



Bishnu inaugurates community hall in presence of Kuldeep at Junglighat

PORT BLAIR, DEC 17/-- / The Community Hall with prefabricated structure behind S a m a y a p u r a m Mariamman Temple, Ward No-13, Junglighat

constructed under MPLAD fund of 16th Lok Sabha has been inaugurated by Mr. Bishnu Pada Ray, ex-Member of Parliament in the presence of Mr.

Kuldeep Rai Sharma, Member of Parliament of Andaman & Nicobar Islands on Saturday. The Community Hall was constructed at the cost of Rs. 37.18 Lakhs

through Andaman Lakshadweep Harbour Works (ALHW) being the executing agency for which the long pending demands of the peoples residing around the area

in Ward No.13 has been fulfilled. During the inauguration function, the Councillor of Ward Number No. 13, Mr. Sudeep Rai Sharma, Mr.

Bhudev Paul, AE, ALHW and other prominent residents of the area and a large number of the general public were also present.

(Comtd. on page-6)

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APWD Guest House built and forgotten Taxpayers' money goes down the drain



KARTIK

MAYABUNDER, DEC 17/-- / A government guest house at Betapur under Shivapuram Panchayat in N&M Andaman constructed by Andaman Public Work Department is yet to be inaugurated and put into public use even after four years of construction. This guest house was constructed at a cost of about Rs one crore and was then forgotten by the department. Citizens consider this as sheer wastage of taxpayer's money. Residents of Betapur blame that the new guest house of APWD at Betapur has not even hosted a single guest even after four years of completion. The reason for not utilizing this guest house for public use is the lack of approach road to this guest house

APPROACH ROAD IN A LIMBO

GUEST HOUSE: OUT OF SIGHT & OUT OF MIND

from the main road. According to reports, the APWD guest house in Betapur is constructed at a location in front of the land belonging to the health department where a Health & Wellness Centre is proposed to be constructed. Since the Health department is not in a mood to issue the mandatory NOC, the APWD is not able to construct an approach road up to the guest house as a result of which the government owned guest house is left unused.

Locals are blaming the APWD for taking up the project without proper planning and wasting public money for no use.

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SC dismisses Bilkis Bano's plea for reviewing order asking Gujarat to examine convict's remission application

NEW DELHI, DEC 17 /--/ The Supreme Court has dismissed a plea filed by Bilkis Bano seeking a review of its May 13 verdict by which it had said the state of Gujarat was the "appropriate government" competent to examine the application for the pre-mature release filed by a convict in the gang-rape and murder case. Bano's separate petition challenging the remission of the sentences of the 11 convicts by the state government is pending before the Supreme Court. She was gang-raped and

seven members of her family were killed during the 2002 Gujarat riots. In its May 13 order, the apex court had asked the state government to consider the plea of a convict for pre-mature release in terms of its policy of July 9, 1992, which was applicable on the date of conviction and decided it within a period of two months. All 11 convicts were granted remission by the Gujarat government and released on August 15. Bano's plea seeking a review of the May 13 order came up for in-chamber

consideration on December 13 before a bench of justices Ajay Rastogi and Vikram Nath. "In our opinion, there appears no error apparent on the face of the record, which may call for review of the judgment dated May 13, 2022, and as regards the judgments on which the reliance has been placed, none of the judgments are of any assistance to the review petitioner," the bench said in its order which was uploaded on the top court website on Saturday. "In our opinion, no case for review is made out. The review

petition is accordingly dismissed," it said, while also rejecting the application for listing in the open court. According to procedures, review pleas against apex court judgments are decided in chambers by circulation by the judges who were part of the judgment under review. The gang-rape survivor had sought a review of the top court's May 13 order on a plea moved by one of the convicts. Earlier in the day, Bano's counsel Shobha Gupta said they would decide the future course of

action after perusing the order of the apex court. "We were seeking review of that order because of the legality aspect. But remission, the legality, the correctness of remission is still open for discussion. There is no setback when it comes to merit to be tested of the remission order and whether the state of Gujarat could have taken it," she said. "The issue completely remains open, no setback on the merit of the case. Only one petition on the legal aspect has been dismissed," Gupta said.

Apart from the review plea, Bano has also filed a separate petition in the top court, challenging the remission of the sentences of the 11 convicts by the state government, saying their premature release has "shaken the conscience of the society". Bano was 21 years old, and five months pregnant, when she was gang-raped while fleeing the riots that broke out after the Godhra train burning incident. Her three-year-old daughter was among the seven family members killed. (PTI)

Nadda says Rahul speaking language of China and Pak as BJP seeks his expulsion from Congress

NEW DELHI, DEC 17 /--/ In an all-out attack on Rahul Gandhi for his remark that Chinese soldiers are beating up Indian Army personnel in Arunachal Pradesh, the BJP said on Saturday that the Congress should expel him from the party as its president J P Nadda accused him of speaking the language of China and Pakistan.

"This underlines the question mark about his patriotism. He had also questioned surgical strikes and Balakot air strikes. It is a reflection of his metal bankruptcy," Nadda said as a number of senior party leaders seized on the former Congress president's comments to target the opposition party which is seeking some sort of political revival with Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra'. At its official briefing, Bharatiya Janata Party spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said if Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge is not "remote-controlled" and if the opposition party stands with the country, then Gandhi should



J P Nadda

be expelled for his comments as they "belittle" India and break the morale of its armed forces. Bhatia likened Gandhi to Jaichand, the king of Kannauj who is projected as a betrayer to the Indian cause in some historical accounts, and alleged that he has constantly tried to break the armed forces' morale, be it after the surgical and air strikes on terror camps in Pakistan or after the Galwan valley clashes, in which 20 soldiers had laid down their lives.

While Gandhi allegedly sought evidence of the armed forces' strikes on terrorists inside Pakistan, he called the prime minister "Surrender Modi" after the Galwan fight, the BJP leader said. The Congress leader should tender an apology to the country for his statement, he said. His sin will not be washed away with the apology but it will at least demonstrate that he has realised his mistake, he said. At a press conference in Jaipur on Friday during his "Bharat Jodo Yatra", Gandhi claimed that China is preparing for a war and accused the government of trying to "ignore" the threat, saying it is "asleep" and not ready to accept the situation. In an apparent reference to a recent clash between Indian and Chinese soldiers in Arunachal Pradesh, he said Indian jawans in the region are being "beaten up".

Nadda said no amount of condemnation of Gandhi's statement will be enough and added that Indian armed forces symbolise courage and valour. He noted that the Congress, when it was in power, had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Chinese Communist Party and that the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation had received funding from the Chinese embassy here. "Probably, this is the reason that Rahul Gandhi speaks the language of China and Pakistan," he said, adding that Gandhi was "secretly" meeting Chinese officials at their embassy in New Delhi when Indian and Chinese soldiers faced off in Doklam. (PTI)

MVA allies take out protest march against Maharashtra govt, demand Guv's removal for 'insulting' icons

MUMBAI, DEC 17 /--/ In a show of strength, the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) constituents in Maharashtra took out a 'Halla Bol' protest march in Mumbai on Saturday against the Eknath Shinde-BJP government in the state, and emphatically demanded removal of Governor B S Koshiyari for passing "insulting" remarks against iconic personalities, including Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Senior leaders of the three MVA allies - Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Congress - shared the stage after the protest march, where NCP chief Sharad Pawar said if the governor was not removed, a "lesson" would be taught, while Uddhav Thackeray warned that there can be no compromise on the state's self-respect and pride. NCP leader Ajit Pawar demanded a strict law to ensure that dignity of national icons is protected. The protest march began from near J J Hospital in Byculla around noon and ended at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT), a distance of around 4 km, where the MVA leaders addressed a rally. Speaking at an event last month, governor Koshiyari had dubbed Shivaji Maharaj an "icon of olden times". The remark sparked outrage from both the descendants of the Maratha king and the opposition parties. Earlier this year, he had also passed alleged derogatory remarks against social reformers Mahatma Phule and Savitribai Phule.

Speaking at the 'Halla Bol' protest rally, Sharad Pawar said, "The governor should be immediately removed for insulting Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Mahatma Phule." He also said that the ideologies of the three MVA partners may be different but there was a need to be together to protect Maharashtra's self-respect. "If the governor is not removed, we will have to take steps to teach them a lesson," he added. The former Union minister said a competition was on, not for the state's progress and development, but to malign it. "Maharashtra cabinet minister Chandrakant Patil says BR Ambedkar, Mahatma Phule begged to start schools... Such an insult cannot be tolerated. We have to be united irrespective of our political ideologies to safeguard the state's prestige. If the governor is not removed we have to take steps to decide our future action," he said.

Former chief minister Uddhav Thackeray accused the Shinde government of being ideologically bankrupt. "One minister Chandrakant Patil says Phule and Ambedkar begged to collect funds to start schools, while another minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha likens Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's great escape from Agra to Eknath Shinde's rebellion and backstabbing," he said. Shinde had led a rebellion against the Shiv Sena leadership in June this year, which led to the collapse of the Thackeray-led MVA government in the state. "I don't consider Koshiyari as governor. The post of a governor is a respectable one. I reiterate my demand that a criteria be decided on selection of a governor," Thackeray said. There can be no compromise on the state's self-respect and pride, Thackeray added.

On the ongoing Maharashtra-Karnataka border row, he said the unfulfilled dream of 'Samyukta Maharashtra' about the inclusion of Belagavi, Karwar, Nipani and other villages into Maharashtra has to be achieved. Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly Ajit Pawar said the governor should be removed "to save Maharashtra". He demanded that a strict law be enacted to protect the dignity of national icons. On the border row, he said, "Never before villages from Maharashtra openly spoke about breaking away from the state. Why is this happening?" The former deputy chief minister stressed the need to stay united and said this protest march was the first step in that direction as the MVA's aim was to protect the integrity of the state. (PTI)

India, Bangladesh play significant role in ensuring security of region: B'desh Air Force Chief

HYDERABAD, DEC 17 /--/ India and Bangladesh have a pivotal role to play in ensuring the security of the region, chief of Bangladesh Air Force Air Marshal Shaikh Abdul Hannan said here on Saturday.

Speaking as the chief guest at the Combined Graduation Parade of Flight Cadets of various branches of the Indian Air Force, Hannan said both the countries have an "umbilical connection" and that relation has been more profound since the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971. "Both the countries have a significant role to play in ensuring the security of the region and our defence forces conduct regular joint exercises to ensure that we have synergy in our efforts," he said.

Noting that Bangladesh Air Force was born in Dimapur in India on September 28, 1971, the air force chief of the neighbouring country said with that heritage today both the countries have an understanding of mutual trust and respect. "India and Bangladesh have an umbilical connection. This connection has been more profound since the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971. This makes me to recall invaluable contribution of India as a whole and Indian Air Force in particular in 1971 war of liberation," he said. Offering advice to the passing out cadets, Hannan said in this technology driven world, air and space power will play a key role in 21st century warfare and will continue to do so in the future.

According to him, currently and also in times to come, the world will face many security challenges that could be effectively countered by continuously upgrading and improving the technological capabilities. "In order to stay ahead of time and be well prepared for the growing requirements, strategies should be dynamic, flexible and updated.

It is in this context that the Indian Air Force stands to derive maximum benefit from the young and innovative minds that can take on the challenges, professional and competent manner, he said. The Bangladesh Defence official said the IAF is keeping pace with the changing environment and has improved the training curriculum recently to train resilient, dynamic and field ready officers. (PTI)

Gujarat: BJP workers stage protests against Pak minister Bhutto for his remarks on Modi

AHMEDABAD, DEC 17 /--/ Bharatiya Janata Party activists on Saturday staged demonstrations in different parts of Gujarat against Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto for his remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The protests were held in Rajkot, Vadodara, Gandhinagar, Botad, Mahisagar, Junagadh and many other places. BJP activists raised slogans against Bhutto and also burnt his effigies in some places. In Gandhinagar, a delegation led by state BJP's Yuva Morcha president Prashant Korat submitted a memorandum criticising Pakistan and the minister to Governor Acharya Devvrat at Raj Bhavan.

"What Bhutto said was an insult to the entire country and its countrymen, not just PM Modi. BJP workers, as well as citizens, have joined a state-wide protest against Bhutto's remarks," Korat told reporters. Bhutto made the comments following India's External Affairs minister S Jaishankar's sharp attack on Pakistan over its support for terrorism at the United Nations Security Council meeting.

Gujarat BJP president CR Paatil dubbed Pakistan a 'beggar' and said Bhutto's remarks on PM Modi have attracted criticism from the entire world. He said the people of India will never tolerate such comments against the PM. "Entire country is angry over Bhutto's vile and shameful remarks about PM Modi. Pakistan is no less than a beggar. Its economy is so weak that Pakistan is forced to sell their assets, even its donkeys, to keep running the country. Pakistan needs to focus on their own condition before commenting on others. The entire world knows the misdeeds of the Bhutto family" said Paatil. (PTI)

When will nation have 'China pe Charcha'? Congress prez Kharge asks Modi

NEW DELHI, DEC 17 /--/ The Congress on Saturday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of not allowing a discussion in Parliament on the situation along the border with China and asked why he was not taking the nation into confidence in the matter.

His attack on the government came days after Indian Army personnel clashed with Chinese soldiers in the Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh. Claiming that Chinese build-up in Doklam is threatening the strategic 'Siliguri Corridor' -- the gateway to northeastern states -- the party asked when the nation will have "China pe charcha". "Chinese build-up in Doklam up to 'Jampheri Ridge' is threatening India's strategic 'Siliguri Corridor' the gateway to Northeastern States! This is of utmost concern for our National Security! @narendramodiji, When will the nation have... 'CHINA PE CHARCHA'?" Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge tweeted, in a swipe at Prime Minister Modi's campaign initiative 'chai pe charcha'.

Congress general secretary communications Jairam Ramesh said in a statement that it is the political duty and moral responsibility of the prime minister to share his "mann ki baat" on the seven questions posed to him by his party. "The nation wants to know... why are you insisting that there should be no debate in Parliament on the border situation and the challenges we face from China," he asked. "You have met the top Chinese leadership an unprecedented 18 times and recently shook hands with Xi Jinping in Bali. China launched an incursion into Tawang shortly thereafter and continues to unilaterally alter the border situation. Why are you not taking the nation into confidence?" the Congress leader asked.

Ramesh said why did the prime minister say on June 20, 2020 that "there has been no incursion by China into Indian territory in eastern Ladakh?" "Why have you allowed the Chinese to stop our troops from accessing thousands of square kilometres in eastern Ladakh where we were regularly patrolling prior to May 2020," he also asked.

The Congress leader also questioned why the prime minister abandoned the plan approved by the Cabinet on 17 July 2013 to establish a Mountain Strike Corps.

"Why have you allowed Chinese companies to contribute to PM CARES Fund? Why have you allowed imports from China to zoom to record levels in last two years," he asked. The Congress attack came a day after Rahul Gandhi said the government was sleeping while China was preparing for war.

Gandhi's remarks evoked sharp reactions from the BJP, which said Gandhi was lowering the morale of the armed forces. In a statement in Parliament, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Chinese troops tried to "unilaterally" change the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Yangtse area of Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang sector on December 9, but the Indian Army compelled them to retreat with its "firm and resolute" response. The face-off took place amid the over 30-month border standoff between the two sides in eastern Ladakh. (PTI)



Sardar Sukhbir Singh Badal with the delegation of Akali Dal-Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee meeting UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath regarding the problems of the Sikh community

If journalism falters, democracy will collapse: Justice Srikrishna

MUMBAI, DEC 17 /--/ Former Supreme Court judge B N Srikrishna has called for preserving the independence of journalists to ensure smooth functioning of democracy in the country.

"If journalism as a profession falters, democracy will collapse," Justice Srikrishna said Friday night after presenting the Redink awards for excellence in journalism, instituted by the Mumbai Press Club.

"Speak the truth to the powers that be," he said. "Two professions have to be necessarily independent, a judge and a journalist. If they falter, democracy collapses," he added. Justice Srikrishna said a journalist who loses his independence is as bad as a judge who has lost his independence.

"Remember, you are in a profession where honesty is really the best policy," said the noted jurist, who headed the Srikrishna



B N Srikrishna

Commission that investigated causes and apportioned blame for the Mumbai riots of 1992-93. "We all know about the four pillars of democracy: judiciary, legislature executive and the press or the fourth estate. If the first three cozy up, it is the duty of the fourth estate to take them to task," he said.

Justice Srikrishna spoke on the "misuse" of investigative agencies. "People spoke of threats from ED, CBI, surveillance,

cutting off revenue to see that businesses collapse," he said. Senior journalist TJS George was presented the Redink Award for lifetime achievement for his distinguished career as an editor and columnist. In the 1960s, George (94) was the editor of the Patna-headquartered newspaper 'The Searchlight' known for its anti-establishment stand. The Press Club's 'Journalist of the Year' Award for 2021 was given to Om Gaur, National Editor of

'Dainik Bhaskar' for leading a team of reporters and photographers that "tirelessly exposed the tragedy of Covid deaths" in UP's towns and cities along the river Ganga. In his acceptance speech, Gaur said he was receiving the award on behalf of his colleagues who made the coverage possible. The awards, along with 24 other winners in 12 categories, were presented at NCPA auditorium in south Mumbai. (PTI)

India-China Border Clash: Can The Govt Stand Up to Xi Jinping’s Military Policy?

BHOPINDER SINGH

In stable democracies, civilian political leadership’s control and oversight over the Military is a prerequisite and established doctrine. Lack or deficiency of political role in the decision-making within the realm of security can create a ‘State within a State.’ The joke on account of the Military’s unaccountability to its ostensible civilian government across the Line Of Control (LOC) goes, “Most countries have an Army, but Pakistan’s Army has a country.”

China is unique in that its Military ie, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is not the national army of the sovereign, but the political army or ‘wing’ of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The allegiance of the PLA soldier is not to the nation-state of China or even its constitution, but to the ruling ‘Party’ (simply called so, as there is no other allowed) that has ruled uninterrupted in a single-party format, since 1949.

Mao Zedong rationalised the concept of Dang Zhihui Qiang. “Our

principle is that the Party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command. PLA’s subservience to the ‘Party’ has ensured that no rival political formation or ideology could emerge.

While multiple rumours of attempted coups within the Chinese narrative abound, perhaps, the most famous one pertains to Lin Bao— Marshal of the People’s Republic Of China and accomplished General of the Chinese Civil War. Lin Bao was the longest-serving Chinese Minister of National Defense (1959-1971) and was touted as Mao Zedong’s successor but Lin got increasingly impatient and lost Mao’s trust and therefore, planned a coup.

Following a botched coup attempt, a flight carrying him and his family to Mongolia mysteriously crashed after accusations of them fleeing. He was officially condemned as a traitor by the CCP. Later, in another attempt, the famous ‘Gang of Four’ from the CCP ie, Jiang Qing (Mao Zedong’s last wife) and three of her associates Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang

Hongwen got officially notified as ‘counter-revolutionaries’.

But for the CCP to fully control PLA (once a gargantuan five million force – today a leaner two million) is a constant task. Civilian political commissars within the PLA are entrusted with the sensitive task of ideological indoctrination and discipline as per the ‘Party’ norms. Xi Jinping’s era may have seen a sharper, more modern PLA but also one with more presence and alignment with the ‘Party’ as part of his ‘national rejuvenation’ project.

Clearly, Xi has subliminal worries about the PLA’s equation with the CCP (and, has even appropriated the title of Commander-in-Chief that neither Mao Zedong or Deng Xiaoping, had assumed). Tellingly, the Beijing Garrison had refused to break up the ‘Tiananmen Square protests and units from outside had to be brought in.

Frequent purges to ensure loyalty and complete control of the top PLA Generalship (as done in 2016, or later, following

the seemingly inept handling of the Xinjiang unrest) suggests that nothing can be taken for granted, not even the PLA. In 2015, Xi accused members of plotting, “political conspiracies to wreck and split the party”, and this was seen as a euphemism for the coup. Ensuring that the PLA follows the dictum of the CCP unflinchingly, especially the word and spirit of Xi Jinping is not a simple task, ever. Institutionalised politicisation of the PLA, coupled with the inexperience of real combat in decades (the last ‘war’ was the Sino-Vietnam war of 1979) has the CCP worried about ‘peacetime disease’ – a metaphor for professional inefficacy and corruption. Besides the task of ‘managing’ the PLA, Xi’s other eye is fixated on reading the pulse of the nation to ensure the legitimacy of the CCP, and specifically, of the

personalised brand, ‘Zhuxi’ (Chairman) Xi Jinping.

Therefore, wearing the PLA Uniform (the first Chinese President to do so in Military parades), saber-rattling on Taiwan, showcasing Military hardware and goading the PLA to, “focus its energy on fighting and war” is par for the course, towards perception management.

Dismantling the earlier PLA superstructure of four headquarters and replacing it with fifteen more controllable agencies with loyalists and visibilising Xi’s signature anti-corruption drive may still not guarantee the latter’s absolute control of PLA, which he seeks.

It is with this backdrop that localised or isolated incidents may not necessarily suggest Xi Jinping’s personal imprint and nudge, especially if they are as shoddily planned and conducted as the recent attempt at land grab in Arunachal. Xi’s



greenlighting of expansionism would be expected to be more robust, scaled-up, and professional than that warranted by the news and visuals filtering in. In authoritarian times, many senior officials try to deliver ‘good news’ that they believe the top leader would like to receive, and herein, short-circuiting the formal approval processes before initiating a move.

It is not beyond the local PLA leadership in the region to ingratiate itself with the powers that be in Beijing. Importantly, the previous head of the India-facing Western Theatre Command ie, General He Weidong, was given a double promotion to become the new Vice Chairman of Central Military Commission (CMC). Weidong was in-charge of the PLA operations in the 2017 Doklam and the Line-of-Actual-Control stand-off in 2020 with India.

In times like this, knee-jerk action and reaction by both the Supreme Leader, in this case Xi Jinping, or by his overenthusiastic functionaries in the operational realm, like

General Wang Haijiang in command of Western Theatre Command now (or by even further junior leadership), cannot be ruled out. For a nation that deploys unmatched resources of scale, deceit and sophistication, it is unlikely that Xi Jinping’s personally authorised doctrine on expansionism would include sending 300 odd unarmed (owing to bilateral agreement) PLA soldiers, who then beat a hasty retreat. Certainly, India needs to remain hyper-vigilant as its Armed Forces have remained so. However, it is equally important to go beyond the suffixation of news (which disconcertingly broke rather belatedly) with ‘more Chinese were hurt’ or release of WhatsApp clips. While psychology is an important part of modern warfare, it would be naïve not to consider partisan utilities that are inherent in a competitive democracy.

However, security preparedness goes far beyond the platitudinous ‘Kadi Ninda’ or ‘not an inch of land’ (worse so, if ascribed to a political leader and not to the Armed

Forces themselves – as if the Armed Forces belong to a partisan persuasion and not to the sovereign!). The Chinese governance structure between the CCP and PLA is not as seamless or aligned as projected, nor are their postures or actions infallible (as validated by recent incidents). What is however, required is to put the Indian security issues above partisan passions (and social media ‘forwards’), empower the Indian Forces further, and develop a strategic culture that is proactive and reactive. The Arunachal incident is not the first, and it, unfortunately, wouldn’t be the last – the Chinese may well recollect their experiences with the Indian Forces post-1962, be it in 1967 (Cho La and Nathu La) or more recently in 2020, or even earlier this week. The Indian Armed Forces did what they did, not because of the political cover that has been historically afforded to them, but despite it. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

ICAR-CIARI conducts training prog at Harmander Bay

PORT BLAIR, DEC 17/--/ A training programme on "Scientific interventions on livestock farming for livelihood security of Tribal farmers" was organized by ICAR-Central Island Agricultural Research Institute, Port Blair at Harmander Bay village, Little Andaman on 10-12th December. Dr. P.A. Bala, Dr. Arun Kumar De, Dr. P. Perumal, Dr. K. Muniswamy and Dr. Ashish Kumar, Senior Veterinary Officer, Department of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services imparted the training programme. There were 80 participants comprising mainly tribal youngsters from different parts of the village having different types of livestock. Mr. Andrew Mosses, Captain, and Mr. Festus, Secretary, Tribal Council, Herminder Bay graced the occasion. They encouraged the participants to interact with the scientists and draw maximum advantage out of the



programme. Dr. Bala sumptuously explained the role of livestock farming for livelihood security of tribal farmers, while Dr. De was instrumental to focus light on Scientific pig rearing and Dr. Perumal intricately explained management of reproductive disorders of livestock. During the three days programme, farmers were given demonstrations on deworming, feeding of mineral

mixture and scientific feeding practices. Inputs such as pig feed (concentrate mixture), feed supplements and medicines were also distributed. Mr. Andrew Mosses and Mr. Festus thanked the village farmers for their active participation. The duo thanked the scientists for their efforts and urged them to conduct such programmes frequently with much more inputs to distribute.

T. Divya Murthy, Police Constable awarded for significant contribution in implementation of CCTNS/ICJS project

PORT BLAIR, DEC 17/--/ Contribution of PC/972 T. Divya Murthy of A&N Police was recognised for his significant role in implementation of Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) & Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) and he has been awarded in the individual officers category in category 'C' of States/UTs having less than 50 Police Stations by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). PC/972 T.

Divya Murthy was appointed on 03/02/2004 as Police Constable and he was trained in MS SQL, MySQL & trouble shooting of applications/web applications by the Department of Information Technology, A&N Administration.

He was posted in CCTNS Cell in the year 2010 and has served for nearly 10 years in the project. During his tenure at CCTNS Cell, he has taken a lot of initiatives and was



instrumental in sorting out glitches in Core Application Software of CCTNS. With the continuous dedicated efforts of CCTNS team, the UT of Andaman & Nicobar has secured overall 96.03% among the UTs as per the latest release of Pragati Report.

All the senior Officers of Andaman and Nicobar Police have congratulated praised PC/972 T. Divya Murthy for being conferred with the award.

CPI(M) demands additional flights

PORT BLAIR, DEC 17/--/ The CPI (M) has demanded additional flights between Port Blair and mainland sectors considering the exorbitant flight fare and non-availability of tickets. In a letter sent to the Chief Secretary, A & N Administration, Mr. D. Ayyappan, CPI (M) State Secretary drew the attention of the Chief Secretary to the non-availability of air tickets for the people of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and exorbitant air fare in the Port Blair - mainland sector flights being operated by Air India and other private airlines. He stated in the letter that with the beginning of Christmas vacation, a large number of students studying in various educational institutions on the mainland propose to visit their homes in A & N Islands. He further also informed the Chief Secretary that a number of people who want to avail specialized medical treatment at mainland hospitals are also unable to proceed to the

mainland due to surging airfare on a daily basis.

CPI (M) informed the Administration that at present, as per the website of Airlines, a single ticket from Port Blair to Chennai costs more than Rs. 20,000/- while no tickets in any flight are available from Chennai to Port Blair. Shri Ayyappan told the Chief Secretary that Islanders, particularly those belonging to lower strata of the society are unable to travel by air. He said that CPI (M) has been getting frantic calls from people stranded at Chennai about the non-availability of tickets in any flights. Hence, the CPI (M) urged the Chief Secretary to intervene in the matter and direct all the Airlines operating between Port Blair-mainland sectors to schedule additional flights to cater to the needs of the passengers especially for the islanders during the months of December, 2022 and January, 2023.

Museum of Cellular Jail to remain close on 19th Dec



PORT BLAIR, DEC 17/--/ General public and tourists have been informed that the Museums of National Memorial Cellular Jail will remain closed for the visitors from 2 pm onwards on 19th December, 2022 due to administrative reasons.

Unidentified dead body of newborn infant found

PORT BLAIR, DEC 17/--/ An unidentified dead body of a new born female infant was found sunken in sea water of Joda Kilan Creek area.

In this regard, a FIR has been registered at PS Pahargaoon and is being investigated. The dead body of the infant is preserved for identification in the cold Mortuary room of GB Pant Hospital, Port Blair.

The general public has been asked to share information pertaining to the unidentified dead body of the newborn female infant, any crime or other illegal activities to Police at 112, 03192-232100, 03192-250525 & 03192-233077. The identity of the informant will be kept secret.



FROZEN SHOULDER

WHAT IS IT & HOW CAN IT BE RELEASED?

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Man is a credulous animal, and must believe something in the absence of good grounds for belief. he will be satisfied with bad ones

Bertrand Russell

India’s trade on a high trajectory

India's trade is moving forward on the high growth wave even with the high base of last year, and despite global demand slowdown, exports performance continues on the high growth run. Exports moving to positive territory, after a drop in October, is on expected line though the challenges continue. The off take has slowed down with rising inflation in most economies affecting the purchasing power. Moreover, the large departmental stores are maintaining lean inventories as credit cost of building inventories have gone up with interest rates moving northwards. Pressure from persistently high global inflation despite accelerated monetary tightening has also raised the import bill for essential commodities like crude petroleum, coking coal that need to be imported.

Latest data showed that India's exports recorded a flat growth of 0.59 per cent to USD 31.99 billion in November, even as trade deficit widened to USD 23.89 billion during the month. Exports stood at USD 31.8 billion in November last year, while imports rose by 5.37 per cent to USD 55.88 billion in November as compared to USD 53.03 billion in the corresponding month a year ago. During April-November 2022, exports rose by 11 per cent to USD 295.26 billion as against USD 265.77 billion in the same month last year. Imports, however, rose by 29.5 per cent to USD 493.61 billion during the eight months period of this fiscal. It was USD 381.17 billion during April-November 2021, as per the data. The merchandise trade deficit for April-November 2022 has increased to USD 198.35 billion as against USD 115.39 billion in April-November 2021.

India's exports entered negative territory after a gap of about two years, declining sharply by 16.65 per cent to USD 29.78 billion in October, mainly due to global demand slowdown, even as trade deficit widened to USD 26.91 billion. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has projected that the global trade growth will rise by 3.5 per cent in 2022, but by only one per cent in 2023. The exports exhibited a positive growth in 15 out of 30 key sectors in November as compared to the same period last year. Sectors which recorded positive growth include electronic goods (54.48 per cent), gems and jewellery (4.61 per cent), RMG of textiles (11.70 per cent), pharmaceuticals (8.66 per cent), rice (19.16 per cent), and leather (8.68 per cent). With exports continuing to remain under stress for the second consecutive month in November, and imports also falling, the current account deficit is likely to moderate in the second half and close the fiscal with a 3.3 per cent of GDP or USD 108-112 billion, which will still be a record high. Falling exports and commodity prices will also help the country print in a moderate CAD at USD 24-26 billion in Q3FY23 from likely high of USD 31-34 billion in Q2FY23, Icra Ratings said in a report. The next move by the US Fed would be very important and crucial.

FM must focus on speedy job generation through 2023-24 budget

REFLEX ACTION

K R Sudhaman

to deal with this peculiar inflation due to a combination of factors, external as well as domestic. So fiscal measures have to be calibrated in a manner that it did not impinge upon growth momentum. This balancing act is going to be tough and is going to be tight rope walk for Sitharaman in the budget.

One positive factor in the economy is that Banks have adequate liquidity at the moment, their balance sheets have been cleaned up and have low bad debts. Also private investments have started picking up with most of the companies working 75-80 per cent of capacity after covid-19. The corporates, which had over-leveraged from banks during boom period, have cleaned their balance sheets as well and have started investing in creating fresh capacity. Rising interest rates at this juncture could act as a dampener, particularly in the real estate sector and automobiles, which are on revival mode. There could also be some impact on exports with global demand being subdued. But hopefully the situation improved in a few quarters.

Apart from usual prescriptions of keeping the fiscal deficit under check and targeting a lower fiscal deficit as per the recommendations of Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, Sitharaman needs to think out of the box to pump-prime the economy. The usual strategy in the budget is to step up public expenditure particularly in the infrastructure sector like rail, road, ports, airports and telecommunications. This has to be done to ensure revival of the economy. There will also be some tax proposals and PLI schemes to incentivize the private industries to make big investments. These are standard prescriptions, which are done year after year and perhaps done more vigorously when the economy is on a revival mode. Of course Corporates are now contemplating big-ticket investments. Tata sons have announced investment of \$90 billion in next five years in various activities including semiconductors, Air India, Apple mobile phones, EVs and so on. Mukesh

World Bank has revised upwards its earlier GDP growth estimate to 6.9 per cent for India this financial year on the back of strong macroeconomic fundamentals and economic revival after Covid-19 mayhem. This is certainly music to the ears as India is perhaps a few countries looking up in otherwise gloomy global economy. Inflation is one factor, which is still daunting the economy and Reserve Bank of India has rightly taken measured monetary steps to bring it down to acceptable band. RBI has raised short-term repo rate, a barometer of interest rates, by a mere 0.35 per cent as against expectation of 0.5 per cent. This has been done to ensure that growth momentum is not severely hampered by going all out contain inflation. Consumer Price Index at 6.7 per cent is still higher than the RBI band of 4 plus-minus 2 per cent, but it has started slowing down. It is, however, still a source of worry as food and fuel inflation, which affects the poor most, are still high and are expected to continue for a few more quarters.

In such a scenario, speculation is ripe on what the general budget on February one can do to step-up economic recovery. This will be the last full budget to be presented by Nirmala Sitharaman, before the general elections in May 2024. Though there will be one more for BJP government present a budget in February 2024, it will be an interim one as the practice is to allow the newly elected government in the Lok Sabha elections to present the full budget in June-July. This is because in India general budget is not merely an annual statement of government expenditure and revenue but lays down the annual economic roadmap besides some medium term strategy and vision of the government of the day.

As has been pointed out by several economists, monetary actions alone cannot contain inflation in the present circumstances, as it is triggered by several factors including global. Monetary action of rising interest rates can only contain to some extent demand factors. The current inflation as supply factors as well besides slowing down of global economy and the uncertain geo-political situation arising out of the prolonged Russian-Ukraine war. There is also monetary tightening by many central banks in advanced economies to suck out excess liquidity pumped into the system due to covid 19 to alleviate the suffering of the people. So well thought out fiscal measures are required



A child looks at a Santa Claus doll kept for sale at New Market in Kolkata on Saturday--Arijit Ganguly

Harming the programme for climate change

The crux of the issue is that non-fossil, or even a low fossil fuel path, will need grid-level storage costs to drop by a factor of 10 times what they are today! If they don't, then the grid supply will become unreliable, with cascading costs for the people and the economy.

That green energy has a storage problem did not bother us earlier. Coal or gas-fired plants on the grid can be used to meet the shortfall due to the variable supply from renewables. The shortage of renewables is not a problem as long as renewables are not the major source of supply for the grid. Once renewables become the major source of supply for the grid, then the reliability of the grid supply depends on grid-level storage batteries. How variable are these supplies? In Germany, wind energy in 2019 went from supplying 59 per cent one day to as low as 2.6 per cent on another. In the same year, solar peaked at 25 per cent and bottomed out at 0.3 per cent. What happens if both solar and wind are not available simultaneously? This would mean installing much bigger storage batteries for a reliable grid supply than what we are planning for today with the luxury of fossil fuel as a backup.

While many may feel that having two renewable sources should take care of the relative unreliability of each, it, unfortunately, does not work that way. If there is a prolonged period of calm, typically lasting for days, then at night time, both sources will be unavailable. This can be an even bigger problem at high altitudes, as days are short and nights

longer. We can either spend money now to provide a reliable grid based on renewables or continue using fossil fuels as long as we can and postpone the transition. The pretence that only coal-fired plants are fossil while natural gas is a transitional fuel is to postpone the investments that the rich countries need to make in grid-level energy storage.

Instead of having an honest discussion about how to reach a low carbon trajectory quickly, the politics of the rich countries is how can "we" postpone our transition to green energy in the name of natural gas as a "transitional" fuel and dump the problem of the energy transition on the poor countries. The rich countries can then also extract their profits from selling us renewable energy technology as well as batteries.

The most hypocritical of the lot are the Nordic countries, who have argued that they can fund African countries' development of gas and oil fields provided the gas and oil are exported entirely back to them. The African countries should go in exclusively for renewable energy. This is what W Gyude Moore and Todd Moss pointed out in a recent article in Foreign Policy called, "Europe to Africa: Gas for Me but Not for Thee".

Renewable energy has a storage problem, is well known. Fossil fuels are both stores of energy and source of energy, assuming coal, gas and oil resources are inexhaustible. That they are not, was thought to be a problem for future generations. Just as global warming was relegated to a problem of the future until drought, heat, and an increasing number of extreme weather events convinced us that the problem has already arrived. This means we need to plan for a grid using much larger amounts of renewables and have it in place as quickly as possible. And in order to do that, we will have to solve the problem of grid-level storage of energy.

The simplest storage for any grid is to convert the existing hydroelectric plants to be run exclusively as complementary to wind and solar energy, converting them to pumped storage except for the period when inflows exceed their current levels of storage, as often happens during rainy seasons. The main problem with hydroelectric power of land acquisition and displacement does not exist here, and no new hydroelectric projects are required. In the current scenario, using hydroelectricity for any other purpose, except to meet a peaking load or in a pumped storage mode is a sheer waste. To

answer the serious question of how to reach a low carbon path rapidly, we need to look not only at future solutions which may or may not come but at the already existing ones. Instead of trying to shift the burden of the energy transition onto the poorer countries, we need to look at not just the amount of carbon emission of a country but the per capita emissions.

Comparing the total emissions of China to that of the US, with its population five times that of the US, or India's with European countries of much smaller population size, lumping all of them as large emitters is simply to confuse the issues. Just for the record, India uses 60 per cent of its energy from fossil fuels instead of 68.6 per cent of the US. And China, in the last three years, has added more renewables each year than the US and Europe together. There are two ways to meet the climate crisis: look honestly at the problem and do the best that each country can do to avert the impending crisis. I am not even talking of a just share of carbon space, simply that rich countries do not occupy even the remaining carbon space as the US and the EU-UK seem to be bent on doing. This means not playing games with climate targets, accepting that rich countries have to shoulder a larger of the costs of transition and not charging extortionate money for patents/know-how from the poorer countries. And not single out only coal while pretending that natural gas is a transitional fuel. A capitalist principle of beggar thy neighbour may help the rich countries in the short run but will only bring disaster for humanity. (IPA)

Ambani has committed to over \$75 billion in the next few years including hydrogen fuel and telecom. Adanis are making huge investments. Vedanta and a few other players too are investing big. At least six Indian cities Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad, are going to be among the top ten cities in the World. Ahmedabad is not far behind. That apart, five states Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh will have GDP that is almost equivalent to India's present GDP in the next 10 years or so. These are already happening

So, the budget could make a huge difference this time through out of the box thinking on how to revive struggling MSMEs. It can come out with some drastic and big-ticket measures to revive the MSME sector, badly hit due to 2016 demonetization, followed by hasty implementation of GST and two years of Covid 19. At the moment, there is no statistics available on how many of the six crore MSMEs have closed down cumulatively in the last five to six years. Nearly 97 per cent of these MSMEs are micro industries employing less than 10 persons and this sector is a major job creator accounting for over 30 per cent of India's GDP and over 40 per cent of India's manufacturing and exports. MSMEs account for nearly 80 per cent of employment in the informal sector outside agriculture.

Informal lending on which MSMEs depended has virtually disappeared after demonetization and an alternative has not yet emerged. Mudra provides only working capital loans. A similar scheme is needed to be created for term lending to MSMEs with the help of banks and institutions like SIDBI and NABARD. The good news is banks have already started increasing term lending to small industries. But unfortunately it is only established small industries, some of whom have now become medium industries. The lending problem is for micro and cottage industries. Banks at the moment do not have the wherewithal to reach out to them. Tamil Nadu government is contemplating some measures to improve term lending through the state lending arms. More states are expected to follow suit. Self Help groups too needed hand-holding. It would be worthwhile for the budget to consider even setting up of a separate institution for term lending to MSMEs particularly micro, cottage and small industries. SIDBI somehow has not delivered adequately on this score. (IPA)

| Conventional Crossword | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 29 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| ACROSS | | | | | DOWN | | | | |
|--------|--------------------|----|---------------------|--|------|--|--|--|--|
| 1 | Imply | 1 | Chant | | | | | | |
| 5 | Social event | 2 | Marsh | | | | | | |
| 8 | Dodged | 3 | Wicked | | | | | | |
| 9 | Garment | 4 | Speed contest | | | | | | |
| 10 | Acting part | 5 | Headwear | | | | | | |
| 11 | Prise | 6 | Worshipped | | | | | | |
| 12 | Indicate agreement | 7 | Falsehood | | | | | | |
| 15 | Camping item | 13 | Tincture gold (Her) | | | | | | |
| 18 | Upright | 14 | Longing | | | | | | |
| 21 | Female deer | 16 | Denial | | | | | | |
| 22 | Black deposit | 17 | Sport | | | | | | |
| 24 | Jump rope | 19 | Dealt with | | | | | | |
| 25 | Plant secretion | 20 | In the direction of | | | | | | |
| 28 | Discount | 23 | Snare | | | | | | |
| 29 | Cast off | 24 | Distress call | | | | | | |
| 30 | Agreements | 26 | Greek letter | | | | | | |
| | | 27 | Dry, of champagne | | | | | | |

| SUDOKU : 3729 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|---|
| 1 | | | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Yesterday's Solution 3728 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 3 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 5 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 6 | | | | | | |
| 1 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 2 | | | | | | |
| 9 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 5 | | | | | | |
| 7 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 3 | | | | | | |
| 4 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 9 | | | | | | |
| 8 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 7 | | | | | | |
| 2 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 8 | | | | | | |
| 6 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | | | | | | |

| Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 1737 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| C | R | A | G | | R | A | B | I | D | | | | | |
| O | | M | I | N | U | T | E | | U | | | | | |
| S | M | U | G | | M | O | D | E | L | | | | | |
| | E | L | S | E | | L | | | C | | | | | |
| T | E | E | | A | L | L | E | G | E | | | | | |
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| G | H | O | U | L | | O | D | D | S | | | | | |
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1247 pending claims of beneficiary workmen approved by A&N Building & Other Construction Workers Welfare Board

PORT BLAIR, DEC 17 /--/ A meeting of Andaman & Nicobar Islands Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board was held on Nov.9. The Board unanimously approved 1247 pending claims of the beneficiary workmen under various welfare schemes. The claims of 1155 beneficiaries amounting to Rs. 2.35 crores have been successfully transferred to beneficiaries' bank accounts whose Aadhaar were seeded with their bank accounts. The remaining claims could not be released as the registered beneficiary's Aadhaar was not seeded with their

savings bank account which is pre-requisite for transfer of benefits under PFMS Portal. A communication in this regard has been already sent to the registered beneficiaries at their address through Post and they were also informed over phone and requested to immediately contact their bank with Aadhaar so that their account is seeded with Aadhaar. The list of beneficiaries whose payment has been released and the list of beneficiaries whose payment could not be transferred to their bank account have been uploaded in the Labour Department's

Official Portal <https://labour.and.nic.in/> for the information and guidance of all concerned registered beneficiaries. The beneficiaries whose Aadhaar is not seeded with their bank account have been requested to seed the same at the earliest and necessary confirmation in this regard may be communicated to Board Office on priority so that their benefits are transferred to their bank account. For further clarification, if any, the beneficiaries may contact Telephone Number 03192-230157 between 8.30 AM & 5.30 PM on all working days.

Tight security for Maharashtra winter session in Nagpur city

NAGPUR, DEC 17 /--/ As many as 7,000 police personnel will be deployed to ensure the smooth passage of the winter session of the Maharashtra legislature beginning here on Monday, officials said on Saturday. Nagpur Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar said the police are geared up to ensure that no untoward incident takes place during the session. "The security cover for chief minister Eknath Shinde and his Deputy Devendra Fadnis has been strengthened. Security at the Vidhan Bhavan, where the two Houses of the legislature meet, is beefed up. Security at 'Ramgiri' and 'Devgiri', the official residences of the CM and the Deputy CM respectively, have also been tightened," he told reporters. No person without valid photo identification would be allowed entry at these three places. Security has also

been tightened at MLAs' Hostel and Nag Bhavan, Kumar said, adding armed police personnel would remain deployed at these places round-the-clock. "Commandos of 'Force One,' Quick Response Teams (QRTs), and armed policemen have been deployed as part of the 'three-tier' security at the Vidhan Bhavan. The number of staff in the CCTV camera control room has also been increased for effective 24x7 monitoring. 600 vehicles have been allotted for police duties," the police commissioner said. Around 2,500 police personnel from various units across Maharashtra have reached Nagpur for bandobast duties, he said. "Additionally, seven companies of the State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) and 1,000 Home Guards will also assist the police in bandobast. (PTI)

NRI nurse, 2 kids murder in UK: Family in Kerala blames husband

KOTTAYAM, DEC 17 /--/ A day after the killing of an Indian-origin nurse from Kerala and her two young children was reported from the UK, her family on Saturday alleged that her husband was a "cruel" man and he had assaulted his wife in the past also. To add to their woes, they need around Rs 30 lakh for bringing the bodies back to India and to see their daughter and grandkids for one last time. The nurse -- 35-year-old Anju Asok -- and her children, a boy aged 6 years and a girl of 4 years, were found with serious injuries at their home in Kettering in the Northampton region of eastern England on Thursday. According to police there, Asok died at the scene and the children succumbed to injuries in the hospital. Speaking to the media at their home in Vaikom area of Kottayam district of the state, Asok's parents said that local police had informed them on the previous night that according to the post mortem of their daughter, she was strangled to death using a cloth or a

rope. The post-mortem of their grandkids was to be conducted today. Asok's mother alleged that her son-in-law -- Saju -- is a "cruel" person and she has seen him assault her daughter and grandson when the couple was living in Saudi Arabia. "I was staying with them when my granddaughter was born. I have seen him hit Anju and my grandson. He is a cruel person. He gets angry very quickly. I was scared to be alone with him in the house there. "But my daughter never complained. She suffered everything in silence as she did not want us to worry. I am sure his cruelty continued when they moved to England," she told reporters. She also said that Saju, who had a job in Saudi Arabia, was unemployed while in England, yet he used to control the finances and would rarely send them any money. "He would decide when we can see our daughter and grandkids via video call," Asok's mother claimed. She also said that her son-in-law's family, who

are based in Kannur, loved her daughter and grandkids and they never had any complaints about Asok. Asok's father said that his daughter studied nursing in Bengaluru and was working there when she met Saju, who used to work in a travel agency. "It was a love marriage. When she informed us, we were hesitant. But they were both adults and educated people. He was working in a travel agency. "My daughter said she would accept it if we said no to their marriage, but she also said not to insist on marrying someone else. So, we agreed to their getting married," he said. He also said that while he has not seen his daughter being hit, he has seen his grandson being allegedly manhandled by Saju who was short-tempered. Asok's parents want to see their daughter and grandkids for one last time, but for that they need around Rs 30 lakhs, an amount which is beyond their means. "We lost everything in the 2018 floods. All we have now is 13 cents of land and this house. (PTI)

Neurological disorders account for 70 per cent of childhood disabilities: Karnataka health minister

BENGALURU, DEC 17 /--/ Karnataka health minister K Sudhakar on Saturday said, neurological disorders contribute to almost 70 per cent of the burden of disability in childhood, and could result in becoming a threat to the development of our country. He said, mental health issues and non-communicable diseases are on the rise due to current food habits, lifestyle and sleep patterns. "We now see that among all age groups from youngsters to adults to senior citizens, we are seeing a lot of mental health issues. Due to this, the quality of life is severely affected," Sudhakar said. Speaking at the inauguration of the 3rd Indian National Conference

of COMHAD (Commonwealth Association for Health And Disability), the Minister said mental health care is an extremely important part of any health care system. "The burden of neurological issues is ever-increasing in India and could become a threat to the growth and development of our country, both economically and socially. There is a rise in mental health and neurological issues including dementia, paralyzing stroke, epilepsy etc," the Minister said. "We will need to create awareness about these issues starting from school children to working professionals. Neurological disorders contribute



K Sudhakar

to almost 70 per cent of the burden of disability in childhood," he added. Further noting that the state government has taken this up very passionately and have developed the Hub and Spoke' model in association with NIMHANS (National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences), Sudhakar said, "What this means is that NIMHANS will act as a hub and the PHCs (Primary Health Centres) in all districts will act as spokes to work together to address the increasing mental health issues." "We are trying to train MBBS doctors at the PHCs to diagnose and counsel patients with mental health needs," he added. (PTI)

‘My daughter in unable to speak or eat’, says MCD school student’s father

NEW DELHI, DEC 17 /--/ The father of the Class 5 girl who was assaulted by an MCD school teacher is still struggling to come to terms with the incident and said his daughter is unable to eat or speak due to a broken cheekbone. The child is still in Safdarjung Hospital. According to her father, the girl has also suffered injuries on her legs and the side of her head. "She is unable to eat or drink anything. The doctor told us that she would be discharged today. But they informed us that she will be kept under observation for two more

days," the father said. He has demanded a harsher punishment for the teacher, saying "how could someone do this to a child". Recalling the events of the day, the father, who is a daily wage, said he was informed about his daughter's injuries on a call from the school. "I was at work when we received information from the school about the assault. We rushed to the school where we were told that she has been admitted to the Hindu Rao Hospital. I ran there," he said. The father said the minor cried when he saw

him and his wife lost consciousness. "Though she was unable to speak when I saw her she started crying. My wife on the other hand fell unconscious," he said. "We want the teacher to be removed and severely punished. She could harm any child. We send our children for education. She can do same thing to other students," he added. According to the police, the teacher locked herself inside a classroom with students and "violently" threw water bottles before she picked up the girl, cut her hair and tossed her from the

balcony. According to doctors, the girl, aged around 11, has sustained a fracture in a facial bone. The incident took place at around 11 am at the Delhi Nagar Nigam Balika Vidyalaya. Papers, books and bags lay scattered in the classroom as students ran out of the classroom in panic. The teacher had allegedly threatened to harm them as well, police said. Police said the teacher, identified as Geeta Rani Deshwal (26), has been arrested, adding that the motive behind the incident is not clear yet. (PTI)

MP: Massive ‘rudra veena’ weighing 5 tonnes created from scrap, waste material by artists

BHOPAL, DEC 17 /--/ A group of artists from Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh has created a 28-foot-long and 10-foot wide 'Rudra Veena' weighing around five tonnes with scrap and waste material after the local civic body gave financial approval under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, the main designer said on Saturday. It will be installed on Atal Path, a road constructed as part of the Bhopal Smart City project, R-one Inc main designer Pawan Deshpande told PTI. "It cost us Rs 12 lakh to make this rudra veena from scrap and wastematerial. The Bhopal Municipal Corporation gave financial approval under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. Our group comprises 12 persons, all of whom are well versed in various forms of art," he said. The first project was a radio that has been installed at the busy Roshanpura Sqaure here, while other works include guitar, a coronavirus theme and the logo of the Bhopal civic body, he added. (PTI)

Woman who dressed up as man arrested for kidnapping minor

JAIPUR, DEC 17 /--/ Police have arrested a woman who dressed up as a man and allegedly kidnapped a minor girl in Rajasthan's Sirohi district. Police had initially charged the woman under sections of rape after she was falsely identified as a man. The charges were later dropped and she was booked for kidnapping. SHO of Mahila Thana Maya Pandit said a case was registered on November 28 against Shankar on the complaint of a minor girl, who alleged that she was abducted and raped by the accused. According to the minor, the accused had sent her home in an auto. On December 5, the police detained the accused, who was identified with the help of a picture produced by the girl. "The accused said he was not a man but a woman living in the guise of a man. A medical examination was

conducted in which it was confirmed that the accused was a woman," she said. While the allegation of rape was found to be false, she was accused of kidnapping the child. Therefore she was arrested and is currently under judicial custody, the

SHO said. The motive behind kidnapping the minor was not known immediately. According to police, the woman used to disguise as a man for earning a livelihood after her husband deserted her. (PTI)

Bring legislation for mandatory physical activities in schools to fight child obesity: UP BJP MLA

LUCKNOW, DEC 17 /--/ BJP MLA Rajeshwar Singh has urged the Union government to bring a legislation that mandates a compulsory physical fitness period in schools that will help to combat the rising cases of obesity and diabetes among children. The Uttar Pradesh legislator has written a letter to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan early this week expressing his concern over the issue and that there was "no single legislation which governs all the schools in India". "I propose that Parliament introduce a legislation to govern the inclusion, access, and provision of basic physical health and fitness to all children in the education system.

"The proposed legislation should seek to mandate all such institutions to have a 45 minute time slot every day dedicated to imparting physical fitness to all students, be it through yoga and exercise, or sports and physical activities," Singh wrote in the letter, citing relevant official data. The MLA from the Sarojini Nagar seat in Lucknow quoted data to state that around 5-8.8 per cent of school children are obese in India and if the rates continue to increase at this pace, India will be home to 27 million obese children by 2030. Childhood obesity, he wrote in his letter dated December 14, is particularly troubling because it has a ripple effect causing a plethora of health problems like diabetes that were once considered to be

F.No. 9-130/CE/PW/ES-II/2022/7036

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER
ANDAMAN PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
NIRMAN BHAWAN

Dated 16th December, 2022

PRESS NOTICE

This is for the information of all concerned that the provisional list of ineligible candidates for the posts notified by APWD vide recruitment notice dated 16/08/2022 has been published in the State portal @ www.andaman.gov.in and Departmental website @ <http://apwd.and.nic.in/index.php> . The reasons for being ineligible are also given.

These candidates can submit their representations, if any alongwith documents in support of claim in pdf format through email to ceapwd.recruitment@gmail.com latest by **25th December 2022**. Representations received in any form after this date will not be entertained by this Department.

EO TO CHIEF ENGINEER
CHIEF ENGINEER'S OFFICE

9445/22

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDERS

The **Executive Engineer, Panchayati Raj Institution, South Andaman Division-** I on behalf of **Pradhan, Gram Panchayat, Mithakhari** invites online item rate tender (in CPWD form-8) from bonafide and experienced contractors of appropriate class of APWD, MES, ALHW & P&T for the below mentioned work.

1. NIT NO. EE/PRI/SAD-I/RR/22-23/88 **Name of Work:-** Conversion of CC Road to Bitumen Road from Biraj Chicken Centre to existing Pahadi Nallah road via A.Hamza Muslimbasti under Gram Panchayat Mithakhari. **Estimated Cost Rs:-** 17, 09,345/- **Earnest Money Deposit:-** 34,187/- **Time of Completion:-** Nine (09) Months, Tender Fee:- `500/- & last date & time of submission of bid:- 22/12/2022 (1500 hrs)

The tender forms and other details can be obtained from the website <https://eprocure.andaman.gov.in>.
Tender ID:- 2022_RDPRI_8433_1

Executive Engineer,
Panchayati Raj Institution,
South Andaman Division-I
Junglighat, Port Blair
South Andaman

9418/22

अण्डमान तथा निकोबार प्रशासन
Andaman and Nicobar Administration
ग्रामीण विकास पंचायती राज संस्थान एवं शहरी स्थानीय निकाय निदेशालय
Directorate of RD, PRIs & ULBs
मेरीन हिल, पोर्ट ब्लेयर
Marine Hill, Port Blair

Port Blair dated the December, 2022
ABSENTEE NOTICE

Whereas, Shri Derick, Multi Tasking Staff attached to Gram Panchayat Tushnabad under Ferrargunj Block is unauthorizedly absenting himself from duties w.e.f. 24.08.2021 without any intimation or prior permission of the Competent Authority.

Whereas, the above unauthorized absent of the incumbent from duties is causing severe inconvenience in the regular functioning of the Gram Panchayat and is badly hampering the public service work rendered by the Gram Panchayat.

Whereas, the Competent Authority has taken serious cognizance of the matter and views the act by the incumbent as disobedience, dereliction and lack of dedication towards work which is an act of unbecoming of a Govt. Servant.

NOW, THEREFORE, Shri Derick, Multi Tasking Staff is hereby served this Absentee Notice with the direction to report for duty along with explanation for his unauthorized absence from duty alongwith supporting documents, if any, within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which disciplinary action will be initiated against his as per Rule.

Assistant Director (Admn)
(F.No. 5-582/RD & LSG/PF/2007)

9427/22

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER

No. e-tender-DB/CD/DP/2022/ 4943
Diglipur, dated: 14-12-2022

The Executive Engineer, Construction Division, APWD, Diglipur invites on behalf of President of India, online Item rate bid from contractors irrespective of their enlistment in APWD or any other Govt. Department subject to the condition that they have experience on executing the relevant magnitude of work as per CPWD Works Manual and with other GOI organizations in these islands and do not have any adverse remarks for following work:-

- 1. NIT No. 83/EE/CD/APWD/DP/2022-23 Name of work:-** Improvement approach road to Police Quarters, village road for Ward No.6 Madhupur (Monoranjn Howlader Road) & Rural Road from Kalyani Howlader house to Binod Howlader house under SD-II, CD, APWD, Diglipur. **Estimated cost: ₹ 94,88,304/- Earnest Money: ₹ 1,89,766/- time of completion: 06 months.** (Tender ID: 2022_APWD_8477_1).

The e-tender form and other details can be downloaded from the website. The last date of bid submission will be **30-12-2022 upto 15:00 hours**. Other details/information can be seen on website eprocure.and.gov.in.

EE, CD, APWD,
Diglipur.

9436/22



Lionel Messi (left) and Kylian Mbappé will go head to head in the World Cup final between Argentina and France, and the narrative of their tussle will overwhelm all other

BJP insulting people living near B'desh border in name of CAA: Abhishek

RANAGHAT, DEC 17 /--/ Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Saturday accused the BJP of insulting the people living near the Bangladesh border by asking them to prove their Indian citizenship for a second time in the name of CAA.

Banerjee, who was addressing a public meeting at Ranaghat in Nadia district, said that if a resident of West Bengal's Nadia or North 24 Parganas districts, both bordering Bangladesh, has to prove his citizenship again, the same yardstick has to be applied for all, including the prime minister and Union home minister. "Those who are misleading the people in the name of the Citizenship Amendment Act, I have one question for them. Why rules cannot be framed even after the CAA was tabled in Parliament. Because they used the CAA to get votes. "If you have all documents and got benefits of the government's welfare schemes, and if you have voted in earlier polls, why there is a need to do it all over again? Because the BJP wants to divide the people," the TMC's Diamond Harbour MP said while addressing the gathering. (PTI)

Rahul speaking China's language to lower armed forces' morale, alleges Nadda

BJP seeks Congress leader's expulsion from party

NEW DELHI, DEC 17 /--/ In an all-out attack on Rahul Gandhi for his remark that Chinese soldiers are beating up Indian Army personnel in Arunachal Pradesh, the BJP said on Saturday that the Congress should expel him from the party as its president J P Nadda accused him of speaking the language of China and Pakistan. Nadda accused Rahul of "again lowering the morale of our armed forces" and slammed his comments as highly condemnable and unpardonable. "This raises question mark about his patriotism. He had also questioned surgical strikes and Balakot air strikes. It is a sad reflection of his metal bankruptcy," Nadda said as a number of senior party leaders seized on the former Congress president's comments to target the opposition party which is seeking some sort of political revival with Gandhi's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra'. At its official briefing, Bharatiya Janata Party spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said if Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge is not "remote-controlled" and if the Opposition party stands with the country, then Gandhi should be expelled for his comments as they "belittle" India and break the morale of its armed forces. Bhatia likened Gandhi to Jaichand, the king of Kannauj who is projected as a betrayer to the Indian cause in some historical accounts, and alleged that he has constantly tried to break the armed forces' morale, be it after the surgical and air strikes on terror camps in Pakistan or after the Galwan valley clashes, in which 20 soldiers had laid down their lives. While Rahul allegedly sought evidence of the armed forces' strikes on terrorists inside Pakistan, he called the Prime Minister "Surrender Modi" after the Galwan fight, the BJP leader said. The Congress leader should tender an apology to the country for his statement, he said. His sin will not be washed away with the apology but it will at least demonstrate that he has realised his mistake, he said. At a press conference in Jaipur on Friday during his "Bharat Jodo

Yatra", Rahul claimed that China is preparing for a war and accused the government of trying to "ignore" the threat, saying it is "asleep" and not ready to accept the situation. In an apparent reference to a recent clash between Indian and Chinese soldiers in Arunachal Pradesh, he said Indian jawans in the region are being "beaten up". Nadda said no amount of condemnation of Gandhi's statement will be enough and added that Indian armed forces symbolise courage and valour. He noted that the Congress, when it was in power, had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Chinese Communist Party and that the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation had received funding from the Chinese embassy here.

"Probably, this is the reason that Rahul Gandhi speaks the language of China and Pakistan," he said, adding that Rahul was "secretly" meeting Chinese officials at their embassy in New Delhi when Indian and Chinese soldiers faced off in Doklam. Union minister Anurag Thakur said he was not surprised by Gandhi's statement as even at the time of the Doklam incident he was seen drinking soup with Chinese officials. "When Indian soldiers carried out



the surgical strikes, even then he raised questions. He and the Congress seem to have no faith in the Indian Army. But we have full faith in our army. Today our army is capable of conducting surgical strikes and gives a befitting reply to the encroachers," he said.

Union minister Kiren Rijiju said Rahul has not only insulted the Army but also damaged the country's image. "He is not only a problem for the Congress Party but he has also become a huge embarrassment the country. We are proud of our Armed Forces," the MP from Arunachal tweeted. Bhatia told reporters that if the Congress does not act against Gandhi, who continues to be seen as its main driving force, it will mean that his statement is reflective of the opposition party's mindset. The Congress has become less of a political party and more of a den of anti-India activities, the BJP leader alleged. (PTI)

Rajnath praises armed forces for display of their bravery, valour in Galwan, Tawang

NEW DELHI, DEC 17 /--/ Bravery and valour displayed by the armed forces during the Galwan valley clashes and the recent face-off in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh is commendable and no amount of praise for them is enough, defence minister Rajnath Singh said on Saturday. In an address at industry chamber FICCI, Singh also said that India aspires to become a superpower to ensure global prosperity, but it does not have any intention to dominate other nations or capture even one inch of land of any country, in comments seen as a thinly veiled reference to China's aggressive behaviour along the borders. The defence minister also took an indirect dig at Rahul Gandhi over his comments on the border row with China, a day after the Congress leader accused the government of downplaying the threat posed by the Chinese military along the Line of Actual Control. "Any amount of praise is not enough for the armed forces for the way they displayed bravery and valour, be it in Galwan or Tawang," Singh said. "We have never questioned the intention of any leader in the Opposition, we have only debated on the basis of policies. Politics should be based on truth. Politics cannot be done on the basis of falsehood for a long time," he said, without naming anyone. "The process of taking the society towards the right path is called 'rajniti' (politics). I do not understand the reason behind doubting anyone's intention always," Singh added. Citing the stiff opposition faced by the government in rolling out the GST (Goods and



Services Tax), the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme and agricultural reforms, the defence minister said the trend of opposing any decision or scheme for the sake of opposition should stop as it is not a good sign of a healthy democracy. Indian and Chinese troops were engaged in a fresh clash in the Yangtse area of Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang sector on December 9, in a first such major flare-up after the deadly hand-to-hand combat in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades. "When I am saying we aspire to become a superpower, it should never be construed that we want to dominate over countries in the world. We do not have any intention to even capture one inch of land of any country," he said. "If we want to become a superpower, then we want to become a superpower for global good and prosperity. The world is our family," Singh added. The defence minister also said that India's economy was among the six-seven large economies during the time of Independence and when China witnessed a new system following the 1949 revolution, its GDP was less than that of India. He said though India and China kept marching together till 1980, the neighbouring country went ahead, riding on economic reforms. "In 1991, economic reforms started in our country too. But China has made such a long jump in a short time that, except the US, it has left behind all other countries of the world in the pace of development," he said. (PTI)

Shah meets Mamata one-to-one at Nabanna

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, DEC 17 /--/ West Bengal government secretariat Nabanna on Saturday witnessed an one-to-one meeting between Union home minister Amit Shah and chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

Shah met Mamata on the sidelines of Eastern Zonal Council (EZC) meeting on Saturday where issues like land for Border Security Force (BSF) outposts and railway projects and Bengal government's dues from the Centre were discussed. According to sources, the meeting between the two political leaders continued for 20 minutes after which the home minister left for Kolkata airport. Shah took his flight for Meghalaya from there. According to experts, the one-to-one meeting between Shah and Mamata is politically significant at a time when the West Bengal government and the Centre were at loggerheads on several occasions over several issues.

Speaking to newsmen at the airport, Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari said: "I asked Shahji about his meeting with the CM. He told me that lands required for setting up of 72 BSF outposts along the West Bengal-Bangladesh border and better communication between the state police force and the BSF were discussed with her. The Union minister also said that he explained why the India-Bangladesh border is very important for national security." Adhikari said Shah called him for a meeting along with BJP's state president in Delhi on Tuesday to discuss "important issues". Sources at Nabanna said that mort



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee greeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah with a bunch of yellow flowers at Nabanna — Photo : Shyamal Maitra

important issue that Shah highlighted in the Council meeting was the fencing of the border between Bengal and Bangladesh. The issue

of cattle smuggling was also discussed in the council meeting. The council meeting continued for 1 hour 40 minutes from 11 am.

After the meet, the chief minister requested the home minister to visit her chamber on the 14th floor of the state secretariat.

States too share responsibility for security in border areas: Home minister at EZC meeting

KOLKATA, DEC 17 /--/ Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday at a meeting of Eastern Zone Council (EZC) indicated to chief ministers that the states too share a responsibility along with the BSF for security in India's border areas.

Illegal infiltration, trans-border smuggling and the vulnerable India-Bangladesh boundary were among subjects discussed at the 25th Eastern Zonal Council (EZC) meeting, chaired by Shah, at the West Bengal secretariat near here, a senior official said. Talks on transportation facilities and water-sharing among the states were also held at the 25th EZC meeting, which was attended by chief minister Mamata Banerjee, her counterpart from Jharkhand Hemant Soren, Bihar deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav and Odisha minister Pradeep Amat, the official said. The role of BSF was discussed, in the light of the increase in the operational area of the border force earlier this year. In response, according to sources, the home

minister is believed to have indicated that the state governments too have a role to play in border security, according to sources. The meeting also discussed resurgence of Maoist activities in Jharkhand-Odisha and Bengal. It was decided that states and Centre will pool real time information on Maoist activities in the red zone in order to coordinate steps to neutralize the movement, officials said. West Bengal chief minister also highlighted that arms are being smuggled into Bengal from neighbouring states and coordinated steps are needed to check this menace. Shah, who is the chairman of the council, was accompanied by five home ministry officials at the meeting that began around 11 am and lasted for a little over two hours. Bihar chiefe minister Nitish Kumar and Odisha's Naveen Patnaik skipped Saturday's session. Shah later met Mamata at her chamber on the 14th floor of the secretariat, the official said. The Union minister left for Shillong soon after the meeting, the official added. (PTI)

Local News

Awareness prog on road safety, free eye test camp by Traffic Police



PORT BLAIR, DEC 17/--/ In order to spread Road Safety awareness among the commercial vehicle owners & drivers, a road safety awareness programme was conducted on Saturday at PS Aberdeen Conference Hall by A&N Traffic Police. The Dy.SP (Traffic), Police Personnel and about 100 drivers & members of various Bus/Truck/Van/Auto unions participated in this programme. Addressing the participants, Mr. Sanjay Kumar Jain, Inspector General of Police (L&O) expressed serious concern over the rising case of fatal accidents and drunken driving in the city. He spoke on the ill-effects of drunken driving and its financial and psychological effects on the entire family in the event of a major accident and has appealed to obey traffic rules. Importance of various road safety measures such as wearing helmets, fastening seat belts, avoiding over speeding, avoiding using mobile phones while driving/riding the vehicles,

avoiding careless overtaking, giving way to emergency vehicles etc were also emphasized. Grievances of participants were also put forth before Shri. Sanjay Kumar Jain, IPS (Inspector General of Police, L&O) and assurance for redressal of grievances was also given. Mr. Ajay Kr. Rai, Dy. Superintendent of Police Traffic highlighted the importance of road safety and educated the participants about the ill effects & aftermath of road accidents. Later, Free Eye test was conducted for all the participants by the medical team headed by Dr. Priyanka Sankaran (SR) of GB Pant Hospital at PS Aberdeen. Further, they were encouraged to report traffic violations by sending clear photograph/short videos of violation containing clear registration no. of vehicle with date, time and place of offence on the official Whatsapp No. 9531892228 or share through the twitter handle @ANTrafficPolice or on the 24x7 Traffic Control Room Number 03192-243812 for prompt action against the violators.

Bishnu inaugurates community hall in presence of Kuldeep at Junglighat

From page-1 Addressing the gathering, the Member of Parliament said that there was a heavy demand for a community hall in Ward Number 13 and with the inauguration now the Community Hall will be of great use to the people of these thickly populated areas. Further, as per demand made by the public present in the function, ShriKuldeep Rai Sharma, MP also said that the fund for construction of a water tank and bathroom adjacent to the community hall will be provided since these facilities do not exist there.

Pak rejects India's criticism of FM Bilawal's 'uncivilised' outburst

ISLAMABAD, DEC 17 /--/ Pakistan on Saturday rejected India's criticism of Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's "uncivilised" outburst against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging that it showed New Delhi's "growing frustration". The Pakistani minister resorted to a personal attack against Prime Minister Modi and slammed the RSS after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar described the neighbouring country as the "epicentre of terrorism" during his visit to New York to attend UN events. On Friday, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi in New Delhi said that Bilawal's "uncivilised outburst" seemed to be a result of Pakistan's increasing inability to use terrorists and their "proxies". In a strong condemnation, Bagchi said Bilawal's "frustration" would be better directed towards the masterminds of terrorist enterprises in his own country that has made terrorism a part of its "state policy". "Pakistan is a country that glorifies Osama bin Laden as a martyr, and shelters terrorists like (Zakiur Rehman) Lakhvi, Hafiz Saeed, Masood Azhar, Sajid Mir and Dawood Ibrahim," he said. "No other country can boast of having 126 UN-designated terrorists and 27 UN-designated terrorist entities." Bagchi also said that the minister's remarks "are a new low, even for Pakistan." On Saturday, the Foreign Office (FO) here issued a statement in response to the media queries regarding the External Affairs Ministry's comments on Bilawal. The MEA statement is "a reflection of India's growing frustration over its failure in maligning and isolating Pakistan," FO alleged. The FO claimed that India is "desperately using international platforms to advance its agenda to defame and target Pakistan" following Islamabad's exit from the FATF grey list in October and international recognition of its counterterrorism efforts. Pakistan was taken off the grey list of the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global watchdog on terror financing and money laundering, four years after it was put in the infamous categorisation. It also alleged that India was following a "policy of pettiness towards its neighbours". "Intimidation and demonisation of religious minorities receives official patronage in states across India," FO alleged, adding that New Delhi was "peddling a fictitious narrative of victimhood." Relations between India and Pakistan have often been strained over the Kashmir issue and cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan. However, the ties between the two countries nosedived after India abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution, revoking the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcating the State into two Union Territories on August 5, 2019. (PTI)



Bilawal Bhutto

Indian-American woman charged in 2018 death of her newborn baby

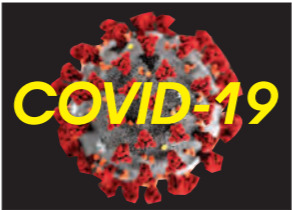
NEW YORK, DEC 17 /--/ A 29-year-old Indian-American woman has been charged with first-degree murder for causing the death of her newborn infant by allegedly tossing the baby into a seaside inlet in Florida in 2018 because "she didn't know what to do with her", according to media reports. Arya Singh, the mother of the female infant known only as 'Baby June', was arrested on Thursday after she confessed to the crime. The baby's body was found floating in the Boynton Beach inlet in Florida on June 1, 2018 after she had been disposed of "like a piece of trash," said New York Post newspaper quoted Sheriff Ric Bradshaw as saying. The mother confessed to the crime, saying "she didn't know what to do with her". The arrest was made after investigators from Palm Beach County Sheriff's cold case unit found the father who cooperated in the probe, the WPTV report said. "He knew nothing about the baby," Detective Brittany Christoffel said. "He knew that he had a girlfriend around that time (who) told him that she had been pregnant, but she had taken care of it," Christoffel was quoted as saying by the news channel. The father of the infant believed that Singh had an abortion. Singh confessed to putting the baby in the water and told that she hadn't realised she was pregnant until she gave birth to the baby in the bathroom of a hotel room, said Christoffel, who spearheaded the case. "She said when the baby was born she wasn't sure if the baby was alive or dead and that was that," Christoffel said of the Singh. The baby was believed to be alive when she was thrown into the ocean, authorities said. "She didn't know what to do with her and she still had her with her and she just decided that's where she was going to dispose of her," Christoffel said. Christoffel said Singh was taken into custody after determining that she "was solely responsible for the baby ending up in the Boynton Beach Inlet." Palm Beach County State Attorney Dave Aronberg said Singh is being charged with first-degree murder. The DNA sample collected from the father and covertly from Singh herself helped the investigators in confirming she was the mother, the authorities said. (PTI)

Covid-linked deaths seen in Beijing after virus rules eased

BEIJING, DEC 17 /--/ Outside a funeral home in eastern Beijing, dozens of people were bundled up in parkas and hats against the freezing temperatures Friday evening as workers in full protective suits wheeled out coffins one by one. When an employee with a clipboard shouted the name of the dead, a relative trundled up to the coffin to examine the body. One of the relatives told The Associated Press their loved one had been infected with Covid-19. Deaths linked to the coronavirus are appearing in Beijing after weeks of China reporting no fatalities, even as the country is seeing a surge of cases. That surge comes as the government last week dramatically eased some of the world's strictest Covid-19 containment measures. On Wednesday, the government said it would stop reporting asymptomatic Covid-19 cases since they've become impossible to track

with mass testing no longer required. That halt in reporting made it unclear how fast the virus is spreading. Social media posts, business closures and other anecdotal evidence suggest huge numbers of infections. It's also unclear how many people are dying from the virus. An AP reporter who visited the Dongjiao Funeral home was told by relatives that at least two people cremated there had died after testing positive. Health authorities had designated Dongjiao and one other funeral home to cremate those who die after testing positive, according to a relative of one of the dead. The woman said her elderly relative had fallen ill in early December, tested positive, and died Friday morning in an emergency ward. She said there were lots of people

in the emergency ward who had tested positive for Covid-19, adding that there weren't enough nurses to take care of them. The woman did not want to be identified for fear of retribution. Over about an hour, an AP reporter saw about a dozen bodies wheeled from the Dongjiao funeral home. About a half-dozen people inside described how another victim had struggled to breathe that morning before dying, and the death certificate listed "pneumonia" as the cause of death, even after a positive test for Covid-19, one of those people said. The people interviewed did not want to be identified for fear of retribution. Three employees of shops in the complex that houses the funeral home said there had been a marked increase in the number of



Representatives vote during a UN Security Council meeting at the UN headquarters in New York

MONTREAL, DEC 17 /--/ A numerical global target for pesticide reduction in the agriculture sector is unnecessary and must be left for countries to decide, India has said at the UN biodiversity conference here in Canada. India also supported subsidies for the agriculture sector. Currently, more than 40 per cent of India's total workforce is employed in agriculture, according to the World Bank data released till 2019. Speaking during a high-level segment of the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Union Environment Minister Bhopender Yadav said that the agriculture sector in India, like other developing countries, is the source of "life, livelihoods, and culture for hundreds of millions". "Such essential support to vulnerable sections cannot be

called subsidies, and targeted for elimination," Yadav said on Friday. "While they are being rationalised, biodiversity must be promoted through positive investment," he said. "Similarly, a numerical global target for pesticide reduction is unnecessary and must be left to countries to decide," the minister added. The Target 7 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) includes the reduction of pesticides by at least two-thirds by 2030. A report by Pesticide Action Network (PAN) India released in February reveals serious problems of pesticide usage in India and points to poor regulation of hazardous agrochemicals. The current use pattern is implicated in widespread unauthorised uses of pesticides in India, posing

threat to food safety and environmental contamination, it said. Proponents of the target



Bhopender Yadav

state that redirecting harmful subsidies towards biodiversity financing would go a long way towards bridging the funding gap of around USD 700 billion a year. Currently, India alone spends

about USD 30 billion (about 2.2 lakh crore) subsidising agricultural inputs, including pesticides.

The minister acknowledged that credible action is the source of strength and optimism in facing all global challenges including biodiversity. He said despite India being home to 17 per cent of the global population, but only 2.4 per cent of the land area and only 4 per cent of its water resources, the country is forging ahead in its efforts to protect biodiversity. "Our forest and tree cover is steadily rising together with our wildlife population. Definitive steps are being taken to return the iconic cheetah to Indian habitats," he added. "India has taken a quantum jump in the number of declared Ramsar sites

to the current figure of 75. As a large developing country, our forest policy is challenging to implement, but our forest surveys are testimony to its success," said Yadav.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, signed in Iran in 1971. The minister said that India's balance sheet in implementing the Aichi Targets (laid out in 2010) is proactive and forward-looking and the country is on track to meet its commitments. To counter the global biodiversity crisis, at the 2010 UN CBD COP10, almost 200 countries pledged to protect at least 17 per cent of their terrestrial environments and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas by 2020 (known as part of the Aichi Targets). (PTI)

Dead boy pulled from rubble of latest Russian hit on Ukraine

KYIV, DEC 17 /--/ Emergency crews pulled the body of a toddler from the rubble in a pre-dawn search for survivors on Saturday of a Russian missile strike that tore through an apartment building in the central Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih. The missile was one of what Ukrainian authorities said were 16 that eluded air defences among the 76 missiles fired on Friday in the latest Russian attack targeting Ukrainian energy infrastructure, part of Moscow's strategy to leave Ukrainian civilians and soldiers in the dark and cold this winter. Gov. Valentyn Reznichenko of the Dnipropetrovsk region, where Kryvyi Rih is located, wrote on the Telegram social media app that "rescuers retrieved the body of a 1-1/2-year-old boy from under the rubble of a house destroyed by a Russian rocket." In all, four people were killed in the strike, and 13 injured four of them children authorities said. Reznichenko said the pounding from Russian forces continued overnight, damaging power lines and houses in the cities and towns of Nikopol, Marhanets and Chervonohryhorivka, which are across the Dnieper River from the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. By Saturday morning, Ukraine's military leadership said Russian forces had fired more than a score of other missiles since the barrage a day earlier. It did not say how many of those might have been stopped by the air defences.

Friday's onslaught, which pummelled many parts of central, eastern and southern Ukraine, constituted one of the biggest assaults on the capital, Kyiv, since Russia began the war by attacking Ukraine on February 24. Kyiv came under fire from about 40 missiles on Friday, authorities said, nearly all intercepted by air defences. Utility crews scrambled to patch up damaged power and water systems. Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko reported on Saturday that two-thirds of homes had been reconnected to electricity and all had regained access to water. The subway system also resumed service, after serving as a shelter the day before. The head of Ukraine's northeastern Zaporizhzhia province Oleh Syniehubov said Saturday that electricity had been restored to the entire region, including Kharkiv city, the country's second-largest metropolis. The power had been knocked out on Friday in attacks involving 10 S-300 missiles.

In Kryvyi Rih, 596 miners were stuck underground because of missile strikes, but all were eventually rescued, Mayor Oleksandr Vilkul said late on Friday. Installation of a protective dome has begun at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, an official from the Moscow-installed authorities of Ukraine's southeastern Zaporizhzhia province said on Saturday. Vladimir Rogov said the dome would protect against fragments of shells and improvised explosive devices carried by drones.

The Russian-held plant, Europe's biggest nuclear power station, has been repeatedly shelled. Its six reactors have been shut down for months. The International Atomic Energy Agency recently announced plans to station nuclear safety and security experts at Ukraine's nuclear power plants to prevent any nuclear accident. The UN nuclear watchdog has already deployed a permanent mission to the Zaporizhzhia plant. (AP)

UN rejects seats for Myanmar junta, Taliban, Libya's east

UNITED NATIONS, DEC 17 /--/ The U.N. General Assembly on Friday rejected attempts by Myanmar's military junta, Afghanistan's Taliban rulers, and Libya's rival eastern-based government to take their country's seats at the United Nations. The 193-member world body voted by consensus, with a bang of the gavel by assembly president Csaba Kor si, to approve a recommendation by its Credentials Committee that the requests be deferred. The decision means that Myanmar will remain being represented at the United Nations by Kyaw Moe Tun, who was Myanmar's ambassador when the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Feb. 1, 2021. Afghanistan's seat will remain with the country's previous government led by President Ashraf Ghani, which was ousted by the Taliban in August 2021. And Libyan Ambassador Taher Elsonni, who represents the government based in the capital, Tripoli, in western Libya will remain the country's envoy. Guyana's U.N. ambassador, Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, who chairs the credentials committee, introduced its report before the vote, citing rival communications from Myanmar, Afghanistan and Libya seeking to represent their countries. "The committee decided to postpone its consideration of the credentials pertaining to the representatives of Myanmar, Afghanistan and of Libya" to a future time in the current 77th session of the General Assembly, which ends next September, she said. Kor si then gavelled adoption of the resolution approving the committee's report. Myanmar's military rulers sought the U.N. seat after Suu Kyi was ousted. The army's coup was met with widespread peaceful protests that were quashed with lethal force, triggering armed resistance that some U.N. experts have characterized as civil war. After the Taliban overran Afghanistan in the final weeks of the U.S. and NATO forces' pullout from the country after 20 years of war, they sought a U.N. seat and initially promised to allow women's and minority rights. (AP)

Biden signs bill to keep govt open through Dec 23

WASHINGTON, DEC 17 /--/ President Joe Biden signed legislation Friday to fund the government for an additional week as lawmakers race to finish work on a full-year spending package before they head home for the holidays and a new Congress is sworn in. Congress in September passed a bill to keep the government running through midnight Friday.



The latest extension funds federal agencies through Dec. 23. It passed the Senate on Thursday evening by a vote of 71-19. "Negotiations keep trending in the right direction, but we still have a lot of work left to do and not enough time to do it, unless we extend government funding for another week," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said in urging lawmakers to support the stopgap measure. The roughly 1.7 trillion package being negotiated would finance the day-to-day operations of government agencies for the current fiscal year that began Oct. 1. Federal spending on programs such as Social Security and Medicare is not part of the annual appropriations process and is not included in the package. House Republicans overwhelmingly have called for a longer-term extension into early next year so they could have a bigger role in setting spending levels for the agencies.

Democrats in the House were able to advance the bill with little GOP support earlier this week. But Sen. Mitch McConnell, the top Republican in the Senate, has made the case that passing a full-year spending bill this Congress is better than the alternatives because it ensures a sizable increase in spending for defense. "If a truly bipartisan full-year bill without poison pills is ready for final Senate passage by late next week, I'll support it for our Armed Forces," McConnell said Wednesday. "Otherwise, we'll be passing a short-term continuing resolution into the new year." Some Senate Republicans disagreed with efforts to pass a spending bill before House Republicans could take charge. Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah., said he supported providing a short-term extension into next year because that would mean "more Republican priorities" in the final package.

Sen. Richard Shelby, the lead Republican on the Senate Appropriations Committee, has said the two parties were about 25 billion apart on overall spending. But lawmakers announced Tuesday night that they had reached agreement on a "framework" that should allow negotiations to be completed by next week. (AP)



MESSI VS MBAPPE

Argentina and France: Routes to the FIFA World Cup final

DOHA, DEC 17 /--/ It is now or never for Lionel Messi. The Argentina superstar's once-in-a-generation career will be defined — for many — by whether he leads his country to the World Cup title on Sunday.

Can he finally, at the age of 35, win soccer's biggest prize to secure his place alongside Pelé and Diego Maradona in the pantheon of the game's greatest ever players? Standing in his way are France, the defending champion, and Kylian Mbappé, the player best positioned to take over from Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo as soccer's marquee name. That's if he hasn't already. Mbappé also is standing on the cusp of history heading into the match at the 80,000-seat Lusail Stadium, a title decider that is filled with storylines. The 23-year-old France forward is looking to emulate Pelé by being a champion at his first two World Cups and set up the prospect of a third title, a feat only ever achieved by the Brazil great who has been hospitalized during this year's tournament because of a respiratory infection. Mbappé was 19 when he led France to its second World Cup title in 2018, becoming the youngest scorer in a final since a 17-year-old Pelé did so in 1958. While Pelé ended up being a peripheral figure in Brazil's 1962 triumph — he didn't play in the knockout stage because of injury — Mbappé has been France's go-to player in the team's bid to repeat. Indeed, Mbappé enters the final tied as the tournament's leading scorer with five goals. The player alongside him? Messi, of course. Who wins the Golden Boot — the award for the top scorer — is just one of the many other narratives around the final.

There's France, the dominant national team of this generation, looking to become the first to win back-to-back World Cups since Brazil in 1962. The country that produced Michel Platini, Zinedine Zidane, Thierry Henry and now Mbappé will be playing in the final for the fourth time in the last seven World Cups, more than anyone else. Then there's Didier Deschamps, a World Cup winner as a player in 1998 and now bidding to win it two times as a coach. Vittorio Pozzo was the only other man to coach two world champion teams, with Italy in 1934 and 1938.

Like France, Argentina is seeking a third World Cup



TODAY'S MATCH
Final
Argentina vs France
8.30 PM IST

Kylian Mbappé

title — after 1978 and 1986 — to move into outright fourth place in the all-time list. It would end a 36-year wait for soccer's biggest prize, since Maradona's string of virtuoso performances in Mexico in

1986. That made Maradona forever a hero in Argentina, and an icon around the soccer world. Messi now appears to be at that level — win or lose on Sunday when he'll play in a record 26th World Cup match.

France not worried about hostile atmosphere in final

DOHA, DEC 17 /--/ Holders France insist playing in front of a largely hostile crowd in Sunday's World Cup final against Argentina will not have an impact as they attempt to become the first team in 60 years to retain the trophy. Argentina may have the backing of a majority of neutrals as Lionel Messi bids to win his first World Cup in probably his last ever game at the tournament at the age of 35. In addition Argentina will also have far more supporters in the crowd at the Lusail Stadium, with up to 40,000 expected in Doha for the occasion, while French fans are set to number around 6,000. "I am well aware that Argentina will have a lot of fans behind them," said coach Didier Deschamps, who is hoping to become the first coach to win back-to-back World Cups since Italy's Vittorio Pozzo in the 1930s. "I expect a festive atmosphere with the Argentine people who are passionate and will be right behind their team. They sing a lot and are very expressive. That's good, it's a World Cup final after all, but our opponents are not in the stands." France can become the first side since Brazil in 1962 to retain the World Cup. Both teams are looking to win the trophy for the third time, with Argentina's last triumph coming in 1986. "It's the same objective for the two teams. One of the two will have a third star on their shirt after tomorrow's game," said Deschamps. Meanwhile captain Hugo Lloris insisted France are not focusing solely on Messi, with Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni having built a solid team around their superstar. "We came into this competition looking to go as far as possible. Lots of people didn't believe in us but here we are back in the final again," said goalkeeper Lloris, with France having arrived in Qatar minus a host of key players due to injury. (AFP)

Lisandro Martinez

of Argentina protests to referee Szymon Marciniak during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 round of 16 match against Australia. For players, the chance to participate in a World Cup final is the pinnacle of their career and the same is true for referees and other officials in such tournaments. Polish official Szymon Marciniak will take charge of the final following strong performances in officiating France vs Denmark in the group stage as well as Argentina vs Australia in the last-16.



France battle to stop spread of virus on eve of final against Argentina

DOHA, DEC 17 /--/ Didier Deschamps said Saturday that France were taking "as many precautions as possible" to stop the spread of a virus that is threatening their preparations for their World Cup final showdown with Argentina. "We are trying to take as many precautions as possible, to adapt as necessary and get on with it," the France coach said at a press conference in Doha ahead of Sunday's match. "Obviously it would be better if this wasn't happening but we are handling it as well as possible with our medical staff." Central defensive pair Raphael Varane and Ibrahima Konate missed training on Friday due to illness, along with winger Kingsley Coman. Midfielder Adrien Rabiot and defender Dayot Upamecano did not play in Wednesday's semi-final win over Morocco. Deschamps and his captain Hugo Lloris both insisted they could not offer any health updates on Saturday morning, with the team set to train again later in the day. "I am fine. As for the

players, I left quite early this morning so they were all sleeping," added Deschamps, who spoke to reporters at 11:30 am local time. "We are trying to handle the situation as well as possible and remain calm and focused. "I'll get some more information later today and think about that tonight and maybe tomorrow. And of course we're looking forward to being ready for this important game." Players, staff and other sources close to the squad have spoken of a range of symptoms affecting the team in recent days, including fever, stomach pains, and headaches. Measures have been taken at the team's hotel, including isolating certain players, but Covid-19 testing is no longer imposed by world governing body FIFA. France are aiming to become the first team since Brazil in 1962 to successfully defend the World Cup. They are facing an Argentina side determined to win the trophy in what is likely to be Lionel Messi's last-ever match at the tournament. "We are never really prepared for this type of thing but we are trying to prepare in the best way possible," Lloris said of the illness worries. (AFP)

GAME NOTES

France's foot soldier Antoine Griezmann pivotal in run to the final

DOHA, DEC 17 /--/ That holds France are through to a second consecutive World Cup final is a little down to the goals of Kylian Mbappé, and a lot to the extraordinary performances of Antoine Griezmann. The 31-year-old's transformation has symbolised more than anything else the man management of France coach Didier Deschamps, who reinvented Griezmann's role partly out of necessity after being hit by a plague of injuries coming into the tournament. Losing Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kante — France's starting midfield pairing in their triumphant campaign four years ago — before the tournament forced Deschamps to come up with a new solution in that area of the pitch, and so he turned to Griezmann. Griezmann, the top scorer at Euro 2016 with six goals as hosts France reached the final but lost in extra time to Portugal, is now France's midfield playmaker, a creator of goals but also a tireless worker. Karim Benzema, the Ballon d'Or winner, was ruled out after injuring himself in training before a ball was kicked in Qatar. "He is doing the job of Pogba, Kante and Karim Benzema," former Argentina defender Pablo Zabaleta told AFP. If the 2016 team was dubbed the "Griezmann Generation", it was the emergence of Kylian Mbappé that helped France take the next step and win the World Cup in 2018. (AFP)

his humility and hailed as a "hero" and "ambassador". Having started the Qatar tournament as a substitute, Alvarez has forced his way into the starting line-up through a series of match-winning displays that have seen him bag four goals. The 22-year-old is a near certain to start -- and perhaps star -- in Sunday's final against France. "At seven years old he was a very supportive, responsible and studious boy, given to help his companions," Patricia Magnino, one of Alvarez's teachers at the Rivera Indarte primary school in Calchin, told AFP. "Now he's a star, a great, alongside (Lionel) Messi." Another of his former teachers, Graciela De Barberis added: "He always stood out for his humility and speaking little. Dreams come true if you work for them." Calchin, which means 'salty spot' in the local vernacular, is a humble village of 3,000 people located in the northeast of the rich rural and industrial province of Cordoba. At the entrance to the village and on the school walls there are billboards praising "Julian, the pride of Calchin," alongside depictions of large spiders. Every building in the grid-like village is a single storey, with roads lined with trees such as white quebrachos, pines, carobs and chanars. (AFP)

FIFA targets USD 11 billion in revenue through 2026 World Cup

DOHA, Dec 17 /--/ FIFA expects to earn \$11 billion in the 2026 World Cup cycle with a 48-team men's tournament in North America set to deliver a big increase in revenue amid ongoing uncertainty about the exact match schedule. The four-year budget, which was presented Friday to the FIFA Council, foresees an almost 50% increase in income mainly tied to broadcasting and sponsorship deals, plus ticketing and hospitality at a tournament which will use several NFL stadiums. "We are bullish about the power of football," FIFA president Gianni Infantino said after the council meeting. (AFP)

Argentina's World Cup 'spider' man Alvarez, the pride of his village

BUENOS AIRES, DEC 17 /--/ Julian Alvarez has been a revelation for Argentina at the World Cup but back in his tiny home village the player nicknamed "Spider" is celebrated for

IKO All India National Karate tourney held in Marthandam, TN



MARTHANDAM (TN), DEC 17 /--/ The IKO All India National Karate tournament was held in Marthandam, Tamil Nadu from December 2 to December 5, 2022. Participants from West Bengal were Jasmine Gayen (Champion in Kumite and 1st runners up in Kata), Kamlesh Hela (Champion in Kata), Jadubir Gupta (1st Runners Up in Kumite and Shankar Singh (1st Runners Up in Kumite). The participants were from South Kolkata Karate Academy, West Bengal under Branch Chief Prasennjit Saha and Instructor Prosanto Mondol. (EOIC)