



Established 1865 sunday pioneer



LUCKNOW, SUNDAY DECEMBER 22, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

www.dailypioneer.com

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

No more public inspection of poll centre CCTV, webcasts, videos



FILE PHOTO: PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a move to check the potential misuse of postal ballot facility extended to voters on poll duty, electoral rules have been changed to ensure that such people cast their vote at designated facilitation centres only and do not keep the ballot papers with them for a long time. Based on the recommendations of the Election Commission (EC), the Ministry of Law and Justice has amended an election rule to prevent public inspection of certain

electronic documents such as CCTV camera and webcasting footage as well as video recordings of candidates to prevent their misuse. The amendment has earned severe criticism from the Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh, who hit out at the poll body saying it was a "vindication" of the party's assertion of the "rapidly eroding integrity" of the electoral process. "Why the poll panel was afraid of transparency", Ramesh questioned. According to Rule 93, all

"papers" related to elections shall be open to public inspection. The amendment inserts "as specified in these rules" after "papers". "In the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, in rule 93, in sub-rule (2), in clause (a), after the word "papers", the words "as specified in these rules" shall be inserted," the Ministry said in a notification. A new section 18A has been added in the rules. It states that "Notwithstanding anything in this Part, a voter on election duty shall receive his postal ballot, record his vote thereon in accordance

with this Part and return the same at the facilitation centre as specified, in writing, by the returning officer. The poll body had in September last year recommended to the Union law ministry to tweak the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 to ensure that voters on poll duty cast their vote at voter facilitation centres located where they are deployed. The EC was of the view that if a postal ballot remains with a voter for a long time, the person could be highly susceptible to undue influence, threats, bribery and other unethical means by candidates or political parties. According to the Ministry of Law, a court case was the "trigger" behind the amendment. Documents such as nomination forms, appointment of election agents, results and election account statements are mentioned in the Conduct of Election Rules, electronic documents such as CCTV camera footage, webcasting footage and video recording of candidates during the Model Code of Conduct period are not covered. "CCTV coverage, webcasting of polling stations are not carried out under Conduct of Election Rules but are the result of steps taken by the EC to ensure a level playing field," said an official.

Continued on page 5

Number of domestic migrants reduced by 12 per cent: EAC-PM

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a remarkable observation which indicates increased economic opportunities across the country, the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (EAC-PM) has estimated the number of domestic migrants has lowered by around 12 per cent to 40.20 crore between 2011 and 2023. "The overall number of migrants in the country, as of 2023, is 40,20,90,396. This is about 11.78 per cent lower as compared to the number of migrants enumerated as per Census 2011 [45,57,87,621]. Consequently, the migration rate which stood at 37.64% as per Census 2011 is estimated to have since reduced to 28.88% of the population," according to a working paper by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM). The paper titled '400 Million Dreams! Examining volume and directions of domestic migration in India using novel high frequency data,' pointed out that West Bengal, Rajasthan and Karnataka are the States showing the maximum amount of growth in percentage share of the arriving passengers. Similarly, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh are States where the percentage share of total migrants has reduced. "At the state level, Uttar Pradesh-Delhi; Gujarat-Maharashtra; Telangana-Andhra Pradesh, and Bihar-Delhi emerge as the primary dyads of the movement," it said. At the district level,



FILE PHOTO: PTI

Murshidabad - Kolkata; Paschim Bardhaman-Howrah; Valsad - Mumbai; Chittoor - Bengaluru Urban and Surat - Mumbai are the most popular routes for migration between districts. This has implications for urban planning as well as for planning of transportation networks. According to the report, April-June is the high month for migrant movement witnessing secondary highs. December-January and September-October are the months with the highest inflows whereas May-June and January-February are the months with the highest outflows in Mumbai. These are perhaps months where most migrant labour travel back to their places of origin. A secondary high in winter time is perhaps indicative of travel around the festival/marriage season. January, on the other hand, appears to be the month of lowest travel. "Even prior to the pandemic related lockdowns, there were signs of the passenger

movement showing little growth, however after the pandemic, even the high months i.e. April-May are at a distinctly lower level as compared to the corresponding period before the pandemic, passenger levels for May 2023 being 6.67% lower than the corresponding number for May 2012. Further, it is interesting to note that a majority [>75%] of our predicted migration flows are within 500 kms of the origin. This is in line with gravitation effects and theories such as Ravenstein's Theory of Human Migration (1834 - 1913)," it said. "We hypothesize that this is on account of availability of improved services such as education, health, infrastructure and connectivity as well as improved economic opportunities in or near in major sources of migration and is an indicator of overall economic growth," noted the paper authored by former EAC-PM chairman Bibek Debroy.

Continued on page 5



The car that was crashed into a crowd at the Magdeburg AP/PTI

Five killed in attack on German Christmas market, 200 injured

AP ■ MAGDEBURG (GERMANY)

Germans on Saturday mourned both the victims and their shaken sense of security after a Saudi doctor intentionally drove into a Christmas market teeming with holiday shoppers, killing at least five people, including a small child, and injuring at least 200 others. Authorities arrested a 50-year-old man at the site of the attack in Magdeburg on Friday evening and took him into custody for questioning. He has lived in Germany for nearly two decades, practising medicine in Bernburg, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of Magdeburg. Officials said. The governor of the surrounding state of Saxony-Anhalt, Reiner Haseloff, told reporters that the death toll rose from two to five and that more than 200 people in total were injured.

Continued on page 5



Govt still not reduced GST on health and life insurance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAISALMER

The Goods and Services Tax Council meeting on Saturday postponed a decision on reducing taxes on health and life insurance, while the much talked-about GoM recommendation of rate rejig in 148 items was not tabled before the Council. Meanwhile, the GST Council agreed to issue a clarification on taxation of popcorn, saying that pre-packed and labelled ready-to-eat snacks will attract a 12 per cent tax while an 18 per cent GST will be levied if it is caramelised. There is no change in the tax rate of popcorn and the GST Council has only agreed that the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) will issue a circular clarifying the current taxation regime of popcorn. "Ready-to-eat popcorn," which is mixed with salt and spices, and has the essential character of namkeens currently attracts a 5 per cent GST if it is not pre-packaged and labelled. If it is supplied as pre-packaged and labelled, a 12 per cent GST is levied. However, when popcorn is mixed with sugar (caramel popcorn), its essential character changes to that of a sugar confectionary, and would therefore be classifiable under HS 1704 90 90 and attract an 18 per cent GST, as per the clarification. Some members of the Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising her state counterparts, felt that more deliberations were required before a final decision could be arrived at with regard to insurance taxation.

Continued on page 5

Delhi LG sanctions ED to prosecute Kejriwal

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In more trouble for former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has sanctioned the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to prosecute him in the alleged money laundering case linked to the liquor policy scam case. This comes just a month before Assembly elections in Delhi. The Aam Aadmi Party, however, claimed that there was no such sanction and challenged the ED to show a copy of the sanction. On its part, AAP leaders Saurabh Bharadwaj, Priyanka Kakkar, Atishi and Manish Sisodia claimed that ED is "spreading fake news". They said that a copy of the permission should be given to them if such an order has been passed. The liquor policy scam has been among the biggest allegations made by the opposition BJP against the AAP government. According to officials, the ED had, on December 5, sought permission to prosecute Kejriwal, writing to Delhi Chief Secretary Dharmendra in his capacity as Chief Vigilance Officer in this regard. A case under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) charges was earlier filed against Kejriwal, but the trial had not started. After the Supreme Court made the Lt Governor's approval mandatory to prosecute individuals holding government posts in money laundering cases, the ED wrote to the Chief Secretary



asking for permission, said sources. Citing a November 6 Supreme Court judgment, the ED sought sanction for prosecution under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, on December 5. In its letter to the Lt Governor, the ED said it found a "huge level of corruption in framing and implementation" of the excise policy. The Supreme Court on November 6 ruled that public servants cannot be prosecuted for money laundering without prior approval from the government, as required under the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). Earlier, prosecution sanction was not needed for chargesheets (prosecution complaints) filed by the ED against public servants. It was mandated for other investigative agencies, like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and state police. The ED in its note to Chief Secretary of Delhi, sought approval from the competent

authority to prosecute former Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal under section 197 (1) of CrPC (Section 218 of BNSS 2023) in a case related to liquor policy scam case. "Sanction may be required for prosecution to Kejriwal, for offence of Money Laundering under Section 4 of PMLA, 2002 read with Section 197(1) of Cr. P.C. (Section 218 of BNSS, 2023) in the case of ECIR No. ECIR/HQ/14/2022 dated 22.08.2022. Therefore, you are requested to grant sanction for prosecution to Sh. Arvind Kejriwal, Ex-CM, Govt. of NCT of Delhi in ECIR No. ECIR/HQ/14/2022 dated 22.08.2022, for the offence of money laundering as define under Section 3 of PMLA, 2002 and the offence is punishable under section 4 of PMLA Act, 2002," the ED said. Meanwhile, the BJP doubled down on its charges against the AAP with Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva welcoming the sanction to prosecute Kejriwal.

Continued on page 5

MCD drive to identify illegal B'deshi migrants in its schools

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has issued an order directing its departments and zonal heads to carry out a drive to identify and verify illegal Bangladeshi migrants in municipal schools and those registered for birth certificates. The MCD has also directed all MCD zones to remove encroachments by illegal Bangladeshi migrants. An action taken report has been sought by the MCD deputy commissioner by December 31. The directive comes days after the Delhi L-G Secretariat ordered a crackdown on illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, with the issue becoming the latest flashpoint between the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the Assembly elections in Delhi due in February. The decision follows a meeting held on December 12 with Delhi government's Principal Secretary (Home), where the MCD Commissioner was represented by the Additional Commissioner (HQ) and Deputy Commissioner (HQ). Zonal heads have been instructed to implement preventive measures to address the issue of illegal Bangladeshi migrants.

Continued on page 5

BLOOMS BANISH WINTER BLUES



Visitors at the 'All India Winter Rose Show' organised by the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) in association with The Rose Society of India, at India-Africa Friendship Rose Garden, Chanakyapuri PTI

Multistorey building collapses in Punjab's Mohali



PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Rescue operations were underway after a multistorey building collapsed in the Sohana village of Punjab's Mohali district on Saturday, officials said. Locals said some people were feared trapped under the debris. The district authorities launched a rescue operation. Two excavators were pressed into

service as part of the operation. A National Disaster Response Team (NDRF) team has reached the spot. The fire brigade is also participating in the operation, the officials said. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said, "Sad news has been received that a multistorey building near Sohana in Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar (Mohali) has collapsed. The entire administration and other rescue teams have been deployed at the spot. I am in constant touch with the administration. "We pray that there is no loss of life, we will also take action against the culprits. Appeal to the people to cooperate with the administration," he added in his post on X. Senior Superintendent of Police (Mohali) Deepak Pareek, who reached the spot to take stock of the situation, said the rescue operation was underway in full swing.

Continued on page 5

A royal takeover: Erstwhile princely estate of Bettiah Raj, is now State property

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA

Perhaps one of the last privy purses, the erstwhile princely estate of Bettiah Raj, one of the largest zamindari of Bihar, will now be assimilated in the property owned by the State government. According to a notification issued in the Bihar Gazette decks have been cleared for complete takeover of 15,358 acres of land belonging to the Bettiah princely State by the Bihar administration.

Out of a total of 15,358.60 acres of land, 15,215.33 acres is in Bihar and 143.26 acres is in Uttar Pradesh. According to officials, a large chunk of land that came under the erstwhile Bettiah Raj has been encroached upon over the years. The 'Vesting of Bettiah Raj Properties Act-2024's gazette notification dated December 11 followed a bill passed by the state legislature in the winter session last month. Earlier, properties of the estate were managed by the Court of Wards, Board of

Revenue (Bihar Government). The last raja of Bettiah Raj, Harendra Kishore Singh, died heirless on March 26, 1893, leaving behind two widows, Maharani Sheo Ratna Kunwar and Maharani Janki Kunwar. Maharani Sheo Ratna Kunwar who succeeded to the estate of Raja Harendra Kishore Singh on his death as his senior widow died on March 24, 1896 and on her death Maharani Janki Kunwar became entitled to the possession of the estate. Since



it was reportedly found that Maharani Janki Kunwar was not able to administer the

estate, its management was taken over by the Court of Wards.

Cities in Bihar where land belonging to Bettiah Estate are located include: 9758.72 acres in West Champaran, 5320.51 acres in East Champaran, 35.58 acres in Gopalganj, 7.29 acres in Siwan, 4.81 acres in Patna, 88.41 acres in Saran. Similarly, cities in Uttar Pradesh where land belonging to Bettiah Estate are located include: Kushinagar (61.16 acres), Maharajganj (7.53 acres), Varanasi (10.13 acres), Gorakhpur (50.92 acres), Basti (6.21 acre), Allahabad

(4.54 acre), Ayodhya (1.86 acre). "All the existing properties, to the knowledge of the court and being looked after by the court, of the Bettiah Raj, located in or outside the state of Bihar, whether movable or immovable, shall stand vested with the state government from the date on which this Act comes into force. Bettiah Raj Properties means and includes all movable and immovable properties of the erstwhile Raja of Bettiah," says the Gazette notification.

Continued on page 5

Out on bail, accused threatens rape victim

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A rape accused, out on bail in the Thakurganj area, allegedly browbeat the victim and pressured her to withdraw the case. The accused allegedly threatened to defame her on social media. When she refused to give in to the pressure, he allegedly attempted to kill her by running his car over her. On the orders of the DCP (West), police have registered a fresh case against the accused. In May 2024, the girl from Dubagga filed a rape case against Sameer, a resident of Thakurganj. The police arrested Sameer and sent him to jail. After remaining in jail for three months, Sameer was granted bail. Following his release, he began pressuring the victim to withdraw the rape case. Initially, he used gentle words to persuade the girl, but when she did not withdraw the case, he started defaming her on social media. The victim alleged that on

Sunday, she had gone for a walk towards the Ghantaghar locality when Sameer hit her with his car with the intention of killing her. He had made several such attempts, due to which the victim was injured. When the victim went to the police station to file a complaint, the case was not registered. After this, she met the DCP (West) and informed him about the incident. A case has now been registered on the orders of the DCP. Meanwhile, Ghazipur police have started investigation into the charges by the family of a 19-year-old student who committed suicide allegedly due to blackmailing on December 17. Police are investigating the case on the basis of call detail records of the student and his mother. The family alleged that someone had been harassing him on phone for the last one week and he took the extreme step due to this. The family also filed a complaint at the police station. The deceased's father, Anand Shukla, originally a resident of Hamirpur Bharua in

Samerpur, lives with his family in Indiranagar (Sector 19). He has given a written complaint to the police. Shukla alleged that someone was blackmailing his son Shivang. It could be a man or a woman. Due to this, he was in a state of depression for a week. Troubled by this, he committed suicide by hanging himself at around 7 pm on December 17. At the time of the incident, his mother Poonam had gone to perform puja and he himself had gone for work. According to deceased's mother Poonam, someone was harassing her son. "Due to this fear of pestering calls on phone, he did not recharge his phone. He used my phone for three days. After this, he deleted all the call details and messages from my mobile before the incident. Since his phone is locked, no information about the call details and messages can be obtained," she said. On Tuesday night when no one was at home, Shivang (19) allegedly hanged himself from the ceiling fan in his room.

Youth duped of ₹3.55 crore by mother-son duo

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman and her son allegedly duped a youth of Rs 3.55 crore under the pretext of securing a house for him in Aliganj. Upon discovering that the house was registered in someone else's name, the victim filed a case at Aliganj police station. The police are currently investigating the matter. Saurabh Agrawal, a resident of Rudauli, said, "I met Abhishek, a resident of Mahanagar Extension, a year ago. He spoke about selling his house. Since I had plans to buy a house in Lucknow, I decided to take the conversation further." According to Saurabh, at the time of the deal, Abhishek stated that his mother Monika and sister Abhilasha were also partners in the house. "The deal for the house was finalised for Rs 4.30 crore. After that, I paid Rs 3.55

crore on their insistence. When the time came for registration, Monika said that Abhilasha had gone to Australia and it would happen on her return. In June 2024, these people sold the house to one Pankaj Mohan Mishra of Aliganj," Saurabh explained. The victim said that he visited Monika's house on October 7 to request the return of the money. "A man named Rudra Dwivedi, who was probably a henchman of the accused, refused to return the money and also threatened to kill me if I went to the police." Upon further investigation, I learnt that Abhishek is a land mafia and involved in this type of fraud," the victim alleged. According to Inspector, Aliganj, Vinod Kumar Tiwari following the victim's complaint, a case has been registered against Monika, Abhishek, and Rudra.

Lucknow to be decked up for Maha Kumbh 2025

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In view of the Maha Kumbh 2025, a presentation of decorative lighting for special decoration on the main roads and intersections leading from Lucknow to Prayagraj was held under the chairmanship of Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob. The meeting was attended by Lucknow Development Authority Vice-Chairman Prathmesh Kumar, LMC chief engineer Mahesh Verma, officers from the PWD, and representatives of the relevant consultancy firms. During the meeting, a detailed plan for decoration was discussed, reviewing the work plan for the main roads and crossings of Lucknow. This included works related to

lighting, wall paintings, signage, horticulture, and road repairs. The divisional commissioner directed that all work should be completed with uniformity and high quality. She stated that Maha Kumbh 2025 is a moment of pride not only for Prayagraj but also for Lucknow. She emphasised that this is an opportunity to enhance Lucknow's beauty and attractiveness, ensuring that devotees have a pleasant experience while passing through the city. Instructions were given to widen major roads, repair footpaths, and ensure construction work. Decorative lighting based on themes such as diya, namaste, and butterflies will be installed on the main roads of the city, with new signage boards to be placed at key loca-

tions and attractive paintings on walls. Encroachments on roads and intersections will be removed, dead poles and hanging wires will be repaired, and the quality of the road surface will be improved. During Maha Kumbh, millions of devotees will travel from Lucknow to Prayagraj. For this, the city's roads will be specially decorated so that the devotees can leave for the fair while enjoying the beauty of Lucknow. The divisional commissioner instructed the officers to complete all the works on time and to a high standard. "This event will not only add to the grandeur of the Maha Kumbh but will also strengthen the cultural identity of the city of Lucknow," she said.

Woman does aquatic meditation mudra for over an hour



Roma Hemvani, right, receives a certificate for setting a new record for holding 'Aquatic Meditation Mudra' while floating on water, in Lucknow on Saturday. PTI

Lucknow (PTI): On World Meditation Day, a 57-year-old woman from Lucknow did a single yoga pose while floating on water for over an hour. To raise awareness about meditation and its benefits, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 21 December as World Meditation Day, recalling the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Additionally, the General Assembly acknowledged the link between yoga and meditation as complementary approaches to health and well-being. On Saturday, Roma Hemvani set a new record for holding the 'Aquatic Meditation Mudra' for 1 hour, 24 minutes and 1 second, Malvika Bajpayee from the Yogasana Book of World Records told PTI. The event took place at the rooftop swimming pool of the Hilton Garden Inn in Gomti Nagar's Vibhuti Khand area. An avid yoga and meditation

practitioner, she said her primary goal with this record-setting achievement was to raise awareness about the ancient practice of aquatic meditation and to highlight its physical and emotional health benefits. "The UN has proclaimed December 21 as World Meditation Day to emphasize how meditation contributes to physical and overall well-being. This date marks the Winter Solstice, when days start becoming longer and nights shorter. According to Indian culture, the winter solstice symbolises that through meditation, a person's inner light of spirituality and energy can overcome the long period of darkness," Hemvani added. Bajpayee said the details of Hemvani's record would soon be uploaded to the website of the Yogasana Book of World Record Council. It is a private organisation, dedicated to keeping a records of achievements in the field of yoga and is registered in Ghaziabad.

LU announces first MOOC

Lucknow (PNS): Lucknow University announced the launch of its first Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) titled 'Unleashing the Potential of Digital Tools in Research', which is part of a project funded by the Higher Education department, Uttar Pradesh, under its research and development initiative. "We are thrilled to launch this MOOC, which aims to empower researchers to unlock the full potential of digital tools in their work," said Dr Kiran Lata Dangwal, Swayam Coordinator of the University of Lucknow. Dr Dangwal, who is also the course coordinator and developer of this MOOC, further said that this is the first MOOC launched under the aegis of Lucknow University and it has only been possible with the support and motivation of Vice-Chancellor Prof Alok Kumar Rai, who is continuously working towards the digital advancement in all sectors of the university. Course coordinator Dr Shipra Srivastava said, "Our goal is to provide learners with the skills and confidence needed to harness the power of digital research tools and advance their research methodology aligned with the present digital age." The MOOC features a unique blend of video lectures, interactive quizzes, discussions, and hands-on exercises, providing learners with a comprehensive and engaging learning experience. This is not the first time that Dr Dangwal and Dr Srivastava have developed a MOOC. In 2019, both of them developed a MOOC titled 'Enhancing Life Skills through Technology' on the Moodle platform. Dr Dangwal has already developed many other MOOCs at the international level.

UP Police to rope in social media influencers to counter fake news

Lucknow (PTI): Uttar Pradesh Police have enlisted social media influencers and college students as "digital warriors" to strengthen its fight against cybercrime and combat fake news, an officer said on Saturday. "The digital warriors (a network of social media influencers and college students) will raise awareness about cybercrime, counter misleading news, train ordinary citizens as cyber trainers, and publicise the commendable work and campaigns of the police," said Uttar Pradesh's Director General of Police, Prashant Kumar. Kumar cited a pilot project run by the UP Police ahead of the Maha Kumbh Mela to combat fake news. This month-long project, which involved influencers and college students, was successful and has now been expanded statewide, he said. "The Uttar Pradesh Police launched the 'Digital Warriors' initiative in 2018, which became active on WhatsApp.

People from different sections of society were added as digital volunteers," Kumar explained. "In 2023, 'WhatsApp Community Groups' were created, adding all UP Police personnel, enabling them to refute fake news and publicise the commendable work of the police." He added that currently, about 10 lakh people are connected as digital volunteers, and around 2 lakh policemen are linked through community groups. "Owing to the limited access of these digital volunteers to WhatsApp and their limited activity on other social media platforms like Instagram, X, Facebook, YouTube, etc, there was a need to engage the younger generation of social media influencers and college/university students with the UP Police by making them 'digital warriors,'" Kumar said. Focusing on the benefits of training the younger generation, the UP DGP said, "By training college/university stu-

dents, we can develop critical thinking skills, enabling them to analyse and verify information. These students will become digital warriors for UP Police and help report cybercrime and fake news." He added that these students will also be able to raise awareness about fake news and cybercrime within their families and social circles. Workshops will be organised in colleges, schools, or collectively at the police lines. The workshops will feature cybercrime experts, fact-checkers, cyber trainers, and district cyber police station cells, who will share technical knowledge and practical experience. Cyber Clubs will be established in schools and universities, with a teacher from each institution serving as the nodal officer. Workshops and creative sessions, such as poster-making, slogan/short-story writing, and social media content creation, will be conducted through the cyber clubs, Kumar said.

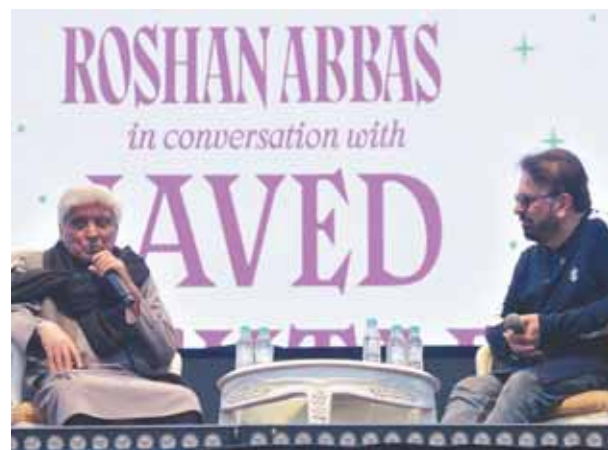
Man sentenced to two years in jail for drug smuggling

Lucknow (PNS): An accused under the NDPS Act, Mohammed Noor, has been sentenced to a two-year jail term and a penalty of Rs 25,000 by the court of Additional District and Sessions Judge/Special Judge NDPS Act, Arun Kumar Rai. Special Public Prosecutor Prakash Srivastava provided details, stating that the file was presented again for hearing on the point of punishment. "The accused, Mohammed Noor, stated that this was his first offence, and he has no criminal history, pleading for the minimum punishment," he said. He further explained that the accused was found guilty of illegally transporting and smuggling heroin. "Intermediate-grade heroin was recovered from the accused, so he was punished with the maximum penalty for the offence charged," he added. The SPO also mentioned that the report from the Forensic Science Laboratory in Mahanagar confirmed that the drug recovered from the accused was positive for heroin. The convicted accused, Noor, was sentenced to two years of rigorous imprisonment and fined Rs 25,000 under Section 8/21 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

Woman undergoes gender reassignment surgery, marries girlfriend

Kannauj (PTI): A 32-year-old woman underwent a gender reassignment surgery and married her lover in the Sarai Devin Tola area here. Shivangi, also known as Ranu, was born a woman but fell in love with Jyoti, 25. Their love blossomed four years ago when Jyoti began visiting Shivangi's jewellery shop in the area. Jyoti later opened a beauty parlour at Shivangi's home and their ties thickened, they decided to marry each other. Since they were both women, Shivangi decided to change her gender. "She researched the process online, consulted a specialist doctor in Delhi, and underwent three surgeries to transition. One final procedure remains, but Ranu (Shivangi) has already begun living her life as a man," said a family member. Both families have been fully supportive of the couple's decision and participated in the wedding, the relative said.

Repertwahr: Javed Akhtar a major highlight on Day 3



Lucknow (PNS): The third day of the Repertwahr festival, Season 12, began with Laksh Maheshwari's slam poetry on the literature stage, followed by popular songwriter and storyteller Rahgir's melodious tunes that enthralled the audience. The festival witnessed a major highlight when literary stalwart Javed Akhtar took to the stage in conversation with Roshan Abbas, where he shed light on the importance and relevance of literature and poetry in society. The evening was filled with laughter when stand-up comic Harsh Gujral took to the stage, followed by a Faezeh Jalali-directed slapstick tragic theatre comedy play 'Runaway Brides', starring Bollywood actor Aamir Khan's son Junaid Khan. Once again, the Fankaar stage highlighted local and upcoming artists by showcasing their talent to the audience. Day 3 ended with sensational grooves and beats from DJ Karan Kanchan with his upbeat Bollywood numbers, which energised the audience.

Vrindavan temple urges visitors to not wear skirts, torn jeans

PTI ■ MATHURA
Vrindavan's Thakur Bankebihari Temple has appealed to the visitors to "dress modestly" and refrain from wearing "indecent clothes" while on the temple premises. The appeal was made given the expected rush to the temple ahead of the New Year. "... attire such as mini skirts, torn jeans, half pants, and night suits is inappropriate for the temple setting, as it undermines the

sanctity and dignity of the place," the temple authorities said. The appeal was made through media channels and banners, put up across the city, especially roads leading to the temple. Munish Sharma, the temple manager, said the initiative was aimed at "preserving the cultural dignity" of the temple. "We have seen instances where devotees, particularly from outside the region, arrive dressed in casual tourist attire like jeans and t-shirts. This is not following the temple's respect for tradition," he said. Every year, thousands of people, both from India and abroad, visit Thakur Bankebihari Temple.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I hitherto known as Bharti Pathak have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Arti, Which may be amended accordingly, Arti W/o Late Sanat Kumar R/O Parashuram Colony, Rahana, Firozabad

NOTICE

I have changed my Son's Name from RUDRA TRIPATHI to RUDRA SHASHANK TRIPATHI. Hereinafter, he will be known and identified with his new Name. Kunal Tripathi, 13/6, Civil Lines, Kanpur Nagar.

NOTICE

I, Manoj Kumar Jalan, S/o late Mr Satya Narayan Jalan, resident of Ward no. 11, Vikas Nagar, Railway Station Road Robertsganj, Sonbhadra, 231216 have changed my name from Manoj Jalan to Manoj Kumar Jalan. Henceforth I would be known by the name of Manoj Kumar Jalan for all future proposes.

REQUIREMENT

We invite applications for the post of research assistant for the project sanctioned under R&D plan of higher education U.P. qualification M.A Economics with Min. 55% Marks, preferable NET/Ph.D, Research orientation will be preferred. No. of Post-01 Date of Interview 30.12.2024, Time 12pm at PPNPG. College. Principal

NOTICE

It is hereby notified to the general public that my son's correct name is SHREYAS YADAV, son of RAM SINGH YADAV, as recorded in his educational records, birth certificate, and PAN card also. However, due to an error, his name has been recorded as SHREYASKAR SINGH YADAV in his Aadhaar card number 6551 8253 7499, which is incorrect. In the future, my son should be known and recognized by his correct name, SHREYAS YADAV, son of RAM SINGH YADAV. RAM SINGH YADAV S/O ROOP SINGH, Vill. Madhoupur, Thana- Mallahabad, Lucknow, U.P.

आवश्यकता है

श्री शंकर भगवान लॉ कॉलेज मुक्त-डिप्लोमा (डोप्रो) सम्बद्ध-बुचेलखण्ड विश्वविद्यालय, झांसी
आवश्यकता है
स्वतंत्रताप्रेम योजना के अन्तर्गत स्नातक स्तर विधि संकाय के अन्तर्गत एल. एल. बी. त्रिवर्षीय पाठ्यक्रम हेतु प्राचार्य/निर्माणाध्यक्ष 01 पद एवं सहायक आचार्य विधि संकाय 09 पद।
योग्यता एवं बतनमान-यु0जी0सी0/विश्वविद्यालय/बार कॉलेज ऑफ इन्डिया के मानकानुसार।
नोट-इच्छुक अर्थात् 7 दिनों के अन्दर समस्त शैक्षिक अभिलेखों सहित आवेदन करें।
प्रबन्धक मो. 9455998743

75
आजादी का
अमृत महोत्सव

बड़ोदा यू.पी. बैंक Baroda U.P. Bank

Regional Office: 2A, Gautam Nagar
ITI Road (2nd Floor), Fatehpur 212601
Mob. 9554969117, 9554969118
E-Mail: Fatehpur@barodaupprb.co.in

**Public Auction/Sale
Notice For
Immovable Assets
Auction Date: 29.01.2025**

Auction Notice u/s 13(4) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act, 2002) read with Rule 6(2) and /or Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Baroda U.P. Bank u/s 13(2) of the above said SARFAESI ACT, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred u/s 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 3 issued a Demand Notice calling upon following the Borrower(s) and to Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) to repay the amount in terms of the said notice within 60 days from the date of the said notice. And whereas the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) having failed to repay the amount and hence, the undersigned, in exercise of the powers conferred u/s 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 4 and/or Rule 8 of the Rules has taken over the possession of the property/properties (here in after referred as the said properties). And whereas the undersigned in exercise of the powers conferred u/s 13(4)(a) of the SARFAESI ACT, 2002 proposes to realize the bank's dues by Sale of the said properties. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditors, the constructive Possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Baroda U.P. Bank, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "whatever there is" basis the date as mention in the table herein below, for recovery of dues mentioned.

Notice is again hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagor(s) that the Authorized Officer has decided to invite BID/tenders/quotations the Immovable properties mentioned below under SARFAESI ACT 2002. So, the interested persons/Bidders are invited to submit their BID, by fulfill all terms & conditions mentioned below, in a sealed envelope on or before 30.01.2025 at Baroda U.P. Bank, Regional Office: 2A Gautam Nagar, ITI Road, Fatehpur-212601. BID will be opened on 30.01.2025

Name of borrower and address	Description of Immovable Property	Demand Notice Date/ Possession Date/Possession Type	Due mount (Rs.)	Reserve Price (Rs.)/ Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Rs.
Account Number : 56690400000052 Borrower: M/s Rudra Floor Mill Proprietor Shree RajuLodhi, Address- Village-KasimpurBibhat Post- Bilanda, Fatehpur-212645 Guarantors: (1) Gajraj S/o Raja Village-Aswar post-Tarapur, Malwan, Fatehpur-212664, (2) Shree Ramji S/o Ram Kishun Village- Mauhari Post- Sarkandi, Distt. Fatehpur-212658	Part of Araz347, Village-Kasimpur Bibhat, Pargana, Tehsil & District Fatehpur-212601. Area 715 square meter	06.03.2017/ 13.09.2024/ Physical Possession	Rs. 29,70,130/- as on 12.20.2024 +interest and other expenses	Reserve Price Rs. 27,50,000/- and Earnest Money Deposit, EMD 2,75,000/-

Terms & Conditions of Sale- 01. Interested Bidders have to submit their BID in sealed envelopes (Clear & Readable BID Serial number & Date of publication should be mentioned over the envelop), **02.** Bidders have to submit/attach 10% of Reserve price as earnest money deposit in form of DD/Bankers' cheque favoring "Authorized Officer, Baroda U.P. Bank" & payable at Sultanpur, in advance along with the BID. The Highest BID value (should not be less than the Reserve price) will be considered as successful Bidder & rest EMD of unsuccessful Bidder will be sent back without interest within a week. **03.** Successful Bidder will have to deposit 25% of the BID amount (including EMD) at the same day in form of DD/Bankers' Cheque and rest amount will have to be paid strictly within 15 days of confirmation of the sale, if he fails to do so, the amounts previously deposited by him will be seized., **04.** Authorized Officer reserves the right to accept/reject/cancel/suspend any BID/Highest one without intimation about any reason or prior notice. Authorized Officer reserves the right to extend the date of Sale/Auction, **05.** Authorized Officer would not be held liable for any type of due charges /lien/encumbrances/taxes/ Govt. dues and other party claims & dues, **06.** Property would be sold an amount less than the Reserve Price. The successful Bidder will have to entertain all stamp duties & registration fee at self. **07.** If it found that two or more bidders have the same Bid Amount, the Authorized officer reserves the right to invite fresh Bid among them. **08.** BID/Sale will be subject to confirmation by Bank. Properties will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "whatever there is" basis. **09.** If Any Mortgagor/Borrowers/Guarantor repay full dues to the bank before the Auction then the Auction will be differed. Thus Borrowers/Guarantors Mortgagor have chances to release of the secured assets before the auction subject to he repays the full amount & charges due to the Bank under sub section (8) of Sec 13 of Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 (By the Security Interest (Enforcement) Amendment Rules, 2002). **10.** This is the sole responsibility of the Bidders to be satisfy & be confirmed about the properties. They can visit/inspect the properties by seeking time from the respective branches at any working day from 12:00 noon to 4:00 pm. **11.** Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagors. **12.** For detailed terms and conditions of theseale, please refer to the link provided in Secured Creditor's website, i.e. <https://www.barodagranbank.com/sarfaesinotice.php>
30 Days notice to Sale under SARFAESI Act 2002
Notice is hereby given to Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagors to repay all due amounts mentioned above to the Bank before the Auction, if they fails to do so the mortgaged property would be sold out on the date mentioned and if any dues left will be recovered to them with due interest, charges & expenses.
Date:- 22-12-2024 **Place:- Fatehpur** **(Authorized Officer- Baroda UP Bank)**

KGMU'S 120TH FOUNDATION DAY

Set goals for next 100 years: CM Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath attended the 120th Foundation Day celebrations of King George's Medical University (KGMU) on Saturday, where he praised the institution for its remarkable growth and resilience over the years.

Emphasising that crisis reveals the true strength of individuals and institutions, he stated, "In times of crisis, some break down, while others rise to the occasion."

He urged the KGMU staff and students to continue strengthening the institution's reputation, ensuring that no patient leaves disappointed.

Addressing the gathering, he highlighted the institution's progress, noting that KGMU started in 1905 with a contribution of Rs 10,75,800 and has since evolved into the largest medical institution in the country, spanning over 100 acres and introducing new services. Reflecting on KGMU's contribution during the COVID-19 pandemic, the CM highlighted how it worked swiftly and effectively, following the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the state government, in contrast to another medical college where doctors were suspended after being found to be negative during quarantine. He also honoured 67 meritorious students, to whom he presented medals and certificates for their achievements. The chief minister said that the government has given every-



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath addresses the 120th Foundation Day programme of King George's Medical University in Lucknow on Saturday

PTI

thing to the institution, emphasising that there is no shortage of funds. He urged KGMU officials to focus on improving services and setting goals for the next 100 years to ensure its continued glory. He further noted that the medical university boasts the highest number of medical seats and continues to produce

skilled professionals. The government has also approved an amount of Rs 300 crore for state-of-the-art machines and labs to take the institution forward.

Apart from this, Rs 377 crore has been approved for the new building of the surgery department, Rs 46 crore for fire safety, and Rs 70 crore for expand-

ing Lari Cardiology. CM Yogi urged the doctors at KGMU to adopt new medical facilities such as patient screening, virtual ICUs, and telemedicine. He said that there is no shortage of funds for treatment, as the government has ensured that funds are available. Mentioning the rising number

of patients and the increasing mental health concerns, especially due to excessive smartphone use, the chief minister called for an expansion of the mental health department and greater awareness efforts.

He also appealed for rapid progress in areas such as cardiac surgery, kidney and organ transplants, and organ donation. CM Yogi stressed the importance of educating the public on organ donation, urging KGMU to conduct awareness campaigns through various means such as camps, programmes, hoardings, and pamphlets.

The chief minister said that the funds allocated to the centre for excellence department are not being utilised effectively and need to be addressed.

He further emphasised that the most valuable asset for doctors is their compassion.

A doctor's caring attitude, he stated, plays a critical role not only in patient recovery but also in creating a positive work environment for all hospital staff.

"The disease may be cured, but the behaviour is remembered," he said, stressing the importance of setting high standards in both the service and education fields.

KGMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Soniya Nityanand presented a memento to CM Yogi during the event.

Deputy CM Brajesh Pathak, State Minister Mayankeshwar Sharan Singh, IIT-Kanpur Director Prof Manindra Agarwal, etc were present on the occasion.

ASI conducts survey at Kalki Vishnu temple in Sambhal



ASI team members at the ancient Kalki Vishnu temple for survey, in Sambhal on Saturday

PTI

Sambhal (PTI): An Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) team inspected an old well on the 'Kalki Vishnu' temple premises here on Saturday, a day after the agency conducted a survey of a recently discovered temple in the district. The priest of the Kalki Vishnu temple, Mahendra Prasad Sharma said it is good that the survey team came for a visit.

"There is a 'krish koop' (well) here. It is not closed but there is no water in it. This well is mentioned in the 'Skanda Purana' along with all pilgrimage sites of Sambhal... this well is on the temple premises, inside the old boundary," he said.

Speaking to PTI about the visit by the ASI, Sambhal Sub-Divisional Magistrate Vandana

Mishra said, "A team of the ASI visited the 'Kalki Vishnu' temple. There is a 'krish koop' here which is said to be an ancient well. Its age is yet to be determined. The team stayed for about 15 minutes and also visited the temple."

On Friday, a four-member team of the ASI surveyed the recently-discovered Shri Kartik Mahadev temple, five pilgrimage sites and 19 'koops' (wells). The Kartik Mahadev temple (Bhasma Shankar temple) was reopened on December 13 after the authorities said they stumbled upon the covered structure during an anti-encroachment drive.

The temple housed an idol of Lord Hanuman and a shivling. It had remained locked since 1978. The temple also has a well nearby which the author-

ities had planned to reopen. Sambhal District Magistrate Rajender Pensiya had earlier told reporters that the ancient temple and the well were being excavated.

The temple is situated in the Khaggu Sarai area, just over a kilometre from the Shahi Jama Masjid of Sambhal. Violence broke out on November 24 during a protest over a court-ordered survey of the Mughal-era mosque. Four people were killed and several, including police personnel, were injured. On December 12, the Supreme Court restrained till further directions courts in the country from entertaining fresh lawsuits and passing any effective interim or final orders in pending ones seeking to reclaim religious places, especially mosques and dargahs.

Maya seeks Shah's apology over Ambedkar remarks

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) Chief Mayawati on Saturday hit out at Union Home Minister Amit Shah, saying that he should apologise for his statement on Dr BR Ambedkar. If this does not happen, the BSP will protest across the country on December 24, she said.

In a series of posts on X in Hindi, Mayawati said, "Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, the author of the original book in the form of the super-humanistic and welfare Constitution for the self-respect and human rights of the Dalits, deprived, and other neglected people of the country, is as revered as God. His disrespect by Shri Amit Shah hurts the hearts of the people." She further mentioned that people from all sections of

society in the country are quite angry and agitated by the words spoken by him in Parliament regarding such a great man.

"Ambedkarite BSP has demanded that he take back his statement and repent, which has not been done till now," she said.

The BSP chief also stated that in such a situation, if the demand is not met, the BSP will raise its voice across the country.

"That is why the party has now decided to hold a nationwide movement on December 24 in support of this demand. On that day, a complete peaceful dharna-demonstration will be held at all district headquarters across the country," she said. During a debate on the Constitution in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, Shah had

said, "Abhi ek fashion ho gaya hai - Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar. Itna naam agar Bhagwan ka lete to saat janmon tak swarg mil jata (It has become a fashion to say Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar. If they had taken God's name so many times, they would have attained heaven for seven lifetimes)."

On Wednesday, Shah held a press conference in which he accused the Congress of twisting facts and distorting his comments in the Rajya Sabha. Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha witnessed instant protests from treasury benches and opposition members over the alleged insult of Dr Ambedkar until both the houses were adjourned sine die on Friday.

Govt uses FDR tech to boost road infra

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a bid to improve connectivity in rural and densely populated areas, the Uttar Pradesh government is prioritising the construction of high-quality roads under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

Leveraging full depth reclamation (FDR) technology, the state has not only enhanced road infrastructure, but also saved an impressive Rs 2,500 crore, setting a benchmark for cost-effective and sustainable development, officials said here on Saturday.

The government emphasises that better connectivity not only ensures access to essential resources in rural areas but also facilitates economic and social progress, they said. Several concrete steps taken by the Yogi administration are proving instrumental in driving rural development, officials said.

Working in close coordination with the Central government to accelerate development across the state, the Yogi government is formulating an action plan to connect as many uninhabited areas as possible under PMGSY.

Proposals are being fast-tracked to identify and address regions with high population density and inadequate connectivity, underscoring the administration's commitment to inclusive growth.

The state government is making every effort to ensure that all roads constructed under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) in rural and densely populated areas adopt FDR technology. This innovative approach not only enhances road quality, but also significantly reduces construction costs, with savings amounting to Rs 2,500 crore so far, officials said.

The state plans to share this achievement with the Central

government to secure additional funding for future projects. Ensuring road quality remains a top priority for the Yogi government, with strict adherence to prescribed standards through regular inspections and monitoring, they said.

To further improve construction outcomes, workshops are being planned for contractors to familiarise them with FDR technology and best practices for maintaining high standards.

The Rural Engineering department has been tasked with coordinating with other departments to maximise road construction in high-priority areas. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath believes that connecting densely populated regions with better roads will not only ease mobility, but also accelerate development, creating new opportunities for employment and business growth, officials said. The Yogi Adityanath government is focused on creating

a robust transport network that seamlessly connects rural and urban areas, recognising that roads are the backbone of development, they added.

Better road infrastructure not only improves access to education and healthcare, but also facilitates the marketing of agricultural products and boosts economic activities.

This initiative goes beyond mere road construction, with equal emphasis on regular repair and maintenance to ensure durability and long-term usability. These concerted efforts have significantly accelerated the pace of road construction in the state, transforming rural areas by improving access to essential services such as agriculture, education, and health, officials said.

Additionally, enhanced connectivity has stimulated economic growth, opening new opportunities for businesses and livelihoods in rural regions, they added.

UP registers 2nd highest green cover increase in country

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh has recorded the second-highest increase in the combined forest and tree cover in the country with an increase of 559 sq km, the state government said in a statement. "UP records the second largest increase in forest and tree cover. Total 559.19 sq km as per the latest ISFR released in Dehradun today," the statement said.

UP's Minister of State (Independent Charge) Forest and Environment, Zoological Garden, Climate Change Arun Kumar Saxena credited Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for the increase in the green cover with his directions to all stakeholders to plant trees.

"And because of the collective efforts, we got positive and good results. We ranked second in the country in increasing the combined forest and tree cover, which is a significant achievement. Only Chhattisgarh is ahead of us," Saxena told reporters.

"Our efforts will be to take the state to the number one position," he added.

India's total forest and tree cover has increased by 1,445 sq km since 2021, reaching 25.17 per cent of the total geographical area in 2023, according to the latest government data.

The India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023, released on Saturday, also said that the country has achieved an additional carbon sink of 2.29 billion tonnes as compared to 2005 levels. As part of its climate plans or Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to meet the Paris Agreement goals, the country has committed to creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

The country's total forest cover increased to 7,15,343 sq km in 2023, reaching 21.76 per cent of its geographical area, the report stated.

The tree cover increased by 1,289 sq km and now constitutes 3.41 per cent of the country's geographical area, it said.

Together, the forest and tree cover amount to 8,27,357 sq km or 25.17 per cent of India's geographical area. This marks an overall increase of 1,445 sq km from 2021, with forest cover alone rising by 156 sq km.

Chhattisgarh (+684 sq km), Uttar Pradesh (+559 sq km), Odisha (+559 sq km) and Rajasthan (+394 sq km) recorded the highest increases in combined forest and tree cover.

3 dead, another hurt as bike rams into tree

Lucknow (PTI): Three men were killed and another injured after their motorcycle lost control and rammed into a tree on the roadside in Bahraich district, police said on Saturday. The accident occurred near Maan Nagar intersection late Friday when Saroj Verma (21), Deepak Yadav (20), Vaidik Kumar alias Bunty Chauhan (19) and Mahesh Chauhan (22) were going to attend a function, they said.

The four men were taken to Ikauna Community Health Centre in Shravasti district, where doctors declared two of them dead, the according to police. They said the other two injured were referred to Bahraich Medical College where another died during treatment.

Meanwhile, a 16-year-old school girl died of asphyxiation while bathing following a geyser gas leak in the bathroom at her house in Aligarh, police said on Saturday. The incident happened in Kuldeep Vihar colony on Friday when Mahi's mother had gone to a nearby shop, according to family members. They said that upon returning she found the bathroom door locked and her daughter did not respond to her calls. Mahi's brother Madhav said the bathroom door was locked from outside, a precaution the family took due to the girl's previous fainting episodes while bathing.

The door was opened and Mahi was taken to the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical

College Hospital where doctors declared her dead upon arrival, the police said. Family sources said that she had fainted in similar circumstances two years ago but had recovered. They attributed the incident to the lack of ventilation in the bathroom that led to the girl's death.

In a separate incident, bodies of a woman and her three children were found hanging under suspicious circumstances at a village in Pratapgarh district on Saturday, police said. The husband of the deceased woman is absconding, they added.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Anil Kumar said the bodies of Komal alias Durgeshwari Devi (23) and her triplets aged one-and-a-half-year each were found hanging at Bhadohi village under the Kotwali Dehat police station limits.

Sandeep Kumar alias Teja, a resident of Bhadohi village, married Komal three years ago. One-and-a-half-year after their marriage, Komal gave birth to triplets - son Raunak and daughters Lakshmi and Jwala, the SP said. On Friday night, Sandeep Kumar beat up Komal under the influence of alcohol, and when his mother came to save her, he thrashed her as well, the officer said. When Komal's mother-in-law knocked at her door on Saturday morning, there was no response from inside. When she pushed the door open, she found Komal and her three children hanging from the ceiling fan of the room, the SP said.

MAHA KUMBH 2025

Dome City to be a mix of modernity, faith

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

In a unique confluence of faith and modernity, the Yogi government is building India's first Dome City at Maha Kumbh. The Tourism department is working closely with private institutions to build the Dome City in the Araiil area of Mahakumbh Nagar.

As part of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's mission to make Maha Kumbh the grandest ever, Prayagraj is being transformed into a modern city that will captivate everyone's attention, officials said here on Saturday. The Dome City, a remarkable combination of modernity, grandeur, and spirituality, is being developed at Triveni by Evo Life Space Pvt Ltd in cooperation with the Tourism department. Company director Amit Johri stated that the Uttar Pradesh government has set new benchmarks in tourism. As part of this effort, the country's first Dome City is being constructed on three and a quarter hectares of land provided by the Tourism department.

For the first time, tourists and devotees will experience the feeling of staying in a hill station while visiting the Maha Kumbh. The Dome City is being built at a cost of Rs 51 crore. According to Amit Johri, the Dome City will feature 44

domes, each measuring 32x32 feet and built at a height of 15 to 18 feet. The domes will be constructed with 360-degree polycarbonate sheets that are both bulletproof and fireproof. Tourists will be able to stay in these domes 24/7, enjoying modern amenities while taking in the breathtaking views of Maha Kumbh, much like observing the event from a hill station.

A total of 176 cottages are being built in Dome City, each equipped with state-of-the-art facilities. Every 16x16 cottage will have air conditioning, a geyser, and arrangements for satvik food. The rent for a cottage will be Rs 81,000 during the bathing festival and Rs 41,000 on regular days. The rent for a dome is set at Rs 1,10,000 during the bathing festival and Rs 81,000 on normal days.

Online booking for the domes has already started. To add a spiritual touch to the cottages, there will be arrangements for religious and cultural presentations.

This innovative effort aims to set a new record for international-level tourism facilities at the Maha Kumbh. Johri also mentioned that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who is scheduled to inspect the Maha Kumbh preparations on December 23, may also visit the Dome City during his tour of the Tent City.

AI-driven data analytics system for enhanced security management

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

In its ongoing effort to make the Maha Kumbh-2025, scheduled to begin on January 13, a grand, secure and digital event, the Uttar Pradesh government has started implementing an advanced AI-driven data analytics system for enhanced security management.

This system will strengthen the surveillance capabilities of the Mahakumbh police, helping to create an effective strategy by analysing the real-time data of the incident site and designated areas, particularly for crowd management and other security measures.

According to Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Mahakumbh Mela, Rajesh Kumar Dwivedi, a dedicated team will be formed to oversee the implementation of the advanced AI-driven data analytics solution system. The team will also assist with surveillance, helping train police officers and security personnel, as well as generate various reports. The initiative is set to be another significant milestone for the Uttar Pradesh Police, who have already launched the Mahakumbh Police App as part of its efforts

to strengthen security and embrace smart policing. Dwivedi stated that the new system will further strengthen police surveillance, enabling more effective strategies for both the safety of devotees and the smooth operation of the fair.

With over 40 crore pilgrims expected to attend the Maha Kumbh, extensive data will need thorough analysis for efficient crowd management, public safety, and security. To handle this, the Prayagraj Mela police will form a dedicated team for the grand event, tasked with building and operating an AI and metadata-based big data analytics solution system. This system will ensure the safe execution of the event and enhance inter-agency coordination.

The AI-enabled solution is being developed to provide real-time data analysis and seamless integration of multiple data sources. The team will also be responsible for training police officers and security personnel to effectively operate the system. After completing the testing phase, the system will be deployed before the start of Maha Kumbh 2025. The objective of the data analytics solu-

tion is to enable real-time analysis of large-scale data sets, enhancing crowd management and public safety during Maha Kumbh. The system also aims to improve inter-agency coordination, detect potential threats promptly, and generate actionable intelligence for national security.

Additionally, it will ensure robust data handling and scalability, supporting the safe and efficient execution of the event. To achieve this, various software solutions will be implemented throughout the process.

The data analytics solution system will be equipped with the following features:

- It will operate on a large scale as a comprehensive data analytics solution provider.
- It will allow real-time data processing, assessment, and correlation for strategy creation.
- It will assist in generating intelligence reports and implementing effective strategies.
- It will serve as a dashboard for generating specific reports and coordinating data storage.
- It will ensure security compliance and sensitive data protection, along with providing training and support.

Girls progressing in every field: UPSWC member

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh State Women Commission Member Neelam Prabhat inaugurated the All India Open Karate Competition at the Indoor Stadium, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Saturday under Mission Shakti Abhiyan Phase-5 and banners and logos of 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' and 'Kashi Sansad Khel Mahotsav'. The players from 27 states are participating in the karate competition.

Speaking at the inaugural function, Neelam Prabhat said nowadays girls are moving ahead in every field. The winning participants will be awarded medals and certificates under 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' by performing well in competitions like Karate. Girls who perform well will get a chance to participate at various levels. She also said that self-defence training is being provided in various schools through 'Beti Bachao Beti



UPSWC Member Neelam Prabhat listening to complaint of a woman at Circuit House, Varanasi, on Saturday.

Padhao'. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has resolved that girls should progress in every field and Mission Shakti Abhiyan is being conducted by the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for women and girls so that they develop a sense of self-reliance, self-respect, security and can progress in every field in the society", she added. On the said occasion, District Probation Officer Sudhakar Sharan Pandey from Women

and Child Development Department and the entire team of Manav Academy and referees and players' coaches from various states were also present. Meanwhile, Neelam Prabhat conducted a women's public hearing in the Circuit House auditorium. During this, officials and representatives of various departments of the district such as Women and Child Development, Child Development and Nutrition,

Social Welfare, Backward Classes Welfare, Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Police, Health, Labour, Secondary Education and Basic Education, One Stop Centre, District Child Protection Unit and many others were present. The State Women Commission member informed that a total of 14 cases were presented in the public hearing programme during the day. She said the women presented their complaint letters and put forth the related problems. After hearing all the complaints, letters have been sent to the departments concerned instructing them to ensure timely disposal of the complaints and send a report of the action taken to the State Women Commission. The disposal of the complaints sent in the last meeting was also reviewed and action is also being taken to send notices to those departments which have not yet provided the disposal report, she added.

Kashi Sansad Rojgar Mela on Jan 4, 5

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

With the inspiration of the Prime Minister, the district administration is organising Kashi Sansad Rojgar Mela-2025 on a large scale at Government ITI, Karaundi on January 4 and 5 with the aim of providing jobs to the unemployed youth of Varanasi district.

Giving this information in a press conference held at Vikas Bhavan here on Saturday, Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal said that the process of filling online forms etc is completely free. He said last year 11,200 unemployed people were provided jobs in Kashi Sansad Rojgar Mela.

"This time a target has been set to provide employment to 14,000 to 15,000 unemployed people in the Rojgar Mela. More than 300 companies will participate in the fair and provide employment to the people", the chief development officer said, adding that the children of those who were employed last year are also being contacted to ensure that they are still employed. "Sometimes it is seen and



CDO Himanshu Nagpal addressing a press conference on the proposed job fair in Varanasi on Saturday.

heard that companies fire the employees after three-four months, if such information is received, then such companies will also be stopped from coming to the fair", he said adding that till now more than 9,000 unemployed candidates have registered on the portal. Nagpal said there will also be arrangements for making CVs and filling forms etc in ITI, Karaundi from December 25.

More than 300 reputed companies from different regions of the country will participate in this employment fair. "Companies like Maruti Suzuki, Netaps, Zomato, Science IT Solution Pvt Ltd, Flipkart, Amazon, Quiskorp, SIS Security, Hotel Taj Group, The King Restaurant, Skill India International, JHV Construction, Utkarsh Small Finance Bank, Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation, Lava, Bajaj

Motors, Dixon Mobile, Hindalco Industries, G4S Security, L&T, Tata Motors, Walkaru International, JK Cement, MRF Tyre, Happy Life etc will participate in the employment fair.

He said that the companies will appoint people on annual packages ranging from ₹1,80,000 to ₹6,00,000.

"Companies participating in this fair should not face any problem in registering the participation of unemployed candidates. Also, unemployed candidates participating in fair should not face any problem. For this,

register.kashisansadrojgarmela.com portal has been developed", he said, informing that the unemployed candidates that they can avail this opportunity for free by registering in maximum numbers on the portal.

For any kind of information regarding class-5/ class-8/ High School/ Intermediate/ ITI/ Diploma/ Nursing/ Pharmacy/ Graduation/ Post Graduate/ BBA/ MBA/ B.Tech/ M.Tech, one can contact the Regional Employment Office, Chowkaghat, the chief development officer said.

'Meditation an important means of increasing balance in life'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A special meditation session was organised by Brahma Kumaris on the occasion of World Meditation Day at the Central Hospital Auditorium of Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) here on Saturday. The aim of this session was to make the officers, employees and their families aware of the importance of mental peace, inner balance and concentration.

The programme began with an inspirational lecture given by Brahmakumari Saroj Didi, in which she highlighted the need for meditation and its benefits. She said, "Meditation not only provides mental peace, but it is an important means of increasing balance in life, energy



World Meditation Day being observed at BLW Hospital in Varanasi on Saturday.

and productivity at the workplace. Meditation establishes harmony between mind and body, which not only enriches individual life but also gives a positive direction to the society". She introduced the gathering to simple methods of meditation and

made all present experience deep meditation. Principal Chief Medical Officer (PCMO) Dr Devesh Kumar also shared his views. He said, "While technology has provided us convenience in the modern lifestyle, main-

taining inner peace and mental stability has become a challenge. In such a situation, meditation gives us a new perspective, which not only improves our mental health but also increases efficiency and decision-making ability." He called upon the officers and employees present to adopt meditation in daily life. It is noteworthy that the United Nations passed a resolution on November 29 last and declared December 21 as World Meditation Day. The purpose of this day is to raise awareness about the importance of meditation and its benefits. During the session, the officers and employees present practiced meditation and resolved to make it a part of life. Senior Medical Officer (SMO) Dr Vijay Durga and Public Relations Officer Rajesh Kumar said

that regular meditation not only strengthens mental health, but it is also helpful in dealing with stress, anxiety and other mental pressures. At the end of the session, other participants also shared their experiences calling the day a positive initiative. The programme was conducted by pharmacist Lokpati Shukla. Many senior officers and employees of BLW participated in the session. Senior Medical Officer Dr Santosh Kumar Maurya, Assistant Nursing Officer Geeta Kumari, Brahma Kumari Chanda Didi, Brahma Kumar Irshad Bhai, Amit Dubey, Aarti, Kamala, Usha Singh, Chandrakala, Devtananda Tiwari, Rajneesh Dubey, Rituraj Yadav, Arvind Tiwari, Pankaj Srivastava and Anshuman Ghosh were also present.

Woman saved from drowning

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A 25-year-old woman devotee who had come to Kashi from Maharashtra suddenly slipped into deep water while bathing at Manmandir Ghat on Saturday and started drowning. When her family members raised an alarm 11 NDRF rescue personnel posted at the ghat, Chief Constable Bahadur Nath without wasting any time jumped into the Ganga river and rescued her. This quick action and courageous effort of the NDRF rescuer saved the precious life of the woman.

Under the guidance of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Manoj Kumar Sharma, NDRF

rescuers are deployed day and night to monitor and protect the Ganga Ghats of Kashi. "This quick decision and bravery of the NDRF rescuer was noticed by the devotees present at the ghat and they praised his spirit and courage. Today's life saving work highlights the dedication and professional efficiency of NDRF", said the DIG. He also praised the NDRF rescuer and said that he has fulfilled the motto of NDRF 'Disaster service always available everywhere'.

He appealed to the general public to avoid going into deep water and follow the guidelines issued by the local administration.



Sadhus of Shri Panchayathi Akhada Niranjani arrive at Prayagraj railway station ahead of the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj on Saturday.

SP workers take out protest march

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The workers of Samajwadi Party (SP) took out a march on Saturday in protest against the alleged statement of Home Minister Amit Shah. The SP members alleged that Home Minister Amit Shah has made derogatory remarks against Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar.

A large number of SP office-bearers demonstrated and raised slogans. All in-charges of the district participated in the protest. Mahanagar president Iftikhar Hussain said Home Minister Amit Shah should apologise to the people of the country. The SP office-bearers demonstrated and handed over a memorandum addressed to the president to the district magistrate. The SP leaders said the main objective of their party is to strengthen democracy and the Constitution. Dr Mansingh Yadav, Vijaya Yadav, Hakim Lal Bind, Sandeep Patel, Geeta Shastri and others were present.

JE THRASHED: A junior engineer (JE) was allegedly thrashed by some consumers over some unknown issues and the Surwandalapur substation was also vandalised. The victim JE filed a police complaint. On the contrary, the consumers also lodged a complaint against the JE for allegedly misbehaving with them. On JE's complaint police have registered a case against three accused. Inspector Shailendra Singh said on the complaint of the JE a case has been registered against the accused under sections of obstruction in government work, assault and vandalism.

NABARD DELEGATION VISITS ISARC

Importance of adopting nuanced approach to support small farmers emphasised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) South Asia Regional Centre (ISARC) hosted a 63-member delegation from National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Uttar Pradesh, here on Friday. The one-day visit was aimed at promoting collaboration, showcasing innovations and exploring avenues to strengthen rural livelihoods through advanced agricultural technologies and entrepreneurship development. The event began with the welcome address by Director of ISARC Dr Sudhanshu Singh, who emphasised the timeliness of the event to promote collaboration between ISARC and NABARD in UP and beyond. He also gave a comprehensive presentation of cutting-edge technologies from various units of ISARC, emphasising their potential to empower farmers, farmer producer organisations (FPOs), self-help groups (SHGs) and agri-startups.

In his opening remarks, Chief General Manager (CGM), NABARD UP Regional Office, Pankaj Kumar expressed his gratitude for facilitating the discussion, which was aimed at exploring and identifying potential avenues of collaboration between the two institutions. He emphasised the importance of fostering strategic partnerships and developing scalable models that can serve as global benchmarks. Kumar urged his team to gain a



comprehensive understanding of the technologies available at ISARC and assess their relevance in their respective districts. He proposed a close and collaborative relationship with the ISARC experts so that the NABARD team is equipped with holistic and scientific knowledge that can be effectively disseminated to the farming community. General Manager, NABARD UP Regional Office, Dr Vinod Kumar shared his views on various aspects of agricultural credit and its potential in shaping the agricultural landscape of UP. He highlighted the current status of the state's agricultural productivity and the key challenges contributing to low productivity, including fragmented landholdings, limited mechanisation for small and marginal farmers, inadequate access to quality inputs, poor market infrastructure and heavy dependence on rainfall. To address these issues, he emphasised the need for

strong collaboration between NABARD and ISARC. ISARC scientist Dr Vikram Patil highlighted the plan to set up a dedicated agri-business incubation centre for mentoring, business development and technology access support to startups, SHGs and FPOs. He mentioned ISARC's 32 ready-to-scale technologies and proposed collaboration with NABARD, universities and investors to promote agricultural innovation, simplify access to credit and develop a replicable model for UP and beyond. The delegation experienced practical demonstrations at ISARC advanced laboratory facilities and field setup. The NABARD staff witnessed cutting-edge agricultural technologies in action, thereby promoting practical understanding of their potential applications. The programme emphasised on mutual learning and NABARD staff participated in insightful Q&A sessions with ISARC

experts. The highlight of the programme was collaborative discussions between ISARC and NABARD delegations, which explored innovative solutions and avenues for scaling entrepreneurial initiatives to enhance rural livelihoods. These deliberations resulted in identification of key broad areas of collaboration in the areas of agri-business growth, training and capacity building and Geographic Information System (GIS). In her concluding remarks, NABARD Deputy General Manager, UP Regional Office, Dr Nandini Ghosh expressed satisfaction over the programme and efforts of the ISARC team. She proposed to continue this journey in a time-bound framework. Highlighting the need to make important plans and monitor them in a coherent manner, she emphasised that the information obtained be utilised at the ground level. She encouraged forging meaningful collaborations. CGM, NABARD Pankaj Kumar and Director, ISARC, Dr Sudhanshu Singh, concluded the meeting by emphasising the importance of adopting a nuanced approach to support small farmers. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to build a strong and long-term partnership between ISARC and NABARD. The day concluded with a valedictory address that laid the foundation for collaboration between NABARD and IRRI to bring about transformational change in India's agriculture sector.

Light thrown on TB treatment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Continuing Medical Education (CME) was organised at Heritage Institute of Medical Sciences (HIMS) under the aegis of the Health department under the National Tuberculosis Eradication Programme (NTEP) here on Friday. Starting the programme, Head of Pulmonary department Dr GN Srivastava threw light in detail on the programme and treatment of Tuberculosis (TB).

District Tuberculosis Officer (DTO) Dr Piyush Rai explained in detail the need for notification of patients by private hospitals and the TB preventive therapy given to the patient's family. He said earlier in TB preventive treatment, the medicine used to last for six months but now only a three-month course with one pill a

week has started in Varanasi district. "The patient is now given ₹1,000 per month instead of ₹500 per month earlier", he said, requesting the HIMS administration to inform the public through various sign boards.

Along with the CME, a meeting of the core committee was also organised in which Dr Vinod of the Pulmonary department informed about the referral and confirmation of patients from various departments in HIMS in the last three months.

WHO consultant Dr VG Vinod explained in detail the process of TB investigation and the dimensions of DRTB treatment. He said in Varanasi district, through differential TB care, in case of any emergency in serious patients, arrangements are being made for treatment by identifying hospitals.

All the guidelines related to the TB programme prescribed by the Government of India and the process of treatment of the patient and upgradation on the portal were informed in detail.

Medical Superintendent (MS) Brigadier Dr Ram Avatar emphasised on increasing the referral of patients from all departments. The MS has asked all the departments to increase referrals and submit a report every month. Apart from the presentation, there was also a question-answer (Q&A) session in the programme in which the junior residents received information about the new guidelines regarding tuberculosis. Principal Colonel Dr BK Prasad along with the heads of various clinical departments and their junior residents were also present.

IFFCO Mahila Chetna Club distributes sweaters



Prayagraj (PNS): The IFFCO Mahila Chetna Club distributed sweaters to the children at Deaf & Dumb School, George Town, here on Saturday. Besides, sweaters, blankets, shawls, rice etc. were distributed to old men and women of Kusth Ashram, Kareli.

The IFFCO Mahila Chetna Club helps the poor, destitute and needy every year. The Mahila Chetna Club president Vineeta Kudesia said the real purpose of human life is to help the needy and expressed commitment that club will always participate in public welfare

works in future also. Sarita Singh, Alka Gupta, Poonam Sharma, Ameeta Pandey, Anamika Mishra and Mamta Raj Singh were present.

WOMAN DIES: A 40-year-old woman died while undergoing treatment after her husband allegedly threw acid on her and son while they were asleep in Chaufatka. Both the victims suffered severe burns in the incident and were admitted to SRN Hospital for treatment where the woman succumbed to her injuries. The police registered a case against the man at Khulabad police station and are looking for him.

Workshop to enhance research skills ends

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Department of Health Research, Multi-Disciplinary Research Unit (MRU) at Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) organised a three-day 'Research Methodology Workshop' which concluded on Friday.

The workshop was organised in collaboration with the ICMR Collaborating Centre of Excellence, Bharati Vidyapeeth University, Interactive Research School

in Health Affairs (IRSHA), Pune.

The main objective of the workshop was to enhance research skills and promote medical ethics among participants from various institutions across India. The workshop began with an inaugural address by Director of IMS-BHU Prof SN Shankhwar, who emphasised the importance of research and interdisciplinary collaboration in advancing healthcare. Dean of IMS-BHU Prof Ashok Kumar delivered an inspiring

address on medical ethics. MRU Nodal Officer and Professor in the Department of Anatomy, IMS- BHU Royana Singh delivered the introductory speech. The workshop featured impactful lectures by renowned experts. Dr Sadhana Joshi, Principal Investigator, ICMR Collaborating Centre of Excellence, Bharati Vidyapeeth University, Pune, delivered an insightful lecture on 'Designing a Research Project'. Dr Kalyanaraman Kumaran, Senior Scientist, University of

Southampton, shared key insights on 'Biostatistics in Clinical Research'. Dr Deepali Sundarani, Assistant Professor at IRSHA, Bharati Vidyapeeth University, conducted a session on 'Writing Research Proposals'. Dr Taruna Madan Gupta (Head, Development Research) threw light on ICMR's initiatives to galvanise the MedTech ecosystem. The organising committee included Prof Royana Singh, Dr Ashish and Dr Nitish. The workshop concluded with a vote of thanks.

Malaviya flower exhibition from Dec 25 to 27

Varanasi (PNS): The annual Malaviya flower exhibition organised every year as part of Mahamana Jayanti Celebrations will be held from December 25 to 27 at Malaviya Bhawan premises. The exhibition offers creative and artistic display of various species of flowers in different categories. Individuals or institutions interested in participating in the exhibition may obtain the application form from the Horticulture Unit office at BHU and must submit the filled form by December 23.

PM Modi's Kuwait visit first by Indian PM in 43 years, aims to strengthen ties and promote peace in West Asia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As he embarked on a two-day visit to Kuwait, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said India and the Gulf nation have shared interest in peace, security and stability in West Asia. Modi's visit to Kuwait, the first by an Indian prime minister in 43 years, comes two weeks after the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria and amid signs of a possible ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. The last Indian prime minister to visit Kuwait was Indira Gandhi in 1981. In a departure statement, Modi said his talks with the top Kuwaiti leadership would be an opportunity to chalk out a roadmap for a futuristic partnership between India and Kuwait. "We deeply value the historical connection with



Kuwait that has been nurtured over generations. We are not just strong trade and energy partners but also have shared interest in peace, security, stability and prosperity in the West Asia region," he said. The prime minister is

visiting Kuwait at the invitation of Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. "I am confident that this visit will further strengthen and reinforce the special ties and bonds of friendship between the people of India and

Kuwait," Modi said. The prime minister said he was looking forward to his meetings with the Emir, the Crown Prince and the prime minister of Kuwait. "It would be an opportunity to chalk out a roadmap for a futuristic partnership for the benefit of our people and the region," he said. "I eagerly look forward to meeting the Indian diaspora in Kuwait who have immensely contributed to strengthening of bonds of friendship between the two nations," he added. Modi's engagements in Kuwait include a visit to an Indian labour camp, an interaction with the Indian community and gracing the opening ceremony of the Gulf Cup football tournament. "I express my gratitude to the leadership of Kuwait for the special gesture of inviting me to the inauguration ceremony of the Arabian Gulf Cup, a

premier sporting event in the Gulf region," the prime minister said. "I look forward to being a part of this celebration of athletic excellence and regional unity," he said. On Friday, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said India and Kuwait are expected to focus on shoring up ties in a range of key areas including defence and trade during the prime minister's visit to the Gulf nation. Discussions are underway with Kuwait on a bilateral investment treaty and a defence cooperation pact, according to officials. At a media briefing, Arun Kumar Chatterjee, Secretary (Overseas Indian Affairs) in the MEA, said a few bilateral documents are expected to be signed during the prime minister's visit. "The historic visit by the prime minister is expected to open a new chapter in

India-Kuwait bilateral relations," he said. "It will not only consolidate the partnership in existing spheres but also unveil new avenues for future cooperation, reinforce our shared values and build a stronger and more dynamic partnership for the future," he added. India is among the top trading partners of Kuwait. The Indian community is the largest expatriate community in Kuwait. The Gulf nation is among India's top trading partners, with bilateral trade valued at USD 10.47 billion in 2023-24. Kuwait is India's sixth largest crude supplier, meeting 3 per cent of the country's energy needs. Indian exports to Kuwait reached USD 2 billion for the first time in 2023-24 while investments by the Kuwait Investment Authority in India exceeded USD 10 billion.

Former SC judge Madan B Lokur appointed as chairperson of UN Internal Justice Council



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Former Supreme Court judge Madan B Lokur has been appointed as chairperson of the United Nations Internal Justice Council for a term ending on November 12, 2028. In a communication to Justice Lokur, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the retired top court judge would head the council which also comprises other distinguished jurists. "I have the pleasure to appoint you, with immediate effect, as a member of the Internal Justice Council, in the capacity of chairperson, for a term ending on 12 November 2028," the communication dated

December 19 said. "The other members of the Council (in alphabetical order) are: Ms. Carmen Artigas (Uruguay), distinguished external jurist nominated by staff; Ms. Rosalie Balkin (Australia), distinguished external jurist nominated by management; Mr. Stefan Brezina (Austria), staff representative; and Mr. Jay Poznel (United States of America), management representative," it added. The General Assembly of UN established the Internal Justice Council (IJC) as part of the new internal justice system in order to help ensure independence and professionalism and accountability in the administration of justice system of the United Nations. The IJC is composed of five members consisting of a staff representative, a management representative and two distinguished external jurists, one nominated by the staff and one by management, and chaired by a distinguished jurist chosen by consensus by the four other members.

Multistorey building collapses...

From page 1

"There is yet no figure whether someone is (trapped) inside or not. Our teams are working. Efforts are on to clear the debris as soon as possible. Lighting arrangements have been made for the rescue operation," he said. A local resident said a loud noise was heard when the building collapsed. Preliminary information suggests that the building collapsed after a basement was dug in a nearby area.

MCD drive to identify illegal...

From page 1

"The education department will take appropriate preventive measures to identify illegal Bangladeshi migrants while giving admission in municipal schools. It is also requested that proper identification and verification drives may also be undertaken to identify the illegal Bangladeshi migrant children in schools," the order by the deputy commissioner said.

India, Russia to boost joint efforts against radicalisation, terror financing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Russia have decided to step up joint efforts in dealing with challenges of radicalisation and terror financing. Ways to deepen cooperation in tackling threats of terrorism were discussed at a meeting of the India-Russia joint working group (JWG) on counter-terrorism cooperation. At a separate meeting on issues relating to the United Nations, Russia reiterated its support for India as a permanent member of a reformed UN Security Council. The meeting took place in Moscow on December 19 and 20, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here on Saturday. "In the 13th JWG on counter-terrorism, both sides shared their experiences in countering

terrorism including cross-border terrorism, extremism and agreed to enhance cooperation to address problems of radicalisation as well as terror financing," MEA said. "They discussed current terrorist threats at the global and regional level and combating the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes," it said in a statement. The MEA said both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening counter-terrorism cooperation in bilateral as well as multilateral platforms. India and Russia also held the sixth round of consultations on UN related issues in Moscow. "In the consultations on UN-related issues, both sides exchanged views on regional and global developments and issues pertaining to the UNSC (UN Security Council),

including its reform," the MEA said. "Russia reiterated its support for India as a permanent member of a reformed UN Security Council," it said. Tanmaya Lal, Secretary (West) in the MEA, led the Indian delegation at the JWG on Counter Terrorism (CT) cooperation and the consultations on UN related issues. The Russian side was headed by Sergey Vershinin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Representatives of respective departments and agencies from both sides also participated in the meetings. On December 19, Lal also held a meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Galuzin and discussed current international and regional issues, especially the Ukraine conflict.

Indian Army increases its footprints in Jammu region

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After witnessing a series of targeted strikes on the army personnel in the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch the Indian army has increased its footprints in the Jammu region to prevent similar strikes and also plug the gaps along the line of control with Pakistan to check any fresh infiltration bids. The deployment pattern was reviewed after the decision was taken to induct more troops in the Jammu region amid a sudden surge in incidents of terrorist violence. The twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch were the worst hit as they witnessed repeated ambushes on army trucks and patrol parties since October 2021. Later the Pakistan-based terrorists extended the arch of terror toward Reasi, Udhampur, Doda, Kishtwar, and Kathua districts. On December 21, 2023, four army personnel



sacrificed their lives and two others received critical injuries after their vehicles were ambushed by the hiding foreign terrorists in the general area of Dera ki Gali in the Poonch district. Nagrota-based General Officer Commanding (GoC), White Knight Corps Lt Gen Navin Sachdeva Saturday visited Rajouri to strengthen civil-military ties and recognize the pivotal role of local communities and veterans in maintaining peace and stability in the region.

During the visit, Lt Gen Sachdeva praised the synergy between the civilian population and security forces, particularly in the sensitive border districts of Rajouri and Poonch. He highlighted the Indian Army's increased operational footprint in the region, including the strategic occupation of the upper reaches of the Pir Panjal Range, as well as its close collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir Police (JKP) and civil administration.

Delhi LG sanctions ED...

From page 1

"We have been saying that Arvind Kejriwal took commission in liquor scam. As the investigation progresses, he would be trapped. He has spoiled Delhi, and looted crores of rupees, we welcome the investigation," said Sachdeva. Former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia alleged that the move was to distract attention from Union home minister Amit Shah's statement on BR Ambedkar in Parliament. Chief Minister Atishi said the news was being spread to distract people from other issues and called on the ED to make the approval letter public. "If LG sahab has given permission to prosecute Arvind Kejriwal ji, then what is the problem for ED in making the copy of the approval public? This news is being spread only to mislead people and distract them from the issues. BJP, stop these conspiracies. Bring out the truth," said the CM on X. Calling it a bid to divert attention from the issue of the alleged insult to BR Ambedkar, former Delhi minister and AAP leader Manish Sisodia asked the ED to show the copy of the permission. "If the Lt Governor has given permission to prosecute Arvind Kejriwal, then why is the ED not showing the copy of that permission? It is clear that this news is false and misleading. Stop making false promises to divert attention from the issue of insult to Baba Saheb," Sisodia said. Delhi Congress president Devendra Yadav also lashed

out at the Kejriwal saying LG's nod has come at the time when Kejriwal was fooling the voters with many promises to cover up his tainted image on the eve of the Delhi Assembly elections. The Delhi High Court recently issued a notice regarding a plea from AAP leaders Kejriwal and Sisodia, contesting the trial court's decision to take cognisance of the ED's chargesheet in the excise policy case. Both leaders are currently out on bail in relation to cases filed by the ED and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) over the now-scrapped excise policy. The ED also alleged in the prosecution complaint that about Rs 45 crore from the proceeds of crime were used in the Goa elections for AAP campaigning with the collusion and concurrence of Kejriwal. The investigating agency alleged that AAP was the "major beneficiary" of the proceeds of crime, and Kejriwal, being the national convener and a member of the political affairs committee and national executive, was ultimately responsible for the utilisation of funds during the Goa elections. On the basis of an internal report of then chief secretary Naresh Kumar, the LG in July 2022 recommended a CBI inquiry into alleged procedural lapses and violations of rules and acts in the formulation and implementation of the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22. Kejriwal was arrested in March this year on charges of money laundering. He was granted bail by the Supreme Court in Sept.

Five killed in attack on German Christmas...

From page 1

Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that nearly 40 of them "are so seriously injured that we must be very worried about them." Several German media outlets identified the suspect as Taleb A., withholding his last name in line with privacy laws, and reported that he was a specialist in psychiatry and psychotherapy. There were still no answers Saturday as to what caused him to drive into a crowd in the eastern German city of Magdeburg. Describing himself as a former Muslim, the suspect shared dozens of tweets

and retweets daily focusing on anti-Islam themes, criticising the religion and congratulating Muslims who left the faith. He also accused German authorities of failing to do enough to combat what he said was the "Islamism of Europe." He has also voiced support for the far-right and anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. Recently, he seemed focused on his theory that German authorities have been targeting Saudi asylum seekers. The two people confirmed dead were an adult and a toddler, but officials said additional deaths couldn't be ruled out.

Govt still not reduced GST on health...

From page 1

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, who heads the panel on GoM on insurance, said one more meeting is required to take a call on taxation of group, individual, senior citizen's policies. Later talking to the media, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the GST Council deferred the decision to cut tax on insurance premium as many inputs including IRDAI comments awaited. "Some (Council) members said more discussions required. We (GoM) will meet in January again," Chaudhary told reporters

here. Besides, the report of the GoM on rate rationalisation, which had recommended tweaks in 148 items, was not tabled before the Council. The Group of Ministers (GoM) on insurance had recommended exempting insurance premiums paid for term life insurance policies from GST. Also premium paid by senior citizens towards health insurance cover has been proposed to be exempted from the tax. The GoM earlier this month had arrived at a consensus to hike tax on sin goods, like aerated beverages, cigarettes, tobacco and related products, to 35 per cent from the present 28 per cent. Finance Minister Nirmala

Sitharaman said that States did not agree on bringing aviation turbine fuel under the ambit of Goods and Services Tax. "States did not feel comfortable. They didn't want the ATF because they saw it as part of the crude petroleum diesel basket, and therefore they said that it alone cannot be taken out, and therefore that continues to remain where it is today," she said. Currently, GST is a four-tier tax structure with slabs at 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent. Luxury and demerit goods are taxed at the highest bracket of 28 per cent, while packed food and essential items are at the lowest 5 per cent slab.

Number of domestic migrants reduced...

From page 1

The paper used three high-frequency and granular data sets, Indian Railway Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS) data on passenger volumes; mobile telephone subscribers roaming data from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), and district level banking data to understand the likely impact of migration at the places of origin. Using TRAI's mobile phone roaming data, the report finds that April-June is the high month for movement with November-December witnessing secondary highs. The report said the total number of passengers carried

by the Railways in 2023-24 stood at 6,843 Million. This includes 3,852 Million Suburban passengers and 2,991 Million non-Suburban passengers. Indian Railways defines suburban services as those being up to 150 Kms. A secondary high in winter time is perhaps indicative of travel around the festival/marriage season. January, on the other hand, appears to be the month of lowest travel, it said. As per Census 2011, just five states, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, together account for about 48 per cent of the total outbound migrants, which includes within-state migrants as well. Similarly, just five

states, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, together account for about 48 per cent of all incoming migrants. This includes within-state migrants as well. In the period from 1991 to 2001, the compounded annual growth rate of the number of migrants was 2.7 per cent. This increased to 3.7 per cent during 2001 to 2011. Interestingly, in the period from 1991 to 2001, India's workforce grew from 3.17 crore to 4.02 crore (an annual average growth of 2.6 per cent), whereas from 2001 to 2011, the workforce grew from 4.02 crore to 4.82 crore (an annual average growth of 1.99 per cent).

A royal takeover: Erstwhile princely estate of Bettiah...

From page 1

"With the publication of gazette notification of the Vesting of Bettiah Raj Properties Act-2024, now the Board of Revenue of the state government is framing rules of the Act which will be further approved by the state Cabinet," Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Revenue and Land Reforms department, Dipak Kumar Singh told PTI on Saturday. The Act has been passed with a view to ensure effective protection and management of Bettiah Raj land, said the ACS.

According to office of the Court of Wards, Bettiah Raj (authority which used to manage properties of the estate earlier), details of properties were submitted to the Secretary, Board of Revenue, on September 9, 2021, total land-15,358.60 acres, worth Rs 7957.38 Crore belonging to the concerned estate are in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. After taking over the possession of all land of Bettiah estate, the department concerned may allot these land to other wings of the state for several

infrastructural projects, sources said. A large chunk of land may be allotted to the Bihar Industrial Area Development Authority (BIADA) for developing townships, malls and parks in West Champaran district, an official said on the condition of anonymity. "The property of Bettiah Raj situated within the state of Bihar and state of UP in course of time has been subjected to numerous litigations, encroachment, unauthorized occupation, etc. The properties once vested with the State Government

cannot be subject to any succession under any law and all ongoing disputes, suits or proceedings relating to succession pending before any court of law on the date of commencement of this act shall stand abated. "The Court of Wards, consequent upon vesting, shall hand over all the papers, documents, records, maps and all relevant information to the concerned Collector of the districts where the properties of Bettiah Raj are located", says the notified Act. All existing leases or the existing privileges upon the

lands and properties of the Bettiah Raj Properties shall stand extinguished from the date of such notification, it said. All Bettiah Raj properties vested in the state under this act shall be free from all encumbrances and shall be exempt from attachment, seizure or sale. "All salami, rents, cess, royalties and revenues in respect of lands comprised in Bettiah properties or tenure on or after the date of vesting shall be payable to the state and any payment made otherwise shall not be binding on the state", it said.

No more public inspection of poll...

From page 1

"All such material is available to candidates, including footage. After the amendment, too, it will be available to them. But other people can always approach the courts to get such electronic records," said another functionary. Candidates already have access to all documents and papers. Nothing has been amended in the rules in this regard, the functionary added. An EC official said the misuse of CCTV camera footage from inside polling booths could compromise voter secrecy. He also said the footage could be used to generate fake narrative using AI. There have been instances where such electronic records have been sought, citing the rules. The amendment ensures that only papers mentioned in the rules are available for public inspection and any other document

which has no reference in the rules is not allowed for public inspection." Punjab and Haryana High Court, in the recent Mahmood Pracha vs EC case, had directed sharing all documents related to the Haryana Assembly elections, including treating CCTV camera footage as permissible under Rule 93(2), with Pracha. The rule mentioned election papers. The election papers and documents do not specifically refer to electronic records, the EC functionaries said. In order to remove this ambiguity, the rule has been amended to safeguard the misuse of CCTV camera footage of polling stations, an EC official explained. Criticising the move, Ramesh said the party would legally challenge the amendment. "If there was ever a vindication of our assertions regarding the rapidly eroding integrity of the electoral process managed by the Election

Commission of India (ECI) in recent times, this is it," Ramesh said in a post on X. Sharing a December 20 notification, the Congress leader said, "This move of the ECI will be challenged legally right away." Ramesh said sunlight was the best disinfectant and information would restore faith in the process, a reasoning Punjab and Haryana High Court agreed with when it directed the ECI to share all information it was legally required to with the public. "Yet, the EC, instead of complying with the judgment, rushes to amend the law to curtail the list of what can be shared," he said. "Why is the ECI so afraid of transparency?" the Congress general secretary asked. Transparency and openness are key in exposing and eliminating corruption and unethical practices and information restores confidence in the process, Ramesh noted.

Meditation transcends all borders, leaders on 1st World Meditation Day at UN

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

Meditation transcends all religions and borders and is also a powerful instrument of diplomacy in the current global landscape marked by escalating conflicts and deep-seated mistrust, top spiritual and UN leaders said on the first World Meditation Day commemorated here.

The Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations organised a special event 'Meditation for Global Peace and Harmony' to mark the first World Meditation Day at the global body's headquarters on Friday.

"Today meditation is not a luxury, as it was thought, but it is a necessity," spiritual leader Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said in his keynote address at the packed event attended by UN Ambassadors, officials, staff, civil society members as

well as members of the Indian-American diaspora.

"Meditation is something you can do anywhere, everywhere, by everyone. In this sense, international Meditation Day plays a very important role and opens the door to those who have some reservations," he said.

He added that for many people, the moment they hear the word meditation, they may feel that the practice either has to be from some religion or it is not taught in their religion. He underscored that meditation "transcends all religions, all geographical boundaries and age groups so it is very, very useful in many, many ways."

President of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly Philemon Yang said in his remarks that meditation "transcends borders, faiths, traditions and time, offering each of us the opportunity to pause, to

listen and to connect with our inner selves."

Yang said that the world today needs peace more than ever before. "The tensions in the world require that we embrace peace and anything that brings peace... Let us build on the practice we have shared to bring about a safer, more just and equitable future for everyone, everywhere."

Earlier this month, the 193-member UN General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution declaring December 21 as World Meditation Day.

India was a member of the core group of countries that guided the unanimous adoption of the resolution titled 'World Meditation Day' in the UNGA. Andorra, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Nepal and Sri Lanka were the other members of the core group.

Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support Atul

Khare said at the event that at the UN, civilian and uniform personnel work tirelessly on the world's most pressing challenges with colleagues operating under high pressure, including in high-risk environments, often far away from their family and country of origin.

"This can and does take a toll on their mental health. Our uniform personnel are often tasked with protecting civilians against physical violence, and are often themselves exposed to atrocities, war crimes and crimes against humanity," Khare said.

While the physical safety of peacekeepers of is of utmost importance, it is equally critical that their mental health is also taken care of, he said.

In this context, Khare said that a special app called 'MindCompanion' was launched by the UN in October

this year.

The app is aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of mental health issues and its self-assessment feature will help users gauge their mental well-being regularly.

"I take this opportunity on this Meditation Day to encourage everyone to reaffirm our commitment to overall mental health and to use the tools available, such as meditation, to seek inner transformation and peace. Let us embrace this practice to create a more peaceful world, starting with the world within ourselves," Khare said.

Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish said that the ancient wisdom of meditation offers a beacon of hope amid growing stress and anxiety at the individual level and conflicts and tensions at the global level.

"In our current global landscape, marked by escalating conflicts and deep-seated mistrust, meditation emerges not merely as a personal practice but as a powerful instrument of diplomacy. Meditation helps us to cultivate empathy, deep self-awareness, capacity to understand complex situations with greater clarity. These are skills that are critical to navigating an increasingly interconnected and complex global environment," Harish said.

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.

In 2014, India took the lead at the UN in declaring June 21 as

the International Day of Yoga.

Permanent Representative of Nepal to the UN Ambassador Lok Bahadur Thapa said that the world is at a pivotal crossroads and "our collective dreams and aspirations" for a better, just, equitable, prosperous and sustained world are thwarted by multiple, intersecting and recurring global challenges.

"Geopolitical competition, economic instability, social divisions and environmental degradation among others have threatened global peace, security and stability," Thapa said. He added that the importance of meditation cannot be overstated. It influences various aspects of human life, society and the global community at large. "It transcends cultural, geographical, societal and religious boundaries, embodying truly humanistic values and

reflecting the highest ideals of humanity," he said.

Chargé d'affaires at the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka Sugeeshwara Gunaratna noted that the UNGA resolution was co-sponsored by over 70 countries from all geographical regions and different cultural and religious backgrounds. "This speaks volumes on the universal applicability and acceptance of the different techniques and practices which we call meditation."

"It is our collective wish that in a world that seeks peace and harmony among the tragedy of conflicts, meditative practices could provide the essential ingredient in creating peaceful individuals, which is the fulcrum to building a sustainable and peaceful world," Gunaratna said.

The event also included a special meditation session led by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

Govt funding bill clears Congress and heads to President Biden, averting shutdown

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Facing a government shutdown deadline, the Senate rushed through final passage early Saturday of a bipartisan plan that would temporarily fund federal operations and disaster aid, dropping President-elect Donald Trump's demands for a debt limit increase into the new year.

House Speaker Mike Johnson had insisted Congress would "meet our obligations" and not allow federal operations to shutter ahead of the Christmas holiday season. But the day's outcome was uncertain after Trump doubled down on his insistence that a debt ceiling increase be included in any deal — if not, he said in an early morning post, let the closures "start now."

The House approved Johnson's new bill overwhelmingly, 366-34. The Senate worked into the night to pass it, 85-11, just past the deadline. At midnight, the White House said it had ceased

shutdown preparations.

"This is a good outcome for the country," Johnson said after the House vote, adding he had spoken with Trump and the president-elect "was certainly happy about this outcome, as well."

President Joe Biden, who has played a less public role in the process throughout a turbulent week, was expected to sign the measure into law Saturday.

"There will be no government shutdown," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said.

The final product was the third attempt from Johnson, the beleaguered House speaker, to achieve one of the basic requirements of the federal government — keeping it open. And it raised stark questions about whether Johnson will be able to keep his job, in the face of angry GOP colleagues, and work alongside Trump and billionaire ally Elon Musk, who called the legislative plays from afar.

Trump's last-minute demand was almost an impossible ask,

and Johnson had almost no choice but to work around his pressure for a debt ceiling increase. The speaker knew there wouldn't be enough support within the GOP majority to pass any funding package, since many Republican deficit hawks prefer to slash federal government and certainly wouldn't allow more debt.

Instead, the Republicans, who will have full control of the White House, House and Senate next year, with big plans for tax cuts and other priorities, are showing they must routinely rely on Democrats for the votes needed to keep up with the routine operations of government.

"So is this a Republican bill or a Democrat bill?" scoffed Musk on social media ahead of the vote. The drastically slimmed-down 118-page package would fund the government at current levels through March 14 and add \$100 billion in disaster aid and \$10 billion in agricultural assistance to farmers.

Gone is Trump's demand to lift the debt ceiling, which GOP leaders told lawmakers would be debated as part of their tax and border packages in the new year. Republicans made a so-called handshake agreement to raise the debt limit at that time while also cutting \$2.5 trillion in spending over 10 years.

It's essentially the same deal that flopped the night before in a spectacular setback — opposed by most Democrats and some of the most conservative Republicans — minus Trump's debt ceiling demand.

But it's far smaller than the original bipartisan accord Johnson struck with Democratic and Republican leaders — a 1,500-page bill that Trump and Musk rejected, forcing him to start over. It was stuffed with a long list of other bills — including much derided pay raises for lawmakers — but also other measures with broad bipartisan support that now have a tougher path to becoming law.

Pak Military courts sentence 25 civilians for May 9 riots

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's military courts sentenced 25 civilians to prison terms ranging from two to 10 years for attacking military installations during riots which erupted following the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan in May last year, the Army announced on Saturday.

On May 9, 2023, Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supporters allegedly attacked several military installations, including the army headquarters in Rawalpindi and the ISI building in Faisalabad, to vent their anger against the arrest of their party founder in a corruption case.

Hundreds of suspects were arrested in the countrywide snoop and at least 103 were handed over to the military authorities for trial due to their involvement in attacks on military installations.

In a detailed statement, the military said that the nation on May 9 witnessed tragic incidents of "politically provoked violence and arson at multiple places, marking a dark chapter in the history of Pakistan" when building on a sustained narrative of hate and lies, politically orchestrated attacks were carried out on the Army installations and monuments of Shuhada (martyrs).

"These blatant acts of violence not only shocked the nation but also underscored the necessity of checking this unacceptable attempt of political terrorism to impose own perverted will through violence and coercion," it stated.

According to the statement, Field General Court Martial sentenced 25 individuals in the first phase, following a thorough review of evidence and the completion of proper legal procedures.

It said that the convicts were

awarded prison terms ranging from two to 10 years for attacking the military facilities. Fourteen individuals received 10-year sentences of rigorous imprisonment, while the others were given shorter terms.

The Army said that promulgation of the sentences of the remaining accused is also being done and will be announced shortly as and when the due process is complete.

The Army termed the development "an important milestone in the dispensation of justice to the nation" and a stark reminder to all those who are exploited by the vested interests and fall prey to their political propaganda and intoxicating lies, to never take law in their own hands ever in the future.

It also said that many accused are also being tried in various Anti-Terrorist Courts and their cases are being pursued as per the law.

Showing its intent to punish the

"mastermind", it stated that "justice would truly be fully served once the mastermind and planners of 9th May Tragedy are punished as per the Constitution and laws of the land."

It said that Pakistan will vigorously pursue dispensation of justice to ensure the establishment of its writ to uproot this evil of violence-driven disruptive and destructive politics based on hate, divisiveness and baseless propaganda.

All convicts punished by the army retain the right to appeal and other legal resources, as guaranteed by the law and the Constitution.

The convictions, announced following the Supreme Court's directive conditionally allowing them, primarily relate to attacks on several key military sites including the Jinnah House, General Headquarters (GHQ), and Pakistan Air Force Base Mianwali.

Santa and Mrs. Claus use military transports to bring Christmas to Alaska Native village

AP ■ YAKUTAT (ALASKA)

Forget the open-air sleigh overloaded with gifts and powered by flying reindeer. Santa and Mrs. Claus this week took supervised rides to southeast Alaska in a C-17 military cargo plane and a camouflaged Humvee, as they delivered toys to the Tlingit village of Yakutat, northwest of Juneau.

The visit was part of this year's Operation Santa Claus, an outreach programme of the Alaska National Guard to largely Indigenous communities in the nation's largest state.

Each year, the Guard picks a village that has suffered recent hardship — in Yakutat's case, a massive snowfall that threatened to buckle buildings in 2022.

"This is one of the funnest things we get to do, and this is a proud moment for the National Guard," Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, said Wednesday.

Saxe wore a Guard uniform and a Santa hat that stretched his unit's dress regulations.

The Humvee caused a stir when it entered the school parking lot, and a buzz of "It's Santa! It's Santa!" pierced the cold air as dozens of elementary school children gathered outside.

In the school, Mrs. Claus read a Christmas story about the reindeer Dasher. The couple in red then sat for photos with nearly all of the 75 or so students and handed out new backpacks filled with gifts, books, snacks and school supplies donated by the Salvation Army. The school provided lunch, and a local restaurant provided the ice cream and toppings for a sundae bar.

Student Thomas Henry, 10, said while the contents of the backpack were "pretty good," his favourite item was a plastic dinosaur. Another, 9-year-old Mackenzie Ross, held her new plush seal toy as she walked around the school gym.

"I think it's special that I have this opportunity to be here today because I've never experienced this before," she said.

Yakutat, a Tlingit village of about 600 residents, is in the lowlands of the Gulf of Alaska, at the top of Alaska's panhandle. Nearby is the Hubbard Glacier, a frequent stop for cruise ships.

Some of the National Guard members who visited Yakutat on Wednesday were also there in January 2022, when storms dumped about 6 feet (1.8 meters) of snow in a matter of days, damaging buildings.

Operation Santa started in 1956 when flooding severely curtailed subsistence hunting for residents of St. Mary's, in western Alaska. Having to spend their money on food, they had little left for Christmas presents, so the military stepped in.

This year, visits were planned to two other communities hit by flooding. Santa's visit to Circle, in northeastern Alaska,

went off without a hitch. Severe weather prevented a visit to Crooked Creek, in the southwestern part of the state, but Christmas was saved when the gifts were delivered there Nov. 16. "We tend to visit rural communities where it is very isolated," said Jenni Ragland, service extension director with the Salvation Army Alaska Division. "A lot of kids haven't traveled to big cities where we typically have Santa and big stores with Christmas gifts and Christmas trees, so we kind of bring the Christmas programme on the road."

After the C-17 Globemaster III landed in Yakutat, it quickly returned to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage, an hour away, because there was nowhere to park it at the village's tiny airport. Later it returned to pick up the Christmas crew.

Santa and Mrs. Claus, along with their tucked-elves, were seen nodding off on the flight back.

16 soldiers killed in NW Pakistan terror attack

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

Sixteen soldiers died and eight others were injured as terrorists attacked a security check post in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of northwest Pakistan early Saturday, security sources said.

The terrorist attacked Lita Sar check post in Makeen in South Waziristan district bordering Afghanistan, sources added.

This is one of the biggest attacks on the security forces in months. The attack comes days after Pakistani security forces killed two terrorists in the Sararogha area of the same district.

Law enforcement personnel acted on the reported presence of militants and killed two terrorists while two militants were apprehended in the operation in December first week.

South Waziristan is one of the seven semi-autonomous tribal areas, where the Army has for more than a decade been battling militants linked from banned outfits.

Ukrainian drones strike deep into Russia

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine brought the war into the heart of Russia Saturday morning with drone attacks that local authorities said damaged residential buildings in the city of Kazan in the Tatarstan region, over 600 miles (1,000 kilometers) from the front line. The press service of Tatarstan's governor, Rustam Minnikhanov, said that eight drones attacked the city. Six hit residential buildings, one hit an industrial facility and one was shot down over a river, the

statement said. A video posted on local Telegram news channel Astra, verified by The Associated Press, shows a drone flying into the upper floors of a high-rise building.

Local authorities said there were no casualties. Flights were halted at Kazan's airport and all mass gatherings cancelled on Saturday and Sunday.

The attacks, which Ukraine didn't acknowledge in keeping with its security policy, comes after a Ukrainian attack Friday on a town in Russia's Kursk border region using U.S.-sup-

plied missiles killed six people, including a child.

Moscow sent 113 drones into Ukraine overnight into Saturday, Ukrainian officials said. According to Ukraine's Air Force, 57 drones were shot down during the attacks. A further 56 drones were "lost," likely having been electronically jammed.

The governor of Ukraine's Kharkiv region, Oleh Syniehubov, said eight people were wounded Friday night in drone attacks on the regional capital, also called Kharkiv.

Rocket fired from Yemen strikes Tel Aviv

AP ■ TEL AVIV

The Israeli military says a rocket fired from Yemen hit an area of Tel Aviv overnight, leaving 16 people slightly injured by shattered glass from nearby windows. A further 14 people sustained minor injuries as they rushed to shelters when air raid sirens sounded before the projectile hit just before 4 am Saturday, the military said.

The attack comes less than two days after a series of Israeli airstrikes on Yemen's Houthi rebel-held capital, Sanaa, and port city of Hodeida killed at least nine people. The Israeli strikes were in response to a Houthi attack in which a long-range missile

hit an Israeli school building. The Houthis also claimed a drone strike targeting an unspecified military target in central Israel on Thursday.

The Israeli military says the Iran-backed Houthis have launched more than 200 missiles and drones during the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. The Houthis have also been attacking shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden — attacks they say won't stop until there is a ceasefire in Gaza.

The Israeli strikes Thursday caused "considerable damage" to the Houthi-controlled Red Sea ports "that will lead to the immediate and significant reduction in port capacity," United Nations spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Thousands greet winter solstice at ancient Stonehenge monument

AP ■ LONDON

Thousands of tourists, pagans, druids and people simply yearning for the promise of spring marked the dawn of the shortest day of the year at the ancient Stonehenge monument on Saturday.

Revelers cheered and beat drums as the sun rose at 8:09 am (0809 GMT) over the giant standing stones on the winter solstice — the shortest day and the longest night in the Northern Hemisphere. No one could see the sun through the low winter cloud, but that did not deter a flurry of drumming, chanting and singing as dawn broke.

There will be less than eight hours of daylight in England on Saturday — but after that, the days get longer until the summer solstice in June.

The solstices are the only occasions when visitors can go right up to the stones at Stonehenge, and thousands are willing to rise before dawn to soak up the atmosphere.

The stone circle, whose giant



pillars each took 1,000 people to move, was erected starting about 5,000 years ago by a sun-worshipping Neolithic culture. Its full purpose is still debated: Was it a temple, a solar calculator, a cemetery, or some combination of all three?

In a paper published in the journal Archaeology

International, researchers from University College London and Aberystwyth University said the site on Salisbury Plain, about 128 km southwest of London, may have had political as well as spiritual significance.

That follows from the recent discovery that one of

Stonehenge's stones — the unique stone lying flat at the center of the monument, dubbed the "altar stone" — originated in Scotland, hundreds of miles north of the site. Some of the other stones were brought from the Preseli Hills in southwest Wales, nearly 240 km to the west.

Lead author Mike Parker Pearson from UCL's Institute of Archaeology said the geographical diversity suggests Stonehenge may have served as a "monument of unification for the peoples of Britain, celebrating their eternal links with their ancestors and the cosmos."

Key ally vows to topple Canadian PM Trudeau

PTI ■ TORONTO

The future of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's leadership appeared increasingly uncertain after New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jagmeet Singh, a key ally, said he would introduce a motion to topple the minority Liberal government.

Singh, whose party has been helping keep Trudeau in office, announced in an open letter posted on social media that he would declare a loss of confidence in the Trudeau-led Liberal government next year, a move that would trigger an early election if other opposition parties support his move.

Canada's next election must be held on or before October. Singh is the last of Canada's three main opposition parties to turn on Trudeau.

In his letter, Singh said the Liberals were undeserving of "another chance."

"That's why the NDP will vote

to bring this government down and give Canadians a chance to vote for a government who will work for them," he wrote.

He said the New Democrats plan to use their next opposition day in the House of Commons — during which opposition priorities are given precedence over government business — to introduce the vote. The House is currently on its winter break and is set to resume on January 27.

Singh's letter came as questions swirled about the future of Trudeau, with at least 21 Liberal MPs now calling for him to resign, CBC News reported.

Singh's announcement is the latest in a series of political setbacks suffered by Trudeau this week after the resignation of Chrystia Freeland, his deputy prime minister and finance minister.

Freeland quit hours before she was set to deliver an economic statement on Monday, citing

political disagreements between her and Trudeau on the "best path forward for Canada" in light of tariff threats posed by US President-elect Donald Trump.

"No matter who is leading the Liberal party, this government's time is up," Singh's letter read.

Singh also said the Liberals have frequently not lived up to their promises and that the time for change is now.

The letter was released just before Trudeau announced his revamped front bench on Friday morning.

The New Democrats ended their parliamentary alliance with the Liberals in early September, but have repeatedly declared confidence in the government when the Conservatives have introduced votes to bring the Liberals down.

Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre has repeatedly called for an election as soon as possible.

FIFA's new super-sized tournament sparks revolt

AP ■ MANCHESTER

One of the most striking moments of soccer in 2024 was when Rodri hobbled onto a stage in Paris on crutches to receive the prestigious Ballon d'Or for best male player of the year. The Manchester City and Spain midfielder had been one of the most outspoken critics against the increasingly congested soccer calendar, warning that the lack of downtime was detrimental to players' performance and health. Then, just a month before the Oct. 28 award ceremony, he tore his ACL during a seemingly routine run in a Premier League game against Arsenal.

Though such injuries have occurred throughout the history of the sport and aren't necessarily linked to overplaying, Rodri's season-ending injury became a visual representation of the physical toll of modern soccer at a time when the busy match schedule is facing legal challenges and the possibility of strike action.

Top footballers are now routinely playing more than 60 games per season for club and country, while the game is getting faster and more intense. Injuries are on the rise. Already pushed to their limits, some players say FIFA's newly expanded Club World Cup, to be held in the United States next year, is the last straw.

Players say they are "at breaking point, that they are at the limit, that it's actually too much," Alexander Bielefeld, from global players' union FIFPRO, told The Associated Press. FIFA's new addition to the calendar

The new Club World Cup is a supersized version of what used to be a short tournament with only seven teams. The new edition includes 32 teams from around the world and will be held every four years, starting next summer in the United States from June 14 to July 13. As its name suggests, it's envisioned to be club version of the World Cup for national teams.

That means top players will have a monthlong



tournament on top of their domestic league season three out of every four years. With more games also added to the Champions League in Europe this season as well as the next World Cup in 2026, the soccer calendar is filling up quickly.

"It's something that worries us because we are the guys

who suffer," Rodri said in September, just days before he was injured. He said players may have no choice but to refuse to play if the trend continues.

FIFPRO says a significant number of players routinely play 60-70 matches a season. The union's recommended limit is 55.

Last season Julian Alvarez played 75 games for former club Manchester City and Argentina in 10 different competitions spanning the Premier League, Champions League, Copa America and Olympics.

The season before, Manchester United midfielder Bruno Fernandes

played 70 times, including a run of 20 consecutive games. Injuries are a concern

The Men's European Football Injury Index, an annual report by global insurance broker Howden, found there were 4,123 injuries in the top divisions of England, Spain, Germany, Italy and France last season. It said the number of injuries had risen year-on-year since the index was first published in 2021 and that "it would be fair to expect a continuation of this upwards trajectory."

Tony Strudwick, medical director for West Bromwich Albion and former head of performance for Manchester United, said injuries are on the rise despite advancements in sports science and medicine.

"That to me looks like there's a mismatch between what the players can physically tolerate and what they've been exposed to," he told The AP. "During the last eight seasons, incidents of hamstring injuries, in particular, have increased." Strudwick said the risk of too many games was ultimately injury and burnout. But he

said players are unlikely to raise the issue with their clubs or national teams.

"Players are very reluctant to say they don't want to play and they're very, very tired. It takes a relatively brave person to do that," he said. Manchester City played 61 games in the 2022-23 campaign when it won a trophy treble of the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup.

This season that number could rise to 71 because of an expanded group stage and potential playoff in the Champions League and the Club World Cup.

A heavy workload is also an issue in women's soccer, FIFPRO said earlier this week, though it noted that while some top players have a packed schedule, others don't get to play enough.

If successful, the Club World Cup could rival the Premier League and Champions League as one of the most lucrative and watched tournaments in club soccer. It has been backed by clubs and next year's event is set to feature many of the biggest names in the sport, including

Lionel Messi, Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Vinicius Jr.

Coming at the end of many leagues' regular season, FIFA said the dates would be "harmoniously aligned with the international match calendar" to ensure sufficient rest for players ahead of the start of domestic campaigns.

The governing body has also set up a player welfare task force to be led by former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger.

FIFPRO, which says it represents more than 66,000 players around the world, is not convinced. In October, its European division teamed up with domestic leagues and filed a legal complaint in Europe against how FIFA adds new and bigger men's competitions to the calendar.

FIFA hit back, noting that European clubs often fill their summer breaks with exhibition matches around the world. It accused some European leagues of acting with "hypocrisy, and without consideration to everyone else in the world."

1st Women ODI: In-form India hold all aces against WI

PTI ■ VADODARA

India will be eager to exploit their recent form and a historical advantage to subdue the West Indies in the three-match Women ODI series, beginning here with the first contest on Sunday.

India notched up their first home T20I series win in over five years with a 2-1 victory over the Caribbeans in Mumbai earlier this week.

Dating back to 2017, India also hold a significant 4-1 head-to-head lead over the Windies in ODIs.

The lone worry for India will be the fitness of regular skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, who missed the last two T20Is with a knee niggle.

Smriti Mandhana led India in Harmanpreet's absence and she made a strong impression too in the T20Is, striking three fifties in a row.

The graceful left-hander will be keen to continue in the same vein in the one-dayers as well. Her form in the last 10 ODIs is outstanding, scoring 599 runs at an average of 60 while striking at 98.



But India's batting has more depth to it beyond these two seasoned players.

Jemimah Rodrigues has shown signs of returning to her run-making ways, and Richa Ghosh showed her ability to rip apart a bowling unit with a breezy fifty in the third T20I.

The addition of Tejal

Hasabnis and Harleen Deol will add some more meat to the middle-order.

India's bowling unit has a fine blend of youth and experience and they could be a handy force in the newly-constructed Kotambi Stadium here, which is hosting its first international match.

The likes of Deepti Sharma, who has taken 15 wickets in her last 10 matches, Renuka Singh and Saima Thakor can rattle the West Indies on an unfamiliar pitch.

India will also have the option of fielding the impressive young pacer Titas Sadhu here.

West Indies' biggest hopes

to counter a strong Indian bowling unit will be skipper Hayley Matthews and veterans Deandra Dottin and Shemaine Campbelle.

Matthews' seven matches this season have produced 308 runs at an average of 45. But the visiting bowlers will have to raise their game several notches to stop a strong Indian batting lineup.

Squads (from): India: Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana (VC), Pratika Rawal, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harleen Deol, Richa Ghosh (WK), Uma Chetry (WK), Tejal Hasabnis, Deepti Sharma, Minnu Mani, Priya Mishra, Tanuja Kanwer, Titas Sadhu, Saima Thakor, Renuka Singh Thakur.

West Indies: Hayley Matthews (c), Shemaine Campbelle (vc), Aaliyah Alleyne, Shamilia Connell, Nerissa Crafton, Deandra Dottin, Afy Fletcher, Shabika Gajrabai, Chinelle Henry, Zaida James, Qiana Joseph, Mandy Mangru, Ashmini Munisar, Karishma Ramharack, Rashada Williams.

Ashwin's wife pens heartfelt tribute after his sudden retirement

PTI ■ CHENNAI

India's ace spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's wife Prithi Narayanan has penned a heartfelt tribute for her husband following his recent retirement from the game, saying "it is time to set the burden of being you down" and embrace life beyond the game.

Ashwin made a surprise announcement of his retirement after the drawn third Test at Brisbane. The veteran cricketer picked up just one wicket during the tour, including the 10-wicket loss at Adelaide.

The 38-year-old retired with a stellar record of 537 Test wickets at an average of 24, in addition to scoring 3,503 runs, including six centuries. He also claimed 156 wickets in ODIs and 72 in T20Is.

Describing her tribute as a "Love letter from a fan girl", Prithi wrote on Instagram: "Dear Ashwin, from not knowing how to put a kit bag together to following you to stadiums all over the world,



rooting for you, watching you and learning from you, it has been an absolute pleasure. The world you introduced me to gave me the privilege to watch and enjoy a sport that I love from close quarters.

"It also showed me how much passion, hardwork and discipline is needed to keep your head above water. And sometimes even that is not enough. I remember us talking about why you, R Ashwin, had to do all of this and a lot more to even stay relevant in the scheme of things."

Ashwin, who debuted in 2011 against the West Indies,

earned a reputation for his relentless pursuit of excellence. His near-equal tally of 269 wickets against right-handers and 268 against left-handers highlights his versatility.

"How awards, the best of stats, the POMs, the accolades, the records didn't matter if you didn't sharpen your skill sets constantly and did not put in the work. Sometimes, nothing is enough," Prithi continued.

"As you end your wonderful international run, I only want to tell you that it's all good. It is all going to be good. It is time to set the burden of being you down. Live life on your terms, make space for those extra calories, make time for your family, make time to do absolutely nothing, share memes all day, create a new bowling variation, bug our kids out of their minds. Just do it all."

Prithi, who has been a constant companion on Ashwin's cricketing journey, reflected on his meticulous approach to his craft.

Bundesliga sees quickfire scoring record as Bayern puts five past dismal Leipzig

AP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich crushed Leipzig 5-1 and they broke a long-standing Bundesliga record for quickfire goals.

Two teams had never scored in the opening two minutes of a Bundesliga match until Jamal Musiala gave Bayern the lead after 28 seconds and Benjamin Šeško equalised barely 60 seconds later on Friday. The pace slowed after that frenetic start but not for long. Konrad Laimer put Bayern ahead against his old club in the 25th. Michael Olise found space on the right side and Laimer gave Péter Gulácsi no chance with a crisp volley.

Nine minutes later, Joshua Kimmich lashed home from almost 30 meters to make it 3-1.

Leroy Sané added the fourth with 15 minutes remaining



and Alphonso Davies got his first league goal of the season to complete the rout three minutes later.

Harry Kane returned and looked rusty after missing two games with a hamstring injury but played 87 minutes of a match that helped Bayern get back on track after a rocky run.

After winning eight games in a row from late October to late November, the Bavarian giant lost two and drew one of its next five, including a 2-1 defeat to Mainz last week, its first loss in the Bundesliga.

Friday's result bumped its lead over titleholder Bayer Leverkusen to seven points.

Head's in the form of his life, hard to contain him, says Shastri

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Travis Head's ability to judge the short ball quite early is behind the Australian batter's phenomenal success in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar series, feels former India cricketer Ravi Shastri, while adding on a lighter note that the visitors would like to have a balm for the 'Headache'.

Head, after being dismissed for 11 in his first innings of the series, has gone on to score 89, 140 and 152 in his next three outings. He played a pivotal role in the pink ball Test that Australia won by 10 wickets to level the five-match series 1-1.

"I think he (Head) is very smart. From what I saw of him three years ago, he has improved immensely. Especially with the way he plays the short ball. He's prepared to leave it. He has learned to leave it well at



times," Shastri said on the ICC Review.

The former India coach added that Head's ability to judge the delivery's line and length quickly gives him time to play the right stroke.

"It's not a big shot all the time off a short delivery

angled at his armpits or something. He's prepared to either ride it or go for the big shots.

And if it is middle, middle and off, then he hits it in front of square as well," Shastri said.

The Indian legend further

said when on song, Head is difficult to stop. "He picks up length very well. That's one of his great strengths. And he has a flashing blade for the offside. So he's a hard man to contain. And he's in the form of his life."

On a lighter note, Shastri said India are looking for a balm for a 'headache' called Travis.

"Because his new surname is Travis Head'ache", Shastri said. "They are looking for balms in India. For foot problems, ankle problems (and) even a headache they are looking for a balm. He is ideal for that."

While Jasprit Bumrah has troubled virtually every Australian batter, Head has been an exception, playing the Indian quick with elan. Even as other Australian batters have struggled against Bumrah, who has 21 wickets at an average of 10.9 in the series, Head has scored 83 runs off 91 balls.

"We all knew he was dangerous, but that first shot he played off Jasprit Bumrah, that cover drive, off the front foot. It was in many ways a little bit on the up, off a good delivery, decent delivery. It told me that this is a player in prime, prime form," said Shastri.

The cricketer-turned-commentator said Head's batting prowess gave an insight into his uncluttered mind.

"He went on to show exactly that (clear mind). And the thing with him is there's no, his mindset is very clear. There's no clouded mindset. He's very clear about the situation. This is my strength."

"I am going to play in that fashion. Yes, I will watch the state of the game. I might shift from fourth gear to third gear. But I will always be in third and fourth gear once I get my eye on," Shastri added.

I've got a few plans against Indian bowlers, claims Sam Konstas

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Young Australian opener Sam Konstas cannot wait to take on the Indian bowlers in the Boxing Day Test and says he already has a "few plans" for Jasprit Bumrah and Co if he gets the nod in the fourth game of the Border-Gavaskar series here.

Teenage sensation Konstas was handed a maiden call-up as Australia dropped rookie opener Nathan McSweeney for the final two Tests against India.

Konstas' inclusion follows a series of disappointing performances from the

Australian top-order in the first three Tests, especially McSweeney.

"I've got a few plans against those (Indian) bowlers. Feeling like I'm moving really nice and hopefully I get that opportunity," Konstas told Fox Cricket.

"I'm just going to react to the ball and show a bit of intent and put a bit of pressure back on the bowlers," he added.

If Konstas, who turned 19 on October 2, is selected in the playing XI for the Boxing Day Test, he would become Australia's youngest Test debutant since captain



Pat Cummins, who was 18 years and 193 days old when he made his debut against South Africa in Johannesburg in 2011.

"It will be a huge honour debuting. A dream come true. I think it's a sellout already (at the MCG)," he said.

"I'm very excited (to take on India). I want to be challenged."

Konstas was in the nets when Australian chairman of selectors George Bailey called him to break the news of his inclusion for the final two Tests.

"I was so thrilled. Called my parents straight away...

Mum was in tears so I was telling her not to cry. Dad was super proud.

"It's been an amazing journey. All the ups and down - very grateful for their sacrifices. They've been great support to me."

Konstas said McSweeney, the player he replaced in the squad, had congratulated him after hearing the news of his inclusion.

"Nathan McSweeney is a very good player in all three formats - he actually congratulated me this morning so we're very close mates. I wish him all the best."

McSweeney has admitted to

feeling "devastated" after being dropped for the last two Tests of the BGT Tests but vowed to work hard to reclaim his spot in the national team.

Konstas cannot recollect when he started playing cricket but admitted his father had played a huge role in his success in the sport.

"I think from memory (I started playing) maybe four or five years old. Dad would always train me with my older brother Billy and Johnny my twin.

"He's retired now my dad. I think I've hurt his shoulder!" said Konstas.



EMBRACING THE MAGIC OF URDU

“Jashn-e-Rekhta”, celebrated the beauty of Urdu with soulful music, heartfelt poetry and moments that deeply connected with everyone, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

In the delicate dance of words and melodies, there exists a beauty that can only be captured by the language of the soul, Urdu. The language has flourished in the hearts of poets, lovers and dreamers for centuries, finding its voice in the lyrical verses of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Mirza Ghalib, Allama Iqbal and countless others. As one steps into the world of *Jashn-e-Rekhta*, a living celebration of this beloved language, it is as though you are immersed in a space where poetry is not merely recited, but experienced, felt in every beat of your heart.

“Dil-e-nadaan tujhe hua kya hai? Aur koi bhi, tujhe na samajh paaya”

These lines by Mirza Ghalib echoed throughout the festival, capturing the essence of *Jashn-e-Rekhta* 2024 in a way no words could. Each verse, each melody, became a reminder of the timeless beauty and emotion embedded in Urdu poetry, and how it continues to bind hearts together across generations.

The opening evening saw the mesmerising Sufi performance by the ever-graceful Padma Shri Kailash Kher and his Kailasa band, setting the mood for an emotional journey through music and words. But the magic of *Jashn-e-Rekhta* didn't stop there.

The second day of the festival paid tribute to the legendary poet Sahir Ludhianvi. Performances by the Qutbi Brothers and the stirring *Dastangoi* session by Himanshu Bajpayee and Pragya Sharma were particularly notable. Their narratives made the audience reminisce about the timelessness of Urdu poetry, while the theatrical production *Jaun Elia ka Jim* brought forth the intensity and passion that marked the poet's life. Javed Akhtar's book launch of *Kyon: Jaun Elia's Unpublished Poetry and Sanjiv Saraf's Wayward Verses* led to a deeper understanding of how Urdu continues to shape the contemporary cultural landscape. As the final act, Papon's soul-



stirring performance brought the festival to a close.

The final day of *Jashn-e-Rekhta* added a modern touch to the festivities with Nisschal Zaveri's "Chaand, Urdu aur Awaaz Unplugged," a performance blending classical Ghazals with contemporary musical expressions. This performance bridged the timeless charm of Urdu poetry with modern acoustic instrumentation, providing an experience that resonated with every listener's heart. Nisschal, with his incredible talent and reverence for the art, captured the essence of what makes Urdu poetry so deeply moving, a delicate balance between tradition and innovation, an invitation to dive into the depths of emotion, where every word is a universe unto itself. The event concluded with a moving tribute- *Main Koi Aisa Geet Gaon*, a celebration of the songs that have touched Bollywood's heart,



presented by Javed Akhtar.

One of the most delightful aspects of *Jashn-e-Rekhta* was the *Rekhta Pavilion*. From the *Rekhta Food Festival - Aiwane-Zaiqa*, which showcased the subcontinent's culinary delights, to the *Rekhta Bazaar and Books Bazaar*, which made Urdu's literary treasures accessible

to all, every corner invited exploration. At its heart was the *Dial-e-Poet*, where visitors could listen to the timeless voices of legends like Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Rahai Indori, creating a deeply personal connection to their immortal words. Around these spaces, people of all ages gathered in spontaneous circles, reciting

shayari, sharing verses and singing ghazals. The soft glow of the lights created an atmosphere of unity, where the shared love of Urdu poetry connected everyone and the timeless melodies carried emotions that resonated deeply in the heart. *Jashn-e-Rekhta* celebrates the timeless

charm of Urdu, bringing its poetry, music, and legacy to life. It reminds us that Urdu isn't just inked on pages but lives in every song, verses and conversation, a celebration of life where poetry becomes a vibrant, living essence.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

The crisp, wintry evening at the Embassy of Finland set the perfect stage for the global premiere of *All I Want for Christmas*, a travel documentary produced by Travelpix and helmed by the nationally acclaimed, award-winning filmmaker Kamakhya Narayan Singh.

With its runtime of 42 minutes, the documentary masterfully captures the alluring spirit of Christmas while imparting a moving message of hope and resilience to its audience.

As the holiday season approaches, bringing with it the warmth of togetherness and the joy of celebrations, *All I Want for Christmas* unfolds as a story that goes beyond festivities, offering a poignant glimpse into the human spirit. This magical narrative was born out of the idea that travel, much like festivals, symbolises happiness, connection, and the celebration of life itself. When global events stir emotions and challenge our perspectives, it becomes essential to remind ourselves of the joy and wonder that still exist in the world. With this thought in mind, the makers brainstormed countless ideas before settling on the heart warming journey of a mother and daughter travelling to Finland's Lapland, the land of Santa Claus and snow-covered dreams.

The documentary chronicles the story of Anastasia, a young Ukrainian refugee, and her mother, who embarks on this journey to rekindle the happiness that seemed lost amidst the chaos of displacement. Their trip to Finland's Lapland, a breathtaking winter wonderland, turns out to be more than just a holiday. It becomes a journey of healing



Global Premiere of Hope and Joy

All I Want for Christmas, the travel documentary has the magic of Christmas with resilience of human spirit, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**



and resilience. From exhilarating dog sledding adventures through pristine snow-laden landscapes to the daring experience of swimming in the icy waters of Kemi, every moment captured in the film speaks to the enduring strength of the human spirit. The ultimate highlight, of course, is the magical moment when Anastasia meets Santa Claus himself, bringing to life the dreams of countless children. Director Kamakhya Narayan Singh, reflecting on his unique experience, shared with *The Pioneer* the challenges of filming in Finland's harsh winters with temperatures plunging to -18°C and only 2-3 hours of daylight. Despite these obstacles, Kamakhya's determination to bring this story to life remained unwavering.

Adding another layer of complexity was the fact that the documentary was originally shot in Russian, a first in a different language for the filmmaker. Yet, the ethereal beauty of Finland's snowy landscapes, the joyful presence of Santa, and the thrill of sledding through its magical terrains make *All I Want for Christmas* a visual treat that promises to leave viewers enchanted.

Collaboratively organised by the embassies of Finland, Ukraine, and Norway, along with SIFFCY and the Smile Foundation, the premiere evening was not just a celebration of cinematic artistry but also a reminder of the universal message of hope and joy that Christmas brings to all. Whether it's the sparkling snowflakes or the heartwarming story of love and resilience, *All I Want for Christmas* will fill your heart with holiday cheer and would inspire you to believe in the magic of the season.

EXPECTATIONS AND STORYLINE MISMATCHED

The new season of *Mismatched* showcases long-distance relationships but struggles to break free from repetitive storytelling, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

Playing the coffee angle yet again in the opening of *Season 3*, the new season of *Mismatched*, currently airing on the OTT platform Netflix has yet managed to keep the audience gripped but to some extent only. The series continues the journey of Rishi played by Rohit Saraf and Dimple acted by Prajakta Koli as they walk through the complexities of a long-distance relationship, new professional challenges, and personal growth. The season takes you into themes such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and personal loss, reflecting the evolving digital landscape and its impact on relationships, basically keeping up with tech from the first season.

The makers have tried to keep season 3 distinguished from the other seasons but have failed to do so because of the same story and absence of the needed spark and twist. The story feels to be unnecessarily stressed by revolving around the fights and then patch up repeatedly which is to be honest too boring. The series yet again revolves around the boring ups and downs of the relationships shown mainly by Taaruk Raina and Ahsaas Chama, Prajakta Kohli and Rohit Saraf. The web series is a steal deal for Rannvijay Singha and Vidya Malvade as Sid sir and Zeenat. The evolving relationship of the two with ups and downs at the age touching around 40 has been conceptualised in a great way. Rannvijay has acted out brilliantly from opening a new college to planning an adoption and growing with his love interest. Zeenat's character has shown ample amount of support to Rannvijay's character and the series throughout.

The part that would excite you a bit would be the whole point of creating Betterverse and the story that revolves around that professional world of all the characters of the web series. The series shines in songs and background scores that make it a bit emotional. *Ishq Hai* song sung by Anurag Saikia, Romy, Amarabha Banerjee, Varun Jain, Madhubanti Bagchi; composed and produced By Anurag Saikia, Oblong Sioni and written By Raj Shekhar is



soothing to the and has been collectively loved by the audience.

To conclude, the review "Mismatched" Season 3 explores contemporary themes relevant to young adults, but opinions differ on its execution and character progression. There could have been addition of twists and turns apart from passageway of Dimple's father to give it an emotional angle.

If you are a mismatched fan you may appreciate the continuation of the story, while others might find it lacking in depth and innovation.

Rating: 3/5

Get in touch at vivacity@dailypioneer.com

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Lucknow only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

Printed and Published by Shobori Ganguli for and on behalf of CMYK Printech Ltd., 4th Floor, Sahara Shopping Centre, Faizabad Road, Lucknow-226016 and Printed at The Indian Express Pvt Ltd., C-26 Amausi Industrial Area, Nadarganj, Lucknow. Editor-in-Chief Shobori Ganguli, Resident Editor Vijay Prakash Singh, RNI No. 2016/57. Lucknow Telephones: EPABX: 4036600 Fax: 2345582. Allahabad Office: (0532) 2420818, 2421018, 3290460. Kanpur Office: (0512) 2304006, 2304416. Varanasi Office: (0542) 2414294, 2414295. Delhi Office: 100K, Milap Bhawan, 8/A, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110 002, Phone: 011-40110455. Corporate Office:- 201-205, 2nd Floor, Pratap Bhawan 5, B.S.Z. Marg, New Delhi-110002 Phone: 011-69342500.

the pioneer agenda

"Have yourself a merry little Christmas. Let your heart be light"
— Judy Garland



LIGHTING UP THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT



AT BEEYOUNG BREWGARDEN



BeeYoung Brewgarden ushered in the festive season with its Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony which drew an enthusiastic crowd who gathered to celebrate the magic of Christmas in the brewpub's signature European-style ambiance. The evening's highlight was the countdown to the illumination of a stunning Christmas tree adorned with twinkling lights and elegant decorations, marking the official start of the holiday season at BeeYoung Brewgarden. There was a selection of bite-sized festive treats, signature holiday cocktails, and BeeYoung's renowned craft brews delighted the attendees, enhancing the celebratory atmosphere. The evening concluded with a heartfelt toast to the spirit of togetherness.

From timeless carols to dazzling tree lighting ceremonies, the Christmas magic unfolds, writes ABHI SINGHAL

When a cold breeze begins to blow, the lights around you feel like home and the wind feels cosy, the spirit of Christmas starts to weave its magic. It's a time when families gather around crackling fires, the scent of freshly baked cookies fills the air and the sound of carollers stirs nostalgia. Though rooted as a Christian festival, Christmas is celebrated with immense joy by people of all faiths. This occasion, observed annually on December 25, marks the birth of Jesus Christ, but it transcends religious boundaries, becoming a cultural celebration of devotion and joy. Christmas is not merely a day, but a season of reflection, hope and togetherness. Through the years, Christmas has been known by various names in English. The Anglo-Saxons referred to it as "midwinter". Preparation for this grand occasion begins with Advent, the First Sunday of which marks the start of spiritual anticipation and reflection. For Christians, Advent is a time of introspection, leading to Christ's birth, which symbolises divine love and redemption. This culminates in the twelve days of Christmastide, a period rich with historical customs that concludes on Twelfth Night, adding layers of ritualistic meaning to the holiday. At the heart of Christmas are the carols of melodic songs that embody joy,



nostalgia, and spiritual reflection. These timeless tunes, sung in homes, churches and streets, unite communities in celebration. Over time, these melodies became synonymous with Christmas, expressing devotion and cheer. From sacred hymns like "O Holy Night" and "Silent Night" to lively tunes such as "Deck the Halls" and "Jingle Bells," carols range from reverent celebrations of Christ's birth to jubilant expressions of festive cheer. Christmas is also about the excitement of children, their eager anticipation and the magic of Santa Claus. Every Christmas Eve, children hang their stockings with wishes, hoping that Santa will fulfil them. Santa Claus, with his jolly face, white beard, and red suit, stands as a global symbol of Christmas

magic. This beloved figure, transcending cultures, embodies joy and the spirit of giving. His story traces back to Saint Nicholas, a 4th-century Christian bishop known for his acts of kindness and secret gift-giving. Over time, his legend evolved into the modern image of a merry, bearded man delivering gifts on Christmas Eve, riding a sleigh pulled by reindeer. Santa's presence in Christmas celebrations is symbolic of the spirit of giving, teaching children the joy of kindness and the magic of believing in something greater than themselves. Christmas decorations are more than just festive embellishments; they are heartfelt expressions of love and joy. From the glimmer of tinsel to the soft glow of fairy lights, these adornments transform homes and public spaces into magical places. The traditional colours of Christmas: pine green, snow white, and vibrant red symbolise life, purity and warmth. When it comes to the Christmas table, one can't forget the classic Christmas cake. Rich with dried fruits, nuts, and spices, it represents the flavours of the season, often soaked in brandy or rum and matured for weeks before being served. Alongside this, candies which are especially the iconic candy canes add sweetness to the season. Many homes also offer platters of colourful, homemade candies, each bringing its festive joy to the celebrations. *Wishing you all merrier than before, A Merry Christmas!*



AT CROWNE PLAZA MAYUR VIHAR

Crowne Plaza Mayur Vihar showcased *Charkha: The Loom Tree*, a breathtaking 10-foot Christmas installation made entirely of Khadi, crafted in partnership with Vikara, a Khadi India initiative. This innovative display celebrated the essence of sustainability, self-reliance, and empowerment. It was created by women artisans trained in traditional weaving, the tree featured natural dyes and zero-waste decorations made from upcycled fabrics and pearls. The installation paid homage to Gandhian principles and the Swadeshi Movement, blending artistry with ecological responsibility. Through its vibrant colours and handcrafted ornaments, *Charkha: The Loom Tree* served as a powerful reminder of the interconnectedness of conscious actions and a greener future.



AT SHANGRI-LA EROS NEW DELHI

Shangri-la Eros New Delhi recently unveiled its *Enchanted Wonders* celebration, marked by the lighting of a beautiful and breathtaking 10-foot-tall Christmas tree. The Christmas tree symbolises the spirit of the season taking the centre stage at the entrance of the hotel. With a sophisticated green and gold palette, the tree exudes elegance, serving as the centrepiece of the festivities. Guests were invited to revel in its artistic charm and experience the magic of the holidays in a truly luxurious setting. The tree lighting ceremony at *Shangri-la Eros New Delhi* was kick started with a series of festive experiences, promising a memorable holiday season for all with Christmas carols, chocolates and Santa Claus making it a complete vibe.





UNWRAPPING FESTIVE FLAVOURS

This Christmas, MKT at The Chanakya invites you to savour the season with festive flavours and a cosy, cheerful atmosphere that makes you feel right at home, writes **TEAM AGENDA**

Christmas is the season of joy, warmth and indulgence and what better way to celebrate than with a feast that brings festive vibes to life? At MKT, The Chanakya, New Delhi, the magic of Christmas unfolds the moment you step inside. The space is beautifully adorned with sparkling lights, a majestic Christmas tree and a cosy ambiance that feels like stepping into a winter wonderland. Add to that their exclusive Christmas Menu for 2024, crafted with care and creativity, and you're in for a treat that truly feels like Christmas on a plate. For vegetarians, the Vegetarians Delight Shepards Pie is pure comfort. A

delightful combination of plant-based meat, a medley of seasonal vegetables, and velvety potato, it's like wrapping yourself in a warm blanket on a chilly winter day. The garden-fresh salad on the side adds a refreshing crunch, making it a well-rounded dish. Another standout is the Wild Mushroom Wellington. Encased in flaky filo pastry, the shimeji mushrooms are earthy and rich, while the mushroom jus and wilted kale bring depth and balance. It's the kind of dish that feels festive and hearty, perfect for the season.

For those craving non-vegetarian options, the menu pulls out all the stops. The Ballotine de Poulet, with tender chicken and a creamy mousse,

is elevated by the sweet-tart cranberry sauce. The Confit Duck Leg with Pomegranate Jus feels indulgent and festive, while the Lamb Ossobuco and Lobster Thermidor add a luxurious touch to the Christmas spread. Each dish is presented with elegance, making every bite feel like a celebration.

The dessert menu is where the magic really comes alive. The Buche de Noel, a mini yule log filled with chocolate truffle, is not just a treat for the taste buds but also a nod to the traditional Christmas spirit. As you slice into it, the rich, velvety truffle filling and the soft, chocolatey sponge make you pause and soak in the moment. Paired with

playful chocolate mushrooms and fresh berries, it feels like a whimsical Christmas story on a plate. If there's one dessert that can instantly make you feel like a kid on Christmas morning, this is it. Other desserts, like the Sticky Date Pudding with whiskey-laced brown butter toffee sauce and the Old Fashioned Apple Crumble Pie, deliver classic holiday flavours with a creative twist.

The drinks menu is equally festive and brimming with seasonal charm. The Winter Wonderland, with its blend of gin, German liqueur, pineapple, oregano, and fresh strawberries, feels bright and refreshing. The Christmas Cheer, a mix of whiskey, pineapple,

cinnamon, and a touch of citrus Tabasco sauce, is warm and inviting, like sitting by a crackling fire. And then there's the Lavender Snowflake, with lavender vodka, thyme syrup, and a soft lavender foam, offering a calming and fragrant finish.

Dining at MKT feels like celebrating Christmas in every sense. From the warm lights to the cheerful music and the thoughtfully crafted menu, it's a place where the festive spirit comes alive. Whether you're sharing stories over a hearty pie or raising a toast with a lavender foam-topped cocktail, every moment feels wrapped in holiday cheer. It truly makes Christmas taste and feel magical.

FACTSHEET

Address: Lower Ground Floor, The Chanakya Mall, Chanakyaapuri, Delhi-110021
Available: Throughout December
Timings: 12:00 pm to 1:00 am
Cost for two: ₹3,000 + taxes



The menu's diverse offerings also included vegetarian favourites like Kuku Sabzi which is a medley of fresh greens and Mirza Ghasemi - a brinjal-based dish. Explaining brinjal's prominence in Iranian cuisine, Chef Wadhwa remarked, "Brinjal is a favourite ingredient. They use it as a garnish, main ingredient, and even as an accompaniment."

A highlight of the festival was the Indo-Iranian Cultural Show which featured mesmerising performances celebrating the shared cultural ties between the two nations. This event culminated in a grand gala dinner, where representatives from the Iranian Embassy and Iran Culture House felicitated participants of the Iranian Food Competition.

A food competition also brought together top chefs from both countries to showcase their culinary talents. Judged by an esteemed panel, including Mr Kazem Samandari, Chef Mostafa Taheripour Isfahani, and Chef Diwas Wadhwa, the competition crowned Chef Neda Tavakoli. Indian chefs also shone, with Hem Chandra Arya securing the first runner-up position and Chef Bharat Khemani the second runner-up.

The festival's ambiance transported diners straight to Iran at the Blooms Restaurant. Chef Wadhwa added, "Despite language barriers, collaborating with Iranian chefs was seamless. Together, we breathed new life into traditional recipes, blending authenticity with a contemporary flair." He further added that saffron (kesar) played an important role in this cuisine and was not missed. Also, the Iranian rice, which you will taste in the pulao, uses pomegranate and plum paste.

The Iranian Food Festival was a celebration of cultural heritage and culinary artistry between the two nations.

Winter Wonderland



By **TEAM AGENDA**

Café Delhi Heights, a refuge for discriminating palates, have begun serving their winter menu that truly celebrates the season. With celebrating the warmth, comfort, and indulgence, the menu features a delectable selection of foods and beverages that will tantalise the senses and warm your soul. Café Delhi Heights is a cosy hideaway vibe from the moment you walk into the cafe. Apart from the offering of the menu, the winter meal at the cafe is a culinary wonder with dessert dishes for the winter lovers.

The Chocolate Bomb, in variants of hot chocolate and Marshmallow Chocolate Ball, with a mouth watering display of molten chocolate in that cosy environment. You have a Red Velvet Baby Croissant, with a delicate layer of pastry or Dollop of Cream Cheese or Chocolate filled looking appealing to the eyes giving a Christmas Winter feel with its red colour.

The addition to the above is the Four Cheese Fondue, a sumptuous treat served with a variety of exquisite dips. For those looking for a more savoury choice, the Bagel Sandwich, which comes with either crumbled chicken or exotic vegetables, is a soothing and fulfilling nibble to try at the Café Delhi Heights.

The Moong Daal Crumble Tart is appealing where tart meets tradition, with a beautiful combination of flavours and textures. From comforting classics to decadent desserts, every bite promises to make your chilly days cosier and more delight.

The hallmark of the winter menu would have to be the Chocolate Fondue, plated aesthetically by the Café Delhi Heights. The Chocolate Fondue comes to you with a chocolate dipping sauce to be taken with strawberries, marshmallows and muffins.

FACTSHEET

Availability of Winter Menu: 1st December to 10th January
Visit your nearest Café Delhi Heights outlet

PLATES THAT TELEPORT TO IRAN

The Iranian Food Festival at the Eros Hotel New Delhi had authentic flavours of Iran with celebrating the culture of the two countries, writes **TEAM AGENDA**



In collaboration with the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Iran Culture House, and the CD Foundation, Eros Hotel New Delhi played host to the Iranian Food Festival. This week-long culinary celebration brought the flavours and traditions of Iranian cuisine to the heart of the capital, creating a unique experience that highlighted the exchange of culture between India and Iran.

The festival showcased an authentic menu crafted by master Iranian chefs, presenting a journey of Iran's rich culinary heritage. Signature dishes such as Ash Reshteh which is a hearty noodle soup with chickpeas and beans, Gheimeh - a lamb stew infused with split chickpeas and cinnamon, and Berry Pulao - saffron rice with tart berries graced the menu. Chef Diwas Wadhwa, Executive Chef of Eros Hotel, described Iranian cuisine as "young, subtle, and simple compared to Indian cuisine, which is often complex and rich with multiple spices."

Savour the Spirit of Christmas!

EXPLORE FLAVORS AND DISHES WITH DIVYA BHATIA THAT PROMISE TO MAKE THIS CHRISTMAS AN UNFORGETTABLE CELEBRATION

YULE LOG

CHEF ASHISH SINGH, COO & Culinary Director at Café Delhi Heights

Ingredients Sponge Cake: 4 large eggs (separated); 1/2 cup (100g) granulated sugar; 1/3 cup (40g) flour; 1/4 cup (30g) cocoa; 1/4 tsp salt; 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
Filling: 1 cup (240ml) heavy whipping cream; 2 tsp powdered sugar; 1 tsp vanilla extract
Chocolate Ganache: 1 cup (170g) dark chocolate; 1/2 cup (120ml) heavy cream
Instructions: Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C); line a 10x15-inch pan with parchment. Beat yolks with sugar until



pale; add vanilla. Sift and fold in flour, cocoa, and salt. Whisk egg whites to stiff peaks; fold into batter. Spread batter evenly in pan; bake 10-12 mins. Cool on a

sugar-dusted towel, peeling parchment. Roll cake with towel; cool completely. **Prepare filling:** Whip cream, powdered sugar, and vanilla until stiff. Unroll the cake, spread filling evenly, and re-roll. **Make ganache:** Heat cream until steaming; pour over chocolate. Stir until smooth and let cool slightly before spreading over the cake. **Decorate** with powdered sugar, berries, and meringue mushrooms for a festive finish. Refrigerate before serving

FESTIVE CIRCUS & HERB ROASTED TURKEY

CHEF ADITI DIXIT, CYK Hospitalityes

Ingredients: 1 whole turkey (about 6-7 kg); 100g unsalted butter, softened; 2 oranges, 2 lemons, zested and juiced; 4 cloves garlic, minced; 2 tsp fresh rosemary, 2 tsp fresh thyme, 2 tsp fresh sage, chopped; Salt and pepper to taste
Stuffing: 1 large onion, 2 celery stalks, chopped; 2 apples, peeled, cored, and chopped; 200g breadcrumbs; 100g dried cranberries; 100g chopped walnuts; 1 egg, beaten; 100ml chicken stock; 1 tsp dried sage; 1 tsp dried thyme; Salt and pepper to taste
Gravy: Pan drippings from the turkey; 2 tsp plain flour, 500ml chicken stock; Salt and pepper to taste
Method: Prepare the Turkey: Preheat oven to 180°C (356°F) In a bowl, mix the softened butter with the orange and lemon zest, minced garlic, and chopped herbs. Season with salt and pepper. Carefully loosen the skin of the



turkey breast and rub the citrus-herb butter mixture under the skin and all over the turkey. **Make the Stuffing:** Combine onion, celery, apples, breadcrumbs, cranberries, and walnuts. Mix in egg, stock, sage, thyme, salt, and pepper. Stuff turkey cavity. **Roast the Turkey:** Place turkey on a rack in a pan. Pour citrus juice over. Roast it in the preheated oven for 3.5-4 hours or until the internal temperature reaches 75°C (165°F) and baste occasionally with the pan juices. Rest 20 minutes after cooking. **Make the Gravy:** Pour the pan drippings into a saucepan, skim off excess fat, and whisk in the flour. Cook over medium heat for 2-3 minutes, then add the chicken stock, whisking continuously. Season with salt and pepper. **Serve:** Carve the turkey and serve with the stuffing and gravy.

GINGERBREAD COOKIE SANDWICH

CHEF ADITI DIXIT, CYK Hospitalityes

Ingredients for cookies: Flour - 250gms, Brown Sugar - 180gms, Salted Butter - 150gms (soft), Honey - 20gms, Clove powder - 3gms, Cinnamon powder - 10gms, Nutmeg powder - 5gms, Ginger powder - 12gms, Baking soda - 5gms, Egg - 1 (whole), Vanilla Essence - 8ml
Ingredients for fillings: Whipping cream - 100gms, Powdered sugar - 50gms, Orange zest - 10gms, Clove powder - 2gms, Cinnamon powder - 5gms, Salt - 3gms, Ginger powder - 5gms
Instructions: Preheat oven: 160°C. Cream butter and sugar until smooth, then whisk in honey, egg, and vanilla. Sift dry ingredients (flour, spices, baking soda) and fold into the mixture. Chill dough for 15 minutes. Portion dough onto a baking tray (yields ~16-17 cookies). Bake for 11-12 minutes until tops crack and lightly brown. Cool completely. Whip cream with sugar to stiff peaks. Fold in spices and zest. Sandwich two cookies with cream, dust with icing sugar, and serve.





A Paw-some Celebration of Pet Love

Pet Fed 2024 celebrated the unconditional love between pets and their owners, creating unforgettable memories and promoting adoption, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**



“Until one has loved an animal, a part of one’s soul remains unawakened.” *Anatole France’s* profound words perfectly capture the essence of *Pet Fed 2024*, India’s largest pet festival. The event celebrated the special bond between pets and their owners, a connection built on trust, affection and unconditional love. Held at the NSIC Grounds in Okhla, New Delhi, the festival offered a spectacular experience for animal lovers, filling the air with joy and excitement. It wasn’t just a gathering; it was a celebration of pets, especially dogs, who truly shone as the stars of the show.

Pet Fed 2024, an annual highlight for pet lovers, buzzed with energy from start to finish. The venue was transformed into a world of fun, excitement and admiration for animals. Pets strutted around in custom outfits, many of them dressed as if for a Christmas getaway, complete with Santa hats and reindeer antlers. It was a sight to behold as dogs like *Bella*, *Leo*, *Goofy*, *Sheeru* and *Noddy* pranced by, each one adding its own personality to the event. The joy and love shared between the pets and their owners was evident, making it impossible not to smile. Inside the venue, the atmosphere was lively, filled with laughter as people chatted, took photos and enjoyed the moment with their pets. The hall was a runway of fashionable dogs, each outfit designed to showcase the personalities of the pets and their owners. It felt like a holiday celebration where pets were treated with the love and attention they deserve.

However, *Pet Fed 2024* was about celebrating the deep bond between pets and their families. The festival featured masterclasses on pet health, nutrition and grooming, offering valuable advice for pet parents. These sessions helped owners ensure the best care for their furry companions. The event also included dedicated play areas and agility rings for dogs and cats to exercise and show off their skills. The agility ring, in particular, was a hit, with pets darting through obstacles and jumping with excitement, providing a thrilling

experience for both pets and their parents. One of the standout segments of the festival was *Catapalooza*, an event organised in association with the Cat Club of India, designed specifically for cats. This segment celebrated all cat breeds and included fun activities and competitions. Cats and their owners participated in games, with participants vying for trophies and certificates. It was a joyous experience for everyone involved, showcasing the fun side of feline companionship. The festival also placed a strong emphasis on pet adoption. Adoption camps were set up to encourage families to adopt rather than shop, in line with the *#AdoptDontShop*

mantra. The festival partnered with NGOs to find loving homes for animals in need and it was heartwarming to see so many pets finding their forever homes. Several adoption stories unfolded during the event, highlighting the festival’s commitment to making a difference in the lives of animals.

For those seeking some friendly competition, *Pet Fed* offered engaging contests and activities. The Official *Pet Fed Premier League Award Ceremony* was a crowd favourite, while other events like *Temptation Alley* and *Bug Buster* had everyone cheering for their furry friends. Day 2 of the festival included even more thrilling events, such as *Trick Roulette*, *Kibble Craze* and the *Security Dog Show*. But the true

highlight of the day was India’s Biggest Pet Fashion Show, where pets and their owners walked the ramp in coordinated outfits, creating a spectacle that was unforgettable.

As I walked through the venue, I was captivated by the wide range of activities designed to keep pets entertained. The retail area, featuring over 100 stalls, offered pet parents the chance to shop for the latest products, accessories and food. From high-end pet clothing to innovative toys, there was something for every pet and every budget. The food and beverage stalls ensured that pet parents could relax and enjoy the event while their furry companions stayed by their side.

One of the most touching elements of *Pet Fed 2024* was its inclusivity. Indie pets, often overlooked, were given special attention with free entry for their parents. This gesture was a beautiful reminder of how important it is to support the adoption of all pets, regardless of breed. It was a sentiment that resonated deeply with attendees, showing that the festival wasn’t just about fun, but also about creating a compassionate world for animals.

Akshay Gupta, the Founder of *Pet Fed*, shared his excitement about the event, saying, “Wrapping up the 10th edition in Delhi has been an incredible experience. The love and support from Delhiites, along with the growing awareness about pet adoption, have been truly heartwarming. This event has shown us the deep bond that exists between pets and their parents, and it’s a privilege to create a platform that celebrates this connection.”

Pet Fed 2024 was a heartwarming celebration of the unconditional love our pets give us every day. It reminded us that animals, like art, have the power to inspire, bring joy and change our lives in ways we never imagined. The event created beautiful memories, showcasing the enduring bond between pets and their families. Most importantly, it carried a meaningful message, *#AdoptDontShop*, encouraging everyone to give a second chance to animals in need, reminding us that love is the best gift we can offer.





YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week presents a significant opportunity for financial housekeeping. It's an ideal time to settle any outstanding debts or loans. You may also find yourself in a position to assist a friend or family member in need, possibly for a celebratory event. Your capacity to offer support isn't limited to financial means; emotional support could be just as valuable. Engaging in charitable activities could enrich your sense of well-being, enhancing your overall outlook on life. Midweek, be cautious of getting caught up in impractical dreams and avoid overindulging in lavish desires. Your tendency to fluctuate between various pleasures could lead to dissatisfaction. Staying grounded and setting clear objectives will be crucial to maintaining your contentment. Embrace a realistic approach to your aspirations.

**Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Plum
Lucky day Tuesday**



LEO July 23-Aug 22

You naturally exude a commanding presence and have high expectations, often seeking to steer things according to your preferences. Your environment is typically filled with dynamism and activity, traits that can sometimes lead to friction if not managed carefully. It's possible that your intensity might lead to misunderstandings or disagreements with peers, potentially causing them to keep their distance or openly disagree with you. These situations could escalate into disputes or clashes of opinion. Channeling your robust energy into constructive projects could be beneficial. You are blessed with robust health and significant authority, which positions you at the forefront of competition. It's important to foster a cooperative atmosphere, as this can enhance your already considerable achievements.

**Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Gold
Lucky day Thursday**



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week might bring some health challenges requiring medical attention. Despite the physical discomfort, this period offers a valuable opportunity to deepen spiritual connections. Embracing spiritual practices can provide solace and strengthen your beliefs, aiding in emotional and physical recovery. The support of a loved one will be a crucial corner, reinforcing your bonds and encouraging shared moments of introspection and faith. Family ties will grow stronger as you find comfort in shared spiritual interests and practices. Engaging with spiritual texts and devotional activities will be particularly comforting, helping you navigate through this period with grace. As the week progresses, a sense of peace and normalcy will begin to return, concluding with you regaining your usual pace of life.

**Lucky number 19 | Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Monday**



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week, you may find yourself in a position of subtle influence where your ability to guide and manage will shine through in professional settings. Your knack for understanding and addressing the needs of those around you marks you as a natural leader. However, be aware that not everyone may appreciate your unique approach. Some may feel overshadowed or disagree with your methods, potentially leading to challenges. There could be scenarios where the efforts you've invested in particular projects or opportunities might not yield the expected rewards, possibly due to the covert actions of competitors or disagreements within the team. As the week progresses, the weight of responsibilities might leave you feeling exhausted. It's essential to consider distributing tasks among your team, as sharing responsibilities could enhance efficiency and reduce stress.

**Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Amber
Lucky day Sunday**



VRIGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week heralds a period of flourishing prosperity for you, marked by both financial gains and emotional contentment. Resources seem to be flowing in, providing a sense of security and success in navigating a materially focused environment. You'll find joy in indulging in pleasures and fulfilling personal desires, contributing to a satisfying home life. As the week progresses, your focus may shift towards achieving emotional objectives. This could be a time of receiving positive news or deepening connections, possibly through romantic gestures or meaningful exchanges with a partner. However, a phase of uncertainty may soon follow, challenging your sense of stability and connection. You might find yourself grappling with a coldness or detachment in your interactions. As the week wraps up, you'll be motivated to restore balance and adapt to evolving perspectives.

**Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Lilac
Lucky day Saturday**



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week, you might find yourself feeling unusually sentimental and emotional. Challenges may arise across various aspects of your life, causing some frustration due to things not aligning with your desires. You may face emotional disturbances along with concerns over health issues that require your attention. It's advisable to manage your finances carefully, focusing on budget control to navigate through this period smoothly. Midweek calls for a strategic and organized approach to manage all spheres of your life effectively. Adopting a balanced diet and maintaining a disciplined lifestyle are recommended to support your well-being. As the week progresses, expect a positive shift in your professional life. You may experience an increase in financial gains from multiple sources, leading to greater contentment, joy, and overall well-being.

**Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Teal
Lucky day Friday**



GEMINI May 21-June 20

Recently, individuals may have experienced positive outcomes from their endeavors. However, the coming days call for increased vigilance as challenging interactions are likely to arise, particularly in professional settings. Expect to encounter opposition from a colleague who may seem to have an upper hand, potentially leading to a turbulent environment marked by criticism and competitive tensions. Mid-week could introduce an influence from a challenging individual, promoting a negative atmosphere and potentially pushing ethical boundaries. Despite these obstacles, your resolve remains strong. By the week's end, your perseverance and commitment to integrity will shine through, earning you recognition and elevating your standing among peers. This period will bring its own trials, but your steadfastness will lead to commendable achievements.

**Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Cream
Lucky day Wednesday**



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This upcoming week promises an abundance of luxury, romance, and harmony in your life. Positioned to enjoy the finer things, your efforts and virtues elevate you, making recognition and personal fulfillment highly accessible. Your hard work and perseverance, coupled with blessings, have led you to this prosperous phase. Known for your fairness and generosity, you naturally attract admiration and leadership roles both at home and in professional spheres. People often seek your counsel, drawn by your caring nature and wise decisions. However, as the week progresses, remain vigilant. There may be indicators pointing towards potential financial setbacks or health concerns. It's wise to approach such possibilities with caution, as taking preventative measures can often mitigate larger issues.

**Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Tangerine
Lucky day Wednesday**



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

At the start of the week, you'll find yourself faced with significant choices that require a firm and fair approach. Emotions must be set aside as your decisions could have profound impacts on your life or that of someone close. A power struggle may emerge in your professional sphere. It's best to steer clear of confrontations and adopt a more yielding attitude. Midweek, you might experience some setbacks or criticism from a superior, which could leave you feeling disheartened. This is a pivotal moment to engage in reflective practices such as meditation or exploring spiritual avenues to rebuild your confidence and maintain mental equilibrium. Recognizing your goals or ambitions is crucial during this period. As the week concludes, the atmosphere will shift positively.

**Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour White
Lucky day Sunday**



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week starts with a flurry of activity, demanding your full engagement and refined skills. The early days bring an opportunity at work that requires immediate action. This may require adjusting your usual methods and clear communication to succeed. As the week progresses, your financial dealings increase, including acts of generosity and assistance to those in need. During these days, you may find your feelings intensifying, prompting a thoughtful reassessment of your financial obligations and relationships. As the week closes, you may enter into a significant agreement or partnership. This period also holds potential for deepening emotional connections. Whether strengthening existing bonds or forming new ones, you'll find a sense of fulfillment in these relationships. For those unattached, the chance to meet someone special presents itself, potentially leading to heartfelt exchanges and thoughtful gestures.

**Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Rose
Lucky day Saturday**



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

It's a busy period for many, with increasing demands at work and in academic pursuits, particularly affecting those who are naturally dedicated and intense in their approach. This rising pressure necessitates a period of rest to maintain balance and wellness. Taking time to heal, rejuvenate, and restore your energy is crucial, especially as neglecting this can lead to emotional and mental imbalances, potentially causing irritability. Health should be prioritized, with attention to any recurring physical discomforts, and ensuring regular wellness checks can be beneficial. Tensions may also arise in professional settings, possibly leading to disagreements with those in authority. Managing emotions and dedicating time for self-care is essential during this period. It's important to find a balance between work and relaxation to navigate this busy time effectively.

**Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Jade
Lucky day Sunday**



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week highlights your dynamic energy and considerable potential. However, without defined objectives, your energy may scatter. Establish clear goals and apply your inherent creativity effectively. Attend to family obligations with care; they need your nurturing. Overlooking small health issues might lead to larger expenses, so proactive care is advisable. The middle of the week may bring certain challenges, possibly affecting your emotional and financial stability. However, your inner strength and determination will prove invaluable. As the week progresses, new prospects will arise, but you could miss them if too focused on yourself. Engage in deep discussions and meaningful explorations to boost your emotional health. Relationship dynamics will improve, enhancing personal harmony. Stay open to diverse avenues for achieving success, as prosperity could approach from various quarters.

**Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Gray
Lucky day Friday**

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

Transforming Life's Karmic Challenges

THE LIFE GUIDANCE



Seerat Kaur Marwaha

The positions of planets are intentional; they align with individual karma from past actions

Life is rarely a bed of roses. Each of us carries unique struggles, often tied to complex karmic accounts from multiple lifetimes. We are born not just to live but to address these past debts and fulfill long-held desires. Our natal charts act as guides, revealing the trials we are destined to face and the lessons we are meant to learn on this journey. As an astrologer, I can examine a natal chart and, without personal details, identify difficulties in health, career, or relationships. This involves analyzing the placement of planets, each influencing specific aspects of life. The positions of planets are intentional; they align with individual karma from past actions. Life events we cannot control, such as our parents, siblings, birthplace, health, and spouse that are all predestined and can be seen in the natal chart. Even incidents beyond our control arise from this design. So what is in our control you may ask? While life's unexpected challenges may be out of our hands, how we react to these circumstances is in our control. A person's behavior often reflects the influence of a poorly placed planet. This unfavorable position is not random; it results from conscious actions in past lives. Even though the soul is reborn, its core nature and mentality remain



unchanged. For instance, a man with a weak Venus, which governs marriage and signifies the wife, is likely to face challenges in these areas. This weakness may indicate past mistreatment of women, leading to difficulties in

forming or maintaining harmonious relationships. It is also likely that he still struggles with treating women properly. While free will can weaken planets through negative actions, it also offers the chance to correct them.

Strengthening a weak planet involves positive actions in the affected area. For the man with a weak Venus, the remedy is to treat women with kindness, respect, and care, especially his wife. By acting with integrity and compassion,

he can gradually undo negative karma and restore balance in his life. Even if you're not familiar with chart reading, the best way to improve your chart and life is simple: identify the problem area and make better choices. The more positive actions you take, the more you clear negative karma from your past. The greater the planetary weakness, the more effort and time it takes to correct. A simple analogy is weight loss: someone who is 50 kilograms overweight needs more time and hard work to reach their goal than someone who is only 5 kilograms overweight. Similarly, the more poorly placed a planet, the more effort is needed to rectify its influence. The good news is that, no matter how weak a planet is, with dedication and consistent positive actions, it can improve, and the individual's life can be transformed. This understanding brings us to a vital concept: no action goes unnoticed. Every choice we make—good or bad—sets in motion consequences we will face. Therefore, it is essential to be mindful of our actions, as they shape not only our present but also our future. Through awareness and conscious living, we can change the trajectory of our lives.

— She is a Life Coach and Founder of Soulful Wellness