

## FOREST DEPT ACTS VILLAIN

### Women forced to trek several kms daily to fetch water

KARTIK

MAYABUNDER, JAN 15/- /- After publishing a news report titled "14 years on, Karthik Tikrey villagers in Mayabunder still await tap water connection", the Andaman Public Works Department (APWD) acted swiftly and started laying pipelines up to Karthik Tikrey at Mayabunder to provide tap water connections to the residents of the isolated village. About six families were settled in the Karthik Tikrey, a hilltop location in Mayabunder Tehsil by the UT administration. For the past many years, these families have struggled to get portable water to meet their daily water requirements. In order to meet their daily



water requirements, women members have to walk up to several kilometers down the hill up to the nearest water source to collect

water. Since the settlement is located on a hilltop, women after collecting the water again have to climb up the hill with the water containers. This has now become a daily work for the women of this village which has been causing a lot of hardship to them.

Sources told EOI that in order to provide tap water connection to these families under the JalJeevan Mission implemented by the Govt. of India with the aim to provide water to the

Mission, the action of the Forest department by stopping the construction of a check dam and laying of pipelines has denied the inhabitants of Karthik Tikrey village under

**Stops check dam, pipeline laying works meant to supply tap water connections to isolated village at Mayabunder**

last village of the country, APWD allotted a tender for construction of check dam and laying of pipelines to a local Contractor. However, the pipeline laying work was stopped by officials of the Forest department, Mayabunder citing the land belongs to the department and no work can be carried out in the forest land.

While the UT administration is doing its best to provide tap water to every household across the Islands under the JalJeevan

Shivapuram Panchayat drinking water facility even after 14 years of settlement.

On August 15, 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi from the Red Fort announced the Government of India's ambitious project JalJeevan Mission to provide safe and adequate drinking water through individual functional household tap connections by 2024 to all households in rural India.



Residents of Rest Camp at Mayabunder celebrated Pongal by organizing befitting programme. As part of the celebration a number of indoor and outdoor games were conducted. (PIX KARTIK)



Admiral D K Joshi (Retd.), Lt Governor, A&N Islands and Vice Chairman, Islands Development Agency held a meeting with Public, PRIs & HoDs at APWD Guest House Little Andaman. Interacting with them, he directed early examination & resolution of issues raised by PRIs. The Lt Governor, along with senior officers of UT Administration also inspected the mini stadium at R.K.Pur, Tourism and other infrastructure facilities.

**Fuel dispenser machines at petrol pump at Lucknow village start functional**

KARTIK

MAYABUNDER, JAN 15/- /- Acting on a news report that motorists are facing a lot of hardship as fuel dispensers at ANIIDCO run petrol pump at Lucknow village in Mayabunder have developed technical snags and have stopped functioning, ANIIDCO has rectified the fault and the



fuel dispensers have started operation. However, due to lack of roof canopy, motorists, particularly two wheelers have to still face hardship. The problem becomes more acute during rainy seasons due to lack of a roof in the petrol pump. Motorists have demanded construction of roof canopy as shelter for two wheelers.

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# Gujarat poll result sends message that Narendra Modi will be re-elected PM in 2024: Shah

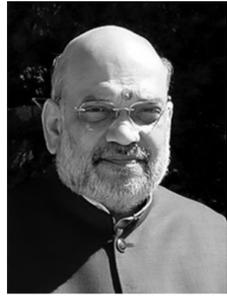
**GANDHINAGAR, JAN 15** /--/ Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the result of the recently-concluded Gujarat Assembly elections is important not just for the state but for the entire country as it has sent a message that Narendra Modi will be re-elected as the prime minister in 2024.

In a veiled reference to the opposition Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party, Shah said the people of Gujarat, by helping the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) retain power with a record number of seats in the state, responded to those who tried to defame the state and Prime Minister Modi. "The people of

Gujarat have worked to end the poison of casteism and slapped those making empty, false and alluring promises.

The people of Gujarat have responded to those who tried to defame Gujarat and Narendra Modi," Shah said at a function here to inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of various projects. "This result is important not for Gujarat alone. There will be (Lok Sabha) elections in 2024, and the entire country is prepared to once more make Narendra Modi the prime minister," he said. "This message of Gujarat that has reached from Kashmir to Kanyakumari (north to south in the country) and

from Dwarka to Kamakhya (west to east) that "Modi Saheb will again become the prime minister in 2024," the senior BJP leader said.



Shah said there is no need to elaborate on the works done by the BJP

government for the development of the state, as people respond to it in the election. "There is not a single state where one party has ruled uninterrupted for 27 years. Gujarat is the only state where the BJP has ruled (for 27 years and more)," he said. Shah said when the Gujarat elections were announced, the Congress claimed this time it was its chance. "People from Delhi also arrived here with the promise of giving this and that for free," he said. Despite all this, when the result was announced, the BJP emerged the winner with a record number of 156 seats (out of the total 182 in Gujarat), he said. Every single worker of the BJP in

the state is indebted to the people for their support and feels proud of this fact, the Union minister said.

The party won 34 out of the 40 seats reserved for the Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste candidates in the state, he said. Prime Minister Modi worked not just to provide basic facilities at the village level, but also did many works to make Gujarat number one in the world, by way of construction of the world's tallest Statue of Unity (in Narmada district), the biggest stadium named after Narendra Modi (Ahmedabad) and Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (Gandhinagar), Shah said. Talking about the

virtues of cleanliness, Shah said unless people work together, no government can make a village or a city clean.

"Cleanliness is the first condition for good health. PM Modi is going to make a big health centre. It is easy to make a health centre...but it is better not to fall ill and not require to visit a health centre. For that, we will have to keep our villages clean," he said.

Shah inaugurated and laid the foundation stones of various projects in Gandhinagar North Assembly constituency and also launched a campaign for plastic-free villages from Moti Adraj village in the state capital. (PTI)

## Army soldiers pushed frontiers of valour; acted as saviours in times of calamities: Prez on Army Day

**NEW DELHI, JAN 15** /--/ President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday extended greetings on Army Day, and said soldiers have always pushed the frontiers of valour besides acting as saviours in times of calamities. "I salute all brave soldiers of Indian Army and their families on this occasion," she said. Army Day is observed on January 15 to mark Field Marshal K M Cariappa taking over as the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, replacing his British predecessor in 1949. "On Army Day, let us recall countless stories of Indian Army soldiers' sacrifices! They have always pushed the frontiers of valour and courage, and also acted as saviours in times of calamities. I salute all brave soldiers of Indian Army and their families on this occasion," Murmu tweeted. (PTI)

## EC to demonstrate remote voting machine to parties today

**NEW DELHI, JAN 15** /--/ The Election Commission will showcase the remote electronic voting machine (RVM) prototype for migrant voters to representatives of political parties on Monday. The poll panel has invited eight recognised national parties and 57 recognised state parties for a demonstration on Monday morning. The letter states that they have been invited for a "discussion on improving voter participation of domestic migrants using remote voting." During the demonstration of the remote EVM, members of EC's Technical Expert Committee will also be present. While inviting parties for the demonstration of the prototype, the poll panel had also issued a concept note on the technology. Parties were also asked to give in writing their views by end of January on issue such as changes required on the law to allow use of RVM. If implemented after stakeholder consultations, migrant voters do not need to travel to their home districts to exercise their franchise.

Terming counting of votes cast at remote booths and their transmission to the returning officer in other states as a "technological challenge", Election Commission officials had earlier said RVMs will be developed as "a robust, failproof and efficient stand-alone system" based on existing electronic voting machines and will not be connected to the internet. The multi-constituency remote EVM, developed by public sector undertaking Electronics Corporation of India Ltd (ECIL), can handle up to 72 constituencies from a single remote polling booth. ECIL and Bharat Electronics Ltd are the two PSUs manufacturing the EVMs. (PTI)

## BJP govts never imposed any ban on media organisations: Rajnath Singh

**NEW DELHI, JAN 15** /--/ Defence minister and senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh on Sunday said those alleging violation of press freedom forget that the governments of the saffron party had "never imposed any ban" on any media organisation, "nor curtailed" anyone's right to free speech. Whereas, the Congress government had even amended the Constitution to curb free speech, he said while referring to the amendment of Article 19 in 1951. Speaking at a conclave organised by RSS-linked weekly "Panchjanya", Singh said a debate has again started in the country regarding freedom of expression. "The interesting thing is that those who allege violation of media freedom today forget that whether it is Atalji's (former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee) government or (Prime Minister Narendra) Modiji's government, they never imposed



any ban on any media house, nor curtailed anyone's right to free speech and expression in any manner," he added. Hitting out at the Congress, the veteran Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader said the entire history of the grand old party is "replete with incidents of violation of all kinds of freedoms". "The Congress government had even amended the Constitution to curb free speech. People who live in glass houses should not throw stones at others," he said. Singh also underlined that the media is the fourth pillar of democracy and its freedom is "very important for a strong and vibrant democracy". Talking about the bans and restrictions imposed on "Panchjanya" in the past, the defence minister said the repeated crackdown on the weekly associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was not only an "attack on nationalistic journalism, but also a complete violation of freedom of expression". (PTI)

## Cong MP Santokh Singh Chaudhary's cremated in native village in Jalandhar

**JALANDHAR, JAN 15** /--/ Congress MP Santokh Singh Chaudhary, who died following a cardiac arrest during the Bharat Jodo Yatra, was cremated at his native Dhaliwal village in Jalandhar district on Sunday with full state honours. The 76-year-old two-time MP died on Saturday in Punjab's Phillaur. The yatra was suspended for 24 hours following his death. Chaudhary had fainted while participating in the march on Saturday. He was rushed to a private hospital in Phagwara where he was declared brought dead. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi paid tributes to Chaudhary at the cremation ground. He described Chaudhary as a hardworking leader and a strong pillar of the party. Congress leaders including, the party's state unit chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa, former chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi, MP Mohd Sadique, besides senior officials from the district administration and police attended the cremation.

On Sunday morning, scores of people, including Congress supporters, paid their last respects to Chaudhary at his residence in Jalandhar where his body was kept. Later the body was brought to his native village Dhaliwal for cremation. His son Vikramjit Singh lit the pyre. Chaudhary, a prominent Dalit leader of the Doaba region, belonged to a family with a rich political legacy. His father Master Gurbanta Singh, a Dalit stalwart, was a seven-time MLA and also a former Punjab agriculture minister. Chaudhary's elder brother Chaudhary Jagjit Singh was a five-time MLA and had been local bodies minister. Vikramjit Singh is a Congress MLA from the Phillaur assembly seat. Santokh Singh Chaudhary was elected to the Lok Sabha in 2014 and 2019. He had been an MLA thrice and was a minister in the Congress governments in 1992 and 2002. Cutting across party lines, many leaders including Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, former CM Amarinder Singh, and Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal expressed grief over Chaudhary's death.

The Rahul Gandhi-led Kanyakumari to Kashmir yatra will resume at 3 pm on Sunday from Khalsa College Ground in Jalandhar. It will halt for the night at Adampur, according to the schedule of the yatra. The Punjab leg of the march began on Wednesday from Sirhind in Fatehgarh Sahib. The yatra took a break on Friday in the wake of the Lohri festival. The yatra, which started from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu on September 7, will conclude in Srinagar by January 30, with Gandhi hoisting the national flag in the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir. The march has so far covered Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. (PTI)

## 'Visionary decisions like demonetisation saved Indian economy, broke backbone of terror funding'

**NEW DELHI, JAN 15** /--/ The Narendra Modi government's "visionary decisions", such as demonetisation, saved the Indian economy amid a global economic crisis, while also breaking the backbone of terror funding, former Union minister and senior BJP leader Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said on Sunday. Naqvi said constructive, conducive and calculated economic reforms and decisions have proved to be a milestone in ensuring the country's economic, social and strategic security. Addressing the closing ceremony of "Delhi Mudra Utsav 2023", organised by the Delhi Coin Society, Naqvi said India, which invented the numeral "zero", has now become a "global hero". The Modi government's visionary decisions like demonetisation saved the Indian economy amid a global economic crisis and also broke the backbone of terror funding, Naqvi said. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) has been proved to be significantly successful towards tax reforms in the country, he added. Noting that India is a leading country in terms of digital payments, Naqvi said the government's "Digital India" campaign has ensured economic transparency. Every single penny of the government's welfare schemes is reaching the bank accounts of the needy directly and this has curbed the "culture of cut, commission and corruption", Naqvi said. Modi has emerged as a "global hero" of "reform, perform and transform" with his commitment to "development with dignity" and "development without discrimination", the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader said. About 100 collectors from different regions of the country participated in the three-day "Delhi Mudra Utsav 2023" and displayed their collection of coins, bank notes, postal stamps etc. (PTI)

## SC to hear today plea on Joshimath subsidence

**NEW DELHI, JAN 15** /--/ The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea seeking the court's intervention to declare the crisis in Uttarakhand's Joshimath as a national disaster. According to the cause list of January 16 uploaded on the apex court website, a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala would hear the petition filed by Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati. Joshimath, the gateway to famous pilgrimage sites like Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib and international skiing destination Auli, is facing a major challenge due to land subsidence. Joshimath is sinking gradually with huge cracks developing in houses, on roads and fields. Many houses have tilted and are sinking, locals said. (PTI)



Union Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnav, Union Minister for Tourism and Culture G Kishan Reddy at the flagging off ceremony of the Vande Bharat Express train connecting Secunderabad with Visakhapatnam, in Secunderabad on Sunday

## UP CM Yogi Adityanath offers khichdi to Guru Gorakhnath on Makar Sankranti

**LUCKNOW, JAN 15** /--/ Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday offered khichdi to Guru Gorakhnath on the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti as per the tradition of the



Nath Panth. Adityanath is the Mahant of Gorakshpeeth and on the festival of Makar Sankranti, the famous Khichdi fair is organised in Gorakhpur's Gorakhnath temple that lasts for a month. On Sunday after rituals were performed by Adityanath at 4 am. Khichdi was also offered on behalf of the dynasty King of Nepal, said an official statement. Devotees from eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Nepal visit the temple on this festival of faith.

According to the temple were thrown open to the public. On the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti, lakhs of devotees thronged the Gorakhnath temple amid the bitter cold to offer the khichdi of public faith to the Shiva avatar Guru Gorakhnath. For the auspicious wish of happiness, prosperity and health, devotees, who came from other states, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and neighbouring country Nepal, queued up after 4 am on Sunday morning and offered

khichdi of reverence to Guru Gorakhnath.

On Sunday, the prasad of Khichdi was distributed to all the devotees in a joint feast with reverence in the temple premises. Forgetting the discrimination of rich-poor, caste and class, everyone took the prasad of khichdi. A banquet was also organised for the invited guests in the temple premises. A huge amount of rice and pulses grains and vegetables are offered to Baba Gorakhnath throughout the month in Khichdi Mela and the temple administration uses every grain offered for the people. Grain and vegetable offerings are used throughout the year to offer prasad (sanskar) to devotees and are also used in the temple bhandara, given to the poor at wedding ceremonies, vanvasi ashrams, blind schools and other institutions. Dwarka Tiwari, who has been associated with the temple for nearly four decades, said that the temple's bhandara serves food for about 600 people daily and programs are organised at regular intervals in the temple in which thousands of people receive prasad. (PTI)

## Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Yatra resumes from Jalandhar

**JALANDHAR, JAN 15** /--/ Scores of people joined the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Yatra as it resumed from the Khalsa College Ground here on Sunday after remaining suspended for 24 hours in view of the death of Congress MP Santokh Singh Chaudhary. Chaudhary died on Saturday after suffering a cardiac arrest during the Bharat Jodo Yatra. He was cremated at his native Dhaliwal village in Jalandhar on Sunday. Gandhi also attended the cremation. Gandhi offered prayers at Devi Talab temple in Jalandhar before the resumption of the march. As the march resumed around 3 pm, singer Sidhu Moosewala's father Balkaur Singh walked with Gandhi for some distance. Shubdeep Singh Sidhu, popularly known as Sidhu Moosewala, was shot dead in Punjab's Mansa district in May last year. Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Partap Singh Bajwa, former chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi, MLA Pargat Singh and other party leaders took part in the march. (PTI)

## Mayawati says BSP to go it alone in assembly, LS polls

### Calls for return to ballot paper

**LUCKNOW, JAN 15** /--/ BSP chief Mayawati on Sunday ruled out an alliance with any party for the assembly polls in various states and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

She also made a strong pitch for the use of ballot papers in elections. Key states of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Telangana would go to polls this year, besides states from the northeast. Speaking to reporters here on her 67th birthday, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said, "I would like to make it clear that in the assembly elections of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan and in the Lok

Sabha elections, which will be held next year, the BSP will not forge a coalition with any party and will contest the polls on its own strength."

Mayawati said it became necessary for her to make the announcement as the Congress and some other parties, as part of a "conspiracy", are allegedly trying to create an impression that they will be forging an alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party. "In electoral alliances forged once or twice in Uttar Pradesh and other states, barring Punjab, their (allies) votes were not transferred to us, due to which the BSP suffered losses," she said. "Hence, our party has decided to contest

the assembly polls and Lok Sabha polls on its own," she said.

The BSP and the Samajwadi Party (SP) had forged an alliance in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Of the alliance partners, the BSP was the biggest gainer with 10 seats. Akhilesh Yadav's SP won five seats and the smallest of the partners, Rashtriya Lok Dal, couldn't open its account. Mayawati exuded confidence that her party's vote base is intact. "As far as the vote base of the BSP is concerned, it has not eroded. But sometimes there are other sections such as OBCs, minorities and upper castes who get misled due to poll promises. The party had to suffer losses in the last

elections," she said. The BSP chief said electronic voting machines (EVMs) should be replaced with ballot papers. "There are doubts in the minds of people regarding EVMs and there is an apprehension that they may be prone to glitches," she said. "The CEC (chief election commissioner) and the Centre should come forward and hold elections using ballot papers. It will be known how many voters are with them and how many voters are with us," she said.

Mayawati further said the BSP was formed on April 14, 1984, and till the time ballot papers were used in elections, neither the party's vote percentage nor the support for it came

down and its seats also increased.

"However, since EVMs started being used in elections, our vote percentage has been affected and there is some foul play," she alleged. Mayawati said the BSP is a well-wisher of the people of the 'bahujan samaj' and the main aim of her party is to achieve their social and economic goals by winning elections on the strength of brotherhood of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Muslims. Attacking Congress, BJP and SP over reservation, she said they did not fulfil their constitutional responsibilities. "The Congress, when it was in

power, did not allow implementation of the Mandal Commission report and made SC/ST reservation ineffective. The BJP is following in the footsteps of the Congress in this case," she said.

"The Samajwadi Party government in the state did not give rights to the people from the extremely backward castes and cheated them. The SP government removed 17 castes from the OBC list and put them on the SC list due to which they were deprived of OBC reservation. "The SP government ended reservation in promotion in the state and tore the bill in the Parliament," she said. (PTI)

# India & Constitution: Can Right to Dissent Not Be Mixed With Partisan Politics?

**BHOPINDER SINGH**

In participative democracies like India, the citizenry has very limited control over the decisions made by the various branches of governance. To wait till the next elections to rectify or amend a contentious decision maybe too late.

The hallowed Constitution of India (Bharatiya Samvidhana) is the sole repository of 'go-to' invocation or referencing if anyone feels deprived of the promises of the 'Idea of India' — be it an individual, social group, region, political party, or, even bickering officials.

In a fractious and aggressively contested democracy, the fitment to the tenets of the Constitution ought to be the ultimate arbiter of conscience and intent between divergent opinions.

Indian Constitution is delicately layered with purpose, accountabilities, responsibilities, and suggested tenor for all its participants. Recognising that participative democracies could get excitable, 'carried away' and even partisan to an extent that it militates against the 'Idea of India', an effective means of checks and balances in terms of its guardians, have been conceptualised who are expected to rise above partisanship as the

'conscience keepers'.

As the designated 'First Citizens', the constitutional offices of the President (Rashtrapati) and the Governor's/Lt Governor's (Rajyapal/UpRajyapal) are expected to behoove that larger purpose, albeit, with the mandated tenor of sobriety, dignity and measure with which the Constitution was drawn.

In hindsight, the brilliant framer of the Indian Constitution Dr BR Ambedkar had presciently accepted a drafting lacuna that could derail the spirit of Constitutionality in India, "We have inherited the idea that the governor must have no power at all, that he must be a rubber stamp. If a minister, however scoundrelly he may be, puts up a proposal before the governor, he has to approve it. That is the kind of conception about democracy which we have developed in this country."

With relatively limited text on presidential and gubernatorial roles, the bold experiment of Indian democracy evolved its own traditions, precedents, and evolutionary processes of checks and balances, failing occasionally like that in the Emergency of 1975, and asserting its mandated charter of ensuring Constitutionality in everyday governance.

However, as is the case

with most 'institutions' today, credible murmurs of the overall diminishment of cherished freedom with which each 'institution' operates, with taints of dangerously high politicisation of constitutional offices, have caught the concern of many.

Necessary instances of such 'institutions' checkmating or calling out the dispensation's Constitutional suppression or impropriety are tellingly few if any. Unsurprisingly, India has slid into the global democracy indexes of almost all independent global bodies with the lowest score for 'political culture' eg, the EIU Democracy Index.

Today, there is strangely an alien spirit of exclusivism, majoritarianism and enforced conformity that rails against the celebration of 'Unity in Diversity'. Like 'Secularism', 'Liberalism' and 'Intellectualism' (with shameful barbs like pseudo-secular, libtard and pseudo-intellectual) even 'diversity' which is inherent in the 'Idea of India' is sought to be templatised and uniformed towards majoritarian moorings.

In revisionist and reimagined times like now, to hear whispers about the Indian Constitution being an impediment or 'needs change' are not unusual. Importantly, even these changes sought are not

progressive and evolutionary as a 'living document' like the Indian Constitution needs to incorporate, but one which is completely partisan, narrow, and illiberal. This situation begs the occupants of the magnificent residences on Raisina Hill, Maulana Azad Road, or in the Raj Bhawans/Niwats to intervene and course correct towards the spirit of Constitution. But do they?

The Rise of Partisan Politics in Indian States T h e d i s t i n c t difference in tenor that exemplified the decidedly louder and more political voice of the Prime or Chief Ministers vis-à-vis the traditionally restrained voice of the President or Governor is all but lost.

It is increasingly normal to see a free-for-all display (especially in states without a 'double-engine' government) of vitriol, slanging and partisanship as the argument shifts from the political offices to those of the ostensibly more apolitical offices like the Governor's—the traditional difference of tenor is sadly bridged as each matches the other for political

one-upmanship.

In Delhi, the two offices routinely tweet inelegant barbs and accusations, in Kerala they don't invite each other socially and simply overrule each other, in West Bengal 'name-calling' was the norm, and now in Tamil Nadu, the Governor simply refused to read parts of the customary address (specific omissions included

references to secularism, Dravidian model and references to leaders like Periyar, BR Ambedkar, K Kamaraj etc) and walked out!

D o e s s u c h grandstanding help the f r a g i l e

federal arrangement (as indeed, South India's cultural sensitivity and perceptions owing to the same)? Does it suggest an independent and apolitical insistence on part of gubernatorial appointees, or one of partisanship and beholden behaviour? It is not a new debate or phenomenon. All parties without exception have sought to have 'safe' incumbents albeit the extent and expression of reckless politicisation now, is simply unprecedented.

When Dissent Wasn't Disruptive & Contrarian Views Respected.

The expression of 'dissent' by the highest Constitutional offices was decidedly more subtle, gracious, and inoffensive — just enough to pass the message, but not shrill enough to suggest a breakdown.

Even the earlier political dispensations (be it at the Centre or States), usually had more maturity and decency to sense the corrective measure and accordingly, align to the constitutional course. Indeed, sometimes, the Constitutional appointees did fall short of the required apolitical anchorage, but thankfully, it wasn't as frequent, as blatant or as complete as now.

Illustrious sons of the soil like former President KR Narayanan had his own gentle (but effective) way of positing his insistences, and the UPA dispensation in his tenure, respected his contrarian message.

When 'Working President' Narayanan faced a peculiar pressure to review the Constitution as sought by the dispensation of the day, he went ahead and read the draft of the speech given to him by the government (he had to), but later on the occasion of the Republic Day he asked sagely, "Today when there is so much talk about revising the

Constitution or even, writing a new Constitution, we have to consider whether it is the Constitution that has failed us or whether it is we who have failed the Constitution."

His message was implicit, and the Government heeded and wisely buried the matter. Narayanan did the same by not responding to the Government's proposal to confer Bharat Ratna to Savarkar, and the equally wise Vajpayee respected the intended caution.

He did so with the proposed imposition of President's Rule in UP and Bihar, where he held a different view. KR Narayanan's direct letters to the Prime Minister on matters like the Babri Masjid or 2002 riots are a masterclass and instructive in the exchange between the two offices that do not require theatrical postures and bitter words in public space.

During a reception for the incoming US President Bill Clinton, KR Narayanan had alluded to the global village that could not be left to a 'village headman' — the message to US President was singular and delivered in patented KR Narayanan style of substance and dignity. He added, "globalisation does not mean the end of history and geography and of the lively and exciting diversities of the world". All of KR

Narayanan's disagreement or concerns inevitably met the standards of the 'four corners of the constitution', as he noted himself and spoke only when he felt that the constitutional spirit was getting shortchanged or tantamount to diminishing India's moral standing. His disagreements and expressions were not politics-driven, but constitution-driven, and that was a fine test of accountability and responsibility in the highest offices.

Political/Partisan/Party offices are naturally louder and more voluble, especially if it comes from opposition parties or 'single engine' states. It is the nature of politics, the offices and its necessities, but those who have sworn to uphold the constitution singularly as the 'conscience keepers' must always be the bigger persons. But do they anymore?

Mahatma Gandhi's prescient forewarning, 'An eye for an eye will leave the whole world blind' is a perfectly suitable allegory to a dangerously blind situation and narrative if there is no difference of tenor between a political office and a constitutional office, whatever be the disagreement. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

## Armed Forces Veterans Day celebrated

PORT BLAIR, JAN 15/--/ Together with the rest of the Country, Armed Forces Veterans Day was celebrated in these Islands too, in a betting manner. Jan.14 every year is commemorated as Armed Forces Veterans Day as a mark of respect and recognition to the services rendered by Field Marshal KM Cariappa, the first Indian Chief of Indian Army who retired from service on Jan. 14, 1953.

To mark the day, a felicitation function was organized by the



Department of Art & Culture, A&N Administration at the historic National Memorial Cellular Jail in which about 40 Armed Forces Veterans were felicitated in

recognition of their selfless devotion and exemplary service to the Nation. The Secretary (Art & Culture/ Tourism), Mr. Hari Kallikatt as the chief guest felicitated the veterans by presenting

them shawls and mementos. Addressing the gathering, the Secretary (Art & Culture/ Tourism) greeted the veterans and their family members on the occasion of Armed Forces Veterans Day. Appreciating the selfless devotion and exemplary service rendered by the veterans for the Country, the Secretary said, the citizens will ever remain indebted to the immense contribution of the veterans towards the Nation. The conduct of the felicitation function in the National

Memorial Cellular Jail premises has made the event a memorable one, the Secretary said.

Mr Vinayak Chamadia, IAS (Probationer) also felicitated the veterans by presenting them shawls and

mementos. In his address, Col. K V Cherian, VSM & Bar President, Ex Servicemen League said that 14th of January is commemorated as Armed Forces Veterans Day as a mark of respect and

recognition for the services rendered by Field Marshal KM Cariappa. Earlier, welcoming the chief guest and others present on the occasion, the Assistant Director, Art & Culture, Dr. Rashida Iqbal said, this Day

is observed to pay tribute to the exemplary service rendered by the veterans to the Country. She also thanked all the veterans for accepting the invitation and gracing the felicitation function.

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**Samuel Johnson**

## Japan steps up security amid muscle-flexing by China, N Korea

The wide-ranging talks between President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida should be seen in the context of Japan looking to build security cooperation with allies in a time of provocative Chinese and North Korean military action. An agreement to bolster US-Japanese cooperation on space capped Kishida's week-long tour that took him to five European and North American capitals for talks on his effort to beef up Japan's security. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the US and Japan agree that China is their "greatest shared strategic challenge" and confirmed that an attack in space would trigger a mutual defense provision in the US-Japan security treaty. Biden welcomed Kishida to the White House for the prime minister's first visit to Washington since he took office in October 2021. Inside the Oval Office, the US president praised Japan for its "historic" increase in defense spending and pledged close cooperation on economic and security matters. Kishida, speaking through an interpreter, said the two nations "share fundamental values such as democracy and the rule of law" and stressed that their joint role on the global stage "is becoming even greater". This assumes significance as Japan announced plans last month to raise defense spending to two per cent of gross domestic product in five years, a dramatic increase in spending for a nation that forged a pacifist approach to its defense after World War II. Japan's defense spending has historically remained below 1% of GDP.

Japan's push to step up defense spending and coordination comes as concerns grow that China could take military action to seize Taiwan and that North Korea's spike in missile testing could augur the isolated nation's achieving its nuclear ambitions. Before the White House meeting of the two leaders, US and Japanese officials announced an adjustment to the American troop presence on the island of Okinawa in part to enhance anti-ship capabilities that would be needed in the event of a Chinese incursion into Taiwan or other hostile acts in the region. Japan is also reinforcing defenses on its southwestern islands close to Taiwan, including Yonaguni and Ishigaki, where new bases are being constructed. Japan last month announced plans to buy US-made Tomahawks and other long-range cruise missiles that can hit targets in China or North Korea under a more offensive security strategy, while Japan, Britain and Italy unveiled plans to collaborate on a next-generation jet fighter project.

With Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, he cemented Japan's first defense agreement with a European nation, one that allows for the two countries to hold joint military exercises. Kishida also discussed with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and French President Emmanuel Macron his hopes to improve security cooperation between Japan and their respective nations. Germany was the lone G-7 country not on Kishida's itinerary.

# Contraction of GDP in one-third of global economy in 2023 is ominous

## REFLEX ACTION

Prabhat Patnaik

The IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva has now openly admitted that the year 2023 will witness the slowing down of the world economy to a point where as much as one-third of it will see an actual contraction in gross domestic product. This is because all the three major economic powers in the world, the US, the European Union, and China, will witness slowdowns, the last of these because of the renewed Covid upsurge. Of the three, Georgieva believes, the US will perform relatively better than the other two because of the resilience of its labour market; indeed the greater resilience of the US labour market provides some hope for the world economy as a whole.

There are two ironical elements in Georgieva's remarks. The first is that the best prospects for the world economy today, even the IMF concedes if only implicitly, lie in workers' incomes in the US not falling greatly. For an institution that has systematically advocated cuts in wages, whether in the form of remunerations or of social wages, as an essential part of its stabilisation-cum-structural adjustment policies, this is a surprising, though welcome, admission. Of course Georgieva, many would argue, is seeing US labour market resilience only as the result of US's economic performance and not as its cause. But her considering it a "blessing" (though not an unmixed one for reasons we shall soon see) leaves one in no doubt that the demand-sustaining role of workers' incomes is also being recognised by her. Some may contend that stabilisation-cum-structural adjustment policies of the IMF are typically meant for economies that are in crisis, as a means of overcoming such a crisis, not as a panacea for growth, so that seeing a change in IMF's understanding in this regard may be unwarranted. But what the IMF is now saying is certainly out of line with what it usually says; it is in effect conceding that a resilient labour market in the US is beneficial for its growth, which begs the question: why should other economies too not attempt to have resilient labour markets even when they are in crisis, and tackle their crises through other, more direct, means like import controls and price controls? Conceding that the resilience of the US labour market can be beneficial for its economy, and hence for the world economy as a whole, thus fundamentally runs counter to what the IMF generally stands for, at least in the current neoliberal times.

The second ironical element in her remarks is her recognition that such a resilient labour market, while being beneficial for US growth, will simultaneously keep up the inflation rate in the US, forcing the Federal Reserve Board to raise interest rates further. This has two clear implications. First, it means that the US growth rate, while being less affected for the time being, will inevitably be constricted in the months to come as the Fed raises the

interest rate. The US performing relatively better in 2023 is thus not a phenomenon that will last long. Since any poor performance by the US will have an adverse effect on the world economy as a whole, this amounts to saying that the world recession will worsen in the months to come, unless China's Covid situation improves substantially. It amounts to saying in other words, that even if 2023 will only see a third of the world economy facing recession, a much larger swathe of it will fall victim to recession later. This is certainly the most dire prediction made about the prospects of world capitalism at the present juncture by any major spokesperson of it.

The World Bank too has been warning of a serious recession looming over the capitalist world and discussing in particular its implications for third world economies. In September 2022 it put out a paper in which it expected a 1.9 per cent growth of the world economy in the year 2023. But both the IMF and the World Bank attribute the looming recession primarily to the Ukraine war and the inflation it has given rise to (and also in passing to the pandemic); the response to that inflation in the form of an all-round increase in interest rates is what underlies the current threat of recession. There is no recognition by these institutions of any problem arising from the neoliberal economy that could be underlying the looming crisis. This analysis first of all is erroneous. Long before the Ukraine war, inflation had reared its head as the world economy had started recovering from the pandemic. At that time such inflation had been attributed to the disruption in supply chains caused by the pandemic, though many had differed from this analysis even then. They had pointed out that, more than any actual disruption, the inflationary upsurge owed much to the jacking up of profit-margins by large corporations in anticipation of shortages. The Ukraine war occurred against this backdrop of an ongoing inflation, and added to it quite gratuitously as the western powers imposed sanctions against Russia.

A look at the movement of crude oil prices confirms this conclusion that the Ukraine war is not the genesis of the inflationary upsurge. The rise in Brent crude prices occurred primarily in 2021 as the world economy started recovering from the pandemic: the rise between the beginning of 2021 and the end of that year was by more than 50 per cent, from 50.37 dollars per barrel to 77.24 dollars per

barrel; the corresponding rise in 2022, during which the Ukraine war occurred, was from 78.25 to 82.82, i.e. by 5.8 per cent, which is less than the current inflation rate in most advanced capitalist countries, even though inflation is generally claimed to have been driven by oil prices. True, immediately after the imposition of sanctions against Russia, world oil prices shot up, reaching a high of 133.18 dollars per barrel during 2022, but then they came down quite sharply as we have seen, so that simply blaming the Ukraine war for the price-rise is not only misleading (as it is not the war per se but the sanctions that were responsible) but also erroneous (as prices should have come down when the price-rise induced by the sanctions abated).

It is not just the analysis of the Bretton Woods institutions that is flawed. Even more noteworthy is the fact that they have no perception whatsoever, even within the terms of their own analysis, of how this world recession is going to end. If, as they believe, it is the Ukraine war that is responsible for the looming recessionary crisis, then they should, at the very least, have hoped for an early end to it. That however is unacceptable to western imperialism which wants the war to drag on so that Russia is "bled" into submission; this is why the twin institutions express no opinions on the need for ending the war. But even if they chose to remain silent on the question of ending the war, they could have expressed some opinion about tackling the inflationary crisis in some other way than by raising interest rates and unleashing a recession. The IMF and the World Bank however are so committed to free markets that they cannot contemplate any other inflation-control measure (such as direct price-control), even as they lament the recessionary effects of interest rate hikes.

Likewise, even as the World Bank president David Malpass commiserates with debt-encumbered third world countries which are going to be badly hit in the coming months, and even says that a large chunk of their debt burden has arisen because of the high interest rates themselves, there is not a word in his speech in favour of lowering interest rates. Both the Bretton Woods institutions in other words are long on commiserations but short on concrete measures to help the world's poor.

This is not just a symptom of timidity. It points to something deeper, namely the genuine impasse in which world capitalism finds itself today. If the structure of western imperialism as it has evolved over the years is to be kept intact, then the metropolitan countries have to keep the Ukraine war going, in which case inflation at the current pace becomes unavoidable in the absence of an engineered recession, and the consequent unemployment. World capitalism's taking this route therefore should not cause any surprise; the point is to resist it. (IPA)



Tiger cubs make his first public appearance at the side of her mother at Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Patna on Sunday

# India should not be in a hurry in allowing foreign university campuses

Last week, the University Grants Commission (UGC) released draft regulations for reputed foreign universities to open campuses in India. In other words, India's higher education sector is opening up to foreign direct investments. In the past, similar attempts met with stiff opposition. As per a study, Indian students would spend \$75-85 billion annually by 2024, from \$28 billion in 2021. The number of Indian students going abroad for higher education is expected to rise to 1.8 million by 2024.

There is a consistent growth in the number of Indian students going overseas for higher education. Given this background, it makes sense for the UGC to let foreign universities open their campuses in India. This would allow students to have access to foreign education and degrees without leaving India. The UGC has uploaded the draft on its website for the general public to make comments and suggestions and after incorporating constructive suggestions, the regulations would be officially adopted. These regulations allow the top 500 universities and reputed universities offering education in specialized areas to run full-time regular programs. However, they are not allowed to offer online or distance education. Finally, these universities can decide the tuition fees and other costs but they need to be transparent in these matters and overall adhere to the education not-for-profit motto. For a long time, a void is felt in India's

higher education system. State government-run universities and colleges are economically unviable, especially because of the grand legacy and vision that the idea of higher education conjures up in our minds. Take, for example, professors earning a six-digit salary for taking a few classes in a week! How many such professors can a government afford on taxpayers' money? So, state government-run universities are mostly dysfunctional. Then, we have central universities that receive funding from the central government through UGC. For the same reasons, their numbers are also limited. Today, the Indian higher education system is mostly geared toward technical education, with medical and engineering being the top choices. Those who choose other streams are largely preparing for government jobs. For admission to top engineering and medical colleges, there is fierce competition among students. The same is the case for students in other streams who study with the sole objective to land a government job. Here again, the competition is very tough. What makes the competition even worse

is the presence of hundreds of top coaching brands. They enroll hundreds of thousands of students for training to beat a competition where available seats are a few hundred to a few thousand, at most.

It's so ironic to see that top private education brands in India are tutorials. From BYJU's to Aakash and ALLEN, these institutes teach and train students to take the bar higher in competitions at the school level. They serve no purpose to India's higher education sector, which is primarily responsible for training students for the job market. The casualty of this lop-sided focus on technical education and government jobs is the very idea of education. Indian higher education system has stopped producing poets, philosophers, political scientists, linguists, and even economists. It's not producing even B or C-grade experts, with the result that we have, on the one hand, a completely illiterate population and, on the other hand, only technology professionals. There are very few academically equipped to talk sense.

What makes the situation even more alarming is the presence of private universities. The standards of education in

these universities are reported to be so poor that graduates even from top-brand universities struggle to find placements. If their parents can afford the fees, we can safely assume they do not have the time to monitor their children's academic progress. With glitzy infrastructure and average academic staff, the presence of private universities has only added to the decline of India's higher education. They try to push the idea that quality education is nothing but quality infrastructure.

These thoughts and trends need to be countered. The introduction of top foreign universities on Indian soil should bring a sober moment for all of us. Should India be producing only engineers, doctors, and MBAs, or should we also have great poets, great philosophers, and great mathematicians? And, what about gardeners and agriculturists? What about fine arts and folk music?

India's higher education is in dire straits. It needs thoughtful interventions. This sector can attract both domestic and foreign investments. But UGC and the country's policymakers must ensure the direction of higher education is in line with India's legacy in this field. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and computer technology dominating American universities, the world is witnessing an acute shortage of academicians and researchers in humanities. India has an opportunity as well as an edge in this space. (IPA)

**Conventional Crossword**

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- |                         |                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Ship's company        | 1 Skill                    |
| 5 Business transactions | 2 Colour                   |
| 8 Tell                  | 3 Church office holder     |
| 9 Says further          | 4 Part of the verb 'to be' |
| 10 Flightless bird      | 5 Discussions              |
| 12 Climbing palm        | 6 Encouragement in crime   |
| 13 Goal                 | 7 Stupefy                  |
| 15 Tentacle             | 11 Labyrinth               |
| 18 Weapons              | 12 Arbitrator              |
| 20 Lyric poem           | 14 Dry                     |
| 21 Unharmful            | 16 Letting contract        |
| 23 Effaced              | 17 Tall, straight stalks   |
| 24 Motif                | 18 Disorderly flight       |
| 25 Lairs                | 19 Festivity               |
|                         | 21 Sorrowful               |
|                         | 22 Marsh                   |

**SUDOKU: 3757**

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**Yesterday's Solution 3756**

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

**Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 1765**

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L	I	M	A		U	N	I	T
D	I	R	G	E		D	O	E
	X				S	T	E	E

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The views in the articles published here are absolutely the views of the author and The Echo of India does not stand liable for them.

## Harvest festival Pongal celebrated across TN with fervour



CHENNAI, JAN 15 /--Pongal festival was celebrated across Tamil Nadu on Sunday with usual fervour as the day heralded the birth of the auspicious Tamil month 'Thai.' The popular Avaniapuram jallikattu, the bull taming sport, was held in Madurai coinciding with the harvest festival where avid bull tamers took on the charging bulls. Many houses were decorated and people woke up early to celebrate the day. People prepared the sweet dish Pongal, made of rice and jaggery and chanted "Pongal-o-Pongal" to symbolise the overflowing of joy and prosperity in the new month.

The month Thai is considered auspicious where marriages are held and new ventures initiated. A festive spirit gripped the state even as scores of people left for their hometown from here in the last two days to join their families to celebrate Pongal. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi, Chief Minister M K Stalin, state Leader of Opposition and AIADMK interim general secretary K Palaniswami among others extended their Pongal greetings. (PTI)

### MESSAGE

On the occasion of Police Raising Day, I extend my heartiest greetings and best wishes to all ranks of Andaman & Nicobar Police. The role of Police in maintaining law & order, prevention of crime and providing a safe & secure environment to the people of A&N Islands is praiseworthy.

It has been 70 years since Mr. Naushirwan Feroz Sauntok, an IPS Officer, assumed the charge of Superintendent of Police, A&N Islands on 16th January, 1953. Ever since, 16th January is observed as "Police Raising Day of Andaman & Nicobar Police".

It gives me immense pleasure to learn that Andaman & Nicobar Police is organizing various activities and programmes to improve Public Police Interface such as awareness drives on social and contemporary issues in schools, colleges & residential areas, cultural-cum-interaction programmes involving Public & Police families and performances by Police Entertainment Team & Police Band during this week.

On this occasion, I expect that A&N Police will continue to discharge their duties with utmost dedication and sincerity and will exhibit professionalism, transparency, integrity and sensitivity in their functioning.

I wish each and every member of A&N Police and their families the very best.

Sd/-

(Admiral D K Joshi)

PVSM, AVSM, YSM, NM, VSM (Retd.)

Lt. Governor, Andaman & Nicobar Islands

&

Vice-Chairman, Islands Development Agency

# From rifle to pen: 6 surrendered Naxalites prepare for Class 10 exam in Chhattisgarh

RAIPUR, JAN 15 /--After having once wielded a rifle in his arms, Karan Hemla is now holding a pen and preparing for the Class 10 examination in Chhattisgarh in the hope of a better future.

The 26-year-old surrendered Naxalite had to quit studies after violence erupted with the start of the 'Salwa Judum' anti-Naxal movement in Bastar division in 2005. Hemla is now thrilled about getting an opportunity to resume education and fulfil his dream of becoming literate. He is one of the six surrendered Naxalites -- three men and as many women -- who after laying down their arms live at the Police Lines in Kawardha city of Kabirdham district. They have submitted forms for the Class 10 state open school examination as part of the district police's initiative to educate them. The surrendered Naxalites, including two couples, had been active in

forests along the Chhattisgarh-Madhya Pradesh border in Kabirdham district and turned themselves in before the police between 2019 and 2021. Hemla, a native of Kakekorma village in the Maoist-hit Bijapur district, was studying in Class 7 at an ashram school in 2005 when the Salwa Judum movement began. "Several schools in the interiors of Bastar division were shut and students were forced to discontinue their studies out of fear," Hemla told PTI.

Before he could resume his studies, local Naxalite leaders took him and another boy Bhima (who later surrendered in Andhra Pradesh) along and forcibly inducted the duo into the banned outfit in 2009, Hemla said. He was promoted as a divisional committee member in 2016 and shifted to the Maharashtra-Madhya Pradesh-Chhattisgarh

(MMC) zone of Naxalites, where he worked with top leader Milind Teltumbde, who was gunned down in an encounter with the police in 2021. Hemla and his wife Anita (22), who was also a Naxalite, fled from a camp in 2019 and surrendered to live a normal life. "Both of us were keen on studying. My wife learned to write while working in the sangthan (a Naxalite outfit). After surrendering, we wanted to pursue education and we are doing so now with the help of local police," Hemla said. Another surrendered Naxalite couple -- Manglu Veko (28) and Rajes alias Vaonja (25) -- was also delighted about getting the opportunity to study.

Veko said Bastar has been battling against the Left Wing Extremism (LWE) for more than three decades and the violence has resulted in disruption of

education for many like him. Veko, who hails from Bhairamgarh area in Bijapur, joined the banned outfit at the age of 19 in 2013 and surrendered in 2020. His wife Vanoja quit the outfit with him and the couple have a child. Veko said he wants to get a job after completing his education to provide a better life to his child.

Talking to PTI, Kabirdham Superintendent of Police Lal Umed Singh said after the surrendered Naxalites expressed their desire to study, they were provided books and helped to apply for the Class 10 open exam. They will be provided free coaching as well, he said. "Education is a key factor in the development of a person. It will help the surrendered cadres to connect with the outside world and they can pursue self-employment or apply for

government jobs in the future," Singh said. The surrendered Naxalites were part of 'Vistar' platoons, active in Kanha-Bhoramdeo division since 2017-18 and tasked with expanding the base of the banned organisation in the area, he said.

The Kanha-Bhoramdeo division covers parts of Kabirdham in Chhattisgarh and Mandla, Balaghat and Dindori districts of neighbouring Madhya Pradesh.

However, the number of Naxalites drastically declined in the last couple of years in this region and around 21 are left active in this pocket, the official claimed. Between 2018 and 2022, three Naxalites were killed in Kabirdham and seven were gunned down in the adjoining districts in separate actions by security personnel, he added. (PTI)

## Victory procession by CITU on 1/30th Pay plus DA case to DRMs

PORT BLAIR, JAN 15/--CITU and trade unions will organize Victory Processions all over the Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar Islands on 16th January 2023, to celebrate the Court case won by the Andaman Sarvajanik Nirman Vibhag Mazdoor Sangh (ASNVMS), affiliated to CITU, in the Calcutta High Court on the 1/30th of pay plus DA case to all the Daily Rated Mazdoors. At Port Blair, the Victory Procession will begin from Tiranga Park, Aberdeen Bazar which after making a

round of the important points of Port Blair will culminate in a public meeting at Tiranga Park. Workers from various trade unions functioning at Port Blair will participate in the victory procession.

The Division Bench of the High Court at Calcutta (Port Blair Circuit Bench) in their judgment on 9th December, 2022 has stated that all the daily rated mazdoors working under the Andaman & Nicobar Administration are eligible for the financial benefits under the 1/30th of pay plus Scheme of the A&N

Administration formulated in September, 2017 without linking it with sanctioned post/vacant posts, etc. The Court also ordered that the workers be given the benefit from September, 2017 within two months from the date of judgment. The 2017 scheme was formulated by the Administration following the protracted struggles conducted by the CITU in these islands during the last 30 years with the demand to implement the Govt. of India's order on the issue of 1/30th of pay plus DA scheme of 1988.

## Suspension of 2 Haryana cops ordered for offering tea to 'absconding' accused at police station

CHANDIGARH, JAN 15 /--Haryana home minister Anil Vij has ordered suspension of two police personnel after a video emerged of them allegedly serving tea to a man, accused of fraud and said to be absconding, at Pundri police station in Kaithal district.

He gave the directions for their immediate suspension on Saturday after a woman complainant showed him the video. The 69-year-old minister holds "Janta Darbar" to hear people's grievances every Saturday in Ambala, his home constituency. While hearing the grievances, Vij pulled up the Kaithal Superintendent of Police. Speaking to him over phone, Vij said, "SP saheb, tea is being served to the accused in the police station and you are saying that the accused is not being found. The criminals are sitting in the police station." Asking him to suspend the policemen immediately, Vij further told the Kaithal SP, "Should I close the police station? How can this happen, SP sir? Will the goons rule the state? I want immediate action." According to an official statement, the woman complainant told the minister that the police were not nabbing the accused in a Rs 25 lakh fraud case. The accused is roaming freely, she alleged. Hours later, director general of Police P K Agrawal informed the home minister about the accused having been arrested. In another case, the minister gave directions to

suspend a police official in Panipat on the charges of demanding bribe from ambulance drivers. The ambulance drivers who came from Panipat gave a complaint to Vij alleging that they are being asked to pay Rs 10,000 per ambulance by the city station in-charge, Balraj. Vij then rang up the Panipat SP and directed him to suspend the station in-charge in the matter. On Saturday, more than 6,000 complainants from all over the state reached the Janata Darbar which was held at the PWD Rest House in Ambala Cantonment. An Army jawan from Jhajjar complained that the police there have not been able to arrest the accused in the case of rape of his minor sister. Taking strict cognizance of the matter, Vij called the Jhajjar SP and reprimanded him as to why the accused could not be arrested till now. He gave strict orders to the SP to arrest the accused immediately.

Another Army jawan who came from Hisar told Vij that his brother was beaten up by several youths, but no action has been taken against the accused. The jawan told Vij whether he should fight on the border or with the system. Taking cognizance of this, Vij told him, "You perform duty on the borders, I will fight for you, and you need not worry." On the complaint of the jawan, Vij directed the Inspector General of Police of Hisar to investigate the matter by forming an SIT involving police officers from another district. (PTI)

## Minimum temperature decreases at most places in Kashmir

### Settles below freezing point



SRINAGAR, JAN 15 /--Night temperature in most places of Kashmir settled below the freezing point across the Valley, even as the weather office has forecast a further dip in the minimum temperature over the next few days in view of dry weather, officials said on Sunday.

In the wake of dry weather after Friday's snowfall, the minimum temperature at most places in the valley decreased on Saturday night, the officials said. Srinagar recorded a low of minus 0.6 degrees Celsius on Saturday night half a degree down from the night before, they said. Qazigund, the gateway to the Valley, registered a minimum temperature of minus 0.7 degrees Celsius, while Kokernag in south Kashmir recorded a low of minus 1.4 degrees Celsius. The minimum in Kupwara, a frontier district, settled at minus 1.3 degrees Celsius, the officials said. Pahalgam in Anantnag district, which also serves as a base camp for the annual Amarnath Yatra, registered a low of minus

10.9 degrees Celsius -- down five degrees Celsius from a night earlier. The resort was the coldest recorded place in Jammu and Kashmir. The minimum temperature at the famous ski-resort of Gulmarg in Baramulla district went slightly up to settle at minus 10.4 degrees Celsius from the previous night's minus 11 degrees Celsius. The meteorological office said the weather will remain mainly dry across J-K till January 18. There will be a further decrease in the night temperature till that time. Fresh western disturbances are likely to affect J-K from January 19 to 25. Light to moderate rain or snow is likely between January 23 and 24, it said.

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

## Man who stabbed victim 16 times convicted of murder

NEW DELHI, JAN 15 /--A Delhi sessions court has convicted a man charged with stabbing a person to death due to personal enmity in 2017 on the testimony of the victim's minor son.

The court was hearing a case of knife attack against Bal Karan Yadav, who was accused of stabbing Khushi Ram 16 times in Okhla Phase 3. Ram was declared dead at a hospital. "The case of prosecution stands proved against the accused beyond a reasonable doubt. Hence, he is convicted for the offence under section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code," Additional Sessions Judge Sachin Sangwan said in an order last week. The court has posted the matter for further proceedings on January 17 when arguments on sentence will likely take place.

The court said merely because the family of the deceased did not name Yadav as the killer in the phone call to police doesn't mean they did not know his identity. Rejecting the argument of Yadav's counsel that the testimony of the victim's minor son, who was an eyewitness, was "planted

evidence", the court said the testimony of a witness has to be appreciated considering the age, social background, education, profession etc. "It is to be noted that the eyewitness was a teenage boy at the time of the incident. Even if a grown-up man witnesses a murder where the injured is stabbed with a knife multiple times and there is blood all over, he may run for cover," the court said.

It said the reaction of any ordinary individual on witnessing a murder is of self-preservation, shock and mental trauma, and the observation power may dull or freeze during such moments. The minor son's testimony had stood the test of cross-examination and cannot be discredited, the court said. The court said a mere lack of independent witnesses cannot be equated to a false case and it was aware of the general attitude of the public to shy away from police proceedings unless their own interest was involved. On the accused's motive, the court said at the time of the offence there was already a case against Yadav under the POCSO Act for allegedly

molesting the deceased's daughter. After the registration of the case, the accused threatened to kill Ram and the minor daughter following which another complaint was lodged against Yadav, the court said. "Thus, it cannot be said that the accused had no motive or enmity against the deceased or his family," the court said, adding, "the mere fact that deceased had some dispute with some other person is not sufficient to disbelieve the accused's motive."

Along with the eyewitness account, there was strong forensic evidence against Yadav, the court said. The court noted that the DNA profile generated from the blood of the deceased was found to match the DNA profile on the knife, clothes and shoes of the accused. "The scientific evidence leans heavily towards the guilt of the accused. The same also corresponds to the manner in which the crime was committed because the deceased was stabbed multiple times and as many as 16 stab or incised wounds were caused on the body of the deceased," the court said. (PTI)

## Sindhu to sail today

PORT BLAIR, JAN 15 /--The vessel Sindhu will sail from Port Blair to Vizag on Jan. 16, 2023 at 1600 hrs from Haddo Wharf. Embarkation of passengers will commence from 1400 hrs to 1500 hrs on Jan. 16, 2023. The embarkation of passengers will be closed one hour before the scheduled time. Passengers reporting late will not be allowed to board the vessel. The vessel will sail soon after the embarkation of passengers and completion of other formalities. Excess baggage will be subject to double the rate of freight.

## After unravelling crime cases, cops at this police station unwind with music

PUNE, JAN 15 /--Inside a police station, criminals are supposed to 'sing' or confess to their crimes, but at Pune's Lashkar Police Station it is the cops who are doing the singing -- as a way of destressing.

The police station, located in Pune city's Cantonment area, is perhaps the first in Maharashtra to have a dedicated 'music room' equipped with a karaoke system, speakers, sound mixers, the works. After a hard day's work, staff members relax in this room, singing hit yesteryear songs of Lata Mangeshkar, Kishore Kumar, Mohammad Rafi and others. "After the COVID-19 pandemic abated, to destress our staff, we conducted a musical therapy session with the help of Dr Santosh Borade, a music therapist.

He encouraged the staff to sing or croon whenever time allows, and underlined that music has a healing

effect and removes stress," said senior inspector Ashok Kadam. On Dr Borade's suggestion, they have a small speaker and mic at the police station. "Since our police station is always under the pressure of bandobast duty and has the responsibility to maintain law and order, the staff needed such a mode of relaxation," said Kadam. Once they got a mic and speaker, the singing bug bit many of the police station personnel.

The officials then thought they should procure some high-end equipment such as a karaoke system, mixers and singing mics. A local gurdwara helped them get the equipment. "Today, we have around 15 police personnel including police officials, constables and even a peon who sing on a regular basis in the music room," said Kadam. When they learnt about the initiative, senior officials

including the police commissioner and joint police commissioner gave the police station staff encouragement. Sub-inspector Vinayak Gujar always loved singing, but the hobby took a backseat because of the job. Now he exercises his musical chops every day after duty hours. "Some fifteen of us gather in the music room after 7 pm and sing," he said. Sometimes even local music enthusiasts join them for a jam session, Gujar said. "They have started thinking of us as artists and not cops," he quipped. Police head constable Rahisha Shaikh makes it a point to sing for some time after finishing the day's work. "Believe me, it is so relaxing and rejuvenating," she said.

The evening musical sessions, according to inspector Kadam, have had another positive effect besides acting as a stressbuster: the

bonding between staff members has increased. It is the time when officials and personnel come together and sing together. The work output too has increased and the staff does not crib if they are assigned any extra official work, he said.

"The important outcome of the initiative is that the personnel who generally do not share their personal problems have now started opening up with senior officials and even started giving inputs in investigations," Kadam added. What 'genre' the cops prefer? He said they mostly sing old, ever-green melodies of Lata Mangeshkar, Kishore Kumar, Rafi, Suresh Wadkar and others. "We have around 15 staff members who sing regularly and they have mastered more than ten songs each. They can now perform at any stage," he said proudly. (PTI)

## PM Modi flags off Secunderabad-Vizag Vande Bharat train service, hails its 'Made in India' concept

HYDERABAD, JAN 15/--/Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday virtually flagged-off the Vande Bharat train service between Secunderabad in Telangana and the port city of Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh on the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti.

As the event coincided with the Army Day, the Prime Minister paid rich tributes to the serving and retired personnel.

"Vande Bharat is a true replica of India which is coming out of the mentality of dependence and moving towards

cumulative distance of 23 lakh kilometres, equivalent to 58 rounds of earth. More than 40 lakh passengers have travelled in Vande Bharat trains so far. He also pointed out that the poor image of railways and a fatalist approach to the dismal situation changed when with good and honest intentions, these problems were addressed and in the past eight years, this is the mantra that transformed Indian railways.

The Prime Minister said today traveling by Indian Railway is becoming a pleasant experience. Many railway stations



Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags off Vande Bharat Express train connecting Secunderabad with Visakhapatnam via video conferencing on Sunday

Atmanirbharta (self-reliance)," the PM said before flagging off the train.

Noting that the new trains will connect the culture of Telangana and AP, Modi said Vande Bharat symbolises new India's resolution and capabilities.

"Vande Bharat is a symbol of New India's capability and resolve. It is a symbol of that India which has chosen the path of rapid development," the Prime Minister said. "This Vande Bharat Express symbolises that India which expects everything to be the best. This Vande Bharat Express symbolises India which wants to give better services to every citizen of its," he said. It was designed and made in India, he pointed out.

This train will be the eighth Vande Bharat Express to be introduced by Indian Railways and will be the first one connecting the two Telugu-speaking states. It will be covering a distance of around 700 km between Secunderabad and Visakhapatnam in eight and a half hours.

The way all important days and festivals connect the country, Indian trains also with their motion and journey give opportunity to join and understand, Modi said.

The PM said seven Vande Bharat trains (already introduced) have covered the

reflect the image of modern India. "Work done in the last seven to eight years will transform the Indian Railway in the coming seven to eight years", he said.

Claiming that prior to 2014, Telangana had a budget of less than Rs 250 crore for the Railways, he said today it has increased to more than Rs 3,000 crore.

As the event coincided with the Army Day, the PM paid rich tributes to the serving and retired personnel. Hailing their commitment in protecting the country and its borders, Modi said their valour was 'unparalleled.' Every Indian was proud of their army, he added.

The Visakhapatnam-Secunderabad Vande Bharat Express (20833) will start at 05.45 AM and reach Secunderabad at 2.15 PM. It will depart from Secunderabad at 3 PM and reach Visakhapatnam at 11.30 PM. In between, the train will stop at Rajahmundry, Vijayawada, Khammam and Warangal in both the directions, South Central Railway (SCR) officials said.

The train comprises 14 AC Chair Car Coaches and two Executive AC Chair Car Coaches with a capacity of 1,128 passengers. It will provide the fastest travelling facility between these two stations and has exclusive reserved sitting accommodation. (PTI)



A physically disability person takes a holy dip in the Ganga on the occasion of 'Makar Sankranti' at Sagar Island on Sunday

## Release arrears of funds under welfare scheme for fishermen now, Centre told

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 15/--/Kerala has asked the Centre to urgently release to it the outstanding amount of around Rs 63 crore from previous financial years under a welfare scheme meant for fishermen, the State government said on Sunday.

The government has also asked the Centre to release over Rs 26 crore under the scheme for the financial year 2022-23, said a statement from the office of Kerala Minister of

Fisheries, Culture and Youth Affairs.

It said Fisheries Minister Saji Cheriyan has also shot off a letter to Union Fisheries Minister Parshottam Rupala seeking release of the funds immediately.

In his letter, Cheriyan said that under the Savings-Cum-Relief Scheme, the Central government has contributed 50 per cent of the funds since 1992, with the remaining half being borne by the State.

However, an amount of

around Rs 63 crore is pending release from the Centre as arrears of its contribution under the scheme for the period from 2018-19 to 2021-22, he said.

Considering the need of releasing the assistance to the beneficiaries in a time-bound manner during the lean period, the entire amount to be disbursed under the scheme was fully borne by the State in the previous financial years anticipating the Centre's contribution, the Kerala Minister said in the letter.

NEW DELHI, JAN 15/--/ Mishandling, malfunctioning of aircraft system or pilot fatigue could be among the factors that caused the deadly plane crash in Nepal that killed at least 68 people on Sunday, according to pilots and an aircraft accident investigation expert. They also said the exact reasons that led to the accident will be known only after a detailed investigation.

Nepal, which has witnessed quite a few aircraft accidents in recent years, on Sunday witnessed

the crash of an ATR-72 aircraft, operated by Yeti Airlines, that was flying from Kathmandu to Pokhara. Going by the video clips on social media purportedly showing the plane's trajectory seconds before it crashed, it was a clear sky and the weather was not bad.

An aircraft accident investigator told PTI that going by one of the video clips, the nose of the aircraft slightly went up and the wings drooped to the left side before the crash happened, and there could have been a stall.

While the exact factors for the crash will be known only after completion of the detailed probe, initially, it looks like the possibility of mishandling by the pilot or malfunctioning of the plane's angle of attack system, he said on the condition of anonymity.

The person, who was involved in multiple aircraft accident probes, was also closely associated with the investigation into the Calicut plane crash in 2020. A senior pilot at a leading Indian carrier, who did not wish to be quoted, said that following

procedures is paramount when flying to terrains like that in Nepal. The pilot, who also flies to Nepal, said multiple factors, including pilot fatigue, could have led to the crash. While flying an aircraft, there is decision-making at every step and a pilot needs to have good rest. So, there could have been pilot fatigue and also the possibility of procedures not being followed, the pilot added.

A pilot with a regional carrier, who has been flying ATR planes for nearly two decades, opined that the particular aircraft could

have suffered a stall or there could have been a pilot error. The factors that led to the crash will be clear only after the completion of the investigation, the pilot added. "The aircraft involved is a 15 year old ATR 72-500 with registration number 9N-ANC and serial number 754. This aircraft was equipped with an old transponder with unreliable data. We are downloading high resolution data and verifying the data quality," flight tracking website Flightradar24 said in a tweet. (PTI)

## Airports under UDAN scheme to get comprehensive armed security cover

NEW DELHI, JAN 15/--/ More than 60 airports operational in tier-two and tier-three cities under the Centre's regional connectivity scheme UDAN will soon be brought under a comprehensive anti-terror security cover of armed CISF personnel with the deployment of around 1,650 troops, officials said.

The proposal is awaiting final policy sanction from the home ministry. The bureau of civil aviation security (BCAS), in consultation with the ministry of civil aviation and the CISF, finalised the proposal for the "very important security measure" required for the safety of passengers taking flights from small air terminals across India.

Some airports such as Shimla which are under the regional connectivity scheme, are being guarded by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) while the rest are secured by various state police forces or their special armed units and there is no uniform policy. The regional connectivity scheme was launched under the name of

UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) on October 21, 2016, by the Union government to stimulate regional air connectivity and make air travel affordable to the masses residing in tier-2 and tier-3 cities and towns.

The civil aviation ministry is the regulating agency while the Airports Authority of India (AAI) is responsible for implementing the ambitious scheme of the Narendra Modi government. According to the fresh blueprint accessed by PTI, 57 security personnel will be deployed at each of the airports operational under the UDAN scheme, with 27 armed personnel drawn from the CISF and the rest sourced from certified private security agencies.

The CISF is the national civil aviation security force as it guards 66 major domestic and international airports in the country.

A senior home ministry official said, "The CISF will get the fresh manpower to guard all the UDAN airports from the pool of 3,049 posts that were abolished recently, from the airports that it is guarding, and replaced by

hiring a total of 1,924 private security personnel for these tasks." The state government concerned and the AAI will provide lodging facilities for the 57 personnel that are supposed to be deployed at each airport under the regional connectivity scheme, apart from putting in place security gadgets and equipment such as hand-held metal detectors for passenger frisking and baggage scanning x-ray machines, officials said.

These facilities need not be in the airport premises as the terminals are very small and there are very limited flights from there. The lodging facilities can be provided at a nearby government barrack or residential unit and in some cases the CISF will draw its manpower from its nearest available security unit from where the troops can undertake a short trip, to be in place before the departure, they said. "As the passenger tickets under the UDAN scheme are priced low, the proposal sent to the home ministry has kept costs in check and security measures effective," a senior security officer said. (PTI)

## 4 of 5 Indians killed in Nepal plane crash hailed from Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh

LUCKNOW, JAN 15/--/ Four of the five Indians killed in a plane crash in Nepal on Sunday hailed from Ghazipur district in Uttar Pradesh, officials said.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath condoled the deaths and said officials have been directed to coordinate with the Ministry of External Affairs to bring the mortal remains of the deceased to the state.

Ghazipur District Magistrate Aryaka Akhauri told PTI over phone that the administration has reach out to the affected families.

"Our sub-divisional magistrate and other officials are meeting them. We are also in touch with the embassy... We will do the needful after the recovery of bodies," she said.

At least 68 people were killed when a Yeti Airlines passenger plane with 72 people onboard, including five Indians, crashed into a river gorge while landing at the newly-opened airport in central Nepal's resort city of Pokhara on Sunday.

The four victims from Ghazipur district were identified as Sonu Jaiswal, Anil Rajbhar, Abhishek Kushwaha and Vishal Sharma.

Sharma belonged to Alawalpur Chatti

village in the Badesar area of the district, Jaiswal had houses in Chak Jainab and Alawalpur Chatti but was currently living in Sarnath, a police spokesperson said.

Rajbhar was a resident of Chak Jainab in the Badesar area and Kushwaha of Dharwa in the Nonhara area of Ghazipur, he said.

Asked about the fifth Indian killed in the plane crash, who was identified as Sanjay Jaiswal, the police spokesperson said he might have his roots in Ghazipur but it could not be confirmed yet.

According to available information he was living in Kathmandu, the police spokesperson added.

In a tweet in Hindi, the chief minister said, "The plane crash in Nepal is very sad. Humble tribute to all the people including Indian citizens who were killed. My condolences are with the bereaved families. May Lord Shri Ram give place to the departed souls at his holy feet and speedy recovery to the injured."

"Officials have been instructed to coordinate with the Ministry of External Affairs to make arrangements to bring the mortal remains of the deceased people of Uttar Pradesh to the state," the chief minister said in another tweet. (PTI)



A physically disability person takes a holy dip in the Ganga on the occasion of 'Makar Sankranti' at Sagar Island on Sunday

## Special training camp for Village Defence Guards held in J-K's Rajouri

RAJOURI/JAMMU, JAN 15/--/A special training camp for Village Defence Guards was organised near the Line of Control in Nowshera sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district on Sunday, officials said.

Army, Central Reserve Police Force and Jammu and Kashmir Police held the camp at the Lam ground. It was attended by Village Defence Guards (VDG) from Lam, Laroka, Mohra Kampala, Pukharni, Bhata, Raipur and Qila Darhal, they said.

The trainers demonstrated proper handling of weapons, cleaning and their maintenance, the officials said, adding that a special firing session was also organised for the participants.

The focus on the training of VDGs, earlier known as Village Defence Committee members, gained momentum following the recent terror attack in Dhangri village of Rajouri that left seven people dead and 14 injured.

"We have been working as VDC members for over a decade. Things were relatively calm in the last 10 years but there is some disturbance now and we are preparing ourselves," one of the participants said.

He appealed to the government to provide Self-Loading Rifles to ex-servicemen who are VDGs in order to further strengthen them.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Rajouri, Mohammad Aslam said efforts to strengthen VDGs are going on across the district.

"Special training capsules are being organised across the district to hone their skills so that they can tackle the terror threat effectively," he said. (PTI)

# More classified documents found at Biden's residences: White House

WASHINGTON, JAN 15 / --/ Five additional pages of classified material have been found at the Delaware residence of President Joe Biden, the White House has said, bringing the total number of secret documents uncovered to about two dozen.

The discovery came just hours after the White House Counsel's Office had released a statement specifically citing the discovery of a single document and the same day

Attorney General Merrick Garland appointed former US Attorney Robert Hur as special counsel to investigate the matter. With this, the total number of classified documents found at Biden's residences in Delaware and his private office in Washington DC has increased roughly to about two dozen. While the details and contents of these documents are not known, these are from the period when he was serving as the vice president under the

Barack Obama administration from 2009 to 2016. There are three basic levels of US classification of documents: confidential, secret and top secret. Biden, who normally spends his weekends at his residence in Wilmington, Delaware, arrived there on Friday evening. The White House Special Counsel Richard Sauber in a statement on Saturday said that one classified document was found in a room adjacent to Biden's garage Wednesday

night. The lawyers who discovered that document did not have security clearances paused their search as a result, Sauber said on Saturday. "While I was transferring it to the DOJ (Department of Justice) officials who accompanied me, five additional pages with classification markings were discovered among the material with it, for a total of six pages. The DOJ officials with me

immediately took possession of them," he said. "The President's lawyers have acted immediately and voluntarily to provide the Penn Biden documents to the Archives and the Wilmington documents to DOJ. We have now publicly released specific details about the documents identified, how they were identified, and where they were found," he said. The White House is facing increasing criticism for its lack of transparency with

the public over the documents.

The initial batch of documents 10 classified documents from Biden's time as vice president were found at his former private office at the Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement were found on November 2 but not revealed to the public until Monday. Biden used the office from 2017 to 2019 when he was an honorary professor for the University of Pennsylvania. (PTI)

## Iran hangs Iranian-British ex-defence official for spy claim

DUBAI, JAN 15 / --/ Iran said Saturday it executed a former high-ranking defence ministry official and dual Iranian-British national, despite international warnings not to carry out the death sentence. The execution further escalated tensions with the West amid the nationwide anti-government protests shaking the Islamic Republic. The hanging of Ali Reza Akbari, a close ally of top security official Ali Shamkhani, suggests an ongoing power struggle within Iran's theocracy as it tries to contain the demonstrations over the September death of Mahsa Amini. It also harkened back to the mass purges of the military that immediately followed Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. Akbari's hanging drew immediate anger from London, which along with the US and others has sanctioned Iran over the protests and its supplying Russia with the bomb-carrying drones now targeting Ukraine. "This was a callous and cowardly act, carried out by a barbaric regime with no respect for the human rights of their own people," British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly summoned Iran's chargé d'affaires in the United Kingdom and temporarily withdrew Britain's ambassador from Tehran as Britain also sanctioned the Islamic Republic's prosecutor-general. "Our response to Iran is not limited to today," he warned. Iran similarly summoned the British ambassador after the execution. Iran's Mizan news agency, associated with the country's judiciary, announced Akbari's hanging without saying when it happened. However, there were rumours he had been executed days earlier. Iran has alleged, without providing evidence, that Akbari served as a source for Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, known popularly as MI6. A lengthy statement issued by Iran's judiciary claimed Akbari received large sums of money, his British citizenship and other help in London for providing information to the intelligence service. However, Iran long has accused those who travel abroad or have Western ties of spying, often using them as bargaining chips in negotiations.

Akbari, who ran a private think tank, is believed to have been arrested in 2019, but details of his case only emerged in recent weeks. Those accused of espionage and other crimes related to national security are usually tried behind closed doors, where rights groups say they do not choose their own lawyers and are not allowed to see evidence against them. Iranian state television aired a highly edited video of Akbari discussing the allegations, footage that resembled other claimed confessions that activists have described as coerced confessions. The BBC Farsi-language service aired an audio message from Akbari on Wednesday, in which he described being tortured. "By using physiological and psychological methods, they broke my will, drove me to madness and forced me to do whatever they wanted," Akbari said in the audio. "By the force of gun and death threats they made me confess to false and corrupt claims." Iran has not commented on the torture claims. However, the United Nations human rights chief has warned Iran against the "weaponisation" of the death penalty as a means to put down the protests.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken condemned Akbari's execution. "We mourn with his loved ones and will continue to hold Iran accountable for its sham trials and politicised executions," Blinken said. Robert Malley, the US special envoy for Iran, said he was "horrified" by Akbari's execution. "The Islamic Republic's unjust detentions, forced confessions, sham trials and politically motivated executions must end," he wrote online. French President Emmanuel Macron also decried what he called "a heinous and barbaric act." German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock called the execution "a further inhuman act by the Iranian regime." Iran is one of the world's top executioners. However, it wasn't immediately clear when the last time a former or current high-ranking defence official had been executed. In 1984, Iran executed its navy chief Admiral Baharam Afzali along with nine other military people on a charge of spying for the Soviet Union.

Iran's government for months has been trying to allege without offering evidence that foreign countries have fomented the unrest gripping the Islamic Republic since the death of 22-year-old Amini in September after her detention by the morality police. Protesters say they are angry over the collapse of the economy, heavy-handed policing and the entrenched power of the country's Islamic clergy. Akbari had previously led the implementation of a 1988 cease-fire between Iran and Iraq following their devastating eight-year war, working closely with UN observers. He served as a deputy defence minister under Shamkhani during reformist President Mohammad Khatami's administration, likely further making his credentials suspicious to hard-liners within Iran's theocracy. (AP)

## Asking for more loans from friendly countries is embarrassing, says Shehbaz Sharif

LAHORE, JAN 15 / --/ Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that it was embarrassing for him to seek more loans from friendly countries, saying it was not a permanent solution for the cash-strapped country's economic challenges. Addressing the passing out ceremony of probationary officers of the Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS) here in the capital of Punjab province on Saturday, Prime Minister Sharif regretted that during the past 75 years, different governments whether headed by political leadership or military dictators could not address the economic issues. Sharif said it really embarrassed him to ask for further loans while lauding the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the financial support, Geo News quoted him as saying. He said that seeking foreign loans was not the right solution to address Pakistan's economic challenges as the loans would have to be eventually returned. The prime minister said that sustainable development goals (SDGs) could be achieved and foreign loans

avoided had their "bus could have moved at a fast pace" and on the right track. Pakistan is battling to fix its economic and political fissures amidst a parochial political rivalry between former premier Imran Khan and the current government headed by Sharif.

During Sharif's recent visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed



Shehbaz Sharif

announced a grant of a further USD 1 billion loan to Pakistan. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are the two key supporters of Pakistan who come to its rescue when the chips are down. The country faces a serious crisis as its foreign reserves are down to USD 5.8 billion, the lowest

since February 2014. The reserve includes deposits worth USD 5 billion from Saudi Arabia and China with specific conditions of use. Pakistan's economic situation is facing severe headwinds with inflation being forecast to stay high between 21-23 per cent and the country's fiscal deficit widening by more than 115 per cent in the first four months (July-October) of the current fiscal year. The country with an economy of Rs 350 billion is in dire need of foreign aid to reduce its current account deficit as well as ensure enough reserves to meet its debt obligations.

Pakistan's economy has been on a downhill because of the political crisis, plummeting rupee, inflation which is at an unprecedented high, added to it last year's devastating floods, and a global energy crisis which has further worsened the situation. In its call for funds at the recent International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan in Geneva, the country was able to secure pledges worth over USD 10 billion most of them loans. (PTI)

# South Korean Prez travels to UAE, seeks arms sales

ABU DHABI, JAN 15 / --/ South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol received an honor guard welcome Sunday on a trip to the United Arab Emirates as he hopes to expand its military sales here.

Yoon's visit comes as South Korea conducts business deals worth billions of dollars and stations special forces troops to defend the UAE, an arrangement that drew criticism under his liberal predecessor. Now, however, it appears the conservative leader wants to double down on those military links even as tensions with neighbouring Iran have already seen Tehran seize a South Korean oil tanker in 2021. "I think that the situation in the Middle East is changing very rapidly when it comes to geopolitics," said June Park, a fellow with the International Strategy Forum at Schmidt Futures. "So Korea wants to make sure some of the strategic partnerships and the components ... with the UAE." Yoon arrived at Qasr Al Watan palace in Abu Dhabi on Sunday. He was greeted by Emirati leader Sheikh Mohammed bin

Zayed Al Nahyan, who took office in May after serving as the country's de facto ruler for years.

An honour guard of traditionally dressed Emiratis greeted Yoon and his wife, Kim Keon Hee. They twirled model Lee-Enfield rifles alongside troops on camelback and horseback. Inside, a military band played the South Korean and Emirati national anthems. After the ceremony, Yoon quoted Sheikh Mohammed as saying the UAE planned to invest USD 30 billion in South Korea. "We decided to make the investment with confidence in the Republic of Korea that keeps its promises under all circumstances," he said. The report did not elaborate. While energy-hungry South Korea does rely on the Emirates for just under 10 per cent of its crude oil supply, Seoul has struck a series of deals far beyond oil with this nation of seven sheikhdoms that closely tie the nation to Abu Dhabi.

South Korea's trade with the UAE is into the billions of dollars worth of cars, material and other goods. Before Yoon's trip, officials described the visit as

seeking to solidify the ties already in place between the two countries. "This visit will strengthen strategic cooperation with our brother country UAE in the four core cooperative sectors of nuclear power, energy, investment and defense," said Kim Sung-han, director of national security in Yoon's government. On Saturday, South Korea's Yonhap news agency quoted an anonymous presidency official as also saying that an arms deal was planned. "The atmosphere is extremely ripe for security or military cooperation between South Korea and the UAE involving the arms industry," the official said, according to Yonhap.

Already, South Korea reached a USD 3.5 billion deal with the UAE in 2022 to sell the M-SAM, an advanced air defence system designed to intercept missiles at altitudes below 40 kilometres (25 miles). Emirati officials have grown increasingly concerned about protecting their airspace after being targeted in long-range drone attacks by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

While US forces fired Patriot missiles for the first time in combat since the 2003 Iraq invasion to defend Abu Dhabi during those attacks, the Emiratis have been hedging their reliance on American military support since America's chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan. But South Korea's biggest project remains the Barakah nuclear power plant, Seoul's first attempt to build atomic reactors abroad.

The USD 20 billion facility, which ultimately will have four reactors, is in the UAE's western deserts near the Saudi border and one day will account for nearly a quarter of all of the Emirates' power needs. It's also key to the UAE's plans to go carbon neutral by 2050, a pledge that takes on special importance as it prepares to host the United Nations COP28 climate negotiations beginning in November in Dubai. Yoon likely wants to assure the Emiratis that South Korea wants to be in the running for lucrative maintenance contracts after his predecessor, President Moon Jae-in, had said Seoul wanted to move away from nuclear energy. (AP)

## US CDC appoints Indian-origin Nirav Shah as 2nd-in-command

WASHINGTON, JAN 15 / --/ Nirav D Shah, an Indian-origin epidemiologist, has been appointed Principal deputy director at the US Centers for disease control and prevention, making him the second-in-command at the national public health agency.

Shah, who is in his mid-forties, is currently the Director of the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Shah will assume the new role, second in leadership under US CDC Director Rochelle Walensky, in March. His appointment as Principal Deputy Director comes as part of a planned, broader overhaul of that agency announced by the US CDC Director in August of last year. Shah previously served as president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials between March 2021 and September 2022, Politico newspaper reported. Maine Governor Janet Mills in a statement said: "I take comfort, as Maine people should, in knowing that the U.S. CDC and the American people at large will soon become the beneficiaries of his leadership. Dr. Shah, on behalf of the people of Maine, thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Commissioner Jeanne Lambrew appointed Director Shah to his current role as head of the Maine CDC in June of 2019, with the mission of rebuilding the agency and the State's public health infrastructure. "Since his arrival in Maine before the pandemic, and every day throughout it, Dr. Shah has been a trusted advisor to me and an extraordinary leader of the Maine CDC. But even more than that, he was a trusted advisor and a leader to the people of Maine during one of the greatest public health crises of our time," said Governor Mills. "I strongly believe that Maine's nation-leading success in confronting the pandemic is due in large part to Dr. Shah's leadership, and there is no doubt in my mind that he saved the lives of many Maine people," Mills added.

Shah said he was sad to leave the Maine CDC. "I'm thankful for the opportunity that Governor Mills and Commissioner (Jeanne) Lambrew provided me to serve the people of Maine," he said. "In my new role, I will be honoured to serve not just Maine, but the entire nation and carry forward the good work that we have done here. As I prepare for this next step, I thank the people of Maine for taking care of me, as I've always asked them to take care of each other," he added. (PTI)

# Pak Prez Alvi to ask PM to obtain vote of confidence: Imran Khan

LAHORE, JAN 15 / --/ Pakistan's ousted prime minister Imran Khan has said President Arif Alvi will soon ask Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to face a vote of confidence, as he stepped up efforts to press the government for snap polls.

"Shehbaz Sharif tested us in Punjab and now it's his turn to prove whether he enjoys a majority in the National Assembly or not," Khan made these remarks during a media interaction here and also in an interview on Hum News TV on Saturday. "In the first, Shehbaz will be tested for a trust vote... and later we have other plans for him," the chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf said, citing differences in the federal coalition as the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) threatened to quit over the issue of local



Imran Khan

body polls in Karachi and Hyderabad. President Alvi belongs to Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the federal coalition is surviving on a very thin majority. MQM-P has seven members in the National Assembly, if it decides to quit the Shehbaz government cannot survive.

Khan has already said that he will sacrifice both Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies to push the federal government to announce snap polls. Khan says only fresh polls can steer the country out of the economic crisis. The federal government, however, insists that general elections will be held after the completion of the tenure of the government in August. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Punjab Assembly has automatically been dissolved on Saturday after the province's Governor Balighur Rehman refused to sign the summary sent by Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi to disband the provincial legislature.

Elahi, a joint candidate of ousted premier Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party and the PML-Q, signed the dissolution of the Punjab Assembly summary hours after he managed to obtain a vote of confidence. Imran Khan said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly will also be dissolved in a couple of days. Khan was ousted from power in April last year through a vote of no-confidence.

Meanwhile, PML-N supreme leader Nawaz Sharif presided over a party meeting in Lahore on Saturday evening through a video link from London where he has been living in a self-exile since November 2019. "Nawaz Sharif has directed the party leaders and workers to start preparations for elections in Punjab. He also asked PM Shehbaz Sharif to constitute a parliamentary board for the award of tickets," PML-N spokesperson and Federal Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said. (PTI)

# Indian women peacekeepers arrive at UN mission in Abyei

UNITED NATIONS, JAN 15 / --/ A contingent of Indian women peacekeepers, the country's largest single unit of female troops in a UN mission since 2007, arrived in Abyei to begin its deployment with the United Nations Interim Security Force.

The United Nations Security Council, by its resolution 1990 of June 27, 2011, responded to the urgent situation in Sudan's Abyei region by establishing the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

(UNISFA). "Making the nation proud! #India's all-women peacekeeping unit for @UNPeacekeeping in @UNISFA\_1 reached Abyei today," India's Permanent Mission to the UN said in a tweet Saturday. The platoon of women peacekeepers has been deployed in Abyei as part of the Indian Battalion in the United Nations Interim Security Force. Abyei (UNISFA). This will be India's largest single unit of women Peacekeepers in a UN Mission since it deployed the first-ever all-women's

contingent in Liberia in 2007. The team will provide relief and assistance to women and children "in one of the highest operational and challenging terrain conditions under the @UN flag", the Indian Army had said. As the Indian women peacekeepers departed India on January 6 to begin their deployment with UNISFA, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a tweet, "Proud to see this. India has a tradition of active participation in UN peacekeeping missions. The

participation by our Nari Shakti is even more gladdening."

India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj tweeted earlier this month, "India is deploying an all #women's platoon of peacekeepers as part of our battalion to the UN Mission in #Abyei @UNISFA\_1. This is the single largest deployment of women #peacekeepers in recent years. Good wishes to the team!" The Indian contingent, comprising two

officers and 25 other ranks, is part of an engagement platoon and specialises in community outreach. It will perform extensive security-related tasks as well. "Their presence will be especially welcome in Abyei, where a recent spurt in violence has triggered a spate of challenging humanitarian concerns for women and children in the conflict zone," India's Permanent Mission to the UN had said earlier this month. In September last year, Kamboj had said in a Security

Council briefing on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations that the role of women peacekeepers cannot be over-emphasised in effective peacekeeping. She had underlined that India took pride in having deployed the first-ever all-women peacekeeping contingent in Liberia in 2007, which inspired a whole generation of Liberian women to take part in the country's security sector. India stands ready to contribute further to the efforts, she said. (PTI)

## Ashwin backs Shami, asks why so many taboos for Mankading

NEW DELHI, JAN 15 /--/ Star India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said it's surprising to see so many "taboos" regarding the 'Mankad' form of dismissal and asked why bowlers are always subjected to different "treatments".

Veteran India pacer Mohammed Shami had tried to run out Dasun Shanaka at non-striker's end when the batter left the crease while backing up during the opening ODI in Guwahati on January 10. However, Indian skipper Rohit Sharma intervened and withdrew the appeal by Shami as Shanaka, then on 98, went on to complete his century. Ashwin, who is a vocal supporter of the form of dismissal, on Saturday backed Shami, saying it's the umpire duty to declare the batter out.

"Of course, Shami's run out... When Shanaka was on 98, Shami ran him out in the non-striker's end, and he appealed too. Rohit withdrew that appeal. So many people tweeted about that immediately," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

"I am going to keep repeating only one thing, guys. The game situation is immaterial. That is a legitimate form of dismissal."

During the post-match presentation, Rohit had said that he withdrew the appeal against Shanaka as the Lankan skipper was on 98.



Shanaka eventually ended his innings at 108 not out even as Sri Lanka lost the match by 67 runs.

"If you ask for an LBW appeal or a caught-behind appeal, nobody will check with the captain on whether they are sure about the appeal," Ashwin said. "They will give him out if the bowler appeals, and that is the end of it. See, even if one fielder appeals, it is the duty of the umpire to declare a player out if he is out."

"So, I find it very surprising to have so many taboos surrounding this mode of dismissal. But the entire dismissal is regarding what the bowler does, right? The right of making that dismissal or making that decision lies with the bowler, right," he said. Drawing an analogy with a batter walking out, Ashwin said: "In so many games, a batter has nicked

and walked without waiting for the umpire's decision.

"At that time, the batting team captain won't come and ask, 'With whose permission did you walk like that? Did you forget the team's cause? Go back and continue playing.'"

"These different treatments for bowlers and batters have been taking place for so many years now," he added. Such run-outs when a non-striker is out of the crease while backing up before the bowler releases the ball are known as 'Mankading'.

The name comes from the first such recorded mode of dismissal by Vinoo Mankad when he ran out Bill Brown twice in the 1947-48 Test against Australia. In October last year, the International Cricket Council amended its rule book declaring that the run outs at the bowler's end were no longer considered 'unfair play'. (PTI)

## Kohli, Gill power India to series sweep with record 317-run win

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 15 /--/ Virat Kohli lit up the dead rubber with an epic 166 not out, his third century in four innings, as India annihilated a clueless Sri Lanka with a record 317-run win in the third ODI to sweep the series here on Sunday.

Skipper Rohit Sharma (42 off 49) and Shubman Gill (116 off 97) shared a fluent 95-run opening partnership before Kohli (166 not out off 110) propelled India to a daunting 390 for five with his 74th international hundred and 46th in the 50-over format. Sri Lanka succumbed to the high quality fast bowling of Mohammad Siraj who struck four times inside the 10 overs to shut the door on the opposition. Sri Lanka were all out for a meagre 73 in 22 overs, highlighting the gulf between the two teams. It is the biggest margin of victory by runs in the history of men's ODIs. The night well and truly belonged to King Kohli. The 34-year-old, who had ended a nearly three-year wait for an international

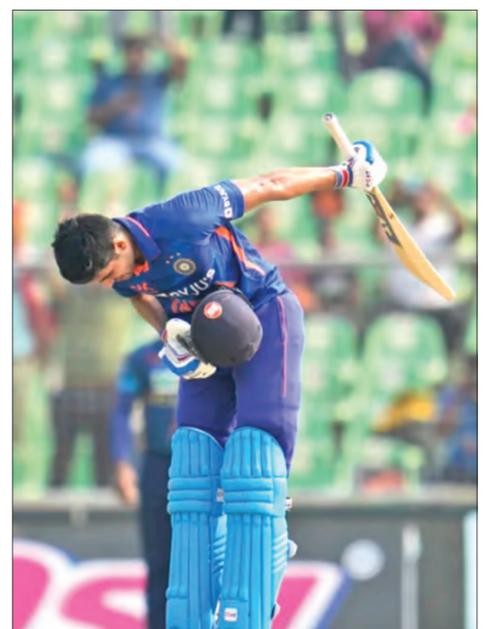


Indian players pose with the trophy after beating Sri Lanka

452 innings to get to 49 centuries. Before Kohli took over, Gill had played some high quality strokes en route to his second ODI hundred. With that effort, he repaid the faith of the team management which had picked him to open ahead of

Kumara, three on the off side and one was a leg side flick off a full toss. Rohit too was looking good at the other end but got out against the run of play while trying one of his signature shots, the front foot pull. Gill and Kohli then shared a 131-run stand in which they were hardly troubled by the Sri Lankan bowlers. Kohli began the innings with a flurry of boundaries before accumulating runs with his exemplary running between the wickets. His first of his eight sixes came in the 80s and it was a mishit over long on, leaving him in a chuckle. He got to 99 with a boundary which came following a collision with Ashen Bandara and Jeffrey Vandersay, who both were running towards the ball from deep square leg and deep midwicket. Both the fielders were eventually stretched off the field.

The last 10 overs saw India smashing 116 runs with Kohli going ballistic after his century. It was raining sixes from his bat post the milestone and one over long on had shades MS Dhoni's helicopter shot that left Kohli with a big smile. Most of his maximums came in the cow corner region. In response to India's



Shubman Gill takes a bow after reaching his hundred

mammoth total, Sri Lanka never really turned up in the chase. Siraj had Avishka Fernando caught at widish slip in the second over of the innings. It was a

procession thereafter with Siraj running through the top order. Mohammad Shami and Kuldeep Yadav chipped in with a couple of wickets. (PTI)

## Ishan Kishan is strong contender for Test spot in Pant's absence: Azhar

ABU DHABI, JAN 15 /--/ Former India skipper Mohammad Azharuddin believes Ishan Kishan would be a strong option as a wicket-keeper batter in the absence of Rishabh Pant for next month's four-match Test series against Australia.

Ishan was handed a maiden call-up in India's Test squad for the Border-Gavaskar trophy beginning at Nagpur on February 9. Azhar, who is doing commentary in the International League T20 in UAE, said what happened to Pant is very unfortunate but Ishan's aggressive style of batting makes him a strong contender for the wicketkeeper-batter's slot. Pant was severely injured in a car accident in the last week of December while he was travelling from Delhi to Roorkee. He will be sidelined for most of the 2023 season as he recovers from multiple injuries.

"Ishan Kishan has been selected in the Indian Test team on his recent form I think he will be a stronger contender for wicket-keeper batsman option. He is a left handed batsman," Azhar told PTI in an interview. However, it will not be easy for Ishan to make it to the playing XI of the Test team due to the

presence of KS Bharat. Bharat has been with the team for almost a year now and has scored three half-centuries in the last four first-class matches. It also included an innings of 77 runs while representing India A against Bangladesh A.

Kishan was unable to retain his place in the ODI team despite scoring a double century against Bangladesh. Azhar lauded the decision to pick Ishan and Suryakumar Yadav in the Test squad but was not

potential to play for the Indian team in all three formats. He has also done well in his last Ranji match," Azhar said.

"As much as I have seen Suryakumar's batting, I can say that like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, he too can also play in all three formats. After a long time, India has got such a batsman who can play in all formats."

"It is very difficult to make a place in the team and both these players will have to prove themselves, if they



Virat Kohli celebrates after reaching his hundred

hundred in the Asia Cup last year, showed that he is back to his best. Kohli is now only three short of equalling Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 ODI centuries. Kohli's conversion ratio is remarkable as he got to his 46th ton in 259 innings while Tendulkar had taken

Ishan Kishan, who came into the series with a double hundred under his belt. The 23-run over from Lahiru Kumara in the initial stage of the innings got India going.

After Rohit flicked him for a six over deep midwicket, Gill collected four straight boundaries off

## India series will be acid test for Cummins: Border

MELBOURNE, JAN 15 /--/ Australian great Allan Border is mighty impressed with Pat Cummins' captaincy but said the upcoming four-Test series against India will be his real "acid test and the final frontier". Australia will begin the marquee Test series at Jamtha from February 9 as they eye their first series win in India in 19 years.

"That is going to be the acid test for him and the team," Border was quoted saying by ABC Sport. Having been elevated to the hot seat after Tim Paine's sudden resignation ahead of the Ashes 2021, the Aussie pace spearhead has had a golden run. Cummins began his captaincy stint winning the Ashes 4-0, then won against Pakistan, West Indies and South Africa. Australia also drew 1-1 with Sri Lanka away from home last year. The results meant Australia are favourites to make their maiden World Test Championships final. The India series will be the last series in the WTC calendar before they take on England in the Ashes with an eye to win on opposition soil for the first time since 2001.

"The next 12 months is the real test for that side and Pat's captaincy in particular because India is just about the last frontier for the Australian cricket team. (PTI)

## Jadeja set for Ranji comeback to prove fitness ahead of Australia series

NEW DELHI, JAN 15 /--/ Premier India allrounder Ravindra Jadeja, who withdrew from the Asia Cup last September to undergo a right knee surgery, is set to make a comeback in Saurashtra's final round of Ranji Trophy fixture against Tamil Nadu in Chennai beginning January 24. The 34-year-old, who is currently doing rehab at the National Cricket Academy, has been picked in a 17-member squad for the first two Tests in the highly-anticipated four-match series against Australia slated to begin in Nagpur from February 9. However, his availability is subject to fitness as a call on Jadeja is likely to be taken during the course of the four-day game.

"It will be good if he plays for Saurashtra. Probably he will, but I don't have any further

details," Saurashtra Cricket Association president Jaydev Shah told PTI. Jadeja has not played any competitive cricket since the T20I against Hong Kong in the Asia Cup on August 31 and his previous first-class match was the rescheduled one-off Test at Edgbaston against England last July. Jadeja reportedly has started to bowl and bat from earlier this week as he's winding up his rehab at the NCA. The left-handed batter is seen as a vital cog in India's line-up, especially in absence of Rishabh Pant at No 5 or 6 in the middle-order. His leftarm spin could also come handy along with ace off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin in the four-match series that will determine India's fate to make a successive World Test Championship final appearance. (PTI)

## India play out goalless draw against England, remain in contention for direct QF berth

ROURKELA, JAN 15 /--/ India played out a goalless draw against England in an entertaining pool match to remain in contention for a direct quarterfinal berth in the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup here on Sunday.

In an evenly contested Pool D match, both the sides failed to score despite getting ample chances to force a result at the jam-packed Birs Munda Stadium. England got eight penalty corners as against India's four. But the home team's penalty corners defence was impeccable. England and India are now on four points each from two matches and who tops the pool and qualify directly for the quarterfinals will be decided on January 19 when India play Wales while England take on Spain, both the matches to be played at Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar. If two teams are on equal points and have won same number of matches, the side which have better goal difference will be ranked higher. England now have a goal difference of plus five after beating Wales 5-0 in their opening match as against plus two of India, who had emerged 2-0 winners against Spain. It was England who dominated in the first quarter as they got five penalty corners one after the other. But India defended the PCs quite well as Manpreet Singh was the first to rush



out and close down the angle. Mandeep Singh won India's first penalty corner towards the end of the first quarter but Manpreet's stop was not the best one, forcing captain Harmanpreet Singh to abort his dragkick.

As soon as the second quarter started, Wallace Zachary's hit from inside the Indian circle came off Krishan Bahadur Pathak high and England got their sixth PC but again wasted it. England kept on entering the Indian circle and got their seventh penalty corner but first

rusher Amit Rohidas was quick enough to fend off the strike. It was end-to-end stuff for a few minutes before Harmanpreet earned a penalty corner for India, the second of the match, but he fluffed it.

After Nilam Sanjeep Xess made a last minute clearance in the Indian 'D' in the 24th minute, Hardik Singh attempted a fierce reverse shot from the top of England circle, only to miss the target by a whisker. India pressed and earned their fourth PC but England were able to clear after a scramble inside the

circle. It was then the turn of Varun Kumar to try his luck but his shot failed to cause any harm. India were the dominant side in the second quarter but could not score as the two sides failed to break the deadlock at half time. David Condon had a try in the 37th minute but went wide. But India were unlucky not to have taken the lead the next minute as Hardik's double shot was saved by England goalie. The match was spiced up and it was the turn of England to get a golden chance as the Indian defence allowed Sam Ward to take a reverse shot from a one-on-one situation with goalie P R Sreejesh but it went wide. India responded quickly and it was Mandep who had a glorious chance to score in the 41st minute as he got a free hit just near the top of England 'D' but he missed the target. The full capacity crowd of 21,000 thought India had taken the lead in the last minute of the third quarter which was contested evenly after the ball landed into the English goal but the umpire ruled that it had already hit an Indian leg.

India were one man down in the last few minutes of the match and England pressed for the winner but failed to breach the home team's defence. England got a PC in the last minute but wasted it.

In an earlier Pool D match, Spain beat Wales 5-1. (PTI)

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