

EU ministers to consider easing sanctions on Syria later in Jan

PTI, RIYADH: European Union foreign ministers will meet in late January to discuss easing sanctions imposed on Syria, the bloc's foreign policy chief said on Sunday. However, she said the move would depend on Syria's new rulers carrying out an inclusive political transition after last month's overthrow of president Bashar Assad.

Kaja Kallas' comments came at a gathering of top European and Middle Eastern diplomats in the Saudi capital of Riyadh to discuss Syria's future.

Saudi Arabia called for the lifting of sanctions, which threaten to undermine Syria's recovery from nearly 14 years of civil war that killed an estimated 5,00,000 people and displaced half the country's prewar population of 23 million.

European countries and the US have been wary over the Islamist roots of the former insurgents who drove Assad out of power and who now lead an interim government.

The former rebels have promised to hold a national dialogue summit that includes different groups across Syria to agree upon a new political road map leading to a new constitution and an election.

Kallas said EU foreign ministers will look at how to ease sanctions during a January 27 meeting in Brussels.

"But this must follow tangible progress in a political transition that reflects Syria in all its diversity," she said in a post on the social media platform X. She also posted a photo of herself meeting the new Syrian foreign minister, Asaad al-Shibani at Sunday's gathering.

The US, the EU and some Arab nations began imposing sanctions on Syria after Assad's brutal crackdown on the 2011 uprising against his rule and tightened them as the conflict spiralled into war.

Some of the measures are against individuals in Assad's government, including freezing of assets. But many target the government in general, including bans on many financial and banking dealings, on oil purchases and on investment or trade in some sectors, crippling

the wider Syrian economy.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said sanctions against 'Assad's henchmen who committed serious crimes' must remain in place.

But she called for "a smart approach to sanctions, providing rapid relief for the Syrian population. Syrians now need a quick dividend from the transition of power". Baerbock did not elaborate but announced an additional USD 51.2 million in German aid for food, emergency shelters and medical care.

At the gathering, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said international and unilateral sanctions on Syria should be lifted.

Pope Francis baptises 21 babies in annual ceremony at Sistine

PTI, VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis baptised 21 babies in the Sistine Chapel on Sunday under the ceiling frescoed by Michelangelo, in what has become an annual tradition that marks the end of the Christmas holiday period at the Vatican.

Francis celebrated the Lord's gift of faith to the children, stressing they were the protagonists of the ceremony.

"It is important that these children feel well," the pope said. "If they are hungry, feed them so they don't cry. If they feel hot, change them. ... But let them feel at ease, because today they are in charge and we must serve them with the Sacrament, with prayers." The pontiff personally administered the sacrament of baptism on the infants, who are the children of Vatican employees working at the Holy See.

The celebration marks the feast day that recalls Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan and was established in 1981 by St John Paul II.

During the ceremony, each father was given a candle to light representing the Christian light that "must never go out". The pope encouraged each family to bring those candles home and light them up in difficult times to ask for the Lord's guidance.

Landslide in Myanmar jade mining area kills over 12

AP, BANGKOK: An overnight landslide at a jade mining area in northern Myanmar has killed at least a dozen people and left many others missing, according to a resident, rescuers and independent media on Monday. They said about 50 houses were buried or damaged.

The accident occurred early Monday in Kachin state's Hpakant township, a remote mountainous region at the centre of the lucrative jade mining industry, about 950 km north of Myanmar's biggest city, Yangon. It's a region where sporadic fighting has broken out between the Myanmar army and ethnic guerrilla forces.

Tarlin Mg, a resident near the accident area, told The Associated Press that the bodies of 12 people, including four children, had been recovered in Spott village.

Two local rescuers told the AP it was difficult finding missing people due to the large amount of mud, and large machinery was needed.

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NOISE FLOUTERS BROKE LAWS, AND EVERYONE JUST WATCHED

The GSPCB's report, which included noise monitoring data from Thalasa between December 19, 2024, and January 6, 2025, indicates multiple instances where noise levels exceeded the prescribed limits, particularly during the night. In a previous court order from December 18, 2024, the Bombay High Court had explicitly directed Thalasa to cease playing music, though it was allowed to continue operating as a restaurant.

Despite this directive, the GSPCB's response to the violations has been criticised for delays. "Sending emails days after noise barriers have been broken makes no sense," argued Desmond Alvares, the petitioner in the case. "The judges had made it clear that action should be swift, not delayed by nine days or more."

Alvares also pointed out that the GSPCB failed to address the live monitoring system at the Diaz Pool Club and Bar, which had reported that its 'mains have been disconnected'. This omission was notable in the GSPCB's affidavit to the court.

"There were large-scale violations in Anjuna and Vagator during the festive season, and we need to determine which violations have been properly reported," said Amicus Curiae Nigel Costa Frias, presenting his concerns to Justices M S Karnik and Nivedita P Mehta during the hearing.

In response to questions from Justice Karnik, Advocate General Devidas Pangam confirmed that a report was still being prepared and could be presented during the next hearing. Costa Frias also indicated that additional material evidence would be submitted for consideration.

HARASSED BY SENIOR, IGNORED BY DEPT, CONSTABLE FOUND ON THE BRINK

Sources within the police force, speaking on condition of anonymity, stated that he was continuously posted on the reserve lines at Porvorim for months together despite there being clear cut guidelines that it should be done on rotational basis.

"The guidelines issued by the SP (Headquarters) Nelson Albuquerque clearly mandate the rotation of duty masters every six months. The duty masters however are never rotated and old faces turn up in same role despite there being clear cut guidelines," said a top cop.

"There are cases that juniors are posted on better beat duties according to political influences. This happens more so in the coastal belt of North Goa district as the plum postings are most sought after by cops," he added. The incident has put a spotlight on the culture of favoritism and neglect within the police department.

While the department has launched initiatives like the 'Cops Care' program — intended to address stress-related illnesses and improve the mental well-being of police personnel — many officers see it as little more than a façade.

"How can they claim to care when grievances like these are swept under the rug?" one officer questioned.

The 'Cops Care' initiative involves a short questionnaire. The program assures confidentiality stating "Please note that all information we receive from you will be kept safe and secure. Your identity will be kept confidential and your name will not be used in any way. Your participation in this study is voluntary and will help provide you with all necessary support. You may choose to withdraw anytime without providing a reason."

Despite the assurances of confidentiality as detailed in the Cops Care programme, the police department reportedly leaked his name to the media.

The Mapusa SDPO Sandesh Chodankar has been directed to submit a detailed report within 48 hours, but for the head constable, much of the damage is already done. The police department in its defense claimed, that the said constable has corruption charges against him.

1.6 CR TAKE KUMBH DIP ON DAY 1

He added said on January 11, around 33.36 lakh pilgrims took a dip and the number reached around 50 lakh the next day.

Thirteen Akharas of seers from different sects are participating in the Maha Kumbh.

And as the famed mela formally began in the darkness of pre-dawn on the occasion of 'Paush Purnima' to the sound of conch shells and bhajans, the excitement was palpable in the sprawling Sangam area as devotees -- mostly in groups -- walked towards the waters chanting "Jai Ganga Maiyya," "Har Har Mahadev," and "Jai Shri Ram".

Former US Army soldier-turned-ascetic Michael joined the Juna Akhara and is now known as 'Baba Mokshapuri'. Sharing his journey of transformation, he said, "I was an ordinary man with a family and career. But I realised that nothing in life is permanent, so I embarked on a quest for salvation. This is my first Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, and the spiritual vibes are extraordinary."

A devotee from Brazil added, "I practise yoga in Brazil, I have come here for 'moksha'. This one is very special, once in 144 years. India is like the spiritual height of the world. Sanatan Dharma is my mission of life and it changed my life, it changed the way I see the world, my family. Jai Shri Ram."

Also in the teeming crowd was Julie from Spain. "I am feeling grateful for this opportunity to dive into the sacred river here at the sacred point. I am fulfilled with

bliss," she said.

Contingents from states across India were seen too at various ghats of Prayagraj.

Given the massive numbers of people, there were those who got inevitably separated from their groups - a recall in another era of a favourite Hindi film trope of siblings getting separated in the Kumbh Mela.

The times have changed, however.

The Uttar Pradesh government implemented several crowd-control initiatives, including 'Bhula-Bhatka' camps, police assistance centres and deployment of personnel on specially constructed watchtowers.

Within the first couple of hours itself, more than 250 individuals got lost' but were found' thanks to efforts by the administration, officials said.

Ajay Goyal, a pilgrim from Delhi, shared his experience of being separated for an hour.

"Just before we got separated, we had joked about how this often happens at Kumbh Melas in old Bollywood films. Luckily, we were reunited within the same Mela itself," Goyal said.

It is a massive logistical exercise for the government. "Spanning 10,000 acres, the event will set an exemplary standard for cleanliness, security, and modernity. To enhance the convenience of devotees, a digital tourist map will facilitate monitoring the cleanliness of toilets, while an AI-powered security system integrated with smartphones will ensure safety," the chief minister said earlier.

Mahakumbh Nagar is the world's world's largest temporary city, accommodating 50 lakh to 1 crore devotees at any given time, Adityanath said.

According to Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh, more than 55 police stations have been set up and 45,000 police personnel are being deployed for the fair.

As many as 30 pontoon bridges, both in the Sangam area and Phaphamau, have also been readied to facilitate the movement of people from one end of the confluence to the other.

Prayagraj District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar Mandar told PTI that sector-wise ghats have been made for smooth conduct of the bathing ritual.

The first of the shahi snans', royal baths, takes place on Tuesday, Makar Sankranti, when the numbers taking a dip in the waters are expected to rise. The last of the snans' will be on Mahashivratri on February 26.

MONTH'S MIND



MARIA COLACO

- PATRONG, BAINA, VASCO-DA-GAMA -

Born: 15/11/1958 - Died: 15/12/2024

There will be an Eucharistic celebration for the soul of our beloved Maria Colaco on 15th January 2025, Tomorrow at Our Lady of Vailankanni Chapel, near Indian Oil Corporation, Vasco-Da-Gama at 4:00 p.m. and thereafter for prayers and blessing of the grave at St. Andrew's Church Cemetery, Vasco-Da-Gama.

Relatives and friends kindly accept this as the only intimation.

ART TRICKS-9011429527

A Tearful Farewell



MILAGRES REBELLO

MELANT - BENAULIM

A tribute of love from his

Children: ALICE REBELLO / GERVASIO PEREIRA, MILTON LAWRENCE REBELLO / VENISA DSOUZA and Grand Children: Gareth, Mystica and Melica.

WE PRAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE.

Confidant Advtg. & Funeral Services, Margao Ph. 9823022194

MONTHS MIND

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

SIMON DIAS

Prop: DIAS DECORATORS (Bona - Vaddy, Mercês)

Born: 07/12/1964

Died: 13/12/2024

We think about you always, we talk about you still, you have never been forgotten, and you never will

We hold you close within our hearts And there you will remain To walk and guide us through our lives Until we meet again.


There will be Eucharistic Celebration for the soul of our beloved DAD on 15th January 2025, Wednesday at 7am in Our Lady of Mercês Church, Mercês.

Followed by prayers & blessings at the grave Mass Offered by his Sorrowful Wife: Conception Dias.

Children: Zina/Orvil, Alton/Sibyl, Anthony. Grand children: Vance, Yeah and Kayden.

Month's Mind

In memory of a life so beautifully lived a heart so deeply loved



MILAGRINA RODRIGUES E REGO

Proprietor: Udupi palace / Hotel Rego (29.10.1964 to 04.01.25)

The call was too sudden to say goodbye But the sweet memories of you will never die.

There will be an Eucharistic celebration for the soul of our beloved MILAGRINA at 8.00 a.m. on Wednesday, 15th January 2025 at Our lady of Mercês Church, followed by prayers.

Offered by sorrowful family

Relatives & friends kindly accept this as the only intimation.

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FIRST DEATH ANNIVERSARY

In Loving Memory of

Menino Jesus Lourenco Gonsalves

(Padri Bhat, Neura - Goa)

There will be an Eucharistic celebration for the soul of Menino on 15th January 2025 at 8.00 am at St. John the Evangelist Church, Neura - Goa followed by prayers at the grave. Offered by his children & family.

Relatives and friends kindly accept this as the only intimation.



RETURNED TO THE LORD

JOSEPH (BABUSH) LOBO

(Sequeira Vaddo, Candolim)

Born: 19.03.1960 Died: 13.01.2025

Beloved husband of Ana Francisca Lobo. Loving father/father-in-law Jessica / Valington Fernandes and Jerusha Lobo. Dearest brother/brother-in-law of Satrio (Seby) Lobo / Gloria Lobo and Paixao Lobo / Jenny Lobo, uncle of Chrysler, Shawn, Steve, Jason, Nivet and Walden.

Funeral cortege will leave his residence at 3:30 PM on Tuesday, 14th January 2025 (Today) to our Lady of Hope Church Candolim for Eucharistic celebration and burial.

Relatives & friends kindly accept this as the only intimation.



MONTH'S MIND

In Everloving Memory of



CYNTHIA MARIA ALBUQUERQUE

Loutulim

Wife of late Joaquim Albuquerque.

There will be a Eucharistic Celebration for the soul of our beloved CYNTHIA on Wednesday, 15th January 2025 (TOMORROW) at 7.30 am at Saviour of the World Church, Loutulim followed by prayers and blessing of the grave, offered by her son Joshua and family.

Neighbours, relatives & friends kindly accept this as the only intimation.

DEATH

SOPHIE RODRIGUES

(CASA BAPTO) (Naikavaddo, Calangute)

Heaven has found it's Angel, A loving blessing she was to us But she is at a better place now.

Daughter/Daughter-in-law of late Louis & late Adeline Sequeira / late Eustaquio & late Maria Purificacao Rodrigues. Loving wife of Francis Assis Rodrigues (ex Radio Officer Wallem Shipmanagement) Mother/Mother in law of Norika / Simon ; Melita / Ashley and Capt. Eustace (Wallem Shipmanagement) / Jill.

Grandmother of Magris, Magnel, Jaden, Ethan and Eliana.

Sister of Philomena / late Sebastian, Col (Retd) Anthony Sequeira, Sr. Sabina (St. Joseph of Chambery), Francis / late Ansu and Louisa / Gerald.

Sister in law of late Exaltacao / late Pauline, late Irene / late John Ramos, late Fr Epifanio, Sr Rita (FSMA, Sarzora-Goa), Clementina / late Sebastian Rodrigues, late Theresa / Mario

was loved always and will be deeply missed by all her nephews and nieces.

Funeral cortege will leave her residence at 3.15 pm on Wednesday, 15th January, 2025, to St Alex Church, Calangute for Eucharistic celebration and burial.

Relatives and friends kindly accept this as the only intimation.



RETURNED TO THE LORD WITH THANKSGIVING



CONCEICAO GUADALUPE ASSUNCAO PIRES e MENDES

(Retired Nurse, DHS Govt. of Goa)

BORN: 08th December 1930 DIED: 13th January 2025

Beloved wife of Late Domingos Mendes, Loving Mother/Mother-in-law of Libano/Piedade, Espertina(Tina)/Carlos Anthony, (Corlim)

Vera/Joseph, (Salvador do Mundo) Rev. Fr. Constancio sfx, Jacinto/Vailankanni, Prof. (Dr) Gervasio (Addl. Director, DHE) / Beatriz Pamla, Viriato/Mavira, Rogério/Julia, Monica/Lourencinho,

Most affectionate Grandmother of Geraldo/Olinda, Kevin/Rohini, Jonathan/Mercilia, Clint/Maryann, Velroy, Ninotchka (Asst. Prof. Goa University), Jerusha, Adv. Gabe (Canada), Ronan, Analie (Mumbai), Blayne, Callula, Dannon (Germany) and Joydn, Doting Great grandmother of Arthur, Kaelan, Natalie and the two newly born twins.

Funeral cortege will leave her residence at Rodrigues Ward, Cavelossim at 4.30 pm on 14th January 2025 (TODAY) to Holy Cross Church Cavelossim for Eucharistic Celebration followed by burial at the Cemetery.

Relatives and friends kindly accept this as the only intimation. NO CONDOLENCE VISITS PLEASE