

MV Kalighat 'forgotten in anchorage near Cochin dockyard

Left without repair work past one month



ROOPA LALL

PORT BLAIR, JAN 2/--/At a time when the Department of Shipping Services under the UT administration is unable to cater to the growing demands of vessels in N&M Andaman as well as southern group of islands, anchorage of MV Kalighat near Cochin Shipyard for the past one month has raised a question mark on the professionalism of the Shipping department of the UT administration. According to sources, MV Kalighat, a 500 pax capacity vessel operated in

PASSING THE BUCK TO SHIRK RESPONSIBILITY

the Inter-Island route sailed from Port Blair on 25th November 2022, for undertaking the annual maintenance work and taking up necessary repair work in Cochin Dockyard. The vessel reached Cochin on 30th November 2022, and since then has been left in the anchorage with neither the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) showing interest in carrying out the repair work nor the Directorate of Shipping Services taking up the matter with the SCI urging them to take up the repair work on priority basis. Inducted in the shipping fleet of the Directorate of Shipping Services in

the year 2004, MV Kalighat is owned by Andaman & Nicobar Administration and the maintenance and operation part of the vessel is taken care by SCI. Since the vessel has not been docked in the Cochin Shipyard, no maintenance or repair work has been carried out over the past one month. The crew members have been complaining that due to lack of maintenance, bugs and rats can be seen roaming everywhere in the ships spoiling foodstuff. Out of the three Generator sets, only one is in working condition. Without functional air conditioners, the crew members have to face a lot of difficulties in living in the hot conditions inside the vessel. For the past one month movement of the crew members are restricted only within premises of the ship. Few of the crew are allowed to visit the Cochin jetty complex for purchasing drinking water and HSD. Crew members are of the opinion that if the Cochin dockyard is delaying the repair work, SCI should take up the general and engine maintenance work as well as repair work of outer parts of the ship. Meanwhile when contacted, the Director of Shipping Services told EOI that the Shipping department has nothing to say in this regard. The repairing and maintenance work of the vessel has to be carried out by the SCI. He further declined to dish out any further information about the vessel. "I am not the competent authority to pass on information on this subject. For any information, you should give a written request and after seeking permission from my superior authorities, I can provide information", said the Director. EOI thereafter contacted the Super of SCI, Mr. Sentil Kumar who too said that he cannot comment on this topic and told EOI to contact the SCI office at Mumbai.

F3 Ambience Shopping Mall inaugurated in city



ROOPA LALL

PORT BLAIR, JAN 2/--/Smt Kavita Uday Kumar, Chairperson, Port Blair Municipal Council on Sunday inaugurated F3 Ambience Shopping Mall at Gandhi market, Municipal Complex. Mr. Suman Bakshi, Regional Manager, SBI graced the function as the guest of honour. Speaking on the occasion, Smt Kavita Uday Kumar and Mr. Suman Bakshi, Regional Manager SBI extended their best wishes to Mr. Sanjay, the owner of the mall.

The Vice Chairperson, PBMC stated that with the opening of this mall unemployed local youth will get employment besides monthly rent for

the Municipal Council. More businessmen should come forward and start such ventures in municipal premises which will not only generate revenue for the civic body but will generate employment for the youth of the islands. Mr. M.S Sanjay, owner of F3 Ambience Mall while welcoming the chief guest and others said that the 3 Ambience Mall is his dream project. The mall is completely a family shopping mall and 80 people employed in this mall are from the islands itself.

This is a small initiative to do something good for the islands. The mall has a variety of products for all categories of customers, including a special play zone for the children.

Branded wears, cosmetics, groceries, play zone for kids, food court, family restaurant & coffee bar are main attractions of the mall

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India building permanent bunkers for BSF at Gujarat creek along Pak border

NEW DELHI, JAN 2 --/ For the first time, India is constructing "permanent vertical bunkers" of concrete to station BSF troops right at the strategically significant Sir Creek and 'Harami Nalla' marshy area along the India-Pakistan International Border in Gujarat, official sources said.

The Union home ministry has sanctioned a Rs 50-crore fund for the construction of eight multi-storeyed bunkers cum observation posts in this area along the Bhuj sector in view of the "constant infiltration of Pakistani fishermen and fishing boats in the area", the sources told news agency PTI. According to official data, the Border Security Force (BSF) apprehended 22 Pakistani fishermen and seized 79 fishing boats as well as heroin worth Rs 250 crore and charas worth Rs 2.49

crore from this region of Gujarat in 2022. While three pylon-shaped towers are coming up in the Sir Creek area, a 4,050 sq km marshy area between India and Pakistan, five such concrete structures will be constructed by the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) along the 'harami nalla' area spread across 900 sq km, sources said.

The top floor of each of the 42-foot high 'vertical bunkers' will have space for mounting surveillance gadgets and radars to keep an eye on the area that comprises serpentine estuaries. The rest two floors will have the capacity to house around 15 armed BSF personnel and their logistics, the officials said. According to officials, these bunkers are being erected in the Lakhpat Wari bet, Dafa bet and Samudra bet on the eastern side of the creek area, well within Indian territory. A

BSF contingent is providing armed protection to the labourers engaged by the CPWD to complete the construction of the three bunkers in the Sir Creek area by March. The ocean gets too turbulent from April and hence the work is going on at war footing, a senior BSF officer said.

The move to build the bunker came after then BSF Director General (DG) Pankaj Kumar Singh, during a tour of Union home minister Amit Shah to the Gujarat border in April last year, along with senior officers made a presentation that the creek area and the marshy water body between India and Pakistan were prone to infiltration and the BSF security apparatus was located way behind. The BSF said it requires eyes right at the front and for that to happen it needed a permanent base, a senior official privy to this meeting said. It was informed

during the presentation that the area is "very sensitive and holds enormous strategic significance" and hence the BSF needs some permanent bases right on the front as compared to the border posts that are currently located about 50-60 km from the creek area.

In order to "dominate" the creek areas, the BSF sends regular foot and boat patrols to keep vigil in the entire 85-km-long coastal region of Gujarat under its control, they said, adding that currently, it takes about five to six hours for troops to reach the border from their posts, on board speed boats or regular boats. The creek area has very inhospitable weather and terrain. The marshes are home to poisonous snakes and scorpions. BSF personnel have to move barefoot while undertaking patrols as one cannot walk with boots on in the swamp area, official

sources said. The three bunkers will be the first permanent structures in the area prone to tidal waves every four hours a day. Anything made of metal or any other item corrodes due to high salt content in the area, the officials said.

The BSF has been dominating this area for over six decades. Last year, Indian Air Force helicopters were pressed into service to help the BSF troops find some Pakistani fishermen who had intruded into the Indian side and were untraceable for some time. Sir Creek is a 98-km disputed territory between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch marshlands, which opens up into the Arabian Sea. It divides the Kutch region of Gujarat and the Sindh province of Pakistan. The two countries have been holding talks to resolve issues related to the border dispute here. (PTI)

Shah to visit 11 states this month as part of BJP's 'Lok Sabha Prawas' exercise

NEW DELHI, JAN 2 --/ Senior BJP leader and Union home minister Amit Shah will travel to as many as 11 states this month as part of his party's "Lok Sabha Prawas" programme, which is aimed at boosting its prospects in targeted parliamentary constituencies ahead of the general election in 2024.

Party sources said Shah will be in Tripura on January 5 and Manipur and Nagaland on January 6. He will be travelling to Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand on January 7

and Andhra Pradesh on January 8. The home minister will be in Uttar



Pradesh on January 16, in West Bengal on January 17 and at Hubli in Karnataka

on January 28. The home minister will be in the northern states of Haryana and Punjab on January 29, party sources said. A key election strategist for the ruling party, Shah has been central to the BJP's expansion under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership since 2014.

The party had earlier identified 160 seats, most of which it had lost in 2019, where it believes it can be in a winning position by strengthening its organisation and social base. (PTI)

Karnataka BJP MLA booked in trader suicide case, CM assures action as per law

BENGALURU, JAN 2 --/ Former Karnataka minister and BJP MLA Arvind Limbavali is among six people named in the FIR in connection with the death of a businessman, police said on Monday.

Pradeep (47) was found dead in his car at Nettigere near here on Sunday evening, they said, adding that he had allegedly shot himself in the head. He had purportedly left behind an eight-page death note that named Mahadevapura MLA Aravind Limbavali and five others, according to police. Limbavali is accused number 3 in the FIR, which also names -- Gopi K, Somaiah, Ramesh Reddy G, Jayarama Reddy, and Raghava Bhat. The case has been registered at Kaggalipura police station. The FIR is based on a complaint by Pradeep's wife along with the death note. Responding to a question on the case registered against Limbavali, chief minister Basavaraj Bommai said: "Action is being taken as per law... actions will follow in the future too in accordance with law."

According to the police, the death note pointed to the six accused for doing injustice to Pradeep, who has demanded for justice and that the persons should be punished. Pradeep is said to have invested about Rs 1.5 crore in an upcoming resort project involving Gopi, Somaiah and others near HSR Layout and was promised a stake, but was later allegedly cheated, police said. Limbavali is said to have tried to broker a compromise between them, and an agreement was reached a month ago to pay Pradeep his dues, but the latter did not receive all the money, they added.

Pradeep had gone to a resort in Nettigere along with his family on Saturday night to celebrate the New Year, police said. (PTI)



President Droupadi Murmu with Veer Naaris from Leh who participated in Capacity Building Tour organised by the Army, at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday

Mayawati thanks Rahul for Bharat Jodo Yatra invitation, Akhilesh wishes success

LUCKNOW, JAN 2 --/ Ahead of the resumption of the Bharat Jodo Yatra which is on a winter break, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati on Monday thanked Rahul Gandhi for inviting her to join the yatra.

In a tweet in Hindi, the BSP supremo said: "Best wishes for the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' and thanks to Rahul Gandhi for writing a letter to me to take part in the yatra." However, there is no information as to whether Mayawati will participate in the yatra. Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav on Monday thanked the former Congress president for inviting him to his 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' and wished it a success, even as the party said he will not be attending it. SP chief spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary said Akhilesh will not participate in the yatra, nor will any other leader from the party.

will enter Uttar Pradesh from the Loni border in Ghaziabad on January 3 afternoon and will halt for the night in Mavikala village in Baghpat. It will pass through Shamli in UP on January 4 and enter

expansion, where there is love, non-violence, emotions, co-operation and bonhomie -- the positive elements, which unite India. "Hope that this yatra achieves its aim of conserving this inclusive

going there." Senior UP Congress leader Nasimuddin Siddiqui, when contacted, told news agency PTI: "Rahul Gandhi ji had written a letter to Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday to be a part of the yatra." "I do not have any information on this," he added, when asked whether Akhilesh will be attending it. Meanwhile, in Ballia, the president of Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) Om Prakash Rajbhar told PTI: "A few days ago, I got the invitation for the Bharat Jodo Yatra of Rahul Gandhi, and former Union minister Salman Khurshid called me discussing this."

"The matter was discussed on Sunday with the party's office bearers, and it was decided that the party will not be a part of Bharat Jodo Yatra," Rajbhar said. The Bharat Jodo Yatra, led by Rahul, is currently on winter break and will resume on January 3. (PTI)



Haryana through Sanauli in Panipat on January 5 evening. In a letter addressed to Rahul, the former UP chief minister said: "Thanks for the invitation to the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' and wishes for the success of the 'Bharat Jodo' initiative." "India is a feeling which is beyond geographical

culture," the SP chief said in the missive he posted on Twitter. Chaudhary, when asked whether Akhilesh or any other SP leader will be going to the Yatra, told PTI, "Akhilesh will not participate in the yatra and there is nil possibility of any other leader of the party

Despite being educated unemployment rate among Kerala youth huge: Tharoor

KOTTAYAM, JAN 2 --/ Unemployment rate among the youth in Kerala is huge and there is a need to make the state more attractive for its younger generation to prevent them from going outside for jobs, Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram Shashi Tharoor said on Monday.

Tharoor, speaking at the inauguration of the 146th Mannam Jayanthi celebration at the Nair Service Society (NSS) headquarters at Perunna in Changanassery here, said unemployment among the youth in Kerala was 40 per cent in June 2022. Mannam Jayanthi is held to celebrate the birth

anniversary of NSS founder and social reformer Mannath Padmanabhan. Tharoor said only Jammu and Kashmir was in such a situation, but that was due to militancy problems there. "No other state is showing such concerning figures of unemployment among the youth. In other states those uneducated or unskilled are the ones lacking jobs. However, in Kerala everyone is literate, educated and has passed class 10, yet a lot of them do not have jobs," the Thiruvananthapuram MP said.

Tharoor said 13 lakh professional and technical job-seekers, including 9,000 medical graduates, were

registered as job-seekers in the southern state's employment exchange. Of the 3.5 lakh job-seekers, around 71 per cent have ITI certificates, he added. "This is the state of affairs in Kerala. Therefore, there is no doubt that the state needs to open its doors to bring in more investment. We need to create more employment opportunities," the Congress MP said. Tharoor said that a lot of youngsters are going outside the state for job opportunities and that should be seen as a loss for Kerala. "We must make Kerala more attractive for our young people," was a solution he offered.

Sukumaran Nair, the general secretary of NSS,

said during the event that when Tharoor came to contest polls from Thiruvananthapuram, he had called the latter 'Delhi Nair'. "To rectify that mistake we have invited him here for this event. According to me, there is no one more competent to inaugurate the celebrations," Nair said. The praise of Tharoor by Nair was welcomed by senior Congressman and Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly V D Satheesan. "I welcome any praise of a Congress leader by anyone here in Kerala," he told reporters. Satheesan had recently initially expressed reservations over the Thiruvananthapuram

MP's political outreach programmes in the southern state.

When the alleged rift between Satheesan and Tharoor was widely reported by the media, the LoP had refuted the same. In his speech on the occasion, the Congress MP also said Padmanabhan, who founded the NSS, had once observed that one Nair cannot see eye-to-eye with another. He said though the observation was made more than a century ago, he has witnessed it during his political career -- an apparent dig at a few fellow Congressmen from the Nair community. Interestingly, Satheesan also belongs to the Nair community. (PTI)

CHANDRAPUR, JAN 2 --/ Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president JP Nadda on Monday alleged that Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray "backstabbed" the BJP and compromised with his ideology for the sake of power, but got a befitting reply as a new government is now in place in Maharashtra. Nadda was addressing a 'Vijay Sankalp' rally in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district. The rally is part of the BJP's plan to win 18 "difficult" seats from Maharashtra in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, according to a party leader. Thackeray's party had snapped ties with long-term ally BJP after the 2019 Maharashtra Assembly polls. Thackeray later tied up with the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress to form the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in the state. In June last year, senior Sena leader Eknath Shinde led a revolt against the party leadership following which the Thackeray government collapsed. Shinde later became the chief minister with BJP's Devendra Fadnavis as his deputy.

Nadda said during the polls it was clearly mentioned that "Delhi mein Narendra... Maharashtra mein Devendra" and the Shiv Sena gave consent to it at that time. But, when the election results came out, they (Sena and Thackeray) "backstabbed us" for becoming the chief minister, the BJP president said. One should understand that in politics, power goes only towards the truth, he said, adding that the "unnatural alliance" (MVA) did not last long. "Thackeray for the greed of power backstabbed the BJP and supported those against whom former RSS Sarsangchalak Balasaheb Deoras fought all his life," Nadda claimed. He asked the BJP workers whether such people should be forgiven.

Thackeray compromised with his ideology for the sake of power and his government stopped the Ganesh Utsav and Dahi Handi programmes, the BJP national president claimed. Nadda further said Thackeray hurt the cultural sentiments of Maharashtra and stood with people who refused to understand the importance of the Indian culture in politics. But, they have got a "befitting reply" for everyone to see and a new government has been formed under the leadership of Eknath Shinde and Devendra Fadnavis, he said. Nadda said Shinde and Fadnavis were taking Maharashtra towards development. He also targeted Thackeray over the incident of alleged lynching of three persons in Palghar district in April 2020.

"Uddhav, the son of Hindu Samrat (Sena founder Bal Thackeray), took a step back" by not handing over the probe into the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation under pressure from the Congress and NCP, he said. Further targeting the MVA, he claimed "three shops of corruption" had opened in Maharashtra. Nadda said the BJP is bringing "digital cleanliness" in politics with 'JAM' (Jandhan-Aadhaar-Mobile), and said the MVA is another 'JAM' which implies "jointly acquiring money". Nadda also referred to the BJP as 'DBT', facilitating "direct benefit transfer" (to people), and claimed the MVA was into "dealership-brokerage-transfer".

The BJP president also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has empowered women and farmers in the country with several welfare schemes. Nadda said he will do his best to strengthen the BJP, right from Kashmir to Kanyakumari (north to south) and from Kutch to Cuttack (west to east), but it will start from Chandrapur district. He also offered prayers at the Mahakali temple in Chandrapur. Nadda was accompanied by Maharashtra minister Sudhir Mungantiwar, state BJP president Chandrashekhar Bawankule, National Commission for Backward Classes Chairman Hansraj Ahir and other party leaders. (PTI)

Negative Covid report must even for flyers to India transiting through China, 5 other nations

NEW DELHI, JAN 2 --/ A negative Covid report is a must for passengers transiting through China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand, irrespective of their originating countries, before landing at any Indian airport, the Union health ministry said Monday. In a letter to states on Monday, Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said that in the context of the evolving trajectory of Covid-19 cases in some countries, especially China, Singapore, Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Japan, the guidelines were revised and came into effect from January 1. A negative Covid report from the RT-PCR test is a must for passengers arriving in India from China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand from the first day of 2023. The test must be conducted within 72 hours of undertaking the journey to India and the negative report from the RT-PCR test has to be uploaded on the Air Suvidha portal before their departure. "This will also apply to transiting passengers through the countries (mentioned) irrespective of their originating countries before coming to any Indian Airport," Bhushan said in the letter. Accordingly, the ministry of civil aviation's Air Suvidha Portal has to be made operational for passengers on all international flights from these countries, with a provision to allow international travellers arriving in India to submit negative RT-PCR test reports as well as a self-declaration form on this portal. "This arrangement is in practice with effect from 10 am on Sunday, January 1, 2023," the letters said, adding the existing practice of post-arrival random testing of two per cent of travellers irrespective of the port of departure shall continue. (PTI)

Benefits under PMKSN scheme

PORT BLAIR, JAN 2/--/ The Department of Agriculture is implementing PradhanMantriKisanSammanNidhi Scheme in A & N Islands. The Department in coordination with the PRIs are working in tandem in all the Zones of A&N Islands continuously from the day of launch of the scheme for its better reach to the farmers.

To make the integrated platform available in the country to assist in benefit transfer, a platform named PM-KISAN Portal was launched for uploading the farmers' details at a single web portal in a uniform structure. Accordingly, a facility is provided in PM-KISAN portal in which any grievances related to PM-KISAN scheme can be submitted. The Department of Agriculture has requested the farmers to submit their grievances in PM-KISAN Portal/ Mobile App and they can also contact the respective Agriculture Extension staff/ Agriculture office.

It is to mention that there are various factors owing to which, the farmer does not receive the benefit of PM-KISAN. The main reason being mismatch in the spelling of the name in the bank account and the name entered on the Aadhaar Card due to which farmers fail to get the money. To facilitate farmers, the Govt. of India has decided to undertake e-KYC verification of all the eligible registered farmer-beneficiaries of PM-KISAN Scheme for smooth transfer of benefits.

The e-KYC authentication of the beneficiaries can be done by both e-KYC OTP mode as well as e-KYC biometric mode. The e-KYC authentication of the beneficiaries through OTP mode can be done on PM-KISAN portal, free of cost by the beneficiaries or State functionaries. For e-KYC biometric authentication facility, the beneficiary may visit the nearest CSC. The CSC will charge for bio-metric authentication from each beneficiary. For any query/doubt related to e-KYC, the beneficiaries can also contact the concerned Zonal Agriculture Office/ Field functionaries of Agriculture Department.

Farmers have been advised to use only the official website of PM-KISAN portal and not to download any other App for e-KYC authentication.

As per the guidelines of the scheme, the following categories of beneficiaries of higher economic status are not eligible for benefit under the scheme:

- (a) All Institutional Land holders
- (b) Farmer families in which one or more of its members belong to following categories :

- *Former and present holders of constitutional posts
- *Former and present Ministers/ State Ministers and former/present Members of Lok Sabha/ Rajya Sabha/ State Legislative Assemblies/ State Legislative Councils, former and present Mayors of Municipal Corporations, former and present Chairpersons of District Panchayats.

- *All serving or retired officers and employees of Central/ State Government Ministries /Offices/ Departments and its field units Central or State PSEs and Attached offices /Autonomous Institutions under Government as well as regular employees of the Local Bodies (Excluding Multi Tasking Staff / Class IV/ Group D employees)

- *All superannuated/retired pensioners whose monthly pension is Rs.10,000/-or more(Excluding Multi-Tasking Staff / Class IV/ Group D employees) of above category b (3))

- *All Persons who paid Income Tax in last assessment year.

- *Professionals like Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Chartered Accountants, and Architects registered with Professional bodies and carrying out profession by undertaking practices.

Special lecture-cum-demonstration session at DBRAIT



PORT BLAIR, JAN 2/--/ As a part of Industry Institute Interaction (III) of DBRAIT, a special lecture-cum-demonstration session was held on 31st Dec 2022.

Dr. AmithbhSaraf, Director Aeronautical Development Agency, Ministry of Defence was the resource person.

Dr. AmithbhSaraf is leading the Integrated Flight Control System directorate as Technology Director. He is a lead designer for flight control laws for all variants of Indian Light Combat Aircraft. He designed the special control law modes for ski jump, landing and bolter of LCA Navy to operate from carrier ships. He also led the air data systems algorithm design and parameter identification activities for LCA.

Dr. Amitabh Saraf on his topic "Professional Ethics" through the presentation shared his experience on various Light Combat Aircraft that was developed by his organization. He also spoke about how pleasure in the job puts perfection in work i.e. how professional excellence starts with the right training and environment, an individual may reach excellence in his work. He also demonstrated the breathing technique of

Pranayam which fills the body with positive energy and boosts the working capacity of individuals who practice it regularly. He concluded by mentioning the four essential traits called WRIST in short which stands for wisdom, responsibility, Inner strength, truthfulness and honesty.

Earlier to this, he was introduced by Shri Anil Srivastava, Chief Engineer and member GayatriPariwar, Port Blair. Mr. Alok Bora, Conducted and proposed the vote of thanks.

TO LET

Andaman Moplah Service Organization (AMSO) invites applications and proposals from individual/groups/companies/societies for renting out of space available for rent in the newly constructed administrative building of AMSO, having an area 2280sqft (Apprx) of the organization situated at Kanyapuram, Wimberlygunj under South Andaman.

For more information and collection of application, please contact:-

N. Yousuf (president) - 9434281211/9933261441

Abdul Siddique (General Secretary) - 9434283333/9932084444.

MPL 35th National Under-9 Chess Championship concludes



PORT BLAIR, JAN 2/--/ The MPL 35th National Under-9 Chess Championship-2022 which began on 25th December 2022 at Indore, Madhya Pradesh, concluded today successfully.

More than 300 players across India participated in the prestigious event in which 3 young budding chess players, (two Boys and one Girl) from Andaman& Nicobar Is-

lands took part in the championship and did quite well. J S Virat, a student of class IV of VKV lamblaine is the top scorer from A & N Islands who scored five and a half points with five wins and a draw while Rohan Singh, a student of class III and Parnita, a student of class IV, Carmel Sr. Sec. School Port Blair scored 4 points each with four wins.

Field day on vegetable cultivation (Tomato) at RS-Minicoy



PORT BLAIR, JAN 2/--/ Regional Station, Minicoy of ICAR-CIARI Port Blair, conducted a "Field Day on vegetable cultivation (tomato) under coconut plantation" for the tribal farmers on 30th December 2022. Speaking on the inaugural occasion, the Chief Guest Dr. Shrikant R. Tapdiya, the Deputy Collector of Minicoy expressed his happiness on the ICAR-CIARI technologies, scientific tomato farming and nutritious kitchen garden. A total of 20 participants including farmers and farm women from Bodouthiri, Rammedu, and South Bandaram villages were attended the field day, in which they were exposed to

a scientific tomato cultivation at the institute farm. The scientific team comprising of Dr. Gladston Y. and Dr. Ajina S. M. interacted with the farmers and impressed upon the package of practices for organic tomato cultivation under coconut plantation. As tomato is one of the highly demanded vegetable in Lakshadweep islands, the farmers were highly fascinated by this potential crop and its farming, which can be successful to earn high returns in short period of time. A total of 61 kg fully matured tomato were harvested in the presence of Deputy Collector, Minicoy. The vegetable kits (Tomato), and tomato seedlings

(30 nos) distributed among the farmers in the presence of officials of Department of Agriculture, Minicoy Unit Shri. Kunjikoya. A total of 15 women and 5 men farmers participated. Dr. Gladston Y. Convener and Co-Convenors Mrs. Ajina S.M., Coordinator, Shri Shareefudeen Hassan&Shri Arif M.I., Dr.S.K. Zamir Ahmed, Nodal Officer, Lakshadweep coordinated the overall conduct of programme under the Chairmanship of Dr. Eaknath B. Chakurkar, Director, ICAR-CIARI, Port Blair.

21st annual athletic meet celebrated at Crescent Sr Sec School, Wimberlygunj



PORT BLAIR, JAN 2/--/ Crescent Sr. Sec. School, Wimberlygunj celebrated its 21st Annual Athletic Meet - 2022 at Wimberlygunj on 29th December 2022. The Principal Mr. P Abdul Rehman accorded a warm welcome to the chief guest, Mr. GyanSheelDubey, Deputy Education Officer, Wimberlygunj and guest of honour Mr. V Ranjith Kumar, Assistant Director (Sports), along with School Managing Committee Members and parents.

The chief guest declared the Sports meet open by hoisting the sports meet flag. More than 750 students showcased their intrinsic talents in various events that included a March Past, Step aerobics and cultural activities.

In the closing ceremony, Mrs. Padmavathi, Pramukh, PanchayatSamiti, Ferrargunj Tehsil, along with other PRI members of Wimberlygunj and Kanyapuram Panchayat were felicitated and honoured all the athletes with trophies, medals and prizes for their achievement in different events. The guests commended the sporting talent of the students and achievement of the school in various sports.

The sports meet was declared closed by Mrs. Padmavathi, Pramukh, PanchayatSamiti, FerrarGunj by lowering the Sports Meet Flag. Mr. N. Abdul Salam, Member, CPS Management Committee accorded Vote of thanks.

IGNOU registration last date extended

PORT BLAIR, JAN 2/--/ The last date for Re-Registration for 2nd year/3rd / 4th semester or 3rd year/ 5th /6th semester in Indira Gandhi National Open University's for January 2023 session, is extended

upto 15th January, 2023. For online Re-registration, the students are advised to log on to <https://onlinerr.ignou.ac.in/> for payment of 2nd year/3rd / 4th semester or 3rd year/ 5th /6th semester fees

through online. For more details, visit IGNOU Website - www.ignou.ac.in or contact IGNOU Regional Centre, Port Blair over Phone: 03192-242888, 03192-230111 or Email: rcportblair@ignou.ac.in.

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My method is to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say, and then to say it with the utmost levity

George Bernard Shaw

Int'l year of millets kicks in

A series of millet-centric promotional activities have been lined up by the government across the country as the International Year of Millets (IYM) kicks in. Union ministries, state governments and Indian embassies have been allocated a focussed month in 2023 to carry out various activities for the promotion of IYM and increase awareness about benefits of millets, which have been made an integral part of the G-20 meetings where delegates will be given a true millet experience through tasting, meeting farmers and interactive sessions with start-ups and FPOs. January is the focussed month for the Union Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs as well as state governments of Chhattisgarh, Mizoram and Rajasthan for conducting activities. The government has urged international organisations, academia, hotel industry, media, Indian diaspora, start-up communities, civil society, and all others in the millets value-chain to come forward and join hands to revive the forgotten glory of 'Miracle Millets' through the grand celebration of IYM. The Food Processing Industries ministry too will organise millet fair-cum-exhibitions in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, while food safety regulator FSSAI will organize 'Eat Right Melas' in Punjab, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Chhattisgarh, Mizoram and Rajasthan will carry out specific activities for sensitisation and promotion of IYM. The states will be conducting millet-centric activities including mahotsava/ melas and food festivals, training of farmers, awareness campaigns, workshops/ seminars, placement of hoardings and distribution of promotional material at various key locations in the state, etc. Other states that are organising similar activities in the month of January include Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Punjab.

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) and the Agriculture Ministry will be participating in a trade show in Belgium wherein a multi-stakeholder delegation will showcase the diversity of Indian millets. Moreover, Embassies of India across more than 140 countries will be conducting side events on IYM involving the Indian Diaspora through exhibition, seminars, talks, panel discussions, etc. The Indian embassy in Azerbaijan and Belarus will be conducting activities such as B2B meetings with the participation of local chambers, food bloggers, importers of food items and local restaurants etc. The High Commission of India in Abuja and Consulate General of India in Lagos, as part of promotion of IYM, have planned a Millets Food Festival and a Millets Food preparation competition in January. The Millets Food Festival would be held at the High Commission premises and provide stalls for preparation with invitees including both Nigerian dignitaries and Indian community. The Sports and Youth Affairs Ministry has planned 15 activities, which include engaging sports persons, nutritionists and fitness experts through video messages, conducting webinars on millets with leading nutritionists, dieticians and elite athletes, promotion amplification through Fit India App, etc. Cooked millets dish exhibitions/contests will be organised with the help of Indian diaspora and millet dishes will be served as part of the Republic Day celebrations. The agriculture ministry has taken a proactive multi-stakeholder engagement approach to achieve the aim of IYM 2023 and taking Indian millets globally.

Too many lives and livelihoods lost to extreme weather in 2022

We have faced several dramatic weather disasters which claimed far too many lives and livelihoods in 2022. From extreme floods to heat and drought, weather and climate disasters affected millions and cost billions, indicating that climate change has intensified this year, and in the next in 2023, the world would need greater preparedness to face it.

The Provisional State of the Global Climate in 2022, the full and final report of which would come out in March 2023, has said that the world has been on the warmest track for the last eight years despite the persistence of a cooling La Niña, now in its third year. This condition is fuelled by ever-rising greenhouse gas concentrations and accumulated heat in the atmosphere. Concentration of the three main greenhouse gases – carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide – reached record highs in 2021, with annual increase in methane concentration was the highest on record. Real time data from specific locations show levels of the three gases continued to increase in 2022. Though the global temperature figures would be released in mid-January 2023, the provisional report has indicated that the cooling impact will be short-lived and not reverse the long-term warming trend caused by record levels of heat trapping greenhouse gases in our atmosphere.

2022 would not be the warmest year on record, but will be fifth or sixth warmest, and will be the tenth successive year that temperatures have reached at least 1°C above pre-industrial levels – likely to breach the 1.5°C limit of the Paris Agreement of 2015. The year topped many national heat records throughout the world.

The pre-monsoon period was exceptionally hot in India and Pakistan. Pakistan had its hottest March and hottest April on Record. The heat caused a decline in crop yields. This combined with the banning of wheat exports and restrictions on rice exports in India

REFLEX ACTION

Dr. Gyan Pathak

are threatening the international food markets and posing risks to countries already affected by shortage of staple foods.

India and Pakistan experienced soaring heat in March and April. China had the most extensive and long-lasting heatwave since national records began and the second-driest summer on record. Parts of the northern hemisphere were exceptionally hot and dry. A large area centred around the central-northern part of Argentina, as well as in southern Bolivia, central Chile, and most of Paraguay and Uruguay, experienced record-breaking temperatures during two consecutive heatwaves in late November and early December 2022. Record breaking heatwaves have been observed in China, Europe, North and South America. The long-lasting drought in the Horn of Africa threatens a humanitarian catastrophe. While large parts of Europe sweltered in repeated episodes of extreme heat, the United Kingdom hit a new national record in July, when the temperature topped more than 40°C.

Rains have also broken records. The Indian Monsoon onset was earlier and withdrawal later than normal this year. The majority of Indian subcontinent received high rainfall which flooded several parts of the region. There was significant flooding in India at various stages during the monsoon, particularly in the north-east in June, with over 700 deaths reported from flooding and landslides, and a further 900 from lightning. Floods also triggered 663000 displacements in the Indian state of Assam. Record breaking rain in July and August led to extensive flooding in Pakistan,



A roadside vendor prepares puffed rice delicacy for lunch goers at City Civil Court area at Dalhousie on Monday afternoon--Arijit Ganguly

Chandrababu Naidu finally passes on baton to his son

Why should it surprise anybody if Telugu Desam Party supremo Chandrababu Naidu wants his son Nara Lokesh to replace him at the head of the TDP table? CBN is doing nothing that is unusual. Besides, it is classic Congress. Nara Lokesh will also undertake a 'padayatra', just like Gandhiji family scion Rahul Gandhi's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', but only limited to Andhra Pradesh.

If the Congress wants Rahul Gandhi to become Prime Minister, the TDP wants Nara Lokesh to be anointed Andhra Pradesh CM. Passing on the baton to a family member is common in Indian politics. When NT Rama Rao became Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, there were no doubts that another dynasty was born.

And in recent months, both Chandrababu Naidu and Nara Lokesh have been addressing packed rallies at places across Andhra Pradesh. On December 28, a stampede at one such rally killed eight people, and injured several. Earlier, this month, Nara Lokesh was heckled and chased away by a crowd in Guntur district when he was on his way to meet a rape-survivor there. Lokesh alleged the attackers were "YSRCP goons".

The stampede on December 28 took place in Nellore district. Death by trampling is not martyrdom. However, Chandrababu Naidu was pleasantly surprised when he saw the "crazed fans" of Nara Lokesh at another rally in the

state. Since then, Lokesh has become the "No.2" in TDP. There are no doubts left that CBN wanted Nara Lokesh to follow in his footsteps. Besides, if Jagan Mohan Reddy could become Chief Minister like his father YS Rajasekhara Reddy, why cannot CBN's son Nara Lokesh? The son-follows-father culture is as old as mythology and everybody knows Indian mythology goes back right into time.

Common Indian people love dynasts, kings and queens and their 'yuvraj'. And, it's not just 'Bharat' that has this tradition. Communist China, too, has its princelings, sons and sons-in-law of powerful Chinese Communist Party officials. President Xi Jinping was also a princeling. On December 29, Prime Minister Narendra Modi added to the ex-gratia promised to the eight dead at CBN's December 28 rally. Chandrababu Naidu, who was with the Congress in 2019, had been edging towards the NDA-camp these past several months. With Telangana Rashtra Samithi transforming to Bharatiya Rashtra Samithi and KCR going all out against Modi, it makes sense for CBN to look Modi-ward.

CBN and KCR are like the cobra and

the mongoose though who is cobra and who mongoose isn't easy to pinpoint for the common folk. Time was when Chandrababu Naidu was the most-met politician in the Indian political scene. The politician who stitched coalitions. Those days in the mid-1990s when secret parleys behind closed doors and names for Prime Minister of India were discussed.

Those heady days are lost in the past and perhaps the safari suit-clad Chandrababu Naidu, whose own rise from obscurity was clouded in intrigue and betrayal, must be missing them most. There are those who will say Chandrababu Naidu got on December 28 what was coming to him. He shouldn't have made a habit of drawing crowds. He should have left Nara Lokesh, the business of addressing rallies. Ask people what triggered the December 28 evening stampede and there will be conspiracy theories plenty. People have a habit of sipping tea and dripping scorn at politicians.

Chandrababu Naidu has been heaping scorn on the YSRCP and Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy. CBN had gotten quite used to being Chief Minister when Jagan Mohan Reddy cut

it short. Now, with age catching up, Chandrababu Naidu is laying the ground for Nara Lokesh to deliver the coup de grace to Jagan Mohan Reddy. Jagan Mohan is sweeping rural and civic polls and he exudes confidence with his freebies and yatras. Come 2024 polls, he needs no allies. The two princelings of Andhra politics have long years ahead of them, and it's both feudal, and tribal. The original 'Iron Man' of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, if he comes calling for a day, would be surprised to find that India continues to be a hotchpotch of princely states!

And he might pick Chandrababu Naidu for the ultimate courtier. Naidu married NTR's daughter and then betrayed NTR calling him an "evil spirit" that deserved what it got. In 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke of the "betrayal" and played Chandrababu's alliance with the Congress. Today, the Congress and TDP are not in any sort of alliance.

Come to think of it, neither is the YSRCP friends with the Congress. The next assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh have to be held before June 2024. In all likelihood, the state elections will be held along with the 2024 general elections. And this time, CBN will be fighting the elections not for himself but for his son Nara Lokesh, who would be carrying out a 4000 km 'padayatra' in time for the 2024 elections, both state and Centre. (IPA)

which caused at least 1,700 deaths, displaced 7.9 million and affected 33 million people. One third of Pakistan was flooded, with major economic losses and human casualties. In East Africa, rainfall has been below average throughout four consecutive wet seasons – the longest in 40 years – triggering a major humanitarian crisis affecting an estimated 18.4 to 19.3 million of people, devastating agriculture, and killing livestock, especially in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

Sea levels, which have doubled since 1993; ocean heat content; and acidification are also at recorded highs. The past two and half years alone account for 10 per cent of overall sea level rise. It has risen by nearly 10 mm since January 2020. Ocean heat was at record levels in 2021 (the latest year assessed), with the warming rate particularly high in the past 20 years. An exceptionally heavy toll on glaciers in the European Alps was recorded with initial indications of record-shattering melt. The Greenland ice sheet lost mass for the 26th consecutive year and it rained – rather than snowed – on the summit for the first time in September. Six per cent glacier ice volume lost between 2021 and 2022 in Switzerland, and the net decline from 2001 to 2022 was more than a third. Taken together, these changes to the global climate have undermined the global ability to achieve sustainable development, directly impacting SDG-1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 13, 14 and 15. However, the picture is far from complete. Significant gaps still exist for many key climate parameters, including ocean acidification (SDG 14) and methane emission (SDG 13).

Keeping these in mind, early warnings, increasing investment in the basic global observing system and building resilience to extreme weather and climate should be priority in 2023, that WMO has set for itself, and the government need to set for themselves. There is a clear need to enhance preparedness for extreme weather events. (IPA)

Conventional Crossword												
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23					24							

ACROSS						DOWN					
1	Trunk					1	Dance				
4	Enemy					2	Automaton				
6	Passport endorsement					3	Not concealed				
8	Illustrious					4	Impartial				
9	Wear					5	Observed				
11	Dry					7	Play for time				
12	Company of eight					10	Starchy food				
15	Glossy					13	Cudgel				
18	Monetary source					14	Church office holder				
20	Musical instrument					15	Sea nymph				
21	Bird					16	Live coal				
22	Faithful					17	Sovereigns				
23	Stain					18	Bend over				
24	Nostrils					19	Musical sound				

SUDOKU:3745												
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Yesterday's Cross Word Solution 1753												
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The views in the articles published here are absolutely the views of the author and The Echo of India does not stand liable for them.

General Body Meeting of Nagarpalika Shramik Sangh discusses demands



PORT BLAIR, JAN 2 /-- / The General Body Meeting of the Nagarpalika Shramik Sangh (CITU) was held at Shaheed Bhavan, Anarkali, Port Blair today (31.12.2022) in which various issues and demands of the workers of PBMC were discussed. Addressing the huge gathering of workers, B. Chandrachoodan, General Secretary, CITU State Committee and President, Nagarpalika Shramik Sangh

criticized the A & N Administration and Port Blair Municipal Council for not considering the demands of the PBMC workers. He said that the workers of PBMC especially those engaged in the sanitary wing have been working in most difficult conditions and their hard work during the Covid 19 pandemic needs appreciation. Referring to the recent judgement of the Division Bench of Calcutta High Court in the APWD workers'

case, CITU General Secretary said that all the daily rated workers working in PBMC should be extended with the benefit of 1/30th of pay plus DA benefit immediately. Addressing the meeting, Mr. D. Ayyappan, Vice President, CITU State Committee called upon all the employees and workers in the PBMC to join the Nagarpalika Shramik Sangh and strengthen it so that their issues and demands

will be highlighted properly and agitations conducted to achieve it. He briefly explained the various anti-working class policies of the BJP-led central government and said that the outsourcing and privatisation of government work are the hallmark of this government because of which the demands of PBMC workers for regularization of their services and grant of 1/30th of pay plus DA are not considered by the PBMC and A & N Administration. Mr. NKP Nair, Vice President, CITU explained briefly various demands of PBMC workers and blamed the PBMC for neglecting the genuine demands of the workers. Mr. SP Kalairajan, Vice President, Nagarpalika Shramik Sangh also addressed the meeting. Hundreds of PBMC workers working in various sections of PBMC attended the meeting. The meeting decided to conduct agitations if the authorities fail to grant 1/30th of pay plus DA to all DRMs within two months as per the High Court order in the ASNVMS case. Mr. R Surendran Pillai, President and P. Sathyapal, Secretary, CITU State Committee were also present in the General Body meeting.

Subsidy for animal Husbandry sector

PORT BLAIR, JAN 2 /-- / The Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Govt. of India under the National Livestock Mission (NLM) envisages Entrepreneurship Development Programme in Piggery & Goat/Sheep by incentivising the individuals, FPOs, Farmers Co-operative Organizations, Joint Liability Groups, SHGs and Section 8 Companies. The Central Govt. shall provide 50% Capital subsidy subject to limits against each of the under mentioned Entrepreneurship Development Programme.

The revised details of the Scheme has been uploaded in the Ministry's website- nlm.udyamimitra.in and A & N Administration's website- ahvs.andaman.gov.in.

Sl. No	Programme	Unit size for Goat/sheep farm	Maximum amount of capital subsidy
1	Sheep & Goat farming	100 females + 5 males	10 lakhs
		200 females + 10 males	20 lakhs
		300 females + 15 males	30 lakhs
		400 females + 20 males	40 lakhs
		500 females + 25 males	50 lakhs
2	Piggery	50 Sows + 5 boars	15 Lakhs
		100 Sows + 10 boars	30 Lakhs

Kashmiri leaders condemn Rajouri attack

SRINAGAR, JAN 2 /-- / Political leaders in Kashmir on Monday condemned the killing of five people by terrorists in Rajouri and slammed the LG-led administration for failing to weed out terrorism even after four years of abrogation of Article 370. Former Jammu & Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah said terrorists do not discriminate between their victims, whether they are Hindus or Muslims, as he condemned the attacks which took place on Sunday and Monday. "I condemn the killing of innocent persons. It does not matter what religion or region the victim belongs to, an innocent is an innocent," Farooq Abdullah told reporters. He said the atmosphere of hatred was responsible for the killing of innocents. "What was the fault of the victims in Rajouri? Or what was the fault of the Kashmiri Pandits killed in Shopian?" he asked. The Lok Sabha member from Srinagar said that according to the BJP government at the Centre, terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir was due to Article 370, but they were mistaken. "Have they been able to end terrorism? Four years have passed since Jammu and Kashmir was made a Union Territory," he said. Omar Abdullah, the National Conference Vice President, questioned the authorities for allegedly not following the standard operating procedure in the aftermath of the Sunday gunfire incident. "This apparent carelessness on the part of the security forces needs to be probed & accountability fixed. Costly

lessons learnt in the past taught us not to hand over the sites of encounters/attacks without thoroughly sanitising them. "Why wasn't this SOP followed in Rajouri?" he said in a tweet. "Deeply shocked as more details emerge of this targeted attack in Rajouri district of Jammu. I unequivocally condemn this heinous attack & send my condolences to the families of the deceased. "I hope those injured in this attack will make a swift & complete recovery," he said. PDP president Mehbooba Mufti too condemned the killings and attacked the BJP for its "bogus claims" of ending militancy in the region. "Condemn this cowardly act & condolences to their families. Despite being under BJP rule & its bogus claims of ending militancy, violence continues unabated. Had J&K had its own elected government, the same media would have hauled them over the coals," she tweeted. Mufti also accused the BJP of leveraging Hindus' deaths for political gains and appealed to the people to retain their brotherly spirit. "Muslims get killed here every day but when our Hindu brethren get killed, a particular party exploits these incidents to spread Hindu-Muslim hatred across the country for its benefit," Mehbooba Mufti told reporters in south Kashmir's Anantnag district. People's Conference leader Sajad Lone in a tweet said: "Yet another carnage. This time in Rajouri. Condemn the cowardly act. My thoughts are with the families of those who lost their lives." (PTI)

Chhattisgarh: Senior cop attacked, church vandalised during protest by tribals in Narayanpur

NARAYANPUR, JAN 2 /-- / A church was vandalised and a senior policeman was attacked and injured during a protest by a group of tribals in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur city on Monday, police said. Narayanpur district Superintendent of Police (SP) Sadanand Kumar was attacked during the protest that took place in the afternoon and was being treated at a hospital, an official said. A large number of police personnel have been deployed in the city, located around 300 km away from capital Raipur, after the protest turned violent, he said. As per preliminary report, tribals staged a demonstration to protest against a clash that took place between two communities over alleged religious conversion in Edka village in Narayanpur district on Sunday, police said. Talking to reporters at the hospital, SP Kumar said that protesters arrived near Vishwa Dipti Christian School in the afternoon and tried to charge towards a church located in the school premises. "After being alerted about it, I immediately rushed to the spot with other officials and tried to pacify the protestors. They seemed convinced and were about to return, but suddenly someone hit me with a stick on my head," the official said. (PTI)

Notional Company Law Appellate Tribunal Appointment of Members

Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi invites online applications on portal namely <https://apptbmembermca.gov.in> from Indian Nationals for 03 posts of Members (01 post of Judicial Member and 02 post of Technical Members) in the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), a quasi-judicial body established under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013. The number of vacancies are tentative and may decrease or increase without prior notice. The Member shall be paid a salary of Rupees two lakh twenty-five thousand per month plus other allowances as admissible. Eligible and willing persons are advised to submit their application online. Applications may be submitted online from 27.12.2022 at 10:00 AM. Last Date for submitting online application is 23.01.2023 at 05:30 PM. Detailed advertisement may be seen on the portal namely <https://apptbmembermca.gov.in>, website of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (www.mca.gov.in), DoPATs website (<https://dopt.gov.in>) and National Company Law Appellate Tribunal's website (www.nclat.gov.in). Instruction for filling up of application are available on the portal <https://apptbmembermca.gov.in>. Print out of the application forms after final submission on online portal duly completed, and signed alongwith copies of uploaded documents, and through proper channel, wherever applicable, must reach by 05:30 PM of 02.02.2023 to Shri Riazul Haque, Under Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Room No 526, A 'Wing', 5th floor, Shastri Bhawan. Or. Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi-110001.

CBC-07119/12/0005/2223

Bomb found near Punjab, Haryana CMs' helipad

CHANDIGARH, JAN 2 /-- / A bomb disposal squad was rushed to the spot after an unexploded bomb was found a few hundred metres away from the helipad used by Punjab and Haryana chief ministers here on Monday, officials said. The bomb was found in a mango garden on the Nayagaon-Kansal T-point, which is about a kilometre away from the helipad and about two kilometres from the official residences of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and his Haryana counterpart Manohar Lal Khattar, they said. As soon as the police received information that a bomb-like object had been found in the high-security area, they reached the spot and cordoned off the area. A bomb disposal squad was also dispatched to the spot, the officials said. The local administration informed the Army about it. Sanjeev Kohli, nodal officer, disaster management, Chandigarh, said, "When we came and

checked it we found that it was a live shell. We have secured the area." "It is a matter of investigation how this shell got here," he said. "With the help of police and the bomb disposal squad team, the shell has been placed in a drum and covered with sandbags and the Army has been informed," he said, adding, "Army officials will come and take care of it." Replying to a question, Kohli said in the past too discarded shells have been found. The possibility of a scrap dealer dumping it here cannot be ruled out, he said. In the past, there have been cases of scrap dealers collecting used shells from the vicinity of military firing ranges. Punjab Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) A K Pandey, who reached the spot, said it appears to be a "misfired shell". There are many scrap dealers in the area where the shell was found. It is being investigated if anyone could have discarded it


here, he said. "The area (where the shell was found) is about 2.5 km from the (Punjab) CM's residence," said Pandey. "It is not like anyone has planted a bomb," he added. Senior Superintendent of Police, Chandigarh, Manisha Choudhary said, "The bomb detection squad of Chandigarh police has inspected the site and the object. The object has been safely isolated and we have informed the Army authorities at Chandimandir." "We have requested the (Army's) bomb disposal squad to come and dispose it of accordingly," she said. Choudhary said only Army authorities will be able to tell the exact nature of the object. She said CCTV footage from nearby areas will be scanned to ascertain how the bomb got here. "We have secured this area and request people residing nearby to take precautions and maintain a safe distance from the site," the SSP said. (PTI)

Hostel plots, coaching villas drive Kota's real estate sector growth

KOTA, JAN 2 /-- / The real estate sector in Rajasthan's Kota, dubbed the country's coaching hub for competitive exams, has two unique options when it comes to properties -- hostel plots and coaching villas. With over two lakh students moving to the city to prepare for the exams, Kota's real estate sector has grown with the coaching industry as people invest in building hostels and other forms of temporary accommodations for those coming here. While hostel plots are bought mostly by locals aspiring to start their own businesses, coaching villas are popular among well off families who move to the city to stay with their children as they complete their coaching for competitive exams as well as schooling. "The plot sizes that can be converted into hostels with 30, 50 and 70 rooms are the most popular. Each hostel room comprises a bed, study

table and wardrobe. Each hostel has a mess, common area for recreation and some extra rooms that are designated 'parents room' and are occupied by them whenever they are visiting their children," Shahbad Khan, a property dealer here, told PTI while explaining the concept of "hostel plots". The monthly charge for each room ranges between Rs 13,000 and Rs 15,000 and hence, an owner can make a decent income, he said. "Either locals buy hostel plots or people who want to set up a business here. It is a lucrative earning opportunity. People can construct hostel buildings of up to seven storeys," Khan said. These two real estate options, "hostel plots and coaching villas", have been in demand in the past 10 years, except during the years of the Covid pandemic, he claimed. Once an industrial hub, Kota is now home to a Rs 6,000-crore worth coaching industry.

Over two lakh students move to Kota annually for preparing for competitive exams such as the JEE for engineering and the NEET for admission to medical colleges. There are 3,500 hostels and 25,000 paying guest (PG) accommodations in Kota, according to Naveen Mittal, president, Kota Hostel Association. "While the hostel sector is completely formal, the PG business is quite unregulated. Hence, hostels are more popular as they have more facilities," he said. However, not all parents are comfortable with their children staying in hostels or PGs and they move in with them by moving into "coaching villas". Coaching villa is a popular concept here as some parents want to stay with their children while they complete Class 9-12 schooling along with coaching for competitive exams, Ram Kishan Gaur, another property dealer in the area, said. (PTI)



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Central Reserve Police Force is conducting recruitment for the post of ASI(Steno) and Head Constable (Ministerial). Applications are invited from Male/Female Candidates who are ordinarily residents of India . Candidates can apply for oii|| one post (multiple applications for more than one post will liable to be rejected) online through website <http://www.crpfindia.com> and www.crpf.nic.in. (Through link as Recruitment>View all>Ministerial Staff 'Apply').

2. VACANCIES NOTIFIED FOR MALE / FEMALE CANDIDATES:-

Post	UR	EWS	OBC	SC	ST	Total
ASSISTANT SUB INSPECTOR (STENO)	58	14	39	21	11	143
HEAD CONSTABLE (MINISTERIAL)	532	132	355	197	99	1315

Note:- The numbers of Vacancies given above are tentative and may increase or decrease a2; \$gsr time/ stage of recruitment process, due to administrative reasons.

2. Pay Scale : The post carries following pay level (as per 7th CPC).

POST	PAY LEVEL	PAY MATRIX
Assistant Sub Inspector (Steno)	05	29200-92300
Head Constable (Ministerial)	04	25500-81100

3. Age limit :- Age limit of candidates should be from 18 to 25 years as on closing date of receipt of application i.e. 25/01/2023 i.e. candidate should not born before 26/01/1998 or after 25/01/2005.

Note:- There will be relaxation in age for SC/ST/OBC, Ex Servicemen and other categories of persons in accordance with the Government orders.

4. Education Qualification :- Candidates must have passed Intermediate (10+2) or equivalent Exam from a board or university recognized by Central or State Government..

5. How to apply :

The application must be submitted through online mode. Candidates can submit their application through website <http://www.crpfindia.com> and (Through link as Recruitment>View all>Ministerial staff 'Apply'). Registration will be started wef. **04/01/2023.**

Note:- Detail notification will be available in crpf website i.e. <http://www.crpf.nic.in> (Through link as Recruitment>View all>Ministerial staff 'Apply').

**Sd/-
(Sudhakar Upadhyay
IG (Estt. Dte.)**

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SC finds no flaw in Centre's 2016 decision on note ban

NEW DELHI, JAN 2 /--/ More than six years after the Centre's decision to demonetise the Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 denomination notes, the Supreme Court in a 4:1 majority verdict on Monday upheld the 2016 move, saying the decision-making process was not flawed merely because the procedure emanated from the government.

Ruling that the decision to scrap the high-value currency notes does not suffer from any legal or constitutional flaw, the apex court said there was consultation between the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Union government for a period of six months. Observing that the decision being the executive's economic policy cannot be reversed, a five-judge Constitution bench headed by Justice S A Nazeer said there has to be great restraint in matters of economic policy and the court cannot supplant the wisdom of the executive by a judicial review of its decision. Justice B V Nagarathna dissented from the majority judgment on the point of the Centre's powers under section 26(2) of the RBI Act and said the scrapping of the Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 series notes had to be done through a legislation and not through a notification. The bench, also comprising justices B R Gavai, A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, said the notification dated November 8, 2016, which announced the decision to scrap the high-value currency notes, cannot be said to be unreasonable and struck down on the ground of decision-making process. It added that the decision had a reasonable nexus with its objectives, such as eradicating black money, terror funding etc., and it is not relevant whether those objectives were achieved or not.

The apex court said the 52-day window provided for the exchange of the demonetised notes with legal tenders was not unreasonable and it cannot be extended now. "There was consultation between the Centre and the Reserve Bank of India for a period of six months. We hold that there was a reasonable nexus to bring such a measure, and we hold that demonetisation was not hit by the doctrine of proportionality," the bench said. "The power available to the Centre under section 26(2) of the RBI Act cannot be restricted to mean that it can be exercised only for some series of notes and not for all series of notes. Merely because on two earlier occasions the demonetisation exercise was by plenary legislation, it cannot be held that such power would not be available to the central government," Justice Gavai, who read the



There was consultation between the Centre and the Reserve Bank of India for a period of six months. We hold that there was a reasonable nexus to bring such a measure, and we hold that demonetisation was not hit by the doctrine of proportionality —SC bench

majority judgment, said. The bench said section 26(2) does not provide for excessive legislation in as much as there is an in-built safeguard that such a power has to be exercised on the recommendation of the RBI's central board and that it is not liable to be struck down. "The notification does not suffer from any flaws in the decision-making process. The notification satisfies the test of proportionality and as such cannot be struck down. The period provided by the impugned notification cannot be said to be unreasonable. The RBI does not possess independent power to accept the demonetised notes beyond the specified period. We direct the registry to place the matter before the CJI for placing before the appropriate bench," the apex court said. The Supreme Court's judgment came on a batch of 58 petitions challenging the demonetisation exercise announced by the

Centre on November 8, 2016. Justice Nagarathna, who was the junior most judge in the Constitution bench, said demonetisation of all series of notes at the Centre's instance is a far more serious issue that has wider implications on the economy and the citizens of the country. Observing that there was no independent application of mind by the RBI, she said the entire exercise was carried out in 24 hours. "In my view, the power of the Central government being vast has to be exercised through a plenary legislation rather than by an executive act by issuance of notification. It is necessary that Parliament, which consists of the representatives of the people of the country, discusses the matter and thereafter, approves the matter," Justice Nagarathna said. In her minority verdict, Justice Nagarathna held that the demonetisation of the Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 currency notes was vitiated and unlawful. (PTI)

BJP hails apex court verdict, asks if Rahul will apologise

Wrong to say SC upheld demonetisation: Cong

NEW DELHI, JAN 2 /--/ The BJP on Monday hailed as "historic" the Supreme Court order upholding the Union government's demonetisation exercise and asked if the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will tender an apology for his campaign against the note ban after the apex court judgment. Former Union law minister and BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad also asserted that the demonetisation done in 2016 proved to be the "biggest blow" to terrorism by curbing terror funding. It boosted income tax and cleansed the economy, he claimed. "It is a historic decision and is in the national interest. The Supreme Court has held a decision taken in the national interest valid. Will Rahul Gandhi now say sorry for his campaign against demonetisation? He spoke against it even abroad," Prasad said at a press conference. The senior BJP leader also hit out at Congress leaders, especially former Union finance minister P Chidambaram, for highlighting the minority judgment. They are ignoring with impunity the majority verdict to make incharitable and scandalous statements, he said. The dissenting judge has also said the policy was well-intentioned, Prasad added. India has become a global



leader in digital payment which was boosted after demonetisation, the former law minister told newspersons, noting that the country notched up over 730 crore digital transactions worth over Rs 12 lakh crore in October this year alone. Prasad said it is a "very important" decision and added the whole exercise was undertaken for valid causes, including removing fake currency and curbing terror funding and money laundering. The court has noted that the government has a right to take a policy decision and rejected the argument that appropriate consultation with the Reserve Bank of India was not done, the BJP leader said. In sum and substance, the apex court looked at the entire decision-making exercise and found the process fair and reasonable, he said, hitting out at the

opposition party for raising a "big storm" against the demonetisation. Rahul understands an issue only after a Supreme Court verdict, the BJP leader said, in a swipe at the former Congress president. The former Union minister said Rahul "abused" Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his campaign during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls against the alleged corruption in the Rafale deal and stopped after the apex court adjudicated on the matter and rejected the demand for a probe. However, reacting to the Supreme Court's verdict, the Congress on Monday said it is "misleading and wrong" to say the apex court has upheld demonetisation, adding that the majority SC verdict on the matter deals with the limited issue of the process of decision-making not with its outcomes. The verdict has nothing to

say on whether the stated objectives of demonetisation were met, AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh said. "The Supreme Court verdict is on the process of demonetisation and not on its outcomes. If anybody has to apologise, it has to be the Prime Minister, because the 'Tughlaki' decision taken by him on November 8, 2016 destroyed lakhs of MSMEs, the informal sector, and livelihood of lakhs of people, and we continue to face the negative impact it had on our economy," Ramesh said. Congress leader Randeep Surjewala, however, said the SC verdict is "deeply disappointing" as the top court has failed to hold the BJP-led Union government accountable for its "monumental recklessness." The dissenting verdict on demonetisation is a "slap on the wrist" of the government as it has pointed out the "illegality and irregularities" in the decision, added his colleague and former Union finance minister P Chidambaram. "The majority Supreme Court verdict deals with the limited issue of the process of decision making not with its outcomes. To say that demonetisation has been upheld by the Honourable Supreme Court is totally misleading and wrong," said Ramesh. (PTI)

Terror strikes: 2 cousins killed in IED blast within 14 hours of shooting at same site in Rajouri, LG visits village

RAJOURI/JAMMU, JAN 2 /--/ In an apparent security lapse, two cousins - aged four and 16 - were killed when an improvised explosive device (IED) went off in a village in Jammu's Rajouri area on Monday, 14 hours after terrorists had shot dead four people there. The terrorists, locals claimed, had planted the IED on Sunday itself and it was missed during the scanning by police and security officials who had cordoned off the area after the shootings last evening. Samiksha Sharma (16) and Vihan Kumar Sharma (4) were killed and six others injured in the blast. Six persons were killed and 12 injured in the two incidents. Village Sarpanch (headman) Deepak Kumar said that it was a serious security lapse on the part of police and security agencies.

As the incidents led to protests across the district, including in Rajouri town, and a complete shutdown, Director General of Police Dilbag Singh, who visited the site, said that the IED blast was intended to target senior officers who were about to reach there. He announced that village defence committees (VDCs) will now be revived and rearmend, after some protesting leaders and locals claimed that the incidents could have been averted had the authorities not taken away the weapons of VDCs. "The improvised explosive device (IED) was planted beneath a bag," Additional Director General of Police, Jammu, Mukesh Singh told reporters in Rajouri. (PTI)



Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee and party's national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee at the convention of party workers and leaders at Nazrul Mancha, on Monday — Photo: Arijit Ganguly

Effects of cross-border terrorism can't be contained within a region: EAM

VIENNA, JAN 2 /--/ In an apparent reference to Pakistan, external affairs minister S Jaishankar on Monday asserted that the effects of cross-border terrorism cannot be contained within a region, especially so when they are deeply connected to narcotics and illegal weapons trade and other forms of international crimes. Addressing a joint press conference with his Austrian counterpart Alexander Schallenberg here, Jaishankar said they had an open

and productive discussion on a range of regional and global situations and by and large, the approaches of both the nations are similar, "though obviously we are located in different regions and we have our particular compulsions". He said they spoke at some length on the threats to international peace and security that are posed by terrorism, including its cross-border practices, by violent extremism, radicalisation and fundamentalism. The effects of terrorism,

Jaishankar said, cannot be contained within a region, especially so when they are "deeply connected to narcotics and illegal weapons trade and other forms of international crimes". "Since the epicentre (of terrorism) is located so close to India, naturally our experiences and insights are useful to others," the minister said without naming any country. The Union minister, who arrived here from Cyprus, is on the second leg of his two-nation tour. (PTI)

BJP's ideology differentiates between people on religious lines: Mamata

KOLKATA, JAN 2 /--/ Chief minister and TMC Supremo Mamata Banerjee on Monday lashed out at the right-wing BJP and claimed that the saffron party's ideology differentiates between people on the basis of religion.

Mamata also attacked what she saw as a tacit understanding between the Left and the BJP, accusing the two parties, which are ideologically poles apart, of forging a 'Ram-Bam' (BJP-Left) alliance. The TMC supremo, while addressing a convention of party workers and leaders, said her party's cadres have to reach out to the people to counter canards spread against the TMC by Opposition parties. "We are followers of an inclusive ideology. We need to take along everyone. BJP's ideology differentiates between people on religious lines. "You have to listen to people with humility," Mamata told TMC workers at the party programme held at 'Nazrul Mancha', named after the famous Independence struggle poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. In an apparent reference to a tacit understanding between the Opposition BJP and the Left in the state, she said: "Now, 'Ram and Bam' (BJP and Left) have become one." The chief minister said a proper vigilance system at the party level will be put in place to "weed out rotten elements". "A proper vigilance system will be put in place to keep a check at the

panchayat level. There will be a check and cross-check mechanism to look into all complaints," she said. With an eye on West Bengal panchayat polls due this year, the ruling Trinamool Congress also launched a new campaign Didir Suraksha Kavach' to reach out to people. The campaign was launched by the chief minister in the presence of TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and state president Subrata Bakshi. "The party will start the campaign on January 11 and will continue with it for 60 days. Our party workers will reach out to people across the state and ensure that everyone can avail of welfare schemes of the state government," TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee said while addressing a press conference. Just like Duare Sarkar' (government at your doorstep), an outreach programme of the state government, the objective of the new campaign will be to connect with people through the party's programme, the chief minister said. "Around 3.5 lakh party workers will reach out to around 10 crore people of the state. It is being done so that no one is left out. The Duare Sarkar' campaign of the state government will continue," she said. Mamata, while speaking on TMC's vision as it completed 25 years on January 1, said the party aims at a "united India with a strengthened federal structure". (PTI)

Kanjhwala incident: Delhi LG directs CP to see whether there was lapses on part of police

NEW DELHI, JAN 2 /--/ Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena on Monday directed the Police Commissioner to "strictly ensure" if there were any "lapses" on part of the police in the gruesome Kanjhawala incident in which a woman was killed after her scooter was hit by a car and she was dragged for 10-12 kilometres in outer part of the city.

Saxena instructed the city police chief to ensure that the accused were treated as per the law irrespective of their socio-economic position or political affiliation, LG office sources said. They also said the Lt Governor asked the officers to see if anyone of the victim's family could be provided with a government job. The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has alleged that one of the five accused arrested in connection with the incident belonged to the BJP. The party leaders and volunteers also staged a protest

outside the LG office here. Saxena condemned the incident and said his head hung in shame over the "inhuman crime". "In his meeting with the Police Commissioner, the LG also asked him to ascertain whether there was any lapse on part of the police and directed that responsibility be fixed for any lapse or laxity on part of the police," the sources at LG office said. The victim's two-wheeler was hit by a car and her body dragged for around 10-12 kilometres from outer Delhi's Sultanpuri to Kanjhawala on Sunday, a senior police officer said. Five men travelling in the car have been arrested, he said. "My head hangs in shame over the inhuman crime in Kanjhawla-Sultanpuri today morning and I am shocked at the monstrous insensitivity of the perpetrators. "Have been monitoring with @CPDelhi and the accused have been apprehended. All aspects are being

thoroughly looked into," The LG tweeted Sunday night. The LG office sources said Saxena is keeping a tab on the situation on a "real-time basis" and has asked the authorities to keep him abreast of the autopsy report of the victim and its corroboration with the findings of the police investigation. The LG has also cautioned against opportunistic scavenging and urged people to work towards a more sensitive society. "Even as every possible support/help and beyond to the family of the victim will be ensured, I appeal to all to not resort to opportunistic scavenging. Let's together work towards a more responsible and sensitive society," he said in a tweet. In his meeting with the Police Commissioner, the LG reiterated his direction that every angle and aspect of the case be looked into and the strictest possible sections of IPC be invoked against the accused, the sources said. (PTI)



Locals protesting the death of the 20-year-old woman in Sultanpuri

India voices 'very deep' concern over Ukraine conflict Urges Russia, Ukraine to return to dialogue and diplomacy

VIENNA, JAN 2 /--/ Voicing "very deep" concern over the raging Ukraine conflict, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said that India is on the side of peace and since the beginning of the hostilities New Delhi's effort has been to bring Moscow and Kyiv to return to dialogue and diplomacy as differences cannot be settled through violence. Jaishankar, who arrived here from Cyprus on the second leg of his two-nation tour, made the remarks on Sunday evening while addressing the members of the Indian diaspora in Austria. "This (Ukraine) conflict is really a matter of very, very deep concern Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared in September (that) we actually genuinely believe that this is no longer an era of war. You cannot settle differences and issues through violence," Jaishankar said. "So from the very beginning, our

effort has been to urge (Russia and Ukraine to) return to dialogue and diplomacy The Prime Minister himself has spoken on numerous occasions with President (Vladimir) Putin and President (Volodymyr) Zelensky. I myself talked to my colleagues in Russia and Ukraine," he said. "We know this is not (an) easily resolvable situation. But it's important that countries who believe (in)...negotiation, speak up clearly in that regard," he said, adding that "we're on the side of peace and a large part of the world thinks like us." India has repeatedly called on Russia and Ukraine to return to the path of diplomacy and dialogue and end their ongoing conflict. Prime Minister Modi has spoken to the presidents of Russia and Ukraine on multiple occasions and urged for immediate cessation of hostilities and return to the path of

diplomacy and dialogue for the resolution of the conflict. In his bilateral meeting with Russian President Putin in Uzbekistan on September 16, Modi said "today's era is not of war" and nudged him to end the conflict. India has not yet criticised the Russian attack on Ukraine and has been maintaining that the crisis should be resolved through dialogue. Jaishankar also told the audience that there are profound changes in India's national security. "Much of it is centred around the intense challenges we face on our northern border with China. We continue to have the problem of cross-border terrorism with Pakistan," he said. Indian and Chinese troops clashed along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh on December 9 and the face-off resulted in "minor injuries to a few personnel from both sides", according to the

Indian Army. It is the first major clash between the Indian and Chinese armies since the fierce face-off in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades. The ties between the two countries have remained frozen since then with India making it clear that peace and tranquillity at the border is the sine qua non for the overall development of bilateral ties. The two countries have held 17 rounds of talks so far to resolve the standoff. Relations between India and Pakistan have often been strained over the Kashmir issue and cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan. Jaishankar also noted that India has vastly improved its relationship with Bangladesh. "We have settled our land boundary agreement with them. It's an example of how successful diplomacy has directly

contributed to a stronger relationship (between two neighbours)," he said. In his speech, Jaishankar also said that India and Austria would sign some agreements on Monday and some of them are of interest to Indian diaspora - one on migration and mobility for Indians who want to come here as students/ professionals and another on 'Working Holiday' programme which will enable Indian students in Austria to work for six months. Earlier in the day, Jaishankar held talks with top Austrian leadership in the first diplomatic engagement in 2023 and conveyed the personal greetings of Prime Minister Modi to Chancellor Karl Nehammer. This is the first EAM-level visit from India to Austria in the last 27 years, and it takes place against the backdrop of 75 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 2023. (PTI)

Modi in contact with leaders of Russia and Ukraine, Jaishankar says in Austria

VIENNA, JAN 2 /--/ Underlining that differences must be settled through talks, external affairs minister S Jaishankar said on Monday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been in contact with the leaders of Russia and Ukraine, pressing them to return to dialogue and diplomacy as a prolonged conflict will not serve the interests of any party. Jaishankar, who arrived here from Cyprus on the second leg of his two-nation tour, made the remarks while delivering a joint press statement after his productive talks with Austrian counterpart Alexander Schallenberg here. "We sincerely believe that this is not the era of war. Differences must be settled on the negotiating table. It is imperative that there is a return to dialogue and diplomacy. Prolonged conflict will not serve the interests of any party. My Prime Minister has been in contact with the leaders of both nations, pressing our point of view," Jaishankar said. "We are also increasingly anxious about

the knock-on effects of the conflict in terms of accessibility and affordability of fuel food and fertilisers. This is a growing concern for the Global South," he added. India has repeatedly called on Russia and Ukraine to return to the path of diplomacy and dialogue and



S Jaishankar

end their ongoing conflict. Prime Minister Modi has spoken to the presidents of Russia and Ukraine on multiple occasions and urged for immediate cessation of hostilities and return to the path of diplomacy and dialogue for the resolution of the conflict. In his bilateral meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in

Uzbekistan on September 16, Modi said "today's era is not of war" and nudged him to end the conflict. India has not yet criticised the Russian attack on Ukraine and has been maintaining that the crisis should be resolved through dialogue. Jaishankar said Austria is an important partner for India in the European Union at a time when it seeks to upgrade its relationship. "We appreciate its strong support for the negotiations underway on the FTA, the investment agreement and the geographical indicators agreement. Their conclusion will obviously have a positive impact on our bilateral economic partnership as well," he said. "Let me underline that we view Austria as a serious and consequential partner when it comes to bilateral cooperation. You have experiences and capabilities that are relevant to India's modernisation and progress," he said. The two countries have currently traded turnover of approximately USD 2.5 billion. (PTI)

Floods in Philippines leave 51 dead, over a dozen missing

MANILA, JAN 2 /--/ The death toll in the massive floods that devastated parts of the Philippines over the Christmas weekend has climbed to 51, with 19 others missing, the national disaster response agency said Monday, as affected residents struggle to get back on their feet. Photos on social media showed residents in Misamis Occidental province in Northern Mindanao sweeping away thick mud from the floors of their homes. In the seaside village of Cabol-anonan, coconut trees were uprooted and huts made of light material were nearly flattened. The Northern Mindanao region in the south bore the brunt of the disaster, reporting 25 deaths, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council. Most of the deaths were from drowning and landslides, and among the missing were fishermen whose boats capsized. Floods have subsided in most of the areas hit by bad weather that disrupted Christmas celebrations in the eastern, central and southern Philippines. But over 8,600 of the nearly 600,000 affected people remain in emergency shelters.

Over 4,500 houses were damaged by the floods, along with roads and bridges, and some areas still have disrupted power and water supply, the disaster management agency said. The government sent food and other essentials to flood-hit residents, deployed heavy equipment for clearing operations, and provided iron sheets and shelter repair kits, officials said. Teams from the capital Manila were sent to assist communities with limited clean water in setting up water filtration systems. At least 22 cities and municipalities have declared a state of calamity, the disaster management council said. The move will allow the release of emergency funds and hasten rehabilitation efforts. A shear line the point where warm and cold air meet triggered heavy rains in parts of the country last week, causing the floods, the state weather bureau said. (AP)

Japanese emperor greets crowd at palace after Covid hiatus

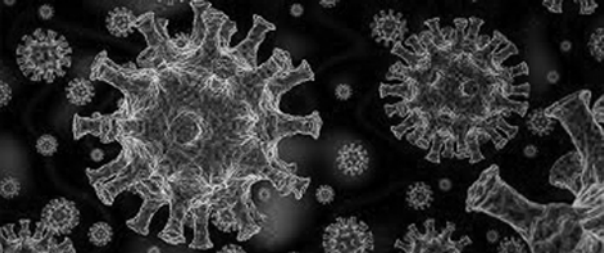
TOKYO, JAN 2 /--/ Japan's Emperor Naruhito and his family waved to throngs of New Year's well-wishers from the balcony at the Imperial Palace on Monday in the return of a celebration halted for the past two years by the pandemic. Naruhito offered prayers for people's happiness and world peace in their appearance Monday beside his wife, Empress Masako, and their daughter, Princess Aiko, who turned 21 in December, was appearing in her first New Year's public greeting. Legal adulthood is 20 in Japan and a condition for taking part in some events featuring the emperor's family. Also standing by was Emperor Emeritus Akihito, who abdicated in favour of his son in 2019, and his wife, Empress Emerita Michiko. Naruhito noted the past few years had been filled with hardships brought on by the pandemic. "These must have been hard times for many of you," he told the crowd below, many waving small Japanese flags. For the last two years, the emperor skipped the public greeting and instead sent video messages. Only those who applied and were selected in advance were allowed in the Imperial Palace grounds this year because of pandemic restrictions on large crowds. In September, Naruhito made his first trip abroad since the pandemic and since he ascended to the Chrysanthemum Throne, to attend the state funeral of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. (AP)

Canada, Australia impose Covid rules on travellers from China

BEIJING, JAN 2 /--/ Australia and Canada have joined a growing list of countries requiring travellers from China to take a Covid-19 test prior to boarding their flight, as China battles a nationwide outbreak of the coronavirus after abruptly easing restrictions that were in place for much of the pandemic. Australian health authorities said Sunday that from January 5 all air travellers from mainland China, Hong Kong or Macao will need to show a negative Covid-19 test taken within two days of their departure. Canadian authorities announced similar measures that will also come into effect January 5 in a statement dated Saturday a move experts say isn't very effective. Kerry Bowman, assistant professor at the University

of Toronto's Temerty Faculty of Medicine, said the requirement is "not based on science at this point." "This isn't the early days of the pandemic," he said. "It's pretty clear that point-of-entry screening is not very effective at all. Often people can test positive days and weeks later." Dr. Isaac Bogoch, associate professor at University of Toronto's Temerty Faculty of Medicine, said it's not entirely clear what the policy's goals are, but such measures have not helped. "We know from the past that very focused and targeted travel measures such as this don't do much to prevent the spread of COVID, either by importing COVID to Canada, or by the threat of variants of concern in Canada," he said. Australia and Canada join other

countries including the US, UK, India, Japan and several European nations in imposing tougher Covid-19 measures on Chinese travellers amid concerns over a lack of data on infections in China and



fears of the possibility that new variants may spread. Research has shown how the virus spreads through human mobility, which means that the next variant of the virus may not even emerge from China, and even if it did, it could land in Canada from other indirect routes, Bowman

said, adding that a more effective measure would be testing wastewater from airplanes and airports to check for the viral load and mutations.

Vancouver International Airport said

Saturday it would expand its wastewater testing pilot programme.

China, which for most of the pandemic adopted a "zero-COVID" strategy that imposed harsh restrictions aimed at stamping out the virus, abruptly eased those measures in December. Chinese authorities

amid freezing temperatures. Ukrainian officials say Moscow is "weaponising winter" in its effort to demoralise the Ukrainian resistance. Ukraine is using sophisticated Western-supplied weapons to help shoot down Russia's missiles and drones, as well as send artillery fire into Russian-held areas of the country. Moscow's full-scale invasion on Feb. 24 has gone awry, putting pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin as his ground forces struggle to hold ground and advance. He said in his New Year's address to the nation that 2022 was "a year of difficult, necessary decisions."

Putin insists he had no choice, but to send troops into Ukraine because it threatened Russia's security

an assertion condemned by the West, which says Moscow bears full responsibility for the invasion. Russia is currently observing public holidays through Jan. 8. Drones, missiles and artillery shells launched by Russian forces also struck areas across Ukraine. Five people were wounded in the Monday morning shelling of a Ukraine-controlled area of the southern Kherson region, its Ukrainian Gov. Yaroslav Yanushevich said on Telegram.

The Russian forces attacked the city of Beryslav, the official said, firing at a local market, likely from a tank. Three of the wounded are in serious condition and are being evacuated to Kherson, Yanushevich said. (AP)



Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Vice President-elect Geraldo Alckmin, as well as their wives, take a convertible in Brasilia

Russia presses its Ukraine strategy, fires 40 drones at Kyiv

KYIV, JAN 2 /--/ Russia deployed multiple exploding drones in another nighttime attack on Ukraine, officials said Monday, as the Kremlin signalled no letup in its strategy of using bombardments to target civilian infrastructure and wear down Ukrainian resistance to its invasion.

The barrage was the latest in a series of relentless year-end attacks, including one that killed three civilians on New Year's Eve. Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said Monday that 40 drones "headed for Kyiv" overnight. All of them were destroyed, according to air defence forces. Klitschko said 22 drones were destroyed over Kyiv, three in the outlying Kyiv region and 15 over neighbouring provinces. Energy infrastructure

facilities were damaged as the result of the attack and an explosion occurred in one city district, the mayor said. It wasn't immediately clear whether that was caused by drones or other munitions. A wounded 19-year-old man was hospitalised, Klitschko added, and emergency power outages were underway in the capital. In the outlying Kyiv region a "critical infrastructure object" and residential buildings were hit, Gov. Oleksiy Kuleba said. Russia has carried out airstrikes on Ukrainian power and water supplies almost weekly since October.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has accused Russia of "energy terrorism" as the aerial bombardments have left many people without heat

Danish screenwriter Lise Nrgaard dies at age 105

COPENHAGEN, JAN 2 /--/ Lise Nrgaard, a screenwriter who penned a popular 24-episode epic television drama about the lives of ordinary Danish families in a fictitious provincial town during the recession of the 1930s and the hard times of World War II, has died. She was 105. Nrgaard died Sunday after a brief illness, her family said Monday. She is also known for having written her 1992 Memoirs "Kun en pige," recounting her struggle to become a female reporter. She worked at major Danish newspapers, including Politiken and Berlingske. She started her career at the local newspaper Roskilde Dagblad in her hometown of Roskilde, located 40 kilometres (25 miles) west of Copenhagen. Danish lawmakers tweeted Monday in honour of Nrgaard, who was little known outside Scandinavia and Germany. Culture minister Jakob Engel-Schmidt said that "culture has lost a piece of life. And Denmark an important witness and contributor to its contemporaries." German Ambassador Pascal Hector tweeted that her television show "Matador," which he called a "masterpiece" was "my first encounter with the Danish language and the country's history." The setting for "Matador," which was the first broadcast in 1978 and shown as repeats over the years, was a fictitious Danish town named Korsbaek. Several Danish actors got their breakthroughs in the four-season show, which ended in 1982, and part of the make-believe town was recreated in a Danish amusement park. Nrgaard retired as a writer and a lecturer in 2018. Funeral arrangements weren't immediately announced. (AP)

Public service in Lankan is not an 8-hour job: Wickremesinghe

COLOMBO, JAN 2 /--/ Public service in Sri Lanka is not an eight-hour job, President Ranil Wickremesinghe said on Monday, as he urged public servants to work overtime to make the cash-strapped island a prosperous nation this year. Sri Lanka was hit by an unprecedented financial crisis last year due to a severe paucity of foreign exchange reserves that also sparked political turmoil in the island nation which led to the ouster of the all-powerful Rajapaksa family. "Each person's duties (public servants) cannot be limited to 8 hours a day and 5 days a week. Let's all work with commitment. By the end of 2023, I hope to take this country forward with the support of all of you and restore normalcy," news portal newsfirst.lk reported, quoting Wickremesinghe as saying during an event held at the President's Office here on Monday. The President said no public servant can shirk responsibility as 2023 was a



Ranil Wickremesinghe

crucial year for the country's economy. Incidentally, Sri Lanka turns 75 as an independent nation later this year. National Day, also known as Independence Day, is celebrated on February 4 to commemorate the country's political independence from British rule in 1948. From April to July, chaos reigned supreme in Sri Lanka, with miles-long queues forming at fuel stations and irate residents coming out in thousands blocking roads. In May last year, the Sri Lankan government declared a debt default on over USD 51 billion in foreign loans - a first in the country's history. The resignations by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in July and his elder brother Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in May 2022 amid massive anti-government protests subsided with the formation of a government led by their ally Wickremesinghe.

Wickremesinghe, 73, is now tasked with stabilising the economy and restoring the financial health of the economy, already hit badly by the pandemic. "Five and a half months ago, we took over a historic task at this office. During those five and a half months, we took steps to establish normalcy in the country at a time when the government had collapsed and the economy had also collapsed. However, not all our economic problems are over yet. Nevertheless, today we have the ability to provide fuel, gas, foodstuff and fertilisers as required," Wickremesinghe said. (PTI)

Mission

2024

MUMBAI, JAN 2 /--/ Hardik Pandya will be expected to begin his full-time T20 captaincy tenure on a bold note as the Indian T20 team prepares to start its life beyond Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul with the three match series against Sri Lanka, beginning here on Tuesday. The followers of Indian cricket got more than glimpse of Hardik's vision for the team when led the team to victory in the rain-hit T20 series in New Zealand. In an ODI World Cup year, the shortest format is not priority for the Indian team but the series will allow Hardik to start planning for the future, specifically the 2024 T20 World Cup. India's famed top three -- Rohit, Kohli and Rahul -- are not part of the squad and irrespective of their T20 future, the team must prepare for life without them. The problem with the current Indian T20 team in recent past, has been distinct lack of intent and ability to play fearless cricket. The idea of self preservation at the cost of impactful performance was hurting the team for a long time and perhaps the poor show in the T20 World Cup became the last straw. Rishabh Pant, who suffered a horrific car crash last week, opened for the team in New Zealand alongside Ishan Kishan. Pant was anyway not picked for the Sri Lanka series, making Kishan and Ruturaj Gaikwad opening combination most likely for the first T20 at the high-scoring Wankhede Stadium. Both Kishan and Gaikwad have been bonafide IPL stars for a past few years and this is their real chance to show their wares without worrying about their place in the side. With next T20 World Cup at least 18 months away, the duo is expected to get a

Indian T20 team under new skipper

Hardik prepares for life without 'big three'



fair run although the number of T20 Internationals this year is less than 15 with ODI gaining more precedence. Shubman Gill, who is yet to make his T20 debut, is another opening option for Hardik. At number three, the skipper will rely on the brilliance of world's No. 1 batter Suryakumar Yadav. With Hardik keen to have six bowling options in the playing eleven, Deepak Hooda could be a likely starter for Tuesday's game. The management

will have to choose between Sanju Samson and uncapped Rahul Tripathi for the one spot in the middle order. Tripathi has been warming the bench for a while now and it could continue against Sri Lanka but Samson on account of experience should get a first go. Though uncapped Shivam Mavi and Mukesh Kumar have been included in the squad, the likely pace bowling trio will be of Arshdeep Singh, Harshal Patel and Umran Malik. India

could also pack in more all-rounders in the team with the option of Washington Sundar and Axar Patel. Specialist spinner Yuzvendra Chahal is expected to play in the series opener. Reigning Asia Cup champions Sri Lanka will be no pushovers for India even in their own conditions. Sri Lanka have rewarded the star performers of the Lanka Premier League -- Avishka Fernando, Chamika Karunaratne and Sadeera Samarawickrama -- by including them in the team for the India series. Both Fernando and Karunaratne have made a comeback and will be looking to make an impactful contribution. Bhanuka Rajapaksa will be their key batter in the middle-order. (PTI)

India: Hardik Pandya (captain), Ishan Kishan (wk), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shubman Gill, Suryakumar Yadav (VC), Deepak Hooda, Rahul Tripathi, Sanju Samson, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel, Arshdeep Singh, Harshal Patel, Umran Malik, Shivam Mavi, Mukesh Kumar.
Sri Lanka: Dasun Shanaka (C), Pathum Nissanka, Avishka Fernando, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Kusal Mendis (VC for ODIs), Bhanuka Rajapaksa (only for T20Is), Charith Asalanka, Dhananjaya de Silva, Wanindu Hasaranga (VC for T20Is), Ashen Bandara, Maheesh Theekshana, Jeffrey Vandersay (only for ODIs), Chamika Karunaratne, Dilshan Madushanka, Kasun Rajitha, Nuwanidu Fernando (only for ODIs), Dunith Wellalage, Pramod Madushan, Lahiru Kumara, Nuwan Thushara (only for T20Is).

GAME NOTES

Rishabh Pant's condition improves,

shifted from ICU to private ward

DEHRADUN, JAN 2 /--/ Cricketer Rishabh Pant has been shifted from the ICU to the private ward of the Max Hospital here following improvement in his condition. He was shifted to the private ward on Sunday evening as his condition improved but the pain in his leg persists, sources said. No MRI is planned yet, they added. Pant was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) of the hospital hours after the wicketkeeper-batsman suffered multiple injuries in a car accident on the Delhi-Dehradun highway, near Roorkee, in the early hours of Friday. Uttarakhanda Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, who met Pant at the hospital on Sunday, had said quoting the cricketer that he had lost control over his car while trying to avoid a pothole and something black on the road. Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) director Shyam Sharma, who met the cricketer on Saturday, had also told reporters that the accident took place when Pant was trying to negotiate a pothole. The accident took place at around 5.30 am on Friday, when Pant's luxury car hit a road divider, rolled over to the other side of the road, and caught fire. Pant had a miraculous escape but he sustained injuries on his forehead, leg, and bruises on his back. (PTI)



Not satisfied with his preparation,

NZ pacer Milne pulls out

of India and Pakistan tours

WELLINGTON, JAN 2 /--/ New Zealand pacer Adam Milne on Monday withdrew himself from the white-ball tours of Pakistan and India due to lack of preparation. Milne finished the recent home series against India with a tight hamstring and subsequently had his return delayed for the Wellington Firebirds, missing two Ford Trophy matches in December. Despite playing the first two games of the Dream11 Super Smash season for the Firebirds, the prospect of six ODIs in 16 days across Pakistan and India was considered too big of a risk. A decision was therefore made, by mutual agreement, to replace Milne with Central Stags pace bowler Blair Tuckner, who is already in Pakistan with the Test team. New Zealand selector Gavin Larsen said the decision wasn't an easy one. "Adam was very up front with us about his concerns around the lack of one-day bowling loading for the upcoming tours," Larsen said in a New Zealand Cricket statement. "After chatting to him, we agreed his preparation leading into the tour wouldn't be sufficient for him to cope with the demands of back-to-back, three-game ODI series. (PTI)

Lance Morris moving closer

to Test berth, says Hazlewood

SYDNEY, JAN 2 /--/ Australian pace-bowling stalwart Josh Hazlewood is confident young quick Lance Morris is moving closer to a Test debut, given the extra pace and accuracy he can bring to the side. Morris is in the Australian squad for the third Test against South Africa and his chances for selection have been brightened by the absence of all-rounder Cameron Green and Mitchell Starc, both of whom suffered serious finger injuries during the Boxing Day Test. While the SCG wicket traditionally favours spin, the forecast of rain could tilt the selection in favour of a tearaway bowler, and Hazlewood suggested Morris is a suitable candidate for the job. Hazlewood, returning to the side after missing three successive Tests due to a side strain, said he is impressed with Morris' pace. "Lance obviously brings that extra pace that we probably lack with (Mitchell) Starc (injured)," Hazlewood was quoted as saying by abc.net.au on Monday. "Usually when you get that in a youngster (bowler), they spray them around a bit, but his accuracy is very good for that sort of pace. There's quite a number of guys on my 'not-facing list' (in the nets) and he's at the top of the tree," added Hazlewood. (PTI)

Ligue 1: Messi and Neymar-less

PSG suffer first defeat of season

as Lens clinch 3-1 win

LENS, JAN 2 /--/ Paris Saint-Germain, without World Cup winner Lionel Messi and Neymar, lost for the first time in any competition since March 20 last year when they were defeated 3-1 at Lens on Sunday. "Lens deserved their win," said PSG coach Christophe Galtier. Lois Openda scored one and set up another as Lens, who have only lost once in Ligue 1 this season, closed the gap on PSG at the top to four points after 17 rounds. "We are happy to be four points behind," said Lens coach Franck Haise. "This victory proves that we can beat anyone in this championship." PSG's last loss was more than nine months ago when they fell 3-0 at Monaco in Ligue 1, although that still left them 12 points clear at the top of the table. On Sunday at Lens, PSG were without Messi and suspended Brazilian Neymar, but Kylian Mbappe, the Golden Boot winner in Qatar, received a rousing welcome from the Lens fans as he warmed up. Galtier said he hoped French fans would give Messi a similar reception. "He's going to join us on January 3, in 48 hours," said Galtier. "I hope Leo will be well received. He won the most beautiful trophy by being very good. We know he's a great and decisive player so we hope he'll be well received obviously." "Kylian worked hard," said Galtier. "He showed a very good attitude." "Leo and 'Ney' were not there but that is no excuse." (AFP)



Lens coach Franck Haise celebrates after the match against PSG

Something I have always

wanted to do: Ashton Agar

on playing Tests in India

MELBOURNE, JAN 2 /--/ Australia all-rounder Ashton Agar is relishing the prospect of bowling on spin-friendly sub-continent wickets during the four Test series against India in February. Australia are slated to play four Tests and three ODIs during their tour of India in February-March. Agar, who was included in Australia's squad for the third Test against South Africa following Cameron Green's injury, said he always dreamt of playing red-ball cricket in India. "It is in my mind," he was quoted as saying by Sydney Morning Herald. "I love watching the Test matches over there, and I think playing Test match cricket in India is something I've always wanted to do. "It's the most exciting cricket to watch on TV because the wickets have been well recently. They've been spinning sideways, and I imagine they'll spin a fair bit over there as well. It's a tour I'd love to go on, but we'll just wait and see what happens." Left-arm spinner Agar, who last played a Test in 2017, has nine wickets from four Tests. From 63 first-class matches, he has an overall average of 41.84. He has also scored 2271 runs including three hundreds. The 29-year-old, who scored a superb 98 batting at No.11 in his Test debut against England in 2013, said he would love to bat at number 7 should he be given a chance. "I feel like if I do come in I'll be batting around that No.7 mark, which is really cool, that responsibility is really nice, it's something I've been doing for Western Australia and I think it's something that makes you play better to be honest," Agar said. "Professional sportsmen enjoy that responsibility, you feel like you have to step up and do that job for the team. If that opportunity came, I'd just give it my best crack. "Any time you bat in four-day cricket you have time, particularly at No.7, there's always enough time. All anyone wants is enough time to make 100, that's every batter's dream. I got close once, so it would be nice to do that." (PTI)

Brazil gears up for final farewell to 'King' Pele

SANTOS, BRAZIL, JAN 2 /--/ Brazilians bid a final farewell this week to football giant Pele, starting Monday with a 24-hour public wake at the stadium of his long-time team, Santos. The oceanside home of the team nicknamed "Peixe" -- "fish" in Portuguese -- is expecting a huge influx of fans looking to honour the "King" of football, who died aged 82 on Thursday after a long battle with cancer.

Stadium doors will open at 10:00 am local time (1300 GMT). The coffin bearing the remains of the only player to have won three World Cups will be displayed in the centre of the field. Known as Vila Belmiro after the neighborhood where it is located, the black-and-white stadium has a capacity of 16,000 people. In the stands, three giant flags could be seen Sunday, one with an image of Pele displaying the famous number 10 on his jersey. Another bore the message "Long live the king"; the third said simply, "Pele 82 years." Entry to the stadium will be allowed until 10:00

am Tuesday, officials said. After that, a procession will be held through the streets of Santos, a port city about 75 kilometers (47 miles) from the state capital Sao Paulo. The parade will pass the house of Pele's mother, 100-year-old Celeste Arantes, who is unaware that her world-famous son has died. "She doesn't know," Pele's sister Maria Lucia do Nascimento told ESPN on Friday. "She is not conscious." The procession will end at a cemetery in Santos, where Pele will be interred in a special mausoleum. Born Edson Arantes do Nascimento, Pele is widely considered to have been the best player yet of the beautiful game. His death sparked a global outpouring of tributes, with his native Brazil holding three days of national mourning. He scored 1,283 goals in a career of 21 years, most of them played at Santos. Wreaths of flowers left by his fans have brought a splash of color to Vila Belmiro, which houses a bust and a statue of the football great. Silvio Neves Souza, an electrician on holiday from Sao Paulo, took a moment

Sunday to visit the stadium since he will not be able to attend the official ceremony. "I'm sure a lot of people will come to the wake, not just old people who saw him play, but also young people," the 54-year-old said. Elsewhere in the city, banners with Pele's face decorate another monument erected in his likeness. "I loved the world with the ball at my feet," read one sign. At the headquarters of the Brazilian Football Confederation in Rio de Janeiro, a giant poster with Pele's image bears the word "eternal." And at the inauguration on Sunday of Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, the ceremony began with a minute's silence in Pele's memory. Military police in Sao Paulo state, where digital street screens also pay tribute to the prolific striker, said there would be a "robust" deployment for the posthumous tributes. Security will be strengthened at Congonhas airport in Sao Paulo ahead of the expected arrival of throngs of athletes, politicians, dignitaries and fans for the wake. Pele had been hospitalised at the Albert Einstein Hospital for a month until his death on 29 December. "We were with him" on 21 December, his sister recounted. "It was very quiet, we talked a little, but I already sensed that he was feeling it, he already knew he was leaving." Born on 23 October, 1940, Pele grew up selling peanuts on the street to help his impoverished family. He got his famous nickname after mispronouncing Bile, the name of a goalkeeper at Vasco de Sao Lourenco, where his footballer father once played. Pele exploded onto the scene at age 15, when he started playing professionally with Santos. At just 17, he helped Brazil to its first World Cup championship, in 1958. That was followed by World Cup titles in 1962 and 1970. The latter marked the pinnacle of his career, as he starred on what many consider the greatest team of all time. Pele had been in increasingly fragile health in recent years. He remained active on social media, cheering on Brazil during the World Cup in Qatar and consoling the pre-tournament favorites when they were eliminated in the quarter-finals just three weeks before his death. (AFP)



Flowers are seen in front of a statue of Brazilian soccer legend Pele at the Vila Belmiro Stadium on the eve of Pele's funeral in Santos

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