



WORLD 6
BRAZIL JUDGE SETS FRESH TERMS FOR X TO RESUME SERVICES

SPORT 7
RAIN WASHES OUT SECOND DAY OF KANPUR TEST

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Terrorists burn Kashmir's dream



Security personnel stand guard after an encounter broke out between terrorists and security forces during cordon and search operation at Adigam village, in Kulgam district, Saturday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Ahead of the third and final round of polling on October 1, a joint team of security forces gunned down two unidentified terrorists on Saturday while five security personnel, including an officer, sustained injuries in an encounter in South Kashmir's Kulgam district. Based on specific intelligence about the presence of terrorists, a joint search operation was launched by security forces at village Kog (Mandli) (J/D of P/S Billawar) at Kathua. Contact has been established and a few rounds have been fired from both

sides. Area is cordoned off. ADG Police, Jammu range Anand Jain said in a statement. The gunbattle broke out in Arigam village in the Devsar area of the district after security forces launched a cordon-and-search operation there early in the morning. Srinagar-based Chinar Corps in a post on X said, "Based on specific intelligence input, a joint operation was launched by the Indian Army and Jammu and Kashmir police at Arigam, Kulgam. "During the search, terrorists fired indiscriminately and a firefight ensued. Two terrorists have been eliminated by the security forces in the ongoing Operation".

Confirming the recovery of two dead bodies from the encounter site, Kashmir Zone Police posted on X, "Two bodies recovered from the encounter site. Identification & affiliation are being ascertained. Incriminating materials, arms & ammunition recovered. Search in progress". The security forces also recovered two x AK Rifles, ammunition and other war-like stores from the terrorists. The security forces also suffered injuries during the firefight. According to official sources, three Army personnel and two police officers, including an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), were injured in a gunbattle with terrorists in

Arigam. Additional Superintendent of Police (Traffic) suffered minor injuries due to a stray bullet near the encounter site, officials said. Earlier on September 14, three terrorists were gunned down by the joint team of security forces in the Kreeeri area of North Kashmir's Baramulla district. The security forces were able to neutralise a group of hiding terrorists after identifying their exact locations inside the building with the help of drone cameras. In this month, so far nine terrorists have been eliminated during anti-terrorist operations across different parts of Jammu and Kashmir.



India slams Pakistan at UN

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

In a strong retort, India has slammed Pakistan in the UN General Assembly, saying its "fingerprints" are on terrorist incidents across the world and the country should realise that cross-border terrorism against India will "inevitably invite consequences". India exercised its Right of Reply in the UN General Assembly on Friday in response to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif raising the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in his address at the General Debate of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly. "This Assembly regrettably witnessed a travesty this morning. A country run by the military, with a global reputation for terrorism, narcotics trade and transnational crime has had the audacity to attack the world's largest democracy," First Secretary in India's Permanent Mission to the UN Bhavika Mangalananand said, delivering India's Right of Reply.

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Israel decimates Hezbollah

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Lebanon's Hezbollah group has confirmed that its leader and one of its founders, Hassan Nasrallah, was killed in an Israeli airstrike. A statement on Saturday said Nasrallah "has joined his fellow martyrs." The statement says Hezbollah vows to "continue the holy war against the enemy and in support of Palestine." Nasrallah led the militant group for more than three decades. Earlier, Israel had said that it killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, dealing its most significant blow to the Lebanese militant group after months of fighting. Nasrallah is by far the most powerful target to be killed by Israel in weeks of intensified fighting with Hezbollah. Ali Karki, the Commander of Hezbollah's Southern Front, and additional Hezbollah commanders, were also killed in the attack, the Israeli military said. The military said it carried out a precise airstrike on Friday while Hezbollah leadership met at their headquarters in Dahiyeh, south of Beirut. Israel's Chief of Staff, Lt Gen Herzi Halevi, said Saturday that the elimination of Nasrallah was "not the end of our toolbox," indicating that more strikes were planned. He said that the strike targeting Hezbollah leadership was the result of a



Flames rise after an Israeli airstrike in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon, Saturday

long period of preparation. The Lebanese Health Ministry said six people were killed and 91 injured in the strikes Friday, which leveled six apartment buildings. The Israeli military said it was mobilising additional reserve soldiers as tensions escalate with Lebanon, activating three battalions of reserve soldiers to serve across the country. The call comes after it sent two brigades to northern Israel earlier in the week to train for a possible ground invasion. On Saturday morning, the Israeli military carried out several strikes in southern Beirut and eastern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. Hezbollah launched dozens of projectiles across northern

and central Israel and the Israel-occupied West Bank. In Beirut's southern suburbs, smoke rose and the streets were empty after the area was pummeled overnight by heavy Israeli airstrikes. Shelters set up in the city centre for displaced people were overflowing. Many families slept in public squares and beaches or in their cars. On the roads leading to the mountains above the capital, hundreds of people could be seen making an exodus on foot, holding infants and whatever belongings they could carry. At least 720 people have been killed in Lebanon over the past week from Israeli airstrikes, according to the Health Ministry.

Stalin to succeed Stalin

A fresh political chapter?

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

In a late night development on Saturday, Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi has promoted Udhayanidhi Stalin, son of chief minister M K Stalin as the deputy chief minister and was allocated additional portfolios of planning and development. In addition to the promotion of Udhayanidhi as deputy chief minister, the Governor has inducted Senthil Balaji, who was released on bail by the supreme court after an incarceration of 471 days in jail in connection with prevention of money laundering case. It may be noted that Stalin is nit in the best of health if political grapevine is to be believed. Three more ministers have been inducted along with Balaji in the council of ministers and they would be sworn in on Sunday afternoon at Raj Bhavan Chennai, said a release by the Governor's office. It also said that three ministers were dropped from the council of ministers as per the recommendation of the chief minister Stalin. The promotion of Udhayanidhi Stalin as deputy chief minister was expected for quite sometime. There were reports that the elevation would happen prior to the foreign



tour of Stalin last month by it was rescheduled as per astrological directives. With Udhayanidhi Stalin getting elevated as deputy chief minister, the DMK and the Government has come under the full control of the Stalin family. Udhayanidhi, a first-time MLA was inducted in the council of ministers with the portfolio of Youth and Sports Affairs. Though there were resentment in the DMK senior leaders over the haste with which Stalin Junior was made a minister overlooking many seniors in the party, the Stalin clan has managed to hush up the issues.

"Now, Stalin will get enough time and space to revamp the DMK as well as the Government as there were many serious allegations about the functioning of the government. Moreover, small parties like VCK led by Thol Thirumavalavan have started as king for a share in the power," said Gauthaman Ramakrishnan, political critic and chief editor of Sree TV, a popular Tamil news channel. With the AIADMK, the main opposition, in total disarray and the BJP plagued with major infightings, Stalin hopes to make a smooth return to

power in the 2026 assembly polls which is less than two years away. The party is also getting ready to go for a clean sweep of the local body elections which are round the corner. The DMK's Delhi face is controlled by Stalin's step sister Kanimozhi with his grand nephew Udhayanidhi Maran acting as cheerleader. The revolt raised by senior leaders like T R Balau and Durai Murugan has been blown out as son Udhayanidhi Stalin has emerged as the DMK's new Raising Sun, the party's emblem.

Cockroach in meal shocks Air India passenger

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a shocking mid air discovery, an Air India passenger has complained of finding a cockroach in an omelette served onboard the flight from the national Capital to New York, with the airline saying the matter has been taken up with the catering service provider for further investigation. The incident occurred on flight AI 101 on September 17, 2024, and was reported by the passenger on social media platform X. The incident has raised concerns about food safety standard prompting Air India to review its catering protocols. This is the second incident of a potentially dangerous foreign object being discovered by passengers in meals served on Air India flights over the past four months. In the statement, the spokesperson said the airline is concerned about the experience of the customer in the said instance and has taken it up with the catering service provider to investigate further. "Air India works with reputed caterers who supply to leading airlines globally and have stringent SOPs (standard operating procedures) and multiple checks to ensure quality of meals served to our guests. We are concerned about the experience of the customer in the



said instance and have taken it up with our catering service provider to investigate it further," the spokesperson said in a statement. "We will take necessary actions to prevent any recurrence of such instances in future," the spokesperson said. In a post on X, the passenger said a cockroach was found in the omelette served on the flight from Delhi to New York. "My 2 year old finished more than half of it with me when we found this. Suffered from food poisoning as a result," she said. The passenger also shared a short video and pictures of the food items served during the flight. She tagged Air India, aviation regulator DGCA and Civil Aviation Minister K Rammoohan Naidu in the post. In June, a passenger flying to San Francisco from Bengaluru on an Air India flight had found a blade-like metal piece in one of the meals served to him.

Gang shootouts on the rise in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Poising a serious threat to law and order situation, the national capital witnessed three separate firing incidents linked to escalating extortion bids by notorious gangs in the last 24 hours with the shooters attacking a luxury car showroom, a hotel, and a sweet shop. Fortunately, no injuries were reported in any of the incidents. While some unidentified shooters targeted a hotel at south Delhi's Mahilpapur area early Saturday, some assailants opened fire at a sweets shop in Sultanpur Mor in Nangloi later. According to a police officer, around 9.30 am on Saturday, two men with their faces covered came on a bike and opened three to four rounds of fire at 'Roshan Halwai'. No one was injured in the incident but there were some shattered glasses in the shop, the officer said. Police suspect the shooting was related to protection money of some gangsters. After the firing at the sweets shop, a note with "Deepak Boxer Bhai, Anکش Lakra Bhai and Vishal Bhai" --the names of gangsters -- written on it, police said. CCTV footage has been collected and a probe was underway, they said. Earlier around 2.30 am, two men came on a motorcycle and fired around five to six bullets at the main entrance gate of Impress Hotel in south Delhi. No one was injured in the incident but some glasses were damaged, police said. Hotel staff and some guests were present in their rooms when the incident took place. Police has initiated a probe into the case. The hotel's receptionist, Khalida said that she was not present during the firing as her shift started in the morning. She added, "They did not target anyone but they opened fire at the gate. Five to six rounds were fired they and fled," Khalida said. This attack is also believed to be part of an extortion attempt to take over the hotel. Last year, the hotel owner had been threatened by a man claiming to be connected to Canada-based gangster Goldie Brar. Brar, along with Lawrence Bishnoi - currently in custody in Gujarat-has been linked to previous high-profile extortion cases, including a shooting outside actor Salman Khan's Mumbai residence.

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Railway tracks to be made cattle and reel free

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

In order to tackle the rising incidents of cattle straying on to the railway tracks and two-wheelers crossing over, the Indian Railways has designed a new metal fencing termed as the W-Beam. It has been developed in such a way that it would also be difficult for humans to sneak and hence curb the menace of 'reel making' which is growing each passing day. These will be framed abreast the tracks that pass through the populated areas, railway officials said. "The gaps from the ground level and between the two beams have been designed in such a way in the new W-Beam metal fence



that cattle or two-wheelers cannot cross it and move over to the tracks," railway officials said. The decision has been taken since the concrete railway boundaries have been found not

be effective in preventing incidents, particularly the cattle run over. As of now the plans are to complete fencing of the New Delhi-Howrah and New Delhi-

Mumbai route to facilitate passenger train operations at a maximum speed of 160 kmph. The railways is mulling to increase the average speed of the passenger trains between 90

kmph to 110 kmph across its networks and the speed can be enhanced only after ensuring there are no animals and two-wheelers intrusion on the tracks. The new model W-Beam type metal fencing has been developed and installed on Mumbai-Ahmedabad route where the train speed is being augmented to 160 kmph. All zonal Railways have also been advised to adopt the new fencing model. Further, to make train journey safer the latest version of Automatic Train Protection system, Kavach 4.0 is being finalised to work across railway network. While the officials claim, ever since specific safety measures have been taken, there has been a drop in accidents per day on the

railway network. An average of 2.6 accidents per day was recorded during 2012-14, which has come down to 0.5 (1 accident in 2 days) during 2022-24. The Centre is already working to secure the national highway network and work on bamboo crash barrier has been going on since last year which been named 'Bahu Balli'. The bamboo crash barrier underwent "rigorous testing" at various Government-run institutions like the National Automotive Test Tracks (NATRAX) in Pithampur, Indore and was rated as Class 1 during the Fire Rating Test conducted at the Central Building Research Institute (CBRI) in Roorkee and it has also been accredited by the Indian Road Congress.

New rates introduced at ISBTs achieved desired results: Raj Niwas

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The new rates and stand fee and norms introduced at Inter State Bus Terminal (ISBT) on September 15 following Delhi Lieutenant Governor, Vinai Kumar Saxena's intervention, has achieved desired results right since its notification, Raj Niwas said on Saturday. Emphasizing that efficiency and equality are two most important factors to achieve optimum utilization of facilities, Saxena had suggested equal parking rates for government as well as private buses and also reducing parking time equally to achieve higher turnaround. He had also asked for only buses with FASTag stickers to be allowed to enter ISBT, so as to ensure complete tracking without human interface, officials said. Giving details of the progress, they said at ISBT - Anand Vihar the average turnaround time that stood at 208 minutes (3.5 hrs) during the month of

August and 212 minutes on September 14, before the notification was issued, dramatically came down to 24 minutes the next day. Subsequently, it decreased to 22 minutes only on September 19. Since then, the average turnaround time for buses at the ISBT is 23 minutes, till the data compiled on September 26. As a result of this, number of buses to and from the Terminal that stood at an average of 852 per day during the month of August, 2024 and 836 on 14.09.2024, have risen substantially. While the number of buses on 15.09.2024 stood at 877, it rose up to 912 on 17.09.2024. The average since 15.09.2024, when the new notification was issued, stands at 870 per day. As regards ISBT - Kashmere Gate, while the average turnaround time that stood at 45 minutes during the month of August, 2024 and 39 minutes on 14.09.2024, before the notification was issued, came



down to 29 minutes on 15.09.2024 and subsequently decreased to 19 minutes on 21.09.2024, averaging at 19 minutes since then. As a result of this, number of buses to and from the Terminal that stood at an average of 1,373 per day during the month of August, 2024 and 1,327 on 14.09.2024,

have risen substantially. While the number of buses on 15.09.2024 stood at 1,367, it rose up to 1,593 on 26.09.2024. The average number of buses at this ISBT since 15.09.2024, when the new notification was issued, stands at 1644 per day. At ISBT - Sarai Kale Khan, while the average turnaround

time that stood at 216 minutes (3.6 hrs) during the month of August, 2024 and 191 minutes on September 14, before the notification was issued, dramatically came down to 24 minutes on 15.09.2024 and subsequently decreased to 17 minutes only on 17.09.2024, averaging at 18 minutes since then. As a result of this, num-

ber of buses to and from the Terminal that stood at an average of 268 per day during the month of August, 2024 and 236 on 14.09.2024, have risen substantially. While the number of buses on 15.09.2024 stood at 260, it rose up to 266 on 17.09.2024. The average since 15.09.2024, when the new notification was issued, stands at 241 per day, marking a dip from the August average, but an increase since 14.09.2024. New uniform stand fee charges for interstate operation of State Government, AITP and other private buses (with valid permit) kicked in from the intervening mid-night of September 14-15. Applicable to all such buses plying from ISBTs at Kashmere Gate, Anand Vihar and Sarai Kale Khan, these revised stand fee charges are being collected only through FASTag based system and no bus is allowed to enter and operate from the terminal's premises without a FASTag. Logistics for implementation

of the FASTag based system have been upgraded and the porta cabins plus barriers have been refurbished. Rooms from which operators operate and storerooms have been air-conditioned and provisions have been made to provide FASTags to vehicles that do not have them. Following Saxena's visit and inspection of Maharashtra Prapat ISBT on August 31 and a subsequent high level meeting chaired by the LG and attended by Delhi Transport Minister, Kailash Gahlot, it was decided that the Transport Department will notify new rates and norms for 'to and fro' inter-state buses utilizing the iconic bus terminals. The LG had also visited ISBTs at Sarai Kale Khan and Anand Vihar on September nine. The underutilization till now is because of rate differences between government and private buses, poor management of parking bays, bus staff using terminals as resting places and systemic issues

like staggered circulation due to extended turnaround time, which in turn leads up to traffic gridlock outside the ISBT. As per the new scheme of things, private as well as government interstate buses are paying the same amount of fee for parking and using the bus bays at ISBT. Till the new notification on September 15, private buses were charged more, which led to a situation where they unauthorizedly parked and picked passengers on roads outside the ISBT complexes, resulting in huge traffic snarls apart from causing passenger and revenue loss to state run buses. With the new notification, reduced turnaround time, faster circulation and improved handling of buses is being achieved. The LG has sought a report from the Traffic Police to ascertain the impact of reduced turnaround timings on the traffic situation and pedestrian movement outside the ISBT complexes.

Bharadwaj to launch single window facility for faster clearances of investors' applications

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government will next week launch a single window facility for faster clearances of investors' applications, boosting ease of doing business in the city. The beta version of the single window system (SWS) will be launched by Industry Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Monday. "The platform aims to streamline pre-operation approvals, reduce compliance, promote sector-specific reforms, shorten project timelines and enhance ease of starting and doing business in Delhi," Bharadwaj said. The portal will help realize objective of speedy processing of clearances and providing investor-friendly environment to business, he added. So far, 59 services across 12



stakeholder departments have been onboarded on the platform. Specifically, 37 services from seven departments namely labour, MCD, Delhi Pollution Control Committee, weights and measures, DJB, power discoms and industries were onboarded on the single window system in the first phase of the plan, the minister said. In the second phase, 22 services from five depart-

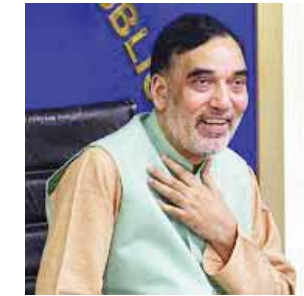
ments -- drug control, trade and taxes, excise, entertainment and luxury tax, DSIIDC and GSDL -- were onboarded. Also, 27 services have been made 'live' on the SWS Portal, he said. The single window facility will allow the investors and entrepreneurs to fill up, upload documents and submit the application form online with the possibility of fee payment being made online as

well. It will also have an online application status tracking system. Notifications at critical stages of application processing, application and query submission, application approval or rejection at various levels through SMS and emails is being integrated with the system, the statement said. The user will also obtain the approval or registration certificate online via the portal only. It will enable the investors to apply for multiple clearances and approvals from different departments on a single platform rather than applying individually. All onboarded departments are bound to deliver the requested clearances or services within the stipulated timeline as prescribed in the Public Service Guarantee Act.

Rai unveils 14-point construction guidelines as part of Winter Action Plan

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to curb rising dust pollution during the winter months, Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Saturday unveiled a comprehensive 14-point construction guideline as part of the city's 'Winter Action Plan'. The rules aim to tackle dust pollution from the construction sites, which is a major contributor to the city's declining air quality, Rai said. He stated that these guidelines will be strictly enforced starting October 7 adding any violations after this date will lead to penalties with the repeat offenders facing a halt in the construction activities. The rules mandate that all construction sites must be covered with tin sheets to prevent dust from spreading into



the surroundings. "People involved in any kind of construction work whether private, government or company-driven must ensure compliance with these rules," Rai emphasised during his press conference. Rai stated that all construction areas must be enclosed with tin sheets, vehicles transporting construction materials must have clean tires and materials like sand and gravel must be covered to

prevent dust from spilling onto the roads. To control dust, regular water sprinkling at the construction sites is compulsory, he added. Rai further said that workers must be provided with dust masks and health kits at all times. The Delhi government has also deployed 523 teams from 13 departments to monitor compliance. These teams will inspect the construction sites around the clock, ensuring that the new norms are followed to prevent dust pollution, he said. The anti-dust campaign will run from October 7 to November 7 as part of the winter action plan to tackle pollution in the capital, Rai added. Rai said that for not registering on the C&D portal, a fine of Rs one lakh will be imposed on construction projects with an area of less than

20,000 square meters and Rs two lakh on construction projects with an area of more than 20,000 square meters. A fine of Rs 7,500 per day will be imposed for not installing anti-smog guns. According to Rai, earlier there was a rule to install anti-smog guns only on construction sites above 20,000 square meters. Now on the basis of the new rule, it has been made mandatory to install anti-smog guns on construction sites with an area of 5,000 square meters and more. There should be 1 anti-smog gun on a construction site of 5,000 to 10,000 square meters, 2 on a site of 10,000 to 15,000 square meters, 3 on a construction site of 15,000 to 20,000 square meters and at least 4 anti-smog guns on a construction site above 20,000 square meters.

Rijiju stresses on educational collaboration, cultural exchange between India, Japan

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Saturday stressed on strengthening educational collaboration and cultural exchange between India and Japan, which will provide the youth of both countries with opportunities to explore global education and careers. He was speaking at the 3rd India-Japan Education Conclave in Guwahati, which brought together key figures of the two countries to strengthen educational, cultural and research ties, an official statement said.

Organised by the Indo-Japan Business Council (IJBC) in collaboration with the Vivekananda Kendra Institute of Culture, the event was supported by the Embassy of Japan in India as part of the celebration of Japan Month. Rijiju, the parliamentary affairs minister, maintained that the conclave is a testament to the growing bond between the two countries. "By fostering educational collaboration and cultural exchange, we are not only strengthening our diplomatic ties but also providing our students with opportunities to explore global education and

careers. "This initiative, rooted in the Japan-India Vision 2025, will shape the futures of countless young talents, especially in regions like North East India, where the potential is immense," Rijiju added. Assam Education Minister Ranaj Pegu, also present on the occasion, said such programmes bring Japanese institutions closer to students of India. "By opening doors to higher education, research and cultural exchange, we are empowering the youth of North East India to take part in global opportunities. This



collaboration between India and Japan is a vital step forward for our region's educational and cultural develop-

ment," he said. Jiro Kodera, counsellor (Economy and Development), Embassy of Japan, said the

conclave has laid the groundwork for future collaborations in the field of education and beyond. "The enthusiasm from students and educators alike demonstrates the strong desire for deeper educational ties between Japan and India," Jiro added. Indo-Japan Business Council (IJBC) president Siddharth Deshmukh and Vivekananda Kendra Institute of Culture's Kumari Sayanti were among other dignitaries present on the occasion. The conclave featured a variety of activities aimed at promoting India-Japan academ-

ic cooperation and cultural exchange. Representatives from top Japanese universities, language schools and research institutions interacted with students, providing insights about study opportunities in Japan. Moreover, participants engaged with Japanese traditional arts, anime and pop culture. Experts and educators from India and Japan discussed expanding joint research, student exchanges and technology transfer programmes at the meet. Over 1,600 students and educators attended

the conclave, with more than 70 per cent of attendees being from the North East region. Dignitaries at the meet also emphasised the potential for further collaboration between Indian and Japanese universities through joint research, technology transfer and student exchange programmes. The event aligns with the Japan-India Vision 2025, a roadmap set forth by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the late Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to enhance the special strategic and global partnership between the two countries, the statement added.

PM Modi consistently advocating betterment of sporting facilities for players: Nadda

PTI ■ PATNA

Union Minister J P Nadda on Saturday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been consistently advocating betterment of sporting facilities for players. He also said the budgetary allocations for the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports have been increased threefold in the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre. Speaking at a function organised to felicitate Paralympians at the Bihar BJP office here, Nadda said, "The budgetary allocations for the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports have been increased threefold under the leadership of our PM. The central government is providing world-class training, equipment and coaching facilities to our sports persons in 34 sports disciplines." "Whether it is Olympic or Paralympic, our PM has been consistently advocating betterment of sports and facilities for players. The budgetary allocation has been increased to Rs 3,342 crore in the current financial year for the ministry," he added. The initiatives taken by the central government have con-



tributed to India's outstanding performance at the Olympic, Paralympic and other international sports events, he said, adding that achievements have surpassed all previous records. India won six medals - a silver and five bronze - at the Paris 2024 Olympics. The country secured a total of 29 medals - seven gold, nine silver and 13 bronze - in the 2024 Paralympics. "Various initiatives have been undertaken by the Centre in the recent past to promote sports excellence and foster a strong sporting culture across the country. There are a total of 1,000 Khelo India centres in the country and 715 are already operational. The 'Khelo India' scheme aims to foster a mass movement for promoting sports excellence across the country," the BJP president said.

Give more time for filing self-declaration about land ownership: Nitish to Revenue Department



PTI ■ PATNA

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Saturday directed the Revenue and Land Reforms Department for the timely completion of the ongoing survey and to provide more time to people to file self-declarations about land ownership. Chairing a review meeting of the department, Kumar said people should not face difficulties while submitting documents pertaining to land ownership. "The ongoing land survey exercise should be completed on time, and the department should give more time to landowners for submission of self-declaration. Besides, other works like mutation and updation of jamabandi register should be continued simulta-

neously," he said. "Pending cases of mutation must be reduced on a priority basis at the block offices across the state. Senior officials must conduct regular inspections of the survey works that are going on in the state," he added. The CM's direction came amid speculations that the government may extend the timeline of the survey in view of obstacles at the ground level. The government is chasing a July 2025 deadline to complete the process. "The government's main aim for conducting special surveys and settlement is to reduce cases of land disputes in the state. The government has taken several steps to reduce the cases of land disputes," the CM said.

Gang shootouts on the rise in...

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On Friday night, three men opened fire at a second hand luxury car show room called Car Street Mini in southwest Delhi's Naraina, situated just a kilometre away from the Naraina police station. In this case also, no one was injured but the attackers targeted the cars in the showroom. Witnesses reported hearing at least 20 rounds being fired by three men, causing widespread panic. The shooters fled the scene after

damaging four luxury cars - two BMWs, a Mercedes, and a Mini Cooper. They also snatched the phone of a salesman and tossed it 100 meters away from the showroom. A slip reading "Bhau Gang, Since 2020" was found at the site, referencing the notorious gangster Himanshu Bhau, who fled to Portugal in 2022 and is suspected of orchestrating extortion attempts from abroad. The gangster has demanded Rs 5 crore from the owner of the car showroom as protection money, they said. According to police, the assailants fired more than two dozen bullets inside and outside the showroom. In a purported

CCTV footage of the incident which was surfaced on social media on Saturday, three men are seen firing at the cars in the showroom. In the video, a shooter is also seen pointing his gun at a customer and employee sitting inside the showroom. In a similar attack in May, the Fusion Cars showroom in Tilak Nagar was targeted, and Rs 5 crore was reportedly demanded by the Bhau Gang. The gang is primarily involved in extortion, demanding large sums of money from business owners in exchange for protection. Police have identified the three suspects involved in the Naraina shooting and have registered a case.

India slams Pakistan at...

From Page 1

She asserted that as the world knows, Pakistan has long employed cross-border terrorism as a weapon against its neighbours. "It has attacked our Parliament, our financial capital Mumbai, marketplaces and pilgrimage routes," she said, referring to the 2001 Indian Parliament attack and the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks carried out by Pakistan-based terror groups. "The list is long. For such a country to speak about violence anywhere is hypocrisy at its worst," Mangalanandan said. In his address, Sharif raised the Kashmir issue, as expected, and said that to "secure durable peace", India should reverse the

Abrogation of Article 370 and enter into a dialogue for a "peaceful" resolution of the issue. He said India has spurned Pakistan's proposals for a mutual "Strategic Restraint Regime". Responding to this reference "to some proposal of strategic restraint", India asserted that there "can be no compact with terrorism. In fact, Pakistan should realise that cross-border terrorism against India will inevitably invite consequences." Reminding the international community that this was a nation that for long hosted Al Qaeda, Mangalanandan said Pakistan's "fingerprints are on so many terrorist incidents across the world, whose policies attract the dreads of many societies to make it their home. "Perhaps it should come as

no surprise that its Prime Minister would so speak in this hallowed hall. Yet we must make clear how unacceptable his words are to all of us. We know that Pakistan will seek to counter the truth with more lies. Repetition will change nothing. Our stand is clear and needs no reiteration," she said. India stressed that it is even more extraordinary for a country with a history of rigged elections to talk about political choices, that too in a democracy. "The real truth is that Pakistan covets our territory, and in fact, has continuously used terrorism to disrupt elections in Jammu and Kashmir, an inalienable and integral part of India," the young Indian diplomat said. She said it is ridiculous that a nation that committed genocide in 1971 and which persecutes its minorities

relentlessly even now, "dare speak about intolerances and phobias. The world can see for itself what Pakistan really is." A Pakistani diplomat went on to respond to Mangalanandan with a Right of Reply. Describing India's assertions as "baseless and misleading", the Pakistani diplomat said the United Nations Security Council, through numerous resolutions, "has unequivocally called for a free, impartial plebiscite to enable the people of Jammu and Kashmir to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. Every year, Pakistan's leaders, on expected lines, make references to Jammu and Kashmir in their UNGA speeches and India fields its young diplomats to deliver hard-hitting retorts to Islamabad's rants.

“Swachhata Hi Seva” campaign promotes cleanliness in C’garh

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAJNANDGAON

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Saturday attended the “Swachhata hi Seva” campaign in Barga village in Rajnandgaon district and inspected a percolation tank site and a drive for cleanliness.

The event was presided over by Union Minister of Jal Shakti CR Patil.

At the event, the Chief Minister also inaugurated and carried out bhumi puja for various development projects worth Rs 32.07 crore.

These include the inauguration of 21 projects worth Rs 12.78 crore and



ground-breaking ceremony for other 14 projects worth Rs 19.28 crore.

Under the Public Works Department, he inaugurated one project worth Rs 2.59 crore. He inaugurated 13 projects worth Rs. 4.25 crore under the Health Department. He inaugurated two projects worth Rs 4.94 crore under the Water Resources Department.

He inaugurated five projects worth Rs 99.46 lakh under the Rural Engineering Services Division.

The Chief Minister also distributed departmental kits to beneficiaries. Sai and the Union Minister also planted saplings at Barga.

C’garh strives to tackle rabies

STAFF REPORTER ■
BILASPUR

Authorities in Chhattisgarh held awareness and free vaccination drives to tackle rabies on the occasion of World Rabies Day on Saturday.

The day is observed on September 28 on the death anniversary of French chemist and microbiologist Louis Pasteur, who developed the first rabies vaccine.

Vaccination programmes were held in all veterinary institutions. Authorities stressed the importance of vaccinating pets against rabies and urged people to do so.

Rabies generally spreads through bites of infected dogs, cats and bats. Symptoms include headaches, hydrophobia, excessive



salivation, muscle cramps and paralysis.

If a person shows signs of infection due to lack of

Rabies Day is observed on September 28 on the death anniversary of French chemist and microbiologist Louis Pasteur, who developed the first rabies vaccine

effective treatment, it can prove fatal. Therefore, it is crucial to get promptly vaccinated if one possibly came into contact with a rabies-infected animal.

Couple found hanging in Bilaspur



STAFF REPORTER ■
BILASPUR

A couple was found hanging in a village in Bilaspur district in Chhattisgarh.

The bodies of Parasram Dewangan and his wife Parvati were found at a community hall in Lakhram village, Bilaspur. Additional Superintendent of Police (Rural) Archana Jha said.

The couple hailed from Akaltara village and Parasram Dewangan was a tailor by profession.

Dewangan left tailoring and the couple worked as weavers at a cooperative society run in the community hall in Lakhram village.

A suicide note found in the community hall accused the cooperative society's chairman Satish Dewangan of harassing them.

Students showcase innovation at Tinkarathon 2024

STAFF REPORTER ■
BILASPUR

Students from across Chhattisgarh are showcasing their innovations at the Tinkarathon 2024 exhibition at Bilaspur district, an official communiqué said on Saturday.

Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu inaugurated the exhibition held as part of the Swachhata hi Seva fortnight. It will conclude on September 29.

Students from 267 schools are showcasing their innovations to improve or resolve problems in cleanliness projects, digital transformation, space technology, rural and urban development, sustainability and health care.

The innovations of the young minds can play a key role in resolving the challenges of the present and



future, the communiqué said. A health camp for

sanitation workers was also held at the exhibition. A total

of 182 workers received health checkups.

Teenage girl among two killed in bear attack

STAFF REPORTER ■
GAURELA

Two persons including a teenage girl were killed and four others injured in attacks by sloth bears in Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi (GPM) district Chhattisgarh, a forest official said on Saturday.

While two incidents took place on Saturday morning, another occurred on Friday night in the Marwahi forest division, known for the presence of sloth bears, Marwahi Divisional Forest Officer Raunak Goyal said.

The girl, Vidya Kewat (13), came face to face with the bear when she went to graze cattle in Beljharia village on Friday evening. The animal mauled her to death.

In the same village, three residents were attacked by a bear when they went to collect

The girl, Vidya Kewat (13), came face to face with the bear when she went to graze cattle in Beljharia village

mushrooms in a nearby forest on Saturday morning.

While Sukkul Prasad (32) died on the spot, Charan Singh Khairwar (50) and Ramkumar (30) sustained grievous injuries.

In another incident, two villagers -- Sevak Lal Yadav (30) and Semlal Gond (45) -- were injured after an attack by a bear in Kargikala village.

The kin of the deceased will be given Rs 25,000 as immediate relief.



Restoration work of the Bhoramdeo temple in Chhattisgarh's Kawardha district is currently underway. The temple, a place of archeological importance, is being chemically treated. Also, water proofing work is being done.

PNB contributes to Swachhta campaign



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The personnel of the Punjab National Bank on Saturday contributed to the Swachhta hi Seva campaign by cleaning the Marine Drive in Raipur.

They also conducted a plantation drive, held a health camp and distributed health safety materials and PPE kits.

Jal Jagar in Gangrel on Oct 5-6

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh government is going to organize a Jal-Jagar event at Gangrel in Dhamtari district to make people aware of the importance of water conservation.

The event will create awareness on depleting ground water levels and various programmes to preserve the water bodies including the lifeline river of the region, Mahanadi.

Gangrel, which lies at the Mahanadi's shores, houses the Ravishankar reservoir. It dries up in summer and has caused concern over availability of water in the state.

Meanwhile, to mark the occasion, Jal-Abhishek will be done in Gangrel by the water of 108 Amrit Sarovars and percolation tanks in the region.

A government official said water recharging is the biggest



challenge in the current times of climate change and global warming. As a part of an initiative to conserve water sources and increase water level, Chhattisgarh is committed to conserving water.

In the same bid, various awareness programmes at

academic institutes would be held on October 5-6.

The villagers of Parastari in the Dhamtari district are contributing to water conservation by planting trees in the name of their girl child and pledging to protect the plants by tying up Raksha Sutra.

How high cholesterol, microplastics are contributing to rising heart diseases

AGENCIES ■

High cholesterol and microplastics are emerging as extremely dangerous risk factors for cardiovascular diseases, like heart attack and stroke, said experts on Saturday.

While cholesterol has traditionally been linked to an older population, recent years have shown a marked increase in cholesterol among youngsters.

This silent health concern often goes unnoticed, as high cholesterol typically does not show clear symptoms until serious damage has been done.

Speaking to IANS Dr. Preeti Gupta, Professor of Cardiology at Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi said that early screenings, and keeping cholesterol and LDL-C levels (bad cholesterol) in check, can make a big difference.

Regular lipid profile

testing and staying on top of your health can help catch any warning signs before they become serious problems.

“Elevated LDL-C levels are a significant contributor to coronary artery disease, which can lead to heart attacks and strokes. Monitoring and managing these levels through lifestyle changes and medication, if necessary, are key to preventing heart disease,” Gupta said.

“For people with comorbidities like diabetes or hypertension, the lipid profile becomes even more crucial, as they are at higher risk of developing heart issues,” she added.

According to recent guidelines from the Cardiological Society of India, LDL-C levels should be monitored regularly to ensure they stay within optimal ranges, particularly in high-risk individuals.

The lipid profile is one of the most important tests for assessing cardiovascular risk, as it provides a detailed view of cholesterol levels, including LDL-C (bad cholesterol), HDL-C (good cholesterol), and triglycerides.

Gupta recommended “starting the test at age 18 and to repeat every 4-6 years unless risk factors suggest more frequent testing”.

Dr Vidya Suratkal, Cardiologist, Lilavati Hospital Mumbai, told IANS said that “high cholesterol levels in youngsters aged 19-24 can cause a 50 per cent spike in heart disease risk during middle age (35-50)”.

“About 7 out of 10 youngsters visiting me are having high cholesterol levels,” he added.

The experts cited obesity, smoking, family history, genetics, thyroid problems, unhealthy diet, high blood

pressure, sedentary lifestyles, and alcohol as the major risk factors for elevated cholesterol levels, which are putting the young hearts in danger.

Dr Sandeep Banerjee, Pathologist, Apollo Diagnostic Mumbai advised the youth “to do the lipid profile test every 8-9 months as recommended by the doctor and adhere to a well-balanced lifestyle that includes eating a nutritious diet, exercising, and sleeping well”.

Meanwhile, the experts noted that microplastics in the bloodstream are also emerging as a hidden link to cardiovascular disorders.

Microplastics are tiny plastic particles less than five millimetres in size and are ubiquitously found in the environment and have infiltrated every part of human lives.

From oceans and soils to the food people eat and the

water they drink, they have permeated the very core of the ecosystem.

Recent research reveals a concerning link between microplastics and human health, especially regarding their impact on the bloodstream, heart disease, and even neurological disorders. “Once microplastics enter the bloodstream, they can trigger an immune response, leading to persistent inflammation. This chronic inflammation has the potential to disrupt normal bodily functions, and over time, is strongly associated with a range of serious health issues, including cardiovascular diseases and neurological disorders,” Dr. Praveen Gupta, Principal Director & Chief of Neurology, Fortis Hospital, told IANS. The long-term impact of microplastic exposure is becoming a critical concern for public health.

Union Minister, CM visit plastic recycling unit RIPA

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAJNANDGAON

Union Minister of Jal Shakti C.R. Paatil, accompanied by Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, on Saturday visited a plastic waste management unit managed by women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) at the Rural Industrial Park (RIPA) in Amlidih village in Rajnandgaon district.

Both the leaders commended the SHGs for their vital role in promoting environmental sustainability through plastic waste recycling.

During the visit, Sai highlighted the significance of the SHGs' efforts, calling it a model initiative for environmental protection.

He emphasised that recycling plastic waste not only protects environment but



also provides the women with employment opportunities, fostering self-reliance and economic empowerment.

Minister Paatil stated that women were making key contributions in various sectors. He praised the SHGs for their dedication and hard work, and stated that their initiative to recycle plastic waste addresses serious environmental concerns, including pollution of soil, water and air.

The Mahatma Gandhi Rural Industrial Park, located in Gram Panchayat Amlidih in the Dongargarh region of

Rajnandgaon district, serves as a hub for plastic waste recycling.

“Swachhata Didis,” women from the SHGs, collect plastic waste from the Arjuni, Konari and Amlidih clusters as well as nearby villages. The waste is sorted and processed into plastic blocks and granules, which are then sent to Raipur to make plastic items such as chairs, drums, twine and gutkha boxes.

This initiative is a major step towards creating plastic-free villages while generating sustainable employment for the women.

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FIR against Siddaramaiah exposes Congress corruption: BJP

Youth will defeat BJP, says Kharge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday asserted that the registration of a case on several criminal charges, including corruption, against Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has exposed the Congress, as it noted that the FIR was lodged following a court order and central agencies had no role in it. BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi told reporters that it is a rare case of a sitting chief minister being made an accused in a corruption case and has unmasked the "corrupt face" of the Congress. Siddaramaiah is the accused number one in the case, he said and took a swipe at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, asking if he stood with the chief minister accused of corrupt practices. The Karnataka Lokayukta police on Friday registered an FIR against Siddaramaiah and others in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority



(MUDA) site allotment case, following the court order. A special court in Bengaluru on Wednesday ordered a Lokayukta police probe against Siddaramaiah in the case, setting the stage for filing an FIR against him. With the Congress leadership accusing the BJP of targeting the chief minister for political reasons, Trivedi noted that the central probe agencies had no role in this FIR.

He claimed that the case is an outcome of Siddaramaiah's own misdeeds, as he and his family abused government powers to acquire assets illegally. He said a Congress candidate in the Haryana assembly polls had recently said that his party leaders will use power to enrich themselves and their relatives, and alleged that the Karnataka chief minister had already been doing it.



While Congress leaders pocket thousands of crores of rupees, they give "lollypop" of a few thousands to people, he said. At the press conference, the BJP spokesperson also slammed the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal for its "nexus" with criminals over the case of rape of an IAS officer's wife. He made a mention of the Calcutta High Court's critical observation of the police

investigation in the case to hit out at the regional party. It shows how dangerous the state has become for women, and a heinous nexus is visible between government officials and criminals, he alleged. Replying to a question about the poor had no place in the Ram temple inauguration ceremony, Trivedi accused the Congress of repeatedly disrespecting the temple and

noted that workers involved in its construction were felicitated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and showered with flower petals.

He objected to the use of phrase like "naach gana" (song and dance) by Gandhi in the context of the temple's inauguration ceremony. He said three generations of Gandhi family had gone to Mughal king Babar's grave in Afghanistan to pay their respects, and claimed that their stand on the temple shows their real nature and contempt for Hinduism. Referring to Pakistani prime minister's comments in the UN targeting India over developments in Kashmir, Trivedi said the Congress-National Conference has also been speaking the same language. Noting that the anniversary of the surgical strikes targeting terrorists in Pakistan in 2016 fell on Saturday, he said the Congress and Pakistan have been echoing each other's views since then.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Citing Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data, he said despite all efforts, this Government data is not able to hide the helplessness of the youth. "There is no bigger issue in the country than unemployment. Modi ji has the biggest contribution in ruining the future of the youth. If we take a closer look at the latest data of PLFS, despite all efforts, this Government data is not able to hide the helplessness of the youth," Kharge said in a social media post in Hindi. "Narendra Modi ji must answer — Isn't youth unemployment at a frightening 10.2% in 2023-24? Instead of giving colourful slogans and doing photo ops, what did Modi ji do to provide jobs to the youth?" he asked. Is it not true that the number of women who have regular



salaries is now the lowest in seven years at just 15.9 per cent, Kharge asked. "Has not the number of women engaged in unpaid labour in rural areas increased from 51.9% (2017-18) to 67.4% (2023-24), which reflects rural unemployment? Why has the Modi Government, which makes a lot of noise about the manufacturing sector, not increased employment in it in the last seven years?" the Congress president posed. How did this figure fall from 15.85 per cent in 2017-18 to just 11.4 per cent in 2023-24, he asked.

BHISMA medical kits for Mahakumbh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Uttar Pradesh, which is readying to host one of the world's largest religious festivals, the Mahakumbh 2025, has sought at least 22 BHISMA kits—India's first indigenous state-of-the-art portable medical facilities housed in a cube—from the Centre to address medical emergencies and ensure prompt healthcare for the anticipated influx of devotees at the mega event. "The UP Government has requested at least 22 portable BHISMA (Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog, Hita, and Maitri) Cubes to be installed at selected locations during the event in Prayagraj which is expected to attract around 40 crore devotees and visitors. Two Cubes will be set up in each of the 11 zones, covering a total of 43 zones," said an official from the HLL lifecare Ltd, a PSU of the Union Health Ministry which has been tasked with assembling the equipments enclosed in the innovative product under the Government's Project Arogya Maitri. Tailored to save the 'Golden Hour' for up to 200 individuals at once, the BHISMA Cubes have already found successful deployments in countries like Laos, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and recently Ukraine when India had gifted four units during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the country. Back home in India, during Ram Mandir inauguration in Ayodhya, it emerged as a crucial lifesaver for a man during a medical emergency.

Dr Ankita, a member of the taskforce of the Union Defence Ministry for the Government's Project Arogya Maitri, shared that the Cubes are portable and rapidly deployable modular medical facilities intended to provide emergency lifesaving clinical care in event of disaster/public health emergencies. These can be deployed within minutes and entails operation theatre, mini-ICU, ventilator, blood test equipment, X-ray machine, cooking station, food, water, shelter, power generator and much more. Due to its modular design and ease of use, it can be transported by air, sea, land, or drone, ensuring timely medical assistance to even the most remote locations. The Cubes will help expedite treatment of the injured and save precious lives. These cubes can handle several severe injuries including 40 bullet injuries, 25 major bleeds, 25 major burns, around 10 head injuries, long limb fractures, spinal injuries, chest injuries and spinal fractures, she explained. The BHISMA cube is already finding huge takers. The Union Health Minister JP Nadda too recently announced that there are plans to set up BHISHM Cubes in 25 AIIMS and Institutes of National Importance (INIs) for rapid deployment in the respective region in case of disaster / health emergencies in the first phase. To enable operators to swiftly find items, track their usage and expiration dates, the cutting-edge BHISHM has a software system in a tablet along with the Cubes.



Modi pays tribute to Lata Mangeshkar on her birth anniversary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday paid tributes to renowned playback singer Lata Mangeshkar on her 95th birth anniversary, and recalled his "special bond" with her. He said in a social media post, "Remembering Lata Didi on her birth anniversary. She will always live on in the hearts and minds of people due to her soulful songs. "Lata Didi and I had a special bond. I have been fortunate to receive her affection and

blessings," he added. The Prime Minister also shared an article written by her brother and music composer Hridaynath Mangeshkar in a national daily, which highlighted the bond between Modi and the great singer. The unchallenged queen of playback singing for several decades, Lata Mangeshkar has been hailed by connoisseurs for her mastery of the intricacies of classical music and adored by the masses for her popular connect of her voice.

Justice system must respond to disabled children's vulnerabilities: CJI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Saturday said it must be ensured that the justice system, from the police stations to the courtrooms, understands and responds to the compounded vulnerabilities of children with disabilities. Speaking at the ninth National Annual Stakeholders Consultation on Child Protection, the CJI said the challenges faced by persons with disabilities extend far beyond issues of physical accessibility and they must also contend with entrenched societal biases, stereotypes and misconceptions that permeate nearly every facet of life. "We must ensure that the justice system, from the police stations to the courtrooms, understands and responds to the compounded vulnerabilities of these children. The incorporation of restorative justice approaches is one such solution. The JJ Act (Juvenile Justice Act) outlines various and



reintegration measures for children in conflict with the law such as counselling, education, vocational training and community service. For children with disabilities, these measures can be adapted to ensure they receive the specialised support they need to thrive," he said. The two-day programme was organised under the aegis of Juvenile Justice Committee of the Supreme Court in association with UNICEF, India. Union Minister for Women and Child Development Annpurna Devi

gave the special address for the two-day programme, while the opening remarks was given by Justice BV Nagarathna, who is also the chairperson of the Juvenile Justice Committee of the Supreme Court. Country representative of Unicef, India Cynthia McCaffrey, gave the introductory address on the topic. The CJI said the challenges faced by persons with disabilities extend far beyond issues of physical accessibility and "they must also contend with entrenched societal

biases, stereotypes, and misconceptions that permeate nearly every facet of life." "When we talk about juvenile justice, especially in the context of children with disabilities, we cannot ignore the concept of intersectionality. Disability often intersects with other marginalised identities such as gender, caste, socio-economic status, and ethnicity, amplifying the discrimination children face," he said, adding the doctrine of intersectionality highlights how multiple identities intersect to create unique experiences of discrimination. Highlighting that for children with disabilities, these compounded vulnerabilities can have devastating effects, the CJI stressed the state must ensure that children with disabilities are provided additional safeguards, recognizing that they face heightened risks and unique challenges. "We must ensure that our legal, social and institutional systems are designed not just to accommodate, but to actively protect and empower these children," he added.

Special Gram Sabhas to guide Panchayat development plans

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Special Gram Sabhas will be held on October two to guide panchayats on preparing their development plans for the 2025-26 financial year, officials in Panchayati Raj Ministry said. The sabhas (meetings) would engage over 2.55 lakh Gram Panchayats (GP) across the country, they said. The training and orientation programme is being conducted under the 'Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas' Abhiyan of the Panchayati Raj Ministry, which is aimed at fostering participatory planning and timely preparation of Panchayat Development Plans (PDPs) across all panchayats in the country. It would involve 20,000 college students who will assist in the handholding and preparation of PDPs across



various gram panchayats, the officials said. According to a ministry official, the special Gram Sabhas would involve over 2.55 lakh gram panchayats, 6,700 block panchayats, and 665 district panchayats. Ahead of the October two programme, the ministry will also organise a national

workshop on September 30, which will bring together representatives from various Union ministries and departments, state departments, faculty members from training institutes, and elected representatives from different levels of Panchayats to share best practices for adoption

across states and UTs. The officials said the workshop will be inaugurated by the Union Minister of Panchayati Raj Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan'. "The Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA), coordinated by IIT-Delhi, will play a critical role this year by involving over 20,000 students in the 'Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas' Abhiyan,

also known as the People's Plan Campaign," another official said. These students will participate in the Special Gram Sabha on October two, and also assist in the handholding and preparation of GPDs across various Gram Panchayats, the official added. "The partnership between UBA and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj aims to engage young minds in grassroots-level planning, marking a first in the history of the campaign," the official said. Young Fellows working under the 'Project for Creating Model Gram Panchayat Clusters' as well as Fellows from Piramal Foundation, Aspirational Bharat Collaborative and Transforming Rural India Foundation will play a crucial role in co-facilitating the October 2 Gram Sabha, the official added. The sarpanchs (village head)

would be provided help in pre-planning and orientation on Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDG) and their themes, orienting Gram Sabha members on Panchayat Development Index (PDI) scores, and in identifying appropriate interventions. Additionally, special sabha-orientation programmes will be held in 750 Gram Panchayats, where senior citizens aged above 75 will share their experiences, the official said. A tree plantation campaign under the banner "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam", involving the planting of 75 trees in each Gram Panchayat will also be undertaken, during which the participants will take pledges on "swachhata" (cleanliness), "Nasha-mukt Bharat" (drug-free India), Fit India, and youth-driven visions for the future, according to the official.

Health Ministry drafts guidelines for passive euthanasia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Brainstem death declaration, medical consensus on the patient's prognosis, documented informed refusal from the patient or surrogate, and adherence to Supreme Court protocols are some of the major specific conditions that have been outlined in the Union Health Ministry's draft guidelines for withdrawing life support in terminally ill patients. The 'Draft Guidelines for Withdrawal of Life Support in Terminally Ill Patients' come weeks after the Supreme Court refused to grant an aged couple's plea to

allow "passive euthanasia" for their 30-year-old son, who has been lying comatose at home for 11 years after a fall from the fourth floor of a building. In 2018 also an elderly couple from Maharashtra had written to the President's office, seeking permission for "active euthanasia", where a person is killed, usually by administering an overdose of pain-killers. The legality of euthanasia varies across the globe, with a small number of countries like Belgium and Australia permitting it under strict conditions. As per the Ministry, these guidelines aim to ensure

ethical decision-making while recognizing that many patients in critical care may not benefit from continued life support. The Ministry is seeking feedback from the stakeholders before finalizing the guidelines. As per the draft, the conditions are whether the individual has been declared brainstem death, if there is a medical prognostication and considered opinion that the patient's disease condition is advanced and not likely to benefit from aggressive therapeutic interventions, patient/surrogate documented refusal, following prognostic awareness, to continue life

support and compliance with procedure prescribed by the Supreme Court. It also states that doctors should take a considered decision to not start a life supporting measure in a terminally ill patient that is unlikely to benefit the patient and is likely to lead to suffering and loss of dignity. In such a case, three conditions — on whether the individual has been declared brainstem death, if there is a medical prognostication and considered opinion that the patient's disease condition is advanced and not likely to benefit from aggressive therapeutic interventions, patient/surrogate



documented informed refusal, following prognostic awareness — has to be taken into account. It also discusses the importance of Advance

Medical Directives (AMD), which allow patients to specify their treatment preferences in advance. However, IMA's national President Dr R V Asokan

stated that the proposed guidelines expose doctors to legal scrutiny and put them under stress. "Such clinical decisions have always been taken in good faith by doctors. The patient's relatives are explained and given all information, taken into confidence in a given case and decision is taken on merit in every single case. Putting it down in sort of guidelines and also alleging that inappropriate decisions have been taken or they have been prolonged is misunderstanding the situation," Dr Asokan told a news agency. "First the perception and

assumption that unnecessarily machines are used and lives are prolonged is wrong. It exposes the doctors to legal scrutiny. "More so what is left of a doctor-patient relationship... Trying to define it in four corners of black and white documentation which is legally scrutinised is nothing but exposing the doctors to further stress," he said. Terminal illness in the draft guidelines has been defined as an irreversible or incurable condition from which death is inevitable in the foreseeable future. Severe traumatic brain injury which shows no recovery after 72 hours or more is also included.

Mumbai on high alert ahead of Navratri, Diwali festivities

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Mumbai police have placed the country's commercial capital on a high-alert on Saturday, after they received a tip-off from the central intelligence agencies about a possible threat of a terror strike in public places during the upcoming Navratri-Diwali festival season.

The police have beefed up security in and around the metropolis, particularly at the religious and crowded public places. The police stations across the city have been directed to maintain a strict vigilance at temples, tourist spots and other important locations.

The police on Friday conducted a mock drill at the Crawford Market area, where there are two famous religious sites including the Juma Masjid. "We are also conducting such mock drills in other parts of the city," a senior police officer said.

In a related development, the famous Siddhivinayak Temple at Prabhadevi in north-central Mumbai has come under a thick security blanket. Confirming that the Mumbai police had asked the temple management to beef up security in the temple, Sada Sarvankar, the chairman of the



Siddhivinayak Temple Trust, said: "We have been asked by Mumbai Police to increase the security at the temple. We have been told to pay attention to all the security arrangements." Similarly, the management of the major religious places including temples have been advised to increase their internal and external security detail. The Zonal Deputy Commissioners of Police have been asked to keep an eye in their juris-

dictions for any suspicious activities. Security has also been strengthened at railway stations and public installations keeping in view the safety and security of the people. Apart from the upcoming festivals like Navratri and Diwali, the authorities have also considered the forthcoming State Assembly as one of the reasons for increasing the security in and around Mumbai.

The Mumbai police are not taking any chances in matters relating to security in view of the recurring terror strikes that Mumbai has witnessed over the years. The country's commercial capital has witnessed 12 terror strikes ever since it had its first brush with international terrorism on March 12, 1993 when 257 people were killed and 713 others injured. The 12 terrorist strikes have collectively claimed a staggering 704 lives and left 2,300-odd people injured, besides a trial of destruction.

Among these terror strikes, the 1993 serial bombings, the twin blasts at Zaveri Bazar and Gateway of India on August 25, 2003, the July 11, 2006 suburban train bombings and the 26/11 Mumbai attack have been major ones both in terms of casualties and loss of property.

In all, 166 people were killed and 300 others injured in a brazen attack indulged in by the 10 Pakistani terrorists, including Kasab, on various prominent landmarks in the metropolis like Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Taj and Oberoi-Trident hotels, Jewish centre Nariman House, and popular eatery Café Leopold, between the night of November 26 and the morning of November 29, 2008.

Rahul Gandhi asks Jaishankar to help TN fishermen arrested in Sri Lanka

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Saturday raised with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar the issue of the arrest of 37 fishermen from Tamil Nadu and urged him to take up the matter with the Sri Lankan authorities to ensure the early release of the Indian nationals and their boats.

In a letter to Jaishankar, Gandhi said the "recurring incidents of small and marginal Indian fisherfolk being apprehended by Sri Lankan authorities and the unjust seizure of assets and imposition of hefty fines by them warrants strict condemnation". Referring to the arrest of 37 Tamil fishermen and the seizure of their boats by Sri Lankan authorities on September 21, 2024, the Congress leader said, "R Sudha, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) from Mayiladuthurai Parliamentary Constituency informed me that the arrested fishermen are small-scale fisherfolk operating close to the coast, and that

on the day of the incident they had attempted to rescue a Sri Lankan boat in distress." It was stated that despite contacting Sri Lankan authorities for assistance with the rescue, the fishermen were arrested on the grounds of crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line, he said. Furthermore, the fishing boats seized were community property purchased through pooled resources, he said. "A copy of Adv. R. Sudha's representation

is enclosed herewith..," he said. "I request you to kindly take up this matter with the Sri Lankan authorities and ensure the early release of the fishermen and their boats," Gandhi said in his letter to Jaishankar. Tamil Chief Minister M K Stalin had on Monday apprised Jaishankar of the arrest of the 37 Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy and the seizure of three boats while seeking measures for their release.

Yuva Sena sweeps Mumbai University Senate polls

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a mini elections of sorts held ahead of the Maharashtra Assembly polls, the Yuva Sena - the youth wing of the Shiv Sena (UBT) - swept the Mumbai University (MU) Senate polls from the Graduates' constituency by bagging all the 10 seats and handing a humiliating defeat to the ruling BJP's students wing Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) in the polls. In a repeat of its sweep posted in the March 2018 Mumbai University Senate polls when it had won all the ten seats from the Graduates' constituency, the Yuv Sena - led by Sena MLA and former state minister Aadiya Thackeray - scored a perfect ten when the counting ended in a vast electoral constituency spread over 850-odd affiliated colleges Mumbai and neighbouring districts of

Thane, Palghar, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg. The ABVP drew a blank in the MU Senate polls - in which there were 28 candidates for the ten seats. Nearly 55 per cent of 13,406 graduate-voters had cast their votes in 38 polling stations and 64 polling booths. Candidates required a minimum of 1,114 votes to win in the open category. "Once again! 10 on 10 it is! We have not only repeated but bettered our performance at the Mumbai University Graduate Senate elections. 100 percent strike rate. From here we start the election victory stream," Aadiya Thackeray wrote on micro-blogging site "X" early today, thanking all his colleagues in the Yuva Sena and SS (UBT). The Yuva Sena not only walked away with all the five open-category seats in the Graduates' constituency, but it also posted



a victory in all five reserved-category seats which included candidates from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Nomadic Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and women. The ten Yuv Sena candidates who romped home in the polls were: Sneha Gawli, Sheetal

Sheth Devrukkhar, Mayur Panchal, Dhanraj Kohchade, Kisan Sawant, Pradeep Sawant, Shashikant Zore, Milind Satam, Alshesh Bhoir and Paramatma Yadav. Yuva Sena supporters celebrated their victory, chanting slogans in favour of their leaders

and distributing sweets. In the normal course, the MU Senate polls were to be held in 2023 in 2023. However, the elections had been delayed over two years due to multiple hurdles, including political and legal disputes. The polls were finally held on September 24,

after the Bombay High Court stayed a directive from Maharashtra's higher and technical education department seeking postponement of the elections. The counting of votes that took place at the Cowasjee Jehangir Convocation Hall in Mumbai University's Fort campus ended in the small hours of Saturday. Accepting the defeat in the Mumbai University Senate polls, the ABVP's Konkarn region head Sankalp Phaldesai said: "It was an election between political giants and the student union. We did our best. There may have been some strategic faults, which we will surely introspect. The ABVP congratulates the winning candidates and wishes them the very best. We hope they will now focus on solving the issues of the student fraternity rather than on political agendas."

4.78 million tourist arrived in India this year 2024

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

During the first six months this year, India welcomed nearly 4.78 million foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs), with Bangladesh and the US being the top source countries, according to data available from the Union Tourism Ministry. This reflects a 9.1 per cent increase from the same period in 2023, although it still trails pre-pandemic levels from 2019, which recorded over 5.29 million FTAs.

The FTAs in June 2024 were 7,06,045 as compared to 6,48,008 in June 2023 and 7,26,446 in June 2019 registering a growth of nine per cent and a fall of 2.8 per cent with respect to 2023 and 2019 respectively, according to the data released by the Ministry on the occasion of the World Tourism Day marked on Friday.

"The FTAs during the period January- June 2024 were 47,78,374 as compared to 43,80,239 in January-June 2023 and 52,96,025 in January-June 2019 registering a growth of 9.1 per cent and -9.8 per cent with respect to 2023 and 2019 respectively," it added.

According to the data on the percentage share of FTAs in India during January-June 2024, among the top five source countries were -- Bangladesh (21.55 per cent), the US (17.56 per

cent), the UK (9.82 per cent), Canada (4.5 per cent) and Australia (4.32 per cent).

The FTAs trend for the month of June 2024 was similar with Bangladesh (28.49 per cent) occupying the first spot among the top five source countries, followed by the US (22.59 per cent), the UK (6.10 per cent), Australia (3.74 per cent) and Canada (3.01 per cent), as per the data shared by the ministry. In June 2024 alone, FTAs reached 706,045, up from 648,008 in June 2023 but slightly down from 726,446 in June 2019. The increase in foreign exchange earnings, which rose to USD 15,339 billion for January-June 2024, suggests that spending per tourist is higher despite the overall lower number of arrivals.

Leisure travel remains the primary motivation for visitors, with the ministry emphasising the need for vigilance in monitoring and encouraging travellers to report symptoms of illnesses. Notably, recent geopolitical tensions could impact the recovery of inbound tourism.

The Ministry also announced the winners of the Best Tourism Villages Competition 2024, recognising 36 villages for their contributions to tourism.

Overall, while inbound tourism is on the rise, it continues to face challenges in fully recovering to pre-pandemic levels, said the experts in the sector.

Sitaram Yechury kept INDIA bloc united: Rahul Gandhi



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi paid emotional tribute to late CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury on Saturday terming him as a glue between

Congress and other parties in the INDIA bloc. Speaking at the condolence meet, Rahul said Yechury was 100% trustworthy person who never compromised. "It's rare to see politics bring out the best in someone. I saw Yechury from the first day I

started my political journey, and I observed him quite carefully. What I found was someone who was flexible and who listened," he said. Whatever he did, he always acted in the best interest of our country. Every single time, his

starting point was India, said Rahul. He shared memories of Yechury's habit of smoking cigarettes, something Yechury was never able to quit.

Rahul also reminisced on the time the two leaders would talk about BJP or the RSS and said that the late leader wouldn't say that they were doing this and that, just that "this is a danger to the country".

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also paid tribute to Sitaram Yechury and noted his "huge role" in the formation of INDIA bloc.

Left leaders Prakash Karat, Brinda Karat, D Raja, Pinarayi Vijayan, Dipankar Bhattacharya, other opposition leaders Supriya Sule, Kanamozhi, Ferooz Abdullah, Gopal Rai and Ram Gopal Yadav also spoke on the condolence meet.



Three Mpx cases in India till October

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

This year till date India has reported three Mpx cases with two from Kerala who have been infected with the fast spreading Clade One B variant, all the three had traveled abroad.

The first case that the country reported was of a 26-year-old resident of Haryana's Hisar, who had tested positive last month for the West African Clade 2 strain, similar to the earlier 30 cases reported in India from July 2022 onwards. He was admitted to a government hospital in Delhi and later discharged after being fully recovered.

However, the two cases reported from the Southern State have been found to be infected with the fast spreading virus that led the WHO to issue an advisory about the public emergency about the outbreak of the pathogen.

The youth diagnosed with Mpx (Clade One B) in Ernakulam, Kerala, is reported to be in satisfactory condition while receiving treatment at a private hospital in Kochi, said the health official from the State Government.

He exhibited symptoms after returning from the UAE and tested positive following an examination at Kochi airport. This marks the second Mpx case in Kerala; the first involved

a 38-year-old resident of Malappuram who had tested positive for Mpx. Tests revealed that he was infected with the Clade One B variant. Both cases highlight the importance of monitoring and swift testing for travellers showing symptoms like Mpx.

In response to these cases, health authorities stress the importance of monitoring symptoms and encourage anyone feeling unwell after travel to seek medical attention.

The World Health Organization has declared Mpx a public health emergency in Africa, with symptoms including fever, headache, sore throat, and muscle aches.

To enhance awareness, health camps have been set up at airports, and isolation facilities are established in 14 districts across the state, Kerala's Health Minister Veena George told reporters in the State.

She confirmed that a contact list for the latest patient has been created and that preventive measures are in place. Since Mpx was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the WHO in 2022, India has reported a total of 30 cases.

In view of the present situation, health authorities are emphasising on vigilance in monitoring symptoms and discouraging anyone feeling unwell after recent travel to seek immediate medical attention.

FIR against Nirmala Sitharaman over electoral bonds

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an interesting development, Karnataka police on Saturday registered a case against Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and others on the directions of a court here, following a complaint relating to the now-scrapped electoral bonds scheme. According to police, an FIR was registered under IPC sections 384 (punishment for extortion), 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) against Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, ED officials, BJP leaders JP Nadda, BY Vijayendra, Nalin Kateel, based on the order of a special court.

The complaint was lodged by Adarsh R Iyer, Co-President of 'Janaadhikara Sangharsha Parishath' (JSP) alleging that the accused "committed extortion under the guise and garb of electoral bonds and benefited to the tune of 8,000 and more crore of rupees. "The complainant further alleged that Sitharaman through the clan-



destine aid and support of ED officials facilitated extortion of thousands of crores of rupees for the benefit of others both at the state and national levels. "The entire extortion racket under the garb of electoral bonds has been

orchestrated hand in glove with officials of BJP at various levels." The Supreme Court in February had struck down the electoral bond scheme, saying it violates the right to information and the freedom of speech and expression under the

Constitution. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramiah, whose resignation is sought by the opposition BJP as an FIR was registered against him over the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment

case, said: "According to BJP leaders' argument, Nirmala Sitharaman should resign now, right?" Responding to this, JD(S) leader and Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy, said: "Why should Nirmala Sitharaman resign? Has electoral bond funds gone to Nirmala Sitharaman's personal account to resign? Has she misused power and benefited herself like you (Siddaramaiah)?"

Leader of Opposition in Legislative Assembly and BJP leader R Ashoka said the Congress doesn't have moral right to comment on the Union Finance Minister, and there can be no comparison between the electoral bond issue against her and MUDA case against Siddaramaiah. "...[electoral bond] issue is over, it has been decided by the Supreme Court, and our leader will take necessary action in accordance with law (in connection with FIR). Where is the comparison to a case where you (Siddaramaiah) used the government (land) for personal benefit, to this (electoral bonds case)..." he said.



ELEGANCE REDEFINED

Experience the joy of fashion

Ravi Bajaj, renowned for his elegance in fashion, recently unveiled his redesigned store at DLF Emporio, New Delhi. This event showcased his latest collection, celebrating the blend of traditional craftsmanship and modern design, writes SAKSHI PRIYA



From the Man Himself An Exclusive Interview with Ravi Bajaj

Ravi Bajaj's redesigned store is not just a new chapter in his fashion journey but also a clear example of his commitment to innovation and excellence. As he continues to shape the future of fashion with his unique vision, one thing is certain: his influence and creativity will remain at the forefront of the industry for years to come. He talked to Sakshi Priya about his passion. Excerpts: **What story do you want to convey through your new store?**

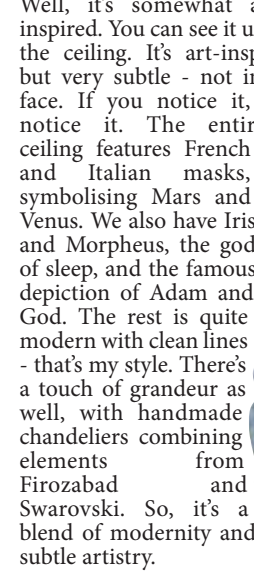
Oh, that's a tough one. It's like choosing a favourite child! I probably like about 20% of my work and not the other 80%. That's how you keep yourself motivated. The day you like 100% of your work, I think you're done.

What challenges did you encounter in shaping the final design?

Ravi Bajaj: There weren't any significant challenges in terms of ideas. The challenge usually comes with execution. Conceiving an idea is easy; the germ is always there. But translating it into reality - that's the tough part. Once it's done, it's beyond your control, and then it's about how it's perceived. What's in my control are the initial idea and its execution.

How do you foresee the intersection of fashion and retail experiences evolving over the next few years?

It's difficult to say. The biggest challenge is staying relevant. There's so much happening in the industry, and I've been in this business for 37 years. Staying persistent and maintaining your grit is essential.



Which piece from your latest collection are you most excited about?

Ravi Bajaj has always been synonymous with style and sophistication in the fashion industry. His unique ability to blend traditional craftsmanship with modern sensibilities has made his designs timeless and appealing to a wide audience. As the festive season approaches, there was a strong sense of excitement surrounding the grand unveiling of his newly redesigned store at DLF Emporio in New Delhi.

Upon entering, guests were welcomed by a warm and inviting atmosphere. The stunning wall art and soft, warm lighting created a comfortable yet elegant setting. The store's transformation was impressive, with every detail thoughtfully curated to highlight the exquisite fabrics and intricate designs on display. The ambience was perfect for an evening dedicated to celebrating fashion and creativity.

The new collection was nothing short of a visual delight, showcasing a captivating range of colours and designs. One standout piece was a beautiful blue saree adorned with intricate red lacework. Its vibrant shade and delicate detailing instantly captured the attention of the guests, who couldn't help but admire its elegance. Nearby, a striking black saree with white lacework also drew admiration. The classic contrast of black and white offered a timeless elegance that resonated with many. But it was a stunning lavender saree embellished with silver and gold embroidery that truly left a lasting impression. As it caught the light, one enchanted guest described it as "simply gorgeous," perfectly echoing the sentiments of those around. The teal colour of the sarees also captured attention, their



stunning shades receiving numerous compliments. One guest perfectly expressed the sentiment with a single word: "Outstanding." The collection also featured a range of warm-toned kurtas in various colours, designed to beautifully blend traditional and modern styles. The bandis and coats, crafted with great attention to detail, provided a sophisticated touch to the ensemble. There was something for everyone, making it clear that these were not just garments but pieces meant to be treasured and worn with pride. As the evening unfolded, the atmosphere was filled with lively conversations and laughter. Guests moved around, appreciating the intricate details of the collection. One particular item that caught many eyes was a striking white saree, decorated with designs of

musical notes in black and shimmering glitter that sparkled beautifully in the store. At first glance, its simplicity was striking, but a closer look revealed delicate embroidery that showcased its craftsmanship. It served as a reminder that sometimes, the most understated designs leave the biggest impact. As the night came to a close, it became evident that this event was about more than just launching a store. It was a celebration of elegance, creativity, and the joy of fashion, perfectly timed for the festive season ahead. Ravi Bajaj's redesigned store is more than a shopping destination; it's a place where people can experience the beauty and artistry of fashion in a welcoming environment. With his signature blend of tradition and modernity, Ravi Bajaj continues to be a favourite for those who appreciate style and craftsmanship.

NEW OFFERINGS

JOIN THE DJGF CELEBRATION!

Don't miss the 12th edition of the Delhi Jewellery and Gem Fair (DJGF) at Pragati Maidan! This premier B2B jewellery exhibition features over 650 exhibitors showcasing 150,000 stunning designs, including gold, silver, diamonds and more. Enjoy networking opportunities, informative sessions and the exciting DJGF Silver Show. Connect with industry leaders and explore the latest trends in jewellery.

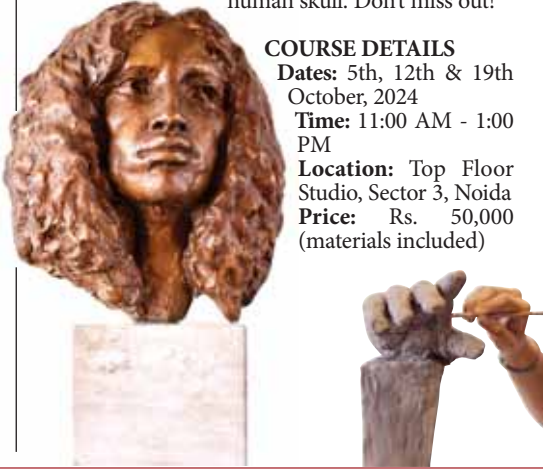
EVENT DETAILS
Dates: 29th September-1st October, 2024
Location: Pragati Maidan, New Delhi
Time: 10 AM - 6 PM



SCULPTING MASTERCLASS

Atelier Della Firenze by Niyamat Mehta is hosting a Masterclass series led by renowned sculptor Niyamat Mehta. This four-session course offers personalised attention with only 7 seats per class, focusing on sculpting the human portrait. Perfect for anyone aged 16+, this is a unique opportunity to master the anatomy and proportion of the human skull. Don't miss out!

COURSE DETAILS
Dates: 5th, 12th & 19th October, 2024
Time: 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Location: Top Floor Studio, Sector 3, Noida
Price: Rs. 50,000 (materials included)



NATIONAL COFFEE FESTIVAL 2024!

Calling all coffee lovers! Join this October for the India International Coffee Festival featuring the National Barista Championship across three cities. Experience thrilling competitions, tastings and workshops celebrating coffee culture. Don't miss out on this caffeinated celebration!

EVENT DATES
Delhi: 4th-6th October, 2024 at Pacific Mall, Tagore Garden
Mumbai: 11th-13th October, 2024 at Phoenix Marketcity, Kurla
Bangalore: 28th-30th October, 2024 at Bangalore International Centre, Domlur

YUDHRA: A HIT OR MISS ACTION

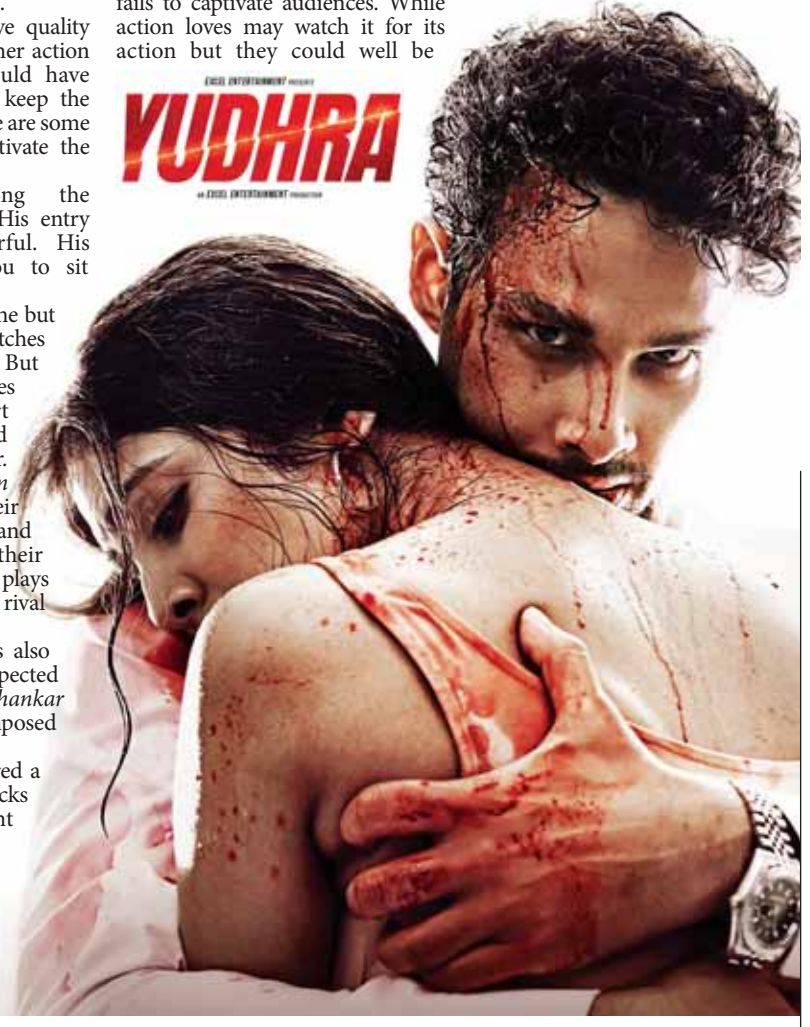
Action scenes come to the rescue for an unhooked plot for Yudhra, says ABHI SINGHAL

Yudhra is an action thriller film directed by Ravi Udyawar. Its script is done by Shridhar Raghavan and dialogues are written by Farhan Akhtar and Akshat Ghildial. The film stars Siddhant Chaturvedi in the title role, alongside Malavika Mohanan, Raghav Juyal, Gajraj Rao, Ram Kapoor, Raj Arjun and Shipra Shukla. Yudhra, who is struggling with anger issues, is assigned an undercover mission to bring down a powerful drug syndicate headed by Firoz and his son Shafiq. Yudhra accepts the responsibility as he wants to exact revenge against Firoz for his parents's death.

Nikhat (Malavika Mohanan) remains underdeveloped and fails to resonate with the audience. Their chemistry does not work and disappoint to say the least. Yudhra lacks a distinctive quality that sets it apart from other action films. The storyline could have been more engaging to keep the audience interested. There are some violent scenes that captivate the audience. Raghav Juyal, playing the antagonist in the film. His entry could be more powerful. His presence does help you to sit through the film. Siddhant could have shone but the sloppy storyline snatches away that from him. But Raghav Juyal does prove himself despite short screen time he gets and that too spaced by an hour. Gajraj Rao and Ram Kapoor have played their roles in a decent manner and have adjusted well to their roles. Raj Arjun as Firoz plays Yudhra's father's killer's rival and fits in well. The music of the film is also average, and was not expected from someone like Shankar Ehsaan Loy. He has composed two songs in the film. The film can be considered a one time watch but it lacks clarity to Siddhant Chaturvedi's character and is a bit blunt and intimidating to understand. The film's duration of two hours and thirty minutes is rather long and could have been much less.

That would have made it crisp and tight. As an action genre lover you would want to like Yudhra. Despite its fast-paced action sequences it fails to captivate audiences. While action lovers may watch it for its action but they could well be disappointed with its storyline and mediocre performances.

Rating: 2/5



"The best way to approach Navratri is in a spirit of celebration. This is the secret of life: to be non-serious but absolutely involved"
— Sadhguru



Over the centuries, Durga Puja has evolved from a private affair of Zamindars to a mass celebration on a global scale. It is now much more than just a religious festival – it's a cultural spectacle, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

DURGA PUJA

A SYMPHONY OF TRADITION AND TRANSFORMATION

Come September and everyone is busy making plans for the 'Puja', a festival dedicated to Goddess Durga, in eastern India. Of course it is Kolkata which is the epicentre of all celebrations. Over the years, *Durga Puja* has evolved into a pan-Indian and global festival. With unmatched fervour and devotion, people across the world now come together to honour the goddess, celebrating her victory and divine power.

Durga Puja, one of the most revered and vibrant festivals in India, particularly in West Bengal, celebrates the victory of the goddess Durga over the demon Mahishasura, symbolising the triumph of good over evil. Rooted in Hindu mythology, the festival commemorates the goddess as the embodiment of Shakti, or divine feminine power. Over the years, *Durga Puja* has transformed from a primarily religious observance into a grand socio-cultural extravaganza that has few parallels.

Durga Puja marks the victory of Goddess Durga, a fierce yet compassionate deity, over Mahishasura, who threatened to disrupt the balance of the universe. According to legend, Mahishasura received a boon that no man could defeat him. As he unleashed terror, the gods united to create Durga, a divine warrior goddess, who fought and eventually killed Mahishasura. The festival celebrates Durga's strength, resilience, and protective nature, while also invoking blessings for peace, prosperity, and protection against evil forces. That is mythology for one and all but it is a metaphor which might have fewer takers but nevertheless the message is crystal.

The metaphor and hidden message of Goddess Durga lie in her embodiment of divine feminine power, resilience, and protection. As a multi-armed warrior goddess, Durga symbolises the shakti (cosmic energy) within all beings, representing the strength needed to overcome life's obstacles. Each weapon she holds signifies various tools required to defeat inner and outer evils like fear, ignorance, pride and injustice. Metaphorically, Durga's battle with Mahishasura, the demon king, is a reflection of the ongoing struggle between good and evil, not just in the cosmic realm but within individuals and society at large. Her victory underscores that evil - be it oppression, greed or violence - can only be defeated through righteous action, courage and the collective strength of the divine and human will.

It is the triumph of dharma (righteousness) over adharma (immorality), a reminder that good eventually prevails even in the face of insurmountable odds. Furthermore, Durga, as a motherly figure, embodies compassion and protection, highlighting the balance between fierceness and nurturing, teaching that strength does not negate love and compassion. Goddess Durga conveys the message of empowerment, particularly for women, demonstrating that power and authority lie in embracing one's true self and purpose. In a broader sense, Durga's story speaks to the need for balance between action and patience, destruction and creation, power and empathy.

The festival is observed during the Hindu Calendar month of Ashwin



DURGA PUJA IS AN ELABORATE AND COLOURFUL FESTIVAL, TYPICALLY SPANNING FIVE DAYS - SHASHTHI, SAPTAMI, ASHTAMI, NAVAMI AND VIJAYADASHAMI. EACH DAY IS MARKED BY RITUALS, PRAYERS, CULTURAL EVENTS AND, OF COURSE, THE UNVEILING OF THE IDOL OF GODDESS DURGA IN PANDALS (TEMPORARY, ARTISTICALLY DESIGNED STRUCTURES). THE CELEBRATION BEGINS WITH THE RITUAL OF BODHON, OR THE WELCOMING OF THE GODDESS, ON THE SIXTH DAY



(September-October), culminating on Vijayadashami, the tenth day when Durga's victory is celebrated and her idols are immersed in water, symbolising her return to Mount Kailash, her celestial home.

Durga Puja is an elaborate and colourful festival, typically spanning five days - Shashthi, Saptami, Ashtami, Navami and Vijayadashami. Each day is marked by rituals, prayers, cultural events and, of course, the unveiling of the idol of Goddess Durga in pandals (temporary, artistically designed structures). The celebration begins with the ritual of Bodhon, or the welcoming of the goddess, on the sixth day.

FROM ZAMINDAR PUJA TO PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS

Historically, *Durga Puja* was a private affair, celebrated within the homes of wealthy zamindar (landlord) families. However, during the late 18th century, it began to shift towards community-based celebrations. In Kolkata, the first publicly organised *Durga Puja*, known as the Barowari Puja, was held in 1790, and since then, the practice has spread across Bengal and beyond.

The first major move toward a community-based *Durga Puja* or Barowari Puja, took place in 1790 in Hooghly district, near Kolkata. A group of twelve friends organised this puja to make the festival more inclusive and community-oriented, free from the exclusivity of the zamindar class. This concept of collective worship was revolutionary at the time and set the foundation for public celebrations of the festival. The term "Barowari" comes from baro (twelve) and yari (friends), representing this group's efforts to democratise *Durga Puja*. Raja Nabakrishna Deb, an influential zamindar of the Shobhabazar Rajbari in Kolkata, played a critical role in popularising *Durga Puja* beyond the private confines of aristocratic families. In 1757, following the British victory at the Battle of Plassey, Nabakrishna Deb invited British officers, including Robert Clive, to his *Durga Puja* celebration, creating a hybrid of Indian tradition and colonial influence.

In the late 19th century, Swami Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Mission also played a pivotal role in giving *Durga Puja* a broader, more public dimension. Through the Ramakrishna Mission, *Durga Puja* became associated with nationalistic and cultural identity, with an emphasis on social service and community welfare. Swami Vivekananda himself performed

Durga Puja at Belur Math in 1901, marking the festival as both a spiritual and community event.

PANDAL HOPPING

The centrepiece of the festivities is the pandals, where elaborate idols of Durga, along with her children - Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartikeya and Ganesha - are displayed. These pandals often feature intricate themes that range from mythological tales to contemporary social issues.

Durga Puja pandals have evolved far beyond simple religious displays, becoming powerful platforms for artistic expression and social commentary. Every year, these temporary structures turn into creative masterpieces that reflect not just devotion to Goddess Durga but also highlight contemporary issues ranging from politics to global events and pressing social concerns.

Some pandals artistically engage with local and national politics, offering thought-provoking critiques or support for political movements. For example, some recent themes have explored elections, portraying the goddess battling forces of greed and dishonesty, metaphorically addressing societal upheaval. Several pandals focus on international matters, such as climate change, world peace or refugee crises. They utilise innovative materials and designs to depict how these global challenges affect humanity. For instance, some recent installations have depicted the Amazon rainforest fires, the pandemic or refugee struggles, merging Durga's fight against evil with the global battle for environmental protection or humanitarian aid. Many pandals are now powerful vehicles for raising awareness about social issues. They have addressed women's rights, child labor, education and even mental health. Some pandals creatively use Durga's weapons to symbolise the tools needed to fight social evils like gender inequality or poverty, aligning the goddess's mythology with contemporary societal struggles. Themes such as women empowerment, gender justice and communal harmony are depicted with a blend of artistry and symbolism.

In recent years, with growing awareness about environmental conservation, eco-friendly pandals have gained popularity. Artists use biodegradable materials like clay, bamboo and jute to create these installations, while themes often focus on

sustainability and environmental consciousness. These efforts not only contribute to reducing pollution during idol immersion but also send a strong message about the urgent need to protect nature.

These innovative pandals transform *Durga Puja* into not just a religious celebration but a cultural forum where tradition and modernity intersect, sparking dialogue on critical societal and global issues. Through artistry, they encourage introspection, inspire change, and bring communities together in shared reflection.

RITUALS AND PRAYERS

Devotees perform elaborate rituals, such as the pushpanjali (flower offerings) and aarti (lamp offerings), invoking the goddess's blessings. On Ashtami, the main day of the festival, the Sandhi Puja, symbolising the transition from Ashtami to Navami, is performed with great fervour. Kumari Puja, where young girls are worshipped as manifestations of the goddess, is also a key ritual.

CULTURAL PERFORMANCES AND FEASTING

Beyond its religious aspect, *Durga Puja* is also a cultural celebration. Communities organise music and dance performances, theatrical productions and art exhibitions. The festival is a time for feasting, with special foods like bhog (a sacred offering) and traditional Bengali sweets such as sandesh, rasgulla, and mishti doi adding to the festive charm. While *Durga Puja* retains its core religious significance, the festival has undergone significant transformations over the centuries, evolving into a social, artistic, and commercial spectacle.

GLOBALISATION OF DURGA PUJA

Today, *Durga Puja* is not confined to Bengal. Thanks to the global Bengali diaspora, the festival is celebrated with grandeur in cities like London, New York and Dubai. Modern technology, social media and live streaming of rituals have expanded the reach of *Durga Puja*, allowing devotees from across the globe to participate.

Durga Puja has also seen commercialisation, with sponsorships and advertisements driving the festival economy. The shopping, food, and tourism sectors receive a massive boost during this time, as people from across the country and the world flock to experience the grandeur of the celebration. *Durga Puja* is more than just a religious festival; it is a vibrant, living tradition that has evolved with time. While the core message of the triumph of good over evil remains intact, the festival has grown to embody the cultural and social heartbeat of Bengal, touching the lives of millions across the globe. As *Durga Puja* continues to transform, it serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring strength of faith, community and creativity. In today's society, with the increasing disregard for women's dignity, the timeless message of Goddess Durga appears to be lost in the din. People seem more focused on indulging in the festive revelry rather than embracing the deeper significance of Durga's empowerment. Yet, this is the fate that most festivals eventually meet - a shift from reflection to celebration.

A TASTE OF HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Durga Puja brings feeling of home for everyone. For those in Delhi, *Oh! Calcutta* offers the flavours of Bengal. It Celebrates 25 years, serving authentic Bengali food, making it a perfect spot to enjoy the festival in all its grandeur, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**



Photos: Pankaj Kumar



Durga Puja is more than just a festival; it's an emotion, a time when everyone feels an irresistible pull towards home. The smell of incense, the rhythm of the 'dhak' and the sight of the majestic idols fill hearts with nostalgia. For those who find themselves far from Kolkata during this time, there's a place that offers a slice of home: *Oh! Calcutta*.

Oh! Calcutta has been serving the flavours of Bengal for 25 years. As the city prepares to welcome Durga Maa, this iconic restaurant remains a favourite for all those hoping for the familiar taste of home-cooked Bengali food. Recently celebrating its silver jubilee, *Oh! Calcutta* has not only kept the essence of Kolkata's cuisine alive, showing that the spirit of Bengali food remains strong and proud, no matter where you are.

Established in 1992, *Oh! Calcutta* was born from a passion to showcase the unique flavours of Kolkata's 300-year-old culinary traditions. The restaurant's menu is a tribute to the city's gastronomic legacy, influenced by British, Armenian, French and Mughal cultures. This blend of influences captures Kolkata's essence as a melting pot of communities. The founder, *Anjan Chatterjee* and his team of chefs envision their cuisine as a tribute to the rich and diverse culinary heritage of Kolkata, which has been shaped over centuries. As they say, "Kolkatay khabar mane sudhu peth bhora noi, eta hriday bhora" (In Kolkata, food is not just about filling the stomach but the heart).

As part of its silver jubilee celebrations, *Oh! Calcutta* has introduced a special anniversary menu that beautifully captures Kolkata's culinary heritage. The menu, curated by *Chatterjee*, marries traditional recipes with a contemporary touch, ensuring that the authenticity of Bengali cuisine remains at its heart. Signature dishes such as *Aam Ada Grilled Bhetki*, *Jackfruit Tikki* and *Prawn Malai Curry* are shining examples of the restaurant's dedication to preserving the old while embracing the new.

One of the highlights is the crispy *Hilsa Fish Fingers*, served with a tangy mustard mayo that brings back memories of home-cooked meals. The *Calcutta Fish Fry* is another star, with its tantalising blend of spices that capture the essence of family gatherings. And, of course, there's the *Bhetki Machher Paturi*,



"KOLKATAY KHBAR MANE SUDHU PETH BHORA NOI, ETA HRIDYOY BHORA"
(In Kolkata, food is not just about filling the stomach, but the heart)

where fish marinated in mustard and coconut, wrapped in banana leaves, and steamed to perfection.

Mutton dishes hold a special place in Bengali cuisine, and *Oh! Calcutta's* offerings don't disappoint. The rich, slow-cooked *Kosha Mangsho* (mutton curry) is simmered with spices that warm the soul, while the *Railway Mutton Curry*, inspired by the classic railway-style preparation, evokes nostalgia and comfort.

These are dishes that remind you of home-cooked meals during Pujo and family journeys. The vegetarian fare at *Oh! Calcutta* is

equally delightful. Dishes like *Mochar Ghonto* (Banana Floret Subzi) and *Cholar Dal* (Bengal gram lentils cooked with coconut and spices) highlight the rich vegetarian tradition of Bengal.

And let's not forget the *Begum Bhaja*, deep-fried slices of eggplant that are the perfect accompaniment to the *Cholar Dal*.

For seafood lovers, there's the *Prawn Malai Curry*, a creamy and indulgent prawn dish cooked in coconut milk and lightly spiced. And for those seeking something lighter, the *Maacher Dom Jhol* (fish curry) with luchi offers a delicate blend of spices with fresh

vegetables and fish. This simple yet heartwarming dish is a staple in Bengali households and is often served during Durga Puja feasts.

No Bengali meal is complete without a sweet ending, and *Oh! Calcutta* makes sure this tradition is upheld. The restaurant offers a range of traditional sweets, including *Sandesh*, *baked Rasgulla* and *Mishti Doi* is a staple at the end of every Bengali meal.

As they say, "Bangalir mishti priyo, eta toh shobar jana" (Everyone knows that Bengalis love sweets).

What sets *Oh! Calcutta* apart is its tireless commitment to authenticity. The restaurant sources key ingredients directly from Kolkata, ensuring that every dish retains its traditional flavour. From the *Kakra Chingri Bhapa* in the fragrant *Gobindobhogor Bhaat* (a special variety of rice), every ingredient is carefully chosen to maintain the integrity of Bengali cuisine. This attention to detail ensures that each dish not only tastes authentic but also evokes a sense of nostalgia.

The atmosphere at *Oh! Calcutta* further enhances the dining experience. The decor, featuring traditional Bengali art and nostalgic photographs of Kolkata, creates a warm and inviting setting. The staff, always attentive and knowledgeable, make sure that guests feel at home, guiding them through the menu and sharing the stories behind each dish.

As the festivities unfold, the connection between food, culture and family shines brightly at *Oh! Calcutta*. It's a place where both Bengalis and non-Bengalis can celebrate the rich and diverse cuisine of Kolkata. This Durga Puja, let the flavours of Kolkata fill your heart and your plate as you indulge in the culinary brilliance that has delighted guests for 25 years. As they say, "Banglar khabar mane sudhu taste noi, eta hriday er kotha" (Bengali food is not only about taste, but it's also a matter of the heart).

So, this Pujo, if you find yourself longing for the flavours of home, head over to *Oh! Calcutta* in GK-2, New Delhi. With dishes like *Kosha Mangsho*, *Mochar Chop* and *Gol Morich Chicken*, you will be treated to a culinary journey that's as close to Kolkata as you can get without leaving Delhi. Let the food fill your heart with joy, warmth, and a taste of home, reminding you that the spirit of Durga Puja can be felt wherever you are.

SIP THE ESSENCE OF ASIA: A UNIQUE BEVERAGES EXPERIENCE

Yauatcha's 'Asia In A Glass' is more than just a cocktail menu, it is an homage to the traditional flavours and modern techniques that define Asian cuisine, says **SHARMILA CHAND**

Yauatcha, the well-known contemporary Dim sum Tea House in Bengaluru is celebrating a unique cocktail menu, 'Asia In A Glass'. It is a vibrant celebration of Asian ingredients, masterfully crafted into exquisite cocktails that promise to transport guests on a sensory journey across the continent. I was thrilled to see how they have gone beyond their culinary fare to extend their philosophy seamlessly into the heart of their bar program, where mixology transforms into an art form.

THE DRINK'S NARRATIVE

Ranging from classic cocktails with a unique twist to refreshing fruit-forward and tea-infused concoctions, each libation at this London-style bar is a meticulously crafted narrative. The carefully designed cocktail menu embodies innovation and sophistication in showcasing Asian ingredients.

"When I was working on the 'Asia In A Glass' article, I had the pleasure of meeting with Merwyn and gained a deeper understanding of the evolution of Yauatcha's cocktail scene. Yauatcha has always been at the forefront of mixology trends, being one of the pioneers in implementing an innovative ice program. Sitting down with Merwyn provided invaluable insights that helped shape the story. It's truly gratifying to see this meticulously crafted menu come to fruition with this article," said **Aslam Gafoor**,



who inspired the creation of this article in the *Yauatcha Life* magazine, titled 'Asia In A Glass'. As the name suggests, Asian ingredients take the spotlight in Yauatcha's cocktail program philosophy, turning every cocktail into a distinctive masterpiece. From the invigorating zing of lemongrass to the

comforting warmth of ginger, Yauatcha's Head Mixologist, Merwyn Alphonso has curated a sensory experience that reflects Asian culinary heritage in every sip. Furthermore, the glassware and ice story transform into canvases for expression, enhancing visual allure and turning the bar into a dynamic masterpiece where flavours dance and

evolve. Sharing his excitement about the launch of the new cocktail menu, Merwyn said, "Discussing the beverage program at Yauatcha, it's clear that it's more than just a dim sum restaurant. When Allen Yau founded Yauatcha, it was built on the four pillars of hospitality, patisserie, dim sum, mixology and tea. To this day, these pillars

guide us in crafting every cocktail that we put on our menus. The 'Asia In A Glass' menu was created with this ethos in mind, and we hope our guests enjoy these beautiful libations. The cocktails draw inspiration from across the Asian continent, incorporating traditional Asian ingredients such as Yuzu, Lychee, Pandan and Lemongrass. The result is a series of exclusive beverages

that are as visually stunning as they are delicious, each one telling a story of its own."

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MENU

- **Tian Shang:** A refreshing blend of Gin, Vodka, raspberry liqueur, lemon, fresh raspberries, elderflower foam.
- **Jian Mei:** A tea twist with Gin, sake, floral tea liqueur.
- **Around The World:** A delightful concoction of White rum, limoncello, Aperol, lychee, homemade apricot compote, rosemary twig.
- **Ginger Martini:** A zesty, aromatic blend with White rum, ginger, green apple, orgeat, lime.

Each cocktail is a testament to the skill and creativity of Yauatcha's mixologists, who have drawn inspiration from the diverse culinary landscapes of Asia. Experience the vibrant flavours and innovative creations that set Yauatcha apart. The drinks echo Yauatcha's ethos, embodying innovation and sophistication in showcasing Asian ingredients. The concoctions are more than just drinks, they are conversation starters and memory makers. Step in, have your pick from the 'Asia In A Glass' menu and see how a world of flavours is waiting to be explored by you! Cheers!

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Sharmila Chand is an author and consulting editor. She writes on food, travel, lifestyle, Culture.

IF ATHEISM SOLVED ALL HUMAN WOE, THEN THE SOVIET UNION WOULD HAVE BEEN AN EMPIRE OF JOY AND DANCING BUNNIES INSTEAD OF THE LAND OF CORPSES
— JOHN C WRIGHT



MOSCOW

A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME: FROM SOVIET SHADOWS TO MODERN MARVELS

From the historical depths of Red Square to the majestic Kremlin, each corner of this sprawling metropolis reveals layers of history - burnt, rebuilt and revived - beckoning travelers to explore its rich tapestry of culture and heritage, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

As I step off the plane at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Alexander S. Pushkin International Airport, the brisk, cold breeze is a refreshing change from the humid warm air of Delhi. This is my second trip to Moscow; my first visit occurred shortly after the Soviet Union disintegrated and Russia emerged as a new entity. Indeed, Moscow has transformed significantly since then. The city's infrastructure has improved dramatically, making it almost unrecognisable; the roads and the cars on them wear a fresh look. Yet, amidst this change, Moscow retains its unique character—inviting yet inherently private. Over its 877-year history, the city has withstood a lot. Moscow lives fully, with its history woven into every brick and stone. Each regime has left its imprint, manifesting in monuments and relics scattered throughout the city, which now stand in contrast to modern architecture.



MOSCOW, THE CAPITAL OF RUSSIA, BOASTS A RICH AND COMPLEX HISTORY THAT SPANS AROUND 800 YEARS. FOUNDED IN 1147 BY PRINCE YURI DOLGORUKY, THE CITY INITIALLY SERVED AS A MINOR TRADING POST. ITS STRATEGIC LOCATION ON THE MOSKVA RIVER FACILITATED TRADE AND COMMUNICATION, CONTRIBUTING TO ITS GRADUAL RISE IN IMPORTANCE

Moscow, the capital of Russia, boasts a rich and complex history that spans over 800 years. Founded in 1147 by Prince Yuri Dolgoruky, the city initially served as a minor trading post. Its strategic location on the Moskva River facilitated trade and communication, contributing to its gradual rise in importance. By the 15th century, under Ivan III (Ivan the Great), Moscow emerged as a significant political and cultural centre, ultimately overthrowing Mongol dominance. In 1547, Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) was crowned as the first Tsar of Russia, marking the official establishment of the Tsardom. This period was characterized by territorial expansion, the consolidation of power, and the construction of iconic structures like St. Basil's Cathedral, which symbolizes Moscow's architectural heritage. Red Square, the iconic heart of Moscow, was established in the late 15th century, specifically during the reign of Ivan III (Ivan the Great). Originally, the area served as a marketplace and a central hub for various activities, but it gradually evolved into a political and cultural centre. It is now a must visit tourist attraction. And if one wants to understand Moscow brace up for a long walk. Red Square transports you to the 15th century. Our guide, an enthusiastic and energetic lady tells us Red is not for colour though the bricks and stones used are Red, Red in Russian means beautiful so it is a beautiful square and I couldn't agree less. You have colourful St. Basil's Cathedral overlooking the square, commissioned by Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) in 1555 to commemorate the conquest of Kazan. Done in Disney style (or maybe it is the other way round). This style of structure painting is categorical of Russia and is called "Russian patterning." It is the place to click selfies. Red square is also the place where Lenin's embalmed body is kept and many other Generals were buried. We don't get a chance to go inside as it is closed by the time we reach. Vladimir Lenin, leader of the October Revolution and the first leader and founder of the Soviet Union, died in Gorki aged 53 after falling into a coma on January 21,

reflect both tradition and innovation. From elegant restaurants serving classic Russian fare like 'borscht' and 'pelmeni' to trendy eateries embracing global influences, the city's food scene is diverse and sophisticated. In the heart of Moscow, Café Pushkin stands as a symbol of elegance, offering a nostalgic ambiance reminiscent of 19th-century aristocratic Russia. For those seeking modern Russian cuisine with a twist, White Rabbit is a must-visit, famous for its innovative take on local ingredients and breathtaking views of the city. For a more casual yet equally delightful experience, LavkaLavka, a farm-to-table restaurant, emphasizes sustainable dining, offering dishes made from fresh, locally sourced ingredients. Meanwhile, Dr. Zhivago of course presents a chic, contemporary take on traditional Soviet-era dishes in a stylish setting. For travellers and locals alike, these eateries are more than just places to dine—they offer an immersive experience into Moscow's rich cultural heritage and evolving modern palate. Moscow has a good number of Museums too; they are a must visit if you have taste beyond Malls and Restaurants which Moscow has plenty. The guides are funny and knowledgeable at the same time. Moscow has a huge collection of paintings from bygone eras. Mostly of the Christ, kings but also of the people their life and woes. One could spend a day just watching the masterpieces. For the intellectually inclined, Moscow has a number of libraries with excellent collection of books. Russian libraries are not just repositories of books but vital cultural institutions that embody the country's rich literary and intellectual tradition. The most iconic among them is the Russian State Library in Moscow, one of the largest in the world. Founded in 1862, it holds millions of volumes, including rare manuscripts, maps, and other historical documents, making it a treasure trove for researchers and scholars. The library's architectural grandeur reflects its significance, with vast reading rooms and meticulously curated collections covering a wide range of disciplines. Beyond the Russian State Library, Moscow is home to numerous other libraries, such as the Lenin Library, which is also highly regarded for its expansive catalogue of works. But the best thing about Moscow is its people; friendly courteous and always willing to help. The warmth of the Russian people is often a pleasant surprise for those visiting the country for the first time. Once you break through the initial formalities, you'll find that Russians are deeply hospitable, warm-hearted, and generous, especially when it comes to welcoming guests into their homes. The tradition of hospitality runs deep—guests are treated with great respect, and hosts often insist on sharing hearty meals and meaningful conversations, making you feel genuinely at home. As we pack bags, they are filled with souvenirs and memories one would share back home. As you board the flight and bid goodbye to Moscow you are still yearning for more.

a smoking burning building. They were restored and did not look burnt now. We moved on to the churches where Tsars were baptised, crowned and laid to rest. All have shining brass tops. Don't know how they keep them so shiny. I can't keep my small Buddha statue that shiny anyway. Moscow became the capital of the new socialist state, undergoing rapid industrialisation and significant urban development, exemplified by the construction of grandiose structures like the Seven Sisters skyscrapers. These seven huge buildings still stand tall and are landmarks. They now house a university, a government ministry, a hotel and no idea about the others. Interestingly the underground in Moscow was used as bunkers by the Muscovites during the second world war. The stations are indeed nothing short of a palace with large murals exquisitely done and preserved. We decide to take a ride. The coaches are neat and people are friendly. We exchange smiles with fellow passengers. Our short but sweet journey comes to an end we are back to our hotel. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked another pivotal moment in Moscow's history. The city transitioned from a socialist regime to a market economy, leading to significant social and economic changes. Modern Moscow has seen extensive urban development and globalisation. Moscow has now become a business hub and opened to inter cultural relations and tourists from all over the world. Today, Moscow stands as a vibrant metropolis that beautifully blends its rich historical heritage with modernity, attracting millions of visitors each year who come to explore its vast cultural treasures, including historic churches, museums, and vibrant neighbourhoods. Each brick and stone of this ancient city tells a story of resilience and transformation, reflecting the enduring spirit of its people. Moscow is a foodie's paradise. I enjoyed Zhivago's food, excellent food served with a charming smile. Apart from Dr Zhivago there are many restaurants that dot the city and have amazing food and vibes. Moscow is a vibrant city where culinary culture thrives, offering a rich tapestry of dining experiences that

1924. It has been 100 years since he died. The GUM Department Store is a major shopping destination nearby. It is beautiful no doubt and has best brands on offer. I buy nothing but being it is an experience; the aura of the place is awesome. Nearby there is a souvenir shop which has a good collection of memorabilia and offers discounts and prices are negotiable, feels like home. I buy a few souvenirs. Red Square has been the site of numerous significant events throughout Russian history, including military parades, public gatherings, and political demonstrations, making it a symbol of both the historical and contemporary Russian state. Then there is a change of guards where every two hours Presidential guards change their duty. They say you have to be the best to be presidential guards. Three tough looking guys come and replace the three guards on duty and walk beating their boots on the ground. The Moscow Victory Day Parade is an annual military parade of the Russian Armed Forces on Moscow's Red Square on May 9 during the Victory Day celebrations and is a big draw with the tourists and locals alike. The other most visited complex in the world is perhaps the Kremlin, the seat of power, where you still have the president's office. We walk through the door rather easily. Our guide is smart; tells us the President is not there else it would not be that easy. There is the president's office and a broken bell which never rang once as it broke while making it. Then there were buildings that were set on fire when Napoleon attacked. People abandoned them and went to jungles. All Bonapart found was

I HAVE BECOME MY OWN VERSION OF AN OPTIMIST. IF I CAN'T MAKE IT THROUGH ONE DOOR, I'LL GO THROUGH ANOTHER DOOR - OR I'LL MAKE A DOOR. SOMETHING TERRIFIC WILL COME NO MATTER HOW DARK THE PRESENT
—RABINDRANATH TAGORE

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week, focusing on financial discipline is crucial as managing your budget becomes a priority. Assess your spending habits and income, noting that while your earnings are substantial, your outlays may exceed them. Aim to establish equilibrium not just in your finances but across all areas of your life that are rapidly evolving and require your focus, such as home matters, property dealings, educational pursuits, and professional growth. Consider limiting social engagements and leisure activities for the majority of the week to concentrate on these pressing issues. As the week progresses, you'll find the weight of stress lifting, allowing you to move forward more freely. You'll end the week feeling vibrant, joyful, and full of zest, ready to embrace your journey with caution and awareness of potential challenges.

Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Coral
Lucky day Tuesday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week may present a series of challenges, including unexpected obstacles, misunderstandings with friends, and financial delays. Despite these difficulties, your resilience will shine through as you confront each issue with calm and determination. Financially, returns on past investments or repayments may be underwhelming, prompting careful consideration and planning. However, this is only a temporary setback. Prioritizing health through timely medical consultations, meditation, and yoga will contribute to overall well-being. Engaging in spiritual practices can provide additional solace and strength during this period. Stay proactive and remember that your choices have the power to alter your path forward. You are equipped to handle any disruptions, drawing strength from spiritual connections to navigate this complex time.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Tangerine
Lucky day Saturday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

Individuals with boundless energy need to channel it effectively to achieve optimal results. There are some immediate adjustments required in your approach. Prioritize delegating tasks and organizing your schedule efficiently, as effective time and resource management is key. A career advancement may be on the horizon this week, accompanied by financial benefits. Work-related travel could be fruitful, providing opportunities to establish long-term connections. Confidence and determination will propel you toward success. By week's end, expect significant financial rewards and the satisfaction of tangible accomplishments. This period also presents a favorable opportunity for investing in assets, though cautious decision-making is advised. Don't be overly concerned about your professional trajectory; you're nearly at your goal. Maintain your focus to ensure you reach your full potential.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Friday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week might start on a positive note with new possibilities ahead, but be prepared for some unexpected sharp exchanges from a coworker or a close one. Your romantic overtures could face setbacks, potentially leading to feelings of isolation and sadness. It's wise to keep your expectations realistic and maintain a practical outlook. You may find yourself on the brink of ending a relationship that hasn't fully begun. It's important to manage your emotions and keep your temper in check to avoid feeling overwhelmed and drained. Remember, this challenging period is only temporary, and you'll soon regain control of the situation. A maternal figure or a more experienced female relative in your life could offer the support and guidance you need during this time.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Rufous
Lucky day Sunday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week may find you feeling deeply emotional, with nostalgic thoughts urging you to reconnect with old friends or visit your family. You might find yourself exchanging gifts or reliving cherished moments with loved ones. However, matters of the heart could prove challenging, possibly leading to feelings of disappointment or heartache, especially for those anticipating significant commitments in romantic relationships. An inclination towards possessiveness might also surface, suggesting a need for emotional balance and calm. To navigate this period, consider engaging in meditation or other calming practices. Focusing on creative or spiritual activities can be particularly beneficial, offering a productive outlet for your emotions and helping to shift your perspective towards optimism.

Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Indigo
Lucky day Thursday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week presents a spectrum of outcomes. Guidance from a mentor or family elder will help clarify your life direction. High ambitions may lead to confusion, especially concerning property matters. Beware of potential deception and criticism from others. Stay grounded to avoid complications, particularly in relationships. Practicality is key in overcoming these challenges. Give yourself and your significant other adequate space and time before making decisions. Emphasize honesty and use your intellect to discern realities. There's a need to cleanse a negative influence affecting your well-being, enabling you to embrace positivity. Trust in your own capabilities and proceed with confidence. Cultivating patience and resilience will fortify your journey through uncertain times. Focus on nurturing your inner peace to ensure you can make balanced and thoughtful choices.

Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Turquoise
Lucky day Thursday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week promises an uplifting journey filled with heartfelt connections and personal triumphs. The initial days bring a deepening bond with your partner, marked by a nurturing love that enhances your vitality and encourages your best efforts. Your positive outlook will help you overcome challenges that previously seemed overwhelming. Your abilities and determination are set to earn your admiration, even from those who have doubted you, marking a significant victory. Your inspiring presence motivates others, and your own well-being—both physical and emotional—sees significant improvement. As the week progresses, you will experience a profound sense of vindication and fairness that reaffirms your path and choices. This period culminates in a joyful realization of your desires and goals, illuminating the rewards of your perseverance.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Lavender
Lucky day Wednesday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week you're infused with a dynamic drive to excel in your career. An awaited piece of positive news from afar is likely to arrive, bringing joy and potential opportunities. Financial matters will demand your focus, with transactions, payments, and investments taking center stage. Remember, sharing your prosperity with those in need can bring profound rewards. You'll also find satisfaction in disseminating the knowledge you've accumulated, providing guidance to those around you. Embrace this phase of abundant possibilities, but consider a significant shift in your perspective or approach. Making these adjustments will lead to gratifying outcomes. Challenges may arise, yet your seasoned judgment and keen intellect will enable you to overcome them and thrive.

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Teal
Lucky day Monday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week presents promising opportunities for career advancement and personal connections. You might unexpectedly receive a promotion or pay increase. Be prepared for potential work-related travel, which is likely to yield significant benefits in the future. If you're renting, this period may also bring changes to your work or living spaces. Midweek, emotions run high, enhancing your romantic and passionate pursuits. However, you might find yourself conflicted about a particular relationship or decision, torn between differing inner voices. Trusting your instincts will serve you well. As the week closes, you'll find greater emotional equilibrium and control over your feelings, leading to a broader perspective on potential opportunities. These could be linked to professional growth, significant personal milestones, or creative inspiration, igniting a strong drive to achieve notable goals.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Thursday



CANCER June 21-July 22

Regulate your emotions! Your emotional responses are currently heightened, possibly leading you to dwell on past mistakes or express frustration toward those close to you. To navigate away from disappointment and a gloomy mood, engaging in mental wellness activities can be very helpful. Consider practices such as meditation, yoga, breath work, or immersing yourself in inspiring literature. Remember, the past is behind you, and focusing on the present can illuminate the path to a brighter future. This week, embrace the closure of old chapters and start anew with a fresh perspective. Being proactive rather than avoiding issues will foster strength and wisdom. Embrace optimism and maintain faith to achieve your aspirations.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Yellow
Lucky day Monday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week brings a series of delightful events and laughter-filled moments. You'll find yourself deeply invested in a challenging project, pouring your energy and passion into it. This experience is unique as teamwork amplifies its benefits, enhancing your virtues and introducing you to new skills and untapped potential. Your focus and determination will make it easier to stay on track and meet your objectives. There may be opportunities for international connections, either through friendships or potential travel plans. Your ambitions keep you driven, and undistracted by romance or leisure as you aim for significant financial and professional achievements. Expect recognition for your dedication, possibly in the form of a raise or promotion. Be grateful for these blessings and savor the rewards of your hard work.

Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Saffron
Lucky day Wednesday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week starts with a focus on reflection and growth as recent efforts and challenges are reviewed. Despite considerable dedication, you may find that the rewards of your labor are yet to be fully realized. It's a period where doubts could cloud your judgment. By midweek, a sense of satisfaction emerges as unexpected professional opportunities present themselves, offering the potential for financial gains. This phase is ideal for initiating new ventures or investments. Throughout the week, various propositions will appear, necessitating careful selection to align with your goals. Financial prudence is advised to avoid unnecessary expenditures. As the week concludes, the desire for travel or leisure activities may arise, leading to plans for enjoyable outings or romantic escapades with a significant other.

Lucky number 1 | Lucky colour Mustard
Lucky day Sunday

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THE TUNING FORK



C V Srikanth

The Kriyamana Karma encapsulates theincrediblybrilliant dynamism of how Karma works. While living our Karmas, we continue to createmore in the present life, influencingour future

Actions Have Corresponding Consequences

One does not merely earn Karma. One seeds it and grows it. And then - it grows on you. Everything connects with everything else - and Karma is the connect.

It is in thought - not only in action. Neither fate nor destiny. A matrix that includes our choices, samskaras and more. Our conscious and unconscious acts, ideas and deeds determine our karma. It is about ownership and deliverance. Simplistically it means the idea of cause and effect, where thoughts, emotions, actions (karma) have corresponding consequences (karma-phala). It comes around as an energy that originates with us. It shapes individual destinies, influences rebirths, and underscores the ethical framework of traditions. It is almost impossible to comprehend the cycle of Karma in a unidimensional way. The limitations of human comprehension restrict our understanding of this extremely complex but immensely beautiful concept.

With its roots in the intention of the action, Karma is also defined as our prescribed duties towards our ecosystem. Krishna asserts in the Bhagavat Gita ...

tasmād asaktaḥ satatam kārati karma samāchara asakto hyācharan karma param āpnoti pūruṣhaḥ

"Therefore, always perform your duties efficiently and without attachment. By performing duties without attachment, a person attains the highest."

Performing duties conscientiously (Sattvik Karma) without attachment to the results, leads to liberation (Moksha). We travel through births, with our accumulated karma due to our past actions. This Sanchita Karma and plays a major role in shaping one's life circumstances. The portion of Sanchita Karma that has to be inescapably experienced in the present life is Prarabdha Karma. It determines the significant conditions and events of one's current life.



The Kriyamana Karma encapsulates theincrediblybrilliant dynamism of how Karma works. While living our Karmas, we continue to createmore in the present life, influencingour future. One of the purposes of spiritual study and growth is to discern right from wrong action. As Krishna explains in the Bhagavat Gita

karmaṇo hyapi boddhavyam

boddhavyam cha vikarmaṇaḥ akarmaṇaḥ cha boddhavyam gahanā karmaṇo gatih

"One must understand what is action, what is inaction, and what is forbidden action. The path of action is very mysterious."

We must understand the nature of different types of actions (karma) and inactions, discerning right actions (Dharma) from wrong

actions (Adharma). In daily life, understanding karma influences decision-making, virtuousconduct, and spiritualapplication in our actions and duties. It encourages us to uphold principles of righteousness (Dharma) and avoid harmful actions, perform our duties selflessly, and practice mindfulness by reflecting on our intentions. Karma grows with intention, and reflects in your volition. It is not merely the content but the context. It is complex. It is not linear and it is Real and authentic. We have the right to it through our choicesand yet are urged not to consider ourselves as the cause of the results. It is about staying connected to the action with commitment but not attached thereafter. One of the most popular shlokas of the Bhagavat Gita, that has been a guiding principle

karmaṇy-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣhu kadāchana mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo ṣtvakarmaṇi

"You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction."

Karma entwines spiritual evolution, and the interconnectedness of all beings. It is not a punishment. It is a consequence of our choices. It is a reminder to be mindful, conscious, aware, and selfless. As Lord Buddha asserted - it is not possible to avoid experiencing the result of a karmic deed once it has been committed. Karma has no standard Menu - you get served what you deserve.

— 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