



Established 1865 Sunday Pioneer



magazine

DEHRADUN, SUNDAY DECEMBER 8, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

www.dailypioneer.com

PUBLISHED FROM DELHI | LUCKNOW | BHOPAL | BHUBANESWAR | RANCHI | RAIPUR | CHANDIGARH | DEHRADUN | HYDERABAD | VIJAYWADA



Yamuna grows toxic veggies?

BISWAJEET BANERJEE
LUCKNOW

The Yamuna River's water has become so polluted that it is no longer safe for drinking, bathing, or even irrigation, a shocking revelation made by the Central Water Commission's latest report, 'Status of Trace and Toxic Metals in Indian Rivers'.

The study exposes dangerously high concentrations of heavy metals such as chromium, nickel, and lead, threatening to unleash a public health crisis in cities like Agra and Mathura. According to the report, water samples collected from three locations in Agra, including Poiya Ghat, and one in Mathura revealed alarming levels of these toxic metals. Agra and Mathura are now ranked among 187 worst-hit cities nationwide, where three or more hazardous metals were found in river water, earning them the grim distinction of having the "worst" water quality in the country. The data is damning. In Agra, nickel levels touched 28.87 micrograms per liter, chromium soared to a staggering 135.15 micrograms per liter, while lead reached 23.41 micrograms per liter—several times above permissible limits. In Mathura, chromium was recorded at 138.02 and 0.55 micrograms per liter at different sites, while nickel stood at 56.04 micrograms per liter. Experts have warned that prolonged exposure to such contamination can trigger



skin diseases, ulcers, lung damage, weakened immunity, heart conditions, kidney failure, liver malfunction, and even cancer. What makes the situation worse is that Agra's water treatment facilities are woefully unequipped to handle such a toxic onslaught. The city's two major water treatment plants, Jiwani Mandi and Sikandra Water Works, are still stuck with outdated technologies that can only test for basic parameters like turbidity, color, pH, TDS, hardness, coliform, and E. coli. Heavy metal detection is entirely outside their scope. Sikandra's 144 MLD MBBR plant, which supplies water to nearly half the city, lacks the necessary filtration systems to remove deadly metals. "We currently don't have equipment to detect heavy

metals in Yamuna water. Samples are tested at external labs occasionally, but there's no real-time monitoring," admitted Arvendra Rajput, General Manager of the Waterworks Department. The root cause of this toxicity is an unchecked flow of industrial waste into the Yamuna. Electroplating units, chemical factories, welding and refining plants, foundries, and even the automotive industry are said to be dumping hazardous waste into the river with impunity. Pollution from pesticides, detergents, and fertilizers has further aggravated the crisis. Environmentalists have slammed regulatory bodies for failing to enforce pollution norms. "If the Pollution Control Board claims to have stopped factories from discharging waste into the

Yamuna, how are such dangerous levels of heavy metals still present in the river? This report exposes the regulatory failures and calls for immediate corrective action," said Dr. Sanjay Kulshreshtha, an environmental expert. Echoing similar concerns, environmentalist Shachindra Sharma issued a stark warning: "The toxic state of the Yamuna River is a ticking time bomb for both public health and the environment. Strict regulations and immediate steps are essential to prevent irreversible damage." With the specter of a full-blown environmental disaster looming large, experts are urging swift government action before the Yamuna turns into an irreversible toxic nightmare.

Special SC Bench to hear validity of Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

With multiple petitions seeking surveys in mosques, claiming they were once temples, the Supreme Court has constituted a special Bench of three judges headed by Chief Justice of India Sanjay Khanna to hear a batch of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 on December 12 at 3.30 pm. Justices Sanjay Kumar and KV Viswanathan are the part of the special Bench. The 1991 law prohibits conversion of any place of worship and provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947. The law, however, made only one exception -- dispute over the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. The petitions filed by many Hindu organisations argue that the 1991 law created an "arbitrary and irrational retrospective cut-off date" of August 15, 1947, for maintaining the character of the places of worship or pilgrimage against encroachment done by "fundamentalist-barbaric invaders and law-breakers". The Union Government has yet to file its counter-affidavit in the matter, despite the several extension times given by the Supreme Court. On July 11, 2023, the Court asked the Union to file the counter by October 31, 2023. The SC is already seized about six petitions, including the PILs



File photo: Ranjan Dimri

filed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Subramanian Swamy and lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay against certain provisions of the law. The management committee of, Anjuman Intezamia Masajid, Varanasi, in its plea filed through lawyer Fuzail Ahmad Ayyubi, filed an intervention application in the top court seeking dismissal of the pending pleas against the 1991 law on the ground that they were based on "rhetorical and communal claims" that could disrupt communal harmony and the rule of law. Upadhyay, in his PIL, sought setting aside of Sections 2, 3, 4 of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 on various grounds, including that these provisions took away the right of judicial remedy to reclaim a place of worship of any person or a religious group. While Swamy wanted the apex court to "read down" certain provisions to enable Hindus to stake claim over the

Gyanvapi Mosque in Varanasi and the Shahi Idgah Mosque in Mathura. The Managing Committee of the Gyanvapi Mosque has filed an intervention before the Supreme Court on Friday on pleas challenging the validity of the Places of Worship Act 1991. It said that the consequences of the declaration sought by the petitioner that the Act was unconstitutional "are bound to be drastic." The mosque committee further underscored the potential "drastic consequences" of overturning the law, citing incidents like the Sambhal case, where a recent survey order reportedly triggered widespread protests and resulted in six fatalities. The committee warned that repealing the Act could lead to a surge in disputes over religious sites across the country, prompting tensions in "every nook and corner" while threatening communal harmony.

Repatriate B'deshis staying illegally: Nizamuddin locals

RAJESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

Amid the killing of Hindus in Bangladesh, a delegation of prominent Ulemas and residents of the Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah and Basti Hazrat Nizamuddin area met with Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Saturday and demanded a special drive to identify and repatriate Bangladeshis staying illegally in the city. The delegation further demanded that Bangladeshi people should not be given employment by any establishment and those who have given employment to them should remove them. Meanwhile, sources in the Delhi police said there is not much information about the exact number of Bangladeshis in Delhi. In a statement, the Lieutenant Governor's office said, reiterating that they were worried about the situation of their Hindu brethren and other minorities in Bangladesh and worsening state-of-affairs in the country, the delegation demanded stringent action against Bangladesh nationals illegally staying in Delhi. In a letter submitted to Saxena, the delegation said they should not be provided rented accommodation or jobs in any establishment. According to the statement, the delegation demanded that illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators should not be given houses on rent and those houses who have already rented out their premises should evict them.

US denies backing anti-India agenda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

The United States Embassy on Saturday rejected the Bharatiya Janata Party's allegations that organisations funded by the US State Department, and elements in the American "deep state" were behind attempts to destabilise India through targeted attacks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and business tycoon Gautam Adani. A spokesperson at the US embassy described the allegations as "disappointing" and asserted that the US government has been a champion of media freedom around the world.



Two murders in a day, AAP raises law and order issue

PNS
NEW DELHI

Two murders in different colonies rocked Delhi on Saturday, with the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government blasting the Centre over the law and order situation in the National Capital. A 52-year-old businessman was shot dead by two unidentified assailants during his morning walk in Shahdara while a man was stabbed to death during a brawl in South Delhi's Govindpuri. The brazen killings and increased criminal activities have raised concerns about public safety and the efficacy of law enforcement in Delhi. Reacting to the two incidents, AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal said that criminals have become "fearless" under the BJP rule. "After the firing in Vishwas Nagar, now news of stabbing is coming from Govindpuri. Under the BJP rule, criminals have become completely fearless," he wrote on X.

These latest crimes are sure to result in a major slugfest between the Centre and other political parties over the increasing lawlessness as the Delhi Police and law and order in the national Capital come under the jurisdiction of the Union Home Ministry. The AAP is going to make law and order an electoral issue when Delhi holds Assembly polls in February. In Shahdara, at least eight rounds were fired at the victim, identified as Sunil Jain, near the Yamuna Sports complex. Jain who ran a business of utensils, was returning home on a scooter, when two motorcycle-borne unidentified attackers opened fire at him in the Farsh Bazar area. Deputy Commissioner of Police Prashant Gautam confirmed that the police received a PCR call at 8.36 am, and at least seven bullets were fired at Jain after which the accused fled the scene.

December 21 is World Meditation Day, UNGA adopts resolution co-sponsored by India



Representative photo

PTI
UNITED NATIONS

India co-sponsored a UN General Assembly draft resolution that was unanimously adopted to proclaim December 21 as World Meditation Day. India, including Liechtenstein, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Mexico and Andorra, was a member of the core group of countries that guided the unanimous adoption of the resolution titled 'World Meditation Day' in the 193-member UN General Assembly on Friday. "A day for comprehensive well-being and inner transformation! Glad that India along with other nations of the core group guided the unanimous adoption of the resolution on the declaration of December 21 as World Meditation Day @UN General Assembly today (Friday)," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish said in a post on X. He said India's leadership in

overall human wellbeing stems from "our civilisational dictum of #VasudhaivaKutumbakam - the whole world is one family". Harish noted that December 21 marks the Winter Solstice, which in Indian tradition is the beginning of "Uttarayana - an auspicious time of the year, especially for inner reflection" and meditation. It also falls exactly six months after the International Day of Yoga commemorated on June 21, which is the Summer Solstice. Recalling that India had in 2014 taken the lead in declaring June 21 as International Day of Yoga, Harish said that in a decade, it has become a global movement which has led to common people across the globe practising yoga and making it part of their daily lives. A press release by the Permanent Mission of India to the UN said India's instrumental role in the adoption of the resolution on

World Meditation Day was a "testimony to its firm commitment to overall human wellness and global leadership on this front in tune with our civilisational dictum of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam". The declaration of World Meditation Day comes at a time when various regions of the globe witness conflicts and growing tensions, the mission said. It underlined that meditation is rooted in ancient practices and is an effective tool to achieve inner transformation and peace in the modern day. It is aimed at comprehensive human well-being, including mental, emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions. It prepares human beings to cope with several modern-day issues such as heightened anxiety and stress and brings about harmony between mind and body, humans and nature. "Modern science attests to the numerous benefits of meditation and its profound impact on our lives. It has been scientifically proven that regular meditation significantly reduces stress, and enhances cognitive and physical functions," the Indian mission added. The resolution, introduced by Liechtenstein, was also co-sponsored by Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Burundi, the Dominican Republic, Iceland, Luxembourg, Mauritius, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Portugal and Slovenia.



ISKCON centre in Bangladesh burnt down: Radharaman Das

PTI
KOLKATA

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) on Saturday alleged that its centre in Dhaka district in neighbouring Bangladesh was burnt down earlier in the day. Iskcon Kolkata vice president Radharamn Das told PTI that the targeted attack on members of the community and members of the Vaishnavite order goes on unabated as "vandals set ablaze idols inside the temple at the Namhata property". He said in a post on X handle, "ISKCON Namhata Centre burned down in Bangladesh. The deities of Sri Sri Laxmi Narayan and all items inside the temple were burned down completely. The centre is located in Dhaka. Early morning today, between 2-3 AM, miscreants set fire to the Shri Shri Radha Krishna Temple and the Shri Shri Mahabhagya Lakshmi Narayan Temple, which fall under the Hare Krishna Namhata Sangha, located in

Dhour village, under the jurisdiction of Turag Police Station, Dhaka district. The fire was initiated by lifting the tin roof at the back of the temple and using petrol or octane. Address: H-02, R-05, Ward-54," he said in the post. Das claimed that attacks are continuing and despite the ISKCON drawing the attention of the interim government in Bangladesh, not much is being done by the police and administration to assuage their grievances and address their concern. "Iskcon India has expressed concern about the safety of Hindus in Bangladesh and urged its monks and followers from Bangladesh not to wear 'tilaks' and practice their faith discreetly. The targeted attacks continue," he had earlier said. The Iskcon Kolkata vice president also expressed concern over arrested Hindu community leader Chinmoy Krishna Das's safety following his denial of bail and the violent attacks.

Dubai returned dulha brings baraat, but dulhan gayab...

RANI SINGH RAJPUT
CHANDIGARH/ NEW DELHI

The stage was set and the wedding party was ready to bring home the beautiful bride chosen by their Dubai-returned groom. The wedding had been planned online and this was the first time everyone, including the groom, would be meeting the lawyer-bride, or so they thought. However, Deepak Kumar (24) and his entourage of 150 'baraatis' were shocked when they arrived in Moga, Punjab, only to find his

bride "missing", adding insult to injury they also realised that the wedding venue did not exist. A month ago returned from Dubai to Jalandhar, Punjab to marry one Manpreet Kaur. Kumar had been talking to her via Instagram for three years, but had never met her in person, the police said. After realising he had been duped, Kumar lodged a police complaint against Kaur. Kumar told the police that he along with his family had travelled all the way from Mandiali village in Jalandhar to Moga for the

wedding at the venue that had been chosen by the bride and her family. Upon reaching Moga, the bride's family reportedly told Kumar that some people will escort him and his family to the wedding venue. However, even after waiting till 5 pm, no one showed up, Kumar said. He added that they had asked the locals about the wedding venue named 'Rose Garden Palace' but were told that there was no such place in Moga. The groom said that he worked as a labourer in Dubai and had been in



REPRESENTATIVE PHOTO

touch with Kaur through the platform Instagram for the past three years. Kumar said he had seen Kaur's photos but never met her in person. Their parents had arranged the wedding over phone calls, police officials said, adding that Kumar also claimed to have transferred Rs 50,000 to Kaur earlier. His father Prem Chand said that 150 'baraatis' came for the wedding, and that he had already hired taxis, paid for catering and a videographer. Kaur reportedly hails from Moga and had earlier told

Kumar that she works in Ferozepur, he said. The groom's father said that the marriage was fixed after speaking to Kaur's parents over the phone, and guests were invited for the wedding. Meanwhile, Moga Assistant Sub-Inspector Harjinder Singh said they have received a complaint from Deepak Kumar. Singh said the complaint was lodged after the groom's family could not reach the bride as her phone was switched off. Further investigation in the matter is underway, he said.



Rain and snowfall forecast in most parts of State today

Yellow warning- thunderstorms with lightning likely in Dehradun and six other districts

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

After nearly two months of no rain or snowfall in the winter months, Uttarakhand is likely to witness rain and snowfall today. The rain and snowfall will not only provide relief from the dry cold but also bring about a gradual drop in the maximum and minimum temperatures across the State where many parts are not yet wit-

Champawat and Udham Singh Nagar districts on Sunday. Apart from this, light to moderate rain is likely to occur at some places over Dehradun, Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Rudrapur, Rudraprayag, Pithoragarh and Bageshwar districts and very light to light rain is likely to occur at isolated places in the remaining dis-

21 degrees Celsius and six degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun today. The temperature drop is already being experienced in Dehradun and other parts of the State, with the minimum and maximum temperatures in Dehradun recorded a degree below normal on Saturday. The minimum temperature is forecast to drop two degrees Celsius below normal on Sunday.

CM asks DMs to make arrangements in night shelters for poor in winter

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In view of the warning of cold wave like conditions issued by the meteorological department due to rain and snowfall expected on Sunday and

especially women, children and ill people should be shifted to the night shelters set by the administration. The CM also directed the DMs to make



Monday, chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has directed all district magistrates to make necessary arrangements in the night shelters. He said that new night shelters for the poor should be opened where necessary. The CM said that blankets should be distributed to the poor persons. He said that destitute persons

arrangements for setting up bonfires at public places. He said that in view of the forecast of snowfall in the higher reaches the cold conditions are likely to prevail in other areas of the State and the administration should take necessary action to provide necessary facilities to the poor in winters.

Home Guards discharging key responsibilities: Dhami

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has said that the organisation of Home Guards is working actively for social security and maintaining law and order in the State. He was addressing a programme organised on the occasion of the foundation day of the Home Guards after reviewing the ceremonial parade at Nanurkheda, Dehradun on Saturday.



He said that the Home Guards are ready to fulfill their responsibilities in every situation and they play an important role in maintaining law and order, controlling traffic and during religious events such as Chardham Yatra, Kumbh Mela and Kanwad Yatra.

The CM announced that the volunteers of the Home Guards deployed at an altitude of more than 9,000 feet will be given an additional incentive of Rs 200 per day like the personnel of State Police and SDRF. He said that the Home Guards deployed with SDRF personnel will get an incentive of Rs 100 per day. The CM also said that the uniform allowance given to the Home Guard personnel will now be given every year. He said that the ex-gratia

amount given to every Home Guard on attaining the superannuation age of 60 years from the Home Guards welfare fund will be increased by Rs 50,000.

Home Guards.

In the programme, the CM handed over scholarship cheques to the meritorious children of Home Guards. He also released the Souvenir 2024 and departmental calendar 2025 of Home Guards and Civil Defense department on the occasion.

Raipur MLA Umesh Sharma, Rajpur MLA Khajan Das, former Mayor Sunil Uniyal Gama, secretary Shailesh Bagoli, director general police Deepam Seth, commandant general Home Guards PVK Prasad and others attended the programme.



The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in various parts of the State on Saturday were 21.7 degrees Celsius and 7.3 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 24 degrees Celsius and 4.4 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 15.5 degrees Celsius and 4.9 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 14.6 degrees Celsius and 5.9 degrees Celsius in New Tehri. The maximum and minimum

were both a degree below normal in Dehradun while the minimum was three degrees below normal in Pantnagar. The maximum was a degree above normal in Mukteshwar while the maximum was degrees below normal and the minimum was a degree below normal in New Tehri.

tricts of the State today. The provisional State capital Dehradun is likely to witness a mainly clear to partly cloudy sky becoming generally cloudy towards the evening/night. Very light to light rain/thunderstorm is likely to occur towards the evening/night. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be about

Officials told to focus on boosting winter Char Dham Yatra: CM

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said that the officials concerned have been directed to facilitate the winter Char Dham Yatra. Dhami visited the Omkareshwar Mandir in Ukhimath, the winter abode of Lord Kedarnath on Saturday, where he prayed to the lord for the wellbeing of the people. Participating in the Pandav Nritya organised on the occasion, he stressed on collective efforts for the conservation and upliftment of the State's cultural heritage.



Kedarnath was resumed soon after the disaster.

Dhami said that the State government is working to develop Rudraprayag into an ideal district. The women in the Kedarnath valley are consistently boosting innovation with efforts including quality production and packaging. The demand for the local products is rising across the nation and the government is also abetting this initiative.

Addressing the public on the occasion, the CM thanked the public for electing the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Asha Nautiyal in the Kedarnath Assembly bypoll, adding that various development works are being taken forward by the government in the area. He said that various announcements have been made for the Ukhimath area which will be executed soon. Various construction works have also been approved for the Kedar valley after the disaster witnessed in the area earlier this year. Stating that he himself was present amidst the public after the disaster witnessed in the valley in July, the CM said that the second phase of the pilgrimage to

“The State government has directed all the officials concerned to boost the winter Char Dham Yatra and is issuing guidelines for this purpose. All the necessary arrangements are being spruced up for the winter Char Dham Yatra. A high-level meeting is also slated to

be held soon regarding the winter Char Dham Yatra. Our government starts preparing for the next Yatra season as soon as the current pilgrimage season ends. We are also working to ensure that the people get work for the winter pilgrimage,” he said.

Winter Char Dham Yatra to be a milestone for State's economy: Bhatt

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party State president Mahendra Bhatt welcomed the State government's focus on encouraging the winter Char Dham Yatra, stating that it will prove to be a milestone for the State's economy. He told the media that Uttarakhand is fortunate to have the four sacred Dham, adding that the blessings of these deities are for the whole world. He said that the pilgrimage has been continuing due to believers of Sanatan Dharma who have been expressing their devotion by visiting these shrines for centuries. There has been considerable improvement in the pilgrimage and the facilities with time but inclement weather and time constraints make it impossible for many devotees

to visit the Char Dham during the main pilgrimage season.

“Efforts have been undertaken for a long time to encourage the winter Char Dham Yatra but today our government has been successful in the real sense to meet the standards needed to facilitate it. This will enable the devotees to pay obeisance to the deities throughout the year. Revolutionary changes have been achieved with the all-weather road and other necessary facilities under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance and chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami's able leadership,”



the BJP State president said. Bhatt said that the continuation of the Char Dham Yatra throughout the year will be welcomed by the devotees while also being considerably bene-

official for the State's economy. The attitude of the people towards tourism is changing and many are visiting the mountains and cold places during the winter these days. In such a situation, the scope for paying obeisance to the deities, enjoying the clean air and environment, sun-bathing in the winter and enjoying the peace will increase the number of visitors. This will boost the tourism business in Uttarakhand and enhance the local economy, the BJP State president said.

Mahara seeks high level inquiry in Police Lines incident

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Karan Mahara has demanded a high level inquiry to investigate the November 4 incident that took place at Police Lines, Dehradun. He said that the police was responsible for the unsavoury incident that occurred between youth Congress workers and journalists.

lines and were made to sit on the stairs. He said that the Congress workers and leaders were not told about the event being organised by the media personnel there.

negligence of the police personnel and misunderstanding, a deliberate conspiracy cannot be ruled out. The PCC president also raised questions on the absence of police personnel in the police lines ground.

In a letter to the director general of police, Mahara has expressed his concern over the gross negligence of the police and administration. He said that after the mass detention in the secretariat march, he and the youth Congress workers were taken to the police

The PCC president added that perhaps the journalists also had no knowledge of the detention of Congress workers. “In this misunderstanding, the journalists probably thought that we had come there to protest against them and in this commotion and misunderstanding, this incident happened, for which police officers and personnel posted there on duty are responsible,” he said.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Youth Congress workers entered into a verbal duel and scuffle with the mediapersons at Police lines ground on November 4. The PCC president has already expressed regret over the incident. On Saturday morning Mahara visited the Uttaranchal Press club and met its office bearers. He again expressed regret for the incident in the meeting.

Mahara said that though the incident occurred due to the

CEO takes public feedback on special summary revision programme

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The chief electoral officer BVR Purushottam visited many booths in Dehradun on Saturday and took feedback on the super checking campaign underway in the State under the special summary revision programme- 2025 of the electoral rolls. He met the general public and took the feedback of the campaign. The CEO visited the booths located at Kanwali road, Kanwali village, Bindal bridge, Majara and Old Dalanwala and took feedback on randomly selected claims and objections.



The CEO requested

that the residents of the state can initiate the process of registering the name of any of their family members in the electoral rolls who has completed 18 years of age on January 1, 2025, can fill the form VI. He

said that the name of any member of a family can be added or amended with the help of ‘voter helpline App’. The additional CEO VK Jogaandee accompanied the CEO.

CM thanks Modi for approving 4 new KVVs in U'khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union cabinet for giving approval to open four new Kendriya Vidyalayas (KV) in Uttarakhand. He said that the Union cabinet has approved 85 new KVVs in the country. These schools will be constructed with an estimated budget of Rs 5,872.08 crore and these will provide quality education to 82,560 students and jobs to 5,388 people. Every new school

will have a capacity of 960 students. The CM said that the initiative of the Union cabinet will set a new dimension of quality education in remote areas of the country. In Uttarakhand the KVVs would be opened at Narendranagar and Madan Negi towns of Tehri district, Kotdwar of Pauri district and Dwarahat of Almora district. There are 47 KVVs in Uttarakhand at present. After the approval of the union cabinet for opening four new schools, the State will have 51 KVVs.

<p>Karnataka Bank Ltd. </p> <p>Your Family Bank. Across India.</p>			
<p>Asset Recovery Management Branch 8-B, First Floor, Rajender Park, Pusa Road, New Delhi-110 060</p>		<p>Phone : 011-40591567(Ext-240) E-Mail : delhiarm@ktkbank.com Website : www.karnatakabank.com CIN : L8510KA1924PLC001128</p>	
<p>APPENDIX IV (Rule 8(1)) POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)</p>			
<p>Whereas, undersigned being the Authorised Officer of KARNATAKA BANK LIMITED, under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Act), 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with [rule 3] of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand notice dated 04.06.2024 calling upon the borrower/ mortgagee/ guarantors : (1) M/s Shiv Hardwar and Paints, Represented by its Proprietor, Mr. Shubham Gupta, (2) Mr. Shubham Gupta S/o Mr. Raj Kumar Gupta, (3) Mrs. Anita Gupta W/o Mr. Rajkumar Gupta, All No (1) to (3) are residing at : #172/4 Nehru Nagar, Roorkee, Haridwar, Roorkee, Uttarakhand - 247667, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs.47,79,554.09 [Rupees Forty Seven Lakhs Seventy Nine Thousand Five Hundred Fifty Four and Paise Nine Only] under PSDO Account No. 667700060007201 along with future interest from 01.06.2024, within 60 days from the date of receipt of this notice.</p> <p>The borrowers, mortgagees and the guarantors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers, mortgagees, guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken the possession of the property described herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him under Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 of Act read with Rule 8 and 9 of the Security Interest Enforcement, Rules 2002 on this the 06th Day of December of the year 2024.</p> <p>The borrowers, the mortgagees and the guarantors in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property mentioned herein below and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Karnataka Bank Limited, Roorkee Branch for an amount of Rs. 50,79,657.95 [Rupees Fifty Lakhs Seventy Nine Thousand Six Hundred Fifty Seven and Paise Ninety Five Only] under PSDO Account No. 667700060007201 along with future interest from 01.12.2024, PSOD costs.</p> <p>[The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.]</p>			
<p>DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY</p>			
<p>All that part and parcel of Industrial Property with land measuring 199.81 Sq mts, and building constructed thereon, situated at Khata No.50, Part of Kharsa No. 36M, Bandakheri Village, Bhagwanpur Paragana, Tehsil Roorkee, Distt. Haridwar, belonging to Mrs. Anita Gupta & Mr. Shubham Gupta. Boundaries : East : Open Plot West : Open Land North : Road 25'-0" Wide South : Detergent Powder</p> <p>All that part and parcel of Residential Property, Land measuring 40.80 Sq mts, (as per documents), 33.59 Sq mts (net plot area) with building constructed thereon, situated at Kharsa No.21/3 Min, Shafeapur Village, presently within limits of Roorkee Nagar Nigam, Paragana, Bhagwanpur, Tehsil Roorkee, Distt. Haridwar, belonging to Mrs. Anita Gupta & Mr. Shubham Gupta. Boundaries : East : House of Ajoy West : House of Shama J North : House of Ajoy Kumar South : Road 16'-0" wide</p>			
<p>Place : Roorkee Date : 06.12.2024</p>			<p>Sd/- For Karnataka Bank Ltd Chief Manager & Authorised Officer</p>

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<p>CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED Corporate Office: Chola Crest, C54 & 55, Super B-4, Thiru V Ka Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600032. Branch Office: 2nd Floor, JJ Tower, 59-Rajpur Road, Adjoining Ram Tirath Ashram, Opp. Sachivalaya Main Gate, Dehradun- 248001. Branch Office: 2nd Floor, Khasra No 945, Railway Road, Jwalapur, Opp. Jwalapur Railway Station, Haridwar (U.K.) 249407. Contact No: Mr. Varun Partap Vohra , Mob. No. 8477000713, 769605552</p>														
<p>E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES</p> <p>E-auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.</p> <p>Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower / Co-Borrower / Mortgagee (s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Cholamandalam Investment And Finance Company Limited the same shall be referred hereafter as Cholamandalam Investment And Finance Company Limited. The Secured Assets will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis through E-Auction.</p> <p>It is hereby informed to General public that we are going to conduct public E-Auction through website https://chola-lap.procure247.com</p>														
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Account No. and Name of Borrower, Co-Borrower, Mortgagees</th> <th>Date & Amount as per Demand Notice U/s 13(2)</th> <th>Descriptions of the Property/Properties</th> <th>Reserve Price, Earnest Money Deposit & Bid Increment Amount (In Rs.)</th> <th>E-Auction Date & Time, EMD Submission Last Date, Inspection Date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Loan No. XOHEHRA0002055623 Borrower & Co-Borrowers:- 1. SANJAY KUMAR S/O JYOTI PRASAD, 2. JITENDRA KUMAR S/O JYOTI PRASAD, 3. SUNITA GOSWAMI W/O SANJAY KUMAR, 4. LEELAWATI DEVI W/O PHOOL GIRI JYOTI PRASAD, R/O: House No. 441,Chaw Mandi Roorkee, Near Bhagwati Hospital Roorkee, Haridwar 247667 ALSO AT: House No. 246, Chaw Mandi Roorkee, Haridwar Uttarakhand 247667</td> <td>15-01-2024, Rs. 34,66,587/- AS ON 09/01/2024</td> <td>Property measuring 92.283 sq. meters registered as per sale deed bearing document number 11,813 dated 29/10/2007 situated in Chao mandi, Roorkee Tehsil Roorkee, Distt. Haridwar</td> <td>Rs. 75,00,000/- Rs. 7,50,000/- Rs. 1,00,000/-</td> <td>17-01-2025 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. 16-01-2025 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. As Per Appointment</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Account No. and Name of Borrower, Co-Borrower, Mortgagees	Date & Amount as per Demand Notice U/s 13(2)	Descriptions of the Property/Properties	Reserve Price, Earnest Money Deposit & Bid Increment Amount (In Rs.)	E-Auction Date & Time, EMD Submission Last Date, Inspection Date	Loan No. XOHEHRA0002055623 Borrower & Co-Borrowers:- 1. SANJAY KUMAR S/O JYOTI PRASAD, 2. JITENDRA KUMAR S/O JYOTI PRASAD, 3. SUNITA GOSWAMI W/O SANJAY KUMAR, 4. LEELAWATI DEVI W/O PHOOL GIRI JYOTI PRASAD, R/O: House No. 441,Chaw Mandi Roorkee, Near Bhagwati Hospital Roorkee, Haridwar 247667 ALSO AT: House No. 246, Chaw Mandi Roorkee, Haridwar Uttarakhand 247667	15-01-2024, Rs. 34,66,587/- AS ON 09/01/2024	Property measuring 92.283 sq. meters registered as per sale deed bearing document number 11,813 dated 29/10/2007 situated in Chao mandi, Roorkee Tehsil Roorkee, Distt. Haridwar	Rs. 75,00,000/- Rs. 7,50,000/- Rs. 1,00,000/-	17-01-2025 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. 16-01-2025 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. As Per Appointment	<p>THIS IS ALSO A STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002.</p> <p>1. All Interested participants / bidders are requested to visit the website https://chola-lap.procure247.com/ & https://www.cholamandalam.com/news/auuction-notice. 2. For details, help, procedure and online training on e-auction, prospective bidders may contact Mr. Muhammad Rahees - 812400030 / 6374845616, Email id: CholaAuctionLAP@chola.munurgappa.com. For Auction training alone, contact M/s. Procure247; Vasu Patel - 9510974587 3. For further details on terms and conditions please visit https://chola-lap.procure247.com/ & https://cholamandalam.com/news/auuction-notice to take part in e-auction.</p> <p>Date : 08-12-2024, Place: Dehradun/Haridwar</p>			
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Government committed to make school education accessible: PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said his government has taken another big decision to make school education as accessible as possible with the Cabinet approving the opening of 85 new Kendriya Vidyalayas.



He asserted that while the step will benefit a large number of students, many new employment opportunities will also be created.

extent," Modi said in another post in Hindi. The prime minister also said his government is determined to improve connectivity across the country.

establishment of the 85 new KV's and the expansion of one existing KV's is Rs 5,872.08 crore spread over a period of eight years from 2025-26.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday said it has attached fresh assets worth about Rs 388 crore in its ongoing money laundering investigation into the Mahadev online betting case.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/RAIPUR



of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on December 5 to attach these assets with a total value of Rs 387.99 crore, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said.

Rajnath Singh to visit Russia on Sunday, witness commissioning of Indian naval warship

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will embark on a three-day trip to Russia on Sunday to witness the commissioning of a stealth warship into the Indian Navy.

will accompany Singh to the commissioning ceremony. Defence Minister Singh will pay an official visit to the Russian Federation from December 8 to 10, an official readout said on Saturday.

industrial cooperation, the defence ministry said in the readout. "They will also exchange views on contemporary regional and global issues of mutual interest," it said.

Union Health Ministry determines compensation for patients with faulty Johnson & Johnson implants

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a ray of hope to patients who received faulty implants manufactured by DePuy International Limited (now Johnson & Johnson Private Limited) in India, the Union Health Ministry has reconstituted a central panel of experts to determine the compensation for affected individuals.

compensation as admissible and medical management for the affected patients who were implanted with faulty ASR hip implants," the notice read.

CISF sets up Quality Control Unit to enhance aviation security



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

CISF has set up a quality control unit to "enhance" the "operational efficiency" of its aviation security wing that provides a counter-terrorist cover to 68 civil airports of the country.

establishing "world-class" security procedures and technology for the airports that are used by lakhs of domestic and international passengers every day.

The unit will be part of CISF's Aviation Security Control Center (ASCC) - located in the national capital - which works as a centralised base for coordinating security at all 68 civil airports that are under the security ambit of the force.

Maharashtra opposition stages walkout over EVM manipulation allegations

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Still to recover from a shocking defeat in the recent Maharashtra Assembly polls, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Saturday staged a walkout from the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly during the first day of the oath-taking ceremony.

by the use of EVMs. This is not the mandate of the public, it is the mandate of EVM and the Election Commission of India," said Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Aaditya Thackeray, who is the leader of the legislature party.

Health Minister JP Nadda launches 100-day TB elimination campaign

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH



Health Minister J P Nadda on Saturday said the rate of decline of tuberculosis incidence in India has doubled since 2015 and is ahead of the global average.

He highlighted that the rate of tuberculosis incidence decline in India has doubled from 8.3 per cent in 2015 to 17.7 per cent now, which is much ahead of the global average.

The 100-day campaign underscores the Union government's commitment to achieving the goal of end-TB by addressing the challenges of tuberculosis notification and mortality in India under the National TB Elimination Programme of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

The 100-day campaign underscores the Union government's commitment to achieving the goal of end-TB by addressing the challenges of tuberculosis notification and mortality in India under the National TB Elimination Programme of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

73 complaints against obscene ads on private TV channels addressed: Govt tells Parliament



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Seventy-three complaints have been received against obscene and vulgar advertisements on private television channels by the regulatory bodies over the past three years, the government has told parliament.

action is taken wherever violation of the Advertising Code is found by issuance of "Advisories, Warnings, 'Apology Scroll' Orders and Off-air orders."

Opposition Christian MPs urge Church body to support Muslims on Waqf issue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Christian community should take an in-principle stand on the Waqf Bill as it affects minority rights enshrined in the Constitution, Christian MPs are learnt to have told the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) at a meeting in the national capital.

parliamentary party leader Derek O'Brien, Congress MPs Hibi Eden, Dean Kuriakose, Anto Antony, and CPI (M) MP John Brittas were among the MPs who attended the meeting, while union Minister of State George Kurian joined later, a source who was present at the meeting told PTI.

supporting and protecting the community and its rights, increasing attacks and threats against minorities, especially Christians, and misuse of FCRA to target Christian institutions. The source said a senior opposition MP suggested that the community leadership should also highlight "positive points, the important role being played by the community today" and "not just be only reactive to negative news."

and the public that three out of four students in Christian institutions, were in fact from different communities. One MP said that there is a need to put a stop to "photo ops," and stressed that the Christian leadership should take a stand to "call out those who are not protecting the Constitution."

the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). The Bill, among other things, changes the composition of the Central Waqf Council and Waqf Boards to include non-Muslim members. Another MP from Kerala told PTI that the issue of seats for Anglo Indians (all Christians) in Lok Sabha and 10 state assemblies being abolished was also raised, and Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licences of some Christian organisations being targeted

and cancelled in recent years was also brought up. "The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere but the MPs sharply criticised the church leadership's handling of its relationship with the government since 2014. One MP even suggested it was getting 'transactional', a leader who attended the meeting told PTI. By the time, Kurien, a BJP leader and Union minister, came most opposition MPs were done speaking, the source said. Two BJP MPs, both Christians, were absent.

President Murmu lays foundation for six projects in Odisha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BANGRIPOSI (ODISHA)

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday laid the foundation for six projects in Odisha, including three new railway lines, worth a total of Rs 6,400 crore. Bangriposi-Gorumahisani, Buramara-Chakulia and Badampahar-Keonjhar are the railway lines for which the foundation stones were laid by Murmu in the presence of Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav and Union Tribal Affairs Minister Jugal Oram, among others. The President also virtually laid the foundation for three other projects in Rairangpur - Tribal Research and Development Centre,



Dandbose Airport and a sub-divisional hospital. Addressing a gathering on the occasion, the President expressed confidence that the rail projects and the airport would boost transportation, commerce, and business in the region.

The new 100-bed hospital would provide better health facilities to the locals, she said. Noting that Odisha is getting benefitted from the 'Purvodaya' vision of the central government, the President said development of the entire region is getting

accelerated through various welfare schemes on education, skill development, health, tourism and transportation. Murmu said that Eklavya Model Residential Schools are being established for tribal children. She said

more than 100 new Eklavya Model Residential Schools are being established in Odisha, including 23 in Mayurbhanj district. She expressed confidence that after getting education from these schools, tribal children would be able to contribute towards the progress of society and the country. According to railway sources, the 82-km Badampahar-Kendujhar line will pass through Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts. The project will be developed at an estimated cost of Rs 2,106 crore. The 86-km-long Bangriposi-Gorumahisani line will be built at an expenditure of Rs 2,549 crore. It will facilitate the movement of passengers and freight and contribute to

the economic growth of Mayurbhanj district, they said. Similarly, the 60-km Buramara-Chakulia line, connecting Mayurbhanj district with Jharkhand's East Singhbhum district, will be built at a cost of Rs 1,639 crore. The new rail line will improve access between these mineral-rich areas and boost the local economy by enhancing the transportation of goods, particularly for the industrial sector. Murmu on Saturday ended her five-day tour of Odisha during which she attended a series of events including the Indian Navy Day celebration at Blue Flag Beach in Puri on December 4 and OUAT's 40th convocation in Bhubaneswar on December 5.

Broken protocol, undertaken several tours of native Mayurbhanj: Murmu

PNS ■ ODISHA

President Droupadi Murmu said she has broken the protocol and undertaken several tours of Odisha and her native Mayurbhanj district in order to speed up development work. "Generally, there is no provision of visiting own state and district as the President. However, I broke the protocol and came down here frequently because of the difficulties faced by the people of this area. Keeping in view the requirements of this area, I do whatever is possible



on my part," Murmu said. Noting that the love and affection of the people have drawn her to the place, Murmu said she always remains concerned about the development of her native place despite being busy with important work.

Assam CM Himanta expands his Cabinet

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday expanded his cabinet with four BJP MLAs sworn in as ministers. Governor Laxman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office to the four new ministers - Prasanta Phookan, Kaushik Rai, Krishnendu Paul, and Rupesh Goala at the Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra here. The chief minister and members of his cabinet were present on the occasion. Phukan is a four-time MLA from Dibrugarh, Paul a two-time MLA from Patharkandi while Rai and Goala are first-time MLAs from Lakhimpur and Doom Dooma respectively. Phukan and Goala represent the Upper Assam tea districts of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia respectively while Paul and Rai are from the two Barak Valley districts of Sribhumi (formerly Karimganj) and



Cachar. Sarma now heads a 19-member council of ministers. Tea Welfare and Labour minister Sanjay Kishan, who represents the Tinsukia constituency, resigned from office on Thursday, to pave the way

for Goala with both representing the tea tribe community. Kishan has since been appointed as the Chairman of the Assam Food and Civil Supplies department. Parimal Suklabaidya had resigned from the Himanta

Biswa Sarma cabinet after he was elected to the Lok Sabha from Silchar (SC) constituency earlier this year. All the new ministers thanked the chief minister for including them in his ministry. They also pledged to serve the people and work

for the development of the state. The ministers are yet to be allocated their portfolios with the chief minister likely to reshuffle and redistribute the departments with the 19 ministers by Saturday evening. The newly sworn-in ministers will attend their first cabinet meeting later tonight. Sarma heads the NDA alliance government in the state with two Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) ministers Atul Bora and Keshav Mahanta and United Peoples' Party, Liberal (UPPL) U G Brahma members of his cabinet. The ruling NDA has 84 members in the 126-member state assembly. The chief minister and 14 other ministers were sworn in on May 10, 2021. Sarma expanded his ministry on June 9, 2022, with the induction of two BJP legislators Nandita Garlosa and Jayanta Malla Baruah as ministers.

Rock bolt technology successfully treating active landslide zones: BRO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ UTTARKASHI

Border Roads Organisation (BRO) on Saturday said the rock bolt technology is successfully treating active landslide zones in the hilly areas of Uttarakhand where landslides occur almost regularly in the hill areas of the State, especially during the monsoon season, blocking roads and causing inconvenience to Chardham pilgrims, and often claiming lives. Active landslide zones on Gangotri and Yamunotri highways have been a major issue for the Chardham pilgrims as well as the local people for years, the official said. The Australian rock bolt technology involves removing loose landslide debris by soil nailing in soil and rock bolting in bedrock, BRO Commander Vivek Srivastava said. It is being used at present in



the treatment of active landslide zones in Raturisera and Bandarkot on Gangotri highway in Uttarkashi district, he said. The technology was used earlier too in the treatment of Nalupani and Chungi Badethi landslide zones which had long been active along the highway and the good results at the two points encouraged authorities to apply it elsewhere too, he said. The technology is 90 per cent effective in preventing landslides, the BRO official

said. In the widening work done under the Chardham road project, landslide zones active for years have been treated successfully with this technology. The same technique is now being used in Raturisera and Bandarkot, he said. The official said that Rs 19.8 crore is being spent on this work in Raturisera and Rs 9.3 crore in Bandarkot. The target is to complete landslide treatment work at both places using the technology by March next year, he said.

Eight-fold rise in per capita income needs to be achieved to realise goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047: Dhankhar

PNS ■ PATNA/MOTIHARI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday asserted that an eight-fold rise in per capita income needs to be achieved to realise the goal of "Viksit Bharat" (developed India) by the year 2047. Addressing the second convocation ceremony of Mahatma Gandhi Central University in Bihar's Motihari, Dhankhar also expressed hope that the country, which was currently the "fifth largest economy" in the world, would "soon leave Germany and Japan behind". Lavishing praise on the Narendra Modi government at the Centre, without taking any names, Dhankhar said, "The last 10 years have been marked by eradication of a culture of corruption and middlemen seem to have been eliminated. The world looks at us with surprise as we keep marching towards getting our due place on the global stage. We are the fifth largest economy as of now but



things are looking up and soon we will leave Germany and Japan behind," said the Vice President. He was speaking in presence of Bihar Governor Rajendra Arlekar and local MP and former union minister Radha Mohan Singh. Dhankhar also pointed out that the nation needs to cover a lot of ground if the goal of "Viksit Bharat" is realized by the time 100 years of Independence is celebrated in 2047. "I am not likely to live to see

that day," said the 74-year-old Vice President, adding: "The onus is on young people like the students present here. We must strive to raise the per capita income to eight times of what it is today. This would require our youth to make sacrifices." Dhankhar also spoke of the progress made in Bihar under the Chief Ministership of Nitish Kumar, who was not present on the occasion. Without mentioning the JD(U) supremo by name, the

Vice President said, "I was an MP when your current CM was a Union minister. So much has been achieved in the state under his stewardship. He has drawn lessons from our past in which we saw grim episodes like the country's gold reserves being pledged". The allusion was to the Prime Ministership of late Chandra Shekhar in 1990 when, in the wake of a severe financial crisis, the Reserve Bank of India had to pledge several tonnes of gold with foreign banks to raise loans. Earlier, the Vice President planted a sapling in memory of his deceased mother as part of "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam (One tree for mother)" drive. At the convocation ceremony, he said, "People must not be sceptical of the impact their individual efforts could have. Consider this Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam campaign and imagine how much difference it could make to our environment if all 140 crore people plant just one sapling each".

SP quits MVA alliance in Maharashtra

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In an expected fallout of the United Opposition front's debacle in the recent Maharashtra Assembly polls, the Samajwadi Party (SP) walks out of the Congress-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) citing many reasons, including lack of coordination among the coalition partners on seat-sharing issues and the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT)'s stand on the Babri Masjid demolition. Announcing his party's decision to quit the MVA, State SP President Abu Azmi said that there was absolutely no co-ordination between his party and the MVA constituents on the seat-sharing process and there were also differences on various issues during the electioneering. "There was absolutely no co-ordination between my party and the main MVA constituents during the seat-sharing process as well as campaigning.. They never called us for meetings or joint



rallies. They used to avoid sharing each other's campaign platforms and all this resulted in the MVA parties' massive debacle in the Assembly polls," Azmi said. The SP, which had sought 12 seats from the MVA, contested six seats in the State Assembly polls and bagged two. While Azmi himself won from Mankhurd-Shivajinagar (Mumbai), Rais Kasam Shaikh romped home Bhiwand East in Thane district. "Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, at an

internal meeting, told party colleagues and workers to aggressively pursue the Hindutva agenda (ahead of the civic polls). On December 6, the party posted a message on social media in favour of Babri mosque demolition. How can this be tolerated?" Azmi asked. One of the main reasons for the SP's exit from the MVA is a post put out on micro-blogging site "X" by Uddhav's personal assistant and MLC Milind Narvekar, hailing the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The post carried

photographs of late Shiv Sena founder Balasaheb Thackeray, former Maharashtra Chief Minister and MLC Uddhav Thackeray and his son Aaditya Thackeray, who is an MLC from Worli in Mumbai. "Yesterday, (Dec. 6), a SS (UBT) leader posted a social media message claiming credit for the (undivided) party on the razing of the Babri Mosque demolition (1993). How can we tolerate this?" Azmi asked. "Such posts hurt our sentiments and go against the values of unity and respect for all communities. We are here to promote harmony, not divide people," Azmi said. Azmi made it clear that the SP stood for secular values, saving democracy and the Constitution, and hence it would not side with any party adopting such a communal approach. Asked if his party's decision to quit the MVA would affect the status of the SP national party chief Akhilesh Yadav vis-a-vis his equations with INDIA block, Azmi was non-committal.

Mayawati hits out at SP, Congress for 'exploiting' Sambhal violence for political gain

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) Chief Mayawati on Saturday lashed out at the opposition parties, accusing the Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress of using the recent violence in Sambhal for political gains. She alleged that instead of raising public welfare issues in Parliament, the opposition was focused on manipulating Muslim voters by creating divisions within the community. Speaking at a press conference in Lucknow, Mayawati claimed, "The SP and Congress are not concerned about national issues. They are using the Sambhal violence as a political tool to serve their vested interests. They are even trying to create a divide between Turk and non-Turk Muslims." She urged the



Muslim community to be wary of such political tactics. The BSP supremo also took aim at Dalit MPs from various political parties, accusing them of remaining silent on issues concerning caste oppression to please their political bosses. She highlighted the plight of Hindu minorities, especially Dalits, in Bangladesh, alleging that they face widespread atrocities. "Despite being elected by the Dalit community, many MPs stay quiet on such issues. Whether it is the oppression of Dalits in

India or the persecution of Hindu minorities in Bangladesh, they have failed to raise their voices," she said. Mayawati linked the historical oppression of Dalits to what she called Congress's "casteist conspiracy" during India's Partition. She alleged that Hindu-majority areas like Jessore and Khulna, from where Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was elected to the Constituent Assembly, were deliberately handed over to Pakistan, forcing Ambedkar to resign and return to India. Demanding urgent action, Mayawati urged the BJP-led central government to facilitate the return of persecuted Dalits and Hindus from Bangladesh. She warned that if the government failed to do so, the BSP would see no difference between the BJP and Congress on the issue of Dalit welfare.

If country is secure, 'religion is safe': Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said if the country is secure, then "religion is safe" which will ensure that "we also are safe". He stressed that "Bharatiyata (Indianness) and Sanatan have the power to unite everyone". Adityanath was speaking at the centenary celebration of the establishment of Vihangam Yog Sant Samaj held at Swarved Mahamandir Dham, the UP government said in a statement. Praising the contributions of Sadhguru Sadafal Dev Maharaj, who founded the Vihangam Yog Sant Samaj, the chief minister said he told the world that a true yogi cannot sit idle looking at the conditions of the country and society. Adityanath emphasised



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's belief that all work should be done while prioritising the country's interest and urged everyone to rise above individual, societal, sectarian and religious boundaries. "If the country is safe then religion is also safe. If religion is safe then we are also safe," Adityanath said while advocating actions that conform with India's Vedic-

spiritual tradition and the values of Sanatan Dharma. The chief minister also spoke about the development works undertaken in Prime Minister Modi's parliamentary constituency Varanasi in the last 10 years. "Be it health or education, Kashi is shining today in various aspects of development and along with Kashi, the entire UP is moving ahead under the guidance of PM Modi. Now

we are seeing the vision of 'Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat', where there is development as well as respect for heritage," he said. "If we get good leadership, the results are pleasant. Today, there is respect for heritage and also a big campaign for public welfare through development," he said. He credited Modi for taking the tradition of Yoga to the global stage. "People in more than 175 countries are associated with Yoga. Whenever Yoga will be discussed, it will inspire a feeling of reverence towards the sages of India in the minds of citizens across the world," Adityanath said. He noted that due to the prime minister's efforts, UNESCO recognised Maha Kumbh as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity in 2017. The UP chief minister paid tributes to Sadhguru Sadafal Dev Maharaj, who was born in a small village in Ballia in 1888 and founded the Vihangam Yog Sant Samaj in 1924. "Vihangam Yog Sant Samaj is determined to connect crores of devotees through its efforts by building a divine and grand temple through Swarved Mahamandir Trust, as well as to take India's yoga tradition and spiritual flow to the people," he said. "Maharaj took the spiritual campaign forward and also stated that a true yogi-saint cannot sit idle looking at the conditions of the country and society. "When the country was bound by the shackles of slavery, Sadhguru Sadafal Dev Ji Maharaj, with his spiritual practice, participated in the freedom movement to free the country from foreign slavery and associated himself with the call of the country's first freedom struggle from Barrackpore," he said.

Focus on batting as demoralised India look to avoid series defeat against Aus

PTI ■ BRISBANE

A desperate India will need their under-fire batters to step up in the second Women's ODI against Australia here on Sunday, as the visitors aim to avoid yet another series loss Down Under. India's batting woes continued as the tourists were bundled out for 100 in the series opener, leading to a demoralising five-wicket defeat, their heaviest in terms of balls remaining since ODIs were reduced to 20 overs a side. India have never won a series Down Under and they will have their task cut out against a quality Australian side, which showed no signs of rust despite playing in the format after a gap of nine months. On the other hand, it was the Indians who appeared under-prepared as the squad

was unable to train together as some of the players were competing in domestic T20 tournaments while others played in the Women's Big Bash League. Additionally, one of their two practice sessions here was washed out due to rain.

After opting to bat, the Indian batters were unable to capitalise on good batting conditions. They lost wickets at regular intervals, were unable to stitch partnerships, and were done in by Megan Schutt's brilliant spell with the new ball. "We were expecting a good score if our batters had applied themselves better. If we had more runs on the scoreboard, anything could have happened," India coach Amol Muzumdar conceded after the match.

With the batting inconsistencies continuing from the New Zealand



series, time is running out for India, who will host the ODI World Cup next year. The Indian think tank will be keen to stabilise their batting and bowling lineup ahead of the marquee event. Even though the bowlers had a small target to defend, they did well to pick five wickets. The only silver lining in an otherwise forgettable outing for India was pacer Renuka Thakur and young leg-spinner Priya Mishra. The tourists will have to regroup fast and having already played a game here, they will hope to give a better account of themselves. "The major thing we talked about was that one match doesn't make you a good team or a bad team. We played a match and it did not go our way. It's fine, we'll take a step back and evaluate

what we could have done better. We have played some good cricket this year we will take it from there. "The conditions are a little different then we are used to but we will be able to adjust to it," pacer Titas Sadhu said on the eve of the second ODI. Meanwhile, Australia produced an almost flawless performance despite missing regular skipper Alyssa Healy. Veteran pacer Schutt registered career-best figures of 5/19 before young opener Georgia Voll impressed on debut. Australia will be keen on putting up a similar display to seal another series win against India but the hosts are unlikely to take Harmanpreet Kaur and Co lightly. "India cannot be underestimated and we will not make the mistake of

being complacent. I think the Indian batsmen will come back strongly in the next match but I have worked a lot on my bowling and I hope to maintain this rhythm," she said after the first match. Schutt had said after the opener. Teams (from): India: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana (vc), Priya Punia, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harleen Deol, Uma Chetry, Richa Ghosh (wk), Tejal Hasabnis, Deepthi Sharma, Minnu Mani, Priya Mishra, Radha Yadav, Titas Sadhu, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh Thakur, Saima Thakor. Australia: Tahlia McGrath (c), Ashleigh Gardner (vc), Darcie Brown, Kim Garth, Alana King, Phoebe Litchfield, Sophie Molineux, Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Megan Schutt, Annabel Sutherland, Georgia Voll, Georgia Wareham.

India's nemesis Head powers Australia with blazing ton

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Travis Head continued to be a thorn in India's flesh with a counterattacking 141-ball 140 and powered Australia to a dominant 332 for eight at dinner on the second day of the pink ball Test here on Saturday. Thanks to Head's eighth Test century, which he reached in 111 balls after toying with India's formidable bowling attack, Australia have taken a 152-run first innings lead as they looked to restore parity in the five-match series after the 295-run hammering in the opener at Perth. Head, who got off the mark with a cracking boundary off Jasprit Bumrah (4/59), got a reprieve on 76 as Mohammed Siraj failed to complete the catch despite getting both hands to it after the batter tried to slog-sweep R Ashwin, having just smashed his third six against the off-spinner.



Amid the rejoicing around Head's century at the Adelaide Oval, Siraj was rewarded for his discipline as he had Alex Carey caught behind following a faint outside edge with Australia's lead crossing 100. Desperate to prevent Australia from swelling their lead further, India took the second new ball the moment it was made available to them, and their lead pacer Bumrah too was brought back into the attack. Bumrah, however, pulled up and was seen holding his adductor muscle as the physio attended to him. Fortunately for India, Bumrah was up on his feet quickly and ready to bowl again, even as Head flicked him for two boundaries in between. During his knock, Head played some incredible shots, including a pick-up

six over Siraj over deep square leg, but the pacer had the last laugh as he brought his innings to an end when he cleaned him up with a yorker. In all, Head struck 17 fours and four sixes. Earlier, Rohit Sharma giving his strike bowler Bumrah only four overs in the first session was a bit strange, and so were some of his field placements. Then, in another surprising move, he started the proceedings after tea with Ravichandran Ashwin instead of the fast bowlers. Luck, though, was with Ashwin as Mitchell Marsh

decided to walk off despite a half-baked appeal by the Indian team. Seeing Marsh heading in the direction of the dressing room, Richard Illingworth raised his finger too, but replays clearly showed there was a gap between bat and pad. Unperturbed by all these, Head went about his task in the manner he does best -- dictating the terms to the bowlers with his free-flowing strokes. None of the Indian bowlers, including Bumrah, looked like they could cause problems for Head. Straight after tea, the aggressive left-hander employed a late cut against Bumrah to send the ball in the gap between gully and backward point. And he continued in same vein until he was dismissed. This was after Marnus Labuschagne regained form with a composed half-century. Labuschagne (64), whose place in the team was debated prior to this game owing to his prolonged lean run with the bat, registered his 26th half-century and then launched himself into a flurry of boundaries in what

were worrying signs for India. But promising all-rounder Nitish Reddy cut short Labuschagne's innings as the batter tried to guide him through gully only for Yashvi Jaiswal to hold on to the sharp catch. Looking to fight their way back into the game after Australia's dominance on the opening day, India got an early breakthrough through who else but Bumrah. Playing in only his second Test after a forgettable debut in Perth, Nathan McSweeney had no answer to one of many excellent deliveries from Bumrah, which straightened a fraction after landing on the perfect length and all the batter could do was get a little nick while trying to defend after getting stuck on the crease. Steve Smith's poor run of form continued as the former captain got out in the most unfortunate fashion. Smith looked to flick a Bumrah delivery tickling down the leg side but only ended up edging it to the keeper Rishabh Pant who completed a neat catch diving to his left.

Rohidas is world's best rusher, says TN Dragons head coach Van Eijk

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tamil Nadu Dragons Dutch head coach Rein Van Eijk believes Olympic-medal winning India defender Amit Rohidas is the best "first rusher" in the world and hopes his multiple skills will benefit the franchise in the upcoming revamped Hockey India League (HIL). Two-time Olympic bronze medallist, Rohidas is one of the best first rushers in the world when it comes to defending penalty corners. As if that was not enough, the player from Odisha is also a potent dragflicker and a senior member of the Indian men's team. "For us, getting Amit (Rohidas) was obviously the one thing that we wished for. He's the number one rusher in the world and a warrior in his style of play. He defends and leads by action, which will be a great motivation for the team. He is able to play multiple positions, can also dragflick," Van Eijk told PTI in an exclusive interview. Rohidas has 200 international caps to his credit and has scored more



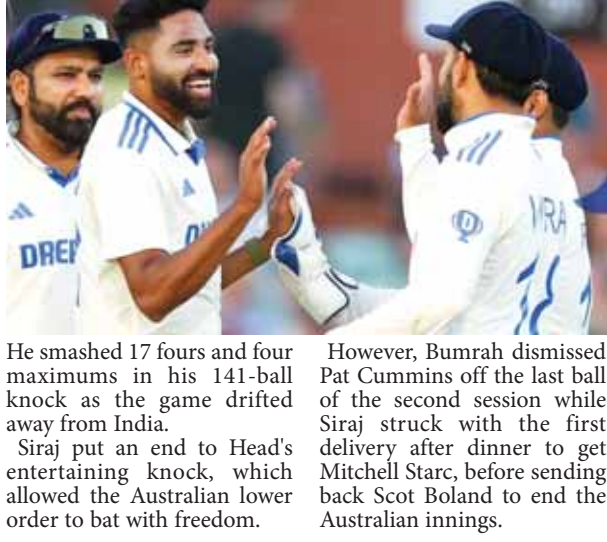
than 25 goals. Rohidas will be complemented by Paris Olympics silver medalist Moritz Ludwig of Germany, another elite rusher, ensuring a solid defence for Tamil Nadu Dragons from set pieces. "I think there are four top rushers in the world. Obviously, Amit Rohidas is probably the number one of those four, but Moritz Ludwig, the German player that we've gotten, is in the top four as well. So our corner defense should be very solid," said Van Eijk, coach of Germany's 2023 Under-21 World Cup-winning side. The coach reserved special

praise for young India striker and Tamil Nadu player Karthi Selvam. "With Karthi, we have a very talented forward. His performances in the 2022 Asia Cup and Asian Champions Trophy showed his strength. His goal-scoring ability and explosiveness bring all the good. He's also physically very imposing and very strong on the ball. "I think scoring nine goals in the game where they won 43-0 with the Tamil Nadu hockey unit says a lot about his qualities. I hope that this can be his way back into the Indian men's national team to solidify his spot," Van Eijk said.

India dismiss Australia for 337, trail by 157 runs

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Travis Head struck a sensational century while Marnus Labuschagne returned to form with a resolute fifty as Australia took a 157-run first-innings lead over India on day two of the pink ball Test here on Saturday. For India, the peerless Jasprit Bumrah (4/61) and Mohammed Siraj (4/98) were the most successful bowlers as Australia fell out for 337 in reply to India's 180. Local hero Head, who was dropped twice, made the most of his reprieves as he struck almost a run a ball 140 in front of his home crowd. He smashed 17 fours and four maximums in his 141-ball knock as the game drifted away from India. Siraj put an end to Head's entertaining knock, which allowed the Australian lower order to bat with freedom. However, Bumrah dismissed Pat Cummins off the last ball of the second session while Siraj struck with the first delivery after dinner to get Mitchell Starc, before sending back Scot Boland to end the Australian innings. Aston Villa will host



Everton vs. Liverpool postponed because of Storm Darragh

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

The Merseyside derby between Everton and Liverpool was postponed on Saturday because of Storm Darragh, which brought dangerous winds and rain to the west coast. The Premier League match was due to kick off at 12.30 p.m. U.K. Time, but Everton issued a statement in the morning to say it would not go ahead. The Met office said parts of Wales had experienced wind gusts of over 90 mph. "Storm Darragh continues to bring strong winds across the UK, with red, amber and yellow wind warnings in force," the office said on social media. Everton and league leader Liverpool issued nearly identical statements about the postponement. In London, Brentford was



Southampton in a 3 p.m. Kickoff. The team urged fans to use extra time to get to Villa Park in Birmingham. "We want to advise all supporters to allow extra time for travel to today's game due to poor weather conditions across the country. Please take extra care and stay safe. We look forward to seeing you at

the game," the team said in a statement. Three other games were scheduled in the Premier League on Saturday. Manchester United was hosting Nottingham Forest at 5:30 p.m. Local time. United has not commented on the storm. In London, Brentford was

hosting Newcastle, and Crystal Palace was hosting Manchester City. Both games are at 3 p.m. Brentford and Palace both said their games will be played. "Today's match is still scheduled to go ahead despite the bad weather," Brentford said. "Please travel safely, plan ahead, and allow extra time for your journey." Storm Darragh was expected to "gradually ease from late morning as it crosses the UK, so the strongest winds in the west will start to reduce through Saturday," Met Office chief meteorologist Steve Willington said. Everton and league leader Liverpool issued nearly identical statements about the postponement.

"Following a Safety Advisory Group meeting at Goodison Park, attended by officials from both clubs, as well as representatives from Merseyside Police and Liverpool City Council this morning, it was decided that, due to the risk to safety in the local area due to strong wind gusts, and an amber severe wind warning that remains in place until 6 a.m. On Sunday, today's fixture should be postponed on safety grounds," Everton's statement read. "We apologize for the inconvenience caused and thank supporters for their understanding. Whilst we appreciate this will be deeply disappointing for supporters, the safety of fans, staff and players is of paramount importance."

Milestones galore as England leads New Zealand by 533 runs in the 2nd test after 2 days

AP ■ WELLINGTON

England led New Zealand by 533 runs with five second-innings wickets in hand Saturday after another day of extraordinary incidents and milestones, including a hat-trick on the second day of the second test at the Basin Reserve. At stumps, England was 378-5 in its second innings with Joe Root 73 not out and captain Ben Stokes unbeaten on 35. Root was among the history-makers Saturday, reaching his 100th score of 50 or more in tests. When he reached his 65th half century, which goes along with his 35 centuries, he became the fourth player after Sachin Tendulkar, Jacques Kallis and Ricky Ponting to achieve that feat. When Stokes declares, possibly overnight, New Zealand will have to achieve the highest successful fourth-innings run chase in test history to win the match and

level the three-match series. England won the first test by eight wickets in Christchurch. The record successful fourth innings total currently sits at 418, achieved by the West Indies against Australia at St. John's in the Caribbean 21 years ago. Under any normal circumstances, Stokes probably would have been happy to declare by now, confident in his bowlers' ability to defend such a mammoth lead. But the match has progressed so fast and so far with 783 runs being scored and 25 wickets falling on the first two days, that three full days are still available to New Zealand reach its winning target. Most other winning fourth-innings totals in tests have had some element of a time constraint. The pitch at the Basin Reserve which has been bathed in sunshine on the first two days also is becoming more docile. Stokes came to the crease 30



minutes before stumps Saturday and immediately hit a four and a six in the first over he faced from Matt Henry, then another six in what seemed a tacit announcement of an impending declaration. By declaring overnight, Stokes will allow the England bowlers to rest and start fresh on the third day. The England second innings also saw two batters fall in the 90s, Jacob Bethell on 96, just short of his maiden test century, and Ben Duckett on 92. Harry Brook made 55 to go with his 123 in the first innings and his 171 in the first innings of the first test. All of those innings would which on any normal day of cricket have notable on their own. But they came one after the other and in quick succession so that Gus Atkinson's historic achievement of the morning session seemed somehow distant. Atkinson became the 15th

English bowler and the first since Moeen Ali in 2017 to take a test hat-trick. The Surrey pacer claimed the last three wickets of New Zealand's first innings, dismissing Nathan Smith, Matt Henry and Tim Southee with consecutive deliveries as England bowled out New Zealand for 125 to take a 155-run first-innings lead. "It feels good," Atkinson said. "I've never really thought about getting a hat-trick until I was at the end of my run and I was on a hat-trick. (It ends the year nicely)." Atkinson bowled Smith (14) with the third ball of the 35th over of the innings. Smith dangled his bat at a delivery wide of off stump, tried too late to leave the ball but managed only to deflect it onto his stumps. That brought out Henry, a competent batter with an average of almost 20 in tests, who received a ball which bounced sharply from just short of a length and reached

chest high. Henry tried to fend the ball away but it skewed from the splice to Duckett in the gully. That left Southee to face the hat-trick ball. The veteran seamer in his last test series averages 15.6 and has hit 95 sixes in an illustrious career. Southee clearly was expecting another short ball, the field was set for it. But the delivery from Atkinson was full and straight, struck the batter on the front pad and clearly was going on to hit middle stump. Atkinson is a statistical marvel who, in just his 10th test, has taken 12 wickets in an innings (12-106 against the West Indies at Lord's in July) and scored a century (118 against Sri Lanka at Lord's in August). He now adds a hat-trick to that already impressive resume. Atkinson was not privy to Stokes' thoughts about a declaration. "I'm not really sure what the plans are to be honest," he said.



FEATHERS OF COUTURE

Fashion is a language, a story told through fabric and beads, a canvas that speaks of cultures and dreams. When Suneet Varma takes the stage, the fabric transforms into poetry. His latest collection, *Quetzalli*, unveiled in collaboration with PATRÓN Tequila, is a masterpiece that bridges continents, blending the fiery soul of Mexico with the intricate elegance of Indian couture. The evening sparkled with sophistication at The Upper House by Tivoli as Varma's designs graced the runway. Each model brought the audience into a world where tradition and innovation existed side by side. The inspiration? A journey to the legendary Hacienda PATRÓN in Jalisco, Mexico, where tequila is an art form in itself. *Quetzalli* emerged not as a tribute to tequila but to the shared spirit of meticulous craftsmanship that defines both cultures.

The collection redefined the colour black, giving it depth, allure and richness. Sheer black gowns adorned with intricate lacework were delicately touched with hints of gold that shimmered under the lights, like secrets waiting to be discovered. These weren't just clothes; they were symbols of confidence, elegance, and a celebration of womanhood. Accessories played a crucial role, with statement necklaces gleaming in antique gold and belts cinching the waistlines of capes and gowns, adding structure to the delicate. Ornate headpieces gave the models an almost regal aura, transforming the runway into a scene of modern-day queens.

Suneet Varma's artistry lies in storytelling. In *Quetzalli*, lace represented Mexico's ancient traditions, while embroidery techniques showcased India's unparalleled craftsmanship. The

Suneet Varma's *Quetzalli* collection fuses Mexican craftsmanship with Indian couture, celebrating elegance, heritage and artistry, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**



silhouettes flowed effortlessly, structured yet soft, tailored yet fluid. From tiered skirts with voluminous ruffles reminiscent of traditional Mexican dresses to contemporary separates designed for the modern woman, the collection was versatile, sensual and unmistakably Suneet. Silver, drawing inspiration from PATRÓN's meticulous tequila-making process, starting with hand-harvested Weber Blue Agave and crafting exceptional varieties like Silver, Reposado, Añejo and the ultra-premium El Cielo, was used to add a touch of refinement and sophistication to the pieces. Sheer capes adorned with metallic motifs floated behind models, reflecting the mystical energy of the Quetzal bird, after which the collection is named.

The collection also celebrated the art of working with feathers in Mexico, known as plumeria. This technique, highly valued in pre-Hispanic and colonial Mexico, was reflected in the dramatic feather details seen on some pieces in the collection. Suneet Varma's use of this ancient art form was a

reflection of his respect for both Mexican heritage and the craftsmanship behind each element of his designs. The feather details were used not just as decoration but as an integral part of the concept, evoking the elegance and mysticism of Mexico's rich history.

Varma's designs aren't limited by time or trends, they are experiences. *Quetzalli* is for the woman who wants to walk into a room and own it. Whether it's an evening gala, an intimate dinner, or a rooftop soiree, these pieces make the wearer the focus without needing to speak. The grand finale brought the audience to its feet as the designer himself took a bow amidst applause. Dressed impeccably, Suneet Varma acknowledged the partnership that made *Quetzalli* possible. It wasn't just fashion; it was a celebration of how heritage can evolve and adapt without losing its essence.

Fashion is more than just clothes, it's a way of life. *Quetzalli* captures this ethos, blending two cultures while staying true to artistry. It's about reimagining tradition, embracing innovation, and celebrating the craftspeople who bring every stitch and bead to life. As the night ended, the buzz in the air was filled with admiration for Varma's genius and the journey of *Quetzalli*. In the hands of Suneet Varma, fabric becomes a storyteller and *Quetzalli* tells a tale that stays with you long after the runway lights dim. For now, it's not just a collection; it's a legacy waiting to be adorned.

Suneet Varma says, "This collaboration with PATRÓN Tequila brings together our shared passion for artistry and heritage. The *Quetzalli* collection reflects a fusion of refined couture and Mexico's rich culture, honoring both PATRÓN's craftsmanship and my vision for elegance."

j Viva la moda, viva la herencia!

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

THE TALE OF LOVE, OBSESSION AND REVENGE RETURNS

After nearly three years, *Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhein* makes its much-anticipated return to Netflix with Season 2. Directed by Sidharth Sengupta, the web series brings back its gripping narrative style while aiming to keep the audience engaged with a fresh dose of action. The cast features Tahir Raj Bhasin, Shweta Tripathi, and Anchal Singh in the lead roles, supported by notable performances from Saurabh Shukla, Surya Sharma, and Arunoday Singh.

maintain the thrill, the over-reliance on similar storytelling techniques limits its ability to surprise and entertain viewers fully.

The cast of *Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhein* Season 2 brings their characters to life with relentless dedication, providing the primary reason for viewers to stay invested in the series. Arunoday Singh



Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhein Season 2 fascinates with its cast and narrative but falls short of delivering the unpredictability that thriller fans crave, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**



delivers a compelling performance as the contract killer Aditya Hafeez, embodying a skilled kidnapper's intense and menacing aura with his brooding demeanor and serious expressions. His portrayal is both convincing and impactful, adding a layer of depth

to the narrative. Tahir Raj Bhasin once again shines as Vikrant Singh Chauhan, the tormented protagonist at the heart of the story. Bhasin's performance is an example of his remarkable acting prowess, as he portrays Vikrant's inner turmoil and

determination with precision. His serious and gritty portrayal further solidifies his reputation as a versatile actor capable of commanding attention with every scene. Shweta Tripathi returns as Sikha, the love interest of Vikrant,



although her role is noticeably reduced in this season. Despite her limited screen time, Tripathi ensures that her presence is felt in all the key moments. The character's development takes an unexpected turn as Sikha finds herself married to a new police officer, adding an intriguing layer to the storyline.

A notable new addition to the cast is Gurmeet Choudhary, whose performance as Guru, a close friend of Purva, makes an immediate impression. Choudhary makes out a distinctive space for himself in the series, bringing a fresh dynamic to the plot. His character's arrival stirs up

the narrative, introducing a sense of unpredictability and piquing the audience's curiosity about the unfolding events. While the show's thrilling plot and dramatic twists may resonate with a general audience, it may fall short of expectations for ardent crime and thriller enthusiasts. The plot, while engaging in parts, tends to feel stretched as it goes into repetitive themes, leaving the story feeling somewhat incomplete. Despite these shortcomings, the series manages to sustain interest, largely due to its talented cast and their performances.

RATING: 3/5

the pioneer agenda



"It is in literature that the concrete outlook of humanity receives its expression"
— Alfred North Whitehead



It is a paradox of sorts: while people's reading habits are at an all-time low, there is a flood of writers producing content on virtually every subject. From fiction and non-fiction to cookbooks and travelogues, the book market is booming like never before. The Indian publishing industry was valued at approximately INR 500 billion in 2019, with projections indicating growth to INR 800 billion by 2024. This sector significantly contributes to India's economic development, fostering learning, education, and employment for over 1.2 million people.

Recent reports suggest that the industry is expanding at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 19.4%, with some estimates as high as 25%. This growth is particularly notable in the printbook market, which is anticipated to see substantial increases in value. Educational books dominate the sector, while the increasing adoption of eBooks and digital content is transforming the industry. Despite a decline in print publishing revenues due to shifting consumer preferences towards online books, magazines, and newspapers, the combined revenue from print and digital publishing continues to grow, illustrating that publishing as a whole is not in decline.

India has approximately 19,000 publishers. The publishing industry in India is vibrant but scattered, with no single association having more than 1,000 members. Evaluating publishers can be challenging, as it involves considering factors such as market size, reputation, genres covered, and influence on the literary landscape. Among the prominent names in Indian publishing, Penguin Random House India stands out as a major player, recognised for its diverse portfolio, literary excellence, and global reach. It publishes celebrated authors such as Arundhati Roy and Salman Rushdie, establishing itself as a giant in the industry.

HarperCollins India, established in 1992, is another notable publisher with a strong presence across genres, including fiction, self-help, and business books. It is home to renowned authors like Amitav Ghosh, Chetan Bhagat, and Paulo Coelho. Rupa Publications, one of India's oldest and most respected publishers, specialises in Indian fiction, biographies, and academic works, with imprints such as Rupa, Oak, and Fingerprint.

Bloomsbury India launched in 2002, has also made a mark in the industry with its high-quality literary fiction, non-fiction, children's books, and academic texts. Together, these publishers play a vital role in shaping India's literary landscape and catering to the evolving preferences of readers. But when it comes to writers it is another story. Given the size of the country, even a small percentage of people trying their hand in writing becomes large in absolute terms. However, not all are equally talented or taught. Of course, creativity cannot be taught in school, but style and form can be. With very few institutions that hone the craft of writing the writing suffers and only a handful of writers stand out in the ocean of mediocrity.

Of course, Books cannot be strictly categorised as good or bad; they are simply those you cherish and those you don't. Some books resonate deeply, while others leave you wondering who they were written for. Even so, labelling a book as 'bad' feels unfair; what one dislikes might be perfect for someone with different tastes or standards. But having said that it is also true some books leave a bad taste in the mouth for almost all. Though the number of writers is swelling, which is indeed a good thing that cannot be said about the quality of books written by them. There is a



Where are the bold, thoughtful voices that once defined Indian literature? As commercial pressures dominate, the true art of writing seems increasingly overshadowed, writes
GYANESHWAR DAYAL

The write thing!

growing trend among new Indian authors to just write and have a book under their name. This is perhaps more true of writers writing in English than in other Indian languages. Many recent books feel amateurish and hastily written. It's frustrating to see many careless writings being passed off as literature, leaving readers feeling duped.

Many books are being churned out with similar themes as if other streams have dried up — ala Bollywood which tends to produce similar films after a blockbuster, hoping to cash in on the success. Others who experiment often end up with juvenile themes and shallow characters. It seems the trend began with the overwhelming success of Chetan Bhagat. While Bhagat's book was light and entertaining, its success led many aspiring writers to believe they could replicate his formula without effort—by simply injecting Bollywood-like clichés into their stories. Many times writers succumb to commercial temptations, trying to publish which would get them a filmmaker like Slumdog Millionaire after the film adaptation's Oscar triumph. Thus, we have a trend: literature crafted to satisfy a superficial public demand, rather than to challenge or inspire.

No doubt publishing is a business like any other and must make a profit. It also has to compete with the reader's attention span of human goldfish- the GenZ. But that often comes with a big price tag. Where are the bold, thoughtful voices of Indian literature? Where are the Salman Rushdies, Amitav Ghoshes, R.K. Narayan, and Anita Desais of today? Literature thrives on diversity, but the current scene of Indian writing in English seems weighed down by opportunists chasing fame over craft. And make no mistake this trend is here to stay. It is all over -- visible in the literature festivals even in the reputed ones.

As they say, it is easy to write a book but difficult to make a person read it. To make it readable it needs to be worth the time and effort of the reader – give him or her some insights, information or perspective he didn't have or make him laugh or cry if that is intended. Translating thoughts into words is an art that deserves to be approached with seriousness. To do so, one must often seclude themselves, almost in a spiritual sense, and dedicate their focus to the act of writing. Writing retreats are an excellent opportunity to refine your skills, learn the ropes, and gain insight into the publishing industry. Mentors, often editors from the industry, along with established writers, offer valuable tips and guidance.

In a world increasingly characterised by distractions, writing retreats have emerged as sanctuaries where budding writers can focus, grow, and thrive. These retreats offer a unique blend of solitude, community, and professional guidance, making them appealing to anyone passionate about honing their craft.

Writing retreats often take place in idyllic settings, mountains, beaches, countryside estates, away from the hustle of daily life. This change of scenery not only inspires creativity but also provides the peace needed to concentrate on storytelling. Many retreats combine workshops, one-on-one mentoring, and group discussions, creating a collaborative yet personal environment. Fortunately, we have many literary retreats to choose from, some good, others very good! TheWriteScene's Landour Writers' Retreat recently unfolded as a vibrant tapestry of inspiration and creativity. Founded by award-winning author Deeba Salim Irfan, this retreat was not just a gathering of minds but a sanctuary for writers from across India, offering them the opportunity to refine their craft in the tranquil surroundings that once inspired the renowned author Ruskin Bond.

"I founded the Landour Writing Retreat to provide aspiring writers with the support they need to thrive. Drawing from my own experience as a published and award-winning author, I understand the challenges and rewards of the writing journey. The serene setting of Landour inspires creativity and focus. Beyond Landour, I organise retreats in picturesque locations like Kangra Valley, India, Slovenia and Lapland (Northern Lights) fostering a global community of writers. I also



The Allure of Writing Retreats

Writing retreats emerge as havens for writing enthusiasts, offering serene surroundings to inspire creativity and refine their craft.



curate the English and Filipino sessions of the Tabbib Literary Festival in Dubai, a platform for diverse voices and literary exchange." Deeba says with a smile and a sense of satisfaction.

The sense of community is another powerful draw. Writing can be a solitary endeavour, and retreats allow participants to connect with like-minded individuals. "Writing is a solitary profession. You sit alone with memory and imagination, both equal parts dangerous and exciting. Writing retreats are a warm hand extended in time, nudging you on, picking

you up and sometimes, putting you back on track" says author and lawyer Sonia Chauhan. The Landour Writing Retreat is one such retreat. From the hosts to the sessions to the participants, it was a motivating journey. Sharing ideas, receiving feedback, and networking with peers and mentors can be incredibly motivating and lead to lifelong creative partnerships. What participants feel is indeed writ large on their faces, "the Landour Writing Retreat was more than a getaway, it was a turning point in my writing journey. I discovered the art of truly listening to my inner voice. The retreat's emphasis on discipline balanced with creativity taught me to treat writing as both a craft and a calling. Sessions by seasoned experts from the publishing industry added technical depth, knowledge, and insights into demystifying the process of writing and publishing in India," says Bijetri Roy, an upcoming writer in her own right.

Additionally, retreats often invite established authors, editors, and publishers to guide participants. This access to industry professionals offers budding writers' invaluable insights into the craft of writing and the business of getting published.

For many budding talents, the challenge isn't just about writing—it's about finding the time and discipline to do so consistently. Writing retreats provide structured schedules that balance writing time with relaxation, fostering a productive rhythm. They also encourage writers to step out of their comfort zones, experiment with new styles, and confront creative blocks.

"The Landour Retreat was a perfect combination of creativity-sparking processes, sufficient unstructured time to allow writing whenever one entered a flow, and quality discussion time with a bunch of like-minded people who write because they love to, and who felt like long-known friends even though we had all just met. The insights shared by publishing industry professionals at the Retreat were invaluable eye-openers for me, says gratified Nilanjana, an avid reader and a writer.

In recent years, writing retreats have gained immense popularity, driven partly by the rise of remote work and digital nomadism. People now seek fulfilling, creative experiences that go beyond their day-to-day routines. As more people explore writing as a career or serious hobby, the demand for such retreats has surged. This trend reflects a cultural shift toward valuing personal storytelling and self-expression. Networking at retreats is also a valuable opportunity to build connections that could open doors to literary agents, publishers, and collaborative opportunities.

"India's literary scene is a dynamic blend of tradition and modernity, marked by its linguistic diversity and exploration of contemporary themes like gender, mental health, and identity. Regional narratives and translations are gaining prominence, while digital platforms and self-publishing empower emerging voices. Young writers experiment with genres like fantasy and speculative fiction, and women authors tackle issues of patriarchy and empowerment. International accolades, such as Geetanjali Shree's Booker Prize win, highlight India's global literary impact," says Rajul, who is a well-known mentor and editor.

Writing retreats are more than just creative getaways; they are transformative experiences that equip writers with the tools, confidence, and connections needed to succeed. Whether you're an aspiring novelist, a poet, or a memoirist, a writing retreat could be the spark that ignites your literary journey.



The Art of Authentic Kashmiri Dining

Kashmirana serves authentic Kashmiri food with a cosy setting, bringing the flavours of Kashmir to Gurugram

FOOD FREAK



Pawan Soni
 Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards

My friends have been dedicated patrons of **Kashmirana**, a Kashmiri restaurant nestled in Rodeo Drive that's gained a steady following in its five years. They've shared their experiences numerous times, so I was eager to see what the buzz was about on my first visit.

Kashmirana has a cosy vibe with a mix of comfortable table seating and a few low tables for those looking to linger. My wife aptly described the interiors as reminiscent of a houseboat's warmth and charm.

We found ourselves indulging in a variety of dishes, given her vegetarian preference. In the non-vegetarian starters, the Tabakmaaz and mutton seekh kebabs were both outstanding. The Tabakmaaz had that perfect crispiness, yielding to the fatty richness inside, while the mutton seekh had a delicate, hollow centre that retained a satisfying bite - some of the juiciest I've had in Gurgaon. My wife, on the other hand, enjoyed the lotus root fritters (*nadru chips*), cut into long, crispy strips and coated with a flavourful, addictive spice blend.

In the mains, the *rista* and *goshtaba* were delightful, with the same signature spongy meatballs but distinct gravies that made each dish memorable. I prefer bigger balls but these tasted so good. On the vegetarian side, the *haaq*, *rajma*, and *nadru yakhani* shone brightly, leaving us no choice but to pack up the leftovers - vegetarian for us and non-vegetarian for my friends. And if I say we loved the non-veg, it's only fair to note the vegetarian options were no less satisfying.

Traditional brassware enhanced the authenticity of the experience, and the *kehwa* added an extra layer of warmth, perfect for the season. Though the *phirni* was good, I've had more refined versions. However, the dry fruit-laden *shufta*, cooked in *desi ghee*, was a decadent finale.

Kashmirana's portions are ample, the pricing fair, and the food impressive, especially as the restaurant filled with fellow Kashmiris as we dined, a clear testament to its authenticity and popularity among those who truly know this cuisine.



RATINGS (Out of 5):
FOOD: 4.0 | **AMBIENCE:** 3.75 |
SERVICE: 4.0 | **OVERALL:** 4.0



ADDRESS: KASHMIRANA, 1ST FLOOR, RODEO DRIVE, SECTOR 49, GURUGRAM | **PHONE:** 85953 99049

The Heart of Odisha's Cuisine

Chor Bizarre's Odia pop-up brings an authentic, unique taste of Odisha, writes **TEAM AGENDA**



Left to right - Culinary Collaborator Mona Lisa Bal, Chef Srinivasulu. A and Actor & Filmmaker Nandita Das

When one thinks of India's diverse culinary landscape, it's easy to be drawn to the well-known dishes of the north or the spicy delights of the south. But what about the understated flavours of Odisha? Often overshadowed by its more famous counterparts, Odisha's cuisine is a hidden gem, rich in taste and steeped in tradition. The recent **Odia pop-up** at Chor Bizarre, the iconic Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi restaurant, offered a rare opportunity to experience the unique vegetarian dishes of Odisha, expertly curated by actor-filmmaker Nandita Das and her culinary collaborator Mona Lisa Bal. The event was an exciting foray into the lesser-known corners of Indian cuisine, offering an authentic glimpse into the simple yet bold flavours of Odisha. With the restaurant's longstanding reputation for bringing regional Indian cuisines to the forefront, this pop-up felt like a welcome celebration of the state's rich culinary heritage, especially for those in New Delhi who may not have had the chance to explore it. The carefully crafted vegetarian menu showcased the simplicity and brilliance of Odia cuisine. The meal began with "Ghole Dahi" (Odia Chhas), a traditional yogurt-based drink that was both refreshing and tangy, setting the tone for the meal ahead. It was the perfect introduction to a menu that relied on fresh, local ingredients and a delicate balance of spices.



addition of "Kusala Saaga" (Amaranth Leaves with Garlic) and "Santula" (Sautéed Vegetables with Five Spices) further exemplified the region's love for vegetables, bringing out the freshness and natural taste of the ingredients in every bite.

The accompaniments were the perfect complements to the main dishes. "Chakuli Pita," a soft, chewy flatbread made with lentils and rice, was ideal for scooping up curries, while the steamed "Bhaata" (rice) acted as a neutral base to balance the complex spices.

No meal would be complete without dessert, and Chor Bizarre didn't disappoint. "Kheer Sagar" (Chhena Balls in Thickened Milk) offered a rich and creamy end to the meal, while "Chhena Poda," a baked chhena dessert, had a beautiful caramelised flavour that left a lasting impression.

The vegetarian menu was, without a doubt, the star of the pop-up. However, it's worth noting that the non-vegetarian thali also garnered rave reviews, with guests praising its perfect blend of spices and execution. Chor Bizarre's ability to balance both vegetarian and non-vegetarian offerings with such precision only further cements its reputation as a destination for authentic regional cuisine.

The **Odia pop-up** at Chor Bizarre was an enlightening and flavoursome journey into the heart of Odisha's culinary culture. For those who have yet to explore the delights of Odia cuisine, this pop-up provided a rare and memorable experience, showcasing the region's unique approach to vegetarian dishes that are as healthy as they are flavourful. With its emphasis on fresh ingredients, simple yet creative preparations, and a deep respect for tradition, this pop-up was a celebration of the incredible variety India's regional cuisines have to offer.



When it comes to coffee culture, **First Coffee** has always been a name synonymous with quality, creativity and bold flavours. Co-founded by the dynamic trio of Sohrab Sitaram, Shiv Dhawan and Chandini D Purnesh, this café has been a favourite haunt for caffeine enthusiasts and foodies alike. Their latest revamped menu is here to take your coffee and snack experience to the next level. Packed with innovative offerings, trendy beverages and classic delights, the menu is designed to cater to every palate. Whether you're a matcha enthusiast, a fan of indulgent pastries or someone who loves a good sandwich or wrap, **First Coffee** has you covered.

COMFORT AND CONVERSATIONS: **First Coffee's** interiors feel like a warm hug. With cosy seating, soothing earthy tones and the irresistible aroma of freshly brewed coffee, the café offers the perfect setting for everything from a quick catch-up to a leisurely workday. The ambience strikes a delicate balance between modern design and laid-back charm, making it a space you'll want to stay in.

TRENDY SIPS: THE MATCHA LATTE Among the highlights of the new menu is the Matcha Latte, a drink that's as vibrant as it is intriguing. Known for its earthy, slightly grassy



Co Founders : Sohrab Sitaram and Shiv Dhawan



flavour, matcha has become a favourite among those looking for a trendy yet healthy alternative. While it might take some getting used to for first-timers, it's a sip worth acquiring. **First Coffee's** version offers a creamy, balanced taste that pairs beautifully with savoury bites like the paneer tikka sandwich or the chickpea Veggie wrap.

NEVER GO OUT OF STYLE: As much as **First Coffee** excels in innovation, they also understand the value of keeping things classic. Their Classic Iced Coffee remains a cornerstone of the menu, offering a refreshing pick-me-up that's as dependable as it is delicious. Perfectly brewed and served chilled, it's a reminder of why **First Coffee** became a beloved name in the first place.

SWEET DREAMS IN EVERY BITE: Sweet tooth? You're in for a treat. The new menu introduces the incredible range of pastries. First up is the freshly baked Choco-Berry Dream Doughnut, a decadent creation that combines the richness of chocolate and custard with a fresh twist of blueberry jam and shaved chocolate on top. If you're a fan of chocolate, the Choco Truffle Eclairs are not to be missed. They combine deep, indulgent chocolate flavours with just the right amount



MORE THAN JUST A COFFEE!

First Coffee's revamped menu combines innovative flavours, trendy beverages and classic favourites, creating the perfect coffee and snack experience, writes **TEAM AGENDA**



of berry sweetness, making them the perfect treat for anyone with a sweet tooth. For something a bit more adventurous, the Blueberry Passion Eclairs and the Nutella Cinnamon Roll are a must-try. The cinnamon roll, in particular, is topped with marshmallows and toasted seeds, adding extra texture and sweetness to every bite.

SAVOURY DELIGHTS: The savoury offerings on the menu are just as impressive. The Truffle Mushroom Sandwich is a symphony of flavours, combining truffled mushrooms, caramelised onions and gooey cheese. It's rich, satisfying, and indulgent. For a spicier kick, the Chipotle Veggie Sandwich features Mexican-inspired vegetables and melted cheese layered on hearty Italian bread. Wrap lovers will adore the Chickpea Veggie Wrap, a flavour-packed burrito-style wrap filled with spicy chickpeas, and tangy pickled onions. Pair it with a side of their crispy Classic Fries for a meal that's as comforting as it is filling.

SWEET AND SAVOURY PAIRINGS: The new menu is designed with pairings in mind, offering a curated experience that complements every dish. Enjoy their signature Crunchy Hazelnut Smash for a heavenly mix of chocolatey sweetness and nutty richness. Or, pair the bold Flaky Chicken Seekh Wrap with a soothing Ginger Tea and Masala tea for a balance of spice and warmth.

If you're in the mood to experiment, the Cascara Thunder, a refreshing mix of cascara syrup over ice and lemonade, offers a zesty complement to the bold flavours of wraps. Each pairing has been thoughtfully created to elevate your dining experience.

DESSERTS AND SIDES THAT DELIGHT: **First Coffee** has also introduced indulgent sides and desserts that are worth savouring. The Korean BBQ Potato and Chicken Poppers are perfect companions to their wraps and sandwiches, while the Brookie, a fusion of brownie and cookie, is a dessert dream come true.

WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT: **First Coffee's** new menu blends trendy offerings like the Matcha Latte with timeless classics like the Iced Coffee, creating a menu that caters to every taste and preference. Add in the cosy, welcoming ambience and you have a café that's more than just a place to grab a coffee, it's a destination.

FACT SHEET

LOCATIONS:

- Cyberhub, Gurugram
- Pacific Mall, Jasola
- Pacific Mall, NSP

Nestled gracefully in the foothills of the Kumaon region in Uttarakhand, Mukteshwar is a serene and unspoiled retreat that has yet to gain the limelight it truly deserves. Perched at an elevation of 2,171 meters, this picturesque hill station is located approximately 51 kilometers from the bustling town of Nainital. Mukteshwar offers you an idyllic escape for those seeking solace amidst nature’s bounty and a peaceful respite from the chaos of urban life.

The Journey to Mukteshwar

The journey to Mukteshwar is as scenic as the destination itself. Once you cross the town of Nainital and continue your ascent, the winding roads begin to carve through the hills, offering a thrilling experience of hairpin bends and steep curves. The air grows crisper, and the lush greenery surrounding you seems to come alive, offering a visual treat to your senses. The long stretches of forested hills and cascading valleys make the drive a captivating experience, setting the stage for the calm that awaits you.

A Gateway to Himalayan Grandeur

Formerly known as Muktesar, Mukteshwar serves as a gateway to the majestic Himalayas, providing breathtaking views of snow-clad peaks. The Himalayan panorama here includes the towering Nanda Devi, the second-highest peak in India, standing tall as a symbol of nature’s grandeur. The pristine mountain air and serene ambiance work like a balm, calming your soul and rejuvenating your spirit. Mukteshwar’s unspoiled beauty makes it an ideal destination for mindful activities such as meditation, yoga, or simply soaking in the peace of the surroundings.

Mukteshwar Dham: A Spiritual Treat

The town derives its name from the revered Mukteshwar Dham, an ancient temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. Believed to be over



THE SCENIC AND SIMPLE MUKTESHWAR



Mukteshwar is a quite destination that will help you discover your calmer self, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**



5,350 years old, this temple is not only a place of worship but also a testament to the spiritual and historical richness of the region. Located 21 kilometres from the town centre, the temple is perched atop a hill, offering mesmerizing views of the valley below. To reach the temple, visitors must embark on a short yet rewarding trek of about 15 minutes. There are two paths leading to the temple: one with well-paved stairs and another with a steep incline, allowing visitors to choose based on their preference and stamina.

Zero Point: A Viewpoint like No Other

Just a short walk from the Mukteshwar Dham lays Zero Point, a spot that offers unparalleled views of the Himalayan range. The 10 to 15-minute walk to this viewpoint is well worth the effort, as the vistas that greet you are nothing short of magical. A small entry fee of Rs. 60 is required, but the sight of the towering peaks bathed in golden sunlight or shrouded in misty clouds is a reward far greater than the cost. Zero Point allows visitors to fully immerse themselves in the raw beauty of the mountains, leaving an indelible mark on their hearts.

Why Mukteshwar?

Mukteshwar is more than just a destination, it is an experience that soothes the mind, body, and soul. Whether you are looking to relax in silence, embrace the beauty of nature, or embark on a spiritual journey, this quaint hill station has something for everyone. With its charming landscapes, rich history, and spiritual essence, Mukteshwar stands as a testament to the timeless beauty of Uttarakhand’s Kumaon Hills. The place is a must visit if you want to detox yourself.

WAY TO MUKTESHWAR

Mukteshwar promises not just a tranquil retreat but also a journey filled with stunning views. Whether you prefer flying, riding a train, or driving through scenic routes, the travel itself becomes part of the adventure. From picturesque landscapes to steep turns on the mountain roads, each mode of transport offers a unique charm. Comfortable travel options ensure that reaching this beautiful destination is as delightful as staying there.

Mukteshwar by Road

Mukteshwar is well-connected by road, lying 353 km from Delhi, 51 km from Nainital, and 42 km from Haldwani. State-run buses link Mukteshwar with nearby Uttarakhand cities, including Kathgodam. Luxury buses are also available on the Delhi-Kathgodam route, with buses departing from Delhi’s ISBT. The journey from Delhi to Kathgodam takes about 8 hours. For those driving from Delhi, follow NH 24 to Rampur, then NH 87 to Ranibagh. From Ranibagh, take the state highway to Bhowali, and finally another state highway via Ramgarh to Mukteshwar.

Mukteshwar by Train

Kathgodam Railway Station is the closest railhead to Mukteshwar, offering connections to major cities like Delhi, Lucknow, and Kolkata. From Kathgodam, travelers can hire taxis or take buses to reach Mukteshwar conveniently.

Mukteshwar by Air

The nearest airport to Mukteshwar is Pantnagar Airport, located 111 km away. Another option is the Jolly Grant Airport in Dehradun. From both airports, travelers can hire taxis to reach Mukteshwar comfortably.



Escape to Peaceful Jihar

From stunning Himalayan vistas and hidden waterfalls to the charm of Nivriti Summit View, my journey to Jihar was a perfect blend of adventure, tranquillity, and warm hospitality, writes **DIVYA BHATIA**



arranged a picnic lunch for us there, and it was nothing short of magical. Surrounded by the sounds of rustling leaves and flowing water, the experience felt like stepping into another world. The locals mentioned occasional sightings of leopards, though they assured us these majestic creatures had never harmed anyone—a testament to the harmonious coexistence of humans and wildlife here. Evenings back at the property were spent stargazing. The clear skies above Jihar unveiled the Milky Way in all its glory, a humbling reminder of the universe’s vastness. It’s rare to find a place where time slows down, where each moment invites introspection and wonder. Jihar, with its unpretentious beauty, offers precisely that. In today’s fast-paced world, places like Jihar remind us of the beauty of simplicity. It’s not just a destination; it’s an experience—a chance to slow down, breathe, and reconnect with what truly matters. Whether you’re a nature lover, an adventure seeker, or simply someone looking to escape the crowds, Jihar promises memories you’ll treasure for a lifetime.

HOW TO GET TO JIHAR

Reaching Jihar is part of the adventure. The nearest airport is Pantnagar, about 140 km away, while Kathgodam railway station is 100 km from the village. From these points, the scenic drive to Jihar is best enjoyed in a private cab or local bus.

As someone who lives for the thrill of discovering untouched destinations, my recent journey to Jihar Village was a revelation. Nestled in the Almora district of Uttarakhand, this unspoiled hamlet, perched at an elevation, offers a serene escape from the chaos of modern life. It lies about 45 km beyond the ever-popular Jim Corbett National Park, yet few venture this far—a detail that adds to its charm. What awaited me was a perfect blend of natural beauty, cultural heritage, and heartwarming simplicity. The drive to Jihar was nothing short of mesmerising. The winding road was flanked by pine forests and occasional streams that glistened under the sunlight. Accompanied by lovely music in the car, I was lost in the serenity of the place. Two jackals darted across the path at one point, a reminder of the region’s rich wildlife. As I drew closer, the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas greeted me, reaffirming that I had made the right choice to explore this lesser-known gem. For accommodation, I opted for Nivriti Summit View, a boutique property near Basot village. Travelling with my family, I needed a place that catered to both comfort and scenic beauty, and this property delivered on all fronts. The first thing that struck me upon arrival was the sheer grandeur of the views. On one side, the majestic Himalayan ranges seemed close enough to touch, while on the other, the



endless valley stretched into a picturesque horizon. The sight of the Ramganga River winding its way below added to the allure. The property, with its six thoughtfully designed rooms, was a sanctuary in itself. Each room had large windows that framed the surrounding beauty like a painting. What made the stay even more special was the personal touch of the owner, Randhir Brar, whose love for travel and nature was evident in every corner. From curated books to artistic décor, every detail told a story. My mornings began with the golden glow of Nanda Devi, and my evenings ended with a cup of tea as Trisul’s snowy peaks reflected the last light of the day. The highlight for my children was the sprawling garden—a perfect space to play and unwind. For me, it was the property’s glasshouse rooms, which allowed me to gaze at the stars from the comfort of my bed. The culinary experience was equally memorable. While I enjoyed

their continental offerings, the Kumaoni dishes—prepared with fresh, local ingredients—stole the show. Don’t miss the chance to savour dishes like Bhatt ki Churdhani and Aloo ke

Gutke, prepared with expertise. After a full day of relaxation, we set out the following morning to explore Jihar. Our first stop was the Bhone Devi Temple, a revered shrine

nested deep within the forests. Located about 14 km from Kalason Basot, the temple is more than 250 years old and steeped in local legend. It houses a Shivling, a pillar of Kaal Bhairavnath, and the sacred hearth of Harju Devta. The moment we stepped into the temple premises, a serene calmness enveloped us, as though the place radiated an abundance of positive energy. However, it

“MAKE YOUR OWN BIBLE. SELECT AND COLLECT ALL THE WORDS AND SENTENCES THAT IN ALL YOUR READINGS HAVE BEEN TO YOU LIKE THE BLAST OF A TRUMPET”
– RALPH WALDO EMERSON

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week holds significant promise, particularly in financial matters. You may find yourself receiving substantial gains early in the week. Celebrations are in order, with joyful gatherings that underscore your recent successes in your professional life. Happiness permeates the home front as well, with key contributions from the women in your life, who display remarkable health, creativity, and energy. Their nurturing roles enhance the joy and unity of those around them. The week may also feature meaningful family events such as the joyous arrival of a new family member or the initiation of a lucrative opportunity, bringing loved ones together to share in the collective joy. As the week closes, expect a shift in perspective that could profoundly reshape your approach to life, setting the stage for enduring benefits.

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Amber
Lucky day Tuesday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week calls for measured actions and a calm demeanor. Embracing moderation rather than giving in to impulsive reactions will serve you well. Opportunities that could significantly improve your circumstances may arise, yet there's a risk of undermining these prospects through unchecked pride or a dismissive attitude. While self-respect is crucial, maintaining a balance with how others perceive you is equally important. You might find that new beginnings in your endeavors could stir envy among competitors. Stay vigilant as you could become the target of negative intentions. It's wise to be observant and understand the motivations of those around you. Secure your valuable possessions and keep a close eye on those who have access to your personal space or property.

Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Thursday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week, you'll find yourself feeling invigorated and full of life, ready to tackle any obstacles that come your way. There's a sense of cosmic alignment that seems to enhance your efforts, steering you towards successful outcomes. Your energy is well-placed, boosting areas of your life that need the most attention. With a clear vision and unwavering resolve, you're set to conquer your highest aspirations. At home, the atmosphere buzzes with the promise of significant events that bring joy and fulfillment. A deep-seated wish of yours may finally come to fruition, possibly linked to family growth or children's achievements, which might include academic successes or securing opportunities they've eagerly sought. Your belief in your abilities and a higher power greatly shapes your reality, fostering a positive environment that encourages you to achieve remarkable things.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Turquoise
Lucky day Monday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week is heavily influenced by your emotional and sentimental nature. You may find yourself in a nurturing role, eager to care for those close to you. Your compassionate demeanor makes you a source of solace and advice for many, although this could distract you from your professional responsibilities. Be mindful of those around you, as there's a risk that your straightforward approach might be exploited. It's essential to strategize and act decisively to ensure stability and financial security. Without active efforts and concrete plans, mere wishful thinking won't yield the desired results. Stay focused on your objectives and manage your emotions effectively to navigate through the week successfully.

Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Crimson
Lucky day Sunday



VirGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week, individuals born under Virgo may experience a sense of isolation and a disconnection from everyday activities. Challenges in personal relationships, such as a break-up or a marital strain, could be impacting your emotional well-being. You might also find obstacles in your professional life; despite diligent efforts, progress seems stalled. This period requires patience and resilience. Stay prepared to counter any resistance you face as this may be the final test before you achieve your objectives. An influential figure may emerge to assist you, providing the support needed to overcome your current challenges. Expect a shift towards spiritual growth and a surge of new ideas. This fresh perspective will infuse your endeavors with innovation and a stronger sense of self-assurance.

Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Olive
Lucky day Saturday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week, you may find yourself navigating a mix of emotions and detachment in your personal relationships. Minor irritants could lead to disagreements, but ultimately, decisions will be reached mutually. In your professional life, your kindness and generosity will shine, enhancing your reputation. Unexpected financial gains could provide a sense of security, bolstering your ability to handle both personal and professional challenges with skill and efficiency. Your reliable and devoted nature will make you a trusted figure at work. A natural curiosity will drive your desire to acquire new knowledge, fueling your success and making you a source of inspiration for others. You will uphold strong ethical standards, advocating for your beliefs and demonstrating integrity in all your endeavors.

Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour Maroon
Lucky day Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week, you demonstrate a compelling sense of authority and determination. Your strength lies not in physical prowess but in your ability to lead and inspire others to action. Your charismatic yet firm approach garners respect, although it leaves little room for emotional considerations. This could lead to some challenges in personal relationships, possibly causing strain or even separation. Family tensions may arise, particularly with maternal figures possibly opposing your choices in personal partnerships, leading to disagreements. Midweek, you might find yourself overwhelmed, struggling to make autonomous decisions due to these pressures. However, by week's end, you will find both financial and emotional enrichment as a respected elder, possibly a paternal figure, steps in to support you. Their fair and generous actions will lay the groundwork for your future achievements.

Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Indigo
Lucky day Wednesday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

In the coming period, you may encounter situations that test the strength of your relationships, potentially leading to deep emotional impacts. Embrace these challenges as they arise; they are opportunities for personal growth and resilience. Fear of not meeting expectations or achieving success might loom large, yet remember that true bravery emerges from confronting and mastering these fears. Should a new opportunity present itself, seize it with confidence and move decisively toward your aspirations. Let go of any reservations and clear any obstacles from your path. If recent achievements seem less significant than anticipated, take time to reassess and refresh your strategies. By week's end, you could find yourself in a more prosperous position, with increased financial prospects or an attractive proposal coming your way.

Lucky number 1 | Lucky colour Lavender
Lucky day Wednesday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week presents a dynamic and steady phase for you, marked by significant authority and confidence. You find yourself in a scenario where confronting and engaging with influential individuals is not only possible but likely. This period allows you to relish a surge of energy and maintain strong connections with those around you. You may find yourself acting as a guiding figure, providing advice, setting goals, and fostering a sense of security for others. There's a harmonious alignment of your physical, mental, and emotional states, enhancing your decision-making prowess. Your presence demands respect, as you consistently uphold your principles, make fair judgments, and speak honestly. Your ability to maintain a clear vision ensures that emotions do not cloud your decisions, positioning you as a leader who views the broader context of any situation.

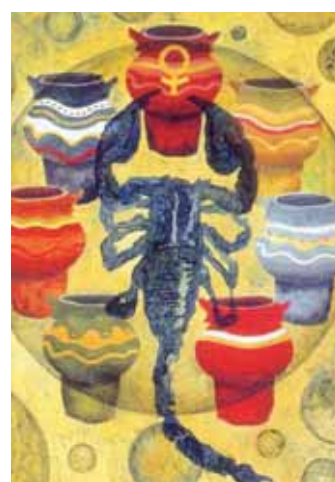
Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Fuchsia
Lucky day Sunday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week is a time for rejuvenation. Step away from the whirlwind of your daily activities and allow yourself some moments of relaxation. Embrace self-care by engaging in activities that refresh both your physical and mental well-being—consider routine health screenings, engage in mindful exercises, take leisurely strolls, and ensure you are getting ample rest. Such practices will equip you to navigate the energetic pace of life that lies ahead. Your professional life may soon pulsate with new opportunities and potential advancements such as raises or promotions. At home, expect to be more involved with family duties, especially in attending to children's needs, which could increase your expenditures. Additionally, consider planning a getaway that promises romantic undertones and quality family time.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Teal
Lucky day Saturday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

Currently, you possess a significant intensity and strength, which enhances your ability to understand the core of any situation distinctly. Your sharp insights and deep perceptiveness are at their peak, simplifying the process of achieving your objectives. This period is optimal for dispelling any confusion that has obscured your inner truths and for releasing the constraints of your past that have impeded your progress. Focus is now essential on your aspirations, accompanied by a profound spiritual enlightenment. Dedicate your time to harmonizing with the natural world—engage in morning or evening walks, embrace practices like yoga and meditation, or even consider participating in sports at a professional level. Embrace the flow of life's currents, allowing them to guide you forward naturally.

Lucky number 14 | Lucky colour Coral
Lucky day Sunday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

Individuals born under this sign possess boundless potential, enabling them to transform and craft their reality as they see fit. While it is not feasible for everyone to uncover every mystery, these individuals often lead others to explore and tap into their own depths to unveil untapped capabilities. Known for their deep spiritual focus, they wield considerable power to enrich and fundamentally change lives. They adhere to a strong belief in balance and fairness, understanding that every action triggers a corresponding reaction, echoing the principles of cause and effect. To cultivate positive outcomes, they maintain a mindset geared toward making decisions that align with their desired results. This clarity of thought facilitates the full realization of their goals and alleviates many of life's challenges. Anticipate a significant journey or change in the near future.

Lucky number 17 | Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Friday

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The Power of a Thought

THE TUNING FORK



CV Srikanth

‘Cogito, ergo sum’ ... I think therefore I am. ...
René Descartes
If you have decided to read this. Stop. Think what you are thinking now. Because ... Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right! The only thing absolutely in our power is our Thought. It shapes our reality. Influences our emotions. Translates to actions. And ultimately defines the quality of our lives. This concept is deeply embedded in various philosophical and spiritual traditions, including ancient Indian wisdom, emphasizing the profound impact of our mental processes, manifesting into our experiences.
In the realm of Vedic philosophy, the Nature of thoughts is not just merely a fleeting phenomenon. They are powerful forces that can create or destroy. The idea that “you become what you think” resonates with many ancient texts, highlighting the significance of cultivating positive thoughts.

“यथा संकल्पते मनः तदनुसम्यद्यते”
“As the mind thinks, so it becomes.”

The quality of our thoughts directly influences our reality. A positive mindset attracts positive experiences. Positive Thinking is not merely wishful thinking. It is a conscious effort to reshape our cognitive patterns. This idea is echoed in various scriptures that advocate for a mindset centred on optimism and well-being.

“असतो मासद्गमय”
“Lead me from the unreal to the real.”

This shloka from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad encourages individuals to move from ignorance to knowledge. By focusing on positive and truthful thoughts, we navigate through the complexities of life towards clarity and holistic well-being. A thought is energy. Almost impossible to stop from flowing in. Having a sizeable impact effect on every facet of our life. What however is possible and should be the goal is to regulate them conscientiously so as to have them supportively influence and nourish our present moment. How we nurture our thoughts is in our control. Thereby we can manage how they impact us. If we



allow the negative to nest within for a long period, we create a cyclic trap which is detrimental. It is important to emphasize here that when we stay on and nourish thoughts, we become what we think. Yet ... we must recognise that and understand that we are not our thoughts. We

have the ability to rise above them. Meditation and mindfulness practices are vital in harnessing the power of our thoughts. They help in cultivating consciousness, allowing us to observe our thoughts without attachment. This detachment is crucial in

understanding the transient nature of thoughts.
“शान्ताकारं युज्यते मनश्शुभ्रतिथिनिनाम्”
“Peaceful in form, resting on a serpent, Lord of all beings, O yogis...”

This shloka refers to Lord Shiva, symbolising inner peace and

mastery over the mind. Through practices that promote mindfulness, we can align our thoughts with tranquillity and purpose.

The power of thoughts extends beyond the individual. It influences our ecosystem. The teachings of the Upanishads highlight the interconnectedness of life and the importance of collective positivity. The power of our thoughts is a profound truth recognised in ancient Indian philosophy. By cultivating positive, constructive thoughts, we can transform our reality, contribute to our well-being, and enhance our connections with ourselves, others and the Universe. As we navigate through life's challenges, our thoughts hold the key to our experiences, shaping our destinies with each conscious choice we make.

As Raman Maharishi said - The degree of freedom from unwanted thoughts and the degree of concentration on a single thought are the measures to gauge spiritual progress. We are the seat of limitless Power - through our thought. Just One Thought can make all the difference!! I think therefore I am.

Now you can write to us at agendapioneer@gmail.com