

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 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 Chimmoy 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 Chhatarpur 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.



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Cabinet approves Rithala-Kundli corridor of Delhi Metro Phase IV

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet approved the 26.463-km Rithala-Kundli corridor of the Delhi Metro's Phase-IV project on Friday, which will further enhance connectivity between the National Capital and neighbouring Haryana. The entire stretch will comprise 21 stations, all of them elevated. Addressing a press conference, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said the project is scheduled to be completed in four years from the date of its sanction. This line will be an extension of the operational Shaheed Sthal (New Bus Adda) - Rithala (Red Line) corridor and will boost connectivity in the northwestern parts of Delhi, such as Narela, Bawana and parts of Rohini. The Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi allotted Rs. 6230 Crore for the completion of the project. "The completion cost of the project is Rs. 6,230 Crore and is to be implemented Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Limited (DMRC) the existing 50:50 Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) of the Government of India (GoI) and Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) in four years," said the statement, detailing the Delhi Metro's new project. This line will be an extension of the presently operational Shaheed Sthal (New Bus Adda) - Rithala (Red Line) corridor and will boost connectivity in the north western parts of the national capital in areas such as Narela, Bawana, parts of Rohini etc.



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, Uttarakhand, from a wedding, lost control on the Pilibhit-Tanakpur Highway near Neuria and struck a tree before overturning into a ditch. Continued on page 2

No renting plots to Rohingyas: J and K admin

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Launching a fresh offensive against the landlords who have rented out and accommodated a large number of illegal immigrants from Myanmar (Rohingya refugees) on their vacant plots in the Jammu and Kashmir administration has now decided to cut off power and water supply lines to evict illegal occupants at the earliest. At least 400 families of Rohingyas, residing inside temporary structures raised on these plots, have been affected by the recent diktat. Confirming the same, a Rohingya immigrant told The Pioneer that "for the last two days we have been facing a lot of hardships as power and water supply has been snapped in the Narwal Bala and Sunjwan area of Jammu. The landlord has given us a final ultimatum to vacate the plot at the earliest." Official sources revealed the district administration has decided to act tough against all those landlords who have sheltered these illegal immigrants on their plots. According to the latest assessment of the Home Department, more than 6000 Rohingyas are camping across different locations across Jammu district and several other illegal immigrants have also shifted to other district



headquarters of Samba, Kathua, Doda, Kishtwar, Rajouri, Poonch. On the instructions of the Home Department, the Jammu and Kashmir police along with intelligence agencies were conducting a fresh audit of illegal settlements of Rohingyas across the Jammu region. Last week, the Jammu and Kashmir police registered cases against the landlords who have rented out their properties without submitting their relevant records and completing due verification. The stringent step was aimed at curbing the illegal influx of Rohingya refugees and to ensure public safety. In the ongoing process, the Jammu Police has identified several instances and likewise registered cases against landlords who have knowingly or unknowingly rented their properties to Rohingya refugees, who are undocumented and pose a potential security threat. The police action followed an order by the office of the District Commissioner of Jammu making police verification of tenants mandatory for all property owners in the district. According to a police spokesman, the Jammu and Kashmir police have so far registered FIR 182/2024 and FIR 184/2024, both under section 223 of BNS in the Police Station Nowabad against Farman Ali S/o Gulam Mohd, R/o Bhawani Nagar, Talab Tillo Jammu; and Azam Malik S/o Masood Malik, R/o Ashti Mohalla, Batmalo, Srinagar respectively. In addition three cases, FIR 296/2024, FIR 297/2024 and FIR 298/2024, all under section 223 of BNS have also been registered in the Police Station Bahu Fort against Asima Latief D/o Abdul Latief R/o Rehima Abad, Bathindi; Mohd Shakeel S/o Rahim Ali R/o Rehima Abad, Bathindi; and Zakir Hussain S/o Khurshed Ali R/o Dungan, Bathindi, respectively.

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. Continued on page 2

Missile frigate INS Tushil to be commissioned on Dec 9

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Indian Navy will commission its latest multi-role stealth guided missile frigate INS Tushil, an upgraded Krivak III class frigate, at Kaliningrad in Russia on December 9. The commissioning of INS Tushil — a 125 metre, 3900 ton ship which is a blend of Russian and Indian cutting edge technologies and best practices in warship construction — will take place at an event to be presided over by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and attended by many high ranking Russian and Indian government and defence officials. INS Tushil is an upgraded Krivak III class frigate from Project 1135.6, of which six are already in service. The six frigates of this class that are



The new sentinel of the seas Photograph courtesy: Indian Navy

already in service comprise: three Talwar class ships, built at Baltiysky shipyard, St. Petersburg, and three follow-on Teg class ships, built at Yantar shipyard, Kaliningrad. INS Tushil, the seventh in the series, is the first of the two upgraded additional follow-on ships, the contract for which was signed in October 2016 between JSC Rosoboronexport, Indian Navy and the Government of India. Upon commissioning, INS Tushil will join the 'Sword Arm' of the Indian Navy, the Western Fleet, under the Western Naval Command and will rank amongst the most technologically advanced frigates in the world. It will not only be a symbol of the Indian Navy's growing capabilities, but also the

resilient collaborative strength of the India-Russia partnership. The warship's construction was closely monitored by an Indian team of specialists from the Warship Overseeing Team stationed at Kaliningrad, under the aegis of the Embassy of India, Moscow. According to the Ministry of Defence, the warship is the result of the continuous toil of hundreds of shipyard workers along with multiple Russian and Indian Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs). The ship post construction and readiness underwent a series of extensive trials, beginning January this year, including Factory Sea Trials, State Committee Trials and lastly Delivery Acceptance Trials by a team of Indian specialists. Continued on page 2

PADHARO MHARE DESH



Beautification work in progress ahead of the Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit, at Kesar Kyari Garden of historical 'Amber Fort', in Jaipur PTI

Three-day Maharashtra Assembly session to begin today

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Ahead of its first Cabinet expansion new BJP-led MahaYuti government that is likely to take place before December 16, a three-day session of the Maharashtra Legislature will begin here from Saturday. During the first two days of the session—on Saturday and Sunday, the newly elected MLAs will take oath. On Monday, the new Speaker of the Maharashtra Assembly will be elected. On the same day, Governor C P Radhakrishnan will address a joint sitting of the Maharashtra Legislature. The new govern-

ment will also table ordinances in both the Houses of the State Legislature during the day. Given that the oath-taking ceremony held on Thursday was restricted to the swearing-in of chief minister Devendra Fadnavis of the BJP and deputy chief ministers Eknath Shinde of the Shiv Sena (ES) and Ajit Pawar of the NCP (AP) the new MahaYuti government is planning its first Cabinet expansion sometime next week. Interacting with a leading television channel, Maharashtra's new chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said: "The Cabinet expansion will definitely take place before December 16. The number of ministries to be



given to each of the three constituents in the MahaYuti – BJP, Shiv Sena (ES) and NCP (Ajit Pawar -- has been finalised". "We are to finalise the matters relating to the portfolio allocations. Three of us (Shinde, Ajit Pawar and I) will sit across the Since the Maharashtra Assembly comprises 288 members, there will be a maximum of 43 ministers in the State Cabinet -- a number that accounts for 15 percent of total members in the lower House of the State Legislature. In the normal course, the BJP will get 21 ministerial berths in the 43-member Cabinet, while the Shiv Sena is entitled for 12 ministries and the

Ajit Pawar-led NCP will have to be satisfied with 10 berths. It remains to be seen if chief minister Fadnavis will accept a demand made by the NCP (AP) – which has won 41 seats --that it be given an equal number of ministries as that of the Shiv Sena (ES) with 57 MLAs on the basis of its "winning strike rate" in the State Assembly polls. In other words, the NCP (AP) is rooting for 11 ministries instead of ten berths. The Ajit Pawar-led party wants the BJP to carve one ministry from the Shinde Sena's quota of 12 ministries and give it. However, when asked about it, Fadnavis declined to disclose as to how many ministries each of

the three MahaYuti constituents will get. Notwithstanding the vociferous demand by Shinde that he be given the crucial State Home portfolio, Fadnavis has indicated that he wants to keep this portfolio with himself. "We will discuss this issue when we sit across to decide on portfolio allocations. But, a state home minister will have to coordinate regularly with the Centre. Given that the BJP heads the government at the Centre, it is ideal that a BJP man holds the State Home portfolio," Fadnavis said, when asked about his insistence on holding the State Home portfolio.

Cabinet approves opening of 85 new Kendriya Vidyalayas, 28 Navodaya Vidyalayas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet approved on Friday the opening of 85 new Kendriya Vidyalayas and 28 new Navodaya Vidyalayas. Addressing media, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said 28 new Navodaya Vidyalayas in the uncovered districts of the country. Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi also gave nod to expanding one Kendriya Vidyalaya. The opening of these new Kendriya Vidyalayas will provide an opportunity for over 82,000 students to receive affordable and high-quality education across the country. The total estimated requirement of funds for the establishment of the 85 new Kendriya Vidyalayas and the expansion of one existing Kendriya Vidyalaya is Rs 5,872.08 crore spread over a period of eight years from 2025-26, said Vaishnaw. As of date, there are 1,256 functional Kendriya



Vidyalayas, including three abroad -- Moscow, Kathmandu and Tehran -- and 13.56 lakh students are studying in these schools, an official statement said. "The administrative structure for implementing the project will require creation of posts at par with the norms fixed by the Sangathan for running of one full fledged KV with a capacity of approximately 960 students. Hence, 960 X 86 = 82560 students would benefit. As per norms in vogue, a full-fledged Kendriya Vidyalaya provides employment to 63 persons and accordingly,

approval of 85 new KVs and the expansion of one existing nearby KV, which will add 33 new posts, a total of 5,388 direct permanent employment opportunities will be created," said the statement. Kendriya Vidyalayas are primarily opened to cater to educational needs of wards of transferable and non-transferable employees of Central Government including Defence and Paramilitary forces and for children of floating population and others including those living in remote and undeveloped locations in the country.

Gyanvapi panel moves SC seeking dismissal of pleas challenging Places of Worship Act

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Gyanvapi Mosque management committee has moved the Supreme Court to oppose several pending petitions that challenge the constitutional validity of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991. The 1991 law prohibits conversion of any place of worship and provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947. The law, however, made only one exception -- dispute over the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. The top court is already seized of about six petitions, including the PILs filed by lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay and former Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy, against certain provisions of the law. The committee of management, Anjuman Intezamia Masjid, Varanasi, in its plea filed through lawyer Fuzail Ahmad Ayyubi, filed an intervention application in the top court seeking dismissal of the pending pleas against the 1991 law on the ground that they were

based on "rhetorical and communal claims" that could disrupt communal harmony and the rule of law. "That without lending much credence to the rhetorical claims made in the petition, the purported grievance of the petitioner as regards ancient rulers of the past cannot be addressed by this hon'ble court nor is a valid ground for challenging the constitutional validity of the 1991 Act," the plea stated. The committee said the pleas challenging a legislative enactment must indicate the unconstitutionality of the provisions based on constitutional principles. "The rhetoric arguments seeking a sort of retribution against the perceived acts of previous rulers cannot be made the basis for a constitutional challenge..." it said. The petition said the 1991 law was a "legislative instrument designed to protect the secular features of the Indian polity and an enforcement of constitutional commitment". The mosque committee further underscored the potential "drastic consequences" of overturning the law, citing inci-



dents like the Sambhal case, where a recent survey order reportedly triggered widespread protests and resulted in six fatalities. The committee warned that repealing the Act could lead to a surge in disputes over religious sites across the country, prompting tensions in "every nook and corner" while threatening communal harmony. The intervention plea listed a series of contentious claims made over the years concerning various mosques and dargahs (shrines), including the Shahi Idgah Masjid in Mathura, the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque near Delhi's Qutub Minar, the Kamal Maula Mosque in Madhya Pradesh, and others. It therefore said the petitions challenging the Act were filed with "mischievous

intent" to facilitate lawsuits against these religious sites, which the 1991 Act currently protected. The committee said the grievances raised in the petitions, centered on the alleged actions of ancient rulers, and couldn't serve as a legitimate basis for challenging the constitutional validity of the law. It asserted that historical wrongs or perceived injustices of the past should not undermine the principles of secularism and non-retrogression upheld by the Act. The 1991 law was interpreted and reaffirmed by a five-judge bench in the Ayodhya Ram Janmabhoomi verdict, underlining its significance as a cornerstone of India's secular framework, it said. The top court, on January 9, 2023, sought responses of the Centre on pending pleas challenging certain provisions of a 1991 law that prohibit filing of a lawsuit to reclaim a place of worship or seek a change in its character from what prevailed on August 15, 1947. Upadhyay, in his PIL, sought setting aside of Sections 2, 3, 4 of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991

on various grounds, including that these provisions took away the right of judicial remedy to reclaim a place of worship of any person or a religious group. The top court had also indicated that the pleas challenging the validity of certain provisions of the law may be referred to a five-judge Constitution bench for adjudication. While Swamy wanted the apex court to "read down" certain provisions to enable Hindus to stake claim over the Gyanvapi Mosque in Varanasi and the Shahi Idgah Mosque in Mathura, Upadhyay claimed the entire statute was unconstitutional and no question of reading it down arose. The doctrine of reading down a law is generally used to save a statute from being struck down on account of its unconstitutionality. The petition alleged that the 1991 law created an "arbitrary and irrational retrospective cut-off date" of August 15, 1947, for maintaining the character of the places of worship or pilgrimage against encroachment done by "fundamentalist-barbaric invaders and law-breakers".

Yunus unworthy to retain Nobel Peace Prize: Bengal Speaker

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee and State BJP MP Jyotirmoy Singh Mahato were on the same page even as both on Friday advocate recanting --- interim Bangladesh president --- Md Yunus' Nobel peace prize for having failed to contain atrocities on the minority Hindus in that country. Mahato said that he had written a letter to the Nobel Committee to consider withdrawing the peace prize awarded to Yunus for his failure to ensure the safety of life and property of the minority Hindus of Bangladesh.

"As a Bengali Hindu I am deeply disturbed and anguished at the way the Hindus are being persecuted in Bangladesh ... I do not know much of how things take place but I am of the opinion that the Nobel Peace Prize of Md Yunus should be taken back as his Government has not only failed to ensure persecution of the Hindus but also they have allowed the massacre of their lives and properties," Mahato said. "Peace is past in Bangladesh ... the way a Hindu sadhus are being harassed and put in jail without trial ... the way the properties of the minorities lives and honour of

women are being looted by the fundamentalist forces and the way the Government is sitting unconcerned it shows complicity ... hence this letter has been written," he said. Bengal Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee and State Minister Bratya Basu too condemned the attacks on the minorities in that country with Banerjee saying that though he could not make suggestions from his position he too did not approve of the mass persecution of the minorities in that country. "Whatever we are seeing is extremely painful ... attack on minorities wherever it takes



place is condemnable ... Persecution of minorities wherever it takes place is condemnable ... it is evident that he (Yunus) has failed to bring peace in his country ... everyone knows why he got Nobel Prize for peace ... now it seems that a time has come to reevaluate his credentials," Banerjee said. Yunus and Grameen Bank of Bangladesh were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2006 for their work to "create economic and social development from below". Senior Trinamool Congress leader and Bengal Minister Bratya Basu too deplored the persecution of minorities in

Bangladesh though he tended to avoid the term "Hindu." Basu said, "it is clearly seen that minorities are persecuted ... their cause is challenged ... if the minorities are massacred like this in your neighbourhood then it will definitely impact peace," adding however that he was not the right person to dwell on the Peace Prize of Md Yunus. "I may have my personal opinions but it will not be proper for me to make any comment on the Nobel Peace Prize," he said. Incidentally, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee too had demanded intervention of United Nations

Peace Keeping Force in Bangladesh a few days ago. Making a speech in the State Assembly she had appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to urge the UNO to send peace keeping forces in Bangladesh. "The Government of India is totally keeping mum on the issue ... we respect the Indian government's stance, but atrocities on religious grounds are unacceptable... considering the deteriorating situation in that country and attack on the minorities," she had said adding, "the Centre should appeal to the UN to send peacekeeping mission in Bangladesh."

Cabinet approves Rithala-Kundli corridor of...

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This entire stretch will comprise 21 stations. All the stations of this corridor will be elevated. After completion, the Rithala-Narela-Nathpur corridor will also connect Shaheed Sthal New Bus Adda station in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh with Nathpur in Haryana via Delhi, which will tremendously boost connectivity in the entire National Capital Region. "This entire stretch will comprise 21 stations. All the stations of this corridor will be elevated. The stations, which shall come up on this corridor are: Rithala, Rohini Sector 25, Rohini Sector 26, Rohini Sector 31, Rohini Sector 32, Rohini Sector 36, Barwala, Rohini Sector 35, Rohini Sector 34, Bawana Industrial Area-1 Sector 3.4, Bawana Industrial Area-1 Sector 1,2, Bawana JJ Colony, Sanoth, New Sanoth, Depot Station, Bhorgarh village, Anaj Mandi Narela, Narela DDA Sports Complex, Narela, Narela Sector 5, Kundli and Nathpur," said the statement. This corridor will be Delhi Metro's fourth extension into Haryana. Presently, the Delhi Metro operates up to Gurugram, Ballabhgarh, and Bahadurgarh in Haryana.

Flight threats: NIA may probe 16 cases

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The Delhi Police is also taking the help of central agencies to reach out to Interpol to access further details of the domain, he added. The Delhi Police, while investigating the threat cases, also interrogated one Jagdish Shriram Uikey (35) of Gondia, Maharashtra. "Jagdish had sent an email to a central government minister stating that he was having information regarding the sender. The team when interrogating him found the claim to be bogus," the source said. He told police officers that some terrorist group had sent those messages. Jagdish, who studied up to Class 11, had also written a book on terrorism "Atankwad-Ek Tufaan Rakhshash", the source added. Against the backdrop of a spate of hoax bomb threats in October, the IT ministry asked social media platforms to observe due diligence obligations and promptly remove or disable access to misinformation within the strict timelines prescribed under the IT rules.

Quad agenda makes it one of most expansive inter-Governmental frameworks: EAM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday said Quad is growing and its agenda makes it one of the "most expansive" inter-governmental frameworks, and the incoming Donald Trump administration is unlikely to reduce support for the coalition. In an interactive session at the India-Japan Forum, Jaishankar

recalled how Trump's first tenure as the US president supported the shaping of the Quad and its subsequent growth. The Quad, comprising India, the United States, Australia and Japan, has been focusing on ensuring peace, stability and inclusive growth in the Indo-Pacific against the backdrop of China's growing military muscle-flexing in the region.

"In 2017, it was the first year of the Trump administration when it (Quad) started at the vice-minister's level. Then in 2019, it was again under the Trump administration that it moved from the vice-minister's level to the foreign minister's level," Jaishankar said. "And there is every reason for us to expect that they would say we got it right the first time, it's done well and therefore, we should keep with it,"

he added. India is scheduled to host the next Quad Summit in 2025. The Quad is growing and its agenda makes it "one of the most expansive sort of inter-governmental coordination that is today in evidence", Jaishankar said. On India's ties with China following the eastern Ladakh border row, Jaishankar referred to the implementation of the latest disengagement

arrangement and said challenges remain with regard to de-escalation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC). "Our entire relationship with China was predicated on the fact that the border areas would remain peaceful and stable and we had agreements to ensure that. In 2020, the Chinese chose to bring a lot of forces to the border areas and obviously, we responded with counter-deployments," he said.

Two shapshooters of Tajpuriya gang nabbed after shootout

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police's Special Cell nabbed two Haryana-based shooters of the Tilla Tajpuriya gang following a shootout in the Rohini area. According to police, the shooters, including 24 year old Narender from Sonipat and 22 year old Abhishek from Panipat, were rushed to a nearby hospital with gunshot wounds in their legs. The arrests were made following a tip-off about the presence of the two shooters in the northwest Delhi area. "Narender and Abhishek were wanted in a murder case in the Mundka police station area. On November 9, 26 year old Amit Lakra, who had been released on bail in a robbery case, was shot dead in Mundka. The Tilla Tajpuriya-Davinder Bamba gang claimed responsibility for the murder through social media posts," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell), Pranav Tayal, said. The assailants, who came on a motorcycle, fired several rounds at Lakra before fleeing from the spot, the officer said. On November 14, the Special Cell arrested Nihal, a resident of Yamuna Nagar and one of the alleged shooters of Lakra, after a shootout. Police later made one more arrest while the two main shooters, including Narender, remained at large.

Missile frigate INS Tushil to be commissioned on...

From page 1

The trials that the warship underwent included the proving of all Russian equipment fitted onboard, including weapon firings. During the trials, the ship clocked an impressive speed of more than 30 knots. "With these trials being successfully completed, the ship would reach India in a near combat-ready condition ready to deliver its effects from the word go," an Indian Navy spokesperson said here on Friday. The ship's name, Tushil, means 'the protector shield' and its crest represents the 'Abhedya Kavacham' (impenetrable shield). Along with its motto, 'Nirbhay, Abhedya aur Balsheel'

(Fearless, Indomitable, Resolute), the ship stands as a symbol of the Indian Navy's undying commitment to protect and safeguard the nation's maritime frontiers. The ship's new design provides it with enhanced stealth features and better stability characteristics. With the collaboration of Indian naval specialists and Severnaya Design Bureau, the indigenous content of the ship has been enhanced to an impressive 26 per cent. The major Indian OEMs involved were BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited, Bharat Electronics Limited, Keltron, Nova Integrated Systems from Tata, Elcome Marine, Johnson Controls India and many more.

25 dead in multiple road accidents across...

From page 1

Rescuers struggled to retrieve victims due to the car's mangled state. Officials reported that five victims died at the hospital, while four remain in critical condition. Another accident in Mahoba claimed three lives when a Celerio car crashed into a divider on the Jhansi-Mirzapur Highway. The vehicle was heading to a wedding in Ghutai village with seven occupants. Investigators discovered alcohol bottles in the car, and witnesses reported a strong smell of liquor at the scene, suggesting the driver may have been intoxicated. Excessive speed, estimated at 130 km/h, further worsened the impact of the crash. In Chitrakoot, five pilgrims

returning from Prayagraj in an overloaded Bolero SUV were killed in a collision with a truck on the Jhansi-Mirzapur Highway. The accident occurred near Raipura at around 5.30 am, reportedly after the driver dozed off. Six others sustained injuries, three of whom are in critical condition. In Lucknow, three friends returning home after marriage on the wee hours of Friday on a motorcycle were hit from behind by a speeding truck. All three died on the spot. These tragic incidents underscore the consequences of reckless driving and the lack of adherence to traffic regulations. Authorities are investigating all cases and have urged stricter enforcement of road safety norms to prevent such avoidable loss of life.

Class 12 student shoots principal...

From page 1

His sudden and violent death has left the school in mourning, with students and staff grappling with the loss. This incident also highlights the increasing concerns over youth access to firearms and discipline among students. Authorities have urged schools to take proactive steps in monitoring student behavior and fostering a safe learning environment. The police have assured that the culprits will be apprehended and justice served. Meanwhile, Saxena's grieving family has demanded a thorough investigation and stringent action against those responsible. The incident underscores the urgent need for stronger safety protocols in schools to ensure the well-being of both staff and students.

Farmers face police barricades, tear gas on way to Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 'jatha' of 101 farmers set off on foot toward Delhi from their protest site at the Shambhu border on Friday but were halted just meters away by multiple layers of barricades. As some farmers approached the barricades on the Haryana side of the border, security forces deployed tear gas to disperse them. The security personnel used tear gas as some farmers reached near the barricades put up on the Haryana side of the Shambhu border. Haryana Police asked the farmers not to proceed further and cited a prohibitory order clamped under Section 163 of

the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). The Ambala district administration has banned any unlawful assembly of five or more persons in the district.

The farmers are marching to force the Centre for a legal guarantee for minimum support price for crops. A few farmers holding farmers' unions' flags pushed the iron mesh, put up by the security personnel, down the bridge constructed over the Ghaggar River.

The Haryana government on Friday suspended mobile internet and bulk SMS service in 11 villages of Ambala district including in Dangdehri, Lohgarh, Manakpur, Dadiyana,

Bari Ghel, Lhars, Kalu Majra, Devi Nagar, Saddopur, Sultanpur, and Kakru villages of Ambala at Friday noon till December 9.

The farmers, gathered under the banner of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, have been demanding the Centre give them a legal guarantee for minimum support price for crops. They have been camping at Shambhu and Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana since February 13 after their march to Delhi was stopped by security forces. The 'jatha' began its march at 1 pm but after covering a few metres, they were forced to stop near a multi-layered barricade



erected by the Haryana government. Chanting 'Satnam Waheguru' and holding farmers' unions' flags and carrying essential items, the 'jatha' crossed the initial layer barricades easily but could not proceed further. A few farmers pushed the iron mesh and barbed wire, and others even uprooted iron nails from the road - National Highway-44. Security personnel, who were standing behind

the cemented barricades with iron grills set up for protection, were seen asking farmers not to move ahead as they did not have permission.

One of the protesters climbed the roof of the tin where security forces had been stationed. He was forced to get down. Water cannon vehicles have also been deployed at the Shambhu border point. Earlier, the district authorities in Ambala ordered the closure of all government and private schools.

Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher termed the 101 farmers part of the jatha 'marjeevras' - someone willing to die for a cause. He slammed the Haryana government for not

allowing them to march even on foot.

Pandher had on Thursday told reporters if the government stopped them from carrying out their march, it would be a "moral victory" for the farmers. Their leaders at the Centre and in states have been regularly saying that if the farmers do not bring tractor-trolleys, there should be no objection. So if we go to Delhi on foot, there should be no reason to stop the farmers," he said. Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur's martyrdom day was also observed at the Shambhu and Khanauri border points by the farmers.

Meanwhile, SKM leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal continued his fast-unto-death at the Khanauri

border point on Friday. Protesting farmers had earlier attempted to march towards Delhi on February 13 and February 21 but they were stopped by security forces deployed at the border points. Besides MSP, the farmers are also demanding farm debt waiver, pension for farmers and farm labourers, no hike in electricity tariff, withdrawal of police cases (against farmers), and "justice" for the victims of the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence. Reinstatement of the Land Acquisition Act, 2013 and compensation to the families of farmers who died during the previous agitation in 2020-21 are also part of their demands.

BJP orchestrating massive 'vote deletion scam': Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Friday alleged that the BJP is orchestrating a massive 'vote deletion scam' wherein the names of a large number of voters had been deleted from the electoral roll ahead of Delhi Assembly polls. Addressing a press conference, the former Chief Minister said the BJP filed applications with the Election Commission of India (ECI) to delete the names of thousands of voters in Shahdara, Janakpuri, Laxmi Nagar, and other seats. He asserted, "So far, we have only heard stories about how Haryana was won, how Maharashtra was won. But today, we are presenting evidence to show what the BJP is doing in the Delhi elections. BJP is filing applications with the Election Commission at a massive scale to delete votes. And secretly, the Election Commission is processing these applications." "The BJP has filed an application to delete the names of



11,018 voters in the Shahdara area, but when we cross-checked that application on 500 names, 75 per cent of people were still living there, but their names can be deleted from the electoral roll," he said. He claimed that the AAP won the Shahdara Assembly seat in the last elections by around 5,000 votes, and now names of around 11,000 voters are being deleted in that constituency

and most of these voters are AAP supporters. The AAP Supremo also raised fingers at the Election Commission of India, stating that its role is highly suspicious in this. "According to the rules, the Election Commission must upload details of all applications for vote deletions on its website daily in Form 10. Yet, as of yesterday, the Election Commission's website showed

only 487 applications for vote deletions in Shahdara constituency over the past month. This means that the 11,000 applications submitted by BJP are being processed secretly without being displayed on the website," he said.

Addressing the accusations, Shahdara District Magistrate claimed, "Only 494 form 7 is received in Shahdara Assembly constituency since 29 October, 2024. Hence, the claim that 11018 form 7 were filed by BJP in the last one month is factually incorrect." Furthermore, Kejriwal said that the BJP is terribly afraid of the people of Delhi, who are extremely angry with the party. "The way BJP has ruined the law and order situation across Delhi is appalling. Women and girls are being openly harassed, and there are open shootings. Delhi has been turned into the capital of gangsters. The people of Delhi want to teach BJP a lesson, and BJP also knows that they are losing badly," the AAP chief stated, adding that

in desperation, they have resorted to this method of deleting a large number of AAP votes to win elections.

"But after today's revelation, the people of Delhi will be outraged. The citizens of Delhi will not allow this conspiracy to succeed under any circumstances," said the senior AAP leader.

He said that the credibility of the ECI is at stake today. Kejriwal demanded immediate action from the Election Commission to halt vote deletions until elections and called for a thorough investigation into the conspiracy. Meanwhile, responding to the allegations, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva stated that Kejriwal is scared because fake votes by Rohingyas and Bangladeshis are being exposed. He alleged, "These voter bases are funded by foreign donations, such as from the Ford Foundation, and are bought by the AAP. Now that their fraud has been uncovered, they fear losing in the upcoming elections."

DUSIB causing huge losses to public exchequer, states LG

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena on Friday expressed strong displeasure over the lackadaisical approach of the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) in not revising the ground rent of its land and properties, stating that it is causing huge losses to the public exchequer.

DUSIB comes directly under the control of GNCTD through its Urban Development Department. The issue came to light during a hearing of an appeal petition filed by Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) against DUSIB, wherein it was found that DUSIB had not revised the rent to be charged by it from HPCL despite mandatory provisions for the same being there.

"In 1984, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) allotted two plots of land in Shahzada Bagh Industrial Area



and Sarai Basti Rohtak Road to HPCL for setting up filling stations on a 10-year lease. The agreement stipulated that the rent would be revised every five years," a statement said, adding that after DUSIB was constituted in 2010, the properties were transferred to it, and the responsibility for charging rent was assigned to the board. "However, the revision of ground rent after every five years as stipulated by the agreement of 1984 was not undertaken for nearly 30 years and DUSIB suddenly raised a random demand of Rs.35 Cr. in 2018 along with interests on HPCL," it added.

Saxena, while hearing the matter, observed that the case highlights the negligence of DUSIB officials responsible for land and property administration. He emphasized that these officials should have taken proactive steps to protect DUSIB's interests by timely revising the ground rent.

To address the issue and fix accountability, Delhi LG has directed the CEO of DUSIB to conduct a fact-finding inquiry and identify the officers responsible for the lapse in revising the ground rent. The LG has also instructed DUSIB to make a fresh calculation of ground rent in this case and formulate a comprehensive policy within 30 days for the fixation of ground rent and other charges for all its land and properties. The LG also decided that HPCL would pay the revised principal amount and interests only since the demand order was raised by DUSIB in 2018, rather than since 1984.

Britannica Education launches Sustainable School Learning

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Britannica Education on Friday launched its India operations, unveiling an expansive suite of digital learning solutions designed to transform the country's educational ecosystem. The event, held in the heart of New Delhi, convened over 150 distinguished educators, policymakers, and thought leaders who explored Britannica's vision for making world-class, skill-based education accessible to learners nationwide.

Building on its 256-year legacy of providing trusted knowledge, Britannica Education introduced 12 innovative digital products tailored for Indian schools, teachers, and students from K-12. These offerings

not only facilitate the move from rote-based methods to skill-driven pedagogy, but also align seamlessly with the Government of India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020) by focusing on foundational literacy, numeracy, and 21st century competencies.

Among the solutions unveiled were Britannica School, Britannica Library, Britannica Professional Learning, and Britannica Connect - Global Community for Collaborative Learning (GCCL). Each product is subscription-based, ensuring scalability, accessibility, and affordability. They aim to foster critical thinking, digital literacy, and lifelong learning habits, while equipping educators with the necessary tools for professional develop-

ment and global collaboration. Some of the salient features introduced includes sustainability which is a program designed to instil environmental stewardship; education reforms for aligning with NEP 2020 to promote experiential, skill-based, and holistic learning amongst others.

"Our mission is to inspire curiosity and the joy of learning, providing trusted, verified content that supports both teachers and students. By empowering educators and nurturing skill-based growth, we aim to ensure that every learner—regardless of background—can achieve their dreams," said Sal De Spirito, Global Executive Vice President, Britannica Education.

Two time Timarpur MLA Surendra Pal Singh Bittu joins AAP Current AAP MLA from Timarpur gears up to leave

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Delhi assembly elections slated to be held early next year, former two-time Timarpur MLA Surendra Pal Singh Bittu joined the AAP on Friday, while the constituency's current MLA Dilip Pandey, hinted that he may be denied ticket for the upcoming polls from Timarpur seat, saying it was time for him to do something else. Earlier Pandey, a senior AAP leader and the party's chief whip in the Delhi Assembly, in a long post on X in Hindi said whoever contests the election from the constituency, only Arvind Kejriwal will become Delhi's chief minister and people will ensure that. The move by Pandey has come after AAP MLA from Shahdara



and Speaker of outgoing Delhi Assembly Ram Niwas Goel recently sought to retire from electoral politics citing his old age, in a letter to Kejriwal. "After fulfilling the responsibility of building an organisation in politics and then contesting elections in the politics, now it's time

to do something else while staying in the AAP," Pandey said in his post.

Meanwhile, senior AAP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia welcomed Singh into the party and said his experience will help the party in its development work.

"Inspired by the good developmental work of the AAP in the field of education, health, Singh is joining our party today, and I am sure that his experience will help the party to continue doing good work," Sisodia said. He emphasised that Arvind Kejriwal is a true leader of the people and a messiah of the downtrodden. "It was my desire to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with him and contribute to the cause of improving people's lives. I am committed to working alongside this party to bring positive change and ensure the welfare of the people," he added.

"There is only one party that truly understands the needs of the common people and I will work shoulder to shoulder with the AAP," Singh said after joining the party.

A former software engineer based in Singapore, Pandey came back to India to join the anti-corruption movement and later became one of the prominent leaders of AAP after Kejriwal formed the party. A Purvanchali leader of AAP, he also contested the Lok Sabha polls from North East Delhi seat on the party's ticket in 2019 but was defeated by BJP's Manoj Tiwari. Pandey said his only satisfaction of being in politics is that the AAP government made lives of a large number of common man and poor people easy and paved the way for prospects of a better life for many children. Delhi assembly elections are due in February next year, and AAP is eyeing a third consecutive term after winning 62 out of 70 seats in the 2020 elections.

India's elderly population set to triple by 2050

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

India is in a unique position due to its demographic dividend but senior citizens in the country are facing battles on many fronts, primarily healthwise. Looking to ensure the elderly are not bogged down by diseases and loneliness in the silver years and listing preventable health-care solutions, ASSOCHAM Foundation for Corporate Social Responsibility (AFCSR), the social arm of ASSOCHAM, organised a panel discussion featuring experts titled "Empowering Elders: A Path to Healthy and Graceful Ageing" in the national Capital.

Supported by hygiene brand Savlon, the panel discussion featured (Padma Shri) Prof. (Dr.) Subhash C. Manchanda, Cardiologist, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Prof. Vinod Kumar, Senior Consultant in Medicine & Former Head of Geriatric Clinic, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi and Dr. Meenal Thakral, Classified Specialist - Geriatric Medicine, Artemis Hospital, Gurugram. The session was moderated by Dr. Rajesh Kesari, Member, ASSOCHAM National Council on CSR and Founder & Director, Total Care

Control, Delhi-NCR and EC Member, Research Society for The Study of Diabetes in India - RSSDI.

Anil Rajput, Chairperson, ASSOCHAM National Council on CSR, said, "Globally, ageing is one of the 21st century's most significant social challenges. In India, the elderly population stands at 104 million and is projected to rise to 319 million by 2050. The government on its part has been addressing this subject through laudable initiatives, however, over the years major issues around elderly health-care have emerged. With a three-fold increase in elderly population expected over the next two and a half decades and geriatric care still being a relatively new area in healthcare and mainly restricted to cities, I firmly believe that empowerment of the elderly necessitates active and sustained participation from the corporate sector, civil society, and the government."

"Man's dream of graceful healthy aging and a happy old age is achievable through balanced diet without addictions, physical exercise, sound sleep, peace and relaxation, as well as by engaging in active mental, social, and spiritual engagement," said Prof. Kumar.

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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, 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."

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 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 Virodi 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 sakti 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. Chamra 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 Kaveripattanam 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 Kaveripattanam 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

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.

After she got off at Dhaula Kuan, I resumed my journey towards Dwarka, and instinctively, my mind, always in a mad rush, raced back in time, to the days when Delhi didn't have a mass transit system. When we, the people of Delhi, had to depend entirely on the rickety, black smoke-spewing Yellow-Green DTC buses which operated at the base level of punctuality, hygiene, customer service and safety. So much so, that the monster red buses earned the well-deserved sobriquet of being a 'killer line', due to the number of fatal accidents in which they were involved. Mercifully, for a long time, my



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)



APS MALHOTRA



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. At the pace that technology with its variants is fashioning itself, numerous applications unravelling virtually by the minute, and the level of obsolescence and attrition of equipment is becoming extraordinarily high. In such a scenario, humans and organisations will be subsumed by various products and their variants. The human mind can no longer remain in the typewriter mode. The garden of Organisational Theory and Behaviour is dotted with eminent scholars. Three pioneers, Adam Smith, Charles Babbage and Robert Owen provided the ballast and the basic groundwork.

Adam Smith advanced the argument that countries and organisations would profit by adopting the tenets of division of labour, what is now termed as specialisation. Charles Babbage in his seminal work postulated: Through the division of labour, the time required for learning a job or skill gets drastically reduced. Right at the stage of infancy wastage of material gets minimised and diminishes. The mind is propelled to take up serious tasks upon attaining superior skills. Way back in 1789, Robert Owen at 18 went on to acquire a factory. He was a utopian, way ahead of his times. In 1825, he promulgated regulated working hours, child labour laws, public education and business involvement in various community projects – a precursor to CSR.



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. Technology stares at organisations with peering eyes, the complexity and dynamics of structures having undergone a complete metamorphosis. Let us look at the Indian Railways. There was a time when the operating and manufacturing departments held sway in the decision-making process. Today, it is the technical departments that are the game changers. The concept of fixed work hours is history.

The workforce must be alert 24x7. Thus, employees need to brush up on their skill sets to brace for the challenges of the virtual world. Let us examine the model of direct teaching through online classes – one-on-one, between the teacher and the tutee. The very paradigm may affect teaching techniques in schools and universities. Similarly, qualified doctors instruct their colleagues through Skype or other means during complex surgeries. In such a scenario, scores of organisational structures, government or those in the private sector must adapt radically in order to survive.

The workforce must continuously upgrade their skill set or face extinction. Perhaps emotions of warmth may be lost in the maze of technological evolution. The philosophy of an organisation, its goals and objectives and the behavioural pattern between the structure and the workforce have been stranded in a traffic jam of the kind one encounters in major cities of India like Gurugram. Stephen Hawking has in a rather depressing prognosis, predicted that life would be extinct on this planet on four grounds – nukes, global warming, man-made viruses or robots. Thus, the human mind should re-invent itself and current organisational behaviour and theories or prepare a blueprint to discover a sister planet to inhabit. Aeons ago, Aristotle wrote, "We are what we repeatedly do." This paradigm will have to change for organisations to survive.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

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. South Koreans fought so hard to build a democratic system. Under South Korea's Constitution, the president has the authority to declare martial law in the face of military threats or a national emergency. However, the reasons Yoon provided for his declaration—opposition-driven impeachment efforts, budgetary clashes, and an increasingly fractured political spectrum—hardly constitute a national crisis of the magnitude that would justify such a drastic measure.

The events surrounding Yoon's attempt to invoke emergency powers are not isolated; they represent the continuation of a deeply ingrained political pattern, where martial law is not only a tool of governance but a reminder of a nation's struggle between democracy and repression.

The debate surrounding Yoon's leadership has drawn comparisons to previous impeachments in South Korea, particularly those of Roh Moo-hyun and Park Geun-hye. Roh, in 2004, faced impeachment over election law violations, though the Constitutional Court reinstated him. Less than a decade later, Park was ousted through impeachment over a corruption scandal.

Yoon, while not yet facing the same fate, is set to have his impeachment voted on today following his controversial declaration of martial law, which lasted only six hours and was rejected by lawmakers



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.

To understand the scope of South Korea's political turmoil, one must look at the country's history with martial law—a tool that has long been used by political elites to stifle dissent and assert control.

South Korea's 20th century is defined by foreign intervention, division, and military rule. Following Japan's brutal annexation of Korea in 1910, martial law became a key instrument of colonial repression, aimed at quelling any resistance to Japanese imperial rule. The atrocities of this period, from forced labour to the sexual enslavement of women, left deep scars on the Korean psyche.

It was a time when the very concept of Korean autonomy seemed impossible, as external powers sought to mould the country to fit their interests. The end of Japanese rule in 1945, after World War II, did not herald peace for the Korean Peninsula. Instead, Korea was divided into two zones of occupation: the Soviet-controlled North and the American-controlled South.

The subsequent Korean War (1950–1953) left the country in ruins, its political and social fabric torn apart by the conflict. In the aftermath, South Korea was deeply reliant on American military protection, a dependency that would come to define the country's geopolitical position during the Cold War. But South Korea's reliance on foreign power

came at a cost. The U.S., though a key ally, often dictated the direction of South Korean politics, using its military presence to enforce stability while limiting the country's true political autonomy. By 1953, when the armistice was signed, the U.S. had established a major military presence in South Korea, which would grow over the coming decades.

This military dominance, coupled with South Korea's internal political instability, created fertile ground for martial law to flourish as a means of maintaining control. One of the most infamous instances of martial law came in 1961 when General Park Chung-hee seized power in a military coup. Park's regime, which lasted for over a decade, was characterised by authoritarian rule, but also rapid industrialisation, transforming South Korea into one of Asia's economic powerhouses.

His government used martial law to suppress political opposition and silence dissent, paving the way for further military interventions in South Korea's political life.

Even after Park's assassination in 1979, his successors continued to rely on dictatorial measures to control the populace, with the 1980 Gwangju Uprising standing as a stark reminder of the brutality of military rule. It was only after the uprisings of 1987, following widespread protests, that South Korea began its transition to a more democratic system—though martial law remained an ever-present force in the background, a reminder of the fragility of its democratic institutions.

The current political crisis, however, is not just about Yoon's leadership or the fractured state of

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. The growing U.S. military presence over the decades, with South Korea becoming home to the largest U.S. military base in a foreign country—Camp Humphreys—has been a key feature of this relationship. The presence of 28,500 U.S. troops, the THAAD missile defence system, and the constant military drills aimed at countering the threat from North Korea and China, have turned South Korea into a crucial outpost for American interests in East Asia.

In this context, the political instability surrounding President Yoon and his administration is more than just an internal affair—it is a matter of global significance. The U.S. cannot afford to let South Korea's internal divisions spiral out of control, especially as tensions with North Korea and China continue to escalate.

If South Korea cannot reconcile its internal political fractures, it risks becoming an unreliable ally in the eyes of its most important partner. This would have significant consequences, not just for South Korea, but for the broader geopolitical ramifications of NATO's eastward expansion and the "Pivot to Asia" strategy coined by former President Barack Obama, which continues to haunt Asian countries.

(The writer is a journalist and author. Views expressed are personal)

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. This strategic approach, which includes matches at neutral venues such as the UAE, is a lifeline for Pakistan cricket. It ensures the preservation of Pakistan's hosting rights for the prestigious ICC Champions Trophy, scheduled from February 19 to March 9, 2025. Ultimately, cricket itself emerges as the ultimate winner. Millions of cricket enthusiasts across India and Pakistan are celebrating the International Cricket Council's (ICC) successful mediation. This reso-



K S TOMAR

lution underscores the power of sports to bridge divides. The ICC had earlier warned of revoking Pakistan's hosting rights if it rejected the hybrid model. The enduring passion of fans-united by their love for cricket—remains unfazed by territorial boundaries. Matches between India and Pakistan, steeped in rivalry and emotion, transcend sports and become spectacles of patriotism and fervour.

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), the world's wealthiest cricket body. His election sets the stage for significant milestones, particularly in organising high-profile tournaments like the Champions Trophy.

For the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), this decision was a calculated move to avert potential isolation. Rejecting India's terms could have deprived Pakistan of the opportunity to showcase its hosting capabilities, particu-

larly given India's security concerns. The hybrid model, which splits matches between Pakistan and the UAE, provides a balanced solution. Pakistan retains its hosting rights while addressing India's apprehensions, thus averting reputational and financial losses.

Accepting the hybrid model aligns with Pakistan's long-term vision for cricket. It ensures that Pakistan remains a credible host for international events and preserves the opportunity to solidify its reputation. Additionally, the agreement likely includes financial assurances from the ICC, compensating for any perceived compromises. Successful implementation could enhance Pakistan's image as a reliable cricketing



hub, following well-received tours by Australia and England. The hybrid model offers a win-win outcome, balancing security concerns with hosting ambitions. While India's matches will take place at neutral venues, Pakistan retains the opportunity to host other games on its soil. This arrangement allows local

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.

Boycotting the Champions Trophy would have been a catastrophic misstep for Pakistan. Such a decision could have alienated the PCB from the ICC and key stakeholders, given India's significant influence in global cricket. The financial and reputational damage, coupled with diminished fan morale and strained sponsor relations, would have left lasting scars. By prioritizing long-term gains, the PCB has ensured its continued relevance on the international

cricket stage. Shah aims to introduce cricket to new markets such as the USA, China, and Africa, diversifying the audience and making the game truly global. His expertise in revenue generation could lead to record-breaking media deals, benefiting smaller boards through equitable revenue sharing. By integrating advanced technologies and data-driven strategies, Shah could modernize ICC tournaments, appealing to younger audiences and enhancing the game's global appeal.

As an Indian, Shah might face allegations of favoring BCCI interests. Ensuring inclusivity and addressing member concerns will be crucial. Balancing the dominance of cricketing giants like India,

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. Pakistan's pragmatic decision to embrace the hybrid model ensures its pivotal role in this journey, preserving its cricketing ambitions while fostering international collaboration. Together, these developments signify a new era for the sport, uniting fans and nations under the banner of cricket.

(Writer is strategic affairs columnist and senior political analyst; views are personal)

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 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 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 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.

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.

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."

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.

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.

Washington's permission for Ukraine to use American longer-range missiles for strikes on Russian territory marked a dangerous escalation. "It is obvious that the Ukrainians would not be able to do what they're doing with long-range modern weapons without direct participation of the American servicemen. And this is dangerous, no doubt about this," he said, adding that

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

Table with 6 columns: Name, ID, Amount, Date, Gross Weight, Net Weight. Lists various individuals and their associated data points.

NHPC Limited advertisement including office details, schedule, and tariff tables for various power stations. Includes sections for 'Year-wise tariff sought to be determined' and 'Primary Energy Charges'.

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.

Table with columns: Sr. No., Item, Details. Contains tender notice details for Annual Maintenance Contract.

PUBLIC NOTICE: It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Arandeep who is the owner of Property ID No. 1318FPKPT...

NHPC Office Complex, Sector-33, Faridabad - 121003 (CIN: L40101HR1975GOI032564) SCHEDULE. Table with columns: Salal Power Station, Tanakpur Power Station, Chamera - I Power Station, etc.

कार्यालय नगर पालिका परिषद, दमोह (म.प्र.) --:: निविदा सूचना ::- दमोह दिनांक 14.11.2024. Includes details about tendering process and contact information.

Table with columns: SI. No., Hydro Power Generating Station, Tariff for the previous year, Year-wise tariff sought to be determined. Contains multiple rows of tariff data.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Ashok Kumar S/o Hans Raj R/o A-3 Paramount Golf Course, Tilapata Dadr, Greater Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar have Changed My name from Ashok Kumar to Ashok Kumar Loomba for all future Purposes.

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

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...

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

I, Dheer Singh, Father of No.16022562A Hav Sonu Singh Parmar, R/o- Vill+PO-Mrigpura, Teh- Morena, M.P.- 476001, have changed my name from Dheer Singh to Dheer Singh Parmar...

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/GSU/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.

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

I, Kishori, Mother of No.16022562A Hav Sonu Singh Parmar, R/o- Vill+PO-Mrigpura, Tehsil- Morena, M.P.- 476001, have changed my name from Kishori to Kishori Parmar, & my correct D.O.B. is 01/01/1972, vide affidavit dated 06/12/2024 before Notary Public Delhi.

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. In the event there is any claim against us, the same may be referred with in 30 days of publication of this notice, copies of the complaint may also be sent to Protector General of Emigrants, Ministry of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj Bhawan, Dr. Jose P. Rizal Marg, New Delhi-110021.

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

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I, Bhabesh Bawara, W/o, Veer Singh Bawara, R/o, D- 216, Rajeev Nagar Bhalswa Dairy, Delhi-42, That I, have Changed My Name From Bhabesh To Bhabesh Bawara, Permanently PD(1033)C

Table with columns: Sr. No., NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH, NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER, OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME), AMOUNT / END (APPROX.) IN RUPEES, WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH, NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/PHONE NO.

Table with columns: SI. No., Hydro Power Generating Station, Tariff for the previous year, Year-wise tariff sought to be determined. Contains multiple rows of tariff data.

I, Km Rekha alias Rekha W/o Jaiprakash R/o 498A, Nyay Khand -1, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad have changed my name to Rekha Devi PD(1034)C

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.

So, growth number is something which is not necessarily going to get badly affected, she added. "We need to push up on many other factors," she said adding India would continue to be the fastest-growing economy next year and thereafter. Growth momentum was low in the first quarter due to general election and reduction in capital expenditure. This has had a bearing on the second quarter as well.

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.

"Purchasing power of Indians is improving, but within India, you also have concerns of wages saturating. We are quite seized of these factors which might have a play on India's own consumption," she said. The finance ministry, in its Economic Survey for FY24, had estimated a GDP growth of 6.5-7 per cent for the current fiscal year. "We have a Prime Minister who looks at opportunities in each of the

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. Maruti Suzuki India said in a regulatory filing said that in light of rising input costs and operational expenses, the company has planned to increase the prices of its cars from January 2025. The price increase is expected to be up to 4 per cent and will vary depending on the model, it added. "While the company continuously strives to optimise costs and minimise the impact on its customers, some portion of the increased cost may need to be passed on to the market," it stated. Mahindra & Mahindra said it will hike prices of its SUVs and commercial vehicles by up to 3 per cent from January next year. 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. The price increase is a result of continuously rising input costs and other external factors, the automaker said in a statement. "Our dedication to quality, innovation and sustainability remains a priority and drives us to improve our offerings continuously. In doing so, minor price adjustments are inevitable to offset the rising input costs," JSW MG Motor India Chief Commercial Officer Satinder Bajwa Singh said.



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/regulators 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.



Cargo traffic at major ports drops 4.95 per cent in Nov

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Cargo traffic at the country's major ports declined 4.95 per cent to 67.53 million tonnes in November, from 71.05 million tonnes in the same period a year ago, according to an industry body. Among these, JNPA and Deendayal ports reported positive growth, while cargo traffic at the remaining 10 major facilities saw a year-on-year drop, the Indian Ports Association (IPA) said in a statement. India has 12 major ports under the control of the central government. These include Deendayal Port (erstwhile Kandla), Mumbai Port, Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA), Mormugao Port, New Mangalore Port, Cochin Port,

Chennai Port, Kamarajar Port (earlier Ennore), VO Chidambarnar Port, Visakhapatnam Port, Paradip Port and Kolkata Port, which also includes Haldia. The cargo traffic at the premier container port JNPA grew 12.34 per cent during the month under review whereas Deendayal Port witnessed a 10.10 per cent growth year-on-year in November, IPA said. Cargo traffic at Mormugao Port declined 29.64 per cent last month, from last year and New Mangalore Port reported a 19 per cent year-on-year drop in cargo traffic, it stated. Other major ports, including Chennai, Visakhapatnam, and Mumbai, also saw a decline in cargo traffic in November over the same month last year, as per IPA.

Semiconductor chip import increased 18.5 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The semiconductor imports in India rose 18.5 per cent to Rs 1.71 lakh crore in 2023-24, Parliament was informed on Friday. According to data shared by the Minister of State for Electronics and IT Jitendra Prasada, India imported 18.43 billion semiconductor chips in FY24. Citing the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics (DGCIIS) portal, he said that in 2022-23, 14.64 billion chips were imported into the country at a valuation of Rs 1.297 lakh crore. In 2021-22, the country imported 17.89 billion chipsets worth Rs 1.071 lakh crore, according to the data. The Indian government has initiated programmes like the Semicon India to lessen reliance on imports by fostering domestic production and attracting foreign investments. The Semicon India programme has an outlay of Rs 76,000 crore for the development of the semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem in the country.



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.

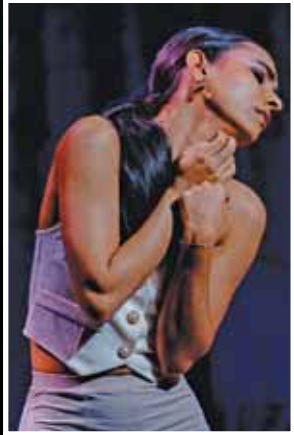
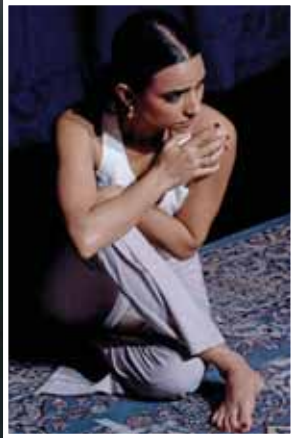
The first day began with a captivating Kuchipudi performance by Yamini Kalluri. Her graceful movements, coupled with the evocative piano accompaniment by Andreas König, set the stage for what was to come. The performance was a beautiful fusion of classical dance and contemporary elements, proving that 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 Vashisth 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.



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.

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

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



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.

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

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



PTI ■ SINGAPORE
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. "...Hopefully, at some point when I do the right things, I believe that the results will come," he had said.

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. The move to Ferrari was announced before the season began and Hamilton admitted Thursday the prolonged farewell has been much more of a strain on his emotions than he expected. Hamilton is out of form and was pessimistic about finishing on a high after penalties and a puncture marred his race in Qatar. Doohan leads new wave of rookiesHamilton's move to Ferrari shocked F1 when it was announced in February, and it set off a chain reaction of driver moves elsewhere. Next year F1 will have its largest influx of young drivers in years as established names switch teams or leave the grid. One of the new faces is on the grid in Abu Dhabi after Alpine opted to give Jack Doohan an early taste of F1. He replaces Esteban Ocon for the last race of the season. Doohan, a 21-year-old Australian, is the son of motorcycle racing great Mick Doohan.