

## MP sanctions purchase & supply of three School buses for students of Diglipur region from MPLADS fund

PORT BLAIR, DEC 22/--/The Member of Parliament, Mr. Kuldeep Rai Sharma has sanctioned purchase and supply of three School Buses (one 26 seater and two 54 seater Non AC) to the State Transport Service unit of Diglipur, Transport Department from MPLADS fund for three specific routes of Diglipur region so that students of the region can comfortably reach their respective schools. The cost

of a 26 seater bus is Rs. 15 Lakhs while each 54 seater bus is Rs. 30 Lakhs. During his recent tour to North Andaman a large number of people including students highlighted the problem regarding shortage of STS buses and heavy crowds of passengers in various routes of North Andaman, for which students are finding it difficult to reach school on time. Students and parents

had informed the Member of Parliament that during school hours in some routes 75 to 80 students have to travel along with regular passengers in jam packed STS buses, making it difficult for girl students to travel.

Following the demands the Member of Parliament sanctioned purchase and supply of three School Buses (54 seater Non AC) for three routes viz Lamiya Bay

to Govt. Sr. Model Sr. Secondary School, Sitanagar via VK ZP School RK Gram, Diglipur Bazar; Khudirampur to Govt. Model Sr. Secondary School, Sitanagar via Diglipur Bazar and JalTirkeyRadhanagar to Govt. Model Sr. Secondary School, Sitanagar via Diglipur Bazar. Once these buses are made operational it will bring relief for hundreds of students of Diglipur region.



## Acute fund crunch, red tape looms ominous

### Spells death knell for SA Zilla Parishad

ROOPA LALL

PORT BLAIR, DEC 22/--/ Smt Pramila Kumari assumed the office of Adhyaksha, South Andaman Zilla Parishad at a time when the Covid-19 induced lockdown was just lifted and the islands were reeling under total lockdown for almost two years. She took the charge of Adhyaksha, SAZP on 19 March 2022, and had to start from zero. Keeping development as the main focus, she started clearing the backlogs and pending projects. She



undertook many official tours to Campbell Bay, along with senior IAS officers, heard the issues of the people and resolved many

*The Adhyaksha Zilla Parishad is hopeful that the Chief Secretary will consider their request for allotment of more funds to the Zilla Parishad so that rural development gets an impetus in the South Andaman region*

of the issues and grievances on the spot. She also visited other places like SwarajDweep and resolved issues concerning the area.

The manner in which she was able to resolve these issues has proved that women can also give a good administration. On being asked to inform about some of her specified achievements, a confident Adhyaksha said she was approached by some tour operators expressing displeasure on the closure of Scuba registration at Port Blair, which they said is having a negative impact on the tourism sector. She met the concerned authorities and the Scuba registration process was resumed. Another achievement for her is resolving the problems faced by patients of outer islands.

(Contd. on page-6)

## XTRAGREEN high performance Diesel launched



PORT BLAIR, DEC 22/--/ At a simple function held at Marina Refueling station, Carbyon's Cove on Thursday, XTRAGREEN, New Age High Performance Diesel was launched by Indian Oil Corporation Limited in UT of Andaman & Nicobar by Mr. L.K.S. Chauhan (Executive Director & State Head), WBSO in presence of Mr. Himanshu Ranjan, Chief General Manager, WBSO, MR. Manash Routray (General Manager Retail Sales), WBSO and Mr. Tahseen Rayaz (Divisional Retail Sales Head),

(Contd. on page-6)

## Croc attack: Residents seek putting in place preventive measures

ROOPA LALL

PORT BLAIR, DEC 22/--/ Crocodile menace has been growing in recent years.

Reports of attacks on residents by crocodiles has been pouring in from various places in the islands on a regular basis. Despite best efforts by the Forest department, there seem to be no end to incidents of



behind his house, along with his wife when all of a sudden, a crocodile attacked him and dragged him to the creek. Local residents of the area have immediately launched a manhunt searching for the victim since last evening. However, despite best efforts, the missing Vikas Sarkar has not been located. The Zilla Parishad Adhyaksha, Smt Prakash Adhikari and Pradhan, Mr. Durlav Das has expressed their displeasure over the incident and demanded that the Forest department take measures to prevent such attack by the wild beast. (File picture)



**YESHUVA**  
**TRAINING ACADEMY Pvt. Ltd**  
NEAR MUBARAK MALL, JUNGLGHAT, PORT BLAIR. 744 103  
Ph. No. 9476092535; 9933274252; 9476060793



**Admission Starts For Following Skill Courses Offered by NDA Govt. of India & All India Paramedical Council**

S.No	COURSE NAME	DURATION	QUALIFI
1.	AIRPORT MANAGEMENT	1YEAR	10 <sup>TH</sup> / 12 <sup>TH</sup>
2.	AIR & SEA CARGO MANAGEMENT	1YEAR	10 <sup>TH</sup> / 12 <sup>TH</sup>
3.	AIRHOSTESS TRAINING	1YEAR	10 <sup>TH</sup> / 12 <sup>TH</sup>
4.	CABIN CREW MANAGEMENT	1YEAR	10 <sup>TH</sup> / 12 <sup>TH</sup>
5.	PRE - PRIMARY EDUCATION	1YEAR	10 <sup>TH</sup> / 12 <sup>TH</sup>
6.	PRIMARY EDUCATION	1YEAR	10 <sup>TH</sup> / 12 <sup>TH</sup>
7.	X - RAY TECHNOLOGY	1YEAR	10 <sup>TH</sup> / 12 <sup>TH</sup>
8.	SANITARY INSPECTOR	1YEAR	10 <sup>TH</sup> / 12 <sup>TH</sup>
9.	MEDICAL LABORATORY TECHNICIAN	2YEARS	12 <sup>TH</sup>
10.	OPERATION THEATER ASSISTANT	2YEARS	12 <sup>TH</sup>
11.	AIRFARE & TICKETING	6MONTHS	10 <sup>TH</sup>
12.	AIRPORT GROUND STAFF TRAINING	6MONTHS	10 <sup>TH</sup>

➤ **ADMISSION GOING ON JANUARY - 2023 BATCH.**

➤ **ADMISSION FORM SUBMISSION LAST DATE 28/12/2022.**

➤ **FOR INTER ISLAND STUDENTS ONLINE CLASSES ALSO AVAILABLE**



## INVENT PUBLIC SCHOOL PROTHRAPUR ORGANIZED ART CRAFT AND SCIENCE EXHIBITION



On 21st December 2022 the Invent Public School Prothrapur organized Art Craft and Science exhibition and named it IMAGINE INVENT-INSPIRE & EXPLORE 2022. On this occasion Smti Kavita Udaya Kumar Chairperson P BMC and Uday Kumar Ex-Chairperson were the chief guest, the inauguration ceremony took place by ribbon cutting and lighting up of lamps in traditional way. The chief guests were welcomed by the students by performing a mesmerizing welcome dance and a welcome song. The chief guest praised the children for the active participation in exhibition despite of long covid-crisis, and realised the significance of Co Curricular activities along with the conventional academic performance, further the students performed various activities with much creativity with the same Zeal and vigor. Shri Susai Alexander the founder Chairman of Invent Public School and the President of Andaman and Nicobar Private School association delivered the welcome speech to honor the chief guest staff student and entire Invent fraternity, this marks the beginning of displaying and surveying the exhibits of the school to the parents and general public at large.

**Headmistress**  
**Invent Public School Middle**  
**Prothrapur, South Andaman**



**MONDAL JEWELLERS**

916 BIS HALL MARK GOLD ORNAMENTS

**New Collections Arrival for Merry Christmas and New Year**



**CELL: 9434281991, PH: 234778**

48 Shastri Road, Aberdeen Bazar, Port Blair-744101  
12/370 R.P. Road, Near Jama Masjid, Aberdeen Bazar, Port Blair



# Unfortunate: Dhankhar on Sonia's 'govt seeking to delegitimise judiciary' remarks

**NEW DELHI, DEC 22** /--/ Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday termed "inappropriate" the remarks made by UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi that the government is seeking to "delegitimise the judiciary" and urged political leaders not to subject high constitutional offices to partisan stances.

Speaking in the Upper House of Parliament, the chairman said Gandhi's statement is far distanced from his reflections as delegitimising the judiciary is beyond his

contemplation. "The observations are severely inappropriate, indicating a lack of faith in democracy, making this exceptional response unavoidable," he said. "The statement imparted by the Hon'ble chairperson of the UPA is far distanced from my reflections. Delegitimising the judiciary is beyond my contemplation. It is a pillar of democracy. I would urge and expect leaders across the political spectrum to bear in mind not to subject high constitutional offices to partisan stances," Dhankhar said.

Gandhi, who is also the chairperson of the Congress Parliamentary Party, calculated attempt to "delegitimise" the judiciary, describing it as a "troubling



accused the Centre on Wednesday of making a

new development". She also accused the government of

making an effort to reduce the standing of the judiciary in the eyes of the public. "A troubling new development is the calculated attempt underway to delegitimise the judiciary. Ministers and even a high constitutional authority have been enlisted to making speeches attacking the judiciary on various grounds. "It is quite clear that this is not an effort to provide reasonable suggestions for improvement. Rather, it is an effort to reduce the standing of the judiciary in the eyes of the public," the

former Congress chief alleged. Her remarks came in the wake of recent run-ins between the government and the judiciary over several issues, including the appointment of judges to higher courts.

Dhankhar criticised the judiciary earlier this month for scrapping the National Judicial Appointment Commission (NJAC) Bill related to the appointment procedure for judges in higher courts and termed it an instance of "severe compromise of parliamentary sovereignty". (PTI)

## UP CM reviews Covid situation, asks officials to ramp up testing, genome sequencing

**LUCKNOW, DEC 22** /--/ Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath Thursday reviewed the Covid-19 situation in the state at a high-level meeting with officials, and directed them to monitor the new coronavirus variant, ramp up testing and conduct genome sequencing of fresh cases. He also asked them to make people aware about wearing masks in crowded public places such as hospitals, buses, railway stations and markets. "It is possible that there may be an increase in new cases in the coming days, so we have to be alert. This is not the time to panic, but to be alert and careful," he said. According to a statement, the chief minister during the meeting with Team-9, a team of senior officials and ministers constituted for Covid-19 management, directed them to reactivate the Integrated Covid Command and Control Room (ICCC) and also activate the public address system.

The meeting comes in the wake of the sudden rise in cases in China and other countries over the past few days. The statement said the situation remains under control in Uttar Pradesh and the Covid positivity rate in December has been 0.01 per cent. The state currently has 62 active cases with no new infection being reported from 27,208 tests conducted in a 24-hour span. During the same period, 33 people recovered from the infection, the statement said. "The changing trend of Covid should be closely monitored. The Medical Education and Health Department should prepare with better coordination," he said, asking officials to maintain constant communication with the Union health ministry. Adityanath said, "The new variant of Covid-19



should be continuously monitored. Whatever new cases are found, their genome sequencing should be done. Daily testing should be increased. People suffering from serious, incurable diseases, and the elderly will have to take special precautions."

In accordance with the spirit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mantra of "Jahan Bimar, Wahin Upchar" (providing sick people treatment closer to their homes), cooperation of village heads, Asha and Anganwadi workers should be taken to bolster the state's Covid response, he said. "In the midst of Covid, large-scale work was done for the infrastructure development of the hospitals. ICUs, ventilators, and specialist doctors were deployed in every district. Ensure the functioning of medical equipment, proper availability of doctors, and paramedical staff in all hospitals. Be it rural or urban areas, every hospital should have adequate resources," Adityanath said. He also asked them to create new posts of specialist doctors by examining the updated requirements of medical institutions and ensure availability of life-saving medicines in the state. Asking officials to improve the functioning of the Medical Supplies Corporation, he said the works of the department should be reviewed at the health minister level.

Uttar Pradesh is the most vaccinated state with about 39.06 crore doses given so far, the statement said, adding as 4.48 crore precaution doses have also been administered. In view of the new variant of coronavirus, the delivery of precaution doses should be expedited and people should be made aware about its utility, the statement said. (PTI)



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with party leaders participating in Bharat Jodo Yatra in Haryana

## 'Chronology samjhiye': Congress's jibe at Centre over PM's Covid meeting

**NEW DELHI, DEC 22** /--/ "Understand the chronology," the Congress said on Thursday as it pointed out that the health minister has written to party leader Rahul Gandhi over Covid-19 concerns and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is reviewing the virus-related situation just days before the "Bharat Jodo Yatra" enters Delhi.

The opposition party alleged that the Modi government "suddenly agreed" to adjourn Parliament sine die on Friday so that its use of Covid to "defame and derail" the Bharat Jodo Yatra, a foot march being led by Gandhi, acquires a shade of respectability. The Congress's attack came on a day the prime minister reviewed the Covid situation in the country at a high-level meeting. In a tweet, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said: "4 cases of Omicron sub-variant driving Chinese surge were reported in Gujarat and Odisha in July, September

and November." "Health Minister writes a letter to Rahul Gandhi yesterday. PM is reviewing situation today. Bharat Jodo Yatra will enter Delhi day after. Ab Aap Chronology Samjhiye.... (now, understand the chronology)," he said.

In a subsequent tweet, Ramesh said Parliament will adjourn sine die on Friday and noted that this was a demand raised by the opposition parties long ago since there were not too many bills that were to be passed in the winter session. "Modi government which never listens, suddenly agreed so that its use of Covid-19 to defame and derail Bharat Jodo Yatra acquires a shade of respectability," he alleged. "Now, will the Modi govt make masks and sanitisers compulsory, curtail international flights and ban public gatherings? The Bharat Jodo Yatra will abide by a science-based and medical evidence-based protocol," Ramesh asserted. Accusing the government of selectively picking on the Bharat Jodo Yatra over

Covid concerns, the Congress had, on Wednesday, pointed out that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was organising marches in Karnataka and Rajasthan, and asserted that public health is far too serious an issue to play party politics on. Citing the concerns raised by three BJP MPs over the spread of the coronavirus, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has urged Gandhi to consider suspending the Bharat Jodo Yatra if Covid protocols cannot be adhered to.

The Bharat Jodo Yatra entered Haryana from Rajasthan on Wednesday. A mass contact initiative of the Congress, the yatra started from Kanyakumari on September 7 and has covered Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. It is slated to enter Delhi on December 24 and after a break of nine days, move on to Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and finally, Jammu and Kashmir. (PTI)

## BJP suspends 'Jan Aakrosh Yatra' in view of global rise in Covid cases

**NEW DELHI, DEC 22** /--/ The BJP has suspended its "Jan Aakrosh Yatra" in Rajasthan in view of a rising number of coronavirus cases globally, party general secretary Arun Singh said on Thursday.

With an eye on the Assembly polls due next year in Rajasthan, BJP chief J P Nadda launched the 'Jan Aakrosh Yatra' in the Congress-ruled state to corner the Ashok Gehlot government on issues related to farmers and governance on December 1. "The BJP has suspended Jan Aakrosh Yatra in Rajasthan in the wake of rising number of COVID-19 cases. For the BJP, people come first before politics. For us the safety of people, their health is priority," Singh said.

Describing the Congress' Bharat Jodo Yatra as a "morning and evening walk", Singh accused the party of playing with people's life for politics. "As for Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra, it is a flop show. It is nothing but a morning evening walk. The Congress should not play with the health of the people for its petty politics," he said. (PTI)

## PIL against permission to Sikhs to carry 'kirpans' on flights dismissed

**NEW DELHI, DEC 22** /--/ The Delhi High Court on Thursday dismissed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) against the permission accorded to Sikhs to carry 'kirpans' while travelling on civilian flights in India. "Dismissed," a bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad said while pronouncing the order. The court rejected the plea by Harsh Vibhore Singhal, who had said that a committee of stakeholders should be constituted to "apply its mind" to the issue of permitting kirpan on flights. The petitioner, a lawyer, challenged a March 4, 2022 notification by the Centre which said Sikh passengers shall have exceptional regulatory sanction to carry kirpans having blade length of not more than six inches and total length of not more than nine inches whilst on board any civilian flight in India that is operating on all domestic routes. The bench had earlier orally remarked that it was a policy of the government of India and the court cannot interfere with it unless it is arbitrary. The petitioner contended that he was "not questioning" the right to profess and practice a religion under Article 25 of the Constitution but only wanted the constitution of a committee of stakeholders to examine the issue. "I admit that Article 25 allows the carriage of a kirpan. But when you are flying, the regulator must apply its mind. I want constitution of a committee of stakeholders to examine the issue. If the committee feels that the notification is good, so be it. Not a problem," he had said.

The petitioner also said that as per the counter affidavit by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security, it has not formulated the policy but was following what the government has said. He also clarified that his intention was not to give a political overtone. The counsel for the authorities had said that safety measures have been put in place by the authorities, including stationing marshals. On August 18, the court had refused to pass an interim order staying the operation of the decision allowing Sikhs to carry kirpans having a blade length of up to six inches while travelling on domestic flights. The petition has said that permitting kirpans on flights, in terms of the presently permissible dimensions, has "dangerous ramifications for aviation safety" and "if kirpans are deemed safe only because of religion, one wonders how knitting/crochet needles, coconuts, screwdrivers, and small pen knives, etc. are deemed hazardous and prohibited". (PTI)

## Parliament passes bill to grant ST status to Narikoravan, Kurivikkaran communities in Tamil Nadu

**NEW DELHI, DEC 22** /--/ The Parliament on Thursday passed a bill which seeks to grant Scheduled Tribe status to Narikoravan and Kurivikkaran communities in Tamil Nadu. The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Second Amendment) Bill, 2022 was passed through a voice vote in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday. The bill, which was piloted by the Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Arjun Munda, has already been passed by Lok Sabha on December 15, 2022. The bill follows the suggestion of the Tamil Nadu government that the two communities be included in the list of Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the state. Replying to the debate, Munda said the number of these communities is very less and faced hardship and were deprived of their rights even after the independence of the country. The government is working on the tribal-related issues, removing discrepancies and has ensured to give justice to them, he added. The minister said various members have raised demands to add more communities from their respective areas to the tribal list and the government is sensitive about it. "The government is trying to solve the issues," he said, adding the government has taken similar requests for the states of Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka. While participating in the debate, members from different parties sought reservations for tribal communities from their areas.

M Thambidurai of the AIADMK supported the bill and said some more communities from Tamil Nadu need to be added in this. He said fishing is also hunting in the sea, so therefore there is a demand from Tamil Nadu to add fishermen into the tribal communities. Other communities such as Valmiki, Vaduga and kuruba must be included in the tribe list, Thambidurai said. Mamta Mohanta of the BJD said there are 62 communities from Orissa in the tribes' list. However, there are more communities, which are required to be added to the tribe's list who are deprived of their fundamental rights. G K Vasan of the TMC (M) said it was a long pending demand to include Narikoravan and Kurivikkaran communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Tamil Nadu. He also raised the demand to include fishermen, Valmiki and some other communities to be included in the tribal list. Mahua Majhi said the central government is "ignoring the request of tribals from Jharkhand of Sarna Code" for the inclusion of Sarna as a separate religion. Jharkhand has witnessed a fall in the tribal population. "In 1931, the tribal population was 38.3 per cent and in 2011 it was reduced to 26.2 per cent," she said, adding the tribal migrating to other states for jobs are deprived of the benefits.

Former prime minister and JDS member H D Devegowda also requested to consider some communities to be included in the tribal list. Describing it as a "great step and historical move", Tiruchi Siva of the DMK supported the bill and said these two communities are going to flourish in the coming days. "After seven decades of independence and becoming a republic, now we are identifying some of the communities to be brought under the tribes," he said. He also raised the issue of uprooting several tribal villages due to industrialisation and mining operations. The tribe lives with nature but they are unable to mix with the mainstream. GVL Narashima Rao (BJP) said this "bill clearly is an expression of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to the welfare of the marginalised sections" which have so far been neglected. (PTI)

## SIT to conduct probe into Disha Salian's death case: Maharashtra DyCM Fadnavis

**NAGPUR, DEC 22** /--/ Maharashtra Deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said in the state Assembly that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) will be formed to conduct a probe into the death of Disha Salian, the former manager of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput. According to police, Salian (28) allegedly committed suicide by jumping from a high-rise building in Malad area of Mumbai on June 8, 2020. Rajput, 34, was found hanging at his apartment in Mumbai's Bandra area on June 14, 2020. Leaders from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had demanded a probe into Salian's death. "The case is already with the Mumbai Police. Those who have proof can furnish it. This will be probed through a SIT," BJP leader Fadnavis, who is also the state home minister, said in the House. Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar said this should not be viewed from any political angle. Fadnavis said the probe will be done in an impartial manner without targeting anyone. The ruling alliance MLAs sought formation of the SIT for a probe into Salian's death. The House was adjourned five times over the issue. (PTI)

## IAF's "critical deficiencies" must be addressed on priority: Air Chief

**NEW DELHI, DEC 22** /--/ The "critical deficiencies" of the Indian Air Force like shortage of fighter squadrons and force multipliers must be addressed on priority so that the force retains its combat edge, Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari said on Thursday, amid mounting concerns over China boosting its air power at a rapid pace.

In an address at a seminar, the Chief of the Air Staff said India's neighbourhood continues to remain volatile and uncertain and that the country must enhance its collective strength by partnering with nations which share common beliefs and values. The comments by Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari came amid fresh tensions between

India and China following a clash between their armies in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh on December 9 that was triggered by Chinese PLA's attempt to change the status quo in the Yangtse area. There have been reports of China significantly modernising its air force and strengthening deployments of its air assets at major air bases close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC). "There are certain critical deficiencies like shortage of fighter squadrons and force multipliers which must be addressed on priority to retain our combat edge," he said addressing the 19th Subroto Mukherjee seminar on the subject 'India's Eminence in the Emerging World Order'.

The Chief of Air Staff

also asserted that there can be no soft power without adequate and credible hard power. "Only when our borders, airspace and coasts are secure will India



Marshal Chaudhari

flourish." Delving into the evolving regional security matrix including the situation in Indo-Pacific, Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari said the "IAF will be expected to contribute across the full spectrum of conflict. Air

power has the capability to deter, defend and if required punish the adversary in a conflict." The number of fighter squadrons of the IAF is going down as several of them have been phased out in recent years while a number of others are due for number-plating (retirement) in the next few years that include the Jaguar fleet. At present, the IAF has around 31 fighter squadrons against the sanctioned strength 42 fighter squadrons. Each squadron comprises around 18 jets. In October, Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari acknowledged that his force would not be able to reach the sanctioned strength of 42 fighter squadron anytime soon, notwithstanding upcoming inductions. "The Indian Air Force needs to

evolve into an aerospace power and to do so, there is a need to develop the capability to fight and win tomorrow's wars," he said.

The IAF chief said that multi-domain operations and hybrid warfare are going to stay and "we must, therefore, realign and reform to keep pace with technology to remain relevant." In his remarks, the IAF chief talked about India's neighbourhood remaining "volatile and uncertain". "Amidst this volatility, we must enhance our collective strength by partnering with nations which share common beliefs and values. We must use our image as a stable country with considerable economic heft to forge mutually beneficial relationships and strategic partnerships," he said. "It is

essential that we retain our strategic autonomy and to do that, in my opinion, a strategy of balancing, as espoused by John Mearsheimer would be the way forward," he added. "When we look at the Indo-Pacific region, we see great power politics in play where an established super power is increasingly being challenged by an established regional power with global ambitions," he said. "The outcome of this great power competition will have repercussions for all major players in the region. In the existing world order, where national interests and realpolitik dictate the actions of state players, there would always be an overlap between competition and cooperation," the IAF chief said. (PTI)



## AaoKhosishKare initiative by PBMC



**PORT BLAIR, DEC 22/--/** Port Blair Municipal Council in collaboration with GIZ-India organised AaoKhosishKare initiative valedictory under the Clean-up Port Blair campaign at Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Auditorium on 20.12.2022. In this program, 15 schools, Durga Puja committees, the Tourist Operators association, Hotels, NGOs and sanitary workers of PBMC have participated. Inter-school competitions were held a month-long ago on waste to wealth and video-making competitions. In this competition, GSS, Junglighat, GSS, Dairy Farm, Sagritara School, GSSS (Girls), GSS, South Point, Kamaraj English Medium School, GMS, Carbyns Cove, Ummat Public School Austinabad, Sarashwathi Shishu Mandir, Carmel SSS, KVI-1, VKV Lamba Line, VKV Ranchi Basthi and RGT Vidhyalaya participated. The winners have been awarded for their creativity, reusable and thinking. Awarded the eco-friendly Durga Puja Celebration for pandals. Junglighat Durga Puja Pandal won the 1st prize eco-friendly Durga Puja Trophy, 2nd Premnagar Puja and 3rd Delanipur Durga Puja Panda. Green Star Rating certificate and trophies has been awarded to the hotels like; Sinclair, Sea Shell, Sea Shell Coral Cove, Mansha Regency, Holiday Inn and Lemon Tree Hotel. NGOs were awarded for their contribution to cleaning up Port Blair. Ghost net collection Centre was inaugurated at

### New admission to pre-sea training at DBRAIT

**PORT BLAIR, DEC 22/--/** The application form for new admission to 2 yrs Pre-Sea Training for Diploma Holders (Post Diploma in marine Engineering course) at Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Institute of Technology (DBRAIT) is available at the Maritime Section of DBRAIT. The last date for submission of filled in application form is Dec 30, 2022. This course is duly approved by DG Shipping, Mumbai and is a residential course. This course is of 24 months duration and the entry qualification is Diploma in Mechanical/Electrical/EEE/Diploma Ship Building Engineering with 50% marks in final year of the Diploma and 50% marks in English, either in Class X or XII. For further details about the course, fees structure, etc., candidates may contact to the Maritime Section of DBRAIT during working hours (Mob- 9679553501 / 9933224884).

### Tsunami anniversary: Boats directed to shift locations

**PORT BLAIR, DEC 22/--/** In connection with the observance of Tsunami anniversary on Dec 26, 2022, all IV boats plying from Rajiv Gandhi Water Sports Complex have been directed to shift from Aberdeen Jetty to Junglighat Jetty on Dec.25, 2022 by 1700 hrs positively. No vessel will be permitted to ply/anchor in the area between Netaji Subash Chandra Bose Island and Aberdeen Jetty off Marina Park on Dec.26. Normal ferry service thereafter can be resumed from Aberdeen Jetty on Dec.27 onwards.

Similarly, all owners of Jetski scooters have also been directed to park their Jetski scooters at parking place by 1700 hrs on Dec.25, 2022. No water sports activities will be permitted on Dec.26, 2022 from Aberdeen Jetty.

Junglighat Fish Landing Centre by the Chairperson and Fisheries department for Fisherman community to store their Fishing gears waste at centre. Mrs. Kavita, Chairman, PBMC was the Special Guest on the occasion. She released the Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) for Coastal Clean-up which may support to the different NGOs for clean-up planning. Stickers on waste management for different stakeholders like; Fisherman Boats for not throwing fishing gears in sea, Taxi & Buses, for tourist Be a responsible Tourist and lot more and released a Guide for the Tourism Sector to Combat Marine Litter in Marine and Coastal Areas of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and a compendium of Best Practices of Port Blair Municipal Council activities. Elected representatives of various Wards of the Council were also present during the function. The Civic Chief gave prizes and trophies to winners and participants. Shri. Avinash Kumar Singh, SE, PBMC was given the presidential address. Mrs. Soma Biswas, briefed about the CCPME and SOP for Coastal clean-up. Shri. Azizur Rahman Sr. Vice Chairman, PBMC shared his experience on Clean-up Port Blair.

Meanwhile, Swachata Awareness Team staged a skit on waste management and positivity for marine life. Artistic items from waste to wealth made by students of Port Blair Municipal areas were displayed as an exhibit. Earlier, Shri. Aviral Saxena, Technical Expert, GIZ was given the brief on AaoKhosishKare initiative.

## Innovation club by IGNOU



**PORT BLAIR, DEC 22/--/** Dr. Alok Chaube, Registrar (Admin), IGNOU, HQ, New Delhi inaugurated Innovation Club' as part of mission on 21st December, 2022 in the premises of IGNOU, Regional Centre Port Blair. This Centre would be 25th Innovation club @ ignou to spread the messages Hon'ble president of India was started in 2015 for creating a culture of innovation in the university. In his presidential address, the Chief Guest Dr. Alok Chaube, Registrar (Admin) highlighted the importance of Innovation Clubs and also pressed upon incubation clubs for effective implementations of the very objective of innovation clubs. Further he said that IGNOU itself an excellent example of innovation and startups by the IGNOU students and alumni. Indeed, IGNOU was established during the year 1985, when India needs to

increase GER, which India was facing challenges in higher education field.

Dr. Alok Chaube, Registrar (Admin) also appreciated the efforts of IGNOU to spread the higher education to unreach to reach out and also complementing the objectives of NEP-2020. Moreover, Dr. Alok Chaube, Registrar (Admin) highlighted that some of the key elements of NEP-2020 is already implemented by IGNOU and it also incorporated in its degree programmes offered to various sections of society. Earlier Dr. RVR Murthy, Regional Director welcomed the Chief Guest and appraised the working of RC in geographically inaccessible areas like A & N Islands, where IGNOU reaches almost all Islands and significantly to fulfill Higher Education requirements of learners. Shri. Sanjiv Kumar, Section Officer proposed vote of thanks.

## Gram Sabha of GP Shivampuram held



**PORT BLAIR, DEC 22/--/** The 3rd Gram Sabha of Shivampuram Gram Panchayat was held at Shivampuram Community Hall on Wednesday under the Chairmanship of Pradhan of GP Shivampuram, Mr. Venkateswar Rao. Mr. Vaibhav Rikari Assistant Commissioner, Mayabunder and Rangat was the chief guest and lit the traditional lamp to inaugurate the Gram Sabha.

Addressing the gathering, the Assistant Commissioner explained in detail the importance of Gram Sabha and the need of PRI members to attend the Gram Sabha meeting. He interacted with the local residents of Shivampuram where the public talked about their needs and necessity. He assured action on their needs. The agenda of the

Gram Sabha was to finalize the Gram Panchayat Development Plan 2023-2024. A host of local issues were put forth to the Assistant Commissioner, along with the proposal of conducting a revenue camp to monitor progress status of various works. The Assistant Commissioner assured to look into the matters raised by the Pradhan of Shivampuram.

## Annual athletic meet of Kishorinagar School held

EOI CORRESPONDENT

**DIGLIPUR, DEC 22/--/** The annual athletic meet of Government Kishorinagar Senior Secondary School was conducted on Thursday at the school's playground. The Gram Panchayat Pradhan, Smti Rita Dhali inaugurated the mega sports event of the region in the morning. She appreciated the efforts taken by the school management in organizing the event after prolonged difficult times of corona pandemic.

All together 37 sports events were conducted, in which the Girls' participation was very encouraging. With his outstanding performance Animesh Mondal of class IX, bagged the Boys' champion trophy. Among the Girls, Little Annesha Mondal of class VI, stunned everyone by showing her incredible skills and she was declared the Girls' Champion.

Giving away the prizes at the valedictory function the Medical officer In-charge Dr. Silvester Titus lauded the students for their brilliant performance and called upon them to excel in academics also. The



School's Principal In-charge, Mr. K. Sashi Sarkar proposed the vote of thanks and hoped that the public representatives would continue their support to the school for achieving excellence in all concerned fields. The Senior Science teacher, Mr. Gour Prasad Biswas informed that the corona pandemic had put a halt on the school's activities and the students were eagerly waiting for this mega sports opportunity to exhibit their talent. He said, this session though it took

some time for the students to get back to their normal schooling rhythm, but now they have adjusted themselves and their creative work in the zonal science Exhibition was appreciated by the audience, held recently at Diglipur.

Large number of villagers turned up today, at the playground to witness the sports skills of their children. Established in 1951 the Kishorinagar school is one of the oldest schools in this vast rural belt and this was the 62nd annual meet.

## Rozgarevam Sawrojgar Mela' on Dec 28

**PORT BLAIR, DEC 22/--/** The A&N Islands Khadi & Village Industries Board jointly with the Industries Department & Employment Exchange and Rural Development, A&N Administration will be organizing a 'Rozgarevam Sawrojgar Mela' in association with like-minded agencies implementing Govt. sponsored schemes for providing career guidance. The programme will be held on Dec. 28, 2022 in the Multipurpose Hall of Subash Gram, Diglipur, North Andaman from 10

am to 4 pm. The main objective of the Rozgarmela is to provide a platform between the self-employment implementing Departments, private employers, and job seekers to set up their livelihood venture duly availing benefits of Govt. sponsored schemes or placement in private sector. During the programme, information kiosks separately for each participating Department and Banks will be setup to disseminate information to the interested beneficiaries on the

formalities / procedure for application submission and benefits of the various schemes being implemented by the respective Departments. As a part of the programme, the Employment Exchange will be organizing a placement drive for the job seekers in the private sector firms on the spot. Unemployed youth have been requested to attend the programme and make optimum utilization of the services being provided by the Govt. Departments.

# Shyam N Shyam

**Festive Collection**  
**NAYRA - CUT**  
**STRAIGHT PANT SETS**  
**SHARARA & PLAZZO**  
**CROP-TOP LEHENGAS**  
*Special Plus Size Collection. Sizes Upto 3XL*

Aberdeen Bazaar, Port Blair, Andamans

# Festival Sale

**Free 32" Smart TV**  
*Offer Valid on Limited Stock*

**Preeta Cars India Pvt Ltd | Renault Port Blair**  
Phoenix Bay, South Andaman-744102 | email : [gecsalespb@gmail.com](mailto:gecsalespb@gmail.com)  
Contact Us: 9564783849 | 9564783856

**DIAL : 03192 - 237777/246666**

**Haywizz**  
Where else

**Free HOME DELIVERY**

**INDIAN /CHINESE/TANDOORI CUISINE**

**#36 MA ROAD, PHOENIX BAY**  
**HAYWIZZ PORT BLAIR**

**naturals**  
India's No.1 hair & beauty salon

**GET US TO YOUR DOORSTEP**  
WITH JUST A CALL!  
**HOME SERVICE**

**9531837777 / 7695040077**  
**Free Pick & Drop**



*The thing I hate about an argument is that it always interrupts a discussion*  
**G. K. Chesterton**

## Covid back at centrestage

As we approach three years since the initial spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, there's much that we've learned, and plenty we'd like to forget. The World Health Organisation (WHO) keeps saying - COVID-19 isn't over. The world is seeing this in China, which only recently lifted its zero-COVID policy and loosened most restrictions following unprecedented public protests and calls for the resignation of President Xi Jinping. Now the Chinese on their own are confining themselves to their homes as a COVID surge similar to the one at the start of the pandemic sweeps across the country, particularly in densely populated urban centers such as the capital Beijing and financial hub Shanghai. Covid is back at the centre of India's health and political map with the government advising people to get vaccinated and mask up, and saying random sample testing will be conducted at airports for passengers arriving from China and other countries. With the spread of the virus, a political storm brewed with Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya writing to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to consider suspending the Bharat Jodo Yatra and the party hitting back with anger. Three cases of the Omicron subvariant BF.7, apparently the strain driving China's current surge of Covid cases, have already been detected in India, prompting the administration to sound a nationwide alert. Two cases of BF.7 have been reported from Gujarat and one from Odisha.

Mandaviya chaired a Covid review meeting with experts and senior officials stressing the need for continued surveillance even though there is no overall increase in the Covid caseload as of now. He directed that the surveillance system for whole genome sequencing of positive case samples to track variants through the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) network be strengthened. States/UTs have been requested to send samples of all COVID-19 positive cases to INSACOG Genome Sequencing Laboratories (IGSLs) on a daily basis, for sequencing, to track new variants, if any. India has been witnessing a steady decline in cases with average daily cases falling to 158 in the week ending December 19, 2022. However, a consistent rise in global daily average cases has been reported for the last six weeks, with 5.9 lakh daily average cases reported in a week. NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr V K Paul has noted that only 27-28 per cent of India's eligible population had taken the Covid precaution dose and said people should take the jab and also wear masks in crowded places. As we reach the season when holiday gatherings are held, everyone needs to be equally cautious. Cold weather ensures that people will be getting together indoors. And though COVID concerns may have taken a backseat for some, the danger remains, and have been joined by a problematic flu season this year.

# 2023 may be worse than 2022 for India's workforce

## REFLEX ACTION

**Dr. Gyan Pathak**

higher prices of food and energy. Tighter financial market conditions are weighing on the demand for capital goods which may held back prospects of big required investment to generate new jobs in a big way.

Large scale job cuts in general and in IT sector in particular in recent months has already tightened the country's job market conditions, though there has been demand for the higher skilled jobs with greater salaries. Bigger part of the workforce has been facing joblessness and unemployment which has already started rising since September 2022. As of December 16, the unemployment rate in India on 30 days moving average is 9.3 per cent according the CMIE data. It was only 6.43 per cent in September, which rose to 7.77 per cent in October despite the festival season in the country, and 8 per cent in November. Unemployment rate is deteriorating in both rural and urban areas of the country, which stood at 9 per cent and 9.7 per cent respectively as on December 16. Unemployment rate in rural areas was 5.84 per cent, which rose to 8.04 per cent in October, and remained considerably high at 7.55 per cent in November. As for urban areas, unemployment rate in September was 7.7 per cent which rose to 8.96 per cent in November after a slight improvement to 7.21 per cent in October. Unemployment scenario in the country is thus most likely to remain volatile with disturbing higher rates.

India has a rural employment guarantee programme named MGNREGA, but there is no such programme for the urban areas, where the joblessness and unemployment more acute. Modi government has reduced the MGNREGA budget for the current fiscal by almost 25 per cent and reduced it to Rs73,000 crore at a time when demand for work in the rural

areas were high. Rural labours were even discouraged not to demand for work by delaying payment for them for months. Even though, Union government owes Rs 7,655 crores to states under the scheme. Of this Rs 3,207 crore is pending for material component and Rs 4,447 as wages. States are already fund starved and during recent budget consultations states had requested the Union Minister of Finance Nirmala Sitharaman not to burden them further with central schemes if Centre does not pay its due in time.

Lack of job opportunities both in urban and rural areas is already at disturbing level, and now when India cannot escape the global economic slowdown, as is being asserted by various national and international analysts, Indian labour market will suffer with India's declined ability and capacity of new job creation on the one hand and cannot retain all the present jobs on the other, which is almost an imminent prospect for 2023. It should also be noted that despite economic recovery in 2022-23, labour force participation (LPR) has settled at 39.6 per cent in November, according to CMIE data, but only a little above 38.8 per cent in June 2022. In fact, it is still lower than 40 per cent average during the last two years of the pandemic. It remains a matter of concern, and with strong prospect of economic growth deceleration, the situation become even worse in 2023 than during the pandemic period, when 80 crore people were getting free foodgrains which is to end this month. People are still not in a position to afford the high prices of foodgrains and vegetables which have been the chief cause of inflation beyond the RBI tolerable limit of 6 per cent, with and exception in November when CPI eased a little to 5.88 per cent, and all indications suggest that it is again likely to increase to 6.5 per cent in December. With depleting foodgrain stock their prices are likely to increase in the coming months. The situation will worsen the condition of the workforce especially when out of jobs and social security coverage. (IPA)



An artwork depicting the 28th Kolkata International Film Festival at Nandan on Thursday--Arijit Ganguly

## Bangladesh takes up power sector reforms focusing on green energy

With crippling power cuts continuing, Bangladesh Government is going all out to buy more power from its regional neighbours, and also examining the possibility of producing 'green energy' by using hydrogen, following recent measures taken in advanced Western countries.

The ruling Awami League (AL) Government has been subjected to stinging attacks from the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and other forces for what the latter see as a miserable official failure to address the country's power woes. Since load shedding in Bangladesh had impacted overall industrial production long before the Ukraine conflict began, it has become easier for the opposition to target the incumbent Ministry for its alleged inability to anticipate the emergency-like situation that has followed. There has been some progress happily for Bangladesh Government: in its bid to buy more hydropower from Nepal, it has welcomed the environmental clearance given by local authorities required for implementing the major 683 megawatt Sunkoshi-3 project.

Dhaka-based officials have offered to invest substantially in the project -- estimated cost over Rs (Indian) 160 billion -- which would enable them to import a sizable quantity of power.

Further Bangladesh looking ahead at its long term power requirements, had indicated that its participation in Sunkoshi scheme could be deemed a pilot developmental effort between two South Asian neighbours, opening a new chapter in regional economic ties.

If things went according to plan, Bangladesh could follow up its investments in Sunkoshi by participating in a proposed much larger 1700-plus megawatt hydropower project in the medium term.

Power from the Sunkoshi project however, would only partially fulfill the sharply rising demand for power in Bangladesh. The proposed transmission line from the high Nepal hills to Bheramara (Bangladesh) supply point would require an approval from India. While Kathmandu and Dhaka-based authorities in their preliminary talks have agreed to approach India formally, no official request for permission has been made yet. However, at the next round of talks between the two participating countries, the first to be held since August 2022, this could change. Initially a supply of around 50 MWs from Sunkoshi is being envisaged in view of existing terrain conditions and other factors.

According to Dhaka-based media, the country urgently needed to arrange additional supply of 10,000 MWs, in the medium term, to meet the growing demands for its rapidly expanding industrial sector. Following positive talks between leaders/officials of both countries, Bangladesh had indicated plans to draw at least 500 MWs from the proposed Karnali hydropower project, scheduled to produce 900 MWs. It would

also draw a large amount of power from another project at Karnali that is being implemented by the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) of India.

Before the war broke out in Europe, Dhaka officials were seeking to ensure a daily supply target of around 30,000 MWs through increased domestic production and major imports from within the region, especially from India and Nepal. With its gas reserves expected to last only for another 2/3 years, Bangladesh is increasing its coal production to raise its thermal power production. It currently imports around 1100 MWs daily from India, receiving the supplies at Bheramara and Comilla, from Baharampur (West Bengal) and Tripura, respectively. However, production from the 1200-MW Rooppur thermal power plant, implemented by major Indian companies, would begin soon, which should help Bangladesh meet especially its winter power demands more comfortably, looking forward.

The problem for the ruling AL authorities is that sincere as it is in its efforts to work out solutions to meet the demand for more power, most hydropower schemes will need some time to become operational. And time is something the AL cannot afford to lose, facing general elections scheduled for Dec 2023. As things stand, many details still remain unsettled. The nature of

bilateral or trilateral co-operation and the use of suitable instrumentalities need to be settled urgently. The three countries need to work out what will work best -- Government to government dealings, with only official agencies being involved in the production/transmission/distribution and overall regional supply; or usual private sector/public sector transactions, or a PPP model.

There would be key roles to be played in the emerging regional power production scenario by organisations like the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), the NTPC and major Indian non-Government Indian private entities like the Adanis and Reliance. Both are currently active in several projects in the neighbouring countries.

The proposal to consider the increasing use of hydrogen in future 'green' non-polluting power generating schemes seems somewhat futuristic in the present context of Bangladesh power sector trends. But the authorities appear determined not to pursue the idea just as an advanced whose time is yet to come. Bangladesh authorities have increased the use of electricity-run vehicles on a minor scale and propose to step up such efforts.

Regardless of the running battle between the AL and the BNP and the turbulent record of past destructive politics in Bangladesh, it cannot be denied that when it comes to fighting the worst impacts of global warming and climate change, the country stands firmly united. (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						

ACROSS						DOWN					
1	Disorderly fight					1	Visage				
5	Ignited					2	Lessens				
7	Person under age					3	Correct				
8	Wine					4	Location				
10	Precious stone					5	Ship's record				
12	Melody					6	Anger				
13	Finish					9	Cricket scores				
14	Lure					11	Encountered				
16	Untidy state					14	Curve				
17	Favourite					15	Dress				
18	Transmitted					16	Cleaning implement				
20	Mild explosion					17	Concretion of nacre				
23	Cargo					18	Strike with open hand				
24	Exclude					19	Incites				
25	Condensed moisture					21	Lytic poem				
26	Tool					22	Church seat				

SUDOKU:3734								
	6			9				
	9	8						3
4		5				6	9	
7	3			1	4			
				7		6		
					8	3		4
	8	2					1	5
3							2	7
				6			3	

Yesterday's Solution 3733								
8	3	5	4	1	9	2	6	7
2	6	1	5	7	3	4	9	8
9	7	4	6	2	8	1	5	3
4	9	2	8	3	6	7	1	5
7	5	6	1	4	2	3	8	9
1	8	3	9	5	7	6	4	2
6	2	9	3	8	4	5	7	1
3	1	8	7	6	5	9	2	4
5	4	7	2	9	1	8	3	6

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 1742								
C	L	O	T			A	G	E
A			V	I	A		L	
S	C	A	R			S	P	A
T			L	E	N	T		R
L			D	O	E		D	I
E	B	B		T	E	E		A
			R		E	L	A	N
E	L	A	N	D		G	U	S
M	O	V	E			A	L	L
S	T	E	W				E	L

### 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.



Cancellation of FPS

PORT BLAIR, DEC 22/--/ Ration card holders attached with the following Fair Price Shops as tabulated below at Col. No.2 have been cancelled with effect from 1st January, 2023, onwards on their own request.

Sl. No.	Name of the FPS & Name of the owner requested for cancellation	Proposed fair price shop No. & Name for transfer of ration cards
1	FPS No.621 Prithivi General Store Bhatubasti, Port Blair	FPS No. 43 CCS Ltd. Bhatubasti
2	FPS No.392, M.S.Ravi Stores Haddo, Port Blair	FPS No.19 CCS Ltd. Haddo, Port Blair
3	FPS No.691 Smti. Meera W/o ShriHarban Singh, Caddlegunj, Ferrargunj Tehsil	FPS No.214 Shri. Ganesh BhoopathyTushnabad
4	FPS No.389 Shri Mathew Joseph School Line	FPS No. 613 ShriUday Kumar School Line
5	FPS No.572 S.Siva Kumar Buniyadabad	FPS No.93 Shri.AbdulWahabBuniyadabad
6	FPS No.134 ShriM.S.ValuvalliGaracharma	FPS No.148 Shri.P.S.V.Raja Garacharma
7	FPS No.652 ShriMohd. Yunus, Mannarghat	FPS No.579 Shri N.V AbdualManafMannarghat
8	FPS No.302 ShriM.Ganeshan, Dignabad	FPS No.254 ShriBhoopathyDignabad

Hence, all the ration cards registered with FPS No 621, 392, 691, 389, 572, 134, 652 & 302 have been requested to draw their ration articles from the above fair price shops (i.e. 43,19,214,613,93,148, 579 & 254 respectively) as indicated at col. 3 from the month of Jan, 2023 onwards.

BSFenhancesbordervigil in Punjab amidfrequentPakistani drone movements underfog cover

CHANDIGARH, DEC 22 /--/The Border Security Force has stepped up vigil near the India-Pakistan border in Punjab amid increasing attempts by smugglers to push narcotics and weapons through drones under the cover of dense fog, an official has said.

Drone movements from across the border to drop weapons and heroin into Indian Territory have gone up considerably in the past few days in the wake of dense fog enveloping the region. "We have increased patrolling and 'nakas' (checkpoints) and BSF (Border Security Force) personnel are alert to thwart any bid by smugglers," said a senior official of the force. A Punjab Police official said the movement of over 200 Pakistani drones had been recorded near the international border this year. The officials said smugglers had increased their activities along the international border as the area was blanketed by dense fog. With the fog reducing visibility to almost zero, BSF troops are relying on the buzzing noise to intercept unmanned aerial vehicles entering from Pakistan.

In just one month, they have gunned down eight drones, including

hexacopters with six rotors, near the border areas, the BSF official said. Frequent drone movements have been recorded in Amritsar, Tarn Taran and Fazilka districts, especially during the nights and early mornings, he said. The smugglers have also started covering the lights on the drones using adhesive tape so that they cannot be sighted. Earlier this month, BSF troops recovered 25 kg heroin, a pistol and 50 rounds of ammunition, allegedly dropped from a Pakistani drone near the border in Fazilka, he said. The smugglers are also using other modes to push narcotics into the country. On Wednesday, the BSF recovered another 25 kg of suspected heroin from a farming field in Fazilka around 2 am.

The troops were alerted after noticing some activity on both sides of the border fence near the Gatti Ajai Singh village. BSF troops fired towards Pakistani smugglers ahead of the border fence. However, the smugglers managed to run away taking advantage of the dense fog. Later, during a search of the area, 25 packets of suspected heroin and a PVC pipe were recovered, another BSF official said. (PTI)

Vintage car show to be held inVadodara from Jan 6 to 8

AHMEDABAD, DEC 22 /--/Nearly 200 vintage cars will be displayed at the much awaited heritage motoring show, 21 Gun Salute Concours d'Elegance 2023, to be held next month in Gujarat's Vadodara city, its organisers have said.

The show, one of the most anticipated automobile events in Asia, will be held from January 6 to 8, 2023 at the Laxmi Vilas Palace of Vadodara, Madan Mohan, chairman and managing trustee of the 21 Gun Salute Heritage and Cultural Trust, told reporters here on Wednesday. The spotlight of the event will be on the 1948 Bentley Mark VI Drophead Coupe, a single-design car specially made for Maharani Shanta Devi of Baroda and will be grandly exhibited at the show after it exited India in 1966, said a release issued by the organisers. "The vintage beauty has roamed around the world and sat in garages adorned by famous collectors from America and Spain, but 21 Gun Salute successfully bought the Indian automobile honour and history back home in 2015," it said.

"Bringing back the spark and charm of the beauty was painstaking as its restoration required its parts, upholstery and even the shade of its original paint to be imported from London. Now, the Maharani car will bask in the glory it deserved for all these lost years," the release said. The event will showcase more than 200 international and national vintage engines, 25 international cars and 120 veteran bikes, it said. "The yet another grand celebration of Indian heritage together with 200 plus featured marques from around the globe in the 10th edition of the 21 Gun Salute Concours d'Elegance will go down in history as an exclusive heritage motoring fiesta," Mohan said. (PTI)

Maha legislature: Ruling dispensation demands probe into phone calls made by 'AU' to actress Rhea Chakraborty

NAGPUR, DEC 22 /--/ Members of the ruling coalition in Maharashtra staged a demonstration in the legislature complex here on Thursday and demanded an inquiry into Lok Sabha member Rahul Shewale's claim of several phone calls from a person with 'AU' initials to actress Rhea Chakraborty, the girlfriend of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

Shewale, who belongs to the Shiv Sena faction led by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, had on Wednesday flagged in the Lok Sabha the issue of alleged suicide of Rajput and asked about the status of the CBI's inquiry into his death. Legislator Pratap Sarnaik, also part of the Shinde camp, on Thursday said Shewale had claimed there were 44 phone calls from 'AU' to Chakraborty. Members of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Shinde faction staged a demonstration in the Vidhan Bhavan complex on Thursday while holding banners which read: "AU kaun hain" (who is AU). Sarnaik demanded an inquiry into the allegations raised by Shewale and to find out who was 'AU'. Legislators of the ruling dispensa-

tion also raised slogans against Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Chhagan Bhujbal for allegedly insulting Mumbai by calling it the 'Kombdi' (hen) that lays the golden egg.

Bhujbal, a former minister, on Wednesday said he had only used the popular Marathi version of the phrase 'to kill the goose that lays the golden egg'. Meanwhile, members of the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi also staged a demonstration in the Vidhan Bhavan complex and again demanded the resignation of CM Shinde over a Nagpur land

allotment decision by him as the urban development minister in the previous MVA government. The opposition members have been making the demand for Shinde's resignation since Tuesday. On Thursday, Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly Ajit Pawar, his counterpart in the Council Ambadas Danve, Congress leader Nana Patole, Shiv Sena (UBT) legislator Aaditya Thackeray, NCP's Rohit Pawar and others were part of the demonstration where slogans were also raised alleging corruption in the Nagpur Improvement Trust (NIT) land allotment

case. The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court last week ordered status quo on a decision taken by Shinde, when he was the urban development minister in the previous Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, over the allotment of land

meant for slum dwellers to private persons. Danve on Tuesday said the NIT, which comes under the urban development department, had reserved a plot measuring 4.5 acres in the city for the construction of houses for rehabilitation of slum dwellers. (PTI)

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL ASSAM RIFLES, SHILLONG-10

CORRIGENDUM

Please read K.S. Thakur, Deputy Commandant Staff Officer-2 (Recruitment) instead of Ganga Singh, Deputy Commandant Staff Officer-2 (Recruitment) published the advertisement in this newspaper for RECRUITMENT THROUGH COMPASSIONATE GROUND APPOINTMENT SCHEME IN ASSAM RIFLES 2023.

Sd/-, PRO, Assam Rifles, Shillong

e-TENDER NOTICE  
No. DB-Tender/Elect/WSD/2022-23/4766 dt.16/12/2022

The Executive Engineer, Workshop Division, APWD, Port Blair invites on behalf of President of India, online Item Rate tenders from the approved and eligible Enlisted Electrical Contractors of the Andaman PWD and Non APWD Contractors irrespective of their enlistment subject to the condition that they have experience of having successfully completed of work dealing with Electrical works in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands with Govt. Organizations & do not have any adverse remarks, for the work mentioned below.

- Name of Work:-** Providing IEI and EEI to Permanent stalls, Stage lighting, Main gate and parking area at backside of ITF ground for the "Island Tourism Festival 2022" at ITF Ground, Port Blair.**SW:-** Providing IEI & EEI to Permanent stalls, Main gate and parking area at backside of ITF ground. **Estimate Cost Put To Tender:-`**.10,28,246/-**Earnest Money:-`**.20,565/- **Time of Completion:- 15 Days****TENDER ID:2022\_APWD\_8542\_1**& last time & date of Submission of bid: **28/12/2022 (10:00 hrs).**

The Tender forms and other details can be obtained from the web site [eprocedure.andaman.gov.in](http://eprocedure.andaman.gov.in).

Executive Engineer  
Workshop Division  
APWD, Port Blair  
  
9455/22

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER

No.Ten/DB/CD/KMT/2022-23/1662dt. 16/12/2022

The Executive Engineer, Construction Division, Andaman P.W.D, Kamorta invites on behalf of the President of India, online Item Rate tenders from the **experienced and eligible contractors having valid GST Registration and requisite experience of having successfully completed similar works(s) in terms of cost** dealing with civil works with any of the Govt. Organizations in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands having no adverse remarks for following works.

1. NIT No. 29/NIT/DB/CD/KMT/2022-23 Name of work:- Construction of Veterinary Dispensary at Kamorta, Nancowrie. Estimated Cost: Rs 42,10,786/-, EMD: Rs 84,216/- Period of completion : 06 (Six) months. Tender ID : 2022\_APWD\_8550\_1

2. NIT No. 32/NIT/DB/CD/KMT/2021-22 Name of work:- Renovation of 03 Nos classroom for Govt. Primary School Minyuk at Teresa. (4<sup>th</sup> call) Estimated Cost : Rs 14,57,819/-, EMD: Rs 29,156/- Period of completion : 06 (Six) months. Tender ID : 2022\_APWD\_8553\_1

3. NIT No. 31/NIT/DB/CD/KMT/2021-22 Name of work:- Renovation of 03 Nos classroom for Govt. Primary School Chukmachhi at Teresa. (4<sup>th</sup> call) Estimated Cost : Rs 25,07,044/-, EMD: Rs 50,141/- Period of completion : 06 (Six) months. Tender ID : 2022\_APWD\_8556\_1

4. NIT No. 01/NIT(KMT)/WS/SE/CN/2022-23 Name of work:- Construction of 01 no. computer room, 01 no. library and 01 no. art / craft room at Govt. Sec. School Kuitasuk Chowra under Samagra Shiksha. (2<sup>nd</sup> call). Estimated Cost : Rs 1,33,93,522/-, EMD: Rs 2,67,870/- Period of completion : 14 (Fourteen) months. Tender ID : 2022\_APWD\_8557\_1

5. NIT No. 02/NIT(KMT)/WS/SE/CN/2022-23 Name of work : Extension and widening of existing CC footpath at Chowra Island. Estimated cost : 1,25,96,098/-, EMD: Rs 2,51,922/-, Period of completion : 09(Nine) Month. Tender ID : 2022\_APWD\_8558\_1

Bid Document Publishing Date : 20/12/2022 (1600hrs)

Bid Document Download/Start Date : 20/12/2022 (1600hrs)

Bid Submission Start Date : 20/12/2022 (1600hrs)

Bid Submission Closing Date : 06/01/2023 (1000hrs)

Bid Opening Date : 06/01/2023 (1030hrs)

The Tender forms and other details can be obtained from the Website [https://eprocedure.andaman.gov.in](http://eprocedure.andaman.gov.in).

Executive Engineer  
Construction Division  
APWD, Kamorta.

9474/22

CD-I/22-23/38

F.No. 37-DB/TN/CDI/PB/22-23/3141 dt. 15.12.2022

e- TENDER NOTICE

The Executive Engineer, Construction Division No.I, A.P.W.D., Port Blair on behalf of the President of India, invites online item rate tenders [in form C.P.W.D – 8] from the approved and eligible Contractors of APWD and Non APWD Contractors irrespective of their enlistment subject to the condition that they have experience of having successfully completed similar nature of work in terms of cost in any of the government department in A & N Islands and they should not have any adverse remarks for the under mentioned work:

1. NIT No. :- 84/NIT/DB/CD-I/PB/22-23, Name of work: Repair and Renovation of Iron watch Tower No. 4 at District Jail P/Pur under CD-I, A.P.W.D., Port Blair. Estimated Cost : Rs. 14,61,709/- Earnest Money : ₹. 29,234/- Time of completion:- 04 [Four] Months [Tender ID No. 2022\_APWD\_8522\_1]

2. NIT No. :- 85/NIT/DB/CD-I/PB/22-23, Name of work: Construction of 02 Nos Class room with toilet block including IEI at Govt Sr Sec School at Swaraj Dweep [1st Floor of Science Lab] under CD-I, A.P.W.D., Port Blair. Estimated Cost : Rs. 52,66,277/- Earnest Money: ₹. 1,05,326/- Time of completion:- 06 [Six] Months [Tender ID No. 2022\_APWD\_8525\_1]

3. NIT No. :- 86/NIT/DB/CD-I/PB/22-23, Name of work: Construction of 01 No Godown for spare parts of Pump and POL and other Electrical Maintenance Materials at Strait Island for E&M Division at Swaraj Dweep under CD-I, A.P.W.D., Port Blair. Estimated Cost : Rs. 18,70,401/- Earnest Money: ₹.37,408/- Time of completion:- 06 [Six] Months [Tender ID No. 2022\_APWD\_8527\_1]

4. NIT No. :- 87/NIT/DB/CD-I/PB/22-23, Name of work: Running and Maintenance and Upkeep of water supply system at Swaraj Dweep including wheel valve operation, maintenance works, watch and valve water testing etc under CD-I,A.P.W.D., Port Blair in lieu of Realigning of gravity raw water line from beach dera source to camp No. 06 Junction at Swaraj Dweep under CD-I, A.P.W.D., Port Blair. Estimated Cost : Rs. 25,85,244/- Earnest Money: ₹.51,705/- Time of completion:- 12 [Twelve] Months [Tender ID No. 2022\_APWD\_8530\_1]

Tender should be filled on line upto 3.00 PM on or before 06.01.2023. The tender will be opened on the same day at 03.30 PM in presence of tenderers representative if any.

The tender forms and other details can be obtained from the website [https://eprocedure.andaman.gov.in](http://eprocedure.andaman.gov.in)

Executive Engineer  
Construction Division-I  
A.P.W.D., Port Blair

9464/22



## Charles Sobhraj's release from Nepal jail delayed by a day

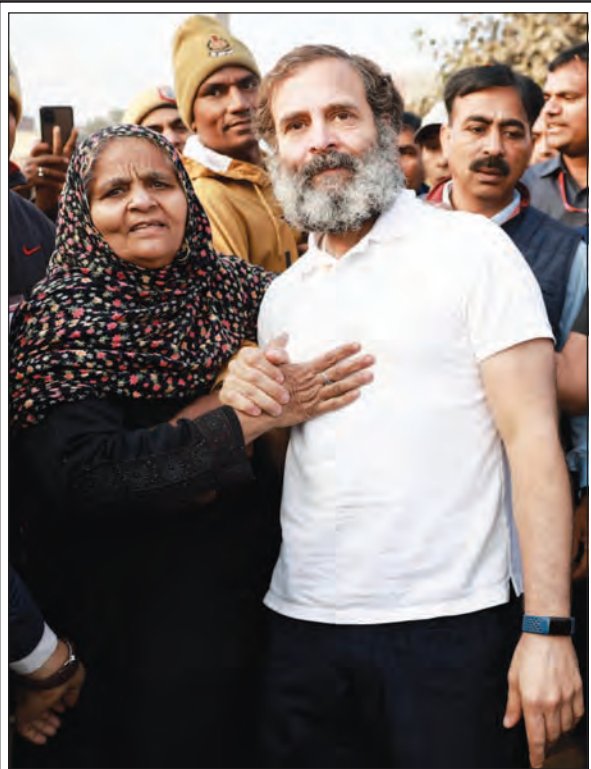
KATHMANDU, DEC 22 /--/ Charles Sobhraj, a Frenchman of Indian and Vietnamese parentage, will spend one more day in Nepal's prison as the immigration authorities on Thursday expressed their inability to arrange accommodation for the notorious serial killer who is expected to be deported after his release on the orders of the apex court.

A joint bench of justices Sapana Pradhan Malla and Tilak Prasad Shrestha on Wednesday ordered to free 78-year-old Sobhraj from jail. "Though everything has been cleared for his release from jail, he has to be handed over to the Immigration Department. The immigration authorities have requested to postpone his release till Friday as they need preparation for his accommodation," said his lawyer Gopal Shivakoti Chintan. Nicknamed "the Bikini Killer" and "the Serpent" due to his skill at deception and evasion, Sobhraj was serving a life-term in the Kathmandu jail since 2003 for the murder of American woman Connie Jo Bronzich in 1975 in Nepal. In 2014, he was convicted of killing Laurent Carriere, a Canadian backpacker, and given a second life sentence. A life-term in Nepal means 20 years in jail. The order by the division bench of Nepal's top court came after Shobraj filed a plea claiming that he was put in prison more than the period recommended for him. (PTI)

## Acute fund crunch, red tape looms ominous

From page-1  
Patients from Inter-Islands have been complaining that when they visit GB Pant hospital, they have to wait for several hours to get the OPD registration. The Adhyaksha raised the matter with senior health authorities and the matter was resolved. Now patients from Inter-Island visiting GB Pant Hospital for treatment are given first preference. She has more to add on her achievement list. She continued that few government Schools located as Manglutang and Humfrygunj lack adequate desks and benches for the students. She has now arranged the desks and benches while taking up this issue with the concerned authorities. Tourists were unhappy with the closure of Wandoor beach. She met officers of the Forest department and requested them to open this beach. The Wandoor beach is now open and tourists are having a good time on the beach. On the issue of non-payment of salary to contract staff engaged by the Zilla Parishad, Smt Pramila Kumari agreed that payment of outsourcing employees were outstanding for about 19 months. But now the matter has been resolved. Six month salaries for all the employees have been

cleared and the remaining salary will be cleared in the next few days. On being asked to comment on the current status of development projects, she said that some tender works allotted by the previous ZP Adhyaksh which was hanging fire has now been re-tendered and hoped that the development projects will commence shortly. Expressing her displeasure over limited fund allocated to the Zilla Parishad, the Adhyaksha said South Andaman Zilla Parishad has 18 members and every member have to undertake development work in their respective area, but due to fund shortage, they have to face the wrath of the public. With allocation of only Rs 2-3 crores, the Zilla Parishad is not in a position to take up major rural development projects as per the needs and aspirations of the people. She has requested the administration to allocate more funds to the Zilla Parishad so that development works in the rural hamlets can be taken up at a faster pace. The Adhyaksha Zilla Parishad is hopeful that the Chief Secretary will consider their request for allotment of more funds to the Zilla Parishad so that rural development gets an impetus in the South Andaman region.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with party supporters during Bharat Jodo Yatra in Haryana on Thursday

## Govt coming up with excuses to stop Bharat Jodo Yatra: Rahul

NUH, DEC 22 /--/ Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said the Union government is coming up with "excuses" to stop the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', days after Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya wrote to him to consider suspending the march if Covid protocols could not be followed. The yatra, which started in Kanyakumari on September 7 and will conclude in Kashmir, is in Haryana, after covering Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. "This yatra will go to Kashmir. Now, they have come out with a new idea. They wrote me a letter that Covid was spreading, stop the yatra," Gandhi said while addressing a gathering in Ghaseera village in Haryana's Nuh district. The Bharat Jodo Yatra led by him entered the state through Nuh on Wednesday after its Rajasthan leg. "Now, they are coming up with excuses to stop the yatra. Wear masks, stop the yatra, Covid is spreading, these are all excuses," the former Congress president said. Union health minister Mandaviya on Tuesday wrote to former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot to consider suspending the yatra if Covid protocols could not be followed. Targeting the BJP, which is in power at the Centre and in Haryana, Rahul said it is scared of the truth. "Hindustan ki shakti say, Hindustan ki Sachai say, yeh log dar gaye hai, yeh sachai hai (they have got scared of power and truth of the country. This is the truth)," the former Congress chief said, adding that "we do not want RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) and (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi's hate filled India". (PTI)

# 'Covid not over yet': PM reviews situation in country, cautions against complacency

## Officials directed to strengthen surveillance measures

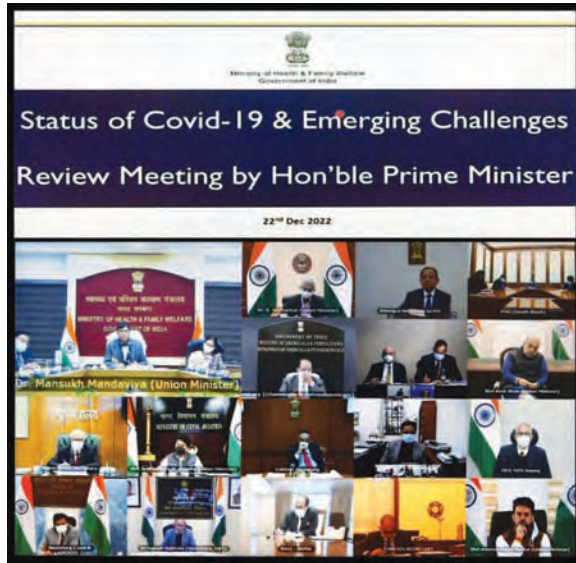
NEW DELHI, DEC 22 /--/ Amid a spurt in Covid cases in some parts of the world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday cautioned against complacency and directed officials to strengthen the ongoing surveillance measures, especially at international airports.

The Prime Minister's assertion came during a high-level meeting, which he chaired to assess the Covid-19 situation in the country, preparedness of health infrastructure and logistics, status of the vaccination campaign and the emergence of new variants and their public health implications. Modi urged everyone to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour, including wearing masks in crowded public places, at all times, especially in view of the upcoming festive season, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). He also urged that precaution dose may be encouraged especially for vulnerable and elderly groups. During the meeting, the Prime Minister directed officials to ramp up testing and also genomic sequencing efforts. States have been asked to share a larger number of samples with the designated INSACOG Genome Sequencing Laboratories (IGSLs) for genome sequencing on a daily basis, the PMO said. This will support timely detection of newer variants, if any, circulating in the country and facilitate undertaking requisite public health measures, it added. Prime Minister Modi cautioned against complacency and advised strict vigil. He reiterated that Covid is not over yet and directed officials to strengthen the ongoing surveillance measures, especially at international airports, the statement said. Modi stressed the need to ensure that the entire Covid infrastructure at all levels is maintained at a high level of preparedness in terms of equipment, processes and human resources. The Prime Minister also advised states to audit Covid-specific facilities to ensure operational readiness of hospital infrastructure, including oxygen cylinders, PSA plants, ventilators and human resources, the statement said. This high-level review meeting comes in the backdrop of spike in Covid-19 cases in some countries. A comprehensive presentation was made at the meeting regarding the global Covid situation, including the rising cases in countries, by the health secretary and the member (health) at the NITI Aayog. Prime Minister Modi was

briefed that India has been witnessing a steady decline in cases with average daily cases falling to 153 and weekly positivity down to 0.14 per cent in the week ending December 22. However, 5.9 lakh daily average cases have been reported globally since the last six weeks. Modi was informed that there is adequate availability with regard to medicines, vaccines and hospital beds. He also advised regularly monitoring of prices and availability of essential medicines.

Highlighting the globally appreciated work of frontline healthcare workers, Prime Minister Modi exhorted them to continue working in the same selfless and dedicated manner, according to the statement. The meeting was attended by Union home minister Amit Shah, health minister Mansukh Mandaviya, civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, external affairs minister S Jaishankar, minister of information and broadcasting Anurag Thakur,

minister of state for health and family welfare Bharati Pravin Pawar, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister PK Mishra, NITI Aayog CEO Parameswaran Iyer, Member (Health) NITI Aayog V K Paul, cabinet secretary Rajiv Gauba, advisor PMO Amit Khare, home secretary A K Bhalla, health secretary Rajesh Bhushan, among others. The meeting came on a day several states such as Uttar Pradesh and Delhi also conducted a review of the Covid situation. (PTI)

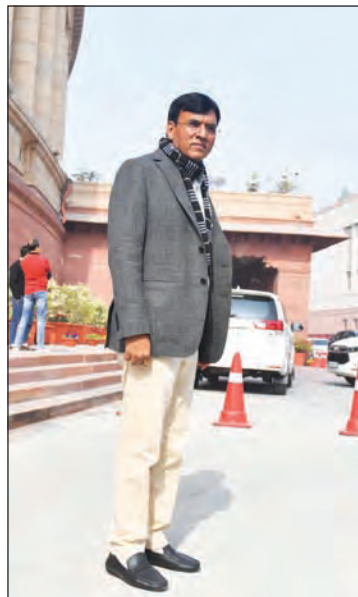


Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairs high level meeting to review status and preparedness of public health response to Covid-19, in New Delhi on Thursday

## Mandatory Covid tests for all international passengers if necessary: Health minister

NEW DELHI, DEC 22 /--/ In the wake of surge in Covid-19 cases in many countries, India has started two per cent random sampling of international travellers coming to the country and may consider making it mandatory for all if necessary, Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Thursday. Mandaviya was responding to queries of some Opposition MPs after his suo moto statement in Rajya Sabha on the latest Covid-19 situation and India's preparedness. "We are constantly monitoring the situation. There are no direct flights between China and India but people come via other routes," he said in response to a query by Raghav Chadha of AAP on whether the government would ban direct flights from China. As a health minister, Mandaviya said he has spoken to many countries and WHO about what all precautions are needed to be taken and also understand in which direction the pandemic is moving. "At a primary stage, we have already started doing two per cent random sampling of any traveller coming to India," he said. The minister further said: "In the coming days the percentage could be increased and if necessary we will make it mandatory for everyone coming to India". Mandaviya also said the focus of the government is to

ensure that no unknown variant of the virus enters India and at the same time there is now impediment on travelling. The health minister assured the Upper House that all the oxygen plants were running and a review has also been done about the availability of medicines. "We are prepared and ready to provide the requirement of medicines



Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Mansukh Mandaviya at Parliament House during the ongoing Winter Session

and vaccines in the country," he said. Mandaviya also informed that an expert committee has given approval to nasal vaccine to combat the virus, doing away with the requirements of jabs. "We are fully prepared to fight the virus," the minister asserted. Referring to the letter written to Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to follow appropriate covid protocol during the Bharat Jodo Yatra, he said it was his responsibility as a health minister to write after few MPs from the state had pointed out to him about people, including the Himachal Pradesh chief minister who took part in the event contracted the virus. "We have never done politics on covid crisis and we don't even want to do it," Mandaviya asserted. In his statement, he said in the recent days there have been reports of rise in Covid-19 cases in many countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, the US, France, Greece and Italy. The evolving nature of the virus poses threat to global health in a way that impacts virtually every country, he said adding the Centre has asked states to remain alert and create awareness about wearing face masks and using hand sanitisers, especially in view of upcoming festivals and new year celebrations. (PTI)

# LS adjourned for day amid Oppn demand for debate on India-China border issue

## Proceedings in Upper House boycotted

NEW DELHI, DEC 22 /--/ Opposition parties repeatedly disrupted the Lok Sabha proceedings on Thursday while demanding a discussion on the Sino-Indian border issue, resulting in five adjournments.

This is the first time during the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament that the Lok Sabha was repeatedly adjourned by disruptions created by Opposition parties. Not much legislative business could be transacted during the day. At the fag end, Union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal introduced the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2022. It was referred to a joint committee of Parliament amid slogan shouting by Opposition members. As soon as the House met, Speaker Om Birla read out obituary references. He also urged the members to wear masks and spread awareness among people about COVID-19 in view of a rising number of cases of the infection in some countries, including China. As Birla began the Question Hour and took up questions related to the road transport ministry, Opposition members were on their feet, protesting over various issues. Members from the Congress, Trinamool Congress (TMC), Shiv Sena and DMK demanded a discussion on the border issue with China. Birla asked the Opposition members to participate in the Question Hour. "I appeal to you to let the Question Hour run. You are disrupting the proceedings.... Don't you want the

House to function?... You are answerable to the people," the Speaker said. As the Opposition continued with its protest, Birla adjourned the House till 12 noon. When the House reassembled, it was adjourned again till 2 pm amid slogan shouting as reports of standing committees and other documents were tabled.

At 4 pm, when the House reconvened, matters of urgent public importance were taken up. But as the Opposition continued with its protest, the proceedings were adjourned for 15 minutes till 4:30 pm. When the proceedings began again, they barely continued for a few minutes during which Goyal introduced the Bill. Rama Devi, who was on the chair, adjourned the House for the day, reminding the Opposition members that people were watching them. Amid the noisy scenes, Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya made a statement on the Covid situation in the country and the steps being taken by the government in this regard. The Opposition

members kept raising slogans during the minister's statement. The Rajya Sabha too witnessed acrimonious scenes since the start of the proceedings on Thursday as the Opposition stepped up its attack on the government demanding a discussion on the India-China border conflict and later, boycotted the day's proceedings after the demand was disallowed. The Opposition also demanded an apology from Leader of the House Goyal for his remarks on Bihar,



which it alleged were an insult to the state and its people. Goyal, however, later said he had no intention of hurting anyone's feelings and withdrew his remarks. He also cited former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's remarks made in Parliament on the unauthorised occupation of 38,000 square kilometres of India's land by China and a part of Kashmir taken by Pakistan, alleging that "it has happened because of their mistakes". Goyal also thanked the Congress for raising the issue of more than Rs 1 crore received by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation from the Chinese

embassy and alleged that the opposition party is responsible for the problems that the current government has inherited. This prompted the entire Opposition to stand together and shout back at the minister. Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar pleaded with both sides to take their seats and then directed the Leader of the House and the Leader of Opposition to see him in his chamber at 1 pm, to which LoP Mallikarjun Kharge said things should be discussed in the House and not behind closed doors. Amid the din, Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman intervened to recall an earlier incident when Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) member Kiren Rijiju wanted to discuss the China issue in the House but then minister Pranab Mukherjee asked him to see him in his office instead. This saw the Opposition staging a walkout from the House, boycotting the day's proceedings. Among the parties that boycotted the proceedings were the Congress, NCP, TMC, DMK, CPI, CPM, SP, JMM, RJD, JD(U) and AAP. However, there were some members of the AAP, TMC, and Left parties who attended the Question Hour that started at 12 noon. Dhankhar said he had received 12 notices under rule 267 on various issues for suspension of the day's business, but added that none of those was in consonance with the rules and disallowed the notices. (PTI)



## Defence chiefs of US and India discuss issue of global security amidst increased tension on India-China border

**WASHINGTON, DEC 22** --/Seeking to deepen US-India military ties, the defence chiefs of the two countries have shared their assessments of the regional and global security environment and discussed ways to deepen bilateral cooperation and interoperability. The call between US Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Mark A Miley and his Indian counterpart Chief of the Indian Defence Force Gen Anil Chauhan took place amidst increased tension between India and China on the border. "The two military leaders shared assessments of the regional and global security environment and discussed ways to deepen bilateral military ties and interoperability," Joint Staff Deputy Spokesperson Joseph R. Holstead said on Wednesday in a readout of the call. "The US and India share a strong military-to-military relationship under the US-India Major Defence Partnership," Holstead said, adding that India plays a "key role" in maintaining a free Indo-Pacific. "India is a key regional leader and an important partner in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific," he said. The US, India and several other world powers have been talking about the need to ensure a free, open and thriving Indo-Pacific in the backdrop of China's rising military manoeuvring in the resource-rich and strategically important region.

China claims nearly all of the disputed South China Sea, though Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam all claim parts of it. Beijing has built artificial islands and military installations in the South China Sea. China also has territorial disputes with Japan in the East China Sea. In 2017, the US, Australia, India and Japan gave shape to the long-pending proposal of setting up the Quad to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific region free of any influence. The Chinese and Indian troops were engaged in a fresh clash in the Yangtse area of Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang sector on December 9, which is the first such major flare-up after the deadly hand-to-hand combat in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades. (PTI)

## King Charles III's official birthday parade set for June 2023

**LONDON, DEC 22** --/The official birthday of the new British monarch, King Charles III, will take place on June 17 next year, Buckingham Palace said on Thursday. The celebration, packed with pomp and pageantry, is known as Trooping the Colour and will involve the King's wife, Queen Camilla, and daughter-in-law Catherine, the Princess of Wales, taking on ceremonial military roles during the royal parade. Charles, who turned 74 on November 14, will ride on horseback alongside his son and heir, William the Prince of Wales, for the customary official celebration of his 74th birthday next year in the summer. They will be watched by Catherine (Kate Middleton), who is now the Colonel of the Irish Guards, and Camilla, who replaces Prince Andrew as Colonel of the Grenadier Guards. Andrew, Charles' younger brother, had



King Charles III

been stripped of his military titles in the wake of a sex scandal. Meanwhile, William takes on the role previously held by his father, that of Colonel of the Welsh Guards. The ceremony will come weeks after the King's grand coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey in London, scheduled for May 6, 2023.

The plans for the new year follow the death of Queen Elizabeth II, who died aged 96 at her Scottish residence of Balmoral Castle on September 8 this year. The late Queen's April 21 birthday was celebrated with a Trooping the Colour parade in the second week of June annually. Earlier this year, the ceremony fell during the Platinum Jubilee celebrations for the UK's longest-reigning monarch and involved the King then Prince of Wales stepping in as his mother who made only brief appearances while she took things easy due to age-related mobility issues. The pageantry of Trooping the Colour has marked the British monarch's official birthday for more than 260 years, held in the summer months when the weather conditions are more suitable.

Next year, more than 1,400 soldiers will parade, with 200 horses and hundreds of Army musicians will once again take part in a ceremony marked by military precision, horsemanship and fanfare. The parade takes place at Horse Guards Parade in London before the royal party return up the Mall to Buckingham Palace, where they gather on the balcony for a Royal Air Force (RAF) fly-past and an iconic royal family photograph beamed the world over. Thousands of well-wishers usually fill central London to watch the monarch and members of the royal family for the event, which stems from the traditional preparations for battle, when colours (or flags) were carried ("trooped") down the rank to be seen and recognised by the soldiers. The event traditionally attracts largely friends and family of the soldiers taking part in the military spectacle. (PTI)

## Japan reverses nuclear phaseout plan adopted after Fukushima

**TOKYO, DEC 22** --/Japan on Thursday adopted a new policy promoting greater use of nuclear energy to ensure a stable power supply amid global fuel shortages and to reduce carbon emissions, in a major reversal of its phase-out plan following the Fukushima crisis.

The new policy says Japan must maximise the use of existing nuclear reactors by restarting as many of them as possible and prolonging the operating life of old reactors beyond their 60-year limit, and by developing next-generation reactors to replace them. Anti-nuclear sentiment and safety concerns rose sharply in

Japan after the 2011 Fukushima disaster, and restart approvals have since come slowly under stricter safety standards. Utility companies have applied for restarts at 27 reactors in the past decade. Seventeen have passed safety checks and only 10 have resumed operations. That was in line with Japan's earlier plan to phase out nuclear energy by 2030. In a reversal, the new policy says nuclear power provides stable output and serves "an important role as a carbon-free base load energy source in achieving supply stability and carbon neutrality" and pledges to "sustain use of nuclear power into the future." "Green transformation

## WHO "very concerned" about reports of severe Covid in China

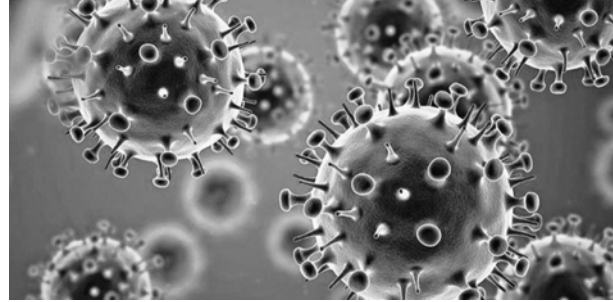
**GENEVA, DEC 21** --/The head of the World Health Organisation said the agency is "very concerned" about rising reports of severe coronavirus disease across China after the country largely abandoned its "zero COVID" policy, warning that its lagging vaccination rate could result in large numbers of vulnerable people getting infected.

At a press briefing on Wednesday, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the UN agency needs more information on Covid-19 severity in China, particularly regarding hospital and intensive care unit admissions, "in order to make a comprehensive risk

assessment of the situation on the ground." "WHO is very concerned over the evolving situation in China with increasing reports of severe disease," Tedros said. He added that while Covid deaths have dropped more than 90 per cent since their global peak, there were still too many uncertainties about the virus to conclude that the pandemic is over. Some scientists have warned that the unchecked spread of Covid-19 in China could spur the emergence of new variants, which might unravel progress made globally to contain the pandemic. "Vaccination is the exit strategy from omicron," WHO emergencies chief Dr.

Michael Ryan said.

Ryan said the explosive surge of cases in China was not exclusively due to the lifting of many of the



country's restrictive policies and that it was impossible to stop transmission of omicron, the most highly infectious variant yet seen of Covid-19. He said vaccination

rates among people over age 60 in China lagged behind many other countries and that the efficacy of the Chinese-made vaccines was

about 50 per cent. "That's just not adequate protection in a population as large as China, with so many vulnerable people," Ryan said. He added that while China has dramatically

## IAEA discusses Ukraine nuclear plant protections with Russia

**KYIV, DEC 22** --/The head of the UN nuclear watchdog met on Thursday in Moscow with officials from Russia's military and state atomic energy company as he pursues a long-running drive to set up a protection zone around a Russian-occupied nuclear power plant in Ukraine.

Russian company Rosatom described the talks on measures needed to safeguard Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and the surrounding region as "substantive, useful and frank".

International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Rafael Grossi indicated that more negotiations were needed after "another round of necessary discussions". "It's key that the zone focuses solely on preventing a nuclear accident," he tweeted.

"I am continuing my efforts towards this goal with a sense of utmost urgency." The meeting in Moscow came a day after

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy made a defiant wartime visit to the US capital, his first known trip outside his country in the nearly 10 months since Russia invaded. The visit to Washington was aimed at reinvigorating support for Ukraine in the US and around the world at a time when Russia appears to have lost battlefield momentum. There is concern that Ukraine's allies are growing weary of providing the military and economic assistance that have enabled Ukraine to keep fighting.

The Russian military on Thursday reported that Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu paid a visit to Russian troops on the front line what the Kremlin calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine. The exact location of the visit was not disclosed. A video released by the Russian Defence Ministry showed Shoigu inspecting temporary troop quarters in dugouts and talking to military commanders.

Before his trip to Washington, Zelenskyy met with Ukrainian troops in the eastern city of Bakhmut, the recent focus of some of the war's most intense combat. Russian President Vladimir Putin has never been seen travelling to front-line areas. Russian newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta reported that Putin visited his Ukraine command headquarters last week, but its location wasn't disclosed, and it wasn't even clear if it was in Ukraine.

The IAEA's Grossi has urged Russia and Ukraine for over three months to agree on a safety zone around Europe's largest nuclear power station. Zaporizhzhia province and areas across the Dnieper River from the nuclear power plant have been under regular shelling since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24.

Ukrainian officials have repeatedly called for a demilitarised zone around the plant, which was seized by Russian forces early in the war. Although all six of

the plant's reactors are shut down, the reactor core and used nuclear fuel must still be cooled for lengthy periods to prevent them overheating and triggering dangerous meltdowns like the ones that occurred in 2011 when a tsunami hit the Fukushima plant in Japan. Ukraine saw the world's worst nuclear accident, at Chernobyl in 1986.

Ukraine and Russia have blamed each other for the repeated shelling, which has led on multiple occasions to the Zaporizhzhia plant losing the electricity needed to operate the cooling system. Ukrainian officials earlier this month also accused Russian troops of installing multiple rocket launchers at the site.

Grossi said in November that the main issues under discussion involve military equipment and the radius of the safety zone. He said the IAEA's proposal is very simple: "Don't shoot at the plant, don't shoot from the plant." (AP)

## Turkey: Sweden still has requirements to meet to join NATO

**ANKARA, DEC 22** --/Turkey appreciates Sweden's steps so far to get approval to join NATO but is not even "halfway" through fulfilling a list of commitments it made to secure Ankara's support, the Turkish foreign minister said on Thursday.

Foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said a Swedish court's decision not to extradite a man wanted by Turkey for alleged links to a 2016 failed coup had "poisoned" a positive atmosphere in negotiations on Sweden's membership in the military alliance. Sweden and Finland dropped their longstanding policies of military nonalignment this year and decided to apply to join NATO following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The move requires the unanimous approval of the alliance's current 30 members. Turkey has held up the process while pressing the two Nordic

countries to crack down on groups it considers to be terrorist organizations and to extradite people suspected of terror-related crimes.

The parliaments of 28 NATO countries have already ratified Sweden and Finland's membership. Turkey and Hungary are the only members that haven't yet given their approval. Speaking at a joint news conference with Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström, Cavusoglu said the Turkish government still was waiting for a "concrete development" on extraditions and asset freezes. "There is a document, it needs to be implemented. We're not even at the halfway point yet. We're at the beginning," he said, referring to a memorandum which Turkey, Sweden and Finland signed in June. Under the memorandum, the two countries agreed to address Turkey's security

concerns, including requests for the deportation and extradition of Kurdish militants and people linked to a network run by US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen.

The Turkish government accuses Gulen of masterminding the 2016 coup attempt, which he denies. Billström's visit came days after Sweden's top court refused to extradite journalist Bulent Kenes, whom Turkey accuses of being among the coup plotters. Kenes, who received asylum in Sweden, was the editor of the English-language Today's Zaman newspaper, which was owned by the Gulen network and the government closed down as part of its crackdown on the group. "The negotiations (between Turkey and Sweden) were continuing in a constructive way," Cavusoglu said. "But this last (incident), the rejection of Kenes' extradition,

unfortunately, seriously poisoned this atmosphere." Billström reiterated that Sweden was determined to fulfill its commitments and said Stockholm was in the process of strengthening its anti-terrorism legislation.

A constitutional amendment will enter into force on January 1 that restricts the freedom of association of groups that engage in or support terrorism and targets the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, he said. The Swedish government also plans to introduce legislation that further impedes people taking part in the activities of terrorist groups, Billström said. "My message to Minister Cavusoglu and to the Turkish people is clear: Sweden keeps its promises. We take the agreement seriously. We have initiated steps on every paragraph and we will continue to implement it," the Swedish minister said. (AP)

increased its capacity to vaccinate people in recent weeks, it's unclear whether that will be enough. To date, China has declined to authorize Western-made messenger RNA vaccines, which have proven to be more effective than its locally made shots. Beijing did agree to allow a shipment of the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine to be imported, for Germans living in China. "The question remains whether or not enough vaccination can be done in the coming week or two weeks that will actually blunt the impact of the second wave and the burden on the health system," Ryan said.

Like Tedros, he said WHO had insufficient

information about the extent of severe disease and hospitalization, but he noted that nearly all countries overwhelmed by Covid-19 had struggled to share such real-time data. Ryan also suggested China's definition of Covid deaths was too narrow, saying the country was limiting it to people who have suffered respiratory failure. "People who die of COVID die from many different (organ) systems' failures, given the severity of infection," Ryan said. "So limiting a diagnosis of death from COVID to someone with a COVID positive test and respiratory failure will very much underestimate the true death toll associated with COVID." (AP)

## Pak anti-terrorism court extends till Jan 3 remand of suspects in Imran Khan attack case

**LAHORE, DEC 22** --/An anti-terrorism court in Pakistan on Thursday extended till January 3 the physical remand of the prime suspect and his accomplice in the November 3 botched assassination bid on the life of ousted prime minister Imran Khan. According to a court official, police presented prime suspect Muhammad Naveed before the ATC Gujranwala on Thursday along with his accomplice Muhammad Waqas in high security. The ATC remanded both suspects into the Joint Investigation Team's custody for 13 days for interrogation. "Police presented suspect Waqas before the ATC for the first time after he was recently arrested for a tweet," the official told PTI. He said Waqas had tweeted on November 3, saying that "something big is going to happen today in Imran Khan's rally". Later, he deleted the tweet. "Waqas is a relative of the prime suspect Naveed," he said. Khan, the chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, suffered bullet injuries in the right leg when two gunmen fired a volley of bullets at him and others standing on a container-mounted truck in the Wazirabad area (some 150-km from Lahore), where he was leading the march against the Shehbaz Sharif government to press for snap polls.

In an interaction with the foreign media early this week, Khan said: "I am alive today because of the sacrifice of a worker of my party who stopped the prime suspect (Naveed) from aiming at my head. When we ducked after the fire another volley of bullets passed on top of our heads from another shooter." Khan, 70, had blamed Prime Minister Sharif, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and Major General Faisal Naseer of spy agency ISI for hatching a plot to assassinate him. The Punjab police had registered the FIR in connection with the assassination attempt on Khan but didn't mention the 'high profile suspects' including ISI's top man Khan held responsible for the attack. Khan dismissed the FIR, saying without nominating Prime Minister Sharif, Interior Minister Sanaullah, and ISI Counter Intelligence Wing head Maj-Gen Faisal in the FIR it is a mere "piece of trash". The Punjab police said they nabbed Naveed from the crime scene and he had confessed to his crime. Naveed in his confessional statement said that he wanted to kill Khan as music was played during Azan time during his long march.

Indirectly blaming the powerful military establishment, Khan had said: "I wonder if I being the former Prime Minister of Pakistan can't get an FIR registered in connection with the attack on me and other PTI workers what will happen to the common man." He claimed that Naveed is a trained shooter and there was another shooter who opened fire on him from another direction. The JIT has so far recorded the statements of the policemen and PTI workers who were present close to Khan at the time of attack on him. Khan is recovering from his wounds and currently residing at his Lahore's Zaman Park residence. (PTI)

## US deputy secretary Sherman discusses Pak's efforts to recover from devastating floods with foreign minister

**WASHINGTON, DEC 22** --/US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy R. Sherman met Pakistan foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and discussed Pakistan's ongoing efforts to recover from the devastating floods. Pakistan witnessed unprecedented monsoon rains over the summer that put a third of the country underwater, damaged two million homes and killed more than 1,700 people. "Deputy Secretary of State Wendy R. Sherman met Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and they discussed Pakistan's continuing efforts to recover from the



Bilawal Bhutto Zardari

devastating floods," US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Wednesday. They also discussed the upcoming International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan to be held in Geneva on January 9, 2023, Price said. During the meeting, Sherman also expressed condolences for Pakistani lives lost in recent terrorist attacks, even as they committed to strengthen counterterrorism cooperation between the two nations. "They also spoke about economic, energy, and environmental cooperation," Price said. Sherman and Zardari also discussed the Taliban's deplorable decision to further restrict women's and girls' access to education, Price added. The Taliban rulers on Tuesday banned university education for women nationwide, as they took decisive steps to crush their right to education and freedom. It was a far cry from their promise of a softer rule when they seized power last year, with the Taliban regime strongly implementing their strict interpretation of the Islamic law, or Sharia. (PTI)



# Messi agrees to extend PSG contract

PARIS, DEC 22 /--/ Lionel Messi will celebrate his World Cup triumph by agreeing to stay at Paris Saint-Germain, local media claimed Wednesday, as he attempts to steer the French side to an elusive Champions League title. The 35-year-old, who led Argentina to victory in the World Cup final against France in Qatar last weekend, will pen a one-season extension to his current deal in the French capital which expires in the summer. Le Parisian and RMC Sport reported that Messi will sit down with PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi and other top club officials when he returns after his World Cup break. Messi joined PSG in 2021 on a two-season deal with an option for another year after having spent his entire professional career with Barcelona. The seven-time Ballon d'Or winner collected four Champions League titles in 2006, 2009, 2011 and 2015 in Spain as well as 10 LaLiga crowns. On Sunday, he inspired Argentina to a penalty shootout win over France in the World Cup final after the epic match had finished 3-3 in extra-time. Messi, named player of the tournament, scored twice in the game with PSG teammate Kylian Mbappe grabbing a hat-trick for France. (AFP)



## Argentina only No. 2 in new FIFA rankings led by Brazil

ZURICH, DEC 22 /--/ Winning the World Cup was not enough to lift Argentina atop the FIFA world rankings with Brazil keeping the No. 1 position on Thursday. Brazil was eliminated in the quarterfinals by Croatia but built enough rankings points from results over recent years that feed into FIFA's calculation. Argentina moved up one place to No. 2 and beaten finalist France also rose one to No. 3. Belgium is still at No. 4, a fall of two places, despite winning only one game in Qatar and failing to advance from the group stage. England and the Netherlands, both beaten quarterfinalists, stay at Nos. 5 and 6 respectively. Croatia climbed five places to

No. 7. European champion Italy is at No. 8 despite failing to qualify for the World Cup. Morocco is the best-placed African nation at No. 11, up 11 places, for its historic run to the semifinals. The United States at No. 13 is the best of the CONCACAF region teams, rising three places after advancing to the round of 16. Mexico is No. 15. Japan leads the Asian confederation teams at No. 20, up four places, and Australia rises 11 places to No. 27. Both reached the round of 16. Cameroon, which beat Brazil in the group stage, rose 10 places to be No. 33. Qatar dropped 10 places to No. 60 after losing all three games as the home team at the World Cup. (AP)

FIFA WORLD FOOTBALL RANKING 2022	
1 Brazil	1840.77
2 Argentina	1838.38
3 France	1823.39
4 Belgium	1781.30
5 England	1774.19
6 Netherlands	1740.92
7 Croatia	1727.62
8 Italy	1723.56
9 Portugal	1702.54
10 Spain	1692.71
106. India	1192.09



Umesh Yadav celebrates after dismissing Shakib Al Hasan

## Umesh, Ashwin put India in driver's seat as Bangladesh get bowled out for 227

MIRPUR, DEC 22 /--/ Umesh Yadav's incisive spells with the old ball and Ravichandran Ashwin's controlled effort put India in complete command as Bangladesh were bowled out for a below-par 227 on the opening day of the second Test here on Thursday. At stumps, India reached 19 for no loss with skipper KL Rahul batting on 3 off 30 balls in company of Shubman Gill (14 batting, 20 balls). Some of the balls bowled by Bangladeshi spinners were turning square and the decision to drop last Test's player of the match Kuldeep Yadav is looking a controversial one. When Bangladesh batted, Umesh (4/25 in 15 overs) led the Indian pace attack manfully while Ashwin (4/71 in 21.5 overs) closed in on a career-haul of 450 wickets (447 currently) on a day when Jaydev Unadkat's (2/50 in 16 overs) return to Test fold after 12 long years did stir up fair amount of debate about some selection calls taken by this team management. However, Unadkat could term himself lucky as last game's hero Kuldeep (8 wickets and 40 runs) was unceremoniously dumped by the team management comprising the two Rahuls -- head coach Dravid and skipper Kannaur Lokesh (KL). The pitch was termed to be a confusing one by skipper Rahul at the toss which prompted them to pick an extra seam bowler in Unadkat. The decision didn't backfire because of the inferior quality of Bangladesh batting line-up more than anything else. Former skipper Mominul Haque (84, 157 balls) was the only batter who showed admirable patience for more than four hours but he hardly enjoyed any support from the other end. Zakir Hasan (15) and Najmul Hosain Shanto (24) added

39 for the first wicket but more importantly saw off the morning spell from Umesh and Mohammed Siraj (0/39 in 9 overs). It was Unadkat who got the first breakthrough when the ball bounced a tad more and was caught in the slips. However, the Saurashtra player bowled a better delivery to get the stodgy Mushfiqur Rahim when he came round the wicket and angled one into the batter. The ball straightened enough after pitching as it completely squared up Rahim. Unadkat, who made his debut against South Africa at Centurion in December 2010, returned to Test format after a gap of 12 years. In between, he missed 118 matches, the highest by an Indian and the second highest in world cricket. However, the most impressive bowler for India was Umesh, who consistently pitched the ball up. What was heartening to see was that along with his stock ball -- the outswinger --, he has also developed a potent inswinger, one which he used to get rid of Nurul Hasan. He also got important wickets of Shakib Al Hasan and Mehidy Hasan Miraz by bowling a probing channel and the slowness of the track did the rest. Litton Das (25 off 26 balls) played an attacking knock which had two boundaries and a six but he couldn't carry on the good work as he flicked a full length delivery from Ashwin straight to captain KL Rahul. But, Mominul kept his calm and went about his business in a quiet fashion, hitting 12 fours and a six in the process. It was Ashwin, who removed Mominul at the fag end of the day when he shaped for an expansive drive and then decided to check his stroke but the ball kissed his gloves into Rishabh Pant's gloves. (PTI)

## Mini auction, maximum returns: Curran, Stokes, Green set for IPL windfall

KOCHI, DEC 22 /--/ Intense bidding is expected to be the order of the day when 10 teams jostle to grab their preferred players from a limited pool of cricketers, including the likes of Ben Stokes, Sam Curran and Mayank Agarwal, in the mini IPL auction here on Friday.

The player pool for the auction has been pruned to 405 with a maximum of 87 slots, including 30 overseas, to be filled by the teams. Former South Africa all-rounder Chris Morris has been the biggest beneficiary of the mini IPL auction till date. In 2021, he became the most expensive player in auction history when Rajasthan Royals shelled out Rs 16.25 crore for his services. Morris is now happily retired. All-rounder Curran, who was named the Player of the 2022 T20 World Cup, is expected to attract intense bidding and end up with a million dollar deal. He is only 24 and teams will look at him as a long-term investment. Back in 2019, Punjab Kings made him an IPL millionaire before he moved to Chennai Super Kings who would be looking to buy him back. Curran, who missed the 2022 season as he was recovering from a back injury, has set his base price at Rs 2 crore. The all-rounders have been listed in the second set to come up for bidding. The venue of the auction is not the usual Bengaluru as Kochi gets to host the keenly followed event.

Curran's English teammates including Test skipper Stokes and Harry Brook are also likely to land fat pay cheques. Stokes is a super star of the game and delivers in the toughest of situations while Brook made a name for himself in the Test format with three centuries against Pakistan after already proving his worth in the shorter-formats. Stokes has set his base price at Rs 2 crore and Brook at Rs 1.5 crore. Australian all-rounder Cameron Green will also be watching the proceedings keenly. He has not looked back in the shortest format after getting the opportunity to open for Australia in India earlier this year. Many were surprised that he was not picked in the World Cup squad initially but he was eventually drafted in after Josh Inglis got injured. New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson will be another big name with a base price of Rs 2 crore. He was released by Sunrisers Hyderabad alongside West Indian Nicholas Pooran. Williamson's strike rate in T20s has been questioned but he remains a very good leadership choice in case a franchise is looking for captaincy material. Pooran, who quit West Indies captaincy after an early exit from the T20 World Cup, has not been in the best of forms of late but is expected to secure a decent deal. Former England Test skipper Joe Root has also thrown his hat into the ring. Zimbabwe all-rounder Sikandar Raza, who has been among the top T20 players over the past 12 months, can also attract a heavy bid. Out of favour India Test opener Agarwal will go under the hammer in Set 1 comprising batters. He has kept his base price at Rs 1 crore and teams are likely to go after him. Punjab had released him earlier



this year and appointed Shikhar Dhawan the captain instead. A good IPL is crucial for Agarwal as he aims to get back into the India fold. Veteran Ishant Sharma and Jaydev Unadkat are Indian pace bowling options available to the teams. If Ishant doesn't get a deal, he might not carry on playing for Delhi in domestic cricket. Among the uncapped Indians who could break the bank include pacers Shivam Mavi and Yash Thakur. Having released by CSK, Tamil Nadu batter N Jagadeesan should be in demand after smashing a record five straight centuries in List A cricket. (PTI)

### GAME NOTES

#### Hardik likely to lead in Sri Lanka T20Is

NEW DELHI, DEC 22 /--/ All-rounder Hardik Pandya will, in all likelihood, lead India in the upcoming T20I series against Sri Lanka, scheduled to start from January 3 in Mumbai, according to BCCI sources. The second and third matches of the series will be held in Pune (January 5) and Rajkot (January 7). It is understood that Rohit Sharma's thumb injury might take some more time to heal. However, there is no clarity whether he (Rohit) will step down from the T20 captaincy or the matter put on hold for the time being. While it has been clear since India's T20 World Cup semi-final exit in Australia that there will be a change in guard once the new selection committee takes over, there has been no formal announcement yet. Also despite speculation, it can be confirmed that there was no discussion on India's T20 captaincy in the Apex Council meeting. (PTI)

#### Pelé's cancer worsens, kidneys and heart affected

SAO PAULO, Dec 22 /--/ Pelé's health has worsened during his hospital stay to regulate his cancer medication, doctors said on Wednesday. The Albert Einstein hospital in Sao Paulo said in a statement Wednesday that Pelé's cancer has advanced and that the 82-year-old Brazilian soccer great is under "elevated care" related to "kidney and cardiac dysfunctions." The hospital did not mention any signs of the three-time World Cup winner's recent respiratory infection, which was aggravated by COVID-19. Edson Arantes do Nascimento, who is globally known as Pelé, is undergoing chemotherapy in his fight against cancer since he had a colon tumour removed in September 2021. Neither his family nor the hospital has said whether it had spread to other organs. Kely Nascimento, one of his daughters, said Pelé will stay in the hospital during Christmas. "We decided with doctors that, for many reasons, it will be best for us to stay here, with all the care that this new family at Einstein gives us," she wrote on Instagram. "We will even make some caipirinhas (no kidding). We love you and we will give up an update next week."

#### Byju's wants to terminate jersey sponsorship deal with BCCI, kit sponsor MPL also wants to exit

NEW DELHI, DEC 22 /--/ Two of Indian cricket team's main sponsors, edtech major Byju's and MPL sports, want to exit from their sponsorship agreements with the BCCI. In June, Byju's had extended its jersey sponsorship agreement with the Board until November 2023 for an estimated USD 35 million. Byju's now wants to terminate its agreement with the BCCI which has asked the company to continue at least until March 2023. "BCCI received an email from Byju's on 4.11.2022 requesting terminating the association post the recently concluded T20 World Cup. As per our discussions with Byju's, we have asked them to continue the current arrangement and continue the partnership at least until 31.3.2023," read a BCCI note on the matter. The matter was discussed at the BCCI Apex Council meeting on Wednesday. The brand had replaced Oppo back in 2019. Byju's was also one of the sponsors of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. The edtech company had recently announced plans to lay off not more than five per cent of its total strength of 50000.

## The historical Karate World Cup took place in Kolkata again

KOLKATA, DEC 22 /--/ The Historical Karate World Cup™ 2022 happened at Kolkata, India on 17th and 18th December 2022 with support of 30 Countries. Organized By KWC- Karate World Cup Committee in Association with WUKF- World United Karate Do Federation and WKKF- World Kyokushin Karate Federation and Hosted By: SKAI- Sports Karate Association of India and OKKKA, Oyama Kyokushin Kai-Kan Karate Association After the huge Successful Karate World Cup™ 2018, supported by International, and National Instructors, Kancho, Grand Masters, Hanshi, Soke, Renshi. Shihan, Sensei and Karatekas Participants of the KWC22 Karate World Cup™ 2022 at Eastern Railway Sports Stadium, Kolkata, West Bengal, India, KWC- Next Karate World Cup, 2026 will be held in Russia or Dubai Qatar in the Month of December 2026. The KWC Committee Chairman Soke Juan Jose Diaz, Spain, KWC Vice-Chairman Anne ArmStrong, UK, KWC President Kancho Bodh Narayan Yadav, India, KWC General Secretary GM Roman Somenove, Russia, KWC Vice President Hanshi Ahmad Alhasani, Germany, KWC Executive Member Kancho Saeed

Mohammedi, Iran, KWC Executive Member Shihan Alex, Brazil And all India Grand Masters & Masters sent their greetings and good wishes for the success of the Karate World Cup 2022. Approximately 180 Students were Selected for the Karate World Cup 2022 from different States of India, Every National and International Players played well with full of energy. in the Categories of Below - 7 Years Girls Sneharika won Gold for Odisha, India and Under-8 Years Boys Cadet Master Prince Yadav Won Gold Medal in Kata and Gold Medal in Kumite Event from Kolkata, India and in the Senior Black Belt Category Sensei Arun Jena from Odisha, India won Gold Medal. The World Championship Trophy for the Team Champion were received by Odisha on 18th December 2022. The Founder President Of the Karate World Cup Committee and Chief Organizer Kancho Bodh Narayan Yadav (9th Dan Black Belt) Kyokushin Karate, 9th Dan Black Belt in Jutsu Karate and 9th Dan of Police Self Defence Kaise do given his heartiest thanks to all the Participants and Committee members for their Support. (EOIC)



Join our Team

**WE'RE AVAILABLE**

FOR printing

**Job**

For Newspaper (Daily/Weekly/Fortnightly/Monthly)

please contact

**ECHO PRINTING PRESS**

KOLKATA  
81, Nilgunj Road, Kolkata-700 109, Cell: 98307 64546/98301 34580  
GUWAHATI  
Gorchuk, Near Katibari Masjid, Guwahati- 781 035  
Cell: 94350 44633/98307 64546  
SILIGURI  
Jaduvita, P.O.: Champasari, PS:Pradhan Nagar, Siliguri-734 003  
Cell: 98307 64546/98301 34580  
PORT BLAIR  
Dollygunj, Port Blair- 744 103, Cell: 99332 260853