

HIGHWAY UPGRADING AT A WAR FOOTING

Bitumen carpeting of NH-4 roads progressing satisfactorily

KARTIK

MAYABUNDER, JAN 8/--/The National Highway Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) has been entrusted with the project to carry out NH-4 road work in the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Accordingly, NHIDCL has taken up NH-4 road work from Port Blair to Diglipur. While NH-4 road work in South Andaman has been done much to the satisfaction of the people, the NH-4 road works at North & Middle Andaman has been drawing flak from the citizens. After receiving complaints from various sections, NHIDCL has initiated necessary actions against the Contractors. As a result of which the Contractor has carried out major repair work on damaged roads on a faster pace and is carrying out

Road work in Kadamtala, Basantipur areas likely to be completed by March end

bitumen carpeting of various stretches of roads in the North & Middle Andaman region on a speedy pace. According to sources, bitumen



carpeting works are going on in various road stretches in this region such as Kadamtala and Basantipur areas. Civil works like culverts, drains and protection walls works are also speeded up on road stretches between Rangat and Diglipur. Speaking to EOI, Contractor, Vasista Mantena Construction assured that the road carpeting work in revenue land portion will be completed by 31st March. The Contractor is hopeful that the road will be completed on time which will bring great relief to the people of this region. Survey for diversion of forest land is progressing as forest clearance has not been issued by the Department of Forest & Environment and once the NOC is given by the Forest department, the road work in these areas will also be speeded up.

MP demands to start transmission of Vividh Bharati FM Port Blair (100.9) in all remote Islands

PORT BLAIR, JAN 8/--/The Member of Parliament, Mr. Kuldeep Rai Sharma has requested the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India to start transmission of Vividh Bharati FM Port Blair (100.9) in all the remote Islands of



Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In a letter addressed to the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India the Member of Parliament mentioned that FM 100.9 MHz being broadcast from AIR Port Blair has been declared as the 42nd FM Station of Vividh Bharati Network by Prasar Bharati. Accordingly, two hours of local programmes are being

broadcasted from VBFM Port Blair in the morning and evening hours from 26.01.2019, the day when it was inaugurated. He added that in very short span of time the service has become immensely popular among the residents of a major part of South Andaman region and Nicobar Islands, which falls under Zone V of Seismic Map. Hence the Member of Parliament requested the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Government of

India to increase the transmission capacity of Vividh Bharati FM Port Blair (100.9) and install receiving station/ repeated at various remote Islands so that the transmission of Vividh Bharati FM Port Blair (100.9) can reach to ever remote Islands of Andaman and Nicobar Islands viz Diglipur, Mayabunder, Billiground, Rangat, Kadamtala, Baratang, Shree Dweep, Little Andaman, Car Nicobar, Nancowry Group of Islands and Great Nicobar Island.

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FIT AS A FIDDLE AT 105 YEARS

Elderly man has to walk two hours to draw his old age monthly pension

KARTIK

MAYABUNDER, JAN 8/--/ Mr. Paulus Toppo, 105 years old man and a resident of Sippi-Tikrey, a remote village in Chainpur Panchayat under Mayabunder Tehsil has to walk up for two hours every month to draw his pension from the A&N State Cooperative bank located in the Mayabunder (Headquarter). Surprisingly, the bank has not taken any initiative to reach out to this man at his doorstep to provide him his pension money on a monthly basis. Speaking to EOI, the great grandson of this elderly person said that his great grandpa woke up in the early morning and used to walk for about 30 minutes every day. He eats only one meal a day. Surprisingly, for the past many years, he has not fallen sick.

He is as fit as any young man in the locality. He is not only physically fit, but mentally fit also and has taken up activities relating to agricultural work on a daily basis. But for drawing his pension, this 105 years old man has to walk several kms up to the bank in the headquarter Mayabunder. Since Sippi-Tikrey village is located at the interior remote area under Forest land, every month this old man has to walk for one hour from home at Sippi-Tikrey to reach a small nallah from where he has to avail dingy services to cross the nallah. He then again has to walk about 40 minutes to reach Chainpur village. After reaching Chainpur village, he has to travel in a bus to reach Mayabunder and finally to his bank to get his old age pension. He has to repeat this process again to reach his home in the interior parts of the remote region.



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"In a democracy if you make one person god, it is not democracy, but autocracy": Kharge

CHITRADURGA, JAN 8 / --/ Targeting the ruling BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday said in a democracy if one person is made a god, it will not be democracy, but will become an autocracy.

He called on all sections of society, especially SC/ST and other weaker sections to unite to safeguard the Constitution and democracy. The veteran leader, while pointing at Modi projecting his Gujarati identity while seeking votes during Gujarat polls, urged people to vote for the Congress during upcoming elections in Karnataka, while highlighting that the ethos of the soil here and asked peoples support him, his party and its leaders. "For every thing Modi, in a democracy if you make one person a god, it is not democracy it is

autocracy, it will lead to dictatorship. Think about it. You have to know your rights and you should fight to get it," Kharge said. He was addressing the "Aikyata Samavesh", a large convention of SC/ST communities organised by Karnataka Congress in the run-up to the Assembly polls, which is likely by April-May. Kharge further said, "if you have strength, if you are united, you will have value. If you are not united, the divide and rule principle which the British used and now Modi is using, will be applied on you by everyone else in the society. Keep this in mind."

The goal should be to protect the democracy in the country, and to safeguard the Constitution, he said, if the Constitution and democracy is there, one can ask for reservation, promotions, and can become MLA or a

Minister. The AICC chief suggested that lakhs of people are joining Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in his "Bharat Jodo Yatra", an nationwide march which he is undertaking, because it focuses on unemployment, pricerise, among other issues. "There are more than 30 lakh job vacancies in the government sector, Modi is not filling them, why? We have to question and demand for it to be filled. Out of 30 lakh, 15 lakh is for SC/ST and OBCs, these are assured jobs," he said.

"They (ruling BJP administration) are not recruiting to fill up these vacancies, because, if poor get jobs and get money into their hand, their (BJP) game will be over. So they are recruiting people on daily wages and contract basis for jobs," he added. Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly Siddaramaiah,

state Congress chief D K Shivakumar, AICC General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, were among a host of party leaders who attended the event.

Stating that we should question the government which is silent on its promise to provide two crore jobs every year, Kharge said, "Did anyone ask? No. When Modi comes only Modi, Modi slogans echo and when Amit Shah comes Shah, Shah slogans, ask them about jobs." Highlighting unemployment, farmers issues among others, he said, "Despite all this, why are the people, also those belonging to SC/ST communities, quiet? Why didn't you fight? It is your fundamental right provided under the constitution." Allying with progressive thinkers and writers, who write in favour of the poor or against the ruling dispensation and its policies,

are directly sent to jail, and there is no freedom of speech and expression for them, Kharge also accused the media of showing only Modi and all his activities, all the time.

Asking for vote trying to project his Kannadiga identity, he said, "I was in Gujarat to campaign for the polls there, Modi addressing rallies wherever he goes, used to say - I'm son of a poor, son of the soil, son of Gujarat, please hold and raise me. When he was held and raised by people in Gujarat, you should do the same for me here in Karnataka."

Pointing out that Modi projected his Gujarati identity and used to ask for votes, he said, "all of us here are from Karnataka. Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar, Muniyappa (former Union Minister), Parameshwara (former Deputy CM) and me are from Karnataka. So we

will urge you that we are also sons of this soil, get us elected and make us form the government." Pointing out that Karnataka which was a progressive state has seen ruins under the BJP rule, Kharge said, "they created fights between people in the name of religion, caste. BJP is responsible for it...there is looto aur baanto (loot and share) system under the BJP, no work is happening, money is demanded every where." Officials say money is important at all levels, he said "we have such a government here, do we want such a government here? If such a government has to go, you will have to work together to ensure Congress wins." Taking a dig at BJP national President J P Nadda, who recently visited Karnataka, he said, he lost in his home state of Himachal Pradesh, and is roaming here seeking votes. (PTI)

Unbefitting of Guv to interfere in TN politics, says DMK

BJP justifies Thamizhagam remark

CHENNAI, JAN 8 / --/ Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi's alleged 'Thamizhagam' remark evoked spontaneous ire of the ruling DMK, which on Sunday accused him of unnecessarily interfering in state politics rather than paying attention to developmental initiatives. On the contrary, the BJP justified Ravi's remark saying the word Thamizhagam is in common usage in the state, and that the DMK was needlessly targeting him as he questioned the government on the NEET Bill. "The Governor is trying to do something that doesn't suit his gubernatorial position. He wants to talk about politics rather than bestow importance to the developmental initiatives of the DMK government," says R S Bharathi, DMK's organising secretary. Stopping short of asking the Governor to refrain from indulging in politics, Bharathi, who is a senior advocate, told PTI that it was unbefitting of the Governor to interfere in state politics. Ravi ought to resign if he wants to talk about politics, he said. "He is fit only to be a lecturer in a college. He has been sleeping over the government Bills and is interfering in unwarranted matters, which is causing disunity in an orderly state. He wants to do injustice and harm to the harmony in Tamil Nadu," Bharathi claimed.

While speaking at a felicitation to the organisers and volunteers of Kashi Tamil Sangamam held at the Raj Bhavan here on January 4, Ravi had allegedly remarked that Thamizhagam is a more appropriate name for Tamil Nadu. "Here in Tamil Nadu, a different kind of narrative has been created. Everything applicable for the whole of the country, Tamil Nadu will say no. It has become a habit. So many theses have been written - all false and poor fiction. This must be broken. Truth must prevail," he had said at the event. "Thamizhagam would be more appropriate word to call it. The rest of the country suffered a lot of devastation at the hands of foreigners for a long time," Ravi further said. Claiming there was nothing wrong in the Governor's suggestion, BJP state vice president M Chakravarty said the DMK targeted Ravi as he questioned the government on the NEET Bill and another to ban online gambling. "They are jumping the gun at the mention of his very name. It seems the nationalistic views expressed by Ravi don't go well with the DMK," Chakravarty told PTI. BJP state chief K Annamalai lashed out at the DMK for criticising Ravi and said "the DMK has long been trying to bury their secessionist past, their ideological parent party wanting a separate Dravida Nadu, later a separate Tamil Nadu".

In a series of tweets, Annamalai hit out at the Dravidian major saying "instead of the DMK party, the separatists nurtured by them continue to echo this sentiment today". The DMK cadre, even recently, said that the 'Dravida Nadu' plea was not forgotten and propelled separatist sentiments, Annamalai alleged. "And the same coterie has an issue when our Hon Gov of TN Thiru RN Ravi avl opines that he prefers Tamizhagam over Tamil Nadu. Surprisingly, Tamizhagam is widely used over Tamil Nadu by the @arivalayam party & even by @CMOTamilnadu; but they still have a problem with @rajbhavan_tn avl's opinion," he said. "Since the Sangam era, Tamil literature has referred to this landmass as both Tamizhagam and Tamil Nadu," Annamalai said in another tweet.

At the event, Ravi had said that there has been regressive politics with 'wrong habit' of refusing everything that benefit all sections of people including academicians, by claiming that the state is not integrally a part of India. To that extent, the Kashi Tamil Sangamam is the start of a power-packed journey with the contribution of everyone in spreading its legacy further more towards national resurgence, Ravi had said. Declining to accept that the Governor was attempting to set a narrative to change the name of the state, DMK spokesperson A Saravanan alleged that Ravi was attempting to pick up unnecessary controversies. "His focus is not development and welfare of the state. The Dravidian model of Chief Minister M K Stalin is doing phenomenally good. This is irking the top brass of the RSS. Apparently, the Governor wants to shift the focus on something else," Saravanan alleged. On the regressive politics remark, Saravanan told PTI that regressiveness is inbuilt in the RSS.

Tamil Nadu, earlier known as Madras State following independence, got its present name after the sacrifices made by many including Sankaralinganar (Tamil independence activist and Gandhian) who demanded renaming the state as Tamil Nadu, he said. Sankaralinganar, who launched a hunger strike on July 27, 1956, in Virudhunagar, died at a hospital in Madurai after 76 days of fasting. Even C Rajagopalachari, the last Governor General of India, too advocated the name change, Saravanan claimed and alleged that Ravi is "attempting to wreck the state of Tamil Nadu, which we will not allow." (PTI)

Pawar pitches for MVA allies to contest Maharashtra Assembly and LS polls together

KOLHAPUR, JAN 8 / --/ Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday pitched for contesting the 2024 Maharashtra Assembly and the Lok Sabha polls together with the Uddhav Thackeray faction of the Shiv Sena and Congress. Talking to reporters, he claimed that despite a split in the Shiv Sena, majority of the "hardcore" Shiv Sainiks who work on the ground stand behind Uddhav Thackeray. Pawar said MLAs and MPs may have aligned with the Eknath Shinde faction of the Shiv Sena after the split, but when polls take place, they will also know what the views of people are. After the 2019 Maharashtra Assembly elections, Thackeray had snapped ties with long-term ally Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and tied-up with the NCP and Congress to form the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in the state. The Thackeray government collapsed in June last year after a revolt led by Shinde against the Sena leadership. To a query on the issue of alliance, Pawar said, "The understanding is that the Congress, NCP and Uddhav Thackeray should work together (for the Lok Sabha and Maharashtra polls). The Republican Party and some groups should be included. But we are having discussions. We take decisions jointly on many issues, so there should not be any problem in this." The NCP chief had last year also said the MVA allies should fight the Maharashtra Assembly elections together. The Lok Sabha polls are due in May 2024 and the Maharashtra Assembly elections are due in October next year.

Thackeray had in November last year predicted mid-term polls in Maharashtra and asked his party workers to start the preparations. On the issue of the ongoing border dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka, Pawar said Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde had convened a meeting with different parties. The case should be strongly presented before court by roping top legal experts of the country, he added. The border dispute is currently pending before the Supreme Court. The issue dates back to 1957 after the reorganisation of States on linguistic lines. Maharashtra laid claim to Belagavi, which was part of the erstwhile Bombay Presidency, as it has a sizeable Marathi-speaking population. It also laid claim to over 800 Marathi-speaking villages which are currently part of Karnataka. Karnataka maintains the demarcation done on linguistic lines as per the States Reorganisation Act and the 1967 Mahajan Commission Report as final. (PTI)

Delhi CM praises NCC for contribution during Covid-19 Urges everyone to believe in Nation 1st ideology

NEW DELHI, JAN 8 / --/ Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday praised the National Cadet Corps for its vital contribution during the tough times of Covid-19 and urged everyone to believe in Nation First ideology to make India progress socially and economically.

Speaking at the National Cadet Corps Republic Day Camp 2023 in Delhi Cantonment on Sunday, Kejriwal assured the NCC of continued support. "At the outset, let me congratulate NCC upon completing 75 Golden years. Every step of this journey by NCC is steeped in rich heritage and tradition. NCC has literally evolved and transformed itself along with our nation which celebrated its 75th year of Independence last year," he said. Kejriwal urged everyone to always remember the ideals of NCC. "I request everyone of you to always remember the ideals of NCC, no matter what path you take or destiny you select for



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath paying floral tribute to former Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha Speaker and former Governor of West Bengal Keshari Nath Tripathi on his death, in Prayagraj

BSF deploys drone-mounted radars to check under-ground tunnels along border with Pak

NEW DELHI, JAN 8 / --/ Drone-mounted ground penetration radars have been deployed for the first time by the Border Security Force (BSF) to check for the presence of under-ground tunnels used by terrorists to infiltrate the India-Pakistan International Border in Jammu region, officials said.

The indigenously-made technical gadget has been pressed into action at this front recently as part of the below-the-earth tunnel detection exercise carried out by the force to ensure no terrorist is able to sneak into Indian territory and conduct strikes in Jammu and Kashmir or any other location of the country. These structures have also been used to smuggle narcotics, arms and ammunition. The BSF has unearthed at least five under-ground tunnels in the about 192 km of the Jammu front of the India-Pakistan IB in the last three years. According to

official data, two such cross-border tunnels were detected in 2020 and 2021 each, while one was found last year and all of them were detected in the Indreshwar Nagar sector of Jammu. "The force has procured a smart technical tool to counter the menace of under-ground tunnels that have been reported regularly along the Jammu region of the India-Pakistan IB. More than one drone-mounted ground penetration radars have been deployed in the region to check these clandestine structures used by terrorists to infiltrate into India from Pakistan," a senior BSF officer told PTI.

Officials working on the ground said the radars being currently deployed have been developed by an Indian manufacturer and they work by emitting strong radio waves to check for the presence of tunnels under the ground and to map their stretch. While the specific

details of the radars cannot be disclosed, the new tools have been added to the BSF surveillance paraphernalia for assisting ground troops undertaking anti-tunnelling exercise. Its efficacy is under study as of now, the officials said.

The radars are mounted on the drones in order to give them better access to such terrain along this front, which is difficult for the ground teams to reach, they said. Usually the surveillance for hidden tunnels is undertaken in the range of about 400 metres from the border fence.

The anti-tunnelling surveillance teams of the BSF remotely control the drone when they are out to comb a specific area on the front and they backup the 'flying radar' with their traditional system of checking for tunnels with the help of hand-held deep search and mine detection tools, they said. "One problem that

these radars come across is the amount of dust that generates due to the flying of drones and they clash with the radio waves being emitted by the radars to scan the earth below.

This is a start and the new tool is still to be called accurate," another officer said. The usual system of ground troops checking for tunnels is being followed too. "The man behind the machine" concept will always be the most important tool despite the best technical gadgetry available, the officer working along the Jammu front said. The 192-km long Jammu IB - out of the total 2,289-km long front running down towards Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat - is prone to both old or dormant and freshly-dug tunnels due to the loose soil structure of the area and the BSF, that is mandated to guard this front, has detected almost ten such structures over the last decade here. (PTI)

Connect with aspirational India through technology and work in interest of world: Union minister Thakur to NRIs

INDORE, JAN 8 / --/ Union information and broadcasting minister Anurag Thakur on Sunday appealed to Non-Resident Indians to connect with aspirational India through technology and use its strong human resources in the interest of the world.

Speaking to reporters during the three-day Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) convention, he said the world's perception of India changed soon after the Pokhran nuclear test in 1998.

"It is our request to the NRI community to connect with us through technology and work together in the interest of not only India but also of the entire world.

You have resources and we have human resources", Thakur said. He said the government doesn't see the overseas Indian community in terms of sending money from abroad to the country but wants to partner with them. "Instead of brain-drain, we talk about getting talent.

We talk about connecting overseas Indians with aspirational India in the period of 'Amrit-Kaal' of Independence," he said. Thakur said the world is looking towards India with hope and added the global outlook towards the country has already changed. "I had gone to Chicago in 1997 during my first visit to the US in connection with a

trade exhibition. I picked up a newspaper in which it was printed that India, the

world's perception of India changed soon after we conducted the successful



Anurag Thakur

country of snake charmers and beggars, is ready to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its independence. But the

nuclear test at Pokhran," he said. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is one of the most popular leaders in the world.

Thakur said India is estimated to have a GDP growth rate of seven per cent this year and that the country is growing at a faster pace than the major economies of the world. There are more than 81 crore internet connections in the country, he said, adding India leads the world in terms of digital financial transactions. Last month, more than seven billion transactions took place on the BHIM UPI platform and around Rs 12.82 lakh crore was transferred, the Union minister said. Thakur said India has a great opportunity to introduce its rich cultural heritage to the world through the current

G20 presidency. In the coming days more than 200 meetings of G20 will take place at more than 55 places in the country, he added. The Union Minister also said technology is rapidly changing the way of working. "When we talk about the future of work, we remember the 'ABC' formula wherein the 'A' stand for Artificial Intelligence, 'B' for Block Chain and 'C' for Cloud Computing," he said. Thakur said in the future India will have the world's most skilled manpower and its youth would contribute to global development through three "I"-s - idea, Intent, and innovation. (PTI)

Pak's metastasizing Insurgents

BHOPINDER SINGH

British colonists had deployed a formula to deal with the restive swathes that constitute modern Pakistan i.e., 'Rule the Punjabis, intimidate the Sindhis, buy the Pashtun, and honour the Baloch'. It is an instructive insight that occasionally plays out, as Syed Ahmad Khan's 'two-nation theory' gets routinely punctured with regional insurgencies that refuse to accept the amalgamation of ethnicities into Pakistan, just on co-religiosity. The historical and lingering 'Pashtunistan' movement or the Baluch separatist movement are direct byproducts of the shaky bind of the 'two-nation

theory' that seeks to rationalise the foundational idea of Pakistan.

While Mortimer Durand's cartographical flourish to fix the limits of the British Raj and the Emirate of Afghanistan as part of 'Great Game' was largely ignored by local Pashtuns on both sides of the Durand Line - even the latter-day creation of the State of Pakistan was met with resistance by the Khudai Khidmatgar movement. Reasonable leniency of movement across borders, retention of local laws, and integration of Pashtuns into Pakistani governance (especially into the 'establishment' or the Pakistani Armed Forces) ensured a gradual waning of sentiment, till Pakistan soured relations with Afghanistan and murmurs of 'Pashtunistan' resurfaced. The willful

creation of the Afghan Mujaheddins in the '80s and support to amoral warlords like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and later to the creation of its Frankensteinian monster i.e., Taliban - Pakistan has inadvertently reignited and weaponised the Pashtun sentiments with its metastasized, Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP), on the rebound.

Whereas formal insurgency in the equally lawless Baluchistan harks back to the stormy signing of the Instrument of Accession by the Sardar of Kalat in 1948. The continued economic marginalisation, forcible control, human right violations, and lack of relative participation in the affairs of Pakistan has led to recurring waves of violent insurgent movements. Even Pakistan's economy-



sustaining \$50 billion punt i.e., the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) with its nerve centre in the Gwadar port of Baluchistan is perceived to be anathema and discriminatory towards local Baluch interests. Fronted by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and a few other militant groups based on tribal affiliations, attacks on the Pakistan Armed Forces and its assets have been

relentless, in recent times. While support for Pashtun groups from Afghanistan can be expected based on parochial sentiments across both sides of the Durand Line - Afghanistan has also been known to support and offer bases to Baluch insurgent groups as a payback to Pakistani machinations in Afghanistan.

With the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban in 2021, it was expected that the Pakistan-beholden Taliban would rein in the Pakistan-centric insurgent groups, but the escalating tensions between the Taliban and Pakistan itself have led to a very different dynamic. The fact that Baluch majority areas, as well as Pashtun dominated areas, are simultaneously 'live' in attacking the Pakistani State, with eerily similar tactics and impact - Islamabad senses to

doomsday scenario of the otherwise oblivious-of-each-other Pashtuns and Baluch insurgents joining hands. Pakistan's yet another flawed experiment of 'good and bad terrorists' could implode within, when its own creation of so-called 'good terrorists' i.e., Taliban (and its ideological offspring Tehrik-i-Taliban) joins hands against the 'bad terrorists' of the BLA.

Therefore, even the audacious 'Strategic Depth' in Afghanistan, as sought and nurtured by the Pakistani 'establishment' is boomeranging, badly. In a stunning reversal of narrative, the Pakistani Foreign Office was seen beseeching the Afghan Taliban on "all issues including border management, upgrading the security of diplomats, and curbing terrorism". Baluchistan's capital city of Quetta (with 70%

Pashtun populace) exemplifies the contiguity of the Baluch and Pashtun sensibilities with only the Pashtun-Baluch War (1757) as the leitmotif of any historical bad blood, else their mutual tensions have only been political (contesting the fair ethnic representation in the State Assemblies of Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, respectively) and not societal, as such. Co-sectarian (Sunni supremacist) organisations like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Jundullah operating in Quetta are natural bridges to find common ideological ground with the likes of Tehrik-i-Pakistan. In the religiously charged tinderbox of Pakistan - there is a coalescing of 'like-minded' forces (even if differing in ultimate objectives) to take on the Pakistani 'establishment'. The conflation of the

clergy via Maulana Hidayatur Rehman of the ongoing 'Haq Do Tehreek' movement which has brought Gwadar to a standstill, is yet another manifestation of the situation going out of hand. The efficacy of the Pakistani 'establishments' blunt tactics via Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad (since 2017) against the Pashtun and Baluch insurgents is highly questionable, and local support for insurgent movements is only gaining traction. The Durand Line along Baluch and Pashtun areas is more troublesome for Pakistan now than the LOC.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

Bharat Jodo Yatra by ANTCC leaders reach Mayabunder



KARTIK

MYABUNDER, JAN 8/--/ As part of the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' planned by the ANTCC, the local political leaders, PRIs & Congress workers conducted a yatra from

Mayabunder to Rescamp on Sunday. The Bharat Jodo Yatra started from Diglipur to Baratang by the Andaman & Nicobar Territorial Congress Committee. Today the yatra started from Mayabunder and in the afternoon reached Restcamp village.

Volleyball tournament by Deshbandhu Youth Club at Billiground



KARTIK

MYABUNDER, JAN 8/--/ The Deshbandhu Youth Club, Billiground in N & M Andaman organized a Volleyball tournament on Saturday at GPS, Playground, Koranghallah. The events was organized to inspire the youth of the region to play sports and games and keep themselves away from other evil activities.

Smti. Shebani Majumder, Pramukh was the chief guest

while Mr. Ashim Roy, SVO Basantipur was the special guest. Mr. Sukaranjan Biswas, Deputy Director NYK, Rangat, was the guest of honour. Smti. Mamata Biswas, Up Pradhan, Harinagar, Smti. Deepika Das PRIs were also present on the occasion. Deshbandhu Youth Club President, Mr. Shankar Mondal and Secretary, Mr. Dilipkumar Das, Vice-president, Mr. Niranjan were also present. About 8 teams participated in the volleyball tournament.

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth & Sports holds meeting with banks



PORT BLAIR, JAN 8/--/ Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports headed by its

Chairman, Mr. Vivek Thakur on Saturday held meeting with banks (SBI,

Canara Bank, Indian Overseas Bank and Union Bank) on efforts being made for loans/ funding arrangements with concerned stakeholders (Ministry of Education, State Governments, School, Higher Educational Institutions) to ensure successful implementation of the National Education Policy, 2020 and develop rural school infrastructure at Swaraj Dweep. The other Members of the Committee present in the meeting were S/Shri Ghanshyam Tiwari, Sadashiv Kishen Lokhande, Asit Kumar Mal, Chandreshwar Prasad, Jagannath Sarkar and Dharambir Singh. The Deputy Managing Director, SBI, Shri Prakash Chandra Kandpal along with other senior officials of Canara Bank, Indian Overseas Bank and Union Bank attended the meeting.

Witnesses disowning prosecution's case adversely impacting criminal justice system: Court

NEW DELHI, JAN 8/--/ The trend of witnesses disowning prosecution's case has become too frequent and is adversely impacting the criminal justice system, a Delhi court has said while acquitting three people accused of attempting to commit culpable homicide. The court said true facts were either suppressed by witnesses or there was some manipulation during the investigation providing an advantage to the wrongdoers and conveying a negative message to society. Principal District and Sessions Judge (North) Vimal Kumar Yadav was hearing a case against three accused who were charged under sections 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code. If a person causes death by an act intended to kill someone, or with the intention of causing such bodily injury as is likely to cause death, or with the knowledge that such action is likely to cause death, commits the offence of culpable homicide. According to the prosecution, Ishwar, Irshad and Himanshu had assaulted the

complainant Ravinder with bricks in the Bhalswa Dairy area here on August 8, 2022. The court said Ravinder had given a clean chit to the three accused while naming another unidentified person Balwant as responsible for fighting and causing injuries to him. The accused trio, while answering the charges framed, named Balwant as the individual who fought with Ravinder. "This indicates that investigation was faulty, motivated or compromised," the court said. Noting that the prosecution witness and complainant Ravinder had turned hostile, the court said the prosecution was unable to show the complicity of the accused even remotely. The court, however, said the testimony of hostile witnesses cannot be washed away simply because the witnesses have turned hostile and the part of the testimony, which was relevant and truthful, can still be acted upon. But in the present case, even if the testimony was read in evidence, it was still inconsequential and there was no evidence showing the complicity of the accused persons, the court said acquitting the trio. (PTI)

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YEAR!
2023

For centuries, theologians have been explaining the unknowable in terms of the not-worth-knowing
H. L. Mencken

Germany too bids farewell to Message Delivery system 'Telegram'

'Telegram' or 'wire' was the only way to send messages at a high speed in the past and was considered the only dependable medium. It was invented in 1837 by American scientist 'Samuel Morse'. This brought communication revolution in the world. Its first use started in India on November 5, 1850.

The real test of the Telegraph Department of the British was the Revolt of 1857. There was a time when Indian freedom fighters defeated the British at many places. Then for the British, the 'Tar' was such a support that through them the locational presence of the army to their commanders sitting hundreds of miles away was used to send news of rebellion and information about their strategy etc.

Simultaneously, with the advent of cheaper and more convenient means of communication, the Telegram was archived in India due to continuous decline in income from service. On July 2013, this 163 year old service was discontinued. 2193 people on that day sent a telegram in reverence, to their loved ones for the last time.

Nine years after the departure of 'Tar' from India, now on December 31, 2022, Germany also said goodbye to it and the country's main postal service 'Dieche Post' announced the cessation of operations. On this day as a memorial, 3,228 people sent telegrams to their acquaintances, whereas in recent years on an average only 200-300 telegrams were being sent per month.

According to Deutsche Post, it is one of the last postal departments in the world, till now that had continued its usage but in recent years it has been limited to the country after being closed to other countries in 2018.

In the ravages of time how only providence knows many inventions will become irrelevant in this age of internet and become history. As now the 'Telegram' or 'Tar' has been confined to the pages of history.

Free food supply to poor won't help eradicate poverty

REFLEX ACTION

Nantoo Banerjee

It is a pity that the government could not think of a better "new year gift for the country's poor" than continuing to feed 81.35 crore Indians with free food grains for another year till December 31, 2023, under a 10-year-old National Food Security Act (NFSA), at a cost of over Rs. 200,000 crore. In the process, the government admits that India's poverty level continues to increase with the growth of its population. The union government enacted NFSA in July, 2013, giving legal entitlement to 67 percent of the population — 75 percent in rural areas and 50 percent in urban areas — to receive highly subsidised food grains.

India's population was 128.13 crore then. The free ration scheme was started by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April 2020 under 'Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) to help the country's 67 percent poor population whose livelihoods were shattered by a national lockdown to contain the spread of coronavirus. It was certainly a very thoughtful move on the government's part at that point of time. There were four phases of lockdowns (between 25 March 2020 and 31 May 2020), and two unlock periods (1 June-31 July 2020) in India. By 2021, life nearly turned normal.

However, giving-away anything for free is easy. It generally makes recipients highly happy. But, freebies carry a risk factor. Their withdrawal could make the donor quite unpopular among the gift recipients. The free food grains scheme was extended through the entire 2021 and 2022 probably because a number of India's states, including West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Puducherry, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat, went for legislative assembly elections. The extension of PMGKAY through 2023 may have also made sense for the Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled national government as nine more states are due for assembly elections during this year.

When NFSA was enacted in July 2013, less than a year before the 2014 Lok Sabha election, the country's population was 128 crore. And, at 67 percent, it covered some 85 crore population. Interestingly, the act did not help the Congress party win the 2014

national election. Now, India's population is nearly 141.4 crore. That raises the number of the poor under the NFSA definition to 94.47 crore and not 81.35 crore as computed by the PMGKAY implementing authority. Under NFSA, food grains were to be made available at highly subsidised prices of Rs. 3/2/1 per kg for rice, wheat and coarse grains respectively for an initial period of three years from the date of commencement of the Act (July 13, 2013). Thereafter, prices were to be fixed by the union government from time to time. The government decided to continue with the above-mentioned subsidised prices under NFSA despite inflation and rising high open market prices of food grains. Sadly, NFSA has always been used as a political tool by the ruling parties in both the union and state governments. It operates more like an election agenda to reward the poor. Poverty eradication received less priority from the government.

This explains why so many so-called poverty eradication schemes have failed to make a dent on the number of the poor under NFSA over the years. The schemes include the National Food for Work Programme; Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana; Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana; Indira Awaas Yojana for Rural Housing; Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act; Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana; Rural Employment Generation Programme; Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana; Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana; Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U); Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G) and Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana.

While PMAY-U is a flagship union government mission implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, PMAY-G was introduced to boost the "Housing for All" scheme by the end of 2022. The main

aim of the PMAY-G scheme is to provide brick-built houses with some of the basic amenities. The scheme has already missed the execution deadline. It continues through the current year. In fact, none of the schemes achieved their prescribed lofty goals. High rates of rural and urban unemployment continue. The Consumer Pyramid Household Survey of the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy showed the employment rate among Indian youth (15-24 years) at 10.4 percent in 2021-22 compared to 10.9 percent during the lockdown-hit 2020-21. The average unemployment rate in India at eight percent may be a grossly understatement. The quality of jobs presently offered in the government and other institutions is poor — mostly fixed salaried contract service.

NFSA may have succeeded in giving a kind of "food security" to the country's rural and urban poor, but the real issue of providing jobs and livelihood to the bottom section of the society to tackle the high poverty rate remains a big challenge. Among the principal causes of unemployment in India are: the caste system, pervading virtually every aspect of life including the provision of certain categories of jobs; inadequate economic growth; rising population, especially among the poor; seasonal agricultural occupation; significant decline in the growth of the cottage and small industry sector affecting small investors and artisans; low rates of savings and investment; poor economic planning leading to imbalanced supply and demand of labour; and lack of job specialisation.

India totally lacks in providing a universal education system to its pupils with uniform curriculum and modern work skills. According to a study, nearly 33 percent of India's educated youth are unemployed due to a lack of future skills. Addressing these issues are much tougher than providing free or highly subsidised food grains to an overwhelming number of India's population (67 percent) helping politicisation of poverty. Interestingly, the government's new education policy, based on "four pillars which are access, equity, quality and accountability," does not address those burning issues leading to joblessness and poverty. (IPA)



Gangasagar devotees gather at Babughat to board buses for their holy dip on Sunday in Kolkata
-----Arijit Ganguly

Conventional Crossword

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

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Prosecutes | 1 Resting |
| 6 Spirit | 2 Rubber |
| 7 Visage | 3 Certain |
| 9 Partly open | 4 Bundle of notes |
| 10 Loose colour | 5 Acceptance |
| 11 Cut off | 7 Get on |
| 12 Anger | 8 Tree |
| 14 Himalayan kingdom | 10 Marsh |
| 17 Remedies | 13 Bucolic |
| 20 Land measure | 15 Conditional release |
| 21 Giver | 16 Guide |
| 23 Rescues | 18 Paradise |
| 25 Emotional state | 19 Distress signal |
| 26 Dash | 22 Leave out |
| 27 No score | 23 Dry, of champagne |
| 28 Lacerate | 24 Forefront |

SUDOKU: 3751

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

Yesterday's Solution 3750

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

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 1759

C	A	N	A	D	A	A	I	D
U	I	C	E			P	R	
P	E	L	T	E	D	P	I	E
W	I	R	A	T	E	S		
H	E	R	O	Y	E	A	R	S
A	R	E	N	A	S	L	A	Y
G	A	S	S	E	T	K		
G	A	S	P	L	A	N	E	T
L	O		P	A	T	E		
E	O	N	S	N	E	E	Z	E

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BJP will fight Karnataka Assembly Poll with Narendra Modi as face

FOCUS

Arun Srivastava

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had to face severe aggression from the BJP leaders for his month old jibe at Narendra Modi asking the people to vote "looking at his face" for all elections. Kharge had said "From municipal corporation election to MLA election and MP election, look at Modi and cast your vote is what you say. Do you have 100 heads like Ravan?"

Undeterred of Kharge's sneer the BJP will seek vote in the assembly election of Karnataka next year on the face of Modi. Amit Shah on December 31 announced that BJP will go solo without any tie-up with JD(S) and Modi will lead the party's campaign. Shah sounded confident Modi as the facethe party will win election and form the government. Shah in the past too had predicted win of his party under the stewardship of Modi but his forecast did not come true. Confidence quotient was quite high got manifest in his remark; "I have been sensing the mood of the people. They are ready to vote for us. All we need to do is reach out to them. No doubt, Modi will lead us. You have to take Modi's message to the people who are waiting to welcome you".

Shah's obliquely underlines that like in other states, the election in Karnataka will veer around communalism and nationalism, and it

also unravelled that the development, the economic urgencies and priorities are not going to feature as the electoral agenda. In a communalised electoral situation the development and growth agenda lose its relevance and turns outdated. It would simply blow over the face of Modi.

There is no denying that the Modi and BJP's position has turned vulnerable after the Bharat Jodo Yatra crossed through the state. The people who were scared and fearful of opening their mouth and narrate their plights, expressed their frustration and anguish by participating at the rally. Of course the Congress communication chief Jairam Ramesh is right in claiming that Yatra has come a morale booster for the party, the bare fact is it provided the opportunity to the common people who are not the members of the Congress to correlate them with it and openly ventilate their hurt feelings.

Modi is not at all scared of Congress workers getting energized, he is in fact more frightened of common people

coming out of their shell and echoing the sentiment and vision of Rahul Gandhi. This would be most dangerous situation for him. A leader who has been feeding the people with the syrup of communalism, hatred and enmity, will certainly be disillusioned at the failure of his formula. Ramesh's observation is unfortunately minimising the psychological and emotional appeal and impact of the yatra on the common people.

One development is quite significant. Though the hate politics and communal violence have acquired the centre stage of Karnataka politics, the state Congress leaders could not make it a bigger political issue. It was only after Yatra traversed through the state the people have started raising their voice. This is a positive change.

Karnataka is witnessing worst nature of moral policing. Throughout the state large number of vigilante groups pledging loyalty to RSS and BJP have sprung up. It is irony that the political leadership of the state instead of focussing on the economic growth

and development of the state have been busy grooming the communal vote banks. This has degenerated the social and economic situation to such an extent that even a frivolous objection, which has no relevance or material is being given top priority by the top executive, the chief minister. The police are flooded with complaints from Hindu bigots against the Muslims. It appears that there is no political or economic issue haunting the people except the Hijab and Muslim bashing.

It is most unfortunate that two evils are riding over the necks of the political system and the governance. The first one is the malaise of cut money and the second is the communalising the administration of the state. Communalised politics has always been a major threat to democratic functioning and the governance. The Bangalore Pragatipara Beedhi Vyaparigala Sangha and other allied organisations deplored the intense communal assault on the livelihood of street vendors in Karnataka.

As communal tensions rise in Karnataka, IT firms 'reach out' to Hyderabad and investment-seeking Tamil Nadu. TN Finance Minister Palanivel Thiagarajan also confirmed saying IT companies showing 'great interest' in state. (IPA/To be continued)

Relief, rescue operations intensified in Joshimath; PMO reviews situation



Cracks on buildings and crumbled structures forewarn of a colossal disaster, at Joshimath

NEW DELHI/DEHRADUN, JAN 8/-- Relief and rescue efforts were intensified in Joshimath after it was declared a landslide and subsidence-hit zone, with the Centre on Sunday stressing that the immediate priority is the safety of people and asking experts to prepare short and long term plans for conservation and rehabilitation.

Amid a mounting sense of urgency, senior Uttarakhand government officials including Chief Secretary Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, DGP Ashok Kumar and Secretary to the Chief Minister R Meenakshi Sundaram visited the worst-hit Manohar Bagh, Singdhar and Marwari areas and appealed to people to shift to temporary relief centres. Officials said 13 more families living in houses with huge cracks were moved by the administration to

safe locations on Sunday. The number of families evacuated to temporary relief centres now stands at 68. Chamoli district disaster management office said. The number of houses developing cracks in the town has risen from 561 to 610. Garhwal Commissioner Sushil Kumar told PTI. Prime Minister Narendra Modi called Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama and reviewed the situation, including the steps taken so far for the safety and rehabilitation of residents, and assured him of necessary assistance. The Uttarakhand chief secretary has said that state and district officials with the support of central experts have assessed the situation on the ground and informed that a strip of land with a width of around 350 metres is affected, the Prime Minister's Office said on Sunday after holding a high-level review

meeting. Central government agencies and experts are assisting Uttarakhand to prepare plans to deal with the Joshimath situation and the immediate priority is the safety of the people, it said. Affected families are being shifted to safe locations, a PMO statement said, noting that Prime Minister Modi is concerned and has taken stock of the situation with Chief Minister Dhama. One team of the National Disaster Response Force and four teams of the State Disaster Response Force have already reached Joshimath. P K Mishra, the prime minister's principal secretary who held the meeting, stressed that the immediate priority should be the safety of people living in the affected area and said the state government should establish a clear and continuous communication channel with the residents.

The Border Management secretary and members of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) will visit Uttarakhand on Monday and assess the situation. A team of experts from National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), National Institute of Disaster Management, Geological Survey of India, IIT Roorkee, Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, National Institute of Hydrology and Central Building Research Institute will study the situations and give recommendations, the PMO said.

The Uttarakhand chief secretary briefed the PMO about the ground situation during the meeting, officials said. Experts from IIT Roorkee, the Geological Survey of India and the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology also participated. Dhama had visited Joshimath on

Saturday to assess the situation on the ground, a day after he directed the immediate evacuation of around 600 affected families. Giving details of the relief and rescue efforts, Chamoli District Magistrate Himanshu Khurana said 229 rooms with capacity to accommodate 1,271 people have been identified at different locations within the town. Ration kits were distributed to affected families besides an ex gratia of Rs 2,30 lakh among 46 of them at the rate of Rs 5,000 per family for buying essential household items.

DM Khurana went door-to-door requesting people living in damaged houses to vacate them and move to temporary relief centres. Uttarakhand Chief Secretary Sukhbir Singh Sandhu during his visit to the town made a similar appeal to people: "You should take no risks. The safety of residents is an immediate priority and the district administration is working continuously to ensure that".

Chief Minister Dhama who visited the affected areas in Joshimath on Saturday held a meeting with officials in Dehradun on his return and asked them to relax the norms to expedite relief operations. They were asked not to get entangled in long procedural complexities and take direct clearance from him for works related to treatment of drainage and sewage systems in Joshimath, he said. The National Remote Sensing Centre, Hyderabad and the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, Dehradun have been asked to conduct a study of the Joshimath area through satellite imagery and submit a detailed report with photographs. A petition has been filed in the Delhi High Court seeking a direction to the Centre to constitute a committee headed by a retired judge to look into the issue of sinking of Joshimath and rehabilitate the affected families. (PTI)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Chinese woman tries to kill self with razor in Delhi airport washroom

NEW DELHI, JAN 8/-- A 29-year-old Chinese woman allegedly tried to kill herself with a razor in a washroom of IGI Airport Terminal-3 here, police said on Sunday.

The woman had landed at T-3 late Saturday night from Bahrain, and was due to take a flight to Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia.

The incident took place around 4 am on Saturday, when the woman during her stopover went to the washroom and cut herself in throat and hand, police said. The authorities, when they were informed, rescued her and took her to a city hospital. Her condition is said to be stable, they said. The woman said she wanted to kill herself because she lost her job recently and her boyfriend too broke up with her, police said. (PTI)

PM Modi wants everyone in country should worship him; Cong's focus is tapasya: Rahul Gandhi

KURUKSHETRA, JAN 8/-- Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants all people in the country should worship him, while the focus of the Congress is "tapasya". He said the Bharat Jodo Yatra was against hatred and fear being spread in society and he sees the foot marches as "tapasya", suggesting the Yatra was about austerity and self-meditation. Targeting the RSS and the BJP, he said they want people to forcibly worship them by using wealth, capturing institutions and creating fear. "RSS wants they be forcibly worshipped. (PM Narendra) Modi ji wants this, that is why he does not meet you (media), that he be worshipped and all people in the country should worship him," Gandhi alleged. Invoking Bhagavad Gita, Gandhi said, "...Do your work, what has to happen will happen, don't focus on the outcome, this is the thinking of this Yatra." He said hatred is being spread by dividing people of the country. "Hindu-Muslim, people of different castes are pitted against each other," he added. On the Yatra, Gandhi said, "We are seeing it as tapasya". The Congress believes in 'tapasya' while the BJP is an "organisation of pooja", he said addressing a press conference at Samana, near here. This was the 10th press conference the Congress leader addressed as part of the Yatra so far. The BJP and the RSS do not respect 'tapasya' but want that people who do their 'pooja' (worship) be respected only, he added. Gandhi said the Yatra's purpose is also to let people hear the true voice of the country. Replying to a question, Gandhi said, "One thing which I have understood

is that this fight is actually not political, superficially it is a political fight. When we fight BSP or TRS, then it is a political contest. But there has been change in the country. "The day when the RSS controlled the institutions of this country, the fight did not remain political. Now, this has become a different fight. You may call it a fight of ideology, dharma ki fight, or you can give it any framework, but this is not a political fight." "If you look at Congress party's history, what you (reporter) said there is an energy in workers. It is an organisation of 'tapasya'," he added. "BJP is a 'sangathan of pooja'," Gandhi claimed, adding both the BJP and the RSS want people to worship them. He said the Congress' response is only one and it is 'tapasya' and nothing else. "That is why this Yatra is successful. Because not only the Congress or one individual is doing 'tapasya', but lakhs are also doing 'tapasya', it is the message of the Yatra," Gandhi stressed. He said there should be respect of 'tapasya', of skill and work. He further said, "The BJP and the RSS say there should not be respect of 'tapasya' and those who do their 'pooja' (worship) only they should be respected. And with this framework you look at demonetisation. Did demonetisation respect the 'tapasya' of the poor? Certainly not. It was an attack on 'tapasya'."

"The BJP and the RSS are taking the country towards 'forced pooja' with the use of wealth, capturing of institutions and making people fear them," he alleged. "They also want you (media) to worship them," the Congress leader said. "That is why the PM does not come

before you (media)...so this is a fight between 'tapasya' and 'pooja'. Our organisation is of tapasya," he asserted. The Yatra has made it clear that this is an organisation of 'tapasya' and that (BJP) is 'pooja ka sangathan', he added. Referring to Lord Shiva, Gandhi said, "You must have seen this symbol (of palm). What is its meaning? You will say 'ashirwad'. It is not ashirwad, it is abhaya mudra. Do not fear. It is a signal of tapasya, do your work, do your tapasya and do not fear." "That is why, it is the symbol of Congress. I have researched it. I will tell it some other day about how this symbol came and you will be surprised," he said, adding Guru Nanak Dev and the Buddha were also seen with abhaya mudra. "Fight for independence was a fight for 'tapasya'. These people had got 'pooja' done from Britishers. It is a history," Gandhi said, without naming anyone.

To a question on half-sleeved t-shirt which he wears during the Yatra despite the biting chill, Gandhi said, "You (media) got me reprimanded. 'Mama ne daant maar di mujhe ke tum kaise ghum rahe ho (Mother told me why you are roaming like this)," he said. Asked how the Yatra changed his image, Gandhi said, "Rahul Gandhi is in your mind. It is not in my mind. The person whom you are watching is not Rahul Gandhi. It is visible to you. You did not understand?" "Read the Hindu religion and about Lord Shiva, you will understand it. Rahul Gandhi is in your mind, it is not in my mind, Rahul Gandhi is in the mind of BJP, it is not in my mind. I have nothing to do with the image; I have no interest in the image." (PTI)

Demand for Indian generic drugs skyrockets in China amid Covid surge

BEIJING, JAN 8/-- The demand for Indian generic drugs has shot up in China amid the massive COVID surge in the country, with Chinese experts cautioning that fake versions of these drugs are flooding the market.

China's National Health Security Administration said on Sunday that Pfizer's Paxlovid oral medication, which is used to treat Covid-19, could not be included in the "register of drugs in the basic medical insurance", because the company's quotation was too high, media reports here said. Due to the massive short supply of Paxlovid,

demand for Indian generic versions has gone up through Chinese e-commerce platforms. "On the Chinese e-commerce platforms..

At least four generic COVID drugs produced in India - Primovir, Paxista, Molnurat, and Molnatris have been listed for sale in recent weeks. Primovir and Paxista are both generic versions of Paxlovid, while the other two are generic versions of Molniravir," Chinese media outlet Sixth Tone reported. All four drugs appear to have been approved for emergency use by the Indian authorities, but are not

legal for use in China, it said. He Xiaobing, the head of Beijing Memorial Pharmaceutical, told Sixth Tone that India was "the only country where we can source reliable and affordable COVID drugs with guaranteed therapeutic effects". "But the strong demand was used by illegal groups who produce counterfeit drugs. This will badly affect patients' treatment," he said. China's health system catering to 1.4 billion people is under strain especially due to the heavy costs of drug supply which were controlled by multinational pharmaceutical giants. (PTI)

Left distorted history, need to rewrite: Himanta

GUWAHATI, JAN 8/-- Accusing Left historians of distorting Indian history by making it a tale of defeats and submissions, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday asserted that history should be rewritten to record the nation's victories. He also alleged that the Left ideology followers have been trying to divide the state along linguistic lines for decades and maintained that the people must defeat such attempts by embracing their "religious similarities". Addressing the 28th state convention of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) here, Sarma said, "The Leftists have always tried to distort our history as they wanted to project Bharat as a defeated jati (community)."

"They overlook the kings and heroes who resisted and defeated Mughal attacks successfully and write only about those who were defeated," he claimed. He cited the examples of Guru Gobind Singh, Chhatrapati Shivaji, Durga Das Rathore and Lachit Borphukan who had successfully led campaigns against Mughal armies, and alleged that the Leftist historians leave out their exploits while writing history.

Asserting that the time was ripe for history to be written anew, the BJP leader said, "We should inspire the students of history to write it anew not as a tale of defeats and slavery, but one of glory and achievement. This will motivate our new generations further towards nation building." Sarma also accused Left intellectuals of dividing the people of Assam along linguistic lines as the state is home to numerous languages. "Jatiyatadab' (sub-nationalism) based on linguistic differences was a ploy of the Leftists to keep Assam divided for over three decades Leftists try to project language as a point of conflict. Had our leaders stood up to them earlier, we would not have seen so much unrest and problems over the years," he maintained. While language is an important component, it cannot be the sole identity of a community and religion and history

also play equally vital roles, he maintained, adding, "Language will survive only when our religion and culture survives." He emphasised on the need for Assamese language speakers to embrace other languages of the state and ensure that all the tribes and communities are accorded equal importance. The chief minister also stressed on need for economic self-reliance and exhorted the youths to focus on skill development, entrepreneurship and farming. "A community needs cultural identity and political pride. But if we can't progress economically, we cannot become atma nirbhar' (self-reliant), on which our prime minister has also accorded much emphasis," he said.

He urged the youths to take up agriculture themselves and not let out their land to others for farming. "If we let others farm on our lands, then we will remain owners only on paper and the actual ownership will slip into the hands of others. There is a huge market potential for our organic and other agricultural products and our youths must explore these," Sarma added. He claimed that a notion was created erroneously that Assam and North East were not part of rest of India historically, which had led to a different stream of thoughts' in this part of the country post-Independence. The perceptions were being corrected gradually, which has gained momentum since 2014 and the state was now a partner in nation building, he said. "We are in a special geographical and political stage in Assam now. There are many challenges before us and we have to meet those by equipping ourselves with correct understanding of history," Sarma said. Alluding to various mythological and historical recorded evidences of Assam being linked with rest of India since ancient times, Sarma said, "Our (Bharat and Assam) atma' (souls) are same but a distorted version was being propagated. Those who did so have been reduced to naught. This is a new Assam where we are proud Assamese and proud Indians." (PTI)

Focus on digital financial inclusion, remittance cost at Kolkata G20 meeting

KOLKATA, JAN 8/-- The first 'Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion' meeting of the G20, scheduled to be held in Kolkata from January 9-11, will focus on the principles of digital financial inclusion, remittance costs and SME finance availability, a top official said Sunday.

The three-day event will also feature symposiums, exhibitions and a domestic outreach programme on digital financial literacy involving over 1,800 students from various schools, he said. "The symposiums will deliberate on unlocking the digital financial inclusion infrastructure and the policy perspective," said Chanchal Sarkar, Economic Advisor, Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs. "The focus of the meeting will be on the digital financial inclusion principles, reduction of remittance costs and finance availability for SMEs," Sarkar told reporters here. He said that 12 international speakers will attend the G20 meeting in Kolkata, but did not elaborate on the same. Sarkar also said institutions like NABARD will highlight the rural



The Indonesian leader is handing over the presidency of the G20 summit to India

area coverage of innovative financial products and services during the meeting. The senior finance ministry official added that "indications are that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee might attend the G20 meeting on January 9". She is expected to promote Bengal as an ideal destination for investment before the representatives of the member countries. Kolkata Port, now Shyama Prasad Mookherjee Port, said in a release that it has undertaken a special cleanliness and beautification drive at several locations, including the iconic Howrah Bridge, for the programme. Cultural events, sightseeing and dinner on river cruise have been planned for the delegates as part of the scheduled programme. India assumed the presidency of the influential bloc G20 at its annual summit in Bali in November, with a promise of striving to ensure that the grouping acts as a global prime mover to envision new ideas and accelerate collective action to deal with pressing challenges. (PTI)



Still open' to ceasefire agreement with Pak govt, says TTP chief

PESHAWAR, JAN 8 /--/ The chief of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has said that his group is "still open" to a ceasefire agreement with the Pakistan government, according to media reports. In November last year, the TTP called off an indefinite ceasefire agreed with the government in June 2022 and ordered its militants to carry out attacks on the security forces. The TTP, which is believed to have close links to al-Qaeda, has threatened to target top leaders of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's PML-N and Foreign

Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's PPP if the ruling coalition continued to implement strict measures against the militants. However, the dreaded outfit insisted that it has not scrapped the ceasefire agreement with the government. "We held talks with Pakistan mediated by Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan. We are still open to the ceasefire agreement," the Dawn newspaper quoted TTP chief Mufti Noor Wali Mehsood as saying in a video on Saturday. Mehsood's change in stance comes amid reports that he

has sought guidance from religious scholars in Pakistan. In the video message, Mehsood said his outfit is "open to guidance" from Pakistan's religious scholars if they believe "the direction of our jihad" is wrong, according to the Express Tribune newspaper. "If you find any problem in the jihad that we waged [against this global infidel agenda], if you believe we have changed our direction, that we have gone astray, then you're requested to guide us. We're always ready to listen to your arguments happily," the TTP chief said. Mehsood's comments come amid a sharp uptick in violence across Pakistan. On Saturday, Pakistan police arrested five TTP terrorists during intelligence-based operations in the country's Punjab province. Over 5,000 tribesmen took out a rally on Friday in Wana, the headquarters of the South Waziristan tribal district, against the growing unrest, terrorism, and kidnappings in their areas. The protest comes amid rising terrorist attacks in the country, especially in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces that are believed to have been carried out by TTP militants. The TTP, also known as the Pakistan Taliban, was set up as an umbrella group of several militant outfits in 2007. Its main aim is to impose its strict brand of Islam across Pakistan. Pakistan had hoped that the Afghan Taliban after coming to power would stop the use of their soil against Pakistan by expelling the TTP operatives but they have apparently refused to do so at the cost of straining ties with Islamabad. The

Strong quake hits Vanuatu, triggering tsunami warning

WELLINGTON, JAN 8 /--/ The US Geological Survey says a powerful 7.0 magnitude earthquake shook the Pacific archipelago of Vanuatu on Sunday, and a tsunami warning has been issued for possible hazardous waves in nearby waters. The quake was centered 23 kilometers (15 miles) from Port Olry and hit at a depth of 27 kilometers (17 miles), the agency said. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center issued a tsunami warning for coasts located within 300 kilometers (186 miles) of the epicenter. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties. Vanuatu is home to about 280,000 people and is prone to natural disasters, with a half-dozen active volcanoes as well as regular cyclones and earthquakes. It sits on the Pacific 'Ring of Fire,' the arc of seismic faults around the Pacific Ocean where earthquakes and volcanoes are common. (AP)

UN envoy meets with Afghan higher-ed chief over ban on women

KABUL, JAN 8 /--/A top UN envoy met with the Taliban-led Afghan government's higher education minister Saturday to discuss the ban on women attending universities.

Markus Potzel is the first international official to meet with him since the ban was introduced last month. Taliban authorities on Dec 20 ordered public and private universities to close for women immediately until further notice. It triggered widespread international condemnation, including from Muslim-majority countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. Higher education minister Nida Mohammad Nadim has defended the ban, saying it is necessary to prevent the mixing of genders in universities and because he believes some subjects violate Islamic principles. That ban was followed days later by a ban on Afghan women working for national and international non-governmental groups, another decision that caused global condemnation and the suspension of work by major aid agencies.

The UN mission in Afghanistan said that Potzel called for the urgent lifting of these bans in his meeting with Nadim, saying the country is entering a new period of crisis. "Taliban bans on female education & work for aid agencies will harm all Afghans," the mission said. Nadim told Potzel the ministry was working for the development and improvement of Afghans, with the protection of Islamic and national values, according to information shared by ministry spokesman Ziaullah Hashmi. He said opponents were criticizing the implementation of Islamic affairs, using education as an argument to achieve their "evil goals." "We need to make sure there is no place for them to criticize and, at the same time, fulfill the wishes of Afghans who have made sacrifices for Islamic rule and the implementation of Sharia rules in the country," Nadim told Potzel at the meeting. He also said Afghanistan's rulers will not accept anyone's demands in the form of pressure against Islamic principles. Potzel thanked Nadim for his time, saying the higher education of any country has a direct impact on the economic situation of that country, according to the ministry spokesman.

The envoy promised to cooperate in the development of Afghanistan's higher education and shared his plan for female education with Nadim. Potzel has also met with Economy Minister Qari Din Mohammed Hanif, who issued the NGO ban; Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi; Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani and former President Hamid Karzai in recent days to discuss the crackdowns on women and girls. The discussions come ahead of a closed-door meeting of the U.N. Security Council on Jan. 13 about Afghanistan. Nadim, a former provincial governor, police chief and military commander, was appointed minister in October by the supreme Taliban leader and previously pledged to stamp out secular schooling. He opposes female education, saying it is against Islamic and Afghan values. (AP)

Pak's former Army Chief Bajwa involved in Imran Khan's ouster, alleges former minister

ISLAMABAD, JAN 8 /--/ Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader and ex-information minister Fawad Chaudhry has said that former Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa along with some key generals played an active role in prime minister Imran Khan's ouster last year, with host Stephen Sackur's statement that the military establishment helped PTI assume power. "It took 22 years for the PTI to come to power and I don't think any military or any institution can support you for that long," the Express Tribune newspaper reported, sending our government home and unfortunately this is what the fact is". Gen Bajwa, 61, retired on November 29 last year after serving two consecutive three-year terms as Pakistan's Army chief. Bajwa was appointed as the army chief in 2016 and his three-year term was extended in 2019 by the then-premier Khan, who has turned out to be a top critic of the Army.



Army Chief Bajwa

The powerful Army, which has ruled coup-prone Pakistan for more than half of its 75-plus years of existence, has hitherto wielded considerable power in matters of security and foreign policy. When asked about Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Director General Lt Gen Nadeem Anjum's comment that Khan asked the military to play an "unconstitutional role" during the vote of no-confidence, Chaudhry said the party's view was "totally different". "We never said that. We only said that let's not let a stable government go like this," he claimed. "The previous army chief was not talking the truth when he said we asked [for their] help. (PTI)

19 killed, 20 injured as truck hits funeral procession in China

BEIJING, JAN 8 /--/ At least 19 people were killed and 20 others injured on Sunday when a truck hit a funeral procession in eastern China's Jiangxi Province, authorities said. A brief report carried by the official media here said that the "major road traffic accident" took place in Nanchang County and the injured were taken to hospital. At least 19 people were killed and 20 others injured in the accident, reports said. An investigation into the

cause of the accident is underway. Reports from the local media said the accident took place when a truck hit a funeral procession. The accident took place as China lifted all restrictions of zero-covid policy and opened internal and external travel, coinciding with the Chinese New Year and Spring Festival. The festival is due to be held from January 22. The 40-day Chunyun or Spring Festival travel rush, the world's largest human migration, is expected to see about 2.09 billion passenger trips this year, up 99.5 per cent from the 2022 level. The passenger volume has rapidly scaled up following the country's optimised epidemic response and amid the release of pent-up demand for travel. China's Ministry of Transport (MOT) said on Friday. Though the official holiday lasts about a week from January 22, Chunyun in 2023 will last 40 days from January 7 until February 15, it said. (PTI)

Prince Harry interviews set to raise heat on UK royal family

LONDON, JAN 8 /--/ Prince Harry is expected to lob more criticism at the UK royal family in broadcast interviews to promote his soul-baring new memoir, which has generated incendiary headlines even before its official release. A prerecorded interview with Britain's ITV is scheduled to air Sunday evening. CBS show "60 Minutes" is set to run a conversation with the prince later, and he is appearing on "Good Morning America" and "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert." In extracts released in advance, Harry tells ITV journalist Tom Bradby that he cried only once after his mother, Prince Diana, died in 1997 at her burial. He said he feels guilt about not showing emotion when he and his brother Prince William greeted crowds of mourners outside Kensington Palace, Diana's London home. In the book, "Spare," Harry blames his family's stiff-upper-lip ethos, saying he had

"learned too well the family maxim that crying is not an option." "There were 50,000 bouquets of flowers to our mother and there we were shaking people's hands, smiling," Harry told ITV. "I've seen the videos, right. I looked back over it all. And the wet hands that we were shaking, we couldn't understand why their hands were wet, but it was all the tears that they were wiping away." "Everyone thought and felt like they knew our mum, and the two closest people to her, the two most loved people by her, were unable to show any emotion in that moment." "Spare" is the latest in a string of public pronouncements by the prince and his wife Meghan since they quit royal life and moved to California in 2020, citing what they saw as the media's racist treatment of Meghan, who is biracial, and a lack of support from the palace. It follows an interview with Oprah Winfrey and a six-part Netflix documentary released last month.

The Associated Press purchased a Spanish-language copy of the book in advance of its publication around the world on Tuesday. In the



Prince Harry

ghostwritten memoir, Harry, 38, describes the couple's acrimonious split from the royal family in 2020, after their suggestion of a part-time royal role was rejected. Harry contrasts the withdrawal of the couple's taxpayer-funded security with the case of his uncle, Prince Andrew, who was removed as a working royal over his friendship with the U.S. sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Last year, Andrew settled a lawsuit from a woman who accused him of sexually abusing her while she traveled with financier Epstein when she was 17. Andrew paid an undisclosed sum as part of the settlement, but didn't admit wrongdoing. Harry alleges that no one considered removing Andrew's security despite the "shameful scandal." The book also explores Harry's grief at the death of his mother and his long-simmering resentment at

the role of royal "spare," overshadowed by the "heir" older brother William. He recounts arguments and a physical altercation with William, reveals how he lost his virginity (in a field) and describes using cocaine and cannabis. He also says he killed 25 Taliban fighters while serving as an Apache helicopter pilot in Afghanistan a claim criticized by both the Taliban and British military veterans. Royal officials haven't commented on the allegations, though allies have pushed back on the claims, largely anonymously. Veteran British journalist Jonathan Dimbleby, a biographer and friend of King Charles III, said Saturday that Harry's revelations were the type "that you'd expect from a sort of B-list celebrity," and that the king would be pained and frustrated by them. In the ITV interview, Harry says he wants reconciliation with the royal family, but "the ball is in their court. (PTI)

40 people killed, dozens injured in bus crash in Senegal

DAKAR, JAN 8 /--/ At least 40 people were killed and dozens injured in a bus crash in central Senegal, the country's president said Sunday.

President Macky Sall said in a tweet that the accident happened in Gniyv village, in the Kaffrine region, at about 3:30 am. "I am deeply saddened by the tragic road accident today in Gniyv causing 40 deaths and many serious injuries. I extend my heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and wish a speedy recovery to the injured," said Sall. He declared three days of mourning starting Monday and said he will hold an inter-ministerial council to discuss road safety measures. Public prosecutor Cheikh Dieng said the crash happened on National Road No. 1 when a public bus punctured a tire and veered across the road, colliding with another bus coming from the opposite direction. At least 78 people are injured some of them seriously, he said. Images of the crash on social media show the damaged buses rammed into each other and a trail of debris along the road. Motor accidents happen regularly in the West African nation due to poor roads, bad cars and drivers not adhering to the rules, say locals. In 2017, at least 25 people were killed when two buses also crashed. Many of those people were heading toward the central town of Touba for the annual Muslim pilgrimage. (AP)

Ukrainians celebrate Orthodox Christmas in reclaimed church

KYIV, JAN 8 /--/ Peking Kyiv's 1,000-year-old Lavra Cathedral for Orthodox Christmas, hundreds of worshippers heard the service in that church in the Ukrainian language for the first time in decades, a demonstration of independence from the Russian Orthodox Church.

Richly decorated with golden icons and panels, the cathedral part of the complex known as the Monastery of the Caves and a UNESCO World Heritage Site put up a video screen outside for the overflow of worshipers, despite the frigid temperatures of -10 Celsius (14 F). Overlooking the right bank of the Dnieper River, the cathedral and monastery complex has been a pilgrimage site for centuries. And for the first time in the 31 years of Ukraine's independence, the service there was held in the Ukrainian language. Ukrainian army troops in uniform were among those singing well-known Ukrainian carols. Ukraine's government on Thursday took over the administration of the revered Lavra complex from the Moscow patriarchate and allowed the Ukrainian church to use it for the Orthodox Christmas service. The move highlights the long-running tensions between the two churches exacerbated by Russia's war in Ukraine. "It's a first victory" for Ukraine, said Oksana Abu-Akel who hailed it as a significant step in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's efforts to cut ties with Russia after it started the war more than 10 months ago. "This is the first time in 300 years that there is really our own service here. Every person feels this joy. It is a victory for all Ukrainians."

Ukrainian culture minister Oleksandr Tkachenko said Thursday that the Lavra complex had been taken over by the state after the lease of the Moscow-controlled church expired on Dec. 31. Tkachenko attended the service Saturday. "It's an amazing moment. Previously this place on Ukrainian territory, within Kyiv has been linked to Moscow. Now we feel this is ours, this is Ukrainian. This is part of the Ukrainian nation," said Alex Fesiak, who attended the service. The Metropolitan Epiphanius, the primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, spoke not just about Christmas but delivered a political message about the war.

"As a nation, we sought to live peacefully, having a good understanding with all our neighbors. But the enemy meanly and treacherously broke the peace and invaded our land, shedding blood, sowing death and wanting to destroy our statehood and our very Ukrainian identity," he said during the service. "Those who held us in captivity could not endure our achievements and our success," he said. "The devil's malice and envy prompted them to make war, but they are sure to be defeated. After all, the truth is on our side."

Natalia Levshyna said her husband couldn't come to the Christmas service as he is fighting on the front line, but she will send him photos of the service as it's very important to him. Originally from Donbas, she said she stopped attending the church of the Moscow Patriarchate in 2014, when Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula and supported the conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine. "Our emotions are running high," she said, barely holding back tears, describing her conviction that the Ukrainian church on Ukrainian soil should be independent from the Russian Orthodox Church. "Our church must be synchronized with state policy. They must be one," Levshyna said. Others in Ukraine have decided to distance themselves from the Russian Orthodox Church by celebrating Christmas on Dec. 25.

On Friday, the Church of Moscow Patriarchate condemned the Ukrainian plans to hold a service in the Lavra Cathedral as "an attempt to forcefully seize ... the cathedral by means of blackmail and misinformation of society." In 2019, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine received recognition from the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, but the Moscow's patriarch refused to accept that. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church declared independence from Moscow's Patriarchate after Russia's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, ending the Ukrainian church's loyalty to the Moscow patriarch which dated back to the 17th century.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church removed Moscow Patriarch Kirill as its leader in public worship and now uses its own sacramental oil for blessings rather than oil supplied by Moscow. But Ukrainian security agencies have claimed that some in the Ukrainian church have maintained close ties with Moscow. They've raided numerous holy sites of the church and later posted photos of rubles, Russian passports and leaflets with messages from the Moscow patriarch as proof that some church officials have been loyal to Moscow.

Prominent Ukrainian Orthodox Church leaders have rejected the allegations of ties with Moscow, insisting that they have loyally supported Ukraine from the start of the war and that a government crackdown will only hand a propaganda coup to Russia. (AP)

Delayed debut, struggles made me hungrier: Surya

RAJKOT, JAN 8 /--/ Suryakumar Yadav was well past 30 when he made his India debut, but the swashbuckling batter says his belated selection had only strengthened his resolve and made him even hungrier to succeed in top-flight. Surya produced yet another incredible knock in the shortest format -- a 51-ball 112 not out -- as India outplayed Sri Lanka by 91 runs in the third T20I to secure a memorable 2-1 series win here on Saturday.

"It does make me even more hungrier (sic) now," Surya told India head coach Rahul Dravid when asked if the long wait has taught him to value his success a lot more. "I mean the amount of domestic cricket I have played, I have always enjoyed playing that for my state side Mumbai and I always try to put up a show. "Enjoyed batting even there as well. Yes it was a little challenging in the last few years but kept telling myself this is why you play this game, enjoy it, the passion for this game kept me driving so I just kept going." The interaction

between the two was organised by BCCI TV. "It is lovely to have someone here with me who, as a young kid growing up, did not watch me bat. And I hope you didn't, I am sure you didn't," Dravid started the chat on a lighter note, to which Surya replied, "No, I did watch (you bat)." Surya's batting is a stark contrast to the way Dravid played his cricket, and the former India captain was alluding to that only. Dravid then asked if he could pick one or two knocks that he feels are his best. "It is actually difficult for me to pick any one innings... I enjoyed batting in all the difficult situations where I went into bat. I just enjoyed myself, whatever I did in the last one year. I have been doing the same thing again. "As I said before as well, I just try to enjoy and express myself as much as possible. In those difficult situations, teams try to pull the game off. I try to take the game on. If it works well for me and the team, I'm happy," said Surya. The middle-order batter's century was his third in the format in just



Enjoyed batting even there as well. Yes it was a little challenging in the last few years but kept telling myself this is why you play this game, enjoy it, the passion for this game kept me driving so I just kept going
—Suryakumar

seven months, making him the first player in the history of the game to score three T20I hundreds when not opening the batting.

So how many shots from his bat are pre-determined? "I mean obviously in this format you have to be a little bit pre-determined, and at the same time you have to have another stroke as well if the bowler is a step ahead of you during that time. But yes, I try to play to the field what fielders are in, what bowler can bowl at that time and it works out." "If I am meeting the ball really well or I mean I try and set the field for myself whenever any left-arm spinner or leg-spinner or fast bowler is bowling and just try and time the ball as much as possible." Surya also credited his family for his immense success in recent times and Dravid, who was in charge when the batter was finding his feet at the India A level for years, lauded the role played by his folks. "I mean the role of the family has been most important in my cricketing journey till now. When I started playing cricket, they were the ones who helped me out of the box. Because my dad is an engineer, so in my family there is no history of sports. I had to be a little different for him to see a spark in me and push me. "They have sacrificed a lot and obviously my wife. After we got married she's been pushing me really hard in terms of nutrition and in terms of staying fit."

"We have been talking about cricket a lot when I go back home and we discuss how we can do better, how we can be one step ahead at this level and we really enjoy doing that." Dravid concluded the interaction by saying, "Long it may continue." (PTI)

GAME NOTES

Nehra made a big difference to my captaincy at GT: Hardik

RAJKOT, JAN 8 /--/ There has been no looking back for Hardik Pandya since he led Gujarat Titans to an IPL triumph in their maiden appearance last year, and the new Indian T20I skipper credits his franchise coach Ashish Nehra for making "a big difference" to his captaincy. Coming back from a long injury layoff, the premier all-rounder was made the Gujarat skipper in a bold move by the first-timers. But Pandya, who had led only once at senior level in a tour game against Australia, proved his detractors wrong and led by example. "What has been very important from Gujarat point of view is the kind of coach I worked with. Ashish Nehra made a big difference in my life, because of our mindsets. We might be two different personalities, but we have very similar cricketing thoughts," Pandya said after leading India to a 2-1 series win over Sri Lanka here on Saturday. "Because I was with him, it added value to my captaincy. It helped me to get exactly what I know. It was just about getting that assurance, once I got that... the awareness of this game I always knew. It was all about knowing and backing what I knew already. It has definitely helped me," he added. Before the home series against Sri Lanka, the Indian selectors overhauled the side after the Rohit Sharma-led team failed to win the T20I World Cup in Australia, losing to eventual champions England in the semifinal. (PTI)

3rd edition of Khelo India National Winter Games at Gulmarg next month

SRINAGAR, JAN 8 /--/ The ski resort of Gulmarg in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district will host the third edition of Khelo India National Winter Games next month, officials said on Sunday. The third edition of the games will start from February 10 and culminate on February 14, they said. This year, around 2000 athletes from different parts of the country will converge in Gulmarg to compete in different sports. They said the main attractions are snow shoe race, ice skating, ice hockey, skiing, nordic ski, snowboarding, ski mountaineering and ice stock. In connection with the preparations for the event, secretary tourism, Sarmad Hafeez chaired a meeting at the Civil Secretariat here on Saturday. Addressing the officers during the meeting, Hafeez said the games will not only promote sports activities in Jammu and Kashmir, but will also go a long way in attracting the tourists, both domestic and foreign. The secretary emphasized upon the government departments and private agencies to put in place all arrangements in advance for the successful conduct of event. (PTI)

Naomi Osaka withdraws from Australian Open

MELBOURNE, Jan 8 /--/ Two-time champion Naomi Osaka has confirmed she will not play at the Australian Open, adding her name to a growing list of notable withdrawals. Organizers confirmed in a tweet on Sunday that Japan's Osaka, the Open champion in 2019 and 2021, will not be playing in Melbourne. "Naomi Osaka has withdrawn from the Australian Open. We will miss her at #AO2023," the tweet said. The 25-year-old Osaka's ranking has slipped to 47 and she hasn't played since September after withdrawing during the second round in Tokyo. She won her first round match at that tournament when Australia's Daria Saville withdrew after one game with a knee injury. Osaka won only one completed match since May and was beaten in the first round of her three previous tournaments, including the US Open at which she also is a two-time champion. Last week she posted pictures on social media of a trip to Europe with her United States rapper boyfriend Cordae and had been considered unlikely to play in the first Grand Slam of the season. Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska has been promoted to the main draw in her place. Osaka took a mental health break after missing the 2021 French Open and later said she had been struggling with depression and anxiety for several years. Her absence from Melbourne adds to uncertainty over when or if she will resume her career. The Australian Open which starts on Jan. 16 already has lost several leading players including men's world No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz who pulled out Saturday with an ankle injury. Former finalist Simona Halep also is not playing this year and Venus Williams also has handed back a wildcard entry after suffering an injury while practising in Auckland. (AP)



Mukesh Kumar has the trophy as India pose after beating Sri Lanka

Just ensured the youngsters they belonged at this level: Pandya

RAJKOT, JAN 8 /--/ Captaining a young side could be tricky but Hardik Pandya, who led India to a 2-1 series win over Asian champions Sri Lanka, feels it was not that difficult as he just had to ensure that they "belong at this level". The three-match T20I series against Sri Lanka saw the Indian set-up begin a new era under the leadership of Pandya. "It's actually not that difficult. My life becomes very easy, when the experienced players are

for various reasons. India began the series by edging out a settled Sri Lanka side under Dasun Shanaka by two runs in the first game in Mumbai. In the second T20I in Pune, India fell by the wayside chasing a stiff 207, while in the series-decider Suryakumar Yadav led the show with an unbeaten 112 from 51 balls to propel the hosts to 228/5, a target that proved too much for the Lankas who folded for 137 in 16.4 overs. Backing his young group, the new India

them confidence, how to make sure they are at a level, when they are playing here, they feel that they belong here. "That is very important in international cricket. In this group, it's a very good journey. Youngsters are willing to learn and it makes my journey very easy". All praise for Suryakumar's explosive century, Hardik said: "Today, it felt like Sri Lanka against Surya. It makes my life very easy. I always mention that someone like Surya is so important for us in white-ball cricket. "The way he plays some shots, the way he changes the game, it actually breaks the morale of the bowler and which kind of helps the other batter as well." Asked if he had any special word for Surya with the way he batted, Pandya said: "You don't tell him anything. Surya, the kind of form he's playing and the clarity he has you don't really need to speak to him. "He is always very clear about his plans and that's the reason he's successful in this format. He doesn't doubt his ability. Wherever he's in double minds, he always comes and have a chat. I don't think anyone has to say anything to him." Electing to bat, India had a jittery start losing Ishan Kishan in the first over itself but thereafter Rahul Tripathi seized the momentum with a 16-ball 35 and Pandya was quick to acknowledge the Maharashtra batter's knock. (PTI)

It's actually not that difficult. My life becomes very easy, when the experienced players are there, I don't say much to them because they are here because they have done a lot of good things in their lives
—Hardik Pandya



there, I don't say much to them because they are here because they have done a lot of good things in their lives," Pandya said after leading the team to a series win in Rajkot here on Saturday. The Indian team had none of the three senior batters in Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul, Virat Kohli, while the likes of Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, R Ashwin, Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah were also not there

skipper said they would make mistakes but it's about accepting and learning from them. "Managing is not difficult, but yes it's a young group. They will make mistakes, they will learn from it, something that we have emphasised that once you make a mistake you make sure that you learn from it. Acceptance is very important in this sport. If you don't expect it, things go very far. "But when a young team is there, the only thing I can help them is about giving

FA Cup: Sheffield Wednesday stun Premier League high-flyers Newcastle United; Liverpool held to 2-2 draw by Wolves

London, Jan 8 /--/ Premier League high-flyers Newcastle suffered a shock FA Cup exit against Sheffield Wednesday and holders Liverpool rode their luck in a draw with Wolves, while Nottingham Forest and Bournemouth crashed out on a day of third round surprises.

Elsewhere on an enthralling afternoon of FA Cup action, Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney, the Hollywood actors who co-own Wrexham, led the celebrations on social media after their non-league side's surprise 4-3 victory at second tier Coventry. But it was Wednesday, second in League One, who stole the show on Saturday with their impressive 2-1 victory at Hillsborough against a Newcastle team sitting third in the Premier League. Eddie Howe's side were unbeaten in 15 games, but Wednesday have now gone undefeated in 10 matches after Josh Windass's double stunned the Magpies. Wednesday went ahead in the 52nd minute when Windass, who looked in an offside position, diverted Dennis Adeniran's ball across from close-range. Windass scored his second 13 minutes later, coolly converting after being put through by Michael Smith. Newcastle reduced the deficit in the 68th minute when Bruno Guimarães poked home from close-range, but Chris Wood squandered a golden opportunity to equalise as he fired over from 10 yards. "It was a disappointing result for us. We are aware that we don't have the deepest squad of any team in the Premier League," Howe said. At Anfield, a difficult week for Liverpool that started with a Premier League loss at Brentford, concluded with a fortuitous 2-2 draw against Wolves. Liverpool keeper Alisson Becker was guilty of a woeful error when his pass was intercepted by Goncalo Guedes, who slotted Wolves' 26th minute opener. (AFP)

Racer K E Kumar dies following crash at national championship



CHENNAI, JAN 8 /--/ K E Kumar, a well-respected racer, died on Sunday following a crash in the second round of the MRF MMSC FMSCI Indian National Car Racing Championship at the Madras International Circuit here. He was 59. The incident occurred when Kumar's car came in contact with that of a competitor during the saloon cars race this morning. The car slid across the track and landed on the roof after slamming into a fence.

The race was immediately stopped (red flag). Within minutes, Kumar was extricated from the wreckage and transferred into an ambulance before being shifted to a nearby hospital after a preliminary examination at the track's medical centre. Despite the best efforts of the hospital's doctors, he succumbed to his injuries. Chairman of the Meet Vicky Chandhok said: "It is a most unfortunate incident. Kumar was an experienced racer. I have known

him for several decades as a friend and competitor. The MMSC and entire racing fraternity mourn his passing away and convey heartfelt condolences to his family." Chandhok added that the national governing body for the sport FMSCI and the organisers, MMSC, have launched an investigation into the incident. Meanwhile, as a mark of respect to Kumar, who was a life member of MMSC, the remainder of the day's schedule was cancelled. (PTI)

Success Meet on Karate

KOLKATA, JAN 8 /--/ Shivaji Ganguly's Karate Academy Mind and Body held a Press Meet at Harish Park, Bhowanipur on 8th Jan. In 1st PEFI National Karate Championship, 2022 at The Manthan School, Greater Noida West, 50 participants from West Bengal participated, informed Shibayan Ganguly, Chief Instructor of Shivaji Ganguly's Academy. Among them 40 participants got good position. In this tournament there were 350 participants from 15 states. The tournament was recognised by Uttarpradesh Olympic Association. Physical Education Foundation of India (PEFI) is recognised by Ministry Of Sports And Youth Affairs, Govt. Of India. West Bengal medal tally included Gold-10, Silver-9 and Bronze-21.

Students of Shivaji Ganguly's Karate Academy won 24 medals (out of total 29 participants):-

Gold-5, Silver-7 and Bronze-12, informed Shyamantak Ganguly, Technical Head of the Karate Academy. This is indeed a great achievement for West Bengal in the PEFI National Karate Championship 2022 recognised by Uttarpradesh Olympic Association, informed Hanshi Shivaji Ganguly. (EOIC)



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