



## HOME SWEET HOME

Actor Shruti Haasan says she looks forward to a quiet and relaxing New Year's eve at home with her partner Santanu Hazarika

LEISURE P2



## COLD WAVE GRIPS NORTH

Dense to very dense fog sweeps over parts of the country's north and northwest

NATIONAL P9



## PRACHANDA TAKES OATH

Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' takes oath as the Prime Minister of Nepal for a third time

INTERNATIONAL P10

## SHORT TAKES

### Srimandir 'stampede' leaves six injured

**Puri:** At least six girl students were hospitalised after being injured in a stampede-like situation at Srimandir here Monday said. The students, part of a 70-member group of boys and girls from Hrudananda High School in Rasgovindpur area of Mayurbhanj, had come to Puri for a picnic during Christmas holidays, a police officer said. While climbing the 22 steps (Baisi Pahacha) to the temple around 8 pm, the girls were caught in a stampede-like situation and fainted, a temple office-bearer said.

### Fake GST officials held

**Chhatrapur:** Four persons, including three who posed as GST officials, were arrested on charges of defrauding a truck driver of Rs 1.40 lakh after assaulting him and looting pan masala worth lakhs of rupees from him in Ganjam. **MORE P5**

### FM hospitalised

**New Delhi:** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here Monday, sources said. The 63-year-old has been admitted in a private ward of the hospital, it was learnt. She was taken to the hospital around 12 noon. More details are awaited.

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



No, not woollens! Show me the T-shirts RaGa wears

### MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	60566.42 ↑ 721.13
NIFTY	18014.60 ↑ 207.80
DOLLAR	82.83 ↑ ₹0.03
EURO	87.87 ↑ ₹0.01
GOLD	₹54,643 ↑ ₹69
SILVER	₹69,124 ↑ ₹91

### WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	32.2°C	31.0°C
TEMP MIN	17.6°C	18.2°C
Humidity	91%	96%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Shallow to moderate fog likely	

## Moon now closer than ever

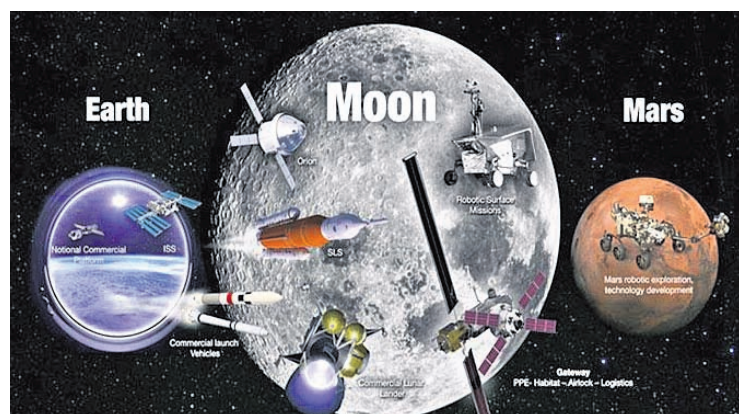
The year 2023 promises to be the final lap towards sending humans to the lunar surface in 2024

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** From a crewed NASA mission to private spacecraft roaring to explore the Moon, the year 2023 promises to be the final lap towards sending humans, including a woman and a person of colour, to the lunar surface in 2024.

On November 28, Orion spacecraft reached its maximum distance from Earth during the Artemis I mission when it was 268,563 miles away from our home planet.

Among the accomplishments for NASA's human spaceflight programmes, the agency successfully launched, for the first time, its Space Launch System (SLS) rocket, which put NASA's Orion spacecraft on a path that travelled farther than any spacecraft built for astronauts has been before.



The US space agency has completed manufacturing the booster segments and delivered the engine section to Kennedy for the Artemis III mission, which will be humanity's first return to the lunar surface in more than 50 years and land the first woman on the Moon

than any spacecraft built for astronauts has been before. The US space agency has completed manufacturing the booster segments and delivered the engine section to Kennedy for the Artemis III mission, which will be humanity's first return to the lunar surface in more than 50 years and land the first woman on the Moon

# Odisha not in focus of nat'l parties: Naveen

Addressing a gathering at BJD's silver jubilee foundation day celebration in Puri, Patnaik says the party would continue to serve the people for another 100 years if it receives the blessings of women

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 26:** In an apparent dig at the opposition ahead of the 2024 assembly polls and general election, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday said his party - Biju Janata Dal (BJD) - has a single-point agenda of development of the state, which is 'not in focus' of national parties.

The BJD has no vested interests apart from the progress of Odisha, Patnaik asserted while addressing a large gathering of party leaders and office bearers at BJD's silver jubilee foundation day celebration in Puri.

The BJD was founded December 26, 1997, and named after legendary leader Biju Patnaik, the father of Naveen Patnaik.

"The interest of the state is the lone agenda of the BJD, while Odisha is not in the focus of national parties. They have national politics in their agenda. Only a regional party can develop the state," he said, without naming any party.

Noting that the BJD is not just a political party, but a social movement, Patnaik said it has earned the trust of 4.5 crore people of Odisha.

"The BJD's growth and acceptability among the people is not dependent on one or two persons, nor will it in future," Patnaik said.

Patnaik said the party would continue to serve the people for another 100 years if it receives the blessings of



BJD's growth and acceptability among the people is not dependent on one or two persons, nor will it in future  
NAVEEN PATNAIK | BJD PRESIDENT

women, whom he called upon to assume leadership roles.

"We believe empowering women will strengthen family, state and the nation as a whole. Hence, initiative like Mission Shakti has become a people's movement," he said.

Patnaik added that under BJD's rule, all regions get equal priority, from Malkangiri to Mayurbhanj and from Bargarh to Puri. This removes the regional imbalance and ensures inclusive growth in the state. The BJD president also said his government has earned accolades from across the globe for its sound disaster management.

Highlighting the developmental activities undertaken during BJD rule, he said, "There was a day when Odisha was depending on other states for food security. Now, the state provides rice to other states. Look at our infrastruc-

ture and good governance - a lot of investment is coming to us - youth will get jobs...the state will witness immense development."

"It's a professionally-run government which works on the principles of 5T. It's a government sensitive to people's aspirations and needs, which has initiatives like Mo Sarkar to get citizen feedback," he further stated. The regional party, which has been in power in Odisha since 2000, could not organise its foundation day function last year due to the Covid pandemic.

The BJD had first formed government in alliance with the BJP in the state.

Meanwhile, the students' wing of the Odisha Congress staged a demonstration in the Holy City, protesting Patnaik's visit. Some of the student activists were detained as a precautionary measure, police said.

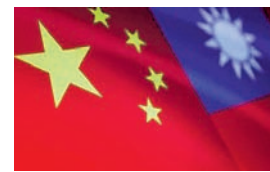
## CHINA STAGES BIG MILITARY INCURSION

AGENCIES

**Taipei (Taiwan), Dec 26:** China's military sent 71 planes and seven ships toward Taiwan in a 24-hour display of force directed at the island, Taiwan's defense ministry said Monday, after China expressed anger at Taiwan-related provisions in a US annual defense spending bill passed on Saturday.

China's military harassment of self-ruled Taiwan, which it claims is its own territory, has intensified in recent years, and the Communist Party's People's Liberation Army has sent planes or ships toward the island on a near-daily basis.

Between 6 am Sunday and 6 a.m. Monday, 47 of the Chinese planes crossed the median of the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial boundary once tacitly accepted by both sides, according to Taiwan's



Ministry of National Defense. Among the planes China sent towards Taiwan were 18 J-16 fighter jets, 11 J-1 fighters, 6 Su-30 fighters and drones.

Taiwan said it monitored the Chinese moves through its land-based missile systems, as well as on its own navy vessels.

"This is a firm response to the current US-Taiwan escalation and provocation," said Shi Yi, the spokesman for the PLA's Eastern Theater Command, in a statement on Sunday night. It announced that the PLA was holding joint combat patrols and joint strike drills in the waters around Taiwan.

## CHINA TO LOWER GUARD FROM JAN

**Beijing:** China will scrap quarantine for international travellers from January 8 next year, according to an official announcement here Monday, in a significant step for the country as it reopens its international borders and comes out of international isolation after nearly three years. China is also poised to downgrade Covid-19 from Class A to B management. These announcements come at a time when the country is grappling with a sudden spurt in coronavirus infections fuelled by the Omicron variants after the Xi Jinping regime relaxed its stringent zero-Covid policy earlier this month following a wave of anti-government protests. **P11**

spitting in public places and self-isolation, in case of showing symptoms, following an important review meeting, December 25.

## Videocon boss arrested for ICICI loan fraud

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** The CBI Monday arrested Videocon Group chairman Venugopal Dhoot in connection with the ICICI Bank loan fraud case, officials said.

Dhoot was arrested from Mumbai after a brief questioning session Monday morning, hours before former CEO and MD of the ICICI Bank Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar were to be produced before a Special Court for remand hearing.

The CBI is planning to file a charge sheet against the three and other suspects soon. The CBI had taken into custody Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak alleging that they were not cooperating with the investigation.

Chanda Kochhar has denied knowledge of any pecuniary transactions between her husband and Dhoot, the agency had claimed during remand proceedings at a CBI Special Court in Mumbai.

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Continued on P5

# leisure



## TAPE FACE TO KICKSTART 6-CITY INDIA TOUR IN JANUARY 2023

Comedian Tape Face, is set to embark on his first multi-city India tour which will start in January and will go on for two weeks. He will be performing his silent comedy shows starting with Pune January 25, with three shows in Mumbai and one each in Bangalore, New Delhi, Hyderabad, and Kolkata.

## NICOLAS CAGE'S MUSICAL DREAMS

Hollywood star Nicolas Cage has starred in a range of film genres throughout his career but one thing that he hasn't done so far is star in a musical. "I haven't done a musical yet and I think I'd make a good Pontius Pilate in *Jesus Christ Superstar*."



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
If you are a gadget freak, today you will have enough opportunity to flaunt your knowledge and impress everyone else. Students with a scientific bent of mind will excel in studies. Ganesh advises housewives to experiment with their own recipes, and not to worry about the oven - it will not burst.

**TAURUS**  
You will not lose your cool today despite the overwhelming odds, feels Ganesh. Rationale and reason will be the rhyme of your attitude as you diagnose the problems and uproot them successfully. Success beckons and you are ready to reach out and grab it by hook or by crook.

**GEMINI**  
You will ponder over religious and social issues and discuss and debate the issue with your family members and make your opinions known to them. This apart, you will probably discuss on issues like law, education, social obligations, and culture with those close to you, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
You may have to give more priority to your job. You will swiftly finish the task entrusted to you with concentration. Your zeal for work will be high. You will give so much importance to friends that you will go out of way to meet them.

**LEO**  
Be it a job or business, you will face severe competition today. You will need to be extra cautious today. You will need to be more serious about whatever it is that you are doing. You will become more influential in your social circle or amongst your colleagues as a result, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Today may prove to be a turning point for you. You will explore the opportunities to secure the money needed to make your future bright. Matters regarding relationships will be on the top of your priority list today. You may feel inclined towards spirituality, and Ganesh says as such you may try doing meditation or yoga.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says your friend who is very influential will be lucky for you. You will be able to start a new joint venture business with out any obstacles. Your efficiency and hard work will be appreciated.

**SCORPIO**  
You reveal your true avatar of being adventurous today, feels Ganesh. It's a favourable day for businessmen as they would make plans that would yield them huge profits. With your great communication and convincing power, you are going to impress your superiors today.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Being a part of all things bright and beautiful will remain the highpoint today, says Ganesh. You may don the hat of an activist and fight injustice and discrimination in the right spirits. Even if you are asked to conquer the world, you will be able to do it today, says Ganesh.

**CAPRICORN**  
You may feel utterly disappointed as all of your hard work and planning will go in vain. You will have difference of opinion with others and at times these differences may turn into heated arguments, predicts Ganesh. Such disharmonious environment will add to your anxiety, but don't lose hope. There is light at the end of the tunnel and you'll surely get through these turbulent times.

**AQUARIUS**  
You have been turning a blind eye towards the pending work you are loaded with. But, today you will take up the challenge of getting done with the pile of work. You may clean your desk at work or room, make payments and purchases, and clear the mess. It will bring clarity to your life.

**PISCES**  
It is important to plan your finances in life, and you will devote your energies towards the same today. You might turn stingy with your money all of a sudden. An unexpected illness in the family will leave you worried.



### Kuttey puts Arjun in dilemma

**Mumbai:** Actor Arjun Kapoor, who is set to play a cop in the upcoming theatrical film *Kuttey*, feels that his role in the film brought in a sense of dichotomy as he is a law abiding citizen but his character is of a corrupt police officer in the film.

Commenting on the same, the actor said: "For me to play a cop in *Kuttey* was a fulfilling experience, because to be a law abiding person and to try and operate out of the law was an interesting dichotomy to have to play a corrupt official. It was very exciting to wear the uniform, wear the cap, do the salute, look and feel the part."

Arjun had earlier essayed the role of a cop in the Dibakar Banerjee directorial *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar*. The trailer of *Kuttey* has been appreciated as people have raved about the refreshing storytelling, the fantastic ensemble cast, the powerful performances that one would get to see in the film.

*Kuttey*, which also stars Naseeruddin Shah, Konkona Sen Sharma, Tabu, Kumud Mishra and Radhika Madan, is set to arrive in cinemas January 13, 2023.



### Sonakshi thinks she's an instinctive actor

**Mumbai:** While she's been a part of commercially successful films like *Dabangg*, *Rowdy Rathore*, *R... Rajkumar*, Sonakshi has never shied away from trying to do something different with films like *Akira*, *Noor* and *Khandaani Shafakhana*.

Her upcoming films - *Kakuda* and *Nikita Roy* and *The Book of Darkness* too have raised curiosity among her fans.

About her choice of films, Sonakshi says, "I think I have been an instinctive actor. If there is a film I like to watch, I would like to be a part of it too. There has never been a strategy. I have always wanted to do the work that I wanted to do. I picked up roles that I feel would challenge me or make me try something new or different."

The actress recently teamed up with her brother Kuss S Sinha as he turned director with *Nikita Roy* and *The Book of Darkness*.



# Shruti has no fear of missing out

**Mumbai:** It's holiday season and with New Year's eve just round the corner, getting 'what's your plan' questions are inevitable. Airports are flooded with paps who want to capture celebs heading to some exotic locations for that much awaited vacation. However, for those who travel extensively, staying at home is a luxury and a vacation in itself.

Actress-singer Shruti Haasan who lived out of a suitcase for the major part of the year due to her back to back professional commitments, is looking forward to a quiet and relaxing New Year's eve at home with her partner Santanu Hazarika and her pet Clara.

Talking about her easy going New Year plans, the actress said, "I have only been out of the country. I spent two months in Greece recently for the shoot of my English film. I don't have any fomo (fear of missing out). This year has been very busy with back to back shoot schedules and I'm very grateful to be working on such amazing projects. I'm looking forward to an easy going and laid

**NEW YEAR TRAVEL PLAN**

back New Year's eve at home with Santanu and my pet Clara. New Year's is best enjoyed with your near and dear ones and I'm really looking forward to spending it relaxing and chilling at home."



### Malavika elevates cut-out trend with flowing gown

**Chennai:** When it comes to refreshing our wardrobes, we could always use some assistance, and Malavika Mohanan's sense of style is the ideal source of inspiration. The most recent picture session of the actress, who received praise from critics for her outstanding performance in Majid Majidi's *Beyond the Clouds* in 2017, is unquestionably proof that her style is genuinely dynamic.

No matter what she is wearing, she always gets people talking, and this time, she is bringing the heat to our screens in a stunning yellow gown by Viola and Vesper. Malavika Mohanan didn't need the light to make her glow; instead, her dazzlingly stunning

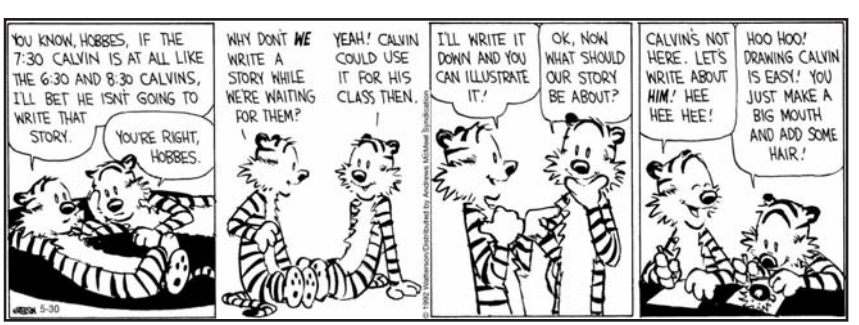
yellow gown did the work. There is no space for error when cut-outs and a flowing satin silhouette are combined, or at least there wasn't one when Malavika chose her ideal option. Not only did her one-shoulder dress have cut-outs at the bust and waist, but a side slit added even more drama to its lengthy trail. Her ultimate glam makeup was perfect with her red glossy lip and highlighted cheeks. Her sleek tear drop earrings and golden arm band was the only accessory that she needed to complement the look.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Malavika was last seen in *Maaran* opposite Dhanush. She will be next seen in Hindi film *Yudhra* opposite Siddhant Chaturvedi and Thangalaan starring Vikram.

### PEANUTS



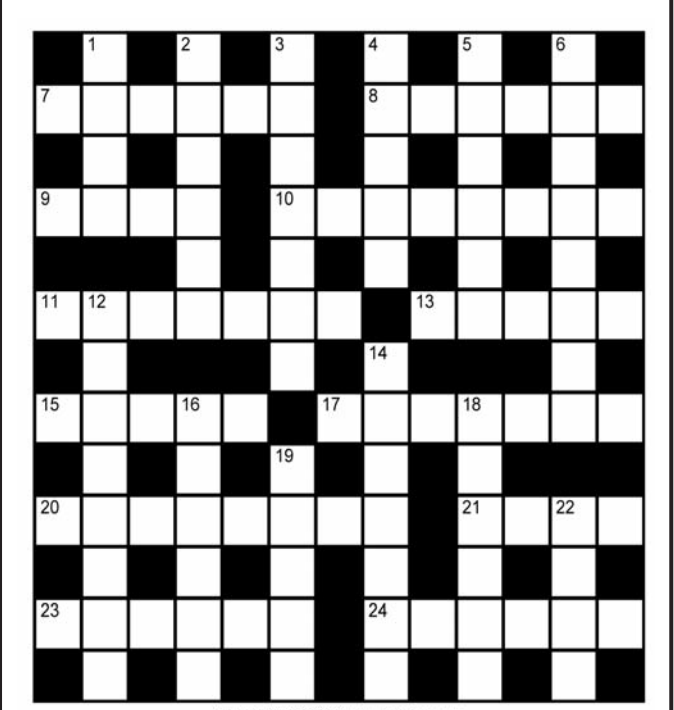
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



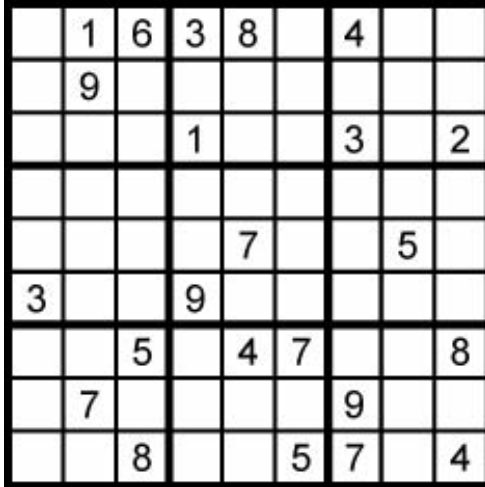
### FUN post CROSSWORD



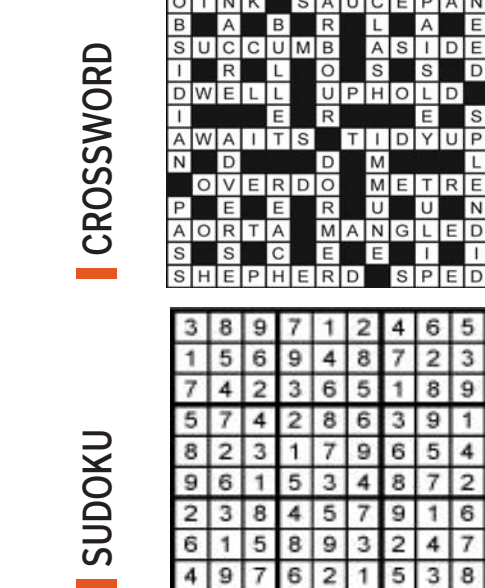
- Across**
- 7 Ravel classic
  - 8 Russian physiologist who studied dogs
  - 9 Persian spirit
  - 10 Pasta type
  - 11 Explanation, maybe
  - 13 Man of steel?
  - 15 Poker play
  - 17 Indonesian island
  - 20 Shoeless
  - 21 Ill-mannered
  - 23 Regress
  - 24 *La Loge* artist
  - 3 Inactive
  - 4 Elbowroom
  - 5 Exaggerate
  - 6 Cloudburst
  - 12 Parlour game
  - 14 Carrion collector
  - 16 Goeteborg locale
  - 18 Cooks' wear
  - 19 Origins
  - 22 Plumbing problem

### 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.



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW







STATE WOOS INVESTORS ODISHA GETS INVESTMENT INTENTS WORTH ₹10.50 LAKH CRORE



The Odisha government received 741 investment intents worth ₹10.50 lakh crore during the 'Make in Odisha' (MIO) conclave...

SENSEX, NIFTY HIT ALL-TIME HIGHS



'Never bet against America.' Warren Buffett had famously said. With Indian stock markets representing an oasis in a desert it won't be wrong to say 'Never bet against Indian stock markets'...

NEW ARRIVALS

5G: Ushering in a new technological era, India joined the elite list of countries that have launched the 5G services...

DIGITAL RUPEE: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced the launch of India's much-awaited Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)...

AKASA AIR TAKES OFF: Akasa Air is finally in Indian skies as the first flight took off August 7. It is a brand of SNV Aviation Private Limited...

CRIPPLED BY CRISES

After two pandemic-ravaged years, the world was expected to return to normalcy with full-scale resumption of economic activities. However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine triggered a series of crises from supply chain bottlenecks to spiralling inflation...

WAR'S DOMINO EFFECT

Infographic showing 'WAR'S DOMINO EFFECT' with categories: COST OF WAR, RECORD ENERGY PRICES, FOOD CRISIS AHEAD, COMPANIES BOYCOTT, and BABY FORMULA.

ENERGY CRUNCH

The spiralling inflation levels across the world led to central banks of several countries raising the repo rate.

COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

The largest cost-of-living crisis of the twenty-first century has come when people and countries have a limited capacity to cope.

HAWKISH CENTRAL BANKS

The US Federal Reserve raised the rate by 50bps to 4.25%-4.5% during its last monetary policy meeting of 2022, pushing borrowing costs to the highest level since 2007.

TECH BUBBLE BURSTS

The tech industry has enjoyed seemingly unstoppable growth over the past five years, but in 2022 it finally hit an immovable object: a slowing worldwide economy.

AMAZON: 10,000 The online retail giant is in the process of laying off about 10,000 corporate and tech employees...

TWITTER: 5,200 A week after billionaire Elon Musk bought the microblogging site, he laid off about half of Twitter's workforce...

HEWLETT-PACKARD: 4,000 - 6,000 The computer maker said in a November 22 statement that it planned to reduce global headcount by about 4,000 to 6,000 people...

META: 11,000 The social media company - which owns Facebook and Instagram - said it cut about 13% of its workforce...

CISCO: 4,165 The networking company told the Silicon Valley Business Journal in a statement No. 16 that it was cutting about 5% of its staff.

MUSK MADNESS Twitter takeover Former world's richest man, Elon Musk, completed his \$44 billion takeover of Twitter October 27. After the acquisition, Musk tweeted "the bird is freed" and later said "let the good times roll"...

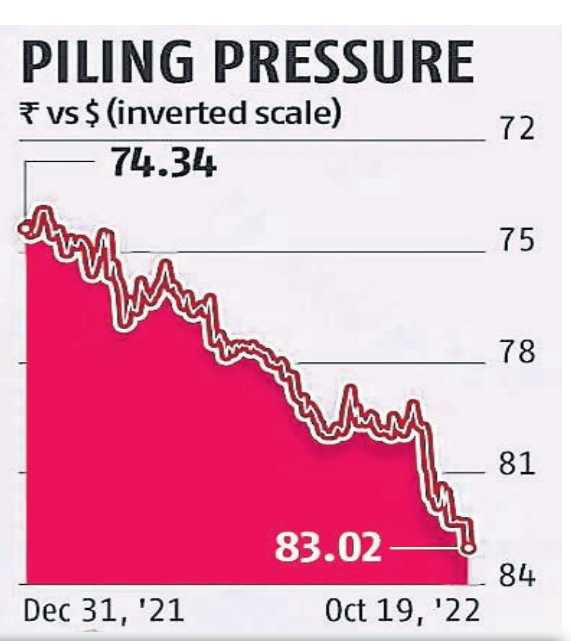
Tesla takes the burn for Twitter Elon Musk's latest multibillion-dollar unloading of Tesla shares brings his total sales in stock of the automaker he leads as CEO to over \$20 billion since he bought Twitter, as he continues to focus his time and resources on Twitter...

Loses richest man tag Musk is worth \$174 billion making him the second-wealthiest person on the planet and his year-long reign as the world's richest person ended earlier this month following the latest decline in Tesla share prices...

RUPEE'S FREE FALL

The Indian Rupee has depreciated nearly 10 per cent this year so far, breaching the key sentiment level of 82 against the US dollar for the first time in history.

FOREX KITTY DIPS: At the start of 2022, India's overall forex reserves were at \$633.61 billion but as of December 9 it declined to \$564.07 billion.



CRYPTO CALAMITY

As 2021 came to a close, cryptocurrency enthusiasts were brimming with optimism, but they were unaware of the 'crypto winter' which was going to shake the market base.

BITCOIN BREAKS Bitcoin, the largest token by market value, plunged more than 60%, leading a rout in digital assets that erased some \$2 trillion in total market value from the highs reached in November 2021.

FTX'S FALL FROM GRACE Cryptocurrency exchange FTX collapse shook the volatile crypto market, which lost billions in value, dropping below \$1 trillion.

VISIONARIES VANISH

'CHETAK' FOUNDER Eminent industrialist and former chairman of the Bajaj group Rahul Bajaj passed away February 12 due to illness at his home in Pune.

TATA SONS' EX-CHIEF Cyrus Mistry, an Indian-born Irish businessman and former chairman of Indian conglomerate Tata Sons, died in an accident September 4 after his car crashed into a road divider in western India.

'WIND-MAN' OF INDIA India's wind energy pioneer, Tulsi Tanti, chairman and managing director of Suzlon Energy, died October 1 at age 64.

'BIG BULL' OF D-STREET Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, often referred to as "India's Warren Buffett" or the "Big Bull of India", and widely known for his stock market predictions and bullish outlooks, passed away August 14.

MEGA MERGERS

FINANCIAL BEHEMOTH A merger that has to rest years of speculation was the marriage of housing to sub-sectored finance company with the sub-sectored finance company...

ENTERTAINMENT GIANT September 22, Zee announced its plans to merge with Sony, and the deal was inked three months later.

MULTIPLEX MOGUL This year saw the merger of multiplex giants PVR and INOX Leisure to become the largest entertainment company in the country.

ADANI'S BIG YEAR

WEALTH SKYROCKETS Indian billionaire and Asia's richest individual Gautam Adani has topped the list of people whose wealth saw the maximum rise this year.

NDTV TAKEOVER Gautam Adani-led Adani Group's media arm acquired 64.71% stake in New Delhi Television Ltd (NDTV).

'CEMENTING' POSITION Adani Group, which had no presence in the cement space became the second-largest cement maker in the country after completing the acquisition of cement players.

FUNDING WINTER

WEALTH KILLER LIC Yang-debtor IPO was dubbed as the world's largest IPO in terms of value raised, but it was a flop in terms of subscription.

STARTUPS' SLUMP This year, India added fewer unicorns to its list as the number of companies that gained billion dollar valuations fell by over a half from a year earlier.

IPO FUNDING HALVES Meltdown in shares of Dalal Street debutants and volatility triggered by geopolitical tensions soured the sentiments for the primary markets.

CONTROVERSIES

'THE YOGI' OF NSE NSE India's biggest stock exchange, unveiled a controversial move to introduce a stock market with a 100% margin.

FALL OF A TITAN Former ICICI Bank CEO Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar were arrested by the CBI December 23 in a case linked to alleged irregularities in an over ₹3,000-crore loan provided to the Videocon Group.

'BIG BAZAR' SHUT DOWN It's been over a year since Amazon and Future Group have been locked in a corporate legal stand-off which has stalled Future Group's \$3.4 billion sale of assets to Reliance.

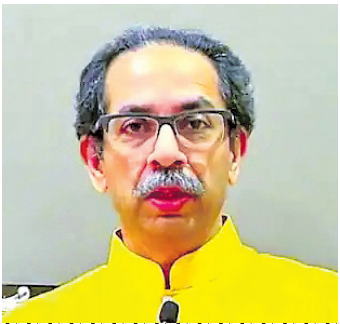


of the day quote

The government has never announced the release of Rs 15 crore to the municipal bodies and Panchayati Raj institutions but if any institutions needed financially help, the state government provided all possible help to them

The guidelines which will be formulated to manage the evolving Covid situation in the state won't impact day-to-day life and business of the people

A decision has to be taken as per the situation. When the situation improves, they (KP employees) should come back. But currently, there is fear in the minds of these employees. For the time being, they should be transferred to Jammu so that their lives can be saved. Why should they be killed



Until the apex court takes decision in the matter, the areas of Belagavi (Belgaum), Karwar, Nippani should be declared as a UT. This point must be included in the resolution that is passed in the legislature

UDDHAV THACKERAY | FORMER MAHA CM

TN REMEMBERS TSUNAMI VICTIMS

Mourners lit candles and silent processions were taken out Monday in remembrance of the victims of the 2004 tsunami that caused massive destruction in the coastal parts of Tamil Nadu 18 years ago. Fishermen kept off the sea as a mark of respect to the departed



## Cold wave sweeps North India

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Dec 26: Dense to very dense fog swept over parts of the country's north and northwest on Monday with the Met department predicting the conditions to persist over the next few days.



People sit around a bonfire to warm themselves on a cold winter day in New Delhi

Intense cold conditions and fog affected normal life in parts of Rajasthan, with sub-zero temperatures being recorded in Sikar's Fatehpur. During the last 24 hours, cold wave to severe cold wave conditions were observed at isolated places in northern parts of the state, the weather office said. Very dense fog also occurred at isolated areas.

Bathinda in Punjab and Bikaner in Rajasthan reported zero visibility, while it dropped to 50 metres and below at Ambala, Hisar, Amritsar, Patiala, Ganganagar, Churu and Bareilly.

Foggy conditions will persist in these areas over the next few days, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

According to the IMD, 'very dense' fog in which visibility is between 0 and 50 metres, 51 and 200 metres is 'dense', 201 and 500 'moderate', and 501 and 1,000 'shallow'.

In the plains, the IMD declares a cold wave if the minimum temperature dips to 4 degrees Celsius. A cold wave is also declared when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees Celsius or below and is 4.5 notches below normal.

A 'severe' cold wave is when the minimum temperature dips to two degrees Celsius or the departure from normal is more than 6.4 degrees Celsius.

A severe cold wave gripped the region with temperatures plummeting in several towns and cities.

In Delhi, dense fog lowered visibility to 50 metres in some areas, affecting road and rail traffic.

Ten trains were reported running late by 1.45 to 3.30 hours, a Railway spokesperson said.

The mercury dropped to 3 degrees Celsius in the Ridge area, 4.9 degrees below normal, making it the coldest place in the national capital. The Ridge and the Ananagar weather stations recorded a minimum temperature of 4 degrees Celsius and 4.1 degrees Celsius, respectively.

The Safdarjung observatory, Delhi's primary weather station, logged a minimum temperature of 5 degrees Celsius - three notches below normal.

Biting cold conditions and dense fog were reported in several parts of Punjab and Haryana, with Narnaul being the coldest in the region at 2.4 degrees Celsius.

In Haryana, Hisar recorded a piercing cold as the minimum tem-

perature plunged to 2.5 degrees Celsius. In Punjab, Amritsar recorded a low of 6.5 degrees Celsius, Ludhiana 6 degrees Celsius, Pathankot 8.8 degrees Celsius, Bathinda 3.6 degrees Celsius, Faridkot 6 degrees Celsius and Gurdaspur 4.5 degrees Celsius.

Dense to very dense fog was witnessed in some parts of the National Capital Region, Haryana, Punjab, west Uttar Pradesh and north Rajasthan

SHORT TAKES

Major terror plan averted

Udhampur: Police Monday averted a major terror plan after recovering an improvised explosive device (IED) in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district, officials said. IED-like material weighing around 15 kilogram and stored in a cylindrical object and 300-400 grams of RDX, seven 7.62mm cartridges, and five detonators were recovered in the Basantgarh area of the district, they said.

20 CARS GUTTED



Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Dec 26: Twenty cars were gutted at a multi-level parking facility in west Delhi's Subhash Nagar Monday morning following a blaze that started allegedly after a 23-year-old man set afire one of the vehicles to take revenge on its owner, police said.

Fire officials said a call was received about the fire in the basement of the four-level MCD parking facility around 4 am and seven fire tenders were rushed to the spot. The blaze was brought under control by 6:10 am, a senior fire official said, adding that no casualties were reported. With the help of CCTV footage, the culprit identified as Yash Arora, a resident of Subhash Nagar, was arrested. "During interrogation, he told the police that he had personal enmity with the owner of an Ertiga car and to take revenge on him, Arora burnt the car which was parked at the MCD parking facility," a police officer said, adding further investigation is underway.

A case was registered under sections 436 (Mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy house, etc) and 427 (Mischief causing damage to the amount of fifty rupees) of the Indian Penal Code and that of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property in connection with the incident, the police official said.

Four killed in car accident

Thirissur (Kerala): Four persons died in a road accident at Eravu area of Thirissur district in Kerala Monday when the car they were travelling in collided with a private bus. The incident occurred at 12.45 pm when the car collided head-on with the bus coming from the opposite side.

40 fall sick after eating leftover food

Korba: Forty people fell sick after eating leftover food which was prepared for a post-death ritual at a village in Chhattisgarh's Surajpur district, officials said Monday. The victims, who suffered from food poisoning-like symptoms, consumed the food Sunday morning in Vishunpur village under Ramanujanagar development block, Surajpur Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO) Dr RS Singh said.

BRS leader found dead

Hyderabad: A leader of Telangana's ruling party Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) was found dead under suspicious circumstances in Siddipet district Monday. Malleham, a member of Zilla Parishad Territorial Committee (ZPTC) from Cheriyal, had gone for morning walk. He was later found injured near Gurijakunta village. Villagers rushed him to a nearby hospital and was later shifted to Hyderabad but he succumbed on the way.

Temple sealed

Chennai: Revenue officials sealed the Sakthi Mariamman Temple at Virudasampatti in Tamil Nadu's Salem district after caste Hindus prevented the entry of Dalits into the temple. Police said that the temple, under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment (HR&CE) Department, was recently renovated and consecration was conducted by the caste Hindus.

## Pak boat's infiltration bid fails

After search of the boat, some arms, ammunition, and approx 40 kg of narcotics, valued at about Rs 300 crore, were found concealed



Indo-Asian News Service

Okha (Gujarat), Dec 26: The Indian Coast Guard and the Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS), in a joint operation early Monday, apprehended a Pakistani boat with 10 crew members from Indian waters and found 40 kg narcotics on board it, an official statement said.

"During intervening night of December 25/26, on a specific intelligence input, ICG strategically

deployed its Fast Patrol class ship ICGS Arinjay for patrolling in area close to notional International Maritime Border Line (IMBL). During early hours of Monday, Pakistani fishing boat Al Soheli was observed moving suspiciously in Indian waters. On being challenged by the ICG ship, the Pakistani boat

started evasive manoeuvring and did not stop even on firing of warning shots. ICG ship in pitch darkness manoeuvred and stopped the boat," a Coast Guard statement said.

It said that after an extensive search of the boat, some arms, ammunition, and approx 40 kg of narcotics, valued at about Rs 300 crore, were found concealed.

The boat, along with its crew, has been apprehended and is being brought to Okha for further investigation.

This is the seventh joint operation by the Indian Coast Guard and ATS, Gujarat in last 18 months and first wherein arms and ammunitions were being infiltrated, along with the drugs.



Labourers wrapped in woollens walk down the Kartavya Path during a cold and foggy morning in New Delhi

Pak drone recovered near border in Punjab

New Delhi/Chandigarh: The Border Security Force (BSF) has recovered a drone that flew into India from Pakistan along the international border in Punjab, an official spokesperson said Monday. The unmanned aerial vehicle was intercepted and fired upon by the troops around 7:40 pm Sunday in an area falling under the territorial limits of Rajatal village in Amritsar, they said. The quadcopter was "recovered" from a field near the border fence and a search is on to check if it dropped any consignment in the area, the BSF spokesperson said. It was not clear if the China-made drone was downed by the firing or if it crashed due to a battery discharge, officials said. At least three such Pakistani drones were shot down by the border force last week in Punjab.

# TALKING LIONS, CHASING CHEETAHS!

What happened to the Asiatic lions for whom a second home at Kuno Palpur was in the making for over two decades? How did a second home for the 'original lions transform into a cradle for 'alien' cheetahs?

As the country's media went ecstatic trumping up the cheetah chapter, lost in the hype and hoopla was the fact that the Prime Minister's own state, under his own 13 year old rule as Chief Minister kept dragging it's feet to give its neighbour Madhya Pradesh ruled by their very own party, the promised lions.

Does this imply that the second home for the lions stands effectively scuttled despite roof-top warnings that a virus had wiped out 30% of the lion population in Serengeti forest of East Africa in the early nineties? Is it that parochial considerations piloted by the powers-that-be, have taken precedence over national concerns even international wildlife imperatives? Gujarat's own Sasan Gir, the lone abode of the Asiatic lion in the world has also had its

share of the virus scare.

Twenty four asiatic lions had died in as many days ending October 15, 2018, prompting a massive preventive operation to ensure that the infection does not spread.

The Gujarat government attributed the deaths to infighting but was subsequently forced to admit that it was caused by canine distemper and babesiosis infection.

The fact is that Gujarat has been dragging its feet in handing over a handful of lions to neighbouring Madhya Pradesh. Warnings by lion conservationists have been to no avail leading to devastating deaths of these prized lions in the only habitat for them in the world.

Now for the official records, Gujarat's Forest Minister Ganpat Vasava, admitted in the State Assembly March 3, 2018, that 184 lions of the total of 523 in Gir forest had died between 2016 and 2017.

The state forest department carries out a Lion Census every five years. The 2005 survey had counted 359 lions and this grew

to 411 in 2010. The 2015 census found 523 lions and the 2020 census has put it at 674 terming it a 28 per cent rise in population.



Meanwhile an international study has made the alarming finding of how less the genetic diversity is among the Asiatic lions.

The Supreme Court in its April 15, 2013 order directed the Union Ministry of environment and forests to take urgent steps for reintroduction and carry out its order in 'letter and spirit' within six months.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature also advised for

a second home for the species. India's National Wildlife Action Plan 2017-31, the official document that guides conservation of wildlife too advised 'suitable, alternative homes for single, isolated population of species such as Asiatic lion'.

Gujarat government, then filed a review petition against the apex court order which was dismissed in October 2013. In February 2014, Gujarat then filed a curative petition in the Supreme Court which was dismissed in August 2014. It mentioned the same grounds as in the previous petitions.

The key points it raised was the threat of poaching and the gun culture prevalent in the region besides the issue of prey base.

Now when the cheetah is being introduced into the very same sanctuary have all these factors disappeared?

With all judicial options exhausted the state government then took the plea of completing a variety of studies before

initiating translocation of the lions. Things continued to move at a snail's pace. With virtually no movement. Bhopal based environmentalist Ajay Dubey filed a contempt plea in the supreme court against the Centre and Gujarat for non-implementation of its 2013 order.

Dubey had highlighted willful non-compliance of the apex court order and raising of technical objections. Gujarat had, in a letter to the technical committee even highlighted the presence of tigers in Kuno as an obstacle.

The contempt plea was discharged in March 2018. Tigers were an obstacle in the re-location of lions but don't seem to be so in the case of cheetahs!

The entire litigation process by the Gujarat government right up to the filing of the curative petition in the Supreme Court took place during Narendra Modi's tenure as chief minister. Now with Modi as Prime Minister there is a veil of silence. The official answer is that preparatory studies are underway.



of the day quote

The coalition agreements do not permit discrimination against LGBTs or to harm their rights to receive services as any other citizen in Israel

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU | ISRAEL'S PRIME MINISTER-DESIGNATE

With regard to the Ukraine crisis, we have consistently upheld the fundamental principles of objectivity and impartiality, without favouring one side or the other, or adding fuel to the fire, still less seeking selfish gains from the situation

WANG YI | CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER

Moscow would pursue its war in Ukraine until the disgusting, almost fascist regime in Kyiv is removed and the country is totally demilitarized

DMITRY MEDVEDEV | DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF RUSSIA'S SECURITY COUNCIL

SHORT TAKES

17 dead, many hurt

Tokyo: Heavy snow in large swaths of Japan has killed 17 and injured more than 90 people and left hundreds of homes without power, disaster management officials said Monday.

Gotabaya, family leave for Dubai

Madrid: Rescuers Sunday recovered the victims from a bus that ran off a bridge and plunged into a river on Christmas Eve, killing six passengers and injuring the driver and another passenger, Spanish authorities said.

US embassy in Pak sounds red alert

Islamabad: The US embassy in Pakistan has warned about a possible terrorist attack against American citizens at the Marriott Hotel here in the country's capital and prohibited American staff from visiting the five-star facility, an official statement said.

UK not to publish Covid-19 data

London: The UK health authorities said Monday that they will stop publishing their regular COVID-19 infections modelling data in the new year because it is seen as "no longer necessary" as the country moves to a phase of living with the virus with the help of vaccines and medicines.

6 fighters killed in IS attack

Qamishli (Syria): An attack by Islamic State militants in the city of Raqqa Monday killed six members of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, which has played a prominent role in the fight against the group, SDF officials said.



Good governance can be ensured if the Inter-Services Intelligence is used against high-level corruption, money laundering, occupation groups and smuggling

IMRAN KHAN | FORMER PAKISTAN PM

REMEMBERING THE DEVASTATION

Sri Lanka Monday observed a two-minute silence to remember the victims of the devastating 2004 tsunami. Traffic movement came to a standstill while employees at public and private institutions stood in silence to commemorate the victims



THIRD TIME PM

Prachanda takes oath



Nepal's newly appointed Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, interacts with President Bidhya Devi Bhandari, after he was sworn in during a ceremony at the President House in Kathmandu, Nepal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, Dec 26: Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" was Monday sworn-in as the Prime Minister of Nepal for a third time, a day after the former guerrilla leader dramatically walked out of the pre-poll alliance led by the Nepali Congress and joined hands with opposition leader K P Sharma Oli.

Warmest congratulations @cmprachanda on being elected as the Prime Minister of Nepal. The unique relationship between India and Nepal is based on deep cultural connect and warm people-to-people ties.

NARENDRA MODI | INDIA PM

The 68-year-old CPN-Maoist Centre chairman was appointed as the country's new Prime Minister Sunday after he submitted a letter to President Bidya Devi Bhandari showing the support of 169 members in the 275-member House of Representatives.

Prachanda took the oath of office and secrecy from President Bhandari at an official ceremony at Shital Niwas Monday. President Bhandari also administered the oath to other cabinet members of the new coalition government.

Paudel has been assigned Finance ministry while Shrestha got Physical Infrastructure and Transport and Lamichhane home ministry.

Prachanda, who is seen as pro-China, has in the past said a new understanding with India needed to be developed on the basis of a "changed scenario" in Nepal and after addressing all outstanding issues, like revision of the 1950 Friendship Treaty and resolving Kalapani and Susta border disputes.

lower house within 30 days. If he fails to win the confidence of the House, then a new process for government formation will begin.

The surprise development of Prachanda becoming the new premier may not bode well for India-Nepal ties as he and his main backer and former premier Oli have had some run-ins with New Delhi previously over territorial issues.

Oli on Sunday outfoxed his bete noire and ex-prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, a veteran of manoeuvring hung parliaments to his advantage.

Deuba congratulated Prachanda over the phone during the Maoist office meeting held on Monday morning. He was also present at the oath ceremony.

Prachanda, who is seen as pro-China, has in the past said a new understanding with India needed to be developed on the basis of a "changed scenario" in Nepal and after addressing all outstanding issues, like revision of the 1950 Friendship Treaty and resolving Kalapani and Susta border disputes.

FRESH TENSION

SK scrambles jets as NK sends drones

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul, Dec 26: South Korea's military fired warning shots, scrambled fighter jets and flew surveillance assets across the heavily fortified border with North Korea Monday, after North Korean drones violated its airspace for the first time in five years, officials said.

South Korea's military detected five drones from North Korea crossing the border, and one travelled as far as the northern part of the South Korean capital region, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. The military responded by firing warning shots and launching fighter jets and attack helicopters to shoot down the North Korean drones.

One of the aircraft, a KA-1 light attack plane, crashed during take-off but its two pilots both ejected safely, defense officials said. They said they also requested civilian airports in and near Seoul to halt takeoffs temporarily.

South Korea also sent surveillance assets near and across the border to photograph key military facilities in North Korea as corresponding measures against the North Korean drone flights, the Joint Chiefs said.



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It's the first time for North Korean drones to enter South Korean airspace since 2017, when a suspected North Korean drone was found crashed in South Korea

and resolutely respond to this kind of North Korean provocation," Maj. Gen. Lee Seung-o, director of operations at the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters. South Korea's public confirmation of any reconnaissance activities inside North Korea is highly unusual and likely reflects a resolve by the conservative government led by

President Yoon Suk Yeol to get tough on North Korean provocations. North Korea could respond with more fiery rhetoric or weapons tests or other provocation, some observers say.

On Friday, South Korea detected two short-range ballistic missile launches by North Korea, the latest in the country's torrid run of weapons tests this month. Friday's launches were seen as a protest of the South Korean-U.S. Joint air drills that North Korea views as an invasion rehearsal.

It's the first time for North Korean drones to enter South Korean airspace since 2017, when a suspected North Korean drone was found crashed in South Korea. South Korean military officials said at the time that the drone with a Sony-made camera photographed a U.S. Missile defense system in South Korea.

North Korea has previously touted its drone program, and South Korean officials said the North has about 300 drones. In 2014, several suspected North Korean drones equipped with Japanese-made cameras were found south of the border. Experts said they were low-tech but could be considered a potential security threat.

Russia shoots down Ukrainian drone

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kyiv, Dec 26: The Russian military reported Monday that it shot down a Ukrainian drone approaching an airbase deep inside Russia, the second time the airbase has been targeted this month, raising questions about the effectiveness of Russia's air defenses if drones can fly that far into the country.

Russia's Defense Ministry said the incident took place in the early hours of Monday, and three servicemen were killed by debris at the Engels airbase that houses the Tu-95 and Tu-160 nuclear-capable strategic bombers that have been involved in launching strikes on Ukraine.

Engels is located in Russia's Saratov region on the Volga river, more than 600 kilometers (more than 370 miles) east of the border with Ukraine. No damage was inflicted on Russian aircraft, the ministry said.

Ukrainian Air Force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat, speaking to Ukrainian television on Monday, did not directly acknowledge his country's involvement in Monday's incident, but said: "These are the consequences of Russian aggression." He added: "If the Russians thought that the war would not affect them in the deep rear, they were deeply mistaken."



EXTREME COLD, TRAVEL CHAOS

Woes from deadly storm continue

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

New York, Dec 26: US emergency crews counted the grim costs of a colossal winter storm that brought Christmas chaos to millions, especially in hard-hit western New York, where the death toll reached 25 Monday in what authorities described as a "war with mother nature."

Blizzard conditions continue to prevail in parts of the US Northeast, the stubborn remnants of a massive sprawl of extreme weather including severe cold that gripped the country over several days, causing widespread power outages, travel delays and

at least 47 deaths nationwide.

The extreme weather forced the cancellation of more than 15,000 flights in recent days including more than 1,700 on Monday, according to tracking site Flightaware.com. Buffalo -- a US city that is no stranger to foul winter weather -- has been buried under staggering amounts of snow, with the National Weather Service forecasting up to 14 inches (0.35 meters) Monday in addition to the several feet that have already left the city marooned, with a virtual collapse of emergency services.

The blizzard has stubbornly refused to release its grip on west-



ern New York's Erie County, where Buffalo is located and which has become the epicenter of the crisis.

In addition to the 13 confirmed deaths yesterday, the Erie County Department of Health

medical examiner's office has confirmed an additional 12 deaths, bringing the total for the blizzard to 25 deaths county-wide," Erie County executive Mark Poloncarz said in a press briefing.

The ferocious weather makes this "the worst storm probably in our lifetime, and the history of the city," Poloncarz said, noting the death toll in Erie will likely surpass that of Buffalo's infamous blizzard of 1977, when nearly 30 people died. With more snow in the forecast and most of Buffalo "impassable," he warned residents to bunker down and stay in place. "This is not the end yet, we are not there," he said.

VIRUS PANIC

China races to vaccinate elderly, but many are reluctant

China has joined other countries in treating cases instead of trying to stamp out virus transmission by dropping or easing rules on testing, quarantines and movement as it tries to reverse an economic slump

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, Dec 26: Chinese authorities are going door to door and paying people older than 60 to get vaccinated against COVID-19. But even as cases surge, 64-year-old Li Liansheng said his friends are alarmed by stories of fevers, blood clots and other side effects.

"When people hear about such incidents, they may not be willing to take the vaccines," said Li, who had been vaccinated before he caught COVID-19. A few days after his 10-day bout with the virus, Li is nursing a sore throat and cough.

He said it was like a "normal cold" with a mild fever.

China has joined other countries in treating cases instead of trying to stamp out virus transmission by dropping or easing rules on testing, quarantines and movement as it tries to reverse an economic slump. But the shift has flooded hospitals with feverish, wheezing patients.

The National Health Commission announced a campaign Nov. 29 to raise the vaccination rate among older Chinese, which health experts say is crucial to avoiding a health care crisis. It's also the



biggest hurdle before the ruling Communist Party can lift the last of the world's most stringent antiviral restrictions.

China kept case numbers low for two years with a "zero-COVID" strategy that isolated cities and

confined millions of people to their homes. Now, as it backs off that approach, it is facing the widespread outbreaks that other countries have already gone through.

The health commission has recorded only six COVID-19 fatal-

ities this month, bringing the country's official toll to 5,241. That is despite multiple reports by families of relatives dying. China only counts deaths from pneumonia or respiratory failure in its official COVID-19 toll, a health official said last week. That unusually narrow definition excludes many deaths other countries would attribute to COVID-19.

Experts have forecast 1 to 2 million deaths in China through the end of 2023. Li, who was exercising at the leafy grounds of central Beijing's Temple of Heaven, said he is considering getting a second booster due to the publicity campaign: "As long as we know the vaccine won't cause big side effects, we should take it."

Neighborhood committees that form the lowest level of government have been ordered to find

everyone 65 and older and keep track of their health. They are doing what state media call the "ideological work" of lobbying residents to persuade elderly relatives to get vaccinated.

In Beijing, the Chinese capital, the Liliudun neighborhood is promising people over 60 up to 500 yuan (\$70) to get a two-dose vaccination course and one booster. The National Health Commission announced Dec. 23 the number of people being vaccinated daily had more than doubled to 3.5 million nationwide. But that still is a small fraction of the tens of millions of shots that were being administered every day in early 2021. Older people are put off by potential side effects of Chinese-made vaccines, for which the government hasn't announced results of testing on people in their 60s and older.



# STOKES HITS OUT AT ICC

# Unhappy Ashwin takes dig at critics



Ben Stokes and England coach Brendon McCullum had something to ponder about during England's practice session

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, Dec 26:** England Test captain Ben Stokes has hit out at the International Cricket Council (ICC) for not paying enough attention to scheduling, adding that the rising popularity of domestic T20 leagues across the world is threatening the existence of the longest format of the game.

Stokes, who led his side to a 3-0 Test whitewash of Pakistan recently, added that the way Test cricket was being handled and spoken about these days, especially in the backdrop of the growing popularity of league cricket, was hurting him.

"The scheduling doesn't get enough attention that it should. A great example is England's one-day

series against Australia after the T20 World Cup. That was shoving three games in there. It made sense to someone to schedule a series which meant nothing," said Stokes in an interaction with the legendary Ian Botham on BBC Monday.

"Test cricket has been spoken about in a way I don't like. It is losing the attention of the fans

with all the new formats and franchise competitions. We understand there are so many opportunities for players away from Test cricket. But for me it is so important for the game," added Stokes.

Hinting that Test-playing nations should follow England's footsteps of playing ultra-attacking cricket, Stokes said "entertainment", more than "result", will

go a long way to popularise the five-day format.

"Taking the result away from the mindset is a great starting point. Putting focus on making every day entertaining. Not allowing people to know what is going to happen. If people turn up excited about what they are going to watch you've already won before a ball has been bowled," said Stokes.

He urged the ICC to do "something different" to popularise Test cricket. "I love playing Test cricket and felt we could do something different," added Stokes, who has guided England to nine Test wins in 10 games after taking over captaincy from Joe Root.

The 31-year-old all-rounder is also not happy with a lot of different squads being selected and players being rested because of the abundance of cricket being played and the commitment of cricketers to their franchises.

"Some people say 'you are playing for England, that should be enough'. But there is a lot more to factor in. You want international cricket to be the highest standard. But we have seen a lot of different squads being picked and players being rested, and that's not the way international cricket should go," opined Stokes.

Botham, while agreeing that franchise cricket was a good idea, called for a balance between domestic leagues and the longest format of the game.

"Test match cricket is called that for a very good reason, because it tests all the faculties of a player. The emphasis is too much towards white ball. In England we currently have a few first-class games in early April and it disappears until end of season. It should be balanced better. You have to make room for it all," said Botham.

"The idea of franchises is a solid, good idea. I just hope we can maintain a balance. And if franchises can maintain that balance then let's have a look at it."



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** Ravichandran Ashwin has taken a slight dig at people who perceive him as an "over-thinker" of the game following his match-winning performance against Bangladesh in the second Test in Mirpur.

Batting alongside Shreyas Iyer, Ashwin played one of the best Test innings of his career to steer India to a famous three-wicket win from an improbable situation. His 42 not out came after a match haul of six wickets, making him the player of the match.

"Overthinking is a perception that has followed me ever since I wore the Indian jersey with pride. I have pondered about it for a while now and believe I should have seriously considered a PR exercise to erase that word out of people's minds," Ashwin tweeted.

Besides his exploits on the field,

Ashwin is one of the best thinkers in the modern game and also has his youtube channel.

"Every person's journey is special and unique, while some journeys require them to overthink it others can afford to keep it simple. The moment someone says I am an over thinker from the inside walls, I have always thought to myself that's the way I play my cricket and not the way I recommend others to play.

"Finally, I think deeply about the game and share my views because I believe when ideas are shared they can multiply into miraculous achievements. The fact that it may not be popular won't deter me because my goal is not to win the war of words, it is to learn at the end of it," he added.

The 36-year-old has already attained greatness with 449 wickets in 88 Tests. He has also taken 151 ODI and 72 T20 International scalps.

# All 'Green' for Aussies against Proteas

# Surya focuses on putting up a show when goes out to bat

ASSOCIATED PRESS

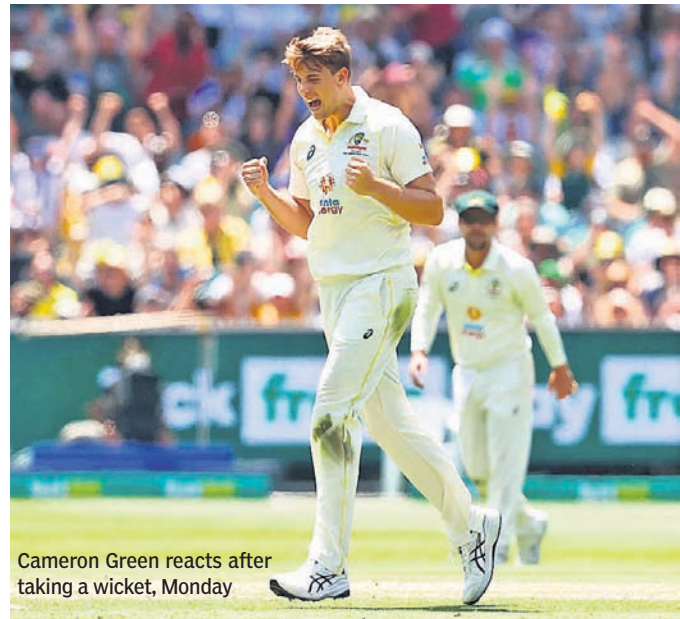
**Melbourne, Dec 26:** Riding a wave of emotion provided by a festive crowd at Melbourne Cricket Ground, Cameron Green claimed the best bowling figures of his Test career as Australia bowled South Africa out for 189 on the opening day of the second Test.

Pace bowler Green (5/27) gave the enthusiastic fans something to cheer about by triggering a late-order collapse of five wickets for 10 runs as the 23-year-old claimed his first five-wicket haul in Tests Monday.

Leading the three-match series one-nil, Australia reached 45/1 at stumps. David Warner was unbeaten on 32 with Marnus Labuschagne on five, leaving the home side 144 runs behind with nine wickets in hand, after Usman Khawaja fell caught behind for one to Kagiso Rabada.

Choosing to bowl first, Australia was on top shortly after lunch with South Africa struggling at 67/5 before Kyle Verreynne (52, 99b, 3x4) and Marco Jansen (59, 136b, 10x4) added 112 for the sixth wicket. It was South Africa's seventh consecutive test total under 200.

On a green-tinged pitch, South Africa's batsmen had edged cautiously to 58 shortly before lunch for the loss of Sarel Erwee (18) and Theunis de Bruyn (12). Captain



Cameron Green reacts after taking a wicket, Monday

Dean Elgar (26) attempted a risky single to mid-off in the penultimate over before the interval and was run out by a direct hit from Marnus Labuschagne.

Mitchell Starc removed Temba Bavuma caught behind for one off the next delivery to leave the tourists teetering at lunch. In the fifth over after lunch, Khaya Zondo on five aimed a powerful drive to mid-off where Labuschagne held a superb

diving catch at 67/5, as Starc (2/39) claimed his second wicket of the innings. South Africa had lost four wickets for 11 runs.

Dropped at short leg on 22 and on the leg-side boundary on 37, Jansen helped steady South Africa's innings, reaching his maiden half-century with a lofted boundary to long-on, after Starc failed to hold a difficult catch. Starc briefly left the field for treatment on a sore

middle finger.

Green dismissed Verreynne caught at first slip at 179/6. Green struck twice in his next over, removing Jansen caught behind for 59 and Rabada bowled for four. Striking again in his third successive over, Green forced his way through Lungi Ngidi's defences to end the innings in the 69th over.

Apart from cheering Green off the field, fans also paid tribute Monday to Test cricket's second-leading wicket-taker Shane Warne, who died aged 52 in March 2022. The Great Southern Stand at Melbourne Cricket Ground was renamed The Shane Warne Stand March 31.

Fans were encouraged to wear floppy hats to honour the champion spin bowler. Warne reached the milestone of 700 wickets on his home ground in Melbourne in December 2006. Both teams wore white floppy hats when walking out onto the field for the national anthems Monday.

A huge sign saying 'Warnie 350' was painted on the outfield to mark Warne's Test-cap number. Play was stopped briefly at 3.50pm, prompting applause from fans and players.

**BRIEF SCORES:** South Africa 189 (Marco Jansen 59, Kyle Verreynne 52; Cameron Green 5/27, Mitchell Starc 2/39); Australia 45/1 (David Warner 32 batting; Kagiso Rabada 1/24). Match to continue.

# Reid advises team to raise game

# Brazil reportedly pursuing Zidane for head coach job

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Dec 26:** Indian men's hockey team coach Graham Reid has warned his players against getting caught up in the moment and advised them to raise their game to the next level if they concede a goal in next month's FIH World Cup.

Reid believes a positive mindset is necessary while playing in a major tournament like the World Cup. India will open their World Cup campaign against Spain in Rourkela January 13, the first day of the tournament.

"You (Indian players) sort of get caught up in the moment when you play an event of this magnitude (World Cup). Don't let yourself get caught up in the moment. It could get quite daunting when you lose the ball, or concede a goal," said Reid, who was part of the Australian side during the 1990 World Cup in Lahore.

"It is important to develop 'the next thing' mentality. You can't



change what happened so you just move on to the next task at hand, stay focused on what's to be done," he added.

Describing how the Australian team prepared for the World Cup in 1990, Reid said shutting the mind to the "raucous spectators" and "playing silently" had done the Kookaburras a world of good during his playing days.

"In the lead up (to the 1990 World Cup), we played smaller games, and played silently - we were not allowed to talk. A recording of the

crowd on loudspeakers would play in the background and we learnt not to rely on calling out but had to get used to turning around and looking," he said in a release issued by Hockey India.

"We had to learn to blanket out the sound. And this time in Odisha, it will be just as important for us to be prepared for the crowd."

Reid admitted that due to the highly-competitive nature of modern hockey, it was very difficult to pick the favourites for the mega-event, which will be staged jointly by Bhubaneswar and Rourkela.

"It is so difficult to pick a team. If I think about it today, I could pick Australia, Belgium and India; and tomorrow I could come back with Netherlands, Germany and India," he said.

"Of course, I would put India in the top three because if we play well, we have a good opportunity to get there. Any of these top eight can win this World Cup. It is both daunting and exciting at the same time."

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Rid de Janeiro, Dec 26:** Zinedine Zidane has emerged as a frontrunner to assume Brazil's vacant head coaching job, according to media reports in the South American country.

Zidane has been linked with the France managerial role but could make Brazil a priority if Didier Deschamps remains in charge of the Les Bleus, the newspaper 'O Globo' reported Sunday.

Brazil's head coaching position became vacant earlier this month when Tite stepped down following the team's World Cup quarter-final defeat to Croatia.

Others to have been linked to the job include current Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti, Portuguese Jose Mourinho, Thomas Tuchel and Abel Ferreira. Brazil has never had a foreigner as coach of its football team.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Dec 26:** Suryakumar Yadav has been a trailblazer who has taken cricket's shortest format by storm. Inarguably, India's first true-blue T20 superstar, Surya has now trained his eyes on being successful in longer formats but without changing the essence of his batsmanship.

In an exclusive interview with this agency, 'SKY' spoke about his journey to the top of T20 rankings, his focus on ODI World Cup this year, ambitions to wear the India whites and how wife Devisha became the force behind the cricketer and the person that he is today.

Surya said that being the World No.1 T20 batter is like a dream for him. "It still feels like a dream. To be seen and called as world's No.1 T20 batter; if someone would have told me one year back, I don't know how I would have reacted. When I started playing this format, I wanted to be the best and I worked hard for it," said the Mumbai cricketer.

When asked whether he would change his game keeping any on the 2023 ODI World Cup, he said that he will stick to his philosophy. "I don't like to think too much when I am playing any format. Because I enjoy this game, whenever I go into bat, I put up a show. What I always dream and visualise is that whenever I go in, I want to be the game-changer. I have always loved batting whether it is T20s, ODIs or Ranji Trophy," he stated.

Surya also said that it is difficult,

but not impossible, to train one's mind to cope with pressures at the highest level. "I would say it was never impossible but certainly it was difficult. It needed a smart approach. Instead of doing a lot of quantity, I did a lot of quality practice. There were lot of sacrifices made by me and my family. Before making my India debut, I had played 10 years of first-class cricket.

"Grinding it out at first-class level, you learn a lot of tricks of the trade. So when you graduate to international level and play different bowlers, all you need to do is express yourself," said the 32-year-old.

"But let me tell you this. If you have gone through domestic grind in India, you are ready for international cricket and when you start that level, you are not carrying any baggage. Just execute what you did at the domestic level," he added.

Speaking on the time when he was struggling to find a place in the Indian team, Surya said he remained optimistic and was always thinking of improving his game. He also shared a story of his 360-degree technique. "In my school and college days, I played a lot of rubber ball cricket. On hard cement tracks and on rainy days, those would bowl would come from 15 yards and most of them chucked (threw) really hard," said the Mumbaier.

"Now rubber ball from 15 yards will come at 140 plus clicks and if the leg side the boundary would be 95 yards, the off-side would be only 25-30 yards. So in order to prevent off-side boundaries, most of them

would bowl into my body in order to prevent me from getting easy boundaries on off-side.

"So manoeuvring my wrists, playing those pick-up pulls and upper cuts have come from those matches. I never try those in the nets. In the nets, I like practising normally and hearing the sound of the bat hitting the ball. If I feel good I come out," he said further.

He termed Mumbai Indians and wife Devisha as two pillars of his career. "In my life and in this cricketering journey, there are two pillars - Mumbai Indians and my wife Devisha," said Surya.

"Let me elaborate about MI's contribution first. When I came back here from KKR in 2018, I was looking for an opportunity to bat higher up the order and even without me asking, the management entrusted me with that responsibility. I grabbed that opportunity, kept performing and never looked back. MI provided me with all the facilities I required to move up the ladder," he said.

"In 2016, I got married to Devisha and when I joined MI in 2018, we (me and Devisha) as a unit started thinking, what do we need to do to make the next grade. It was a dream we both nurtured together and she is always been around when I needed her. Even if she doesn't want to travel, I drag her around.

"She brings in the balance that I need as a sportsman. She doesn't let me get complacent after a good day in office and at the same time, doesn't allow my shoulders to drop after a poor day," Surya signed off.