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SECOND DEPORTATION FLIGHT ARRIVES

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

A plane carrying 119 illegal immigrants from the US landed at the Amritsar airport on Saturday night, the second such batch of Indians to be deported by the Donald Trump administration as part of its promised crackdown on illegal migration. Before the arrival and another scheduled deportee flight for Sunday created a lot of furore and controversy across the country with political parties crossing swords.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann questioned the move to land another plane at the Amritsar airport, as he accused the Centre of trying to defame Punjab as part of a conspiracy and sought to know under which criteria the Amritsar airport was chosen to land the second aircraft, BJP hit back accusing the AAP leader of playing politics over the matter.

Among the 119 deportees, 100 are from Punjab and Haryana alone. While 67 are from Punjab, 33 are from Haryana, eight from Gujarat, three from Uttar Pradesh, two each from Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, and one each from Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. The second batch of illegal Indian immigrants includes four women and two minors, including a six-year-old girl. Most of the deportees are in the age group of 18 to 30, sources said. A third plane carrying 157 deportees is also expected to land on February 16. On February 5, a US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal Indian immigrants landed at the Amritsar airport.



Relatives wait outside the airport in Amritsar ahead of the second batch of the immigrants' arrival from the US PTI

Of them, 33 each were from Haryana and Gujarat, and 30 from Punjab. Mann visited the airport on Saturday and said his government has made arrangements to take the residents of Punjab from among the second batch of deportees to their hometowns. The deportees who hail from other states will head to Delhi from Amritsar in a flight on Sunday morning and then they will be taken to their respective places. Talking to reporters at the airport, Mann continued his attack on the Centre and said, "Do not make our holy city (Amritsar) a deport centre."

Hitting back at Mann, BJP leader Tarun Chugh said on Saturday, "Bhagwant Mann sahab, people of Punjab want to know how the innocent youths went out, why they had to go, who were those who spoiled their lives. Why they had to go adopting illegal routes, who sent them, and who were the fraudulent agents who spoiled their lives." "The youths were forced to sell their land, houses. Rather than catching the culprits and acting against those who spoiled the lives of these youths, the AAP-da party leader is doing politics over the issue," Chugh, who is also BJP's general secretary, said.

BJP's national spokesperson R P Singh also took a dig at Mann, and told him to stop politicising the issue. "Amritsar is the closest international airport for flights entering India from the US. That's why the plane carrying illegal immigrants is landing there. Stop politicising the issue and promoting conspiracy theories due to your lack of knowledge," Singh said in a social media post. Senior BJP leader and former Union minister Uma Bharti lashed out at the US government for the "cruel and extremely shameful manner" in which it deported the illegal Indian immigrants recently. In a post on social media platform, Uma Bharti said, "The manner in which the illegal Indian immigrants were sent back from America in handcuffs and shackles is extremely shameful and a blot on humanity."

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Destiny plays cruel at Maha Kumbh, again

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR/NEW DELHI

A devastating road accident in Prayagraj on Friday and a fire in the mela grounds on Saturday marred the festivities in Kumbh as the week came to a close. A fire broke out at the storeroom of a camp in the Maha Kumbh Mela area on Saturday evening, gutting seven tents and destroying some items, including blankets and foodgrains, officials said.

No person was injured, they said. Meanwhile late evening heavy rush led to chaos at New Delhi Railway Station on platform no 14 and 15 from where Prayagraj Express was scheduled to depart. Sources said that passengers forced themselves in all the coaches of train including air conditioned coaches. Several passengers fainted due to heavy rush and Mahakumbh bound passengers barging into coaches. Delhi police and Delhi Fire Service rushed to the spot and along with the RPF tried to control the chaos and prevented a major stampede at the national Capital station. Some of the passengers including female were rushed to hospital for first aid. Northern Railway officials said that



Smoke billows out after a fire broke out at the Maha Kumbh Mela, in Prayagraj PTI

situation was brought under control and rush was cleared by deploying two special trains for Prayagraj.

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Accident claims 10 lives in Prayagraj

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A late Friday night accident claimed the lives of 10 pilgrims and left 19 others injured. The incident occurred on the Prayagraj-Raigarh highway in Meja. According to police reports, a Bolero carrying pilgrims collided head-on with a bus. All 10 occupants of the Bolero died on the spot.

The deceased were residents of Korba district in Chhattisgarh and were on their way to the Sangam for a holy dip.

The bus, carrying pilgrims from Raigarh district in Madhya Pradesh, was returning from the Sangam and heading toward Varanasi when the accident took place. Nineteen passengers onboard sustained injuries and were rushed to the Community Health Center (CHC) in Ramnagar for treatment.

Upon receiving information, local authorities and police reached the site, took control of the situation, and sent the bodies for post-mortem examination. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took note of the road accident in Prayagraj and directed the officials to reach the spot and expedite the relief work.

The Chief Minister also directed proper treatment of the injured.

This is not the first instance that such accidents involving Maha Kumbh devotees occurred.

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EXAM TIME



Students check their allocated seats at an examination center before appearing for the CBSE class 10 board exam 2025, in Gurugram PTI

AAP appointments under scrutiny

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In order to crackdown on the 'tentacles' of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) within the Delhi government, Delhi Chief Secretary Dharmendra has asked all Secretaries and Heads of Department to compile a list of appointments of chairpersons and members made by the previous AAP government. The move may spark controversy as the AAP government had faced allegations of appointing party members and close aides of ministers to various non-official posts, allegedly bypassing established laws and government regulations.

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According to top sources, the Services Department has already received lists of non-official appointees from multiple departments. Once the compilation is complete, the list will be forwarded to the Chief Secretary for further action.

The Chief Secretary had previously discussed the matter in a meeting with HoDs and Secretaries, instructing them to prepare detailed records of all non-official



Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva with former AAP councillors after they joined the BJP, in New Delhi PTI

appointments of chairpersons and members made by the AAP government. As per the minutes of the meeting, "All departments and their organizations shall submit a list of non-official appointments made under various Acts and Rules pertaining to their respective departments."

Departments have been directed to submit their lists by February 13, after which further decisions will be made regarding these appointments. Sources indicate that hundreds of AAP workers and supporters have been appointed to key positions in various Delhi government departments over the past decade. Many of these appointments were reportedly made in Mohalla Clinics,

governing bodies of educational institutions, and state public undertakings. Insiders claim that these appointments were primarily given to party volunteers, raising concerns about favoritism and possible violations of government procedures. The review ordered by the Chief Secretary is expected to examine whether these selections were made following due process or if they were politically motivated. In July 2023, the Delhi Services Department had ordered that 437 private persons appointed as advisers, fellows and consultants via "back door entry" by the Aam Aadmi Party government are "void ab initio" (void from the beginning) and directed the departments concerned to stop their services.

The 437 appointments include 140 fellows and associate fellows appointed at the Delhi Assembly Research Centre (DARC) since 2019. The Services department had compiled the information received from 23 departments and agencies of the Delhi government that engaged private persons as "specialists". During the scrutiny by the Services department, it was found that 69 persons were engaged in five departments of Archaeology, Environment, Delhi Archives, Women and Child Development and Industries without the approval of the competent authority. Also, 13 Boards, autonomous bodies which engaged 155 persons, did not take the necessary approval.

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Meta's longest undersea cable to connect India, US

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Social media major Meta on Saturday tagged India as one of its largest markets to be connected with the company's world's longest undersea cable "Project Waterworth" which is expected to be operational by the end of this decade.

Meta has announced "Project Waterworth" which will reach five major continents and span over 50,000 kilometers - longer than the earth's circumference.

The project was part of the US-India Joint Leaders' Statement that was released on February 13 following the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to US.

"Meta is investing in India -- one of its largest markets -- bringing the world's longest, highest capacity and most technologically advanced subsea cable project to connect India, the US, and other locations," Meta spokesperson said on Saturday.

The undersea cables are crucial for internet operations. These cables connect countries with each other. Local telecom operators connect with undersea cables to provide internet access to their customers.

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Sheesh Mahal under CVC lens

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In mounting trouble for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convener and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has ordered a detailed probe into allegations of irregularities in the construction and expenditures incurred on interiors of his residence, 6, Flagstaff Road, during his tenure in office, on the basis of a factual report submitted by the Central Public Works Department (CPWD). This comes just days after the BJP asked Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena to cancel the merger of four properties with the 'Sheesh Mahal'. The inquiry is expected to probe whether government regulations were bypassed to facilitate the

construction of what the BJP has dubbed the "Sheeshmahal," spanning 40,000 square yards (8 acres). "After examination of factual report regarding complaint 75059/2024, CVO Central Public Works Department has been advised to conduct a detailed investigation in the matter. Based on the investigation report, suitable action will be taken by the competent authority," CVC said.

The Sheesh Mahal controversy was one of the major issues of people discredited Kejriwal and his party during the recently concluded assembly polls here. The BJP had accused exorbitant amount was spent, flouting regulations, for the construction of Kejriwal's residence. The probe was ordered on February 13.

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Bengaluru airport to have train connectivity to city

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU/NEW DELHI

To beat the chronic traffic problem in silicon city Bengaluru, the Indian Railways in a first of its kind has announced to connect the metropolitan to the Bengaluru Airport. Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said that, in addition to road, metro rail, and suburban railway services provided by the State government, Indian Railways will also introduce a train travel option from Kempegowda International Airport to Bengaluru city.

However, he noted that a few technical challenges need to be addressed before this can be implemented and the Railway team is working on resolving



them. Addressing media, Vaishnav said that people currently have access to Bengaluru airport via Metro Rail, road, and the suburban railway project managed by the Rail Infrastructure Development Company (Karnataka) (K-RIDE). K-RIDE, a joint venture between the Centre and the

comfortable 40 to 45-minute ride. However, there were some technical issues, particularly the need to construct a rail flyover. The team has now completed the necessary work and they presented the concept to me today. I will share it with you soon. This will bring significant relief to the people," the Minister said.

He also emphasised the importance of suburban and metro projects for Bengaluru, a city with a population of 1.5 crore. "It's a very large city, and we need to rapidly expand metro and suburban rail networks. The state and Centre must work in a synchronised manner," he pointed out.

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Biryani, chicken curry included in Singapore's emergency meal kits

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Curry chicken with biryani rice is among the five meal options prepared by SATS Ltd, or Singapore Airport Terminal Services, ready-to-eat foods for public consumption during national emergencies.

SATS, a Singapore-headquartered solutions company, has spent four to six months on research and development before finalising five meal options. Besides biryani -- a popular Indian dish in the city-state, the other meal options are chicken bolognese pasta, fish porridge with sweet potato and pumpkin, sweet spicy tomato fish with basmati rice, and vegetable marinara pasta. The meals are prepared in a SATS halal-certified kitchen in Singapore, reported

Channel News Asia on Saturday. The report said these meals require no refrigeration, can be eaten at room temperature without reheating and have a shelf life of up to eight months.

Leveraging its experience in producing army combat rations, food caterer SATS has developed these products. "As with any ambient product, we have to do a real-time shelf-life study... once we are assured of the quality, then we launch the commercial production," said Jean Sin, head of innovation and product development at SATS.

About 150,000 of these meals will be distributed between Saturday (February 15) and February 28 as part of this year's Exercise SG Ready, a component of Singapore's Total Defence campaign. The exercise allows people in Singapore to

experience simulated power outages and disruptions to food supplies, among other scenarios. More than 100,000 students and teachers from over 90 schools, and three Institute of Technical Education colleges, along with over 8,000 seniors from 111 Active Ageing Centres, will be able to try these meals.

While long-shelf-life meals are often assumed to be unappetising, a taste test revealed otherwise. The texture of the meals also closely resembled freshly cooked food, with the chicken, fish and rice maintaining a natural mouthfeel. Nutritional value is another key consideration. Sin said the meals provide essential energy and nutrients, including carbohydrates, protein, fibre and fat.

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Woman stabs husband to death during altercation

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman allegedly stabbed her husband to death in the Ghazipur police station area here, police said on Saturday. The husband and wife had a fight over something, after which the woman attacked him with a knife, which pierced through his chest, police said. The family rushed him to the hospital, where he was declared dead, they added. The victim, identified as Shavez (42), a resident of Indranagar (B Block), was a real estate businessman. As per reports, he returned home from work at around 9 pm on Friday and engaged in an argument with his wife, Razia, over some issue. During the altercation, Razia attacked him with a kitchen knife. Shavez's family took him to RML Hospital where the doctors declared him dead. The victim's family has filed a case against the woman, who has been taken into custody and

being interrogated by police. Meanwhile, the accused, who stabbed a girl 43 times before consuming poison out of fear of being jailed for his crime, succumbed in the hospital on Saturday. The victim, who lives at an MLA's house in Madaion, was also treated at the hospital for ten days before recovering. The accused, identified as Ankul, had entered the MLA's house in Shankarpur village, Madaion, and attacked the girl. His family initially admitted him to a nursing home on Sitapur Road. However, upon receiving information, the police took him into custody and shifted him to the KGMU Trauma Centre, where he died on Saturday. Following the incident, the police conducted continuous raids in search of Ankul. They tracked him down using the registration number of a bike found at the crime scene. According to the police, they traced the bike to Ankul's

house in Sitapur. His family claimed he had left, saying a girl had met with an accident. Since then, the police had been searching for him and recently located him with the help of surveillance. Due to his critical condition, the police could not question him about the crime. A post-mortem will be conducted before further legal action is taken, according to the Madaion police. During a raid at Ankul's house, police discovered that he was married. The investigation also revealed that he knew the victim and had visited her house on the fateful day. The attack reportedly occurred after a dispute. The victim suffered severe injuries in the attack, requiring 23 stitches on her face and 20 on other parts of her body. Although she has been discharged from the trauma centre, she has not fully recovered. Her family said she still breaks down in tears when recalling the attack.

LDA's Shakti Utsav empowers women

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Women participated in the Shakti Utsav organised by the Lucknow Development Authority on Saturday. Shakti Utsav began at 1090 crossing, where, first of all, artistes from YDP Performing Art delivered a message to women through a street play, encouraging them to learn new skills, participate in various activities within society, and enhance their physical and mental strength. Along with this, women were made aware of their rights. Following this, a 2.5 km 'pink run' was held from 1090 crossing to Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Park. The chief guest of the programme, Indian Olympic athlete and Arjuna Award winner Sudha Singh, flagged off the run. While encouraging the women, she said that this pink run was not merely a race of a few kilometres but a symbol of moving towards a new era where



women will progress without fear or obstacles, taking society to new heights. Various programmes were organised at Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Park as part of Shakti Utsav. Among these, artistes from the country's first women's mission rock band, 'Meri Zindagi', gave a live performance. Band's founder Jaya Tiwari, along with Niharika Dubey,

Meghna Srivastava, Saubhagya Dixit, Aayti Sharma, Sukanshi Prajapati, raised their voice for the rights of daughters. A painting competition on the theme of women empowerment was also organised as part of the programme. Participants, including school and college students as well as women, brought the figures alive by filling the colours of courage, security, and self-

reliance on paper. Anshika won first prize in the 6-12 years age group, Riya came second, and Pratiksha Shukla was awarded third prize. In the 13-18 years age group, Shradha Mishra secured first place, Muskan Gupta came second, and Seema Sahu took third place. Similarly, in the age group of over 18 years, Rashmi Srivastava won first prize, Sidra

Riyaz was second, and Sheikh Ansara was third. Women participants gave their best efforts in the 2.5 km pink run. Some ran in sports shoes, while others ran barefoot. Among the winners of the pink run, Pooja Nishad secured the first prize of Rs 10,000, Anjali received Rs 7,500 as second prize, and Supriya was awarded Rs 5,000 as third prize. Chief guest Sudha Singh and Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob honoured the winners of the pink run and the painting competition by presenting them with cash prizes, trophies, and certificates. Various social organisations organised a handicraft exhibition as part of Shakti Utsav. A large crowd gathered at the stalls of Jute for Life, Bala Foundation, Chaitanya Welfare Foundation, Swapna Foundation, and Vigyan Foundation. Additionally, people enjoyed delicious dishes at the stall of Shiroz Hang Out Cafe.

Girl alleges rape, blackmail by man on job pretext

Lucknow (PNS): A man allegedly lured a girl from Rae Bareilly with the promise of a job, raped her, and then sexually exploited her for months under the pretext of marriage, police said here on Saturday. The victim claimed that the accused had also made obscene videos of her, preventing her from reporting the abuse to the police. However, when he eventually refused to marry her, she filed a case at Gudamba police

station. According to the complaint, the victim, who lives in a rented house in Ashiyana, met Rahul Khare, a resident of Tedhi Pulia, Adil Nagar, while searching for a job. He introduced himself as an officer at a company and assured her he could help her secure employment. As they continued to interact, they developed a friendship. One day, Rahul invited her to his flat on some pretext. There, he allegedly made her consume an intoxicant and raped her. He also recorded a video of the act and later used it to blackmail her into repeatedly visiting his flat, where he continued to exploit her. When she threat-

ened to go to the police, he silenced her with false promises of marriage. Over time, he continued to force her to stay with him under this pretext. On February 11, Rahul refused to marry her. When she went to his flat to confront him, he allegedly threatened her and forced her to leave before blocking her phone number. Following this, she filed a complaint at the Gudamba Police Station. Gudamba Inspector Prabhatesh Kumar stated that the victim's statement would be recorded before a magistrate. Further action would be taken based on her testimony and the available evidence, he added.

LMC seals buildings over non-payment of house tax

Lucknow (PNS): Launching a crackdown on major house tax defaulters in Malviya Nagar Ward, the Lucknow Municipal Corporation (Zone-2) on Saturday attached and sealed several buildings. Action was taken on various buildings under thePWD. Many prominent buildings were sealed, which mainly included establishments such as warehouses, central stores, and central godowns. The total amount of outstanding house tax on these buildings was Rs 1,70,58,141. The municipal corporation swung into action so that the outstanding amount could be recovered from the defaulters. The campaign was conducted under the chairmanship of zonal officer Shilpa Kumari. Tax superintendent Om Prakash Soni, ward revenue inspector Dharendra Pratap Singh,

Pradeep Srivastava, Sibte Raza, and the ETF team were also involved in this action. "This action was taken by the nagar nigam to send a strong message to all the defaulters that they should deposit their dues immediately, otherwise they may face serious consequences. Such campaigns are necessary for the stability of the nagar nigam and service to the city. LMC officials also ensured that all the procedures and rules were followed and the rights of any citizen were not violated," an official said. ■ Warehouse and Residency - Total outstanding: Rs 38,96,954 ■ Central Store - Total outstanding: Rs 2,13,308 ■ Central Store-2 - Total outstanding: Rs 33,42,066 ■ Central Store - Total outstanding: Rs 55,86,128 ■ Central Warehouse - Total outstanding: Rs 39,19,685

Aggarwal was to highlight govt's failures, traders' problems: AKY

Lucknow (PTI): Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday said that Manish Jagan Aggarwal, who had been arrested by the Lucknow police, was to highlight the failures of the BJP government and traders' issues on the party's behalf. On Friday, the party accused the Lucknow Police of "forcibly" taking its trade wing president into custody, fearing for his safety. "He is a patient of high blood pressure and his wife is also pregnant. If any harm happens to Manish Jagan ji or his family then Lucknow Police will be responsible for it," the party said in the post earlier. In response to the party's allegations, the Lucknow Police in a post on X said, "To prevent the strong possibility of continuously creating negativity,

unrest and violence in the society through objectionable posts on social media, Manish Jagan Aggarwal was arrested and further legal action was taken against him." Speaking to the reporters outside the party office in Lucknow, Yadav said that Aggarwal was to highlight the failures of the BJP government and the issues faced by the traders. "By the time traders understand GST, the government will change the way of collecting GST. Because of the GST, the government's profiteering (policies) and electoral bonds, we have to face inflation. Because of these (factors), inflation is increasing. These questions were raised by Aggarwal, but (we) don't know what problem the government has with the Samajwadi Media

Cell," he said. "And this is not the first time this has happened, it happened last time also when I had to go to Police Bhavan (apparently referring to his visit to the UP Police Headquarters in 2023). These BJP people have made the entire police force a part of the BJP. I will tell the police to leave their uniform. Bad things were being said about the SP's cap sometimes. The BJP people too have started wearing caps. You (police) should wear that cap and sit in the police station," he asserted. Meanwhile, the party in a post on X, "If any objectionable post has been made by Manish Jagan which leads to unrest and violence, then Lucknow Police should share that post or else stop exploiting opposition leaders with baseless things."

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

Be it known to all that earlier my name was Tufail Ahmad which I have changed to Mohammad Tufail Beg. Now I be known and regarded as Mohammad Tufail Beg for all future purposes. Mohamad Tufail Beg S/o Mohammad Fareed Beg R/o 16D/7A/786 C Kasari Masari, Prayagraj

NOTICE

"My name is mentioned as Mohd Asif in my son Mohd Wasif's Class X statement of marks and pass certificate, while my full name is Mohammad Asif Quraishi, as shown on my Aadhaar and PAN card. Both names refer to the same person: Mohammad Asif Quraishi, S/o Zafrul Hasan, R/o M 8/22, K.D.A Colony, Ganga Vihar, Jajmau, Kanpur."

NOTICE

HDFC Bank Limited. It is being informed to the general public that the property Part of house no. 215/166Ka, situated at Subhash Marg (Pandey Ganj), Ward Mauviaganj, City & District Lucknow is in the name of Sri Rajnesh Kumar Gupta S/O Late Madan Lal Gupta, which he has obtained through registered gift deed, which is duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar Lucknow bearing document no. 8431, dated 29/09/2022. The above mentioned property owner is going to mortgage the aforesaid property in HDFC Bank Limited. If any person or any financial institution or bank has objection/claim in this regards, kindly inform within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice and after the completion of above time period, no claim of any kind will be considered. B.N. Tripathi Advocate, Res: C-15, Nehru Vihar, Kalyanpur, Lucknow, Mob: 9336127853

आवश्यकता है

अनुदानित मदरसा तालीमुल कुरान सलाहपुर, प्रयागराज में स०अ० तदतानिया दो (2) पद हेतु एक पद रिक्त है तथा एक पद दिनांक: 31-03-2025 को अखिलवर्षा के आधार पर (62 वर्ष की आयु पूर्ण कर) सेवा निवृत्त होने पर रिक्त होगा। शैक्षिक योग्यता अस्मिन् अध्यापक इण्टर चर्च से अथवा हाफिज। लेवल-6 में वेतनमान - 35400-112400 एवं अन्य मन्चे न्यूनतम आयु 18 वर्ष उपरोक्त योग्यता पूर्ण करने वाले इच्छुक अर्जियों अपना पूर्ण आवेदन पत्र अपनी समस्त शैक्षिक प्रमाण-पत्रों की प्रमाणीत प्रतियों के साथ निम्नलिखित की तिथि से तीन सप्ताह (21) दिन के अन्दर प्रबन्धक के पद नाम से मदरसा के पते पर पंजीकृत डाक के माध्यम से अथवा स्वयं उपस्थित हो कर उपलब्ध करा सकते हैं। साक्षात्कार की तिथि की सूचना बाद में पंजीकृत डाक के माध्यम से प्रेषित की जायेगी। (जनील अहमद) प्रबन्धक मदरसा तालीमुल कुरान सलाहपुर, प्रयागराज। दिनांक: फरवरी 15, 2025

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Sundeep Chaurasia to SANDEEP CHAURASIYA S/o Hari Kishan Chaurasiya R/o K-398 World Bank Colony Barra Kanpur for all future purpose.

NOTICE

I, Manoj Kumari Singh, also known as Manoj Kumari, W/o Late Indrajit Singh, R/o 77/3 B, Jain Building, Kuli Bazaar, Kanpur would like to inform that both these names refer to me. In the future, I shall be known and recognized by the name Manoj Kumari Singh.

NOTICE

It is notified that my Daughter's Birth certificate No-B-2023-9-91747-004233 Correct name recordad ANVIKA SINGH. But Aadhar Card, my daughter name is mentioned as ANJAL SINGH, which is wrong so, It is necessary to mention the Correct name of my daughter. ANVIKA SINGH is Place of ANJAL SINGH. It is hereby verified that above my personal knowledge fulfill by me. DHARMENDRA KUMAR SINGH S/o -VIJAY NARAYAN SINGH, R/o- DEOGHAT, JHALWA, PRAYAGRAJ.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from AFROJ AALAM TO AFROZ ALAM which is also recorded in the government documents. In future I should be known and identified as AFROZ ALAM, Afroz Alam S/o Hafeezulla R/o Plot No.292 Scheme No- 39 Face No -1 Emerald Gulistan, Jajmau Kanpur Nagar

AUCTION NOTICE

दिनांक 27-02-2025 पूर्वान्ह 11:30 बजे ०३०० राउज निर्माण सहकारी संघ लि०, 4/5 बी, सेक्टर-IV, गोमती नगर, लखनऊ के पुराने मुख्यालय मन्च, 19 ए, विद्यानसमा, मार्ग, लखनऊ में रखे निष्पयोग्य घोषित सामग्रियों की नीलामी जहाँ-जैसी है स्थिति में पुराने मुख्यालय पर होगी, सिक्योरिटी रु.5,00,000/- बैकड्राफ्ट यू.पी. आर एन एस एस के नाम, जी.एस.टी. पंजीकरण, पैनकार्ड के साथ जमा होगी। आई.पी.सिंह एण्ड सन्स.

BSIP, LU study reveals climate and vegetation changes in Kukrail Reserve Forest

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

A new study conducted by the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences (BSIP) and Lucknow University, analysing pollen extracted from the soil of Kukrail Reserve Forest, offers crucial insights into changes in climate and vegetation. Dr Swati Tripathi, a scientist at BSIP, explained that 'modern pollen refers to recently collected pollen samples taken directly from the current vegetation of a specific area, which serves as a reference point for understanding past vegetation changes. By comparing these modern samples with pollen found in fossil records (paleo-pollen), scientists can accurately reconstruct past environments, she clarified. She further elaborated that climate change is a dynamic process

that results in periodic shifts in vegetation within a particular region. "Reserve forests, however, are highly protected areas dedicated to the conservation of biodiversity. Kukrail Reserve Forest, located in Lucknow city on the Indo-Gangetic foreland basin, is critical for tropical species and has served as a reservoir for endangered medicinal plants," Dr Tripathi said. Researchers from BSIP and LU, including Prof Ajay Kumar Arya and research scholar Dr Naushin Aneez, have developed a modern analogue dataset using pollen samples from various vegetation settings (forest, open land, and crop land) within Kukrail Reserve Forest. This dataset will assist in interpreting the past climate and vegetation changes in the region. Dr Tripathi noted that developing a modern pollen analogue is essential for

understanding both past and future climatic scenarios, especially in this tropical region, and will help formulate sustainable future projections for the area around the reserve forest. She further stated that this research adopts a holistic approach to developing an accurate reference tool for studying past herbivory and ecological patterns in the tropical region of the Ganga Plain. The study has been accepted for publication in the Journal of the Palaeontological Society of India, a Sage Publication. It will aid in identifying marker pollen taxa recovered from surface soil samples, providing vital information about the different vegetation and land-use types in Kukrail Reserve Forest. Dr Arya pointed out that the Ganga Plain, one of the world's largest alluvial tracts, is home to significant ecological diversity. "Lucknow

city, located on the north-western shore of the Gomati River, is divided into the Trans-Gomti and Cis-Gomti regions. Kukrail Reserve Forest lies in Khurram Nagar/Indiranagar, adjacent to Shivpuri Colony, about 9 km from the city centre. The forest was developed as a crocodilian rehabilitation centre in 1978 with funding from the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department," he explained. He added that the forest is a sanctuary for various species of deer, particularly sambar and black-brown spotted deer, and is home to numerous avian species. The reserve is also a popular tourist attraction due to its natural beauty and the crocodiles residing there. The surrounding area is rich in potential lakes and sedimentary deposits, offering ample opportunities for Quaternary palaeoclimatic studies.

CITYBRIEFS

CME ON BLOOD SAFETY

Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences organised a CME programme focused on blood safety and the scope of centralised TTE testing (ID-NAT). The chief guests were RMLIMS Director Dr CM Singh, and MD NHM, Department of Hospital and Family Welfare, UP, Dr Pinky Jovel. The expert faculty included Dr Preeti Elhens, head of transfusion medicine department, SGPG; Dr Tulika Chandra, head of transfusion medicine & Blood Bank in charge; Dr Richa Gupta from GTB Hospital, New Delhi; and Dr Hemchandra Pandey, head of transfusion medicine, AIIMS Delhi, among others. Dr Chandra highlighted safe blood supply and donor selection, while Dr Gupta discussed the development and methods of testing for transfusion-transmitted infections. Dr Pandey explained the advantages of nucleic acid testing (NAT) over serological methods, reducing residual infection risks. Dr Subrata Chandra reviewed global and Indian centralised ID-NAT models. The session concluded with a call for guidelines from the National Blood Transfusion Council and CDSCO to ensure efficient, cost-effective ID-NAT testing.

SURGICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The general surgery department at KGMU concluded its Surgical Education programme on Saturday. The final session covered urological diseases, bariatric procedures, paediatric surgical conditions, and medical statistics. Dr Apul Goel and Dr HS Pawha discussed urethral disorders and prostate diseases, while Dr Arshad Ahmad and Dr Sanjeev Kumar addressed anal fissures, hemorrhoids, and fistulas. Dr Awanish Kumar explained bariatric surgery, emphasising its role in preventing obesity-related complications and improving diabetes, not for cosmetic purposes. Prof SN Kureel, Prof JD Rawat, and Dr Anand Pandey held a discussion on managing paediatric surgical conditions like hypospadias and anorectal malformations. A session on research methodology and surgical ethics was led by Dr Imran Rizvi, Prof Hardeep, Dr Saumya Singh, and Prof Himanshu, covering medical ethics and artificial intelligence in surgery. The day ended with an endo-training workshop, enhancing students' practical skills in laparoscopic surgery.

Police rescue girl 'sold' to man for marriage from Ajmer

Lucknow (PTI): Uttar Pradesh Police have rescued a 17-year-old girl who was abducted from a village in Mainpuri district about nine months ago from Rajasthan's Ajmer, where she was allegedly sold to a man who later married her, officials said on Saturday. Neeraj, who stayed in a nearby village, abducted the girl as she was going to a coaching centre in Mainpuri, took her to Ajmer, and allegedly sold her to a person named Vishnu Mali, police said. While the girl and Mali have been brought here, Neeraj is still at large, they said. The girl's location was traced to Ajmer after Mali shared photos of their marriage on Facebook, police said. The SHO of Kurra police station, Arvind Singh, told PTI, "The 17-year-old girl had disappeared in May 2024. She was taken to Ajmer, where she was handed over to Mali. Her father had filed a missing complaint at the Kurra police station. Mali has been sent to judicial custody." Mali told the police that Neeraj had brought the girl to him for marriage, and that they were living as husband and wife after tying the knot, Singh said, adding that the girl refused to

MAN SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS IN JAIL FOR RAPING MINOR IN 2023

A local court in Ghazipur sentenced a man to 20 years of imprisonment for raping a minor girl, officials said on Saturday. Additional District Judge (POCSO) Rakesh Kumar also imposed a fine of Rs 30,000 on Shivkumar alias Rahul, they said. According to the prosecution, the incident occurred in October 2023 when Rahul lured the rape survivor, his neighbour, for a walk near their residence and took her somewhere else. He was arrested soon after. On Friday, the court held Rahul guilty and sentenced him to 20 years imprisonment. Seventy-five per cent of the fine amount would be given to the survivor, the prosecution said.

Minister stresses need for branding to attract more tourists to UP

Uttar Pradesh's Minister of Tourism and Culture, Jaiveer Singh, emphasised the need for branding to attract more tourists to the state's major tourist destinations and wildlife sanctuaries. Uttar Pradesh has immense potential to attract foreign tourists, and with the right approach, the state could soon achieve the top position in international tourism, similar to its success in domestic tourism, Singh said in a review meeting. The Spiritual Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Eco-Tourism Circuit, and Bundelkhand Circuit are playing a significant role in this transformation. To ensure that the tourism sector maximises its contribution to the one-trillion-dollar economy, departmental officials must focus on various possibilities, said the minister. Singh stated that several states attract a large number of foreign tourists to religious, spiritual, natural, and historical sites, as well as fairs and festivals. Compared to other states, Uttar Pradesh has far greater tourism potential with sacred sites like Ayodhya, Kashi, Mathura, and Prayagraj, along with grand celebrations such as Maha Kumbh, Deepotsav, Rangotsav, and Dev Deepawali, he noted. Additionally, he said the government is prioritising the development of on-site amenities, as tourists undertaking long journeys seek well-equipped stopovers with good facilities. The Tourism department is actively working towards enhancing these amenities to improve the visi-

Minister stresses need for branding to attract more tourists to UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

tor experience, Singh said. During the meeting, it was also highlighted that in recent years, there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh, leading to a surge in demand for accommodation. To address this, the state's tourism policy offers special incentives to promote the establishment of hotels, homestays, and paying guest accommodations to provide affordable, safe, and high-quality lodging for tourists. The minister instructed all state authorities to simplify the approval process for hotel maps and permits. Principal Secretary (Tourism and Culture) Mukesh Meshram stated that the government will work on simplifying the NOC process for hospitality units. Additionally, a comprehensive Tourist Footfall and Expenditure Survey is being conducted, covering a sample size of nine lakh tourists. The survey will continue until December 2025 and will analyse the food, beverage, and medical sectors related to tourism. To boost tourist numbers, studies on the development of tourist destinations will be carried out, along with assessments to enhance on-site amenities. The principal secretary also suggested maximising hotel occupancy in the state as part of the broader tourism development strategy. The meeting was attended by representatives of the survey company, Special Secretary of Tourism Isha Priya, MD Sanya Chhabra, Director of Tourism Prakhara Mishra, Tourism Advisor JP Singh, and other departmental officials.

Police rescue girl 'sold' to man for marriage from Ajmer

Lucknow (PTI): Uttar Pradesh Police have rescued a 17-year-old girl who was abducted from a village in Mainpuri district about nine months ago from Rajasthan's Ajmer, where she was allegedly sold to a man who later married her, officials said on Saturday. Neeraj, who stayed in a nearby village, abducted the girl as she was going to a coaching centre in Mainpuri, took her to Ajmer, and allegedly sold her to a person named Vishnu Mali, police said. While the girl and Mali have been brought here, Neeraj is still at large, they said. The girl's location was traced to Ajmer after Mali shared photos of their marriage on Facebook, police said. The SHO of Kurra police station, Arvind Singh, told PTI, "The 17-year-old girl had disappeared in May 2024. She was taken to Ajmer, where she was handed over to Mali. Her father had filed a missing complaint at the Kurra police station. Mali has been sent to judicial custody." Mali told the police that Neeraj had brought the girl to him for marriage, and that they were living as husband and wife after tying the knot, Singh said, adding that the girl refused to

कार्यालय, प्राचार्य, डी०बी०एस०कालेज, कानपुर-208006
दूरभाष संख्या-0512-2651730
पत्रांक-5394 /निविदा/2024-25 निविदा सूचना दिनांक: 10.02.2025
डी०बी०एस० कालेज, कानपुर के जन्तुविज्ञान, वनस्पति विज्ञान, भौतिक विज्ञान एवं बी० एड० विभाग के विभागाध्यक्ष कक्षा/स्टाफरूम, महाविद्यालय के कुछ शिक्षण कक्षाओं/प्रयोगशालाओं/ शोध कक्षाओं की मरम्मत, प्लास्टर, रॉगर्स-पुतार्ड एवं अन्य आवश्यक सविल कार्य हेतु इच्छुक फर्मों/ठेकेदारों से निर्धारित प्रश्न पर सीलबंद निविदा अमात्रित की जाती है। इच्छुक फर्म/ठेकेदार प्राचार्य कार्यालय में रुपये 500/-जमा कर दिनांक 28 फरवरी, 2025 को अपराह्न 3.00 बजे तक निविदा फार्म प्राप्त व जमा कर सकते हैं। निर्धारित तिथि के उपरांत/विलम्ब से प्राप्त किसी भी निविदा पर विचार नहीं किया जायेगा। समस्त कार्यों का विवरण एवं अन्य विस्तृत जानकारियाँ प्राचार्य कार्यालय से प्राप्त की जा सकती हैं। बिना कारण बताये किसी भी निविदा को निरस्त करने का अधिकार अधोहस्ताक्षरी के पास सुरक्षित रहेगा। प्राचार्य

Lok Sabha speaker, Goa CM take holy dip in Sangam

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Goa Chief Minister Promod Sawant took a holy dip in Sangam on Saturday. Om Birla visited Mahakumbh Nagar on Saturday and took a holy dip in Triveni Sangam. He described the Maha Kumbh as a symbol of India's spiritual faith and a celebration of the nation's ancient culture and religious heritage.

On this occasion, Birla sought the blessings of Maa Ganga, Maa Yamuna and Maa Saraswati and prayed for the happiness and prosperity of the people of the country. He said, "May grace of Maa Ganga always remain on everyone and every person's life be filled with joy."

He also highlighted the profound influence of saints, their teachings and the unwavering faith of crores of devotees who gather to experience the divine aura of Maha Kumbh.

Highlighting the significance of Maha Kumbh, Om Birla said it holds a special place in the Vedas and Puranas. He described the grand event as a symbol of unity and harmony, where people from all backgrounds come together, rising above caste and religion, to take a sacred dip in faith. "Maha Kumbh not only awakens inner energy and consciousness but also purifies the soul and mind," he added.

Highlighting faith as the greatest strength in life, Birla remarked that this festival transcends politics and serves as an opportunity for social and spiritual harmony. He pointed out that crores of devotees from villages and cities across India have gathered for this sacred event, reflecting its immense scale and sanctity. Reaffirming his faith in Maha Kumbh, he mentioned that the festival not only provides spiritual peace but also strengthens societal bonds. He extended his best wishes to all devotees and described the



Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla takes a holy dip at the Sangam during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj PTI



(Left) Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and (right) NCP leader Praful Patel at the Sangam PTI

overwhelming participation as a remarkable testament to India's rich cultural heritage. Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant took a holy dip in Sangam along with his cabinet colleagues and state party president on Saturday. He lauded the grandeur of the event, praising Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's visionary leadership and seamless execution in organising the Maha Kumbh. Sawant said the participation of over 50 crore devotees in this gathering was a testament to its immense scale and divine significance. Expressing gratitude to Chief Minister Yogi and his govern-

ment, Sawant praised their meticulous planning and execution of the Maha Kumbh. He congratulated Chief Minister Yogi on behalf of the people of Goa for orchestrating this grand spiritual gathering and thanked him for making the experience both divine and joyous. Sawant, along with his party's state president and cabinet members arrived at Prayagraj airport. From there, they proceeded to the Triveni Sangam, where they took the holy dip. Sawant said that being part of this grand spiritual event and experiencing the sacred dip was truly special. He described

the Maha Kumbh as a divine and magnificent event that brings joy to millions. It may be mentioned here that trains are being run for the people of Goa to attend Maha Kumbh. Sawant said coming to Mahakumbh Nagar and being part of this spiritually uplifting moment was a wonderful experience for everyone. Since its commencement on January 13, the Maha Kumbh has witnessed an overwhelming participation of over 50 crore devotees. Sawant remarked that this massive turnout was a testament to the festival's grandeur and profound spiritual significance.

Akhilesh Yadav urges UP govt to extend Maha Kumbh date

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has urged the Uttar Pradesh government to extend the duration of the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, citing the overwhelming number of devotees on the roads still hoping to attend the mega festival.

Yadav claimed that in previous years, the Maha Kumbh and Kumbh Mela used to last for 75 days whereas the current one schedule is shorter. Even now, many people want to go to Maha Kumbh but cannot. In such a situation, the government should extend the duration of Maha Kumbh, he said.

Yadav said, "We appeal to the government that many elderly people, who are 65-plus, 70-plus have not been able to take bath in Maha Kumbh. They want to take a bath and want to participate in spiritual programmes. This is an appeal to the government that at one time there used to



be a Kumbh of 75 days. Our demand is that the residents of Prayagraj could not even take a bath, so the Kumbh should be given a further extension." Visuals on social media show packed trains, congested roads and massive crowds, all heading to Mahakumbh Nagar. Earlier this week, roads leading to the Maha Kumbh Mela witnessed severe traffic congestion stretching for kilometres. The Prayagraj Sangam railway station was forced to

shut down temporarily due to the overwhelming crowd.

The SP chief also accused the state government of concealing the true number of deaths in a stampede at the Maha Kumbh last month. The Maha Kumbh, the world's largest spiritual gathering, began on January 13 and is set to conclude on February 26, coinciding with Maha Shivaratri.

Yadav reiterated that the Waqf (Amendment) Bill tabled in Parliament was a tactic of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Central government to divert people's attention from key issues to engage them in unnecessary debates and government's "failure" to boost the economy. "The government has now introduced the new legislation (referring to the Waqf Bill) to divert public attention from real issues and keep people engaged in unrelated debates," he alleged. "This is not a Waqf Amendment Bill; it is a Waqf

Eradication Bill. All 14 provisions in this bill are against Waqf. The government wants to seize Waqf properties and use them for its own purposes," the SP chief alleged.

Yadav repeated his charge against the Election Commission of India over the alleged irregularities in bypoll to Milkpur assembly seat. "The Election Commission is dead. If the poll panel gives us a notice then it will provide us an opportunity to explain our stand and furnish the details of malpractices and irregularities committed during the bypoll to Milkpur assembly seat," the SP chief said. He also criticised the Union Budget 2025-26, stating that while the government claims to elevate India's economy from the fifth to the third position globally, the Budget has only led to disappointment. He also accused the National Democratic Alliance government of failing to support the manufacturing sector, rendering slogans like 'Make in India' ineffective.

Climate conference & bird fest today

Lucknow/Mahakumbh Nagar (PNS): All preparations are complete for the Climate Conference and Bird Festival at Maha Kumbh-2025, being organised under the supervision of the Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department of the Yogi Adityanath government.

On February 16, a climate conference on the theme 'Kumbh ki Aastha evam Jalvayu Parivartan' will be held at Maha Kumbh, with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurating the event. The conference will witness participation from religious leaders, environmentalists, social organisations, industry representatives, business leaders, and eminent citizens. The skimmer bird has been chosen as the mascot for the Nature and Bird Festival 2025, symbolising the confluence of faith and conservation.

The Indian Skimmer plays a crucial role as an indicator of river health. It thrives in marshy areas along the banks of rivers, lakes and estuaries. Recognised for its striking orange beak and black-and-white plumage, its distinct feature is a lower mandible that is longer than the upper one, allowing it to efficiently catch prey while skimming the water's surface. This unique adaptation has earned it the local name 'Panchira'.

In Uttar Pradesh, the skimmer bird breeds along the Ganga, Yamuna and Chambal rivers, with an estimated population of around 1,000 in the state. Under the direction of the Yogi government, the bird festival has been organised consistently, with each edition taking place at a different location. In 2017, the festival was held at Dudhwa Tiger Reserve,

Pilibhit, followed by Nawabganj Bird Sanctuary, Unnao, in 2019 and Sursaravari Bird Sanctuary, Keetham-Agra, in 2020. The Okhla Bird Sanctuary, Gautam Buddha Nagar, hosted the event in 2021, but it could not be held in 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In subsequent years, the festival was organised at Vijay Sagar Bird Sanctuary, Mahoba, in 2023, and Surajpur Wetland in 2024. This year, the event will take place at Maha Kumbh, Prayagraj, making it a unique confluence of faith and nature conservation. A curtain raiser event for the Climate Conference and Bird Festival in Maha Kumbh, Prayagraj, was held in Lucknow on the first Saturday. Schoolchildren participated in a walkathon, which began in the morning from 1090 Crossing and ended at Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah

Zoological Park. The event also featured a musical performance by the ITBP band. During the programme, the mascot and teaser of the festival were unveiled at the Saras Auditorium in the zoo. The event was attended by Minister of State for Forest (Independent Charge) Dr Arun Kumar Saxena, Principal Chief Forest Conservator Aparna Yadav and head of department Sunil Chaudhary, and other dignitaries. "This year, the Indian Skimmer has been chosen as the mascot of the Bird Festival, coincidentally a species found at the Sangam. To raise awareness about its conservation, it has been given this special recognition. With all preparations complete, this edition of the Bird Festival promises to be truly exceptional," said Lalit Verma, Nodal Officer, Bird Festival.

Dandi Swami saints depart after Trayodashi snan

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

As the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh nears its conclusion, the sacred gathering is witnessing the gradual departure of devotees and saints. Following the amrit snan on Basant Panchami, the 13 akharas were the first to bid farewell to Mahakumbh Nagar, followed by the departure of kalpavaas after the Maghi Purnima bathing festival. Continuing this sequence, the revered 'Pratham Sadhak' Dandi Swami saints, who observed kalpavaas throughout the Magh month, have now also departed from Mahakumbh Nagar. The Dandi Swami saints, revered as protectors of Sanatan

dharma, had been residing on the holy sands of Sangam for a month. Their final sacred bath in Maha Kumbh took place on Trayodashi, after which they returned to their respective maths. Jagadguru Swami Maheshashram Ji, head of the All India Dandi Parishad, explained that while kalpavaas of Magh month traditionally concludes with a holy dip on Maghi Purnima, there is a belief that during kalpavaas, one may unknowingly commit sins of sight, hearing or touch and these are purified only through the Trijata snan in Sangam, which is performed on Trayodashi of Falgun, after which the Dandi Swami saints depart from Maha Kumbh.

Before leaving Prayagraj Maha Kumbh, the Dandi Swami saints reflected on the significance and impact of this grand spiritual event. Swami Shankarashram, president of the Dandi Sanyasi Parishad, who has been observing kalpavaas on the banks of Triveni for 45 years, remarked that the participation of over 50 crore Sanatan in this Maha Kumbh signifies the growing influence of Sanatan dharma. What sets this year's Kumbh apart, he noted, is the overwhelming presence of the new generation, particularly those aged 18 to 35, surpassing that of older devotees. Unlike previous years, where youth indifference towards religion and

Sanatan was noticeable, this Maha Kumbh witnessed a remarkable shift – young devotees took the sacred dip at the confluence, adorned tilaks and actively engaged in seva (service). Swami Shankarashram attributed this revival of faith among the youth to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision and unwavering commitment to the Maha Kumbh, stating that his efforts in organising and promoting the event have deeply resonated with the younger generation. "Yogi ji has emerged as a youth icon, inspiring this new wave of devotion and enthusiasm towards Sanatan dharma," he remarked.

Woman killed by nephew

Shahjahanpur (PTI): A 35-year-old woman was strangled to death allegedly by her nephew for resisting molestation bid here, police said on Saturday. The incident occurred in Katia village under the Meeranpur Katra police station area, police said.

According to ASP (Rural) Manoj Kumar Awasthi, Jyoti was alone at her home on Friday night when her brother-in-law's son, Rinku alias Ashish (22), entered her room and allegedly attempted to molest her. "When Jyoti resisted, Ashish allegedly struck her on the head with a wooden stick, rendering her unconscious. He then proceeded to strangle her to death," said the officer.

Seven tents gutted in fire

PTI ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

A fire broke out at the store-room of a camp in the Maha Kumbh Mela area on Saturday evening, gutting seven tents and destroying some items, including blankets and foodgrains, officials said. No person was injured, they said. Chief Fire Officer (Kumbh) Pramod Sharma said the fire broke out at a camp in Sector 19 of the Maha Kumbh area and it engulfed seven tents. "As soon as we received the fire alert, firefighting motorcycles reached the spot within two minutes, followed by



four fire tender trucks," he said. DIG of Maha Kumbh Vaibhav Krishna told PTI that the fire broke out at the camp of Luv Kush Seva Mandal around 6:15 pm. Police and the fire brigade responded swiftly and brought the blaze under control within about five minutes, he said. "The camp also housed kalpavaas (pilgrims who stay for an extended period during the Kumbh). Items such as blankets and foodgrains stored in the room were damaged in the fire," the DIG said. The chief fire officer said the cause of the fire was being ascertained.

Four killed as car rams into tractor-trolley

Lucknow (PNS): Four persons were killed after the car they were travelling in rams into a tractor-trolley from behind on Gaur-Babhan road in Bast district.

Superintendent of Police Abhinandan said the speeding Wagon R car carrying four persons rams into the tractor-trolley carrying tent material at around 11:30 pm on Friday, killing all four occupants on the spot. On receiving information, a team from the Paikolia police station reached the spot and sent the bodies for autopsy. The deceased were identified as Rohit (27) from Ayodhya, Pawan (24) from Gonda, and brothers Monu (22) and Somnath (24) from Basti.

In a separate road accident, four members of a family riding on a motorcycle were hit by a speeding bus in Khaiya village in Lakhimpur Kheri on Saturday, killing three of them while they were being rushed to a hospital. Dhaurahra Circle Officer PP Singh said all the four were riding on a motorcycle when near Khaiya village, a speeding bus hit the motorcycle from behind. Awadhesh (42), his wife Mina (40) and mother Gita (53) died while they were being taken to a district hospital, he said, adding that Awadhesh's 11-year-old son, Rohit, survived and was referred to Lucknow for treatment. A case has been registered in the matter, he said.

Over 20,000 reconnect with families



Rush of devotees to take a holy dip at the Sangam during the ongoing Mahakumbh Mela in Prayagraj on Saturday PTI

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

Maha Kumbh 2025 has set a milestone with its grandeur and an unprecedented gathering of over 50 crore devotees. To ensure the safety and smooth management of this massive event, the Yogi Adityanath government has introduced several groundbreaking initiatives. One of the most impactful measures has been the establishment of digital Lost and Found Centres, designed to quickly reunite lost devotees with their families. This initiative

has already helped reconnect over 20,000 missing individuals with their loved ones, proving to be a crucial support system for the event. Notably, the Lost and Found Centre has successfully reunited 20,144 people who had been separated from their families in this year's Maha Kumbh. A large number of those reunited were women. The police also played a key role by helping devotees from various states and even from Nepal reconnect with their loved ones. Notably, during the amrit snan

on Mauni Amavasya (January 28, 29 and 30), the digital Lost and Found Centres managed the crowd efficiently and reunited all 8,725 lost devotees with their families. Similarly, during the Makar Sankranti amrit snan (January 13, 14, and 15), 598 devotees were reunited with their families, and during Basant Panchami amrit snan (February 2, 3, and 4), the centres helped 813 more devotees in reuniting with their families. Apart from these major bathing festivals, these centres have successfully helped over

10,000 more people reunite with their families on regular days and other auspicious occasions. Ten Lost and Found Centres have been set up at key locations, including Sangam, Jhusi, Arai, Phaphamau and sectors 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 21, 23, and 24, as well as near Prayagraj railway junction. These centres are equipped with advanced AI-based facial recognition technology, machine learning and multilingual support, enabling the quick reunification of lost individuals with their families.

Elephant carcass recovered

Bahraich (PTI): The carcass of a male elephant aged about 45-50 years was found in the bushes in Katarniaghat forest here, a senior forest department official said on Saturday.

Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary comes under the area of Dudhwa National Park. Field Director of Dudhwa National Park H. Raja Mohan said that they received information regarding the death of an elephant in the trans-Gerua area of Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary on Thursday. The area where the carcass of the elephant was found was so inaccessible that "we had to cross the river by boat to reach there. We reached there with great difficulty by travelling some distance in the jeep of the Sashtra Seema Bal (SSB) and some distance on a two-wheeler." He said that looking at the footprints found in the field

inspection at the spot, the broken trees nearby and the wounds on the body of the dead elephant, it seemed that the said elephant must have died in a fight between two adult elephants sometime on Tuesday or Wednesday, information of which was received by the department on Thursday. On Friday, a panel of three doctors conducted the post-mortem examination of the elephant's body. Its report revealed that the elephants died due to a fight among themselves.

Rishi Sunak visits Taj Mahal with family



Former British prime minister Rishi Sunak with family at the Taj Mahal in Agra on Saturday PTI

PTI ■ AGRA

Former British prime minister Rishi Sunak visited the Taj Mahal on Saturday along with his daughters, wife and mother-in-law Sudha Murty. The family spent around one and a half hours at the iconic monument. Sunak is on a two-day visit to Agra. The senior conservation assistant from the Archaeological Survey of

India at the Taj Mahal confirmed that Rishi Sunak and his family enjoyed their visit. Both Sunak and his wife left a personal note of appreciation in the visitor's book. ACP, Taj Security, Areeb Ahmed said, "Rishi Sunak and his family were provided top-tier security throughout their visit. The Taj Mahal was shown to them under strict security measures, in collaboration with the CISF."

CM inaugurates Kashi Tamil Sangamam 3.0 programme

...emphasises Kashi's importance as capital of knowledge since ancient times



CM Yogi Adityanath addressing inaugural function of KTS 3.0 at Namoo Ghat in Varanasi on Saturday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

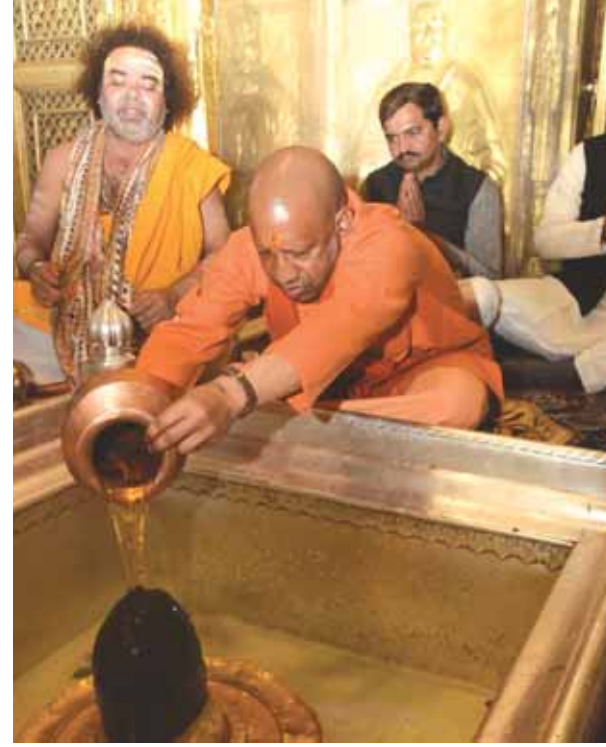
The Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS) 3.0 programme was formally inaugurated by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath by pressing a button at Namoo Ghat on Saturday in the presence of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Dr L. Murugan. This time KTS is dedicated to Maharishi Agastya. A photo exhibition based on his life has also been organised at Namoo Ghat. Expressing gratitude to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the CM said that due to his inspiration, KTS programme is being held in Varanasi for the third consecutive time. "The guests were welcomed by the people of Kashi, the people of the state, especially the Prime Minister. The guests from Tamil Nadu will be shown the Maha

Kumbh organised in Prayagraj after 144 years and Ramlala built in Ayodhya after 500 years", he said. Taking forward the concept of New India, the theme of this year's KTS has been kept with Maharishi Agastya at the centre. "Maharishi Agastya is the one who helped Ram find Sita and gave the 'Aditya Stotra' during the Ram-Ravana war", Yogi said, adding that the teachers, writers as well as people involved in industry, trade, temple management etc will be a part of this programme this time. "The work that Shankaracharya had once done to connect the country from east to west and north to south, the same work is being done by PM Modi in today's environment through KTS to realise the vision of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'", Yogi said and added that Kashi is the oldest city in the country. He said people from different regions will get an opportunity to con-

nect with the culture of Varanasi, Prayagraj and Ayodhya. While talking about Kashi, he also mentioned Baba Vishwanath, Baba Kaal Bhairav, Maa Ganga, Maa Vishalakshi. "Kashi has been the capital of knowledge since ancient times and the ancient scriptures of Tamil Nadu also hold an important place", the CM said. Speaking about Maharishi Agastya's Siddha Chikitsa, he said all participants of KTS will get a chance to connect with it. Welcoming everyone wholeheartedly, he said this vision of the PM will continue. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said that the people coming from Tamil Nadu should be shown the Maha Kumbh and such arrangements should be made that they feel like staying there. He welcomed the guests on behalf of the whole of India. "This time's Maha Kumbh has created awareness among the Sanatanis not only in the coun-

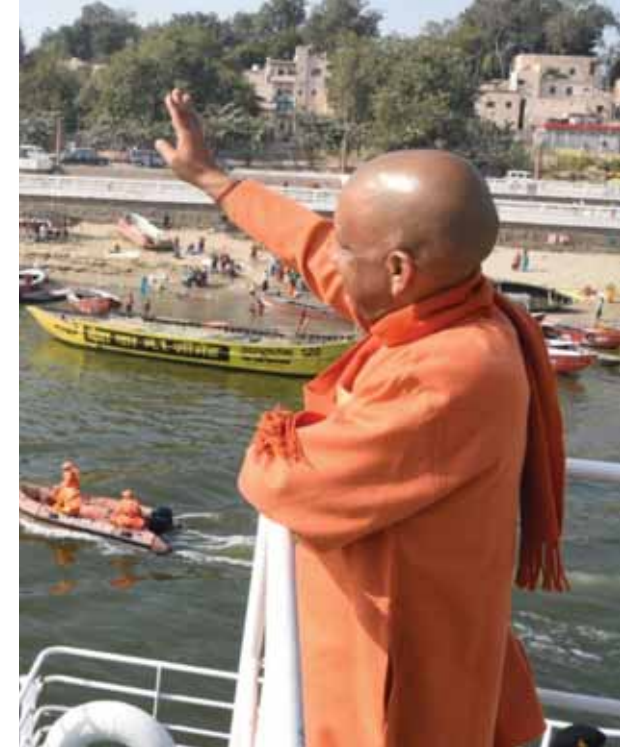
try but all over the world. So far, more than 51 crore people have visited and bathed in the Maha Kumbh", he said, welcoming the UP CM on behalf of the entire countrymen for the well-organised organisation of the grand and divine Maha Kumbh. "Like Sanskrit, Tamil is also the oldest language of the country which is the biggest example of showing cultural unity. There is no temple in Tamil Nadu in which Shri Kashi Vishwanath Mahadev does not reside", Pradhan said. He said for the first time in this year's Union Budget, provision has been made that the great scriptures of the country will be preserved through Artificial Intelligence (AI). "PM Modi's announcement of making India developed by 2047 has to be given a concrete shape by preserving our cultural heritage", he said. On this occasion, UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp and Court Registration Fee Ravindra Jaiswal, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for AYUSH Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu', Zila Panchayat Chairperson Poonam Maurya, Mayor Ashok Tiwari, MLAs Dr Neelkanth Tiwari, Dr Awadhesh Singh, Saurabh Srivastava and Dr Sunil Patel, MLAs Hansraj Vishwakarma and Dharmendra Rai, Ashwini Tyagi, Union Secretary (Education) Vineet Joshi, Divisional Commissioner Kaushal Raj Sharma, Commissioner of Police Mohit Agarwal, District Magistrate S Rajalingam, Additional Commissioner of Police S Channappa, Acting Vice Chancellor BHU Dr Sanjay Kumar and many other dignitaries and Tamil guests were present.

Yogi offers prayers at Kashi Vishwanath Temple



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reached Namoo Ghat directly from Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Babatpur, and boarded a boat to visit Kashi Vishwanath Temple (KVT). He saw the rush of crowd coming to Kashi from an aerial view. While boarding the boat, the crowds at the ghats gathered welcomed the chief minister by waving their hands and raising slogans. Later, the CM offered prayers at Kashi Vishwanath Temple as per rituals. After that, Yogi again reached Namoo Ghat and participated in the inauguration programme of Kashi Tamil Samagam (KTS) 3.0. Amidst the huge crowd in the temple premises, the chief minister presented chocolates as gifts to children.



To keep alive the art and cultural connection between Kashi and the major cities of Tamil Nadu since ancient times, the KTS programme started by the Central government has been organised in the Prime Minister's parliamentary constituency Kashi for the last two years. This year it is being organised from February 15 to 24. KTS is a cultural festival, which aims to bring together the diverse traditional and cultural practices of North India and South India. This is the third consecutive Sangamam of this kind. A large number of people from different regions of Tamil Nadu participate in this. This Sangamam is being organised by the Union Ministry of Education under the Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat program. IIT Madras and BHU are responsible for organising this event. This year also, about 1,200 people from Tamil Nadu will participate in Sangamam. They will come in about six different groups during this event. About 200 will come in each group. During this, all these people will be taken on a tour of Prayagraj and Ayodhya along with Varanasi.

First Tamil group gets warm welcome

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The first Tamil group was given a 'Vanakkam Kashi' welcome amid beats of dhols and nagaras when it arrived at Banaras railway station by a special train on Saturday to participate in Kashi Tamil Sangamam (KTS) 3.0. District Magistrate S Rajalingam and senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders, including regional party chief Dilip Patel and MLAs, Hansraj Vishwakarma and Dharmendra Singh, were present at the station. This team was sent off from Chennai Central railway station by Tamil Nadu Governor Thiru RN Ravi. Apart from a red carpet welcome, all the participants were garlanded and 'tilak' was applied amid the sounds of drums, conches and 'damrus'. According to IRCCTC Chief Regional Manager Ajit Kumar Sinha, guests were taken to their hotels by e-buses and after taking a bath in Ganga river at Hanuman Ghat, they went to the residence of national poet Subramania Bharti before attending the inaugural function of KTS 3.0 at Namoo Ghat. They will also visit Kashi Vishwanath Temple (KVT) and participate in academic sessions to be organised at



The first group of Tamil participants of KTS 3.0 being welcomed at Banaras railway station on Saturday.

Ramnagar Fort and in Banaras Hindu University (BHU). Under KTS 3.0, six academic sessions will be held in BHU from February 16 to 22 and Tamil guests of each group will tour the historical sites and departments of BHU campus. They will learn about BHU and IIT (BHU) at the stalls set up at Namoo Ghat. Students, teachers, farmers, artisans, professionals and small entrepreneurs from Tamil Nadu apart from women and researchers will also participate in this programme at Namoo Ghat. They will also get a chance to participate in the ongoing

Maha Kumbh Mela on the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers in Prayagraj. The main theme of KTS is to highlight the important contribution of Rishi Agastya in Siddha system of medicine, classical Tamil literature and cultural unity of the nation. On this occasion, a special exhibition will be organised on various aspects of Rishi Agastya's personality and his contribution to health, philosophy, science, linguistics, literature, politics, culture, art, especially Tamil and Tamil Nadu. Committee Chairman Prof

Anurag Dave said there will be experts from BHU's Institute of Agricultural Science, faculties of Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Veterinary Science, Dental Science and others at Namoo Ghat. Professor Gyaneshwar Choubey from the Department of Zoology, BHU, and researchers will tell about the excellent work done in the direction of gene therapy and DNA science. Short videos on BHU will also be shown to the Tamil delegation. Professors and student volunteers of Tamil department will be the medium of communication with the guests.

Fire in tent house warehouse

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A major fire broke out in the warehouse of a tent house located in the rear part of Motijheel complex in Mahmoorganj under Bhelpur police station. According to eyewitnesses, the fire broke



out around 1.30 am and was brought under control at 4.45 am on Saturday. The fire was so fierce that it also engulfed the multi-story building of Mohini Kunj Colony located nearby. While there were no casualties in this incident, goods worth lakhs of rupees were burnt to ashes. It is suspected that the fire might have been caused by the spark of a firecracker as the MCB was switched off before closing the warehouse. The locals contacted Satya Foundation's founder secretary Chetan Upadhyay who informed the police control room and number 112. Electricity supply to the area was cut off. Four fire tenders took up the task of extinguishing the fire. Finally the fire was brought under control during the wee hours. Huge stock of tent house was burnt to ashes in the fire. Apart from this, ACs, washing machines, electric switch boards, mobiles, laptops, clothes, beds and doors and windows of many flats in Mohini Kunj building also got burnt.

STPs approved in Varanasi & Bhadohi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has approved significant sewage treatment plants (STPs) in Varanasi and Bhadohi. The 60th executive committee meeting of the NMCG chaired by director general approved these projects amounting to more than ₹400 crore, which are aimed at the conservation and rejuvenation of the Ganga river. The committee approved the interception and diversion of the Durga drain and the construction of a 60 MLD capacity sewage treatment plant (STP) in Varanasi at a cost of ₹274.31 crore. This project, based on the hybrid annuity model, includes a 75 MLD capacity main pumping station and other essential structures, ensuring long-term wastewater management and pollution control. Additionally, another significant project was approved to prevent the flow of untreated

sewage into Varuna, a major tributary of the Ganga, in Bhadohi. With an investment of ₹127.26 crore, it will establish three STPs with capacities of 17 MLD, 5 MLD, and 3 MLD, along with an extensive sewer network to tap four major drains and prevent pollution. This project follows the design-build-operate-transfer (DBOT) model, ensuring sustainable operation and maintenance over the next 15 years. Further, the executive committee of NMCG has undertaken a breakthrough initiative with the approval of 'Ganga Through the Ages - A Literary Bioscope', an innovative project designed to foster public participation in Ganga conservation through literature, education, and community engagement. Implemented in collaboration with the National Book Trust, this initiative will highlight the historical, spiritual, and ecological significance of

the river. Other programmes such as Ganga Mobile Parikrama, Chaupal Ganga Kinare, Ganga Awareness Week, and the Ganga Ambassador Programme will be introduced, featuring mobile libraries, digital storytelling, school workshops, and literary sessions along the riverbanks. These efforts inspire behavioural change and encourage deeper community involvement in conservation efforts. The projects approved during the 60th NMCG executive committee meeting reaffirm the mission's commitment to Ganga conservation through infrastructural advancements, pollution control, and public engagement. Key initiatives include sewage treatment plants and afforestation, alongside the innovative 'Ganga Through the Ages - A Literary Bioscope' project to foster awareness and participation in river rejuvenation efforts.

Two more Arogya Mandirs receive NQAS certificates

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Two more Ayushman Arogya Mandirs of the district including Bhaithauli and Maniyari now received National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS) certificates and with this a total of 21 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs have become NQAS certified. Giving this information on Saturday, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said medical and health facilities are being continuously expanded and strengthened at the community level in Varanasi, parliamentary constituency of the Prime Minister. "Keeping in mind Arogya Param Dhanam, the reach of better health services is being increased in the community through Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (Health Wellness Centres) being operated near the home. Recently, the Government of India has

certified two more Health Wellness Centres (HWCs) of the district as NQAS, which include Bhaithauli of block Harhua and Maniyari Ayushman Arogya Mandir of block Sewapuri. Expressing happiness, the CMO said two more Ayushman Arogya Mandirs of the district have received NQAS certification, in which Bhaithauli has scored 90 per cent and Maniyari 88 per cent marks. With these, now a total of 21 such health centres have received NQAS certificates. He congratulated the Community Health Officers (CHOs), ANMs, ASHA Sanganis, all ASHA workers and gram pradhans of Ayushman Arogya Mandirs working at these centres. Nodal officer of the programme Dr YB Pathak informed that Ayushman Arogya Mandirs are given NQAS certificate for better performance on seven standards set by the Government of

India such as Care in Pregnancy and Child Birth, Neonatal and Infant Health Services, Childhood and Adolescent Health Services, Family Planning, Management of Communicable Diseases, Management of Simple Illnesses Including Minor Elements and Management of Non-Communicable Diseases. Divisional Quality Assurance Consultant Dr Tanveer Siddiqui informed that currently 45 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs have been certified for NQAS by preparing certification and uploading data and details on Saksham portal and sent from state level to national level. In this sequence, 21 facilities have been certified in the district. Assessment of nineurban primary health centres and 29 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs has been done. The result of which is yet to come. Apart from this, the assessment of 14 Ayushman Arogya

Mandirs will be done by February 28. "If we talk about the district hospitals like Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital and Adolescent Women's Hospital, their marks are also above 70 per cent and details of which have been sent to the state government", he added. **WORKSHOP ORGANISED:** The Department of Veterinary Extension, Faculty of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (FVAS), Rajiv Gandhi South Campus (RGSC) of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) organised a one-day workshop on 'Vindhya Kshetra Mein Unnat Bakri Palan' (Advanced goat rearing in Vindhya region) under the Institute of Eminence (IoE) Seed Grant Programme on Friday at RGSC, Barkachha (Mirzapur). Dean of FVAS Prof NK Singh graced the occasion as chief guest emphasising advanced goat rearing practices for better livelihood opportunities.

Man dies in road mishap

Prayagraj (PNS): A 35-year-old man died in a road accident in Meja police station area on Saturday. Bablu Sonkar belonging to Belan Baraudha village of Lalganj in Mirzapur district, had come to Bashara village to visit relatives. He was walking on the roadside around 2 pm when he was by an uncontrolled vehicle. The collision was so severe that Bablu Sonkar died on the spot. Meja police station in charge Rajesh Upadhyay said the matter is being investigated.

Main gate, selfie point at deer park inaugurated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The main gate and selfie point at Sarnath Deer Park were inaugurated by Conservator of Forests, Varanasi, Ravi Kumar Singh, on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, Singh said these places will further generate more interest among tourists and attract more visitors and school chil-



dren. He said at the Chidhiya Ghar there in Sarnath, the number and variety of birds will be increased. The function was also attended by Sumitranand Bhante of Mahabodhi Society of India, Regional Forest Officer Ravindra Yadav, District Forest Officer Swati, representatives of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), WII etc and Ganga Praharis.

'Fundraising for social cause one of toughest challenges'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Institute of Management Studies, Banaras Hindu University (IM-BHU) organised an interactive session on 'Entrepreneurship Beyond Profits: Creating Impact Through Business' here on Friday. The esteemed guest for the session was CEO and co-founder of Devaseva and co-founder of Donatekart Anil Kumar Reddy. It was organised under the guidance of Coordinator, Student Leadership and Life Skills Development Initiative, Dr Anindita Chakraborty. The session began with paying floral tribute to the idol of Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. Director of the institute Prof Ashish Bajpai, and Dean of the Faculty Prof SK Dubey commenced the session by felicitating the guest with a token of gratitude and presenting a memento. Addressing the session, Anil Kumar Reddy



Guest speaker of an interactive session being welcomed at IM-BHU in Varanasi

shared his experience of how he ventured into entrepreneurship and his journey as an entrepreneur. He informed the students about various social activities he had organised, like blood donation camps, disaster management drives and clothes collection initiatives. He also explained that fundraising for a social cause is one of the toughest elaborated on the concept of challenges and crowdfunding. He said, "If you want to build something, think about solving a problem instead of trying to come up with something new." Reddy further emphasised on Hindu traditions and how donating and helping others are its integral part. Towards the end of the session, he opened the floor for students to ask questions. The students actively participated in the discussion. The session ended with a vote of thanks to the guest.

CBSE exams for Classes 10, 12 begin

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) exams for Classes 10 and 12 began on Saturday, with more than 42 Lakh students set to take the tests at over 7,800 centres across the country and abroad. According to board officials, a total of 24.12 Lakh Class-10 students will take the test in 84 subjects, while more than 17.88 Lakh students will appear in the Class-12 exams across 120 subjects. The exams are scheduled to be conducted at 7,842 centres in India and 26 abroad. On the first day of the exams, the Class 10 students appeared for the English (Communicative) and English (Language and Literature) papers, while the Class-12 students appeared in the Entrepreneurship exam. "The CBSE board exams for Classes 10 and 12 have started. Today, the Class-10 English and Class-12 Entrepreneurship exams were



held. The Class-10 exam took place at 7,780 centres, with over 23.86 Lakh students appearing, while the Class-12 exam was conducted at 995 centres with around 23,000 students," CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj said.

"The exams were organised smoothly. I hope all the students reached their exam centres with enthusiasm and were able to take the tests in a positive environment," he added. Bhardwaj said the CBSE has ensured that all necessary guidelines and

security measures are in place to maintain the integrity of the examination process. "Schools and exam centres have been briefed on strict protocols to facilitate a fair and seamless examination experience. The CBSE had organised a live webcast on

Friday in the presence of school principals from Delhi-NCR, outlining the essential exam guidelines for the schools and stakeholders," he added.

The Class-10 exams are scheduled to end on March 18, while the Class-12 exams will conclude on April 4. The CBSE started its annual counselling service ahead of the board exams to alleviate examination-related stress and support the students as they prepare for their theory exams. "A team of 66 trained professionals, principals, counsellors, special educators from CBSE-affiliated schools and psychologists will offer voluntary support to the students. The services are available from 9:30 am to 5:30 pm from Monday to Saturday," Bhardwaj said. "Fifty-one counsellors are based in India while 15 counsellors will connect from Nepal, Japan, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates to guide the students," he added.

Congress questions India's need for F35 fighter jets

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala on Saturday raised several questions on whether the country required expensive fighter jets like F35 aircraft from the US and if security experts and armed forces were consulted in the national interest.

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit, India and the US unveiled an ambitious plan to sign a new 10-year defence partnership and pursue co-production of key weapons and platforms with President Donald Trump announcing that Washington would increase sales of military hardware to New Delhi by millions of dollars including possible supply of F-35 stealth fighter jets.

In multiple posts on X, Surjewala claimed there are many flaws in the F 35 aircraft and many accidents have happened, with some calling



them "junk" and others "useless". "There is a lot of discussion about Prime Minister Modi buying F 35 fighter aircraft from America, but did the Modi government consider these aspects in the interest of the country," he asked.

The cost of flying an F 35 fighter aircraft is \$35,000 per hour, i.e. ₹28,00,000 per hour, he said, adding F 35 is the most expensive fighter aircraft in the world and the cost of one aircraft is approximately USD 110 million, or ₹968 Crore. "Does the Modi government think that the cost of Rs 28 lakh per hour is right for India and

was the opinion of the Indian Air Force and defence experts taken in this regard," Surjewala asked.

"Prime Minister Modi is buying F 35 fighter aircraft from America, but did the Modi government consider these aspects in national interest before taking a unilateral decision to buy F 35 aircraft at the behest of President Trump. Does the Indian Air Force want to buy F 35 fighter aircraft in accordance with the country's defense interests? Was the Air Force's opinion taken," the Congress leader asked in another post in Hindi.

Kerala nurses council to bar ragging accused from continuing their studies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Thiruvananthapuram/New Delhi

Amid widespread outrage over the brutal ragging incident at the Government Nursing College, the Kerala Nurses and Midwives Council (KNMC) on Saturday decided to bar all five accused students from continuing their studies.

A council meeting convened here observed that the accused did not deserve to complete their studies or enter the service profession. The council further noted that those entering the nursing profession should be humane and compassionate—whereas the accused displayed cruelty toward their juniors—behaviour that is unacceptable in any circumstance. A council member described the Kottayam ragging incident as an "extremely cruel act" and said it cannot be justified under any circumstances. "We will never justify the incident. What we want to emphasise is



that allowing such individuals into the nursing profession would be a disaster," said Usha Devi, a council member. She said the Council would soon inform the concerned authorities of its decision. With this decision, the accused students can no longer continue their studies in Kerala, she added. The Council's ruling came a day after the state Health Minister indicated that strict action would be taken against those involved in the brutal incident. On Friday, the department suspended Principal Sulekha A T and Assistant

Professor/Assistant Warden-in-Charge of the student hostel, Ajeesh P Mani, pending an inquiry for allegedly failing to prevent ragging and effectively intervene in the matter. The hostel's housekeeper-cum-security staff was also ordered to be removed immediately, according to a statement issued by the Health Minister's office late Friday night. The action was taken following an inquiry conducted by the Director of Medical Education, as per the instructions of Health Minister Veena George, the statement added.

Delhi HC seeks CBIC's stand on betel nuts for customs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has sought the stand of Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) on a plea for resolving the issue of alleged mis-classification of betel nuts for the purpose of customs duty.

The petitioner, a customs house agent, claimed the ambiguity on whether betel nuts would attract 100 per cent or 50 per cent basic customs duty has allegedly resulted in large-scale mis-classification, enabling duty evasion and causing significant financial harm to the government. The court was informed by the petitioner's advocate that complaints have also been filed with the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and other higher government authorities for action to be taken against the officers who are allegedly evading in large scale duty evasion on the basis of this ambiguity in spite the



clarification provided by the Supreme Court. A bench of Justices Prathiba M Singh and Dharmesh Sharma noted that despite advance copies of petition being served to the authorities, their counsel have not been given any instructions. The court granted time to the counsel for the respondents to take instructions in the matter and listed it for further hearing on February 27.

The court said if no decision has already been taken on the complaints, it should be taken on an "early date". Advocate Kamini Lau, representing petitioner Bajrang Lal Sharma, said the issue has created enormous difficulties for customs house agents like the petitioner as no decision has been taken despite repeated complaints against the senior officials. The plea said the petitioner, along with several customs

house agents, are facing repeated harassment from a group of customs officers, even as the National Customs Targeting Centre (NCTC) received multiple complaints regarding the alleged mis-declaration and mis-classification of imported betel nuts under various names such as "boiled supari, API supari, chikni supari, and flavoured supari", being wrongly classified. It claimed this mis-

classification allowed importers to evade the 100 per cent basic customs duty (BCD) by paying only 50 per cent, and also bypass the Minimum Import Price conditions set by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade.

The plea said the petitioner submitted a complaint to the CVC in March 2022, seeking urgent intervention against senior custom officer for his alleged involvement in duty evasion in collusion with others as the ongoing clearance of goods through mis-classification was causing significant revenue loss. However, the respondent departments failed to take any effective action, thereby allowing the duty evasion scam to continue unchecked, it claimed. The petition has arrayed the Centre through Ministry of Finance, CBIC, CVC and the Directorate General of Vigilance, Customs and Central Excise as respondents.

CIABC urges government to curb dumping of imported spirits

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) on Saturday urged the government to impose stringent measures to curb dumping of imported spirits and ensure greater market access for domestic products.

The Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) said the Indian liquor manufacturers are not against reduction in import duty, though they have sought the import duty cuts in a phased manner. India on February 13 slashed import duty on bourbon whiskey to 100 per cent. It is mainly imported from the US. The confederation "has urged the government to address the concerns of the Indian companies and ensure a level-playing field in FTA (free



trade agreement) negotiations and set in stringent effective measures to check and curb dumping of imported spirits and seeking better international access for Indian alcoholic products which face several non-tariff restrictions at present," it said in a statement. It has also requested the states to withdraw excise duty concessions given to imported liquor in view of reduction in customs duty.

The government needs to safeguard the interests of Indian liquor manufacturers while deciding on issues related to customs duty cuts and other concessions under FTAs, CIABC Director General Anant S Iyer said. "Though we have already recommended to the government to cut basic customs duty on spirits over a period of 10 years, we also want the government to ensure better international

market access especially the Western countries and safeguard interests of Indian companies against any dumping of products through transfer price mechanism at lower prices specifically for India," Iyer said. He added non-tariff barriers imposed by other countries prevent a vast majority of Indian products being sold in the Western markets. "We also want these markets to recognise Indian whiskies at par with other global products," he said, adding the industry needs to be protected as there is always the fear of cheap imports in spirits and wines eroding the domestic industry. The alcoholic beverage industry contributes over Rs 3 lakh crore to the exchequer of states apart from adding central government's revenue in terms of customs duty and GST on a host of inputs.

India needs strong production base, not empty words: Rahul Gandhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said while India has the talent, it needs a strong production base, and not empty words, to build industrial prowess in new technology to give its youth jobs. In a post on X, Gandhi highlighted how China has started producing drones which are revolutionising warfare across the world, saying India needs to develop a strategy to become competitive in this area.

"Drones have revolutionised warfare, combining batteries, motors and optics to manoeuvre and communicate on the battlefield in unprecedented ways. But drones are not just one technology -- they are bottom-up innovations produced by a strong industrial system. Unfortunately, PM Modi has



failed to grasp this. While he delivers 'teleprompter' speeches on AI, our competitors are mastering new technologies. India needs a strong production base, not empty words," he said in the post, taking a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "India has immense talent, scale and drive. We must have a clear vision and build real industrial prowess to give our youth jobs and lead India into the future," Gandhi added.

The Congress leader also tagged a nine-minute video on drone technology with the post, saying India has the talent and engineering skills to develop such technology for the future. He also referred to his speech in the Lok Sabha while speaking on the Motion of Thanks to the president's address, where he talked about new technology. In the video, Gandhi is heard saying that drones have

completely transformed the way wars are fought. "But drones are not just a technology -- they are a grassroots and small-scale innovation being produced by a robust industrial system. Drones have diminished the importance of tanks, artillery and even aircraft carriers, bringing air power to the platoon level and reshaping intelligence and precision on the battlefield. But this revolution is not just limited to warfare -- it is also about industry, AI and next-generation technology," he said. "Unfortunately, PM Modi has failed to understand this. While he is busy giving speeches on AI by simply reading from a 'teleprompter', our competitors are mastering new technologies. India needs a strong production base, not empty speeches," Gandhi said.

Textbooks not challenge for intelligence, be smarter than smartphone: Sadhguru

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Textbooks are not a challenge for intelligence and stress means the brain is not being oiled enough, spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev said, as he shared mantras for playful learning and avoiding stress ahead of exams with students as part of the prime minister's latest 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' episode aired on Saturday. Sadhguru told students that they have to be smarter than their smartphones. He also shared tips on how to avoid overthinking during a special session of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' -- an annual event in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with students appearing for board

examinations. In a shift from the traditional town hall format, Modi preferred a more informal setting this time and took students to Delhi's iconic Sunder Nursery for his annual interaction. Eminent personalities such as boxer MC Mary Kom and Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone have also shared their experiences and knowledge on key aspects of life and learning in different episodes of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha'. Next in the series are Bollywood actors Vikrant Massey and Bhumi Pednekar sharing tips on cultivating positivity, managing negative thoughts, and tackling exam stress with confidence. "For #ExamWarriors, among the biggest allies during

exam time is positivity. Tomorrow's 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' episode delves into this topic and we have @VikrantMassey and @bhumpednekar share their insights," PM Modi wrote on X. Teaching students how to practise meditation, Sadhguru said intelligence is not about usefulness. "Intelligence creates a profoundness of experience of life. If you feel stressed, it means the brain is not being oiled well," he said. "Your textbook is not a challenge for your intelligence, no matter who you are. No matter if you have not done well in school till now, I'm telling you for your intelligence that textbooks are not a challenge.



"You're unnecessarily making it difficult for yourself by approaching it in a certain way. Why can't you learn playfully? If you make it playful, your textbook will not be a challenge," Sadhguru added. The Isha Foundation chief

told students that they have to be smarter than their smartphones, while urging them to not treat exams as a "challenge to their intelligence". "If you look at the grass or that motorcycle, you should think what is the physics,

math and chemistry of it. Education gives you fundamentals and eventually an access to life. To find this access, one aspect is active dynamic intelligence," he said. Responding to a student's query on addiction to social media and phone, he said that a person should decide how to use a smartphone, not the other way round. He also said that there is no such thing as overthinking, as one must think beyond to be able to do something worthwhile. "You may call it stress or anxiety, but the problem is that you don't know how to keep your mind aligned. What is not well aligned will cause friction, further causing stress," Sadhguru said. Emphasising the power of

meditation, the spiritual leader said studies have shown that when the 'Shambhavi Mahamudra' is practised, a large part of the brain lights up. "This is what needs to happen, that everything is lit up. The more you activate your intelligence, the more access you have to everything that you see. If your body is well-exercised, you can function better. Then why is that not true with your mental faculties?" he asked. Sadhguru also warned against comparing the intelligence of people. "Am I as intelligent as this person or that person? There is no such thing. It's a farce that's been spread in the world. Everybody can sparkle and do things that others cannot imagine. Only

thing is, because there is no striving, that sparkle doesn't happen," he told students. Nutrition and health experts Shonali Sabherwal, Rujuta Diwekar and Revant Himatsingka; YouTuber Gaurav Chaudhary popularly known as 'TechGuruji' and Radhika Gupta, MD and CEO, Edelweiss Mutual Fund are among the other guests who have been part of the programme so far. The first edition of the interactive programme with school and college students was held at Delhi's Talkatora Stadium in 2018. Its seventh edition was held in a town hall format at the Bharat Mandapam last year, involving participants from around the country and abroad.

Former New India Cooperative Bank GM arrested in ₹122 Crore bank fraud case

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Two days after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed restrictions on New India Cooperative Bank (NICB), the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Mumbai police on Saturday arrested its former General Manager Hitesh Mehta in a Rs 122 crore funds' embezzlement case.

Mehta's arrest came after the NICB's chief executive officer Devarshi Shishir Kumar Ghosh lodged a complaint against him with the Dadar police on Friday. Mehta will be produced before a holiday court on Sunday.

Ahead of Mehta's arrest, the EOW officers raided his residence at Dahisar in north Mumbai and seized some incriminating documents.

In his complaint, the Bank's CEO has alleged that Mehta and one of the senior employees of the bank had in their custody the bank's cash in the bank's vaults at its Prabhadevi and Goregaon offices and that together, they had allegedly hatched a criminal conspiracy and embezzled about Rs 122 crore. Ahead of Mehta's arrest, the police had begun to investigate the alleged irregularities that took place in the bank between 2020 and 2025. On Friday, the EOW had recorded the statement of a senior official.

The EOW officials have registered an FIR under sections 316(5) (criminal breach of trust by a public servant or banker, merchant, broker, attorney or agent) and



Hitesh Mehta, General Manager and Head of Accounts at New India Cooperative Bank, after being arrested by the EOW

61(2) (criminal conspiracy) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The RBI's decision to impose severe restrictions on the bank, including withdrawal of money from the savings and current accounts of the bank, has sent shocking waves through the country's commercial capital, with thousands of panic-stricken depositors gathering before the branches of the bank to check if their money lying with the bank was "safe" and if they would be allowed to withdraw the same. The RBI's restrictions prevent

the bank from issuing new loans, making investments, borrowing funds or allowing withdrawals for six months due to concerns over its financial stability. Having superseded the bank's board of directors for 12 months, citing "poor governance standards", the RBI has appointed Shreekanth, a former chief general manager of the State Bank of India (SBI), as the administrator to manage the bank's affairs. Additionally, a committee of advisors has been formed to assist him. The RBI has barred the bank

from granting or renewing any loans and advances, making any investment, including any liability including borrowing funds and acceptance of fresh deposits, disburse or agree to disburse any payment whether in discharge of its liabilities and obligations without prior approval of RBI in writing. The RBI restrictions came into effect after the close of business on February 13, and will be valid for six months. In all, NICB has 30 branches and a deposit base of Rs 2,436 crore as of March 2024. The

bank had posted losses of Rs 30.74 crore in 2022-23 and Rs 22.78 crore in 2023-24. This is the third major action taken against a co-operative bank in Maharashtra over alleged financial irregularities. Earlier, on September 24, 2019, the RBI had Tuesday placed Punjab & Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank Ltd under regulatory restrictions, thus barring the bank from carrying out routine and major financial transactions, including withdrawal of cash exceeding Rs 1,000 by each of the depositors, for a period of six months.

Sarma continues allegations against Gaurav Gogoi's wife

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma continued to question Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi's British wife Elizabeth Colburn's links with Pakistan, alleging on Saturday that the "network is now emerging as far more significant and deeply entrenched than initially thought".

He shared screenshots of old posts on X by Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, an advisor of the Pakistan Planning Commission and a former colleague of Colburn, and claimed that the relationship between the Gogois and the Pakistani national appeared to be 'deeply rooted'.

Sarma had also targeted the Jorhat MP over the issue, demanding answers from Gogoi over the allegations of ISI links, "leading young individuals to the Pakistan embassy for brainwashing and radicalisation, and the refusal

to take Indian citizenship for the past 12 years", referring to Colburn's nationality status. He had also alleged that Gogoi had raised questions in Parliament on sensitive defence matters after his marriage to the British citizen, a charge termed by the opposition leader as a "false accusation".

In his latest charges, Sarma shared a screenshot of a post on X by Sheikh in 2019 in which he commented on the problem of illegal migrants from Bangladesh to India.

"Elizabeth Colburn w/o Hon'ble MP worked under Ali Tauqeer Sheikh in the organisation LEAD Pakistan, which operated under the guise of climate change initiatives," Sarma wrote, sharing the screenshot. He claimed that a "closer examination" of Sheikh's works and articles reveals a deeper and more strategic involvement, particularly in Assam.

"The extent of this network is now emerging as far more significant and deeply entrenched than initially thought," Sarma maintained, as he tagged the Union Home Ministry in his post.

The CM shared another post by Sheikh from 2020 where the Pakistan national lauds Gogoi and others for raising the Delhi riots issue in the Parliament.

Sarma said, "Pakistan National Ali Sheikh of Lead Pakistan who is Elizabeth Colburn's colleague and supervisor shared his anti-India propaganda and also tagged and cheered Hon'ble MP when he raised the Delhi Riots 2020 issue in Parliament. Yes, The relationships appear to be deeply rooted."

The BJP had on Wednesday accused Gogoi's wife of having links with Pakistan and the ISI, a charge rejected by the deputy leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha as 'laughable and entertaining'.

Maharashtra forms panel on Love Jihad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Government has set up a seven-member committee headed by the State Director General of Police (DGP) to study the legal aspects for a new law against forced conversions and cases of 'love jihad'. The committee includes secretaries of the women and child welfare, minority affairs, law and judiciary, social justice and special assistance departments, and deputy secretaries of the home department. As per a Government Resolution (GR) issued late on Friday, the committee will study the prevailing situation in the state and suggest steps to tackle the complaints of "love jihad" and forced conversions. The committee will also look at legal aspects and the laws

framed in other States. Accordingly, it will recommend legislation to prevent forced conversions and instances of "love jihad". Love jihad is a term used by right-wing activists and outfits to allege a conspiracy by Muslim men to convert Hindu women to Islam through marriage. Speaking on the development, Maharashtra minister and senior BJP leader Mangal Prabhat Lodha said the state government is taking strict steps to curb incidents of "love jihad" in the state. Lodha, the joint guardian minister of Mumbai suburban district, thanked Chief Minister

Devendra Fadnis for the step. "Love jihad is a serious issue, and the state government is working towards preventing such incidents. The committee established to address cases of love jihad will work for the protection of women and preservation of cultural values," he said. Lodha said he had set up the Interfaith Marriage Coordination Committee, which played a significant role in highlighting such incidents, when he was in charge of the Women and Child Development Department in the Eknath Shinde dispensation.

Second deportation flight arrives

From page 1

NAPA urged the Punjab government to protect the lives of young Punjabis and take decisive action against those who send youths abroad illegally. Punjab Congress leader Partap Singh Bajwa alleged that the Bhagwant Mann government in the state has "failed" in curbing human trafficking. Bajwa asked Mann how many travel agents were booked for human trafficking in the last three years.

Accident claims 10 lives in Prayagraj

From page 1

On Tuesday, seven people from Andhra Pradesh, who were returning from the Maha Kumbh, died after their tempo traveller collided with a truck on a highway in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district. On Monday, a couple from Agra died and four others were injured when their car collided with a truck while

they were returning from the Kumbh. According to Station House Officer Rudra Pratap Singh, the truck was seized and the driver was detained. A man from Odisha's Rourkela died and six others were injured when a car carrying them from the Maha Kumbh to their home collided with a bus in Uttar Pradesh's Sonbhadra on Monday, police said.

Bengaluru airport to have train...

From page 1

Vaishnav mentioned that during his visits, he has been reviewing the progress of the K-RIDE suburban railway project in detail. "Each time, the major challenge has been the lack of technical personnel. I will request the state government to appoint a full-time MD from the

Railway technical cadre. Without this, progress will be slow," he said. Regarding the circular rail project around Bengaluru, he said the concept has now been finalised. "Bengaluru is connected to the city by seven railway spokes. About a year and a half ago, we introduced the idea of a circular rail network," he explained. The

Minister also addressed issues related to metro train manufacturing. "Although this does not fall under the railway's purview, we will do our best to ensure that the people of Bengaluru get good facilities, which is the priority. We should not get into whether this falls under the state or Centre's domain," he pointed out.

AAP appointments under scrutiny

From page 1

Further, no information was provided to the Services department about the engagements of 187 persons in Delhi Assembly Research Centre (DARC), Dialogue and Development Commission of Delhi (DDCD) and Department of Planning, about the issue of approval of the competent authority, the statement said. Eleven persons were engaged in 4 departments - Health and Family Welfare, Food Safety, Indra Gandhi Hospital and Transport - with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor. According to the minutes of the meeting, the chief secretary has directed

departments to draft a cabinet note on the implementation of the Ayushman Bharat scheme, a key BJP poll plank. Officials have also been tasked with finding immediate solutions for waterlogging and sewage problems. To streamline civic administration, a Unified Delhi Control Room will be set up in the NDMC area, ensuring real-time coordination across departments. All departments must outline their 15-day, monthly, and 100-day targets. If any project/scheme needs to be placed before the Council of Ministers, the Department should start preparing the Draft Cabinet Note," read the

directive issued by the chief secretary. Officials have also been instructed to compile PowerPoint presentations detailing their department's structure, roles, challenges, and goals, which will be consolidated by the General Administration Department for review by the incoming government. The directive has stressed the importance of integrating Central government schemes that have not yet been implemented in Delhi. "Departments may take urgent action on these schemes/programmes for taking requisite approval of the Competent Authority," it has stated.

Meta's longest undersea cable to connect India, US

From page 1

The investment assumes significance as telecom operators have been demanding big techs including Meta to contribute towards building network infrastructure to decongest the data traffic load and improve customer experience. "Driven by India's growing demand for digital services, this investment reaffirms Meta's commitment to economic growth, resilient infrastructure, and digital inclusion, supporting India's thriving digital landscape and fostering technological innovation," the spokesperson said. According to the US-India joint statement, India intends to invest in maintenance, repair and financing of undersea cables in the Indian Ocean, using trusted vendors. Meta in a blog on Project Waterworth said that the company is deploying first-of-its-kind routing, maximizing the cable laid in deep water

-- at depths up to 7,000 metres -- and using enhanced burial techniques in high-risk fault areas, such as shallow waters near the coast, to avoid damage from ship anchors and other hazards. The company said the new, multi-billion dollar investment will connect five continents, enhancing the scale and reliability of the global digital highways that power Meta's apps and services, and will be ready for service at the end of the decade. "This project will enable greater economic cooperation, facilitate digital inclusion, and open opportunities for technological development in these regions. For example, in India, where we've already seen significant growth and investment in digital infrastructure, Waterworth will help accelerate this progress and support the country's ambitious plans for its digital economy," the blog said.

Biryani, chicken curry included in Singapore's emergency meal kits

From page 1

These meals can also be heated up using a microwave, oven or by immersion in hot water for those who prefer a warm meal. Sin said the ingredients are "selectively picked and harvested", with SATS working closely with local farmers for vegetables and mushrooms. The tilapia fish used in the meals is also locally sourced. However, not all ingredients are suitable for long-term storage - leafy greens, for example, are "nearly impossible" as they tend to turn yellow and limp if cooked under high heat, according to the Channel report. Once prepared, the meals undergo a sterilisation process in a retort machine, typically used commercially to eliminate harmful bacteria and pathogens in sealed food products. Different meal types require specific sterilisation methods, with variations in temperature and duration to maintain food quality while ensuring safety. No additives or preservatives are added to the meals, underlined Sin.

options due to considerations such as needing to airdrop the packages and meeting the high-calorie needs of soldiers in the field. Nevertheless, the SATS team learned from its experience producing combat rations to develop the new emergency meals. One key difference is packaging transparency: combat rations are stored in opaque pouches to extend shelf life up to 24 months, while the ready-to-eat meals have a transparent seal, which exposes them to sunlight that could discolour the food. "When we distribute the meals, we give very clear storage conditions: a clean environment, away from sunlight, in an ambient storage area less than 30 degrees," the Channel had Sin as saying.

The Singapore Food Agency, which collaborated with SATS in this initiative, said ready-to-eat meals are a quick way to ensure Singaporeans have access to food in crises. "These meals are shelf-stable and are convenient as they require minimal preparation before consumption," it said in a media factsheet. The agency encouraged Singaporeans to support the nation's food security by being flexible in their choices such as choosing frozen over chilled products or opting for canned alternatives instead of fresh food. Households could keep a reasonable pantry stocked with extra food, enough to last up to two weeks, reported the Channel, citing the agency.

Land-short Singapore largely depends on imported food sources but has several farms and a fishing network.

Sheesh Mahal under CVC lens

From page 1

The probe came after the CPWD submitted a factual report on Kejriwal's official residence which was undertaken after a complaint by BJP MLA Vijender Gupta. The renovated bungalow was the official residence of the Aam Aadmi Party national convener, Arvind Kejriwal, during his tenure as the capital's chief minister from 2015 till October 2024, when he vacated the mansion after resigning from the post. The PWD report, released in October 2024, highlighted luxurious renovations and high-end appliances installed at the bungalow. This provided ammunition to the BJP in its campaign against the AAP leadership. Gupta first raised concerns on October 14, 2024, alleging

unauthorized construction at Kejriwal's former official residence. His complaint stated that government properties, including Plot Nos. 45 and 47 on Rajpur Road-previously occupied by senior officials and judges in Type-V flats-as well as two bungalows (8-A & 8-B, Flag Staff Road), were demolished and merged into the new structure. He claimed that the construction violated ground coverage and floor area ratio (FAR) norms and proceeded without proper layout approvals. Following the complaint, the CVC registered the case for examination on October 16. A month later, in November 2024, it forwarded the matter to the CPWD for further scrutiny, assuring that appropriate action would be taken based on the findings.

On October 21, Gupta filed another complaint with the Vigilance Commission, this time focusing on the alleged misuse of public funds for extravagant renovations and interior decorations at Kejriwal's residence. He accused the former CM of spending crores of taxpayers' money on luxury amenities, far exceeding reasonable limits, raising serious concerns about financial irregularities. Taking note of the allegations, the CVC acknowledged the seriousness of the matter on November 5. Later, on December 5, the CPWD's chief vigilance officer (CVO) submitted a factual report based on Gupta's complaint, which ultimately led to the CVC's decision to launch a full-scale

investigation. A year ago, in September 2023, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had registered a preliminary enquiry on the matter months after the Ministry of Home Affairs asked the Comptroller & Auditor General of India to conduct a special audit into the alleged irregularities and violations in the reconstruction of the bungalow. A Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report in the case detailing the audit of the house's repair and renovation shows that from a preliminary estimate of Rs 7.91 crore in 2020, the total cost of the work at the property shot up to Rs 33.66 crore by the time it ended in 2022. During a political rally, Prime Minister Narendra

Modi made a veiled attack on Mr Kejriwal, stating: "In the last 10 years, Delhi has been plagued by an 'AAP'da'. AAP has descended as a calamity on Delhi. I could have built a 'Sheeshmahal' too, but I chose to build more than 4 crore homes for the poor." Gupta, a newly elected BJP MLA from Rohini, said in a press conference that his first complaint to the CVC on October 14, 2024, alleged that Kejriwal flouted building regulations to construct a lavish mansion covering 40,000 square yards (8 acres) of land. Government properties, including plot Nos. 45 and 47 on Rajpur Road (previously housing senior officials and judges in Type-V flats) and two bungalows (8-A and 8-B, Flag Staff Road) were

demolished and merged into the new residence, violating ground coverage and floor area ratio norms and lacking proper layout plan approvals, Gupta alleged. "The CVC registered the complaint on October 16, 2024, and forwarded the matter to the CPWD submitted its factual report on December 5, 2024, confirming the violations. Following this, on February 13, 2025, the CVC directed CPWD to conduct a full-scale investigation into the matter," he said. Gupta asserted the Aam Aadmi Party and its supreme Arvind Kejriwal should not be under the "illusion" that they would get away from facing the law, as PM Narendra Modi had said that those who have "looted the public money" will have to pay back.

Rohit, Kohli lead Team India for Champions Trophy

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Dressed natively in a white T-shirt and black tracks, Rohit Sharma got down from his car, and walked towards his teammates at the departure lounge amid loud calls of 'Rohit bhai' and 'Rohit sir' by fans waiting near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport entrance. Most of the squad members arrived in the team bus including head coach Gautam Gambhir, vice-captain Shubman Gill and star batter Virat Kohli and the stars obliged some fans by signing autographs or waving at a few of them. Soon, the team boarded an afternoon flight to Dubai for the upcoming Champions Trophy amid heightened optimism of netting another



global trophy after winning the T20 World Cup last June. A Jasprit Bumrah-less India will open their campaign against Bangladesh on February 20 in Dubai before the much-anticipated

blockbuster against traditional rivals Pakistan February 23, and then the Men in Blue will take on New Zealand on March 2 to round off their league engagements. The confidence - of the fans

and the team - has been boosted by India's recent 3-0 ODI series whitewash at home over England. Those supporters assembled at the Mumbai airport will be hoping that the icons led by

Rohit and Kohli will pull off another triumph like they did in the West Indies last year. One last opportunity for greats?

Few months ago, Hardik Pandya had walked out with the T20 World Cup trophy hoisted on his shoulders to join a sea of passionate fans on the streets near the Wankhede Stadium for an open bus parade.

If those scenes are to be repeated next month, then India will need some runs from Rohit and Kohli, who have copped heavy criticism after repeated failures in Test cricket.

But they replied in kind, as Rohit made a characteristically fluent hundred - a 90-ball 119 in Cuttack ODI against England - and Kohli his 73rd fifty in Ahmedabad.

Wrestlers appeal for Albania Ranking Series approval

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Asian champion Sunil Kumar, U-23 Asian Championship gold winner Minakshi and several other Indian wrestlers gathered at Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya's residence on Saturday, seeking his intervention to secure approval for their participation in the upcoming Ranking Series in Albania.

The ministry has withheld approval for the wrestlers to participate in the second Ranking Series of the year scheduled to take place in Tirana, Albania, from February 26 to March 2.

"We are unable to participate in the tournament and hence we came to the minister's residence to request him to let us participate in the tournament," Kumar said.

"It will help us in the Asian Championship in Amman in March (as points will decide) the draws and first-round

bouts," he added.

However, the minister was travelling and unavailable. The gathered bunch of 8-10 wrestlers waited till about 2pm outside his residence before dispersing.

"Earlier, we were not allowed to participate in World Ranking Championship in Croatia, and now we are not allowed to go to Albania. We came here to request, we don't know the reason," Minakshi said.

"We are 30 wrestlers, there is no response. We came here and got to know that the minister is not here."

The ministry has cited the Wrestling Federation of India's (WFI) failure to submit the necessary recommendations on time as the reason for withholding the approval.

WFI had sent the proposal to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) on January 30, almost a month before the start of the tournament, a WFI source had told PTI on Friday. Due to the ongoing tussle

between the ministry and the suspended WFI, the wrestlers had also missed the first Ranking Series in Zagreb, Croatia. Although the WFI was suspended by the ministry in December 2023, it remains recognised by the international wrestling body (UWW).

The event will be followed by the Senior Asian Championships in Amman, Jordan, from March 25-30, the third Ranking Series in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from May 29-June 1, and the fourth Ranking Series in Budapest, Hungary, from July 17-20.

Competing in Ranking Series is very important for Indian wrestlers. By doing well there, they earn points and that helps them get seedings at World Championship.

Last year, the government had cleared the Indian wrestling team's participation at for World Championships after all the 12 selected athletes assembled outside the residence of the sports minister.

Aditi lone Indian to make cut in PIF Saudi Ladies International



PTI ■ RIYADH

Aditi Ashok was the lone Indian to make the cut after she carded an even-par 72 in the penultimate round of the PIF Saudi Ladies International held at Riyadh Golf Club. She shot an even par 72 to be 3-under for 36 holes. At T-33, she was among the top 60 and ties who qualified for the final round.

Among the other Indians Pranavi Urs (70-73) was 1-under but missed the cut which fell at 2-under 142, Diksha Dagar (75-69) also exited as did Tvesha Malik (73-73). Thailand's Jeeno Thitikul fired a round of 8-under 64 to move to the top of the leaderboard at 13-under-par. She holds a three-shot lead heading into the final day. The world number four rolled in

back-to-back birdies on the first two holes before adding another on the fifth, Thitikul then rolled in seven birdies on the trot on holes three to nine.

Another birdie came on the 12th before the 21-year-old's only dropped shot of the day on the 15th but the 2021 Race to Costa del Sol champion finished with a flourish with birdies on 17 and 18 to be in pole position.

England's Annabel Fuller and Korea's Somi Lee sit in second place on the leaderboard on 10-under-par. Switzerland's Chiara Tamburini and Austria's Emma Spitz are in a share of fourth place on nine-under-par after 36 holes. Seven players are in a tie for sixth place with Thailand's Ariya Jutanugarn, Denmark's Nanna Koerstz Madsen, Germany's Esther Henseleit, China's Muni He, Korea's Minsun Kim, Australia's Steph Kyriacou and Germany's Olivia Cowan all on eight-under-par.

Jannik Sinner gets three-month ban

PTI ■ LONDON

Top-ranked tennis player Jannik Sinner has accepted a three-month ban in a settlement with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) over his two positive doping tests, the organisation said Saturday.

WADA, which was seeking to ban Sinner from the sport for at least one year, had challenged a decision last year by the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) to suspend Sinner for what the ITIA judged was accidental contamination by a banned anabolic steroid last March.

Sinner's explanation - that trace amounts of Clostebol in his doping sample was due to a massage from a trainer who used the substance after cutting his own finger - had been accepted. The 23-year-old Italian, who won the Australian Open in January, will be eligible to compete in the next Grand Slam. The French Open begins May 25.

"This case had been hanging over me now for nearly a year and the process still had a long time to run with a decision maybe only at the end of the year," Sinner said in a statement. "I have always accepted that I am responsible for my team and realise WADA's strict rules are an important protection for the sport I love. On that basis I have accepted WADA's offer to resolve these proceedings on the basis of a three-month sanction."

WADA had originally appealed the ITIA's ruling to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, Switzerland. It has formally withdrawn the appeal. "WADA accepts the athlete's explanation for the cause of the violation as outlined in the first instance decision. WADA accepts that Mr Sinner did not intend to cheat, and that his exposure to Clostebol did not provide any performance-enhancing benefit and took place without his knowledge as the result of negligence of members of his entourage," it said in

Saturday's announcement.

"However," the WADA statement continued, "under the code and by virtue of CAS precedent, an athlete bears responsibility for the entourage's negligence. Based on the unique set of facts of this case, a three-month suspension is deemed to be an appropriate outcome. As previously stated, WADA did not seek a disqualification of any results, save that which was previously imposed by the tribunal of first instance."

WADA added that the International Tennis Federation and ITIA, "both co-respondents to WADA's CAS appeal, neither of which appealed the first-instance decision, both accepted the case resolution agreement." On Friday, Sinner posted a video on Instagram of himself training in Doha at the Qatar Open, which starts next week. The suspension is from February 9 to May 4. Sinner could return at his home tournament, the Italian Open in Rome, which starts May 7.

Italian Tennis and Padel Federation president Angelo Binaghi noted that while the case was "a shameful injustice," the ban will mark "the end of a nightmare" for Sinner. Binaghi adds that the settlement "demonstrates Jannik's innocence" and that "all of Italy" will welcome him back at the Italian Open.

The ITIA said it acknowledged the settlement but in its statement Saturday reiterated that "we were satisfied that the player had established the source of the prohibited substance and that the breach was unintentional. Today's outcome supports this finding."

Sinner's London-based lawyer, Jamie Singer commented: "I am delighted that Jannik can finally put this harrowing experience behind him. WADA has confirmed the facts determined by the Independent Tribunal. It is clear that Jannik had no intent, no knowledge, and gained no competitive advantage."

Gujarat Giants to make amends in WPL clash

PTI ■ VADODARA

Gujarat Giants will hope their batters and fielding shows overall improvement after a crushing defeat in the Women's Premier League (WPL) season opener, when they take on the UP Warriorz here on Sunday. Gujarat Giants produced a unified batting show to set a commanding 202-run target against the defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru but their bowling frailties were exposed in the first game of the season itself when as many as six options could not contain the opposition batters. Richa Ghosh was dropped on the first ball she faced and the India wicketkeeper-batter made GG pay a hefty price for the mistake, striking 64 off only 26 balls (7x4s, 4x6s) to quickly turn the tables.

Gukesh loses to Firouzja

PTI ■ HAMBURG

World champion Ding Liren finished last after losing to Iranian-French grandmaster Alireza Firouzja in the second game of their seventh-place playoff match at the Freestyle Chess Grand Slam here. Gukesh thus concluded his forgettable campaign in the tournament at Weissenhaus resort without a single win. After a lost battle that ended in a draw on the first day, the ball was in Gukesh's court to do well as the white pieces, but clearly, the world champion had run out of steam to lose in 30 moves.



The test of time started in the middle game when Gukesh made a mistake and had to part with his queen for two pieces. While Firouzja made good use of his material advantage. Meanwhile, local favourite Vincent Keymer won the first edition despite being touted as a rookie at the start. The German winning the first leg over many of his fancied

rivals is good news for the event's sponsors who started it keeping in mind the chess connoisseurs. It is no secret that FIDE, the world's apex chess body, does not like Chess 960, also known as Fischer Random Chess, or the Freestyle Chess. But it is here to stay. Pre-tournament favourite Magnus Carlsen won his second game on the trot at the expense of Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan - the other big

East Bengal to revive campaign against Mohammedan SC

PTI ■ KOLKATA

East Bengal will be eager to break their winless streak and move up in the points table when they face struggling city rivals Mohammedan SC in their Indian Super League (ISL) match here on Sunday.

With just 18 points from 19 games, East Bengal's campaign has been plagued by inconsistency.

They have won only once in their last five matches and have failed to score in four of those outings.

While their playoff hopes are all but over, they still have 15 points to play for and will look to finish the season strongly. In their debut ISL season, Mohammedan Sporting have endured an even tougher run. Sitting at the bottom with 11 points, they have scored just nine goals while conceding 34. A three-match losing streak has added to their struggles, and their defence remains a major concern. They played out a goalless draw in the first leg fixture. Given their current form, a breakthrough in attack will be



crucial for both sides. East Bengal's defensive discipline has been a highlight, with the team leading the league in catching opponents offside (51 times).

Jordanian centre-back Hijazi Maher has been a standout performer, contributing both defensively and in attack with two goals.

On the other hand, Mohammedan SC's defensive

frailties have cost them dearly, as they have conceded multiple goals in their last four matches. Their attack has also faltered, converting just six of 29 big chances -- the worst efficiency in the league.

East Bengal coach Oscar Bruzon was optimistic, saying his team has worked hard to regain their form.

"This was a long week. It was a week where we worked towards

bringing our performances back to the level that we have displayed earlier against good and quality teams," he said.

With time running out for them, Mohammedan SC's assistant coach Mehrajuddin Wadoo urged the players to give their all. "We know the importance of this game. We are going to play with all our heart and make sure that the game is difficult for East Bengal FC," he said.

Magic Mitoma, Minteh double give Brighton 3-0 win over Chelsea

PTI ■ BRIGHTON

Brighton completed a league Band cup double over Chelsea on Friday after beating the London side 3-0 for the second time in a week.

Brighton beat Chelsea 2-1 in the FA Cup last Saturday and gave an even better performance for all three points in the Premier League on Friday thanks to a magic moment from Kaoru Mitoma and brace from Yankuba Minteh.

With 27 minutes gone, the Japanese striker brought down with aplomb a hopeful punt forward by goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen and powered past the last man before firing a low shot past Filip Jorgensen. Mitoma was also involved in Brighton's second 11 minutes later. He danced through the

Chelsea penalty box before firing a low shot across goal. The defense cut out the cross but couldn't clear the danger and the ball fell to Minteh, who stroked it home.

The Gambian winger got his second and Brighton's third 17 minutes into the second half after working a nice one-two with Danny Welbeck and firing in from a tight angle as the Chelsea defense stood and watched.

"Three goals, a clean sheet, what more can you ask for?" Brighton keeper Verbruggen told broadcaster Sky Sports.

It was the third loss in its last four games for an insipid Chelsea side and left it in fourth place in the Premier League table, four points behind Nottingham Forest, which has a game in hand. Chelsea had 70 per cent possession but couldn't put a

shot on goal.

"Probably since I arrived that is the worst performance, especially in the moment we are in," Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca told the BBC.

Brighton's first home win in the league since November. 9 lifted it two places into eighth, and was a brilliant reply to the humiliating 7-0 loss to Nottingham Forest on Feb 1.

"It has been a massive couple of weeks for us after a horrible result and it was important we reacted in the right way," Welbeck told Premier League Productions. "There was obviously something wrong against Forest. We had to look at ourselves and have some honest conversations in the dressing room and with the manager. It was something we could not just gloss over."

Jeev off to fast start with 68 in Marbella Legends

PTI ■ BRIGHTON

India's Jeev Milkha Singh got off to a fine start on the 2025 Legends Tour season with a superb four-under 68 in the first round of the Staysure Marbella Legends event here.

Jeev was lying tied 12th and his round included a superb eagle on the front nine and a hat-trick of birdies on the back.

Overall, he had an eagle, four birdies and two bogeys. For Jeev it was his second Seniors event this year as he finished tied 28th at the Trophy Hassan II, an event on the Champions Tour PGA.

Jeev, who was 26th on the Legends Tour rankings last year, started on the tenth with a bogey. He rallied with three birdies in a row from the 14th, but dropped another shot on the 18th. On his second nine, he landed an eagle on Par-5 fifth and



added a birdie on eighth for a 68 while playing with Scott Hend, a former colleague from both DP World Tour and Asian Tour. There was a group of five players sharing the lead, including Colin Montgomerie, Anders Hansen, Simon Griffiths, Adilson Da Silva and Lionel Alexandre. They were all 7-under 65 each at the

Aloha Golf Club in beautiful conditions in southern Spain. Colin Montgomerie rolled in a long birdie putt down a tier on the 18th green to the delight of the spectators who followed him and local favourite Miguel Angel Jimenez right from their very first shots. Last year's Legends Tour

number one Adilson da Silva remarkably birdied all four of the tough quartet of par-3s on the way to his 65. The Brazilian kept a blemish off his card as he started 2025 in the same fashion that he ended the 2024 season. Three-time DP World Tour winner Anders Hansen hasn't played competitive golf in recent years, but there wasn't much sign of any rust as the Dane reeled off seven red numbers in a 10-hole stretch from the 5th and finished with four pars to post his 65.

Simon Griffiths is another player to carry good form into the new year. The Englishman picked up a win, a second, a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth and an eighth in his last nine tournaments last season to claim the Barry Lane Rookie of the Year Award.

Griffiths had eight birdies and one bogey to make a strong start in pursuit of a second Legends Tour win.

injuries.

Deepti has been a vital cog in the Indian teams across formats but the 27-year-old veteran hasn't held any leadership role with the national side in nearly a decade. On their part, spin bowling could be described as UP Warriorz' biggest strength this season after the team which finished fourth in the five-team league last year added Australia's Alana King to their roster which already boasts of England's Sophie Ecclestone.

King had a successful run in the women's Ashes taking nine wickets in the only Tests as well as 17 more wickets in the limited-overs series. Along with King and Ecclestone, the Warriorz have India's Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Deepti, Gouher Sultana as well as others in Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu and Grace Harris. Their overall firepower pits Warriorz as the favourites for this clash given they have the formidable trio of Talha McGraith, Harris and Athapaththu to pick from in the batting.



Tulips Catching the Light



TULIPS BLOOM IN DELHI

A rare sight in Delhi, sixty thousand tulips bloom in vibrant shades, painting a stunning spectacle. These flowers carry history, art and a bond between nations, once sparking 'Tulip Mania' in the Netherlands. Today, they bring a touch of Dutch heritage and the magic of spring to India.



From Dutch fields to Delhi's gardens, tulips bring colour and unity, says SAKSHI PRIYA

There is something almost human about a tulip. It does not simply bloom, it arrives. Standing tall with effortless grace, its petals unfurl as if stretching after a long slumber, ready to greet the world with quiet confidence. Unlike the delicate rose or the wild daisy, a tulip possesses an unshakable certainty, heralding the end of winter and the promise of warmth ahead. In New Delhi, at the residence of the Netherlands Ambassador H.E. Marisa Gerards, sixty thousand tulips swayed gently in the cool February breeze, their vibrant colours painting a breathtaking spectacle. This was not just a garden in full bloom, it was a moment of poetry, a meeting of nature, diplomacy and history.

Tulips have long been entwined with Dutch identity, but their journey began far from the Netherlands. They first flourished in the rugged wilds of Central Asia before being cultivated in the grand gardens of the Ottoman Empire, where they became symbols of prestige and luxury. When tulips arrived in the Netherlands in the late sixteenth century, they ignited a passion unlike any other. By the seventeenth century, tulip mania was swept up in the feverish obsession of the Dutch tulip bulb



traded for fortunes, their value soaring beyond gold. Though the frenzy eventually collapsed, the Dutch devotion to tulips never waned. Over time, tulip cultivation became one of the Netherlands' most celebrated industries. Today, three thousand varieties bloom across the country, each a product of meticulous breeding and generations of expertise. Among them, the rare broken tulip, with its flame-like streaks, remains a marvel, a reminder that even nature carries an artist's touch.

This deep admiration for tulips has travelled far beyond Dutch borders. Inspired by the world-famous Keukenhof Gardens in the Netherlands, Srinagar established its own tulip festival in 2007, transforming its landscapes into a floral wonderland each spring. Bollywood, too, has long been captivated by tulip fields, using them as dreamy

backdrops for stories of love and longing. The white tulips carried a quiet purity, like freshly fallen snow, while the deep purple ones held a regal mystery, as if plucked from a painter's canvas. The golden yellow tulips stood like little drops of sunshine, bright and warm. But the ones streaked with red were the most enchanting of all, their fiery shades blending into a soft glow, just like a sunset on a clear evening. Then there were the pink tulips, soft yet striking, their petals catching the light in a way that made them almost glow.

Standing there, amidst a garden bursting with life, it was impossible not to be moved. Tulips are storytellers, time-keepers and silent poets. And just like the bond between India and the Netherlands, they remind us that beauty, when nurtured with care, has the power to bloom across continents and cultures, year after year.



Curtain Raiser

The Icons of Whisky Awards 2025 began by bringing together industry leaders and connoisseurs, writes ABHI SINGHAL



The Icons of Whisky Awards 2025 kicked off in style with a curtain raiser event at The Claridges, New Delhi. The event was hosted by Spiritual Luxury in association with Whisky Magazine and presented in partnership with Suntory Toki Whisky, the evening had fun moments of craftsmanship, innovation and industry excellence.

Since its inception in 2008, the Icons of Whisky Awards have remained India's premier international beverage accolades, curated by Spiritual Luxury Living for the past 15 years. The curtain raiser brought together industry stalwarts including distillers, brand ambassadors, connoisseurs and whisky enthusiasts, creating a vibrant space for discussions on evolving trends and innovations shaping the whisky landscape in India and beyond.

A mixology masterclass took centre stage, where expert mixologists showcased innovative whisky based cocktails, while an interactive activation allowed guests to personalise their own tote bags, a d d i n g a b e-



spoke touch to the experience. Adding to the evening's charm was the "One Night in Toki o" experience, an immersive tribute to Japanese culture, blending tradition with modern innovation. Guests also indulged in an exquisite Japanese culinary spread including sushi, asparagus tempura and lamb chops, perfectly complementing the whisky experience.

The grandeur continues on April 12 in Gurugram, where the Icons of Whisky Awards 2025 will honour the finest talents in the Indian beverage industry.

British Remake of Culpa Mía

My Fault: London brings passion and style but struggles to match its Spanish adaptation, writes ABHI SINGHAL

My Fault: London is a 2025 British romantic drama streaming on Amazon Prime Video. The movie is directed by Dani Girdwood and Charlotte Fassler, this film is an English-language adaptation of the 2023 Spanish hit and people's loved Culpa Mía, based on Mercedes Ron's Wattpad-originated Culpables trilogy. The narrative centres on a provocative romance between step-siblings, set against the backdrop of London.

The story follows Noah played by Asha Banks, a spirited young woman uprooted from her Miami life to join her mother and new stepfather in London. There, she encounters her enigmatic stepbrother, Nick played by Matthew Broome. Their initial interactions are marked by tension and mutual disdain, but as they move deeper into each other's worlds, a forbidden attraction ignites.

Banks and Broome deliver performances that capture the intense chemistry and complexity but fail to get at par with the Spanish adaptation. Their portrayal brings depth to the tumultuous journey from animosity to passionate connection, trying hard to engage the audience in their forbidden romance.

While the film excels in its portrayal of steamy



romance and dramatic flair, it doesn't venture far from familiar tropes found in young adult fiction. The plot incorporates elements like underground racing, secretive family dynamics, and the allure of the "bad boy," which, while entertaining, may feel predictable to seasoned viewers.

My Fault: London offers a visually appealing experience which has overshadowed char-

acter development and plot intricacies. The film's commitment to delivering a high-energy, passionate story is evident, yet it sometimes comes at the expense of exploring nuanced themes or providing substantial back-story for its protagonists.

The film serves just to the young adult romance genre. Its strengths lie in the palpable chemistry between the leads and the vibrant London setting, which together create an engaging, if somewhat predictable, viewing experience. Fans of dramatic, forbidden love stories will find satisfaction in this film, though it may not offer significant surprises or deviations from genre expectations.

Style That Works

BY TEAM VIVA

Men's workwear is evolving, combining comfort with sophistication. Harfun, a brand at the forefront, is redefining professional attire by ensuring style meets functionality. Modern workwear is no longer just about appearance, it enhances confidence and comfort, allowing professionals to perform at their best.

A key innovation is the 2025 Work Suit, designed for flexibility and ease of movement while maintaining a sharp corporate look. Moving beyond restrictive office wear, this new wave of clothing caters to professionals in fast-paced environments, offering garments that adapt to different work settings. Whether sitting through long meetings or commuting, professionals need clothing that supports their routine.

Fashion events dedicated to workwear innovations are gaining popularity, showcasing ad-

vanced fabrics and sleek designs. Corporate fashion walks blur the line between office wear and stylish, comfortable clothing, emphasising attire that empowers professionals while reflecting individuality. The growing demand for practical yet fashionable workwear highlights the need for a wardrobe that balances professionalism with personal style. A recent event featured notable figures like former cricketer Piyush Chawla and comedian Anshu Mor, alongside industry influencers. Conversations revolved around the necessity of workwear that effortlessly transitions from boardrooms to social gatherings.

With designers focusing on innovation, adaptability and elegance, the future of workwear is transforming professional dressing. Function and fashion are no longer separate, they are the new standard.

SUGGESTED BINGES



Marco
IMDB Rating - 7.3/10
OTT - SonyLIV
Cast - Umni Mukundan, Yukti Thareja, Kabir Duhan Singh



Cobra Kai Season 6 Part 3
OTT - Netflix
Cast - Ralph Macchio, Daniel LaRusso, William Zabka, Johnny Lawrence



Dhoom Dhaam
IMDB Rating - 6.6/10
OTT - Netflix
Cast - Yami Gautam, Pratik Gandhi



My Fault: London
IMDB Rating - 6.2/10
OTT - Amazon Prime Video
Cast - Asha Banks, Eve Macklin, Matthew Broome



The Gorge
IMDB Rating - 6.8/10
OTT - Apple TV+
Cast - Miles Teller, Anya Taylor-Joy, Sigourney Weaver, Sope Dirisu

Get in touch at vivacity@dailypioneer.com

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the pioneer agenda

"Spring: a lovely reminder of how beautiful change can truly be"

-UNKNOWN



A SKY FULL OF WINGS

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

A world untouched by noise, where only the wings of birds break the silence, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

WHEN THE SKY COMES TO LIFE

Around 11 AM, the sun began to work its magic. The first rays of sunlight began to filter through, slowly dissolving the fog. The *Dhanauri Wetlands* were finally revealed in all their splendour. The lake shimmered under the golden light, mirroring the movements of birds in the sky.

In every direction, life unfolded in the most mesmerising ways. *Baikal teals*, their green and chestnut plumage gleaming, glided effortlessly across the water. *Sarus cranes*, the tallest flying birds in the world, waded gracefully through the shallows, their striking red crowns standing out against the backdrop of endless blue. *White-throated kingfishers*, streaks of electric blue, darted across the surface, their sharp beaks poised for the perfect catch. *Black drongos*, perched high on bare branches, observed their surroundings with quiet confidence.

Then, in the midst of it all, I spotted something that truly captivated me, a *Painted stork* (*Mycteria leucocephala*), standing still in the water, its pink and white plumage vibrant against the reeds. Nearby, an *Ibis* sat motionless, sharing the space with an egret that hovered just above. They did not interact, nor did they compete. They simply coexisted, bound by the same stillness that surrounded them. It was a reminder that nature does not rush, nor does it seek control, simply is.

217

BIRD SPECIES, INCLUDING 150+ SARUS CRANES

At a time when rapid urbanisation threatens natural ecosystems, *Dhanauri Wetlands* stands as a critical stronghold for avian biodiversity. Home to over 150 *Sarus cranes*, the state bird of Uttar Pradesh and sheltering 217 bird species, including 23 endangered and vulnerable ones, this wetland is an ecological necessity.

20,000+

waterfowl, but the push for conservation has yet to gain the urgency it deserves. With habitat loss accelerating, the fate of *Dhanauri* is about the larger battle to protect our natural heritage before it is too late.



There's something deeply soothing about the presence of birds. No matter where you are, the soft flutter of wings or the distant call of a bird can instantly transport you to a place of peace. Birds seem to fill the air with a quiet kind of company that makes you feel connected to the world around you. Unlike most popular nature spots, this wetland remains hidden from the typical tourist routes, untouched and unhurried, just waiting for someone to notice its magic.

I found this solace in the *Dhanauri Wetlands*, near *Thasrana* in *Uttar Pradesh*, a place that feels like a hidden sanctuary untouched by the noise of modern life. Unlike crowded nature reserves, it does not call out for attention. Instead, it waits patiently, its beauty unfolding only for those willing to step into its stillness. It was in this mist-laden landscape that I discovered the true magic of being among birds, where silence speaks, and nature embraces you without asking for anything in return.

A WORLD WRAPPED IN FOG

Arriving early in the morning, I was greeted by a thick blanket of winter fog, softening every outline, blurring the edges of trees, water and distant shapes. It was the kind of silence that didn't feel empty but full - full of life stirring beneath the mist, of whispered movements in the reeds and of birds calling out unseen. The cold air carried distant sounds of wings flapping, making the entire landscape feel like something out of a dream.

At first, I thought the fog would ruin my chance of getting any decent photographs. Everything seemed swallowed up by the mist, with just the faintest shapes of trees and water appearing like ghosts in the haze. But as I stood there, waiting for the fog to clear, I realised that there was a certain calm in it. The mist didn't obscure the beauty of the place, it enhanced it. It gave everything a sense of mystery, as if nature itself was being revealed slowly, almost deliberately.

A FRAGILE HAVEN WORTH PROTECTING

Yet, as untouched as it seems, the *Dhanauri Wetlands* are not invincible. Like many natural spaces, they face growing threats from habitat destruction, pollution and human encroachment. It's easy to assume that places like this will always exist, remaining undisturbed and waiting for the next visitor to discover them. However, the truth is, without conscious effort to protect them, they may not. For those who have ever found comfort in nature, who have stood still just to listen to the world breathe, places like *Dhanauri* are not simply landscapes. They are living sanctuaries, home to thousands of species, each playing its part in the delicate balance of life.

A PLACE THAT DEMANDS NOTHING BUT PRESENCE

One of the most striking things about *Dhanauri Wetlands* is not just its visual beauty but its quietness. In a world constantly buzzing with movement and noise, finding a place that does not demand attention, but instead rewards those who choose to be present, is rare. There were no distractions here, no honking cars, no flashing screens, just the simple, unbroken sounds of water lapping against the shore, wings flapping overhead and birds calling out to one another.

It is a place that does not overwhelm but instead invites you to slow down. Whether you're there to watch the birds, capture the beauty through your camera or just enjoy a moment of peace, it offers more than a pretty sight, it gives you a sense of connection to something much bigger than yourself.

A SANCTUARY ON THE BRINK

The *Dhanauri Wetlands* are at risk, once a sanctuary for birds like the *Sarus Crane* and *Painted Stork*, now threatened by encroachment and neglect. With land repurposed for construction, the ecosystem is shrinking and disrupting its delicate balance. Water pollution and disappearing green buffers worsen the crisis. Without urgent protection, this vital habitat, which supports biodiversity, flood control and climate regulation, may soon be lost, leaving behind only memories of its once-thriving wildlife.



Recognised as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by BirdLife International and extensively studied by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), *Dhanauri* plays a pivotal role in global bird conservation. Each year, between November and March, the wetland transforms into a sanctuary for over 50,000 migratory waterfowl, reinforcing its importance as a breeding and nesting ground



A MOMENT WITH NATURE

At *Dhanauri Wetlands*, you'll find yourself surrounded by the beauty of nature. Expect to spot the striking *Baikal Teal*, the towering *Sarus Crane* and the graceful *White-throated Kingfisher*. The *Black Drongo* and *Citrine Wagtail* add charm to the scenery, while the *Painted Storks* and *Ibis* soar across the sky, truly making you feel one with the wilderness. The *Bull-headed Shrike* perches quietly, surveying the land, while flocks of birds move in perfect harmony, painting the wetlands with life.

The *Sarus Crane*, the world's tallest flying bird, glides through wetlands with elegance, its vivid red head and long legs creating a breathtaking sight in nature's tranquillity

A JOURNEY WORTH TAKING

If you decide to visit, go early in the morning, before the mist lifts completely. Walk quietly along the lake's edge, listen to the calls of unseen birds and let yourself be immersed in the stillness. Watch as the fog dissolves into golden light, revealing a world teeming with life. *Dhanauri Wetlands* is an experience, a reminder that, in the presence of birds, you are never truly alone.



Pan-Indian Plates

FACT SHEET
RAAG by Miss Nora
Address : 1st Floor,
R Cube Monad Mall,
Rajouri Garden,
New Delhi
Price for Two:
₹1600 approx

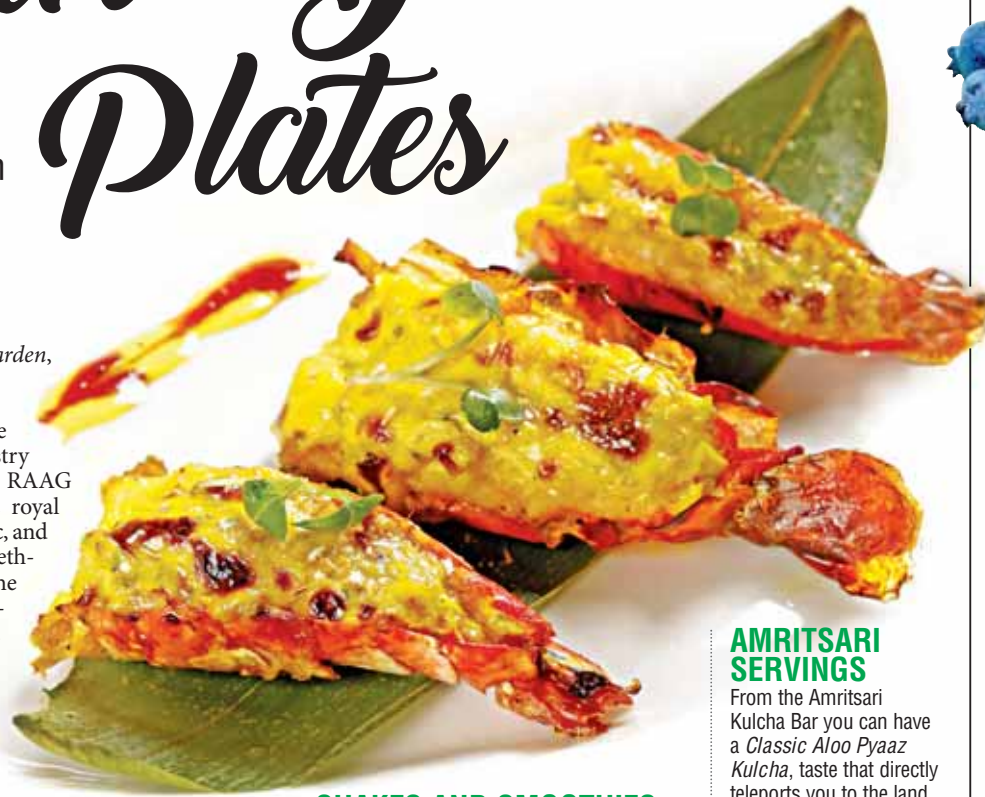
Step into RAAG, where each bite you take, will let you experience original flavours, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

In the heart of *Rajouri Garden*, RAAG orchestrates a dining experience that harmonises India's diverse food heritage with artistry and ambiance. Stepping inside RAAG feels like entering an aesthetic royal world where flavours, soft music, and traditional design comes together as a perfect dining. The menu, inspired by time-honoured recipes and slow-cooked traditions, takes diners on a gastronomic journey across the country. From the rich, aromatic *Ek Taar ki Nihari* to the indulgent *Kaladi Bharwan Gucchi*, every dish tells a story steeped in history. With a diverse menu of *Chaats, Shorba, Grill and Tandoor, Platters, Main Course, Degh*, and so much more, the restaurant has so much to offer with a literally delicious taste.

If you start from chaats, the beloved street-style delight, *Moradabadi Dal Ki Chaat* is a symphony of textures and flavours. Made with protein-packed tallow-moong dal lentils, this dish is a warm, velvety bowl of comfort, elevated by an array of vibrant toppings. The date-jaggery chutney adds a delicate sweetness, balancing the savoury richness, while the *khas-ta kachori* provides the perfect crunch.

Moving to the vegetarian tasting platter, the appetizers served were just wow in taste where every ingredient's flavour has been differentiated from the other giving a perfect taste. The appetizers in the platter include the *Chenna Dahi Kabab* blending creamy Greek yogurt and ricotta, pan-grilled to golden perfection, *Paneer Tikka* with a smoky finish and stuffed mushroom, *Bharwan Khumb Tikka* showcases teja mirch marinade, cheddar-paneer stuffing. The platter is a must have recommendation.

Beyond the plate, RAAG fascinates with its immersive atmosphere with the striking *Sabyasachi*-designed wallpaper, the gentle strains of the sitar, and a cocktail menu infused with regional spices elevate the eating experience. Signature drinks, like the *Nawabi Sour*, complement the carefully curated flavours, ensuring that every sip and bite resonates with authenticity. At RAAG, dining is a celebration of India's culinary soul with taste that will make you lick your fingers in satisfaction.

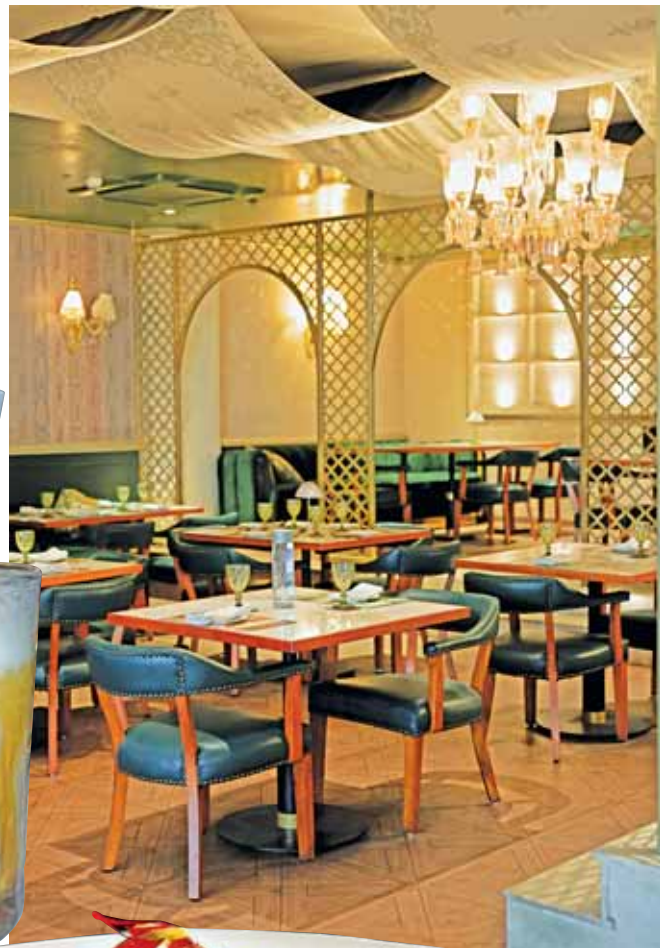


AMRITSARI SERVINGS

From the Amritsari *Kulcha Bar* you can have a *Classic Aloo Pyaaz Kulcha*, taste that directly teleports you to the land of Amritsar with layered Indian flat bread with stuffing of your choice, served with dal makhni, homemade compote and white butter.

SHAKES AND SMOOTHIES

You can go for an *Oreo Caramel Shake* and *Choco Peanut Butter Shake*. Shakes at RAAG break the notion that a milkshake must always be thick, offering a perfect blend of milk and chocolate flavours.



Indulgent Flavours

BY TEAM AGENDA

Food has a magical way of bringing people together. The dessert dishes like *Berry Bliss Cheesecake*, evoke a feeling of satisfaction to your taste buds. Every dish tells a story and satisfies cravings in ways words often fail to capture.

Imagine this, you're sitting at the dining table, the air filled with the warm, inviting aroma of vanilla feels like a hug in every bite. A silky smooth cheesecake layered with a luscious berry glaze, this *Berry Bliss Cheesecake* is a perfect fusion of rich creaminess and tangy berry flavours. Here are the ingredients for a *Berry Bliss Cheesecake*:



INGREDIENTS (SERVES 6-8)

- For the Crust:**
- 1½ cups crushed digestive biscuits or graham crackers; • ¼ cup unsalted butter (melted); • 2 tbsp sugar
- For the Cheesecake Filling:**
- 2 cups cream cheese (softened); • 1 cup heavy cream; • ¾ cup powdered sugar; • 1 tsp vanilla extract;
- 2 tbsp cornflour; • ¼ cup milk
- For the Berry Glaze:**
- 1 cup mixed berries (strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, blueberries); • ¼ cup sugar; • 1 tbsp lemon juice; • 1 tsp cornflour dissolved in 1 tbsp water
- For Garnish:**
- Fresh berries; • Mint leaves

Method

- Step 1:**
- Prepare the Crust
 - Mix crushed biscuits, melted butter, and sugar.
 - Press into a greased cake tin and refrigerate for 30 minutes to set.
- Step 2:**
- Make the Cheesecake Filling
 - Whisk cornflour into milk until smooth.
 - Beat cream cheese, powdered sugar, and vanilla extract until creamy.
 - Add heavy cream and beat until smooth.
 - Gently fold in the cornflour mixture.
 - Pour over the prepared crust and refrigerate for 6 hours or overnight until firm.
- Step 3:**
- Make the Berry Glaze
 - Heat berries, sugar, and lemon juice in a saucepan until soft.
 - Add the cornflour mixture and simmer until thickened.
 - Strain for a smoother texture (optional) and let it cool.
- Step 4:**
- Assemble and Serve
 - Pour the berry glaze over the chilled cheesecake.
 - Garnish with fresh berries and mint leaves.
 - Slice and serve cold.



CHEF'S TIPS

- Use full-fat cream cheese for the best texture.
- Allow the cheesecake to set completely for clean slices.
- Straining the berry glaze enhances the smoothness.

This *Berry Bliss Cheesecake* is a showstopper, creamy, fruity and indulgent, making it the ultimate dessert for any celebration!

Young and Rising Stars of Dining

The new generation of restaurateurs are transforming India's dining scene with passion

The restaurant industry has long been a playground for seasoned professionals, but a new wave of young entrepreneurs is rewriting the rules. These are not just ambitious dreamers banking on Instagrammable décor and buzzy themes, they are deeply invested in the food itself. Menu planning, ingredient sourcing, and tastings are their daily bread, and their knowledge surpasses even some chefs I have met.

Take, for instance, Tusheeta Khanna and Anant Bali, the young duo behind *Encanto*, a newly opened Mexican restaurant in Gurgaon. Their passion for authenticity is evident, not just in the food, which is impressive, but in their understanding of every dish, its origins, and the nuances of each ingredient. Too often, I have seen chefs operate with a superficial grasp of their own menu, but these two could school many in the trade.

Then there is Vanshika Wadhwa, carrying forward her family's legacy in the food business. Daughter of renowned restaurateur Vineet Wadhwa of *Fio*, she has launched *Kamei*, an Asian restaurant

that has already won over some of the most discerning food critics. Though I have yet to visit her outlets, the praise from trusted voices makes me confident she is onto something remarkable.

And let us talk about Bhagyesh Tekriwal and Utkarsh Khandelia, the brains behind *Sorbo*, a Mediterranean restaurant that speaks volumes of their dedication. While not as young as the others, their work reflects the

same meticulous approach, one where the food is the hero, not just the ambience.

Moving beyond the NCR, Jaipur has its own rising star in Sagar Nagpal, the force behind *Swinton House*. Built within an old haveli once owned by a British architect, the restaurant curates a menu inspired by his favourite dishes from around the world. The charm of the setting, combined with a well-thought-out culinary selection, makes it a standout in the Pink City's ever-growing food scene.

Further north, in Mohali, Arpit Singh is making waves with *Prey*, an avant-garde concept built over a dam.

With open-air dining lit by kerosene lamps, the space exudes a dreamy, romantic charm, setting the stage for an unforgettable dining experience. His vision proves that ambience and cuisine can come together to create something truly special.

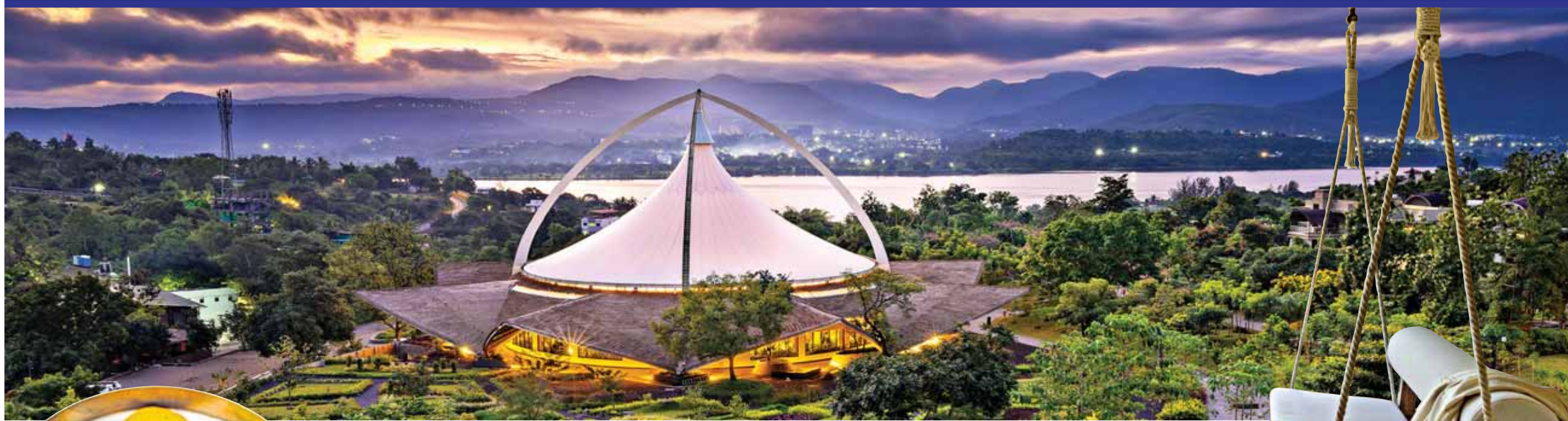
Just today, I met Muskan Katyal, the niece of Porus

Arora, the name behind *Sticky Rice*, *Enoki*, and more. She is the same age as Tusheeta and Anant and is already making waves with *Mala Project*, a Gurgaon-based restaurant dedicated to the fiery flavours of Chinese Mala cuisine. Her involvement in the project along with Porus and Tanvi Arora is not just token ownership, she is hands-on, ensuring the authenticity of every bite.

If these young restaurateurs are any indication, the future of dining in India is in excellent hands. Their enthusiasm, knowledge, and commitment to quality are setting new standards. This is not just a generational shift, it is a culinary revolution, and I, for one, am eager to see what they cook up next.

—Pawan Soni





RECONNECT WITH YOURSELF

A wellness retreat embracing nature and modern science

Set against the stunning backdrop of the Sahyadri mountains, *Swastik* offers an immersive experience that rejuvenates the mind, body, and soul. Here's a glimpse into this transformative journey that redefines wellness travel.

Wellness today is no longer just a luxury for the affluent or a niche interest for certain travellers. It has become a mainstream pursuit, embraced by individuals from all walks of life. This shift is reflected in the rapidly growing wellness tourism sector, which, according to the Global Wellness Institute, is expected to reach \$1.3 trillion by 2025. Amidst this burgeoning trend, I recently discovered a retreat that perfectly encapsulates the evolution of wellness travel, *Swastik*, a Luxury Wellbeing Sanctuary.

Swastik's Elemental Harmony

- Dhyan Vihar (Space, Akash):** A conical meditation hall promoting self-awareness and stillness.
- Anand Vihar (Fire, Agni):** A transformative space featuring dining, consultation, and performance areas.
- Ayu Vihar (Air, Vayu):** A rejuvenation hub offering therapies to balance body and mind.
- Sukh Vihar (Earth, Bhumi):** Luxurious residential spaces for immersive wellness experiences.
- Ganga Vihar (Water, Jal):** A space dedicated to cleansing and rejuvenation, embodying fluid energy and transformation.



A Journey into the Unknown

As a newcomer to wellness retreats, I wasn't sure what to expect. My understanding of wellness was limited to exercise and meditation, which I had found rather mundane. However, in search of a reset, I embarked on a three-day journey that would challenge my preconceptions in the most delightful way.

Upon our arrival in Pune, we were greeted by a gracious driver who took us on a scenic 1.5-hour drive to the retreat. Having expected bland, restrictive meals, I indulged in a Vada Pav before arriving at *Swastik*. But from the moment we stepped onto the property, the experience exceeded all expectations. The resort's design, crafted by TAOSTUDIO, is deeply inspired by the five core elements, Earth, Air, Water, Fire and Space, which form the foundation of its architectural brilliance. The property is structured around five key dimensions of life, Health, Wealth, Love, Bliss and Spirituality, ensuring that nature is woven into every aspect of the experience.



the exhaustion, the tranquillity, or the therapy itself, I drifted into deep, restful sleep almost instantly.

Architectural & Philosophical Vision

Swastik's philosophy is embodied in its logo, a blooming flower representing the four core values of Health, Wealth, Love, and Bliss, all rooted in Spirituality, the central force of its existence. The retreat nurtures the potential of every individual, encouraging personal growth and self-discovery. *Swastik* transformed my perception of wellness. It showed me that wellness is not about rigid discipline but about creating a lifestyle that balances indulgence with mindfulness.

— By Rohit Kaul

Unique Rituals and Therapies

That evening, we experienced *Swastik's* signature sleep ritual. Two therapists arrived at our Guha to perform a soothing bedtime routine, applying calming oils, offering a relaxing foot massage, and tucking us in with mindful silence. Whether it was

A TRANSFORMATIVE WELLNESS EXPERIENCE

Our wellness journey began with an assessment by an in-house Ayurvedic doctor, who analysed our doshas (body energies) and recommended therapies to restore balance. The evening's dinner was a revelation. Contrary to my expectations of bland health food, *Swastik's* culinary offerings were a sensory delight. Each meal was a five-course experience, crafted from locally sourced, seasonal ingredients, many of which were grown on-site. Chef Arvind Joshi's thoughtfully curated menu transformed my understanding of healthy eating. It was nourishing, flavourful, and fulfilling without feeling restrictive.



A Retreat in Nature's Embrace

Nestled in the peaceful Peacock Valley, *Swastik* overlooks the backwaters of Khadakwasla Lake and the majestic Sahyadri mountain range as its backdrop. Designed to honour nature's rhythms, from sunrise to moonrise, *Swastik* seamlessly integrates spirituality and wellness. The name itself, derived from Sanskrit, combines well, being associated with, symbolising auspiciousness and wellbeing.

Chettinad: Unleashing the Ghosts of Imagination

Though known for its stunning architecture, rich cultural heritage, and unforgettable cuisine, Chettinad hides a deeper mystery, the kind that stirs the imagination

ground spices from a Chettinad kitchen. And so, here I am, in *Chettinad*, on a journey to unravel its mysteries. It is not merely a destination, it is an experience, an ongoing unravelling that draws you in deeper with every step. When speaking of South India, it is impossible to ignore the region's vibrant culture and magnificent architecture. The interplay of bright colours, lush greenery, and the salty air gives this part of India its unique character, attracting visitors from all corners of the globe. One such captivating destination is *Chettinad*, the homeland of the Nattukottai Chettiars (also known as Nagarathars), a prosperous banking and business community. The name "Chettinad" refers to a region comprising 56 villages in the Sivaganga district and 20 in the Pudukkottai district. Historically, this area was part of the Ramnad kingdom of Pandya Nadu.

Despite lacking typical tourist attractions like beaches or lofty hill stations, *Chettinad* captivates visitors with its majestic mansions, architectural masterpieces that stand in stark contrast to the arid landscape. These grand homes, some more

than 300 years old, whisper stories of the generations who once lived under their roofs. The *Chettiar* community, originally merchants and traders dealing in salt, gems, textiles and jewellery, controlled much of India's banking economy in the 19th century. Their legacy is written in the stunning mansions that still stand today, some meticulously preserved as heritage properties, while others gradually succumb to the ravages of time.

The Athangudi Palace is one such treasure, showcasing the finest elements of *Chettiar* architecture. For a modest fee of INR 50, visitors can explore its open courtyards, elegant verandahs, and the seamless blend of European and Indian architectural styles. Built in the early 20th century, the palace boasts imported wood, marble, tiles, and mirrors from around the world. Its interiors, maintained with painstaking care, offer a rare glimpse into the grandeur of the Chettiars' past.

For those with a spiritual inclination, *Chettinad* is home to some remarkable temples. A visit here would be incomplete without exploring the Ariyakkudi Thiruvangadamudaiyan Temple, dedicated to Lord



THOUGH THESE VILLAGES MAY BE VACANT NOW, THEY STILL STAND RESILIENT, HOLDING ONTO THE MEMORIES OF A BYGONE ERA

Srinivasa. Built in the 17th century by Sevugan Chettiar, a devout Saivite, this temple was constructed after the divine Lord Venkateswara appeared to Chettiar in a dream, instructing him to build a temple in his village. The temple's Dravidian architecture is awe-inspiring, reflecting the community's deep devotion.

Chettinad also holds its share of ancient fortifications. The Thirumayam Fort, built in 1687 by Raja Raghunatha Thevar of Ramanathapuram, sits atop a hillock. It encompasses temples, caves, a jail, and even a mysterious pond. As my guide, Kavita, excitedly narrated the fort's history, I was particularly drawn to a natural water pond at the summit, whose water level remains unchanged year-round, a phenomenon that adds to the fort's allure. From the highest point, I was rewarded with a stunning 360-degree view of the region, a moment of pure enchantment.

More than the grand mansions, exquisite temples and rich culinary heritage, what truly touched my heart was the warmth of the people. Their genuine smiles and welcoming nature made my journey even more memorable.

— By Divya Bhatia



There is something enchantingly captivating about a place frozen in time. As you wander through the quiet streets of *Chettinad*, its serenity is only disturbed by the soft whispers of the wind and the distant echoes of a long-forgotten past. The grand yet lifeless palaces, beautifully crafted and untouched by time, seem to hold within their walls the secrets of centuries. Even now, these imposing structures stand firm, guarding corridors that once hummed with life. *Chettinad* is a paradox, a land where opulence was once abundant, yet the echoes of that prosperity now linger in a quiet, almost meditative stillness. Unlike the bustling tourist hubs that thrive on their vibrant energy, *Chettinad* flourishes in this exotic calm, where each cracked tile and fading mural speaks of an era long past, brimming with migration, prosperity, and change. Walking through its abandoned villages, you don't just observe history; you feel its pulse in the air, hanging like the intoxicating scent of freshly





YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

Your dedication and alignment of body, mind, and spirit, combined with effective management of responsibilities, will yield positive outcomes. Your drive to excel and collaborate with others contributes to achieving shared objectives. You are engaged in a profession that satisfies both your emotional and financial needs. Your passion and courage shine through in all aspects of life. This is a perfect moment to delve deeper into your intuitive abilities. Activities that enhance both focus and tranquility, such as yoga, chi gong, or meditation, will prove beneficial. For some, the possibility of a new romantic connection may emerge. As the week concludes, you might find yourself embracing a more affectionate and imaginative outlook.

Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Amber
Lucky day Monday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

You possess the strength to forge ahead in life, effectively turning your visions into tangible results. Engaging in collaborative efforts with another can prove exceptionally rewarding, leading to significant achievements. Take charge of your journey, demonstrating courage, vitality, and a purposeful resolve to achieve your goals. It's crucial to strategize and clarify your direction to avoid uncertainties. Embrace the leadership within you, steering your path confidently. Let your inherent strength surface and take pride in the accomplishments that follow. You are poised for a period of comprehensive fulfillment. Whether it's your health, finances, or relationships, you're on the brink of achieving a deep sense of satisfaction and joy that encompasses all areas of your life.

Lucky number 19 | Lucky colour Ruby
Lucky day Wednesday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

In today's competitive environment, where material achievement is paramount, you may encounter competition, dishonesty, and betrayal. You could face setbacks or be unfairly outmaneuvered by a clever adversary. As everyone pursues financial success and opulence, the prevailing ambition focuses solely on monetary gains, often leading individuals to forge relationships based solely on personal advantage. This pursuit might lead you to compromise your principles and overextend yourself. Midweek brings a shift as you display compassion and attentiveness to your family's needs, gaining valuable insights into financial and emotional matters, paving the way towards personal growth and understanding. By the week's end, you might find yourself seeking simplicity and tranquility, preferring rest over continuous engagement.

Lucky number 18 | Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Friday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

You often opt for the path of least resistance, finding joy in simplicity and innocence. Embrace the fresh opportunities that beckon, promising adventure and growth. Trust in your instincts, even if they lead you down seemingly irrational paths. Your aspirations often touch on desires for a better life, filled with prosperity and serenity. However, it's essential to ground your dreams in reality. While it's wonderful to imagine a more fulfilling existence, practical steps are necessary to make those dreams tangible. Now is a crucial moment for decision-making. Carefully weigh your options, considering all the benefits and drawbacks before proceeding. Focus on making positive choices—the decisions you prioritize now will shape your future. By aligning your thoughts with actionable goals, you'll manifest the changes you seek.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Aqua
Lucky day Thursday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week, you may find yourself feeling let down in matters of the heart or overwhelmed by achievements that don't meet your expectations. These feelings could lead you to step back and impose boundaries to prevent emotional fatigue. Escaping ongoing relationship challenges and leaving behind previous troubles to start afresh might seem appealing. As you navigate through these frustrations, remember that unmet expectations, especially regarding your efforts, require a focus on current resources and possibilities. Striving for productivity and financial gain remains a priority. While it may seem challenging now, support is on its way, providing the guidance needed to achieve your goals. Keep steady; assistance is just around the corner.

Lucky number 21 | Lucky colour Saffron
Lucky day Saturday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week finds you buzzing with activity. Many will find themselves embarking on journeys that promise joy and bonding with close ones, or perhaps even relocating. Good tidings, such as a heartwarming proposal, may arrive, infusing your days with excitement. Mid-week, however, could bring its share of challenges as you find yourself wrestling with uncertainty, making it tough to settle on significant choices. This period will test your resolve. Staying aligned with your long-term aspirations is crucial now. Financially, you're in a position to manage your resources effectively, a testament to your diligence. You've earned your accomplishments, and it's time they were acknowledged. Your efforts over the years have not just accumulated wealth but also invaluable wisdom and personal fulfillment. Embrace your achievements and make the most of your moments.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Cream
Lucky day Monday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

It's evident that you possess a profound inner strength, a testament to the resilience of the human spirit to transcend challenges. You adeptly maintain a balance of compassion, warmth, and courage, which elevates you above superficial desires. This foundation allows you to pursue your goals with vigor and determination. Your journey is marked by personal growth and the pursuit of self-mastery, indicating a phase of significant self-discovery. However, your enthusiasm may sometimes manifest as impatience or rash decisions. Upcoming changes could include relocating or embarking on a new path that may require you to leverage your abilities in innovative ways. Towards the week's end, you might find yourself deeply moved by emotions, which, if not managed, could lead to complications.

Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Copper
Lucky day Thursday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week calls for decisive, practical action, reflecting your natural ambition and determination to achieve success. Abundance flows naturally to you, enhancing your professional standing and financial prospects, especially in property-related matters. A clear and powerful insight will help you identify and prioritize long-term goals, allowing your unique personality to shine through in all you do. The arrival of a new family member brings joy and celebration. Despite the demanding nature of this week, leaving you fatigued yet deeply fulfilled, your compassionate nature comes to the fore. You'll find satisfaction in caring for others and addressing their needs with empathy and a soothing presence. Your resilience and inner wisdom will be your guiding forces, ensuring you navigate this week with grace and effectiveness.

Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Wednesday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week, you may find yourself grappling with a sense of urgency and a dominating attitude. Your desire to take charge and oversee every detail is strong, driven by your ability to grasp the broader scope of situations. Your decisive nature and unyielding adherence to truth and fairness establish you as a natural leader, garnering respect and adherence from those around you. These traits ensure your actions contribute positively to the greater good, enhancing your reputation. However, as the week progresses, pay attention to your financial management; your spending habits may require some moderation. Additionally, strive to maintain equilibrium between your professional ambitions and personal life. Balancing these aspects is crucial for sustained success and harmony.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Charcoal
Lucky day Thursday



CANCER June 21-July 22

You possess the strength to forge ahead with resolve. The coming times are ripe for turning your dreams into realities, as collaborations with others are likely to be highly beneficial. With command over your life's direction, your inherent bravery, vigor, and purpose are ready to propel you toward achievement. Strategic planning is essential—know your goals and the path you wish to take. Ambiguity has no role in your journey. Embrace your capacity to lead your life with authority. Let your inner strength manifest and you might find yourself amazed at your own capabilities. A sense of contentment pervades all aspects of your existence, from personal health and financial stability to relationships and overall well-being, bringing deep satisfaction and joy.

Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour Emerald
Lucky day Tuesday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, you'll find yourself brimming with new ideas and opportunities that could breathe new life into your personal and professional realms. Embrace openness and allow yourself to adapt to new situations with ease. Strive to infuse your daily activities with aesthetic and harmony, drawing inspiration from the natural world around you. However, be mindful of the darker undercurrents of fear and anxiety that might cloud your thoughts, leading to unhealthy obsessions or even physical ailments. It's crucial not to let these negative feelings thwart your progress towards your ambitions. As the week progresses, you might feel a mix of restlessness and vibrant energy, but by the week's end, a sense of duty and a peaceful resolve will guide you towards productivity in your endeavors.

Lucky number 20 | Lucky colour Turquoise
Lucky day Sunday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week, you might feel a strong drive to take the initiative and control every aspect of your surroundings. Your natural inclination towards leadership is powered by a comprehensive understanding of situations, which solidifies your role as a respected figure. Your dedication to fairness and truth further cements your leadership position, ensuring your actions resonate positively within your environment. As the days unfold, keep an eye on how you manage your resources; it might be wise to temper your expenditures. Also, consider finding a balance between your career aspirations and your personal commitments. Successfully managing both domains is essential for achieving lasting success and maintaining overall harmony in your life.

Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour Lavender
Lucky day Tuesday

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THOUGHTFUL INSIGHTS



Dr. Tanu Jain

Sacred Confluences: Reflections on Kumbh and Spirituality

On this quiet evening, as I sat with my friend while the sun painted the sky in gentle hues, memories of my recent visit to Kumbh Mela flooded back, sparking a deep conversation about spirituality and human nature. The cooling evening air seemed to sharpen our thoughts as we recalled the extraordinary scenes witnessed at Prayagraj.

The vivid images remained crystal clear in my mind – the swirling smoke from countless sacred fires, the endless sea of humanity moving like waves toward the Triveni Sangam, and the fascinating sight of sadhus wielding smartphones alongside their traditional implements. Each memory carried its own weight of meaning, prompting us to contemplate the unique blend of ancient and modern that defines today's spiritual gatherings.

As the evening shadows lengthened, I found myself describing the remarkable atmosphere at Kumbh – how the air seemed charged with collective faith and anticipation. The memory of millions of devotees waiting patiently, some for years, to take their sacred dip at the confluence sparked an interesting discussion about human psychology and spiritual seeking.

What particularly struck us both was the contemporary evolution of this ancient gathering. I shared stories of seeing sadhus actively engaged with social media, posting their spiritual journeys online, their orange robes bright against the glow of mobile screens. This observation led us to ponder



how technology has transformed even the most traditional spiritual practices, creating a new kind of sacred space that exists both in the physical and digital realms.

Our conversation naturally flowed to broader questions about mental well-being in modern times. We discussed how the mind, like the converging rivers at Sangam, seeks its own confluences – between tradition and modernity, between spiritual seeking and everyday life, between individual practice and communal experience.

The evening's discussion reminded me of the various factors affecting mental health that I had observed during my visit. While

obvious threats like substance abuse were visible, we found ourselves more intrigued by the subtle, everyday habits that can gradually erode mental well-being. The irony of seeing people seeking spiritual awakening while simultaneously being tethered to their devices sparked a thoughtful dialogue about digital detachment and mindful engagement.

We explored how seemingly innocent modern habits can impact our cognitive health – from insufficient sleep to excessive solitude, from sedentary lifestyles to mindless overconsumption. The contrast with the disciplined lives of traditional sadhus pro-

vided an interesting perspective on balance and well-being.

As dusk settled around us, our conversation turned to the role of community and connection. The Kumbh experience highlighted how human beings naturally seek confluence – with others, with higher meaning, with themselves. Yet modern life often pulls us toward isolation, even as our devices promise greater connectivity.

The memory of watching countless devotees take their sacred dip led us to reflect on transformation – how people seek it, whether through traditional spiritual practices or modern means. We pondered

whether the sacred waters of Sangam truly awakened everyone who bathed there, or if the real awakening came from the intention and belief they carried within.

As our evening of reflection drew to a close, we realised that the Kumbh had offered us more than just spiritual spectacle – it provided a powerful lens through which to examine our own relationship with tradition, technology, and mental well-being. The smoke from the sacred fires, which had seemed so prevalent during my visit, now felt like a metaphor for the way old and new intermingle in our quest for meaning and mental peace.

Our twilight discussion revealed that while the tools and expressions of spiritual seeking may evolve, the fundamental human desire for connection, meaning, and well-being remains unchanged. Whether through ancient ritual or modern practice, we all seek our own version of the sacred confluence, where the rivers of tradition, innovation, and personal growth meet to form something greater than their individual streams.

As the first stars began to appear in the darkening sky, the insights gained from examining these memories of Kumbh through the lens of our conversation felt both profound and practical – a reminder that sometimes the greatest understanding comes not from the experience itself, but from the thoughtful reflection that follows.

— The author's views are personal. The author is a civil servant at the Ministry of Defence and a spiritual speaker