

Revenue case filed against violator for illegal earth cutting at Diglipur

KARTIK

MAYABUNDER, DEC 23/--/ As part of the zero tolerance policy against violation of revenue cases, the North & Middle Andaman District administration initiated action against a violator who was reportedly indulged in the illegal earth cutting under the direction of the Deputy Commissioner,



N&M Andaman, Dr. Satyendra Singh Dursawat. According to reports, an incident of illegal earth cutting and transportation was reported in Subhasgram village of Diglipur Tehsil where estimated quantum of 2125 cbm of earth materials has been extracted from hilly land bearing survey no 49/P and was then transported to and dumped over land S No 292/1/3/2 by R Rajashekharan. District

Administration took a swift action initiating a revenue case against the reported violation under Andaman & Nicobar Islands Minor Minerals Rules, 2012 and penalty as deemed fit according to law will be levied against the violator. A robust mechanism has been created to check illegal earth cutting operations across districts. All such incidents in the future will also be dealt with firm hands.

Nimbutala Pradhan threatened closure of Panchayat seeking replacement of Panchayat Secretary

KARTIK



MAYABUNDER, DEC 23/--/ The Pradhan, Gram Panchayat, Nimbutala has threatened to close the Panchayat office from 26th December 2022, till such time their demand replacement of incumbent Panchayat Secretary, Mr. P Vimal Kumar which according to the PRI members have been creating problems for the smooth execution of Panchayat works. In a letter to the Director of Panchayat, the Pradhan recalled the assurance he had received from him to replace the incumbent Panchayat Secretary and post a new Secretary. However, even after repeated requests and pleas, the Department has yet to post a new Panchayat Secretary. The Pradhan alleged that incumbent Panchayat Secretary has been creating disturbances in many ways by quoting different rules and regulations which has been resulting in hampering development work in the region. He cautioned that if such a situation continues to prevail, all development activity of this Panchayat will remain hampered. He further added that as an elected Pradhan, the people of his region have certain needs and aspirations which he is not able to fulfil presently.

In a first, 'Toy Fair' held at Primary School NayaShahar

EOI CORRESPONDENT

PORT BLAIR, DEC 23/--/ A toy fair was organized on Thursday at Govt. Primary School NayaShahar. This fair was the first of its kind, as the toys were prepared and developed by the small children with the help of their parents and teachers. The commendable thing about the making of the toys was that all the items were prepared using waste materials like newspapers, plastic materials, cloths etc. Inaugurating the fair the Deputy Education Officer, Smti Sangita Chand



appreciated the participation of the parents and guardians in guiding their children in shaping the toys. She said that with the support of the parents the Educational goal of developing the overall personality of the student can be achieved successfully. Elaborating the National initiative

Program 'NIPUN' for making the child proficient in reading with understanding and Numeracy, she said that art and aesthetic development under the program are one of the key areas, through which the interest in children for learning can be boosted. (Contd. on pge-6)

One killed in road accident



ROOPA LALL

PORT BLAIR, DEC 23/--/ One person died on the spot in a road accident on Friday at Coffee Bagicha in a road accident at coffee bagicha. As per reports, the incident occurred around 3.00 pm today in which Mr. Vinod, driver of a pickup van died on the spot after a private bus of Raj Lakshmi while overtaking the van hit the vehicle.

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| 4. | CABIN CREW MANAGEMENT | 1YEAR | 10 TH / 12 TH |
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| 6. | PRIMARY EDUCATION | 1YEAR | 10 TH / 12 TH |
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| 9. | MEDICAL LABORATORY TECHNICIAN | 2YEARS | 12 TH |
| 10. | OPERATION THEATER ASSISTANT | 2YEARS | 12 TH |
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DMK leader Kanimozhi joins Bharat Jodo Yatra in Haryana

Kamal Haasan, freedom fighter families likely to walk with Rahul in Delhi today

FARIDABAD / NEW DELHI, DEC 23 /-- DMK MP Kanimozhi joined the Congress's "Bharat Jodo Yatra", led by party leader Rahul Gandhi, here on Friday and said she was delighted to be a part of the foot march that celebrates India's diversity. "I was delighted to take part in the Bharat Jodo Yatra, which celebrates our diversity, in Haryana today. Mr @RahulGandhi's vision of uniting India is an idea which will be taken forward by the people of India," the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) leader wrote on Twitter and posted pictures of her with the former Congress chief on the microblogging website. The yatra resumed on Friday from Kherli Lala in Gurugram's Sohna on the third and last day of its Haryana leg in the first phase, before entering Faridabad. The Delhi leg of his Bharat Jodo

Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir yatra, a mass contact initiative of the Congress that started on September 7, has so far covered Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The first phase of the yatra in Haryana concludes on Friday. The foot march, which will halt for the night at Faridabad, is slated to enter Delhi through the Badarpur border, near the Badarpur metro station, on Saturday. After a short break starting Saturday night, it will resume on January 3, head to Uttar Pradesh, then again enter Haryana, move towards Punjab and finally, conclude its journey in Jammu and Kashmir. Actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan, family members of freedom fighters and top Congress leaders are expected to join Rahul in the Delhi leg of his Bharat Jodo

Yatra on Saturday, party sources said. Delhi Congress president Anil Chaudhary said at least 40,000 to 50,000 yatriis are expected to participate in the yatra in the national capital. "Senior Congress leaders and parliamentarians, families of freedom fighters and Makkal Needhi Maiam (MKM) president Kamal Haasan are likely to join the Bharat Jodo Yatra in the national capital," a party source told news agency PTI on Friday. Addressing the MKM office-bearers last week, Haasan had said he has been invited by Rahul and that, he would participate in the Bharat Jodo Yatra on December 24 in the national capital. "People from different fields will be joining the yatra that will enter Badarpur border at 6 am. We will then walk towards Ashram via Apollo hospital and thereafter, the yatriis will have a lunch break

and will rest for a while. We will resume our yatra at 1 pm from Ashram," Chaudhary said. After the lunch break, the yatra will resume and head towards Nizamuddin and then to the India Gate Circle ITO Delhi Cantt-Darya Ganj and before heading towards the Red Fort. Thereafter, Rahul and some of the yatriis will visit Rajghat, Veerbhumi and Shantivan by car and pay floral tributes. After a short break beginning Saturday night, the yatra will resume from January 3 from Uttar Pradesh, then again head to Haryana in the second phase and then to Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. The yatra, which was launched on September 7 in Kanyakumari, has covered Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. It completed 100 days on December 16. (PTI)



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi receives a memento from a burqa-clad woman during the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', in Sohna, Haryana on Friday

Whole 'Covid drama' being orchestrated to 'derail' Bharat Jodo Yatra: Ramesh

FARIDABAD, DEC 23 /-- Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Friday accused the government of orchestrating the "Covid drama" to defame and derail the Rahul Gandhi led Bharat Jodo Yatra that is all set to enter Delhi, and said his party will follow any protocol based on scientific advice that is uniformly implemented. The former Congress president-led Yatra entered Faridabad on the last day of its Haryana leg in the first phase and will reach Delhi on Saturday morning. DMK MP Kanimozhi joined the yatra here besides some sports persons. At a press conference in Pakhal village here, Ramesh said: "This whole Covid drama over the last two days has been orchestrated to defame and derail the Bharat Jodo Yatra from coming to Delhi. That's the only objective". He was asked if the government was selectively picking on the yatra after Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya wrote to Gandhi to consider suspending the march if Covid protocols could not be followed. "Any protocol based on scientific and medical advice that is uniformly implemented will be followed by the Congress party. We have always followed it," he said.

In a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the former Union minister said: "We were not the party which gave solution that the Covid situation (after its outbreak in 2020) will be won in 18 days, like the Mahabharata war". "There was one gentleman who said that we will win the Covid war in 18 days, there was one gentleman who advised Indians to deal with the pandemic by going to their balconies and bang 'thalis'. These were the remedies given for Covid, if you recall," the senior Congress leader said. Ramesh said if there is a scientific or medical protocol, we will follow it voluntarily. "I wore the mask longer than the prime minister wore it yesterday," he said, while claiming that the prime minister's mask was for TV. Ramesh had on Thursday said the Union health minister's letter to Rahul over following Covid protocols in the march was based on concerns raised by three BJP MPs and not on advice of experts or scientists. Rahul had also slammed the advisory, saying the government is coming up with "excuses" to stop the yatra.

Earlier addressing a press conference here along with senior leaders AICC in-charge for Haryana affairs Shaktisinh Gohil, Bhupinder Singh Hooda and party leader Kanhaiya Kumar, Ramesh said, "If there is a directive to wear masks, we will wear masks, if there is a directive to maintain social distancing, that will be ensured". Ramesh said he has advised the "Bharat Yatriis this morning to wear masks" during the yatra. "I don't understand what the controversy is all about. There is no directive, there is no protocol..." he said. On parliamentary affairs minister Pralhad Joshi's reported remarks that Congress leaders want to give a break to the yatra to holiday abroad, Ramesh dubbed it as baseless.

"I want to challenge Pralhad Joshi. If what he is saying comes true, I will publicly apologise and if what he claims turns false, he should do the same," he said. On Parliament being adjourned sine die six days ahead of schedule, Ramesh said the reality is that there was no business left for four more days and some opposition parties had flagged this point "that government does not have any bills and agenda". Kanhaiya Kumar also charged that the BJP government has made every attempt to defame the yatra. Detailing the yatra's route in Delhi, Gohil said the march will halt for the night in Faridabad and will enter Delhi from the Badarpur border near Badarpur Metro station on Saturday morning. "At 6 am Saturday, the march will begin from Haryana end and after walking a distance of 5 km the yatra will enter Delhi. We will reach Ashram Chowk at 10:30 am. The yatra will resume from 'Jairam Ashram' from Ashram Chowk. It will move to Mathura Road, Zakir Hussain Marg, India Gate, Tilak Marg, ITO, Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, Netaji Subhas Marg," he said. (PTI)

Kharge meets top Cong leaders to strategise party's outreach plan

NEW DELHI, DEC 23 /-- Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday chaired a meeting of top leaders on ways to strengthen the organisation and to take forward the party's soon-to-be launched outreach initiative.

Kharge held deliberations with party general secretaries, in-charge of various states, PCC presidents and CLP leaders on ways to take forward the two-month long 'Haath se haath jodo abhiyan' that would start from January 26. Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot, Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel,

general secretary organisation K Venugopal, Leader of the



Mallikarjun Kharge

House in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, other general secretaries

Randeep Surjewala, Mukul Wasnik, Kumari Selja, Tariq Anwar, Avinash Pandey, party treasurer Pawan Kumar Bansal, Jitendra Singh and all PCC presidents and CLP leaders were present at the meeting. The Congress has decided to launch to reach out to every household across the country. The leaders also deliberated on the modalities of the party's initiative during which the message of the Bharat Jodo Yatra will be taken to the people's doorstep. The campaign will be launched soon after the yatra ends in Jammu and Kashmir by

January end. The yatra is set to enter the national capital on Saturday. The campaign is part of the Congress efforts to continue its mass outreach plan which has gained momentum after the launch of the Bharat Jodo Yatra from September 7 from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu. As part of the campaign, padyatras will be taken out and a letter from Rahul Gandhi, that talks about the core message of the yatra, will be distributed among the people along with a 'charge sheet' against the Narendra Modi government. (PTI)

Himachal CM Sukhu urges tourists to wear masks, follow Covid protocol

SHIMLA, DEC 23 /-- Himachal Pradesh chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Friday urged tourists visiting the hill state to follow Covid-19 protocol, including wearing a face mask, as a precautionary measure amid the spurt in infection in some countries. The appeal comes in the backdrop of the highly transmissible Omicron strains, mostly BF.7, causing a spike in coronavirus cases in many countries, including China. The chief minister also said proper law and order must be maintained and additional police must be deployed in places with high flow of tourists so that peace and tranquility of the state could be maintained. "Himachal Pradesh was a tourist destination for all reasons and seasons with a rich tradition of welcoming the tourists with warmth and hospitality," Sukhu said, adding that all required steps must be taken to ensure that the tourists visiting the state must feel at home during their stay in the state. 'Atithi Devo Bhava' must be the motto of the Tourism and other departments to facilitate the tourists, he said. "The tourists were our guests and we should ensure the best possible hospitality to them," the chief minister stated. Sukhu directed the officers to ensure foolproof arrangements to facilitate the tourists visiting the state, especially for Christmas and New Year celebrations. He asked the chief secretary to hold a meeting with the senior officers of the state government to make adequate arrangements for the smooth flow of tourists in Himachal Pradesh. The chief minister said that special arrangements must be made for ensuring hassle-free movement of tourist vehicles, particularly at major tourist destinations, of the state so that they could enjoy their stay without any inconvenience, a statement issued here said. Sukhu appealed to the tourists not to park their vehicles alongside roads leading to traffic congestion and inconvenience to them. He directed the police department to ensure use of drones for effective traffic management. He said adequate man and machinery must be deployed in areas prone to heavy snow so as to avoid any inconvenience to the tourists. He said that four by four vehicles must also be stationed at strategic locations to meet any eventuality. Sukhu directed the public works and health departments to be on high alert. He said that special focus must be laid on smooth plying of vehicles across the Atal Tunnel Rohtang to facilitate the commuters. He said the police must also conduct night patrolling and Urban Local Bodies must ensure proper functioning of street lights and basic amenities. (PTI)

No Covid-related curbs in Goa till Jan 2: Sawant

PANAJI, DEC 23 /-- The Goa government will not impose any Covid-19 related restrictions till January 2 but will review the situation on January 3, chief minister Pramod Sawant said on Friday after chairing a high-level meeting here. Sawant said that people should voluntarily follow Covid-19 appropriate behaviour. "The state will not impose any Covid-19 related restrictions till January 2, but will review the situation on January 3," the chief minister told reporters after chairing the meeting. He said as per the Centre's direction, a mock drill will be conducted on December 27 to check the preparedness to tackle any potential coronavirus outbreak. Sawant said authorities have already started random checking of international passengers arriving in the coastal state. "Two per cent of international passengers arriving in the state are being tested," he added. As Goa gears up to ring in the Christmas and New Year festivities amid a rise in Covid-19 cases in some countries, the state government has appealed to the people not to panic, but to take necessary precautions. Speaking to reporters after chairing a meeting with officials on Friday, state health minister Vishwajit Rane said the Union government has asked the state to remain alert about the Covid-19 infection. (PTI)

India doing fine, do not expect surge in cases due to Omicron's sub-variants XBB, BF.7: Virologist

NEW DELHI, DEC 23 /-- Renowned virologist Gangadeep Kang on Friday said India has reported a few cases of Omicron sub-variants XBB and BF.7, but they have not driven an upsurge, and she does not expect a spike in Covid cases. Kang's remarks come in the backdrop of the highly transmissible Omicron strains, mostly BF.7, causing a spike in coronavirus cases in many countries, including China. "They are, like all Omicron sub-variants, very good at infecting people because they escape the immune response that prevents infection, but are not causing more severe disease than Delta," the professor at the Christian Medical College's division of gastrointestinal sciences tweeted. Kang said that "at the moment, India is doing fine" but maintained that surveillance should be ensured to "detect signal of any changes in the behaviour of the virus". BF.7 is a sub-lineage of the



Virologist Gangadeep Kang

Omicron variant BA.5 and has the strongest infection ability since it is highly transmissible, has a shorter incubation period and has a higher capacity to cause reinfection or infect even those vaccinated. China is opening up fast at a time when their population has low levels of exposure to natural infection, she said, adding that "the current circulating variants are Omicron, which have evolved in vaccinated populations and are therefore very infectious". Kang said most of China's population has received two doses of vaccines. "Most infections can be managed at home, but sheer numbers mean that even a small proportion getting severely ill, means that many people will have severe disease and that a proportion of those will die," the virologist said in another tweet. "At the moment, India is doing fine. We have few cases, we have had the XBB and BF.7 for a while and they have not driven an upsurge in India. In the absence of an even more highly infectious variant, I do not expect a surge," Kang tweeted. Noting that Omicron does result in severe disease in a proportion of the infected, but it is not as severe as that caused by the Delta variant, she said it is not mild, but it does infect the upper respiratory tract more than the lower. "Each new sub-variant thrives only if it is better at immune escape than the prior ones. Therefore, greater infectiousness of new variants is a given and not news," the virologist said on Twitter. "Worry with China is not just the tragedy unfolding for them as they undergo what we have already experienced, but that high levels of replication mean increased opportunity for new variants to emerge," she said.

Kang said there is a need to maintain variant and clinical surveillance to ensure that "we detect signal of any changes in the behaviour of the virus". "This is a public health function where stable surveillance runs in the background and ramps up for emerging threats," she said. Kang also said randomly increasing testing has little value. "Testing incoming travellers needs a risk-based framework, but 'X per cent' sampling also means that you accept that every incoming case will not be detected. In other words, increasing testing needs a strategic approach," Kang said. "Our population is vaccinated with the primary series, and has had high rates of infection (90 per cent estimated). Most infections were during Omicron, and this gives us hybrid immunity. How long will it last and vaccines," Kang tweeted. (PTI)

SC 'hackathon' to explore ideas to bring efficiency-from filing to listing cases

NEW DELHI, DEC 23 /-- The Supreme Court is organising a hackathon to encourage innovative ideas and explore practical propositions for bringing in efficiency in the existing processes- from "filing to listing". It has invited suggestions and innovative ideas from the stakeholders for improvement in the system. A notification uploaded on the apex court website said the event will

be organised under the supervision and guidance of apex court judge Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul. "Under the directions of the Chief Justice of India, the Registry is organizing a 'Hackathon' event for identifying innovative ideas and exploring practical propositions for refining and bringing in efficiency in the existing processes from 'filing' to 'listing' of judicial matters in the Supreme Court of

India," the notification said. It said suggestions or innovative ideas be submitted online through link 'https://main.sci.nic.in/hackathon/', which will be available on the official website of the apex court from December 24 till December 30, 2022. "The suggestions/innovative ideas shall be within the ambit of the provisions of the Supreme Court Rules, 2013," it said. The notification said the

stakeholders and duty holders like members of the Supreme Court Bar Association and Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association, members of the apex court e-committee, officials and law clerks-cum-research assistants working in the top court registry, may participate in the event. It said after scrutiny of the responses, a screening-cum-selection committee shall identify the best 18

suggestions or innovative ideas and the selected participants would be invited to make presentation during the event to be held on January 7 in the court complex. "Each participant would be allotted maximum ten minutes for presentation of the proposition and further five minutes for interaction-cum-question/answer session with the screening-cum-selection committee and the judge in-charge," it

said. The notification said in the presentation, the participant may demonstrate as to how his or her vision and proposition will bring systemic changes to achieve the desired objective. It said a participant with the best proposition will be selected as winner, followed by a runner up, while the rest of them would be given certificate of participation. (PTI)

Secondary School Parangara celebrates “Arunoday -2022”(Annual Day) “Students should make use of the facilities” -Chief Guest



DIGLIPUR, DEC 23/-- The Annual Day- “Arunoday-2022” of the remote Government Secondary School Parangara of North Andaman was celebrated on Thursday at the school’s premises. The Divisional Forest Officer, Mr. Shiv Shakti B was the chief guest on this occasion. Addressing the students, he said that the students should make use of the facilities being provided to them at the school. Appreciating the students for displaying skills with

perfection in performing Yoga-Asanas and aerobics, he said the students have tremendous potential and they can do wonders if they concentrate on their studies too. He congratulated the Principal In-Charge SmtiKiranKumari for her excellent guidance to the students attaining good results in academics, sports and cultural activities. The DFO had special words for the Physical Education teacher, Mr. EshwarRao for making students adopt Yoga in their daily lives. He



applauded the students, participating in the fancy dress competition, saying that they have effectively conveyed the message of environment protection and ecological balance. Mr. Shiv Shakti called upon the students of this remote area not to let any kind of inferiority complex ,dominate their psyche, as they possess all the required attributes to compete at any platform at any level. The students presented their traditional ‘chotaNagpuri’ folk dance, showing their feeling of pride in performing it in the ‘Arunoday-2022’. The audience wereenthralled by the skilled display of difficult postures of Yoga. The children with special needs-the Divyangs were facilitated by the chief

guest for their achievements in different fields. Impressed by the performance, the guest of honour, the Junior Engineer of APWD smtiPriti offered a cash prize to the students. A melodious song was presented by shriDebbbrataMazumdar, GTT on this occasion. The best student award in the boy’s category was given to Alex, a student of class X, whereas Rithika of the same class, was felicitated with the best student award among girls. Earlier, the Principal In - c h a r g e SmtiKiranKumari in her welcome address said that though the school has so many challenges but it has been progressing, overcoming the obstacles,

in its journey to make itself a better place for the students’ learning. Dedicating success to the collective team work of the staff members she said, each member of the school family is committed to achieve the organizational goal. SmtiKiranKumari presented the report of the activities performed under the Government’s Flagship P r o g r a m m e ‘SamagraShiksha’. She said all the interventions under the SMA are being implemented in the school to ensure the equitable and inclusive quality Education to the students. Mr. Mohan Kumar Das, GTT proposed the vote of thanks. A large number of villagers came today to watch the annual day program, held after a gap of two years.

MESSAGE

I express my warm greetings to all the Islanders on the occasion of ‘National Consumer Day’ on 24th December, 2022. It gives me immense pleasure to know that the Department of Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs is celebrating “National Consumer Day” in these Islands along with the rest of country on the theme “Effective disposal of cases in Consumer Commissions”.

As the archipelago of A&N Island has 1912 Km long coastline from Diglipur in North to Campbell Bay in the extreme South, UT Administration implemented e-Daakhil to facilitate Consumers to file complaints from anywhere irrespective of their physical location. Mediation being an alternate dispute redressal solution, for fair, cost friendly and quick disposal of consumer disputes, the Administration established a Mediation Cell under the A&N State Commission. The Government has also taken proactive steps by encouraging the use of electronic mediation (e-mediation) and e-hearing to overcome approach barriers. Dedicated Lok Adalats are being held to take up the pending cases with Consumer Commissions.

This occasion reinforces the need to sensitize people towards adoption of e-filing of consumer complaints through the e-daakhil portal.

I call upon the people of these Islands to work together and participate in the celebrations in solidarity with consumer movement.

I wish a grand success to this endeavour:

(Admiral D K Joshi)
PVSM, AVSM, YSM, NM, VSM (Retd.)
Lt. Governor, A&N Islands

&
Vice Chairman, Islands Development Agency

ZP Member, LA meets CS



KURMA RAO

PORT BLAIR, DEC 23/-- Mr. VasuDevan Nair, Zilla Parishad Member, Little Andaman met the Chief Secretary on Thursday and requested him converting the Labour guest house of the Forest Cooperation at Haddo, Port Blair into accommodation facilities for people of inter-island who visits Port Blair for medical reasons. Some of them have to even stay at Port Blair for months for which these poor islanders have to spend a hefty amount for accommodation purposes. Turning the vacant guest house of Forest Corporation will be of immense helpful for them.

ANRKM delegation meets Minister of State of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying



PORT BLAIR, DEC 23/-- A delegation of Andaman Nicobar RajyaKaramchariMahasangh (ANRKM) met Dr. L. Murugan, Minister of State of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying at Circuit House, Port Blair on Friday, in the presence of Mr. Vishall Jolly, National Executive Member of BJP, Mr. Ram Das, General Secretary BJP and Mr. JijithRekh, State Spokesperson for BJP.

The President ANRKMS, Mr. Jaydeep Kumar Dey welcomed Dr. L. Murugan with flowers, and the General Secretary BharatiyaMazdoorSangh(BMS), Mr. Sunil Gosh presented the issues of BMS. After that, the members of affiliated associations of ANRKMS had elaborated their issues and grievances pertaining to service in front of the Hon’ble Minister. Thereafter, Mr. .G. Anoop, Organising Secretary, ANRKMS had collectively represented major issues of working class of the islands such as regularisation of DRMs in all departments, regulation of 249 posts and other issues of Sanitary Worker under PBMC, Adhoc Bonus for DRMs, 100% job reservation for Islanders, issues related to the contractual employees of ANIIMS etc., After observation, with a positive note, Dr. L. Murugan assured to take up the issues with appropriate authorities in the A&N Administration and concerned Ministries for fruitful results. The meeting ended with the vote of thanks delivered by Mr. M. Veeranna, State President BMS.

Restrictions on movement of vehicles

PORT BLAIR, DEC 23/-- In view of the manifold increase in the vehicular traffic in the route between Chatham and Bamboocflat, the Directorate of Shipping has imposed restriction on the movement/ transportation of commercial vehicles, through the vehicle ferry vessels operating in the above route, during the peak hours i.e between 07.30 AM to 09.45 AM and from 05.00 PM to 06.45 PM, on all working days except Holidays. Similarly, movement/ transportation of on commercial Four wheeler vehicles, has also been restricted to 02 Four Wheeler vehicles per trip, during the above peak hours in the above route. In order to clear the rush, especially during peak hours, the vessels once full to its capacity, instead of waiting for her scheduled departure time.

CS reviews status of Covid-19, discusses threat perception

PORT BLAIR, DEC 23/-- The Chief Secretary, A & N Administration, Mr. Keshav Chandra held a comprehensive meeting on Thursday to review the current status of COVID-19 in A&N Islands and future threat perception. The meeting was attended by senior officers of the administration, including Deputy Commissioners of all three Districts and representatives from Andaman Nicobar Command.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary urged the people of the Islands to follow all the COVID Appropriate Behavior in order to prevent the outbreak of infection in these Islands. He advised the people to wear mask, maintain social distancing, especially in crowded places and not to panic.

The Chief Secretary further directed the concerned authorities to review the logistic supplies and place fresh orders for procurement, if needed. He also directed the Health Department to augment the process of manpower hiring and purchase of logistics, if needed, to tackle the situation. The Chief Secretary directed the District Magistrates to review the stocks of medical supplies, beds and oxygen in their respective jurisdiction and take necessary action accordingly. Further, he directed to follow the guidelines and advisories issued by MoHFW, New Delhi and act accordingly. He said, samples of all positive cases must be sent for genome sequencing to the designated INSACOG Laboratories. He also directed all concerned to activate the surveillance at the Port of Entry as well as in all the Health Institutions across the

Firing Practice

PORT BLAIR, DEC 23/-- Firing practice by CG Dornier will be carried out on Jan. 3, 6, 9, 17, 20, 23 and 31, 2023 from 1 pm to 3 pm. The safe flying height is 6000 feet AMSL. All concerned have been warned to keep themselves and their vessels/fishing boat away from the firing range during the above mentioned dates and time.

Islands. ILI/SARI cases across the Islands should be reported daily and a media team be constituted to brief the media on daily basis, the Chief Secretary said.

The Chief Secretary directed the Health Department to issue an advisory on Do’s & Don’ts pertaining to COVID-19 for the general public. He also mentioned that in case of any untoward situation, Andaman & Nicobar Administration is fully prepared to tackle the situation.

Earlier, the Commissioner-cum-Secretary (Health) briefed about the present situation of COVID-19. This was followed by a detailed presentation about the current status of COVID-19 globally, in the country as well as in the Islands.

He also informed about the status of medical supplies including oxygen, status of vaccination in the Islands and also future threat and strategies to tackle any unforeseen situation.

Shyam N Shyam

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The secret of greatness is simple: do better work than any other man in your field - and keep on doing it
Wilfred A. Peterson

Spain passes transgender law

Spain's lower house of Parliament has passed a law that allows people over 16 years of age to change their legally registered gender without any medical supervision. The law will bring a change to many of its members' everyday lives. Under the law, drawn up by the centre-left coalition government, minors aged 12 or 13 will need a judge's authorisation to make the change, while those between 14 and 16 will have to be accompanied by their parents or legal guardians. The law also bans so-called conversion therapies to suppress sexual orientation or gender identity, establishes fines and punishments for attacks on LGBT people and overturns a ban that prevented lesbian couples from registering their children under both parents' names. Up to now, transgender people needed a diagnosis by several doctors of gender dysphoria, which is the psychological condition of not feeling a match between one's biological sex and gender identity. In some cases, they also needed proof they had been living for two years as the gender they identified with, or even records showing they had taken hormones.

Transgender rights groups say the law represents a "before and after" in LGBT rights. But some feminist activists regard gender self-determination as a threat that blurs the concept of biological sex. Ahead of the voting session in Parliament, dozens of transgender rights activists gathered in front of the building listening to the debate on their mobile phones. The bill will bring a change to many of its members' everyday lives. It's always been a problem when an ID doesn't match the identity in a job interview, or at the doctor's office, or when boarding public transport.

The bill, which will become law once it is passed by the Senate, was sponsored by the far-left Unidas Podemos (United We Can), the junior party in the government coalition, follows an intense 18-month-long parliamentary debate. It was fiercely opposed by right-wing opposition parties and also created some divisions with the Socialist party of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. The Spanish Congress voting comes at the same time that the Scottish parliament is debating a similar bill granting gender self-determination. More than a dozen other countries have already adopted similar legislation.

Centre's Operation Uproot of Naxalites will be helping BJP politically

REFLEX ACTION

Arun Srivastava

electoral challenge to his political hegemony it is the right time for him to launch an aggressive tactic on the plea of destroying urban Naxals and Maoists holding pens. Barely a couple of months back the Bengal BJP has raised an alarm that the Adivasi populated areas of the state were witnessing revival of the Naxalite activities. Nevertheless in the absence of concrete information and ground level data, the central government had maintain restraint. It is sad that some political parties in order to embarrass and make their presence felt in the political arena of the state have been endorsing the allegations of the BJP.

Modi in his address to the Chintan Shivir had said; "In recent years, all governments have acted responsibly to destroy the terror network's ground network... We must deal with it by joining forces. We will have to defeat all forms of Naxalism, be it gun-totting or pen-wielding, we will have to come up with a solution for all this." The Prime Minister expressed concern that the Maoist-Naxalite forces are expanding their intellectual sphere in order to corrupt the minds of future generations.

The CRPF has deployed more than one lakh troops in about ten Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected states of the country. Some other central armed police forces (CAPFs) like the ITBP, BSF and SSB have also been deployed for this task in specific areas along with the state police forces.

Chhattisgarh has been at the radar of Modi government for the simple reason that the Congress government of the state has proved to be a major

stumbling block in the path of expansion of RSS and BJP in the state. In past, even during the BJP government headed by Raman Singh, the state had witnessed many severe Naxalite attacks on its security forces but in recent times the state has been witnessing peace. Modi using the old information has been planning to launch an anti-Maoist campaign in the state. The year 2019 saw one of lowest fatalities among security forces in the last two decades.

The Chhattisgarh experience does not need Modi's plan for intervention. There is little doubt that the BJP is taking advantage of the prevailing situation to weaken the Congress government in the state and create an impression among the people that since Baghel government has failed, Modi has intervened to curb the Maoist menace. Undeniably Modi's approach is the example of unprecedented level of politicisation of nationalism and national security. By eliminating the civil society activists, the academics and social activists peace could not be established. The peace process requires the critical roles of civil society activists but unfortunately the Modi government and RSS have been branded them 'Urban Naxals'.

The Modi government hiding behind the veneer of the Maoist menace has been designing to deploy more and more para military forces in these states. It has been using old records which underlines that the existing para military forces are inadequate to deal with the menace. At one stage it was rumoured that Naxalites and Maoists have built a strong red corridor. But the latest government reports and records point out that the general election in Maoist-hit areas completed without major incidents. The elections this year has so far been relatively peaceful in Bihar and Jharkhand. As elections approach, extremism in these two states becomes a cause for worry. (IPA)



Jesus Christ's birth sequence created at a tableau set up in St Paul's Cathedral in Kolkata-----Arijit Ganguly

Congress has to take lessons from Saffron Camp's determination & grit

Gujarat and Himachal have voted for two opposing national parties. While Himachali voters rejected the BJP and upheld the tradition of electing an alternate every five years, voters in Gujarat gave the saffron party its biggest victory ever and seventh straight term. With over 52 per cent share, and 156 of 182 seats, Narendra Modi magic has worked again in Gujarat, although he moved to Delhi eight years ago.

The Modi mantra of good governance, development welfarism infused with the cultural resurgence of Hindutva—known collectively as Gujarat model—still pays dividends. For Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP, 2022 is ending on a high note as they expect the momentum gained in successive victories in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Manipur and Gujarat will be carried forward next year when elections will be held in ten states, including the key ones like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, and possibly Jammu and Kashmir.

Winning Gujarat has been on expected lines, still, the historic Mandate in their home state has come as a matter of personal satisfaction for

Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The cacophony of victory chants at BJP headquarters may have drowned the loss in Himachal Pradesh and the Aam Aadmi Party's victory in the Delhi municipal elections, but the road ahead for 2024 Lok Sabha polls is not devoid of challenges for BJP.

Voters appear to reward strong leadership and punish weak contenders—perhaps, a lesson for future electoral battles. Although Himachal's BJP Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur won his seat with a record 76 per cent votes, and got the BJP most seats in his home district, he was not seen as an assertive leader in rest of the state. In Gujarat, Bhupendra Patel, a first time MLA chosen to replace Vijay Rupani, too, faced, similar challenge. But the Gujarat electorate voted for Modi's charisma and Shah's strategic acumen in the absence of any creditable opposition. Similarly, in Delhi, the electorate gave the nod to AAP which sought votes in name of chief minister Arvind Kejriwal. During the

2017 assembly polls in Gujarat, the BJP faced multiple challenges. Demonization, the introduction of GST and rising prices had disillusioned the trading community. The politically important Patel community was in agitation for reservation. Moreover, Modi was focused on Delhi while Congress leader Rahul Gandhi undertook multiple tours, visited temples and even asserted his Brahmin heritage. People took notice of the challenger as he courageously took on Modi. However, certain comments by Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar gave the BJP a chance to regain lost ground, and the party managed to retain power with 99 seats, while the congress won 77.

Since then, the BJP worked hard to remove the adverse factors. The 10 % reservation for economically weaker sections helped it won over the Patidars, as did the installation of a Patel chief minister. The BJP went on a door-to-door campaign, with shah

micromanaging electoral strategy. The party opened the doors to Patidar Congress leaders like Hardik Patel, OBC leader Alpesh Thakur and 19 congress MLAs. The GST rates of several items were rationalized. The BJP had another constituency to address which had been historically been with the congress—tribal. Many of them were won over with the decision to nominate Droupadi Murmu as the first tribal president of India.

When the votes were counted on December 8, the BJP won most of the seats in Patel dominated Saurashtra and also in tribal areas. While the Congress ran a low-key campaign, the BJP pumped in its star campaigners including central ministers and several chief ministers to campaign across the state.

It also pushed Hindutva agenda by promising the uniform civil code and giving ticket to daughter of a Naroda Patiya riot victims. The decision to release convicts in the Bilkis Bano case was an attempt to polarize the campaign so that core BJP voters would step and vote. As it turned out, the 2022 verdict was even better than 2002 verdict after the Gujarat riots when the BJP had won 127 seats. (IPA)

FOCUS

Harihar Swarup

| Conventional Crossword | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | | |
| 9 | | 10 | | | | 11 | | | |
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| | | | 18 | | | 19 | | 20 | |
| 21 | 22 | | | | | | | | |
| 23 | | | | 24 | 25 | | | | |
| 26 | | | | 27 | | | | | |
| 28 | | | | 29 | | | | | |

| ACROSS | | | | | DOWN | | | | |
|--------|----------------------|---|--------------|------------------|------|----------------|--|--|--|
| 1 | Wan | 2 | Presentation | | 3 | Illuminated | | | |
| 5 | Cicatrice | | 4 | Component | 6 | Innermost part | | | |
| 10 | Testament | | 7 | Reluctant | 8 | Sharp blow | | | |
| 11 | Eggs | | 9 | Clock face | 15 | Obliteration | | | |
| 12 | Angry | | 16 | Book of accounts | 17 | Widespreading | | | |
| 13 | Corded fabric | | 18 | Gossip | | dominion | | | |
| 14 | Measuring instrument | | 21 | Schemes | 19 | Hackneyed | | | |
| 23 | Neckwear | | 24 | Oneness | 20 | Narrow beams | | | |
| 26 | Land measure | | 25 | Pinch | 22 | Liquor dregs | | | |
| 27 | Legal document | | | | 23 | Faucet | | | |
| 28 | Mexican dollar | | | | | | | | |
| 29 | Duelling sword | | | | | | | | |

| SUDOKU: 3735 | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| | 2 | | | | 5 | 7 | | 9 | |
| | | | | 6 | | 9 | | 3 | |
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| | | 2 | | | 6 | 5 | 3 | | |
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| Yesterday's Solution 3734 | | | | | | | | | |
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| 2 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 1 | |
| 1 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 3 | |
| 4 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 6 | 9 | 2 | |
| 7 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 6 | |
| 8 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 9 | |
| 6 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 7 | |
| 9 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 5 | |
| 3 | 1 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 7 | 4 | |
| 5 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 8 | |

| Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 1743 | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| F | R | A | C | A | S | | L | I | T |
| A | | B | | M | I | N | O | R | |
| C | L | A | R | E | T | | G | E | M |
| E | | T | | U | N | E | | | E |
| | | E | N | D | | B | A | I | T |
| M | E | S | S | | P | E | T | | |
| O | | | | S | E | N | T | | E |
| P | O | P | | L | A | D | I | N | G |
| | D | E | B | A | R | | R | | G |
| D | E | W | | P | L | I | E | R | S |

DISCLAIMER

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KisanDiwas by ICAR-KVK



PORT BLAIR, DEC 23/--/ The ICAR-Krishi Vigyan Kendra celebrated Kisan Diwas-2022 and awareness programme on natural farming on 23rd Dec. 2022 at its three locations Sippighat, Nimbudera and Nicobar with main aim of creating awareness of the contribution of farmers to the socio economic development of the nation. Every year birth anniversary of Shri Chaudhary Charan Singh ji is observed as National Farmer's Day to recognize his contributions for the farmers. Dr Debasis Bhattacharya, Director (I/c), CIARI, Port Blair graced the occasion as Chief Guest at Sippighat. He congratulated and appreciated each and every farmer who is working continuously for feeding our growing population and economical growth of our nation. He shared

important innovation occurred in association with nature and farming. He motivated the farming community to lead their happy and healthy life in association with nature. Dr. P.K Singh, Principal Scientist & Head (I/c), Division of FC&IP, CIARI, Port Blair discussed about importance of pulses in different cropping system which enriches micro flora and soil health. Dr. T. Subramani, Sr. Scientist & Head (I/c), NRM Division, CIARI, Port Blair briefed integration of livestock and crops under Natural farming and advised the farmers to adopt climate resilient technologies and exclude the synthetic chemicals and external input. Dr B.K. Nanda, Head (I/c) KVK, South Andaman discussed about the necessity of adoption of natural farming for the fragile island ecosystem of Andaman and Nicobar

islands. Dr N. Bommayasamy, SMS (Agro./ Agrl. Extn.), explained about promotion of alternative farming system free from externally purchased inputs, cost reduction and increasing farm income through natural farming, integrated agriculture and animal husbandry based with desi/indigenous cows and local resources, create awareness and up scaling of natural farming products and certification to compete with national and international markets. Dr. Pooja Kapoor, SMS (Home Science) discussed about role of women in agriculture and sustainable livelihood. At North and Middle Andaman district, the awareness programme was conducted at Basantipur gram panchayat. Sri Ramakrishna Roy,

Pradhan, Basantipur Gram Panchayat graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Sri Ashim Dutta, Panchayat Samiti member, Sri Bibhuti Ranjan Biswas, PRI members of Basantipur Gram Panchayat attended the program. Sri Thanmay Paul, Technical Officer, KVK organized the program and discussed about the importance and methods of natural farming and its suitability and necessity for the N & M Andaman. The awareness programme was conducted at Car Nicobar where Sri Paul David, 1st Headman, Perka village graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Experts demonstrated preparation of ghanajeemrut, beejamrut, jeevamrut, neemashtra, bhramastra and agniasthra. As part of the programme, Jeevamrut preparation kits, pulse & vegetable seeds were also distributed to the participants. A total of 165 farmers, farm women participated and benefitted and 16 PRI members and official were presented during the occasion at the three different locations. The programme was organized under supervision and guidance of Dr Eaknath B. Chakurkar, Director, ICAR-CIARI, Port Blair.



Minister of State for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences (I/C), Dr. Jitendra Singh interacting with the members of J&K Chapter of Confederation of Indian Industry at Habitat Centre, in New Delhi

Veteran Telugu actor Kaikala Satyanarayana passes away at 87

HYDERABAD, DEC 23 --/ Veteran Telugu actor Kaikala Satyanarayana, known for his villain and other versatile character roles, passed away here on Friday due to age-related ailments. Satyanarayana was 87. Satyanarayana, who acted in over 700 films in a career spanning six decades, had been unwell for some time and the end came on Friday morning at his residence here, film industry sources said. Satyanarayana, who started his career in the late 1950s, made a mark for himself with his villain roles

in the films of legendary N T Rama Rao and later actors Chiranjeevi, Balakrishna, Venkatesh and Nagarjuna. The veteran actor made a mark for himself in Telugu films with the role of Lord Yama as he played the character in several films, including NTR's 'Yama Gola' (1977) and 'Yama Leela' (1994). Satyanarayana is widely known for playing different roles such as villain, character artiste, comedian and others with ease. He had a brief stint in politics, serving as a Member of Parliament representing Telugu Desam Party (TDP). Some of his memorable performances came in films, including 'Pandava Vanavasam', Akkineni Nageswara Rao's 'Prem

Nagar', Chiranjeevi's 'Gang Leader', Balakrishna's 'Samarasimha Reddy', 'Sutradharulu' directed by legendary K Viswanath and 'Brundavanam'. Former Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu, Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, Telangana chief minister K Chandrababai Naidu, his Andhra Pradesh counterpart Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, Union Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy and several other leaders and film personalities condoled the death of Satyanarayana. Megastar Chiranjeevi, who shared a special bond with Satyanarayana, penned an emotional tribute on Twitter to the departed soul. Expressing grief over the demise, Chiranjeevi said

no other actor in India had played versatile roles as Satyanarayana did. He recalled visiting the actor's residence on the latter's birthday this year. Chiranjeevi, top Telugu stars Pawan Kalyan, Venkatesh, veteran director K Raghavendra Rao and a number of other film personalities visited Satyanarayana's residence and paid their last respects to him. Telangana chief minister Rao, who also visited Satyanarayana's residence and paid homage to him, directed that the departed actor's funeral be conducted with official honours. The funeral would take place in Hyderabad on Saturday, family members told newsmen. (PTI)

Fully prepared to deal with any eventuality, say Delhi hospitals amid Covid scare

NEW DELHI, DEC 23 --/ Many hospitals in Delhi have instructed their heads of department to strictly follow Covid guidelines, including wearing masks and using sanitisers, amid concerns over surge in coronavirus cases in some countries. The hospital said they have braced themselves for any eventuality. The two waves of Covid-19 were a learning experience for hospitals in terms of bringing about infrastructural changes, but the medical facilities now assert that they are fully prepared in case the BE.7 variant triggers a surge. On Thursday, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal held an emergency meeting over the Covid situation, amid a surge triggered due to the BE.7 variant of the virus in some countries such as China and the US. India has also reported some cases of the variant, although no such case has been registered in the national capital. The medical director of state-run LNJP Hospital, Suresh Kumar, said the hospital currently has 450 dedicated Covid beds, including 50 ICU

beds. "We have a genome sequencing lab at the hospital. Covid is not over yet but at the same time we are fully prepared," Kejriwal added. The Centre-run RML Hospital is motivating patients and their relatives to follow Covid appropriate behaviour, said Nandini Duggal, medical superintendent of the hospital. "In view of the sudden surge in Covid-19 cases (in other countries), the hospital has decided to implement all precautionary measures specially wearing mask, frequent hand washing and use of sanitizer, and social distancing strictly. All HOD's have been instructed to implement the guidelines strictly in their departments and to motivate the public and patients to adhere to these protective measures. "Posters will be installed at public areas for social awareness regarding the same," she added. The senior doctor asserted that the hospital is geared up to face the challenges -- in terms of beds, equipment, oxygen supply and medicines.

Echoing similar views, Dr Neeraj Gupta, professor in the Department of Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine at the Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi, said they have adequate preparations in place in terms of isolation beds, manpower, oxygen supply and required PPEs to face any upsurge of Covid cases. Private hospitals also said they are prepared for any eventuality. Dr Charu Goel Sachdeva, HOD and Consultant Internal Medicine, HCMCT Manipal Hospitals, Dwarka, said there is no need to panic at the moment, since people have good immunity and the vaccination status in the country has been steady. "Our situation is quite different from China where they are observing a zero Covid policy for quite some time and once this is reversed, people started getting exposure to this infection which they were not exposed to earlier. "The infection has taken a very severe form just like the delta variant that we faced in 2021. Yes, there is no need to panic but we have to be alert. The government

is gearing up its preparedness to handle this situation. We as a hospital and our healthcare workers are all geared up. However, we are still waiting for the final guidelines to come but in terms of our preparation, we will keep rooms prepared where we have to admit COVID-19 patients and we will ensure that we have all the drugs, enough oxygen, and ambulances are geared up," she added. Similarly, Dr Bishnu Panigrahi, Group Head, Medical Strategy and Operations, Fortis Healthcare, said the hospital made quite a few infrastructural additions across the country, in terms of augmenting oxygen supply, and other aspects. "We had set up oxygen plants in our hospitals in Delhi-NCR and many of our facilities in other cities. These have led to a reduction of our dependence on liquid medical oxygen. We had also set up an expert group comprising senior clinicians who would meet every week to discussing measures in accordance with the guidelines by the Centre," he added. (PTI)

PORT BLAIR, DEC 23/--/ The Birth Anniversary of Dr. Srinivas Ramanujam the Great Mathematician of India was celebrated at Govt. Middle School, Wandoor today. As part of the celebration, the life history & achievements made by Dr. Srinivas Ramanujam was highlighted to the students. An Anti-Superstition show was also organized for the students. The programme was specially designed to educate the rural student by unraveling the scientific phenomena working behind each magic. Thereafter, with a view to inculcate the spirit of inquisitiveness and to develop scientific temper among the students, the Mobile Science Exhibition bus fitted with science exhibits was placed on display in the school campus. The students along with their teachers showed keen interest to know the scientific phenomena behind each exhibit/model.

NIA raids 14 places in case related to terror activities in J&K

JAMMU, DEC 23 --/ The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday conducted searches at 14 locations in different districts in a case related to terror activities of various proscribed outfits in Jammu and Kashmir, an official said. The raids were conducted in Jammu, Kulgam (south Kashmir), Pulwama, Anantnag and Sopore in (north Kashmir's Baramulla), a spokesperson of the federal agency said. The agency said the searches were carried out in connection with a case which was suo-moto registered on June 21 by the NIA Police Station in Jammu. "The case pertains to the criminal conspiracy for carrying out terrorist and subversive activities hatched by the cadres and Over Ground Workers of various proscribed organizations and their affiliates/off-shoots, operating under various pseudo names, at the behest of their Pakistani commanders/handlers," the spokesperson said. The official said they are involved in carrying out terrorist attacks by using cyber-space in Jammu and Kashmir. (PTI)

PORT BLAIR, DEC 23/--/ Working towards its commitment to make the A&N Islands drug-free, N&M District Police is conducting regular raids. Based on an intelligence, regarding cultivation of Cannabis plants. A police team headed by SI Basudev Baroi, I/c OP Rest Camp, PC/1428 Abdul Safique, PC/2614 Hemant Rao and PC/2732

Seema Tirkey conducted raid on 21/12/2022 and recovered 02 Nos. Cannabis plants from possession of Rohit Kumar Bairagi R/o Tugapur-8. The accused was arrested and a case was registered under relevant sections of NDPS Act at PS Mayabunder. The entire trap was conducted under the supervision of

Shri Lakshya Pandey, DANIPS, SDPO, Diglipur and overall supervision of the undersigned. The general public is requested to pass and share any credible information pertaining to any crime or illegal activities to their nearest Police Station or over phone No.100, 112 & 03192-273344. The identity of the informers will be kept secret. there was a need to deal sternly with the menace. "We have to deal with drug menace just like we are doing with terrorism. This action needs to be intensified and people also have to cooperate with the police," the DGP said. Earlier, Singh inaugurated the 18th Martyrs Memorial football tournament here. He said 40 teams will take part in the event organised to pay tributes to personnel who laid down their lives in the line of duty. (PTI)

Main focus will be to work harmoniously with councillors for betterment of Delhi: AAP mayoral pick Shelly Oberoi

NEW DELHI, DEC 23 --/ Working harmoniously with all councillors for betterment of the national capital will be the focus of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Aam Aadmi Party's mayoral candidate Shelly Oberoi said on Friday. Speaking to news agency PTI, Oberoi said

the AAP councillors have already started working in their respective wards and cleanliness and resolving the garbage menace in the city is their primary focus. "My main focus in MCD will be to work harmoniously with all the councillors for betterment of the city. We have started working in our respective wards and

resolving the garbage menace is our primary focus right now," she said. The AAP on Friday finalised six names as its candidates for various MCD posts, including that of mayor and deputy mayor, with Oberoi emerging as the choice for the top post in the civic body. Oberoi, 39, won the civic body polls from East

Patel Nagar ward -- considered to be the home turf of former Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta. The mayoral candidate of the AAP is a visiting faculty at Delhi University and had studied management from IIM, Kozhikode. She has been associated with the AAP since 2014 and also remained the vice president of party's Mahila Morcha in 2020. The AAP's deputy mayor candidate is Aaley Mohammad Iqbal, son of AAP MLA Shoaib Iqbal. The four names shortlisted for Standing Committee are Raminder Kaur, Sarika Chaudhary, Mohini Jeenwal and Mohd Aamil Malik. On December 7, the AAP won the MCD polls with 134 seats, ending the 15-year rule of the BJP in the municipal corporation and reducing the Congress to just nine seats in a house of 250. (PTI)

Umar Khalid released from prison on interim bail for a week

NEW DELHI, DEC 23 --/ Former Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) student Umar Khalid was released from the Tihar jail here on Friday after he was granted interim bail for a week to attend his sister's wedding, officials said. According to prison officials, Khalid was released on Friday morning. Additional sessions judge Amitabh Rawat granted the relief

to Khalid, who was arrested in a case related to the February 2020 northeast Delhi riots. Khalid has been granted bail till December 30. The former student leader had moved an application seeking interim bail for two weeks to attend his sister's wedding. Khalid was booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and provisions of the

Indian Penal Code for allegedly being a mastermind of the February 2020 riots, which had left 53 people dead and more than 700 injured. The violence had erupted during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC). Khalid was arrested by the Delhi Police in September 2020. (PTI)

OBITUARY



BORN ON: -04/06/1952 DIED ON: -22/12/2022

The Entire Mayabunder Educational Zone Shocked and mourned the sudden demises of Late. Shri. Swapan Kumar Das, Retd. Assistant Supervisor (Sports) (72 yrs.) on 22/12/2022 at 02.00 P.M in his residence Mayabunder. He was very hard working, energetic and Nobel person. The entire officials/staffs of Mayabunder Educational Zone pray to almighty for the eternal peace of the departed soul and strength to his family members.

Deputy Education Officer, Staff and Officials
Mayabunder Educational Zone

16 soldiers killed as Army truck falls into gorge in north Sikkim

Prez expresses anguish; PM, defence minister condole death of Armymen

DEEPAK SHARMA

MANGAN/ NEW DELHI, DEC 23/--/ Sixteen Indian Army personnel including three Junior Commissioned Officers were killed in a road accident when the vehicle they were travelling in fell into a gorge while negotiating a sharp turn at Zema in north Sikkim, the Army said.

It four injured soldiers have been air evacuated. There were 20 army personnel in the vehicle which tumbled 1,000 feet below from the

highway. "In a tragic road accident, involving an army truck on December 23 at Zema in north Sikkim, 16 brave-hearts of the Indian army have lost their lives," the Army said in the statement. The Army said the truck was part of a three-vehicle convoy that moved from Chatten in the morning towards Thangu. "En route at Zema, the vehicle skidded down a steep slope while negotiating a sharp turn. A rescue mission was immediately launched, and four injured soldiers have been air evacuated," the Army

said. "Unfortunately, three Junior Commissioned Officers and 13 soldiers succumbed to the injuries sustained in the accident. Indian Army stands firm with the bereaved families, at this hour of loss," it said. President Droupadi Murmu on Friday said she was anguished to learn about the death of 16 Army personnel in a road accident in Sikkim. Murmu offered heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured. "Anguished to learn about the loss of lives of brave soldiers of Indian Army in a road accident in Sikkim. My heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased. I pray for the speedy recovery of the injured," the President tweeted. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday expressed grief at the death of 16 army personnel in a road accident in Sikkim. Quoting Modi, the PMO tweeted: "Pained by the loss of lives of our brave army personnel due to a road mishap in Sikkim. Condolences to the bereaved families. May the injured recover soon." Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said he is "deeply pained" over the loss of lives of the personnel. "The nation is deeply grateful for their service and commitment. My condolences to the bereaved families. Praying for the speedy recovery of those who are injured," he said in a tweet. (With PTI inputs)



The ill-fated vehicle that fell into the gorge leading to death of 16 soldiers, at Zema, North Sikkim



Children wearing face masks attend morning assembly at their school in Jammu. Precautions are being taken at schools amid sudden spurt in COVID cases in China and some other countries

Avoid overcrowding, ensure wearing of masks in crowded places: Centre to states, UTS ahead of festive season
MoCA issues guidelines for random testing of international arriving passengers

NEW DELHI, DEC 23 /--/ Ahead of the festive season, the Centre on Friday asked states and Union territories to take measures to avoid overcrowding and ensure adequate ventilation for indoor gatherings and wearing of masks in crowded places.

In a letter to states and UTS, Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan stressed on monitoring and reporting of district-wise influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) cases in all health facilities on a regular basis for detecting the early rising trend of cases. These cases may also be tested for Covid-19, Bhushan said. Ensure higher samples for whole genome sequencing amongst positive samples of Covid-19 in the community so as to enable timely detection of new variants, if any, in the country, he wrote. "Considering the upcoming festive season and new year celebrations, there is need to put in place requisite public health measures and other arrangements to minimize risk of increase in transmission of the disease by maintaining and strengthening focus on test-track-treat-vaccination and adherence to Covid-appropriate behaviour, i.e. use of mask, hand and respiratory hygiene and adherence to physical distancing," he said. Bhushan asked the states to ensure adequate testing in all districts, maintaining the recommended share of RT-PCR and antigen tests, and take stock of existing hospital capacities in terms of bed availability, logistic requirements as well as need for re-orientation of healthcare workers in clinical management of Covid-19 to remain prepared for any surge in cases. This may be tested by conducting "dry runs" in hospitals, he said. "Covid-19 vaccination efforts need to be bolstered by creating community awareness. Special focus on increasing the coverage of 'precaution dose' is required by all states and UTS. "In terms of preparedness for upcoming festivities, it is essential that all measures are put in place with relevant stakeholders like event organisers, business owners, market associations, etc. to avoid overcrowding, ensure adequate ventilation especially in indoor settings, wearing of masks in such places where crowds congregate," the health secretary said in the letter. Bhushan also stressed on effective compliance of the detailed operational guidelines for revised surveillance strategy for Covid-19 as shared by the Union ministry. It deserves mention here that with random coronavirus testing of international arriving passengers set to start from Saturday, the ministry of civil aviation has said that airlines' crew members will have to bring such identified passengers to the testing facility at the airport. Against the backdrop of rising coronavirus cases in China and some other parts of the world, the government has decided to subject 2 per cent of the passengers arriving on international flights to random coronavirus test starting from Saturday morning. In a communication on Friday, the ministry said that airlines are required to direct their crew members to lead and bring identified two per cent of international arriving passengers to the testing facility at the airport. "The airport operators would create necessary infrastructure to facilitate random testing of international arriving passengers at their respective airports," the communication said. (PTI)

Bharat Biotech's intranasal Covid vaccine as a booster approved by Govt, to be available on Co-WIN

NEW DELHI, DEC 23 /--/ Bharat Biotech's intranasal Covid vaccine has been approved by the Union health ministry as a booster dose for those aged 18 years and above and is likely to be introduced on the Co-WIN platform Friday evening, official sources said. The needle-free vaccine will be available at private hospitals as of now and can be administered as a precaution dose to adults who have been vaccinated with two doses of either Covishield or Covaxin. It is likely to be rolled out in the national Covid vaccination programme soon, they said. The ministry's approval for the intranasal vaccine as a booster comes amid a spurt in Covid cases in China and some other countries. The nasal vaccine -- BBV154 -- had received approval of the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) in November for restricted use in an emergency situation for those above 18 years as a heterologous



booster dose. "The vaccine branded as iNOVACC is likely to be introduced on the Co-WIN platform Friday evening onwards. For now, it will be available in private hospitals," an official source said. "Intranasal vaccine is another example of India's research and development prowess in the vaccine development arena. Secondly, it is easy to administer and builds up immune barriers in the respiratory tract through which respiratory viruses enter the body. (PTI)

Mamata likely to visit Tripura in first week of Jan

AGARTALA, DEC 23 /--/ Chief minister Mamata Banerjee is likely to visit Tripura in the first week of January, TMC state president Pijush Kanti Biswas said on Friday.

Assembly elections are due in Tripura in February, and Banerjee's visit will be part of the party's effort to fuel its campaign in the North-Eastern state. "Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee is arriving in the state in the first week of January, tentatively. During the visit, she will offer prayer at the Tripureswari temple and address a workers' conference. She will also interact with the press," Biswas said, addressing a press conference at the state party headquarters here.



Mamata will be accompanied by her nephew Abhishek Banerjee, who is the party's national general secretary, Biswas said. "Mamata Banerjee will not address any public rally during this visit. However, she will address public meetings once the party's campaign for Assembly elections begin," he said. A few ministers from West Bengal are also likely to visit the state in the coming weeks, the TMC state president added. (PTI)

Parliament's Winter session ends early amid demands for discussion on Tawang clash
Cong says Govt ran away from debate, Centre hits back

NEW DELHI, DEC 23 /--/ The Winter session of Parliament concluded on Friday, six days ahead of schedule, with Opposition members forcing repeated adjournments in the final days over their demand for a discussion on the border issue with China.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge accused the government of running away from a debate on issues such as Chinese transgressions, inflation and unemployment and said this shows its "governance failure". He also alleged the Modi government is "rattled" by the "immense support" the Bharat Jodo Yatra is getting, and is finding excuses to stop it. Chairing a meeting of top leaders on ways to strengthen the organisation and to take forward the party's soon-to-be launched outreach initiative as a follow-up to the Yatra, Kharge said the Opposition put forward 16 major issues during the Winter Session but the Modi government did not agree to hold a debate on even one of them.

The entire Opposition kept demanding a discussion on national security, inflation, unemployment but the government "kept running away", giving one fabricated excuse after the other. "One thing is definitely worth noting that whether it is the question of China's transgressions or providing employment to the youth, whether it is the rising inflation or any other important issue related to people, the government could not answer on any one of them," the Congress president said. The government launched a counter-attack against the Opposition for disrupting

parliamentary proceedings, demanding a discussion on the China border row, and said it was "unfortunate and uncalled for" since the Congress-led UPA dispensation had taken a similar stand on such issues.

Speaking to reporters, parliamentary affairs minister Pralhad Joshi said the UPA government in July 2013 and January 2014 had refused to accept a request from Opposition parties for a discussion on China, citing the sensitivity of the matter. "It is unfortunate and uncalled for that the opposition disrupted Parliament on this issue. When in power they had not allowed a discussion on the issue," Joshi asserted. On July 24, 2013, the UPA government turned down a request for Short Duration Discussion under Rule 193 moved by BJP's Murli Manohar Joshi and 10 other MPs on the subject of "violation of the Line of Control by Chinese and Pakistani army", the minister said.

Earlier in day, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla in his valedictory address said the productivity of the House was 97 per cent during the 13 sittings which saw passage of seven bills, including the supplementary demands for grants and the Maritime Anti-Piracy Bill. The session began on December 7 and was originally scheduled to end on December 29. However, members requested the government and the presiding officers of both the House to end the proceedings early citing the festive season and New Year celebrations ahead. In both the Houses, Opposition members pressed for discussion on the border issue with China, which was turned down by presiding officers. (PTI)

Charles Sobhraj: Wily and ruthless Serpent' out of jail

NEW DELHI, DEC 23/--/ On Friday, Charles Sobhraj was released from a prison in Nepal, adding another chapter to the life and times of the slight, suave killer whose escapades and chilling MO confounded perhaps even the most inventive criminal mind.

At 78, the French national of Indian-Vietnamese descent is now ailing, his name ringing a distant bell even for those not familiar with headlines of the time or the several reel versions detailing his life. Sobhraj, the stuff of reams of journalistic articles, books and film and TV scripts, has several monikers. "Bikini Killer" because of what some of his victims were wearing when he killed them and the "Serpent" from his various jail breaks being just two of them. Suspected to have killed over 20 western backpackers across Asia in the 1970s and 1980s, he had been serving a life-term in Kathmandu jail since 2003 for the murder of American woman Connie Jo Bronzich in 1975 in Nepal. More than a decade later, in 2014, he was convicted of killing Laurent Carriere, a Canadian backpacker and Bronzich's companion, and given a second life sentence.

"I can escape at will. I can rob at will. I can live exactly as I want," the man once counted among Asia's biggest law breakers is believed to have said according to the book "The Life and Crimes of Charles

Sobhraj" by Richard Neville. Sobhraj was born in Saigon in former French Indochina (present-day Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam). Sobhraj's troubled childhood led him to take to petty crimes early in his life, according to several published accounts. Sobhraj, believed to turn on his charm when he met women in particular, was initially jailed in Paris in the 1960s for crimes such as burglary and theft. This was also the time he decided to marry his first wife Chantal Compagnon, a young and wealthy Parisian girl.

Many years later, in a Nepal prison in 2008, Sobhraj married Nihita Biswas, 44 years his junior and the daughter of his Nepalese lawyer. Dr Raamesh Koirala who treated Sobhraj in Nepal writes about the Chantal-Charles romance in his book "Charles Sobhraj: Inside the Heart of the Bikini Killer". What followed were a spree of murders and frequent run-ins with law enforcement agencies of several countries, including Greece, France, India, Thailand, Nepal and Malaysia.

Before turning to murder, preying on Western tourists on the 1970s hippie trail and triggering an international manhunt that put him at the top of Interpol's most wanted list, Sobhraj was a consummate con artist who would smuggle drugs and guns across Asia and rob wealthy associates. Sobhraj is known to use

his good looks to his advantage and mastered the distinctive art of 'befriend-rob-kill' -- his favoured pattern to attack his targets. In July 1976, his crimes finally began to catch up with him. This was when Sobhraj and his accomplice were arrested for trying to poison over 30 engineering students in a hotel lobby in New Delhi, India.

During the police investigation, it was found that he had also killed a French tourist. He was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment in Tihar prison for various crimes. However,



more than his series of criminal activities, it was his dramatic jailbreak at the highly-guarded Tihar jail in 1986 that hogged headlines across the world -- and the cult of the notorious murderer continued to grow. He executed the great escape by drugging security guards, whom he had served sweets on the pretext of celebrating his birthday. He was soon caught in a restaurant in Goa and was returned to the jail where he was lodged till 1997.

Former Tihar Jail law officer Sunil Gupta remembers Sobhraj as someone who would make special efforts to dress up when he had to meet women advocates but rather casual in his attire when he had a meeting with their male counterparts. "Whenever he was supposed to meet any female guest, be it a lawyer or anybody else, he used to make extra effort to dress up properly, apply perfume and look handsome," Gupta told PTI. Many believe Sobhraj escaped Tihar to evade his extradition to Thailand where he awaited a death sentence on the charges of drugging and killing six women on a beach in Pattaya. He served another decade at Tihar from 1986 onwards. During this time, his Thai arrest warrant expired. Released from India in 1997, Sobhraj went back to France but was spotted in Nepal in 2003 when he began his prolonged jail sentence that ended on Friday. (PTI)

In a first, 'Toy Fair' held at Primary School NayaShahar

From page-1

The beautifully made toys reflect the interest of the children and the skills and interest should be applied to achieve the defined learning outcomes. Smti Sangeeta Chand called upon the teachers to use the toys as teaching learning materials in the classrooms to make their teaching more effective. Earlier, welcoming the guests the Headmaster In-charge of the school, Mr. Durayodhan Rao informed that the response of the parents has been very encouraging and they devoted their time to guide the children to make beautiful and useful things. The Chairperson of the School Management committee, Smti Monika Bairagi, School heads of Manglutan, Guptapara, and Manjeeri schools, Public representatives from panchayat and other Government departments were also present in the fair.

N Korea fires ballistic missiles after US-S Korea drills

SEOUL, DEC 23/--/North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles toward its eastern waters on Friday, its latest weapons demonstration that came days after US and South Korean warplanes conducted joint drills that North Korea views as an invasion rehearsal.

North Korea has conducted an unprecedented number of missile tests this year in what some experts call an attempt to bolster its weapons capability and pressure its rivals to make concessions such as sanctions relief in future negotiations. Recently, the North also claimed to have performed major tests needed to acquire its first spy satellite and a more mobile intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the US mainland.

South Korea's military detected the two missile launches from North Korea's capital region at around 4:32 pm on Friday.

Japan said it also confirmed at least one missile launch by North Korea.

It wasn't immediately clear exactly what kinds of missiles North Korea fired. South Korea's military said the missiles travelled about 250 kilometres (155 miles) and 350 kilometres (220 miles) respectively before landing in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

Japanese Vice Defence Minister Toshiro Ino said that one missile detected by Japan flew as far as 300 kilometres (180 miles) at a maximum altitude of 50 kilometres (30 miles). He said that missile might have showed an "irregular" trajectory, a possible reference to North Korea's highly maneuverable, nuclear-capable KN-23 missile, which was modeled on Russia's Iskander missile.

South Korea's military called the launches "a grave provocation" that hurts international peace. It said

South Korea will maintain a firm readiness and closely monitor North Korean moves in coordination with the United States.

Ino also accused North Korea of significantly raising tensions with repeated weapons tests.

The launches could be a response to the US-South Korean aerial military exercises near the Korean Peninsula on Tuesday, as North Korea has said its torrid run of testing activities in past months were meant as a warning over its rivals' previous combined drills.

Washington and Seoul have said their drills are defensive in nature, but North Korea calls them practice for an invasion.

The latest US-South Korean drills drew B-52 nuclear-capable bombers and F-22 stealth fighter jets from the United States and other advanced warplanes from South Korea.

The training was part of a bilateral agreement on

boosting a US commitment to defend its Asian ally with all available military capabilities, including nuclear, according to South Korea's Defence Ministry.

The F-22 jets were supposed to stay in South Korea for more joint drills this week with the South Korean air force, but the US aircraft eventually returned to their base in Japan due to weather conditions, South Korean defense officials said. The aerial drills came after North Korea said it used old missiles as launch vehicles to test cameras and other systems on Sunday for the development of its first military reconnaissance satellite. Its state media also published low-resolution photos of South Korean cities as viewed from space.

Some civilian experts in South Korea said the photos were too crude for surveillance purposes and that the launches were likely a cover for tests of North Korea's missile

technology.

South Korea's military has maintained North Korea fired two medium-range ballistic missiles.

Such assessments have infuriated North Korea, with the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un issuing crude insults of unidentified South Korean experts. Kim Yo Jong said there was no reason to use an expensive, high-resolution camera for a single-shot test.

Kim Yo Jong also scoffed at South Korea's previous assessment that North Korea still has technological hurdles to overcome to acquire functioning ICBMs that can launch nuclear strikes on the US homeland such as the ability to protect its warheads from the harsh conditions of atmospheric reentry.

To prove the North's ICBM capability, she suggested that North Korea might carry out a standard-trajectory ICBM launch.

All of the North's previous ICBM launches were made at a steep angle to avoid neighbouring countries. A normal-angle ICBM launch could sharply inflame regional animosities and trigger a strong response from the US as the weapon would fly toward the Pacific Ocean.

A spy satellite and a solid-fuelled ICBM are among the high-tech weapons systems that Kim Jong Un has vowed to introduce to cope with what he calls US hostility. Other weapons systems he wants to procure include missiles with multi-warheads, underwater-launched nuclear missiles, nuclear-powered submarines and hypersonic missiles.

Last week, North Korea tested a "high-thrust solid-fuel motor" that experts say would be used for a solid-fuelled missile, which is more agile and harder to detect before launches than liquid-fuelled weapons. (AP)

Scotland votes to lower age to legally change gender; London mulls options to block law

LONDON, DEC 23/--/The devolved Scottish government has voted in favour of lowering the age when people can apply to legally change their gender from 18 to 16, prompting a clash with the Westminster government in London which is weighing up its options to step in to block the controversial law.

The Scottish Parliament on Thursday evening voted 86 votes to 39 to pass the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill and also to remove the need for a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria.

The controversial self-identification system would make it easier for people to obtain a gender recognition certification (GRC), which critics warn could put vulnerable people at risk.

The UK government can technically prevent the legislation from becoming law by blocking Royal Assent, which is the process by which a Bill gets formal agreement by the British monarch and becomes an Act of the Scottish Parliament.

"The UK government is now looking at provisions that can prompt reconsideration and allow MSPs [members of the Scottish Parliament] to address these issues," UK Minister for Women and Equalities Kemi Badenoch said in a statement.

Under UK law, it can apply to have Scottish laws struck down by arguing they would conflict with UK-wide equalities legislation.

This power has not been used before.

"We will look closely at that, and also the ramifications for the 2010 Equality Act and other UK-wide legislation, in the coming weeks up to and including a Section 35 order stopping the Bill going for Royal Assent if necessary," said Scottish Secretary Alister Jack.

However, a spokesperson for the Scottish government warned that any attempt by the UK "to undermine the democratic will of the Scottish Parliament will be vigorously contested".

Scotland First Secretary Nicola Sturgeon, whose Scottish National Party (SNP) has largely been in favour of the reform, said that she would "never apologise for trying to spread equality, not reduce it, in our country".

The Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill's opponents, also including nine SNP MSPs who voted against it, have fears over its potential impact on women and girls, in particular single-sex spaces, like toilets.

The Scottish government insists little will change and exceptions barring trans people from single-sex space in some circumstances in the Equality Act will stand. (PTI)

Travellers warned of delays as UK passport staff go on strike

LONDON, DEC 23/--/International travellers arriving at UK airports have been warned of long delays as Border Force staff who check passports begin a series of strikes over better pay and working conditions on Friday.

More than 1,000 employees have walked out, affecting passport control desks at Heathrow, Gatwick, Birmingham, Cardiff, Manchester, and Glasgow airports, as well as the port of Newhaven in East Sussex.

The strike will last until early on Monday, before another round of strike action from December 28 until early on December 31.

Military personnel and volunteers will be standing in for the striking workers and the UK Home Office, which is responsible for the Border Force, has drafted in officials from other departments as a contingency workforce.

More than 10,000 flights are scheduled to land at those airports during those times and around 250,000 passengers arriving on Friday are expected to face delays.

The affected airports have indicated that most departing flights should not be affected, with only some arriving passengers particularly those who cannot use e-Gates facing delays.

Meanwhile, Royal Mail postal employees will also be on strike on Friday, their fifth day of industrial action this month.

It has been estimated that the strike, which will continue on Saturday, has already cost Royal Mail around GBP 100 million.

National Highways workers in London and the south east of England will continue their four-day walkout that started on Thursday.

It marks part of what has been dubbed a winter of discontent as workers across different sectors are taking industrial action as their unions seek pay rises in line with the rate of inflation to help cope with an ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

Rail workers represented by the RMT union will begin strike from Saturday evening until December 27 with a few other services also impacted.

Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency employees will strike on Friday and Saturday in northwest England, and Yorkshire and the Humber, with more strike action expected in other regions over coming weeks.

Many bus drivers in south and west London are planning a strike on Saturday and two further days this month, before a further eight days in January in their pay dispute. Earlier this week, state-funded National Health Service (NHS) staff were on strike, with nurses walking out on Tuesday and ambulance workers following them on Wednesday.

The government has refused to negotiate on pay with public sector workers, insisting it is accepting recommendations from independent pay review bodies and pay rises would make the inflation crisis worse. (PTI)

Ukraine president back in Kyiv, Russia keeps up attacks

KYIV, DEC 23/--/ Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy sounded another defiant note on his return to his nation's capital on Friday following his wartime visit to the United States, saying his forces are "working toward victory" even as Russia launched new strikes across the country. Zelenskyy posted on his Telegram account that he's in his Kyiv office following his US trip that secured a new USD 1.8 billion military aid package, and pledged that "we'll overcome everything."

Zelenskyy's return comes amid relentless Russian artillery, rocket and mortar fire as well as airstrikes on the eastern and southern fronts and elsewhere in Ukraine. Moscow repeated that there would be no end to the war until its military objectives are achieved. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the war would end at the negotiating table once the "special military operation" achieves "the goals that the Russian Federation has set," adding that "a significant headway has been made on demilitarisation of Ukraine."

The Kremlin spokesman said no reported Ukrainian peace plan can succeed without taking into account "the realities of today that can't be ignored," a reference to Moscow's demand that Ukraine recognises Russia's sovereignty over the Crimea Peninsula, which was annexed in 2014, as well as other territorial gains. Peskov said Russian President Vladimir Putin would on Friday visit a weapons factory in Tula, about 150 kilometres (90 miles) south of Moscow, and chair a meeting on the country's arms industry there. The Ukrainian military said Russian forces fired multiple rocket launchers "more than 70 times" across Ukrainian territory overnight, while fierce battles raged around the city of Bakhmut in the eastern Donetsk region where regional Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said four people were killed and seven others were wounded over the past day.

The General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces said Bakhmut and Lyman in the neighbouring Luhansk region as well as the front line between the Luhansk and Kharkiv regions bore the brunt of the Russian strikes, but didn't specify to what degree. In the Kherson region, as many as 61 Russian rocket, artillery and mortar fire attacks over the past 24 hours killed one person and wounded two others. Kherson regional Gov. Yaroslav Yanushevych posted on Telegram that Russian forces attacked from dug-in positions on the right bank of the Dnieper river, hitting educational institutions, apartment blocks and private homes. In the eastern Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk regions, Ukraine's military said Russia launched six missile strikes and as many air attacks on civilian targets while Ukrainian forces repelled Russian ground attacks on or near 19 settlements in the north and east. Russian shelling overnight also struck a district hospital in the northeastern city of Volchansk, Kharkiv region, wounding five people, according to local Gov Oleh Syniehubov. Syniehubov posted on Telegram that the four men and one woman were all in "moderate condition." (AP)

In our 'profound interest' that China reins in latest surge in coronavirus infections: Blinken

WASHINGTON, DEC 23/--/It is in America's "profound interest" that China reins in the recent surge in coronavirus infections, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said, asserting that there are major implications if the world's second-largest economy remained shut down due to the virus. China's stringent zero-COVID policy deployed mass testing and strict quarantine measures, which were revised earlier this month in the wake of mass anti-government protests. Several Chinese cities endured lengthy lockdowns, often prompted by a handful of infections and there were indications that people were starting to run out of patience. Experts are now predicting a difficult time ahead, with a grim prediction that close to 2 million deaths due to the virus by next year.

When asked about the latest surge in COVID-19 cases in China, Blinken said the US wants to see China get this outbreak under control for three reasons. "First, we don't want to see people anywhere suffering from COVID. Whether it's illness, whether it's death, we want to see that come to an end wherever it's happening, including in China," Blinken said, while addressing his year-end news conference here on Thursday. "Second, any time the virus is spreading or is moving around, there is the possibility that a new variant develops, that variant spreads even further, and it comes and hits us or hits other countries around the world. So, we have a clear interest in that," he noted. "And then, as we've seen, there are clear implications for the global economy with China being shut down because of COVID. So on all of those levels a basic humanitarian level, the concern for everyone's health, as well as for the global economy it's profoundly in our interest that China do what's necessary to get ahead of this," he asserted. Blinken said the US, which is the largest donor of Covid-19 vaccines in the world, was prepared to continue its support to people around the world, including China. "China has not asked to date for that help, but, again, we're fully prepared to provide assistance to anyone who asks for it if they think it's useful," he added. (PTI)



Passengers wait to check in for the first direct flight between Shanghai and Athens at Athens International Airport, Greece

Molnupiravir does not cut deaths in high risk Covid patients: Lancet study

LONDON, DEC 23/--/Using the antiviral drug molnupiravir does not decrease deaths or hospital admissions among COVID-19 patients who are vaccinated and at higher risk of mortality, according to a study published in The Lancet journal. The trial with over 25,000 participants, however, suggests that patients taking molnupiravir recovered faster -- on average 4.2 days quicker -- compared to patients in the control group. Previous studies suggested that molnupiravir is effective at reducing hospital admissions in patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 and WHO recommends its use for patients with the highest risk of hospital admission. However, studies have so far been conducted in largely unvaccinated populations and prior to the emergence of the Omicron variant.

The new study was carried out in a vaccinated population where most COVID-19 infections were the Omicron variant. Molnupiravir is one of the more expensive antivirals used to treat COVID-19, with a seven-day course costing around USD 700 in the US. Molnupiravir was sent directly to the trial participants and was able to be taken orally at home. "Although this trial found no benefit from molnupiravir treatment on its primary outcome -- which hypothesised that treatment with molnupiravir for vaccinated, at-risk patients would reduce the likelihood of hospitalisation or death - the trial suggests that this treatment could have other benefits when being used to treat COVID-19, such as a faster recovery time and reduced follow up with health services," said lead author, Professor Chris Butler, from the University of Oxford, UK.

The study included 25,708 participants over the age of 18 (average age 57 years) with a higher risk of death or hospitalisation from COVID-19 infection from health centres across the UK.

Patients were considered at higher risk of hospitalisation or death if they were aged 50

years or older -- or aged 18 years or older with relevant underlying health conditions. Patients had a confirmed Omicron COVID-19 infection and were unwell for five days or less before beginning treatment. The results represent outcomes for patients treated between December 8, 2021 and April 27, 2022, during the peak of the Omicron wave in the UK.

Approximately half the patients in the trial (12,774 people) received 800mg molnupiravir twice daily for five days, which was taken at home, in addition to standard care. The control half of the trial (12,934 people) received standard care only.

There was no benefit observed in hospitalisation or death rates between the molnupiravir group and the control group, the study found. In the group treated with molnupiravir there were 105 cases of death or hospitalisation (0.8 per cent), while in the control group there were 98 cases of death or hospitalisation (0.8 per cent). (PTI)

Authorities say 2 dead, 4 wounded in Paris shooting; 69-year-old suspect in custody

PARIS, DEC 23/--/A shooting in central Paris on Friday left 2 dead and 4 wounded, authorities said. One person was arrested.

The reason for the shooting wasn't immediately clear.

Police cordoned off the area in the 10th arrondissement of the French capital, and the Paris police department warned people to stay away from the area. It said one person was arrested, without providing details.

An emergency services official said multiple people were wounded, without elaborating. The official wasn't authorized to be publicly named. (AP)

One police constable, two TTP militants killed in suicide attack in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD, DEC 23/--/ One police officer and two suspected militants, including a woman of the dreaded Pakistani Taliban outfit, were killed in a suicide attack here on Friday, prompting authorities in Pakistan to issue a "red alert" across the federal capital.

The incident took place in Sector I-10/4 in Islamabad's upscale residential area, located barely 15km away from the garrison city of Rawalpindi, where Pakistan's powerful military establishment is located.

"The bomber,

accompanied by a female and driving an explosive-laden vehicle was stopped by police for checking," Deputy Inspector General of Police Sohail Zafar Chattha told the media.

"When the police stopped the vehicle, the couple came out. The long-haired man, while being checked by the officers went inside the vehicle and detonated himself," he said.

The female militant was also died in the blast, police said.

Television footage showed a burning vehicle as police officers cordoned off the area after the explosion.

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Mohammad Khalid Khurasani, the TTP spokesman said in a statement its militants carried out the suicide attack to avenge the killing of senior leader Abdul Wali, who was killed in a roadside bombing in August in Afghanistan's Paktika province.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said that the vehicle was "loaded with explosives" aimed at striking at high-value targets in Islamabad.

Elaborating on the

casualties, the minister said one police officer was killed and six others injured.

Following the blast, Islamabad police issued orders for a "security red alert" across the city.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has condemned the incident and sought a report from security officials.

"Due to the timely action of the law enforcement agencies, the nefarious plan of terrorists to shed the blood of innocent people has been foiled," Prime Minister Sharif said in a statement.

The TTP has stepped up attacks on security forces

since November, when they ended a monthslong cease-fire with the Pakistan government.

The latest attack in Pakistan's federal capital comes days after an arrested TTP militant, who was being interrogated at the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) police station inside the Bannu Cantonment, snatched an AK-47 from the police and opened fire.

He then freed other wanted militants being held at the building and together they took control of the compound.

The TTP is believed to

be close to al-Qaeda, has been blamed for several deadly attacks across Pakistan, including an attack on army headquarters in 2009, assaults on military bases, and the 2008 bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad.

In 2014, the Pakistani Taliban stormed the Army Public School (APS) in the northwestern city of Peshawar, killing at least 150 people, including 131 students.

The attack sent shockwaves across the world and was widely condemned. (PTI)



Sam Curran shatters records as all-rounders hit jackpot

Shivam Mavi, Mayank Agarwal, Mukesh Kumar hit jackpot

MUMBAI, DEC 23/--/ The Indian Premier League 2023 mini-auction is set to take place in Kochi on Friday (December 23). A total of 405 have been will go under the hammer but only 87 of them will get the slots remaining among the 10 teams ahead the 2023 season. With names like Kane Williamson, Joe Root, Ben Stokes and many more talented cricketers from India available in this auction, it will surely be an exciting one for the fans. The auction will be conducted by Hugh Edmeades, the veteran auctioneer who got ill during the event last year in the IPL 2022 mega auction. CSK are in search for a captain, KKR in search of winners, RCB looking for bowlers, MI looking for Pollard's replacement and many more topics we cannot explain until the auction begins. The yearly extravaganza of the

Indian Premier League (IPL) Auction 2023 concluded with franchises shattering some all-time records. England all-rounder Sam Curran hit the jackpot, fetching INR 18.50 crore from Punjab Kings. Curran's international teammate Ben Stokes also bagged a whopping deal from Chennai Super Kings, who splashed INR 16.25 crore for the all-rounder's services. Overseas all-rounders were expected to fetch big deals in the auction and that certainly happened. Even Australia's Cameron Green, who displayed his attacking ability on the last tour of India, became the second-most-expensive buy in IPL auction history, going to Mumbai Indians for INR 17.50 crore. Among the uncapped Indian players, Shivam Mavi turned a few heads as Gujarat Titans spent a whopping INR 6 crore for his services. The pacer has been playing for the



Kolkata Knight Riders for a few seasons but didn't quite manage to make the step up. But, the Titans remained keen on availing his services despite topsy-turvy performances in previous seasons. Among the capped Indians, former Punjab Kings captain Mayank Agarwal received the biggest bid of all. He was bought by Sunrisers Hyderabad Rs. 8.25 crore. With the Sunrisers also being without a captain, having let go of Kane Williamson, Mayank could be given the responsibility to lead the franchise. Uncapped Indian Mukesh Kumar, who was the net bowler for Delhi Capitals last season, got a fat paycheck. With his skills, Mukesh is expected to be used diligently in the powerplays in the next season. Chennai Super Kings, who are known to put their faith in veterans, bought Ajinkya Rahane for his base price of Rs. 50 lakh.

Magnificent Pant, steady Iyer put India in command in second Test

MIRPUR, DEC 23 --/ Rishabh Pant enhanced his reputation of being team's biggest game-changer with a scintillating 93 that put India in a commanding position for a series clean sweep against Bangladesh, here Friday. Pant, who got out in the 90s for the sixth time in his Test career, again brought his 'A' game to the fore with a counter-attacking knock that formed the cornerstone of India's first innings score of 314 on the second day of the second Test. Between the lunch and the tea, the match which seemed to be hanging in balance was single-handedly changed by Pant, whose 104-ball innings had seven fours and five huge sixes -- a few of them were one-handed lofted shots. Shreyas Iyer, who has been consistent since his Test debut last year, also batted with a lot of intent but missed his second hundred of the series, getting out for 87 off 105 balls. Riding on the 159-run fifth wicket stand between Pant and Iyer, India, who were tottering at 94 for four, will fancy their chances for a fourth-day finish and consolidate their position in the World Test Championship table.



Trailing by 87 runs, Bangladesh were seven for no loss at stumps on Day 2. The batting will only get difficult on the third day and playing Ravichandran Ashwin and Axar Patel on this track will be a Herculean task. "I love and thrive under challenges. Pressure lifts me, that's the situation I wanted to be in. Pant kept me calm and composed. It was crucial," Iyer said after day's play. Asked further about his conversation with Pant, Iyer said, "It wasn't an intense chat. I didn't want to disturb his focus. We tried to communicate with actions, he maintained calm and targeted the right bowlers." The morning session belonged to Bangladesh's left-arm spinner Taijul Islam (4/74), who rocked the top-order by dismissing skipper KL Rahul (10), Shubman Gill (20) and Cheteshwar Pujara (24) but by the end of afternoon session, Pant had blown the hosts away. It only helped Iyer at the other end, who was equally aggressive and a surface that looked difficult to bat on suddenly appear to be a willow wielder's paradise. Pant literally manhandled the Bangladeshi spin troika by smashing five sixes -- two off Taijul, a couple off Mehidy Hasan Miraz and one off skipper Shakib Al

Hasan. The visitors were in trouble at 94 for four when Virat Kohli (24, 73 balls) once again nicked one off Taskin Ahmed outside the off-stump channel before Pant propelled the Indian innings. But Taijul was made to look pedestrian by the maverick keeper-batter from Rourkee. Pant hammered Taijul into submission by repeatedly dancing down the track and carting him either in the arc between the mid-wicket and long-on or by lofting him down the ground. The most exhilarating one was a one-handed down-the-ground shot off rival captain Shakib. And it was not at all surprising when he repeated the stuff off Miraz over long-on for a 100-metre long maximum. The Bangladeshi bowlers, who were pumped up at the lunch break, had drooped shoulders by the time tea was called. Pant's beast mode did rub off on Iyer as he also lofted Miraz for his first six and duly completed his second half-century of the series with a single. By the time, Pant nicked one to Nurul Hasan behind the stumps, missing out on yet another Test hundred, he was completely done and

didn't come out to keep after experiencing cramps. Earlier, having misread the track on day one, Rahul paid the price for his ultra defensive mindset on a pitch that offered fair bit of turn on the opening day itself. Not for once during his 45-ball stay did he look comfortable, save the cover driven boundary off a seamer at the start of the day. Gill, on the other end, looked more assured even as Taijul kept his deliveries on good length and bowled a nice trajectory. The delivery that got Rahul, seemed like an armer that came in with the angle and then straightened enough to trap him in front of the wickets. Umpire had dismissed the LBW plea but Bangladesh got the decision in their favour after taking DRS review. In case of Gill, it was more of a straightforward decision where he was caught plumb as he missed a straighter one while attempting a sweep shot. Pujara looked assured till the time he was at the crease but with the deliveries stopping and turning, there was always the danger of negotiating that ball which would send him back. (PTI)

GAME NOTES

Hero of 1966
World Cup George
Cohen dead at 83

LONDON, DEC 23 --/ George Cohen, the right-back in England's 1966 World Cup-winning team, has died aged 83, his former club Fulham announced Friday. The 37-times capped



defender played every minute of the victorious campaign on home soil that culminated in a 4-2 extra-time win over the then West Germany to give England their first -- and so far only -- football World Cup title. "Everyone at Fulham Football Club is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of one of our greatest ever players -- and gentlemen -- George Cohen MBE," said a statement on the London club's website. Cohen spent his entire career with Fulham, playing 459 games for the Cottagers from 1956-1969 before a knee injury cut short his career at 29. (AFP)

FIFA reviews chef's
'undue access' to hold
World Cup trophy

ZURICH, DEC 23 --/ FIFA is taking "appropriate internal action" to address breaches of World Cup protocol by a celebrity chef who held the gold trophy on the field, soccer's governing body said Thursday. The chef, who is known as Salt Bae and is regularly seen with FIFA president Gianni Infantino, mingled with Argentina players and posed for photos after their victory over France in an epic game on Sunday in Qatar. FIFA describes the trophy as "a priceless icon" that "can only be touched and held by a very select group of people, which includes former winners of the FIFA World Cup and heads of state." (AP)

French football president
wants Deschamps
to stay as head coach

RENNES, DEC 23 --/ The French Football Federation (FFF) president Noel Le Graet said in an interview published on Thursday he wants France coach Didier Deschamps, whose current contract expires at the end of the year, to remain in the post. Deschamps, 54, led Les Bleus to the World Cup final on Sunday, where they lost in a penalty shoot-out to Argentina, after guiding them to the trophy four years ago. Deschamps, who captained the 1998 France team to their first World Cup title, will meet with Le Graet in the north-west town of Guingamp next week to discuss extending the ex-Juventus midfielder's deal until Euro 2024. "In my opinion, we will settle it in Guingamp," Le Graet told the newspaper Ouest-France. (AFP)

Finch not surprised by big bucks attracted by Curran, Stokes and Green

KOCHI, DEC 23 --/ Australia T20 captain Aaron Finch was not surprised by the big bucks attracted Sam Curran, Ben Stokes and Cameron Green in the IPL mini-auction on Friday, saying all three are world-class rounders who can add value to their respective sides. England all-rounder Curran became the most expensive player in the history of IPL auctions after fetching a whopping Rs 18.5 crore bid from Punjab Kings. Australia all-rounder Green was second-highest earner, fetching Rs 17.5 crore bid from Mumbai Indians. England Test skipper Stokes was the third-highest gainer, fetching Rs 16.25 crore from Chennai Super Kings. "Oh, absolutely, I think Chennai have a history of going after experienced players, knowing what they want. And when you complement that with the rest of the squad, it is so balanced when you throw that world class all-rounder in there," Finch said on Star Sports show 'Cricket Live -- Auction Special'. "I think the only separation between Sam Curran, Ben Stokes and Cameron Green is Sam Curran's ability to bowl in the last five overs. His record has been unbelievable. So, that probably gives him the nod if you're going down the road of a bowling all-rounder. "But Ben Stokes, he structures out any side tremendously well because he can bat in the top four, he can bat in the top six, and you can almost bank on him to bowl four overs as well. So, that's a huge asset and I'm not surprised that all three of those guys have been paid what they have been paid there," he added. Besides, England batter Harry Brook earned a Rs 13.25 crore from Sunrisers Hyderabad. West Indies great Brian

Lara, who is the head coach of SRH, said they went for Brook keeping in mind finisher's role, a place left vacant by Nicholas Pooran in the side. "With the absence of Pooran, we were looking at someone who could finish the game for us. He is a very good batter. Harry Brook's exploits around the world has shown that he has the capability of doing it. It will be his first IPL. It will take time for him to get into the groove but the expectation is pretty high and I believe that's he's a great choice," he



said. Brook recently struck three hundreds in as many games and set new record for most runs by an England batter in a Test series in Pakistan. "First of all, he's played in Asian conditions. He just played Tests in Paksitan, he played in the Pakistan Super League. Those kind of experiences will serve him well in a place like India. I think he has that advantage," Lara said. "He also comes from a very strong and confident environment, playing Test cricket under Brendon McCullum and winning the World Cup (T20). We have somebody who is growing accustomed to winning and that's also a big asset." (PTI)

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Manifested my 1st test wicket by visualising it over 1000 times: Unadkat

MIRPUR, DEC 23 --/ He had manifested that moment in his mind by visualising it over a 1000 times and when it finally happened after 12 long years of wait, Jaydev Unadkat was both relieved and delighted after Zakir Hasan became his maiden Test wicket. Unadkat, who made his Test debut against South Africa at Centurion on December 16 in 2010, was named in the playing XI in the second Test against Bangladesh here on Thursday. On his Test debut, which happened a dozen of winters back, Unadkat had gone for more than 100 runs in 26 wicketless overs with Hashim Amla and AB de Villiers scoring hundreds and Jacques Kallis hitting a double century. "I did manifest it, I visualised it more than a 1000 times and there was a moment when I actually missed playing with the red ball," Unadkat told bcci.tv. He ended the first innings with the figures of 2/50 as India bowled out Bangladesh for 227 on the opening day. "I went blank when I took that wicket, I have visualised this moment maybe 1000 times in between when I played the first Test and now," Unadkat said. "I didn't get a wicket back then and that was the talk every time people talked about me getting an opportunity again for the Indian team." In between the two matches, Unadkat missed more than a century of Tests (118), the second highest in world cricket. (PTI)



Lionel Messi, arguably the Greatest footballer of time, made the sporting world his own as he went on to lift the FIFA World Cup title with Argentina, beating France on penalties in the final. After Messi and Argentina's triumph, celebrations erupted not just in Argentina but in all corners of the globe. Even in India, people celebrated Argentina's third World Cup triumph in extravagant fashion. While there's no denying that Messi enjoys a great fan-following in India, the 7-time Ballon d'Or winner also did his bit by sending a signed jersey to the secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Jay Shah