

‘KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES’: MOCKERY OF SPORTS

Sportspersons from outer islands denied opportunities to participate in selection trials



PORT BLAIR, JAN 18/--/The Department of Sports & Youth Affairs, A&N Administration through a news report published in the official mouthpiece (DT) on 13th January 2023, informed that interested persons can participate in the selection trials in respect of the A&N contingents for participation in the forthcoming ‘Khelo India Youth Games-2022’ to be held at Madhya Pradesh and New Delhi from 26th January to 11th February 2023. The news report mentioned that interested persons can participate in the selection trials as per the schedule. Accordingly, the Schedule mentioned that selection of candidates for the sports like Swimming, Cycling, Badminton, Table Tennis, Athletics and Yogasana will be held on 13th January 2023. But what was more shocking and bizarre was the new report was published on 13th January 2023, and the selection trials were fixed on the same day i.e. 13th January

2023. This clearly means that all those candidates residing in outer islands are denied the opportunities to participate in the selection trials as no time was given to them to visit Port Blair-the venue of the selection trials to participate in the selection process. Everybody in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands is aware that the real sports talent lies in the rural hamlets of the Islands. But by keeping the selection trials date and disseminating information about the selection trials date on the same day is nothing but an attempt to deny fresh sports talents. It also means that the Department of Sports & Youth Affairs has published the new report just as an eyewash so that necessary formalities are completed. The intention was not to go for real talents, but to make a mockery

of the sports department in the islands. The fact of the matter is the selection trials have already been done on an internal basis and just as eyewash, a date has been published so that no candidates appear for the selection trials. Another question the Sport department has to

INSENSITIVE APPROACH TO REALITY

answer is at a time when Netaji Stadium has been dug up to erect tents and pandals to host the 23rd January event, how it was possible for the Sports department to conduct selection trials for Athletics sports... Sources told EOI that selection of sportspersons who will participate in the ‘Khelo India Youth Games-2022’ have already been done based on their previous performance and on ground no selection trials were done.

(Contd. on page-6)

MP requests LG to take up with Shipping Ministry for preference to ships from ANI for Annual Survey in mainland dockyards

PORT BLAIR, JAN 18/--/ The Member of Parliament, Mr. Kuldeep Rai Sharma called on the Lt. Governor yesterday and took up some important issues of these Islands. Among other crucial issues, he requested the Lt. Governor to take up this matter of shortage of ship for Southern Group of Islands with the Ministry of Shipping to give preference to Andaman Ships for Annual Survey in Mainland Dockyards so that the turnaround timing of the ship after Annual Survey is reduced to minimum and round the year at least 50% of the ships are available for Hut Bay and Nicobar District as shipping is the lifeline of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. He informed the Lt. Governor that there is a shortage of ships for Car Nicobar, Kamorta and Great Nicobar Islands. He said that at present only MV Bharat Seema is available for Car Nicobar sailing



while only MV Nalanda is available for sailing for Kamorta and Great Nicobar. The Member of Parliament added that presently there are eight ships for inter-islands sector viz MV Sentinel, MV Chowra, MV Campbell Bay, MV Nalanda, MV Sindhu, MV Kalighat, MV Bharat Seema and MV Dering but out of these eight ships only three ships are presently operational and sadly out of these three operational ships, the MV Dering cannot be sent to Nicobar District. He pointed out that when ships from Andaman go for Annual Survey, the ships have to wait for several weeks for dry-dock works, which causes delay in repair of ships and due to which Islanders suffer. He added that as summer vacation is nearing there is a need to keep more ships seaworthy for catering to the needs of a large number of passengers.

Leatherback turtle rescued by AC, C/Bay

CAMPBELL BAY JAN 18/--/ It was the last day of Dr. Nitin Shukla as Assistant Commissioner, Campbell Bay and during his normal walk at B Quarry beach, which is just a few minutes' walk from his residence, he saw a strange thing. There was a net thrown in the sea water and has reached the shore. It was a big net, out of curiosity, the Assistant Commissioner went near the net and saw a leatherback turtle caught in it. Initially, he suspected some foul play but later realised that the leatherback turtle was mistakenly caught in the net and the net has washed away to the seashore. Initially, he tried to rescue the turtle by removing the net but he was unsuccessful, later his staff helped him cut the net. The turtle is now free from all the boundations and was happily moving towards the water. Thus timely intervention helped in rescuing the endangered animal which if not intervened at the correct time might lead to its demise.



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KCR'S BR SEVENTTURNS INTO LAUNCHPAD FOR OPPN ATTACK AGAINST RULER

Kerala CM Vijayan calls for 'new resistance' against saffron party

KHAMMAM, JAN 18 /-/- Accusing the BJP-ruled Centre of 'undoing' the foundations of the nation's democracy, Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday called for a 'new resistance' to protect secularism, democracy and the Constitution and said people's unity has to emerge against the communal agenda that seeks to divide the country.

Addressing a public meeting organised by K Chandrasekhar Rao-led BRS here, the veteran CPM leader alleged that the Centre was constantly "trying to destroy" the country's federal structure and it was using the offices of Governors to target non-BJP state governments. This mammoth rally is being held at a time when the basic tenets of our Constitution are facing a series of threats from the people who are at the helm of affairs at the Centre, he

said. "I hope that today, in Khammam, the land of people's resistances, we will have the beginning of a new resistance, a resistance to secure the ideals that we



Pinarayi Vijayan

fought for in our freedom struggle. A resistance to protect our secularism, our democracy, our Constitution and thereby our nation," Vijayan said. Without directly naming BJP, the Communist leader said there is a "peculiar situation" in which a political formation that was not part of our national freedom struggle is in

power in the country.

Charging that the followers of those who tendered unconditional apologies to the colonisers and promised to serve the imperial crown are at the helm of affairs today, he said they have been and remain "antagonistic" to the values of the anti-colonial struggle. "Since those in power now were not part of our collective struggles then, they do not know the values on which India has been built as a sovereign, democratic, republic. So, they seek to alter the basic structures on which our modern nation has been built," the Kerala chief minister further said. Further sharpening his attack against the BJP-led Union government, the Marxist veteran said by signing various international defence agreements, the Centre goes against the concept of sovereignty.

By allowing the concentration of wealth through consistent

appeasement of corporates, they go against the concept of socialism and by seeking to replace parliamentary democracy with presidential form of governance, they go against the concept of democracy, he contended. Enacting laws that divide the people on communal lines, as in the case of the Citizenship Amendment Act, the Centre has thwarted the concept of secularism, he alleged. Accusing the Centre of having a mission to make India a 'unitary state', he said slogans such as 'One Nation One Tax', 'One Nation One Uniform', 'One Nation One Election' are all attacks on federal structure. Alleging that the Union government is consciously trying to destroy the country's federal structure, Vijayan said laws are being enacted repeatedly by the Parliament on subjects in the State List in the Constitution, be it law and order, agriculture, cooperation, power or so on. (PTI)

BJP has started counting its days: Akhilesh

KHAMMAM, JAN 18 /-/- Taking a dig at the Prime Minister Modi's comment in the national executive meeting that there are only 400 days left for the 2024 elections, Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav said here on Wednesday that the ruling BJP has started counting its days and would not last a day more in power. Speaking at the first public meeting of Bharat Rashtra Samithi here, Akhilesh said: "the BJP will be out of power after 399 days and a new government will be in place



on the 400th day." He said that the ruling BJP has been pushing the nation behind and it is time for all progressive leaders to come together and work for the country's development. "In this historic land of Khammam, Telangana chief minister and BRS president KCR has gathered such a huge crowd and given a message to the whole country," Yadav said. Noting that Uttar Pradesh will eventually join other states in rejecting the ruling BJP, he said: "Today when we have gathered in such large numbers and in front of this gathering, I can say that if the BJP is being resisted in Telangana, then UP is not far behind." BRS rally at Khammam was presided by party president K Chandrashekar Rao. The meeting was attended by Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, his Kerala counterpart Pinarayi Vijayan, CPI general secretary D Raja. (PTI)

Make in India has become 'Joke in India,' says Telangana CM

KHAMMAM, JAN 18 /-/- The 'Make in India' initiative has become a 'Joke in India,' Telangana chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao said on Wednesday, taking a dig at the BJP-led Centre.

Addressing the first public meeting of Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) here, party chief Rao said free power would be provided to farmers across the country if a 'BRS proposed government' captured power at the Centre in 2024, following polls to the Lok Sabha. "Make in India has



K Chandrashekar Rao

become Joke in India. There is Make in India, but there are China bazaars in every street (in the country)," he said ridiculing the NDA government's flagship programme. He further said if BRS comes to power, the Agnipath scheme for recruitment in Armed forces would be abolished.

Schemes like Telangana's Rythu Bandhu (for the welfare of farmers) should be implemented throughout the country and it is his party's slogan and demand, KCR asserted. He slammed the BJP and Congress, alleging that both the parties are responsible for interstate water issues. He said the BRS is opposing tooth and nail the 'disinvestment of LIC'. (PTI)

Rahul Gandhi should apologise to J&K people before Yatra enters UT: BJP

JAMMU, JAN 18 /-/- Before his Bharat Jodo Yatra enters Jammu and Kashmir, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi should apologise to the nation, especially the people of the Union Territory, for the "sins committed by his family and party" in the region over the last 70 years, the BJP said on Wednesday.

BJP's J&K unit chief Ravinder Raina alleged that the Congress has been sympathetic to parties who supported terrorism and asserted that it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has "truly united the country", while the Opposition party has done otherwise. "Gandhi family and Congress have made historic blunders related to Jammu and Kashmir and are directly responsible for the eruption of terrorism which has consumed thousands of lives. "Before entering J&K, Rahul should apologise to the nation, especially people of J&K, over the mistakes and sins of the party which it committed over the past 70 years," Raina told reporters here. He referred to the now-scraped special status under Article 370, the permit system, the exile of the last Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh and the "denying of rights" to various communities including refugees from West Pakistani and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), Valmikis, Gorkhas and Paharis.

"The atrocities committed by the Gandhi-led Congress family cannot be forgotten. There is a long list of how they humiliated and jailed the nationalists who campaigned against its wrong policies," he alleged. According to the BJP leader, Rahul should also answer why the nation was divided in 1947. "Major parts of Kashmir and Ladakh are under illegal occupation of Pakistan, while Aksai Chin is under illegal occupation of China. He should tell the people who are responsible for this." "They have stabbed 'Bharat Mata' in the back. They were sympathetic to the parties who supported terrorism and arrested the nationalist among Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus who tried to unfurl the national flag in Lal Chowk (Srinagar) during their rule," Raina alleged. (PTI)

'Bharat Jodo Yatra' enters Himachal

SHIMLA, JAN 18 /-/- The Rahul Gandhi-led 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' entered Himachal Pradesh on Wednesday morning with the senior Congress leader targeting the BJP-RSS combine and accusing it of spreading hatred, violence and fear in the country. After the march entered the state near Ghatot village, Punjab Congress president Amrinder Singh Raja Warring handed over the flag to Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu and state Congress chief Pratibha Singh. Rahul then addressed people gathered in Manser village to participate in the march and welcome him. "All the policies of the Union government demonetisation, GST and anti-farm laws were aimed at benefiting three-four multi-millionaires," he said.

"Welfare of farmers, the youth and workers was not on the agenda," Rahul added. Braving the cold weather, hundreds of Congress workers, along with chief minister Sukhu, his deputy Mukesh Agnihotri, state party chief Pratibha Singh, state ministers and party MLAs, welcomed the yatra at the Manser toll plaza near Indora. Flanked by the state ministers on a foggy morning, the former Congress president walked at a brisk pace amid sloganeering by enthusiastic party workers.

Tight security arrangements were in place for the yatra and only select people were allowed to enter the security ring. Rahul, however, interacted with people, especially the youngsters, along the march route, besides party leaders. "The two important issues of unemployment and inflation are brushed aside by the BJP. We started this yatra from Kanyakumari four months back to unite people and bring them together and raise these issues as we were not allowed to speak in Parliament. We could not raise the issues through the judiciary and the media as they are under pressure from the BJP," he claimed. Rahul said the Bharat Jodo Yatra was aimed at uniting the nation against communal and divisive forces and giving a befitting reply to the nefarious designs of the BJP and the RSS. "My aim is to unite the people and the nation against the anti-people policies of the BJP," he added. "Earlier, Himachal Pradesh was not in the itinerary but we changed the route of the yatra to cover the state. Only one day was allotted and I feel more time should have been given, but the yatra is proposed to conclude in Kashmir on January 30 the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi," the Congress leader added. (PTI)

TN Guv says he referred to state as 'Tamizhagam' in historical, cultural context

CHENNAI, JAN 18 /-/- Governor R N Ravi on Wednesday asserted that he referred to the State as 'Tamizhagam' in historical and cultural context and construing it as a suggestion to change the name of Tamil Nadu is 'erroneous' and 'far-fetched.'

In an event at the Raj Bhavan on January 4, 2023 to felicitate the volunteers of Kashi Tamil Sangamam, while dwelling upon the historical cultural connect between the two places, Ravi said he referred to the word 'Tamizhagam'. "In those days, there was no 'Tamil Nadu'. Hence in historical cultural context, I referred to the word 'Tamizhagam' as a more appropriate expression," Ravi said in a press note issued by Raj Bhavan.

"An interpretation or inference that it was a suggestion to change the name of the Tamil Nadu is erroneous and far-fetched. Without understanding the basis of my speech, arguments that the Governor is against the word 'Tamil Nadu' have become a topic of discussion. (PTI)

SIMI's objective of establishing Islamic rule in India can't be permitted to subsist: Centre to SC

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /-/- The Union government has told the Supreme Court that SIMI's objective to establish Islamic rule in India cannot be permitted to subsist and activists of the banned outfit are still indulging in disruptive activities capable of threatening the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.

In a counter affidavit filed in the apex court, which is hearing a batch of pleas on the ban imposed on the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), the Centre has said the activists of the organisation are in "regular touch" with their associates and masters based in other countries and their actions could disrupt peace and communal harmony in India.

"Their stated objectives are contrary to the laws of our country. Especially their objective of establishing Islamic rule in India can, under no circumstances, be permitted to subsist," said the affidavit, filed by an under-secretary in the ministry of home affairs.

The matter came up for hearing on Wednesday before a bench comprising Justices S K Kaul, A S Oka and J B Pardiwala. Advocate Rajat Nair, appearing for the Centre, told the bench they have submitted a counter affidavit to one of the petitions filed in the matter. He said the ban on SIMI is continuing and the petitions have challenged its imposition and subsequent extensions.

The counsel appearing for some of the petitioners said they would examine the counter affidavit filed by the Centre.

After both the parties requested the court to adjourn the hearing, the bench posted the matter for next month.

In the counter affidavit, the government has said the SIMI aims to mobilise students and youth for propagation of Islam and obtain support for 'Jihad' (religious war).

"The organisation also emphasises on the formation of 'Shariat' based Islamic rule through 'Islami Inqilab' (revolution). The

organization does not believe in nation-state or in the Indian Constitution including its secular nature.

It further regards idol worship as a sin, and propagates its 'duty' to end such practices," it said.

The affidavit said the evidence brought on record clearly establishes that despite being banned since September 27, 2001, except for a brief period in between, the SIMI activists are associating, meeting, conspiring, acquiring arms and ammunition, and indulging in activities "which are disruptive in character and capable of threatening the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India".

It said that SIMI, through its members, has contacts in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh and Nepal and, being an organisation of students and youth, SIMI is influenced and used by various fundamentalist Islamic terrorist organisations operating from Jammu and Kashmir. (PTI)



Telangana Home Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali receiving Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann at Begumpet airport, Hyderabad

Cong chief Kharge to visit Punjab today, address Pathankot rally

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /-/- Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge would be on a daylong visit to Punjab on Thursday where he would meet the family members of Jalandhar MP Santokh Singh Chaudhary and offer his condolences. Kharge will also participate in the Bharat Jodo Yatra, led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, in Pathankot and address a public rally. Kharge, Rahul

and leaders of the Punjab Congress would address the rally in the border town of Pathankot. The Bharat Jodo Yatra of the Congress would thereafter enter Jammu and Kashmir. The Congress chief would return to Delhi by Thursday evening in a special flight. Chaudhary died on Saturday after suffering a cardiac arrest during the Bharat Jodo Yatra in Jalandhar's Phillaur,

following which the march was halted for 24 hours. At two-time MP, Chaudhary (76) was walking with Rahul during the yatra when he fainted. He was rushed to a private hospital in Phagwara in an ambulance where he was declared brought dead. Chaudhary was cremated with full state honours on Sunday at his native Dhaliwal village in Jalandhar district. (PTI)

Karnataka polls: Moily urges Cong to pick candidates with corruption-free image to project alternative to BJP

BENGALURU, JAN 18 /-/- Senior Congress leader M Veerappa Moily on Wednesday urged the party leadership to field only candidates with corruption-free image in the coming Assembly elections in Karnataka to help project an "alternative" to the BJP in the state.

The former chief minister claimed that his party's prospects in the polls are "very bright" and alleged that Ministers in the Basavaraj Bommai Cabinet and ruling party MLAs were facing "anti-incumbency". The Congress has in recent months stepped up its attack on the government on corruption issues, which are also likely to be its dominant campaign themes for the election, due by May. "...good people with image...with corruption-free image should be selected because this is the alternative we can show", Moily told PTI here. "Candidates with corruption-free image will definitely project what we intend to do in future", the former Union minister added. Moily said the fact that the Congress president M Mallikarjun Kharge hails from the state, is a "big status" for the party and its leadership as it faces elections. Moily said the poll promises of the Congress to provide 200 units of free power a month to each household, and Rs 2000 to every woman head of households would give electoral dividends for the party. He also targeted the JD-S headed by former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda. "Whenever they came to power, they failed in governance. (PTI)

R-Day: Airspace curbs in national capital for 8 days this month

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /-/- Airspace restrictions will be in place in the national capital for eight days this month in view of the Republic Day preparations and celebrations. There will be airspace curbs from January 19 to 24 as well as on January 26 and 29. From January 19 to 24, restrictions will be in place daily from

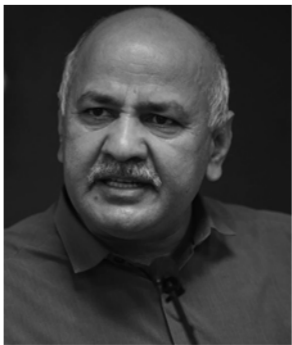
10 am to 1.15 pm. During this period, non-scheduled flights of scheduled airlines and chartered flights will not be allowed to take off or land at the Delhi airport, according to a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM). During this period, scheduled flights will not be impacted. On the Republic Day on January 26, no flights will

be allowed to take off or land from 8.30 am to 1 pm, and from 3 pm to 6 pm. As per the NOTAM issued by the Airports Authority of India (AAI), no landing or take-off of flights will be permitted at the Delhi airport from 1500 hours to 1900 hours on January 29, the day of the Beating the Retreat ceremony. (PTI)

Delhi LG 'acting like tribal chieftain to appease his big boss': Sisodia

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /-/- Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia Wednesday slammed LG V K Saxena, alleging he was acting like a "tribal chieftain to appease his big boss" by "interfering" in an elected government's work. Addressing the Delhi Assembly on the third day of its session, Sisodia stressed that the Supreme Court has said the LG or administrator is bound by the aid and advice of the elected government. But let alone aid or advice, the LG was not even consulting the government, he alleged, adding, "This is happening for the first time in the country." "According to Constitution, the decision on local governance has to be taken by states, not the Centre. Delhi LG is not obeying

Constitution or the decision of the Supreme Court's constitution bench," Sisodia alleged. The deputy chief ministers said the Delhi LG was



Manish Sisodia

not a tribal chieftain but was acting like one by not obeying Constitution or Supreme

Court. "Urge Delhi LG to not act like a tribal chieftain to appease his big boss, but to follow Constitution." Sisodia alleged the nomination of aldermen in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi by LG was "unconstitutional" and accused him of changing the proposal of the city government, instead of expressing his opinion on it. "Instead of paying attention to law and order, Delhi Police and land encroachment, the LG is interfering in an elected government's work," he added. On Tuesday, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal used the Hindi proverb "begaani shaadi mein Abdullah deewana" to hit out at LG VK Saxena, questioning his authority with a "he is not my headmaster" jibe. (PTI)

NSUI demands construction of canteen at ITI campus

PORT BLAIR, JAN 18/--/ The State President of National Students' Union of India A&N Islands has requested the Administration for constructing of the college canteen at the ITI Campus, Port Blair. In his letter addressed to the Chief Secretary, Andaman & Nicobar Administration, he said that the students of ITI are covering a long distance from rural areas at morning hours to reach the college campus to facilitate their proper well being health and studies. Whereas with an establishment of the canteen in the college campus might help the students to balance them equivalently.

He stated that most of the ITI students feel that to have a college canteen in the campus as the students get tired and hungry at morning and afternoon hours and it would be an immense help by the College Management in providing canteen facilities to the students commuting from long distances. Furthermore, the President has requested the administration to make proper plans and arrangements in providing food and nourishment facilities inside the College Campus.

Online port clearance system for foreign flag vessels visiting ANI

PORT BLAIR, JAN 18/--/ The Andaman and Nicobar Administration has launched a Web-based Clearance of Foreign Flag Vessel visiting A&N Islands in August 2022. The Port Clearance System (PCS) <https://pcs.andaman.gov.in> provides a platform to all the registered agents to submit their requests online for berthing of the vessels in advance, along with all the required documents of the visiting Foreign Flag Vessel.

The portal developed in line with the Prime Minister's vision for improving the 'Ease of Doing Business' is faceless and fully paperless. The objective of creating this portal is to bring in transparency and efficiency.

The Chief Secretary A&N Administration, Mr. Keshav Chandra immediately on joining the Administration during August 2022, had inaugurated this portal. The last part of the approval in Home Department was being done through e-office since then.

Now, even this part of approval on e-office will not be required. This development will further reduce the time period and make the system more transparent, efficient and accountable.

Thus, the method of obtaining NOC on file has been fully done away with. With this, the request would be approved online and e-NOC with QR would be generated.

The agents and applicants can now download the e-NOC from the portal. A mobile app is also being developed for usage by the Port Users which will provide further convenience to the end users. UT Administration is committed for an accountable and transparent Administration.

Bairagi, Vishal meet Nitin Gadgari

NEW DELHI, JAN 18/--/ Mr. Ajoy Bairagi, State BJP President and Mr. Vishal Jolly, National Executive Member of BJP met Mr. Nitin Gadgari, Minister of Road Transport & Highways of India at New Delhi and discussed about the extremely pathetic condition of NH-4 in North and Middle Andaman District as well as construction of Chatham-Bambooflat Bridge. The local leaders also submitted a representation



Admiral D K Joshi (Retd.), Lt Governor, A&N Islands and Vice-Chairman, Islands Development Agency reviewed the preparations for the forthcoming iconic events to be organized to celebrate 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' with particular emphasis on 126th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on 23rd January, 2023 in A&N Islands.

Admiral D K Joshi (Retd.), Lt Governor, A&N Islands and Vice-Chairman, Islands Development Agency launched the book "Exam Warriors" detailing how to approach exams with a positive mindset & a solid plan, authored by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi at Raj Niwas on Wednesday in the presence of Chief Secretary, Mr. Keshav Chandra, Director General of Police, Mr. Neeraj Thakur and other Senior officials of Andaman & Nicobar Administration, Andaman & Nicobar Police and Andaman & Nicobar Forest.



State level mock disaster management exercise on Feb 9

PORT BLAIR, JAN 18/--/ The A&N Administration in coordination with National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), MHA, GoI, New Delhi will be conducting a State Level Mock Disaster Management Exercise on Earthquake and Tsunami on 9th February, 2023 in the Islands involving all stakeholders including ANC, Coast Guard, NDRF, PRIs,

Schools/Colleges and Media. In this regard, an Orientation & Coordination Conference in VC Mode will be held on Jan. 31 in which all stakeholders/Line Departments at the UT Level, District Level and other relevant stakeholders will participate. This will be followed by Table Top Exercise (TTE) at Port Blair (Physical) on Feb. 7, 2023.

WITH YOU NGO hosts adolescent girls' health & hygiene awareness prog



PORT BLAIR, JAN 18/--/ WITH YOU (NGO) organized an awareness programme on "Adolescents girls health and hygiene" at the conference hall of Pranab Kanya Sangha on 17th January 2023. ON . The programme was aimed to educate and empower young girls on the importance of maintaining good health and hygiene. During the program, Dr.C Rani, Medical Officer (Homeo), CHC, Bambooflat spoke about the importance of daily hygiene and the diseases that can be caused by poor personal hygiene. She also requested the girls to come forward with any questions or doubts they may have about their health. In

addition to the educational program, WITH YOU also distributed free sanitary pads to the inmates of the home. The President of WITH YOU, Ms. V.K MariyamBibi, welcomed the guests and spoke about the purpose of organizing such awareness programs. Smti Malti Mondal, President, PranabKanyaSangh expressed her gratitude to the NGO for organizing such a meaningful program for the adolescent girls. The members of WITH YOU spent quality time with the inmates and are dedicated to continue to educate and empower young girls on the importance of their health and hygiene.

'At Home' function at Police line marks culmination of Police Raising week

PORT BLAIR, JAN 18/--/ The A & N Police is organising a week-long programme from 16th to 23rd January 2023, celebrating Police Raising Week. On 18th January 2023, an "At Home Function" was organized at Police Lines, in which Admiral D K Joshi (Retd.), Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands graced the occasion, along with Hon'ble Justice Subhas Dasgupta & Hon'ble Justice Saugata Bhattacharya (Calcutta High Court Circuit Bench at Port Blair).

Lt. Gen Ajai Singh, AVSM, Commander-in-Chief of A & N Islands, Mr. Keshav Chandra, Chief Secretary, A & N Administration and other dignitaries from A&N Administration, Armed Forces, Member of Electronic & Print media were also present. Mr. Neeraj Thakur, Director General of Police, ANI welcomed all the guests.

The history of A&N Police dates back to the year 1875, when an organized Police force was established in Andaman & Nicobar Islands to deal with crime and criminals. In the year 1924, the Civil Police Force was formed as a separate



branch under the control of a Commandant. After Independence, it on 16th January, 1953 Mr. Naushirwan Feroz Sauntook, the first IPS officer took over the charge of the Superintendent of Police from Mr. M. Macfarland. Since then, this day is celebrated every year as the "Raising Day" of Andaman & Nicobar Police. Lt. Governor greeted the Police

personnel and lauded the effort of the entire police force in making the islands crime free.

He appreciated the work of all the ranks of the A & N Police who were putting day and night for the safety and security of the citizens of A & N Islands. During the occasion, the Brass and Pipe Band of A&N Police played euphonious music.

5 youth from ANI participate in National Youth Festival at Karnataka



PORT BLAIR, JAN 18/--/ The 26th National Youth Festival was held in Hubli, Karnataka from 12th January to 16th January 2023. This program was inaugurated by Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi on 12th January, 2023. The theme of this year's National Youth Festival is "Developed Youth - Developed India". The basic objective is to bring together the youth of the country in an effort to showcase their talents in various activities covering almost all socio-cultural aspects of life, to provide an opportunity to amateur

young artists to express themselves and interact. In this connection, this year a total of 5 youths from Nehru Yuva Kendra, Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands have participated in the National Youth Festival, namely Miss S. Varsha, Shri S. Raj Shree, Shri B. Madesh participated as trainers of Yoga and Medicine while Shri Y Sai Kiran and Shri B. Jagdish Kumar Participated in photography contest and sculpture contest under Young Artist Competition and Shri Y Sai Kiran secured second position at National level in Photography contest.

Sailing for MV Bharat Seema preponed

PORT BLAIR, JAN 18/--/ Due to Administrative reasons, the promulgated sailing programme of MV Bharat Seema from Port Blair to Car Nicobar via Little Andaman on 21st January 2023, has been preponed.

Now the vessel will sail for Car Nicobar via Little Andaman on 20th January 2023 (Fri) at 0700 Hrs from Haddo Wharf and will sail for Port Blair on 21st January 2023 (Sat) at 1600 Hrs from Car Nicobar via Little Andaman. Passenger tickets for the sailing will be issued to the general public from 19.01.2023 onwards at STARS Ticketing Counters.

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When the politicians complain that TV turns the proceedings into a circus, it should be made clear that the circus was already there, and that TV has merely demonstrated that not all the performers are well trained

Edward R. Murro

Union Budget 2023-24: Will subsidies stay?

The government may cut fertiliser subsidy to lower budget deficit after having already spent more than Rs.2.2 trillion on fertiliser subsidies this fiscal given the fact that India imports about a third of its fertiliser requirements from other countries. Speculation is rife that the fertiliser subsidy bill could be slashed to Rs 1-1.5 trillion for the 2023-24 fiscal year starting April. Officials expect fertiliser costs to come down globally and domestic production to increase. This move will help India cut its budget deficit. After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, food and energy prices have been soaring. On food, fertiliser, and fuel, the government has already spent 70 per cent more than it had allocated in the last budget. Experts say that if the government spends less on subsidisingfertilisers in the upcoming budget, it could lead to higher inflation. If the government cuts subsidies, which is a reimbursement to companies for selling fertilisers at below-market prices, farmers will have to bear higher costs. It would lead to higher inflation. It was previously reported that fertiliser subsidy will rise to Rs 2.3-2.5 lakh crore in this fiscal but the bill may fall by 25 per cent in the 2023-24 financial year with moderation in global prices. This estimate was according to the Fertilisers Association of India (FAI), which had expressed concern that the fixed cost of urea has not been increased, thereby affecting the viability of urea plants. FAI said that the fertiliser industry is running on a very thin margin, which is hampering new investments in this sector.

Food and fertiliser subsidies alone account for about one-eighth of India's total budget spending of Rs 39.45 lakh crore this fiscal year, but reductions in food subsidies in particular may prove politically sensitive with elections looming on the horizon. Reports say the government aims at cutting spending on food and fertiliser subsidies to Rs 3.7 lakh crore (\$44.6 billion) in the fiscal year from April, down 26% from this year to rein in a fiscal deficit that ballooned during the COVID-19 pandemic. The government expects to peg around Rs 2.3 lakh crore for food subsidies in the coming fiscal year, compared with Rs 2.7 lakh crore for the current year to March 31. Spending on fertiliser subsidies will likely fall to about Rs 1.4 lakh crore, according to an unconfirmed report which the finance ministry has declined to comment upon, while the food and fertiliser ministries have maintained a studied silence.

A large part of the savings will come from the end of a COVID 19-era free food scheme, which will be replaced with a lower-spending programme. In other words, it will effectively reduce by half the free rations available to the poor in a year. The free food programme was implemented at the peak of the pandemic, to ensure food security to the vulnerable population. In December 2022, the government discontinued the free food programme and instead decided to provide free foodgrains under the existing public distribution system. This is likely to reduce the food subsidy to 0.8 per cent of GDP. Further, global commodity prices which rose sharply in 2022 on the back of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, have since normalised and the outgo on fertiliser subsidy is likely to decline in FY24.

A new Third Front emerges in Tripura

REFLEX ACTION

Ashis Biswas

In Tripura, on the eve of the state assembly polls next month, a fresh development has taken place giving some relief to the ruling BJP which has been struggling to get the support of the tribals to retain power.

The CPI(M) , following its State Committee meeting attended by senior politburo leaders, set the ball rolling , signalling its intent to align with Congress and the tribal Tipra Motha (TM) in the fight against the BJP. General Secretary Mr Sitaram Yechury, meeting newsmen recently along with senior state party leader Mr Jiten Choudhury, strongly emphasized that the first priority for the opposition going into the 2023 polls must be to ensure the defeat of the BJP.

On the other hand, while BJP leaders took their time in assessing the implications of the Left proposal for a joint Front with Congress, a smaller local outfit, the Peoples’ Congress (PC) announced the formation of a new front with Trinamool Congress and tribal party Tipra Motha (TM) as partners. This is virtually a direct challenge to the proposed Left-Congress alliance to challenge the ruling BJP. The PC welcomed other forces opposed to the BJP but avoided mentioning the Congress and the CPI(M) making it clear that they had chosen to go separate ways in the battle against the BJP.

Judging by the speed of the new proposal from a small local party, to set up a new pre-poll formation with the TMC in it, there was a general impression that apparently some opposition forces were keener to assert their own political presence rather than exploring he possibility of a loose alliance of sorts with Congress and the CPI(M) to avoid an anti-BJP vote split. A keen fight for power is on the cards in Tripura. It goes without saying that an opposition

divided into two distinct camps, presenting their own separate narratives in their respective campaigns, could only help, not hinder, the BJP’s cause.

Mr Sitaram Yechury made it clear at his recent meet that Left and democratic forces must come together to fight the BJP not merely to win the elections. The greater fight was to strengthen the foundations of democracy, protect the basic rights of the people achieved after many years of struggles. During the BJP’s tenure at the centre and in different states, India’s Constitution and time-honoured political norms had been grossly violated. The economic sufferings of the common people all over India had increased phenomenally because of the BJP’s anti people policies, the CPI(M) general secretary underlined.

To avoid possible controversies , Mr Yechury parried specific questions as to whether the CPIM which had won 16 out of 60 seats in 2018 assembly polls as it lost in Tripura after many years, would support a tribal candidate as the next Chief Minister; in the event of a BJP defeat. It was no different when he was pressed to explain the political outlook, and objectives behind the alignment with Congress, etc. Nor did he clarify whether former Chief Minister Mr Manik Sarkar would contest this year’s polls. At one point he appealed to Mr Choudhury to reply to newsmen when the queries from mediapersons referred to local issues. Sources suggest that while a proposal had now been formally made to the TM and



People practice taekwondo on a beach of the Mediterranean Sea in southern Gaza Strip city of Khan Younis

Madhya Pradesh assured of massive investment at the Global Summit

Madhya Pradesh has been assured massive investment both by foreign and domestic investors in the course of two day Global Investment summit (GIS) held at Indore. Leading business houses of the country and also from abroad. The sectors that were assured investment include chemicals and petroleum (Rs. 77,000 crore), service sector (Rs. 71,000 crore), Auto, engineering and e-vehicles (Rs. 42,000 crore) Pharma and healthcare (Rs. 18,000 crore), Logistics and warehousing (Rs. 18,000 crore) and others (Rs. 1.25 lakh crore).

The state Government has prepared elaborate plan to expand state’s \$ 150 billion economy to \$ 550 billion economy by 2026 in a bid to align growth with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s target of \$5 trillion economy for India. Madhya Pradesh will be strongly pushing for economic diversification while creating jobs, adding value to agriculture and food processing, semi-conductors and ESDM and boosting bio-economy, besides focusing on skill development and logistical upgrade.

The work has already started with identification of key sectors for economic transformation of Madhya Pradesh based on recommendations of various expert reports, participants of sessions on “Madhya Pradesh’s contribution to the \$ 5 trillion economy’ were informed on the sidelines of GIS 2023, Madhya Pradesh State policy and Planning Commission vice-chairman Sachin Chaturvedi outlined four major areas of execution

for transformation and said agriculture and allied products have a hugeshare in the state’s GDP. He said the need as to ensure value addition to the sector by developing an ecosystem, enhance skills and connectivity.

He said 455 trains pass through Madhya Pradesh giving a huge fillip to transportation. Chaturvedi spoke about the need for technology integration and said under an RBI plan, efforts are being made for financial inclusion at the district level. He stressed on the need for statistical upgrade of the state and lauded the formation of Madhya Pradesh State Statistical Commission. The focus should also be placed on developing a bio economy.

“It is seen that Rs. 5 will show 550% increase to Rs. 5500 when invested in bio economy”. Chaturvedi said State Planning Commission member secretary Swantata Kumar Singh gave details of the roadmap prepared and focus areas.

There are many factors which held up industrialisation of the state. Among them high cost of logistics, being a landlocked state there is need for providing freight subsidy. The high cost of logistics involved in transportation of goods from manufacturing unit to destination makes the product out

priced in the global market said industrialists on sidelines of Global Investors Summit. Flexituff Group promoter Saurabh Kalani said “We are poised correctly for a good growth given a chance. There is a lot of potential provided we got better connectivity and improved logistics. Being a landlocked state, the logistic costs becomes much higher than other states and this makes us out priced in the market”.

Industry players said transport subsidies to exporters will level playing field for everyone. An international buyer from Malaysia, Taizoon Hyder Tyebkhan said, “I am into hardware business. I came to attend the summit to meet suppliers of some hardware parts but unfortunately could not get any deals locked because of the price factor. Prices of products are very high in MP and do not suit my requirement”. Tyebkhan said in comparison to other countries the cost quoted by Indian businessmen is about 5-10 per cent higher.

Industry players stressed on bridging the infrastructure and logistics gap to give a fillip to domestic manufacturing and exports.

Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) additional secretary Santosh Sarangi said “MP needs to

address the infrastructure and logistics gap. There are some key export clusters where the transportation facilities, connectivity issues still exist and those need to addressed”.

Addressing difficulties pointed out by participants of investors summit Chief Minister Shiv Raj Singh Chouhan assured that they will not have to take any permission to start operations in Madhya Pradesh and they will not be inspected for compliance of deemed permission for three years.

MP, a predominantly agricultural state, is keen to position itself as an industrial destination, leveraging its advantages of location, low land prices and abundance of water, power and human resources. “My government is committed to ensuring ease of starting business and ease of doing business. For this, we have made a big decision. Industrialists will not have to take any permission for starting an industry in areas earmarked and notified by us, whether it is industrial areas or MSME” Chouhan said.

“Investors have complained about running around for clearance for several days. No permission needed. Start your work. You have to trust the investors. They will not run away with the land. Follow the rules. We have complete faith in you” Chouhan assured.

“No officer will carry out inspection of industries for compliance of deemed permissions for three years. You must understand my intentions. We have full faith in you” he added. (IPA)

Congress to join the Left and democratic forces, no discussions had been held yet even at the informal level. TipraMotha is placed advantageously for bargaining with the national parties. The PC-TMC combination is offering TM leader Pradyot Manikya Debbarman chief minister's position in case the BJP is defeated in the polls.

The TM it may be recalled had expressed its reservations about the possible alignment between the Left and the Congress. TM leaders doubted whether Congress supporters, many of whom had a very hard time during the long Left rule, would rally in large numbers to support the Left, forgetting the past.

As for the BJP, it reacted strongly to the proposal for a left-Congress joint Front. Senior leaders said it would be hard for common people to accept what would obviously be an opportunistic alliance between the Left and Congress. There had been too much violence and bitter history between the two parties. The sole reason for their understanding would be their desire to win power anyhow, caring for nothing else. ‘If the CPI(M) had won 16 seats in 2018, this year they would win 0’, said state BJP leaders.

The BJP stepped up its campaign, with prominent actor Mithun Chakravarty addressing rallies in his characteristic flamboyant style. He attacked the Left for its inability to alleviate the peoples' sufferings during its long but barren tenure. At the organizational level, BJP sources say that till now, not much progress in their informal talks with TM, but the local leaders including the central leaders are trying and Home Minister Amit Shah has given strict directive that all steps have to be taken to ensure that the TM does not join the Left proposed alliance. Now the ball is in TM’s court. (IPA)

Conventional Crossword													
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ACROSS

1 Reduced intensity
4 Female bird
7 Nimble
8 Exerted influence
11 Uncooked
12 Heavy substance
13 Prayer ending
15 Finished
16 Tumbles
20 Skin eruption
23 Close up
24 Cricket score
25 Assert without proof
26 Sacrificial table
27 Acceptance
28 Autocrat

DOWN

1 Like a weak old woman
2 Merchants
3 Facts given
4 Employ
5 Dash
6 Fresh
9 The human race
10 Cushion
14 Rubella
17 Sheltered side
18 Convict
19 Frozen shower
20 Govern
21 Insects
22 Difficult to do
24 Narrow beam

SUDOKU:3760

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Yesterday's Solution3759

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Yesterday's Cross Word Solution1768

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DISCLAIMER

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IIT Delhi student killed, another injured after being hit by car

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /--/ A 30-year-old IIT Delhi student was killed and his friend was injured after they



were allegedly hit by a car here, police said on Wednesday.

Ashraf Nawaz Khan and Ankur Shukla (29) went to a restaurant on Tuesday night and were crossing the road after having dinner when a car hit both of them, said a senior police officer. Khan died during treatment at the Safdarjung hospital while Shukla is admitted to the Max hospital in Saket with a fractured leg, he said. Both of them were doing their PH.D from IIT Delhi, police said. The car, which hit the two, was found abandoned at some distance. The driver of the car has been identified, police said. (PTI)

Cybercrime cases in Mumbai rise by more than 63 per cent in 2022 compared to 2021: Police

MUMBAI, JAN 18 /--/ Registration of cyber offences, including online frauds under the pretext of offering jobs, gifts etc. and payment of electricity bills, rose by 63.7 per cent to 4,718 in 2022 compared to 2,883 cases in 2021, according to the Mumbai Crime Report.

However, the detection of cases remains poor. The cybercrime cases in 2022 rose by 112 per cent compared to 2,225 cases registered during the pre-Covid period in 2019. As far as detection is concerned for the 2019-2022 period, 1,292 cases were solved, including 346 in 2022, out of the 12,261 registered cases, the report said. Post the Covid pandemic, crimes such as part-time job fraud, cheating in the name of crypto currency investment, insurance fraud, sextortion, and electricity bill fraud have risen, as per the report released on Tuesday. In 2022, a total of 2,170 cheating cases, including frauds like customs, gift, purchase, job, insurance, etc, were registered. Of these cases, 92 crimes were solved. In 2021, 1,154 such cases were registered and 140 detected, it said.

Cases like putting up fake social media profiles and morphing emails or SMSes rose to 400 in 2022 compared to 118 in 2021. A total of 1,318 cases of credit and debit card fraud were reported in 2022 as against 1,075 in 2021.

Other cyber-crimes include phishing or spoofing of mail, electricity bill fraud, hacking, pornography, data theft, sextortion, communal posts etc. (PTI)

Delhi court grants bail to Kamal Nath's nephew Ratul Puri in fertiliser scam

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /--/ A Delhi court on Wednesday granted bail to Ratul Puri, nephew of former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath, in a money laundering case linked to an alleged fertiliser scam for which Rs 685 crore was claimed to have been paid as kickback.

Special Judge Vikas Dhull granted the relief to Puri after he appeared before the court pursuant to summons issued against him. The court had issued summons against Puri on December 23 while taking cognizance of a supplementary charge sheet in the case. During the hearing on Wednesday, the judge noted that Puri was not arrested during the investigation and said no purpose will be served by sending him to custody at this stage. Puri's bail plea was opposed by ED's Special Public Prosecutor Nitesh Rana, who claimed if granted the relief, the accused may flee from justice. Rana said Puri may also influence the witnesses and tamper evidence. While issuing the summons to Puri, the judge had said prima facie there was enough evidence to prosecute him. Puri is also an accused in cases related to the Augusta Westland chopper scam and Moser Baer scam. He is currently out on bail.

According to the ED, the fertiliser scam case, which also involves RJD Rajya Sabha MP Amarendra Dhari Singh andIFFCO Managing Director and CEO U S Awasthi, relates to illegal commissions worth over Rs 685 crore allegedly paid to the NRI sons of Awasthi and Indian Potash Ltd (IPL) Managing Director P S Gahlaut, and some others by overseas suppliers during 2007-14. Indian Farmers Fertiliser Co-operative Limited (IFFCO) is a multi-state farmers' cooperative, while IPL is its company involved in supplying fertilisers for which the government provides subsidies to keep the rates affordable, the ED said. It alleged Awasthi and others inIFFCO generated proceeds of crime and layered it through various unrelated entities, and part of that was transferred to the entities controlled by Awasthi and others. (PTI)

Pandemic policy must be defining part of India's health policy: Bharati Pawar

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /--/ The pandemic policy must be a defining part of our health policy as any health crisis today leads to an economic crisis due to the multisectoral nature of our inter-connected world, Minister Of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar said on Wednesday.

In her address to the 1st Health Working Group meeting under G20 India presidency, Pawar noted that pandemic prevention, preparedness and response require diverse multi-sectoral, multi-agency coordinate efforts. A health ministry statement said Pawar emphasized on the need for strengthening and empowering communities to become resilient to future health emergencies. "COVID-19 will not be the last pandemic. The learnings must form the agenda for our preparedness and response together. We need to diversify our capabilities and ensure that collectively, we preserve ourselves in the face of any health crisis," Pawar said. She also underscored the importance of building resilient health systems and investing in lifesaving vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics, the statement said.

Union minister of state for external affairs S V Muralaeddharan and Dr V K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, were also present on the occasion. Highlighting India's strong culture of medical practices and innovation, Muralaeddharan noted that the prime minister's clarion call for "One Earth, One Family, One Future" is pro-planet approach, one that is in harmony with nature for an increasingly globalized world. He also emphasized upon the delegates the "need to align our agenda for preparedness and response together to be able to effectively meet any health emergencies". We should be prepared to collectively meet any health challenges in the future, he stated. (PTI)

CBI books Navy personnel among 31 for income tax fraud in Kerala

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /--/ The CBI has booked 31 people based in Kerala, including 18 Navy personnel, for allegedly claiming income tax refunds worth over Rs 44 lakh by making false claims of various deductions which were not included in Form-16, officials said on Wednesday.

The CBI has booked personnel of Navy and police, and executives of two private companies - an IT major and a life insurance provider - for allegedly using services of agents to make the fake claims, they said. The central probe agency has alleged that the agents were charging 10 per cent of the Income Tax refund as fee, they said. The CBI action came on a complaint from the principal chief income tax commissioner of Kerala, who alleged that a total of 51 people had made the false claims. "Out of these 51 assesseees, 20 individual assesseees, who had falsely claimed and received refund of income tax, repaid the refunded amount totalling Rs 24.62 lakh to the Income Tax Department, after a notice was issued to them by the IT Department, admitting that they had committed mistake in claiming the income tax refund," the FIR alleged. The CBI has alleged that the remaining 31 people booked in the FIR have yet not returned the falsely claimed income tax refund totalling Rs 44.07 lakh to the income tax department. (PTI)

associate said. Her father is the owner of Sanghvi and Sons, a nearly three-decade old diamond polishing and export firm in Surat. The minor girl's 'diksha' -- or vow of renunciation -- marks her initiation into the ascetic life. The ceremony began last Saturday. She will now shun all the material comforts and luxury, which her family of diamond merchants could have provided her. Devanshi was inclined towards spiritual life

Yamuna pollution: Delhi aims to treat entire sewage generated in city by December

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /--/ Delhi aims to treat all sewage generated in the capital as per the prescribed standards by December which will help reduce the pollution load in the Yamuna river, the Delhi government's environment department has informed Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena.

At a meeting last week, officials informed the LG that the sewage treatment plants (STPs) in the capital will be able to treat around 814 million gallons of wastewater per day (MGD) by December. Saxena had called the meeting to take stock of the ground situation before the first meeting of a new high-level committee appointed by the National Green Tribunal for the cleaning of the Yamuna. The green tribunal had requested the Delhi LG to head the committee. The environment department gave a presentation, informing the LG that Delhi generates 768 million gallons a day (MGD) of sewage. The 35 STPs in the capital have a cumulative treatment capacity of 632 MGD. At present, these STPs are utilising only 69 percent of their installed capacity, i.e. only 530 MGD of the 768 MGD sewage is being treated. The official said only



160.5 MGD of the treated wastewater meets the prescribed standards, i.e. BOD (biological oxygen demand) and TSS (total soluble solids) in the treated wastewater should be less than 10 milligram per litre.

BOD, an important parameter for assessing water quality, is the amount of oxygen required by aerobic microorganisms to decompose organic material present in a water body. BOD levels less than 3 milligram per litre is

considered good. The officials said Delhi's sewage treatment capacity will increase to 727 MGD by June and 814 MGD by December this year. The treatment capacity will be further increased to 935 MGD by June, 2024 to accommodate the future increase in sewage generation.

An official said that the upgradation of 18 existing STPs will increase the cumulative treatment capacity by 93.2 MGD and the rehabilitation of three

existing STPs will add another 70 MGD. The construction of three STPs in Okhla, Delhi Gate and Sonia Vihar will lead to an increase of 47 MGD in the treatment capacity and 40 decentralised sewage treatment plants will be able to treat another 92 MGD. Thus, the installed treatment capacity will increase from the existing 632 MGD to 934.5 MGD by June 2024, the official said.

The 22-km stretch of the river between Wazirabad and Okhla in Delhi, which is less than two percent of the river length, accounts for around 80 per cent of its pollution load. Untapped wastewater from unauthorised colonies and slum clusters, and poor quality of treated wastewater discharged from sewage treatment plants (STPs) and common effluent treatment plants (CETPs) is the main reason behind high levels of pollution in the river. The Delhi government has promised to clean the Yamuna to bathing standards by February 2025. The river can be considered fit for bathing if BOD is less than three milligram per litre and dissolved oxygen (DO) is greater than five milligram per litre. (PTI)

Delhi HC issues summons to Ashneer Grover on BharatPe's co-founder's plea reclaiming shares

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /--/ The Delhi High Court Wednesday issued summons to payment app BharatPe's former MD Ashneer Grover on a suit by the company's co-founder seeking to reclaim the shares he transferred to his erstwhile colleague. Justice Prateek Jalan noted Grover's counsel's submission that he will file a reply to the suit and not create any third party rights to the 16,110 shares in question. "Defendant no. 1 (Grover) is bound under to this statement and is directed to file an undertaking in this



regard within a week from today. Reply to the application be filed in four weeks and rejoiner in two weeks thereafter," the high court said. It listed the suit for further hearing on March 16. The high court was hearing a suit filed by BharatPe co-founder Bhavik Koladiya which stated that he had sold to Grover his 1,600 shares whose total value was around Rs 88 lakh but no money was paid to him. He said the shares have now gone up to over 16,000 and the title need not pass to Grover. Koladiya said he was asking for his goods which he had given to be returned. Koladiya, in an application, sought an interim injunction restraining Grover from creating any third party rights in the shares which are subject matter of the suit. However, Grover's counsel alleged that the documents shown to the court were false and fabricated and that his wife had paid Rs 8 crore to Koladiya's wife.

As the court asked why Koladiya gave away his shares, senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Koladiya, said he is a gullible person. In June last year, Koladiya, who ran the fintech firm's technology and product divisions, had stepped down. Koladiya and Shashvat Nakrani founded BharatPe in July 2017, although the firm was not incorporated till March 2018.

Grover had joined the company in June 2018 and resigned in March 2022. Last year, the court had issued summonses to Ashneer Grover, his wife and other defendants on another suit filed by the fintech firm, BharatPe, which has accused the couple of misappropriating funds. Grover had resigned from the company in while his wife was removed from her post. In the suit, besides seeking to restrain the defendants from making defamatory statements, the company has also sought direction for payment of over Rs 88.67 crore along with interest towards recovery of alleged misappropriated funds and damages caused to the reputation of the firm. (PTI)

TN Guv says he referred to State as 'Tamizhagam' in historical, cultural context

CHENNAI, JAN 18 /--/ Governor R N Ravi on Wednesday asserted that he referred to the State as 'Tamizhagam' in historical and cultural context and construing it as a suggestion to change the name of Tamil Nadu is 'erroneous' and 'far-fetched'.

In an event at the Raj Bhavan on January 4, 2023 to felicitate the volunteers of Kashi Tamil Sangamam, while dwelling upon the historical cultural connect between the two places, Ravi said he referred to the word 'Tamizhagam'. "In those days, there was no 'Tamil Nadu'. Hence in historical cultural context, I referred to the

word 'Tamizhagam' as a more appropriate expression," Ravi said in a press note issued by Raj Bhavan. "An interpretation or inference that it was a suggestion to change the name of the Tamil Nadu is erroneous and far-fetched. Without understanding the basis of my speech, arguments that the Governor is against the word 'Tamil Nadu' have become a topic of discussion. Hence, I am giving this clarification to put an end to it." The event, a month long festival celebrating the age old cultural connect of Tamil people with Kashi, concluded recently (PTI)

Notwithstanding protests, J&K admin launches drive against encroachments on state land

SRINAGAR, JAN 18 /--/ The Jammu and Kashmir authorities on Wednesday started a drive to evict encroachers from state land in Baramulla district, even as public notices were issued to violators in other districts of the Valley to remove illegal constructions within seven days, officials said.

"The drive is going on in Baramulla district and we have recovered more than 12 hectares of state land or 'kacharai' (common) land from illegal possession," Deputy Commissioner, Baramulla, Syed Sehrish Asgar said. He said the district administration had adopted a unique approach to ensure that these tracts of recovered land are not encroached again. "We have taken teams from various departments along in this drive. The recovered land is handed over to agriculture,

sericulture or any other department as per feasibility so that these lands are not encroached again. Wherever playing fields are needed, we are providing land for that as well," the official added. The authorities also issued notices in other districts of the Valley, directing the encroachers to vacate the state land within seven days or face action.

Political parties like the National Conference, PDP, Peoples Conference and others have criticised the move, saying the occupants are generally poor people who constructed their dwellings on these state land. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) also held a protest against the drive in Srinagar on Wednesday. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq-led Hurriyat Conference also expressed concern over the anti-

encroachment drive, saying the step will disempower people in the Union territory.

"Hurriyat Conference expresses great anguish at the administration's move to scrap Jammu and Kashmir land laws and revoke the rights of local communities to cultivate state, community and evacuee land in order to facilitate the creation of private land banks and hand them over to outsiders to set up industries in Jammu and Kashmir," it said in a statement.

"All these are attempts to accelerate and facilitate the settlement of outsiders in Jammu and Kashmir in order to bring about demographic change in the composition of the region, while keeping the locals entangled in fighting for basic sustenance....," it added. (PTI)

Cold wave intensifies in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, JAN 18 /--/ Cold wave conditions in Kashmir intensified as the minimum temperature plunged further below the freezing point across the valley owing to clear skies even as the Meteorological Department has forecast rains and snow from Thursday, officials said.

Srinagar recorded a low of minus 4.3 degrees Celsius on Tuesday night -- down from minus 2.7 degrees Celsius the night before, they said. The minimum temperature was 2 degree below normal. Qazigund, the gateway to the Valley, registered a minimum of minus 7.4 degrees Celsius, 4.1 degrees below normal. Kokernag in south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 6.2 degrees Celsius, while the minimum in Kupwara, a frontier district, settled at minus 6.2 degrees Celsius, nearly 8 degrees below normal, the officials said. Pahalgam in Anantnag district, which also serves as a base camp for the annual Amarnath Yatra, registered a low of minus 11.7 degrees Celsius, almost same as previous night. The minimum temperature at the famous ski-resort of Gulmarg in

Baramulla district also stayed around the previous night's minus 11.5 degrees Celsius. The meteorological office said the weather will remain mainly dry across J-K till January 18. There will be a further decrease in the night temperature till that time. It said, a few western disturbances are likely to affect J-K from January 19 to 25. The weather will remain cloudy from January 19-21 with chances of light rain or snow over isolated to scattered places mainly over higher reaches. However, it said a much higher intensity precipitation will occur from the night of January 22 to the forenoon of January 24 and there is a possibility of widespread moderate snow in plains of Kashmir (with rains in Jammu) and moderate to heavy snow over middle and higher reaches.

Kashmir is currently under the grip of 'Chillai Kalan', the 40-day harshest weather period when the chances of snowfall are maximum and most frequent. Chillai Kalan begins on December 21 and ends on January 30. The cold wave continues even after that with a 20-day-long 'Chillai Khurd' and a 10-day-long 'Chillai Bachha' following it. (PTI)

Nine-year-old daughter of Gujarat diamond merchant embraces monkhood

SURAT, JAN 18 /--/ A nine-year-old daughter of a wealthy diamond merchant embraced monkhood in Gujarat on Wednesday, renouncing material comforts.

Devanshi, the eldest of the two daughters of Dhanesh and Ami Sanghvi, took 'diksha' in the presence of Jain monk Acharya Vijay Kirti yashsuri and hundreds of other people at a venue in Vesu locality of Surat, a family

associate said. Her father is the owner of Sanghvi and Sons, a nearly three-decade old diamond polishing and export firm in Surat. The minor girl's 'diksha' -- or vow of renunciation -- marks her initiation into the ascetic life. The ceremony began last Saturday. She will now shun all the material comforts and luxury, which her family of diamond merchants could have provided her. Devanshi was inclined towards spiritual life

since a very young age and had even walked about 700 km with other monks and embraced their life before formally being initiated into monkhood, family friend Nirav Shah said.

She knows five languages and also has other skills, he said. "Today, she was given 'diksha' at a function. The Sanghvis have two daughters -- Devanshi is the elder one and she has a four-year-old sister," he said. "Devanshi showed

religious inclination since she was a toddler. She has followed the ascetic life since a very young age," he said.

On Tuesday, a day before Devanshi took 'diksha', a religious procession was taken out with fanfare in the city, Shah said.

A similar procession was also taken out in Belgium, he added. Several diamond traders from the Jain community have close business links with Belgium. (PTI)

Will make guidelines on "living will" more workable, no review: SC

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /--/ The Supreme Court said on Wednesday it will not review its 2018 judgement on passive euthanasia and only make the guidelines on "living will", an advance medical directive on end of life treatment, more workable.

The apex court's 2018 order on passive euthanasia wherein it recognised the right to die with dignity as a fundamental right and an aspect of Article 21 (right to life) notwithstanding, people wanting to get a "living will" registered have been facing problems due to cumbersome guidelines. A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Justice K M Joseph said during Wednesday's hearing a clarification by the court should not lead to more confusion. "We will simply make it a little bit more workable, we can't be reviewing it. We kept the matter in open court. There is nothing to be reserved. We cannot be reopening the whole thing," the bench, also comprising Justices Ajay Rastogi, Aniruddha Bose, Hrishikesh Roy and Justice C T Ravikumar said.

Additional Solicitor General K M Nataraj contended the present proceedings fall within a very narrow compass. "Everything has already been laid down. Whatever are the practical difficulties that vacuum has to be filled in," Ravikumar said. Senior advocate Arvind P Datar, appearing for The Indian Society for Critical Care, told the court that he has submitted a chart elaborating the areas which are unworkable. He said suggestions put forth have been discussed with doctors and there is a complete report of the Indian Council of Medical Research. The hearing remained inconclusive and will resume on Thursday. (PTI)

Mamata hits out at BJP in poll-bound Meghalaya, dubs it as 'double-faced'



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee trying her hands on a traditional musical instrument of Meghalaya in the sudelines of her rally in the poll-bound state —UB Photo

SHILLONG, JAN 18 /--/ West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday hit out at the BJP, dubbing the saffron party as "double-faced", which says something at the time of elections and does something else after polls. Addressing a public meeting in North Garo Hills district in poll-bound Meghalaya, Mamata asserted that her Trinamool Congress is the only party that can provide better governance in the North-Eastern state, as it fulfils the dreams of people. "BJP is double-faced, it says something during elections and does something else after that. The BJP government at the Centre only gives money to states ruled by the saffron party," she said, urging people to vote for the TMC. Assembly polls will be held in Meghalaya on February 27, the Election Commission announced on Wednesday. "What has this (National People's Party-led) government done in the past five years in the state?

We challenge them to show the report card of their performance... Why is it that after so many years electricity hasn't reached homes in Meghalaya? Why is the younger generation not getting employment opportunities?" "If you want to change this corrupt and proxy BJP government, then TMC is the only credible alternative. Our party can provide better governance, as it fulfils the dreams of the youth, women, students and farmers. We want a government for the people, by the people and of the people in Meghalaya," the chief minister told the

gathering of around 50,000 people. TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, who accompanied the party supremo, alleged that education, healthcare, roads and infrastructure are all in shambles in the North-Eastern state. "People of Meghalaya have been



"What has this (National People's Party-led) government done in the past five years in the state? We challenge them to show the report card of their performance... Why is it that after so many years electricity hasn't reached homes in Meghalaya? Why is the younger generation not getting employment opportunities?" "If you want to change this corrupt and proxy BJP government, then TMC is the only credible alternative —Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee

misled and let down," Banerjee claimed. The TMC has been trying to strengthen its foothold in Meghalaya along with Assam and Tripura in the region. In November 2021, 12 out of the 17 MLAs of the Congress in Meghalaya had joined the TMC, making it the principal Opposition party in the 60-member Assembly. During her December visit, Banerjee had launched a financial assistance scheme for women in Meghalaya, which has recorded over 3.14 lakh registrations so far, the TMC had said in a statement. (PTI)

Tripura goes to polls on Feb 16, Nagaland, Meghalaya on Feb 27

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /--/ Assembly polls will be held in Tripura on February 16, followed by Nagaland and Meghalaya on February 27, with the counting of votes scheduled for March 2, the Election Commission (EC) announced on Wednesday.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar's announcement at a press conference here marked the official start of the first round of Assembly polls in the new year, in which nine states are headed for elections, deemed crucial in the run-up to the all-important Lok Sabha contest in 2024. The three poll-bound northeastern states may be small in terms of their electoral size but hold larger political significance. While the BJP is pulling out all the stops to retain power in Tripura and expand its footprints in the two other states, the Congress and the Left are trying to recapture their lost influence. The Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress (TMC) is also making a determined bid to prove its clout outside West Bengal by contesting these polls. The three state assemblies have a strength of 60 members each. While the term of the Nagaland Assembly ends on March 12, the terms of the Meghalaya and Tripura assemblies end on March 15 and March 22 respectively. Kumar said the EC has decided to wrap up the polls in February, taking into account the examinations scheduled in March. With Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati recently questioning the integrity of electronic voting machines (EVMs), the CEC noted that many political parties that had earlier expressed doubts over the machines had won elections through the same process. While Tripura has a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) is in power in Nagaland. The National People's Party (NPP), the only political party from the North-East that has the recognition of a national party, runs the government in Meghalaya. The Congress and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) are expected to join hands to take on the BJP in Tripura, where the Left ruled for 25 years while the Congress was its main rival, before the saffron wave swept aside both in the 2018 polls. The Congress had long been a dominant player in the North-East, before the BJP's rise to power at the Centre gradually relegated it to a pale shadow of itself. While the BJP is the junior partner in the governments in Nagaland and Meghalaya, it has been on an overdrive to strengthen its presence in these states. BJP president J P Nadda, in his recent address at the saffron party's national executive, called upon its members to ensure the victory of the party in all the nine state Assembly polls scheduled for this year. He noted that the year is crucial in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. (PTI)



The Election Commission of India (ECI) panel during the press conference on upcoming elections in Nagaland, Meghalaya and Tripura at Akashwani Bhawan in New Delhi, on Wednesday

Treating sports as extracurricular activity caused huge loss to country: PM

BASTI, JAN 18 /--/ Treating sports merely as an extracurricular activity had caused a huge loss to the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Wednesday while inaugurating a sports event where he also urged athletes to include millets in their diets. The pitch for the coarse grain comes as the world marks 2023 as the International Year of Millets. The Prime Minister said that at one time sport was considered as a means of passing time and so the mentality that games are not important took root, as a result a lot of talents kept away from the playgrounds. But this mentality is changing now, he said. The Prime Minister also advised sportspersons to include yoga in their daily life to stay fit. "Every sportsperson knows how important it is for him to remain fit, and 'Fit India Movement' has its role in this. For fitness, all should include yoga in their lives...it will make them healthy and also help keep the mind alert," the Prime Minister said after virtually inaugurating the second phase of 'Saansad Khel Mahakumbh 2022-23' in Basti.

The first phase of the competition was organised from December 10 to 16, 2022 and the second phase which began on Wednesday will continue till January 28. Underlining the importance of millets popularly called 'mota anaj' (coarse grain), the PM said that "nutritious diet is also important for players, and millets can play an important role in this. On India's request, 2023 has been declared as the International Year of Millets". Prime Minister Modi, who also watched the first event of the competition 'kho-kho', said the talents participating here exist in all parts of the country and such an event helps find out them. The PM

regretted that at one time sports were considered as an extracurricular activity, and this caused a huge loss to the country. "There was a time when sports used to be considered as an extracurricular activity. They were considered only a means of passing time. The children were also told the same. Due to this, generation after generation, a mindset developed in the society that sports are not so important. This mentality has caused a huge loss to the country," he said. "We gave the best ever performance in the Olympics. Best ever performance in the Paralympics. India's better performance in different sports is now becoming a topic of discussion. This is just the beginning. We still have a long way to go," he said. "This 'Khel Mahakumbh' will give new opportunities to young players. I am told that about 200 MPs in India have organized similar sports events in their respective places in which thousands of youths have participated," he said, adding that in his parliamentary constituency Varanasi also, such events have started. The Prime



Minister also lauded girls performing well in the sports and made a mention of the spectacular showing of Shefali Verma in women's Under-19 T-20 hitting 26 runs in an over with five fours and one six. Stressing that the government was encouraging sportspersons at all levels, the PM said "the government is also providing financial assistance to the players. At present, there are more than 2,500 athletes in the country who are being given more than Rs 50,000 every month under the 'Khelo India' campaign". (PTI)

'KHELO INDIA YOUTH GAMES': MOCKERY OF SPORTS

From page-1

The new report in the official media was published just as an eyewash. A total of 21 athletics have been selected for participation in the sports championship from the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Candidates for Cycling, Canoeing, Kayaking and Rowing have already been selected owing to their training which they received in the islands itself. However, for sports like Badminton, Table Tennis, Athletics, Yogasan and Swimming, there is no regular residential coaching done in the islands. The selection of the candidates is being done on the basis of performance in the National Games. Actually, Sports Federations of various sports decide the performance of the participants and whether they are eligible to participate or not in such sports championships. Meanwhile, some of the former sportspersons who have brought laurels to the islands by winning various sports events said that a fundamental overhaul is needed in the sports culture in the islands. Much of the Islands sports talent remains undetected. This is because these Sports Federations never organize District level tournaments in the three districts of the islands.

Ekenbabu's creator Sujan Dasgupta passes away at 79

DEBANJAN MUKHERJEE

KOLKATA, JAN 18 /--/ Bengali author Sujan Dasgupta, whose fictional detective character Ekenbabu has won hearts of thousands of booklovers, has passed away. Dasgupta was 79. The author has left his wife and their only daughter Sayantani.

The author was found dead in his house at Santoshpur Survey Park on Wednesday morning. Like every day, their maid servant rang the calling bell. As nobody opened after repeated ringing, she informed Dasgupta's neighbours. Since the author was alone in his apartment, the neighbours informed the local police, who rushed there and unlocked the door. They found Dasgupta lying on the floor in between bedroom and bathroom. The author's wife Shamita

Dasgupta, also an author, was at Shantiniketan and rushed back to Kolkata on getting informed about Dasgupta's demise.

Dasgupta, an US citizen was staying with his wife in Montville, New Jersey for decades. He was associated with The Bell Laboratories. The author couple used to visit Kolkata every year during Kolkata International Book Fair (KIBF). They were in the city from November. According to some people close to the family, Dasgupta's daughter Sayantani, who is also a US citizen, has already left for Kolkata to attend her father's last rites. Dasgupta penned several books and novels during his long career as an author but his most popular creation was the not so charming detective character Ekenbabu. Apart from five volumes of published stories, which are considered among bestsellers,

Ekenbabu have also appeared on OTT and movies. Avishek Aich, co-owner of publishing house The Café Table, which is also the publisher of Dasgupta's Ekenbabu series, said: "Sujan Dasgupta was not only an author. He was like a guardian to us. We used to call him Sujan Mesho. He was our well-wisher and we always used to seek his advice and suggestions for bringing improvement in our work. We had a meeting with him just two days back and he told us to arrange for a similar meeting before the book fair. After his sudden demise, I feel like as if somebody has removed the umbrella which was protecting me for a long time." Aich also said Volume 6 of Ekenbabu series will be published in the upcoming edition of KIBF and they were expecting Dasgupta to visit their stall, as he used to do every year.



Saujan Dasgupta

Joshimath: 65-70 per cent people living normal life, says Uttarakhand CM

NEW DELHI, JAN 18 /--/ Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Wednesday said 65-70 per cent people in Joshimath, where cracks appeared in buildings and other structures, are leading a normal life and the Char Dham Yatra will commence in four months. After meeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah, whom he briefed about the prevailing situation in Joshimath, Dhami said he was assured all assistance from the central government to deal with the current situation arising out in the hill station. "65-70 per cent people in Joshimath are living a normal life. In nearby Auli, which is a tourist attraction, everything is going on normally. Tourists are still visiting Auli," Dhami told reporters here. He said the Char Dham Yatra, one of the renowned pilgrimage for the Hindus which takes pilgrims to four holiest sites, including Kedarnath and Badrinath via Joshimath, will start in next four months. The chief minister said there is no need for panic due to the Joshimath situation and people sitting in other parts of the country should not comment about it. Dhami also said he has briefed the home minister about the steps taken for the relief and rehabilitation of the affected people in Joshimath. Asked whether he sought a rehabilitation package for the people in Joshimath, he said such things will come after the central team, which is visiting Joshimath, submits its final report. "Whatever help is required, the Central government is giving us," he said. Dhami said he has already briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi who himself is taking regular inputs. Reports said that the Uttarakhand government has distributed Rs 3.10 crore to 207 affected families as advance for the displacement while a piece of land belonging to the Horticulture Department has been identified for the construction of model pre-fabricated huts with one, two, and three bedrooms. The number of buildings that have developed cracks has risen to 849 and 250 families have so far been evacuated to safety. There are a total 615 rooms in Joshimath with a capacity of 2,190 people and 491 rooms in Pipalkoti with a capacity of 2,205 people have been made into temporary relief camps. (PTI)

India and Maldives together have responsibility for regional peace and security: EAM Jaishankar

MALE, JAN 18 --/ India and Maldives are good neighbours and strong partners, External affairs minister S Jaishankar said on Wednesday as he underlined that the two countries also together have the responsibility for peace and security in the region.

Jaishankar, who is here on the first leg of his three-day visit to the Maldives and Sri Lanka, made the remarks after a "productive meeting" with his Maldivian counterpart Abdulla Shahid during which they discussed the full spectrum of special bilateral partnership with a focus on development cooperation, capacity building and people-to-people ties. "We are good neighbours. We are strong partners. We have mutually invested in development and progress. But we also together have a responsibility for peace and security in the region,"

the minister said in a joint press appearance along with Shahid. He said the security partnership between the two countries also continues to strengthen which is the way it should be. "Again here, India is always willing to meet the requirements and the needs of the Maldives both for itself and for the larger region," he added. "A lot of our diplomatic attention is being given to easing global tensions and ensuring the interest of countries like Maldives...many of your concerns are also our concerns," Jaishankar added.

A number of significant Memorandums of Understanding were exchanged between Maldives and India in various fields, expanding the cooperation between the two countries. One of the MoUs was on additional grant assistance of 100 million Rufiyaa for the High Impact Community

Development Project (HICDP) scheme. A number of socio-economic development projects are



planned to be implemented throughout the country under this funding. Others included the development of a sports complex in Gahdhoo and academic collaboration between Maldives National University and Cochin University of Science and Technology. The two ministers also witnessed

the handover of two sea ambulances from India to the Ministry of Defence of Maldives. "The agreements and MoUs that we have exchanged today again, are just reaffirmations of the very strong development partner that we have built. We have jointly reviewed our ongoing infrastructure projects, and the groundbreaking ceremony of what I think without exaggeration is one of the most anticipated projects in the North (of the country)," he said. He said the Hanimaadhoo International airport expansion project, when completed, will actually transform the lives and livelihoods of all the people in the North of Maldives. "As the airport commences in the North, we are also privileged to be a partner, of course in another very ambitious project in the capital, the greater Male connectivity project. This is the largest

project which has ever been done in this country," he added.

Maldivian foreign minister said the two sea ambulances procured under the HICDP scheme will greatly enhance the capacity of the emergency medical services. Jaishankar also visited Noonu Mandhoo preschool. India will send 10,000 school books to be distributed in 260 schools in this country. He was earlier given a traditional Maldivian welcome when he arrived at Manadhoos, the capital of Noonu Atoll in the Maldives. He would also call on President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih.

Both the Maldives and Sri Lanka are India's key maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean Region and occupy a special place in the Prime Minister's vision of 'SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and 'Neighbourhood First'. (PTI)

EU lawmakers to vote after scandal suspect makes plea deal

STRASBOURG, JAN 18 --/ European Union lawmakers are set to vote Wednesday on a candidate to replace a disgraced former parliament vice president, after a key suspect in the cash-for-influence corruption scandal rocking the assembly made a plea bargain with prosecutors, raising the prospect that more names might surface.

Former parliament vice president Eva Kaili was removed from her post after she was taken into custody early last month facing charges of corruption, money laundering and membership of a criminal organization. Belgian prosecutors suspect that Kaili; former parliamentarian Pier Antonio Panzeri; Kaili's partner and Panzeri's friend Francesco Georgi; and Niccolo Figa-Talamanca, head of the charity group No Peace Without Justice, were paid by Qatar and Morocco to influence decision-making at the assembly. Both countries deny the allegations. The federal prosecutor's office said Tuesday that Panzeri had agreed to become an informant and reveal more information about the scandal in exchange for a lighter sentence. He's pledged to tell investigators the names of those involved and what financial arrangements were made

with other countries. Several EU lawmakers and officials have said that the corruption allegations are the most damning to have hit the parliament. The centre-left Socialist and Democrats, the second biggest political group in the assembly, has been the prime target, and its members are wary that things might get worse.

The S&D group have nominated Marc Angel, a Luxembourg member of the EU parliament, to replace Kaili. He has received the backing of the two other biggest groups and seems almost certain to be endorsed in a vote in Strasbourg, France, later Wednesday. Panzeri's lawyer avoided reporters as he left the main Brussels courthouse on Tuesday but later, in an interview with Belgian broadcast RTBF, said that the 67-year-old Italian would probably only now receive a five year suspended sentence, with one year to be served in detention. The lawyer, Laurent Kennes, said that Panzeri would also be fined 80,000 euros, and would have to give up the estimated 1 million euros that prosecutors suspect he earned from his corruption dealings. (AP)

Pak silently urges Afghan Taliban to neutralise threat posed by TTP terrorists

ISLAMABAD, JAN 18 --/ Pakistan is quietly encouraging the Afghan Taliban government to neutralise the threat posed by the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) after the banned militant outfit in recent months have stepped up terrorist attacks across the country, according to a media report on Wednesday.

However, it has emerged from the efforts so far that the interim government in Kabul still sticks to its earlier stance that the only way to resolve the TTP issue is through dialogue. The Express Tribune quoted officials familiar with the development as saying.

Pakistan pursued peace talks with the terror outfit at the request of the Afghan Taliban. Initially, talks produced some results as the group agreed to a ceasefire in return for Pakistan allowing certain TTP members to return home. The ceasefire, however, collapsed after the group continued to target security officials, ramping up their attacks in recent

months. In the last three months alone, the TTP, which wants to impose the law of Sharia across Pakistan, claimed responsibility for over 150 terrorist attacks. The flurry of attacks compelled the country's civil and military leadership to revisit the Afghan strategy.

Earlier this month, the National Security Committee (NSC) held an extended meeting for two days to discuss the spike in terrorist attacks. The civil and military leadership decided not to pursue talks with the TTP and conveyed the same to the Afghan Taliban. The Express Tribune quoted sources as saying that in line with the decision of NSC, the Afghan government was told that Kabul will have to neutralise the TTP threat as promised in the Doha agreement as well as bilateral meetings between the two countries. To avoid any deterioration in ties, Pakistan persuaded the Afghan Taliban behind closed doors.

The Afghan Taliban government, which relies

heavily on Pakistan's crucial support, was informed that the failure to address the TTP issue would only complicate bilateral ties between the two neighbours, forcing Islamabad to halt cooperation. Sources, however, told the newspaper that the Afghan Taliban government was adamant that Pakistan must pursue talks with the TTP. Islamabad was told that Kabul's priority was to tackle groups like Daesh, which are posing a direct threat to their rule. As far as the TTP is concerned, the issue can be best dealt with politically by Pakistan, suggested the government in Kabul. Pakistan, however, has set certain red lines for any talks with the TTP. Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah earlier said that Pakistan could talk to the TTP if they surrendered and accepted the writ of the state. Sources said the Afghan Taliban in private meetings were willing to address Pakistan's concerns but were reluctant to take any action against them because of their close links with the TTP. (PTI)

World's oldest known person, French nun, dies at 118

PARIS, JAN 18 --/ A French nun who was believed to be the world's oldest person has died a few weeks before her 119th birthday, the spokesperson for her nursing home in southern France said Wednesday.

Lucile Randon, known as Sister Andre, was born in the town of Ales, southern France, on February 11, 1904. She was also one of the world's oldest survivors of Covid-19. Spokesman David Tavella said she died at 2 a.m. on Tuesday at the Sainte-Catherine-Laboure nursing home in the town of Toulon. The Gerontology Research Group, which validates details of people thought to be 110 or older, listed her as the oldest known person in the world after the death of Japan's Kane Tanaka, aged 119, last year. Sister Andre tested positive for the coronavirus in January 2021, shortly before her 117th birthday, but she had so few symptoms that she didn't even realise she was infected. Her survival made headlines both in France and beyond.

In April last year, asked about her exceptional longevity through two world wars, she told French media that "working makes you live. I worked until I was 108." She was known to enjoy a daily glass of wine and chocolate. The oldest living known person in the world listed by the Gerontology Research Group is now American-born Maria Branyas Morera, who is living in Spain, and is 115. (AP)

Japan court again acquits ex-execs over Fukushima disaster

TOKYO, JAN 18 --/ A Japanese court on Wednesday found three former executives of Tokyo Electric Power Company not guilty of negligence over the 2011 Fukushima nuclear meltdowns and subsequent deaths of more than 40 elderly residents during their forced evacuation.

The Tokyo High Court ruling upheld a 2019 lower court decision that also acquitted the three former top TEPCO officials noting that a tsunami of that magnitude was unforeseeable. The case is the only criminal trial related to the nuclear accident that led the former TEPCO executives to face charges. Minutes after Wednesday's court session for the verdict opened, supporters held up posters saying: "All found not guilty.

Unjust Ruling." The court said ex-TEPCO Chairman Tsunehisa Katsumata, 82, and two other former executives were also not guilty of causing the deaths of 44 elderly patients whose already waning health deteriorated during or after forced evacuations from a local hospital and a nursing home. The executives were accused of failing to anticipate the massive tsunami that struck the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant on March 11, 2011, following a magnitude 9 earthquake, and of failing to take measures that might have saved the plant.

Katsumata and his co-defendants former vice presidents Sakae Muto, 72, and Ichiro Takekuro, 76 had consistently pleaded not guilty and maintained that predicting the tsunami

Ukraine interior minister, others killed in helicopter crash

BROVARY, JAN 18 --/ Ukraine's interior minister died on Wednesday in a helicopter crash near the capital that killed at least another 14 people, including other officials and three children, authorities said.

Interior minister Denys Monastyrskiy, who oversaw Ukraine's police and emergency services, is the most senior official to die since Russia invaded nearly 11 months ago. His death, along with two others from his ministry, was the second calamity in four days to clobber Ukraine, after a Russian missile strike on an apartment building killed dozens of civilians. There was no immediate word on whether the crash, which was near a kindergarten, was an accident or related to the war. No fighting has been reported recently in the Kyiv area. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the crash was "a terrible tragedy" on a "black morning". "The pain is unspeakable," he wrote on Telegram. British Home Secretary Suella Braverman called Monastyrskiy "a leading light in supporting the Ukrainian people during Putin's illegal invasion". She said she was "struck by his determination, optimism, and patriotism".

Monastyrskiy's deputy Yevhen Yenin and State Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Yuriy Lubkovych were also among those killed, according to the chief of Ukraine's National Police. Senior officials routinely travel by helicopter during the conflict. Nine of those killed were aboard the chopper when it crashed in Brovary, an eastern suburb of the Ukrainian capital, Ihor Klymenko said. The others who died were apparently on the ground. Kyiv regional Governor Oleksii Kuleba said 18 people overall were killed,

including three children, and that 25 were injured. Ukraine's Emergency Service, however, put the death toll at 15. It was not immediately possible to confirm if that was old information or a revised figure. At the scene of the crash, at least four bodies on the ground were covered by reflective sheets as officials cleared helicopter debris from a kindergarten playground. Wreckage also sat on top of a charred vehicle and a building. "It is too early to talk about the reasons," for the crash, the spokesperson for Ukraine's Air Forces, Yuriy Ihnat, told a television channel. He said an investigation could take some time.

The helicopter was a Super Puma supplied by France, he added. The Security Service of Ukraine is conducting an investigation, prosecutor general Andriy Kostin said.

"For now, we are considering all possible versions of the helicopter crash accident," he said on Telegram. The crash comes at a particularly dark period in the war for Ukraine, just days after the Russian strike on the apartment building in southeastern Ukraine killed 45 people, including six children the deadliest attack on civilians since the spring. "Another very sad day today new losses," said Ukraine's first lady, Olena Zelenska, dabbing teary eyes and pinching her nose as she responded to the news while at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

The forum held 15 seconds of silence after opening the session to honour the Ukrainian officials killed. "Haven't had time to recover from one tragedy, there is already another one," said the deputy head of the Ukrainian presidential office Kyrylo Tymoshenko. (AP)



Dancers perform during a cultural dance show to promote tourism in Colombo, Sri Lanka

India a 'great example' of countries who are choosing security assistance from US: Pentagon

WASHINGTON, JAN 18 --/ India is a "great example" of countries who are choosing security assistance from the US, the Pentagon has said, underlining that it was ready for any response to wean them away from Russia.

Pentagon spokesperson Pat Ryder also said the US understands that some countries that bought Russian or Soviet-era weapons want to maintain some type of relationship with Moscow.

"There are a lot of countries that maintain a security or defence relationship with Russia. Again, that's a sovereign decision for individual countries to make," he said on Tuesday at a media briefing in Washington. Ryder made these remarks when asked if there is no concern if information or technology that the US might share with them will be shared with Russia. "Many of those nations have in the past purchased Russian-built or Soviet-era equipment.

So it stands to reason that they may maintain some type of relationship. From a security cooperation standpoint, certainly

from the US perspective, I think that the types of security assistance the United States provides to include capabilities is much more dependable and also maintained," he added. "And something that we continue to discuss with various partners and allies around the world on would they -- should they choose to purchase those kinds of systems, we're certainly all ears. India is a great example," Ryder said.

In 1997, defence trade between India and the US was almost negligible, today it stands above USD 20 billion. India has faced flak from US lawmakers, both Republicans and Democrats, for choosing to abstain from a UN vote to rebuke Russia's invasion of Ukraine. US officials have expressed concern over India's purchase of the S-400 missile systems by Russia. In October 2018, India signed a USD 5 billion deal with Russia to buy five units of the S-400 Triumf air defence missile systems to ramp up its air defence, despite a warning from the then-Trump administration that going ahead with the contract may invite US sanctions. (PTI)

India's pragmatic response to pandemic-triggered crises ensured moderate inflation, high growth: Vaishnaw

DAVOS, JAN 18 --/ Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Wednesday said India took a very pragmatic approach in dealing with the humanitarian and economic crises triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic and that has ensured moderate inflation and high growth in the country.

Speaking here at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2023, the minister said India's economy has been resilient and the policy framework has been for a sustained growth with a very moderate inflation. "As the pandemic hit the world and triggered an economic as well as humanitarian crises, many countries began unleashing their purses with big stimulus packages but that led to a gold-plated rush resulting in huge inflationary pressures. "However, India took a very pragmatic approach, while understanding that capital is very scarce, irrespective of what some

experts may say," he added. Vaishnaw said the Indian government focussed on vulnerable population for financial aid, free food and free vaccines and all of that was done on digital platforms under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Those decisions have shaped the destiny of our country and put us on a path of resilient and sustainable growth. We have been able to achieve high growth and moderate inflation because of the pragmatic approach we took," he added. "Our prime minister also ensured that fiscal policy and monetary policy moved in tandem, which many other countries couldn't do. We ensured that moderate inflation was the prime target and that too for a longer 10-year period time frame and it ensured that we returned to a high growth rate quickly," he added. (PTI)

Shubman Gill

c Phillips b Shipley

Runs : 208

Balls : 149

4's : 19

6's : 9

S/R : 139.59

Shubman Gill brought up his double-century in 145 deliveries

Shubman Gill hits double century with 3 back-to-back sixes, creates record

Siraj, Gill shine as India beat NZ by 12 runs in thriller to take 1-0 lead

HYDERABAD, JAN 18/--/ Michael Bracewell is standing strong for New Zealand after a quick fall of wickets against India. New Zealand have lost nine wickets in the chase of 350 against India in the first ODI at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Hyderabad. So far, Devon Conway, Finn Allen, Henry Nicholls, Glenn Phillips, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, and Tom Latham have lost their wickets. Earlier, Shubman Gill's massive knock guided Team India to a huge total of 349/8 in 50 overs against New Zealand. Gill brought up his maiden double ton off 145 balls and became the youngest player to reach the milestone. He also became the fifth India batter to cross the 200-run mark in the ODIs. For New Zealand, Daryl Mitchell and Henry Shipley scalped two wickets each. Shubman Gill slammed his maiden double century off just 145 balls during the first ODI encounter between India and New Zealand in Hyderabad on Wednesday. He became the fifth Indian cricketer ever to achieve the feat and his innings

was adorned with 19 boundaries and eight massive sixes. Earlier, the feat was achieved by Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, Rohit Sharma and Ishan Kishan. He also became the youngest cricketer to hit a double century in ODIs - a record previously held by Kishan. It was a near-perfect performance for the youngster who looked completely in control against the New Zealand bowlers. Hestitched together a solid 50-run partnership with Rohit for the opening wicket and although Rohit was dismissed, Gill continued without any discomfort on the pitch with an even bounce. New Zealand have lost six wickets in the chase of 350 against India in the first ODI at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Hyderabad. So far, Devon Conway, Finn Allen, Henry Nicholls, Glenn Phillips, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, and Tom Latham have lost their wickets. Earlier, Shubman Gill's massive knock guided Team India to a huge total of 349/8 in 50 overs against New Zealand. Gill brought up his maiden double ton off 145 balls and became the youngest player to reach the milestone. He also became the fifth India batter to cross the 200-run mark in the ODIs.

Stats - Gill becomes youngest to 200, and fastest Indian to 1000

208 Shubman Gill's score in Hyderabad is now the highest against New Zealand in ODIs. The previous highest was Sachin Tendulkar's unbeaten 186 in 1999, also in Hyderabad.

23 years 132 days Gill's age coming into the first ODI. He is now the youngest player to score a double-hundred in men's ODIs. The previous youngest was Ishan Kishan, who set the record with his 210 against Bangladesh last month at the age of 24 years and 145 days.

19 Innings needed for Gill to complete 1000 runs in ODIs. He is now the joint-second fastest to the milestone alongside Imam-ul-Haq. Fakhar Zaman is the quickest to the mark, having got there in 18 innings. Virat Kohli and Shikhar Dhawan (24 innings) were previously the quickest Indians to 1000 ODI runs.

349 for 8 India's total in Hyderabad, the lowest total in ODIs to feature a double-century. The previous lowest was 372 for 2 by West Indies against Zimbabwe during the 2015 World Cup, when Chris Gayle scored 215.

2 Batters to score a double-century in ODIs when no other batter reached fifty in the innings, including Gill in Hyderabad. The first was Martin Gupitill, who scored 237* against West Indies in 2015 - the second-highest score was Ross Taylor's 42.

174 Runs difference between India's top two scores in the Hyderabad ODI - Gill's 208 and Rohit Sharma's 34. It is the third-highest difference between the top two scores in an ODI innings. The highest is 198, when Rohit scored 264 against Sri Lanka in 2014. Virat Kohli's 66 was the second-highest score in that innings.

GAME NOTES

Saudi businessman bids \$2.6m for Ronaldo-Messi ticket

RIYADH, JAN 18 /--/ A Saudi real estate mogul won a ticket to see Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi face off in a friendly after bidding \$2.6 million at auction, an official said Tuesday. The match on Thursday in Riyadh is set to pit Messi's Paris Saint-Germain against a select side made up of players from Ronaldo's new club Al Nassr and their Saudi rivals Al Hilal. It will mark the first time Ronaldo has played any football in the kingdom since signing a contract with Al Nassr that runs until 2025 and is worth more than 200 million euros (\$214 million), according to sources close to the club. The five-time Ballon d'Or winner is scheduled to make his Saudi Pro League debut for Al Nassr on Sunday. To promote Thursday's friendly, Turki al-Sheikh, an advisor at the Royal Court and head of Saudi Arabia's General Entertainment Authority, announced a charity auction for a special ticket that would come with perks like photo opportunities with players and access to the locker rooms. Bidding started at 1 million Saudi riyals (\$266,000) and the auction closed at 11:30 p.m. local time on Tuesday. (AFP)

Australian Open: Nadal suffers shocking second round exit; Iga Swiatek, Maria Sakkari into 3rd round

Melbourne, Jan 18 /--/ Defending champion Rafael Nadal hobbled out of the second round in a major upset at the Australian Open on Wednesday, but there was no such trouble for the leading women's stars. The Spanish great's wife Maria was in tears as Nadal was beaten by 65th-ranked Mackenzie McDonald at Rod Laver Arena, where the roof was closed because of more rain in Melbourne. The 36-year-old Nadal was clearly hindered by a hip issue that required a medical timeout, as he surrendered 6-4, 6-4, 7-5 to the American. It was the reigning champion's earliest exit from a major in seven years and will lead to more questions about whether injury and age are catching up with the record 22-time major champion. (AFP)

ICC inspects venues at San Francisco, LA, Dallas, Texas for T20 WC

Dubai, Jan 18 /--/ Oakland, Florida, Los Angeles are some of the cities that have been recced by the ICC Venue inspection team as prospective centres for the 2024 T20 World Cup jointly hosted by United States and West Indies, informed USA Cricket president Atul Rai. It is understood that ICC event's biggest box office fixture - India versus Pakistan - is likely to be held in USA and not the West Indies keeping in mind the crowd support for both teams. "Preferably it will be held in the USA considering that India's T20 games against West Indies in Florida were complete sell out," Rai told PTI in an interview. (PTI)

Wrestlers molested by coaches, alleges Vinesh Phogat, chief responds

NEW DELHI, JAN 18/--/ Vinesh Phogat, the first Indian woman wrestler to win gold in both Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games, on Wednesday raised some serious allegations against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) and its president Brijbhushan Sharan Singh. The veteran athlete, who has represented India at the Olympics too, said that "national coaches molested female wrestlers over the years and were given death threats by WFI officials."



She along with other top Indian wrestlers sat a massive protest at the Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Wednesday. The wrestlers called for the removal of the WFI president from the post. "We will not compete in any international competition until WFI President is removed", Bajrang Punia, Olympic bronze medallist wrestler, declared at the protest. Singh has been at the helm of the WFI since 2011. He was elected President of WFI for the third consecutive time in February 2019. "We were threatened that our careers will come to an end if we speak. Federation members used profanities against female wrestlers. We have approached the Prime Minister as well," Vinesh added. Rio Olympics medallist Sakshi Malik, world championship medallist Sarita Mor, Sangeeta Phogat, Satyawart Malik, Jitender Kinha and CWG medallist Sumit Malik were among 30 wrestlers who assembled at Jantar Mantar on Wednesday. Vinesh, a world championship medallist and Olympian, also claimed that several coaches at the national camp in Lucknow have exploited women wrestlers, adding that there are a few women at the camp who approach wrestlers at the behest of the WFI President. "Some coaches are close to the national federations. Those coaches have exploited young girls. Don't know how many young girls have suffered due to them," Vinesh further stated. The 28-year-old though clarified that she herself has not faced such exploitation but claimed that she had received death threats at the behest of WFI President from officials close to him because she dared to draw Prime Minister Narendra Modi's attention to several issues plaguing Indian wrestling when she met him after the Tokyo Games. "I know at least 10-12 women wrestlers who have told me about the sexual exploitation they faced at the hands of (the) WFI President. They told me their stories. I can't take their names now but I can definitely reveal the names if we get to meet the Prime Minister and the Home Minister of the country," Vinesh said addressing the media after staging a four-hour dharna at Jantar Mantar. (With inputs from PTI)

India seek big win against Wales to qualify directly for World Cup quarter-finals

BHUBANESWAR, JAN 18 /--/ An unbeaten India will seek to address their penalty-corner woes to post a big win against bottom-placed debutants Wales in their final pool match and qualify directly for the quarter-finals of the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup here on Thursday. India and England are on four points each after two matches with the latter ahead on goal difference -- plus five as against the hosts' plus two. India, though, will have the advantage of knowing what to do before their match as they play after England's game against Spain on Thursday. If England lose or draw against Spain, there will be no headache for India as they just need to beat Wales by any margin to top Pool D -- considered the group of death -- and qualify directly for the quarter-finals. If England beat Spain, then India will need to defeat Wales by at least five goals. The number of goals India need to score will keep on increasing depending on England's victory margin.

If two teams are on equal points and have the same number of wins, the rankings in the pool stage are decided on the basis of goal difference. In any case, India will not be knocked out of the tournament as they will finish second if they beat Wales -- a task they are expected to accomplish. If India finish second in Pool D, they will play the third-place team in Pool C, which could be either New Zealand or Malaysia in the 'crossover' round. India had beaten Spain 2-0 before drawing England 0-0, both matches played at the new Birs Munda Stadium in Rourkela. They are going to play at the Kalinga Stadium for the first time in this World Cup. The winning team in each of the four pools qualifies directly for the quarter-finals. The second and third-placed finishers in each pool will feature in crossover matches. A second-place finisher of a pool will

play a third-place side of another pool and the winning team will face a pool topper in the quarter-finals. If India top Pool D and qualify directly for the quarter-finals, they will play one match less and that may keep them fresh for the last-eight stage. "If we top our pool, we will play one match less and that will be good for us. We will try to play our best and play our normal game and execute our plans," said midfielder Manpreet Singh, who had led India to a historic bronze at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. The main concern for India is their rate of penalty-corner conversion. They have got nine penalty corners so far but have not scored even once from them directly, though Amit Rohidas found

we next (against Wales) have to try and do better inside the opposition circle," head coach Graham Reid said. India were also dealt a blow after midfielder Hardik Singh injured his hamstring towards the end of the England match. He will be an unlikely starter in Thursday's match against Wales, though he is expected to recover in time for the quarter-final or the crossover stage. No doubt, Hardik will be missed but his absence is unlikely to affect India's chances against Wales, ranked 14th in the world as against the hosts' fifth as per the latest rankings. The likes of Vivek Sagar Prasad can fill in for Hardik. Wales, on the other hand, will be playing for pride as they have virtually no chance of progressing to the next stage following two heavy losses against England (0-5) and Spain (1-5). Even if they beat India, which is highly unlikely, and Spain defeat England, Wales might not make it to the crossovers as they have a goal difference of minus nine. (PTI)



The Squads (From): India: Abhishek, Surender Kumar, Manpreet Singh, Jarmanpreet Singh, Mandeep Singh, Harmanpreet Singh (captain), Lalit Upadhyay, Krishan Pathak, Nilam Sanjeev Xess, PR Sreejesh, Nilakanta Sharma, Shamsher Singh, Varun Kumar, Akashdeep Singh, Amit Rohidas (vice-captain), Vivek Sagar Prasad, Sukhjeet Singh.

Wales: Rupert Shipperley (captain), Toby Reynolds-Cotterill, Rhys Payne, Gareth Furlong, Daniel Kyriakides, Hywel Jones, Ioan Wall, Steve Kelly, Lewis Prosser, Dale Hutchinson, Jacob Draper, Gareth Griffiths, Rhys Bradshaw, Fred Newbold, Ben Francis, Luke Hawker, James Carson, Jack Pritchard.

MATCH STARTS AT 7PM IST.

Dutee Chand tests positive for prohibited substances, provisionally suspended

New Delhi, Jan 18 /--/ India's top sprinter Dutee Chand has been provisionally suspended after her 'A' sample returned positive for prohibited anabolic steroids during an out-of-competition testing. The report of the adverse analytical finding, a copy of which is in possession of PTI, says Dutee has tested positive for SARMS (Selective Androgen Receptor Modulators), a type of supplement that helps increase muscle mass and strength and is also known to help burn fat and improve stamina. The urine sample of the athlete showed traces of 'andarine', 'ostarine' and 'ligandrol', which fall under the SARMS category and are banned under World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) rules. In the letter issued to Dutee on January 3, 2023, the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) said, "I do hereby inform you that your sample A was tested at the NDTL (National Dope Testing Laboratory) in accordance with the procedure set out in WADA's (World Anti-Doping Agency) International Standard of Laboratories and was returned adverse analytical findings." The sample was collected out-of-competition on December 5 last year at Bhubaneswar. The 26-year-old, who won the 100m and 200m silver medals at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta, can now opt for a 'B' sample test under WADA rules and if that also returns an adverse analytical finding (AAF), or she cannot establish that the anti-doping rule violation was not intentional, she could be banned for four years. The letter states that

Dutee has seven working days to appeal for a 'B' sample test, failing which NADA will deem that she has waived her right to have the second



sample analysed. Given that the notice was issued on January 3, Dutee's time to appeal for a 'B' sample test would have ended by now.

However, Dutee, when contacted on Wednesday, said she was unaware of the 'A' sample testing positive. "I do not know," she told PTI. Dutee holds the 100m national record with a timing of 11.17 seconds, which she achieved at the Indian Grand Prix IV at Patiala in 2021. She is currently not a national camper and is not training with any Athletics Federation of India (AFI) coach in Hyderabad. She moved to Bhubaneswar to train on her own. AFI president Adille Sumariwalla said he had no news about Dutee's positive test. "I have not received any news on her testing positive. Ask NADA. They inform us about the tests via registered post, which takes a few days to arrive. Ask Dutee if she has got the letter (of adverse analytical findings)," said Sumariwalla. Dutee had qualified for the women's 100m event at the 2016 Rio Olympics, 36 years after sprint legend and the current Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president PT Usha took part in the 1980 Moscow Olympics. The Odisha athlete had a long battle with the International Amateur Athletic Federation (World Athletics) after being barred from competing in 2014 because of high levels of testosterone hormone, exceeding the standards laid down for female athletes. The hormone, which is naturally produced in the body -- less in females, more in males -- is understood to give women significant competitive edge.

However in 2018, IAAF altered its hyperandrogenism rules, excluding the 100m and 200m events from the gamut of the rules. (PTI)

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