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MONEY 10

DEVELOPMENT IN EVERY SECTOR WITH MANTRA OF 'REFORM, PERFORM AND TRANSFORM' IS VISIBLE: PM MODI

Hot words singe Winter Session

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The fate of the ensuing Winter Session of the Parliament continued to be under stalemate with both the Bharatiya Janata Party-led ruling parties and Congress led Opposition taking turns to lock horns, both in and out of the Parliament, over the Adani Group controversy and now the grand old party's alleged links with "forces to destabilise the country". The BJP has alleged that Congress leaders led by their tallest leader Sonia Gandhi are "colluding with foreign billionaire investor George Soros to destabilise the country" to which Opposition termed the ruling party's attempt to divert the attention from the Adani issue that has rocked the Parliament ever since it started on November 25. The heat was turned up last Thursday against the Opposition who till then were belligerent after BJP member Nishikant Dubey sought to draw some links between Soros, Sonia and Rahulm, as he went on with his claims of an international conspiracy was afoot to derail India's success story under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. While both, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, witnessed acrimonious scenes on Monday as BJP and Congress traded charges against each other, Congress members staged protest outside the Parliament. Special session to debate to mark celebrations of Constitution Day is



Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi takes a mock interview of Congress MPs Manickam Tagore and Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka, wearing face masks of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani, at a protest demanding a probe into the bribery case in the US involving the billionaire industrialist

INDIA Bloc to seek VP's removal

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

The turbulent relations between Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and the INDIA Bloc came to a head on Monday with opposition camp sources saying they are considering submitting a notice "very soon" for moving a resolution to remove the Vice President from his office. They said the Opposition parties had required signatures from all INDIA Bloc parties in August itself but did not move as they decided to give Dhankhar "another chance but his conduct on Monday" convinced them to go ahead with it. INDIA Bloc parties had in August this year also considered submitting a notice for moving a resolution to

remove the Vice President from his office. Sources said Congress had taken the lead on the issue and the TMC and the Samajwadi Party, besides other INDIA Bloc parties, were supportive of the move. On Monday morning when the Rajya Sabha resumed, Congress MPs Digvijaya Singh, Jairam Ramesh accused Dhankhar of being partisan. Dhankhar said forces within or outside India cannot be allowed to "sacrilege our unity, integrity and sovereignty", and asserted that all must unite to neutralise the evolving "deep state", amid uproar in the Upper House over BJP's allegations of Congress leaders colluding with billionaire investor George Soros to destabilise the country.

scheduled this weekend which will also see participation by the Prime Minister. The proceedings of the Parliament were washed out in the first week of the Winter Session starting November 25 due to protests by opposition members demanding discussion on issues like the indictment of industrialist Gautam Adani in a US court and Sambhal violence. Last week, the House functioned properly for only two days, Tuesday and Wednesday. Both sides attempts for smooth functioning has turned futile with no relenting from either the treasury bench or Opposition which emerged stronger in this General Elections by improving their margins to be led by Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi.

Hoax bomb threats target city schools again

STAFF REPORTER ★ NEW DELHI

Bomb threats once again targeted prominent Delhi schools on Monday, and over 40 institutions across the national Capital reportedly received emails threatening to cause injury to the students. This lead to panic and fear among the children and their parents. The bomb threat, which turned out to be hoax, prompted immediate evacuations and emergency responses. The e-mail, which was sent by the id 'scottielanza@gmail.com' and username 'Scottie Lanza11', was delivered to the different schools in a single mail on Sunday night at 11.38 pm when the schools were closed, according to the sources. The email read, "I planted multiple bombs (lead azide) inside the building. The bombs are small and hidden very well. It will not cause very much damage to the building, but many people will be injured when the bombs detonate... You all deserve to suffer and lose limbs. If I do not receive \$30,000, I will detonate the bombs. The group 'KNR' is behind this attack." The threat was received by prestigious schools including DPS RK Puram; GD Goenka, Paschim Vihar; The British School, Chanakyapuri; The Mother's International, Aurobindo Marg; Modern School, Mandi House; DPS Vasant Kunj; Delhi Police Public School, Safdarjung; Bal Bharati Public School, Ganga Ram Hospital Marg; Bharat National Public School, Karkardooma; Golden Bells Top Pre School,



Police personnel outside DPS RK Puram, New Delhi during an investigation after the school received a bomb threat

Ashok Vihar; Cambridge School, Srinivaspuri; DPS East of Kailash and Salwan Public Schools. With the news spreading across Delhi and guardians receiving messages from school authorities about the threats, parents rushed to the schools, their faces etched with anxiety, to ensure the safety of their children. Expressing his concerns, a parent Vipin Bhatra said, "I rushed to the school as soon as I received the message about the bomb threat. If situations like this persist, how can we send our children to school with peace of mind?" Another parent, Anuradha shared similar concerns saying that she took her child home but she is still tense. "Education is important but incidents like these are terrifying to all parents. Schools should be safe, not a place of constant threats," she said. With fears gripping among

children waiting anxiously to be picked up, chaotic scenes were witnessed at different schools as anxious parents led their children away from the institution premises. Teachers and staff managed the crisis by gathering students to safe locations before coordinating their dispersal once the parents arrived. Akanksha Soni, a parent, expressed concerns about the long-term impact of such incidents on children. "These threats don't just disrupt the day they plant fear in the minds of our children. How will they focus on their studies when safety feels uncertain?" Soni said. Other schools that received the emails include Richmond Global School (RGS), Paschim Vihar; Delhi International School Edge, Dwarka; DAV Public School, Daryaganj; Don Bosco school, Alaknanda; St. Thomas' Girls Senior Secondary School, Dwarka among others.

AAP list reflects anti-incumbency election stress

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a move to counter the anti-incumbency factor against sitting Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday announced its second list of 20 candidates, dropping 13 sitting MLAs, for the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls. Two sitting MLAs, former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia from Patparganj, and Deputy Speaker of Delhi Assembly Rakhi Bidlan from Mangolpuri, have been shifted out of their current constituencies and fielded from fresh seats. Sisodia has been shifted to Jangpura Assembly seat which was once considered as a stronghold for the Congress. Bidlan has been shifted to the reserved seat Madipur. Bidlan had contested and won the Mangolpuri seat thrice. Rakesh Jataw Dharamrakshak has been nominated from Mangolpuri seat.

PIONEER SENIOR JOURNALIST VIPUL NAUTIYAL PASSES AWAY

The world of journalism lost one of its brightest stars on December 8, with the untimely passing of Vipul Nautiyal. And that too at an age when many are at the peak of their career, his departure has left a profound void. His relentless dedication to his craft and his humanity touched the lives of all who knew him.

Obituary on page 5



India calls for peaceful Syrian-led political process

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after rebel forces overthrew President Bashar Assad's authoritarian government in Syria, India on Monday called for a peaceful and inclusive Syrian-led political process to bring stability to that country. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said it is monitoring the unfolding developments in Syria while underlining the need for all parties to work towards preserving the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Arab Republic. The Syrian government collapsed on Sunday as the rebels seized control of the capital Damascus. Assad fled the country for an undisclosed location, marking the end of his family's 50-year rule. "We are monitoring the situation in

Syria in light of the ongoing developments. We underline the need for all parties to work towards preserving the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria," the MEA said in a statement. "We advocate a peaceful and inclusive Syrian-led political process respecting the interests and aspirations of all sections of Syrian society," it said. The MEA said the Indian embassy in Damascus is in contact with the Indian community in Syria for their "safety and security". Hours after the rebels captured power, official sources in Delhi on Sunday said all Indian nationals in Syria are safe. Many leading countries have also welcomed the fall of the nearly 14-year-long Assad regime that witnessed civil strife across Syria.

India expresses concern over safety of minorities in B'desh

PTI ■ DHAKA

India raised its concerns over the safety of minorities in Bangladesh, flagging "regrettable incidents of attacks on cultural, religious and diplomatic properties" as Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met his counterpart here on Monday. Misri, the first high-level Indian official to visit Bangladesh after August 5 when prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India following massive protests against her government, expressed New Delhi's desire for a "positive, constructive and mutually beneficial" relationship with Dhaka. "Today's discussions have given both of us the opportunity to take stock of our relations. I appreciate the opportunity today to have had a frank, candid and constructive exchange of views with all my interlocutors," Misri told reporters after meeting Foreign Secretary Mohammad Jashim Uddin. "I emphasized that India desires a positive, constructive and mutually beneficial relationship with Bangladesh," he said. Misri said they discussed



Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri during talks with his Bangladeshi counterpart Mohammad Jashim Uddin and other delegates, amid strained bilateral ties since August following the ouster of prime minister Sheikh Hasina, in Dhaka

"certain recent developments and issues." "I conveyed our concerns, including those related to the safety and welfare of minorities. We also discussed some regrettable incidents of attacks on cultural, religious and diplomatic properties..." Misri told reporters. He said India expected an overall constructive approach on all these issues by the Bangladesh authorities and looked forward to moving the relationship forward in a positive and constructive direction. Misri said he underlined India's desire to work closely with the interim government of Bangladesh.

He also called on Interim Government Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and Foreign Affairs Adviser Md. Touhid Hossain. During these meetings, Misri highlighted India's support for a democratic, stable, peaceful, progressive and inclusive Bangladesh, said a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in New Delhi. "He reiterated India's willingness to build a positive and constructive relationship with Bangladesh, based on mutual trust and respect and mutual sensitivity to each other's concerns and interests," it said.

Sanjay Malhotra appointed new RBI Governor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Monday appointed Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra as the 26th Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. Malhotra, a 1990 Batch Rajasthan Cadre IAS Officer, will replace Shaktikanta Das, whose tenure ends on Tuesday. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet cleared Malhotra's name, who has been appointed as the RBI Governor for three years, starting Wednesday. Malhotra is an engineering graduate in computer science from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, and has a Master's in Public Policy from Princeton University, US. In his career of over 33 years, he has worked in multifarious sectors, including power, finance and taxation, information technology, and mines, among others. Before becoming Revenue Secretary, Malhotra held the post of Secretary in the Department of Financial Services under the Ministry of Finance. He has extensive experience in finance and taxation at the state as well as the central government levels.

Common University Entrance Test to undergo several changes in 2025

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Common University Entrance Test (CUET) for admission to undergraduate and postgraduate courses is set to undergo several changes in the 2025 edition following a review by an expert panel for which the university watchdog UGC had constituted an expert committee to review the conduct of CUET-UG and PG. UGC will soon release a draft proposal detailing the revised guidelines for conducting CUET-UG and CUET-PG 2025, inviting feedback and suggestions from students, parents, teachers and institutions. "Based on feedback from past years, it is also essential to continuously improve the examination process to provide a better, more efficient and conducive environment for students taking CUET. In this spirit, the UGC has constituted an expert committee to review the conduct of CUET-UG and CUET-PG for 2025," University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Prof M Jagadesh Kumar said. Sources said the committee



has examined various aspects of the test, such as its structure, number of papers, duration of test papers, syllabus alignment and operational logistics and the commission has considered the recommendations. In the first edition of the exam in 2022, CUET-UG was plagued by technical glitches. Also, as a result of tests for a subject being conducted over multiple shifts, the scores had to be normalised during the announcement of results. The exam was conducted in hybrid mode for the first time in 2024. It was cancelled across Delhi a night before it was to be held citing logistical reasons.

In BBSR Rs 15L found in Sub-Registrar office



After Junior Clerk held taking bribe

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Vigilance police on Monday caught Debajani Kar, Junior Clerk of the office of Sub-Registrar, Khandagiri in Bhubaneswar, while accepting

a bribe of Rs 20,000. Kar had demanded the bribe from a person for execution of Registered Sale Deed (RSD) of a sub-plot. Following the trap, simultaneous searches were conducted on the residential house of Kar at Old Town in Bhubaneswar and her office room. Cash of Rs 15 lakh was

found during the search of Sub-Registrar office. The staffs are being examined, and the source of such huge cash is being verified. Senior officers from Inspector General of Registration (IGR) Office, Cuttack, have been requisitioned to assist in verification as foul play is suspected.

8,000 doctors, paramedical staffs recruitment soon

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

All the 30 districts in Odisha, including Bhadrak, would have a medical college each soon, informed Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling in the State Legislative Assembly on Monday.

Mahaling said, "It is important to set up medical colleges and fill up the vacant doctor posts. We have mentioned about the opening of medical colleges in our (BJP) manifesto."



"We have made a couple of amendments in the medical

recruitment process which have also got the consent from

the Chief Minister. The advertisement process for the recruitment of 5,000 doctors will commence soon," the minister said.

"Similarly, the recruitment process for the 3,000 vacant paramedical staff posts will start soon. All the 30 districts in the State will have medical colleges. We are committed to whatever we have mentioned in our poll manifesto," he stated.

The State Government is spending Rs 250 crore to Rs 300 crore for every 100-bed medical college established after 2014, Mahaling informed. It is worthwhile to mention

here that as many as 5,014 doctor positions, including 1,114 posts meant for specialists, are lying vacant in the State. At least 375 Community Health Centres in the 30 districts are operating without any doctors.

Ganjam district is facing the most severe shortfall with 450 vacancies followed closely by 309 vacancies in Mayurbhanj. Earlier in September this year, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi had also said that the government aims to open medical colleges in each of the 30 districts and fill up vacant posts of doctors on a priority basis.

All 30 districts to have medical colleges

Smart campuses of little avail as teacher crunch hits 5T schools

All modern facilities lying unused

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

State-of-the-art facilities, robust infrastructure, and smart campuses are reportedly lying unused across several State government-run schools in Odisha owing to an acute shortage of teachers, leading to a poor learning experience for students.

As per sources, lack of teachers is disrupting regular education in schools that were recently equipped with modern facilities like smart classrooms and advanced tools under the previous State government's 5T initiative.

Concerning reports in this regard have surfaced from the



Indravati Project High School in the Dharamgarh block of Kalahandi. Sources stated that despite modern facilities, the school struggles as reportedly only three teachers are available for five classes.

"Our science labs are lying closed and we are unable to learn anything new. None of the 5T facilities can be availed by us," claimed a student of the school.

Incidentally, the school has

also seen repeated student and teacher protests. However, they have failed to address the issue, as the school's administration is under the Irrigation department, complicating recruitment processes.

A similar situation was also reported from the Narasinghpur block in Cuttack where about 24 schools are equipped with smart classrooms and computer labs.

However, since 2019, no new computer instructors have been appointed following earlier dismissals. As a result, computer lessons have halted, and expensive equipment, including computers, generators, and electronics worth crores, lies unused.

Concerned students, parents, and teachers have voiced their frustrations. "Since 2019, several computers have been lying unused and many have become defunct," alleged Sashi Bhusan Mishra, a contractual computer science teacher.

Meanwhile, School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond promised swift action to resolve the crisis. "Our department has taken note of the matter and necessary actions will be taken soon," he stated.

Sujeet Kumar flies nominations for RS

Sure to be elected in view of BJP's strength in Assembly

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

BJP leader Sujeet Kumar filed his nomination papers for the by-poll to a single Rajya Sabha (RS) seat in Odisha before the Returning Officer at the State Assembly in the presence of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and several other ministers and MLAs on Monday.

He filed the nominations with 30 MLAs proposers. The BJP had earlier announced the name of former MP Sujeet Kumar for the by-poll to the Rajya Sabha seat.



Kumar is all set to go to the Upper House of the Parliament as the BJP has the number to win the seat.

As per the notification, the last date for filing of nomination papers is December 10. Scrutiny of nominations will be done on December 11. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is December 13. If required, the by-poll will be conducted

on December 20. Sujeet Kumar had been elected to the Rajya Sabha on April 3, 2020, and his term would have ended on April 2, 2026. Meanwhile, he has joined the BJP.

Sujeet Kumar from Kalahandi district was the second BJD MP to resign from Rajya Sabha after Mamata Mohanta, a leader from the Kudumi community. Mohanta

later joined the BJP and became a Rajya Sabha member as a BJP nominee. Now, the saffron party has followed the same route for Sujeet Kumar. Odisha has 10 Rajya Sabha seats, of which seven are held by the BJD, two by the BJP and one is currently vacant, which is expected to go in favour of the BJP, which has 78 MLAs in the 147-member Assembly.

In Baleswar Rs 2-cr brown sugar seized

PNS ■ BALESWAR

Smugglers of the Excise Department on Sunday seized two kg of brown sugar worth Rs 2 crore in Baleswar town, and a man was arrested in this connection.

Acting on a tipoff, a team of excise officials raided a house in Adarbaraz area and seized the contraband.

Baleswar Excise Superintendent Sushanta Padhi said

one man was arrested while another managed to flee the spot when the raid was launched in the house.

The contraband was brought from outside Odisha for disposal.

A case under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985 has been registered and a search operation is on to arrest those involved in such an illegal activity, Padhi added.

In Sundargarh Electric scooter catches fire during charging

4 other vehicles, furniture also reduced to ashes

PNS ■ SUNDARGARH

An electric scooter caught fire, leading to a major fire mishap at a house located along Government College Road in Sundargarh town reducing four other vehicles and furniture to ashes.

The fire broke out while the electric scooter was being charged. The flames quickly spread, engulfing a motorbike, three other scooters and furniture in the house.

The incident caused panic in the area. However, fortunately, no loss of life was reported due to the mishap.

Though the exact reason behind the fire mishap was now known immediately, it was suspected that a short circuit



cuit during the charging process might have triggered the fire.

Further investigations were underway to determine the exact cause of the fire and assess the total damage caused by the incident.

This is not the very first time when an electric scooter caught fire. In recent time, several incidents of electric scooter fires have raised serious safety concerns among the buyers.

Cases like the parked e-scooters suddenly catching fire and fires during charging have been reported across various cities, often leading to property damage and injuries.

Thousands of women employees hit streets



● Demand release of long-pending salaries

● Issue raised in State Assembly

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Thousands of women from various organisations of the Odisha Government's Mission Shakti programme, including MBK, Bank Mitra, Krishi Mitra and Prani Mitra, on Monday gathered at Lower PMG Square in Bhubaneswar and voiced their grievances against the alleged non-payment of salaries.

The protests coincided with

the start of the Legislative Assembly session on the day. The agitators took out a mass rally to draw attention to their unresolved issues including the demand for release of the alleged pending wages and salaries for the past nine months.

The protesting women levelled allegations against their respective departments for withholding their salaries for the past nine months. "We have not been paid our dues since April. Under such circumstances, we do not know how to run our families," lamented a woman.

Notably, among the six cadres of SHGs, women under the MBK, Bank Mitra and Jeevika

Sahayika schemes were earlier assured of a salary increment from Rs 6750 to Rs 10750 per month. Meanwhile, those under Krishi Mitra and Prani Mitra were promised Rs 6,250 instead of Rs 3,750 per month in March this year.

However, the agitators stated that they have not been paid their dues of three months by the previous BJD government and six months by the present Mohan Majhi-led BJP government. They further alleged that the pending salaries have not been released despite assurances from Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida.

"We have held talks with our department heads, but

they are not facilitating release of our salaries. As such, we hope that the Deputy CM takes note of our grievances this time," said another member of the rally.

Meanwhile, the issue was raised by members of the opposition BJD in the State Assembly on the day. They urged the Speaker to direct the government to ensure that the employees are paid without further delay. During the Zero Hour, Opposition Chief Whip Pramilla Mallik pointed out that these employees were appointed to assist and empower women members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) socially, mentally and financially.

Aspirants for jobs in SCB Hospital duped

2 brothers held

PNS ■ CUTTACK

Two brothers were arrested by the Manglabag police in Cuttack city on the charge of defrauding over Rs 11 lakh from 30 aspirants by promising them non-existent government nursing jobs.

The accused were identified as Archit Das and Arpit Das of Thoria Sahi in the city.

As per sources, the duo was operating an unauthorised office located at Madhupatna. They lured job aspirants through newspaper advertisements. They allegedly duped 30 job aspirants of over Rs 11 lakh, promising nursing jobs at the SCB Medical College Hospital.

It was when the victims visited the SCB Hospital with the appointment letters they had

received from the two brothers that they realised that they had been duped as the hospital authorities told them that they hadn't issued any appointment letters.

Later, they lodged a complaint at the Mangalabag police station. Police launched a probe and arrested the two brothers. The cops also seized a car, a motorcycle, ATM cards and counterfeit offer and appointment letters from their possession. Later, they were produced in court.

Meanwhile, police appealed to those who had been cheated by the fraudsters to come forward and lodge complaints.

"We have launched a detailed probe to find out if some others are involved in the racket," said Girija Shankar Chakraborty, ACP, Zone II, Cuttack.

Cheque bounce case in B'swar

Defaulter sent to jail

PNS ■ BALESWAR

A court of Nilgiri in Baleswar district on Saturday convicted a defaulter of a cheque bounce case and sentenced him to one year of imprisonment along with a penalty of Rs 2.5 lakh.

The convict, identified as

Sabitri Jena of village Chhatakanpur under Nilgiri block, had taken a loan of Rs 2.5 lakh from one Chittaranjan Sethi assuring him to pay interest against the principal. But she neither paid interest nor returned the principal. After a lot of persuasion, she gave a cheque of Rs 1.9 lakh which was dishonoured. Following this, Sethi took shelter in the court of law.

Unsung heroes of tribal uprisings in Odisha

The history of India's struggle for independence is replete with tales of courage and sacrifice, often highlighting the contributions of mainstream leaders. However, the tribal communities, with their distinct cultures and undying love for their land, played a pivotal role in resisting British colonialism. Odisha, a State with rich tribal heritage, witnessed numerous uprisings led by tribal leaders who fought valiantly against British exploitation and domination. These movements, though less recognized, laid the foundation for resistance and unity among oppressed communities.

Tribal resistance in undivided Ganjam district (1768-1815)

One of the earliest tribal uprisings in Odisha occurred in Ganjam (at present Gajapati district) where tribal people staged revolt against the British under Narayan Dev, the king of Paralakhemundi, a region historically known for its tribal settlements. Between 1768 and 1815, the tribal communities of undivided Ganjam, particularly belonging to Sabara and Kandha communities, resisted British policies that disrupted their traditional way of life. These policies included the imposition of land revenue systems, exploitation of natural re-



AB OTA

sources, and interference in tribal customs. Though sporadic and localized, the resistance in Ganjam set the tone for subsequent tribal revolts in Odisha.

Kandha Movement Ghumsar (1835-1856) led by Dora Bissoi, Chakra Bissoi

The Kandhas of Ghumsar, led by visionary leaders like Kamal Lochan Dora Bissoi and Chakra Bissoi, spearheaded a significant movement against British rule. The resistance was fuelled by the British suppression of tribal traditions, particularly the practice of Meriah sacrifice, and their efforts to enforce alien administrative systems. The Kandhas fiercely defended their sovereignty, engaging

in prolonged conflicts with the colonial forces. Their revolt is remembered as a testament to their bravery and commitment to preserving their cultural identity.

Kandha Movement in Boudh (1835-1846) led by Nabaghan Kanhar

The Kandha uprising in Boudh, led by Nabaghan Kanhar, was another crucial chapter in Odisha's tribal resistance. The movement arose from grievances over British interference in tribal landholding patterns and their disregard for tribal autonomy. Nabaghan Kanhar united his people to resist British attempts to impose exploitative laws. Although the uprising was eventually quelled, it highlighted the Kandhas' determination to protect their land and culture.

Kandha movement in Kalahandi (1853-1855) led by Rendo Majhi

Under the leadership of Rendo Majhi, the Kandhas of Kalahandi rose against British oppression between 1853 and 1855. The movement was marked by fierce battles and strategic mobilization of tribal warriors. The Kandhas resisted the British policies that threatened their traditional livelihood, including the imposition of taxes and

forced labour. Rendo Majhi's leadership became a symbol of tribal resistance and inspired other communities to rise against colonial exploitation

Dharua Movement (1857-1866) led by Dayanidhi Dharua

Dayanidhi Dharua led the Dharua tribe in an uprising against the British from 1857 to 1866. The movement was contemporaneous with the First War of Independence and reflected the shared resentment against British policies. Dayanidhi Dharua mobilized his community to fight against land dispossession and economic exploitation. The Dharua movement, though overshadowed by larger national events, was a significant assertion of tribal identity and resistance.

Tribal Movement Led by Veer Surendra Sai (1837-1862)

Veer Surendra Sai, a legendary figure in Odisha's freedom struggle, united various tribal groups to challenge British authority. His movement spanned over two decades, during which he mobilized the Adivasis of Sambalpur and surrounding regions. Sai's efforts were driven by the British refusal to recognize his legitimate claim to the throne of Sambalpur.

Bhuyan Movement in

Keonjhar (1867-1868) led by Ratana Nayak

Ratana Nayak led the Bhuyan tribe of Keonjhar in an uprising against the British in 1867-1868. The movement was a direct response to the exploitation of tribal resources and the oppressive land revenue system. Ratana Nayak's leadership brought together various tribal factions to resist colonial policies. Although the movement was ultimately suppressed, it underscored the resilience and unity of the Bhuyan tribe.

Bhuyan movement II in Keonjhar (1891-1893) led by Dharanidhar Nayak

The second Bhuyan movement in Keonjhar, led by Dharanidhar Nayak, was a continuation of tribal resistance against British exploitation. Dharanidhar Nayak emerged as a formidable leader, organizing his people to resist unjust taxation and forced labour.

Koya movement in Malkangiri (1870-1880) led by Tama Dora

Tama Dora led the Koya tribe of Malkangiri in a decade-long resistance against the British from 1870 to 1880. The movement arose from the exploitation of tribal resources and the imposition of foreign administrative practices. Tama Dora's leadership galvanized the

Koya tribe, inspiring them to defend their land and traditions.

Tribal movement in Gangpur State under Madri Kalo (1897-1900)

The tribal uprising in Gangpur State, led by Madri Kalo, was a response to British exploitation and disregard for tribal welfare. Madri Kalo's leadership united the tribal communities to resist oppressive policies, including the forced collection of taxes. The movement, though short-lived, reflected the growing awareness among tribals about their rights and the need to resist colonial rule.

Munda Movement in Gangpur State under Nirmal Munda (1934-1939)

The Munda tribe's resistance in Gangpur State, led by Nirmal Munda, was one of the most organized tribal uprisings in Odisha. Nirmal Munda's leadership brought together various tribal communities to demand justice and an end to exploitation. The movement highlighted the tribals' growing political consciousness and their willingness to fight for their rights. The stiff resistance of about 3,000 tribals with their traditional crude weapons against the British armed forces led to a fierce fight and the British forces re-

sorted to firing which killed several innocent tribals at a place called Amko-Simco. This is also known as the second Jalianawalabag massacre.

Movement in Malkangiri (1936-1942)

Laxman Naik led the tribals of Malkangiri in a movement against British rule from 1936 to 1942. The uprising coincided with the broader Quit India Movement, reflecting the synergy between national and tribal struggles. Laxman Naik's leadership inspired the tribal community to resist colonial exploitation and fight for their dignity. He is popularly known as Gandhi of Malkangiri as he resorted to non-violence means of agitation against the British for their inhuman act.

Despite their immense contributions, the tribal heroes remain largely unsung in mainstream historical narratives. Recognizing and celebrating the contributions of tribal communities is essential to understanding the multifaceted nature of India's freedom struggle.

(Prof Ota is a retired IAS Officer. He is a former RDC, Central Division and former Director, Tribal Research Institute as well as Tribal Museum, Odisha)

B'pur city merger issue: Minister's statement decried

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAPUR

A press meet was held here on Monday where the Sahara Tali Anchala Milita Kriyanustha Committee strongly criticised a recent statement by the House and Urban Development Minister Krishna Chandra Mahapatra regarding the merger of peripheral areas into the Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC). The committee condemned the minister's response in the

State Legislative Assembly on December 3 as misleading and incomplete. The controversy erupted when Brahmapur MLA K Anil Kumar raised a question about the merger, referencing a 2008 Gazette notification and a ruling from the Orissa High Court. In his response, the minister acknowledged the committee's agitation for merger but failed to address key legal aspects and the on-going High Court case. The committee pointed out



that the minister ignored critical details, including a 2020 resolution by the Ganjam District Collector recommending

inclusion of four villages, Lochapada, Sana Kushasthali, Brahmapalli and Golabandh, into the BeMC. Furthermore, the minister did not address objections from local residents or the political motives behind opposition to the merger. Despite a notice issued in 2022 inviting objections from residents, the committee criticised the minister for overlooking these concerns and ignoring contradictory instructions from

local authorities. The ongoing legal case in the High Court was also left unaddressed in his response. The press meet, chaired by Sanjeev Kumar Pattnaik, was attended by vice-chairperson Devi Prasad Das, joint secretary T Sudesh Patra and others. The committee urged the government to resolve the merger issue transparently and legally as concerns continue to grow among affected residents.

In Gajapati Ganja crop worth Rs 8 crore destroyed

PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

In a crackdown against the ganja cultivation, a joint team of police and Excise Department destroyed the extensive illegal crops in Gajapati district on Sunday.

The authorities had received information about ganja being illegally grown on a hill near Pengam village under Bada Sindhaba panchayat under the Mohana police station.

Acting on the input, over 100 personnel from the police and the Excise Department conducted a raid and destroyed the crops spread over 42 acres and estimated to be worth Rs 8 crore.

The incident marked yet another instance of illegal ganja cultivation being raided and destroyed in the district after recent similar actions in Adaba and R Udayagiri police limits.



Action against illegal cannabis cultivation has gathered steam following the government's plans to eradicate the practice in the State by 2026 under its 'Green Clean' campaign.

A few weeks ago, a joint State taskforce concluded a significant operation where they eradicated over 10 acres of cannabis cultivation in the Digapahandi area of Ganjam district.

Coincidentally, around the same time, another 62 acres of forestland in Subarnapur district were also cleared of cannabis plants.

In Jajpur Locals hold demo over NH expansion delay



Allege NH 53 has turned deathtrap

PNS ■ JAJPUR

Hundreds of locals on Monday took to the street in protest against the alleged delay in the expansion work of National Highway-53 and the construction of a second bridge over the Brahmani river in Jajpur district.

The demonstration, spearheaded by the Sachetana Nagarika Mancha, was held near the Kabatband bridge under Dharmasala block in the district.

The agitators alleged that due to the slow progress of the NH construction work, several accidents have occurred, leading to numerous fatalities. They demanded expediting of the construction work. They

also warned that they would continue their demonstration till they receive a written assurance from the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) authorities.

"The Chandikhole-Duburi portion of the NH-53 has turned into a deathtrap. There are gross violations of road safety norms. We are staging the demonstration with seven key demands including widening of the National Highway, a written assurance as to when the work will be completed, a traffic system for safe commuting of college students and illumination of the Brahmani bridge," said Saroj Kumar Behera, convenor of the Sachetan Nagarika Mancha.

"We request the Chief Minister, the Prime Minister and the President of India to consider the demands," he added.

'Sakhyam' prog for visually impaired held in B'swar

PNS ■ BALESWAR

A two-day programme 'Sakhyam' meant for the visually impaired children, organized under the banner of 'Desh Videsh,' kicked off on Saturday here.

The event was inaugurated by Baleswar Municipality Chairperson Sabita Sahu. In the inaugural address Sahu lauded the initiative of the organizers for hosting such events each year.

Sub Divisional Social Security Officer Pushpalata Dikshit mentioned various



schemes and programmes which were available for the visually impaired and differently able special children.

President of the association Krushna Gopal Panda stressed on the awareness of different schemes and

programmes which were launched from time to time by the centre as well as the State government.

He said different sports and cultural activities were organized among them. "The objective is to sensi-

tize the special children that they are among us and we are with them. Further, through various cultural and sports activities, we try to encourage them that they are able (Sakhyam) and identify their potentials," said association secretary Asiash Ghosh.

Association chairman Sanjib Giri, Dibakar Shaw and Gopal Kar while spoke on the occasion, Anup Panda, Sanjib Sahu, Ajay Samal, Marut Rout, Smarak Dash, Mrutunjay Rout, Gourav Das and Saurav Agarwal among others conducted the events.

In K'handi, R'gada Vedanta's Sijimali bauxite block to accelerate dev

Socioeconomic status of tribal inhabitants to change

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Spread over two adjoining districts, the Sijimali Bauxite Block, owned by Vedanta Aluminium, has the potential that promises to transform the socio-economic status of the inhabitant primitive tribes by dint of mainstreaming and accelerating the pace of developmental process of Kalahandi and Rayagada.

Vedanta has already planned and tightened up its belt to spend Rs 1,200 crores in the next 25 years through the existing Lanjigarh Periphery Area Development Fund (LPDAF) and proposed the Sijimali Periphery Area Development Fund (SPDAF) in Rayagada and Kalahandi with inclusion of public representatives of both the districts in the SPV for transforming the region into a prosperous and pragmatic region.

Not only this, Sijimali Bauxite Mine will generate a

whopping revenue of Rs 2,200 crore per annum in favour of the public exchequer of Odisha for its entire life span. Such a huge revenue generation will empower the State to undertake infrastructural development considering the future needs of the State for the coming fifty years. The State can be enabled to flood welfare schemes for the residents of the region.

Besides, more than 1,500 direct and indirect job opportunities can be created around the periphery. The duo of Vocational Training

Centers and Entrepreneur Development Programmes will also change the life and dreams of the community.

The local tribals' participation in the developmental drive will change the entire narrative of the region on the indexes of health, education, livelihood and environment.

Since Vedanta considers mother earth as a stakeholder, the already blessed green cover will work as a bio-filter that will hold the entire eco-system by preventing soil erosion and maintaining the flora and fauna of the region.

In Rayagada

Loot of gold from jeweller caught on camera

PNS ■ RAYAGADA

A daylight loot involving miscreants fleeing away after snatching a bag of gold was reported from Rayagada district on Monday morning.

The crime was captured on CCTV. It showed two miscreants intercepting a jeweller and snatching away his bag which contained gold ornaments before fleeing away on a motorcycle.

The incident took place near the Ambadola police station of Rayagada town. The victim lodged a complaint with police and claimed that the bag contained over half a kilogram of gold ornaments.

As per the victim's state-



ments, he was opening his shop when the two bike-borne miscreants approached him. One of them snatched his bag away while the other kept the bike engine running. The duo fled the spot after committing

the crime.

Police initiated an investigation into the matter and were analysing the CCTV footage to nab the culprits.

The latest incident is among a recent series of loots and

robberies.

A similar incident was reported in November when masked robbers stole over Rs 25 lakh worth of gold and silver ornaments from a jeweler in Keonjhar district.

The robbery had happened around 9 pm when Hiranmayee Sahoo, the shop owner, was heading home with his son, carrying bags of gold jewelry. About 100 meters from the store, six masked men stopped them, stole the bags, and assaulted them at gunpoint.

As such, this incident in Rayagada has highlighted a spurt in theft, loot, and armed robbery cases in Odisha of late.

In Brahmapur Awareness drive on cruelty against animals held

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR

An awareness programme on the cruelty against the animals was organised under the chairmanship of ADM Sudhanshu Kumar Bhoi here.

CDVO Dr Manoj Kumar Sahu as chief guest opined that there is no place for cruelty against animals. He said animals and birds especially the stray cattle should be treated fairly as they too have right to survive.

The innocent animals and birds should be provided with food on road sides in 6 hours durations. If any animal or bird faces an accident or falls ill at anywhere it must be brought to the notice of the State Government Helpline

Number: 1962 forthwith. There's the provision of Government to provide financial assistance of Rs 20,000 per annum to the social organisations for shelter to animals like Goshala, Sahu said.

Other dignitaries such as BeMC vice-chairman D Biswanath, Deputy Commissioner Ashivad Parida, Additional District Veterinary Officer Dr Jagadish Mohanty, Deputy Director of Animal Husbandry Subhakanta Mohanty, District SPCA member and Zoopilist Lalatendu Choudhary, SPCA members Biju Lenka, Susant Kumar Behera, Kailash Chandra Das and Dr Pramod Kumar Pattanayak among others were present.

Podagarh dev works move at snail's pace

Tourists flow on decline

MONOHAR MOHANTY ■ NABARANGPUR

When winter comes, everyone's first choice is to go for a picnic in the lap of nature and have fun, enjoying the natural beauty. One such tourist destination is the historical Podagarh.

A few years ago, people from different corners of the State and neighbouring districts used to flock to the Podagarh tourist destination. However, these days the place is largely deserted.

Located in Nabarangpur district, the Podagarh tourist destination is located at a distance of 11 km from Umerkote and 78 km from Nabarangpur district headquarters. The Podagarh hill is covered with flora and fauna. Punjisil waterfall is located at a distance of 5 km from Podagarh.



There are connectivity problems, water, electricity problems, and no facilities for night stay in Podagarh. Hence, people are turning faces away from this tourist destination.

The tourist destination has a history of 1,500 years. Many historical stone inscriptions and stone carvings from the reign of the Nala dynasty here are on the verge of extinction due to lack of maintenance. The king's presiding deity is still worshipped by the locals on the hilltop. A year ago, the government had allocated about Rs 3 crore for the development of the site. However, the work has been delayed and is still going on at a slow pace. The locals are demanding that the beautification work be completed at the earliest.

Ambedkar's contributions recalled



On Mahaparinirvan Diwas at CUO

PNS ■ KORAPUT

The Central University of Odisha (CUO) commemorated Mahaparinirvan Diwas, on December 6, marking the death anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr BR Ambedkar.

Acting Vice-Chancellor and Registrar Prof NC Panda, Dean, School of Biodiversity and Conservation of Natural Resources Prof SK Palita and HoD, Department of Sociology Dr. Kapila Khemundu along with faculty, staff, and students, paid heartfelt floral tributes to Dr Ambedkar,

honouring his enduring legacy.

Assistant Professor of Hindi, Dr Sunit Paswan delivered the welcome address, reflecting on the significance of Mahaparinirvan Diwas and Dr. Ambedkar's contributions.

Acting VC Prof Panda noted that Dr. Ambedkar's drafting of the Indian Constitution was a monumental achievement, making it the largest written constitution in the world, and called upon students to study his writings to understand his vision for India's prosperity.

Faculty members and students were present.

Where India is headed 78 yrs after independence

They rightly say, history repeats itself; first as a tragedy, and then as a farce. At the dawn of India as a republic, several Western and Indian scholars, including Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, had reservations about its survival as a democracy. The specter of widespread poverty, the shadow of illiteracy and the deep scar of caste and religious divisions loomed as formidable barriers to the flourishing of universal suffrage. Soon followed the period of 1975-77, the political era of India that was the first open assault on the political system that India's first ever Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru had worked tirelessly to nurture and nourish. It was the 'tragedy'.

And now, years after Independence, where hospitals are clearly unsafe for female doctors, dirty public toilets and reservation-



DISHASHREE SWAIN

ruled educational frameworks are the standard, the structure of the country is still somehow colonial and corruption is the way of life. In many ways, Indian democracy can only be considered skin-deep. And in such conditions, the Indian democracy is all set to devolve into the 'farce'.

India alone is not the only one

facing such institutional and moral degradations. South Africa doesn't have a Nelson Mandela, nor does the US have their Franklin D Roosevelt. Yet, with a populace teeming to be around 1.4 billion, with a tide of rising unemployment, unfulfilled aspirations and divisions deep rooted in caste, gender, race, colour and religion, the Indian republic stands poised to confront formidable trials in the years to come.

On August 9, Moumita Debnath, a 31-year old trainee doctor in the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital was brutally raped and murdered. In 2017, the Supreme Court of India upheld capital punishment for the perpetrators of the brutal rape of Jyoti Singh Pandey, nicknamed "Nirbhaya" that led to her death. Twelve years hence, can it be said that capital punishment was enough to deter

rape in India? Has anything changed since then? Whereas every single day seems to bring more horror, India's focal point still remains that Indian feminism is just a strand of western feminist culture, one that doesn't fit into the standards and particularities of Indian society.

India's laws still continue to deprecate victims and create divides between them. Rape victims from lower castes and strata of the society usually go unnoticed. While those rape cases that get airtime in the media need to be dealt with, the Indian administration has to understand that the media always doesn't need to propagate an event for it to take action. When an incident rises to national attention, the kettle of outrage boils over, and the masses sometimes stage protests, but it passes quickly. And the fire comes down to a sim-

mer until yet another rape is followed by fruitless protests for corrective action. Be it Unnao, Hathras or Bilkis Bano back from 2002; in the end, it all boils down to a fight between forgetting and remembering.

India can take pride in having had women elected as Prime Minister and Presidents, but we remain a heavily patriarchal society. How outstandingly unprogressive and inhuman must it be that after 78 years of being 'independent', it takes the shocking sight of a dead woman to remind society of its humanity?

The dominance of Indian media by entities aligned with the ruling establishment has resulted in corporate consolidation, fostering a conservative blend of sexism, communalism, casteism, and demagoguery in public discourse. In the era of the Indian economy becoming remarkably dynamic, a corrupt

and inefficient colonial-era bureaucracy is all ready to put a brake on India's breakthrough. It is common knowledge that Indian bureaucrats are rewarded for bending the rules for their political masters. Conversely, defying their superiors' directives is the surefire way to derail their careers. In a masterful work of author Naresh Saxena, it is rightfully stated, "Where power is highly personalized and weakly institutionalized, the decision-making process is replaced by arbitrary and behind-the-scenes transactions." In a country where those entrusted with safeguarding resources are instead exploiting them, the prospects of development ever reaching the impoverished remain exceedingly slim.

Indian democracy, and the constitutional order that underlies it, is facing the gravest challenge since India's independence. A land of

contradictions, of change and continuity, and of modernity and mystery is posed by one crucial question; how is the much needed transformation supposed to incorporate this land while keeping its history, culture and traditions safe? As a country that is richly consistent in its inconsistency and changeless in its constant change, what remains to be seen is how India moves into the future while safeguarding its peace, democracy and integrity. Well, hospitals safe for women and clean train toilets are definitely not hard to achieve, and it is the bare minimum we can do to make the sacrifices of those who spent years and even decades in British jails worthwhile.

(The writer is a student of 1st Year, Computer Engineering (2024-28) Odisha University of Technology and Research, Bhubaneswar)

Didi's lollipop barb for Bangla netas' 'annex Bengal' threat

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday lobbed a tart "lollipop" at Bangladesh leadership advising them to "stay calm and have peace of mind" and hold down their "occupy Bengal" dreams because India would not sit quiet if they resorted to any kind of misadventure. Speaking on a recent aggressive remark made by a senior Bangladesh Nationalist Party leader who said that their country had a legitimate right over three Indian States, Banerjee said, "it is unusual for us to speak on the foreign affairs a responsibility that has been entrusted with the Ministry of External Affairs and it is our declared stance that we will abide by all the advisories from the

Government of India... "But we have heard about some politician from Bangladesh saying that they have a right over Bengal, Bihar and Odisha ... I wish them mental peace and health and advice them to stay calm ... but at the same time I will remind them that we will not lick lollipops while their forces will try to occupy our land," Banerjee said to a thumping roar inside the House. Amid ongoing attacks on the minority Hindus and vandalism of their religious places a section Bangladesh Ulama and the political leaders have been pouring venom on India asking people to boycott Indian consumer products and preaching Gazba e Hind (subjugate India). The BNP leader in that context had told a gathering that his country



had "a legitimate right over Bangla, Bihar and Odisha as they were once ruled by our Nawab Siraj ud Daulah." The Chief Minister's statement came on a day when Indian Foreign Secretary met his counterpart during when he made a candid expression of India's stand on the repression of minorities. Accordingly Banerjee said, "We are quite conscious and active enough. We also test patience because we learnt it from Rabindranath Tagore," reminding India's patience was not to be misconstrued as its weakness. "I don't say that our politics should match theirs ... I don't say that the politics of the two countries should be interconnected but I can forcefully say that India and its Constitution is emphatically

secular and we will practice secularism," advising the people on this border against walking into the "communal traps being set up by some vested interests." She said, "I ask all and sundry to act rationally and stay calm and not get influenced by communal forces," she said. Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari however "refuse" to take Banerjee's speech "on face value." He said, "the Chief Minister knows that the people on this side of the border are tremendously agitated about what is happening in Bangladesh ... she also knows that the people in Bengal are angry with her appeasement politics ... so she has made such statement as a face saving measure." Wondering why the Chief Minister would not take any

action against her senior Cabinet colleague Siddiquallah Chowdhury who had allegedly praised Bangladesh interim Chief Advisor Md Yunus the Opposition Leader said, "if she is really concerned about the Hindu minorities of Bangladesh then why she has not dismissed and taken action against her own Cabinet colleague Siddiquallah Chowdhury who openly praised Md Yunus and criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi ... and why her Government refuses permission to Sanatani protesters to organize rallies whereas it gives permissions to communal people like Firhad Hakim and Twaha Siddiqi... I think Mamata Banerjee's statement will have no bearing on the people ... they will never believe in her."

CPI(M) files intervening application in SC on Places of Worship Act, 1991

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The CPI(M) on Monday filed intervening application in Supreme Court opposing the petitions which challenge the constitutionality of the Places of Worship Act, 1991. The party's petition represented by polit bureau member Prakash Karat, said the Act preserves India's secular fabric and sought the top court's intervention in stopping survey orders on mosques by several courts across the country. The polit bureau in a statement cited that many such surveys of ancient mosques to verify the presence of temple ruins lying underneath is creating communal tensions in many places. "After Varanasi and Mathura, in Sambhal, a survey was ordered of a 16th century mosque by a lower court. This resulted in vio-



lence in which four Muslim youth were killed. Following this, a similar petition has been entertained in the civil court in Ajmer regarding the Ajmer Sharif Dargah," the party said. In a statement here after a two-day meeting of the CPI(M) Politburo on December 7-8, the Left party said it is unfortunate that the Supreme Court has not intervened to put a stop to such lit-

igations. "The 2019 five-member bench judgment of the Supreme Court on the Ayodhya dispute had categorically upheld the validity of the law and its enforcement. Given this direction, it is incumbent on the apex court to intervene to put a stop to legal proceedings, which are violative of the Act," the CPI(M) said. Several litigations filed in various courts related to tem-

ple-mosque disputes have come into the limelight, including on Gyanvapi Mosque in Varanasi, Shahi Idgah Mosque in Mathura, Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal, Ajmer Dargah of Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishti and Budaun's Jama Masjid Shamsi, where petitioners have claimed that these were built after destroying ancient temples and sought permission to offer Hindu prayers there. The Supreme Court has constituted a special bench to hear a batch of PILs challenging the validity of certain provisions of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 law that prohibits filing a lawsuit to reclaim a place of worship or seek a change in its character from what prevailed on August 15, 1947. The headed by Chief Justice of India is scheduled to hear the matter on December 12.

Manipur violence: SC asks State to give details on arson, property encroachments

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Manipur Government to submit a detailed sealed cover report on the number of properties that were fully or partially burnt, looted, or encroached upon during the ongoing ethnic violence in the State. The bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar emphasised the need for the State to address the grievances of the displaced persons and take steps to restore their properties. The Bench asked the Manipur government, represented by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, to provide specific details such as "buildings burnt or partially burnt, buildings looted, buildings trespassed or encroached upon". The report should also provide information about the owners and current occupants



of these properties, along with the details of any legal actions taken against trespassers, the CJI said. "We also direct the State Government to provide the following details: 1. Buildings burnt and partially burnt, 2. Buildings which are looted; and (3) the buildings trespassed and encroached upon," the SC order stated. The bench further directed, "In all these, give details of the name and address of the owner as well as the person, if any, in occupation of the

property. The report shall also indicate the steps taken by the state government to ensure that the persons who have trespassed are proceeded against as per the law. The said list be given in a sealed cover." "You have to take a decision on how you want to deal with it or in terms of criminal action as well as to ask them (encroachers of the properties) to pay 'mesne profits' for the use of the occupation..." noted the apex court. Mesne profit is the com-

pensation paid to a rightful owner of a property by a person who is in unlawful possession of it. The top court further asked the state government to respond to the issue of release of funds for temporary and permanent housing as flagged by the three judges panel headed by Justice Gita Mittal, the former chief justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court. Senior advocate Vibha Makhija, appearing for the judges panel, said it took several steps with the support of some officials on the rehabilitation, skill-building, and resettlement of the displaced individuals. Makhija said the committee filed over 34 reports addressing the crisis beginning 2023 and lauded its pro bono efforts. The bench directed for the committee's reports to be shared with the Union Home Ministry and the Manipur Government to facilitate further remedial actions.

NMC issues new guidelines to identify 'fake patients' in medical colleges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a first the National Medical Commission (NMC) has issued new guidelines aimed at identifying "fake patients" in medical colleges and institutions seeking approval for new establishments or an increase in undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) seats. The guidelines are aimed at addressing concerns about medical institutions admitting fake patients—individuals who do not require inpatient treatment—just to meet bed occupancy requirements. These guidelines are being introduced after instances were reported where some medical institutions or colleges admitted fake patients (i.e., individuals who do not require treatment or inpatient care) to fulfill bed occupancy and investigation requirements. According to the guidelines, admission of large numbers of patients on the day of inspection or the previous day, admission of multiple patients from the same family or the admit-

ted patients having no or minor problems which can be treated on OPD basis with oral medications, could be a parameter for identifying "fake patients". Patients, who are admitted without any evidence of investigations like X-ray, blood tests etc. (before or after admission) or treatment which is generally done for admitted patients like intravenous (IV) fluid, injections, catheterization, giving medicines etc can also be an indication. Another parameter assessors should keep in mind is if most of the admitted children are found to be playful and joyous without any significant problem in the paediatric ward or if they observe that patients were admitted in large numbers through preventive health checkups or camps. The NMC has laid down the guidelines while inviting applications for establishment of new medical colleges/institutions intending to offer undergraduate courses and increase in the number of UG seats in established medical/institutions for the Academic year

(AY)2025-2026. The Commission said "fake patient practice" will be considered as a serious violation and will invite punishment as per the regulations. For the purpose of training the students, certain minimum clinical exposure of patients have been defined in the minimum standards of requirements criteria of undergraduate and postgraduate in the form of bed occupancy requirements, etc. "It has been observed for a long time that some medical institutions/colleges indulge in admitting fake patients (people who do not require any treatment or inpatient treatment) to fulfil the requirement of bed occupancy, investigation, etc," the NMC said. As per the guidelines, the Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB) will choose the best possible team of assessors for optimal output. For UG courses, assessment will be conducted for one or more days and for PG courses, assessment will be conducted for one or more days.

'More than 24 lakh cases registered by NHRC since its inception'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

More than 23 lakh cases have been registered by the NHRC since its inception in 1993 and total relief amount worth Rs 256.57 crore has been recommended to victims of human rights violations during the period, the rights panel said on Monday. President Droupadi Murmu will be the chief guest at an event on Tuesday to mark the Human Rights Day, the National Human Rights Commission said in a statement. Human Rights Day is observed on December 10 every year to commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. The UDHR serves as a global benchmark for the protection and promotion of human rights. The NHRC said it views Human Rights Day as an opportunity for various stakeholders worldwide to reflect on their actions and responsibilities, ensuring that they do not contribute to the violation of human rights.



"The UDHR embodies the principle that all human beings are born free and equal, with the right to life, liberty and security, and equality before the law, and freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion, and expression," the statement said. This principle is also reflected in India's Constitution and the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993, which provided the legal framework for the establishment of the NHRC on October 12, 1993. "During more than three decades, it registered a total of 23,14,794 and disposed of 23,07,587 cases, including 2,880 cases based on suo motu cognisance, and recommended about Rs 256.57 lakh as monetary relief to the victims of human rights violations," the rights panel said. During the last one year, from December 1, 2023 to November 30, 2024, the NHRC registered 65,973 cases and disposed of 66,378 cases, including those carried forward from previous years, the statement said. "It took suo motu cognisance in 109 cases and recommended Rs 17,24,40,000 in monetary relief to victims of human rights violations during this period of the last year," it added. The Commission also held a camp in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

To mark Human Rights Day, the NHRC is organising a programme at the Vigyan Bhavan here. NHRC's acting chairperson Vijaya Bharathi Sayani, Secretary General Bharat Lal, along with senior officers, members of statutory commissions and SHRCs, diplomats, civil society, and other dignitaries will be present on the occasion. The event will be followed by a national conference on 'Mental well-being: Navigating stress from classroom to workplace'. The three sessions include 'Stress among Children and Adolescents', 'Mental health challenges in institutions of higher learning', and 'Stress and burnout at workplaces'. The conference aims to explore the psychological impacts of stress at various stages of life - from education to employment and propose recommendations to promote mental well-being across different sectors, the NHRC said. The theme for this year's Human Rights Day -- 'Our Rights, Our Future, Right Now' - emphasises that human rights are not just aspirational but also a practical tool for

empowering individuals and communities to create a better future. Embracing the transformative potential of human rights can help build a more peaceful, equitable, and sustainable world. Now is the time to renew global action for a future rooted in human dignity, it added. "The Commission has consistently worked to ensure the protection of both civil and political rights, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights. It has made significant contributions to mainstreaming a human rights-centred approach in government policies and programmes, and in raising awareness among public authorities and civil society through various initiatives," the statement said. It continues to foster human rights discussions at national and international fora and engages in dialogue with civil society, NGOs, human rights defenders, experts, statutory commission members, state human rights commissions, and government officials. The NHRC, India has conducted numerous spot investigations, open hearings, and camp sittings since its inception.

Fifth edition of IYC spokesperson talent search competition launched

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Youth Congress on Monday launched the 5th edition of its flagship program 'Young India Ke Bol'. On this occasion, National President of Indian Youth Congress Uday Bhanu Chib and National AICC Incharge of NSUI Kanhaiya Kumar launched the poster of the program and appealed to the youth across the country to join the program. Speaking on the occasion, Bhanu Chib said that this year the event will focus on two of the most serious and worrying problems that our country is facing today - the alarming rise in unemployment and the rampant drug menace, which are deeply affecting the youth of India and future generations. "The rampant problem of unemployment and drug addiction is hollowing out the roots of our society. The

scourge of these problems is affecting the lives of the youth and hampering the development of the entire society. We have to make united efforts to find solutions to these challenges," he said. "The BJP had promised to provide 2 crore jobs every year to tackle unemployment, but the reality is that in the last decade, since the Modi government came to power in 2014, only 0.3% of the candidates who applied have got government jobs. That is, only 3 out of every 1,000 applicants got permanent government jobs," Bhanu said. He further said, "In 2022, Union Minister Jitendra Singh admitted in Parliament that out of the 22 crore applications received by the government since 2014, only 7,22,311 candidates were appointed. This statement makes it clear that the Modi government is not giving 2 crore jobs every year. The government has completely

failed to fulfill its promise of 2 crore jobs. The number of 22 crore applications reflects the deplorable state of employment in the country. The BJP has taken only electoral posturing and superficial steps to deal with the problem of unemployment, which exposes its careless mindset towards this serious issue," said the IYC chief. Before the Lok Sabha elections, the BJP made a false promise of filling government vacancies in the name of 'Rojgar Mela', but what was the result of it? The situation has become more frightening. Not only unemployment, but the problem of drug addiction in the country has also taken a serious turn, Bhanu mentioned. "Mudra Port, which is under the control of Adani, has become a major route for the entry of drugs into India. In 2021 alone, 3000 kg of heroin (the country's largest drug seizure case so far) and another



consignment of 75 kg was seized in 2022. This problem is continuously increasing. After all, by whom and why is Adani being protected? These facts not only highlight the failures of the BJP government, but also confirm its far-reaching negative impact on the youth and society of the country," Bhanu added. Talking about the Young India Ke Bol program, Bhanu Chib said the horrific national inci-

dents have inspired the Indian Youth Congress to involve the youth of the country in the struggle against the BJP government. Under this idea, a spokesperson search program called 'Young India Ke Bol' was started. This year, the main focus of the 5th edition of 'Young India Ke Bol' will be on the complete failure of the BJP government to deal with the problem of drug addiction

and unemployment. This program is in line with the national campaign of Indian Youth Congress 'Naukri Do, Nasha Nahi', which aims to provide a platform to youth, students, professionals, grassroots workers and political enthusiasts, so that they can raise their voice and reach this irresponsible government," stated an IYC statement. The application process for this competition will start from 15 December 2024 through 'With IYC App'. Interested participants will have to submit their videos on both these issues. Participants of this program will be invited at the state and national level, and they will be given the unique opportunity to become the state and national spokesperson of the Indian Youth Congress. Also, they will get a chance to express the party's views on relevant issues, further said the statement. Bhanu appealed to the youth

of the country to participate in this program in large numbers and force the government to take effective steps to control the problem of unemployment and drug addiction. This is a golden opportunity to raise your voice and be a part of the change," he said. NSUI's national in-charge Kanhaiya Kumar said that Youth Congress constantly fights for the issues of the youth of the country. "We have been doing many creative programs to change the situation of the youth in the country, to solve their problems. 'Young India Ke Bol' is a platform for the youth of the country to present their side and join us. In this platform, the youth will express their views against unemployment. Today, the youth in the country do not have employment. The situation is such that even those from IIT-IIM are not getting employment," Kanhaiya said.

He also said that India is the youngest country in the world. 55% of the population is young, every fifth youth in the world is an Indian. "India has never been so young. Such a young population, educated people, but what is the reality? Two youths are committing suicide in an hour. Youth suicide has also crossed the farmer suicide rate. It is such a painful thing that the suicide rate has overtaken the population growth. Why is this happening? The reason for this is that on one hand, an educated youth does not have a job of Rs 5000, while on the other hand, Rs 5000 crores are being spent on the marriage of another youth. As part of a conspiracy, these youth are being pushed into drugs. If the youth is in his senses, he will ask for a job. That is why a conspiracy is being hatched to push him into drugs," Kanhaiya added.

Fadnavis wins trust vote in Maha Assembly

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis Mahayuti led Mahayuti alliance government in Maharashtra comfortably won a confidence vote in the State assembly on Monday. The trust motion, tabled by Shiv Sena MLA Uday Samant and others, was passed by a voice vote on the last day of the three-day special assembly session.

Speaker Rahul Narwekar, elected unopposed for a second straight term earlier in the day, announced that the trust motion has been approved by the newly-constituted House. The BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP 'Mahayuti' coalition has a commanding majority of 230 seats in the 288-member assembly, where the majority mark is 145. "The confidence motion has been passed with a majority," Narwekar said. Fadnavis was sworn-in as the chief minister for a third time on December

5 at a grand ceremony in Mumbai's Azad Maidan. Eknath Shinde (Shiv Sena) and Ajit Pawar (NCP) took oath as deputy CMs at the ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The 15th assembly officially began its tenure on December 7, two weeks the poll results were announced. With the BJP-led alliance enjoying a super majority in the lower House, the floor test was a mere formality. Shiv Sena leader and former minister Samant, BJP legislator Sanjay Kute, former minister Dilip Walse Patil (NCP), and independent MLA Ravi Rana tabled the proposal for a confidence motion in the lower House. With Narwekar's appointment as Speaker, the ruling coalition now enjoys the support of 229 MLAs, including small parties and independent MLAs. Narwekar (47), the BJP MLA from Mumbai's Colaba seat and a lawyer by training, was elected unopposed as the



Speaker of the 15th assembly. Opposition alliance Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), which has less than 50 MLAs, did not put up a candidate. Fadnavis, in his congratulatory speech, highlighted that Narwekar is only the second member of the lower House to be re-elected to the post since the state's formation in 1960. "Balasaheb Bhardhe was the only Speaker of the legislative assembly to be re-elected to the post twice since 1960 when Maharashtra was formed. After Bhardhe, Narwekar is the second member of the assembly to receive the honour," the chief

minister said. He pointed out that Kundanmal Firodia was the first Speaker of the House to be reappointed, but it was during the time of Bombay state, and Sayaji L Silam was elected to the post before the formation of Maharashtra, and he was re-elected after the state came into existence. During his first tenure, Narwekar had ruled that the party led by Eknath Shinde was the "real" Shiv Sena after a split in the Uddhav Thackeray-led party in 2022. He also held that the faction under Ajit Pawar was the "real" Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), which was founded by Sharad Pawar. Making a cursory reference to the verdict on the disputes involving the Shiv Sena and NCP, Fadnavis said, "During his first tenure as Speaker, Narwekar underwent some excruciating tests of his mettle, such as the decisions related to recognising the parties in the House. It was his 'agnipariksha' (trial by fire). His

legal acumen proved invaluable during several debates in the chamber." In the evening, Governor C P Radhakrishnan addressed a joint sitting of the legislature where he said Maharashtra has emerged as the No.1 destination among all states in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). Maharashtra contributes more than 14 per cent to the country's GDP, he said.

The government has set a very ambitious target of making Maharashtra the first state to achieve the target of becoming a USD one trillion economy by the year 2027-28, the Governor emphasised. The state government has announced a policy of giving anchor industry status to mega projects and hi-tech manufacturing sector like semiconductors, electric vehicles, aerospace and defence, chemicals and polymers, lithium ion batteries, steel and other products, the Governor noted.

CM Hemant Soren takes oath as member of Jharkhand Assembly

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI



Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Monday took oath as a member of the Jharkhand Assembly on the first day of the four-day session of the House. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Radhakrishna Kishore, Revenue and Land Reforms Minister Deepak Birua and Labour Minister Sanjay Prasad Yadav were among the ministers in the Hemant Soren cabinet who also took oath as members of the assembly. The CM and the ministers were among 80 elected representatives who were administered the oath as MLAs by the assembly's pro-tem Speaker Stephen Marandi soon after the proceedings of the House began at 11 am. The House was adjourned till 11 am on Tuesday after the oath-taking ceremony. "All MLAs and ministers took oath today. We will move for

next proceedings tomorrow," the CM later told reporters. The Speaker's election is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, an assembly official said. Kishore said Nala MLA Rabintra Nath Mahato is likely to be elected as Speaker of the House unopposed as all members, including those of the BJP, have given their consent for it. The four-day session will conclude on December 12. Besides Speaker's election, governor's address, presentation of the second supplementary bud-

get and debate on the governor's speech are also scheduled during the session, the official said. Hemant Soren took oath as the 14th chief minister of Jharkhand in a grand ceremony here on November 28, while 11 MLAs took oath as state ministers on December 5. The JMM-led alliance on November 23 stormed to power in Jharkhand for the second time in a row, securing 56 seats in the 81-member assembly, while the BJP-headed NDA managed 24.

Assam CM Himanta effects major reshuffle of portfolios

PNS ■ GUWAHATI



A major reshuffle of portfolios was effected by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday, and four newly inducted ministers were assigned their departments. Sarma will hold Home, Public Works Building and National Highways, Public Works Roads, and Medical Education and Research departments, with some portfolios assigned to other ministers. He will also be in charge of Personnel and any other department not assigned to other ministers, an official notification said. Among the new ministers, Prasanta Phukan has been allotted Power and Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship departments, and will assist the chief minister in the Medical Education and Research department. Kaushik Rai will hold Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs, Mines and Minerals, and the newly created Barak Valley Development departments. Departments of

Animal Husbandry and Veterinary, and Fishery have been allocated to Krishnendu Paul, who will also assist the CM in Public Works Roads department, the notification signed by Chief Secretary Ravi Kota said. Rupesh Gowala has been given Labour Welfare and Tea Tribes and Adivasi Welfare departments, besides assisting the CM in the Home department. Ajanta Neog retained both her departments - Finance and Women and Child Development. The Health and Family Welfare

department was assigned to Ashok Singhal, who retained the Irrigation department. Atul Bora has been given charge of the Excise department, besides his existing portfolios of Agriculture, Border Protection and Development, Horticulture and Implementation of Assam Accord. Among the departments allocated anew are Tourism department to Ranjeet Kumar Dass, Revenue and Disaster Management to Keshab Mahanta, Parliamentary Affairs and Housing and Urban Affairs to Jayanta Malla Baruah.

BJP demands CBI probe into settlement of Rohingyas in Jammu

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU



The Jammu and Kashmir Unit of the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) Monday demanded a thorough CBI probe to identify all those responsible for rehabilitating illegal immigrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh in Jammu to change the demography of the region. For the last couple of days, several Rohingya settlements in and around Jammu have come on the radar of security agencies following which a fresh security audit was launched to verify their records. Rough estimates indicated over 6500 Rohingyas are camping across different localities in and around Jammu. In the ongoing drive, the intelligence agencies stumbled upon credible evidence linking the involvement of Kashmir-based Non-Government organizations (NGO's) in rehabilitating these illegal immigrants in the close vicinity of several vital security installations. Taking serious note of these developments, the UT administration launched a massive crackdown against some of

the landlords who have rented out accommodation and vacant plots to these illegal immigrants and booked them as per the law of the land. The UT administration also decided to disconnect the power and water supply to these plots and properties to evict them at the earliest. Taking note of these crucial developments Chief Spokesman of the Bharatiya Janta Party Sunil Sethi along with senior party leaders Monday urged Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha to

order a CBI inquiry to investigate and identify persons involved in bringing in and facilitating the settlement of Rohingyas and Bangladeshis in Jammu. Sethi said that such persons/elements should be booked for anti-national activities and punished. The people should know as to who have been showing sympathy with the illegally settled foreign nationals and advocating their cases in the court of law. Earlier, Jal Shakti Minister Javed Ahmed Rana, a mem-

ber of the council of ministers led by Omar Abdullah issued verbal instructions to the concerned authorities not to deprive them of essential water and power supply till the government of India takes a call on their issue. Referring to the recent diktat issued by the National Conference, Minister Sunil Sethi questioned him to explain if they respect and follow the law of the country or they are above the law and have liberty to go to any extent to appease the illegal

settlers. By siding with the Rohingyas and Bangladeshis, the NC is also playing with the future of the unemployed youth of the UT, as the Rohingyas and Bangladeshis nationals have engaged themselves in different jobs here. "It is a matter of security concern that Rohingyas and Bangladeshis have settled in J&K UT, particularly in Jammu for years now, which is a few kilometers away from Pakistan. The BJP has been repeatedly raising questions on their entering Indian territory illegally, traveling thousands of kilometers, crossing half a dozen states and settling in Jammu, said Sunil Sethi. Sethi said that anyone wishing to settle in a country can apply through proper procedure and may get permission to come and settle but in case of these Rohingyas and Bangladeshis, they have crossed over illegally, and traveled so long with the motive of settling in Jammu. They are illegal and a threat to security as well. Any yardstick cannot justify their settlement near the border. The only solution is their immediate deportation, he said.

Court commissioner seeks more time for Shahi Jama Masjid survey report

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW



The court-appointed commissioner, Ramesh Singh Raghav, has sought additional time to submit the survey report of Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal, citing health issues. The report, initially due on November 29, was delayed after Raghav requested an extension, which the court granted until December 9. On Monday, Raghav again approached the court, requesting 15 more days, which the court approved. He informed the court that while the report is almost complete, his ill health has delayed its finalization. He assured that the report would be submitted in a sealed envelope once completed. The Muslim side has expressed strong reservations over the repeated extensions. Zafar Ali, representing the Muslim petitioners, said, "We have filed our objections before the court. It now depends on the court's decision. Any further legal steps will be taken based on direc-

tives from the High Court and the Supreme Court." The dispute began on November 19 when a petition was filed in the Chandausi Civil Judge (Senior Division) court, claiming that the Shahi Jama Masjid was originally a Harihar temple. Acting on the plea, the court appointed a commissioner and ordered an immediate survey of the mosque premises. The first survey was conducted the same day, followed by a second one on

November 24. However, the second survey triggered violent clashes, resulting in five deaths and several injuries, including to police personnel. In response, police and PAC forces have been deployed across Sambhal to maintain peace. The delay in submitting the survey report has intensified the controversy. The Muslim petitioners have strongly opposed extending the deadline, accusing the commissioner of negligence.

However, Raghav has maintained that health issues have hindered the report's completion and assured the court that the report would be filed soon. Meanwhile, police teams are intensifying their search for suspects involved in the violent riots that erupted on November 24 during the Jama Masjid survey in Sambhal. The clashes, marked by stone-pelting, arson, and gunfire, claimed five lives, left many injured, and saw 29 policemen wounded. According to police investigations, hundreds of alleged rioters have fled their homes to evade arrest. Many are believed to have taken shelter in Delhi, prompting authorities to deploy teams there. "Raids are being conducted continuously, and surveillance technology is being used to trace the suspects," said Superintendent of Police Krishna Kumar Vishnoi. "A specialized unit has been formed to track key suspects involved in the deaths and attacks on security personnel, he said.

A startling revelation from the ongoing Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe is the use of foreign-made ammunition during the riots. Police recovered spent shells from Pakistan- and US-made cartridges of different bores at the site. "The seized shells will be sent for forensic analysis to determine their origin and possible smuggling routes," SP Vishnoi confirmed. Many injured victims are still undergoing treatment at local hospitals, while the condition of some remains critical. Police are also focusing on identifying those responsible for the deaths during the riots. SP Vishnoi assured the public that strict action will be taken against those involved. "We are committed to ensuring that all accused are arrested soon. No one involved in this violent incident will be spared," he stated. The investigation continues as authorities expand their search operations and intensify security in the region to prevent further unrest.

IIT-M develops AI-driven app to assess truck driving behaviour

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras has developed an AI-driven mobile application to assess truck driving behaviour on safety and energy efficiency, officials said on Monday. The mobile application also sends anticipative alerts designed to inform drivers of inadequate driving behaviour relative to the static context of road infrastructure and will enrol drivers of diesel trucks who are operating in long distances of minimum of 4,000 km per month, they said. The Centre of Excellence for Zero Emission Trucking (CoEZET) at IIT Madras has launched two major projects during "Get ZET- Shifting Gears to Zero Emission Trucking". According to IIT Madras Director V Kamakoti, the objective is to accelerate adoption of Zero Emission Trucks (ZET) like electric trucks in India as despite trucks representing

only 5 pc of the vehicle fleet, they consume nearly 65 pc of diesel, leading to substantial pollution and fuel consumption costs. "Awareness, Acceptance and Adoption - that is the process being taken. This first step is to make these stakeholders aware of the different aspects of truck electrification - the trends, advantages, challenges and technologies. The idea is to build a strong relationship based on trust. Once that relationship is in place, we plan to engage with them in order to help them accept the electrification journey - appreciating the benefits that accrue to them as well as the country and world at large," Kamakoti said. "Finally, we will help them adopt truck electrification with the right tools, training and preparations. There are many people who are working with different Stakeholders for Truck Electrification - IITM is engaging with this mostly neglected community that is going to be most critical in the Adoption of e-Trucks," he

added. The IIT Madras Director explained that India's trucking industry is on a fast growth trajectory with freight movement making up 70 pc of road-based transportation. "Such initiatives, launched early and with prolonged engagement, is expected to help India accelerate the Electrification of Trucks, thereby saving import costs of petroleum, improving competitiveness, reducing emissions and increasing driver comfort and well-being," he said. The institute will also generate awareness about Zero Emission Trucking (ZETs) among the truck drivers and operators. "This layer of stakeholders consisting of drivers, cleaners, operators, mechanics, dhabba owners, masseurs, barbers and pump operators, among others, widely called the 'User Layer', will be the most critical layer from a psychological acceptance perspective," said CS Shankar Ram, Head, Department of Engineering Design, IIT Madras.

Rest in peace, Vipul sir. Your light will never fade

GYANESHWAR DAYAL ■ NEW DELHI

The world of journalism lost one of its brightest stars on December 8, with the untimely passing of Vipul Nautiyal. And that too at an age when many are at the peak of their career, his departure has left a profound void. A celebrated journalist, a fighter with an indomitable spirit, and an empathetic human being, His relentless dedication to his craft and his humanity touched the lives of all who knew him. An integral part of The Pioneer family, Vipul Nautiyal was much more than just a journalist—he was an ardent soldier of truth. He minced no words when he disagreed

and voiced the bitterest truths when they needed to be told. Yet, he was equally generous with praise for work that impressed him or touched his soul. I first got to know him through a common friend. From then on, our friendship blossomed during meetings at the Press Club, and I grew to admire him deeply. At the time, I was contributing op-ed articles to The Pioneer, and when he asked me to join the paper full-time, I did so without hesitation. I knew I had much to learn from him—and learn I did. As a mentor and guide, Vipul sir played a pivotal role in shaping my understanding of various nuances of editing. He helped me manage the edito-

rial and op-ed pages, setting high standards for every piece. His ruthlessness when it came to quality was legendary—stories that didn't meet his standards were dropped, regardless of the writer's stature. This unwavering commitment to excellence was a rarity and something I greatly respected. His journey in journalism was neither easy nor conventional. He rose through the ranks, trying his hand at various roles—from marketing to circulation—before finding his true calling in journalism. A self-taught professional, he had an intuitive understanding of the craft, coupled with integrity and an unmatched dedication to his work. In his early days of career



October 30, 1970–December 8, 2024

when he worked as reporter, his reporting was meticulous, fearless, and insightful, often shedding light on socio-political complexities and amplifying the voices of the marginalised. In his last days despite his illness, he maintained a level of professionalism and passion that was awe-inspiring. Deadlines, late nights, and the high-pressure demands of the newsroom never fazed him, making him a role model for many aspiring writers. The past one year was a testament to his resilience. Despite battling a prolonged illness, he never let his struggles dampen his positivity or generosity. Friends and family remember him as a beacon of strength, facing adversity

with grace and courage. This same tenacity defined his career and inspired those around him. Beyond his professional achievements, Vipul sir will be remembered for his kindness and empathy. He was always ready to mentor young journalists, support colleagues, and lend a listening ear to those in need. For me, he was not just a boss but a friend, philosopher, and guide. I called him Vipul sir which sometimes annoyed him. Despite my insistence that he was my superior, he affectionately called me "Gyan sir," jokingly proposing that we be "sirs for each other." But perhaps, deep inside, he carried a sense of brokenness—a quiet melancholy he

rarely shared. There was a void within him, one he sought to fill in moments of solitude, often with a glass in hand. It was a battle he fought in silence, yet it ultimately took its toll and eventually his life. His passing has left a void that will be hard to fill, but his legacy endures in the lives he touched and the stories he told. He exemplified what it means to stand by one's principles, persevere through hardships, and approach life with compassion and integrity. Mr Vipul Nautiyal may no longer be with us, but the impact of his life and work will continue to inspire generations. Journey well, Vipul sir. You will always be with us!

Renewed vigour

PM Modi and the King Wangchuck’s meeting strengthens ties with the Himalayan kingdom and lays the groundwork for future collaboration

India and Bhutan share a relationship rooted in historical ties, cultural affinity and a deep commitment to mutual progress. This bond was reaffirmed during a recent high-level meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bhutan’s King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. The meeting underscores the enduring importance both nations place on their friendship amidst a dynamic geopolitical landscape. The foundation of India-Bhutan relations was laid with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship in 1949, which established perpetual peace and friendship, free trade and mutual cooperation. This treaty was updated in 2007 to reflect evolving dynamics, It continued to emphasise close cooperation on defence, trade and cultural exchange. India has been a steadfast partner in Bhutan’s development journey, assisting in key sectors such as hydropower, infrastructure, education and health. Bhutan, in turn, has been a reliable neighbour, sharing India’s security concerns and supporting its diplomatic endeavours.



The recent interaction between PM Modi and King Jigme Khesar sought to address emerging challenges and explore avenues for deeper collaboration. Hydropower is a cornerstone of India-Bhutan relations. Bhutan exports surplus electricity generated from its rivers to India, a mutually beneficial arrangement. Discussions focused on scaling up hydropower projects, ensuring sustainable energy practices, and addressing financial challenges related to project execution. India remains Bhutan’s largest trading partner and the leaders explored ways to diversify trade and enhance connectivity. Emphasis

was also placed on digital infrastructure and technology transfer to support Bhutan’s aspirations for modernisation. Geopolitical developments, particularly in the Indo-Pacific and Himalayan region, were key discussion points. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to regional stability and countering security threats, including transnational crimes and emerging cyber risks. Recognising the importance of fostering people-to-people ties, leaders pledged to expand scholarship programmes, skill development initiatives and cultural exchanges. These efforts aim to empower the youth and deepen cultural understanding. The dialogue between India and Bhutan holds broader geopolitical significance. As China increases its outreach in South Asia, including in the Himalayan region, India’s proactive engagement with Bhutan reaffirms its commitment to its smaller neighbours. Bhutan’s strategic location makes its partnership vital for India’s security and regional influence. India’s support for Bhutan’s participation in global forums reflects its willingness to amplify Bhutan’s voice on international issues, including climate change. As both nations work toward common goals, their relationship serves as a model for regional cooperation based on trust, benefit and mutual respect.

PICTALK



Farmers carry harvested cauliflower at a field on a winter morning, in Kolkata

PTI

Be receptive to contrary point of view!

As social beings, our lives are deeply intertwined with communication, but the same can often become a source of conflict

We are social beings. Communication with others is as integral to us as breathing. We often find conflicting conversations blowing out of proportion, sometimes leading to even a break in relationships. Unpleasantness can be avoided if we are mindful of others. We had lived in bungalows in well-planned colonies for a better part of our lives.

It was easy to be more social in such surroundings when we met only on social occasions. We, and more like us, have moved to condominium complexes only over the past few years. Private spaces are diminishing as neighbours fall over each other, literally and figuratively. This is a new life that we are still adjusting to. I noticed something different about a neighbour recently as we gathered for a meeting. We indulged in some idle banter before the start of serious business. It was a light-hearted conversation, over which we could smile or chuckle. Or so I thought, till I received his call the next day. I got the message loud and clear that he was upset over



the reference to his receding hairline. I apologised profusely for the faux pas. He does not seem to have forgiven me and has stopped greeting me when we cross each other during walks. He is the same person who does not think twice before breaking into a sarcastic verse on the community WhatsApp group, without considering the hurt he might cause to the intended victim. We have regular meetings with the governing body of our welfare association. There are arguments galore on any subject, which would not be such a bad thing, and may sometimes even be considered as a humorous interlude in an otherwise charged environment, were it not

for the seriousness with which the adversaries try to push their viewpoint to the exclusion of even listening to the other’s perspective. One morning, one of the members told me that it was good that he was now a part of the management body, otherwise he would have vehemently opposed some of the proposals. I could not fathom the logic. A wrong could not have been right only by his being inside the team. In yet another instance recently, two ladies insisted that they were right in their respective contentions. As the arguments went back and forth, I could see the gradual stubborn look on the faces of both, an indication that they were no longer listening to each other. As an independent observer, I realized that both were talking the same, albeit in different words. They were not taking the time to pause and reflect before responding. There is one more incident that I may not forget easily. I felt aggrieved enough to write to the promoter of our condominium complex about the

supposed transgressions of a neighbour in handling the community affairs. The latter was still working as an employee with the builder. I was upset and did not deem it fit to consider the latter’s point of view or the adverse impact that it might have on his professional prospects. I apologised to him in later years. He has moved on and continues to accord me respect. However, I could have avoided the unpleasantness had I taken the time to talk to him about my grievances. It would be good for everyone to be more respectful and less impulsive in an argument. If only we could follow the words of Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi, “We cling to our own point of view, as though everything depended on it. Yet our opinions have no permanence; like autumn and winter, they gradually pass away.”

(The writer is an author, speaker, coach, arbitrator and strategy consultant. He conducts workshops on creative writing for young adults and corporate executives. The views expressed are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

Superpower retreats and their fallout

Russians abandoning Assads is a stark reminder of the fact that promises of steadfast allegiance can falter when geopolitical will and resources wane

The Vietnam War was fought between the forces of the North (supported by the Soviet Union and China) and those of the South (supported by the United States of America). While it lasted twenty years (1955 to 1975) the direct involvement of the American troops lasted about a decade from 1965 onwards. The scars of 58,281 US fatalities and 303, 644 wounded had tired the spirits, emotions and morale of the Americans, and they secretly negotiated a pull-out plan under the garb of the Paris Peace Accords that the Americans knew would not hold up.

The Americans made many insincere and knowingly immoral promises to intervene on behalf of its ally, the Southern side, but when the push came to shove, it pushed the Southern side under the bus with non-intervention or support. Later day US President Ronald Reagan was to coin the term ‘Vietnam Syndrome’ to suggest a reluctance to support an international military intervention, beyond a point. A similar renege of support after almost a decade of direct military intervention was to face the Soviet-propped puppet government of Afghanistan, under Mohammad Najibullah.

Ultimately the political and popular will of the Soviets had waned as the human and financial cost of continuing the war in Afghanistan had waned. A few years later, exactly as it had happened in Vietnam, the Afghan government was ousted in a bloody offensive and Najibullah’s corpse was dragged behind a truck through the streets of Kabul. Eventually, the Soviets left him to his fate. It was the sort of end of a regime that was far less than ideal as the land of many ‘Great Games’ earlier i.e., Afghanistan, had seen similar consequences of bloodlust with the British troops leaving Afghanistan in Jan 1842 (only one survivor had managed to reach the British controlled township of Jalalabad). Sadly, even Najibullah’s ouster wasn’t to be the last of the ‘abandoning’ of a regime in Kabul. In 2021, an exhausted and dispirited American force ‘abandoned’



its ally i.e., the Ashraf Ghani government, in Kabul on the pretext of a deal signed between the Taliban and the US in Doha.

Everyone knew that the deal would not hold up and lo behold the Taliban stormed into Kabul, soon after. The ‘longest war in US history’ with a two trillion financial cost, a no-win situation, and mounting pictures of ‘US body bags’ had yet again forced the Americans to push their ally under the bus. By blindsiding its purported ally, the Americans had unilaterally let down its ally after making promises to defend the same. Afghan Vice President Amrullah Saleh was left mocking the US on its pusillanimous stand, “when a superpower decided to become a mini power”.

Recently, and yet again, it was the decisive reluctance of a major power and ally i.e., Russia and Iran, that left the beleaguered Syrian Government of Bashar Al Assad, to its inevitable fate and within days of some token support, the Syrian capital of Damascus fell to rebels, who routed the Russia-Iran supported Bashar Al Assad regime. To be fair, the ‘abandonment’ of Bashar Al Assad cannot be compared to the Vietnam or Afghanistan situations, as the principal power



AFTER THE SYRIAN REBELS HAD TAKEN OVER IDLIB AND WERE DASHING THE NEXT PROFILE TARGET OF HOMS, THE RUSSIAN FIGHTER PLANES DID BOMB SOME REBEL STRONGHOLDS, BUT IT SIMPLY WASN’T ENOUGH

behind the Syrian regime no longer had the wherewithal to continue supporting, even if they wanted to.

Russia is already bleeding and reeling under the humiliating and costly stalemate on the Ukrainian front, whereas the Iranians and their strategic regional proxies (e.g. Hezbollah and the Houthis) were getting systematically decimated and attacked with literal impunity.

After the Syrian rebels had taken over Idlib and were dashing the next profile target of Homs, the Russian fighter planes did bomb some rebel strongholds, but it simply wasn’t enough. Soon, the Syrian rebels made the kill for Damascus, and the isolated and unsupported forces of Bashar Al Assad simply couldn’t hold on. History repeated itself and in the face of supporting foreign allies failing the regime, it was tantamount to pushing the same under the bus!

The lessons are substantial for other regions facing similar belligerence or circumstances i.e., counting on declared allies cannot be assumed, definitely and certainly not, infinitely. When there were grave tensions on Indo-Sino borders in 2020, then President Donald Trump (author of a book aptly titled, ‘The Art of Deal’) made mean-

ingless offers to ‘negotiate’ between the two sides, as opposed to denouncing Chinese expansionism and aggression, unequivocally. While certain military orders with Delhi were indeed signed and expedited – the same made great transactional and commercial sense to the American defence sector. This is something that the already cornered Ukrainian President Zelensky must be fearing as President-elect Donald Trump sheepishly talks about yet another ‘deal’ to supposedly end the Russia-Ukraine war. History is instructive of the consequences that await whenever similar ‘deals’ (read, abandonment) are made by a Superpower, be it the Americans or most recently, the Russians in Syria. Reveling on the latest situation in Syria, Donald Trump tweeted, “Assad is gone. He has fled his country.

His protector, Russia...led by Vladimir Putin, was not interested in protecting him any longer” – while it is true, it has been no different for the US, throughout history. Trump too has the blood of letting down Afghanistan on his hands.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WEST ASIA IN TURMOIL

Madam — This refers to the editorial on the developments in Syria (December 9). In West Asia, mostly countries are dominated by Muslims, the people have hardly anything to feel elated about. The hate against the subjects of the same religion is dominating the scene in most of the countries there. Each group is in constant war against the other not for economic benefits but for an upper hand over the other group. In the process the struggling groups have taken the path of terrorism forgetting that the one who wins is not the permanent winner and victories are purely ephemeral. In Syria also the number of such groups divided by sub-divisions of the same religion, culture, etc., is too many, and this makes it clear that whoever has won now is only for a temporary period, as the deprived groups will always be waiting to take revenge and capture power. In this entire game, the real beneficiaries are the developed nations whose main plank of economy is weapon trade. Selling weapons to every terrorist and warring group is a flourishing trade. Therefore, either of the groups is provoked, promoted, and equipped with enough weapons and the fire is kept alive. In the case of Syria, though Assad has fled the country, bowing to the rebels, the civil war among the groups will continue to be there. But all the groups call it a jihad meaning I am killing you to satisfy the same God whom we both worship piously. Terrorism knows no economy, no logic, no rationality, and no ideology, and it is simply a mental affair capable of destroying anything and nothing constructive.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

AUSTRALIA DEFEATS INDIA

Madam — Indian cricket is not in the pink of health and the second test at Adelaide was a highly disappointing one for the fans by this indigestible defeat. The scores of 180 and 175 in the first and second innings, respectively, by Indian batters were a little more than 19 runs behind the chase for the Aussies in the second innings, winning this

World Meditation Day declared



Meditation is a timeless element that connects the soul’s depth, offering humanity a path to mental peace, physical health, and spiritual growth. Recognising December 21 as World Meditation Day honours this ancient practice and symbolises global recognition of India’s cultural heritage. In modern life, meditation has evolved as a science for holistic development, offering hope to those grappling with stress and spiritual unrest.

The winter solstice, marking the start of Uttarayan in Indian tradition, is especially sacred for meditation, as the flow of energy in nature fosters spiritual awakening. Amid personal, social, and economic challenges, meditation offers mental stability, reduces stress, and enhances concentration while alleviating disorders like anxiety and depression. Its benefits extend to physical health, stabilising blood pressure, heart rate, and boosting immunity. World Meditation Day, endorsed by the UN, reflects India’s cultural strength and influence.

R K Jain | Barwani

cricket. With 1 win each, the remaining tests will be the test of time for the future of Indian cricket.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

MORE SCHOOLS FOR RURAL AREAS

Madam — PM Modi’s Saturday-X post, stating the Cabinet decision to open the 85 new Kendriya Vidyalayas and 28 Navodaya Vidyalayas across the country and make accessible school education maximal, is a top-notch contribution. From the vantage point of the present, it seems that, ostensibly, rural students are still under scrutiny over facilities as compared to urban. There are far fewer schools, poorly qualified teachers, and miserable schools, grinding the little students’ study zeal and future immeasurably. The government must consolidate the correlation of urban development with rural. Pull up its socks to upgrade the situation of being more adept.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

BRAIN ROT IN THE DIGITAL AGE

There is alarming cognitive decline linked to overindulgence in mindless digital content



SAKSHI SETHI

In a world saturated with endless entertainment, constant notifications and superficial distractions, the human brain faces unprecedented challenges. The term brain rot refers to the perceived decline in cognitive abilities or intellectual engagement due to excessive consumption of mindless or unproductive content. While it is colloquial and not a clinical diagnosis, it describes mental fog, reduced attention span and diminished problem-solving abilities often linked to prolonged screen time or low-value content. Studies suggest that heavy screen usage can correlate with reduced grey matter in the brain, which may impair critical thinking and memory, particularly among younger individuals. It also contributes to mental health issues like anxiety and depression, driven by constant comparisons and exposure to idealised online content. The rise of social media, streaming platforms and short-form content has revolutionised how we consume information and entertainment. While these platforms offer unprecedented access to global knowledge, they also foster habits of passive consumption. Endless scrolling and binge-watching also lead to mental fatigue and reduced attention spans, making it harder for individuals to engage with more complex ideas or tasks. Brain rot can also stem from a lack of intellectual stimulation. Activities that challenge the brain such as reading, problem-solving, or engaging in creative pursuits are often sidelined in favour of easier, low-effort distractions. Over time, this neglect can lead to a decline in critical thinking, memory retention and problem-solving skills.



The modern lifestyle, characterised by high levels of stress and constant multitasking, can contribute to cognitive decline. It is often said that chronic stress impairs brain function, particularly in areas responsible for memory and learning which creates a vicious cycle where individuals turn to mindless activities to escape stress, further exacerbating mental stagnation. Moreover, a sedentary lifestyle, coupled with a diet lacking in nutrients essential for brain function, can also lead to cognitive decline. In maintaining mental clarity and overall brain health, physical exercise and a balanced diet play crucial roles. The effects of brain rot are far-reaching and can manifest in various aspects of life. A lack of focus and motivation often results in decreased efficiency and the inability to complete tasks effectively. Overindulgence in passive entertainment stifles the ability to think creatively or generate original ideas. The overuse of escapist media can lead to a disconnect from real-world emotions and experiences, fostering feelings of emptiness or dissatisfaction. Excessive reliance on digital communication can impair interpersonal relationships and the ability to engage in meaningful, face-to-face interactions. Addressing brain rot requires a multifaceted approach that emphasises mindfulness, discipline and a commitment to personal growth. Setting boundaries for screen time and being intentional about the type of content consumed can help reduce the effects of brain rot. By choosing educational or thought-provoking material over passive entertainment the mind can be stimulated; by prioritising physical health such as regular physical exercise, a balanced diet and setting goals for personal and intellectual growth learning can help foster mental resilience and creativity. They will also help reduce stress and combat mental inertia.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Addressing Hindu persecution in Bangladesh

India must take decisive action to safeguard the persecuted and assert its role as a defender of minority rights, cultural identity and regional stability



The escalating persecution of Hindu minorities in Bangladesh cloaked under the guise of political shifts and regime change, underscores an alarming resurgence of communal violence. With reports of systematic targeting and atrocities emerging over months, the role of the current regime, reportedly influenced by Jamaat-e-Islami, demands scrutiny. India, as the world's largest Hindu-majority nation and a protector of minority rights, cannot afford to stand as a passive observer. Instead, it must respond with decisive and proactive measures to safeguard not only the Hindu minority in Bangladesh but also its own cultural and historical ethos. Reports of widespread violence against Hindus in Bangladesh reveal a pattern of calculated aggression. From desecration of temples and destruction of property to orchestrated violence, these acts are not isolated incidents but part of a broader, systematic campaign. The roots of this antagonism can be traced back to the Great Bengal Partition of 1905 when radical elements sought to establish an Islamic dominion in the region. Although temporarily disrupted by Bangladesh's liberation in 1971, the vision of Darul-ul-Islam—a dominion governed by Islamic law—has been rekindled. Under the current regime, these historical grievances have been weaponised to erode Hindu culture and population. What makes the situation more alarming is the reported nexus between the Bangladeshi government, Pakistan's ISI, radical jihadi groups, and influential ideologues like Jamaat-e-Islami. These forces seem united in their goal of reshaping Bangladesh's demographic and cultural landscape to align with extremist ideologies. **Mohammad Yunus and the Shadow of Global Influence** Central to this crisis is the controversial figure of Mohammad Yunus, a Nobel laureate who reportedly plays a significant role in the regime's ideological alignment. While his global reputation as a microfinance pioneer lends him an aura of credibility, his alleged affiliations with anti-Hindu policies and his ties with external powers, including China and certain factions in the United States, raise concerns. These alignments have not only emboldened the regime but have also enabled it to criticise India under the pretext of democracy and human rights violations. This geopolitical manipulation, leveraging both soft power and hard alliances, directly challenges India's sovereignty and its role as a regional stabiliser. India must counter these narratives with truth and assert its position as a defender of minority rights. The current crisis mirrors the challenges faced by India in 1971. The liberation of Bangladesh under Indira Gandhi was driven by humanitarian and strategic imperatives—protecting millions of refugees and dismantling a regime that perpetuated genocide. Today, the targeting of Hindus in Bangladesh represents a similar humanitarian catastrophe and a strategic threat. India, home to the largest Hindu population in the world, bears a unique responsibility to safeguard its diaspora and kin. The Narendra Modi government has a historic opportunity to emulate the bold decisions of 1971, reaffirming India's role as a protector of justice and a regional powerhouse.



INDIA MUST SUPPORT THE EMERGENCE OF A FAVOURABLE AND INCLUSIVE REGIME THAT CAN COUNTER EXTREMIST IDEOLOGIES. THIS APPROACH, WHILE CONTROVERSIAL, ALIGNS WITH INDIA'S STRATEGIC AND HUMANITARIAN INTERESTS

A Strategic Path Forward India's response to the crisis must be multifaceted, encompassing aggression, diplomacy, and strategic recalibration. India's security apparatus must transcend reactive measures. By identifying and dismantling rogue elements within Bangladesh that orchestrate attacks on minorities, India can send a strong message. Targeted strikes, similar to Israel's precision operations, could serve as a deterrent and emphasise India's commitment to protecting its Hindu diaspora. Bangladesh's economic reliance on India provides a powerful tool. By imposing strategic trade sanctions and mobilising international opinion, India can isolate the current regime, pressuring it to reconsider its policies. Efforts must also focus on highlighting the human rights abuses faced by minorities in Bangladesh, garnering global support for the cause. Long-term stability in Bangladesh hinges on a government that respects minority rights and values democratic principles. India must support the emergence of a favourable and inclusive regime that can counter extremist ideologies. This approach, while controversial, aligns with India's strategic and humanitarian interests. A bolder proposition involves addressing the demographic realities of 1971 when Hindus comprised around 21 per cent of Bangladesh's population. Securing territories proportional to this demographic could provide a haven for minorities while addressing historical injustices. Such a solution would echo the decisive territorial realignments of 1947 and 1971, albeit adapted to contemporary challenges. The Hindu community worldwide must unite against these atrocities. India, with its population of over one billion Hindus, should lead by example, adopting a robust stance to counter persecution. Strengthened solidarity, coupled with decisive government action, can set a precedent for minority protection globally. **Rebuilding Regional Stability** The crisis also necessitates a reevaluation of India's relationship with Bangladesh. Despite India's pivotal role in Bangladesh's

liberation, successive regimes have displayed hostility and indifference. This lack of gratitude underscores the need for a recalibration of India's foreign policy toward its neighbour. Through a combination of economic, social, diplomatic, and military strategies, India must assert its dominance in the region. The message should be unequivocal: any violence against Hindus or hostile actions will be met with resolute action. Israel's unwavering commitment to its sovereignty and people offers valuable lessons for India. Despite being a small nation, Israel has consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of decisive measures in safeguarding its citizens. India, with its vast resources and geopolitical influence, must adopt similar strategies to protect its minorities and assert its regional leadership. **A Turning Point for India** The Bangladesh crisis represents more than a regional issue; it is a defining moment for India's foreign policy and its identity as a nation. By taking bold and proactive measures, the Narendra Modi government can reaffirm India's role as a defender of justice and humanity. Protecting Hindus in Bangladesh is not just about addressing a humanitarian crisis—it is about asserting India's sovereignty, preserving its cultural identity, and ensuring regional stability. Instead of hoping for UNHRC intervention, the Indian government must rise to the occasion, transforming the crisis into an opportunity to redefine India's role in South Asia. With decisive action, India can prevent history from repeating itself, ensuring that justice prevails and that the legacy of protecting minorities endures. (The writer is prominent columnist and Public Policy Expert; the views expressed are personal)

The imperative of continuous learning in India's AI-driven future

The rapid growth of AI, has intensified the demand for skilled professionals. Yet, a stark talent gap threatens this progress

Technology has become an integral part of our daily lives and work, making continuous learning essential to stay relevant. The rapid adoption of automation and advanced digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), is not just transforming industries but also reshaping the skills employers expect from their workforce. By 2027, it is projected that 80 per cent of engineering roles will require employees to undergo training and development to meet the changing demands brought about by AI advancements, according to Gartner. In India, the demand for skilled professionals in technology-driven fields, especially AI, is growing significantly. Reports by BCG and NASS



SUMIT SHUKLA

COM indicate that the AI market in the country could grow to \$17 billion by 2027, with an annual growth rate of 25–35 per cent. However, this growth is accompanied by a stark shortage of experts in advanced technologies. NASSCOM estimates that over a million skilled engineers specialising in AI and related technologies will be needed in

the coming years. Alarming, the talent gap could rise from 25 per cent to nearly 30 per cent by 2028, emphasising the critical need for skill development among both new graduates and experienced professionals. One significant challenge is the disconnect between formal education and the practical skills required in the job market. Every year, approximately 1.5 million engineering graduates enter the workforce in India, yet only a fraction secure jobs aligned with their field of study. This mismatch is not due to a lack of opportunities but stems from the gap between the theoretical knowledge imparted in academic institutions and the hands-on skills sought by employers. Beyond technical expertise,

companies now prioritise candidates with interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence, essential for thriving in collaborative and dynamic work environments. The India Skills Report 2024 highlights this concern, noting that while some states, such as Telangana, have made strides in job preparedness among the 18 to 21 age group, critical skill gaps persist. For roles reliant on AI and emerging technologies, the gap ranges from 60 per cent to 73 per cent. These statistics underscore the urgent need for educational institutions to revamp their curricula to better align with industry demands. Updating academic programmes is vital to bridging this gap. Universities and colleges must incorporate indus-



try trends and practical learning experiences into their courses. Today's workforce needs to think critically across disciplines and understand the broader implications of technology on economic, social, and cultural contexts. Flexible and continuous education plays a pivotal role in closing the divide between academic knowledge and the realities of the job market. Digital learning platforms offer

a promising solution in this context. With over 50 per cent of Indians actively using the internet, online education provides accessible opportunities to acquire new skills. Edtech platforms specialising in skill enhancement allow individuals to enroll in tailored courses and programmes, preparing them for rapidly evolving job landscapes. The benefits of continuous learning extend beyond career advancement. Employees who are adaptable and committed to enhancing their knowledge contribute to organisational innovation and help businesses navigate shifting market dynamics. For instance, as AI becomes more integrated across industries, the demand for experts in these technologies will continue to rise.

Forward-thinking companies are already investing in employee training programs to stay competitive and ensure their teams are equipped to handle emerging challenges. Despite these efforts, many traditional educational institutions struggle to meet industry needs. Relying heavily on lecture-based teaching, these institutions often focus on theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical skills. Students have limited access to industry-standard equipment or opportunities for hands-on problem-solving, leaving them ill-prepared for the workforce. Integrating real-world applications into academic learning bridges the gap between theoretical instruction and practical expertise, ensuring graduates are ready to meet

employer expectations. Upskilling is not just about addressing current deficiencies—it involves cultivating a mindset of continuous improvement. In a world where industries evolve rapidly and the shelf life of skills is shrinking, professionals must adapt to new technologies and methodologies quickly. Skills once considered indispensable can become obsolete within a few years, making the ability to learn and relearn critical for success in today's professional environment. For individuals and organisations alike, embracing continuous education is a strategic move to navigate the present and excel in the future. (The writer is CEO at Scholars Merit, views are personal)

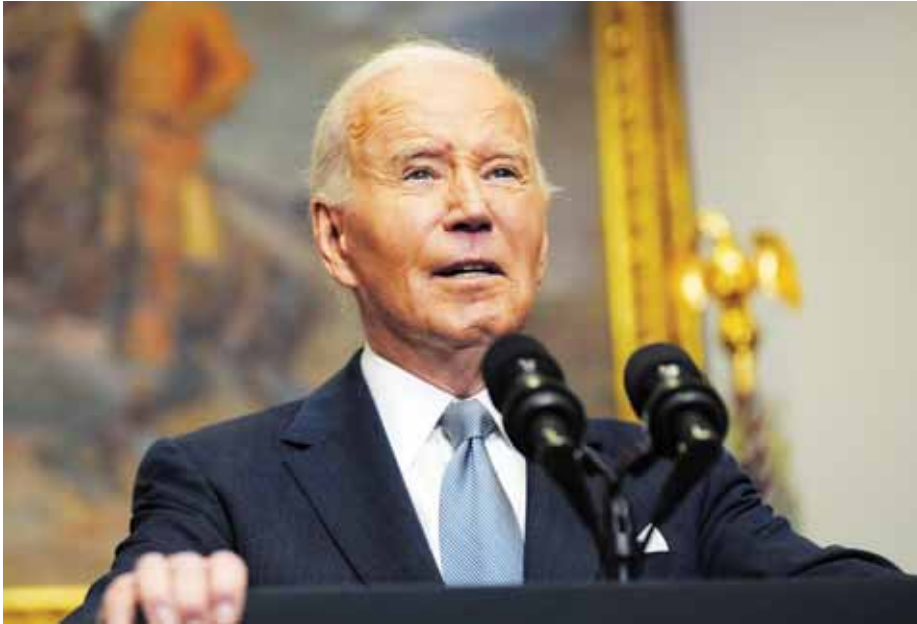
Fall of Assad regime 'historic opportunity for people' of Syria: Biden

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The fall of the Assad regime that brutalised, tortured and killed thousands of innocent Syrians over the past half a century is a historic opportunity for the people of the country, outgoing US President Joe Biden said on Sunday. Biden spoke at the White House hours after rebel groups took over the country following more than a dozen years of violent civil war and decades of leadership by Bashar Assad and his family. “After 13 years of civil war in Syria and more than half a century of brutal authoritarian rule by Bashar Assad and his father before him, rebel forces have forced Assad to resign his office and flee the country. We’re not sure where he is, but there’s word that he’s in Moscow. At long last, the Assad regime has fallen,” Biden said. “This regime brutalised, tortured and killed hundreds of thousands of innocent Syrians. The fall of the regime is a fun-

damental act of justice. It’s a moment of historic opportunity for the long-suffering people of Syria to build a better future for their proud country,” he said. It is also a moment of risk and uncertainty, Biden said, adding that over the past few weeks, the support of Hezbollah, Iran and Russia to the Assad regime had collapsed. He observed a new opportunity for the people of Syria now. The Syrian opposition that brought down Assad is led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which the US says is a terrorist organisation with links to al-Qaida. However, the group says it has since broken ties with al-Qaida. “Looking ahead, the United States will do the following. First, we’ll support Syria’s neighbours, including Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Israel, should any threat arise from Syria during this period of transition. I will speak with leaders of the region in the coming days. I had long discussions with all of our people ear-

lier this morning. I’ll send senior officials from my administration to the region as well,” he said. “Second, we will help ensure stability in eastern Syria, protecting our personnel against any threats, and our mission against ISIS will be maintained, including security of detention facilities, where ISIS fighters are being held as prisoners. We’re clear-eyed about the fact that ISIS will try to take advantage of any vacuum to reestablish its capabilities and create a haven. We will not let that happen,” he said. “Just today, US forces conducted a dozen precision strikes, airstrikes, within Syria, targeting ISIS camps and operatives. Third, we will engage with all Syrian groups, including within the process led by the United Nations to establish a transition away from the Assad regime towards independent and sovereign Syria, with a new constitution, and a new government that serves all Syrians. And this process will be determined by the Syrian



President Joe Biden speaks about the sudden collapse of the Syrian government under Bashar Assad from the Roosevelt Room at the White House in Washington. AP/PTI

people themselves,” Biden said. A day earlier, Trump ruled out any role for the US in Syria. “In

any event, Syria is a mess, but is not our friend and THE UNITED STATES SHOULD

HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH IT. THIS IS NOT OUR FIGHT. LET IT PLAY OUT.

Will make it easier for people to come in legally, says Trump

Insists on deporting all illegal immigrants

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Incoming US President Donald Trump on Sunday said he would go ahead with his plans to deport all illegal immigrants after entering the Oval Office and said at the same time he would make it easier for people to come in, a move that could be helpful to Indians who mostly enter the US legally. “I think you have to do it,” Trump told NBC News in an interview when asked if he plans to deport everyone who is here illegally over the next four years. “You have to have, rules, regulations, laws. They came in illegally. People that have been treated very unfairly are the people that have been online for 10 years to come into the country. We are going to make it very easy for people to come

in terms of they have to pass the test. They have to be able to tell you what the Statue of Liberty is. They have to tell you a little bit about our country,” Trump said. “They can’t come out of prisons. We don’t want people that are in for murder. So, we had 11,000 and 13,000 different estimates, 13,099 murderers released into our country over the last three years. They’re walking down the streets. They’re walking next to you and your family. They’re very dangerous. You don’t want those people in this country,” he said. “I’m saying this. We have to get the criminals out of our country. We have to get people that were taken out of mental institutions and put them back into their mental institution, no matter what country it is,” Trump said, adding that his top

priority on the deportation list is going to be such criminals. “Number one, we’re doing criminals and we’re going to do them rapidly. We’re getting the worst gang probably with MS-13 and the Venezuelan gangs are the worst in the world. They’re vicious, violent people,” he said. “Is it realistic to deport everyone who’s here illegally?” he was asked. “You have no choice. First of all, they’re costing us a fortune. But we’re starting with the criminals, and we’ve got to do it. Then we’re starting with others, and we’re going to see how it goes. Others are other people outside of criminals. We have convicted murderers. We don’t mean people that are even on trial. We have people that have murdered numerous people on our streets and in our farms, and we have to get them out of our country,” he said.

“The dreamers are going to come later and we have to do something about the dreamers because these are people that have been brought here at a very young age. Many of these are middle-aged people now. They don’t even speak the language of their country. And yes, we’re going to do something about the dreamers,” he said. “I will work with the Democrats on a plan. And if we can come up with a plan. But the Democrats have made it very, very difficult to do anything. Republicans are very open to the dreamers. The dreamers, we’re talking many years ago, they were brought into this country. Some of them are no longer young people. In many cases, they become successful. They have great jobs. We are going to have to do something with them,” he said.

Syrian premier says govt still functioning but foreign and domestic challenges loom

AP ■ DAMASCUS

Syria’s prime minister said Monday that most Cabinet ministers are still working from offices in Damascus after rebels entered the capital over the weekend and overthrew President Bashar Assad. Streams of refugees crossed in from neighbouring countries, hoping for a more peaceful future. But there were already signs of the difficulties ahead for the rebel alliance now in control of much of the country, which is led by a former senior al-Qaida militant who severed ties with the extremist group years ago and has promised representative government and religious tolerance. Israel said it is carrying out airstrikes on suspected chemical weapons sites and long-range rockets to keep them from falling into the hands of extremists. Israel has also seized a buffer zone inside Syria after Syrian troops withdrew. In a separate development, the Kremlin said Russia has granted political asylum to Assad, a decision taken by President Vladimir Putin. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov declined to comment on Assad’s specific whereabouts and said Putin was not planning to meet with him. In northern Syria, Turkey said allied opposition forces seized the town of Manbij from Kurdish-led forces backed by the United States, a reminder that even after Assad’s departure to Russia the country remains split among armed groups that have fought in the past. Damascus was quiet on Monday, with life slowly returning to normal while most shops and public institutions were closed. In public squares, some people were still celebrating. Civilian traffic resumed but there was no public transport, leaving some to hitchhike. Long lines formed in front of bakeries and other food stores. There was little sign of any security presence, and Associated Press reporters saw a few SUVs on the side of a

main boulevard that appeared to have been broken into, with their windows shattered and their doors open. In some areas, small groups of armed men were stationed in the streets. A video circulating online showed a man in military fatigues holding a rifle attempting to reassure residents of the Mezzeh neighbourhood in Damascus that they would not be harmed. “We have nothing against you, neither Alawite, nor Christian, nor Shiite, nor Druze, but everyone must behave well, and no one should try to attack us,” the fighter said. **Prime minister says the government is still operational:** Prime Minister Mohammed Ghazi Jalali, who remained in his post after Assad and most of his top officials vanished over the weekend, has sought to project normalcy. “We are working so that the transitional period is quick and smooth,” he told Sky News Arabia TV on Monday, saying the security situation had already improved from the day before, when joyful crowds gathered in public squares and celebratory gunfire rang out across the capital. He said the government is

coordinating with the insurgents, and that he is ready to meet rebel leader Ahmad al-Sharaa, formerly known as Abu Mohammed al-Golani, who made a triumphal appearance at a famed Damascus mosque on Sunday. Syrians who only days ago were working at all levels of the bureaucracy in Assad’s regime were now flipping to the new reality. At the court of Justice in Damascus, which was stormed by the rebels to free detainees, Judge Khitam Haddad, an aide to the justice minister in the outgoing government, said Sunday that judges were ready to resume work quickly. “We want to give everyone their rights. We don’t their rights to be wasted,” Haddad told AP outside the courthouse. “We want to build a new Syria and to keep the work but with new methods.” Meanwhile, a Syrian opposition war monitor said a top aide to Assad’s brother, Maher, was found dead in his office near Damascus. A video that circulated on social media purportedly showed Maj. Gen. Ali Mahmoud covered with blood and with his clothes burned. The Britain-based Syrian

Observatory for Human Rights said it was not clear if he was killed or died by suicide. Maher Assad, whose whereabouts are unknown, led the army’s 4th Armored Division, which played a major role in the civil war that erupted in 2011, after a popular uprising against Assad led to a violent crackdown on dissent and the rise of an insurgency. **Turkey says its allies have taken northern town:** Officials in Turkey, which is the main supporter of the Syrian opposition to Assad, say its allies have taken full control of the northern Syrian city of Manbij from a US-supported and Kurdish-led force known as the Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF. The SDF said a Turkish drone struck in the village of al-Mistriha in eastern Syria, killing 12 civilians, including six children. Turkey views the SDF, which is primarily composed of a Syrian Kurdish militia, as an extension of the banned Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK, which has waged a decades-long insurgency in Turkey. The SDF has also been a key ally of the United States in the war against the Islamic State group.



Syrians arrive to cross into Syria from Turkey at the Cilvegözü border gate, near the town of Antakya, southern Turkey. AP/PTI

If we are subsidising Canada, Mexico let them become a state of US: Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Claiming that the US is subsidising its two neighbours Canada and Mexico to the tune of USD 100 billion and USD 300 billion, respectively, incoming US President Donald Trump on Sunday said that if that is the case then these two countries better be a part of America. Trump, 78, has threatened to impose hefty tariffs on both Canada and Mexico if they don’t stop the flow of illegal immigrants into the US through their territories. “We’re subsidising Canada to the tune of over USD 100 billion a year. We’re subsidising Mexico for almost USD 300 billion. We shouldn’t be subsidising. Why are we subsidising

these countries? If we’re going to subsidise them, let them become a state (of the US),” Trump told NBC News in an interview, his first on a Sunday talk show after winning the November 5 presidential elections. “We’re subsidising Mexico, we’re subsidising Canada, and we’re subsidising many countries all over the world. All I want to do is have a level, fast, but fair playing field,” he asserted. Trump refuted the observations by some American CEOs that tariffs would cost the US and increase the cost of common commodities thus putting a strain on common people. “They cost Americans nothing. They made a great economy for us. They also solve another

problem. If we were going to have problems having to do with wars and having to do with other things, tariffs, I have stopped wars with tariffs by saying, you guys want to fight, it’s great, but both of you are going to pay tariffs to the United States at 100 per cent. They have many purposes (for), tariffs if properly used. I don’t say you use them like a madman. I say properly used,” he said. “But it didn’t cost this country anything. It made this country money. We never really got the chance to go all out because we had to fight COVID in the last part. We did it very successfully. When I handed it over to Biden, the stock market was higher than it was just previous to COVID coming in. It was

higher. Tariffs, if properly used, are a very powerful tool, not only economically, but also for getting other things outside of economics,” he said. “Are you going to impose these tariffs, or are they a negotiating tactic?” Trump was asked. “Well, I’ll give you an example. With Canada, and in particular Mexico, we have millions of people pouring into our country. I spoke with both (the leaders). I spoke with Justin Trudeau. He flew to Mar-a-Lago within... about 15 seconds after the call-in. It was at Mar-a-Lago. We were having dinner, talking about it,” Trump said. “I said to the president of Mexico and Justin Trudeau, if it doesn’t stop, I’m going to put tariffs on your country at about 25 per cent,” Trump insisted.

to have weathered an Arab Spring uprising-turned-civil war. Iraqi insurgents killed US troops with Iranian-designed roadside bombs. Yemen’s Houthi rebels fought a Saudi-led coalition to a stalemate. Syria, at the crossroads, played a vital role. Early in Syria’s civil war, when it appeared Assad might be overthrown, Iran and its ally, Hezbollah, rushed fighters to support him — in the name of defending Shiite shrines in Syria. Russia later joined with a scorched earth campaign of airstrikes. The campaign won back territory, even as Syria remained divided into zones of government and insurgent control. But the speed of Assad’s collapse the past week showed just how reliant he was on support from Iran and Russia — which at the crucial moment didn’t come. “What was surprising was the Syrian’s army’s failure to counter the offensive, and also the speed of the developments,”

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told state television late Sunday night. “That was unexpected.” Russia remains mired in Ukraine years after launching a full-scale invasion there in 2022. For Iran, international sanctions over its advancing nuclear programme have ground down its economy. For Israel, breaking Iran’s regional network has been a major goal, though it is wary over jihadi fighters among the insurgents who toppled Assad. Israel on Sunday moved troops into a demilitarised buffer zone with Syria by the Israel-held Golan Heights in what it called a temporary security measure. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Assad’s fall a “historic day,” saying it was “the direct result of our forceful action against Hezbollah and Iran, Assad’s main supporters”. Iran’s theocratic rulers long touted their regional network to Iranians as a show of their country’s strength, and its crumbling could raise reper-

cussions at home — though there is no immediate sign of their hold weakening. Anger over the tens of billions of dollars Iran is believed to have spent propping up Assad was a rallying cry in rounds of nationwide anti-government protests that have broken out over recent years, most recently in 2022. Iran could respond by revving up its nuclear programme. The loss of Syria does not mean the end of Iran’s ability to project power in the Mideast. The Houthi rebels continue to launch attacks on Israel and on ships moving through the Red Sea — though the tempo of their attacks has again fallen without a clear explanation from their leadership. Iran also maintains its nuclear programme. While insisting it enriches uranium for peaceful purposes, Western intelligence agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency say Iran had an organised nuclear weapons programme until 2003.

The head of the IAEA also warned Friday that Iran is poised to “quite dramatically” increase its stockpile of near weapons-grade uranium as it has started cascades of advanced centrifuges. “If Iran would develop nuclear weapons, that would be a great blow to the international non-proliferation regime,” said Thanos Dokos, Greece’s national security adviser, in Bahrain. There remains a risk of wider attacks in the region, particularly on oil infrastructure. An attack in 2019 initially claimed by the Houthis but later assessed by experts to have been carried out by Iran temporarily halved Saudi Arabia’s production of oil. “If, as a result of escalation, there are attacks against the energy infrastructure of Iran or Saudi Arabia, that would be bad news for the global oil supply,” Dokos warned. Whatever happens next, Iran will need to make the decision weighing the problems it faces at both home and abroad.

Thousands of Syrian soldiers cross into Iraq, official says

AP ■ BAGHDAD

More than 4,000 Syrian army soldiers have crossed into Iraq since rebel forces seized Damascus and overthrew the government of Bashar Assad, a militia official in western Iraq said Monday. The official with the Anbar Tribal Mobilisation Forces said that the soldiers had turned over their weapons, ammunition and armoured vehicles and would be housed in a camp. He did not say where the camp was located. Another security official said that the governor of the Syrian province of Hasakeh had come to the border late Sunday night with a convoy of Syrian army soldiers who wanted to cross into Iraq, and they were allowed in via the Qaim crossing. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the matter.

nuclear programme. Though it denies that intention, it can use the potential for building a weapons capability to cast a shadow of influence in the region. “Iran remains a critical regional player,” Gargash said. “We should use this moment to connect and speak about what’s

next in my opinion.” It’s a dramatic reversal in Iran’s regional might. Only a few years ago, the Islamic Republic loomed ascendant across the wider Middle East. Its ‘Axis of Resistance’ was at a zenith. Hezbollah in Lebanon stood up against Israel. Assad appeared

er to Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, once called Assad and Syria “the golden ring of the resistance chain in the region.” “Without the Syrian government, this chain will break and the resistance against Israel and its supporters will be weakened.” That break in the chain is literal. Syria was an important geographical link that allowed Iran to move weapons and other supplies to Hezbollah in Lebanon. Its loss now further weakens Hezbollah, whose powerful arsenal in southern Lebanon had put Iranian influence directly on the border of its nemesis Israel. “Iran’s deterrence thinking is really shattered by events in Gaza, by events in Lebanon and definitely by developments in Syria,” a senior diplomat from the United Arab Emirates, Anwar Gargash, said at the International Institute for Strategic Studies’ Manama Dialogue in Bahrain. Iran still holds the card of its

And now Iran’s longtime stalwart ally and client in Syria, President Bashar Assad, is gone. As dawn broke Sunday, rebel forces completed a lightning offensive by seizing the ancient capital of Damascus and tearing down symbols of more than 50 years of Assad’s rule over the Mideast crossroads. Ali Akbar Velayati, a key advis-



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer meets Director General Youssef Alabaidli as he visits the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, during his three day visit of United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Cyprus.

AP/PTI

Israeli strikes in Gaza kill 6, target chemical weapons sites in Syria

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Palestinian medical officials said Monday that Israeli strikes in the central Gaza Strip overnight killed at least six people, including one woman. The strikes came as ousted Syrian leader Bashar Assad fled to Moscow on Sunday and received asylum from his longtime ally, according to Russian media, hours after rebels seized control of Damascus.

The UN Security Council plans to hold emergency closed consultations on Syria later Monday at Russia's request. Among the dead in the overnight Israeli strikes were Raed Ghabaeni, who was released from Israeli detention in 2014, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, where the casualties were taken.

He was killed along with his wife when an Israeli strike hit their tent in the central town of Zuweida, the hospital records showed. Two other people were killed in a strike that hit their house late Sunday in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp. Another two were killed in a strike in the Wadi Gaza area early Monday.

An Associated Press journalist counted the bodies at the hospital's morgue.

Israel's offensive has killed over 44,500 Palestinians in the Gaza since the start of the war, according to local health authorities. They say most of the dead are women and children but do not distinguish between fighters and civilians. Israel says it only strikes militants and blames Hamas for civilian deaths because its fighters operate in residential areas.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250, including older adults and children. Around 100 hostages are still inside

Gaza, at least a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Turkish foreign minister says Ankara hopes for an inclusive govt in Syria: Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said Monday that Ankara hopes the fall of the Syrian government will usher in a new era where different ethnic and religious groups can live peacefully under an inclusive new government.

Fidan also said his country hopes that a "new Syria" would maintain good relations with its neighbors and bring stability to the volatile region.

"The developments in Syria yesterday have given us a glimmer of hope," Fidan said in a speech to Turkish ambassadors. "We expect international actors, especially the United Nations, to reach out to the Syrian people and support the formation of an inclusive government." The minister said Turkey would continue to support Syria's territorial and political unity and work toward the country's "prosperity, security and stability."

But Fidan said it was important that the Islamic State group and Kurdish militants do not take advantage of the situation, adding that Turkey "would want with determination" to prevent Syria from turning into a "haven for terrorism."

"Turkey, which has reached out to its Syrian brothers during difficult times, will also be by their side, as the new page opens in Damascus," Fidan said. "We believe that the Syrian people will also make good use of this golden opportunity."

Israel says a drone that appears to have originated in Yemen hit a city in central Israel: The Israeli military said Monday that a drone that appeared to have originated in Yemen slammed into a city in central Israel.

Video posted by Israeli news sites showed a large burst of smoke erupting from a high-

rise apartment building. The military said sirens were not sounded to warn of the incoming drone. There were no immediate reports of injuries. Iran-backed militants in Yemen have been attacking Israel since Hamas' assault on southern Israel in October 2023.

Their drones have at times evaded Israel's sophisticated aerial defence system.

Turkey-backed forces take full control of Syrian city from US-backed and Kurdish-led force: The Turkish-backed forces known as the Syrian National Army launched an offensive against the Syrian Democratic Forces in the northern Syrian city of Manbij on Dec 6, days after expelling SDF fighters from the city of Tal Rifaat.

Turkish security officials said Monday that "control of Manbij has been secured," without providing further details. The officials provided the information on condition of anonymity, in line with Turkish regulations.

Turkey views the SDF, which is primarily composed of a Syrian Kurdish militia group, as an extension of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and a terrorist organisation. The force, however, has been a key partner of the United States in the fight against the Islamic State group. Separately, the US-backed Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces said in a statement on Monday that a Turkish drone strike in the village of al-Mistriha north of Raqqa in eastern Syria killed 12 civilians, including six children.

Top aide to Assad's brother found dead, war monitor says: A Syrian opposition war monitor says a top aide to the brother of Syria's ousted president was found dead in his office near the capital, Damascus. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Maj Gen Ali Mahmoud, who was in charge

of Maher Assad's office, had led a 2018 military campaign in southern Syria.

A video that circulated on social media allegedly showed Mahmoud covered in blood while sitting on a chair. His clothes appear to have been set on fire. It was not clear if he was killed by Maher Assad or he committed suicide, the observer's chief Rami Abdurrahman said.

Maher Assad was in charge of the army's 4th Armored Division which played a major role in Syria's conflict since it began in March 2011.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Suresh Kumar had acquired Property Plot No. 243-A, area measuring 104 Sq. yds., (Part of Plot no.243 measuring 204 Sq. yds), out of Kharsa No. 10/17/2 & 10/18/2, situated at Village Nangal Sakrawati, about known as Laxmi Vihar, Najafgarh, New Delhi vide G.P. Dt. 22.10.2024 along with ATS & Will executed by Mrs. Chanchal Kumar and Now Mr. Suresh Kumar is the undisputed owner of the said property.

OR

Any person / firm / institution / company having any claim or right in respect of the said Property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession, legal heirs, partners or encumbrance however or otherwise is hereby required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice of his/her share or claim, if any, with all supporting documents at below mentioned address. After expiration of notice period, the claims, if any, of such person shall be treated null and void and also treated as waived and not binding on our client.

Ajay Kumar Giri (Advocate) H No. 26/161, Basement, Vikram Vihar, Lajpat Nagar 4, New Delhi - 110024

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Sushil Kumar, Mr. Tika Raj & Mr. Pawan Kumar had acquired Portion of Plot No. 28 & 29, area 95.5 sq. yards, out of their land area 191 sq. yards, Kharsa No. 15/3, situated at Village Ranthoula Hassal, Delhi State Delhi, about known as Colony Deep Enclave, Part-II, Vikas Nagar, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi vide G.P. Dt. 21.10.2024 along with ATS & Will executed by Mrs. Mr. Shiva Bhagat Singh & Mr. Sushil Kumar. Mr. Tika Raj & Mr. Pawan Kumar are the undisputed owners of the said property.

OR

Any person / firm / institution / company having any claim or right in respect of the said Property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession, legal heirs, partners or encumbrance however or otherwise is hereby required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice of his/her share or claim, if any, with all supporting documents at below mentioned address. After expiration of notice period, the claims, if any, of such person shall be treated null and void and also treated as waived and not binding on our client.

Ajay Kumar Giri (Advocate) H No. 26/161, Basement, Vikram Vihar, Lajpat Nagar 4, New Delhi - 110024

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Ram Prakash Saxena had acquired Part of Plot No. 03, area measuring 190 sq. yards out of Total Land area measuring 300 sq. yards, Kharsa No. 10/2/4, situated in the area of Village Johri Pur alias Jeeva Pur in the abadi of Shani Bazar Road, Ilaga Shadarda, Delhi vide G.P. Dt. 10.04.2024 along with ATS & Will executed by Mr. Hari Kishan Jindal and Now Mr. Ram Prakash Saxena is the undisputed owner of the said property.

OR

Any person / firm / institution / company having any claim or right in respect of the said Property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession, legal heirs, partners or encumbrance however or otherwise is hereby required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice of his/her share or claim, if any, with all supporting documents at below mentioned address. After expiration of notice period, the claims, if any, of such person shall be treated null and void and also treated as waived and not binding on our client.

Ajay Kumar Giri (Advocate) H No. 26/161, Basement, Vikram Vihar, Lajpat Nagar 4, New Delhi - 110024

Public Notice Lost and Found

This is to inform the general public that Sh. Nizamuddin, S/o. Sh. Mohd. Yasin, R/o A-28/29, First Floor, Abu Fazal Enclave, Part I, Jamia Nagar Okhla, New Friends Colony, P O New Friends Colony, District South East, Delhi-11002, has the sub-leasehold rights of Dwelling Unit No. 1505, Tower- CS-12 on the 15th Floor, in the Complex known as "Capetown" Built on Group Housing Plot No. GH-01/A, Sector-14, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, (U.P.), having a Super area of 1150 Sq. Feet (i.e. 106.83 Sq. Mtrs.) along with one covered Car Parking, fully registered vide Document No. 9199, registered at Sub-Registrar II, Noida, in Book No. 1, Volume No. 8387, Page No. 85 to 126, as Document No. 50581, dated 22/06/2018.

A Lost Article Information Report Registered by e-hans dated 25/06/2024, vide L.A.R. No. 2024 000539220 had also been registered by Smt. Paromita Roy W/o Sh. Anurudha Roy for the same. If anyone has any right/claim/interest claims over the undermentioned property, they are advised to approach the undersigned within 10 days along with necessary proof to substantiate the claim. If no response is received within 10 days, it is presumed that the property is free from any charge/claim/encumbrance, and they shall proceed with the mortgage.

Details of the Property - Sub-Leasehold rights of Dwelling Unit No. 1505, Tower-CS-12 on the 15th Floor, in the Complex known as "Capetown" Built on Group Housing Plot No. GH-01/A, Sector-14, Noida, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, (U.P.)

Details / Contact: Sh. Nizamuddin, S/o Sh. Mohd. Yasin, Contact: 9717052086

S Korea's Justice Ministry imposes travel ban on President Yoon over martial law

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's Justice Ministry on Monday imposed an overseas travel ban on President Yoon Suk Yeol as authorities investigate allegations of rebellion and other charges in connection with his short-lived declaration of martial law last week.

Yoon's martial law decree last Tuesday, which brought special forces troops into Seoul streets, plunged South Korea into political turmoil and caused worry among its key diplomatic partners and neighbours.

On Saturday, Yoon avoided an opposition-led bid to impeach him, with most governing party lawmakers boycotting a parliamentary vote. But the opposition parties vowed to submit a new impeachment motion against him this week.

Bae Sang-up, a Justice Ministry official, told a parliamentary hearing that it banned Yoon from leaving the country following requests by police, prosecutors and an anti-corruption agency as they expand their probes into the circumstances surrounding Yoon's power grab. On Monday, a senior National Police Agency officer told local reporters in a background briefing that police can also detain Yoon if conditions are met. The contents of the briefing were shared with The Associated Press.

While a sitting South Korean president has immunity from prosecution while in office, that does not extend to allega-

tions of rebellion or treason. This means that Yoon can be questioned and detained by police over his martial law decree, but many observers doubt that police will forcefully detain him or search his office because of the potential for clashes with his presidential security service.

In the case of former President Park Geun-hye, who was thrown out of office in 2017 after being impeached by parliament over a corruption scandal, prosecutors failed to search her office and ended up receiving documents outside the compound because presidential officials turned them away.

After refusing to meet with prosecutors while in office, Park underwent questioning by them and was arrested after the Constitutional Court approved her impeachment and ruled to dismiss her as president in March 2017.

The main opposition Democratic Party called Yoon's martial law imposition "unconstitutional, illegal rebellion or a coup." It has filed complaints with police against at least nine people, including Yoon and his former defence minister, over the rebellion allegations.

South Korean prosecutors on

Sunday detained former Defence Minister Kim Yong Hyun, who allegedly recommended that Yoon declare martial law. He became the first person detained in the martial law case. The Defence Ministry last week separately suspended three top military commanders over their alleged involvement in imposing martial law. They were among those facing the opposition-raised rebellion allegations.

On Saturday, Yoon issued an apology over the martial law decree, saying he won't shirk legal or political responsibility for the declaration. He said he would leave it to his party to chart a course through the country's political turmoil, "including matters related to my term in office."

Since taking office in 2022 for a single five-year term, Yoon, a conservative, has been on a near-constant collision course with his liberal rivals who control parliament. The liberals have introduced a slew of motions seeking to impeach some of his top officials and launched a fierce political offensive against Yoon over a spate of scandals involving him and his wife.

In his martial law announcement on Tuesday night, Yoon

called parliament a "den of criminals" bogging down state affairs and vowed to eliminate "shameless North Korea followers and anti-state forces."

Yoon's martial law decree lasted only six hours because the National Assembly voted it down, forcing Yoon's Cabinet to lift it before daybreak Wednesday. Some members of Yoon's governing People Power Party cast ballots against Yoon's decree, but the party later decided to oppose his impeachment.

Experts say Yoon's party fears losing the presidency to liberals in a by-election if he is impeached and ousted, as they did after Park was removed from office.

PPP leader Han Dong-hun said Sunday his party will push for Yoon's early and orderly exit from office in a way that minimizes social confusion, but he didn't say when that would happen. He also said Yoon will not be involved in state affairs, including foreign policy. Critics say Han likely wants to buy time to help his party restore public confidence. His comments on sidelining Yoon from state affairs have also sparked widespread concern and criticism that it violates the constitution.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I Mr. Vijay Kumar (Aadhar : 9249-9870-4884) S/o Late Daya Ram Chandok R/o D- 65, Aruna Park, Shankarpur, Delhi - 110092 the above named deponent do hereby solemnly affirm and inform that I have debarred my son Mr. Monish Chandok from my all moveable and immovable properties including Property No. D- 65, (Old No. 44) sq. yds. situated at the abadi of Aruna Park, Shankarpur, Delhi - 110092 due to his mis - behave and non co- operative behavior towards me and other family members. I will not be responsible for any liability of my son Mr. Monish Chandok.

Vijay Kumar

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that I, Kuldip Singh Kahlon, S/o Pitam Singh Kahlon, R/o Flat No 2478, Cat-II, Second Floor, Sector-C, Ph-2, Vasant Kunj Delhi-110057, in my personal possession of Flat of vide D/A file no F-125/6363/SFS/VK/II. The Original Documents Allotment Letter, Demand Letter, Site Possession Letter, NOC for Water, Electricity, Site Possession Slip & Bank Challans of above mentioned Flat Has been Lost. I have misplaced somewhere and not traceable in Police Station. An FIR of this has been lodged in Police Station Crime Branch, Delhi vide LR No: 2360286/2024 on 02/12/2024.

Any person claiming any right, interest having any objection or find in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9810277099.

The person claiming any right, interest, possession with respect to this property can personally inform or write to Dy. Director, LAB(H) or Director (H)-1, D-Block, 3rd Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi-110023.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Be it known to all that my client: (1) **Sh. Mohd. Nasir, S/o. Shabbir Ahmad** & (2) **Smt. Shabana Nasir, W/o Mohd. Nasir, R/o. F-11/12A, Shaheen Bagh, Abdul Aziz Chowk, Patparganj, Delhi-92** is my client and her husband Late Rahul Niralla has expired on 28.08.2024 and left behind wife and minor children namely Master Aarsh Niralla (Age- 8 Years) and Master Aansh Niralla (Age- 8 Years) my clients wants to sell the undivided share of her minor children in the immovable properties of her husband and for the same she has filed a suit u/s 8 (2) of Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act in the Court of Sh. Gaurav Sharma, East District, Guardian Judge, Karkardooma Courts, Delhi vide Case No.GP/3/2024, titled as "Seema Niralla vs Ours. V/s State and Ours." and it is listed on 08/01/2025 in Court No.406.

It is therefore, Notified that anybody claiming any right, title, interest or lien over the aforesaid property may file such claim or objection to the Court of Sh. Gaurav Sharma, East District, Guardian Judge, Karkardooma Courts, Delhi on or before the next date of hearing i.e. 08/01/2025.

SAHIL ARORA (ADVOCATE)
Office No. 107, First Floor, M.S.S. Chambers, Aruna Park, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi-110092
Mob. +91-9811912277

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the General Public that Mrs. Seema Niralla W/o Late Rahul Niralla R/o D-101, Narwana Apartments, Plot No.89, I.P. Extn., Patparganj, Delhi-92 is my client and her husband Late Rahul Niralla has expired on 28.08.2024 and left behind wife and minor children namely Master Aarsh Niralla (Age- 8 Years) and Master Aansh Niralla (Age- 8 Years) my clients wants to sell the undivided share of her minor children in the immovable properties of her husband and for the same she has filed a suit u/s 8 (2) of Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act in the Court of Sh. Gaurav Sharma, East District, Guardian Judge, Karkardooma Courts, Delhi on or before the next date of hearing i.e. 08/01/2025.

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उत्तराखण्ड सामाजिक अंकेक्षण, जवाबदेही एवं पारदर्शिता अभिकरण

ग्राम्य विकास विभाग, उत्तराखण्ड

92/1 गुरु गुरु बहादुर रोड, लेन नं-0-4 देहरादून-248001

संख्या : 1539/USAATA/189/2024, देहरादून दिनांक -07.12.2024

Advertisement

Applications are invited for the following posts for the Social Audit Unit, Uttarakhand purely on contract basis.

S. No.	Name of the Post	Qualification/Experience	No of post	Salary Per month
1.	Director	For Contractual appointment - The officer in charge shall preferably a retired principal secretary/secretary level officer. His contractual salary will be fixed as per last pay minus drawn pension rule.	01	State Government instructions/norms Applicable.

Term and conditions:

The minimum tenure of post shall be of one year and can be extended upto the maximum tenure of 3 years or 65 years of age whichever is earlier. The maximum age at the time of recruitment shall not be more than 62 years. Interested persons fulfilling the above conditions are required to submit their CV/application along with photocopies of certificates/credentials on email: sau.ukrd@gmail.com by 09-01-2025 till 5.00 pm in the Office of Director, Uttarakhand Social Audit, Accountability and Transparency Agency (USAATA), 92/1 Guru Teg Bahadur Road, Lane No. 4, Dehradun-248001.

The list of eligible candidates will be uploaded on the website. Only eligible candidates will be called for interview. The date, venue & time of interview will be intimated only to eligible candidates through email and website. No interview letters will be sent & no TA/TD will be paid. The agency has the right to postpone or cancel the interview at any time without assigning reasons.

Director Social Audit

Landslides, flash floods hit Indonesia's Java island

AP ■ SUKABUMI (INDONESIA)

Indonesian rescuers recovered 110 bodies that were swept away in flash floods or buried under tons of mud and rocks that hit hilly villages on the country's main island of Java, officials said Monday. Two people are still missing.

Torrential rains since last week have caused rivers to burst their banks, tearing through more than 170 villages in Sukabumi district of West Java province, as mud, rocks and trees tumbled down mountainside hamlets, said Lt Col Yudi Hariyanto, who heads a rescue command post in Sukabumi.

Landslides, flash floods and strong winds devastated 172 villages and forced more than 3,000 people to flee to temporary government shelters, Hariyanto said. Authorities have warned nearly 1,000 people to evacuate as more than 400 houses are threatened by extreme weather.

The disasters also destroyed 31 bridges, 81 roads and 539 hectares of rice fields, while 1,170 houses were flooded up to the roof. Extreme weather has

also damaged more than 3,300 other houses and buildings, the local Disaster Management Agency said.

Rescue workers on Monday pulled out 10 bodies in the worst-hit villages of Tegaleleud, Simpenan and Ciemas, including three children, and rescuers are searching for two villagers who are reportedly still missing, Hariyanto said. Videos circulating on social media showed flash floods caused by heavy downpours in Sukabumi swept away almost everything in their path, including cars, motorbikes, buffaloes and cows.

Footage released by West Java's Search and Rescue Agency showed roads that were transformed into murky brown rivers and villages covered by thick mud, rocks and uprooted trees as soldiers, police and rescue workers pulled mud-caked bodies from a devastated hamlet. Seasonal rain from about October to March frequently causes flooding and landslides in Indonesia, an archipelago of 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near fertile flood plains.

Taiwan says China sent naval ships into nearby waters

AP ■ BEIJING

China's military appears to be preparing for widely anticipated drills in response to a recent visit by Taiwan's president to Hawaii and Guam. Taiwan's defence ministry said Monday that it detected Chinese naval and coast guard ships entering the Taiwan Strait and the western Pacific and that China had restricted airspace along its southeast coast through Wednesday.

There was no immediate confirmation from the Chinese side.

A Taiwan defence ministry statement said it has set up an emergency response centre and launched combat readiness exercises. It did not say what those exercises entailed.

The Chinese government says Taiwan is part of its territory and opposes American support and military sales to the self-governing island. Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te made stops in Hawaii and Guam during a weeklong tour of the Pacific that ended Friday. China maintains that Taiwan is a province that should not have its own president or foreign relations.

Development in every sector with mantra of 'Reform, Perform and Transform' is visible : PM Modi

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the development following the mantra of 'Reform, Perform and Transform' is visible in every sector. Addressing the inaugural session of the Rising Rajasthan Summit here, Modi said today every expert and investor in the world is very excited about India. "In the last ten years, India has become the 5th largest economy from the 10th largest. In the last ten years, India has almost doubled the size of the economy. India's exports have also almost doubled in ten years," he said. Modi stressed on the importance of having a large manufacturing base in India. "Today the world needs an economy that continues to function strongly even during the biggest crisis. It should not be disrupted. For this, it is very important to



have a large 'manufacturing base' in India," he said. He said that it is a great achievement in itself that democracy is flourishing in a diverse country like India. "Welfare of humanity while being democratic is at the core of India's philosophy. The people of India are voting for a stable government in India

through their democratic right. The youth power is taking this forward," he said. The PM said that India is going to be among the youngest countries in the world for many years to come. "India will have the largest pool of youth as well as the largest skilled youth segment. For this, the

government is taking many decisions one after the other," he said. The Prime Minister said India has shown how the democratisation of digital technology is benefiting every sector and every class. "India is showing the world the real power of 'Democracy, Demography and Data,'" he said. PM Modi said our government is working on the mantra of development as well as heritage, and Rajasthan is getting huge benefits from it. He said the priority of the post-independence governments was neither the development of the country nor the heritage and Rajasthan has suffered the loss due to this. "Rajasthan is not just rising but also proving to be reliable. The state is receptive to change and knows how to refine itself over time. Recently, Rajasthan's "R-factor" has

gained an additional dimension, with the people electing a responsive government led by the BJP," he said. Modi said in a short span of time, Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma and his team have delivered impressive results and his commitment towards the state's development are highly commendable. "Under the leadership of the current government, new opportunities are being created for the youth, while infrastructure projects like road and electricity developments are progressing rapidly. The government's swift action in controlling crime and corruption has instilled confidence among investors and people," he said. Highlighting the potential of the state, he said Rajasthan is rich in natural resources, with a vast land area and a strong, skilled young workforce.

Air India to purchase 100 more Airbus aircraft

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Private carrier Air India on Monday announced placing an order to purchase 100 more Airbus aircraft, comprising 10 wide-body A350 and 90 narrow-body A320 family aircraft including A321neo. These 100 new aircraft are in addition to the orders of 470 aircraft that Air India had placed with Airbus and Boeing last year, Air India said in a statement. The airline also announced it has tied up with Airbus for component and maintenance support for its A350 fleet. The latest order takes the total number of aircraft that Air India ordered with Airbus from 250 to 350. The order placed in 2023 for 250 planes comprised 40 A350 and 210 A320 family aircraft. Air India in February 2023 announced that it would place an order for 470 aircraft, with an additional 370 options. This was confirmed in June 2023, with the order comprising 40 Airbus A350s, 20 Boeing 787s and 10 Boeing



777-9s wide-body aircraft, as well as 210 Airbus A320/321 Neos and 190 Boeing 737 MAX single-aisle aircraft. However, in December last year, the airline rejigged this order with 140 neo planes and 70 A320neo, as against the earlier order of 140 A320neo and 70 A321 neo aircraft. Besides, it also reshuffled its A350 order with 20 A350-900s and 20 A350-1000s as against six A350-900 and 34 A350-1000s ordered in February 2023. "With India's passenger growth outpacing the rest of the world, its significantly improving infrastructure and an aspirational young population increasingly going

global, we see a clear case for Air India to expand its future fleet beyond the firm orders of the 470 aircraft placed last year," said Natarajan Chandrasekaran, Chairman, Tata Sons and Air India. These additional 100 Airbus aircraft will help position Air India on the path to "greater growth" and contribute to our mission of building Air India into a world-class airline that connects India to every corner of the world, he said. With the order for 100 additional aircraft, Air India currently has a total of 344 new aircraft incoming from Airbus, having received six A350s so far, it said. Air India in 2023 had also placed orders for 220 wide-body and narrow-body aircraft with Boeing, of which 185 aircraft remain to be delivered, the company said. Meanwhile, Air India on Monday also said it has selected Airbus' Flight Hour Services-Component (FHS-C) to support the maintenance of its growing A350 fleet.

Tata Motors and Kia India to hike vehicle prices from January



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Motors and Kia India on Monday announced plans to hike vehicle prices from January to offset the impact of rising input costs. Tata Motors said it will hike the price of its passenger vehicle portfolio, including electric vehicles, by up to 3 per cent from January next year. The price hike is being undertaken to partially offset the rise in input costs and inflation, the Mumbai-based auto major said in a statement. "Effective January 2025, the price increase will vary depending on model and variant," it added. Tata Motors sells a range of passenger vehicle models ranging from Tiago hatchback to SUVs Harrier and Safari. Kia India, which sells models like Seltos and Sonet, said it will increase prices of its entire model range by 2 per cent from

January. The price hike, effective from January 1, 2025, is primarily due to rising commodity prices and escalating supply chain-related costs, the automaker said in a statement. Kia India Senior Vice President - Sales and Marketing - Hardeep Singh Brar said the company is committed to delivering technologically advanced vehicles of the highest quality to customers. "However, due to the persistent rise in commodity prices, unfavourable exchange rates, and increased input costs, a necessary price adjustment has become unavoidable," he added. Despite these challenges, Kia is absorbing a significant portion of the cost increase, minimising the financial impact on customers, so they can continue to enjoy their favourite models without a major dent in their pockets, Brar said. Market leaders Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai Motor India have announced plans to hike vehicle prices next month. The country's largest carmaker aims to raise prices by up to 4 per cent from January due to rising input costs and operational expenses. Rival Hyundai Motor India is also looking to increase the prices of its model range by up to Rs

25,000 from January 1, 2025. The price increase has been necessitated due to an increase in input costs, adverse exchange rate and increase in logistics costs, the maker of Verna and Creta said. Mahindra & Mahindra said it will hike prices of its SUVs and commercial vehicles by up to 3 per cent from January. The adjustment is in response to the rising costs due to inflation and increased commodity prices, the automaker stated. Similarly, JSW MG Motor India said it will increase prices of its entire model range by up to 3 per cent from next month. Honda Cars India is also considering a price increase but is yet to decide on the quantum. Besides, luxury car market leader Mercedes-Benz India plans to increase prices by up to 3 per cent from January. Prices of Mercedes-Benz cars will be revised in the range of Rs 2 lakh for the GLC to Rs 9 lakh for the top-end Mercedes-Maybach S 680 luxury limousine. Audi India said it will increase prices by up to 3 per cent across the model range due to an increase in input and transportation costs. Similarly, BMW India is looking to increase prices of its model range by up to 3 per cent from January next year.

War on spam: Airtel's network flags eight billion spam calls in 2.5 months, identifies one million spammers daily

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom operator Bharti Airtel on Monday said its network has flagged a staggering 8 billion spam calls and called out 0.8 billion spam SMSes within two and a half months of the launch of its spam-fighting AI-powered solution. Leveraging an advanced algorithm, the AI-powered network has successfully identified close to 1 million spammers every day, the company informed in a release. Notably, six per cent of all calls and two per cent of all SMSes on the Airtel network have been identified as spam. Delhi had the dubious distinction of accounting for a maximum number of the spam calls received and originated. The company, in the last 2.5 months, has alerted close to 252 million unique customers to these suspicious calls and has observed that there has been a 12 per cent decline in the number of customers answering them. "Bharti Airtel, India's first spam-fighting network, has flagged a staggering 8 billion spam calls and 0.8 billion spam SMSes within two and a half months of launching its AI-powered, spam-fighting solution," the release said. Airtel observed that a



staggering 35 per cent of the spammers have used landline telephones. Customers in Delhi have received the maximum number of spam calls, followed by customers in Andhra Pradesh and Western Uttar Pradesh. Delhi is also where the maximum number of spam calls have originated, followed by Mumbai and Karnataka. In terms of SMSes (text messages), the maximum number have originated in Gujarat followed by Kolkata and Uttar Pradesh and the maximum number of customers targeted have been from Mumbai, Chennai and Gujarat. As per the trends, 76 per cent of all spam calls have been targeted at male customers.

Additionally, distinct differences have been noted in terms of spam call frequency across age demographics. Customers in the age bracket of 36-60 have received 48 per cent of all spam calls, while those in the 26-35 age bracket have been the second-most targeted, accounting for 26 per cent of spam calls. Just about 8 per cent of the spam calls have landed in the handsets of senior citizens, the release said. Giving insights into the hourly distribution of spam activity detected, the company said spam calls commence from 9 am onwards and gradually escalate in volume as the day progresses. The peak of spam activity is observed between noon and 3 pm, during which the

highest concentration of spam calls occurs. Moreover, there is a notable disparity in the frequency of spam calls between weekdays and weekends. "The volume of these calls diminishes by around 40 per cent on Sundays. Specifically, devices in the price range of Rs 15,000-20,000 are the recipients of approximately 22 per cent of all spam calls," it said. By meticulously examining a multitude of parameters, the AI-driven system has been able to identify these unwanted intrusions in real time with remarkable accuracy. The government has allocated 10-digit numbers with the prefix 160 for service and transactional calls. "Customers can expect to receive calls from these 160-prefix series assigned to banks, mutual funds, insurance companies, stockbrokers, other financial institutions, corporates, enterprises, SMEs, big and small businesses used for making transactional and service calls," Airtel said. Further, those customers who have not opted for Do-not-disturb (DND) and have subscribed to receiving promotional calls will continue to receive them from a 10-digit number with the prefix 140.

Centre allows Adani Krishnapatnam Port to import petroleum up to March 2026



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has allowed Adani Krishnapatnam Port in Andhra Pradesh to import petroleum into India up to March 1, 2026, according to an official notification. The port has been allowed to import petroleum by sea from August 28, 2024, till March 1, 2026, in public interest, according to the notification by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. Owned and operated by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited (APSEZ), Adani Krishnapatnam Port Ltd is an all-weather deep water port located on the East Coast of India in Andhra Pradesh. Adani Ports & SEZ shares were trading higher by 0.56 per cent at Rs 1,267.30 on BSE in the pre-close session.

Special CBI court convicts Abhijeet Infrastructure Pvt Ltd and two others under coal scam

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A special CBI court on Monday convicted Managing Director of Abhijeet Infrastructure Ltd Manoj Kumar Jayaswal and its former director Ramesh Kumar Jayaswal in a coal scam case related to the allocation of Brinda, Sisai, and Meral coal blocks in Jharkhand. In its case registered in 2016, the CBI had alleged that the company obtained the coal blocks by misrepresenting its financial position, acquisition of land for its proposed end-use plant, and other related claims, a statement from the agency said. Forged documents were used to secure the recommendation of the Ministry of Steel, Government of India, for the allocation of the coal blocks, the CBI said. Special Judge Arun Bhardwaj convicted Nagpur-based Abhijeet Infrastructure Pvt Ltd (AIPL), its Managing Director Manoj Kumar Jayaswal and former director Ramesh Kumar Jayaswal of cheating, criminal conspiracy and using forged documents as genuine. Their sentence will be pronounced later. The four-year-long investigation showed that photocopies of fabricated documents related to the purchase of private land at Hazaribagh, Jharkhand, procurement of machinery for

the proposed end-use plant and financial tie-ups with banks were submitted to clinch the coal blocks. "These forged documents were used to secure the recommendation of the Ministry of Steel, Government of India, for the allocation of the coal blocks. Based on this recommendation, the Ministry of Coal allocated the Brinda, Sisai and Meral coal blocks to Abhijeet Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd (now Abhijeet Infrastructure Ltd) on June 25, 2005. The company thus defrauded the Ministry of Coal/public exchequer," the CBI Spokesperson said. The judge noted that Manoj Kumar Jayaswal was controlling the affairs of the company when forged letters and documents were submitted to the ministry. "It is he who got forged documents submitted (through Ramesh Kumar Jayaswal) to the Ministry of Steel. False information in these letters led to the recommendation of the Ministry of Steel in favour of M/s AIPL. On the basis of recommendations of the Ministry of Steel, the Screening Committee was also induced to believe false facts to be true and recommended allocation of Coal blocks in favour of the company," the judge held.

Rupee drops eight paise to close at 84.74 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 8 paise to close at 84.74 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, dragged down by fresh foreign fund outflows and a muted trend in domestic equities. Forex traders said the rupee remains in a weakening mode due to dollar demand from importers and foreign banks. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.70 and touched the lowest level of 84.73 against the greenback during intra-day trade. The unit ended the session at 84.74 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of 8 paise over its previous close. On Friday, the rupee appreciated by 5 paise to settle

at 84.66 against the US dollar. On December 4, the rupee had slumped to its all-time low of 84.76 (provisional) against the US dollar. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.09 per cent at 105.96. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, surged 0.89 per cent to USD 71.75 per barrel in futures trade. Forex traders said post the RBI monetary policy announcement, investors will await the Industrial Production (IIP) and CPI data for further cues. The Reserve Bank of India on Friday kept its key interest rate unchanged citing inflation risks, but cut the Cash Reserve Ratio that banks are required

to park with the central bank, boosting money with lenders to support a slowing economy. On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share benchmark index Sensex closed 200.66 points, or 0.25 per cent lower, at 81,508.46 points. The Nifty fell 58.80 points, or 0.24 per cent, to 24,619.00 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded Rs 1,830.31 crore in the capital markets on net basis on Friday, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, India's forex reserves increased by USD 1.51 billion to USD 658.091 billion for the week ended November 29, the RBI said on Friday. The overall reserves had dropped by USD 1.31 billion to USD 656.582 billion in the previous reporting week.

Hiring in IT sector to witness 15 to 20 per cent growth in job opportunities: Report



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The IT sector, which is on the path of recovery, is expected to witness 15-20 per cent growth in job

opportunities across various industries in 2025, talent solutions company NLB Services said on Monday. The IT industry has gained back momentum in H2 2024

and is gearing up for a promising 2025 on multiple fronts, said NLB Services. In the coming year, fresher hiring in the Indian IT sector is poised for significant growth, with an anticipated increase of 15-20 per cent in job opportunities across various industries, it added. At the same time, the demand for highly specialised tech roles, including artificial intelligence, machine learning (ML), data analytics, and cloud

technologies, is expected to surge by 30-35 per cent, driven by the increasing reliance on emerging technologies, it said. This surge in demand is not limited to hiring but extends to a strategic focus on tech upskilling, with companies investing heavily in training initiatives to equip their workforce with the necessary skills to meet the evolving technological landscape, the company noted. NLB Services' analysis is based on the brand's view of

the macro ecosystem, industry trends, and demand. Further, the company stated that campus hiring remains the core focus for larger companies that are looking to hire aggressively for the second half of 2024-25. Since the 2021-22, global economic slowdown, clients have curtailed their discretionary spending due to on-demand hiring patterns and global macroeconomic challenges, this has impacted the project pipeline however, it is

expected to stabilise in 2025, thus promising hopes for freshers, it said. IT fresher hiring in 2025, is projected to increase with high demand for roles in artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), data analytics, Python, cloud technologies, and cybersecurity. Sectors such as Global Capability Centres (GCCs), manufacturing, BFSI, healthcare, and retail are also anticipated to boost their IT fresher intake by 30-35 per cent in 2025, it added.

Nine-year-old boy becomes youngest Indian to beat a chess Grandmaster

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Nine-year-old Delhi boy Aarit Kapil has become the youngest Indian to beat a chess Grandmaster as he emerged victorious against Raset Ziatdinov of United States in the ninth and penultimate round of the KIIT International open tournament here.

At 9 years, 2 months and 18 days, Aarit is the youngest Indian and third in the world to beat a GM under the classical time control.

The youngest player in the world to beat a GM is Indian-origin Singapore boy Ashwath Kaushik who won against Jacek Stupa of Poland when he was just 8 years and six months old earlier this year.

Ziatdinov, 66, is certainly past his prime if the game was any indication. As is usually the case when an experienced GM plays against a youngster,



Ziatdinov did many things right positionally to get the upper hand thanks to his better pawn structure. To Aarit's credit, he fought on

after standing slightly worse with his white pieces. It was a long-drawn endgame wherein Ziatdinov made the final mistake and lost a

knight on Sunday. The resulting position just needed decent calculation and the young lad from Delhi had no troubles whatsoever

in converting his advantage in to a well-deserved win. The game lasted 63 moves. While the victory places Aarit among the elite young talents, it remains to be seen how he performs in upcoming tournaments. The next challenge awaits him in form of under-13 national championship to be held at Durgapur later this month, followed by his own age group event, the under-9 nationals in Pune.

Meanwhile, Grandmaster Boris Savchenko of Russia won the KIIT tournament, settling for a draw with India's Sayantan Das in the final round. Savchenko scored 8.5 points out of a possible 10.

The top three youngest players to beat a Grandmaster:

1. Ashwath Kaushik (Singapore) – 8 years 2 months
2. Leonid Ivanovic (Serbia) - 8 years 11 months



Atletico Madrid stunning 4-3 victory over Sevilla

AP ■ MADRID

Atletico Madrid conceded its three-point lead over fourth-place Athletic Bilbao, which beat Villarreal earlier Sunday.

Rodrigo De Paul gave Atletico the perfect start when he lashed home a stunning opener in the 10th minute.

However, goals from Dodi Lukébakio, Isaac Romero and Juanlu Sanchez put Sevilla 3-1 up early in the second half and Atletico, without the vocal support of some home fans in a dispute over tickets, seemed lost in an unusually quiet at Metropolitano Stadium.

Simeone's side, though, is known for its resilience and it was not long before the fightback began.

Griezmann reduced the deficit in the 62nd minute and 17 minutes later, after Simeone made five substitutions in a quarter of an hour, Samuel Lino got the equalizer with a low shot from 30 yards.

Griezmann himself got the winner in stoppage time to

consolidate Atletico's third place.

The Madrid club now has 35 points, one behind city rival Real and three behind league leader Barcelona.

"We struggled to get into the game," Griezmann said. "We missed the support of the fans behind the goal. But in the end we managed to come back."

FOURTH-PLACE BILBAO BEATS VILLARREAL

Athletic Bilbao consolidated fourth place with a comfortable 2-0 win over Villarreal, the team immediately below it in the table and one of its closest rivals for a Champions League spot.

Aitor Paredes put Athletic ahead when he glanced home a corner kick in 14 minutes and Iñaki Williams made it 2-0 midway through the second half.

It was the fourth consecutive league win for Athletic but the victory was marred by a silent protest from an organized fan group. The group refused to sing or chant in response to a rift between it and the club president, who reported threats to police earlier in the week.

Several Athletic players expressed solidarity with the president and the team did not salute the fans behind the goal after the match.

"It's a very sad win and a time for everyone to pull

together," club captain Óscar De Marcos said in comments reported by newspaper Marca. "The silence was notable during the game but we need to keep doing our job."

Earlier Sunday, Real Sociedad won for the fourth time in a row, beating Leganes 3-0 at the Butarque stadium near Madrid.

Three days after his extra-time goal gave Sociedad a 1-0 win at fourth-tier Conquense in the Copa del Rey, Brais Méndez scored again to give the visitors an early lead.

Substitute Ander Barrenetxea's first goal of the league season doubled its lead 10 minutes from time and then Mikel Oyarzabal added a third in stoppage time.

It was only the fourth time in 16 matches that Sociedad has scored twice in a league game and the win lifted it into sixth, above Osasuna, which drew 2-2 with Alaves.

Alaves took only 37 seconds for Kike García to put the team ahead with a diving header.

However, Ante Budimir and Rubén García scored early in the second half to put Osasuna in front before Kike García got his second of the game to tie the scores at 2-2.

The point was the first for new Alaves coach Eduardo Coudet but still leaves it in 15th place without a win in five games.

Scheffler defends Hero World Challenge title

PTI ■ ALBANY (BAHAMAS)

Scottie Scheffler was at his consistent best while firing a solid 9-under 63, good enough for the World No. 1 American to defend the Hero World Challenge title on the fourth and final day here.

Scheffler finished the event with a total of 25-under (263: 67, 64, 69, 63) on Sunday.

The 28-year-old won by six shots over Tom Kim, and it was the largest winning margin at the Albany Golf Club and the biggest in the tournament history since the 10-shot margin achieved by Jordan Spieth in 2014.

South Korean Kim finished second with a final round of four-under 68 for a total of 270 (74, 65, 62, 68).

But Kim can be proud of his comeback and running Scheffler close after going 2-over on day 1 and his third round card of 62 was the best day's score by any golfer in this tournament.

"I think only two bogeys for the week and then I made a good amount of birdies. Eliminating the mistakes and making a good amount of birdies is always helpful," said Scheffler.

"I'm very thankful to be sitting here with the trophy. Winning the Hero (World Challenge), which is Tiger Woods' event, is pretty special," added the American, who was presented the trophy by Woods and Pawan Munjal, Executive Chairman of Hero MotoCorp.

Debutant Indian-American Akshay Bhatia (69) missed several putts to finish fourth at 15-under and Keegan Bradley (71) was fifth at 14-under.

Sahith Theegala (74) was eighth and Indo-British Aaron Rai (70) was tied 14th.

However, Scheffler's commanding victory kept the stats men busy.

Scheffler equalled the best-ever winning total of 25-under set by Bubba Watson in 2015.

Danilo Cataldi scores goal for hospitalised teammate Bove

AP ■ ROME



Danilo Cataldi texted hospitalized Fiorentina teammate Edoardo Bove to say that he would score for him and then fulfilled his promise in a 1-0 win over Cagliari.

It was Fiorentina's first Serie A match since Bove collapsed on the field during a game against Inter Milan last weekend and was placed in a medically induced coma.

The 22-year-old has been awake and alert since last Monday as doctors continue to investigate the cause of his collapse.

Cataldi found the top corner midway through the first half and that was all Fiorentina needed for its eighth straight

win in the Italian league to match the club record set in 1960.

After he scored, Cataldi ran toward a TV camera, held up four fingers to match Bove's No. 4 jersey then created a heart symbol with his fingers

as he shouted, "I told you. I told you."

"I texted him before the match, saying: Watch the game on TV because I'm going to score a goal into the top corner," Cataldi said. "He said it was impossible. We're

pleased that he's feeling well and about these three points." Fiorentina, which has a game in hand since the match against Inter was abandoned, moved level on points with third-place Inter. Fiorentina is three points behind new leader Atalanta, which is on a nine-game winning streak, and one point behind second-place Napoli, which was beaten 1-0 at home by Lazio.

Gustav Isaksen scored for Lazio with a long-range shot late in the second half.

Lazio also moved level on points with Inter and Fiorentina.

Napoli had led for most of the season under first-year coach Antonio Conte but has now lost at home to both Atalanta and Lazio.

Mbappé reaffirms his commitment to France after missing recent games

AP ■ PARIS



Kylian Mbappé has reaffirmed his commitment to France despite missing recent games, saying "there's nothing bigger than the national team."

The 2018 World Cup winner was left out for Nations League matches against Israel and Italy last month, with coach Didier Deschamps saying "it's better that way" and adding that the player's struggles were physical and mental.

Mbappé is France's captain and was also absent from a previous gathering in October because of a minor thigh injury, but nevertheless played for Real Madrid.

"I've always said there's nothing bigger than the national team," Mbappé said on Sunday night during a television interview with Canal Plus. "My love for the France team hasn't changed."

Deschamps' reference to his mental state led some

observers to speculate Mbappé suffered from depression.

He took a moment to explain that he has not.

"There are people who really are in a depression and who should be helped. This is not a subject which should be taken lightly," Mbappé said. "I am not going to claim that (I had a depression)."

However, he alluded to unfair treatment when saying "people ask a lot of me" as captain compared to his predecessor, the goalkeeper Hugo Lloris, and also took a swipe at those who questioned his dedication

to France.

"I've always put it above anything else. I even gave my nose," Mbappé said, referring to his broken nose at the European Championship this year.

Mbappé, who turns 26 on Dec. 20, is third on France's all-time scoring list with 48 goals, only Thierry Henry (51) and Olivier Giroud (57) are ahead of him.

He scored a superb hat trick in the 2022 World Cup final, but his scoring ratio has dropped recently with two goals in the past 12 games for Les Bleus.

Mbappé said he gave the television interview because he's had enough of people talking for him in recent weeks, when his struggles with Madrid have also been widely commented upon.

"When you're a star, if you don't talk, people talk in your place. That's why I'm talking now," said Mbappé, who also spoke for the first time about reports of a rape investigation in Sweden.

Botafogo wins its first Brazilian league title

AP ■ SAO PAULO



Copa Libertadores champion Botafogo had another big reason to celebrate as the club owned by American businessman John Textor beat Sao Paulo 2-1 to win its first Brazilian league title since 1995.

Botafogo won the title for the third time with 79 points in 38 matches to finish six points ahead of runner-up Palmeiras.

Jefferson Savarino scored the first goal for host Botafogo in the 37th minute at the Nilton Santos Stadium, but a defensive mistake allowed an under-strength Sao Paulo side to equalize in the 63rd through William Gomes.

Gregore netted the winner in injury time for the Rio de Janeiro-based team. The same player was sent off after a first-minute foul in the Copa Libertadores final against Atletico Mineiro.

Botafogo overcame that difficulty to beat their countrymen 3-1 and lift its first South American crown

on Nov. 30. That earned Botafogo a spot at the Club World Cup in the United States next year.

Palmeiras, the last rival standing between Botafogo and the trophy, lost 1-0 at home to Fluminense, which managed to avoid relegation and send Athletico Paranaense to the second division instead. Kevin Serna scored in the 37th minute.

It's another welcome trophy

for Textor.

Asked if he had expected Botafogo to win major trophies in only three years since he took over, Textor replied "not at all."

"I can't really say I believed it," Textor told journalists on the field Sunday. "When you have ambition, it doesn't necessarily mean you know (you will win)," Textor said. "It happened much before we expected. We are very

excited about that."

Before the club won the Copa Libertadores, Textor was under widespread criticism from fans because of financial difficulties and poor results.

Textor's Eagle Football also owns Crystal Palace in the Premier League, French club Lyon and RWD Molenbeek in Belgium.

Textor has had his share of critics in Brazil, after making unproven allegations about match-fixing when Botafogo squandered a 13-point lead to miss out on the league title last year.

Botafogo was relegated from the league in 2020 but has risen to prominence again with Textor's investment. He was part of a wave of foreign owners who came into Brazilian soccer after a 2021 law change paved the way for private investors.

Textor has spent big on star signings for Botafogo such as Argentina midfielder Thiago Almada for \$25 million and winger Luiz Henrique for \$21 million.

F1 in 2025: Close racing, Lewis Hamilton at Ferrari and plenty of new faces

AP ■ ABU DHABI

Even before he'd parked his car after winning the last Formula 1 race of 2024, Lando Norris made a vow to be champion in 2025.

"Next year is going to be my year, too," Norris, who was runner-up to Max Verstappen this year, told the McLaren team over the radio.

After four different teams won races in 2024, next year could see an even closer contest for the title. Lewis Hamilton will be aiming for an eighth career championship at his new team, Ferrari, and there'll be ambitious young drivers joining the grid.

CLOSE COMPETITION

Major rule changes in F1 tend to shake up the established order, but can let one team gain a big

advantage.

When the same rules are in place for a while, teams tend to be more evenly matched. The season-long competition for the title in 2021 between Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton preceded a rule change for 2022.

Expect McLaren and Norris to be in the hunt next time.

"The one thing I've learned this year is probably to believe in myself a bit more," Norris said Sunday. "I've certainly not come out on top as often as I would have liked in certain moments as a driver, especially in my fights against Max. As much as it hurts sometimes, I'm probably happy about it now that I'm going to go into next season knowing that I can fight."

Some worry focusing on 2025 could hurt them in the long run, and may be



tempted to aim for 2026 instead.

Carlos Sainz Jr. On Sunday said his new team, Williams, is "preparing to maximize

that chance" in 2026. Aston Martin has Adrian Newey, widely considered F1's greatest designer, heading up its development after he left

Red Bull. Audi is turning Sauber into its works team for 2026 and General Motors is joining the grid with its Cadillac brand and may

already have a head start on development.

"Obviously, the earlier start, the bigger advantage you have," Red Bull team principal Christian Horner said, "but if there is a tight championship (in 2025) and it does go down to the wire, then that's going to be a tough balancing act."

HAMILTON AT FERRARI

A seven-time champion in Ferrari red.

Hamilton's move to the storied Italian team could bring back memories of Michael Schumacher, the only other driver to win seven titles in F1.

After an emotional farewell to Mercedes on Sunday, Hamilton's focus will shift quickly to 2025. No driver has won the F1 title with Ferrari since Kimi Raikkonen beat then-rookie Hamilton by a single point in

2007.

"Lewis has achieved so much in the sport and it will be a big motivation," his future teammate Charles Leclerc said Sunday.

Hamilton, F1's only Black driver, has also said he wants to continue his efforts to improve diversity in F1 when he joins his new team.

NEW CHALLENGERS ON THE GRID

Could 2025 be the year the next generation of drivers upsets F1's biggest names? The biggest rookie class in years arrives in F1 with plenty of hype as 18-year-old Andrea Kimi Antonelli steps up from Formula 2 to replace Hamilton at Mercedes.

Oliver Bearman joins Haas after impressive stand-in drives this year, while F2 champion Gabriel Bortoletto moves to Sauber. Alpine gave its new driver Jack Doohan,

son of a motorcycle racing great, an early taste of F1 at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, where he was 15th. Post-season tests Tuesday in Abu Dhabi offer a chance to get valuable experience.

The new arrivals mean experienced drivers will be off the F1 grid.

Ten-time GP winner Valtteri Bottas is likely heading back to Mercedes as a reserve next year after leaving Sauber.

Kevin Magnussen, Zhou Guanyu and Franco Colapinto are also without race seats for 2025.

Then there's Sergio Perez. Second to Verstappen in the 2023 standings, the Mexican driver was nowhere near his Red Bull teammate's pace this season and has faced repeated speculation he will be dropped for 2025 despite a contract extension agreed in June.

Kapil Dev backs Rohit, says captain doesn't need to prove himself

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Let's not doubt Rohit Sharma's ability to bounce back," said the legendary Kapil Dev, who also felt that under-fire India skipper doesn't need to prove himself at this stage of his career. Rohit, who managed scores of 3 and 6 in the the Adelaide pink-ball Test after dropping down the batting order, is being criticized by fans and former players for being subdued. India lost the game by 10 wickets in just two and a half days. "He doesn't have to prove himself. He has done this for many, many years, so let's not doubt somebody. I won't doubt him. I hope his form comes back, that's important," Kapil said during the launch of the Vishwa Samudra Open, a

PGTI event set to begin at the Delhi Golf Club on Tuesday. Rohit had missed the opening Test due to the birth of his second child. Despite scoring most of his runs as an opener, the 37-year-old dropped down to the number six position, offering the top spot to KL Rahul, who played a pivotal role in the Perth win. "With one or two performances, if you doubt someone's captaincy, I mean, just six months back when he won the T20 World Cup, you wouldn't have asked me this question. Let it go, knowing his ability and talent, he will come back. They will come back strongly." Asked if it was a mistake to include young Harshit Rana in the second Test, Kapil said: "I am a nobody. How can I judge? There are people



up there who have the responsibility to decide who should be in the team." "We shouldn't talk. My former colleagues are sitting

there, and I hope they will do a good job." In Rohit's absence, vice-captain Jasprit Bumrah had led India to a 295-run in



Perth. Asked if Bumrah is shaping up well to take over the reins from Rohit, Kapil said: "I think it is too early to talk

about that. With one performance, you can't say he is the best, and with one bad performance, you can't say he doesn't deserve it.

"Let a player play a lot of cricket, take on a lot of captaincy. Ups and downs will come, and then you judge a person by how he reacts in difficult times, not in good times. In good times, we don't have to judge. When he is down and out," Virat Kohli, who also looked subdued coming into the five-Test series in Australia, managed to hit his first hundred in 18 months in Perth. However, the star batter failed in the second Test with scores of 7 and 11 in his two innings. "Like Virat Kohli, he is one of the best cricketers in our country. If you put the four top batsmen, he will be there. If he is going through a rough time, it is only up to him how fast he can bounce back," Kapil said. Kampli needs to go back to rehab

Kampli has been struggling with alcohol-related and other health issues. He appeared frail during a recent public event held in memory of legendary coach Ramakant Achrekar. He was seen refusing to let go of his childhood friend Sachin Tendulkar. Kapil expressed sadness over Kampli's condition, emphasising the need for self-help alongside external support. "We should all try to support him. But more than us, he has to support himself. We can't look after anybody if that person can't look after himself," Kapil said. "All the cricketers feel very sad about what we have seen. I wish his closest friends can try to get him some help, to look after himself, to go back to rehab. People do get this illness, but you have to get back to rehab."



Siraj fined, Head also sanctioned by ICC for Adelaide confrontation

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Indian pacer Mohammed Siraj was fined 20 per cent of his match fee, while Australian batter Travis Head was also "sanctioned" by the ICC for indulging in a heated exchange of words during the just-concluded day-night Test here. Siraj and Head were held guilty of breaching the world body's code of conduct following a disciplinary hearing on Monday. "Siraj has been penalised 20 per cent of his match fee after being found guilty of breaching article 2.5 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel," the ICC said in a statement. The cited rule relates to "using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon dismissal." The ICC said Head too was "sanctioned" for breaching Article 2.13 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel. However, he escaped a fine for breaching the rule that relates to the "abuse of a player, player support personnel, umpire or match referee during an international match." Siraj and Head also received one demerit point each on their disciplinary records, marking their first offence in the last 24 months. "Both admitted their offences and accepted the sanctions

proposed by Match Referee Ranjan Madugalle," the ICC said. Head and Siraj had a brief showdown on day two of the match that Australia won by 10 wickets on Sunday. Head had struck a splendid 141-ball knock of 140 before being castled by Siraj, who went on to give him an aggressive send-off following an exchange of words. The Indian endured boos from the Adelaide crowd following the confrontation. Head later claimed that he had merely said "well bowled" to Siraj and that he was disappointed at how the visiting bowler had responded. Siraj disputed that claim, asserting that Head had abused him. "I only celebrated and he abused me and you saw that on TV too. I only celebrated at the start, I didn't say anything to him," Siraj told broadcaster 'Star Sports'. "What he said in the press conference wasn't right, it's a lie that he only said 'well bowled' to me. It's there for everyone to see that that's not what he said to me." Head also acknowledged his role in the incident. "There was no confrontation leading up to him and I felt like it was probably, yeah, a little bit far at the time, and that's why I am disappointed in the reaction that I gave back," he said in a post-play press conference. The two teams are tied 1-1 in the five-match series.

World Chess Championship: Gukesh loses to Ding Liren in 12th game

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Indian challenger D Gukesh lost the 12th game against defending champion Ding Liren of China to allow his opponent bounce back and level the World Chess Championship match here on Monday. The 18-year-old Gukesh was ahead by one point after he notched his second win of the match on Sunday, which came after seven consecutive draws, but Liren's win on Monday brought the things on an even keel. The two players are now tied at 6 points each with just two games left in the 14-round classical time control format, still shy of 1.5 points in order to win the title. The remaining two games will be played on Wednesday and Thursday, after rest day on Tuesday. Irrespective of what happens in the next game on Wednesday, the match will go the distance (14 games) and more likely there will be tiebreaker – where games are of shorter duration – to determine the winner. The 32-year-old Liren had won the opening game before Gukesh emerged victorious in



the third game. The second, and the fourth to 10th games were drawn. In what was the first victory for Liren with his white pieces, Gukesh's preparation did not come as good as the other 11 games that he played here. The start was an English opening by the Chinese and much to the surprise of the fans, Gukesh went for a position that led to a Benoni defense with colours reversed. Gukesh started to miss out creating counter play in the middle game as white played just normal developing moves. By the 15th move, though less on time on the

clock, white had a small advantage as a central breakthrough looked inevitable, giving Liren the space advantage. Gukesh's 17th move did not help his cause as white was able to get the desired break in the centre. Five moves later, another error by Gukesh gave Liren a huge advantage. Liren's central pawn made a foray to the sixth rank in what was a near-decisive blow on the 27th move. Gukesh had to part with a couple of pawns. Adding to Gukesh's woes was an imminent rook invasion. The game ended through a fine tactic by Liren who sacrificed a rook to force

matters. The game ended in 39 moves. For Gukesh, much would depend on how he does in his last remaining white game after the final rest day on Tuesday. Liren has proved again that he is a tough nut to crack and his second victory in the match was pretty much one-sided compared to many other games in the match that had chances for both sides. In the previous world championship match against Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia, Liren had to come back from behind as many as three times before being crowned the world champion. The Moves: 1.C4 e6 2.G3 d5 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.Nf3 d4 5.0-0 Nc6 6.E3 Be7 7.D3 dxe3 8.Bxe3 e5 9.Nc3 0-0 10.Re1 h6 11.A3 a5 12.H3 Be6 13.Kh2 Rb8 14.Qc2 Re8 15.Nb5 Bf5 16.Rad1 Nd7 17.Qd2 Bg6 18.D4 e4 19.Ng1 Nb6 20.Qc3 Bf6 21.Qc2 a4 22.Ne2 Bg5 23.Nf4 Bxf4 24.Bxf4 Rc8 25.Qc3 Nb8 26.D5 Qd7 27.D6 c5 28.Nc7 Rf8 29.Bxe4 Nc6 30.Bg2 Rcd8 31.Nd5 Nxd5 32.Cxd5 Nb8 33.Qxc5 Rc8 34.Qd4 Na6 35.Re7 Qb5 36.D7 Rc4 37.Qe3 Rc2 38.Bd6 f6 39.Rxg7+ Black resigned.

South Africa go on top in WTC points table

PTI ■ DUBAI

South Africa on Monday replaced Australia at the top of the ICC World Test Championship table after their massive 109-run over Sri Lanka while India are now in the third place following their defeat in the Adelaide Test. South Africa now have 63.33 percentage points after 10 matches in the cycle and they are followed by Australia (60.71 PTC). India were leading the WTC table, heading into the Adelaide Test after their massive win in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy opener in Perth. India had 61.11 points heading into the pink ball Test in Adelaide which they



lost inside three days and they now stand third with 57.29 percentage points. The best possible way for India to make a third appearance in the WTC final next year would be to win

each of the three remaining Tests in Australia. Australia had 57.69 percentage points before the Adelaide Test which improved to 60.71 after their win.

But even as they grabbed the top spot with the contest ending on Sunday, Australia remained table-toppers only for one day as the Proteas surged ahead with their win in the second Test at St George's Park in Gqeberha. With the Border-Gavaskar series now tied at 1-1, Australia are in a strong position for a top-two finish. They will also tour Sri Lanka next year for an additional two Tests, meaning they could theoretically draw 2-2 with India and stay in contention for a place in the final. Both England and New Zealand have been penalised with three WTC points each for slow over-rate in the Christchurch Test, according to the ICC.

Mohammed Siraj is a good character, he gets the crowd up like Kohli: Josh Hazlewood

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Mohammed Siraj's hot temper has become a topic of discussion but Australian quick Josh Hazlewood says the Indian pacer is a "good character" who fires up the crowd and is passionate about the game like Indian superstar Virat Kohli. Siraj was involved in two incidents where his temper flared during the pink-ball Test that India lost by 10 wickets. In Australia's first innings, Siraj threw the ball wide off the stumps near Marnus Labuschagne after the Australian batter pulled away from his stance, forcing the bowler to halt his run-up. This occurred when a man holding a tower of beer cups walked into Labuschagne's line of sight. The next day, Siraj was involved in a verbal altercation with Travis Head soon after cleaning him up, drawing the ire of the Adelaide crowd which booed him. "He's just a good character and it's good to see sometimes," said Hazlewood, who shared the dressing room with both Siraj and Kohli during his time at the Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL. "I really enjoyed my time at RCB with Siraj. He's probably the leader of the attack there, to a degree. He's another one who's a bit like Virat, very passionate, goes with the flow of the game, gets the crowd up. He has bowled serious spells in the IPL in the last few years," he added. Hazlewood, who missed the second Test due to a side strain, had dismissed Kohli for



5 in the first innings in the opening Test at Perth. It was the fourth time the Australian quick dismissed Kohli in red-ball cricket. "It just comes down to who executes well on the day, whether he leaves you well until the ball gets soft or someone else comes on the balls and doesn't ball quite well enough," he said.

"There's a lot of match-ups like that throughout international cricket. You know, we've played each other so much. If you've been around for 10 years, you pretty much know each other inside out." Hazlewood said the current crop of batters are much more eager to go after the ball as compared to the players who

wielded the willow 10 years ago. "There are different players in different teams there are some players you really need to be patient with. There are others who come after you, so you don't have to be patient but they are dangerous because they can score. "I don't think betters are probably as patient as they were 10 years ago. They like to feel the ball and we've seen the way England play and even players in the Indian team with (Rishabh) Pant and (Nitish) Reddy and guys like that." India suffered a 10-wicket loss in the pink ball Test as Australia levelled the five match series 1-1 following their 295-run loss in the opener. The two sides now head to Brisbane for the third match, starting December 14.

Australia have lost the last two matches in the Gabba and will look to get back to winning ways at the venue, where they have done well, traditionally. The last time they played at the Gabba, pacer Shamar Joseph ripped through Australia to fashion West Indies 8-run win in the day night fixture. "We always play pretty well in Brisbane (but) the last Test was obviously pink-ball," Hazlewood said. "The pink-ball gets quite soft in Brisbane quite early on, with the wicket being quite hard, it doesn't have that thatch grass that we see here at Adelaide. "So we're back to the red-ball there, which suits us. We obviously haven't won recently up there, but it's a place we like to play as it suits our guys.


India gets tricky group in 2027 Asian Cup Qualifiers final round

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India was on Sunday drawn in a tricky group along with Bangladesh, Hong Kong and Singapore for the 2027 Asian Cup Qualifiers final round matches, beginning March 25 next year. The draw, which saw 24 teams divided into six groups of four, was held at the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Only the six group winners will qualify for the main tournament to be held in Saudi Arabia in 2027 and join the 18 teams who have already booked their tickets after the second round of qualifying. The final round will be contested over six match days in a home-and-away format between March 25, 2025 and March 31, 2026. Aiming to qualify for the third successive time, India will begin its Group C campaign at home against Bangladesh. India is the highest-ranked team in the group at 127, followed by Hong Kong (156), Singapore (161) and Bangladesh (185). But, they won't be easy opponents. India has faced all three



opponents in the recent past. The Blue Tigers last faced Bangladesh (1-1 draw) in the 2021 SAFF Championship, Hong Kong (India won 4-0) in the AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers in Kolkata in June 2022, and Singapore (1-1 draw) in the Hung Th?nh Friendly Tournament in Vietnam in September 2022. After the draw, India head coach Manolo Marquez said, "We are a Pot 1 team and we need to show why we are the favourites to qualify. There are not too many differences between groups. Every group is difficult. "Hong Kong has improved a lot with naturalised players and with their coach Ashley Westwood. "We will play against Bangladesh first in March, who have been our regular opponents in the SAFF Championship. We know the calendar. We have six games and we need to top the group and qualify for the Asian Cup."



NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Tel. No.0675222092, e-mail id-eeerwuri@gmail.com
TCN NO. TENDER ONLINE - 03 OF 2024-25
No. 8667 /Dt. 29.11.2024
The Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Puri on behalf of Government of Odisha invites percentage rate tenders through e-procurement for 22 Nos. of work for the year 2024-25 in the District of Puri.

1.Total no. of works: 22 nos.

2.Tender cost of packages: Amount varies from Rs.0.84 lakh to 37.44 lakhs.

3.Class of contractor: As per DTGN.

4.Period of completion: 6 (Six) , 4(four) & 2(two) Calendar months .

5. Period of availability of tenders on-line/ Date & time of bidding on-line/ last date of seeking clarification/ Date of opening of tender papers:

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender on-line for bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	Date, time & venue of opening of tender
		From	To		
1	2	3	4	5	6
Superintending Engineer Rural Works Division, Puri.	Online- 03	16.12.2024 at 11.00 A.M.	27.12.2024 up to 5.00 P.M.	28.12.2024 up to 1.30 P.M.	30.12.2024 at 11.30 A.M. Office of the S.E.R.W. Division, Puri.

6. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents, which is available in website "<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>".

Superintending Engineer, R.W. Division, Puri

OIPR-25065/110052425



GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
Office of the Engineer-In-Chief, Water Resources, Secha Sadan, Bhubaneswar
A-494 Email Address: cemeh.eicwr.od@gmail.com
e-Procurement Notice- Bid Identification No.- CEM/MDL-03/ 2024-25

1. Name of the Work : Mechanical Gate Works

2. No. of Works : 01 (One)

3. Category of executors : SSI Units registered under DIC/ NSIC/ MSME for Irrigation Shutters / Hydro mechanical gates.

4. Bid Identification No. : CEM/MDL - 03/2024-25

5. Tender Value : Rs.20,68,928.00

6. Period of Completion : 02(Two) calendar months.

7. Date & time of availability of bid documents in the Portal : From dt.11.12.2024 (10.00 AM) to dt.23.12.2024 (5.30 PM)

8. Last date/ time for receipt of bid : dt.23.12.24 (up to 5.30 PM)

In the Portal

9. Date and Place of opening of Bid : dt.24.12.2024 (12.00 Noon onwards in the O/O the undersigned)

10. Name of the Officer inviting bid : Chief Engineer, Mechanical, O/O the E.I.C, Water Resources, Odisha, Bhubaneswar

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any further issue of Addenda/ Corrigenda/ Cancellation Notice shall be uploaded in the aforesaid website only.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer, Mechanical
O/o- Engineer-In-Chief,
Secha Sadan, Bhubaneswar

OIPR-32520/110018245