

President Of India Addresses Students and Faculty Members of Keshav Memorial Educational Society, Hyderabad

## Read More in Order To Improve Understanding and Widen Your Perspective : President Murmu To Students

**New Delhi:** The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu addressed the students and faculty members of the Keshav Memorial Educational Society at a function organized as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav in Hyderabad today (December 27, 2022). She also inaugurated a photo exhibition on 'Hyderabad Liberation Movement' showcasing contributions of regional freedom fighters.

Speaking on the occasion, the President said that education is the foundation upon which a nation is built. It is the key to unlocking the full potential of every individual. She was happy to note that the activities of Keshav Memorial Educational Society have grown manifold—from a small school in 1940 to a premier educational centre with nine different colleges, enrolling over 11,000 students. She said



that this growth is a tribute to the ideals of Justice Keshav Rao Koratkar in whose memory the society has been established.

Noting that celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the Liberation of Hyderabad are being held as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', the President said that this holds great significance for the people of this region and for the nation as a whole. She paid tributes to the

brave leaders who fought for the liberation of Hyderabad, including Ramji Gond, Turbaz Khan, Komaram Bheem, Suravaram Prathap Reddy and Shoyabulla Khan. She said that their valour and sacrifice would always be remembered and honoured.

The President said that as we celebrate the historic milestone of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, it is important for us to

remember that our independence is not just about the liberation from oppressive rulers of the past. It is also about ensuring a bright future through well conceived steps taken today. As we move into the future, it is upto the young people of India to ensure that we build upon the foundations laid by our forefathers and take our nation to new heights. This means working hard and striving for excellence

in all that we do. It means being responsible and committed citizens, who are willing to contribute to the betterment of our society. It means upholding the values and ideals of our Constitution and working towards a more inclusive and equitable society. It means fighting climate change and preserving the planet for future generations.

Emphasizing on the importance of reading, the President said that the habit of reading is one of the most effective means for self-development. It is a skill that would serve students well throughout their life. She said that this is an age of internet and social media when attention span is getting shorter and communication is limited in characters. She urged students to read more in order to improve their understanding and widen their perspective.

## Odisha MSME Development Policy 2022 Gets Cabinet Nod

**Bhubaneswar(KCN):** The Odisha Cabinet meeting held under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik took 17 major decisions today.

Informing people about the cabinet decisions, Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra said that to accelerate the growth of enterprises in the MSME sector, the Odisha MSME Development Policy 2022 has been approved by the state cabinet. The policy announces progressive measures to incentivise the growth of MSMEs in promoting employment & contribution of the sector to the State's GDP.



As per CMO, both new and existing Micro & Small Enterprises will get Capital Investment Subsidies and the policy will support the growth of industrially backward districts. The Odisha Cabinet led by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday approved a

bid for the operation of direct flights to Dubai, Singapore & Bangkok. According to the CMO, IndiGo6E will operate direct flights on these routes which will make travel seamless & economical for the people of Odisha and Prabasi Odias.

## Bargarh town turns into Mathura as 11-day Dhanu Yatra kicks off with fanfare

**Bargarh(KCN):**The western Odisha town of Bargarh has transformed into Mathura as Dhanu Yatra, the world's biggest open air theatre, kicked off on Tuesday. The festival will continue till January 6, 2023.

According to sources, a big rally will be taken out from Gandhi Square at 2.30pm to Samaleswari temple to mark the diamond jubilee celebrations of the world-famous Dhanu Yatra. As many as 20 cultural outfits from Odisha and neighbouring states would participate in the rally. The outfit members will conduct a puja at the temple before leaving for the palace of Maharaja Kansa at Hatapada at 6pm. Later, the inaugural function will be held in the presence of chief guests-Parliamentarian Suresh Pujari and legislator Debesh Acharya. Meanwhile, Bargarh has transformed into Mathura. The theme is



borrowed from 'Krishna Leela' and 'Mathura Vijay'. It is learnt that as many as 30 artistes hailing from Kolkata took 15 days to give Maharaja Kansa's palace a look of Rajasthan palace. The palace is 42 ft in height, 120ft in length and 35 widths. Residents of Bargarh are excited to watch Dhanu Yatra after a gap of two years due to Covid restrictions. A local resident said, "We were eagerly waiting for this moment. Last two years we had missed being part of it. The 11-day fair will begin with the birth of Lord Krishna and end

with the death of Kansa. The total event is full of fun." An organiser said, "All the artistes are prepared both physically and mentally to showcase their talent in the popular Dhanu Yatra. Today, saint Narada will be seen advising King Ugresena to solemnize his daughter Devaki's marriage with Basudev. Saint Garga will also be seen advising King Ugrasena to conduct their marriage without delay. Following the advice, King Ugresena will be seen solemnizing the marriage of Devaki and Basudev in the absence of Prince Kansa."

## CB Probe On Russian Death

**Cuttack(KCN):** Odisha Police DGP Sunil Bansal on Tuesday ordered a Crime Branch investigation into the mysterious death of two Russian tourists including a lawmaker Pavel Antov in Rayagada district last week.

"DGP, Odisha has ordered CID-Crime Branch to take over enquiry into Rayagada Police Station UD Case No.34/2022 & No.35/2022. These cases relate to the unnatural death of two Russian nationals in Rayagada Dist," the Odisha Police said in a tweet.

Vladimir Bidenov, a close friend of Mr.Antov, was found lying unconscious in his hotel room on December 22. When he was taken to Rayagada district headquarters hospitals, the doctor declared him dead, police said.

Following the approval of Russian Authority in India, the body of Vladimir Bidenov was cremated in Rayagada.

Mr.Antov, stated to be a member of the legislative assembly of Russia's Vladimir region, was found with a pool of blood outside the same hotel on December 24, the police said.

Police is yet to ascertain whether Mr.Antov accidentally fell off the terrace of the hotel room or committed suicide. The cops are also looking into other angles in the mysterious death. These two deaths with a short span of time in one location has put the Odisha police on tizzy.

As the tourist season is going on in India, four people from Russia had come to Rayagada, of which one person (Vladimir Bidenov) died due to heart related problem, as per the preliminary investigation, said Odisha SGP Sunil Bansal. "Till now, we have not found any foul play in the case," he said.

After two days of the death of the person, his friend (Antov) was died suspected to be suicidal death case, Mr.Bansal said.

"We have registered unnatural death cases and are conducting investigations. Post-mortem was done.

The Russian authority in Kolkata is in touch with us. We are extending all support they want in this case," the DGP informed.

Meanwhile, Pandit Rajesh Uttamrao, DIG (south western range), Koraput along with Rayagada SP Vivekanand Sharma visited the spot in the hotel and investigated.

"Our scientific investigation is going on. We have taken photographs and videography. We are waiting for the post-mortem. As per doctors' opinion in the report, we will conduct further investigation," said Mr.Pandit.

As per reports, the four Russian citizens along with their guide Jitendra Singh had first travelled to Daringbadi and other parts in Kandhamal district. Later, they travelled to Rayagada and stayed at Sai International Hotel in the town.

Hotel owner Koushik Thakur said the four Russian nationals have checked-in in his hotel on December 21. Two of them have died here while the Russian couple checked out on Tuesday (December 27). Mr.Antov was upset following this incident, he said.

Notably, Mr.Pavel and Mr.Antov, belonged to the ruling party of Russian President Vladimir Putin and a millionaire, had recently sent out a message criticising Russian attacks on Ukraine, but had later retracted the statement, according to several media reports.

## Bharat Biotech's intranasal Covid vaccine priced at Rs 800

**Hyderabad:** Vaccine maker Bharat Biotech's intranasal vaccine for Covid-19, the first in the world, is scheduled to be introduced in the country as a booster dose shortly. The vaccine, iNCOVACC (BBV154), is now available on CoWin, and priced at Rs 800 for private markets and Rs 325 for supplies to the Centre and state governments, the Hyderabad-based company said. Last last month, Bharat Biotech received approval from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) for the use of heterologous booster doses of iNCOVACC. It is a recombinant replication-deficient adenovirus vectored vaccine with a pre-fusion-stabilised SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. This vaccine candidate was evaluated in phases I, II and III clinical trials with successful results, the company said. iNCOVACC has been specifically formulated to allow intranasal delivery through nasal drops. The nasal delivery system has been designed and developed to be cost-effective in low- and middle-income countries, it added.

## Kriti Utsav showcases India's diversity at KIIT University

**Bhubaneswar, (KCN):** The spirit of India's unity in diversity was reflected at the valedictory ceremony of the five-day-long Kriti Utsav, the 36th Inter University East Zone Youth Festival, as it came to an end today at KIIT-Deemed-to-be-University, with participants narrating their experiences and life lessons learned, during the event.

The Kriti Utsav representing the Inter University East Zone Youth Festival saw the participation of 13 universities and 450 contestants and it coincided with the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of



KIIT-Deemed-to-be-University "Soil to Silver". Speaking on occasion Vice-Chancellor Prof Sasmita Samanta said "the spirit of Kriti Utsav under the aegis of the Association of Indian

Universities (AIU) is based on the traditional Indian philosophy and the essence of our age-old tradition with education, sports, and heritage and culture being showcased and students showcasing the

best of their talents." She added that the "togetherness" of our traditional social system is also reflected during the youth festival at KIIT-DU. AIU Observer and Professor from IIT BHU

SK Sharma said "the university festival or Unifest as it is popularly called also teaches students to take failures in a stride and to do better and to try to win the next time. However, for the winners, he advised thorough practice on a daily basis so that the top performers from the East Zone can do their best at the national event to be held at Jain University in Bengaluru in February 2023." Organising Secretary Dr Shyam Sundar Behura also spoke. Registrar Prof Jnyana Ranjan Mohanty extended the vote of thanks.



# UTTAM for Coal

New Delhi(KCN): The Ministry of Coal and the coal companies have taken various measures to achieve the objective of supply of quality coal to all consumers. Coal companies are to endeavour to achieve 100% quality satisfaction. There has been substantial improvement in conformity to declared grade of coal supply from Coal India Ltd (CIL) sources. The grade conformity has jumped to 69% in 2022-23 (till Nov' 22) as against 51% in 2017-18.

Steps taken for improvement in quality are periodic re-gradation of coal mines, introduction of improved mining technology like surface miners, supply of washed coal, first mile connectivity for direct conveying of coal on Belt from Coal surface/face to Rapid loading Silo, installation of Auto Analyzers etc. Different officials/agencies are entrusted with the job of ensuring supply of coal in conformity to the declared grades. Primary reason for grade variation is the inherent heterogeneous nature of Indian coal itself meaning, calorific value of coal extracted within the same seam at different points tends to vary.

Coal Contoller Organisation (CCO), a subordinate office under the Ministry regularly assess and declare coal mines grades including undertaking annual coal mine/loading points grade declaration exercises. For enhanced customer satisfaction, special emphasis has been given to Quality Management of coal from mine to dispatch point. Now, all the consumers of CIL have the option for quality assessment of the supplies through independent third-party sampling agencies (TPSA). These accredited third-party agencies have been engaged to ascertain Coal Quality from loaded coal wagons/lorries as per prescribed norms under BIS standards. Apart from Central Institute of Mining & Fuel Research (CIMFR) and Quality Council of

India (QCI) two more agencies namely M/s SGS India Private Ltd (by CIL) for power & non-power sectors & M/s Mitra S K Pvt. Ltd. for power sectors are empanelled to provide more choices of Third-Party Agencies to consumers. All consumers of power /non-power sectors are free to take services of any of the empaneled agencies. The Coal Companies, also share 50% cost of sampling by Third party agencies. Facility of joint sampling of coal is also available to the consumers. To infuse quality awareness at mines end,

Coal companies also organize quality weeks, fortnights on regular intervals with active participation of consumer representa-

tives. The persistent monitoring, increased awareness drives and corrective measures is showing improvements in quality conformity in coal supply.

CIL initially bills customers based on the declared grade of coal supplied. Such provisional bills are later adjusted, once the actual quality of coal is tested and established by the authorized Third-Party Sampling Agency. There is a commercial arrangement for settlement and payment of debit/credit bills which is based on the outcome of the 3rd party validation and upon referred sampling analysis result. The overall grade compatibility of coal supply supplied by CIL is evident from the net impact of Credit and Debit note issued by CIL which shows CIL has earned Bonus of around Rs 400 crores during 2021-22 and has already earned a bonus of around 201 crores during current fiscal till October 2022.

The Coal app UTTAM (Unlocking Transparency by Third Party Assessment of Mined Coal) is available for consumers/general public to view the third-party validation of coal supply. Many consumers are taking advantage of this app in planning their coal usages.



UTTAM

# Lack of international flights roadblock for Odisha tourism

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): Going by the current tourist bookings, domestic tourism seems to have got back on its feet post-Covid but that has not been the case with international arrivals in Odisha yet. Stakeholders attribute this to lack of direct international

ism. The travel and hospitality sectors have their hopes pinned on the possibility of direct flights to Dubai, Singapore and Bangkok (these countries have been large air hubs) from Bhubaneswar. Two months back, the state government had invited a request for

quotation (RFQ) for selection of airlines to have a direct flight between Bhubaneswar and international destinations, the above-mentioned three countries being the first in the line.

Only one airline - Indigo - has evinced interest in operating direct flights from



Bhubaneswar to the three countries, with three flights a week including the weekends.

Officials in the Transport department said Indigo's proposal has been sent to the state government for consideration. "For any international flight service, there is a need for continuity. We are hoping that if one airline begins its direct flights from Bhubaneswar to different countries and is provided all the facilities to continue the service, other airlines will follow," said principal secretary of the department Usha Padhee.

In the Odisha Travel Bazaar that was organised earlier this year by FICCI, foreign tour operators of Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand and other South Asian countries had evinced interest in tourism partnership with the state, provided there is direct flight connectivity. Chairman of Hotel & Restaurant Association of Odisha and IATO (eastern region) JK Mohanty said international tourism can be revived if there is direct air connectivity to Thailand, Dubai, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia and Nepal besides, flights between Bhubaneswar and Bodh Gaya.

"Because, a lot of international tourists come to Bodh Gaya through Kolkata, Delhi or Mumbai for Buddhist tourism. HRAO also suggests that international flights to Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata or Chennai can be diverted to Bhubaneswar for lessening the congestion," he said.

Pre-Covid, 1.15 lakh foreign tourists arrived in the state and the number was 1 crore for the domestic tourism sector in 2019. During this period, Odisha used to get the majority of international travellers (opting for organised tours) from Western Europe and Malaysia.

"Of the total bookings for organised tours between October this year and March-end next year, foreign arrivals in Odisha are only 10 per cent. Blame it on the lack of direct international flights. Prior to Covid, we at least had direct flights to Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia," said chairman of Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) Odisha chapter, Gagan Sarangi.

He added that most of the foreign tourists coming to the state opt for eco-tourism (community based), culture, rural and ethnic tourism.

# Annual sports day at Guru Nanak Public School



BHUBANESWAR(KCN): The annual sports day of Guru Nanak English Medium Public School at Sangalaisasan area of Pipili in Puri was organised recently.

The school organised a number of sports events like 100 and 200 mtr race, javelin throw, shot put, relay race, and other team events. Jumba and Garba dance by the kids, Sambalpuri dance by the students of VI and VII and Odissi dance by the students of VIII

# Class X, Plus II exams may be held under Covid norms: Samir Ranjan Dash

BHUBANESWAR(KCN): Amid scare of a possible outbreak again, School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash on Monday said the department may conduct summative assessment II exams of Class X and annual exams of Plus II final year students as per Covid guidelines, if needed.

He also urged the students to come to school wearing mask to avert any possibility of its spread. "I will urge students to come to school wearing masks and follow Covid appropriate behaviour on the campuses. Besides, the government, if needed, will go for the SA - II and annual Plus II exams following Covid guidelines," Dash said.

Sources said the SA-II is expected to take place in February, while the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) is mulling to conduct the Annual Higher Secondary Exams (AHSE) 2023 for the Plus II final year students in March.

and IX were also special attraction of the event.. Pipili-Delanga MLA Rudra Pratap Maharathy joined the event as the chief guest, while president S Satpal Singh, secretary S Jaspal Singh, vice-president Kuldeep Singh Chawla, official Lajpat Chawla and principal Madhumita Sahoo were also present during the sports day and encouraged the students with their speech. The sports meet concluded with prize distribution.

Members of Odisha Abhibhabak Mahasangh also urged the state government to ensure that adequate precaution are placed in advance to ensure that there is no further disruption of education or the exam process due to Covid outbreak.

"Students have already suffered a lot in terms of learning due to lockdown, shutdown and other Covid restrictions on offline education during the last two years. Adequate steps should be taken to ensure that the same is not repeated," said Mahasangh chairperson Basudev Bhatt.

Meanwhile, health officials said that people in the state should not panic about the new variant as it had been identified in the state during the previous outbreaks. Besides, the state has already been affected by all four waves of the virus. They, however, suggested that people should remain careful and take appropriate precautionary measures.

# Gross liabilities on rise

New Delhi(KCN): The Budget Division, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, brings out the Quarterly Report on Public Debt Management for July-September 2022. Since April-June (Q1) 2010-11, Public Debt Management Cell (PDMC) of the Budget Division has been bringing out a quarterly report on debt management on a regular basis. The current report pertains to the quarter July-September (Q2 FY23).

During Q2 of FY23, the Central Government raised an amount worth ₹4,06,000 crore through dated securities, as against notified amount of ₹4,22,000 crore in the borrowing

any amount through the Cash Management Bills. The Reserve Bank did not conduct Open Market operations for government securities during the quarter. The net daily average liquidity absorption by RBI under Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) including Marginal Standing Facility and Special Liquidity Facility was at ₹1,28,323.37 crore during the quarter.

Total gross liabilities (including liabilities under the 'Public Account') of the Government, as per provisional data, increased to ₹1,47,19,572.2 crore at end-September 2022 from ₹1,45,72,956 crore at end-June 2022. This represented a quarter-on-quarter increase of 1.0 per cent in Q2 FY23. Public debt accounted for 89.1 per cent of total gross liabilities at end-September 2022 up from 88.3 per cent at end- June 2022. Nearly 29.6 per cent of the outstanding dated securities had a residual maturity of less than 5 years.

The yields on Government securities in secondary market hardened in short- end curve due to near-term inflation and liquidity concern though softening of yield was observed for the longer tenure securities during the second quarter of FY23. MPC decided to hike the policy repo rate by 100 bps, i.e., from 4.90% to 5.90% during Q2 FY 2023 largely with an intention to contain inflation.

In secondary market, trading activities were concentrated in 7-10 year maturity bucket during the quarter mainly because of more trading observed in 10 year benchmark security. Private Sector Banks emerged as dominant trading segment in secondary market during the quarter. On a net basis, foreign banks and primary dealers were net sellers while public sector banks, co-operative banks, FIs, insurance companies, mutual funds, private sector banks and 'Others' were net buyers in the secondary market. The ownership pattern of Central Government securities indicates that share of commercial banks stood at 38.3 per cent at end-September 2022 as against 38.04 per cent at end-June 2022.



calendar, while repayments were at ₹92,371.15 crore. The weighted average yield of primary issuances hardened to 7.33 per cent in Q2 FY23 from 7.23 per cent in Q1 of FY23.

The weighted average maturity of new issuances of dated securities was lower at 15.62 years in Q2 of FY23 as compared to 15.69 years in Q1 of FY23. During July-September 2022, the Central Government did not raise



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# 'The Legend of Maula Jatt' ft Fawad, Mahira Khan to release in India

MUMBAI: Pakistani film "The Legend of Maula Jatt", starring Fawad Khan and Mahira Khan, is likely to be released on the big screen in India this Friday, an INOX official said.

This will perhaps be the first film from Pakistan in over a decade to get a theatrical release here.

"It will be played in Punjab and a few theatres in Delhi in INOX where there are Punjabi speaking people," Rajender Singh Jyala, chief programming officer, INOX Leisure Ltd, told PTI.

Multiplex chain PVR Cinemas had shared a release announcement on its official Instagram page but deleted it soon after. "Presenting the official poster of #TheLegendofMaulaJatt! Coming to PVR this Friday," the post read.

The action drama, which has become the highest-grossing Pakistani film of all time amassing USD 10 million, was released in Pakistan on October 13.

Directed by Bilal Lashari, "The Legend of

Maula Jatt" is an adaptation of the 1979 cult classic "Maula Jatt" and producers have said it is neither a remake nor a sequel.



Its stars Mahira and Fawad are familiar to Indian audiences through their popular Pakistani drama "Humsafar" and also through Bollywood -- Fawad, who was most recently seen in the superhero series "Ms Marvel", has featured in "Khoobsurat", "Kapoor & Sons", and "Ae Dil Hai Mushkil" while Mahira appeared in Shah Rukh Khan-starrer "Raees".

The last Pakistani film to get a theatrical release in India was "Bol" starring Mahira in 2011.

Before that was "Ramchand Pakistani" star-

ring Nandita Das and Rashid Farooqi in 2008. "Khuda Kay Liye", which included Fawad in the ensemble cast alongside Naseeruddin Shah, came in 2007.

Pakistani films, however, have been screened at festivals in India.

In November this year, the Dharamshala International Film Festival screened Saim Sadiq's "Joyland", which is Pakistan's official entry in the international film category at the 95th Academy Awards.

ALSO READ | 'Joyland' becomes first Pakistani film to enter Oscars shortlist  
"Khuda Kay Liye" was the first ever Pakistani film to be included in the official selection of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI). "The Legend of Maula Jatt" started production in January 2017 and concluded in June 2019.

The film was initially scheduled for cinema release during multiple dates in 2019-2020, but kept getting delayed due to copyright related issues and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pakistani actors stopped being cast in Indian productions following the 2016 terror attack in Uri in which 19 Indian Army personnel were martyred.

The decision came amid demands by various political outfits to ban Pakistani artistes from Indian films and from performing here.

# Salman Khan turns 57; police lathicharge unruly fans outside actor's home

MUMBAI: Salman Khan turned 57 on Tuesday and his fans, it seemed, were in full party

mode with hundreds of people gathering outside his Bandra home through the day, waiting patiently for their 'bhaijaan' to come out to acknowledge their greetings. Around 6 pm, just before dusk set in, he obliged, stepping out in his balcony, folding his hands to say 'namaste', doing a 'salaam' and then waving much to the delight of the crowds, some who were carrying life-size cut-outs and others who breached barricades in their excitement.

The actor's admirers started assembling outside Galaxy Apartments from early hours of the day and by evening the swelling crowd transformed into a sea of people waiting to catch a glimpse of the superstar.

Fans, who welcomed their favourite star with loud cheers, carried his life-size cut-outs, while others held up 'Happy Birthday' posters.

To add to the celebratory mood, they also released red-coloured balloons.

Police personnel were stationed outside the building for crowd control as fans waited behind the barricades. After the star left, some of the fans breached the barricades following which the police resorted to lathicharge. Dressed in powder blue T-shirt and denims, Salman greeted an ecstatic crowd as he asked them to maintain order.

He was accompanied by his father, veteran screenwriter Salim Khan, who also waved at the public.

"Thank you all," the superstar posted on

Instagram alongside a photograph of him greeting the crowd.



Salman rang in his birthday with close family and friends on Monday night at a party hosted by his sister Arpita Khan Sharma and brother-



in-law Aayush Sharma at the Khar residence. Bollywood actor Salman Khan during his 57th birthday party celebration hosted by his sister Arpita Khan Sharma, at her residence,

celebration for their daughter Ayat Sharma, who turned three, and the Bollywood star.

The party was attended by superstar Shah Rukh Khan, Tabu, Kartik Aaryan, Suniel Shetty, Pooja Hegde, Riteish Deshmukh, Genelia D'Souza, Sangeeta Bijlani, Sonakshi Sinha, Sajid Nadiadwala and wife Warda Nadiadwala, Ramesh Taurani and Julia Vantur.

Shah Rukh Khan with Salman Khan at the birthday party hosted by Arpita Khan and her husband Aayush Sharma. (Photos | ANI/PTI)

The star-studded night was lit up by the visuals of "Karan Arjun" co-stars Salman and Shah Rukh sharing a warm hug as the latter left the party in the early hours of Tuesday.

Family members, including Arbaaz Khan, Sohail Khan, Atul Agnihotri and Alvira Khan Agnihotri were present.

Salman also celebrated his special day with the paparazzi stationed outside the party venue by cutting a cake.

On the work front, Salman will make a special appearance in Marathi film "Ved", starring Riteish and Genelia.

He will also make a cameo in Shah Rukh's much-anticipated spy movie "Pathaan", set to arrive in theatres on January 25.

Salman's first major standalone release in over two years will be "Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan", scheduled to come out on Eid next year. He will follow it up with the third installment

in his "Tiger" franchise slated to hit the cinemas on Diwali.

According to trade analyst Akshaye Rathi, industry insiders are hopeful both "Tiger 3" and "Kisi Ka Bhai" will give a much-needed boost to the Hindi film exhibition sector.

"I have a lot of confidence in 'Tiger 3'. It's an urban action film," Rathi told PTI, adding that producers Yash Raj Films will do a "great job" with the franchise. Salman



Khan on his day with the right kind of film is one of the biggest stars we have at the box office," he said.



## MONUMENT OF A SPIRITUAL LUMINARY



**M.R.LALU**

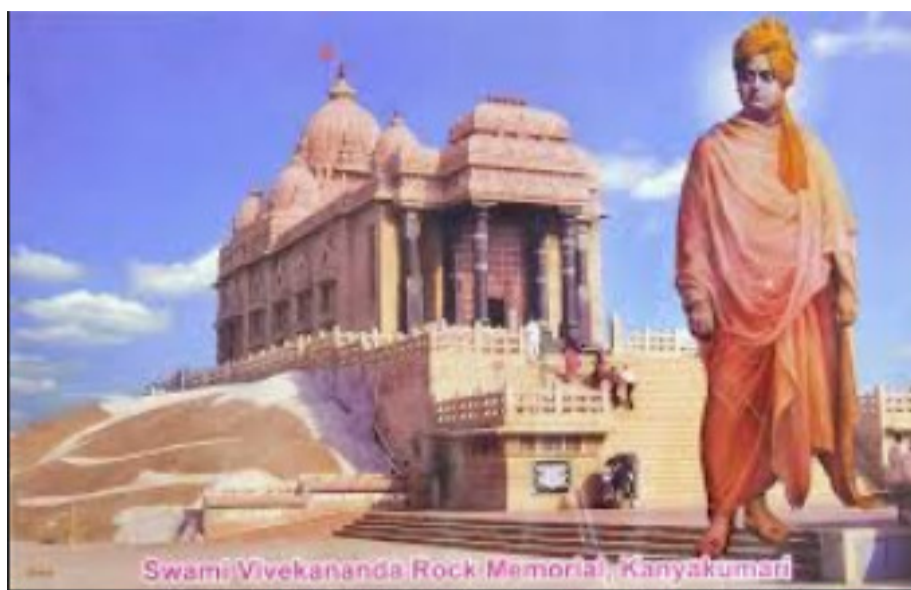
Almost fifty years before India's independence, a young monk, a mendicant with the power of his spiritual dedication shining in his brilliant eyes, travelled across the country and on 24 December 1892 landed at the southernmost tip of India, Kanyakumari. He was anxious and relentlessly trying to find reasons behind the perils that the country had to live under centuries of invasion. The penniless mendicant swam across the sea waters and sat in deep meditation on the mid-sea rock for three days from 25 to 27 December. That was an event which further turned out to be another milestone in the spiritual history of India since the days of Shankaracharya. The effect of the spiritual purity with which Swami Vivekananda

defined the essence of Indianness was overwhelmingly deep in meaning and vision.

Kanyakumari has long been known for its spiritual splendour. The penance of Goddess Parvati for the hands of Lord Shiva depicted in the legends is believed to have taken place here. Pilgrimage of Vivekananda and his meditation on the mid-sea rock added to its spiritual grandeur and it attracts millions of visitors every year. The Vivekananda Memorial at Kanyakumari is an architectural marvel and an edifice of India's spiritual rejuvenation and a pilgrim centre. The Congress party's Bharat Jodo Yatra started at Kanyakumari and the reason possibly the party chose the southern tip as the yatra's inaugural point was the geography of the country. Stretching from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, India is a landscape of socio-spiritual diversity and the Bharat Jodo Yatra led by Rahul Gandhi is probably trying to engrave a symbolic connection from the south to the north of

the country. Before he launched his yatra at Kanyakumari, Rahul Gandhi paid a visit to the rock memorial. I am not sure if he was aware of the fact that the very rock was once a platform for another nationwide unification programme. Undoubtedly, Vivekananda's spiritual renaissance mission began on the same rock but a movement to establish a monument for the saint on the same rock later became another historic initiative.

January 1962 was the right time for India to remember the patriotic saint as that was the year of his birth centenary. There had been serious plans to bring the mid-sea rock into limelight and the meditation of the saint on the rock was to be given a meaningful obeisance. Building a memorial on the rock was the dominant idea. While resistance from various corners turned the whole memorial mission a complete mishmash, the RSS stepped in with its former General Secretary Eknath Ranade being deputed to nationally mobilize



the memorial movement. Emboldened by the public support, Eknath Ranade went ahead with the memorial mission. But the memorial movement in the mid-sea rock had often been blocked by sharks from Indian politics. Though they had respect for Swami Vivekananda, they disregarded and disagreed with the memorial construction on the natural rock surrounded by water. But Ranade's indefatigable efforts began to see light on the other side of the tunnel.

Breaking all administrative and political barriers, Ranade could

successfully convince 323 members of the Indian parliament securing their signatures in support of the memorial which included members from the Left as well as the Congress. What was more interesting about his endeavour was the fundraising. He opted to collect one rupee each from every Indian through coupon distribution from across the country. And the idea behind such a move was to bring the socio-spiritual sensibility of the country for one noble cause and amazingly India responded to such a move with complete earnestness. Cutting across party lines Eknath Ranade

wanted the top leaders from major political parties to become the Vice-presidents of the movement. His visit to Jyoti Basu the Deputy Chief Minister of West Bengal had an interesting element. Jyoti Basu refused his invitation saying the Communist Party's ethos fundamentally disagreed with everything that was spiritual. But Eknath Ranade skilfully managed to bring in Jyoti Basu's wife into the memorial movement and she became a fund collector for the national monument. The memorial with its legendary architectural magnificence came into existence in 1970.

India, after 75 years of its independence can't be silent on the stormy patriotic saint Swami Vivekananda who regarded this land as the holiest and sensed the reasons behind its social downfall and centuries of invasion. His endeavour to gloriously depict India's cultural heritage across the globe holds significance even today. For a precise understanding we can say that he was the first spiritual ambassador of India to the west who brought massive respect for Indian spiritual wisdom in the western soil. More than that, his efforts were genuinely stupendous due to his mastery in English. Ideological interactions he started with the west were continued by many others who followed his path. Marching through its Amrit Kaal, the next 25 years are going to be so crucial for India and the thoughts for humanity that Vivekananda extensively espoused would hold relevance for centuries.

He could proclaim the inclusiveness of Hinduism to the world with its intellectual

depth while different religions competed to prove each other as unacceptable, uncharacteristic and brittle by essence. The dharmic values of Hinduism and their applicability to a deeply polarised world were his agenda and propaganda. The spiritual eloquence Swami Vivekananda dealt the world with had an effect of the reflections that he garnered from his deep meditation on the rock. He later talked vividly about the plan that he hit upon for his nation and spelt out his love for the poor who suffered unbearable hopelessness in their life due to ignorance. India's Amrit Kaal can be a dedication to the dreams and beliefs that Swami Vivekananda lived for - a remarkable time to strive and a golden opportunity to enhance its spiritual stamina.

**(Freelance Journalist / Author of the book (India @75-A Contemporary Approach) Meppurathu House Puthusserimala P.O Ranni Pathanamthitta District Kerala State**

### Letter To Editor

#### Dear Editor, Paints which emits harmful fumes has to be banned

It is a major concern in the country that teens are using illegal drugs like paint fumes on a daily basis these days.

Inhalants like paint fumes are the substances that are used to achieve a variety of different psychoactive effects. Paint fumes pollute the environment also. Inhalant abuse includes a wide range of household products that can be purchased by almost anyone, such as aerosols, solvents, cleaners, pain relievers, and paints. The most concerning of these is Huffing Paint. The vast majority of people who continue to use inhalants like paint fumes are under the age of eighteen, which is particularly concerning. The "huffing" process typically entails placing the substance (e.g., paint) in a container, such as a bag, and then rapidly breathing in the fumes to achieve the psychoactive effects. Because these psychoactive effects are frequently fleeting, people will continue to "huff" the fumes in order to prolong the effects. According to the studies, younger people are more likely to inhale products like paint fumes and paint thinner, while older people are more likely to inhale products containing nitrous oxide. According to studies, huffing has a variety of effects on the body. Individuals with a history of sniffing paint fumes performed significantly worse on measures of motor speed, set shifting, attention, and memory, according to the findings. The results also showed that huffing/sniffing paint fumes for a longer period of time (i.e., those with a long-term abuse problem) was associated with more severe impairments on these measures. This implies that individuals had significant changes in their brains as a result of this substance. According to studies, individuals who have chronically inhaled substances such as paint fumes and paint thinners have brain damage in a number of areas. Because the effects of sniffing paint fade quickly, some people begin to "huff" repeatedly for long periods of time in order to prolong the psychoactive effects. This is a potentially hazardous practise. Some people who are otherwise healthy but sniff paint and other inhalants for long periods of time can develop a syndrome known as sudden sniffing death syndrome. This can happen even to people who do not regularly use inhalants. Death is usually caused by an overdose of the chemicals in paint fumes, which causes cardiac failure. Individuals who huff on a regular basis are at risk of developing a formal substance use disorder. Individuals develop tolerance to inhalants, cravings for them, and may develop a formal withdrawal syndrome as a result of continued misuse of inhalants such as paint fumes, so our centre regime should ban paints that emits harmful fumes.

## Remembering Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee

Vinod Chandrashekhar Dixit



I remember the first words of Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee when he was sworn as the 16th Prime Minister of India which was certainly more solemn than cheerful. "I have a pledge to redeem, and a promise to fulfill." Vajpayee was born into a high-caste Brahmin family in Gwalior, on Dec. 25, 1925. He was barely 15, but already steeped in Marxism, when a friend took him to a meeting of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Service), a neo-fascist organization that has been the guiding force behind Hindu nationalism for much of this century. After entering the politics of the country, he climbed up step by step and now he is the spotless meticulous statesman of the Indian politics. He was the first politician, who addressed the U.N.O. in Hindi on 4th October, 1977. He was adorned with "Padma Vibhushan" by the Indian Govt. on 25th January, 1992. This was followed by another honor bestowed upon him by the U.P. Hindi Sansthan on 28th September, 1992. And then on 16th

August, 1994 "Govind Vallabh Pant Award" was conferred upon him for his being the Best Parliamentarian.

He was the first Prime Minister of India who is regarded as non-controversial heart-throb of the country. He was held in high esteem not only by his party men but also by other members of the Indian polity. Undoubtedly, he was a great orator. He stood out to be a distinguished man in respect of his choice of words, effective pauses in between, sweet touch of sarcasm and humour, the style of speaking and above all, the quality of judging the moods of his listeners. Vajpayee's problem was that he proved to be more popular with the 344 million voters than did the Hindu nationalist movement, for which he has been the principal parliamentary standard bearer for 30 years. After coming into power Vajpayee had to face problems but he faced all the problems with courage and sincerity. He took many ups and downs in his political life with great equanimity and bears malice towards none. He was among the very few politicians who knew how to respect the viewpoint of their opponents. The poet turned politician achieved such as successful nuclear Pokharan-2 test, winning of Kargil war, starting of golden quadrilateral national expressway, growth rate of 5 percent or above per annum.

Undoubtedly, he was a successful prime minister but his tenure experienced certain failures such as Indian airlines hijack by Taliban, attack of terrorists on parliament and riots in Gujarat. He was a great leader and one of the tallest

commensurate to its size. He said "We have the capacity for a big bomb now. Ours will never be weapons of aggression."

Those who have known Vajpayee for years say that for him the RSS was his alma mater where he had learnt the

to speak of millions of his admirers across the world. The man was loved for his qualities of head and heart, his poetry, his integrity boldness, patriotism, qualities of forget and forgive, and the principle of consensus. He was one of the few who can brave

transformed the Indian growth story. Interestingly the maximum drop in inflation happened during his tenure. His strong will power led to make country nuclear power. His dreams of providing quadruplicate connectivity to India with highways changed people's lives across country. Interlinking Rivers in country will prove a boon for country in removing water scarcity throughout country.

His exemplary service & leadership has had a very positive impact on India's growth trajectory. Staying in the politics for more than 60 years as active politician, both in opposition and the ruling party and retiring from it without any allegation on the character is one rare achievement. From an insignificant political player to a key leader, Vajpayee will be known for his several contributions. From leading a delegation at United Nations to introducing Lahore bus service to raising Kashmir issue, Vajpayee has really won the hearts of Indians and even opposition. Vajpayee was an outstanding artist, eminent poet and a true leader who always stood for the cause of the poor and downtrodden classes of society. Vajpayee's name will be written in golden letters in the history of India.



politician of India and the world. Even enemies have liked his oratory skill and diplomacy. The way he maintained dignity in the Parliament was commendable.

For many observers Vajpayee's successful navigation of what was called an "unwieldy coalition" was his biggest achievement; others praised his optimistic foreign policy while others applaud India's economy under his rule. He was also passionate about his desire to "see India take its place as a great nation," with a nuclear weapons arsenal

lessons of life and which had made a man of him. He once wrote, "[the] Sangh is my soul". But as a practical man, he was not ready to be dictated to by the Sangh on every move that he made and every step that he took.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had once introduced Vajpayee to Winston Churchill as the future Prime Minister of this country who travelled a long way to emerge as India's towering politician, a leader who commanded respect and admiration not only of his party men but even of his rivals, not

the worst travails in life and political career, and came out unscathed. He was an eminent national leader, an erudite politician, a selfless social worker, forceful orator, poet, journalist and indeed a multifaceted personality. He was an ideal for the masses. The message that clearly sprinted from his deeds was that even under the most trying circumstances we must never lose our values that have so long been our guiding star. As a parliamentarian he had been a member of Lok Sabha nine times and of Rajya Sabha twice. He

**B-15 Jyoti-Kalash Society, Jodhpur Tekra Satellite Ahmedabad**



## UP: Urban local body polls only after reservation to OBCs, says CM Yogi

LUCKNOW: The Urban Local Body polls seem to be heading for a delay in the state as, contrary to Allahabad High Court's Tuesday or-

issued on Tuesday, UP CM Yogi Adityanath said that the state would form a commission to ensure reservation to OBCs on the basis of

Upadhyaya and Justice Saurabh Lavania said until the "triple test/conditions" mandated by the Supreme Court was completed in all re-

state government's stand of moving to the Supreme Court if needed.

Minister Ashish Patel, the executive president of BJP ally Apna Dal (S), claimed that it would not be proper to hold civic polls without an OBC quota. "We (Apna Dal -S) are also studying the HC order and will not shy away from moving apex court if necessary to protect the rights of OBCs," said Patel.



der, the Yogi Adityanath government is contemplating going for the elections only after fixing quota for OBCs through a triple test process in the civic bodies.

Reacting to the order passed by the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court allowing Urban Local Body elections in the state without OBC reservation in civic bodies, the Uttar Pradesh government said that it would not go for the polls without fixing quota for OBCs.

In a press statement

a "triple test" process and that the Local Body elections would be conducted only after providing reservations to OBCs.

CM Yogi said the authorities were going through the High Court order in detail and the state government would consider all the legal aspects associated with it. The state government would move the Supreme Court, if necessary, said the UP CM.

Earlier in the day, in an order, a Division Bench of Justice Devendra Kumar

spects by the state government, no reservation for the Backward Class of citizens should be provided.

UP Deputy CM Keshav Maurya said that the decision over Urban Local Body polls would be taken only after consulting the legal experts in connection with the High Court order.

"However, there would be no compromise over the rights of OBCs," said Maurya. State Urban Development Minister AK Sharma also made similar claims and reiterated the

ALSO READ | Electoral politics vs affirmative action: Quota test for BJP ahead of 2024 polls

In UP, BJP has been banking upon the support of non-Yadav OBCs to a large extent in the previous elections. In the 2022 assembly polls, around 64 per cent non-Yadav OBCs voted for the ruling party.

Following the High Court order, Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav called the state government "anti-OBC reservation" and accused it of shed-

ding 'crocodile tears' on the issue.

Taking to Twitter, the SP chief said, "Today the BJP has snatched the right of reservation from OBCs, tomorrow it will also strip the SC/ ST of their right ensured to them by Baba Saheb Ambedkar."

SP national general secretary and party's Rajya Sabha member Prof Ram Gopal Yadav took to Twitter to raise questions over the Yogi government's intent to hold civic polls in the state. Ram Gopal Yadav accused the state government of not contesting the case properly in court. He called the court order allowing the civic polls without OBC reservation as 'unfortunate'.

Alleging it a plot of the Yogi government, the SP leader accused it of not presenting the facts in the court deliberately. "This is how the UP government has stripped 60 per cent population of the state of reservation," said the SP leader in his Twitter post.

## Assassination bid on former Pakistan PM Imran Khan 'well-thought-out conspiracy', says JIT

LAHORE: The assassination bid on Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan during his long march to Islamabad last month was a "well-thought-out conspiracy," according to the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) probing the incident.

Khan, the chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, suffered bullet injuries in the right leg on November 3 when two gunmen fired a volley of bullets at him and others standing on a container-mounted truck in the Wazirabad area (some 150-km from Lahore), where he was leading the long march to press for snap polls. Briefing the media on the findings of the JIT headed by Lahore police chief Ghulam Mahmood Dogar, Punjab Home Minister Omar Sarfraz Cheema said on Monday that the gun attack on Khan was an "organised one and well-thought-out conspiracy."

He said the JIT investigation found that more than one attacker tried to assassinate 70-year-old Khan in the rally. Police had arrested the prime suspect, Muhammad Naveed, who has been in the JIT custody on physical remand till January 3 for interrogation. The minister said Naveed is a "trained assassin and he was present at the crime scene with his accomplices." He said Naveed also failed a polygraph test.

ALSO READ | The politics behind Imran blaming Pakistan govt and army for his shooting

Naveed had told police he wanted to kill Khan as music was played during Azan time during his long march/rally. Naveed's cousin Muhammad Waqas has also been in the JIT's custody till January 3 for a controversial social media post. Waqas on November 3 had tweeted "something big is going

to happen today in Imran Khan's rally".

Khan had blamed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and Major General Faisal Naseer of ISI for hatching a plot to assassinate him.

The Punjab police had registered the FIR in connection with the assassination attempt on Khan but didn't mention the high-profile suspects including ISI's top man Khan held responsible for the attack.

Khan dismissed the FIR, saying without nominating Sharif, Sanaullah, and ISI Counter Intelligence Wing head Maj-Gen Faisal in the FIR it is a mere "piece of trash".

READ MORE | Focus Pakistan: PM Shehbaz, Imran Khan & priorities of new Army Chief

The Punjab police said they nabbed Naveed from the crime scene and he had confessed to his crime. Naveed in his confessional statement said that he wanted to kill Khan as music was played during Azan time during his long march.

Indirectly blaming the powerful military establishment, Khan had said: "I wonder if I, being former Prime Minister of Pakistan, can't get an FIR registered in connection with the attack on me and other PTI workers what will happen to the common man."

He claimed that Naveed is a trained shooter and there was another shooter who opened fire on him from another direction.

The JIT has so far recorded the statements of the policemen and PTI workers who were present close to Khan at the time of attack on him.

Khan is recovering from his wounds and currently residing at his Lahore's Zaman Park residence.

## COVID-19 vigil: Mock drills held in hospitals across country to check readiness

NEW DELHI: Many hospitals across the country held mock drills on Tuesday to check the preparedness of health facilities to deal with any spurt in COVID-19 cases, with Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya saying it was important to gauge the operational readiness of equipment and human resources.

Mandaviya oversaw the drill at the Centre-run Safdarjung Hospital here, while health ministers reviewed the drill in their respective states.

The Centre has asked states and union territories to conduct the drill as part of precautionary measures following an increase in infection in China and other countries.

Officials said the mock drill focused on parameters such as the availability of health facilities in all districts, the capacity of isolation beds, oxygen-supported beds, ICU beds and ventilator-supported beds, and optimal availability of doctors, nurses, paramedics, AYUSH doctors, and other frontline workers, including ASHA and Anganwadi workers. Mandaviya said the drill was necessary to know how prepared our hospitals are.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya speaks with a doctor during a mock drill for COVID-19 preparedness, at Safdarjung hospital in New Delhi, Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2022. (Photo | Shekhar Yadav, EPS)

"Covid cases are rising all over the world and India might witness a spike in cases too. Hence it is important that the entire Covid infrastructure in terms of equipment, processes and human resources are in a state of operational readiness," he stated.

Clinical readiness at hospitals is crucial, Mandaviya said while noting that government, as well as private hospitals, are undertaking mock drills. Cautioning against complacency, he urged everyone to follow Covid Appropriate Behaviour.

He also asked people to refrain from sharing unverified information and ensure a high level of preparedness.

ALSO READ | Don't expect surge in Covid cases at the moment: India's top virologist

A Ventilator is being set up as part of the Mock drill conducted at MN Aread Hospital in Malakpet, Hyderabad on Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2022. (Photo | Vinay Madapu, EPS)

India recorded a single-day rise of 157 new COVID-19 cases, while the count of active cases of the disease has marginally decreased to 3,421, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday.

In the national capital, the drill took place at the LNJP Hospital and other government-run facilities. Some of the private hospitals are expected to take up the exercise later in the day.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who also

holds the health portfolio, visited the Delhi government-run Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital around noon to assess the drill.

"The Delhi government is prepared for any kind of emergency. At LNJP, there are 2,000 beds and 450 of them are marked for COVID-19. If a need arises, we can dedicate all 2,000 beds for COVID-19... we can also increase this number by using nearby banquet halls and add an additional 500 beds for COVID-19, so there would be no shortage," Sisodia told reporters at the hospital.

The deputy chief minister asked people not to panic, saying primary data suggests that the new BF.7 sub-strain of the coronavirus, which is causing a surge in infections in other countries, is similar to previous variants.



"Compared to previous times, oxygen availability has increased 10 times, five PSA plants have been set up here. And ventilators are also present. Today, a mock drill was conducted, how patients can be attended to and shifted to desired location within five minutes was observed," he added. An official said COVID-19 testing in the city is also likely to be ramped up soon.

COVID mock drill conducted at the KAPV medical College in Tiruchy, on Tuesday, Dec. 27, 2022. (Photo | M K Ashok Kumar, EPS)

At present, around 2,500 to 3,000 tests are being conducted daily in the city. Delhi has recorded over 2,007,000 Covid cases and 26,521 deaths since the pandemic started in early 2020.

The number of daily cases has remained below 20 and the positivity rate below one per cent since mid-November, according to official data.

Dr B L Sherwal, the Medical Superintendent of the Safdarjung Hospital, said, "All symptomatic patients shall be screened, assessed and tested right

there in the Covid centre. The report shall be made available within one to two hours following which the decision on admission or discharge shall be taken. Till that time the patient can be monitored. All beds have oxygen facilities."

Four international travellers from Myanmar, who tested positive for Covid at the Delhi airport, are admitted to the Safdarjung Hospital and their samples have been sent for genome sequencing "They were asymptomatic. They will be discharged once they test negative," Dr Sherwal informed.

ALSO READ | COVID-19 scare: Demand for booster vaccination rises

In Uttar Pradesh, Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak visited a hospital in Lucknow to ascertain its preparedness to deal with any eventuality.

Uttar Pradesh recorded two COVID-19 cases in Unnao and Agra districts among persons who had recently returned from abroad.

"A mock drill is being conducted across all Covid hospitals in the state to check their preparedness. I personally checked the Covid management (facilities), oxygen flow and ventilators at Lucknow's Balrampur Hospital. Everything is working fine. A mock drill is being conducted for medical, paramedical and nursing staff on how to function in case of an emergency," Pathak, who is also the state's health minister, told reporters.

A COVID-19 swab sample test being conducted as part of a mock drill held at the Coimbatore Medical College and Hospital on Tuesday. (Photo | S Senbagapandiyam, EPS)

At least one senior officer, MLA or minister is present at the drills in hospitals across the state.

COVID-19 is there in other countries but there is no scare in Uttar Pradesh at this point, Pathak said. In Mumbai, medical facilities including the civic-

run Seven Hills Hospital (having 1,700 beds) and Kasturba Hospital (35 beds), government-run Cama Hospital (100 beds), St George Hospital (70 beds), Tata Hospital (16 beds), and Jagjivan Ram Hospital (12 beds) conducted the mock drill.

The state-run JJ Hospital said it will be conducting the mock drill.

To diagnose and track COVID-19 cases, the city has a daily testing capacity of 1,35,035 at 34 hospitals and 49 laboratories, according to the release. Madhya Pradesh saw such drills being conducted in all government medical institutions in the state.

State Medical Education Minister Vishvas Sarang said the COVID-19 situation in Madhya Pradesh was under control and not a single positive case was reported from the state in the recent past.

"We are ready to deal with any situation. The drill was conducted to check the preparedness of oxygen generation, Intensive Care Unit, Paediatric Intensive Care Unit, oxygen supported beds, medicines," Sarang said while appealing to all to follow COVID-19 appropriate behaviour.

As of Monday evening, active COVID-19 cases in Madhya Pradesh stood at four and there was no report of any new positive case from the state, officials said.

ALSO READ | New guidelines: Ensure oxygen supply, RT-PCR mandatory for passengers

Beds and necessary medical equipment were kept ready for patients as part of the mock drill at the Rajiv Gandhi government general hospital, in Chennai on Tuesday, Dec 27, 2022. (Photo | R.Satish babu, EPS)

Officials in West Bengal said the mock drill was conducted at Kolkata-based hospitals including MR Bangur Hospital, Infectious Diseases and Belegata General Hospital, Medical College Hospital Kolkata, RG Kar Medical College and Shambhunath Pandit Hospital besides Dr BC Roy Post Graduate Institute of Paediatric Sciences.

All private hospitals in the city and one hospital each in the districts are also taking part in the drill, the official added.

"We are ready to face any situation in case there is any surge in COVID-19 cases. It's an exercise to keep a check on our preparedness. At the moment, the COVID-19 contagion is totally under control and there is no reason to panic. The state has enough testing facilities and we are ready to face any situation," Director of Health Services (DHS) Siddhartha Niyogi told.

Karnataka Health Minister K Sudhakar said Covid response mock drills are in place in all districts and talukas across the state. He said the BF.7 variant of COVID-19 is transmissible with low virulence, but emphasised that senior citizens, children and pregnant women must remain cautious.



## Odisha govt to build water reservoir at Puri's Sereikona

BHUBANESWAR: The state government has decided to construct a water reservoir in Puri to provide piped drinking water to the pilgrim town round the clock. The proposed project 'sourcing of water for supply of piped drinking water to Puri town' will be developed after completion of the land acquisition process at Sereikona mouza of the urban area.

Accordingly, the Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department has requested the water resources department to furnish details of the land losers and their bank accounts for release of funds towards disbursement of compensation to them.

Sources in the H&UD department said acting on the decision taken during a meeting chaired by chief secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra on October 6, the department



made a budget provision of Rs 336.98 crore in the Supplementary Budget 2022-23 for acquisition of private land at Sereikona.

According to sources, the proposed water reservoir will help the state government in sourcing around 75 MLD of drinking water for Puri and ensure 24x7 piped water supply to its residents. It will also help in round the clock water supply to Samuka beach area of the town.

Officials said the project will help giving a further boost to the tap water project in the Puri town that became the first city in the country to have 24x7 'Drink from Tap' facility in July last year. As per the information around 49 MLD water is being supplied to the town daily. This apart, 200 drinking water fountains have also been installed at various parts of the town.

## JP Nadda to address rallies at Tumudibandha, Banpur on Dec 28



BHUBANESWAR: BJP national president JP Nadda is coming on a day's visit to the state on Wednesday to kick-start the campaign of the party for the next general election which is likely to be preponed.

After touching down

here, Nadda will go to Kandhamal where he will address a public meeting at Tumudibandha under Baliguda Assembly constituency at 11.30 am. After the meeting he will proceed to Jaleshpeta ashram set up by slain VHP leader

S w a m i L a x m a n a n d a Saraswati and inaugurate a Kanyashram.

Nadda will address his second public meeting at Banpur under Chilika Assembly constituency, a segment of Puri Lok Sabha seat

at 3 pm. After the meeting he will offer prayer at Maa Bhagwati Temple and later attend a meeting of party workers at the indoor stadium of Nachuni college, said state BJP general secretary L e k h a s h r e e Samantsinghar.

## Honoris causa on IMD DG and organic farmer

BHUBANESWAR: The Odisha University of Agriculture

tion ceremony on Monday. Presided over by

Addressing the students, Pathak said the convocation

and 64 PhDs. Besides, 113 gold medals and six cash



and Technology conferred honorary doctorate degrees (honoris causa) on director general of Meteorology, India Meteorological department, M r u t y u n j a y a Mohapatra and organic farming practitioner Sabarmatee at its 39th convoca-

the Governor of Odisha and Chancellor of Universities Prof Ganeshi Lal, the event was chaired by secretary of Department of Agricultural Research and Education Himansu Pathak, who is also the director general of ICAR.

aims at handing over the scholars of the university to the society to perpetuate the mission of learning. Degrees in various disciplines of agriculture, allied sciences and basic sciences were awarded to 821 graduates, 510 post-graduates

prizes were distributed for excellence in academics and co-curricular activities. University VC Pravat Kumar Roul and principal secretary of Agriculture and Farmers Empowerment department Arabinda Kumar Padhee also spoke.

## Dharmendra Pradhan appeals for more contests on G20 India themes

BHUBANESWAR: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan

enthusiasm for India's G20 Presidency in rural pockets of Odisha. In-

conduct various competitions on G20 India themes to engage more and

Bhubaneswar are likely to be among the venues for 200 such meetings to be



on Monday appealed to all educational institutions, social organisations and non-governmental organisations to conduct various competitions on G20 India themes.

"Let us all join the movement to showcase India's strength, plurality, traditions and achievements to the world," said Pradhan. In a series of tweets, the Union minister said he was happy to learn that more than 350 students participated in various competitions.

"Glad to see great

spired by Hon. PM @narendramodiji's call, 'Ama Prayas' a social organisation based out of K e n d r a p a r a organised a school-level painting, debate & quiz competition on #G20India themes," he tweeted. It is a matter of pride that the organisation has taken up several constructive steps on education and skill development in the state and providing scholarship to meritorious students.

"I appeal, especially to educational institutes, NGOs and social organisations to

more students," he said. Pradhan said, "As citizens we all are stakeholders in India's presidency. It is our collective responsibility to engage with G20 India and scale up participation."

Earlier, Pradhan had informed that three G20 sub-committee meetings on education, energy and culture will be held in Odisha in April next year. Though the venue of the sub-committee meetings have not been finalised, he had indicated that heritage town Konark and

held in the run-up to the main summit.

UDF meeting in Kochi on Friday  
THRUANANIHAPURAM  
The UDF coordination meeting will be held at Hotel Abad, Kochi, on Friday at 10am. The meeting of the Opposition allies is being convened to finalise on the protests being planned against the LDF government. It will also take stock of the prevalent political situations in the state, including the financial allegations raised against LDF convener E P Jayarajan, buffer zone issue, the Niti Ayog's decision to scrap the Rubber Board, backdoor appointments and fall in crop prices.



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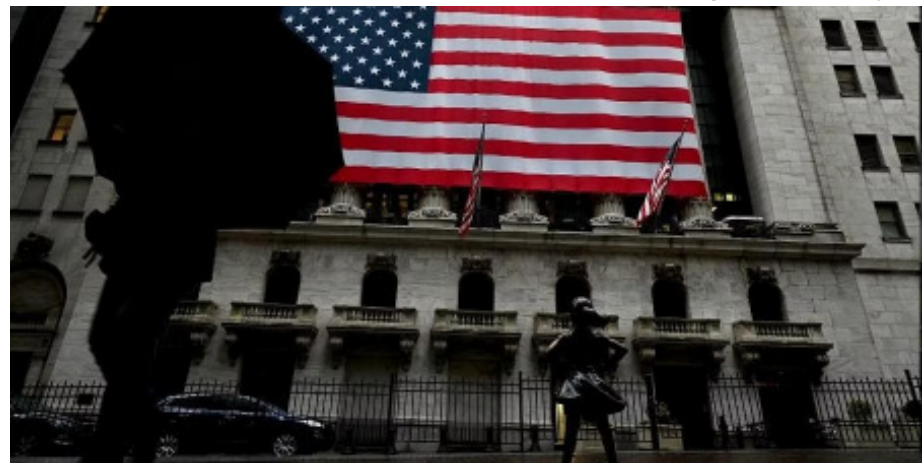
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### Wall Street may get much worse in 2023 before getting better

NEW YORK: The worst may be yet to come for the stock market. Wall Street's mini-rebound since mid-



October has recovered some of the index's sharp losses from the first 10 months of the year. It closed Monday a shade below 4,000, up more than 10% since its bottom two months earlier.

Many analysts expect stocks to end 2023 at least around this range, if not a bit higher, after the Federal Reserve finally stops hiking interest rates in order to get high inflation under control. But before getting to that end point, much of Wall Street is also forecasting stock prices to fall sharply in the interim. Consider Morgan Stanley, which says the S&P 500 could drop all the way to a range between 3,000 and 3,300 during the first three months of the new year. That would mean it loses up to a quarter of its value from Monday's closing level. The low end of that range would also be 37.5% below the record set in early 2022.

The reason for the bank's pessimism is that its strategists forecast much weaker corporate profits than the rest of Wall Street. On the revenue side, businesses are feeling

pressure as manufacturing and other areas of the economy are weakening. At the same time, Morgan Stanley says profits will get squeezed on the other end by higher wage costs after businesses had to give workers' raises. Corporate profits will likely be coming off record levels from 2022, which helped companies return more cash to investors through dividends and stock

buybacks. To be sure, the strategists led by Michael Wilson say the S&P 500 could end 2023 at 3,900 if things go mostly as they expect, not far from its current level. Strategists at Goldman Sachs also forecast a trough during the first half of the year, possibly at 3,600. That would mark a nearly 10% drop from Monday's close, and it's based on Goldman Sachs' expectation that the economy can avoid a recession. If the economy does contract as many on Wall Street expect, Goldman strategists led by David Kostin said the S&P 500 could fall all the way to 3,100.

At Deutsche Bank, strategists see the U.S. economy falling into a recession in the second half of 2023. That could pull the S&P 500 down to 3,250 before it hits bottom about halfway through the recession, which the German bank sees lasting the last six months of the year. Then, the S&P 500 could end the year as high as 4,500 if stocks follow their typical playbook around recessions, say the strategists led by Binky Chadha.

Q4 2022 remained quite robust with as many as 92,160 units sold in the period," says Puri.

### At 3.65 lakh units, housing sales peak in 2022: Report

Housing sales in India's top seven cities created a new peak in 2022, breaching the previous high of 2014. This comes despite



hike in property prices and home loan interest rates in 2022.

According to real estate consultancy firm Anarock, approx 3,64,900 units were sold in 2022 against 2,36,500 units in 2021 across the top 7 cities – rising by 54% on Y-o-Y. The last peak was seen in 2014 when 3.43 lakh units were sold across the top 7 cities. In terms of cities, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) witnessed the highest sales of approx. 1,09,700 units in 2022, followed by National Capital Region (NCR) with approx. 63,700 units. The two realty hotspots are together once again the leading residential markets.

Meanwhile, new launches across the top 7 cities saw 51% annual rise – from 2,36,700 units in 2021 to nearly 3,57,600 new units in 2022. MMR and Hyderabad witnessed maximum new launches in 2022, together comprising nearly 54% share of the total new launches in the year.

Anuj Puri, Chairman - ANAROCK Group, says, "While it was widely anticipated that the rise in property costs and interest rates towards the second half of 2022 would have a cascading impact on the residential sales,

"Interestingly, NCR became the shining star in 2022 which deliberately restricted new supply in the year to approx. 22,350 units but witnessed robust housing sales of 63,700 units."

Puri anticipate the current sales momentum in the housing sector to continue in the first quarter of 2023.

"The appetite for homeownership has remained undeterred, with maximum sales being driven by the end-users. However, various risks loom large around the residential segment. A lot will depend on how the home loan interest rates pan out over the next year," he said.

Pune recorded sales of around 57,200 units in 2022, an increase of 59% over 2021 while 49,500 units were sold in Bengaluru in 2022, an annual increase of 50%. Hyderabad recorded sales of approx. 47,500 units in 2022, a massive yearly increase of 87% over 2021 and Kolkata recorded sales of approx. 21,200 units in 2022, an annual increase of 62% from the previous year. Approx. 16,100 units were sold in Chennai in 2022, a yearly jump of 29% over 2021.

### OUAT releases little millet variety with stronger quality, gets three patents

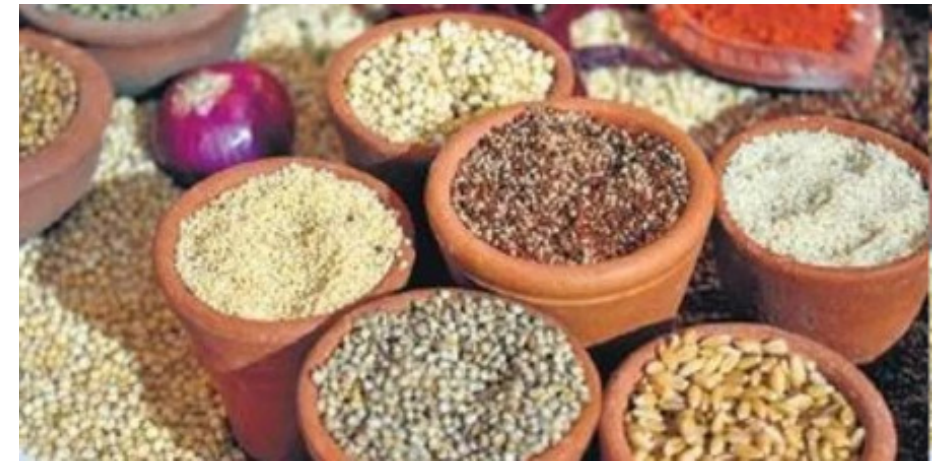
BHUBANESWAR: As the country is all set to observe 2023 as the international year of millets, Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) has developed a little millet variety with enhanced productivity and quality. The new variety - Kalinga Suan 18 was recently released by the central variety release committee.

On the eve of 39th convocation day of the university, OUAT vice-chancellor Prof Pravat Kumar Roul on Sunday said the university has so far developed 171 high yielding varieties and hybrids of different crops.

The scientists have also developed a bullock operated pearl millet thresher-cum-cleaner and a bullock drawn four-row seed drill for millets. The university has so far obtained three patents for raw stone apple slicer, miniaturised system for cost effective and

small scale vegetable oil refining and ragi thresher-cum-

It is implementing a project to promote natural farming in a country for being eligible to get financial support for



pearler, he said. "Scientists have re-synthesised the coloured broiler chicks - OUAT Kalinga Pallishree, the stock of which was liquidated due to bird flu. It will boost the rural economy through involvement of women SHGs," he informed.

The university has facilitated for GI registration of five commodities, out of which, Mayurbhanj Kai Chutney, Dhenkanal Magji (sweet) and Nayagarh Kanteimundi brinjal are expected to get GI tags by the GI Registry.

1,000 hectare (ha) through 10 KVKs with funding support from the state government. More than 500 ha of rice-fallow areas will be covered through promotion of pulses under this project. Ranked 19th at all-India level, OUAT's academic ecosystem has attracted students from countries including Nepal, Bangladesh, Somalia, Afghanistan, Vietnam and Egypt over the years. Its College of Basic Science and Humanities has been selected as one among 30 institutions in the

strengthening undergraduate science education in 2021.

Secretary of Agricultural Research and Education and director general of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Dr Himanshu Pathak will deliver the convocation address. Altogether 821 graduates, 510 post-graduates and 64 PhDs will be conferred in various disciplines apart from 113 gold medals and six cash prizes to be awarded for excellence in academic pursuit.

### WhatsApp to end support for bunch of old Samsung phones



NEW DELHI: Meta-owned WhatsApp will reportedly end support for a bunch of old Samsung phones, as the company might soon end support for Android smartphones that are not running at least Android 5.0 (Lollipop).

According to SamMobile, those devices include seven Samsung smartphones that were released in 2011, 2012, and 2013. The devices include the Galaxy Ace 2, Galaxy Core, Galaxy S2, Galaxy S3 Mini, Galaxy Trend II, Galaxy Trend Lite and Galaxy Xcover 2.

All of these devices were upgraded to Android 4.x, which was their last major Android OS update. WhatsApp will stop working on these phones

after December 31, 2022, according to the report.

Other smartphones that will no longer support WhatsApp include those from Apple, HTC, Huawei, Lenovo, LG and Sony, among others, the report added.

Meanwhile, WhatsApp is reportedly working on a new feature which will provide users with the ability to report status updates on desktop beta.

The new feature will allow users to report a status update right within a new menu in the status section, reports WABetaInfo.

If users see any suspicious status update that might violate the Terms of Service, they will be able to report it to the moderation team with the new option.



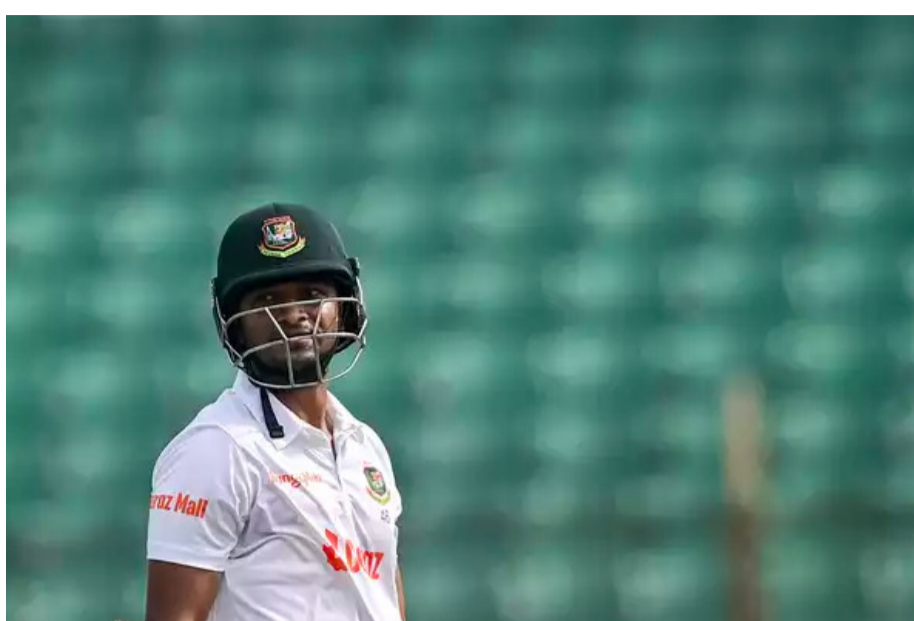
# Shakib rues missed chances after close defeat

**Dhaka:** Bangladesh Test skipper Shakib al Hasan said on Sunday (December 25) that he is disappointed with his team's catching that let them down in the series-concluding second Test against India.

Catching lapses are considered to be one of the weakest links in Bangladesh Test game, and it was no different in Mirpur where India earned a three-wicket win over the hosts to sweep in the two-match series part of ICC Test Chamed three catches and an easy stumping while Mominul Haque dropped a regulation catch of Ravichandran Ashwin at forward short-leg when he failed to

negotiate a turning delivery of Mehidy Hasan Miraz. The hosts were well on top until that dropped chance considering the fact Ashwin (42 not out) turned the game in his team's favour by stitching an undefeated 71-run partnership with Shreyas Iyer.

"It is slightly disappointing (missing catches). Other teams don't miss the chances that we are missing. They made the difference. We could have bowled them out for 250 instead of 314 (in the first innings). There was a chance in the second innings, but it is part of cricket," Shakib told reporters at



the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium on Sunday.

"We fielded well in the T20 World Cup. We fielded well in the ODI series, but we couldn't

do it in the Test match. Maybe due to lack of concentration or fitness," he said.

"We have to find out how to better concentrate for longer,

wickets. Other teams have to create nine chances to take 10 wickets," he added.

Though Shakib was disappointed with the fielding, the skipper insisted he's happy with the overall performance and mentality of the team and mentality. Shakib also credited the Indian lower-order for handling the pressure so well.

"I think Ashwin and Iyer both batted well on a pitch that wasn't easy. Credit to them. I think we tried in every which way. We fell slightly short, somehow.

"There's no regret. I think we fought well in the whole Test. If we continue having this mentality in future Tests,

we will get better results.

"There's regret not winning a close match but at least we are getting close. Hopefully next year there'll be a better result next year. We have 3-5 Tests in 2023. I expect to win all three series, considering the teams we will be playing," he added.

Bangladesh will play five Test matches in 2023 respectively against Ireland, Afghanistan and New Zealand and all of them are home fixtures.

Shakib also noted that though he is not regularly playing first-class cricket, but if Bangladesh want to improve in Tests they need to introduce more

first-class matches.

"We need to introduce more first-class matches to do seriously well in Tests. A player with 50-70 first-class matches is a lot different than someone who has played 8 or 10 first-class matches. I am sure most of the Indian players have more than 100 first-class matches under their belt. I don't play domestic cricket for a long time, but even those who are playing, how many do they play? They will need 10 years to reach 80 first-class matches. If we could have done that in five years, we may have better Test players," he added.

## Good sign there are two pacers in IPL from Afghanistan - Naveen-ul-Haq

**Kabul:** Afghanistan pacer Naveen-ul-Haq's eyes were glued to the TV screen when the IPL auction was taking place even though it was late at night in Australia, where he is currently plying his trade for Sydney Sixers in the Big Bash League. The right-arm pacer did not lose his hope even though he was ignored by the franchises during the first round. Eventually, Lucknow Super Giants picked him up later for his base price of INR 50 lakh that has now helped him realise his dream of taking part in the competition.



"Every player has a dream to play in IPL but more than my dream it was my parents' dream to see me playing in the IPL and I'm happy to fulfill that," Naveen told Cricbuzz. "I am in Australia and it was around 1 at night and I was watching the auction. I was unsold when my name was called first

time. There was another round and I was still sitting but I had the hope (that I will be picked) and by the grace of Allah it was fulfilled," he said. Naveen, who earlier in an interview, told Cricbuzz that it isn't the end of the world for a pacer in Afghanistan given the country is renowned for producing world class spinners, feel that his inclusion in the IPL will help the young generation take pace bowling more

seriously. Unlike the past when IPL teams were only interested in spinners from Afghanistan, there are two pacers from the region now in the tournament - Naveen and Fazalhaq Farooqi. Apart from the pace duo, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Rashid Khan and Noor Ahmed are part of the tournament while there was no place for seasoned campaigners like Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi. "Yes, it's a good sign

that two pace bowlers are there in the IPL from Afghanistan," said Naveen. "Because earlier spinners (from Afghanistan) used to play everywhere The more seam bowlers will play in tournaments like IPL, it will help to grow interest back home," he said while added that his familiarity with conditions in Lucknow will keep him in good stead.

"Look I have played in Lucknow so there is little bit of idea because we had a series against West Indies in Lucknow and I played there. Knowing the conditions always helps and if I get the chance I want to repay back the confidence they show on me by giving 110 percent. Certainly playing in different franchise leagues will help me to absorb the pressure of IPL but saying that it is the biggest league in the world and the experience that I will gather playing there will certainly help me in the future."

## Green finds the right rhythm to fill Starc void

**New Delhi:** On a day CA announced Australia's Men's Test Player of the Year will be named in honour of the legendary leg-spinner Shane Warne, young all-rounder Cameron Green produced a splendid performance to finish with his maiden Test five-wicket haul in the Boxing Day Test against South Africa at MCG.

When Kyle Verreynne and Marco Jansen had stitched a hundred plus stand for the sixth wicket, it seemed as if they would take South Africa to a score of some respectability. But Green extracted



bounce and found a hint of movement to rip through the rest of South Africa's batting order as the visitors lost their last five wickets for a mere 10 runs. In fact, he took four of his last five

wickets in a space of just 12 balls.

What made Green's performance even more impressive was the fact that he hadn't bowled much during the recent Tests. He was used for

just six overs by the stand-in captain Steve Smith in the Adelaide Test against the West Indies. When the rest of the bowlers went about taking wickets on a seam-friendly deck at the Gabba, Green bowled a mere three overs. The all-rounder observed that a chat with the Australian skipper Pat Cummins helped to find his rhythm.

"It is just the rhythm. It has been a slow start to the summer, just wanted to bowl a few overs basically," Green told in the presser. "Thankfully, got a few today, I was just trying to find that rhythm."



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