



'HAR GHAR NAL, HAR GHAR JAL' STILL A MIRAGE

14 years on, Karthik Tikery villagers still await tap water



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KARTIK

MAYABUNDER, DEC 18/-/-While the government is determined to provide tap water to every household across the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands under the JalJeevan Mission, the inhabitants of Karthik Tikery village under Shivapuram Panchayat in Middle Andaman are still battling for drinking water facility even after 14 years of settlement in this village located at a hill top of Karthik Tikery.

About six families settled in this hilly area are still struggling with the drinking water problems. These families have been allotted house sites by the North & Middle Andaman District Administration to settle in this hill top in the year 2008. The residents have appealed to the Chief Secretary to give directions

Still battling for drinking water facility even after 14 years of settlement



to the higher officials with regard to drinking water facility to be provided to the villagers as the six families living here are still craving for drinking water and have to travel long distances to fetch water. 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. According to a PRI Member, the six families settled in this hill

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Ex-MP inaugurates MPLAD work of 16th Lok Sabha at Utkal Samaj in presence of Mr. Kuldeep Rai Sharma



PORT BLAIR, DEC 18/-/- The Terrace on the top floor building of Utkal Samaj at Shadipur Ward No. 10, Port Blair constructed under MPLAD fund of 16th Lok Sabha has been inaugurated by Shri Bishnu Pada Ray, Ex-Member of Parliament in the presence of Shri Kuldeep Rai Sharma, Member of Parliament of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, today on 18th December 2022. (Contd. on page-6)

Bio-Diversity Park to come up at Shyamkund village

ASHIM

BAKULTALA, DEC 18/-/- A joint survey of Bio-Diversity Park at Shyamkund village in Middle Andaman was held by the Forest and Revenue department. The Pradhan Gram Panchayat Bakultala and ZP Member, Bakultala, PRI members and staff of Forest and Revenue departments, Rangat Tehsil were present. Once developed, the park will not only become a place of tourism attraction but nature lovers can spend their time in this park in the lab of nature.



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Cong promises to bring back farm loan waiver scheme in MP if it returns to power after 2023 polls

BHOPAL, DEC 18 /--/ The Congress in Madhya Pradesh has promised that if it is voted to power in the state Assembly polls next year, it would reintroduce the farm loan waiver scheme which it had brought after forming a government in 2018.

The party's state unit president and former chief minister Kamal Nath made this announcement on Saturday evening, when he also said that the farm loan of every farmer in the state would have been cleared by now if his government was at the helm. Ahead of the last Assembly polls, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had promised to implement a farm loan waiver scheme in the state if the party came to power. The party delivered on its promise as Kamal Nath signed the file for waiving loans of up to Rs 2 lakh soon after taking oath as the chief minister in December 2018. It is widely believed that the grand old party's promise of farm loan waiver was one of the major factors behind its victory. Sharing the order of the loan waiver scheme issued on December 17, 2018, the day he took oath as Madhya Pradesh CM, Nath said in a tweet, "On this day, the order for loan waiver of the farmers of the state was issued. Had the democratically elected Congress government been in power now, the loan of each and every farmer of the state would have been

waived by now." Nath assured that the loan of farmers would be waived if the Congress returns to power in the state. "There is nothing to worry about. As soon as the Congress government is formed next year, this order will be issued again and the loan of each and every farmer brother will be waived," he said in another tweet. Reacting to Nath's tweets, MP Home Minister Narottam Mishra, who is also the spokesperson of the Shivraj Singh Chouhan-led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in the state, termed this announcement as "cheating".

"Not a single farmer got the benefit of farm loan waiver of up to Rs two lakh as stated in order (posted by Nath). This is cheating. This tweet is rubbing salt into the wounds of farmers, who have become defaulters due to this promise," Mishra said. The BJP, which had been in power in the state since 2003, lost the 2018 Assembly polls.

The Congress came to power with the help of independents and Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) legislators, but the Kamal Nath-led government collapsed 15 months later in March 2020 following a rebellion by near two dozen MLAs loyal to Jyotiraditya Scindia. After that, Chouhan became the chief minister for the fourth time. (PTI)

Why is BJP-led Centre allowing imports from China when it is attacking India: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, DEC 18 /--/ AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal Sunday lashed out at the Narendra Modi government over the recent faceoff between Indian and Chinese troops in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh, asking it to show "some courage and respect" for the country's soldiers.

Addressing the party's National Council meeting, Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal said while Chinese aggression is increasing at the border, the BJP-led Centre says "everything is alright". Instead of "punishing" China, the Modi government is "rewarding Beijing" by allowing high volumes of imports from the country even though many Indian soldiers put their lives on the line while fighting Chinese troops, he charged.

"Don't you have any respect for our soldiers? Show some courage. China will come to its senses if India stops imports," Kejriwal said. He also appealed to the nation to boycott Chinese products. "They say Chinese products are cheap. We do not want Chinese products even if it is cheap. We are ready to buy made-in-India products even if it costs us double," he added. Kejriwal also hit out at the Central government over rising inflation and unemployment, accusing it of having no intention to bring relief to the masses. "People fed up with rising inflation, unemployment under BJP govt at Centre. The AAP government in Delhi has shown that inflation can be contained and jobs can be created. Delhi's inflation is the lowest in India at 4.7 per cent," he claimed. (PTI)

Rahul sharpening ideological basis of Cong, working with party chief Kharge as ‘jugalbandi’: Jairam Ramesh

DAUSA, DEC 18 /--/ Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday said the Bharat Jodo Yatra has ensured that the Congress is now setting the political narrative in the country and the BJP has been made to play on a pitch prepared by his party.

In an interview with PTI on the yatra completing 100 days, Ramesh also said that Rahul Gandhi is trying to sharpen the ideological basis of the Congress and is working along with the party's elected president, Mallikarjun Kharge, as a 'jugalbandi' (together).

Asked whether the party

could undertake another such yatra next year, Ramesh said, "I would certainly love to participate in a Porbandar (Gujarat) to Parshuram Kund (Arunachal Pradesh) Yatra but whether we can do it next year and how we can do it next year, it has to be discussed and debated in appropriate party forums."

The Congress general secretary in-charge communications asserted that through the Bharat Jodo Yatra, Gandhi has given a new direction to the political discourse and the Congress has set the narrative for the last 100 days.

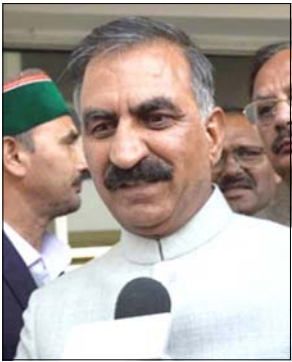
No infighting within Himachal Congress, ‘conflict’ was for CM post: Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu

NEW DELHI, DEC 18 /--/ There is no infighting within the Himachal Pradesh Congress and the "conflict" was only for chief ministership as there were three-four claimants, newly sworn-in CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has said, adding if something were wrong, there would have been a "Rajasthan-like situation".

He asserted that no Congress legislator in the state would defect to the BJP and the party's government was committed to work for the people and would fulfil the promise of restoring the old pension scheme for government employees in the first cabinet meeting. In an exclusive interview with

PTI, Sukhu said, "We have spoken to the finance secretary. Under a strategy we know from where we have to generate money and where we have to invest. We have done the work on introducing the old pension scheme and we will introduce it in the first cabinet meeting."

Asked about the expansion of his cabinet, he said it will happen soon and denied reports about some MLAs lobbying for ministerial berths. After the Congress wrested power from the BJP in the hill state winning 40 of the 68 assembly seats, the party picked Sukhu, 58, as its chief minister over some other claimants to the post, including state party chief



Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu

Pratibha Singh and Mukesh Agnihotri. Sukhu, a four-time MLA from Nadaun in Hamirpur district and the son of a bus driver, was sworn in as the chief minister on December 11. Agnihotri took oath as the

deputy chief minister. The chief minister dismissed reports about infighting within the Congress state unit, but admitted that there was jockeying for the post of CM. "Conflict was for post, it's not party conflict. Three-four people were willing to occupy the post of chief minister. You can see till now we have not done the cabinet expansion. If something were wrong, a Rajasthan-like situation would have occurred," he said. The Congress government in Rajasthan led by Ashok Gehlot faced a rebellion by his then deputy and state party president Sachin Pilot and some other MLAs in 2020. Though the Congress managed to defuse the situation then, the two

factions have been at loggerheads ever since. Sukhu targeted the opposition BJP over reports that some Congress MLAs may join hands with it. "No Congress member will defect from the party," he asserted. He said the people of the state voted against malgovernance of the BJP.

He said the country is facing various issues such as unemployment and inflation but the BJP is trying to divert people's attention from the core issue by using various tactics including making mockery of Rahul Gandhi's speech. He hailed the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Yatra and said the foot march aims to unite people and remove hate that is being spread in

society in the name of religion and caste. Sukhu credited Congress workers for the victory of the party and praised party leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra for framing an effective campaigning strategy. The chief minister said his government was committed to work for the welfare of the people and would fulfil the 10 promises made to the people in the run-up to the November 12 assembly elections. The poll results were announced on December 8.

In its manifesto, the Congress promised to implement the old pension scheme, 30 units of free power and Rs 10 crore 'StartUp fund' in each constituency among others. (PTI)

Rajnath Singh cites puranas’ to underline Navy’s role in India’s security



Union Minister for Defence Rajnath Singh at the commissioning ceremony of INS Mormugao, graced, in Mumbai--PIB

MUMBAI, DEC 18 /--/ Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday cited puranas to underscore the important role the Indian Navy plays in the country's maritime security. Singh mentioned about puranas (sacred writings on Hindu mythology) in his speech after stealth guided missile destroyer Mormugao was commissioned into the Navy in Mumbai.

"Even if our puranas are mere (figment of) imagination, there is truth behind them," he said.

"They are important for us," he added. "I am stating all this before you as our puranas mention the importance of the sea. There is hardly a story which doesn't mention the sea."

"At some places (in the puranas), there is a description of Lord Vishnu's kshir sagar

(ocean of milk), in some places the earth is seeking shelter in the sea due to atrocities by demons," Singh said. The defence minister said all are very well acquainted with the role of the sea in the epic Ramayana. "The sea is present in all the stories. But here, I would like to mention the story about samudra manthan (tale from Hindu mythology, where Lord Vishnu takes the incarnation of a huge tortoise and helps the gods and demons churn the ocean) in which 14 ratnas (gems) emerge from the ocean. "Goddess Laxmi is one of the 14 ratnas. She is known as the goddess of wealth."

That is why the sea is the fountainhead of wealth and prosperity. You (Navy personnel) guard our seas, so you are also guarding our wealth and prosperity," Singh said. (PTI)

MP BJP to go into 2023 Assembly polls with ‘Abki baar, 200 paar’ slogan, also eyes 51 per cent vote share

BHOPAL, DEC 18 /--/ Buoyed by the party's resounding victory in Gujarat, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in Madhya Pradesh has come up with 'Abki baar, 200 paar' slogan for the next year's Assembly elections, setting the ambitious target of winning more than 200 seats in the 230-member House. The saffron party, which has been in power in Madhya Pradesh for almost 20 years, also aims to garner 51 per cent votes in the polls that are due by the end of 2023.

"The party is setting the target of bagging 51 per cent vote share and winning more than 200 seats in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly polls next year," state BJP chief V D Sharma told reporters on Saturday after emerging from the party's executive committee meeting in Katni district of the state.

"Abki baar, 200 paar" (this elections, more than 200 seats), he said, adding that the party had received 53 per cent votes in Gujarat and rewritten history in that state with the landslide victory. The BJP won 156 seats out of 182 seats in Gujarat, where elections were held on December 1 and 5, and broke the Congress's 1985 record in that state when Madhavsingh Solanki won 149 seats. At the meeting, where MP Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and other

leaders were present, the party resolved to win more than 200 seats.

After 15 years in power, the BJP had lost the 2018 Assembly polls in MP, paving the way for the Congress to form a government under the leadership of Kamal Nath with the help of elected independents, MLAs from the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party. However, a rebellion by nearly two dozen Congress MLAs loyal to Jyotiraditya Scindia, a Union minister who is now in the BJP, led to the collapse of the Nath government in March 2020. The BJP subsequently formed its government under the leadership of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. "In the last Assembly polls in MP, the Congress and independent candidates backed by it together won 114 seats, while the BJP had to be content with 107 seats," senior journalist and political analyst Rakesh Dixit told PTI.

"In 2018, the saffron party garnered 41.02 per cent votes, while the Congress managed to cobble up 40.89 per cent votes. The BJP had to sit in the opposition for 15 months until 22 Congress MLAs mostly loyal to Jyotiraditya Scindia rebelled, paving the way for the return of the saffron party to power in MP," he added. (PTI)

Proverbial dog barking at majestic elephant: Goamminister slams Bilawal Bhutto over remarks against Modi

PANAJI, DEC 18 /--/ Goa tourism minister and BJP leader Rohan Khaunte has dubbed Pakistan foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto's remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a proverbial dog barking at the majestic elephant.

Bhutto's statement has evoked a strong reaction in India with the Bharatiya Janata Party holding protests against him in various cities. "Proverbial dog barking at the Majestic Elephant is what Bilawal Bhutto's ranting is all about while Our Hon'ble PM @narendramodi Ji strides the Global Scenario like A Colossal Giant taking India to its Rightful Position of a World Super Power," Khaunte tweeted. The Pakistani foreign minister made remarks against PM Modi and targeted the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) after India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar highlighted at the United Nations Security Council meeting the neighbouring country's support to various terror groups and described the country as the "epicentre of terrorism". (PTI)

Kamal Haasan to take part in Bharat Jodo Yatra

CHENNAI, DEC 18 /--/ Top star and Makkal Needhi Maiam president Kamal Haasan on Sunday said he would take part in the Bharat Jodo Yatra led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on December 24 in Delhi. According to the party, Haasan, addressing office bearers here, said he has been invited by Rahul Gandhi to participate in the Yatra. MNM spokesperson Murali Appas told PTI that party workers, led by their leader Haasan, would take part in the Gandhi-led foot march in the national capital.

"Our leader made the announcement addressing office-bearers," he said. Chaired by Haasan, MNM's administrative and executive committee and district secretaries meeting was held here on Sunday. (PTI)

1971 India-Pakistan war: Hero of Longewala post battling health issues at AIIMS-Jodhpur

NEW DELHI, DEC 18 /--/ Bhairon Singh Rathore (81), the veteran of the 1971 India-Pakistan war whose bravery at Rajasthan's Longewala post was portrayed by actor Suniel Shetty in Bollywood movie 'Border', is battling health issues and has been admitted to the AIIMS in Jodhpur.

Rathore's son Sawai Singh told PTI that his father was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) at Jodhpur on December 14, two days before the 51st anniversary of the war, after his health deteriorated and his limbs got affected in what seemed like a paralysis.

"Doctors told us that my father has possibly suffered a brain stroke. He has been



Sawai Singh. Bhairon Singh Rathore, posted with the 14th BSF battalion during the war, retired in 1987. Singh said that AIIMS-Jodhpur had taken care of his father earlier too and the

entire cost of the treatment is being taken care by the government, as like always. "However, sometimes I have to get medicines from the market as they are not available at the hospital," he said. Officers from the Border Security Force (BSF) and the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Army responsible for guarding the India-Pakistan front along the Thar Desert area have also visited the hospital to inquire about his health and treatment, officials said.

According to BSF records about the 1971 war at Longewala post, "When one of the 23 Punjab boys was killed, Lance Naik Bhairon Singh took his light machine gun and inflicted heavy casualties on the advancing enemy." (PTI)



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath distributing appointment letters, spokespersons and assistant teachers organised at Lok Bhavan in Lucknow on Sunday

Wounded by One's Kith and Kin Overriding ambitions



BHOPINDER SINGH

When the venerable late Jaswant Singh had just been expelled from the political party of which he was a founder member i.e., the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), he had invoked a Churchillian quote to explain the conundrum, 'The opposition occupies the benches in front of you, but the enemy sits behind you'. When the interviewer tried to curry militaristic step with the erudite scholar-Statesman by suggesting a case of 'friendly fire', Jaswant Singh gently corrected the interviewer that the term 'friendly fire' was inappropriate as it had a different connotation, and that he was actually, "wounded by my own kith and kin". The former soldier with pucca English would always describe himself to be a proud 'liberal democrat' (the word 'liberal' hadn't acquired a pejorative context, as yet). Also Read - "No Matter What the World Does, You and I And All Positive People Are - Alive!" He was naturally given to an era, flavour and sensibility with which his party's foundational manifesto had explicitly sworn, 'allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established and to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy.....' (Then, even the word 'secularism' wasn't lampooned, and no one complained of 'too much democracy'). But within his own party, a starkly different air and aesthetic took charge and Jaswant Singh was to fade away along with the likes of Arun Shourie, Yashwant Sinha, Maj Gen BC Khanduri etc., all dignified

men of letters, each made irrelevant as Jaswant would poignantly describe, "wounded by my own kith and kin". Also Read - Afghanistan Turns Into an Information Black Hole But this is not an exclusive narrative of any one political party, but that of all Indian political parties. It is rarely the 'enemy' in the front in terms of the other opposing party, but in fact the enemy 'within' that threatens any topical party leadership. The purges within could almost be Stalinist in terms of brutality and unemotionality. Many popular names that were associated with the 2011 Anna Hazare movement that ultimately morphed into the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), were soon excommunicated from the young party within a few years of its formation. The grand old party i.e., Congress deals with its own internal strife that is basically predicated on leadership wrangling and preferences, and the ideology per se is never the issue (think, G-23 rebellion). Also Read - The 'Balance of Fear' The regional strongman in Uttar Pradesh i.e., Akhilesh Yadav, is perennially looking over his shoulder at his own 'kith and kin' who threaten his political inheritance, as opposed to rival parties in the front - familial intrigues consume the party's news and agenda. It is no different with TMC (All India Trinamool Congress) in Bengal where accusations of 'heir apparent' do the rounds or in DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) in Tamil Nadu, where a tactical truce belies the tensions within the 'family'. Also Read - Beyond the Tawang Skirmish While conflicting and ruthless ambitions within the leadership of all political parties are a global phenomenon, rarely is the same a matter of primary focus, governance or manipulation, as much as it is in the 'world's largest democracy'. Battered ruins of the battle of the 'kith and kin' have already imploded the Shiv Sena into several claimants of

Bal Thackrey's true inheritors. Perhaps it is only the Leftist parties that can be said to have atrophied owing to truly ideological concerns and other issues, as opposed to 'palace intrigues', necessarily. Most recently, serious murmurs of being politically wounded by own 'kith and kin' albeit from within the same partisan parivaar abound in the recently concluded Himachal Pradesh elections. Ostensible turf wars amongst the three warring factions with considerable say within their own boroughs is being bandied as amongst the serious reasons for the BJP's defeat, despite the fiery campaign led by no less than the Prime Minister himself. It is believed that a young Central Minister had given signals of the brewing trouble when he shed tears 'in praise of the hard work' done by his father (a former Chief Minister), who had coincidentally been denied a ticket in these elections. He then alluded to rebel candidates from his own BJP who suddenly propped up and supposedly had 'their reasons' but were 'part of our family' - when the results came out, all five seats in the Hamirpur Constituency went to others. The area has traditionally been a BJP stronghold. But this is also possible where the 'kith and kin' are allowed the freedom to disagree and perhaps express the disagreement, but in Gujarat where the same partisan persuasion had the iron discipline of removing all Ministers (including the sitting Chief Minister) in a single stroke without a murmur - the results were a staggering win of unmatched scale for the same BJP. However, India's political history consistently confirms a finite shelf-life for individual cult appeal that can override the issues of internal 'kith and kin' phenomenon temporarily with an iron hand, as was seen with Indira Gandhi, Jayalalitha, Mayawati et al, who often sought unquestionable right to

decide their political party's narrative, exclusively. Given Indian landscape of diversity, imagined civilisational wounds and the 'argumentative nature' in the land of antiquity, perhaps the most nuanced and deft approach is the ideal combination of inclusivist instincts (by and large), and with a supreme ability 'to manage contradictions' - four political leaders across the partisan divide mastered this art, namely Jawaharlal Nehru, Narsimha Rao, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh. But this template is also susceptible to looking indecisive, enfeebled or even manipulable, as was the case of Manmohan Singh in the last couple of years of his Prime Ministership - but hard data beyond rhetoric and bombast will also validate the times of their respective rules as their respective rules as of national progress and enlightenment, relatively. All four managed dissent and disagreement, and some like Atal Bihari Vajpayee even had the magnanimity and grace to encourage intellectual disagreement from the likes of Jaswant Singh, Arun Shourie, Yashwant Sinha, KK Khanduri. But the change of political hands and consequential winds also changes cultures within and those who do not fit into the 'new normal' are automatically ejected out - it happened with the BJP, Congress, AAP and all regional parties without exception. To return to Churchillian quotes, "You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life", is by-and-large true for all Indian political parties as most of those who have survived the vicissitudes of time and leadership purges are often the ones who have not stood for something, sometime in life! (Lt General. BHOPINDER SINGH (Retd), is the Former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. Views expressed are the author's own).

3rd Gram Sabha of GP Mithakhari held



PORT BLAIR, DEC 18/--/ The 3rd Gram Sabha for the finalization of Gram Panchayat Development Plan-2023-24 of Gram Panchayat Mithakhari was held on Sunday at the Community Hall of Ograbraj. Officials of many line departments and villagers attended the Gram Sabha meeting. Mr. MohdSafiq, Pradhan, GP Mithakhari welcomed the officials of the line department as well as the villagers

During the Gram Sabha, the villagers of Ograbraj, Muslimbasti and Mithakhari held direct interaction with the concerned officials and raises their grievances and issues. The officials of concerned department after patiently hearing their grievances assured to resolve their issues on a time bound manner.

Mr. JavedHameed, Panchayat Secretary GP Mithkhari concluded the Gram Sabha by proposing the vote of thanks.

Mr. Safique has expressed his gratitude to the officials of the line departments and as well as the residents of these villagers for participating in the 3rd Gram Sabha and raising their issues.

4-Days prog for B.Ed trainees of TGCE

PORT BLAIR, DEC 18/--/ Environmental Education Centre organised a four-days programme for B.Ed trainees of Tagore Govt. College of Education on Science & Technology communication of best practices and awareness raising on climate change & biodiversity conservation in Andaman & Nicobar Islands in association with the National Council for Science and Technology




Communication, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.


Two workshops and exposure visits were organised from 13th to 16th December 2022. The inaugural programme was held on 13th December 2022, at TGCE auditorium. The programme was inaugurated by Mr. BirendraChaudhary, Dy. Conservator of Forest (PW), Department of Environment and Forest.

Dr. S. J. Mathew, Principal, TGCE was the guest of honour. In this program, B.A.B.Ed and B. Sc. B. Ed trainees participated.

The awareness program was held on 13th & 15th December 2022. During the awareness program, various issues were discussed, the subjects are the Basic concept of climate change and biodiversity with reference to the current scenario, the Impact of

Contd. page 5





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Govt-Judiciary on collision course?

Is the government headed for a confrontation with the judiciary? At least certain recent statements by Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on the judiciary make one wonder. Rijiju waded into a controversy by saying that a constitutional body such as Supreme Court should not be hearing "bail applications and frivolous PILs" when pendency of cases is so high. The law minister also sounded critical when he said that Supreme Court judges take too many vacations. He did not mince words when he said that there is a feeling among the people that the long vacation in courts is not very convenient for justice-seekers. Rijiju went on to question the process of appointments to the higher judiciary. His statement raises a very fundamental question - does the government of the day believe in Article 21 (Protection of Life and Personal Liberty)? Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud reacted to the minister's remarks, saying that no case is too small for the Supreme Court. "If we do not act in matters of personal liberty and grant relief, then what are we doing here," the CJI posed. A bench of CJI Chandrachud and Justice PS Narasimha highlighted the importance of "personal liberty", saying the top court will be acting "in breach" of its special constitutional powers if it does not act in cases pertaining to the violation of the fundamental rights of the citizens. "What for are we here if we do not listen to our conscience?" the bench asked. If we do not act in matters of personal liberty and grant relief, then what are we doing here?" asked the bench. "We will be acting in breach of Article 136 (special powers to grant relief under the Constitution) if we do not act in the matter of personal liberty."

The issue regarding court vacations has been raised earlier also but judges, including former CJI NV Ramana, had said there is a misconception that judges stay in ultimate comfort and enjoy their holidays. Delivering the inaugural Justice SB Sinha Memorial Lecture on 'Life of a Judge', the then CJI Ramana had said judges spend sleepless nights rethinking their decisions. "There exists a misconception in the minds of the people that judges stay in ultimate comfort, work only from 10 am to 4 pm and enjoy their holidays. Such a narrative is untrue... when false narratives are created about the supposed easy life led by judges, it is difficult to swallow," he had said. Justice Ramana had also said judges work even during weekends and court holidays to do research, and to author pending judgements. In this process, we miss out on many joys of our lives," he had said. Similarly, a former judge of the Delhi High Court, Justice Jayant Nath, has observed that the public perception of courts going on vacations like schools was not correct and an appropriate machinery must be engaged to project their hard work for an "image change". The collegium system has become a major flashpoint between the Supreme Court and the Union government, with the mechanism of judges appointing judges drawing criticism from different quarters. Rijiju had on November 25 launched a fresh attack, saying the collegium system is "alien" to the Constitution.

Proposed changes in Forest (Conservation) Rules will hit the dwellers

REFLEX ACTION

Krishna Jha

social factors and great importance of the latter. It is also significant how he deals with the question at classical political economic level. He says that in capitalism and in all other socio-economic formations preceding capitalism, one had been concerned only or mainly with the immediate and direct results of labour and production without bothering about the long term ecological effects. Classical political economy, he said, examines only the social effects of human actions in the fields of production and exchange that are only intended towards about immediate production and sale of these commodities. Citing the example of Spanish planters in Cuba that were concerned only with burning down the fields to the extent that only bare rocks were left, he said, "In the present mode of production, only concern has been about the immediate and most tangible results."

Marx had also brought out details about environmental loopholes in the British capitalist society. He wrote interesting details about pollution and argued along with Engels that it was essential to have a strong link between industrial and agricultural production. In fact Marx and Engels were the philosophers and scientists who analysed the society and repeatedly held responsible the capitalist society for the worrisome situation. It was the duo of Marx and Engels who had prepared the blue print of scientifically organising the downtrodden for demanding change in the exploitative socio-economic system. They analysed the ecological dangers of the industrial society scientifically and all their

prophecies have come true. Tsunami, earthquakes, droughts and massive floods are now common, every minute are burning long stretches of forests, toxic gases spreading their infections and making the atmosphere poisonous, promoting pandemics. All these devastations point towards the fact that repercussions of anarchic 'development' are let lose. It is time to take up ecological issues with primary concern. The threat to nature has become threat to life on earth. Perhaps it would need a total revision of earth's atmosphere, biosphere, noosphere among so many other dimensions. But as we enter the end of modernity and reach out to the post modern days, collective thinking slowly has been pushed into the past.

It is the singularity of the regime that takes the final call. Entire approach has been shifted towards ways that serve the vested interests. The recent sale of the forest land is here that unveil the obvious. Incidents are there when the deal is cleared and price is collected without taking into confidence the provincial governments, despite the fact that the issue is under concurrent list. Approval of the victims, the forest inhabitants, is of no concern. Not even the legal side of it. Instead of bringing back the balance that the criticality of the moment needs imperatively, the law has been revised to allow for de-reservation of forest land and use of it for non-forest purposes. Noose has started tightening fast. The changes to be brought in the Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022 are meant to push the dwellers of the forest to the end, and the effects it would have are not just for the people living in the forests but for ecology itself. Nature stands almost bereft of its gifts. It is not only forests, rivers and mountains, but the entire human habitat that is facing the challenge -- singular and almost invincible. (IPA)



Two youngsters take a selfie at Nandan during the ongoing Kolkata International Film Festival on Sunday --Arijit Ganguly

Easing of inflation threat a global phenomenon

Inflation is showing signs of softening, providing much-needed relief to the government as well as the managers of the economy, not to speak of the common man, whose household budgets have been under a squeeze in view of skyrocketing prices. The improvement is reflected in the latest rate hike by the Reserve Bank, which is by a lower margin of 35 basis points compared to the three previous instances of 50 each. So far so good. But the important point not to be missed is that the reversing trend is in keeping with a global trend rather than any spectacular success that can be credited to only India.

Inflation the world over has begun to decline, which is primarily attributed to falling oil prices as well improvements in supply chain, which had been one of the biggest casualties of the pandemic era. Though the central banks are still a long way off their comfort zone inflation level of 2 percent, they have been largely successful in taming the problem, with rate increases and other appropriate policy mechanism.

They have been aided by some very favourable developments in the energy sector. King dollar, which has been on a

rampage, and a scourge for most other currencies, notably those in the emerging markets, including India, has finally relented and is down 5 percent from its October level. This has changed the directions of money flows, reflecting in proportionate improvement in the performance equities as well as other investment products.

Although the Reserve Bank continues to swear by uncertainties in the global economy, with core inflation still indicating stickiness and medium-term outlook remaining exposed to global developments and weather, it has indicated a continuation of the policy of 'withdrawal of accommodation'.

RBI has revised upwards the retail inflation forecast marginally to 6.6 per cent and 5.9 percent for the third quarter and fourth quarter respectively and hopes to bring down CPI inflation to 5 percent and 5.4 per cent in the first and second quarter of next year. Simultaneously, there has been an

improvement in the foreign exchange situation. According to RBI, forex reserves have increased for the fourth straight week, with valuations greatly benefitting from the fall in dollar vis-à-vis other major currencies. The reserves stood at \$561.16 billion by the first week of December, enough to pay for almost nine months' import requirements.

India is, however, better placed in these respects than Europe, where double digit inflation and soaring cost of living are giving a tough time to consumers in the whole continent. Despite the onset of festival shopping season, retail sales are down and consumer confidence has plummeted to levels lower than where they were at the peak of the pandemic.

In contrast, retail demand in India is consistently increasing and the effect of inflation seems to be cooling off for the sector. A recent CII event was told that in this respect India is much better than the rest of the world. Particularly,

demand in rural India is picking up and there is a lot of value-seeking behaviour, according to FMCG major ITC.

According to reports, India's factory activity expanded at its fastest pace in three months in November. The Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index, compiled by S&P Global, rose to 55.7 last month compared with 55.3 in October, marking the 17th successive month of expansion in manufacturing production across India. Robust demand, particularly for consumer and intermediate goods, and marketing pushed the new orders sub-index to a three-month high, while input prices rose at the slowest pace in 26 months providing some relief for manufacturers, and also benefiting end-consumers with selling prices increasing at the shallowest rate since February, S&P pointed out.

Although overall economic growth slowed to 6.3 per cent in the previous quarter, compared to 13.5 per cent growth reported in the previous three months. There has been an improvement in overall business confidence. Reflecting the positive sentiment, employment also rose at the quickest rate since January 2020 barring October. (IPA)

FOCUS

K Raveendran

Conventional Crossword												
1		2	3	4		5		6				
			7									
8	9				10		11					
				12			13					
14		15				16				17		
18					19		20					
		21				22						
23					24			25			26	
						27						
28					29							

ACROSS						DOWN					
1	Scold					1	Obstacle				
5	Drink slowly					2	Rodent				
7	Whatever					3	Give life to				
8	Part of the eye					4	English river				
11	Decay					5	Calm				
12	Combine					6	Seabird				
14	Table-shaped hill					9	Water pitcher				
16	Minister's residence					10	Limb				
18	Angry					13	Floral ornamentation				
20	Scottish dance					14	Mix in				
21	Corolla leaf					15	Undermined				
23	Opening					17	Appear to be				
24	Danger signals					19	Greek letter				
27	United					22	Drug-yielding plant				
28	Finish					25	Colour				
29	Interfere					26	Prosecute				

SUDOKU:3730												
			4	3								
7								9	5			
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8	1					7	6	2				
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Yesterday's Solution 3729												
1	9	5	6	3	4	2	7	8				
6	4	3	8	2	7	5	9	1				
8	7	2	9	5	1	3	4	6				
9	3	8	4	1	2	6	5	7				
7	5	1	3	9	6	8	2	4				
4	2	6	5	7	8	9	1	3				
5	8	9	1	4	3	7	6	2				
2	6	4	7	8	5	1	3	9				
3	1	7	2	6	9	4	8	5				

Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 1738												
I	N	T	O	N	E	R	E	C	T		B	A
N					E	V	A	D	E	D		I
T					U	N	I	C			R	O
O						L	E	V	E	R		
N	O	D								T	E	N
E	R	E	C	T						D	O	E
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S	K	I	P				R	E	S	I	N	
O					R	E	B	A	T	E		I
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Blood donation camp by Bajrang Dal



PORT BLAIR, DEC 18/-/ Bajrang Dal under the aegis of VHP, A & N Islands organised a voluntary Blood Donation Camp on Sunday at Vivekanda Kendra Vidhyalaya, Lambaline, Port Blair on the occasion of ongoing Gita Jayanti celebration and ShauryaDiwas. Gita Jayanti is celebrated all across the country by the VHP and Bajrang Dal by conducting various SevaKarya. The voluntary blood donation camp was

graced by Mr. Thyagarajan, Proprietor, Sunny Diesel. The chief guest explained the importance of donating blood and motivated the youths to donate frequently while appreciating the various sevakarya undertaken by Vishwa Hindu Parishad. The programme started with dweepprajalan and pushpanjali to Bharat Mata and Swamy Vivekananda by the chief guest and senior dignitaries of VHP, A&N Islands Mr. Ajay Goel

and Mr. Dinesh Sharma. Mr. A n o o p G o p i n a t h a n , Secretary, Port Blair Zilla, VHP elaborated upon the Gita Jayanti celebrations and the various sevakaryasorganised by the sanghatan. The youths of Bajrang Dal actively participated and made a huge contribution. 51 units of blood were donated by the karyakartas of various organisations. Mr. AmitRai, Sayyanjok, Bajrang Dal concluded the programme with the vote of thanks.

4-Days prog for B.Edtrainees of TGCE



fram page 3
climate change on terrestrial and marine biodiversity: Andaman and Nicobar Islands perspective., Coral reef and mangrove ecosystem with special reference to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Basic concept of Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH), Pollution causes to climate change and threats to marine life and floral diversity of Andaman and Nicobar islands. The above topics were delivered lectures by various eminent resource persons. Dr. P.M. Mohan, Professor, Pondicherry University, Brookshabad, Dr. R. KirupaSankar, HoD, Fisheries Science Division, CIARI, Port Blair, Dr. ParthMondal, AYUSH Hospital, Dept. of Health Services, Junglighat, Dr. Lalji Singh, Dy. Director, Botanical Survey of India, Port Blair, Shri. A. Gopal, Project Officer, CPREEC, Port Blair and Shri. Uma

MaheshwarRao, JE (SWM), PBMC, Port Blair were the resource persons during the program.
In the continuation of the program, exposure visits were organized for participants on 14th and 16th of December 2022. The participants were taken to the Botanical Survey of India's Herbarium and Zoological Survey of India's museum for observing the ex-situ conservation of biodiversity. After that, they visited the prem Nagar coastal line for the purpose of understanding unmanaged plastics break down into microplastics and contribute to climate change indirectly by negatively affecting marine life. The students visited the mangrove patch of Sippighat and the BSI's Botanical Garden, Nayashehar to understand the biodiversity conservation methods of in-situ and ex-situ conservation.

Diglipur Police arrests autodriverwith illicit ganja



PORT BLAIR, DEC 18/-/ Police Station Diglipur once again showed their mettle and are going tough against drug peddlers. Keeping sharp vigil over antisocial activities under the jurisdiction on 17/12/22 an information was received regarding an auto driver carrying huge quantity of illicit ganja in his Auto rickshaw. A raiding team comprising Inspr. Vikash Singh, SHO PS Diglipur, SI Abdul Shakil, HC(IRBn) Santosh Nair, PC's DevsaiToppo, S a n t o s h L a l , AbubackerSiddique, SamareshMistry, &

HG(D) Mari Kani was constituted and the team intercepted the auto rickshaw bearing AN 01 K 8522 near Subashgram bridge and recovered 1.068 Kgs of ganja from driver BiswajitMondal S/o Late GhanashyamMondal, (37) yrs. Auto Driver R/o Madhupur, Diglipur. A case under appropriate section of NDPS Act was registered against the auto driver and accused was arrested. The dedication and hard work of the raiding team of PS Diglipur resulted in seizure of such huge quantity of ganja. The entire trap was

conducted under the supervision of Mr Lakshya Pandey, SDPO Diglipur, and overall direction and supervision of undersigned. The district police follow a policy of zero tolerance towards any organized crime. The general public is requested to pass and share any credible information pertaining to any crime or illegal activities to their nearest police station or over phone No.100, 112 & 03192-273344. The identity of the informers will be kept secret and will also be suitably rewarded.

5-days training course on “Para Taxonomy, including people’s biodiversity register” concludes

PORT BLAIR, DEC 18/-/ The Zoological Survey of India, Andaman & Nicobar Regional Centre, Port Blair conducted a five-day training course on 'Para Taxonomy Including People's Biodiversity Register' (PBR) sponsored by Department of Environment & Forests, A & N Islands to train the frontline staff during 13th to 17th December 2022.

Mr. Kamal Datta, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests was the chief guest, while Dr. S. Senthil Kumar, Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), and Mr. Kuldeep Sharma, Deputy Conservator of Forest (Mill Division), Department of Environment and Forests were the guests of honour. The programme was also attended by Officers from Department of Environment and Forests, Anthropological Survey of India, Pondicherry University, IGNOU and District Mobile Forensic Unit, A & N Police. The ceremony started with a prayer song and lighting of a traditional lamp. Total of 34 trainees from different divisions of the Department of Environment and Forests have participated.

Mr. Kamal Datta in his speech indicated how this course will be advantageous in capacity building and imparting knowledge on Biodiversity of island ecosystems. He showed his appreciation to ZSI/ANRC, Port Blair for organizing this knowledge-based capacity building program. He has informed that the next course will implement all the stratified comments in the feedback. He encouraged the field training and offline classes for the trainees to have a better interaction with the experts. The speaker stated about the preparation of a compendium in both English and Hindi for distribution to trainees at the start of the course. This kind of manual will help the trainees in their future assessments. He also highlighted the development of mobile applications for biodiversity assortment and this should be done in both Hindi and English which will facilitate the



preparation of PBRs. All the participants that were enrolled to participate in this workshop were greeted by him and encouraged to implement the information gathered during this five-day course on local community awareness and pass on this information to co-workers. He motivated them to become a master trainer and continue implementing the information they perceived in this course in their future work processes.

In his felicitation address, guest of honour Dr. S. Senthil Kumar admired the present course and its proposal for serving trainees in procedure of developing and solidifying the skills, predispositions, aptitudes, procedures and resources that governments and publics need to be cultivated. He specifically mentioned the formulation of training programmes and seminars for all levels of staff to strengthen their knowledge on modern techniques and so they can use this conservation of nature for the future generation. He congratulated the trainees and showed his appreciation for the trainees who came with flying colours. He emphasized the role of forest rangers as a regulator of assortment of proposed

biological resources which should not affect the sustainability of the resources; entail any environmental impact; shall not pose any risk to ecosystems; adversely affect the local communities. He emphasized on the importance of PBR and Para taxonomy on the above issues and how it would be beneficial to the trainees. He showed his profuse gratefulness to the Officer-in-Charge for organizing this course. He extended his congratulations to everyone who participated and successfully completed the workshop.

Mr. Kuldeep Sharma in his address stated that this form of course implants the knowledge in capsule mode on relevant issues and inspires trainees for a better experience which will be put out through interactions with the notables.

The speaker mentioned the need for detailed taxonomic and surveying techniques in preparation of PBRs. In his speech he mentioned the establishments of BMCs at various sectors which facilitate the investigative procedure. The speaker explicitly mentioned how the trainees should take this training and enlarge their knowledge spectrum to a special field as it will

be more useful than general groups. He expressed his appreciation to all the lecturers and resource personnel for sharing their knowledge. He also stated the inputs from the course which will help in biodiversity management in the field. He encouraged the trainees to excel in their fields.

Dr. C. Sivaperuman, Officer-in-Charge, ZSI, Port Blair, greeted the dignitaries, invited guests, and trainees. In his welcome address. The speaker mentioned how the institute has developed this course for the front-line staff. The main objective of this course was to inform the duty personnel on how to prepare the People Biodiversity register through standard procedure. He emphasized the role of Zoological survey of India, Andaman and Nicobar Regional centre, Port Blair. He significantly said how these unplanned visits to nature have developed a keenness in the forest officials for bird watching and observation of nature. He accentuated the fourteen lectures which had been offered during the course work.

Many topics such as flora and fauna of ANI, mangroves, aquatic insects, spiders, techniques on preservation

and documentation and curation of insects have been dealt with by lecturers from online and offline. He mentioned how the trainees have been benefited by a half-day lecture on preparation of PBR by the expert. Besides, one day field trip was organized for the trainees where they were given a glimpse of Intertidal marine fauna at Burmanallah viz. Ascidians, Coral, Coral associated Crabs, Sea Anemones, Sponges, Sea cucumbers and other molluscs. In addition to this terrestrial field training was conducted at Chidiyatapu Reserve Forest, Sippighat and Ograbraj where they were taught to identify both forest and wetland birds as well as insects and spiders. In his course report he mentioned that 90% of trainees scored more than 60 percent in their evaluation. He extended his gratitude to the Department of Environment and Forests for the support and insights they have given in performing a well organised course. The participation certificates were distributed to the trainees by Chief Guest and Guests of Honour of the programme. The valedictory function was conducted with a vote of thanks.

‘Give it Back’ campaign through “Cloth Sharing” initiative by SPARSHA

PORT BLAIR, DEC 18/-/ SPARSHA, Society for Promotion of Serve Humanity Among Youths, a not-for-profit NGO launched its “Give it Back” campaign through “Cloth Sharing” initiative at Community Hall Anna Nagar, Hope Town on Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Ward member GP Hope Town, Mr. Pitrus, lauded the effort of SPARSHA in reaching out to the needy villagers. President SPARSHA, Mr. DebkumarBhadra briefed the gathering about the Give it Back campaign launched by SPARSHA which is aimed at helping the needy section of the society through various social sector intervention programs. Cloth Share is one such initiative which has been launched from Anna Nagar Village under Gram Panchayat Hope Town. In the days to come, SPARSHA will conduct such programs in other villages in rural South Andaman. About 60 villagers participated in the program alongside the office bearers of SPARSHA.

Earlier, Mr. Ajay Singh, General Secretary SPARSHA welcomed the gathering. The program was conducted by TS Rao, Organising Secretary SPARSHA.



Left govt in Kerala wasted time regarding survey of buffer zone areas: UDF

ERNAKULAM, DEC 18 /- / The Congress-led UDF opposition on Sunday alleged that the ruling Left front in Kerala wasted time since June this year to carry out a manual survey of areas which may fall in the one-kilometre buffer zone around protected forests and wildlife sanctuaries, and called the satellite survey report as "incomplete and inaccurate".

The objections against the satellite survey report of the state government have been gaining momentum over the last few days with locals of affected areas, Congressparty and Christian religious organisations terming the survey as "inaccurate" and "lacking clarity". In view of the criticisms against the report,

state Forest Minister A K Saseendran on Sunday said that it would not be placed before the Supreme Court or the Centre in its present form. The minister said help from all departments concerned, including Revenue and Local Self Government, has been sought to come out with a comprehensive report which can be placed before the apex court and the central government. Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the state assembly V D Satheesan, earlier in the day, said the apex court had in June directed that a one-kilometre wide buffer zone needs to be maintained around protected forests and wildlife sanctuaries across the state. However, the Left government took no steps to

carry out a proper manual survey utilising the local bodies across the state and instead opted for a satellite survey after wasting several months' time, he alleged.

Satheesan further alleged that the satellite survey was "incomplete and inaccurate" as it has not taken into account several residential and agricultural areas, towns and thousands of constructions in the surveyed villages. "The government deserves no forgiveness for its laxity and mismanagement with regard to this issue," the LoP said while speaking to reporters here. He also alleged that it was the ruling Left, which in 2019 passed an order that residential areas can be included in buffer zones, and it was that decision which led

to the Supreme Court directions issued in June this year. Satheesan said that if the state government goes to the Supreme Court with the satellite survey report, it would have an adverse effect on the interests of the state. He suggested that the state government seek more time from the apex court and then carry out a proper manual survey of the areas which may be falling in the buffer zone. He also questioned why the state government was hesitant to carry out a manual survey.

The suggestion of the LoP was welcomed by Forest Minister Saseendran. Speaking to the media, the minister said the Satheesan's suggestions to seek more time was a welcome one and the government was not hesitant

in exploring that option. Regarding the allegation of delay in making public the satellite survey report, the minister said that it happened as the expert committee which was to go through the report and verify it had to hold several sittings for the same which took time. He also said that more time can be given for inviting objections from the public with regard to the report. Saseendran also clarified that the state government's intention is to exclude residential and agricultural areas from the buffer zones. The Diocese of Thamarassery in Kozhikode district of the state told the media that their request was to come out with a buffer zone which would not affect the interests of farmers. (PTI)

FAIRY TALE FINISH FOR MESSI



DOHA, DEC 18 --/ Argentina captain Lionel Messi scored twice and France striker Kylian Mbappe hit a hat-trick as a thrilling World Cup final finished 3-3 after extra time at the Lusail Stadium. "Lionel Messi crowned his glittering career with victory in the World Cup on Sunday as Argentina beat France on penalties in a final for the ages, triumphing 4-2 after Kylian Mbappe's hat-trick ensured the game ended level following extra time. Gonzalo Montiel rolled in the deciding penalty to give Argentina their third World Cup and prevent France becoming the first team in 60 years to retain the trophy. But a truly remarkable game saw Messi and Mbappe both live up to their billing, with Messi scoring twice and Mbappe

becoming the first player since England's Geoff Hurst in 1966 to net a World Cup final hat-trick in a game that ended 3-3 after extra time. "Messi had opened the scoring from the penalty spot midway through the first half before Angel Di Maria doubled Argentina's lead at the end of a brilliant counter-attack in the 36th minute. But the astonishing Mbappe breathed life into the holders as he pulled one back from the penalty spot with 10 minutes to go before equalising in stunning fashion just 60 seconds later to force extra time. Messi then seemed to have decided the contest in Argentina's favour once and for all when he converted a rebound in the 109th minute, only for Mbappe to net from another spot-kick, bringing the game level at 3-3 and

Argentina captain Lionel Messi scored twice and France striker Kylian Mbappe hit a hat-trick as a thrilling World Cup final finished 3-3 after extra time at the Lusail Stadium

forcing a shoot-out. The third World Cup final penalty shoot-out started with Messi and Mbappe both scoring, but Kingsley Coman's next kick for France was saved and Aurelien Tchouameni then crucially missed the target. It is the second time in five World Cups that France have lost the final on penalties after they were beaten by Italy in 2006, and it is Argentina who are champions for the first time since 1986. The win allows Messi, at 35, to complete his glorious career by emulating Diego Maradona, and this will be remembered as his tournament despite the best efforts of Mbappe, who finished as the tournament's top scorer on eight goals, one more than his Paris Saint-Germain teammate Messi. (AFP)



Lionel Messi, goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez and Kylian Mbappe shared honours in the award ceremony

Modi and not Rajnath must answer on border issue in Parliament: Cong

DAUSA, DEC 18 --/ The Congress on Sunday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "running away" from a debate in Parliament on the situation along the border with China and said he and not the defence minister must answer on this issue. The Opposition party also posed questions to the government on the China-India border issue, saying the nation demands and deserves answers to them. In a statement, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh asked after two years of a protracted "disengagement", what emboldened the Chinese to try taking over the Indian post in the Yangtse area of Tawang. India has dominated Yangtse since PM Rajiv Gandhi deployed forces there in 1986 during the Sumdorong Chu confrontation, Ramesh said and asked how the Chinese dared to open a new front. The Opposition party also alleged that the prime minister does not utter the word "China" and asked whether the government was "silent" due to its "close ties" with that country. The attack on the government came days after Indian Army personnel clashed with Chinese soldiers in the Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh.

At a press conference here after the morning leg of the Bharat Jodo Yatra, Ramesh said the BJP raises the 1962 war but forgets that in 1967, China and India fought a war in which China was defeated and India won, which is also part of history. Ramesh said then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi went to China in 1988 "when we were strong at the borders and after that visit bilateral ties became stronger". But in April 2020 all this came to an end and a new chapter was opened, he claimed. "The Prime Minister has given a clean chit to them (China) by saying 'no one has come and no one is inside our territory'. Due to this clean chit, our bargaining position has gone down," Ramesh claimed. The Congress leader said there should be a debate in Parliament and the Prime Minister should answer on the issue and discuss it with the opposition. "Debate should take place in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and answers have to be given by the prime minister and not the defence minister or external affairs minister. Several former prime ministers have answered in Parliament. He is the first prime minister

who runs away from debate and he does not utter the word China," Ramesh said. The Congress general secretary in-charge communications also raised the slogan "Pradhan Mantri Ji Chien Par Chuppi Todo, Bharat Jodo (Mr Prime Minister, break the silence on China, unite India)." At the press conference, Congress media department head Pawan Khara said the government must answer why the mountain strike corps was put in "cold storage" after the UPA established its first division in West Bengal. "Prime Minister Modi refuses to answer on China and doesn't want a debate on China. The prime minister has close ties with China since he was the Gujarat chief minister and the Chinese president was in a top post in that country. They share close ties," he alleged. The second division of the mountain strike corps that was to come up in Pathankot, did not come up because a "China-loving" Prime Minister came to power, Khara alleged. Asked about the BJP's attack on Rahul Gandhi over his remarks on the China issue at a presser in Jaipur, Khara said the former Congress chief had "only highlighted that the government had

tied the hands of the armed forces who are full of valour". "Veer Sena, kayar raja (brave army, coward king)," that is the story of the country, he alleged. Khara also claimed that BJP leaders have travelled to China in the past for training with the Communist Party of China. He asked what relations organizations such as the Vivekananda International Foundation, with whom National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval had been associated with, have with China. The Congress leader also alleged that the think tank whose one unit is headed by external affairs minister S Jaishankar's son got money from the Chinese Embassy thrice. The BJP has been accusing the Congress of having close ties with China. Union home minister Amit Shah had said last week that the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) was cancelled as it allegedly got Rs 1.35 crore from the Chinese Embassy. In his remarks at the presser, Khara asked whether the government was silent on the matter due to these issues and said all this was a "secret" which must be revealed. (PTI)

Police officers are not required to do moral policing and ask for physical favour or material goods: SC

NEW DELHI, DEC 18 --/ The Supreme Court has said police officers are not required to do moral policing and ask for physical favour or material goods as it upheld the order of the disciplinary authority for the removal of a CISF constable from service. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and JK Maheshwari set aside the verdict of the Gujarat High Court of December 16, 2014, by which it had allowed the plea of CISF constable Santosh Kumar Pandey and directed his reinstatement in service with 50 per cent back wages from the date of his removal. Pandey, who was working as a constable with the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), was posted at the Greenbelt Area of the IPCL Township, Vadodara, Gujarat, where he was charge-sheeted vide memorandum dated October 28, 2001 on allegations of misconduct. (PTI)

Ex-MP inaugurates MPLAD

From page-1
The work was carried out by the Andaman Public Work department being the executing agency of MPLAD work for which the long pending demand of the Utkal Samaj has been fulfilled. During the inauguration function, Smti. T Mangaykar karasi Councillor Ward No.10, Smti. Vasantha, Councillor Ward No.12, Smti. Sheela Singh, Ex-Chairperson, PBMC, Shri SP Burman, Ex-Director of Health Services, Smti. Ratna Kannan, Ex-Chairperson of Social Welfare Advisory Board, Smti. Puspanjali Raju, Chairperson, CCS Ltd., Shri Kishore Naran, AESAD, APWD, Members of the Utkal Samaj, other prominent members of the residents of the area and a large number of general public were also present.

Pakistani clerics' delegation to visit Afghan for dialogue over cross border hostility

ISLAMABAD, DEC 18 /--/ A delegation of Pakistani clerics will travel to Afghanistan this week to hold talks with Afghan officials to end the cross-border hostility in the southwestern Chaman border region, authorities said on Sunday. The four-member delegation will hold meetings with officials from the Afghan ministry of defence and key Taliban leaders in Kandahar and Kabul, the Chaman district administration was quoted as saying by The News International newspaper. They added that the Pak-Afghan border security forces' flag meeting has been postponed upon the departure of the delegation. Pakistan on Friday summoned the Afghan

charge d'affaires here to condemn the recent incidents of "unprovoked" cross-border shelling by Afghan troops near the Chaman border crossing that have escalated tensions between Islamabad and Afghanistan's Taliban rulers. At least one person was killed and 11 others were wounded on Thursday when Afghan Taliban forces fired mortars toward civilians in the Chaman-Spin Boldak area in the restive Balochistan Province. The latest violence follows a series of deadly incidents and attacks that have strained relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan's Taliban rulers in recent months. Thursday's violence was the second incident of firing in

less than a week after a similar attack on December 10 had killed seven civilians. Earlier this month, Pakistan's Embassy in Kabul came under gunfire in an attack that was later claimed by the Islamic State group. Pakistani officials at the time had called the incident an attack on its envoy there. Islamabad also has said Afghanistan's rulers are sheltering militants who carry out deadly attacks on its oil.

Pakistan and Afghanistan share a 2,600-km volatile border. Chaman remains a busy border trading area for Pakistan and Afghanistan and has also been a flashpoint for clashes between border forces on both sides. The Chaman border crossing, also known

as the Friendship Gate, connects Balochistan province to Afghanistan's Kandahar. It was closed last month after an armed Afghan crossed onto Pakistan's side of the border and opened fire on security troops, killing a soldier and injuring another two. Islamabad has completed almost 90 per cent of fencing work along the border despite protests from Kabul, who contested the century-old British-era boundary demarcation that splits families on either side. Successive regimes in Afghanistan, including the US-backed governments in the past, have disputed the border and this has historically remained a contentious issue between the two neighbours. (PTI)

Fuel tanker tunnel blast kills at least 19 in Afghan

KABUL, DEC 18 /--/ At least 19 people were killed and 32 injured when a fuel tanker exploded in a tunnel north of the Afghan capital Kabul, a local official said on Sunday. The Salang Tunnel, which is around 80 miles north of Kabul, was originally built in the 1960s to assist the Soviet invasion. It is a key link between the country's north and south. According to Said Himatullah Shamim, a spokesman for Parwan province, Saturday night's tunnel explosion killed at least 19 people, including women and children. He said survivors remain trapped under rubble and that the number of casualties could rise. It was not immediately clear what caused the incident, which happened at around 8.30 pm. Parwan's health department has received 14 dead and 24 injured so far, according to local official Dr. Abdullah Afghan. There are five women and two children among the dead, he said, and the rest are men who are severely burnt and cannot be recognised. Molvi Hamidullah Misbah, a spokesman for the Ministry of Public Works, said earlier on Sunday that the fire was extinguished and that teams were still working to clear the tunnel. (AP)

Terrorist attack in northwest Pak kills 4 policemen

PESHAWAR, DEC 18 /--/ At least four Pakistani policemen were killed and as many as injured in the terrorist attack on a newly-constructed police station in the country's volatile Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Sunday. The Bargai police station in Laki Marwat bordering the south Waziristan tribal district was attacked by terrorists carrying lethal weapons, including hand grenades and rocket launchers, police said. The suspected terrorists fled the scene after a fierce exchange with the police, it said. A heavy police contingent launched a search operation in the area to track down the suspects. Mehmud Khan, the chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, described the attack as an act of cowardice and sought an immediate report from the provincial police chief. President Arif Alvi also expressed his condolences to the grieving families and condemned the attack saying "our efforts will continue until the complete elimination of the remnants of the terrorism". Although no group has immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, the previous attacks on police in the district have been claimed by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The TTP, set up as an umbrella group of several militant outfits in 2007 called off a ceasefire agreed upon with the federal government in June and ordered its militants to stage terrorist attacks across the country. Last month, militants attacked a police patrol vehicle, killing all six policemen in the same area. The Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for the ambush. The group, which is believed to be close to al-Qaeda, has been blamed for several deadly attacks across Pakistan, including an attack on army headquarters in 2009, assaults on military bases, and the 2008 bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad. (PTI)

Pope wrote resignation note in case of health impediment



ROME, DEC 18 /--/ Pope Francis has revealed in an interview published on Sunday that shortly after being elected pontiff in 2013 he wrote a resignation letter in case medical problems impede him from carrying out his duties. Speaking to the Spanish newspaper ABC, Francis said he gave the note to Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, who then was the Vatican secretary of state. The pontiff added that he presumes that the prelate currently in that Vatican No. 2 role, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, now has the written instruction. Francis, who turned 86 on Saturday, had surgery in 2021 to repair a bowel narrowing and has been hobbled by knee pain that for months saw him use a wheelchair. Lately, he has increasingly used a cane instead of the wheelchair to get around in public. Asked what happens if health issues or an accident suddenly leaves a pope unable to do his job, and whether there should be a rule for such instances, Francis replied, "In practice there is already a rule." "I have already signed my renunciation," Francis revealed, noting that he did so early in the

papacy. "I signed it and said: If I should become impaired for medical reasons or whatever, here is my resignation. Here you have it," he said, referring to Cardinal Bertone, who stepped down as secretary of state in October 2013, in the first months of Francis' papacy. The pontiff quipped that now that he has revealed the existence of his resignation note, "someone will run up to Bertone (saying), Give me that piece of paper." Francis said he was sure Bertone would have passed on the letter to the current secretary of state, Parolin. In past remarks, Francis has hailed the decision of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, to resign

because he felt due to advancing age he wouldn't be best able to carry out his duties. Benedict, who is living in a monastery on the Vatican's grounds, was the first pontiff to resign in 600 years, and his stepping down paved the way for Francis' election as the first pope from South America. Francis in the interview played down his mobility challenge, saying "One governs with the head, not the knee." Catholic church law requires a papal resignation be "freely and properly manifested" as was the case when Benedict startled the world when he announced his resignation to a gathering of prelates at the Vatican in February 2013. (AP)

Key Ukrainian city's rapid fall leaves unanswered questions

KHERSON, DEC 18 /--/ When about 100 Russian troops rolled into Kherson's Lilac Park on the morning of March 1, Oleh Shornik was one of about 20 lightly armed Ukrainian volunteers who didn't stand a chance against them. Ukraine's military was nowhere to be seen, and Russian troops in armored vehicles had easily entered the Shumensky neighbourhood, opening fire and sending shrapnel flying everywhere, witnesses said. Civilians walking to work were hit in the short, fierce battle. The volunteers, hiding among the trees in the park, were cut down so rapidly that they weren't even able to throw the Molotov cocktails they had prepared. "They did not have time to do anything," said Anatolii Hudzenko, who was inside his home next to the park during the attack, in an interview with The Associated Press. Left seemingly on their own, the civilian volunteers fell quickly. A day later, so did Kherson. Thousands of Russian troops, sweeping up from the Crimean Peninsula on February 24, captured the city on the Dnieper River so rapidly that many residents say they felt abandoned by the Ukrainian military and its quick withdrawal, leaving the city without an adequate defense. But was the doomed stand in Lilac Park a futile, early act of resistance to what became a bloody Russian occupation of Kherson? Was it due to the hasty retreat by Ukraine's military so it could regroup to fight another day indeed later retaking the

city in November? Or was it the result of a betrayal by high-level Ukrainian security officials collaborating with Moscow? It's possible it was a combination of all of those. Now that Russia has retreated from Kherson following Ukraine's counteroffensive in the south, residents want to know why Moscow's forces were able to overrun the city so easily. "There are more questions than answers to this story," said Svetlana Shornik, standing at her ex-husband's grave for the first time because the Russians had blocked access to the cemetery while they had occupied the city. Besides the volunteers killed in the park, about five others were slain that day at a roundabout nearby. Families of the dead say they have been trying in vain for months to get information from the military and the government so they can have some closure about the deaths of their loved ones. "I know very little," said Nadiia Khandusenko, recounting what few facts she knows about the death of her husband, Serhii, who also was killed in Lilac Park. Wiping away tears, Shornik told the AP that she believes her ex-husband probably suffered in his final minutes because an autopsy revealed the 53-year-old retired policeman was shot in the lung. The bodies lay on the bloodstained grounds of the park for three days because the Russians would not allow them to be buried, residents said. "They are heroes," Shornik said. "They were practically defending (the city) with their bare hands," she said. (AP)

N Korea fires 2 ballistic missiles capable of reaching Japan

SEOUL, DEC 18 /--/ North Korea test-fired a pair of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles with a range of striking Japan on Sunday, in a possible protest of Tokyo's adoption of a new security strategy to push for more offensive footing against North Korea and China. The launches also came two days after the North claimed to have performed a key test needed to build a more mobile, powerful intercontinental ballistic missile designed to strike the US mainland. The two missiles travelled from the country's northwest Tongchangri area about 500 kilometers (310 miles) at a maximum altitude of 550 kilometers (340 miles) before landing in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, according to the South Korean and Japanese governments. South Korea's military said both missiles were launched at a steep angle, suggesting the weapon could have travelled farther if fired at a standard trajectory. North Korea usually tests medium- and longer-range missiles at a high angle to avoid neighbouring countries, though it fired an intermediate-range missile over Japan in October, forcing Tokyo to issue

evacuation alerts and halt trains. In an emergency meeting, top South Korean security officials deplored North Korea's continued provocations that they said came despite "the plight of its citizens moaning in hunger and cold due to a serious food shortage." They said South Korea will boost a trilateral security cooperation with the US and Japan, according to South Korea's presidential office. Japanese Vice Defense Minister Toshiro Ino separately criticized North Korea for threatening the safety of Japan, the region and the international community. The US Indo-Pacific Command said the launches highlight the destabilising impact of North Korea's unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs. It said the US commitments to the defense of South Korea and Japan "remain ironclad." Kwon Yong Soo, a former professor at Korea National Defense University in South Korea, said North Korea likely tested its Pukguksong-2 missile, a solid-fueled, land-based variant of its Pukguksong family of missiles that can be fired from submarines. Kwon said that flight details of the weapons tested Sunday

were similar to those of the Pukguksong-2's two known tests in 2017. Kwon said the Pukguksong-2 can fly about 1,200-2,000 kilometers (745-1,240 miles) if it's launched at a normal trajectory, a range enough to strike key facilities in Japan, including U.S. military installations there. "North Korea staged an armed protest with a land version of a submarine-launched ballistic missile that it can fire quickly in response" to the Japanese national security strategy, Kwon said. Some observers say North Korea might have tested a newly developed medium-range missile that can still reach Japan. On Friday, the Japanese government adopted a national security strategy that would allow it to carry out preemptive strikes and fire powerful cruise missiles to give itself more offensive footing against threats from neighboring China and North Korea. That was a major break from its strictly self-defense-only postwar principle. The Japanese strategy names China as "the biggest strategic challenge" before North Korea and Russia to Japan's efforts to ensure peace, safety and stability for itself and the international community. (AP)

LONDON, DEC 18 /--/ British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Sunday hit out at trade unions for causing misery for millions with "particularly cruelly timed" strikes over the Christmas holiday period as the government announced plans to use around 1,200 troops to cover for striking workers to keep key services going. There is a wave of winter strikes planned over the course of the next few weeks, including railway workers, healthcare workers, and border security staff, who are all demanding better pay and working conditions. Writing in "The Sun on Sunday", Sunak said the workers have been offered "deals that are fair and affordable" and accused the unions of unleashing a "class war". "The unions are causing misery for millions, with transport strikes in particular cruelly timed to hit at Christmas," writes Sunak. "Rail workers and border officers have been offered deals that are fair



and affordable to taxpayers. An increasing number of union members want a deal. They are tired of being foot soldiers in Railway RMT Union chief Mick Lynch's class war," he said. The government has repeatedly warned that giving in to union demands for massive pay rises will kick Britain into an "inflation spiral", which in turn would hit the poorest the hardest. "Even [Opposition] Labour have admitted the unions' demands are unaffordable. But they'll still take union money and undermine the

interests of the travelling public. Labour back the Grinches that want to steal Christmas for their own political ends. We are doing everything we can to ensure people get the Christmas they deserve," said Sunak. "The army is stepping up and we're putting in place other measures to keep services running where possible," he added. Union chiefs warn the military are not "sufficiently trained" to guard the country's borders or drive ambulances, and that they should not be put in such an "invidious" position when they already

have "enough on their plate". Labour's shadow minister for immigration, Stephen Kinnock, called the Prime Minister's language "incendiary", telling Sky News' that the government is "spoiling for a fight" with the unions. "I think the government needs to stop all the rhetoric, the empty posturing and sowing the seeds of division and actually now needs to start finding a constructive solution so that we can get people back to work in a way where they feel valued and where they feel that there is a real future for them in those jobs," said Kinnock. Meanwhile, nurses are threatening to stage a fresh wave of strikes in the new year on an even larger scale if ministers fail to respond with a solution in the 48 hours following next week's walkout. The 48-hour countdown will begin after the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) stages its second set of historic strikes on Tuesday. (PTI)

Husband charged with triple murder of Indian nurse, 2 kids in UK

LONDON, DEC 18 /--/ The male suspect being questioned by UK police in connection with the murder of an Indian nurse and her two children has been charged with three counts of murder and will appear in court on Monday. Sajju Chelavalel, 52, known locally as the husband of the deceased nurse Anju Asok, was charged by Northamptonshire Police on Saturday night with the murder of 35-year-old Asok, six-year-old Jeeva Sajju and four-year-old Janvi Sajju. The police also confirmed the cause of death for all three victims as asphyxiation. "Our thoughts continue to be with the family of Anju, Jeeva and Janvi, who were determined to seek justice for," said

Detective Inspector Simon Barnes, the Senior Investigating Officer in the case. "Incidents of this nature are incredibly distressing, and I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who responded to the 999 call on Thursday, or has been involved with the subsequent investigation for the professionalism and respect they have shown," he said. "I also want to thank the local community as we know how upsetting it is for an incident of this nature to take place. We will continue to have members of our Neighbourhood Policing Team on patrol in the area and I urge anyone with any concerns to please speak to them," he added. Chelavalel can be named only now

following the murder charges and ahead of his appearance at Northampton Magistrates' Court, where he will be remanded to judicial custody. He was arrested by Northamptonshire Police officers when they were called to his address in Kettering on Thursday morning and the three victims were discovered with serious injuries. "On attendance, officers found Anju Asok, 35, Jeeva Sajju, 6, and Janvi Sajju, 4, with serious injuries and despite the best efforts of paramedics, police officers and hospital staff all three sadly died a short time later," the police said. "Forensic post-mortem examinations have taken place at Leicester Royal Infirmary, where it was

concluded all three died as a result of asphyxiation," the statement added. Anju Asok, originally from Viakom in Kottayam district of Kerala, had been employed at the local hospital in Kettering since last year. She worked as a nurse in the orthopaedic department of Kettering General Hospital, which has paid tributes to its "committed and compassionate" staffer. Sarah Powell, head teacher at Kettering Park Infant Academy where the two children went to school, said they were "devastated" by the news of the deaths. Tributes have continued to pour in for the deceased, with flowers and notes left near the family's home in Kettering. (PTI)

Israel deports Palestinian activist to France

JERUSALEM, DEC 18 /--/ Israel said it deported a Palestinian lawyer and activist to France early on Sunday, claiming he has ties to a banned militant group, despite objections from the French government. The expulsion of Salah Hammouri underscored the fragile status of Palestinians in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, where most hold revocable residency rights but are not Israeli citizens. It also set up a possible diplomatic spat with France, which had repeatedly appealed to Israel not to carry out the expulsion. "I'm happy to announce that justice was served today and the terrorist Salah Hammouri was deported from Israel," Israel's interior minister, Ayelet Shaked, announced in a videotaped statement. He was set to land in Paris just before 10 a.m. local time. Hammouri was born in Jerusalem but holds French citizenship. Israel says Hammouri is an

activist in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a group that it has labelled a terrorist organisation. He has worked as a lawyer for Adameer, a rights group that assists Palestinian prisoners that Israel has banned for alleged ties to the PFLP. He spent seven years in prison after being convicted in an alleged plot to kill a prominent rabbi but was released in a 2011 prisoner swap with the Hamas militant group. He has not been convicted in the latest proceedings against him. Israel, however, claimed he continued his activities with the banned group and placed him last March in administrative detention a status that allows Israel to hold suspected militants for months at a time without charging them or putting them on trial. Hammouri was not charged in the current case, but Shaked ordered the deportation when his detention order expired. (PTI)

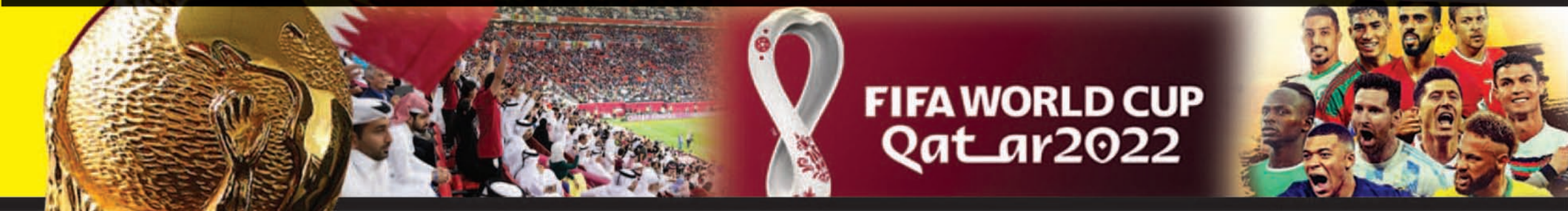
India and Lanka to launch ferry service next month between Kankesanthurai port and Pondicherry: Reports

COLOMBO, DEC 18 /--/ Sri Lanka and India will start a passenger ferry service next month between Kankesanthurai port in Jaffna district and Pondicherry, according to media reports. Ports, Shipping, and Civil Aviation Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva said arrangements were made to start the ferry service in mid-January next year, Colombo Page reported. The minister said the Indian government had extended consent for the service. Daily Mirror reported. "A large number of

Indian citizens are engaged in business activities in the Jaffna Peninsula. With such engagement, the new service is expected to generate a large portion of foreign revenue. It will also be of immense convenience for Buddhist pilgrims to India," the minister said. The minister said that passenger transport services will also be started from south India to Trincomalee and Colombo in Sri Lanka. He pointed out that till now no firm conclusion has been reached about starting the ferry service between

Thalaimannar and India. De Silva added that this step of beginning the ferry service had been taken on the demand of the people of both countries. According to the minister, during the discussion with ferry owners, they emphasised that the existing facilities at the ports should be upgraded further to continue providing passenger service. The minister instructed the Ports, Shipping, and Civil Aviation Ministry Secretary to take immediate steps to develop infrastructure related to

customs, immigration and emigration, and other facilities at the Sri Lankan ports according to government procurement procedures. The vessels under the new service will carry 300 to 400 passengers on a trip that will take about three and half hours between destinations, according to ferry owners. Ferry owners suggested that they would have to charge USD 60 (About LKR 21,000) per passenger for a single journey and that each passenger could carry up to 100 kg of luggage. (PTI)



GAME NOTES

David Beckham makes first statement on his Qatar World Cup deal

Doha, Dec 18 /--/ David Beckham has made his first public statement on his controversial multi-million-dollar ambassador's role with World Cup hosts Qatar, telling the New York Times he believed "sport has the power to be a force for good in the world". In an article on Friday entitled "The World Cup's Missing Mouthpiece", the US newspaper alleged Qatar had been disappointed with its return on its investment because the former Manchester United and Real Madrid player had appeared very little in public during the World Cup. The paper claimed Beckham had placed strict conditions on his appearances and that he appeared to be shielded from questions on issues such as Qatar's laws on homosexuality. In response to the article, his publicist issued a statement saying: "David has been involved in a number of World Cups and other major international tournaments both as a player and an ambassador and he has always believed that sport has the power to be a force for good in the world. (AFP)

Gareth Southgate to remain England manager: Reports

LONDON, DEC 18 /--/ Gareth Southgate will stay on as England manager and target the Euro 2024 title, despite the misery of his team's World Cup quarter-final exit, British media reported Saturday. The 52-year-old said after last weekend's defeat to defending champions France in Qatar that he required breathing space to take stock after six years in the job. England have not won a major trophy since their World Cup victory in 1966 but under Southgate they reached the semi-finals of the 2018 tournament and the final of last year's European Championship. On Saturday, the Daily Telegraph said he is "convinced" he should stay on as national team manager and will inform the Football Association of his wish to see out his contract before Christmas. His current deal runs until December 2024. The Daily Mail said Saturday that Southgate "will confirm his decision to the FA in the coming days to bring an end to speculation over his future". England's latest bid to win a second World Cup ended in last Saturday's 2-1 defeat to defending champions France, who went on to reach the final. Captain Harry Kane blazed over from the penalty spot when handed a chance to equalise late in the game, having earlier scored from the spot. (AFP)

Morocco's FIFA World Cup finish is bittersweet for Arab fans

BEIRUT, DEC 18 /--/ Morocco's fans in the Arab world took the North African team's 2-1 loss to Croatia in Saturday's World Cup third-place playoff philosophically. The team had already made history, becoming the first Arab and first African team to reach the semifinals in the international soccer tournament. Its loss to France on Wednesday dashed fans' hopes that Morocco would become an underdog champion, but many had hoped that it would at least take third place in facing off against Croatia.

In the Moroccan capital, the national team's fans were disappointed by Saturday's loss but pointed with pride to the team's historic performance. "They remain champions in our eyes," said Soukaina Makkaoui, a fan in Rabat.

"They are now among the four top teams in the world." Ali Hachimi, another Moroccan fan, was both proud and sad. "We would have liked to finish third because the players deserved it after giving their all," he said. Along the way, the Moroccan team charmed many Arab soccer fans who saw in the team a reflection of themselves, with players waving the Palestinian flag after their wins and celebrating on the field with their mothers and children. Seeing Palestinian flags fluttering in the stadium "was an indescribable feeling," said Ibrahim al-Lilli, who was among thousands of fans in the Gaza Strip who gathered to cheer for Morocco on Saturday. The games affirmed that the Arab street "supports the Palestinian cause regardless of what their governments

do," he said, referring to the Abraham Accord normalization agreements that four Arab countries — including Morocco — signed with Israel in 2020. Fans in the besieged Gaza enclave found a bitter solace in the fact that the northern African Arab country got as far as it did. "It's a defeat, albeit with a taste of victory and joy," said Ahmed al-Najjar, another fan in Gaza. In Beirut's Tarik al-Jdideh neighbourhood, where fans were also rooting for Morocco, Muhammad Shaalan said the team's fourth-place finish is still a point of pride for the Arab world. "They arrived at the final games and they defeated three of the best big European teams (Belgium, Spain and Portugal)," he said. "I bow my head in respect to them as an Arab team." (AP)

Luka Modric sets sights on Nations League title for Croatia after FIFA World Cup heartbreak

DOHA, DEC 18 /--/ Luka Modric led Croatia to the bronze medal at the World Cup on Saturday and revealed he will extend his international career into 2023 in an attempt to win the Nations League. The 37-year-old won his 162nd cap in the 2-1 win over Morocco, four years after helping his country to the World Cup runners-up spot behind France. Croatia will now attempt to win the Nations League title next June in the four-team finals also featuring Netherlands, Italy and Spain. "That's the plan," said Modric when asked if he intends to keep playing international football. "It would be a nonsense not to play in the Nations League, and then we'll see how to proceed. I definitely want to stay for the Nations League." Croatia were defeated by a Lionel Messi-inspired Argentina in the World Cup semi-finals but Modric insisted that his team have cemented a place amongst the heavyweights of the sport. "We achieved

something major for the Croatian football. We wanted the gold, we were close," he told broadcaster HRT. "In the end, we return to Croatia as winners. Croatia is not a miracle that appears every 20 years. We proved that we are constant, that we cannot be seen as dark horses but as a football power." Even though Modric intends to keep playing at international level, coach Zlatko Dalic admits that time is ticking on other senior players. "It's the end of a cycle. It's the last World Cup for some older players," said the coach with one eye on the qualifying tournament for Euro 2024 which kicks off in March. "But we have very good young players who give hope, (Josip) Stanisic, (Mislav) Orsic, many players who are on the bench. We have a very good team for the future. "Croatia have nothing to fear with this generation. What awaits us is the League of Nations, and the qualifications of the Euro." (AFP)



Deepika Padukone unveils FIFA World Cup trophy ahead of final between France and Argentina



DOHA, DEC 18 /--/ Bollywood actor Deepika Padukone unveiled the FIFA World Cup trophy on Sunday ahead of the final between Argentina and France at the Lusail Stadium in Doha. She was accompanied by former Spain goalkeeper and captain Iker Casillas. Deepika, who was appointed brand ambassador of the luxury brand Louis Vuitton in May, 2022, unveiled the trophy that will be handed out to the winner of the final. The trophy was brought to the ground in a case, which was carried by Casillas. The case weighs 6.175 kgs and is made of 18-carat gold and malachite. It is designed to protect and transport the FIFA World Cup trophy. Argentina took control of the final with some attacking football up front and then took the lead in the 23rd minute as Lionel Messi converted from the penalty spot after Angel Di Maria was brought down inside the box. Di Maria himself struck in the 36th minute to double Argentina's lead.

1st Test: Kuldeep returns career-best figures in India's massive 188-run win



Kuldeep Yadav is the man of the match in the first test match against Bangladesh

CHATTOGRAM, DEC 18 /--/ Wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav registered his career-best match figures as India quickly wrapped up Bangladesh's second innings for a comprehensive 188-run win in the opening Test, here Sunday. Needing four wickets to pocket the win, India finished the job in 11.2 overs, bowling the hosts out for 324 after the hosts began at overnight score of 276 for six. Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep scalped two of the remaining four batters while Mohammed Siraj and Axar Patel took one wicket each. Kuldeep, who cherished an impressive five-wicket haul in the first innings, added three more wickets in the second Bangladesh innings to finish with match figures of 8 for 113. "I love bowling with Kookaburra balls, it gives me better grip and control, compared to the SG ball," said Kuldeep after the win. "If I were not playing cricket, it would have been very challenging but I have played a lot of white-ball matches. I have played IPL and with red ball India A matched, so my rhythm was set. "I could bowl with aggressive approach and in this rhythm, you need to make extra effort and it takes a toll on body," he said. "I like playing all formats of cricket for India, nothing matches that pride. When I don't play I keep training so that the confidence remains intact in matched but I stay relaxed," he added. Kuldeep was ably supported by left-arm spinner Patel, who

finished with figures of 4 for 77 in the second innings. With this win, India have climbed to the third place in the World Test Championship points table, pushing Sri Lanka to the fourth position. India now have 87 points with 55.77 percentage (PCT) while Sri Lanka have 64 points and 53.33 PCT. Australia lead the table with 75 PCT and are followed by South Africa (60 PCT) Resuming at the overnight score of 276 for 6, Bangladesh skipper Shakib-Al-Hasan came all out attacking, knowing very well it would not be easy to just survive the whole day. He went for his shots to score 84, studded with six fours and as many hits over the fence in his 108-ball stay. But the Indians played the patient game. KL Rahul, who registered his first Test win as skipper, started with pace-spin combination of Siraj (1/67) and Patel. Bangladesh batters started aggressively as Mehidy Hasan Miraz delightfully drove Siraj through the covers in his first over for the day's first boundary. At the other end, Shakib made his intentions clear, clobbering Patel over square leg. But Siraj had his man in his next over as Mehidy fell to a loose shot. Siraj sprayed the ball outside the off-stump again and Mehidy only managed to slash the delivery straight to Umesh Yadav at backward point. Shakib brought up his 30th Test fifty with a straight six off Patel. (PTI)

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