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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 The city's two major water treatment plants, Jiwani Mandi and Sikandra Water Works, are still stuck with outdated technologies that can only test for basic parameters like turbidity, color, pH, TDS, hardness, coliform, and E. coli.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 Bangladeshis 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 Bangladeshis infiltrators should not be given houses on rent and those houses who have already rented out their premises should evict them.

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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 Govindpur. 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 Govindpur. 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.

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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 cosponsored 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 Radharam Das told PTI that the targeted attack on members of the community and members of the Vaishnavite order goes unabated as "vandals set ablaze idols inside the temple at the Namhatta property." He said in a post on X handle, "ISKCON Namhatta Centre burnt 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 Namhatta 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 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.

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Dubai returned dulha brings baraath, 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 taxi, 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.

Saints define Kumbh grandeur, govt plays supporting role: Yogi

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasised that the holiness and grandeur of the Maha Kumbh owe their essence to the revered saints, with the government and administration merely acting as partners in its organisation.

CM inaugurates 100 shelters with 25,000 beds for devotees

Prayagraj (PNS): Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Saturday, inaugurated 100 public shelters, each with a capacity of 250 beds and equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, in the Maha Kumbh Mela area.

Additional provisions include clean drinking water and 24x7 security. Devotees from all sections of society attending the Maha Kumbh can avail themselves of these facilities at a nominal fee.

SI, constable suspended for negligence

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A sub-inspector and a constable were suspended on Saturday for negligence in connection with the cylinder explosion case in Dubagga on Friday evening.

Consequently, both officers were suspended, and a probe was initiated," the DCP said. Around 7 pm on Friday, an explosion occurred due to illegal gas refilling, resulting in a fire.

Faizabad road on Friday night and succumbed to injuries on the way to RML Hospital. Police informed his family of the incident after retrieving their contact details from his mobile phone, which was found on him.

ELECTRICIAN KILLED IN ROAD MISHAP

An electrician was seriously injured after his bike collided with a loader on Lucknow-

Wedding procession turns violent as gatecrashers molest women

Lucknow (PNS): A wedding procession heading towards the Ram Janaki Guest House in Aliganj turned violent late on Friday night when a group of youths from a nearby slum allegedly gatecrashed the event.

MAN SHOT AT, NABBED

Deoria/Gorakhpur: A murder case suspect was shot in the leg and nabbed Saturday morning in the Surauli area of Deoria district, police said.

Man loses over ₹87 lakh in cyber fraud

Lucknow (PNS): A man was allegedly duped of Rs 87.10 lakh in a cyber fraud. The victim, Vinod Kumar Singh, a resident of Khasar Golf City, reported that he was contacted by employees and officials of a firm through various phone numbers

INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK (A GOVERNMENT OF INDIA UNDERTAKING) POSSESSION NOTICE [Rule 8(1)] Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I Gursharan Singh Chugh S/o Harbhajan Singh 111A/376A, Ashok Nagar R.K. Nagar Kanpur Nagar 208012, have changed my name to Gursharan Singh for all future purposes

NOTICE

I, declared that my daughters Saamia Faisal, high school marksheet my wife name mentioned as Sumbul Faisal whose correct name is Sumbul Akhtar W/o Syed Mohammad Faisal R/o 290/3, Civil Lines Madhya City & Dist. Unnao.

सूचना

मैंने अपना नाम KIRTI AGARWAL PASBOLA से बदलकर KIRTI AGARWAL कर लिया है। भविष्य में मुझे इसी नाम से जाना जाये। KIRTI AGARWAL W/o AJAY PASBOLA निवासी- HOUSE NO- 15/63, SILVER OAKS, CIVIL LINES, KANPUR NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH 208001

सूचना

शहीद से पहले मेरा नाम Sheeba था अब हमने Sheeba Farooq कर लिया है आज से मुझे इसी नाम से जाना पहचाना जाए, Sheeba Farooq पत्नी कारुख शमीम निवासी आराजी नं 11, पोखरपुर उमर कम्पान्ड, जाजमऊ कानपुर नगर 208010

NOTICE

Mr. Mahendra Babu Mishra S/o Munna Lal Mishra Owner of Property non agricultural land belonging to Khata No. 00283, Araji No. 676 & Araji No. 675 situated at village Gyaspur, Pargana-Saktapur, Tahsil Chhibramau, Kannaui-UP. Below mentioned Original chain deed has been misplaced and any use of it by somebody else would be illegal.

Youths misbehave with cop, snatch his mobile phone

Lucknow (PNS): Two youths misbehaved with an inspector and snatched his mobile phone after they were asked to give passage to the cop as their car parked on the street was blocking the way.

Triple suicide: Cop among four held for abetment

Lakhimpur Kheri (PTI): After a man and his two sons took their lives within a 24-hour period following alleged harassment by relatives over a property dispute, police on Saturday arrested four persons, including a woman constable, on charges of abetting suicide, a senior official said.

3 of family among 5 killed in road accident

Gorakhpur/Meerut (PTI): Five people, including three members of a family, were killed in a collision between two motorcycles in Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh, police said on Saturday.

3 of family among 5 killed in road accident

Declared dead at the hospital. Both Monu and Suraj were also returning from a function, police said. The condition of Nikita, Angad and the third motorcyclist, Chinmayanand Mishra, is stated to be critical and they are undergoing treatment at BRD Medical College here, they said.

3 of family among 5 killed in road accident

Meanwhile, an alleged cow smuggler was shot at and arrested by police in a confrontation in an area under the Lohia Nagar Police Station early Saturday, a law enforcement spokesperson said.

Bank of India POSSESSION NOTICE See Rule 8 (1)

Table with columns: Name of the Borrower/Guarantor, Demand Notice Dt., Possession Date, Description of Properties Mortgaged/Owner of the Properties

'Bharatiyata has power to unite all'

PNS ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Saturday, said that Bharatiyata (Indianness) had the power to unite all. "A secure nation ensures the security of religion and individuals," he said, emphasising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of dedicating every action to the nation. He urged everyone to prioritise national interests, transcending personal, social, or religious boundaries, while staying connected to India's Vedic and spiritual traditions rooted in Sanatan Dharma.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath speaking at the centenary celebrations of the Vihangam Yoga Sant Samaj at Swarved Mahamandir Dham in Varanasi on Saturday

Chief Minister Yogi made these remarks during the centenary celebrations of the Vihangam Yoga Sant Samaj at Swarved Mahamandir Dham. The event also featured the 25,000 Kundiya Swarved Gyan Mahayagya, which attracted lakhs of devotees and participants. Yogi commended the smooth arrangements made for the grand celebration. The Vihangam Yoga Sant Samaj, founded by Sadguru Sadafal Dev Maharaj in 1924, is celebrating its centenary this year. Chief Minister Yogi reflected on his contributions and spiritual vision, noting that Sadguru Sadafal Dev Maharaj was born in 1888 in a small village in Ballia and dedicated his life to promoting yoga and spiritual practices.

Chief Minister Yogi further highlighted that Sadguru Sadafal Dev Ji Maharaj composed 'Swarved' in Uttarakhand, a practice that continues to thrive today. "A true yogi and saint cannot remain idle," he said, emphasising the role of spiritual traditions in fostering nationalism and social service. He credited Acharya Swatantra Dev Ji Maharaj and Vigyan Dev Ji Maharaj for continuing this legacy and leading campaigns to spread awareness. Chief Minister Yogi praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for transforming his parliamentary constituency, Varanasi, over the last 10 years. "Kashi Vishwanath Dham, now recognised as the world's largest bathing ghat Namoo Ghat,

has also been equipped with a helipad, allowing large events to take place. The ghats of Kashi have been renovated and now present a grand and majestic form," he remarked. The chief minister noted that since 2014, road, rail and air connectivity in Kashi has improved by 100 times, and waterways connecting Kashi to Haldia have expanded travel opportunities. Kashi has now emerged as a prominent pilgrimage destination, witnessing remarkable development in sectors

such as health and education, he added.

Chief Minister Yogi acknowledged that under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, Uttar Pradesh is witnessing unprecedented growth, symbolising the vision of Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat. He further stressed that "good leadership brings about positive outcomes" while combining heritage respect with public welfare initiatives. Speaking about Prime Minister Modi's role in promoting yoga globally, Chief Minister Yogi highlighted that over 175 countries now participate in yoga practices, following the prime minister's declaration of June 21 as World Yoga Day.

He also praised Prime Minister Modi's efforts in making the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj recognised as an intangible cultural heritage and in the successful installation of Lord Ram Lalla in the divine temple in Ayodhya on January 22 this year.

Chief Minister Yogi said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated this ceremony on December 18, 2023 during the Shatabdi Mahotsav. On this occasion, Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the Swarved Mahamandir and commended the works of the Vihangam Yoga Sant Samaj and the Swarved Mahamandir Trust. Chief Minister Yogi mentioned that similar programmes had been celebrated in 2021 under the prime minister's guidance. Acharya Swatantra Dev Ji Maharaj, Swatantra Pravar Vigyan Dev Ji Maharaj, and Cabinet Minister Anil Rajbhar were present at the event.

Yogi integrates solar energy into the Jal Jeevan Mission

Centre recognises initiative as model of best practices

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a significant move towards environmental conservation, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has prioritised renewable energy in Uttar Pradesh by integrating solar energy into the Jal Jeevan Mission.

The project is expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 13 lakh MT annually while lowering expenditures on traditional power supply, thereby bolstering the government treasury and setting a precedent for eco-friendly governance.

The chief minister recently reviewed the progress of the Jal Jeevan Mission in a meeting with officials. It was reported that a total of 40,951 schemes under the mission are currently operational in the state. These include 204 schemes based on surface groundwater sources under Phase-1, 7,504 electricity-based groundwater schemes, 14 surface

THE PROJECT IS EXPECTED TO REDUCE CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS BY APPROXIMATELY 13L MT

source-based schemes under Phase-4, and 33,229 solar energy-based groundwater schemes. The operation of 33,229 solar-powered schemes by the Yogi government is projected to save the state approximately Rs 1 lakh crore over the scheme's duration. To support these initiatives, solar panels with a combined capacity of about 900 MW have been installed. This innovation has been recognised by the Central government as the best practice. In addition to cost savings, the solar energy-based schemes are expected to significantly reduce carbon emissions by approximately 13

lakh metric tons annually. Furthermore, the state can earn 390 lakh carbon credits over the next 30 years, showcasing Uttar Pradesh's commitment to sustainability and environmental conservation.

The Central government has recognised the Yogi government's innovative use of solar energy in the Jal Jeevan Mission as a model of best practices. This initiative has become an inspirational example for the entire country, encouraging other states to adopt renewable energy solutions.

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh is not only ensuring the supply of drinking water in rural areas through the Jal Jeevan Mission but is also taking significant strides in environmental conservation. The adoption of solar energy-based schemes is reducing energy costs and contributing to the state's transformation into a 'green state'.

Samajwadi Party snaps relations with MVA

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party announced on Saturday its decision to quit the Maha Vikas Aghadi, citing a newspaper advertisement and a social media post by a close aide of Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray that hailed the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Samajwadi Party spokesman Rajendra Chaudhary said here that following the direction by party president Akhilesh Yadav, Maharashtra party unit president Abu Azmi had made the announcement in Mumbai. Chaudhary said the decision to leave MVA was prompted by Shiv Sena (UBT) secretary and MLC Milind Narwekar's post on X, that celebrated the 1992 demolition with a quote from the party's late founder Bal Thackeray.

The post included an image of the mosque's demolition alongside Thackeray's words: "I am proud of those who did this." It also featured photos of Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, his son Aaditya Thackeray, and Narwekar himself. An advertisement was given by Shiv Sena (UBT) in a newspaper congratulating those who demolished Babri masjid. His (Uddhav Thackeray's) aide has also hailed the demolition of the mosque in post X. Abu Azmi said, "If anyone in the MVA speaks such language, what is the difference between the Bharatiya Janata Party and them? Why should we stay with them?"

The development comes in the wake of MVA's poor performance in Maharashtra assembly elections, where the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance swept the recent state assembly elections. The SP had contested nine seats but managed to win just two. Azmi slammed the MVA leadership, saying, "We were not part of strategies or ticket distribution. What is the use of continuing in MVA? They don't talk to us."

SP, Congress exploiting communal tensions for political gains: Maya

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati, on Saturday, accused the Samajwadi Party and Congress of exploiting communal tensions for political gains in Sambhal. Mayawati questioned the "silence" of Congress on the Bangladesh issue, saying that because of the "mistake" of Congress the people there are suffering. "Hindus are becoming victims of crimes in large numbers in the neighbouring country Bangladesh, where many have fallen victim to crimes. In such a situation, the Central government, which the Bharatiya Janata Party is leading, should fulfill its responsibility so that the Dalit class people who are becoming victims of exploitation do not have to suffer... or they should be brought back to India by talking to the government there, because of the mistake of Congress, they are suffering losses," she added.

"Most of them are Dalits and people from weaker sections... Congress party is silent and is now shouting 'be careful' only for Muslim votes," the BSP chief said while addressing a press conference. She further said that Congress, Samajwadi Party and their supporters are "two sides of the same coin". She alleged that both parties are inciting divisions within the Muslim community in Sambhal to secure votes. Mayawati claimed that Samajwadi Party and Congress are prioritising Muslim votes over other pressing issues. "These two parties are pitting Turks and non-Turks in the Muslim community against each other in Sambhal. Muslims must remain cautious about these tactics," she said. "The Congress has remained silent on atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh but is now vocally addressing Sambhal solely to win Muslim votes. This proves that Congress and Samajwadi Party are two sides of the same coin," she remarked. Mayawati expressed disappointment over the silence of Dalit parliamentarians on issues affecting their community. She accused them of prioritising party loyalty over the interests of Dalits, whether in India or Bangladesh. The BSP chief mentioned historical injustices faced by Dalits during the Partition of India. According to her, the Jessore-Khulna region in Bangladesh, which was a Hindu-majority area, was handed over to Pakistan during Partition as a deliberate move by the Congress. This, she said, was an act of casteist poli-



Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati addresses a press conference at her residence, in Lucknow on Saturday

tics aimed at punishing Dalits for electing Dr BR Ambedkar to the Constituent Assembly. Mayawati pointed out that Dalits and weaker sections, who form the majority of oppressed Hindus in Bangladesh, continue to suffer, and the Congress has turned a blind eye. "It was due to these conspiracies that Dr Ambedkar resigned and returned to India. Today, Congress is shouting about Sambhal, but only to cater to Muslim voters, ignoring the broader issues," she claimed.

'BSP CADRE MAY MARRY ANYONE CUTTING ACROSS PARTY LINES'

BSP chief Mayawati has refuted reports that a leader was expelled from the party for getting his son married to the daughter of an SP legislator. She asserted that the BSP cadre was free to marry anyone cutting across party lines. BSP's Rampur district unit president Surendra Sagar's son recently tied the knot with the daughter of Samajwadi Party (SP) MLA from Alapur in Ambedkar Nagar district Tribhuvan Dutt. Earlier, Dutt was associated with the BSP but joined the SP before the 2022 UP Assembly elections. In a series of posts on X in Hindi on Friday night, Mayawati said Sagar and the current district president of BSP in Rampur, Pramod Kumar, were expelled from the party

due to a simmering dispute between them and had nothing to do with the marriage. "The quarrel between former party president of Rampur district Surendra Sagar and current party president Pramod Kumar was at its peak due to which the party's work was suffering. Both of them were expelled and it has got nothing to do with the marriage," Mayawati said. "The party (BSP) is not concerned with the personal relationships of its cadre. People are free to marry anyone they want. It all depends on their thinking. But be cautious of those who spread false propaganda about this," Mayawati said.

In another tweet, Mayawati said party members were barred from attending the wedding of former BSP MP Munqad Ali's son because his daughter contested the state Assembly by-election from Meerapur on an SP ticket. SP candidate from Meerapur Assembly constituency Sumbul Rana is married to former MP Qadir Rana's son Shah Mohamud. "The BSP also contested the seat. In such a situation, there was a general discussion about possible clashes between the people of both parties at the wedding. To avoid this, the party was forced to take this step. But the way it is being publicised is not right," Mayawati said. Rashtriya Lok Dal's Mithlesh Pal won the bypoll in Meerapur constituency in Muzaffarnagar district.

HC to hear petition in another mosque-temple dispute

Prayagraj (PTI): In yet another litigation related to mosque-temple disputes, the Allahabad High Court is likely to hear next week a petition filed by the management committee of Jaunpur's Atala Mosque against the orders of the lower court allowing registration of a suit which claimed that the structure was originally a Hindu temple. The suit was filed before a Jaunpur court by the Swaraj Vahini Association (SVA) and Santosh Kumar Mishra. It sought the "disputed" property be declared "Atala Devi Mandir" and followers of the Sanatan religion be allowed the right of worship there. On November 8, Justice Rohit

Ranjan Agarwal directed SVA and Mishra to file their reply within three weeks to the plea by the mosque committee and asked the petitioner to file a rejoinder affidavit within a week. In the suit, the SVA had prayed for the possession of the structure and sought a mandatory injunction to restrain non-Hindus from entering the property. The plaintiffs had also sought permission to sue under Order 1 Rule 8 CPC in a representative capacity. Under Order 1 Rule 8 of the Code of Civil Procedure (CPC) dealing with a representative suit, one or more persons can sue or defend on behalf of all persons having the same

interest in a suit. This prayer was allowed in May this year and the same was upheld by an order of the District Judge in August this year. Both the orders have been challenged in the petition before the High Court. The high court observed that a petition challenging the earlier passed on May 29, 2024, was rejected on August 12, 2024, by the district court solely on the grounds of non-maintainability. The court said, "Matter requires consideration. Let a counter affidavit be filed by both the respondents within a period of three weeks." The mosque management committee pleaded before the High Court that

the complaint was defective, as the plaintiff SVA, a society registered under the Societies Registration Act, was not a juristic person and, thus, was not competent to file the suit in a representative capacity. Further, the society's bylaws do not authorise it to engage in litigation of this nature, it claimed. Several litigations filed in various courts related to temple-mosque disputes have come into the limelight including on Gyanvapi Mosque in Varanasi, Shahi Idgah Mosque in Mathura, Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal, Ajmer Dargah of Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishti and Budaun's Jama Masjid Shamsi.

Indian Bank

Zonal Office: 15/287, Mahatma Gandhi Marg, The Mall, Bada Chauraha, Kanpur U.P.-208001

POSSESSION NOTICE (Rule 8(1) for immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Indian Bank, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 8 & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice (details of which have been mentioned hereunder) calling upon the borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the said Act read with rules 8 & 9 of the said rules. The borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the Indian Bank for an amount and interest & charges there on as described here on as described here in below: We draw attention to the provisions of Section 13(8) of the SARFAESI Act and the Rules framed there under which deals with your rights of redemption over the securities.

S. No.	Name of the Borrowers	Name of Mortgagees	Description of the Immovable property	Date of Demand Notice
	Branch	Guarantors		Date of Possession Notice Outstanding Amt.
1.	M/s Krishna Construction Company	Shri Ram Narayan Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	1. All that Part and Parcel of Land and Building situated at Arazi No. 63Mi, Sale Deed No. 1754, Mauza: Kakhawatu, Pargana & Distt.: Auraiya	24.04.2024
		1. Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla 2. Shri Shesh Narain Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	Area of the Property: 0.060 Hectare Owner of the Property: Shri Ram Narayan S/o Shri Shyam Sunder Shukla Bounded by: East: Auraiya- Dibiypur Road, West: Bhumri No. 61 & Nail & Bhumri No. 58, North: Bhumri No. 58, South: Khet of Atwal Singh & Others	03.12.2024
		1. Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla 2. Shri Shesh Narain Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	2. All that Part and Parcel of Land and Building situated at Arazi No. 61, Sale Deed No. 9463, Correction Deed No. 2405, Mauza: Kakhawatu, Pargana & Distt.: Auraiya	
		1. Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla 2. Shri Shesh Narain Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	Area of the Property: 0.073 Hectare Owner of the Property: Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla Bounded by: East: Bhumri No. 63 thereafter Road, West: Bhumri No. 60, North: Khet of Ram Narayan Shukla, South: Connecting Road	
		Shri Ram Narayan Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	3. All that Part and Parcel of Land and Building situated at Arazi No. 61, Sale Deed No. 9462, Correction Deed No. 2406, Mauza: Kakhawatu, Pargana & Distt.: Auraiya	
		1. Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla 2. Shri Shesh Narain Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	Area of the Property: 0.218 Hectare Owner of the Property: Shri Ram Narayan S/o Shri Shyam Sunder Shukla Bounded by: East: Bhumri No. 63 thereafter Road, West: Bhumri No. 60 thereafter Road, North: Nali thereafter Khet, South: Khet of Kusum Lata	
		Shri Ram Narayan Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	4. All that Part and Parcel of Land and Building situated at Residential Plot No. 58, Sale Deed No. 7730, Mauza: Kakhawatu, Pargana & Distt.: Auraiya	
		1. Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla 2. Shri Shesh Narain Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	Area of the Property: 74.349 Sq. Mtr. Owner of the Property: Shri Ram Narayan S/o Shri Shyam Sunder Shukla Bounded by: East: Property of Purchaser, West: Khet of Seller, North: Plot of Ram Narayan, Purchaser, South: Khet of Pushpa Devi	
		Shri Ram Narayan Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	5. All that Part and Parcel of Land and Building situated at Arazi No. 67, Sale Deed No. 2313, Mauza: Kakhawatu, Pargana & Distt.: Auraiya	
		1. Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla 2. Shri Shesh Narain Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	Area of the Property: 167.286 Sq. Mtr. Owner of the Property: Shri Ram Narayan S/o Shri Shyam Sunder Shukla Bounded by: East: Bambi, West: Auraiya-Dibiypur Road, North: Plot of Smt. Kusum Lata, South: Plot of Shri Rajesh Kumar	
		Shri Ram Narayan Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	6. All that Part and Parcel of Land and Building situated at Arazi No. 67, Sale Deed No. 446, Mauza: Kakhawatu, Pargana & Distt.: Auraiya	
		1. Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla 2. Shri Shesh Narain Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	Area of the Property: 167.286 Sq. Mtr. Owner of the Property: Shri Ram Narayan S/o Shri Shyam Sunder Shukla Bounded by: East: Bambi, West: Auraiya-Dibiypur Road, North: Plot of Purchaser, South: Arazi of Sujit Singh	
		1. Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla 2. Shri Shesh Narain Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	7. All that Part and Parcel of Land and Building situated at Arazi No. 67, Deed No. 1769, Mauza: Kakhawatu, Pargana & Distt.: Auraiya	
		1. Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla 2. Shri Shesh Narain Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	Area of the Property: 446.097 Sq. Mtr. Owner of the Property: Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla Bounded by: East: Bambi, West: Auraiya-Dibiypur Road, North: Plot of Smt. Krishna Shukla, South: Khet of Seller (First Party)	
		Shri Ram Narayan Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	8. All that Part and Parcel of Land and Building situated at Plot No. 332, Sale Deed No. 3877, Correction Deed No. 2768, Mauza: Kakrahi, Residential Yojana No. 1, "Vikas Kunj", Pargana & Distt.: Auraiya	
		1. Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla 2. Shri Shesh Narain Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	Area of the Property: 167.28 Sq. Mtr. Owner of the Property: Shri Ram Narayan Shukla S/o Shri Shyam Sunder Shukla Bounded by: East: 20 Ft. Raasta to Colony, West: Plot No. 333, North: Plot No. 331, South: 20 Ft. Raasta to Colony	
		Shri Ram Narayan Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	9. All that Part and Parcel of Land and Building situated at Arazi No. 970, Sale Deed No. 2852, Mauza: Sehud, Pargana & Distt.: Auraiya	
		1. Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla 2. Shri Shesh Narain Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	Area of the Property: 33.457 Sq. Mtr. Owner of the Property: Shri Ram Narayan S/o Shyam Sunder Bounded by: East: Dibiypur-Auraiya Road, West: Khet of First Party, North: Plot of Ram Narayan Shukla, South: Plot of Santosh Kumar Dubey & Rakhi Tripathi	
		Shri Ram Narayan Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	10. All that Part and Parcel of Land and Building situated at Arazi No. 970, Sale Deed No. 2307, Mauza: Sehud, Pargana & Distt.: Auraiya	
		1. Smt. Kusum Lata W/o Shri Ram Narayan Shukla 2. Shri Shesh Narain Shukla S/o Late Shyam Sunder Shukla	Area of the Property: 250.929 Sq. Mtr. Owner of the Property: Shri Ram Narayan S/o Shri Shyam Sunder Shukla Bounded by: East: Nala thereafter Dibiypur-Auraiya Road, West: Arazi of First Party, North: Plot of Rajendra Sharma, South: Arazi of First Party	

Committed to protecting daughters: Yogi

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Saturday, emphasised that the double-engine Bharatiya Janata Party government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is steadfast in its commitment to protecting daughters and safeguarding their dignity in all circumstances.

He added that the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative is deeply connected to the safety, honour, and self-reliance of daughters. The Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojana, he remarked, is a historic step in this direction, symbolising the collective effort to support women's dignity and societal welfare.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath giving blessings to a newly-married couple in Varanasi on Saturday

CM unveils 11 LED screens at Kashi Vishwanath Temple

PNS ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath unveiled 11 LED screens installed by Axis Bank in the Kashi Vishwanath Temple (KVT) complex here late Friday evening, after offering prayers at the temple.



Shrikesh P and others were also present.

After that, the chief minister inspected the road widening work being done on Pandeypur-Lamahi road. He directed the PWD engineers to complete the construction work on a war footing.

Three youths killed as two bikes collide

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Three youths were killed in a collision between two motorcycles in Semri, near Sarai Mamarez police station in Prayagraj, late on Friday night. In addition to the fatalities, three individuals riding the bikes were seriously injured and were rushed to the Community Health Centre in Pratappur, from where they were referred to Prayagraj in critical condition.

Yogi inspects preparations for Maha Kumbh

Prayagraj (PNS): Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited Prayagraj on Saturday to inspect the ongoing preparations for Maha Kumbh 2025 and to assess the arrangements in anticipation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit.

He spent over five hours in the city, reviewing various projects and also visiting the proposed venue for Modi's meeting. Yogi emphasised the importance of vigilance from the Uttar Pradesh Police, noting that even foreigners now raise the force.

In police vigilance could lead to conspiracies by opponents. He also underscored the importance of preventing rumours from spreading among the crowd and ensuring constant monitoring of social media updates.

people to the event. Instructing BJP leaders, he advised them to stay away from negative narratives and instead focus on spreading awareness about the divinity of the Kumbh. Speaking about the Maha Kumbh, CM Yogi stated that an estimated 40 crore people would attend the event, making it the largest gathering in the world, with the population expected to surpass that of any other country.

Mechanic comes in contact with high-tension wire, burnt alive

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A 25-year-old mechanic was burnt alive after coming into contact with a high-tension (HT) line at Rahimpur intersection in the Jhunsi police station area of Prayagraj on Saturday. While working in a building in the Jhunsi area, the mechanic made contact with an 11,000-volt high-tension line and died instantly. His body continued to burn in front of onlookers, and smoke spread throughout the area.

LOCAL RESIDENTS ACCUSED THE ELECTRICITY DEPARTMENT OF NEGLIGENCE, CITING THE PREVALENCE OF EXPOSED WIRES

now searching for the contractor responsible.

ing searches to locate the suspects. In another incident, Nisha Bhattacharjee, who was travelling to her office in an e-rickshaw from her home in Old Bairhana, had her gold chain snatched. The chain, valued at around Rs 1.5 lakh, was snatched by miscreants while she was accompanied by four other women in the rickshaw.

3 WOMEN ROBBED Incidents of chain snatching have risen sharply in Prayagraj of late, with three such cases reported in just two days. On Friday night, Pooja Singh, a resident of Pritam Nagar, was heading to the market when two individuals on a bike approached her and snatched the gold chain from her neck before speeding off the scene.

Students protest seeking removal of mosque from college campus

PTI ■ VARANASI

Temper ran high at Uday Pratap College here after a large group of students staged a demonstration demanding the removal of a mosque from the campus. On Friday, hundreds of students gathered at the college gate, shouting "Jai Shri Ram" and waving saffron flags. They attempted to enter the campus, but were stopped by police.

after students recited the Hanuman Chalisa when namaz was being offered near the mosque. Seven men were briefly detained after the row on Tuesday, according to the local police. In a related development, students of the college have formed a "student court" and sent an 11-point letter to the Uttar Pradesh Waqf Board, demanding a response within 15 days regarding the status of the mosque and its ownership.

Advocates demand arrest of accused in colleague's murder

Prayagraj (PNS): A large group of advocates on Saturday staged a protest at Mayo Hall intersection, demanding the immediate arrest of Atul Pratap Singh, the main accused in the death of advocate Akhilesh Shukla. The advocates were firm in their demand to halt the convoy of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and present a memorandum. During the protest, the advocates raised slogans, and the police appeared unable to control the crowd or persuade them to end the demonstration.

Falls and Frailty Clinic starts at NCA-BHU

Varanasi (PNS): A specialised Falls and Frailty Clinic has been started at National Centre of Aging (NCA) in the Department of Geriatric Medicine, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) here. In this OPD, specialised validated tools will be used to screen various domains, along with advanced devices like hand dynamometers and body composition analysers to assess physical, mental and social factors affecting fall risk, making it one of the first clinics in north India dedicated to this area of geriatric care.

tations. "The growing population contributes to a heavier burden of diseases, particularly with geriatric health issues like cognitive decline, loss of mobility, frailty, and falls. These issues worsen the quality of life of the patient as well as increase healthcare costs," he said. "Fall is a serious problem in the elderly which is now becoming a global challenge with prevalence reaching 26.5 per cent worldwide. Falls can cause acute loss of function due to trauma resulting in injuries such as bone fractures, and head trauma. In addition to that, it also leads to loss of confidence in the elderly resulting in fear of falls. Increasing age, cognitive decline, sarcopenia (muscle loss), balance issues, psychoactive drugs, vision problems, depression, and unsafe environments (slippery floors, and poor lighting) are among the major factors increasing fall risk," he said, adding that another very common geriatric syndrome occurring in older adults which goes hand in hand with falls is frailty.

Health camp for adolescents with disabilities

PNS ■ VARANASI

In celebration of the International Day for Persons with Disabilities Week, a comprehensive health camp was organised by the Adolescent Health Centre of the Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, in collaboration with Mamta Health Institute for Mother and Child, New Delhi, National Health Mission and the Wellbeing Services Cell, BHU at the DSW Lawn, BHU here on Saturday. The programme was conducted under the guidance of Nodal Officer Prof Saangeeta Rai. The event aimed to address the unique health and well-being needs of adolescents with disabilities. It focused on promoting inclusive healthcare and empowering young individuals through awareness and education, covering a range of topics, including anaemia management, balanced nutrition, menstrual hygiene, dental check-ups and awareness about the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. The attendees actively participated in screening sessions conducted for hemoglobin levels, dental check-ups, height, weight and biomass index



(BMI) and blood pressure. These screenings provided valuable insights into the overall health status of the adolescents, enabling timely interventions and support. Dr Shuchi Jain from the obstetrics and gynecology department at IMS-BHU provided a detailed session on menstrual hygiene and the importance of HPV vaccination. She highlighted the causes, symptoms and prevention of HPV, stressing the need for vaccination to safeguard young women against it. Dr Sarita Chaudhary from the paediatric surgery department at IMS-BHU delivered an informative session on anaemia

and nutrition, a prevalent health issue among adolescents, particularly girls. Her lecture emphasised the significance of early detection and management of anaemia to ensure optimal health and well-being. Dr Rajesh Bansal from the dental sciences department at IMS-BHU, delivered a lecture on the significance of dental care in maintaining overall well-being as well as addressing the unique challenges faced by adolescents with disabilities in maintaining oral hygiene. Counsellor Neha Choudhary and Akanksha Singh conducted an interactive demonstration on the proper use of san-

itary pads, equipping the participants with practical knowledge for maintaining menstrual hygiene. CMO FLAGS OFF POLIO AWARENESS RALLY Chief Medical Officer Dr Sandeep Chaudhary flagged off the awareness rally of Pulse Polio Special Campaign from his office here on Saturday. District Immunisation Officer Dr AK Maurya, World Health Organisation's SMO Dr Chelsea, UNICEF's BMC along with ASHA workers of urban area participated in the rally. During the rally, they raised slogans, stressing the need to administer polio drops to children. To save the children from polio, they appealed to the people not to forget to give polio drops to their wards up to five years old at the medicine booths only. The CMO said that all parents should get polio drops administered to their children up to five years of age at the booth only. In this six-day long campaign, 5,68,511 children will be administered polio drops. The campaign is starting with Booth Day on Sunday. In this, polio drops will be administered at 1,813 booths in the district.

Energy Conservation Week inaugurated

Varanasi (PNS): Energy Conservation Week-2024 was inaugurated at Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) here on Saturday under the auspices of its electrical department. The primary objective of this special week is to raise awareness about the importance of energy conservation among employees, officials and the general public. To mark the beginning of the week, an Energy Conservation Awareness Rally was flagged off by the General Manager Naresh Pal Singh from the administrative building. The rally passed through key locations within the BLW premises, including the BLW Auditorium, Kundan crossing, Central Hospital and concluded at the BLW Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) station. The rally witnessed enthusiastic participation from senior officials, employees, and their families, including Principal Chief Electrical Engineer SK Srivastava, Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer Subrato Nath, Chief Design Engineer (Electrical) MK Gupta, Chief

Electrical Service Engineer Bhardwaj Choudhary, Chief Design Engineer (Project) Anurag Gupta, Chief Electrical Loco Engineer Manoj Kumar Singh, Chief Electrical Inspection Engineer Arun Sharma and Deputy General Manager Anuj Katiyar. Speaking on the occasion, the general manager said, "Energy conservation is not only a means of economic savings but also plays a crucial role in maintaining environmental balance. It is our collective responsibility to contribute towards energy conservation in every possible way." He said that the BLW achieved the top position in the railway workshop sector for energy conservation in 2022 and was honoured by the Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency under the Additional Energy Sources department of the Government of Uttar Pradesh. "BLW has made significant strides in utilising solar energy by installing solar panels across its administrative buildings and workshop areas," he said.

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.

"Our government has taken another big decision to make school education as accessible as possible. Under this, 85 new Kendriya Vidyalayas will be opened across the country. While this step will benefit a large number of students, many new employment opportunities will also be



created," Modi said in a social media post.

The prime minister said the government is committed to providing school education to every section of the society in accordance with the National Education

Policy.

"As part of that, our government has approved 28 new Navodaya Vidyalayas across the country. This will expand residential and quality school education to a larger

extent," Modi said in another post in Hindi.

The prime minister also said his government is determined to improve connectivity across the country. "In this direction, our government has approved the Rithala-Kundli corridor under the fourth phase of Delhi Metro in the National Capital Region. This will make commuting between Delhi and Haryana easier," Modi said.

The Union Cabinet approved on Friday the opening of 85 new KVVs and 28 new NVVs.

It also gave its nod to expanding one KV. The opening of these new KVVs will provide an opportunity for over 82,000 students to receive affordable and high-quality education across the country. The total estimated requirement of funds for the

establishment of the 85 new KVVs and the expansion of one existing KVVs is Rs 5,872.08 crore spread over a period of eight years from 2025-26. As of date, there are 1,256 functional Kendriya Vidyalayas, including three abroad - Moscow, Kathmandu and Tehran - and 13.56 lakh students are studying in these schools, an official statement said.

The Union Cabinet also approved on Friday the 26.463-km Rithala-Kundli corridor of the Delhi Metro's Phase-IV project that will further enhance connectivity between the national capital and neighbouring Haryana. The entire stretch will comprise 21 stations, all of them elevated. The decisions were taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Modi.

ED attaches fresh assets worth ₹388 Crore in Mahadev online betting case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI/RAIPUR



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 in which various high-ranking politicians and bureaucrats from Chhattisgarh are alleged to have been involved.

These include movable assets - investment made by Mauritius-based company Tano Investment Opportunities Fund related to Dubai-based 'hawala operator' Hari Shankar Tibrewal through FPI and FDI - and properties in Chhattisgarh, Mumbai and Madhya Pradesh in the name of promoters of multiple betting apps and websites, panel operators and associates of the promoters, the federal agency said in a statement.

A provisional order was issued under the Prevention

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.

Tibrewal is being investigated by the agency in this case.

The ED has issued multiple such orders during this investigation and with the latest order, assets worth Rs 2,295.61 crore have been either frozen, attached or seized so far.

Eleven people have been arrested in this case and the ED has filed four chargesheets.

The agency has alleged in the

past that its probe into the Mahadev Online Betting (MOB) gaming and betting app has shown the involvement of various high-ranking politicians and bureaucrats from Chhattisgarh.

The app's two main promoters, Sourabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal, hail from the state.

According to the ED, the MOB app is an umbrella syndicate arranging online betting platforms for enabling illegal betting websites to enrol new users, create user IDs and launder money through a layered web of benami bank accounts.

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 and hold talks with his Russian counterpart Andrei Belousov on the expansion of bilateral cooperation in co-production of military hardware.

The Russian-manufactured multi-role stealth guided missile frigate INS Tushil will be commissioned on Monday in the coastal city of Kaliningrad. The warship, billed as one of the most technologically advanced frigates globally, is expected to significantly bolster the Indian Navy's operational capability in the Indian Ocean, a region that has witnessed increasing Chinese forays. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi

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.

It said Singh and Belousov will co-chair the 21st meeting of the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC) in Moscow on December 10.

The defence minister's visit to Russia comes five months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelled to Moscow and held summit talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin. In the talks, both sides decided to further bolster two-way defence ties.

Singh and Belousov will review the entire range of multi-faceted relations between the two countries in the field of defence, including military-to-military and

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.

People familiar with Singh's visit said India-Russia cooperation in co-production of military hardware will figure prominently in the talks between the two defence ministers. "As part of the visit, the defence minister will also commission the Indian Navy's latest multi-role stealth guided missile frigate INS 'Tushil' at Yantra Shipyard, Kaliningrad on December 9," the ministry said.

It said Singh will also pay tributes at 'The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier' in Moscow to honour the Soviet soldiers killed during the Second World War. He is also scheduled to interact with the members of the Indian community in Moscow.

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.

A recent public notice issued by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) informed the public about the reconstitution of this committee.

"The central expert committee is reconstituted under the chairmanship of Dr Ajay Kumar Shukla, Professor of Orthopaedics, RML Hospital (New Delhi), to determine the quantum of

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

The ASR hip implants were manufactured by M/s DePuy International Limited, UK and imported by M/s DePuy Medical Private, Mumbai - now Johnson and Johnson Private Limited - according to the notice.

In 2010, the company issued a global recall on the product following complaints related to hip implants from other parts of the world.

The affected patients who were implanted with faulty ASR hip implants and are suffering from disability and other losses may approach either the Central Expert Committee or the state-level committee in accordance with their convenience.

CISF sets up Unit to enhance aviation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

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

An spokesperson for the paramilitary force said on Saturday that the Internal Quality Control Unit (IQCU) will play a "crucial" role in establishing "world-class" security procedures and technology for the airports that are used by lakhs of domestic and international passengers every day.

The initiative is in compliance with the National Civil Aviation Security Quality Control Programme (NCASQCP) of 2024 issued by the Bureau of



Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) and the Aircraft (Security) Rules of 2023, he said.

The BCAS, under the civil aviation ministry, frames security policies for the Indian civil aviation sector. The new unit will bring about uniformity in civil aviation security procedures and training, recommend new technology available world over, allow internal audits of CISF security units and their protocols and identify "gaps" for improvement.

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.

The latest system will also cover the airports that come under Regional Connectivity Scheme (UDAAN), the spokesperson said.

"The IQCU will be led by a senior CISF officer and a team of certified aviation security instructors will run it," he said.

The about 1.80 lakh people-strong Central Industrial Security Force, under the Union home ministry, is the national civil aviation security force and it has deployed around 50,000 personnel to guard the 68 airports.

Maharashtra opp stages walkout

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Still to recover from a shock-Sing 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, alleging that the BJP-led MahaYuti registered a landslide victory in the Assembly polls because of the manipulation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

However, the MLAs belonging to the MVA - comprising the Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) may take oath on Sunday, the second and final day of the oath-taking ceremony. While the MVA MLAs staged a walk out en masse from the State Assembly, two MLAs belonging to the Akhilesh Yadav-led Samajwadi Party took oath. The three MVA constituents collectively account for 46 MLAs in a 288-member State Assembly as against the combined strength of the ruling MahaYuti - comprising BJP, Shiv Sena (ES) and NCP (Ajit Pawar-of 235 in the House.

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.

Nadda said this while inaugurating a nationwide campaign in Haryana's Panchkula to reduce such cases and mortality due to it. The 100-day TB elimination campaign will be implemented in 347 districts of 33 states where the prevalence of the disease is higher.

The campaign is focused on enhancing detection, reducing diagnostic delays and improving treatment outcomes.

"Under this programme, we

have taken detection, tests, treatment and supportive strategies forward in an accelerated way.

I feel this 100-day programme will prove to be a milestone in making a 'TB-mukt Bharat' and it will have a far-reaching impact," Nadda said.

The Union health minister highlighted the country's long struggle in its fight against tuberculosis, saying that at one time TB meant a 'slow death'.

"Even family members suffering from TB were isolated to prevent its spread. Since 1962, there have been many campaigns against tuberculosis, but in 2018 the prime minister put forth a vision to end TB much before the 2030 deadline of the Sustainable Development

Goals." "We changed strategies to achieve the aim. Services have been decentralised and now, 1,73,000 AAMs (Ayushman Arogya Mandirs) will have the facilities to detect and treat tuberculosis," the Union health minister said.

He also informed the gathering that molecular technologies have been introduced for TB detection. Also, a new and shorter regimen of tuberculosis treatment has been started which will help increase compliance and fight TB, he said.

In 2014, there were 120 laboratories for TB detection and their number has now reached 8,293, said Nadda. 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.

Deaths due to tuberculosis have also reduced significantly in India by 21.4 per cent in the last 10 years, he said.

"Ni-kshay support worth Rs 3,338 crore has been provided through direct benefit transfer to over 1.17 crore tuberculosis patients," the minister said and underscored the government has increased Ni-kshay poshan amount recently from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 and added energy boosters for the nourishment support for TB patients.

Ni-kshay Poshan is not only a policy decision, this is a financial commitment for people in the health sector to

eliminate TB, he said.

Nadda said the government has now made it mandatory for even private practitioners to notify any new tuberculosis patient so that their treatment can be followed up immediately.

"This might look like a small step but it has led to an eight-fold increase in the rate of TB notifications in the private sector," Nadda said.

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.

Some of the key focus areas

of the campaign are increasing access to advanced diagnostics, targeted screening among vulnerable groups, specialized care for high-risk individuals, and provision of expanded nutritional support. Speaking about Haryana, he said earlier, there were only six medical colleges and now the number has grown to 15.

The Haryana chief minister has announced to opening a medical college in each district, he said.

Nadda further said the number of undergraduate seats for doctors has increased from 650 in 2014 to 2,185 in Haryana. Similarly, the number of post-graduate seats increased from 243 to 889 now, he added.

ISKCON centre in Bangladesh burnt down: Radharaman

From page 1

Since the installation of the interim government and the dislodging of the Awami League from power in August, ISKCON properties have come under attack at various places across Bangladesh in the past four months.

West Bengal BJP president and Union minister Sukanta Majumdar in a post on X said, "Strongly condemn the horrific arson attack on the #ISKCON Namhatta Centre in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which destroyed the Deities of Sri Sri Laxmi Narayan and sacred temple items." "This is an unforgivable act of hatred against a place of worship. Immediate action must be taken to bring the culprits to justice and ensure the safety of religious minorities," the Union Minister of State for Education said.

Two murders in a day, AAP raises law...

From page 1

A team from the local police station was immediately dispatched to the scene. He was rushed to a hospital but succumbed to his injuries," police said. Police added that they are looking into the CCTV cameras installed in the area to identify the accused. Jain's family said neither he had any enemy with anyone nor received any threats.

Meanwhile, in Govindpur, an 18-year-old scrap shop worker died of stab wounds he suffered in a fight with his neighbours over a common toilet not being flushed. Sudheer was rushed to a hospital with multiple stab wounds, reportedly made with a kitchen knife, in his chest, scalp, and face. He died at the hospital. His brother Prem, 22, is still undergoing treatment and a friend, Sagar, was given a discharge.

The fight broke out late Friday night between the siblings and a family who lived on the first floor of a building in lane number 6 of Govindpur. According to

police, Bhikam Singh, his wife Meena, and their three sons Sanjay, 20, Rahul, 18, and a minor boy attacked the three youths, when Sudheer objected to the toilet not being flushed.

"Both parties were tenants on the first floor of the building and had a common toilet. The quarrel started when Bhikam's youngest son used the common toilet and didn't flush," police said in a statement. A case of murder has been registered and Bhikam and his family have been apprehended for investigation, they said. Sagar Malik, a neighbour, said that the victims were beaten up with rods and knives.

"Bhikam's family called the police and told them that their mother was attacked," Malik said.

Sudheer's cousin, Sanjiv Saxena, who lives in the same building said the incident took place around Friday 11.30 pm. Sudheer was a native of Uttar Pradesh's Mainpuri and paid Rs 3,000 per month in rent for the house which he shared with his brother, an e-rickshaw

driver. Bhikam Singh works at a building materials shop and had shifted to the building around 45 days ago.

Holding Union Home Minister Amit Shah responsible for Rohingyas and Bangladeshi immigrants staying illegal in Delhi, AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal questioned, "Who brought the Rohingyas to Delhi? Rohingyas are either coming from Burma or Bangladesh. How did they cross the border?"

"That was also Amit Shah's responsibility. After crossing the border, how did they reach Delhi? That was Amit Shah's responsibility as well; he is the country's Home Minister. Who settled them in Delhi? It was Amit Shah who settled them.

So, he knows where the Rohingyas are. If Rohingyas are in Delhi, why aren't they being caught? If Rohingyas are committing crimes, why aren't they being apprehended? Why isn't the Delhi Police catching them? Why isn't Amit Shah taking action? This is what pains me?" Kejriwal added.

US denies backing anti-India agenda

From page 1

"The US government works with independent organisations on programming that supports professional development and capacity building training for journalists. This programming does not influence the editorial decisions or direction of these organisations," the official said, confirming the US funding to

OCCRP and other organisations. The OCCRP, headquartered in Amsterdam, is a media platform that largely focuses on stories relating to crime and corruption.

The BJP had referred to a French media report and said it revealed that OCCRP is funded by the US State Department's USAID, along with other "deep state figures" like George Soros and the

Rockefeller Foundation. "The United States has long been a champion of media freedom around the world. A free and independent press is an essential component of any democracy, enabling informed and constructive debate and holding those in power accountable," the US embassy official said. Last month, US prosecutors charged Gautam Adani, 62, his nephew Sagar

and other defendants for paying over USD 250 million in bribes between 2020 and 2024 to Indian government officials to win solar energy contracts on terms that could potentially bring in more than USD 2 billion in profit. Following the charges, the Congress demanded a thorough investigation into the charges and accused the government of shielding him.

Repatriate B'deshis staying illegally: Nizamuddin locals

From page 1

"Delhi residents must be directed that if they find that any illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators are living in their neighbourhood, they should provide the information in this regard to the police," read the statement. It also said that the Delhi Police and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) should be directed to remove any encroachments on government land, footpaths, parks and other public places by such people.

"Any documents like Aadhar Card, Voter ID, or any other government document acquired illegally by Bangladeshi infiltrators be cancelled immediately. If any Masjid or Madarsa has given shelter to such infiltrators, they should immediately evict them. A special drive be launched to identify such infiltrators and they be sent back to Bangladesh," the letter read.

Citing "a sudden spurt in the number of illegal immigrants" in the national capital, Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena's office has written to the Chief Secretary, Delhi Police Commissioner, and other senior officials, asking them to take urgent action last month. Saxena also directed the civic agencies, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) and Chief Secretary of Delhi to be on "alert" as these illegal immigrants may approach them to get fake citizenship and election identity cards. The BJP leaders in Delhi have been

accusing the ruling A for patronising the Rohingyas and Bangladeshi living illegally in the city.

Diplomatic ties between the two nations have been strained since Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus assumed interim leadership in Bangladesh after Sheikh Hasina's ouster in August. Several Hindus and Hindu organisations have come under attack in Bangladesh since the unceremonious removal of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

leaders Suvendu Adhikari, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, BJP national president JP Nadda, Assam Chief Minister Hemanta Biswa Sharma and several other leaders have also demanded to remove Bangladeshi infiltrators. It is learnt that there are two crore Bangladeshi immigrants illegally staying in India. The rise in the number of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, which almost equals the size of the entire population of Australia.

South Korean President Yoon's impeachment fails

Ruling party boycotts vote, public protest likely to intensify

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korean legislative push to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol over his short-lived imposition of martial law fell through on Saturday after most lawmakers from his conservative governing party boycotted the vote. The defeat of the motion is expected to intensify public protests calling for Yoon's ouster and deepen political chaos in South Korea, with a survey suggesting a majority of South Koreans support the president's impeachment. Yoon's martial law declaration drew criticism from his own ruling conservative party, but it is also determined to oppose Yoon's impeachment apparently because it fears losing the presidency to liberals. Impeaching Yoon required support from two-thirds of the National Assembly, or 200 of its 300 members. The opposition parties who brought the impeachment motion had 192 seats, but only three lawmakers from PPP participated in the vote. The motion was scrapped without ballot counting because the number of votes didn't reach 200. National Assembly Speaker Woo Won Shik called the result "very regrettable" and an embarrassing moment for the country's democracy that has

been closely watched by the world. "The failure to hold a qualified vote on this matter means we were not even able to exercise the democratic procedure of deciding on a critical national issue," he said. Opposition parties could submit a new impeachment motion after a new parliamentary session opens next Wednesday. There are worries that Yoon won't be able to serve out his remaining 2 1/2 years in office because his leadership took a huge hit. Many experts say some ruling party lawmakers could eventually join opposition parties' efforts to impeach Yoon if public demands for it grow further. If Yoon is impeached, his powers will be suspended until the Constitutional Court decides whether to remove him from office. If he is removed, an election to replace him must take place within 60 days. Woo repeatedly urged ruling party members to return to the chamber to participate in the vote, waiting several hours for them to come. At one point, Democratic Party leaders visited a hall on the floor below the main chamber where PPP lawmakers were gathered, attempting to persuade them to vote. After being blocked from entering, they angrily accused the conserva-

tives' leadership of preventing its lawmakers from voting freely. Earlier Saturday, Yoon issued a public apology over the martial law decree, saying he won't shirk legal or political responsibility for the declaration and promising not to make another attempt to impose martial law. He said would leave it to his party to chart a course through the country's political turmoil, "including matters related to my term in office." "The declaration of this martial law was made out of my desperation. But in the course of its implementation, it caused anxiety and inconveniences to the public. I feel very sorry over that and truly apologise to the people who must have been shocked a lot," Yoon said. Since taking office in 2022, Yoon has struggled to push his agenda through an opposition-controlled parliament and grappled with low approval ratings amid scandals involving himself and his wife. In his martial law announcement on Tuesday night, Yoon called parliament a "den of criminals" bogging down state affairs and vowed to eliminate "shameless North Korea followers and anti-state forces." The turmoil resulting from Yoon's bizarre and poorly thought-out stunt has paralysed South Korean politics and

sparked alarm among key diplomatic partners like the US and Japan. Tuesday night saw special forces troops encircling the parliament building and army helicopters hovering over it, but the military withdrew after the National Assembly unanimously voted to overturn the decree, forcing Yoon to lift it before daybreak Wednesday. The declaration of martial law was the first of its kind in more than 40 years in South Korea. Eighteen lawmakers from the ruling party voted to reject Yoon's martial law decree along with opposition lawmakers. Yoon's speech fuelled speculation that he and his party may push for a constitutional amendment to shorten his term, instead of accepting impeachment, as a way to ease public anger over the martial law and facilitate Yoon's early exit from office. Lee Jae-myung, the leader of the main liberal opposition Democratic Party, told reporters that Yoon's speech was "greatly disappointing" and that the only way forward is his immediate resignation or impeachment. His party called Yoon's martial law "unconstitutional, illegal rebellion or coup." The passage of Yoon's impeachment motion appeared more likely Friday when the chair of Yoon's party called for his



South Korea's main opposition Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung, bottom centre, and his party members stage a rally to denounce President Yoon Suk Yeol's apology over Tuesday's martial law declaration at the National Assembly in Seoul on Saturday. The signs read, 'Punish.'

removal on Friday, but the party remained formally opposed to impeachment. On Saturday, tens of thousands of people densely packed several blocks of roads leading up to the National Assembly, waving banners, shouting slogans and dancing and singing along to K-pop songs with lyrics changed to call for Yoon's ouster. Protesters also gathered in front of PPP's headquarters near the Assembly, angrily shouting for its lawmakers to vote to impeach Yoon. A smaller crowd of Yoon's supporters, which still seemed to be in the thousands, rallied in

separate streets in Seoul, decrying the impeachment attempt they saw as unconstitutional. Lawmakers on Saturday first voted on a bill appointing a special prosecutor to investigate stock price manipulation allegations surrounding Yoon's wife. Some lawmakers from Yoon's party were seen leaving the hall after that vote, triggering angry shouts from opposition lawmakers. On Friday, PPP chair Han Dong-hun, who criticised Yoon's martial law declaration, said he had received intelligence that during the brief period of martial law Yoon

ordered the country's defence counterintelligence commander to arrest and detain unspecified politicians based on accusations of "anti-state activities." Hong Jang-won, first deputy director of South Korea's National Intelligence Service, told lawmakers in a closed-door briefing Friday that Yoon had ordered him to help the defence counterintelligence unit to detain key politicians. The targeted politicians included Han, Lee and Woo, according to Kim Byung-kee, one of the lawmakers who attended the meeting.

The Defence Ministry said Friday it suspended three military commanders including the head of the defence counterintelligence unit over their involvement in enforcing martial law. Vice Defence Minister Kim Seon Ho has told parliament that Defence Minister Kim Yong Hyun ordered the deployment of troops to the National Assembly after Yoon imposed martial law. Opposition parties accused Kim of recommending to Yoon to enforce martial law. Kim resigned Thursday, and prosecutors imposed an overseas travel ban on him.

Syrian troops rush to defend Homs

AP ■ BEIRUT

The Syrian army withdrew from much of southern Syria on Saturday, leaving more areas of the country, including two provincial capitals, under the control of opposition fighters, the military and an opposition war monitor said. The redeployment away from the provinces of Daraa and Sweida came as Syria's military sent large numbers of reinforcements to defend the key central city of Homs, Syria's third largest, as insurgents approached its outskirts. The rapid advances by insurgents is a stunning reversal of fortunes for Syria's President Bashar Assad, who appears to be largely on his own, with erstwhile allies preoccupied with other conflicts. His chief international backer, Russia, is busy with its war in Ukraine, and Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah, which at one point sent thousands of fighters to shore up his forces, has been weakened by a yearlong conflict with Israel. Iran, meanwhile, has seen its proxies across the region degraded by Israeli regular airstrikes. Rami Abdurrahman, who heads the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Syria war monitor, reported Saturday

that Iran's military advisers have started leaving Syria. He added that Iran-backed fighters in eastern Syria, mainly from Afghanistan and Pakistan, have withdrawn into central Syria. The shock offensive began November 27 led by the jihadi Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group, or HTS, during which gunmen captured the northern city of Aleppo, Syria's largest, and the central city of Hama, the country's fourth largest city. The group has its origins in al-Qaida and is considered a terrorist organisation by the US and the United Nations. HTS leader Abu Mohammed al-Golani told CNN in an exclusive interview Thursday from Syria that the aim of the offensive is to overthrow Assad's government. The Britain-based Observatory said Syrian troops have withdrawn from much of the two southern provinces and are sending reinforcements to Homs, where a battle is looming. If the insurgents capture Homs, they would cut the link between Damascus, Assad's seat of power, and the coastal region where the president enjoys wide support. The Syrian army said in a statement Saturday that it has carried out redeployment and repositioning in Sweida and



A Syrian opposition fighter holds a rocket launcher in front of the provincial government office, where an image of Syrian President Bashar Assad is riddled with bullets on the facade, in the aftermath of the opposition's takeover of Hama, Syria. AP/PTI

Daraa after its checkpoints came under attack by "terrorists." The army said it is setting up a "strong and coherent defensive and security belt in the area," apparently to defend Damascus from the south. Since Syria's conflict broke out in March 2011, the Syrian government has been referring to opposition gunmen as terrorists. In the gas-rich nation of Qatar, the foreign ministers of Iran, Russia and Turkey were scheduled to meet to discuss the situation in Syria. Turkey is a main backer of the rebels seek-

ing to overthrow Assad. Qatar's top diplomat, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, criticised Assad for failing to take advantage of the lull in fighting in recent years to address the country's underlying problems. "Assad didn't seize this opportunity to start engaging and restoring his relationship with his people," he said. Sheikh Mohammed said he was surprised by how quickly the rebels have advanced and said there is a real threat to Syria's "territorial integrity." He said the war could "damage and

destroy what is left if there is no sense of urgency" to start a political process. After the fall of the cities of Daraa and Sweida early Saturday, Syrian government forces remain in control of five provincial capitals — Damascus, Homs and Quneitra, as well as Latakia and Tartus on the Mediterranean coast. Tartus is home to the only Russian naval base outside the former Soviet Union while Latakia is home to a major Russian air base. On Friday, US-backed fighters of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces captured wide parts of the eastern province of Deir el-Zour that borders Iraq as well as the provincial capital that carries the same name. The capture of areas in Deir el-Zour is a blow to Iran's influence in the region as the area is the gateway to the corridor linking the Mediterranean to Iran, a supply line for Iranian-backed fighters, including Lebanon's Hezbollah. With the capture of a main border crossing with Iraq by the SDF and after opposition fighters took control of the Naseeb border crossing to Jordan in southern Syria, the Syrian government's only gateway to the outside world is the Masnaa border crossing with Lebanon.

Road mishap in Ivory Coast leaves 26 dead

AP ■ ABIDJAN (IVORY COAST)

A fiery crash involving two minibuses in Ivory Coast on Friday killed at least 26 people and injured 28 more, authorities said. The two vehicles collided in Brokoua, a village in the centre west of the country, the transportation ministry said in a statement without providing further details. However, the statement said an investigation was launched. Ten of the 26 killed died in a fire that followed the collision, according to the ministry. Videos from the scene from local media outlets showed the two vehicles in flames. "The Minister of Transport invites, once again, all road users to be more vigilant in road traffic, by respecting traffic regulations," the statement read. Accidents are common in the west African country due to dilapidated roads and reckless driving, killing over 1,000 people annually, according to the ministry. Last month, 21 people were killed and at least 10 others injured in a road accident. Earlier this year, a tanker truck crashed into a bus in northern Ivory Coast, leaving 13 people dead and injuring 44.

Iran poised to raise stock of weapons-grade Uranium: IAEA chief

AP ■ MANAMA (BAHRAIN)

Iran is poised to "quite dramatically" increase its stockpile of near weapons-grade uranium as it has started cascades of advanced centrifuges, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency warned Friday. The comments from Rafael Mariano Grossi came just hours after Iran said it conducted a successful space launch with its heaviest payload ever, the latest for its programme that the West alleges improves Tehran's ballistic missile programme. The launch of the Simorgh rocket comes as Iran's nuclear programme now enriches uranium at 60%, a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90%. While Iran maintains its programme is peaceful, officials in the Islamic Republic increasingly threaten to potentially seek the bomb and an intercontinental ballistic missile that would allow Tehran to use the weapon against distant foes like the

United States. The moves are likely to further raise tensions gripping the wider Middle East over Israel's continued war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip and as an uneasy ceasefire holds in Lebanon. However, Iran may as well be preparing the ground for possible talks with the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump, who in his first term unilaterally withdrew America from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers. The US intelligence community in a report released Thursday said that while "Iran is not building a nuclear weapon" it has "undertaken activities that better position it to produce one, if it so chooses." The Iranian debate over seeking the bomb "risks emboldening nuclear weapons advocates within Iran's decision-making apparatus and shifting the thinking of current and future Iranian elites about the utility of nuclear weapons," the report added.

NY cops push to identify CEO killer, FBI offers reward

AP ■ NEW YORK

The gunman who killed the CEO of the largest US health insurer likely left New York City on a bus soon after the brazen ambush that has shaken corporate America, police officials said. But he left something behind: a backpack that was discovered in Central Park. Nearly four days after the shooting of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, police still did not know the gunman's name or whereabouts or have a motive for the killing. Investigators were looking at whether the shooter may have been a disgruntled employee or client of the insurer. Chief of Detectives Joseph Kenny told reporters. The FBI announced Friday night it was offering a USD 50,000 reward for information leading to an arrest and conviction. Video of the gunman fleeing Wednesday's shooting showed him riding a bicycle into Central Park and later taking a taxi to a bus terminal that offers commuter service to New Jersey and Greyhound routes to Philadelphia, Boston and Washington, D.C., according to Kenny. Police have video of the man entering the bus station but no video of him exiting, leading them to believe he left the city, Kenny said. Investigators on Friday found a backpack in the park that had been worn by the gunman during the shooting, police said, following a massive sweep to find it in a vast area with lakes and ponds, meadows, playgrounds and woods. Police didn't immediately reveal what, if anything, it contained but said it would be analyzed for clues.

The gunman made sure to conceal his identity with a mask during almost all of his time in the city, including during the attack and while he ate, yet left a trail of evidence in view of the nation's biggest city and its network of security cameras. The gunman arrived in New York City on Nov 24 and shot Thompson 10 days later outside his company's annual investor conference at a hotel just blocks from Radio City Music Hall and Rockefeller Center. The gunman got off a bus that originated in Atlanta and made several stops along the way, Kenny said. Police have not determined where he got on the bus. Investigators have a list of passengers, but none of them would have had to provide an ID when they climbed aboard, Kenny said. Investigators believe the suspect used a fake identification card and paid cash, Kenny said, when he checked in at the hotel, which has a café along with shared and private rooms and is blocks from Columbia University. Investigators have tested a discarded water bottle and protein bar wrapper in a hunt for his DNA. They also were trying to obtain additional information from a cellphone found along the gunman's escape route. Photos of the suspected shooter that were taken in the lobby of a hostel on Manhattan's Upper West Side appear to from the only time he removed his mask, Kenny said. The images, showing a man smiling in the lobby of the HI New York City hostel. They are among a collection of photos and video circulated since the shooting — including footage of the attack, as well as images of the suspected gunman at a Starbucks beforehand.

Ukraine confirms second Danish delivery of F-16s

AP ■ KYIV

Denmark has delivered a second batch of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday as he travelled to Paris to meet with top politicians and dignitaries. In a message on Telegram, Zelenskyy praised Denmark and lamented a lack of dedication from other allies. "The first batch of planes provided by the Danes are already shooting down Russian missiles: rescuing our people and our infrastructure. Now our air shield is reinforced even further," he said. "If all partners were so determined, we would have been able to make Russian terror impossible." The announcement comes as Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region marks a day of mourning for 10 people killed in a Russian attack on Friday. A further 24 people, including two children, were injured when a missile struck a local service station, said regional Gov. Ivan Fedorov. Another three people were killed in a strike on the Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih Friday, Ukraine's State Emergency Service said. Addressing the attacks, Zelenskyy said that Russian President Vladimir Putin did not seek "real peace." Putin "only seeks the ability to treat any country this way, with bombs, missiles, and all other forms of violence," Zelenskyy said. "Only through strength can we resist this. And only through strength can real peace be established." Zelenskyy is due to meet other world leaders on Saturday, including French President Emmanuel Macron, at an event in Paris celebrating the renovation of Notre Dame Cathedral after a devastating fire in 2019.

Pearl Harbor survivor recalls confusion, chaos during Japanese bombing 83 years ago

AP ■ PEARL HARBOR (US)

Bob Fernandez thought he'd go dancing and see the world when he joined the US Navy as a 17-year-old high school student in August 1941. Four months later he found himself shaking from explosions and passing ammunition to artillery crews so his ship's guns could return fire on Japanese planes bombing Pearl Harbor, a Navy base in Hawaii. "When those things go off like that, we didn't know what's what," said Fernandez, who is now 100. "We didn't even know we were in a war." Two survivors of the bombing — each 100 or older — are planning to return to Pearl Harbor on Saturday to observe the 83rd anniversary of the attack that thrust the US into World War II. They will join active-duty troops, veterans and members of the public for a remembrance ceremony hosted by the Navy and the National Park Service. Fernandez was initially planning to join them but had to cancel because of health issues. The bombing killed more than 2,300 US servicemen. Nearly half, or 1,177, were sailors and Marines on board the USS Arizona, which sank during the battle. The remains of more than 900 Arizona crew members are still entombed on the submerged vessel. A moment of silence will be held at 7:54 am, the same time the attack began eight decades ago. Aircraft in missing man formation are due to fly overhead to break the silence. Dozens of survivors once joined the annual remembrance but attendance has declined as survivors have aged. Today there are only 16 still living, according to a list maintained by Kathleen Farley, the California state chair of the Sons and Daughters of Pearl Harbor Survivors. Military historian J Michael

Wenger has estimated there were some 87,000 military personnel on Oahu on the day of the attack. Many laud Pearl Harbor survivors as heroes, but Fernandez doesn't view himself that way. "I'm not a hero. I'm just something but an ammunition passer," he told The Associated Press in a phone interview from California, where he now lives with his nephew in Lodi. Fernandez was working as a mess cook on his ship, the USS Curtis, the morning of Dec 7, 1941, and planned to go dancing that night at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Waikiki. He brought sailors coffee and food as he waited tables during breakfast. Then they heard an alarm sound. Through a porthole, Fernandez saw a plane with the red ball insignia painted on Japanese aircraft fly by. Fernandez rushed down three decks to a magazine room where he and other sailors waited for someone to unlock a door storing 5-inch (12.7-centimeter), 38-caliber shells so they could begin passing them to the ship's guns. He has told interviewers over the years that some of his fellow sailors were praying and crying as they heard gunfire up above. "I felt kind of scared because I didn't know what the hell was going on," Fernandez said. The ship's guns hit a Japanese plane that



Pearl Harbor Navy veteran Bob Fernandez poses for a photograph with medals from his military service, in Lodi, Calif. AP/PTI

crashed into one of its cranes. Shortly after, its guns hit a dive bomber which then slammed into the ship and exploded below deck, setting the hangar and main decks on fire, according to the Navy History and Heritage Command. Fernandez's ship, the Curtis, lost 21 men and nearly 60 of its sailors were injured. "We lost a lot of good people, you know. They didn't do nothing," Fernandez said. "But we never know what's going to happen in a war." After the attack, Fernandez had to sweep up debris. That night, he stood guard with a rifle to make sure no one tried to come aboard. When it came time to rest, he fell asleep next to where the ships' dead were lying. He only realized that when a fellow sailor woke him up and told him. After the war, Fernandez worked as a forklift driver at a cannery in San Leandro, California. His wife of 65 years, Mary Fernandez, died in 2014. His oldest son is now 82 and lives in Arizona. Two other sons and a stepdaughter have died. He has traveled to Hawaii three times to participate in the Pearl Harbor remembrance. This year would have been his fourth trip. Fernandez still enjoys music and goes dancing at a nearby restaurant once a week if he can. His favorite tune is Frank Sinatra's rendition of "All of Me," a song his nephew Joe Guthrie said he still knows by heart. "The ladies flock to him like moths to a flame," Guthrie 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 waists 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*, he represented Mexico's ancient traditions, while embroidery techniques showcased India's unparalleled craftsmanship. The silhouettes flowed

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



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."

¡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. The second season picks up right where the first left off, resuming the suspenseful narrative with the abduction of Purva, played by Anchal Singh. The creators have consciously tried to maintain the series' intensity, diving straight into the action from the first episode. This decision sets a fast-paced tone that remains consistent throughout the season. While the relentless action

sequences and tightly woven plot aim to fascinate the audience, the series struggles to break new ground. While effective in parts, the continuous focus on action begins to feel repetitive, causing the narrative to lose the unique spark that made the first season stand out. Despite the attempt to 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 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,

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**



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.

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.

A notable new addition to the **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 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!

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.

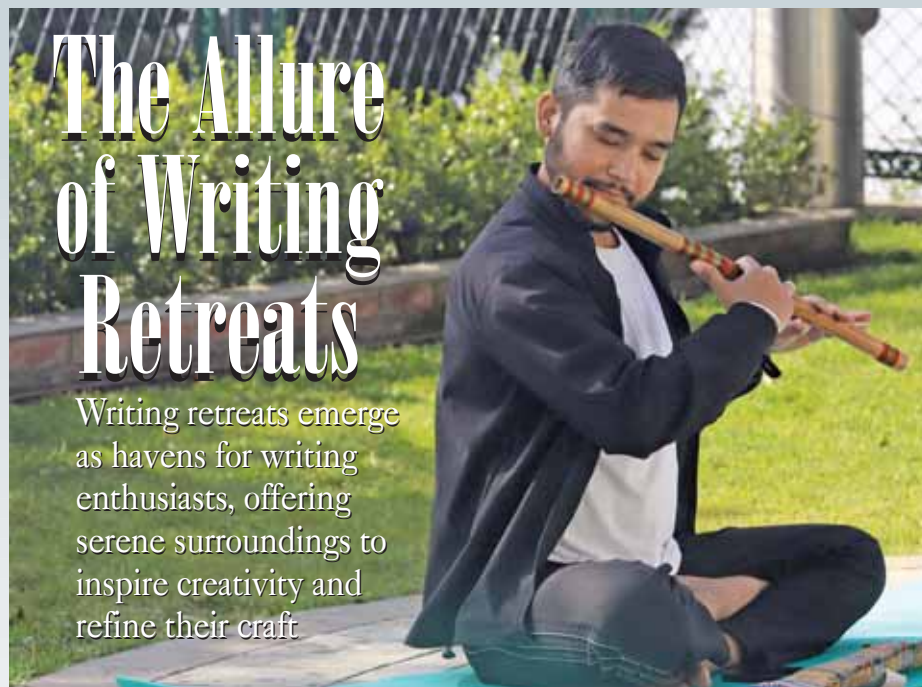
In a world increasingly characterised by distractions, writing retreats have emerged as sanctuaries where budding writers can focus, grow, and thrive. These retreats offer a unique blend of solitude, community, and professional guidance, making them appealing to anyone passionate about honing their craft.

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 Tahbib 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.

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.

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 (nadrú 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 as 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 long-standing 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. The starters were a real treat, with dishes like "Biri Boda with Dhaniya Chutney" (Lentil Fritters with Coriander) and "Besara Chhatu Potra Poda" (Mushrooms with Mustard in Banana Leaf) capturing the essence of Odisha's cooking style. The lentil fritters were crispy on the outside, soft on the inside, and paired beautifully with a fresh coriander chutney that added a burst of flavour. The mushrooms, cooked with mustard and wrapped in banana leaves, offered a smoky, earthy flavour that exemplified the depth of Odia culinary techniques. When it came to the main courses, the dishes truly shone. "Dahi Baingan" (Shallow Fried Eggplant with Tempered Yogurt) was a standout, with its crisp, golden eggplant and creamy, tangy yogurt creating a delicious contrast in texture and taste. "Dalma," a hearty lentil and vegetable stew with coconut, was a comforting dish, light yet full of flavour. The



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 Podo," 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.



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



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 lies 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.

**THE SCENIC AND
SIMPLE MUKTESHWAR**

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



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 railroad 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.



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 5,400 feet, 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

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**



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 Bona Devi Temple, a revered shrine nestled 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 Shivaling, 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 wasn't just the spiritual aura that captivated us. The temple offers stunning panoramic views of the Himalayan range and the five regions of Salt—Talla, Malla, Vichalla, Palla, and Valla. Its potential for spiritual tourism is undeniable, but its tranquillity must be preserved. Next on the itinerary was a hidden waterfall, about 25 km from the property, towards Almora. Accessible only on foot, the path to the falls remained elusive until a local guide helped us navigate the terrain. From the road, it appears like a modest stream cascading down the mountainside, but once you hike up, the scene transforms. The effort was worth it. At the top, I was greeted by a crystal-clear pool fed by cascading waters. Taking a dip in the cool, pristine water felt like nature's own therapy. A jungle walk leading to a secluded spot by the Ramganga River was another unforgettable highlight. Nivriti Summit View 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.



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 11 | 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



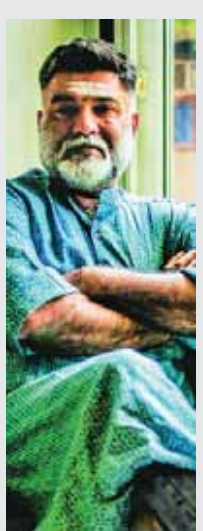
PISCES Feb 19-March 20

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 TUNING FORK



C V Srikanth

The Power of a Thought

"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 peace and Holistic wellbeing. 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 सुजगत्शान्तं पशुपतियोगिनाम्"
"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 tranquility 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

