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LET'S JUST LEAVE IT TO THE GODS: CHOPRA ON 90M AND BEYOND

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Patients suffer as doctors strike work over WB horror



Doctors and staff of RML Hospital stage a protest demanding justice for the woman doctor who was allegedly raped and murdered at Kolkata's R G Kar Medical College and Hospital, in New Delhi, on Saturday

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Healthcare services across the nation were paralysed as doctors and other medical workers from the Government, private, and even corporate hospitals went on a 24-hour strike starting at 6 am on Saturday, leading to the shutdown of OPDs, elective surgeries, and IPD services. The strike — called to protest rape and murder of a trainee doctor at a State-run hospital in Kolkata last week — caused significant disruption,

with hospitals across the national Capital turning away patients, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. While many sympathised with the cause, they struggled to receive necessary medical treatment. The Indian Medical Association (IMA), which represents over 4 lakh medical professionals nationwide, called for the strike after resident and junior doctors, along with medical students, ceased work for six consecutive days

and took to the street to protest the August 9 incident. As senior doctors also joined the strike, medical services were hit hard in many States, severely impacting primarily poor patients who had traveled long distances from across the country to access care at centrally run facilities like AIIMS, Safdarjung Hospital, and Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital. A 60-year-old heart patient who had come to AIIMS for an OPD visit expressed his frustration and said, "I had an appointment for a routine

checkup today, but it was cancelled due to the strike. I understand the doctors' concerns, but we haven't done anything wrong. I hope the strike ends soon." Relatives of another patient echoed similar sentiment, acknowledging the tragedy in Kolkata but emphasising that the strike had severely affected them. They had travelled from Rajasthan to Delhi seeking treatment for their uncle, as they believed the best healthcare services were available in the Capital. In display of solidarity and demanding a Central Protection Act, doctors across the Capital also marched towards Jantar Mantar, despite resistance from Delhi Police, who tried to prevent the demonstration from disrupting public life. Nurses too joined the protest, holding a sit-in to show their solidarity and outrage over the West Bengal tragedy. Dr Arpit, a protesting doctor who participated in the march to Jantar Mantar, said, "Our demands are clear. We don't want another incident like the one in West Bengal. The Government must finalise the Central Protection Act. This is not about politics; it's about justice and safety." **Continued on Page 2**



CBI focusing on victim's diary to crack case

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

As the murdered doctor from RG Kar Medical College and Hospital aware of any threats to her life? And if so, who were her tormentors? As they work to answer these questions, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officials are focusing on the victim's personal diary and statements from her family, including her father, regarding the events leading up to the alleged rape and murder inside the hospital premises on the night of August 8 and 9. Sources indicated that CBI officials have identified around thirty individuals of interest in their investigation, including some doctors, interns, senior nurses, and other hospital staff. According to these sources, the victim's father informed investigators that his daughter had recently expressed reluctance to perform night shifts. She had also voiced suspicions about certain colleagues, fearing that they might cause her harm. The CBI is now meticulously

examining her personal diary to gather as much information as possible about her concerns and the potential threats she faced. The victim's father reportedly informed investigators, citing some of her colleagues, that she may have been murdered elsewhere and then her body was moved to the seminar hall of the Department of Chest Medicine, where she was a final-year postgraduate trainee. CBI officials, who interrogated Sandip Ghosh — the influential former principal of the college, known for his close ties with the topmost family in the State — for approximately 13 and a half hours on Friday night, resumed questioning him on Saturday. Sources suggested that Ghosh has started to crack under CBI pressure, and the interrogation was ongoing at the time of the last reports. On Saturday, a team of CBI officials visited the crime scene inside the hospital for the second time, equipped with three-dimensional cameras and other instruments to gather additional evidence. **Continued on Page 2**

Guv OK's K'taka CM prosecution in MUDA scam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday ruled out his resignation, following Governor Thaaarchand Gehlot granting sanction to prosecute him, in connection with the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment 'scam', and said he had done no wrong to step down. He termed the Governor's decision "anti-Constitution and against law". The Chief Minister also said Governor's decision will be questioned in court and that he will battle it out legally. "It is a big conspiracy to dislodge the elected Government. They (BJP) have done this in several States including Delhi, Jharkhand. A conspiracy has been designed to destabilise the elected Government in Karnataka also. The Central Government, BJP, JD(S) and others are involved in this conspiracy," Siddaramaiah told reporters here. "High command (of Congress) is with me, the entire Cabinet and the Government is with me. All Congress MLAs, MLCs, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members are with me...I have done no wrong to resign," he asserted. Accusing the Opposition of wrong doings and behaving illegally and anti-Constitutionally, he further said, "They are using Raj Bhavan as a political pawn. The Governor is functioning like a puppet in the hands of the Central Government." The Governor has accorded sanction against the Chief Minister under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 and Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 for the commission of the alleged offences as mentioned in the petitions of Ardeep Kumar S P, T J Abraham and Snehamayi Krishna. **Continued on Page 2**



Police personnel during a rescue operation after coaches of the Sabarmati Express passenger train derailed between Kanpur and Bhimsen stations in Uttar Pradesh, on Saturday

Sabotage suspected in Kanpur train derailment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR/NEW DELHI

Twenty coaches of the Sabarmati Express passenger train derailed near Govindpuri station in Kanpur early Saturday after the engine hit an "object placed on the track", rail officials said. There is no report of any loss of life or injury in the accident. The Varanasi-Ahmedabad train derailed between Kanpur and Bhimsen railway stations around 2.35 am. Rescue and relief operations are underway, officials said. In a post on X, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said, "The engine of Sabarmati Express (Varanasi to Amdavad) hit an object on the track and derailed near Kanpur at 02:35 am today." "Sharp hit marks are observed.

Evidence is protected. IB and UP police are also working on it. No injuries to passengers or staff. Train arranged for passengers for onward journey to Amdavad," Vaishnaw added. Railway Board officials said involvement of miscreants or anti-social elements is being looked into as prima facie it appears that the engine hit an object placed on track. "We found a foreign material near the 16th coach of the train. Looking at the size of the damaged portion of cattle guard of the engine, it seems that the engine hit this foreign object and derailed," an official said. "The loco pilot said some boulder hit the cattle guard (front portion) of the engine which got badly damaged and bent," another official said. **Continued on Page 2**

Mumbai terror attack plotter faces extradition to India

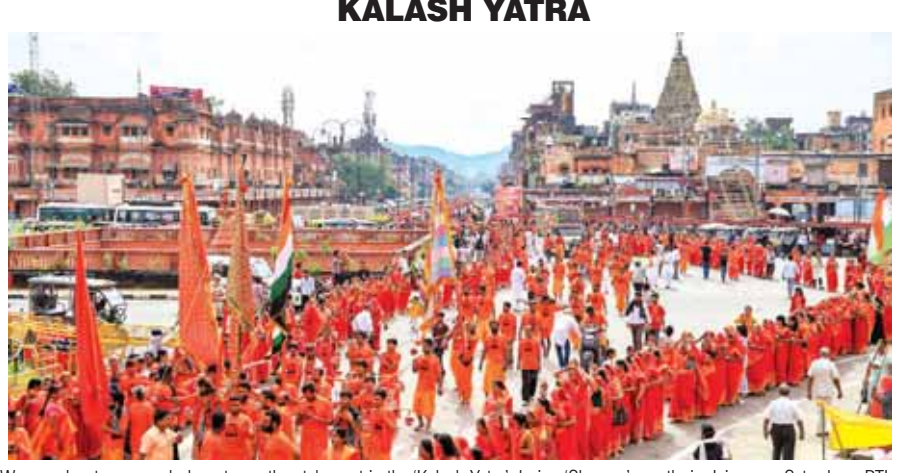
PTI ■ WASHINGTON

In a huge setback to Tahawwur Hussain Rana, a US court has ruled that the Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman could be extradited to India where he was wanted for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack carried out by Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists. "The (India US Extradition) Treaty permits Rana's extradition," the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit said in its ruling on Thursday. Ruling on an appeal filed by 63-year-old Rana, a panel of judges of the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit affirmed the District Court in the Central District of California's denial of his habeas corpus petition challenging a magistrate judge's certification of his as extraditable to India for his alleged participation in terrorist attacks in Mumbai. Rana, currently lodged in a jail in Los Angeles, faces charges for his role in the 26/11 Mumbai attack and is known to be associated with Pakistani-American Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the terror incident that hit India's financial hub in 2008.



Rana has the option of appealing against the ruling. He still has not run out of all the legal options to prevent his extradition to India. Under the limited scope of an extradition order, the panel held that Rana's alleged offence fell within the terms of the extradition treaty between the United States and India, which included a Non Bis in Idem (double jeopardy) exception to extraditability "when the person sought has been convicted or acquitted in the Requested State for the offence for which extradition is requested". Relying on the plain text of the treaty, the US State Department's technical analysis, and persuasive case law of other circuits, the panel held that the word "offence" refers to a charged crime,

rather than underlying acts, and requires an analysis of the elements of each crime. The panel of three judges concluded that a co-conspirator's plea agreement did not compel a different result. The panel held that the Non Bis in Idem exception did not apply because the Indian charges contained distinct elements from the crimes for which Rana was acquitted in the United States. In its ruling, the panel also held that India provided sufficient competent evidence to support the magistrate judge's finding of probable cause that Rana committed the charged crimes. The three panel of judges were Milan D Smith, Bridget S Bade, and Sidney A Fitzwater. Rana, a Pakistani national, was tried in a US district court on charges related to his support for a terrorist organisation that carried out large-scale terrorist attacks in Mumbai. A jury convicted Rana of providing material support to a foreign terrorist organisation and conspiring to provide material support to a foiled plot to carry out terrorist attacks in Denmark. However, the jury acquitted Rana of conspiring to provide material support to terrorism-related to the attacks in India. **Continued on Page 2**



Women devotees carry holy water as they take part in the 'Kalash Yatra' during 'Shravan' month, in Jaipur, on Saturday

KALASH YATRA

Hoax bomb threats send cops into tizzy in NCR-Delhi, Maha

PARVESH SHARMA/STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM/NOIDA

Two malls in Gurugram and Noida were evacuated on Saturday after they received bomb threat through emails with police later saying nothing suspicious was found following anti-sabotage checks. The bomb threats to DLF Mall of India in Sector 18 of Noida and Ambience Mall in Gurugram came over three months after similar threats were emailed to multiple schools in the National Capital Region (NCR). The



Saturday threat, which had thrown police and security personnel into a tizzy, turned out to be a hoax in the wake of upcoming Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana, which announced by the Election Commission

on Friday. Besides Delhi and NCR, the Inorbit Mall in Vashi in Navi Mumbai was also evacuated by the police after the mall's management received a bomb threat email on Saturday afternoon. According to Gurugram police, the Ambience Mall management received a bomb threat email at 9.27 am. The email, which was sent from hiddenbones101@gmail.com, read, "I planted bombs in the building. Every person inside the building will be killed, none of you will escape. You deserve death." **Continued on Page 2**

This nation also knows how to respect a woman

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Celebrated wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Saturday received a grand welcome on her return to the country with hundreds of supporters gathering outside the IGI airport, showing immense solidarity with her. Stars such as Bajrang Punia, Sakshi Malik and panchayat leaders received Vinesh, who endured a heartbreaking exit at the Paris Olympics where she was disqualified for being overweight on the day of her 50kg final. Heavily garlanded, Vinesh stood in an open Jeep and thanked all the supporters. Congress leader Deepender Hooda accompanied Vinesh and offered her sweets.

"I thank the entire country for support," she said, her hands folded in humility. There was a thick security cover as Vinesh, who was found 100 grams overweight at the Olympics, landed in the national Capital. Vinesh's caravan left for her native village Balali in Haryana and on the way she met her supporters, positioned at different spots. Hooda presented a mace, a symbol of victory to Vinesh, who got emotional and was consoled by her husband Somvir. In a series of twitter posts, Hooda praised the 29-year-old Vinesh for her fighting spirit. "In our eyes, you have been a winner in the past and will remain so in the future too. Your courage, struggle and



Wrestler Vinesh Phogat gets emotional as she arrives after Paris Olympics heartbreak, at IGI airport, in New Delhi, on Saturday

determination have not only won the hearts of crores of countrymen but you are an inspiration to crores of youth of the country," read one of his tweets. A group of 50 supporters followed her jeep. They offered prayers at a temple in Delhi's Dwarka before continuing their journey towards Balali. Vinesh had stayed back in Paris after challenging her disqualification in the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and demanding a joint silver. The application was dismissed on Wednesday. "She has come back to her country after such a long time. She is very emotional also. She will spend time with family and calm herself. What Vinesh has done for women is praiseworthy. She

might not have received a medal, but she is a champion for us," said Sakshi Malik. London Olympics bronze medal-winning shooter Gagan Narang, who was the Chef de Mission of the Indian contingent in Paris, called her a champion, posting a photo with Vinesh at the Paris airport. Both of them were on the same flight to Delhi. "She came as a champion on day 1 into the games village and she will always remain our champion. Sometimes one doesn't need an Olympic medal to inspire a billion dreams.. @vineshphogat you have inspired generations. Salute to your grit," Narang posted on X. "People are waiting to welcome her to our village. People are excited to meet Vinesh and

encourage her," her brother Harvinder Phogat said. The feisty wrestler, in her first reaction after her disqualification, on Saturday said that under "different circumstances" she could see herself competing till 2032 because she still has a lot of wrestling left in her, but is now unsure about her future as things "might never be same again". Vinesh had announced her retirement from the sport after her disqualification. In an emotional post on social media, Vinesh shared her childhood dream, the hardships she faced after losing her father and also put on record the contribution made by people in her extraordinary journey that ended in heartbreak in Paris.

Interim govt committed to free & fair polls: Yunus

PTI ■ DHAKA

The caretaker government in Bangladesh is committed to ensuring a transition to inclusive and pluralistic democracy...

sworn in on August 8, Yunus said, "Our government is committed to ensuring a transition to inclusive and pluralistic democracy...

or guidance for that. No budget support from anybody. It is just an outpouring of their emotions and commitment to the goals of the Second Revolution...



ing the financial system to make sure that wealth is shared by all. "It should not be a one-way path for wealth. We must ensure financial services for all people, particularly women and youth...

decades later our students-led Second Revolution is inspiring youth throughout the global south to raise their voice for democracy, human rights, dignity, equality and shared prosperity...

10 killed in Israeli strike in southern Lebanon

AP ■ NABATIEH (LEBANON)

An Israeli strike in southern Lebanon early Saturday killed at least 10 Syrian nationals, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry.

Hezbollah. Mohammad Shoaib, who runs a slaughterhouse in Wadi al-Kfour, said the area struck was an "industrial and civilian area" that contained factories producing bricks, metal, and aluminum...

top commander, whom Israel accused of leading a rocket attack on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights that killed 12 youths.

Nearly 650 people killed in recent violence in Bangladesh: UN report

PTI ■ DHAKA/GENEVA

Nearly 650 people have been killed in the recent unrest in Bangladesh between July 16 and August 11, the UN Human Rights Office has said in a preliminary report...

Student demonstrations. The number of reported killings in revenge attacks since that time remains to be determined, the report, released on Friday in Geneva, said.

details of those killed and injured, the report suggested. Triggered by the reinstatement of a quota system for the allocation of jobs in civil services, the student protests in Bangladesh in mid-June turned violent...

well as reprisals against and revenge killings of members of the former ruling party and police following the resignation of Hasina on August 5, the report said.

Missile hits Ukraine as Kyiv's troops push into Kursk region

AP ■ MOSCOW

A Russian missile strike sparked a blaze in the Ukrainian city of Sumy on Saturday, while Ukrainian forces continued to push into Russia's Kursk border region.

"In the main sections of the ragged front, the situation has stabilized. But there are areas where the enemy continues to try to expand its bridgehead," he wrote on his Telegram channel.



A damaged monument to Soviet founder Vladimir Lenin stands in a central square in Sudzha, Kursk region.

the Kursk incursion is notable for its size, speed, the reported involvement of battle-hardened Ukrainian brigades and the length of time they have stayed inside Russia.

Teenager shoots Indian-origin man dead in US

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A 36-year-old Indian-origin man has been shot and killed after a teenage boy robbed a convenience store in the US state of North Carolina, authorities said.



American businessman and Microsoft founder Bill Gates during flagging off the First India Day celebrations, in Greater Seattle area, USA.

Rana can be extradited to India, rules US court

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

In a huge setback to Tahawwur Hussain Rana, a US court has ruled that the Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman could be extradited to India where he is wanted for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack...

Appeals for the Ninth Circuit affirmed the District Court in the Central District of California's denial of his habeas corpus petition challenging a magistrate judge's certification of his as extraditable to India...

2008. Rana has the option of appealing against the ruling. He still has not run out of all the legal options to prevent his extradition to India.

Pak Intel agencies continue to abduct critics, reveal families

PTI ■ LAHORE

Intelligence agencies in Pakistan continue to abduct social media activists and vloggers for criticising the government and the powerful military establishment in the country, their families have alleged and approached courts in Punjab province.

Two social media activists of former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, Naeem Ahmad Yasin and Arsalan Akbar, have allegedly been arrested by intelligence agencies in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

famous Pakistani song "Dil Dil Pakistan" and released a video on social media criticising the high prices of electricity and extra taxes added to it.

ances" of its political workers. Professor Mazhar-ul-Hassan and Zahoor-ul-Hassan, the brothers of PTI former social media head Azhar Mashwani, and Khan's close aide Shahbaz Gill's brother Ghulam Shabbir have also been missing since June last year.

Glacial lake outburst devastated Everest village

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Army officials, civic authorities and scientists on Saturday confirmed that the massive flash floods in a high-altitude village in the Everest region of Nepal were caused by two glacial lake outbursts leading to widespread devastation.

A team of experts and authorities were dispatched in a helicopter to inspect and monitor the disaster site and investigate the cause of the sudden flood and mudslide that struck the village.

of Nepal (CSN), a group of Nepal-based glaciologists working in the Himalayas, said in a post on X: "The lake, which is approximately 39,081.87 square meters in size and located upstream of Thame Village in Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality, caused the devastation in Thame Village on August 16th.

PPGCL advertisement for Ph.D. entrance test 06.09.2024, including details about the exam and university information.

LET'S JUST LEAVE IT TO THE GODS: CHOPRA ON 90M AND BEYOND

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Having missed out on breaching the elusive 90m mark at the Paris Games, two-time Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra has left that widely debated matter "to the gods."
After all, Chopra has been chasing that milestone for years and the wait got longer when his only legal throw of 89.45m got him a silver at the Paris Olympics earlier this month. A back-to-back medal at the Summer Games was a monumental feat for an Indian athlete but it was way short of Arshad Nadeem's sensational 92.97m that comfortably secured a historic gold for the Pakistani.
Nursing a long-standing groin injury, Chopra managed to be on the podium and now he will be seen in the Lausanne Diamond League starting August 22.
After a busy couple of days post the Olympic final on August 8, Chopra started training in Switzerland and is determined to finish the season on a high despite being restricted by the injury.
"I need to leave it to gods now," he said when asked about his target throw in the foreseeable future.

"I just want to prepare well and see where the javelin goes. There has already been talk about 90m, now I feel just let it be. In Paris, I thought it would happen and it could have happened."
"Now I will give my 100 percent in the next two or three events and see what happens," he said in a virtual interaction arranged by JSW.
Following the season-ending Diamond League in Brussels from September 13-14, Chopra will consult the doctors on his groin injury with surgery being the most likely option. The 26-year-old has been managing the injury since winning the gold in the World Championships last year. With Arshad producing an Olympic record throw in the final, Chopra needed to up his game but he said he could not do that because of his physical state.
"I felt I could increase the distance. My two no throws in qualification and final, they were second and third best throws and my season best as well. To increase distance I need to be injury free."
"In my mind I know need to give 100 percent but because of the injury I am not able to give 100 percent. My body and mind stops me from making



that extra effort.
"What is most important in training session is throwing sessions which I have not been able to do as much as I would like (due to injury). If you can't throw regularly then you are not able to work on your technique. I need to throw as much as I can. The rest is all fine," said Chopra.
He needs to make a few technical tweaks in his game. "When we run with the javelin there is also lot of strain on groin, when we take cross step. But right now I am not able to tweak my technique. Also my line of the javelin was also not perfect."
"Arc speed was good in Paris but the line was disturbed. If it would be straighter, I could have got two three metres out of it. However, not for once I thought that Arshad's throw could not be bettered. My mind was ready to push the limits but body was not," said the champion athlete.
Chopra needs to finish in the top-six of Diamond League Meetings series to qualify for the season finale in Brussels.
"I came to Switzerland for training ahead of Diamond League. Luckily I did not aggravate my injury as I took extra care of that. I thought of continuing my season like

most other athletes. There is one month to go for season end. I will go to the doctors in free time," he said.
WE NEED TO SPOT TALENT BETTER TO BECOME SPORTING POWERHOUSE: India finished an abysmal 71st in the Paris medals tally with five bronze and Chopra's silver.
Asked what India needs to do to become a sporting power, Chopra said: "Overseas, there are more talent spotters. For example I took up javelin I don't know how, I liked it so I pursued it. But if we try multiple sports and pick the best one on recommendations of an expert that way Indian sport can move forward. We need to spot talent better."
"Also, we can't just focus on one sport. We need to be good in all sports. I feel the leaders in the medals tally (China, USA, Japan). They all are powerful nations in various fields, sports play a big part as well in lifting the profile of the nation."
"Hope we do well in the next Olympics, and qualify for FIFA World Cup as well. Cricket we already are doing well. There is no dearth of talent, mental, we also need to have more coaches," added Chopra, who plans to open javelin academies going forward.

Jhajharia confident of 25 medals' target despite Pramod suspension

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
The shadow of Pramod Bhagat controversy won't linger on the Indian contingent, and Paralympic Committee of India president Devendra Jhajharia is hopeful of winning at least 25 medals at the upcoming Paralympics.
India have an 84-member contingent across 12 disciplines for the Paralympics slated in Paris from August 28-September 8.
Tokyo Paralympics gold medal-winning shuttler Pramod Bhagat was handed an 18-month suspension for breaching BWF's anti-doping whereabouts clause.
"Look, there is no doubt that Pramod Bhagat is our star athlete but the target of 25 medals that we have set is from our current contingent of 84 players. Pramod Bhagat is not included in this," the two-time Paralympics gold medal-winning

javelin thrower Jhajharia told PTI Bhasha.
"Pramod being a gold medal winner of the last Games not being in the Indian team is extremely sad and unfortunate, but we cannot do anything."
Asked about his confidence about target of 25 medals, he said, "I have kept this target after closely monitoring our players."
"You may think I am exaggerating. But I have seen the practice sessions of players. We have worked hard on their physical fitness and mental strength."
Badminton's world governing body (BWF) had on Tuesday announced that Bhagat has been "suspended for a period of 18 months and will miss" the Paris Paralympics.
"On 1 March 2024, the Court of Arbitration of Sport Anti-Doping Division found Bhagat in breach of the BWF anti-doping regulations for



committing three whereabouts failures within 12 months."
The five-time para world champion Bhagat had appealed this decision to the CAS Appeals Division but it was rejected last month.
Jhajharia further said the number of players this time is much more than the previous games and they are competing in more sports.
India were ranked 24th in the Tokyo Paralympics table with 19 medals

which included five gold.
"I have set a target of 25 medals and to be in the top 20 in the medal table, but we will win more medals than this," said the 43-year-old former javelin thrower.
"We had 56 players in the Tokyo Paralympics, this time 84 players will compete. For the first time, our players will participate in Blind Judo, Para Sailing and Para Cycling."
Jhajharia is expecting the highest medal haul from the athletics team and is hoping new stars to emerge from these games.
"Each and every player of our contingent is a medal prospect. We have 38 track and field athletes and I am expecting the most medals from them."
"Our contingent has 47 new players, despite their first Paralympics games they are very confident and mentally strong about their performance," he concluded.



Driver line-up announced for Indian Racing League

PTI ■ CHENNAI
Akhil Rabindra and Nikhil Bohra will be among the Indian racers who will be seen in action in the Indian Racing League that gets underway on August 24.
Six teams comprising four drivers each will feature in the IRL.
The teams will feature two Indians and two overseas racers, including female driver. Akhil Rabindra made the headlines in 2019 after being selected by Aston Martin for their racing academy as the only Asian and later clinched the inaugural IRL title in 2022.
Noted Swiss driver Neel Jani, who has an impressive resume, having won the World Endurance Championship and the prestigious 24 Hours of Le Mans in 2016, will be seen in action in the league, said a press release here.
Returning to the competition again will be South Africa's Raoul Hyman, along with his partner Sohail Shah, who won the 2023 Car Championship by earning the most points.
"The Indian Racing League is a testament to the excitement and passion for motorsports in

our country. The grid here is extremely competitive, pushing each of us to our limits and showcasing the immense talent we have," said Shah.
The racers would be whizzing around in their rapid World Thunder GB08s, single-seater cars that can achieve a top speed of 240 kmph.
Ruhaan Alva, who was the youngest race winner last year, will be joined by Shahan Ali Mohsin and Rishon Rajeev, fresh from their success in the Formula 4 Indian Championship, along with debutant Julius Dinesen, a 17-year-old Danish prodigy with a F4 title to his name.
The IRL, comprising five rounds, will begin at the Madras International Circuit at nearby Sriperumbudur on August 24-25, followed by India's first-ever night race at the Chennai Formula Racing Circuit on August 31-September 1.
The six participating teams in the IRL are: Kolkata Royal Tigers, Speed Demons Delhi, Goa Aces JA Racing, Hyderabad Blackbirds, Chennai Turbo Riders and former champions Bangalore Speedsters.

Aspas caps eventful game with late winner as Celta Vigo beats Deportivo Alaves 2-1 in Spain

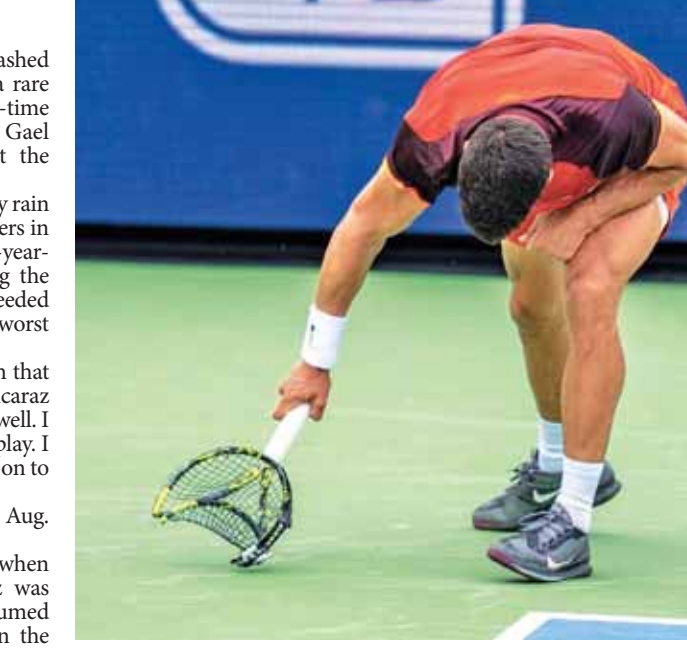
AP ■ MADRID
Iago Aspas avoided an early red card thanks to a video review, had a goal chalked off just before halftime and then capped an eventful game by scoring Celta Vigo's winner against Deportivo Alaves in the Spanish league on Friday.
The 37-year-old Aspas was the focal point for Celta for much of last season and picked up where he left off in its opening game, netting in the 84th minute to seal a 2-1 victory for the hosts.
He had been shown a red card after seven minutes when his arm made contact with Antonio Blanco, but it was downgraded to a yellow after a VAR review.
Blanco's cross to Kike Garcia then set up the opening goal for Alaves 10 minutes later.
Aspas had a goal disallowed for offside before halftime but Celta equalized midway through the second half thanks to Williot Swedberg's superb strike with the outside of his boot.
Aspas then received Swedberg's defense-splitting pass to score the winner with six minutes left.
"Iago is eternal," Alaves coach Luis Garcia



said. "He gets one chance and he puts it away."
SEVILLA DRAWS AT LAS PALMAS: In the night's other game, Las Palmas came from a goal down twice to hold Sevilla to a 2-2 draw at home.
Alex Suarez's deflected a cross from the left past his own keeper to give Sevilla the lead after 24 minutes but an own goal at the other end by Tanguy Nianzo leveled the scores just before halftime.
Juanlu Sanchez then converted a neat cross by Isaac Romero to put Sevilla 2-1 up on the hour mark only for Sandro Ramirez to equalize 10 minutes later, just moments after coming on as a sub.
Las Palmas' two Scotland internationals, recent signings Oliver McBurnie and Scott McKenna, both appeared for the home side and it was McBurnie's pressure on Nianzo that led to Las Palmas' first goal.
With three of the first four league matches ending in draws, Celta's win means it can enjoy at least one night atop the La Liga standings.
Barcelona is away at Valencia on Saturday, while defending champion Real Madrid visits Mallorca on Sunday.

Frustrated Carlos smashes his racket in 3-set loss to Gael Monfils at Cincinnati Open

AP ■ CINCINNATI
Carlos Alcaraz repeatedly smashed his racket on the court in a rare show of frustration, and the four-time Grand Slam winner fell to Gael Monfils 4-6, 7-6 (7-5), 6-4 at the Cincinnati Open.
In a match that was suspended by rain on Thursday night with the players in a second-set tiebreaker, the 37-year-old Monfils advanced by taking the last two sets from the second-seeded Alcaraz, who called the loss his "worst match."
"I felt like it was the worst match that I've ever played on my career," Alcaraz said. "I've been practicing really well. I was feeling great. But I couldn't play. I want to forget it and try to move on to New York."
The U.S. Open begins there on Aug. 26.
Trailing 3-1 in the tiebreaker when the match was halted, Alcaraz was hoping for a reset when play resumed Friday. But, the No. 3 player in the



ATP rankings wasn't able to control his emotions.
"It never happened before, because I could control those feelings," Alcaraz said. "Today I couldn't. I was feeling that I was not playing any kind of tennis. It was really frustrating for me. At some point, I didn't want to be on the court anymore."
Alcaraz was playing his first match since earning a silver medal at the Paris Olympics after losing to Novak Djokovic, who also beat him last year in the Cincinnati final.
Monfils returned to the court later Friday and lost to No. 15 seed Holger Rune 3-6, 6-3, 6-4. "It was a big win for me against Carlos, unexpected to be honest," Monfils said. "To play again in a couple hours against (another) good and younger player, I knew it would be tough."
In women's action, top-ranked Iga Swiatek advanced to the quarterfinals with a convincing 6-2, 6-2 win over Marta Kostyuk.
Swiatek bounced back with a more

complete performance after losing a second-set tiebreaker on Wednesday before outlasting France's Varvara Gracheva.
"Today, I just kept my intensity at a high level all the time," Swiatek said. "It didn't really matter to me what the score was, I just wanted to continue playing my game. I focused on myself."
No. 3 Aryna Sabalenka also advanced with a 7-5, 6-2 victory over Elina Svitolina, but No. 5 Jasmine Paolini, the runner-up at the French Open and Wimbledon, lost to Mirra Andreeva 3-6, 6-3, 6-2.
Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova upset No. 7 and Olympic gold medalist Zheng Qinwen 7-5, 6-1. Spaniard Paula Badosa defeated Yulia Putintseva, who upset Coco Gauff on Thursday, 6-4, 6-4.
Top men to advance included No. 1 Jannik Sinner, who got a walkover against Jordan Thompson on his 23rd birthday, No. 3 Alex Zverev, No. 5 Hubert Hurkacz, No.

43-member Indian contingent for U-20 Athletics World Championships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
A 43-member Indian contingent including 23 in the men's category will vie for top honours across multiple events in the Under-20 World Athletics Championships scheduled in Lima from August 27-31.
As per the entry list, more than 1700 athletes from 134 teams will compete in the event at Estadio Atletico de la Videna.
India had won two silver and a bronze to be ranked joint 25th in the last edition.
INDIAN SQUAD
MEN: Himanshu, Sachin (10,000m Race Walk); Karthik Raja Arumugam, Murad Kalubhai Sirman (400m hurdles); Ankul, Rihan Chaudhary, Bapi Hansda, Abiram Pramod, Jay Kumar (4x400m relay); Bapi Hansda, Jay Kumar (400m); Siddharth Choudhary, Anurag Singh Kaler (Shot Put); Mruygam Jayaram Dondapati (100m); Hariharan Kathiravan, Nayan Pradip Sarde (110m hurdles); Sahil Khan (800m); Saruk

Khan, Ranvir Ajay Singh (3000m steeplechase); Dev Kumar Meena (Pole Vault); Prateek (Hammer Throw); Ritik (Discus Throw); Mohammed Atta Saqid (Long Jump); Dipanshu Sharma, Rohan Yadav (Javelin throw).
WOMEN: Aarti (10,000m Race Walk); Rujula Amol Bhonsle, Neole Anna Cornelio, Sudeeksha Valduri, Abinaya Rajarajan, Siya Abhijit Sawant (4x100m relay); Neeru Pahtak, Unnathi Aiyappa Bolland (200m); Neeru Pahtak, Anushka Kumbhar (400m); Tamanna (Shot Put); Abinaya Rajarajan (100m); Unnathi Aiyappa Bolland (100m hurdles); Shreyas Rajesh (400m hurdles); Ekta Dey (3000m steeplechase); Amanat Kamboj, Nikita Kumari (Discus Throw); Pavana Nagaraj (Long Jump); Pooja (High Jump); Laxita Vinod Sandilela (800m); Laxita Vinod Sandilela (1500m); Neeru Pahtak, Kanista Tenna Maria Deva Shekar, Sandramol Sabu, Shrivani Sachin Sangle, Anushka Kumbhar (4X400m relay).

"Love does not begin and end the way we seem to think it does. Love is a battle, love is a war; love is a growing up"
— Gareth Thomas



Photo: Pankaj Kumar

RAKSHA BANDHAN

CELEBRATING THE BEAUTY OF PURE BONDS

In the heart of Delhi, with monsoon clouds overhead, the streets burst into life for Raksha Bandhan. Amidst the lively chaos and bright colours, the festival unfolds as a touching celebration of sibling love. Each stall, filled with colourful rakhis, tells a story of pure bonds and heartfelt traditions, turning everyday moments into cherished memories, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

As the festive season arrives, bringing with it a time of warmth, togetherness and cherished traditions, one celebration stands out for its profound significance — the bond between brothers and sisters. Raksha Bandhan, a festival that embodies untold love and silent care, is not just a ritual but a celebration of a "PURE BOND." Amidst this atmosphere, the vibrant marketplaces come alive with the spirit of Raksha Bandhan and nowhere is this evident than in Delhi's iconic Sadar Bazar. The festival's essence is captured not just through rituals but through the bustling, colourful preparations that fill the market, making it a focal point of the celebration.

THE ENCHANTING FESTIVAL ATMOSPHERE

Sadar Bazar, one of Delhi's oldest and busiest markets, undergoes a remarkable transformation as Raksha Bandhan approaches. The market, typically known for its wide range of goods, turns into a hub of colour and excitement, with rakhis and festive decorations taking center stage. Every shop and vendor gears up for the big day, filling the air with a lively sense of excitement. The narrow lanes of Sadar Bazar, usually crowded with shoppers, become even more packed as people move from stall to stall, searching for the perfect rakhi. The market itself seems to join in the celebration, with every corner reflecting the spirit of Raksha Bandhan. Despite the unpredictable weather during the monsoon season, with sudden bursts of rain and heat, enthusiastic shoppers continue to pour into Sadar Bazar. The market remains crowded, even in the rain, as people carry umbrellas or brave the elements to get what they need. There is a shared determination among the shoppers, a sense that no amount of rain or heat can dampen the joy of preparing for Raksha Bandhan.

A MARKET FULL OF CHOICES

One of the most striking features of Sadar Bazar during Raksha Bandhan is the sheer variety of rakhis on display. The market caters to all tastes and budgets, ensuring

“ONE OF THE MOST HEARTWARMING SIGHTS IN THE MARKET IS THE SELECTION OF CHILDREN'S RAKHIS, OFTEN FEATURING POPULAR CHARACTERS. A YOUNG GIRL, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS OVERHEARD ASKING A VENDOR, "BHAIIYA, DO YOU HAVE A SPIDER-MAN RAKHI?" THIS SMALL MOMENT BEAUTIFULLY ENCAPSULATES THE SIBLING BOND, A SISTER KNOWING EXACTLY WHAT WILL MAKE HER YOUNGER BROTHER SMILE

that everyone can find something special. From simple, traditional rakhis costing as little as ₹ 10 for a dozen to more elaborate designs priced at ₹ 70 or ₹ 100 per dozen, the market offers something for everyone. Rakhis come in every imaginable style, from classic designs featuring beads and threads to more modern versions adorned with glitter and stones. Children's rakhis, often featuring popular cartoon characters and superheroes, are among the most popular items. Little girls excitedly pick out rakhis for their brothers, carefully choosing ones that they know will bring a smile to their siblings' faces. A young girl, for example, was overheard asking a vendor, "Bhaiya, do you have a Spider-Man rakhi?" This small moment beautifully encapsulates the sibling bond, a sister knowing exactly what will make her younger brother smile. A small moment that perfectly captures the thoughtfulness and love that define Raksha Bandhan. The girl knew exactly what her brother would love and she was determined to find it for him.

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE FESTIVAL

The vendors and artisans are integral to the Raksha Bandhan experience. Their work begins long before the festival, with many starting preparations at least a month in advance. Crafting each rakhi requires skill, patience and a deep understanding of what the festival means to people. For these artisans, Raksha Bandhan is more than just another business opportunity; it's a chance to contribute to a tradition that has been passed down through generations. A shopkeeper in Sadar Bazar explained how much effort goes into preparing for Raksha Bandhan. "We start getting ready about a month before," he said. "There's a lot of hard work, but it's worth it when you see the market come alive like this. Even in the rain, people come. It's something we love." His words highlighted the dedication that goes into making the festival special for everyone. Despite the long hours and sometimes challenging conditions, the vendors take pride in being part of something bigger than just selling rakhis. They are part of a tradition that brings people together, year after year. The artisans also take great care in crafting each rakhi. They understand that these simple threads carry significant emotional weight. For them, it's important that every rakhi reflects the love and care that

siblings have for each other. They often work late into the night, ensuring that their creations are perfect. It's not just about making something that looks good, it's about creating something that will be cherished.

A FESTIVAL OF EMOTIONS

Raksha Bandhan is a time of joy and celebration, but it can also bring about feelings of longing, especially for those who are separated from their loved ones. Not everyone is fortunate enough to be with their siblings on this special day, and for them, the festival carries a bittersweet note. A woman in Sadar Bazar, carefully choosing rakhis to send to her brother who lives far away, shared her plans to send them by post. Despite modern courier services offering faster delivery, she preferred the traditional method, finding something special in the anticipation that comes with receiving a package by postman. Her story is just one of many that highlight the emotional depth of Raksha Bandhan. The festival is not just about the physical act of tying a rakhi, it's about the connection that siblings share, a connection that goes beyond time and distance. Even when miles apart, the bond remains strong and the act of sending a rakhi is a way of maintaining that bond. It serves as a reminder that, no matter where life takes people, the relationships that matter most are always worth celebrating.

THE ESSENCE OF TRADITION

As Raksha Bandhan draws near, the market becomes a living embodiment of tradition. With its rich history and vibrant atmosphere, it reflects the enduring values of family and togetherness. In a world that often moves too fast, these moments offer a chance to slow down and appreciate what truly matters. The festival is a time to reconnect with loved ones and honour the bonds that have shaped lives. During this time, the market becomes more than just a place to buy rakhis, it transforms into a space where memories are made. Every purchase, conversation and shared smile contributes to the festive atmosphere. The streets serve as a symbol of the festival,

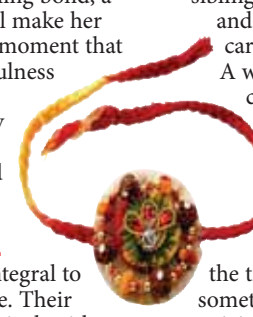
where tradition is not just remembered but actively experienced, blending the past and present in a heartfelt celebration of love and family.

THE MEANING BEHIND THE RAKHI

At the heart of Raksha Bandhan is the rakhi itself — a simple thread that carries profound meaning. It's more than just a decorative piece, it's a symbol of a sister's love, gratitude and appreciation for her brother. Tying a rakhi is an act of trust, a way of saying, "Thank you for always being there." This small thread binds not just wrists but hearts, reinforcing a bond that is as old as time. For many, the rakhi is also a reminder of the shared history that siblings have, the moments of joy and support and the times when they've stood by each other. It's a token of the relationship that has shaped who they are. Though it may be simple in appearance, the rakhi holds a depth of meaning that goes beyond words. It's a symbol of a bond that is pure, unbreakable, and everlasting.

A CELEBRATION OF LOVE

Raksha Bandhan is more than just a date on the calendar, it's a celebration of the relationships that connect people, the memories that hold them together, and the love that sustains them through life's challenges. In today's fast-paced world, festivals like Raksha Bandhan remind everyone of the importance of family and the connections that define them. In Sadar Bazar, the spirit of Raksha Bandhan is alive and well. The market, with its history and vibrancy, captures the essence of the festival. It's a place where love is expressed through simple gestures and where the bonds between siblings are honored in all their beauty. As brothers and sisters across the country prepare to tie the rakhi this year, they are reminded of what the festival truly stands for. It's not just about the rituals, it's about the love, care and unbreakable bond that siblings share. In the end, that's what makes Raksha Bandhan so special — a celebration of love that goes beyond time, distance and the challenges of life.



NOE – WHERE GLOBAL FLAVOURS MEET RARE INGREDIENTS!

Nestled in the heart of Lutyens Delhi in the iconic Diplomat Hotel, the recently launched 'NOE' is set to redefine the dining culture in the city, bringing a vibrant social atmosphere and an innovative culinary experience

By SHARMILA CHAND

I wanted an elevated comfort food zone to take guests through a culinary journey blending global flavors with local influences to craft a unique experience," says Sandeep Bishnoi, the Founder who has been associated with creative brands such as Perch Wine & Coffee Bar and Hoots. Here innovative culinary experience is the key with Chef Dhruv Nijhawan, at the helm of affairs. An alumnus of Le Cordon Bleu, India, Chef Dhruv's passion for ingenious cooking techniques and for reviving rare, authentic ingredients, is well known. At NOE, he brings forth his passion as is evident in the distinctive menu that celebrates the art of 'elevating comfort food'. Evoking nostalgia and inspiring innovation, the kitchen at NOE re-invents handpicked traditional comfort dishes from world cuisines using lesser-known ingredient pairings and creative cooking techniques. From high-quality produce to regional and international cuisines, each dish encapsulates a rich tapestry of flavours and the ingredients' culinary heritage.

Speaking about the cooking methods, chef Dhruv tells me, "Every dish tells a story of a unique ingredient and a different cooking method. Reinventing modern classic dishes in a flavour forward method lies at the heart of our cooking. NOE incorporates culinary techniques from around the world using star ingredients to create an innovative dining experience." Hence, Potato & Chilli Orange sits nicely looking pretty in front of me. Swedish Hasselback potatoes in smoked brown butter with savoury cheena, bajji chili, orange zest, Korean chilli oil and pea shoot cress, is one perfect example of Dhruv's philosophy. And so is 'Tofu & Garum' - an umami flavoured silken tofu with vegan mushroom garum, soy, leek circles, porcini mushrooms & nori powder. For mutton lovers, what better than 'Kanda & Picante'? "Kaffir lime and coriander mutton kanda with broccoli picante puree finished with chermoula crumble," explains chef. He also recommends 'John Dory & Mazavaroo' - pan-seared John Dory with cauliflower crème, smoked Mazavaroo, tossed almond flakes served with cashew duqqa. The menu is extensive with a lot more stars like 'Lamb & Molé' - medium-rare cooked lamb chop with curry leaf, thyme, black molé sauce, togarashi tossed snap peas, sumac onions with seasonal cress. For crab lovers, 'Crab & Wasabi' is strongly recommended. Crab meat with avocado, wasabi, lime puree, water chestnuts, asparagus, compressed cucumbers and seasonal cress. From large plate section, Pumpkin & Pomegranate turned out to be my favourite. Braised pumpkin with pomegranate sauce reduced with all spice and tahini, served with a sumac cress salad. 'Potato & Capers' is another one I lapped up. You will love layered potato slices with lemon zest cream, asparagus and olive. The relish of smoked onion added to the flavor



brilliantly accompanied by a side salad in orange dressing. 'Onigiri & Rasam' is a brilliant take on innovative experimentation. Jasmine rice onigiri with a light rasam sauce finished with celery dust, furikake peashoot, you would have never relished rasam in this medium. The dessert section looks pretty impressive, each dish comes with a lavish dose of drama to oomph things up. For me, Biscoff & Chai was the perfect way to wind up the meal. A vanilla cardamom sponge cake with Biscoff mousse and masala chai whipped cream cheese, with a spiced ginger sable & Biscoff gelato, simply bowled me over. Complementing culinary experience is the creative highball cocktail program served at NOE's bar. Managed by Hoots - recently awarded as one of Asia's Top 50 Bars, the highball bar concept emphasises refreshing, perfectly balanced cocktails created with premium spirits and house-made mixers, showcasing creativity and craftsmanship. Inspired by its prestigious address



flows effortlessly into a trendy bar and a plush rustic outdoor deck as well as an intimate courtyard," tells Amit Chhabra, of studio LDC, the team behind the design architects of NOE. With diverse settings, NOE offers layers of sensory experiences for all moods and occasions where guests can enjoy different spaces in a single visit or each separately over multiple ones. Whether it's a casual gathering over food and drinks, a rendezvous with a friend, a special celebration, solo culinary adventures, a romantic date, or even small events, NOE promises for a memorable time. Featuring an extensive breakfast spread, an all-day dining menu, delectable Sunday brunches, and a creative drinks menu along with rotating seasonal menus and pop-up surprises, NOE welcomes you to a world of elevated comfort food, exquisite cocktails, and unforgettable dining experiences. Overall, the vibe at NOE is elegant and chic. Sharmila Chand is an author and independent journalist who writes on Travel, Food and Lifestyle



A NOSTALGIC CULINARY FARE AT INDIAN REPUBLIC CANTEEN

By SHARMILA CHAND

Ever heard of Waffle Imarti, Mac n Cheese Pakora, Waffle Bread Pakora, Samosa Cannelloni? If no, head to Indian Republic Canteen in the heart of capital's popular Connaught Place and you will get to taste innovative dishes with a flair for fun. Why the name Indian Republic, I asked the team. "The concept is inspired by the diversity of the Indian Republic, aiming to create a welcoming and accessible environment to a familiar canteen setting, where all patrons can feel comfortable and engaged," is the answer. Alok Aggarwal Co-Founder- Indian Republic Canteen further explains, "Our establishment is founded on the concept of nostalgia, aiming to evoke cherished memories of simple, beloved foods such as noodles, samosas, and bread pakoras from one's college days. We are devoted to celebrating these dishes and encouraging patrons to savor

them without reservation. The interior design of our space is a contemporary fusion of modernity and nostalgia. It reflects both cutting-edge trends and traditional influences, presenting a vision of India that is globally stylish yet deeply rooted in Indian sensibilities."



BREAKFAST SOIREES

If not in a mood to rustle up breakfast at home, then just hop in here. They have introduced a new breakfast menu, serving a delightful array of morning treats that promise to start your day on a flavorful note. Imagine the perfect morning with a spread of traditional and contemporary breakfast dishes, curated to suit every palate. From 8 AM to 11 AM, you can indulge in a hearty and wholesome breakfast experience that blends the best of regional flavors with popular morning staples. The highlight of my breakfast was the comforting taste of Nagori Halwa, a classic dish that combines the rich flavors of semolina and sugar, bringing a touch of nostalgia to your breakfast. How could I miss the delicious Bedmi Sabzi, just perfect for my taste. For a flavour of traditional regional classic, Indori Poha, garnished with fresh



coriander, sev, and a squeeze of lemon, captures the essence of Indore's street food culture so beautifully. If you prefer something nutritious and savory, the Besan Chilla with Chutney

provides a protein-packed option, featuring a gram flour pancake served with a side of tangy chutney. The Bombay Sandwich offers a taste of Mumbai with layers of fresh vegetables and

health-conscious diners need not worry as they have option of Masala Oats, Banana Muesli Bowl, a refreshing mix of

muesli, fresh bananas, and yogurt, offering a perfect balance of taste and nutrition. For the ubiquitous South Indian flavors, the menu includes crispy and golden Dosa, served with traditional sambar and chutneys, transporting you to the streets of Southern India. Complement your meal with a selection of fresh juices, made from seasonal fruits, to add a refreshing touch to your breakfast. Or go for signature drinks like The IRC Shichanji, a longstanding favorite, alongside the Imli Fritz. Each drink is crafted to be unique and memorable, aligning with the overall concept of the place.

TO CONCLUDE

Whether you are looking for a quick bite or a leisurely breakfast, Indian Republic Canteen's thoughtful and exciting menu is well curated to cater to all your hunger cravings.

CHECK IT OUT

Time: 08:00am to 11:00am
Location — H-26, Connaught Circle, Block H, Connaught Place, New Delhi



BKP SINHA



DR ARVIND K JHA

FOREST RIGHTS ACT: A BEACON OF HOPE OR A VICTIM OF EXPLOITATION?

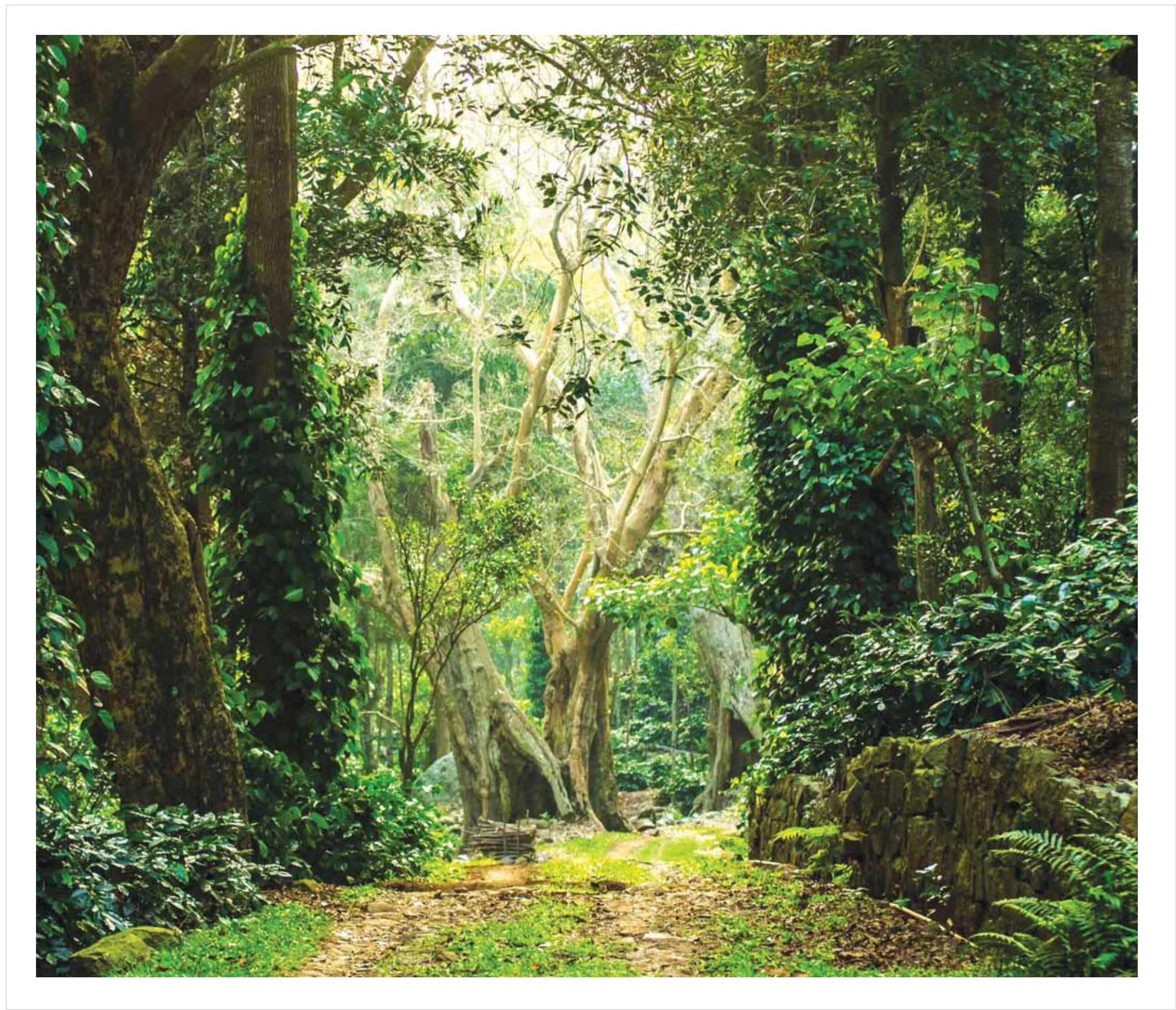
The Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006 was heralded as a transformative piece of legislation designed to recognise and empower forest dwelling communities while promoting sustainable forest management. However, the implementation of FRA has faced significant hurdles, including mismanagement, exploitation, and inadequate scrutiny write **BKP SINHA** and **ARVIND KUMAR JHA**

The Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006, a landmark legislation in India, was introduced to recognise forest rights (FRs) of the Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDST) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFD) and empower them aiming at strengthening the conservation regime of forests. It was seen as a beacon of hope ushering in an era of community-led sustainable use of forest resources, conservation of biodiversity, and maintenance of ecological balance, which are essential for the sustenance of FRs. The Act however has faced serious implementation challenges and is overly involved in debates about the fulfilment of this vision indicated in the preamble.

The FRA outlines fourteen distinct FRs for its target group but its initial implementation focused primarily on just two viz. habitation and self-cultivation. This emphasis led to large-scale encroachments by people claiming that they occupied the forest land before the mandated cutoff date of December 13, 2005. Not very surprisingly, the high volume of cases and the pressure to decide them quickly resulted in many ineligible claims getting recognized as valid. This, in turn, encouraged even more people to make similar claims, hoping that theirs would also be approved. During this time, the claims related to Community Forest Rights (CFRs) were given low priority, except for those involving traditionally collected minor forest produce.

In 2012, significant amendments to the FRA Rules were made and new guidelines issued thereafter. Although these amendments purportedly aimed to streamline implementation, they resulted in unintended consequences. Some of these amendments, allegedly extending beyond the Act's original scope, relaxed the eligibility criteria for claimants, allowing non-deserving individuals and communities to exploit the system. The amended Rule introduces a new right, known as the 'Title' to Community Forest Resources. It enabled communities with only a few members from the FDST and OTFD to make such claims thus allowing the rural elite and powerful individuals to take advantage of the system marginalizing the genuine target group of FRA. Additionally, the evidentiary value of satellite imagery was lowered, making it more challenging to distinguish between legitimate and fabricated claims. No system was established to scrutinize the approved claims while the Tribal Ministry, GOI repeatedly issued directives to review just the rejected ones. In the existing atmosphere, it was 'practical' to approve claims rather than reject them even when the evidence was weak and essential criteria were not met. At times hundreds of cases were cleared in just one meeting which often lacked adequate representation of non-officials and women members, and objections by foresters, even when based on ground reality, were generally labelled as anti-tribal and anti-FRA.

The protection-related duties of forest right holders, gram sabhas, and village-level institutions mentioned under Section 5 of the FRA still await alignment with existing Acts and Rules given the purport of Section 13. Some state tribal departments, as nodal agencies for implementation, have excluded the forest department from village-level management plan committees constituted for community forest resources. Such exclusion precludes inputs from trained foresters and consideration of a landscape-based forest management approach, which is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of biodiversity, survival of wide-ranging wildlife, and the provision of eco-services that extend beyond village boundaries. Village-centric



management systems, influenced by electoral politics, may undermine long-term conservation efforts and harm ecological balance. Instances of clear felling and over-exploitation in bamboo coupes, in violation of sustainability principles, have already been observed in some villages. Encroachments and land-use alteration near watercourses and on slopes pose significant risks. In 1992, the Forest Department attempted to remove encroachments in Mundakai, Wayanad but faced violent resistance resulting in assaults, injuries, and the torching of six vehicles by locals. Over time, emboldened encroachers and developers constructed large resorts on slopes increasing landslide susceptibility. This risk was tragically realized with the recent landslide in Mundakai in July 2024.

Under FRA also, recognition of claims by ignoring the terrain is an extremely serious issue. In Maharashtra, a 2014 satellite-based study on FRA implementation revealed that out of randomly selected 56,029 claims for cultivation and habitation in Gadchiroli, Gondia, Nandurbar, and Dhule districts; 8,472 and 11,988 sites respectively were within 50 and 100 meters of water bodies or watercourses. Similar claims were found in different districts on slopes exceeding 20 degrees, pockmarked with a total area of

485 acres, many of which could potentially become the epicentre of additional encroachments and imminent disasters.

To date, 5.18 million acres of forest land scattered over 2.37 million sites have been recognized in the country as individual FRs of cultivation and habitation and the process is still on. The absence of a cut-off date for claim submission, however, makes misuse of the Act easier with time since the verifiability of evidence about 2005 becomes increasingly difficult. It may allow the exploitation of the Act for political purposes too.

An analysis of cases cleared just before elections, for instance, 1,33,920 titles granted to podu cultivators reportedly based on village elders' statements; ramping up of claim clearances in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh; and current invitations for new claims in Jharkhand should be revealing. A worrying trend, however, has emerged in Madhya Pradesh, with encroachers from other villages and districts targeting forest land in Burhanpur district and nearby areas, often with local politician's support. These actions have sparked violent clashes between the encroachers, local villagers, and forest officials, who are struggling to protect the forests.

An examination of randomly selected CFR cases in Maharashtra reveals that the 'nature' and 'extent' of FRs are often missing from title documents. The issue reportedly

“THE PROTECTION-RELATED DUTIES OF FOREST RIGHT HOLDERS, GRAM SABHAS, AND VILLAGE-LEVEL INSTITUTIONS MENTIONED UNDER SECTION 5 OF THE FRA STILL AWAIT ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING ACTS AND RULES GIVEN THE PURPORT OF SECTION 13. SOME STATE TRIBAL DEPARTMENTS, AS NODAL AGENCIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION, HAVE EXCLUDED THE FOREST DEPARTMENT FROM VILLAGE-LEVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN COMMITTEES CONSTITUTED FOR COMMUNITY FOREST RESOURCES”

exists in other states as well. Understanding the quantity of forest produce (as a forest right) is crucial for the sustainable management of community forest resources and the long-term continuance of the exercise of forest rights. Accurate quantification can prevent issues such as the dwindling supply of medicinal plants for the Ayurvedic industry, which has led to the use of substandard materials and tarnished the reputation of Ayurveda. Unregulated removals could lead to future disputes over forest produce among neighbouring villages which would simply be disastrous.

The process adopted for recognizing Rights over Community Forest Resources (RCFR) raises significant concerns. According to Section 3(1)(i), RCFR of management is admissible only for communities of FDSTs and OTFDs who have traditionally protected and conserved these resources for sustainable use. Further, section 4(3) of the Act mandates that these communities must have occupied the forest land before the cutoff date of December 13, 2005. However, in practice, management rights under Section 3(1)(i) have been liberally granted, ignoring the mandated criteria, on more than 13.5 million acres out of the country's total recorded forest area of 191.5 million acres. The trend continues unabated also

due to the absence of a deadline for claim submission. Surprisingly, RCFRs for management have been granted on thousands of acres in the core areas of Tiger Reserves and Protected Areas in Achanakmar, Udanti Sitanadi, Dhantari, Navegaon Nagzira, and Tansa without fulfilling the required criteria. Apart from the illegalities involved in RCFR cases, the overall situation indicates that the concerned District Level Committees have unauthorisedly transferred the State's responsibility mentioned in Article 51A of the Constitution.

In the past, forests were vast and tribal populations were small and cohesive with minimal influence from market forces. They existed harmoniously. Today, we face a crisis of fractured village populations and fragmented forests. The traditional arrangements that once worked may no longer be effective. Any harm to forest conservation and management has far-reaching consequences and Nature responds to it in compounded ways, leading to unpredictable weather patterns, desertification, global warming, and ecological crises.

These environmental changes exacerbate climate change, creating a vicious cycle that further threatens the sustainability and health of our forests and communities. It is crucial to set a deadline for claim

submissions, revisit the rules under the FRA, and swiftly correct its implementation to benefit genuine beneficiaries. Cancelling irregularly granted rights, removing encroachments, and relocating FR holders from high-risk areas will establish confidence in the administration among the voiceless target group of the FRA.

The Supreme Court must prioritize the hearing of writ petition 109/2008, duly because their earlier order to evict encroachers was stayed on February 28, 2019, due to the Tribal Affairs Ministry's submission that due processes were not followed in implementing the FRA. The ministry had also highlighted that the process of settling the claims and rights of the applicants left much to be desired.

At this critical juncture, the choices we make will shape the destiny of India's forests, its people including forest-dependent communities, and its ecology and economy. The question remains: Will the FRA fulfil its promise of empowering legitimate forest right holders while safeguarding India's ecological wealth, or will it succumb to exploitation and misuse? Only time, and our commitment to a sustainability-oriented implementation of the Act, will tell.

(The writer are former PCCFs, UP and Maharashtra; views expressed are personal)

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

You're currently experiencing a period marked by keen observation and active communication. This phase is ideal for engaging with new concepts and exploring different perspectives with an open and eager mind. You'll feel a surge of mental vitality, perfect for diving into research or expanding your knowledge. This heightened energy will enhance your confidence in sharing your thoughts and ideas. However, it's important to temper this enthusiasm with caution to avoid appearing too critical or making hasty decisions. Stay vigilant about the accuracy of the information you encounter, as appearances can sometimes be deceiving. Trust your intuition, but make sure to confirm your findings. Strive for a harmonious balance between exploring bold ideas and thoughtful analysis. Engage in open conversations, allowing your sharp intellect to uncover more profound insights.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Sunday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week invites you to introspect and embrace transformation. A period of deep reflection is at hand, where you may find yourself revisiting previous decisions and their impacts on your life. This process offers a chance for significant personal renewal. You might find an increased clarity and conviction in facing these realities, helping you to let go of what no longer benefits you. This is an ideal time to foster personal growth and initiate a new beginning. Use this opportunity to re-evaluate your life's path and implement changes that genuinely represent your true self. Welcoming this phase of change can lead to a more genuine and rewarding future. Allow the insights from your experiences to guide you forward.

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Coral
Lucky day Saturday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week heralds a period ripe for embracing new opportunities and embarking on bold ventures. The essence of adventure and spontaneity is in the air, inviting you to take steps forward in directions you've perhaps not considered before. There's an underlying force encouraging you to break free from routine and explore fresh horizons. It's an ideal time to initiate projects, explore new places, or set transformative personal objectives. Let go of any hesitations or perceived barriers that might be holding you back. This period calls for trusting the journey of exploration and being open to where it might lead. Embrace this phase with enthusiasm and a readiness to venture into the unknown, as the possibilities for growth and exhilarating experiences are particularly strong now.

Lucky number 20 | Lucky colour Olive
Lucky day Sunday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week, you may experience a sense of entrapment, driven by personal beliefs or external demands. You could perceive your options as being quite limited, feeling a heavy weight from ongoing challenges. It's crucial to recognize that these barriers are often more psychological than tangible. The key to overcoming them lies in challenging old habits or assumptions that constrain you. Take time to deeply consider what is truly restricting your progress and explore ways to adjust your outlook to uncover fresh opportunities. This period demands robust inner fortitude and adaptability. Don't hesitate to seek support when necessary, and keep in mind that true freedom begins with a shift in how you view your circumstances. Embrace the potential for change by actively addressing these mental obstacles.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Saffron
Lucky day Friday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week invites a time of deep reflection and emotional exploration. You may find yourself facing moments of uncertainty or confusion as certain aspects of your life that were previously obscured begin to surface. This period calls for a reliance on your inner guidance, urging you to look inward and trust your instincts, even when clarity seems distant. As you navigate through intricate emotions and perhaps discover underlying truths, patience becomes vital. It's important not to rush decisions based on transient emotions. Instead, focus intently on the gentle murmurs of your dreams and the nuanced signals from your subconscious, which abound with valuable insights. Embrace this journey of self-exploration, keeping an open mind and heart, and let your innate wisdom guide you through these introspective days.

Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Turquoise
Lucky day Wednesday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week, you may encounter a phase of contemplation and reconsideration. It's a period where progress could appear slow, encouraging you to see things from a fresh viewpoint. Embrace this pause as a chance for introspection and reassessment of your goals and priorities. During this time, you might feel the pressures of duties or encounter hurdles that challenge your usual pace. By setting aside strict expectations and opening yourself to new perceptions, you can uncover meaningful insights. Recognize that this temporary standstill is a preparatory stage, setting the groundwork for forthcoming advancements. Seize this moment to refine your understanding and patience, as you prepare for a transformative journey ahead. Remember, every pause is an opportunity for growth and personal evolution.

Lucky number 18 | Lucky colour White
Lucky day Tuesday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week, your focus will intensify around personal connections and pivotal decisions. There's a heightened emphasis on unity, partnerships, and aligning with your fundamental values. You might notice your close relationships flourishing or becoming more profound, particularly those that align well with your deepest beliefs and desires. This period calls for choices to be made with affection and collective respect, covering both romantic ties and joint ventures. It's an opportune moment to fortify relationships or resolve any prevailing conflicts. Aim to align your actions with your loftiest ideals and be receptive to nurturing bonds that propel your personal development. Embrace chances for harmony and equilibrium, trusting that the guidance from your emotions will steer you rightly.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Teal
Lucky day Thursday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week marks a period of emotional rejuvenation and beginnings in personal connections. You're entering a phase where your feelings and potential for meaningful interactions intensify, promising a bounty of affection, empathy, and contentment. It's the perfect moment to deepen bonds, explore new relational or creative avenues, and embrace projects that satisfy your soul. This phase invites you to cultivate your emotional landscape and act on your heart's desires. Whether you're starting a new romantic chapter, enriching existing relationships, or pursuing artistic expressions, the time is ripe to open your heart. Allow yourself to both give and receive love in its myriad expressions, and tap into your natural reservoir of compassion and artistic spirit. Embrace this cycle of growth and connection.

Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Burgundy
Lucky day Friday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week invites you to reevaluate your foundations in both material and emotional aspects. You may find yourself reflecting on how well you secure what you deeply care about, as stability becomes a theme. This period is about reassessing how you manage what you possess and confronting any underlying anxieties about potential losses or shortages. While you generally lean towards embracing change, you might notice a tendency to hold tightly to certain elements of your life or resist shifts in your usual approach. It's a good time to find equilibrium between your innovative impulses and a grounded perspective. This will help you solidify your base, ensuring that you are well-prepared and confident as you plan for future endeavors.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Fuchsia
Lucky day Wednesday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week emphasizes stability, family, and long-term security, reflecting a period of completion and fulfillment in your life's tangible and emotional areas. You might find yourself contemplating your accomplishments and the legacy you're shaping. It's an opportune time to invest in your future or partake in activities that strengthen your home and familial connections. Expect highlights around financial or material advancements, signaling rewards for previous endeavors. Seize the chance to honor your achievements and those of your loved ones. This period encourages you to prioritize enduring security and happiness, underlining the significance of robust foundations and valued relationships. This supportive setting promotes development and strengthens relationships essential for your personal growth.

Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour Indigo
Lucky day Monday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week heralds a period of dynamic energy and passionate pursuits. You will embody confidence and charisma, reflecting a time when you can harness your inner strength and creativity. This is an ideal moment to take charge with enthusiasm and determination. Embrace your leadership qualities and let your passion propel you toward your goals. This is a powerful time for initiating projects, asserting your vision, and inspiring those around you. Your magnetic presence will attract positive attention and support. Channel your energy effectively, and don't hesitate to step into the spotlight. Use your innate creativity and confidence to make significant strides in both personal and professional areas of your life. This week is about actively shaping your future with vigor and vision.

Lucky number 16 | Lucky colour Lavender
Lucky day Tuesday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week may bring potential for discord or tension in your interactions. You could find yourself in situations that are emotionally taxing or lead to disagreements. These conflicts, while challenging, offer a chance to practice discernment in choosing which issues to engage with. Aim to resolve disagreements peacefully and steer clear of power struggles. It's a time to reflect on what is truly causing friction and explore constructive solutions to these problems. Emotional resilience and clear thinking are crucial during this period. By staying composed and opting to distance yourself from minor disputes, you will be able to maintain your inner peace and handle challenges gracefully. Cultivate patience and understanding to navigate through this period with ease.

Lucky number 17 | Lucky colour Baby Pink
Lucky day Tuesday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331



ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Shakti trinity deified as Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh



Persons with the Sata element prominently displayed, become aware of the fundamentals of life. Sata finds reflection as positive virtues – purity, righteousness, a positive attitude, and meaningful karma, free from any malice, obsession, and prejudices. They also understand the unity underlying all diverse existences, whereby all and sundry are essentially set into an inter-dependant relationship. Therefore, they value all on equal terms overriding all apparent difference. They, therefore, get along well with those around with ease. They, thus, remain at peace by the self and with the rest. They carry sense of love, are humane and compassionate. They remain live to their collective obligations even while pursuing their individualistic aspirations. Sata driven use other two dimensions of shakti trinity to their advantage. Using Tamasa, they take a pause to reflect, reason out, articulate well, before getting into action. So, invariably they make better choices in life. The Rajasa element being live, they too carry desires, but are invariably directed to serve meaningful purposes.

They don't employ it purely with an utterly selfish motive. Their thought process being easy, simple, and free from clutter, could use their mind power optimally. Consequently, they see things in wider perspective to pick up the most appropriate lead. They are better focused also, and therefore have relatively higher success rating. Well, since human beings are born with a sense of 'want', a being's conduct is motivated and driven by desire. That, in turn brings in a sense of craving, possessiveness and attachment, which remains the prerogative of Rajasa. The indwelling sense of desire makes one dream, and which motivates a being blindly chase their desired destination. They ordinarily shun Tamasa, and so when faced with challenges, get unnerved. And that they are susceptible to get drawn towards varied tempting influences of the seeming world, they have a scattered brain. That makes it difficult for them to remain contented, and would therefore, never be at peace. Because of its veiling nature, the essentials of life remain clouded in Tamasa driven people. They can't

visualise things in larger perspective, as they have self-centric narrowed vision. Out of ignorance, such people are often not sure what they should look for in life and therefore, are usually found to be directionless. They are restful by nature, which induces a sense of inertia,

indolence, ignorance, and more often a negative mind-set. To such people, the indwelling Rajasa element keeps the desire element alive. But at the same time, they are not keen to take pains to pursue their desires in right earnest. So, invariably they are left behind in the

run of life. Their sense of want, however, makes it difficult for them to digest the riches available with others either. That in turn, breeds in a sense of jealousy and hatred towards the achievers. This way, particular mix of the three in a being, with one or the other prominently displayed, defines the unique character of each being. To sum up, Sata, Rajasa, and Tamasa, begin their course as three dimensions of creative intelligences, whose imprints stretch on to even the last point in the evolutionary chain. For, their psychological imperatives very much find reflection in the personality frame up of manifest beings, especially in terms of one's thought trends on ground. That makes continuum between the primal source and manifest being, evident. The spoken primal word 'Om' has in its store sound trinity designated by the three letters 'A', 'U', and 'M'. All sound syllables in active use are believed to have evolved out of these three root sounds. 'Om', thus, has in its womb the seeds of all letters with their related sounds. The three letters are

respectively marked with Rajasa, Sata, and Tamasa. The first two letters - 'A' and 'U' - apparently coalesce into 'O' in dicta-lingua. The three are also respectively identified with waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep state of a being in day-to-day life. Waking state is evidently identified with Rajasa, as it involves action. Dream state is marked with Sata, for it involves simply working on an idea either real or assumed, in the inner realm of mind, which evidently can't be seen in real terms. Tamasa is that restful state of mind devoid of any creative thoughts. Ancient India's seers, realising the relevance of the three creative intelligences - Rajasa, Sata, and Tamasa - deified them respectively through the symbolism of Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh. The concept of God-trinity, thus, is nothing but Energy concept of creation deified. Concluding the discussion on Om, goodbye pioneer readers. The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at Tel: 91-11-9818037273/9871037272 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com