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Shades of danger lurk around city

Authorities Concerned Have To Undertake An Audit Of 'Dangerous' Trees

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: On Monday morning a huge tree, battered by rains and strong winds, fell with a big thud just behind the premises of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Kadavanthra. Fortunately, it happened during class hours thus preventing a tragedy.

"Thankfully, students were safe. But had the incident occurred before or after school hours, it would have been a disaster as the particular road would be full of students," said Suresh T T, leading fireman at the Gandhinagar fire station.

But the accident in Kothamangalam, when a tree that fell on a school bus claimed lives of five school children, have set off alarm bells.

On Friday, while Gandhi Nagar station received around 10 calls regarding tree-



A scene from Park Avenue Road in Kochi

related incidents, the Club Road fire station reported around five cases following heavy rains and strong winds in the city.

Parent teacher associations from various schools across the city will hold meetings on Saturday to discuss

the safety of children. The schools will have to ensure that students are safe during heavy rains.

"We had requested school authorities to undertake pre-monsoon preparations. We have asked them to prune large trees and pluck coconuts to

avoid any untoward incident," said Prakash Keshavan, head of the Kendriya Vidyalaya Parents' Association, Kochi.

According to parents, falling trees are not the only cause for concern during monsoons. "Last October, a school bus had a narrow escape during heavy rains when the bus skidded and almost fell into the backwaters. On days when the rains are heavy, schools should declare a holiday for the safety of students," said Sanil Kumar, head of the parents' forum for CBSE and ICSE schools in the city.

School authorities on the other hand treat such accidents as a 'one-off' incident. "We can't plan or prepare for such incidents as we cannot foresee them. But, we will ensure that precautions are taken during the monsoon, espe-

cially in the campus," said a principal of Bhavan's school.

"There are dozens of large trees across Kochi that could potentially keel over and fall. In Kadavanthra alone, there are two areas where we have noticed trees in dangerous condition - one at the entrance of Kendriya Vidyalaya and the other at Matha Nagar Public School," said Suresh T T.

"There are about 18 to 20 large trees in and around educational institutions, hospitals and other crowded public spaces in the city. There was a tree on Foreshore Road that was on the verge of toppling over. Though we informed the corporation, action was taken only when it was reported to the RDO," said T S Madhavan, who has been monitoring such dangerous trees in the city.

11 activists held for opposing autonomy

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IN PROTEST MODE

Kochi: The city police on Friday arrested 11 student activists who held a protest in support of the ongoing strike at Maharaja's College against the granting of autonomy. The students were released on bail by the magistrate at 9pm.

The protesters, members of 'Paadantharam', performed a street play and formed a human chain on the Park Avenue Road, obstructing traffic, said a police official with the Central station. The incident took place at 12pm on Friday.

"We were performing a play, revolutionary in nature, to express solidarity with the agitation against autonomy. No woman police officer was around when they arrested woman activists who took part," said Abhilash Padachery, one of the arrested activists.

The protesters, including two students from Maharaja's College, were booked for obstructing traffic and preventing police officers from carrying out their duty.

Prashanth A B, another student activist who was present during the arrest, said that six persons who went to the station were also interrogated by police. The agitation against autonomy, led by Maharaja's College Samrakshana Samiti, has been going on for a month.

DIGEST

Seminar at KMA Hall

A seminar on 'International association in energy efficiency' organized by the Kerala Chapter of Society of Energy Engineers and Managers (SEEM) will be held at KMA Hall, Panampilly Nagar, from 4.30pm to 7pm on Saturday.

100% placement for ship tech students: The department of ship technology, Cusat, has succeeded in earning 100% placement for its students this year also, although the slump in oil price had affected the international maritime business, said Sivaprasad, head of the department.

Concert at school: 'This Miracle Called Life', the annual concert of Global Public School, will be held at Pularackal Joseph Memorial Auditorium on the school premises on Saturday and Sunday. Singer Biju Narayanan will be the chief guest of the event.

Toc-H centenary celebrations: The inaugural ceremony of Toc-H international centenary celebrations will be held in Toc-H Indoor Stadium, Vyttila, at 3pm on Saturday.

CG evacuates Filipino national: The coast guard (CG) has evacuated a Filipino national Agravante Joenard (24) from MV Cosco Glory East near Agatti Island despite severe weather. Joenard, who suffered pain in upper abdomen, was airlifted to Kochi in five hours on Sunday.

German team in talks with KMRL, corp

Kochi: A seven-member team from KfW, a German government-owned development bank, held discussions with Kochi Metro Rail Ltd (KMRL) officials and inspected a few proposed water transport routes in the city on Friday. The Germans had expressed their willingness to pump in about

80 million Euros (approximately Rs 624 crore) to develop Kochi's water transport.

According to KMRL, the team inspected Vyttila Mobility Hub, the integration point of Metro, water and road transport. "The visiting team expressed their satisfaction over the detailed project report (DPR) and other preparations made by KMRL. The final KfW mission will come



The Germans will pump in about 80 million Euros to develop Kochi's water transport

here in August and take a final decision on funding," a KMRL spokesperson said. The DPR of the water transport project is still awaiting state government's approval.

Wolfram Klein, head of South Asia division, BMZ (German ministry of eco-

nomics and development cooperation); David Tantow, deputy head of South Asia Division, BMZ; German embassy officials Heiko Warnken, head of economic and development cooperation; Yasmin Tawfik, regional manager; Nicolai Tust, country manager; Andreas Thermann, deputy director; and Stefan Hediger, head of energy sector, were part of the German team.

Meanwhile, German representatives also held discussions with Kochi corporation to set up a decentralized sewage treatment plant. The sewage treatment plant is part of a city sanitation plan prepared by the agency, German International Cooperation. "The German government and various German agencies have promised all assistance for the project," said mayor Tony Chammany. TNN

Court in 'red rage' over speeding buses

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