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INSIDE

MONEY 10
GDP SLOWDOWN IN Q2 NOT SYSTEMIC, Q3 TO COMPENSATE FOR MODERATION: FM

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Paisa yeh paisa... notes rock RS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A wad of currency notes found near the seat allotted to Congress leader and eminent lawyer Abhishek Singhvi in the Rajya Sabha rocked the Upper House on Friday, with the Opposition, and ruling alliance Member of Parliament trading charges and the Congress Member of Parliament demanding a probe into the 'security lapse'. An investigation has been ordered in accordance with practice by Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar. "It was my duty and I'm obliged to inform the House. This is a routine anti-sabotage check which takes place," Dhankhar said. Dhankhar added that he was expecting someone would claim the currency notes, but no one has so far. "Does it reflect the state of the economy that people can afford to forget it," he posed. Soon after the official papers were laid on the table in the morning, Dhankhar said security staff had recovered a wad of Rs 500 notes from the seat allotted to Congress MP Abhishek Manu Singhvi, leading to an uproar in the House. While Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge said the Chairman should not have named the member without an investigation being completed, Leader of the House JP Nadda accused the Opposition of showing eagerness on "some issues" while wanting to cover up other issues. Singhvi Friday termed the "recovery" of cash from his



Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar conducts proceedings in the House during the Winter session of Parliament PTI

seat in the Rajya Sabha "bizarre" and demanded a probe into what he described as a "security lapse". He also suggested that glass enclosures should be made to prevent anyone from planting 'ganja' on seats in an MP's absence. The currency notes were recovered from seat number 222, which is allotted to Singhvi, during an anti-sabotage check on Thursday, Dhankhar said. "After the adjournment of the House yesterday, a wad of currency notes was apparently recovered by security officials from seat no 222 presently allotted to Abhishek Manu Singhvi, elected from the state of Telangana," said the RS Presiding officer. As a ruckus broke out, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju asked, "Why should there be an objection to the name being taken? The Chairman has pointed out the seat number and the member who

occupies that. What is the problem with that?" He said carrying bundles of notes in the House is not appropriate and agreed that there should be a serious investigation into the matter. According to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president and Union Minister JP Nadda, the matter was serious and the opposition and treasury benches should not be divided as it is an attack on the dignity of the House. He also suggested that the Rajya Sabha should pass a resolution stating the proceedings of the House should never be disrupted. Taking a jibe at opposition members, Nadda said, "On some issues, you show eagerness, while you want to cover up other issues" to which Kharge objected, saying, "Why is Mr Nadda saying we are trying to suppress the matter... You do that, we don't do that." As the controversy spiralled, Singhvi termed the incident

bizarre and added that politics on issues such as this showed the system in a bad light and "demeans our level". The Congress MP clarified that he carries only one Rs 500 note when he goes to the Rajya Sabha. "I reached inside the House at 12.57 pm yesterday and the House rose at 1 pm; then I sat in the canteen till 1.30 pm with Ayodhya Rami Reddy then, I left Parliament!" he said in a social media post. "I feel there should be a glass cabin for every seat in Parliament. This will allow an MP to lock his seat before leaving for home and no person can keep anything like ganja." Deputy Chairman Harivansh, who was in Chair post lunch session, sought to pacify the members of the ruling party and urged them to sit down and allow the House to function. As unrelenting BJP members continued to raise slogans, he adjourned the House for the day.

Amid strain in ties, MEA to reach Dhaka

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday announced that Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri will travel to Dhaka on December 9, a visit that comes amid strain in ties with Bangladesh over attacks on minorities, including Hindus, in the neighbouring country. External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said Misri is travelling to Bangladesh to attend a meeting under the framework of Foreign Office Consultations. "The foreign secretary is scheduled to visit Bangladesh for Foreign Office Consultations on December 9. This is part of our structured interactions with the Bangladesh side," he said. Jaiswal was responding to a question at his weekly media briefing. On the arrest of Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das, the spokesperson said India expects a fair, just and transparent legal process in the case. "We have spoken on this issue earlier. We would like to reiterate our expectation that relevant legal processes underway in Bangladesh are executed in a fair, just and transparent manner, ensuring full respect for the legal rights of concerned individuals," he said. The relations between India and Bangladesh came under strain after the interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus came to power. India has been expressing concerns over attacks on minorities, especially Hindus, in that country. There has been a spate of attacks on minorities including on the Hindu community in Bangladesh in the last few months. India last week said the interim government in Bangladesh must live up to its responsibility of protecting all minorities as it expressed serious concern over the "surge" of extremist rhetoric and increasing incidents of violence against Hindus. India had also hoped that the case relating to Das, arrested on a charge of sedition, would



Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri

be dealt with in a just and fair manner. Das was arrested at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport last month in connection with a sedition case.

INDIA DEMANDS STRONG ACTION FROM PAKISTAN AGAINST MASOOD

India on Friday demanded strong action from Pakistan against Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar, after a report emerged that he delivered a speech recently at a public gathering in Bahawalpur. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said if the report is correct, then it has exposed Pakistan's "duplicitous" in containing terrorist activities. "We demand that strong action be taken against him (Azhar) and he should be brought to justice. There has been denial that he is not there in Pakistan," Jaiswal said. "If the reports are correct, then it exposes the duplicity of Pakistan. Masood Azhar is involved in cross-border terror attacks on India and we want that strong action be taken against him," he added. Jaiswal made the remarks in response to a question at his weekly media briefing.

Class 12 student shoots principal dead in MP school

PNS ■ BHOPAL

In a shocking incident, Surendra Kumar Saxena, the 55-year-old principal of Dhamora Government Higher Secondary School, in Chhatrapur district was shot dead on school premises on Thursday. The tragic event unfolded in the school bathroom, where Saxena was fatally shot in the head by a Class 12 student. According to police, the accused followed Saxena into the bathroom before committing the crime. The sound of the gunshot caused panic throughout the school. Staff members, rushing to investigate, found Saxena lying in a pool of blood. He was declared dead at the scene. The student allegedly fled the school on Saxena's two-wheeler, accompanied by another student. Both students, identified as residents of Dhillapur village, have a history of indiscipline, according to Superintendent of Police Agam Jain. CCTV footage from the school shows the two students fleeing after the incident. While the exact motive remains unclear, Saxena's family suspects foul play. His brother, Rajendra Saxena, claimed, "Some individuals at the school were pressuring him unnecessarily and harassing him to carry out wrongful acts. This murder appears to be part of a planned conspiracy." The police have launched an investigation into the matter and are actively searching for the accused. The firearm used in the incident is also under scrutiny, as authorities work to determine how the student obtained it. The killing has sent shockwaves through the local community, raising serious concerns about safety and discipline in schools. Parents and residents have called for stricter measures to prevent such incidents, emphasising the need for enhanced security on educational premises. Saxena, who had been the principal of the school for nearly five years, was described by colleagues and students as a dedicated educator.



Temp to fall in State after 48 hrs

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Even as the winter chill is still missing, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday informed that there is every possibility that the minimum or night temperature in Odisha would fall in the next 48 hours. As per the Regional Office of the IMD here, the minimum temperature is likely to dip by 2 to 4 degree Celsius during the next two days and thereafter rise by 2 to 3 degrees in subsequent three days. Earlier in the day, the IMD informed that a cyclonic circulation lies over Equatorial Indian Ocean and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal in lower tropospheric levels. Under its influence, a low-pressure area is likely to form over central parts of south Bay of Bengal around December 7. The system is likely to move west-north-westwards and reach over southwest Bay of Bengal off the Sri Lanka-Tamil Nadu coasts around December 12.



Rescue work underway after a double-decker bus collided with a tanker on Agra-Lucknow Expressway, in Kannauj district, Uttar Pradesh. At least six people were killed and 40 others suffered injuries, according to officials PTI

25 dead in multiple road accidents across UP

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

A spate of road accidents across Uttar Pradesh over Thursday night and Friday has left 25 people dead and many others severely injured. The crashes, involving wedding parties, pilgrims, and overloaded vehicles, were attributed to speeding, driver fatigue, and alcohol consumption, highlighting critical lapses in road safety. The most severe incident occurred on the Agra-Lucknow Expressway in Kannauj, where a sleeper bus traveling from Lucknow to Delhi overturned after the driver reportedly fell asleep at the wheel. The bus collided with a water tanker on the

median before flipping over near kilometer marker 140. Eight passengers died on the spot, while over 40 others sustained injuries. Locals and rescue teams broke the windows to free those trapped inside. The injured were transported to hospitals in Saifai, Tirva, and Saurikh. Eyewitnesses described chaotic scenes as passengers screamed for help in the aftermath. In Pilibhit, six people lost their lives in a crash involving a speeding Ergita car. The vehicle, carrying 11 passengers returning to Khatima, Uttarakhnad, from a wedding, lost control on the Pilibhit-Tanakpur Highway near Neuria and struck a tree before overturning into a ditch.

In Balangir

Woman borrows 50K to bring hubby's body back

PNS ■ BALANGIR

The ordeals of migrant workers from Balangir continue with two of them from Saintala dying in the last 10 days. But the indifferent attitude of the district administration has compounded the woes of their families. In the latest instance, the body of Kishore Majhi, who was working as a migrant worker in Telangana, was carried to his native place Ambapali village on



Wednesday. Making things worse, the hapless wife and little girl of the deceased had to borrow Rs 50,000 from the villagers to pay the ambulance bill as the company owner and the 'Sardar' (middleman) refused to help

them. As per sources, Kishore was working as a migrant worker in Telangana. His wife and little daughter had a tough time bringing back his body to the village following his death. Somehow, they managed to bring the body in an ambulance and requested the villagers for some financial assistance to pay the ambulance bill. As per reports, no officials from the local administration visited the house to extend a helping hand.

Polavaram issue rocks State Assembly

House repeatedly adjourned

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Assembly on Friday witnessed repeated adjournments by Speaker Surama Padhy amid ruckus over the issue of Andhra Pradesh Government's Polavaram irrigation project. Members of the Congress created pandemonium by expressing their dissent with slogans after coming to the Well of the House as soon as the Question Hour began. The uproar ensued after the

Speaker rejected their adjournment motion relating to the Polavaram project, leading to the protests. Meanwhile, Opposition BJD and Congress rapped the ruling BJP over the issue. "BJD has always been fighting for the interest of the people of Odisha. We will continue to do so," said Leader of the Opposition, Naveen Patnaik. Congress Legislature Party Leader Rama Chandra Kadam said, "The Centre is supporting the Polavaram project and providing huge amount of funds for it. Some parts of Odisha will be inun-

dated due to the project; and as a result, the people in the area will suffer. But the Odisha Government has remained a mute spectator." In response, the BJP said the opposition parties are trying to mislead the people of Odisha over the issue. "The way the opposition parties are misleading the people of Odisha has stunned one and all. We are also concerned about the Polavaram project. Land in Odisha will not be provided to the project illegally," said BJP member Ashok Mohanty.

Flight threats: NIA may probe 16 cases

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

At least 16 cases registered in connection with threats to flights of different airlines operating from Delhi are likely to be transferred to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), official sources said on Friday. It has been learnt that the Delhi Police has written to the city government's home department to transfer the cases to the NIA, they said, adding that it would be further sent to the Union home ministry for final approval. "The matter was related to national security and it has an international ramification. All these 16 cases were registered under the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against Safety of Civil Aviation (SUA SCA) Act with BNS sections and they needed deeper probe," an official source said. In the last two weeks of October, more than 510 domestic and international flights received bomb threats that later turned out to be hoaxes, causing major operational and financial distress for the airlines across the country. Most of the threats were issued through social media. Police sources said 16 cases were registered in response



to the threats to more than 150 domestic or international flights operating from Delhi. The first case was registered on October 16 following a bomb threat received via X targeting a Bengaluru-bound Akasa Air flight. The aircraft, carrying over 180 passengers, was forced to return to the national capital, they said. The Indira Gandhi International Airport police, along with the Cyber cell, IFSO, conducted the probe into the matter but they have not got any lead into any of the cases as of now. "The threat messages were sent via VPN (Virtual Private Network) due to which the agencies are not able to get its exact domain or server. In some cases, the servers from which these messages were routed were located in European countries like the Union Kingdom and Germany," another official source said.

Angul, Talcher among 6 most-polluted cities in India

BIJAY MISHRA ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a matter of concern, Angul and Talcher in Odisha have found place among the most-polluted cities across the country. As per the information published in the Sameer App of Central Pollution Control Board on Friday, Angul is the fourth polluted city in India with an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 323 while Talcher is the sixth polluted city in the country with an AQI of 302. As per the Central Pollution Control Board, the quality of air in both the cities has been categorised as 'very poor'. Meanwhile, the quality of



air in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Baleswar has also become very poor. As per the environmentalists, Air Quality Index is deteriorating in Bhubaneswar due to construction activities. The

dust particles are remaining in the lower layer due to lower temperature in winter. Notably, the Angul-Talcher industrial area has been identified as one of the world's largest nitrogen dioxide (NO2)-emission hotspots. According to environmentalists, the main reason for increasing pollution levels in the Angul-Talcher area is the coalmines, thermal power plants, an aluminium smelter plant and several other industries. If the AQI remains within 151-200, a city falls under Red Category. It suggests that the air quality is harmful for the health of people in many cities of Odisha.

Odisha to get 8 new KVs

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

With the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs granting approval to opening of as many as 85 new Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) under Civil/Defence sector across the country, Odisha is all set to get eight new KVs. The eight KVs would be established in Odisha's Railway Titilagarh in Balangir district, Patnagarh in Balangir, ITBP Khordha in Khordha, Athmallik in Angul, Kuchinda in Sambalpur, Kamakhyanager in Dhenkanal and Jeypore in Koraput.

Prez visits birthplace



President Droupadi Murmu's visit to her birthplace, Uparbeda village in Mayurbhanj district, turned

into an emotional homecoming on Friday. She broke protocol and joined tribal women in a traditional dance. The roads of Uparbeda were adorned with traditional

jhoti. The President's first stop was Uparbeda Government Upper Primary School, her alma mater. She reminisced about her childhood days at the school. Later, she visited

the village deity's shrine and offered prayers. This marked Murmu's first visit to her ancestral home since assuming the office of the President on July 25, 2022.

In BBSR Armed burglars find apartment soft targets

Resident live in fear
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Earlier people thought that apartments are safer than individual houses. But now, apartment residents face a growing threat from burglars, who are targeting the locked flats at will.

With a sudden surge in loots, the residents are having sleepless nights. The criminals, mostly armed with lethal weapons, are targeting residences in the apartments that



are locked from outside.

In a recent incident in the Pahala area, CCTV captured armed burglars entering an apartment with swords and other sharp-edged weapons. They can be seen sneaking into

the apartment and targeting houses that are locked from outside.

Police are investigating these burglaries, and CCTV footages of the intruders have been made public.

“Our main motive to buy or stay in apartments was due to security reasons. However, burglars are easily entering into apartments with swords and guns. Most of us have families including small children and elderly parents. So, it is very worrying,” said a resident.

The Commissionerate police under pressure have issued advisories urging residents to remain cautious and vigilant. To counter the increasing threat, police have recommended that apartment communities reinforce their own security measures.

‘Not in RS race’: Manmohan Samal

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Bringing an end to speculation, BJP State president Manmohan Samal on Friday informed that he is not in the race for Rajya Sabha.

Samal said the party's parliamentary board would decide the candidate for Rajya Sabha election. Whatever discussion is doing the round about his possibility to be selected for the Rajya Sabha election is fictitious and the parliamentary board would take a formal decision in this regard soon.



Notably, the Election Commission of India has announced that by-elections to six vacant Rajya Sabha seats including one from Odisha will be held on December 20.

The one seat from Odisha is now vacant following the resignation of BJD leader Sujet Kumar, who later joined the BJP. Earlier, Mamata Mohanta, a leader from Mayurbhanj district, had resigned from the Rajya Sabha and the BJD before joining the BJP and being subsequently elected unopposed to the Parliament's Upper House.

Hirakud Wildlife ACF in Vig net



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

On the allegation of possession of assets disproportionate (DA) to his known sources of income, the Vigilance police on Friday raided the properties of an Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) of the Hirakud Wildlife Division, Sambalpur.

He was identified as Rebat Raman Joshi. Vigilance personnel conducted simultaneous searches in as many as nine places in Bargarh and Sambalpur linked to Joshi on

the charge of amassing disproportionate assets.

Until the last report, the raids were underway in the places such as his government quarter near Deer Park, Sambalpur; office chamber at Sambalpur; a triple-storied building at Ainthapalli, Sambalpur; two flats in Brijdham Housing Society, Sambalpur; a flat in City Pride Apartment building, Farm Road, Sambalpur; and two single-storied commercial buildings at Malipalli, Sambalpur, and at Padmapur, Bargarh.

1st Int'l Conf on Sustainable Finance at IIT BBS

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar is organising a three-day 1st International Conference on Sustainable Finance: Innovations and Strategies for a Responsible Future, which was inaugurated on Friday.

During the inaugural session, experts from the finance sector emphasised on the importance of sustainable financial practices and their implementation to support and safeguard the business organisations and also strengthen the stakeholder including the common public.

Conference convener Dr Naresh Chandra Sahu articulated the programme's aims, emphasising the necessity of disseminating financial literacy and personal financial



education to eliminate financial inequity, hence fostering a sustainable economic future.

He declared a forthcoming collaboration between IIT Bhubaneswar and FPSB India.

IIT Bhubaneswar chief Prof Shreepad Karmalkar said the importance of studies related to humanities and social sciences has increased in the IIT Education System in recent years, which has created a new scenario and an ecosystem for

entrepreneurship. He informed that the IIT Bhubaneswar has started a course on 'Introduction to Research and Entrepreneurship', which will drive students to become entrepreneurs.

Chief speaker Dr Madhusudan Sahoo, former IITBBI Chairman, spoke on the various factors affecting the lifespan of a business organisation. He also spoke about 'Freedom to Exit' for a

weak organisation.

Guest of honour Krishnan Mishra, CEO, FPSB India, spoke on the importance of 'People, Planet and Profit' in financial sustainability.

Chief guest Sudhansu Mishra, Chief General Manager, NABARD, highlighted the important role being played by different beneficiaries and women in attaining financial sustainability in the country.

Asst professors in medical colleges HC directs govt for regular recruitment

PNS ■ CUTTACK

The Orissa High Court has directed the State Government for regular recruitment of assistant professors in medical colleges in the State.

Justice SK Panigrahi directed the government to expedite regular recruitment of assistant professors through the Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) to fill over 180 vacant positions in the medical colleges.

The court also criticised the government's practice of appointing assistant professors on a contractual basis in the government medical colleges and termed it 'unsustainable'.

In a significant judgment, the Court stated, "These posts must be filled through regular appointments to ensure the integrity and stability of the academic and medical frame-

work." As per the court, the judgment will address the prevailing culture of complacency and ad-hoc arrangements in public service in the State's medical education sector.

The court gave the judgment on a petition filed by Dr Rakesh Kumar Ludam, a Medical Officer of the Odisha Medical and Health Service (OMHS) cadre. Dr Ludam was serving as Assistant Professor in the Anaesthesiology Department at MKCG Medical College, Brahmapur, on a contractual basis from January 31, 2020 to January 30, 2024.

The government is currently filling these teaching positions through contractual engagement or deputation of OMHS cadre medical officers for four years as an interim measure to meet the requirements of National Medical Council (NMC).

Couple set on fire in Baranga Man succumbs to burns 5 days after losing wife

PNS ■ CUTTACK

Five days after being set on fire by his father and losing his wife, Dinabandhu Rout (40) succumbed to the burn injuries at the SCB Medical College Hospital (MCH) in Cuttack on Friday.

Following a domestic feud, 70-year-old Gobardhan Rout had poured petrol on his son and daughter-in-law and set them on fire while both were having dinner at Barisinga village in Baranga in Cuttack district at around 10 pm on December 1.

The couple suffered over 60 per cent burn injuries and was rescued by neighbours. They

were shifted to the SCB Hospital and later to a private hospital, where Sasmita (37) died. Dinabandhu was then again shifted to the SCB MCH.

Police attributed the incident to financial dispute between father and son, who also objected to his father's habit of spending money on smoking ganja. Gobardhan, who has been arrested, confessed to having committed the crime due to sudden provocation under the influence of ganja.

The couple was parents to a five-year-old son, who had a close shave on that day since he was sleeping with his grandmother in another room.

Youth Cong decries awarding projects to WAPCOS



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Pradesh Youth Congress on Friday led by its president Ranjit Patra gheraoed the residence of Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribe Minister Nityananda Ganda protesting the award-

ing of projects worth Rs 300 crore to the WAPCOS company.

Patra alleged that the BJP government is carrying out development work through blacklisted companies.

Former Youth Congress president Yasir Nawaj said it

is surprising how Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, concerned minister Nitayananda Ganda and Schedule Caste and Scheduled Tribe Welfare Secretary Bishnupada Sethi awarded important projects to the alleged tainted company.

The Chief Minister, who blows the trumpet of honesty repeatedly, should issue a clarification on the issue. It is suspected that the tainted company managed to bag the contracts by benefitting the Chief Minister, the Minister and the Secretary, alleged Nawaj.

Odisha's per capita debt now Rs 20,177

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Amidst an Opposition walk-out, the Odisha Legislative Assembly on Thursday approved the Appropriation Bill (two), allowing the State Government to spend Rs 12,156 crore from its Consolidated Fund during the remaining period of financial year 2024-25.

Meanwhile, it also revealed that the average debt per person in the State is now Rs 20,177. This reflects an increased financial responsibility on individuals amid the State's efforts to drive development.

Chief Minister Mohan Majhi had presented the

supplementary budget of Rs 12,156 crore in the Assembly on November 26, augmenting the annual outlay of Rs 2.65 lakh crore presented in July.

The approved funds will significantly bolster key sectors, including health, welfare for women and children, housing and urban development, capital investment, education and skill development. These sectors are seen as critical for the State's socio-economic progress.

Each legislative constituency is set to receive Rs 142 crore, empowering local MLAs to initiate development projects tailored to regional needs. This allocation aims to spur growth at the grassroots level.

Why Odisha's dream of 100% VBD remains elusive

Despite decades of tireless efforts by various organisations, the vision of 100% voluntary blood donation (VBD) in Odisha remains a distant goal. On the eve of the National Conference on Voluntary Blood Donation organised by Tyaga in Burla, the need to reflect on the State's achievements and ongoing challenges is more pressing than ever. Celebrating its 40th year of dedicated service, Tyaga, a social organisation committed to promoting voluntary blood donation since 1984, is hosting the significant event.



DILLIP DASHSHARMA

The voluntary blood donation movement in Odisha owes much to the contributions of multiple organisations. Since 2002, the Odisha Voluntary Blood Donors' and Motivators' Association has played a pivotal role in mobilizing donors State-wide. Similarly, Ama

Odisha, supported by a leading Odia daily, has been active in this sphere since 2006. The Indian Red Cross Society's Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Police Commissionerate branch has organised numerous drives under the Jeeban Aloka ini-

tiative since 2017. Additionally, the BJD-led Jeevan Bindu campaign has further bolstered voluntary blood donation efforts in recent years. However, despite these sustained efforts, the State's VBD percentage has plateaued between 64% and 72% over the last 12 years, highlighting the challenges that persist.

Odisha's journey in enhancing voluntary blood donation began over two decades ago. In 1999, voluntary contributions accounted for a mere 12-13% of total blood collection. Over the next decade, significant progress was made, with the percentage rising steadily to 75.65% in 2011. Organisations like Tyaga, Ama Odisha, and the Voluntary Blood Donors' and Motivators' Association played instrumental roles in driving this growth through awareness campaigns and regu-

lar donation camps. However, since 2012, the progress has stagnated. Despite the active participation of several social and political organisations, the VBD percentage has failed to surpass the 75% mark, leaving many to question the reasons behind this persistent bottleneck.

One of the critical setbacks has been the removal of the Red Cross name and emblem from 54 Red Cross blood banks across Odisha. Historically, the Red Cross symbol has been a beacon of trust and selflessness, inspiring donors and volunteers alike. Without its identity, these blood banks have struggled to evoke the same sense of personal ownership and commitment, leading to a decline in donor engagement. The disengagement of Red Cross life members, youth Red Cross volunteers, and counsellors has only

exacerbated the issue.

The rise of private blood banks poses another significant challenge. Operating independently of voluntary blood donation drives, private hospitals rely heavily on exchange donations, wherein patients or their relations donate blood only when in immediate need. This practice undermines the principle of voluntary donation and diverts potential donors away from organised camps. Even premier institutions like AIIMS have refrained from participating in voluntary donation drives, further weakening the State's efforts.

Outdated policies governing blood banking have also hindered progress. Currently, donors receive a card granting access to one unit of blood, but only from the specific blood bank where they donated—a limitation that proves impractical in emergencies or when

donors are treated elsewhere. Additionally, organisers of blood donation camps are entitled to 10% of the blood collected during their events, a policy that has remained unchanged since the days when VBD accounted for just 10% of total collections. Despite the VBD percentage now nearing 70%, these policies have not been updated to reflect the current scenario, limiting their effectiveness in encouraging voluntary donations.

The National Workshop and Conference on Voluntary Blood Donation at Burla arrives at a pivotal moment. It presents an opportunity to address systemic challenges and advocates for meaningful reforms. Steps such as bringing back the Red Cross branding in blood banks, integrating private hospitals into the government and Red Cross blood bank-

ing ecosystem, encouraging participation from institutions like AIIMS, and updating policies to make them more donor-friendly are essential to advancing the cause.

As Odisha's stakeholders gather to deliberate on these pressing issues, the hope is that their collective efforts will drive transformative changes in the State's voluntary blood donation framework. Achieving 100% voluntary blood donation may remain an ambitious goal, but with bold reforms and renewed commitment, it is a future worth striving for.

(Founder president, Odisha Blood Donors' and Motivators' Association, Bhubaneswar, Phone No. 9938537600)

(On the occasion of the National Conference on Voluntary Blood Donation at Burla, Dec 7-8, 2024)

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Violence against Hindus in B'desh Hindu Suraksha Manch holds protest in K'pada

Seeks PM's intervention to end crisis

RAJESH BEHERA
KENDRAPADA

Hundreds of activists and Sadhus under the fold of Hindu Suraksha Manch, Kendrapada, condemning the continued persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh, organised a protest rally from Tinimuhani -based Ram Mandir to the Collectorate here on Thursday. Later, they held a demonstration along with a protest meeting at the Collectorate.

The activists appealed to the Prime Minister to take cognisance of the recent atrocities perpetrated against the



Hindus and sought his intervention.

The Sadhus alleged that they were deeply concerned over the escalating incidents of targeted actions against the Hindu community people in Bangladesh, culminating in the recent arrest of ISKCON monk, Chinmoy Krishna Das.

The actions are not isolated but form part of a broader pattern of discrimination, violence and suppression against the minority Hindu population, threatening the principles of coexistence, they said.

The arrest of a religious leader on doubtful charges and subsequent attempts of

censoring the voices of the oppressed have further eroded the confidence of minorities in receiving fair treatment and legal protection, stated activist Niranjana Suar.

The Manch sought the immediate release of innocent leaders like Chinmoy Krishna Das, an investigation into those involved in the incidents, besides ensuring constitutional guarantees for minorities, especially the Hindus in the neighbouring country.

Manch convenor Baba Sidhartha Sankar Das demanded that the Indian government must exert pressure on the neighbouring country to end the violence. Later, the Manch submitted a memorandum to the district Collector for the PM.

In Jagatsinghpur Hindu outfits protest attacks on Hindus in B'desh



KAHNU NANDA
JAGATSINGHPUR

Members of various Hindu outfits under the banner of Zilla Hindu Surakhya Mancha, Jagatsinghpur, on Thursday staged a demonstration in front of district Collector's office here, protesting against the alleged atrocities against the Hindus in Bangladesh.

Condemning the arrest of Hindu monk and ISKCON

head Chinmoy Krishna Das in Bangladesh on the charges of sedition, the protestors raised slogans to express their anguish against the atrocities committed against the Hindus in the neighboring country.

"We demand immediate release of Das from jail and urge the Union government to intervene to end the impasses continuing in Bangladesh," said Mancha coordinator Ram Pankaj Das. Carrying placards with slo-

gans like 'Save Hindus of Bangladesh,' the protestors began a rally from College Chowk and culminated at the Collector parade ground. Later, the agitators submitted a memorandum to the Collector addressed to the Prime minister of India with a demand for the protection of minority Hindus and their rights in Bangladesh.

The other demands included investigating those responsible for orchestrat-

ing violence against the Hindu community, especially Hindus, to ensure their safety, dignity, and equal treatment in Bangladesh.

Notable to inform two days ago a mob in Bangladesh targeted religious places, homes, businesses, and belongings of Hindus. The attackers vandalised and looted dozens of homes and shops besides ISKCON head Chinmoy Das over a fake Facebook post.

9 held for cheating job aspirants in Ganjam

PRASANT DAS ■ BRAHMAMAPUR

On allegations of fraudulently cheating lakhs of rupees from job seekers, Brahmmapur - Baidyanathpur police have arrested nine miscreants of a gang.

On false assurance of providing government services in railway, Odisha secretariat, etc, they looted lakhs of rupees from unemployed youths from Ganjam district as well as from all over the State.

On receipt of the report on the matter, BN Pur police took prompt action and started an investigation. They succeeded in solving the case and arrested the nine accused. During raids, the police recovered duplicate appointment orders, government seals, money collection diary, biodatas of youths and a car from them.

The arresters were identified as Jagadish Kumar

Behera from Gopalpur, Hrudya Nanda Muni from Kalasandhapur, Aska Sisir Kumar Mishra from Marshaghai in Kendrapara, Suryakant Behera from Nalabanta in Aska, Sunil Behera from Balipatna, Khurda, Prakash Sethi from Baliana in Khurda, Sumanta Patra from Khantapasa in Baleswar, Chaitanya Jena from Budhipada in Khorda and Santosh Nayak from Nayagada.

Initially, the frauds were taking the job seekers to various government offices and were able to convince them about their good relations in those departments. Next they were collecting good amounts from them and giving them duplicate appointment orders. When they didn't get employment and knew that they were duped, they reported to police.

In Cuttack Worker dies during BPCL gas pipeline repair

Kin allege lack of safety measures

PNS ■ CUTTACK

Tension prevailed when a worker died after entering a sump during the gas pipeline repair work of the Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL) near Taladanda along the Cuttack-Paradip road on Friday.

As per reports, the worker had entered the sump for some repair work of gas pipeline, but he became unconscious after some time. Though he was rescued after two hours by Fire Service personnel, he was found dead.

As per the allegations of other workers, the man died due to asphyxiation in the sump.

"He was directed to enter the sump for repair. He entered the sump after covering his nose with a piece of cloth.



However, he collapsed immediately after entering the sump. I cried for help and people gathered near the place in large numbers. However, he could not be saved," said another worker.

The family members of the deceased alleged lack of proper security measure at the workplace.

"We demand strong action against the officials who directed our boy to enter the sump without any proper security measures," said a family member of the deceased.

However, the company officials were yet to comment regarding the incident.

Inspired by family legacy Tribal Ayurvedic doc aims to save 1K plant species

Claims he has cure for 117 ailments

PNS ■ KORAPUT

A class VIII drop-out, 43-year-old Hari Pangi from Koraput has dedicated his life to preserving medicinal plants as a tribute to his great grandfathers who carried forward the legacy of 'ayurveda doctors' in the area when the tribal villages were deprived of medicines and treatment.

Back then, medicinal plants were the only source of medicine for the tribals. Hari's forefathers worked as 'ayurveda doctors' with their profound knowledge of herbal medicinal plants. They were the only source of 'medicine' and used

to cure tribals of several diseases when the regions were cut off from the rest of the world.

As a child, Hari would accompany his father to collect medicinal plants from the forest. Thus began the journey of Hari into the medicinal plant world. Hari was so inspired by his father that he took an interest in the field and since then there has been no looking back for him.

Today, Hari claims that he has a cure for at least 117 diseases including heart attack, high blood pressure, gastric, respiratory problems, sickle cell anemia, thyroid, menstrual cycle problems, kidney diseases, and many more. He runs his own research center 'Sri Guptheswar Herbal Medi-



cine and Traditional Technology Research Centre in Semiliguda, Koraput, where he preserves the medicinal plants that are on the verge of extinction.

"I had admitted my grandfather, who is around 75-year-old in a hospital in Vishakhapatnam as he suffered from heart blockage. But, his condition improved after he started taking Hari's herbal medicines. Today, 4 years have

passed by and he is showing no signs of any problem or diseases," a customer revealed.

"I had also taken medicine for my father-in-law who was suffering from diabetes. He is also doing well now. I had also taken medicine for my aunt's back pain and skin disease, she is also doing well," he added.

Hari said, "Till now, I have the saplings of more than 400 medicinal plants that are on the verge of extinction. But, I aim to preserve more than 1,000 medicinal plants. My medicinal plants can cure 117 types of diseases including 11 diseases of cattle and 5 of birds." "I had started it alone, but at least 25 people have now joined me. We want to carry forward this noble deed," he added.

Damodar Swami preached Krishna consciousness nicely

SRIPAD RADHAKANTA DAS

Bhaktiswarup Damodar Swami Srila Guru Maharaj of ISKCON is a scientist, spiritualist, philosopher and Krishna conscious preacher. He made efforts for a synthesis between science and religion for a deeper understanding of life.

Sripad Maharaj was born on Lord Jagannath's "Odhan Sasthi Tithi" on Thursday in the year 1937 in Touble village of Bishnupur district closer to Imphal, Manipur. He belonged to a pure traditional Vaishnav family. His childhood name was Todam Damodar Singh. He came with thousands of problems since his childhood. His father died when he was 5 years old. His elder sister Anhabi Devi got married and he became isolated. He was affected with epidemic when he was 14 years old. His primary teacher Todam Karen Singh took care of him and imparted him education.

With his effort he always stood first in the class throughout his academic career. He became Master in Chemical Engineering with first class distinction in the year of 1964. Then he joined as Assistant Director in Industries Department of Manipur. In the meanwhile he was selected for overseas scholarship and joined the California University for his doctoral degree. He became PhD Degree holder



On his 87th Holy Appearance Day

in physical organic Chemistry in the year of 1976.

He joined the ISKCON mission in 1970. Srila Prabhupad, founder of ISKCON, initiated him on June 13, 1971 at Los Angeles, New Dwarika ISKCON Temple (United State of America) and he became identified as "Swarup Damodar". He was personal secretary of Srila Prabhupad from 1970 to 1977. Prabhupad imparted him knowledge about deeper relation of Krishna consciousness with science and philosophy. He became director of Bhaktivedanta Institute (BI), ISKCON in 1974. He was promoted to chief authority of BI in 1976. He undertook Baishnab


taught the philosophy of Krishna consciousness and religion to the students of engineering colleges and various universities of the world. He established Bhaktivedanta Institute at Manipur where innumerable students from India and abroad were educated about Krishna conscious, philosophy and religion. He established Ranga Niketan, a cultural unit at Manipur.

He was very fond of Kirtan. All devotees praised him for his nice Kirtan. He published many books relating to science. Philosophy, religion and Krishna consciousness. He was chief Editor of journal of Bhaktivedanta Institute.

He became the GBC of ISKCON Bhubaneswar temple in 1996 after the departure of our beloved Gurudev Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Goswami Guru Maharaj. He came to Bhubaneswar temple 3-4 times in a year for his preaching on Krishna consciousness.


He inaugurated Bhaktivedanta Book Trust unit at Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar. He laid the foundation stone of ISKCON Gundicha Mandir, Bhubaneswar. He also laid the foundation stone of Brahmmapur, Bahanaga and Kamakshyanagar, ISKCON centers, besides Bhaktivedanta Institute at Burla. He passed away in Kolkata.

(Das is State PRO, Mob: 9132090199)




Convocation Ceremony

7TH DECEMBER 2024 at 10 AM




Centurion UNIVERSITY
Shaping Lives... Empowering Communities...




His Excellency Shri Raghubar Das
Hon'ble Governor of Odisha
and
Visitor, Centurion University

Will preside over the Ceremony
The Commencement and Convocation Address will be delivered by the following Distinguished Dignitaries



Hon'ble Justice Shri Sandeep Mehta
Judge, Hon'ble Supreme Court of India



Dr Sreedhar Panicker Somanath
Secretary, Department of Space,
Chairman, Space Commission,
Chairman, ISRO

Venue : Centurion University Campus | Bhubaneswar | Odisha

Congress responds to BJP's traitor barb with RSS, tukde-tukde gang taunt



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday slammed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for accusing Rahul Gandhi of conspiring to destabilise India and calling him a traitor, saying the truth is that BJP-RSS is the "biggest tukde-tukde" gang of this country and is spreading the "poison of communalism". The Opposition party said the truth is that the work of destabilising the economy is being done by the people of BJP. The BJP on Thursday had claimed a link between Rahul Gandhi and international forces, including an investigative media platform, trying to destabilise India and that the Congress leader was a "traitor of the highest order". Patra claimed that billionaire investor George Soros and

some US-based agencies, investigative media platform Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), and Gandhi occupy three sides of a "dangerous" triangle trying to destabilise India and stoke public disaffection for a regime change. "I have no hesitation in saying he (Gandhi) is a traitor of the highest order," he said. Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters, Congress spokesperson Ragini Nayak said, "A very unfortunate incident happened yesterday. The Congress is the oldest party in the country. Former president of the party, five-time elected MP, leader of the opposition of this country, grandson of a martyred Prime Minister, a man whose family's sacrifice has irrigated the soil of the country. How did the BJP dare to call Rahul Gandhi

a traitor? The people of the country want to know where do you get so much shamelessness from?" Accusing the BJP of spreading the "poison of communalism, violence and hatred", Nayak cited slogans by BJP leaders such as 'batenge toh katenge'. "In such a situation, Rahul Gandhi ji undertook tours from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and from Manipur to Maharashtra, the aim of which was to unite India with love. A person who understands the struggles of all sections of society like labourers, farmers, cobblers, carpenters, drivers etc. And finds solutions to them. A person who raises the voice of Dalits, backward people, women, fights for their rights... These people call that person a traitor," she said. Nayak alleged that the truth is that BJP-RSS is the "biggest

tukde-tukde gang" of this country. She said Rahul Gandhi has always raised public issues and will continue to do so, asserting that the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha is not afraid of the BJP's threats and allegations. "When the country's food providers say - we will not tolerate black laws, we will protest, then for BJP it becomes a part of international conspiracy and funding. When Sonam Wangchuk comes from Ladakh with his companions and puts forward his demands, he becomes a part of an international conspiracy," she said. Manipur has been burning for one and a half years, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi does not go there because that too is a part of the international conspiracy, Nayak said. "If you ask Modiji questions on inflation and unemployment,

you are a traitor. If the youth ask for employment, they will be beaten with lathis because they are also part of the conspiracy. Modi Ji, if there is so much international conspiracy going on in the country, then why don't you fire Amit Shah Ji?" she said. BJP people say that the Congress party is working to destabilise the country's economy but the truth is that the work of destabilising the economy is done by the people of BJP, she said. "When demonetisation and wrong GST were implemented in the country, former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh had warned Narendra Modi, he had said that if you go ahead with demonetisation then GDP will fall. Then Narendra Modi ji had made fun of him, but today the whole truth is in front of the country," she said.

Opposition marches in Parliament in protest against Adani issue



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Wearing black masks with "Modi, Adani bhai-bhai" printed on them and holding a copy of the Constitution, several Opposition MPs led by the Congress held a protest march inside the Parliament complex on the Adani issue on Friday. The protest saw several leaders from some of the INDIA bloc parties marching and raising slogans against the Adani group, its owner Gautam Adani and the government. MPs from the Rashtriya Janta Dal, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and the Left parties joined the protest.

The Trinamool Congress and the Samajwadi Party, which have so far stayed away from any denunciation of Adani, stayed away from Friday's protest as well. The decision has been seen by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as a "division" in the opposition bloc. Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadrawere among those who led the agitation. Priyanka later alleged that the government was scared of holding a discussion on the Adani issue and wondered why it was so. "They don't have the courage to discuss the Adani issue (in Parliament). Why is there a

problem in discussion... Discussion happens in democracy only; they are afraid of it as well," she said. On Thursday, the opposition MPs protested outside the Makar Dwar of Parliament wearing black jackets with "Modi, Adani Ek Hai" and "Adani Safe Hai" stickers on them. They also raised slogans on the Parliament premises to demand a joint parliamentary probe into the Adani issue. The Congress and several other opposition parties have been demanding a probe by a Joint Parliamentary Committee into the Adani Group, following the indictment of Adani and other company officials in a US court.

Delhi HC seeks MHA stand on Rahul's citizenship

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday directed Union Ministry of Home Affairs to place its stand on Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Subramanian Swamy's plea seeking directions to the Ministry of Home Affairs to decide over the complaint on Rahul Gandhi's British Citizenship. A bench of Acting Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela asked the proxy counsel for the Union government to take instructions in the matter. "We want to have the assistance of the counsel from the state before we pass any order," the bench said. The court, which was initially inclined to issue notice on the petition, was informed by the Union's proxy counsel that the lawyer who was earlier representing the government in the matter was designated as a senior advocate. He therefore sought some time for a new counsel to be engaged in the case. The bench subsequently posted the matter on January 13, 2025. Swamy's plea, filed by advocate Satya Sabharwal, said on August 6, 2019, a letter was sent to the home ministry alleging Gandhi had voluntarily disclosed to the British government that he was a British citizen, amounting to holding a British passport. Swamy claims the Congress leader, being an Indian, had violated Article 9 of the Constitution, read with the Indian Citizenship Act, and would cease to be an Indian citizen.

Hashimpura massacre: SC grants bail to eight

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday granted bail to eight convicts in the infamous 1987 Hashimpura case involving the massacre of 38 persons by the Provincial Armed Constabulary personnel. A bench comprising Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih took note of the submissions of senior advocate Amit Anand Tiwari, appearing for four convicts, that they were suffering prolonged incarceration after the Delhi High Court reversed their acquittal by the trial court in the case. On Friday, senior advocate Tiwari, while representing Sami Ullah, Niranjan Lal, Mahesh Prasad, and Jaipal Singh, argued the appellants had been in jail for over six years since the high court verdict. He highlighted that the appellants were previously acquitted by the trial court and their conduct during the trial, and appeal process, was exemplary. He further contended that the reversal of the trial court's well-reasoned acquittal by the high court was based on erroneous grounds. The court took note of the submissions and allowed the pending bail pleas of eight convicts. The Hashimpura massacre occurred on May 22, 1987 when Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) personnel, belonging to the 41st Battalion's "C-Company", allegedly rounded up approximately 50 Muslim men from Hashimpura in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, during communal tensions. The victims were taken to the city outskirts on the pretext of being ferried to a safer place due to

communal riots. They were fatally shot there, and their bodies were dumped in a canal. The incident resulted in the death of 38 persons, leaving only five survivors to recount the horror. The trial court, in 2015, acquitted 16 PAC personnel, citing a lack of evidence to establish their identification and involvement. The Delhi High Court, in 2018, reversed the trial court's decision and convicted the 16 accused under Sections 302 (murder), 364 (kidnapping or abducting in order to murder), and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence) read with Section 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the IPC, sentencing them to life imprisonment. The convicts challenged the high court's verdict, and their appeals were pending in the top court. A chargesheet was filed against C-Company's 19 personnel, including platoon commander Surender Pal Singh. However, the crime branch, criminal investigation department of UP police in its report indicted 66 personnel of the PAC for the killings. Of the 19 accused, Om Prakash Sharma, Kush Kumar Singh and Surender Pal Singh, died during the pendency of the trial. The High Court then convicted the remaining 16 former PAC officials and sentenced them to life term imprisonment. Those convicted are Suresh Chand Sharma, Niranjan Lal, Kamal Singh, Ram Bir Singh, Sami Ullah, Mahesh Prasad Singh, Jai Pal Singh, Ram Dhiyan, Arun Kumar, Lila Dhar Lohani, Hamir Singh, Kunwar Pal Singh, Buda Singh, Budhi Singh, Mohkam Singh and Basant Ballabh.

Verify docs of government job candidates in six months: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court (SC) has directed police officials of all the states to check and verify documents pertaining to the character, antecedents, nationality, genuineness of the documents produced by the candidates selected for government jobs within six months from the date of their appointment. In an order passed on December 5, a bench of Justices JK Maheshwari and R Mahadevan said appointments to government jobs would be regularised only after verification of the credentials of the candidates. The top court passed the direction while setting aside the termination of an ophthalmic assistant two months prior to the date of retirement. The petitioner joined service on March 6, 1985, but the verification report was communicated by the police to the department on July 7, 2010, only two months prior to the date

of retirement. "The given factual matrix would also compel this court to issue a direction to the police official(s) of all the states to complete the enquiry and file report as regards the character, antecedents, nationality, genuineness of the documents produced by the candidates selected for appointment to the government service, etc., within a stipulated time provided in the statute/GO, or in any event, not later than six months from the date of their appointment," the top court said. The bench went on, "It is made clear that only upon verification of the credentials of the candidates, their appointments will have to be regularised so as to avoid further complications, as in the case on hand." Supreme Court was hearing a plea filed by Basudev Dutta challenging an order of the Calcutta High Court which set aside direction passed by the West Bengal State Administrative Tribunal.

Past governments didn't pay attention to Northeast: PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that previous governments weighed development to votes, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the progress of the North East was not given much emphasis earlier due to fewer population and votes in the region. Inaugurating the Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav here to celebrate the vibrancy of the northeast, he said the government of Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the first to create a dedicated ministry for the region and also earmarked 20 per cent budget of every Ministry for its development. "In the last decade, we have seen a wonderful journey of the development of the northeast but it was not easy. We have taken every possible step to connect the northeastern states with India's growth story.



"For a long time, we have seen how development was weighed against votes. Northeastern states had less votes and low seats so previous governments did not pay attention to the development of the region," he said. Modi said he strongly believes that the coming days are of eastern India and the northeast. Like Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bengaluru, cities of the region such as Guwahati, Shillong, Imphal, Itanagar and Aizawl will be new beacons of growth, the prime minister said.

With its vibrant culture and dynamic people, the northeast holds immense potential to propel India's growth, he said. The prime minister said during the last decade his government tried to reduce the feeling among people about the gap of Delhi and 'Dil' with the northeast. Union Ministers made 700 visits to the North East in the last decade and his government was connecting the region with the trinity of emotion, economy and ecology, he said. The first-ever Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav is being celebrated from December 6 to 8 at the Bharat Mandapam here. This festival aims to showcase the beauty, diversity, and promise of the eight states of northeastern states -- Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, and Sikkim. Together they are known as the 'Ashtalakshmi'.

C-section deliveries linked to income, private healthcare: study



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Over one-fifth of deliveries in India are via caesarean section (C-section), with significant regional and socioeconomic disparities, according to a study published in The Lancet Regional Health-Southeast Asia. While this figure may indicate some level of adequate national access to healthcare, it may not capture disparities between different regions or social groups, which the study points out. The study published in The Lancet Regional Health-Southeast Asia journal also revealed that caesarean delivery rates were at least twice as high among the wealthiest groups compared to the poorest in nearly 70 per cent of states. Statewise, C-section rates vary greatly across India, with Telangana having a very high

rate of 60.7%, and Nagaland a much lower one at 5.2%. This regional discrepancy suggests differing levels of healthcare access, infrastructure, and perhaps birthing choices. While C-section rates are higher in private healthcare facilities, wealthier individuals are more likely to undergo the procedure, even in private settings. The study also highlights varying rates across states, cultural influences, and the role of access to healthcare, suggesting that economic, social, and regional factors all play a crucial role in shaping delivery choices. A caesarean delivery is performed surgically through a pregnant woman's abdomen and uterus. Researchers, including those from The George Institute for Global Health in New Delhi, analysed live birth data of over 7.2 lakh women aged 15-49

years across 28 states and eight union territories, collected during the fifth round of the National Family Health Survey (2019-2021). "India's caesarean delivery rate of 21.5 per cent suggests adequate national access but may mask significant disparities," the authors wrote. Caesarean, or C-section, delivery rates across states were found to substantially vary, "ranging from 5.2 per cent in Nagaland to 60.7 per cent in Telangana". Facilities performing caesarean deliveries were higher among private health care units, compared to public centres across all wealth groups, the authors found. However, within private facilities too, wealth disparities were found to exist, with fewer C-section deliveries among the least wealthy and more among the wealthier sections.

"The study concluded that both high-income and low-income individuals in India are more likely to receive caesarean deliveries in private rather than public facilities," the authors noted. Arunachal Pradesh had a relatively low C-section delivery rate of 14.5 per cent and showed low inequality, while southern states like Tamil Nadu and Telangana exhibited high rates of C-section delivery with lower inequality. The variation could be attributed to factors such as improved access to healthcare, higher literacy rates, and a stronger Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the authors suggested. In Bihar, where much of the population belongs to lower wealth groups, there was a higher preference for vaginal deliveries due to their affordability and shorter recovery times, even when medical professionals recommended a C-section.

Indira peace prize for ex prez of Chile

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2024 will be conferred on former Chile president and prominent human rights voice Michelle Bachelet, the international jury for the award chaired by former National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon announced on Friday. "President Michelle Bachelet is one of the world's most prominent voices for human rights, peace, and equality. In her various roles... she has spoken strongly for gender equality and the rights of the most vulnerable sections of the population at home and across the world," a statement issued award trust said.

112 died in three years at Gujarat hospital after free treatment under PM-JAY scheme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

As many as 112 people have died in the last three years after or during treatment under government healthcare schemes at a private hospital here which is under the lens for the death of two Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) beneficiaries following botched angioplasty, police said on Friday.

Hospital, which hit headlines last month after two "patients" registered under PM-JAY died following unnecessary angioplasty procedure. Between September 2021 and October 2024, nearly 8,500 patients received treatment or underwent different surgeries at the private hospital, said Assistant Commissioner of Police Bharat Patel. "Of these, 3,842 persons received free treatment under government schemes such as PMJAY. Our probe has revealed that of these 3,842 beneficiaries, 112 lost their lives during or after treatment in these three years. Medical experts will be roped in to investigate these deaths," he told reporters. The

investigations have also revealed that the hospital management, including those who are under arrest in the angioplasty death case, divided revenue under different heads in the account books and eventually showed a loss of Rs 1.5 crore in the last financial report, informed the police officer. So far, the crime branch has arrested seven persons, including Khyati Multispeciality CEO Rahul Jain and director (marketing) Chirag Rajput, in connection with the death of two PMJAY beneficiaries following botched angioplasty. Two more accused -- hospital chairman Kartik Patel (who is abroad)

and director Rajshri Kothari -- are still absconding, police said earlier. The investigations were triggered by complaints from the families of the two deceased, who were among seven individuals who underwent angioplasty at the hospital on November 11. Angioplasty is a procedure that widens blocked or narrowed coronary arteries to improve blood flow to the heart. The investigations have showed the hospital organised free check-up camps in villages to convince PMJAY cardholders to undergo angioplasty despite no medical necessity for the procedure. People were falsely registered under "emergency"

category to expedite government nod for the procedure. In return, the hospital claimed payments from the government under the scheme, police stated. On November 12, the Vastrapur police registered three FIRs over the death of two PMJAY beneficiaries and arrested visiting cardiologist Dr Prashant Vazirani. Police have charged the accused with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, forgery, and criminal conspiracy. The FIRs accuse the hospital management and doctors of conspiring to obtain financial benefits under the central government's health scheme.

All CMs invited to Prayagraj Mahakumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

The upcoming Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, set to begin on January 13, 2025, is being positioned as a symbol of unity and inclusivity, with chief ministers from across the political spectrum invited to attend. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed his ministers to personally deliver invitations to governors and chief ministers across the country, marking this as a national event celebrating spirituality, culture, and tradition. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi are among those on the extensive guest list. The invitations will also be extended to Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah, Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, and Jammu and Kashmir's Omar Abdullah, among others.

largest congregation of people worldwide. This year's event will be held at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers from January 13 to February 26, 2025. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Prayagraj on December 13, 2024, to review preparations and launch infrastructure projects, including the upgraded Prayagraj-Varanasi rail line. As part of the preparations, Uttar Pradesh ministers have been assigned specific regions to deliver personal invitations and engage in discussions with state leaders. Minister of State Danish Azad Ansari, who will travel to Jammu and Kashmir to invite Omar Abdullah, remarked, "This Mahakumbh is a moment of national pride. It is our honor to personally reach out to leaders across the country and share this spiritual journey with them."

invitations to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. In West Bengal, Arun Saxena and Sanjay Gangwar will meet Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh will travel to Arunachal Pradesh to invite CM Pema Khandu, while Daya Shankar Mishra will visit Nagaland to meet Neiphiu Rio. Energy Minister A.K. Sharma is expected to invite Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel. "We want every state to feel represented in this historic event," said Suresh Khanna. "It's not just about inviting them but building a sense of participation and unity through shared cultural values."

Chaura may have acted on his own to fire at Sukhbir: Police

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH

Ex-terrorist Narain Singh Chaura, who opened fire at Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal outside the Golden Temple, appears to have acted on his own, preliminary police investigation revealed, Punjab Police sources have said. Chaura was sent to a three-day police remand by a court in Amritsar on Thursday. Badal escaped a bid on his life on Wednesday when Chaura fired at him from a close range at the Golden Temple's entrance in Amritsar but missed. He was overpowered by plainclothes policemen. The audacious attack was captured on cameras by media persons who had gathered to cover the second day of Badal performing the duty of 'sewadar' at the main gate of the Sikh shrine as religious penance for 'mistakes' committed by the SAD government in Punjab from 2007 to 2017. Police sources said Chaura, 68, appears to have planned the attack after Badal was awarded 'tankhah', a religious punishment by the Akal Takht for 'mistakes' committed by the SAD government and his party in Punjab from 2007 to 2017. The 9mm pistol he used for the attack was seized by police. Amritsar Police

Commissioner Gurbpreet Singh Bhullar Bhullar Thursday said the police were thoroughly investigating the matter. "A 9mm pistol has been recovered from his possession. From where it (pistol) was procured, we are investigating it. We are involving all agencies to keep our investigation transparent," Bhullar had said in Amritsar. Chaura in a Facebook post in July this year had written: "The Sikh community has rejected the Akali Dal (Badal) from the political sphere due to its grave misdeeds and it is using the Akal Takht as a means to revive its image. This party is an enemy of the 'Panth' (Sikh community) and no longer has the right to lead the Sikh community in the political arena." The Sikh clergy at the Akal Takht had on December 2 pronounced 'tankhah' for Sukhbir Singh Badal and other leaders for the "mistakes," that included pardoning Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh in a 2007 blasphemy case. Chaura is facing 21 cases and also had a role in the 2004 Chandigarh Burail jailbreak case. Chaura had helped Babbar Khalsa International terrorists Jagtar Singh Hawara, Paramjit Singh Bheera, Jatar Singh Tara and Devi Singh from behind bars.

Another maternal death in Ballari, total five dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BALLARI

Another maternal death has been reported at the Ballari Medical College and Research Centre (BMCRC), bringing the total number of such fatalities in the past month to five. Chief Minister of Karnataka, Siddaramaiah on Friday assured that an investigation would be conducted into the death that took place on December 5 night, while health minister of Karnataka Dinesh Gundu Rao, stated he was willing to resign if it would help improve the situation. According to information received, 23-year-old Kolmi Sumaiya was admitted to the hospital on November 11 and underwent a cesarean section. She later developed complications that led to renal failure, senior health department officials said. "Following the C-section, complications arose, requiring her to be placed on dialysis. She passed away on Thursday," an official said. The officer stated that there were seven complicated delivery cases, of which two patients were discharged, while five, including the recent case, lost their lives in the past month. He added that all the newborns in these cases were healthy.

According to a note issued by the health department, on December 5, the patient experienced persistent hypotension, despite being on double inotropes and suffered cardiac arrest at 7.45 pm. "Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) was administered in three cycles, but despite all efforts, the patient succumbed at 8.10 pm," the note stated. According to the health department, between November 9 and 11, four maternal deaths were reported at the district hospital in Ballari. It was noted that the Ringer Lactate (RL) batches supplied by a West Bengal-based pharma company had been used. Siddaramaiah assured that the matter would be investigated. "We will determine the cause of the death. Maternal deaths occur in many places," he told reporters in Bengaluru. When reminded that this was the fifth death, Siddaramaiah acknowledged he was aware of the situation. "I have conducted a meeting and suspended officials from the drugs control department. We will investigate this case, as well to determine whether medicines or any other reason caused it," he said. On his part, Minister Rao told reporters in Bengaluru, "I am ready to resign if it can set things right. This is not about prestige or power; it is about

people's lives. We have taken the maternal deaths in Ballari very seriously and implemented legal steps and measures to bring improvements." Rao further said he had no objection to an investigation into the matter. "A probe must be conducted, and anyone found responsible should face action. We are committed to making all necessary efforts to improve the system. I even seek the opposition's support in this," he stated. Emphasising that the investigation should identify where the mistakes occurred and why they persisted, Rao expressed regret that such incidents have occurred in various parts of the country "without anyone being held accountable". He highlighted that the health department had written to the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) questioning why it was certifying drugs "rejected by Karnataka". "You approve drugs that we reject. What are we supposed to do next? We can't blacklist the company or reject their products outright because they might then approach the court claiming their product is safe. What should be the next step, and who is responsible for this?" Rao questioned, stressing the need for a "third-party review of

Over 12 lakh youths waiting for jobs in Odisha: Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUWANESHWAR

More than 12.13 lakh jobless youths, who registered themselves with different employment exchanges in Odisha over the last five years, are waiting for jobs, the state government informed the Assembly on Friday. In a written reply to BJD MLA Sarada Prasad Nayak, Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Sampad Chandra Swain said 12,13,924 unemployed youths registered their names in the employment exchanges between 2019-20

and 2023-24. The job aspirants include 3.19 lakh graduates, 51,956 postgraduates, 4.22 lakh intermediates, 1.80 lakh matriculates, 42,916 diploma pass-outs, 74,827 trained teachers, 33,691 ITI pass-outs and 14,750 under-matric students, he said. Interestingly, 836 medical postgraduates and two medical graduates were also waiting for jobs in the state, the minister added. "During the last five years, the government has given employment to 2,274 youths through the exchanges," he informed.

In another written statement, Swain said, "The state government has provided training to 36,329 youths through placement linked training programme from 2019-20 to 2023-24, of which 15,068 got employment." "Over 18.42 lakh youths have been made self-employable by providing training under the Chief Minister's Employment Generation Programme during 2014-15 to 2023-24," he added. To create employment opportunities, "Odisha Skill Development Authority (OSDA) has been organising job fairs.

What is in a name, asks HC as it junks govt fiat on naming of social organisations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

Naaam mein kya rakha hai (what is in a name)," the Bombay High Court remarked in a ruling on Friday as it quashed the Maharashtra Charity Commissioner's order barring charitable organisations from using words such as 'eradication of corruption' in their names. No trust or charitable organisation shall use terms such as 'Bhrashtachar Nirmulan Mahasangh', 'Bhrashtachar Viroidi Andolan', 'Bhrashtachar Mukta Bharat' or 'Human Rights' in the title and name, said a circular issued by the Charity Commissioner in July 2018. Trusts and other organisations with such names should drop these words from the title, it said. The charity commissioner justified the rule stating that eradication of corruption is the government's job and not of any private body. The judgement by a division bench of Justices M S

Sonak and Jitendra Jain came on a writ petition filed by the Manvi Hakka Sanrakshan and Jagruti Trust which had challenged the rule. Quashing the circular, the judges held that fighting against corruption or for upholding human rights falls in the definition of "object of general public utility" for which a charitable trust or organisation can be set up. "We may end by saying 'Naaam mein kya rakha hai, kaam dekhna chahiye. Agar kaam galat ho to sakt karvaai karni chahiye'" (What is in a name, look at the work. If the work is wrong then take strict action)," the judgement said. Authorities are free to take action against any organisation that actually acts like a kangaroo court, but the circular was contrary to the definition of 'charitable purpose' under the law, the judges said. Names with words such as 'anti-corruption' or 'human rights' only give an indication that the organisation has been formed



to take up the cause of human rights and eradication of corruption, the HC noted. Corruption has become "cancerous", affecting not only common people but also impairing the country's economic growth and functioning of the bureaucracy, and "no such practice should be prevailing or be encouraged," the judgement said. Hence, an organisation/trust set up for fighting corruption would certainly be covered by the

phrase 'advancement of any other object of general public utility' as defined in the Maharashtra Public Trusts Act, it held. To say that eradication of corruption cannot be the objective of a charitable organisation would be contrary to law, the HC added. "Corruption and human rights are closely associated...Corruption is detrimental to all areas and aspects of human wellbeing, in particular human rights," it said. Effective protection of human rights includes mitigating systemic problems such as corruption, said the high court. "Therefore, merely because such phrase is used in the title of the Trust would not mean that such an organisation is functioning as a kangaroo court, and if any such organisation is acting like a kangaroo court, then certainly the state rightly has to take action by curbing the activities of such kangaroo courts but not by forcing to change the name," the HC said.

Speedy trial a right, no indefinite incarceration: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Speedy conclusion of trial is a fundamental right and an undertrial cannot be subjugated to indefinite incarceration, the Supreme Court said on Friday. A bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and Pankaj Mishra therefore granted bail to a man, who was in custody for about 4.2 years in a case lodged in Bihar, observing the case's trial wouldn't be over soon. The top court's order came on a plea filed by one Raushan Singh, who challenged the Patna High Court's June verdict dismissing his bail application. "An undertrial cannot be subjugated to indefinite incarceration. Speedy conclusion of trial is a fundamental right, well-recognised in our jurisprudence," the bench said. Singh's counsel informed the bench that the petitioner was in custody since his arrest in October, 2020, and the case's trial was still inconclusive. The counsel appearing for the



state said three more prosecution witnesses were to be examined in the case. The bench noted as per the state's counsel, the delay in trial was attributed to a discharge application filed by one of the accused in the case. "Having considered the period of incarceration and the that trial may not be concluded on a near date, we deem it appropriate to allow bail to the petitioner," held the bench, adding appropriate bail conditions were to be imposed by the trial court. While dismissing his bail application previously, the high court directed the trial court to conclude the trial as expeditiously as possible, preferably within six months.



Soren keeps Home, distributes portfolios

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Friday distributed portfolios among the new ministers, keeping key departments such as Home, Personnel and several others to himself, according to a government notification. Radhakrishna Kishore, a Congress MLA, got Finance, Commercial Tax, Planning and Development Department, and Parliamentary Affairs departments. Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) legislator Deepak Biruwa was allotted the departments of Revenue, Registration and Land Reforms (non-registration), and Transport, the notification said. Chandra Linda, another JMM leader, was allotted the departments of Schedule Tribes, Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes (except Minority Welfare). RJD's Sanjay Prasad Yadav was given the departments of

Industries, and Labour, Planning, Training and Skill Development. Irfan Ansari of the Congress got Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare, besides Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs, and Disaster Management departments, the notification said. The chief minister also kept to himself the departments of Cabinet Secretariat, Personnel, Administrative Reforms and Official Language, Road Construction, Building Construction, and those departments yet to be distributed to anyone. Among the other ministers, JMM's Ramdas Soren was given the School Education and Literacy, and Registration departments. Party colleague Hafizul Hasan was allotted the departments of Water Resources, and Minority Welfare Department. Panchayati Raj, Rural Works, and Rural Development departments were given to Congress MLA Deepika Pandey Singh.

Peon in Chhattisgarh cracks state civil services

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RAIPUR

By sheer dint of hard work and dedication, a peon with mechanical engineering degree has cracked the tough Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission (CGPSC) examination and set an example for young aspirants. Shailendra Kumar Bandhe, employed at the CGPSC office in capital Raipur since the last seven months, aced the Chhattisgarh civil services exam in his fifth attempt and will now be appointed as an assistant commissioner (state tax).

The 29-year-old, who cleared the CGPSC-2023 exam, results of which were declared last week, with 73rd rank in the general category and 2nd spot in the reserved category, credited his parents for his success. Bandhe said his parents supported him at every step and stood by him in every decision. "In May this year, I got appointed as a peon at the CGPSC office. Then, I had cleared the CGPSC-2023 preliminary examination held in February this year. I continued my preparation for the Mains as I wanted to become an officer," he told

PTI Videos on Friday. Bandhe, who comes from a Scheduled Caste community, originally hails from a farming family in Bitkuli village of Bilaspur district. His family is now settled in Raipur. He completed his schooling in Raipur and then studied B Tech (mechanical engineering) at the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Raipur. After obtaining engineering degree from a reputed institute, Bandhe could have got a well-paid job in the private sector, but he chose not to appear in placement interviews as he aspired to

be a government employee. Bandhe shared that he got inspired by one of his super seniors at NIT Raipur, Himachal Sahu, who secured the first rank in CGPSC-2015 examination, and started preparations for civil services. He could not realize his dream in first four attempts, but failures did not dishearten him and only encouraged him to work even more harder. "I failed the preliminary examination in the first attempt and in the next, I could not clear the Mains exam. In the 3rd and 4th attempts, I qualified for interview, but could not

crack it. Finally, the fifth attempt brought cheers to me," Bandhe said with a glint in his eyes. The soon to be assistant commissioner said he opted for peon's job to financially support his family, but continued his preparations for the state civil services. "No job is big or small as every position has dignity. Be it a peon or deputy collector, in every job one has to work with honesty and responsibility," he said when asked whether he was uncomfortable working as a class 4 employee. He maintained he faced taunts from people while working as a peon, but

their uncharitable comments did not dent his confidence or self-respect. "Some people used to taunt me and make fun of me for working as a peon, but I didn't pay heed to them. My parents, family and office always supported me and encouraged me," he added. His father, Santram Bandhe, a farmer, said he salutes the hard work and dedication of his son who had been preparing for a government job for the last five years. "I hope my son will be an inspiration for all those who are working hard to get a government job and serve the nation," he added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Plunging into instability

France's political instability and economic crisis deepens as Prime Minister Michel Barnier ousted in a rare no-confidence vote

In a dramatic turn of events, French Prime Minister Michel Barnier was ousted in a no-confidence vote on December 5, 2024, marking a rare political upheaval in France's post-war history. The motion, which garnered 331 votes, united far-right and left-wing lawmakers against Barnier's government, plunging France into political instability at a critical juncture. At the core of the crisis lies the contentious 2025 budget. Facing a massive budget deficit, Barnier's government proposed a budget aimed at saving Euro 60 billion. The proposal included austerity measures that sparked widespread discontent across the political spectrum. Barnier's decision to bypass parliamentary approval for parts of the budget using special constitutional powers was a key trigger for his removal. Interestingly, both the Left and the Right united to oppose the budget. By forcing the no-confidence vote, opposition lawmakers saw an opportunity to challenge a government struggling to unite a fragmented parliament. The ouster is a significant blow to President Emmanuel Macron, who now faces daunting challenges in appointing a successor capable of navigating a polarised parliament.



Macron's leadership has been weakened, and his coalition has failed to maintain a majority, leaving his administration vulnerable to opposition maneuvers. France's political landscape is now marked by deep uncertainty. The immediate challenge is ensuring fiscal continuity, as the lack of an approved 2025 budget could further erode investor confidence. Right now Macron has limited options. Macron may try to quickly install a new leader, aiming for stability before symbolic events like the reopening of the Notre-Dame Cathedral.

However, finding someone who can secure cross-party support is a tall order. If the situation gets worse Macron could rely on emergency measures to extend the 2024 budget provisions or pass the 2025 budget by decree. However, such actions would carry significant political costs and might deepen the crisis. The turmoil comes at a precarious time for France and the European Union. With Germany grappling with its coalition government's collapse and the return of Donald Trump to the US presidency, Europe's political stability is increasingly in question. France, as the EU's second-largest economy, plays a critical role in the bloc's cohesion. Domestically, the crisis is a test of resilience for Marine Le Pen, whose National Rally party supported the no-confidence motion. While Le Pen seeks to position her party as a stable alternative to Macron's government, prolonged instability could expose vulnerabilities in her leadership. France faces a soaring budget deficit, high inflation, and growing public dissatisfaction over austerity measures. The fragmented parliament reflects a divided electorate, complicating governance and increasing the likelihood of legislative deadlock. The road ahead requires deft political maneuvering to restore stability and address the systemic challenges that threaten France's economic and social fabric.

PICTALK



Tourists on an elephant safari at the Kaziranga National Park, in Golaghat

India's maritime legacy: Lessons from history



ANOOP SHARMA

Revisiting India's maritime legacy can drive advancements in naval strength, trade security and regional cooperation, paving the way for a strong maritime future

India has a rich maritime history dating back to the Indus Valley civilisation. People of ancient Indian empires such as Mauryas and Cholas were active seafarers who undertook long and arduous voyages for trade, cultural, religious and political causes. Various regional powers and rulers such as Marathas, Marakkars and even Mughals tried to contest the ascendancy of European naval supremacy in Indian waters. The present-day Indian Navy was born out of the Royal Indian Navy in 1947, with already meagre assets divided between India and Pakistan. As a result, the Indian Navy was initially a coastal force responsible for coastal defence and protection of maritime trade. The Indian Navy proved its mettle during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971.



The decisive and bold actions by the Navy in the 1971 war made the nation realise the potential of the silent, yet dynamic and effective element of the comprehensive national power. Commencing with the international humanitarian and disaster relief operations in the aftermath of the 2004 Tsunami, the Indian Navy has significantly stepped up its operational tempo.

The recent successes of the Indian Navy in anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden protecting mariners of various nationalities, including Pakistanis, have been internationally appreciated. Indian Navy ships have evacuated personnel of the Indian diaspora and citizens of friendly foreign countries from conflict areas such as Lebanon (2006) and Yemen (2015).

Ancient Indian Maritime Culture As India strives for its rightful position on the global stage, we need to revive and study the historical and indigenous Indian maritime strategic thought. Our scriptures, treatises and literature reference the rich Indian maritime strategic culture. Other powers that arose in the Indian sub-continent such as Satavahanas, Pallavas, Pandyas, Cholas and many others continued the rich maritime traditions of the Indian civilisation well past the decline of the mighty

Mauryan empire. The adoption of a new naval ensign inspired by the spirit of Shivaji's maritime endeavours is a step in this direction that needs to be ingrained in the ethos of all maritime and naval endeavours of the nation.

Shivaji's Maritime Endeavours: The Marathas were the only Indian power between the 17th to early 19th centuries who successfully challenged the growing European influence in Indian waters. Shivaji, his son Sambhaji Maharaj and their able Admirals such as Mayank Bhandari, Dautat Khan, Sidhoji Gujar and legendary Kanhoji Angre raised and maintained a strong Navy of over 5000 personnel comprising over 300 vessels at its peak. Noted historian Jadunath Sarkar acknowledges that "Nothing proves Shivaji's genius as a born statesman more clearly than his creation of a navy and naval bases". The Maratha naval prowess was further consolidated under Maratha Admiral Kanhoji Angre from 1699 onwards. He effectively challenged the British maritime power on the West coast from his base at Vijaydurg in Ratnagiri. His tactics of attacking the



OTHER POWERS THAT AROSE IN THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT SUCH AS SATAVAHANAS, PALLAVAS, PANDYAS, CHOLAS AND MANY OTHERS CONTINUED THE RICH MARITIME TRADITIONS OF THE INDIAN CIVILISATION WELL PAST THE DECLINE OF THE MIGHTY MAURYAN EMPIRE

deep draught British ships with shallow water crafts, utilising the shelter of shallow natural harbour and fortress with mounted heavy guns were akin to typical sea denial and littoral warfare operations practised by modern navies. Such was the Maratha naval supremacy that even a combined Anglo-Portuguese assault on Kolaba island of Mumbai in 1772 failed to dislodge the Marathas. Strategic Maritime Culture of Cholas The earliest mention of Chola's naval prowess dating back to Roman records of the 1st century AD highlights the presence of a flourishing port at Kaveripatnam and the King's fleet escorting merchant ships into the harbour. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea mentions the voyage of the early Chola ship 'Colandia' from Kaveripatnam to islands in the Pacific Ocean. The maritime power of Cholas reached its peak between the 9th and 10th centuries during which the Cholas developed a strong Navy with Blue Water capabilities and established robust trade links with China and South East Asia. The seafarers of the Chola empire had exceptional navigational skills and, an understanding of the seas, monsoons, winds and

currents. They were conversant with the use of a 32-point Arab-Tamil wind compass and as many as 56 stars in the Northern Hemisphere for navigation. Despite the lack of a rudder and magnetic compass, the Cholas seafarers could traverse the distance between India and Southeast Asia in twelve to fifteen days, indicative of their Blue Water capability. The maritime endeavours of c Cholas provide valuable insights for stakeholders of the contemporary Indian maritime strategy. The Indian maritime outlook for the Indian Ocean Region that has evolved from the 'Look East' to 'Act East' and the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) can draw inspiration from India's maritime legacy. Initiatives like anti-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden, HADR missions, Sagarmala and Port Led Development, SAGAR, Atma Nirbharta and Make in India etc. have common threads with the maritime practices of Cholas.

(The views expressed are solely those of the author and do not reflect the position of the Indian Navy or the Pioneer. The writer is currently serving as Directing Staff at Defence Services Staff College, Wellington)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SOUTH KOREA REJECTS MARTIAL LAW

Madam — South Korea escaped the martial law imposed by President Yoon Suk Yeol on Tuesday night, within just 6 hours, for the first time since 1980, then I will not give the credit for this to the people who had gathered outside the Parliament building late at night, nor to the 190 MPs who overturned the President's crazy decision in just a few hours. The entire credit goes only to the South Korean army, who quietly watched this spectacle from a distance and did not interfere in any way. If the army wanted, it could have followed the President's orders and fired on the crowd of common people and also arrested the MPs who had reached the Parliament building. South Korea is one of the most developed and industrialised countries in the world. South Korea's economy is the 12th largest in the world and the fourth largest in Asia. No one is able to understand this decision of the President despite there being no unrest of any kind. Experts are even saying that President Yoon Suk Yeol and his wife Kim Kyeon-hee must have taken such a step due to corruption charges against them. Now they will have to step down from their post themselves, or else they will be removed by bringing an impeachment motion against them in the Parliament. Just removing them will not work, but they should be put in jail. Since the founding of South Korea in 1948, several presidents have declared a military emergency. The most recent and perhaps the most infamous occurred in 1979 after the assassination of President Park Chung-hee, a former general who had occasionally used martial law to crack down on political protests and opposition since seizing power in 1961.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

LAX VIP SECURITY IN PUNJAB

Madam — The recent brazen assassination attempt on former Punjab CM Sukhbir Singh Badal at the Golden Temple underscores a disturbing breach in security that raises serious concerns about the state's law

Workplace woes for women



It is sad but true that the workplace can become a problem for young working women. Though most places are safe, there are a few exceptions. India has seen over 400 cases of sexual harassment at work every year since 2018, with an average of 445 cases being reported annually, according to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data. Over 419 cases,

or about 35 per month, were reported in the country in 2023. There could be more unreported ones. That year, Himachal Pradesh recorded the highest number of sexual harassment cases at the workplace (97), followed by Kerala (83), Maharashtra (46), and Karnataka (43).

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 (PoSH Act), was enacted to safeguard women and provide mechanisms for addressing sexual harassment. In 2023, companies reported 1,160 sexual harassment complaints, the highest number in the past decade. However, only slightly more than half of these cases were resolved, according to data from the Centre for Economic Data and Analysis, Ashoka University. On average, 49 sexual harassment cases were reported every day in 2022.

Jayanthy Subramaniam | Mumbai

CURBING CUSTODIAL CRIMES

Madam — Two recent judgements—one from the Delhi High Court and the other from a special court in Bengaluru—convicting policemen for custodial torture and death of the accused have sent a strong message on putting in place a robust mechanism to end the scourge once and for all. 687 persons died in police custody between April 1, 2018, and March 31, 2023, a damning indictment of the police. Generally, custodial deaths go unreported but for vigilante organisations and proactive families that have a keen nose for suspecting foul play. The Supreme Court guidelines in all cases of arrest or detention are clear-cut. During custodial detentions, mandatory documentation and presence of legal counsel are compulsory. Additionally, every police station should have CCTV cameras installed in strategic points.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

From chaos to comfort: Reflecting on Delhi's transit transformation

Once reliant on rickety DTC buses plagued by poor service, Delhi now boasts a state-of-the-art metro network, revolutionising travel and making commuting a breeze



APS MALHOTRA

Can you drop me at the Dhaula Kuan Metro Station in your car? I must catch the 1800 hrs train from there!, requested my colleague, Madhu Jasrai, as we were leaving the office in the Bhikaji Cama Place complex. "Sure, why not!!" I replied nonchalantly. "I have some work on the other side of town, and it is prudent to travel by the metro, instead of taking risks, and getting gridlocked in the peak traffic" she explained. I could not have agreed more.



exposure to this horrible service was limited, as I had the privilege of travelling on the school bus.

Although the situation changed when I moved to college, and then university, there remained a saving grace, the University Special, which, with a monthly all-route student pass for a measly Rs 12.50 was the lifeline of students. But, despite these safeguards, it was difficult to remain isolated from the scary DTC, where the drivers behaved as if they owned Delhi roads as if it were a grand prix track. And the less said about the frequency & punctuality of the service, the better it is, as quite often, one had to wait for hours on end before an overcrowded bus appeared on the horizon, heaving like a fatigued tortoise. Expectedly, even before it came to a halt, a virtual

stampede ensued. In the melee, there was an exchange of choicest Punjabi abuses, fisticuffs, an occasional physical altercation, lucrative business for pickpockets and chain snatchers, and worst of all, a field day for eve-teasers. It was while travelling on these buses that Delhi denizens earned most of their characteristics— of being brawny, insensitive to women and disorderly.

During this hullabaloo, the role of the crew was unpredictable. Sometimes they preferred to be mute spectators watching over the fracas with the serenity of a smiling Buddha. At other times, they were grumpy, with a short fuse, and embroiled in heated arguments with harassed commuters, with hard-to-imagine ferocity. Nevertheless, once the confusion sorted, as if by divine intervention, and there was no space for more passengers— as every nook and cranny, including the windows, footrests and the rickety bars at the rear of the bus had been gobbled— the driver pressed the accelerator, to bring the bus into painful motion. Hereon, the law of the jungle took over, as rules

were flouted with impunity, without fear of the law— seats reserved for women, the elderly and the physically challenged, hardly, if ever, went to those for whom these had been earmarked. Signs of 'no smoking', 'no tobacco', 'no litter' and 'no spitting' were ignored callously, without an iota of deterrence. Hygiene, well what is that? At the end of this mayhem, those who missed boarding the bus had to wait, patiently, for their next attempt. And the wheel started moving in the same pattern, once more. This long reverie concluded when I reached home and parked the car in its slot. As I walked towards my house, I thanked the stars (not any politician or bureaucrat) for the winds of change that have blown across the face of my city, transforming it in three decades, heralding the era when state-of-the-art Metro crisscrossed Delhi like an octopus spreading its tentacles, when radio cabs whizzed around, when CNG & electric buses is a common sight. Delhi's public transport system has indeed come of age. (The author is a freelance writer; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

SURVIVING THE TECH-DRIVEN ERA

Amid rapid technological obsolescence, the need for reinvention has never been more critical



RAVI VALLURI

It would be worthwhile to examine how organisations are structured and articulated. In the long haul organisations blessed with individuals willing to experiment, innovate and embrace technology will be the ones that survive.



In today's wired world, individuals work from their dwellings. Places with the latest technology and gizmos at their disposal. Over the last decade, the entire paradigm of organisational behaviour has metamorphosed.

South Korea faces its gravest political crisis



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

Yoon's actions threaten the democratic foundations painstakingly built over decades, echoing a legacy of authoritarianism that South Korea has fought to overcome



President Yoon Suk-yeol has plunged South Korea into a political crisis that risks echoing the darkest chapters of the nation's history. As his administration teeters on the edge of a dramatic shift, Yoon has turned to martial law, invoking emergency powers in a desperate gambit to silence political opposition and maintain control.



THE IMPLICATIONS OF HIS ACTIONS ARE PROFOUND, NOT JUST FOR HIS PRESIDENCY, BUT FOR SOUTH KOREA'S ONGOING STRUGGLE WITH ITS TOTALITARIAN PAST, ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH FOREIGN POWERS, AND ITS OWN IDENTITY AS A MODERN DEMOCRACY

ers and the public. Whether or not he survives, South Korea remains trapped in a cycle of political crises, where democratic ideals clash with despotic impulses, reflecting a historical legacy that has shaped the nation for over a century.

South Korea's political structure. It is also a reflection of the country's broader struggle with its geopolitical position. As the U.S. continues to view South Korea as a critical ally in its efforts to counter China's rise, the country's internal divisions risk undermining its role as a stable partner in the region.

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Hybrid model secures ICC Champions Trophy hosting rights

Pakistan's government approves a hybrid hosting model proposed by India, ensuring its role in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025

A pragmatic and groundbreaking decision has emerged from Pakistan's government corridors, approving its cricket board's acceptance of India's proposed hybrid model for hosting ICC events.



K S TOMAR

In a parallel development, Jay Shah has been elected as the new ICC chief, marking a pivotal moment in global cricket governance. Shah's leadership promises transformative opportunities for the ICC, leveraging his vast experience as chairman of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).



hub, following well-received tours by Australia and England. The hybrid model offers a win-win outcome, balancing security concerns with hosting ambitions.

fans to experience international cricket firsthand. Furthermore, the PCB's insistence on reciprocity for events in India until 2031 demonstrates strategic foresight, paving the way for equitable future agreements.

England, and Australia with the development of smaller nations will be a key test of Shah's leadership. The ICC Champions Trophy 2025 holds immense promise under Jay Shah's leadership, with the potential to set benchmarks in competitiveness, innovation, and fan engagement.

S Korea's governing party head supports suspending Yoon's powers, making impeachment more likely

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's governing party chief expressed support Friday for suspending the constitutional powers of President Yoon Suk Yeol for imposing martial law this week, in a bombshell reversal that makes Yoon's impeachment more likely.

During a party meeting, PPP leader Han Dong-hun stressed the need to suspend Yoon's presidential duties and power swiftly, saying he poses a "significant risk of extreme actions, like reattempting to impose martial law, which could potentially put the Republic of Korea and its citizens in great danger."

Opposition leader Lee Jae-myung and National Assembly speaker Woo Won Shik, said Kim Byung-kee, one of the lawmakers who attended the meeting, Kim said Hong told lawmakers he ignored Yoon's orders.

Workers' Union, one of the country's biggest umbrella labor groups, have started hourly strikes since Thursday to protest Yoon. The union said its members will start on indefinite strikes beginning on Dec. 11 if Yoon was still in office then.

Joint Chiefs of Staff will absolutely not accept it," Kim said. Kim became the acting defense minister after Yoon's office on Thursday accepted the resignation of Defense Minister Kim Yong Hyun, who has been hit with a travel ban and faces an investigation over his role in Yoon's imposition of martial law.

Taiwan's leader calls on China to refrain from threats

AP ■ TAIPEI

Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te called on China to "open its arms rather than raise its fists" as he wrapped up his first overseas tour since taking office in May.

Taiwan and China split in 1949 during a civil war that saw the victorious communists take control in Beijing and the Nationalists setting up a rival government in Taiwan, an island of 23 million people about 160 kilometers off China's east coast.

China. The Taiwanese leader played up the distinction between democracies such as Taiwan and the US and authoritarian governments, noting Russia's military cooperation with both China and North Korea, including the dispatch of North Korean troops to Russia for the war against Ukraine.

Gaza ceasefire talks resume, says Hamas official

AP ■ ISTANBUL

A Hamas official said Thursday that international mediators have resumed negotiating with the militant group and Israel over a ceasefire in Gaza, and that he was hopeful

ful a deal to end the 14-month war was within reach. Ceasefire negotiations were halted last month when Qatar suspended talks with mediators from Egypt and the United States because of frustration over a lack of progress between

Israel and Hamas. But there has been a "reactivation" of efforts in recent days to end the fighting, release hostages from Gaza and free Palestinian prisoners in Israel, according to Bassem Naim, an official in Hamas' political bureau who spoke with

The Associated Press in Turkey. Another official familiar with the talks confirmed the return of Qatari mediators. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the negotiations with the media.

Since the talks broke down, there have been significant shifts in the global and regional landscape. Donald Trump won the US presidential election, and a ceasefire was declared last week between Israel and Hamas ally Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Russia will use 'all means' to defend its interests: Lavrov

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia's top diplomat said in an interview with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson released Friday that Moscow doesn't want a war with the United States but will use "all means" to defend its interests.

the Western belief that Russia's red lines could be "moved again and again" is "a very serious mistake." Lavrov, the world's longest-serving foreign minister who has been on the job for 20 years, said that a recent Russian strike on Ukraine with a new hypersonic intermediate range ballistic missile called Oreshnik was a signal to the West that Russia is prepared to use all means to achieve its goals in Ukraine.

they must understand that we would be ready to use any means not to allow them to succeed in what they call strategic defeat of Russia." Russian President Vladimir Putin has described the Nov 21 attack with Oreshnik as a response to Ukrainian strikes on Russian military facilities in Bryansk and Kursk regions with Western-supplied weapons. He has declared that in the case of new attacks on Russia with Western longer-range weapons, Russia could use Oreshnik to hit the government district in Kyiv.

Table with 6 columns: CUSTOMER NAME, LOAN A/C NO., Amount Outstanding (In Rs.), Date Of Recall Notice, Gross Weight, Net Weight. Includes multiple branches like ASHOK VIHAR, DLF, FARIDABAD, etc.

Table with 6 columns: CUSTOMER NAME, LOAN A/C NO., Amount Outstanding (In Rs.), Date Of Recall Notice, Gross Weight, Net Weight. Includes multiple branches like Noida, Palam Vihar, Gurgaon, etc.

NHPC Limited advertisement including office complex details, schedule of tariffs, and generating station information. Includes NHPC logo and contact details.

China fine-tunes economic stimulus as it braces for new US administration

China is fine-tuning policies to rev up its economy as it braces for uncertain relations with the United States under President-elect Donald Trump...

although some components must just meet standards for a share of domestic-based production. Farm, forestry, minerals and fisheries products are excluded...

access to financing for e-commerce and small- and mid-sized "little giants" and "hidden champions". Shares in China have surged this week on expectations that the planning meeting will yield more support...

with heads of 10 major international organisations including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation...

Iran says it conducted successful space launch

Iran said Friday it conducted a successful space launch, the latest for its programme the West alleges improves Tehran's ballistic missile programme.

The United States has previously said Iran's satellite launches defy a UN Security Council resolution and called on Tehran to undertake no activity involving ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

programme expired in October 2023. Under Iran's relatively moderate former President Hassan Rouhani, the Islamic Republic slowed its space programme for fear of raising tensions with the West.

to offer strategy when it comes to Iran's ambitions in space. Intercontinental ballistic missiles can be used to deliver nuclear weapons. Iran is now producing uranium close to weapons-grade levels after the collapse of its nuclear deal with world powers.

OFFICE OF THE REGULATED MARKET COMMITTEE, JUNAGARH

Table with 3 columns: Sr. No., Item, Details. Contains details for annual maintenance contract tender.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Aramdeep who is the owner of Property ID No. 12167PKP7, area measuring 85 Sq. Yards out of 200 Sq. Yards...

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the public at large, on behalf of our client, Mr. Gangaram S/O Mr. Sitaram R/O H. No. DZ-586/1, Mr. Sitaram...

कार्यालय नगर पालिका परिषद, दमोह (म.प्र.)

दमोह दिनांक 14.11.2024

Table with 6 columns: क्र. NIT No./Tender No., कार्य का नाम एवं विवरण, अनुमानित लागत, अमानत राशि, निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य, समायावधि. Lists construction tenders.

नोट :- कार्य क्र. 01 हेतु-निविदा प्रपत्र केवल ऑनलाईन ई-टेंडरिंग पोर्टल www.mptenders.gov.in दिनांक 20.11.2024 को सुबह 10:30 बजे से दिनांक 26.12.2024 को शाम 17:30 बजे तक क्रय किये जा सकते हैं।

- 1. इच्छुक निविदादाता विस्तृत निविदा एवं अन्य समस्त जानकारी ई-टेंडरिंग पोर्टल www.mptenders.gov.in पर Key-Date अनुसार देखी जाकर निविदा प्रपत्र ऑनलाईन क्रय किये जा सकते हैं।

मुख्य नगर पालिका अधिकारी नगर पालिका परिषद दमोह

सर्वजनिक सूचना

सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरा सुविक्रित श्री फडिम अली पुत्र श्री बुनियाद अली निवासी मकान नं० 68, दूसरी मंजिल, श्रदानन्द मार्ग, जी.बी. रोड, दिल्ली-110006 पर काबिज है।

सर्वजनिक सूचना

It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Azeem Khan had acquired Third Floor with roof rights, area measuring 75 sq. yards, part of property bearing No. 3447, situated at Dariba Pan, Paharganj, New Delhi...

सर्वजनिक सूचना

सूचना नगर निगम मध्यम के भवन कर रिफॉर्म में आईडिओ No. IC3NAH22 विस्तार पत्रा 11-B, Agora Tower, Tata Raisina Residency, Raisina, Gurugram, 121002 की प्रतिलिपि कर रिफॉर्म में तद्विधी हेतु USHA AHLAWADI ने आवेदन किया है...

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to public at large that my client Smt. Parwati wife of Late Shri. Meer Singh resident of A-286, Kusum Pur Pahari, Kusum Pur, South West Delhi, Delhi-110057, is disowning and disinherited their son namely Sanjay and daughter-in-law namely Jyoti from all my moveable & immovable properties...

DEVELOPMENT OF CIRCULATING AREA

E-Tender Notice No. KIR/GSA/19 of 2024 Dated: 05-12-2024. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Brief Description of work: ABSS: Development of circulating area, approach road, toilet unit, Portico, facade at Labha station of Kathir Division.

सर्वजनिक सूचना

सूचना नगर निगम मध्यम के भवन कर रिफॉर्म में आईडिओ No. IC3NAH22 विस्तार पत्रा 11-B, Agora Tower, Tata Raisina Residency, Raisina, Gurugram, 121002 की प्रतिलिपि कर रिफॉर्म में तद्विधी हेतु USHA AHLAWADI ने आवेदन किया है...

NOTICE

We M/s Alsiraa International, holding Registration Certificate, No. B-0992/DEL/PART/1000 PLUS/3/4781/96, Under the Emigration Act, 1983 for Export of Manpower, have closed our Business with effect from 01.04.2020.

DEVELOPMENT OF CIRCULATING AREA

E-Tender Notice No. KIR/GSA/19 of 2024 Dated: 05-12-2024. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Brief Description of work: ABSS: Development of circulating area, approach road, toilet unit, Portico, facade at Labha station of Kathir Division.

सर्वजनिक सूचना

सूचना नगर निगम मध्यम के भवन कर रिफॉर्म में आईडिओ No. IC3NAH22 विस्तार पत्रा 11-B, Agora Tower, Tata Raisina Residency, Raisina, Gurugram, 121002 की प्रतिलिपि कर रिफॉर्म में तद्विधी हेतु USHA AHLAWADI ने आवेदन किया है...

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE

Table with 6 columns: Sr. No., Name of Board/Corp./Auth, Name of Work/Tender, Opening Date, Amount/End Approx./IN Rupees, Website of the Board/Corp./Auth. Details for repair and rehabilitation of structure.

NHPC Limited (A GOVT. OF INDIA NAVRATNA ENTERPRISE)

NHPC Office Complex, Sector-33, Faridabad - 121003 (CIN: L40101HR1975GOI032564) SCHEDULE

Table with 10 columns: Capacity of the generating station, Approved capital cost of the project, Authority which has approved the capital cost, Scheduled date of commercial operation, Actual date of commercial operation, Capital cost on the date of commercial operation. Lists technical specifications for power stations.

Details of tariff: (₹ in Lakh)

Table with 6 columns: Sl. No., Hydro Power Generating Station, Tariff for the previous year (2018-19), Year-wise tariff sought to be determined (2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24). Lists tariff details for various power stations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in

Place : Faridabad Date : 29.11.2024 (Ajay Shrivastava) General Manager (Comm.), Commercial Division

GDP slowdown in Q2 not systemic, Q3 to compensate for moderation: FM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The GDP slowdown in September quarter was not "systemic" and the economic activity in third quarter, with better public expenditure, is likely to compensate for the moderation, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Friday.



India recorded a 7-quarter low GDP growth of 5.4 per cent in July-September FY25. In the first quarter, the growth was 6.7 per cent. "It is not a systemic slowdown. It is more of absence of activity on public expenditure, capital expenditure and so on...I expect Q3 to make up for all these," Sitharaman said at an event here.

In the first half, the government spent only 37.3 per cent of its capital expenditure target of Rs 11.11 lakh crore for FY25. The minister's comments came moments after the Reserve Bank of India sharply slashed its growth projection to 6.6 per cent for the current fiscal from 7.2 per cent earlier. Other factors affecting growth include plateauing global demand that affected export growth, Sitharaman said.

challenges. During Covid-19, the challenge was seen as an opportunity for bringing in reforms. Five mini budgets were presented at that time, each of them giving relief, support and handholding on one hand and on the other making sure that small and overlooked pending reforms were taken," she said. Being the voice of the Global South for some time now, India will carry forward its role that everyone saw during India's G20 Presidency, she added. Every time Prime Minister Narendra Modi takes up an issue of global importance, he does consult the Global South and takes their concerns forward. Referring to the India-Japan relations, she said the two countries shared strong business ties. "Between India and Japan, other than just the governments, what needs to be sustained is the people-to-people and business-to-business interest. Despite some ups and downs, relationship between countries remains strong and at a stable level when people-to-people and business-to-business contacts are safe, strong and deepened," she said.

RBI to allow small finance banks to extend credit lines through UPI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Friday proposed to allow small finance banks to extend pre-sanctioned credit lines through Unified Payments Interface (UPI). UPI is an instant real-time payment system developed by NPCI for transactions through mobile phones. In September 2023, the scope of UPI was expanded by enabling pre-sanctioned credit lines to be linked through UPI and used as a funding account by commercial banks excluding Payments Banks, Small Finance Banks (SFBs) and Regional Rural Banks. Credit line on UPI has the potential to make available low-ticket, low-tenor products to "new-to-credit" customers, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said. SFBs leverage a high-tech, low-cost model to reach the last-mile customer and can play an enabling role in expanding the reach of credit on UPI, he said.



"It is, therefore, proposed to permit SFBs to extend pre-sanctioned credit lines through the UPI. Necessary guidelines will be issued shortly," he said while unveiling the latest bi-monthly monetary policy. The Governor also said that the Reserve Bank has been deploying traditional as well as new-age communication techniques as a key part of its toolkit to ensure transparency and greater impact of its decisions, explain the rationale behind its decisions, and disseminate various awareness messages to a wider audience. The Reserve Bank has been expanding the scope of its public awareness activities including through social media over the last few years. In continuation of this endeavour, the Reserve Bank proposes to launch podcasts for wider dissemination of information that is of interest to the general public, Das said.

RBI raises FY25 inflation estimate to 4.8 per cent



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Friday raised the inflation projection for current fiscal year to 4.8 per cent from 4.5 per cent with Governor Shaktikanta Das saying lingering food price pressures are likely to keep headline inflation elevated in the December quarter. Consumer price index (CPI)-based inflation increased sharply in September and October 2024 led by an unanticipated increase in food prices. Core inflation, though at subdued levels, also registered a pick-up in October. Fuel group remained in deflation for the 14th consecutive month in October. "In the near term, despite some softening, lingering food price pressures are likely to keep headline inflation elevated in Q3," Das said while unveiling the December 2024 monetary policy. RBI said CPI inflation for 2024-25 is projected at 4.8 per cent, with Q3 at 5.7 per cent, and Q4 at 4.5 per cent.

CPI or retail inflation for Q1:2025-26 is projected at 4.6 per cent, and Q2 at 4 per cent. In the October policy, the central bank had estimated the inflation at 4.5 per cent for the fiscal ending March 2025. "Going ahead, a good rabi season would be critical to the softening of the food inflation pressures. Early indications point to adequate soil moisture content and reservoir levels, conducive for rabi sowing," the Governor said. CPI headline inflation increased from average 3.6 per cent during July-August to 5.5 per cent in September and further to 6.2 per cent in October 2024, which was the highest in more than a year, since September 2023. He further said the estimates of a record kharif production should bring relief to the elevated prices of rice and tur dal. Vegetable prices are also expected to see a seasonal winter correction. On the upside, Das said the evolving trajectory of domestic edible oil prices, following the hike in import duties and rise in their global prices, need to

be closely monitored. "The near-term inflation and growth outcomes in India have turned somewhat adverse since the October policy. The medium-term prognosis on inflation suggests further alignment with the target, while growth is expected to pick up its momentum," Das said. He further said persistent high inflation reduces the purchasing power of consumers and adversely affects both consumption and investment demand. The overall implication of these factors for growth is negative. "Therefore, price stability is essential for sustained growth. On the other hand, a growth slowdown - if it lingers beyond a point - may need policy support," Das said. The Governor noted that high inflation reduces the disposable income in the hands of consumers and dents private consumption, which negatively impacts the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth. The increasing incidence of adverse weather events, heightened geopolitical uncertainties and financial market volatility pose upside risks to inflation, he added. Das also said the last mile of disinflation is turning out to be prolonged and arduous, both for advanced and emerging market economies (EMEs). The government has tasked the RBI to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on the either side.

Air India Express on expansion mode

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Air India Express, the budget-carrier arm of Air India, is embarking on a significant expansion by increasing its fleet size and introducing new routes, as passenger growth remains robust. The airline, however, has deferred plans to launch direct flights between Kolkata and Dhaka, citing the ongoing political crisis in Bangladesh. "You would recall we had announced our operational plan for Dhaka, which is a new and significant market for us. But because of the situation there, we have deferred those plans," Alok Singh, Managing Director of Air India Express, said. "As soon as the conditions are right, we will resume those plans," he said. The airline had initially planned to launch the Dhaka services in September with six weekly flights. Despite the deferment, Singh said the airline remains committed to expanding its presence in the eastern sector. He said its international service flights to and from Kathmandu would begin with the summer schedule, starting the end of March 2025. Singh, speaking to reporters here, also said the airline sees strong growth potential, as daily passenger movement in India in November crossed the 5,00,000 mark. In order to tap the growth, it aims to increase the fleet size to over 100 aircraft by March 2025, up from the existing 90. Over the next three years, the fleet size is expected to grow



to about 175, Singh said. He also highlighted that Air India Express is part of the Air India Group, which has announced plans to acquire 470 aircraft at the group level in the next few years. Singh said the airline's network expansion would focus on short-haul routes within a 5.5-6 hour range, and on connecting metro cities with tier-II and tier-III destinations, to tap emerging opportunities. Air India Express currently operates 24 daily flights from Kolkata, which will increase by 10 in the summer schedule. The additions will include new routes and frequency enhancements to existing services. The airline also plans to increase its night halt capacity in Kolkata from seven aircraft to nine. Speaking about enhanced connectivity in the northeast, Singh said the airline will introduce a new flight connecting Dimapur with Kolkata. Patna is another destination for expansion, the top company official said. He said Air India Express will continue to strengthen its presence in the Gulf and Middle East regions, while expanding into Southeast Asia. New destinations such as Bangkok, Singapore, Vietnam

and Colombo are also under consideration. Singh said flights to Vietnam could start in the next financial year or the following year. The airline is also exploring opportunities in the CIS countries. Weekly flight frequencies in Kolkata and Bagdogra have increased by 37 per cent, rising from 168 last winter to over 230, he said. New direct routes from Kolkata include Port Blair, Indore, and Agartala, while new routes from Bagdogra include Hyderabad and Chennai. Air India Express operates over 400 daily flights, connecting 36 domestic and 15 international destinations. Its fleet comprises 90 aircraft, including 61 Boeing 737s and 29 Airbus A320s. The airline's market share in Kolkata stands at 12 per cent, and 24 per cent when combined with parent company Air India.

Maruti Suzuki, Mahindra to hike vehicle prices from January

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Maruti Suzuki India and Mahindra & Mahindra on Friday announced plans to hike vehicle prices from January in order to offset the impact of rising input costs and operational expenses. Maruti Suzuki, the country's largest carmaker, will hike prices of its model range by up to 4 per cent from January. Mahindra & Mahindra is increasing prices of its SUV models and commercial vehicles by up to 3 per cent. The adjustment is in response to the rising costs due to inflation and increased commodity prices, Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) said in a statement. The automaker has made efforts to absorb as much of these additional costs as possible however, a portion of this increase will need to be passed on to customers, it added. The extent of the price increase across different SUVs and commercial vehicles will be upto 3 per cent, the auto major stated. Similarly, JSW MG Motor India said it will also increase prices of its entire model range by up to 3 per cent from next month.



India's forex reserves jump USD 1.51 bln to USD 658.091 bln

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's forex reserves increased by USD 1.51 billion to USD 658.091 billion for the week ended November 29, the RBI said on Friday. The overall reserves had dropped by USD 1.31 billion to USD 656.582 billion in the previous reporting week. The kitty has witnessed a declining trend in the recent past and had dropped by a record USD 17.761 billion in the week prior to the last. The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion in end-September. For the week ended November 29, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves,

increased by USD 2.061 billion to USD 568.852 billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves decreased by USD 595 million to USD 66.979 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by USD 22 million to USD 18,007 billion, the apex bank said. India's reserve position with the IMF was also up by USD 22 million to USD 4.254 billion in the reporting week, the central bank data showed.

Sebi revamps investor charter to boost transparency, grievance redressal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Friday unveiled an updated investor charter aimed to enhance investor protection, market transparency, and trust and confidence among investors. The updated charter has emphasised on ensuring confidentiality of investor information and providing the right to exit at fair and reasonable terms from the securities market related products or services. "Further, Sebi has strengthened the grievance redressal mechanism and alternative dispute resolution mechanism with the launch of SCORES 2.0 and SMART Online Dispute Resolution," the regulator said in a statement. In SCORES 2.0, investor complaints are taken up directly with Sebi registered intermediaries/regulator entities and the designated bodies for first level review, with the markets watchdog taking up all complaints at the stage of Second Level Review. SMART ODR portal facilitates online conciliation and online arbitration for resolution of disputes arising



in the Indian securities market. The revamped charter aims to enable investors to better understand the risks associated with market investments while ensuring their fair treatment in a timely and efficient manner. The regulator has urged investors to exercise diligence by engaging only with Sebi-recognised market infrastructure institutions and intermediaries. Investors are also encouraged to keep their contact and Know Your Customer (KYC) details up to date and address grievances within prescribed timelines. In line with its mission, the

markets watchdog has committed to streamline procedures to facilitate ease of investment while adopting innovative and digital solutions to modernise the securities market. The updated charter also details best practices for investors, such as maintaining transaction records, knowing the risks and fees associated with investments, and familiarizing themselves with the grievance redressal mechanisms. Further, the regulator advised against practices like making cash payments beyond prescribed limits or sharing sensitive account details.

DSPL-238

ARMED FORCES FLAG DAY MESSAGE

On the occasion of Armed Forces Flag Day-2024, I extend my warm felicitations and best wishes to all ranks of Armed Forces as well as our Ex-Servicemen and their families.

The Armed Forces Flag Day offers us a unique opportunity to express our gratitude to Armed Forces personnel who not only resolutely defend the borders of our great nation but also render valuable service during the natural calamities and in combating internal disturbances. Their patriotism, valour and sacrifice has earned them a special place in the hearts of the people.

By proudly wearing the Armed Forces token Flag and donating to the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund, the nation expresses solidarity and support for the gallant heroes of our Armed Forces, rehabilitation of War Widows, Disabled Soldiers and Ex-Servicemen.

On the occasion, I appeal to my fellow citizens to donate generously to the "Armed Forces Flag Day Fund".

Jai Hind !

(Raghubar Das)
 Governor, Odisha

OIPR-12088/13/002/2425

A CREATIVE RENAISSANCE

The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art hosted CentreStage Weekend 2024, highlighting young talent with performances spanning dance, music and culture, says SAKSHI PRIYA

Art is the only way to run away without leaving home," said Twyla Tharp and the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) brought this idea to life through its CentreStage Weekend 2024. CentreStage Weekend truly brought this sentiment to life. The vibrant two-day festival was a celebration of youthful creativity, where tradition and innovation blended seamlessly, leaving the audience in wonder. With an eclectic mix of performances spanning genres like Kuchipudi, modern dance, jazz, Carnatic music, Welsh and Naga folk and Sufi traditions, the event was a powerful reminder of the incredible diversity within the performing arts.

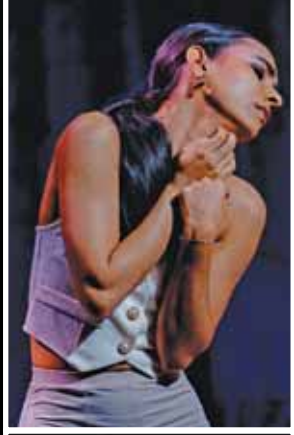
The first day began with a captivating Kuchipudi performance by Yamini Kalluri. Her graceful movements, coupled with the evocative piano accompaniment by Andreas König, set the stage for what was to come. The performance was a beautiful fusion of classical dance and contemporary elements, proving that tradition can evolve without losing its soul. Next, Wales musician Mari Mathias and Naga artist Seyievinuo Chuzho brought something truly special to the stage. Their collaboration, supported by the British Council, was a stunning cross-cultural exchange. The fusion of Welsh folk and Naga music offered a rare and refreshing glimpse into the power of music to transcend borders and create new connections.

As the evening progressed, the energy on stage only intensified. Kartikeya Vashist and Makrand Sanon's flute and percussion duet took the audience on an exhilarating journey, blending Indian classical music with jazz, blues, and world music. The performance was an exciting demonstration of how traditional sounds can be reimagined and revitalised, captivating both purists and modern music lovers alike.

The first day concluded with TAL FRY, a percussion ensemble that pushed the boundaries of Indian rhythmic traditions. Their experimental approach to percussion was a feast for the senses, offering not just sound, but a visual and emotional experience. It was a bold and striking finale to the evening, leaving the audience buzzing with energy. Day two continued the celebration of artistic innovation, starting with the GMI Ensemble. This group of talented students and alumni from the Global Music Institute delivered a high-energy fusion of jazz, Latin, pop, and fusion genres. Their performance was a testament to the creativity and versatility of the new generation of musicians. The soulful Carnatic performance by Spoorthi Rao and her ensemble followed, beautifully bridging the gap between ancient classical traditions and modern sensibilities. Her music was both deeply rooted in heritage and refreshingly contemporary, captivating the audience with its emotional depth.

The evening took a reflective turn with Mehtab Ali Niaz's sitar performance. As a maestro from the Bhendi Bazar Gharana, his mastery of the instrument and emotive playing brought the timeless beauty of Indian classical music to life, offering the audience a chance to reconnect with the profound richness of tradition. The weekend ended with a stirring performance by Jashn-e-Sufiana, a Sufi band from Delhi. Their ability to blend classical jugalbandi with modern influences created an unforgettable experience, where the ancient art form was reinterpreted for today's audience. It was a beautiful closing act, leaving the audience with a sense of emotional and cultural richness.

CentreStage Weekend was a powerful reminder of the immense talent and creativity of the next generation of artists. The event provided a unique platform for young performers to experiment with new forms while staying rooted in their cultural traditions, making it a truly inspiring and unforgettable celebration of the performing arts.



TEAM VIVA

The Delhi Classical Music Festival 2024 was a remarkable celebration of Indian classical music, held over three captivating evenings at the Shriram Centre, Mandi House. Organised by the Sahitya Kala Parishad in collaboration with the Government of NCT of Delhi, the festival brought together both legendary artists and rising stars, showcasing the depth and beauty of this timeless art form. The packed audiences each night reflected the lasting appeal of classical music in today's world.

The festival opened with Ojesh Pratap Singh, whose performances of Raga Bhoopali and Raga Nat-Bihag captivated listeners with their clarity and precision. Following him, Dr. Rindana Rahasya's presentation of Raga Kedar and Raga Kirwani brought a sense of tranquility to the evening. The night concluded with the legendary Padma Bhushan Pt. Ajoy Chakraborty, whose thumris and bhajans struck a chord with all who attended, leaving a lasting impression.

Day two of the festival continued to impress, with Kashish Mittal presenting Raagas Jhinjhoti, Sohni, and Adana. His Krishna Bhajan was a powerful way to end his performance. The audience was equally enthralled by Satayajeet Talwalkar, who performed a tabla solo full of intricate rhythms, demonstrating his exceptional skill. Deborshi Bhattacharya's performance of Raaga Abhogi and Raaga Jog was well



MUSICAL MASTERY LIGHTS UP DELHI



received for its emotive depth and technical precision, earning him much praise.

The final evening closed the festival on a high note. Pandit Harish Tiwari's rendition of Raga Puriya Dhanashree was a blend of traditional compositions and a bhajan, creating a deep sense of connection with the audience. Shubhendra Rao's sitar performance of Kalyan Thaat Raga was both graceful and powerful, showcasing his technical mastery. The festival concluded with Vidushi Shubha Mudgal, whose performance was a fitting finale, leaving the audience mesmerised and filled with appreciation for the beauty of Indian classical music.

As the final notes of Vidushi Shubha Mudgal's performance echoed in the air, the Delhi Classical Music Festival 2024 drew to a close, leaving an indelible mark on all who attended. This three-day celebration not only showcased the talent of some of the most revered maestros but also served as a reminder of the timeless beauty of this rich tradition. With such an overwhelming response, one can only look forward to future editions of the festival, which continue to inspire, educate, and bring joy to music lovers across the capital and beyond.

PHOTO: PANKAJ KUMAR



NATURE'S SPIRIT ON CANVAS

Sujata Dere's Earth Song explores the spiritual essence of nature, highlighting the strong connection between humanity and the natural world, says SAKSHI PRIYA



"In the quiet of nature, there is a song that speaks to the soul, A melody that moves gently, yet powerfully, through all living things."

Sujata Dere's *Earth Song*, recently showcased at the Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre, beautifully embodies this concept. Through her paintings, Dere captured the serene yet powerful rhythms of nature, transforming horses, lotuses, and forests into symbols of spiritual connection. This exhibition invited viewers into a space where nature's essence was not only visible but deeply felt, echoing the sacred landscapes that inspired it.

Earth Song offered a captivating journey into the spiritual heart of nature. Dere presented her works through a meditative lens, where horses, lotuses, and forests each held significant symbolic meaning. The exhibition was a celebration of Dere's artistic growth and her bond with the natural world. The Equus series stood out as one of the most striking elements of the exhibition. In these pieces, Dere portrayed horses with dynamic brushstrokes that conveyed their powerful energy and their historical role in connecting cultures. The digital maps printed under the horses' forms added depth to the work, linking the creatures to a broader, more global story. Through earthy tones and glazes, Dere illuminated the horses with a glowing aura, giving them a sense of vitality and spirit that captivated viewers.

Dere's lotus studies were equally captivating. The lotus, often a symbol of purity and spiritual growth, was rendered in compositions that evoked tranquility and reflection. The delicate interplay of acrylic paints and aquarelle pencils created an atmosphere of light and

shadow, adding texture and depth to each piece. The lotus, a symbol of perfection, was given new life through Dere's innovative techniques, blending tradition with a contemporary touch. The forest series, rooted in Dere's deep love for nature, focused on the subtle beauty of the natural world. These smaller works, rich in texture and tone, captured the mystique of the forest with an



organic quality. Dere's spontaneous approach, allowing the paint to drip and blend, mirrored the fluid, ever-changing nature of the forests themselves.

Earth Song was a celebration of nature's mysticism, and Dere's mastery in capturing its essence was both enchanting and inspiring. The exhibition offered not just a visual experience, but an emotional and spiritual journey. Dere's work encouraged viewers to pause, reflect, and reconnect with the quiet rhythms of the earth.

Australia 86-1 in reply to India's 180 at stumps on day one of pink ball Test

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Australia reached 86 for 1 in their first innings after dismissing India for 180 at the end of the opening day of the pink-ball Test here on Friday. Nathan McSweeney and Marnus Labuschagne were at the crease on 38 and 20 respectively when the stumps were drawn after 33 overs of play in Australia's first innings. The home side trail by 94 runs. Opener Usman Khawaja was the lone Australia batter out for 13 off the bowling of Jasprit Bumrah. Earlier, India were all out for 180 at dinner after playing 44.12 overs as the visitors lost four and six wickets in the first and second sessions of the day respectively after opting to bat. Nitish Reddy top-scored for India with 42 off 54 balls, while KL Rahul and Shubman



Gill contributed 37 and 31 respectively. Yashasvi Jaiswal (0), Virat Kohli (7) and captain Rohit Sharma (3) fell cheaply while Rishabh Pant and Ravichandran Ashwin contributed 21 and 22 respectively. Pacer Mitchell Starc was the wrecker-in-chief for Australia as he took six Indian wickets for 48 runs. India made three changes with captain Rohit, Gill and Ashwin returning to the playing XI after missing the first Test which India won by 295 runs. Devdutt Padikkal, Dhruv Jurel and Washington Sundar made way for them. Brief Scores: India: 180 all out in 44.1 overs (Nitish Reddy 42, KL Rahul 37, Shubman Gill 31; Mitchell Starc 6/48). Australia: 86 for 1 in 33 overs (Nathan McSweeney 38 not out, Marnus Labuschagne 20 not out; Jasprit Bumrah 1/13).



In 200th ISL game, Kerala Blasters eye victory against Bengaluru FC

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Appearing in their 200th ISL game, Kerala Blasters will have their task cut out as they look to mark the occasion with victory against formidable hosts Bengaluru FC here on Saturday. The Blues are presently placed in the second spot in the league table, with 20 points from 10 engagements, after six victories and a couple of draws. As for the Kochi-based Tuskers, they will want to move up the table from the current 10th place, having managed 11 points. Bengaluru have secured 13 points from their first five home matches this season, and victory on Saturday would take their tally to 16 points, their best-ever after after six home games in ISL history. Bengaluru FC have never failed to score against Kerala Blasters FC in the ISL, netting 27 goals in 16 meetings. The Blues will look to leverage this record to secure another crucial win in the upcoming match. Sunil Chhetri has been a talisman in this fixture, scoring seven goals, the most by any player in this fixture. The Kerala Blasters FC have conceded in their last 11 away matches, a streak that could extend to a record-equaling 12 games with another defensive lapse. Their tally of 40 away losses is the joint-most in ISL history alongside NorthEast United FC. The team is also coming off a 0-1 loss to FC Goa, failing to score for the first time this season. The last time they went goalless in back-to-back matches was in February-March 2023. Bengaluru FC have dominated the rivalry, with 10 wins in 16 matches, compared to Kerala Blasters FC's 4 wins and 2 draws. At home, Bengaluru FC are unbeaten against the Kochi-based team, winning five of six matches and scoring eight goals while conceding only two. Chhetri touched upon his team's rivalry against Kerala Blasters FC by hailing it as one of the most remarkable fixtures in the competition. Assistant coach Renedy Singh addressed the team's form post the international break in addition to their preparation for the clash against Kerala Blasters FC. "The first time we played in Kerala, I didn't expect it (the fixture) to grow as much as it has. It's one of the best games to watch, whether it's played in Kochi or Bengaluru. People put a check list on their calendar for this match and I'm sure it will be the same tomorrow," Chhetri said. Kerala Blasters FC head coach Mikael Stahre is confident of his team's tactical setup and stressed on defending collectively in the coming match. "From a technical perspective I think we are on the right track. We have to focus on the team performance. We should defend together as a side and focus on doing the small things right," Stahre said.

Messi and Inter Miami to open Club World Cup against Egyptian club Al Ahly



AP ■ MIAMI

Lionel Messi and Inter Miami know their path for next year's Club World Cup. The host team — invited by FIFA to compete despite criticism from many in the soccer world — will play the tournament's first match on June 15 against Egyptian club Al Ahly, as part of a group that will also feature Palmeiras and Porto. Other opening matches include Paris Saint-Germain vs. Atletico Madrid and Brazilian club Botafogo playing at Major League Soccer's Seattle Sounders in Group B; Monterrey against Inter Milan in Group E; and Real Madrid facing the Saudi club Al-Hilal — potentially a showdown pitting superstars Kylian Mbappé for Real Madrid and Neymar for Al-Hilal if the Brazilian great remains with that club. "Anytime that you have certain things where soccer is big and you bring it to the U.S., it's going to be a great atmosphere and entertaining," said baseball great Ken Griffey Jr., part of the Sounders' ownership group. His club will get the chance to play one of the world's storied teams in PSG during group play. "I'm going to leave that one alone," Griffey said, smiling. The draw was held Thursday in Miami, with the 32 teams finally finding out their first three opponents in the newly expanded event.

The tournament will be held in the U.S. From June 15 to July 13, using 12 stadiums in 11 different cities. The final will be at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, the same stadium that will play host to the 2026 World Cup final. Among the powerhouse clubs in the field: Manchester City, Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, PSG, Chelsea, Borussia Dortmund and Inter Milan. There's also the four highest-ranked teams from South America: Flamengo, Palmeiras, River Plate and Fluminense. And Messi's team, as a representative of the host nation, gets the distinction of playing the first match. It'll happen at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Florida. "It's about inclusivity, it's about bringing clubs from all over the world, the 32 best clubs and best players from all over the world together," FIFA President Gianni Infantino said. Some would argue it's not the 32 "best" clubs. Inter Miami's selection was widely panned by critics, the volume of that only rising after the team that won the Supporters Shield as the best MLS team in the regular season — with a record-setting point total — lost in Round 1 of the MLS Cup playoffs. "There's no controversy," Inter Miami managing owner Jorge Mas said. Major League Soccer got two teams: Seattle and Inter Miami. The Sounders qualified for the field, and Inter Miami was

placed into it as the host nation's representative. The club competition uses the traditional 32-team format used by the World Cup from 1998 to 2022. Eight round-robin groups of four teams each were drawn Thursday, with the top two from each group advancing to a knockout bracket of 16. Europe got 12 spots and South America six to lead the field, while Africa, Asia and North America all got four — with Inter Miami essentially a fifth from North America since it has host status. Oceania got one spot. "There is no rule that said the MLS Cup winner needs to be in the Club World Cup," MLS Commissioner Don Garber said. "I have no interest in anything other than what I think is going to be best for the showcase, best for our league. I am supportive of the decision that FIFA made and I'm excited to put Miami and Seattle in a global media deal and be shown around the world." Mas said Inter Miami getting the privilege of playing the opening match of the tournament at home is "a testament to our community, the soccer culture that's here." "Who would have told us five years ago, with no club, that we'd be here today at a draw with the best teams in the world?" Mas said. "That's what we aspire to. That's what we dream of." Group A: Palmeiras, Porto, Al Ahly, Inter Miami. Group B: Paris Saint-Germain, Atletico Madrid, Botafogo, Seattle. Group C: Bayern Munich, Auckland City, Boca Juniors, Benfica. Group D: Flamengo, ES Tunis, Chelsea, Leon. Group E: River Plate, Urawa, Monterrey, Inter Milan. Group F: Fluminense, Borussia Dortmund, Ulsan, Mamelodi Sundowns. Group G: Manchester City, Wydad, Al Ain, Juventus.

Shammi Silva takes over ACC presidency role from Jay Shah

PTI ■ DUBAI

Sri Lanka's Shammi Silva has taken over as the president of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), succeeding India's Jay Shah, who recently became the chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC). Shah had vacated the position after three terms as ACC President. It won't be Silva's maiden role with the ACC, having previously functioned as the chairman of the organisation's Finance & Marketing Committee. "It is a great honour to lead the Asian Cricket Council. Cricket is the heartbeat of Asia, and I look forward to working closely with all member nations to elevate the game, provide opportunities for emerging talents, and strengthen the bond that unite us through this beautiful sport," said Silva in a statement. On behalf of the ACC, Silva also extended heartfelt gratitude to Shah for his exemplary leadership and significant contributions during his tenure. "Under Mr Shah's stewardship, the ACC achieved remarkable milestones, including the successfully achieving highest value for its commercial rights of ACC Asia Cup tournaments for 2024-31, the introduction of a new pathway events structure, and the continued development and growth of cricket across its member nations," the ACC said. Silva's tenure begins at a pivotal time, with the ACC focusing on the upcoming Asia Cup and striving to strengthen Asia's position as a powerhouse in global cricket.



for 2024-31, the introduction of a new pathway events structure, and the continued development and growth of cricket across its member nations," the ACC said. Silva's tenure begins at a pivotal time, with the ACC focusing on the upcoming Asia Cup and striving to strengthen Asia's position as a powerhouse in global cricket. The 32-year-old Liren had won the opening game while Gukesh had emerged victorious in the third All other games have ended in draws. If history is anything to go by, the reigning champion wins the match if the scores are tied 4-4

World Chess Championship: Gukesh, Liren eye breakthrough after series of draws

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Half a dozen draws and some missed opportunities later, sprightly challenger D Gukesh and resolute defending champion Ding Liren would be desperate for a breakthrough when they clash in the 10th game of the World Chess Championship here on Saturday. Gukesh has explored several winning lines but the advantage has not translated into victories for the Indian, and with just five more classical games left to be played in the USD 2.5 million prize money championship, the 18-year-old would look to break the deadlock and hope to take a decisive lead after a day's rest on Friday. The draw on Thursday, which was the seventh of the match and sixth on the trot, has left both players on an identical score of 4.5 points each, still three shy of the championship-



winning tally. The 32-year-old Liren had won the opening game while Gukesh had emerged victorious in the third All other games have ended in draws. If history is anything to go by, the reigning champion wins the match if the scores are tied 4-4

after eight games which was the case here too. The Chennai-born Indian knows that he will have to punch hard against his gritty Chinese opponent, who has a habit of coming up with well-disguised tricks when the chips are

down. World number one and five-times world champion Magnus Carlsen minced no words while doing a recap of the ninth game and said that the time was running out for Gukesh. "I think we have finally arrived at a moment when Gukesh is not a favourite in this match anymore, it's as pure a 50-50 match as it comes," said Carlsen. If the deadlock is not broken after 14 rounds, Gukesh could well surrender the initiative to his Chinese opponent when the games are played under the faster time control to determine the winner. Liren is said to have an advantage in short games. Gukesh, one of the architects of India's maiden Chess Olympiad title triumph recently, said after the draw in the ninth game on Thursday that he would like to improve his performance in critical moments.

Grid penalty for Charles Leclerc deals a blow to Ferrari's hopes in F1 constructors' title race

AP ■ ABU DHABI

A grid penalty for Charles Leclerc threatens to end Ferrari's hopes of beating McLaren to the Formula 1 constructors' title. Ferrari said Friday the team had to change the battery pack on Leclerc's car in the first practice session in Abu Dhabi. Ferrari said the team expects a 10-place penalty on the grid for Sunday's race. Leclerc was fastest in the first practice session by .221 of a second from McLaren's Lando Norris, with Lewis Hamilton third fastest for Mercedes. Leclerc's brother Arthur took over Carlos Sainz Jr's car and was 18th. Teams have to give two practice sessions per season to younger and less experienced drivers. McLaren goes into the race with a 21-point lead over Ferrari in the constructors' standings. Leclerc's teammate Sainz said

Thursday that he expected that either he or Leclerc would have to win the race in Abu Dhabi, with the other car also finishing on the podium, to have a chance of the title "unless something very disastrous happened" to McLaren. Either McLaren or Ferrari will end a long wait for an F1 constructors title Sunday. McLaren hasn't won the lucrative prize for teams since 1998 and Ferrari's last win was in 2008. Tension in the paddockTwo of Formula 1's top drivers are exchanging bitter personal attacks. All-time great Hamilton is bidding an emotional farewell to Mercedes. It's all overshadowed the constructors' title fight. Despite Max Verstappen wrapping up his fourth driver title in Las Vegas two weeks ago, the Red Bull star is still the center of attention for a feud with George Russell of



Mercedes. Russell branded Verstappen "a bully" and accused him of threatening behaviour following a dispute between the two in qualifying at the Qatar Grand Prix last week. Verstappen was pushed off pole position in Qatar in favor of Russell, and has said his rival

lied to get him a penalty. Verstappen is aiming for his 10th race win of the season in Abu Dhabi. That's an impressive feat by most drivers' standards but not for Verstappen, who won 15 races in 2022 and topped it with 19 last year. The whole weekend in Abu

Dhabi will be a long goodbye for Hamilton as he leaves Mercedes, where he won six of his seven titles, and joins Ferrari for 2025. Hamilton is driving in Abu Dhabi with the names of 150 fans on his car as part of a "Thank you, Lewis" campaign by Mercedes.

Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice

Bid Identification No.05 of 2024-25

1	Number of Works :	14 Nos. of Works (Road - 7 Nos. & Building - 7 Nos)
2	Estimated Cost (Approx.):	₹1.68 lakhs & ₹38.60 lakh (Approx.)
3	Period of Completion :	Mentioned against NIT Table Col.06
4	Date & Time of availability of Bid documents in the Portal :	11/12/2024 at 11:00 Hrs.
5	Last date & time for receipt of Bids in the Portal :	20/12/2024 at 17:00 Hrs.
6	Date of Opening of Tender :	21/12/2024 at 11:00 Hrs.
7	Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid :	Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Jagatsinghpur

Further details can be seen from the Government website: www.tendersorissa.gov.in

Superintending Engineer
Rural Works Division
Jagatsinghpur

OIPR-25050/11/0009/2425

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, KESINGA

No. 3278 /NAC(K) Dt. 04/12 /2024

Expression of Interest for Rejuvenation of Water Bodies under NAC Kesinga

N.A.C., Kesinga invites Expression of Interest from MSGs within NAC Kesinga area in close envelope system for " Rejuvenation of Khola Bandha, Bagad, ward no-02", " Rejuvenation of Ram Bandha, Boringpadar, ward no-08" and " Rejuvenation of Madhaba-Sabitri, ward no-09" under the jurisdiction of kesinga NAC as per scheduled available in the NAC office and Official Website, www.nac-kesinga.nic.in. The EOI scheduled will be available in the NAC office from 05.12.2024 to 17.12.2024 and the same shall be received in the NAC Office on or before 18.12.2024 up to 05 P.M. by Speed Post only, with sealed envelope, should be superscribed with " EOI FOR REJUVENATION OF WATER BODIES UNDER NAC KESINGA". The technical bid shall be opened on 19.12.2024 at 11 A.M. at NAC office, Kesinga, in presence of the Parties/SHGs. Preference will be given to MSGs from the same ward. In case of the non-availability of eligible MSGs within the ward area, application(s) may be considered from adjacent ward(s). Other terms and conditions can be seen in the EOI scheduled.

The authority reserves the right to reject any one or all of the EOIs without assigning any reason thereof.

Executive Officer,
N.A.C., Kesinga

OIPR-13109/11/0016/2425