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Amid escalating tensions with US, PM Modi dials President Putin

tariffs on products like corn, soybeans, apples, almonds and ethanol, as well as increased access for US dairy products. New Delhi is, however, resisting these demands as these will have a direct bearing on farmers.

Trade talks between India and the United States broke down after five rounds of negotiations over disagreement on opening India's vast farm and dairy sectors and stopping Russian oil purchases. India's foreign ministry has called the US decision "extremely unfortunate" and said it would "take all necessary steps to protect its national interests."

Kulgam operation enters 8th day

rorists there.

The contact with terrorists was established on August 1 evening but after an initial exchange of fire between the two sides, the operation was halted for the night. The cordon was strengthened, and additional reinforcements were rushed to the area.

Firing resumed on August 2 morning, during which two terrorists were killed, officials said, adding that seven security personnel were also wounded during the exchange of fire.

The search teams combed the woods for the eighth day today but they were yet to re-establish contact with the holed-up terrorists, the officials added.

ACB arrests junior asstt in graft case

the file with Umar Nawaz, the concerned clerk having additional charge of junior assistant, sub-registrar, Rajouri, but he allegedly demanded a bribe of Rs 15,000. Subsequently, he agreed to do the work if the complainant paid him Rs 4,000, officials said.

Since the complainant is a poor person and did not want to give the graft money to the junior assistant, he approached ACB for taking legal action against him. Accordingly, a case under section 7 of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018) was registered at ACB police station, Rajouri, the officials added.

During investigation, a trap team was constituted. The team laid a successful trap and caught the accused red-handed while demanding and accepting the bribe of Rs 4,000, officials said.

The accused was arrested on the spot by the ACB team after following due process of law. The bribe money was also recovered from his possession in the presence of independent witnesses associated with the trap team.

Searches were also conducted at the residential house of the accused at Thanamandi, Rajouri. Further investigation into the case was underway.

Drug peddler's bank account attached

was seized and a bank account with a deposit of Rs 7.17 lakh was attached as it was found disproportionate to his known sources of income, the officials added.

"Police are committed to eradicate the menace of drugs from Udhampur district and take stringent action against drug peddlers," officials said.

Raksha Bandhan strengthens determination to protect women's rights: Prez

The holy festival of Raksha Bandhan signifies the unique bond of love and trust between brothers and sisters, she said in a message.

"This festival promotes harmony and spirit of unity in the society. This occasion is also an opportunity to preserve our rich cultural heritage and moral values. This festival strengthens our determination to protect the rights of women and respect them," Murmu said.

She asked all to pledge to build a prosperous country where every woman feels safe and can actively contribute to the development of the nation.

"On the auspicious occasion of Raksha Bandhan, I extend my warm greetings and best wishes to all fellow citizens living in India and abroad," the President was quoted as having said in the message shared by the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Shah slams oppn for objecting to SIR

that the judiciary needs to get involved in this because "the democracy that we love so much, does not exist anymore".

On the opposition parties' stand on Operation Sindoor, Shah claimed that terrorist attacks were "frequent in India during the UPA regime".

"But now India is different under Narendra Modi ji's regime. Our soldiers killed terrorists in their hideouts. But RJD and Congress leaders are opposing Operation Sindoor,"

he claimed.

Shah also asserted that the NDA will form the government with a thumping majority in the upcoming Bihar assembly polls.

"The RJD did nothing for the development of Bihar. (RJD supremo) Lalu Prasad ji, as a central minister, sanctioned Rs 1,132 crore for railway infrastructure in Bihar, while our govt provided Rs 10,066 crore in FY'26," he claimed.

Shah also alleged that the RJD "encouraged hooliganism" during its rule in the state.

CBSE chief gets 2-year extension

tenure of Singh for a period of two years beyond November 11, 2025, i.e. up to November 11, 2027, said the order dated August 6 issued by the Personnel Ministry.

White Knight Corps GOC reviews security situation along LoC

of frontline troops.

He expressed satisfaction over the high level of alertness being maintained in the sensitive region.

During the visit, the GOC emphasised on maintaining robust defensive and surveillance measures along the LoC to ensure mission effectiveness in safeguarding territorial integrity.

LG Kavinder calls for boosting winter tourism in Ladakh

highlighted various initiatives being taken by the department to boost infrastructure, along with policy and incentives schemes such as Ladakh Homestay Policy 2023, STP Incentive Scheme 2024, among others.

He also highlighted efforts being made to preserve museums and construct or upgrade new libraries at the sub-divisional level.

Post-lunch, administrative secretary Michael D'Souza informed the LG about various infrastructure projects carried out by PWD for better connectivity and promoting sustainable development, including the status of nine tunnels and roads/bridges being built under PMGSY, CRIF, Special Development Package and State Capex, etc.

He said various works, such as snow clearance, maintenance of heating spaces and oxygen plants were being carried out by the Mechanical Engineering Department.

Framing of Recruitment Rules, notification of exams, conducting recruitment exams through Ladakh Subordinate Services Staff Selection Board (LSSSSB), service-related matters of GAD were highlighted in the PPT presentation given by the Administrative Secretary.

He apprised the LG of total staff strength, recruitments that took place after the formation of the union territory through various boards, recruitment drives to be conducted later this year and submission of requisitions to UPSC for gazetted posts, etc. The functions and challenges of the Inspector General of Registration Department were also discussed in the meeting.

Gupta emphasised early work on cleaning legacy waste in Kargil along with ensuring proper waste collection and segregation for environmental protection.

He directed that sewage treatment plant (STP) projects constructed under AMRUT 2.0 can be done in phases to deal with financial crunches, but there must be no compromise with their quality.

He also asked the Executive Officer of Municipal Committee Leh to promote the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) Urban 2.0 scheme so that more people come forward to avail the benefit, keeping in mind the number of new municipal wards added in Leh town, which might see a surge in demand for housing loans.

The LG stated that utmost importance must be given to the construction, upgradation, and maintenance of strategic roads for the movement of troops throughout the year.

He emphasised the importance of maximising government employee registration on the Karamyogi Bharat portal to enhance civil service capacity building through the iGOT Karmayogi online platform for training. He emphasised filling up gazetted and non-gazetted posts for the efficient functioning of the UT Administration.

Energy security 'top priority' amid rising global tensions: EAM

50 per cent, among the highest imposed by the US on any country in the world.

Jaishankar also said, "The government considers energy security to be among its top priorities and has taken all necessary steps to ensure access to affordable energy for the people of India."

He was also asked whether the recent geopolitical developments, including the Russia-Ukraine war, conflict in West Asia and sanctions imposed by Western countries,

have had any impact on India's diplomatic and economic relations with affected countries.

"The government constantly monitors all geopolitical developments having a bearing on India's national interest and responds appropriately to their impact with a view to safeguarding India's interests at bilateral, regional and global levels," he said.

The government has also stated its readiness to contribute to efforts for mitigation and resolution of conflicts through diplomacy and dialogue, he said.

On the query related to the steps taken by the government to safeguard the country's strategic and energy interests, Jaishankar also said the government's decisions on international energy sourcing are based on "diverse market factors, including pricing and availabilities and keeping in mind India's national interests and priorities".

"Necessary steps are also taken to sensitise all relevant stakeholders regarding any developments that could impact them. Government also remains engaged with the concerned countries on this matter," he added.

Jaishankar was also asked about the measures taken by the government to ensure safety and repatriation of Indian nationals, including students and workers, from conflict zones during the last year.

"Government accords the highest priority to the safety, security and well-being of Indian nationals abroad. It has engaged with all relevant players including governments of other countries, to facilitate safe return of Indian nationals," he said.

The government's actions, including issuance of appropriate advisories through Indian Missions or Posts abroad, operating 24x7 helplines, engaging with Indian nationals through social media platforms, and undertaking evacuation, where necessary etc., have been "guided by the evolving situation in conflict zones," the minister said.

Sitharaman withdraws Income Tax Bill

A new version of the Income Tax Bill will be introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 11.

The updated version of the I-T Bill, according to sources, will incorporate most of the recommendations of the Select Committee.

"To avoid confusion by multiple versions of the Bill and to provide a clear and updated version with all changes incorporated, the new version of the Income Tax Bill will be introduced for the consideration of the House on Monday," sources said.

The Select Committee, chaired by Baijayant Panda, had suggested a host of changes in the Income Tax Bill, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha on February 13.

Soon after its introduction in the Lower House, the Bill, which will replace the six-decade-old Income Tax Act, 1961, was referred to the Select Committee for scrutiny.

The 31-member Select Committee had made some suggestions on the Bill.

They also favoured continuing tax exemption on anonymous donations made to religious-cum-charitable trusts in the new law, besides suggesting that taxpayers be allowed to claim TDS refund even after the ITR filing due date without paying any penal charges.

The government in the new Bill has exempted non-profit organisations (NPOs) from taxing anonymous donations received by purely religious trusts. However, such donations received by a religious trust that may also have other charitable functions, like running hospitals and educational institutions, will be taxed as per law, as per the Bill.

Need to revise creamy layer income ceiling for OBCs: Par panel

Another unresolved issue flagged by the panel is the absence of equivalence between posts in autonomous bodies and government positions for determining creamy layer status.

The report said the lack of such equivalence has led to qualified OBC candidates, including those who cleared the UPSC Civil Services Examination, being denied service allocation because their parents' salaries were counted without considering post equivalence.

The committee urged the ministry to expedite work with the inter-departmental committee set up by the DoPT in 2023 to resolve the matter.

While 10 of the panel's 12 recommendations from its earlier sixth report were accepted by the government, the two on creamy layer revision and post equivalence were reiterated.

Accepted proposals include reviewing parental income limits for scholarships, expanding the Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme under PM-YASASVI to start from Class V, increasing slots for "Top Class" school and college education schemes for OBCs, Economically Backward Classes (EBCs) and Denotified Tribes (DNTs), and enhancing central grants for OBC welfare.

The panel also voiced concern over a sharp fall in scholar-

ship beneficiaries.

Under the pre-matric scheme, beneficiaries dropped from 58.6 lakh in 2021-22 to 20.29 lakh in 2023-24, while expenditure fell from Rs 218.29 crore to Rs 193.83 crore.

Post-matric beneficiaries fell from 38.04 lakh to 27.51 lakh, with spending down from Rs 1,320 crore to Rs 988 crore in the same period.

States' incomplete or delayed proposals, slow fund utilisation, and transition issues to Aadhaar-based direct benefit transfer and online portals were cited as key reasons.

On budget allocation, the committee said OBCs make up 52 per cent of India's population as per the Mandal Commission, yet their central grants are far lower compared to those for Scheduled Castes, who comprise about 16.6 per cent of the population.

While allocations for OBC schemes such as PM-YASASVI have risen from Rs 1,581 crore in 2022-23 to Rs 2,190 crore in 2025-26 the panel wants proportional increases to reflect the community's size and needs.

Unspent funds were another sticking point.

The report pointed to unused amounts, including Rs 86 lakh in pre-matric, Rs 98 lakh in post-matric, and Rs 15 lakh in hostel construction schemes as signs of "lack of supervision and foresightedness."

It recommended stricter monitoring, more awareness campaigns in local languages, and better coordination with states to ensure timely utilisation of funds.

The committee warned that without timely policy updates and efficient execution, procedural delays and outdated eligibility norms could undermine the government's stated goal of uplifting backward classes through education, skills, and social welfare.

Israel's security cabinet approves plan to take control of Gaza

1,200 people. Hamas also took 251 people as hostages. The Israeli military action in Gaza has killed an estimated 60,000 people.

Gaza has been reeling under a massive humanitarian crisis largely due to scarcity of food and medicines. The World Health Organisation said last month that Gaza's malnutrition rates have reached "alarming levels".

Ahead of the Security Cabinet meeting, Netanyahu told a group of visiting Indian journalists that Israel doesn't want to annex or occupy Gaza and its sole aim is to destroy Hamas and hand over the strip to a transitional government.

The prime minister also said that Israel wants to take control of Gaza's security.

Asked about the food crisis in Gaza, Netanyahu said over two million tonnes of food were sent to Israel, but the supplies were "interdicted".

"Our plan is not to occupy or annex Gaza. Our goal is to destroy Hamas and get our hostages back, and then hand-over Gaza to a transitory government," Netanyahu said.

3 killed in road accidents

the motorcyclist and the pillion rider. The dead were identified as Shahbaz, son of Abass, and Rohit, son of Rashpal. Both were residents of Bhoond in Bani area.

Police had taken cognizance of the incident.

In the other incident, one person was killed and three were injured in a collision between Ertiga & Baleno cars near Bhata Dhurian in Poonch district at about 3.10 pm.

The dead was identified as Amrit Kumar, son of Jagat Ram. The injured, including Neelam Kumari, wife of Amrit Raina, Ansh Sharma, son of Jeet Kumar, and Ajay Kumar, all residents of Sunderbani, were undergoing treatment in the hospital.

A case in this connection was registered at the concerned police station.

Oppn MPs protest against SIR, 'vote theft' in Par complex

protesting MPs read "Our Vote. Our Right. Our Fight". Another banner carried by the protesting MPs read "SIR - Silent Invisible Rigging".

The MPs also carried "Stop SIR" placards along with posters alleging collusion between the EC and the government. Several MPs also carried posters and placards alleging "vote theft", alluding to the poll rigging claims made by Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi at a press conference on Thursday.

The opposition has been protesting in both Houses of Parliament against the SIR, alleging that the EC's exercise is aimed at "disenfranchising voters" in Bihar ahead of the assembly elections due later this year. They have been demanding a discussion on the issue in both Houses.

There has been a logjam in Parliament over the SIR in Bihar. Barring discussions on Operation Sindoor in the two Houses, Parliament has seen little business ever since the Monsoon session began on July 21 due to repeated adjournments, mostly over the SIR issue.

Vance, UK foreign secretary will meet before US vice president's vacation in English countryside

LONDON, AUG 8: US Vice President JD Vance is expected to meet with UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy on Friday at a stately home south of London before heading off on a family vacation in the the Cotswolds, a trendy retreat in the English countryside.

Vance and Lammy, who come from opposite ends of the political spectrum but have made a personal connection through their hard-scrabble childhoods and Christian faith, will hold talks at the foreign secretary's official country residence, known as Chevening.

The meeting comes as the United Kingdom tries to come to favourable terms for steel and aluminum exports to the US as the two sides work out details of a broader trade deal announced at the end of June.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza are also likely to be on the agenda amid debates between Washington and London

about the best way to end those conflicts.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that he hoped to meet with US President Donald Trump next week.

Those comments came a day before Trump's deadline for Moscow to show progress in ending the nearly 3½-year war in Ukraine.

While Trump has focused on bilateral talks with Putin, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and other European leaders have stressed that Ukraine must be part of any negotiations on ending the war.

The US and Britain, which have historically close ties known as "the special relationship," have also disagreed on their approach to ending the war in Gaza.

Starmer said last week that the UK would recognise a Palestinian state in September unless Israel takes steps to end the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and commits to a "long-term sustainable peace."

The US has said that such recognition would be counterproductive because it rewards Hamas militants for the attack on southern Israel on October 7, 2023.

Lammy and Vance will meet at Chevening, an almost 400-year-old mansion surrounded by 3,000 acres or about 1,200 hectares of gardens, lawns and woodland in the county of Kent, southeast of London. The estate was given to the nation by the 7th Earl Stanhope in 1967 and is now the official country residence of the UK foreign secretary.

While Lammy is a member of the left-leaning Labour Party and Vance is a conservative Republican who supports Trump's "America First" agenda, the two men have bonded in recent months.

Lammy told the Guardian newspaper that the two men can relate over their "dysfunctional" working class childhoods and that he considers Vance a "friend."

Lammy attended a

Catholic Mass at the Vance home in Washington earlier this year, and the two men met again at the US Embassy in Rome when he and Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner attended the inauguration of Pope Leo XIV in May.

"I had this great sense that JD completely relates to me and he completely relates to Angela," Lammy told the Guardian. "So it was a wonderful hour and a half."

After spending a few days at Chevening, Vance and his family will head to the Cotswolds, an area that has become popular with wealthy American tourists because of its quaint villages, stone cottages and rural countryside that hark back to old England.

A host of celebrities descended on the area two weeks ago for the wedding of Eve Jobs, the daughter of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, and Harry Charles, a member of the British equestrian team at last summer's Olympic Games in Paris.

WELLINGTON, Aug 8: An Australian state lawmaker and convicted rapist, who is in jail awaiting his sentence, quit his seat Friday moments before a vote scheduled by his former colleagues to eject him.

Gareth Ward, an independent member of parliament in New South Wales state, earlier refused to resign despite his July convictions by a jury for sex crimes against two young men. He failed in a legal bid Thursday to stop his peers taking rare action to expel him.

Ward, 44, sexually assaulted a political staffer after a parliamentary event in 2015 and abused an 18-year-old at the politician's home in 2013. His sentencing on one count of sexual intercourse without consent and three counts of indecent assault is scheduled for September.

Jailed lawmaker tries to stop ouster vote

In a bizarre and unusual episode for Australian poli-

tics, Ward refused to resign even after his bail was revoked last week following the convictions. He has said he plans to appeal and to keep his seat from jail in the meantime, prompting derision from his peers.

"If you're convicted of some of the most serious charges, sexual assault in New South Wales, you can't sit as a serving member of parliament drawing a parliamentary salary," state Premier Chris Minns told reporters Friday. "How can you represent your community from behind bars in Cessnock?"

Ward on Monday launched a legal challenge to an expulsion vote planned for Tuesday. The bid was dismissed by an appeals court Thursday, allowing a new parliamentary vote against him to be scheduled.

Resignation comes as lawmakers readied to vote

As lawmakers assembled to oust him from Parliament Friday morning — a measure expected to draw

cross-party support — Ward wrote to the speaker of the house tendering his resignation. He would have been the first lawmaker to be expelled from the lower house of the state parliament in more than a century.

Leader of the House Ron Hoenig told reporters it was "shameful" that Ward had taken so long to quit.

"I would have thought being a convicted rapist is enough infamy without going down in history as both a convicted rapist as well as the first person in a century to be expelled," Hoenig said.

Expulsions from Australian legislatures are rare and only lawmakers in New South Wales and Victoria have ever exercised their powers to oust their peers by vote. The last lawmaker expelled from New South Wales' lower house for "unworthy conduct" was in 1917.

Constituents reelected Ward despite the charges

Ward had held the seat of

Kiama since 2011, first with the centre-right Liberal Party and then as an independent after he quit the group when the charges against him emerged. A date has not been set for a byelection in his seat.

His constituents reelected him in 2023, despite his 2022 suspension from Parliament awaiting trial.

Ward's lawyer argued in the state's appeals court Thursday that the fact of his convictions alone did not automatically mean his conduct was unworthy.

In a scathing decision rejecting his legal bid, the court ordered Ward to pay costs.

The former lawmaker faces a prison term of up to 14 years. He did not comment publicly Friday.

Ward was the state's minister for families, communities and disability services between 2019 and 2021. He served an eight-year term as a local council member before entering Parliament.