



THE TIMES OF INDIA

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**TODAY'S
EDITION**

➤ From anxiety to insomnia and physical pain, watch out the signs of burnout among teenagers

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➤ A student writes about the advantages of reading science fiction, and how it broadens your knowledge about the world and future

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➤ England's Ashes dream in tatters as Australia dominate on day 1

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STUDENT EDITION

MONDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2021


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MANN KI BAAT

PM Modi to hold 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' with students in 2022, registration begins from Dec 28



Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold Pariksha Pe Charcha with students before the annual exams in 2022. Addressing the nation in the 84th episode of his monthly radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat' on Sunday, the Prime Minister said, "I discuss such similar topics with students on exams. This year also I am planning to discuss with the students before the exams. The registration for this programme is also going to start two days later, December 28, onwards on Mygov.in. The registration will be from December 28 to January 20." The Prime Minister said an online competition will also be organised for teachers and parents of classes IX to XII students. This was PM Modi's last 'Mann Ki Baat' this year. The next episode will be in January next year.

The fourth edition of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' was held via virtual mode in April this year

INDIA'S JAB DRIVE GETS A BOOSTER DOSE

India will open its Covid vaccination drive for teenagers (15-18 years from Jan 3) and start administering 'precautionary' doses to frontline workers and senior citizens above 60 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Saturday. The highly-infectious Omicron variant has gained a foothold in the country, with 422 cases reportedly confirmed in India. The health ministry has raised concerns about its onward spread. "Omicron is a matter of discussion right now," PM said, adding, "After looking at global developments and examining the last 11 months of our Covid-19 vaccination drive, our scientists have taken key decisions today. It is time to be careful and cautious." ^{TNN}



THE STORY, SO FAR

■ India has fully vaccinated about 60% of its adult population of roughly 900 million people, while about 90% have received at least one dose of vaccine

■ About 90% of Indians have been vaccinated with Covishield, a locally-manufactured version of the AstraZeneca vaccine. Initial studies in Britain found that AstraZeneca's vaccinations showed no ability to stop Omicron infection, while its booster shot did raise antibody levels enough to suggest that it may offer protection against the Omicron variant

Global economy to top \$100 trillion in 2022 for the first time

The world's economic output will exceed \$100 trillion for the first time next year and it will take China a little longer than previously thought to overtake the United States as the No1 economy, a report showed on Sunday...



1 British consultancy, The Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR), has predicted that China will become the world's top economy in dollar terms in 2030, two years later than the forecast made by the World Economic League Table report in 2020

2 India looks set to overtake France next year and then Britain in 2023 to regain its place as the world's sixth-biggest economy, it said

3 The report showed that Germany was on track to overtake Japan in terms of economic output in 2033. Russia could become a Top 10 economy by 2036, and Indonesia looks on track for ninth place in 2034



SANTA IN A BED OF ROSES: Sand artist Sudarsan Pattanaik made a 50-foot-long, 28-foot-wide sand sculpture of Santa Claus with about 5,400 roses for Christmas at the Puri beach in Puri on Sunday



DANIEL CRAIG DOESN'T WANT JAMES BOND TO BE STREAMED

Hollywood star Daniel Craig has urged people not to stream James Bond films because "event movies" deserve to be seen on a big cinema screen. Craig said: "One of the greatest things that's happened is we got this movie into the cinema." That's where Bond movies should be. They don't look so good on a

phone. They look great on an Imax screen. It looks great on a 30ft screen, he added. They are family events. It gets the family out. As long as there's event movies like this then cinemas have a chance of surviving, he said. For the new Bond, Craig thinks the franchise is in a "good place" and he believes there are still a lot of good stories to be told. He added: "I hope I've

left it in a good place and I hope the next person can just make it fly. It's an amazing franchise. I still think there's a lot of stories to tell." He recently shared that he thought it was "very satisfying" that Bond was apparently killed at the end of 'No Time To Die' after he sacrificed himself to save partner Madeleine (Lea Seydoux) and his daughter Mathilde.

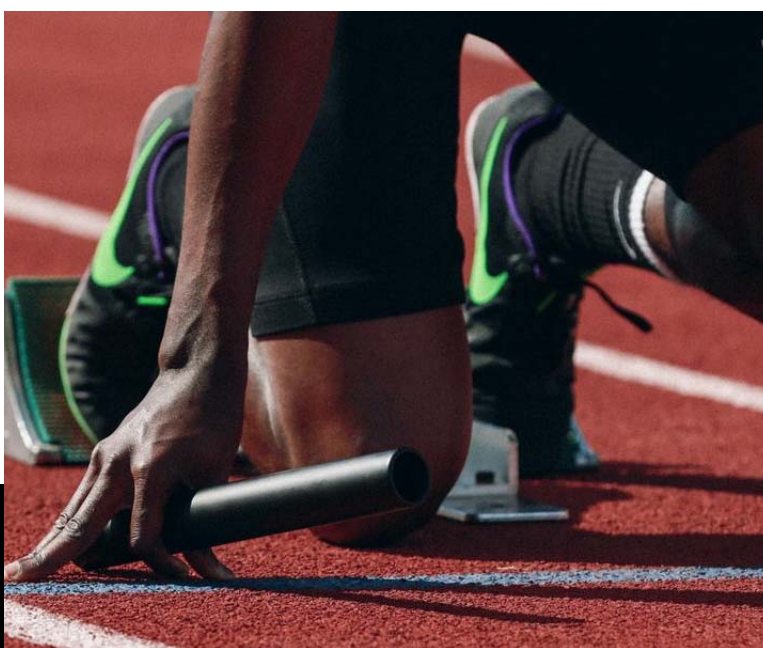
Shoes to have uniform sole thickness from November 2024: World Athletics Body

The sole thicknesses for all the athletic shoes in track and field events will be simplified to a stack height of 20mm from Nov 1, 2024, World Athletics said. World Athletics said the timeline was agreed to give shoe manufacturers enough notice after they had made "significant investment" in shoes with a sole thickness between 20-25mm. Shoe technology has been in the spotlight since records started to tumble, with the governing body trying to draw a line between innovation and giving athletes an unfair advantage. The World Athletics also said, athletic shoes must not contain any embedded "sensing or intelligent" technology now or in the future, with the new rules and regulations set to be in place from Jan 1, 2022.

The current regulations allow for shoes to have maximum thickness between 20 and 25mm depending on the event while it can go up to 40mm for road races

WHY SUCH MOVE?

Norwegian 400 metres hurdler Karsten Warholm shaved 0.76 of a second from his own world record at this year's Tokyo Olympics – a massive margin in a one-lap race – and warned that shoe technology was hurting athletes' credibility



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ONLINE TOI STUDENT EDITION

NEW YEAR, NEW DAWN

Welcome 2022 with a dollop of hope

WHAT TO EXPECT

- STUDENTS AND TEACHERS SHARE WHAT THEY ARE HOPEFUL FOR
- LESSONS OF 2021 FOR '22
- CALENDAR OF EVENTS
- MOST-ANTICIPATED MOVIES
- BOOKS BUZZ FOR 2022
- MUSIC NEWS
- THE BIG TRENDS IN HEALTH, LIFESTYLE, TRAVEL, ENVIRONMENT AND MORE
- TRIVIA

Happy New Year 2022

Don't miss the 'Exciting Festive Edition' on this special occasion

MARK YOUR DATE **JANUARY 1, 2022**

COLLECTOR'S EDITION

AWARENESS

5 SIGNS OF BURNOUT IN TEENS

Being a teen in pandemic time isn't easy. Extensive syllabus, changing exam patterns, sibling rivalry and social media image – all of these are not easy to manage – that too together. The pressure of doing well in studies along with planning a career and trying to develop their personality may lead to burnout. Regular stress and anxiety are signs of burnout. Long term burnout can also make them vulnerable to illnesses like colds and flu. So, it's important to know the signs of weariness at the correct time to help teens overcome it. Here are five signs to identify burnout in teens.



1 ANXIETY

This is your body's natural response to stress, characterised by feelings of worry, anxiety or fear that are strong enough to interfere with daily life. When stress level exceeds the normal level, it often leads to anxiety, which is the first sign of burnout. Your teenager might feel anxious for no known reason. He or she may find it unable to relax or even sleep at night. In some cases, they may also have vivid dreams and restlessness.

2 INSOMNIA

Burnout may also affect the quantity and quality of your sleep. It is a result of excessive stress and overwhelming feeling. Stress increases the level of the cortisol hormones in the blood, which increases the risk of insomnia. Sleepless nights make kids feel tired the other morning. This affects their mood as well as their choice of foods.

Caution
Teenager
Ahead

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Once you have identified these triggers, have a detailed discussion with your spouse and chalk out a plan to reduce problems that lead to burnout, for example, if your child is extremely stressed about class tests, you can have a talk with him/her and calm down his fears and uncertainties. If your teen seems troubled in a way that you find unable to manage, you can take a counsellor's help. Also, making sure that their food and sleeping habits are healthy goes a long way in managing burnout. TNN

3 PHYSICAL PAIN

Burnout not only affects your teenager's mind but might also have an impact on their physical well-being. They may often experience neck, back or stomach pain. Dizziness, dryness of the throat and mouth, might be some other visible signs of burnout in the high school going kids. In the case of girls, missing periods is an evident sign of burnout.

4 EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOUR

Burnout is a stage of emotional and physical exhaustion. Excessive stress makes teens feel emotionally worn out and drained, which causes them to behave differently because they feel stuck or trapped in a situation. They might be dealing with several emotions at one time and might express them in negative ways like impulsive behaviour, decreased motivation, fear and anger.

5 RISKY ATTITUDE

Burnout is also a phase where teens start engaging in risky behaviours. Experimenting with drugs, fast driving, etc. for the first time are indications that things are not well with your teen. These are just ways to momentarily escape from stress and feel good.

FIVE HEALTHY CONCOCTIONS FOR WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Exercise and diet are the principal prerequisites for weight loss and sustainable weight management. But some tricks and tips can boost your weight loss process and herbal concoctions are one of them. Loaded with healthy and weight loss friendly nutrients, these beverages can speed up the metabolism and fat burning process. We bring to you five healthy drinks that may help in maintaining weight, shedding extra kilos and staying healthy

HEALTH BYTES

Apple cider vinegar



The acetic acid present in vinegar helps suppress body fat in animals and it also helps lower the levels of triglycerides in the body. Because of its versatility and health benefits, apple cider vinegar has been touted as a superfood and consuming it daily can help get rid of fat and manage overall health properly. Mixing a tablespoon or two of apple cider vinegar in water and spreading out two to three doses of it throughout the day helps aid weight loss.



Detox water

Add cucumber, lemon juice, mint leaves and a slice of ginger to water and store it for some time. This is detox water that can help reduce weight as it improves metabolism and helps eliminate toxins from the body, thereby purifying your blood. Consume it in the morning and throughout the day as well.



Ajwain water

Gastric problems such as ulcers and indigestion can lead to bloating and weight gain. In Ayurveda, these problems are treated by using carom seeds or ajwain. Carom seeds also contain antifungal and antibacterial properties that can help clean the gut and aid digestive processes that ultimately helps in weight loss. Consuming these seeds on an empty stomach early in the morning is highly recommended to shed flab.

Ginger tea

Ginger is a powerful root and it plays an important role in weight management. Instead of helping lose weight, ginger tea helps reverse the symptoms that tamper with weight loss. It has often been suggested that drinking ginger water before meals can help one feel full. In addition to helping appetite directly, ginger tea also helps prevent cardiovascular diseases because of its anti-inflammatory properties and antioxidants. It also regulates blood glucose levels and eliminates bad fat or cholesterol from the body. Drinking a cup every day before meals are believed to have great effectiveness in achieving weight loss.

Black tea

Because of its caffeine content, black tea helps cut down fat by speeding up metabolism. Even though caffeine can be found in multiple drinks including coffee, black tea contains polyphenol which reduces calorie intake and can help increase healthy bacteria in the gut. Polyphenol also helps and promotes the breakdown of fat. Consuming it early in the morning every day is advisable for effective results.



BOOKS

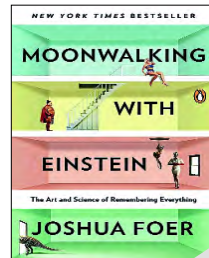
5 BOOKS RECOMMENDED BY TWINKLE KHANNA FOR EVERY TYPE OF READER



Actor-entrepreneur-producer- author Twinkle Khanna is also an avid reader. So much so that she often posts about the books that she or her daughter Nitara loved reading. Recently, Twinkle shared a funny video where she recommended five books for different kinds of readers. The video was posted on Tweakindia's Instagram page and also shared by the star author. From people who are multitaskers to those who read in the bathroom, here are five recommendations by Twinkle for five different types of readers

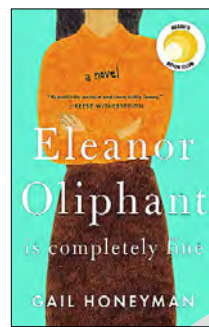
FOR MULTITASKERS

For readers who multitask and can't sit still, Twinkle recommended 'Moonwalking with Einstein' by Joshua Foer. A New York Times bestseller, in this book, Foer writes about his 'year long quest to improve his memory under the tutelage of top 'mental athletes'."



FOR INSTAGRAM REELS-ADDICTS

For readers who love spending their time watching Instagram reels, Twinkle has recommended Gail Honeyman's debut novel 'Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine'. This is a heart-warming story of Eleanor Oliphant, a young eccentric woman, and what makes her so. Published in 2017, the book won the Costa First Book of the Year award.



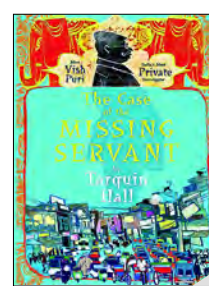
FOR READERS WHO CAN'T DECIDE BETWEEN THE MOVIE AND THE BOOK

For such confused readers, Twinkle has suggested Haruki Murakami's short-story collection 'Men Without Women'. "Across seven tales, Murakami brings his powers of observation to bear on the lives of men who, in their own ways, find themselves alone," reads the book's blurb.



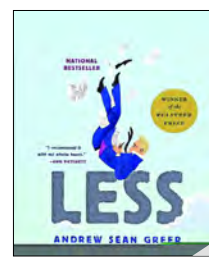
THOSE WHO MOSTLY READ IN THE BATHROOM

For people who mostly end up reading on the toilet seat, Twinkle suggested the book 'The Case of the Missing Servant' by Tarquin Hall. The first book in the Vish Puri series, this one is an entertaining crime fiction that will keep you on the edge (quite literally).



THE PEOPLE WHO FORGET ABOUT THE WORLD WHILE READING

For such readers, Twinkle has aptly recommended Andrew Sean Greer's Pulitzer Prize for Fiction winning novel 'Less'. It will you on a trip across the world, as the protagonist finds himself in this journey.



5 DIY face masks to tackle skin issues

WELLNESS

1. FOR DRY SKIN

Take ½ banana and slice it into pieces and then do the same with ½ cucumber. Grind them both together and make a paste out of them. Add 2-3 tablespoons of rose water into the paste. And voila, your mask for treating dry skin is ready to be used.

3. FOR SUPPLE SKIN

Take 3 teaspoons of oats powder and add 1 tablespoon of rose water with a few drops of tea tree oil. Mix this pack well and use it thrice a week.



2. FOR RADIANT SKIN

Take 2 tablespoons of unflavoured Greek yoghurt and add a pinch of turmeric powder and 1 teaspoon of tomato juice. Mix them all gently and apply the paste all over your face and neck for 20 minutes. Wash off with cool water.

4. FOR YOUTHFUL SKIN

Take ¼ carrot in a grinder and add 2-3 teaspoons of milk. Grind both ingredients together into a smooth paste. Store the paste into a glass container and add 2 teaspoons of unflavoured yogurt. Your wrinkle-free mask is ready for application after mixing them all well.

5. FOR ACNE-PRONE SKIN

Take 2 tablespoons of honey and add 2-3 teaspoons of apple cider vinegar with 1 tablespoon of rice powder. Mix well and apply the pack all over your face and neck for 20 minutes and wash off with cool water. Use this pack 3 times a week for best results.

Xmassy spirit spreads cheer



Christmas celebration was held at Army Public School Golconda, a day marked with fun and excitement for the students and staff as class VII took the lead to put up a mesmerizing show on the stage.

The programme began with a brief welcome address followed by a modern classical version of jingle bells which spread the spirit of celebration.

The main celebration started with Christmas carols followed by a skit by students, dressed in bright and elaborate costumes to give the nativity scene effect. Children performed a dance and sang melodiously, holding candles which depicted the angels descending on the earth with cheers, charm

and happiness. The Jingle Bells song saw the grand entry of Santa Clause, handing out toffees and gifts which got the entire audience singing along.

Principal Vidya Muralidharan applauded the students for their efforts and wished everyone a happy Christmas. The programme concluded with a special vote

of thanks and wishing each other Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2022.

Various activities on the occasion were organized by the art department like gift wrapping, making greeting card using electric circuits, paper bags, photo frames and tree decorations. After the programme the children participated in fun filled games and activities in their respective classes.



Christmas is one of the most joyous festivals of the year, awaited by both children and grown ups. The glittery decorations, gifts, cakes, delicious meals, Christmas carols, everything about the festivals is just splendid. But above all, it's about the love, laughter and precious time spent with family and loved ones.

Christmas is that time of the year when the community comes together and bids goodbye to the year gone by, praying for a prosperous and peaceful New Year.

Due to Covid-19, it may be difficult to meet your dear ones, but this should not

Principal, Gayatri Grammar High School
Adarsh Nagar, Hyderabad

take away the joy of this festival. Festive time is all about creating happy memories that will last a lifetime. Students came together to wish one another a Merry Christmas. Teachers too blessed them all the joy and happiness.

May all of your wishes and dreams comes true, and may you feel this happiness all year round. Merry Christmas!

The primary wing of Sister Nivedita celebrated Christmas on a grand note. The beautiful backdrop with Santa and the Christmas tree added beauty to the stage. The celebrations started with a wonderful Christmas carol sung by the young Niveditans dressed in bright red dresses.

The carol was followed by a lively dance and a skit depicting the birth of Jesus by the little ones.

Director of the school Harihara Prasad and Principal Lalitha Kumari graced the occasion and appreciated the children and teachers for the fine performance.

Sister Nivedita School
Hyderabad



To celebrate the hour of Christmas miracles, smiles, and positivity, students of Gitanjali Vedika bonded to end the year together on a jubilant note. The little ones of Vedika excitedly met the School Santa who was none other than the sports instructor who indulged them in songs and merriment.

Students of nursery to class III participated in a range of activities like candy cane decoration, colouring and drawing to express their ideas; origami, and giving gifts to spread delight. The middle school students displayed their artistic bone by decorating their classrooms in a splendour of Christmas colours. They adorned their classrooms with mini Christmas trees, paper snowflakes, handmade wreaths and many balloons. They also engaged in fun games in the school grounds to end the year on a high note.

Gitanjali Vedika

Delhi Public School Mahendra Hills organized a special assembly to celebrate the festival of kindness - The Joy of Giving and the true spirit of Christmas. The extravaganza was graced with a very special guest S Harinath, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Cyber Crimes.

Members from the NGO Robin Hood Army, children of Kamala Orphanage, students of Government School, Addagutta were also a part of the event apart from the staff and students of DPS Mahendra Hills.

The event started with the lighting of the lamp by chairman M Komaraiah, principal Nandita Sunkara, vice-principal I Sudha along with the chief guest. The school choir presented a prayer song.

The chairman articulated that a compassionate nature makes one an exemplary humanitarian. The glimpses of the fortnight-long event - The Kindness Festival- were presented by students. They put forward the efforts of the students, teachers, and parents, who participated in this noble endeavour and showed their willingness to help others selflessly for a better to-



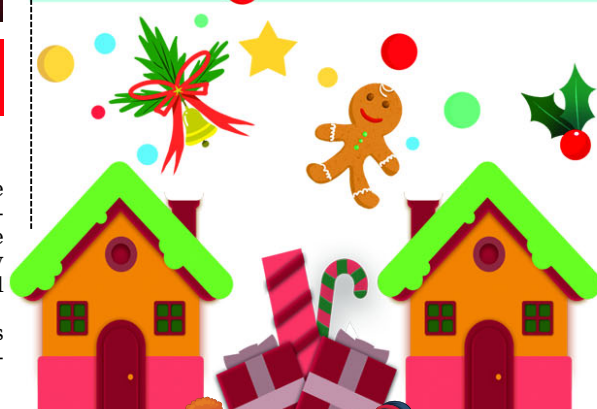
Delhi Public School
Mahendra Hills

more than one hundred kilograms of dry ration, approximately two hundred Covid-Kits, and an equal number of toiletries, woolen clothes, and blankets contributions were made by the school fraternity, including the students, parents, academic and non-academic staff. These were presented to the NGOs and children of the orphanage.

The school announced that

tomorrow. Addressing the audience, chief guest Harinath told the students that one should not expect anything in return while giving. He reiterated that giving never makes one poor but makes one richer. He also spoke about the digital discipline that one should follow in online mode of learning.

The school announced that



Edify World School Balapur

Christmas was celebrated by the students of Edify World School, with the spirit of joy and festive cheer. Principal Dipti Joshi addressed the gathering followed by a cultural programme. Students showcased their talent on the occasion by presenting a skit and later spread the cheer with riddles, Santa Gifts and finally the vote of thanks.

Express YOURSELF

THE BLISS OF RAIN

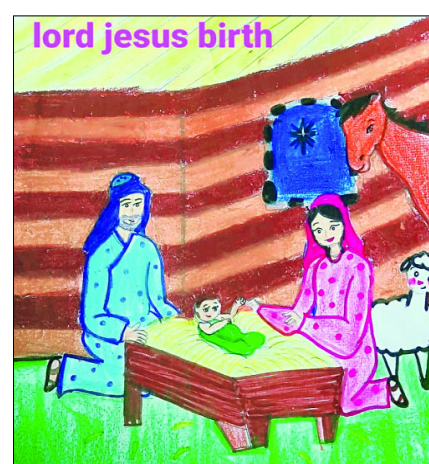


Since childhood, I have always loved the rain. Before it rained, I could smell the sweet scent of soil, and I could tell that it was going to rain soon. My prediction was always right. When it would start raining I would always go to the balcony, and look at the rain in awe. It was just so mesmerizing for me. I had always spent a lot of time, watching the rain and playing with it. Whenever I would hear the sound of the rain, it always

used to make me relaxed and happy. The rain always had a lasting impact on me. Even after the rain stopped I was always relaxed and calm for a couple of days. Some people do not like it when it rains, but for me, it is like a beautiful gift coming down from heaven.

SAI SUDHISHNA NARAYANACHETTY, class IX, Silver Oaks International School, Hyderabad

Painters' Gallery



HOLY NIGHT: RUTUJA SANJIV SINGAL, class VI, Army Public School, Bolarum

SANTA: PRISHA DAS, class PP II-F, Delhi Public School, Hyderabad

THE EDUCATIONIST

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

English is very important in this modern world. Apart from the mother tongue we need to have a common language to help us communicate with others from across the world. English is the common language which is known to most of the people in the world. English words used must be simple so that it can be easily understood by everyone.

Nowadays English is being taught to children at primary level itself. Students are strictly made to speak in English when they are in school premises which helps in building a good communication as well as the right body language. English can be improved by constant usage, by watching films, reading books with high level grammar, playing games and trying to use new words. English can be improved by practice.

Most jobs in today's world are based on English such as IT sector, business field. So students aspiring for good jobs need to stress upon their English and usage of it because their job depends on this simple structure.



English is mainly divided into two accents - US and British. Most people in the world follow British accent. In the modern world, English is highly useful to have business relations as well as social network with friends and family. A person can communicate effectively and reach a wider audience. People can be influenced with your thoughts and ideas as well as they can connect to them without complications in understanding.

VENKATAKRISHNA KAMMARI, Vice Principal, Delhi World School, Shadnagar

HAPLESS ENG'S ASHES DREAMS IN TATTERS

AUSTRALIA DOMINATE WITH A BOXING DAY POUNDING AS THEY BOWL OUT ENGLAND FOR 185 ON DAY ONE OF THE ASHES TEST SERIES



Photo: REUTERS

England's hopes of keeping the Ashes alive plunged on Sunday as their batsmen failed again to stand up on a dismal opening day of the third test against Australia in Melbourne. England was bowled out for 185, before Australia reached 61-1 at stumps.

Sent in to bat on a grassy wicket after Australia won the toss, England were skittled for 185 to the delight of a festive Boxing Day crowd, leaving the tourists' bowlers with an improbable rescue mission. By stumps, that mission appeared doomed as opener David Warner thrashed a quickfire 38 and Australia pushed to 61 for one, with Marcus Harris 20 not out and nightwatchman Nathan Lyon yet to score.

Leading 2-0 after thumping wins in Brisbane and Adelaide, holders Australia need only a draw in Melbourne to retain the urn. But Pat Cummins' men will be

hell-bent on taking the series proper before the New Year's test in Sydney.

England, meanwhile, need a miracle. Only one team has ever turned around a 2-0 deficit to win the Ashes. That was Don Bradman's Australia who came back to win the 1936/37 series 3-2 on home soil.

CUMMINS BACK IN ACTION

Though forced to miss Adelaide after being pinged as a close contact of a COVID-19 case, Cummins wasted no time resuming his torment of Joe Root's men. Winning the toss on a cool and overcast morning, Cummins claimed three quick wickets to validate his decision to attack.

England's rejigged opening partnership of Zak Crawley and Haseeb Hameed lasted 12 balls before Cummins had Hameed caught behind for a duck. Crawley, who replaced the dumped

CAN'T FATHOM BROAD'S OMISSION: VAUGHAN

Former England captain Michael Vaughan on Sunday said he "can't fathom" why experienced pacer Stuart Broad was not included in the playing XI for the third Ashes Test and believed the tourists have "got pretty much everything wrong" so far in Australia. "I look at someone like Stuart Broad, in Brisbane he wasn't selected on that green top there, he's not selected here," Vaughan, who led England to 26 wins in 51 Tests, including the 2005 Ashes, said. "How England have not seen Stuart Broad, with all his experience, such a wonderful Test career, is



not going to be bowling a ball on a green top in Brisbane and now not here in Melbourne, that's staggering really. "So far the only thing they've done right on the trip is turn up on time. They've got pretty much everything wrong - selection, tactics have not quite been right. Spin legend Shane Warne also echoed his voice. "England looks a better balanced side - but I would have played @StuartBroad8 instead of Robinson & Poole looks a good player to me, but Bairstow had to play," he wrote on his Twitter handle. ^{PTI}

Rory Burns, managed 12 before edging Cummins straight to Cameron Green in the gully.

The Australia skipper bagged his third wicket in the last over before lunch, having David Malan (14) edge to the slips to break a budding 48-run partnership with Root.

Root brought up his ninth half-century in Australia soon after the break but was caught behind for 50 with an unsightly, loose shot off paceman Mitchell Starc. The England captain now shares the unenviable record of the most test fifties in Australia without making a century (9) with former Australia opener Bruce Laird.

RAPID SPIRAL FOR ENGLAND

England's poor start rapidly spiralled as talisman Ben Stokes (25) and wicketkeeper Jos Buttler (3) both fell to

dreadful strokes. Recalled batsman Jonny Bairstow battled for his 35 but was forced to slog for quick runs as his batting partners dwindled. He was out trying to duck a venomous Starc delivery that caught his bat and looped to the gully where Green batted forward for a terrific catch.

Australia paceman Scott Boland grabbed a wicket on his test debut, trapping Mark Wood lbw for six. Spinner Lyon cleaned up the tail to finish with 3-36.

Australia's openers raced to 57 before veteran paceman James Anderson finally broke through, having Warner edge to Crawley in the gully. All-rounder Stokes did his best to soften up Harris with some short-pitched bowling and drew blood from the opener's finger after rapping him on the glove. But Harris survived and nicked Stokes's final ball just wide of the slips for four, capping a forgettable opening day for England. AGENCIES

AFRICAN CUP DESERVES RESPECT: VIEIRA

CRYSTAL PALACE MANAGER PATRICK VIEIRA SAYS HE WON'T TRY TO BLOCK HIS PLAYERS FROM COMPETING IN THE TOURNAMENT



Wilfried Zaha

Photo: REUTERS

Crystal Palace manager Patrick Vieira won't try to block his players from competing in the African Cup of Nations, arguing that the tournament deserves more respect.

It begins in early January in Cameroon despite the fast-spreading omicron variant adding to concerns that include European clubs threatening not to send players after raising doubts about coronavirus protocols put in place by the Confederation of African Football.

"I will never stop any players to go to play the African Cup of Nations," Vieira said at a press conference ahead of Palace's match at Tottenham on Sunday. "I believe that that competition has to be more respected. This competition is as important as the European Championship."

The Dakar-born Vieira, who

played internationally for France, is set to lose Cheikhou Kouyate (Senegal), Wilfried Zaha (Ivory Coast) and Jordan Ayew (Ghana). "I respect and I understand the passion and the importance of those players to go and to represent their country," Vieira said.

Liverpool would be missing league-leading scorer Mohamed Salah (Egypt) as well as Sadio Mane (Senegal) and Naby Keita (Guinea), among other teams set to lose players.

Vieira said more media coverage would help people understand more how important it is for the African continent. When you're talking about Senegal, I don't think (the Senegalese) will understand if Mane or Cheikhou Kouyate will not represent the nation," he said.

Perhaps the biggest doubts now are when national teams will have their full 28-man squads.

The organization representing

the world's leading domestic leagues says teams shouldn't have to release players until Jan. 3, a week later than stipulated by FIFA and only six days before the tournament begins. That would allow stars like Salah and Mane to squeeze in two more Premier League games.

"(The African Cup) will start one week earlier than normally, due to its extended format and CAF has encouraged FAs to call up more players than ever," the World Leagues Forum wrote to the world and African governing bodies. "These decisions, made unilaterally by FIFA and CAF, have a huge impact on domestic competitions' integrity, placing many clubs and players in a difficult position."

The world's two biggest leagues in England and Spain - the Premier League and La Liga - have matches on Jan. 2 and continue

throughout the African Cup.

The World Leagues Forum called the earlier requirement for players to go on international duty "unreasonable and disproportionate for many clubs and players who are still playing at that time," and said that any sanction imposed by FIFA on clubs would be deemed "abusive, null and void."

While there have been talks about whether the already delayed 2021 African Cup of Nations might be postponed for a second time because of the pandemic, or even moved to a country outside Africa, CAF insists that it will still open on Jan. 9 at the Olembe Stadium in Yaounde. It ends Feb. 6.

Cameroon was due to host the 2019 edition but lost it because of problems with its preparations. It was given a second chance in 2021 but the event was pushed back a year because of the pandemic. ^{AP}

SHAPOVALOV TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID

World number 14 Denis Shapovalov has tested positive for Covid-19 after arriving in Sydney, highlighting the virus threat to the Australian Open.

The 22-year-old was among the first players to enter Australia ahead of the ATP Cup teams event from January 1, where he was to play for Canada, with the first Grand Slam of the year three weeks away. He said on Twitter he was experiencing mild symptoms and isolating - the latest player who competed at an Abu Dhabi exhibition this month to get coronavirus.

"Hi everyone, just wanted to update you that upon my arrival in Sydney, I tested positive for Covid," Shapovalov said. "I am following all protocols, including isolation and letting the people who I've been in contact with know. Right now I am experiencing minor symptoms and look forward

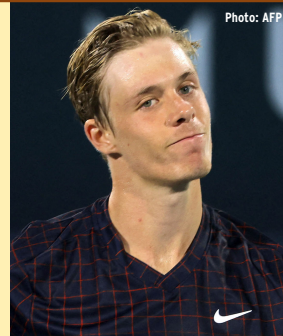


Photo: AFP

to getting back on the court, when it is safe to do so."

Shapovalov played Rafael Nadal in Abu Dhabi, with the Spanish superstar later testing positive for Covid. Australian Open chief Craig Tiley last week said he was confident Nadal would still play at the Melbourne event, starting January 17. Olympic tennis champion Belinda Bencic and Tunisian Ons Jabeur also tested positive after playing in Abu Dhabi. ^{AFP}



2021 BADMINTON: A LEGENDARY WIN, RESURGENCE AND SOME FORCED BREAKS

Sindhu, Srikanth showed their mettle, while Lakshya kindled hopes of a bright future. PV Sindhu's legend grew with a second Olympic medal, and a silver at the season-ending World Tour Final. Srikanth and Lakshya dished out a year-end special, scooping a silver and bronze respectively at the World Championships. It was a moment to rejoice as for the first time, two Indian men returned with medals from one edition of the World Championships, a feat that was earlier achieved by Sindhu and Saina Nehwal in women's singles at the 2017 Glasgow event. However, India's title drought continued.

While the singles players did well, India cut a sorry figure at team events including at the Sudirman Cup and the Thomas and Uber Cup Finals.

Photo: GETTY IMAGES



SINDHU: Crash after riding a high

Sindhu, the 2019 World champion, was subbed at the Thailand leg early in the year but reached the final at the Swiss Open in March. She then sealed her place among the greatest when she added a bronze at the biggest multi-sport extravaganza in Tokyo. She registered three semifinal finishes at French Open, Indonesia Masters and Indonesia Open and sized at the World Tour Finals, winning a silver medal. The final finish raised hopes of a successful defence of her world championship gold but it was not to be as Sindhu returned empty handed from the prestigious event for the first time since 2017.

SRIKANTH: despair to ecstasy

Since claiming four titles in five finals in 2017, Srikanth struggled with fitness and form. The lowest point came when he failed to secure the Tokyo berth due to injuries and cancellation of qualifiers. However, the 28-year-old from Guntur slowly found his groove with two semifinal finishes at Hylo Open and Indonesia Masters before an explosive performance at the World Championships. Srikanth dished out one superlative win after another to enter his final and became the first man to earn India a silver at the event.

LAKSHAYA SEN: Fine run

The 20-year-old Lakshya charmed with his youthful exuberance as he continued his fine run from 2019

when he had won five titles. The youngster from Almora scripted a final finish at the Dutch Open, made it to semifinals at Hylo and then reached the knockout stage at World Tour Finals on debut.

Lakshya then sizzled with a bronze at the World Championships.

INJURY HIT

Plagued by injuries, London Olympics bronze-medallist **Saina Nehwal**, failed to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics and was also forced to pull out of the World Championship for the first time in her career. The former world no.1 returned to the circuit at Uber Cup but it was cut short due to multiple injuries. Struggling with a gastroe-



Kidambi Srikanth

sophageal reflux disease and post COVID effects, **HS Prannoy** also finished things on a high with a quarterfinal finish in Spain.

CHIRAG-SATWIKSAIRAJ: Doubles delight

It was a decent year for men's doubles pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy. They reached semifinals at Toyota, Thailand Open, Swiss Open and Indonesia Open before injury to the latter took a toll. The duo also won two of the three matches against higher-ranked opponents at Tokyo but missed out quarterfinal on the basis of the number of games won and lost. ^{PTI}

Photo: GETTY IMAGES



Satwiksairaj Rankireddy (L), Chirag Shetty (R)