

# Maldives President talks Chinese lingo

Maldives will receive support for more development projects from China if they align with President Xi's initiatives, says China's Ambassador to Maldives

BEIJING/MALE, Jan 13 (PTI)

**RETURNING** home after a five-day high-profile state visit to China, Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu on Saturday said that his island nation may be small but it doesn't give other countries the licence to "bully us" amid a diplomatic row with India.

The diplomatic row with India erupted after derogatory social media posts by three of his Ministers against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "We may be small but this doesn't give them the license to bully us," Muizzu, who is regarded as a pro-China leader, said without naming any country.

"Though we have small islands in this ocean, we have a vast exclusive economic zone of 9,00,000 square km. Maldives is one of the countries with the biggest share of this ocean," he told the media on his arrival from China

after concluding the state visit, the first after assuming office in November last year. "This ocean does not belong to a specific country. This (Indian) Ocean also belongs to all countries situated in it," he said, in an apparent jibe at India.

"We aren't in anyone's backyard. We are an independent and sovereign state," he was quoted as saying by the Maldives Sun Online portal.

During his visit to China, Muizzu held talks with President Xi Jinping after which the two countries signed 20 agreements.

"The two sides agree to continue firmly supporting each other in safeguarding their respective core interests," said a joint statement issued at the end of Muizzu's talks with the top Chinese leaders.

"China firmly supports the Maldives in upholding its national sovereignty, independence and national dignity, respects and supports the Maldives' exploration of a development path that suits its national conditions, and firmly opposes external interference in the internal affairs of the Maldives," the statement said, without referring to any country.

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# Alliance Air starts additional flights to

# Lakshadweep

NEW DELHI, Jan 13 (ANI)

AMID the ongoing India-Maldives row, Alliance Air the only airline that operates to Lakshadweep has started additional flights.

Due to a surge in the number of passengers willing to visit Lakshadweep, Alliance Air, the only Indian airline that operates to Lakshadweep, has started additional flights Kochi-Agatti-Kochi.

A senior official of Alliance Air informed that the additional flights will operate two days a week i.e on Sunday and Wednesday.

Alliance air, the only airline that runs in Lakshadweep, runs flights between Kochi in Kerala and Agatti island, which has a regional airport serving

Lakshadweep.

The airlines operate 70-seater aircraft to the island daily. It is running in full capacity and all tickets till March have been sold out, an official of the airline informed.

“We are getting lots of queries on phone and social media regarding tickets. Following to the huge demand for tickets, an additional flight has been added to the route. If required frequency of the flight will be increased,” the official said.

Recently in an Annual General Meeting, Ajay Singh, CEO of SpiceJet also informed that the airline have exclusive rights under Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) for Lakshadweep and that they will soon launch flights to Lakshadweep.

# Army showcases avalanche rescue prowess on LoC



BARAMULLA (J&K), Jan 13 (ANI)

IN A display of remarkable resilience and expertise, an Indian Army unit deployed on the Line of Control (LoC) in the Gulmarg sector of the Baramulla district showcased its exceptional capabilities in avalanche rescue operations in high snow levels and inclement weather conditions.

In a remarkable display of resilience and expertise, an Indian Army unit deployed on the Line of Control (LoC) in the Gulmarg Sector of the Baramulla district of North Kashmir showcased their prowess in avalanche rescue

operations and domination of the area during the winter snow season.

Daring harsh and challenging winter terrain, the unit seamlessly integrated avalanche dogs, an avalanche rescue team, Ski-patrol and an efficient casualty evacuation mechanism into avalanche rescue protocols to ensure the safety of their personnel.

The heart of this training lies in the collaboration with highly trained avalanche dogs, adept at locating buried individuals under snow. These canine heroes, working in tandem with the Avalanche Rescue Team, navigate treacherous

snow-covered landscapes to swiftly identify and pinpoint potential avalanche victims.

The Ski-Patrol, specially trained and equipped with avalanche safety gear, demonstrated their mastery in alpine environments, effectively reaching remote locations where traditional means might fall short. Their agility and skill were paramount in accessing areas inaccessible to standard rescue teams. Additionally, the unit showcased a streamlined casualty evacuation process, ensuring that any injured personnel are rapidly and safely transported to the nearest available medical facilities.

# RED SEA CRISIS: Commerce Ministry calls inter-ministerial meet on 17th

NEW DELHI, Jan 13 (PTI)

THE Commerce Ministry has called a high-level inter-ministerial meeting on January 17 to discuss the way forward on the trade front in the wake of ongoing problems in the Red Sea, a senior official said on Saturday.

Senior officials from five ministries -- External Affairs, Defence, Shipping and Finance (Department of Financial Services) and Commerce -- will participate in the deliberations.

The Commerce Ministry has also set up an internal strategic group, comprising additional secretaries of the Ministry, to discuss global issues impacting the country's trade on a daily basis and prepare a strategy so that India's response can be quick and decisive.

"This Wednesday, we are holding an inter-ministerial



consultation. We will be discussing the way forward," the official said.

The situation around the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, a crucial shipping route connecting the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean, has escalated due to recent attacks by Yemen-based Houthi militants. Due to these attacks, the shippers are taking consignments through the Cape of Good Hope, resulting in delays of almost 14 days and also higher freight and insurance costs.

New trade routes are also being considered and "we will

keep exploring our options if the problems at Red Sea escalate," the Commerce Ministry official added.

The issues being faced by the stakeholders concerned were discussed at a high-level meeting in the Commerce Ministry on January 4.

Stakeholders, including traders, shippers, container firms, and freight forwarders were present in the meeting.

Exporters are apprehensive that the crisis may cause some trade disruption because the cost of moving it around becomes expensive.

# US carries out fresh strikes against Houthis in Yemen

SANAA, Jan 13 (IANS)

JUST A day after launching a coordinated multi-nation attack on nearly 30 Houthi positions in Yemen, the US on Saturday carried out fresh airstrikes against the Iran-backed militia in the war-torn nation.

According to the US Central Command (CENTCOM), the new strikes were carried out at about 3.45 a.m. on Saturday.

"This strike was conducted by the USS Carney (DDG 64) using Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles and was a follow-on action on a specific military target associated with strikes taken on January 12 designed to degrade the Houthi's ability to attack maritime vessels, including commercial vessels," it said in a post on X.

The Central Command said that since November 19, 2023, the Houthi militants have attempted to "attack and harass" vessels in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden at least 28 times. "These illegal incidents include attacks that have employed anti-ship ballistic missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, and cruise missiles," it said.



Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar and Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal V P Chaudhari pay tribute at the National War Memorial in commemoration of the upcoming 76th Army Day celebrations in New Delhi on Saturday. (PTI)

## Project 'Shaurya Sankalan': Army building archives to preserve its military history

NEW DELHI, Jan 13 (PTI)

NEARLY 700 hours of audio-visual content and 11 lakh pages related to "declassified records" on the 1948 Jammu and Kashmir conflict, 1961 Goa Liberation and the India-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971 have been archived as part of a project to preserve the Army's glorious past for posterity, officials said on Friday.

This has been done under Project 'Shaurya Sankalan:

Digital Archiving of Military History' of the Army, they said.

"Nearly 11 lakh pages and 700 hours of audio-visual content related to declassified records from 1948 Jammu and Kashmir conflict, 1961 Goa Liberation (Operation VIJAY) and 1965 and 1971 India-Pakistan wars, held with over 1300 units, formations, regimental centres and military museums in the form of battle memoirs," a senior official said.

"After-action reports" and audio-visual films have been cured, digitised and preserved in the 'Digital Archive Kiosk' created at the United Services Institute of India, New Delhi, he said. Subsequently, another kiosk will be established at the upcoming 'History Cell' of the Army War College, the officials said.

This will be accessible to researchers, academicians and scholar warriors in a web page interactive format, they said.