



PM Modi Performs Last Rites Of His Mother Heeraben In Gandhinagar

Gandhinagar(KCN): The last rites of Heeraben Modi, mother of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, were performed at a crematorium in Gandhinagar on Friday morning. Heeraben passed away at the U.N. Mehta hospital in Ahmedabad, where she was admitted on

Wednesday for some heart-related problems. The Vadnagar town will remain shut for the day as a mark of respect to the departed soul. Vadnagar traders Association has appealed to the members to keep shutters down. Union Surface and Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari while paying

tributes said in his tweet, "May his soul rest in peace, and I pray to god to give strength to the family to endure the pain." Congress party's president Mallikarjun Kharge paid tribute to Heeraben by saying, "Deeply saddened to hear about the demise of Heeraben Modi. My

heartfelt condolences to Narendra Modi on the loss of his beloved mother. Our thoughts and prayers are with the entire family in this hour of grief. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, paying condolences, has said, "For any son's mother in the entire world,

mother's demise is unbearable for any son, I am sad to hear the news." Congress party's General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra paying tribute tweeted, "May god give strength to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his family to face the demise of Heeraben."

New Downstream Product of NALCO Launched by Secretary, Mines, GoI

Bhubaneswar: Navratna CPSE National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO), has launched a new downstream product- Aluminium LED Cap stock in Alloy AA1100 with temper H12 in coil form. The product was formally launched by Shri Vivek Bharadwaj, Secretary, Ministry of Mines, Govt of India, in virtual mode during his visit to NALCO Corporate office on December 29. Shri Sridhar Patra, CMD, NALCO, Dr. Veena Kumari D, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Mines, Govt of India, Directors and senior official of NALCO were notably present during the product launching ceremony. Besides, as part of the launching ceremony, special arrangements were also made at the production unit i.e at the Rolled Product Unit at NALCO's Smelter Plant at Angul. The 1st consignment of the product was also dispatched on the occasion. Worth mentioning that the Aluminium LED Cap stock in Alloy AA1100, is used for manufacturing of Aluminium cup, which is used as cap in LED bulbs that acts as heat sink. Aluminium is an ideal choice for heat sink applications and Alloy AA1100 having higher conductivity is therefore suitable for LED bulb cap. With launching of this new downstream product, market share of NALCO will be enhanced.



Odisha Government Announces Another 4 Pc Hike In Dearness Allowance

Bhubaneswar(KCN): With new year around the corner, the Odisha government today announced a four per cent hike in the Dearness Allowance (DA) for the State government employees. The official notification from the Chief Minister's office also stated that the hike will be effective retrospectively from July 1, 2022. With the latest revision, it now stands at 38 per cent. This is the second hike in DA this year. In September, ahead of Durga Puja festivities, the Odisha government had announced a three per cent hike in DA for state government employees and pensioners, taking the allowance to 34 per cent from the existing 31 per cent. The decision, which had been taken considering the overall financial resources and fiscal target stipulated under Odisha Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2005, will come into effect from January 1 next year.

Flight Service Between Rourkela & Bhubaneswar From Jan 7

Rourkela(KCN): There is a piece of good news for the residents of Odisha's Steel City. The daily flight service between Rourkela and Bhubaneswar is all set to begin on January 7, 2023. Alliance Air will operate ATR-72 aircraft between Rourkela and Bhubaneswar on daily basis, sources said. International flight operations from Bhubaneswar to directly connect Dubai, Singapore, Bangkok and Odisha: Silver City being decked up for hockey world cup opening ceremony "The online sale of tickets will begin in a couple of days. The first flight on the



route will either take off from Rourkela Airport or Biju Patnaik International Airport in Bhubaneswar in the afternoon of January 7," sources added. An ATR-72 aircraft of Alliance Air successfully landed at Rourkela Airport at 3.20 pm today and took off for Bhubaneswar at 3.45 pm as part of the trial run. Notably, several

matches of FIH Men's Hockey World Cup-2023 will be played at Birsamunda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela. The state government had urged the Centre to make necessary arrangements for starting flight service between Rourkela and Bhubaneswar ahead of the hockey world cup. The Directorate General

of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has granted license to the Rourkela Airport for public use a few days ago. "The license authorizes the airport to be used as regular place of landing and departure to all persons on equal terms and conditions for operation by aircraft requiring specifications of runway and associated facilities including granted exemptions equal to or less than those indicated in the aerodrome manual, subject to the conditions as contained in Schedule-I and for a period as shown in Schedule-II hereto," the DGCA mentioned in the license document.

Rishabh Pant Injured After His Car Hits Divider, Catches Fire In Uttarakhand

New Delhi: Star India wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant suffered a horrific car crash early on Friday morning near Roorkee, Uttarakhand. He was admitted in a hospital in Dehradun. Pant was driving his Mercedes Benz car, when he met with an accident near Roorkee in Uttarakhand. The talented youngster sustained injuries after his car collided with a divider and caught fire while he was travelling from Delhi to Uttarakhand. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has provided an update on the health condition of the 25-year-old cricketer. Pant has two cuts on forehead and a ligament tear in right knee but is currently stable, read a statement from the cricket body. "India

wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant met with a car accident early on Friday morning near Roorkee, Uttarakhand. He was admitted to Saksham Hospital Multispecialty and Trauma Centre where he was treated for impact injuries. Rishabh has two cuts on his forehead, a ligament tear in his right knee and has also hurt his right wrist, ankle, toe and has suffered abrasion injuries on his back," the BCCI statement read. "Rishabh's condition remains stable, and he has now been shifted to Max Hospital, Dehradun, where he will undergo MRI scans to ascertain the extent of his injuries and formulate his further course of treatment."

"The BCCI is in constant touch with Rishabh's family while the Medical Team is in close contact with the doctors currently treating Rishabh. The Board will see to it that Rishabh receives the best possible medical care and gets all the support he needs to come out of this traumatic phase," the statement added. Pant, who was on his way to his hometown Roorkee to surprise his mother, dozed off while driving, which resulted in the accident. He had to break the windscreen of the car to escape after the vehicle caught fire. The driver and other staff of a Haryana Roadways bus passing by helped the cricketer get out of the burning



Mercedes Benz, said Uttarakhand Police, Ashok Kumar, has confirmed that the cricketer was alone in the car at the time of the accident and broke the windscreen to escape from the vehicle after it caught fire. "Indian cricketer Rishabh Pant's car met with an accident at around 5:30 am. The

incident took place at Mohammedpur Jat near Roorkee. According to what Pant said, he dozed off while driving and as a result the car collided with the divider and caught fire. He was moved to the Roorkee hospital from where he has now been shifted to Dehradun," DGP Ashok Kumar told

the media. Dr. Ashish Yagnik of Max Hospital said that Rishabh Pant has minor injuries and is currently being treated for injury around his waist. He is out of danger and conscious. Pant was part of the Indian team that had won the Test series against Bangladesh 2-0 earlier this month. He had impressed with knocks of 46 and 93. He was recently dropped from the T20I team announced for the series against Sri Lanka and was supposed to join National Cricket Academy for strength and conditioning programme ahead of February's Border-Gavaskar Trophy against Australia. Pant has been India's regular wicket-

keeper across all formats after MS Dhoni's retirement and has been one of India's top performers with the bat in Test cricket in past two years. He had played a big role in India's second successive Test series victory in Australia in 2020/21. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said his government will bear the entire expense of Pant's treatment. Dhami spoke to the cricketer's mother and assured her that the state government will provide all necessary support. He also spoke to officials and asked them to make all arrangements for his treatment. Arrangement for an air ambulance would be made if required, he said.

Barbil youths bagged several medals in Taekwondo Championship



Barbil(KCN): Taekwondo players of Barbil in the district of Keonjhar, Odisha clinched 51 medals (10 gold, 32 silver and 9 bronze) to emerge as the team champion in National Taekwondo Championship held at Kolkata. These players were received grand welcome after reaching at Barbil railway station. Mr Dillip Mishra, the former Chairman of Barbil Municipality who was present during the

occasion said he was impressed by seeing the talents among the local boys and girls. He greeted all players including coach by offering sweets and bouquet. "These young players are truly a product who can represent India in International level if they are given proper training" Kartik Behera, the coach of the team said. Parents, teachers and residents of Barbil were also present on the occasion.

Bhubaneswar gears up for grand New Year celebrations, cops to check untoward incidents

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): As the state capital, Bhubaneswar gears up for a grand New Year bash after two years, hotels, restaurants and clubs have planned a variety of

mium will organise 'Let Go' to celebrate New Year's eve. The celebrations will begin at 7 pm and continue till 11.30-12 am. The event will include dance per-

said they will hold a special event on New Year's eve where partygoers can groove to dance and music performances from 7 pm onwards with unlim-

As the revellers are likely to come out to the streets for celebrations in good numbers, the Commissionerate police are gearing up to check untoward



events and programmes for 'Zero Night'. The Commissionerate police too are gearing up to ensure the New Year's eve celebrations in the city remain hassle-free. Special arrangements have been made at hotels, restaurants and clubs including Swosti Premium, Presidency, HHI Bhubaneswar, Empires, Pushpak and VITS among others. Hotel Swosti Pre-

formances, and live music along with unlimited food and drinks, exotic mocktails, snacks and a gala dinner. "Since we are organising New Year's eve party after a gap of two years, the response has been overwhelming. A maximum number of our coupons have already been sold," said a hotel staff. Similarly, organisers at HHI Bhubaneswar at Shriya Talkies Road

ited food and beverages. The New Year Countdown-2023 at Pushpak Hotel will also have a live performance of singers and a fashion show as special attractions. Hotel Presidency is organising Disco Night 2023 on December 31 to celebrate New Year's eve. Apart from hotels and restaurants, people have also planned celebrations with their families outdoors.

incidents. Check posts at 28 places will be set up to crack down on drunken driving and other traffic violations. DCP Prateek Singh said the checking will continue from 7 pm to 2 am. At least 13 platoons of the police force will be deployed at tourist spots while quick action teams will be deployed at Master Canteen, Kalpana Chowk, Khandagiri and Rasulgarh.

Govt committed to provide justice to weaker sections: Odisha CM

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday said the state government is committed to providing justice to the vulnerable sections of society. Addressing the 51st annual conference of the All Odisha Lawyers' Association here, the chief minister said the state requires lawyers to be knowledgeable, intelligent and above all possessed with an unrestrained passion for providing justice, especially to poor and helpless people. Stating that lawyers are the pivot of the justice system, the chief minister said they act as a bridge between justice seekers and the delivery of justice. "Therefore, it is quite clear how dependent is our justice delivery system on the efficiency of lawyers," he added. Referring to steps taken by the state government through various institutional mechanisms such as

Madhu Babu legal aid camps at the panchayat level, legal literacy camps through legal services authority and other initiatives, the chief minister said he expected lawyers to stand behind the efforts of delivery of justice to people who are not well versed with the complexities of the legal system. The chief minister said the lawyers' community is an asset to society and has always been supportive of the government's initiatives for the transformation of the state at all levels. Stating that the government is sympathetic to the welfare of the lawyers' community, he said it has established a welfare trust for advocates with an annual grant of Rs 5 crore. "We are also working to improve the infrastructure of our courts in the state and established a Judicial Infrastructure Management Agency," he said.

Russian envoy lashes out at Congress MP for questioning cremation of two Russians who died in Odisha

NEW DELHI(KCN): The mysterious deaths of two Russians in Odisha recently and their subsequent cremations has stirred up a storm. Even though the local police in Odisha have said that they don't suspect any foul play, it hasn't refrained people from commenting. Congress MP, Manish Tiwari, has expressed his surprise at why the two were cremated and not buried. "Two Christians cremated not buried! Why? Hercule Poirot says burnt bodies tell no tales," Tiwari said. Poirot is a fictional Belgian detective created by British writer Agatha Christie.

"We appreciate the investigation efforts

Information centre, Tiwari

two days after his friend Vladimir



In response to this, Russian Ambassador Denis Alipov lashed out at the assertion made by Tiwari.

by the Indian authorities into the death of two Russian nationals in Odisha. Meanwhile, it would be useful for some Hercule Poirot lovers to learn that cremation in Russia is as customary as burial. Idleness is the root of all evil," Ambassador Alipov said, quoting Tiwari's comment.

tweeted, "the order of the burial which we have at present has been sanctified by ancient customs and is as such protected by the sacred canons...on the contrary, cremation of bodies is unacceptable from the church's point of view."

Bidenov, 62, died due to what is viewed as excessive drinking. Antov was also a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Vladimir Oblast. His sausage company "Vladimir Standard" was estimated by Forbes to be worth \$140 million in 2019. The Russian embassy has maintained all along that these two deaths were accidental and ruled out any foul play.

FIH Men's Hockey World Cup: BDA readies squads with special uniform, vehicles



BHUBANESWAR(KCN): Enforcement squads formed for FIH Men's Hockey World Cup will don a special uniform and conduct patrolling in dedicated vehicles across the city to ensure the smooth con-

duct of the event next month. Officials of the Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) said all 17 squads formed for the world cup will have special patrolling vehicles fitted with GPS, sirens and

lights. The devices have been fixed on the vehicles after approval from the Commissionerate police, said a BDA official. He said enforcement squad members as per the direction of BDA VC

Balwant Singh will also be on duty wearing special uniforms. The squads will patrol major areas in the city to intensify eviction and prevent roadside encroachments during the quadrennial event.

FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup-2023: Colleges in state plan walkathons, sand art

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): The FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup-2023 fever seems to have taken the higher educational institutions of the state in its grip too. Apart from plans to install large LCD screens on campuses for students and locals to watch the matches - particularly ones played by India - colleges and universities in Rourkela, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack will hold walkathons by students. Institutions across the state will also create sand art on campuses to create awareness of hockey and the world cup.

world cup. All the campuses will put up posters, signages like 'I love

Hockey World Cup' and logos of the world cup with photographs of popular Odia hockey players, said higher education minister Rohit Pujari. This apart, sand art relating to the theme of



the world cup and the sport will be created by students with the help of local artists at one or two popular areas within a campus. All the colleges will display the world cup logo at the main entrances of their campuses. The Regional Directorates of Education (RDEs) have been asked to reach out to other higher educational institutions not coming under the state government like KIIT, OUAT, SUM, ITER, VIMSAR, VSSUT, NIT-Rourkela, IIT, NISER and IIIT to carry out similar activities ahead of the World Cup.

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Janhvi Kapoor's 'Mili' now streaming on Netflix



Janhvi Kapoor starrer survivalist-thriller Mili is now streaming on Netflix. The film was released in the-

atres on November 4. Directed by Mathukutty Xavier, Milli is the Hindi remake of the

Malayalam film Helen. The original starred Anna Ben and was also helmed by Xavier. Taking to Instagram,

Xavier made the announcement. Sharing a poster of the film he wrote, "Mili now streaming on @netflix_in"

The film couldn't perform at the box office and managed to mint just over Rs 2 crore. It was made at a budget of about

Rs 30 crore. Critics, however, praised the film, especially Janhvi Kapoor's performance.

Lyricist Vaisagh: Ajith sir liked both Chilla Chilla and Kasethan Kadavulada I wrote for Thunivu

Music is an integral part of many of our lives. For fans of Tamil cinema, it is but a given that the songs from our favourite actor's films are the soundtrack of our own lives too. Likewise, for lyricist Vaisagh, who grew up listening to actor Ajith Kumar's Vathikuchi Pathikadhuda (Dheena), Oh Nenje Nenje (Mugavari) and albums of Billa and Mankatha, writing lyrics for his favourite actor was definitely a dream come true.

Vaisagh has penned the lyrics for two songs in Thunivu-- Chilla Chilla and Kasethan Kadavulada. "Every artist wants their debut to be special. Little did I know that my debut will not just be a special but a matter of pride too. Writing a couple of songs for Ajith sir's Thunivu is a dream come true," says Vaisagh.

Vaisagh, an independent musician, rose to fame with his singles like Kakka Kadha and En Rant Ah Konjam Kelu. Recalling how he came on board for Thunivu, Vaisagh says, "The head of Think Music, Santhosh, introduced me to Ghibran and director H Vinoth. My first meeting was for Kasethan Kadavulada. It was at the same time when one of my independent tracks, Edhuvum Kedaikalana, was released. After listen-

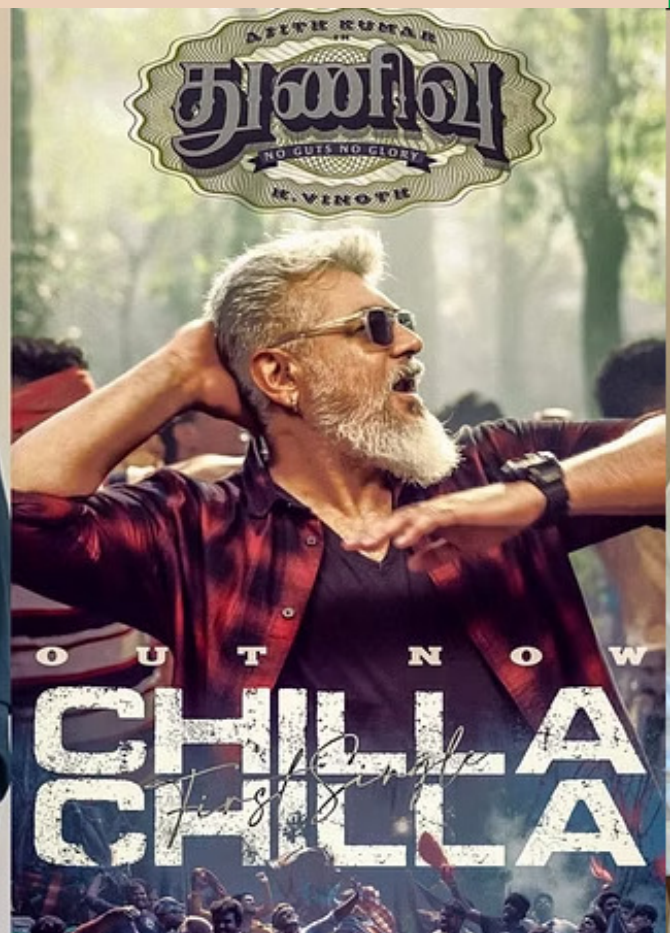
ing to this, Ghibran called me and asked if I could write an-

negativity around us and focus on the goal. "My favourite

me keep up my work," Vaisagh shares.

him in the indie-music scene too. He also observes how

to work in Thunivu almost felt like a Thanos snap," he



other song as well. And that became Chilla Chilla."

While Anirudh Ravichander sang Chilla Chilla, Vaisagh with Ghibran and Manju Warrior sang Kasethan Kadavulada.

Vaisagh reveals that he was initially apprehensive of the responsibility to write for a "mass" star. He reveals that Ghibran and Vinoth insisted he retained his own style for Chilla Chilla as well. "I am glad they let me work in my own way and were very welcoming of my ideas. They wanted me to imbibe the content and deliver it through my rather casual lyrics," he adds.

Vaisagh feels that Chilla Chilla is a celebration of life and a reminder to dilute the

line from Chilla Chilla — Mathavana mattam thatti mela vanthu no use...Kathuravan katthatumey...thatti vidu time pass..Vantha enna pona enna yaaru enna sonna enna—exactly resonates with this idea."

About his second song for Thunivu, Kasethan Kadavulada, Vaisagh says that the idea of the song is universal and relatable to everyone. He also adds that Ajith felt Kasethan Kadavulada was one of the actor's favourites in recent times. "When I met Ajith sir, we had finished composing both the songs. He said he liked both of them, especially the second song. He also said that I have a good future and asked to

Extending his gratitude to Vinoth and Ghibran, Vaisagh says that this launchpad will give great mileage for

this entry has given him hope and responsibility to do better and bigger in the industry. "The process of getting

laughs, adding, "I am overwhelmed by the responses coming my way. It is beyond expectation," he signs off.

'Bol Radha Bol' producer Nitin Manmohan dies at 62

MUMBAI: Film producer Nitin Manmohan, known for movies such as 'Bol Radha Bol' and 'Laadla', died on Thursday



at a hospital here, his daughter Prachi said. He was 62.

The filmmaker was undergoing treatment at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Navi Mumbai after he had a cardiac arrest on December 3. Nitin Manmohan was battling several health complications and passed away around 10 am today following status

epilepticus (abnormal brain signals), his daughter said.

"He had a cardiac arrest on December 3 and since then he has been on a ventilator. When he was brought to the hospital, the doctors revived him.

No oxygen and blood supply in the brain and other parts of the body led to some damage and caused status epilepticus.

Slowly, his condition started deteriorating. He left us today at around 10-10.20 am," Prachi told.

Nitin Manmohan is the son of the late actor Manmohan, who featured in films such as 'Brahmachari', 'Gumnaam' and 'Naya Zamana'.

Besides his daughter, the producer is survived by his wife.

Heeraben Modi: A Life Devoted to Values & Selflessness



Lalit Garg

The demise of compassionate soul Heeraben Modi, who created a world hero like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is an irreparable loss, a trauma not only for her son but for the entire nation. The stop of the centenary journey of Indian values and ideals is definitely a matter of mourning for every person of the country, but this is not the time to mourn, but to imbibe their ideals and life-values. It is said that God could not live with everyone so he created a mother. Hiraben was such a wonderful mother, an angel. To say that she was human, but was no less than God. She was like a temple, a place of worship and was a place of pilgrimage. She was not only the life giver of Narendra Modi but also the culture maker, but also the ideal mother of this nation. With her demise, the era of affection, culture, sacrifice, dedication, simplicity and ideals has come to a standstill. What Prime Minister Modi said while paying tribute to his mother is an example of inspiration? He said, "A glorious century rests at the feet of God... In Maa, I have always felt

that trinity, which includes the journey of an ascetic, the symbol of a selfless Karmayogi and a life committed to values. When I met him on her 100th birthday, she had said one thing, which I always remember, that work wisely and live life with purity.' Whenever Modi went to meet his mother, this meeting and dialogue between mother and son became a big event for the country and the world. It had been becoming an inspiration to the world. Maa Heeraben, not only shaped Modi's body but also shaped his mind, personality and self-confidence and in doing so she consumed herself, forgot herself. 'Maa Heeraben' - In this short word lies the vastness/comprehensibility of love. There is the culmination of love inside her or we can say that she is the culmination of complete love. For the Modi family, mother Heeraben was life, strength, energy, love, compassion, and was synonymous with affection. She was not only the birth giver but also the life maker. She was the basis of the development of not only Narendra Modi but the entire family. He has woven the fabric of this family with her own hands. Constant progressive and cultural changes were made in the shape-type, lifestyle, thinking and mind of this family. It was the mother, the mother, who changed both the fortune and the



picture of this family. Mother Heeraben's hundred years of struggling life is a symbol of Indian ideals. Mr. Modi has imbibed the spirit of 'Matrivedbhav' and the values of Heeraben in his life. That's why there is no other human relation for Modi more important than his mother. She was full of all qualities, like the ocean in seriousness and the Himalayas in patience. Her blessings became a boon. This is the reason why amidst all the busyness and responsibilities, Modi used to go to his mother, sit near her, listen to her, see her, listen to her words. Taking her blessings, visiting her and leaving with a new energy. Hiraben Modi was born in the year 1923. She was 100 years old. Hiraben Modi was married to Damodar Das Mulchand Modi. Hiraben Modi has five sons and one daughter. The names of sons of Hiraben Modi are Soma

Modi, Amrit Modi, Narendra Modi, Prahlad Modi and Pankaj Modi. And her daughter's name is Vasanti Ben Hasmukhlal Modi. Damodar Das Mulchand Modi is no more in this world. Damodar Das Modi used to set up a street stall in Vadnagar earlier. At the same time, for some time after this, he also worked to sell tea at the railway station. Modi had said in one of his blogs that the house in Vadnagar where we used to live was very small. There was no window in that house, no bathroom, and no toilet. Overall, that one-and-a-half room structure made of mud walls and tile roof was our home, in which our parents, all of us brothers and sisters used to live. It is natural that where there is scarcity, there is also tension. But the specialty of mother Heeraben was that even in the midst of scarcity, she never allowed

tension to dominate the house. Hiraben's whole life has been a mix of inspirations. She was punctual, she had a habit of getting up at 4 in the morning, she used to finish a lot of work early in the morning. Be it grinding wheat, grinding millets, picking rice or pulses, she used to do all the work herself. She used to hum some of her favorite bhajans or prabhatis while working. A famous hymn of Narsi Mehta ji is "Jalkamal chhandi jaane bala, swami amaro jagshe" she liked it very much. There is also a lullaby, "Shivaji nu halardu", Heeraben used to hum it a lot. To get two to four paise more for running the house, Heeraben used to wash the utensils of others. She used to take out time to spin the charkha as well because that too earned some money. The work of extracting cotton from cotton rind, the work of making yarn from

cotton, Heeraben herself used to do all these things. She was also very fond of decorating the house, making the house beautiful. She used to work the whole day to make the house look beautiful and clean. She used to cover the ground inside the house with cow dung. Her life was self-supporting. It was simple and restrained. Maa' Heeraben' is that supernatural word, which makes Narendra Modi's heart full of love and emotions and he felt so inspired and energized by hearing the word 'Maa'. For him 'Maa' is that powerful mantra,

whose mere utterance destroys every pain. According to Modi, the love and glory of 'Mother' cannot be described in words, it can only be felt; who gave ideal values to me and my family. In my view, the rituals given by her are their origin; which is the basic identity of every mother. Her values and memory are the basis of Modi's future life. Hiraben's childhood was spent in many struggles and deprivations. She did not get the love of her mother. The effects of the global pandemic a century ago then lasted for many years. The same epidemic had taken away Heeraben's mother. Hiraben must have been only a few days old then. She didn't remember her mother's face, her lap, anything,

this family created by the Creator. She used to weave dreams and this family used to live and enjoy those dreams. She used to teach how to live, whether they were near or not, her love and caress, the values given by her lived together with every member of the family. She shaped the future of her children. That's why she was also in the form of the first Guru. Maa Heeraben as the first teacher has a very important role in shaping the future of every member of this family. Sometimes in their lullabies, sometimes in scolding, sometimes with love and sometimes with caress, she kept on sowing the seeds of a bright future for her children. The whole nation has been inspired by her simple life-ideals



she couldn't insist on her mother, couldn't hide her head in her lap. Heeraben did not even get the knowledge of letters; she did not even see the door of the school. She saw only poverty and lack everywhere in the house. Still, in these absences, she molded his six children in upbringing and rituals. Hiraben was the superpower who created

and will continue to be so for ages. Heeraben has given strength along with culture; her emotional strength will continue to work as a protective shield not only for Modi but for the entire nation.

**Writer, Journalist, Columnist
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Sivagiri-a pilgrimage to enlightenment

M PRADYU

Anybody visiting Kerala during the winter vacation must make a visit to Sivagiri mutt which is a very famous pilgrim centre and anybody irrespective of caste, religion and race can visit this beautiful and divine spot where the greatest of Kerala reformers and one of the greatest saint and philosopher the nation had seen, Sree Narayana Guru, spent his final days preaching the world the message of 'one caste, one religion, one God for mankind' and this is the place from where the Guru left for the heavenly abode and his body buried at the Maha samadhi mandapam atop the Sivagiri hill. The Sivagiri hillock, a beautiful place with blessed with natural splendour, stands tall as a beacon spreading the great philanthropists message of universal brotherhood. In Kerala many many years ago there was a

decline in moral standards of society and it was full of incorrect practices because of improper interpretation of the holy texts. There was untouchability and caste systems prevalent separating human beings. Sree Narayana Guru was born when these wrong practices were at the peak in Kerala. He devoted and dedicated his entire life to educate people and bring on the principle of one caste, one religion, one God for humanity. The Guru established a healthy social system in Kerala and discouraged bad practices such as drinking liquor, unwanted traditional customs, superstitious practices and unwanted rites. He laid stress on education and declared it as the basis of social progress. During his life he travelled far and wide to propagate this mission. He was a scholar of great understanding of the ancient Indian texts



like Vedas and upanishads and he was proficient in Sanskrit and Tamil besides Malayalam. The guru was a social and spiritual Revolutionary and the preachings and teachings of the Guru gave the philosophy of unity and importance of Oneness among human kind. The Guru besides being a spiritual leader and social reformer was a great poet and has composed many poems and is the master of many works including the famous prayer song "Daivadasakam". The

works have become popular due to its rich and brilliant messages embedded with superb philosophy. The current problems faced by the world - religious conflicts, casteism, terrorism and atrocities on nature can be put to an end if we follow and practice the preachings of Gurudevam. Those who embrace his idea's and understand his teachings will never tread the path of violence. The Sivagiri mutt was established in the year



1904 and Guruji consecrated an idol of Goddess Saraswati. The Saradha temple was designed by the Guru himself and is unique in its structure. It emphasises the Gurus idea of

gaining knowledge and spreading knowledge. It is octagonal in shape and has large windows which normally in most Hindu temples are not found. The temple, the mutt and the samadhi mandapam has become a part of a divine pilgrimage which was conceptualised by the

subjects - education, cleanliness, piety, organized endeavour, agriculture, trade, handicrafts and technical training. Even today during the pilgrim days the mutt schedules workshops, seminars and conferences on the subjects and experts from all around the globe participate and share their wisdom to

December. Every pilgrim season the mutt invites great personalities that include the President, Vice president, Prime minister, national and international leaders. This year Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will inaugurate the 90th Sivagiri pilgrimage. Several dignitaries such as Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Dr Zakir Hussain, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Dr Abdul kalam, Narendra Modi, The Dalai Lama, are some of the great dignitaries who participated in the pilgrim congregation in the past. This year the When most pilgrimages in our country are focused on worship and rituals the Sivagiri pilgrimage is unique as it blends spirituality with knowledge gaining and imparting. Sivagiri mutt is 44 kilometres North of Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of Kerala.

**GEETH THALIKAVU
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Irked by 'Jai Shri Ram' slogan, Mamata refuses to share dais during Vande Bharat Express inauguration

KOLKATA: Irked by the 'Jai Shri Ram' slogan at the virtual inauguration event of West Bengal's first

ever, following repeated requests from the governor, Mamata delivered a brief speech expressing

'Jai Shri Ram' slogan. In 2021, on the occasion of celebrating the birthday of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

shouted the slogan and in retaliation, TMC supporters shouted Trinamool Congress zindabad



Vande Bharat Express by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee refused to share the stage at Howrah station. Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, who was present at the event, was seen trying to control the BJP supporters and requested them to refrain from shouting slogans. He pleaded with Mamata and requested her to come on the dais which she refused.

Governor CV Ananda Bose was seen interacting with Mamata. The Bengal CM even refused to deliver a speech. But, how-

her condolences over the death of Modi's mother. A political slugfest erupted over the issue of the slogan. Firhad Hakim, a minister in Mamata's cabinet, said the BJP supporters deliberately shouted the slogan to irritate the chief minister. "Jai Shri Ram should be said in a temple or house with a pure mind. But the BJP supporters are using this slogan to irritate our chief minister. Had we wanted we could have stopped them immediately. But we believe in political courtesy," he said.

This is not the first time Mamata expressed her discontent over raising the

at Victoria Memorial in Kolkata, where Modi and other Union ministers were present, BJP supporters raised the slogan as soon as Mamata appeared on the stage. Expressing her displeasure, Mamata said the government programme should follow certain decorum. "It is unexpected to insult any invited person at such an event. So, in protest, I refuse to say anything here. Jai Hind. Jai Bangla," she said in her brief address.

ALSO READ | PM Modi virtually flags off Howrah-NJP Vande Bharat express. The event took a political turn as soon as the BJP supporters

(long live TMC). Throughout the programme, Mamata sat on a chair adjacent to the dais. "I express my condolences over the demise of Heeraben Modi, the mother of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Sir, I would like to request you to show your love for your mother through your act," she said in her brief speech. BJP MP Locket Chatterjee said the slogan was raised when the Prime Minister appeared online to inaugurate the express train. "The slogan was not raised to irritate the chief minister. No one should find politics in it," she said.

Hiraben Modi's neighbours recall her simplicity, cordial relations with locals

GANDHINAGAR: For the residents of Vrindavan Bungalows-2 Society in Raysan village of Gandhinagar, Hiraben was an

Gujarat capital. Her neighbours said that Hiraben used to mingle with everyone and participate in all festivals. One of the

Dharaben Patel said Hiraba was like her family member and she had always maintained harmonious relations with everyone living in the so-

wards poor people," said Prajapati. Kokilaben Patel mourned Hiraba's death saying "Ba" had always lived a simple life and used to bless



epitome of simplicity, who always maintained a low profile despite being Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother. Hiraben, Hiraba to many, passed away at an Ahmedabad hospital early on Friday at the age of 99.

She used to stay with PM Modi's younger brother Pankaj Modi at Raysan located on the outskirts of the

neighbours Kirtiben Patel said, "Hiraba lived here for nearly seven years and we used to meet her almost daily. She was a very humble and simple-natured woman and I personally feel that I lost my mother today. She always showered blessings on all of us. She was like a Rajmata of this society." Another resident

ciety. Ramesh Prajapati, who lives in an adjoining society, said Hiraba lived like a normal human being despite being PM's mother. "She always believed in simple living and used to mix with everyone. She used to participate in all the festivals. Hiraba used to urge the residents to be kind to

everyone who visited her during Diwali. Hasmukh Patel, chairman of the society, said it was a matter of pride for every resident that Hiraba used to live there. "Not just me, the entire society is in immense grief today. We all are proud of the fact that we got a chance to live with Hiraba. She always showered her blessings on all of us," he said.

PM instructed not to cancel any official programme on account of his mother's demise: Rajnath Singh



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Prime Minister Narendra Modi had instructed his cabinet colleagues not to cancel any pre-scheduled official programmes on account of the demise of his mother Hiraben Modi on Friday, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said.

After inaugurating the 90th Sivagiri pilgrimage at Varkala in Thiruvananthapuram, Rajnath condoled the death of Modi's mother and said he had initially thought of skipping the programme and rushing to Delhi after hearing the news of her demise.

"The PM said no one should cancel their pre-scheduled programmes and to return only

after attending them," Rajnath said. After Rajnath's address, the meeting observed a minute's silence and prayed for the departed soul.

Hiraben passed away in a private hospital in Gandhinagar on Friday. Barely hours after he laid his mother to rest, Modi returned to performing his official duties.

The PM virtually attended two back-to-back meetings — flagging off the new Vande Bharat Express between Howrah and New Jalpaiguri and chairing the meeting of the National Ganga Council — through video conferencing after performing the last rites.

Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping hold talks as Russia fires another Ukraine barrage

KYIV: Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping vowed Friday to deepen their bilateral cooperation against the backdrop of Moscow's 10-month war in Ukraine, which weathered another night of drone and rocket attacks following a massive missile bombardment. Putin and Xi made no direct mention of Ukraine as they held bilateral talks via videoconference. But they hailed strengthening ties between Moscow and Beijing amid what they called "geopolitical tensions" and a "difficult international situation."

"In the face of increasing geopolitical tensions, the significance of the Russian-Chinese strategic partnership is growing as a stabilizing factor," Putin said.

according to regional Gov. Valentyn Reznichenko. Marhanets is located directly across the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, Europe's largest nuclear power station.

The city of Bakhmut in Donetsk province continued to be a key target of Russia's ground offensive in the industrial east, Ukrainian Defense Ministry spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun said. Other populated places in Donetsk, neighbouring Luhansk province, northern Ukraine's Chernihiv, Sumy and Kharkiv provinces, and Zaporizhzhia and Kherson provinces in the south all came under attack.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address that Russia hasn't abandoned plans to capture all of Donetsk, aiming to accomplish the goal by New Year's Day. Zelenskyy also warned Ukrainians there could be another widespread air assault.



He invited Xi to visit Moscow in the spring. In Ukraine, authorities reviewed the toll from a widespread Russian missile attack on power stations and other vital infrastructure Thursday that was the biggest such bombardment in weeks. Four civilians were killed during the barrage, according to Kyrilo Tymoshenko, the deputy head of the Ukrainian president's office.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said in its Friday morning update that Russian forces had unleashed a total of 85 missiles and 35 airstrikes on Ukrainian targets in the previous 24 hours. Russia also launched 63 attacks from multiple launch rocket systems, the military report said.

Following the first waves of missiles on Thursday morning, Russian forces attacked Ukraine with Iranian-made Shahed-131/136 drones on Thursday night and early Friday, all of which were shot down, the Ukrainian air force said.

Some were aimed at Kyiv, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said Friday. Of seven kamikaze drones launched against the Ukrainian capital, two were shot down on the approach to the city and five over Kyiv itself, according to Klitschko.

Windows in a residential building and one non-residential building were damaged as a result of falling debris, but no casualties were reported, he said. Further east, the Ukrainian military reported its forces shot down 10 attack drones in the central-eastern Dnipropetrovsk province and southeastern Zaporizhzhia provinces.

Almost 30 Russian shells were fired at Marhanets in Dnipropetrovsk province on Thursday night,

Perhaps, the occupants are planning to make us suffer with the next strikes on our cities," he said. "But no matter what they plan, we know one thing about ourselves: we will survive. We will. We will drive them out. No doubt about it. And they will be punished for this terrible war."

Putin, during his call with Xi, noted that military cooperation has a "special place" in the relationship between their countries. He said the Kremlin aimed to "strengthen the cooperation between the armed forces of Russia and China."

Xi, in turn, said through a translator that "in the face of a difficult and far from straightforward international situation," Beijing was ready "to increase strategic cooperation with Russia, provide each other with development opportunities, be global partners for the benefit of the peoples of our countries and in the interests of stability around the world."

Ties between Moscow and Beijing have grown stronger since Putin sent his troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24. Just last week, Moscow and Beijing held joint naval drills in the East China Sea.

China, which has promised a "no limits" friendship with Russia, has pointedly refused to criticize Moscow's actions in Ukraine, blaming the U.S. and NATO for provoking the Kremlin, and has blasted the punishing sanctions imposed on Russia. Russia, in turn, has strongly backed China amid the tensions with the U.S. over Taiwan. Russia and China are both facing domestic difficulties. Putin is trying to maintain domestic support for a war that has lasted longer than anticipated, while a surge in COVID-19 cases has overwhelmed hospitals in China.

New rail line to boost MCL coal despatch in Odisha



ANGUL: Evacuation of coal from Talcher coalfields received a major boost with the inauguration of the Angul-Balram rail link. The 14-km-long line will enable Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) to increase the daily despatch of coal to consumers by around 40,000 tonne.

The rail line has been constructed by Mahanadi Coal Railway Limited (MCRL), a joint venture of MCL, IRCON International Ltd and IDCO. Angul-Balram link is the first phase of the total 68-km-long inner corridor which will cater to the coal mines of Talcher. The inner corridor is

being implemented by MCRL in two phases. In phase-I, the Angul-Balram line was constructed. In the second phase, the 54-km-long Balram-Putugadia-Jarapada-Tentuloi rail line would be completed. The project is being developed at a cost of Rs 1,700 crores. Commissioning of

the Angul-Balram rail line will enhance MCL's potential to despatch 10 more rakes of coal daily. The link will also facilitate the evacuation of dry fuel from coal blocks allotted to miners other than Coal India in Talcher coalfields, stated a release of MCL.

Amit Shah blows the bugle for 2023 Karnataka assembly election from Mandya

MYSURU: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday blew the bugle for the 2023 assembly election in Karnataka urging the people of Mandya and Mysuru to vote for BJP in the coming election for the development of the region. In a sharp attack against the JDS and Congress during the Jana Sankalpa Yatre organised at Mandya University campus, Shah tore into the JDS and the Congress accusing them of looting the state resources for several years and serving as automated teller machines (ATMs) for Gandhi and Gowda families.

"While Congress government was an ATM for the party high command, JDS was an ATM for the family (HD Deve Gowda and family). As both Congress and JDS governments in the past were involved in corruption and looted the state, there has been no development in the state. The

ity: Rahul

Mandya in the Old Mysuru region is a Vokkaliga community-dominated district, largely seen as a bastion of JD(S), where the Congress too is strong, and the BJP is trying to make inroads. Former PM HD Deve Gowda and Adhichunchanagiri Mutt seer Nirmalanandanatha Swami were also present at the gathering. While addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai announced an additional Rs 100 per ton of sugarcane for farmers who supply sugarcane to factories which produce ethanol and molasses.

"There has been a demand from sugarcane farmers for a hike in the sugarcane price. So Rs 100 per ton will be given to farmers. During the CNNL meeting which will be held next week, the government will take initiatives to irrigate the fields in Mysuru and Mandya region," he said.

BJP leader CT Ravi meanwhile continued his tirade against the Muslim community saying that the 2023 election is Tipu vs Wadiyar and Mulla vs Hanuman. He said that the government will set up statues of Uri Gowda and Nanje Gowda, who killed Tipu in battle in Mandya district.

"They are the real tigers of Mysuru and not Tipu. Tipu tried to destroy the Kannada language by making Persian an administrative language," he alleged.

Earlier in the day, Home Minister Amit Shah launched the Mega Dairy at Gejjalagere village in Maddur taluk on Friday constructed at a cost of Rs 260 crore. Speaking on the occasion, Shah said that two lakh primary dairies will be set up at the village level across the country in three years.

Karnataka Assembly polls: Shah to take stock of BJP poll preparation

"The government will set up a primary dairy in every panchayat of the country as part of the white revolution to make the country an exporter in the milk sector," he said.

In the 2018 polls, the BJP managed to win one seat in Hassan; later in the high-voltage 2019 bypolls, it managed to win the K R Pet seat, its first victory in Mandya district and also won Chikballapur, another first. Creating a history of sorts, the party bagged the Sira Assembly segment in Tumakuru district for the first time in the 2020 bypolls. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls under the leadership of Modi with 52 per cent vote share, Karnataka got 25 out of 28 seats in Karnataka for the BJP.



double-engine BJP government which believes in nationalism and unity will further take up development activities if it returns to power," he said.

Shah claimed that Congress and the JDS are corrupt, and communal and have sheltered criminals in the past.

He also alleged that the Congress had ignored and cheated the Dalits and Adivasis for centuries, but it was the BJP who made Ram Nath Kovind and Droupadi Murmu, who belong to Dalit and Adivasi communities respectfully, as Presidents.

"It is the BJP which is working for the welfare of the Dalits and Adivasis in the country," he said.

"Enough of JD(S)-Congress, Congress-JD(S). This time Mandya, the Mysuru region should make BJP win with full majority. Congress and JD(S) are both parivaarvadi (dynastic politics) parties, they are corrupt parties," Shah said.

Further alleging that both Congress and JD(S) haven't done anything for the progress of Mandya and Old Mysuru region, Shah said BJP got the Mysuru-Bengaluru expressway done, doubling of existing railway line and its electrification, and complemented CM Bommai for the reopening of MySugar factory.

I have full confidence that Congress will win Karnataka Assembly elections with clear major-

Odisha: NCDC regional centre to come up in Bhubaneswar

BHUBANESWAR: The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) is all set to set up its regional branch on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar. It will support the state in strengthening surveillance on emerg-

Goel said NCDC at Bhubaneswar would be like a regional centre of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. It would work in complete collaboration with the state machinery for improv-

ing disease surveillance, and non-communicable diseases and will be the apex lab for 32 district public health laboratories, state referral laboratories at MCHs and other laboratories in the state. The NCDC centre

search activities. The state government has also planned to develop a laboratory management information system for ensuring timely communication of results and an early warning system for all districts. Pandit said



ing and reemerging infections of public health importance. Health secretary Shalini Pandit on Thursday handed over the registered land deed and possession to the director general of health services Prof Atul Goel. Stating that prevention of diseases should be given equal focus along with clinical treatment,

and control of diseases having public health implications, he said.

The state government has provided 3.125 acres of land at Andharua Mauza in the Khurda district free of premium with a waiver of registration fees for the regional centre. It will extend a gamut of diagnostic services for communicable dis-

will provide the hand holding for bio-safety and bio-security along with quality assurance activities for district labs and RTPCR labs and lower-level laboratories. It will monitor the emerging trend of diseases along with vector control measures through entomological surveillance and also support operational re-

Odisha has rolled out a transformative approach in quality health care services and worked in collaboration with central organisations like RMRC, Institute of Life Sciences and AIIMS during the Covid pandemic. NCDC would further strengthen the state's strength in disease surveillance and public health service, she added.

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Govt hikes interest rates of post office savings schemes, PPF and Sukanya Samriddhi rates unchanged

NEW DELHI: In good news for senior citizens and common investors, the government on Friday hiked interest rates on post office savings schemes, national saving certificate (NSC), senior citizen savings scheme, and

January 1, 2023 and March 31, 2023. However, interest rates for more popular savings instruments like PPF and Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana have been kept unchanged at 7.1 per cent and 7.6 per cent, respectively.

With the latest revision, a one-year term deposit with post offices would earn 6.6 per cent interest, for two years deposit, it will earn 6.8 per cent interest, for three years deposit, it will earn 6.9 per cent interest, while for a

though on a reduced maturity period of 120 months. Currently, KVP has an interest rate of 7 per cent on a maturity period of 123 months. Monthly Income Scheme would earn 40 basis points more at 7.1 per cent, while



the Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP). Rates for deposits up to 5 per cent as well as NSC, senior citizen savings scheme and KVP have been hiked by up to 1.1 percentage points, according to a Finance Ministry notification. The changed interest rates would be applicable between

This is the second straight quarter, when interest rates have been hiked for select schemes. Prior to October 1, 2022, there was no change in interest rates for these schemes for nine consecutive quarters. Normally, interest rates for small saving schemes are revised every quarter.

five years deposit the interest earned would be 7 per cent, the notification said. Senior Citizen Savings scheme will earn 40 basis points more at 8 per cent during the January-March period, it added. For KVP, the government has hiked the interest rates to 7.2 per cent,

NSC interest rate has been raised by 20 basis points to 7 per cent. Savings deposits will continue to earn 4 per cent per annum interest rate. The Reserve Bank of India since May this year has raised repo rate five times, thus allowing banks to raise interest rates on deposits.

Fiscal deficit touches 59 per cent of full-year target in November



NEW DELHI: The government's fiscal deficit at the end of November touched 59 per cent of the full year budget estimate, according to data released by the

Controller General of Accounts (CGA) on Friday. In actual terms, the fiscal deficit -- the difference between expenditure and revenue -- was Rs

9,78,154 crore during the April-November period of 2022-23. In the corresponding period last year, the deficit was 46.2 per cent of the budget

estimates of 2021-22. For 2022-23, the fiscal deficit of the government is estimated to be Rs 16.61 lakh crore or 6.4 per cent of the GDP.

Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant get engaged

NEW DELHI: Anant Ambani, the youngest son of billionaire Mukesh Ambani, will wed Radhika Merchant, daughter of industrialist Viren Merchant, the family announced on Thursday. The 'roka' or engagement ceremony of Radhika, daughter of Shaila and Viren Merchant, and Anant was performed at the Shrinathji Temple at Nathdwara in Rajasthan on Thursday in the presence of family members and friends. A statement issued by the family said the young couple after the engagement spent the day at the temple seeking Lord

Shrinathji's blessings for their upcoming union.

It, however, did not say when the wedding will take place. The two have been friends for some time now.



Mukesh Ambani and his wife Nita had in June this year hosted a lavish 'arangetram' ceremony for Radhika at the Jio World Centre in Mumbai. It was the first on-stage dance performance or 'arangetram' of Radhika, who is a trained Indian classical dancer.

She is daughter of Encore Healthcare CEO Viren Merchant and Shaila Merchant.

Gold to retain its glitter; may touch Rs 60,000 level in 2023

MUMBAI: A yellow glow is likely to stand out amid grey geopolitical clouds in 2023, with gold price projected to touch Rs 60,000 per 10 grams in the Indian market as more investors veer towards safe-haven assets. In a year where volatility was more a norm than an exception, gold prices in the international market oscillated from a peak of USD 2,070 per ounce in March to a low of USD 1,616 per ounce in November and is steadily recovering since then, according to market experts.

At the beginning of 2022, gold prices were around USD 1,800 an ounce. Currently, the yellow metal price is hovering around USD 1,803 an ounce on international markets and Rs 54,790 per 10 grams on commodity stock exchange MCX at a time when the rupee is at near 83-level against the US dollar.

Going forward, a raft of factors, including geopolitical situation, recession concerns, inflation trends and low appetite for crypto assets, are expected to boost gold prices since the yellow metal is always considered as a safe haven in uncertain times.

"Gold in the international market is expected to trade in a range of USD 1,670-2,000 with a positive bias in 2023. On the MCX gold may trade in a range of Rs 48,500-60,000," Kotak Securities Vice President and Head Commodity Research Ravindra V Rao told PTL.

While the demand for gold is likely to be resilient in 2023, Rao said further tightening of interest rate by the US Federal Reserve could cast a dark shadow on yellow metal prices at least in the first quarter of next year.

"Physical demand for gold bars and coins remains strong, spurred by ongoing inflation concerns and geopolitical and financial market risks. Inflows in gold Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) might start gaining momentum as the Fed is likely approaching the final leg of rate hikes in the current cycle," he noted. Market experts opined that Russia-Ukraine conflict led to a short-term spike in gold prices before it began falling amid stronger dollar and spike in crude oil prices.

The hike in interest rates effected by the Federal Reserve and other central banks to manage inflation during the year also dampened sentiment for gold, as rising yields undermined the holding capacity of zero-yielding bullion, they added.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold began the year at Rs 47,850 per 10 grams, then rose to a peak of Rs 55,680 per 10 grams in March and also touched a low of Rs 48,950 per 10 grams in September.

"We expect prices to test USD 1,885 at least in

the international markets and Rs 57,000 per 10 grams in MCX with present factors at hand. Any fresh geopolitical tensions could boost prices further.

"The technical picture, however, is not that conducive for a retest of highs around USD 2,000 in the international markets while the rupee weakness could push domestic prices above all-time highs of Rs 56,370 per 10 grams," Commtrendz Risk Management Services CEO Gnanasekar Thiagarajan said.

The World Gold Council Managing Director for India Somasundaram PR said high gold prices and a sharper focus on Current Account Deficit (CAD) to support imports for growth in priority sectors may put gold under policy pressure in 2023.

"Gold demand will, however, be driven by factors supporting long-term price performance and portfolio balancing even as sentiments about India's economic growth will remain hugely positive for the stock markets in 2023," he said.

Battle against inflation to continue amid global uncertainties

Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council's former Chairman and Kama Jewellery's Managing Director Colin Shah said the yellow metal has started giving up gains since the Federal Reserve and other



major central banks started hiking rates in May 2022.

"We expect gold prices to trade sideways till H1CY23. Festive demand and global central banks pausing their rate-tightening policy will push demand for gold in H2CY23." "A pause in the rate hike cycle will lead to softening of the USD, thereby making it cheaper to buy gold. We expect gold to trade in the range of USD 1,900-1,975 and Rs 55,000-57,000 in India during CY23," he added. According to him, trade tensions between the US and China, escalation of Russia-Ukraine conflict and gold buying programmes of central banks could also push gold and silver prices higher in 2023.

All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council Chairman Ashish Pethe said that demand for gold and gold jewellery came back strongly in the second half of 2022.

"The gold price increase has affected the business at retail counters. But once the gold rates stabilises, I see good sales in the coming year".

India's forex reserves down from USD 691 mn to USD 562.81 bn in 2nd week of decline

MUMBAI: India's forex reserves dropped by USD 691 million to USD 562.808 billion as of December 23, making it the second consecutive week of decline in the kitty, according to the RBI data. The overall reserves had dropped by USD 571 million to USD 563.499 billion in the previous

billion to USD 498.49 billion during the week to December 23, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the RBI.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound



and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves increased by USD 390 million to USD 40.969 billion, it said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by USD 8 million to USD 18.19 billion, the apex bank said. The country's reserve position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was up by USD 45 million to USD 5.159 billion in the reporting week, the data showed.

The reserves had been declining as the central bank deployed the reserve to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments. Foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves, decreased by USD 1.134

Rashid Khan appointed Afghanistan T20I captain



Kabul: Rashid Khan has been named captain of the Afghanistan T20I team, replacing Mohammad Nabi who stepped down following Afghanistan's campaign in the ICC T20 World Cup 2022 in Australia. Mirwais Ashraf, chairman of the Afghanistan cricket board, proposed Rashid to take over the role, with the legspinner having earlier led the country in seven T20Is in 2019.

Rashid had also led Afghanistan in seven ODIs in 2018-19 and also two Tests in 2019. In Rashid's previous captaincy stint, Afghanistan won four out of the seven matches under his leadership, including two victories against the West Indies in Lucknow. Rashid's latest captaincy stint will begin in February 2023 when Afghanistan tour UAE to play three T20Is against the hosts.

"Rashid Khan is a massive name in Afghanistan Cricket. He has colossal experience of playing the format around the world which will help him take the team to a new level in the format," said Ashraf. "Rashid Khan has the experience of leading Afghanistan in all three formats before and we are happy to have him as our skipper for the T20I format again. I am sure he will come out on top and will bring more glories to the nation," he said. Speaking about his appointment, Rashid, the third highest wicket-taker in T20Is, said: "Captaincy is a huge responsibility. I have the experience of leading my country before, there is a great bunch of guys with whom I have a good understanding and feel pretty comfortable. We will try to stick together, will work hard to put things on the right track and bring pride and joy to our country and nation."

Starc, Green injuries the worry lines for Australia amidst series win

New Delhi: Cameron Green and Mitchell Starc are both nursing finger injuries but the latter is likely to take a longer time to recover, making him a doubtful starter for the Test series against India in February. Green, who fractured his right index finger, is set to undergo surgery after he consulted a specialist but he is likely to make a recovery within a month's time. Starc, meanwhile, may not require surgery but the damage done to the tendon on his left middle finger could leave him on the sidelines for a longer period. "India's the next big tour and we'll see where the timeframe is with that. It's my bowling hand so I've got to be pretty careful and make sure it heals properly," Starc told cricket.com.au on Thursday (December 29) following Australia's innings victory against South Africa at the MCG. "The irony is (Green) will be back before I am. Bones are a bit quicker in



the healing process, the tendon is a little bit different. I think we'll both be seeing the same specialist. "I still think everyone's confident it will be more front-end (of the India tour that he will miss). It will obviously depend on how it heals and how quickly it can do what it needs to do," added Starc. Despite his injured finger, which he sustained while fielding in the first innings, Starc bowled 18 overs in the

second essay and managed to pick up the wicket of Sarel Erwee. While Green batted with his fractured finger and struck a half-century, he was ruled out of bowling while the medical staff was confident that Starc would be able to bowl without aggravating his injury. "I wasn't sure what to expect. I need the middle finger for control more than anything. I've had a lot of painkillers. I could have jabbed it but I feel like I need the feeling of

the ball on finger, otherwise I feel like I would have been spraying it everywhere," said Starc. "I've played with a broken foot before ... It's Test match cricket. I've been on both sides of being injured and then with one man down (in the bowling department). Having Greeny with a busted finger as well probably helped that decision to try to push through. Especially with the bowling side of things, we had the whole

second innings to go and it would have been tough to have just three bowlers," he said. Skipper Pat Cummins heaped praise on Starc and Green for making contributions despite their injuries while he also commended Steve Smith and David Warner for their knocks in the first innings as they spent time at the crease in warm temperatures. Speaking at the press conference, the Australia captain said: "(It's) probably a good time to mention all the incredible achievements this week. Starc with a finger that's going to put him out for a few weeks, to have the bravery to go out and do that. Cam Green, the same, 'gutsing' it out for us. "We saw Steve Smith and Davey (Warner) on day two in 38 degrees - gutsy, gutsy innings. It just speaks volumes for the team at the moment. Everyone would do anything for each other so we're in a really good place."

Pele passes away at 82

New Delhi: Brazil football legend Pele passed away at the age of 82 after a long battle with cancer. His daughter Kely Nascimento informed the world about the sad news that brought reactions and tributes from world over including Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, Kylian Mbappe and Neymar. Pele was known by many nicknames such as 'The Black Pearl' and 'The King'. He remains the only player in history of the sport to win the FIFA World Cup three times. After his passing, his funeral is expected to be attended by thousands of his fans in Brazil. He passed away in a hospital in Brazil but his funeral will take place at Vila Belmiro Stadium, where he started his football career for his club Santos. His funeral will be held on Monday and Tuesday.

Pele, whose original name was Edson Arantes do Nascimento,



will be remembered by a billion fans, some of them are in India where he played one match. Santos said the coffin carrying the three-time World Cup champion will leave Albert Einstein hospital in Sao Paulo early Monday morning and will be placed in the center circle of the field.

Visitation will start Monday at 10 a.m. And finish the next day at the same time.

Pele's casket will be carried through the

streets of Santos and will pass in front of the home of his 100-year-old mother, Celeste. Recent reports in Brazilian media say Pele's mother cannot leave her bed and is not lucid. The burial will take place at the Memorial Necropolis Ecumnica, a vertical cemetery in Santos. Only family will attend. Pele has a home in Santos, where he lived most of his life. He spent his last years in the city of Guarujá.

Pele had a colon tumor

removed in September 2021. Neither his family nor the hospital have said whether it had spread to other organs. He returned to the Albert Einstein hospital on November 29 with COVID-19 and a respiratory infection. Last week, the hospital said in a statement his cancer had advanced. Pele led Brazil to World Cup victory in 1958, 1962 and 1970 and remains one of the team's all-time leading scorers with 77 goals.

Agar, Renshaw added to Australia squad for Sydney Test

Sydney: Australia's national selectors have added Ashton Agar and Matt Renshaw to the squad for the Sydney Test against South Africa starting on January 4. Reinforcements were necessary after both Mitchell Starc and Cameron Green were ruled out of the series finale with finger injuries sustained during Australia's series-clinching win in Melbourne.

Agar's inclusion is noteworthy in the context of the upcoming marquee four-Test series against and in India, where Australia are

likely to partner Nathan Lyon with a second spinner. The 29-year-old left-arm spinner played the last of his four Tests in 2017 in Chattogram but was unlucky to lose his spot to Mitchell Swepson on the tour of Sri Lanka earlier this year after picking up a side strain in the build up to the series.

He has, however, played two first class games this season - for the Prime Minister's XI against West Indies and for Western Australia against Queensland, registering combined figures of 3 for 212 across 78.4 overs from

those games.

Australia's head coach Andrew McDonald has suggested that the SCG pitch could be quite dry later next week, bringing in the need for a second spinner. Agar also offers decent batting pedigree at No.7 to a side that will miss the balance provided by all-rounder Cameron Green.

Should Australia choose to play only four bowlers in Sydney, they have the option of bolstering their side with an extra batter in Renshaw, who will compete with Marcus Harris for a spot in the middle-order. Renshaw,

who played the last of his 11 Tests in 2018, batted in the middle-order last season but has returned to opening for Queensland this year with an eye on replacing David Warner or Usman Khawaja in the future. He recently scored a fine unbeaten double hundred against New South Wales

"Matthew is included as a versatile batting option who is in good form, including an unbeaten century in the recent PM's XI tour match against the West Indies," said selector Tony Dodemaide.



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