



GRAHAM URGES FANS TO FEEL BEAUTIFUL IN THEIR OWN SKIN

Model Ashley Graham – who has Isaac, 23 months with husband Justin Ervin and has just given birth to twins – has slammed society's version of beauty and urges fans to feel beautiful in their own skin.

KRISTEN STEWART HAS CHOSEN WEDDING OUTFIT

Spencer actress Kristen Stewart got engaged to girlfriend Dylan Meyer in November after two years together. Although she is unsure how many traditions they will follow on their big day, she's already chosen her clothes but wants to keep the details a surprise.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES
Carry the peace sign if you have to, because today, people will literally pull you into arguments. You could even be facing some kind of litigation or trouble with peace-keeping forces, warns Ganesha. Meditate, walk, or simply seek the company of friends and loved ones.

TAURUS
You need to be very and practical and realistic in all that you do today, urges Ganesha. You are known to be pretty emotional and sensitive and generally go by your feelings. Your mind, your reason do not normally feature in your decision making. Even minor problems, complications get you worked up.

GEMINI
If you are into retail business, planetary positions indicate today is a day for bumper sales. You will set records in making profits. After work, you may want to take your beloved out shopping.

CANCER
Ganesha advises you to watch your back today. However, he wants to make it clear that you may be at the receiving end of others' actions. Anyway, your cautious and watchful approach will save you from needless discomfiture.

LEO
The bourgeoisie feasted on cake, while the masses starved for want of a mere loaf of bread. Ganesha foresees something similar for you today, as you show the propensity to indulge in unwanted expenses. Whether it is impulsive decisions or compulsive buying, they shall not serve as an excuse on a later date when the milk is already spilt.

VIRGO
You will be cool as a cucumber today. Nothing that happens will unsettle that composure, says Ganesha. Your loved ones will stand tall and strong behind you, and inspire you to overcome obstacles. Your work will reflect dedication, says Ganesha.

LIBRA
Sit back and think hard – think about what is it that you really want when it comes to your business enterprises, because there are many ways to go about things at work, and they all shall lead you somewhere different. The stars favour you today with a golden touch, so take it in your stride and make hay while the sun shines. Learn to take charge and take initiatives, says Ganesha.

SCORPIO
While not the Trot, you shall, however, trot on the lines of radicalism today, predicts Ganesha. Learn to think as you would, and always have, but act as others would have you to, advises Ganesha. Be the maverick that you are only with those who are closest and dearest, cautions Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
Your friend base is slated to multiply today. At work, additional responsibilities will be thrust upon you, and you will also be given charge of new resources. Ganesha predicts you taking up the challenge and emerging triumphant in all spheres today.

CAPRICORN
Overcome with feelings, you may take decisions that may stand in the way of success. Don't let your sentiments ruin your future prospects because the damage done will be beyond repair, warns Ganesha. Today, there are also chances that your down-to-earth nature and amiable approach will win the hearts of many.

AQUARIUS
You will come out top in whatever you choose to do, and success will smell honey-suckle sweet! Naturally, recognition and rewards await you. Take your friends to that trendy café; you needn't wait for a reason to party, says Ganesha.

PISCES
Major expenses are coming your way, but the good news is a lot of them can be avoided simply by drawing a line between your needs and your wants. Exercising a little restraint now will go a long way in boosting your savings later on, says Ganesha.

Swara slams trolls wishing her death

Mumbai: Actress Swara Bhasker, who tested Covid positive Friday, has clapped back at

trollers, who have wished her death. Swara Friday shared on Twitter that she has been isolated and is in quarantine. She even shared her symptoms.

She wrote: "Hello Covid! Just got my RT-PCR test result and have tested positive. Been isolating & in quarantine. Symptoms include fever; a splitting headache and loss of taste. Double vaccinated so hope this passes soon. Stay safe everyone."

The actress later shared a screenshot of her name trending on Twitter, where several users wrote 'Rest In Hell' with a picture of Swara.

Clapping back at her haters, Swara wrote: "And to my dear Nafrati Chintus and trolls praying for my demise.. doston apni bhaavnaein kaaboo mein rakho.. mujhey kuch ho gaya toh aapki rozi roti chhin jaaegi.. ghar kaisey chalega (Friends keep your feelings in control; ½ If something happens to me, how would you run your household?)"



A show underway to pay tribute to Guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra on his 96th birth anniversary at Utkal Rangamanch, Bhubaneswar

Guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra remembered on birth anniv

Bhubaneswar: Premier dance school *Srjan* in collaboration with Guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre Saturday organised *Antardrishti*, a cultural event, here at Utkal Rangamanch, to pay homage to Odissi legend Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra on his 96th birth anniversary.

The second half of the evening presented a musical presentation by Jabahar Mishra and Sandeep Kumar Raut with tabla accompaniment by Subhransu Sekhar Sahoo. The recital commenced with Raga Gorarakha Kalyan set to Mata Tala and Dhruv Teen Taal. The second presentation was the popular Bhajan Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram set to Raga Mishra Pilu and Tala Dipchandi and Kaharva. The musicians created a magical spell and left the audience spellbound right through the show.

Pak actress Saba excited over her show on Indian OTT

Mumbai: Pakistani actress Saba Qamar who is known for appearing in Hindi film *Hindi Medium* alongside the late Irrfan Khan, will soon be seen in an upcoming Zindagi original show *Mrs & Mr Shameem*.

As the show releases on ZEE5, the actress is quite excited and looking forward to connecting with the Indian audience through the show.

Zindagi originals announced three new shows that will be released this year on ZEE5. Out of the three shows, one untitled show features Fawad Khan, another favourite of the Indian audiences, post his fame for *Kapoor & Sons* and *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil*.

Saba Qamar is part of a show titled *Mrs & Mr Shameem*. Saba, who is playing the female protagonist in the film, said, "Mrs and Mr Shameem is a contemporary story that questions the stereotypical gender roles defined by society. The subject of this show is very different from what we normally see on our screens and I am so excited to be a part of this trail-blazing *Zindagi* series."



Vicky urges Aanand Rai to cast him in his next

Mumbai: Actor Vicky Kaushal, whose wedding with Katrina Kaif was the centre of attention recently, has made a public appeal to Aanand L Rai to cast him in his next venture.

Vicky took to his Instagram story and posted the poster of Rai's recent directorial, *Atrangi Re* starring Sara Ali Khan, Dhanush and Akshay Kumar. Mightily impressed with the film, the *Masaan* actor wrote on the picture, "Kitni pyaari Film hai... mazaa aa gaya! @saraalikhani95 such a difficult role to play and how wonderfully

you have surrendered yourself to it."

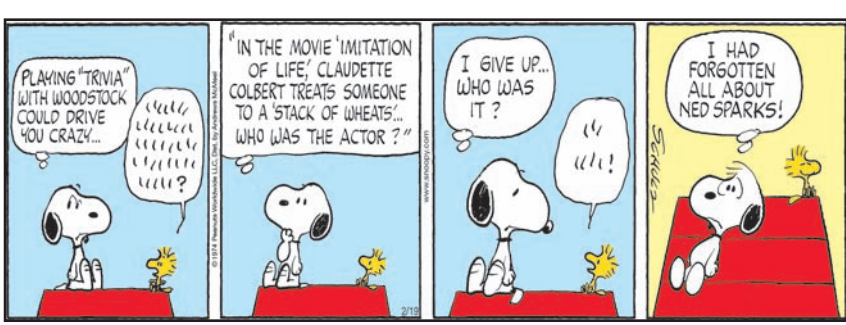
He added, "@dhanushkrja absolutely genius. @akshaykumar Garda uda diye! @aanandrai Cast me in your next Film Sir, please!"

Atrangi Re took the direct-to-digital route as it released to a positive response on Disney+ Hotstar.

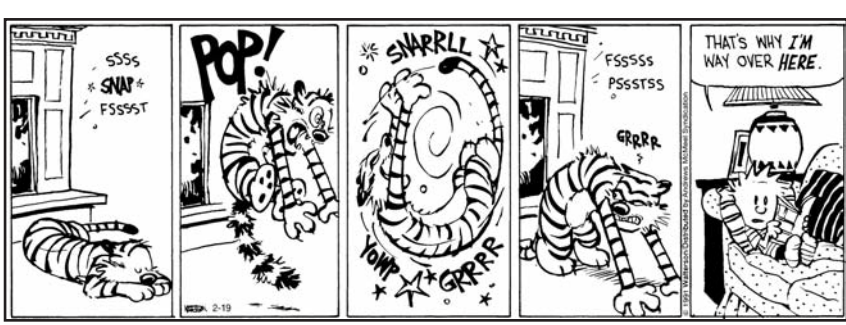
As for Vicky, the actor will have three releases this year including *Govinda Naam Mera*, *The Great Indian Family* and *Mimi* director Laxman Utekar's next untitled film.



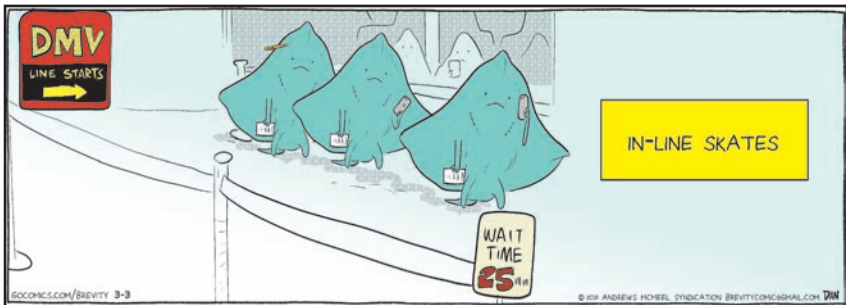
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6
7			8		
9		10			
11		12		13	
			14		
15	16		17		18
			19		
20				21	
			22		
23					

- Across
7 Treat
8 Shred (4,2)
9 Something of little value
10 Substitutes (5-3)
11 Serious infection
13 Mesh
15 Suffering
17 Concede
- Down
20 Deposit
21 Attic
22 Anxious
23 Receive
- 4 Lash
5 Scalp condition
6 Rivulet
12 Disability
14 Speech
16 Leafy vegetables
18 Ending
19 Mineral
21 Former

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

E	X	C	I	T	E	R	A	M	B	L	E	N
N	H	A	B	L	E	N						
T	R	E	M	B	L	E	B	I	L	G	E	
R	E	L	L	U	G	R						
A	N	K	L	E	L	E	M	M	I	N	G	
P	A	Y	A	Y								
I	N	F	U	L	L	S	W	I	N	G		
A	A	A	A	I	A	F						
V	A	N	A	T	U	S	U	C	R	E		
I	L	I	E	N	G	H	R	A				
A	L	I	E	N	H	E	I	R	E	S		
T	E	U	S	N	D	O	T					
E	A	S	E	L	S	I	G	L	O	O	S	

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



Bengal may impose total lockdown

EXPERTS ARE OF THE OPINION THAT IF THE TRANSMISSION CHAIN IS NOT BROKEN IMMEDIATELY THEN THE NUMBER OF DAILY CASES MIGHT BREAK THE RECORD WITHIN A COUPLE OF DAYS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Jan 8: With more than 73,000 new Covid-19 registered in the last seven days, speculations are rife that West Bengal, which has already announced formation of micro-containment zones, might impose a full lockdown curb the unprecedented spike.

Friday, the state recorded 18,213 new cases, close to the highest single-day spike registered May 14, 2021 (20,836).

Experts are of the opinion that if the transmission chain is not broken immediately then the number of daily cases might break the record within a couple of days.

What is more alarming for the state is the astronomical rise of cases in the last 10 days. January 4, the number of fresh was 9,073 which then doubled within a span of two days.

January 1 the number was just 4,512 but in the next seven days, the cumulative figure touched 73,412 causing real concern for the state administration.

In an effort to curb the steep rise of the virus, the state government has already announced a series of measures bringing back



A Covid-19 patient waits to get admission at a state government-run Covid hospital in Kolkata, Saturday.

the micro-containment zone mechanism to restrict people from high infectious zones to get into the mainstream areas.

So far, the local administration has announced 48 micro-containment zones of which 28 are in Bidhannagar - the satellite township of Kolkata.

Though Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said the state government is against a total lockdown because it hampers the life of the common people, recently, she indicated that the state government is mulling stricter restrictions.

Not only in Kolkata and its adjacent areas, but the local administration has imposed partial lockdown in several other areas.

The local administration of South 24 Parganas, Howrah, Hooghly, Jalpaiguri, Nadia and North 24 parganas have announced a total lockdown three days a week.

"Presently we have decided to continue with a total lockdown Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and will carefully observe the situation for the next seven days. If the number of fresh cases doesn't come down then we might think of a

stricter imposition of the lockdown conditions. We are going for a mass campaign so that the people become aware of wearing the masks and maintain social distance. This is the only way to control the spread of the disease," a senior official of a district adjacent to Kolkata said. According to senior officials of the state government, the administration is not waiving out the possibility of a total lockdown in the state.

"We have one advantage that there is no rush in the hospitals and we don't have any shortage of oxygen either. It indicates that the people are having mild symptoms and will be safe if they maintain the government regulations strictly and stay in home isolation," a senior state government official said. "We are preparing for the worst. If there is a huge rush in the hospitals then the government might think of imposing a lockdown in the entire state. Presently the situation is under control and we are having a close watch on the development. If the situation becomes critical then we will have to think in a different way. Lockdown is our last resort and we will not impose it unless it is inevitable."

AGENCIES

Kolkata, Jan 8: The Indian government renewed permission for late Catholic nun Mother Teresa's charity to receive foreign funds, weeks after rejecting it, the organisation said Saturday.

On Christmas Day the Narendra Modi government moved to cut off foreign funding to the Missionaries of Charity and refused to renew its licence under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA).

Charities and non-profit firms need to register under FCRA to receive money from abroad. "The FCRA application has now been renewed," Sunita Kumar, a close aide to Mother Teresa, told AFP.

The Missionaries of Charity, which runs shelter homes across India, was founded in 1950 by the late Mother Teresa, a Catholic nun who devoted most of her life to helping the poor in the eastern city of Kolkata.

She won the Nobel Peace Prize and was later declared a saint. India's home ministry issued a statement in December saying it was rejecting the renewal appli-



cation because the charity did not meet "eligibility conditions" and that "adverse inputs were noticed". Last week, Oxfam India said the Indian government had blocked its access to international funds, a move which it said would have severe consequences for its humanitarian work. The Modi government has been accused of cutting off access to funding of charities and rights groups in the country. Amnesty International announced in 2020 that it was halting operations in India after the government froze its bank accounts.

Derek's swipe at PM

NEW DELHI: TMC MP Derek O'Brien took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday after the government restored the FCRA registration of the Mother Teresa-founded Missionaries of Charities. Tagging a screenshot of the list of FCRA-registered associations, O'Brien tweeted, "The POWER OF LOVE is stronger than the power of 56 inch," he added, taking a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

BJP fights to retain power in Manipur

AGENCIES

Imphal, Jan 8: Manipur will vote in two phases - February 27 and March 3 - as the elections are held for the 60-member state Assembly, the Election Commission announced Saturday.

According to the EC, six districts of Manipur will go to the polls on February 27, while voting in the other 10 districts will take place March 3.

In the 2017 state elections, Congress had emerged as the single-largest party by winning 28 seats. Several leaders, however, later quit the party.

Later, the BJP which had 21 seats managed to form the government with Nongthongbam Biren Singh as the Chief Minister in an alliance with three regional parties - Naga People's Front (NPF) National Peoples Party (NPP), the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), an independent candidate, and even a former Congress MLA.

Over the past five years or so, 13 Congress MLAs have switched over to BJP. Chief Minister N Biren Singh, a former Congress leader, has been able to steer the alliance for five years with a strong lobby in-

side the party in Manipur, pushing BJP central leadership more than once for a leadership change in the state. Biswajit Singh is another BJP leader who has made efforts to bridge the divide between the hills and the valley areas of Manipur and sustain peace.

The BJP's relation with its alliance partner NPF was recently strained after the party had poached few key members of its ally. The NPP - another component of the coalition - has this time decided to go solo.

Congress which is facing a crisis due to infighting between state units aims to wrest power from the BJP in the state. The party also suffers due to the absence of vibrant and energetic young leaders.

The party has vowed to push for "the immediate and complete removal of AFSPA" from Manipur if it is elected to power.

Nitish Kumar's JD(U) had earlier announced that the party will contest the Assembly elections in Manipur. JD(U) and BJP are allies in Bihar as well as at the Centre. Conducting elections in Manipur amid frequent insurgent attacks is one of the biggest challenges for the EC.



How chocolate from Assam reached Myanmar market

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Jan 8: A chocolate named 'dark fantasy', manufactured in Assam's Mangaldai town, made its way into the markets of Myanmar after travelling over 2,000 km and passing through Siliguri, Kolkata, Singapore, Yangon to finally reach Kale.

This nugget of information was shared by KK Dwivedi, Commissioner to the Department of Industries & Commerce, Assam, while speaking at the ongoing Northeast Festival here Friday.

At the 'Make in Northeast - DoNER Dialogue', Dwivedi also dwelt on several aspects of the region including how the term 'Northeast' was first used in 1884 by the then chief commissioner of Burma, Alexander Mackenzie, in his book 'History of the Relations



of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal". Dwivedi also recalled how Jyoti Prasad Saikia coined the term 'seven sisters' for the northeast

PILGRIMAGE AMID PANDEMIC



A health worker collects swab sample of a pilgrim as others stand in a queue near a transit camp for pilgrims of Gangasagar Mela 2022, in Kolkata, Saturday.

Dhankhar summons CS, DGP over incident involving Suvendu

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Jan 8: West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar Saturday summoned Chief Secretary Hari Krishna Dwivedi and Director General of Police (DGP) Manoj Malaviya to brief him on an incident involving BJP Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari, in which he was allegedly stopped from entering Netaji under Binpur Block in Jhargram Friday.

Adhikari was going there to pay homage to nine persons who were shot during the Left Front rule.

"In view of the highly-disturbing scenario, reminiscent of Emergency, in Jan 07 communication @SuvenduWB, WB Guv has directed CS @MamataOfficial &



allowed to go to Netaji despite him saying that he would go there alone. Writing in detail, the BJP MLA said, "I would request you to kindly analyse the following information that I am about to share with you as a specimen of the deterioration of the democratic order in West Bengal where even the judiciary holds no importance in the eyes of the authorities in charge of law and order." Adhikari said that January 7, 2011, armed goons fired indiscriminately targeting innocent villagers of Netaji, in which nine lives were lost while several others got injured. The Governor responded immediately and asked the two senior state government officials to be present in person Monday and brief him on the details.

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'Important to have civilian population in border areas'

Arunachal Pradesh shares a 1,080-km border with China, 440 km with Myanmar and 160 km with Bhutan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Itanagar, Jan 8: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has stressed on the importance of the presence of civilian population in border regions, asserting that the Centre is focused on speedy development of such areas.

He also said border areas in the state will soon have the facility of 4G connectivity.

"The government now is focused on speedy development of the border regions by constructing roads and building other vital infrastructure. It is because of such aggressive stance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that road connectivity has extended to places like Taksing and other remote border areas in Arunachal, which was earlier unthought of," Khandu said.

The chief minister was speaking at a public rally Friday in Nacho constituency in remote Upper Subansiri district bordering Tibet. "Regions near the international borders in the state will soon be con-



nected with 4G mobile connectivity," Khandu was quoted as saying in an official release. Khandu said people along the border areas should be "able to move freely and take up activities for sustenance." He said in Tangang, activities like yak rearing are gaining importance, and tourism and pilgrimage centres are being developed. Arunachal Pradesh shares a 1,080-km border with China, 440 km with Myanmar and 160 km with Bhutan.

Ships from NE to be connected to Haldia via B'desh: Sonowal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Jan 8: Work has begun for national waterways along the Brahmaputra and Barak rivers and cargo and passenger ships from Assam and the northeast will be connected to Haldia in West Bengal via Bangladesh, Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal said Saturday.

Speaking at the 'Brahmaputra River Conclave' at the ongoing Northeast Festival here, he said transformation through transportation is the idea behind the revamping of national waterways as means of communication.

"Work has already begun to pave way for national waterways (Brahmaputra and Barak) to facilitate movement of cargo ships. Cargo and passenger ships from Assam and the northeast will be connected to Haldia via Bangladesh. The work of dredging has already begun," the Union ports, shipping and waterways minister said.

He added that coastal and maritime shipping will get a boost with opening up of the northeastern markets. Sonowal also said that "we must not limit ourselves to the Brahmaputra. We must go beyond and develop waterways through other rivers like Aie, Dhansiri, Manas."



He spoke about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to develop the northeastern region. "All the eight states must come together and work towards the region's development," he urged. Director of Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWA) A Selvakumar made a presentation on measures taken for revamping river networks in the northeast. Rituparna Baruah, director of Assam Tourism Development Corporation Ltd, and Lakshya Konwar, vice president of Sports Authority of Assam and general secretary of Assam Olympic Association, were also present at the conclave. The three-day Northeast festival was inaugurated by Assam Governor Jagdish Mukhi Friday. It is being held at Radisson Blu here with necessary Covid protocols and only double-vaccinated people are being allowed.

international



When some make from their freedom ... a motto, not only do they put others' lives at risk, but they are also curtailing others' freedom. That I cannot accept. When you are a citizen you must agree to do your civic duty
EMMANUEL MACRON | PRESIDENT, FRANCE

SWISS ARMY BANS WHATSAPP USAGE
Citing privacy concerns, the Swiss army has banned the use of Meta-owned WhatsApp among other popular messaging services by army personnel. Apart from WhatsApp, the Swiss army has also banned the use of Signal and Telegram



of the day quote

Next week's series of engagements are an opportunity for Russia to demonstrate that it is serious about dialogue and diplomacy. We are always ready to listen to Russian concerns. And NATO will make every effort to find a political way forward

JENS STOLTENBERG | SECRETARY GENERAL, NATO

This pandemic, especially this latest wave has put our health professionals under enormous pressure. Please be polite and considerate when dealing with the frontline health workers

MALCOLM TURNBULL | FMR PM, AUSTRALIA

We know now that Omicron is less severe and we certainly know that once you get boosted that your chance of hospitalisation, our latest analysis shows, is almost 90 per cent less than it was with Delta

SAJID JAVID | HEALTH SECRETARY, UK

SHORT TAKES

Cafeteria blast kills 16 in China

Beijing: A lunchtime explosion at an office cafeteria killed 16 people in southwest China Friday and injured 10 others, authorities said. A gas leak is the suspected cause of the blast, the Chongqing city government said in an online statement. The cafeteria collapsed, trapping victims inside. Rescue workers searched the debris into the night and all the bodies were recovered by midnight, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

Mandela items' auction halted

Johannesburg: US-based Guernsey's Auction House has agreed to suspend its planned auction of the key to the cell on Robben Island where former President Nelson Mandela served out most of his 27 years as a political prisoner before becoming the first democratically-elected president of South Africa in 1994. This followed interventions by the South Africa government after it emerged that the key had been made available for auction January 22 alongside other Mandela curios.

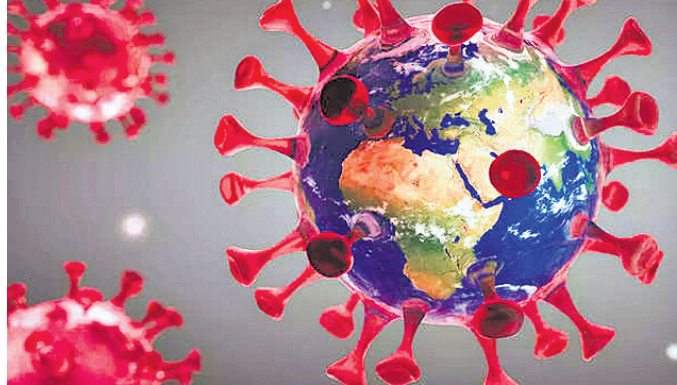
14 killed in bus collision

Cairo: At least 14 people were killed and 17 injured Saturday when a coach and a minibus smashed into each other at high speed in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, security officials said. The minibus and the coach, which had come from the capital Cairo and was heading for the Red Sea tourist resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, collided while speeding in poor visibility due to fog around dawn, officials added. The crash took place close to El-Tor in southern Sinai, some 300 kilometres southeast of Cairo.

Earthquake hits Qinghai Province

Beijing: A strong overnight earthquake shook a sparsely populated area in western China early Saturday and forced the suspension of high-speed rail service because of tunnel damage, authorities said. Four people with minor injuries in Menyuan Hui Autonomous County had been treated and released, they said at a news conference. The magnitude 6.9 quake struck at 1:45 am in a mountainous part of Qinghai province that is 3,659 meters above sea level.

'World tops over 2mln new daily Covid cases'



AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE

Paris, Jan 8: The world recorded more than two million daily coronavirus cases on average between January 1 and 7 with figures doubling in 10 days, an AFP tally showed Saturday. An average of 2,106,118 new daily infections were reported over the seven-day period, shortly after the one million case threshold was passed in the week of December 23-29, 2021. New global case numbers have soared by 270 percent since the highly contagious Omicron variant was discovered in South Africa in late November. But Covid-related deaths were at

Europe, as well as the United States and Canada, are the world's infection hotspots

their lowest level since October 2020, with an average of 6,237 per day recorded in the period between January 1 and 7. Although early studies suggest Omicron causes less severe illness, experts have warned the sheer volume of cases fuelled by the strain could still overwhelm health systems. Countries around the world have reintroduced restrictions and ramped up vaccination programmes in a bid to stem the spread of the virus. Europe, as well as the United States and Canada, are the world's infection hotspots. The two regions respectively represented 49 percent and 33 percent of global Covid cases in the past week. Covid cases skyrocketed by 47 percent in Europe and 76 percent in the United States and Canada compared with the previous week. In the same period, Covid infections increased by 224 percent in Oceania, 148 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 116 percent in the Middle East and 145 percent in Asia. The number of new cases reported in Africa remained stable but, as elsewhere, were at their highest level since the start of the pandemic in March 2020. The figures are based on official statistics produced by national health authorities. A significant proportion of less severe or asymptomatic cases go undetected despite intensified testing regimes since the beginning of the pandemic. Testing policies also vary from one country to another. Taking into account excess mortality linked to Covid-19, the World Health Organization estimates the overall death toll could be two to three times higher.

KAZAKHSTAN UNREST

Ex-security chief held over treason

REUTERS

Almaty, Jan 8: Kazakhstan's former intelligence chief has been arrested on suspicion of treason, the state security agency said Saturday, as the former Soviet republic cracks down on a wave of unrest and starts to assign blame. The detention of Karim Massimov was announced by the National Security Committee which he headed until he was fired by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev Wednesday after violent protests swept across the Central Asian nation. Tokayev's office said he had told Russian President Vladimir Putin in a phone call that the situation was stabilising. At the same time, hotbeds of terrorist attacks persist. Therefore, the fight against terrorism will continue with full determination, it quoted him as saying. The Kremlin said Putin backed Tokayev's idea to convene a video call of leaders from the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), under whose umbrella Russia and four other former Soviet republics have sent troops into Kazakhstan to help restore order. It was not clear when this would take place. Dozens of people have been killed, thousands have been detained and public buildings across Kazakhstan have been torched over the past week in the worst violence experienced in the oil and uranium producer since it became independent in the early 1990s as the Soviet Union collapsed. Tokayev has ordered his troops to shoot to kill



Russia furious over Blinken's comment

Moscow: Russia responded angrily Saturday to a comment by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken that Kazakhstan might have a hard time getting rid of Russian troops, saying he should reflect instead on US military meddling around the world. Blinken Friday challenged Russia's justification for sending forces into Kazakhstan after days of violent unrest in the Central Asian country. One lesson of recent history is that once Russians are in your house, it's sometimes very difficult to get them to leave, Blinken said. Russia's foreign ministry called Blinken's remark typically offensive and accused him of joking about tragic events in Kazakhstan. It said Washington should analyse its own track record of interventions in countries such as Vietnam and Iraq. If Antony Blinken loves history lessons so much, then he should take the following into account when Americans are in your house, it can be difficult to stay alive and not be robbed or raped, the ministry said on its Telegram social media channel. We are taught this not only by the recent past but by all 300 years of American statehood.

to end what he has called attacks by bandits and terrorists.

Indian-origin taxi driver assaulted

New York: In yet another case of suspected hate crime, an Indian-origin Sikh taxi driver in the US has been assaulted by an unidentified man, who knocked off his turban and also used expletives against him outside the JFK International Airport here, according to a video on social media. The updated 26-second video was uploaded by Navjot Pal Kaur on micro-blogging site Twitter January 4, showing a man assaulting the Sikh taxi driver outside the airport. The person can be heard allegedly using expletives against the victim. He repeatedly hits and punches him and knocks off his turban. "This video was taken by a bystander at John F. Kennedy International Airport. I do not own the rights to this video. But I just wanted to highlight the fact that hatred continues to remain in our society and unfortunately I've seen Sikh cab drivers get assaulted again and again," Kaur tweeted.

PAK: 22 TOURISTS FREEZE TO DEATH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, Jan 8: Pakistan's popular hill station Murree was declared a calamity-hit area Saturday after at least 22 people, including ten children, froze to death in their stranded vehicles due to unprecedented snowfall and rush of tourists to the picturesque town in Punjab province. All the routes in Murree in Rawalpindi district were blocked after thousands of vehicles entered the city, leaving the tourists helpless on the roads. Around 1,000 cars were stuck on the hill station while the Punjab chief minister Usman Buzdar issued instructions for expediting rescue work and providing aid to the stranded tourists, the Dawn newspaper reported. The Punjab government has imposed a state of emergency in hospitals, police stations and admin-



S Korea dismisses North's hypersonic missile launch

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul, Jan 8: South Korea disputed North Korea's claim to have recently launched a hypersonic missile as an exaggeration Friday, saying it was a normal ballistic missile that could be intercepted. The assessment is certain to anger North Korea. South Korea has previously avoided publicly disputing North Korea's weapons tests, apparently so as not to aggravate relations. South Korea's Defence Ministry said it believes North Korea hasn't acquired the technologies needed to launch a hypersonic weapon. It said in a report that what North Korea fired Wednesday was a type of ballistic missile that was displayed in October during a weapons exhibition in Pyongyang, its capital. It said South Korean and US forces could shoot it down. The ministry said North Korea's claim that the weapon flew 700 kilome-

tres and maneuvered laterally appeared to be an exaggeration. Ministry officials said the claim was likely aimed at a domestic audience to boost public confidence in its missile program. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has been calling for greater unity and improved weapons development in the face of pandemic-related difficulties. He has refused to return to disarmament talks with Washington and Seoul while maintaining tough anti-virus restrictions. The UN Security Council scheduled closed consultations on the North Korean launch Monday afternoon and diplomats said members will receive a briefing from Assistant-Secretary-General Khaled Khairi. The meeting was requested by the United States, United Kingdom, France, Ireland and Albania.

Webb is so big that it had to be folded origami-style to fit in the rocket that soared from South America two weeks ago. The risky operation occurred earlier in the week, when the tennis court-size sunshield unfurled, providing sub-zero shade for the mirror and infrared detectors. Webb should reach its destination 1 million miles away in another two weeks.

James Webb's 'golden eye' opens up

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cape Canaveral, Jan 8: NASA's new space telescope opened its huge, gold-plated, flower-shaped mirror Saturday, the final step in the observatory's dramatic unfurling. The last portion of the 21-foot mirror swung into place at flight controllers' command, completing the unfolding of the James Webb Space Telescope. "I'm emotional about it. What an amazing milestone. We see that beautiful pattern out there in the sky now," said Thomas Zurbuchen, NASA's science missions chief. More powerful than the Hubble Space Telescope, the USD 10 billion Webb will scan the cosmos for light streaming from the first stars and galaxies formed 13.7 billion years ago. To accomplish this, NASA had to outfit Webb with the biggest and most sensitive mirror ever launched — its "golden eye," as scientists call it.

Webb should reach its destination 1 million miles away in another two weeks.

Colombian man felt tranquil before euthanasia ended his pain

Escobar was the first to use a July ruling of the nation's top court that changed the rules for euthanasia, allowing it to be applied to people who suffer intense physical or psychological suffering due to a grave and incurable disease, even if they are not yet near death

ASSOCIATED PRESS

for his lung disease. There was no longer any need. On Friday evening, he became the first Colombian to be euthanised despite not yet being in terminal condition. "I feel an immense tranquility. I don't feel fear of what is to come," Escobar told The Associated Press this week. They have told me that the process is going to be a slow sedation at first so that I have time to say goodbye. "After that is the injection of the euthanasia, which is going to be something without pain — a very tranquil death. I trust in God that that all this will be that way," he said in a weak voice while sitting on a sofa in the small home he had been paying off with a pension of \$250 a month.



His lawyer, Luis Giraldo, said Friday evening that the process had been completed and

Escobar was dead. His family declined to reveal the name of the clinic where the eu-

thanasia took place. The country depenalised euthanasia in 1997, but only for those considered to have fewer than six months to live. While polls indicate most Colombians favour expanding it to people like Escobar, the legislature so far hasn't formally followed the court's lead by explicitly authorising it and some remain deeply opposed. From the apartment in Cali, where he was born, Escobar was conscious of the importance of his case, the first in Latin America. Even morphine was insuffi-

cient to calm his pain and he said other medications were losing their effects. He had been ill since 2008, when two strokes cost him the movement of half his body though some of that returned. He later developed chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, hypertension, diabetes, severe arthritis and costochondral junction syndrome — a painful inflammation where the ribs meet the breastbone. Escobar fought to obtain euthanasia for more than two years. Judges twice turned him down because his illnesses were not yet considered terminal. Escobar said he would say farewell to his wife, three children, brother and cousins at a midday meal.

If we ask for a dignified death it is because we are tired of all the illnesses that overcome us. For us, life ended a long time ago
VICTOR ESCOBAR

