

SC grants Sisodia bail

POLITY & GOVERNANCE



The Supreme Court Bench of Justices B.R. Gavai and K.V. Viswanathan on Friday the right to a speedy trial and personal liberty were sacrosanct, while granting bail to former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who spent over 17 months behind bars without trial for money laundering charges linked to the Delhi excise policy. The top court allowed bail to Mr. Sisodia in both ED and CBI cases and ordered him to be released on payment of ₹10 lakh in bail bonds.

“Keeping Mr. Sisodia incarcerated for an unlimited time in the hope of a speedy trial is a violation of his fundamental right to liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.”

Justice Gavai
Supreme Court of India

Mr. Sisodia had undergone two earlier rounds of litigation for bail. The first round ended on October 30 last year with the top court denying him interim bail while upholding his right to speedy trial. The probe agencies had assured the top court to conclude the trial in the next six to eight months. The second round culminated on June 4, 2024, again in the Supreme Court. Mr. Sisodia was denied interim bail but was allowed to “revive” his plea as soon as the final chargesheet was filed.

SC refuses to put off NEET-PG

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

A three-judge Supreme Court Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud on Friday refused to reschedule the postgraduate National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-PG) 2024 to be held on Sunday saying it cannot put careers at risk.

Appearing for the petitioners, senior advocate Sanjay Hegde submitted that the controversy over paper leaks and allocation of exam centres in NEET-UG 2024 had had an impact on NEET-PG 2024 with exam centres been cut down from 1,200 to 500. The Bench neither intervened should at least intervene with a direction to the authorities to hold one exam per day. He said the current schedule was gruelling with two exams a day. But the court did not budge.

MHA creates committee to monitor the safety of Indians, minorities in Bangladesh

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



The Union Home Ministry constituted a five-member committee chaired by Ravi Gandhi, BSF Additional Director General, Eastern Range, and includes Aditya Mishra, chairperson of the Land Ports Authority of India to communicate with Bangladesh authorities “to ensure the safety and security of Indian nationals, Hindus, and other minority communities living there”. A preliminary enquiry

by government agencies has found that no major attacks against Hindu or other minority communities have been reported near the India-Bangladesh border.

Turned back

Since August 5, there have been four instances of Bangladeshis gathering along the North Bengal border. In each case, they were convinced to return with the assistance of Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) and local authorities. On Friday, over 700 Bangladeshis, who had travelled 300 to 400 kilometres by bus, gathered at the Sitalkuchi border in Cooch Behar district, demanding entry into India.

Currently, the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) have laid down procedures up to the company commander level to deal with any emergent situation along the border. India follows a non-lethal policy along the eastern border. Firing only takes place in extreme cases, while the border forces are instead allowed to use stun grenades and pump action guns to deter cross-border criminals.

After Sheikh Hasina stepped down as Bangladesh Prime Minister and escaped to India on August 5, violence erupted in the neighbouring country. In several cases, the Hindu community, and its temples and shops were specifically targeted. The BSF, deployed along the 4,096 km Bangladesh border is on a heightened vigil, and has sent back crowds of people at multiple locations over the last five days.



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Union Cabinet meeting approve multiple projects

POLITY & GOVERNANCE



The Union Cabinet on Friday approved eight new railway projects at an estimated cost of ₹ 24,657 Cr. to provide connectivity, facilitate ease of travelling, minimise logistics costs, reduce oil imports and lower carbon dioxide emissions. The projects, expected to be completed by 2030-31 cover 14 districts in the seven States of Odisha, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Telangana and West Bengal will increase the existing network of the railways by 900 km.

Pradhan Mantri Awas

Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) 2.0

The Cabinet approved financial assistance in form of government subsidies worth ₹ 2.30 lakh Cr under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) 2.0 to 1 Cr. urban poor and middle-class families to construct, purchase or rent a house at affordable cost with a total investment of ₹10 lakh Cr. Under PMAY-U, 1.18 crore houses have been sanctioned while more than 85.5 lakh houses have already been constructed. The corpus fund of Credit Risk Guarantee Fund Trust has been increased from ₹ 1,000 Cr. to ₹ 3,000 Cr. to provide benefit of credit risk guarantee on affordable housing loans from banks/housing finance companies/primary lending institutions to Economically Weaker Section (EWS)/Low Income Group (LIC) segments for construction or purchase of their first home.

Clean Plant Programme (CPP)

The Cabinet gave its nod for the Clean Plant Programme (CPP), an initiative proposed by the Ministry of Agriculture to provide virus-free, high-quality planting material to farmers. The Centre said the move would lead to increased crop yield and improved income opportunities for farmers. The scheme entails an investment of ₹1,765.67 Cr. The Clean Plant Programme (CPP) will prioritise affordable access to clean plant material for all farmers, regardless of their landholding size or socioeconomic status. The programme will actively engage women farmers in its planning and implementation, ensuring their access to resources, training and decision-making opportunities. Nine world-class state-of-the-art Clean Plant Centres (CPCs), equipped with advanced diagnostic therapeutics and tissue culture labs, will be established across India.

Budget Session ends ahead of schedule

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Both Houses of Parliament were adjourned sine die on Friday after an eventful Budget Session. Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla thanked the MPs and floor leaders of various political parties for the smooth functioning of Parliament. The session was scheduled to end on Monday. Mr. Dhankhar noted the session of the rare distinction of witnessing the seventh Budget in a row by the “first full-fledged woman Finance Minister” Nirmala Sitharaman. Overall, the Rajya Sabha functioned for 90 hours and 35 minutes, while the Lok Sabha sat for around 115 hours with a productivity of 136 % during this session.



In the Lok Sabha, 25 statements were made under Direction 73A and 30 statements including two statements given by the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs in connection with parliamentary business and three suo motu statements by Ministers. As many as 1,345 papers were laid on the Table of the Lok Sabha.

Twelve Bills were introduced and four Bills passed during the session. A total of 400 matters of urgent public importance were raised by the Members during the Zero Hour and a total of 358 matters were taken up under Rule 377.

Opposition to move no-confidence motion against V-P

POLITY & GOVERNANCE



For the first time in Indian parliamentary history, as many as 50 Opposition MPs have signed a resolution to bring a no-confidence motion against Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar under Article 67(B) of the Indian Constitution.

“A Vice-President may be removed from his office by a resolution of the Council of States passed by a majority of all the then members of the Council and agreed to by the House of the People.” It explicitly says that for moving this resolution “at least fourteen days’ notice” has to be given.

Article 67(B), Indian Constitution

With both Houses of Parliament adjourned sine die, Opposition leaders would make the move in the next session. In the Rajya Sabha, the Opposition INDIA bloc, barring the YSR Congress, the Bharat Rashtra Samithi and the Biju Janata Dal, has 86 members.

The Opposition's resolution is based on three points:

1. The MPs say there is a marked lack of space and time for the Opposition to express its views. The Opposition argues that parliamentary convention dictates that the Leader of the Opposition is conceded the floor, if he gets up to speak. Their complaint is that Congress president and the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge's microphone is routinely turned off.
2. The second point that the Opposition has raised is that the House should be run by "rules and convention" and the floor of the House is "supreme" to any other area in Parliament. "Every time we complain, we are told to see the Chairman in his chamber. The problems generated on the floor of the House should be sorted there," a senior Opposition leader said.
3. The third accusation that the Opposition has made against the Chairman is on "personal remarks against members." "Rule 238(2) of the Rajya Sabha clearly states that a member while speaking shall not make a personal charge against a member.

Congress moves privilege motion against Dharmendra Pradhan

POLITY & GOVERNANCE



The Congress on Friday submitted a notice to initiate privilege proceedings in the Rajya Sabha against Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for allegedly "misleading" the House on the issue of 'dropping' the Preamble to the Constitution from certain NCERT textbooks. Congress General Secretary and chief whip in the Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh wrote to Rajya Sabha Chairman, attaching copies of the 2024 edition of textbooks for Classes 3 and 6, where the Preamble has been omitted.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge raised the issue regarding the dropping of Preamble in the textbooks for Classes III and VI. Mr. Pradhan had rejected the charge and Leader of House and BJP president J.P. Nadda had defended the government saying it has continuously worked to safeguard the Constitution.

"Leader of the Opposition was saying that earlier there used to be a Preamble (in the textbooks). In the new textbooks of Class 6, there is a Preamble. Not only Preamble, there are Fundamental Duties, Fundamental Rights, and National Anthem (in the books). These also represent core values of the Constitution and they are in the books. What he said was not a fact".

Jairam Ramesh,
Congress General Secretary

Bill proposing 4 nominees to a bank account tabled in LS

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary has tabled the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 in the Lok Sabha, proposing changes to banking laws, including giving an account holder the option of naming up to four nominees. The Bill proposes to amend the RBI 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. The Bill seeks to:

1. Ensure consistency in reporting by banks to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), improving governance standards and audit quality in public sector banks;
2. Allow individuals to claim transfers or refunds from the fund, safeguarding interests of depositors and investors;
3. Extend tenures of Directors (other than Chairperson, Whole-time Director) in cooperative banks;
4. Transfer of unclaimed dividends, shares, and interest or redemption of bonds to the Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF)

China envoy, Myanmar junta chief meet

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

China's special envoy met Myanmar's junta chief for talks on "peace and stability" along their shared border, days after ethnic rebels seized a regional military command.

Myanmar's northern Shan state has been the site of repeated clashes since late June after ethnic rebel groups renewed an offensive against the military along a vital trade highway to China.

Major ally

China is a major ally and arms supplier to the junta, but analysts say it also maintains ties with armed ethnic groups in Myanmar that hold territory near its border. Last week, an alliance of ethnic rebel groups captured the military's north-eastern command in the town of Lashio, home to about 1,50,000 people. The capture of the regional command — the first by opponents of the junta since the military's 2021 coup — has sparked rare public criticism of the top generals by its supporters.

Dozens of civilians have been killed or wounded in the recent fighting. Myanmar's borderlands are home to myriad ethnic armed groups who have battled the military since independence from Britain in 1948 for autonomy and control of lucrative resources.



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