

Cabinet approves eight new rail line projects in 7 States

NEW DELHI, Aug 9 (PTI)

THE Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved eight railway projects with total estimated cost of Rs 24,657 crore, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Friday.

The new line proposals will provide direct connectivity and improve mobility, providing enhanced efficiency and service reliability for the Indian Railways, Vaishnaw said in a press briefing.

A Government press release, providing details of these projects, said the eight projects covering 14 districts in seven States such as Odisha, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand,

Bihar, Telangana and West Bengal will increase the existing network of the Indian Railways by 900 kms.

"With these projects 64 New Stations will be constructed, providing enhanced connectivity to Six (6) Aspirational Districts (East Singhbhum, Bhandra, Kothagudem, Malkangiri, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Rayagada), approx. 510 villages and about 40 lakh population," the release said. "Ajanta Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage site will be connected to Indian Railway Network facilitating large number of tourists," the release added. Four out of these eight railway lines, Gunupur-Therubali (New Line), Junagarh-Nabrangpur,

Badampahar-Kandujhargarh and Bangriposi - Gopalnagar are in Odisha while one, ie, Malkangiri - Pandurapuram (via Bhadrachalam) spreads in three states Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

The Railway line between Buramara and Chakulia covers Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha. Two other new lines Jalna - Jalgaon and Bikramshila - Kataraah are in Maharashtra and Bihar, respectively.

Nod for 2 crore more houses under PM Awaas Yojana

THE Union Cabinet on

Friday approved the proposal of the Department of Rural Development for construction of two crore more houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin.

The Cabinet approved the Implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin during FY 2024-25 to 2028-29," which prescribes for the construction of two crore more houses at existing unit assistance of Rs 1.20 lakh in plain areas and Rs 1.30 lakh in North Eastern Region States and Hill States of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, according to an official statement.

The Cabinet approved continuation of the scheme from

April 2024 to March 2029.

Cabinet nod for Rs 1,765.67 cr Clean Plant Programme

THE Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Friday approved the Clean Plant Programme (CPP) with an outlay of Rs 1,766 crore to revolutionize India's horticulture sector. The programme, proposed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, aims to enhance the quality and productivity of fruit crops across the nation. It was earlier announced in the Budget speech by Finance Minister in February 2023.

Jaishankar on three-day visit to Maldives to reset bilateral ties

MALE, Aug 9 (PTI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday said that India's partnership with Maldives is based on its deep desire to work together for each other's welfare and interests and the archipelagic state is one of the cornerstones of India's Neighbourhood First Policy.

Jaishankar arrived here on Friday evening for a three-day official visit to reset the bilateral relationship with the Maldives, the first high-level trip from India after the archipelago nation's pro-China



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Maldives Foreign Affairs Minister Moosa Zameer upon his arrival at the airport in Maldives.

(PTI)

President Mohamed Muizzu assumed office last year.

Addressing a press conference with his Maldivian counterpart Moosa Zameer after their talks, Jaishankar said, "India's partnership with the Maldives is based on our deep desire to work together for each other's welfare and interests. It is a partnership that has enabled us to always respond to challenges as witnessed in the past."

The ties between India and the Maldives came under severe strain since Muizzu took charge of the top office in November 2023.



LS clears Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak Bill

NEW DELHI, Aug 9 (PTI)

THE Lok Sabha on Friday passed a bill to replace the 90-year-old Aircraft Act and further improve the ease of doing business in the aviation space. The Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak Bill 2024 seeks to remove redundancies and replace the Aircraft Act, 1934 -- which has been amended 21 times -- at a time when India is one of the fastest-growing civil aviation

markets in the world. Moving the bill for passage in the Lower House, Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu said the Ministry will be setting up an "efficient online mechanism" to address grievances of people, including about the rise in airfares, and ensure a timely response. Expanding the helicopter industry presents a signifi-

cant opportunity and the Government is set to advance towards manufacturing helicopters, he said. India is poised for a significant transformation in its aviation sector with the introduction of the Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak Bill, 2024, he said. The Ministry is looking at having a balanced approach where there is a level playing field for the airlines and the people are not exploited with higher airfares, he said.

31-member panel to examine **WAQF BILL**

The Joint panel, with 21 MPs from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha, to submit its report by the next session

NEW DELHI, Aug 9 (PTI)

THE joint committee of Parliament to examine the Waqf (Amendment) Bill will have 31 members -- 21 from the Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha -- and will submit its report by the next session.

The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on Friday adopted a motion moved by Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, who also holds the

Parliamentary Affairs portfolio, naming the members to be part of the committee.

In the Lower House, 12 members of the panel are from the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), including eight from the BJP, and nine from the Opposition. In the Upper House, four are from the BJP, four from the Opposition and one is a nominated member.

The Lok Sabha members in the panel are Jagdambika Pal, Nishikant Dubey, Tejasvi Surya, Aparajita Sarangi, Sanjay Jaiswal, Dilip Saikia, Abhiit Gangopadhyay, DK Aruna (all BJP); Gaurav Gogoi, Imran Masood and Mohammadd Jawed (all Congress); Mohibullah (Samajwadi Party); Kalyan Banerjee (Trinamool Congress); A Raja (DMK); Lavu

Sri Krishna Devarayalu (Telugu Desam Party); Dileshwar Kamait (JDU); Arvind Sawant (Shiv Sena-UBT); Suresh Mhatre (NCP-Sharad Pawar); Naresh Mhaske (Shiv Sena); Arun Bharti (Lok Janshakti Party-Ram Vilas); and Asaduddin Owaisi (AIMIM).

Those included from the Rajya Sabha are Brij Lal, Medha Vishram Kulkarni, Gulam Ali, Radha Mohan Das Agrawal (all BJP); Syed Naseer Hussain (Congress); Mohammed Nadimul Haque (Trinamool Congress); V Vijayasai Reddy (YSRCP); M Mohamed Abdulla (DMK); Sanjay Singh (AAP); and nominated member Dharmasthala Veerendra Heggade.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla is expected to name the committee's chairperson soon.

There is a view that BJP's Pal may head the panel but officials said a final call would be taken by Birla.

The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Thursday and referred to a joint committee of Parliament after a heated debate, with the Government asserting the proposed law did not intend to interfere with the functioning of mosques and the opposition calling it targeting of Muslims and an attack on the Constitution.

The committee will submit its report to the Lok Sabha by the last day of the first week of the next session, Rijiju said.

A delegation of Muslim clerics also met Rijiju to extend its support to the amendments to the Wakf Act, 1995, proposed by the Government amid the opposition's strong criticism.

BRONZE

Aman Sehrawat wins for India in 57 kg wrestling

PARIS, Aug 9 (PTI)



Aman Sehrawat of India and Darian Toi Cruz (red) of Puerto Rico in action during their match. (EPA/PTI)

WRESTLER Aman Sehrawat won the bronze medal, defeating Puerto Rico's Darian Cruz in the men's 57kg free-style category at the Paris Games here on Friday.

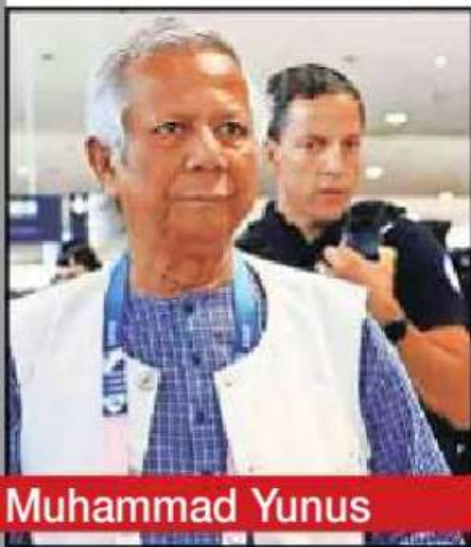
India now have five bronze medals and a silver, which javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra bagged on Thursday.

Aman won the bout 13-5 to keep the tradition of wrestlers returning home with a medal since 2008 Beijing Games, where Sushil Kumar had finished third.

On Thursday, Aman had lost to Japanese top-seed Rei Higuchi in the semi-final bout to set up a bronze-medal bout with Darian Cruz.

B'desh's interim Govt announces portfolios

■ Chief advisor Muhammad Yunus to oversee 27 Ministries



Muhammad Yunus

■ **By Anisur Rahman**
DHAKA, Aug 9 (PTI)

BANGLADESH'S interim leader Muhammad Yunus on Friday announced the portfolios of his 16-member Council of Advisors and named a former top diplomat to head the Foreign Ministry, who underlined the importance of maintaining a "balance" in Dhaka's relations with the "big powers".

The 84-year-old Nobel laureate's first task is to bring stability to

Bangladesh after he responded to a call by student protesters for him to temporarily lead the country following weeks of deadly anti-Government demonstrations led by Sheikh Hasina.

Yunus was sworn in on Thursday as the head of an interim Government following the toppling of Prime

Minister Hasina's Government and the dissolution of Parliament on Monday. He is also a longtime critic of Hasina, who fled to India

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