



the pioneer

BHUBANESWAR, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹4

www.dailypioneer.com

PUBLISHED FROM: DELHI | LUCKNOW | BHOPAL | BHUBANESWAR | RANCHI | RAIPUR | CHANDIGARH | DEHRADUN | HYDERABAD | VIJAYWADA

INSIDE

SPORTS
PRAJNESH GUNNESWARAN
ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT
FROM PROFESSIONAL TENNIS



Representative Image

BCCI stumps PCB dream of Champions Trophy visiting POK

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Friday strongly objected to Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) purported move to take the Champions Trophy for a tour of the disputed 'Pakistan Occupied Kashmir' (POK), prompting the global body International Cricket Council (ICC) to put the promotional event on hold. The tournament, last played in 2017, is already in limbo after the BCCI officially intimated ICC about the Indian cricket team's inability to travel to Pakistan. The PCB in return, as of now, has rejected the proposed 'Hybrid Model' with India playing its matches in Dubai. The schedule has also been put on hold and the new controversy could only make things ugly. It is learnt that BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Friday spoke to the top brass of the ICC and condemned this move by Pakistan and has urged the global body to take strong note. The BCCI secretary, after it came to his notice, called up the ICC and was extremely critical of

PCB's move to conduct a Trophy tour of multiple cities which fall under Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, a senior BCCI official privy to the development said according to reports, adding, "He has urged the ICC to take strong action. As far as Islamabad is concerned, there is no issue but there can't be any Trophy tour to POK." The Trophy Tour is part of the global body's promotional campaign, involving visits to multiple cities as per discussions between the international body and the host country. However, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), without prior consultation with all stakeholders, announced on its official social media that the Trophy would be taken to Skardu, Murree, and Hunza, areas that fall under the disputed territory. "Get ready, Pakistan! The ICC Champions Trophy 2025 trophy tour kicks off in Islamabad on 16 November, also visiting scenic travel destinations like Skardu, Murree, Hunza and Muzaffarabad. Catch a glimpse of the trophy which Sarfaraz Ahmed lifted in 2017 at The Oval, from 16-24 November," the PCB tweeted.

Delhi LG cracks whip on illegal immigrants

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinay Kumar Saxena has issued instructions to District Magistrates and the Commissioner of Police to identify illegal immigrants in Delhi, and take action in coordination with the Central government. "Lieutenant Governor's attention has been drawn to reports on social media and other reliable sources that there is a sudden spurt in the number of illegal immigrants in Delhi. There is also a rise in encroachment by such people on public roads, footpaths, parks etc," stated an official letter from LG's office. The letter has been forwarded by the LG's Principal Secretary to the Chief Secretary of Delhi, Commissioner of Police, Commissioner of Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and Chairman of New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC). A senior official from the MCD told The Pioneer that in light of the letter, a drive will be carried out to identify and evict such people from the land belonging to the MCD, and any illegal immigrants will be reported to the law enforcement agency. According to reports, at least 20,000 Rohingyas are registered in India with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, also known as the UN Refugee Agency) and an estimated 1,100 such people live in New Delhi, including at the Kalindi Kunj camp in South-east Delhi. Ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, due early next year, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders in Delhi have been accusing the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) of "patronising the Rohingyas and Bangladeshi living illegally in the city and gaining votes from them". The LG's letter also mentioned that many illegal migrants are being given various



FILE PHOTO

ID cards in Delhi, and this has the potential to impact electoral politics, "there are reports that efforts are underway for getting their identity documents such as Aadhar, Election Identity Card, etc, prepared on the basis of fake documents and adopting a manipulative process." It added that these documents are being claimed as citizenship documents by the illegal immigrants. "Election Identity Card, if issued to illegal immigrants, provides them the most powerful right of democracy i.e. Right to Vote in our country. Giving such rights to illegal immigrants cannot be accepted by any Indian Citizen and such moves can even be detrimental to National security," the letter stated. The letter added that the Chief Secretary may issue instructions to District Magistrates through Divisional Commissioner to exercise extra caution in verification of people applying for identity documents. "Separately, Commissioner Police may also issue instructions to field level officials to be extra vigilant

specially while undertaking inspections of squatters along road side and on vacant Government land," it stated, adding that Delhi Police shall conduct a special drive for one month for identification of illegal immigrants and take further action in coordination with central agencies. "All government agencies should also ensure that no unauthorised occupation of public places takes place anywhere in the city as directed by the Supreme Court of India," the letter read. Reacting to the LG's direction, Delhi BJP accused the AAP of viewing it through a political lens. Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva stated that previously, encroachments on Delhi's footpaths and around parks were mostly done by hawkers, but in recent months, Resident Welfare Associations and trade organisations have consistently drawn attention to encroachments by Rohingyas and others, who have been settling along roadsides and in parks. "During this period, both small and large criminal incidents have occurred on the streets of Delhi, and in light of this, Delhi's

Lieutenant Governor Vinay Kumar Saxena has directed the Police Commissioner to take action. It is unfortunate that the AAP is politicising the serious issue of encroachments by Rohingyas and others, which is related to the security of Delhi and the BJP strongly condemns this," he said. Reacting to the letter by the LG, the AAP claimed that the BJP is merely using the issue of illegal immigrants for political gains. "A thorough investigation should be launched on how illegal immigrants are entering our country in the first place. For this, the direct responsibility lies with Amit Shah, and the Union Home Ministry," the party said in a statement. It asked that if there are illegal immigrants, how many are there? "This is a massive failure, and the lack of action on detentions highlights it further," they claimed. Further, Delhi's ruling party claimed that while on one hand, the BJP is granting citizenship to illegal immigrants, and on the other, it is staging a farce of an investigation. "The BJP must stop

this hypocrisy and put a rest to its dirty politics," the AAP said. On November 12, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raided multiple locations in poll-bound Jharkhand, apart from West Bengal, in a money laundering investigation linked to alleged illegal infiltration of Bangladeshi nationals, official sources said. A total of 17 places were raided in the two neighbouring states by the Ranchi office of the federal probe agency, a day before the first phase of polling in Jharkhand. Visuals of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel positioned outside a hotel located on Bariatu Road in Ranchi and a resort in the city were captured by media teams as ED teams scoured for documents, ledger entries and financial records inside. It was in September that the ED had filed a case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to probe an instance of alleged infiltration, and trafficking of some Bangladeshi women into Jharkhand leading to the generation of alleged slush funds. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders had also accused the State Government of aiding such infiltration leading to the altering of the demographic landscape of the tribal-dominated areas of Santal Pargana and Kolhan regions during the recent poll campaign. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday accused the ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led coalition of converting Jharkhand into a 'dharmashala' for Rohingyas and Bangladeshi infiltrators. Earlier this week, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had announced that a committee would be formed, if the BJP is voted to power in Jharkhand, to identify and drive out infiltrators from the state besides reclaiming land grabbed by them.

IAF aircraft develops snag, PM stranded at Deoghar airport

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was stranded in Jharkhand's Deoghar airport for nearly two hours on Friday after his special Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft developed a snag, flew back to Delhi in another plane. PM Modi was supposed to return to New Delhi on the IAF plane after addressing a rally in Bihar's Jamui, around 80 km from Deoghar. Senior Congress leader and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi too faced a two hour delay in the schedule due to a grounded helicopter close to the place where PM's craft was held. The PM visited Jamui to attend a function marking the 150th birth anniversary of tribal leader Birs Munda, celebrated as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas.



"PM Modi left for Delhi from Deoghar in another special aircraft after his IAF plane developed a technical snag. The aircraft could not be rectified on time. The PM had to wait for more than two hours," Deoghar Deputy Commissioner Vishal Sagar said. While Modi waited for the issue to be resolved, the region's airspace was declared a "no-flying zone". Meanwhile, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was also caught in a similar situation in Godda, Jharkhand. Rahul's helicopter, which was supposed to take him back after addressing an election rally, was grounded for about two hours, prompting allegations from the Congress that the delay was politically motivated. "Our leader Rahul Gandhi's helicopter was not allowed to take off for about two hours, posing a grave threat to his life. This was a security lapse at the behest of the Centre," state minister Deepika Pandey Singh alleged. Congress also Friday complained to the Election Commission against the alleged grounding of Rahul Gandhi's helicopter in poll-bound Jharkhand and sought its urgent intervention in ensuring a level-playing field in poll campaigning.

CM announces Consultations to be held before executing PESA Act

Stone laid for projects worth Rs 1,535 cr for tribal communities
NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Friday clarified his government's intentions regarding the implementation of the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) (PESA) Act, 1996. He said the government would hold comprehensive consultations with all stakeholders before implementing the Act, which has been pending execution for over 27 long years.

Addressing a gathering of tribals at the Janata Maidan here on the occasion of Janajatiya Gaurav Divas, organised to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Birs Munda, a revered tribal freedom fighter, Majhi criticised the previous BJD government for failing to implement the PESA Act, accusing it of harbouring an "anti-tribal" attitude. "The BJD government never wanted to ensure the socioeconomic development of tribal communities. Our government will guarantee all-around development for tribals," he said.

Odisha is among 10 States with Fifth Schedule Areas where the PESA Act is applicable. In terms of tribal population, Odisha ranks third in the country after Madhya Pradesh and



Maharashtra. The Act empowers tribal communities by granting them greater authority in self-governance and ensuring the protection of their unique social and cultural practices in the Fifth Schedule Areas.

As per the spirit of the PESA Act, 1996, power and authority should be devolved to gram sabhas and panchayats.

Odisha has 13 PESA districts, six fully-covered districts, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh and Koraput, and seven partially-covered districts, Ganjam, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Baleswar and Gajapati. Of Odisha's 314 blocks, 121 have been identified as Tribal Sub-Plan blocks.

According to experts, since the PESA Act is a Central law, the Union Government should have framed its rules as was done for the Forest

Rights Act, 2006. States such as Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have already notified their PESA Rules while Jharkhand has floated a draft for public consultation. Reacting to the Chief Minister's remarks, BJD leader Pradeep Majhi refuted the allegations of tribal neglect. "The BJD government, under the leadership of Naveen Patnaik, has undertaken significant initiatives for the socioeconomic development of tribal communities. Special Development Councils were established for their upliftment alongside measures to provide quality healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities," he stated.

On this occasion, the CM also laid the foundation-stones for projects worth Rs 1,535 crore aimed at the development of tribal communities.

Srimandir entry through all 4 gates from today

PNS ■ PURI

Devotees can gain entry into the Jagannath Temple here through all four gates of the shrine from Saturday (November 16). This was informed by the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) on Friday.

Keeping the huge footfalls during the holy Kartika month in view, a restriction on devotees entering the shrine through the three gates except for the Lions Gate was imposed. They were entering only through the Lions Gate.

To decide on the devotees' darshan system after the



Kartika month, a meeting under the chairmanship of SJTA Chief Administrator was held on Friday. It was decided that a new darshan system would come into force from Saturday. Devotees can enter the

shrine through all the four gates, but they can't exit only through the three gates other than the Lions Gate. The exit of the devotees through the Lion's gate has completely been restricted.

However, the servitors and their family members can use any of the gates to enter and exit from the shrine.

At the same time, the SJTA informed that devotees' special darshan system from the Natamandap is still under consideration. It would come into force after consultation and approval of the Srimandir Management Committee.

Janajatiya Gaurav Divas

CM lays stone for Rs 1,535-cr projects

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Friday laid the foundation-stone for projects worth Rs 1,535 crore for the development of tribals in the State on occasion of the Janajatiya Gaurav Divas.

Attending a function at the Janata Maidan here, Majhi paid tributes to tribal leader Bhagwan Birs Munda and said Birs was one of the

prominent warriors of the freedom movement and his deeds would remain etched in history in golden letters. His contribution for the development of tribals would not be forgotten by the country and the community.

The CM on the occasion also paid tributes to other eminent tribal freedom fighters like Laxman Naik, Ratna Naik, Chakra Bisoi, Dora Bisoi and Rendo Majhi and recalled

their sacrifices. The projects worth Rs 1,535 crore, for which the CM laid foundation-stone, include development of 16 Ashram Schools at a cost of Rs 240 crore. Besides, a Bhavan for development of tribal culture and heritage would be constructed in Bhubaneswar at a cost of Rs 100 crore. Majhi said the government is laying stress on the overall development of the tribal community.

From Sarai Kale Khan to Birs Munda Chowk, a historical journey

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Mediaeval era origin Sarai Kale Khan Chowk dating back to the 16-17 Century will now be called Birs Munda chowk in a tribute to the tribal icon and freedom fighter. The renaming, on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary, was announced on Friday by Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal. November 15 was declared 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas' by the Central government in 2021. Sarai Kale Khan is one of the busiest areas of Delhi, particularly due to the Inter-State Bus Terminal (ISBT) from where buses ferry travellers to destinations across north India. In the past, it was known as Moocho Waali Sarai

(Inn of Moustaches) because every man had long moustaches, which was a symbol of masculinity in those days. The renaming of the historic area, comes ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, and was announced by the minister on the occasion of the unveiling of a statue of Birs Munda by Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinay Kumar Saxena at the Baansera Bamboo Park near Sarai Kale Khan inter-state bus terminus (ISBT) in south-east Delhi. President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several leaders also paid tributes to the great leader. Birs Munda spearheaded a tribal movement that started in the



Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Delhi Lt Governor Vinay Kumar Saxena, Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Union Minister of State Harsh Malhotra, BJP MPs Manoj Tiwari, Bansuri Swaraj, Kamaljeet Sehrawat and Ramvir Singh Bidhuri and others during the unveiling of a statue of freedom fighter Birs Munda on his birth anniversary

Bengal Presidency (now Jharkhand) in the late 19th century, making him an important figure in the history of the country's independence movement. Born in 1875 in present-day Jharkhand, Munda had challenged British rule and is credited with mobilising tribals against the empire. He died in British custody at a young age of 25 years. Munda, the hero of the Indian tribal freedom struggle, played a pivotal role in inspiring the tribal community of the Chotanagpur region to fight for their independence. He led the armed revolution known as "Ulgulan" (the rebellion) against British rule. He belonged to the Munda tribe in the Chhotanagpur Plateau area. He spearheaded an Indian tribal mass

movement that arose in the Bihar and Jharkhand belt in the early 19th Century, to protest British colonisation. Munda rallied the tribals to fight against the forceful land grabbing carried out by the British government, which would turn the tribals into bonded labourers, and force them to abject poverty. He influenced his people to realise the importance of owning their land and asserting their rights over it. He founded the faith of Birsait, a blend of animism and indigenous beliefs, which emphasised the worship of a single god. He became their leader and was given the nickname, 'Dharti Aba' or the father of the earth. He died on June 9, 1900, at age 25.

In city Kids branded with hot iron by mother's lover

For opposing extramarital affair
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a shocking incident in Bhubaneswar, two children were branded with hot iron rod for three long days for allegedly opposing the 'extramarital affairs' of their mother.

The duo was allegedly branded by the lover of their mother at Mahavir slum under the Maitree Vihar police station. Both the woman and her lover were detained by police for questioning.

As per reports, the children were allegedly tortured brutally for opposing their



mother's unethical relationship with her lover in the absence of their father at home.

The alleged lover of the woman branded the children with hot metal rods on the pretext of their mother's complaint that they were becoming wayward.

After receiving information about the incident, the Maitree Vihar police reached the spot and rescued both the children. The woman was detained and was being ques-

tioned over the matter, sources said.

Following overnight raids at several places, the Maitree Vihar police also nabbed the accused identified as Gudu Nayak on Thursday night. As per reports, accused Gudu confessed to his crime during interrogation.

It was alleged that Gudu and the woman had an unethical relationship for around seven months. However, the children of the woman used to oppose their relationship. So, with the woman's insistence, the accused allegedly confined the children in a room and branded them with hot metal rods for three days.

Odisha relives maritime glory on Kartika Purnima

Cultural parallels celebrated in Thailand, Bali

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR / CUTTACK

Hundreds of people gathered at the Gadagadia Ghat in Cuttack and the Bindu Sagar tank in Bhubaneswar before daybreak on Friday to participate in Boita Bandana traditions on Kartika Purnima by sailing miniature boats to commemorate Odisha's glorious maritime past.

Similar congregations were also seen in Puri. Devotees also visited the Shree Jagannath Temple to witness



the 'Rajadhiraja Besh' of the sibling deities.

Early in the morning on Kartik Purnima, people make their way to different water bodies across the State to set afloat boats made up of ba-

nana stems and banyan leaves with various symbolic offerings like flowers, coins, 'Kaudis' or cowries, betel leaves, betel nuts along with a lighted lamp. They perform religious rituals and take a

holy dip.

Boita Bandana echoes the collective consciousness and memories of the past when Sadhabas, the maritime merchants and seafarers of Kalinga, used to set sail across the Indian Ocean to distant lands like Bali, Sumatra and Java on trading trips.

Not known to many, Thailand has its version of Odisha's Boita Bandana. In Thailand, it is called Loy Krathong. People gather around water bodies and pray to the Water Goddess. They set afloat beautiful rafts in the shape of lotus flowers. The flickering light of the candles creates magic in the water.

Apart from being an apology for polluting the water bodies, the festival signifies the end of the harvest season and is a thanksgiving ritual for abundant supply throughout the year. If your candle remains lit until the Krathong (boat) disappears out of sight, all the luck is yours.

The Balinese celebration of Nyepli, the Hindu New Year, also bears similarities to the rituals of Kartik Purnima in Odisha. On this day, people there wear traditional attire and move in processions towards the sea, praying and performing rituals that symbolise the cleansing of impurities.

2nd edition of 'Yi Run - BBSR by Nite' on Nov 17

Aims to promote drug-free Odisha
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The CII Young Indians, Bhubaneswar, is hosting the 2nd Edition of the "Yi Run - Bhubaneswar by Nite-Rise Above Addiction & Break the Silence," supported by the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs and the Department of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Government of Odisha.

The marathon invites all community members, organizations, forums, medical fraternity, and fitness enthusiasts, school and colleges, senior citizens and corporate professionals to unite and run for drug-free Odisha.

Participants have a chance to win cash prizes totaling Rs 1,02,000 across three categories: 2.5 km Fun Run (Non-Timed), 5 km Timed Run, 10 km Timed Run.



senior bureaucrats of the Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities along with actor, social activist and national Rugby player Rahul Bose will be there to flag off the event.

The marathon invites all community members, organizations, forums, medical fraternity, and fitness enthusiasts, school and colleges, senior citizens and corporate professionals to unite and run for drug-free Odisha.

Participants have a chance to win cash prizes totaling Rs 1,02,000 across three categories: 2.5 km Fun Run (Non-Timed), 5 km Timed Run, 10 km Timed Run.

To boost animal husbandry sector

Cabinet clears 4 proposals of Rs 1,823 crore

Schemes like GOMATA, PSSY, MMKY approved
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Cabinet on Thursday approved four proposals worth Rs 1,823 crore for the development of animal husbandry, including 'Goal for Management and Treatment of Animals' (GOMATA) scheme.

The GOMATA scheme will be implemented in the State for 3 years from the current financial year (2024-25) with a total budget outlay of Rs 342.65 crore, Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja said.

The scheme aims to benefit the livestock farmers of the

State through delivery of veterinary service at veterinary institutions and at farmers' doorstep through treatment, vaccination, disease control and surveillance, he said.

The implementation of the scheme will facilitate phase wise vaccination of 2.5 crore and treatment of 1.30 crore livestock annually, he informed.

Similarly, the State Cabinet also decided to implement another scheme named as "Prani Sampad Samruddhi Yojana (PSSY)" with a total budget outlay of Rs 1,031.19 crore for 5 years (2024-25 to 2028-29) to enhance meat and eggs production, he said.

This sub-scheme aims at benefiting 3,73,928 farmers in-

cluding WSHGs. There will be an additional production of about 95.58 TMT meat per year and 5.5 lakh eggs per day upon implementation of the scheme.

The Government also decided to spend Rs 696.21 crore for development of various infrastructure in fishery sector and Rs 449.71 crore for development of infrastructure for animal resources in three years (2024-25 to 2026-27), Ahuja said.

Another State sector umbrella scheme 'Mukhyamantri Maschayajibi Kalyan Yojana (MMKY)' was also approved by the Cabinet. The scheme with 17 sub-schemes will be implemented in the State from 2024-25 to 2028-29 with a to-

tal budget outlay of Rs 2,239 crore.

The Chief Secretary said that the scheme aims at covering all sectors of fisheries like freshwater, brackish water and marine to augment fish production and export to increase fishers' income. The scheme will benefit about 14 lakh fishers including 6,67,500 fishers and 7,32,500 WSHG members in next five years.

Further, he said, the State has decided to extend the existing Water Sector Infrastructure Development Programme (WSIDP) with an estimated cost of Rs 9,652.24 crore for a period of five years from the current financial year 2024-25 to accelerate the pace of irrigation development in the State.

In city Woman robbed of gold chain in temple

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

On Kartika Purnima on Friday, a woman was robbed of her gold chain at a Shiva temple at Nayapalli in the city. The elderly victim was offering prayers after participating in Boita Bandana when the miscreants snatched her chain at Behera Sahi in Nayapalli taking advantage of the large crowd.

"It was a 13-gram gold chain and was gifted to me by my husband. I was standing in the queue in the temple when the looters took advantage of the rush and snatched my chain," alleged the victim.

"My son tried to search for



the looters, but they disappeared in the crowd. I have come to the police station to lodge a complaint. Never in my dream had I thought that I would be looted in a temple," she stated.

Her son said, "We come across such reports every day in the news. However, we had never thought that it could happen to us. We request Po-

lice and the government to take stringent action against such looters so that no one else is looted like us."

This incident occurred a day after a woman was killed after being attacked by chain snatchers while she was on her way to a temple with her husband on a bike.

The chain snatchers chased and attacked them, leaving the woman critically injured after she fell off the bike. She was admitted to a hospital, but eventually succumbed to her injuries. Police lodged a case and launched a probe but were yet to identify the miscreants, who had come on a Black Pulsar wearing helmets.

Genetic diversity to strengthen ecological balance

2nd Maharashtra tigress released in Similipal

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

A three-year-old tigress named 'Jinat', relocated from Maharashtra's Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, was released on Friday into a soft enclosure at the Similipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj district.

This marks the second successful translocation of a tigress to Odisha under the State Government's tiger relocation initiative.

Odisha Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) Susanta Nanda an-

nounced the tigress's arrival. Jinat was released near Chahala, marking another milestone in Odisha's inter-State tiger translocation project approved by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

A team of 10 wildlife experts from the Odisha Forest Department oversaw the translocation process.

This follows the earlier relocation of Jamuna, another tigress from Tadoba-Andhari, which has already been released into Similipal's core areas.



The project aims to infuse fresh genetic diversity into Similipal's tiger population, ensuring a healthier ecosystem.

According to the latest All Odisha Tiger Estimation (AOTE) report for 2023-24,

the State is now home to 30 tigers, including eight cubs under one year old. The Similipal Tiger Reserve remains the central habitat, housing 24 tigers, 11 of the typical morph (seven females, four males) and 13 pseudo-melanistic tigers

(seven females, six males). The reserve also has eight tiger cubs.

Other regions in Odisha, including Keonjhar Territorial, Keonjhar Wildlife, Paralakhemundi Territorial and Hirakud Wildlife, host one tiger each.

Odisha's tiger population has shown a remarkable growth. The 2022 All India Tiger Estimation (AITE) reported 17 tigers in the State while the current AOTE findings reflect a significant increase attributed to strengthened conservation measures.

Changing nature of the press

Navigating the age of digital media and misinformation

The landscape of journalism has undergone unprecedented changes across the globe over the past two decades. Once dominated by newspapers, magazines and television, the field of news media is now deeply intertwined with the digital age, shaped by social media, real-time news apps, blogs and an increasingly blurred line between credible news sources and unverified content. This transformation has redefined the nature of the press with significant implications for journalists, audiences and democracy itself.

One of the most significant shifts in the press has been the decline of print newspapers and magazines. Readership and advertising revenues for traditional media have decreased dramatically as digital platforms have taken the lead. Publications that were once household names have closed their doors, and others have turned to online-only formats to cut costs and reach broader, digital-savvy audiences. The rapid rise of social media has further amplified this trend as



AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO

people now have the power to access breaking news with the swipe of a finger, 24/7.

Major national news outlets in India like 'The Times of India,' 'The Hindustan Times,' 'The Asian Age,' 'Deccan Chronicle' and 'The Pioneer' and international dailies like 'New York Times' and 'The Washington Post' now rely heavily on their digital presence and subscriptions, developing mobile apps, push notifications and interactive digital content to retain their readership. Many small-town newspapers, including the Odia vernacu-

lar dailies, have also started focusing on enhancement of their digital presence.

The digital age has not only changed the way we consume news but also who creates it. The internet has made it possible for anyone to report news, post updates and share opinions. This democratisation of information has fostered a diversity of voices that would not have been possible in the pre-digital era. Independent journalists, bloggers and citizen journalists have gained followings by reporting on niche topics or local events often overlooked by larger media outlets.

While this has allowed for a wider array of perspectives, it has also raised questions about the credibility of information. When news is crowd-sourced or shared on social platforms without rigorous fact-checking, it can be difficult to separate well-researched reporting from misinformation.

Another defining feature of the modern press is the use of algorithms to shape the news we see.

On platforms like Facebook, Twitter and TikTok, algorithms decide which stories appear in our feeds based on our previous interactions. This selective exposure often creates "filter bubbles," where readers are primarily exposed to viewpoints they already agree with, leading to a form of echo chamber. Although these algorithms aim to show users the content they are most likely to engage with, they can unintentionally polarise audiences and limit access to a balanced perspective on current events.

In the current digital landscape, misinformation and "fake news" are pervasive issues. The ease of sharing content on social media has given rise to a staggering volume of false or misleading information, which can spread rapidly before fact-checkers have a chance to verify its accuracy. This phenomenon is especially concerning in the context of politically-charged topics, where deliberate disinformation campaigns can influence public opinion and, ultimately, democracy.

The press now faces a new re-

sponsibility: to actively combat misinformation while upholding ethical standards of accuracy and objectivity.

Fact-checking organisations have become an essential part of the journalism ecosystem, working to quickly verify or debunk viral stories. Platforms like Twitter (now X), Facebook and YouTube have implemented their own measures such as labeling questionable content and promoting verified news sources, but these actions alone are not enough to stem the tide of misinformation.

In the past, a handful of well-established news outlets were regarded as the primary gatekeepers of information. Today, however, audiences have access to a dizzying variety of sources, each with its own perspective, style and level of credibility. As a result, the traditional markers of authority such as established reputations, journalistic credentials and editorial oversight have been challenged by new forms of media that prioritise entertainment value, personal branding and immediacy over traditional re-

porting standards.

Increasingly, people trust their news from social influencers, popular bloggers and even podcasts over traditional news channels. This shift complicates the way audiences perceive authority and reliability, prompting news organisations to rethink how they build and retain trust.

In a world filled with misinformation, where traditional news models are giving way to an often chaotic digital sphere, the role of a free press in upholding democracy is more critical than ever. Today's media not only reports the news but also holds governments accountable, sheds light on important social issues and gives voice to underrepresented communities. But to maintain this vital role, the press must adapt to the challenges of a fragmented media landscape while preserving the values that have long defined journalism: integrity, transparency and a commitment to the truth.

The future of the press will likely involve a blend of emerging tech-

nologies and innovative business models designed to sustain high-quality journalism. Nonprofit journalism, crowd-funded reporting and memberships have provided alternatives to the ad-driven revenue models that have proven unsustainable for many traditional media outlets. Meanwhile, artificial intelligence (AI) offers new tools for news gathering, data analysis and even content generation though it also presents ethical dilemmas around bias, accuracy and privacy.

As we move forward, the press will need to continue to evolve, balancing the demands of a digital audience with the responsibilities that come with shaping public opinion and informing citizens. In an era marked by information overload, media organisations that can navigate the challenges of credibility, speed and ethical standards will play a vital role in ensuring an informed and engaged society.

(The writer is a senior journalist and researcher associated with the Centre for Socio-Economic Studies as head of its Odisha chapter)

Kartik Purnima tragedy 5 kids drown while collecting tiny boats from water

In separate incidents in B'swar, M'giri, Cuttack

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Five children aged three to five years tragically drowned during Kartik Purnima festivities. Incidents occurred in Baleswar, Malkangiri and Cuttack districts while retrieving floating boats.



girls aged about five years drowned in a pond at Panishapada village under Basta police limits in Baleswar district. The deceased have been identified as the daughters of Dilip Kumar Das and Manas Nanda, two villagers of Panishapada.

In a shocking incident, two

were last seen playing in the backyard. Later, they might have noticed boats floating in the nearby pond and went there to bring them while not being watched by their family members.

Not finding them at the spot where they were playing, their family members launched a frantic search.

Later, they were rescued from the pond and rushed to the nearby Rasagovindapur Community Health Centre (CHC).

However, it was too late by then. The doctors at the CHC declared them received dead.

In another shocking incident reported from Saundia village under Khaira police limits in the same district, a three-year-old boy drowned in a pond.

Similar incidents were also reported from Champanagar in Malkangiri and Salepur in Cuttack where a minor girl (age not known) and a three-year-old boy drowned.

Brahmapur Mayor's security withdrawn

She mulls legal action

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAPUR

In a controversial move, the State Government has withdrawn the personal security officer (PSO) assigned to Brahmapur Mayor Sanghamitra Dalai, without any prior notice or official explanation.

The sudden decision has raised concerns over selective treatment, as the mayors of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack continue to receive government-provided security.

Sources indicate that the withdrawal of security personnel came as a shock, especially since Brahmapur is one



of the three major municipal corporations in the State where the Mayor is directly elected by the people. The move has sparked criticism, with many questioning the

government's rationale behind the decision.

Mayor Sanghamitra Dalai, who had not been informed in advance about the development, expressed her disappointment over the issue. "No official communication or written directive has been provided to me regarding the withdrawal of my security. This sudden decision not only undermines my safety but also affects my dignity," she stated.

Despite maintaining silence initially, Mayor Dalai has now decided to take the matter to court. She emphasized that if the government intended to withdraw security, it should have done so for all three Mayors across the State

rather than singling out Brahmapur.

The abrupt withdrawal has also raised questions about the State's approach to municipal governance and security protocols, especially given the Mayor's proximity to the public and involvement in sensitive civic matters.

The district administration and State government have yet to issue an official statement on the reason behind the move, leaving the public and local officials in speculation. Mayor Dalai's decision to seek legal recourse is expected to further escalate the matter, potentially setting a precedent for other elected officials facing similar issues.

In Sambalpur Ex-Army man looted at gunpoint



PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

A retired Indian Army personnel was looted of cash and gold ornaments worth lakhs of rupees at gunpoint in his house at Sana Dumermunda village under the Gobindpur police station in Sambalpur district late on Thursday night.

ables before escaping.

According to the former Army man Saroj Nayak, six masked assailants entered his house armed with guns. They held him and his family members at gunpoint and fled with all the cash and gold, silver ornaments.

A complaint was lodged at the local police station, following which cops launched an investigation into the incident and to nab the culprits.

Int'l exhibition of painting, sculptures in Dubai

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Subhadra Art Gallery, Bhubaneswar in collaboration with the Dubai Odia Society and the Suryakshetra Foundation, is organising a "Modi@20 International Exhibition of Painting & Sculptures" at the Dubai International Art Center on Thursday.

The event was inaugurated by Principal Secretary of the Odia Language, Literature and Culture Department Bishnupada Sethi.

The exhibition saw participation from around 40 artists from various Indian States, including Odisha, Assam, Tripura, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi, as well as 20 artists from Dubai. The artworks showcased a range of visuals inspired by the welfare initiatives taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Sethi praised the exhibition as a powerful platform for cultural exchange, emphasising its role in fostering an educa-



tional environment and creative exchange among artists from India and Dubai.

He remarked that Odisha's art forms, including the renowned Pattachitra and palm leaf etchings, embody the State's rich history and cultural pride.

The exhibition will remain open until December 11.

Dignitaries present at the inauguration included Surya

Rath, chairman of Subhadra Art Gallery; Ashok Nayak, gallery director; Dr Bipin Mishra, chairman of the Suryakshetra Foundation; Dyali Bhalia, chairperson of the Dubai International Art Center; Amiya Mishra, president of the Dubai Odia Samaj; along with artists Anjali Prakash, Dr Kulamani Bishwal and Kaji Raghav and educationist Mihir Sahu.

Illegal tree felling Case registered against 13 in Keonjhar

Accused at large

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

The Forest Department of Keonjhar division has registered a case against 13 people in connection with the illegal felling of trees in Krushnapur reserve forest, which is an elephant habitation under Champua Range of Kalikaprada forest beat.

Meanwhile, the village is deserted as people have fled their houses in order to evade arrest after the case was registered. So, the Forest Department is yet to make any arrests.

According to sources, the Keonjhar Forest Department had given permission to fell down 2,505 eucalyptus trees to Krishnapur Van Suraksha Samiti (VSS) in the reserve forest. However, more than double the number of trees including some rare species were allegedly cut down, due

to lack of proper supervision.

The villagers of Krushnapur lodged written complaints with Keonjhar district Collector Vishal Singh, DFO Dhanraj HD and the Champua sub-collector, when no action was taken by the local forest officials despite several complaints. Following the complaints, ACF Akshay Chhatria who is in charge of Champua range, was asked to conduct an inquiry into the matter. The villagers alleged that the counting was stopped midway as a large number of trees were found cut during the counting. If it is properly counted by an independent team, then the number of illegal felled trees would be much more than cited, they said.

The Forest Department registered a case against Ranjan Kumar Mahanta, president of the VSS, and 12 others.

"Around 1,123 more trees were found to have been cut. A case has been registered in this regard. The accused would be arrested," said forester Sunita Baghel, adding that after registration of the case, the accused are absconding.

Meanwhile, the villagers have submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister grievance in Keonjhar against the forest officials who are supervising the work.

DFO Dhanraj HD said, "13 persons were booked after registering a case (OR 14 CH of 2024-25) in the incident and more inquiry is going on."

When the government is spending crores of rupees to create forests by planting trees, ironically, in Keonjhar division, the department is allowing a large number of trees to be cut affecting the habitat of wild animals, lamented environmentalists.

In Ganjam 6 held for loot from Tara Tarini temple

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

Police on Thursday arrested six persons, including two night watchmen and four seavays, for the alleged looting of ornaments worth lakhs of rupees and cash from the Tara Tarini temple atop Kumari hill in Ganjam district.

Rajani Kanta Samal said.

However, police were yet to recover the silver ornaments, including the facemasks and decorated umbrella, of the deities. Further investigation was ongoing to ascertain the possible involvement of others.

The accused, who entered the temple by breaking the locks of the entrance gate, decamped with silver ornaments worth Rs 10 lakh and cash from the donation box on November 4. The loot came to light on November 5 morning.

Following the incident, the temple management has installed six CCTV cameras in strategic locations of the shrine.

Rs 20K aid to B'swar deaf, dumb judo player



To participate in 'X Asia Pacific Deaf Games-24'

PNS ■ BALESWAR

The district administration extended financial support to a deaf and dumb Judo player who has been selected to participate in the ensuing international sports event, 'X Asia Pacific Deaf Games-24' to be held in Malaysia between December 1 and 8.

The player, Sambit Das, a resident of Pinchhapali village under Nuapur GP of Bahanga block, was given Rs 20,000 as financial assistance by district Collector Suryawanshi Mayur Vikash on Wednesday in presence of District Athletic Association president and secretary respectively Adhip Das and Abhay Mahapatra and District Sports Officer Purna Chandra Jena.

In fact, the parents of the differently abled had ap-

proached the district administration earlier seeking financial help for their ward as they could hardly afford it. They said their son was very good at sports since his childhood despite adversities and he is very keen to participate in the Judo event to be held in Malaysia.

From November 15, Sambit will receive training in New Delhi and further will fly to Malaysia for the competition, reports said.

In Bhadrak Bank staff found dead on rly track Suicide suspected

PNS ■ BHADRAK

A mutilated body of a bank employee was found near the Kednuapada railway station in Bhadrak district on Friday. The deceased was a resident of Sherpur village.

It was suspected that the bank employee might have committed suicide by jumping before a train late Thursday night. Upon being informed, Government Railway Police (GRP) officials reached the spot and started an investigation into the incident.

As per sources, the employee had left the bank after his duty on Thursday evening. However, he never reached home. The reason behind his death was yet to be ascertained.

In Sambalpur Man gets 20-yr RI for raping minor

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

The Special POCSO Court in Sambalpur on Thursday awarded 20 years of Rigorous Imprisonment (RI) to a man for sexually assaulting a minor on the pretext of marrying her. The convict has been identified as Ashwini Mahakud under Jujumura police limits in the district.

According to reports, on November 23, 2022, the accused managed to seduce the victim and took her to different places where he raped her multiple times. During the period, the accused also threatened her family members over phone that he had kidnapped their daughter and warned them against in-

forming police. However, two days later, the father of the victim lodged a complaint at Dhama police station following which an investigation was lodged and the victim was rescued from the village of the accused. Police also nabbed Mahakud.

A case was registered under Sections 363, 366 and 376 (2)(n) of the IPC, besides Section 6 of the POCSO Act and the accused was forwarded to court.

After examining 10 witnesses and 73 evidences, the court pronounced the verdict. The judgement was delivered by Special Judge RL Panda while the case was presented on behalf of the government by Basanta Mishra.

'Paradip gateway of Odisha economy' 'Our Environment is our responsibility'

CM participates in Port Day ceremony

PNS ■ PARADIP

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi participated in the Port Day and boat docking ceremony at the Paradip Port on Friday. He handed over the traditional Kalasa to the decorated Sadhava Sadhvani. The Paradip Port Authority has been celebrating this festival traditionally to recall Odisha's great maritime tradition.



Majhi said it would not be an exaggeration to call Paradip as the gateway of Odisha's economy. With the Prime Minister's call for 'Bharat Uday from the East', efforts are underway for successful implementation of the Sagarmala Project for

modernisation of ports and harbours. The Chief Minister launched a piped fuel gas project for more than 7,000 houses in the port area. PNG can reach every home at 40% less cost. Minister for Industries, Skill

Development and Vocational Education Sampad Chandra Swain, Jagatsinghpur MP Bibhu Prasad Tarai, district Collector J Sonal, DIG Charan Singh Meena were the guests of honour. Paradip Port Chairman PL Haranadh said the

Paradip Port has become the number 1 Major Port in the country. He hoped that the capacity of the port would be increased to 500 million metric tonnes by 2047 and it would gain a unique position in the world.

PNS ■ TANGI

The Paribesh Suraksha Abhijan (PSA) celebrated its second annual day at the Biswanahakani Higher Secondary School, Garudgan on Sunday under the chairmanship of Dr Pradeep Kumar Rath. Journalist Bhabani Sankar Tripathy was chief guest along with Dr Sarat Kumar Acharya, Dr Pramod Kumar Panda, Principal Scientist of Indian Institute of Water Management, Bhubaneswar, wildlife conservationist Dr Prakash Kumar Jena, Diptimayee Behera, Sarapanach, Garudgan sarachayast as guests of honour.

Tripathy stressed that everyone has the responsibility in nurturing and protecting the environment to ensure a clean and green environment



for future generations. This assumes importance in the present context of an environment which is constantly on degradation mostly due to human intervention.

Dr Panda, an expert on groundwater management, gave essential tips for water conservation and economy in use of available water consid-

ering the scarcity of this life sustaining element of nature. Nidhi Routray, a former Odisha Financial Service officer and an environmentalist, was conferred with "Paribesh Samman" in recognition of his contribution in planting thousands of palm trees to arrest lightning. At the outset, Prof Kalyani Mohanty, vice-presi-

dent of the organisation, gave welcome address. General secretary Raghunath Prusty read out the annual report of PSA. Dr Narayan Tripathy, joint secretary, gave a vote of thanks.

The students of PMIR Department of Utkal University made a thematic presentation on "Our environment is our responsibility".

President honours Birsa Munda



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday led the nation in paying tributes to tribal icon Birsa Munda on his birth anniversary which is observed as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas. The President, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla offered floral tributes at the statue of Birsa Munda at the Prerna Sthal in Parliament complex. Rajya Sabha Deputy Chair Harivansh was also present. After the event, the leaders interacted with folk artists.

After the president left the venue, Dhankhar, who is also the Rajya Sabha chairperson, and Birla tried their hands on musical instruments, including drums. Since 2021, Birsa Munda's birth anniversary is being observed as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas to remember the sacrifices of unsung tribal heroes. Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi on Friday hailed tribal icon Birsa Munda on his birth anniversary and said he sacrificed everything to protect the honour and glory of the motherland. Born in 1875 in present-day Jharkhand, Munda had chal-

lenged British rule and is credited with mobilising tribals against the empire. He died in British custody at a young age of 25 years. "Bhagwan Birsa Munda ji sacrificed everything to protect the honor and glory of the motherland. My deepest respects to him on the auspicious occasion of his birth anniversary Janjatiya Gaurav Divas," PM Modi wrote in a social media post in Hindi. Modi also shared a video and audio montage on his tributes to Munda on various occasions. The PM visited Bihar's Jamui to commemorate Janjatiya Gaurav Divas, marking the com-

memencement of the 150th birth anniversary celebration of the tribal icon. Modi also greeted people on Jharkhand's foundation day. "Best wishes to all our brothers and sisters of Jharkhand on the foundation day of the state. This land, irrigated by the struggle and sacrifice of the tribal society, has always made the country proud. I wish that this state, full of natural resources, moves forward at a fast pace on the path of progress," the PM noted in a social media post. The state of Jharkhand officially came into being on Munda's birth anniversary in 2000.

PM greets nation on Guru Nanak Jayanti



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted people on Guru Nanak Jayanti on Friday and wished that his teachings inspire people to further the spirit of compassion, kindness and humility. "Greetings on the auspicious occasion of Sri Guru Nanak Jayanti. May the teachings of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji inspire us to further the spirit of compassion, kindness and humility," Modi wrote on social media. "May it also motivate us to serve society and make our planet better," the post added.

ED siezes Rs 8.8 Crore from lottery king Santiago Martin



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday seized Rs 8.8 crore in cash from the corporate office of Chennai-based 'lottery king' Santiago Martin, officials said. The PM visited Bihar's Jamui to commemorate Janjatiya Gaurav Divas, marking the com-

scrapped electoral bonds. The searches were carried out in multiple states as part of a money laundering investigation against the 'lottery king', officials said. The action comes after the Madras High Court recently allowed the ED to proceed against Martin as the Tamil Nadu Police had decided to close the predicate or primary FIR against him and a

few others and a lower court accepted this police plea. Officials said at least 20 premises linked to Martin, his son-in-law Aadhav Arjun and associates in Chennai and Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, Faridabad in Haryana, Ludhiana in Punjab and Kolkata in West Bengal were being searched as part of an action against his business.

ECI officials frisk bags of Amit Shah at Hingoli

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a development that sought to blunt the Opposition's criticism that the Election Commission of India (ECI) was targeting the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) leaders, a team

of ECI officials checked the bags of Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah, when he landed in a helicopter in the Hingoli district to address a rally in poll-bound Maharashtra. Posting a video clip on his handle on micro-blogging site "X", Shah wrote:

"Today, during my election campaign in Hingoli Assembly constituency of Maharashtra, my helicopter was inspected by Election Commission officials. BJP believes in fair elections and a healthy election system and follows all the rules made by the Honourable Election

Commission. We all must contribute to a healthy election system and perform our duties in keeping India as the strongest democracy in the world". Chief Election Officer (CEO) had clarified that the ECI was following the Standard Operating Procedures.

Rahul Gandhi alleges SEBI's Buch hand in glove with corporations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Stepping up his attack on Madhabi Puri Buch, chairperson of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, on Friday alleged that India's economic framework is being hollowed out from within by a "cartel of corporate giants", enabled by those meant to guard the country's interests. The former Congress chief said the Madhabi Buch scandal isn't just insider trading but is a revealing case of direct conflict of interest, where powerful regulators are entangled with the very corporations they're supposed to oversee. Rahul made the remarks in his post that accompanied a YouTube video, part of a series featuring him and Pawan Khera, Congress' media and publicity head, in which the two leaders discuss various conflicts of interest allegations



against Buch. There was no immediate reaction from Buch, who is facing conflict of interest allegations, on the video and the charges. However, previously the SEBI chief has dismissed allegations of any wrongdoing. In his post he said, "India's economic framework is being hollowed out from within by a cartel of corporate giants, enabled by those meant to guard the country's interests." This is not mere oversight but a coordinated scheme to exploit loopholes, distort regulations, and prioritise corporate profit over public interest, all while ordinary Indians pay the price,

Rahul said. In the over six-minute video, Khera briefs Rahul Gandhi about various conflict of interest allegations against Buch while travelling with him on a flight. Khera talks about how the Congress exposed the claim that Agora Advisory Pvt Ltd became immediately dormant upon Buch joining SEBI. She still holds a 99 per cent stake in it, and the company has actively provided consultancy and advisory services, including to Mahindra & Mahindra, Khera tells the senior leader in the video. He also tells Rahul Gandhi that Buch allegedly traded and also invested in Chinese funds. Rahul Gandhi also posted the video on X, and said, Buch Hai Toh Syndicate Safe Hai. Congress and the Opposition has been targeting the government over conflict of interest allegations against Buch and demanding that she be removed from the post.

Power minister inaugurates trilateral power flow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Manohar Lal Khattar, the Union Minister for Power and Housing and Urban Affairs, jointly inaugurated the power flow from Nepal to Bangladesh, along with Md. Fozul Kabir Khan, adviser, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, Government of Bangladesh and Dipak Khadka, Minister of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, Government of Nepal, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) noted. It said the inauguration was done through a virtual event hosted by the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, Government of Nepal. This occasion marks the first trilateral power transaction which has been carried out through the Indian grid. The Government of India had announced its decision to facilitate the first trilateral power transaction from Nepal to Bangladesh, through Indian grid with an export of upto 40 MW of power during the visit of the former prime minister of Nepal, Puspaha Kamal Dahal Prachanda to India from May 31-June three. During the visit, both sides had expressed their commitment towards greater sub-regional cooperation, including in the energy sector, which would lead to increased inter-linkages between the economies for mutual benefit of all stakeholders. Subsequently, a tripartite power sales agreement signed on October 3 in Kathmandu.

DFCCI celebrates 19th foundation day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Thursday said the dedicated freight corridor is a very important infrastructure project of the Indian Railways, which has made a positive impact on the country's logistics sector. Congratulating the office bearers of Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India

Limited (DFCCIL) on the occasion of its 19th Foundation day, Vaishnaw said more than 350 goods trains are being operated on the corridor at present and this has improved the efficiency of logistics transportation in the country. "The timings of cargo transportation have been reduced to half as compared to earlier. The speed of freight trains has made significant improvement. In every way, the DFC

has played a crucial role to reduce the logistics cost in the country," Vaishnaw said in a video message that was played during the celebration at Bharat Mandapam here. Expressing hope that DFC would continue to serve the country, Vaishnaw said that a good integration has taken place in the network of the Indian Railways. "We have to take it further so that DFC can serve the country better," he added.

Rajya Sabha to consider private member bill to regulate independent media services

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A private member's Bill that seeks to provide for establishment of an independent authority for the regulation and licensing of media services in the country has been cleared for consideration by the Rajya Sabha, a bulletin of the House noted. The Indian Media Services (Regulation and Licensing) Bill, 2024, a private member's bill by CPI(M) MP V Sivadasan, provides for establishing an independent authority -- the Indian Board of Media Services -- for the regulation and licensing of media services "to facilitate development of free and inde-

pendent media services in the country". According to the bulletin, Ashwini Vaishnaw, minister for information and broadcasting, communicated to the Rajya Sabha secretary-general that the president has recommended the consideration of the Bill to the House. Private members' Bills involving expenditure from the exchequer require the President's permission through the ministry concerned on whether such bills can be considered by the House. The Indian Media Services (Regulation and Licensing) Bill says the Central government shall, within six months of the commencement of the Act, by



notification in the Official Gazette, establish for the purposes of the Act, an autonomous body to be known as the Indian Board for Media Services, to regulate the functioning of media services and foster free and independent media services in the country. It also says the Union government shall, after due appropri-

ation made by the Parliament by law on this behalf, make to the Board grants of such sums of money as the Union government may think fit for carrying out the purposes of the Act. In the statement of objects and reasons of the Bill, Sivadasan has argued independent media that plays an impartial role in the dissemination of news and information to the public at large is crucial for the functioning of a healthy democracy, and licensing powers being a monopoly in the hands of the Executive often results in a pliant media, as journalists will hesitate to criticise the ruling dispensation for fear of legal hazards.

Haryana BJP gears up for MCG polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Pandit Mohanlal Badoli, president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Haryana BJP said that the party is all set for the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) election, and with the help of welfare works, organisational strength and blessings of the public. Badoli was in the Gurugram's party office to attend the membership campaign on Friday. While attacking the Congress

party, he said that the public burst the balloon of Congress's lies in the Assembly elections and now the lies of Congress will not work in any election. He said in 2019, 33 lakh primary members were made in the BJP, but this time the target is to make 50 lakh primary members in Haryana. "There are more than 20,000 booths in Haryana and the workers have been given the target of adding 250 new people to the party at every booth," he said.

He said that after one election, the BJP starts preparing for the next election. BJP will win any upcoming election. "MCG elections will be held soon and we will win every election with a clear majority," he added. During the elections, some people were upset and left the party; apart from this, some workers did anti-party work while being in the party. The organisation has full information about such people, and action will be initiated against

them. On the question of naming the medical college being built in Gurugram after Guru Nanak, the state president said that great men and patriots have worked for the society and the country. We are indebted to the great men. It is a matter of pride that the medical college is named after Guru Nanak. "Congress does not have a leader. Congress lacks policy, leadership and intentions. Congress will decline and BJP will move ahead," he said.

Jitendra Singh bats for private-public partnership to tackle Diabetes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Diabetes is too serious to be left solely to the medical professionals, Jitendra Singh, Union minister for earth sciences and science and technology, said as he advocated for increasing public-private partnership in the efforts to achieve truly optimal results. He made these remarks at the 52nd Annual Conference of the Research Society for the Study of Diabetes in India (RSSDI), in collaboration with the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), which commenced on the occasion of World Diabetes Day on Thursday. The two-day conference brought together over 5,000 healthcare professionals, national and international

experts, and prominent speakers to discuss and address the growing diabetes epidemic in India, where more than 10 crore people are currently affected, according to the latest report from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). "Just as economics is too serious a subject to be left to economists alone, I believe we can say that diabetes is too serious to be left solely to the medical professionals. It is a much broader issue," Singh said. To tackle the epidemic of diabetes, there is a need for a collaborative effort which has to be extended beyond the practitioners of medicine, he said. The minister also said "As rightly pointed out, it's about breaking barriers and bridging gaps between individuals and patients, individuals and doctors, individuals and families,

individuals and society as well as between the private and public sectors." "I have been a strong advocate of increasing private-sector involvement in these efforts. It is only through such partnerships that we can achieve truly optimal results," he added. The conference also marked the announcement of a joint declaration by the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) and RSSDI. This declaration underscores the global and regional commitment to diabetes awareness, prevention and treatment. Meanwhile, Dr B M Makkar, RSSDI president, said this declaration is a testament to the urgent need for collaborative efforts to tackle diabetes. "By working together with the IDF, we aim to ensure better access to care, promote educa-



tion, and reduce the risks associated with this disease. We believe that by uniting healthcare professionals, governments, and global organizations, we can significantly improve outcomes for those

affected by diabetes worldwide," he added. Another key aspect of the conference is the Doctors' Pledge or Doctor's Oath, with over 10,000 healthcare professionals from across India taking a

solemn oath to increase awareness of diabetes, advocate for early screenings, and promote healthier lifestyle choices. Dr Sanjay Agrawal, Diabetologist and Secretary General, RSSDI, said, "This

pledge is a vital part of our collective responsibility to make diabetes prevention a national priority. By educating people about early diagnosis and healthy living, we can make a significant difference in preventing the onset of diabetes and managing the condition more effectively. "Our professionals are committed to supporting the public with resources, education, and advocacy to ensure that diabetes is diagnosed early and effectively managed," he added. Dr Banshi Saboo, Chief Diabetologist and Chairman of Dia Care - Diabetes Care and Hormone Clinic, emphasized the urgency of addressing diabetes as a national priority cannot be overstated. "By focusing on prevention, early diagnosis, and patient education, we empower indi-

viduals to manage their health more proactively, ultimately reducing the burden of this epidemic on families and communities," Dr Sahoo said. The program also highlights nationwide activities led by doctors, including the A-Z Diabetes Awareness Activity campaign organized by RSSDI's Delhi chapter and the conference committee. The campaign was launched by RSSDI Delhi Chapter under the aegis of the 52nd National Annual Conference of RSSDI to spread awareness about diabetes, in which posters and flyers were made and distributed, disseminated online by thousands of doctors all over the country. It saw huge participation by doctors, including Dr Rajesh Kesari, a diabetologist, and benefited lakhs of people by creating awareness.

UPPSC announces new date for PCS prelims

Protests over RO-ARO exam continue

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission (UPPSC) has rescheduled the PCS (Preliminary) Examination for December 22, after intense student protests. However, agitation continues as students demand that the Review Officer-Assistant Review Officer (RO-ARO) examination also be conducted in a single day

and shift. The PCS prelims will be held in two shifts on the same day, with the first session from 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM and the second from 2:30 PM to 4:30 PM. Initially scheduled for December 7 and 8, the exam was postponed following demonstrations by students who sought a one-day exam schedule. **Deadlock over RO-ARO exam schedule** Despite the announcement for PCS, a section of students remain dissatisfied as the commission has not provided clarity on the RO-ARO Preliminary Examination. Protesters stationed at Gate No. 2 of the UPPSC office have vowed to continue their demonstration until their demand for a single-day, sin-



gle-shift RO-ARO exam is met. "The commission has assured fairness through a high-level committee, but we need a written commitment that the RO-ARO exam will be held in one shift," said one protester. UPPSC officials argue that conducting the RO-ARO exam in one shift is logistically challenging due to the high number of candidates—over 10.7 lakh registered for the exam. Strict government directives limit the use of private or substandard centers, allowing only government-approved venues within a 20-km radius of district headquarters. Even with the inclusion of universities, medical colleges, engineering institutions, and other government facilities,

there are not enough centers to accommodate all candidates in a single shift. As a solution, the UPPSC plans to conduct the RO-ARO exam over multiple days using a normalization process to ensure fairness in evaluation. The decision has judicial backing; the Supreme Court upheld normalization in its January 2024 ruling in "Uttar Pradesh State and Others vs. Atul Kumar Dwivedi and Others". Omkar Nath Singh, Under Secretary of UPPSC, stated that a committee has been formed to ensure the RO-ARO selection process is transparent and fair. "The committee will analyze all aspects and submit its report soon," he added.

Students remain unconvinced, arguing that normalization introduces discrepancies and diminishes fairness. "We initiated this protest to ensure that both exams are conducted on the same terms. While the PCS exam will now be held in one day, the commission's approach to RO-ARO remains unclear," said a student leader. "The ongoing protests and the unresolved RO-ARO schedule underscore the broader challenges faced by the commission in balancing logistical feasibility with fairness and student expectations. For now, the stalemate continues, with students determined to press their demands until a resolution is reached," R K Mishra, a retired bureaucrat told this reporter.

Rajnath criticises Congress for their promise to conduct 'Caste Census'

PTI ■ RANCHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday criticised the Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi for their promise to conduct a "caste census," accusing them of using the issue as a ploy to manipulate voters for political gain. Speaking at a rally in Jharkhand's Mahagama, Singh challenged the Congress to come up with a concrete plan for distributing reservation benefits among the numerous castes and sub-castes in the country. "In 2011, a socio-economic caste census was conducted, which revealed the presence of around 46 lakh castes, sub-castes, and gotras. According to the Ministry of Social Welfare, there are about 1,200 Scheduled Castes (SC), over 750 Scheduled Tribes (ST), and around 2,500 Other Backward Classes (OBCs). How will Congress manage the distribution of reservation quotas among all these groups?" Singh asked. He further demanded that Congress present a clear blueprint for implementing such a system. Singh also took a swipe at



Rahul Gandhi, saying, "He should answer how many castes reside in India. Politics should be about serving the people, not just forming a government." He accused Congress of engaging in opportunistic politics, claiming that the party has historically ruined alliances with regional partners such as RJD in Bihar, JKNC in Jammu & Kashmir, and now it is the turn of DMK in Tamil Nadu. "Congress uses these alliances to attain power, but ultimately it harms its partners," he said. On the subject of corruption, Singh alleged that the ruling JMM-Congress-RJD coalition in Jharkhand had engaged in widespread corruption, even

going as far as taking bribes for issuing death certificates. He contrasted this with the BJP's record in the state, stating, "So far, 13 Chief Ministers have governed Jharkhand, but none of the three BJP CMs ever faced corruption charges or went to jail." Singh expressed confidence in the BJP's prospects in the ongoing Jharkhand elections, predicting that the party would secure two-thirds of the 43 seats up for election in the first phase. He pointed to a 3 per cent increase in voter turnout as an indicator of strong support for the NDA government in the state, signaling a stable and corru-

After 21 years, tribals plan to return to native place in Naxal-hit Abujhmad

PTI ■ RAIPUR

More than two decades after deserting their village due to Maoists, around 25 tribal families are planning to return to their native place in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district. Nearly 100 members of these families had left their homes in Gaarpa village located in Abujhmad after Naxalite started targeting them in 2003. They were then settled on the outskirts of Narayanpur town on a tract of government land, where they took up agriculture for livelihood. Now, 21 years after their desertion, these families recently visited their native place and have been planning to resettle there after police set up a camp there to facilitate development works and ensure security for local population. Abujhmad, bordering Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district, was considered a Maoist fortress until recently. On October 4, security forces scripted their most successful anti-insurgency operation in Chhattisgarh by gunning down 31 Naxalites during an encounter in the area. "Leaving the ancestral land was never easy. We had no



option but to flee for the sake of our lives." 60-year-old Sukkuram Nureti told PTI. Nureti's family was among the 25 families that left Gaarpa in April 2003. Nureti hails from the Abujhmaria community, a particularly vulnerable tribal group. "Of the 80 families in the village, around 25 were followers of 'Gayatri Pariwar' and Naxalites objected to it. They threatened us with dire consequences if we did not quit following 'Gayatri Pariwar'. So we decided to leave the village," he said. Nureti said they always wanted to return. "Now it seems our dream will come true as a police camp has been set up and

things have started improving there," said Nureti, who has served as a member of Janpad panchayat in the past. Nureti and others who had left the village visited Gaarpa last week and opened a Lord Shiv temple that had remained shut since 2003. "We are planning to resettle in the village as we have our farmland and homes there," he said. Making significant inroads into Abujhmad, the Chhattisgarh police have set up security camps in Gaarpa, Kasturmeta, Mastur, Irakbhathi, Mohanti and Horadi villages in the past eight months. The Gaarpa camp came up on October 22. According to police, the strat-

egy of establishing these camps has pushed the Naxalites to a very limited area in the zone and facilitated development works in the region. Security camps in remote and Naxal-hit areas will help thousands of villagers avail the benefits of development works and welfare measures through Niyad Nellanar schemes, Narayanpur Superintendent of Police Prabhat Kumar said. Under Niyad Nellanar, the state government has been undertaking development works in interior villages within a 5-km radius of security camps. Tribals evicted by Naxals in villages around the newly set up camps have started returning to their homes, the SP said. "Villagers who were earlier pressured by Naxals to oppose development projects are now demanding roads, mobile towers, health and schools. Positive results will be seen in the coming days due to the efforts of police and administration," he said. With a combined security and development push, nearly half of Abujhmad now has road accessibility. There is a target of providing road connectivity through Mad to

Chhotebethia (Narayanpur) and Maharashtra, he said. "We will connect Narayanpur to Gadchiroli (Maharashtra) and Chhotebethia within the next 18 months," the official said. After the establishment of six security camps, Principal Secretary of Chhattisgarh's Panchayat and Rural Development Department Niharika Barika recently visited five villages of Abujhmad, marking the first such trip by a top bureaucrat to the region. She travelled over 60 km on a motorcycle and reviewed more than 30 development projects, an official here said. Barika visited three Anganwadis, two schools, one health sub-centre and met grassroots development workers and flagged off bus service between Gaarpa and Narayanpur, he said. Spread over about 4,000 sq km, Abujhmad had been a den of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist) as its dense forest served as a hideout for its leaders. The rebels' activities in Abujhmad have declined in recent years due to the increased presence of security forces and development works being carried out in the region, officials said.

Cyber fraudsters dupe Minister's accountant of Rs 2.08 Crore

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

In a shocking incident of cyber fraud, Ritesh Srivastava, the accountant of Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi, was duped of ₹2.08 crore by fraudsters impersonating the minister's son. The incident occurred on Wednesday, sending shockwaves from Prayagraj to Lucknow as top officials scrambled to investigate. According to police, the fraudster used the picture of Minister Nandi's son as the WhatsApp display photo and sent a message to Ritesh Srivastava from an unknown number. The message claimed, "This is my new number. I am in an important



business meeting. Please transfer money immediately." Believing it to be genuine, Srivastava promptly transferred ₹2.08 crore in three transactions to the bank accounts provided in the message. The scam came to light when Srivastava later confirmed with Nandi's son, only to learn that no such request was made. Realizing the fraud, the accountant informed authorities late on Wednesday night. The cyber police were alert-

ed around 11:30 PM, prompting swift action. Senior officials were reportedly stunned by the audacity of the scam, given its connection to a high-profile cabinet minister. The cyber police station in charge, Rajiv Tiwari, confirmed that efforts are underway to trace the culprits and recover the funds. The investigation revealed that the fraudsters used bank accounts from ICICI, HDFC, and another unidentified bank for the transactions. Cyber police have contacted the banks to freeze the accounts and retrieve transaction details. Tiwari stated, "Emails have been sent to freeze the concerned accounts, and further details are being extracted to

identify the fraudsters." Minister Nand Gopal Gupta's office has yet to issue an official statement. When contacted, his PRO assured that the minister would respond, but no clarification was received until the time of reporting. This high-profile incident highlights the increasing threat of cyber fraud and the need for vigilance in financial transactions, even among individuals in influential positions. Authorities have urged the public to double-check requests for money transfers, particularly those made over messaging apps, police official Tiwari said. The investigation is ongoing, and updates will be shared as more details emerge.

Arunachal Governor underlines critical role of tribal communities in nation building

PTI ■ ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen K T Parnaik (Retd) on Friday underlined the critical role of tribal communities in nation-building, emphasising the importance of mutual respect and recognition of their rights, culture, and self-governance. Speaking at the fourth Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas here, which commemorates the birth anniversary of tribal leader Bhagwan Birsa Munda, the governor stressed that engaging tribal communities as active partners in development strengthens the nation by leveraging their resilience, knowledge, and unique strengths. Parnaik praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for inclusive development and expressed confidence that this day would inspire citizens to contribute to the fields of education, health, employment, entrepreneurship, and livelihood opportunities for tribal communities. He also highlighted the importance of technocrats and businesses in preserving tribal art, culture, heritage, languages, and dialects, ensuring these rich traditions are celebrated and sustained. The governor elaborated on the vital role the tribal communities play in shaping the nation's identity. He noted that their preservation of cultural heritage, support for social cohesion, and contributions to economic and political processes enrich the country's diversity. "Tribal communities maintain unique languages, customs, art, music, and sustainable practices, which not only add to India's cultural wealth but also offer innovative solutions in areas such as agriculture, medicine, and environmental conservation," he pointed out. Parnaik emphasised that the communal values of tribal



societies in Arunachal Pradesh, including mutual support, respect for elders, and collective decision-making, foster unity and stability. "These principles are essential for building a harmonious and progressive society. Mechanisms like Kebang, used for conflict resolution within tribal groups, offer lessons for national peace-building frameworks," he added. Despite their significant contributions, the governor acknowledged that many tribal communities continue to face challenges such as social discrimination, poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to education. He stressed the need for inclusive policies, investments, and partnerships to address these issues, enabling tribal communities to further contribute to national progress. Parnaik also drew attention to the importance of highlighting and preserving tribal heritage. He said that Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas provides an opportunity to celebrate traditional crafts, textiles, and art forms, which boosts economic opportunities for artisans and small businesses. By showcasing tribal culture, regions can attract tourism, generating economic benefits while promoting their unique identity. Parnaik added that Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas, initiated by Prime Minister Modi, hon-

ours the sacrifices and contributions of tribal communities to India's freedom struggle and nation-building efforts. For the first time since independence, the nation is recognising and celebrating the art, culture, and history of tribal societies on a large scale, he said. The governor also paid tributes to Birsa Munda, a revered tribal leader from the Munda tribe of the Chhota Nagpur Plateau, describing him as a freedom fighter, people's leader, and national hero. "Munda fought tirelessly for the rights of tribal communities, advocating for the preservation of their faith, culture, and traditions. He inspired his followers to reconnect with their roots and uphold tribal values, becoming a symbol of resilience and pride for tribal societies. His efforts during the British colonial era motivated many others to fight for their rights and freedom," Parnaik pointed out. "Birsa Munda's vision and legacy remind us of the strength and spirit of India's tribal communities," Parnaik said, calling on people to honour the contributions of all tribal freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for India's independence. The governor urged the people, particularly tribal communities, to actively participate in the nation-building process.

Scindia slams Congress for overlooking tribals' contribution in India's fight for independence

PTI ■ AGARTALA

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Friday criticised the Congress for overlooking the significant contributions of the tribal community in India's fight for independence. Speaking at a programme marking the birth anniversary of tribal freedom fighter Birsa Munda, the DoNER and communications minister called the tribal leaders "heroes not only for the tribal community but for the entire nation." "Birsa Munda fought a decisive battle against British rule and made the ultimate sacrifice for Bharat Mata. He is a hero to 140 crore people in India, not just the janajati (tribal) community," Scindia said, asserting that India's history would be incomplete without acknowledging the tribal contributions to the freedom struggle. Taking aim at the Congress, Scindia claimed that the tribals were neglected under its rule and their historical con-



tributions were forgotten. "When Congress was in power, the tribals were disconnected from the nation's growth, and their role in the freedom movement was ignored," he added. The Union Minister praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for rectifying this historical injustice. "A major change occurred in 2014 when Modi became Prime Minister. Modiji began giving due recognition to tribal leaders by making them ministers, governors, and public representatives," Scindia said. The Minister highlighted the election of Droupadi Murmu,

India's first tribal President, as a significant milestone. "The Congress opposed her election, but the people supported Modi's choice, and Murmu-ji became the President. Congress's opposition to her election was nothing more than an attempt to diminish the contribution of the tribal community," he alleged. Scindia also praised Modi's initiatives for the welfare and development of tribals, noting the launch of the JANMAN Yojana with an outlay of Rs 24,000 crore, aimed at developing 12,000 tribal-dominated villages. "The PM visited Birsa Munda's birthplace and launched a comprehensive welfare programme for the janajati community," he said. Under Modi's leadership, Scindia pointed out that the number of Eklavya Model Residential Schools had increased from 10 to 500, and one lakh houses had been built for the tribal community to ensure that no one remains without a roof.

First seaplane lands in Guwahati after taking flight from city

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

A seaplane landed at Pandu Ghat in Guwahati on Friday after a successful flight from the city airport, making it the first such plane to land in Assam. The addition of seaplanes to the state's transport network is expected to boost connectivity and tourism, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. "Earlier today, a sea plane successfully landed at Pandu Ghat on the banks of Brahmaputra, marking the first river landing in Eastern India, which will open new chapters of connectivity in a riverine state like Assam," Sarma said in a post on X. "A dawn of new possibilities in the Tourism & Intercommunication of Assam. This morning, participated in an 'Amphibian Airplane' demonstration in Guwahati by M/s De Havilland Canada in collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Aviation,"

State Tourism Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah, who took the flight, posted on the micro-blogging site. Taking off from LGBI Airport and landing at Pandu Ghat, this brief yet remarkable journey showcased the immense potential of seaplanes in enhancing Assam's tourism, he said. "I am optimistic that future collaborations will create unique experiences for tourists and further strengthen Assam's tourism sector," he added. Talking to reporters at Pandu Ghat later, Baruah said, this is a special day for Assam. "It is the first time that a seaplane has landed in our state," he said. Almost all tourism sites of the state are located near water bodies, like Kaziranga, Umrangso, and Majuli. These can be connected by seaplanes, he added. The minister said it will take six to 12 months to make the seaplanes operational.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Right to breathe

As Delhi air turns toxic, Delhiites face severe health risks; the capital needs long-term solutions, not knee-jerk reactions

Delhi's air quality has plummeted to hazardous levels, with the city's Air Quality Index (AQI) soaring to a staggering 428, marking the worst pollution levels in the country. As a result, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has announced the enforcement of stringent Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)-3 restrictions starting at 8 AM on Friday. On Thursday, the 24-hour AQI for the city reached 428, signaling a "severe" air quality category, which poses serious health risks to the population, especially children, the elderly and those with pre-existing respiratory conditions. The current AQI level of 428 puts Delhi in the "Severe" category, indicating that the air is dangerously polluted and immediate action is required to prevent further deterioration of public health. In response to the deteriorating air quality, the CAQM has imposed the following GRAP-3 restrictions to mitigate the pollution levels: All non-essential construction and demolition activities in Delhi and the surrounding National Capital Region (NCR) are suspended to prevent dust and particulate matter from exacerbating the pollution. Vehicles that do not meet the latest emission norms are banned from the roads. Specifically, petrol vehicles that do not comply with BS-III (Bharat Stage III) standards and diesel vehicles that fall under BS-IV norms are prohibited from operating within Delhi and parts of NCR.



These measures are expected to significantly reduce the amount of pollutants being emitted into the air, especially from construction sites and older vehicles, which are major contributors to air pollution. The current spike in pollution levels to a combination of factors. The calm winds and a sharp drop in temperature have trapped pollutants in the air, preventing them from dispersing. The weather conditions have created a 'smog blanket' over the city, intensifying the effects of vehicular emissions, industrial pollution, and the burning of crop stubble in neighbouring states. The Supreme Court of India has taken note of the deteriorating air quality and has scheduled a hearing on November 18 to discuss further enforcement measures. The court has emphasised that every citizen has the fundamental right to breathe clean air, as protected under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. Delhi's pollution crisis has now drawn significant national and international attention. While the immediate focus is on enforcing short-term measures like the GRAP-3 restrictions, experts argue that lasting solutions require systemic changes, including stricter emissions standards, better waste management, and a push for cleaner public transportation options. As the city continues to grapple with the toxic smog, Delhi residents are urged to stay indoors as much as possible, avoid strenuous outdoor activities, and wear N95 masks to protect themselves from the harmful effects of the air pollution. In the coming days, it is hoped that both weather conditions and Govt interventions will bring some relief, but the long-term health of the city's residents depends on sustained efforts to curb the sources of pollution.

pollutants in the air, preventing them from dispersing. The weather conditions have created a 'smog blanket' over the city, intensifying the effects of vehicular emissions, industrial pollution, and the burning of crop stubble in neighbouring states. The Supreme Court of India has taken note of the deteriorating air quality and has scheduled a hearing on November 18 to discuss further enforcement measures. The court has emphasised that every citizen has the fundamental right to breathe clean air, as protected under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. Delhi's pollution crisis has now drawn significant national and international attention. While the immediate focus is on enforcing short-term measures like the GRAP-3 restrictions, experts argue that lasting solutions require systemic changes, including stricter emissions standards, better waste management, and a push for cleaner public transportation options. As the city continues to grapple with the toxic smog, Delhi residents are urged to stay indoors as much as possible, avoid strenuous outdoor activities, and wear N95 masks to protect themselves from the harmful effects of the air pollution. In the coming days, it is hoped that both weather conditions and Govt interventions will bring some relief, but the long-term health of the city's residents depends on sustained efforts to curb the sources of pollution.

PICTALK



Devotees take a holy dip in the Ganga river at a ghat on the occasion of 'Kartik Purnima' festival, in Varanasi

US-Iran tensions: War clouds over West Asia



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

With regional stability hanging in the balance, the world watches anxiously as West Asia braces for the potential fallout of escalating hostilities

On July 3, 1988, the US Navy's USS Vincennes, in an act of brazen military overreach, shot down Iran Air Flight 655, a civilian airliner carrying 290 passengers, over the Persian Gulf. The Navy's justification—that this was an "unintentional error"—betrays the harsh reality: this was not a mistake, but rather an emblematic instance of Western indifference to the lives of those deemed expendable.

The Navy mistook a commercial flight for an enemy fighter jet, launching two surface-to-air missiles and killing all aboard. Yet, the US response was not to acknowledge a moral failing, but to double down on its denial, offering neither a genuine apology nor reparations to the victims' families. This tragedy was a grim reminder of the West's long-standing practice of dehumanising the peoples of West Asia in its relentless pursuit of geopolitical dominance. For the Iranian people, it was not merely a military blunder; it was a stark dismissal of their humanity, reinforcing the deeply entrenched belief in Western circles that the lives of those beyond its borders are, at best, collateral damage in the pursuit of power.

The echoes of this tragedy persist today, amplified by the volatile relationship between the US and Iran. Just days after Donald Trump's re-election, the US government claimed to have uncovered a plot by Iran to assassinate the president. Iran vehemently rejected these allegations, with Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi dismissing them as a "third-rate comedy" and accusing the US of fabricating a narrative to justify further aggression. Araqchi's derision-mocking the absurdity of an assassin "sitting in Iran and talking online to the FBI"—renewed the deep mistrust that defines the US-Iran relationship.

Now that Trump has secured a second term and will become the 47th President of the USA, it is clear that his foreign policy, especially towards Iran, could become far more aggressive, with disastrous consequences. His planned appointments of hawkish figures



— such as Pete Hegseth as Secretary of Defence, Steven C Witkoff as Special Envoy on West Asia Affairs and Mike Huckabee as Ambassador to Israel — suggest that peace in the West Asia is more distant than ever. These choices reflect a growing alignment with Israel's interests, further inflaming tensions and laying the groundwork for a catastrophic conflict—one that could see a war against Iran as the ultimate culmination of decades of Western intervention.

This looming disaster cannot be divorced from the historical legacy of Western interference in West Asia. Iran's relationship with the West has been shaped by centuries of betrayal and manipulation. A defining moment in this fraught history was the CIA-backed coup of 1953, which ousted Iran's democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh after he sought to nationalise Iran's oil industry.

This act, orchestrated by Western powers, reinstated the Shah's brutal regime, sowing the seeds for the 1979 Islamic Revolution. This history of intervention, driven by oil and geopolitics, instilled a deep sense of betrayal in the Iranian consciousness—a sentiment that still defines Iran's foreign policy today.

Divided along sectarian lines and often opportunistic in their foreign policy, Iran's



DIVIDED ALONG SECTARIAN LINES AND OFTEN OPPORTUNISTIC IN THEIR FOREIGN POLICY, IRAN'S NEIGHBOURS HAVE REPEATEDLY FAILED TO PUT REGIONAL UNITY AHEAD OF EXTERNAL PRESSURES

neighbours have repeatedly failed to put regional unity ahead of external pressures. Yet, the geopolitical manipulations that have shaped this region's history are part of a broader pattern: the West's refusal to recognise the sovereignty of nations it deems strategically irrelevant.

The Iranian people have grown ever more resolute in their refusal to capitulate to external demands. This isolation, initially born of necessity, has also transformed into a profound existential struggle. In response, Iran has sought alliances with nations like China and Russia and forged relationships with non-state actors in the region. These alliances—born not of ideology, but of pragmatic necessity—have allowed Iran to exert regional influence, shifting the balance of power in ways the West never anticipated.

In his first term, Trump used a two-pronged strategy to weaken Iran: connecting other Arab nations in favour of Israel through the Abraham Accords, a treaty engineered by his Jewish-origin son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and secondly, targeting key personalities who enabled Iran's influence in the region while funding efforts by Iranians living abroad working against Iran.

In his second term, which could be more refined and sharpened by the experiences he earned in the last eight years—both in office and out-

side the White House—his actions could become far more unpredictable. Consequently, the potential for war against Iran is no longer a distant fear; it is a rapidly approaching reality. It would affirm the West's view that the lives of Iranians, like those across the Global South, are expendable in pursuit of geopolitical dominance, making this a war of choice, not necessity, with existential stakes for Iran.

In this context, the responsibility to avoid war does not lie solely with the U.S. or Iran, but with all the nations of the region, including those of the Arab world.

Despite their differing beliefs, histories, and alliances, it is incumbent upon Arab nations to take a united stand against the spectre of war. The voices of Arab leaders, particularly those who have long been caught in the geopolitical crossfire of the US-Iran conflict, must strive to find a path of diplomacy and dialogue, to avoid yet another destructive war that will further tear apart the very fabric of the region.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SIMPLIFY TAX SYSTEM

Madam — The article on simplifying tax structures presents an acceptable argument (14-11-24). The successive governments seem to be under utter confusion and all the changes are found to be further complicating the tax structure rather than making it simple to understand and comply with. GST is further a complicated one in every aspect. The government is not clear even in a matter like what is to be taxed. Essentials are taxed; condoms and bangles are exempted. Falling sick is taxed. Medicines, diagnostic devices and insurance premiums are taxed as if falling sick is a matter of comfort and luxury. Even in the case of direct tax, the government's sense of vengeance over the salaried section is clearly displayed. This section is earning money to spend and save.

Both are good and help build a better economy of the country. But they are made to pay not less than 30 per cent as income tax besides GST on every spending. Besides forgoing a huge part of salary, they have to manage the hardships caused by untamed inflation also. There is no answer on the relevance of toll collections. A road is laid and its expenses are met with one year of toll collection. But collections are carried on for decades and they are never closed. It is this confusion in the mind of the government that drives earners to seek ways and means to avoid tax and accumulate black money. It is high time for the government to overhaul the entire tax system and make it people-friendly.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

STOP ILLEGAL DEMOLITIONS

Madam — The Supreme Court intervened that no government is allowed to rule with a bulldozer, by blazing the houses of the miscreants and culprits like this. The Supreme Court guidelines pace respect to the dreams of the home of every single individual, despite

Ensure doctors' safety



Violence against doctors and medical staff by patients' relatives is a serious issue that has been on the rise. Hospitals often deal with life-and-death situations, leading to heightened emotions; for example, when a patient's health condition worsens or dies, relatives may react violently out of grief and frustration. This can be avoided by informing the patient's condition when it wors-

ens, to prepare the relatives for the worst situation. Sometimes families believe that adequate and proper treatment was not provided, which can be cleared by informing them about the disease and line of treatment being provided. Clear and compassionate communication is crucial to satisfying and pacifying them.

Some patients or their relatives may have mental health issues or be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, which can lead to violent tendencies, which need to be noticed and taken care of by the attending medical staff. Overcrowded hospitals, long waiting times, and inadequate basic facilities add to the frustration of patients and their families, resulting in violence. Hence, a multifaceted approach is required to tackle violence against medical professionals in hospitals.

O Prasada Rao | Hyderabad

that he was the been charged culprit under some legal allegations. So far, the UP government has been popularising itself with the Bulldozer Raaj.

The use of bulldozers to demolish the house of the culprits, to give them a lesson, is turning into the way of governance in Uttar Pradesh. The demolishing of the houses and illegal land encroachment must be followed by a legal procedure of waving official legal notice at least 15 days prior and with full opportunity to appeal by the affected party. The move by the apex court will add more transparency to the justice mechanism, and this intervention by the judiciary will assist the innocent to save the sweet home from the red tape bureaucrats and political leaders, who many times hurt the innocent to show their political status and power.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

POLLUTION FROM WASTE

Madam — Instead of resolving environmental problems, Delhi's ambition to convert garbage into energy is creating

health risks. The factory is releasing harmful smoke and ash into the surrounding neighborhoods, despite its goal of reducing landfill waste through rubbish incineration. Significant pollution has resulted, exposing locals to dangerously high concentrations of heavy metals like lead, cadmium, manganese, and arsenic—up to 19 times higher than what the EPA recommends.

Cardiovascular and respiratory disorders, as well as developmental hazards for children, are among the health effects. The absence of crucial safety measures at the plant is criticised by experts. Respiratory problems are common among the locals, and ash contamination has reached neighboring residences, schools, and parks. The intended "green" solution might make Delhi's pollution problem worse if regulatory action is not taken.

Divyansh Pal | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Wooden pallets: Turning timber into treasure

Circular economy practices are changing the future of wooden pallets, from innovative recycling methods to tech-driven solutions



JAY DEEPAK SHAH

Wooden pallets are indispensable in modern logistics, widely used to support the transportation and storage of goods across various industries, including fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), pharmaceuticals, automotive, chemicals and more.



These durable platforms are designed to handle heavy loads and protect products during shipping, simplifying the process of storage and handling. The demand for wooden pallets is immense, with countries like India requiring an estimated 207.8 million units. With such extensive use, an important question arises: what happens to these pallets when they reach the end of their lifecycle? By giving new life to old pallets, industries can reduce waste, conserve resources, and promote economic growth while protecting the environment. There are numerous innovative ways to repurpose and recycle wooden pallets, which contribute to building a more sustainable and efficient supply chain.

One of the most effective ways to enhance sustainability in the wooden pallet industry is through repair and refurbishment. While pallets generally have a lifespan of 12 to 18 months, many can be used longer with regular maintenance. Instead of discarding damaged pallets, companies can inspect and repair them by replacing broken slats and restoring their structural integrity. This process helps conserve raw materials and lowers the carbon footprint associated with manufacturing new pallets. Adopting repair programmes also reduces the demand for fresh timber, which helps prevent deforestation and minimises waste.

Repair and Refurbishment: Instead of discarding damaged pallets, companies can inspect and repair them by replacing broken slats and restoring their structural integrity. This process helps conserve raw materials and lowers the carbon footprint associated with manufacturing new pallets. Adopting repair programmes also reduces the demand for fresh timber, which helps prevent deforestation and minimises waste.

When wooden pallets are no longer fit for their primary purpose, they can still serve a wide range of functions through repurposing, upcycling, or recycling. Repurposing transforms discarded pallets into furniture, decor, or art, extending their lifespan and keeping them out of landfills. This also supports local economies by providing artisans with reclaimed wood to create unique, eco-friendly products. When repurposing or upcycling are no longer options, recycling can turn pallets into products like particleboard or mulch, which conserves resources and reduces the need for new timber. Together, these strategies help minimise waste and lower environmental impact, encouraging responsible use of resources.

Sustainable Sourcing as a Foundation for Circularity To fully align with circular economy principles, the wood used in pallet manufacturing should be sustainably sourced. Certification programs, such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), play a

crucial role in ensuring responsible forest management. These certifications verify that forests are managed sustainably, protecting biodiversity, preventing illegal logging, and minimising environmental impact.

The Role of Technology in Enhancing Circularity Technology is increasingly central to the transformation of wooden pallets, with advancements like the Internet of Things and Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) improving pallet management. These technologies allow pallets to be embedded with sensors, which enable real-time tracking of location, condition, and usage. This visibility optimises inventory management and reduces losses. By tracking pallets through their entire lifecycle, businesses can maximise reuse, ensuring that pallets are returned, repaired, and repurposed efficiently. Such technology-driven strategies extend the lifespan of pallets, ensuring they remain in the supply chain as long as possible.

(The writer is CEO & MD at Jay Wood Industry; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

THE RISE AND FALL OF EGO

True success lies not in fame or power but in humility and understanding one's purpose of life



RAVI VALLURI

A challenging task or an idea normally releases endorphins, which stimulate the human mind to think out of the box, and when endowed with such an attitude, we scale high altitudes and reach the summit. But there is a flip side. We become attached to the product or the activity flow; consequently, the mind gets entrapped by the adulation. A vivacious model with gravitas, known for scorching the ramp, was chosen for a cinematic role. She executed the role with aplomb and was soon nominated for several awards and managed to win some of them, including the Best New Face award.

The actress was bestowed with several honours and in the process bagged prestigious roles. It was indeed a heady feeling. She was feted at various parties and became a celebrity overnight. However, there was no end to her avarice as her mind and body craved more attention. The "I, Me" syndrome dominated her mind and she spent hours before the mirror, taking selfies, adoring her ravishing beauty and success. At her peril, she ignored the alarm bells, the death knell knocking at her door. She got hooked on alcohol, money, drugs and sex. The talented artiste lost her equanimity, equipoise and equilibrium in a state of feverishness and in the process attracted opprobrium.

The meteoric rise of the artiste was short-lived and her obnoxious behaviour was not acceptable to the industry she was soon stripped of meaty roles and sure enough, lost power and fame. Tragedy struck



in a cruel form as her life was snuffed out at a tender age when she succumbed after a car crash in an inebriated state. Who was to be blamed for this irrational behaviour? False egos play havoc on human minds when the power of discrimination gets obfuscated in the razzmatazz and dazzle of "doership". The breed of such people extends among politicians, entrepreneurs and seekers as they are entrapped by doership and cannot let go and remain humble.

They focus on certain immediate outcomes and in the bargain, lose the plot and larger picture. In the political sphere too, parties become dependent on the success and megalomania of an individual and lose their core strengths of inner democracy and grassroots contact. The spiritual world is not spared either. Seekers, to begin with, tread the path with great courage and conviction and have immense faith in the Master and the path. They unflinchingly participate in sadhana, seva, Satsang, meditation and other activities of the organisation. The Master (Guru) in his magnanimity encourages all his followers. Some progress on the path and others fall aside as the rigour and regimen of spirituality are arduous and crammed with disturbances before the seeker obtains peace of mind. Soon the feverish mind of the seeker feels proximity to the Master and in the process, rubs fellow seekers the wrong way. Some seekers 'like' these photographs on Facebook to ingratiate themselves with those purportedly "close", in anticipation that it could act as a passport to have a glimpse of the Guru. A true spiritual leader or Master cautions the faithful not to be trapped in the quagmire of Guru Mandal. "Under the influence of false ego, one thinks himself to be the doer of activities, while all the activities are carried out by nature as a natural process," expounds Lord Krishna to Arjuna. A genuine seeker should realise that we are infinitesimal in this vast universe. Our acts and deeds, if truly positive and humble, will automatically draw us closer to the Guru and the Laws of the Universe.

(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)

Bangladesh: A nation's press under pressure



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Attacks on media houses and journalists continue notwithstanding the interim Govt's claim that it is committed to upholding media freedom

The media's independence is under severe attack in Bangladesh under the interim government headed by chief advisor Muhammad Yunus. The attack is two-pronged. One of these is directed against media houses and journalists perceived to have been supporters of the Awami League and the government when Sheikh Hasina headed both. The second targets non-aligned media establishments, editors and journalists, including those known for standing up to the Awami League government's repressive media regime. The objective is to pressure them into toeing the line laid down by the young sparks dominating the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement (ADSM) and rabidly anti-Awami League and fundamentalist Islamist elements in sections of the media and the interim government.

Coming to media houses, eight channels were attacked on August 5, 2024, itself, when Sheikh Hasina left for India. Among them was Ekattor TV's office in Baridhara, Dhaka, which was vandalised and burnt down; also attacked on the same day in Dhaka were the premises of Samay TV, and ATN Bangla. On August 19, an armed mob attacked and severely damaged the establishment of East West Media group, which runs Kaler Kantha (Voice of the times) Bangladesh Pratidin (Bangladesh daily), both Bengali-language newspapers, Daily Sun, an English-language daily, News24BD, a television news channel, Radio Capital, a radio station, and Banglanews24, an online Bengali daily. The mob assaulted journalists, injured a woman journalist and harassed women employees.

As for journalists, according to Reporters Without Borders, a globally-respected international NGO headquartered in Paris, "baseless accusations of killing protesters have been brought against nearly 140 journalists. Twenty-five have been charged with 'crimes against humanity. Many of them have gone into hiding because they fear being arrested and jailed." A number of journalists have been arrested and jailed. Their ranks include Shakil Ahmed, former head of news at television channel Ekattor TV, and Farzana Rupa, its former chief correspondent, who were arrested from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka, on August 21, 2024, when they were about to board a Turkish Airlines flight to Paris via Istanbul, along with their daughter. The two of them remain in prison, as do Mozammel Haque Babu, chief executive officer of Ekattor TV and Shyamal Datta, editor of Bhorer Kagaz (Paper at Dawn) who were arrested on September 15. In a letter emailed recently to Muhammad Yunus, Jodie Ginsburg, chief executive officer of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a respected NGO promoting press freedom and defending the rights of journalists worldwide, urged him to ensure, among other things, respect for the "procedural rights of four incarcerated pro-Awami League journalists: Farzana Rupa, Shakil Ahmed, Mozammel Babu and Shyamal Dutta, including their right to a free trial." The arrests are hardly surprising. According to a report in the Dhaka Tribune dated September 19, 2024, the ADSM leader, Nahid Islam who, besides his other hats, is advisor in charge of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, thundered at a press conference on the previous day that the "instigators" of the July-August massacre



EIGHT CHANNELS WERE ATTACKED ON AUGUST 5, 2024, ITSELF, WHEN SHEIKH HASINA LEFT FOR INDIA. AMONG THEM WAS EKATTOR TV'S OFFICE IN BARIDHARA, DHAKA, WHICH WAS VANDALIZED AND BURNT DOWN; ALSO ATTACKED ON THE SAME DAY IN DHAKA WERE THE PREMISES OF SAMAY TV, AND ATN BANGLA

[of protesters] would be brought to justice no matter whether they identified themselves as journalists, writers and artists. Doubtless, the interim government was to decide as to who were to be brought to justice. Just two examples would show how utterly arbitrary and vindictive such decisions have been. The one is the continued incarceration of Shahriar Kabir, an internationally-respected human rights activist, champion of secular humanism, advocate of the bringing war criminals of 1971 to justice, author and journalist. The second is the arrest, on November 6, 2024, of the noted television actor, Shomi Kaiser, daughter of Shahidullah and Panna Kaiser. Shahidullah, a noted writer and journalist, disappeared after being abducted by Pakistani army personnel and their collaborators from the ranks of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and allied organisations like al-Badr, al-Shams and Razakars. His brother, Zaheer Raihan, also disappeared while looking for him. Panna Kaiser was an Awami League Member of Parliament (1996-2001) who worked in the area of youth welfare. Apart from arrests on false charges, the cancellation of accreditation cards, which has reached a total of 167 at the time of writing, is being used as a weapon against journalists. Such cards are important for identifying oneself as a journalist, and securing entry into restricted areas, government offices and meetings. Referring to the matter, Celia Mercier, Head of South Asia Office of Reporters Without Borders,

another globally-respected NGO whose mission is to act for freedom, pluralism and independence of journalism, and defend those who embody these ideals, has said, "The decision to rescind the accreditation cards of journalists considered close to the previous government is politically-motivated and punitive, and has the effect of intimidating the press. It encourages self-censorship and threatens the very existence of opposition media. This decision by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry [of Bangladesh] is incomprehensible, coming just a week after it took a positive step by establishing a mechanism for reporting cases of harassment against journalists. We urge the ministry to return to this more constructive path by establishing a regulated procedure for issuing and rescinding press cards, by ensuring that cases of harassment are examined impartially, and by putting a final stop to political reprisals against media professionals." As for pressures on independent media establishments, editors and journalists, the aim is to make them toe the line laid down by the young sparks dominating the ADSM, and rabidly anti-Awami League and fundamentalist Islamist elements in sections of the media and the interim government. The weapons are threats and harangues. At a meeting to discuss "Role of Media in Creating Fascist Narrative: A Review," Mahmudur Rahman, editor of Amar Desh (My Country) criticized two national newspapers, Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, for their coverage and com-

mentary on Sheikh Mujib and Sheikh Hasina, suggesting that these outlets are paving the way for fascism by creating contrasting narratives. He further said that the media had fostered hatred towards Islam, misrepresented societal divisions, and perpetuated a narrative of eternal gratitude towards India for its role in Bangladesh's liberation. Significantly, Mahmudur Rahman said this in the presence of Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus' press secretary, Shafiqul Alam. Events like this have been creating a climate in which channels and publications, including the two of Bangladesh's leading paper which Rahman criticised, are sought to be put under compulsion to conform to the kind of reportage and comment the interim government expects of them. All this makes a mockery of the interim government's assertions that it is for the freedom of the press and its moves like the setting up of a commission for hearing allegations of harassment by journalists. An editorial in The Daily Star, dated November 7, 2024, delivered a damning indictment of the situation and the interim government's role when it said, "In our pursuit of a fair, anti-discriminatory Bangladesh, few values are as vital as press freedom. We are, therefore, concerned by the persistent intimidation, harassment, and censorship faced by journalists, which shows how the media landscape remains fraught with obstacles." *(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer; the views expressed are personal)*

Punjab by-elections: A Stage for dynastic politics, defections and defamatory rhetoric

In the run-up to the Punjab Assembly by-elections 2024, political leaders seem to have sidestepped pro-people issues

Elections are usually a good opportunity for political leaders to make public statements and seek public feedback on their pro-people works and policies. But the scene in the Punjab Assembly by-elections 2024 eludes the expectation. Along with other states in India, there are by-elections in four Assembly constituencies of Punjab for which voting is to be held on November 20, 2024. In the absence of any public-interest manifestos, political parties rely on the 'candidate-winnability' supporting political apostasy and dynastic politics. Most political leaders in the campaign are relying on defamatory garrulous speeches and irresponsible false claims. The trust deficit of the people in politi-



SUKHDEV SINGH

cal parties and the confidence deficit in their leaders is so high that the oldest and traditionally strongest political party of the state, Shiromani Akali Dal, has preferred to not contest the elections. A conglomeration of its disgruntled leaders, the Akali Dal Reform Movement, is also out of the election contest. The contest is triangular among the ruling party in the state- Aam Aadmi Party, the ruling party

in the centre- Bharatiya Janata Party and the Indian National Congress. In one constituency, the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate is a cousin of the Akali Dal chief and has been a minister in the Akali and the Congress governments. He has apostatised three political tastes before joining the Bharatiya Janata Party, while the Aam Aadmi Party candidate left the Akali Dal shortly before the current by-elections. The Congress party candidate is the wife of the Congress State party president and a 2024-elected Member of Parliament. In another constituency, the Aam Aadmi Party candidate is the son of a 2024-elected Member of Parliament from the same party; the MP had defected

from the Congress just before the 2024 parliamentary elections to contest and win as an Aam Aadmi Party candidate, while the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate has defected Shrimoni Akali Dal; he has been a minister in the SAD government. In the third constituency, the Congress party candidate is the wife of its party MP and a former Deputy Chief Minister. In contrast, the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate is a former Akali MLA and the son of a Punjab Assembly speaker in the SAD government. In the fourth constituency, the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate has been a former senior Vice-President of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee and a Congress MLA before deserting the Congress to join



the Bharatiya Janata Party, while the Aam Aadmi Party candidate is said to be a favourite of an MP and a former minister, ignoring its former district chief who is contesting as a rebel. The four vacancies arose because the MLAs in all four contested and won parliamentary elections held in June 2024. In three of the four, the

contesting candidates are the immediate family members of the 2024-elected MPs. As the family members of the MPs, they are assumed to be the 'winning' candidates because their mentors have already proved it by winning the Assembly and then parliamentary elections sequentially. The question arises whether the political parties do not have any other members from any other section of society who can be 'winning' candidates or if some leaders have turned electoral politics into a family monopoly aka 'nepotism', in which there is no room for other party workers, however sincere and hard-working they may be. The current situation is so ridiculous that these leaders

and the political parties criticize each other for dynastic politics, nepotism and party defection. Still, when the opportunity arises, they play the game and present their spouses, children and relatives as the only 'winning' candidates and strengthen political dynasticism justifying it in various ways. Claiming himself the next Chief Minister of the state during his campaign for the BJP candidate, a Government of India Minister compared the peasant leaders in protest with 'Talibans' and threatened action against them after the elections. Not only his threat is defamatory and against the spirit of a democracy, but also an unbecoming rambling coercing votes for the candidate of his party.

Addressing an election meeting in favour of an Aam Aadmi Party candidate, its supreme dubs the sitting Congress MP as "corrupt Randhawa" inviting defamatory threat from him. Further he charges him with 'dynastic politics' ignoring the similar practice by AAP in another constituency where he has campaigned for the candidate on the same day. Thus the Punjab 2024 By-elections are riddled with defecation, dynasticism, defamatory rhetoric, irresponsible rambling, bringing with it a sense of deterioration in democracy which both the people and political parties must address. *(The writer is retired professor, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar; views are personal)*

Trump vows to end Russia-Ukraine war Sri Lankan president's NPP secures parliamentary majority

US President-elect Donald Trump has said his administration will focus on ending the Russia-Ukraine war, as he lamented the killing of people in the conflict.

"Russia and Ukraine's got to stop. I saw a report today. Thousands of people over the last three days were killed. Thousands and thousands of people were killed. They happened to be soldiers, but whether they're soldiers or they're people sitting in towns, we're going to work it," he said.

Sri Lanka's National People's Power of President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Thursday secured a majority in parliament, according to official results announced by the election commission.

The NPP has received 6.8 million or 61 per cent of the votes counted, taking a commanding lead over its rivals. The party is on track to get a two-thirds majority as it is expected to add to its tally a bulk from the 29 seats, taking the party to the absolute majority of 150 seats in the 225-member assembly.

Downing Street apologises for menu 'mistake' at Diwali reception N Korea tests exploding drones

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's office on Friday apologised for a "mistake" in the organisation of its Diwali reception at 10 Downing Street after some British Hindus objected to non-vegetarian food and alcohol being served at the gathering.

"He paid tribute to the huge contribution the British Hindu, Sikh and Jain communities make to our country and how the government is driven by the shared values of hard work, ambition and aspiration. A mistake was made in the organisation of the event," the spokesperson said.

The organisation of this year's event - with a disappointing lack of knowledge of the customs and traditions that many British citizens hold dear, reads her letter posted on social media.

Seoul (AP): North Korea tested exploding drones designed to crash into targets and leader Kim Jong Un called for accelerating mass production of the weapons, state media said Friday.

ASSET RECOVERY MANAGEMENT (ARM) BRANCH, ARYA SAMAJ ROAD, KAROL BAGH, NEW DELHI-110005. E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described movable / immovable property mortgaged/hypothecated charged to the Secured Creditor...

Statement of Unaudited Consolidated Financial Results for Quarter & The Half Year Ended 30th September, 2024. (Rs. in crore except EPS). Table with columns for S. No., Particulars, Quarter Ended (30/09/2024 Unaudited, 30/06/2024 Unaudited, 30/09/2023 Unaudited), Half Year Ended (30/09/2024 Unaudited, 30/09/2023 Unaudited), and Year Ended (31/03/2024 Audited).

STATEMENT OF UNAUDITED STANDALONE FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE HALF YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER, 2024. (Rs. in crore except EPS). Table with columns for S. No., Particulars, Quarter Ended (30/09/2024 Unaudited, 30/06/2024 Unaudited, 30/09/2023 Unaudited), Half Year Ended (30/09/2024 Unaudited, 30/09/2023 Unaudited), and Year Ended (31/03/2024 Audited).

Notes for Integrated Industries Limited. 1. These above unaudited consolidated financial results for the quarter & six month ended 30 September 2024 ("the results") of the Integrated Industries Ltd ("the Company") (formerly Integrated Technologies Ltd), were reviewed and recommended by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors at its meeting held on 14th November, 2024.

Notes for Integrated Industries Limited. 1. These above unaudited standalone financial results for the quarter & six month ended 30 September 2024 ("the results") of the Integrated Industries Ltd ("the Company") (formerly Integrated Technologies Ltd), were reviewed and recommended by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors at its meeting held on 14th November, 2024.

For INTEGRATED INDUSTRIES LIMITED (Formerly Integrated Technologies Limited). Saurabh Goyal (Managing Director). Place: Delhi. Date: 14th November, 2024.

For INTEGRATED INDUSTRIES LIMITED (Formerly Integrated Technologies Limited). Saurabh Goyal (Managing Director). Place: Delhi. Date: 14th November, 2024.

PUBLIC NOTICE. It is hereby brought to the notice of public at large that (1) Original Registered Sale Deed dated 03.04.2010 bearing no. 2702 executed by Jayant Prasad and Mahipal and Trilokchand in favour of Kanodia Cement Limited for land measuring 0.253 Hectare bearing Khata No. 159, Gata No. 130, 128 situated at Nekampur, Sikandrabad, Bulandshahr is lost with present owner, Kanodia Cement Limited.

PUBLIC NOTICE. The Public at large is hereby informed that owner has availed credit facilities from HDFC Bank Ltd. against security of the aforementioned property. Any person, who comes in knowledge or possession of aforementioned original sale Deed, may please return the same to the below mentioned address.

PUBLIC NOTICE. As per SURVIVING MEMBER certificate number 90660000253689 issued by REVENUE DEPARTMENT, GOVT OF NCT OF DELHI, Ravindra Narain Bhatnagar, son of S.N. Bhatnagar R/O Flat No. 379 Mandakini Enclave, with Car Garage, Kalkaji, Alakhanda, South Delhi, India - 110019 had left following surviving members in his family:

MY MONEY SECURITIES LTD. Extract of the Standalone Unaudited Financial Results for the Quarter & Six Months Ended 30th September, 2024. Table with columns for S. No., Particulars, Quarter Ended (30/09/2024 Unaudited, 30/06/2024 Unaudited, 30/09/2023 Unaudited), Half Year Ended (30/09/2024 Unaudited, 30/09/2023 Unaudited), and Year Ended (31/03/2024 Audited).

Indian economy in sweet spot, forecasts 7.2 per cent growth in 2024: Moody's Ratings

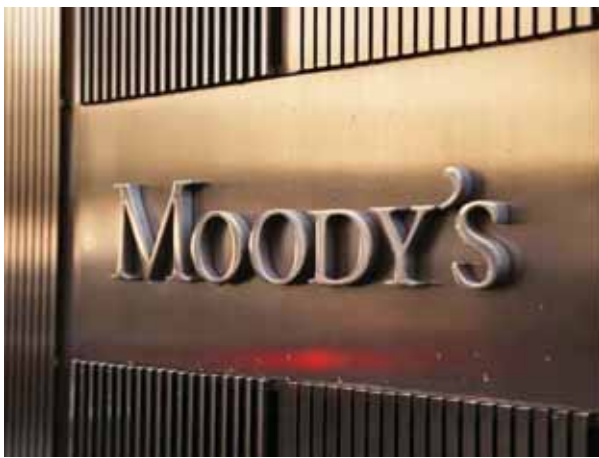
PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian economy is in a sweet spot, with a mix of solid growth and moderating inflation, Moody's Ratings said, forecasting a 7.2 per cent GDP growth in the 2024 calendar year and 6.6 per cent in the next.

In its Global Macro Outlook 2025-26, the rating agency said the global economy has shown remarkable resilience in bouncing back from supply chain disruptions during the pandemic, an energy and food crisis after the Russia-Ukraine war began, high inflation and consequent monetary policy tightening.

"Most G-20 economies will experience steady growth and continue to benefit from policy easing and supportive commodity prices," it said.

However, post-election changes in US domestic and



international policies could potentially accelerate global economic fragmentation, complicating ongoing stabilisation. The aggregate and net effects of trade, fiscal, immigration and regulatory policy changes will expand the range of outcomes for

countries and sectors. On India, Moody's said the real GDP expanded 6.7 per cent year-over-year in the second quarter (April-June) of 2024, driven by a revival in household consumption, robust investment and strong manufacturing activity.

High-frequency indicators - including expanding manufacturing and services PMIs, robust credit growth and consumer optimism - signal steady economic momentum in Q3.

"Indeed, from a macroeconomic perspective, the Indian economy is in a sweet spot, with the mix of solid growth and moderating inflation. We forecast 7.2 per cent growth for calendar year 2024, followed by 6.6 per cent in 2025 and 6.5 per cent in 2026," it said.

Moody's said household consumption in India is poised to grow, fuelled by increased spending during the ongoing festive season and a sustained pickup in rural demand on the back of an improved agricultural outlook. Additionally, rising capacity utilisation, upbeat business sentiment and the government's continued thrust

on infrastructure spending should support private investment.

"Sound economic fundamentals, including healthy corporate and bank balance sheets, a stronger external position, and ample foreign exchange reserves also bode well for the growth outlook," it added.

Sporadic food price pressures continue to inject volatility in the disinflation trajectory. Headline inflation breached the upper end of the RBI's 4 per cent (+/-2 per cent) tolerance band for the first time in more than a year in October, accelerating to 6.2 per cent amid a sharp jump in vegetable prices.

"Despite the near-term uptick, inflation should moderate toward the RBI's target in the coming months as food prices ease amid higher sowing and adequate food grain buffer stocks," the agency said.

Centre urges states to fill 663 vacant posts in consumer forums

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union government on Friday directed states to accelerate the appointment process for 663 vacant positions across state and district consumer commissions, expressing concern over mounting vacancies that threaten to undermine consumer rights protection.

Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare, who reviewed the situation with state government officials, expressed "deep concern" about increasing vacancies in consumer commissions compared to previous years.

According to official data, 18 posts of President and 56 posts of Members are lying vacant in state commissions as of October 2024.

At district level, 162 posts of President and 427 posts of members are vacant across the country, the consumer affairs ministry said in a statement.



"It is imperative that vacancies are filled up at the earliest possible to ensure that consumer disputes/cases are handled promptly and efficiently," Khare said during the meeting.

The secretary urged state representatives to prioritize these appointments, emphasizing that effective functioning of consumer commissions is vital for protecting consumer rights.

To address immediate concerns, Khare drew attention to Section 32 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, which permits assigning additional charge to another District Commission to ensure continuity in consumer dispute resolution.

State officials agreed that filling vacancies is crucial to avoid delays in hearings and reduce case backlog. The ministry has committed to work with stakeholders to ensure an efficient and transparent process for filling these vacancies.

PM Modi should set up panel on urban infra development in major cities: KP Singh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Real estate doyen K P Singh has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to set up a high-powered cabinet rank committee to prepare a blueprint for the development of urban infrastructure in all major cities that can support USD 5 trillion economy.

The urban master planning should not be for a short-term but for 100 years, the 95-year-old Singh said in an interview with PTI on the occasion of the launch of his second book 'Why the Heck Not?'. His autobiography 'Whatever the Odds' was released by Jack Welch, the former Chairman and CEO of GE, in November 2011.

Singh, the Chairman Emeritus of realty major DLF, described the current state of urban infrastructure as "horribly wrong" and said there was a need for "drastic steps" as India is growing and soon going to become the



third largest economy in the world. Referring to traffic mess in cities including IT city Gurugram which he built and high pollution level, Singh said these are large issues and "it needs attention in my view of the highest person in the country."

"So, you plan in advance, well knowing India is a democracy and growth is going to take place. Therefore, what urban infrastructure is necessary in

advance for the growth, here that is not happening," he rued.

"Unless drastic actions are taken" the problem cannot be solved," he said.

Singh said there is a need to change the thinking process which he said remains "myopic" since the 1950s. Thinking small and managing shortages will not help, he asserted.

In his book, he said there is a need to focus on rapid development of urban infrastructure, including roads, sewage lines and water supply.

"To build a resilient nation and to ascend a USD 5 trillion, we must wield our collective might to fortify the foundation of our cities. We must focus on rapid urban infrastructure development. The declining state of our cities is akin to a ticking time bomb signalling their devastation," Singh said in his book, co-authored with

Aparna Jain and published by Penguin.

He appealed to the prime minister to intervene to correct the situation.

"With a clarion call, I beseech our Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi to urgently convene a high-powered cabinet ranking committee, composed of farsighted planners and developers from the private sector in every major city, along with environmentalists of repute, all of whom should possess the experience or capability of envisioning India 100 years from now," Singh said.

The members in the committee must work with the foresight of Edwin Lutyens, who planned what is known as New Delhi almost a century ago, he added.

"These futurists, planners and a collective of individuals with wisdom and experience should then craft an enduring blueprint of the urban

infrastructure development of at least all the major metro cities of India that will last a century," Singh suggested.

The PMO should ideally monitor the committee monthly, with the PM personally overseeing it once a quarter, he added.

Singh said the committee findings should also be made public regularly so that people are informed of plans that will fortify their children's lives through the development of India's urban infrastructure.

"Our cities are crumbling, and why? Because urban infrastructure has neither planned nor kept up with the growth of cities. Because of illegal encroachments and settlements. Because no one is being held responsible. It all gnawed at me. When I envisioned a new city, it wasn't just about bricks and concrete. It was a dream for a sprawling metropolis, a blueprint for future generations," he pointed out

in the book.

During the interview, Singh spoke about his decision to leave an army posting in 1961 to join DLF, a company started by his father-in-law, Chaudhary Raghvendra Singh, in 1946.

He not only revived DLF Ltd but made it the largest publicly listed real estate company in India.

Singh spoke about challenges in the acquisition of land and getting approvals from the government for development of real estate projects.

The DLF Chairman Emeritus, however, asserted he never paid any bribe and rather used industry chambers and media to convince political leadership and bureaucrats that what DLF intended to do was for the public interest.

Singh also emphasised the importance of planning for retirement and sharing wealth with children when they are young as well as extended family.

Government proposes task force to push for 500 GW renewable energy capacity target

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi has proposed formation of a task force in consultation with the Ministry of Power to push efforts to meet India's ambitious target of having 500 GW renewable energy capacity by 2030.

The minister for new and renewable energy has also urged industry players and stakeholders to devise strategies which would help the country meet the target in a time-bound manner.

Speaking at an event in Bhubaneswar, the minister proposed the formation of a task force, in consultation with the Ministry of Power, to align the efforts of all stakeholders towards meeting the 500 GW target, the ministry for new and renewable energy (MNRE)

said in a statement on Thursday.

India has already achieved 212 GW of energy from non-fossil fuel sources and is on track to exceed the 2030 target, he said.

The minister stressed the importance of concerted, collaborative efforts among all stakeholders to overcome challenges and expedite progress in the renewable energy sector.

Joshi further assured that the government will continue to support technological advancements and innovations in the clean energy sector.

"Joshi also expressed optimism regarding the commitments made during the RE-Invest Summit, which collectively amount to over Rs 32 lakh crore and 540 GW of renewable energy projects," the statement said.

Air India announces 230 weekly flights from Kolkata

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Air India Express on Friday announced expansion of its services from West Bengal's Kolkata and Bagdogra, increasing the number of weekly flights to over 230 this winter, from 168 in the same season last year.

The growth includes new direct routes connecting Kolkata with Sri Vijaya Puram (Port Blair) and Indore, and Bagdogra with Chennai, the airline said.

"Our new winter schedule, featuring over 230 weekly flights from Kolkata and Bagdogra, underscores our dedication to fostering trade and tourism in the region," Dr Ankur Garg, Chief Commercial Officer of Air India Express, said in a statement.

"We are thrilled to introduce a new Kolkata-Port Blair flight next month, just in



time for the holiday season, offering our guests more travel options," he said.

Additionally, two brand new aircraft, with liveries inspired by "Jamdani" and "Kantha" designs, invite guests to experience the rich cultural heritage of West Bengal, the statement said.

Jamdani is a renowned pattern from Bengal, known for its delicate handloom creations, typically featuring intricate floral, vine, leaf, and geometric motifs.

Kantha, also from Bengal, originated as a method of repurposing old saris and clothes into quilts and blankets.

"As we expand our services with a 37 per cent increase in flights from West Bengal, Air India Express reaffirms its commitment to connecting this vibrant state with the rest of India," Garg said.

According to the statement, Air India Express' winter schedule across its expanding network has grown by 30 per

cent from last year, supported by the airline's growing fleet, which now includes over 90 aircraft.

This winter, the airline will operate more than 400 daily flights compared to over 325 daily flights during the same period last year.

The enhanced schedule includes new routes such as Chennai-Goa, Chennai-Jaipur, Chennai-Pune, Delhi-Indore, Hyderabad-Gwalior, Kochi-Pune, and Visakhapatnam-Vijayawada. Additionally, the airline will commence operations to two new destinations, Jammu and Sri Vijaya Puram (Port Blair), starting December 1, 2024.

The airline has also increased the frequency of flights on the Bengaluru-Hyderabad and Kochi-Hyderabad routes, along with international routes connecting Abu Dhabi, Ras al-Khaimah, and Muscat.

Niti Aayog's WEP partners with Urban Company to empower women

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Niti Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) has partnered with Urban Company to empower women salon and beauty parlour owners, an official statement said on Friday.

According to the statement, WEP, under its award-to-award initiative, launched the pilot to support women MSMEs to scale up their businesses in the beauty and wellness sector.

Women entrepreneurs will be offered training across six key ecosystem needs, including skilling, legal and compliance, access to finance, market, and business development services, along with



mentorship and networking, it added.

A baseline study conducted by MicroSave Consulting identified four key sectors with more than 1,00,000 women MSMEs - beauty & wellness, textile manufacturing, retail trade and food & beverages.

The statement said this pilot initiative aims to develop process templates by leveraging insights and learnings gathered through

the programme and upscaling women MSMEs nationwide.

Urban Company will spearhead the programme, collaborating with other key stakeholders to identify women working in micro-units and support their business growth, it noted.

WEP, incubated in Niti Aayog in 2018 as an aggregator platform, transitioned into a public-private partnership in 2022.

ABB India gets Sebi warning

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

ABB India on Friday said it has received a warning letter from stock markets regulator Sebi for violation of insider trading rules by two of its employees.

The warning letter dated November 8, 2024 has been received on November 14, 2024, ABB India said in an exchange filing.

"The company secretary has received administrative warning letter from Deputy General Manager SEBI for violation of SEBI (Prohibition of Insider Trading) Regulations, 2015 by two designated persons of the company," it said.

ABB is a global technology leader in electrification and automation.

Japan's economy grows for second straight quarter on back of consumer spending

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan's economy eked out an annual rate of 0.9% growth in the July-September period as consumer spending held up, government data showed Friday.

The world's fourth-largest economy grew 0.2% in the fiscal second quarter, marking the second straight quarter of expansion, following 0.5% growth in April-June.

Seasonally adjusted gross domestic product, or GDP, measures the value of a nation's products and services.

The annual rate shows how much the economy would have grown or contracted, if the quarterly rate continued for a year.

Domestic demand grew at an annualized rate of 2.5%. Private consumption, which makes up more than half of Japan's GDP, grew 3.6% on the back of healthy household consumption, according to preliminary Cabinet Office data. Recent data show wages and employment are improving. Spending was lower than the previous quarter, partly because of severe weather that crimped spending and shut down some factories. Recent income tax reductions helped boost spending. Exports grew 1.5%. The weakening yen is a plus for exporters, tending to make Japanese products cheaper overseas. But the impact was relatively limited in the latest quarter.

The Japanese yen was trading at 160-yen levels earlier this year. It's now trading at 150-yen levels.

Prior to the last two quarters, the economy contracted 0.6% in the January-March quarter after recording a 0.1% growth in October-December in 2023 highlighting how Japan's economy recently slipped into periods of contraction in between weak expansion.

"We believe the Japanese economy will continue to grow gradually, supported by growth in overseas economies," said Katsutoshi Inadome, senior strategist at SuMi Trust. He noted winter bonuses many Japanese get in coming months should also help strengthen domestic demand.

Mercedes-Benz India to hike prices by up to three per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz on Friday said it will hike prices of its vehicles in India by up to 3 per cent on its entire model range in the portfolio from January 1, 2025, citing a rise in input costs, inflationary pressures and higher operational expenses.

Prices of Mercedes-Benz cars in India will be revised by Rs 2 lakh for the GLC to Rs 9 lakh for the top-end Mercedes-Maybach S 680 luxury limousine, Mercedes-Benz India said in a statement.

The combination of rising input costs, inflation, and

higher operational expenses has been exerting considerable pressure on Mercedes-Benz India's business operations and the company has been absorbing the rise in operational cost since the last three quarters, it added.

"Over the past three quarters, we have been facing increased pressure on our cost structure primarily driven by escalating material cost, fluctuating commodity pricing, increased logistics expenses and inflationary cost," Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director & CEO Santosh Iyer said.

He further said, "While we have been absorbing these

cost pressures by optimising our operational costs and driving higher efficiencies, the overall bottom line is getting impacted, considering the current challenges. To ensure the sustainability of our business, we have decided for a nominal price correction."

This price correction will apply to those vehicles currently not in stock, offering price protection for all existing and future bookings until December 31, 2024, Iyer said.

Currently, Mercedes-Benz India sells a range of vehicles with prices starting from Rs 45 lakh for the A-Class to Rs 3.6 crore for the G63 SUV.

IN BRIEF

VIT-AP UNIVERSITY ORGANISES 57TH NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK CELEBRATIONS

AMARAVATI: As part of the National Library Week celebrations from November 14 to 20, 2024, VIT-AP University organised an event at ZPHS Mandadam. The programme, titled "Improving Reading Habits Among School Children," was organised by University Librarian, Dean was the chief guest for the occasion.



RECPDCL HANDOVERS 1 NO. SPV VIZ. ERES-XXXIX POWER TRANSMISSION LIMITED TO TATA

GURUGRAM: REC Power Development and Consultancy Limited (RECPDCL), a wholly owned subsidiary of REC Limited, the Maharashtra CPSU under the aegis of Ministry of Power, has handed over the project specific SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle).





FROM THE STAGE TO THE SOUL

The KNMA Theatre Festival offers a fresh take on theatre, exploring vulnerability and human connection. With productions like 'Love and Information,' it challenges traditional narratives and invites audiences to reflect on the complexities of identity and emotion, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Theatre is a mirror of the human condition." This timeless quote captures the essence of why we turn to the stage - to reflect on who we are, how we live and the world we inhabit. Theatre has the power to make us confront uncomfortable truths, question our beliefs and reimagine the possibilities of human connection. It's a place where vulnerability, in all its forms, becomes not just a theme, but the lens through which we view the world. At the inaugural *KNMA Theatre Festival*, I was reminded of this power in the most profound way. Held at the serene Sunder Nursery in New Delhi, the festival celebrated contemporary theatre and its ability to speak to the issues that matter most today. Curated by *Kirtana Kumar*, the festival's theme, *The Power of Vulnerability*, couldn't have been more fitting. It was a celebration of the delicate, yet potent, human experiences that shape us. From class and gender to sexuality and identity, the performances unearthed the quiet, often overlooked struggles that define our society. One of the most thought-provoking performances I experienced was *Love and Information*, a play that stripped back the complexities of modern life, revealing the raw emotions beneath. Presented by the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in association with *Asakta Theatre*, this production, directed by *Mohit Takalkar*, took

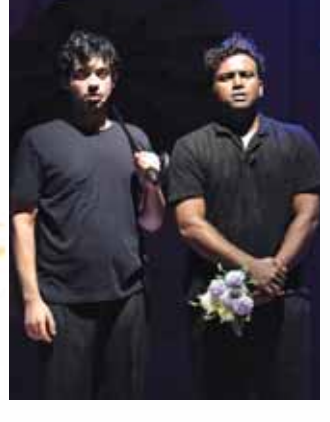
a unique approach to storytelling. Adapted from *Caryl Churchill's* original, *Love and Information* is a radical departure from traditional theatre, with no central characters and no linear plot. Instead, the play is made up of over fifty short scenes, each one fleeting and fragmented, much like the way we experience life today in an age of endless scrolling and information overload. The play delves into questions of how we make sense of our lives, how we connect with others and ultimately, how we love. In an era dominated by social media and constant connectivity, these questions seem more urgent than ever. As I sat in the audience, I couldn't help but reflect on the themes of the play, which mirrored the very nature of our times, alienation in the face of constant exposure, the erosion of privacy, and the blurring of boundaries between the self and the digital world. What struck me most about *Love and Information* was its non-linear structure. Each scene, often lasting only a few seconds, felt like a snapshot of a fleeting moment in time. There were no central characters to follow, no clear narrative to grasp, just a series of disconnected vignettes that came together to form a larger, more complex picture. It was as if we were channel-surfing through different lives, only catching a glimpse of each before moving on to the next. Yet, in this chaotic rush, the play's true message emerged: that in a world overflowing with data and distractions, it is our emotional connections that truly define us.



As I watched the actors move effortlessly between characters, it became clear how much we, as individuals, are shaped by the constant flow of information and the pressure to stay connected. Each actor brought something unique to their role, embodying the vulnerability of a generation struggling to balance their digital lives with their real-world emotions. Visually, the production was nothing short of stunning. The lighting design by *Vikrant Thakar* was minimalist yet powerful, shifting seamlessly to enhance the emotional tone of each scene. The sound design by *Anita Kushwaha* further amplified the experience, creating an atmosphere that was both intimate and intense. *Saurabh Bhalerao's* music punctuated the narrative, adding another layer of depth to the performance. *Love and Information* isn't just a play about the times we live in; it's a reflection of the human condition in a world overwhelmed by information. It speaks to the anxiety of living in an age where we are constantly flooded with



data but struggle to make genuine emotional connections. The rapid-fire scenes, with their fragmented glimpses into people's lives, forced me to reconsider the way we view love and information and the spaces in between. Theatre like this is what makes us sit up and pay attention, it forces us to question, to reflect and to confront the uncomfortable truths about the world around us. And that is precisely what the *KNMA Theatre Festival* set out to do. It didn't just offer performances; it created



a space for dialogue, for conversation and for collective reflection on the role of theatre in today's society. Beyond the performances, the festival also included a symposium, a workshop and lecture demonstrations that delved deeper into the themes of vulnerability in contemporary theatre. These discussions, led by scholars and practitioners like *Dr. Anuradha Kapur*, *Vivek Madan* and *Dr. Abhilash Pillai*, explored how the pandemic has shifted the landscape of theatre and how artists are grappling with new ways of telling stories in a post-pandemic world. The entire experience was a reminder of how theatre is a living, breathing entity, always evolving, always challenging us. The festival brought together artists, audiences, and scholars, all united by the belief that theatre is not just a form of entertainment, but a mirror to society, a space where we can reflect on who we are and who we want to become. Leaving the amphitheatre after *Love and Information*, I found myself contemplating the profound vulnerability at the heart of the play. It was a vulnerability that felt familiar, one that I recognised not only in the characters on stage but in myself. In a world that's increasingly disconnected, theatre offers a space to explore our shared humanity, to embrace the discomfort, the uncertainty, and, ultimately, the beauty of being human. *The KNMA Theatre Festival* was not just a showcase of performances, it was a celebration of the power of vulnerability, a theme that will continue to resonate with me long after the curtains have fallen.

Photos: Pankaj Kumar

Cultural Legacy Brought Alive



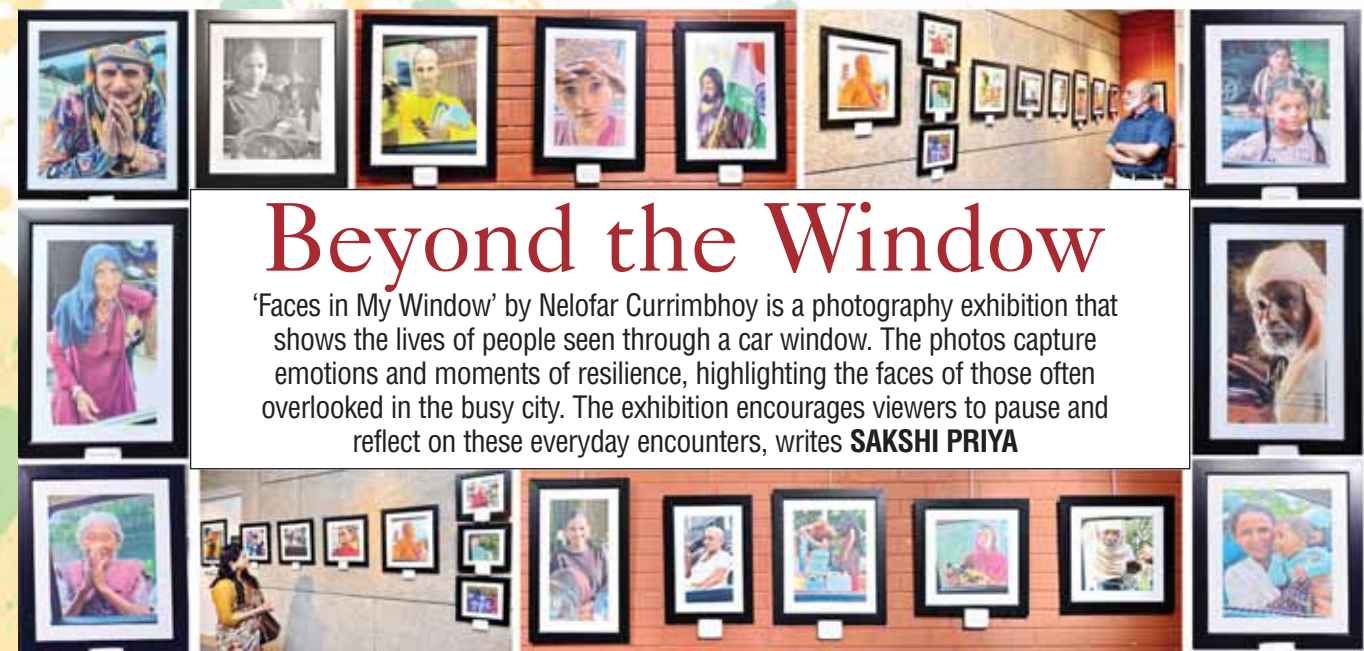
BY TEAM VIVA

The dance drama Production - *Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram*, presented by the *Urvashi Dance Music Art & Cultural Society* in collaboration with the *Tapasaya Foundation*, beautifully combined three distinct Indian dance forms *Kathak*, *Chhau* and *Manipuri* to tell the epic story of Lord Rama. Directed by the renowned Kathak maestro *Dr. Rekha Mehra*, the performance offered a deeply emotional and artistic tribute to *Lord Rama's* virtues of courage, compassion, and integrity. *Kathak*, with its intricate footwork and expressive storytelling, formed the foundation of the performance. The dancers' graceful spins, precise footwork, and emotional expressions conveyed the key events in Ram's



life, from his exile to his victory over Ravana. The *Kathak* sequences captured Lord Ram's inner strength and resilience, drawing the audience into his journey.

Chhau, a dynamic and martial dance form, added a vibrant energy to the production. The fierce battle scenes, particularly Ram's confrontation with Ravana, were brought to life through powerful, swift movements and acrobatic leaps. The physicality of *Chhau* showcased Ram's warrior-like qualities, intensifying the dramatic moments of the story. *Manipuri*, with its flowing and graceful movements, provided a contrast to the more intense dances. The serene and spiritual quality of *Manipuri* was used to depict the divine connection between Lord Rama and Sita, with the delicate gestures and soft footwork creating a peaceful, almost ethereal atmosphere. Choreographed by *Guru Ajay Bhatt* and *Aamrapali Bhandari*, the integration of these three dance styles was seamless, each adding its own unique layer to the narrative. The dancers, dressed in elaborate costumes used expressive hand gestures and facial expressions to embody the characters and deepen the emotional impact of the performance. Props such as the giant bow, peacock feathers and diya lighting added visual splendour and spiritual depth, making the production a truly immersive experience. The dance forms together captured the essence of *Lord Rama's* journey, creating a powerful and unforgettable performance that resonated deeply with the audience.



Beyond the Window

'Faces in My Window' by Nelfar Currimbhoy is a photography exhibition that shows the lives of people seen through a car window. The photos capture emotions and moments of resilience, highlighting the faces of those often overlooked in the busy city. The exhibition encourages viewers to pause and reflect on these everyday encounters, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Have you ever noticed the faces that peer in through your car window as you drive through the bustling streets of the city? The faces of strangers who, for a fleeting moment, are so close to you yet often go unnoticed. Each face tells a story of joy, pain, resilience and survival. These moments, so easily overlooked in the rush of urban life, have been thoughtfully captured by *Nelfar Currimbhoy* in her exhibition *Faces in My Window*. The exhibition presents a powerful series of photographs taken from within *Currimbhoy's* car. Each image is framed through the glass of her window, offering an intimate yet distant view of the lives unfolding on the streets. The unique perspective

of capturing these moments from inside a car creates a sense of emotional proximity while maintaining a subtle boundary - one that allows the viewer to truly observe the raw emotions of the individuals, yet from a safe distance. One photograph features a young girl staring intently through the window of a car, her eyes full of curiosity, hope and perhaps a hint of longing, creating an intimate connection with the viewer. Another striking image captures a mother holding her child, both faces exuding a profound sense of care and resilience. There is also a powerful photograph of a man holding a bundle of flowers, his tired yet hopeful

expression reflecting the daily struggles of many who walk the streets. The series also includes an image of a young girl selling flowers, her face a mixture of innocence and determination as she tries to make a living amidst the chaos of the city. *Currimbhoy*, a multi-talented individual, author, theatre producer, philanthropist and now a sensitive photographer has long been dedicated to capturing the essence of life in her beloved country. Her passion for storytelling, whether through the written word or the lens of a camera, shines through in this exhibition. As a photographer, she is deeply attuned to the resilience of the human spirit, particularly those who live on the

fringes of society, yet continue to find strength and meaning in their daily lives. The faces captured in this exhibition reveal an astonishing range of emotions: grief, joy, defiance and longing, each one reflecting the survival instincts that define the human experience. *Faces in My Window* is an exhibition that calls to pause and acknowledge the lives of those who, though they may go unnoticed, are an integral part of the city's fabric. Through *Currimbhoy's* lens, we are reminded of the importance of empathy, understanding and the need to support those who are struggling to survive in a world that often overlooks them.

Photos: Pankaj Kumar

My aim is to get back into T20 team: KL Rahul

PTI ■ PERTH

The beleaguered KL Rahul is seeking to use the next IPL as a vehicle to stage a comeback to the Indian T20 side as he wants to remain involved in all three formats of the game. The 32-year-old is in line to open the innings if skipper Rohit Sharma does not play in the first Test of the upcoming five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy series at Perth. Rahul's form has been a cause of concern for the Indian team as he was recently dropped for the last two Tests against New Zealand at home with Sarfaraz Khan replacing him. But the batter, who is pleased to watch when in full flow, remains unperturbed by his lean run of form. "My aim is to obviously get back into the T20 team. I've always wanted to be an all-format player, and that desire and drive haven't changed over the years. I want to still play for India in all three formats and have done that



for many years," Rahul told Star Sports. "I've been out of the T20 team for a while, and I know where

I stand as a player and what I need to do to get back. So, I look forward to this IPL season to give me that

platform to enjoy my cricket and play the way I want to," he added. Since 2022, he has scored 514

runs in Tests from 12 matches (21 innings) at an average of 25.7, having registered three half-centuries and a century. During the interaction, Rahul emphasised on always keeping the team ahead of his individual aspirations. "All of us as players want to play with freedom, and everyone would think that the way I batted, I'm enjoying playing that. But like I said, my thought process and motivation have always been team first. It doesn't matter what I want to do or what my natural game is. "We play a team sport. If I played tennis, it would be different; I could stick to saying, 'This is my natural game.' But in a team sport, it's very different. Each game, you'll have a different role and responsibility given to you to find a way to deliver for the team," he said. The Bengaluru man's last Test hundred was against South Africa at Centurion in December 2023 and since then made just two fifties in nine innings.

Prajnesh Gunneswaran announces retirement from professional tennis

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Asian Games bronze medal winner Prajnesh Gunneswaran on Friday announced his retirement from professional tennis. The 35-year-old Indian, who won singles bronze in the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games, wrote on his Instagram account: "Hanging up my racquet. Thank you." Gunneswaran, who rose to world No.75 in the ATP rankings in 2019, expressed his deep gratitude for being able to compete at the top level for several years. "As I write this, my heart swells with gratitude, pride, and a touch of nostalgia. Today, I step off the competitive tennis court for the last time. "For over three decades, this game has been my sanctuary, my greatest teacher, and my most faithful companion. From the first swing of my racquet to representing India on the grandest stages, the journey has been nothing short of extraordinary," he wrote. The Chennai-born player, who turned pro in 2010, finished with a singles record of 11-28 and a doubles record of 1-1. His highest doubles ranking was 248 which he attained in 2018. Gunneswaran also competed



in all four Grand Slams, bowing out in the opening round in all instances. The Australian Open was the only Slam in which he competed on multiple occasions -- 2019 and 2020. "Every drop of sweat, every victory, every setback - it's all woven into the fabric of who I am. Tennis taught me discipline, resilience, and the power of dreaming big," he further wrote in his post. "It gave me friendships that transcend borders and memories that will last a lifetime. It challenged me to dig deep, to grow, and to be better - not just as a player but as a human being," he noted. He had success in the ATP Challenger Tour and in ITF Futures Tour, possessing a record of 2-7 and 9-9

respectively in the singles category. He won only a title in the doubles -- Egypt F25, Sharm El Sheikh (ITF Futures Tour) -- in 2018 with his Egyptian partner Issam Haitham Taweel. Gunneswaran's biggest win against a top-20 player came in 2019 when he beat the then-18th-ranked Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia during the Indian Wells Masters in the second round. "To my coaches, teammates, and most of all, my family -- you have been my backbone. To my fans who cheered me on through the highs and lows - I'm deeply grateful. "And to the sport that gave me everything - I owe you my heart. Thank you, tennis, for the ride of a lifetime," he concluded.



Ajaz Patel, hero of New Zealand's clean sweep in India, dropped for England series

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Spinner Ajaz Patel, whose 11 wickets in the third Test against India this month helped New Zealand to an unprecedented clean sweep of that series, has been omitted from the Black Caps squad for the upcoming Test series against England. Patel had match figures of 11/160 as New Zealand won the third Test by 25 runs to become the first team to sweep India in a three-match Test series at home. The selectors have found no place for him in a 14-man squad named Friday for the three-Test series against England. Mitchell Santner, who took 13-157 in the second Test against India, is the only frontline spinner in the squad, though he will play only in the second and third Tests. "Mitch has performed superbly since his recall to the Test team last year and I am sure he will take a lot of confidence out of his match-winning performance in the Pune Test," selector Sam Wells said. Wells said it was difficult to leave out Patel but Santner had been preferred for his

recent form and all-round ability while Glenn Phillips provides another spin option. Patel has often been overlooked for Test series in New Zealand conditions. After taking 10/119 in an innings against India in 2021, he also was left out of the following home series against Bangladesh. In other squad features, Kane Williamson, who missed the India series with a groin injury, returns, but Tom Latham retains the captaincy, and uncapped all-rounder Nathan Harris has been called in. "Nathan is an exciting talent with a proven first-class record," Wells said. The opening Test at Christchurch begins on November 28. The second Test is scheduled for December 6 in Wellington and the third from December 14 in Hamilton. New Zealand squad for England Tests: Tom Latham (c), Tom Blundell, Devon Conway, Jacob Duffy, Matt Henry, Daryl Mitchell, Will O'Rourke, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Nathan Smith, Tim Southee, Kane Williamson and Will Young.

Slovakia beats United States to advance in Billie Jean King Cup Finals, Japan defeats Romania

AP ■ MALAGA (SPAIN)

Ashlyn Krueger and Taylor Townsend saved six match points but ultimately lost the decisive doubles match as the United States was defeated 6-3, 3-6, 10-8 by Slovakia and was eliminated 2-1 in the first round of the Billie Jean King Cup Finals early Friday. Krueger and Townsend lost after rallying from 9-2 down in the third set against Tereza Mihalikova and Viktoria Hrucakova in a match that ended close to 1 a.m. in Spain. Townsend have given the U.S. the first point by defeating 17-year-old Renata Jamrichova 7-5 6-4, but Rebecca Sramkova evened the tie with a 6-2, 7-5 win over Danielle Collins in the second singles match. Slovakia will face Australia in the quarterfinals on Sunday. Japan reached the quarterfinals for the first time since 2013 after rallying to defeat Romania 2-1. Japan advanced when Eri Hozumi and Shuko Aoyama defeated Monica



Niculescu and Elena Ruse 6-1, 7-5 in the deciding doubles match. Ana Bogdan had put Romania ahead with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Nao Hibino in the first singles match of the day but Ena Shibahara pulled Japan level with a 6-4, 7-6 (2) victory over Jaqueline Cristian. Japan will face Italy in the quarterfinals. The first match between Japan and Romania had been moved back two hours because of a severe weather alert that was in effect in the Malaga region until early in the day.

The weather alert had already forced the opening meeting between Spain and Poland to be pushed back from Wednesday to Friday, when Germany is also facing Britain. The Billie Jean King Cup Finals is taking place about two weeks after a powerful storm caused flash floods that killed more than 200 people in the Valencia region, east of Malaga. The International Tennis Federation announced a donation to the Spanish Red Cross to support relief and recovery efforts in the region, and Spanish player Paula Badosa said she will donate half of her prize money to help the victims. Both the Billie Jean King Cup Finals and the Davis Cup Finals are taking place in the southern Spanish city, with the men's competition beginning next week, also at the Palacio de Deportes. It is the first time that the women's team tournament is taking place at the same venue as the Davis Cup and with overlapping dates. And for the second year in a row, it will offer equivalent prize money to the men's competition.



Snooker player Mark King banned for five years for fixing match, providing inside information

AP ■ SHEFFIELD (ENGLAND)

English snooker player Mark King was handed a five-year ban on Friday after being found guilty of match-fixing and providing inside information in the latest corruption scandal to blight the sport. The punishment for the 50-year-old King, who reached a career-high ranking of No. 11 in 2003, related to a match against Joe Perry at the Welsh Open played on Feb. 13 last year that was flagged following suspicious betting patterns. King was suspended by snooker's world governing body a month later and an independent disciplinary commission has ruled that he fixed the result of the match, while giving information to others about that match for betting purposes. He had denied the charges. His ban ends after March 17, 2028, and King was also ordered to pay more than 68,000 pounds (\$86,000) in costs. King's suspension comes after Chinese players Liang Wenbo and Li Hang were handed lifetime bans from snooker last year for their role in a match-fixing scandal involving eight more of their countrymen. "I have known Mark King since he was very young, he is a very experienced player who has enjoyed great success, and I am deeply saddened to read the finding in this case," said Jason Ferguson, a former player who is now chairman of the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association. "However, the integrity of this sport will always be our No. 1 priority." King had also been charged with fixing the outcome of a match against John Higgins played on Dec. 13, 2022, and for providing inside information on it. Those charges were dismissed. The governing body said Perry and Higgins were not accused of any misconduct related to the case.

France coach says Mbappé's dip in form is due to both psychological and physical reasons

AP ■ PARIS

France coach Didier Deschamps said that there are both physical and psychological reasons for Kylian Mbappé's rough patch of form. After France drew 0-0 with Israel in the Nations League, Deschamps was again asked about the reasons behind the Real Madrid striker's absence from his squad. "It's a fact that he is in a difficult situation," Deschamps told broadcaster TF1. "Obviously, he is going through a period which is not the happiest of his career."



Mbappé was not included in Deschamps' list for the match against Israel and a game in Italy later this week. Mbappé was also absent from the previous France gathering because of a minor thigh injury. This time he is not injured. "He wanted to come," Deschamps said. "I think it's better for him (not to be selected) at the moment. Everybody can go through a difficult period. There is a physical element, and a

psychological one." Mbappé's performances have been below par in recent weeks after he joined Madrid from PSG this summer. He has one goal in his last seven club games and hasn't added to his 48 goals for France since June. Deschamps last week did not elaborate about his choice to do without Mbappé but said it was not related to recent reports in Swedish media that the former Paris Saint-Germain star was the subject of a rape investigation in Stockholm. Mbappé's representatives have rejected the reports as "false and irresponsible."

Messi, Vinicius have frustrating nights as Argentina loses, Brazil draws in World Cup qualifying

AP ■ ASUNCION (PARAGUAY)

Argentina's Lionel Messi and Brazil's Vinicius Junior had frustrating nights in South American World Cup qualifying. While Messi could not help his team avoid a 2-1 defeat at Paraguay, Vinicius Junior missed a second-half penalty as Brazil was held to a 1-1 draw at Venezuela on Thursday. Argentina will remain on the top of the 10-team round robin competition with a 22 points in 11 matches, Brazil is provisionally in third place in the standings with 17 points. Also on Thursday, Ecuador beat Bolivia 4-0. The Ecuadorians remain in fifth position with 16 points, while Bolivia is in eighth place with 12 points. The 11th round of South American World Cup qualifying will continue on Friday with second-place Colombia visiting Uruguay



and the bottom two teams in the standings, Peru and Chile, facing off in Lima. Argentina played at Paraguay with the hosts having banned

local fans from wearing any Messi shirts in the home crowd. TV footage of the match in Asuncion showed that the vast majority of the

local crowd was wearing Paraguay's red and white colours, with no Messi shirts visible in the local broadcasts. Messi had few opportunities

to touch the ball during the first half, but saw Lautaro Martinez open the scoring in the 11th minute with a crossed shot. The goal was allowed after a video review. Paraguay scored the equalizer with a bicycle kick by Antonio Sanabria in the 19th minute, shortly after defender Gustavo Gomez hit the bar with a header. The hosts continued to apply pressure, and gave the Argentine star some heavy marking. Messi showed he was upset with Brazilian referee Anderson Daronco for not sending off Paraguay's Omar Alderete for his aggressive tackles. It was Alderete who scored Paraguay's winner with a header in the 47th minute, which puts Paraguay back in contention for a spot in the next World Cup. "We came to a hard place where the national team always struggled," said Martinez.

"We have to correct a lot of things we did wrong in this match, but generally speaking we are playing well. We are still in the lead, and we have to look forward." Vinicius Junior is still without a goal in six matches of World Cup qualifying. He had the chance to score a potential winner after he earned the penalty in the 67th minute but his low spot kick was saved by goalkeeper Rafael Romo and the Brazil forward then shot wide from the rebound. Brazil had the best chances in the first half, with Vinicius hitting the post once after

dribbling three Venezuelans and shooting from the edge of the box. But it was Raphinha who opened the scoring from a free kick in the 43rd minute. Venezuela brought on 21-year-old Telasco Segovia at half time and the substitution had an immediate effect as he equalised in the 46th minute with a powerful shot from the edge of the box. Venezuela went down to 10 men in the 89th minute after Alexander Gonzalez was sent off for hitting both Gabriel Martinelli and Vinicius Junior in the face. The irrigation system then

came on two minutes before the final whistle at the Monumental Stadium in the city of Maturin, 500 kilometers (310 miles) west of the capital Caracas, which angered Brazil players. "When we don't win I leave the pitch a bit disappointed, we deserved to win this one," Raphinha said after the match. "But it is an important point playing away, we are working hard to win the next one at home." Ecuador beat Bolivia with goals by Enner Valencia (26th minute), Gonzalo Plata (28th and 49th) and Alan Minda (61st).

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, KUCHINDA
E-mail: eerw.kuchinda@yahoo.com

Procurement Notice
Cancellation of Bid Identification No. Online Tender / 02 / RWD / Kuchinda / 2024-25
The tender for the work "S/R to road from Lapada to Dumku in the district of Sambalpur for the year 2024-25" of SI no.07 invited vide this office online Tender Bid Identification no. 02 / RWD / Kuchinda / 2024-25 is hereby cancelled due to single response.

2515111/0009/2425

Superintending Engineer
Rural Works Division
Kuchinda