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## WATER ATMS BECOME SHOWPIECE ITEMS

Majority of water ATMs installed by PBMC lie defunct

ROOPA LALL

**PORT BLAIR, JAN 16/--** Fifteen out of the 21 water ATMs, which were installed by the Port Blair Municipal Council (PBMC) in the city for the convenience of the citizens, have been lying non-functional for the past many months. These were installed with a lot of fanfare and were beneficial in providing safe drinking

water to people. Residents say this is nothing but a waste of taxpayers' money. This public money could have been used for providing other basic amenities to the citizens. Taxpayer's money has been wasted due to lack of maintenance of the water ATMs, said Kapil, a resident of Aberdeen Bazaar. A water ATM is an automated water vending machine that

dispenses pure drinking water when a coin or note is inserted into it. A water vending machine works like any regular bank ATM, the only difference being that it provides water instead of money.

The Water ATMs installed by the PBMC in different places in the city not only provide clean and affordable water to the people, but also fetch

valuable revenue for the Civic Body. The Municipal Council has been earning revenue of about Rs 1000-1500 per week from the single Water ATM located in front of the Municipal Office. Out of the 21 water ATMs in the city, 15 Water ATMs are installed by the Municipal Council, five water ATMs by the Indian Oil Corporation under its Corporate Social

Responsibility (CSR) and one water ATM under the Member of Parliament Local Area Development

(IMPLAD). The authorities concerned must look into the matter and get the needful done immediately.

**In MP's presence, Pradhan, Ward Members of GP Kanyapuram join Congress Party**



**PORT BLAIR, JAN 16/--** Expressing faith in the leadership of the Member of Parliament, Mr. Kuldeep Rai Sharma, Mr. P Abdul Basheer, Pradhan of Kanyapuram Panchayat, along with his supporters on Monday joined the Congress Party, after leaving the Andaman & Nicobar Democratic Congress Party. (Contd. on page-6)

**Advocate Sheela Chakrabarty awarded with National Social Worker Award**



**PORT BLAIR, JAN 16/--** Advocate Sheela Chakrabarty, Vice President, Smt. Saraswati Narayan, President, along with 3 others of HRCCO, Andaman & Nicobar Islands received the National Social Worker Award on 8th January 2023, at a function (Contd. on page-6)

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Welfare, Swami Shudhanadji (Chinmaya Mission) and Founder President Pankh, Smt. Komal Anand, along with member Smt. Anita Majumdar. The workshop included programmes like planting pots, Crochet stitching, making jewellery, embroidery. The NGO also donated materials for the workshop and blankets for the old age inmates. The



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# PM holds road show as BJP national executive begins in Delhi

## Ensure party does not lose any of 9 state Assembly polls in 2023: Nadda at meeting

**NEW DELHI, JAN 16 /--/** Enthused BJP workers and supporters lined the roads to greet Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his road show here as the party's two-day national executive began in Delhi on Monday. In an atmosphere enlivened by music and the cheering crowd, the roadshow started from Patel Chowk and continued till the NDMC convention centre. People showered Modi with flower petals and chanted slogans in his support. Huge cutouts of the Prime Minister were placed along the road, besides several posters highlighting various initiatives of the government and also India's presidency of the G20. Stages had been erected at

places. Folk artistes from several states performed on some of them, while others blared patriotic songs. BJP president J P Nadda welcomed Modi at the venue of the party's meeting, which started upon the Prime Minister's arrival. While Modi has been holding roadshows frequently, it is not very often that he does it ahead of the party's executive meet, which has been organised several times in the national capital now. BJP leaders noted that Modi had held a roadshow ahead of the party's national executive in Odisha, and added that the exercise proved to be helpful in galvanising cadre and

supporters. With Lok Sabha polls due in the first half of next year, the enthusiastic roadshow will also help energise the party's Delhi

BJP president J P Nadda on Monday underlined the importance of the nine state Assembly polls to be held this year in the run up to the

it does not lose in any state. Briefing reporters on Nadda's address to the key BJP body, whose two-day meeting began here on Monday, party leader and former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the party president noted that the ongoing year was very important in the prelude to the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The ruling party has been putting in place a number of exercises to strengthen its organisation to ensure that it comes back to power in 2024 at the Centre for a third term. Nadda, in his closed-door address, lauded India's progress under the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government. It has become the world's fifth-largest economy, second-largest

manufacturer of mobile phones, third-largest manufacturer in the auto sector while the highway being built every day has risen to 37 km from 12 km earlier, the party president said. The country has also worked to empower the poor with a number of welfare schemes, including that of free grains, he added. Nadda praised the party's win in the recent Gujarat assembly polls as "extraordinary and historic", saying winning more than 150 seats in the 182-member assembly is a great achievement. While the party lost in Himachal Pradesh to the Congress, the vote gap between the two parties was less than one per cent, he said. (PTI)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi waving at people who lined the roads to catch a glimpse of him, during the roadshow, in New Delhi

unit after its loss to the Aam Aadmi Party in the recent municipal polls, they said. 2024 Lok Sabha elections, and asked the party's national executive to ensure

## Give it in writing that you haven't rejected Finland training prog: Kejriwal to Delhi LG

**NEW DELHI, JAN 16 /--/** Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday asked Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena to give in writing that he had never rejected the proposal for sending government teachers for training to Finland as the two sides continued to lock horns over the matter. Earlier in the day, Kejriwal along with his deputy Manish Sisodia led a march to the LG's office to voice their protest over the issue and seek a meeting with him. The LG's office, however, asserted that it has not rejected the proposal but has advised the AAP government to evaluate it in totality. Questioning the LG, the chief minister urged him to give it in writing that the proposal has not been rejected. "Honourable L-G saying he never rejected teachers' Finland training proposal. If that is the case, he (L-G) may kindly write me a letter immediately, saying that he has no objection to the proposal and the matter will be



over," Kejriwal said. Notably, the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) had planned to send two groups of 30 primary in-charges to Finland in December 2022 and March 2023. The Council has also made a budget provision in its annual plan and was given a grant-in-aid by the Delhi government for conducting such training programmes. "It is reiterated that the Lieutenant Governor has not rejected the proposal of training programme for primary-in-charges in Finland. Any statement on the contrary is deliberately misleading and mischievously motivated," an official from Raj Niwas said. According to the official, the AAP-led government has been advised to evaluate the proposal in totality and "record the cost benefit analysis in terms of impact on quality of education being provided to students so as to assess the effectiveness of various foreign training programmes for teachers undertaken in the past". "The LG has also advised for examining and identifying similar training programmes in the Institutions of Excellence, within the country, so as to ensure optimal utilisation of resources, fiscal prudence and administrative effectiveness," the official said. The city government has so far sent 1,079 teachers to different countries for training. Of these, 59 have gone to Finland, 420 to Cambridge and 600 to Singapore. Besides, 860 school principals have been imparted training in prestigious institutes like IIM Ahmedabad and IIM Lucknow. (PTI)



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with young supporters during the party's Bharat Jodo Yatra, in Jalandhar, on Monday

## SC grants Centre 4 weeks to respond to plea against age restriction for conducting pre-natal diagnostic tests

**NEW DELHI, JAN 16 /--/** The Supreme Court on Monday granted the Centre four weeks to file its response to a plea on the age restriction of 35 years on women for conducting pre-conception and pre-natal diagnostic tests. The matter came up for hearing before a bench of Justices S K Kaul and A S Oka. The counsel appearing for the Centre requested for some time to file the response confined to the aspect on which the court had issued notice on October 17 last year. "Counsel for the respondent seeks time to file counter affidavit... needful be done within four weeks," the bench said, adding that rejoinder, if any, be filed within two weeks thereafter. The apex court posted the plea, filed by advocate Meera Kaura Patel, for hearing after eight weeks. (PTI)

## RS session from Jan 31 to April 6, FM to present Budget on Feb 1

**NEW DELHI, JAN 16 /--/** The 259th session of Rajya Sabha will commence on January 31 and end on April 6, a statement from the Rajya Sabha Secretariat said. Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget 2023-24 on February 1. "The President has summoned the Rajya Sabha to meet on Tuesday, the 31st January 2023, at New Delhi. Subject to exigencies of business, the Session is scheduled to conclude on Thursday, the 6th April 2023," the statement said. Parliament's Budget Session will begin from January 31 with President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The session will have 27 sittings and will continue till April 6 with a month-long recess to examine the budget papers, parliamentary affairs minister Pralhad Joshi had said. "Budget Session, 2023 of Parliament will commence from 31 January and continue till 6 April with 27 sittings spread over 66 days with usual recess. Amid Amrit Kaal looking forward to discussions on Motion of Thanks on the President's Address, Union Budget & other items. "During the Budget Session, 2023 the recess will be from 14 February till 12 March to enable the department related Parliamentary Standing Committees to examine the Demands for Grants and make reports relating to their ministries/ departments," Joshi had tweeted earlier. The first part of the Budget Session will end on February 13 and the Parliament will reconvene on March 13 for the second part of the session after the recess. (PTI)

## Sonia initially struggled to learn Indian traditions, disliked politics: Priyanka

**BENGALURU, JAN 16 /--/** Italy-born Sonia Gandhi initially struggled to learn Indian traditions and disliked politics, her daughter and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said on Monday. Addressing a women-centric convention organised here by the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee in the poll-bound State, the Congress leaders said she was brought up by two brave and strong women --



her grandmother Indira Gandhi and mother Sonia Gandhi. Priyanka recalled that she was eight-years-old when Indira Gandhi lost her 33-year-old son. But the very next day of Sanjay Gandhi's death, she went to work to serve the nation and that was the sense of duty and her "inner shakti". Indira Gandhi continued to serve the nation until she died. The Congress general secretary said her mother Gandhi fell in love with Rajiv Gandhi at the age of 21. "She (Sonia) came all the way from Italy to India to get married to him. She struggled to learn our traditions. She learnt the ways of India. She imbibed everything from Indira ji and at the age of 44, she lost her husband. Even though she disliked politics, she took the path to serving the nation and she served it all her life till today when she is 76 years old," Priyanka said. Sonia learnt a "very important thing" from Indira Gandhi, she said. "No matter what happens to you in your life, no matter how big a tragedy you face, how deep your struggles are... whether at home or work or outside, you have the capacity to stand up and fight for yourself," Priyanka said. (PTI)

## Govt "intimidating" judiciary with view to "capture" it: Cong on Rijiju's letter to CJI

**NEW DELHI, JAN 16 /--/** The Congress on Monday accused the government of "intimidating" the judiciary in a bid to "capture" it, after Union law minister Kiren Rijiju wrote to Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud suggesting the inclusion of the Union and state government representatives in the Supreme Court and High Court collegiums. Rijiju has sought this representation, saying it will help infuse transparency and public accountability in the selection of judges. "The VP's assaults. The Law Minister's attacks. All this is orchestrated confrontation with the judiciary to intimidate and thereafter capture it totally," AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh said on Twitter. "The Collegium needs reform. But what this Government wants is complete subservience - Its remedy is a poison pill for the judiciary," Ramesh also said. Justifying the letter to CJI, the law minister said in a tweet: "the contents in the letter to hon'ble CJI are exactly in conformity with the observations and directions of the Supreme Court Constitution Bench." "Convenient politics is not advisable, especially in the name of the Judiciary. The Constitution of India is supreme and nobody is above it," Rijiju also said. The law minister said the government's demand for the inclusion of its representatives and that of states in collegiums of the Supreme Court and High Courts was the "precise follow-up action" suggested by the apex court while striking down the National Judicial Appointment Commission Act. Rijiju made the remarks while responding to Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who dubbed as "extremely dangerous" the government's move to ask the Supreme Court to include its nominees in the collegium. "I hope you honour Court's direction! This is a precise follow-up action of the direction of the Supreme Court Constitution Bench while striking down the National Judicial Appointment Commission Act. The SC Constitution Bench had directed to restructure the MoP (Memorandum of Procedure) of the collegium system," Rijiju said on Twitter. "This is extremely dangerous. There should be absolutely no government interference in judicial appointments," Kejriwal said on Twitter.

In November, Rijiju had said that the collegium system of making judicial appointments was "alien" to the Constitution. Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Thakkar and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla have also claimed that the judiciary was encroaching on the powers of the legislature. (PTI)

## CM Sukhu urges Centre to enhance disaster fund for Himachal

**SHIMLA, JAN 16 /--/** Chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has urged the Union government to enhance the disaster fund for Himachal Pradesh as the state is prone to various types of natural disasters due to difficult topographical and climatic conditions. Sukhu was speaking at the inauguration function after setting up of Doppler Weather Radars at Jot in Chamba district and Murari Devi in Mandi district by the Union minister of state (independent charge), ministry of earth sciences, Jitendra Singh through virtual mode on Sunday. A Doppler Weather Radar was installed at Kufri near Shimla on January 15, 2021 and with the commissioning of these additional two radars, about 70 per cent area of the State will be covered for weather forecast, a statement released here said. Stating that about 30 per cent area of the tribal Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti districts will not be covered under these Radars, the chief minister urged the Union minister of state to provide additional Radar for these districts. He said that cloud bursts have caused heavy damages in Kinnaur district in the recent years, thus it was vital that a proper weather forecast mechanism be evolved to take preventive measures in advance. The chief minister said these incidents of cloud bursts have caused heavy damage to the area particularly the power projects. Sukhu said that these radars will be able to forecast heavy rain, thunderstorm and hailstorm within 100 kilometer radius in all directions, especially for short-range forecasting and will be helpful to improve area specific forecast and warning for the State. They will also enhance weather monitoring capabilities and generate accurate data that will help the administration in making pre-arrangements to reduce damages caused due to weather borne disasters, he added. (PTI)

## Cong promises Rs 2k per month to woman head of households if voted to power in Karnataka

**BENGALURU, JAN 16 /--/** The Congress in Karnataka on Monday promised Rs 2,000 a month to every woman head of households if the party is voted to power in the state. The announcement was made at a convention attended by Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who said Rs 24,000 a year would be directly credited to their bank accounts under "Gruha Lakshmi Yojana", an "unconditional universal basic income". The promise comes within days of the Congress making an announcement to provide 200 units of free power every month to each household in the State, where Assembly elections are due by May. Gruha Lakshmi Yojana is an attempt of the Congress party to share the "burden of the exorbitant" LPG prices and the "costly daily expenses" that a woman has to bear, the party said. The Congress wants every woman of the state to be empowered and capable of standing on her own feet and also taking care of her children. The party wants to provide financial independence to each woman of Karnataka, it said. More than 1.5 crore women would benefit from this scheme, the party said. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said a separate manifesto for women would be released in the State and alleged rampant corruption in the BJP-ruled state. "I am told that the situation in Karnataka is very shameful. I am told that your Ministers are taking 40 per cent commission on jobs," Vadra said during the women-centric titled Na Nayaki' (I am a woman leader). Priyanka alleged that Rs 1.5 lakh crore of public money has been looted in Karnataka. "Think about some development that has to take place in Bengaluru for Rs 8,000 crore and Rs 3,200 crore is going into commission," Priyanka alleged. Referring to the alleged police sub-inspector recruitment scam, Priyanka said: "Nothing moves without paying bribes in Karnataka." "There are shameful scams like the PSI scam where the police posts are being sold. You educate your children, the young boys and girls to get them jobs. Is this what you expect from the people in power?" the Congress leader asked. She alleged that people have to pay bribes for borewells, driving licences, housing, transfers and almost everything related to government work. (PTI)

# Nepal crash: Video captures horrific moments before plane went down

**GHAZIPUR, JAN 16 /--/** A video apparently shot by one of the five Indian passengers on board the aircraft that plunged into a gorge in Pokhara on Sunday captures the horrific moments of the crash that killed at least 68 people. The one-minute clip opens with a view of passengers sitting inside the plane and then focuses on the Pokhara town below. The mood of the group filming the video at that point is upbeat. One person is heard saying, "waah betaa waah mauj kar dee". Moments later there is commotion, and then there is blurred footage, including that of a fire. Apparently the camera kept running for some moments after the crash. PTI could not independently verify the authenticity of the video. Yeti Airlines' 9N-ANC ATR-72 aircraft took off from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport at 10:33 am on Sunday and



crashed on the bank of the Seti River between the old airport and the new airport in Pokhara, minutes before landing, according to the Civil Aviation Authority of

Nepal. The bodies of 68 people, including five Indians, have been recovered, officials said, in one of Nepal's worst aviation tragedies. The remaining four passengers are also feared dead but the bodies are yet to be recovered. The five Indians, all reportedly from Uttar Pradesh, have

been identified as Abhisekh Kushwaha, 25, Bishal Sharma, 22, Anil Kumar Rajbhar, 27, Sonu Jaiswal, 35, and Sanjaya Jaiswal. Meanwhile, a subdued atmosphere prevailed at the residences of the four of the deceased who hail from UP's Ghazipur. Rajbhar's mother was crying and inconsolable. "Anil went to Nepal without informing anyone. Anil's friend was also to accompany him to Nepal, but due to some work, he could not make it. I was also scheduled to go with Anil. But, somehow, I could not make it to the trip. He went without informing his family members and friends. I would have gone with him, if he had taken the road route to Nepal, and had opted for a four-

wheeler to go there," a friend of Anil at the deceased's native village said. People also spoke about the social nature of Kushwaha. "Abhishek Kushwaha was running the 'Jan Seva Kendra' for the last three years. He was a practical person and in less time he registered a good growth. He never said 'no' to anyone for work if they were finding it difficult to make the payment. We did not know that he was going to Nepal, and came to know after the accident," said the owner of a shop from where Kushwaha ran the Jan Seva Kendra. Villagers said the four were to return to Ghazipur on Tuesday after participating in the popular tourist hub of Pokhara. (PTI)



## LG held meeting with tribal captains, public representatives at Kamorta



**PORT BLAIR, JAN 16/--/** Admiral D K Joshi (Retd.), Lt Governor, A&N Islands and Vice-Chairman, Islands Development Agency on Monday held meeting with Tribal Captains & Representatives, Public & HoDs at APWD Guest

House at Kamorta. During the meeting, The Lt Governor directed the officials of various Departments to ensure early examination & resolution of the issues raised. On completion of his four-day visit to Little Andaman and

Kamorta, Lt Governor returned back to Port Blair today. He was given an affectionate send off by senior officials of Andaman & Nicobar Administration, Andaman & Nicobar Police and Tribal Captains & representatives at Kamorta.

## CITU held victory processions across A&N Islands



**PORT BLAIR, JAN 16/--/** At the call given by the CITU Andaman & Nicobar State Committee, hundreds of workers participated in the Victory Processions all over the union territory of Andaman & Nicobar Islands today (16.01.2023) to celebrate the Court case won by the Andaman Sarvajani Nirman Vibhag Mazdoor Sangh (ASNVMS), affiliated to CITU, in the Calcutta High Court on the 1/30th of pay plus DA case to all the Daily Rated Mazdoors.

At Port Blair, the Victory Procession began from Tiranga Park, Aberdeen Bazar which after making a round of the Port Blair town converged into a public meeting at Tiranga Park. Hundreds of Workers from various trade unions functioning at Port Blair participated in the victory procession. Addressing the public meeting, B. Chandrachoodan, General Secretary, CITU State Committee said that the Division Bench of the High Court at Calcutta (Port Blair Circuit Bench) in their judgment on 19th December, 2022 had directed that all the daily rated mazdoors working under the Andaman & Nicobar Administration should be extended the financial benefits under the 1/30th of pay plus Scheme of the A&N Administration formulated in September, 2017 without linking it with sanctioned post/vacant posts, etc. He said that the Court also ordered that the workers be given the benefit from September, 2017 within two months from the date of judgment. He traced the valiant struggles conducted by the CITU during the last 30 years because of which the 2017 scheme was formulated by the Administration. R. Surendran Pillai, President CITU State Committee, who presided over the meeting, called upon the

workers to remain united to conduct more struggles in case the Government did not implement the court order. Addressing the public meeting D. Ayyappan, Vice President, CITU State Committee explained in brief the failure of the BJP-led government at the Centre to solve the power, water and communication problems of these islands. SP Kalairajan, Shipra Bala and MV Yugander, Secretaries of CITU State Committee also addressed the meeting. M. Boominathan, BC Bhattacharjee, NKP Nair, Vice Presidents and P. Sathyapal and AnandRajan, Secretaries of CITU State Committee were also present at the public meeting. At Diglipur, Victory Procession was taken out in the Diglipurbazaar which culminated into a public meeting. The programme was led by RamjeebanSarkar, Vice President, AIKS, S. Arummugam of NGOs Association, Sunil Bepari, Vice President and BarunBiswas Secretary of CITU Diglipur Zonal Committee. A large number of workers participated in the Victory Procession. At Rangat, Victory Procession was taken out in the Rangat Bazar which culminated in a meeting in front of the office of the Assistant Commissioner which was addressed by Projit Kumar Sarkar, President and C. Karuppaiah, Secretary of CITU Rangat Zonal Committee. A large number of workers from APWD and Electricity Department participated in the programme. At Hut Bay, a large number of APWD workers assembled in front of the Executive Engineer's office and staged a mass demonstration which was led by P. Rajesh. At Katchal, the APWD workers staged a mass demonstration in front of the APWD office which was led by Rajesh Khanna.

## A&N POLICE CELEBRATES 71ST RAISING DAY

### DGP lists out achievements in past one year

**PORT BLAIR, JAN 16/--/** As part of the 71st Raising Day celebrations, the Andaman & Nicobar Police organized a ceremonial parade on Monday at Police Line parade ground. Mr. Naveen Kumar, Assistant Commandant (IRBn) of A & N Police who was the ceremonial parade commander, presented the salute to Mr. Neeraj Thakur, Director General of Police, A&N Islands.

The Director General in his address conveyed his greetings to the members of A&N Police & their families. He lauded the services rendered by A&N Police towards the well-being of the society and highlighted the major achievements of A&N Police force in the past one year.

In the past one year, 28 Police Officers were honoured with various medals and prizes. Departmental promotions were given to 101 deserving Police personnel, including Fire, PMF, Communication & IRBn from the rank of Constable to Inspector and 905 personnel were granted MACP. Many other welfare measures like reinstatement from

suspension of Police Personnel, speedy finalization of departmental proceedings and timely settlement of medical claims were also taken up in the administrative measures. Police Sub-Inspector Regina Kiro



has brought laurels to the Andaman and Nicobar Police Force by winning 01 gold medal in Kayaking and 02 bronze medals in Canoeing in the 36th National Games held in Gujarat. On the enforcement front during the year nearly 17,000 Traffic Challans were issued. Apart from this, more than 2000 persons were booked under drunken driving. In 2022, Fires Services Unit attended 223 calls & saved property worth more than Rs.85 crore. Further, a strict vigil over the illegal activities like bootlegging, drug peddling, poaching activities etc., has been kept around the clock for maintaining law & order in these islands. Further, during the year many training programmes were conducted related to First Aid, Fire Fighting and Disaster Preparedness for students, teachers and general public.

## IGNOU celebrates National Startup Day

**PORT BLAIR, JAN 16/--/** As part of Institutions Innovation Council (IIC), Ministry of Education (MOE), Government of India and National Centre for Innovations in Distance Education (NCIDE) campaign, the IGNOU, Regional Centre, Port Blair has observed the National Startup Day-2023 today, to foster a culture of entrepreneurship among youth. Dr. N. Rajvel, Head of the Department, PG Department of Commerce, Jawaharlal Nehru Rajkeeya Mahavidyala (JNRM), was the chief guest for the function. In his speech, Dr. Rajvel, elaborated the



significance of the day and urged the gathering to take up startup for future endeavors. Further, he also stated that the Startup Day aims to engage startup ecosystem stakeholders across to encourage the spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation in India. Moreover the Startups are often the first to bring

innovative ideas to market and play an important role in driving economic growth and creating jobs. Earlier Dr. RVR Murthy, Regional Director welcomed the Chief Guest and other guests were present. The learners and staff of IGNOU, Regional Centre, Port Blair participated in the programme.

## Special meeting of Central Office Bearers of NGGOA held

**PORT BLAIR, JAN 16/--/** A special meeting of the Central Office Bearers, Vice Presidents and Secretaries of various branches and Sub-Committees of the Non-Gazetted Govt. Officers' Association, A & N Islands was held at Port Blair on 12th Jan 2023 at the call of the Confederation of Central Govt. Employees & Workers, New Delhi on the issue and also briefed how this new system of NPS implemented by the Central Govt. shall affect the future of government employees. The Asst. General Secretary of the Association, Mr. S. L. Vinjit, also highlighted the long pending demand of the govt. employees throughout the country to scrap the NPS and restore OPS for all and which has also been implemented in several other states like Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Punjab, etc. The meeting was presided by Mr. R. Papa Rao, President of the Association who welcomed the gathering and urged the members to remain united in the fight against all oppressive forces and to work for the betterment of the government employees. The meeting resolved to

join the programmes as decided by the Confederation in the National Convention held at New Delhi on 12th January, 2023 which was attended by the leaders from various Association, affiliates and organisations throughout the country. The meeting also reviewed the activities of branches and sub-committees functioning under the Association and urged the leadership to organize membership drives and prepare for the Annual General Body meeting. Issues pertaining to the various categories of employees working in departments like Health, RD & PRI, Education, Shipping, JNRM, Statistics, Secretariat etc. were discussed. Mr. E. P. Johnson, Mr. Salman Khan, Mr. Sasi Kumar, Smt. Meena Kumari, Smt. Usha Rajendran, Smt. Suma Nair, Mr. Javed etc. also spoke on the occasion.

R. Rajendran explained in detail about the ongoing programme by the confederation of Central Govt. Employees & Workers, New Delhi on the issue and also briefed how this new system of NPS implemented by the Central Govt. shall affect the future of government employees. The Asst. General Secretary of the Association, Mr. S. L. Vinjit, also highlighted the long pending demand of the govt. employees throughout the country to scrap the NPS and restore OPS for all and which has also been implemented in several other states like Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Punjab, etc. The meeting was presided by Mr. R. Papa Rao, President of the Association who welcomed the gathering and urged the members to remain united in the fight against all oppressive forces and to work for the betterment of the government employees. The meeting resolved to

## Forest officials of Bakultala Range seizes wild pig meat, venison, one nabbed

**BAKULTALA, JAN 16/--/** On a tip off information regarding illegal possession and trade of wildlife articles at about 2030 Hrs, a team constituted under the leadership of Mr. R. Raghu, Forest Guard, Mr. Niranjan Podder, S/o Late C.R. Podder, Regular Mazdoor, Mr. Parameshwar Baral, S/o Mr. Jiten Baral, Regular Mazdoor and Mr. Deb Kumar Sider, S/o, Late Nagen Sikder, Regular Mazdoor. The team camouflage themselves in different dark places to nab the offender. In the meantime, one of the team members Mr. Niranjan Podder noticed one suspected person, holding one shopping bag. Mr. Niranjan Podder immediately stopped the suspected person and asked him about the material inside the bag. As he was asked, he tried to run away, but Mr. Podder succeeded in nabbing him and noticed 02 kgs of wild pig meat and 02 Kgs of spotted deer meat inside the bag. The meat was seized from the accused person. In the meantime, the Range Officer, Bakultala Mr. S.P. Ray also reached the spot and arrested the accused person namely Romanus Dhanwar, S/o Mr. Noos Dhanwar, R/o. Kalsi. Later the accused person was produced to the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Mayabunder on 15th January 2023 and sent him to judicial custody for 14 days.

The entire operation was carried out under the direct and close supervision of Mr. S.P. Roy, Range Officer, Bakultala and overall direction of Assistant Conservator of Forest. Mr. Anil Saha [SFS] and Mr. Sandeep Dibjyoti Behra, Divisional Forest Officer Middle Andaman. —ASHIM

## WITH YOU NGO distributes clothing to needy villagers



**PORT BLAIR, JAN 16/--/** WITH YOU (NGO) distributed clothing to the needy residents of Miletalak village ON 15TH January 2023. The clothes were generously donated by members of the community and were warmly received by the villagers. Children, women, and men came out with enthusiasm to choose their desired clothing. President and members of WITH YOU expressed its deepest gratitude to the society for coming forward to support this noble cause. The organization is committed to continue its efforts to assist those in need and making a positive impact in the community.

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*Good soldiers never pass up a chance to eat or sleep. They never know how much they'll be called on to do before the next chance*  
**Lois McMaster Bujold**

**Lanka to resume debt restructuring talks with India**

Sri Lanka is in the midst of its worst economic crisis since its independence from Great Britain in 1948, triggered by a severe paucity of foreign exchange reserves, sparking political turmoil in the country which led to the ouster of the all-powerful Rajapaksa family. In April last year, it declared its international debt default due to the forex crisis as a result of which it was unable to afford key imports, including fuel, fertilisers and medicines, leading to serpentine queues. Against this backdrop, Sri Lanka has just concluded debt restructuring talks with Japan and will continue to hold such meetings with India this month, President Ranil Wickremesinghe announced, as the cash-strapped country looks to carve a path out of its worst financial crisis. The crisis-hit island nation, which is trying to secure a USD 2.9 billion bridge loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has been trying to get financial assurances from its major creditors -- China, Japan and India -- which is the requisite for Colombo to get the bailout package. The IMF bailout has been put on a halt as Sri Lanka pursues talks with creditors to meet the global lender's condition for the facility. The president said that the debt restructuring talks with China's Exim bank have been held and further dialogue is in progress.

On January 19, the Indian foreign minister is expected to visit Sri Lanka and the island nation will continue to have debt restructuring talks with India. His remarks came days after Wickremesinghe said India's response to Sri Lanka's request for debt restructuring is expected by the end of this month. He had earlier said that India and Sri Lanka held "successful" talks on debt restructuring and the country will also begin discussions with China. Extending a much-needed lifeline to a neighbour in need, India gave financial assistance of nearly USD 4 billion to Colombo during the year. Wickremesinghe stressed that the only option that the island nation was left with was a bailout package from the IMF. The president said he was looking forward to the IMF facility in 3-4 tranches. "I want to lift this country out of the plunge sooner," he said.

Sri Lanka began debt restructuring talks with its creditors in September last year as warranted by its agreement with the IMF for the USD 2.9 billion facility over four years. It began negotiating with the IMF for a bail-out after having announced its first-ever sovereign debt default in April last year. The IMF facility would enable the island nation to obtain bridging finance from markets and other lending institutions such as the ADB and the World Bank. Wickremesinghe says there were no quick fixes to the current crisis and Sri Lanka had to be wary of sliding growth in Europe and the US which would have a direct bearing on the country's exports. The president's meeting with trade unions assumes significance in view of hard economic reform measures to be implemented by the government. Personal tax hikes and electricity tariff hikes proposed and the move to privatise state-owned enterprises are being already opposed by the trade unions. Wickremesinghe recently said he was intent on selling the state-owned enterprises to boost reserves. The government has already made clear its plans to privatise Sri Lanka Telecom and Sri Lankan Airlines.

# Indian Universities need to break out of text book education

## REFLEX ACTION

**K Raveendran**

There is one thing common among the Indian CEOs of global IT giants: all of them completed their higher education from a leading foreign university. Such exposure decidedly put them into the big league and the corollary is that the lack of a foreign degree is as good as a disqualification for their fellow Indians.

It is in this context that the move to allow foreign universities to set up campuses in India assumes significance. Of course, these universities will be free to fix their fees as well as norms in terms of admissions in the sense that the restrictions applicable to Indian universities will not be binding on them. But it will provide more Indian students with the opportunity to acquire qualifications that are in demand by the top companies of the world. It is a pity that despite India's legacy as the ancient seat of learning and claims of it being the provider of knowledge to the rest of the world, not even one Indian institution of higher learning finds a place on the list of top 100 universities. Perhaps, as a consolation point, three Indian universities have made it to the list of the top 200: the Indian Institute of Sciences, Bengaluru, followed by IITs of Bombay and Delhi.

Given the size and other attributes of the country, accounting for one-sixth of humanity, this is indeed a dubious distinction. Contrast this to a country like the United Arab Emirates with a history of just about half a century, and much less in terms of its history of education. The UAE today has at least three universities on the QS World Universities Rankings list of the top 100 and as many as 20 in the top 200. QS reviews some 1,400 universities to produce its lists. Institutions are assessed across six categories to effectively capture university performance—including academic and employer reputation, faculty/student ratio and research citations.

The topmost consideration in the rankings is academic reputation, which accounts for 40 per cent of the overall score. Academic reputation looks at the teaching and research quality at the world's universities. According to QS, over 130,000 expert opinions are collected from the higher education space, creating the largest survey of academic opinion in the world.

In terms of employer reputation, QS assesses how institutions prepare students for successful careers, and which institutions provide the most competent, innovative, and effective graduates. This is to address the concerns of the prevailing job market, which revolves around skills and knowledge of the students passing out of the top institutions. Faculty-student ratio is another key indicator, which recognises that a high number of academics per student reduces the

teaching burden and creates a more supportive student experience. QS seeks to assess how institutions provide students with meaningful access to lecturers and tutors. While computing the score, citations per faculty is also an important factor. For this QS measures the quality of university research with a citation per faculty metric, taking the total number of academic citations in papers produced by a university in a five-year period.

Also deciding the rankings is the ratio of International students and faculty in a particular institution. A highly international university is seen to create a number of benefits, demonstrating the ability to attract quality students and staff from across the world, and it implies a highly global outlook. Strong international institutions are seen to provide a multinational environment, building international sympathies and global awareness. The decision to allow foreign universities to set up campuses in India will allow Indian universities to set up overseas campuses, which will be a big plus for some of the more ambitious universities in the country.

But academicians have opposed the UGC new GCC proposals, saying that opening up of higher education sector would affect the Indian universities as there would be greater demand for admission in foreign universities. This view is typical of an isolationist approach, which has held back our institutions from upgrading and updating themselves to the new realities of an emerging world. (IPA)



Visitors enjoy a picnic mood and a mild Sun at the Alipore Zoological Garden on Monday--Arijit Ganguly

### Conventional Crossword

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

**ACROSS**  
1 Indian ruler  
4 Crippled  
7 Buccaneer  
8 Bury  
10 Transmitted  
11 Make effort  
12 First woman  
14 Halt  
17 Coarse file  
19 Anger  
20 Lazy person  
23 Bearing  
25 Not concealed  
26 Arm covering  
27 Precious stones  
28 Mistake

**DOWN**  
1 Attacker  
2 Summit  
3 Employ  
4 Endures  
5 Consumed  
6 Wise counsellor  
9 English river  
13 Traveller's bag  
15 Weary  
16 Alloy  
18 Trees  
21 Fondness  
22 At all times  
24 Tree

### SUDOKU:3758

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

**Yesterday's Solution 3757**

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

**Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 1766**

C	R	E	W		D	E	A	L	S
R	E	L	A	T	E		B		T
A	D	D	S		B		E	M	U
F		E		R	A	T	T	A	N
T	A	R	G	E	T			Z	
	R			F	E	E	L	E	R
R	I	F	L	E	S		E		E
O	D	E		R		S	A	F	E
U	T		E	R	A	S	E	D	
T	H	E	M	E		D	E	N	S

**DISCLAIMER**

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## Open offer to foreign universities not in national interests

'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' of RSS-BJP mould has decided to open its doors before foreign universities to "come, see and conquer" India. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has published the 'proposed regulations for establishing and running campuses of foreign higher education institutions' in the country. Now any foreign university ranked within 500 in the world or any foreign higher education institution with good standing in home country may apply to the UGC for their entry to India. The regulation notifies that there will be a clearance process of 90 days. After that such universities/institutions can start their campuses in India. They will have the freedom to decide the content and structure of the education in their campuses. The fee structure, curriculum, syllabus, examinations and awarding of degrees will all be under the control of those foreign institutions.

Conspicuously, the social justice aspect of Indian education system is completely neglected by the UGC and their political masters. There is no single word of reference to reservation. That concept itself is alien to those foreign universities. The UGC respectfully decided to follow their suits even though reservation, an essential component of social justice is vital for Indian conditions. From this instance itself, the real intention of 'foreignisation' of Indian higher education is convincingly unveiled. The government is setting the ground ready for the commercialization of higher

education. The idea of foreign investment in Indian education is having far reaching ramifications. The philosophy of FDI based on greed for profit would undermine the basic structure of Indian education. That would be the case with fee structure and curriculum where 'Atmanirbhartha' of India is thrown to foreign whims. Still, the loyalists of RSS-BJP claim that this foreign intrusion is a feather in the crown of 'viswaguru'.

In order to justify their surrender before the foreign universities, many of them have begun to propagate the backwardness of India in the field of education. It is interesting to see that the very same people who were preaching the glory of India in every field including education and knowledge have suddenly taken a U-turn to spread red carpet for foreign universities. Now they narrate the gradation reports of Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) which is said to be the quality analyst in higher education. Once they were boasting about the ancient universities of Nalanda and Thakshasila. Now they lament that in the ranking list of 150 global universities none from India could find a place. IIT Mumbai stands at 177, IIT Delhi 185, Indian Institute of Science,

Bangalore, 186. Of course, it is a matter of concern for all those who love India. The reasons for this academic backwardness should be thoroughly explored and rectification measures taken urgently. But the Modi government's contention that foreign universities are the only panacea is deplorable.

Accumulating knowledge from any part of the globe and imparting education on a wider range are necessary and welcome. But surrendering before foreign greed and foreign universities will not be the solution. Those advocates have to explain that how love for foreign universities would improve the standards of our IITs in Mumbai or Delhi. Collaboration with foreign universities and exchange of ideas, knowledge and human power has to take place in modern times. No country can live in isolation. While paving the way for broad engagement with foreign universities and other establishments, the primary concern should be India's interests. Any collaboration with foreign countries would be beneficial for both sides. The RSS-BJP government intoxicated by the fascination of FDI always forgets India's interests as they surrender before foreign capital. Thus, affinity towards foreign universities is

nothing new. The idea was mooted in the National Education Policy, 2020.

The adventurous experiment taking place in the field of higher education is an inevitable part of RSS-BJP's concept of growth. They want it to be driven by foreign investment. Their tall claim of national pride is only a myth when it comes to the question of foreign capital. The RSS-BJP government has become the shameless disciple of the neo-liberal concept of knowledge industry. In that industry, market and profits are the motivating factor. The question before India on the 76th year of Independence is whether to surrender our national goals of sovereignty and self-reliance at the feet of foreign capital. Every policy decision in all walks of life including education should be based on Indian conditions and priorities. When it comes to questions related to areas like education, a national debate is a must. In this case, the UGC has come out with its regulations even without a name-sake discussion in the Parliament.

It is quite natural that the teachers and student organizations have come out questioning the policy orientations of the government. They should be heard and properly consulted.

In a democracy the people's voice and the Parliament are considered to be supreme. RSS-BJP government has no right to bypass the people's voice. Universities are to be the centers of inquisitive wisdom and source of guidance for the future. They should not be allowed to be controlled by foreign universities and foreign capital. (IPA)

## FOCUS

**Binoy Viswam**



## Shaheed Dr Diwan Singh, 'Kalepani'-a tribute



**PORT BLAIR, JAN 16/--/** The 80th Martyrdom Day of Shaheed Dr Diwan Singh, "Kalepani" was observed on 14th January in a befitting manner by the Management Committee of Gurudwara Dr Diwan Singh, Port Blair. The executive committee of Shahidon Ki Awaz, ANI , extended heartfelt support in paying rich tributes to this national freedom fighter . A week long array of activities were held at Khalsa Public Senior Secondary School , Port Blair respectively.

On 10th January , Interschool Patriotic Song competition was held . The esteemed judges were Mr. B K Talukder, Mr. Gulshad Ali, Mr. Chimmoy Das and Mrs Sujata .The result was as follows :

### a) SOLO SONG COMPETITION

S.NO	NAME OF THE PARTICIPANTS	CLASS	SCHOOL	RESULT
1	AARATRIKA DAS	VII	NAVY CHILDREN SCHOOL	FIRST
2	SHRIYA S NAIR	VII	KHALSA PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL	SECOND
3	ADITI SINGH	VIII	CARMEL SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL	THIRD
4	PRATYAKSH SINGH YADAV	VI	VIVEKANANDA KENDRA VIDYALA	CONSOLATION

B) GROUP SONG COMPETITION		
S.NO	NAME OF THE PARTICIPANTS	RESULT
1	CARMEL SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL	FIRST
2	KHALSA PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL	SECOND
3	ST MARY'S SCHOOL	THIRD
4	NAVY CHILDREN SCHOOL	CONSOLATION

On 11th January, Drawing as well as Sports Competition was organized for CWSN children under the theme, "HAUSLON KI UDAAN" respectively. Mr. V Ranjith Kumar, Assistant Sports Director, Mr. R K Singh, State Project Officer, Mrs Sumitha Mol, Nodal Officer, CRC, Brookshabad, Mr. Tarun, President, KHV, Mr. Arun, President, The Andaman Avians Club, Mr. Biswajit, Secretary, Sahara NGO, Meghna Pal Govind, DCPO, alongwith S SSChani, Chairman, KPSSS M.C. graced the inaugural session. M Bhavani and Ragni Devi, BRPs (CWSN) conducted the sports competition. Vipin, SagarDubey, Dilip, Vinita, Charanjit Singh, Tarannum, Renu, Mousumu, Anupama, Regina, Anamik, Lawrence, Prashant Singh and Iklaq (officials of SKA, ANI) lent relentless support for the smooth conduct of sports. Shrestha Das Gupta of class XI enthralled the audience with her speech. D Vinish of class VI took the Sports Pledge on behalf of the CWSN kids.

The overall prizes won by the children were as follows:

SHAHIDON KI AWAZ , ANI WEDNESDAY , 11TH JANUARY 2023 (DRAWING AND SPORTS COMPETITION ) VENUE : KHALSA PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL , PORT BLAIR OVERALL RESULT					
S.NO	EVENT	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	CONSOLATION
1	DRAWING COMPETITION	ROSHNI NARAYAN	P S SURYA PRAKASH	SUMIT SAMMADAR	1)TAMANNA LAKRA 2) SURAJ ADHIKARI
2	RUNNING RACE (2 ROUNDS FOR JUNIORS AND 2 ROUNDS FOR SENIOR BOYS WERE CONDUCTED AS FOLLOWS				
2 (a)	i) RUNNING RACE (BOYS JUNIORS)	MAHESH KUMAR	SUMIT	K DHARSAN	-----
2 (b)	ii) RUNNING RACE (BOYS JUNIORS)	RAKESHWAR KUMAR KINDO	UTKARSH LASKAR	ROJER TENZING	-----
2 (c)	iii) RUNNING RACE (BOYS SENIORS)	RAYON LAL	SURAJ ADHIKARI	RUBAS JONES ARULANDU	-----
2 (d)	iv) RUNNING RACE (BOYS SENIORS)	R RANGASWAMY	R DIVAGAR	SHEKSALMAN	-----
2 (e)	i) RUNNING RACE (GIRLS JUNIORS)	ADIKALA MARY	ANKITA YADAV	NISHIKA KUJUR	-----
2 (f)	ii) RUNNING RACE (GIRLS SENIORS)	TAMANNA LAKRA	C NISHETA ANAND	PRACHI TOPPO	-----
3	PASSING THE BALL (ALL AGE GROUPS)	MAHESH KUMAR	THAVANASHWARAN	ROJER TENZING	R DIVAKAR
4 (a)	RELAY RACE (BOYS)	i) SHEKSALMAN S JONES ARULANDU	i) RUBA ii) RANGASWAMY	iii) K DHARSAN iii) MAHESH KUMAR	-----
4 (b)	RELAY RACE (GIRLS)	i) C NISHETA ANAND ii) ADIKALA MARY	i) N SADHANA ii) PRACHI TOPPO	i) TAMANNA LAKRA ii) BHOOMIKA	-----
5 (a)	SHOT PUT ( BOYS SENIOR )	KUNAL BEPARI	RUBAS JONES ARULANDU	SURAJ ADHIKARI	-----
5 (b)	SHOT PUT ( BOYS JUNIOR )	ROSHAN RAJ MINJ	R SUBASH	NISHANT	-----
5 (c)	SHOT PUT ( GIRLS )	C NISHETA ANAND	TAMANNA LAKRA	C H BHOOMIKA	-----
6	MUSICAL CHAIRS (ALL AGE GROUPS)	RITU MEHRA	MAHESH KUMAR	N SADHANA	ANKIT YADAV
7	MUSICAL CHAIRS (KPSSS & SKA STAFF)	LAXMI FROM KPSSS	VINITA VIPIN FROM SKA	SARASWATI FROM KPSSS	

The Drawing Competition was judged by K Kasturi, Art Teacher and Anupam Singh, GTT (KPSSS). The prizes, medals and certificates were distributed to the winners as well as the participants on 14th January in a special event graced by august officials and audience from various sectors of the society including Dr V K Sahu (JNRM), Shri Vive, the Law Officer, Shri Saurabh Singh, Prabhari, and Shri Diptendu Das Gupta, President from SKA, ANI respectively. While addressing the gathering, Shri D D Gupta, President (SKA) declared that event for the CWSN will be conducted every year on 14th January to pay tribute to this great freedom fighter. Gowtham class III child from Model Primary School and SatakshiDubey, class VI from RGT Vidyalaya gave enlightening performances on patriotic zeal. Sardar Aatamjeet Singh, National President, SKA congratulated the team of SKA, ANI, for conducting such a befitting programme to pay rich tributes to the noble Martyr Dr Diwan Singhji by including CWSN children. Dr S K Jagpal, Principal, KPSSS welcomed the guests as well as helped in the smooth conduct of all the scheduled programs. Shri Vipin Jacob (SKA) proposed the vote of thanks.

## SEVA SUCHNAYEIN

All the sailings are subject to weather conditions

**INTER ISLAND SECTOR:** MV Bharat Seema will sail for Car Nicobar via Little Andaman on 21.01.2023 (Sat) at 0700 Hrs from Haddo Wharf and will sail for Port Blair on 22.01.2023 (Sun) at 1600 Hrs from Car Nicobar via Little Andaman. Passenger tickets for the above sailing will be issued to the general public from 19.01.2023 (Thu) onwards at STARS Ticketing Counters.

**LITTLE ANDAMAN:** MV Bharat Seema will sail for Little Andaman on 18.01.2023 (Wed) at 2000 Hrs from Haddo Wharf and will sail for Port Blair on 19.01.2023 (Thu) at 0800 Hrs from Little Andaman. Nalanda will sail for Little Andaman on 21.01.2023 (Sat) at 2100 Hrs from Haddo Wharf and will sail for Port Blair on 22.01.2023 at 0800 Hrs from Little Andaman. Note: Passenger tickets for the above sailings ie. (for 18" & 21 Jan, 2023) will be issued to the general public from 17.01.2023 (Tue) onwards at STARS Ticketing Counters. NOTE: FOR SHIPPING RELATED QUERIES PLEASE DIAL TO TOLL FREE NUMBER 18003452714.

Deputy Director (SS) A & N Admn.

## Complete destruction of ideals taking place in India: Mallika Sarabhai

**KOLKATA, JAN 16/--/** Eminent classical dancer and activist Mallika Sarabhai has voiced disappointment over the "complete destruction of ideals" in the country, alleging that Hindutva' is being shoved down the throat of people in the name of Hinduism.

Hinduism is actually all about asking questions, the 68-year old Padma Bhushan awardee said during a session about her life, career and initiation into the world of dance, at the concluding day of the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival here on Sunday.

"What I am witnessing around today completely decimates me. Never had I thought there will be complete destruction of our ideals in India, and so many people blinded by the glory of advertisement and brand-building," she said.

"It is so nice coming to Kolkata and actually seeing (people) of different religions living side by side... which I don't see in a similar way in Gujarat, in Ahmedabad, where ghettoisation seems to be so complete," Sarabhai said.

She claimed that many of her friends are in jail, facing trial for asking questions, apparently referring to the arrests of some rights activists in recent times.

"Hinduism is all about asking questions, as manifested in our scriptures. Unfortunately, it is Hinduism in the form of Hindutva that is quoted to us and shoved (down the throat of people)," the noted dancer said.

Sarabhai, who had essayed the role of Draupadi in Peter Brook's play The Mahabharata' in the 1980s,

apart from acting in solo theatrical works Shakti: The Power of Women' and co-directing Women with Broken Wings', said Bengal is among the few states where pluralism still exists in society.

"Kolkata has always given me more love than any other part of the world".

Reacting to her comments, BJP leader Roopa Ganguly said Hinduism is not a religion, but a way of life that is connected to nature.

Hindutva is a Hindi word and Hinduism is a globally known English word. That is the only difference between the two expressions, Ganguly, a former Rajya Sabha MP, said.

"About the ghettoisation comments, shall I ask her (Sarabhai) to go through the population chart of Gujarat and (charts) of all parts of India. As she specifically mentioned Gujarat, I would ask her to check how many people engaged in diamond cutting live there?"

"Many of them are from Domjur in West Bengal and they are living peacefully in Surat. What she said is irrelevant," asserted Ganguly, who is also an acclaimed actor.

On Sarabhai's remark about many of her friends being in jail for asking questions, Ganguly claimed she has herself faced media trial for putting forth questions against the West Bengal government.

"Madam, please find out how many cases of molestation and atrocities on women are unregistered in Bengal before talking. This much I would expect from such a great personality," the BJP leader added. (PTI)

## Queries about RJD-JD(U) rift irks Tejashwi

**PATNA, JAN 16/--/** Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav on Monday betrayed vexation over queries from journalists about the recent spat between leaders of his RJD and his boss Nitish Kumar's JD(U). The young leader, otherwise known for being cool headed, used the analogy of media houses to underscore that foot soldiers fell in line with their leaders and not the other way round.

"You tell me in your organizations do the editors decide what line to take or do the reporters tell the editors what to do", the RJD leader said quizzically, rankled by queries from reporters. The RJD and the JD(U), former rivals which became allies less than six months ago, appear to be on a collision

course. The trigger has been controversial remarks about "Ramcharitmanas" made by the state's Education minister Chandra Shekhar, an RJD leader. Some leaders of the JD(U) have been wary of the BJP exploiting the issue to its own advantage and in favour of action against the minister, by his party, by way of damage control. Those in the RJD have not taken kindly to the suggestion from the coalition partner. Yadav reiterated that there was a good understanding between his father Lalu Prasad, the RJD president, and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, the JD(U) supremo, both of whom were "sheersh neta" (top leaders) of the 'Mahagathbandhan' and, hence, it did not matter what others in either party said. (PTI)

## e-TENDER NOTICE

**NoDB-Tender/Elect/WSD/2022-23/4963 dt.30/12/2022**

The Executive Engineer, Workshop Division, APWD, Port Blair invites on behalf of President of India, online Item Rate tenders from authorized dealer, manufacturer or experienced contractors in similar works, having Office at Port Blair for the following work.

- 1. Name of Work:-** Supplying, installation, testing and commissioning of CCTV camera surveillance systems at Delanipur Section, Haddo Section, Chatham Section of PBNB under Section-II of E&M Sub Division, Workshop Division, APWD, Port Blair. **Estimate Cost Put To Tender:- ₹ .9,02,981/- EMD:- ₹ .18,060/- & Time of Completion:- 01 Month TENDER ID: 2023 APWD\_8892\_1 & last time & date of Submission of bid: 23/01/2023 (10:00 hrs).**

The Tender forms and other details can be obtained from the web site [eprocure.andaman.gov.in](http://eprocure.andaman.gov.in).

Executive Engineer  
Workshop Division  
APWD, Port Blair

9567/23



F.No. 1-212/ANIIMS/Rec./Cath Lab/2021/61

निर्देशक एनिम्स का कार्यालय

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF ANIIMS

अंडमान निकोबार द्वीप समूह चिकित्सा संस्थान

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES

अण्डमान तथा निकोबार प्रशासन

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ADMINISTRATION

Port Blair, Dated 13/01/2023

### VACANCY NOTICE

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands institute of Medical Sciences (ANIIMS), Port Blair will conduct "Online Interview" for the following post purely on **CONTRACTUAL BASIS** for a period of 01 year extendable depending on assessment of performance.

S. No	Name of the Post	No of Post	Consolidated Salary	Place of engagement	Age limit	Essential Qualification and Professional Qualification
01	Cardiac Cath Lab Technician	02	Rs. 50000/- per month	G.B. Pant Hospital, Port Blair	21-40 years for male & 21-43 years for female	1. BSc. Degree in Science with Physics/Applied Science as one of the subject from a recognized University with minimum 1 year work experience in field of Cath lab. Or 2. BSc. Degree in Cardiac Care Technology (CCT) or Cardiovascular Technology (CVT) with minimum 1 year work experience in field of Cath lab. Or 3. Diploma course in Cardiac Cath Lab Techniques from a Govt. recognized institution with minimum 2 years work experience in field of Cath lab.

Note:

- Eligible candidate can apply for the post in the prescribed Performa (available at the institute website <http://andssw1.and.nic.in/aniims>) and website of A & N Administration <https://www.andaman.gov.in/> along with self-attested photocopies and the relevant documents available and send through Email: [aniimsrecruitment2022@gmail.com](mailto:aniimsrecruitment2022@gmail.com) by 28.01.2023 till 04:00 pm
- Date of online interview: 01.02.2023
- Details of the vacancy notice and other terms and conditions can be seen on the college website <http://andssw1.and.nic.in/aniims>.

-sd/-

9576/23

Director ANIIMS

## Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs Government of India

### EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) FOR EMPANELMENT OF SWACHHATA KNOWLEDGE PARTNERS

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs hereby invites Expression of Interest for empanelment of Organizations as 'Swachhata Knowledge Partners (SKPs)' for capacity Building under Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) 2.0 from Relevant and Interested Organizations.

**Description:** The institutes and organizations empaneled by MoHUA as SKPs will work with States/UTs and ULBs in alignment with the goals of Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban). **Swachhata Knowledge Partners (SKPs)** will be required to support effective design and successful delivery of capacity building training programs by building the capacity of city and state officials. The SKPs will be the primary support resource for developing the capacity of executive and technical officials of the State/UT Department and ULBs under SBM(U) 2.0 through training and handholding sessions.

**Last date and time for Eoi Submission- 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2023.**

The detailed scope of work, terms and conditions for evaluation of the SKPs applicants, selection of the SKPs and roles and responsibilities of the knowledge partners can be downloaded from <https://skp.sbmurban.org/u/login> or using the QR code.

Interested organizations are requested to submit their applications along with supporting documents by uploading it at <https://skp.sbmurban.org/u/login> by the last date of Eoi Submission.



SD/  
Director

CBC-20101/11/0003/2223



AGRICULTURE INSURANCE COMPANY OF INDIA LIMITED  
Plato B & C, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Block 1, East Kirti Nagar, New Delhi - 110023  
CIN: U19990DL2002PLC118123, IRDAI REGISTRATION: 126

### Recruitment Notice

Agriculture Insurance Company of India Limited (AIC) a leading Crop Insurance Company, invites applications for recruitment for the post of: -

**50 (Fifty) Management Trainees** in the Generalist discipline.

For details regarding the eligibility conditions, age, educational qualifications, reservation, different dates of application etc., please visit company's website at [www.aicofindia.com](http://www.aicofindia.com) in career section.

Online registration & payment of fees: -  
Start Date: 17th January 2023 (from 08:00 hrs.)  
End Date: 05th February 2023 (till 20:00 hrs.)

DGM-HR

Date: 17 Jan 2023

CBC 01115/12/0106/2223

### IREL (India) Limited

(A Govt. of India Undertaking Dept. of Atomic Energy)

CIN: U1500MH1950GO1008187

Rare Earths Division, Kochi, Kerala, email: [purchase-red@irel.co.in](mailto:purchase-red@irel.co.in)

An ISO 9001, 14001 & 45001 COMPANY

### TENDER NOTICE

IREL (India) Limited, Rare Earths Division invites tender for the following item/job description:

Description	Availability of tenders in the website
Outsourcing of material charging in MPP and Calciner Operation	17.01.2023 14.00 Hrs.
Construction of RCC Trenches No. 27.28.29	18.01.2023 14.00 Hrs.

For details visit the following websites

<http://bit.ly/mstcirell>, <http://bit.ly/cpppirell>

[www.irel.co.in/tender-information](http://www.irel.co.in/tender-information)

Any corrigendum/extension to the above tenders shall be hosted in the above websites only

Date: 17.01.2023

GM & Head, RED

CBC-48129/12/0084/2223





Rescue operation underway after a truck fell into the Kamla river due to collapse of a portion of a bridge over it in Darbhanga district, Bihar

## Oppn parties question need for remote voting machines

NEW DELHI, JAN 16 /--/ Opposition parties on Monday questioned the need to deploy remote voting machines and urged the Election Commission to address the issue of urban apathy towards the poll process. "No Opposition party wants to see the demonstration of a remote voting machine (RVM). First the issue of the need to have such a machine should be settled," senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh told reporters after participating in a meeting of political parties convened by the Election Commission (EC) for the demonstration of the workings of an RVM. The former Madhya Pradesh chief minister said he felt that there would be no RVM demonstration till there is a consensus on having one. No political party is prepared to see the demonstration, he said. "The idea of RVM is not acceptable," Singh said and added that the commission should address concerns about electronic voting machines raised by eminent citizens of the country. The EC should also address the issue of urban apathy towards the election process, the Congress leader said. The poll panel had invited representatives of eight national and 57 recognised state parties for an RVM demonstration here. The commission has maintained that RVMs, developed by public sector undertaking Electronics Corporation of India, will be a standalone device not connected to the internet in any way. The initiative, if implemented, can lead to a "social transformation" for migrants, the EC had said last month. Each machine can handle up to 72 constituencies, allowing migrant voters to cast their votes from a remote polling booth. Parties were also asked to give in writing their views by the end of January on issues such as changes required in the law to allow the use of RVMs. On Sunday, leaders of most Opposition parties decided to oppose the EC's proposal on RVMs after a meeting facilitated by the Congress. The meeting was attended by leaders of JD-U, Shiv Sena, CPI, CPM, National Conference, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Peoples Democratic Party, Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi, Revolutionary Socialist Party, Indian Union Muslim League, as well as Independent Rajya Sabha MP and former Congress leader Kapil Sibal. (PTI)

## SC declines to hear plea on Joshimath crisis, says HC should handle it as matter of principle

NEW DELHI, JAN 16 /--/ The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a plea seeking the court's intervention to declare the crisis in Uttarakhand's subsidence-hit Joshimath a national disaster, saying since the state High Court is seized of a "broad range of issues" it should hear it as a matter of principle. As the lawyer for the petitioner submitted that people in Joshimath are dying, the apex court told him curtly: "You don't want to use these proceedings for sound bytes in social media." A bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala asked petitioner Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati to approach the Uttarakhand High Court with his petition. "As a matter of principle, we should allow the High Court to deal with this. High Court is seized of a broad range of issues, we'll give you liberty to approach the High Court." The specific aspects which have been highlighted in these proceedings can be addressed before the High Court for suitable redressal. We accordingly permit the petitioners either to institute a substantive petition before the high court so that it can be together with pending proceedings or intervene in the pending matter. The high court is requested to consider the grievance," the bench said. The counsel for the Uttarakhand government submitted all the points raised by the petitioner have already been acted upon. Senior advocate Sushil Kumar Jain, appearing for the petitioner, said people are dying and urgent steps are needed for relief and rehabilitation of those affected by ground subsidence. The bench then remarked: "You don't want to use these proceedings for sound bytes in social media, what you want is relief for affected persons." The apex court asked the petitioner to approach the high court with his petition. Joshimath, the gateway to famous pilgrimage sites like Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib and international skiing destination Auli, appears on the edge of a precipice with gaping cracks appearing on buildings, roads and public facilities. The petitioner has contended subsidence in swathes of the town has occurred due to large-scale industrialisation and sought immediate financial assistance and compensation. The plea has also sought direction to the National Disaster Management Authority to actively support the residents of Joshimath in these challenging times. "No development is needed at the cost of human life and their ecosystem and if any such thing is to happen, then it is the duty of the State and Union government to stop the same immediately at war level," the plea by the Seer said. (PTI)



Children at a residential area affected by land subsidence, in Joshimath

## Activists write to PM; accuse Uttarakhand govt of slow-paced relief-rehabilitation work

JOSHIMATH, JAN 16 /--/ The Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Samiti on Monday demanded scrapping of NTPC's Tapovan-Vishnugad hydel project and asked the Centre to take over the relief and rehabilitation works in the land subsidence hit-town, accusing the Uttarakhand government of carrying them out at a snail's pace. Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Samiti (JBSS) convenor Atul Sati, in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accused the state government of ignoring its warnings about the imminent disaster for 14 months and dealing with it now at a slow pace. The letter has been signed by Sati, who is credited with bringing the crisis into focus, Congress MLA from Badrinath, Rajendra Bhandari and around a dozen activists of the Samiti. "The

crisis has endangered the very existence of a historic town, but the relief and rescue operations being carried out by the state government are devoid of any urgency," it said. "We demand from the Prime Minister that the relief-rehabilitation and stabilisation work in Joshimath is taken over by the Centre to secure the lives and interest of people," the letter said. The Samiti also demanded the scrapping of NTPC's Tapovan-Vishnugad hydel project, holding the building of its tunnel responsible for the current crisis in Joshimath. It said L&T company was initially building the tunnel for the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), but had to quit as it was not satisfied with the way the corporation worked. (PTI)

## Agnipath transformative policy, game changer in making armed forces future-ready: PM

NEW DELHI, JAN 16 /--/ Addressing the first batch of Agniveers, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday asserted that Agnipath, a short-term military employment scheme, is a transformative policy and a game changer in strengthening the armed forces and making them future-ready. A statement said Modi, in his virtual address, congratulated them on being the pioneers of this "path-breaking" scheme which, he noted, will further empower women. The Prime Minister said the young Agniveers will make the armed forces more youthful and tech-savvy. Technologically-advanced soldiers will play a key role in our armed forces, he said, adding that the current generation of youth especially

has this potential and Agniveers will play a leading role in the forces in the times to come. The Prime Minister said new India is filled with renewed vigour and efforts are underway to modernise the armed forces as well as make them 'aatmanirbhar' (self-reliant). In the 21st century, the way wars are fought is changing, he said, speaking about the new fronts of contactless warfare and challenges of cyber warfare. Lauding their potential, Modi said their spirit is reflective of the bravery of the armed forces which has always kept the flag of the nation flying high. The experience they will acquire through this opportunity will be a source of pride for life, the Prime Minister added. "Hailing the potential of youth and Agniveers, Prime Minister concluded by saying that they are



Prime Minister Narendra Modi attends the BJP National Executive meeting, at NDMC Convention Centre in New Delhi on Monday

the ones who are going to provide leadership to the nation in the 21st century," the statement quoting PM Modi said. He said Agnipath will further empower women and expressed happiness at how women Agniveers are adding pride to naval forces. The Prime Minister said he looks forward to seeing women Agniveers in all three forces, noting that they are leading armed forces on various fronts and cited examples of women posted in Siachen and driving modern fighter planes. Defence minister Rajnath Singh was also present at the interaction. Under the Agnipath scheme, announced on June 14 last year, the three services are recruiting youths between the age bracket of 17-and-half years and 21 years for four years with a provision to retain 25 per cent of them for 15 more (PTI)

## Centre discriminating against state over MGNREGA fund disbursement: Mamata

### CM laments lack of Central aid for Gangasagar Mela

SAGARDIGHI, JAN 16 /--/ Chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday alleged that the BJP-led Union government was discriminating against the state over the disbursement of MGNREGA funds. Mamata claimed the Centre owes West Bengal Rs 6,000 crore for the scheme. "The Central government is not releasing MGNREGA funds to West Bengal. It owes us Rs 6,000 crore. BJP-ruled states, however, are getting funds for the 100 days' work scheme. "Why is West Bengal facing such discrimination despite being number one in MGNREGA implementation? We are running the scheme without any central assistance



The Central government is not releasing MGNREGA funds to West Bengal. It owes us Rs 6,000 crore. BJP-ruled states, however, are getting funds for the 100 days' work scheme. "Why is West Bengal facing such discrimination despite being number one in MGNREGA implementation? We are running the scheme without any central assistance

—Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee



would not impose any tax on the pilgrims. "Whatever we could, we did for the Gangasagar Mela. There's nothing to be worried about; we will generate funds as per our capability... I will not impose tax on pilgrims, but I will definitely try to get funds for the mela. "You (Centre) cannot just decide on not giving funds and then stop us, too, from sourcing it from elsewhere," she said. Earlier this month, the chief minister had alleged that the Union government, despite requests, did not take any measure to help the state build a bridge over the Muri Ganga river for pilgrims to reach the island without hassle. "The Central government provides huge funds for the Kumbh Mela. They bear the entire expenses, but Bengal gets nothing for the Gangasagar Mela. I will request the Centre again to declare the event a 'national fair'," she had said during her visit to the island. (PTI)



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at an event at SSKM Hospital, on the occassion of the IPGME&R-SSKM's foundation day on Monday —Photo: Shyamal Maitra

## I-T targeted Bengal MLA as he is TMC leader: CM

SAGARDIGHI, JAN 16 /--/ Days after the seizure of a large amount of money from properties linked to West Bengal MLA Jakir Hossain during Income Tax raids, chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday said he was targeted because he is a Trinamool Congress leader. Mamata also claimed that Hossain, the MLA of Jangipur in Murshidabad district, has been framed. An amount of Rs 11 crore in cash was seized from at least 20 properties linked to Hossain in Kolkata, New Delhi and Murshidabad during the I-T raids on January 11 and 12. "Jakir is a 'bidi' industrialist. Around 20,000 people work for him. Will he be paying them through bank transactions? How many bidi workers have bank accounts? "Jakir is facing this situation because he is a TMC worker. Central agencies are selectively targeting TMC leaders. There were attempts to kill Jakir. A conspiracy is being hatched against him," the chief minister said. Mamata was addressing an administrative review meeting at Sagardighi in Murshidabad district. Hossain had earlier claimed that the seized money was meant for paying salaries of his employees. In an apparent reference to Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari, who was looking after party affairs in Murshidabad when he was with the Trinamool Congress, she said, "It's my bad luck that someone who was entrusted

with the responsibility of this district is now selectively directing central agencies to the homes of TMC leaders." She said CBI, ED or I-T raids should first be conducted on the residences of BJP leaders. The TMC supremo also criticised the "illegal" arrest of party spokesperson Saket Gokhale by Gujarat Police from Banga Bhavan in New Delhi last week. Alleging that a team of Gujarat Police, along with their Delhi counterparts, entered Banga Bhavan sans permission and took away CCTV footage, Banerjee said she will direct chief secretary H K Dwivedi to take legal action from now on if someone enters the state government-owned property without proper permission. "A few days ago, one of our party workers for social networks was illegally arrested by Gujarat Police from Banga Bhavan. He was earlier arrested in Gujarat and Rajasthan," she said.

"You have seized the entire CCTV footage from Banga Bhavan where governors, judges and journalists put up. Even I stay there sometimes when I visit Delhi. Who gave you the right to seize the footage? Where did you get the audacity to do it?" Mamata said. TMC national spokesperson Saket Gokhale was arrested by Gujarat Police for the third time in the last one month. Gokhale, who was arrested in a case related to the alleged misuse of money collected through crowd-funding, has got bail twice. (PTI)

## In MP's presence, Pradhan, Ward Members of GP...

From page-1  
The GP Member, Ms. Reshma and Ms. C P Maimuna and Social Workers, Mr P K Abdul Gafoor and Mr. Shabaz also joined the Congress party today. These leaders were welcomed in the Congress Party by the Member of Parliament with open hearts. Mr. Sharma expressed hope that the newly joined members will continue to work for the betterment and welfare of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

## Advocate Sheela Chakarborty...

From page-1  
held at Hotel 5 Star Redision Blue, New Delhi. The International Human Rights Crime Control Organization has organized the award ceremony under the Chairmanship of Pt. MohitNavani, Brand Ambassador.



## Islamic State claims church bombing in east Congo; 14 dead

KASINDI, JAN 16 /--/ Islamic extremists claimed responsibility for a bombing of a church in eastern Congo as authorities said on Monday that the toll from Sunday's attack had risen to at least 14 dead. The Islamic State group and its Aamaq news outlet issued statements saying that its militants had planted an explosive device inside the Pentecostal church in Kasindi and detonated it while people were praying. "Let the Congolese forces know that their continued attacks on the Mujahideen will only bring them more failure and losses," the group said in its statement. The extremists claimed the bomb killed 20 Christians. Congolese authorities put the toll on Monday at 14 dead and at least 63 wounded. The injured were evacuated to Beni General Hospital by the UN peacekeeping mission known as



MONUSCO, authorities said. Violence has wracked eastern Congo for decades as more than 120 armed groups and self-defense militias fight for land and power. Nearly 6 million people are internally displaced, and hundreds of thousands are facing extreme food insecurity, according to the UN. Fighters with the Allied Democratic Forces, a rebel organisation which is believed to have links to the the Islamic State group, have carried out several attacks in Kasindi, which is located on the border with Uganda. Troops from Uganda's army have deployed to eastern Congo to try to stem the violence, but the attacks have increased and spread. ADF attacks since April have killed at least 370 civilians and involved the abduction of several hundred more, a report by the United Nations last month said. (AP)

## South Korea Prez, in UAE, backs return to nuclear power

ABU DHABI, JAN 16 /--/ South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said on Monday that his nation's efforts to be carbon neutral by 2050 would rely in part on returning to nuclear power, even though his predecessor had tried to move away from atomic power. Yoon's comments at a summit in the United Arab Emirates, made in front of the country's leader, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, served to underline Seoul's commitment to nuclear power as it works to finish the Arabian Peninsula's first atomic power plant. That could see South Korea in line for lucrative maintenance contracts and future projects in the UAE, which Seoul has grown closer to over recent years. "If our two countries join efforts in clean energy development it will not only enhance our two countries energy security but also will contribute to global energy market stability," Yoon said in an address at Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week. The UAE also promises to be carbon neutral by 2050 a target that remains difficult to assess and one that the Emirates still has not fully explained how it will reach. The USD 20 billion Barakah nuclear power plant, Seoul's first attempt to build atomic reactors abroad, will one



Yoon Suk Yeol

day account for nearly a quarter of all of the Emirates' power needs. Already, Yoon's four-day trip the UAE has seen a promise from Sheikh Mohammed to invest some USD 30 billion in the country. Heavyweight business leaders from Hyundai, Samsung, and other companies also are taking part in the state visit. During his trip, Yoon also visited South Korean special forces stationed in the United Arab Emirates, a murky deployment that grew out of Seoul's deal over the nuclear power plant. The Akh unit is comprised of some 150 troops. "The UAE is our brother nation.... This isn't a foreign country called the UAE this right here, is your country," a hawkish Yoon told the gathered forces. Both he and his wife, who accompanied him on the trip, wore desert fatigues. "The security of our brother nation is our security. The enemy of the

UAE, its most-threatening nation, is Iran, and our enemy is North Korea ... We are in a very similar situation with the UAE," he said. Yoon's comments comes as the Emiratis have been trying to hedge in its relationship with Iran, a major business partner. The UAE also is home to around 3,500 American troops at Al Dhafra Air Base, a naval outpost in Fujairah and other locations. Already, the Emiratis have paid USD 3.5 billion for the Cheongung II, or "Heaven's Bow," surface-to-air missile system from South Korea to protect itself against aerial threats. Emirati officials have grown increasingly concerned about protecting their airspace after being targeted in long-range drone attacks by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels drones likely built by or with Tehran's help. South Korea has found itself squeeze by the tensions over Iran's collapsed nuclear deal with world powers. Billions of dollars in Iranian funds remain in Seoul, frozen by American sanctions. Iran held a South Korean oil tanker for months in 2021 amid the dispute. Yoon's wife, Kim Keon Hee, had a different question for the troops, however. She asked if the soldiers had seen foxes in the Emirati desert. (AP)

## UK govt may veto Scotland's gender self-recognition law

LONDON, JAN 16 /--/ The British government is considering blocking a new law that makes it easier for people in Scotland to legally change their gender a move that would spark conflict with transgender rights advocates and the nationalist Scottish administration in Edinburgh. The Financial Times reported Monday that Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative administration was set to veto the Scottish law. The government said no decision has been made but that it had concerns about the law, "particularly around safety issues for women and children." The law approved by the Scottish parliament last month allows people age 16 or older to change the gender designation on their identity documents by self-declaration, removing the need for a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria. It also cuts the time trans people must live in

a different expressed gender before the change is legally recognised, from two years to three months for adults and to six months for people ages 16 and 17. The law sets Scotland apart from the rest of the United Kingdom, where a medical diagnosis is needed before individuals can transition for legal purposes. Several countries around the world have legalised gender self-recognition, including Argentina, Canada, New Zealand, Denmark and Iceland. Last month Spain's parliament approved a bill similar to Scotland's. The Scottish National Party-led government in Edinburgh says the new law will improve the lives of transgender people by allowing them to get official documents that correspond with their gender identities. Opponents claim it risks allowing predatory men to gain access to spaces intended for women, such as shelters for domestic abuse survivors. (AP)

# Global recession likely in 2023

## India may benefit from diversification of supply chains: WEF survey

DAVOS, JAN 16 /--/ A global recession is likely in 2023, but pressures on food, energy and inflation may be peaking, the World Economic Forum said on Monday in its Chief Economists Outlook survey. At the same time, some economies in the South Asia region, including Bangladesh and India, may bene?t from global trends such as a diversi?cation of manufacturing supply chains away from China, the report said. The WEF said globally businesses are expected to cut costs significantly in response to economic headwinds, but chief economists are optimistic about inflation and

strong balance sheets. A majority of the World Economic Forum's Community of Chief Economists expect to see geopolitical tensions continuing to shape the global economy, and anticipate further monetary tightening in the United States and Europe. Almost two-thirds of chief economists believe a global recession is likely in 2023; of which 18 per cent consider it extremely likely more than twice as many as in the previous survey conducted in September 2022. A third of respondents consider a global recession to be unlikely this year. There is, however, a strong consensus that the prospects

for growth in 2023 are bleak, especially in Europe and the US. All of the chief economists surveyed expect weak or very weak growth in 2023 in Europe, while 91 per cent expect weak or very weak growth in the US. In China, expectations of growth are polarised, with respondents almost evenly split between those who expect weak or strong growth. On inflation, the chief economists see significant variation across regions, with the proportion expecting high inflation in 2023, ranging from just 5 per cent for China to 57 per cent for Europe. "With two-thirds of chief

economists expecting a world-wide recession in 2023, the global economy is in a precarious position. The current high inflation, low growth, high debt and high fragmentation environment reduces incentives for the investments needed to get back to growth and raise living standards for the world's most vulnerable," WEF Managing Director Saadia Zahidi said. "Leaders must look beyond today's crises to invest in food and energy innovation, education and skills development, and in job-creating, high-potential markets of tomorrow. There is no time to lose," she added. (PTI)

# Ukraine strike deaths hit 40

## Russia seen preparing long war

KYIV, JAN 16 /--/ The death toll from a weekend Russian missile strike on an apartment building in the southeastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro has risen to 40, authorities said on Monday, as Western analysts pointed to indications the Kremlin was preparing for a drawn-out war in Ukraine after almost 11 months of fighting. About 1,700 people lived in the multi-story building, and search and rescue crews have worked nonstop since Saturday's strike to locate victims and survivors in the wreckage. The regional administration said 39 people have been rescued so far and 30 more remained missing. Authorities said at least 75 were wounded. The reported death toll made it the deadliest single attack on Ukrainian civilians since before the summer, according to The

Associated Press-Frontline War Crimes Watch project. Residents said the apartment tower did not house any military facilities. The European Union's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, called the strike, and others like it, "inhumane aggression" because it directly targeted civilians. "There will be no impunity for these crimes," he said in a tweet on Sunday. Asked about the strike on Monday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Russian military doesn't target residential buildings and suggested the Dnipro building was hit as a result of Ukrainian air defense actions. The strike on the building came amid a wider barrage of Russian cruise missiles across Ukraine. The Ukrainian military said on Sunday that it did not have the means to

intercept the type of Russian missile that hit the residential building in Dnipro. Fierce fighting continued to rage on Monday in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk province, where military analysts have said both sides are likely suffering heavy troop casualties. No independent verification of developments was possible. Donetsk and neighbouring Luhansk province make up the Donbas, an expansive industrial region bordering Russia that Russian President Vladimir Putin identified as a focus from the war's outset. Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Kyiv's forces there since 2014. The Russian and Belarusian air forces began a joint exercise Monday in Belarus, which borders Ukraine and served as a staging ground for Russia's

February 24 invasion of Ukraine. The drills are set to run through February 1, the Belarusian Defence Ministry said. Russia has sent its warplanes to Belarus for the drills. The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, reported signs of the Kremlin taking steps to turn its Ukraine invasion into "a major conventional war" after months of embarrassing military reversals. What Moscow calls "a special military operation" aimed to capture the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, within weeks and to install a Kremlin-friendly regime there, but Russian forces ultimately withdrew from around Kyiv, the think tank said. Then came a successful Ukrainian counteroffensive in recent months before the onset of winter slowed military advances. (AP)

## Germany's defence minister resigns amid Ukraine criticism

BERLIN, JAN 16 /--/ Germany's much-criticised defence minister announced her resignation on Monday, as her department steers the massive project of modernising the country's military and oversees expanding weapons deliveries to Ukraine. Christine Lambrecht said in a statement that she had submitted her resignation request to Chancellor Olaf Scholz, adding that "months of media focus on my person" had stood in the way of a factual debate about the military and Germany's security policy. "The valuable work of the soldiers and many people in my department must stand in the foreground," she said. There was no immediate word on a possible replacement. The 57-year-old has been defence minister since Scholz became chancellor in December 2021. Critics have long portrayed her as out of her depth but Scholz stood by her, describing her last month as "a first-class defence minister." Pressure on her mounted recently after an ill-judged New Year's video message. Lambrecht's resignation comes at a sensitive moment, as Scholz faces mounting pressure to make another significant step forward in German military aid to Ukraine by agreeing to deliver Leopard 2 battle tanks. Earlier this month, Germany agreed to provide 40 Marder armoured personnel carriers and a Patriot air defence missile battery to Kyiv. Germany has given Ukraine substantial support in recent months, including howitzers, Gepard self-propelled anti-aircraft guns and the first of four IRIS-T surface-to-air missile systems. But critics, some inside Germany's governing coalition, have long complained of Scholz's perceived hesitancy to step up aid. Lambrecht was overshadowed on the issue by the chancellor, who made most major announcements. Lambrecht was then Finance Minister Scholz's deputy before being appointed justice minister in 2019. She also was minister for families and

women in the closing months of then Chancellor Angela Merkel's government. She was respected in those roles but was widely viewed as one of the Scholz government's weakest links at the Defence Ministry. The notoriously unwieldy department has a history of diminishing ministers' reputations. Its importance increased with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. That prompted Scholz to announce a special 100 billion-euro (USD 108 billion) fund to upgrade the German military, the Bundeswehr, which has suffered for years from neglect and in particular from aging, poorly functioning equipment. Last month, Lambrecht dismissed suggestions that the government had been too slow to get going on its spending drive. She said officials have moved fast but that "such projects must be carefully negotiated this is tax money." The minister also drew criticism for hapless communication, starting with a January 2022 announcement that Germany would deliver 5,000 military helmets to Ukraine as "a very clear signal that we stand by your side." In April, she took her 21-year-old son along on a military helicopter flight, which became public when he posted a photo to Instagram that it turned out the minister had taken herself. Her ministry said she had applied for permission and paid the costs herself, but critics said it showed poor judgment. An amateurish New Year's video message on her own private Instagram account prompted new opposition calls for Lambrecht's departure and strained political allies' patience. It showed a barely audible Lambrecht speaking against a backdrop of loud New Year's Eve fireworks in a Berlin street. "A war is raging in the middle of Europe," she said. "And connected with that for me were a lot of special impressions that I was able to gain many, many meetings with interesting, great people." (AP)

## House GOP demands visitor logs in Biden classified docs case

WASHINGTON, JAN 16 /--/ Newly empowered House Republicans on Sunday demanded the White House turn over all information related to its searches that have uncovered classified documents at President Joe Biden's home and former office in the wake of more records found at his Delaware residence. "We have a lot of questions," said Rep. James Comer, chairman of the House Oversight and Accountability Committee. Comer, R-Ky, said he wants to see all documents and communications related to the searches by the Biden team, as well as visitor logs of the president's home in Wilmington, Delaware, from January 20, 2021, to present. He said the aim is to determine who might have had access to classified material and how the records got there.

The White House on Saturday said it had discovered five additional pages of classified documents at Biden's home on Thursday, the same day a special counsel was appointed to review the matter. In a letter Sunday to White House chief of staff Ron Klain, Comer criticised the searches by Biden representatives when the Justice Department was beginning to investigate and said Biden's "mishandling of classified materials raises the issue of whether he has jeopardised our national security." Comer demanded that the White House provide all relevant information including visitor logs by the end of the month. Appearing on CNN's "State of the Union," Comer referred to Biden's home as a "crime scene" though he acknowledged that it was not clear whether laws were broken. "My concern is that the special counsel was called for; but yet hours after that we still had the president's personal attorneys, who have no security clearance, still rummaging around the president's residence, looking for things I mean that would essentially be a crime scene, so to speak," Comer said. While the US Secret Service provides security at the president's private residence, it does not maintain visitor logs, agency spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said Sunday. "We don't independently maintain our own visitor logs because it's a private residence," Guglielmi said. He added that the agency does screen visitors to the president's properties but doesn't maintain records of those checks.

The White House confirmed that Biden has not independently maintained records of who has visited his residence since he becoming president. "Like every President in decades of modern history, his personal residence is personal," White House spokesman Ian Sams said. "But upon taking office, President Biden restored the norm and tradition of keeping White House visitors logs, including publishing them regularly, after the previous administration ended them." Indeed, President Donald Trump's administration announced early in his presidency that they wouldn't release visitor logs out of "grave national security risks and privacy concerns of the hundreds of thousands of visitors annually," Democrat Barack Obama's administration initially fought attempts by Congress and conservative and liberal groups to obtain visitor records. But after being sued, it voluntarily began disclosing the logs in December 2009, posting records every three to four months. A federal appeals court ruled in 2013 that the logs can be withheld under presidential executive privilege. That unanimous ruling was written by Judge Merrick Garland, who is now serving as Biden's attorney general. Asked about Comer's request for logs and communications regarding the search for documents, Sams responded: "I would simply refer you to what Congressman Comer himself told CNN this morning: At the end of the day, my biggest concern isn't the classified documents to be honest with you." That says it all. (PTI)

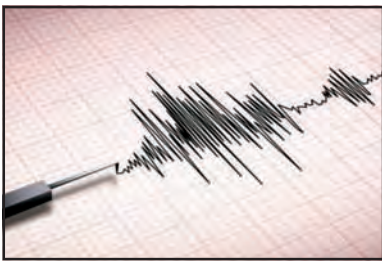
## SHORTTAKES

### US man found guilty of death of 5-year-old Indian-origin girl

HOUSTON, JAN 16 /--/ A 35-year-old man has been found guilty in the 2021 killing of a five-year-old Indian-origin girl in the US state of Louisiana. A stray bullet struck Mya Patel's head on March 20, 2021, when she was playing in her motel room in Shreveport. She was rushed to a hospital but passed away after battling for three days. A District Judge found Joseph Lee Smith guilty of manslaughter last week in connection with Patel's death, according to the Shreveport Times. During Smith's trial on January 13, it was found that on the day of the fatal shooting, Smith got into an altercation with another man in the parking lot of a motel which was owned and operated at that time by Vimal and Snehal Patel, who lived in a ground-floor unit with Mya and a younger sibling. Smith fired a 9-mm handgun at the man, but the bullet missed its intended target and struck Mya in the head before grazing her mother. Smith will return to court on February 27. He faces a prison sentence of up to 40 years at hard labour for the manslaughter conviction, and up to 10 years in prison, and/or a fine of up to USD 5,000 for the aggravated battery conviction, the report said. He also faces up to 40 years in prison and/or a fine of up to USD 100,000 for the obstruction conviction, it said. (PTI)

### Strong earthquake shakes western Indonesia, no tsunami alert

JAKARTA, JAN 16 /--/ A strong undersea earthquake shook western Indonesia Monday morning. But there were no immediate reports of serious damage or casualties. The magnitude 6.0 earthquake was centred 48 kilometers (30 miles) southeast of Singkil, a coastal district in Aceh province at a depth of 48 kilometers (30 miles), the US Geological Survey said. No tsunami alert was issued by Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency. Indonesia, a vast archipelago of more than 270 million people, is frequently hit by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions because of its location on the "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin. A magnitude 5.6 earthquake on November 21 killed at least 331 people and injured nearly 600 in West Java's Cianjur city. It was the deadliest in Indonesia since a 2018 quake and tsunami in Sulawesi killed about 4,340 people. In 2004, an extremely powerful Indian Ocean quake set off a tsunami that killed more than 230,000 people in a dozen countries, most of them in Indonesia's Aceh province. (AP)





# Kohli credits throwdown specialists for making 'big difference' to his batting

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 16 /- /- Indian run-machine Virat Kohli has credited the team's throwdown trio of D Raghavendra, Nuwan Seneviratne and Dayanand Garani for making a "big difference" to his batting.

The throwdown specialists use a sidearm, a cricketing equipment in the shape of a long spoon, to hurl the ball at high speed (in the range of 140-150kmph) to test the batters at nets.

"All three of them have given us world-class practice every time we play. They challenge us in the nets like any 145 or 150kmph pace bowlers. They always try to get us out and make sure that they test us regularly," Kohli told young Indian opener Shubman Gill in an interaction on BCCI.tv after the third and final ODI against Sri Lanka here. "At times, it feels very intense. For me that has been the difference in my career, to be very honest.... From where I was as a cricketer before I started getting this kind of practice to where I am today." Karnataka's Raghavendra, who is fondly known as 'Raghu' joined the BCCI from the National Cricket Academy, and was the first to join Team India. He would regularly give throwdowns to batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar and former Indian captain MS Dhoni. India then hired left-handed Sri Lankan Seneviratne in 2018 to help them prepare for left-arm pacers. A civic volunteer in Kolkata Police, Dayanand, who was with Kings XI Punjab, was roped in by Team India after Raghu tested positive for COVID-19 in 2020 and has become a permanent support staff since then. "A lot of credit has go to these



guys, who have given us practice regularly and their contribution has been unbelievable. You guys should remember their names and faces because, behind our success, a lot of effort has been put in by these guys," Kohli said. Gill, who was interviewing Kohli, was quick to add: "These three combined would have had 1200 to 1500 wickets. They prepare us for all

kinds of conditions heading into the match." India thrashed Sri Lanka by 317 runs in the final ODI to sweep the series 3-0, with Kohli notching two hundreds from three matches.

Terming it an ideal start to the ODI World Cup year, Kohli said: "It's been a great start. It's been a while since I started the year like this... getting a hundred and

then scoring two hundreds in the series and also becoming the Man of the Series." "I am just happy that in the World Cup year, I am able to start like this, and I know I can be consistent. When I start like this, and I start feeling confident, then things usually go well," he said. "The team is gelling well as a batting unit, you guys have been phenomenal at the top." Kohli went on to congratulate Gill for scoring his first century at home as the youngster converted his start to make a sublime 116 off 97 balls. "Congratulations for your first hundred in India. You deserved to get one in the first match. Today also you played phenomenally well and many more at home and away will come in the future." "I really enjoyed batting with Shubman. We haven't batted for very long many times. But today was the day where we had a good partnership and it really helped the team as well," said Kohli. The duo shared 131 runs for the second wicket as India posted a massive 390/5 before skittling out Sri Lanka for 73. "It was disappointing to get out in the first ODI. I was looking to go big in that match, but unfortunately, nahi ho paaya (could not). "In Kolkata too, I was playing well but failed to convert my start. Aaj yahi tha ki agar start milta hai to lamba jaane ki koshish karunga (Today I just wanted to take it deep). I have felt in Test matches as well that I left a bit of a run there." Crediting Kohli for motivating him and changing the tempo of the match, Gill said: "While we were in the middle, you told me that today I am going to score big and you changed the rhythm right from the word go." (PTI)

## GAME NOTES

### IPL disappointment last year behind my success in white-ball cricket in new year: Siraj

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JAN 16 /- /- India pacer Mohammed Siraj has said the disappointment of not being able to perform in the previous edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) pushed him to focus more on white-ball cricket, which is paying rich dividends now. The 28-year-old bowler returned with superb figures of 4 for 32 from his 10 overs to bundle out Sri Lanka for 73 in 22 overs as India won the match by a massive 317 runs here on Sunday. Siraj, who was retained by Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) ahead of the 2022 season, had only nine wickets in 15 matches with an economy of more than 10 runs per over. Siraj said the transformation has come about because he started focussing on the execution of line and length in white-ball cricket following the 2022 IPL disappointment. "When the IPL season went bad for me, I started focussing on white-ball cricket. I worked on it and grew in confidence. I stopped worrying about how my performance would go which was not the case earlier." Siraj also said the beauty of bowling with a wobbled seam lies in its unpredictability. So much so that he even doesn't know how much the ball will do after pitching. (PTI)

### Brothers in arms: Sibling support in times of hard days

ROURKELA, JAN 16 /- /- There's a saying that 'a brother is better than 1000 friends' and that is reflected in the Cunill siblings in the Spanish team which is battling to remain in contention for a quarterfinal berth in the ongoing hockey World Cup here. Pau Cunill and Pepe Cunill are providing each other with emotional support after Spain slumped to 0-2 defeat to India in their opener last week. The same is the case of the siblings in the Wales team -- Gareth Furlong and Rhodri Furlong, who lost their second match on Sunday to be virtually out of the tournament. In Bhubaneswar, the Grambusch brothers -- Mats and Tom -- are in a better position as their German team beat Japan 3-0 in their campaign opener. "To have someone from your family playing alongside you during such a big tournament like the World Cup is a big support emotionally and otherwise. You can rely on him for anything, for moral support or boosting confidence," Pau said. The 23-year-old Pau is one-and-a-half years older than Pepe and they have been inseparable since their childhood. They also play together for the same club in Spain -- Athletic Terrassa. (PTI)



## "Humbled and grateful": Rishabh Pant's first social media post after car crash



NEW DELHI, JAN 16 /- /- Star India wicket-keeper batter Rishabh Pant on Monday took to Twitter to thank his fans and well-wishers for their wishes as he continues to recover from a horrific car crash he met with in late December last year. Pant also thanked the Board of Control for Cricket in India, its secretary Jay Shah and the government authorities, alongside the team of doctors and physios, who played a significant role in helping him after his accident. This is Pant's first social media post since the car crash. "I am humbled and grateful for all the support and good wishes. I am glad to let you know that my surgery was a success. The road to recovery has begun and I am ready for the challenges ahead. Thank you to the @BCCI, @JayShah & government authorities for their incredible support," Pant wrote on Twitter. "From the bottom of my heart, I also would like to thank all my fans, teammates, doctors and the physios for your kind words and encouragement. Looking forward to see you all on the field," he added. From the bottom of my heart, I also would like to thank all my fans, teammates, doctors and the physios for your kind words and encouragement.

## Healy predicts India to win Border-Gavaskar trophy 2-1 if they don't produce 'unreasonable wickets'

MELBOURNE, JAN 16 /- /- Former wicketkeeper-batter Ian Healy has predicted a 2-1 win for India in the four-Test series against Australia beginning at Nagpur on February 9, provided the hosts don't prepare "unreasonable wickets". The two side will play four Tests for the Border-Gavaskar trophy with the series extremely crucial for India, as the World Test Championship (WTC) final spot is at stake. "They've (India) got a good team but I'm not too scared of their spinners unless they produce unreasonable wickets," Healy was quoted as saying by SEN on Monday. "If they produce unreasonable wickets like they did half the series last time (we won't win), two wickets were just terrible, unfair, spinners jumping over your head on day one.

"So that type of thing they will play better on than we will, but if they get flat wickets that India used to put out, nice flat batting wickets and bowlers have to work really hard, I think we can do it. But (my prediction is) 2-1 India, if (Mitchell) Starc's unavailable in the first Test," added Healy. The Australian pace-bowling stalwart will likely miss the first Test against India due to a finger injury to his bowling hand, which he sustained

during the second Test against South Africa recently. "My worry for him (Starc) not playing the first Test is that you don't have a lot of time to get the



bowling in that you're going to need in the second, third and fourth Test," opined Healy. "Starc mightn't be

him. "Our best players for mine, Pat Cummins and Steve Smith will be our stars," added Healy. (PTI)

## India Open: Sindhu, Sen among title contenders at India Open

NEW DELHI, JAN 16 /- /- The country's top shuttlers, including reigning champion Lakshya Sen and double Olympic medalist PV Sindhu, will look to keep their date with destiny as they will be title contenders in at least three of the five events when the India Open Super 750 begins here on Tuesday.

Indian badminton never had this good with as many as three players -- Sindhu (7), Sen (10), HS Prannoy (8) in singles world's top 10 and the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty at world No. 5 -- all coming into the season with loads of success last year. While seventh seed Sen and Satwik-Chirag, seeded fifth, are entering the USD 900,000 event as defending champions, Sindhu and world No. 13 Kidambi Srikanth are also former champions. However, the past results will count for little as all the big stars of world badminton will be pitted against each other -- some of them in the opening round itself -- during the upgraded version of India's flagship event. Sen and Prannoy, two most prominent figures of Indian men's singles in 2022, will engage in yet another slugfest in the opening round with the younger of the two hoping to return the favour this time after last week's opening round reversal in Kuala Lumpur. Sindhu's return after a long injury lay-off at the Malaysia Open was spoilt by long-time nemesis Spain's Carolina Marin, who herself is on a comeback trail having sustained two ACL injuries in both her knees in the last few years. This week, it will be Thailand's Supanida Katethong who will stand in her way in the first round and Sindhu will hope to find her sharpness in attack and

strength in defence to avoid any hiccup, having lost to her in the last edition. The former world champion, who has been out of action due to a heel injury since the Commonwealth Games in August, is likely to face a potential quarter-final clash against Olympic champion Chen Yufei of China. Satwik and Chirag will be brimming with confidence after a semifinal finish at the Super 1000 event last week as they begin their men's doubles campaign against Denmark's Jeppe Bay and Lasse Molhede, ranked No. 31 in

boost her confidence after another injury-ravaged 2022. Young guns Malvika Bansod and Aakarshi Kashyap will have their task cut out against Thailand's world No. 11 Busanan Ongbamrungphan and world No. 24 Beiwen Zhang of the US in the opening round of what will be their first appearance at the Super 750 level. Among other Indians, Dhruv Kapila and MR Arjun will be missing in action due to an injury but Krishna Prasad G and Vishnuvardhan Goud P will hope for a good start when they square off against the Netherlands' Ruben Jille and Ties Van Der Lecq. In women's doubles, All England semi-finalists and Commonwealth Games bronze medallists Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand Pullela will meet France's Margot Lambert and Anne Tran in the opening round, while Ashwini Bhat K and Shikha Gautam will open against eighth seeds Pearly Tan and Thinaah Muralitharan of Malaysia. India's only entry in mixed doubles, Ishaan Bhatnagar and Tanisha Castro will face the Netherlands' Robin Tabeling and Selena Piek. Among international stars, Axelsen, who has lost just three matches in 2022, and Japan's Akane Yamaguchi, who has won four titles in 2022 including the All England, World Championships and World Tour Finals, will be favourites for the crown following their title run in Malaysia. All eyes will also be on the next-gen shuttlers -- Japan's new sensation Kodai Naraoka, Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia, former world champion Loh Kean Yew and Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn. (PTI)

the world. The Indian duo is likely to face a real test in a potential quarter-final clash against top seeds Takuro Hoki and Yugo Kobayashi of Japan. However, no one has a tougher task at hand than former world No. 1 Srikanth, who will open against reigning Olympic and two-time world champion Viktor Axelsen, who has extended his record-breaking winning streak by retaining the Malaysia title on Sunday. London Olympics bronze medallist Saina Nehwal, a former winner of the India Open, will begin her campaign against Denmark's Mia Blichfeldt, desperately hoping for a good run to



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