

Rajnath Singh arrives to a rousing welcome, visits ANC

PORT BLAIR, JAN 5/--/ The Union Defence Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh arrived Port Blair and was accorded a formal welcome at the airport. On arrival, he was received by the Lt Governor, Admiral DK Joshi (Retd), Lt General Ajai Singh AVSM, Commander-in-Chief Andaman & Nicobar Command (CINCAN) and Senior government officials. The Raksha Mantri reviewed a Quad-Service Guard of



sacrifices of soldiers of the Indian National Army. The Commander-in-

in the Region (SAGAR), Andaman and Nicobar Command has played a significant role in giving teeth to the Government's stated Act East Policy by building "Bridges of Friendship" with our maritime neighbours. Mr. Singh also visited the ANC Joint Operations Centre (JOC) which is the nerve centre for integrated planning for surveillance, conduct of operations and logistic support. The Defence Minister thereafter, addressed all ranks of Andaman & Nicobar Command at Dweepika auditorium and had barakhana with troops, where while interacting he lauded the efforts of the only joint services command of the country.

years since its creation on 08 Oct 2001. CINCAN during his briefing highlighted the geo-strategic potential of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands and the role they can play towards enhancing India's influence and support to military operations in the area. It was also highlighted that towards realising the Prime Minister's vision of Security and Growth for All

Defence Minister interacts with troops and lauded the joint services command for securing the isles

Honour and visited Sanklap Smarak, the location of Netaji's historic arrival on 29 Dec 1943. At the Sanklap Smarak, he paid solemn homage to honour the

Chief, ANC briefed the Defence Minister on the role, significance and challenges to India's only joint services command, which has matured over 21

Humiliation of senior doctor by Congress leader sparks row

ROOPA LALL

PORT BLAIR, JAN 5/--/ The medical profession is under a lot of pressure from political leaders. Some of them being elected representatives of the public are unable to digest the powers bestowed on them and tend to vomit it out at every nook and corner. The disrespectful behavior of a Congress leader with the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Asish Kumar Das, senior most Doctor of the Health department and presently posted at Health & Wellness Centre, Ferrargunj on 3rd January 2023, makes us feel that we are still under the colonial era. Unable to bear the humiliation meted out to a senior doctor like him by the Congress leader and Zilla Parishad member, Mr. Abdul Aziz, Dr. Das has taken up the issue with the Lt Governor and senior health authorities seeking



insulted, misbehaved and disrespected a senior doctor is against the protocol and unbecoming of a political leader.

The CMO further alleged that the Zilla Parishad member started talking to his associates and simultaneously gave directions to them to call

continued with his aggressive behavior. The CMO requested the Congress leader to meet him after 30 minutes when the examination of patients is over. But, the Congress leader started walking in the lobby and shouted loudly at the lobby where about 50 patients were waiting for their turns. He then called up the Director of Health Services and in front of the CMO started complaining about him to the DHS. The CMO also spoke with the DHS and narrated the entire incident. The DHS advised the CMO to continue with his duty.

An experienced doctor like Mr. A K Das who has rendered over 32 years of duty finding no other choice has written letters to the Senior Health authorities as well as Lt Governor requested them to ensure the safety & security of doctors and health workers on duty. He has also requested for installation of CCTVs in the hospital premises so that such events can be avoided.

Meanwhile, speaking to EOI, Mr. Abdul Aziz said that for a long time, the PRI members of this region have been receiving complaints about the CMO of Health & Wellness Centre, Ferrargunj from the general public. Patients have been complaining that the duty doctor takes considerable time examining the patients. As a result, the patients have to wait for a long time to meet the doctor. New sets of rules like removal of shoes before entering the doctor room is

their own people and gather a crowd inside the hospital. While he was sitting and talking with the CMO, he also started filming the arguments and the events with his mobile camera from a close range.

The CMO respectfully requested the Zilla Parishad member not to disturb him at a time when he is examining the patients. But Mr. Aziz

CMO urges LG, senior health authorities to ensure safety & protection of health staff on duty

protection of doctors and health staff during duty hours.

According to reports, the Chief Medical Officer, Health & Wellness Centre, Ferrargunj has alleged that a Congress leader and Zilla Parishad Member, Mr. Abdul Aziz, along with about six persons, including some women entered his chamber in PHC Ferrargunj on 3rd January 2023, when

Yeshuva Education Services completes 20 years in ANI

PORT BLAIR, JAN 5/--/ In order to celebrate 20 glorious years of providing education services to the children in the Islands, the Yeshuva Training Academy organized a get-together at Hotel Shompen on 4th Jan 2023. The Member of Parliament, Mr Kuldeep Rai



Sharma was the special guest of this occasion. Dr. R.P Moses welcomed the gathering and presented a report about the achievements and functioning of Yeshuva Training Academy. He also expressed his happiness over catering to the educational needs of the children of the islands for over 20 years in Andaman & Nicobar Islands.




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Prez calls for more women officers in military engineer services

NEW DELHI, JAN 5 /--/ Significant push is being given to women empowerment in the defence forces whether in combat roles or medical services, President Droupadi Murmu said on Thursday, calling for more number of women officers in the Military Engineer Services (MES).

Addressing officer trainees of the MES, who had called on the president at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, she said as young officers in the field of construction, they have the prime duty to care of the environment also. "We must move towards increased use of renewable energy for sustainable development," Murmu said. The President asked them to use information and c o m m u n i c a t i o n technologies to improve the service delivery mechanism and move towards more efficient governance. "Our soldiers are always ready to lay down their lives for the country and countrymen. You should feel privileged to provide service and support to the brave sons and daughters of the motherland," she said. The officer trainees present were from the Indian Defence Service of Engineers, architect cadre and surveyor cadre of the MES.

"I would also like to emphasise the need for more number of women officers in MES. In recent times, we have seen increase in participation of women in our armed forces. Whether in combat roles or medical services of defence forces, a significant push is being given to women empowerment. This positive change would be hopefully visible in military engineer services also," Murmu said. The President said the officers

have joined the services at a time when India has just entered into the Amrit Kaal and has also assumed the G20's presidency. "It is the time when the world is



looking towards India for new innovations and solutions. As officers of military engineer services, they would be instrumental in providing rear line engineering support to all the defence arms, that is, Army, air force, navy, coast guard and other

organisations," she said. "The dedicated engineering support that they provide to the armed forces enhances their overall performance and keeps them prepared to meet any exigencies," the President said.

Murmu said the nation must move towards increased use of renewable energy for sustainable development. She also noted that the MES is greatly contributing in reducing the national

carbon footprint by completing a large number of solar photovoltaic projects. They can innovate and use new building material that protects residents from hazardous chemicals, the president said. "The overall human well-being increases when surrounded by natural materials. Such materials are eco-friendly and result in improved indoor air quality," she said. Murmu said that the construction sector is very dynamic and technologies are changing very fast. "The construction sector is very dynamic and the technologies are changing very fast. We all know that the construction sector plays a major role in economic growth and development. You can contribute immensely in developing infrastructure using modern tools of project management," she said. The President urged them to make use of cutting-

edge technologies such as machine learning and artificial intelligence in their future projects. This would help in a more efficient design and reduced time frame for construction, she said.

"At the COP 27, India said that the world urgently needs to move from mindless and destructive consumption to mindful and deliberate utilization. India highlighted the role of human beings as trustees of planet earth and stressed on the need to nurture it through sustainable lifestyles," Murmu said. The President was happy to note that MES has completed the first ever 3D printed houses at Gandhinagar, Gujarat. She urged the MES officers to try to use more such technologies that are cost effective and help in avoiding wastage. Murmu also urged to promote recycling of materials wherever possible. (PTI)

PM to flag off Ganga Vilas Cruise on Jan 13: Official

VARANASI, JAN 5 /--/ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off 'Ganga Vilas Cruise' on January 13 and preparations for the programme have started, district authorities said on Thursday. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off the world's longest cruise tour from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh to Assam to Dibrugarh via Bangladesh on January 13," the information and public



relations department of Uttar Pradesh said in a tweet in Hindi. Though the administration is yet to receive any formal programme of Modi from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the district administration has already started the preparations. Varanasi divisional commissioner Kaushal Raj Sharma and district magistrate S Rajalingam have given necessary instructions in this regard to the officials of Culture department, tourism department and inland waterways transport.

On Thursday Sharma said that the world's longest cruise from Varanasi to Dibrugarh will be flagged off on January 13. The cruise will be flagged off from the jetty boarding point opposite to Ravidas Ghat. According to official sources, Ganga Vilas Cruise will cover a total distance of 3,200 kms. This will be the longest voyage in the world by a cruise. This journey will take a total of 50 days. On the way, this cruise will stop at more than 50 places, including World Heritage Sites. According to Sharma, this vessel will also pass through national parks and sanctuaries. These include Sundarban Delta and Kaziranga National Park. (PTI)

Tracking emergencies, digital innovation among health priorities for India in G20 presidency: Madaviya

NEW DELHI, JAN 5 /--/ Tracking health emergencies, preparedness and response, strengthening cooperation in pharmaceutical sector and digital health innovation and solutions are the three priorities under health for India in the G20 presidency, Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Thursday. Covid-19 pandemic which has affected the entire world in a major way has highlighted the need that all countries need to join hands to prevent and fight such a crisis, Mandaviya said. Health emergencies, prevention, preparedness and response with a focus on one health and antibiotic resistance is top on the agenda and India will aim to play a major role in converging discussions in multiple forums for global health architecture and act as an enabler for reducing fragmentation and duplication, he said. Another major focus would be on strengthening cooperation in the pharmaceutical sector for availability and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable medical countermeasures, the health minister said. "India is known as the pharmacy of the world. India will be able to utilise the agenda to promote distributed manufacturing of vaccines, drugs, and diagnostics globally so as to manage future health emergencies," he said.

India has exported drugs and vaccines to over 150 countries globally during the pandemic. At present, medical countermeasures availability is being linked to national security and India can ensure playing a proactive role in ensuring health security for global south and low and middle-income countries, he said. India will also focus on digital health innovation and solutions (universal health coverage and improving healthcare service delivery) with an aim of converging existing global efforts for digital health into an institutional framework, to create a repository, customise the best healthcare digital solutions and provide to countries in need with specific focus on low and middle-income countries. Ongoing agendas in G20 also touch upon digital health, as in one health surveillance, research, value-based healthcare etc.

Mandaviya said India already has an established leadership position in digital health. Digital Health Resolution in 71st World Health Assembly was moved by India and endorsed by the world. India has been the chair of Global Digital Health partnership, the largest inter-governmental body (33 countries as members) for digital health, he added. According to Mandaviya: "Use of digital health solutions such as Co-WIN, telemedicine and Covid-19 India platform highlighted the advantages of data-driven insights and use of technology for accessibility, ease of availability, and affordability in health service delivery." Four events on medical value travel and digital health, affordable medicine and traditional medicine along with HWG meetings to enrich and supplement support G20 discussions will be held in Kerala, Goa, Telangana and Gujarat. (PTI)

Police looking for 2 men who 'shielded' accused in Kanjhawla incident

NEW DELHI, JAN 5 /--/ Delhi Police on Thursday said it was looking for two men who are suspected to have shielded the five persons accused of dragging a woman under their car.

Amid demands that murder charges be invoked against the accused in the Kanjhawla incident, police said they have not found any previous link between victim Anjali Singh and the accused. They added that for murder charges to be pressed, intention behind the killing needs to be established. Addressing a press conference, Special Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Sagar Preet Hooda said 18 teams are working on probing the case and all angles are being looked into. Hooda also sought to dismiss claims by Anjali's family that that never heard or met her 'friend' Nidhi.

The police officer said around 25 to 30 calls were exchanged between Anjali and Nidhi from December 29-31. Nidhi had claimed she was with Anjali when their two-wheeler was hit by the Baleno car, with Anjali getting stuck under its wheels and succumbing to the grievous injuries sustained during the accident. Anjali's family on Wednesday had questioned Nidhi's claims and denied having heard of her or even meeting her. Nidhi had fled the spot out of fear, without informing anyone.

Investigating into the CCTV camera footage and call detail records, police zeroed in on two more suspects -- Ashutosh and Ankush Khanna - and said they were involved in shielding the accused. Police are on the lookout for the duo. Deepak Khanna (26), Amit Khanna (25), Krishan (27), Mithun (26) and Manoj Mittal have been arrested so far. Ankush is accused Amit's brother. Amit does not have a driving license and after he informed Ankush about the accident, his brother convinced Deepak, who is a Gramin Seva driver, to tell police that he was behind the wheel on the fateful day, the officer said. He said Ashutosh and Ankush were not in the car.

Ashutosh also misled the police by claiming that Deepak took the car when it was Amit, who had taken the car. Deepak also happens to be Amit and Ankush's cousin, Hooda said. When questioned about any link between the accused and victim, the senior officer said: "There was no connection between accused and victim and accused and eyewitnesses. This is what has been revealed so far in the investigation. The accused will be produced before the court on Thursday and we will request the court for police custody." The officer said that all five accused are being interrogated. Talking about fighting the case in court, Hooda said that a public prosecutor is also being appointed.

"Intention is required for murder. Till now, no previous connection has been found between the accused and victim. If intention is not established, it is difficult for police to prove charges under section 302," Hooda said. On allegations of delay in arrival of PCR vans and calls not being answered, he said an internal inquiry is being conducted. "It will be looked into whether it was human error or some system glitch. Police deployment is more at places where footfall is more," he added. There were some technical glitches over footage timings also that emerged. More CCTV footage emerged on Wednesday where Nidhi was seen returning home around 1.37 am, about five minutes after she and Anjali left the party venue, leading to questions being raised about the timeline of the events on the fateful night.

However, Hooda said the incident occurred between 2.04 am to 2.06 am, while body was found around 4.15 am. "Footage is emerging and we are also investigating the matter," he added. Sources said that a shoe and an earring were recovered from the spot by police. The FSL teams have recovered bloodstains and pieces of cloth that were found stuck to the car. Meanwhile, the AAP on Thursday alleged that the police and the BJP were "planting evidences" to malign the image of the woman who was killed after being dragged by a car in Delhi. Aam Aadmi Party national spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj slammed the BJP and Lt Governor V K Saxena, claiming that "facts are being twisted" to "shield its members". (PTI)



Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi (R), presenting memento to former President Ram Nath Kovind at Raj Bhavan in Chennai

Foreign varsities can now set up campuses in India, decide admission process, fee structure: UGC

NEW DELHI, JAN 5 /--/ Foreign universities will be able to set up their campuses in India for the first time with the UGC on Thursday unveiling draft norms, under which these varsities can also decide on the admission process, fee structure and repatriate its funds back home.

Noting that foreign universities with campuses in the country can only offer full-time programmes in offline mode and not online or distance learning, UGC chairperson M Jagadesh Kumar said the foreign universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) will need a nod from the UGC to set up their campuses in India. The initial approval will be for 10 years and will be renewed in the ninth year subject to the meeting of certain conditions, he

added and clarified that these institutions shall not offer any such study programme which jeopardises the national interest of India or the standards of higher education here.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) announced the draft regulations for 'Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India' and the final norms will be notified by the end of the month after considering feedback from all stakeholders. While these universities will have the freedom to decide their admission criteria and fee structure, the commission has advised keeping the fees "reasonable and transparent". "The new National Education

Policy (NEP), 2020 has envisioned that top universities in the world will be facilitated to operate in India. For this, a legislative framework facilitating such entry will be put in place, and such universities will be given special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance, and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions of India," Kumar said.

The regulatory framework allowing the entry of higher-ranked foreign varsities will provide an international dimension to higher education, enable Indian students to obtain foreign qualifications at affordable cost, and make India an attractive global study destination, he added. On matters related to funds and funding, he said that the cross-border

movement of funds will be according to the Foreign Exchange Management Act. "Cross-border movement of funds and maintenance of Foreign Currency Accounts, mode of payments, remittance, repatriation, and sale of proceeds, if any, shall be as per FEMA, 1999. An audit report shall be submitted annually to the commission certifying that the operations of the FHEIs in India are in compliance with the Act and related rules," he said.

"The operation of foreign HEIs shall not be contrary to the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency, or morality," the UGC chairperson added. (PTI)

Nadda takes a dig at Cong, says BJP will face Karnataka polls with report card

TUMAKURU, JAN 5 /--/ BJP national president J P Nadda on Thursday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has created "politics of report card" in the country, and the party will face Karnataka polls, with a report card on its performance. Congress' other name is "corruption, commission and casteism" and they should be made to sit at home, Nadda said as he urged his party cadres to take the message of BJP's inclusive politics, and its belief in taking all sections of the society irrespective of religion, caste, gender together. "When we go for election we will go with a report card, every single of our leaders, thumping their chests with pride, will say we had promised this and we have done it, we had not promised something, but still we have done it," Nadda said.

The BJP president called on party workers to tell people that neither former chief minister BS Yediyurappan nor incumbent chief minister Basavaraj Bommai has left any stone unturned to take Karnataka ahead.

Nadda was addressing BJP's "Shakti Kendra" heads meeting of Tumakuru and Madhugiri Assembly segments here, as the party prepares for Assembly polls likely by April-May. He said he has come to the meeting to meet the workers, who work at the ground level and take the message of the party and the government to the people. "I have decided to visit all parts of Karnataka and directly speak to karyakartas as we prepare for upcoming elections." Further asking party workers to organise "tiffin meetings" at Shakti

Kedras and booth-level to unify the society and ending casteism, Nadda said exchange food, send out a message of togetherness and



party's ideology. State BJP president Nalin Kumar Kateel, party's national general secretary in-charge of Karnataka Arun Singh, ministers J C Madhuswamy, BC Nagesh, Araga Jnanendra among were present at the event.

Accusing the Congress party of votebank politics, dividing the people in the name of caste, creating regional divide, also indulging in casteism, dynasty and appeasement politics, the BJP president said from the time PM Modi took over, dynasty and caste politics has ended and with the mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', he is taking everyone ahead together. From the time when Modi took over the responsibilities as the Prime Minister, he has changed the culture, conduct and the character of India's polity, Nadda said, adding that "The political culture has totally changed."

Urging BJP karyakartas to strengthen the party's roots along with the agenda of development, Nadda said this has to be done to

strengthen Karnataka, if the State has to be strengthened, the ideology of the BJP should be strengthened here. Work towards creating an "able booth", he said, "our booth should not be weak, it should take all sections of the society together like religion, caste, age, gender. Unify everyone under BJP's symbol, and we have to work towards it. So give representation to all sections in your booth and shakti kendra, also ensure that Dalits are associated with the party, no caste should be left out." Pointing out that several major economies like the US, China and Europe are in financial distress due to Covid and Ukraine war, the BJP president said: "Under Modi, India as a sound and stable economy, by maintaining stability it has

overtaken Britain, which had once ruled us, to become fifth largest economy in the world."

Listing out various work and programmes of the BJP government in Karnataka, he also highlighted the decisions taken to meet the reservation demands by various communities. Taking a dig at Congress leader and former chief minister Siddaramaiah for his 'Puppy' jibe at CM Bommai, Nadda said: "I was pained because with such a statement, he has brought down the standard of Karnataka's politics. A leader is known by the statement he gives." BJP respects its political opponents and under Modi it is strengthening cooperative federalism, he said: "They (Congress leaders) fight here, they don't get opportunity to meet their high command, today speak lightly about others." (PTI)

State BJP delegation meets Union Defence Minister



PORT BLAIR, JAN 5/--/ The Core Committee Members of State BJP led by Mr. Ajoy Bairagi, State BJP President met Mr. Rajnath Singh, Union Defence Minister, Govt of India on Thursday and discussed various issues concerning the Islanders. Notable issues discussed include expediting the ongoing upgradation work of Port Blair runway.

The BJP team stressed the importance of the upgradation of the runway and requested the Defence Minister to direct the concerned authorities to get the work completed as early as possible by engaging the workforce in 8X3 shifts. The team wanted that airport is fully operational for the maximum days with minimum curtailment of air services as it is the life line for the Islanders and also requested to make a standby arrangement for one aircraft from defence at the disposal

of the civil authority to engage the same for any emergency evacuation of serious patients referred to mainland during the airport closure days. They also apprise the Defence Minister about the exorbitant airfares due to closure of airport for flight operation on all days.

The BJP team also raised the issue of extension of Shibpur Airport at Diglipur to be completed in a time bound manner: To boost the connectivity of North & Middle Andaman, it is extremely important to extend the runway of the airport at Shibpur, in Diglipur. The extension of these runways is important for both the Defence Sector as well as for the civilian population. This will help in the introduction of the much acclaimed Udaan Scheme for the benefit of islanders as well as tourists.

The team requested the Defence Minister to introduce air connectivity to

Diglipur from Port Blair for at least three days in a week by engaging the Defence Aircraft for the residents of Diglipur as it will help the serious patients referred from Diglipur to Port Blair.

Another issue was extension of Campbell Bay airport at Great Nicobar and Car Nicobar Airport to be completed in a time bound manner. In order to boost the connectivity to Great Nicobar and Car Nicobar, it is extremely important to extend the runway of Car Nicobar and Campbell Bay airport at Great Nicobar. The extension of these runways is important for both the Defence Sector as well as for the Civilian Population. Development of the airport at Campbell Bay will definitely help the people of Nicobar and Campbell Bay.

Mr. Rajnath Singh assured the delegation to consider all the issues raised by them.

Training on organic vegetable production & seed distribution in NICRA-adopted areas



PORT BLAIR, JAN 5/--/ ICAR-KVK, CIARI, Port Blair organized training on organic vegetable production on 04.01.2023 at chouldharipanchayat. Dr. Y Ramakrishna, Principal Scientist and Head, briefed on the negative impacts of indiscriminate use of agrochemicals in farming systems, which create bad effects on soil diversity, depletion of soil organic matter, physiological disturbance, poor water use efficiency, and contamination of soil, food and water bodies in our fragile ecosystem. Dr. N. Bommayasamy,

SMS (Agro./Agrl. Extn.) emphasises the significance of organic farming and its long-term fertility of soil by maintaining organic carbon levels, ways of enhancing soil biological activities, achieving nitrogen self-sufficiency through intercropping of leguminous vegetables, biological nitrogen fixation, and effectively utilizing cow urine and cow dung for the preparation of liquid organic manure and supplementary nutrients through the use of bio-fertilizers. Dr. B.K. Nanda, SMS (Agrl. Engg.), and Dr. Pooja Kapoor, SMS

(Home Science) also spoke on efficient water management methods in post-rainy season vegetables, as well as the value of vegetable consumption in daily life. As part of the programme, fifteen farmers and farm women from NICRA adopted villages received vegetable seeds, including tomato (Arkasamrat, Arkarakshak), chilli (Arkatejasri, Arkakyatiri), French bean (Arkakomal, Arkasharath), bottle gourd (Co-1), long yard bean (Arkamangala), and cucumber (ArkaVeera).

Week-long 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' by ANTCC



PORT BLAIR, JAN 5/--/ The Andaman Nicobar Territorial Congress Committee will organize a 7-day Bharat Jodo Yatra in North and Middle Andaman from 6th January 2023, and covering through several villages & Panchayat of North and

will be covering a distance of approximately 200 km which will commence from Hathi Level Village, Diglipur on 6th January 2023, and covering through several villages & Panchayat of North and

Middle Andaman. The Bharat Jodo Yatra will end at Baratang on 12th January 2023. All the Islanders are requested to actively participate in this yatra at North & Middle Andaman to make this campaign a successful one.

Annual training camp for NCC cadets commenced at JNRM



PORT BLAIR, JAN 5/--/ A combined annual training camp for Senior Division/Senior Wing Army and Naval NCC cadets commenced at JNRM, Port Blair on 04 Jan 23. Camp Commandant Lt Col Pankaj Modgil addressed the cadets and motivated them to inculcate discipline and decision making skills in their day to day life. He reiterated the importance of these camps in fostering camaraderie and core values of Armed forces. Associate NCC Officers, Caretakers and Instructors from Army and Naval NCC were present during the ceremony.

The cadets will undergo classroom and practical training related to a wide spectrum of subjects like personality development, disaster management, health & hygiene in addition to service subjects and weapon training. On Thursday, the cadets had training and demonstration related to fire fighting equipment by SI Devandar Kumar and his team. The cadets handled various fire fighting equipment under their guidance.

EDP by Animal Husbandry dept

PORT BLAIR, JAN 5/--/ The Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Govt. of India under the National Livestock Mission (NLM) envisages Entrepreneurship Development Programme in Piggery & Goat/Sheep by incentivising the individuals, FPOs, Farmers Co-operative Organizations, Joint Liability Groups, SHGs and Section 8 Companies. The Central Govt. shall provide 50% Capital subsidy subject to limits against each of the under mentioned Entrepreneurship Development Programme.

The revised details of the Scheme has been uploaded in the Ministry's website-nlm.udyamimitra.in and A & N Administration's website-ahvs.andaman.gov.in.

Sl. No	Programme	Unit size for Goat/sheep farm	Maximum amount of capital subsidy (Rs. in lakhs)
1	Sheep & Goat farming	100 females + 5 males	10 lakhs
		200 females + 10 males	20 lakhs
		300 females + 15 males	30 lakhs
		400 females + 20 males	40 lakhs
		500 females + 25 males	50 lakhs
2	Piggery	50 Sows + 5 boars	15 Lakhs
		100 Sows + 10 boars	30 Lakhs

Calcutta High Court to hold circuit court from Jan 16

PORT BLAIR, JAN 5/--/ Hon'ble Justice Subhasis Dasgupta and Hon'ble Justice Saugata Bhattacharyya, Judges of the Calcutta High Court shall be sitting / holding Circuit Court at Port Blair from Jan. 16 to 27, 2023.

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THE ECHO OF INDIA-PORT BLAIR Friday-January 6, 2023

One swallow does not make a summer, neither does one fine day; similarly one day or brief time of happiness does not make a person entirely happy

Aristotle

Hydrogen Mission: India to become export hub

The approval given by the Union Cabinet to the National Green Hydrogen Mission offers a great opportunity for India to become a global export hub of green hydrogen and ammonia. The Mission aims at making India become energy independent. It will also help in decarbonisation of major sectors of the economy. Given that India currently imports more than 80 per cent of its oil requirement, green hydrogen along with solar and wind could be the answer to the future, with this initial outlay being projected to curtail fossil fuel imports of over Rs 1 trillion by 2050. The production of green hydrogen can rely on electricity generated by solar plants, and in a way, this is a boost to the renewable sector. The incentive programme makes the green molecule from India competitive. This is required for the initial few projects and create green hydrogen hubs, which will allow supply chains to be established and scale of production to increase. Several nations have already come up with green hydrogen subsidy and support programs. Recently, the US announced a big support plan for clean hydrogen through Inflation Reduction Act. Germany, UK and Japan are also providing support to clean hydrogen through state support programme. It will provide much-needed boost to encourage the green hydrogen industry. This intervention is even more significant because it comes at a time when India has the G20 presidency, clearly showcasing India's commitment to lead the global energy transition. Indian hydrogen demand is anticipated to see a five-fold jump to 28 MT by 2050, along with tremendous opportunities that exist for exports. This intervention will help Indian developers cater to the requirement and augment the ongoing efforts to reach the target of 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2070. The announcement of incentives under the National Hydrogen Mission Plan, along with the scale of likely hydrogen demand in India, positions the country as one of the few attractive nations globally for green hydrogen demand and production. It is a crucial policy measure in establishing India as a regional manufacturing and production hub for green hydrogen.

The initial outlay for the Mission will be Rs.19,744 crore, including an outlay of Rs.17,490 crore for the SIGHT programme, Rs.1,466 crore for pilot projects, Rs. 400 crore for R&D, and Rs. 388 crore towards other Mission components. The Mission will result in development of green hydrogen production capacity of at least 5 MMT (Million Metric Tonne) per annum by 2030 with an associated renewable energy capacity addition of about 125 GW in the country, over Rs. eight lakh crore in total investments, creation of over six lakh jobs, cumulative reduction in fossil fuel imports by over Rs. one lakh crore, and abatement of nearly 50 MMT of annual greenhouse gas emissions. The Mission will have wide ranging benefits, like creation of export opportunities for Green Hydrogen and its derivatives; decarbonisation of industrial, mobility and energy sectors; reduction in dependence on imported fossil fuels and feedstock; development of indigenous manufacturing capabilities; creation of employment opportunities; and development of cutting-edge technologies.

Global leaders must work to bring end to Ukraine war

REFLEX ACTION

Harihar Swarup

The 10-month-long Russia-Ukraine conflict has escalated to next level. These two countries account for about 30% of the world's wheat supply and approximately 60% of edible oils. Further, Russia exports fuel and energy to Europe. As Moscow withdrew, the already shaky continent fell into a profound recession. As a result, there was a regime change in Italy, and two Prime Ministers in the United Kingdom, lost their seats.

This year has also seen an outbreak of hostilities in our country. The comments of BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma during a TV discussion of May 26 gave reactions in India and abroad a handle to beat us with. Islamic countries objected diplomatically, and tension extended throughout the country's ten states. The murders in two states--- one in Rajasthan and another in Maharashtra---forced us to ponder whether we are regressing to the middle ages. Social media also fuelled fire.

The controversy surrounding Shah Rukh Khan's film Patthan is the most recent example of social media fostering hostility. This has previously occurred with several films, books, essays and writers. We also lost many leading lights this year---Birju Maharaj, Lata Mangeshkar, Rahul Bajaj, Shiv Kumar Sharma, Cyrus Mistry, Raju Srivastava, and Mulayam Singh Yadav among others. Such departures will leave a void for a very long time. Despite, these shocks, we also received some good news in 2022. India was elected

as G20 as President, and global financial institutions, voiced optimism about the Indian economy's performance this fiscal year. This year, we could see a growth of 6.9%. When the rest of the world is teething, India is marching forward. So the ruling government may get some kudos. Aside from the economy, there are some other exciting developments. It gives hope to see how rapidly we produced vaccines during Covid-19 era. Similarly, in Artificial intelligence, ideas, such as, Chat GPS may be game changer in industries such as education and journalism. It would be unfair if I do not mention Lionel Messi and the football World cup here. People like Messi spread love and brotherhood. Such heroes must be created in India as well. But within days of the thrilling World Cup football final, the greatest football legend Pele of Brazil died. For the sports lovers of the world, the death of the icon was a great loss. The year ended with the death of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother at the age of 100. PM rushed on December 30 morning to do the last rites but carried out all his scheduled programmes virtually. Modi learnt all the lessons of patriotism and discipline from his struggling mother.

Let New Year 2023 bring peace and happiness to the people in the world. The global leaders have to work hard to bring about an end to the war in Ukraine. The more than ten month old war has adversely affected the global economy, energy crisis has accentuated, the people are dying in battlefields, bombing of power installations by the Russians is continuing. The primary task in 2023 has to be the end of the Ukraine war. India as the newly elected president of G20 for 2023 can play a major role as a peace maker. (IPA)



A vendor operates a fast food cart at Balaram Dey Street on Thursday afternoon--Arijit Ganguly

Akhilesh Yadav still lacks that political skill of his father

If at all the state was really interested to benefit the backward castes it should have responded to the directives. Akhilesh simply performed the rituals by criticising the action of the BJP by saying that it was against the reservation for backwards.

Though both, the subjective and objective, conditions are congenial for mobilisation of the poor and bringing together the backward castes, Dalits and EBC on one single forum, the assembly election of 2022 exposed that the instead of fighting together against the exploitation and oppression of the upper castes these castes are pitted against each other. Even a close insight into the clashes amongst these people makes it explicit that the differences are basically not of the nature of caste awareness but of the nature of ego clash. The leaders of these castes are concerned of their personal gains and image than the class interest of the poor and Dalits.

It is irony that the leaders of the poor and Dalits treat the BJP as their ally and are willing to go to any extent with them to ensure the defeat of the other parties boasting to uphold the poor's interest. Of course in 2017 assembly election Akhilesh had entered into alliance with BSP of Mayawati. But the element of distrust among the partners torpedoed the strategy of transferring of dalit votes to the SP candidate and vice versa. Akhilesh's style of functioning has even inflicted massive damage to his own party. His

uncle, the number two leader in the party during the days of Mulayam deserted the party as he was not paid due respect and honourable treatment by Akhilesh.

He even formed his own party PSP. It was during the recent Lok Sabha election to Azamgarh that he came back to help Akhilesh's wife, his daughter in law. The most important Muslim leader Azam Khan, the closet protégé of Mulayam is having a strained relation with Akhilesh. The reason is known only to Akhilesh. When Azam Khan was slapped with a range of charges and jailed with his wife and son for months by the BJP government, Akhilesh preferred to maintain a passive silence and even ignored him.

In this election Akhilesh did not take any initiative to open talk with Mayawati and forge some kind of alliance with her. In the 2022 assembly election though the BSP did not win any seat, it got 12 per cent of votes. This is quite reflective of the importance of the dalit-jatav votes. It is beyond imagination how could a leader claiming to defeat the mighty BJP ignore this sizeable proportion of Jatav votes and let it shift to the saffron party? This does not reinforce their claim of being anti BJP. It are also

aware of the fact that BJP gets its strength from its parent organisation RSS, which is committed to transforming India into a Hindu Rashtra.

He should also realise that the people, especially Dalits have come to know of the trade tricks of Samajwadi Party of using the names of Ram Manohar Lohia and B R Ambedkar. He has admitted "We tried to realise the dream of Ram Manohar Lohia and B R Ambedkar of bringing the Bahujan forces on one platform, but those in power misused the official machinery and we failed".

The question arises if the poor and Dalits in Bihar and Bengal could frustrate the efforts of BJP, why then they failed in UP? Why they did not rise to protect their rights to vote? It is worth mentioning that in 2019 the SP had contested the Lok Sabha election in alliance with the BSP and had won 15 seats out of 80; five for SP and 10 for BSP. The BJP did not succeed in wiping them out.

It is absolutely clear that if the prevailing political narratives are any indicator, it could safely be said that the BJP will have a smooth sailing at the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. No doubt the Congress will find tough to challenge

the political hegemony of Modi and redesign new type caste equation, other regional satraps and their parties will receive a suffer a major jolt. While Akhilesh does not appear to be keen to bring other caste groups to bring on one table, he is consistently facing infighting within his own party and clan. Losing the by-elections in the Samajwadi Party (SP) bastions of Azamgarh and Rampur has raised serious questions about the party's future prospects in electoral politics.

Party sources emphasise that he is planning to overhaul the organisational structure. But he ought to realise that replacing A with B is not sufficient to refurbish the image of the party and improve its visibility. He must bring all the political parties together and steward this formation. Congress under the presidency of Rahul was rejected as a weak and useless party, but the same party has got revitalised with new vision after he took out Bharat Jodo Yatra.

Experts recall Mulayam did not lose a day in putting the BJP government on the mat. He was shaken with the fear of being accused of "anti-Hindu" and "anti-national". In contrast, since 2017, Akhilesh Yadav-led SP has been too defensive on both counts. The experts also say in the past the SP's workers were always out on the streets fighting the misrule of the government, but after 2017, but in existing situation they appear to have retreated. (IPA/Concluded)

Conventional Crossword						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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9	10			11		
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14			15	16		17 18
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24		25		26	27	28
		29				
30					31	

ACROSS						
1	Wooden shoe					
4	Meditated					
8	Read carefully					
9	Prophetic sign					
11	Songs for two					
12	Afresh					
14	Anger					
15	Lubricating					
19	Buy back					
21	Adults					
22	Explodes mildly					
24	Hot wine drink					
27	Be weak-minded					
29	Proverbs					
30	Dealt with successfully					
31	Look for					

DOWN						
1	Dove's call					
2	Laid bare					
3	Unit of inheritance					
4	Wet soft earth					
5	Customary					
6	Bishop's territory					
7	Pattern					
10	Female horse					
13	Misery					
14	Seemingly mocked by fate					
16	Little devil					
17	Set as a burden					
18	Nidus					
20	Ooze out					
23	Lytic poems					
25	Opening					
26	Sorrowful					
28	Large deer					

SUDOKU:3748						
2	5		3			
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Yesterday's Solution 3747						
6	2	8	3	9	4	1
4	3	9	5	7	1	6
7	5	1	8	6	2	9
9	7	5	2	4	3	8
3	1	2	6	8	9	4
8	6	4	1	5	7	2
5	4	3	9	2	8	7
1	9	7	4	3	6	5
2	8	6	7	1	5	3

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 1756						
M	O	R	A	S	S	
U	N	I	T	E		G
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N		M			D	E
A	S	S	U	R	E	
B	E	E			A	B
L	E	N	T		S	I
E	N	D			R	E

DISCLAIMER

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'Pathaan' troubles grow: VHP, Bajrang Dal want 'Besharam Rang' removed, some back film team

AHMEDABAD, JAN 5 /--/ Shah Rukh Khan-starrer "Pathaan" slid further into trouble with posters of the film being vandalised in an Ahmedabad mall and members of the VHP and Bajrang Dal saying they would not allow its screening in Gujarat unless their problems over its song "Besharam Rang" are resolved.

Several videos circulating on social media showed VHP and Bajrang Dal members shouting slogans, tearing the film's poster and stomping on large cutouts of "Pathaan", which also features Deepika Padukone and John Abraham, on Wednesday. While debate raged, team "Pathaan" found support in filmmaker Rahul Dholakia and some others who condemned the vandalism. The centre of the protests is the song, which features Deepika in several looks, including in a saffron bikini.

The song released on December 12 and has already reached 50 million views on YouTube. "We want the makers of Pathaan' to remove the words besharam rang' from the song and also scenes where the actress is seen in a saffron dress in the song. We will not allow Pathaan's

screening in Gujarat if these two changes are not made. Though we are also against the movie's title, because it propagates love jihad, our main demand at present is about that song," Bajrang Dal's north Gujarat president Jwalit Mehta said.

Gujarat VHP spokesperson Hitendrasinh Rajput added that "Besharam Rang" should ideally be dropped from the movie. "VHP and Bajrang Dal have a problem with that song and scenes in it. If that is sorted out, we do not have any problem with the movie. We will not allow the movie to be released with that song in its original form" said Rajput, adding that the VHP is okay with the movie's title. While most people in the industry have not spoken on the controversy, Dholakia, who directed SRK in "Raees", described the protest as "vandalism and hooliganism". He put out a tweet alongside a video of the protest. Soon after the release of "Besharam Rang", Dholakia said the hate attack that had been going on for years against Shah Rukh should "be condemned by one and all in the film industry".

"SRK has contributed more to our fraternity and India as an ambassador of

entertainment & cinema; than most people have. Please tell these bigots with idiotic theories to Shut Up," Dholakia tweeted. Some other social media users also criticised the incident in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. "I have zero interest in this movie. But, this hooliganism by bajrang dal is despicable," one user wrote. Another user said: "This is so wrong... Actually people praise Shahrukh on international levels but in India he is struggling to release movies... He isn't forcing u to watch... But u r forcing people not to watch it's ridiculous." The censor board last week asked production banner Yash Raj Films to implement changes and submit the revised version of the movie before its release on January 25. It did not specify what changes. CBFC chairperson Prasoon Joshi said the committee has guided the makers to implement the advised changes in the film "including the songs and submit the revised version prior to theatrical release". The aim of the CBFC, Joshi said, was to strike a balance between creativity of the makers and sentiments of the audience and accordingly find a solution. (PTI)

CPI(M) Panchayat member meets AS(Diglipur)

PORT BLAIR, JAN 5 /--/ The CPI (M) Panchayat Member, Mr. Madan Sarkar, along with 50 villagers of Nischintpur Village in Kalighat, North Andaman met the Assistant Commissioner, Diglipur on 4th January, 2023 and re-iterated their long-pending demands for construction of a bridge between Nischintpur and Kalighat market and road to Nischintpur village. The Assistant Commissioner patiently heard the delegation and assured that he will undertake a field visit to the area and take appropriate action on the demand. CPI (M) has been demanding for quite a long period of time for construction of the above bridge and road for the residents of Nischintpur village but the authorities did not accept the demands.

Vishal, Bairagi take up NH-4 roads, Chatham-Bambooflat bridge projects with Nitin Gadkari

PORT BLAIR, JAN 5 /--/ Mr. Vishal Jolly, National Executive Member of BJP & Mr. Ajoy Bairagi, State BJP President in a letter to Mr. Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Government of India over the extremely pathetic condition of NH-4 in North & Middle Andaman District & an early commencement of construction of Chatham Bambooflat Bridge. In their letter, they stated that the people residing at North & Middle Andaman are suffering enormously due to the extremely pathetic condition of the NH-4 in that region. The economic development and the transport system have collapsed due to the pitiable condition of NH-4. The construction of NH-4 was awarded to National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) in the year 2016 and even after lapse of almost 6 years, the work is yet to be completed.

Further they added that the yardstick, method and quality of work adopted by NHIDCL in South Andaman District was completely different from the works that



are being done at North & Middle Andaman District. Due to non-availability of good quarry products, the previously constructed road materials were rolled over for the new construction and they say that the same was done after obtaining necessary approval.

Both the leaders further highlighted that the road construction in that region is difficult considering the fact that around 09 months, the islands receive rains, the truth is that the concerned contractors have miserably failed in their

management and performance of work.

In respect to Chatham-Bambooflat Bridge, both the leaders wrote that the issue requires the intervention of the Minister for which a large number of people are awaiting. Reportedly, the DPR for this project was already completed and further course of action was required to be taken for its early implementation. This project would bring a sea change for enabling convenient vehicular traffic movement from a major part of South Andaman region to

Port Blair City. This would largely reduce the travel time for the commuters from several villages of South Andaman.

Concluding their letter both the leaders have earnestly requested take a serious note and take all needful steps to make sure that the construction work of NH-4 gets completed at the earliest by strictly maintaining the standards of National Highways and commence the project of Chatham-Bambooflat Bridge, in the interest of people of A & N Islands.

The age of celebration of technology for technology's sake is over: Satya Nadella

BENGALURU, JAN 5 /--/ Suggesting that the age of celebration of technology for technology's sake is over, Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella on Thursday said it is now about technology and its use for everyone in the world, where India can contribute immensely.

Speaking at the 'Microsoft Future Ready Technology Summit' here, he also highlighted the "magic" of government programmes and India Stack "co-evolving" in the country. "I had a chance to have a brief conversation with the Prime Minister yesterday, his vision and all the programmes, the yojanas and the India Stack. In fact the thing I'm realising is the magic of India Stack, because everything needs feedback. The yojanas or the policy and the technology stack co-evolving, that's just like a virtuous cycle that is unlike anything I have seen and it's just tremendous," Nadella said. He said, "I absolutely think both of these are perhaps the greatest contributions that India can make to the world quite frankly. The idea that there is digital public good is great, but also there is some sort of new way to use them to make it possible for every society and economy to be more inclusive."

Nadella was in conversation with IT industry veteran and Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani as part of the summit.

Stating that what he learns from India every time he comes here is the common man being able to use the greatest technology to do something that is useful to them, he said, "and it is not about tech for tech sake. That to me is what I think India can contribute."

"The age of celebration of technology for technology's sake is over, it is about really thinking about technology and its use for everyone in the world, and that I think will be the greatest contribution," Nadella added.

Further pointing out that the original vision of the internet was that it was a great leveller, so that everyone can build and create, and there would be frictionless access, Nadella said, at some level some of the new protocols and the stack work is re-bringing those ethos.

He also said it is also fostering the right amount of competition at the right layers, so there are no "incumbencies".

Earlier addressing the summit, Nadella said Microsoft stays grounded in its mission to empower

every person and organisation on the planet to achieve more.

"Ultimately for me is being able to put the technology into the hands of other technologists so that they can go on to create more technology to have real impact in the world, across every small, large businesses, non-

profit and public sector. Couldn't be more excited to be here in India, to be able to talk about all of this, to see all that is being developed here," he said. Nadella also spoke about the use of digital technology to solve the hard problems faced by our people, the society and organisations. (PTI)

PUNE, JAN 5 /--/ Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar has criticised the BJP governments at the Centre and in Maharashtra over unemployment, saying it is creating social issues as young men of marriageable age are not finding brides.

Speaking before flagging off the NCP's 'Jan Jagar Yatra' campaign here on Wednesday, Pawar said a rift is being created between communities and an attempt

is being made to divert the attention from real issues like inflation and unemployment. "It is possible to address the issue of hunger in the country as our farmers have increased the production, but the people in power are not ready to give due remuneration to farmers, instead they are safeguarding the interests of middlemen and pushing the common people into the gorge of inflation," the former Union ag-

riculture minister claimed. Today's youth are educated and they have the right to demand jobs, he said. Industries are going out of Maharashtra, no encouragement is being given to the existing industries and no opportunities are being given to set up new businesses, which is leading to increase in unemployment, Pawar said. "Once while travelling I came across 15 to 20 men in the age group 25 to 30 sitting

idle in a public square in a village. I asked them what did they do. Some said they are graduates, some said they are post-graduates. When I asked if they were married, everyone responded in the negative," the NCP chief said. Pawar said when he asked them the reason, they said no one was ready to give them brides as they had no jobs. "These complaints are being heard more in rural parts of the

state," he noted. But instead of adopting policies to boost employment opportunities, attempts are being made to create divisions between communities and religions, the former Union minister claimed. "Some issue is created randomly to create hatred between two communities. Why they are doing this? Because they have not been able to fulfil the promises they had made during the election," he added. (PTI)

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LOST

I, Eklavya Lall, S/o Shri. Mohan Lall, residing at M.B.46, Aberdeen Bazar, Port Blair- 744101, have lost my Passport No. L8210778 while traveling between Aberdeen Bazar to Goalghar within the dates 29/12/2022 to 04/01/2023.
Finder may Please Contact: 9933210660

AFFIDAVIT


I, Urvee Eklavya Lall, wife of Shri Eklavya Lall, R/o MB-46, Aberdeen Bazar, Port Blair, South Andaman District, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, solemnly affirm & declare as under:-
(a) That, my father's previous name was Shri UMESH NATH GUPTA, S/o Shankar Lall Gupta, R/o Main Road, Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh- 486889
(b) That he declared his name change to Shri UMESH KUMAR GUPTA, S/o Shankar Lall Gupta, R/o Main Road, Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh- 486889 vide Affidavit Ref.No.3354/2005 dated 21-03-2005 and news paper publishing dated 21-03-2005, copy attached annexure.
(c) That as per his latest Passport vide ref. No.N6539904 date of issue 11/03/2016 the name mentioned is 'UMESH KUMAR GUPTA', vide file no. BP1079717762216.
(d) That my father has passed away on 21-10-2020 and his Death Certificate Registration No. is D-2020:23-90719-000572, copy attached annexure.
(e) I state that 'UMESH NATH GUPTA' (previous name) and 'UMESH KUMAR GUPTA' (present name) is the name of one and the same person and that is my father.
(f) That, as per my Passport No. J2793020, file no.PNEP03435510, my name is recorded as URVEE GUPTA BHUNJIA and my father's name is recorded as Shri UMESH NATH GUPTA.
(g) That, as per my updated PAN Card No. AWPB6665Q & Aadhaar Card No. 263935777094 my name after marriage is recorded as URVEE EKLAVYA LALL and my father's corrected name is recorded as Shri UMESH KUMAR GUPTA.
(h) That accordingly I have applied for re-issue of my Passport requesting change in my personal particulars/details vide application no.23-1000171535 dated 04-01-2023
(i) I am executing this declaration to be submitted to the concerned authorities for the acknowledgment of my father's name change.
(j) I hereby state that all the above information mentioned herein are true to the best of my knowledge.
Solemnly affirmed at Port Blair on 05/01/2023

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Admission Notification to Class VI in Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (2023-24)

Online applications are invited for admission to class VI in Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas through Selection Test for the session 2023-24.


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Date of Exam

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Online applications are invited from students studying in class-V for admission in class VI during the academic year 2023-24 in the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya of South Andaman, N & M Andaman and Car Nicobar districts which is scheduled to be conducted on 29th April 2023 (Saturday) at various centres of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Students can apply only for the JNV in the district where they are studying in class V. On line prospectus-cum-applications are available in the website of Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti www.navodaya.gov.in. The last date for submission of online applications is 31st January 2023.

Vande Bharat Express pelted with stones in Bihar, not Bengal: Mamata

SAGAR ISLAND, JAN 5 /--/ Chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday claimed that the Vande Bharat Express was pelted with stones in neighbouring Bihar, and not her state.

Mamata said legal action will be taken against those media outlets that spread "fake news" that the incident took place in West Bengal, bringing a bad name to the state. "Vande Bharat was pelted with stones in Bihar and not in West Bengal. We will take legal action against those media outlets that telecast fake news that the incident took place in West Bengal and brought a bad name to our state," Banerjee told reporters before leaving Sagar Island. "Vande Bharat is nothing special. It is just an old train refurbished with a new engine," Mamata, a former Railway minister herself, said. She concluded her two-day visit to the island to oversee the preparations for the Gangasagar Mela that begins on January 8. The Vande

Bharat Express was on Tuesday pelted with stones for the second consecutive day. It was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 30.

Railway authorities on Thursday claimed they have identified those who threw stones at the train. Eastern Railways CPRO Ekalabya Chakraborty told news agency PTI that after scanning video footage, it was found that Monday's stone-pelting incident on Vande Bharat Express took place in Malda district and Tuesday's happened in Kishanganj district of Bihar, and efforts are underway to nab the perpetrators. The first incident

caused a glass door to crack, while the second damaged windows. No injuries to passengers, however, were reported in the incidents. "After scanning the footage, it was found that the first incident took place in Malda district of West Bengal and the second in Kishanganj district of Bihar. Further scanning of available footage is underway to pinpoint the exact location and identify the perpetrators," he said.

FIRs have been lodged in both cases and an awareness campaign started to prevent a recurrence of such incidents, the official said. Vande Bharat Express between Howrah

and New Jalpaiguri railway stations was flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 30 and commercial service on the route started on January 1. The incidents sparked a slugfest between the BJP and Trinamool Congress. The saffron party stuck to its demand for a probe by National Investigation Agency (NIA). "Probe is not yet over. We stick to our demand for an NIA probe to bring out the truth. We believe the stone-pelting incidents were a fallout of an incident that took place during the inauguration of the train in Howrah station last week," BJP state spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya said. BJP workers had raised 'Jai Shree Ram' slogans at the inauguration ceremony, following which Mamata refused to get on the dais from where the train was flagged off.

TMC had criticised the raising of a "political slogan" at a government function, while BJP leaders had tried to downplay the incident. (PTI)



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addressing media at Gangasagar on Thursday---Photo: Shyamal Maitra

3 boys arrested in Kishanganj for throwing stones

KISHANGANJ, JAN 5 /--/ Three minor boys were on Thursday caught by the police in Kishanganj district of Bihar in connection with a recent incident of hurling stones at the Howrah-New

Jalpaiguri Vande Bharat Express train. According to a statement issued by the Kishanganj police, a case was registered on Thursday morning in connection with the

incident that had taken place a couple of days ago. "Information was received at around 10.30 am today, from railway officials, that a coach of the Vande Bharat Express was vandalized by stone-

pelters on January 3, around 12.55 pm", said the police. It said a case was subsequently registered under the Railway Act and a video footage of the incident was examined.

"Four boys, all aged 14

years and residents of Nimalgaon in Potiya police station area, were identified. Three of them were caught and produced before the juvenile justice board. A search is on for the fourth", said the police. (PTI)

Modi could become PM because Cong nurtured democracy for 70 yrs: Kharge

BANKA, JAN 5 /--/ Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday flagged off a more than 1,000 km long march, inspired by Rahul Gandhi's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', in Banka district of Bihar.

The march, which would cover a major part of the state, was launched close to the "Mandar" hills, about 250 km from the state capital, which finds a mention in Hindu mythology. Kharge, who was visiting Bihar for the first time after getting elected to the top post of his party, slammed the BJP government at the Centre for "failure to provide employment to the youth" and diverting public attention with "communally charged rhetoric". "It is often being alleged that in the 70 years that it ruled the country after Independence, the Congress achieved nothing. It was the Congress which nurtured democracy, making it possible for Narendra Modi to become the Prime Minister despite his humble origins. A poor man's son like me is heading the party today," said the Congress president.

The veteran leader also called into question the BJP's nationalistic pitch, underscoring "it was the Congress that fought against the British and strove for freedom of the country. They had no role to play in that movement". In his speech, Kharge also recalled Congress stalwarts from Bihar like former deputy prime minister Jagjivan Ram and the first chief minister Shri Krishna Singh. He also remarked that all big changes in the country were connected to Bihar in one way or the other, underscoring Buddha's Enlightenment and Mahatma Gandhi's Champaran Satyagrah to buttress his point. The Congress president spoke in presence of a number of senior leaders, including the recently-appointed state president Akhilesh Prasad Singh. On the inaugural day of the march, participants covered a distance of seven and a half kilometers on foot before the night halt. (PTI)

Foreign Ministers of India and Israel discuss ways to strengthen strategic ties

JERUSALEM, JAN 5 /--/ Israel's newly-appointed foreign minister Eli Cohen and his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar on Thursday in a telephonic call spoke about ways to strengthen bilateral ties, including ways to promote Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and projects in the field of innovation, food and water security. Jaishankar congratulated Cohen on his assumption of office, a press release from the Israeli foreign ministry said. "The ministers discussed the importance of relations between Israel and India, relations that are strategic partnership, and the ways to strengthen them through the promotion of a Free Trade Agreement between the (two) countries and projects in the field of innovation, food and water security," it said. The ministers also discussed the events that were held in 2022 to mark the 30th anniversary of establishment of full diplomatic ties between the two countries and the cooperation between Israel, India, the United Arab Emirates and the United States. The four countries are collaborating on major infrastructural projects to strengthen economic ties under the I2U2 forum, and even held a summit meeting last year. Jaishankar also invited Cohen on an official visit to India soon. "Great to talk to the new foreign minister of Israel @elico1", Jaishankar tweeted immediately after the call. "Look forward to partnering (with) him in taking our cooperation forward. Value his many insights, including on economy and security," he further wrote. Cohen, who belongs to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party, has served in the past governments as Minister of Economy and Minister of Intelligence. He was appointed foreign minister by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on December 29, 2022. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, JAN 5 /--/ Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday underlined the importance of people's participation in the efforts for water conservation and said the governments' attempts alone cannot be successful. In his virtual address at the first national conference of water ministers from states, Modi said water should be a subject of cooperation, collaboration and coordination among states and asked them to plan in advance in view of the fast pace of urbanisation. "When the public is associated with a campaign, they also get to know the seriousness of the work. Due to this, a sense of ownership also comes in the public towards any scheme or campaign," Modi said in his virtual address at the first national conference of water ministers from states in Bhopal. The Prime Minister remarks assume significance as disputes over water-sharing have lingered among several states for decades. Modi said he thinks that under the MGNREGA maximum work should be done on water as he called for spreading awareness among people for its conservation.

Water is most consumed in sectors such as industry and farming, and awareness should be spread among them, he said, advocating for crop diversity and natural

farming. The Prime Minister said the subject of water comes under the control of states under our constitutional system and it is their efforts that will go a long way in achieving the collective goals of the country. "Water Vision@2047 is an important dimension of the journey of Amrit Kaal for the next 25 years," Modi said. Noting that success does not come from the efforts of the government alone, the prime minister drew attention to the role of public and social organisations and civil societies and asked for their maximum participation in campaigns related to water conservation. The Prime Minister also urged states to work on waste management and sewage treatment to stop water bodies from being polluted, and said they can use the 'Namami Gange' scheme as a template. People's participation in any programme develops a sense of ownership among them which, he said, is a key to success. Modi cited the 'Swachh Bharat' (clean India) campaign as a successful example of this. The all-India water ministers' meet on the theme 'Water Vision@2047' brings together key policy makers to discuss "ways to harness water resources for sustainable development", the government has said. (PTI)



Chairman and CEO of Microsoft Corporation Satya Nadella calling on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in New Delhi on Thursday

LS Secretariat preparing new identity cards of MPs for new Parliament building

NEW DELHI, JAN 5 /--/ Ahead of the Budget session, the Lok Sabha Secretariat has started preparing new identity cards for MPs to access the new Parliament building, sources said on Thursday. The MPs are also being trained on the audiovisual devices to be used in the new building. The Parliament's Budget session may start from January 31

with its first part concluding on February 10. The session's second part could start from March 6 and conclude on April 6, the sources said.

However, a final decision on the dates is yet to be taken. "A new Smart Card-based Identity Card is being prepared for the Hon'ble Members of Parliament for access in the New Parliament Building.

The Smart Card-based Identity Cards shall be highly secure with several safety features embedded into the system," the Lok Sabha Secretariat said in a bulletin.

The MPs' personal and biometric data will be collected for the new identity card. The process also involves a photograph for the Smart Card and registration on the facial

recognition system, the bulletin added. The members have been informed that a facilitation counter would be set up for it on the Parliament premises. Sources in the Lok Sabha Secretariat said training for MPs of new audiovisual devices to be used in the new building was going on in the annexe building.

The new Parliament

building is part of the redevelopment of the Central Vista.

It was announced that the building would be completed by the 2022 Winter session but the construction phase has been extended to this year. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had laid the foundation stone of the new Parliament building in December 2020. (PTI)



whether the state will allocate another amount after the four-month period, the school department official said that no such decision has been taken so far. He said the additional items will be served with immediate effect in every block on different days of the week. The move triggered a political row, with the BJP questioning why such a decision was taken ahead of the panchayat elections due this year and Lok Sabha polls in 2024, while the Trinamool Congress accused the Opposition of "smelling politics in everything".

"The decision to serve chicken to school children ahead of elections raises questions about the change of heart of the TMC government. Why were poor children deprived of these items and only given rice and lentils till recently? The decision smacks of a political motive to secure votes as panchayat polls are around the corner," BJP leader Rahul Sinha said. TMC's Rajya Sabha MP Santanu Sen said party supremo and chief minister Mamata Banerjee always stands by the side of the common people, and this decision "reaffirms that fact".

"Trinamool Congress is a people-centric party, unlike the BJP which wants to do politics on every issue. During the Covid pandemic and lockdown, our state ensured that children were not deprived of mid-day meals and distributed rice, pulses, potato, soybean regularly from school buildings. Despite difficulties, we did not shut down mid-day meals," Sen added. (PTI)

State to serve chicken, fruits in mid-day meals from Jan to April

KOLKATA, JAN 5 /--/ Ahead of the panchayat elections due this year, the West Bengal government has allotted Rs 371 crore for introducing chicken and seasonal fruits in mid-day meals from January to April.

In addition to the existing midday meal menu of rice, potato, soybean and eggs, chicken and seasonal fruits will be served weekly once for four months for additional nutrition under PM POSHAN, according to a notification. The provision of additional items, however, is unlikely to continue after April, a school department official said. Students are at present given rice, pulses, vegetables, soybean and eggs in schools as part of mid-day meals. An amount of Rs 20 will be spent per week on providing additional nutrition to every student, and the process will continue for 16 weeks, according to the January 3 notification, a copy of which is available with news agency PTI. Over 1.16 crore students in state-run and aided schools are beneficiaries of the mid-day meal scheme, for which the state and Centre share the cost on a 60:40 ratio. The additional allocation of Rs 371 crore, however, was made entirely by the state. Asked

Period of parole granted to prisoner to be excluded from sentence: SC

NEW DELHI, JAN 5 /--/ The Supreme Court ruled on Thursday that the period of parole granted to a prisoner is to be excluded from the sentence while considering his premature release.

Upholding a Bombay High Court order, a bench of justices M R Shah and C T Ravikumar said if the period is included in the sentence, then a prisoner who may be influential may get parole a number of times.

"If the submission on behalf of the prisoners that the period of parole is to be included while considering 14 years of actual imprisonment is accepted, in that case, any prisoner who may be influential may get parole for a number of times as there is no restrictions and it can be granted a number of times and if the submission on behalf of the prisoners is accepted, it may defeat the very object and purpose of actual imprisonment.

"We are of the firm view that for the purpose of considering actual imprisonment, the period of parole is to be excluded. We are in complete agreement with the view taken by the high court holding so," the bench said.

The apex court was hearing an appeal filed by some convicts undergoing life

imprisonment, who were released on parole under the provisions of the Goa Prisons Rules, 2006. All the petitioners had applied for a premature release under the 2006 rules and the State Sentence Revenue Board had recommended their premature release. The state government sought the convicting court's opinion on the petitioners' premature release. The court opined that the convicts shall not be released prematurely, considering the gravity of their offence. Therefore, the state government rejected the petition seeking a premature release of the petitioners. The convicts then approached the Bombay High Court, challenging the state's decision not to consider their case for a premature release. (PTI)

UK saw hottest-ever year in 2022 as Europe's climate warms

LONDON, JAN 5/--/ Britain had its warmest year on record in 2022, official figures showed Thursday, the latest evidence that climate change is transforming Europe's weather.

The Met Office weather agency said the provisional annual average temperature in the U.K. was 10.03 degrees Celsius (50 Fahrenheit), the highest since comparable records began in 1884. The previous record was 9.88 Celsius (49.8 Fahrenheit) set in 2014.

Met Office scientists said human activity - primarily fossil fuel emissions - has made such warm conditions vastly more likely.

"The results showed that recording 10C in a natural climate would occur around once every 500 years,

whereas in our current climate it could be as frequently as once every three to four years," said Met Office climate attribution scientist Nikos Christidis.

Britain is not alone. France's average temperature was above 14 Celsius (57.2 Fahrenheit) in 2022, making it the hottest year since weather readings began in 1900. In Spain, preliminary data from the end of December indicated that 2022 was the hottest year since records started in 1961.

Last year saw summer drought and heat waves across much of Europe, with the temperature in Britain rising above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) for the first time on record. Norway's Svalbard islands in the

Arctic had their warmest summer in more than a century of record-keeping. The archipelago's average temperature for June, July and August was 7.4 Celsius (45.3 Fahrenheit), the Norwegian Meteorological Institute said.

Autumn brought more heavy rain in parts of Europe, including the mountainous Italian island of Ischia, where downpours in November triggered a massive landslide that pushed cars and buildings into the sea and killed at least a dozen people.

Unlike the U.S. and Canada, which have been hit by bitter cold and snowstorms, much of Europe is experiencing unseasonably warm winter weather.

In Germany, the year ended with the warmest

New Year's Eve on record, with temperatures reaching 20 Celsius (68 Fahrenheit) in the south of the country. Belarus, Belgium, Czechia, Latvia, Poland and the Netherlands all set national record daily highs for Dec. 31 or Jan. 1. As 2023 begins, many low and medium-altitude ski resorts in the Alps, the Pyrenees and other European ranges are suffering from a lack of snow.

In Bosnia, spring-like weather has foiled even artificial snow - either it's too warm to make it, or it melts soon after being spit out onto the slopes. Along the slopes in Bjelasnica near Sarajevo on Wednesday, snow accumulation amounted to little more than several white patches on an otherwise grassy landscape of brown and green. (AP)



People Practise ice skating at the frozen sea of Amur Bay in Vladivostok, Russia

Hong Kong to start reopening border with China on Sunday

HONG KONG, JAN 5 /--/ Hong Kong will start to reopen its border with mainland China on Sunday and allow tens of thousands of people to cross from each side every day without quarantine, the city's leader said. The city's land and sea border checkpoints with the mainland have been largely closed for almost three years under China's "zero-COVID" strategy, which has restricted entry to the country, isolated infected people and locked down areas with outbreaks. The reopening is expected to provide a much-needed boost to Hong Kong's economy.

Thursday's announcement came as China is easing some of the world's toughest anti-virus controls. From Sunday, China will also gradually increase the number of flights between Hong Kong and the mainland and scrap the limit on passenger numbers for flights from the city, the Chinese government said in a statement.

"My personal inclination is, if factors permit, I want to allow a large number of people to go through because that has been the voice of a lot of people, both locally and overseas - wishing Hong Kong to proceed to normalcy as quickly as possible," Chief Executive John Lee said at a press conference.

During the first phase of the reopening, four border checkpoints that were closed for nearly three years will resume operations, bringing the number of checkpoints up and running in the city to seven, Lee said. Currently, all but three checkpoints in Hong Kong are shut.

The Hong Kong government will decide when to expand the scale of border reopening after reviewing the situation with mainland authorities, Lee added.

Under a quota system, up to 60,000 people can travel from Hong Kong to mainland China each day. The same cap is also imposed on the number of travelers entering the city from the north, he said.

But Hong Kong residents in mainland China who want to return to the city are not bound by the quota system, and neither are mainland Chinese residents in Hong Kong going north.

Travelers will have to obtain a negative COVID-19 test result within 48 hours before departure. Those crossing via designated land border checkpoints have to register online to secure a quota slot.

Hong Kong is a semi-autonomous Chinese territory that borders Guangdong province in southeast China. People must pass through immigration to cross between the two. The border restrictions imposed since 2020 have hammered the city's economy, especially the tourism sector.

Also starting from Sunday, the mainland will no longer require inbound travellers to quarantine, marking a major step toward fully reopening travel with the rest of the world. Mainland Chinese residents will be allowed to visit Hong Kong for sightseeing purposes in a gradual and orderly manner, depending on the city's capacity and pandemic situation, the Chinese government added. (AP)

Pak court bars Election Commission from removing Imran Khan as PTI chief

LAHORE, JAN 5 /--/ A top court on Thursday stopped the Election Commission from removing ousted prime minister Imran Khan as the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party's chairperson. The top election body last month initiated the process to remove 70-year-old Khan as chairman of his party following its verdict in the Toshakhana (national depository) case. It had disqualified the ousted premier under Article 63(1)(p) of the Constitution for making "false statements and incorrect declaration".

Khan on Wednesday filed a petition in the high court against the electoral body's move. The Lahore High Court (LHC) took up the petition of Khan and stopped the Election Commission from initiating the process to strip him of the chairmanship of his party after listening to the arguments of his counsel, Senator Ali Zafar. LHC judge Justice Jawad Hassan also issued a notice to the ECP to file its reply on the issue on January 11. Khan has asserted that the law does not place any bar on a convict from becoming an office-bearer of a political party.

In the petition, the ousted premier said the ECP has exceeded its powers by trying to remove him as his party's chairperson. "The cognizance and exercise of jurisdiction by the ECP for debarring Imran Khan from holding the office of the party chairman on the basis of alleged incorrect statement of assets and subsequent disqualification is unlawful and contrary to the Constitution," Khan said in the petition.

"The entire scheme of the qualification and the disqualification under the Constitution and the Act has been misconstrued by the ECP and the precedent set by the Supreme Court in disqualification of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has been misapplied to the detriment of the petitioner. In fact, the impugned findings of ECP are to the detriment of the entire scheme of parliamentary democracy which is not warranted in law and are liable to be set aside by the court." (PTI)

Pak Army chief travels to Saudi Arabia on his maiden visit abroad

ISLAMABAD, JAN 5 /--/ Pakistan Army chief General Asim Munir on Thursday travelled to Saudi Arabia on his first official visit abroad where he met Saudi Defence Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman and discussed ways to strengthen bilateral ties, including in the defence sector. General Munir arrived in Saudi Arabia early Thursday and was received by Defence Minister Prince Khalid.

During the meeting, they emphasised the strength and durability of bilateral relations between the two fraternal countries, state-run Saudi Press Agency reported. "They discussed military and defence cooperation, and ways to support and enhance them, in addition to discussing the most important regional and international issues of common interest," it added.

The meeting was attended by the Chief of General Staff of Saudi Arabia, Lt Gen Fayyad bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili, Assistant Minister of Defence Eng. Talal bin Abdullah Al-Otaibi, and a number of Saudi and Pakistani military and civilian officials.

Later, Prince Khalid tweeted that he was "pleased" to meet General Munir.

"We emphasised the strategic partnership between our brotherly countries, reviewed the bilateral military and

defence relations, and discussed ways of strengthening our cooperation," Prince Khalid tweeted.

General Munir, who has headed Pakistan's both powerful spy agencies - the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Military Intelligence (MI), assumed charge as the new Army chief in November end, replacing General Qamar Javed Bajwa who retired after two consecutive three-year terms.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) - the media wing of the Pakistan Army - earlier said that General Munir would be visiting Saudi Arabia and the UAE from January 4 to January 10. "The COAS will be meeting the senior leadership of both brotherly countries to discuss matters of mutual interest, military-to-military cooperation and bilateral relations focusing on security-related subjects," it said in a statement.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoy close military and economic ties and the kingdom has been providing critical support at the crucial hours.

Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also toured Saudi Arabia and the UAE in a bid to secure funds for the crash-strapped country.

Pakistan faces a serious crisis as its foreign reserves are down to USD 5.8 billion, which included deposits worth

USD 5 billion from Saudi Arabia and China with specific conditions of use.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said on Wednesday that Saudi Arabia and China were set to beef up Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves much before the close of this month.

"Our foreign exchange reserves by end-June would be much better than you can think," Dar told reporters at a news conference in Islamabad.

The presser had been called in response to a "white paper" launched a day earlier by the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), suggesting that Pakistan was on the verge of anarchy because of hyperinflation and unemployment, the Dawn reported.

Dar recalled that during the prime minister's visits in September, China and Saudi Arabia had agreed to increase their support to Pakistan, and the Saudi finance minister later confirmed this to international news agencies.

He said the process got delayed, but Saudi Arabia would increase its support much earlier than the end of this month, while the Chinese loan rollover was also being processed.

The minister said the IMF delay was because of the credibility gap caused by "reckless decisions" of the PTI government on the eve of the no-confidence vote. (PTI)

Pakistani officers shot dead in Punjab province revealed to be ISI officers

LAHORE, JAN 5 /--/ Two police officers who were shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Khanewal district of Punjab province on Tuesday turned out to be the officials of Pakistan's spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). On the day of the attack, the police claimed that the two deceased officers belonged to the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of the provincial police.

The FIR filed for the case, however, revealed that both were ISI officers working to bust a terror network in south Punjab. The banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Lashkar-e-Khorasan, an offshoot of Al-Qaeda, have claimed responsibility for the attack. According to the FIR, ISI Multan Region Director Naveed Sadiq and Inspector Nasir Abbas met a "source" (suspected killer) on Tuesday at a roadside restaurant on the National Highway near Pirowal in Khanewal district, approximately 375 kilometres from Lahore.

"After having tea, they all walked to the parking lot when the source identified as Umar Khan suddenly pulled out a gun and shot the ISI officers dead," the FIR said, adding that the suspect killed the intelligence officers reportedly on the orders of his group leader, Asadullah.

It is standard practice for intelligence officials to cultivate sources among terrorist networks to thwart their terror plans. The Counter Terrorism Department of Punjab police, Multan, has registered the case against the suspect and his accomplices under

murder and terrorism charges. Raids are being conducted to arrest the prime suspect. ISI chief Lt Gen Nadeem Anjum offered the funeral of Naveed Sadiq in Lahore. In a statement, TTP spokesman Mohammad Khorasani claimed that "a secret squad of TTP killed ISI Deputy Director Multan Naveed Sadiq along with his colleague Inspector Nasir Butt at Bismillah Highway in Khanewal district of Punjab."

The TTP, which is believed to be close to al-Qaeda, has also explicitly warned Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari led Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) - the two major parties of the ruling coalition. (PTI)

Ukraine to get French combat vehicles in "first" such move

PARIS, JAN 5 /--/ The French Defence Ministry said Thursday it will soon hold talks with its Ukrainian counterpart to arrange for the delivery of armored combat vehicles in what France's presidency says will be the first time this type of Western-made wheeled tank destroyer will be given to the Ukrainian military. Discussions will include the delivery timetable and the training of Ukrainian soldiers on the equipment, the ministry said. Designated as "light tanks" in French, the AMX-10 RC carries a 105-millimeter cannon and two machine guns. It's primarily designed for reconnaissance missions and has enough armor to protect against light infantry weapons, according to the French defence ministry. They have wheels rather than tracks, allowing it to be more mobile than heavy tanks.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr Zelenskyy took to Twitter to thank France the weapons and for "intensifying work with partners in the same direction." Ukraine has for months sought to be supplied with heavier tanks, including the U.S. Abrams and the German Leopard 2 tanks. France's decision was announced after an hour-long call between French President Emmanuel Macron and Zelenskyy Wednesday afternoon. The Elysee declined to provide details about the agreement.

The AMX-10 RC has been in service with the French military since 1981 and has undergone recent upgrades. France's defense ministry said the combat vehicle is now being gradually replaced by the new equivalent named Jaguar. The decision is another in France's military support to Ukraine, following the French defense minister's visit to Kyiv last week. Paris has supplied Ukraine with a substantial chunk of its arsenal of Caesar cannons, as well as anti-tank missiles, Crotale air defense missile batteries and rocket launchers. It is also training some 2,000 Ukrainian troops on French soil. (AP)

Global shares rise as sentiments get boost from Fed, US jobs

TOKYO, JAN 5 /--/ Global shares mostly rose Thursday following a rally on Wall Street as investors assessed minutes from the Federal Reserve's latest meeting of policymakers and welcomed encouraging data on US jobs.

France's CAC 40 lost 0.6 per cent to 6,736.01 in early trading, while Germany's DAX fell 0.4 per cent to 14,438.94. Britain's FTSE 100 edged up 0.1 per cent to 7,595.23. US shares were set to drift higher with Dow futures up 0.3 per cent to 33,389.00. S&P 500 futures rose 0.5 per cent to 33,389.00. Worries over China's economic slowdown were weighing on Asian regional sentiment.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 rose 0.4 per cent to finish at 25,820.80. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 edged up nearly 0.1 per cent to 7,063.60. South Korea's Kospi added 0.4 per cent to 2,264.65. Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 1.3 per cent to 21,052.17, while the Shanghai Composite gained 1.0 per cent to 3,155.22.

India's Sensex declined 1 per cent. Widespread COVID-19 cases in China have added to gloom over a long-term slump in its property sector and over the impact of pandemic restrictions that were only recently loosened as the virus gained ground in the worst nationwide outbreak so far. "Retail sales in general should be weaker in December compared to the prior month," said Robert Carnell, regional head of research Asia-Pacific at ING. He said demand might bounce back during the Lunar New Year later in the month.

"After the long holiday, there could be even more daily COVID cases, and then another quiet month for retail. The road to recovery may not be smooth for retailers," he said. On Wall Street, the S&P 500 rose 0.8 per cent Wednesday and the Dow Jones Industrial Average advanced 0.4 per cent. The Nasdaq composite added 0.7 per cent while the Russell 2000 index gained 1.2 per cent.

The US government will release its weekly unemployment report on Thursday and its closely watched monthly employment report, for December, on Friday. Strong jobs numbers are seen as an indication of inflationary pressures that support further interest rate increases by the Federal Reserve.

But layoffs have been mounting in the technology sector, which is dealing with falling demand as inflation squeezes consumers.

The Fed raised its key short-term interest rate last month for the seventh time in 2022 and signalled more hikes to come. The increase was smaller than those from the previous four meetings, reflecting signs that inflation, while still high, has been easing.

The minutes from the mid-December meeting show Fed officials remained determined to keep rates high, taking little comfort from inflation's decline from a peak of 9.1 per cent in June to 7.1 per cent in November.

The Fed's benchmark lending rate stands at a range of 4.25 per cent to 4.5 per cent, up from close to zero following seven increases last year. It has forecast that the rate will reach a range of 5 per cent to 5.25 per cent by the end of 2023 and it isn't calling for a rate cut before 2024.

Investors have had their eyes on the Japanese yen, because investors don't expect Japan's superlow rates to continue, even as rates are rising in other nations.

"Even though the BoJ warned that this doesn't mean that a rate hike is imminent, the BoJ won't be able to maintain rates below zero while rates are soaring elsewhere. Sooner or later, the BoJ will hike, and that's enough for traders to pile into the yen, which has been the worst performing major currency last year," said Ipek Ozkardeskaya, senior analyst at Swissquote Bank.

In currency trading, the US dollar fell to 132.51 Japanese yen from 132.56 yen. The euro cost USD 1.0621, up slightly from USD 1.0610. In energy trading, benchmark US crude rose USD 1.87 to USD 74.72 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It dropped USD 4.09 on Wednesday. Brent crude, the international pricing standard, rose jumped USD 1.93 to USD 79.77 a barrel. US crude oil settled 5.3 per cent lower on Wall Street. (AP)

William urged him to hit back but he refused to do so and later William returned "looking regretful, and apologised".

Harry's resentment of being the "spare" is the unifying theme of his book, through chapters on his childhood, his schooling, his career as a royal and in the British army, his relationship with his parents and brother and his life with Meghan through courtship, wedding and marriage to their own experience of parenthood. (PTI)

Axar, Surya heroics went in vain as SL beat India by 16 runs to level series

PUNE, JAN 5 /--/ Suryakumar Yadav and Axar Patel struck blistering fifties in a stunning 91-run stand, albeit in a losing cause as Sri Lanka tightened the screws in the nick of time to beat India by 16 runs in the second T20I and level the three-match series 1-1 here on Thursday.

Skipper Dasun Shanaka made a rear-guard unbeaten 56 off 22 balls, while wicket-keeper Kusal Mendis hit a 31-ball 52 to power Sri Lanka to an imposing 206 for 6. India had a nightmarish start to their chase slumping to 57 for 5 before Axar (65 off 31) and Surya (51 off 36) raised hopes of an improbable win with a scintillating sixth-wicket stand. The task became tough once Surya departed in the 16th over, but Axar and Shivam Mavi (26 off 15) shared quick 41 runs to bring down the equation to 21 off the last over. But Axar's dismissal in the third ball of the final over was the last nail in the coffin for India. Chasing the total, India lost openers Ishan Kishan and Shubman Gill in the second over to Kasun Rajitha. If that was not enough debutant Rahul Tripathi sneaked one to Kusal Mendis off Dilshan Madhushanaka in the next over before skipper Hardik Pandya departed an over later as India slumped to 34 for 4 in 4.4 overs. Surya and Deepak Hooda tried to stabilise the innings with a hard-fought 23-run partnership but with the asking rate creeping up, the latter departed in search of a big shot, caught by Dhananjaya de Silva off Hasaranga de Silva as India lost half of their side for 57. Surya and Axar tried to up the ante with a sensational 91-run sixth-wicket partnership off just 40 balls to keep India afloat after a forgettable start. Axar was particularly severe on off-spinner Maheesh Theekshana, clobbering the bowler for a four and six over long-on in the 13th over. It was not just Theekshana, Hasaranga de Silva too had to bear the brunt of Axar's aggression as the left-hander smacked the bowler for a hat-trick of sixes in the 14th over.

Axar brought up his maiden fifty off just 20 balls with a six of Karunaratne over long-off. Surya followed suit, registering another fine fifty with a six off over square-leg off Madhushanaka. The duo raised hopes of a famous victory but it was not to be as the visitors pulled the strings just in time to level the series. Earlier, it was a disastrous performance from the Indian bowlers after electing to field as the Lankan batters went hammer and tongs from the onset. Barring Axar (2/24 from his 4 overs), all other Indian bowlers went for runs. Even though speedster Umar Malik (3/48) picked up three wickets, he too was taken to the cleaners, while last match's hero Mavi (0/53) looked a pale shadow of himself. Arshdeep Singh conceded 19 runs of the second over, which included two back-to-back no balls that yielded 17 runs. Hardik too went for 11 runs from his second over as Mendis topped one over deep third man. Mavi was also taken to the cleaners by Mendis in his opening over, which yielded 15 runs.

Spin duo of Axar and Yuzvendra Chahal (1/30) gave respite for two overs before Pathum Nisanka (33) struck a four and then a mammoth six over deep midwicket. (PTI)



Game recognises game- Dasun Shanaka pats Axar Patel after a fantastic knock

the right-arm move further clear as the top-ranked T20I bowler. Hasaranga also scored a quick-fire 21 with the bat and that saw the 25-year-old jump two spots to fifth on the latest list for all-rounders. In the Test rankings for batters, Marnus Labuschagne remains at the head of proceedings with a healthy lead despite his failure in the Boxing Day Test against South Africa. However, his closest rivals, teammate Steve Smith, Pakistan skipper Babar Azam and former New Zealand captain Kane Williamson all are closing in on the 28-year-old Labuschagne. Williamson is the other big winner on the latest rankings with the experienced right-hander jumping two places and back inside the top five at fifth following the fifth double-century of his distinguished career in the first Test against Pakistan.

In bowling, Pat Cummins managed just one wicket during Australia's victory over the Proteas in the Boxing Day Test, but still held a big 37-point lead over England veteran James Anderson. (PTI)

T20I ICC rankings: Ishan Kishan jumps 10 places to 23rd, Hooda re-enters top 100

DUBAI, JAN 5 /--/ India opener Ishan Kishan jumped 10 places to 23rd position while Deepak Hooda re-entered the top 100 in the latest ICC rankings for T20I batters issued on Thursday.

Both moved upwards in the chart after their impressive performances in the first T20 International against Sri Lanka in Mumbai on Tuesday, which India won by two runs. Hooda moved up 40 places to 97th after his unbeaten 41 off 23 balls while Kishan was rewarded for his brisk 37-run knock at the top of the order. The swashbuckling Suryakumar Yadav continued to hold the top spot for batters despite a rare failure in Mumbai. India's new T20I captain Hardik Pandya, up nine places to 76th among bowlers, is the other to move up the rankings. As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, Wanindu Hasaranga was once again a strong contributor against India with figures of 1/22 with the ball helping



Miller's mission in 2023: Maintain consistency and win elusive world title

NEW DELHI, JAN 5 /--/ His IPL captain Hardik Pandya might sport a wry smile while reading this but star South Africa batter David Miller too wants to end a world title drought for his team by maintaining his remarkable consistency in the new year.

Miller had a year to remember as he contributed immensely to Gujarat Titans' title winning effort on IPL debut besides shining in South African colours. In the 16 T20 Internationals he played in 2022, Miller struck at a rate of 164.84, including scoring a hundred and two half centuries against India. In 12 ODIs, he averaged 57.80. Speaking to PTI ahead of the inaugural SA20, where he will captain Paarl Royals, Miller said his focus is on maintaining the consistency he showed in the last 12 months.

"As a sportsman you always try to be consistent. Finding out what works for you through pressure situations and try to do that more often than not. Looking into this year, I want to make sure I am in a good mental space and be nice and clear with my plans.

"I want to stay consistent, whatever team I am playing for. It is a busy international calendar but I have got some good time off in December so feeling refreshed and revitalised for the new year," said the destructive southpaw. While India last won a world title in 2011, South Africa have struggled to win one since they returned to international cricket in the post apartheid era in 1991. India T20 skipper Hardik has already said that there can't be anything bigger than winning the World Cup at



home and Miller too wants to win it for the Proteas.

"We haven't managed to win one yet but the end goal is to strive towards the World Cup. It is one of the biggest trophies going around and we have exciting players in the white ball set up coming through.

"I am certainly looking forward to that World Cup. There is still time left but I have added that to my new year resolution," he

said referring to the ODI World Cup in India in October-November. All six teams in the SA20 are owned by successful IPL franchisees and their presence gives much-needed stability to the event, feels Miller. Cricket South Africa launched T20 leagues in the past but with little success.

"We have been wanting to have something like this. I you look around all the leagues that are happening, it always benefits the local players, the international players coming around and playing and they get to gain experience.

"The IPL owners are involved. They have a very successful product in IPL in the last 14-15 years. The teams are very experienced in what they want and how the event should be run.

"They are getting involved in different leagues around the world. It seems the way at least T20 cricket is going. South Africa is a great place to play cricket with a good time zone and good weather. It is going to be a successful product.

"Having the owners from India, it becomes very lucrative for the local players as well." Like IPL was life-changing for him, the SA20 could do the same for the young cricketers at home, said Miller.

"As a South African you always want to play for your country, it is the biggest honour for me. In terms of changing one's life you can definitely do that in the IPL with the financial benefits coming with it.

"It (SA20) will change a lot of local lives as well. It gives them additional income outside their domestic contracts. It is surely a win win," he added. (PTI)

BCCI, PCB on collision course

ACC chairman Jay Shah announces "calendar", PCB chief Sethi terms it "unilateral"

NEW DELHI, JAN 5 /--/ The simmering tension between India and Pakistan cricket boards was palpable after PCB chief Najam Sethi took a sarcastic jibe at BCCI secretary Jay Shah for "unilaterally announcing" the Asian Cricket Council's two year calendar.

On Thursday, Shah, in his capacity as ACC chairman announced the 2023 and 2024 itinerary on his twitter handle with the marquee Asia Cup slotted in September this year, though the detailed itinerary and the host country have not been announced yet. Pakistan is the original host of the Asia Cup this year but the BCCI is not keen on playing there owing to political tension between the two countries. The then Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Ramiz Raja had opposed the BCCI's stand and even threatened to boycott the 50-over World Cup in India. Raja's contention was that the decision to award Pakistan the hosting rights was taken by ACC's Board of Directors and Shah can't decide about shifting the tournament. Sethi, who was perceived to be close to previous Indian board bigwigs, however was sharp in his response after Shah released the calendar in the morning.

"Thank you Jay Shah for unilaterally presenting ACC structure & calendars 2023-24 especially relating to Asia Cup 2023 for which Pakistan is the event host. While you are at it, you might as well present structure & calendar of our PSL 2023! A swift response will be appreciated," Sethi's sarcasm-laden tweet wasn't lost on anyone. The Asia Cup 2023 will be a six-team affair involving India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and a qualifier team.



Sri Lanka are the defending Asia Cup champions in the UAE after they beat Pakistan in the final. The tournament was played in T20 format because of the ICC T20 World Cup in Australia.

With India are set to host the ODI World Cup later this year and the focus of all the participating teams being on the 50-over format, this year's Asia Cup will be held

ACC president Jay Shah, while releasing the calendar for the next two years, said the schedule "signals our unparalleled efforts and passion to take this game to new heights. With cricketers across countries gearing up for spectacular performances, it promises to be a good time for cricket." A total of 145 ODI and T20I matches will be played during the two-year cycle (between 2023-2024) announced by ACC. There will be 75 games in 2023 and 70 games in 2024.

Also, the Emerging (U23) Asia Cup is back and will be held in the 50-over format in July this year for men and involve eight teams. The tournament next year will be held in December but in T20 format.

The women's Emerging Asia Cup this year in June will be T20 affair involving eight teams. (PTI)

Green rubbishes rumours about his IPL unavailability

SYDNEY, JAN 5 /--/ Young Australian all-rounder Cameron Green is puzzled by rumours that he will not be able to bowl in the early part of the Indian Premier League (IPL) this year, saying he will be "100 per cent available" to bat and bowl for Mumbai Indians. Reports have circulated that Green, who suffered a broken finger after being hit by an Anrich Nortje bouncer during the second Test against South Africa, can only bowl in IPL 2023 after April. But the 23-year-old, bought by the most successful IPL franchise for Rs 17.50 crore -- the second-most costliest player in the history of IPL auction -- rubbished the rumours on Thursday, saying he doesn't know how and where the news originated.

"No, that's not correct," Green was quoted as saying by SEN.

"I've heard about this for quite a while now, I think. I don't know where it's come from. I've heard that I'm 100 per cent available for both skill sets in the IPL at the start, so yeah, I'm not too sure where that's kind of come from," added Green. Green and pace bowler Mitchell Starc are both missing the third and final Test against South Africa, currently underway at the Sydney Cricket Ground, due to finger injuries. The all-rounder, after retiring on day two of the Boxing Day Test following the injury, returned the next day to complete his half-century. Australia won the second Test to take a 2-0 lead in the three-Test series. Doctors have recommended surgery for Green and he is expected to be fit in time for the opening Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, scheduled to begin on February 9. Green said he has set his sights on the opening Test in India.

"Obviously my first priority is the Test series that's beforehand (before the IPL)," Green added.

"I think me and Starc (Starc) are maybe touch and go for that first one (Test)



but obviously we'll give ourselves the best chance." Green said money earned during the IPL auction in Kochi recently will not be a distraction for him when it comes to playing his natural game.

"Yeah obviously it (auction) turned out really well but I think at the same time you want to go out there and perform and kind of re-pay the faith they showed you," said Green.

"I think just having the right people around you I think keeps you pretty humble in a way. You've got the right people to drag you down if you get too ahead of yourself, but also the right people to bring you back up when you're going not as great as you like.

"I think that's kind of cricket. It's a game of failures, you're going to fail more than you succeed. As long as you have the right people around you to kind of bring you back up is probably key," added Green. (PTI)

Ronaldo urged to highlight human rights issues in Saudi Arabia

LONDON, JAN 5 /--/ Cristiano Ronaldo has been urged to speak out about human rights issues in Saudi Arabia after completing his big-money move to Al Nassr. The Portugal superstar, who was greeted by fireworks and deafening roars at Al Nassr's Mrsool Park stadium on Tuesday, said he wanted to "be part of the success of the country and the culture of the country".

The 37-year-old left Manchester United in November after an explosive interview in which he criticised the club and manager Erik ten Hag. Amnesty International said Ronaldo's signing is part of a "wider pattern of sportswashing" in Saudi Arabia. The arrival of the former Real Madrid forward comes against the backdrop of a Saudi push into sports including golf, boxing, tennis and F1 as well as football, following the takeover of English Premier League club Newcastle United in 2021. The Gulf nation is also mulling a joint bid to co-host the 2030 World Cup.

"Instead of offering uncritical praise of Saudi Arabia, Ronaldo should use his considerable public platform to draw attention to human rights issues in the country," said Dana Ahmed, Amnesty's Middle East researcher. Saudi Arabia regularly executes people for crimes including murder,

rape and drug smuggling. On a single day last year, 81 people were put to death, many of whom were tried in grossly unfair trials. (AFP)

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