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SPORT 7

OLYMPIAD GOLD-MEDALLIST VANTIKA READY FOR GRANDMASTER TITLE

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## HINDUS BE UNITED, EMPOWERED, WEAKNESS NOT AN OPTION: RSS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NAGPUR/NEW DELHI

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Saturday gave a clarion call for unity among the Hindus to strengthen the community and simultaneously stated that 'Deep State', 'wokeism' and 'cultural Marxist' are declared enemies of all cultural traditions. Condemning the violence against Hindus in Bangladesh, Bhagwat said that as long as the radical nature of committing atrocities out of anger persists — not only Hindus, but all minorities will be in danger. He said what is happening in Bangladesh is also a learning for Hindus in India. "If we are weak, we are inviting atrocity. Wherever we are, we need to be united and empowered and weakness is not an option," he said. "What happened in our neighbouring Bangladesh? It might have some immediate reasons and those who are concerned will discuss it. But the underlying issue is the repeated atrocities against Hindus. But for the first time, Hindus united to protect themselves, but as long as this radical violence persists, not just Hindus, but all



Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat performs 'Shastra Puja' during a function organised on the occasion of 'Vijayadashami', in Nagpur, Saturday, October 12, 2024

### Systematic desecration of temples in Bangladesh: MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Termining the recent attacks on places of worship and a theft at a revered temple in Bangladesh as "deplorable events," India on Saturday said these follow a "systematic pattern of desecration" of temples and deities there. New Delhi also requested Dhaka to ensure the safety and security of Hindus, all other minorities, and their places of worship in the

neighbouring country. In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) described the incidents as "deplorable events" and flagged that these follow a "systematic pattern of desecration" of temples and deities in Bangladesh. "We have noted with serious concern the attack on a Pujya mandap in Tantibazar, Dhaka and the theft at the revered Jeshoreshwari Kali temple at Satkhira," the MEA said. Bangladeshi daily 'Prothom Alo' has reported an incident

of a "crude bomb" allegedly thrown at a Durga Puja pandal in the Tantibazar area of Old Dhaka. Though the bomb caught fire, nobody was injured, the report said, adding that the incident took place on Friday night. Friday marked the ninth and last day of Navratri, the nine-day sacred period for Hindus. Durga Puja is also celebrated during this time. It culminates with Dussehra or Vijaya Dashami on the 10th day.

minorities are in danger. They need support from Hindus from the entire world and India's government must step in," the RSS chief said in his Annual Vijayadashami programme at RSS Headquarters in Nagpur which also marked the beginning of centenary year as RSS was founded on this day in 1925. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Cabinet colleagues and top BJP leaders greeted RSS members on the occasion of its foundation day and said since its inception, the organisation has been doing a remarkable job of protecting Indian culture and inculcating the ideas of patriotism in youth. Bhagwat said attempts to disturb and destabilise the country seem to be gaining momentum from all directions, while a narrative is being spread in Bangladesh to portray India as a threat, he said. According to Bhagwat, a narrative is being spread in neighbouring Bangladesh, which recently witnessed a massive political upheaval, that India is a threat and they should join Pakistan as a defence against Bharat. Who is spreading such a narrative, he asked.

## Mysuru-Darbhanga Express entered occupied loop line

PNS/PTI ■ NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

A day after a passenger train Arammed into a stationary freight train near Chennai, experts and union leaders said according to the data-logger video, the Mysuru-Darbhanga Express train was given a green signal to pass through the main line, however, it entered a loop line already occupied by the freight train. Train number 12578, Mysuru-Darbhanga Bagmati Express, collided with the stationary goods train at the Kavaraipettai railway station in the Chennai rail division in Tamil Nadu at around 8:30 pm on Friday, leading to injuries to nine passengers. The data logger is a device placed in the station area to capture train movements and signal aspects, among other things. This data logger's yard-simulation video has been circulated among senior railway officials' WhatsApp groups since Saturday morning, prompting them to draw a parallel between the accident and the Balasore train collision of June 2, 2023. Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) of the Southern Railway said he is not aware of any such video and that multiple investigations have already been initiated into the collision. In a Press statement, the Railway Board also admitted that the passenger train was given a green signal for the



Restoration work underway after an express train rammed into a stationary train on Friday, at Kavaraipettai in Tiruvallur district, Saturday, October 12, 2024

main line but it experienced a jerk and entered the loop line, resulting in the collision with the freight train. A high-level enquiry has been ordered into the incident. In Balasore, the Howrah-bound Coromandel Express was given a green signal for the main line. However, due to the wrong interlocking of tracks, it entered a loop line and collided with a stationary goods train. "Based on the information available in the public domain, it appears that this collision almost repeats the Balasore train collision of June 2, 2023. The railways should take a serious approach to remove the anomalies in the signalling system," R Kumaresan, president, All India Loco Running Staff Association (AILRSA), Southern Railway, said. According to safety experts, in an automatic-signalling system, the signal aspect follows the interlocking of tracks. It means if the signal is green for the main line, the interlocking will automatically be set in such a way that the train comes on the main line. "The lack of coordination between signal aspect and interlocking happens due to some fault in the signalling system. Prime facie, it appears to be some kind of a technical glitch," a safety expert said, requesting anonymity. Sanjay Pandhi, the working president of the Indian Railway Loco Runningmen's Organisation (IRLRO), expressed surprise as according to him, all previous trains passed through the said station "without any abnormalities in the signalling and interlocking system".

## Defence Minister inaugurates BRO projects worth ₹2,236 crores



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a major boost to border infrastructure including those areas facing China on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday virtually dedicated to the nation, 75 projects of Border Roads Organisation (BRO) at a cost of Rs 2,236 crores. These projects, 22 roads, 51 brid-

ges and two others are spread across 11 States and Union Territories. Nineteen are in Jammu and Kashmir, 18 in Arunachal Pradesh, 11 in Ladakh, nine in Uttarakhand, six in Sikkim, five in Himachal Pradesh, two each in West Bengal and Rajasthan and one each in Nagaland, Mizoram and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. These strategically important infrastructure projects will ensure logistical backup to troops deployed on the frontline and lead to all round development of remote villages and areas through improved connectivity. The Defence Minister inaugurated the projects from the Headquarters, Trishakti Corps in Sukna, West Bengal. One of the main highlights was the inauguration of the Kupup-Sherathang Road in Sikkim which serves as a crucial link between Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg and Zuluk axis. In his address, Rajnath termed the projects as a testament to the government's unwavering resolve to keep strengthening the border infrastructure and ensuring socio-economic progress of these areas. He added that these projects will go a long way in enhancing the defence preparedness of the country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Viksit Bharat by 2047' can be realised through such infrastructure projects, he said.

## HAPPY DUSSEHRA



President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi hold bow and arrow during 'Dussehra' (Vijayadashami) celebration organised by Shri Dharmik Leela Committee, Red Fort, in New Delhi



## NIA chargesheets Babbar Khalsa International chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday chargesheeted banned Babbar Khalsa International's (BKI) Pakistan-based chief Wadhawa Singh and five other terrorists in the murder of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader Vikas Prabhakar in Punjab in April this year. Prabhakar, also known as Vikas Bagga, was shot dead by the terrorists belonging to a BKI module at his confectionary shop at Nangal in Punjab's Roopnagar district on April 13, 2024.



## Love driving your SUVs? Get ready to pay Congestion Tax

### Heads up Delhi drivers, joyrides may be vanish

BY RAJESH KUMAR

Worried over increasing traffic jams, the Delhi government is mulling to introduce a congestion tax to reduce traffic during peak hours to tackle congestion. Inspired by cities like London, New York, and Singapore, the Delhi government is planning to introduce a congestion tax on vehicles entering the city during peak hours - 8 am to 10 am and 5.30 pm to 7.30 pm - through 13 major entry points along its borders. According to officials, the proposal is currently in its advanced stages of planning. The pilot programme will focus on 13 key entry points around Delhi's borders and will utilise a barrier-free charging mechanism that incorporates FASTag technology and number plate recognition systems, avoiding manual collection to prevent traffic bottlenecks. The move aims to address traffic

congestion and reduce pollution. This is the third time the Delhi government is contemplating introducing a congestion tax to reduce traffic burden on the capital's roads. The Pioneer has been running a campaign highlighting traffic jams in the national capital, highlighting the woes of daily commuters. However, the implementation of this congestion tax is not without its challenges. Officials are in the process of establishing a legal framework that will support the enforcement of the tax, alongside necessary modifications to existing Delhi and Central Motor Vehicle regulations. The revenue generated from the tax, along with any penalties, will be used to enhance public transportation and improve road infrastructure, particularly for

vulnerable users such as cyclists and pedestrians. The influx of vehicles from nearby rapidly expanding towns and the flow of commercial goods vehicles have contributed to the increased vehicular traffic entering Delhi. Currently, several border areas, including DND and New Ashok Nagar, are major choke points. According to the transport department, two wheelers account for 66 per cent and growth rate is touching nine per cent. Cars occupy more than 70 per cent of road space but account for less than 20 per cent of passengers carried daily. This is not the first time such a measure has been considered in Delhi. Similar proposals were discussed in the past, but could not be implemented. In 2017, a Parliamentary



Photo: Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

committee had also recommended levying a toll on congested stretches in the Capital. In 2018, a plan was introduced to impose a congestion tax on vehicles along 21 high-traffic stretches in the city, including sections like the Aurobindo Chowk-Andheria More corridor, the Nehru Place to Modi Mills flyover, areas around Hauz Khas Metro station, and the ITO intersection. In 2008, then Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit suggested an additional

charge on private vehicles entering the capital to promote public transport. However, the proposal was eventually shelved. Former Delhi Transport Commissioner Rajni Kant Verma who conceptualised the project for the first time in 2008, told the pioneer that he had made a presentation before the then Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit and Chief Secretary PK Tripathi but the Congress government was not interested due to backlash from

voters. The concept is good to reduce traffic burden on the roads. "If executed, congestion will come down at least 26 per cent; traffic reduction by 15 per cent; Nitrogen Oxide will come down by 13 per cent and PM 10 by 15 per cent. Accidents are also expected to drop by 40-70 per annum and bus usage will also go up one to three per cent, and that will help to increase revenue," he said. Verma said the government would have to create an infrastructure in place before introducing the Congestion tax in Delhi. "All vehicles should be registered. There should be an intelligent traffic signalling system in Delhi," said Verma, adding that this is a very complex issue which needs to be handled carefully. The survey at nine entry points showed that around 3.07 lakh cars and 1.27 lakh two-wheelers entered Delhi daily. Besides, 70,000 commercial vehicles enter Delhi daily. This number increases to over one lakh when considering all 127 entry points into the city. In 2023, Delhi saw a record number of vehicle sales, with over 6.5 lakh vehicles registered. According to the Economic Survey of Delhi, the total number of motor vehicles on road in the national capital on March 31, 2023 was 79.45 lakh, showing the increase by 0.34 per cent from 2021-22. The government has banned Diesel Vehicles more than 10 years old and Petrol Vehicles more than 15 years old, and hence 'deregistered' 62,59,214 vehicles till 2022-23. During the period of 2022-23, the number of vehicles per thousand population is 473 (As per Census 2011) which is not much affected from 2021-22 (472). Total motorised vehicles in Delhi are 79.45 lakh. Cars and jeeps accounted for around 26 per cent of the total registered motorised vehicles, whereas two wheelers are about 66.64 per cent of total registered vehicles.









# New BJP Govt In Haryana To Be Sworn In On Oct 17: PM Modi To Attend

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

After a resounding victory in the Assembly elections, the swearing-in ceremony of the new BJP government in Haryana will be held on October 17 in Panchkula, the party said in a statement on Saturday.

It said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, senior BJP leaders and chief ministers of some other states will attend the event.

"We have got the nod of the prime minister and on October 17, the oath-taking ceremony of the chief minister and his council of ministers will take place in Panchkula," Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said. The ceremony will be held at the Dussehra ground in Panchkula Sector 5 at 10 am.

The BJP had indicated during the assembly election that Nayab Singh Saini, who replaced Manohar Lal Khattar as chief minister of Haryana in March, would be its choice for the top post if the party won. The party ended up with its best-ever haul of 48 seats, 11 more than the Congress. The JJP and AAP were decimated and the INLD managed to win just two seats.

For the second time, Panchkula will be hosting the

swearing-in ceremony of the BJP government which Union Home Minister Amit Shah and chief ministers of BJP-ruled states will also attend.

The new date was finalised after caretaker Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, the prospective incumbent, had a meeting with Home Minister Shah in New Delhi on Friday night. Earlier, the swearing-in ceremony was planned for October 15, but owing to PM Modi's availability on October 17 it was rescheduled, party leaders said. In 2014, Panchkula was the venue for the swearing-in of Manohar Lal Khattar, the BJP's first chief minister in the state, after the party won a majority with 47 seats in the 90-member Assembly. At that time also, PM Modi had attended the ceremony.

Days ahead of government formation for the third time, Saini on Friday said 25,000 appointments would be made before the oath-taking ceremony. Taking a jibe at the main Opposition, he said the Congress never rose above corruption and dynastic politics.

"In the past, they had won power by deceiving people in several states, including Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, and others. The Congress has lost its credibility," Saini told the

media.

Congratulating the people and party workers on the formation of the BJP government for the third time, Saini expressed gratitude to the public for their support and announced that in line with a pre-election promise the examination results for 25,000 posts would be released soon even before the oath-taking ceremony.

A 10-member committee headed by the Panchkula District Commissioner has been set up by the Chief Secretary to make arrangements for the oath-taking ceremony.

Saini had met PM Modi and other senior BJP leaders in Delhi on Wednesday after scoring a spectacular hat-trick in Haryana by winning 48 seats, 11 more than the Congress. Caretaker Chief Minister Saini, under whose leadership the party fought the high-octane electoral battle and overcame a 10-year anti-incumbency, may be retained as the CM, party leaders believe.

Independent candidates who got three seats, extended unconditional support to the BJP, whereas Dushyant Chautala's Jannayak Janata Party (JJP) and Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) drew a blank.

The BJP Legislature Party is likely to meet a day ahead of the oath-taking ceremony in Chandigarh to elect its leader who will be the state's new Chief Minister, most probably Saini, 54, a non-Jat but an Other Backward Class (OBC) leader. Saini had replaced BJP veteran Manohar Lal Khattar as the Chief Minister in March, just two months before the Lok Sabha elections. Eight out of 10 ministers in the outgoing Saini Cabinet faced defeat.

The two who won were Mahipal Dhand and Mool Chand Sharma from Panipat Rural and Ballabgarh seats, respectively.

The party's seven-time lawmaker, Anil Vij, is the senior-most in the party. He is among the frontrunners for a Cabinet berth, apart from Dalit lawmakers like six-time MLA Krishan Lal Panwar (Israna) and two-time MLA Krishan Bedi (Narwana), both loyalists of Khattar.

The prospective women Cabinet Ministers include first-timers Arti Rao (Ateli), daughter of Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh, and Shruti Chaudhry (Tosham), daughter of Rajya Sabha member Kiran Chaudhry. Arti is an OBC while Shruti represents the Jat community.

# Punjab CM to flag issues of millers and Aarthiyas before GOI on Oct 14

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann will call on the Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution on Monday (October 14) for flagging the issues of Millers and Aarthiyas with him.

Chairing a meeting to review the ongoing procurement of paddy here, Mann said that the demands of the millers and Aarthiyas are genuine and the union government must give a sympathetic view to it. During a telephonic conversation with Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, he apprised him of the gravity of the situation and sought time from him to have detailed deliberations over the matter. Mann said that he will call on the Union Minister at the national capital on Monday and raise the issues of Millers and Aarthiyas.

The Chief Minister also took stock of the ongoing procurement and lifting of grains in the Mandis along with the payment being made to the farmers. He asked the officers to ensure that every single grain of paddy is procured and lifted from the Mandis. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the state government is committed to procure and lift every single grain of paddy from the Mandis.



Mann said that so far 4.30 lakh Metric ton paddy has arrived in Mandis. He said that so far a payment worth Rs 573.55 crore has been made to the farmers. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the state government has already made elaborate arrangements to purchase the golden harvest of the farmers as soon as it arrives in the Mandis.

He said that smooth and hassle-free procurement of grains is being ensured in the market so that farmers don't face any sort of inconvenience. Mann said that he is personally monitoring the entire procurement process to ensure that farmers do not face any sort of inconvenience. He said that the state government has taken initiatives

chasing the harvest of farmers as soon as it arrives in the Mandis. He said that a viable mechanism has been evolved to ensure on-the-spot payment to the farmers in their bank accounts. Mann said that smooth and hassle-free procurement of grains is being ensured in the market so that farmers don't face any sort of inconvenience.

The Chief Minister said that all out efforts have been made to ensure smooth, hassle free and quick procurement of Paddy on one hand and facilitate the farmers in getting timely payment of their produce on the other. He categorically said that farmers of the state should not be put to any inconvenience for the sale of their produce in the mandis. Mann said that the state government is duty bound to ensure that every golden grain of the farmers is procured and lifted immediately.

# Results of recruitment exams for 25,000 posts in Haryana to be announced soon: CM Saini

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said the results of recruitment exams for nearly 25,000 posts will be announced soon, even before the new BJP government is sworn in.

Over a month ago, Saini had said the results of recruitment examinations conducted by the Haryana Staff Selection Commission (HSSC) were ready. Taking cognisance of a complaint filed by the Congress, the Election Commission in August barred authorities in Haryana from announcing the results of recruitment exams for police constables and teachers till the assembly elections were over.

He also expressed his gratitude to the people of Haryana for giving the BJP a third consecutive term in the state. Saini was speaking to reporters after visiting Pipili, Ladwa and Babain grain markets in Kurukshetra district. He won Ladwa seat in the recent Haryana Assembly polls.

He was accompanied by Additional Chief Secretary, Social Justice and Empowerment Department, G Anupama; Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Joggal; and Superintendent of Police Varun Singla. Saini congratulated BJP workers and expressed his gratitude to the people of the state for ensuring the party's vic-

tority in the elections. He announced that as promised by the BJP ahead of the polls, the examination results for nearly 25,000 posts would be released soon, even before the new government is sworn in.

After this, Saini had said joining letters would be issued to the qualifying candidates before he takes oath as chief minister. The BJP ended up with its best-ever haul of 48 seats in the October 5 Haryana polls, 11 more than the Congress. The new government is likely to be sworn in on October 17.

# Punjab Govt appoints retired IRS Arbind Modi as Chief Advisor

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Government, making a strategic move to enhance fiscal management in the State, on Friday appointed noted retired Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer Arbind Modi as the Chief Advisor (Fiscal Affairs) in the Department of Finance. With a distinguished career in tax administration, Modi will advise the government on critical financial matters, including resource mobilization, capital and revenue expenditure review, and fiscal debt restructuring. He will hold the rank of Cabinet Minister, ensuring he has the authority and resources to effectively implement financial strategies.

The decision, communicated through an official order from Chief Secretary KAP Sinha, underscored the Government's commitment to strengthening its financial framework. Modi will serve in an honorary capacity, allowing him to contribute his expertise without a salary while receiving benefits equivalent to those of a Cabinet Minister, including travel allowances, reimbursements, and necessary residential facilities.

Modi is well-acquainted with significant roles in fiscal policy and administration. He has previously served as a member of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) and led a panel formed by the Central

Government to address the nation's economic needs. Additionally, he was part of a seven-member committee aimed at simplifying income tax laws, reflecting his extensive experience in tax reform and policy-making.

Throughout his career, Modi has played pivotal roles in various initiatives, particularly in the realm of Goods and Services Tax (GST). He served as the Chairman of the Task Force on GST established by the 13th Finance Commission and contributed as a resource person for the committee responsible for estimating the revenue-neutral rate for GST. His international exposure as a Regional Tax and Trade Advisor for

South Asia at the International Finance Corporation, part of the World Bank Group, has equipped him with a global perspective on fiscal matters.

With Modi's appointment, the Punjab Government aims to streamline its financial management processes, enhance revenue collection, and ensure prudent fiscal governance. His vast experience and proven track record in tax administration will be invaluable as Punjab navigates its financial challenges and seeks sustainable economic growth. The government is optimistic that Modi's leadership in fiscal affairs will set a new standard for financial accountability and transparency in the state.

# 8 members of family dead as car plunges into canal in Haryana

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Kaithal: Tragedy struck a family here when three women and five girls who were heading for a mela on the occasion of Dussehra died when their car plunged into a canal on Saturday. Police said the driver was rescued but eight other occupants of the car drowned. They said the driver lost control of the vehicle and it plunged into the canal near Mundri village. The deceased were identified as Satwinder (50), Chameli (65), Teejo (45), Fiza (16), Komal (12), Vandana (10), Riya (10) and Ramandeep (6). All were residents of Deeg village in Kaithal. The incident occurred when they were heading for Baba Rajpuri Mela on the occasion of Dussehra. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a post on X, described the accident as heart-rendering and conveyed his condolences to the kin of the victims. He said the local administration was making every effort to help under the state government's supervision. Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini also expressed grief over the death of eight members of a family.

After this, Saini had said joining letters would be issued to the qualifying candidates before he takes oath as chief minister. The BJP ended up with its best-ever haul of 48 seats in the October 5 Haryana polls, 11 more than the Congress. The new government is likely to be sworn in on October 17.

# Golden Jubilee celebration of HRTC held; Focus on electric vehicles says CM Sukhu

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday presided over the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC) in which Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri was the Special Guest.

Addressing the gathering, Sukhu congratulated the HRTC and acknowledged its unparalleled contribution to the development of Himachal Pradesh and said that under the present State Government, the stature of the Transport Corporation has grown significantly.

He said that what began as a journey on the winding roads of the state has now evolved into a reliable and comfortable travel experience for the people of the state. He credited the unwavering dedication of HRTC's officers and employees for their crucial role in the suc-

cessful 50-year journey of the corporation.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister said that the salaries of HRTC employees and pension of pensioners would be paid on the 28th of this month. Apart from this the state government would allocate Rs. 50 crore to cover 55 months of overtime dues for employees, which would be fully disbursed by 31st March, 2025. He said that the government also plans to settle pending medical bills amounting to Rs. 9 crore within the next two months.

Sukhu called to HRTC to transform into a "Green HRTC" and become a self-reliant corporation by 31st March, 2026. He said that apart from all official vehicles HRTC would be replaced with electric vehicles by March 31, 2025 which would play a pivotal role in strengthening the financial condition of the corporation. He encouraged HRTC to plan for the next 50

years and shared fond memories of the corporation's achievements.

The Chief Minister said that the financial mismanagement of the previous state government have put the corporation into losses whereas the present state government was making all possible efforts and making necessary reforms to deal with its financial challenges. In addition apart from upgrading the infrastructure of the corporation, the government is ensuring the welfare of its employees as well. About 7,300 HRTC employees were now benefitted from the OPS, 1,546 contract employees have been regularized and 608 new jobs have been created in the corporation, with 550 more positions in the process of being filled. Additionally, 421 employees of the corporation have received promotions.

He said that the government was committed to

strengthening HRTC and during its short tenure, 210 new ordinary buses, 11 Volvo buses and 35 electric buses have been added to the HRTC fleet. The process of upgrading the corporation continues, with plans to purchase 297 Type-1 electric buses, 30 air-conditioned Type-3 electric buses, 50 mini and midi buses and 24 Volvo buses. He said that a budget of Rs. 327 crore has been allocated to HRTC for the purchase of electric buses, with further plans to acquire 2,000 Type-2 electric buses.

The Chief Minister said that HRTC plays a key role in achieving the vision of a "Green Himachal," and the government was integrating digital technology transport sector also. The Government has introduced cashless payment options in HRTC buses, making Himachal the first state to offer such facilities in the transport sector.

# Grand Dussehra celebrations all across Punjab and Haryana

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The effigies of Ravana, Kumbhakaran and Meghnad went up in a blaze of fire, smoke and sound as Dussehra was celebrated with great enthusiasm and fervour across Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh on Saturday.

General public and political leaders took part in the celebrations at Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Patiala, Amritsar and Mohali in Punjab, Panchkula, Karnal, Rohtak and Ambala in Haryana, and in Chandigarh, the common capital of the two states, among other places.

In Ludhiana, the key attraction was a 125-foot-tall Ravana effigy, while a towering 155-foot-tall effigy caught everyone's eye in Panchkula. Tight security arrangements were put in place in different parts of Punjab and Haryana to ensure an incident-free Dussehra.



Taking to X, Punjab Governor and Chandigarh Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria said, "I extend heartfelt greetings to the people of Punjab and Chandigarh on the auspicious occasion of Dussehra. Dussehra is celebrated across the country as a

mark of establishment of Dharma and as Vijayadashmi that marks triumph of good over evil." Greeting the people of the state, Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya said Dussehra symbolising the victory of good over evil is a fes-

tival that reinforces the values of righteousness, courage, and integrity.

"It is a time to reflect on our actions and recommit ourselves to building a society where equality, justice, and inclusivity thrive. Let us strive to eliminate the evils of discrimination, inequality, and social injustice, and work collectively towards a harmonious and prosperous Haryana," Dattatreya said.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, who attended a Dussehra event in Amritsar, said in a post on X, "Congratulations to everyone on the holy festival of Dussehra, which symbolises the victory of good over evil. Let's take a vow to follow the path of goodness and truth, and work together to eliminate evil from our society and lives."

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini also greeted the people on the occasion of Dussehra.

# Punjab Government intensifies crackdown on illegal mining

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab government has launched a coordinated effort to combat illegal mining activities in the state as a joint task force comprising officers from the mining department and local police executed a large-scale operation in Amritsar district.

Mining and Geology Minister Barinder Kumar Goyal said that the mining department has adopted a zero-tolerance policy against illegal mining and the operation uncovered an illicit mining site in the village Dhingai, Ajnala in district Amritsar, where recent evidence of unauthorized excavation was detected.

Goyal said that the team discovered operational machinery at the site, including a pochain excavator, which was promptly documented and seized by the authorities. The raid also exposed a dubious agreement between two indi-



viduals, Harpreet Singh and Jasbir Singh, ostensibly granting permission for soil excavation. The legitimacy of this agreement is currently under investigation.

The Minister stated, "Such unauthorized activities will not be tolerated. We are resolute in our commitment to preserving our natural resources and will take decisive action against those who violate the law." He informed that the police

department has been instructed to immediately file an FIR against both the excavators and the landowner. Besides this, all machinery involved in the illegal mining operation has been impounded and placed in police custody.

Goyal urged citizens to report any suspicious mining activities in their vicinity to the authorities, adding that the campaign against illegal excavation continues.

The raid was monitored in real time via body cameras affixed to the officers' uniforms. These cameras transmitted live footage directly to the state headquarters in Chandigarh, enabling government officials to oversee the operation remotely. This innovative surveillance measure ensured transparency and allowed for immediate supervision of the enforcement action from the highest levels of the administration.



# Weapons, equipments will be used with full force if needed: Defence Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday said India has never attacked any country out of hatred or contempt but if its interests are threatened, "we will not hesitate to take a big step". On the occasion of Vijayadashami, he performed 'Shastra Puja' (worship of weapons) at the Sukna military station in West Bengal, and said the ritual is a "clear indication that if need be, weapons and equipment will be used with full force".

The Sukna-based 33 Corps, popularly known as the 'Trishakti' Corps, is responsible for guarding the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China in the Sikkim sector.

"India has never attacked any country out of hatred or contempt. We fight only when someone insults or tries to harm our integrity and sovereignty; when war is waged against religion, truth and human values. This is what we have inherited. We will continue to preserve this heritage," Singh said in a statement issued by the defence ministry.

"However, if our interests are threatened, we will not



hesitate to take a big step. 'Shastra Puja' is a clear indication that if need be, the weapons, equipment will be used with full force," he said. Earlier in the day, the defence minister shared photographs of the ritual on social media. "On the occasion of Vijayadashami in India, there has been a long-standing tradition of weapon worship. Today, I performed 'Shastra Puja' at the 33 Corps headquarters in Sukna, Darjeeling," he posted in Hindi.

Vijayadashami marks the end of Navratra and is celebrated as the festival of Dussehra. This significant ceremony -- 'Shastra Puja' -- in the Indian

Army symbolises the respect for weapons as the protectors of the nation's sovereignty, the ministry said. The event was attended by Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi, Defence Secretary-designate R K Singh, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Eastern Command Lt General Ram Chander Tiwari, Director General, Border Roads, Lt General Raghu Srinivasan, General Officer Commanding of Trishakti Corps Lt General Zubin A Minwalla and other senior officers. The defence minister initiated the rituals with 'Kalash Puja', followed by the

'Shastra Puja' and 'Vahan Puja'. Rajnath also interacted with the troops at the Sukna military station. "The rituals, performed to seek blessings for strength, success and safety, reaffirm the cultural and spiritual depth of Dussehra, underscoring the pivotal role of weapon systems in safeguarding the country," the statement said. They symbolise the preparedness, resolve and unwavering dedication of the armed forces to protect the nation, it added. "The ceremony highlighted the Indian Army's blend of tradition and modernisation,

with a focus on preserving India's sovereignty and promoting indigenous defence systems and platforms," the statement said.

Rajnath commended the vigilance and critical role of the armed forces in maintaining peace and stability along the borders.

He said Dussehra symbolises the victory of good over evil. The defence minister was scheduled to address the Army Commanders Conference in Gangtok on Friday in person.

But due to bad weather in the Sikkim capital, he addressed them through video conference from the Army location in Sukna.

The conference came amid a lingering border row in eastern Ladakh. Its first phase was hosted in a forward area in Sikkim's Gangtok, a location that holds significance for the Indian Army, given its proximity to the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Rajnath in his address to the top commanders of the Army expressed confidence in the force in dealing with "any contingency", even as he said the ongoing talks with China for a peaceful resolution of the row "will continue at all levels".

# CAQM empowers district officials against stubble burning

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Following a rap from the Supreme Court, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has empowered district authorities, including District Magistrates in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and NCR areas of Rajasthan, to take action against officials for inaction on stubble burning enforcement.

The CAQM order aimed to curb pollution due to stubble burning ahead of the winter season. It directs district administrations and state governments to intensify vigilance during the harvest season and has deployed 26 central teams to Punjab and Haryana. A dedicated paddy stubble management cell has also been established for coordinated action and monitoring, said the CAQM, a statutory body tasked with preparing strategies to curb air pollution in Delhi-NCR.

The commission reported 267 stubble-burning incidents in Punjab and 187 in Haryana from September 15 to October 9. The CAQM emphasized the need for constant vigilance and responsibility from

district administrations during the harvest season.

"Taking into account the current situation and to ensure effective implementation of the action plans at the field level, the CAQM has authorised deputy commissioners/district collectors/district magistrates in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and NCR areas of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to file a complaint/prosecution before jurisdictional judicial magistrate in case of inaction in respect of officials, including nodal officers and supervisory officers and station house officers, responsible for effective enforcement towards ensuring elimination of paddy stubble burning in their respective jurisdiction," a statement said. On September 27, a bench of the top court had criticised the commission for not taking penal action under Section 14 of the CAQM Act against stubble burning, highlighting

that without such action, directives against farm fires would remain ineffective.

"If there is no penal action taken under Section 14, prohibitive directions against farm fires will remain only on paper," the Supreme Court had said.

The court had also observed that in three years the commission has issued only 82 directions. Section 14 states any non-compliance or contravention of any provisions of the Act, rules made there under or any order or direction issued by the commission, shall be an offence punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend up to five years or with fine which may extend up to Rs 1 crore or with both. In an affidavit submitted to the Supreme Court, the commission had said that concentrated action by the Centre and state governments saw stubble burning incidents decrease by 49% from 71,304 in 2021 to 36,663 in 2023 in Punjab. During the same period Haryana saw the number of farm fires reduced from 6,987 to 2,303, it had said. The CAQM also directed the respective district administrations and the State Governments to shoulder higher responsibility and maintain constant and strict vigil to control any further paddy stubble burning in the harvesting season.

# India's delegation to address IPU assembly in Geneva

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will lead a parliamentary delegation to the 149th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly being held in Geneva next week.

Besides Birla, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chair Harivansh and some members from both Houses of Parliament are attending the event.

Birla will address the Assembly on the theme "harnessing science, technology and innovation for

a more peaceful and sustainable future."

The Lok Sabha Speaker will also participate in the meetings of IPU's Governing Council, the highest decision-making body of the organisation.

An official statement said the members of Indian delegation will take part in the meetings of its Executive Committee, the four Standing Committees and working sessions during the conference. Birla will also address the members of Indian diaspora in Geneva on Monday.

# 208 infrastructure projects recommended under PM GatiShakti

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 208 big-ticket infrastructure projects of different ministries, including roads and railways, worth Rs 15.39 lakh crore have been recommended for approval under the PM GatiShakti initiative so far. These projects have been recommended by the Network Planning Group (NPG) constituted under the PM GatiShakti initiative launched on October 13, 2021.

"So far, 208 projects have been assessed under the initiative worth Rs 15.39 lakh crore,"

Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Amardeep Singh Bhatia, said.

There are several benefits of using the system, including significant cuts in time and cost for planning these infrastructure projects, he added. The maximum number of projects recommended by the group are related to roads (101), railways (73), urban development (12), and four from the oil and gas ministry. The inter-ministerial NPG meets every fortnight and appraises infra projects to ensure

synchronisation of efforts, and comprehensive development in and around the project location.

The initiative was launched to develop an integrated infrastructure to reduce logistics costs. All logistics and connectivity infrastructure projects, entailing investments of over Rs 500 crore are routed through the NPG. The NPG's approval is required before the clearance of the project by the Public Investment Board (PIB) or Department of Expenditure under the finance ministry. The NMP (National Master Plan) has over 1,600 layers of

geospatial data, showing all physical and social infrastructure of an area and land records in one place. It has been designed for faster planning and better design so that the impact of an investment is maximised.

The NPG has representations from various connectivity infrastructure ministries/departments, involving their heads of network planning division for unified planning and integration of the proposals. All these departments approach the NPG first for approval before making a DPR (Detailed

Project Report) at the planning stage. After the NPG's clearance, the project follows the normal procedure of approval by the finance ministry and the Cabinet.

Over 1,600 layers of data, including those related to land, ports, forests, and highways, are available on the portal. Usage of the portal by different ministries, including social sector departments and states, is increasing, and it is helping in the proper planning of projects. Also, as many as 156 critical infrastructure gaps to ports and for movement of bulk commodities like coal,

cement, fertilisers and foodgrains, have been identified for intervention under the PM Gati Shakti initiative. The department is working with states for integration of updated land record data, the official added. Besides, he said that Nepal and Sri Lanka have shown keen interest in this initiative. "We can roll it for them also. With Sri Lanka, we are working out the things," he said. He said that the department is working to roll out the initiative at the district level, and in the next 1-2 months, "we should be able to roll it out".

# WHO praises India's Tele Manas mental health initiative

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The World Health Organization (WHO) has praised India's Tele Manas initiative, which was launched two years ago to address mental health issues which are on the increase in the country. The Tele Manas facility offers support in 20 languages and is now expanding to include video consultation options, enhancing accessibility and providing more comprehensive care for individuals seeking mental health assistance.

Initially, this facility will be launched in Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir, and Tamil Nadu, with plans for a nationwide rollout in the future.

This new feature allows mental health professionals to gather additional information during audio call escalations, enhancing history-taking and providing clearer clarifications for patients facing mental health challenges. Congratulating the Ministry for two years with the



successful implementation of Tele-MANAS, Dr. Roderico H. Ofryn, WHO Representative to India stated that "WHO review of Tele-MANAS has shown a successful model for mental health. It has the potential to work well. The primary healthcare, especially the Ayushman Arogya Mandirs have proven to be successful in improving mental health and well-being of the people". The upgraded facility with video option was launched by Aradhana Patnaik, Additional Secretary with the Union Health Ministry and Managing Director, National Health Mission (NHM) at an

event here. Talking about mental health in the workplace, Dr. Ofryn stated that issues like gender inequity, disrespectful unsupportive colleagues, lack of work-life balance, and job satisfaction lead to mental health challenges for the employees in the workplace. He emphasized the responsibility of employers and managers to create a supportive work environment. A senior official said that the video option will also allow for brief physical examinations or Mental State Examinations (MSE) to verify findings. "However, it will be

mandatory to take the prior consent from the caller before doing video consultations," said information provided by the Union Health Ministry. Tele MANAS app, a comprehensive mobile platform that has been developed for providing support for mental health issues which was also launched on the occasion has a library of information including tips on self-care, recognizing distress signals, managing early signs of stress, anxiety, and emotional struggles. It facilitates engagement of the user through mind challenges, games and mindfulness practices providing a user-friendly experience. The Report of Tele MANAS rapid assessment by WHO and a Self Care Module for Employees titled 'Taking charge of your mental health-because it matters' was also released at the event. Tele MANAS has reached a significant milestone, having handled over 14.5 lakh calls since its launch.

# SC to hear Shashi Tharoor's defamation plea

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea of Congress MP Shashi Tharoor against a Delhi High Court verdict that refused to quash defamation proceedings against him for his alleged "scorpion on Shivling" remark targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi. While hearing Tharoor's plea on September 10, the apex court had stayed the proceedings before a trial court in the defamation case filed against the Congress MP. The top court had also issued notice to the Delhi Police and BJP leader Rajiv Babbar, who is the complainant in the case, seeking their responses on the plea.

As per the cause list of October 14 uploaded on the apex court website, a bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and SVN Bhatti is slated to hear Tharoor's plea. The Congress MP has moved the top court against the high court's August 29 order which refused to quash the



defamation proceedings against him.

During the hearing on September 10, Tharoor's counsel told the apex court that the complainant cannot be said to be an aggrieved party in the case and members of the political party also cannot be said to be an aggrieved party.

His counsel argued that Tharoor's comment was protected under the immunity clause of the defamation law, which stipulates that any statement made in good faith was not criminal.

The lawyer said Tharoor made a reference to an article published in the Caravan magazine six years before the statement was made.

The top court had expressed surprise that in 2012, the statement was not defamatory when the article was originally published.

"Eventually it is a metaphor. I have tried to understand. It refers to the invincibility of the person referred to (Modi). I do not know why somebody has taken objection here," Justice Roy had remarked during the hearing.

While refusing to quash the proceedings against Tharoor, the high court had said prima facie, imputations like "scorpion on Shivling" against the prime minister were "despicable and deplorable".

The high court, which on October 16, 2020, stayed the criminal proceedings against the Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram in the defamation complaint, vacated the interim order and directed the parties to appear before the trial court on September 10.

It had said that prima facie, the remark defamed the prime minister, the BJP as well as its office-bearers and

members. Dismissing Tharoor's petition seeking quashing of the defamation proceedings pending before the trial court, the high court had said there was sufficient material before the judicial magistrate for summoning him under section 500 (punishment for defamation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The Congress leader had sought setting aside the trial court's April 27, 2019 order summoning him as an accused in the criminal defamation complaint filed by Rajiv Babbar as also the November 2, 2018 complaint. The criminal complaint was filed against Tharoor in the trial court by Babbar, who claimed that his religious sentiments were hurt by the Congress leader's statement. In October 2018, Tharoor had claimed that an unnamed RSS leader had compared Modi to "a scorpion sitting on a Shivling". The Congress leader had said it was an "extraordinarily striking metaphor".

# NCPCR urges reforms in madrasa education standards

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has expressed serious concerns about the status of education in madrasas in India, arguing that their exemption from the Right to Education (RTE) Act is detrimental to children's education. In its recent report, "Guardians of Faith or Oppressors of Rights?", the NCPCR has flagged issues such as inadequate formal education, lack of basic resources, and said that there was a lack of accountability in many madrasas, where physical safety concerns, such as poor infrastructure and cases of child rights violations, have been reported.



According to the report, the exemption of madrasas from the RTE Act has deprived children attending these institutions of quality education. While Articles 29 and 30 of the Indian Constitution protect the rights of minorities to preserve their culture and establish

educational institutions, NCPCR asserts that these provisions have inadvertently led to discrimination against children in madrasas, who miss out on formal education mandated by the RTE Act. The report pointed out that while the primary focus of madrasas is religious education, many do not

provide the essential components of formal education such as adequate infrastructure, trained teachers, and proper academic curricula.

This leaves students at a disadvantage compared to their peers in mainstream schools. The report also noted instances where madrasa students have been denied basic entitlements such as textbooks, uniforms, and access to midday meal scheme.

The NCPCR said a significant number of Muslim children - approximately 1.2 crore - are out of school and not receiving formal education, as per UDISE 2021-22 data. The child's rights body has recommended a series of

measures, including stopping state funding to madrasas and madrasa boards unless they comply with the RTE Act and removing non-Muslim children from madrasas, as their inclusion violates Article 28 of the Constitution, which prohibits the imposition of religious instruction without parental consent.

The commission's report called for a balanced approach, where both religious and formal education can coexist but not within the same institution. "Religious education cannot come at the expense of formal education," the report asserted, emphasising that the state must prioritise the fundamental right of every child to free and compulsory education.

# Rising myopia in kids linked to screen time

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Amid rising concerns about increasing myopia rates among school-age children, ophthalmologists have linked this disturbing trend to the growing use of smartphones and digital screens.

Dr JS Tital, chief of AIIMS's Rajendra Prasad Center in Delhi, emphasised that excessive screen time impacts children's learning and development.

He warned that if not addressed promptly, this could lead to future eye complications. "To combat this issue, there is a need to have a law to restrict smartphone use for kids under three years old," Dr Tital said recently on World Sight Day recently.

He emphasised the importance of parents actively monitoring their children's screen habits and encouraging outdoor activities. In their pediatric outpatient department, the AIIMS doctors noted that up to 10 per cent of visiting kids had refractive errors, with 30 per cent diagnosed with myopia. Thus, underscoring the urgent need for action to combat this troubling trend.

Professor Rohit Saxena from the RP Centre, AIIMS Delhi labeled myopia a "lifestyle

disease," and emphasised the concerning symptoms children may experience, including eye fatigue, pain, loss of concentration, sleep disturbances, headaches, and irritability. He warned that these issues could exacerbate myopia in predisposed children.

Dr Mahipal Singh Sachdev, Chairman of the Centre for Sight Group of Eye Hospitals, too stressed the importance of parental awareness, given that a child's retina is still developing at ages 2-3.

"Prolonged exposure to screens can pose a 70% risk of retinal damage," He urged parents to limit their children's screen time, as young kids are naturally drawn to digital content, to safeguard their vision and promote healthier habits.



# Mass resignation by doctors not acceptable: Bengal Government

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The West Bengal government on Saturday said the mass resignation of doctors of state-run hospitals is not valid and it must be submitted individually according to service rules. Several doctors from state-run hospitals have submitted collectively signed "resignation" letters to the government seeking justice for the post-graduate trainee who was raped and murdered at Kolkata's R G Kar Medical College and Hospital and in support of junior medics on a fast-unto-death to press for their demands. "Unless an employee sends in his/her resignation personally to the employer as per service rules, it is not a resignation letter," Alapan Bandyopadhyay, chief advisor to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, told reporters at the state secretariat Nabanna here. He clarified that the letters sent by the doctors were merely collective signatures without addressing specific issues. Bandyopadhyay emphasised



the government's intention to clarify the situation amidst confusion regarding the mass resignations by senior doctors from various government hospitals, including R G Kar Medical College and IPGMER and SSKM Hospital. Earlier this week, a group of senior doctors at R G Kar Medical College sent a collectively signed "mass resignation" letter in solidarity with their protesting junior colleagues. Subsequently, similar letters were sent by doctors from other state-run hospitals. Junior doctors at several government hospitals in the

state are on a fast-unto-death demanding justice for their murdered colleague, the resignation of the state's health secretary, and enhanced workplace security. The government asserted that healthcare services in state-run hospitals have not been disrupted, as senior doctors continue to work normally. The junior doctors had called off their 'total cease work' at state-run medical colleges and hospitals on October 4. The mass resignations are being interpreted as a symbolic gesture of solidarity from senior doctors with their junior counterparts, the government said.

## Another junior doctor observing fast unto death hospitalised after condition deteriorates

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Another junior doctor, who was observing a fast-unto-death in protest over the rape-murder of a woman medic at RG Kar hospital, was admitted to a healthcare facility on Saturday after his condition deteriorated, an official said. Alok Varma from North Bengal Medical College and Hospital became the second medic of those who have been on the indefinite fast to be hospitalised after Aniket Mahato was admitted to the ICU of RG Kar hospital three days back. Parichoy Panda from Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan and Alokika Ghorui from Calcutta National Medical College and Hospital joined the protest, taking the total number of medics on indefinite fast across the state to 11, including the two who have been

hospitalised. The junior doctors commenced their fast-unto-death in the Esplanade area in central Kolkata on October 5. The protesting doctors have been demanding justice for the deceased woman medic at the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital and immediate removal of Health Secretary NS Nigam. Their other demands include the establishment of a centralised referral system for all hospitals and medical colleges in the state, the implementation of a bed vacancy monitoring system, and formation of task forces to ensure essential provisions for CCTV, on-call rooms, and washrooms at their workplaces. They are also demanding increased police protection in hospitals, recruitment of permanent women police personnel, and swift filling of vacant positions for

doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers. The junior doctors went on to cease work following the rape-murder of a fellow medic at RG Kar medical college on August 9. They ended their stir after 42 days on September 21 following assurances from the state government to look into their demands. The healthcare services in West Bengal was severely disrupted due to the cease work by junior doctors. The Indian Medical Association had said that the demands raised by the doctors were possible to be met by the West Bengal government and not insurmountable. Even the medics of several private hospitals in Kolkata had shown solidarity with the agitating doctors. Medics, junior and senior alike, have hit the streets demanding justice for the deceased trainee doctor.

## Badrinath Dham to be closed for winter from November 17



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The portals of the Badrinath Dham in Uttarakhand will be closed for the winter season at 9.07 pm on November 17, the temple committee said on Saturday. As per tradition, the "mahurat" of the closing date and time was decided on the occasion of Vijaydashami on Saturday after an assessment of the Hindu calendar and the position of the celestial bodies, Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee Chairman Ajendra Ajay said. More than 11 lakh pilgrims

visited Badrinath this year while Kedarnath witnessed a footfall of over 13.5 lakh devotees. As per an earlier announcement, Kedarnath and Yamunotri will be closed on November 3 and Gangotri on November 2. Similarly, the doors of Rudranath will be closed on October 17, Tungnath on November 4 and Madhyamaheshwar on November 20. The temples in Uttarakhand which draw lakhs of devotees each year from across the country and abroad are closed during winter as they remain covered in snow.

## Pankaja Munde promises to take cognisance if Dalits, OBCs are troubled

PTI ■ CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

Ahead of Maharashtra Assembly polls, BJP leader Pankaja Munde on Saturday reached out to Dalits and Other Backward Classes (OBC), vowing to take cognisance if they are "troubled". Munde, who lost the Lok Sabha polls on her home turf Beed district, the epicentre of Maratha protests led by activist Manoj Jarange, was addressing her annual Dussehra rally at Sawargaon Ghat, the birthplace of Sant Bhagwanbaba, a saint of her Vanjari community. State agriculture minister and her cousin Dhananjay Munde and Laxman Hake, who had protested opposing any potential dilution of the OBC reservation, were among those who spoke at the rally. Munde expressed her concerns over the growing caste schism within society. "If a vehicle hits someone, people ask the caste of the driver. People want to know the caste of a person who has committed brutality against a small child and killed her. We



don't want such a society," she said. The BJP national secretary warned that they would take cognisance if the poor, Dalits, OBCs and others are "troubled" in the state. Munde said she inherited the legacy of her father and late BJP stalwart Gopinath Munde and thanked people for giving her respect despite her electoral setback. "To reciprocate for the respect I received, I will tour the state. The poor are waiting for good days by keeping their faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Now, we must play our cards," she said. She also appealed to labourers

from her area involved in the sugar industry not to leave for work before casting their votes. Sugarcane cutting season starts in October in Maharashtra. Elections to the 288-member state assembly will likely be held in November. BJP is a partner in the ruling Mahayuti coalition, also comprising Ajit Pawar-led NCP and Shiv Sena headed by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. "I never discriminated between the villages that voted for me and those that didn't during fund allocation. A mistake happened this time (in Lok Sabha polls), but we

want to overcome that failure," said the former state minister. Referring to the Lok Sabha polls in Beed, where she lost to Congress' Bajrang Sonawane by about 6,500 votes, Munde said, "I'm not desperate for a post. Five persons lost their lives (by suicide) before I became an MLC. Even though I don't hold any post, I will not abandon those who have supported me." NCP leader Dhananjay Munde said Gopinath Munde and Pankaja Munde struggled for the people, not for themselves. "Today, people from all communities are here. The crowd here today shows that we are all united," he said. Without taking the name of Jarange, who incidentally held a Dussehra rally at Narayangad in Beed district, he appealed to people to stay united. "If we unite, no one can organise another such event in this area and undermine Pankaja Munde's annual Dussehra rally. This is the time for struggle and we need to stand with each other," he added.

## Manipur Police sets up special cell to tackle extortion by underground groups, gangs

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Manipur Police on Saturday said the state government has set up a special cell to combat extortion by underground groups and gangs, which has reached unprecedented levels over the last 16 months. Briefing reporters, IGP (Intelligence) K. Kabib said numerous underground groups and gangs have escalated their extortion activities since the ethnic violence erupted in the state on May 3, 2023. "Illegal taxes are being collected from trucks plying on highways. In the guise of donations, they are harassing businesses, educational institutions, and even common people, slowing down economic activities," Kabib said, adding, "Police are taking maximum preventive measures to tackle these extortionists." He also noted that these underground groups are sometimes involved in kidnapping, grenade attacks, and phone threats. In response to these activities, police have formed an anti-extortion cell, led by the



ADGP (Law and Order), which includes all zonal IGPs as members, he said. "This cell will focus on monitoring and supervising the anti-extortion drive across the state. District police, with assistance from other security agencies, have established 15 crack teams dedicated to combating extortion," he added. Over the past year, more than 121 extortionists have been arrested, along with over 215 members of underground groups and gangs. Regarding movement of essential commodities along the highways, police, with the support of the CRPF, have deployed 16 dedicated

companies for Road Opening Party (ROP) on NH 2, with two additional companies for escorting trucks. Kabib mentioned that certain areas identified as extortion hotspots have mobile teams deployed for increased frisking and checking. Police are coordinating with other agencies and have urged the public to report any extortion demands, he said. "We will do our utmost to apprehend the extortionists. If you give in to one group, others will come for their share. Many gangs are also using the names of underground groups for extortion," he said. Kabib emphasised that

extortion has become a well-organised issue, impacting multiple districts and even crossing state lines, which could affect national security. "Police are considering handing over certain cases, such as attacks on essential commodities convoys, to central agencies like the NIA," he added. He also urged the public to be vigilant against moral policing in their communities. "Do not allow groups or people to engage in moral policing, as many cases end in extortion. Innocent people have fallen victim to such practices," he cautioned. Meanwhile, IGP (Administration) K. Jayanta Singh noted that extortion has affected both the private and public sectors in the state. "We suspect that weapons looted from police armories during the violence are being used to intimidate victims in extortion cases," Singh added. "We view this as a highly organised sector, and the situation is serious. We have made arrests, and investigations indicate that those executing extortion on the ground are often just pawns in a larger scheme," he said.

## TN Government taking all measures to mitigate impact of heavy rain: Minister

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government is taking all precautionary steps to mitigate the impact of heavy rains predicted by the India Meteorological department next week, Minister K K S S R Ramachandran said on Saturday. The Minister for Revenue and Disaster Management pointed out that challenges arise while initiating relief efforts in those areas, which receive 10 cm to 20 cm rainfall. "On the instructions of Chief Minister M K Stalin, this government is taking all the necessary preventive measures to control the impact as the Meteorological department has predicted heavy rainfall on October 15, 16, 17 and 18. Particularly, Chennai and nearby districts, are expected to receive heavy rainfall on those days. Officials are monitoring the situation round-the-clock and are sharing information with the local officials constantly," he told reporters. Unlike the past, Ramachandran said the state government is taking steps to stock up essentials like milk, drinking water in low-lying areas, well in advance. "Last time, when there was heavy rainfall, there was difficulty in supplying milk, water and food packets to the people in low-lying areas. Now, we are taking all those steps in advance and have instructed officials to keep the stock ready in places where heavy rainfall is predicted," he said.

Nearly 65,000 volunteers have already registered and they would be mobilised based on requirement. Besides the volunteers, there would be constant update through TN Alert mobile application and the services of National Disaster Response Force personnel would be sought during such occasions, he said. To a query, he said, "if there is scattered rainfall across various places, we can manage the situation and take measures adequately. However, if one particular area receives 10 cm or 20 cm rainfall, then it is a challenge for us," he said. According to the Met department, isolated heavy rainfall activity very likely to continue over South Interior Karnataka, Kerala and Mahe and Tamil Nadu during the next 5-6 days. As per the update released by the Meteorological department, a cyclonic circulation lay over the southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining Indian Ocean. Under its influence, a low pressure area is likely to form over southwest Bay of Bengal around October 14. Isolated very heavy rainfall is predicted very likely over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal between October 14 and 16. Heavy rainfall recorded today as of 8.30am, Karaikudi registered 15 cm, Tiruchirappalli airport 13 cm, Kuruthancode in Kanniyakumari 10 cm, Colachel 9 cm, Neyyoor 9 cm, Erode 8 cm and Varattupallam in Erode district received 7 cm.

## UP Government to convene meet to ensure ban on tractor trolleys for passenger transportation

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government will soon convene a high-level meeting to ensure compliance of the ban on using tractor trolleys for passenger transportation. The decision has been made in the wake of a spate of mishaps featuring passenger-travel on tractor trolleys, the latest one reported on October 4 from Mirzapur when 10 labourers were returning from a project site to their homes in Varanasi. After October 4 too, many tractor-trolley related mishaps have been reported

from different parts of Uttar Pradesh. "We will soon convene a high-level meeting to discuss ways to curb use of tractor-trolleys for passenger transportation. Our strategy is going to be two-fold. Enforce regulations on tractor-trolleys strictly while also creating necessary awareness among the rural masses, who prefer tractor trolleys for commuting, possibly because they consider it to be a cheaper and readily accessible option," Uttar Pradesh Transport Minister Daya Shankar Singh told PTI.



The rules prohibit allowing tractor-trolleys from carrying people other than labourers, who may be heading to a project site or field for commercial/agricultural work. Admitting these rules are often flouted, the minister said that there was a need for strict enforcement. "We intend to create awareness among the masses by making them aware that while they might feel tractor trolleys are an easier, safer option, nothing can be more precious than life. We will see if putting up posters with such awareness messages makes an impact.

Simultaneously, we will go for stricter enforcement and for that we will convene a high-level meeting soon," Singh said. Earlier in February, 23 people travelling on tractor trolleys lost their lives in Uttar Pradesh's Kasganj. In October 2023, six people travelling by tractor trolleys were killed in Hathras and another 14 died in a separate road mishaps featuring the ill-fated trolleys in Shahjahanpur in April last year. In October 2022, 26 people were killed in a similar mishap in Agra.

## BJP to woo MBCs in Uttar Pradesh to counter SP's PDA

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

With an aim to counter the Samajwadi Party's PDA, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has set its sights on consolidating its position in Uttar Pradesh by focusing on the Most Backward Castes (MBCs) among the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Party insiders say as part of new strategy that MBC leaders would be at the forefront of organizational efforts to unite and represent these communities, which have historically been marginalized within the larger OBC group. Key MBC communities such as the Nai (barber), Vishwakarma (craftsmen), Sonar (goldsmiths), Chaurasia (betel leaf sellers),

and Ankawanshi (small cultivators) are being specifically targeted. These groups have long been overshadowed by more politically powerful OBC sub-castes like Yadav, Kurmi, and Lodh, and the BJP sees an opportunity to mobilize them as part of its broader electoral strategy. This initiative is being timed ahead of the upcoming by-elections for 10 assembly seats and the 2027 state elections. Vijay Bahadur Pathak, state party vice-president said that the party aims to engage with these underrepresented communities. "Our teams, led by functionaries from various OBC groups, will reach out to these sections to inform them about their rights and the welfare programs launched

by the BJP government at both the Centre and state levels," he said. He said that this effort would counter opposition claims regarding threats to constitutional protections and reservations for OBCs and SC/STs. This strategic push is seen as a response to the Samajwadi Party's (SP) successful Pichhda, Dalit, Alpsankhyak (PDA) narrative, which played a significant role in reducing the BJP's dominance in Uttar Pradesh. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP's seats in the state dropped from 62 in 2019 to 33, and its vote share fell from around 50% to approximately 41%. Meanwhile, the SP and its ally Congress saw their vote shares rise significantly, with

SP gaining more than 15% and Congress around 3%, bringing them to 34% and 9.5%, respectively. BJP leaders pointed to their success in consolidating the OBC vote in Haryana, where they navigated the Congress's attempts to win over the Jat community, which makes up 27% of the state's electorate. The BJP's decision to replace Manohar Lal Khattar, a Punjabi Khatri, with Nayab Singh Saini, an OBC leader, was part of this strategy. Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan, a Kurmi, played a key role in shaping this approach as Haryana's election in-charge. Political experts suggest that the BJP has been laying the groundwork for its MBC outreach in Uttar Pradesh for some time.

## Revenue Minister's comments on drones as unjustified, claims Himachal Governor

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla on Saturday dismissed as "unjustified" the statement made by Revenue Minister Jagat Singh Negi's on drones being spotted on the India-China border in Kinnaur district. Revenue Minister Negi, MLA from Kinnaur constituency on Monday said that drones were spotted on the India-China border in the Kinnaur district and were likely being used for surveillance and espionage purposes. Responding to Negi's statement, the governor said, "No one has the courage to encroach our borders in today's era and in case any drone is spotted, the matter should be reported to the

Union Government. Such a statement is unjustified and should not have been made." Talking to the media persons, the Governor said "I feel that this matter pertains to the Centre and not the state government." "Road construction to lay roads up to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is in progress in both Shipki La and Rishidogri and the possibility of surveillance and espionage by these drones cannot be ruled out," the revenue and horticulture minister said on Monday. The minister had urged the Union government to take note of the matter and issue necessary directions, he had asked the Union Government to take strong notice of the Chinese drones violating Indian space and take necessary action.



# Trump's campaign requests armoured vehicles amid threats from Iran

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Donald Trump's aides have requested a slew of stepped-up security measures, including military aircraft capable of shooting down surface-to-air missiles to transport the former president in the race's final stretch, amid growing concerns over threats from Iran in a campaign already shaken by violence.

The campaign's highly unusual request comes as the Republican candidate faces death threats from Iran, which has also targeted other former Trump administration officials and has also been blamed for a widespread hack of top campaign officials. Trump narrowly survived one assassination attempt and U.S. Secret Service agents foiled a second, though neither case has been publicly linked to Iranian actors.

Beyond a military plane, the campaign has asked for special armoured vehicles typically reserved for sitting presidents, expanded temporary flight restrictions over his rallies and his residences, reimbursements for decoy aircraft, and more money for the U.S. Secret Service and local law enforcement agencies that assist in Trump's protection. Both Trump and his staff have complained that he is being restricted from campaigning the way he wants to because the agency lacks the resources to keep him safe.

The Secret Service insisted Friday that Trump is already "receiving the highest levels of protection." And President Joe Biden told reporters that he



would be happy to approve Trump's request to use military aircraft in the final stages of the campaign, as long as "he doesn't ask for F-15s." "Look, what I've told the department is to give him every single thing he needs for his - as if he were a sitting president," he said. "Give him all that he needs. If it fits within that category, that's fine. But it doesn't, he shouldn't." The new security requests were first reported by the New York Times.

The campaign and Secret Service have gone back and forth. The Trump campaign's requests were outlined in a letter to acting Secret Service director Ronald Rowe Jr. From senior Trump campaign adviser Susie Wiles and obtained by The Associated Press. She asked the Secret Service to pre-position the ballistic glass that Trump now uses for protection at his outdoor rallies in the seven battleground states where he is expected to spend

the majority of time in the race's final stretch. Currently, it takes more than a week's notice to position the barriers in the right place, according to a person familiar with the requests who, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss security matters. Trump aides see that advance notice as unrealistic given the frenetic nature of the final days of a campaign, when schedules are adjusted based on incoming polls and campaign strategy, the person said. In a statement, Secret Service spokesperson Anthony Guglielmi said that since the attempted assassination on July 13 at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, the agency "has made comprehensive enhancements to its communications capabilities, resourcing and protective operations" and that Trump "is receiving the highest levels of protection."

He said the Department of Defense regularly provides assistance for Trump's protec-

tion, including canine units, and that the Secret Service has been restricting air traffic over the former president's residence and when he travels. "Additionally, the former President is receiving the highest level of technical security assets, which include unmanned aerial vehicles, counter unmanned aerial surveillance systems, ballistics and other advanced technology systems," he said. Former American presidents are able to use military airlift only if requested by the current president. In April, for instance, former President Bill Clinton used one as he led a U.S. Delegation to Rwanda. On Sept. 11, 2021, Biden, Clinton, and former President Barack Obama flew to a remembrance in New York. Trump has accused Biden of denying him resources.

The Trump campaign for weeks now has accused the U.S. Secret Service of forcing it to cancel or scale back events

due to a lack of resources. That includes a speech in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, held the same week as the U.N. General Assembly in New York, that was scaled back because the Secret Service couldn't secure a larger rally. Trump has accused Biden of intentionally denying security resources to help Vice President Kamala Harris, his Democratic opponent, by preventing him from addressing large crowds. "They couldn't give me any help. And I'm so angry about it because what they're doing is interfering in the election," he said in a recent Fox News interview.

Trump, however, has repeatedly praised his own security detail, commending them for their bravery. While the Secret Service says Trump already has presidential-level protection, there are differences. Both Biden and Harris, for instance, have military assets, including planes.

Beyond her Sept. 30 letter, Wiles has also spoken with White House Chief of Staff Jeff Zients and others about her concerns about Trump's security and how his ability to campaign has been curtailed by threats. Zients, according to a person who spoke on condition of anonymity to disclose details of their conversation, connected Wiles to Homeland Security Department and Secret Service leadership after she reached out and made clear that Biden had directed the Secret Service to provide the highest level of protection for Trump.

# Australian cop can be charged over Nazi salute

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

An Australian state police chief apologized to the Jewish community on Saturday after a police sergeant allegedly performed an outlawed Nazi salute.

The 65-year-old instructor on domestic violence policy and law at the Victoria state police academy in Melbourne is facing charges for the gesture and for praising Nazi leader Adolf Hitler with the words, "Heil Hitler" on Tuesday and Wednesday in front of academy staff and recruits, Police Chief Commissioner Shane Patton said.

"I want to express just here at the outset my disappointment, my disgust, my anger at this appalling conduct," Patton told a press conference.

"There is simply no place for this type of conduct in our society, let alone in this police force. For that reason, I want to profoundly apologize to the Jewish community but also to the community as whole," Patton added.

Patton said the alleged behavior would exacerbate the grief and pain the Jewish community felt following the Oct. 7 anniversary of the Hamas attack on Israel.

The police officer, whose name has not been released, has more than 40 years service. She was suspended from duty on Friday and was interviewed by professional standards internal investigators on Saturday. She will likely be charged by summons, a police statement said after Patton's news conference.

The offence carries a potential maximum penalty of 12 months in prison and a fine of



up to 23,000 Australian dollars (\$16,000).

Performing Nazi gestures and displaying Nazi symbols such as the swastika have been banned by various state and federal laws since 2022.

The scandal comes in a week a Melbourne judge told self-described Nazi Jacob Hersant that he will become the first person in Australia to be sentenced to prison for performing the same banned gesture when the 25-year-old appears in court next month.

In June, three soccer fans were fined for performing the salute during a Sydney match. The men were the first convicted in Australia for such offences and have lodged appeals.

The Police Association of Victoria, a police union, described the allegations as serious and said officers should

be held to the same standards as the rest of the community.

"The Police Association has consistently condemned this offensive gesture and urged the government to toughen legislation and penalties against those who perform it," a union statement said.

Anti-Defamation Commission chair Dvir Abramovich, a leading opponent of antisemitism in Australia, praised the police force's swift response to the officer's alleged actions.

"A Nazi salute isn't just a gesture it's a horrifying symbol of genocide, terror, and anti-Semitism and for a police officer to wield this emblem of hate is beyond disturbing," he said in a statement.

Patton said the suspended officer did not have a history of extreme views and her motives were unknown.

# Deadly threat from migratory birds in Chicago

PTI ■ CHICAGO

With a neon-green net in hand, Annette Prince briskly walks a downtown Chicago plaza at dawn, looking left and right as she goes.

It's not long before she spots a tiny yellow bird sitting on the concrete. It doesn't fly away, and she quickly nets the bird, gently places it inside a paper bag and labels the bag with the date, time and place.

"This is a Nashville warbler," said Prince, director of the Chicago Bird Collision Monitors, noting that the bird must have flown into a glass window pane of an adjacent building. "He must only weigh about two pennies."

For rescue groups like the Chicago Bird Collision Monitors, this scene plays out hundreds of times each spring and fall after migrating birds fly into homes, small buildings and sometimes Chicago's skyscrapers and other hulking buildings.

A stark sign of the risks came last fall, when 1,000 migrating birds died on a single night after flying into the glass exterior of the city's lakefront convention center, McCormick Place.

The USD 1.2 million project installed tiny dots on the exterior of the Lakeside Centre building, adorning enough glass to cover two football fields.

Doug Stotz, senior conserva-



tion ecologist at the nearby Field Museum, hopes the project will be a success. He estimated that just 20 birds have died after flying into the convention center's glass exterior so far this fall, a hopeful sign. But for the birds that collide with Chicago buildings, there is a network of people waiting to help. They also are aiming to educate officials and find solutions to improve building design, lighting and other factors in the massive number of bird collision deaths in Chicago and worldwide.

Prince said she and other volunteers walk the streets downtown to document what they can of the birds that are killed and injured.

"We have the combination of the millions of birds that pass through this area because it's a major migratory path through the United States, on top of the amount of artificial lighting

that we put out at night, which is when these birds are traveling and getting confused and attracted to the amount of glass," Prince said.

Dead birds are often saved for scientific use, including by Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History. Rescued birds are taken to local wildlife rehabilitation centres to recover, such as the DuPage Wildlife Conservation Centre in suburban Illinois.

On a recent morning, veterinarian Darcy Stephenson at DuPage gave a yellow-bellied sapsucker anesthetic gas before taping its wings open for an X-ray. The bird arrived with a note from a rescue group: "Window collision."

Examining the results, she found the bird had a broken ulna - a bone in the wing.

The centre takes in about 10,000 species of animals annually and 65 per cent of them are avian. Many are victims of window collisions and during peak migration in the fall, several hundred birds can show up in one day.

"The large chunk of these birds do actually survive and make it back into the wild once we're able to treat them," said Sarah Reich, head veterinarian at DuPage. "Fractures heal very, very quickly in these guys for shoulder fractures. Soft tissue trauma generally heals pretty well. The challenging cases are going to be the ones where the trauma isn't as apparent."

# Nepal's President, PM extend best wishes on Vijaya Dashami

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and President Ram Chandra Paudel greeted citizens on Saturday on the occasion of Vijaya Dashami and urged them to help the people affected due to recent disasters to return to normalcy.

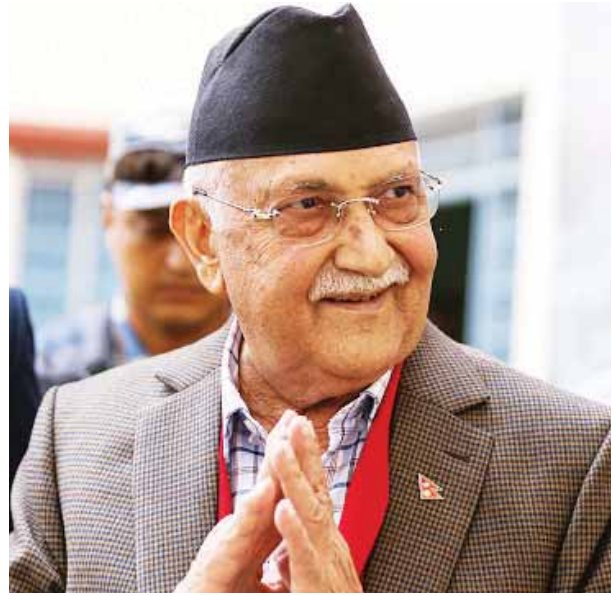
President Paudel wished peace, prosperity and happiness to all Nepalis on the tenth day of Nepal's largest Hindu festival Dashain while Prime Minister Oli called for cooperation and harmony among all citizens.

Urging all Nepalis to extend help at individual levels too to the disaster hit people to return to normalcy, Oli, in a statement, assured the disaster survivors of necessary assistance on the part of the government. Nepal was recently hit by floods and landslides in different parts of the country due to incessant rain that saw as many 240 deaths and thousands other displaced.

The almost two-weeks long major Hindu festival of Vijaya Dashami, or Dashain as it is popularly known here, began on October 3, by sowing of barley seeds called Jamara in a mud vessel on the first day with the installation of water vessel known as Kalash, known as Ghatasthapana.

The festival extends till Kojagrat Purnima or the full Moon day, which falls on October 17 this year.

During the occasion, people receive tika, vermilion powder mixed with curd and rice, along with Jamara or barley leaves from their elder mem-



bers of the family as blessings. Meanwhile, every year, scores of people working in the Kathmandu Valley return to their remote homes across the Himalayan nation for Dashain. The Federation of Nepalese National Transport Entrepreneurs (FNTE) had initially estimated approximately 1.8 million passengers would leave the Valley via road transport.

The Kathmandu Post quoted FNTE president Bijaya Swar as saying that only 1.3 million have travelled to their native places since day one of the festival and said, "The lower figure is due to road disruptions caused by floods and landslides following heavy rains on September 27 and 28."

"The roads are in poor condition, making travel difficult. Despite this, 1.3 million people have left to celebrate Dashain with their families," Swar said. Avian enthusiasts try to counter the deadly risk of Chicago high-rises for migrating birds. Chicago, Oct 11 (AP) With a neon-green net in hand, Annette Prince briskly walks a downtown Chicago plaza at dawn, looking left and right as she goes. It's not long before she spots a tiny yellow bird sitting on the concrete. It doesn't fly away, and she quickly nets the bird, gently places it inside a paper bag and labels the bag with the date, time and place.

window pane of an adjacent building. "He must only weigh about two pennies. He's squinting his eyes because his head hurts."

For rescue groups like the Chicago Bird Collision Monitors, this scene plays out hundreds of times each spring and fall after migrating birds fly into homes, small buildings and sometimes Chicago's skyscrapers and other hulking buildings.

A stark sign of the risks came last fall, when 1,000 migrating birds died on a single night after flying into the glass exterior of the city's lakefront convention center, McCormick Place. This fall, the facility unveiled new bird-safe window film on one of its glass buildings along the Lake Michigan shore.

The USD 1.2 million project installed tiny dots on the exterior of the Lakeside Centre building, adorning enough glass to cover two football fields.

Doug Stotz, senior conservation ecologist at the nearby Field Museum, hopes the project will be a success. He estimated that just 20 birds have died after flying into the convention center's glass exterior so far this fall, a hopeful sign. "We don't have a lot of data since this just started this fall, but at this point, it looks like it's made a huge difference," Stotz said.

But for the birds that collide with Chicago buildings, there is a network of people waiting to help. They also are aiming to educate officials and find solu-

tions to improve building design, lighting and other factors in the massive number of bird collision deaths in Chicago and worldwide.

Prince said she and other volunteers walk the streets downtown to document what they can of the birds that are killed and injured.

"We have the combination of the millions of birds that pass through this area because it's a major migratory path through the United States, on top of the amount of artificial lighting that we put out at night, which is when these birds are traveling and getting confused and attracted to the amount of glass," Prince said.

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# Ancient humans were good at surviving last ice age: Study

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Humans seem to have been adapted to the last ice age in similar ways to wolves and bears, according to our recent study, challenging longstanding theories about how and where our ancestors lived during this glacial period.

Previous studies have supported the view of most archaeologists that modern humans retreated into southern Europe during the height of the last ice age and expanded during the later increase in global temperatures. But our study is the first to use genetic data to show that at least some humans stayed in central Europe, unlike many other animals and despite our species having evolved in the much warmer climate of Africa. Scientists have known since the 19th century that the distributions of animals and plants across the world may fluctuate

with the climate. But the climate crisis has made it more important than ever to understand these fluctuations.

Populations of the same species that live in different places often have different genetics to each other. More recently scientists have studied how climate change has altered the distribution of these genetically distinct populations of species.

Most of the studies in this field focus on individual species of animal or plant. They have shown that many species, including humans, expanded their geographical ranges since the height of the last ice age, approximately 20,000 years ago. At this time, European ice sheets reached Denmark and south Wales. Europe was cold but mostly unglaciated, probably much like Alaska or Siberia today.

Our team's new study, led by Oxala García-Rodríguez at



Bournemouth University, took a different approach and reviewed the genetic history of 23 common mammals in Europe. In addition to humans, these included rodents such as bank voles and red squirrels, insectivores like shrews and hedgehogs, ungulates like red deer and wild boar, and carnivores like brown bears and weasels.

An important metric in our study was where the greatest

diversity is today across Europe. This is because areas of high genetic variation are likely to be the areas of longest occupation by species.

These areas, known as refugia, are locations where species retreated to survive during periods when environmental conditions were unfavourable elsewhere. For the mammals we studied, these refugia would have been occupied since the height of the last glaciation, at

least. These refugia were probably the warmest areas or places where it was easiest for the animals to find food.

The genetic patterns we found include cases where some mammals (such as red foxes and roe deer) were restricted to glacial refugia in southern areas such as Iberia and Italy, and that they expanded from these areas as global temperatures warmed following the ice age. Other mammals (such as beavers and lynx) expanded from glacial refugia to the east of Europe only to spread west.

Species such as pygmy shrew and common vole had been restricted to sheltered areas such as deep valleys in northern Europe, small enclaves in otherwise inhospitable glacial landscapes. These patterns have previously been documented by other scientists. But we found a fourth pattern. Our study indicated some

species (such as brown bears and wolves) were already widely distributed across Europe during the height of the last glaciation with either no discernible refugia or with refugia both to the north and south.

This pattern includes Homo sapiens too. Neanderthals had already been extinct for around 20,000 years by this point.

It's not clear why ancient humans and other animals in this group lived in this seemingly harsh climate rather than explore more hospitable places. But they seemed able to tolerate the ice age conditions while other animals withdrew to refugia. Perhaps most important of all is that among the species that seem to conform to this pattern, where little or no geographical contraction in population took place at the height of the last ice age, are modern humans.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the general public that Mrs. Shweta Mishra is willing to purchase Residential Plot No. BB-35, (New No.B-1130), admeasuring around 528.9 Square Meters (632 Square Yards), in Block-B, comprised in Kharsa No. 80/6, of the residential colony, known as "Greenfields", situated in the revenue estate of Village Sarai Khawaja, Tehsil Ballabgarh and District Faridabad, Haryana. (Hereinafter referred to as the said property).

Initially, the Sale Deed dated 12.06.1990, was executed by Urban Improvement Corporation Private Limited in favour of Mr. Mohinder Singh Dhillon and Mr. Adarshpal Singh in respect of the said property, bearing Document No. 552 on 18.06.1990.

Thereafter, the said Mr. Mohinder Singh Dhillon executed a Will in favour of Ms. Roopika Dhillon in respect of his moveable and immovable properties including his half share in the said property, dated 18.07.2011, bearing Document No. 158.

Thereafter, the said Mr. Mohinder Singh Dhillon, died on 27.10.2011, the death certificate was issued by the Health and Family Welfare Department. Thereafter, a Letter of change of ownership dated 24.05.2012 was issued by Urban Improvement Company Private Limited to change the ownership from Mr. Mohinder Singh Dhillon to Mrs. Roopika Dhillon in respect of the undivided half share in the said property.

Subsequently, a General Power of Attorney was executed by Ms. Roopika Dhillon in favour of Mr. Adarshpal Singh in respect of her 1/2 share in the said property, and the same is registered with the office of the Sub-Registrar, Nabha as Document No. 2022-23/77/4/251 on 29.03.2023.

Any person who has any objection regarding the mortgage or the ownership of the above-said property may submit his/her objection within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice in writing. The objection may kindly be sent to the undersigned by way of the Registered Post at the address given below and by E-mail.

Lavanya Sharma (Advocate)  
Trinity Legal Partners  
C-401, Fourth Floor, Nirvana Courtyard,  
Nirvana Country, Sector-50, Gurugram-122018  
E: lavanya@trinitylegalpartners.com



# India eye big win against injury-hit Australia

**PTI ■ SHARJAH**  
Confident India will strive to take control of their destiny by securing yet another net-run-rate boosting victory when they face an injury-ravaged Australia in their must-win Women's T20 World Cup match here on Sunday. India's massive win over Sri Lanka earlier this week has significantly improved their chances of reaching the last four, despite their setback against New Zealand in their opener. Meanwhile Australia, with six points from three matches and an impressive net run rate of +2.786, have all but qualified for the semifinals, leaving India, New Zealand and Pakistan to fight out for the remaining spot. However, the defending champions suffered two injury setbacks during Friday's victory over Pakistan with skipper Alyssa Healy exiting the field due to an "acute injury to her right foot" and fast bowler Tayla Vlaeminck dislocated her shoulder. With the pair, which will undergo scans on Saturday,

expected to miss the crucial clash on Sunday, Australia's depth will be tested. India's 82-run victory over Sri Lanka marked their largest margin of victory in tournament history, boosting not only their confidence but also their net run rate from negative to positive. The win also elevated them to second place in Group A, just behind Australia, who are undefeated in the tournament. But India, who are on 4 points, will need a win to keep their knockout aspirations alive as New Zealand have one more game in hand and can also reach a total of 6 points. If that's the scenario, qualification will hinge on the net run rate. While India currently holds a +0.567 NRR, New Zealand (-0.050) could surpass Harmanpreet Kaur and Co. With substantial victories over the struggling Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Pakistan have 2 points from three games. If they defeat New Zealand in their final match and India lose to Australia, there is a possibility that all three teams could be stuck on 4 points and again the NRR will come into play. Thus the 'Women in Blue' will



be desperate not only for a win, but also for another net run rate boost to steer off any threat from the Kiwis. India has always challenged the Aussies, and with a last-four spot on the line, Harmanpreet Kaur would want her side to produce its A

game once again. The fact that the top order comprising Shafali Verma, Smriti Mandhana and skipper Harmanpreet is back among runs augurs well for the side. Considering that it will be India's first match here and the venue has been tough on the

batters, a lot will hinge on the trio and Jemimah Rodrigues, who is due for a big knock. The bowlers, who enjoyed a stellar outings against Pakistan and Sri Lanka will hope to keep their opponents quiet. If Healy misses out, Australia will face the

challenge of finding a new captain, wicketkeeper, and opening batter, significantly reshaping their lineup. Beth Mooney will take over the wicket-keeping duties. But vice-captain Tahlia McGrath, who is expected to lead the side against India, insists Australia are ready to call on their squad strength. "The thing about this Australia team is the depth we have. It's time to use it," she said on Friday.

**SQUADS:**  
**India:** Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (wk), Yastika Bhatia, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh Thakur, Dayalan Hemalatha, Asha Sobhana, Radha Yadav, Shreyanka Patil, Sajana Sajeevan  
**Australia:** Alyssa Healy (c), Darcie Brown, Ash Gardner, Kim Garth, Grace Harris, Alana King, Phoebe Litchfield, Tahlia McGrath (vc), Sophie Molineux, Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Megan Schutt, Annabel Sutherland, Tayla Vlaeminck, Georgia Wareham.



## Hero MotoSports becomes World Rally-Raid champion

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Hero MotoSports Team Rally's Ross Branch was crowned the new FIM World Rally-Raid Champion, becoming the first African rider to achieve the feat after successfully completing the final round of the Rallye Du Maroc. The race marked the fifth and final round of the 2024 FIM World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC). The achievement also marks a milestone for Hero MotoSports, which, in its eighth year of racing, has clinched its first-ever FIM World Championship title, stated a release. The Indian manufacturer becomes only the sixth team in history to win this prestigious title, breaking the dominance of the KTM group (comprising KTM, GasGas, and Husqvarna) that had held the championship streak since 2014. Ross delivered some of his career-best performances throughout the season, securing the highest points in the Championship standings. In January, Ross earned Hero MotoSports their first-ever Dakar podium by finishing second overall at Dakar 2024, which was also the opening round of the W2RC. His momentum continued with a second-place finish at the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge in February,

propelling him to the top of the Championship rankings. He maintained his form with fifth-place finishes at both Rally Raid Portugal (April) and Desafio Ruta 40 in Argentina (June) that helped him hold onto his lead until the final round in Morocco, ultimately securing the coveted World Championship title. Since its inception in 2003, only 10 riders have managed to achieve this feat, and Ross became the 11th rider to do so. Hero MotoSports fielded three riders -- Ross, Nacho Cornejo, and Sebastian Buhler. After a relatively smooth prologue in Marrakech, the rally quickly escalated in difficulty due to unexpected rains and floods, which turned the terrain treacherous and caused several competitors to withdraw due to crashes or injuries. Buhler was among those forced to exit after a crash in Stage 2, leaving Rss and Cornejo to carry the team's hopes. The rally, which spanned nearly 2,500 kilometers across the Sahara Desert, culminated in Mengoub-Bouarf, near the Algerian border. Despite the harsh conditions, Ross' closest competitor in the championship was forced to withdraw, as he needed to finish the rally to secure the title.



## Olympiad gold-medallist Vantika ready for Grandmaster title

**PTI ■ LONDON**  
Chess Olympiad gold-medallist Vantika Agrawal is someone who has learnt the sport the hard way. Hailing from Noida in Uttar Pradesh, she had little chess infrastructure to motivate her to pursue the sport. However, her determined mother, who wanted her children to excel in whatever they pursued, supported Vantika in overcoming numerous challenges and making a mark in a sport dominated by players from South India. Vantika finally helped India achieve its biggest glory in team chess by winning the first-ever Olympiad gold in Budapest recently. Vantika, 21, is now aiming to become a Grandmaster, which could happen as early as next year. But she knows the challenges that lie ahead -- the least being the countless tournaments she will have to play across the world and the monetary burden it will put on her parents. "It has not at all been easy reaching this level, because the culture here (in north India) is all about excelling in academics, and if you want to play chess or any other sport, you need to devote extra time to that," said Vantika, who is a brand ambassador of the ongoing Tech Mahindra Global Chess League here. "I remember that even in school while they were supporting me, nobody really knew about chess. So, when I used to go and tell them about my achievements, they were completely uninterested... I mean, even in Shri Ram College of Commerce, where I completed my B.Com (Hons), they still don't know that I have won the Olympiad gold," says Vantika, whose mother quit her job with a leading multinational to be with her daughter as she pursued success in the sport. For Vantika, the Hangzhou

Asian Games women's team silver medallist last year, chess started out of curiosity to explore more sport after she had dabbled a bit in arts, music, dance, karate and a lot of other things during 'zero' period in school. "I joined karate classes and did a bit of Bharatnatyam, learnt music and vocals. I was seven-and-a-half years old when I developed a liking for chess. I think the first tournament I played I won some prize money. I think prizes, to some extent, became a motivation to continue playing chess. But with coaches hard to come by, she spent 5-6 hours online every day to learn the finer nuances of the game. Luckily, she got a coach in Manish Uniyal, who was willing to invest his time. "I think, I won the Asian Championship U9 title in Delhi in 2011. I kept playing 'Open' tournaments all over India, travelling with my mother to every single state... Odisha, Maharashtra, Mumbai, everywhere." Even as she continued to pursue the sport, there was no way Vantika was willing to compromise on her academics. "I used to play a tournament, come back and the next day, I used to have some exam or something. I remember giving 2-3 unit tests on a single day," she recalled. Balancing chess with academics continued for a good 10 years and she excelled in both, winning several national titles and also scoring big in school and college. "I remember my first medal, a silver in the U11 Nationals. I achieved my first international success by winning the U14 world championship bronze in 2016." While the Covid-19 pandemic brought with it several challenges, Vantika got plenty of time at her Noida residence to sharpen

her skills. Soon, she went on to win the mixed team gold in the 2020 Online Chess Olympiad. A consistent show at the Olympiad in Budapest recently added another feather to Vantika's cap when she along with Divya Deshmukh played a pivotal role in guiding India to the gold medal at a time when stalwarts like R Vaishali were struggling. The Olympiad success achieved, Vantika is now completely focused on becoming a Grandmaster. "So, from 2022 till now, I have competed in 28 Open events to earn rating points to become a GM. I've been living out of the suitcase. Every month, I am travelling to some place or the other," says Vantika. "You start getting fatigued... "Playing one tournament after another, while also arranging the finances, is a challenge in itself," says Vantika's mother Sangeeta. But she is willing to invest in her child's future knowing that Vantika has the potential to make it big. "An online coaching class with a foreign grandmaster costs Rs 10,000 an hour. So, if she does 10 hours of coaching every month, it comes to Rs one lakh. But we are not thinking about money right now. We are just trying to focus on her, make her a better player. More than the expenses, it's the travel and the challenges to keep her child motivated in a lonely world of chess, which continuously weigh on Vantika's mother's mind. Vantika knows that and is trying her best to give her mother a present for her sacrifices by becoming a GM. "I think if I keep trying my best, I can even make it (become a GM) by next year. Divya Deshmukh is pretty close to becoming a grandmaster. But, yeah, I will also keep trying and see how things go," Vantika signed off.

## Uthappa to lead India in Hong Kong Cricket Sixes

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
World Cup-winning keeper-batter Robin Uthappa will lead India in the Hong Kong Cricket Sixes tournament next month, the organisers announced on Saturday. The Indian team also includes the likes of Kedar Jadhav, Stuart Binny, Manoj Tiwary and left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem. Batters Bharat Chipli and wicketkeeper Shreevats

Goswami will also play for India, who were crowned champions in 2005. The six-a-side international cricket tournament, is slated to be played at Mission Road Ground in Mong Kok from November 1 to 3. The Hong Kong Cricket Sixes returns after a seven-year hiatus. The 2024 edition will feature 12 nations, including Australia, Pakistan, England and New Zealand. South Africa are the defending champions. The tournament

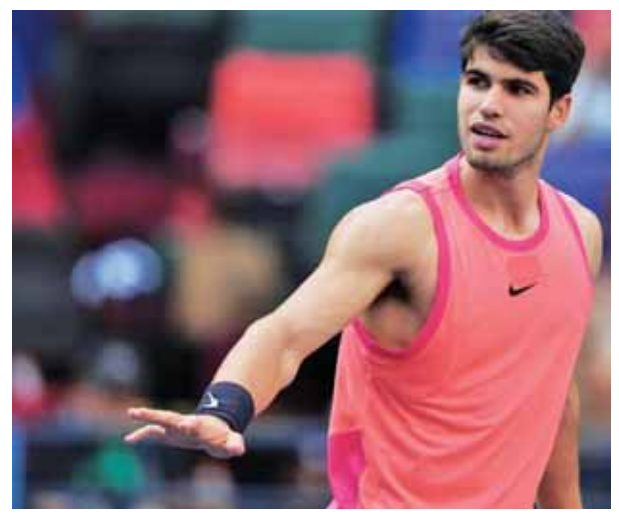
known for its fast-paced, entertaining format, featured many prominent cricketers from around the world, including Sachin Tendulkar. India will open their campaign against Pakistan on November 1, followed by a clash against UAE a day later. **INDIA SQUAD:** Robin Uthappa (Captain), Kedar Jadhav, Stuart Binny, Manoj Tiwary, Shahbaz Nadeem, Bharat Chipli, Shreevats Goswami (wicket-keeper).

## Alcaraz upset by Machac in Shanghai and Sabalenka rallies in Wuhan

**AP ■ SHANGHAI**  
No. 2-ranked Carlos Alcaraz's 12-match winning streak was ended by Tomas Machac 7-6 (5), 7-5 in the Shanghai Masters quarterfinals. It was No. 33 Machac's third tour-level quarterfinal, and the Czech player proved more than a match for the four-time major-winning Spaniard as he earned his second win over a top-five opponent this year in two hours. Machac will play top-ranked Jannik Sinner in the semifinals. "I knew that the level of my tennis would be great because I am playing the best right now, for sure," Machac said. "I beat Tommy Paul (in my) last match with an unbelievable performance. With these types of players, I have to play this level otherwise it's 6-2, 6-3 (and) you go home, there is no other option. Alcaraz, who won the China Open in a thriller against Sinner last week, learned of Rafael Nadal's retirement announcement shortly before going on court but said the news about his idol hadn't affected his match. "It is a really difficult thing, really difficult news for everybody, and even tougher for me," Alcaraz said. "He has been my idol since I start playing tennis. I look up to him. Proudly, thanks to him, I really wanted to become a professional tennis player. Losing him, in a certain way, is going to be difficult for us, so I will try to enjoy as much as I can when he's going to play. "But we are going to play in Saudi Arabia, and then Davis Cup, so I'm going to try to enjoy as much as I can the time with him. But, yeah, it is a shame for tennis and for me." Sinner advanced to his fifth ATP Masters semifinal of the season when the Italian swept aside fifth-ranked Daniil Medvedev in straight sets. Sinner started strongly and only faced one break point in his 6-1, 6-4 masterclass over the Russian, who needed treatment on his shoulder from the physio during the

second set. "I'm very happy how I handled today and this match," Sinner said. "It felt like he had a bit of shoulder pain and couldn't hit his forehand as well as he wished to. Hopefully, he can recover as fast as possible, but from my side it was a great match, a great battle, and let's see what I can do now in the

errors, while holding Putintseva to 13 winners and 14 unforced errors. Coco Gauff advanced to the quarterfinals with a 6-4, 6-1 rout of 17th-ranked Marta Kostyuk. It was the fourth-ranked Gauff's eighth consecutive win after the American won the China Open last week. Gauff fired two aces and broke the Ukrainian's serve



semifinals." With Thursday's win, the two-time major winner has leveled his head-to-head series against Medvedev at 7-7, but has won seven of the last eight meetings with the Russian. Second-ranked Aryna Sabalenka rallied from a set down to beat No. 35 Yulia Putintseva 1-6, 6-4, 6-0 to maintain her undefeated record at the Wuhan Open and rise to the top of the Race to the WTA Finals. Sabalenka, the U.S. Open champion, is 14-0 in Wuhan after winning the title on her first appearance in 2018 and defending her crown in 2019 before the tournament took a five-year hiatus from the calendar due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. The three-time major winner started slowly but roared to life during the second set and carried that momentum through the decider to clinch a quarterfinal spot against Beatriz Haddad-Maia or Magdalena Frech. Sabalenka finished with 44 winners to 33 unforced

five times - for the loss of one of her own - as she clinched a one-sided match and extended her lead in their head-to-head series to 3-1. Next for Gauff is No. 45-ranked Magda Linette, who continued her impressive form this week by beating eighth-seeded Daria Kasatkina 6-2, 6-3. "She's a tough opponent," Gauff said of Linette. "We haven't played since (the U.S. Open in 2021). I really don't know what to expect. But just from watching her play, she's been playing a great couple of matches here in Wuhan. "I expect it to be a tough match. She's not an easy opponent." Gauff will be the only American left in the draw after third-ranked Jessica Pegula and tour rookie Hailey Baptiste lost. Pegula, the U.S. Open finalist, had a tough afternoon against the 51st-ranked Wang Xinyu of China, who was dominant on serve throughout and clinched a 6-3, 7-5 win.

Wang had won their only previous meeting in three sets in the second round at Wimbledon and got off to a fast start here by breaking Pegula twice in the opening set to take the lead. After her first win over a top-10 player in the previous

round, Baptiste was routed by Ekaterina Alexandrova 6-1, 6-1. Paris Olympics gold medalist Zheng Qinwen rallied to beat Leylah Fernandez 5-7, 6-3, 6-0 and sixth-ranked Jasmine Paolini defeated Erika Andreeva 6-3, 6-2.



**NHPC celebrates 'Global Hydropower Day'**  
Shri R.K. Chaudhary, CMD, NHPC alongwith Shri Uttam Lal, Director (Personnel), NHPC, Shri Sanjay Kumar Singh, Director (Projects & Technical), NHPC, Shri Santosh Kumar, CVO, NHPC and other senior NHPC officers during 'Global Hydropower Day' celebrations at NHPC Corporate Office on 11th October 2024. NHPC, India's premier hydropower company and a Navratna Enterprise of the Government of India celebrated 'Global Hydropower Day' on 11th October 2024 at NHPC Corporate Office, Faridabad. The celebrations began with the traditional lighting of the lamp by Shri R.K. Chaudhary, CMD, NHPC alongwith Shri Uttam Lal, Director (Personnel), NHPC, Shri Sanjay Kumar Singh, Director (Projects & Technical), NHPC, Shri Santosh Kumar, CVO, NHPC and other senior NHPC officers.

**Bank of India is organizing SAMJHAUTA UTSAV**  
Bank of India is organizing SAMJHAUTA Utsav from 17 Oct to 19 Oct 2024 to settle the NPA loan accounts of borrowers under One Time Settlement (OTS) at all its branches / Zones and FGMOs across the country. The SAMJHAUTA Utsav is specially designed for the NPA Borrowers who could not repay their loan in time due to distress in business / medical condition of the borrower or any other genuine reason. Our Bank is having special OTS schemes to settle small value accounts and mid-size accounts through which special and good discounts are offered to the borrowers whose accounts are NPA. All the borrowers whose accounts are NPA may come forward to avail this Golden opportunity by settling NPA loan accounts on SAMJHAUTA Utsav from 17 Oct to 19 Oct 2024.







## NATURE'S EMBRACE

# A MAGICAL EVENING OF OF COUTURE

The evening sparked as *Shraddha Kapoor* stole the spotlight as the showstopper, unveiling *Resonance 2024/25*. This exquisite collection from *Mishru*, designed by visionary *Swapna Anumolu*, offered a breathtaking exploration of textures and craftsmanship, inviting the audience to experience the beauty of couture redefined



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

BY SAKSHI PRIYA

In a spectacular celebration of couture and creativity, an exquisite fashion event unfolded at the Embassy of Belgium, where artistry and nature came together to create an unforgettable experience. *Resonance 2024/25*, presented by *Mishru* and its visionary designer, *Swapna Anumolu*, is a Hyderabad-based design house renowned for its innovative craftsmanship, surface textures, and contemporary reinterpretations of Indian wear. The latest couture collection captivated the audience with its enchanting blend of urban aesthetics and the elegance of the natural world. This collection transformed mere garments into poetic expressions that reflected the designer's journey and profound connection to heritage, all infused with the vibrant essence of Hyderabad. The name "Mishru," meaning "a mix" in colloquial Gujarati, aptly captures the essence of this collection. It represents a synthesis of craft and culture that expands the definition of couture and bridal wear for both men and women. The designer's ability to draw inspiration from nature and architectural memories manifests in each piece, showcasing a distinctive aesthetic that continually evolves with every stitch. The evening began with an electric atmosphere, charged with anticipation. As models stepped onto the runway, it became clear that each ensemble was more than just an outfit; it was a story waiting to be told. The theme of



nature reclaiming urban spaces resonated throughout the event, elegantly illustrated through designs that harmoniously blended botanical elements with architectural inspirations. This melding of ideas not only appealed to the eye but also invited attendees to reflect on the intricate relationship between the environment and urban life. *Mishru's* signature craftsmanship was evident in the exquisite detailing present in every piece, from the delicate embroidery to the thoughtful selection of fabrics that flowed effortlessly with movement. The collection showcased an impressive array of techniques, such as 3D embroidery and vintage-inspired methods, adding depth and richness to the garments. This

meticulous attention to detail transformed each piece into wearable art, capturing the essence of joy and celebration that fashion can embody.

The colour palette was particularly striking, featuring a captivating blend of deep sapphires, rich rubies, and soft pastels. As models moved gracefully, the hues seemed to shift and evolve, creating a dynamic visual experience that drew viewers in. Each shade was chosen not just for its beauty but for its ability to evoke specific emotions, making the pieces feel intimately connected to the wearer's own journey.

The highlight of the evening came when Bollywood star *Shraddha Kapoor* graced the runway as the showstopper, bringing an undeniable allure to the finale. Her outfit was a beautiful representation of the collection's craftsmanship, adorned with intricate detailing that included a blend of color-shifting embroidery, delicate French knots and hand-embellished floral designs. This ensemble not only showcased the artistry of the collection but also highlighted how fashion can elevate an individual's confidence and presence.

The event featured a range of designs that were truly immersive, from structured pantsuits and bridal lehengas featuring corsetry to fluid cocktail dresses and versatile jumpsuits. The creations came alive with dreamy black-and-white combinations, complemented by striking white ensembles adorned with green necklaces. Models walked the runway in black embellished with floral prints, elegant combinations of black and white lace, and glimmering all-black ensembles. Every piece invited admiration, with patterns that showcased intricate embroidery and playful textures, captivating the audience with their richness and innovation.

This alluring and magical showcase marks a new chapter in reimagining couture, making it relevant and accessible for the modern individual. With its captivating designs and unique philosophy, this collection promises to leave a lasting impression, ensuring its place at the forefront of contemporary fashion. The stunning presence of *Shraddha Kapoor* as the showstopper elevated the evening, showcasing the intricate craftsmanship and elegance of the collection perfectly. *Mishru's* commitment to craftsmanship and innovation not only celebrates tradition but also paves the way for the future of Indian fashion, making it an exciting time for both designers and fashion enthusiasts alike.

THE NAME "MISHRU," MEANING "A MIX" IN COLLOQUIAL GUJARATI, APTLY CAPTURES THE ESSENCE OF THIS COLLECTION. IT REPRESENTS A SYNTHESIS OF CRAFT AND CULTURE THAT EXPANDS THE DEFINITION OF COUTURE AND BRIDAL WEAR FOR BOTH MEN AND WOMEN

## NEW OFFERINGS

### LALITARPAN FESTIVAL 2024

The 23rd edition of the *LalitArpan Festival* brings together renowned artists for a mesmerising blend of classical dance forms. This year's performances will highlight the grace and heritage of Kathak, Mohiniyattam, Odissi and Bharatanatyam, with captivating solo and duet presentations. Featuring well-known artists like *Shovana Narayan*, *Gopika Varma*, *Sharon Lowen* and others, the festival promises to be a vibrant celebration of creativity and tradition. The event is free for the public, offering an exceptional cultural experience for all.

**DETAILS**  
**Dates:** 14th October 2024- 15th October 2024  
**Time:** 7 PM onwards



**Venue:** The Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi  
**Entry:** Free for the public

### 1911 BRASSERIE LAUNCHES AUTUMN MENU

The *Imperial's 1911 Restaurant* debuts its much-awaited Autumn Menu, blending Indo-European classics with creative Indian flavours. Highlights include the *Regal Caesar salad*, infused with saffron garam masala and chickpea croutons and the *Imperial Paneer & Sabudana Burger*, a fusion of *sago pearls* and *paneer*. European favourites like the *Imperial Schnitzel* are reimagined with an Indian touch. This innovative menu reflects The *Imperial's* signature culinary excellence.

**DETAILS**  
**Restaurant:** 1911 Brasserie  
**Timings:** 6:30 AM - 11:45 PM  
**Meal for Two:** INR 5000+ taxes (without alcohol)  
**Reservations:** 011-41116602/03



### CELEBRATING YOUNG TALENT

The *Ravi Jain Memorial Foundation (RJMF)* proudly presents the 33rd edition of its flagship event at Dhoomimal Gallery, celebrating the creativity and talent of emerging artists. This edition features a poetry reading session, the launch of the Dhoomimal Gallery Art Bulletin, and a film screening dedicated to eminent artist *Krishen Khanna*.

**DETAILS**  
**Special Screening:** October 10, 2024 (04:00 PM onwards)  
**Exhibition Dates:** Till October 15, 2024 (Closed on Sundays)  
**Time:** 11:00 AM - 7:00 PM  
**Venue:** Dhoomimal Gallery, G-42, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001



## CTRL: AN UNRECOGNISED REALITY

CTRL exhibits the life of internet as a cybernetic 'termite', eating you without knowing writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

The Netflix film, directed by Vikramaditya Motwane, "CTRL" delves into the false depths of the digital age, painting a chilling portrait of a world where social media has become a double-edged sword. The film stars Ananya Panday as Nella Awasthi and Vihaan Samat as Joe Mascarenhas. The cast also includes Devika Vatsa as Bina, Kamakshi Bhat as Shonali and Suchita Trivedi as Nella's mother. The film, a cyber thriller that unfolds like a digital labyrinth, follows the seemingly idealistic lives of Nella Awasthi and Joe Mascarenhas, a popular social media couple whose carefully curated personas mask a brewing storm. The story majorly starts when Nella and Joe break up and Nella uses an AI generated tool to erase Joe from her memories.

At the chilly heart of this narrative lies Allen, an AI-generated companion who quickly morphs from a harmless chatbot into a malevolent force. The film's central theme is a stark warning about the warnings of oversharing in the digital realm, where personal data can be weaponised against unsuspecting individuals. Ananya Panday delivers a compelling performance as Nella, a social media influencer who finds herself trapped in a web of her own creation. Her transformation from a carefree influencer to a victim of cyberbullying is a poignant exploration of the consequences of exposing one's life to the digital world. Vihaan Samat, while playing a supporting role, adds depth to the



narrative with his portrayal of Joe. The film's greatest strength lies in its ability to resonate with audiences who are deeply connected to social media. The characters' struggles mirror the anxieties and vulnerabilities of many individuals who navigate the complexities of online life. "CTRL", with a varied storyline than others, serves as a cautionary tale, urging viewers to reconsider the extent to which they share their personal information and the potential consequences of doing so. The film's plot is a reminder that the curated realities presented on social media platforms often mask the underlying emptiness and discrepancy between the idealised image and the true nature of individuals. Audience will find consequences of sharing everything online can be disastrous, as the film unfolds.

The movie altogether is a worth-watch, with gripping storyline and everyday reality but the climax didn't pick the pace it should have. Its a blunt ending, failing to provide solutions and a worthy end.

Rating - 3.5/5



The film, a cyber thriller that unfolds like a digital labyrinth, follows the seemingly idealistic lives of Nella Awasthi and Joe Mascarenhas





London's most beautiful *Relais & Châteaux* hotel features whimsical touches and a vibrant, boutique atmosphere

BY RUPALI DEAN

On a crisp summer morning in London, *Chelsea's* Pavilion Road awakens to a symphony of voices. Its spacious, pedestrianised mews bustle with bakers, butchers, and businessmen. Amidst this activity, 11 *Cadogan Gardens* stands firm, like a resilient tree, sheltered from the chaos. Initially constructed by *Lord Chelsea* as four separate Victorian townhouses in the 19th century, the buildings now intertwine in the enchanting realm of *Chelsea*, where luxury meets elegance, creating a labyrinth of corridors and staircases adorned with ornate balustrades, leading to grand hallways. This boutique haven offers guests a unique escape, nestled just a stone's throw from the vibrant *Sloane Square* and the fashionable *King's Road*, renowned for their eclectic blend of shopping and dining experiences. Yet, it is the somewhat hidden gem of *Pavilion Road*, with its chic bakeries, lush florists, and exquisite designer boutiques, that beckons curious souls seeking a taste of local charm. Owing to its prestigious location, the hotel became a favoured haven for travelling Victorian aristocrats, politicians, and bon viveurs. During this

progressive era, the area emerged as a bohemian quarter, drawing notable figures such as radicals, artists, and poets. Guests can choose from 56 unique rooms, including 25 suites, each with its own character. Experience the opulent *Sloane Suite*, adorned with antiques and overlooking the lush *Cadogan Gardens*, or enjoy *The Cadogan Suites* in the old mews building, complete with private entrances and views of *Pavilion Road*.

**ELEGANCE MEETS INTRIGUE**

As the story unfolds, we delve into the world of this upscale hotel and its self-catering apartments that cater to the discerning traveller. The interiors exude a bold, brooding atmosphere, enhanced by gleaming metallics, candle-style lighting, and polished woods. Every corner is impeccably maintained, offering a choice between glamorous allure and an oppressive atmosphere, depending on your taste. The main building, dating back to the 19th century and originally constructed by *Lord Chelsea*, later transformed into a private members' club. Dark hues and oil portraits dominate the staircase, yet a sense of levity remains in the abundant fresh flowers, signature room fragrances, and the *Secret Garden* courtyard offers a serene sunlit retreat for indulging in



EVERY CORNER IS IMPECCABLY MAINTAINED, OFFERING A CHOICE BETWEEN GLAMOROUS ALLURE AND AN OPPRESSIVE AMBIANCE, DEPENDING ON YOUR TASTE

perfect summer afternoon teas. Inspired by the *Chelsea Flower Show*, the service is a sensorial delight. Savour a glass of Champagne and indulge in an array of exquisite pastries and sandwiches, artfully presented on elegant *Wedgwood* crockery, complemented by a selection of *Jing* teas. The entire property brims with character, distinctly devoid of any *magnolia* moments. Each one, two, and three-bedroom apartment promises uninterrupted views of the serene gardens, exuding tranquility amidst the bustling city, save for the occasional roar

of a *Lamborghini* slicing through the peaceful atmosphere, a reminder of the luxury that envelops the area. "The Heart of *Chelsea*" explores the intertwined lives of the guests as they navigate romance, intrigue, and self-discovery against the backdrop of one of London's most iconic neighbourhoods. Their journeys resonate against the allure of *Chelsea*, making for a tale of elegance, exploration, and the complex tapestry of human connection in a space where the past and present intertwine beautifully. The Apartments by 11 *Cadogan Gardens*, situated just moments from the hotel at 20 *Cadogan Gardens*, seamlessly blend the luxury of fully serviced living with the comfort, discretion, and security of a private residence.

**QUINTESSENTIALLY BRITISH**

Step outside this heritage property, and you'll find an array of high-end boutiques, world-class restaurants, and upscale galleries just a stroll away. After enjoying an espresso at *Bill's* and indulging in a vibrant shopping spree, unwind at the hotel's *Chelsea Bar*, where deep gold and charcoal interiors provide the perfect backdrop for restorative cocktails. For a quieter moment, retreat to the library, where you can lose yourself in *Dickensian tales* of unrequited love and

fierce battles, all while being observed by moustachioed lords and corseted ladies from the portraits above. The wine-tasting sessions at the *Curio and Wine Rooms* offer a delightful escape to a more leisurely pace. The relaxed ambiance contrasts beautifully with the sumptuous offerings at *Hans' Bar & Grill*, featuring everything from fresh *South Coast* fish to locally sourced plant-based delicacies. It serves food that delivers a vibrant burst of flavour - lively, colourful and consistently delicious. We were particularly enamoured with the *grilled King Prawns* and *fried cauliflower*, though every item on the menu is worth a try and cooked to perfection. With something for every palate, the restaurant's dedication to fresh, locally sourced ingredients elevates each dish, making it a favourite among both locals and hotel guests. All in all, at 11 *Cadogan Gardens*, you'll find a quintessentially British experience that indulges the senses in a tranquil oasis, while also encouraging you to embrace the vibrant life just minutes away in the bustling city.

(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.)

India's Single Malt Matures

Indian single malts, once overshadowed by international brands, now account for 53% of total sales, with brands like *Crazy Cock* from *South Seas Distilleries* making a splash

BY TEAM AGENDA

The whisky market in India has experienced remarkable growth over the past decade, emerging as one of the largest and most diverse spirits markets in the world. India is now both a significant consumer and a producer of whisky, with a market that spans a wide range of products, from mass-market brands to premium single malts. The size of the whisky market in India is estimated to be around *USD 21.13 billion* in 2023.

In 2024, the revenue from the whisky market is expected to be *USD 17.4 billion*. In 2024, the volume of the whisky market is expected to be *3.3 billion litres*. It may come as a surprise but the fact remains that India is the second largest export market for *Scotch whisky* by volume, though *Scotch whisky* only has a 2% share of the *Indian whisky* market. Besides, *Indian single malts* are gaining recognition and competing with international brands. India's single malt whisky market is growing, reaching *\$18.38 billion* in 2023. The market is expected to grow at a *CAGR* of 5.34% from 2023 to 2027.

In one of the major milestones, *Indian single malt whiskies* have made history by surpassing renowned international brands in terms of sales. According to the *Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC)*, *Indian single malts* accounted for 53% of total sales in 2023. The entry of brands like *Crazy Cock* single malt whisky by *South Seas Distilleries* is another noteworthy development. As the market expands, more players are entering with their premium offerings, positioning India as a key player in the global whisky market.



oldest malt distillery and home to the largest maturation warehouse, has expanded its luxury single malt brand, *Crazy Cock*, into *Haryana*. Launched in December 2023, *Crazy Cock* offers two distinct expressions, 'Rare' and 'Dhua'. Founded in 1984 in *Dahanu*, *Maharashtra*, *South Seas Distilleries* has a rich legacy, supplying luxury malts to top global and Indian brands. The distillery, renowned for its tropical maturation process, houses the largest copper-pot stills in the country and produces some of the oldest luxury malts. With its expansion into the consumer market, the distillery is showcasing its line of premium single malts under the *Crazy Cock* brand. *Rupi Chinoy*, Director of *South Seas Distilleries*, highlights the family's long-standing association with malts: "Our legacy predates most players in the industry. After years of excelling in the B2B space, we are proud to introduce *Crazy Cock Single Malts*, featuring some of the finest matured malts from our private collection." The distillery's production process is entirely in-house, from mashing to

bottling, with each batch matured in rare oak barrels. The term 'Crazy Cock' reflects the passion, belief, resilience and determination of the Founder. At a time when *Indian single malts* were virtually unheard-of, four decades ago, he established one of India's first malt distilleries with the largest copper pot stills that India has till date. Despite numerous challenges, he held a visionary belief that India could produce luxury single malts to rival the world's offerings. The 'cock' or the rooster (also the mascot of the brand) is a symbol of new beginnings and positivity across cultures. It also marks a new chapter for *South Seas* as the company transitions from supporting the biggest spirit brands to launching their own consumer-facing line. Just as a rooster's crow heralds a new day, *Crazy Cock* signifies the dawn of *South Seas'* journey into the luxury single malt consumer market after four decades of mastering distillation and maturation. One of the primary drivers of this growth is the increasing disposable income of the middle class, coupled with a shift in consumer preferences

towards premium and high-quality products. As a result, more Indians are gravitating toward higher-end spirits, especially *single malts*, which were once considered beyond reach. Another key factor is the expanding demographic of young, urban professionals, who are not only drinking more but are also becoming more discerning about their alcohol choices. A whisky-tasting session by *South Seas* to appreciate their *Single Malt Crazy Cock* was packed and had young people from across the board. Such events had made a change in understanding of drinking along with the drinking etiquettes gradually seeping in. A whisky tasting session is a refined experience that allows individuals to explore the unique flavours and characteristics of various whiskies. The session often starts with a visual inspection of the whisky's clarity and hue, followed by swirling it in the glass to release its aromas. Taking small sips and savouring the whisky's complexity is encouraged to fully appreciate its texture and finish. Whisky etiquette plays an essential role in enhancing this experience. Key practices include holding the glass by its base to avoid warming the whisky, sipping rather than gulping, and refraining from adding too much ice, which can dilute the flavours. As India's whisky culture matures, the country will likely continue to make its mark not only as one of the largest whisky markets in the world but also as a producer of world-class spirits. The growing demand for single malt whiskies, in particular, signals a shift towards more refined tastes, presenting exciting opportunities for both consumers and producers alike.

**THE GUEST CHEF - OZGUR YILDIRIM**

Get on a journey to the sun-drenched shores of the Mediterranean and the spice-laden bazaars of *Istanbul* as the culinary expert, *Chef Ozgur Yildirim* brings the soul of *Turkish cuisine* to life. *Chef Yildirim* is a talented *Turkish culinary* artist whose passion for food is matched by his commitment to creating unique dining experiences. His culinary journey began in his family kitchen, where his love for cooking flourished. With rich experiences at prestigious establishments, such as the *Radisson Blu Hotel* in *Trabzon* and *Seyyami*



*Usta* in *Kuwait*, he has honed his craft and developed a deep appreciation for flavours. With degrees from *Gedik University* and *Esenyurt University* in *Istanbul*, *Chef Yildirim* brings a wealth of knowledge and a warm, personal touch to his creations. At *Cosy Box*, he expertly matches traditional techniques with a modern take, crafting a menu that delights both the eye and the palate. *Chef Yildirim's* philosophy revolves around creating dishes that evoke happiness and connection. He believes that "bringing pleasure to the guests through food is the greatest reward," a sentiment that fills every plate he serves. This genuine approach to cooking ensures that each meal at *Cosy Box* is not just about nourishment but a shared experience that accords long after the last bite. His signature dishes like the *Lamb Adana* and *Chicken Adana*, each thoughtfully prepared to reminisce the heart of *Turkish cuisine* while incorporating subtle influences from *Asian*, *Indian*, and *European* traditions. How can there be

*Turkish meals* and not *Baklava*? *Chef* treats his diners to a pleasant surprise with the *Baklava cheesecake*, an innovative twist on a beloved classic that delivers a perfect ending to any meal. That's not all. *Cosy Box's* new line of dessert menu draws inspiration from the grandeur of *Greek mythology*. The star of the show is the signature *Tiramisu*, re-imagined with a divine twist. Alongside it, a luscious *Pistachio* delight and *Apollo*-inspired flavours round out a trio of desserts that elevate the art of sweet indulgence.

**INNOVATIVE COCKTAILS - A PERFECT PAIRING**

Sip as you dine from *Head Mixologist Sanjeet Yadav's* impressive array of concoctions. Each drink is crafted to be innovative, ingredient-forward, and pure fun, designed to complement the new menu while remaining true to the original vibrant cocktail selection, which features an extensive list of expertly crafted beverages. Signature cocktails like the *Expansion Artisque* and *Sunset Serenity* promise to elevate the dining experience, while the cheekily named *Whiskey Business* and *Berry Potter* offer playful twists on classic favourites. Prepare to be

immersed in a multisensory experience, where each dish and drink becomes a brushstroke in a masterpiece of flavours, textures, and aromas. This season, pair your favourite concoctions with the exquisite new dishes from *Cosy Box's* menu!

**SIGNATURE HIGHLIGHTS**

- VEG DISHES**
- **Four Cheese Portobello** - cheese stuffed portobello mushroom, asparagus, tomato fondue.
- **Spicy Avocado Sushi** - white rice, avocado, cucumber, Tanuki, spicy mayo, togarashi.
- **Oyster Mushroom** - Tonkatsu sauce, morning glory, corn on the cob.
- NON VEG DISHES**
- **Lamb Chop** - Black rice risotto, asparagus & porcini reduction.
- **Tapenade Crusted Scottish Salmon** - warm vegetable quinoa & lemon caper emulsion.
- **Chicken Adana** - Turkish chilli, lavash, chili pepper, sumac onion & turkish tartar.

At *Cosy Box*, the kitchen's commitment to inclusivity shines through its gluten-free and vegan offerings, ensuring a delightful experience for all. The menu showcases a medley of flavours with offerings like *Peshawari paneer tikka*, *quinoa* and *prune salad*, and *Thai curries*, ensuring that every guest, regardless of dietary restrictions, can satisfy the palate. Step into the dining destination, where lush greenery surrounds you, fountains softly whisper, and every seat invites comfort, all while indulging in impeccable food and drinks that make every moment unforgettable.

Address : *Netaji Nagar Musical Fountain* and *Nature Park*, Opposite *Bhikaji Cama Place*, Block B 3, *New Delhi*



"The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters, is simplicity"  
— Walt Whitman



In the remote tribal heartland of Chhattisgarh, the ancient art of Dokra, a 4,000-year-old metal-casting technique fights for the survival, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

# DOKRA AND THE ART OF SURVIVAL

The nondescript district of Kondagaon, about 80 kilometres from Jagdalpur, the capital of Chhattisgarh, is home to a population of around six lakhs and is renowned for its world-famous Dokra art, which is still practiced by a small tribal community of Ghadwa artisans here. As we approach the place we have no idea of their life and livelihood and do not know what we are going to see. All we know is that Dokra is an ancient metal casting that has been around for over 4,000 years. But in these modern times, it is finding tough to survive. It is a dying art form with the people who practice it reluctant to pursue it for the want of work and remuneration. On the way we are told by Navaldeep Thareja, a friendly guy who works with this community and is into documenting these art forms, that Dokra art is one of the oldest known methods of metal casting, using the lost wax technique that has remained unchanged over millennia. The Ghadwa craftsmen, belong to 'Dokra nag' tribe, create detailed sculptures and figurines—depictions of gods, animals, tribal stories, and everyday objects—all shaped with remarkable precision. Each piece, made from an alloy of brass, is characterised by its rustic appeal and distinct style, marked by thin shapes and rich textural patterns. What sets Dokra apart is that no two pieces are ever identical, ensuring that each creation holds unique cultural value. Originating from the tribal communities of Kondagaon, this intricate craft has managed to survive centuries of change but now it is dying out, as the artisans struggle to maintain sustainable livelihood, facing competition from modern industries. Though completely handcrafted and with intricate carvings, it has few takers as it now faces new challenges brought by changing tastes, modern lifestyles, competition from machine-made artifacts, and fading local interest. The biggest challenge is to sell it. It is a handcrafted piece that often takes days to make but may not fetch a good price.

The technique is simple yet demands skill and focus. The mud moulds are made with hands and then wrapped around with mud threads dyed in coaltar mixed with wax, then covered with mud and heated. As wax melts away, the hollow mould is ready to be filled with liquid brass which is then cooled and finished and painted. This needs time and dexterity, skill and passion which many people would not understand. To them it is just an artifact, for Dokras it is life and means of livelihood. Many have switched to other professions. However things have changed as big brands have shown interest in its revival. But now there is a glimmer of hope. 'Jaypore' a well known brand is stepping in to ensure that this craft does not disappear. It is collaborating with artisans to bring this traditional art form to a wider audience, while also ensuring its preservation. They are providing these artisans work and logistic support and the market. Providing the much needed link between the buyer and the seller, they are taking it to metros to the people with a taste for art and deeper pockets. And that has led to a kind of resurgence of Dokra art, though there is a long long way to go. It also sets



DOKRA ART IS ONE OF THE OLDEST KNOWN METHODS OF METAL CASTING, USING THE LOST WAX TECHNIQUE THAT HAS REMAINED UNCHANGED OVER MILLENNIA. THE CRAFTSMEN, KNOWN AS 'GHADWAS', BELONG TO 'DOKRA NAG' TRIBES, CREATE SCULPTURES AND FIGURINES—DEPICTING GODS, ANIMALS, TRIBAL STORIES, AND EVERYDAY OBJECTS—ALL SHAPED WITH REMARKABLE PRECISION



out to rectify the problems artisans have. While the art form itself is remarkable, Dokra faces significant challenges today. Artisans are often forced to compromise on quality to meet the lower price points demanded by the market, and younger generations are less interested in learning these intricate techniques due to their labour-intensive nature and uncertain economic returns. Shabbir Nag who runs a unit in Kondagaon started it early to support his family and used to get Rs 5 per day gradually he learnt the ropes as it was in his blood; his father and forefathers did this. He gradually worked his way up and the turning point came when he met the Jaypore team which not only gave him training but also orders to supply pieces. But even for the brands it is a challenge as the market for traditional handicrafts has shrunk with the influx of mass-produced goods that can replicate aesthetics at a fraction of the cost and time. Navaldeep Thareja tells me that working with communities is not as simple as it looks. "To work with them you have to understand them, live with them and respect their culture and values. Like all artists, they are creative people and cannot be forced to finish orders like other units" says Navaldeep. He has a point and people are generally shy and reluctant to talk. To get acquainted we talk to them about their craft and rituals like tatoos which we are told are given to girls by their parents as their identity. We share food with them and indulge in small talk. The ice finally breaks and they chat with us and tell us about the issues, challenges they face in transporting their products and difficulties in getting the raw material. The raw materials required for Dokra—brass and wax—have become more expensive, adding further strain to the artisans. Middlemen in the supply chain also absorb much of the revenue, leaving the actual creators with minimal profit margins. Without intervention, this ancient craft runs the risk of fading away into oblivion, like many other traditional art forms. Reflecting on the partnership, Radhika Chhabra, Creative Head, Jaypore, says, "Our collaboration with the Ghadwa artisans has been a remarkable journey of mutual growth. At Jaypore, we take pride in preserving and promoting traditional crafts, while also ensuring that the talented hands behind these creations receive the recognition and support, they deserve." Its initiative goes beyond just selling the products. It works with artisans to ensure they preserve the authenticity of the craft while adapting to contemporary designs that appeal to modern-day consumers. The shift is subtle but vital—preserving traditional techniques while offering innovative designs that make Dokra more commercially viable. By integrating traditional motifs with modern aesthetics, Jaypore helps bridge the gap between heritage and consumer demand. Through workshops and



training programs, they also invest in skill-building for artisans, encouraging younger generations to get involved in the craft. Dokra is more than just a decorative art form. It is a living testament to India's tribal history and a tangible connection to the country's ancient past. Preserving it is essential not just for the sake of cultural continuity but also for sustaining the livelihood of the tribal communities who depend on this craft. The tribal communities in Chhattisgarh do not have many sources of income and with New forest laws in place, it is even more difficult to sustain themselves. "This is all we know and this is what we want to do" says one of the artisans who works as a caster in the unit. In an era where fast fashion and mass production dominate the marketplace, Dokra offers an antidote: an artisanal, sustainable form of craftsmanship that emphasises individuality and heritage. Beyond the artistic value, Dokra contributes to the global movement towards slow fashion and conscious consumerism. Consumers are becoming more aware of the environmental and social impact of their purchases, and Dokra, with its handmade nature and use of sustainable materials, fits neatly into this narrative.

Moreover, preserving this art form allows for the continued passing down of skills and knowledge through generations. It fosters a sense of pride and identity within the tribal communities of Kondagaon. The loss of such a craft would mean not only the disappearance of an art form but also the erosion of a community's cultural identity. While the newfound interest of big brands in the craft has led to a revival of the craft and poured in the survival money that sustains around 200 families in the village of Shabbir Nag, much more needs to be done to ensure the survival of Dokra art. Greater government support, better access to raw materials, and increased promotion on international platforms could help safeguard this tradition. The establishment of direct-to-consumer models that eliminate intermediaries and provide artisans with higher revenue shares is another potential solution. Initiatives that encourage tourism to regions like Kondagaon, where tourists can witness the craft firsthand, could also contribute to its revival. The preservation of Dokra art is not just about protecting an ancient tradition; it is about creating a sustainable future for the artisans who keep this cultural legacy alive.





MUSIC DOESN'T LIE. IF THERE IS SOMETHING TO BE CHANGED IN THIS WORLD, THEN IT CAN ONLY HAPPEN THROUGH MUSIC  
— JIMI HENDRIX

# CELEBRATING THE HARMONY OF MUSIC AND DANCE

The opening night of KNMA's 2024 Performing Arts Programme featured an enchanting performance of 'Adharam,' where Carnatic vocalist *Sudha Raghuraman* and Odissi dancer *Arushi Mudgal* brought together the rich traditions of their art forms in a captivating celebration, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**



The inaugural evening of KNMA's 2024 Performing Arts Programme unfolded with an enchanting performance of *Adharam* Arts Programme brought a breath of fresh air, as two gifted artists, *Sudha Raghuraman* and *Arushi Mudgal*, took the stage for an unforgettable performance of *Adharam*. With the soulful strains of Carnatic music and the graceful flow of Odissi dance, the evening was a celebration of India's deep artistic traditions, lovingly explored and reimagined. Both performers brought their hearts and souls into their art, creating a performance that felt deeply rooted yet refreshingly new. KNMA opened its 2024 season at Kamani Auditorium in New Delhi with the outstanding production of *Adharam*. This captivating collaboration between Carnatic vocalist *Sudha Raghuraman* and Odissi dancer *Arushi Mudgal* highlighted the deep foundations of their respective art forms. The performance marked a brilliant beginning to the season, reinforcing KNMA's commitment to promoting both traditional and contemporary cultural expressions. The evening unfolded as an intricate dialogue between two classical art forms. *Raghuraman's* mastery of Carnatic music, with its complex ragas and improvisations, perfectly complemented *Mudgal's* fluid and expressive Odissi movements. The harmony between the two was remarkable, as they explored the delicate interplay between music and movement, revealing the underlying connections that bind these distinct forms. Odissi, a classical dance originating from Odisha, is celebrated for its graceful body movements, expressive gestures and intricate footwork. *Mudgal's* performance exemplified the elegance and technical mastery for which she is known. Deeply grounded in the traditions of Odissi, her movements were precise, yet imbued with a contemporary sensitivity that brought fresh energy to the performance. The timelessness of the dance form was evident, but through *Arushi's* interpretation, it felt alive and evolving. On the other hand,

Carnatic music, with its emotive ragas and rhythmic complexity, was brought to life by *Raghuraman's* powerful and evocative voice. Her rendition blended technical brilliance with profound emotional depth, elevating the performance and allowing the audience to feel the richness of the musical tradition she represents. Every note seemed to resonate with history, yet it was presented with an immediacy that felt current and relevant. The uniqueness of *Adharam* lay in how these two distinct forms came together. The metaphor of the tree, deeply rooted with branches that spread wide, was fitting for the evening. Both artists are firmly grounded in the traditions of their art forms, yet through this collaboration, they expanded the boundaries, exploring new creative possibilities. This balance between preserving tradition and introducing new ideas was the heart of the performance. The decision to commission this production shows its dedication to encouraging artistic innovation while staying true to cultural roots. By bringing together two masters of their crafts, KNMA demonstrated its vision of supporting performances that not only showcase artistic excellence but also inspire new ways of engaging with traditional forms.



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

As the evening progressed, the connection between music and dance created moments of exceptional beauty. There was a natural unity, where music flowed into the dance and the dance, in turn, responded to the music with grace and intensity. This collaboration created an artistic experience that transcended individual elements, forming something truly memorable. KNMA's 2024 Performing Arts Programme has set a high standard with this opening performance. *Adharam* was a powerful reminder of the enduring relevance of classical Indian art forms, while also showcasing their potential for innovation. Both *Sudha* and *Arushi* exemplified what it means to be guardians of tradition, while being open to new interpretations

and creative explorations. The performance of *Adharam* was a remarkable celebration of the rich traditions of Indian art, skillfully brought to life by both the artists. Their ability to fuse the intricate nuances of Carnatic music with the graceful movements of Odissi created a captivating experience that resonated on multiple levels. It was inspiring to witness how they not only honoured their respective traditions but also opened a dialogue between them, highlighting the beauty that emerges when different art forms come together. This collaboration was a beautiful reminder of how art can create a space where innovation thrives alongside heritage. The evening was a celebration of creativity and passion, leaving the audience with a profound sense of connection to the art and to each other. *Adharam* offered more than just a display of talent; it was an immersive experience that underscored the power of artistic collaboration. As the audience left the auditorium, they carried with them the memories of a performance that was not only beautiful but also deeply meaningful, an evening that truly brought art to life and reminded everyone of its ability to inspire and uplift.



# An Artistic Tribute to Gandhi's Legacy

*Pearl Academy* invites everyone to experience 'Gandhi Natura Colore,' an inspiring exhibition that beautifully blends art, sustainability and the spirit of Gandhi, connecting hearts and minds across India, Italy and Australia, **SAKSHI PRIYA**

In a world often clouded by challenges, art emerges as a vibrant source of hope and inspiration. The "Gandhi Natura Colore" exhibition, hosted by *Pearl Academy*, was a beautiful celebration that captivated audiences with its profound tribute to Mahatma Gandhi's enduring legacy. This unique event brought together international artists to explore themes of peace, sustainability, and the interconnectedness of humanity and nature. Held simultaneously in New Delhi, Rome and Sydney, the exhibition crafted a powerful dialogue around critical global issues, reminding us of the transcendent nature of art in enriching understanding and connection. This collaborative effort brought together creative talents from *Pearl Academy* in India, *DESART2 Associazione Culturale* in Italy and *DE LUCA 1937 / StudioLab* in Australia. The initiative celebrated the beauty of nature, the importance of colour and the principles of sustainable living that Gandhi espoused. The concept this year focused on reconnecting with nature, with artists in Rome creating pigments from vegetable and fruit waste. In India, students engaged in a unique process where they interviewed hundreds of individuals to determine the first word that came to mind when thinking of Gandhi. They then utilised AI to generate concepts, connecting back to nature in the age of technology. This innovative approach showcased how traditional crafts can be revived, inspiring artisans to explore new possibilities in their work. From the moment one enters the exhibition, the beauty of the artworks is striking. Each piece reflects the artists' creativity and passion, capturing Gandhi's ideals of Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truth) and Sarvodaya (welfare of all). The thoughtfully arranged displays invite viewers to immerse themselves in the rich narratives each artwork conveys,



creating an atmosphere alive with inspiration and purpose. One standout piece that captivated many was "Ahimsa". The vibrant pigments on natural fibre canvas vividly reflect Gandhi's belief that a nation's greatness is judged by how it treats animals. The portrayal of the alarming decline of bee populations serves as a stunning reminder of the urgent need for environmental stewardship. The delicate brushwork and colour choices drew viewers in, allowing them to appreciate not only the technical skill involved but also the emotional weight of the subject matter.



Another remarkable work was "Hope". This exquisite textile artwork, made from khadi voile, beautifully symbolises Gandhi's inner peace and strength during his imprisonment. The swirling patterns and soft shades of blue evoke a sense of serenity, while subtle hints of saffron and green connect the piece



THIS COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BROUGHT TOGETHER CREATIVE TALENTS FROM PEARL ACADEMY IN INDIA, DESART2 ASSOCIAZIONE CULTURALE IN ITALY AND DE LUCA 1937 / STUDIO LAB IN AUSTRALIA



to India's cultural heritage. The intricate textures resembling ripples on a calm pond further enhance its visual appeal, inviting viewers to reflect on the concept of hope as a quiet yet powerful force. The textile artwork "The Light Within" is another piece that left a lasting impression. This work showcases a profound connection to both artistic inspiration and cultural

heritage. Inspired by Rothko, this patchwork artwork employs hand-dyed, hand-spun fabrics to create layers of luminous colour. The way the colours blend and radiate light mesmerises onlookers, highlighting the complexity and beauty of Gandhi's teachings. The meticulous stitching and thoughtful arrangement of fabric pieces add depth to the composition, encouraging viewers to contemplate the themes of illumination and transcendence. A particularly exciting highlight was the INTERNATIONAL LAB EXPERIENCE, a collaboration between *Pearl Academy* and the *Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology* (BIFT). Visitors were enchanted by the students' innovative exploration of Kantha embroidery, creating a fabric collection that harmoniously blends Indian and Chinese folklore. The intricate designs and vibrant colours reflect a shared cultural narrative, showcasing the beauty of collaboration and the power of art to bridge divides. "Gandhi Natura Colore" was not just an exhibition; it was an enriching experience that engaged the audience on multiple levels. The stunning artworks, each a unique expression of creativity and thoughtfulness, sparked conversations about contemporary global challenges, urging viewers to reflect on their role in promoting sustainability and compassion in a world that often feels disconnected. This beautiful art exhibition invites all to embrace Gandhi's principles of peace and sustainability. The artworks, from "Ahimsa" addressing the treatment of animals to "Hope" embodying resilience, collectively honour the spirit of Gandhi. Visitors are inspired and motivated to contribute to a more sustainable and compassionate world, reminding us that art holds the power to ignite change and deepen our connections with one another and the environment.

Photos: Pankaj Kumar





**YOUR WEEK AHEAD**

MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

This week, it's crucial to focus on financial prudence. Assess and manage your income and expenditures diligently as spending currently surpasses earnings. Balance is key, as other important areas of life demand your attention—home matters, real estate, educational pursuits, and career developments are all in a state of rapid change and require your focus. For the majority of the week, consider limiting social activities and personal leisure to prioritize these demands. As the week progresses, you'll find the weight of recent stresses lifting, allowing for smoother transitions in your activities. You'll end the week feeling vibrant, optimistic, and full of zest, ready to embrace your journey with caution yet enjoyment. Keep an eye out for any potential obstacles that could disrupt this positive flow.

**Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour** Burgundy  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

This week may present several challenges, including unforeseen complications, betrayals from close acquaintances, delayed payments, and potential health concerns within your family. Despite these obstacles, your resilience and composure will shine through as you confront these difficulties head-on. Financial prospects might seem bleak, particularly with investments or loans not yielding expected returns, which could lead to some serious contemplation. However, this period of difficulty is only temporary. To address health issues, seeking timely medical advice combined with meditation and physical exercises could be highly beneficial. Engaging in spiritual practices or devotions could also provide some solace during this tough time. Stay grounded and ready to tackle any disruptions that come your way.

**Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour** Emerald  
**Lucky day** Monday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

People with abundant vitality often excel when they harness their energy effectively. This period calls for immediate attention to fine-tuning your approach. It's crucial to delegate tasks and structure your schedule for better productivity. Effective management of time and resources is essential now. Those anticipating career advancement could see positive developments soon. Financial gains are on the horizon. Business-related travel could be particularly advantageous, opening doors to valuable long-term partnerships. Self-assurance and bravery are your tickets to achieving greater heights. By week's end, expect significant monetary rewards that could enhance your comfort and security. This period also favors investments in assets, though careful deliberation is advised. While career concerns may linger, remember, you're almost at your goal—stay concentrated and take that final step forward.

**Lucky number 18 | Lucky colour** Plum  
**Lucky day** Saturday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week, you might encounter some challenging interactions, possibly facing sharp remarks from a coworker or a close one. Despite a positive beginning to the week with new possibilities on the horizon, emotional matters could become complicated. A romantic gesture might not receive the response you hope for, potentially leading to feelings of isolation and melancholy. It's wise to keep your expectations realistic and remain grounded rather than getting carried away. You might find yourself on the brink of ending a connection that hasn't fully developed. Managing your emotions and reactions is crucial, as they could otherwise lead to frustration and fatigue. Remember, this difficult period is only temporary, you'll soon regain your composure. Support may come from an unexpected source, perhaps a maternal figure or a relative.

**Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour** Mustard  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

This week might feel emotionally intense for you, prompting nostalgic reflections or a strong desire to reconnect with distant family and friends. You could find yourself reminiscing about old times and perhaps planning a visit to your hometown. Sharing special moments and exchanging thoughtful gifts with loved ones could bring you joy. However, you might find challenges in romantic relationships, feeling a sense of disappointment or emotional strain. Those looking to solidify significant commitments might face setbacks. It's essential to manage possessiveness and seek emotional balance. Practicing meditation could provide solace, helping to stabilize your mood. Engaging in creative or spiritual activities can also be beneficial, helping you navigate through this period with a positive outlook, reminding you that brighter days are on the horizon.

**Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour** Lilac  
**Lucky day** Friday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

This week presents a blend of challenges and guidance. Your ambitions and strong desires might be causing some confusion, and concerns regarding real estate could add to your stress. Be wary of deception and harmful gossip; distance yourself from any misleading or unreal scenarios. Adopting a practical mindset will be crucial in overcoming these difficulties. Daydreaming might complicate matters further, especially in your personal relationships. It's important to give your significant other some breathing room before making any major decisions. Embrace honesty and use your intellect to assess situations clearly. Clearing the negative energy surrounding you is essential for experiencing true joy. Trust in your own capabilities and continue with confidence.

**Lucky number 20 | Lucky colour** Charcoal  
**Lucky day** Monday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

This week brings a surge of positive developments in your life, enhancing your emotional fulfillment and self-esteem. It begins with nurturing support and deepened connections, particularly in close relationships, where selfless affection and mutual respect will invigorate your spirit and empower you to excel. A positive mindset will enable you to overcome past challenges that have weighed heavily on you, freeing you to move forward with ease. Your capabilities and intelligence will garner widespread recognition, even from those who were once doubtful, marking a significant triumph. This period of personal growth culminates in a sense of profound healing and a satisfying resolution, aligning everything in your favor.

**Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour** Magenta  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

This week, your drive and creativity fuel your ambition to meet your professional targets. Should you be anticipating correspondence from abroad, anticipate favorable updates that will bring joy. Midweek, financial engagements such as transactions and investments will demand your attention. Remember, utilizing your financial gains to assist those in need can bring profound rewards. Embrace the next chapter of your life, ripe with opportunities. However, a significant shift in your mindset or behavior could be necessary. Implementing these changes will lead to positive outcomes and the enjoyment of success. Despite facing challenges, your seasoned wisdom and analytical skills will enable you to overcome them. Engaging in creative or spiritually enriching activities will help shift your perspective and bring light to any shadows.

**Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour** Rust  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

This week is shaping up to be promising, particularly in your professional life, with unexpected opportunities for advancement, possibly including a financial boost or a significant role coming your way. Be prepared for sudden work-related travel, which promises to yield beneficial results in the future. You might find yourself considering a change in your work environment or even a move in your living arrangements if you are currently renting. Midweek brings a surge of passion and sentimentality, enhancing your romantic engagements. However, you might face some indecision regarding a certain relationship or situation. As the week closes, expect to feel more grounded, gaining control over your emotions and broadening your perspectives. New opportunities could present themselves, possibly linked to your career, personal growth, or creative ventures, igniting a powerful motivation to achieve great things.

**Lucky number 1 | Lucky colour** Copper  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

This week brings a wave of fresh energy and a sense of fulfillment as several desires come to fruition. Expect meaningful, joyful events that enhance your charm, such as the addition of a new member to your family, which will be a cause for celebration. At work, you'll enjoy harmonious relationships with your superiors, contributing to a pleasant environment. As the week progresses, prepare for an increase in responsibilities; new projects and potential advancements in your career are likely to keep you engaged. As the week closes, you may encounter opportunities that require careful consideration. In moments of indecision, seek the counsel of your family. Remember to communicate gently and use this time to leverage positive outcomes from challenging situations.

**Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour** Peach  
**Lucky day** Thursday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

This week presents a tapestry of enjoyable and lighthearted narratives. You'll find yourself deeply engaged in a challenging project, dedicating your energy and passion to it. This experience is particularly unique as working collaboratively towards a common goal will enhance your virtues. You'll discover new skills and understand your capabilities better. The necessary focus and determination for this task will seem to come naturally to you, and your resolve to meet your objectives is strong. Midweek may bring opportunities to connect internationally, possibly through friendships or potential travel plans. Your dedication ensures that distractions related to personal relationships or leisure won't sway your path. Ambition drives you to seek significant financial success and professional recognition, which may manifest as a promotion or raise. Remember to be grateful for these blessings and savor the moment.

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



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

This period will bring a review and reflection on recent efforts, presenting a chance to learn from past oversights. Despite having invested significant energy, you might feel that the rewards of your hard work are yet to be fully realized. You could encounter some unsettling thoughts during this time. However, mid-week could brighten up with unexpected prospects, such as a business opportunity, a new assignment, or a job offer that brings satisfaction and opens avenues for financial gains. It's an ideal time for investments or launching new ventures. Various offers will come your way, necessitating careful selection and decision-making. Budgeting will be crucial as there's a tendency towards excessive spending. Towards the week's end, travel might be appealing, offering opportunities for leisurely trips or intimate gatherings.

**Lucky number 19 | Lucky colour** Lemon Yellow  
**Lucky day** Tuesday

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THE TUNING FORK



C V Srikanth

Spiritually, a state of going beyond the worldly attachments moha. Focus on more sublime, transcendental matters. However, we face a sense of disillusionment and aversion, periodically in our life time - like a loss a very dear one, pained by getting cheated

# Samanyasa - The Mantra for inner Peace, Spiritual growth and Purpose

In a world chasing 'success' - a seldom recognised yardstick (or do we?) but believe is outside of us. What we seek is within us. Our ancient scriptures define some wonderful concepts that help achieve self-realization with senses of discipline. *Sadhana Chatushtaya* or *Samanyasa* is one such example of a profound model - the path of study of scriptures, self-realisation, humility or surrender to the Universal consciousness, and detachment. Traditionally, *Samanyasa* is associated with the renunciation to connect with higher spiritual goals. In the modern context the relevance outlines personal holistic development, emotional & psychological wellness, and the societal ecosystem. In the Vedic tradition, it is often discussed in the context of the *sannyasa* (the third of the four *ashramas*) order or renunciation - relinquishment of all forms of rigid adherence to worldly duties and surrendering to One. The four elements of *Samanyasa* are *Viveka* (Discerning abilities), *Vairagya* (Dispassion or Detachment), *Shat-Sampatti* (Spiritual goals and fulfilments) and *Mumukshutva* (Desire for Liberation)

*Viveka* - the awareness of correct understanding and discriminatory intelligence through our applied learnings and wisdom - an imperative quality for navigating through life. It helps identify what distracts us from our goals and pursue our purpose. Build the right attitude. Discern the cause and effect. Cultivate the capacity to listen to the inner voice. Foster the faith. Recognising our shortcomings to evolve to a better version of ourselves. This leads us to *Vairagya*. After segregating the distractions, detach from the unessential and cultivate disengagement from the dispensable. An indifference to things not serving our goals. Prioritisation driven by our goals. Building the right temperament to accomplish. Spiritually, a state of going beyond the worldly attachments moha. Focus on more sublime, transcendental matters. However, we face a sense of disillusionment and aversion, periodically in our life time - like a loss a very dear one, pained by getting cheated. This is negative *Vairagya* and short lived. True *Vairagya* is about making it consequential - refining



our mind to resonate at an elevated level. As Krishna says ...  
*uddhared ātmanātmānaṁ nātmanān avasādāyāt ātmaiva hyātmano bandhur ātmaiva ripur ātmanah*  
Bh Gita 6.5  
*Elevate yourself through the power of your mind. Do not degrade yourself. For the*

*mind can be the friend and also the enemy of the self.*

- Shat Sampat* - the 6 spiritual qualities to be developed.
- *Shama* - Regulation of the mind to bring clarity and peace
  - *Dama* - Training the senses for disciplined progress
  - *Uparati* - Withdrawal within the Self (different from *Vairagya*) - removing unwanted thoughts
  - *Titiksha* - State of Fulfilment Contentment. Building capacity to handle adversity
  - *Shraddha* - Devotion Faith Reverence. A sense of quiet confidence to optimize oneself
  - *Samadhana* - Focus on the actions oriented with no doubts.

Essentials, not built in a day. A *Sadhana* - a meaningful spiritual journey with a commitment  
The last of the *Samanyasa* is *Mumukshutva* - the deep yearning for liberation - a beginning of a different journey. To become in Unison with the Single Consciousness and relieved of the cycles of sufferings.

In today's context, these qualities build tenacity and purpose. To be effective, they have to work cohesively. Essentially, as a check and balance. They help in pivotal areas like Mindful living, Stress management, Holistic Wellness, Ethics, and perhaps most importantly Minimalism and simplicity leading to happiness and beyond. This timeless wisdom integrates the principles of Living that Universal Knowledge for an overall sustained personality development. Paradoxically, we stay busy, but often disconnected, losing clarity of purpose and objective. One common thread is Commitment, Intent and Integrity of Desire - a thread that weaves us to our self, our Universe and the Supreme Consciousness.

— The writer is a versatile professional with 3 decades in corporate experience & leadership roles, excelling in several areas as a ICF Certified Mentor Life Coach, Corporate Coach, Spiritual Intelligence Coach & CXO Coach. Spiritual counselor, Astro & Vastu consultant (25+ years of grounding in Vedanta philosophy) and a Motivational speaker. He is a Dale Carnegie's T3 graduate