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MONEY 10 PWC INDIA PARTNERS WITH META FOR AI SOLUTIONS

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SLOW START FOR SHUBHANKAR IN FRENCH OPEN GOLF 12 SPORTS

Prime Minister will clean the air for Delhi this winter

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Concerned over the perennial problem of deadly pollution with the onset of winters in Delhi NCR, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on Friday set the degree of engagement of stakeholders, including the NCT Government of Delhi, to combat the air pollution particularly augmented due to stubble burning in neighbouring States. The meeting comes a few days after the Supreme Court came down heavily on the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), for not taking any action on local officers amid a rise in crop burning in north Indian states, which leads to air pollution in Delhi. The SC said not a single committee was formed to tackle the stubble burning issue. "Every year we see stubble burning. There has been total non-compliance of the CAQM Act. Have committees been constituted? Please show us a single step taken. Which directions have you used under the Act? You are silent spectators. You are doing nothing," the Supreme Court said on September 27, 2024. Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Dr. PK



File Photo: The Pioneer

Mishra convened a High Level Task Force meeting for the purpose where he reviewed short term and long measures being undertaken to prevent, and abate, air pollution in Delhi, and simultaneously expressed concern over slow pace of

clearance of landfill sites in the national Capital and delays in implementation of waste to energy plans by the civic bodies. Agriculture stubble burning, a major source of seasonal air pollution in Delhi and neighbouring states was

addressed. Although Delhi has a relatively small paddy area, Mishra called for the complete elimination of stubble burning in the city as a model for surrounding regions. According to a senior official, the meeting focused on assessing the readiness of the Delhi Government and other stakeholders in implementing both immediate and long-term measures to mitigate air pollution in Delhi. The Task Force, comprising senior officials from Central Ministries and the Delhi administration, reviewed current strategies and discussed additional innovative steps to tackle the pollution challenge. Task Force, consisting of representatives from the Delhi Government, Central Ministries including Secretary MoHUA, Secretary MoEFCC, Delhi Police, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), and the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), reaffirmed their collective resolve to abate air pollution in Delhi, especially during the ensuing winter season. Continued on page 8

Nayab Chief Minister for Haryana



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI/ CHANDIGARH

After Bharatiya Janata Party's spectacular performance winning a third consecutive tenure, Haryana's incumbent Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini is likely to take oath as the Chief Minister of Haryana on Tuesday, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Union ministers, and CMs of BJP-ruled states, are also expected to attend the swearing-in ceremony. According to BJP leaders, Haryana may follow the precedent set by other states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha by introducing two Deputy Chief Ministers. This dual-leadership model is anticipated to balance party seniority, and caste representation within the Cabinet. The senior-most leader, former Home Minister Anil Vij, is tipped to be one of the Deputy CMs, while the other position may go to a Brahmin MLA, potentially offering a more inclusive leadership structure. In another development, Rajya Sabha MP Kartikeya Sharma met Saini in Delhi, as his mother, Shakti Rani Sharma, had secured a win from the Kalka constituency. In another strategic meeting, Rajya Sabha MP Kiran Chaudhary and her

Omar returns to Jammu and Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Leader of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Legislative party Omar Abdullah Friday evening staked claim to form the government, the first since the Centre scrapped J&K's special status in 2019. Omar, dressed in a traditional salwar suit, drove to the Raj Bhawan to meet Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. During the meeting, he formally presented his claim to form the government in Jammu & Kashmir, following the support from Congress. Omar also presented letters of support from the alliance partners and independent candidates. Continued on page 8

daughter Shruti Chaudhary, the newly elected MLA from Tosham, met with Union Minister Khattar, indicating a broader coalition-building process within the BJP. A 10-member committee headed by the Panchkula district commissioner has been set up by the state chief secretary to oversee the arrangements for the ceremony. The ceremony was initially scheduled for October 12, but was postponed to accommodate the Prime Minister's schedule. According to sources, the Parade Ground had been chosen as the venue as it was adjoining Indradhanush Auditorium Complex, which had a huge secured parking space for VVIPs. Continued on page 8



Mahadev app kingpin arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Sourabh Chandrakar, one of the main promoters of the Mahadev betting app, is expected to be brought to India soon, following his recent formal arrest in Dubai on the basis of an Interpol issued arrest warrant in a money laundering and fraud case, official sources said Friday. Chandrakar along with another promoter of the app, Ravi Uppal was detained and put under "house arrest" in that country late last year following the Enforcement Directorate (ED) request for issuance of a Redcorner Notice (RN) against them. The RN is issued by Interpol. Sources said Chandrakar is expected to be either extradited or deported to India over the next few days after he was formally placed under arrest in Dubai recently. The ED is in the process of sending relevant documents for his extradition to Dubai authorities following which a competent court there will be approached, they said. Chandrakar is stated to have left for Dubai in 2019 and before that he used to run a juice shop named "Juice Factory" with his brother in Bhilai town of Durg district in Chhattisgarh. The ED has alleged that its probe in the Mahadev Online Book (MOB) gaming and betting app has shown involvement of various high-ranking politicians and bureaucrats from Chhattisgarh, the state where Chandrakar and Uppal hail from. Continued on page 8

Maa Kali decrowned in Bangladesh



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India has urged Bangladesh to investigate the reported theft of a religious article that was gifted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Jeshoreshwari Kali temple during his visit in 2021. In a social media post, the Indian High Commission in Dhaka expressed deep concern over the theft and called upon the authorities to recover the

article and take action against the perpetrators of the crime. "We have seen reports of theft of the crown gifted by PM Modi to Jeshoreshwari Kali Temple (Satkhira) in 2021 during his visit to Bangladesh," it said, adding "We express deep concern and urge Govt of Bangladesh to investigate theft, recover the crown and take action against the perpetrators." Separately, Indian government sources said New Delhi is deeply disturbed by the reported incident of theft.

The Indian High Commission in Dhaka is in touch with Bangladesh authorities on the issue, they said. The Bangladesh law enforcement authorities have been urged to investigate the incident, recover the stolen article and bring the guilty to book, sources said. As per reports, the gold-plated crown of goddess Kali at the temple in Satkhira's Shyamnagar was stolen on Thursday afternoon. The absence of the crown from the deity's head was noticed by the cleaning staff after temple priest Dilip Mukherjee left around two pm. Prime Minister Modi had visited the Jeshoreshwari Temple on March 27, 2021, as part of his tour to Bangladesh. The temple is considered among the 52 'Shakti Peethas (seats of the Goddess) and is believed to have been constructed in the late 12th Century.

HOLIDAY NOTICE

The offices of The Pioneer will remain closed on Saturday, October 12, 2024 on account of Vijaydashmi. The next issue of the newspaper will appear on October 14, 2024

From Ratan to Naval, the Tata legacy moves on

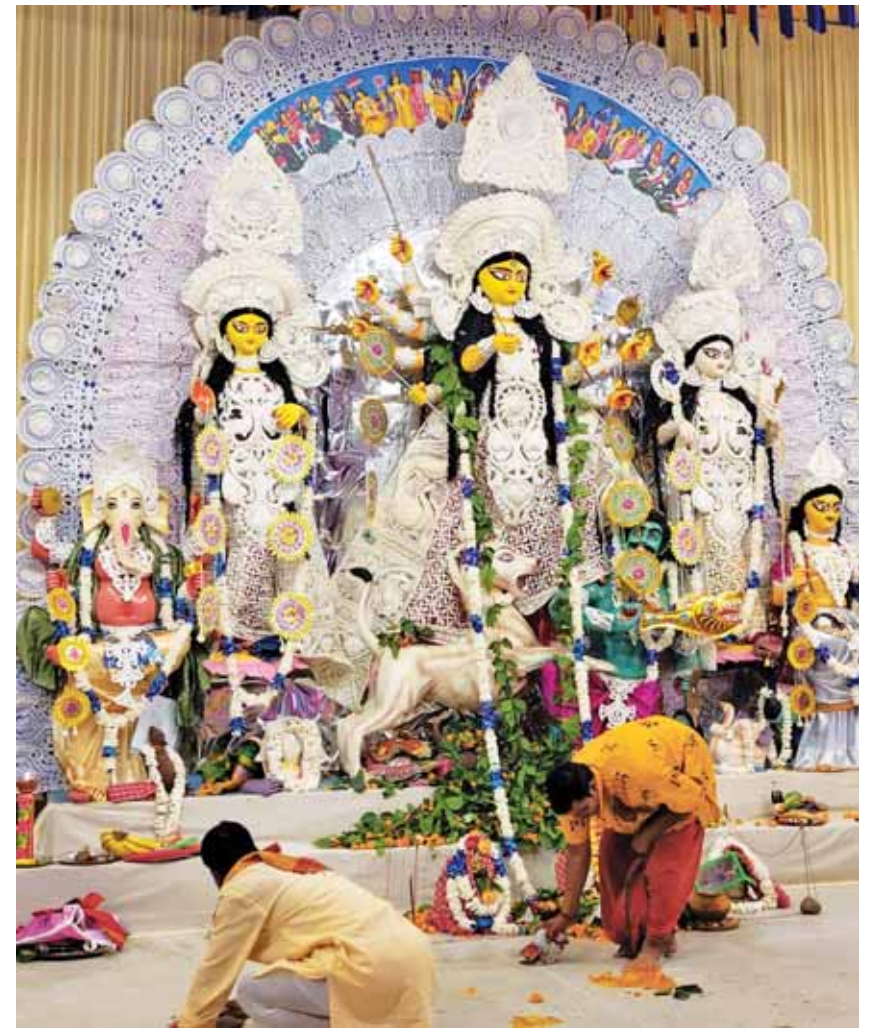


T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a succession that came two days after the death of Ratan Naval Tata, his half-brother Noel Naval Tata was on Friday appointed new Chairman of Tata Trusts, the philanthropic arm of Tata Group. A formal announcement about Noel Tata's appointment as the head of the Tata Trusts came after the Trustees of various Trusts that come under the Tata Trusts held a joint meeting, condoled Ratan Tata's demise and noted his yeoman services not only to the Tata Group but also to nation building. "In separate meetings held immediately, thereafter, it was unanimously decided to appoint Mr. Noel Naval Tata as the Chairman of the

various Trusts that constitute the Tata Trusts and also designate him as Chairman, Tata Trusts," Tata Trusts said in a statement issued here in the afternoon. Sixty-seven-year-old Noel Tata's appointment came into place with immediate effect. After being appointed as the new chairman of the Tata Trusts, India's oldest philanthropic institution, Noel Tata said that he was "deeply honoured and humbled" by the responsibility cast on me by my fellow Trustees and he looked "forward to carrying on the legacy of Ratan N Tata and the founders of the Tata Group." "I am deeply honoured and humbled by the responsibility that has been cast on me by my fellow Trustees. I look forward to carrying on the legacy of Ratan N Tata and the founders of the Tata Group. Founded more than a century ago, the Tata Trusts are a unique vehicle for undertaking social good. On this solemn occasion, we rededicate ourselves to carrying on our developmental and philanthropic initiatives and continuing to play our part in nation building," Noel Tata said. Continued on page 8

VIJAYADASHAMI GREETINGS



Illegal parkings gobble up market roads at peak hours

Commuters leave their vehicles on the roadside, to avoid paying parking fees

BY SANJAY RAI

That there are traffic jams in and round major markets of the national Capital is now old news for the locals. However, not many talk about what causes these jams in those busy commercial areas. It is also interesting to see that the market associations have not objected to these illegal parkings as the shop owners also park all their vehicles on the road side, even before the market opens. And customers prefer to park on the roads outside the shops as the charges are lower in comparison to the official parking. These vehicles park for a short

time but block the oncoming traffic as they enter and leave the illegal parking bays constantly. The attendants stand on the road and stop the traffic flow to facilitate that. The problem is especially severe near big market places where people park their vehicles on the roadside. Regular commuters are left with no choice but to stop-look-and-go every few metres. They say that complaints to the authorities go unanswered. Visitors park their cars and two-wheelers on the roadside and go shopping, and prefer to pay a 'token' parking fee of just Rs 10-20, seldom do they have to pay more even if they park for more than five hours. Usually they



leave within an hour or so after shopping. It is this frequent 'side-movement' that then clogs the oncoming traffic. For example an underground parking lot has been made by Delhi Municipal Corporation near Subhash Nagar Market, where about 600 vehicles can be parked. But more than 30 percent of the area remains vacant here. The reason behind this is parking charges. An employee working here told The Pioneer that the car parking fee is Rs 20 for every hour. The bike parking fee is Rs 10 per hour while the monthly pass costs Rs 2,000. But people living here or coming to the market always park their cars on the road,

which makes it difficult for pedestrians, and other commuters. This results in the parking lot incurring losses every month. Apart from this, the condition of market areas such as Kamla Market, Rani Bagh Market, Karol Bagh, Lajpat Nagar, Avantika Market, Tilak Nagar, Rajouri Garden, and Uttam Nagar is the same. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has made underground parking on Asaf Ali Road at Delhi Gate, where vehicles gather dust and dirt. The monthly fee here is less compared to other parking lots, however roadside parking is also the norm here too.



FIRST COLUMN

OVERCOMING ANXIETY: THE RIGHT WAY

Mindfulness, mental resilience and stress-relieving activities are essential to combat anxiety



RAVI VALLURI

Sameer was armed with a degree in management from an estimable institute. Having specialised in the field of marketing management, he was well versed in the 4Ps of marketing. At this juncture of his life, the young trainee fantasised about joining an FMCG company, earning an exorbitant salary and over a period acquiring an opulent property in an up-market area of the town. But there was an element of hesitation in his mind about successfully crossing the final hurdle – the interview. As the mind was not in the present moment and instead fixated on the future it remained anxious and continuously agitated. Thus, it was not in a state of equilibrium, equipoise, or equanimity. Meanwhile, Siddhartha, his school mate majored in architecture and apprenticed at a celebrated architectural firm in the city. Siddhartha however, was not content in designing buildings.

He possessed a febrile mind that ached to pursue a greenfield area called entertainment design. The stripling self-taught himself and acquired ultra-modern and newfangled skill sets. Fortified with the newly acquired knowledge he prepared a portfolio consisting of visionary and ingenious graphics, sketches and paintings. Yet, mentally he was anxious, tense and strained as to what lay in future. It is a normal human tendency to be apprehensive before anxious situations as it is not in the present moment. Several individuals become splenetic and waspish. Invariably there is a churning in the abdomen region and the mind is subsumed with anxiety. Arjuna, in possession of a lethal arsenal, was numbed seeing the mammoth army of the Kauravas. This, even though Lord Krishna was his charioteer! At zero hour, before the showdown at Kurukshetra, he lay down his weaponry. The consummate warrior could not distinguish between righteousness and malevolence. The demons in his mind were



eventually dispelled through the Vishwarupa Darshan of Lord Krishna and the song celestial – The Bhagavad Gita. Psychologists have advanced a two-pronged strategy to combat such inhospitable states, firstly by closely monitoring the piquant state and taking prompt and effective action and second, by avoiding and blunting the situation. Monitoring involves taking several proactive steps which help in the preparation of the mind. Advanced and well-rehearsed preparation before a significant event; this is tapasya and no one can relax on this ground.

The mind should be resolute and robust, to practice incessantly like the celebrated archer Arjuna. In the process, the individual de-clutters the mind and gets rid of the baggage of anxiety and fear. The Inoculation Technique is another effective strategy. An individual insulates the self against the perils of stress through constant exposure to rehearsals and role-playing.

This mentally toughens up the candidate to be prepared for the scrutiny and appraisal with utmost confidence and credence. Further, adopting a positive dispensation is invaluable. In addition, there are blunting tactics and strategies which help to augment the above. It is perspicacious and canny to drown in physical activity. It could be going for long walks, swimming, hitting the gym, taking up a sport or learning yogic techniques to de-stress the mind. These activities release endorphins which assuage the mind. Simultaneously, an individual will appear chiselled and smart. There are other ways to remain happy. For instance, join the Happiness Programme of the Art of Living to learn the unique rhythmic breathing technique of Sudarshan Kriya which calms the body and mind. Learn pranayama and various techniques of meditation to remain in the present moment. Only when a human being is in the present moment is he insulated from anxiety and manages inexpedient and onerous situations?

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

‘Fourth transformation’ of Mexico embraces inclusivity



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

Claudia Sheinbaum’s leadership promises to reshape the nation’s trajectory away from its violent past, embracing inclusive and human-centred policies

Claudia Sheinbaum’s swearing-in on October 1 as Mexico’s first female President marks a transformative moment not only for gender equality but also within the broader historical trajectory shaped by violence, revolution and the ongoing pursuit of justice. In a nation long burdened by colonial legacies and systemic inequality, her presidency signals a paradigm shift towards more inclusive and human-centred governance. Declaring a “fourth transformation,” Sheinbaum’s leadership reflects the weight of Mexico’s tumultuous history and the lives lost in its struggles. Her rise to power disrupts the deeply entrenched male-dominated political sphere, accentuating the resilience of women fighting for representation in a country plagued by gender-based violence and femicide.

Historically, Mexico has undergone significant transformations marked by bloodshed and resistance. The country’s struggle for independence from Spanish colonial rule in the early 19th century was fuelled by revolutionary fervour and the desire for self-determination. Statesmen like Miguel Hidalgo and José María Morelos emerged as symbols of resistance, galvanising the population against colonial oppression. The violent conflicts that followed laid the groundwork for a nation striving for autonomy, albeit at a considerable human cost. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the divide between church and state catalysed further revolutions and conflicts. The Liberal Reform, led by figures such as Benito Juárez, sought to dismantle the power of the Catholic Church and establish a secular state.

This period was marked by violence and civil strife, as conservative factions resisted these changes. The Mexican Revolution of 1910 further exemplified the nation’s tumultuous journey, with leaders like Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa rallying for agrarian reform and social justice. The revolution, while transformative, came at a heavy price, resulting in the loss of countless lives and widespread suffering. The bloodshed that characterised these early transformations stands in stark contrast to Sheinbaum’s vision for the fourth transformation, which she advocates as a path of non-violence and reconciliation. She seeks to distance her administration from the militarised approach that has defined previous efforts to combat crime and violence.

In her inaugural speech, she emphasised that “we must turn the page on the cycles of violence that have plagued our country.” By framing her presidency as a continuation of a peaceful and humanistic governance model, she aims to redefine Mexico’s political structure.

The economic model embraced by Sheinbaum’s administration marks a significant departure from the neoliberal policies that have dominated Mexico for decades. The neoliberal framework, characterised by deregulation, resource exploitation, privatisation, and an emphasis on unethical free-market principles, has often exacerbated social inequalities and marginalised vulnerable populations. In contrast, Sheinbaum’s “Mexican Humanist” approach seeks to prioritise social welfare, equity, and sustainable development. This shift is not merely a matter of policy but represents a broader socio-political transformation in the way governance is conceived. Sheinbaum advocates for a model that empowers communities and fosters inclusivity, stating, “We must build



IN THE CONTEXT OF CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM’S PRESIDENCY, THE ENDURING LEGACY OF CIA COVERT OPERATIONS AND FOREIGN INTERVENTIONS LOOMS LARGE

a Mexico where no one is left behind.” This vision reflects a recognition that systemic issues require collective solutions and that the voices of marginalised communities must be heard in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Yet, while Sheinbaum’s approach has garnered support from many, it also faces criticism and scepticism from those who question the feasibility of her proposed reforms. Critics argue that the structural challenges posed by organised crime and entrenched political corruption may undermine her efforts to implement meaningful change. The harsh realities of violence and inequality persist, and many Mexicans remain wary of promises that may be difficult to fulfil in the face of overwhelming opposition. The historical backdrop of Mexico’s political volatility illuminates the formidable challenges in achieving authentic progress, as the legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and systemic oppression remain deeply ingrained.

The ongoing struggles for justice and equality have come at a profound cost, with the violence woven into Mexico’s history continuing to influence the present and complicate future paths.

The Zapatista movement, which arose in the 1990s in response to neoliberal policies and the marginalisation of Indigenous communities, stands as a powerful testament to the fight for social justice. Led by Subcomandante Marcos, the Zapatistas championed self-determination, autonomy, and the acknowledgement of Indigenous rights, challenging dominant political narratives and inspiring a new generation of activists, including Sheinbaum. Yet, their movement also reveals the challenges inherent in revolutionary politics; while their promise of non-violence

and social justice aligns with Sheinbaum’s vision, navigating the realities of power and governance often demands difficult compromises. The pressing challenge remains: how to dismantle deeply rooted systems of inequality and violence without mirroring the oppressive methods of the past. Sheinbaum’s fourth transformation calls for a reevaluation of economic policies and a fundamental shift in political culture, emphasising transparency, accountability, and democratic principles that prioritise the needs of the many.

She stresses the importance of restoring faith in institutions and rebuilding the nation’s social fabric. However, the ongoing issues of alleged corruption and political machinations, exacerbated by her predecessor López Obrador’s concentration of power and undermining of democratic institutions, raise concerns about the sustainability of her reforms. In the context of Claudia Sheinbaum’s presidency, the enduring legacy of CIA covert operations and foreign interventions looms large. Historically, the United States has intervened in Latin America to safeguard its interests, often undermining democratic governance and social justice.

The repercussions of these interventions have fostered a deep-seated distrust and scepticism toward foreign influence in Mexico’s internal affairs. As Sheinbaum endeavours to establish a nation committed to human rights and social justice, she must grapple with the pervasive effects of these historical injustices and the Western media narratives that distort the actual picture of Mexican society. In terms of international relations, Sheinbaum vehemently opposes foreign intervention, particularly regarding the US blockade against Cuba, which harms ordinary cit-

izens rather than the government. She advocates for cooperation rather than militarisation in addressing drug-related violence, emphasising that the drug market is intricately linked to US consumer demand. As she aptly stated, “We must honour our past, learn from our struggles, and build a future that reflects the aspirations of all Mexicans.” Yet, the pursuit of a more just and equitable Mexico demands collective action, engagement from diverse communities, and a steadfast commitment to dismantling systemic barriers, as Sheinbaum seeks to embody the hopes of a nation shaped by resilience and struggle. However, the structural challenges, as Enrique Dussel, an Argentine-Mexican philosopher, explained in his writings, continue to haunt Mexico, posing real threats to the stability of political leadership. He emphasises the need for integrating diverse cultural perspectives and fostering dialogue from the Global South, as seen in his concept of transmodernity. Dussel also highlights the coloniality of power, illustrating how historical injustices persist in contemporary governance, perpetuating inequality. Furthermore, his ethics of the Other calls for recognising the experiences of marginalised individuals as central to any discourse on justice. Additionally, the aporia of borders illustrates the contradictions communities face at national edges, such as the Mexico-US border, where ideals of freedom and security often clash. Addressing these issues demands a nuanced approach that acknowledges the voices of those usually left unheard, which presents a significant challenge for the historic administration of Dr Sheinbaum.

(The writer is a journalist and author; Views expressed are personal)

Half of the world’s GDP at risk due to environmental degradation

The conservation and restoration of depleted forests are essential steps to combat climate change

Climate change has become an important challenge for the whole world. Conservation and restoration of depleted forests can become a necessary step to deal with this challenge.

Regarding this, many companies around the world have pledged to plant over 12 billion trees in the next seven years. The report published by the World Economic Forum on Nature and Biodiversity on January 18, 2024, clarifies that half of the world’s GDP, i.e. about \$44 trillion, is in danger. Which is due to the loss of nature.

To save it, more than 100 companies have pledged to conserve, restore and plant new trees of over 12 billion



RAJEEV AACHARYA

trees in more than 100 countries. This report states that companies around the world are working together through the World Economic Forum’s It.org initiative.

It aims to support the global movement to protect over 12 billion trees by 2030. In January 2024, It.org welcomed this resolution by

five new companies Bharat Heavy Electricals (BHEL), Burberry China, Go To Group, RPG Enterprises and Vale. Member companies of It.org are committed to implementing the goal in line with the Paris Agreement to save trees and reduce carbon emissions. Tree conservation is not only important for environmental sustainability, but it is also a part of our cultural and religious heritage. Trees learn from each other. That research was published on May 28, 2024 in the Current Forestry Reports magazine of Springer Nature, America.

This research is based on the topic that how trees planted in agro-forestry and urban forestry can learn from each

other and flourish. According to the research, both systems can be seen as natural solutions. Both systems also have similarities in ownership and management responsibilities. For example, most of the agricultural land in the Global North is privately owned, just as a large part of the green cover is seen in cities.

Increasing the density of trees improves air quality. The Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore conducted a study in 2023 on the role of trees in the urban environment. This study was mainly done in urban areas of Bangalore. It was found that trees in urban areas play an important role in improving air quality as well as controlling



temperature. In this research, it was told that the higher the density of

trees, the greater the increase in air quality and the effect of heat can also be reduced.

This study also found that the mental and physical health of people living in green areas improves. The density of trees prevents soil erosion.

A study conducted by the University of Sydney, Australia, says that dense cover of trees can control the flow of water and help prevent soil erosion. This study also stated that the conservation of trees helps in reducing the effects of climate change. All these studies confirm how important the conservation of trees is for our future. In Indian culture, importance has been given to the conservation of trees since the beginning. According to Matasya Purana, “Dashakoopasama Vaapi, Dashavaapisamo

Hradah. Dashahradasamo Putro, Dashputrasamo Drumah.” That is, one tree is equal to ten sons. Similarly, it is said in Vishnu Purana that the person who plants a tree earns virtue not only in his life but also for the coming generations.

Planting and caring for trees has been described as an important religious and social work in Indian scriptures. At present, planting trees is not only to save lives but also to save the earth. Let us take resolve to conserve nature. Each one of us must take a pledge to plant at least 5 trees, only then this disaster of global warming can be dealt with.

(The writer is an environmentalist; views are personal)



SHUBHO BIJOYA DASHAMI!



WALKING THROUGH THE HEART OF THE FESTIVAL



In 'Chittaranjan Park', New Delhi, Durga Puja comes alive with families in festive attire, dhol beats echoing, and the aroma of delicious Bengali food, creating a vibrant celebration of community, says SAKSHI PRIYA

As the festive days of Durga Puja come to an end, we celebrate Vijaya Dashami with love and gratitude. Today, we say goodbye to Maa Durga until next year, thanking her for the blessings and protection she has showered upon us. On this special day, may you and your loved ones be blessed with joy, peace, and happiness. Shubho Bijoya Dashami to everyone!

In C.R. Park, located in South East Delhi, Durga Puja isn't just another festival - it's an emotion. Often called the mini Kolkata of Delhi, this bustling neighbourhood truly becomes the heart of the city during these days. Families eagerly wait the whole year for this, preparing for pandal hopping, relishing Bengali delicacies and being part of the vibrant celebrations that make this time so special.

THE MAGIC OF PANDAL HOPPING

For many, Durga Puja is all about pandal hopping, going from one beautifully decorated pandal to another, admiring the stunning idols of Maa Durga. In C.R. Park, the streets come alive with people of all ages, dressed in their finest traditional clothes. The women in sarees, the men in kurtas and kids running around in excitement, it's a sight that fills your heart with joy.

You can start your pandal journey at the Kali Mandir, where the peaceful surroundings set the mood for the rest of the day. Then comes the grand Durgotsab in GK II, which attracts thousands of visitors every year. From stunning decorations to cultural performances, the spirit of Durga Puja is alive and thriving here. Another must-visit spot is the Mela Ground, where families gather to enjoy not just the festivities but also the wide variety of food stalls that line the streets.

Children dart between pandals, holding their parents' hands, their faces lighting up

with every new sight. The sound of dhols echoes through the air, and in the evenings, the Sandhya Aarti becomes a beautiful and calming experience for everyone watching. The streets of C.R. Park transform into a magical world, full of lights, music and devotion, and no matter how many pandals you visit, the excitement never dies down.

A FEAST FOR ALL

No Durga Puja is complete without indulging in the food. The food stalls lining the streets and pandals in C.R. Park offer everything from traditional Bengali dishes to popular street food that

everyone loves. You can try the famous Kolkata-style Puchka that bursts with flavour or enjoy classic rolls stuffed with spicy chicken or mutton.

For those who love fish, Bhetki Paturi - fish marinated in mustard and wrapped in banana leaves is a must-try. Fish Kebab and Chicken Shami Kebab are equally popular among non-vegetarians, while vegetarians can indulge in dishes like Hara Bhara Kebab or Chhanna Paturi (paneer wrapped in banana leaves).

And for the main course, Golbari Murg and Dhakai Mangsho (mutton curry) and Aloo Dum served with soft luchis are pure bliss.

The joy of Durga Puja isn't just in the rituals but also in sharing these meals with family and friends. Sitting down at a table with loved ones, eating delicious food and laughing together under the twinkling lights is a memory that stays in your heart long after the festival is over.

THE STREETS COME ALIVE

The streets of C.R. Park become a celebration in themselves. It's not just about the pandals - it's the whole neighbourhood that transforms. The lanes are filled with people walking from one pandal to another and families taking pictures to capture the beautiful moments. The colourful lights strung across buildings, the sound of Rabindra Sangeet floating through the air and the laughter of people enjoying the festival all come together to create a magical atmosphere. Even if you're not Bengali, it's hard not to get swept up in the energy of Durga Puja in C.R. Park. People from all over Delhi come here to experience the festival and there's a sense of community that goes beyond language and culture. It's a time when everyone comes together to



celebrate the victory of good over evil, the triumph of light over darkness.

THE CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

One of the most beautiful things about Durga Puja is how it brings people together to celebrate not just the goddess, but also the rich cultural heritage of Bengal. During the festival, the pandals host a variety of performances, from Purulia Chou to traditional Bengali folk music. These performances are not just entertaining, they're a way to connect with our roots and pass on our traditions to the next generation.

Whether you're watching a soulful song performance or enjoying a dance recital, there's something about the atmosphere during Durga Puja that makes everything feel a little more special. The connection between the audience and the performers, the shared love for the culture and the joy of being part of something bigger than yourself, it's all part of what makes Durga Puja so meaningful.

THE BLESSINGS OF SANDHYA AARTI

As the sun begins to set, one of the most special moments of Durga Puja takes place, the Sandhya Aarti. The rhythmic beating of the drums, the chanting of mantras and the sight of people gathered in devotion create a moment of pure

peace. It's a time when everyone pauses to



reflect and give thanks to Maa Durga. The aarti fills the air with a sense of calm and the glow of the lamps as they're lit adds to the sacredness of the moment. It's in these quiet moments that you feel the true spirit of Durga Puja, the blessings of the goddess, the love of family and friends

and the joy of being part of something so special.

SAYING GOODBYE ON BIJOYA DASHAMI

As the festival comes to an end, there's a bittersweet feeling in the air. It's time to say goodbye to Maa Durga as she returns to her heavenly home. The day is marked with rituals like Sindur Khela, where married women apply vermilion to each other, symbolising the strength and joy of womanhood.

Then comes the Bijoy Yatra, the immersion procession, where the idols of Maa Durga are carried to the river or pond for their final journey. In C.R. Park, this procession is a deeply emotional experience. People gather to bid farewell, throwing flowers into the water and praying for the goddess's return next year. Though there are tears as we say goodbye, there's also a sense of hope. We know that this isn't a permanent goodbye. Maa Durga will return next year, bringing with her the same joy and blessings. And until then, the memories of this Durga Puja will keep our hearts full.

UNTIL NEXT YEAR...

As we celebrate the last day of Durga Puja and look forward to the coming year, let's carry the love, joy and blessings of the festival with us. The laughter, the shared meals, the excitement of pandal hopping, and the spiritual peace of the Sandhya Aarti - these moments are what make Durga Puja so special. So as we say goodbye to Maa Durga on this Bijoya Dashami, let's remember the joy of this festival and look forward to next year when we will once again gather with our loved ones to celebrate. Until then, may Maa Durga's blessings be with you and your family, bringing peace and happiness to your lives. Shubho Bijoya Dashami, Vijaya Dashami or Dussehra to all!



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

SAVOUR THE SPIRIT OF NAVRATRI

Celebrate Navratri with AnnaMaya's special thali, offering a delightful mix of traditional fasting dishes with modern twists, perfect for the festive season, says SHARMILA CHAND

Navratri fasting goes in harmony with Satvik food. Feasting on traditional dishes completes the celebrations with joy and happiness. I head to indulge in an authentic experience. As the specially curated thali is placed before me, I am on an immersive culinary journey in the festive spirit. This year's thali at AnnaMaya is a testament to tradition and innovation, crafted by their renowned Maharaj, Mahendra Jakhar, who has been delighting guests with his unique Navratri offerings for the past nine years. Known for infusing modern twists into traditional fasting dishes, the chef continues to elevate the dining experience, ensuring both authenticity and indulgence during the sacred fasts.

"The Navratri Thali has been thoughtfully curated to honour the spirit of devotion and celebration of Durga Puja and Dussehra, offering guests a culinary journey that reflects India's rich heritage. Every dish adheres to Navratri's dietary requirements while providing a vibrant and flavourful dining experience," he says.

He explains, "The highlights of the thali are Falahari Shakarkandi Ki Chaat, a refreshing blend of sweet potatoes with creamy yoghurt, 'Kacche Kele Ki Shammi', a delectable mix of raw banana, paired with potato, cardamom and green chilli, 'Pethe Ki Khati Meethi Sabzi', a tangy and sweet pumpkin preparation with tamarind and ghee, 'Makhana Moongphali Ki Kadhi', fox nuts and peanuts simmered in a lightly spiced yellow curry, and 'Samak Chawal', which is Barnyard millet cooked to perfection."

The experience doesn't end with the savoury delights - the chefs have also curated divine Satvik desserts that perfectly conclude the meal, such as 'Makhana Kheer' and 'Badam Gulab Ki Barfi', a rich almond barfi infused with rose petals and milk. Each offering in the thali is crafted using high-quality, farm to table



ingredients to ensure both health and indulgence during the sacred fast. To complement the meal, guests can pair their Thali with

refreshing beverages like Lassi or Chach - perfect for staying hydrated and energised during this auspicious time. Reflecting on the spirit of Navratri, Maharaj Jakhar

concludes, "For me, every year is a new opportunity to explore the rich diversity of India's rituals while honouring the purity and devotion of the festival. This year's thali brings together flavours and ingredients that not only nourish the body but also celebrate the cultural heritage we hold."

Go ahead and celebrate the festival of purity and devotion at AnnaMaya, where each dish tells a story of cultural India and is prepared with the utmost care to nourish the body and soul. Priced at INR 2000 plus taxes per person, this Navratri Thali offers a harmonious blend of culture, nutrition, and indulgence. Available on all days from 3rd October to 12th October 2024, the Thali is served during both lunch and dinner.



RECIPE BY MAHARAJ JAKHAR

SAMAK CHAWAL PULAO

Preparation and Cook Time: 25-35 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 60 gm barnyard millet (samak chawal)
- 20gm carrots
- 10gm beans
- 10gm cauliflower
- 15gm potatoes
- 10 gm fresh green peas
- 1 tbsp ghee
- 1 tbsp sunflower oil
- 2 tsp cumin seed
- 1/2 cup yogurt

- 3gm green chilies
- 1 tsp fresh coriander
- 5 gm sendha namak (Himalayan rock salt)

METHOD

- Soak the barnyard millet in double the amount of water for 10 minutes.
- Peel and cut carrots, beans and potatoes into small diagonal pieces.
- Boil water in a pan, add Himalayan salt, and blanch potatoes, carrots, peas, and beans, separately for 2-3 minutes. Once they are boiled, rinse them in cold water.
- Heat sunflower oil in a vessel, add cumin seeds, and sauté.
- Add water and cook for a minute. Add the vegetables and salt. Cook for some time.
- Now add yogurt and cook for 5-10 minutes. Add water and boil it for some time.
- Add green chilies and millet.
- Gently stir and reduce the heat. Cover and cook for some time.
- Once the millet is cooked, finish with the ghee. Serve hot.

Sharmila Chand is an Author and Consulting Editor who writes on Food, Travel, Lifestyle, Art & Culture

