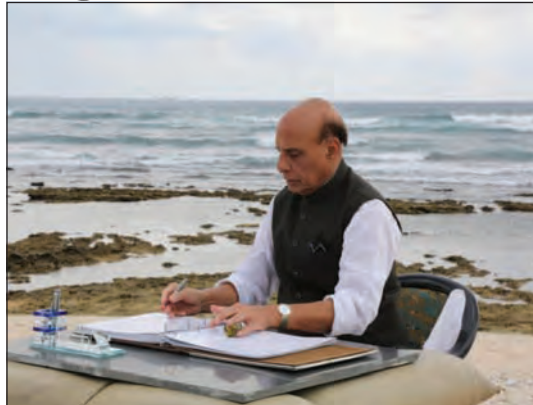


Rajnath Singh visits Indira Point



PORT BLAIR, JAN 6/--/ The Union Defence Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh accompanied by Lt General Ajai Singh AVSM, Commander-in-Chief Andaman & Nicobar Command (CINCAN) visited Campbell Bay. En-route to Campbell Bay, he was familiarised with the terrain of Southern Group of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and on arrival at Campbell Bay, he visited Indira Point, the southernmost tip of the country. Thereafter, he visited INS BaaZ and interacted with joint services troops of Andaman & Nicobar Command. The Defence Minister thereafter visited the Air Force Station at Car Nicobar and interacted with the troops, prior returning to Delhi.

MP inaugurates annual athletic meet of Govt Boys School

PORT BLAIR, JAN 6/--/ The 107th Annual Athletic Meet 2022-2023 of Boys' Senior Secondary School was organised on Friday at Boys' School campus, in which the Member of Parliament of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Mr.

Kuldeep Rai Sharma was the chief guest. The Member of Parliament declared the Annual Athletic Meet open and in his inaugural speech he said that this is a proud moment for him to attend the 107th Annual Athletic



Meet of Boys' School, which is one of the oldest schools of these Islands and has its own legacy. He said students from Boys' School have reached to the highest position in various departments and fields making the School and entire Andaman and Nicobar Islands proud. The Member of Parliament distributed prizes to students, who have excelled in various events and took salute of marching contingent. Guest of Honour of the event, DEO, South Andaman, Smti. Sangeeta Chand and Principal of Boys' Sr. Secondary School Smti. Archana Singh were also present during the ceremony.

PBGKR Provides PA System to Govt. School, Ograbraj



PORT BLAIR, JAN 6/--/ When Mr. Parminder Singh, School In-charge, GSS Ograbraj reached out to Mr. Mandeep Grewal, President, PBGKR and requested for the PA system for the students of the School and briefed him about the necessity during Annual Day/Sports Day events at the School and as it was a long pending requirement of the School. To mark and celebrate Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji Jayanti, the team PBGKR provided the PA system to

the School Incharge. Mr. Mandeep Grewal, President, PBGKR has said that his team is trying its to serve as many schools as

possible and expressed his gratitude to all those who have come forward to support PBGKR for the noble causes.

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SC clubs, transfers to itself all pleas pending before different HCs on same-sex marriages

NEW DELHI, JAN 6 --/ The Supreme Court on Friday clubbed and transferred to itself all petitions pending before different high courts seeking legal validation for same-sex marriages.

A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwalla asked the Centre to file a joint reply to the petitions by February 15 and directed their listing on March 13. The bench said any petitioner, if not available to argue physically before the court or unable to engage a counsel, or to travel to Delhi, can avail the facility of a virtual platform to join the hearing. The apex court asked the registry to provide links for virtual hearing to all parties who wish to address the court virtually. It asked advocate Kanu Agarwal, appearing for the Centre, and advocate Arundhati Katju, representing the petitioners, to file a written note on the issue, cases laws and precedents to be relied upon by the parties, if any, and share it among themselves and with the court.

The bench asked advocate Kanu Agarwal to ensure that no petitioner is left out and the details of all

petitions are incorporated in the compilations to be made. During the arguments, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the bench since a petition is ripe for hearing before the Delhi High Court, the top court could either await its verdict or transfer all the petitions to itself. The counsel for multiple



petitioners told the bench they want the apex court to transfer all the cases to itself for an authoritative pronouncement on the issue and that the Centre can file its response to the apex court.

The counsel said other than the main petition, several petitions are listed seeking transfer of cases pending in different high courts including the Delhi High Court, Gujarat High Court and Kerala High Court. On

January 3, the Supreme Court had said it will hear on January 6 the pleas seeking transfer of petitions for recognition of same-sex marriages pending before high courts to the apex court. On December 14 last year, the top court had sought a response from the Centre to two pleas seeking transfer to the apex court of the petitions pending in the Delhi High Court for directions to recognise same-sex marriages. Prior to that, on November 25 last year, the apex court had sought the response of the Union government to separate pleas by two gay couples seeking enforcement of their right to marry and a direction to the authorities to register their marriage under the Special Marriage Act.

A bench headed by CJI Chandrachud, who was also part of the Constitution bench which in 2018 decriminalised consensual gay sex, had in November last year issued notice to the Centre besides seeking the assistance of Attorney General for India R Venkataramani in dealing with the pleas. The apex court's five-judge Constitution bench, in a path-breaking unanimous judgement

delivered on September 6, 2018, held consensual sex among adult homosexuals or heterosexuals in private space is not a crime while striking down a part of the British-era penal law which criminalised it on the ground that it violated the constitutional right to equality and dignity.

The petitions on which the apex court had issued notice in November last year have sought a direction that the right to marry a person of one's choice be extended to the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) people as part of their fundamental right. One of the petitions sought interpretation of the Special Marriage Act, 1954 in a gender-neutral manner where a person is not discriminated against due to their sexual orientation. The apex court in its 2018 judgement held that Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code that criminalised consensual gay sex was "irrational, indefensible and manifestly arbitrary". It had said the 158-year old law has become an "odious weapon" to harass the LGBT community by subjecting them to discrimination and unequal treatment. (PTI)



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visiting country's southernmost tip during his visit to Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Bomb hoax in school sends police into tizzy in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, JAN 6 --/ An email about bomb planted in a private school, which later turned out to be a hoax, sent the police and the school authorities into tizzy in Bengaluru on Friday. The school located at Basaveshwara Nagar received the mail about bomb being planted in the institution. The school management informed the police, which rushed to the spot along with bomb disposal and sniffer dog squads. The students were taken out of the classrooms and were put up in a safe place, a police officer said. A detailed investigation carried out by the police revealed that it was a hoax mail and there was no truth in it, the officer said. (PTI)

Bharat Jodo Yatra beyond politics: Kamal Haasan

CHENNAI, JAN 6 --/ Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) founder Kamal Haasan on Friday said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's ongoing Bharat Jodo Yatra is a campaign that was beyond politics and stated there was a duty to 'reclaim' the country's "lost honour." Haasan had joined Gandhi in Delhi last month in the latter's pan-India foot march that started from Tamil Nadu in September last. "It is our responsibility to reclaim the lost ethos of our Bharat. This (Bharat Jodo campaign) is a yatra that is beyond politics," the actor-politician told reporters here. Haasan further said he wanted to conduct the bulltaming sport 'Jallikattu' in Chennai and that efforts were on to secure permission for the same. The aim was to ensure the city-dwellers get a glimpse of the sport's glory, he added. Jallikattu is generally held in Madurai coinciding with the harvest festival Pongal in the second week of January. (PTI)

Kharge trains guns at BJP-led Centre over inflation, unemployment Demonetisation and GST weapons to destroy small businesses: Rahul

PANIPAT, JAN 6 --/ Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge slammed the Centre on Friday over a host of issues, including inflation and unemployment, and accused it of making tall promises during election time and going back on those words after coming to power.

Addressing a rally here as part of the Congress's Bharat Jodo Yatra, Kharge said there is rising inflation and unemployment in the country but the government, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), does not seem to be bothered. Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, senior party leaders Kumari Selja, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, K C Venugopal, Shaktisinh Gohil, Kiran Choudhary and D K Shivakumar were among those present at the rally. Kharge said Rahul has led the Bharat Jodo Yatra for more than 3,000 kilometres so far. The foot march reached Haryana from Uttar Pradesh on Thursday evening. The Congress chief said essential items of use have gone out of the common man's reach because of the rising inflation.

"In 45 years, unemployment was never so high. Educated youngsters, including those with degrees in engineering and medicine are without jobs, but (Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister) Amit Shahji are not worried about them. "They have no concern for youngsters, the economic condition or inflation. Only elections are on their mind," Kharge said while accusing the BJP of misusing central agencies to target the Opposition. He said the Congress came to power in several states under Gandhi's leadership, but the saffron party allegedly used

tactics to bring down those democratically-elected governments. "Then they say they believe in democracy," the Congress chief said. "They take the god's name and spread such lies. This is a government of lies. It had promised two crore jobs every year. Did you get those jobs? It had promised to put Rs 15 lakh in everyone's bank account. Did you get that," the Congress president asked the crowd.

Kharge pointed out that in poll-bound Tripura, Shah has talked about the inauguration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. "Who are you to say so? Are you the pujari or mahant of the Ram temple?" Kharge said targeting the home minister. He hit out at the BJP-led Centre for making tall promises and going back on those words later. Kharge accused the saffron party of indulging in divisive and vote-bank politics and asserted that the Congress stands to protect the interests of all sections of the society. Former party president Rahul Gandhi said there are two Indias under Prime Minister Narendra Modi -- one of labourers, farmers and the unemployed, and the second of around 100 people who hold half of the country's wealth. Addressing the rally, he said 90 per cent of profits are in the hands of 20 companies while the common man has nothing.

Rahul also hit out at the Centre over the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and demonetisation which he said were "weapons" to destroy small and medium businesses. The Congress leader asked the crowd at the rally what the population of the country is and pat came the reply: "140 crore". He

further asked how many people are seated on the stage and the crowd replied, "100". "I want to tell you about the country's economic condition. Remember the first number is 140 crore and the second is 100," Rahul said.

"Today, half of the country's wealth is held by its 100 richest people. Do you think this is fair? "I will give you the second figure. If you take the profits of all corporate companies of the country, 90 per cent of the profits are in the hands of only 20 companies. This is the truth of Narendra Modi's India," the Congress leader said. "There are two Indias - one of farmers, labourers, small shopkeepers and unemployed youth in which crores of people live and the second of 200-300 people," Rahul stated. "What you have is this polluted air," the former Congress chief told the gathering. He criticised the Centre over demonetisation and the introduction of GST.

Earlier, Panipat was famous as a centre of small and medium industries. Thousands of small businesses were run here, providing employment to lakhs of people till the government came up with demonetisation and GST, he said. "Demonetisation and GST were not policies but weapons to destroy small and medium businesses," Rahul said. The impact of these two measures was felt not just in Panipat or Haryana but across the country, he said. Gandhi's remarks came days after the Supreme Court gave its stamp of approval to the Centre's 2016 decision to demonetise currency notes of denomination Rs 1,000 and Rs 500, saying the decision-making process was neither flawed nor hasty. (PTI)

Bareilly-based entity wants EC registration as 'Bharat Jodo Party'

NEW DELHI, JAN 6 --/ A group of people based in Bareilly have issued a public notice seeking registration as a political party with the name 'Bharat Jodo Party'. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has been on a foot-march across states as part of his 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' and is currently in Haryana.

As per the notice, published in two newspapers last month, the group's president and the vice president are Nasir Ali and Jinat Begum. The mandatory public notice is part of an elaborate exercise parties have to undertake before they are registered by the Election Commission. The notice says that the party has submitted an application before the EC for registration as a "political party" under the Representation of the People Act. The notice was put on the EC website on Friday. Once a party applies for registration, the political party division of EC scrutinises the documents and asks it to publish a notice in newspapers for people to know and file objections, if any. If there are objections with merit, the party office-bearers are asked to respond. Otherwise, the EC calls them for a personal hearing before granting registration to the party. (PTI)

Nominated member not allowed to vote in MCD House: Kejriwal on aldermen row

NEW DELHI, JAN 6 --/ Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said that the article 243R of the Constitution debars nominated members from voting in the MCD House and attempting to get them to do so is unconstitutional.

The chief minister's comment came a few hours after the MCD house was adjourned over

have been protesting privately and in a muted voice. "They are scared of consequences if they do not follow the directions. Some also faced wrath in the past. Control over bureaucracy through 'services' is being misused," the Delhi CM wrote. Earlier in the day, the House was adjourned without electing mayor and deputy mayor as the BJP

Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital for treatment. This is unconstitutional and we demanded the secretary to get the House adjourned. In order to please the BJP, the Lieutenant Governor should not break rules," Atishi told PTI. AAP national spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj also said that their party will get an FIR registered for the alleged attacks on their councillors. "Even after so much effort, not even a single AAP councillor switched sides. That's why BJP was getting 10 nominated councillors to vote unfairly. They (BJP) are even capable of saying that tomorrow the PM and the home minister will also vote in the mayor election," Bhardwaj said.



administering of oath to the 10 aldermen nominated members a move that the Aam Aadmi Party has alleged was an underhanded ploy to get them to vote for the election of mayor and deputy mayor in the House. Kejriwal also wrote a letter to the Lieutenant Governor (LG) V K Saxena mentioning several other incidents which according to him were attempts to bypass the MCD rules. The nomination of 10 aldermen to the MCD, dictating names of the Haj Committee by allegedly bypassing the Delhi government, and not nominating the senior-most person as the presiding officer, were some such instances he cited in the letter.

"Officers in the administration would have refused to follow bizarre directions by the LG. They

and the AAP councillors got into a heated argument over administering of oath to the alderman first and not the elected representatives. The AAP has alleged that the BJP made the alderman take oath first in order to get them voting rights for the election to mayor and deputy mayor. Refuting the allegations, BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said: "Nobody was trying to make aldermen vote in the House but that doesn't mean they can't be sworn in. After all, the aldermen can vote in zone committees. Arvind Kejriwal instigated his councillors to create ruckus in the house."

Senior AAP leader Atishi said that they will file a complaint against the BJP for allegedly attacking the AAP councillors. "Injured councillors are being taken to Lok Nayak

Delhi Police team in Mumbai in search of Air India 'urinating' incident accused

MUMBAI, JAN 6 --/ A four-member Delhi Police team on Friday afternoon landed in Mumbai in search of the man, who had allegedly urinated on his female co-passenger on an Air India (AI) flight on November 26 last year, but found his home here locked, an official said. The Delhi Police have registered an FIR (first information report) against the man based on the complaint given by the

victim to the Tata group-owned airline. The police said the accused, Shankar Mishra, is the Vice-President of the India Chapter of an American multinational financial services firm headquartered in California and is currently absconding. According to a Mumbai Police official, the team reached the Nehru Nagar police station in the suburbs and made an entry into the station diary

informing authorities there that they had come in search of Mishra. The visiting team, without taking along any Mumbai Police staff, launched a search for the accused and reached his bungalow "B 47" at Kamgar Nagar in Kurla (East) which was found to be locked, he said.

The official said the Mumbai police will help their Delhi counterparts as and when their assistance is

sought. The accused, allegedly in an inebriated condition, urinated on his co-passenger, a senior citizen in her seventies, in the business class of the Air India New York-Delhi flight. According to the FIR, shortly after lunch was served and the lights were switched off on board AI 102 of November 26, the inebriated male passenger seated in Business Class seat 8A walked to the

elderly woman's seat, unzipped his pants and urinated on her. The Tata group-owned airline on Wednesday said it has imposed a 30-day travel ban on the man and instituted an internal probe to find if there were lapses in handling the situation by the crew. The Delhi Police has formed multiple teams to nab the accused, who is a resident of Mumbai, officials said. (PTI)

The Central Public Works Department (CPWD) has floated a revised pre-qualification bid to build an office complex for MPs at a cost of Rs 1,210 crore, reducing the project cost by Rs 225 crore.

The proposed buildings will come up at plot number 119 in Lutyens' Delhi, where the Transport Bhawan and the Shram Shakti Bhawan are currently located. According to the revised bid document floated on Thursday, the total plinth area of the proposed buildings is approximately 98,000 square metres while in the previous tender, it was 1,18,000 square metres. The buildings will have eight floors. In the earlier tender, the proposal was for 10-storey structures. New chambers for the members of Parliament are part of the Union government's ambitious Central Vista redevelopment project and those will be built by demolishing the Transport

Bhawan and the Shram Shakti Bhawan.

The project also envisages a plan to build a tunnel that will connect the MPs' chambers with the new Parliament building being built by Tata Projects Limited. In its latest bid document, the government's construction agency said the proposed complex with the MPs' chambers will be built at a cost of Rs 1,210 crore against the Rs 1,435 crore estimated in the previous tender floated in November. "The existing structures on plot number 119 are to be demolished before the start of new construction. The existing boundary wall also needs to be demolished and new boundary wall shall be constructed as per design and drawings provided by the department. "Tree transplantation as per the requirement to be done and the existing services, if any, to be diverted," it stated.

The existing government offices

operating from the Transport Bhawan and the Shram Shakti Bhawan will have to vacate the complex. The CPWD said the proposed buildings will be designed to improve potency and functioning through a carefully-planned formation of the MPs' offices with supporting facilities. The work includes the construction of the civil structure, furniture, interiors, external development and landscaping. It also involves stone masonry, stone carving, wood work and system glazing, the agency said. The redevelopment project of the Central Vista -- the country's power corridor -- envisages a new triangular Parliament building, a common central secretariat, the revamping of the three-kilometre-long Rajpath from Vijay Chowk to India Gate, a new Prime Minister's Residence and a Prime Minister's Office, and a new Vice-President's Enclave. (PTI)

BJP leaders meet Defence Minister at Campbell Bay



CAMPBELL BAY, JAN 6/--/ Leaders of Bharatiya Janata Party, Campbell Bay led by Mr. Sanjay Kr. Singh, State Vice President, BJP, Zilla Parishad Member, C/ Bay along with other leaders met Mr.Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister, Govt of India on Friday at Campbell Bay and discussed various issues pertaining to the development of Campbell Bay and Nicobar group of Islands.

Panchayat Office shut down protest by PRIs of GP Nimbutala



MAYABUNDER, JAN 6/--/ The Pradhan& PRI members of Nimbutala Panchayat have decided to close the Panchayat Office as a mark of protest for non fulfillment of their genuine demands. According to the PRI members of Nimbutala Panchayat, the PRI members have resorted to total shut down of the Panchayat Office as a mark of protest against the Panchayat Secretary. The Pradhan and PRI members alleged that the Panchayat Secretary, Mr.Vimal Kumar has created obstructions in carrying out development activities in the Panchayat by raising one or another queries in every village development project . Due to the obstructive attitude of the Panchayat Secretary, development works initiated by the PRI members have been totally halted in this Panchayat and the villagers are suffering due to such attitude of the government official. —KARTIK

MP seeks induction of modern, fast, bigger & better vehicle ferry vessels

PORT BLAIR, JAN 6/--/ The Member of Parliament, Mr.Kuldeep Rai Sharma has requested the Lt. Governor to induct modern, fast, bigger and better Vehicle Ferry Vessels for Andaman and Nicobar Islands. He suggested that to save time, such bigger and better vehicle ferry vessels can be brought to Andaman on wet lease for next four to five years. The Member of Parliament mentioned that bigger vehicle ferry vessels will not only save precious time for residents of South Andaman but also make life easy for commuters of Bambooflat and Port Blair route. In a letter addressed to the Lt. Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, he pointed out

that everyday more than 20,000 people from South Andaman region, viz Port Blair, Bambooflat, Wimberlygunj, Shorepoint, Stewardgunj, Mathura, Mannarghat, Wright Myo, Shoal Bay etc commute through vehicle ferry vessels. He mentioned that to handle the rush, time and again we have seen many restrictions on people and vehicles in Vehicle Ferry Vessels. He added

that such restrictions are not the right solution to the actual problem, which is shortage of sufficient number of vehicle ferry vessels and absence of bigger vehicle ferry vessels. He pointed out that although there is a move from the side of the Government of India to construct a bridge between Chatham and Bambooflat but the date of starting of the project and

completion of the bridge is yet not known. Hence, he mentioned that in the next four to five years commuters of Bambooflat and Chatham have to rely solely on the present fleet of vehicle ferry vessels for reaching either side for job, school, medical etc other purposes, even if the said bridge construction works begin anywhere soon. He pointed out that the present fleet of vehicle ferry vessels are not only unbelievably old but also are very small in size and are terribly slow. The Member of Parliament added that in this modern age we have multi-level vehicle ferry vessels, which can accommodate a large number of two wheelers, four wheelers and heavy vehicles along with hundreds of passengers.



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George Santayana

Students hail UGC stand on foreign varsities in India

The University Grants Commission's draft norms for establishment and operation of foreign universities in India have been hailed by students, who believe that it will improve the quality of education and research and give aspirants exposure to world-class learning without having to travel abroad. Academics and industry experts, however, differ on the draft norms for establishment and operation of foreign universities in the country with some saying such varsities would not be able to address the unique problems of the Indian education sector. The final norms will be notified by January-end after considering feedback from all stakeholders on the draft regulations for 'Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India'. According to the draft norms, foreign universities will be able to set up their campuses in India for the first time. These varsities can also decide on the admission process, fee structure and repatriate its funds back home. Studying abroad is expensive, especially in countries like the UK and the US. Because of the high costs associated, a lot of students who have the potential but don't have the means to afford the education, are not able to go to the universities of their choice. If foreign universities set up their campuses in India, this cost would be reduced significantly and Indian students will be able to benefit from the world-class expertise of these varsities. A few students, however, raised questions over the move, saying the government should instead focus on improving the standard of education and infrastructure in Indian universities so that they are able to compete with universities at a global level.

Noting that foreign universities with campuses in the country can only offer full-time programmes in offline mode and not online or distance learning, UGC chairperson M Jagadesh Kumar said the foreign universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) will need a nod from the UGC to set up their campuses in India. The initial approval will be for 10 years and will be renewed in the ninth year subject to the meeting of certain conditions, he said, clarifying that these institutions shall not offer any such study programme which jeopardises the national interest of India or the standards of higher education. The UGC Chairman said several countries in Europe have expressed interest in setting up their campuses in India. Surprisingly, the UGC was finalising the norms at a time when it was supposed to be dismantled under the National Education Policy - 2020. The draft regulations published by the UGC are quite clear and flexible. They are in a way in line with the regulations that were introduced recently. Previous attempts through complex legislation didn't work and a regulatory approach appears far more feasible. There will be two categories of foreign institutions eligible to apply for setting up their campuses in India---the universities that have secured a position within the top 500 of overall or subject-wise global ranking or a reputed institution in its home jurisdiction. The foreign institution shall have the autonomy to recruit faculty and staff from India and abroad as per its recruitment norms.

Falling industrial growth and high inflation main problem

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domestic inflation, and arrest a fall in the rupee value. To reduce dependence on foreign imports and increase export competitiveness, the GoI launched programmes such as the National Manufacturing Policy in 2011. Additionally, several policies; such as the Focus Market Scheme (FMS) and Production Linked Incentives (PLI) were launched. The PLI scheme was meant for increasing competitiveness of 14 items under manufacturing sectors such as pharmaceuticals engineering, and electronics.

To lower trade and logistics costs related to the movement of goods, the Centre increased outlay on capital expenditure from Rs 5.54 lakh crore in 2021-22, to Rs 7.50 lakh crore in 2022-23. Such allocation of funds is expected to provide impetus to the Gati Shakti project, a plan to improve multimodal connectivity. Some positive results are emerging so far India's exports are concerned. In the case of high-value-added pharmaceutical exports such as formulation and vaccines, India is performing well because of FDI and government's support in the form of various schemes such as FMS and PLI. Foreign smartphone manufacturers are showing interest to invest in India. Export of electrical and telecom equipments are showing an uptick.

In the short run, policymakers undertook a few micro measures to reduce the widening CAD. For instance, India is buying oil from Russia. The share of Russian mineral fuel imports in India's trade basket went up from 1 per cent in February 2022 to 22 per cent by November 2022. On September 9, 2022, India banned export of 100 per cent broken rice, an input for producing ethanol, an alternative source of fuel. India increased customs tariffs on gold imports from 7.5 per cent to 12.5 per cent. Gold is another item responsible for increasing trade deficit. The rupee has also fallen on account of monetary tightening in the US. Since March 2022, the US Federal Reserve has raised interest rates by 350 basis points. A hawkish policy stance has led to a rise in returns of the US treasury security. The yield on two-year US treasury security increased from 1.56

per cent on August 1, 2020, to 4.50 per cent on December 9, 2022. This has led to outflow of capital from the Indian economy, pulling down the rupee. Since March 2022, this year, RBI increased the policy rates by 225 basis points. In addition to raising the repo rates, the RBI took a few other policy measures. For example, RBI giving permission to commercial banks to open Foreign Currency Non-Resident (FCNR) accounts (held in foreign currency) and Non-Resident External (NRE) deposits from Indians residing outside India without any cap on interest rates. This is likely to increase deposits of foreign currencies. RBI is also contemplating about listing Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Emerging Markets Government Bond Index and FTSE Emerging Markets Government Bond Index. This when done, will ease the inflow of foreign currency, improving foreign exchange reserves and curtailing a fall in the value of the rupee.

The combination of fiscal and monetary policy initiatives has begun to show results. Foreign exchange reserves increased from \$528.37 billion in October 2022, to \$564.07 billion in December 2022. Net foreign direct investment rose to \$22.7 billion in April-October 2022 up from \$21.3 billion during the corresponding period last year. Foreign portfolio investment contributed to inflow of \$11.8 billion between June and early December, reversing negative trends of the past. Although the rupee has depreciated up to 9.8 per cent this calendar year, it was less when compared to other developed countries in the EU regions, Japan, and South Korea, where exchange rates depreciated in excess of 15 per cent. Remittances from abroad also started looking good, estimated to reach \$100 billion in 2022, up from \$81 billion in 2021. According to the World Bank data, there is a structural shift in remittances from largely low-skilled workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries to remittances from high-skilled workers in the UK, US, Australia, and Singapore. Only events, such as another war in the Asia Pacific region, or a newer fatal variation of COVID hitting the world, can derail India's growth process.

Make in India, Atmanirbhar Bharat and PLI schemes will take time to make exports competitive. Meanwhile, Indian negotiators should find ways to deal with extra-trade provisions such as labour, environment, IPRs etc., which are increasingly hurting access to India's exports in the developed markets. (IPA)



Visitors through the tiger enclosure to get a glimpse of the majestic wonder at Alipore Zoological Garden on Friday afternoon--Arijit Ganguly

Workers and Trade Unions struggle to intensify in 2023

The year 2023 is beginning with a prospect of more intensified labour and trade union movement in India. A convention of all Central Trade Unions is already scheduled to be held on January 30 to chalk out an intensive path for concrete struggle to be taken unitedly in the country against alleged anti-labour and pro-corporate policies of the incumbent government at the centre lest it would implement the four controversial labour codes before the General Election 2024.

It would worsen PM Narendra Modi's predicaments since nine states of the country would go for polls, considered to be semi-final political contest to test respective strength of the ruling and opposition political parties, and the result of which would cast its spell on the outcome to the Lok Sabha election due to be held by mid-2024. Modi government would be tabling its last full budget in February 2023 before the general election in 2024, thereby it would be last chance for him to politically appease both the corporate friends and the workforce, who have been agitating against its policies – particularly on labour reforms through four labour codes and privatisation of public sector undertakings.

A year before in January 2022, PM Narendra Modi was somewhat relieved after the farmers movement led by SKM was called off in December 2021, after he had unilaterally withdrawn the three farm sector laws seeking to bring corporate to the farm. Farmers have been campaigning against BJP in the state elections throughout 2021, and the party had to undergo electoral setbacks that had frustrated its expectation, more pronounced in the West Bengal elections of April. Electoral setbacks to the party were also witnessed during by-elections.

Farmers, Trade Unions, and Employees associations etc had joined hands to protest the Modi government's policies. Withdrawal of farm laws did not help the government in 2022. It could not even win back its estranged political partner SAD again into NDA. Farmers of Punjab opted for AAP during February 2022 election, after which the party formed its government in the states. The year closed with two other significant loss for Modi's BJP – in Himachal Pradesh to Congress, and in Delhi Municipal Corporation to AAP.

The entire 2022 was a year of Trade Union and Employees Union Movements, as the year 2021 was the year of Indian Farmers' Movement. Ten Central Trade Unions organized all India strike actions in March. They continued agitation the whole year. Banks, Insurance Companies, Public Sector, and government sector employees' associations and unions also went for demonstration and strikes. Now we see, that the year is closing with upsurge in general disenchantment of farmers and workforce, who have resumed their protest demonstration afresh in November and December. Additional factor is coming of RSS-affiliated Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) into the picture in December. BKS organized Kisan Garjana Rally in Delhi and threatened political consequences if Modi government would not concede to their demand in time, while BMS leaders in rare gesture of expressing unity of the trade union fraternity went to AITUC convention

in Alappuzha and voiced their concern on several issues confronting labour.

It is out of fear that PM Modi would devise certain means to implement some of the provisions of the scrapped three farm laws, of yet-to-be-implemented four controversial labour codes, and privatisation of public sector undertakings, the farmers and workers have stepped up their agitations again and are preparing for more intensive struggle in 2023. Such a fear has roots in several initiatives of Modi government relating to farm sector, labour reform, and privatisation especially through subtle disinvestment of certain public sector undertakings, such as seen in selling of IPOs in LIC, mere offering of constitution of a high-powered committee on legal guarantee of MSP, and encouraging private sector banks and insurance companies.

Due to political reasons, many observers feel that PM Modi would not opt for implementation of four controversial labour codes or bring back some farm sector reforms in 2023. Moreover, they also expect the pace of privatisation of public sector companies, banks, insurance, etc to be slowed down. PM Modi would not like to take risking BJP's political prospect either in 2023 or 2024, unless he or his advisors are overwhelmed by overconfidence. The four controversial labour codes that were labelled by PM Modi as the much needed, much awaited, biggest labour reform in independent India, has been resisted tooth and nail by the Central Trade Unions ever

since they came into existence in 2019 and 2020. They could not be implemented since labour is in concurrent list of the Constitution of India and states needed to come out with their rules before notification of implementation. States were preoccupied in tackling COVID-19 crisis, and hence framing of rules delayed. Modi government has missed several targeted dates for their implementation. Union Ministry of Labour has said that they are almost ready for their implementation, that has alarmed the Central Trade Unions resulting in preparation for more intensive united struggle in 2023.

Restoration of old pension scheme for government employees have become an issue now, the impact of which has been against the BJP as we have seen in Punjab and Himachal Pradesh elections. Central Trade Unions have come out in support of restoration of old pension scheme, enhancement of pension to at least Rs 5000 for workers in the organised sector, and credible social security net for unorganised and informal workers, who according to a AITUC study has increased to 97 per cent of the total workforce.

The recent years have been marked with “lack of dialogue” between the Modi government and Central Trade Unions. ILC meetings have not been called since 2015. Labour codes were passed in 2019 and 2020 without consultation. Tripartite consultations have been put on back burner. Only RSS-BJP-affiliated BMS has been given importance, and this year it was included in ILO representation and now appointed L-20 chair to discuss labour related issues of the G-20 summit later in 2023. Central Trade Unions were not given enough time in Union Budget consultations of the Union Minister of Finance which led to their boycott. (IPA)

Conventional Crossword						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		8				
9				10		
			11			
12	13	14		15	16	17
18			19	20		21
		22		23		
24				25	26	27
		28				
29				30		

ACROSS			DOWN		
1	Dairy product	2	Brings about		
5	Dissolve	3	Ovum		
8	Act in abject manner	4	Region		
9	Advises strongly	3	Maximum		
10	Circle	5	Worth		
11	Top room	6	Bring out		
12	Tree	7	Pull forcibly		
15	Helpful hints	13	Behold!		
18	Tarnishes	14	Optical illusion		
21	Digit	16	Italian river		
22	Building cover	17	Pick out		
24	Nail on animal's foot	19	Let down		
25	Over	20	As stated		
28	Language	23	Reputation		
29	Water pitcher	24	Billiard rod		
30	Build	26	Barrier		
		27	United		

SUDOKU : 3749

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

Yesterday's Solution 3748

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

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 1757

C	L	O	G	M	U	S	E	D
O		P	E	R	U	S	E	
O	M	E	N		D	U	E	T
	A	N	E	W		A		I
I	R	E		O	I	L	I	N
R	E	D	E	E	M		M	E
O		X		P	O	P	S	
N	E	G	U	S		D	O	T
I		A	D	A	G	E	S	L
C	O	P	E	D		S	E	E

DISCLAIMER

The views in the articles published here are absolutely the views of the author and The Echo of India does not stand liable for them.



On departure from Port Blair, Hon'ble Raksha Mantri, Mr. Rajnath Singh was given a fond send off by Raj Niwas staff & Admiral D K Joshi (Retd.), Hon'ble Lt Governor, A&N Islands and Vice-Chairman, Islands Development Agency along with senior Officers of Andaman & Nicobar Administration and Andaman & Nicobar Police at VSI Airport.

3-days training on 'Youth Leadership & Community Development' by NYK Port Blair



PORT BLAIR, JAN 6 /--/ The Nehru Yuva Kendra, Port Blair organized a 3-days residential training programme of "Training in Youth Leadership and Community Development (TYLCD)" from 6th - 8th January, 2023 at Maharashtra Mandal, Port Blair. The objective of the training programme is to enhance the capacities of young people to take leadership to help others to live meaningful lives and contribute to Nation Building. Inculcate strong character, self-discipline, integrity, positive attitude, commitment to National and strong desire to spread messages for Nation Building also to establish a cadre of dedicated, motivated and trained youth leaders who are willing to enhance Nation Building activities. In this training total 40 youths were participated from various youth clubs and Mahilamandals.

The training programme was inaugurated by Mr. Naresh Chandar Lal, Padmashree Awardee and Swachh Bharat Ambassador, A & N Islands.

Admission to Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya: 31st Jan 2023 last date for application submission

PORT BLAIR, JAN 6 /--/ The online registration of candidates for the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Selection Test for admission to Class VI for the next academic year 2023-24 in JNV, Chouldari has already started. The last date for the submission of application online is 31st January, 2023 and the test is tentatively scheduled on 29th April, 2023. JNVs are progressive Co-educational & residential Vidyalayas run by Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti under the Ministry of Education spread over 649 districts across the country, providing quality education especially to the rural talented students. Since the admissions are purely on the basis of the

selection test, eligible and talented students studying in Class V in recognized schools in the district are advised to take the test. It is also brought to the notice of all concerned that the application forms are to be submitted online only through the Website <http://navodaya.gov.in>. Students should have Aadhaar Card/Residence Certificate and Study Certificate duly signed by the Headmaster, photograph of the candidate, signature of the candidate and the parent for uploading the application. In case of any difficulty in uploading the applications, parents can contact JNV Chouldari over phone to the helpdesk numbers 7018283450, 9580455683 and 8900970775.

KNMA to showcase cross-border art collaboration at Dhaka Art Summit

NEW DELHI, JAN 6 /--/ The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) will co-produce an exhibition featuring Indian and Bangladeshi artists with the Samdani Art Foundation (SAF) at the sixth Dhaka Art Summit. With over 140 local and international artists and architects, the Dhaka Art Summit will be held in the Bangladesh capital from February 3. The sixth edition, titled 'Bonna', will explore the theme of Bangladesh's climate, and how it has shaped the country's history, identity and culture. The headlining exhibition by KNMA and SAF, 'Very Small Feelings', will showcase extensive exchange between contemporary artists of Bangladesh and India through exhibition-making, publishing, co-commissioning, and loans of artworks. The exhibition has been co-curated by Akansha Rastogi, senior curator at KNMA, and chief

curator of Dhaka Art Summit Diana Campbell with Ruxmini Choudhury, assistant curator at SAF. "The collaboration with Samdani Art Foundation advances our goal of providing a platform for emerging and younger voices from India and the subcontinent. It will be the first time that two major South Asian contemporary art institutions collaborate on such a scale, and we are excited to create this space for learning and exchange for people from both countries and around the world," Kiran Nadar, chairperson, KNMA said. As part of the exhibition, award-winning author Amitav Ghosh's "Jungle Nama" will come to life through its audio-visual presentation and collaboration with painter Salman Toor and singer Ali Sethi. "This is a collaborative project and there could be no better way of bringing

the different aspects of the work together than in an installation for this exhibition, which celebrates the role of storytelling in society," Ghosh said. The fourth exhibition under KNMA's multi-part, long-term program 'Young Artists of Our Times' aims to address and engage the younger voices of the subcontinent, bringing them into the fold and forming new forms of institutional collaboration. Other highlights of the exhibition include a new commission work by Mumbai-based architect duo Rupali Gupte and Prasad Shetty, sculptural installation by Delhi-based artist Murali Jha, and a performance work by Shillong-based artist Lapdang Syiem that connects India and Bangladesh via the folklore of Shillong's Khasi hill tribes. The collaboration will also feature a presentation by the Anga Art Collective focusing on the

memories of village elders in western Assam close to the Bangladesh border, who were forced to abandon their homes as their village drowned in the Brahmaputra river due to erosion. The Summit at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy will also host artists and architects including Rana Begum, Bhasha Chakrabarti, Simon Fujiwara, Antony Gormley, Yasmin Jahan Nupur, Ashfika Rahman, Joydeb Roaja, Rupali Gupte and Prasad Shetty, Lapdang Syiem, Sumayya Vally and Anpu Varkey. While Over 50 per cent of the works on view will be new commissions, exhibitions and performances, historic works by artists such as Chittaprosad Bhattacharya, Leela Mukherjee, Benode Behari Mukherjee, Satyajit Ray and Lala Rukh will also be featured at the Summit. The art festival will conclude on February 11. (PTI)

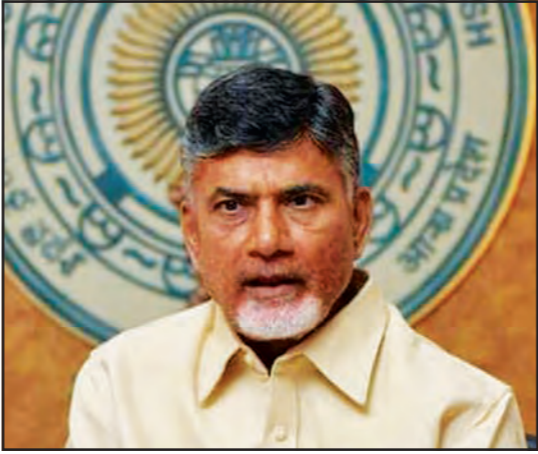
Police restriction on Chandrababu Naidu's visit to Kuppam continues

KUPPAM, JAN 6 /--/ Telugu Desam Party president and Leader of Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday staged a sit-in protest on the road near the bus station at Gudipalle mandal headquarters as police prevented him from going to the local party office. After the protest, Naidu climbed onto his vehicle and addressed the public, slamming Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy for bringing in a Government Order (GO) prohibiting roadshows. He also asked the police to "stop the slavery" and work as per law. "This is democracy. Respect the law. People will revolt if you don't implement law in a proper manner," he warned the police. "I pity the police. It is not their fault but of the CM ruling over them. I am only reminding police of their

duties and responsibilities," he added. Police erected barricades on the roads in Gudipalle that prevented TDP workers from entering the village for Naidu's tour. Two days after seizing the TDP chief's campaign vehicle, the police silently towed it to an undisclosed location. The former chief minister reacted furiously to this and demanded that his vehicle be returned to him. As the police refused to bring back the vehicle, Naidu squatted on the road along with TDP leaders and workers saying that as the local MLA, he had every right to visit his constituents. "Should I not meet my people and address their grievances? How can you

prevent me from this," he asked. Stating that his fight was for

other. Have YSRC leaders not held roadshows in Macherla, Nandigama and other places after the 'dark GO' was issued? Are there different rules for me and YSRC leaders?" He vowed to fight till the state was rid of Jagan Mohan Reddy's rule. Meanwhile, the Rallabudugur police registered a case under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including attempt to murder, on several TDP workers, including women, based on a complaint filed by an inspector of police. In his complaint, Inspector G Ashok Kumar alleged that about 50 TDP activists formed into an unlawful assembly on January 4 for the visit of



Chandrababu Naidu

the five crore people of the state, Naidu said: "Five crore people are on one side and the CM is on the

other. Have YSRC leaders not held roadshows in Macherla, Nandigama and other places after the 'dark GO' was issued? Are there different rules for me and YSRC leaders?" He vowed to fight till the state was rid of Jagan Mohan Reddy's rule. Meanwhile, the Rallabudugur police registered a case under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including attempt to murder, on several TDP workers, including women, based on a complaint filed by an inspector of police. In his complaint, Inspector G Ashok Kumar alleged that about 50 TDP activists formed into an unlawful assembly on January 4 for the visit of

Chandrababu Naidu. When told that there was no permission for their roadshow, the TDP workers obstructed his duties and also beat up a constable with sticks, causing bleeding injuries, the inspector alleged. "CI Tulasi Ram and I tried to prevent them but the accused with an intent to kill, stabbed me with a flag stick. As I tried to thwart the attempt, they inflicted injury on the fingers. Further, they caused head injury to Tulasi Ram and constable Vinod Kumar also," Ashok Kumar alleged in the complaint. Based on this, police registered a case of attempt to murder against nearly 50 TDP workers. Criticising this, Naidu wondered how an attempt to murder case could be foisted on women. "The society feels ashamed of the police action," he remarked. (PTI)

DMRC employee held for impersonating IAS, flashing red beacon

NEW DELHI, JAN 6 /--/ A 40-year-old DMRC employee was arrested for allegedly impersonating an IAS officer and using red beacon on his personal car, police said on Friday. The accused has been identified as Manoj Kumar Gupta, a resident of Ganga Vihar, Shahdara, they said. On Thursday around 7 pm, a man saw a Tata Tigor car flashing red beacon light in the Shastri Nagar fruit market. He found the vehicle suspicious as there was only one person in the car and shared the information with traffic policeman ASI Dhamendra Kumar, a senior police officer said. When the ASI stopped the vehicle and asked the driver about his identity, he started arguing with him, following which the matter was reported to the local police. Gupta was caught driving a car which had "Bharat Sarkar" written on its front bonnet and "Government of India and Ministry of Power and Energy" on its back, police said. A sticker of advocate was also found pasted on the windshield which confirmed that the man was an imposter, police said. When Gupta was asked if he was authorised to use the red beacon, he got annoyed and in

a threatening manner introduced himself as Sanjeev Kumar, IAS, posted as deputy director in the Ministry of Power & Energy. He further said that he is authorised for flashing the red beacon, police said. The car Gupta was driving was found registered in his name, so was the driving licence found on him. Police also found in his possession an ID card, apparently issued by the DMRC, which showed him to be employed as the head maintainer with the transporter, Deputy Commissioner of Police (northeast) Sanjay Kumar Sain said. After that, police arrested Gupta and booked him on relevant charges. During interrogation, Gupta revealed that he had got the beacon and other insignia to show off and create an impression on the public, the DCP said. As the Republic Day celebrations are in full swing, unauthorised use of red beacon could lead to sabotage in security arrangements, police said. Information about the incident was shared with intelligence agencies, special cell etc and a joint interrogation was conducted in the matter, they said. According to police, Gupta had joined the DMRC in 2004. (PTI)



Union Minister for Home Affairs and Cooperation Amit Shah at the inauguration of Churachandpur Medical College, in Manipur

UP: Drunk 'BJYM worker' arrested for misbehaving with cops Car with siren, black film impounded

NOIDA, JAN 6 /--/ A man who identified himself as a worker of the BJP's youth wing was arrested in Greater Noida for allegedly misbehaving with an on-duty police officer during a checking campaign, a senior official said on Friday. The accused was also found drunk driving and did not have documents to his car when checked on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Greater Noida) Abhishek Verma said. The accused was identified as Rahul Bhati, who claimed to be a worker of the Ghaziabad unit of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), the BJP's youth wing. The BJP or the BJYM are yet to comment on the incident. The police said the car in which Bhati was travelling was being driven at a high speed with sound blaring from its hooter when it was

intercepted on the Bilaspur-Sikandrabad Road. The windshield of the Maruti Swift car bore stickers of the BJYM and the BJP's flag. It also bore a sticker that read 'Adhyaksh: Mahanagar, Ghaziabad BJP'. "The police checking was set up in the Dankaur area where a Swift car was intercepted. A person named Rahul Bhati was driving the car but was inebriated. There were black films, siren and hooter installed in the car. He also misbehaved with the police," Verma said. "The car has been impounded by the police and action has been taken against Rahul Bhati under CrPC Section 151 (arrest to prevent cognizable offence without magisterial order) after which he was produced before the competent court," Verma said. Further legal proceedings are underway, he added. (PTI)

CONDOLENCE

PORT BLAIR, JAN 6 /--/ CPI (M) Andaman & Nicobar State Organising Committee mourn the death of Shri KK Ratnakaran, retired Manager of A & N State Cooperative Bank, at Coimbatore today (6.1.2023) morning. He was 76 years old. He left behind his wife and two sons. CPI (M) conveys its deepest condolences to the bereaved family members.

Annual Range Classification

PORT BLAIR, JAN 6 /--/ The CISF Unit Port of Blair Port will carry out Annual Range Classification for the year 2022 (Left Out) on 11.01.2023 from 0700hrs to 1700hrs at Army Firing Range, Brichgunj



Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Anurag Singh Thakur launching the logo, website and themes of Y20 Summit, in New Delhi

SC directs panel to call meeting to evolve framework for drawing guidelines for road safety

NEW DELHI, JAN 6 /--/ The Supreme Court on Friday directed a committee headed by former apex court judge A M Sapre to convene a meeting within two weeks to evolve a framework for formulating state-specific guidelines on electronic monitoring and enforcement of road safety norms across states. A bench of chief justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala agreed that urgent steps were needed to be taken to enforce Section 136A (electronic monitoring and enforcement of road safety) of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988. "The Motor Vehicle Act was amended in 2019 so as to incorporate provisions of section 136 A for electronic monitoring and enforcement of road safety on national highways, state highways, roads and urban cities. The issue now is about ensuring due enforcement of the provisions of section 136A by drawing out state specific guidelines which would have to be done in collaboration

with state governments. "Section 215 B of the MV Act has provided for the constitution of a national road safety board in an advisory capacity. Having due regard to the framework, it would be appropriate for Justice A M Sapre, chairperson of committee appointed by the court, government official and amicus to set out modalities. The meeting may be convened preferably in two weeks. The amicus can then report to the court on the consensus arrived at in the meeting," the bench said. The matter is now listed for hearing in the first week of

February. Additional Solicitor General Madhavi Divan, appearing for the Centre, said the government has already framed Rules under Section 136 (2). According to Section 136 (2), "The Central Government shall make rules for the electronic monitoring and enforcement of road safety including speed cameras, closed-circuit television cameras, speed guns, body wearable cameras and such other technology." The apex court had constituted the Sapre committee while hearing a PIL on the issue of road safety in the country. (PTI)



त्रिपुरा विश्वविद्यालय
TRIPURA UNIVERSITY
(केन्द्रीय विश्वविद्यालय / A Central University), त्रिपुरा (त.) / Tripura (W), पिन / PIN - 799022
No. E.TU/FIN/MSE/363/Vol-III/2020
Date: 06-01-2023

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER (3rd Call)
Tripura University invites e-Tender from the bonafide Manufacturers/ Authorized Dealers for supply and installation of High Temperature Sintering Furnace for Tripura University. The Details can be seen at Tripura University website: www.tripurauniv.ac.in. However, for submission of documents please visit <https://mhrd.enr.wizard.com> (NB: Hindi version is available at TU website)
Sd/-, (Pranay Pal), Assistant Registrar (Finance)

India to host virtual summit on Jan 12-13 to flag challenges facing nations of global South

NEW DELHI, JAN 6 /--/ India will host a virtual summit on January 12 and 13 to bring together countries of the global South and share their common concerns, interests and perspectives relating to various global challenges including food and energy security triggered by the Ukraine conflict.

Foreign secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said more than 120 countries are being invited for the 'Voice of Global South' summit whose theme would be 'Unity of Voice, Unity of Purpose'. At a media briefing, he said concerns and apprehensions of the developing countries often do not receive due attention at the global stage and the purpose of the summit would be to address these elements of "our concerns and priorities". Asked whether Pakistan, China and Ukraine have been invited, Kwatra did not give a direct reply and said names of the participating countries will be made public in due course. The foreign secretary cited food security, climate finance, fertiliser shortage, mounting debt and inflationary pressures as some of the burdens on the developing countries.

"You are all aware of the recent global developments which have severely impacted the developing world across many domains. Some elements of this impact include the

Covid pandemic, the impact of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, increasing difficulties of access and affordability of food, fertiliser and fuel," he said. Often however, these concerns of the developing world do

priorities of the developing countries is a need of the hour," he said. The 'global South' largely refers to countries in Asia, Africa and South America. The foreign secretary said the Voice of Global South summit



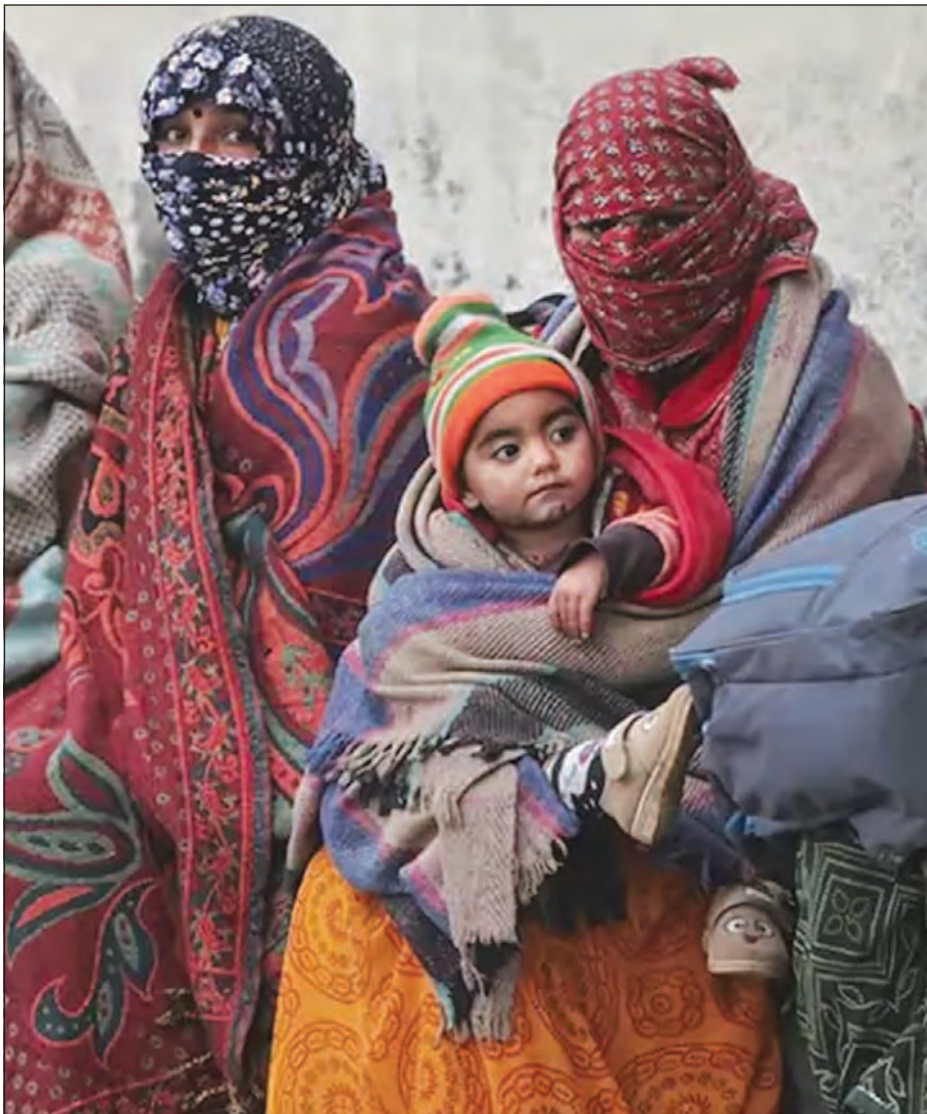
Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra (R) briefing media on Friday

not receive due attention and space on the global stage, Kwatra noted. "Often also the relevant existing platforms have proven to be inadequate in addressing these challenges and concerns of the developing countries. As such a consultative and outcome oriented conversation focused on the most pressing concerns, interests and

is India's endeavour to provide a common platform to deliberate on these concerns, interests and priorities that affect the developing countries. "Also to exchange ideas and solutions, and most importantly to unite in voice and purpose in addressing these elements of our concerns and priorities," he said. The foreign secretary said India will work

to ensure that the valuable inputs generated from partner countries in the summit deliberations received due cognisance globally. Kwatra said India's ongoing presidency of the G20 provides it a special and strong opportunity to channelise these inputs into the deliberations and discourse of the grouping.

This is in line with the Prime Minister's statement that India's G20 Presidency will be shaped in consultation with not just our G20 partners, but also our fellow-travellers in the Global South, whose voice often goes unheard, he said. Kwatra said the initiative to host the summit is inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas, and is underpinned by India's philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family). The Summit envisages 10 sessions. Four sessions would be held on 12 January, and six sessions on 13 January. Each session is expected to witness the participation of leaders/ministers from 10-20 countries. The inaugural and concluding sessions would be at Head of State/ Government level, to be hosted by the Prime Minister. The theme of the inaugural leaders' session is "Voice of Global South- for Human-Centric Development". (PTI)



UNDER COVER: Passengers wrapped with warm clothes wait for their train at a railway station on a chilling winter morning, in Jammu

Kharge hits out at Shah for announcing date of Ram temple's inauguration

PANIPAT, JAN 6 /--/ Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge slammed Union home minister Amit Shah on Friday for announcing in poll-bound Tripura that the Ram temple will be ready by January 1, 2024, wondering in what capacity the BJP leader said so as he is neither the "pujari" nor the "mahant" of the shrine.

"Everyone has faithingod. But why did you make such an announcement, that too in the run-up to the (Tripura Assembly) polls? And when the (2024 Lok Sabha) election is also slated for May, you are saying the Ram temple will be inaugurated. "Who are you to make such an announcement? Are you the pujari or the mahant of the Ram temple," Kharge said targeting Shah. "Let the mahant and the seers say it. You are a politician. Your job is to keep the country secure, ensure law and order, ensure that people get food and give the price for farmers' produce. That is your job," the Congress chief told a rally organised here as part of the Opposition party's "Bharat Jodo Yatra". Shah announced on Thursday that the Ram temple in Ayodhya will be ready by January 1, 2024, the year of the Lok Sabha polls. This is being seen by the political opponents of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as an indication that the temple may again be a cornerstone of the saffron party's campaign in the next general election. "Rahul baba, listen from Sabroom (Tripura) that a mammoth Ram mandir will be ready on January 1, 2024," Shah said, attacking Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who is leading the Bharat Jodo Yatra. Kharge addressed the rally in the presence of Rahul and other Congress leaders, including Kumari Selja, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, K C Venugopal, Randeep Singh Surjewala, Shaktisinh Gohil, Kiran Choudhary, Digvijay Singh, Deepender Singh Hooda, D K Shivakumar and Uday Bhan. The Congress chief also slammed the Centre over a host of issues, including inflation and unemployment, and accused the BJP of making tall promises during election time and going back on those words after coming to power. He said there is rising inflation and unemployment in the country but the government does not seem to be bothered. (PTI)

PM expresses happiness over Army deploying its largest contingent of women peacekeepers at UN mission

NEW DELHI, JAN 6 /--/ Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed happiness on Friday at the Indian Army deploying its largest contingent of women peacekeepers at a UN mission.

"Proud to see this. India has a tradition of active participation in UN peacekeeping missions. The participation by our Nari Shakti (women power) is even more gladdening," the Prime Minister said in a tweet. Modi was replying to an Army tweet that said: "Indian Army deploys its largest contingent of women peacekeepers in United Nations mission at Abyei, UNISFA. The team will provide relief and assistance to women and children in one of the highly operational and challenging terrain conditions under the UN flag." India, among the largest troop-contributing countries to UN peacekeeping, is deploying a platoon of women peacekeepers in Abyei, the country's largest single unit of female Blue Helmets in a UN mission since 2007. The move heralded India's intent



of increasing significantly the number of women in peacekeeping contingents. "India is deploying an all #women's platoon of peacekeepers as part of our battalion to the UN Mission in #Abyei @UNISFA_1. This is the single largest deployment of women #peacekeepers in recent years. Good wishes to the team!" India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador

Ruchira Kamboj tweeted Thursday, along with a photo of the contingent. India's Permanent Mission to the UN said in a statement that the platoon of women peacekeepers will be deployed in Abyei as part of the Indian Battalion in the United Nations Interim Security Force, Abyei (UNISFA) on January 6, 2023. "This will be India's largest single unit of women Peacekeepers in a UN Mission since we deployed the first-ever all-women's contingent in Liberia in 2007. It will also herald India's intent of increasing significantly the number of Indian women in Peacekeeping contingents," the statement said. The Indian contingent, comprising two officers and 25 other ranks, will form part of an engagement platoon and specialise in community outreach and will be performing extensive security-related tasks as well. "Their presence will be especially welcome in Abyei, where a recent spurt in violence has triggered a spate of challenging humanitarian concerns for women and children in the conflict zone," it added. (PTI)

Not complying with regulations on handling unruly passengers to be dealt with strictly: DGCA to airlines

MUMBAI, JAN 6 /--/ Aviation safety regulator DGCA on Friday warned airlines that any non-compliance with regulations on handling unruly passengers will be dealt with strictly and invite enforcement action.

The advisory comes in the backdrop of two shocking incidents of urination on Air India flights late last year, which the airline failed to report to the regulator. In an advisory issued to the airlines' head of operations, the DGCA reiterated the responsibility of individuals -- pilot-in-command, cabin crew and director-in-flight services -- towards handling of unruly passengers under various provisions of Aircraft Rules, 1937, DGCA regulations, circulars and manuals of

airlines approved/accepted by the regulator. "Head of operations are hereby advised to sensitise pilots, cabin crew and director-in-flight services of their respective airlines on the topic of handling of unruly passenger through



appropriate means under intimation to DGCA," the advisory stated. Any non-compliance towards applicable regulations will be dealt with strictly and invite enforcement action, the regulator added. Under the norms, if an

airline finds a passenger's behaviour unruly, the pilot-in-command has to file a complaint, which is to be investigated by an internal panel. During the probe, the airline can ban the flyer for a maximum of 30 days. The committee

has to decide on the matter within 30 days and specify how long the flyer can be kept from travelling. If the panel fails to give a decision within the stipulated time, the passenger is free to fly. In the recent past, DGCA has noticed a few incidents

of unruly behaviour and inappropriate conduct by passengers during flight, wherein "it is observed that post holders, pilots and cabin crew members have failed to take appropriate actions", it said.

A drunk passenger allegedly urinated on a woman passenger in the business class of an Air India New York-New Delhi flight on November 26 last year. Within 10 days of this shocking incident, an inebriated passenger travelling on Air India flight to New Delhi from Paris urinated on the blanket of a passenger. An airline, as per DGCA sources, is bound to report any unruly incident to the regulator. But in both the cases, the matter was not reported to the aviation safety regulator, DGCA sources said. (PTI)

Govt sending back names reiterated by Collegium matter of concern: SC

NEW DELHI, JAN 6 /--/ The Supreme Court said on Friday it is a "matter of concern" that the government is sending back the names reiterated by the Collegium for judgeship in constitutional courts despite there being nothing in the present scenario to prevent the appointment post reiteration.

A bench of Justices S K Kaul and A S Oka observed that nothing prevents the legislature from bringing in a better system for appointment of judges to Constitutional courts but till the time the law holds it must be implemented. Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for one of the petitioners, said even the names reiterated by the Collegium have been sent back by the government "That is a matter of concern. We have already flagged it in the last order," said

at times has considered the view of the government and dropped names. That has also happened." The apex court said it is not that every name recommended by the High Court's Collegium goes through and this shows the scrutiny. It said there are people with different points of view and a court must reflect different philosophy and course of views. "I do believe when you join as a judge... you are here to do a job and trained yourself to do a job independently, dehors (other than, not including or outside the scope of) whatever may have been your political affiliations, what may have been the thought processes," Justice Kaul said. He said there is a spectrum of thought process in appointment of judges and if a person has his or her own thought process, it does not mean he or she is aligned one way



or the other. "Integrity of course is the first qualification," the bench said. Senior advocate Vikas Singh, who also appeared in the matter, raised the issue of seniority of a person whose name has been recommended. "We have had examples where seniority has been disturbed. Now a negative impact of that is that the collegiums will be very hesitant in sending the second list..." the bench said. On the issue raised by Bhushan that names

reiterated by the Collegium have been sent back, the bench said the government in the last lot had returned some names which were pending. The apex court said some of the names sent back by the government were reiterated by the Collegium and some are those which the Collegium did not clear but the government in its wisdom felt they ought to be considered. The bench has posted the matter for further hearing on February 3. It deserves mention here that the government told the Supreme Court on Friday all efforts are being made to "conform" to the timelines laid down by the apex court for processing the names recommended by the Collegium for appointment as judges to constitutional courts and 44 names are likely to be processed within two-three days. Amid the frosty executive-judiciary ties over the system of judges appointing judges, Attorney General R Venkataramani told the top court the government will adhere to timelines and the recent recommendations made by the Collegium of High Courts have been processed with "utmost dispatch". (PTI)

Airport passes with 'distorted' map of India withdrawn

NEW DELHI, JAN 6 /--/ All passes issued to employees and visitors of airports across the country have been withdrawn by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) after it was found that a "distorted" map of India was printed on them, officials said.

Map images of Jammu and Kashmir, the North-Eastern region, Rajasthan and Gujarat were wrongly depicted in the passes issued at all Airports Authority of India operated airports and six Adani group-run airports -- Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Thiruvananthapuram, Guwahati and Mangaluru. After it was found that the images were "distorted",

the BCAS has withdrawn the passes, an official privy to the development said. In a communication to the chairman of the Airports Authority of India (AAI), the BCAS said the embedded hologram roll being used is not according to the sample hologram approved by the BCAS. "Keeping in view the seriousness of the issue, it is hereby directed that all Aerodrome Entry Permits (AEPs) issued with holograms shall be withdrawn and further printing with these hologram roll shall be stopped with immediate effect," the letter said. The BCAS also conveyed that the AAI will conduct an inquiry in the matter,



find out at which level the lapses occurred, who is responsible for procuring these hologram rolls and take appropriate action against the responsible officers. The AAI has been directed to submit an action taken report on the issue to the BCAS at the earliest, it said. A person, who is not a passenger with a valid ticket, requires an AEP that is issued by the airport. The AEP application form, which is issued by the BCAS, mentions 13 zones that a person can enter. The permitted areas include the arrival halls, the departure halls, the terminal building, the apron area, the security hold area, cargo terminal among others. (PTI)

Gotabaya Rajapaksa returns to Sri Lanka from Dubai

COLOMBO, JAN 6 /--/ Former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was ousted from power last year over his government's mishandling of the cash-strapped country's economy, has returned here from Dubai, his first foreign trip since returning to Sri Lanka four months ago.

Rajapaksa and his wife Ioma arrived at Bandaranaike International Airport here from Dubai on Thursday, the Daily Mirror Lanka newspaper reported, quoting the airport duty manager and spokesperson of the airport immigration department. They arrived on an Emirates flight from Dubai, the report said. During his visit to Dubai, Rajapaksa visited the exotic animal farm called "Fame Park," according to news portal newsfirst.lk. Rajapaksa, 73, fled Sri Lanka to the Maldives on a Sri Lankan Airforce plane in July, as the country plunged into its worst economic and humanitarian crisis since its independence from Great Britain in 1948. He then proceeded to Singapore, from where he submitted his resignation on July 14 last year. Weeks later, he flew to Thailand, seeking

temporary shelter. Thailand said Rajapaksa can stay in the country for 90 days because he is still a diplomatic passport holder. However, he was not allowed to engage in political activities in Thailand. He was confined to a hotel and surrounded by security personnel.

In September 2022, he was given special security and a state bungalow upon his return to Sri Lanka from Thailand. Rajapaksa, an ex-military officer, became the president in November 2019. Rajapaksa, formerly a dual citizen of both Sri Lanka and the US, had to give up his US citizenship ahead of the 2019 presidential elections. As per Sri Lankan Constitution, dual citizenship holders are barred from contesting elections. A corruption case against him when he was a top defence official was

withdrawn soon after he was elected in 2019. Earlier this month, Rajapaksa applied for restoration of his US citizenship after he failed to get asylum in any country, according to The Sunday Times newspaper. However, the US government is yet to consider the request, newspaper reported. An appeal to restore US citizenship previously held is a costly legal process and time-consuming, the report said.

The Rajapaksa family has dominated Sri Lankan politics for over two decades. Mahinda Rajapaksa, the 76-year-old patriarch and elder brother of Gotabaya was the country's president and prime minister. Younger brother Basil Rajapaksa, 71, was earlier Sri Lanka's finance minister. Sri Lanka, a country of 22 million people, is going through its



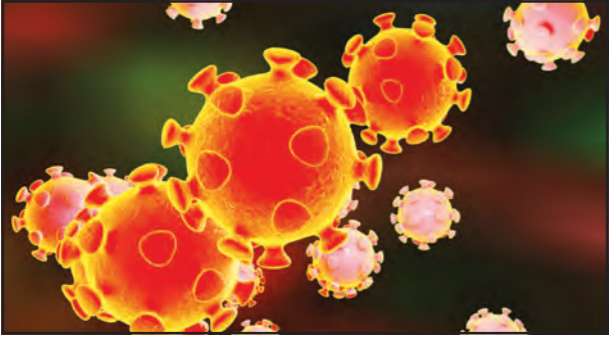
worst economic crisis since its independence in 1948 which was triggered by a severe paucity of foreign exchange reserves. In September last year, the IMF announced that it will provide Sri Lanka with a loan of about USD 2.9 billion over four years under a preliminary agreement to help the bankrupt island nation tide over its worst economic crisis and protect the livelihoods of the people. The country is also expected to restructure its debt worth USD 29 billion, with Japan expected to coordinate with other creditor nations, including China on this issue. In mid-April, Sri Lanka declared its international debt default due to the forex crisis. The country owes USD 51 billion in foreign debt, of which USD 28 billion must be paid by 2027. There have been street protests in Sri Lanka against the government since early April due to its mishandling of the economic crisis. A crippling shortage of foreign reserves has led to long queues for fuel, cooking gas, and other essentials while power cuts and soaring food prices have heaped misery on the people. (PTI)

Multiple people wounded in shooting near Florida restaurant

MIAMI GARDENS, JAN 6 /--/ Multiple people were wounded in a shooting after an altercation outside a restaurant in south Florida, police said. It wasn't immediately clear how many people were hit by gunfire Thursday night, but the Miami Herald cited a law enforcement source saying as many as 10 people were wounded in the shooting outside a soul food restaurant in Miami Gardens. Investigators were looking into reports that a video was being shot at the restaurant, Miami Gardens Police Chief Delma Noel-Pratt said. "We believe it's an isolated incident," Noel-Pratt said. Miami Gardens police spokesperson Diana Gourgue told reporters that she could not confirm reports that as many as 10 people had been wounded, saying "right now it is just multiple victims that were injured." She said the condition of those hurt was unknown, but there were not any fatalities. She said a large crowd had gathered outside the restaurant at the time of the shooting. Social media posts also said a music video was being filmed. (AP)

Covid may change body's response to other threats in men: Study

WASHINGTON, JAN 6 /--/ Covid-19 can trigger stronger inflammatory responses in males, resulting in changes to their functional immunity long after recovery, a study has found. The findings may also help create better vaccines against diverse threats by, for instance, mimicking how mild Covid-19 changes the male immune system, the researchers said. Scientists have long believed that the immune system reverts to the previous stable level after



viral infection. However, the latest study published in the journal Nature, shows that it depends on the individual's sex. Researchers at the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) systematically analysed immune responses of healthy people who had received the flu vaccine. From that data, they then compared the responses between those who had never been infected by SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, and those who experienced mild cases but recovered.

The team found that immune systems of men who had recovered from mild cases of Covid-19 responded more robustly to flu vaccines than women who had mild cases or men and women who had never been infected. The baseline immune statuses in men previously infected with SARS-CoV-2 was altered in ways that changed the response to an exposure different from SARS-CoV-2, the researchers said. "This was a total surprise," said John Tsang, an immunobiologist at Yale University in the US, who was previously at NIAID. "Women usually mount a stronger overall immune response to pathogens and vaccines, but are also more likely to suffer from autoimmune diseases," Tsang said. The findings may also be linked to an observation made early in the pandemic: Men were much more likely to die from a runaway immune response than women after contracting the Covid-19 virus. The findings suggest that even mild cases of Covid-19 might trigger stronger inflammatory responses in males than females, resulting in more pronounced functional changes to the male immune system, even long after recovery. Their analysis of immune system status down to the individual cell level showed several differences between Covid-recovered males and healthy controls and Covid-recovered females, both before and after receiving flu vaccinations. For instance, previously infected males produced more antibodies to influenza and produced increased levels of interferons, which are produced by cells in response to infections or vaccines. "Our findings point to the possibility that any infection or immune challenge may change the immune status to establish new set points," said lead author of the study, Rachel Sparks, from NIAID. "The immune status of an individual is likely shaped by a multitude of prior exposures and perturbations," Sparks added. (PTI)

Kremlin-ordered truce is uncertain amid suspicion of motives

KYIV, JAN 6 /--/ The impact of Russian President Vladimir Putin's order for his forces in Ukraine to observe a unilateral, 36-hour cease-fire was in doubt Friday after Kyiv officials dismissed the move as a ploy but didn't clarify whether Ukrainian troops would follow suit.

Moscow also didn't say whether it would hit back if Ukraine kept fighting. The Russian-declared truce in the nearly 11-month war began at noon Friday and was to continue through midnight Saturday Moscow time (0900 GMT Friday to 2100 GMT Saturday; 4 a.m. EST Friday to 4 p.m. EST Saturday). There were no immediate reports of it being broken. Putin's announcement Thursday that the Kremlin's troops would stop fighting along the 1,100-kilometer (684-mile) front line or elsewhere was unexpected. It came after the Russian Orthodox Church head, Patriarch Kirill, proposed a cease-fire for this weekend's Orthodox Christmas holiday. The Orthodox Church, which uses the Julian calendar, celebrates Christmas on Jan. 7. But Ukrainian and Western officials suspected an ulterior motive in Putin's apparent goodwill gesture.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy questioned the Kremlin's intentions, accusing the Kremlin of planning the fighting pause "to continue the war with renewed vigor." "Now they want to use Christmas as a cover to stop the advance of our guys in the (eastern) Donbas (region) for a while and bring equipment, ammunition and mobilized people closer to our positions," Zelenskyy said late Thursday. He did not, however, state outright that Kyiv would ignore Putin's request. U.S. President Joe Biden echoed Zelenskyy's wariness, saying it was "interesting" that Putin was ready to bomb hospitals, nurseries and churches on Christmas and New Year's. "I think (Putin) is trying to find some oxygen," Biden said,

without elaborating. State Department spokesman Ned Price said Washington had "little faith in the intentions behind this announcement," adding that Kremlin officials "have given us no reason to take anything that they offer at face value."

The truce order seems to be a ploy "to rest, refit, regroup, and ultimately re-attack," he said. The Institute for the Study of War agreed that the truce could be a ruse allowing Russia to regroup. "Such a pause would disproportionately benefit Russian troops and begin to deprive Ukraine of the initiative," the think tank said late Thursday. "Putin cannot reasonably expect Ukraine to meet the terms of this suddenly declared cease-fire and may have called for the cease-fire to frame Ukraine as unaccommodating and unwilling to take the necessary steps toward negotiations." Washington says it is prepared to keep backing Ukraine's war effort.

On Friday, the U.S. was due to announce nearly 3 billion in military aid for Ukraine a massive new package that was expected for the first time include several dozen Bradley fighting vehicles. The ill-feeling between the warring sides showed no signs of abating, despite the backdrop of Christmas. Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council, said those who rejected Putin's proposal for a Christmas truce were "clowns" and "pigs." "The hand of Christian mercy was extended to the Ukrainians," he said in a Telegram post. "But pigs have no faith and no innate sense of gratitude." Some civilians on the streets of Kyiv said they spoke from bitter experience in doubting Russia's motives. "Everybody is preparing (for an attack), because everybody remembers what happened on the New Year when there were around 40 Shahed (Iranian drones)," local resident Vasyl Kuzmenko said. "But everything is possible." (AP)

China seeks to minimize Covid-19 risk during travel rush

BEIJING, JAN 6 /--/ China is seeking to minimize the possibility of a major new Covid-19 outbreak during this month's Lunar New Year travel rush following the end of most pandemic containment measures.

The Transportation Ministry on Friday called on travelers to reduce trips and gatherings, particularly if they involve elderly people, pregnant women, small children and those with underlying conditions.

People using public transport should wear masks and pay special attention to their health

and personal hygiene, Vice Minister Xu Chengguang told reporters at a briefing. The call stopped short of asking citizens to stay home entirely, as the government had since the pandemic began, although some local governments have urged migrant workers not to return home. (AP)

Covid infection reshapes immune status depending on gender: Study

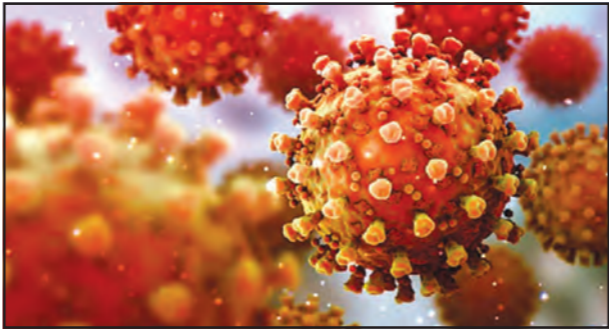
WASHINGTON, JAN 6 /--/ Scientists have found that the baseline immune statuses in men previously infected with SARS-CoV-2 was altered in ways that changed the response to an exposure different from SARS-CoV-2.

The team of researchers systematically analyzed immune responses of healthy people who had been given the flu vaccine. From that data, they then compared the responses between those who had never been infected by SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, and those who experienced mild cases but recovered. The team led by John Tsang, an immunobiologist from Yale University, US, found that immune systems of men who had recovered from mild cases of Covid-19 responded more robustly to flu vaccines than women who had mild cases or men and women who had never been infected. "This was a total

surprise," said Tsang. "Women usually mount a stronger overall immune response to pathogens and vaccines, but are also more likely to suffer from autoimmune diseases," said Tsang. The long-term effects of infection on the immune system had long intrigued Tsang. After the body has faced down a pathogen, does the immune system return to the previous baseline? Or does a single infection change it in ways that alter how it will respond not only to a familiar virus but also to the next new viral or bacterial threat it faces?

Tsang, a professor at Yale University, had long believed that the immune system reverts to the previous stable baseline after viral infection. The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020

allowed him and colleagues to test that theory. The answer, they found, depends on the individual's sex. The findings have been published in the journal Nature. The findings may also be linked to an observation made early in the pandemic: Men were much more likely to die from a runaway immune response than women after contracting the Covid-19 virus. Even mild cases of Covid-19, the new findings suggest, might trigger stronger inflammatory responses in males



than females, resulting in more pronounced functional changes to the male immune system, even long after recovery.

According to the study, their unbiased analysis of immune system status down to the individual cell level revealed several differences between Covid-recovered males and healthy controls and Covid-recovered females, both before and after receiving flu vaccinations. For instance, previously infected males produced more antibodies to influenza and produced increased levels of interferons, which are produced by cells in response to infections or vaccines. Generally, healthy females have stronger interferon responses than their male counterparts, the study said.

Understanding the lingering effects of Covid-19 on the immune system is crucial, the authors said, since more than 600 million people worldwide have been infected so far, and the emergence of "long-COVID" symptoms in some people continues to be a major health concern. "Our findings point to the possibility that any infection or immune challenge may change the immune status to establish new set points," said lead author Rachel Sparks, from National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). "The immune status of an individual is likely shaped by a multitude of prior exposures and perturbations," said Sparks.

Tsang thinks these findings may also help scientists create better vaccines against diverse threats by, for instance, mimicking how mild Covid-19 changes the male immune baseline. (PTI)

Japan, US to hold security talks before Kishida meets Biden

TOKYO, JAN 6 /--/ Japan and the United States will hold security talks between their foreign and defence ministers in Washington the day before Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida lands in the US capital next week wrapping up his tour of Group of Seven nations as Tokyo expands its military and deepen alliance with America amid China's growing influence.

Kishida will embark on a six-nation trip Monday to France, Italy, Britain and Canada ahead of his January 13 summit with US President Joe Biden. Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada and Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi will fly to Washington to join their American counterparts Lloyd Austin and Antony Blinken for their "2+2" security talks on Wednesday, just before their leaders' summit at the White House, Japanese officials said Friday. The "2+2" talks are expected to focus on their new national security strategies, released by Japan in mid-December and the United States in October, and how the two allies plan to tackle security concerns including China, North Korea and Russia. "We will discuss strengthening of deterrence and response capability of the Japan-US alliance as we take into consideration our new strategy documents," Hamada told reporters.

Hamada said Friday he and Austin will separately hold bilateral defence talks on Thursday to discuss details of how their militaries can expand and deepen their operations. Asked if they will discuss a

revision to their current defence guideline based on Japan's more defensive role, Hamada said nothing has been decided. Japan in December adopted a set of three security and defense strategy documents that break from its exclusively self-defence-only stance. Under the new strategies, Japan vows to build up its counterstrike capability with long-range cruise missiles that can reach potential targets in China, double its defense budget within five years and bolster development of advanced weapons. US officials have welcomed Japan's willingness to take on more offensive role, while experts say it could also help widen cooperation with Australia, their main regional defence partner. Kishida on Wednesday said his talks with Biden will underscore the strength of the Japan-US alliance and highlight closer cooperation between the countries under Japan's new security and defense strategies adopted last month. Kishida said coordination with other G-7 leaders ahead of the Hiroshima summit he will host in May is a key purpose of his trip, but Japanese officials said their talks will also focus on security and military cooperation. Kishida plans to discuss further deepening of security ties with France through joint military exercises. Japan's joint development and production of its F-X next generation fighter jet with Italy and Britain for deployment in 2035 will be a top agenda during his visit in Rome and London as they seek to further expand their military ties. (AP)

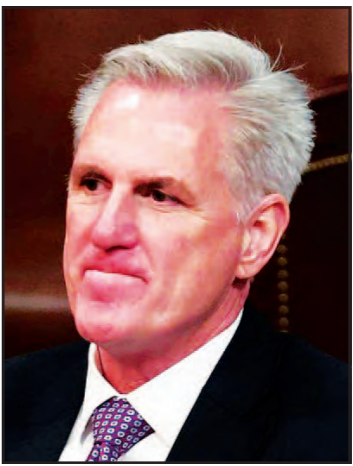
McCarthy fails again to win speakership: House stalemate

WASHINGTON, JAN 6 /--/ Pressure mounting, the speaker's chair of the US House sat empty for a third day on Thursday, as Republican leader Kevin McCarthy failed anew on the seventh of an excruciating string of ballots to win enough votes from his party to seize the chamber's gavel.

One of McCarthy's steadfast critics, Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, even cast his vote for Donald Trump, a symbolic gesture, but one that highlighted the former president's influence over the Republican Party. The seventh vote for speaker turned out no different from the others, with McCarthy well short of the required majority. McCarthy emerged from a morning meeting with colleagues at the Capitol determined to persuade Republican holdouts to end the stalemate that has blighted his new GOP majority. Despite endless talks, signs of concessions and a public spectacle unlike any other in recent political memory, the path ahead remained highly uncertain. The day started as the other two have, with Republican allies nominating him for now a seventh time to be speaker. Republican John James of Michigan put McCarthy's name up for a vote, with a nod to history: "My family's gone from being slaves to the floor of the United States House of Representatives" in five generations, said James, a newly elected lawmaker to be, who is Black.

He said that while the House Republicans were

"stuck" at the moment, McCarthy, who has failed to seize a majority to become speaker, would ultimately win. Democrat Hakeem Jeffries of New York was re-nominated by Democrats. Republican party holdouts again put forward the name



Kevin McCarthy

of fellow Rep. Byron Donalds of Florida, assuring the stalemate that increasingly carried undercurrents of race and politics would continue. Donalds, who is Black, is seen as a future party leader and counterpoint to the Democratic leader, Jeffries, who is the first Black leader of a major political party in the US Congress, on track himself to become speaker some day. "We could have elected the first Black speaker of the United States House," said conservative Republican Dan Bishop of North Carolina who re-nominated Donalds on Thursday.

Democrats jumped to their feet in applause, as Jeffries is, in fact, closest to the gavel with the most votes on every ballot so far. What started as a political novelty, the first time in 100

years a nominee had not won the gavel on the first vote, has devolved into a bitter Republican Party feud and deepening potential crisis. McCarthy is under growing pressure from restless Republicans, and Democrats, to find the votes he needs or step aside, so the House can open fully and get on with the business of governing. His right-flank detractors appear intent on waiting him out, as long as it takes. "We're having good discussions and I think everyone wants to find a solution," McCarthy told reporters shortly before the House was prepared to gavel into session again. House Chaplain Margaret Kibben opened the day's session, perhaps the last of the week, calling on greater powers to "still the storms of dissent." The House, which is one-half of Congress, is essentially at a standstill as McCarthy has failed, one vote after another, to win the speaker's gavel in a gruelling spectacle for all the world to see.

The ballots have produced almost the same outcome, 20 conservative holdouts still refusing to support him and leaving him far short of the 218 typically needed to win the gavel. In fact, McCarthy saw his support slipping to 201, as one fellow Republican switched to vote simply present. "I think people need to work a little more," McCarthy said on Wednesday as they prepared to adjourn for the night. "I don't think a vote tonight would make any difference. But a vote in the future could." (AP)

Asian Cricket council slams Pak Board Chief's comments targeting Jay Shah

Cricket calendar was sent to PCB on Dec 22, Sethi's comments baseless: ACC

KUALA LUMPUR, JAN 6 /--/ The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) has slammed the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman over the comments made by him following the announcement of ACC Calendar 2023-24 and the pathway structure on Thursday. PCB's interim chairman Najam Sethi had criticised Jay Shah for 'unilaterally' presenting the structure and calendar. Now, the Asian cricketing body has hit back, suggesting the calendar was shared on December 2022 with all the members, including the Pakistan board but no

communication came from the latter's side. On Thursday, Shah had announced the ACC calendar 2023-24 and pathway structure for the continental body along with ODI Asia Cup slated in September. However, the calendar didn't have the host country's name as BCCI secretary Shah had already said last October (2022) that the tournament will be shifted out of Pakistan as India won't be able to travel. Sethi's predecessor Ramiz Raja had then made a counter-threat of pulling out of the ODI World Cup being held in India later this year. Sethi, who is



Thank you @JayShah for unilaterally presenting @ACCMedia1 structure & calendars 2023-24 especially relating to Asia Cup 2023 for which ??? is the event host. While you are at it, you might as well present structure & calendar of our PSL 2023! A swift response will be appreciated
—PCB's interim chairman Najam Sethi

response came from them. A few other members, however, did share their take on the schedule and structure.

"Thank you @JayShah for unilaterally presenting @ACCMedia1 structure & calendars 2023-24 especially relating to Asia Cup 2023 for which Pakistan is the event host. While you are at it, you might as well present structure & calendar of our PSL 2023! A swift response will be appreciated," Sethi had remarked

The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) on Friday hit back strongly at Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Najam Sethi "vehemently denying baseless allegations" of unilateral decision making levelled against its president Jay Shah with regards to the continental body's two-year programme. The ACC, in its statement, categorically stated that PCB were sent the itinerary on December 22, 2022 along with other member nations but no

back in the hot seat, had reacted sharply to BCCI supremo Shah's announcement of ACC itinerary on twitter. "Thank you Jay Shah for unilaterally presenting ACC structure & calendars 2023-24 especially relating to Asia Cup 2023 for which Pakistan is the event host. While you are at it, you might as well present structure & calendar of our PSL 2023! A swift response will be appreciated," Sethi's sarcasm-laden tweet wasn't lost on anyone. The ACC led by Shah, on the day, released a strongly-worded statement calling out PCB chairman's bluff. "It has come to our knowledge that PCB Chairman Najam Sethi has made a comment on the ACC President (Shah) unilaterally taking the decision on finalising the calendar and announcing the same. The ACC wants to clarify that it has followed established due process," ACC said in its statement. In fact, the statement also shared the timeline with



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— Jay Shah



the media which effectively means that the PCB chairman was lying.

"The calendar was approved by its Development Committee and Finance & Marketing Committee in a meeting held on December 13th, 2022. The calendar was then communicated to all the participating members individually, including Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), via an e-mail dated December 22nd, 2022," it further stated.

The PCB in the last two weeks didn't seek any modification in the proposed calendar and hence there was a public announcement. "While responses were received from certain Member Boards, no comments or suggested modifications were received from PCB. In view of the above, Sethi's comments on a social media platform are baseless and are vehemently

denied by the ACC," the statement concluded. The socio-political tension between India and Pakistan has prevented the neighbours engaging in any bilateral cricket since 2012 and India has not visited the country post the 2008 Asia Cup. The arch-rivals are only pitted against each other in multi-nation events and that too on neutral venues. While the Asia Cup is a multi-nation event, the decision of the ACC Board to award the hosting rights to Pakistan hasn't gone down well with the BCCI. For PCB, the contention is if Australia, England and currently New Zealand can tour its country then why can't India? In case of the BCCI, the decision of sending a cricket team to Pakistan will completely be the central government's prerogative. (PTI)

GAME NOTES

Team rebuilding for next T20 World Cup, we have got to be patient with youngsters, says David

PUNE, JAN 6 /--/ Head coach Rahul Dravid has called for patience as the Indian team goes through a rebuilding phase for the next cycle of the T20 World Cup and the youngsters in the side get some experience. Dravid felt inexperience was one of the main reasons for India's 16-run defeat to Sri Lanka in the second T20I here. The former India captain pointed out that while the visitors had a pretty sorted playing XI, the hosts fielded a completely different side than the one which played the T20 World Cup less than two months back. "They (youngsters in the team) are very skilful, but as they are learning, it's a tough job. It's not easy learning in international cricket and you have to learn on the job. So, we've got to have a little bit of patience with these guys," Dravid said at the post-match press conference on Thursday. Dravid said the team was in the rebuilding phase, given the "next cycle of the T20 (World Cup)" had started. He added that youngsters will be handled patiently and will continue to get support from the team management, hinting that it could be the end of the road for the likes of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul. (PTI)

Not blaming Arshdeep but no-balls in any format is a crime: Pandya

PUNE, JAN 6 /--/ Bowling no balls in any format is a crime, said India skipper Hardik Pandya, adding that it was not about blaming Arshdeep Singh but the young pacer needs to go back and rectify his basic errors. India slumped to a 16-run loss in the second T20I as Sri Lanka levelled the three-match series 1-1. Returning to the side after missing the opener, Arshdeep looked rusty and bowled as many as five no balls in his two overs, giving away 37 runs. "You can have a good day, you can have a bad day, but you shouldn't be moving away from the basics. For Arshdeep, in this situation, it is very difficult. In the past as well, he's bowled no-balls," Pandya said at the post-match presentation. "It is not about blaming him or being too hard on him, but we know no-balls in any format is a crime," Pandya felt India was not up to the mark in the Powerplays both while bowling and batting. "Both in bowling and batting, the Powerplay hurt us. We made some basic errors, which we shouldn't be making at this level. Everyone knows what it is. The learning for us is we should be focusing on what we can control," he said. (PTI)

Pranesh becomes India's 79th chess Grandmaster

STOCKHOLM, JAN 6 /--/ M Pranesh clinched the title in the Rilton Cup, the first tournament of the FIDE Circuit, here to become India's 79th chess Grandmaster. The 16-year-old Pranesh crossed the 2500-rating threshold and became a GM, having completed his three norms before the Rilton Cup. To become a GM, a player has to secure three GM norms and cross the live rating of 2,500 Elo points. Seeded 22nd, the Indian made a clean sweep of the field in Stockholm, winning eight games and finishing a full point ahead of IM Kaan Kucuksari (Sweden) and GM Nikita Meshkovs (Latvia) as the tournament concluded late on Thursday. He topped the standings with eight points. (PTI)

Ronaldo the latest star to end career in football outpost

DOHA, JAN 6 /--/ Cristiano Ronaldo is not the first football superstar to head off to one of the world's supposed minor leagues in the latter years of his career. The temptation for one last huge payday, to be a trailblazer in a nation looking to boost its standing in the sport, or just to try something different often can be too big to resist. Not every player bows out right at the top like Zinedine Zidane — even if the France great was sent off in the last game of his career, the World Cup final of 2006. Others, like Pelé, Johan Cruyff, Zico, Xavi Hernandez, and now the 37-year-old Ronaldo at Saudi Arabian club Al Nassr, find themselves prolonging their careers at unlikely football outposts usually for vast amounts of money. (AP)

Pacers, top order in focus as India look to win T20 series against SL

RAJKOT, JAN 6 /--/ The young pace bowling unit will look to pick up pieces from the hammering of previous night even as the Indian top-order itches to put in a meaningful performance against Sri Lanka in the decider of the three-match T20I series here on Saturday.

After eking out a narrow last-ball win in the opener, India fell short by 16-run defeat as Sri Lanka levelled the three-match series 1-1. The inconsistency of a young attack was one of the reasons for the defeat but going forward Umran Malik and Shivam Mavi will know that it was great learning experience for them. They erred in their lines and didn't always bowl the fuller length, making the Sri Lankan batters job easy to guide the pace of the short pitched stuff. The Indian bowling unit bled runs with left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh, who returned to the playing XI after a spell of injuries, bowling as many as five no balls in his two overs. He stepped over the line three times on the trot in his first over, making him the first India bowler to bowl hat-trick of no-balls in T20I.

Mavi, who made a sensational T20I debut in the opening game and Arshdeep Singh added to the no ball count as they too missed the trick with skipper Hardik Pandya, who had to rely on his spinners, lamenting that the team needs to get its basics right. But the youngsters in the team are expected more chances as they gather valuable experience. "The young kids will have games like this at times, and I think we all need to be patient with them, (but) we need to be understanding that games like this can't happen," head coach Rahul Dravid said. "I think as they're learning, it's tough. It's not easy learning in international cricket. You have to learn on the job. I think we're going to have to have a little bit of patience with these guys," he added. On the batting front, the top order, once again, failed to provide a solid start. Shubman Gill succumbed to his second successive failure in the series and would be eager to capitalise on the opportunities in hand like Rahul Tripathi, who too perished cheaply in his debut game. It was the



second instance of the top-order collapse in the series. But despite half the team returning to the dugout under 60 runs, it was heartening to see India still go for chase as Axar Patel and Suryakumar Yadav almost pulled off the impossible. In Axar, India have found a reliable like for like replacement of Ravindra Jadeja. The team is expected to give its core more games to form lethal combinations as the team prepares for life beyond Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in the shortest format of the game. India is unlikely to make any

changes for the series decider with head coach Dravid asserting "we are not going to be chopping and changing people too much." As expected, Sri Lanka have given a solid fight to the hosts. The reigning Asia Cup champions came back strongly to level the series. However, they would like their middle order to perform better. Rajkot has is one of the flattest tracks in the country and is expected to be a batting belt. The toss could thus play an important role as both captains would like to chase. (PTI)

Teams From: India:

Hardik Pandya (C), Ishan Kishan (wk), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shubman Gill, Suryakumar Yadav (VC), Deepak Hooda, Rahul Tripathi, Jitesh Sharma, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel, Arshdeep Singh, Harshal Patel, Umran Malik, Shivam Mavi and Mukesh Kumar. Sri Lanka: Dasun Shanaka (C), Pathum Nissanka, Avishka Fernando, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Kusal Mendis, Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Charith Asalanka, Dhananjaya de Silva, Wanindu

Gianluca Vialli, former Italy striker, dies At 58



ROME, JAN 6 /--/ Gianluca Vialli, the former Italy striker who helped both Sampdoria and Juventus win Serie A and European trophies before becoming a player-manager at Chelsea, has died. He was 58. The Italian football federation confirmed Vialli's death on Friday. Vialli announced in 2018 that he had overcome a year-long battle with pancreatic cancer but then said in December 2021 that the disease had returned. With his condition worsening, Vialli announced in mid-December that he was temporarily stepping down from his role as the delegation chief for Italy's

national team. Vialli had been appointed delegation chief under Azzurri head coach Roberto Mancini, his longtime friend and former teammate. Vialli and Mancini were known as the "gemelli del gol," or "goal twins," when they played together at Sampdoria, leading the club based in Genoa to its only Serie A title in 1991 and its only European title in 1990 with the Cup Winners' Cup — plus four Italian Cup trophies. Vialli and Mancini also led Sampdoria to the 1992 European Cup final, which it lost to Barcelona at Wembley Stadium. (AP)

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