

# THE ECHO OF INDIA

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM KOLKATA, SILIGURI, GANGTOK, GUWAHATI and PORT BLAIR

VOL XV ISSUE NO 254

PAGES 8

PORT BLAIR • TUESDAY • DECEMBER 27, 2022

Rs 3.00

## Dilapidated condition of Sub-Depot Betapur

### Collapse panic reigns supreme

KARTIK



MAYABUNDER, DEC 26/--/The dilapidated condition of Sub-Depot Betapur of Agriculture Department has created an atmosphere of panic out of fear of collapse of the wooden building. This wooden building is more than 35 years old and it was constructed for the purpose of providing Departmental Residential Quarters. The agricultural department converted this quarter into Sub Depot of agriculture products for the farmers and also allocated this building for the residential purpose of the staff working in this depot. Questions have arisen that how anyone can stay here and work in such a dilapidated building. Doubts are also being cast if any earthquake or any collapse induced accident occurs then who will take responsibility for the lost lives and government property.

## LG, Islanders pay tributes to Tsunami victims



PORT BLAIR, DEC 26/--/The Lt. Governor, Andaman & Nicobar Islands & Vice-Chairman Islands Development Agency, Admiral DK Joshi, (Retd.) On Monday led the Islanders in paying homage to those who lost their lives in the devastating Tsunami of 2004. At a solemn function organized by A&N Administration on the occasion of 18th Anniversary of

Tsunami at the Tsunami Memorial at Water Sports Complex, the Lt. Governor placed wreath and offered floral tributes at the Memorial. This was followed by offering of floral tributes by the First Lady of these Islands, Smt. Chitra Joshi, the Chief Secretary, A&N Islands, Shri Keshav Chandra, IAS, Adhyaksha, ZPSA, Smt. Pramila Kumari, DGP,

Shri Neeraj Thakur, Chairperson, PBMC, Smt. U Kavitha, Councillors of PBMC, Senior Officers of A&N Administration, prominent citizens, school students and general public. An all Religions Prayer Meeting (Sarva Dharma Prarthana Sabha) and a two-minute silence were observed to remember those who lost their lives in the devastating Tsunami.



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Zindagi ke saath bhi, Zindagi ke baad bhi.



# Congress invites Akhilesh, Mayawati, former deputy CM Dinesh Sharma to attend Bharat Jodo Yatra in UP

**LUCKNOW, DEC 26** ---/ The Congress has invited several leaders of non-BJP parties, including Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, BSP supremo Mayawati and RLD's Jayant Chaudhary, to take part in the Uttar Pradesh leg of the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

An exception is former deputy chief minister Dinesh Sharma who has been invited to the yatra in his capacity as a professor of Lucknow University. Another professor of the university, Ravikant, has also been invited. The Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat

Jodo Yatra will enter Uttar Pradesh on January 3 through Loni in Ghaziabad. It will then pass through Baghpat and Shamli to enter Haryana. Congress spokesperson Ashok Singh told PTI that the party has extended invitations to prominent opposition leaders in the state to attend the yatra. In the present times when people are not allowed to raise their views, this yatra is the only option to know people's minds, the spokesperson said. The entire opposition has almost the same view about this government so they have been invited to participate

in the yatra, the party spokesman said.

In addition to Yadav, Mayawati and Chaudhary, the Congress has invited SP MLA Shivpal Singh Yadav, BSP general secretary Satish Mishra, Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party chief Omprakash Rajbhar and Communist Party of India secretary Atul Anjan, he said. Former Union minister Salman Khurshid, who is the state coordinator of the yatra, had told newspersons last week that the Bharat Jodo Yatra is not of any party but of the whole country and leaders of various parties will be invited to attend it.

He, however, had not shared the names of leaders who would be invited then. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who had led the party's campaign in the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections earlier this year, will join the yatra in the state on all three days. The Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir yatra, which has so far traversed more than 2,800 km through 10 states, is on a nine-day winter break and will resume on January 3. It started from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu on September 7 and will conclude in Kashmir early next year. (PTI)



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath attending the Veer Bal Diwas programme, in Lucknow on Monday

## Maharashtra Lokayukta Bill that aims to bring CM, cabinet under its ambit tabled in Assembly

**NAGPUR, DEC 26** ---/ The Maharashtra Lokayukta Bill 2022 which aims to bring the chief minister and the council of ministers under the ambit of the anti-corruption ombudsman, was tabled in the Assembly on Monday.

As per the draft bill, prior approval of the Assembly has to be obtained and the motion has to be placed before the immediate session of the House before initiating any inquiry against the chief minister. Such motion shall be passed by not less than two-thirds of the total members of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, the draft bill stated. The draft bill also held the Lokayukta shall not inquire into any matter involving any allegation of corruption against the chief minister if it relates to internal security or public order in the state. "any such inquiry shall be held in-camera and if the Lokayukta comes to the conclusion that the complaint deserves to be dismissed, the records of the inquiry shall not be published or made available to anyone," it states.

On the appointment of the ombudsman, the draft law states the Lokayukta shall consist of a chairperson who is or has been the Chief Justice of the High Court, a judge of the Supreme Court, or a judge of the Bombay High Court. "...such number of members, not exceeding four out of whom, two shall be judicial members," it said. The selection committee for the appointment of members and the chairperson will comprise the chief minister, deputy chief minister, speaker of the Legislative Assembly, chairperson of the Legislative Council, the Leaders of Opposition in the Assembly and Council and the chief justice of the Bombay High Court or a judge nominated by the CJ. "No appointment of the chairperson or a member shall be invalid merely by reason of any vacancy in the selection committee," the draft bill said.

Notably, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis had announced the state will have a Lokayukta law on the lines of the Centre's Lokpal law. (PTI)

## Delhi govt sanctions Rs 104 crore for hospitals to procure general medicines amid fresh Covid scare

**NEW DELHI, DEC 26** ---/ The Delhi government on Monday approved a budget of Rs 104 crore for hospitals to procure general medicines as part of preparations to deal with emergency situations amid a surge in Covid cases in some countries.

At a review meeting, deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia directed the heads of government hospitals to share details of beds, ventilators, ICUs, human resources, oxygen plants, and medical logistics with the Health department by the evening. "The surge in Covid cases globally is a matter of concern for everyone. Delhi hospitals have been asked to prepare well in advance and stay vigilant. "An amount of Rs 104 crore has been approved to ensure that there is no shortage of any medicines at government hospitals and they are well prepared to deal with any situation," a statement quoted Sisodia as saying. A mock drill will be organised at all the hospitals on Tuesday to ensure the health facilities' readiness for the management of Covid following the Centre's directions, the deputy chief minister added. He said any gaps would be addressed immediately by Health department officials.

The mock drill will assess bed availability, manpower, referral resources, testing capacity, medical logistics, telemedicine services, and medical oxygen, among others. Real-time data on the availability of beds, oxygen cylinders and ventilators will be available for the public on a Delhi government portal from Tuesday, officials said. An official said testing was also likely to be ramped up soon. At present, around 2,500 to 3,000 tests are being conducted daily in the city. Meetings are being held with residents' welfare organisations and non-government organisations, which are being asked to create awareness about the emerging situation.

Last week, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had said the new Omicron sub-variant BE.7 of the coronavirus, which is causing a surge in cases in some countries, had not been detected in Delhi so far and that his government was fully geared to tackle any eventuality. Instructions have been issued to send samples from all positive cases for genome sequencing, increase precaution dose coverage and manpower in hospitals.

Kejriwal had also directed officials to take prior approval for procurement of essential items needed and inspect the machines in all hospitals. The chief minister had asserted that they were self-sufficient in terms of oxygen availability and storage. During the second Covid wave last year, Delhi had grappled with oxygen shortage with hospitals sending out SOS messages over depleting supplies on social media. However, experts say the BE.7 sub-strain should not worry India too much as a lot of people have developed immunity against the virus -- either through vaccination or previous infection -- unlike China where people have low immunity due to tough restrictions. (PTI)

## Gujarat: BJP's historic poll performance, Morbi bridge collapse and Bilkis case dominate Year 2022

**AHMEDABAD, DEC 26** ---/ The BJP's record 156-seat victory in the Gujarat Assembly polls, the collapse of a suspension bridge in Morbi killing 135 people, and the premature release of 11 convicts undergoing life term in the Bilkis Bano case on remission dominated the year 2022. The BJP's victory-the seventh consecutive term-mainly on the plank of development under a "double engine government", can potentially propel it ahead of opponents when the narratives for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls begin to set in. It was a rout for Congress which won only 17 seats while the new entrant Aam Aadmi Party bagged five seats. However, in at least 35 seats, the combined votes polled by candidates of the Congress and the AAP exceeded the votes polled by BJP nominees. Gujarat was rocked on October 30 when the British-era cable suspension bridge with a crowd of revellers enjoying the Diwali vacation collapsed into the Machchu river, killing 135 people and injuring several others. In July, hooch claimed 50 lives in Botad district in the 'dry' state. On the legal front, a court in February sentenced a record number of 38 convicts to death holding them responsible for the 2008 synchronised blasts in Ahmedabad which killed 56

people and sentenced 11 others to life imprisonment. Memories of 2002 communal riots rekindled after 20 years when 11 convicts serving a life term for the gang rape of Bilkis Bano gang and murdering her family members were released from jail on remission in August. This decision of the Gujarat government triggered outrage and led to a legal challenge in the Supreme Court. After the top court upheld the clean chit given by the SIT to incumbent Prime Minister Narendra Modi and 63 others, including senior government officials in the 2002 Gujarat riots, the police arrested activist Teesta Setalvad, and IPS officers R B Sreekumar and Sanjiv Bhatt in June for allegedly fabricating documents to frame innocent people in the riots cases.

On the social front, public flogging of youths from the Muslim community by the police in Undhela village after stones were thrown at a Garba event in October led to an outrage. On the crime front, the daylight murder of Grishma Vekariya, a college student, in February in Surat by her jilted lover Fenil Goyani, in front of her family members, sent shock waves. Security agencies seized drugs worth crores during the year from the porous coast of Gujarat,

which showed the state has emerged as a transit route to smuggle the banned substances. In April, heroin worth Rs 1.43 crore was seized near Kandla port. In the same month, the Indian Coast Guard seized a Pakistani boat carrying heroin worth Rs 280 crore and arrested nine crew members.

In July, heroin worth Rs 376 crore was seized near the Mundra port. The issue of illegal migration to the US from Gujarat came to the fore following the tragic death of a family of four hailing from Dingucha village on the Canada-US border in January. The deceased Jagdish Patel, his wife, and two children froze to death just a few metres away from the US border in Canada. Police cracked down on agents involved in illegal human trafficking after the incident. The highlight of the year was the Assembly elections given Gujarat is the home state of PM Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah. The contest was expected to be three-pronged between the ruling BJP, the opposition Congress, and Aam Aadmi Party. But in the end, the ruling party had the last laugh as it reaped the rich harvest of 156 out of 182 seats and retained power for the seventh consecutive term. (PTI)

## Haryana Assembly pays tributes to ex-Guv, 16 soldiers killed in Sikkim

**CHANDIGARH, DEC 26** ---/ The Haryana Assembly on Monday paid rich tributes to prominent personalities, including former state governor Dhanik Lal Mandal, as well as 16 Army jawans killed in a road accident in Sikkim.

The three-day winter session of the Haryana Vidhan Sabha began on Monday with the House paying tributes to the departed souls. Chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar, who is the leader of the House, read out the obituary resolutions. The House paid tributes to former Haryana governor Dhanik Lal Mandal and former MLA Bhag Singh Chatter. The members also placed on record their deep sense of sorrow on the demise of 16 soldiers who

lost their lives in a road accident in Sikkim on December 23. Three of the soldiers belonged to Haryana. They were havildar Arvind Kumar of Jhojhu Kalan village, Charkhi Dadri district; Lance Naik Somvir Singh of Sandol village, Hisar district; and Sepoy Vikas Kumar of Pili Mandori village, Fatehabad district.

The House also remembered 17 brave martyrs of Haryana who showed indomitable courage and made supreme sacrifice while safeguarding the unity and integrity of the country. These included Lieutenant Colonel Saurabh Yadav, Gurugram; Captain Nidesh Singh Yadav of Nandgaon village in Bhiwani; Inspector Jitender Kumar

of Jhanwari village in Bhiwani; Assistant Sub-Inspector Virender Singh of Patikara village, Mahendragarh; Havildar Satender Pal of Ganiar village, Mahendragarh; Rifleman Manoj Kumar of Shahjahanpur village, Faridabad, among others. Haryana Assembly Speaker Gian Chand Gupta read out the obituary resolutions and paid tributes to the departed souls. Leader of the Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda also read out the obituary resolutions on behalf of his party. Apart from this, the House paid tributes to Krishna Devi, mother of OP Yadav, Minister of state; Santosh Devi, sister of MLA Nayan Pal Rawat; and Dharambir Singh, cousin of MLA Raghubir Singh Kadian. (PTI)

## Rahul Gandhi visits memorials of former PMs, Mahatma Gandhi

**NEW DELHI, DEC 26** ---/ Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi visited the memorials of Mahatma Gandhi and several former prime ministers and paid tributes to them here on Monday.

Wearing a white T-shirt on a chilling December morning, with his security staff seen wearing suits and other Congress leaders wearing jackets and mufflers, Gandhi visited Veer Bhumi, Shakti Sthal and Shanti Van, the memorials of former prime ministers Rajiv Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru respectively.

The Congress leader also visited Rajghat, the memorial of Mahatma Gandhi, and Vijay Ghat, the memorial of former prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. He paid tributes to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at his memorial, Sadaiv Atal.

Gandhi also visited the memorials of former prime minister Chaudhary Charan Singh and former deputy prime minister Jagjivan Ram.

"The holy land of India has taught the whole world lessons of love and non-violence. Keeping these

ideals in heart, looking at the footprints of the sons of Mother India, we are moving forward...." Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi while sharing pictures of

him paying tributes at various memorials. The Congress leader had



initially planned to pay homage to the former prime ministers on Saturday after his 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' march but later, rescheduled it to Monday morning. Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinate said Gandhi is on a "tapasya" and wants to take everyone along.

While Congress leaders did not say whether Gandhi was giving any political message while paying tributes to the former prime ministers in a T-shirt on a cold December morning, they charged Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders with spreading "lies" to

## Maharashtra CM knows intensity of border dispute, will take right steps: Sena MP

**NASHIK, DEC 26** ---/ Shiv Sena MP and chief minister Eknath Shinde's son Shrikant Shinde on Monday said the state government will take the right steps on Maharashtra's border dispute with Karnataka.

The issue of Maharashtra-Karnataka border row heated up in the ongoing winter session of the state Assembly here on Monday, with the opposition demanding a resolution on the issue. Talking to reporters here, the Sena MP said the chief minister had been in jail for taking part in an agitation over the border issue in the past and knows the intensity of the dispute well. The state government is with the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti and right steps will be taken regarding the issue, he said. Earlier in the day, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis informed the legislative Assembly that the state government will do whatever it can to ensure that the Marathi-speaking people in Karnataka get justice and asserted that the state government will fight even for an inch of land. On the Opposition's demand for resignation of state Minister Abdul Sattar alleging an irregularity in ordering 'regularisation' of the possession of land reserved for grazing in favour of a private person, Shinde said the opposition parties don't have any real issues to raise and were making allegations without doing any research.

Sattar had passed the order in June 2022 when he was the Minister of State for Revenue in the previous Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government. The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court last week issued a notice to Sattar for ordering 'regularisation' of the possession of land reserved for public 'gairan' (grazing) in favour of a private person in the face of a civil court order. The MP also took potshots at the Thackeray-led faction of the Shiv Sena stating that it needs to introspect why people are leaving the fold and where it is going wrong. (PTI)

## Finance minister Sitharaman admitted to AIIMS

**NEW DELHI, DEC 26** ---/ Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Monday with symptoms of viral fever and is recovering, sources said. Sitharaman, 63, is in a private ward of the hospital, they said. She was taken to the hospital around 12 noon. (PTI)

## Himachal govt suspends functioning of staff selection commission over recruitment exam paper leak

**SHIMLA, DEC 26** ---/ The Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu government suspended the functioning of the Himachal Pradesh Staff Selection Commission (HPSSC) on Monday, two days after an HPSSC employee was arrested along with five others over the leak of question paper for the junior office assistant (IT) recruitment exam.

According to a notification issued by the state government here, the decision has been taken in view of various irregularities found in the working of the commission, especially the recruitment process for the JOA (IT) posts.

"There has been a reported instance of leak of question paper for the post of Junior Office Assistant (Information Technology) (JOA-IT), for which examination was scheduled to be held on December 25 besides information regarding leak of question papers of posts of Junior Auditors and Computer Operators, for which examination is proposed to be held in near future," the order said.

The acts of omission and commission in the HPSSC have not only eroded its credibility but also adversely impacted the larger public interest. Prima facie, it appears that the commission has not discharged its duties and responsibilities objectively, in a transparent manner as well as with due confidentiality to the detriment of job aspirants, the order added. (PTI)

## Adityanath congratulates Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on appointment as Nepal PM

**LUCKNOW, DEC 26** ---/ Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath congratulated Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' after his appointment as Nepal prime minister.

He also expressed hope that India's relations with Nepal would be further strengthened under his leadership. "Hearty congratulations and best wishes to Shri Pushp Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' ji on being elected as the Prime Minister of Nepal, Adityanath said in a tweet in Hindi. "Undoubtedly, under your successful leadership, the political, commercial and cultural relations between India and Nepal will further strengthen.

Jai Pashupatinath!" 'Prachanda' was sworn-in as Nepal prime minister for a third time, a day after the former guerrilla leader dramatically walked out of the pre-poll alliance led by the Nepali Congress and joined hands with Opposition leader KP Sharma Oli. The 68-year-old was appointed prime minister after he submitted a letter to the president showing the support of 169 members in the 275-member House of Representatives. (PTI)

defame him.

"The BJP said Rahul Gandhi is going on a Christmas holiday abroad, but today, in this chilling cold, when BJP ministers, leaders and spokespersons, covered with blankets, were trying to break India, Rahulji was paying tributes to Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Chaudhary Charan Singh, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee at their memorials and completing his tapasya," Shrinate told reporters when asked about Gandhi wearing a T-shirt.

BJP's IT cell head Amit Malviya accused Gandhi of doing so for the media and said the Congress leader did not visit former prime minister PV Narasimha Rao's memorial in Hyderabad.

"Rahul Gandhi visiting samadhis of former PMs is for the shutterbugs, chattering elites and part of his makeover exercise, the nth perhaps. If he was sincere about it, he should have visited the samadhi of Narasimha Rao in Hyderabad too. He didn't, even though it was on his way...." Malviya said in a tweet. (PTI)



# CPI(M) seeks shifting of crocodiles from residential area



PORT BLAIR, DEC 26/-/ CPI (M) has demanded to shift the crocodiles from all residential areas of A & N Islands to the Crocodile sanctuary. In a letter sent to the Lt. Governor, A & N Islands, Shri D. Ayyappan, State Secretary of CPI (M) has further demanded that a policy decision may be taken not to release the hatchlings/baby crocodiles in the nearby areas of human inhabitation henceforth. He drew the attention of the Lt. Governor to the incident

occurred at New Manglutan recently in which a person was killed by the crocodile while fishing in the creek near his house. ShriAyyappan along with other leaders visited the residence of the victim on 25th December, 2022 morning and spoke to his family members, relatives and villagers assembled there. He stated in his letter that the area is inhabited by a large number of fishermen and fishing is their only income. The

villagers informed ShriAyyappan that the above incident occurred due to the sheer callousness of the authorities concerned as no action was taken by the authorities to shift the crocodiles from the area to the Crocodile sanctuary despite requests by the fishermen villagers. The incident occurred at a place 1 KM away from Guptapara Fish Landing Centre. It is surprising that the crocodiles were allowed to remain at a place where fishermen are fishing and inhabit. ShriAyyappan alleged that no concrete step was taken by the Environment & Forest Department of the A & N Administration or by the concerned Panchayat-raj institutions to shift the crocodile from the area because of which the instant incident occurred. He informed the Lt. Governor that the rescue operation launched by the Forest Department to save the victim was also not effective and it was reportedly conducted in a very casual manner. The family members of the victim and the villagers have reported to the CPI (M) leaders that no officer from the Administration visited their home or in the area after the tragic incident and it was left at the discretion of the lower level officials of the Forest Department. CPI (M) Secretary urged upon the Lt. Governor to issue necessary directions to the concerned authorities in this regard.

## ANTCC pays Shradhanjali to Tsunami victims



PORT BLAIR, DEC 26/-/ The Andaman Nicobar Territorial Congress Committee has paid Shradhanjali to the Tsunami victims on 26th December 2022 at ANTCC Headquarter Gandhi Bhavan, Port Blair to deeply mourn silence for the people who have lost their

lives in the Tsunami earthquake on 26th Dec 2004. ANTCC President Shri.RangalalHalder along with Chairman- Campaign Committee Shri. G. Bhasker garlanded the portrait of the "Tsunami Memorial" followed by a Candle light & floral tribute by all Congress

Senior leaders, BCC Presidents, TCC Members, Frontal Organizations, PBMC Councilors and the general public present there. This day was observed with prayers given by the Priest, Pandits, Molana and Sikh Guru to mark with silences as nature

has killed thousands of lives in the Tsunami Earthquake. All Congress Family prayed for the departed souls to be in eternal peace.

## Ramolon Store: A vocal for local initiative inaugurated by CS

PORT BLAIR, DEC 26/-/Ramolon Store, promotes local craftsmanship, art, culture,



a vocal for local brand and its flagship store was inaugurated by Chief Secretary, Mr. Keshav Chandra at Port Blair. The store

expected to open in various islands. The brand is also available online soon at [www.ramolon.in](http://www.ramolon.in)

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# Swaraj Deep to sail for Chennai

PORT BLAIR, DEC 26/-/ The vessel MV Swaraj Dweep will sail for Port Blair to Chennai on 28.12.2022 at 1000 Hrs.

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passengers will be closed one hour before the schedule time. Passengers reporting late will not be allowed to board the vessel.



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*Get all the fools on your side and you can be elected to anything*  
**Frank Dane**

## Prachanda Nepal’s new PM

The surprise appointment of CPN-Maoist Centre chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal on Sunday as Nepal’s new Prime Minister may not bode well for India-Nepal ties as Prachanda, as he is popularly known, and his main backer KP Sharma Oli had some run-ins with New Delhi previously over territorial issues. There has been an understanding between Prachanda and Oli to lead the government on rotation basis and Oli agreed to make Prachanda Prime Minister at the first chance as per his demand. Prachanda, the 68-year-old guerrilla leader of former communist rebels, dramatically broke away from the five-party ruling alliance led by the Nepali Congress, ending the political uncertainty after last month’s general elections failed to produce a clear winner. Prachanda has support of 168 lawmakers in the 275-member House of Representatives which includes CPN-UML with 78, CPN-MC with 32, Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) with 20, Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) with 14, JSP with 12, Janamat with 6, and Nagarik Unmukti Party with 3. Nepali Congress is the largest party with 89 seats, and along with the other ruling alliances it has a combined strength of 136 seats in the House – just two seats short of majority.

Prachanda, who becomes the Prime Minister of Nepal for the third time, is seen as pro-China. He has in the past said a new understanding with India needed to be developed on the basis of "changed scenario" in Nepal and after addressing all outstanding issues, like revision of the 1950 Friendship Treaty and resolving Kalapani and Susta border disputes. The India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 forms the bedrock of the special relations between the two countries. In recent years, Prachanda, however, said India and Nepal need to address diplomatically some of the issues "left by history" to realise the full potential of the bilateral cooperation. His main backer Oli is also known for his pro-China stance. As the prime minister, Oli last year claimed that efforts were being made to oust him after his government redrew Nepal’s political map by incorporating three strategically key Indian territories, a move that strained ties between the two countries. India had termed as "untenable" the "artificial enlargement" of the territorial claims by Nepal after its Parliament unanimously in 2020 approved the new political map of the country featuring Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura areas which India maintains belong to it.

Nepal shares a border of over 1850 km with five Indian states – Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Land-locked Nepal relies heavily on India for the transportation of goods and services. Nepal’s access to the sea is through India, and it imports a predominant proportion of its requirements from and through India.

# Pentagon deeply worried at China’s military beef-up

## REFLEX ACTION

Sankar Ray

The Pentagon, headquarters of US military establishment, submitted to the US Congress a report, ‘Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2022’ pursuant to the National Defence Authorisation Act for Fiscal Year 2020. It reflects Pentagon’s concern about China’s military beef-up as it poses a challenge to the hegemonic power of American military supremacy. The report encapsulates China’s plan to beef up the integrated development of mechanisation, informatisation, and intelligentisation of the PRC’s armed forces, aiming at outmanoeuvring of the American military-industrial complex in a couple of decades.

The 196-page report reveals “in both classified and unclassified form, on military and security developments involving the People’s Republic of China ‘tenets and probable development of Chinese security strategy and military strategy, and of the military organisations and operational concepts supporting such development over the next 20 years. The covert belligerence in PRC’s preparedness is of concern for Washington although Beijing reiterated its commitment to US-China engagement and cooperation on security matters through bilateral military-to-military contacts, for such engagement and cooperation. The report identifies ‘the contours of the People’s Liberation Army’s way of war’, while surveying China’s current activities and capabilities, and assessment of its future military modernisation goals.’

The Pentagon document has noted that PRC in 2021 began reposing greater responsibility on the PLA ‘as an instrument of statecraft as it adopted more coercive and aggressive actions in the Indo-Pacific region’. Following completion of modernisation in 2020, the PLA ‘now sets its sights to 2027 with a goal to accelerate the integrated development of mechanisation, informatisation, and intelligentisation of the PRC’s armed forces. If realized, this 2027 objective could give the PLA capabilities to be a more credible military tool for the Chinese Communist Party to wield as it pursues Taiwan unification.’ There is a comparative statement between China and Taiwan in tabular form on China’s all out edge over Taiwan in any eventual military showdown. The 20th National Congress of the CCP laid down important military and security

implications for the PLA’s 2027 centenary objectives while having focused on intensification and acceleration of PLA’s modernisation goals over the next five years, including strengthening its “system of strategic deterrence.” The report mentions how CCP increasingly turns to the PLA in support of its global ambitions. It covers security and military developments involving the PRC until the end of 2021.

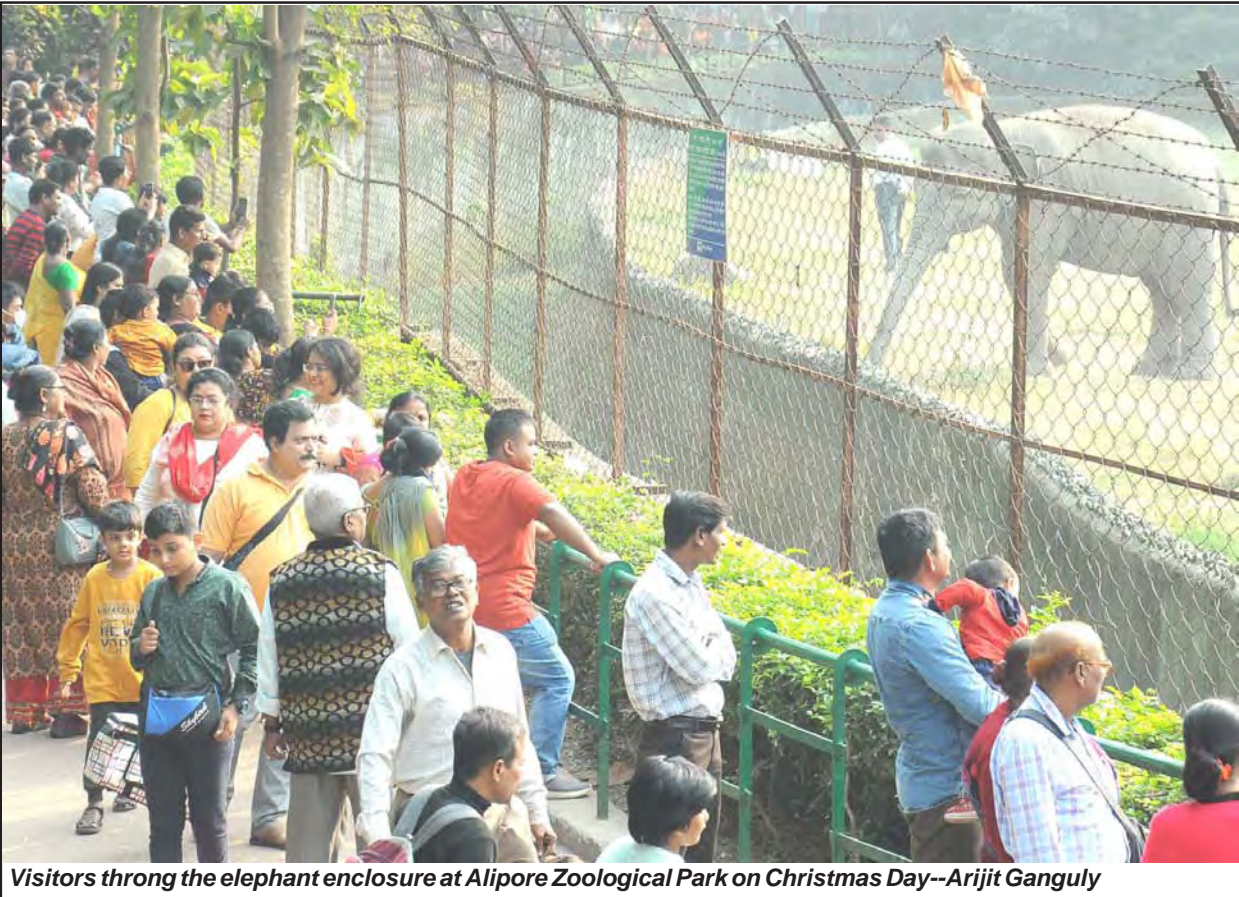
The Pentagon report in the sub-section, ‘understanding China’s strategy, mentions PRC’s national strategy that aims to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” by 2049. China ‘increasingly views the United States as deploying a whole-of-government effort meant to contain the PRC’s rise, which presents obstacles to its national strategy’.

Importantly, China describes its view of strategic competition’ in terms of a rivalry among powerful nation states, as well as a clash of opposing ideological systems’. Leaders of PRC – top brass of CCP – believe that structural changes in the international system and an increasingly confrontational USA ‘are the root causes of intensifying strategic competition’ between the two countries. One of the special features of China’s armed preparatory plan is what is termed as Military-Civil Fusion Development Strategy that plans to “fuse” its security and development strategies to build an integrated National Strategic System and Capabilities in aid of the PRC’s national rejuvenation goals. It will develop and acquire advanced dual-use technology for military purposes and deepen reform of the national defence science and technology industries that serves a broader purpose to strengthen all of the PRC’s instruments of national power. China’s space industry, managed by the PLA, is rapidly expanding its intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, navigation, and communication satellite constellations. The successful landing of a rover on Mars and launch of the first and second modules of China’s first long-term space station in 2021 and 2022 demonstrated the industry’s continued progress. PRC’s strategic land-based nuclear and

conventional missile forces, associated support forces, and missile bases. The PLARF is advancing its long-term modernisation plans to enhance its strategic deterrence capabilities. The SSF is a theatre command-level organisation established to centralize the PLA’s strategic space, cyberspace, electronic, information, communications, and psychological warfare missions and capabilities’. The JLSF provides integrated joint logistics support for the PLA and concentrates its efforts on improving joint strategic and campaign-level logistic efficiencies through training and on integrating civilian products and services.

China’s arsenal is mammoth with the largest aviation force in the Asia-Pacific region and the third largest in the world, with over 2,800 total aircraft (not including trainer variants or uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) of which approximately 2,250 are combat aircraft (including fighters, strategic bombers, tactical bombers, multi-mission tactical, and attack aircraft).

China has developed a sophisticated, persistent cyber-enabled espionage and attack threat to military and critical infrastructure systems through its efforts to develop, acquire, or gain access to information and advanced technologies. Detected PRC cyberspace operations target telecommunications firms, managed service providers and software developers. The PLAAF is rapidly catching up to Western air forces and continues to modernise with the delivery of domestically built aircraft and a wide range of UAVs. In October 2019, the PLAAF publicly revealed the H-6N as its first nuclear-capable air-to-air refuelable bomber, signalling the airborne leg of its nuclear triad. In 2021, it launched approximately 135 ballistic missiles for testing and training. This was more than the rest of the world combined, excluding ballistic missile employment in conflict zones. In 2021, the PRC continued building three solid-fuelled intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) silo fields, which will cumulatively contain at least 300 new ICBM silos. China’s space industry, managed by the PLA, is rapidly expanding its intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, navigation, and communication satellite constellations. The successful landing of a rover on Mars and launch of the first and second modules of China’s first long-term space station in 2021 and 2022 demonstrated the industry’s continued progress. (IPA)



Visitors through the elephant enclosure at Alipore Zoological Park on Christmas Day--Arijit Ganguly

# US women’s U-19 World Cup Cricket Team with all PIO’s a tribute to Indian diaspora

There was God, the ‘God of Cricket’, Sachin Tendulkar. For a people with 33 million gods and one more discovered or invented every once in a while, this wasn’t a surprise. Like somebody insignificant pointed out, god should be shown their place except the ‘One’ almighty who scares you stupid in your imagination. But, where there are Indians there aren’t too many surprises left, at least when it’s cricket.

The gentlemen’s game which the pagan adopted and adapted to with the felicity of a chameleon changing colours, should not surprise anybody if the USA women’s cricket team for the U-19 T-20 Women’s World Cup is almost entirely ‘Indian’. That said, it is a cricket team and not baseball.

Indians or PIO (Persons of Indian Origin) have cricket in their DNA, so to speak. That cricket is India’s most popular sport isn’t good for other sports but who cares as long as one can hold a bat and thrash the ball to kingdom come. There was a time when we had rajas and nawabs of cricket, these days it is the commoner hitting the highs.

And India has a tough Indian women’s cricket team, hitting the ball as if born to the game. But to have a USA women’s cricket team with universal Indian names is like having an Indian in every pie, and under every stone. That’s like saying there’s a Malayali (Malabari!) under every Dubai stone.

Remember the Dhoni-led T-20 team at the World Cup when Sreesanth held a catch and everybody said there’s a Malayali standing next to every blade of artificial grass!

It’s uncanny, go anywhere and everywhere on the planet, from the African Sahara to the Siberian Tundra, and there will be an Indian. The easiest people to raise in an hour’s notice anywhere is the Indian diaspora. Half the reason why Prime Minister Narendra Modi gets worldwide fame (notoriety at home!) is because Indians are there in substantial numbers in every country on Earth. They say the next 50-100 years will be the Chinese and Indian to own. Cool! But there’s a difference. The two are expansionists of different makes, like there are fossil fuel cars and there are Elon Musk electric vehicles. The Chinese are salami-slicing expansionists, while Indian’s take their culture and their cricket and add them to that of the countries they expand to.

So, there will be two world-class cricket teams with an Indian flavour at the U-19 World Cup. Call them curry-cricketers. The best thing about the USA U-19 women’s cricket team is that

the “Indians” in the team aren’t transplants from India, young girls who migrated to the USA for a US citizenship courtesy cricket. The USA cricket team’s “Indians” are all proud “Born in the USA”.

Getting a place in the Indian women’s cricket team is difficult. It must be the same for the USA women’s cricket team. And the 15 “Indians” in the USA U-19 women’s cricket team must be only the tip of the number of “Indians” vying for a place in the USA team. There must be hundreds, nay thousands, of “American Indians” playing cricket in the USA, fighting to make a mark.

The USA team for the ICC Under-19 Women’s T20 World Cup will be in South Africa in January 2023. The 15-member squad will be led by skipper Geetika Kodali. Fellow ‘Telugu’ Anika Kolan is Vice-Captain. The team is dominated by ‘Telugu’ players, which should not surprise anybody because there are more Telugu Indians in the USA than there are Punjabi Indians and other-language Indians.

And, as if having Indians to play for the USA isn’t enough, the head coach of the team is also a person of Indian

origin but not hailing from India, or the USA, nevertheless having ‘Indian’ in his introduction! Yup, West Indian Shivnarine Chanderpaul is no stranger to India or Indians worldwide. His name is Indian, and that is enough to make the bloke sound like an Indian.

The USA team will be in the “challenging Group A” along with Australia, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Just imagine if India and USA end up facing each other in the knockouts? That will be a dream game and let neither team play the game by ignoring the rules. There shouldn’t be bitterness like that which plagues Indo-Pak fixtures.

Then again, that’s an extreme. From the names of the USA cricketers posted on social media, there seems to be no “Pakistanis” in the team. The “Indian monopoly” is near absolute. Then again, desi-Indians should refrain from calling the USA team the “India B Team”. The United States cricket team is as USA as the Indian cricket team is India.

The best part of the deal is, India and Indians worldwide have two teams to cheer for at the U-19 T-20 Women’s World Cup, the one in blue, and the other in blue and red! To top it all, the venue is South Africa, a country where Indians used to get thrown out of trains but never left because the world is an oyster and you can be where you want to be as long as you play the game and play by the rules. Howzat! (IPA)

### Conventional Crossword

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23			24			25				
27							28			

**ACROSS**  
1 Fashions  
4 Members of a play  
7 Easily managed  
8 Polite  
10 Expensive  
11 Make up for  
12 Printers' measures  
14 Starchy food  
17 Morse elements  
19 Lair  
20 Commonplace  
21 Capital of Peru  
25 Stop  
26 Modes of utterance  
27 Heavy substance  
28 Bullock

**DOWN**  
1 Derided  
2 Revise and correct  
3 Alone  
4 Drink  
5 Beer  
6 Spiritualists' meeting  
9 Very extensive  
13 Incentive  
15 Notion  
16 Make beloved  
18 Not flighty  
21 Frozen treats  
22 Examine  
24 Extinct bird

### SUDOKU: 3738

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**Yesterday's Solution 3737**

9	3	8	7	1	2	4	5	6
7	2	6	9	4	5	8	1	3
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6	4	2	8	7	3	5	9	1
5	1	7	2	9	6	3	4	8
8	9	3	1	5	4	7	6	2
3	8	9	5	2	1	6	7	4
1	6	5	4	3	7	2	8	9
2	7	4	6	8	9	1	3	5

**Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 1746**

M	O	S	T		R	I	G	I	D
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M	I	D	G	E		N	E	W	S

**DISCLAIMER**

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# CPI(M)'s Tarigami suggests dialogue to resolve issues of Kashmiri Pandit employees

JAMMU, DEC 26/--/Asserting that warnings only complicate issues rather than solving them, Senior Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader M Y Tarigami on Monday suggested dialogue with the protesting employees who are seeking their relocation outside Kashmir in the wake of targeted killings.

Hundreds of Kashmiri migrant Pandits and Jammu-based reserved category employees are camping in Jammu after leaving their places of postings in the Valley following the killing of their colleagues -- Rahul Bhat and Rajni Bala -- by terrorists in May.

Last week, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha asserted that all necessary measures had been taken to ensure the safety of minority community employees, including Kashmiri Pandits, in Kashmir and sent out a "loud and clear" message to those demanding a transfer that no salary will be given for sitting at home.

"They are caught in a hapless situation and need a sympathetic and humanitarian approach to address their demands. The warnings are not given to our own people, it further complicates the situation," Tarigami, who is also convenor and spokesperson of the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), told PTI here.

He said the minority employees are feeling insecure and "they (administration) is saying that they are not going to listen to them". "...Learn to conduct business with your own people by holding dialogue and made them satisfy if you think the situation is normal in the valley, though it is otherwise".

The former legislator said the PAGD

delegation met the Lt Governor in May over the targeted killings and told him to ensure adequate security to them so that they can feel secure. "The elementary demand of every citizen is protection of their life and property. We stand with the protesting employees and want the government to ensure a safe environment for them to perform their duties normally," Taragami said.

Asked about the statement of Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Kashmiri Pandits that it is better to save precious human life even if it means closing down a dozen offices, he said the remark is absolutely in contradiction with the statement of the Lt Governor:

"Let them sit together and reach a consensus about what to speak or not," the CPI(M) leader said.

He also dismissed the administration's claims about restoration of normalcy in the valley. "There are no indicators suggesting expression of normalcy."

"If there is normalcy, what is stopping them from holding Assembly elections, why are the Pandit employees forced to flee en masse and why are they being threatened to return to their duties?" he asked.

Tarigami said the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and other central government agencies are going house-to-house and the people are being booked under the draconian Public Safety Act (PSA) and shifted to jails outside the valley.

"If the situation is normal, why do they not go for removal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)? Journalists are not free to work or make critical analyses of the situation," he said. (PTI)

order, granted six weeks to the prosecution to file a status report and listed the case for further hearing on March 1. The FIR was registered by Makhi police station in Unnao on December 23, 2018 under sections 419/420/467/468/471 IPC for the alleged offence of cheating and forgery after the husband of an accused in the main rape case claimed the petitioner and her mother forged the date on the birth certificate so they could press the charge under the POCSO Act. In her anticipatory bail plea, the petitioner said a charge-sheet has been filed but due to threat to her life, she could not appear in response to the summons and, consequently, non-bailable warrants were issued against her. Sengar's appeal challenging the trial court's verdict in the Unnao

# Delhi HC grants protection to Unnao rape survivor in forgery FIR

NEW DELHI, DEC 26/--/The Delhi High Court has granted interim protection from "precipitate action" to the 2017 Unnao rape survivor in an FIR registered by the Uttar Pradesh police for allegedly forging her date of birth to attract provisions of the POCSO Act in the case in which the now expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar was convicted. Sengar has since been disqualified as an MLA.

Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani issued notice on the anticipatory bail plea by the 21-year-old and directed that subject to the petitioner appearing before the trial court when required, "no precipitate action affecting the petitioner's liberty shall be taken by the trial court, till the next date of hearing".

The court, in a recent

case is pending in the high court. He has sought the quashing of the December 16, 2019 judgement of the trial court which convicted him of rape. Sengar has also sought setting aside of the December 20, 2019 order sentencing him to imprisonment for the remainder of his life. The trial court had convicted Sengar under various provisions including section 376 (2) of IPC which deals with the offence of rape committed by a public servant who "takes advantage of his official position and commits rape on a woman in his custody as such public servant or in the custody of a public servant subordinate to him". It had awarded him the maximum punishment of life term with a rider that the convict will remain in jail for the "remainder of his natural biological life" and also imposed an exemplary fine of Rs 25 lakh on him. The girl was kidnapped and raped by Sengar in 2017 when she was stated to be a minor. (PTI)



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IREL/Kanyakumari/22-23/ET56	Repair and maintenance of existing bidirectional approach road from bus bay to security main gate in MK Plant

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CBC-46129/12/0070/2223

**AFFIDAVIT**

I, Shri. K. Srinivas, S/o Shri. K. Satyanarayana, aged about 25 years, R/o Buniyadabad Village, Near: Ayyappa Temple under Port Blair Tehsil, South Andaman District, Andaman & Nicobar Islands by faith Hindu do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as follows:  
1. That I am a permanent resident of these Islands and permanently residing in the address given herein above.  
2. That my father actual name is K. Satyanarayana and my mother actual name is K. Veerlaxmi, whereas in my 10th and 12 Marksheet, Passbook, bonafide, migration etc., issued from the Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi, my father name is wrongly written as K. Satyanarayan instead of K. Satyanarayana and my mother name is wrongly written as Veer Laxmi instead of K. Veerlaxmi and as such I declare that K. Satyanarayan and K. Satyanarayana is the name of my father belong to same and identical person and I also declare that Veer Laxmi and K. Veerlaxmi is the name of my mother belong to same and identical person and in future my father shall be known as K. Satyanarayana and my mother shall be known as K. Veerlaxmi for all official and non-official purposes.  
3. That I have possessed valid document to prove that my father actual name is K. Satyanarayana and my mother actual name is K. Veerlaxmi.  
4. That this instant affidavit is mainly made to submit in the office of Passport section for obtaining passport in my name by declaring that my father name is wrongly depicted in 10th and 12 Marksheet, Passbook, bonafide, migration etc. as K. Satyanarayan instead of K. Satyanarayana and my mother name is wrongly depicted as Veer Laxmi instead of K. Veerlaxmi and in future my father shall be known as K. Satyanarayana and my mother shall be known as K. Veerlaxmi for all official and non-official purposes. Hence this instant affidavit.  
5. That the contents made in Para 01-04 of this instant affidavit are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and I have not suppressed any material facts of this instant affidavit.  
Solemnly affirm on this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of December, 2022 at Port Blair.

**DEPONENT**

# TN remembers 2004 tsunami victims

CHENNAI, DEC 26/--/Mourners lit candles and silent processions were taken out on Monday in remembrance of the victims of the 2004 tsunami that caused massive destruction in the coastal parts of Tamil Nadu 18 years ago.

Fishermen kept off the sea as a mark of respect to the departed.

People living along the shoreline from Chennai to Kanyakumari, took out silent processions to the beach and paid tearful homage by pouring milk into the sea and sprinkling flowers.

On the fateful morning of December 26, 2004, an earthquake in the Indian Ocean near the island of Sumatra in Indonesia triggered a tsunami that killed thousands of people.

Several fishermen and a large number of civilians who had gone to Velankanni to celebrate Christmas died due to the disaster.

In Nagapattinam district where about 6,065 people died, fisherfolk, accompanied by public, traders and political party members took out a massive procession and paid tribute at Akkaraipettai.

Many children were orphaned and in certain cases, parents had lost their children during the tsunami.

On the occasion of the 18th anniversary, fishermen

of Cuddalore, Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari too paid tribute by pouring milk into the sea and sprinkling flowers.

At Nagore, tributes were paid at the mass burial site on the land owned by the Dargah.

At several places, candles were lit and banners and hoardings containing the photos of the victims were put up, according to president of South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association Ku Bharathi.

"We cannot forget the ghastly tragedy that claimed several hundreds of lives 18 years ago. Today our members decided to keep away from the sea to

pay tribute to the victims," Bharathi said.

DMK Legislator, representing the Mylapore Assembly constituency here, Dha Velu and Principal secretary, Cooperation, Food and Consumer Protection Department, Dr J Radhakrishnan, joined hundreds of people in a procession at Nochikuppam here, carrying pots of milk in their hands, which they emptied later at the Marina beach.

Radhakrishnan, who was Collector of Nagapattinam district which faced the brunt of the killer waves, had then adopted a 4-year old girl Sowmya who lost her

parents due to the calamity. He had fostered her over the years and in February this year, Radhakrishnan solemnised her marriage.

At Kasimedu here, former AIADMK minister D Jayakumar, accompanied by his party members, paid floral tributes and poured milk into the sea. Later, speaking to reporters he said late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, then, took up rehabilitation measures on a war footing and won the appreciation from several quarters.

Nagapattinam Collector Arun Thamburaj and Poompuhar Collector R Lalitha, too, were among the officials who laid wreaths at the tsunami memorial. (PTI)

# BJP says Rahul Gandhi 'doing drama' after he visits Vajpayee's samadhi

NEW DELHI, DEC 26/--/The BJP on Monday attacked the Congress and demanded an apology over unsavoury remarks made against former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee by a leader attached to the Congress chief's office, even as the opposition party distanced itself from the controversy.

Gaurav Pandhi, who is a coordinator with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's office and handles social media for him, had put out a tweet alleging that Vajpayee had sided with the British. He later deleted it as the BJP accused Rahul Gandhi of "doing a drama" of paying homage at Vajpayee's memorial while party leaders use "abusive words" against the former prime minister.

On Monday morning, Rahul Gandhi visited the 'samadhi' of Mahatma Gandhi and several former prime ministers, including Vajpayee whose birth anniversary was on Sunday.

The Congress noted that Pandhi has since deleted the controversial tweet and asserted that the party's stand and that of Rahul Gandhi are the same.

BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawala demanded that the Congress should apologise for Pandhi's remarks, "else one will be forced to believe that the words of Congress leader Gaurav Pandhi are Rahul Gandhi's thoughts".

Another party spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said Vajpayee was an epitome of honesty and a messenger of peace, while Rahul Gandhi was involved in "defaming" India and "spreading hatred".

"Gaurav Pandhi has deleted his tweet but that is not enough. Congress must clarify its stand and apologise. Must sack serial offender Pandhi. Or else we will be forced to believe that "Shabd Pandhi ke, soch Rahul Gandhi ki",..." Poonawala said on Twitter.

"Atal ji is an epitome of honesty, dedication to the nation & a messenger of peace. Rahul Gandhi at 'Sadaiv Atal' is corruption kneeling before honesty. The question is whether he has walked the path taught by him. From defaming India, supporting 'tukde tukde' gang Rahul Gandhi only spreads hatred," Bhatia tweeted.

He also alleged that Rahul Gandhi is "doing a drama". "On one hand Rahul Gandhi goes to Atal Sadaiv to pay homage and on the other hand party leaders use abusive words", he said.

Asked about Pandhi's tweet, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said a lot is being made out about somebody's tweet.

"I think when Rahul Gandhi stands up for something then it is the party's stand.

"The person in question has also deleted it, to the best of my knowledge, but that is not the issue.

"The issue is that when Rahul Gandhi goes and pays homage at the 'samadhi' of whether Rajiv Ji or Indira Ji or Shastri Ji, Nehru Ji, Mahatma, Chaudhary Charan Singh or even Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ji, he is actually paying homage to each and every individual who has built this country," she said. The Congress leader also said that Vajpayee had told the then Gujarat Chief Minister in 2002 and today's prime minister to follow "Raj Dharma", which was to follow the Constitution. (PTI)

# Services affected for over an hour on Pink Line section due to OHE issue

NEW DELHI, DEC 26/--/Services were affected for over an hour on a section of the Delhi Metro's Pink Line on Monday due to a disruption caused by a bird dropping an external wire on a live overhead equipment (OHE) line, officials said on Monday.

The 58-km-long Pink Line connects Majlis Park with Shiv Vihar.

"Train services between Maujpur and Shiv Vihar section of the Pink Line were affected on the down line (going towards Shiv Vihar) from 11.15 am to 12.35 pm today as one of the OHE wire parted due to scrap external wire dropped by bird on live OHE resulting in shorting of phase to earth," a senior

Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) official said.

He said the DMRC's OHE maintenance teams "rushed to the site and undertook the repair work" of this parted catenary wire (part of OHE), which was damaged and broken between the Jauhari Enclave and Shiv Vihar section.

During this period, single line services were maintained between Shiv Vihar to Maujpur through the up line as maintenance work of the damaged catenary wire was in progress in the affected section on the down line, the official said.

Normal services were restored on the Maujpur-

Shiv Vihar section at 12.35 pm, he said.

The DMRC had also tweeted to alert commuters earlier in the day.

"Slow movement of trains between Shiv Vihar and Maujpur-Babarpur stations on the Pink Line. Services are normal on the section i.e. between Maujpur-Babarpur and Majlis Park. Normal service on all other lines," the DMRC tweeted at 11:25 am.

There was no impact on train services from Maujpur to Majlis Park during this period as Maujpur is a loop interchange section on the Pink Line, the official said, adding that regular announcements were also being made to inform the passengers about it. (PTI)

**FINAL PRESS NOTICE**

Whereas Shri M.Marimuthu S/o Muthu working as a Sanitary Mazdoor in ward no 15, Municipal Council is absenting from his duty w.e.f 11/12/2020 without any prior intimation/ permission of the competent authority and proceeded to mainland.

Whereas a memo was already issued by the Administrative Officer vide 1-268/SS/Estt/MC/1165 dated 02/08/2021.

Whereas with reference to the memo mentioned above, no response is received from the employee till date.

Whereas, a Press Notice vide no 1-268/SS/Estt/MC/984 dated 14/06/2022 was also released directing him to report duty within 07 days of publication of the notice and till date the employee failed to report duty.

Shri M.Marimuthu S/o Muthu, Sanitary Mazdoor, is once again directed to report for duty within 07 (Seven) days from the date of publication of this notice, with valid reason along with documentary proof, if any, for his unauthorized absence from duty failing which action under Sub-rule(1) of Rule 5 of the CCS (Temporary service) Rules, 1965 will be taken against him.

**Administrative Officer  
Municipal Council**



**Government of India**  
**Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment**  
**Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities**  
**(Divyangjan)**

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9968578428,8981303685  
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CBC-38117/11/0048/2223



## Videocon founder Dhoot arrested in ICICI Bank loan fraud case

Court remands the industrialist along with Chanda and Deepak Kochhar, earlier arrested in loan fraud case, to CBI custody till Dec 28

NEW DELHI, DEC 26/--/The CBI on Monday arrested Videocon Group founder Venugopal Dhoot in connection with the ICICI Bank loan fraud case, officials said. The 71-year-old Dhoot was arrested from Mumbai after a brief questioning session on Monday morning, hours before former CEO and MD of the ICICI Bank Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar were to be produced before a Special Court for remand hearing. The CBI is planning to file a charge sheet against the three and other suspects soon, they said. The three-day remand of Kochhars arrested on December 23 is getting over on Monday. The CBI had taken into custody Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak alleging that they were not cooperating with the investigation, and



Dhoot being taken away by CBI sleuths

giving evasive replies. Chanda Kochhar has denied knowledge of any pecuniary transactions between her husband and Dhoot, the agency had claimed during remand proceedings at a CBI Special Court in Mumbai on December 24. Senior advocate Amit Desai, appearing for the Kochhars, had opposed the remand, saying the "main borrower of the loan has not been arrested, and the present accused were not the beneficiary of any amount. Desai had also brought to the court's notice a letter written by the ICICI Bank to the CBI in July 2021 stating that there was no wrongful loss to it in any of the transactions under question. The CBI had named the Kochhars and Dhoot, along with companies Nupower Renewables (NRL) managed by Deepak Kochhar, Supreme Energy, Videocon International

Electronics Ltd, and Videocon Industries Limited, as accused in the FIR registered under IPC sections related to criminal conspiracy and provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act in 2019, they said.

The CBI had alleged that ICICI Bank had sanctioned credit facilities to the tune of Rs 3,250 crore to the companies of Videocon Group promoted by Dhoot in violation of the Banking Regulation Act, RBI guidelines, and credit policy of the bank. It was also alleged that as a part of the quid pro quo, Dhoot made an investment of Rs 64 crore in Nupower Renewables through Supreme Energy Pvt Ltd (SEPL) and transferred SEPL to Pinnacle Energy Trust managed by Deepak Kochhar through a circuitous route between 2010 and 2012. (PTI)



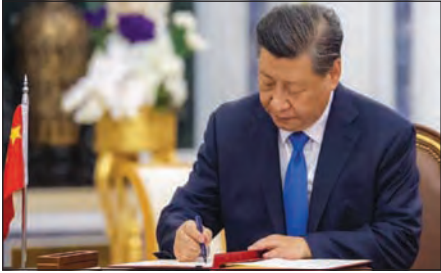
Prime Minister Narendra Modi attending the 'Veer Baal Diwas' programme at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, in New Delhi on Monday

### Army chief highlights importance of synergy in assessing threats, policy initiatives and responses

NEW DELHI, DEC 26/--/ Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande on Monday highlighted the importance of having synergy in correctly assessing threats, identifying desired military capabilities, formulation of enabling policies and effecting appropriate responses. His comments at a seminar organised by Centre for Land Warfare Studies came in the backdrop of the lingering standoff with China in eastern Ladakh and the recent incident of clash between the Chinese and Indian troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh. "The Army chief spoke on the importance of synergy to correctly assess threats, articulate vital strategic guidelines and documents, identify the desired military capabilities, formulate enabling policies, achieve the required preparedness metric and effect appropriate responses, congruent to overall national security objectives," said an official statement. In his remarks, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan highlighted the pivotal role played by the armed forces as part of the 'whole of government' approach towards national security. (PTI)

## President Xi Jinping says China faces 'new Covid situation', calls for targeted measures to curb the virus

BEIJING, DEC 26/--/ President Xi Jinping on Monday said China faced a "new Covid situation," as he urged healthcare officials to take targeted measures to deal with the sudden surge in infections, the first time that he has spoken about the grim healthcare situation in the country. In his fresh directive, Xi said that more targeted patriotic health campaigns should be conducted as the country's COVID-19 epidemic prevention and control faces new



situations and new tasks. As China continues to reel under a wave of Omicron variants, Xi demanded more efforts in guiding the public to acquire health knowledge and skills, maintain good personal hygiene and form a healthy lifestyle to build a defence line against the epidemic for the whole society, state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Monday. This is the first time that the Chinese president has commented on the grim Covid situation in the country after his government overnight relaxed the stringent zero-covid policy earlier this

month following mass anti-government protests. Since then, cases stated to be variants of the Omicron have fuelled a spurt in infections across the country. Premier Li Keqiang has called on governments at all levels to redouble their efforts,

effectively ensure people's access to medical services, anti-epidemic supplies, and safeguard people's lives and health. Amid reports of crematoriums working overtime and packed ICUs across several cities, the Chinese government reported only seven deaths, all in the capital city of Beijing. A leaked document, purportedly from China's National Health Commission, said around 248 million, roughly 17.56 per cent of the total population were affected by the recent surge in infections from December 1 to 20. Official media reports say that ICUs

in Beijing are under stress as community transmission of the Omicron variant has led to increasingly severe cases -- most of whom are among the elderly -- in a short period of time. Despite concerns, Beijing and Shanghai virtually returned to normalcy after several weeks with people thronging malls and eateries. State-run Xinhua reported on Monday that a total of 13 types of COVID-19 vaccines, approved for conditional marketing or emergency use, are now available as the second booster shot in China. Omicron-resistant vaccines are preferred in choosing second booster doses, it quoted experts. As of Friday, more than 3.46 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses were administered on the Chinese mainland, with over 90 per cent of the population being fully vaccinated. Population groups with a high risk of infections, especially people aged 60 and above, people with serious underlying health conditions and those with low immunity are advised to receive a second booster shot six months after the first, the report said. (PTI)

## India needs to break free from narrow views of past to achieve heights of success: PM

NEW DELHI, DEC 26 /--/ Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said India needs to break free from the "narrow views" of the past to take the country to heights of success. Speaking at the first 'Veer Bal Diwas' event, Modi paid tributes to Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, Guru Gobind Singh's sons who laid down their lives while defending their faith. "On the one hand there was terrorism and on the other spiritualism. On one hand there was communal violence while on the other there was liberalism. On one hand there were forces of lakhs while on the other there were just Veer Sahibzaade who did not budge at all," he said referring to the two martyred children of the Guru. "Aurangzeb and his people wanted to convert the religion of Guru Gobind Singh's children on the basis of sword that is why he decided to kill the two innocent children. Imagine that era when against the terror of Aurangzeb, against his plans to change India, Guru Gobind Singh ji stood like a mountain," he said. On the occasion of Guru Gobind Singh's birth anniversary on January 9 this year, the prime minister had announced that December 26 will be observed as 'Veer Bal Diwas' The prime minister said in the name of history, people were being taught versions which promoted inferiority complex among them and that to move forward in the 'Amrit Kaal' and to take India to the heights of success in the future, "we have to break free from narrow views of the past." Modi also listened to 'shabad kirtan' recited by school children at the event, which was also attended by chief ministers of Punjab and Maharashtra. (PTI)

## Mehrauli murder: Accused Poonawala taken to forensic lab to record voice sample

NEW DELHI, DEC 26/--/ Mehrauli murder accused Aaftab Amin Poonawala was on Monday taken to the Central Forensic Science Laboratory here to record his voice sample after police came across an audio clip in which he was purportedly heard fighting with Shraddha Walkar. According to sources, police came across the audio recording, purportedly of a heated argument between Walkar and Poonawala, while investigating the murder case. The accused, currently lodged in Tihar Jail, was taken to the CFSL to record his voice sample which will be checked if it matches the male voice in the clip, they said. "We have got hold of an old audio clip in which Poonawala could be heard having a heated argument with Walkar. It is an old clip but could prove to be crucial evidence with respect to the case," a source privy to the development in the case said. "Poonawala was taken to the CFSL where his voice sample was recorded and it will be matched with the purported audio clip to ascertain if it was Poonawala's voice in the alleged audio. "This will help us understand the kind of relationship they shared and further help us in establishing the trigger behind the incident," the source added. According to

them, Poonawala reached the CFSL office around 11 am and left for Tihar from there around 3 pm after recording his voice sample for which the Delhi Police had sought permission from a city court. The sources also said the investigating team has got a purported video of Poonawala and Walkar from a witness' phone in which Poonawala is allegedly seen being "counselled." This video was purported to have been shot in Mumbai. "We are also checking the veracity of the purported video and will question Poonawala in this regard as the probe is still underway," the source said. The investigating team is also in the process of getting Poonawala's face recognition test done. During the process, a 3D image of his face will be taken to ensure that he cannot deny his presence in the said video, they added. Poonawala allegedly strangled his live-in partner Walkar, 27, and saved her body into 35 pieces, which he kept in a 300-litre fridge for almost three weeks at his Mehrauli residence, before dumping them across the city over several days. He was arrested on November 12, and a court in New Delhi on Friday extended his judicial custody by 14 days. (PTI)

## British, Indian with suspected Covid infection land in Kolkata airport from abroad

KOLKATA, DEC 26 /--/ A British national and an Indian coming from abroad were suspected to be infected with Covid-19 following a rapid antigen test at the Netaji Subhas Chandra International Airport in Kolkata, a senior official of the West Bengal Health Department said on Monday. The British woman, aged around 42 years, has been shifted to an isolation ward of the state-run Infectious Diseases & Belegghata General Hospital in Beliaghata here, the officer said. Her sample was sent for genome sequencing at the National Institute of Biomedical Genomics at Kalyani in West Bengal's Nadia district to ascertain whether she is infected with the BF.7 variant of coronavirus.

The other passenger, a man from Bihar's Darbhanga who returned from Bangkok, "has gone back home on his own" from the airport, the officer said.

The woman who had landed at the city airport on Sunday night from Kuala Lumpur was initially kept in isolation at a hotel before she was shifted to the hospital on Monday morning, the official added. An RT-PCR test was conducted on the British national and the result is awaited. The state health department would be monitoring the health of the other 30-odd passengers who travelled on the same flight with her. "The woman was meant to travel to Bodh Gaya. We are waiting for the RTPCR report and will take action accordingly," the official said. He told PTI that the man reached the city on Saturday and has left



A medic collects swab samples from a passenger at Patna railway station on Monday

for Bihar. "We have informed the surveillance team of Bihar and they are monitoring the matter," he said. Meanwhile, three persons tested positive for coronavirus in West Bengal on Monday pushing the tally to 21,18,589 since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, a health department bulletin said. There was no death due to the disease and the toll remained unchanged at 21,532. Five patients recovered from the disease during the day taking the number of cured people to 20,97,006. The state now has 51 active cases, 42 of them are in home isolation and nine are undergoing treatment at hospitals, the bulletin said. Altogether 3,364 samples have been tested for Covid-19 in the state since Sunday (PTI)

## Assam: Leopard jumps on passenger vehicle in Jorhat, forces man to freeze on spot

GUWAHATI, DEC 26/--/ A winter break trip in Assam's Jorhat district turned wild when a leopard jumped into a passenger vehicle in the morning hours of December 26. As per reports, the incident was reported near Rain Forest Research Institute. Notably, the leopard first

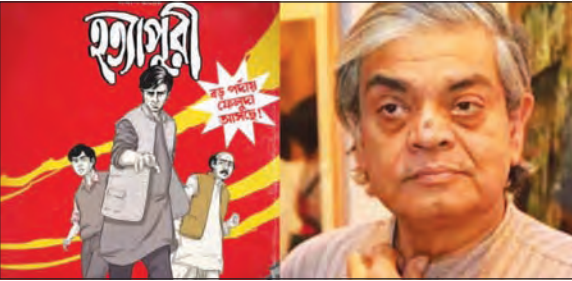


attacked a family which included a father, mother and their two children in the Sotai area of the district and later jumped upon a moving vehicle while trying to escape from the human habitat. On the other hand, the forest officials, upon receiving information, rushed to the spot with rifles and firecrackers to chase the leopard away from the residential area. Following this, two forest officials were injured during the ordeal. The injured were rushed to Jorhat Medical College and Hospital (JMCH) for medical attention.

## Ray who-done-it 'Hatyapuri', popular draw with Christmas crowds

KOLKATA, DEC 26/--/ Six years after the last 'Feluda' film was screened, another who-done-it 'Hatyapuri' (Murder in Puri) based on the adventures of the popular Bengali fictional sleuth created by Satyajit Ray, is drawing crowds at multiplexes.

The movie directed by Ray's son Sandip Ray has been drawing full-houses at 130 single screen multiplexes since its release before Christmas. Another Bangla movie, 'Projapoti' (Matchmaker), a family drama starring the ageing Mithun Chakravarty and actor-turned-politician Dev, is also witnessing back-to-back houseful shows in over 100 halls. One of two producers of Hatyapuri, Shyam Sundar Dey told PTI Monday, "while 40-50 shows recorded Houseful on Saturday, it went upto 60-70 on Sunday across 120-130 single screens and multiplexes." Dey said the film, screened in 120-130 halls, had already notched up Rs 60 lakh since the film's release on December 23. Director Sandip Ray, on a



to be back with another Feluda film in another two years time." He said the launch of Feluda films around Christmas has always been popular with Bengali audiences. Speaking about his new hero, of whom many critics had apprehensions as his Bengali accent was earlier

seen as imperfect, Ray explained his choice, stating, "What I wanted in my new Feluda was a combination of cerebral and athleticism. He fitted the bill and he is a good actor." Sengupta, accompanying Ray and soaking in the adulation, said "I had been wanting for this role for ages. Which Bengali actor doesn't want to be cast as Feluda. This had been my long cherished wish." From the 35 Feluda stories penned by him, Satyajit Ray had directed two Sonar Kella (The Golden Fortress, 1974) and Jai Baba Felunath (The Elephant God), 1979. Both starred Soumitra Chatterjee as the hero. In Sandip Ray's seven Feluda films made between 2003 and 2016, Sabyasachi Chakraborty and Abir Chatterjee brought the sleuth's character to life. 'Hatyapuri' saw Pradosh Chandra Mitter or Feluda along with his companions - cousin Topse and friend Lal Mohan Ganguly - visiting the Odisha town famed for its sea beach and Lord Jagannath temple on a holiday trip only to end up investigating a murder. (PTI)



## Frigid monster storm across US claims at least 34 lives

**BUFFALO, DEC 26** --/ Millions of people hunkered down against a deep freeze Sunday to ride out the winter storm that has killed at least 34 people across the United States and is expected to claim more lives after trapping some residents inside houses with heaping snow drifts and knocking out power to tens of thousands of homes and businesses. The scope of the storm has been nearly unprecedented, stretching from the Great Lakes near Canada to the Rio Grande along the border with Mexico. About 60 per cent of the US population faced some sort of winter weather advisory or warning, and temperatures plummeted drastically below normal from east of the Rocky Mountains to the Appalachians, the National Weather Service said.

Travellers' weather woes are likely to continue, with hundreds of flight cancellations already and more expected after a bomb cyclone when atmospheric pressure drops very quickly in a strong storm developed near the Great Lakes, stirring up blizzard conditions, including heavy winds and snow. Some 1,707 domestic and international flights were cancelled on Sunday, according to the tracking site FlightAware. The storm unleashed its full fury on Buffalo, with hurricane-force winds and snow causing whiteout conditions, paralysing emergency response efforts. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said almost every fire truck in the city was stranded Saturday

and implored people Sunday to respect an ongoing driving ban in the region. Officials said the airport would be shut through Tuesday morning. The National Weather Service said the snow total at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport stood at 109 centimetres Sunday.

Daylight revealed cars nearly covered by 6-foot snowdrifts and thousands of houses, some adorned in unlit holiday displays, dark from a lack of power. With snow swirling down untouched and impassable streets, forecasters warned that an additional 1 to 2 feet of snow was possible in some areas through early Monday morning amid wind gusts of 40 mph. Police said Sunday evening that there were two "isolated" instances of looting during the storm. Two people died in their suburban Cheektowaga, New York, homes Friday when emergency crews could not reach them in time to treat their medical conditions. County Executive Mark Poloncarz 10 more people died in Erie County during the storm, including six in Buffalo, and warned there may be more dead. "Some were found in cars, some were found on the street in snowbanks," said Poloncarz. "We know there are people who have been stuck in cars for more than 2 days." "If I stay in this car I'm going to die here with my kids," Ilunga recalled thinking. He cried when the family walked through the shelter doors. "It's something I will never forget in my life.. (AP)

## Russia shoots down Ukrainian drone near its Engels airbase

**KYIV, DEC 26** --/ The Russian military reported on Monday that it shot down a Ukrainian drone approaching an airbase deep inside Russia, the second time the airbase has been targeted this month, raising questions about the effectiveness of Russia's air defenses if drones can fly that far into the country.

Russia's Defense Ministry said the incident took place in the early hours of Monday, and three servicemen were killed by debris at the Engels airbase that houses the Tu-95 and Tu-160 nuclear-capable strategic bombers that have been involved in launching strikes on Ukraine. Engels is located in Russia's Saratov region on the Volga river, more than 600 kilometers (more than 370 miles) east of the border with Ukraine. No damage was inflicted on Russian aircraft, the ministry said.

Ukrainian Air Force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat, speaking to Ukrainian television on Monday, did not directly acknowledge his country's involvement in Monday's incident, but said: "These are the consequences of Russian aggression." He added: "If the Russians thought that the war would

not affect them in the deep rear, they were deeply mistaken" Ukrainian officials have never confirmed sending drones into Russia. They have maintained ambiguity over previous high-profile attacks, including drone strikes on Russian military bases earlier this month.

On Dec. 5, unprecedented drone strikes on Engels and the Dyagilevo base in the Ryazan region in western Russia killed a total of three servicemen and wounded four more. The strikes on the airbases were followed by a massive retaliatory missile barrage in Ukraine that struck homes and buildings and killed civilians. In Ukraine, at least four civilians have been wounded in Russian shelling of five regions in the country's southeast over the past 24 hours, according to the deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko. Overall the intensity of the shelling the night from Sunday into Monday has been significantly lower. For the first time in weeks, Russian forces didn't shell the Dnipropetrovsk region, which borders the partially occupied southern regions

of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, its governor, Valentyn Reznichenko, reported on Telegram. "This is the third quiet night in 5.5 months since the Russians started shelling" the areas around the city of Nikopol, Reznichenko wrote. Nikopol is located across the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is under control of the Russian forces.

Ukrainian-controlled areas of the neighboring Kherson region were shelled 33 times over the past 24 hours, according to Kherson's Ukrainian Gov. Yaroslav Yanushevich. There were no casualties. On Sunday, Russian forces attacked the city of Kramatorsk, where Ukrainian forces are headquartered. Three missiles hit an industrial facility and damaged residential buildings, but no casualties were reported, according to the battlefield report from the Ukrainian presidency. In the partially occupied eastern Donetsk region, fierce battles continue around the city of Bakhmut, which Russian forces have been trying to seize for weeks to consolidate their grip on Ukraine's east. (AP)

## US embassy sounds red alert; prohibits Americans from visiting Islamabad's Marriott Hotel

**ISLAMABAD, DEC 26** --/ The US embassy in Pakistan has warned about a possible terrorist attack against American citizens at the Marriott Hotel here in the country's capital and prohibited American staff from visiting the five-star facility, an official statement said.

The statement was issued by the embassy on Sunday, two days after a suicide bombing in Islamabad killed a policeman. "The US government is aware of information that unknown individuals are possibly plotting to attack Americans at the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad sometime during the holidays," it said. "Effective immediately, the Embassy in Islamabad is prohibiting all American staff from visiting Islamabad's Marriott Hotel," the statement said. The

embassy also directed that as Islamabad has been placed on a 'Red Alert' citing security concerns while banning all public gatherings, all mission personnel have been urged to refrain from non-essential and unofficial travel in the capital throughout the holiday season. It asked the US nationals to exercise vigilance at events and places of worship, and avoid locations with large crowds while reviewing personal security plans. The advisory comes after the latest attack in Islamabad and an uptick in countryside attacks by the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terror group. The TTP has stepped up attacks on security forces since November, when they ended a months-long cease-fire with the Pakistan government. (PTI)

## UK to stop publishing infections data in new year for 'living with COVID' phase

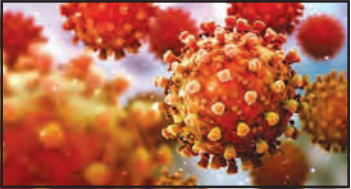
**LONDON, DEC 26** --/ The UK health authorities said on Monday that they will stop publishing their regular Covid-19 infections modelling data in the new year because it is seen as "no longer necessary" as the country moves to a phase of living with the virus with the help of vaccines and medicines.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said that it will continue to monitor Covid like other common viral illnesses such as seasonal flu. Since April this year, the data on the reproductive rate, or the R value speed at which the novel coronavirus infects people, has been published fortnightly as a monitoring tool. "During the pandemic, the R value and growth rate served as a useful and simple indicator to inform public health action and

government decisions," said Dr Nick Watkins, chair of the UKHSA Epidemiology Modelling Review Group (EMRG). "Now that vaccines and therapeutics have allowed us to move to a phase where we are living with COVID-19, with surveillance scaled down but still closely monitored through a number of different indicators, the publication of this specific data is no longer necessary," he said. "We continue to monitor COVID-19 activity in a similar way to how we monitor a number of other common illnesses and diseases. All data publications are kept under constant review and this modelling data can be reintroduced promptly

if needed, for example, if a new variant of concern was to be identified," he added.

The EMRG said its recent detailed review concluded that the next publication of its so-called "consensus statement" on Covid-19 on January 6, 2023, "will be the last". The UK's Covid incidence data will continue to be accessible from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) infection survey. The country's remaining Covid restrictions, including the legal requirement to self-isolate at home with symptoms, were removed earlier this year. Amid an expected rise in infections over the winter months, the health authorities had urged those with



## Strong Bangla-India ties to grow further in 2023 despite outstanding bilateral issues

**DHAKA, DEC 26** --/ Bangladesh's friendly ties with India and bilateral cooperation are expected to gain momentum in 2023 despite some pending issues, especially the sharing of river waters, that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said. Dhaka believes could be resolved through negotiations.

Bangladesh-India relations are multifaceted in nature and rooted in a shared history, geographical proximity and commonality in their cultures. The emotional bonds stemming from the contribution of India towards the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 remain a dominant factor in the country's political, social and cultural web. Being India's next-door neighbour, Bangladesh's relations with New Delhi are crucial for its political and economic stability. The two neighbours have remained engaged bilaterally and, unlike some western nations, India usually refrains from commenting on Bangladesh's domestic politics in public. Former diplomat Humayun Kabir, who now runs Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, a non-government think tank, told PTI that owing to geographic reality and historic backdrop, "good relations" are likely to be there in place in the interest of both countries. "But there is a general perception in Bangladesh that we give more and

get less' this concern must go and being the bigger neighbour, India is expected to take the lead role," he said. The two countries have several pending issues with the most crucial being the sharing of waters in common rivers, including the Teesta River, which flows through India.

Prime Minister Hasina has repeatedly said that Dhaka believes the outstanding issues with New Delhi could be resolved through discussions. During her visit to India in September, she noted that India and Bangladesh share 54 rivers and sought an early conclusion of the Teesta water-sharing agreement. "I recall that the two countries have resolved many issues in the spirit of friendship and cooperation. We hope that all outstanding issues, including the Teesta water sharing agreement, will be concluded at an early date," she said at a joint media interaction with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. "There are 54 rivers. As long as Prime Minister Modi is here, India and Bangladesh will resolve all these issues... Our main aim is to develop the economy and fulfil the basic needs of our people. With friendship, you can solve any problem. So we always do that," she added. Former foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said last year that India will continue to engage with

Bangladesh to conclude the Teesta agreement as soon as possible.

The Teesta river dispute is an important point of bilateral talks between India and Bangladesh, as the latter has sought a fair and equitable distribution of Teesta waters from India. The two countries also signed an agreement in 2011 to share surface waters at the Farakka Barrage near their mutual border. However, the proposed deal was called off after repeated objections by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The water-sharing issue remains unresolved. Interfaith harmony in Bangladesh and Dhaka's ties with China over mega projects largely are also thought to be issues of concern to India. However, Bangladesh maintains that while Beijing is one of its major development partners, it will never undermine its close historic bond with India. On the domestic front, politics and the economy are the two areas where the country is facing challenges in 2023.

Bangladesh is scheduled to go to polls in early January 2024. "The governance system now appears as the crucial factor to sustain political stability and economic durability in the current context," Kabir said. His comments came as tensions rose with the return of former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party

(BNP) to the political scene after years of wilderness and are eyeing the upcoming elections. BNP chief Zia has been debarred from political activities as she was jailed in 2017 for 17 years in two graft cases, though under a special government arrangement she is now staying at her home since the outbreak of the pandemic. Her son Tarique Rahman now steers the party, but he too is convicted in several criminal and graft cases while two Bangladeshi courts have declared him a "fugitive".

In the past two months, the BNP has staged public rallies in major cities across the country. Prime Minister Hasina's Awami League-led government has decided to tighten further its spending as trade imbalance and inflation eroded Bangladesh's GDP while a sense of panic gripped people due to fallout from money market volatility. Financial analysts said Bangladesh's growth was remarkable but its economy was now at risk.

According to analysts, Bangladesh's economy continued to grow during the Covid-19 pandemic, but the Russia-Ukraine war caused a setback with dwindling demand for the country's exports, mainly readymade garments, in the western markets and badly hit its foreign currency reserves. (PTI)



People walk on the frozen Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool in Washington, D.C., which had the coldest Christmas in more than two decades

## Post-COP15, India needs to align national goals with global framework: Experts

**MONTREAL, DEC 26** --/ After the COP15 conference adopted a historic deal here last week to protect nature, experts believe the key challenge for India now is to align the national goals with the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and take effective capacity-building measures at all levels. The 15th Conference of Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) ended on a high note with nearly 200 countries, including India, adopting a historic deal to preserve nature and reverse damage to ecosystems after four years of fraught negotiations. India, which is one of the Parties to the convention, pushed for Digital Sequence Information (DSI) to be considered under the CBD's access and benefit sharing mechanism, among many other targets during the run-up to the conference and through the anxious final moments until the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) became a reality. The Indian delegation was led by Bhopender Yadav, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change along with a team of officers from the government. "India negotiated strongly and held discussions with the COP Presidency and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity before the final Global Biodiversity Framework was put up for adoption," Yadav said. "The suggestions from India to keep all the goals and targets, globally, were accepted, along with other propositions. India's pitch for Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE), and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities found an echo in the GBF," he added.

The LiFE initiative was introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at COP26 in Glasgow last year. It is a campaign to

encourage "mindful and deliberate utilisation, instead of mindless and destructive consumption" to protect and preserve the environment, in line with the Framework's Target 16 on sustainable consumption. Vinod Mathur, former chairperson of National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) agreed, saying the Indian delegation made a significant contribution in developing consensus on several issues relevant to the developing South'. In fact, a majority of biodiversity-rich countries are located in Asia, Africa, and South America between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn. The Chinese-brokered deal is aimed at saving the lands, oceans, and species from pollution, degradation, and climate change. The GBF aims to conserve 30 per cent of land, inland water and ocean ecosystems by 2030, also known as 30 by 30.

India is already a member of the High Ambition Coalition (HAC), a group of over 113 countries that aims to bring 30 per cent of the world's geographical area under conservation by 2030. The Framework also commits countries to "take effective legal, policy, administrative and capacity-building measures at all levels, as appropriate, to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits that arise from the utilisation of genetic resources and from digital sequence information on genetic resources, as well as traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources." DSI, which was adopted as part of the historic deal to save biodiversity at the COP15 conference, will ensure flow of funds to countries like India from users such as biotechnology companies which access its biodiversity and related genetic information, experts say. "With DSI becoming a reality, developing countries that are rich in biodiversity would benefit. (PTI)

## Pakistan ill-prepared to tackle new Covid-19 variant's arrival

**ISLAMABAD, DEC 26** --/ Pakistan's health authorities appear to be ill-prepared to stop the arrival of the new coronavirus variant in the country, which is spreading fast in some countries including China, a media report said on Monday. The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) says that the situation is being closely monitored but according to the Dawn newspaper there have been

no measures at the airports, such as rapid testing and screening of inbound travellers, to detect positive Covid-19 cases. NCOC member Dr Shahzad Ali Khan said it was uncertain how the new variants would behave in Pakistan since "viruses behave differently in different environments", the report said. "We have been closely observing the situation. It is a fact that a sudden spread [of Covid-19]

has been observed in China because there were strict restrictions in place and an abrupt removal of these curbs allowed the virus to spread," he said. Khan claimed that the immunity level of the citizens of Pakistan was better due to vaccination. "New variants may disturb those who are not inoculated, so I would urge people to get vaccinated and get booster shots," he said. (PTI)



# Whenever I go out to bat, I want to put up a show: Surya

NEW DELHI, DEC 26 /--/ Suryakumar Yadav has been a trailblazer who has taken cricket's shortest format by storm.

Inarguably, India's first true-blue T20 superstar,Suryahasnowtrainedhiseyesonbeing successful in longer formats but without changing the essence of his batsmanship. *InanexclusiveinterviewwithPTI, 'SKY' spoke about his journey to the top of T20 rankings, his focus on ODI World Cup this year, ambitions to wear the India whites and how wife Devisha became the force behind the cricketer and the person that he is today. Excerpts from Interview:*

**Q: If you were told one year ago that you will be world no. 1 batter in the T20 format, would you have believed?**

A: It still feels like a dream. To be seen and called as world's No. 1 T20 batter, if someone would have told me one year back, I don't know how I would have reacted. When I started playing this format, I wanted to be the best and I worked hard for it.

**Q: The priority in 2023 will be ODI World Cup and does that mean you will change your game for the 50-over format?**

A: I don't like to think too much when I am playing any format. Because I enjoy this game, whenever I go into bat, I put up a show. What I always dream and visualise is that whenever I go in, I want to be the game-changer. I have always loved batting whether it is T20Is, ODIs or Ranji Trophy.

If I can do what my team wants me to do in

40-50 balls, why should I bat 100 balls? Q: Do you fancy your chances of making the India squad for 4-Test series against Australia? A: I started playing age-group national level cricket in red ball, so the answer lies there itself. There are a lot of tricky yet fascinating situations that you encounter across five days and you want to embrace that challenge. Yes, I am ready if they (Indian team management) need me.

**Q: Skills can be taught but how does one train one's mind to cope with pressures at the highest level?**

A: I would say it was never impossible but certainly it was difficult. It needed a smart approach. Instead of doing a lot of quantity, I did a lot of quality practice. There were lot of sacrifices made by me and my family. Before making my India debut, I had played 10 years offfirst-classcricket. Grindingitoutatfirst-class level, you learn a lot of tricks of the trade. So when you graduate to international level and play different bowlers, all you need to do is express yourself. But let me tell you this, If you have gone through domestic grind in India, you are ready for international cricket and when you start that level, you are not carrying any baggage. Just execute what you did at the domestic level.

**Q: You were India Emerging (U-23) captain nearly a decade back. Over the years, while putting up performances at domestic and IPL level, did you get anxious or angry that national call-up wasn't coming?**

A: I won't say I got irritated but I would always think how I could be different to move



to the next level. So hard work continued and you need to enjoy the game also.

That's why you started playing cricket. Whether it's a simple training session or even the food that was healthy but I didn't enjoy earlier, I started to savour it. I knew that if I stop thinking about outcomes and just focus on process, I would someday break the door.

**Q: Your friend Sufiyan Sheikh said that at times you don't wear thigh pads even when**

**you face the best of fast bowlers. Is it true and what's the reason for it?**

A: In the World T20 in Australia, I was wearing thigh pads as it was the first time I was touring the country and it wasn't a great idea (not wearing them) on those tracks with pace and bounce. But yes, on Indian tracks with low bounce, if I get a feeling that wearing thigh pads would hinder me from playing the shots that I love, then I don't wear it.

**Q: Can you explain us a bit about your 360-degree technique?**

A: It is an interesting story. In my school and college days, I played a lot of rubber ball cricket. On hard cement tracks and on rainy days, those would bowl would come from 15 yards and most of them chucked (threw) really hard. Now rubber ball from 15 yards will come at 140 plus clicks and if the leg side the boundary would be 95 yards, the off-side would be only 25-30 yards. So in order to prevent off-side boundaries, most of them would bowl into my body in order to prevent me from getting easy boundaries on off-side. So manoeuvring my wrists, playing those pick-up pulls and upper cuts have come from those matches. I never try those in the nets. In the nets, I like practising normally and hearing the sound of the bat hitting the ball. If I feel good I come out.

**Q: What kind of bond do you share with Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma?**

A: I am actually very lucky that I share dressing room with Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma. They are a different breed of

international cricketers. Things they have achieved, I don't know I will be ever able to achieve that.

Recently, I have had some good partnerships with Virat bhai and I have enjoyed batting with him. Rohit is like an elder brother and my sounding board. When I am in doubt, I ask him direct questions about my game. He has been a good guiding force since I joined MI in 2018.

**Q: If you can also talk about the contributions of Mumbai Indians and wife Devisha in your career?**

A: In my life and in this cricketing journey, there are two pillars – Mumbai Indians and my wife Devisha. Let me elaborate about MI's contribution first. When I came back here from KKR in 2018, I was looking for an opportunity to bat higher up the order and even without me asking, the management entrusted me with that responsibility. I grabbed that opportunity, kept performing and never looked back. MI provided me with all the facilities I required to move up the ladder. In 2016, I got married to Devisha and when I joined MI in 2018, we (me and Devisha) as a unit started thinking, what do we need to do to make the next grade. It was a dream we both nurtured together and she is always been around when I needed her. Even if she doesn't want to travel, I drag her around.

She brings in the balance that I need as a sportsman. She doesn't let me get complacent after a good day in office and at the same time, doesn't allow my shoulders to drop after a poor day. (PTI)

## GAME NOTES

### Overthinking is a perception that has followed me since my debut: Ashwin

NEWDELHI, DEC 26 /--/ Ravichandran Ashwin has taken a slight dig at people who perceive him as an "overthinker" of the game following his match-winning performance against Bangladesh in the second Test in Mirpur. Batting alongside Shreyas Iyer, Ashwin played one of the best Test innings of his career to steer India to a famous three-wicket win from an improbable situation. His 42 not out came after a match haul of six wickets, making him the player of the match. "Overthinking is a perception that has followed me ever since I wore the Indian jersey with pride. I have pondered about it for a while now and believe I should have seriously considered a PR exercise to erase that word out of peoples minds," Ashwin tweeted. Besides his exploits on the field, Ashwin is one of the best thinkers in the modern game and also has his youtube channel. "Every person's journey is special and unique, while some journeys require them to overthink it others can afford to keep it simple. The moment someone says I am an over thinker from the inside walls, I have always thought to myself 'that's the way I play my cricket and not the way I recommend others to play. (PTI)

### Haaland can score 800 goals, says De Bruyne

LONDON, DEC 26 /--/ Kevin De Bruyne believes Manchester City teammate Erling Haaland can go on and score 800 goals before his career ends. Haaland, who will return to the city of his birth when the champions resume their Premier League title defence at Leeds on Wednesday, has scored 24 goals in just 19 appearances since his summer move from Borussia Dortmund. "He already has about 200 goals, so he can probably go to 600, 700 or 800 if he stays fit and does the things that he does," said De Bruyne. The Belgian international has played with a host of top strikers in his career and is well-placed when it comes to 22-year-old Haaland's place in the pecking order. De Bruyne enjoyed a fruitful relationship with the club's record goalscorer Sergio Aguero before the Argentinian left the Etihad Stadium in 2021. He has also combined with Romelu Lukaku on international duty, former City teammate Gabriel Jesus and new World Cup-winner Julian Alvarez, a current fellow City player. "It is very hard to compare because they are all totally different," said De Bruyne. "They have all scored 300 or 400 goals. Erling is so obsessed with goals he can maybe go beyond that." He added: "He is still a young boy enjoying his life and he takes his football very seriously. He loves scoring goals, so I think that is the most unique thing he has." (AP)

### Crickit Australia renames Test Player of the Year award in honour of Shane Warne

MELBOURNE, Dec 26 /--/ Australia's men's Test Player of the Year award has been renamed to honour legendary spinner Shane Warne, the country's cricket board announced on Monday. The Shane Warne Men's Test Player of the Year award will be presented annually at the Australian Cricket Awards. Cricket Australia (CA) chief executive Nick Hockley and Australian Cricketers' Association CEO Todd Greenber, announced the renaming of the award during the Boxing Day Test against South Africa as a tribute to Warne. He died of a suspected heart attack in Thailand earlier this year. "As one of Australia's all-time greats, it is fitting we acknowledge Shane's extraordinary contribution to Test cricket by naming this award in his honour in perpetuity," Hockley was quoted as saying by cricknet.com.au.

### Fabian O'Neill, hailed by Zinedine Zidane as "Most Talented Player Ever", dead at 49

MONTEVIDEO, DEC 26 /--/ Former Uruguay international midfielder Fabian O'Neill, once hailed by Zinedine Zidane as "the most talented player" he'd ever seen, died Sunday after a long battle with alcoholism. He was 49. "Goodbye Wizard," tweeted O'Neill's formative club Nacional after he passed away due to chronic cirrhosis in a Montevideo hospital where he had been rushed on Saturday suffering from a hemorrhage. "The most talented player I've ever seen," was how French World Cup winner Zidane, a teammate at Juventus, described O'Neill. After making his debut for Nacional at the age of 18 in 1992, O'Neill was transferred to Cagliari in Italy three years later. In 2000, he moved to Juventus but after playing for the



Turin giants for just one season, he was farmed out to Perugia. He then returned to Nacional before quitting in 2003. O'Neill earned 19 caps for Uruguay and scored two goals.

He was part of the squad that was eliminated in the first round of the World Cup in South Korea and Japan in 2002 although he did not feature in any of the group games due to injury. "Uruguayan football is in mourning. One of the best players to emerge in recent decades and who knew how to shine on the field with his talent and magic has left us," wrote the El Pais newspaper. El Observador said that "Fabian O'Neill was one of those great talents wasted.... his career was marked by alcohol and excesses." (AFP)

## MOST RUNS

### BABAR AZAM

(PAKISTAN)

MATCH 9\*

RUNS : 1102

HS : 196

### JE ROOT

(ENGLAND)

MATCH 15

RUNS : 1098

HS : 176

### UT KHAWAJA

(AUSTRALIA)

MATCH 11\*

RUNS : 1080

HS : 160

Babar Azam's ninth Test hundred helped Pakistan wrest control

## Babar Azam's 161\* takes Pakistan to 317/5 at stumps

KARACHI, DEC 26 /--/ Pakistan were boosted by an unbeaten 161 by Babar Azam and fighting 96 from Sarfaraz Ahmed as they reached 317/5 at stumps on the first day of the first Test against New Zealand in Karachi. Babar Azam hit his ninth Test century to help Pakistan recover from the early blows. Earlier, Pakistan captain Babar had won the toss and opted to bat against New Zealand. During the toss, Babar confirmed that Sarfaraz Ahmed has replaced Mohammad Rizwan in the playing XI, while Mir Hamza, who was added to the squad prior to the first Test, also returned to the Test side, having made his debut in 2018. A ninth Test century - the third in Karachi - from Babar Azam propelled Pakistan into the driver's seat by tea on the opening day of the first Test against New Zealand. Batting alongside Sarfaraz Ahmed (43\*), Babar moved from 54 to an unbeaten 119 at the end of the second session, taking the hosts through a wicketless two hours of play to a total of 224 for 4, adding 109 runs

between lunch and tea. After surviving a dropped chance at first slip on 12 and a potential run-out chance in the first over after lunch, Babar made full use of a surface that turned benign after a tricky first hour to power on to his century, reaching the triple figures with a six over deep midwicket. Babar scored a total of 69 runs in front of square on the leg side, making full use of the balls turning in from Michael Bracewell, the deliveries tailing in from Tim Southee, and the unsuccessful leg-side line offered by Neil Wagner. His most productive shot, the flick, earned him 48 runs in an innings that has seen 11 fours and the solitary six thus far. Pakistan captain Babar Azam hit his ninth test century and alongside the recalled Sarfaraz Ahmed helped his team recover against New Zealand on Monday in the first Test.

Babar smashed his hundred off 161 balls with a six off Michael Bracewell over midwicket just before tea as Pakistan progressed to 224/4. Breaking a 16-year-old

record held by Mohammad Yousuf, Azam now holds the record for the most runs in a calendar year by a Pakistan batter. The Pakistan skipper eclipsed Yousuf's aggregate of 2435 runs in 2006 while batting on 54 at the end of the first session. During his innings, Babar shattered multiple records, among them – scoring most 50s or more in a calendar year as a captain. He moved past Australia's Ricky Ponting who had 24 half-centuries in 2005. This year has been nothing short of a roller coaster for Pakistan's Test team, however, the 28-year-old batter outclassed with numbers; he registered more than 1000 runs under his name in just 9 matches and has become the highest Test run-getter in 2022. Babar's milestone of eight centuries in 2022 ranks third all-time in the list. Babar has also gone past former players Brian Lara, Graeme Smith and Mahela Jayawardene and his contemporary Australian Vice-captain Steven Smith for the most centuries as a captain in a calendar year. Often

stepping up for his team and bailing the side out of crucial situations, the batter has also performed well in limited over games. Leading Pakistan in three series victories, the skipper scored 679 runs in ODI this year.

### Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul likely to miss home series vs Sri Lanka: Report

NEW DELHI, DEC 26 /--/ India captain Rohit Sharma and out-of-form opener KL Rahul are likely to miss the home series against Sri Lanka in January, according to a report. The report stated that Rohit is yet to recover completely from the thumb injury he sustained during the second ODI against Bangladesh earlier in December, as per ANI sources in BCCI. KL is going to get married during the time-frame of the series, added the sources. Sri Lanka will be touring India from January 3 to January 15 for three T20Is and three ODIs. Notably, Rohit and KL did not have a very good 2022 with the bat. Rohit Sharma struggled to live up to his 'Hitman' tag numerous times in 2022. In two Tests this year, Rohit scored 90 runs at an average of 30, with the best score of 46. In eight ODIs, he scored 249 runs at an average of 41.50, with three half-centuries and a best of 76\*. Rohit scored 656 runs in 29 T20I innings this year at an average of 24.29 and strike rate of 134.42, with three half-centuries and the best score of 72. Overall, in 40 innings this year, Rohit scored 995 runs, failing to cross the 1000-run mark. These runs came at an average of 27.63, with six fifties. For the first time since 2012, he did not score an international century for an entire year. On the other hand, KL played four Tests this year in which he scored 137 runs at an average of 17.12, with one fifty. He has the best score of 50 in Tests this year. In 10 ODIs this year, he scored 251 runs at an average of 27.88, with two half-centuries and the best score of 73. In 16 T20Is this year, he scored 434 runs at an average of 28.93 and six half-centuries, with a best score of 62. Overall in 30 matches this year, KL has scored 822 runs at an average of 25.68, with nine half-centuries.



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