of sacrilege of Guru Granth Sahib at Bargari in 2015 for protecting the accused persons so far.

Addressing the press at the SGPC office on August 7, Harjinder Singh Dhmi said that while the Bhagwant Mann-led government of Punjab is protecting Pradeep Kler, one of the main accused persons in the sacrilege cases, it is also running away from prosecuting Dera Sirsa head Gurmeet Ram Rahim and Honeypreet even after their names have come to light in Kler's statement. He said that the SGPC will write a letter to CM Punjab asking for an appointment in this serious matter and, if he does not respond positively, apart from



approaching the Governor of Punjab, necessary legal action will also be taken.

The SGPC President questioned the Punjab government and said that despite the court statements by Pradeep Kler, one of the main accused in the sacrilege cases, naming Dera Sirsa head Gurmeet Ram Rahim and Honeypreet, these two have not been arrested so far. "Moreover, prosecution sanction is not being given by the Home and Justice Affairs Department of Punjab Government to prosecute Ram Rahim and others", he said.

He said that even after Pradeep Kler's name was involved in three cases related to sacrilege, he was arrested in only one case, while his arrest is still

pending in the other two cases even though he was declared a proclaimed offender by the court. It is clear from this that the Bhagwant Mann government is only playing politics on the issue of sacrilege and is bent on protecting the culprits and using them as tools. While showing copies of three FIRs and court order against Pradeep Kler to the press, Dhmi questioned whether Bhagwant Mann would answer why the prime accused was released on bail. He demanded that all these accused Gurmeet Ram Rahim, Honeypreet, and Pradeep Kler should be arrested and prosecuted immediately.

Dhmi condemned the alleged irresponsible statements of

former IG Ranbir Singh Khatra in sacrilege cases. He said that the former SIT head Khatra is defaming the Sikh organization by making false allegations. He said that the SGPC was never in favor of the closure report of the CBI, but the Central agency's report was rejected by passing a resolution in the executive meeting of SGPC on July 17, 2019, and legal proceedings were initiated. The SGPC is fighting a legal battle in this regard till today. Along with this, the SGPC has also filed a petition in the High Court to become a party against Gurmeet Ram Rahim, the next date of which is fixed on August 9, 2024. The SGPC is fighting a separate legal battle in the High Court to stop the repeated paroles and furloughs awarded to Gurmeet Ram Rahim by the government.

He asked CM Bhagwant Mann not to play politics. Dhmi also asked the CM to spare out time to meet the SGPC delegation. He said that the Punjab government will no longer be allowed to play politics and run away from accountability in sacrilege cases.

Akal Takht makes public Sukhbir Badal's apology submitted, failed to elaborate his mistakes

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

The secretariat of Akal Takht on August 5, made public Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal's apology he had submitted to Akal Takht. Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh in response to allegations levelled by rebel Akali leaders.

Sukhbir Badal tendered an unconditional apology but he didn't elaborate his mistakes committed during the SAD government. As Sukhbir Badal has written in the letter that he accepts all mistakes committed during their government or at party level. He said that he was living his life with devotion and religious practices. He said that whatever had happened in the past, it hurts the



Sikh community. He said that he regrets for all mistakes.

Sukhbir however failed to mention the mistakes for which rebel SAD leaders had reached out to Akal Takht. The rebels have blamed Badal family for not giving justice for sacrilege incidents, giving apology to Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Raheem Singh and making appointment of Sumedh Singh Saini as DGP by late Parkash Singh Badal. Daljit Singh Cheema party spokesman said that Sukhbir Badal had submitted his apology

as a humble Singh and the ball is now in the court of Akal Takht. He said that whatever decision, five high priests would take, SAD will accept it. Talking to a TV channel, Cheema refused to reply about questions raised by former IGP Ranbir Singh Khatra that Dera Chief's letter given to Akal Takht Jathedar was tempered. The Dera chief had not mentioned word apology in his letter and the letter was written in Hindi.

Khatra in a TV interview alleged that dera chief's letter was translated in Punjabi and words 'Khima da Jachak Han (I seek apology)' were added in the Punjabi version. Khatra also claimed that five Jathedars were summoned to CM house to hand over letter to them.

Neeraj Chopra makes country proud with rare, historic feat: Punjab CM

CHANDIGARH: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday congratulated Indian athlete Neeraj Chopra for bagging the silver medal in the ongoing Paris Olympics in the javelin throw.

In a message, the Chief Minister said Chopra has made the entire country proud through his rare and historic achievement. He said Chopra who had created history in the Tokyo Olympics by winning gold has now brought laurels for the country by bagging silver in the ongoing Paris Olympics.

Mann said medals bagged by Indian players during the ongoing Olympics will motivate other players for coming events.



The Chief Minister envisioned that the spectacular performance of this young athlete would inspire the coming generations to follow in his footsteps in future.

He expressed hope that Chopra will surely become a role model for the budding players of the country to excel in more

events in the coming times.

Mann said such outstanding performances by players are the result of hard work, dedication and perseverance by these players in every game.

Chopra fell short of retaining his Olympic gold medal, finishing with a best throw of 89.45 metres. Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem won the gold medal by throwing an astonishing 92.97 metres for victory, a world record.

Thousand of kilometres away but always close at heart, joy and celebrations busted on Friday in a village of Haryana's

Panipat as the family of Chopra, with the athlete's gracious mother saying the "guy who got gold is also my child."

The family said it was the love of the family, locals and his fans that turned into his greatest victory in two consecutive Olympics.

With grace, Neeraj Chopra's mother Saroj Devi told the media, "I am happy with the silver, the guy who got gold (Arshad Nadeem) is also my child, everyone goes there after doing a lot of hard work."

She said his son was working hard. "In a match, it's about competition, not India and Pakistan. We all are preparing to welcome him."

Jammu and Kashmir Assembly polls to be held in September: Reddy



FW DESK

Union Minister G. Krishna Reddy, the Election Incharge for the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections, said on Monday that the elections in the Union Territory will be held in September.

Speaking at the 'Ekatma Mahotsav' rally organised by the BJP at Bana Singh Stadium in RS Pura, Reddy expressed confidence in the BJP's chances of securing a majority. The rally marked the fifth anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370, which was repealed by Parliament on August 5, 2019.

Reddy urged voters to support the BJP to maintain the pace of development and to combat terrorism. He noted a reduction in ISI activities in Jammu and Kashmir since the revocation of Article 370 by the Modi-led government and warned neighboring countries against supporting terrorism, stating that such actions would have serious consequences.

The rally was attended by senior BJP leaders, including National General Secretary Tarun Chugh, J&K BJP President Ravinder Raina, and former Deputy Chief Minister Kavinder Gupta. Reddy highlighted the positive changes in Jammu and Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370, including the empowerment of women and other marginalized groups and the reduction of terrorism and separatist activities.

Olympic medal winner Manu Bhaker calls on Punjab CM

CHANDIGARH: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Friday felicitated Olympic medal winner professional shooter Manu Bhaker, who called on him at his official residence.

The Chief Minister congratulated Manu Bhaker and her family for her rare achievement in the Ongoing Paris Olympics. He said that by bagging two medals in the shooting events at Paris Manu has made the entire country proud. Bhagwant Singh Mann said the ace shooter has emerged as a youth icon who will always inspire the budding players for bringing laurels for the country in national and international events.



The Chief Minister also appreciated the young player about the innovative Sports policy of his government, which aims at giving fillip to sporting activities in the state. He said that this is the need of the hour to channelise the unbounded energy of the youth on one hand and to wean them away

from menace of drugs on the other. Bhagwant Singh Mann also lauded the Indian players especially from states of Punjab and Haryana who have won medals for the county in various events.

Meanwhile, Manu Bhaker expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister for sparing his valuable time to meet and felicitate her. She also lauded the robust sports policy along with other initiatives taken by the state government for the promotion of sports in the state. The ace shooter also batted for equal opportunities for all the players so that maximum medals can be won for the country in various competitions.

Gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's Interviews: SIT Identifies Locations, HC Emphasizes Thorough Investigation

TARUN BHAJNI
Chandigarh

Eight months after the Punjab Police registered two FIRs regarding gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's interviews aired by a private news channel in March 2023, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) has reported to the Punjab and Haryana High Court that the first interview was conducted on the night of September 3-4, 2022, at the CIA premises in Kharar, and the second interview took place while Bishnoi was in Rajasthan.

During a suo-motu hearing, the division bench of Justice Anupinder Singh Grewal and Justice Lapita Banerji stated, "We hope and trust that the investigation conducted by the SIT is not confined to the



lower-level officials and they are not made scapegoats while protecting the higher officers." The bench emphasised, "The black sheep has to be identified and brought to book at the earliest." The case is scheduled for further hearing on September 5.

A status report filed by the SIT, led by Prabodh Kumar, Special Director General of Police, PSHRC-cum-Head of the SIT, detailed the progress made in pinpointing Bishnoi's locations during the interviews. The bench noted, "It is disquieting to note that in

the first interview conducted on the night of September 3-4, 2022, the interviewee was in the premises of CIA, Kharar, while giving the second interview, the interviewee was in the State of Rajasthan."

The bench expressed concern over a previous report by a two-member committee appointed by the State Government, which had stated that it was "highly improbable" the interview was conducted either in jail or in police custody in Punjab. "It had taken almost eight months to arrive at that inconclusive finding. If it was an attempt to hoodwink the Court or misdirect the proceedings of the Court, it would be a serious matter and would be considered at an appropriate stage," the bench remarked.

Harsimrat Kaur seeks international status for Bathinda airport



CHANDIGARH: Saying Bathinda is a strategic hub connecting eight districts across three states, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader and Bathinda MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal on Tuesday sought to upgrade the city's airport to introduce international flights to Canada.

In a missive to Union Minister for Civil Aviation Rammoohan Naidu, she called for introducing a daily Delhi-Bathinda Alliance flight utilising Boeing aircraft and flights under the regional connectivity scheme UDAN. She also urged for the introduction of flights linking the two holy Takhts of Sri Hazur Sahib in Nanded and Sri Patna Sahib.

Explaining the importance of Bathinda, Harsimrat Badal said the city was positioned as a strategic hub spanning from Sirsa in Haryana to Sri Ganganagar in Rajasthan encompassing Sangrur, Mansa, Ferozepur and Faridkot districts in Punjab.

She said Bathinda's importance even extended beyond geographical boundaries as it encompassed Asia's largest Indian Army cantonment, an Air Force station, a Central University, a major oil refinery, three thermal plants and the revered Takht of the Sikhs -- Sri Damdama Sahib.

She said since there was no airport within a 300-km radius, the city's airport presented a fit case for upgradation to an international airport.

"Since there are a large number of students from the eight districts, including those in the adjacent states, who were studying in Canada, flights to Canada could be started from Bathinda," she said.

She said this would also facilitate NRIs as well as families who were travelling to and fro between the two destinations and had to presently land in Delhi and then travel by road to their destinations in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

She said similarly starting a daily Delhi-Bathinda Alliance air flight would result in the region's economic and social development. She said while a Delhi-Bathinda-Delhi flight had been flagged off in 2016 and operated five times a week with an impressive 80 per cent occupancy, it was suspended during the Covid-19 pandemic.

She said in September 2023 a Bathinda-Hindon-Bathinda flight had been initiated utilising ATR aircraft, this should be replaced with a Delhi-Bathinda Alliance flight.

Heroine of value worth Rs 2 cr seized with 2 arrested



SATISH HANDA
Ambala

Team of CIA-1 staff led by Inspector Harjinder Singh on a secret clue that two youths carrying drugs are moving under suspicious condition on the National Highway No. 1 near Dukheri Bridge between Ambala and Shahabad area under Parao Police Station, Ambala Cantt. Finding two youths on a motorcycle, police team surrounded both and during checking recovered 260 gm heroine of international value worth Rs 2 crore from them. Both arrested by police were residents of Ambala Cantt identified as Sooraj alias Passi resident of Sunder Nagar in Nanhera and Chetan alias Nanu resident of Lucky Vihar (Behind BD Flour Mill) Ambala Cantt.

Addressing a press conference Surinder Singh Bhorla SP Ambala said, Ambala police between 1st July and 31st July this year has arrested 17 persons in 11 cases registered against the drug smugglers, in which drugs of value worth Rs 3 crore 40 lakh and 10 thousand were seized by police. Both arrested were produced in the court on 31st July 2024 and were remanded to police custody for two days. During police remand, both arrested disclosed that Raj Kumar alias Paiya was also involved with them in drug smuggling business. Police started search for him and arrested on 2nd August.

Complaints regarding alleged frauds in purchase of medicines & medical instruments in Haryana

SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

Punjab and Haryana High Court has raised a question over Anti-corruption Bureau (ACB) in Haryana state as regard action taken in nine complaints in which government hospitals under state health department purchased medicines and hospital instruments at much higher prices and has now demanded report in this regard for nine complaints from ACB in the state before 22nd August this year, raising a question why FIRs has not been registered against alleged accused so far. However, former ACB chief Amitabh Dhillon had moved a writ in the High Court that as many as nine complaints related to different districts



had been registered. Information further reveals, during year 2018 when cases of alleged fraud in government hospitals in different districts for the purchase of medicines and the medical instruments unethically at much higher rates came to light and the former Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala had also de-

manded CBI investigation, get audited from Cag and according to RTI embezzlements of amount worth crores of rupees in procurements of medicines and medical instruments by the government hospitals in three years. According to the complainant, the medical firm in Hisar district from where medicines were purchased when

visited at the address, a washerman was found residing there.

Similarly, medical instruments were shown purchased for the government hospitals at Hisar and Fatehabad the visiting team found that the owner of the firm was lodged in Bihar jail at Delhi allegedly manufacturing fake coins and the tender documents were prepared by him from inside the jail duly signed by a fake person. It was also observed that a huge quantity of medicines and hospital instruments purchased by the government hospitals at much higher rates from firms and manufacturers having no manufacturing or trade license. It was also observed that some of these firms were found selling general merchandise goods or food products.

Murder in Chandigarh Court: Former AIG of Punjab Police shot his ICAS son-in-law

TARUN BHAJNI
Chandigarh

In the Chandigarh District Court on Saturday, a retired AIG of Punjab Police shot and killed his son-in-law. There was a domestic dispute between the two families. Both parties had come to the Chandigarh Family Court on Saturday for this matter. The accused has been identified as retired AIG Human Rights, Malwinder Singh Sidhu. The deceased son-in-law, Harpreet Singh, was an ICAS officer in the agriculture department.

According to the information, there had been a domestic dispute between the two families for a few months. Both parties had come to the Chandigarh Family Court for the third time on Saturday for mediation. At around 12 noon, Harpreet Singh arrived at the Family Court with a



written agreement along with his parents. The girl's family arrived at the court at around 1:30 PM.

During the mediation conversation, retired AIG Malwinder Singh Sidhu requested to go to the bathroom. The advocate directed him to the restroom from the room itself, but son-in-law Harpreet Singh offered to show him the way. Harpreet took his father-in-law out of the mediation room, and after a few seconds, the sound of

gunfire was heard from outside. There were four to five shots fired one after another.

When the lawyer looked outside the room, Sidhu was seen shooting at his son-in-law with a gun. The advocate locked the room from the inside, and everyone hid under the table. One bullet was fired towards the mediation room door as well. Hearing the gunshots, other staff and lawyers nearby gathered and captured the AIG, locking him in a room.

SGPC account clerk murdered by his own colleague in the SGPC complex

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Darbara Singh working as an account clerk in the SGPC office was brutally killed by the SGPC employee here today. Confirming the incident police said that this afternoon victim Darbara Singh was allegedly stabbed with a small sword by Sukhbir Singh who was also an employee (sewadar) of the SGPC. The incident took place in the SGPC office adjoining the Golden Temple complex. SGPC secretary Partap Singh said that both Darbara Singh and Sukhbir Singh were known to each other and having some family relations. Today after 1.00 p.m both were indulged in some heated arguments whereupon Sukhbir Singh in a fit of anger attacked Darbara Singh who was immediately shifted to SGPC hospital in a serious condition where he succumbed to injuries.

16000 NHM staff in Hospitals observes strike



PARVESH HANDA

Medical services in government hospitals in Haryana have been disturbed due to nearly 16000 employees having declared strike in hospitals after doctors strike has been finished since the state government has accepted most of their demands. National Health Mission (NHM) employees working in government hospitals remained on strike demanding regularisation of their services and

providing them with service security, social security, economic security, ex-gratia as per Haryana Civil Service Rules and facility of cashless treatment in hospitals as applicable to permanent employees till the formation of policy. The strike was called by the NHM Karmachari Sanjha Morcha, Haryana of the state. Those who participated in the protest included doctors, Ayurvedic doctors, staff nurses, ANMs, ambulance drivers, Lab Technicians, operators and others.

regularisation is made such employees should be provided service security, social security, economic security, ex-gratia as per Haryana Civil Service Rules. NHM employees had meetings with CM's Head Chief Secretary Rajesh Khuller and Additional Chief Secretary Dr Amit Aggarwal had assured to look into the matter but nobody took care during indefinite call for strike by the workers after 26th July adversely affecting health services in hospitals.

Lady SHO attacked in Amritsar by serving army man



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Lady SHO Amanjot Kaur posted in the Police station Verka was admitted in the hospital with grievous injuries after she was attacked by some inebriated youth during midnight.

Confirming the incident, Police said that during midnight SHO Amanjot was informed that two groups at village Mudhal were fighting and created the law and order problem in the area. She immediately rushed to the spot in her private car in a civil dress.

A group of people who were creating the scene on the spot while seeing the lady attacked her with wooden sticks on her head and neck resulting in injuring her seriously. The gunman who was accompanying her took the SHO to hospital with profuse bleeding where her treatment was in progress.

Haryana has become the first state in the entire country where all crops will now be purchased at the Minimum Support Price : Anil Vij

Bhupinder Singh Hooda is nothing but a shop of lies and dishonesty

PARVESH HANDA
Ambala

Haryana's former Home Minister Anil Vij said that Haryana has become the first state in the entire country where all crops will now be purchased at the Minimum Support Price. This is a very significant development because the current government is farmer-friendly, and the state government has proven that it is working for the farmers. The government has also waived off the Abiana, which is a major step in Haryana politics. Vij was replying to the questions asked by the media persons today.

In response to a question about farmer leader Gurnam Chaduni's statement regarding the government's fear, he said, "Everyone thinks from their own perspective. Chaduni has welcomed Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini's decision, which is also a significant development



because the current government is farmer-friendly and takes decisions for farmers, having already taken many steps before, he asserted."

Attacking the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, he said, "Bhupinder Singh Hooda claims to be farmer-friendly, yet we saw his government distributing compensation of just two rupees, while our current government has distributed compensation in lakhs and crores." Vij described Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda as a shop of lies and dishonesty, saying, "Nowadays, Bhupinder Singh Hooda is making false

promises that we will regularize contract employees. He questioned who started the practice of contracting, who exploited workers, and who employed them on contract. Our government has established the Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigum to prevent employees exploitation and to end middleman contracting. We are considering regularizing these employees in due time, he add."

Further attacking Bhupinder Singh Hooda, he said, "Hooda talks about athletes. During the Asian Games, when athletes won medals, Hooda did not give them awards, but I awarded those athletes after becoming the Sports Minister. Therefore, he has no right to speak. He spends the whole day spreading lies, but the people of Haryana have seen his reality."

He said that "The country's powerhouse, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is leading the Bharatiya Janata Party, which will form a strong government in Haryana. The Aam Aadmi Party has already been defeated

in Delhi and Punjab and has lost all seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi. The AAP has nothing to show except deceit and only knows how to run the government from jail, he said."

In response to questions about Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala's attacks on the Haryana government through postcards, he said, "It is good that even a postman plays a role in politics because no one listens to Surjewala's words or pays any attention to him, and now he has become a postman."

Regarding the comments made by Uddhav Thackeray calling Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis a 'bedbug,' Vij responded, "When defeated players reach the end of their rope, their level of language deteriorates because when a person is down, they cannot control their language. That is the case with Uddhav Thackeray. He has been thoroughly lost in politics, and his cries are a result of his helplessness because he is a defeated pawn, Vij added."

'Cannot jeopardise careers of 2 lakh': SC dismisses plea for postponement of NEET-PG exam

NEWDELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea seeking directions to the National Board of Examinations (NBE) to reschedule the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET)-PG 2024, which is scheduled for August 11.

Senior advocate Sanjay Hegde, representing the petitioners, submitted before a bench, headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud, that administration cut down the number of examination centres for the NEET-PG exam from 1,200 to 500 against the backdrop of allegations of paper leak and other irregularities in the conduct of NEET-UG exam this year.

Due to the decrease in the number of centres, the NEET-PG will be conducted in two shifts, said Hegde, flagging the risks arising from the normalisation process. Declining to exercise its discretionary jurisdiction, the bench, also comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, remarked that the examination where two lakh students are going to appear cannot be halted at the instance



of four petitioners.

As it dismissed the plea, the apex court said: "We will not reschedule or pass any orders. There are 2 lakh students and close to 4 lakh parents who would weep if we touch this matter. At the best of four-five petitioners, we cannot jeopardise the careers of two lakh students. We will not do it."

On Thursday, CJI Chandrachud directed the registry to urgently list the matter for hearing after advocate Anas Tanwir, representing petitioners, mentioned the plea for urgent listing.

The petitioners sought the postponement of the exam on the

ground that candidates have been allocated cities which are highly inconvenient for them to reach and the formula for normalisation is unknown to them. It also sought details and disclosure of the formula for the normalisation of the four sets of question papers to eliminate any possibility of arbitrariness in the process.

"The examination will be conducted in two batches... There is a likelihood that one batch of candidates may face a more difficult question paper than the other batch. Therefore, it is prayed that the formula for normalisation should be disclosed before the conduct of

examinations thereby ruling out any fear of arbitrariness," it said. Further, the plea stated that the allocation of test cities was made on July 31 and the specific centres are scheduled to be declared on August 8, and given such short notice, it has become highly difficult for students to make arrangements for their travel to their specific cities.

"That more than two lakh students are scheduled to appear in the examination. The examination is scheduled to be held in 185 test cities, therefore, resulting in the non-availability of train tickets as well as the hiking of airfares due to dynamic pricing, thereby making it almost impossible for a large number of students to reach their test centres," it added.

On June 22, the NEET-PG, which was scheduled to be held on the very next day, was postponed by the Union Health Ministry in "best interests of the students and to maintain the sanctity of the examination process". Last year, the top court had declined to entertain petitions seeking postponement of the NEET-PG 2023 exam.

Wayanad disaster: Search continues for missing 152 people



WAYANAD: Search operations for the missing 152 people continued on Friday, the 11th day of Kerala's worst-ever natural calamity in Wayanad in which 413 casualties have taken place so far.

The search operations were taking place in the Mundakayil and Panchirimatom areas.

State Tourism Minister P.A. Mohammed Riyas, who is spearheading the rescue and relief operations, said the search operation will end on Friday, and on Sunday again a similar search operation with the help of the villagers will be held as they are

familiar with the area.

Like in the past few days, a few teams on Friday continued to search areas in and around the area where the Chaliyar River originates in Wayanad and passes through the Malappuram district. So far 78 bodies and over 150 body parts have been recovered.

Meanwhile, Friday appears to be crucial as the Kerala High Court suo moto decided to register a case.

The High Court decided to register the case based on media reports and on a letter it received which said that

there has been unbridled exploitation of fragile areas in Wayanad and other environmentally sensitive areas.

Experts have time and again pointed out that disasters are waiting to happen and even after clear signals coming from smaller tragedies, the authorities continued to remain silent.

Successive governments in Kerala have blinkered the reports of top experts like Kasturirangan and Madhav Gadgil.

Even though Kerala has four state-run agencies to tackle environmental and climate change issues, nothing much has come from these agencies as there is a serious shortage of experts.

Eyebrows were raised when the Pinarayi Vijayan government entrusted the Kottayam-based Institute of Climate Change Studies to conduct a study and submit a report on the Wayanad landslide.

After having seized of the widespread damage being caused to the environment when tourist resorts owned by the big and mighty have sprung up in eco-fragile areas and homestays, all eyes are on how the High Court.

Election Commission to review poll preparations in J&K



FW DESK

The Election Commission of India (ECI) will visit Jammu and Kashmir from August 8 to 10 to review the preparations for the upcoming assembly elections in the union territory. The visit comes as Jammu and Kashmir has been without an elected government since June 2018, when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ended its alliance with the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP).

The last Assembly election in J&K was held in 2015.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar, along with Election Commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, will lead the review. During their visit to Srinagar, they will engage with political parties and meet with the chief electoral officer, the union territory's police nodal officer, and the central forces coordinator to assess election readiness.

The commissioners will also hold discussions with the chief secretary, police chief, district election officers, and superintendents of police from each district. On August 10, the ECI officials will travel to Jammu to evaluate coordination with enforcement agencies, followed by a press conference to update the media on election preparations.

Earlier in March, the Chief Election Commissioner visited Jammu and Kashmir before the Lok Sabha elections and assured political parties and the public that assembly elections would be conducted soon.

The Supreme Court has directed the Central government to hold elections in Jammu and Kashmir by September 30, 2024, and to restore statehood at the earliest. The ECI has also requested the Jammu and Kashmir administration to reassign officials stationed in their home districts and those involved in the election process who will complete a three-year term before the end of September.

Since June 2018, after the BJP-PDP alliance collapsed and Mehbooba Mufti resigned as chief minister, Jammu and Kashmir has been under Governor's rule. The legislative assembly was dissolved in November 2018. In August 2019, the Modi government abrogated Article 370, ending the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcating it into two union territories.

August 5 is a black day for J&K, Constitution: PDP



JAMMU: On the occasion of fifth anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370, People's Democratic Party (PDP) Spokesperson Virendra Singh has called it a "black day" for Jammu & Kashmir as well as for the Constitution of India.

"With the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, the rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, which were granted to us by the Constitution, are snatched away. Jammu and Kashmir was converted into a prison and the state was divided into two parts. It has been five years. There is no one to listen to our grievances here. Those who say that the situation in Jammu and Kashmir has changed are making empty claims."

He remarked: "Terrorism has increased of late in Jammu. After the removal of Article 370, there has been a spike in terrorist incidents in Jammu which was not there before." "While the Central government is considering giving special status to another state," he said while making a reference to Bihar, he questioned: "Why are our rights taken away? What did we do wrong?" "The people of Jammu have understood that they have been deceived," he added.

Centre moves Waqf (Amendment) Bill in LS, Congress calls it 'draconian'

NEWDELHI: Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju moved the Waqf Act (Amendment) Bill, 2024, in the Lok Sabha on Thursday, sparking disruptions by the Congress.

The Bill seeks to amend the Waqf Act of 1995 and repeal the Mussalman Waqf Act of 1923. Congress leader KC Venugopal raised strong objections, calling the Bill an attack on the Constitution.

"I would like to raise an objection to this draconian law introduced by the government. Fundamentally, this is an attack on the Constitution," Venugopal said. The Congress MP argued that the Bill violates Article 26 of the Constitution, which grants the right to form and maintain



institutions for religious and charitable purposes, manage religious affairs, and administer property according to the law. "Through this Bill, they (the Centre) are putting a provision that non-Muslims can also be members of the governing council. Can anyone imagine a non-Hindu being part of the Supreme Court-constituted Ayodhya Board? This provision directly attacks

the faith and freedom of religion," Venugopal asserted. He expressed concerns that the government might target other religious communities next, saying, "Now you are going after Muslims, next you will go for Christians, and then Jains."

"There is a fundamental principle. What is the tradition and the culture of India? We believe in traditions and culture. We respect each other's

faith. We are Hindus, we are believers, but at the same time, we respect the faith of other religions also," Venugopal said.

Slamming the Bill as the Centre's political move, the Lok Sabha MP said, "This Bill is specialised for Maharashtra and Haryana elections. You did not understand when, last time, the people of India taught you a lesson. The countrymen will not buy this kind of divisive politics now. This is a clear attack on the federal system."

Accusing the government of attempting to create conflict and "spread violence," he asserted, "Your fundamental idea is to create conflict and anger between communities... This Bill cannot pass, and it cannot be introduced."

Congress alleges, BJP won 79 seats in LS polls by manipulating voter turnout figures

Seeks ECI clarification over variation in initial, final voter turnout figures.

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

Alleging that the BJP won 79 seats in the 2024 General Elections by voter turnout manipulation, the Congress has sought clarification from the Election Commission of India (ECI) over the substantial difference in the preliminary/initial and the final voter turnout figures in the 2024 General Elections.

Quoting a report by the 'Vote for Democracy' (VFD), senior party leader and ex-MP Sandeep Dikshit said while the overall difference in the voter



turnout between what the ECI said initially and what figures it gave finally, was on an average 4.7 percent, it counted to about 5 crore votes nationally.

Quoting the VFD report he disclosed that in some states like Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, where the BJP or its allies did unexpectedly better, the difference between the initial and final turnout figures

was 12.5, which is huge and needs answers from the ECI.

The senior Congress leader observed that while a difference of around 1 percent is understandable, but the massive difference up to 12.5 percent and in some places like Lakshadweep up to 25 percent raises serious questions. Quoting the same report, Dikshit said, it had specifically identified 79 constituencies that the BJP won, where the final voting percentage increased substantially from the initial figures given by the ECI.

He also wondered why it took the ECI so much time to come out with the final voting percentage, while in the modern days of technological pro-

cess, the figures are updated every two hours. He pointed out, while for the first phase it took ECI eleven days to come out with the final figures, for the second phase it took 6 days and for the subsequent phases 4 to 5 days. Dikshit said, this had raised questions not only on the credibility of the ECI, but has also created doubts about the entire electoral process. He did not agree with the ECI explanation like communication and Internet issues for delay in coming out with the final poll percentage figures. He observed that with the availability of sophisticated technology there should not be so much variation between the initial and final figures.

Congress targets BJP govt over failure to defend Vinesh Phogat

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The Congress today blamed the Bharatiya Janata Party government at the centre for failing to safeguard the interest of ace wrestler Vinesh Phogat just because some people in power would have had problems with her winning a medal.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here today, party general secretary and MP Randeep Singh Surjewala said that the entire country was seeking justice for Phogat, who had been thrown out of the Olympics under a deliberate conspiracy. "Phogat was sacrificed at the altar of sports politics," he remarked.

The Congress general secretary tore into the failure of the Indian Olympic Association and the Wrestling Federation of India to come to the rescue of Phogat.

He said it was unprecedented in the history of Olympic games that an athlete had been disqualified for being overweight



by just 100 grams.

He also quoted the Olympic rules, including Article 11, where a player is allowed one or two hours to adjust his/her weight in case it is slightly higher. He asked why Phogat not given this time to reduce her extra weight. He asked what was the huge entourage of officials, who outnumbered the players, doing in Paris and why they could not assist and guide Phogat.

Surjewala narrated the entire sequence of events and the related background as how people in power including the

Prime Minister were reluctant to congratulate Phogat when she defeated a so-far-invincible wrestler to become first Indian woman wrestler to qualify for the finals.

He observed that it was apparently because Phogat had led a struggle against sexual exploitation by the then Wrestling Federation of India and former BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, that a conspiracy was hatched to deny her medal in the Olympics. He said, people in power in the country would have had a problem with her

winning the medal.

The Congress leader raised certain technical questions substantiating his charges of conspiracy. He wondered how 100 grams of weight could not be managed, which could have been done very easily, even by a haircut.

Asserting and reiterating his charge, he pointed out, the silver medal could still have been saved, if the organisers and managers had made her opt out, citing illness or injury.

He pointed out, while there were consolatory tweets after Phogat was disqualified, nobody in the government had congratulated her when she had won the semifinals or pre-quarterfinal by defeating a wrestler who had never lost a bout in the last 82 games.

Surjewala said, the Congress party does not want consolation, but justice for Phogat, who was unduly and unjustifiably disqualified from the Olympic games under a conspiracy, thus denying her the opportunity to win a medal and create history.

Army opens fire on suspected infiltrators along LoC in J&K's Akhnoor and Sunderbani sectors



FW DESK

The Army opened fire upon detecting movements from suspected infiltrators along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Akhnoor and Sunderbani sectors early Monday morning, officials reported.

In Akhnoor's Battal sector, near Jammu, Army troops spotted suspicious movement by three to four individuals around 1:30 am. The area was illuminated with flares, put under drone surveillance, and reinforcements were mobilized to establish a tight cordon. A search operation commenced at dawn to prevent any potential infiltration across the border.

NEW DELHI: Raising questions on partial amendment in indexation in Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MP Raghav Chadha said the Modi government is taxing the people of the country for voting for the BJP.

The only mission of the government is to collect tax. The people of the country are being taxed on everything, including waking up and sleeping, laughing and crying, eating and drinking, studying and medicine, buying and selling, road and air travel, earning and sweets.

On the amendment brought by the Finance Ministry in the Finance Bill, Raghav Chadha said that this is a minor amendment as only those investors who buy land and buildings before 23 July 2024 will get the benefit of indexation. Any property bought after 23 July 2024 will not be benefitted by indexation. He demanded from the Union Finance Minister to reimplement 100% indexation on all types of investments as before.

Expressing his views on the issue of indexation in Rajya Sabha, AAP MP from Punjab Raghav Chadha said a few days ago we had presented our views on indexation in tax. Our suggestion was accepted by the Union Finance Minister and the indexation that was taken away from the country's



investors two weeks ago has been restored. This raises a big question mark on the tax policy of our Government of India, how confused our country's tax policy is. "On 23 July 2024, the central government says that it is withdrawing indexation from the investors of India, but on 6 August it reversed its decision and said that indexation will not be withdrawn, but it will be implemented again.

This situation makes it clear that when the government will get the budget prepared by people who do not have knowledge of economics, then such irregularities will be seen," he said.

Raghav Chadha said that taking away indexation from the investors of India is like breaking their back. I had earlier demanded the complete restoration of indexation in the House, but the Finance

Ministry has talked about reimplementing indexation only partially in the proposal to amend the Finance Bill. In this, indexation is not being rolled back on all types of properties, but it is being reapplied only on immovable properties like land and building. Apart from this, the benefit of indexation will not be available on properties purchased after 23 July 2024.

Raghav Chadha requested the central government to completely restore indexation. "It should be applied to all types of properties and properties purchased after 23 July 2024 should also get its benefit. Abolishing indexation on asset classes raises questions on the Finance Minister whether she does not believe in inflation-adjusted benefits and does she not have knowledge of the impact of inflation.

PERCIVAL BILLIMORIA & SIDDHARTHA K GARG BAT FOR SCIENTIFIC METHODS OVER KILLING STRAY DOGS



The tale of stray dog policy



Supreme Court then stated that any parties with issues regarding these new laws can challenge them in the relevant High Courts. In the meantime, the governing law of the land remains the Central law (PCA Act 1960 and ABC Rules, 2023), which prohibits the killing of stray dogs by local authorities or municipalities.

that we are promised to deliver us from all evils? Science certainly does not back the claim that killing helps reduce the population.

WHO's Expert Consultation on Rabies, which met in Geneva in October 2004, in its technical report endorses the sterilisation program by stating that it is the only effective and humane method of controlling stray dog populations.

A 2014 report commissioned by the Bombay Municipal Corporation stated that sterilisation is the only scientific humane solution. The same corporation in a 1994 circular admitted that killing strays does not affect the population.

In this circular, the Bombay Municipality admitted to killing about 4.5 lakh stray dogs between 1984 and 1994 and spent more than Rs 2 crores. But what takes the cake is that, despite no evidence to prove the efficacy of killing and evidence to the contrary, the same Bombay Municipal Corporation approached the Supreme Court seeking permission to kill stray dogs in this case.

One can only hope that the spirit of scientific temper and humanism, as enshrined in the fundamental duty in our Constitution under Article 51A(h), imbues itself in the minds of our citizens. We must eschew unscientific and barbaric methods such as the killing of stray dogs in favour of the scientific approach, which is a win-win for everyone. We domesticated stray dogs around 10,000 years ago and let us not let them or ourselves down.

Percival Billimoria is a Senior Advocate and founder of All Creatures Great and Small Animal Sanctuary, while co-author Siddhartha K Garg is an Advocate and founder of Angel Trust Animal Rights NGO. Views are personal.

“Under all circumstances, there cannot be any indiscriminate killings of canines and the authorities have to take action in terms of the mandate and spirit of the prevalent legislations in place.”

With this single line, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India brought to an end a 15-year-old case titled Animal Welfare Board of India & Anr Versus People for Elimination of Stray Troubles & Ors, also known as the All India Stray Dogs case or AWBI vs PEST. The last hearing was held on May 9 this year when the judgment was reserved. Since then, all dog lovers (and regrettably, all dog haters) have been waiting with bated breath for the final judgment. That judgment came out on July 12 and has been cheered in some circles and criticised in others.

The case centred on whether municipal and local authorities can wantonly kill stray dogs to reduce the stray dog population, eradicate rabies, and prevent man-animal conflict, or whether local bodies must follow the World Health Organization (WHO)-backed scientific approach of sterilisation, which achieves these objectives. Legally speaking, the matter was framed as a battle of supremacy between State and Municipal laws, which authorise the killing of stray dogs (euphemistically referred to as culling) as opposed to the Central law (Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960, and the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2001), which mandates that killing is strictly prohibited and, the only recourse is the scientific solution of sterilisation.

Final mandate

These State and Municipal laws permitting the killing of stray dogs were challenged in various High Courts. The High Courts of

Bombay, Karnataka, and Himachal Pradesh ruled that local authorities have discretionary powers to kill stray dogs and are not bound by the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. On the other hand, the Kerala High Court ruled that local bodies possess no such discretionary powers, and that they are guided by Central law, which penalises cruelty to animals, specifically canines. All these judgments were appealed and came to a head in the Supreme Court, which then issued notices to all the States and Union Territories in 2015, taking the case to a pan-India level.

The denouement of this case was reached when the final order was uploaded on the Supreme Court's website. The Supreme Court laid down that since the inception of the case, a lot of water has flown under the bridge and, specifically, there has been a change in the legislative landscape with the notification of the new ABC Rules, 2023 under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. These two pieces of legislation mandate that wanton killing by municipalities is prohibited and that sterilisation must be followed. The

'Duty of every citizen'

The court then capped off this judgment with these stirring lines: "Compassion to all living beings, is the enshrined Constitutional value and mandate, and cast obligation on the authorities to maintain." This refers to Article 51A(g) of the Constitution of India, which deals with the fundamental duties of the citizens and states: "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures."

With such a positive and compassionate conclusion to a very scientifically backed judgment, the Supreme Court ended this matter. The dog haters, or to put it politely the cynophobes, can certainly go to the High Courts and file writ petitions praying for the striking down of the new Central Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023. But the question is what good would that do? Is killing all the stray dogs the panacea

KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN ON HOW POLITICAL TRENDS BLUR THE DEMOCRACY-AUTOCRACY LINE IN US



The United States shifts to autocratic trends

Since the Second World War, Washington has defined its foreign policy as a moral conflict between democracies and dictatorships, though this definition proved malleable and redacted to those siding with the United States and those against. The binary between democracy and autocracy is now further blurred by political trends within the U.S. itself.

In the past, American presidential politics comprised differences over policy and principle, when Presidents and Congress jostled for advantage and the boundaries of executive authority were negotiated. Despite serious disagreements, the norms of civility and forbearance prevailed in a mood consistent with democratic governance.

That situation no longer prevails. The populist faction, perhaps majority, that dominates the Republican Party, embraces a strongman vision of leadership that operates beyond customary democratic norms. This is now centre-stage in U.S. politics, endorsed by the July 1, 2024 ruling of the Supreme Court which granted former U.S. President Donald Trump's desire to guarantee that that his attempts to overturn the 2020 presidential election would not go to trial before the presidential election in November.

The Supreme Court allowed American Presidents an absolute immunity from prosecution for core official acts and Chief Justice John Roberts summarised the decision of the majority comprising six conservative Justices thus; "We conclude that under our constitutional structure of separated powers, the nature of Presidential power requires that a former President have some immunity from criminal prosecution for official acts during his tenure in office. At least with respect to the President's exercise of his core constitutional powers, this immunity must be absolute. As



for his remaining official actions, he is also entitled to immunity."

The Supreme Court decision does not place Presidents above the law, but removes restrictions on possible presidential abuse of power placed by both Democrats and Republicans since the 1970s, when growing executive authority and abuse of power were checkmated after Watergate.

Three liberal judges dissented from this decision, warning that granting presidential immunity would impact American democracy. Justice Sonia Sotomayor said, "the category of presidential action that can be deemed unofficial is destined to be vanishingly small."

Phases of transformation

The American presidency has undergone periods of transformation in the modern era, each involving a dramatic expansion of power. The first was the rise of the administrative state under Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, which grew in size and cost under Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, when bi-partisan values broadened the scope of government interven-

tion and generated a complex bureaucracy to address social problems and social welfare. This administrative state, with its resources and agencies, enabled Presidents from both parties to direct public policy and construct their legacies. They needed to

bring the administration under their direct control, which led to the centralised apparatus that resides in the Executive Office of the President.

Dangerous precedent: On the U.S. President and majority ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court

Far-right opinion began to regard the ever-expanding administrative state as unconstitutional, socialist and opposed to individual liberties. With growing Republican strength in the southern States and political activation by evangelicals, the conservative movement led to the conviction that the answer lay in a leader wielding top-down power and a different orientation towards laws that impeded his ambitions. President George W. Bush signed the Patriot Act that assumed some autocratic powers, expanded the surveillance capabilities of the administration, and allowed torture of prisoners contrary to statutory law.

The populist tendency of Republican conservatism is concentrated among less educated, blue-collar, white, rural, religious

populations disadvantaged by globalisation, threatened culturally and economically, and driven by grievance and anger. They seek a leader to attack the prevailing system, flout its procedures and take remedial action on their behalf. Democrats are seen as their enemies rather than political opponents, the contest pitting the people against big government and the corrupt and illegitimate Washington establishment.

The new normal

In Donald Trump, the populists found their natural leader. From the moment he announced his intention to seek the presidency, he made it clear that he had little use for the legal limitations of democracy. During his tenure, Mr. Trump waged a campaign against the norms and institutions of two-party politics, the climax being shortly after his 2020 election loss, when, despite his deploying the authoritarian actions of a strongman presidency, he was prevented from overriding Joe Biden's electoral victory.

Populist extremism is the new normal of the political Right that has taken over the Republican Party. It energises the party with hatred for the administrative state and embraces a strongman presidency as the panacea for its grievances, thereby threatening the basic fundamentals of democracy. This is given substance by Mr. Trump himself through ambiguous but ominous pronouncements to supporters such as in Florida on July 26 — "you don't have to vote again, we'll have it fixed so good you're not going to have to vote." Unless such sentiments are blunted in the years to come, democracy in the United States faces an uncertain future

Krishnan Srinivasan is a former Foreign Secretary. Views are personal.

LETTERBOX

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There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.
COLIN POWELL

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BOOKS: REVIEW

Jalil's curated gems explore contemporary Urdu narratives

Urdu: The Best Stories of Our Times, edited and translated by Rakhshanda Jalil, offers a rich anthology of contemporary Urdu fiction, capturing a diverse range of themes and tones. Jalil, in her comprehensive introduction, emphasizes her intention to spotlight modern writers, specifically from the 1990s, thus consciously omitting stalwarts like Manto, Chughtai, Rajinder Singh Bedi, and Krishan Chander. This deliberate focus on contemporary voices underscores the vibrant and evolving nature of Urdu literature today.

Jalil's anthology challenges the stereotypical associations of Urdu fiction with Muslim culture, Sufism, or romanticism. Instead, the collection of 14 stories presents a multifaceted view of life, touching upon issues faced by marginalized communities, the unpredictability of public transportation, the mystical allure of ancient manuscripts, and even surreal post-modern worlds. Through these

diverse narratives, readers are invited into landscapes of fear, longing, greed, violence, and oppression, reflecting the complexities of human survival in an unequal world.

The anthology opens with Suren-dra Prakash's Scarecrow, a poignant story that revisits Hori, the protagonist from Premchand's Godan, portraying the exploitation of hardworking individuals by the very systems they trust. Qurratulain Hyder's The Halfway View unfolds a three-sided love story through the perspective of a maid, ending with a surprising revelation. Stories like Suffocation by Khurshid Akram and The Halted Train by Abdus Samad use the confined spaces of an overcrowded bus and a stalled train to explore how people's behaviors shift under duress.

Communal tensions, a recurring theme, are depicted with fresh perspectives in many stories. In The Vultures of Doongerwadi, Ali Imam Naqvi narrates the perplexity of corpse bearers at the Parsi Tower of

Silence over the absence of vultures, drawing a parallel to the urban decay and societal indifference. Ghazanfar's Circumcision of Khalid portrays a boy's fear of being asked to prove his identity during communal riots, highlighting the pervasive sense of insecurity. Anwar Qamar's What Happened on the Ship tells of people hiding in a ship's cargo hold to escape violence, and Tariq Ansari's The Line shows how communal lines disrupt shared traditions and celebrations.

The stories in this anthology are not only reflective of the socio-political environment but also delve into the psychological impacts of these external conflicts. For instance, Hyder's The Halfway View not only presents a love triangle but also subtly comments on the complexities of human relationships in a rapidly changing world. Similarly, Prakash's Scarecrow is not just about exploitation but also about the resilience of the human spirit in the face of systemic failures. Jalil's editorial choice to focus on



Urdu: The Best Stories of Our Times Edited by Rakhshanda Jalil; Harper Perennial; 200 pages; Rs 399.

contemporary writers brings forward the voices that resonate with today's readers, making the anthology highly relevant. Her translations maintain the essence and cultural nuances of the original Urdu texts, ensuring that the stories retain their authenticity. By doing so, Jalil opens up the rich world of Urdu literature to a global audience, fostering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

Jalil asserts that her collection does not claim to represent the best of Urdu fiction but aims to offer a fair sampling of significant voices in modern Urdu literature. This selection provides nuanced perspectives, showcasing the language's plurality in addressing varied issues across different settings.

The strength of Urdu: The Best Stories of Our Times lies in its abil-

ity to present contemporary Urdu fiction as a living, breathing entity that is deeply engaged with the socio-political and cultural realities of our times. Each story, while distinct in its narrative style and thematic focus, collectively paints a broad canvas of the human condition, making the anthology a significant contribution to the understanding and appreciation of modern Urdu literature. Jalil's careful curation and insightful translations ensure that the essence and richness of these stories are accessible to a broader audience, fostering a deeper appreciation of the language and its literary heritage.

For readers unfamiliar with Urdu literature, this anthology serves as an excellent entry point, offering a glimpse into the diversity and depth of contemporary Urdu storytelling. For those already acquainted with the language, it provides a refreshing perspective on modern themes and issues, reaffirming the enduring relevance and adaptability of Urdu fiction. In conclusion, Urdu: The Best Stories of Our Times is a compelling collection that captures the essence of contemporary Urdu literature, making it a must-read for literary enthusiasts and casual readers alike.

Indian investors are increasingly trusting mutual funds: Ananth Narayan Gopalakrishnan, Whole Time Member of SEBI

NEW DELHI: At the ASSO-CHAM 16th Mutual Fund Summit, Chief Guest Ananth Narayan Gopalakrishnan, Whole Time Member, Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said, amidst stable macroeconomic conditions and robust corporate earnings, the financial landscape in India has witnessed a significant shift, with more individuals channeling their savings towards risk capital formation. The mutual fund ecosystem has played a crucial role in this transformation, stepping up remarkably to earn the trust of Indian investors.

This is evident from the impressive growth in unique mutual fund investors, reflecting a compounded annual growth rate of 18% during this period. The digitization of services and user-friendly access have further accel-



erated this trend, laying a strong foundation for sustained growth. He added "Over the past three years, key benchmarks, including the Sensex, have delivered a commendable compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14%, with an annualized realized volatility of just 14.3%. Compared to global markets, this performance stands out for its higher returns and

lower volatility.

By unlocking the potential of investment opportunities in India for the goal of Viksit Bharat, He shed light on increasing the number of investor advisors in the country, focus should be on expanding the network of distributors and enhancing the role of the mutual fund industry, which has delivered remarkably

as a flagship of the securities market. Mutual fund members have gained the trust of investors through initiatives like light regulations, reduced compliance, and fostering innovation. As a responsible partner in capital formation, the mutual fund industry is committed to furthering financial inclusion, raising awareness of higher risks, and streamlining structures to increase efficiency. By ensuring that funds are passed on the day of settlement, we are reinforcing our role in market development and regulatory advancement", he added.

The primary regulatory change that has occurred in the past year is the democratization of access to information, according to Sundararaman Ramamurthy, Managing Director & CEO of BSE Ltd.

MSMEs vital for India's goal to become 3rd-Largest Economy: Gujarat CM

GANDHINAGAR: Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel emphasised the crucial role of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in India's ambition to become the world's third-largest economy.

Speaking at the launch of the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC) MSME Centre of Excellence in Ahmedabad on Thursday, Patel underscored the importance of these enterprises in the nation's economic growth.

"The IACC-MSME Centre of Excellence will serve as a bridge between MSMEs in Gujarat and American companies," Patel stated, pledging the state government's support as a facilitator for MSME growth.

He highlighted Gujarat's economic significance, noting that despite occupying only 5 per cent of India's landmass, the



IACC National President Pankaj Bohra outlined the challenges faced by Indian MSMEs in accessing the U.S. market, including lack of capacity, awareness of good manufacturing practices, quality certification requirements, and export documentation.

He explained that the new Centre of Excellence in Ahmedabad aims to address these issues through training, market information dissemination, and buyer meets.

The IACC, a bilateral chamber of commerce promoting India-U.S. trade, operates 14 offices across India and collaborates with 38 partner organisations in the U.S.

The chamber has been instrumental in fostering bilateral trade, which reached USD 200 billion last year.

PhonePe launches pre-approved term life insurance



NEWDELHI: PhonePe on Friday announced the launch of a 'pre-approved term life insurance' feature on its platform.

The feature aims to make insurance coverage more accessible and affordable for millions of Indians by waiving the requirement for proof of income at the time of policy purchase. With this launch, PhonePe ushers a new era of financial inclusion in India by making insurance products inclusive with the added advantage of quick and convenient access to life insurance coverage, without requiring extensive income verification.

The company has partnered with leading insurers to enable this feature on its platform. This partnership also supports insurance providers to now serve more users, specifically over 30 million individuals, who previously could not avail of term insurance due to the lack of income proof. Millions of PhonePe users including merchants, self-employed individuals, gig workers, and many more user groups who don't have formal proof of salary or income, can now avail of term insurance products seamlessly on the PhonePe platform. In fact, the company is focused on scaling up this offer tremendously and expanding its reach to make it accessible to up to 50 million users by later this year.

"We are excited to announce the launch of the 'pre-approved sum assured (PASA)' feature on our platform. This launch is aimed at bringing the previously underserved customers into the term life insurance net by making the products more accessible and affordable to Indians across various socio-economic strata," said Vishal Gupta, CEO at PhonePe Insurance Broking Services. "By partnering with industry leaders and collaborating with them deeply we are able to simplify user experience and deliver tailor-made offerings that are industry-leading and solving for specific cohorts in an inclusive manner. Our mission is to drive insurance adoption in the country by making the insurance buying process simple, easy, and affordable for all," Gupta added.

Handicraft industry witnessed boom after 'Bunkar Sewa Kendra' was set up in Panipat in 1975



SATISH HANDA
Panipat

Prior to independence in 1947 there was no handicraft industry in the country and people used to manufacture few handicraft products manually on 'Khaddis', but afterwards this industry witnessed drastic boom in 'Textile City' Panipat after 1975 when handloom products manufactured in the town earned name and fame not only in the country as well as across the world. Information reveals, there are more than 31,050 units in 'Textile City' manufacturing textile products, blankets, carpets, bed sheets and other handicraft products by nearly 15,350 workers involved in this business with a strength of nearly 15,700 exporters.

Government plans to introduce online mechanism to handle grievances related to inflated airfare

Making airfare affordable top priority for government, says Aviation Minister while moving Bhartiya Vayuyan Vidheyak Bill, 2024, for passage in Lok Sabha

New Delhi: Amid complaints over inflated airfare, Union Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram-mohan Naidu on Friday said the government was planning to introduce an online mechanism to address grievances to ensure passengers were not exploited by unnecessary fare hikes.

Moving the Bhartiya Vayuyan Vidheyak Bill, 2024, for passage in the Lok Sabha, Naidu explained that airfare was in-



fluenced by a variety of factors, including market demand, that were beyond the airlines merely setting their own prices. "We must ensure that the airlines are not under so much pressure that

they cannot operate. So a balanced approach is needed," he said. The minister emphasised the importance of a regulatory environment that prevented exploitation while ensuring that the airlines remained financially viable.

He assured the Lower House that making airfare affordable was a top priority for the government. "One of my top priorities is to make airfare affordable for the common man," he said, drawing attention to the significant shift in India's civil aviation sector since 2014.

He contrasted the situation

before and after 2014, saying, "Until 2014, civil aviation was like 'civilised aviation' but after Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it is considered 'civilian aviation', which reflects our commitment."

In response to the issue of rising airfare, the minister announced plans to establish an online grievance redress mechanism.

"We are considering setting up an online mechanism to handle grievances, with a dedicated team, to ensure passengers are not exploited by unnecessary airfare hikes," he said.

Trent Q1 net profit more than doubles to Rs 393 crore

NEWDELHI: Fashion major Trent Ltd on Friday reported a 126 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 392.6 crore for the April-June quarter of the current financial year, from Rs 173.48 crore in the same quarter of the previous financial year.

The revenue from operations for the Tata Group company came in at Rs 4,104.4 crore, up 56 per cent from Rs 2,628.37 crore in the same quarter last year, the company said in a regulatory filing.



The company's EBIDTA margin rose to 14.91 per cent during the quarter compared to 13.93 per cent in the year-ago period.

Noel Tata, Chairman, Trent Limited is upbeat about the

company's outlook.

"The market opportunity associated with building brands and a pure play direct-to-customer business like ours is immense," he remarked.

"The overall market sentiment remains subdued with increased competitive intensity. On our part, we continue to witness encouraging traction for our lifestyle offerings across brands, concepts, categories and channels. Focus on delivering consistent and improved value propositions to keep us

relevant for our customers," he added.

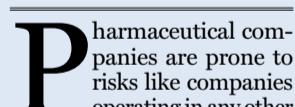
Trent opened 25 new stores during the first quarter. As part of the Tata group, Trent's flagship concept, Westside offers branded fashion apparel, footwear and accessories for women, men and children, along with a range of home furnishings & decor.

With a presence in 178 cities, the company's business has spread across 228 Westside stores, 559 Zudio and 36 stores across other lifestyle concepts.

Risk Management and Pharmaceutical Companies in India



DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH



WAGH SAURABH RAJENDRA

Pharmaceutical companies are prone to risks like companies operating in any other sector. To deal with these risks, pharma companies put in place their risk mitigation strategies. Pharmaceutical sector is highly regulated at each stage of value chain. Further, pharmaceutical companies operate in different geographies, each having its own regulatory landscape, continuously evolving, changing, and undergoing increased scrutiny from the regulators. Any non-compliance with regulations or scrutiny processes can dilute the financial position or jeopardize that company's reputation. Top 20 pharmaceutical companies reported compliance with cGMP regulation. In June 2024, the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) revealed that the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) had conducted risk-based inspections of more than 400 pharmaceutical manufacturing units over the past year and a half. Further, he said that he was not very happy to say that more than 36% of them had to be closed because these MSMEs cannot meet the expectations of the regulators.

Top pharmaceutical companies reported about integration of 'Quality by Design (QbD)' to build quality into all processes and use of quality tools to minimize process risks. Other regulatory compliance risk mitigation measures include 'building a robust quality culture', 'robust compliance management sys-

tem', 'independent assessments and audits', 'product life cycle management and timely recalls', 'engaging consulting firms to establish, train and constantly monitor Quality Culture Excellence', to name a few.

To deal with credit risks, pharma companies ensure 'credit approvals', 'establish a credit policy', 'establish credit limits', 'monitor the creditworthiness of counterparty', and 'expected credit loss model' for assessing the impairment loss. To deal with liquidity risk, these companies have 'prudent liquidity risk management', 'monitoring of rolling forecasts of the company's liquidity position and cash and cash equivalents', 'cash flow forecasting models', and development of a 'robust cash management system'. To deal with 'foreign exchange risk', pharma companies opt for foreign exchange forward contracts, Option contracts, or Currency swap contracts. To mitigate 'interest rate risk', pharma companies opt for interest rate swaps, diversification of portfolio and review the interest rate gap statement and the mix of floating and fixed rate assets and liabilities.

To mitigate cyber-security risk, top pharmaceutical companies in India have implemented perimeter security, anti-virus, patch management, firewalls, encryption and cyber training. In certain companies, their internal team is regularly performing Vulnerability Assessment and Penetration Testing (VAPT), e.g., Divi's Labs and Torrent Pharma reported about their team. Further, this is also reviewed by external consultants. Pharmaceutical companies also establish a robust Information Security Management System Framework, e.g., Lupin reported that their system is ISO/IEC 27001:2013 certified.

Pricing and Competition Risk

remains a concern for pharmaceutical companies. Pharmaceutical product pricing for existing portfolios and new launches is subject to price controls as prices for 928 formulations have been fixed by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) in India till date. Adverse pricing regulations of essential pharma products may adversely impact pharmaceutical companies' revenue flow and earnings. Some top Indian pharmaceutical companies get significant revenue from the US and Europe market, e.g., selling specialty products in the USA and Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) region exposed Lupin to downward pricing risks due to government efforts to reduce prescription drug prices. In Integrated Annual Report 2023-24, Lupin highlighted that the pharmaceutical market in EMEA with an estimated value of US \$363 Bn, accounts for 25 per cent of the global market, and Lupin's sales in the EMEA region constitute 10 per cent of the company's global sales. To mitigate Pricing & Competition Risk, pharma companies focus on establishing a robust and diversified product portfolio, strengthen in-licensing and out-licensing of products, cost reduction, efficiency improvement, expansion of volumes of existing products and launch of new products. Pharmaceutical companies also resort to launch team of innovative, differentiated, and value-accrative products for which better pricing can be secured. This risk has been cited by 13 out of 20 top pharmaceutical companies as critical threats to their business viability and expansion prospects.

Supply Chain Risk in pharmaceutical sector is dual-fold risk that involves securing the supply of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) and critical materials for products and



ensuring a consistent supply of final products to domestic as well as global customers. For FY2022-23, 16 out of 20 leading pharmaceutical companies reported supply chain disruptions as a paramount risk impacting their operations worldwide. Companies like Zydus Lifesciences, Sun Pharma, Aurobindo Pharma are encouraging local sourcing which in turn improves supply chain resilience, limits various risks, including currency risk and reduces supply timelines. Cipla has 360-degree vendor reviews. Mankind Pharma has reported about inbound and outbound automation of warehouses using scanning technology, implementation of Vendor-Managed Inventory (VMI) systems, automation in product expiry management at points of sale and the adoption of digital demand planning and forecasting tools. Lupin has focused on forward and backward integration to reduce dependence on distributors and API suppliers, and 30% of its API requirements are fulfilled through its own API manufacturing sites.

Pharmaceutical companies are susceptible to many legal challenges such as breach of contract disputes, product recalls, product liability claims, regulatory investigations, Para IV litigations, among others. To mitigate these risks, lead-

ing pharma companies conduct patent searches, monitor patent expiry dates, and assess validity and enforceability. Mankind Pharma has reported about conducting comprehensive due diligence prior to entering into any agreements to deal with contract related risks. Zydus Lifesciences has a 'Global Product Liability Insurance' as a safeguard against potential claims regarding the quality of products.

Pharmaceutical Product Development Lifecycle is characterized by risks such as costly upfront investment in R&D, potential patent litigation, clinical trial delays, delays in regulatory reviews and approvals, etc. To mitigate R&D risks, pharmaceutical companies put in place robust project management to identify schedule slippages and prioritize timely de-risking interventions. A targeted approach is being adopted in specialized fields, as exemplified by Lupin's concentrated efforts in the domain of inhalation and injectable solutions. Lupin implemented Integrated Business Planning in FY23 to identify the product portfolio well in time, and to work towards 'First to Launch' / 'First to File' alongwith higher Return on Investment (ROI). Torrent Pharma seeks suitable alliances with partners at appropriate stages to share the risks and rewards of the project, while continuing to develop NCEs

for India.

Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) is taken into account by stakeholders while evaluating companies. Pharmaceutical companies are increasing use of renewable energy, improving processing of solid waste to avoid incineration/landfill disposal, opting for rainwater harvesting and water recycling, following principle of the RT (reduce, reuse, recover, recycle, and rethink) for managing natural resources, etc. Certain pharmaceutical companies have designed a multi-pronged strategy, e.g. Torrent Pharma has designed the strategy with four core pillars namely 'Responsible Consumption', 'Responsible Practices', 'Responsible Communication', and 'Responsible Supply Chain'.

9 out of 20 top leading pharma companies have identified Quality Risk as a major risk that entails failure to comply with Good Laboratory Practices (GLP), cGMP etc. Risk Mitigation strategy includes adherence to global cGMP guidelines, quality standards, and SOPs, robust Quality Management Systems, Corrective and Preventive Action (CAPA), integration of Quality by Design (QbD) to build quality into all processes and use quality tools to minimize process risks, Quality Audit, among others. Piramal Pharma highlighted that the company is moving from 'quality for compliance' to 'quality as a culture', and the company has a dedicated team of Corporate Quality Assurance Group.

Commodity Risk has also been mentioned as a significant risk by 6 out of 20 companies as this risk arises from the company's purchases and sales of APIs, including raw material components for such APIs. Effective risk management strategy can safeguard a pharmaceutical company against the

volatility of commodity prices, which has been exacerbated by factors such as supply chain disruptions as happened during Covid, inflation, geopolitical tensions. To mitigate this risk, pharmaceutical companies develop robust sourcing policies, streamline their product portfolios, and renegotiate procurement contracts to secure more favourable terms.

One-fifth of top 20 leading companies have acknowledged Manufacturing Risk that can significantly affect their operational capabilities, e.g., Alkem Laboratories mentioned it a major risk as mostly domestic production is done at their Sikkim facility; any disruption in production or supply chain due to natural or manmade causes may directly affect earnings. To mitigate this risk, Alkem is looking to set up alternative in-house manufacturing facilities and forge contract manufacturing partnerships. Piramal Pharma assesses the quality of current preventive maintenance and generates a five-year plan for maintenance/replacement, with appropriate prioritization that is based on risk/impact.

People Risk or Talent Management is not merely about risk avoidance; it is about creating an environment where talent thrives, propelling the business forward in a highly competitive and regulated industry. 30% firms among top 20 leading firms reported it as a significant factor. Pharmaceutical Companies initiate targeted recruitment and retention for strategic businesses, geographies, and functions. Undertaking employee surveys, performing engagement and team building initiatives, evaluation of individual performance through Performance Management System (PMS), strategic tie-ups with reputed institutions for enabling company to attract

skilled talent, Leadership Development Programmes, Rewards and Recognition are key components of mitigation strategy for this risk.

25% of the leading 20 pharmaceutical companies reported Pharmacovigilance (PV) Risk as a major risk that includes adverse drug reactions (ADRs), unexpected side effects, drug interactions and medication errors. Leading pharmaceutical companies employ centralized PV processes, global PV programme, ensure adherence to the International Council for Harmonization of Technical Requirements of Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH) guidelines on PV, and maintain dedicated portals for reporting adverse events.

Finally, Ethical Conduct has been mentioned by leading pharma companies as a key risk for the industry. Ethical Issues include employee behavior, bribery, corruption, and fair dealings with all stakeholders. Certain pharmaceutical companies comprehensively define layers of preventive and detective controls to ensure compliance with laid down processes and applicable regulations, harness risk analytics to automate and identify areas of non-compliance, fraud and business waste, conduct annual e-training that embeds the Code of Conduct, among other initiatives.

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RBI hikes limit for tax payments via UPI from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh

RBI is also making a provision for the introduction of 'Delegated Payments' through UPI which will enable a secondary user to make payments using UPI by making use of the bank account of the primary user

NEW DELHI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to enhance the limit for tax payments through Unified Payments Interface (UPI) from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh per transaction, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das announced on Thursday.

"UPI has become the most preferred mode of payment, due to its seamless features. Currently, the transaction limit for UPI is capped at Rs 1 lakh. Based on the various use cases, RBI has periodically reviewed and enhanced the limits for a few categories like capital



markets, IPO subscriptions, loan collections, insurance, medical and educational services, etc.," Das said.

"As direct and indirect tax payments are common, regular and high value, it has been decided to enhance the limit for tax payments through UPI from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh per transaction. Necessary instructions will be issued separately," he added.

RBI is also making a provi-

"It is proposed to introduce 'Delegated Payments' in UPI. Delegated Payments would allow an individual (primary user) to set a UPI transaction limit for another individual (secondary user) on the primary user's bank account. This product is expected to add to the reach and usage of digital payments across the country. Detailed instructions will be issued shortly," he added.

UPI has been a key driver in India's digital payment ecosystem, experiencing a 10-fold increase in transaction volume over the past four years, according to the RBI report on Currency and Finance 2023-24. The volume of UPI transactions skyrocketed from 12.5 billion in 2019-20 to 131 billion in 2023-24, now accounting for 80 per cent of all digital payment volumes in the country.

Price, financial stability are at the core of RBI monetary policy: ASSOCHAM

NEW DELHI: Decision of the RBI-Monetary Policy Committee to keep the benchmark REPO rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent has come about in the wake of robust GDP prospects of 7.2 per cent in FY25 providing an elbow room to the central bank to continue with its focus on moderating inflation for a resilient and sustained economic growth, ASSOCHAM has said.

"The message in the RBI monetary policy is to keep price stability at the top of its priority list with an objective of a sustained economic growth. We see convergence in these two objectives even as there is an expectation of change in stance towards 'accommodation' in the next one or two policy reviews," ASSOCHAM Secretary General Deepak Sood said.

He shared RBI's optimism on retaining the GDP growth projections at 7.2 per cent for the current fiscal and assessment that food inflation should moderate with improved sowing of Kharif crops.

Sood further said, "The RBI policy statement reflects resilience of the Indian economy in



the face of multitude of global headwinds including volatile financial markets, slowdown in major economies and geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. A nimble policy response by RBI and the government have provided strength to the Indian economy". He said moderation of inflation and financial stability are the twin tracks which are welcome features of the monetary policy review.

The chamber welcomed several other measures announced by the RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das. Enhancing the UPI tax payment limit from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh is a step forward in the direction of easy tax administration while the proposal for 'delegated UPI payment' would prove to be useful for senior citizens.

Top Payment Companies Eye RBI's E-Rupee Pilot, Including Googlepay And Amazonpay

NEWDELHI: Five prominent payment companies, including GooglePay, Walmart-backed PhonePe, and AmazonPay, have applied to participate in the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) digital currency pilot program, according to sources close to the matter.

The initiative aims to facilitate transactions using the e-rupee, India's digital alternative to physical currency, reported ET.

The RBI launched the e-rupee pilot in December 2022, initially limiting participation to banks. However, in April, the central bank expanded eligibility to include payment firms, subject to RBI approval. Indian fintech companies Cred and Mobikwik have also submitted applications to join the pilot.

These payment firms are collaborating closely with the RBI and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), the country's domestic payments authority. Sources indicate that access to e-rupee transactions through these platforms could be rolled out within the next three to four months.

The move comes as the e-rupee faces challenges in gaining widespread adoption, mirror-

Minimum account balance rules not applicable to PM Jan Dhan & saving accounts: Nirmala Sitharaman



NEW DELHI: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said that minimum account balance rules do not apply to PM Jan Dhan and basic saving accounts.

"Minimum account balance rule does not apply to PM Jan Dhan accounts and basic savings accounts. It applies only to those bank accounts where customers are required to maintain a certain minimum balance in their accounts," the Finance Minister said in response to a question

in Rajya Sabha on the penalty of Rs 8,500 crore collected by public sector banks in the last five years for non-maintenance of minimum balance in bank accounts by customers.

The government banks that charged fines for not maintaining minimum balance include Punjab National Bank, Bank of Baroda, Bank of India, Punjab and Sind Bank, Union Bank of India Bank, UCO Bank, Indian Bank, Canara Bank, Bank of Maharashtra and Central Bank of India.

Credit card spendings via UPI platform touch new high

Minister of State (MoS) for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary had told the Lok Sabha last month that public sector banks have collected a fine of Rs 2,331 crore in FY24 for not maintaining minimum balance. "This amount was 25 per cent more than the amount from last year," the MoS said.

In the financial year 2023-24, a penalty of Rs 633 crore was collected by Punjab National Bank, Rs 386 crore by Bank of Baroda and Rs 369 crore by Indian Bank for non-maintenance of minimum balance. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (Jan Dhan or PM-JDY), the Union government's financial inclusion plan, envisages at least one basic banking account per household, improved financial literacy, and access to credit, insurance, and pension facilities.

Launched in 2014, PMJDY accounts are now about 23 per cent of India's total savings accounts by number.

MUMBAI: The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) platform, a flagship of the Indian Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) which has gone global, has added another feather to its cap.

According to Dilip Asbe, Managing Director and CEO of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), credit card spendings via UPI has touched Rs 10,000 crore a month.

The NPCI CEO also informed that credit lines on UPI account has reached about Rs 100-Rs 200 crore, as the remainder comes from the RuPay credit card on UPI facility.

According to him, ICICI Bank is one of the leading banks offering credit on UPI, with other five to six lenders live on the platform.

NPCI launched "credit line on UPI" last year, offering low-ticket, high-volume retail loans to people and businesses.

Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Indian Bank, Punjab National Bank (PNB), and State Bank of India (SBI) are live with this facility.

Among the digital platforms, BHIM, Google Pay, Paytm, PayZapp, Navi, and Tata Neu are live on this product offering.

RuPay Credit Cards on UPI provide a seamless, digitally enabled credit card lifecycle experience for the customers. Currently, as many as 16 banks are facilitating this product.

Meanwhile, the UPI-based transactions touched Rs 20.64 lakh crore in July against Rs 20.07 lakh crore in the previous month - a huge 35 per cent surge (year-on-year). The total UPI transaction count went up almost 4 per cent (month-on-month) to 14.44 billion in July from 13.89 billion in the previous month.

As the UPI success story is being adopted by several countries, the average daily transaction volume stood at 466 million last month, compared with 463 million in June.

Indian economy likely to grow at 7-7.2 per cent in FY25, says Deloitte



NEW DELHI: India's economy is expected to grow at 7-7.2 per cent in the current fiscal year driven by robust economic fundamentals and continuity in domestic policy reforms, Deloitte India said on Monday.

The August update of Deloitte's India Economic Outlook said several initiatives in the Union Budget 2024-25 toward improving agriculture productivity, creating jobs for the youth, and in manufacturing and addressing the challenge of access to finance for micro, small, and medium enterprises, would help improve supply-side demand, curb inflation, and prop up consumer spending, especially in rural areas.

Deloitte India Economist Rumki Majumdar said, India would witness robust growth in the second half after a period of uncertainty in the first six months of the year.

No need to be panic, Indian Stock Market remain strong & resilient



SATISH SINGH

On August 5, 2024, the fear of recession in US caused panic in stock markets around the world. The biggest decline of 12.40 percent was recorded in Japan's Nikkei, the leading share market of Asia, while Korea's Kospi recorded a decline of 8.77 percent.

The US stock market Nasdaq recorded the biggest decline of 4.95 percent, while in the Europe, Germany's stock market, Dax recorded the biggest decline of 2.34 percent. At the same time, the Sensex in the Indian stock market closed at 78,759 with a decline of 2,222 points, 2.74 percent, while the Nifty recorded a decline of 662 points, 2.68 percent and closed at 24,055.

In the Indian stock market, metal, government bank stocks particularly State Bank of India and media stocks fell by more than 4 percent, while auto, IT, and oil and gas stocks fell by more than 3 percent. Investors who invested in Tata Motors, Adani Port, Tata Steel and Power Grid stocks suffered the biggest losses.

There are many reasons for the panic in the stock market, but the most important reason among them is the fear of recession in US. The likelihood of war between Iran and Israel, geopolitical crises such as the war between Russia and Ukraine continuing for a long time, constant uncertainty in the global market, etc. also caused the world's big investors to start selling, which caused panic in the



stock markets of many countries of the world.

Except India, many developed countries of the world are struggling with the problem of inflation since the Corona pandemic and some countries are in a state of recession, while some countries are fearing recession. US is also one of them among such countries.

The most important reason for the biggest decline in Japan's Nikkei stock market is the Bank of Japan raising the interest rate from 0.1 percent to 0.25 percent, which is the highest level in 15 years. At the same time, the valuation of shares in the mid and small-cap segment in the Indian stock market is very high. Therefore, a fall in this segment clearly means that a phase of correction is going on in this segment. Also, the rupee is weak.

This is the second biggest fall in the Indian stock market in 2024. Earlier on June 4, the Sensex had fallen by 5.74 percent. Investors have suffered a loss of Rs.16.00 lakh crore due to selling in the stock market, due to which the overall market cap of the companies listed

on the Sensex came down to Rs.441 lakh crore on August 5.

Since, in the past months, there has been a huge reduction in the number of foreign investors and the amount of investment in the Indian stock market. Therefore, the prospect of recession in US or the continuation of the slowdown in the world or the apprehension of downturn in some countries will not have much impact on the Indian stock market.

The position of the stock market in India continues to remain strong on the strength of domestic investors. In 2024, domestic investors have invested more than Rs.2.28 lakh crore in the stock market. Not only this, domestic investors have played an important role in taking the Sensex from 75,000 to 80,000. Companies like Reliance, Mahindra & Mahindra, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India and HDFC Bank have also played an important role in taking the Sensex from 70,000 to 80,000.

Talking about sectors, banking, BSE Power, BSE Realty, Auto, Telecom etc. have helped in maintaining the boom in the shares. Apart

from Sensex, Nifty 50 is also continuously showing an upward trend. In the coming days, it may touch the level of 26,000 to 27,000 and by the end of this year, it may close at the level of 30,000.

Hon'ble Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman has again become the Finance Minister. Therefore, it is expected that the government will continue its old policy towards the banking and economic sector, as the earlier policies of the government have helped in strengthening the Indian economy and accelerating the pace of development.

India is continuously moving forward on the development front. The GDP growth rate in the fourth quarter of the financial year 2023-2024 was 7.8, while it was 6.1 percent in the same quarter last year. At the same time, the GDP growth rate in the financial year 2023-24 was 8.2 percent, which is 1.2 percent more than the estimate of the Reserve Bank of India. According to the Ministry of Statistics, the growth rate remained high in the period under review due to strong performance in the manufacturing and mining sectors. The manufacturing sector has grown by 9.9 percent, which was minus 2.2 percent in the financial year 2022-23. Similarly, the mining sector grew at a rate of 7.1 percent during the financial year 2023-24, which was 1.9 percent in the financial year 2022-23.

According to the National Statistical Office, retail inflation in June rose by 0.33 percent to 5.08 percent as compared to May, while in May it was 4.75 percent, which was

the lowest level in 12 months. There was some reduction in retail inflation in the month of April, but it was slightly higher than May at 4.83 percent. Retail inflation was 4.81 percent in June 2023, while it was 4.44 percent in July 2023. The central bank is very sensitive about inflation and it wants to keep the economy strong by maintaining a balance between inflation and growth rate.

Here, despite the lending interest rate remaining at a high level for the last few months, loan disbursement is increasing, because the banking sector remains strong, which is giving strength to development. In such an environment, it is natural for Sensex and Nifty to remain bullish. In the short term, the Indian stock market has plunged due to concerns arising from global economic activities, but there is little chance of such a situation being repeated.

Nevertheless, big investors who buy and sell shares every day need to keep a close eye on the domestic and foreign markets and global movements. The stock market is a kind of casino and those who always dream of becoming rich with the help of this platform need to be cautious. Otherwise, the proverb "Saavdhani Hati, Durghatna Ghati" can come true at any time, but those investors who invest only in the shares of premium companies and always remain satisfied with low profit, need not worry at all.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad based Senior Columnist. Views are Personal



ing difficulties encountered by central banks worldwide in popularizing digital currencies. After an initial surge, e-rupee transactions have reportedly declined from over 1 million per day late last year to approximately 100,000-200,000 daily transactions. Industry experts suggest that integrating popular payment platforms could significantly boost e-rupee usage by expanding its user base.

The five companies seeking to join the pilot collectively account for over 85 per cent of digital payments via India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which processes an average of 13 billion transactions monthly.

Despite efforts to increase e-rupee adoption, sources indicate that the RBI does not have immediate plans for a full-scale launch of the digital currency.

The e-rupee is expected to remain in the pilot stage for at least the next couple of years as the central bank continues to re-

fine and evaluate its implementation. The RBI and NPCI have not provided official comments on these developments, and the companies involved have declined to respond to inquiries.

This expansion of the e-rupee pilot program represents a significant step in India's exploration of central bank digital currencies, as the country seeks to balance innovation in financial technology with regulatory oversight and monetary policy objectives.

DFS Secretary calls on Fintechs to Aid in Developing Credit Assessment Model for MSMEs

NEW DELHI: Vivek Joshi, Secretary, Department of Financial Services (DFS), has called upon fintech companies to assist public sector banks (PSBs) in creating a new credit assessment model for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) based on their digital footprints.

Speaking at a fintech conference organised by the industry body FICCI, Joshi emphasised the need for innovative approaches to credit evaluation that go beyond traditional reliance on balance sheets and returns.

In the FY25 Budget, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had urged PSBs to lead in developing this novel credit assessment model.

The proposed model would focus on the digital activities of MSMEs, especially micro and nano enterprises, rather than conventional asset or turnover



Secretary Vivek Joshi, Department of Financial Services (DFS)

criteria.

Sitharaman highlighted that this approach would be a significant improvement, particularly for MSMEs lacking a formal accounting system.

Joshi underscored the pivotal role fintech companies can play in enhancing banks' digital lending capabilities. "I urge fintechs to collaborate with banks in creating and implementing this credit assessment model," he said.

He pointed out that fintechs have transformed the financial sector with innovative solutions and should work closely with banks to understand and address their specific chal-

Armed robbers loot Rs 21 lakh from PNB Bank in Bihar

PATNA: Seven unidentified armed robbers looted Rs 21 lakh from a Punjab National Bank (PNB) branch in Patna's outskirts village on Monday.

The police said that the robbers arrived on bikes in Jamui Koraiya village, under the jurisdiction of Dulhnbazar police station in the district and committed the crime. In a daring daylight robbery, armed criminals entered a branch of Punjab National Bank, taking employees and customers hostage at gunpoint. They looted approximately Rs 21 lakh. The robbery took place just a few hours after the bank opened on Monday.

The district police are currently investigating the incident. The criminals also took away the Digital Video Recorder (DVR) of the bank's CCTV system, which



Exterior view of a Punjab National Bank branch in Patna.

will likely hinder the investigation. Patna West City SP Abhinav Dhiman said that about Rs 21 lakh was looted from the PNB branch, adding that authorities are working diligently to track down the perpetrators and recover the looted money.

He said that the incident has prompted an extensive investigation, with authorities scanning CCTV footage from nearby shops and utilising a dog squad team to track down the perpetrators. "The bank manager has said that Rs 21 lakh were looted. Dur-

lenges. Addressing the issue of collaboration, Joshi noted that fintechs often develop solutions independently before approaching banks, which can lead to a mismatch in addressing the banking system's challenges.

"Since fintechs are not working closely with banks, they may have limited information about the challenges the banking system faces," he stated. He further explained, "Therefore, we should work towards having fintechs address problems identified by banks. Many banks have started empanelling startups for this purpose, and it would be highly beneficial to provide them with problems and seek tailored solutions."

Joshi also highlighted the importance of balancing innovation with regulatory compliance.

ing the robbery, the criminals also took away the DVR of the CCTV installed in the bank. We are scanning the CCTV cameras in the adjoining shops to find some clues about the robbers. The dog squad team has been informed, and further action is ongoing," Patna West City SP Abhinav Dhiman said.

In recent months, there has been a surge in crime incidents in Bihar and the opposition leaders are blaming the Nitish Kumar government for the failure of law and order in the state.

However, the state government claims that preventive measures are being taken to curb these incidents. Despite these claims, the rising crime rate remains a significant concern for the residents and authorities of Bihar.

INTERNATIONAL

Kamala Harris declines Trump's offer to shift presidential debate

WASHINGTON: Kamala Harris, the Democratic presidential nominee, has declined Donald Trump's suggestion to move the presidential debate to Fox News, media reports said.

Trump, 78, and President Joe Biden had agreed in May to two presidential debates. The first which was with CNN took place in June while a second one slated for September 10 was planned to be hosted by ABC News. But Biden dropped out in the previous month and therefore, Vice-President Harris is the declared presidential candidate for 2024 in the Democratic Party. The assessment was published before Saturday, when Trump said he had agreed to an offer by Fox News to debate Harris on September 4, in what would be a departure from the planned format if reported



by CBS News.

Trump said, "I have decided with Fox News to debate Kamala Harris on Wednesday, September 4. The previous debate that was supposed to be conducted with sleepy Joe Biden on the ABC channel is no longer possible. Bianchi is no longer a participant in a legal battle against the ABC Net-



work and George Slopapoulos, thus there is a conflict of interest." Consequently, Harris countered using platform X declined Trump's debate invitation on Fox News. "It's interesting how 'any time, any place' becomes 'one specific time, one specific safe space'. I'll be there on September 10, like he agreed to. I hope to see

him there," Harris said. The Harris campaign also offered an affirmation of their stand to adhere to the ABC News debate plan. They claimed that Trump was 'running scared' and required Fox News' help to avoid the scheduled debate with ABC News. "He needs to stop playing games and show up to the debate he already committed to on Sept. 10," the report quoted Michael Tyler, the Harris campaign communication director, as saying.

"The Vice President will be there one way or the other to take the opportunity to speak to a prime-time national audience," Tyler said, adding that the campaign is open to discussing further debates but only after the one both campaigns have already agreed to takes place.

Kamala Harris picks Governor Tim Walz as her running mate



WASHINGTON: US Vice-President Kamala Harris has picked Tim Walz, the Democratic Governor of Minnesota, as her running mate, according to multiple media reports.

Walz, 60 is a former schoolteacher, a military veteran, a member of the House of Representatives, two-term Governor and, in recent days, the man who coined the word "weird" to describe the Re-

publican nominee for President, former President Donald Trump and his running mate Senator JD Vance and their views that was quickly adopted by the Harris campaign and her allies.

Walz will make his first appearance along with Harris, who secured on Monday night, the official nomination of the Democratic party for President, at an election rally in Philadelphia later on Tuesday and then go with her on a tour of battleground states.

We must unite to prevent Afghanistan from again becoming 'terrorism hotbed': UN official

UNITED NATIONS: UN Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism Vladimir Voronkov has called on the Security Council members to unite to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a "hotbed of terrorism".

"We must unite to prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a hotbed of terrorism," Voronkov said on Thursday while warning about the danger of Islamic State group affiliate in that country launching attacks abroad.

He made the remarks while briefing the Security Council on Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' report on the threat from Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL).

Voronkov said that the terrorist group's Central Asian affiliate, ISIL-Khorasan, "has improved its financial and logistical capabilities in the past six months".

ISIL, which is also known as Da'esh from its Arabic acronym and as ISIS, is extending its reach by "tapping into Afghan and Central Asian diasporas for support", he said.

"The activity of Da'esh and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan remains a significant concern. We must unite to prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a hotbed of terrorism," he added.

Efforts by neighbouring countries "to counter and prevent the spread of the threat emanating from Afghanistan is very important", he said.

Da'esh was emerging as a greater threat in Africa where two of its affiliates have expanded and consolidated their areas of operations, Voronkov said.

"Should these groups extend their influence in northern littoral States, a vast territory stretching from Mali to northern Nigeria could fall under their effective control," he said.

Sierra Leone's Permanent



Representative Michael Imran Kanu, who presided over the meeting, said, "We share the concern of the Secretary-General (that) the risk that the continued expansion of terrorist groups will result in an expanding area of instability across West Africa."

He said that it was already in North West Nigeria.

Despite facing "leadership attrition and financial setbacks, Daesh and its affiliates have retained their capacity to conduct terrorist attacks and project threat beyond the areas of operation", he said.

Natalia Gherman, the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) said that a "one UN approach" of all the member nations and UN agencies and regional and sub-regional groups working together "is crucial in our common endeavours to effectively combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations".

While China has been providing an umbrella from sanctions for some Pakistan-based terrorists like Lashkar-e-Tayyiba leader Sajid Mir, its Permanent Representative Geng Shuang spoke out at the meeting against double standards.

He said, "All countries should uphold the concept of common security, abandon ideological bias, eradicate double standards or selectivity in counterterrorism efforts, and effectively respect and protect the security of each and every country."

Love & peace, not revenge, will rebuild our country: Khaleda Zia



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

In her first public speech since 2018, delivered via video link at the BNP rally in Nayapalton, 79-year-old Zia appealed for calm. She thanked people as they fought and prayed for her to be released from imprisonment, The Daily Star newspaper reported.

"I have been released now. I want to thank the brave people who were in a do-or-die struggle to make possible the impossible."

"Youths are our future... No destruction, no anger and no revenge, we need love and peace to rebuild our country," she said. Zia was sentenced to 17 years in prison for graft in 2018.

Simla agreement to be noted in settling Kashmir dispute: UN

UNITED NATIONS: The Simla Agreement of 1972 is also to be noted while finding a final settlement to the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN Charter, according to Farhan Haq, the deputy spokesperson for Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

He said, "Our position on Kashmir remains unchanged: That the final settlement of the dispute concerning Jammu and Kashmir is to be reached by peaceful means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and full respect for human rights." "The Secretary-General also recalls the 1972 agreement on bilateral relations between India and Pakistan, also known as the Simla Agreement," he added. The pact was reached



in Shimla between Indira Gandhi, then the prime Minister of India, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's president at that time, in the aftermath of the Bangladesh War of Independence.

The agreement between the two countries stipulated that

disputes between the neighbours, including over Kashmir, were bilateral issues to be resolved without the involvement of third parties. Haq was replying to a question at the daily UN briefing from a Palestinian journalist who alleged that the UN was silent

on the "atrocities committed for the past five years" since Article 370 of India's Constitution that gave Kashmir special status was abrogated on August 5, 2019.

UN's position "is governed by the Charter of the United Nations and applicable Security Council resolutions", Haq said.

Security Council Resolution 47 adopted on April 21, 1948, requires the Pakistani government "to secure the withdrawal from the State of Jammu and Kashmir of tribesmen and Pakistani nationals not normally resident therein who have entered the State for the purpose of fighting, and to prevent any intrusion into the State of such elements and any furnishing of material aid to those fighting in the State".

Holding 'around-the-clock' talks to prevent war in Middle east says President Biden

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden has held crisis talks on a potential Iranian counterattack on Israel as his administration said it was working around the clock

to avoid all-out war in the Middle East. Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken engaged in frantic diplomacy to try to ease tensions sparked by a suspected Israeli attack that killed Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, KLAX-TV reported. "We are engaged in intense diplomacy, pretty much around the clock, with a very simple message -- all parties must refrain from escalation," Blinken said after joining other top officials in a White House meeting.



Jamaat-e-Islami Hind appeals for peace and an end to violence in B'desh

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), Syed Sadatullah Husaini has expressed concern over the ongoing situation in Bangladesh and its far-reaching consequences for the region. The current unrest in Bangladesh is a direct result of the Shaikh Hasina government's dictatorial and draconian approach to governance. The elections in Bangladesh in January 2024 were marred by widespread allegations of unfair practices, leading to the entire opposition boycotting the electoral process. This un-

dermined the very foundation of democracy and eroded public trust in the political system. Additionally, the previous government's efforts to silence dissenting voices through vendetta politics were deeply troubling, with prominent opposition leaders being unjustly imprisoned which stifled the democratic discourse and in-



creased political tensions. The JIH President further stated, "The response of the Shaikh Hasina regime towards protesting students was excessively violent and repressive, akin to the measures used in warfare. Jamaat-e-Islami Hind calls upon the officials at the helm of affairs of Bangladesh to take immediate and decisive action to restore peace and form and interim Government immediately which have the trust of people.

Crucial UN talks to evolve mechanism on genetic resources

MONTREAL: Marking a potentially pivotal moment, more than 300 delegates will convene in Montreal, from August 12 to 16 to advance a 2022 global agreement to share fairly and equitably the multi-trillion dollar annual revenues and other benefits derived from uses of digital sequence information (DSI) on genetic resources, including the DNA of plants, animals, and microorganisms.



The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Benefit-sharing from the Use of DSI on Genetic Resources, established by the 196 nations to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), will work through

options for operationalising the multilateral mechanism, including a global fund. The multilateral mechanism and the associated global fund were adopted at COP15 as part of the historic Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), the world's master plan guiding biodiversity actions through 2030 towards achieving the vision of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050.

ARMY'S RENEWED ROLE

Muhammad Yunus Becomes the Face of the Hybrid Regime in Dacca

GOPAL MISRA
With the swearing-in of Muhammad Yunus, a noted economist and Nobel laureate, as the Chief Adviser, the decks have been cleared for a non-political consensus government in Bangladesh. The nomenclature of the chief advisor instead of appointing Yunus as the prime minister has been used to avoid political controversy regarding the veteran economist.

It is not known when the fresh polls in the country will take place, but the interim government having the blessings of the army chief General Waker-uz-Zaman, might continue till the supporters of the erstwhile government were finally subdued. The army has adopted the strategies being adopted in Pakistan, where the elections took place only after destroying Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI). His supporters have also been deprived of the PTI's symbol to contest elections. It means, the agenda of the new regime in Dacca would be crushing all political opinions having secular or progressive agenda.

The final takeover of the Islamists under the Army's patronage has not taken place suddenly. Earlier, the deposed Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, was cautioned regarding the political ambitions of Zaman, but she ignored the advice. She elevated him, her close relative, on June 23 this year, who within 40 days of his elevation physically chased out his mentor using disparate political

elements, including Jihadists and students. In the presence of the air force and navy chiefs, he ensured her farewell from the coveted office.

Zaman and his colleagues had scripted a foolproof strategy for the unceremonious removal of an elected prime minister without firing a single bullet. It is also quite intriguing how the issue of the reservation quota in jobs, which was already resolved by the Hasina Government, could cause massive countrywide protests among students. The issue became alive recently, when the beneficiaries of the reservation moved the Supreme Court. The apex court, however, allowed only a six percent quota for the weaker sections and the descendants of the Mukti Bahini, the irregulars who had finally ousted the Pakistani army from the then East Pakistan.

There is hardly any criticism of the end of democracy in the West. Instead, Hasina's removal is being described as the end of a dictator. Zaman is also being praised for ensuring Hasina's escape to India in a helicopter without any physical harm.

It is stated that before forcing Hasina to resign, Zaman had held the meeting of the army commanders on August three. He told them that Hasina's removal was necessary to prevent further chaos in the country. He, however, cunningly camouflaged his role in preventing the civil police in diffusing the situation based on a false narrative and propaganda, and got Yunus agreeing to become the face of the military sponsored regime.

The Resignation: Zaman was exposed when he announced the resignation of Hasina instead of the president of Bangladesh, Mohammad Shahabuddin. He, however, announced the dissolution of Parliament by conceding the demand of the agitating students.

Zaman-led the security establishment supported by Islamists have also been maligning Hasina by making selective leaks. Thus, before being finally evicted from the coveted office, she was maligned as a leader crushing her opponents as well as the agitating students opposed to the job reservation.

After her forceful undemocratic eviction, Zaman appears to have emerged as a political figure, who was holding meetings for restoring peace with the Islamists and supporters of the country's main Opposition, Bangladesh National Party.

A Prophetic Statement: A few weeks before her departure from Dacca, Hasina had been cautioning that a few foreign countries were keen to push her country towards political instability. These forces will be undoing the financial and political stability achieved during her 15-year rule.

The lackluster statement of the External Affairs Minister, S.Jaishankar, in Parliament on the Bangladesh crisis has further exposed the poor management of the present rulers as well as their helplessness. The government should avoid boasting about India's foolproof foreign policy and the invincibility of her security establishment. The Indian media too has exposed its poor understanding of the issues being faced by the country. In recent years, New Delhi has failed to protect its friendly regimes in Male, Sri Lanka, Nepal and now Bangladesh.

Bangladesh should caution India's political class. The perennial communal and reservation issues for political gains might erupt in large scale agitations across the country. The forces inimical to the country's democracy, her institutions might cause irreparable damages to the Indian state, its economy and political stability.

The mandarins in New Delhi, perhaps unaware of the threats to the Hasina Government and its implications for India, could not take appropriate steps to protect the only democratic regime in the country's neighborhood.

The Indian media too has exposed its poor understanding of the issues being faced by the country. In recent years, New Delhi has failed to protect its friendly regimes in Male, Sri Lanka, Nepal and now Bangladesh.

A Warning for India: The exit of an elected government in



our neighborhood. They could not counter the influence of the Jamaat-e-Islami penetration in friendly countries like Bangladesh. The attacks on Hindus and Ahemedias and their places of worship were pre-planned.

The Conspirators: During the recent crisis in Bangladesh, the Indian establishment and its friendly media has further exposed the vulnerability of the country and her institutions. They were either indulging in unsubstantial facts or diverting the issues by focusing on the attacks on minorities i.e. Hindus. Also, its accusations against China, Pakistan and the US should have been supported by facts. Even they didn't care to give old references that how these three powers have been working against India since the sixties even before the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971.

Hasina and her family were in Europe, when her father, Mujibur Rahman and other members of the family were killed on August 15, 1975, 49 years ago, at their ancestral home in Dacca. The then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had promptly contacted Hasina and ensured her safe stay in New Delhi. On the other hand, Jaishankar was evasive in Parliament whether India would offer asylum to the deposed leader.

The Threats: Hasina, apart from facing the political enemies of her father, also has recently been facing threats from the ISI, CIA and the Chinese proxies. In recent years by supplying weapons to Bangladesh, the Chinese have gained much influence in the Bangladesh army. The dragon has also liber-

ally funded the radical Islamists as well as bribing senior government and military officers. It is also stated that if Hasina had not escaped, she too might have been assassinated or arrested facing treason charges like the Aung San Su Kyi of Myanmar.

During the past one decade or so, Beijing has dumped its dated weapons at throwaway prices to Bangladesh.

And now in lieu of this assistance, it was keen to obtain contracts for the downstream projects of the river Teesta, worth billions of USD. Since the contract was finally awarded to the Indian companies, China naturally became furious. For this Hasina had to be punished. It was indicated during Hasina's recent visit to China, where she was not accorded the protocol befitting a prime minister.

Amidst these developments, the Biden Administration too became unhappy with Dacca for denying the US a military base in Bangladesh.

It appears that history is repeating itself. During the sixties, the CIA, ISI and the Chinese had joined hands against India for supporting Naga and Mizo insurgencies. The CIA operatives at the American consulate in Dacca, then the provincial capital of East Pakistan, were activated for using the Christian missionaries to access the insurgents. The British secret police, MI-6, however, refused to join the conspiracy. The Chinese were providing weapons and training and the CIA was helping the insurgents in Europe with funds and media coverage. It was happening much before the US President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972.

The details about these anti-India conspirators have already been published in a book recently written by the erstwhile Chief Minister of Mizoram, Zoram Thanga, also a former insurgent.

The recent outbursts of the Biden Administration against the Hasina regime has renewed the colonial agenda for setting up a Crown Country in India's north-eastern region comprising the predominant Christian states of India, Nagaland and Mizoram. For this, the US needs a favorable government in Dacca.

It may be recalled that before their departure from India, the British wanted to separate the region from the mainland, but they could not implement their full agenda of fragmenting the country in 1947. They could partition India only by creating Pakistan.

Being the successor state of the British Empire in world politics, the US is now conniving with China, which has attained a sizable economic presence in the region with its technologies and capital for completing the unfinished British agenda.

There is hardly any serious study regarding the penetration of the forces perennial inimical to India. With the end of the Hasina regime in Bangladesh, the Dragon's agenda to encircle its southern neighbor, perhaps, has been finally achieved.

Gopal Misra has been associated with national and international media. His books on journalism and geo-politics have been well-appreciated. Views are personal.

Team Sher-e-Ludhiana geared up for Pro Panja League debut, with Great Khali as Brand Ambassador

KAVITA SHARMA Ludhiana

The newly rebranded Sher-e-Ludhiana arm wrestling team officially launched its entry into the Pro Panja League during a press conference held on August 9, 2024, at the Radisson Blu in Ludhiana. Previously known as the Ludhiana Lions, the team unveiled its new identity alongside the announcement of The Great Khali as its brand ambassador, a figure representing the strength and pride of Ludhiana.

The press conference, orchestrated by V Corp Action Private Limited, kicked off with a dynamic introduction of The Great Khali. His endorsement is expected to significantly enhance the team's visibility and serve as a source of inspiration for athletes across the country. Khali's association with Sher-e-Ludhiana underscores the team's revitalized identity and



unwavering commitment to excellence in the sport of arm wrestling.

Aayush Lalwani, Founder V Corp Pvt. Ltd., stated, "This is a momentous occasion for us as we introduce our new identity with The Great Khali as our brand ambassador. This partnership signifies not merely a rebranding but a deepened dedication to achieving excellence in arm wrestling. We look forward to a promising future and are excited to motivate athletes and fans alike as we establish our presence in the

Pro Panja League and beyond."

Expressing his enthusiasm, The Great Khali remarked, "I am thrilled to embark on this journey with Sher-e-Ludhiana. Arm wrestling demands exceptional strength, strategy, and passion—qualities that I recognize in this team. Together, we aim to inspire a new generation of athletes and elevate the sport to unprecedented heights."

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Parvin Dabas, Co-Founder, Pro Panja League said, "It is great that Pro Panja League had an amazing first season

with 32 million unique viewers. Sher-e-Ludhiana played a big part in its success. I want to congratulate the team owners for understanding the game and bringing on The Great Khali as their brand ambassador, who really embodies the 'Bharat ka khele' spirit and is a desi hero who is loved by millions of people in the country. I am looking forward to the season ahead. I am sure that Sher-e-Ludhiana will be a team to look out for."

Sher-e-Ludhiana embodies the strength, pride, and resilience of Ludhiana. The team boasts a roster of top-tier athletes, including Kashmiri Kashyap, Kritika Das, Tawheed Shaikh and Shivanshu Kaushik, among others. Each athlete brings a unique blend of skill, strategy, and determination, positioning Sher-e-Ludhiana as a formidable contender in the Pro Panja League.



A Sikh volunteer ties a Nishan Sahib flag, Sikh religious flag on a pole in front of the Akal Takht in the Sri Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple complex), on Friday. Akal Takht, the highest temporal body of the Sikhs, has issued a circular asking Gurdwaras across the state to ensure that the colour of the Nishan Sahib is either Basanti (xanthic) or surmai (blue). PHOTOS-PRABHJOT GILL

Anil Vij advises Wrestler Vinesh Phogat not to retire, win and lose is part of game

SATISH HANDA Ambala

Former Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij advised wrestler Vinesh Phogat against retiring, stating she should not give up because sports always involve both victory and defeat. What she could not achieve now should be accomplished in the next Olympics, as the country has high expectations from her. Vij was replying to a questions asked by the media persons here.



pinder Singh Hooda had stated that if his position was stronger, he would have seated Vinesh in the Rajya Sabha. Commenting on this, Vij said, Hooda ji always makes promises and assurances that cannot be fulfilled. He had announced a reward of 6 crore rupees for winning a gold medal at the Olympics. Hooda should give that amount to Vinesh Phogat from his own share, but he will not do it. Bhupinder Singh Hooda makes promises he cannot fulfill.

Attacking opposition leaders, Vij said it is unfortunate that some leaders born in the democracy of this country are talking about incidents similar to those in Bangladesh happening in India. "These are people who have no faith in the country's democracy. Defeated individuals who cannot achieve their goals democratically are making such statements," Vij said.

Leaders Who Incite and Stir Up Violence Will Never Succeed. Responding to such leaders, Vij said, "I want to inform

them that India's democracy is the largest and strongest democracy in the world. It has the capacity to defend itself. Leaders who are attempting to incite and provoke violence will never succeed. Every citizen of India is ready to sacrifice their lives to protect democracy, but no harm will come to our democracy."

Vij said, Nothing Can Undermine India's Democracy. Former Haryana Home Minister tweeted (now X) saying, "bhidraatanr ke kuchh neta bhaarat mein bhee banga la desh jaisee ghatana kee baat kar rahe hain. yah vah log hain jo lokatanr mein bikul bhee vishvaas nahin karate hain. yah bhaarat ke lokatanr ko lekar aae hain, jo lokatanr ke poorvajon se chait kar dostee karane kee koshish kar rahe hain, lekin vah nahin jaanate ki bhaarat ka vishv ka sabase majboot lok tantr isamen kuchh bhee nahin dikha sakata hai. >>

Hockey India announces cash prizes for Indian Men's Team

Historic Bronze medal victory at 2024 Paris Olympics, India defeated Spain 2-1 to retain their Olympic Bronze medal

KAVITA SHARMA New Delhi

8th August 2024: Hockey India is proud to announce a cash prize of INR 15 lakhs for each player of the Indian Men's Hockey Team and INR 7.5 lakhs for each member of the support staff in recognition of their outstanding achievement at the 2024 Paris Olympics. The team secured a historic Bronze medal, defeating Spain 2-1, marking their second consecutive Olympic medal, an achievement last accomplished 52 years ago.



team, led by Captain Harmanpreet Singh, delivered a stellar performance, with the skipper scoring two crucial goals in the 30th and 33rd minutes. Their victory not only secured the Bronze medal but also solidified India's position as a dominant force in international hockey.

Hockey India President Dr Dilip Tirke lauded the team's historic performance, stating,

"This victory is a testament to the hard work, determination, and resilience of our players and support staff. Winning back-to-back Olympic medals is an extraordinary achievement that reflects the resurgence of Indian hockey on the world stage. On behalf of Hockey India, I congratulate the entire team and support staff for their exceptional performance and dedication.

Priyanka Chopra shares BTS of a rainy day from the sets of 'The Bluff'



MUMBAI: Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas experienced a full spectrum of events on the sets of her upcoming movie 'The Bluff'.

On Thursday, the actress took to the Stories section of her Instagram, and shared a short video from the sets of the film which shows the drizzling. Priyanka says in the video: "It's a rainy day on 'The Bluff'. But, we don't stop. The rain rain, go away, we want to play." The video shows huge blue screens with track marks mounted on the sets for VFX purposes. The actress geo-tagged the location of Gold Coast in Queensland.

Earlier, PC had shared several pictures from the sets of 'The Bluff' in which she was seen drenched in blood and bruises courtesy the realistic makeup and prosthetics. In one of the videos, PC asks her makeup artiste how she creates burnt hair, to which the latter responds by crushing breakfast cereals and sprinkling over her hair. She wrote in the caption: "Bloody Fun times on #TheBluff Last week of filming! PS: fyi for the unversed, I'm on a film set and it's all makeup."

Marriage like scene at village Timmowal of Harmanpreet Singh



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

The entire inhabitants of Timmowal glued with the Television to watch the performance of their lad the captain of the Indian Hockey team have begun to distribute sweets to each other's when Harmanpreet Singh-led Indian men's hockey team secure a bronze medal with a 2-1 victory over Spain at the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium in Colombes on Thursday in 2024 Paris Olympics.

Captain Harmanpreet Singh, with two goals against Spain, finishes the tournament as India's leading goal-scorer with a total of ten goals, said father Sarbjit Singh adding that the last five to ten minutes were very tough for me (father) as reciting constantly Waheguru for the victory of Indian hockey team.

The scene of the village was not less than any marriage function like in the family as crackers were burnt. A Sizable crowd thronged at Harmanpreet's house to congratulate the family for the outstanding performance of the son of this village. Harmanpreet is one of four players from Amritsar district in the team, along with Germanpreet Singh (Rajdhan village), Shamsher

dia's leading goal-scorer with a total of ten goals, said father Sarbjit Singh adding that the last five to ten minutes were very tough for me (father) as reciting constantly Waheguru for the victory of Indian hockey team. The scene of the village was not less than any marriage function like in the family as crackers were burnt. A Sizable crowd thronged at Harmanpreet's house to congratulate the family for the outstanding performance of the son of this village. Harmanpreet is one of four players from Amritsar district in the team, along with Germanpreet Singh (Rajdhan village), Shamsher

Singh (Attari village), and Gurjant Singh (Khalaira village). Harmanpreet Singh, ace-drag flicker, hails from Timmowal village. His father Sarbjit Singh is enormously happy at the performance of the entire team said that the victory credit goes to the entire team as all played with die hard efforts for the nation.

Earlier when the match was being played in the evening as per Indian standard time the entire family including the father of the Harmanpreet were reciting Paath and praying for the victory of the Indian team. Father bowed down his head to express gratitude to the Almighty when the Indian Hockey team declared winner in the last match today in the Paris Olympics. He also thanked the Punjab chief minister Bahgwant Singh Mann for announcing cash prizes worth Rs 1 crore each, said that it would boost the morale of players and encourage the Punjab youth to opt hockey game. However, there are ten players from the Punjab who would be rewarded by the Punjab government.

Vicky Kaushal is thrilled for brother Sunny's performance in 'Phir Aayee Haseen Dilruba'



MUMBAI: Vicky Kaushal, who is basking in the glory of his latest film 'Bad Newzz', is going gaga over his brother Sunny Kaushal's performance in 'Phir Aayi Haseen Dilruba'.

The actor, who is known for his grounded nature and genuine support for his family, did not hold back from showering praises on his talented sibling. He took to Instagram and highlighted his work in Tapsee- and Vikrant-starrer 'Phir Aayee Haseen Dilruba', noting how his brother has delivered an exceptional performance.

Vicky made a joint appearance with Sunny at the film's premiere. Sharing their picture on his Instagram stories, he wrote: "You have truly surprised me with your ability to pull off such a twisted character. So tastefully done, I know how excited you were to take up this part and could see you having fun playing it through and through. So proud. Onwards and Upwards brother."

The younger Kaushal has been steadily carving a niche for himself with versatile roles, earning both critical acclaim and a growing fan-base. While Sunny may have initially been in the shadow of his elder brother's towering success, he has now firmly established himself as a promising actor in his own right.

Sunny Kaushal made his debut in 2016 with 'Sunshine Music Tours and Travels'. He later worked in films like 'Gold' and 'The Forgotten Army: Azaadi Ke Liye'.

Prior to acting, Sunny worked as an assistant director on films like 'My Friend Pinto' and 'Gunday'.

Vicky's shoutout is not just a brotherly gesture but also a significant endorsement from an actor who has himself garnered immense respect and accolades in Bollywood.

Kartik Aaryan, director Kabir Khan to celebrate 'Chandu Champion' at IFFM 2024

MUMBAI: Actor Kartik Aaryan and filmmaker Kabir Khan are all set to celebrate their latest film 'Chandu Champion' at the 15th edition of the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM).

The celebration will include a special "fan interactive session" featuring Kartik and Kabir. The actor-filmmaker duo will be talking to a live audience about "Chandu Champion", on August 17.

In the session, the two will be talking about the making of the sports biopic. They will share insights into the creative process, the challenges faced, and the extraordinary dedication required to bring the story of Murlikant Petkar to life, read a statement.

Released in June 2024, "Chandu Champion" traces the journey of India's first Paralympics gold medalist, Murlikant Petkar.

This will be the second time Kartik will be making an appearance in the festi-



val, which will commence on August 15. He first made an appearance in 2023 as the Rising Global Indian Superstar of Indian Cinema.

Festival director Mitu Bhowmick Lange said in a statement: "Their collaboration on 'Chandu Champion' has set a new standard for sports biopics, inspiring audiences with its powerful narrative and exceptional performance that Kartik has given."

"I'm certain that this spe-



College girls perform 'giddha', a popular folk dance to celebrate the Hindu festival of Teej at Shahzada Nand college in Amritsar on Tuesday. PHOTOS-PRABHJOT GILL

Golden boy Neeraj Chopra wins silver for India

MAHIE JK

India's Golden Boy Neeraj Chopra wins silver medal at Paris Olympics 2024. The first Indian to win track and field medals at two Olympic Games. Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem grabs top position with a monstrous throw of 92.97 in second attempt gave a tough competition to India's Neeraj Chopra who threw 89.45 in his second attempt.

The Javelin throw turned out to be India versus Pakistan just like in cricket with Pakistan's Nadeem, grabbing first position in Javelin throw



followed by India's Neeraj Chopra getting silver and Anderson Peters from Grenada getting bronze.

India is yet to win gold in these games and this is the fifth

medal overall, Chopra has won many medals and has placed himself in the golden books of Indian Sports.

After winning silver medal Neeraj chopra said, it was probably not my day. 'Every day is not yours, losing and winning is a part of game'. Either we win or lose. "It was Arshad's day, Aaj Arshad ka din tha..." I gave my best but it was Arshad day it's time to improve the game now..." he added.

On Neeraj Chopra winning a silver medal his mother Saroj Devi said, "We are very happy, for us silver is also equal to

gold... he was injured, but still he played well, so we are happy with his performance."

She is also happy for Nadeem performance who won gold, 'All the athletes are like her own children'. She also reveals that she will cook Neeraj's favourite food when he returns home. Her comment is winning millions of hearts on social media.

Neeraj became the first Indian to win back to back Olympic medal after independence. He is an inspiration to millions of Indians, the whole country is proud of him and is celebrating his victorious win.