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## MEA summons Canadian diplomat



MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal

Image Source : VIDEO SCREENGRAAB

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India on Saturday said it summoned the Canadian high commission representative and lodged a strong protest over Ottawa's allegations against Union Home Minister Amit Shah. "We had summoned the representative of the Canadian High Commission yesterday, a diplomatic note was handed over in reference to the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in Ottawa on October 29, 2024," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. India protested in the strongest possible terms the references made by a Canadian minister about Shah and said that such "absurd and baseless" allegations will have serious consequences for bilateral ties between the two

countries, the MEA said on Saturday. The comments came after Canada's Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister David Morrison on Tuesday alleged that Shah ordered a campaign of violence, intimidation and intelligence-gathering targeting Sikh separatists inside Canada. Morrison had also told Canadian Parliament members of the national security committee that he had confirmed Shah's name to The Washington Post, which first reported the allegations. Jaiswal said this revelation that high Canadian government officials deliberately leaked unfounded insinuations to international media as part of a conscious strategy to discredit India and influence other nations only confirms the view that the Indian government has long held about the current Canadian government's political agenda and behavioural pattern.

Replying to queries during a weekly Press briefing, Jaiswal said such irresponsible actions will have serious consequences for bilateral ties. He said India summoned a Canadian High Commission representative on Friday and the official was served a diplomatic note to lodge the protest in strongest terms on the "absurd and baseless" references made by the Canadian deputy minister about India's Union Home Minister. While addressing the Parliament members, Morrison did not say how Canada knew of Shah's alleged involvement. The diplomatic relations between India and Canada deteriorated after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said a year ago that Canada had credible evidence agents of the Indian government was involved in the murder of Canadian Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia

in June 2023. Dismissing the allegations as absurd, Indian government officials have consistently denied that Canada provided evidence. Last month, India recalled its high commissioner Sanjay Verma after the diplomat was named as 'person of interest' by Canada in its probe into Nijjar's killing. New Delhi withdrew its high commissioner and expelled six Canadian diplomats from its soil. Calling Canada's behaviour "the pits", Verma in an interview last week said India was backstabbed and treated in a most unprofessional manner by a country that is supposed to be a friendly democracy. "A handful of supporters of Khalistan have turned the ideology into a criminal enterprise, which indulges in a range of activities such as gun-running and human trafficking and yet the Canadian authorities turn a blind eye because they comprise a vocal electoral bank for local politicians," Verma said. India also accused Canada of indulging in "harassment and intimidation" of Indian consular staff by putting them under audio and video surveillance in "flagrant violation" of diplomatic conventions. "Yes, some of our consular officials were recently informed by the Canadian government that they have been and continued to be under audio and video surveillance. Their communications have also been intercepted. We have formally protested to the Canadian government, as we deem these actions to be in flagrant violation of relevant diplomatic and consular conventions" Jaiswal mentioned during the briefing. "By citing technicalities, the Canadian government cannot justify the fact that it is indulging in harassment and intimidation," he alleged.



## Patrolling begins at Depsang

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Army has commenced verification patrolling at Depsang, the second friction point in eastern Ladakh, the government said on Saturday. Patrolling at Demchok had begun on Friday, a day after the Indian and Chinese troops completed disengagement at the two friction points in eastern Ladakh. Replying to a query at a weekly press briefing, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said following the disengagement agreement with China, the verification patrolling has begun on mutually agreed terms in both Demchok and Depsang. On Thursday, Indian and Chinese troops also exchanged sweets at several border points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on the occasion of Diwali. The traditional practice was observed a day after both countries completed troop disengagement at the two friction points, bringing a fresh thaw in Sino-Indian ties. Sources had earlier said that the areas and patrolling status were expected to be moved back to pre-April 2020 level.

## Forces gun down three terrorists in Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A day after a large number of residents, and tourists were seen bursting crackers and lighting diyas during Deepawali celebrations at Lal Chowk, the old city area of Khanjar in Srinagar witnessed its first anti-terrorist operation in the last 30 months. The forces gunned down Usman Lashkari, a commander of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) by the joint team of security forces and four jawans including two Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and two Jammu and Kashmir Police (JKP) personnel received injuries in an over eight hour-long operation on Saturday. Meanwhile, two more terrorists, one suspected to be a foreign terrorist, were neutralised by the security forces in the Halkan Gali area of South Kashmir's Anantnag district on Saturday. Of the two terrorists killed, one was a foreigner, and the other a local. Their group affiliation was yet to be ascertained, official sources said. In another terror-related incident, a search operation was launched on Saturday after the movement of terrorists was observed in Jammu and Kashmir's Bandipora district. According to preliminary reports, a joint team of the Special Operations Group of JKP and the CRPF jawans had launched a cordon-and-search operation in Khanjar early Saturday morning, following inputs about the presence of terrorists in the area. The search operation turned into an encounter as the terrorists opened fire at the search party, which retaliated, they said. The residential house, where a group of terrorists were hiding, was completely raised to the ground after it caught fire in the heavy



exchange of gunfire. Inspector General of Police, Kashmir range VK Birdi said, "the day-long operation has been completed. Security forces have killed a terrorist, who has been identified as Usman Lashkari. IGP said the slain terrorist was the commander of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT). He is a foreign terrorist and his role and involvement in the murder of Inspector Masroor has come to light and further investigation is being done in this regard." While the encounter was still going on President of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Dr Farooq Abdullah sparked off a fresh controversy by suggesting that terrorists should be captured rather than killed, to uncover the masterminds behind the recent surge in terror attacks across Jammu and Kashmir. Farooq Abdullah also demanded an investigation into the Budgam terror attack and said he doubted that it was done by the people who were trying to destabilise the government in Jammu and Kashmir.



FILE PHOTO

## Four sanitary workers run over by Kerala Express

PNS ■ KOCHI

Four sanitary workers were run over by the speeding New Delhi-Thiruvananthapuram Kerala Express at 3 pm on Saturday. The dead hailed from Tamil Nadu and were working for a firm hired by the Railways to remove the garbage and waste from railway tracks. Three bodies have been recovered and taken to the Government Hospital Shoranur for autopsy. Search for the fourth body, of that of a male, was called off by evening because of strong undercurrents in the river and fading lights. The Fire Brigade told media persons that a scuba team would be deployed on Sunday morning to retrieve the body. All the victims hailed from Villupuram in Tamil Nadu. The incident occurred when the workers were collecting plastic garbage thrown at the tracks by passengers of trains. They were working at Kochin Bridge built over the Bharathapuzha which comes immediately after the Shoranur Railway Station.

## BJD, BJP harangue over Naveen's security

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

The downgrading of Leader of Opposition and former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's security from Z to Y category has fuelled a war of words between the opposition BJD and the ruling BJP. Taking strong exception to the government's move, BJD leader Sanjay Dasburma on Saturday said the government should make sure that no lapses are there in Patnaik's security. "It should be the government's accountability that there is no lapse in the security of Naveen Patnaik, a five-

time Chief Minister and the Leader of Opposition. Unfortunately, his security has been downgraded. I hope the government would amend the fault it has made," said Dasburma. Responding to Dasburma's statement, BJP leader Jaynarayan Mishra said what the government has done is according to the rule applicable to an Opposition leader. "When I was the Leader of Opposition, they hadn't provided me any security. Then, why are they expecting security for him? There is a rule as to who will get Z security and who will get Y security. And the government has acted in accordance with the rule," said Mishra.

## Cyclone damage assessment report today

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government would complete its assessment of the damages caused due to the severe cyclonic storm Dana by Sunday (November 3), Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari said on Saturday. "Three districts have been majorly damaged including Baleswar, Bhadrak and Kendrapada. Baleswar was worst-affected and it was more due to floodwater rather than the cyclone. After getting reports from the districts concerned by tomorrow, the

State Government will make a final damage assessment, which will be sent to the Central Government thereafter. After submitting the final report, a Central team will visit the cyclone-affected districts," Pujari stated. "The process of the Central government's grant, which is to be released in this regard, will follow the submission of a final cyclone damage assessment report. However, we are prepared that the State Government will immediately start disbursement of the compensation amount when the final report is complete," he added.

## Hit by Mo Bus, girl loses hand in city



### Locals block road, allege reckless driving

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A girl lost her left hand while another person sustained grievous injuries after they were hit by a 'Mo Bus' near the Chandrasekharpur petrol pump in Bhubaneswar on Saturday morning. Eyewitness said recklessness of the driver led to the

mishap. The incident sparked tension as irate locals intercepted two Mo Buses and staged a demonstration, leading to severe traffic congestion from Jayadev Vihar to Nandankanan Road. The injured girl and another pedestrian were rushed to the Capital Hospital. As many as 15 Mo Buses were stranded as locals did not allow them to ply through the route. "The bus ran over the girl's

left hand. The driver was driving recklessly and trying to flee the spot after hitting the girl. So, angry locals intercepted the bus. The CRUT authorities should arrive at the spot and provide necessary compensation to the girl. They should also bear all the expenses," the agitators demanded. "This is not the first time; most of the Mo Bus drivers are driving recklessly. We demand that their licences be checked properly. The young girl is

battling for her life now," he added. Another eyewitness alleged, "We tried to stop the bus at the bus-stand. But the driver did not stop and hit the girl while trying to speed away. The speed limit here is 45 kmph, but he was driving at 60 to 65 kmph." Locals further alleged that most of the drivers are drunk and very rude. When asked to drive carefully, they often misbehave with the passengers.

## Diwali takes ugly turn

# Mock Indo-Pak fight with crackers by VIMSAR students

NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR

The celebration of Diwali took an ugly turn on Thursday night when students from two hostels at VIMSAR, Burla engaged in a mock fight armed with crackers.

Inspired by online war games, students got them divided into two groups, with one hostel calling themselves "India" and the other "Pakistan". They then engaged in a mock conflict, firing rockets and firecrackers at each other.

The intense exchange, which resembled a war zone, was captured on video and quickly went viral, drawing widespread concern from the public. In the video, students, wearing helmets, are seen aiming fireworks at the opposing hostel, creating a potentially dangerous situation. The VIMSAR Director expressed disappointment over the incident, stating, "Such reckless behavior is unacceptable, especially during a festival that should be celebrated peacefully." He added that the



event highlights the need for stricter measures to prevent similar occurrences in the future. Many on social media

condemned the activity as reckless, while others argued that the influence of popular battle games might have encouraged the students' ac-

tions. One local resident commented, "Festivals should bring people together, not encourage risky behaviour." The incident has sparked a broader conversation on the need for responsible celebrations and the dangers of imitating violent games in real life. Concerns have been raised about safety and the potential harm these actions could cause, urging both students and authorities to exercise caution during future festivals.

## In State

# ED to quiz all Vigilance-trapped engineers

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) will quiz all the engineers trapped in the Vigilance net in Odisha over disproportionate assets (DA) to their known sources of income soon. As per Vigilance sources, the anti-corruption agency has provided all the information about the engineers, whose houses and other properties were raided in the last four months, to the ED. The ED will summon those

engineers soon under the Money Laundering Act. The ED has already prepared a list of the corrupt engineers and taken the files from the Vigilance Department. "We have shared details about all the important cases detected by us with all the related agencies like Income Tax and ED. We have also interacted with each other to take further courses of action," Vigilance Director Yeshwant Jethwa said. Notably, the Vigilance has arrested six Chief Engineers

along with several other top-cadre officers over DA charges in the last four months. Besides the six Chief Engineers, a Joint Commissioner of Excise, an Assistant Commissioner of CT&GST, a Chief Accounts Officer of OSRTC, a Deputy Director of Fisheries Department, a Chief Civil Supplies Officer, two tehsildars, two BDOs, a Forest Range Officer, a Jail Superintendent, a doctor and seven police officers have so far been arrested on DA, bribery and government fund embezzlement charges.



# CM raps previous govt over Suktel project delay

# 'Breast cancer not death sentence but a challenge'

**PNS ■ BALANGIR**  
Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Saturday launched a scathing attack on the previous BJD government over the fact that the Lower Suktel irrigation project, the foundation stone of which was laid in 1998, is yet to be fully functional.



Addressing a meeting at Belapada in Balangir district, Majhi said the Lower Suktel irrigation project was inaugurated in a hasty manner. However, it is yet to be fully operational and as a result, farmers are not getting any benefit out of it.

ers in each block of the State could not get 35 per cent water for irrigation. Irrigation facilities are limited in Balangir though the district gets less amount of rainfall," said Majhi.

**Awareness drive held in Brahmapur**  
**PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR**  
October marks Breast Cancer Awareness Month, often referred to as "Pink October". In this context, a motivational and informative breast cancer awareness programme was organised here jointly by voluntary organisation Kranti, Brahmapur, Government ITI and Mahatma Gandhi Cancer Hospital and Research Center, Visakhapatnam.



death sentence but a challenge that with proper support and awareness a cancer free India is possible!" The awareness programme was conducted under the chairmanship of Dr Debananda Dash. Dr Das welcomed everyone and introduced the guests. Nirmala Das, member of Kranti, welcomed the guests by offering "Upadhaukan" and flower bouquets. First, ITI Principal Ranjan Kumar Parida gave a comprehensive information on breast cancer and advised the students to be aware of themselves and to make oth-

University and a cancer survivor, shared her own experience of surviving breast cancer and advised students to continue awareness.

## In Sundargarh 6 die, 5 hurt as van rams into trailer



**Low visibility due to fog blamed for mishap**  
**PNS ■ SUNDARGARH**  
As many as six persons were killed and five others injured in the wee hours of Saturday as a Tata Magic rammmed into a trailer near Gaikanapali under the Hemagiri police station in Sundargarh district.

the occasion of Diwali. They were very close to their village when the mishap occurred, killing the six people and leaving five others critically injured.

## First of its kind AI-facilitated design thinking software by R'kela techie

**MALAY RAY ■ ROURKELA**  
A researcher and product designer, who hails from Rourkela, has made a first of its kind AI-facilitated design thinking software, using Artificial Intelligence (AI), to solve challenges like water scarcity, women empowerment, bringing innovation mindset among students and solving sustainability environmental challenges etc.



pany, he developed world's first mobile m-greetings application named "mobilewish", along with Pocket Travel Assistant (PTA), a travel mobile applications for Nokia Mobile phones, with a user base of over a 2000 users across the globe. For these initiatives, his efforts were recognised by Manthan Awards 2009 and M-Billionth 2010 by Digital Empowerment Foundation along with Nokia Siemens and later recognised with the "Outstanding Regional Achievement Award" at the 2010 World Summit Award Mobile by the International Center for New Media (ICNM) in collaboration with the United Nations.

a paper titled "AI Facilitated Data-driven Design Thinking," which he presented at the HCI International Conference in Copenhagen in 2023. His findings demonstrated how AI could reduce innovation time by nearly half using his approach.

## Ragging allegation in MKCG 5 senior students expelled from hostel forever

**PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR**  
In a significant move, the five senior students accused of ragging their juniors at the Brahmapur-based MKCG Medical College have been expelled from the hostel forever.



caused their seniors of switching off the hostel lights and beating them up, abusing them and even forcing them to dance. The students further alleged that they were being brutally thrashed by the seniors whenever they tried to resist the torture.

## Another case lodged against PEO; arrested

**PNS ■ CUTTACK**  
One more case has been instituted against Sanyasi Nayak, former PEO, Kaniguma gram panchayat under Th Rampur block in Kalahandi (now under suspension) for possessing disproportionate assets (DA).

his properties. In this connection, Vigilance has registered a case against Nayak and his wife. He was arrested on Friday and forwarded to court.

## Worker's decomposed body seized in Jajpur

**Probe on as murder alleged**  
**PNS ■ JAJPUR**  
Police recovered the decomposed body of contractual worker Silu Pradhan late on Friday night, who was missing for the past four days.

employed in. From preliminary investigation, police has deduced that he was murdered by a group of friends. The deceased Pradhan, son of Akhay Pradhan, was a resident of Brahmanbati village under Gandiya police station limits in Jajpur district.

members who confirmed his identity. Forensic team reached the spot and collected the samples following the identification of the deceased.

tion will unravel the details of the crime. According to the family members, Silu went to work four days ago and did not return home. The worried family members asked for help from the police only to be neglected. They protested in front of the private company to know about the whereabouts of Silu following which police started an investigation into the matter.

## In Nayagarh Man tied to tree, thrashed over property

**Accused still at large**  
**PNS ■ NAYAGARH**  
NAYAGARH: A youth was tied to a tree and thrashed severely by three to four persons at Badasahara village under the Fategarh police station in Nayagarh district on Friday.



cessfully over the issue. "The family members of my husband's elder brother tied him to a tree and thrashed him mercilessly with lathis. My husband has sustained severe injuries in the attack," said Barsha.

## BeMC Mayor Sanghamitra gets death threats

**Case lodged**  
**PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR**  
Brahmapur Mayor Sanghamitra Dalei on Saturday opened up about being the target of threat calls. A caller from an unknown number allegedly abused her using filthy language and threatened to kill her.



margin by defeating her BJP rival Sabita Suar. Earlier, she held the post of Ganjam BJD Mahila wing and had won as a Councillor thrice and once as a Corporator.

# This Paradip Port engineer creates 3 mangrove forests

**By massive plantations in JSpur, K'pada coasts in 15 years**  
**RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA**  
For the last one and a half decades, a middle-aged man, by profession an engineer, with the support of local youths, has created three mangrove forests at the Mahanadi mouth and its catchment areas of coastal districts of Kendrapada and Jagatsinghpur.



locals and school students to plant them. Amaresh Naresh Samant works in the electrical and mechanical division of Paradip Port Authority. With his dedicated efforts, he not only created mangrove forests but also created awareness about the forests by motivating the local people to chip in.

ried out near Paradip, Balidia, Aambaghola, Singtalijora, Goadapat and some parts near Sobala under Mahanadi catchment areas in Mahakalpada.

phase of planting in the beginning of the year, which is April to July. After the above cyclonic period is over, our second and final phase of plantation starts from December to February and we try to recover the damaged percentage of the massive plantation.

communities who depend on the Mahanadi river and its embankment for collecting their livelihoods," stated Samant.

tion, with the unforgettable memory of the 1999 Super Cyclone. It was quite a heart-breaking and unbearable experience for us. We came forward to take care of our people and land by creating jungles," stated the members of the Parishad.

# BJP says it stands for credibility of promises under PM Modi, Congress for crisis

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

BJP on Saturday asserted that it stood for credibility of promises made to people under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and the Congress for crisis of credibility, as the ruling party fired a salvo at its rival in a war of words between them over unkept poll pledges.

BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi told the media that the ruling party had gradually stepped up the scope of its welfare schemes, ranging from health insurance to free grains and cash transfer for farmers, by resorting to first creation of wealth followed by its

distribution as the size of the Indian economy grew over the past decade.

"We believe in first the creation of wealth and distribution. The Congress stands for creation of corruption and destruction of wealth," he said, citing a host of alleged unfulfilled promises of Congress-led governments in different states.

A day after Mallikarjun Kharge claimed that "Modi ki guarantee" was a cruel joke on people after the prime minister had seized on the Congress president's advice to his state colleagues that they should be guided by budgetary constraints in making poll announcements, the BJP

made a fresh charge. Was Kharge speaking the truth on Friday or a day before, Trivedi said mockingly, suggesting that the Congress president's attack on the BJP was made under pressure to cover up for what he had said earlier.

Trivedi cited the construction of the Ram temple, abolition of Article 370, construction of more than 14 crore houses for the poor, opening of over 51 crore Jan Dhan accounts, and India's tough stand against Pakistan on terrorism under Modi to assert that his government had walked the talk.

As a veteran Congress member who has served in senior positions, Kharge has



seen leaders such as PV Narasimha Rao and Pranab Mukherjee, who deftly handled the economy under difficult circumstances, and is now seeing the party under the grip of urban

Organisation) data suggested that its account holders had grown to 25 crore compared to 11 crore a decade ago.

He also cited a host of infrastructure work, including the construction of houses for the poor, 74 airports and 37 kilometres of road per day, and asserted that all these activities had led to a lot of employment.

India is now third in auto manufacturing and second in mobile phones manufacturing and if anyone still cannot see the country's development, then there is some serious weakness in their sight and mindset, the BJP spokesperson said.

When the BJP was in power

in Karnataka, it was the top state in attracting investment while Maharashtra under the Congress-led alliance's rule had slipped, he said, adding that the situation was reversed after the BJP came to power in the western state while losing to the Congress in the southern state.

"The brains of some parties are so empty that they end up emptying the treasury when in power," he said.

The Congress, Trivedi alleged, had lost the ability to govern, noting that its promise to provide one woman in every household Rs 1 lakh annually would have cost the country Rs 31 lakh crore even though its entire budget was only about

Rs 27 lakh crore. It was like a Ponzi scheme promise and could be part of a well thought-out conspiracy as the Congress believes in triggering chaos, he said.

Citing the welcome Modi received recently in the US, Russia and Ukraine from their top leaders, the BJP spokesperson said it was a testimony to the prime minister's standing. Any attempt to belittle him will have no impact on his popularity, reputation and image, he added.

To a question, he refuted opposition MP Asaduddin Owaisi's claim on Waqf boards, saying these were not religious bodies but constituted for land management.

## India records 17.7 per cent decline in TB incidence from 2015 to 2023: WHO report

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

India has recorded a 17.7 per cent decline in tuberculosis incidence from 237 per lakh population in 2015 to 195 in 2023, which is more than double the global decline of 8.3 per cent, Health Ministry sources have said citing a WHO report.

In its Global TB Report 2024 released on October 29, WHO has acknowledged the tremendous progress India has made in closing the gap of missed tuberculosis cases since 2015, the sources said.

"In 2023, India is estimated to have had 27 lakh TB cases, of which 25.1 lakh were diagnosed and put on treatment. This has buoyed India's treatment coverage to 89 per cent in 2023 from 72 per cent in 2015, thereby bridging the gap of missing cases," an official source said.

The source said WHO has "acknowledged a drop in India's tuberculosis incidence from 237 per lakh population in 2015, to 195 per lakh population in 2023 accounting for a 17.7 per cent decline.

"This is more than double the pace of decline as compared to the global decline of 8.3 per cent," the source said.

The Health Ministry sources asserted that the leap in coverage has been due to the momentum India has created around tuberculosis case finding and reflects the efforts of decentralisation of healthcare services through over 1.7 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs in the country.

While WHO had downsized its estimation of tuberculosis mortality in India last year, the current report documents the sustained reduction in deaths due to the disease achieved by India from 28 per lakh population to 22 per lakh population, a 21.4 per cent decline, they said.

The government has been able to strengthen and expand the National TB Elimination Programme with sustained domestic financing, official sources said.



The tuberculosis budget saw a historic 5.3 times leap in allocation from R 640 crores in 2015 to Rs 3400 crores in 2022-23. The WHO report noted that a majority of the funding for the TB programme comes from government resources.

Over the years, India has been able to scale up state-of-the-art molecular diagnostic tools, introduce newer and more efficacious treatment regimens and provide free screening, diagnosis and treatment to all tuberculosis patients.

The government is procuring over 800 artificial intelligence-enabled portable chest x-ray machines to complement India's extensive TB laboratory network, the largest in the world with 7,767 rapid molecular testing facilities and 87 culture and drug susceptibility testing laboratories, the sources said.

"This acknowledgement by WHO signifies the paradigm shift India has brought to tuberculosis care over the past eight years. In October, the government announced the enhancement of support under Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY) from Rs 500 per month to each patient for the entire duration of the treatment to Rs 1,000," another source said.

To date, Rs 3,202 crore has been disbursed to 1.13 crore beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer under the scheme. While enhancement of NPY support will benefit all 25 lakh tuberculosis patients in a year, the introduction of Energy Dense Nutritional Supplementation (EDNS) would cover approximately 12 lakh undernourished TB patients.

## Jaishankar, Thai counterpart discuss bilateral ties, multilateral cooperation

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Thai counterpart Maris Sangiampongsa discussed bilateral ties, multilateral cooperation and regional developments during a meeting in Delhi on Saturday.

In a social media post, Jaishankar said Sangiampongsa's visit for the Royal Kathina ceremony "exemplifies the longstanding historical and cultural relations" between the two countries. The Thai minister is scheduled to depart India on Sunday. Jaishankar also shared pictures of the meeting at the South Block.

"Delighted to meet FM @AmbPoohMaris of Thailand today in Delhi. His visit for the Royal Kathina ceremony exemplifies the longstanding historical and cultural relations between our two countries. We discussed India-Thailand ties, multilateral cooperation and regional developments," he said. Royal Kathina is a traditional Buddhist ceremony.



Sangiampongsa's first official visit to India was during July 11-13 for the second BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat, hosted by the external affairs minister in New Delhi.

On July 12, Jaishankar held a bilateral meeting with Sangiampongsa and hosted a lunch in his honour. During that meeting, the two ministers reviewed progress across various areas of partnership.

The two ministers also exchanged views on issues of mutual interest and reiterated their commitment to closer cooperation in sub-regional, regional and multilateral fora, the Ministry of External Affairs had said.

In accordance with the vision of the two prime ministers, the ministers reaffirmed the mutual desire for a stronger India-Thailand partnership, it had said.

Thailand is a key partner for India in the ASEAN. India's 'Act East' policy, which is in its tenth year, finds convergence with Thailand's 'Act West' policy. Interactions between Jaishankar and the Thai foreign minister have contributed to further strengthening of bilateral ties, it had added.

## SC to hear Rajoana's plea seeking commutation of death sentence

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on November 4 a plea by Balwant Singh Rajoana, convicted in the 1995 assassination case of the then Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh, seeking commutation of his death sentence to life term due to an "inordinate delay" in deciding his mercy petition.

A special bench of Justices B R Gavai, P K Mishra and K V Viswanathan will hear the plea of the former Punjab Police constable.

On September 25, the top court had sought responses from the Centre, the Punjab Government and the administration of the Union Territory of Chandigarh on Rajoana's plea. In his plea, Rajoana has sought directions to the Centre and the Punjab government to commute his death sentence "due to inordinate delay" in its execution and in deciding the "mercy petition filed on his behalf".

Rajoana was convicted in Beant Singh's assassination



case. The former chief minister and 16 others were killed in a blast at the entrance of the civil secretariat in Chandigarh on August 31, 1995. A special court had sentenced Rajoana to death in July 2007. Rajoana has said that in March 2012, a mercy petition under Article 72 of the Constitution was moved by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) on his behalf. On May 3 last year, the apex court had refused to commute his death sentence and said the competent authority could deal with his mercy plea.

In his fresh plea filed in the top court, Rajoana has said he

has undergone a total sentence of about 28 years and eight months, of which he served 17 years as a death row convict. It has been over a year since the top court directed the competent authority to decide on his mercy petition, he said. The plea referred to an April 2023 order of the top court in a separate matter in which it directed all States and appropriate authorities to decide the pending mercy petitions at the earliest and without any inordinate delay.

"Despite the above directions, the mercy petition of the petitioner herein has been kept pending. It is submitted that this extraordinary and inordinate delay in deciding his mercy petition, for reasons beyond the petitioner's control and not attributable to him, is an infringement of his right to life guaranteed under Article 21," said the plea, adding that the issue of keeping mercy petitions pending for long and the incarceration of the convict has come up for consideration before the apex court in numerous cases.

## Modi destroyed dignity of PM's post with repeated hollow promises: Priyanka

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

In a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi on Saturday said the prime minister has "destroyed" the dignity of the highest post of the country by repeatedly making "hollow promises" to 140 crore Indians.

She also said that instead of worrying about the Congress, Modi should work on "restoring the dignity of his post by resorting to truth". Her remarks came after Modi on Friday said the Congress stands "badly exposed" in front of the people for promising to them what the party knows it will never be able to deliver.

The prime minister launched a fierce attack on the opposition party as he seized on Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge's comments that the Congress' state units should make promises that are properly budgeted.

He also said the developmental trajectory and fiscal health in the Congress-ruled states of Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana is going from bad to worse.

Hitting back at the prime minister, Priyanka Gandhi said in a post in X in Hindi, "Mahatma Gandhi used to say 'Truth is God'. 'Satyameva Jayate' written in Mundaka Upanishad is our national motto. These mottos establishing truth became the ideals of the



Indian freedom movement, the reconstruction of India and public life.

"In a country where truth is the basis of thousands of years of culture, the person sitting on the highest post should not resort to falsehood." The allegations levelled by the prime minister against the Congress are far from the

truth, she said.

"The Congress started fulfilling the promises made to the people as soon as it formed the government, without waiting for the next elections. Be it Karnataka, Telangana or Himachal Pradesh, people's money is being put into their pockets everyday through guarantees," the Congress general secretary said in the post.

The prime minister has understood that his words no longer have any value before the country's people, she claimed.

Sharpening her attack on Modi, Priyanka Gandhi continued, "The '100 days plan', 'taking opinion of 20 lakh people for the roadmap for 2047', '2 crore jobs every year', '100 smart cities',

'bringing back black money', 'reducing inflation and unemployment', 'doubling farmers' income', 'bringing rupee at par with dollar' and 'bringing 'Acheche Din' -- these are all promises which have been proven false and now the people of the country have no faith in them."

Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khera also slammed the prime minister, saying the latter has lowered the dignity of his post by resorting to false promises. Claiming that the Congress governments have fulfilled their promises in the states ruled by them, Khera alleged in a video statement that Modi had to even delete a post attacking the party out of fear of being fact-checked.

## We are in touch with US authorities: MEA on sanctions on Indian entities

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

In the wake of the US imposing sanctions on several individuals and entities, including from India, for allegedly supporting Russia's military-industrial base, the MEA Saturday said New Delhi is in touch with Washington to clarify issues.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, in response to a query during his weekly briefing, also said India has a "robust legal and regulatory framework" on strategic trade and non-proliferation controls.

"We are also a member of three key multilateral non-proliferation export control regimes," he added. "In keeping with India's established non-proliferation credentials, we are working with all relevant departments and agencies to sensitise Indian companies on applicable export control provisions as also inform them on new measures being implemented that



could impact Indian companies in certain circumstances," Jaiswal said.

The US has imposed sanctions on 275 individuals and entities, including 15 from India, for allegedly supporting Russia's military-industrial base. The US Department of Treasury said in a statement on Thursday that companies from China, Switzerland, Thailand, and Türkiye have also been slapped with sanctions for supplying Russia with advanced

## India committed to Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction: Principal Secretary to PM

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister P K Mishra has affirmed India's commitment to the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction and called for increased international collaboration on knowledge sharing, technology transfer and sustainable development to enhance disaster resilience globally.

Mishra said this while participating in the G-20 Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group (DRRWG) ministerial meeting in Belem, Brazil, according to an official release. He led a high-level Indian delegation which took part in the meeting held from October 30 to November 1.

With the active participation of the Indian delegation, a consensus was arrived at on finalising the first ministerial declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), the release issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs said. During various sessions, Mishra shared the progress made by the government of India in



reducing disaster risks and in upscaling disaster financing. He emphasised India's proactive approach to disaster risk reduction on five priorities of the DRRWG which were enunciated during India's presidency of G20 -- early warning systems, disaster resilient infrastructure, DRR financing, resilient recovery and nature-based solutions.

On disaster resilient infrastructure, he spoke about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's global initiative of Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure (CDRI), which now has 40 countries and seven international organisations as

members, the release said.

The Indian delegation also participated in a troika meeting with the ministers of Brazil and South Africa. It also held bilateral meetings with ministers from Brazil and other countries, namely Japan, Norway, South Africa, South Korea, Germany, and heads of invited international organisations. Responding to discussions on extreme heat, Mishra shared experience and steps being taken, including the focus on promoting traditional practices, to suit local conditions.

The first DRRWG was established on India's initiative during its G20 presidency in 2023. Mishra congratulated Brazil on its continuation of the DRRWG and scaling it up to the ministerial level and affirmed India's support to South Africa on the DRRWG during their G20 presidency next year. India's participation underscores its growing role in global DRR efforts and its commitment to building a safer and more resilient world, the release said.

## CPI(M) slams Government for denying permission to its MP to attend Venezuela event

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

The CPI(M) on Saturday slammed the Government for not granting political clearance to party MP V Sivadasan to participate in a parliamentary forum in Venezuela and called it an attempt to stifle the voices of those who did not conform with the ruling party's views.

Termining the denial of permission "political discrimination", the CPI(M) said this should be a matter of concern for all opposition parties and their MPs.

"The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) condemns the Central Government's decision denying political clearance to Dr V Sivadasan, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), to attend the Parliamentarian's Forum Against Fascism, being held in Caracas, Venezuela," the CPI(M) said in a statement.

"This is an attempt to stifle any voice that does not conform with the ruling party's views," it said.

The statement said the CPI(M) received an invitation from the National Assembly of Venezuela to nominate its Parliament members for the forum. The party nominated Sivadasan to participate in the forum, where parliamentarians from many countries are going to be present. "It is highly deplorable that in spite of getting the FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) clearance, the Ministry of External Affairs denied political clearance to Sivadasan, thus infringing his rights as a Member of Parliament," the CPI(M) said.

MPs are required to obtain prior permission of the Centre for accepting any foreign hospitality during their private visits abroad or visits abroad in their personal capacity under the FCRA. The CPI(M) further said, "The Government is following a policy of political discrimination, where differing voices are prevented from expressing their views. This should be a matter of concern for all opposition parties and their members of Parliament."

# Elephant attack leaves two dead in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, locals believe 'it's an act of revenge'

AKBAR KHAN ■ BHOPAL

In an incident that is sure to echo in the sal-covered forests of Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve for generations, three wild elephants trampled three men, killing two, on Saturday morning, barely four kilometres from Salakhaniya, where ten elephants have died in less than a week.

Attribute it to Bollywood or a local penchant for folklore, but many in the area are absolutely convinced that the elephant attack is an act of revenge.

Forest officials have neither confirmed nor denied that the attacking wild mammals belonged to the herd of thirteen, of which ten have perished this week.

They said that the remaining three from the herd are believed to have made their



way into the neighbouring Katni district, and efforts are underway to track their movement. Forest officials camping in the area since the outbreak of the elephantine tragedy have ordered the destruction of the Kodo millet harvest and crops in the area.

The little-known grain has emerged as the flashpoint of the controversy, as officials believe that grazing on contaminated Kodo has led to the loss of pachyderm lives. Contradicting research suggesting that Kodo crops harvested in damp conditions

are deadly for human and animal health, indigenous tribals who have grown the grain for generations say that they have never encountered any such issue with the crop. The order for the destruction of 'contaminated' Kodo is causing heartburn among the marginal farmers that dot the area, especially as there is no official word on how they would be compensated for their loss of earnings. Kodo has been widely grown in the region for decades, if not centuries, but the little-known millet came into the limelight last year when the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets. The crop is now added to multigrain atta preferred by the health-conscious, and the

state government has incentivised its production by offering an MSP on the yield. People in the area concede that the fungus-infested Kodo does cause intoxication but refute claims and research suggesting that the tiny grain is detrimental to human or animal health. With the controversy gaining mammoth proportions, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav convened top forest administration officials at his residence late on Friday evening. A brief released to the media stated that Chief Minister Yadav has dispatched a high-level team, including MoS for Faorets Dilip Ahirwar, to Bandhavgarh to supervise investigations and present their report in 24 hours.

# Gangotri temple to close for winter season

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ DEHRADUN

The portals of the Gangotri temple at Uttarkashi were closed on Saturday for the winter season when it remains snowbound, an official of the temple committee said.

All temples located in the Garhwal Himalayas, also known as Char Dham, are closed during the winter. Gangotri temple committee secretary Suresh Semwal said the gates of the temple located at a height of around 10,000 feet above sea level were closed amid rituals at 12.14 pm on the auspicious occasion of the Annakoot festival.

After the ceremonial closure of the temple gates amid chants of "Har Har Gange, Jai Ma Gange" by devotees and priests, the idol of Goddess Ganga left in a palanquin for Mukhba where she will be worshipped for the whole of winter, he said. Gangotri is the first of the Char Dham temples to be closed. More than eight lakh devotees visited the temple



this season. The doors of Yamunotri and Kedarnath temples will be closed on Sunday while those of Badrinath will be shut on November 17. These famous Himalayan temples are reopened in April-May each year with the onset of summer.

# BJP faces tough battle for Seesamau seat in UP by-elections as SP's Solanki family holds firm ground

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ KANPUR

Uttar Pradesh is set to witness high-stakes by-elections on nine seats, including the Seesamau constituency in Kanpur. For the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), this seat has become a matter of prestige as it has been a stronghold of the Samajwadi Party (SP) for over two decades.

Adding to the challenge, a single Muslim family—the Solankis—has held onto this seat for the last 22 years, indicating not only their political influence but also the support they enjoy across all communities.

With nearly 40% of the Seesamau constituency's population being Muslim and the rest comprising various other communities, the Solanki family's ability to secure continuous victories



Irfan Solanki

highlights their broad-based appeal and strong presence. The sustained hold on this seat reflects the trust the electorate places in the family, regardless of religious affiliations.

Naseem Solanki, the SP candidate and wife of former SP MLA Irfan Solanki, recently underscored this image of inclusivity during her campaign. Despite being a Muslim candidate, Naseem

visited the historic Bankhandeshwar Shiv Temple in Kanpur on Diwali, offering a traditional oil lamp and performing a 'jalabhishek' on the Shiva Lingam, seeking blessings for victory. This act has drawn significant attention and is seen as a symbol of the Solanki family's philosophy of "sabka saath, sabka vishwas" (unity and trust of all communities). The temple visit is just one among several steps taken by Naseem Solanki to reach out to voters across religious lines. She also visited a Gurudwara to offer her respects before continuing with her campaign. Her husband, former MLA Irfan Solanki, and father-in-law, Haji Mushtaq, have historically contributed towards the development of religious places of all faiths, using their resources to fund various projects. However, such

symbolic gestures from the Solanki family have surfaced publicly for the first time, prompting the BJP to label these actions as mere "election stunts."

A legacy of the Solanki family in Seesamau The legacy of the Solanki family in Seesamau dates back to 22 years ago when the family patriarch, Haji Mushtaq Solanki, first won the seat. Though Haji Mushtaq is no longer alive, his goodwill and community-focused contributions remain fresh in the minds of Seesamau residents. His son Irfan Solanki, who is currently in jail, has also carried forward the legacy, and now, his wife Naseem is seeking to continue the family's representation. By reaching out to people from all walks of life, Naseem Solanki aims to secure her victory in this significant electoral contest.

# Karnataka CM withdraws notices on farmers related to Waqf land issues



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday instructed officials to immediately withdraw all notices sent to farmers concerning Waqf land issues. A decision to this effect was taken during a high-level meeting, with senior officials from the Revenue department, the Minority Welfare department, and the Karnataka Board of Waqfs.

"Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has issued a strict directive for the immediate retraction of all notices sent to farmers about Waqf land, emphasising that no disruption should be caused to them," a statement from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) read. The statement noted Siddaramaiah's dissatisfaction with recent actions by certain officials and highlighted concerns that the JD(S) and BJP were

allegedly using the Waqf issue for political gains, potentially disrupting peace in the state.

"Siddaramaiah has urged the public to ignore any misinformation and directed officials to handle the matter with sensitivity," it added.

The statement also emphasised that all notices issued to farmers regarding land records tied to Waqf properties must be promptly withdrawn.

Officials were instructed to avoid harassing farmers or causing any issues related to lands under their possession. The CM further directed that any unauthorised changes made to land records (Pahani or RTC) without prior notice or legal procedures should be immediately nullified.

The meeting was attended by Karnataka Law and Parliamentary Affairs

Minister H K Patil, Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, and senior government officials. However, Minority Welfare and Waqf Minister B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan was not present.

Earlier, Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said all District Deputy Commissioners have been directed not to issue notices to farmers under the Waqf Act.

He affirmed that revenue records would be considered final, and administrative actions would adhere to them. "The Chief Minister has instructed all deputy commissioners to withdraw such notices or letters. The matter is now resolved, though we are unsure of any future developments," Parameshwara told reporters.

# Mumbai Police files extradition of Anmol Bishnoi



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

The Mumbai police have forwarded a proposal for extradition of jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's younger brother Anmol Bishnoi, who has been named as an accused in some high-profile crimes, including the Baba Siddique murder case, an official said. The proposal was sent after the US authorities informed the Mumbai police about Anmol Bishnoi's presence in their country, the senior police official said on Saturday.

Last month, the Mumbai police's crime branch moved the special Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) court here stating that it intends to "initiate the extradition procedure of fugitive criminal Anmol Bishnoi". Mumbai police filed an affidavit "for further necessary action", which was allowed by the special court. Both Lawrence and Anmol Bishnoi have been named as wanted accused in the April 14 firing incident outside the Bollywood actor Salman Khan's Galaxy Apartment in Mumbai's Bandra area. Vicky Gupta and Sagar Pal had carried out the firing. They, along with Sonukumar Bishnoi, Mohammed Rafiq Choudhary and Harpal Singh, were arrested and are currently in judicial custody. One accused Anuj Kumar

Thapan committed suicide during his police custody. In the chargesheet filed in the case, police have shown Lawrence Bishnoi and Anmol Bishnoi as wanted accused in the case. NCP leader and former MLA Baba Siddique was shot dead by three gunmen near the office of his MLA-son Zeeshan Siddique on October 12. The police have so far arrested 15 persons in connection with the murder. The role of Bishnoi brothers, who hail from Fazilka in Punjab, is suspected in the case.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) recently announced a reward of Rs 10 lakh for information leading to the arrest of Anmol Bishnoi. Lawrence Bishnoi is currently lodged in a jail in Sabarmati in Gujarat. A lookout circular was issued in April against Anmol Bishnoi, who had claimed responsibility for the firing incident outside Salman Khan's residence. An FIR was also registered by the NIA against nine accused, including both the Bishnoi brothers, in August 2022 for being part of a conspiracy to raise funds, recruit youth to carry out terrorist acts in the Union Territory of Delhi and other parts of the country besides "targeted killings of prominent persons".

# Mahakumbh set to boost tourism in Uttar Pradesh, creating jobs for over 45,000 families

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Yogi Adityanath government is set to elevate Uttar Pradesh's tourism industry through a focused initiative on skill development, with the upcoming Mahakumbh in Prayagraj anticipated to generate direct or indirect employment for over 45,000 families. This monumental event, scheduled for 2025, is expected to attract millions of pilgrims and tourists, creating a significant demand for trained local service providers.

In an effort to prepare for this surge, extensive training programs are underway across Prayagraj. These programs aim to upskill local vendors, boatmen, street vendors, and tour guides, ensuring they are equipped to meet the needs of visitors with professionalism and customer-friendly service.



By empowering these service providers, the government is not only supporting existing businesses but also laying the foundation for new employment opportunities around religious tourist destinations, contributing to the region's economic growth. The Yogi administration's comprehensive tourism strategy took root with the launch of the Tourism Policy-2022, approved on November 16, 2022. This policy envisions a substantial investment

inflow of Rs 20,000 crore and aims to generate 10 lakh jobs, cementing Uttar Pradesh's position as a tourism-friendly state. A key pillar of this strategy is to connect local service providers with targeted skill development programs, equipping them with essential skills in service and management. Regional Tourism Officer Aparajita Singh emphasized the campaign's reach, saying that training sessions have been launched for a broad range of

tourist-facing roles. From boatmen and tour guides to street vendors, service providers are being trained in hospitality, hygiene, and communication skills to enhance the visitor experience. The government is also promoting responsible tourism by raising awareness among service providers about maintaining a clean and welcoming environment at tourist sites. A notable initiative within this campaign focuses on boatmen who navigate the rivers near religious sites. The Tourism Department is providing training to 2,000 boatmen to broaden their skill set, enabling them to take on dual roles as river guides. This initiative, undertaken in collaboration with Manyavar Kanshipram Tourism Management Institute, has already trained 300 boatmen,

giving them the skills to enhance the tourist experience by sharing insights about the area's cultural and spiritual significance. "We are dedicated to preparing a robust, skilled workforce for the Mahakumbh 2025," Singh said. "Our goal is to support livelihoods while enhancing the quality of services provided to our visitors." The training for tour guides is also progressing rapidly. Assistant Professor Prakhar Tiwari from the Manyavar Kanshipram Tourism Management Institute, who is overseeing the program, reported that seven batches of guides have completed the course, resulting in 420 well-trained tour guides ready to assist pilgrims and tourists.

The government's efforts extend to street vendors and taxi drivers as well. Recognizing the important role of street vendors in

providing accessible goods to locals and tourists alike, the Tourism Department has launched a training program focused on customer service skills and cleanliness standards. So far, 600 street vendors and 600 taxi drivers in Prayagraj have enrolled, with 250 vendors and 120 drivers already completing their training.

With the Mahakumbh serving as a catalyst, Uttar Pradesh's tourism sector is undergoing a transformative phase, with skill development programs creating a wide range of employment opportunities for local youth. Singh estimates that over 45,000 families will benefit from this initiative, securing income through tourism-related roles and fostering a sustainable environment for the industry's growth around key religious sites.

# Jharkhand CM urges PM Modi to pay coal dues of 1.36 lakh crore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI

Ahead of the scheduled visits of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah to poll-bound Jharkhand, Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Saturday urged the Centre with "folded hands" to clear Rs 1.36 lakh-crore coal dues to the State. Modi is scheduled to address two rallies in Jharkhand on November 4 while Shah will address three public meetings on November 3.

"The PM and the Home Minister are coming to Jharkhand. I once again request them with folded hands to clear the outstanding (coal dues) of Rs 1.36 lakh crore to Jharkhand. This amount is crucial for Jharkhand," Soren posted on X. He also appealed to BJP MPs to facilitate clearance of the amount. "I would also appeal to my BJP colleagues, especially the



MPs, to help Jharkhandis in getting our dues," Soren posted on Social Media, sharing a copy of a letter to the Prime Minister. Soren emphasised that the dues with central PSUs, like Coal India, are "rightful" to the state and claimed that "non-clearance is causing irreparable harm to Jharkhand's development". "I, Hemant Soren, the Chief minister of Jharkhand, am drawing your attention towards a serious issue which is creating obstacles in the path of state's development.

Our dues from coal companies stand at Rs 1.36 lakh crore," Soren wrote in the letter to the PM. "In spite of provisions in the law and judicial pronouncements, coal companies are not making any payment... These questions have been raised at various forums, including your kind office, Finance Ministry and NITI Aayog. But till now this compensation (Rs 1.36 lakh crore) has not yet been paid," he said.

A recent ruling by a nine-judge Supreme Court bench affirmed the State's right to collect its mining and royalty dues. Soren pointed out that the development of Jharkhand and essential socio-economic projects are getting hampered owing to the non-clearance of dues. "Jharkhand is an underdeveloped state and there are lots of social economic development projects which are getting hampered due to non-payment of our

justifiable demands," Soren wrote. Last month, he suggested a direct debit from Coal India's account to the state, similar to the arrangements made for Jharkhand State Electricity Board dues to the DVC. "This delay in payment of the just demand raised by the state has constrained me to write to you that this negligence is causing irreparable damage to Jharkhand and its people. Various social sector schemes in education, health, women & child development, clean drinking water and last mile connectivity are unable to be translated on the ground because of lack of funds," Soren said. Earlier, he accused the Central Government of indifference to the state's plight, highlighting the disparity in treatment regarding dues. The Jharkhand assembly polls will be held in two phases - November 13 and 20. The counting of votes will take place on November 23.

# AQI 'poor', 'very poor' in several parts of Himachal post-Diwali

PTI ■ SHIMLA

The air quality at various places across Himachal Pradesh deteriorated post-Diwali due to bursting of crackers, officials said.

This year the average AQI in the state was at 140 (moderate) as compared to 92 last year. As per the data from the pollution department, industrial areas in the state recorded air quality ranging between moderate to very poor and Baddi (industrial area) was the most polluted with a "very poor" AQI of 392 followed by Parwanoo at 217, Poanta Sahib at 145, Barotiwala at 139, Nalagarh at 128 and Una at 122. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', 401 and 450 'severe' and above 450 'severe plus'. The air quality of Shimla was satisfactory with AQI 66 against 78 last year as the

district administration had allowed the bursting of firecrackers from 8 pm to 10 pm only. Though some violations were seen but majority of the residents abided by the directions, officials said.

The production of green crackers and its supply chain has increased. With people being aware of the environmental hazards and the regulations in place, people generally have preferred bursting green crackers and adhering to the norms, they added. Meanwhile, Dharamshala recorded AQI at 109 against 140 last year. However, Manali saw an increase in air pollution with AQI increasing from 55 in 2023 to 80 in 2024 on Diwali day. Industrial areas of Baddi-Barotiwala-Nalagarh, Poanta Sahib, Una, Damtak and Kala Amb have witnessed AQI above 100 but overall air quality in the state is average, the data indicated.



# SPINNERS DO THEIR JOB WELL, TIME FOR BATTERS TO SALVAGE PRIDE

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**  
Exploiting the spin-friendly conditions, Ravindra Jadeja and R Ashwin chiselled through the New Zealand batting line-up to bring India to a stage from where they can force a face-saving victory in the third Test which is now headed for an intriguing finish. New Zealand ended day two at 171 for nine with an overall lead of 143, which might look small but even a target in the vicinity of 150 will pose serious challenge for the Indian batters, considering the fast deteriorating Wankhede track. This was after half-centuries from Shubman Gill (90) and Rishabh Pant (60) and a crucial 38 not out from Washington Sundar gave India a slender 28-run lead as they put on board 263. A total of 15 wickets fell on the second day, underlining the fact that life won't be easy for the hosts while batting fourth. Ashwin (3/63) found his rhythm while Jadeja (4/52) added four more dismissals after his 5/65 in the first essay to keep India's hopes alive to avert a clean sweep at home for the first time. Ajaz Patel (7) was at the crease when Jadeja cleaned up Matt Henry (10) for the penultimate wicket on the final ball on the second day. Will Young's gutsy 51 was the only resistance from the Kiwis who succumbed to pressure, after Patel (5/103) recorded yet another five-wicket haul.

Having made a subdued impact so far, Ashwin's delight on getting Rachin Ravindra (4) stumped was evident as he beat the charge of the batter with bounce and turn. With Glenn Phillips (26) using the long handle to a good effect, Ashwin cleaned up the New Zealand batter for another crucial breakthrough. Young, who batted as solid as he did in the first innings, was Ashwin's third victim giving the bowler catching practice after being outfoxed on a carrom ball. The 37-year-old Ashwin made impact beyond his bowling when he took an outstanding catch to end a stubborn 50-run association between Young and Daryl Mitchell (21), who, for a passage of play, threatened to take the game away. Young and Mitchell had steadied the ship after New Zealand's top-order was blown away, but the latter's charge against Jadeja proved costly as he did not get the distance in his stroke. From mid-off, Ashwin covered 19 metres running sideways to his left and put in a fabulous dive to complete the dismissal, post which New Zealand crumbled further. Tom Blundell (4) chopped one onto his stumps off Jadeja while Ashwin cleaned up Phillips, who had switched to aggressive batting knowing New Zealand desperately needed more runs. At the start of Kiwis' reply, Akash provided a rare sight of a pacer disturbing a batter's furniture on turning track when he dismantled



Tom Latham's (1) off and middle stumps in the first over. Earlier, India's progress suffered a severe blow with the exit of Pant towards the end of the morning session, as its effects were felt acutely when play resumed post lunch.

From Pant's dismissal in the 38th over to India eventually folding in the 60th, the team managed eight fours and two sixes - the wicketkeeper-batter alone hit that many during his brisk half-century earlier. Patel, finding the right length, reaped rewards as the Kiwi spinner claimed another five-for at the Wankhede Stadium, following up his world record 10/119 in the first innings of the 2021 Test here.

Gill fell short of his century while others continued to disappoint. Perhaps, there was no greater disappointment than to see Sarfaraz Khan looking like a fish out of water during his four-ball struggle, failing to open his account at his home turf

where at times he has plundered runs for fun. Sarfaraz failed to read the length of his first ball and went for a mighty sweep against Patel in his pomp, but was beaten by the bounce and turn on the next. He might have fallen on the third ball when it bounced off his glove but there was no silly point. But he had to walk back when the bounce and turn had the ball settling in 'keeper Tom Blundell's gloves after kissing the shoulder of his bat. Gill, who showed no flaws in his 146-ball stay with seven fours and a six - longest for any batter in this Test - was also among Patel's victims on the day as the Mumbai-origin Kiwi spinner had him caught at the first slip after a fine knock. Jadeja (14) too was caught at first slip, albeit off Glenn Phillips, as Washington waged a lone battle among the three all-rounders scoring a brisk 36-ball 38 not out with four boundaries and two sixes. Having ceded control to New Zealand in final minutes of the opening day's play with an embarrassing collapse, India showed better resolve to make a speedy recovery. Pant's quickfire 60, laced with eight fours and two sixes, was instrumental in taking the advantage away from the Kiwis who were gifted three unexpected wickets by the Indians with batting mainstays Virat Kohli (4) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (30) committing harakiri.

## Two-time Olympic medallist Lily Owsley signs for Delhi SG Pipers

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Delhi SG Pipers on Saturday announced the acquisition of England's woman hockey midfielder and superstar Lily Owsley for the upcoming season of Hockey India League (HIL). The 29-year-old two-time Olympic medallist will be replacing 28-year-old Dutch midfielder Xan de Waard following her pull-out from HIL this season due to personal reasons. Owsley is one of the most highly decorated players in English hockey, having won the gold medal at the Rio Olympics 2016, followed by the bronze in Tokyo 2020. Besides, she also won the gold and silver at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham 2022 and Glasgow 2014, respectively. Owsley also clinched two European Championship medals - gold in London 2015 and bronze in Amstelveen 2017. "Losing Xan de Waard, undoubtedly one of the best players in the world, is a setback for the team. But, being able to replace her with a 2-time Olympic medal winner, Lily Owsley, is a big relief," said Delhi SG Pipers women's team coach Dave Smolenaars in a statement. "She will bring in her experience, leadership and high-speed play to help the team reach its potential." It will be the inaugural edition of the Women's HIL, slated to get underway on December 28, comprising four teams, with the other three sides being Odisha Warriors, Rajasthan and Soorma Hockey Club. The tournament final takes place in Ranchi on February 1 next year.

## Virat Kohli drops hints of staying with RCB till 2027

**PTI ■ BENGALURU**  
Virat Kohli has dropped elaborate hints that he would like to continue playing competitive cricket till 2027 with an aim to complete 20 years with Royal Challengers Bengaluru after being retained by the franchise for a hefty fee of Rs 21 crore. Having entered the twilight zone of his illustrious career, speculations are rife about how long the 36-year-old would continue in top flight cricket having endured a prolonged lull for the last four years since the start of COVID-19. Kohli has been playing for RCB ever since IPL's inception in 2008 and is the leading run-scorer in the competition, amassing over 8,000 runs at a healthy if not spectacular strike rate of 131.97, including eight hundreds and 55 fifties. "At the end of this cycle, it is going to be 20 years that I am going to be playing for RCB and that in itself is a very, very special feeling for me," Kohli told 'RCB Bold Diaries' indicating that he aims to continue for at least another three years till 2027. "I have never thought that I am going to play so many years for one team, but the relationship has truly become special over so many years. He reiterated that he doesn't see himself playing for any other franchise. "I don't see myself anywhere other than RCB, and I am very happy that it happened. I am very excited that I got a chance to create a strong new squad in this auction, something that we are really looking forward to as a franchise, as a team," Kohli said in RCB's Bold Diaries video.



He also pondered on the fact that he shared a close bond with the franchise and its fans, while his goal would be to win the elusive title. "I am super excited as ever as everyone knows what RCB means to me. It's been a very, very special relationship over so many years, which continues to grow stronger, and what I have experienced playing for RCB is truly special. I hope that the fans and everyone who's connected to the franchise feel the same way," he continued. "I am also just looking forward to this cycle. Obviously, the goal is to win the IPL title at least once in the next cycle." He promised that RCB will leave no stone unturned to win their elusive IPL title. "We are going to give it our best shot as always and try to make everyone proud of the way we play our cricket. A big shout out to the fans for your unwavering support over so many years. I am really grateful, really thankful," Kohli concluded. **KOHLI WILL BE A KEY TO RCB'S SUCCESS: ANDY FLOWER:** Meanwhile,

## Zverev beats Tsitsipas and joined by Rune, Humbert, Khachanov in Paris Masters semis

**AP ■ PARIS**  
Alexander Zverev advanced to the semifinals of the Paris Masters by beating Stefanos Tsitsipas 7-5, 6-4 and knocking the Greek player out of contention for the ATP Finals. The third-seeded German saved the only break point he faced. Zverev, the French Open runner-up, next faces 2022 champion Holger Rune for a shot at the title. He's into his third Paris semifinals in the past four years, though he's never won the hard-court tournament. The first break point opportunity came in the 11th game as Tsitsipas struggled with his first serve. Zverev got the break for 6-5 on an unforced error. Tsitsipas then saved two set points but squandered his only break point chance with his 17th unforced error before Zverev closed out the set. Zverev broke again in the third game of



the second set to take full control. He rattled off 12 straight points in his final three service games. With the victory, Zverev became the first player born in the 1990s to record 100 wins over top-20 players. Daniil Medvedev is on 99.

The 10th-seeded Tsitsipas, who reached the ATP Finals for five consecutive years, had 28 unforced errors to 18 winners. Rune outlasted Alex de Minaur 6-4, 4-6, 7-5 in a 2 1/2-hour baseline fight. Rune improved to 3-2 against the Australian. Grigor Dimitrov's hopes of making the ATP Finals were set back after the 2023 finalist was upset by 2018 champion Karen Khachanov 6-2, 6-3 for the first time. Khachanov lost their four previous matches. Dimitrov was 10th in the race to the top-eight ATP Finals in Turin. Khachanov improved to 12-1 in the last three weeks after winning the Almaty title and reaching the Vienna final. He'll face in the semifinals local hope Ugo Humbert, who defeated Jordan Thompson of Australia 6-2, 7-6 (4) a day after stunning Carlos Alcaraz. Humbert has reached his first Masters semifinal, and he's the first Frenchman to go this far in Paris in seven years.

## Mohun Bagan SG say AFC 'recognised' club's decision to forego match in Iran

**PTI ■ KOLKATA**  
Mohun Bagan Super Giant on Saturday said the Asian Football Confederation has "recognised" the top Indian club's pullout from their AFC Champions League 2 match in Iran last month as a case of force majeure. Keeping the players' "safety and security" in mind, Mohun Bagan SG last month decided to forgo their October 2 match against Tractor FC in Iran due to the volatile situation prevailing in the West Asian nation at the time. The continental body reacted promptly and the Kolkata-based club was withdrawn from the tournament, pending further decision on the matter. According to the MBSG, the

AFC has now recognised their concerns but added the club remained withdrawn from the tournament. "On 2nd November 2024, Mohun Bagan Super Giant has been communicated by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) that in response to the club's appeal, the AFC Competitions Committee has decided to recognise the matters raised by Mohun Bagan SG as an event of force majeure," the club said in a statement.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA  
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER  
RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, JAJPUR, AT JARAKA

**CORRIGENDUM TO TENDER CALL NOTICE NO. TENDER ONLINE JPR-II-03 OF 2024-25**

Due to some unavoidable circumstances, the following roads from the Annexure sheet are to be deleted and dropped from this current tender call notice (i.e. from the Notice No. "Tender Online JPR-II-03 of 2024-25").

Sr. No.	Assesse sheet of TCR-03/2024-25	Name of the Work	Amount (Rs. in Lakh)
1	2	S/R to Gobandia Bikramtirana Road for the year 2024-25	25.30
2	13	S/R to Dharmasala to Bhubana Road for the year 2024-25	8.42
3	14	S/R to Kalando to Bichhakhandi Road for the year 2024-25	16.83
4	15	S/R to Antia to Gadamadhapur Old Railway Station Road for the year 2024-25	8.42
5	16	S/R to RD road -Mahisara Road for the year 2024-25	12.63
6	17	S/R to RD Road ( Chakroda ) to Sunduria Road for the year 2024-25	29.43

All other terms & conditions remain unchanged.

The above corrigendum shall only be published in the Govt. website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)

Yours Faithfully  
Executive Engineer  
Rural Works Division-II  
Jaipur At Jarak

OIPR-2506/11/0006/2425

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e - PROCUREMENT NOTICE  
Bid Identification No. E.E. GTN (R&B) - 14/2024-25  
E-mail address- [eehghatagaon2015@gmail.com](mailto:eehghatagaon2015@gmail.com)  
Letter No. 7879 Dt. 30.10.2024

1. The Executive Engineer, Ghatagaon (R&B) Division on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate Bids in Single Cover system in online mode from the eligible contractor for EI works as mentioned below.

2. Nature of the work: - EI Works

3. Numbers of work - 01 (One) No.

4. Estimated cost: - Rs. 16.01 Lakhs

5. Period of completion - 01 (One) Calendar Month.

6. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal- From 11.30 A.M of dt.05.11.2024 to 05.00 P.M of dt.14.11.2024

7. Last Date/ Time for receipt of bids in the portal - 05.00 P.M of dt. 14.11.2024

8. Date of opening of Bid - 11.00 A.M of dt.16.11.2024

9. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the same website only.

Executive Engineer  
Ghatagaon (R&B) Division

OIPR-34140/11/0007/2425

OFFICE OF THE BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER  
SAINTALA, BALANGIR  
Email - [ori-saintala@nic.in](mailto:ori-saintala@nic.in)

**INVITATION FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement**  
TENDER CALL NOTICE NO- 3/2024-25/SNTL

**Invitation for Bids**

1. The BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER SAINTALA, BALANGIR, on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in single cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for Construction of Building work as detailed below.

2. Nature of work	: Civil Works
3. No. of work	: 03 Nos.
4. Bid Cost.	: ₹ 6,000 & 10,000
5. Class of Contractor	: "D & 'C' & 'B' License
6. Availability of Bid Documents in the website	: From 10.00 AM of 04.11.2024 to 5.00 PM of 18.11.2024
7. Date of Opening of Bid	: Dt. 19.11.2024 at 11:00 AM.
8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website <a href="https://tendersodisha.gov.in">https://tendersodisha.gov.in</a> . Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.	

BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER, SAINTALA, BALANGIR

OIPR-19095/11/0002/2425

## F1 braces for more Verstappen-Norris drama and Hamilton to drive Senna's car

**AP ■ SAO PAULO**  
Max Verstappen suggests he won't change his aggressive driving this weekend at the Brazilian Grand Prix as he bids for a fourth successive Formula 1 title. Lando Norris needs a win at Interlagos in Sao Paulo to maintain any realistic title hopes. New elements could spice up the clash between the drivers, who have received penalties in the past two races in Austin, Texas and Mexico for their boldness on the track. Interlagos has a new tarmac, rain is expected all weekend, and Verstappen received a five-place penalty on the grid after he and Red Bull decided to use a new engine. Friday's free practice was not a



good omen for Verstappen; he finished 15th, more than one second behind Norris, who clocked the best lap in his McLaren. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who also has a shot at the title, was sixth. The sprint race qualifier in the afternoon was better for Verstappen; he was fourth but almost one second behind leader and Norris teammate Oscar Piastri. Norris was second.

amounting to 20 seconds. The British driver was penalized in the previous race at the U.S. Grand Prix as he battled the defending champion. Leclerc, 70 points behind Verstappen, told media on Thursday he was not expecting a leading performance by his team this weekend. The Monegasque driver also had to face the stewards in Brazil for swearing in a press conference after the Mexican GP last weekend. He was fined 10,000 euros (almost \$11,000), of which half is suspended as long as there is no further breach of a similar nature within the next 12 months. "During the hearing Leclerc expressed his regret for his momentary lack of judgment and shared that he understood his responsibility as a role

model for the sport," the stewards' decision said. Verstappen was punished with one day of community service for the same reason during the Singapore GP. **CHALLENGES FOR VERSTAPPEN AND MCLAREN:** Verstappen said in Mexico that F1 has become over-policed. Upon his arrival in Brazil, he said he didn't care about critics of his aggressive driving. Though he and Norris claim to have a respectful relationship, another showdown is expected between the two in Sunday's race. The McLarens are expected to have the upper hand. Verstappen has won twice at the 84-year-old Interlagos circuit, including last year, when Norris finished second.



# CHASING REFLECTIONS A COUTURE DREAM

Sara Ali Khan lit up the runway as the showstopper for *Abhinav Mishra's* latest collection, 'The Man in the Mirror'. Drawing inspiration from Rajasthan's *Kalbeliya* dance, the collection showcased vibrant colours, intricate mirror-work, and elegant silhouettes, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

The runway lights illuminated the venue and as the audience held their breath, the showstopper Sara Ali Khan emerged, radiating elegance and confidence. Dressed in a breathtaking ensemble from *Abhinav Mishra's* latest collection, she set the tone for a night that celebrated not just fashion but a rich blend of Indian culture. Her stunning ensemble featured delicate floral motifs beautifully embellished with mirrors, sequins and crystals, adding a touch of opulence to the muted tones. The regal silhouette flowed gracefully while maintaining a refined structure, with each detail thoughtfully executed to create a harmonious blend of artistry and sophistication. Couture Runway Showcase, titled "The Man in the Mirror," was a stunning ode to the craftsmanship of mirror-work, which has become a hallmark of his designs. This year, the collection arrived just in time for the festive season, captivating guests with its vibrant celebration of weddings and cultural traditions. A standout segment of the collection was 'Kalbeliya,' inspired by the folk dance of the same name, deeply rooted in Rajasthani culture. Each piece drew from the Kalbeliya tribe's distinctive style, showcasing colourful motifs and intricate patterns that reflect their nomadic heritage. This

segment was not only a visual delight but also a tribute to the artistry that often goes overlooked in modern fashion. *Mishra's* designs in 'Kalbeliya' captured the essence of the tribe, incorporating a palette of bold colours like black and ivory, paired with unexpected combinations found in traditional attire. Each ensemble was meticulously handcrafted, adorned with floral motifs, geometric patterns and an array of embellishments, including pearls, sequins and his signature mirrors. The luxurious fabrics, silks, soft wool, and sheer materials flowed beautifully, ensuring that every piece felt ethereal and festive. Silhouettes varied from traditional lehengas and anarkalis to contemporary kaftans, providing something for every wedding function. The blouses featured daring necklines and chic short kurtas, while the kaftans introduced a modern twist to the classic designs. This fusion of styles ensured that the collection appealed to a wide audience, from brides to modern women seeking elegance. In addition to bridal wear, *Mishra's* collection highlighted the versatility of mirror-work across both menswear and womenswear. The show reflected his commitment to reviving this ancient craft while seamlessly blending it with contemporary aesthetics.



**EACH ENSEMBLE WAS METICULOUSLY HANDCRAFTED, ADORNED WITH FLORAL MOTIFS, GEOMETRIC PATTERNS AND AN ARRAY OF EMBELLISHMENTS, INCLUDING PEARLS, SEQUINS AND HIS SIGNATURE MIRRORS. THE LUXURIOUS FABRICS, SILKS, SOFT WOOL, AND SHEER MATERIALS FLOWED BEAUTIFULLY, ENSURING THAT EVERY PIECE FELT ETHEREAL AND FESTIVE**

Reflecting on the significance of the event, *Mishra* expressed his excitement: "I'm thrilled to present 'The Man in the Mirror,' a personal presentation that invites you into my imaginative world, where the craft of mirror-work takes centre stage. This showcase is a serene, star-lit wonderland blending tradition and modernity." The atmosphere was enhanced by exquisite jewellery from *The House of Rambhajos*, known for its stunning polki and diamond pieces. The décor, envisioned by Rani Pink, transformed the venue into a mesmerising oasis, reminiscent of a desert under a starlit sky. As the final looks hit the runway, *Abhinav Mishra's* "The Man in the Mirror" revealed itself as more than just a collection; it was a nod to the rich stories and traditions of Indian couture. The show captivated the audience with its emphasis on the beauty of mirror work and the importance of preserving heritage crafts in modern fashion. With his blend of classic and contemporary elements, *Mishra* once again proved why he's a standout in couture, ensuring that Indian craftsmanship continues to shine worldwide.



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

## NEW OFFERINGS



### THE WRITTEN CANVAS

Art Konsult presents "The Written Canvas: Letters to Keshav Malik from Artists and Thinkers," an exhibition honoring the birth centenary of acclaimed art critic and poet Keshav Malik. This rare collection of letters, featuring correspondences with cultural icons like Harivansh Rai Bachchan, Krishen Khanna and F.N. Souza reveals Malik's profound influence on Indian art and thought. Dive into the timeless art of letter-writing and experience the cultural dialogues that shaped India's artistic heritage.

### EVENT DETAILS

**Venue:** Annexe Art Gallery, India International Centre, New Delhi

**Dates:** November 4 – November 9

**Timings:** 11:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

### REDISCOVER AUTHENTIC CHINESE FLAVOURS

Radisson Blu MBD Hotel Noida is thrilled to introduce an all-new menu at RED (Rare Eastern Dining), offering an authentic journey into the world of Chinese cuisine. Curated by Executive Chef Sachin Malik and Master Chef Ghanshyam Thapa, the menu presents a range of dishes from delicate dim sums to bold Sichuan flavours and creative reinterpretations of classic recipes. Standouts include Truffle Edamame, Exotic Green Vegetables with Liqueurice, and Sichuan specialties like Mapo Tofu and Braised Aubergine with Peppercorn. Enjoy these dishes with cocktails inspired by Chinese heritage, including the Dragon on the Sky and Junshan Island Sundowner.

### DETAILS

**Venue:** RED, Radisson Blu MBD Hotel Noida

**Timings:** 7:00 – 11:30 PM

**Price for Two:** Rs 4500 (plus taxes)

**For reservations:** 858590779



### FACES OF RESILIENCE

Faces in my Window by Nelofer Currimbhoy, at the Open Palm Court Gallery, Habitat Centre, captures the resilience and spirit of those often overlooked. With each photo, Currimbhoy's lens brings viewers face-to-face with the untold stories of survival on the streets of Delhi. An entrepreneur, author and photographer, Currimbhoy's work extends beyond photography. Her docu-stories, like Ratni's Red Lipstick, highlight lives of perseverance, reflecting her passion for capturing human resilience. Influenced by Gandhi and Mother Teresa, her art is both an homage to her subjects and a call for empathy. Step into Faces in my Window for a poignant glimpse into lives that often go unseen.



### EVENT DETAILS

**Exhibition Open Till:** November 5, 2024

**Venue:** Open Palm Court Gallery, Habitat Centre, New Delhi

## LONELY PLANET A FAILED ROMANTIC DELIVERY

A lacklustre narrative undermines *Lonely Planet's* visual appeal, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

Shot with landscapes around Morocco giving a beautiful backdrop, *Lonely Planet* is an addition to the old woman young man romantics list. The film is an American Netflix romantic drama directed by *Susannah Grant*. The movie stars *Laura Dern* as *Katherine Loewe* and *Liam Hemsworth* as *Owen Brophy*. The film plots around a writer, *Laura Dern* and explores her romantic angle with *Owen Brophy* after they meet on a retreat of writers. *Laura Dern* as *Katherine Loewe* has been shown as a successful female novelist who comes on a writers retreat to overcome a struggling love life due to a separation from her longtime partner. *Liam Hemsworth* as *Owen Brophy* comes on the same retreat with her girlfriend *Lily Kemp* (played by *Diana Silvers*), whose first novel becomes a best seller. Changing attitude of *Lily Kemp* on the retreat creates a rift between her and her boyfriend *Owen Brophy*, after which *Owen finds* himself attracted towards *Katherine Loewe* after meeting her closely in some sudden circumstances.

The story explores an understanding romance between *Laura* and *Liam*. The story tries to emphasise on the importance and need of having an understanding partner with whom you can feel light and help you grow, but doesn't fall up to the point. Talking about the characters the cast seems to have overplayed their



part due to the weak plot. *Owen* doesn't have deep talks with his love interest, which is the want of the movie. *Laura's* character has been too into herself killing the expectations of what the audience really wants. *Lily Kemp's* character feels like a character played without an effort. *Lonely Planet* fails to deliver the truly wanting script because of its weak plot. It tries to land up to a space of the fantasy world where

the guy meets the woman and they fall in love, with all the butterflies which is actually not the demand of the film. The film's pacing is uneven, with certain scenes dragging while others feel rushed. The ending doesn't compliment the story at all and becomes too flat. The movie can be too boring for the people who love the romantic genre as it doesn't live up to the standards. The 96 minutes drama has been failing

to deliver a desired thoughtful romance being a romantic genre. Summarising, *Lonely Planet* is a missed opportunity. It has the potential to be a poignant and thought-provoking exploration of love and loss, but it settles for a generic and formulaic approach. While the stunning Moroccan landscapes are a visual treat, the film's lackluster script and characters ultimately leave a lot to be desired. **Rating - 2.5/5**



"Nothing is easy in cricket. Maybe when you watch it on TV, it looks easy. But it is not. You have to use your brain and time the ball"  
— Rohit Sharma



SHAMI FINISHED THE ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP 2023 AS THE TOURNAMENT'S LEADING WICKET-TAKER, WITH AN IMPRESSIVE 24 WICKETS ACROSS SEVEN MATCHES. HIS REMARKABLE PERFORMANCES INCLUDED THREE FIVE-WICKET HAULS AND A FOUR-WICKET HAUL, HIGHLIGHTED BY A CAREER-BEST 7/57 AGAINST NEW ZEALAND IN THE SEMI-FINALS

Mohammad Shami has been pushing the boundaries of pace and redefining the role of fast bowlers. His comeback adds depth to India's bowling attack, and his journey inspires the youngsters writes GYANESHWAR DAYAL

# THE COMEBACK MIAN

After nearly a year away from the field, 34-year-old Indian pacer Mohammad Shami is set to make his highly anticipated comeback. Having missed out due to an ankle injury that sidelined him since November last year, Shami has been seen practicing hard on the main pitch at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru, following the first Test between India and New Zealand. With a five-Test tour of Australia approaching this November, fans are eagerly awaiting the return of one of India's most formidable fast bowlers.

After a year-long hiatus, Mohammad Shami, India's lethal pace bowler, has returned to international cricket with renewed vigour, reminding fans of his remarkable skill and unyielding determination. Shami's journey back to the pitch is not just a testament to his resilience, but also an inspiring comeback story that showcases his unwavering commitment to the game. With career-defining spells and an uncanny knack for turning games in India's favor, Shami's return has once again fortified the Indian bowling lineup.

In 2023, Shami delivered an outstanding season, claiming 56 wickets in 27 innings and earning the prestigious Purple Cap in the IPL. He finished the ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 as the tournament's leading wicket-taker, with an impressive 24 wickets across seven matches. His remarkable performances included three five-wicket hauls and a four-wicket haul, highlighted by a career-best 7/57 against New Zealand in the semi-finals.

Despite battling a persistent heel issue, Shami's dedication to cricket was unwavering, playing a crucial role in India's World Cup journey. Since India's defeat to Australia in the ODI World Cup final in November 2023, Shami has been sidelined. He was initially selected for India's two-Test series in South Africa in December 2023, but fitness concerns prevented his participation. In January 2024, Shami travelled to London for specialized injections to treat his ankle. Following this treatment, he was advised to gradually resume physical activity. Unfortunately, the injections did not bring the desired relief, leading to surgery on his Achilles tendon. Following a prolonged break due to injuries and personal challenges, Shami's return has been nothing short of extraordinary, proving that his time away from the game did little to diminish his prowess. "Every comeback has its own set of challenges but cricket has always been my calling. Being on the field and playing for the country puts me on cloud nine", Says Shami. Known for his high-velocity deliveries and pinpoint accuracy,



Shami has remained dedicated to refining his craft, training rigorously to ensure his return was one for the books. His work with renowned trainers and sports psychologists was instrumental in fortifying both his physical and mental resilience, setting the stage for a triumphant return to the Indian squad.

Returning from a prolonged injury is always a test of resilience, particularly for a cricketer under the global lens. The mental challenges of injury can be as tough as the physical ones, with constant scrutiny adding to the pressure. Shami's journey reflects the dedication required to overcome these obstacles, as he not only returns to the sport but does so with a renewed sense of self-belief.

Comeback after an injury is not easy, the biggest setback is psychological apart from the physical challenge. And if it extends for a year the challenge is immense. "I had one resolve to be back on the field and play for the country. And if the goal is clear God gives you resilience and courage to withstand the storm. I practiced and maintained my poise and worked on my game and fitness and my overall wellbeing." Says Shami with a smile.

Shami's transformation has not been limited to his athletic pursuits. In addition to his rehabilitation, he recently underwent a hair transplant as his hairline had thinned. Now when he will be back on the field he would be sporting the look of a younger man with flowing hair. "Indeed it was his perseverance and health regime that the results were better than we expected," says Dr Arika Bansal, at Eugenix Hair Sciences Shami's choice of Eugenix highlights the clinic's reputation for delivering outstanding hair restoration results. Dr. Pradeep Bansal also expresses his gratification working with Shami, calling it "an honour to serve an eminent cricketer who exemplifies resilience." Indeed, the results have not only enhanced Shami's appearance but also reignited his confidence, adding a renewed energy to his presence on and off the field.

Mohammed Shami's home ground is Eden Gardens in Kolkata, where he made his Test debut against the West Indies in 2013. Shami has always had a special connection with India's cricketing venues, with the Eden Gardens, his home ground in Kolkata being particularly close to his heart. He considers the iconic stadium to be his lucky ground, where he has delivered several memorable performances. "Eden Gardens has a special vibe; the crowd and atmosphere push you to go that extra mile. There's no place quite like it." He quips. Shami has now earned a name for him as a right-arm fast-medium bowler. He's known for his ability to swing the ball at pace, and for his reverse swing. He hails from Amroha, Uttar Pradesh. Shami was a mainstay in India's T20 World Cup teams in 2021 and 2022. In the 2023 World Cup, he was India's highest wicket-taker.

The Uttar Pradesh government is building a mini-stadium and gymnasium in Shami's village, Sahaspur Alinagar, to honor him. The stadium will be built on one hectare of land and will also include an open gym and race track. Shami's journey has been marked by significant challenges, both on and off the field. Despite setbacks, he has shown a profound level of mental toughness, using the time off to focus on his inner resilience. He once remarked, "The game of cricket teaches you a lot about life. It's a test of patience, hard work, and mental strength." His perspective has evolved to not only focus on physical fitness but also to prioritize mental well-being, which has been a key element in his recent comeback. When asked who he finds the hardest batsman to ball, he simply smiles and replies, "No one!"

Shami's return has not only bolstered India's pace attack but has also brought in a seasoned leader for the younger bowlers. His experience and ability to read the game are assets that elevate the team's overall performance. Known for his tactical approach, Shami's presence is invaluable, particularly in high-stakes matches, where his sharp instincts and seasoned techniques shine.

As Shami steps back into the limelight, his journey stands as a testament to grit and resilience. The Indian cricket fraternity and millions of fans eagerly watch as he once again takes to the pitch, embodying the spirit of Indian cricket at its finest.

Photo: Pankaj Kumar



IF YOU REALLY WANT TO MAKE A FRIEND, GO TO SOMEONE'S HOUSE AND EAT WITH HIM... THE PEOPLE WHO GIVE YOU THEIR FOOD GIVE YOU THEIR HEART  
—CESAR CHAVEZ

WYNN MACAU DEBUTS DRUNKEN FISH

DINING REDEFINED!



Wynn Macau's Drunken Fish redefines Chinese dining with bold seafood creations and Moutai-infused dishes crafted by Executive Chef Henry Zhang, writes RUPALI DEAN



**A**vibrant tribute to Chinese culture, Drunken Fish at Wynn Macau, led by Executive Chef Henry Zhang, redefines luxury dining by marrying tradition with contemporary flair. Chef Zhang's innovative approach spotlights the ocean's rarest treasures, enhanced with China's revered national liquor, Moutai, creating an exceptional culinary experience. In Chinese mythology, the creature Kun lives in deep, shadowed waters, where light barely reaches its vast form. Rising to the ocean's surface, Kun morphs into Peng, a radiant bird soaring to lofty altitudes and casting its expansive shadow below. Symbolising transformation and boundless ambition, this legend mirrors human potential, urging us to transcend limitations. Inspired by this myth, Wynn Macau presents its latest venture, Drunken Fish, or 'Jiu Kun,' under Zhang's expert vision. This dining experience showcases a lavish seafood spread featuring prized ingredients such as French blue lobsters, Sri Lankan crabs, and

Malaysia's famed 'king of river fish,' all crafted using traditional Chinese techniques with modern twists. "Our philosophy respects tradition while embracing innovation," Zhang affirms. **EXCEPTIONAL SEAFOOD, ARTFULLY CRAFTED** Drunken Fish employs an array of traditional Chinese techniques that amplify the natural flavours and nutrients of the seafood. Steaming preserves freshness, while stir-frying ensures a delightful texture, and braising and poaching add layers of aromatic richness. The restaurant offers a wide range of preparations, inviting guests to explore local and global flavours, including spicy Sichuan, Hong Kong-style, and a fusion of Singaporean, Thai, and Japanese influences. This diverse approach results in a stunning variety of dishes designed to satisfy every palate.



Cooking with Moutai is an exhilarating process that demands balance to enhance rather than overpower a dish's flavour. At Drunken Fish, this unique liquor is used in two signature offerings, demonstrating the culinary finesse required to incorporate Moutai's distinct, pungent essence without it overshadowing the seafood's natural taste. **SAVOUR THE EXPERIENCE** A highlight of the menu is the Moutai flambe' crispy chicken, a dish that harmonises tradition with innovation. The crispy skin and tender meat, infused with the distinct flavour of Moutai, create an unforgettable taste experience. Another standout is the red-spotted grouper with pickled tomato, chili, and bean sprouts—a nod to the traditional sour soup of the Miao and Dong ethnic groups of Guizhou, where the liquor subtly enhances the fish's freshness. Additionally, the empurau, a rare Malaysian fish steamed in soy sauce using Cantonese methods,



presents a remarkable delicacy, available only in select seasons and prized for its exquisite taste. Drunken Fish at Wynn Macau offers a captivating dining experience that celebrates traditional Chinese flavours while embracing innovative culinary techniques. The warm and welcoming setting, accentuated by custom hand-bent aquariums and a chic turquoise Moutai bar, creates an ideal atmosphere for seafood lovers. With a menu that skillfully blends familiar and daring dishes, each visit promises a memorable journey for the senses. Interactive auctions of fresh seafood and exclusive liquors on weekend evenings add to the allure, ensuring each dining experience is as engaging as it is delectable. (Awarded the "Best Food Writer in the Country" by the Indian Culinary Forum, WACS, and the Ministry of Tourism, Rupali Dean writes on food and travel.)

Oktoberfest on a Platter

This Oktoberfest season, Smoke House Deli, in collaboration with United Breweries, brings a month-long celebration featuring a host of special culinary delights

BY SHARMILA CHAND

**O**ur Oktoberfest menu captures the essence of the celebration through bold, vibrant flavours thoughtfully crafted to elevate the beer experience," says Chef Shamsul Wahid, Group Executive Chef, Impresario Entertainment & Hospitality Pvt Ltd. "We've curated a unique selection, including Pizza Dogs, Panuzzos, and Tramezzas, blending tradition with modern innovation. It's a menu designed to surprise and delight, offering a fresh, exciting take on Oktoberfest while staying true to the festive spirit," he adds.

SPECIAL MENU

The well-crafted menu offers a variety of small plates, hearty mains and indulgent desserts, all crafted to pair perfectly with your favourite brews. There's a selection of Pizza Dogs, Panuzzos, and Tramezzas, alongside other delectable dishes. It's more than just a meal—it's a festive feast in true Smoke House Deli fashion, where great food meets great beer for a celebration you won't forget. Start your feast with a delicious selection of Pizza Dogs, each offering a unique twist on a classic favourite. Try the Plant-Based Sausage Dog, topped with mozzarella and tomato. For a smoky kick, the Smokin' Chicken Frank is loaded with ketchup, mustard, citrus chilli, and gherkin relish. Meat lovers won't want to miss the Bolognese Dream Dog, featuring a chicken frank and bold paprika for an unforgettable flavour. Next, indulge in Panuzzos—a lineup of hearty sandwiches that bring bold flavours and fresh ingredients to the table. Enjoy the Mediterranean, packed with nutty hummus, grilled vegetables, and finished with tahina, or the Classic Caprese, featuring tomato, mozzarella, herby basil, and

black pepper. For something a bit more savoury, try the Chicken Balsamico with balsamic chicken, tomato, onion, and fresh greens, or the A-BLT, with crispy bacon, lettuce, avocado, and tomato for a satisfying crunch. Tramezzas truly pack a punch of flavour in every bite, perfect for those who crave a satisfying yet balanced meal. Do not miss the Truffle Shuffle, a decadent mix of brie and truffle oil tossed with oyster, shiitake, and button mushrooms. For a more comforting option, the Deli Roast brings together roast chicken with hollandaise and caramelised onions. If you're craving something richer, try the BLT Molten Brie, combining bacon, brie, tomato, and lettuce, or go for the crispy, creamy combination of The Pollo Frito, featuring fried chicken and a creamy egg salad. For a heartier choice, the Shroom Smash blends a tenderloin patty with grilled mushrooms for a deliciously savoury experience. And of course, no Oktoberfest is complete without beer! Pair these delicious dishes with a variety of beers from United Breweries, available in buckets of 4 and 8, specially selected to enhance your dining experience and bring the festive spirit to life.

SIGNATURE VEG DISHES

- Plant Power Frank (Pizza Dog) – Italian-style hot dogs served with French Fries (Plant-based sausage, mozzarella and tomato).
- Classic Caprese (Panuzzo) – Crispy, stuffed turnover pizza sandwiches served with French Fries (Tomato, fresh mozzarella, basil, EVOO & ground black pepper).
- Truffle Shuffle (Tramezza) –



Folded pizza sandwiches served with French Fries (Brie, truffle oil tossed oyster, shiitake & button mushrooms).

**NON-VEG DISHES**

- Bolognese Dream Dog (Pizza Dog) – Italian-style hot dogs served with French Fries (Minced mutton bolognese, chicken frank and paprika).

- Chicken Balsamico (Panuzzo) – Crispy, stuffed turnover pizza sandwiches served with French Fries (Creamy, diced balsamic chicken, tomato, onion & fresh greens).
- The Shroom Smash (Tramezza) – Folded pizza sandwiches served with French Fries (Smashed tenderloin patty & grilled mushroom).

SIGNATURE COCKTAILS

- Peach House – Bitter Ginger Roku Gin, Peach Schnapps & Ginger Beer.
- Nobel Nectar – Hendrick's Gin with Fresh Cucumber Juice & Elderflower Tonic.
- Gimlet Di Basilico – Roku Gin, Limoncello, Basil Oil & Shiso Leaf.

COMFORT MEETS SOPHISTICATION

Smoke House Deli is renowned for its contemporary culinary experience, offering guests comfort food in a casual and relaxed ambience. The menu is curated using locally sourced ingredients, elevating familiar dishes into gastronomic masterpieces. Smoke House Deli is celebrated for its diverse range of modern European cuisine, featuring exceptional grills, artisanal pizzas, exquisite charcuterie, fine spirits, delectable bakes, sumptuous desserts, and a variety of pastas. Each outlet reflects a Deli-style architecture, telling the tales of the unique history and landmarks of its locale, adorned with whimsical décor, creating the perfect setting for memorable dining experiences. It's an ideal destination for a family meal, a romantic date, or a catch-up with friends, offering a versatile and inviting atmosphere for any occasion. "For over a decade, Smoke House Deli has evolved from a café into a cherished classic, known for its beautifully crafted food and memorable experiences," says Chef Shamsul. "At the core of our ethos is a deep commitment to serving comfort food made from ethically sourced, wholesome ingredients. What truly sets us apart is the attention to detail—whether it's sourcing organic produce from local farms or handcrafting every dish with care. Our whimsical décor, combined with novel offerings and a thoughtfully curated, ever-changing menu, strikes the perfect balance between indulgence and mindful eating. This creates a warm, inviting space that has been cherished by our guests for years." Sharmila Chand is an author, columnist, and journalist who writes on Food, Travel, Culture, and Lifestyle.



Vegan Wonders: Where to Eat Next!

BY TEAM AGENDA

MISS MARGARITA

Miss Margarita features a newly launched menu with a dedicated section for vegetarian and vegan dishes, showcasing its commitment to inclusive dining. Highlights include Classic Guac 'N' Chips with fresh guacamole, Avocado Agua Chile, Charred Sweet Potato & Crispy Cauliflower Tacos, and Stuffed Chilli and Chipotle Potato Skewers, all designed to please plant-based diners.

BEEYOUNG BREWGARDEN

BeeYoung Brewgarden offers an exciting range of vegan cocktails that emphasise innovative drinking options. Signature drinks include Hearts on Fire, Pulp Fiction, and Nutta Sour, along with unique choices like Trufflesome and To Beer, or Not to Beer. These cocktails reflect the venue's dedication to flavourful, inclusive beverages.

ROSE CAFE

Located in Malviya Nagar, Rose Cafe is known for its extensive vegan menu featuring hearty soups, fresh salads, and delicious pastas and pizzas. Diners can enjoy options like Roasted Tomato & Basil soup, Big Greek salad, and Aubergine Parmigiana, all within a cosy atmosphere that makes it a must-visit for vegans.

GUPPY AND THE GRAMMAR ROOM

Guppy and The Grammar Room are celebrated for their creative vegan offerings, focusing on fresh, seasonal ingredients. These restaurants provide inviting spaces for diners to enjoy delightful plant-based meals that highlight vibrant flavours and sustainability.

# LIVING IT UP IN AN AIRBNB IN LONDON

When planning my trip to London, selecting the perfect Airbnb was crucial. I focused on vibrant neighbourhoods, safety and charming details to ensure an unforgettable experience in this bustling city

BY AKANKSHA DEAN

## RELYING ON AIRBNB

For my travels, I have relied on Airbnb with unwavering confidence. Whether transitioning between flat shares or advising friends, it remains my top choice. The perks include local insights, a genuine neighbourhood experience, and costs often lower than hotels but far superior to hostels. While some listings require minimum stays, and occasionally hosts can be problematic, the advantages far outweigh the drawbacks. Thus, I enthusiastically recommend London Airbnbs.

## SELECTING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

When selecting my Airbnb in London, the area was my first consideration. If you have a specific itinerary in mind, staying nearby is a no-brainer. Each neighbourhood in London feels like its own city, so I explored options that sparked my excitement. For a taste of the hipster scene, Hackney, Brixton, and Shoreditch were perfect choices. For luxury, Westminster, Soho, Fitzrovia, or Kensington beckoned, while Hampstead, Islington, and Greenwich offered a cosy, local vibe. These insights gave me a clearer picture of what each neighbourhood had to offer.

I opted for a two-bedroom flat in Marylebone. Nestled between Hyde Park and Regent's Park, this area embodies serene sophistication in London's heart. Its upscale charm provided easy access to Mayfair, Westminster, and The City, as well as the captivating shopping, dining, and majestic architecture of the iconic West End. It's truly a refined oasis amidst the bustle. My Airbnb was within walking distance of Marylebone Station, Tesco, and a couple of delightful restaurants, including one that served amazing Vietnamese food and another renowned for its Fish and Chips.

## DETAILS MATTER

When considering my stay, I focused on price points, assessing my overall budget and daily accommodation expenses. In London, Airbnbs typically range from £30 for a private room to £80-£100 for an entire unit. Prices climb as you approach Central London. I always seek discounts for first-time stays, ensure my flat has a kitchen to save on meals, and choose a location within walking distance of must-see sites. This time, the Airbnb I liked was



roughly £300 over my budget for the entire stay. I messaged the host on the app, and they kindly waived the extra cost. While it may not be paramount for everyone, the details matter when finding the perfect Airbnb in London. I prioritise essentials like Wi-Fi, a washing machine, a tea kettle, microwave, toaster, hairdryer, lift, and air conditioning. I also appreciate visually appealing rooms, often with a splash of colour or, if I'm fortunate, a lovely view. This time, I enjoyed a spacious terrace adjacent to the living room, offering beautiful views and sunlight.

## SUPERHOST FOR THE WIN

When browsing for an Airbnb, I always make it a point to delve into the reviews. No matter how visually appealing a property might be, a poor host can mar the entire experience. I pay particular attention to feedback from other women, as safety is my foremost concern when selecting accommodations. While security measures are in place, one can never be too cautious. If I encounter a single negative review over something trivial, I typically brush it off. However, if there are multiple red flags, it's wise to take your hard-earned pounds elsewhere. I personally favour the "Superhost" option. These hosts often come with glowing reviews and little extras that enhance the stay dramatically. Though some might say it's controversial, I recommend booking your London



Airbnb well in advance — falling in love with a place only to discover it's fully booked is disheartening. Once you find an Airbnb that fits your budget and has good reviews, seize the opportunity and don't look back. After finalising my travel plans, I saved two or three potential Airbnb options. I compared them and made my booking a month in advance. Exploring London was the true highlight of my trip. Visiting London without indulging in afternoon tea is akin to going to Paris and skipping the Eiffel Tower.



## LONDON EXPERIENCES

My tea experience began at Sketch, nestled in a stunning 18th-century building in Mayfair. I was enchanted by the restaurant's signature pink dining room, adorned with whimsical artwork by David Shrigley. By night, this charming tea room transformed into a

vibrant restaurant and cocktail bar led by renowned French chef Pierre Gagnaire. For more culinary adventures, I discovered the modern European flair of The Ivy Cafe Marylebone, the Art Deco elegance of The Wolseley, the fresh seafood at Scotts Mayfair, and the decadent Austrian charm of Fischer's Marylebone. No shopping spree is complete without a visit to Selfridges on Oxford Street, a landmark since 1909, followed by a stroll down Marylebone High Street, where boutiques like Le Labo and Lululemon await. Culturally, I explored The Wallace Collection, housed in a historic Marylebone townhouse, featuring masterpieces by Titian, Rubens, and Rembrandt. I also visited the renowned British Museum nearby. I discovered a world of luxury at the UK's premier shopping destination, Bicester Village. Just a train ride from Marylebone, I explored over 150 chic boutiques in the charming Oxfordshire countryside. With brands like Gucci, Armani, and Givenchy, I indulged in a rich retail

experience and enjoyed savings of up to 60%. As a special guest, I even received an extra 10% off the Village price—truly a shopper's paradise. Surrounded by beautiful parks, my London experience was truly unforgettable.

## THE LAST LEG

As my journey from London began, I couldn't help but feel excitement for my return home after a good two weeks in London. I had chosen a Premium Economy seat with Virgin Atlantic after extensive research. For those who don't know, Virgin Atlantic, founded by Richard Branson in 1984, stands out as a refreshing alternative to conventional carriers. Flying in Premium, simply called Premium, was a transformative experience. The leather seats offered noticeably more space than standard Economy, with an extra inch of width and enhanced recline, making the long-haul flight far more comfortable. I appreciated the adjustable headrest and the additional luxuries, like a pull-out footrest. The in-seat entertainment system, Vera, featured a 13-inch screen packed with an impressive selection of films. Ultimately, my upgrade was a brilliant choice, making the journey back home a truly enjoyable experience. Akanksha Dean is an independent food & travel writer, a chef, and a catalyst. She is the first Indian to have trained at Osteria Francescana in Modena, Italy, rated as the world's best restaurant in 2016 and 2018.



# Srisailam: A journey to spiritual splendour

Discover Srisailam, the "Kailash of the South," where spirituality meets natural beauty. This sacred Andhra Pradesh town offers a profound journey through ancient temples, serene landscapes and cultural wonders, says VISHESH SHUKLA

With a spirit of adventure and a heart full of curiosity, I set out from Bhubaneswar, the vibrant capital of Odisha, on a journey that promised to be extraordinary. Boarding the Yesvantpur Superfast Express, excitement coursed through me as I made my way to a small town in Andhra Pradesh, often called the "Kailash of the South." This enchanting place is home to Sri Mallikarjuna Swamy, one of the twelve sacred Jyotirlingas, and Goddess Bhramaramba, one of the eighteen Mahashakti Peethas, giving it an aura of deep spiritual significance. Nestled in the picturesque Nandyal district, Srisailam is a town where natural beauty and profound spirituality merge, offering a treasure trove of experiences waiting to be uncovered.

Markapur Road railway station serves as the gateway for devotees bound for Srisailam, with convenient connections to this revered destination. Upon arrival, travellers can hire autos for ₹30 to reach Markapuram bus stand, where buses run regularly to Srisailam. The 2.5-hour journey, costing ₹250, offers breathtaking views of the lush landscape, especially during the monsoon season. After arrival, the Shiva temple is within walking distance from the bus stand. Affordable accommodations, such as Kakatiya Anna Satra Sangam (?1100), cater to pilgrims' needs.



The Mallikarjun Swami and Mata temple, a primary attraction, welcomes devotees until late evening. Local eateries like Trishul Family Restaurant provide delicious refreshments. Srisailam's well-organised transport and amenities ensure a hassle-free experience for pilgrims, making the spiritual journey truly unforgettable.

## JOURNEY TO SERENITY

After a refreshing night's sleep, one can start the morning with a visit to the ancient



Hatkeshwar Mahadev Temple, where Lord Shiva defeated the demon Tripurasura. Following the blessings of Lord Shiva, visitors often head to the unique Sakshi Ganapati Swamy temple, where Lord Ganesha is depicted seated with a pen and paper,

recording devotees' wishes to fulfil them. As the sunlight gently touches the mountains, the Paldhara-Panchdhara waterfall awaits, captivating visitors with its serene beauty. Covering all the scenic spots, I proceeded to Patal Ganga, where I enjoyed a ropeway ride and boating on the Krishna River, savouring the serene view of the Srisailam reservoir. After visiting the major sites, I stopped for brunch at a local hotel serving delicious idli, dosa, and menduvada. Satisfied with my meal, I returned to my place to rest and took a two-hour nap.

## SOUVENIRS OF SRISAILAM

The next morning began at 5 AM. After checking out of the hotel, I enjoyed a hearty dosa breakfast before taking an express bus from Srisailam to Markapur for ₹200. I reached Markapur railway station around 10:15 PM to board the Vasco-da-Gama Shalimar Express. With around eight hours left in my journey, I had breakfast from the train's pantry car and spent some time reading. As the journey concluded, I was met with an enchanting surprise—the breathtaking beauty of Chilika Lake, which unfolded before me as the train traversed its waters. Unaware of its majesty, I found myself mesmerised by this unexpected sight, a perfect conclusion to an extraordinary journey.





**YOUR WEEK AHEAD**

MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

This week holds promise, particularly in the realm of finances, where opportunities to enhance your resources appear promising, especially at the start of the week. Celebrations and gatherings underscore your achievements, bringing joy and festivity to your social and work life. At home, the atmosphere is cheerful, with significant contributions from women who bring vitality, creativity, and joy, enriching the lives of those around them with their nurturing roles. The week might also herald joyful family events, such as welcoming new beginnings or celebrating expansions that bring family members closer. As the week closes, expect a shift in your perspective, leading to fresh insights that could significantly benefit your future path. This period is marked by positive transitions and communal happiness.

Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Rose Pink  
Lucky day Sunday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

This week calls for a balanced approach, especially for those who naturally lead with charisma and passion. Emotions may run high, but it's crucial to channel this energy wisely rather than letting impulsiveness or a rigid stance guide your actions. Opportunities may arise that could significantly enhance your circumstances. However, these same opportunities could slip through your fingers if not handled with care due to tendencies toward stubbornness or indifference. Respect for oneself is important, but it's equally vital to maintain respect towards others. Watch for new developments that might stir envy among competitors. Be cautious, as you might also attract negative intentions from others. Remain vigilant about your environment and the motivations of people around you, especially those you employ or who assist you in your daily activities.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Violet  
Lucky day Monday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

This week, you will experience a noticeable surge in vitality and purpose. Your endeavors are backed by a universal alignment that propels you toward success. All your energies are harnessed effectively, guiding you to make significant progress in important areas of your life. You possess both the clarity and the resolve to tackle challenges and turn your ambitions into achievements. A joyful event at home may also occur, bringing fulfillment to a longstanding wish. This could relate to family joy, particularly through children, who may achieve significant academic success or secure opportunities they have been hoping for. Your confidence in your abilities and spiritual support is robust, fostering a conducive environment for positive developments. The possibility of significant transactions involving real estate could also arise, marking a prosperous period.

Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Saffron  
Lucky day Sunday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week, your emotional and sentimental nature will be particularly prominent, offering you an opportunity to express nurturing qualities towards those you care about. Your instinctive ability to heal and counsel will draw others to seek your guidance. However, amidst this emotional engagement, there's a risk of overlooking your professional obligations. Stay vigilant as your straightforward nature could be exploited. It's crucial to strategize and implement new plans aimed at enhancing stability and securing your financial future. Passive daydreaming won't suffice; staying focused on your objectives and managing your emotions effectively are essential to making tangible progress. Keep an eye on your goals and temper your sensitivities to navigate this period successfully.

Lucky number 22 | Lucky colour Lemon Yellow  
Lucky day Wednesday



**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

This week, you might experience a sense of isolation and a disconnect from daily engagements. This could stem from romantic disappointments or a break in a close relationship, impacting your emotional state. Challenges in your professional life are also evident, as your diligent efforts seem to yield little to no progress. Patience is key during this period. It's important to stay prepared and alert, as you may face some opposition. Recognizing and harnessing your strengths will be crucial in navigating these obstacles. As you approach the resolution of these challenges, expect a transformative shift within yourself. Support may arrive in the form of an influential individual who will play a significant role in guiding you. This guidance will spark a renewal in creativity and optimism, prompting innovative approaches in various aspects of your life.

Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Burgundy  
Lucky day Wednesday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

This week, you may find yourself navigating a mix of emotions and detachment in personal relationships. Couples might face several challenges that seem minor but can evoke strong reactions like tears, loud arguments, and eventual agreement. In professional settings, your approach is kind and benevolent, contributing positively to your reputation. You might experience some unexpected financial benefits, enhancing your sense of security. Your ability to effectively handle both personal and financial matters will be evident, showcasing your competence. Your commitment and reliability make you a trusted figure at work. A natural curiosity drives your desire to learn and succeed, potentially making you a source of inspiration for others. Throughout this period, your integrity and courage in standing up for your beliefs could set a powerful example for those around you.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Aqua  
Lucky day Friday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

This week finds you wielding significant influence and determination. Your ability to lead and inspire others stems not from physical prowess but from your strategic position and charisma. You maintain a strict and disciplined approach, leaving little room for emotional considerations. This may lead to challenges in your personal relationships, potentially causing rifts or disappointments in romantic connections. Family dynamics may become strained, particularly regarding significant life choices, as disagreements over such decisions could emerge, possibly involving maternal opposition. Midweek, you might feel overwhelmed by pressure, finding it difficult to make decisions autonomously. However, as the week concludes, you will experience both financial and emotional enrichment. Support from an elder, likely a paternal figure, will provide you with both balance and guidance, setting a foundation for future achievements.

Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Grass Green  
Lucky day Friday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

Currently, you may experience a strained relationship, which could bring significant emotional discomfort. However, embracing these challenges can fortify your resilience and prepare you for future hurdles. Remember, true bravery emerges only in the presence of fear. Should an opportunity arise, it's essential to push past your uncertainties and seize it with determination. Now is the moment to pursue your aspirations vigorously, casting aside all doubts and obstacles. If you sense that your efforts have fallen short or the outcomes aren't as fulfilling as anticipated, take time to reassess your strategies and explore alternative avenues. By doing so, you're more likely to align yourself with a path that leads to success. By week's end, you may find yourself encountering opportunities for increased financial gain or an enticing proposal.

Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour Indigo  
Lucky day Saturday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

This week presents an opportunity for profound influence and decisive actions. You'll find yourself in scenarios where engaging directly with influential figures is not only possible but beneficial. Your ability to navigate these interactions showcases your knack for leadership and strategic thinking. You'll be seen as a source of inspiration, providing guidance and stability to those around you. Enjoy a sense of control and respect, as your balanced approach to life's challenges allows you to make sound decisions. Your presence commands respect, as you are known for your fairness and unwavering commitment to your principles. This period highlights your talent for overseeing the bigger picture without losing sight of your core values, ensuring that emotions do not cloud your decision-making process.

Lucky number 16 | Lucky colour Mustard  
Lucky day Tuesday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

This week, take some time to unwind and recharge. Prioritize healing through various wellness practices, from mindful exercises to enjoying nature's subtle offerings and ensuring adequate rest. This will equip you to handle the brisk pace of upcoming events. Your professional life appears dynamic, with potential positive shifts in your current role, possibly signaling a promotion or financial reward. Responsibilities at home, particularly involving children, will also demand your attention, bringing both joy and some additional expenditure. Romantic gestures could lead to planning special getaways with loved ones. For those unattached, the period is ripe for encountering significant connections that could lead to long-term commitments. Enjoy a sense of closeness with your partner as the weekend approaches, reinforcing your bond.

Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Grey  
Lucky day Tuesday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

You possess remarkable strength, potentially even overwhelming at times. Your deep perceptiveness and sharp intuition enable you to penetrate to the core of any matter. Your analytical abilities are at their peak, making the realization of your ambitions significantly more attainable. This period marks an excellent opportunity to dispel any obscurities that have obscured your true understanding and to sever ties with past constraints that have limited your progress. It's an ideal time to prioritize your objectives and pursue personal growth. A profound spiritual renewal is also on the horizon. Engage in activities that harmonize you with the natural world, such as walking, yoga, meditation, or even pursuing a sport at a professional level. Rather than resisting life's flow, allow it to guide you forward.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Burgundy  
Lucky day Thursday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

Individuals born under your sign possess an expansive potential that enables profound transformations and creations according to their will. While unraveling all mysteries may not be feasible for everyone, you excel as a mentor to those eager to delve into their psyche to unlock their latent capabilities. Your focus on spiritual growth and introspection can significantly enrich lives and bring about transformative changes. You hold a strong belief in the principle of fairness and the reciprocal nature of actions. The choices you make continuously shape your future outcomes, advocating for deliberate and positive decisions to cultivate desirable experiences. Such clarity in thought ensures the realization of goals and resolves many of life's challenges. A significant journey may soon be forthcoming, presenting new opportunities for growth and exploration.

Lucky number 20 | Lucky colour Magenta  
Lucky day Friday

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# Pursuit of happiness

Let us welcome the new year with open arms and alet go of the negativity that holds us back.  
Only a heart bereft of pessimism can embrace happiness

**GURUSPEAK**



Sri Sri Ravi Shankar  
Spiritual Guru

**H**APPINESS is the one thing that everybody is seeking. People do find happiness but it is momentary; for couple of hours or days. True happiness is when you find inner stability and comfort. You know you are connected to something unimaginably bigger and that there is an unshakable power within you. Here are a few pointers to ensure that happiness simply wells up in you.  
**HEALTH:** In India, "swastha" refers to one who is established in oneself. A healthy person has a smile on the face, love in the heart and strength and vitality in the body. Seeing life with the eyes of wisdom makes negative emotions go away and you start smiling from the core of your being.  
**ATTACHMENTS:** These cause feverishness that take away peace of mind. You are in pieces and fall prey to misery. Your first step is directing your attachment to the Knowledge and the Divine. Your



non-attachment to the mundane is your charm. Your attachment to the Divine is your beauty.  
**PROBLEM:** Five steps to solve a problem are as follows: 1) Accept

the problem and see it as a challenge. 2) Know that the problem is not real. 3) Know that nature has provided you the solution even before giving you

the problem. 4) If it concerns people, keep in touch with them instead of avoiding them. 5) Talk less and give time a chance.  
**INSECURITY:** How much time

have you spent being insecure and gloomy? It builds up toxins in your body. Know that there are good people in the world who will come to your help. There is a

power which will guide you and help you out. With this wisdom and understanding, get over your insecurity.  
**NEGATIVITY:** This mindset needs a hook to hang on — this person or that thing. Negativity or aversion for even one person can guarantee a one-way ticket to hell — you need nothing else! Don't focus on the support of negativity; look at the seed. In a negative atmosphere, be like a drop of ghee and float.  
**SUCCESS:** My parameter for success is an undying smile, a confidence that cannot be shaken and a fearless attitude. Take life not as a struggle but as a challenge; not as a suffering but a way to express the multitude of emotions.  
Break through all the barriers and feel that you are Blessed. This is the one and only step you have to take — the rest will happen happily enough.  
(www.artofliving.org)