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PAPER WITH PASSION

Finance Minister yields

Facing a backlash over changes to the property transaction taxation, the FM has given some concessions to homeowners

Bowing to the popular pressure and critiques from MPs within the NDA coalition, the Central Government has relented to grant some relief for property transactions. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in the budget that the tax on long-term capital gains was reduced from 20% with indexation benefits to 12.5% but without indexation benefits. However, following significant opposition, an amendment is being made to The Finance Bill, 2024. For the transfer of a long-term capital asset such as land or a building acquired before July 23, 2024, the taxpayer can now choose to calculate their tax either at 12.5% without indexation under the new scheme or at 20% with indexation under the old scheme and pay whichever amount is lower. Indexation adjusts purchase price for inflation, reducing tax liability on gains from investments like debt funds. The government eliminated indexation benefits on long-term capital gains, increasing taxable gains. It prevents inflation from eroding returns on long-term investments.



This adjustment marks a significant reversal from the government's firm stance on the issue after the Budget.

The ministry officials had argued that the new tax rate structure, with a lower tax rate minus the indexation benefits, would benefit people in almost all cases. However, the industry experts had different opinions. Industry bodies had sought to rethink the proposal, observing that the removal of indexation benefits amounted to a retrospective tax change for those who had bought properties earlier. They pointed out that this would particularly hurt those who

had invested in assets that had delivered lesser appreciation in value over the years. It was widely feared that the removal of indexation benefits on long-term capital gains would slow down property transactions in the Mumbai real estate market, and the real estate engine of the country and could have cascading effects throughout the country. Besides, several MPs also urged the Government to reconsider the proposal. During the debate on the Finance Bill in the Lok Sabha, TDP MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu echoed the concerns of other MPs, emphasising that this issue involves taxpayers' hard-earned money and impacts middle-class people the most. He noted that the middle class views real estate as a safe investment and and so should be protected. Indeed he had a point, as the middle-class is facing the pinch of price rise and rising unemployment. If their small investments and savings are wiped off they would have nothing to fall back upon. Providing taxpayers with the option to choose between the two tax regimes would address some of their concerns. Thankfully the finance minister yielded to allow for the second option. This would indeed give some relief to small and middle-class homeowners, providing a more balanced approach to long-term capital gains taxation in the real estate sector.

PICTALK



Fishermen cast their nets in the Arabian sea, at the Kochi coast

The evolution of Rahul Gandhi

It may be premature to assess Rahul Gandhi's effectiveness as the new Leader of the Opposition, but his initial performance is promising



KALYANI SHANKAR

It might be too soon to judge how well Rahul Gandhi is doing as the new Leader of the Opposition. The current budget session ends in just a few days, so we'll need more time to understand his leadership fully. But he has begun well. After winning in the Lok Sabha polls, Rahul has been confident and strong both inside and outside the house, which is appropriate for an opposition leader. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen recently discussed Rahul's evolution since their days at Cambridge University. Sen underlined that Rahul has significantly matured over the years and underscored that his true test lies in how he steers the Opposition in Parliament. Rahul stepped into the shoes of the Leader of the Opposition, a quarter of a century after his political debut in 2004. The Lok Sabha had been without a Leader of the Opposition for a decade, as no opposition party had the requisite number of members to stake the claim in the last two Lok Sabhas. During the recent budget session, the first after Rahul became the LOP, he took a vital leadership role in his party and the Opposition. Since becoming the Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi has taken on more responsibilities. He now leads and represents the Opposition's viewpoint on various subjects. This is a new role for him. He organised protests, delivered powerful speeches against the Modi government, and worked closely with allies to coordinate their efforts on the floor. He also focused on critical issues for the people and made himself more accessible. In the recent budget session, Rahul Gandhi, as the Leader of the Opposition, took on an important leadership role within his party and the Opposition. He has organised protests, delivered powerful speeches against the Modi government, and worked closely with allies. Additionally, he has focused on critical issues for the people and made himself more accessible. Rahul Gandhi's backroom office has a



team of about twelve key members.

This team, led by General Secretary K.C. Venugopal and including Sam Pitroda, Sunil Kanugolu, K. Biju, B. Srivatsa, Manickam Tagore, Alankar Sawai, and Kaushal Vidyarthi, plays a vital role in managing Rahul's political activities and election strategies, including logistics and social media. Rahul's growth and evolution in the political arena have transformed him into a more confident leader, marking a significant departure from his previous image as a reluctant politician. This change has been compelling to witness in his political journey. Rahul finds it easier to take on a more assertive role now, with a substantial number of opposition members in the 18th Lok Sabha. Furthermore, the success of united allies in the 2024 polls has made them realise the power of unity.

When Rahul spoke as the Leader of the Opposition for the first time, he said, "While the government has political power, the Opposition also represents the voice of the Indian people. This time, the Opposition represents significantly more of the Indian people's voice than it



DESPITE BEING AN MP FOR THE PAST TWO DECADES, RAHUL WAS NOT CONSIDERED A GOOD PARLIAMENTARIAN. HE ASKED ONLY 99 QUESTIONS, PARTICIPATED IN 26 DEBATES, AND WASN'T ALWAYS PRESENT AT CRITICAL TIMES

did last time." Rahul Gandhi's criticisms of Prime Minister Narendra Modi have caused strong reactions from the ruling party. During Rahul's maiden speech as LOP, PM Modi spoke up for the first time in 10 years. Modi accused Rahul of saying that the entire Hindu society is 'violent'. The Prime Minister stated, "Democracy and the Constitution have taught me to take the Leader of the Opposition seriously." Modi's responses to Gandhi's criticisms show an acknowledgement of the changed situation and the resulting tension in the Parliament. Rahul Gandhi has been speaking out against the Modi government's decision to arrest AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and JMM chief Hemant Soren. He opposes the BJP's attempts to silence opposing viewpoints. This has caused increased tensions in Parliament for the ruling party. During his Lok Sabha campaign, Rahul Gandhi strategically showed a small red pocket edition of the Constitution at public meetings. This move effectively highlighted what he called the perceived threat to the Constitution from the BJP.

His use of the Constitution helped him gain support from reservation beneficiaries.

Despite being an M.P. for the past two decades, Rahul was not considered a good Parliamentarian. He asked only 99 questions, participated in 26 debates, and wasn't always present at critical times. Since 2014, he has been noticeably absent during budget sessions, only appearing occasionally. He also frequently went abroad, leaving the party in a crisis. Rahul is doing well as the Leader of the Opposition (LOP).

His success will depend on his political planning. He missed some opportunities in the past, like becoming a minister in Manmohan Singh's cabinet or strengthening the party as the Congress President. However, his current role shows his potential. He must use this opportunity to face future political challenges confidently. Rahul's belief in the power of the LOP to raise its voice in Parliament gives hope and optimism to the party.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PRESIDENT'S STATE VISIT

Madam — President Droupadi Murmu embarked on a six-day state visit to three nations: Fiji, New Zealand, and Timor-Leste a couple of days ago. I wonder why the President has undertaken this visit? How will engaging with these nations benefit India? Fiji and Timor Leste are almost unheard of countries in India. What is the government's agenda really? As both Fiji and New Zealand are approximately 11,000 kms and Timor Leste is about 6,500 kms away, it goes without saying that a to and fro visit to these countries would cost our nation a humongous sum. Besides, the President who would be travelling by a state aeroplane (read, like a private airliner) would leave a heavy carbon footprint. Will a RTI query in respect of the purpose and cost of the tri-nation jaunt be answered, if at all?

Avinash Godbole | Dewas

BLINDING HEADLIGHTS CAUSE ACCIDENTS

Madam — Blinding headlights are one of the important causes of road accidents in India. A driver can be blinded by the opposite vehicles as well as the rear ones. On an average, glaring headlights are direct or contributory causes of 75 percent of vehicular collisions in India. Of course high beam lights are useful in low visibility when there are little or no street lights. However, rules say high beams can be employed by the drivers only if there are no oncoming vehicles but not many drivers are sticklers for rules. Rear vehicles can distract the front drivers' vision by using bright lights within 60 metres.

It has become a fashion for several youngsters, especially in small towns and cities with none to keep a hawk's eye on them, to use ornamental illumination like flashy headlights. Flickers, Light emitting diodes(LED), and its variants, are freely used by irresponsible drivers. Section 177 of the Motor Vehicles Act (MVA) has explicitly detailed the proper and improper use of headlights. Many drivers, especially the non-professional ones, are oblivious to the correct usage of headlights and

Justice delayed is justice denied



This is with reference to your editorial "Justice Delayed". The Chief Justice of India's deep concern over the excessive delay in disposing of cases, as noted in the

editorial is a concern shared by all. The staggering fact that 44 million cases are pending and could take 300 years to resolve at the current pace should prompt the ruling government to seek a tangible solution. Currently, filing a case itself feels like a punishment for both parties involved.

Even after winning a case, the appeals process undertaken by the losing party makes the entire affair extremely frustrating. There is a pressing need to increase the capacity of courts at all levels to handle and dispose of cases in a timely manner. However, it is unfortunate that even the existing courts are forced to operate with severe manpower shortages. Simply changing the Acts and their names is not the change people desire; what is urgently needed is systemic and infrastructural improvement.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

this can mainly be blamed on poor quality of driving schools and doling out licences without proper application of mind.

Ganpat Bhat | Akola

TURMOIL IN BANGLADESH

Madam — Sheikh Hasina's resignation as Prime Minister of Bangladesh is a result of socio-political upheaval of her own making. Every nation is an enterprise owned and run by its people who elect a government to run it as also simultaneously place an Opposition as the auditor. So long as the auditor is facilitated by the government to put up dissenting notes and is willing to correction, the shareholders let the checks and balances play out. When the government fails to give credence to the opposition, a plethora of public fora and institutions come in to press an alternative narrative. Should the government resort to suppressing them too, the people step in as suo- moto auditor. The likes of social media then expound dissent and if this too goes unheeded, people act as regulators leveraging electoral

platforms to tone down aberrations in governance by impinging on electoral standing of the ruling dispensation. Should a government seek to neutralise the process of such franchise itself, as has been in many nations across the globe, people take to roads to convey the message. An extremely recalcitrant government could then compel people to set up tribunals and don the robes of judge and jury. Bangladesh has apparently slipped into this unhappy final phase. It's military may yet be sagacious enough to restore law and order and enable the nation to reclaim governance and eschew going the Myanmar way. There is a lesson for every progressive democratic nation. Stifling the elected opposition and relentless and heavy handed suppression of dissent per se in hubris of power, is bound to heavily set back economic progress while the socio political fabric stands frayed beyond repair.

R Narayanan | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Renewable energy: Paving the way for a sustainable future

By 2030, India plans to achieve 500 GW of installed capacity from non-fossil fuels, marking a significant shift towards sustainability and energy security

India's growth story over the past two decades has been marked by vibrant economic progress, largely driven by service exports and rising domestic consumption. As of 2024, the economy appears robust, poised to replicate its service sector success by transforming into a global manufacturing hub to leverage its demographic dividend.

A robust manufacturing sector necessitates significant resources, with power being a crucial component. Despite this, India's per capita electricity consumption remains low compared to global averages. As the country embarks on its manufacturing-focused era, electricity demand is expected to rise significantly. To meet this demand while adhering to climate commitments, India plans to add new electricity generating capacity primarily from non-fossil fuel sources. The goal is to achieve 500 GW of installed non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030.

By May 31, 2024, India's non-fossil fuel-based power generation capacity stood at 201.7 GW, with renewable energy, including small hydro pro-



jects, contributing 146.6 GW. To meet growing demands, a significant increase in renewable energy capacity is anticipated, supported by the renewable energy procurement roadmap from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), which targets 50 GW of bids annually from FY 2023-24 to FY 2027-28.

Regulatory policies for the renewable energy sector are governed by both central and state governments, as electricity is part of the concurrent list. Key aspects of central government policy include promoting domestic manufacturing of solar modules and electrolyzers, safeguarding domestic manufacturing, and domestic content requirements, and implementing policies to encourage specific types of electricity genera-

tion like rooftop solar and offshore wind.

India's renewable energy policy framework adopts a holistic approach, addressing multiple factors. For example, the Ladakh region, with excellent irradiation levels, lacks sufficient infrastructure to integrate its power into the grid. To tackle this, the government announced the green energy corridor. Furthermore, the government identified states with offshore wind potential and introduced a viability gap funding scheme with an outlay of Rs 7,453 crores for installing 1 GW of offshore wind projects. Regulatory policies also aim to enhance self-sufficiency in the energy. The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, with an outlay of Rs. 24,000 crores, targets achieving gigawatt-scale manufacturing capacity of high-efficiency solar PV modules. Additionally, the Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT) Program, with an outlay of Rs. 17,490 crores under the National Green Hydrogen Mission, supports domestic manufacturing of electrolyzers and green hydro-

gen production. These investments are expected to generate numerous direct and indirect jobs while ensuring energy security.

The government has also introduced schemes to promote distributed solar generation at the household level in both rural and urban areas. The PM-KUSUM scheme aims to reduce the agricultural sector's reliance on diesel and boost farmers' incomes by providing central government subsidies of up to 50% for installing standalone solar pumps and solarizing existing grid-connected agricultural pumps. Farmers can also install grid-connected solar plants on barren land and sell electricity to local distribution companies (DISCOMs). In the interim budget for FY 2024-25, the government announced the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojna, which offers subsidies covering up to 40% of solar panel installation costs. This scheme aims to equip 10 million homes with solar panels, saving INR 75,000 crores in electricity costs.

(The writer is a manager-investments at AMPIN Energy Transition, views are personal)



GAURAV PRABHURASHI



FIRST COLUMN

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

Praying, Chanting, meditation and other such practices can transform your life



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We are forever doing material acts like eating, sleeping, 'vihar' (entertainment) and, yes, work. Some of us may be doing some spiritual practices as well. Why is there such a mismatch? Because most people do not realize how beneficial spiritual practices are for a human being. Read on and you will agree. I have chosen ten common spiritual practices for this article. They are simple to do and almost everyone can benefit by doing them. Beginning with praying, what is so difficult to do it? Someone is not well in a family, and a family member prays for his or her quick recovery. Even small children pray for their mother when she is unwell. What happens then? God hears them, as He has eyes and ears everywhere. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 13.13)

What is God's response? He has to consider several factors like what does the person prayed for deserves, what effect it will have on other family members, who is praying, etc. There will be a response, which will be appropriate taking into consideration everything. Let us remember that God knows 'The Big Picture', which includes the past, present and future also.

Whatever God may decide, the act of praying sincerely curbs ego, which helps one to become humble – a necessary quality to be able to deal properly with others. Praying is also a good start for taking shelter from God – the topmost spiritual activity. Chanting of God's names and mantras is quite common across all religions. Many studies have been done to see the effects of chanting on the brain. They have found that chanting stimulates positive changes in the brain. Mantras with the sound 'Ohm'



are especially useful. God's names bring similar benefits. When we take God's name, He must respond. Didn't Lord Krishna respond to calls of Draupadi – "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna"? How the Lord respond to us depends again upon what we deserve and what will be good for us. 'Darshan' – seeing God's 'murti' in Deity form or a photo of one of God's incarnations like Krishna, Rama, etc. is very useful. This is my favourite spiritual act. I have hung a large photo of Lord Krishna on the right side of my bed. All I do is to sit or lie comfortably and look at the Lord's attractive face. Lord Krishna has allowed gaining spiritual knowledge to be pleasing in doing. (9.2) What better company than of God there can be? My Lord has become my own. And He rewards me in many ways. 'Atmabala' (inner strength) flows into me. This strength – the mother of all strengths has made me stronger mentally. I am also able to tolerate the inevitable miseries of this world better. Meditation is getting quite popular worldwide.

People are beginning to see the enormous benefits of this spiritual practice. Lord Krishna has recommended it strongly. In verse # 6.35, the Lord says, "Mind can be brought under control by practice." In verse # 12.8, He tells us where our mind should be fixed, i.e. in Him only. (12.8) In verse #18.65, the Lord asks us to develop His consciousness. Then, what will happen? We will be in God, i.e. become part of Him. (9.29) Could anything be better than that? Hearing about God is another great activity. Lord Krishna goes to the extent of indicating that those devoted to hearing from others will also benefit greatly. (13.25) There are many, who are conversant with spiritual truths. Satsang is a meeting of persons, who are conversant with spiritual truths. "And preachers of supreme knowledge (spiritual benefits) amongst My devotees please Me the most." (18.69) This is the highest devotion towards God. Remembering God and thanking Him whenever some good happens to us are immensely beneficial; they make us deserving of more such rewards. Why don't we do such activities? Because we are almost entirely focused on material acts. We can all do spiritual acts – the givers of great benefits both spiritual and material.

(The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

Negligence and tragedy:
The price of complacency

RAJDEEP PATHAK

The death of three IAS aspirant highlights severe systemic negligence by coaching center management, property owners, and municipal authorities



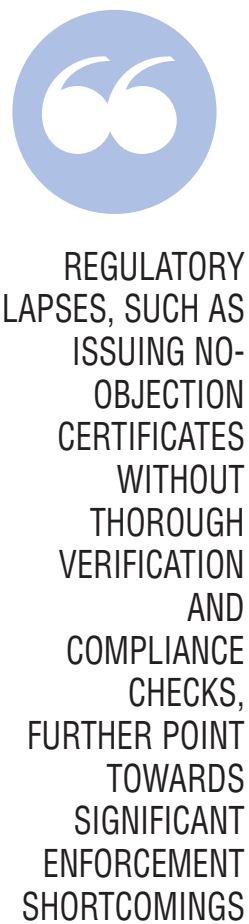
In reflecting on the powerful speech delivered by Mark Antony following the assassination of Julius Caesar, one cannot help but recall his stirring words: "Friends, Romans, countrymen, I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him." Antony's oration skillfully ignited the Roman populace, who were initially ambivalent towards Caesar's murder. Through his use of rhetorical questions and ironic praise for Brutus and the other conspirators, Antony incited the crowd to question the motives behind the assassination. < By revealing Caesar's will, which generously bequeathed wealth and public parks to the citizens, Antony further endeared Caesar to the people and painted the conspirators as traitors. The crowd, now convinced of Caesar's benevolence and the conspirators' treachery, erupted into chaos, leading to a violent riot. This turmoil precipitated a civil war, ultimately overthrowing the existing order and paving the way for the rise of the 'Second Triumvirate' (all sought revenge for the murder of Julius Caesar) and the end of the Roman Republic.

A tragic incident in the Capital City of India echoes this (Shakespearean) historical upheaval, where the death of three students (IAS aspirants) has incited public (students') outrage. On Saturday, July 27, 2024 evening, a supposed drainage burst led to flooding in the basement of Rau's IAS Study Circle in Old Rajinder Nagar used as a library where approximately 35 students were present when rainwater began to inundate the basement, creating a panic-stricken atmosphere. Despite attempts to evacuate, three students were trapped and subsequently died.

This disaster has cut short the dreams of the parents of three students. Unlike Bhola Baba – who philosophically dramatized death as an inevitable part of life following the Hatras stampede tragedy – the negligence displayed by the coaching centre owners in this instance cannot be so easily dismissed. The failure to ensure proper evacuation facilities has underscored the mismanagement of the institution.

Although the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has stormed into action, they

cannot fully absolve themselves of responsibility. More than anything else, the basement, intended for parking and storage, was illegally repurposed as a library. As the news became the talk of the town, sentiments of anger and frustration poured amidst huge grief and loss. The incident in Old Rajinder Nagar underscores a pervasive pattern of systemic negligence among various stakeholders, including coaching centre management, property owners, and municipal authorities. The illegal conversion of the basement into a library, without proper safety measures reveals a severe disregard for student safety. Compounded by chronic infrastructure deficiencies such as inadequate drainage systems, this negligence is exacerbated by municipal authorities' failures.



REGULATORY LAPSES, SUCH AS ISSUING NO-OBJECTION CERTIFICATES WITHOUT THOROUGH VERIFICATION AND COMPLIANCE CHECKS, FURTHER POINT TOWARDS SIGNIFICANT ENFORCEMENT SHORTCOMINGS

Regulatory lapses, such as issuing No-Objection Certificates (NOCs) without thorough verification and compliance checks, further point towards significant enforcement shortcomings.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi's (MCD) delayed actions in sealing other illegally repurposed basements reflect a reactive rather than proactive enforcement strategy. Additionally, the coaching centre's lack of an effective emergency plan, including proper drills and protocols, significantly contributed to the chaos and heightened the tragedy, demonstrating a critical need for better emergency preparedness, stricter regulations and oversight to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Accounts from traumatized students reveal harrowing experiences. Whether it is Aishwarya Rai, a 30-year-old UPSC aspirant from Kanpur, Nakul Tiwari, or Shreya, the very fact that they have been rescued from the terrifying moment of being drowned to death will linger

in their psyche for years to come. The question arises: why does it take such disasters for the administration to take action?

The arrest, bulldozing of illegal constructions and other preventive and punitive measures often come only after tragedy strikes. Videos now emerging tell tales of utter mismanagement and illegal use of properties, breaking all norms. Why are the students only now flagging these issues? Another question is why their seniors, who have perhaps lived and studied in these conditions and are either IAS aspirants or have cleared their examinations, did not raise such issues of negligence in the past. Moreover, if a few of them have become Civil Servants from these coaching centres, why didn't they, over the years, bring this to the notice of the local administration? Another crucial issue is that the commercialization of education, driven by the high demand for competitive exam preparation, should not compromise safety standards, which in this case has resulted in unsafe and overcrowded conditions.

The commercialization of education, characterized by the increasing influence of profit-driven motives, brings both benefits and drawbacks to student welfare. On the positive side, it often leads to improved infrastructure, better resources, and innovative teaching methods that enhance the learning experience. Private institutions do attempt to provide advanced facilities and extracurricular activities, fostering a more dynamic and engaging educational environment. This recent incident must become an eye-opener. It critically highlights the need for enhanced regulatory oversight and stricter enforcement of building codes and safety regulations, emphasizing regular inspections and audits to ensure compli-

ment. Investment in infrastructure, particularly drainage systems, is crucial to mitigate flooding risks, especially in flood-prone areas like Old Rajinder Nagar.

Additionally, educational institutions, particularly coaching centres, should be mandated to develop and regularly practice emergency evacuation plans, as safety drills can significantly improve preparedness and reduce panic during emergencies. Increased public awareness about safety regulations and accountability mechanisms is necessary, encouraging students and residents to report violations and demand action from authorities.

Moreover, the process for obtaining necessary permits and NOCs should be transparent and stringent, with severe penalties for deviations from approved plans. Public awareness and advocacy are crucial. Educating students and residents about safety standards and rights is another key factor. Further, creating platforms for community engagement and empowering residents with safety mechanisms is crucial.

More than anything else, authorities should respond promptly to such reports and take corrective action. While this is a sad moment for all of us to have lost young budding talents of our country in this manner, it is time we foster a culture of accountability, in our endeavour to safeguard the dreams and lives of countless students who come to Delhi in pursuit of their aspirations. The path forward requires a collective effort from authorities, institutions, and the public to prioritize human safety over commercial interests and ensure that such a tragedy never recurs.

(The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

Indian cardiologist sparks global debate on mind-based medical protocols

In a groundbreaking challenge to conventional medical practices, Prof B M Hegde has called for a paradigm shift in the treatment of serious ailments

The world of medicine is all set to see an intense debate on the medical protocol to be employed in curing serious ailments thanks to an Indian doctor.

An internationally reputed cardiologist Prof B M Hegde who is based in Mangalore in Karnataka has challenged the existing diagnostic system in the field of physical ailments practiced across the world and has called for a shift to mind-based cure protocol.

Dr Hegde says that if one wants to live a life free of ailments like cancer and other serious medical issues, all one needs to do is to love all and hate none. "The more you hate people and abuse/criticize them, the



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

medical constitution in your body gets deteriorated," he told The Pioneer. "Although there has been a lot of thinking going on in medical circles about the role of the mind in psychological disorders, much needs to be done in the field of physical ailments.

Recent data on the important role played by the human mind in the causation of major physical ill-

nesses like heart attacks and cancer have rekindled our interest in the intricacies of the working of the human mind vis a vis the human body. In the 17th century itself, William Harvey had clearly indicated that in all bodily afflictions there is a mental basis.

As there is no big money involved in this kind of research unlike the gold rush in the field of epidemiology and interventions, the field did not until very recently attract good researchers," writes Prof Hegde, who is also the chief editor of the "Journal of Science of Healing Outcomes", a super peer-reviewed scientific publication. Interestingly, Prof Hegde, a former visiting

professor of cardiology at the University of London, always had strong reservations about the treatment protocol for cardio vascular diseases and cancer. In the editorial of the July 2024 issue of the JSHO, he quoted from the Journal of American Medical Association which has published a large study on the connection between life stresses and their role in the causation of coronary artery diseases.

He said the JAMA study focused on the immediate and long-term effects of various emotional stressors that are a part of life in the modern rat race of the monetary economy. Prof Hegde with more than five decades of medical research and prac-



tice to his credit has found that hostility, anger, frustration and bereavement come up on top among the negative emotions.

"Love, compassion, social support and job satisfaction have control over one's situation, negative emotions acutely raised the blood

pressure as also the heart rate and the breathing rate," said the octogenarian professor who has been honoured with Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan by the President of India for the scintillating works he has done over the decades. According to Prof Hegde's experience, chronic stress does take its toll leading to killer diseases. "Emotions play a major role in one getting afflicted with such ailments. Scientists, business barons, professionals and politicians should bear this in mind.

When the competition becomes too intense, chances of one losing control shoot up and there can be no coming back to normalcy," he said.

Dr Hegde pointed out the debates in Parliament and election campaigns to drive home the point that one should be elegant and cool-headed during the battle for power. "Even military officers behave in a disciplined manner while they are engaged in fighting the enemies.

This is what we should learn to stay cool and free of ailments," he said. For the uninitiated, Prof Hegde is the author of many books and has written the preface for medical books published by medical scientists. His seminal work "What Doctors Don't Get to Study in Medical School" is widely read in the world of medicine and many doctors rate it as the Holy Bible of

Modern Medicine. If we stay away from unhealthy competition for wealth and power, we can keep serious ailments like heart disease and cancer miles away from us.

The only losers would be pharma companies that charge a fortune for a course of medicine. The JSHO has the whose-who of the world of medicine and science working as its editorial staff and board. This includes Prof Joanna Floros, and Evan Pugh Professor of Paediatrics and Obstetrics, Penn State University Hershey, USA, who is the co-editor in chief.

(The writer is a special correspondent with the Pioneer, views expressed are personal)

I THINK IT MIGHT BE SABOTAGE: BOXING ICON VIJENDER ON VINESH'S DISQUALIFICATION

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian boxing stalwart Vijender Singh has alleged that wrestler Vinesh Phogat's disqualification from the Olympics final might be a case of sabotage as elite athletes like her are well-versed with the techniques of cutting weight before major competitions.



Vijender, who is India's first and only male boxer to have won an Olympic medal, knows a thing or two about maintaining weight before major bouts and he said it is shocking that Vinesh was 100gm over in the weigh-in before an Olympic final. "I think it might be sabotage. 100gm, you have got to be kidding me. We athletes can shed 5 to 6kg overnight. It is difficult no doubt but we know how to control our hunger, thirst, and exert to the extreme," the middle-weight (75kg) boxer told PTI.

"And when I say sabotage I mean people who are not happy to see India rise as a sporting nation. This girl has been through so much, your heart breaks for her. What more could she have done? Which other test?" he wondered. Vinesh was the face of a lengthy protest against former Wrestling Federation of India head Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who has been accused of sexual harassment and intimidation by women wrestlers. She had endured police detention, nights on the streets and a tumultuous qualification process before

making it here. The highlight of her remarkable performance at the Olympics was the opening win over defending champion Yui Susaki of Japan who came into the competition undefeated in her international career. "I can't believe that Vinesh would make a mistake like this. She has been an elite athlete for so long that she knows, there has to be something more to it. I am worried for her, I hope she is fine. What has happened is not good at all," said Vijender, a trailblazer in Indian boxing. Athletes who compete in contact sports, where fights

are held as per weight categories, have to go through the painful process of staying within their divisions. It involves going hungry for hours, avoiding even liquids and in some desperate situations, stay huddled inside layers of blankets to sweat out the extra weight. "There have been times when I have spat out saliva continuously so that nothing goes inside, you know. One can't imagine this extreme exercise. There are special Sauna suits that we wear, they feel like a furnace and there are times we run wearing them to shed weight," he explained.

It's an extraordinary exercise that takes a physical and mental toll on athletes and in 2018, six-time world champion woman boxer M C Mary Kom, in an interview to PTI, had revealed how she lost 2kg in a matter of four hours. Mary Kom had landed in Poland for a tournament, where she eventually picked up her third gold of that year. But hours before she was to take the ring, she had gone through the strenuous process of shedding weight just to be eligible to fight. "We landed in Poland at round 3-3:30 in the morning and the general weigh-in was at



Tough challenge awaits Chopra in bid for another piece of history

PTI ■ PARIS

His stunning monster throw of 89.34m in the qualification round made quite a statement but a tough challenge awaits defending champion Neeraj Chopra as he seeks another piece of history in the Paris Olympics mens javelin throw final round here on Thursday. Just like he did at the same stage in the Tokyo Olympics three years back, Chopra needed just a few seconds to top the qualification round with his opening throw but the similarity ends there. This time, the quality of the field is better than Tokyo with nine throwers crossing the automatic final round qualification mark of 84m in Paris as against six in Tokyo. Out of the nine, five made it to the final round with their first throws and thus will have a lot in their tanks for the medal round.

The 26-year-old Chopra knows it too well, having been in the global circuit for more than eight years. "In the final, everyone has a different mindset and different situation. It will be a good competition. Whoever qualifies automatically is the best in preparation," Neeraj told journalists after his 'lightening' appearance on the field. He was in a hurry to go back to the Games Village and take rest to prepare for his best for the final round, as a lot is at stake on Thursday. Chopra will have a chance to become only the fifth man in Olympic javelin throw history to defend the title. Eric Lemming (Sweden; 1908 and 1912), Jonni Myyrä

(Finland; 1920 and 1924), Jan Zelezny (Czech Republic; 1992, 1996 and 2000) and Andreas Thorkildsen (Norway; 2004 and 2008) are the only ones to have defended the men's javelin gold medals in the Olympics. If he wins gold, and for that matter a medal, he will become the most decorated Indian in Olympics in individual sport. Shuttler PV Sindhu (one silver, one bronze), wrestler Sushil Kumar (one silver, one bronze) and shooter Manu Bhaker (two bronze) have won two Olympic medals each post Independence. The tremendous effort, which was the second best of his career, also set aside concerns surrounding Chopra's fitness after he revealed that he had been battling an adductor niggle in the build-up to the Games. His personal best continues to be 89.94m achieved back in 2022. His 89.34m throw may also raise hopes of millions of Indian fans to see Chopra cross the elusive 90m mark on Thursday. His effort was also the second-best qualifying throw at an Olympics after the 89.39m registered by the legendary Jan Zelezny at 2000 Sydney Games. But there were some ominous signs coming out from the qualification round which Chopra will have to be wary of. The peaking of two-time world champion Anderson Peters (personal best 93.07m) of Grenada as well as immediate hitting of form by Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem may indicate that the final round at Stade de France could be a classic contest. Peters, of the same age as Chopra, was beaten up and

Kellie of Ireland wins second boxing gold and retires

AP ■ PARIS

Kellie Harrington is an unusual boxing champion. She is passionate only about the amateur version of her pro-dominated sport, and she has long claimed to have no ambitions of being paid to fight. Minutes after she stepped onto the podium at Court Philippe Chatrier to have her second gold medal hung around her neck Tuesday night, Harrington announced her retirement from boxing. The money to be made from being a two-time Olympic gold medalist in a passionate fight nation like Ireland still isn't enough for Harrington to change her plans after her magical run at the Paris Games. "I'm done and dusted," Harrington said.



"I'm going to go out a champion. That's the way I want to go out. I don't want to go out and lose a fight and then retire. I'll retire happy." Harrington is the first Irish woman to win gold medals at two Olympics, and she is just one of four Irish athletes to retain an Olympic title. After winning

three years ago in Tokyo, she clinched her second gold with a remarkable charge through the Paris field, capped by her 4-1 victory over China's Yang Wenlu at Roland Garros. Harrington pressured Yang more than enough to get the victory despite losing the third round. The champion's most impressive win in Paris likely was in the semifinals, when she spectacularly outboxed Brazilian IBF lightweight champion Beatriz Ferreira, whose physicality and aggression had made her look like a gold-medal favorite. Harrington isn't the fastest or the most powerful woman in the lightweight division, but she might be the best ever to fight at the weight in the four Olympics with women's boxing. "It has been four fights with absolutely

fantastic opponents," Harrington said. "Everyone who is here is the best of the best. Everyone deserves respect." Harrington's final drew thousands of Irish fans to the famed tennis arena where she clinched her gold. They waved flags, chanted her name and generally put on a party while their improbable boxing hero got her final job done. "To have the support of the nation. It is just amazing," Harrington said. "The people here today lifted me. They made me feel like I wasn't tired and I was exhausted." Harrington danced in the ring after her victory, clearly thrilled to be fighting in front of her frenzied fans instead of in the mostly empty Ryogoku Kokugikan in Tokyo three years ago.

Demoralised India need to regroup quickly to win in bronze medal play-off

PTI ■ PARIS

A heart-wrenching defeat in the semifinals, notwithstanding, a demoralised Indian men's hockey team will have to regroup quickly and aim for a second consecutive podium finish at the Olympics when it takes on Spain in the bronze medal play-off here on Thursday. The Indians played bravely against Germany, putting their defence under pressure from the start and in the process took the lead in the seventh minute through a penalty corner conversion by skipper Harmanpreet Singh. But the Germans came back strongly in the second quarter and fourth quarters to secure the close win, courtesy some silly defensive lapses from the Indians, especially Jarmanpreet Singh. The Indians too were guilty of wasting too many scoring chances, including as many as 10 penalty corners, while converting two, one directly and another through variation. The opposition teams seemed to have found out a way to deny one of the world's best drag-flicker Harmanpreet as he managed to be on target just once on Tuesday. The over-reliance on Harmanpreet and lack of innovative penalty corner variations seemed to be hurting India badly here as they don't have much options in their hands. But the return of Amit Rohidas, who missed Tuesday's match after being shown the red card against Great Britain in the quarterfinal, should bolster the Indian defence and also give more chances from



penalty corners as he is second best option from set pieces after Harmanpreet. The Indians were looking to break a 44-year-old jinx to reach an Olympic final but it eluded them narrowly. The last time India made the Olympic hockey final was way back in 1980 Moscow Games, which, in fact, was their last of the eight gold medals at the quadrennial event. A place in final would have at least assured India a silver medal after 1960 Olympics but that also slipped out of hands. But all is not lost for the Indians as they still have a chance to claim a podium finish if they beat Spain on Thursday in the bronze medal match. For that, the Indians will have to leave the baggage of the semifinal loss behind and come out with a fresh mind to get the better of Spain. Veteran India goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, who is playing his last international tournament, reminded his teammates that all is not lost. "It's a heartbreaking loss for us (against Germany). We had the chance to win gold, but now, we have to forget this semifinal

and focus on the bronze medal match," he had said. "It's a medal match and it's about the country. It's about those 19 players here, all the staff. And I think we all get a last opportunity to play, to get a medal for our country rather than worrying about what happened today (Tuesday). "These 19 players should play like this is our last opportunity as a player to get a medal for our country." Going by form and world ranking, the Indians are clear favourites to win the tie against Spain but in the end it will all boil down to the mental aspect of the side. While India lost a close semifinal, Spain were thrashed 0-4 by Netherlands. In world ranking too, Spain are placed eighth while India are currently at the fifth spot. But it would be easier said than done for the Indians as Spain, while not matching India's Olympic achievements, has made significant strides in recent decades. The Spanish team has secured two European Championship titles and has consistently participated in World Cups since 1971.

AP ■ PARIS

All the favored teams in the first three men's basketball quarterfinals at the Paris Olympics had problems. Canada lost to France, Serbia erased a 24-point deficit to beat Australia. Germany had to shake off a double-digit deficit before beating Greece. So, going into the fourth and final game of the night, the U.S. knew what it had to do. "We wanted to come out and make sure we were the aggressor," U.S. Coach Steve Kerr. They made it look easy, too. Devin Booker led a balanced front with 18 points and the Americans had little trouble with Brazil in the quarterfinals of the Paris Olympics, winning 122-87 on Tuesday. The U.S. (4-0) moves on to face Serbia (3-1) in Thursday's semifinals, while Germany (4-0) takes on France (3-1) in the other semifinal. Winners of those games will play Saturday

US rolls into semifinals of basketball tournament, eases past Brazil 122-87

night for the gold medal; Thursday's losers will play Saturday morning for the bronze medal. "Everybody expects us to win," U.S. Forward Jayson Tatum said. "But you don't take things for granted, right? Canada lost earlier. It's a different game. It's not like playoffs, where it's a series. We've got one game and a lot of (stuff) can happen in one game, especially over here." If there was one issue, it was this: LeBron James left in the third quarter after catching an elbow around his left eye, struck by Brazil's Georjinho de Paula while going for a rebound. James went down, eventually pressed a towel over the eye and left for the locker room area later in the



third. Kerr said James needed four stitches. "I'm all right," James said. "Got hit with an inadvertent elbow around the eye." Anthony Edwards scored 17 points, while Joel Embiid - booed again in France, of

course - had 14 points and seven rebounds in 12 first-half minutes for the Americans. Anthony Davis finished with 13 points and eight rebounds for the U.S. James had 12 points and nine assists. Kevin Durant scored 11 points

and passed Lisa Leslie as the U.S. Olympic career scoring leader, men's or women's. Leslie had 488 points in her four Olympic appearances, all of which ended with gold medals. Durant is trying to go 4 for 4 on the gold front as well; he's two wins away from getting that done. "He's incredible. He was born to play ball and he's simply incredible," James said. "I'm happy for him. Congratulations to him. I'm super proud of him. And he's got more to go." There was a moment where Brazil might have thought it had a chance. It trailed the U.S. by only eight midway through the second quarter. A big deficit had turned into something rather manageable.

Echikunwoke changes countries and wins a hammer silver for US

AP ■ SAINT-DENIS

This time at the Olympics, hammer thrower Annette Neka Echikunwoke got to compete. Not only compete, but win a medal - for the United States. Three years ago, Echikunwoke arrived at the Tokyo Games ready to represent Nigeria, but she wound up needing to leave before even getting to take a throw. Nigeria was among a handful of countries deemed "high risk" by track's anti-doping regulators in the lead-up to those Olympics - forcing its athletes to be subjected to more drug testing. Echikunwoke was among those from Nigeria who did not meet the requirement and so was not allowed to participate. The 28-year-old was born in

Ohio and originally decided to represent Nigeria because that's where her parents are from. But after the issues in 2021, she switched her Olympic country to the U.S., and on Tuesday night became the first American woman to earn Summer Games medal in the hammer, getting a silver. Echikunwoke was in the early lead before Canada's Camryn Rogers won the gold on her second-to-last throw. "I think (this medal) could have happened three years ago, but I'm happy it's happening now," Echikunwoke said. "I feel like everything happens for a reason, even if it's bad or good or ugly or whatever the case may be. This is beautiful." She remembers that time in Tokyo so vividly, such as not being able to walk in

the opening ceremony. "Not the best feeling, as you could imagine," said Echikunwoke, who went to the University of Cincinnati. Echikunwoke's application to change what country she would compete for finally came through at the last minute before the U.S. Nationals in 2022, and she earned a spot for the world championships that year. Now, she's an Olympic medalist for the red-white-and-blue. "It doesn't feel right now," she said. "I can't really put it into words." Echikunwoke led after the third round Tuesday with a throw of 75.48 meters (247 feet, 7 inches). Rogers, though, threw the hammer 76.97 (252-6) on her second-to-last attempt to overtake her. Bronze went to Zhao Jie of China.





HISTORY-MAKING BHAKER ARRIVES HOME TO ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Star pistol shooter Manu Bhaker landed back in the country on Wednesday after her historic feat of winning two medals in a single edition of the Olympic Games and was welcomed by hundreds of supporters and her family, who braved a steady drizzle to give her a memorable reception here. The Air India flight (AI 142), which brought Bhaker from Paris to Delhi, landed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport at around 9:20am, delayed by one hour.

Hundreds of people, who waited at the airport long before her arrival despite the morning drizzle in the city, accorded her — and her coach Jaspal Rana — an enthusiastic reception. The 22-year-old Bhaker won a bronze each in the women's 10m air pistol and 10m air pistol mixed team event — where she had paired with Sarabjot Singh — to script Olympic history for the country. Before her, only British-Indian athlete Norman Pritchard had achieved the rare landmark for the country with his two silver

medals in 200m sprint and 200m hurdles at the 1900 Olympics but this happened in the pre-Independence era. Before leaving for India, Bhaker had stated that she was looking forward to a grand welcome and she was not disappointed on Wednesday. The youngster was greeted with bouquets, garlands, and celebratory dhol after emerging from the airport exit. Flower petals were showered on her and Rana as soon as they came out amid significant police presence to manage the crowd. Among those present were

Bhaker's parents — Ram Kishan and Sumedha — and sports enthusiasts and officials from her home state Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, the state to which Rana belongs. Rana's father was also there at the airport. "It is a matter of pride for us that a daughter of India is coming back after creating history by winning two medals in an Olympics. It has never happened before. She is only 22 years old," said former Uttarakhand Sports Minister and Rana's father, Narayan Singh Rana. "She is coming along with her

coach Jaspal Rana. He is my son. He brought glory playing for India in shooting. Jaspal Rana and Abhinav Bindra started it all," he added. People gathered at the airport long before her arrival and they celebrated her feat with song and dance, holding banners with photos of Bhaker and Rana. Bhaker will be meeting sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya in the afternoon. She will head back to Paris on Saturday to participate in the closing ceremony on Sunday where she will be one of India's flag-bearers.



Top surfers converge in Kovalam for final National Surfing Championship

PTI ■ CHENNAI
The Covelong Classic, the final National Surfing Championship of the year, is set to kick off at Kovalam near here on Thursday, with over 75 surfers from across the country competing for top honours. The event will happen across four categories — Men's Open, Women's Open, Junior Boys & U-16, and Junior Girls & U-16. The 2024 season started with the International Surfing Festival Kerala Varkala, followed by the Indian Open of Surfing in Mangalore, and the third stop — Mahabs Point Break Challenge — happening earlier this month in Mahabalipuram. Covelong Classic will be a three-day surfing carnival organised by the Tamil Nadu Surfing Association under the aegis of the Surfing Federation of India, to be hosted by Surf Turf. The competition has also received significant support from the Tamil Nadu Government and the Ministry of Youth Welfare and Sports Development. Among the top surfers to participate will be Ajeesh Ali, Srikanth D, Harish M and

Ramesh Budihal in the Men's Open categories. Recently, Ajeesh, Harish and Srikanth were named in the Indian squad for the Asian Surfing Championship happening next week in Maldives. Additionally, Srikanth D will be looking to defend his title. In the Women's Open category, Kamali P (ranked first) has already secured the overall championship title, making her performance at the Covelong Classic irrelevant. However, she is anticipated to face stern competition from fellow surfers Sandhya Arun (ranked second), Shrishti Selvam (ranked third), and Sugar Shanti Banarse (ranked fourth). Kamali and Sugar have also been selected for the Indian squad competing in the Asian Surfing Championship, representing the Women's Open and Junior U-18 categories, respectively. Local surfers Tavay Arun and Kishore Kumar will grab eyeballs, thanks to their recent performances and national rankings in the Junior Boys & U-16 category. Additionally, fellow local surfer Harish P, having gained

recognition for his impressive surfing skills, will aim to defend his Covelong Classic championship title with determination. In the Junior Girls & U-16 category, defending champion Kamali P will look to secure a double victory, as she is a strong contender for both the Women's Open and Junior Girls & U-16 titles at the Covelong Classic. Meanwhile, Dhamayanthi Sriram (ranked second) and Saanvi Hegde (ranked third) will be putting forth their best efforts to claim the title. Surfing Federation of India's president, Arun Vasu said, "As the surfing calendar culminates with the year's final national championship, the Covelong Classic, the best surfers are set to compete in the Asian Surfing Championship. I would like to extend my best wishes to all the surfers participating in this prestigious national championship." Apart from the medals and trophies, victors in each category will receive cash rewards, with the overall competition champion being awarded a Jawa Yezdi motorbike.

Refugee athlete's dream of taekwondo medal cut short

AP ■ PARIS
Having overcome so many hurdles, the disappointment was immense for refugee athlete Hadi Tiranvalipour as his dream of winning an Olympic medal was cut short when he lost in a taekwondo qualification bout on Wednesday at the Paris Games. Tiranvalipour was up against Omar Ismail of Palestine in the men's under 58 kilograms competition and was handed a 2-0 loss in a lopsided match at the lavish Grand Palais venue on the first day of taekwondo events. "I'm not satisfied with my performance, I don't have an answer for this. I wanted a good result, it's not happening," he said. Before making the IOC Refugee Olympic Team, Tiranvalipour fought for eight years as a member of the



Iranian national team, winning the gold medal at the 2015 Asian Junior championship back in 2015. But Tiranvalipour, who also worked as a TV presenter and studied sports science, was forced to leave his country after speaking out in favour of women's rights, losing his job. In October 2022, he travelled to Turkey, then to Italy where he lived in a forest for 10 days and then slept three months

on a sofa in a shared accommodation that Iranian students had helped him find. "Our journey is too difficult," he said after his loss to Ismail. "Not for me, for all the refugee athletes. It's too difficult for each of us to be here." Athletes from the refugee team compete under the same flag and come from different parts of the world. The team was created for the Rio Olympics in 2016 as a symbol of hope

and to call attention to the plight of refugees worldwide. After training alone in a park, Tiranvalipour finally approached the Italian federation, which helped him apply for asylum and settle for good in the country. In the build-up to the Games, he trained at the Olympic Sports Center in Roma with the likes of Vito Dell'Aquila, the defending Olympic champion. After missing out on Olympic qualification during the European qualifiers in March, he was selected by the refugee Olympic team and had big expectations in Paris. "I'm not satisfied because I had to make too many sacrifices about my losing weight process, my training. I'm really sad," he said. "We passed so many difficult journeys. If you have a target, you have to keep going. Life is like this."

US women's volleyball team advances to semifinal with straight-set win against Poland

AP ■ PARIS
The reigning Olympic champion U.S. Women's volleyball team posted a straight-set victory against Poland on Tuesday night at the Paris Olympics. The Americans led throughout while taking the first two sets, 25-22 and 25-14. They fell behind 5-0 and 7-1 in the third set before rallying to close it out, 25-20. Next up is a semifinal date on Thursday with powerhouse Brazil, which swept the Dominican Republic earlier in the day. It's a rematch of the Tokyo Games final. Turkey eliminated China with a 3-2 victory and was waiting on the result of Tuesday's late match between Italy and Serbia to learn its next opponent. US coach Karch Kiraly said he was thrilled to get his players off their feet sooner — and not have to play any extra sets, especially for setter Jordyn Poulter as she continues to regain her form in match play after coming back from a devastating left knee injury in December 2022 that required surgery. "To be able to chip away and get back and tie it up at 13-all and get out with 3-0 instead



of 17-15 in the fifth, which happens so often, that's really big, especially for somebody like Jordyn Poulter who's on a really good recovery," Kiraly said. "But to have less load here and more recovery before we play a really big Brazil team was big." Kiraly made a lineup change after the team's five-set defeat to China on July 29 to open group stage play, moving veterans Jordan

Larson and Kelsey Robinson Cook to reserve roles and bringing in Avery Skinner and Kathryn Plummer. The Americans bounced back to beat Serbia two days later. The new starting six are beginning to click. "The first time we ever played with this starting lineup was against Serbia, so now we've got three matches," Kiraly said. "Most other teams have been playing for years with the same (lineup). We now have three matches, so things are coming together." Andrea Drews had 13 points, while Plummer and Skinner contributed 12 apiece. Plummer credited the Americans for improving their service pressure and four-time Olympian Larson's boost off the bench to get them back in it. "We started out the third set very slow, we tend to do that even when we have a 2-0 lead in the match," she said. "We got out of that first rotation and then I think we just got strings of points together, had a couple of big momentum swings with some big blocks, some big serves... The third set was a testament to what happens when we stay together and connected."

Sprint powerhouse Jamaica has had more injuries than medals and celebrations

AP ■ SAINT-DENIS
The midpoint of the Olympic track meet used to be time for Jamaican sprint stars — Usain Bolt, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and all the rest — to catch their breath, recover from their victory parties, then start gearing up for more. This year in Paris, there hasn't been much to celebrate, and there's a sense that it could be years, not days, until the good times start rolling again for the Caribbean nation known for sun, sand and sprints. After Tuesday, which marked the halfway point of the action at the Stade de France, Kishane Thompson's silver in the 100 meters was the only medal the Jamaican team had won on the track. And in a twist hardly anyone on the island could have ever imagined, Jamaica actually had more medals from field events

(three) than from sprinting. "I know the world is used to Jamaica winning, and Jamaica always celebrating," said Asafa Powell, the Jamaican legend who held or shared the 100-meter world record for nearly three years before Bolt broke it when he surged onto the scene in 2008. "But believe me, it's going to happen again." It almost happened this time. Thompson's quest to become Jamaica's next Olympic male sprint champ came a scant .005 seconds short. **THE JAMAICAN SPRINTING WOMEN HAVE DEALT WITH INJURIES:** For the women's program, the problem has simply been getting a contender to the starting line. Elaine Thompson-Herah, Shericka Jackson and Fraser-Pryce, all in their 30s, all pulled out of their Olympic sprints with injuries. They made up

the entire 100-meter podium in Tokyo in 2021. The team that won 15 of the 24 Olympic medals in the women's 100 and 200 between 2008 and 2021 will go home with none this year. It will mark the first time since 1976 the country hasn't won a women's medal in either of those events. "I think people appreciate us more when they see a down period like this," said Powell, who is in town hanging at the PUMA house, which used to be party central for Jamaica at the Olympics. The pieces started crumbling on June 9, when Thompson-Herah, the two-time defending champion at 100 and 200 meters, hurt her Achilles at a meet in New York. Exactly a month later, Jackson, the second-fastest woman of all time at 200 meters, pulled up lame in a race in Hungary. It left 37-year-old Fraser-Pryce



She arrived in Paris, only to pull out of the 100 first, then the 200. Even had she raced, there were questions as to what kind of impact she would have had in the 200 given her pedestrian 22.29-second run at Olympic trials. It left 37-year-old Fraser-Pryce

as the only healthy member left from the group. But that ended Saturday when, shortly before the 100 semifinals, she pulled out with an undisclosed injury, saying on social media it was "difficult for me to describe the depth of my disappointment." **WHO ARE THE NEXT**

STARS FOR JAMAICAN TRACK?: Now, track fans await the lineup for Thursday's 4x100 relays. Have the old guard healed enough to compete? Or will the world see the likes of Tia Clayton, 19, who finished seventh in the 100 final; Shashalee Forbes, 28, who finished sixth in the 100 semifinal; and Niesha Burgher, 21, who came in fifth in the 200-meter semifinal? "It's a very young team," said Lanae Tava-Thomas, another relay candidate, who is 23 and finished fifth in the 200-meter semifinal. "We definitely have time to develop. It's going to be a very strong team when we get actually fully developed." **JAMAICA HAS A HISTORY OF FINDING NEW SPRINTERS:** History shows there is hope for Jamaica. There was a time when Merlene Ottey (three silver, six

bronze medals over six Olympics with Jamaica) seemed irreplaceable. Then along came Veronica Campbell-Brown, who won eight Olympic medals, including three golds, over a stretch that covered 2004-16. In the weeks before the 2008 Beijing Games, vitriol flew at the then-21-year-old newcomer, who then went by Shelly-Ann Fraser, from those who believed the spot she captured in the 100 was depriving Jamaica and "VCB" a sure medal. Fraser won gold that year and again in 2012. She won eight medals and became one of Jamaica's all-time greats over the span of four Olympics before this year. If the next Fraser is out there, she hasn't arrived yet, though Thompson's relatively quick emergence on the men's side — he was a virtual unknown

outside the island before June — shows how fast things can change. **EVEN USAIN BOLT STARTED SLOWLY AT HIS FIRST OLYMPICS:** Remember this: Four years before he became an international celebrity, Bolt made his Olympic debut in the 200 meters in Athens. He went out quietly in the first round. Four years later, though, the 6-foot-5 force of nature turned the Olympic track into his own personal stage — 9-point-something seconds of running followed by a reggae-filled, dance-fest and capped off by his iconic bow-and-arrow victory pose. At times during this Olympic track meet, it has felt like more than eight years have passed since Bolt reigned supreme. But Powell remains hopeful. "We will see Jamaica celebrating again," he said.

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