



the pioneer

Established 1865

BHUBANESWAR, MONDAY JANUARY 6, 2025; PAGES 12 ₹4

www.dailypioneer.com

PUBLISHED FROM DELHI | LUCKNOW | BHOPAL | BHUBANESWAR | RANCHI | RAIPUR | CHANDIGARH | DEHRADUN | HYDERABAD | VIJAYWADA

magazine



Verma, Bhiduri vs Kejriwal, Atishi: High stakes Delhi polls

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

With less than a week left before the announcement of Delhi assembly polls, the BJP has released its first list of 29 candidates, awarding tickets to four sitting MLAs, two former MPs, and eight former MLAs. The BJP's first list features eight prominent leaders who switched over from the Congress and AAP in recent months. Former West Delhi MP Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma will contest against AAP Chief Arvind Kejriwal in the New Delhi assembly constituency. The New Delhi seat, held by Kejriwal since 2013, will witness the former chief minister taking on the sons of two other former chief ministers. Verma is the son of Sahib Singh Verma, who had a two-year tenure as chief minister in the 1990s. Former West Delhi MP Verma started his preparations for contesting from the seat even before he was announced as the official candidate, saying he had been given the go-ahead by national leaders. The Congress candidate from the seat is former three-term chief minister Sheila Dikshit's son Sandeep Dikshit. "I thank my party's top leadership... I hope that the trust that I have shown in me, I'll live up to it... When Delhi was facing COVID-19, when they needed Oxygen, Arvind Kejriwal Ji was distributing a 'free bottle on every bottle'... There are many works in Delhi - like cleaning



Yamuna, and curbing pollution... when the BJP forms the govt, we will do all these works," Verma said after the BJP released its first list. Former South Delhi MP Ramesh Bidhuri will face chief minister Atishi in Kalkaji. Congress has fielded Alka Lamba from here, making it a triangular contest. Four former Delhi ministers - Kailash Gahlot and Raj Kumar Anand, who served in the outgoing AAP government, along with Arvinder Singh Lovely and Rajkumar Chauhan, who held key portfolios during Sheila Dikshit's government from 2003 to 2013 - have also been given tickets. Gahlot's seat has been shifted from Najafgarh to

Bijwasan, while Anand will contest from the reserved constituency of Patel Nagar. The two-time Najafgarh MLA resigned as minister and quit AAP to join the BJP in November. Tarvinder Singh Marwah, a three-time former Congress MLA from Jangpura who joined the BJP in 2022, will contest from the same seat. He is pitted against senior AAP leader and former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia. Former Delhi minister Arvind Singh Lovely has been fielded from the Gandhi Nagar seat in east Delhi, replacing incumbent BJP MLA Anil Bajpai. Bajpai had defeated Lovely from the seat in the 2020 polls.

Kejriwal promises water bill waivers post elections

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) debt accumulated to over Rs 73,000 crore, former Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party convener Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday made another promise to the people of Delhi that his party would waive inflated water bills if his party was voted to power in the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls likely to be held next month. Addressing a press conference, Kejriwal urged the people not to pay inflated water bills and said that 12 lakh families got bills of zero amount. "But when I went to jail, I don't know what these people (BJP) did behind my back." He assured that these erroneous bills would be waived off after the elections, offering relief to affected residents. The AAP government is providing 20,000 litres of free water to Delhi households. Interestingly, Kejriwal's AAP is in the power in Delhi. This comes after announcing six freebies to the people of Delhi including Mahila Samman Scheme under which Rs 2100 per month to be given to every woman, Pujaris and Granthi's monthly salary and free treatment to senior citizens. Insiders say the DJB's financial losses have jumped from Rs 344.05 crore in the 2019-20 fiscal to Rs 1,196.22 crore in 2021-22, while the board has a debt of more than Rs 73,196.55 crore, which includes Rs 37,366.59 crore in principal amount and Rs 35,829.96 crore in interest.

Fresh violence erupts in Manipur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ IMPHAL

After the apologies by Manipur chief Minister N Biren Singh, fresh violence were reported from the north eastern State as security was beefed up in Kangpokpi district where the Superintendent of Police was injured in a mob attack for failing to "remove" the central armed forces as per the demands of Kuki groups. A mob on Friday evening attacked the office of M Prabhakar, throwing stones and other "projectiles" to vent their anger over the continued deployment of central forces, particularly the BSF and the CRPF, in the Saibol village. Vehicles of district police kept within the compound of the SP's office were vandalised. Prabhakar



Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla chairs meeting to review the state's security and law and order situation, at Raj Bhavan, in Imphal

was injured after being hit on the forehead by some projectile, officials said. Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla who took over the charge chaired a meeting with senior police, CRPF, BSF, Assam Rifles officials on Saturday and reviewed the comprehensive security situation in the state. The Governor of Manipur chaired a security meeting at Raj Bhavan in Imphal. Taking stock of the prevailing law and order situation, the Governor reviewed the security apparatus and its

arrangements throughout the state, with a particular focus on border areas," the release issued by Raj Bhavan said. More than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki communities since May 2023. A senior officer in Imphal said a huge contingent of security forces have been deployed in the area. "Situation is now under control and being closely monitored," he added. In a statement, the police said that besides stones, the protestors attacked the SP office with petrol bombs. "Security forces retaliated against the mob and resorted to the use of adequate force to disperse the mob and the situation was brought under control," it said.

Nagaland CM calls for end to factionalism in Naga talks

PNS ■ KOHIMA

Nagaland deputy chief minister Yanthungo Patton, while emphasising that the Centre is willing to offer only one solution to the longstanding Naga political issue, on Saturday urged Naga underground factions and people to come together for a permanent resolution. Addressing the 175th anniversary celebration of Lhisemia Thino, the amalgamation of different clans of Lhisemia Khel (sector) of Kohima village, Patton said, "The Centre,



under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is ready to give us a solution only if our Naga factions are united." The Centre has been holding political negotiations with the NSCN-IM since the signing of the ceasefire

agreement in 1997 and also inked the Framework Agreement in 2015. It also entered into parallel negotiations with the Working Committee of Naga National Political Groups (WC NNPGs), composed of at least seven Naga factions, in 2017. They signed the Agreed Position in November 2017. Negotiations between the Centre and Naga groups were declared to have concluded on October 30, 2019, by the then interlocutor and Governor of Nagaland, R N Ravi.



District hospital where injured army personnel are being treated after an army vehicle fell into a gorge in Bandipora district

Two Army accidents in two weeks: 8 soldiers dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Three Indian army jawans were killed and two others received injuries when their vehicle skidded off the road and fell into a deep gorge in the North Kashmir district of Bandipora on Saturday. According to preliminary reports, the accident occurred due to inclement weather and poor visibility conditions in the SK Payeen area of Bandipora. The locals in the area responded swiftly and launched rescue operations. This is the second incident in the last two weeks in which Indian army jawans lost their lives in a road accident. Five soldiers were killed in the Balmoi sector of Poonch when an army vehicle rolled down into a gorge on December 24, 2024. Srinagar-based Chinar Corps posted on X (earlier Twitter), "On 04 Jan 24, while performing duty in the Bandipora district, an Indian Army vehicle skidded and fell into the gorge due to inclement weather and poor visibility." Injured soldiers were promptly evacuated for medical care with assistance from Kashmiri locals, for which we express gratitude to the citizens for providing immediate succor. Tragically three bravehearts lost their lives in the unfortunate accident. Indian Army extends heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families."

Odisha prepares for Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

PM Modi to launch the event on Jan 9

NALINI SAHU ■ BHUBANESWAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Bhubaneswar on January 8 to inaugurate the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention, an event to celebrate the Indian diaspora being hosted in Odisha for the first time. Modi is expected to arrive at the Bhubaneswar airport at 8 pm on January 8 and will stay overnight at the Raj Bhavan. On January 9, he will launch the convention at the Janata Maidan. The three-day conclave from January 8 to 10 has attracted significant attention among the global Indian diaspora. Registrations have surged in recent weeks with over 7,500 participants from more than 50 countries expected to attend, according to the State Home Department. The delegates include non-resident Indians (NRIs) primarily from Southeast Asia, the Gulf region and Europe. Domestically, participants



from Kerala, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha will also take part. The event emphasises Odisha's role as an emerging hub for economic and cultural exchanges. The State's strategic location and its rich cultural heritage have played a significant role in boosting interest, especially in sectors like tourism and port-based infrastructure. This year marks the 18th edition of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, an initiative first launched in 2003 by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari

Vajpayee. By hosting the convention, Bhubaneswar joins an elite group of cities such as New Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru, showcasing Odisha's growing prominence on the national stage. To enhance the experience for international and domestic delegates, Odisha is organising parallel events, including a Night Flea Market, an Adivasi Fair and a Food Festival to highlight the State's cultural vibrancy. The convention aligns with India's 'Act East Policy,' aiming to strengthen ties

with Southeast Asia. Odisha Chief Minister, Mohan Charan Majhi called the event "a defining moment in Odisha's journey towards becoming a global destination for investment and cultural exchange." The programme will commence with the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas on January 8 followed by the Prime Minister's inauguration on January 9. The event concludes on January 10 with the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awards presented by President Droupadi Murmu.

Manoj Sahoo new PS to CM



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government on Saturday appointed senior IAS officer Manoj Kumar Sahoo as the new Private Secretary to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi. According to sources, the 2006-batch IAS officer would replace his IAS colleague Arindam Dakua. "The post of Private Secretary to the Chief Minister, Odisha is declared equivalent in status and responsibility to the post of Special Secretary provided in the IAS Cadre of the State," a notification by the General Administration and Public Grievance Department stated.

In Jajpur 2 jewellery store staffs shot dead during robbery bid

2 robbers nabbed; 2nd incident in State in 2 days

AKSHAY ROUT ■ JAJPUR

Two employees were killed after miscreants opened fire at them during an attempt to rob a gold jewellery shop at Panikoili of Jajpur district on Saturday afternoon. Shop staff Nila Madhab Panda died after sustaining a bullet wound in the stomach. Another employee was also shot at in his thigh and was admitted to hospital in acritical condition. However, he also succumbed to the bullet injury after being shifted to Bhubaneswar for advanced treatment. Sources said several miscreants arrived by motorbikes and opened fire after facing resistance during a robbery attempt at the jewellery shop in the bustling Panikoili market. Incidentally, locals tried to overpower the robbers and managed to apprehend two of the accused even as at least



two others were able to flee. Chaos and tension prevailed in the area as a large crowd gathered around the scene. A pistol and empty cartridges were found at the spot. Later, police arrived at the scene and took the two apprehended accused into custody. Till last reports, a search and investigation was underway to nab those who fled. The incident is a glaring case of growing cases of armed robbery in the State. On Friday, a gang of armed men carried out a robbery in broad daylight at the Manappuram Gold Loan office in Sambalpur town. The robbers decamped with gold jewellery worth Rs 20 crore after holding the employees and customers hostage at gunpoint.

Six Indian Americans sworn-in as members of US House of Representatives

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

In a momentous occasion for Indian Americans, six of their leaders on Friday were sworn-in as the members of the US House of Representatives, the largest so far for this minority ethnic community in the United States. "When I was first sworn in twelve years ago, I was the sole Indian American Member of Congress and only the third in US history. Now, our coalition is six strong! I am excited to welcome even more Indian Americans to the halls of Congress in the years to come!" Congressman Dr Ami Bera said in a post on X. Bera, the senior most of them, who has been sworn-in for the seventh consecutive term as a representative of the seventh Congressional District of

California, also posted a picture of all the six Indian American Congressman from the floor of the House. Suhash Subramanian, who represents the 10th Congressional District of Virginia is the newest Indian American to be a member of the House of Representatives. "First day of work! Honoured to be sworn into the #119th Congress, and excited to get to work to deliver results for VA10," he said as he posted a picture of him along with his family and House Speaker Mike Johnson. "Ready to Serve," said Congressman Shri Thanedar who represents the 13th Congressional District of Michigan as he posted a selfie of his from the House floor. All the six Indian American lawmakers are from the Democratic Party and voted for



(Left to right): Ami Bera, Pramila Jayapal, Raja Krishnamoorthi, Ro Khanna, Shri Thanedar and Suhash Subramanyam

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries in the election for House Speakership. Republican Mike Johnson was elected as the House Speaker. Congressman Ro Khanna represents the 17th Congressional District of California and Raja Krishnamoorthi represents the eighth Congressional District of Illinois. Congresswoman Pramila

Jayapal, representing the seventh Congressional District of Washington state, is the first ever Indian American woman to be elected to the House of Representatives. All the three - Khanna, Krishnamoorthi and Jayapal - have been sworn-in for a fifth consecutive term, during which they have emerged as powerful

lawmakers in their own way. Krishnamoorthi is a Ranking Member of the powerful China Committee and also a member of the House Intelligence Committee. Jayapal is leader of the highly powerful progressive group of lawmakers. Khanna is not only a member of several powerful House committees, but also is seen as a potential presidential candidate in

the years to come. All the six Indian Americans constitute an informal Samosa Caucus, a term coined by Krishnamoorthi. When sworn in for the first term in 2012, Dr Bera had then wished to have 10 Indian Americans in the House of Representatives. Several Indian Americans aspiring to be elected to the House lost

elections either during the primaries or in the November 5 general elections. At least three of them were women: Sushila Jaipal, Bhavani Patel and Krystal Kaul. Dalip Singh Saund was the first Indian American to be elected to the House of Representatives in 1957. Also, the first Sikh, he was elected for three consecutive terms. He was from the Democratic Party. It took nearly five decades for a second Indian American to enter the US House of Representatives. Bobby Jindal represented the First Congressional District of Louisiana from 2005 to 2008. He later went on to become the two-term Governor of Louisiana, making him the first Indian American to be elected as the governor of a US State. Jindal is the only Indian American to be elected to the House on a Republican ticket.

Utkarsh Odisha Conclave

3,000 business leaders to attend event

CM holds review meet

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Saturday reviewed the preparations for the upcoming Utkarsh Odisha-Make in Odisha Conclave-2025 scheduled to be held here on January 28 and 29.

Odisha Conclave, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is scheduled to hold a national executive council meeting on January 27.

As many as 3,000 industrialists, investors, business leaders and entrepreneurs from across India and abroad are scheduled to participate in the Utkarsh Odisha conclave.

The conclave would have four plenary sessions, 16 sectoral sessions and four roundtable conferences.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to address the conclave on its opening day on January 28. Several eminent industrialists would



also speak at the event. The business leaders would also join in a roundtable conference with the Chief Minister. There would be special sessions for Odia entrepreneurs as well as women business leaders at the conclave, said the state government.

A special session titled 'Subhadra ru Mudra' would be held for the women entrepreneurs of Odisha. An industrial exhibition would be organised during the conclave.

Among others, Industries Minister Sampad Chandra Swain and senior officials were present.

Cold wave

BBSR records season's lowest temp of 12.7 deg

Cuttack 12.4 deg; Rourkela coldest at 8.7 deg

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The gripping cold wave owing to chilly winds blowing in from the north and north-west continued to sweep Odisha on the fourth day of the year 2025 with the capital city of Bhubaneswar recording the season's lowest temperature of 12.7 degrees Celsius on Friday night.

predicted to remain between 13 and 14 degrees for the next seven days.

As per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Rourkela once again recorded the lowest temperature among major cities in the State at 8.7 degree followed by Jharsuguda 9 degree, Keonjhar 10.4 degree and Sambalpur 11.9 degree.

Coastal regions also reeled under the cold wave with Baleswar recording a minimum temperature of 13.1 degrees followed by Chandbali with 13.4 degree, Paradip 14.2 degree, Gopalpur 15.7 degree and Puri 16.6 degree.

The IMD also stated that the intense cold is likely to persist for at least the next two days, after which a respite is likely as temperatures may rise by 2 to 3 degrees in the subsequent three days.

PM to lay stone for R'gada Rly Dvn tomorrow

PNS ■ RAYAGADA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone for Rayagada Railway Division and inaugurate various projects through videoconferencing from Jammu on January 6. Minister of Railways, I and B and Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav will also grace the occasion.

Rayagada Railway Division project is valued at Rs107 crore comprising several key components aimed at enhancing the region's railway infrastructure. Some of the major features of the Rayagada Division project are headquarters of the division located in Rayagada, a modern DRM office building (G+2 structure, with a total plinth area of 12,000 sqm), a divisional control office to manage railway operations, residences for officers and staff to support the division's workforce and connecting roads for smoother transportation links.

The event will be attended by several dignitaries at Rayagada, including Governor Dr Hari Babu Kambhampati, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Minister of State for Railways and Food Processing Industries, Ravneet Singh Bittu.

Boudh Mahotsav begins with torch rally



PNS ■ BOUDH

The Boudh Mahotsav and Pallishree Mela kicked off on January 2 in Kacheri field, Boudh, with local MLA Saroj Kumar Pradhan inaugurating the event. Collector Subrat Kumar Panda presided over the event, where SP Nagraj Deverokknda, Phulbani MP Sukant Kumar Pranigrahi and ZP president Prabhasini Dash attended as honourable guests.

The event began with a torch rally which started from Rajbati Chowk, Boudh. A puja was held at the historic Buddha statue. The rally concluded at Kacheri field, with the staff from the administration and local people participating in the opening ceremony. The inaugural evening of Boudh Mahotsav featured a plethora of cultural performances. The event's cultural evening was a grand celebration of Odisha's folk traditions, with mesmerising performances of folk dance and folk song from across the State.

Buses to be fitted with smart devices to curb mishaps



Announces CM Majhi

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi announced on Saturday that smart devices would be installed in all buses plying in the State to improve road safety and reduce accidents.

Addressing the media and audience at an event to kickstart the National Road Safety Month in Bhubaneswar, the CM said the government would assist private bus owners in installing these devices which would help detect as well as prevent various cases of negligence and emergency including drunk driving and loss of consciousness.

Such smart devices can also analyse braking and detect loss of steering and other mechanical failures, which can be key elements in preventing casualties.

State Transport Secretary Usha Padhee said discussions regarding the manufacturer

and procurement of these devices are ongoing with the IIT Madras.

"These smart devices are capable of detecting various scenarios. They can follow the movement of the iris and alert the driver if they fall asleep while driving, a condition known as sleep hypnosis," she said.

Odisha State Bus Owners' Association general secretary Debendra Sahu lauded the move while emphasising the need for such devices not only in buses but in all ve-

hicles plying on the roads. "We had already requested the government for such devices. Not only will it spread awareness but also ensure the safety of drivers and passengers alike," he added.

In the same event, CM Majhi also stated that the government would recruit over 2,000 traffic police personnel already made to appoint 500 personnel this year with a vision to streamline traffic and prevent accidents.

In Cuttack

Valuables looted from Hanuman temple

PNS ■ CUTTACK

Thieves looted silver crown and gold ornaments from the Panchamukhi Hanuman Temple in the Khannagar area in Cuttack city on Friday night.

The matter came to light on Saturday morning when the priests went to open the temple.

It was suspected that the theft took place during the late hours of the night, leaving devotees in disbelief over how such a brazen act could occur at one of the city's popular and revered temples.

Getting information, a team of the Madhupatana police station reached the spot for investigation.



Temple authorities have expressed deep concerns over the theft of valuables from the temple. Locals also urged police officials to increase vigilance in safeguarding sacred establishments, which have always remained an easy tar-

get for the miscreants. Sources said the miscreants gained access to the temple by breaking its backyard gate.

"CCTV cameras have been installed at the temple, but their recording is available only till December 3," said a

local resident. The priest of the temple said, "All the valuables of the deity have been looted. The incident occurred after 3:30 am. It appears that the miscreants have not opened the donation boxes."

Woman converting trash to treasure gets R Day invite

Honour for Kamala Moharana who was praised by PM

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

Kendrapada woman Kamala Moharana, who shot into prominence when Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised her efforts in transforming the lives of rural women in the 98th episode of Mann Ki Baat on February 26 last year, has been invited to attend the Republic Day parade in New Delhi.

The 66-year-old woman has been successful in running a self-help group for the last nine years and empowering 50 women who have been earn-



ing their livelihoods by converting waste materials into artistic products.

PM Modi had touched Kamala's feet in admiration of her work during an election meeting in Kendrapada on May 29, 2024.

As per reports, the Central Government has arranged flight tickets for Kamala and her son Mahendra to attend the event in the national capital. "My life has been changed dramatically after Prime Minister Modi praised my work. I am now eagerly waiting for the Republic Day parade and the opportunity to meet him. Villagers initially mocked at me as a 'kabadiwalla' but their perceptions changed after the PM mentioned about my work in his popular programme," said an elated Kamala after getting the invitation to attend the Republic Day parade.

Kamala has been converting plastic, polythene and other waste materials into baskets, pen stands, flower pots and wall hangings.

"Without my idea to turn waste materials into useful products, I might have been still struggling to make ends meet. Now, I am also helping others build a better life," she added.

Kendrapada farmer ends life over crop loss

10 such deaths in State in 10 days

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA

Another farmer committed suicide on Friday night by consuming poison allegedly due to crop loss in Koladiha village under the Aul police station in Kendrapada district.



The deceased was identified as Kailash Chandra Dhal. This is the tenth death of a farmer in the last 10 days in the State due to crop loss owing to the depression-induced untimely rainfall, reports said.

As per sources, Dhal had cultivated paddy in eight acres of land but lost the vast majority of it after unseasonal rains in December destroyed his entire crop. Family members of the deceased linked his death to mounting financial burden. Dhal had taken a loan of approximately Rs 2.5 to Rs 3 lakh and was under severe mental distress for several days over concerns about repaying the same after losing his crops.

Kumarsen said his father was under intense depression for the past ten days and despite family intervention took the extreme step after increased debt burden.

The incident once again brought forth an alarming situation in the State where several farmers have either taken their lives or died out of shock after losing their crops in unseasonal and incessant rains that battered the State from December 19.

In the most recent case, two farmers from the Ranpur block of Nayagarh died after reported stress from crop loss and mounting debts. Earlier, at least seven farmers had died by suicide.

Subhadra 4th-phase money after Jan 15: Dy CM

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Deputy Chief Minister Pravatī Parida announced on Saturday that a specific date for the release of the instalment amount of Subhadra Yojana's fourth phase would be declared after January 15.

"An inquiry will take place until January 15 and the number of applicants after that period will be taken into account to decide a date for disbursement of the funds," she told the media.

The statement came a day after the State Cabinet approved March 31, 2025 as the deadline for registration to avail benefits under the Subhadra Yojana for the financial year 2024-25. Earlier on December 30, Parida had

announced that in 2025, women across the State would benefit from the Subhadra Yojana funds on three separate occasions throughout the year.

While beneficiaries are expected to receive this year's first disbursement in January, the other two Subhadra Yojana instalments will follow on the International Women's Day on March 8 and later on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan in August.

Parida had then also emphasised that a field survey was ongoing to ensure that no eligible beneficiary was left out of the final list while facilitating effective implementation and ensuring prompt delivery of benefits to those who qualify.

Terror threat Tactical force unit to ensure security during NRI meet

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Security in Bhubaneswar has been heightened with the arrival of a dedicated tactical unit of the Indian Special Forces as the State gears up to host the 2025 edition of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas from January 8 to 10.

The special tactical unit reached on Friday even as the Commissionerate police organised a meeting to review security measures in the capital city ahead of the prestigious event.

The combat unit of the special armed forces is equipped with multiple sophisticated weapons, wireless communication systems and advanced gear, ready to combat any eventuality.

Sources said the special tactical unit would be in charge of security at key junctions and keep vigil from vantage points of the city.

Incidentally, the security enhancements have been done at a time when Khalistani terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun has issued a threat to disrupt the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

In an email, Pannun referred to Bhubaneswar as a "terror city" instead of a temple city. He also threatened that his supporters may disrupt the proceedings and warned people to avoid the area from the Bhubaneswar airport to the Janata Maidan.

Notably, the Khalistani terrorist had also issued similar threats during the DGP-IGP conference held in Bhubaneswar in December.

Man returns jewellery found on road to police

Feted by Baleswar SP

PNS ■ BALESWAR

Baleswar Superintendent of Police Raj Prasad on Friday appreciating the honesty of a person felicitated him here.

The man identified as Ranjan Samantray of Kashipur village under Baliapal area had deposited gold ornaments worth over Rs 2 lakh with the local police after he found them from road. He didn't show any greed.

of Kaumari village, dropped a box of ornaments while on the way to deliver them to a customer between Kalipada market and Chandmani area. A child first found the ornament box on the road who gave it to Ranjan. He, in turn, handed over the ornaments to police urging them to return them to the actual owner. Goldsmith Kamila had lodged a complaint of missing articles with police and was later handed over the ornaments.

After learning about the incident, SP Prasad appreciating the integrity of Ranjan felicitated him.

According to reports, Goutam Kamila, a goldsmith

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

In Jagatsinghpur Firecracker blast leaves 2 dead, 2 injured

KAHNU NANDA
JAGATSINGHPUR

An explosion claimed the lives of a man and his wife while another couple has been left battling for their lives in Jagatsinghpur. The suspected 'firecracker blast' led to the collapse of a house's roof and walls, killing the two while two others were critically injured. The deceased were identified as Rajesh Das and his wife Rani Das, residents of Badabag village. Those injured were Rajesh's younger brother Paresh Das and his wife Lakshmi Priya. The explosion occurred at night, report-



edly linked to a fireworks incident. Authorities, including police, fire brigade and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), arrived at the scene to conduct rescue efforts. The trapped family members were

Jagatsinghpur SP Bhawani Shankar Udgata informed, "Families of two brothers were residing in the building. We have recovered a body from the debris. We suspect another body is buried under the rubble. Another couple was rescued and admitted to hospital. Further search operation is on. Fortunately, the children were sleeping in a separate house. We are not sure if the blast occurred due to a cracker burst. But the probe is on." The tragedy has left the village community in shock with discussions about safety and legalities of fireworks usage.

Woman allegedly killed over dowry in Koraput

Murder case lodged; husband detained

PNS ■ KORAPUT

A pregnant woman was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Beheraguda village under the Semiliguda police station of Koraput district on Friday night. Despite her pregnancy, her husband and in-laws demanded more dowry as per the serious allegations

brought forward by her family members. Sources said the deceased, identified as Rachana Sahu, had married a man named Anil from the village in March 2024. However, she was constantly harassed and under pressure from her in-laws for dowry as per allegations of her father. Relatives of the deceased also corroborated the allegations and claimed that her in-laws had demanded a large sum of money from them as dowry and allegedly

killed her after their demands were not heeded. "They initially demanded Rs 5 lakh as dowry. We could not afford that much but still paid them Rs 2 lakh and had requested time to pay the remaining amount," alleged a relative of Rachana. Family members further reported signs of injuries and wounds around the neck and insisted that she was killed by her in-laws. "I saw bruises on my sister's neck and noticed that her nose was bleeding. More-

over, her in-laws are all reporting different angles that led to her death. It is a case murder," alleged the deceased's brother. On the other hand, the woman's mother-in-law refuted the claims and alleged that she died by suicide. Later, the Semiliguda police reached the scene, seized the body and detained Rachana's husband for questioning. A case of possible murder was also registered and an investigation was underway.

In Bhadrak 2 brothers held with brown sugar

PNS ■ BHADRAK

Police have seized brown sugar worth more than Rs 9 lakh and arrested two brothers in this connection in Bhadrak district on Saturday while they were on the way to peddle the drugs. Bhadrak Additional SP Arup Abhisek Behera said the police had information about the two brothers, Kahnu Nayak and Kalia Nayak, peddling brown sugar in Gunthunia bazaar of Charampa under the Bhadrak Town police station for some time. But the two brothers

managed to elude the police dragnet. Getting information that Kahnu and Kalia were going with the drugs on Friday night, a special squad of Bhadrak police nabbed them and found 9.5 grams of brown sugar from their possession. They seized the brown sugar which was estimated to cost more than Rs 9 lakh. Following the arrest, the police seized a scooter, a car and two mobile phones of the two accused. After further investigation, the two accused would be forwarded to court, the ASP said.

In Jagatsinghpur dist Parties offer financial aid to deceased farmer's kin

KAHNU NANDA
JAGATSINGHPUR

Former Chief Minister, Leader of the Opposition and BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik visited deceased farmer Krutibasa Swain's residence at Sarana village under Balikuda block on Tuesday and listened to late farmer's kin who narrated stories of crop loss and mounting debts as cause behind the suicide. Patnaik assured them that he would take up the matter with the State government. BJD MLA Sarada Jena along with Balikuda Block Chairman Prakash Pradhan and other BJD leaders handed over Rs 1 lakh financial assistance to the late farmer's kin on Thursday, donated by Patnaik.



him and he would take care of their education and livelihood. Not to be left behind, Congress too came to the rescue of the deceased farmer's family. Its Balikuda leader and former legislator Jitu Mohapatra visited Sarana village on Thursday and gave some financial assistance to the farmer's kin. Mohapatra

demanding Rs 50 lakh monetary help to the deceased's family, a government job and waiver of all debts. The Naba Nirman Krushak Sangathan [NNKS] activists under the leadership of Seshadev Nanda held a road blockade at the Hospital Chhak on the Cuttack-Machhagaon NH 55 demanding compensation for the late

farmer's family. The district administration officials and police personnel held a discussion with agitated NNKS leaders and handed over a cheque amounting to Rs 25K to the deceased farmer's kin. They assured to provide more compensation for the deceased farmer's family from the Chief Minister Relief Fund. Later, the agitation was lifted.

Gold loan office robbery Cops form 4 teams for probe but still clueless

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

Police on Saturday intensified search operations and formed four specialised teams in the wake of a daring robbery at the Manappuram gold loan office on Friday. Although extensive searches are being conducted across State borders, no arrests have been made yet. The robbery saw miscreants decamped with approximately 28 kilograms gold jewellery along with Rs 4.8 lakh in cash. The investigation teams are not just limiting their efforts to Sambalpur alone; the investigation is also on in neighbouring districts though a significant breakthrough continues to elude them. The Manappuram gold loan office employees recalled the harrowing ordeal where they were held at gunpoint, tied and held captive by the robbers during their getaway with the valuables.

A witness, who is an employee of the office, recounted that between six to seven armed robbers stormed the premises, thrashed everyone and held them at gunpoint. The robbers forced the staff members to comply by intimidation and physical restraint before feeling with the valuables. "As usual we were working in the office when the armed miscreants stormed into the office and began beating up before we could understand anything. They were all armed with pistols and sharp-edged weapons. They tied us all and took off with the gold jewellery weighing around 28 kilos and 200 grams. They have also taken away Rs 4.8L cash," the employee recounted. The dramatic escape of the robbers was captured by CCTV cameras. Investigators are currently scrutinising this footage in hopes of identifying the perpetrators and tracing their whereabouts.

Bird & crocodile census Satkosia sanctuary shut for tourists for Jan 6-8 & 17-18



PNS ■ ANGUL

The Satkosia Tiger Reserve and its different sections would remain closed for tourists from January 6 to 8 and again on 17 and 18 owing to the scheduled bird and crocodile census. Satkosia Wildlife Division Forest Officer (DFO) Saroj Panda informed on Saturday that the crocodile census would commence from the evening hours of January 5 and continue until 8. Besides, Satkosia will again reopen on January 9 before remaining out of bounds for tourists on 17 and 18 for the bird census. All tourism-related activities, including boating in the Mahanadi river, will also be suspended along with a prohibition on local fishermen from entering the gorge

during this period. The census at Satkosia will cover a 23-km stretch along the Mahanadi and involve 70 staff members deployed across 14 teams from the Forest Department. Arrangements, including the use of country boats, have been made for the census activities. Incidentally, last year's census in Satkosia was held around roughly the same time when the crocodile population had surged with the number of mugger crocodiles rising to 97 and the population of gharials increasing to 14. However, the DFO had also mentioned a decline in the number of birds visiting the sanctuary last year with approximately 3,330 birds flocking to the gorge against 3,800 birds of 81 species in 2023.

Tribals observe Black Day at Kalinganagar

On 19th anniversary of firing on tribal protesters killing 14

PNS ■ JAJPUR

Large numbers of tribal people on Thursday observed 'Black Day' to mark the killing of 14 innocent tribals 19 years ago in Ambagadia village near the Kalinganagar steel hub in Jajpur district. The police had gunned down 14 people including three women on January 2, 2006 during a congregation of tribals, protesting against the construction of a boundary wall of Tata Steel company. Slogan-shouting tribals including many women and others took out a procession from Champakoila to Ambagadia and held a meet-



ing at the martyrs' tower. "We have been paying tribute to those who have sacrificed their lives for us and our livelihoods 19 years ago. We have been agitating for the protection of water, forest and land," said VVJM secretary Rabindra Jarika. Addressing the meeting, Jarika said, "The Nabin government had not so far explained the reason behind the firing. The government was only too keen to sign MoUs

with the big corporate houses and to practically give away the best deposits of iron ore as captive mines at a mere amount of royalty. The TATA built the steel plant over the bodies of the tribal people." Jarika also criticised the decision of the State Cabinet accepting the report of the Inquiry Commission on Kalinga Nagar firing. "In the report, the Inquiry Commission has not blamed the police for the killing of 14 tribal

people for which we totally reject it," added Jarika. Six chopped palms of Kalinganagar victims have been waiting for decent cremation for 13 years. The doctors of the government hospital in Jajpur had chopped off the palms of six bodies on January 2, 2006. Now the family members of the deceased need the chopped palms for the decent cremation," Jarika said. Security was tightened in Kalinganagar and its nearby areas on Thursday to prevent any untoward incident. The memorial meeting was peaceful with no report of untoward incident, said the Kalinganagar ADM. Meanwhile, the MLA of Chhatrapur has also written a letter to the Chief Minister requesting to order for a high level inquiry.

Dam safety NHRC directs Keonjhar, Sambalpur DMs for steps

PNS ■ KEONJHAR

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed the district Collectors of Keonjhar and Sambalpur to take steps for the safety of people living in the vicinity of the Hadagarh Dam. The NHRC passed the order taking cognisance of a petition filed by lawyer and human rights activist Radhakant Tripathi in December. The commission has asked the Collectors to take action within eight weeks. Tripathi stated that the Hadagarh Dam has been built on the Salandi river in Keonjhar district. People of Keonjhar and Bhadrak districts, are benefiting from this. The embankment is being constructed to protect people from floods.

However, the dam has become weak and its restoration and repairs are necessary. Such is also the situation of the Hirakud Dam. He alleged that the safety audit of the dams is also not being done properly and on time. Despite the Dam Safety Act 2021 and the National Dam Safety Authority, many dams are functioning without proper arrangements, which have always put people's lives at risk. More than 1,000 dams in the country will be around 50 years of age or above in the year 2025. Due to various reasons, the water holding capacity is decreasing while the premises are shrinking. Similarly, the earthen dams and concrete infrastructure are weakening. As a result, there are floods when it rains and there is always a danger to the dams, stated the petitioner.

Many Ganjam mega drinking water projects in limbo

Locals demand probe as to why projects worth crores defunct

KRUSHNA CHANDRA PANDA
BRAHMAPUR

The much-hyped multipurpose inter district mega drinking water supply project to meet the need of 55 villages under Ganjam Block and 42 villages of Krushna Prasad Block in Puri is in doldrums due to poor supervision. The project was started in 2018 with a target to complete it in 2022. The RWSS Division has utterly failed to supervise the execution. The project was aimed to provide piped water at the doorsteps of people in the two adjoining districts at

an approximate cost of Rs 150 crore since the ground water in several areas of Ganjam district and Krushna Prasad Block is saline and contaminated and unfit for consumption. There is a growing demand by the villagers for fixing accountability on the contractors, concerned engineers and the erring officials responsible for the delay of the project execution. The false claim of the BJD government of having provided piped drinking water in Ganjam was exposed after the villagers of Mayurpada, Gokharakuda, New Podampetta and Old Pedampetta under Ganjam Block narrated their difficulties. The villagers led by KM Reddy of Mayurapada village

said that the villages located near sea-shore are deprived of getting piped drinking water due to discontinuation of water supply from the earlier project i.e. Lakshmi Overhead Tank and the mega drinking water project. Hence, drinking water supply has been very irregular and erratic. Further, the Ganjam-Humma drinking water line constructed at a cost of Rs 10 crore too has gone futile. The overhead tank as well as Ganjam-Humma pipe line were meant to provide drinking water to the nearby villages. However, the inter district drinking water project is confined to pen and paper only and intended to befool the public, as water supply to these villagers has been fre-

quently discontinued and interrupted. The villagers have now demanded for a thorough inquiry into the matter. Similarly, another glaring example of non-functioning of drinking water project is in Karapada GP. For last 3 years, the water supply has been either erratic or stopped to which the officials reportedly have expressed their ignorance. During the earlier government, the officials laid pipes spending huge money from the government exchequer ignoring effective and hassle free performance of the project. There is a public perception that, the CM should order an impartial probe in to the matter and fix accountability on those responsible and restore water supply in public interest.

Native of Kendrapada US-settled NRI Prof helps students for higher studies

Felicitates persons at his trust's annual fest

RAJESH BEHERA
KENDRAPADA

Septuagenarian NRI Professor Debendra Das, a native of Badahat of Kendrapada district and presently settled in the USA, is on a mission to encourage the meritorious students of his native district by giving them scholarships to go for higher studies. He, on Saturday, provided scholarships to nearly 500 students under Shree Banchhanidhi Das and Srimati Devi Charitable Trust, established by him in the name of his late parents in a func-



tion at Kendrapada. Former PCC president Niranjan Pattanaik was the chief guest on the occasion. Former Health Director of SCB Medical College and Hospital Dr Nayan Kishore Mohanty, NRI educationalist Dr Biswaprakash Kanungo, Prabasi Odia social activist Dr Rita Mohanty and Runu Mohanty were the guests in the function. Former PCC president Pattanaik also received Tulashi Ratna Samman from the Trust, whereas social activist Gayatri Mohanty, Dr

Rita Mohanty, Dr Nalini Pattanaik, Dr Pratap Das, Dr Birendra Kumar Pattnaik, and former Head of Times of India, Kolkata, late Kamalakat Mohanty received Katherine Das Seva Samman on the occasion. The Trust provided a sum of Rs 1 lakh to Jagatsinghpur-based 'Amari Biswas' NGO managed by Dr Runu Mohanty for the social empowerment of poverty stricken women. Prof Debendra Das, working as Emeritus Professor at the University of Alaska, be-

longs to a lower middle class family. But most of his family members were well educated and established themselves in their own fields which inspired him to do well in his studies. He graduated in the Mechanical Engineering from Regional Engineering College, Rourkela in 1972 with a gold medal which paved the road to the US for his higher studies. Brown university gave him cent percent scholarship to pursue master's degree and later he obtained Doctorate. He settled in USA and married Katherine Cross (Das). "I know there are several meritorious poverty stricken students who fail to go for higher studies due to lack of encouragement and financial constraints. So I decided to help the meritorious and poor students," stated Prof Das.

Delhi polls: BJP attacks AAP Govt over financial mismanagement, rising debt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi dubbed AAP an "aapda (disaster)" for Delhi, the BJP on Saturday said it would highlight daily the crisis the city government had inflicted on different sectors, and began with its alleged financial mismanagement. BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said Delhi used to be considered one of the better states and Union Territories in terms of its financial health but its budget was now likely to report overall losses under the AAP

government. Delhi had a budget surplus of 1.56 per cent in 2015-16, which has been falling since then and is now headed into the negative, he said. The city government has also been seeking more and more debt and has now proposed to take a loan of Rs 10,000 crore from the National Small Savings Fund, he claimed. Trivedi said the grant-in-aid by the Centre to Delhi had also risen three times to 1.53 per cent of its GDP and accused former chief minister and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal of setting a record in looting and emptying the treasury.

The BJP spokesperson said the city's revenue collection had seen a steady fall from 5.4 per cent during AAP's 10-year rule, adding that the national average stood at 6.27 per cent. AAP is all about financial irregularities and mismanagement of taxpayers' contribution, Trivedi alleged, claiming that things were in a bad shape in AAP-ruled Punjab as well. He noted that AAP claimed to have spent a lot of money in education and health sectors and questioned the output. If AAP comes to power again, there will be no money left, Trivedi said, adding that the



challenge for a BJP government, if elected to power, would be how to repair the damage caused by the Kejriwal-led party's rule. He said the central government led by Prime Minister Modi had shown how to provide electricity by creating a framework for solar power for domestic use. It will also cause no damage to the environment, he added. He also expressed confidence that voters would take the lead in ridding Delhi of this "aapda". Targeting Kejriwal after he questioned the BJP over its face for the Delhi polls, expected next month, Trivedi

said what was "amusing and peculiar" was that AAP had a chief minister in Atishi who was not its face for the chief minister's (CM) post. People are wise enough to know what AAP's face is and what its mask is, he said, taking a "super CM" jibe at Kejriwal. The BJP has not had a chief minister in Delhi since 1998, Trivedi said. Kejriwal, he added, made claims driven by political experience, noting that the AAP leader had sought pictures of Lord Ganesh and Goddess Lakshmi on currency notes during the Gujarat Assembly polls in

2022 and then forgot about it. People will take out their anger on AAP this time, he said. Trivedi, who was quizzed about the murder of a journalist in Chhattisgarh, said the state government would put out all the facts transparently and was handling the issue with sensitivity and alacrity. Three people have been detained in connection with the murder of a 33-year-old journalist whose body was found in a septic tank on a local contractor's property in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police said on Saturday.

Some people trying to disturb peace in name of caste politics, says PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said some people are trying to disturb peace in the name of caste politics and called for thwarting such designs to preserve the social harmony in rural parts of the country. Inaugurating the Grameen Bharat Mahotsav, the Prime Minister exuded confidence that villages will play a key role in pushing forward the dream of Viksit Bharat by 2047. Without mentioning any names, Modi said certain people are trying to disturb peace by spreading the venom of caste politics. "We have to work to strengthen the heritage of peace and harmony of villages," he said. Recalling the steps taken by the NDA government since 2014, for rural development, Modi, quoting an SBI research report, said poverty in rural India came down to below 5 per cent from 26 per cent in 2012. He said the previous government had neglected the people living in rural India, and even after decades of independence, villages



were deprived of basic necessities. But his government is empowering villages, and focusing on those who were neglected before, the Prime Minister said. Speaking on the occasion, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said banks have undertaken saturation drive for 16 government schemes, including Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, PM Mudra and PM SVANidhi. The Mahotsav, through

various discussions, workshops and masterclasses, aims to enhance rural infrastructure, create self-reliant economies, and foster innovation within rural communities. Its objectives include promoting economic stability and financial security among rural populations, with a special focus on North-East India, by addressing financial inclusion and supporting sustainable agricultural practices.

Govt's draft protection rules create balance between regulation and innovation while completely protecting citizen rights: Ashwini Vaishnaw

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The draft protection rules released by the government create a balance between regulation and innovation while completely protecting citizen rights, Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Saturday. The Government issued draft rules for the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act on Friday for public consultation till February 18. "Rules have to be within four walls of the Act. It is within the ambit of the Act passed by Parliament. These rules have been framed to ensure a balance between regulation and innovation while completely safeguarding the rights of citizens," Vaishnaw told PTI in an interview. The minister said earlier there was only one template available to the world -- the European data protection rule with a high level of regulation. However, Indian rules have attempted to balance the regulation with innovation to safeguard the boom in the innovation ecosystem developing among startups in the country. He said extensive consultations have been held



with the industry and systems such as complaint registration, their handling and distribution, interaction with digital platforms, have been put in place. The minister said the final rules will be placed before Parliament in the monsoon session for approval and all entities handling data digitally will get two years to calibrate their systems as per the law. "All the entities covered under the Act will have to review existing consent within two years after the rules are in place," Vaishnaw said. He said the rules will be improvised based on the experience of the new data

government", as per the draft rules. "We have also kept graded punishments to protect the interests of micro, small and medium enterprises. It is to save businesses who may be running their business using a single computer. However, Big Techs have higher obligations under the rules. Minor breaches will attract small penalties and big breaches will lead to higher penalties," Vaishnaw said. He said the penal provision will be implemented as per the Act and the rules prescribe the way to implement them. The Act has the provision to impose penalty of up to Rs 250 crore on data fiduciaries. "There is a provision on voluntary undertaking under the Act where an entity can voluntarily disclose any breach to authorities and the Data Protection Board (DPB) will deal with it as per Act," Vaishnaw said. As per the DPDP Act, the acceptance of the voluntary undertaking by the Board will protect an entity from proceedings under the provisions of this Act. However, the protection will be subject to the approval of the DPB.

If a person fails to adhere to any term of the voluntary undertaking accepted by the DPB, it shall be deemed a breach of the provisions of the Act and the board after giving an opportunity of being heard to the person may proceed to act as per the penal provisions. The minister said utmost precaution has been taken to protect small businesses as per the basic principle laid down in the Act. Vaishnaw said the rules for data processing overseas will be implemented while keeping in mind citizen rights and national interests. "The country should be able to take benefit of all the new opportunities that are emerging out of the digital economy," Vaishnaw said. The rules will not have an impact on existing rules under which news media operate, he said, adding, "Media rights will continue to remain as it is. Press will continue to function as per the current framework." Digital platforms will also have to be informed and they will need to take consent of people in English or official languages as mentioned in the Constitution, Vaishnaw added.

Entire country needs MSP, says fasting farmer leader

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHANDIGARH

Fasting Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal on Saturday appealed to farmer outfits in other states to fight the agitation seeking legal guarantee to MSP strongly in their states to send a message to the Centre that it is not Punjab's fight alone. During his over 11-minute address at the "Kisan Mahapanchayat" at Khanauri, Dallewal tried to send across a message that his life was not more important than farmers. Seven lakh farmers have committed suicides in the country and he knows what their families have to go through, Dallewal said at the mahapanchayat called by the two forums which is spearheading the ongoing agitation. The 70-year-old farmer leader was brought out in a stretcher and addressed the gathering of farmers while lying on a bed from a stage at the protest site. He referred to farmers' demands, including the MSP guarantee, indicating that he understands the enormity of the task at hand but that does



not mean one will sit and do nothing. Dallewal, who is convener of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political), has so far refused to take any medical aid despite his prolonged fasting which completed 40 days on Saturday, which has caused his health to deteriorate. During the past few days, Dallewal had made an address to the farmers via short video messages, but this was his first public appearance after several days when he began his fast on November 26. Dallewal, whose outfit was earlier part of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) during

its agitation against now repealed farm laws, said, "When we returned from Delhi (borders after the 2020-21 stir), farmer leaders from other states had said Punjab is going back after the repeal of three laws.... We had told them Punjab cannot betray anyone." "Now, Punjab is at the forefront again. I request organisations of other states with folded hands to fight agitation strongly in their states and send a message to the central government that this agitation is not of Punjab alone but of the entire country," he said. "The entire country needs MSP," said Dallewal, who in between took sips of water

and told doctors standing nearby to allow him to complete his speech and not worry about his blood pressure. He told the gathering, "The way you have come today in numbers. Now, from every village one trolley should reach Khanauri to strengthen this Morcha." "The battle which I am fighting, it is not me who is fighting. It is being said Dallewal is fighting... It is God's will. The way God wants one to do, we have to do accordingly," he said. During his brief address, Dallewal said, "The night we got information that police can evict us, the same night scores of youths reached Khanauri from Punjab and Haryana and took charge of the morcha..." The Punjab government recently made it clear that it had no intention to forcibly evict Dallewal from the present agitation site. "I have faith that we will win the Morcha. The government may try to use as much force, but they cannot defeat the morcha," he said. Then going into the enormity of the task at hand in fighting the farmers' battle for MSP guarantee and other

demands, Dallewal said, "It is not that I don't understand this... I have studied, and I know it is difficult. But seeing the difficulty or enormity of the task if we sit doing nothing, then how will things work". See how much loss we suffered, he said, referring to farmer suicides. "Seven lakh farmers have committed suicide in the country. If we sit and think it is a difficult task, it will not be achieved, should we let them die. We are farmer leaders, many of our colleagues are farmer leaders," he said. Dallewal said he does not even care about his life, but the battle has to be fought so that no farmer suicides happen again. "The Supreme Court recently said that Dallewal's life is important. I had said that day hon'ble Supreme Court I am also human, alright, but what about families of those 7 lakh farmers who have committed suicide. We have to stop suicides in future," he said. Dallewal thanked the farmers who came for the "Kisan Mahapanchayat" from far off places and said despite doctors not permitting, it was his desire to meet them all.

Eminent nuclear scientist R Chidambaram passes away

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Renowned nuclear scientist and crystallographer Dr Rajagopala Chidambaram - who played an integral role in the Pokhran-I and Pokhran-II nuclear tests - passed away on Saturday, following a brief indisposition. Dr Chidambaram, who had not been keeping well for some days, had been admitted to the Jaslok Hospital where he breathed his last in the early hours of Saturday. He was 89. A high-pressure physicist and internationally-renowned crystallographer, Dr Chidambaram will long be remembered for his contributions to establish India as a nuclear weapons power on the global stage besides and give a boost to India's nuclear power generation plan. He was a trailblazer, an inspirational leader, and a dedicated mentor to countless scientists and engineers in the country. His life's work has propelled India to the forefront of global science and technology, and his legacy will continue to inspire generations. Born

November 11, 1936, he was an alumnus of Presidency College, Chennai, and the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, from where he also later got his D.Sc Degree. Dr Chidambaram joined the Indian nuclear establishment in 1962, when Dr Homi Jehangir Bhabha, the father of the country's nuclear programme, helmed the affairs. During his illustrious career as a scientist, Dr Chidambaram worked as the Director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) from 1990-93, Chairman of Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and Secretary of Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) from 1993-2000. He was also the chairman of the board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) during 1994-95. A Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India from 2001-2018, Dr Chidambaram also served as a member of the IAEA's Commission of Eminent Persons, contributing to the organisation's vision for 2020 and beyond. Apart from playing a pivotal

part in shaping India's nuclear capabilities, Dr Chidambaram played an integral role in the nation's first nuclear test in 1974, and led the DAE team during the Pokhran-II nuclear tests in 1998. He had worked with legends like Dr Vikram Sarabhai, Dr Homi Sethna, Dr Raja Ramanna, Dr M R Srinivasan, Dr P K Iyengar and groomed distinguished scientists like Dr Anil Kakodkar, who succeeded him. During the Pokhran-I test carried out on May 18, 1974 (Smiling Buddha), Dr Chidambaram worked closely with Dr Ramanna, Dr Sethna and Basanti Dulal Nag Chaudhuri, then then Director General of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). During Pokhran-II on May 11 and 13, 1998 (Operation Shakti), Dr Chidambaram worked with then DRDO chief Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, who later became the President and Dr Kakodkar. A visionary leader, Dr Chidambaram believed in the power of science and technology to drive national development.

Congress announces the launch of 'Jai Babu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan' campaign to press for resignation of Amit Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress has announced the launch of a 'Jai Babu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan' campaign to press for the resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah for "insulting" BR Ambedkar, the principal architect of India's Constitution. Congress head of media and publicity Pawan Khera said under the campaign, party leaders will organise 'Chaupals' in every district and tell people how the BJP-RSS has been insulting Ambedkar and demeaning the Constitution for decades. Launched on January 3, the campaign will culminate on January 26 with a grand rally at Mhow in Madhya Pradesh,

the birthplace of Ambedkar, commemorating 75 years of the Constitution and the Republic, Khera said. "To safeguard his legacy and values, a 'Samvidhan Bachao Rashtriya Padayatra' will be held from January 26, 2025, to January 26, 2026 -- connecting villages and towns across India with a powerful message of unity and social justice. We reiterate our demand to sack Home Minister Amit Shah for his derogatory remarks against Dr Ambedkar," Khera told reporters. The Congress leader also accused the BJP leadership of trying to "normalise the demonisation" of national leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Babasaheb Ambedkar and Jawaharlal

Nehru, who left an indelible mark in the country's history. "Make-up artists' cannot replace national icons whose contributions to the nation are immense. Such people have certainly created a name for themselves in the country's history. Icons like Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar cannot be replaced," Khera said. He also said the campaign aims to awaken and tell the people of the country about BJP's actions and the "insult" to Ambedkar. Replying to a debate on the Constitution in the Rajya Sabha on December 17, Shah had criticised the Congress for repeatedly taking Ambedkar's name. "It has become a fashion to say Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar... Had



they taken God's name so many times, they would have got a place in heaven," Shah had said. "We hoped that the home minister would apologise and the prime minister would intervene in this matter. But Prime

Minister Modi supported the home minister and became a partner in insulting Ambedkar ji," Khera claimed. The Congress leader said this issue was also raised at the Belagavi meeting where it was decided that the party will

launch a 'Jai Babu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan' campaign across the country. "Under this campaign, we will organise 'Chaupals' in every district and tell people how the BJP-RSS has been insulting Ambedkar ji and demeaning the Constitution for decades," Khera said. The Congress leader also recalled how on November 30, 1949, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) described the Constitution as "un-Indian" in its mouthpiece 'Organiser'. "When Ambedkar ji talked about equal rights for women, RSS burnt his effigy at the Ramliha Maidan. Not just Ambedkar ji, but Gandhi ji's legacy is also being attacked today," he alleged. He also claimed that BJP was confident of

changing Ambedkar's Constitution by winning more than 400 seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, which didn't happen. "But, had this happened, not only would the Constitution have changed, even Mahatma Gandhi's picture would have been removed from currency notes. "Mahatma Gandhi, whom the whole world considers an ideal, is slowly being removed by the ruling party of his own country. That is why the Congress is moving ahead and preserving the legacy of Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi," he said. Khera also said the BJP cannot roam around speaking about the Constitution while keeping 'Manusmriti' in its armpit. "BJP not just openly

commits injustice against Dalits and Adivasis in the country, it also weakens their laws. The BJP is against constitutional and democratic institutions. It has always insulted Ambedkar ji, but we will not tolerate this anymore," he said. Khera also released a pamphlet for the 'Jai Babu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan' campaign, claiming the Congress seeks to reveal with historical background how the BJP has been conspiring against 90 per cent of India's population. "Insulting Babasaheb Ambedkar or conspiring against him is a violation of the rights of 90 per cent of the people of this country... It is an attack on them," Khera alleged.

MP Govt to appraise Court on Bhopal toxic waste shifting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
BHOPAL

Amid protests over the planned disposal of 337 tonnes of toxic waste linked to the Bhopal gas tragedy in the Pithampur industrial town of Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has decided to appraise the courts of the latest position on the issue and not proceed until further court orders. The decision was taken on Friday night during a high-level meeting to review the situation. "The state government stands firmly with the people. We will not allow any harm to the public. We will bring the matter before the court and proceed with any action only in compliance with the court's order," Yadav told reporters after the meeting. The chief minister has appealed to the citizens not to



Workers deployed for the collection of toxic waste for disposal from the Bhopal's Union Carbide factory at the Pithampur Industrial Waste Management Facility. PTI

believe in rumours. Yadav held discussions with senior public representatives, top officials from the administration and police, and legal experts in the meeting regarding the transportation of the Union Carbide waste and its dumping and disposal near Pithampur. He said that they have discussed various aspects of the work related to dumping of Union Carbide waste in the presence of deputy chief

ministers Jagdish Devda and Rajendra Shukla, senior MP and state president of the Bharatiya Janata Party Vishnu Dutt Sharma, Urban Development and Housing Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya, Chief Secretary Anurag Jain,

Additional Chief Secretary Dr Rajesh Rajora, Director General of Police Kailash Makwana, Principal Secretary Law and other senior officials in the Chief Minister's Office. Yadav said, "The Madhya Pradesh government is a government that gives top priority to the interests of the public. Therefore, we have always moved forward with the public interest in mind. In compliance with the Supreme Court's instructions and the High Court's order, the Union Carbide waste has been transported to Pithampur." He said they only transported it while complying with the safety parameters in line with the petitions and orders of the court. The court had given a deadline for the waste to be sent to the designated place before January 4. The court expected its report by January 6.

Bihar PSC exam retest held peacefully for 12,000 candidates amid paper leak allegations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
PATNA

The retest for a select group of candidates who had appeared in the recent Bihar PSC exam, which has been embroiled over allegations of question paper leak, was held on Saturday afternoon at 22 centres here, officials said. Altogether, 12,000 candidates were scheduled to sit for the re-examination that started at 12 pm and continued till 2 pm, they said. The 70th Combined Competitive Examination (CCE) held on December 13 has been in the eye of a storm over allegations of leak of question papers, which has been denied by the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC), though a fresh test was ordered for 12,000 candidates, who had appeared for the exam at the Bapu Pariksha Parisar centre here. "The re-exam took place at 22 centres in Patna. Out of a total 12,000 candidates, around 8,200 aspirants had downloaded their admit cards. The authorities concerned will later provide the exact number



of students who appeared for the retest," District Magistrate Chandrashekhar Singh told reporters. "The retest was peacefully held at all the centres, where adequate arrangements were put in place. The district administration had issued strict guidelines. Unauthorised entry, gatherings and protests within a 200-metre radius of the centres were prohibited," he said after the exam. The clamour for cancellation of the Combined Competitive Examination held on December 13 by the BPSC has gained strength, as agitating aspirants found support from

various political parties, Independent MP Pappu Yadav and Jan Suraj founder Prashant Kishor. Yadav had on Friday led his supporters in blocking rail and road traffic in several areas of Patna as well as other parts of the state. Several MLAs and leaders of the Congress, CPI-ML (Liberation), CPI(M) and CPI also lent support to the protesting candidates, who have been demanding that fresh exams be held for all the five lakh candidates, who had appeared at more than 900 centres across the state, to ensure a "level-playing field".

Cold wave intensifies in Uttar Pradesh, dense fog disrupts normal life

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
LUCKNOW

The cold wave gripping Uttar Pradesh intensified on Saturday, with icy winds and dense fog plunging temperatures and disrupting daily life across the state. For the second consecutive day this season, a cold-day alert was issued in 10 districts, leaving residents shivering as they braved the harsh weather conditions. Kanpur recorded the lowest temperature in the state, with the mercury dipping to 4.6 degrees Celsius in the last 24 hours.



The cold snap was felt statewide, with temperatures in 20 cities falling below 10 degrees Celsius. The Meteorological Department issued a yellow alert for dense fog in 26 districts. In Lucknow, visibility dropped to less than 50 meters until 9 a.m., causing significant disruptions to air travel. Two flights to Lucknow from Bengaluru and Delhi were cancelled, while several outbound flights faced delays of up to eight hours. Visibility reached zero in

multiple cities, including Meerut, Auraiya, and Mainpuri, where vehicles struggled to navigate. Slow-moving traffic was reported in Sambhal, Ghaziabad, Hapur, and Ayodhya. In Agra, dense fog caused a tragic accident late Friday night in the Kiravali area, where three vehicles collided. One person died, and 30 passengers were injured in the mishap. In another accident, a passenger bus collided with a truck on the Agra-Jaipur

highway at 1 a.m. The bus, traveling from Gujarat, also struck a Max vehicle following the initial collision. Police arrived at the scene to rescue passengers trapped inside the bus. Four passengers and two individuals from the Max vehicle were critically injured. According to reports, the accident occurred after the driver of a trailer truck abruptly applied brakes, causing the bus to rear-end the truck amid low visibility. The police later used cranes to

remove the damaged vehicles. Dr. S.N. Sunil Pandey, a meteorologist at CSA University in Kanpur, explained that the strong northwestern winds from the mountains have significantly intensified the cold. "The wind speed on Saturday is expected to range between 15 and 25 km/h, contributing to severe cold conditions," he said. Pandey predicted that Saturday would remain extremely cold, with minimal chances of sunshine. Some respite from the cold is expected on Sunday, with a slight rise in temperature and reduced fog. However, the cold wave is likely to return after Monday as a new western disturbance becomes active. This weather system could bring drizzle to parts of western Uttar Pradesh and the NCR, further intensifying cold winds. Authorities have urged residents to exercise caution while traveling and to stay indoors during peak fog hours to minimize risks associated with the severe weather.

Three arrested in connection with Chhattisgarh journalist Mukesh Chandrakar's murder

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
RAIPUR



Three persons have been detained in connection with the murder of a 33-year-old journalist whose body was found in a septic tank on a local contractor's property in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, police said on Saturday. Mukesh Chandrakar, a freelance journalist, went missing on January 1, and his body was found on Friday in the septic tank on a property owned by contractor Suresh Chandrakar at Chattanpara Basti in Bijapur town. "Three persons have been detained in connection with the murder and are being interrogated," an official here said. The police, however, did not disclose their names and said the details would be revealed later in the day. Mukesh worked as a freelance journalist for news channels, including NDTV, and ran a YouTube channel, 'Bastar Junction', which has some 1.59 lakh

subscribers. He had played a crucial role in the release of a CoBRA commando, Rakeshwar Singh Manhas, from Maoists' captivity in April 2021 following the Takalguda Naxal ambush in Bijapur, wherein 22 security personnel were martyred. He went missing on Wednesday evening, and his elder brother Yukesh Chandrakar lodged a complaint with the police the next day, a senior police official said. Tracking Mukesh's mobile number, police reached the property owned by Suresh Chandrakar and found the body in a septic tank, which was freshly cast with

UP Govt launches initiative to curb stubble burning, promotes sustainable farming

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Government has launched a unique initiative, "Parali Ke Badle Govansh Khaad" (cow manure in exchange for stubble) aimed at curbing stubble burning and promoting sustainable farming practices, officials said on Saturday. The initiative, launched on October 28, 2024, seeks to address environmental pollution caused by stubble burning while benefiting farmers through the distribution of cow manure for organic farming, a statement said. Under the campaign 2,90,208.16 quintals of straw were collected across the state and 1,55,280.25 quintals of cow manure were distributed to farmers. The manure is being used to enhance soil fertility and encourage sustainable agricultural practices, it said. Several districts including Varanasi, Banda, Budaun, Jalaun, Bareilly, Amethi, Siddharthnagar, and Bahraich performed notably well during the campaign with large-scale collection of straw and distribution of manure, the statement added. The campaign not only reduces environmental hazards but also lowers production costs for farmers contributing to long-term agricultural welfare and conservation efforts, the statement said. It also emphasizes the protection of destitute cows by facilitating the distribution of manure collected from cow shelters to farmers. This effort showcases the proactive and efficient functioning of the Animal Husbandry Department, the statement added. The 'Parali Ke Badle Govansh Khaad' campaign stands as a crucial step for the welfare of farmers, environmental sustainability, and society at large, the government said. It effectively curbs stubble burning and motivates farmers towards organic farming, this initiative marks a significant stride towards a greener revolution in the state, the statement added.

Devotees visiting Ayodhya during Mahakumbh should not face any inconvenience: CM Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
AYODHYA

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Saturday, said that over 40-45 crore devotees are expected to attend Prayagraj Mahakumbh-2025, with many likely to visit Ayodhya as well. In Ayodhya, devotees will visit prominent temples and sites, including Ramlala, Hanumangarhi, and Suryakund. He instructed the local administration to ensure all preparations are complete, focusing on visitor safety, crowd management, worship arrangements, and shelter facilities. The CM held a review meeting with administrative officials after meeting with BJP workers. He said, "No devotee should face any inconvenience during the cold season. In addition to maintaining

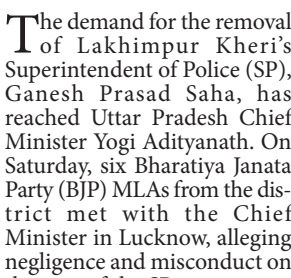


cleanliness, proper arrangements for bonfires and other necessities must be ensured." In the auditorium of Acharya Narendra Dev Agricultural University Kumarganj, the Chief Minister along with district senior officials gathered information about the security of devotees coming to Ayodhya during Mahakumbh-2025, cloud management, shelter and

more. Divisional Commissioner Gaurav Dayal gave a presentation on the preparations in Ayodhya for Mahakumbh-2025. The Chief Minister issued necessary instructions to the officials. The review meeting was attended by local administration officials, police personnel, and senior district authorities.

Six MLAs from Lakhimpur Kheri meet CM Yogi demand removal of SP

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
LUCKNOW



The demand for the removal of Lakhimpur Kheri's Superintendent of Police (SP), Ganesh Prasad Saha, has reached Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. On Saturday, six Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLAs from the district met with the Chief Minister in Lucknow, alleging negligence and misconduct on the part of the SP. According to sources, the MLAs expressed their grievances, claiming that SP Saha does not address their concerns, frequently engages in phone conversations with mafia members, and has failed to maintain law and order in the district. "The SP does not listen to us. He prioritizes talking to the mafia and has deteriorated the city's security. We request

his immediate removal," one MLA reportedly said. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, after hearing the concerns of the MLAs, assured them that an investigation would be conducted, and appropriate action would follow. Lakhimpur Kheri district, which comprises eight assembly constituencies, saw six MLAs participating in the meeting, including Yogesh

Verma (Sadar), Vinod Shankar Awasthi (Dhaurahra), Saurabh Singh 'Sonu' (Kasta), Aman Giri (Gola), Manju Tyagi (Srinagar), and Shashank Verma (Nighasan). District BJP President Sunil Singh also accompanied them. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, MLA Saurabh Singh and District President Sunil Singh stated that their discussions with the CM also covered development initiatives in the district. "The Chief Minister assured us he would visit Lakhimpur on January 15 to review the progress of ongoing projects," said Singh. The MLAs had earlier raised their concerns with Principal Secretary (Home) Sanjay Prasad on Friday. During the meeting, they accused SP Saha of ignoring their calls and favoring mafia elements.

Sanjay Prasad, a trusted officer of CM Yogi, assured the MLAs that their complaints would be forwarded to the Chief Minister for review. SP Ganesh Prasad Saha, an IPS officer, took charge of Lakhimpur Kheri on January 12, 2023. Known for his sharp administrative skills, Saha has previously served as a Deputy Commissioner of Police in Gorakhpur, Banda, Prayagraj, and Deoria. He has also been awarded the prestigious Parakram Award for his service. Despite his accolades, Saha's tenure in Lakhimpur Kheri has been marked by allegations of favoritism and negligence. The MLAs have claimed that their inability to collaborate with the SP has hampered governance and development in the district.

Technological innovations likely to elevate 2025 Maha Kumbh

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■
PRAYAGRAJ

The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj is set to embrace the digital era with groundbreaking initiatives aimed at enhancing the experience of millions of devotees. From advanced navigation systems powered by Google to a state-of-the-art AI Generative Chatbot, the event is making significant strides toward becoming a high-tech spiritual gathering. Google Navigation for Seamless Pilgrimage For the first time, Google has integrated the temporary city of Mahakumbh into its navigation system, marking a historic policy shift. An MoU has been signed between Google and the Mahakumbh Mela Authority to develop a



specialized navigation system tailored to the fair. This system will enable visitors to locate various sites, Akharas,

and prominent saints with ease. This innovative feature is expected to go live by late

November or early December. Additional Mela Adhikari Vivek Chaturvedi highlighted that while

Google has provided navigation for established cities worldwide, this is the first time it has developed navigation for a temporary event of this scale. Over 450 million domestic and international devotees are expected to benefit from this technology, allowing them to effortlessly reach their destinations, whether it be Sangam Ghat, specific Akharas, or temples. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasized the importance of leveraging digital technology to enhance the pilgrimage experience, aligning with his vision of a Digital Mahakumbh. With Google Maps, devotees will no longer need to ask for directions, making their spiritual journey smoother and more fulfilling.

AI Generative Chatbot: A Technological Marvel The Maha Kumbh will also feature the first-ever AI Generative Chatbot, an initiative championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. This high-tech chatbot provides real-time assistance and information on facilities such as food, lockers, washrooms, and changing rooms. Accessible in 11 languages, including Hindi, English, Tamil, and Bengali, the chatbot ensures seamless communication by responding to both spoken and written queries in the user's preferred language. Visitors can also receive a personalized Mahakumbh certificate with their photo by scanning a QR code or

visiting the link (https://chatbot.kumbh.up.gov.in). This unique feature allows attendees to create a lasting memento of their visit, either digitally or as a printed keepsake. Regional Tourism Officer Aparajita Singh noted that under CM Yogi's guidance, preparations are in full swing to make the Mahakumbh a spiritually enriching and technologically advanced event. The AI chatbot initiative is being extensively promoted on social media platforms such as X, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram, creating a buzz among tech-savvy devotees worldwide. Enhancing the Visitor Experience The AI Generative Chatbot is not just a tool for

convenience; it aims to foster a personal connection with the event. By providing detailed information about every major program and event, it ensures that visitors stay informed and engaged throughout their pilgrimage. This initiative underscores the Mahakumbh's commitment to blending tradition with innovation, offering devotees a unique and memorable spiritual experience. With these digital advancements, the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 is poised to set a new benchmark for religious gatherings, demonstrating how technology can enrich age-old traditions while catering to the needs of modern devotees.



Phool Khilein Hai Gulshan Gulshan

"Flowers are the music of the ground, from Earth's lips they speak" — Edwin Curran

Delhi's winter gardens bloom with vibrant colours, offering a peaceful, rejuvenating escape amid chilly mornings, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**

As winter settles in, Delhi transforms into a canvas painted with nature's brightest colours. In January and February, the city bursts into bloom, with vibrant flowers filling the air with fragrance and painting the streets in shades of red, pink, white and yellow.

The cold breeze brushes against your face, but it's the sight of flowers scattered across parks, streets and gardens that brings warmth to the season. Wrapped in woollen layers, people venture out, eager to experience the charm of Delhi's winter gardens. The city, known for its bustling streets and busy markets, becomes a space of natural beauty, offering a tranquil escape for those who wish to experience the quieter side of life. The streets are alive with flower vendors, their carts brimming with bright blossoms. The colours of the flowers stand out against the grey of the streets, giving a joyful touch to the city's landscape. From *Daisies to roses*, every flower seems to tell its own story, contributing to the lively atmosphere. Parks and gardens are filled with families, children and friends, all taking time to marvel at nature's work.

Among the many spots where Delhiites gather, the *Brics Friendship Rose Garden* stands out. Its endless varieties of roses, red, pink, white, and yellow, fill the garden with their elegance. A walk through this garden feels like stepping into a painting, where every bloom is carefully placed to create a masterpiece. The roses, with their soft petals and vibrant colours, seem to tell the story of the



season, a season of beauty, growth, and renewal.

Not far from here, *Lodi Garden* offers its own magic. The soft winter sunlight filters through the trees, casting long shadows on the ground while highlighting bursts of colour from the flowers below. *Daisies*, with their cheerful white petals, brighten up garden beds, adding a light touch to the winter gloom. *Poppies* sway gently in the breeze, their bold red petals creating a striking contrast against the muted backdrop. *Dianthus barbatus*, with its detailed patterns, draws curious gazes from those who pass by. It's a place that invites

you to pause and appreciate the little things, like the texture of a flower's petals or the way the wind makes them dance. The quiet hum of the park, combined with the gentle presence of flowers, creates an atmosphere of calm, offering a break from the city's constant rush. One of the highlights of the season is *Amrit Udyan*, formerly known as the Mughal Gardens, at *Rashtrapati Bhavan*. Open to the public for a brief period at the end of January and the beginning of February, the garden offers a breathtaking experience. The garden, with its grand pathways and symmetrical design, is home to a variety of

flowers, each more stunning than the last. *Hyacinths*, with their soft pastel shades and soothing fragrance, line the walkways, offering a moment of tranquillity in the midst of the garden's grandeur. The roses - *carminose*, *bonica* and *bush roses*, stand out as the garden's crown jewels. Their delicate petals, in varying shades of red, pink, and white, add an elegant touch to the space. The golden blooms of the *yellow sibiruna* trees brighten the garden, their cheerful colour lighting up even the quietest corners. Together, these flowers create a space where nature takes centre

stage, inviting visitors to slow down and immerse themselves in the beauty around them.

The flowers in *Amrit Udyan* and other gardens around the city don't just beautify the landscape, they also bring a sense of togetherness. Families walk hand in hand, children run along flower-lined paths, their laughter echoing through the air. Couples sit on benches, quietly enjoying the view, while elderly visitors bask in the warmth of the sun. The flowers provide a peaceful backdrop for these moments, adding a sense of calm to the busy lives of the city's inhabitants. It's a time when Delhi feels slower, gentler, and more inviting, with nature offering its own reminder to take a break from the fast pace of modern life.

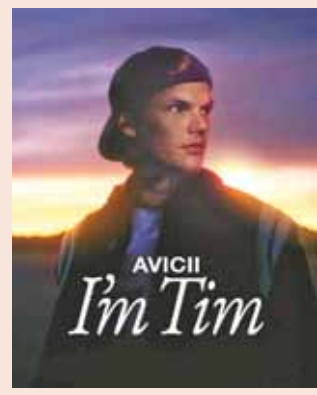
Even in the busiest corners of Delhi, there are small moments of beauty to be found. Flower vendors, with their colourful carts, brighten up the busiest streets. Roundabouts are dotted with flower beds, each one a small oasis of colour in the midst of the traffic. Trees adorned with golden flowers seem to lift everyone's spirits, their bright blooms creating a cheerful atmosphere even in the most crowded areas. These small touches of nature add an unexpected layer of beauty to the city, offering a gentle reminder of the season's charm.

While Delhi's streets can often feel chaotic, its gardens offer a peaceful reprieve. Whether you're in the *Brics Friendship Rose Garden*, *Lodi Garden* or *Amrit Udyan*, the flowers remind you to slow down, to appreciate the beauty around you and to find moments of stillness in the hustle of everyday life.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR



SUGGESTED BINGES



AVICII - I'M TIM
IMDB Rating: 8/10
OTT: Netflix
Director: Henrik Burman
Cast: Tim Bergling, Chris Martin



CUNK ON LIFE
IMDB Rating: 7.9/10
OTT: Netflix
Director: Al Campbell
Cast: Diane Morgan, Michelle Greenidge, Charles Aitken



STAR WARS: SKELETON CREW
IMDB Rating: 7.2/10
OTT: Disney+ Hotstar
Cast: Jude Law, Robert Timothy Smith, Ryan Kiera Armstrong, Dominic Burgess, Tunde Adebimpe



MISSING YOU
IMDB Rating: 6.3/10
OTT: Netflix
Director: Sean Spencer
Cast: Rosalind Eleazar, Ashley Walters, Richard Armitage, Charlie Hamblett



GUNAAH SEASON 2
IMDB Rating: 7/10
OTT: Disney+ Hotstar
Director: Anil Senior
Cast: Gashmeer Mahajani, Tanmay Nagar, Surbhi Jyoti

In 1989, the movie *Khoj* brought together *Naseeruddin Shah* and *Rishi Kapoor* in a suspenseful tale of deceit and mystery. The story revolved around a man whose wife mysteriously vanished, only to have another woman claim to be his wife. While the film's climax fell flat, its premise remained exciting.

Fast forward to the present, and *Khoj - Parchaiyo Ke Uss Paar* attempts to reimagine the suspense in a web series format. Directed by *Prabal Baruah* and produced by *Juggernaut*, this Zee5 thriller stars *Sharib Hashmi*, *Anupriya Goenka*, and *Aamir Dalvi* in pivotal roles. Unfortunately, it struggles to deliver the nail-biting tension audiences expect from such a genre. The story follows *Ved* played by *Sharib Hashmi*, a man desperately searching for his missing wife, *Meera*, played by *Anupriya Goenka*. As he goes deeper into her disappearance, *Ved* encounters bizarre events and clues that challenge his grip on reality. A sceptical police officer complicates matters, questioning *Ved's* narrative and leaving him to prove that the woman posing as *Meera* is not, in fact, his wife.

While the first three episodes, particularly *Aar Ya Paar*, maintain a semblance of intrigue, the series begins to lose steam soon after. The narrative feels unnecessarily stretched, adding little value to the plot. Despite a strong performance by *Sharib Hashmi* in a rare lead role, and *Anupriya Goenka's* stellar portrayal, the storyline fails to capitalise on its potential. The biggest letdown is the

IN KHOJ OF THRILL

Khoj - Parchaiyo Ke Uss Paar falls bland in the mystery and thriller genre despite commendable performances, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**



predictability of the plot. The absence of genuine twists and an underwhelming climax detract from what could have been an interesting watch. The final episode abruptly resolves the mystery, leaving viewers dissatisfied. Moreover, the police inspector's role is underdeveloped, adding little to the progression of the narrative. Another notable drawback is the lack of an impactful background score, which

could have significantly enhanced the suspense. The awkward cliffhanger endings to each episode feel forced, especially for a series with a mere 140-minute runtime, which would have been better suited as a film. Despite its flaws, the performances by *Sharib Hashmi* and *Anupriya Goenka* are the saving grace of the series, making it a tolerable one-time watch. However, the lack of originality and engaging drama keeps it from standing out.

Rating: 2/5

India 141-6 at stumps, lead by 145 runs against Australia in fifth Test

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Staying true to his aggressive style of play, generational talent Rishabh Pant conjured up a spectacular 33-ball-61 to somehow keep India afloat even as Australia remained in driver's seat in the fifth Test, which is poised for an intriguing finish. It was largely due to Pant's breathtaking knock that India finished the second day at 141 for 6 for an overall lead of 145. Pant entrained the packed SCG with four monstrous sixes and six boundaries. His back-to-back sixes off Mitchell Starc into the heritage Ladies Members Stands were for posterity. Pant's knock prevented Indian second innings from falling apart with the visitors top and lower order struggling to negotiate Aussie attack on a track that was aided seam and bounce. This was after unheralded bowling duo of Prasidh Krishna (3/42) and Nitish Reddy (2/32) complemented Mohammed Siraj

(3/51) and Jasprit Bumrah (2/33) to shoot Australia out for 181. On a difficult track, Virat Kohli (6) and his top-order colleagues found Scott Boland (3/38) too hot to handle. Kohli lost his wicket on outside the off stump line for the eighth successive time in this series. The match is certain to end on the third day but if India will be able to defend the total will very much depend on whether skipper Jasprit Bumrah is fit to bowl full tilt. Bumrah underwent precautionary scans for an unspecified injury after he left the field in the post-lunch session in which he bowled just one over. If even a half-fit Bumrah bowls, it won't be easy for Australia to chase even a 175-run target on a track with variable bounce and widening cracks. **Pant Power** Having curbed his natural instinct to attack during a sedate 40 in the first essay after being torn to shreds by the most important member of the Indian coaching staff for indiscreet shot selection



at the MCG, Pant perhaps cleared his mind about what he needed to do. He came in at a time when not just

Boland but even debutant Beau Webster was getting the ball to move a proverbial mile off the deck.

There was steep bounce available at the Randwick End (far end) where Kohli got out. Boland pitched it on hard length and got

both seam and bounce. The result was a now familiar dab towards slips as Kohli's future beyond 123 Tests looks doubtful. This was after both KL Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal got a couple of rippers. However once Pant came out, he was a man-on-a-mission as the first ball disappeared into the long-on stand. The fallen pull shot also came out of the closet. It was exhilarating stuff. Pant rode on bounce and hit Webster over point but the two sixes off Starc do take the cake. It was understood that Pant was mentally not in frame due to unsolicited sermons from a coaching staff member, who despite knowing the dashing southpaw's game told him to play otherwise. At one point, a clueless Pat Cummins was forced to put six fielders near the boundary ropes. The skipper himself who saw the back of Pant, inducing edge from a ball that rose. Indian and Australian fans gave a standing ovation to the diminutive

southpaw. **Third pacer steps up** In the post lunch session, Prasidh and Reddy more than made up for skipper Bumrah's absence as India took 51 overs to bowl out the hosts. Steve Smith's (33) dismissal off Prasidh just before lunch disturbed Australia's rhythm. Post lunch, Prasidh came from round the wicket from the Paddington End and removed Alex Carey (21) with an angled-in delivery. Carey was looking good but once Karnataka speedster found his length, he was literally unplayable. Debutant Webster (57) justified his selection with a half-century but it was Reddy, coming for his second spell, sparked a collapse with wickets of Cummins and Mitchell Starc, both done in by subtle movement off the surface. The final blow was dealt by Prasidh. He used the uneven bounce and cracks off the surface to get one bounce awkwardly at Webster and Jaiswal snaffled the catch.

McDonald surprised by Pant's subdued play in first innings

PTI ■ SYDNEY

It was not at all surprising that Rishabh Pant bulldozed the Australian attack with his stroke-play in the second innings but his ultra-defensive approach on the opening day indeed was, Australia head coach Andrew McDonald said on Saturday. Pant had laboured to 40 off 98 balls, taking multiple blows on his body during his 149-minute stay on the wicket. Pant had said that he was not in a frame of mind to attack. Pant, though, changed the gears effortlessly in the second innings, hitting Mitchell Starc for two massive sixes. Scott Boland and Beau Webster were not spared either as they too were lofted for a six each. "First of all, it's not surprising, the way he plays. We were in fact a little bit surprised in the first innings, the way he went about his work. He's got an incredible ability to put pressure back on to bowlers," McDonald said, doffing his hat to India's biggest match-winner in Test cricket in recent years. However, Australia didn't allow Pant to completely walk



away as Pat Cummins dismissed him just when things looked like getting out of hand. "We're planning for that though, we'll plan leading into the summer. We bounced in and out of a few plans there and clearly kept taking on the boundary riders and was getting away with it and no, it was an innings that you would say was right for that time." Boland has been difficult match-up for Kohli. Virat Kohli has been out eight times in his nine innings while fishing at deliveries on or outside the off-stump and

Australia head coach praised his bowlers, especially Scott Boland, who sent back the India stalwart four times in five Tests. Does it seem easy to get Kohli out? "No, it's never easy to get Virat out," McDonald, trying to contain his smile of satisfaction. "I give full credit to the bowlers and the execution of the plan. It's one thing to have a plan, but then to be able to execute is another thing. It's put him (Kohli) under immense pressure. And, look, he's tried some things."

"He's tried walking out of his crease. He's tried different tactics as well. But clearly that relentless nature of our bowlers, in particular, Scottie (Boland), the 'match-up' has been incredibly difficult for him to combat. But he's never an easy wicket, no." **This is a pitch for even contests** The traditional SCG wicket is usually a batting paradise and also helps the spinners towards the end but the ongoing Test has unfolded on a green top with variable bounce on offer. McDonald did not hide his appreciation for the ground staff for preparing a fair track. "The ground staff have done an incredible job in terms of, creating a wicket with something in it. Traditionally here it's quite benign and we've had a lot of draws, so a lot of people have been talking about the draws, so you're damned if you do it and damned if you don't. So this game's sped up. "I think he's trying to produce an even contest between bat and ball. There's no doubt about that. It's made for interesting cricket."

Novak Djokovic beaten by big-serving Reilly Opelka in quarterfinals of Brisbane International

AP ■ BRISBANE

Novak Djokovic was beaten 7-6 (6), 6-3 by big-serving Reilly Opelka in the Brisbane International quarterfinals. The 37-year-old Djokovic was playing his first tournament of the year. The 24-time Grand Slam champion is preparing for the Australian Open, which starts on Jan. 12 and which he has won 10 times. "Amazing tennis, Reilly. Absolutely deserved," Djokovic wrote on Instagram. Opelka served 16 aces — including one to finish off each set — to earn one of the biggest wins of the American's career. "I was just focused on my



spots," Opelka said. "If I hit them, it's hard to get them back. If there's anyone that can, it's him. "We have nothing to lose coming in against him. He's the greatest player ever," Opelka added. "So you end up playing more free and you

take a lot more risk. If you play your normal level or even above a normal level, he's going to win every time. So it's tough in his position because he gets guys that are good players that they roll the dice. And on a on a day like this when a lot of things go

my way that's how it works out." New coach Andy Murray will join Djokovic in Melbourne. Opelka achieved a career-high ranking of No. 17 in Feb. 2022 before undergoing hip surgery later that year to remove a benign tumor. He's now No. 293. "It was tough. A lot of uncertainty, a lot of doubt," Opelka said. In the semifinals, Opelka will face Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard, who beat Jakob Mensik 7-5, 7-6 (5). The other semifinal will feature Jiri Lehecka against Grigor Dimitrov. Lehecka beat Nicolas Jarry 6-4, 6-4 and Dimitrov advanced when Jordan Thompson retired while Dimitrov was ahead 6-1, 2-1.

I am not going anywhere, I just stood down from this Test: Rohit Sharma

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Senior India batter Rohit Sharma on Saturday firmly dismissed his retirement rumours, saying he is "not going anywhere" and offered poor form as the reason for him "standing down" from the ongoing Sydney Test against Australia. Grappling with modest form, Rohit "opted to rest" from the Sydney Test, handing over the leadership duties to Jasprit Bumrah, sparking widespread speculations about his future. "I have not retired. I stood down, that is what I would say. Basically the chat that I had with the coach and the selector was very simple. I am not able to score runs, there is no form, it is an important match and we need a player with form," Rohit told Star Sports. "As it is, in our batting, the form of the boys is not that good. So you cannot carry a lot of out of form players in the team. This simple thing was going on in my mind. I am not going anywhere," he added. The 37-year-old said the team management and selectors backed his decision. "I wanted to tell the coach and the selector that this is what is going on in my mind. They backed my decision. They said that you have been playing for so many years. You know what you are doing. So for me, it was difficult to take this decision. But if everything is kept in front, then this decision was sensible. I will not think much further," he added. In Rohit's absence, Shubman Gill was included in the India eleven for the crucial fifth match of the Border-Gavaskar

Trophy as India is trailing 1-2. The Mumbaikar endured a tough time in Test cricket in 2024, accumulating just 619 runs in 26 innings across 14 matches averaging 24.76. Before standing down, he had scored just 31 runs across five innings in three Tests in this series after joining the team following the Perth Test. Rohit's bold call triggered speculations that he might pull the plug on his Test career after this series.

DISTRICT PROJECT OFFICE, SAMAGRA SHIKSHA, KEONJHAR
P.W.D. road, in front of Govt. Press, Keonjhar-759001
Ph. No-06766-254103, Fax-256420
Email id: dpckeonjharssa.opepa@nic.in
Letter No. 57 / Date. 03.01.2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

Sealed tenders are invited from the reputed & credible printers / firms / agencies for printing & supply of "Holistic Progress Card" for 2024-25 for Class-I to VIII Students at Block points in two bid systems (Technical & Financial Bid) as detailed below.

Name of the Tender	Bid processing fees	Amount of EMD	Last Date & Time of receipt of Bid	Date & Time of opening of Technical Bid
"Holistic Progress Card" for 2024-25 for Class-I to VIII Students	Rs.2000/- (Two thousand) only	Rs.50,000/- (Fifty thousand) only	20.01.2025 by 5.30 PM	21.01.2025 at 11.30 AM

The detailed BID document is available in the website www.kendujhar.nic.in & www.opepa.odisha.gov.in. Interested and eligible agency/ firm may download BID DOCUMENT from the above website and apply accordingly. Corrigendum / addendum, if required, will be uploaded in the above web site. Hence potential bidders are requested to be in continuous touch with the above website.

The Tender Inviting Authority (TIA) reserves the right to accept / reject any, full or part / all BIDs/cancel the entire selection process at any stage without assigning any reason therefor.

By the order of Collector - cum - Chairman
District Project Co-ordinator,
Samagra Shiksha, Keonjhar
OIPR-2712011100082426

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, JAJPUR
Letter No. 12 / Date 01.01.2025

2nd Corrigendum to Bid Identification No. Tender Online 07 JJPT of 2024-25 invited this office Letter No. 5621, Dtd. 04.12.2024. The Change as detailed below are hereby made in the above N.I.T

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding		Last date & time of seeking tender clarification		Date & Time of opening of Technical Bid		Final Bid
		From	To	As earlier	Modified	As earlier	Modified	
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Jajpur.	Tender Online 07 JJPT of 2024-25	28.12.24 at 10:00 AM	06.01.2025 at 10:00 AM	06.01.2025 up to 5.00 PM	16.01.2025 up to 5.00 P.M.	07.01.2025 at 11:30 AM	17.01.2025 at 11:30 AM	To be intimated later

OIPR-256047/11/0019/2425 Superintending Engineer R.W. Division, Jajpur

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION RAIRANGPUR (MAYURBHANJ)
E-mail ID: serwrairangpur@yahoo.com
Letter No. // Date-

"e" Procurement Notice for Road Works
Bid Identification No - RWDRRP -13 / 2024-25

- Name of the work : Special repair of roads for the year 24-25
- Estimated Cost : From Rs. 20.00 to Rs 23.09 lakhs (approximately).
- Class of Contractor : 'D' & 'C' & 'C' & 'B' Class of works license.
- Period of Completion : 01 (one) calendar months.
- Tender Paper Cost : As per Annexure

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender On-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/S & E.R.W. Division, Rairangpur, Technical Bid & Financial Bid
		From	To		
S.E.R.W. Division, Rairangpur.	RWDRRP-13/2024-25	06.01.2025 at 11.00 A.M.	17.01.2025 up to 5.00 P.M.	16.01.2025 up to 5.00 P.M.	18.01.2025 at 11.30 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

-Sd-
Er. D.Behera
Superintending Engineer
R.W.Division,Rairangpur
OIPR-25107/11/0017/2425

DAV PUBLIC SCHOOL
CHANDRASEKHARPUR, BHUBANESWAR - 21
A Star Performer School
MANAGED BY DAV CMC, NEW DELHI (AFFILIATED TO CBSE, NEW DELHI)

ONLINE REGISTRATION FOR
DAV Aptitude Test (DAT), CSP - 2025
25.12.2024 - 19.01.2025

FOR ADMISSION INTO
CLASS XI (SCIENCE, COMMERCE, HUMANITIES) SESSION 2025-26
Along with 2 Years Special Programme for NEET, JEE & IIT Aspirants

PRIME - 40 (Medical Residential)
SUPER - 40 (Engg. Residential)
SPL. MEDICAL Day Scholar/ Residential
SPL. ENGINEERING Day Scholar/ Residential

DAV APTITUDE TEST (DAT), CSP: 23.01.2025 (THURSDAY)
COMPUTER BASED TEST CENTRES
Balasore, Berhampur, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Jeypore / Rayagada, Puri, Rourkela, Sambalpur & Kolkata

For Registration Login : www.davcsp.org

RESULT HIGHLIGHTS - 2024

CBSE Class XII School Averages	All India Entrance Examinations Qualifiers	
Science : 82.12%	JEE Main -118 Above 95 Percentile : 71 Above 99 Percentile : 16	JEE Advanced -31 Within 5000 Rank : 8 Within 10000 Rank : 17
Commerce: 81.86%	NEET - 131 Above 700 Marks : 4 Above 650 Marks : 18	ENROLLED IN AIIMS : 07 ENROLLED IN IIT : 11
Humanities: 90.43%		

JEE ADVANCED TOP RANKERS

ANVESH S. PRADHAN (IIT MADRAS), Koustubh Sahoo (IIT DELHI), AYUSH MOHAPATRA (IIT, BOMBAY), RAHUL KUMAR DAS (IIT BHU), SHREYASH PATTNAIK (IIT KHARAGPUR), ASHMIT SHOW (IIT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM)

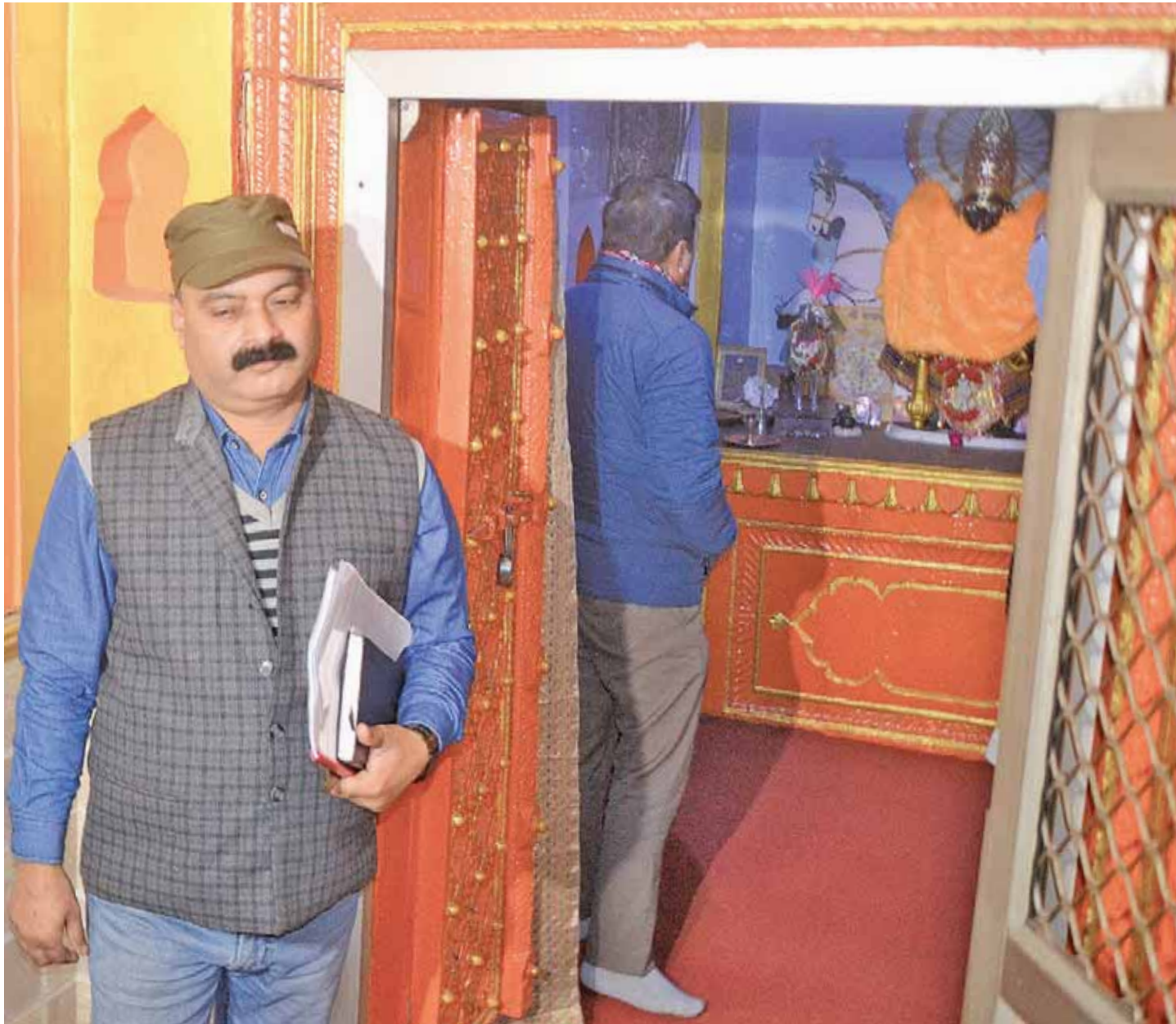
NEET TOP RANKERS

G. PARINKA (AIIMS RAIPUR), K. KRUPASAGAR (AIIMS BBSR), NARENDU K. MOHAKUD (AIIMS BIJAYAWADA), AYUS ANUPAM (AIIMS KALYANI), SRUSTI SANKALP PANDA (AIIMS DEOGHAR), SATYA J. KHATUA (AIIMS GUWAHATI), SOUMYASHREE SAHOO (AIIMS BBSR)

E-mail : datcspur@gmail.com
Contact Nos.: 0674-2740551, 651 +91-7873347574 +91-9861958313

"If you want to understand today you have to search yesterday"

— Pearl S Buck



What began as a routine inspection by district officials to check noise levels from loudspeakers and illegal electricity connections in the Muslim-dominated *Khaggu Sarai* area of Sambhal has turned into a historic archaeological discovery. On 14 December, a team led by the District Magistrate (DM) and Superintendent of Police (SP) stumbled upon a locked structure. Breaking open its doors revealed not just an abandoned Shiva temple but also a wealth of history hidden beneath layers of soil and silt. The discovery of the temple, which had been locked for 46 years, has prompted a flurry of activity, including surveys by the *Archaeological Survey of India* (ASI). Early reports suggest the temple, and other relics unearthed nearby, may date back several centuries, providing invaluable insights into Sambhal's rich cultural and religious history.

Locked Temple, Unlocked History

Dr. *Rajendra Pansiya* recalled the unexpected nature of the find. "This discovery was purely accidental. We were investigating noise and electricity issues near a mosque, but what we found behind the locked doors was remarkable," he said. The temple, which had been shut since the 1978 communal riots, housed a Shiva idol and a statue of Hanuman. Nearby, a well contained three additional statues that were uncovered during excavation. The riots of 1978, which displaced many from the local Hindu community, had led to the temple being abandoned. "Local accounts suggest the temple is over 500 years old," Dr. *Pansiya* added. To confirm its antiquity, the district administration reached out to the ASI for carbon dating and further investigation.

The ASI Steps In

Following the DM's request, a four-member ASI team from Meerut and Delhi conducted an extensive eight-hour survey of the site last week. The team examined the temple, the adjacent well, and five other pilgrimage sites, including *Bhadrak Ashram*, *Swargdeep*, and *Chakrapani*. During their survey, they documented their findings through photography and collected evidence for further analysis.



DISCOVERY IN SAMBHAL: UNEARTHING ANCIENT TEMPLES AND WELLS

A historic discovery in Sambhal reveals ancient temples, wells, and stepwells, offering valuable insights into the region's cultural heritage, say **BISWAJEET BANERJEE** and **SAJID KHAN**



In addition to the temple, the ASI team identified 19 wells, including the historically significant *Chaturmukh Koop*, *Moksha Koop*, and *Dharma Koop*. The ASI's investigation aims to establish the historical and cultural significance of these sites. Dr. *Pansiya* expressed optimism about the findings. "Once we have the ASI's report, we will have a clearer picture of the historical importance of these sites. Based on their recommendations, we will prepare a plan for their preservation and development," he said.

The Stepwell of Laxman Ganj

Adding to the list of discoveries, a 250-foot-deep stepwell, believed to date back to the First War of Independence in

ONCE WE HAVE THE ASI'S REPORT, WE WILL HAVE A CLEARER PICTURE OF THE HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF THESE SITES. BASED ON THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS, WE WILL PREPARE A PLAN FOR THEIR PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT — DR. PANSIYA



administration plans to address this issue promptly. The site, once a vital part of the Sahaspur State, served as a rest stop for soldiers and the royal family during their travels. Shipra Gera, a relative of the royal family, recounted the historical importance of the *Bawdi*. "This place was a strategic stopover for soldiers travelling from Sahaspur (Bilari) to villages under the State's control, which now fall in the Badaun district. The royal family also used the underground complex during their journeys to escape the scorching summer heat," she said. The *Bawdi*'s corridors were manned by soldiers, and the site served both functional and leisure purposes. The underground chambers provided a cool retreat for the royals, while the stepwell itself ensured a steady water supply for their needs. As restoration and research continue, the *Bawdi* and its surrounding structures are set to become a beacon of Sambhal's historical legacy, offering locals and visitors alike a chance to reconnect with the region's storied past.

A Shared History Unearthed

The discoveries in Sambhal are a poignant reminder of the region's layered history, which is often obscured by present-day tensions. The proximity of the temple to the *Shahi Jama Masjid*, where violence had erupted during a protest against a court-ordered survey, underscores the intertwined histories of communities that have lived together for centuries. Local historian and archaeologist Dr. *Arvind Sharma* highlighted the significance of the finds. "These discoveries provide a window into the past, showcasing Sambhal's role as a cultural and religious hub. The preservation of these sites is not just about protecting relics but also about understanding our shared heritage," he said. The district administration, in collaboration with the ASI, is now focused on ensuring that these historical sites are preserved and developed responsibly. Plans include creating tourist-friendly infrastructure while maintaining the integrity of the sites. The discoveries have sparked excitement and curiosity among locals. "We've always heard stories about these places, but seeing them come to light is incredible. It feels like a part of our history has been revived," said Sunil Kumar, a Sambhal resident. As excavation and research continue, the findings in Sambhal are expected to shed more light on the region's past, offering lessons for the present and inspiration for the future. The accidental unearthing of the Shiva temple and subsequent discoveries serve as a reminder of the hidden treasures that lie buried beneath the surface, waiting to be rediscovered and celebrated.



1857, was unearthed in Sambhal's *Laxman Ganj* area last week. Named *Rani ki Bawdi*, the stepwell came to light after the ruins of an ancient *Banke Bihari temple* were discovered earlier this month. *Kaushal Kishore*, the state publicity chief of the *Sanatan Sevak Sangh*, had written to the DM, pointing out the historical significance of the site. "The stepwell and the ruins are remnants of the royal family of Sahaspur. These finds are a testament to our history," Kishore said. The excavation, which involved two bulldozers, also revealed a two-storey structure near the stepwell. Work at the site is ongoing, with authorities halting operations at night due to visibility issues. "Encroachments on the site have been identified, and notices will be issued to families occupying the land illegally," Dr. *Pansiya* said, adding that the administration is committed to restoring and beautifying the area. The discovery of the ancient stepwell, or *Bawdi*, in Sambhal has brought to light the rich history of the region, linked to the erstwhile royal family of *Sahaspur State in Bilari*. Official records list the *Bawdi* as a pond spanning 400 square metres. However, recent excavations have revealed much more—a well-preserved three-storey structure featuring intricate architecture and significant historical relevance. "The *Bawdi* was constructed during the reign of the king of Bilari and is believed to be approximately 150 years old," Dr. *Pansiya* said. The structure includes two marble floors and one brick floor, along with a well and four rooms, all part of an elaborate underground complex. Signs of encroachment on the site have also been identified, and the

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

EXQUISITE DINING WITH A VIEW

When it comes to food that excites the senses, *Resaca* in the heart of Central Delhi offers an experience that perfectly balances sophistication with flavour. This newly opened 12,000 square-foot space is a culinary palace where every dish is designed to captivate both the eyes and the taste buds. Whether you're craving an intimate dinner or a lively gathering with friends, *Resaca* has it all.

The indoor dining area, affectionately known as the “Resaca Playground,” is a chic and stylish setting, offering sleek, modern furniture that's both practical and comfortable. With spacious tables thoughtfully arranged to cater to different dining styles, guests can enjoy private, intimate meals or social gatherings with equal ease. Each corner of the restaurant is designed to create a relaxed yet refined ambiance, perfect for any occasion.

However, what truly sets *Resaca* apart is its stunning rooftop – ‘Resaca Aero.’ This rooftop has quickly become the talk of the town, offering guests panoramic views of the Delhi skyline. Whether you're dining in the golden light of day or under the twinkling stars at night, the experience is nothing short of magical. The breathtaking views and elegant atmosphere create the perfect setting for a memorable dining experience.

Behind this visionary space is *Mayank Sehgal*, a renowned menswear designer who has brought his creative flair to the world of fine dining. As the creative director, *Mayank's* attention to detail and aesthetic sensibilities are

A sophisticated dining experience with flavours, stunning views and elegant ambiance for every occasion, says **TEAM AGENDA**

reflected in every aspect of *Resaca*, from the décor to the curated dining experience. *Resaca* is a destination where food lovers can indulge in both culinary delights and a beautiful atmosphere.

When it comes to the food, *Resaca* excels in offering an array of innovative and mouthwatering options. For those who enjoy small plates, the *Kataifi Dahi Kebab* (spiced yoghurt and crispy kataifi kebab) is a must-try. The *Magnum Kebab*, featuring panko crumbed assorted veggies with warm tomato chutney, promises a delightful burst of flavours. If you're a fan of rich and smoky flavours, try the *Lababdar Paneer Tikka*, silky chunks of cottage cheese served with house-special gravy and fried shallots. For a lighter yet equally satisfying option, the *Stuffed Mushrooms*, served with roasted red pepper coulis, are divine.

The menu also includes delectable platters for sharing. The *Arabic Mezze* is a fantastic choice for anyone who loves Mediterranean flavours, with an assortment of *falafel*, *hummus*, *baba ganoush* and warm *pita bread*. For a meatier version, the *Arabic Platter* with *chicken shish tawook* and *lamb fatayer* is equally tempting.

No meal at *Resaca* is complete without indulging in their sweet offerings. The *Rum-Based Tiramisu*, a no-bake dessert soaked in rum, offers a rich, indulgent finish to your meal. Other fan favourites include the *Mango Cheesecake*, *Banoffee Pie* and the innovative *Kunafa Cheesecake*, which combines the best of both worlds.

Of course, no visit to *Resaca* is complete without sampling their signature cocktails, such as the *Katana*, made with vodka, coconut and matcha or the refreshing *Green Park*, which features Hendricks Gin, celery infusion, and elderflower syrup. *Resaca* offers an experience that goes beyond a meal. From its stunning interiors to its carefully crafted cocktails and mouthwatering dishes, this restaurant has quickly become a go-to destination for those looking to indulge in style.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR



FROM THE ITALIAN FEASTS

At *Toscano*, traditional flavours and premium ingredients transport you to Tuscany, writes **TEAM AGENDA**



With its gates in the centre of Saket's Select City Walk Mall, *Toscano* welcomes you on a Tuscan food adventure. *Toscano* offers a genuine dining experience that satisfies the sophisticated palates of its esteemed patrons by fusing traditional culinary methods with premium, fresh ingredients and unusual cheeses.

Toscano offers a warm and inviting atmosphere, where handcrafted pastas, carefully selected wines, and dishes inspired by Italy's heritage take the centre tables. The cosy setting is uplifted by soft yellow lighting, a striking wine wall, and painted patterned walls, creating the perfect backdrop to savour delightful moments with your loved ones.

You can initiate the tasty food by starting with the *Antipasti*, the small plates menu offering you *Arancini e Mozzarella Fritta* (Arborio rice balls & fried mozzarella) that has golden fried cheesy Italian rice balls, crumb fried fresh mozzarella, carrots, zucchini, broccoli and haricot verts served with arrabiata sauce as they melt in your mouth, enticing you to consume an increasing amount. Also, in *Bruschetta* you can go forward with *Pomodoro Classico* made out of fresh tomatoes, olive oil, basil & parmesan cheese.

From the *Insalata*, the salad menu, *Insalata di Quattro Fagioli con Cereali* (four bean salad with mixed grains) with selection of four beans, mixed grains, roasted pumpkin, cherry tomatoes, red onion, romaine lettuce, roasted

pumpkin seeds, feta cheese & sweet balsamic dressing to keep up with your fitness and taste. In the *Pane all'aglio*, the garlic breads menu you can go for *Classic Baguette Garlic Bread* with melting mozzarella cheese and *Rosemary Bread* with rosemary, pesto, olive oil made with rock salt pizza bread.

For pasta lovers, the *Artisan & Signature Special Pasta* menu is a feast of flavours that will leave you craving more. A recommendation is the *Ravioli di Spinaci e Ricotta*, featuring handmade spinach and ricotta ravioli, served in a fragrant basil-flavoured tomato sauce with olives, melting deliciously in every bite.

The *Dolce* (Dessert) menu at *Toscano* is a paradise for dessert lovers. The highlights include the *Classic Tiramisu*, perfectly paired with coffee ice cream, and the indulgent 55% *Couverture Chocolate Hazelnut Brownie*, served warm with creamy vanilla ice cream. Saving the best for last, the *Signature Chocolate Kahlua Mousse*, complemented by a delicate almond tuile and velvety crème anglaise, promises to be an unforgettable treat for your taste buds.

FACT SHEET

Restaurant Name: Toscano
Address: S-44, 2nd Floor, Nexus Select City Walk, MGF Saket Driveaway, Saket, New Delhi.
Price for 2: Approx. ₹1800

FACT SHEET

Restaurant Name: Resaca
Address: No. 7, 3rd Floor, Building, Pusa Rd, Block 11, WEA, Karol Bagh, Delhi, 110005
Price for 2: Approx. ₹2000
Cuisine: Multi-cuisine (Indian, Mediterranean, International)
Dining Experience: Indoor and Rooftop seating



SMALL PLATES LEAD THE WAY

Small eateries deliver bigger and tastier joys than mega restaurants



When it comes to dining out, bigger isn't always better. In a world where restaurants compete to offer a vast array of dishes, there's something uniquely charming and rewarding about *small eateries* that focus on just one or two specialties. They may lack the glitz of fine dining or the variety of a multi-page menu, but what they offer goes far deeper. Here's why these unassuming establishments are not only worth visiting but may also offer a far superior dining experience.

more attention on the quality and less temptation to rely on pre-made or frozen components. *Small eateries* usually shop locally and in small quantities, ensuring that what you eat was likely bought that very morning.

It's not uncommon to see these modest eateries sourcing their produce from the local market, even chatting with their vendors to get the best pick. This personal touch translates directly to the plate, where each ingredient retains its flavour, offering a sensory experience.

MASTERY OVER MEDIOCRITY: The biggest problem with an expansive menu is that it's almost impossible to do every dish justice. When a kitchen has to juggle diverse cuisines or multiple complex recipes, something inevitably gets lost in translation. Food often becomes standardised, stripped of any distinct personality, and made to cater to the average palate. Conversely, small eateries that specialise in a single dish or a couple of items have the luxury of focusing all their energy and skill on perfecting those few offerings. Each plate becomes a labor of love, honed through years of repetition and refinement.

THE PRICE OF CONVENIENCE: QUALITY VS. QUICK FIXES: In large eateries, the pressure to churn out diverse dishes at a rapid pace often means sacrificing freshness and authenticity. Many big restaurants, in an effort to streamline operations and manage



such extensive menus, have begun to rely on pre-made sauces and packaged ingredients laced with preservatives. These shortcuts may save time, but they take a serious toll on both flavour and nutritional value. A *small eatery*, with its focus on fresh, daily-prepared dishes, naturally provides a far more nourishing experience than the one that supports both health and taste without compromising quality.

A PERSONAL TOUCH THAT'S HARD TO FIND: Eating at a *small eatery* often means connecting with the person behind the food. They take pride in their craft, in the stories that accompany each dish, and in the relationships they build with regular customers. The proprietor might greet you by name, share the origins of a recipe, or remember just how spicy you like your curry. This connection adds a personal dimension to dining that large restaurants struggle to offer.

When you order from a restaurant with a lengthy menu, there's a transactional air to it. You're just another customer, another order to be fulfilled. But at a small, specialised eatery, you're part of a community, one of the lucky few who get to experience the authenticity that food can bring.

A UNIQUE DINING ADVENTURE: In an age where everyone seems to crave variety, the idea of returning to a place for the same

dish can seem limiting. But there's joy in simplicity. Knowing you're about to eat a dish that's the pride and focus of an establishment, there's an unspoken promise of quality.

SMALL IS THE NEW BIG: As the trend toward slow, intentional dining gains momentum, small eateries with limited menus are emerging as champions of true culinary craftsmanship. These spots may lack the expansive spaces and curated ambiance, but they don't need it. They deliver exactly what matters: real, unforgettable food, born from expertise and commitment, served with the kind of warmth you can't find on any restaurant's oversized menu.

In the end, it's about quality over quantity, simplicity over spectacle. And maybe, just maybe, finding the heart in what's on the plate over the number of options in a menu.



FOODFREAK



Pawan Soni
Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards

MEDIEVAL MARVEL IN BARCELONA



don't let that deter you—this serene sanctuary is worth the extra steps. Inside, the décor has evolved from vibrant, bold palettes and plush velvets to a soothing symphony of creams and greys adorned with elegant black and white photos. My lucky pick was an Apartment with a breath-taking medieval ambience and charming views of the cobbled street buzzing with tapas bars. Talk about living the fairy tale! The room's ambience, a mix of sophisticated neutrals and delicate fabrics, made the stay luxuriously cosy. The sleep preferences menu—offering sheets in cotton, satin, or linen, and a variety of pillows—felt like a dreamy personal touch. And the bathroom! A peaceful oasis with both a bathtub and rain shower, mood lighting, and Molton Brown products.

HISTORICAL CHARM AWAITS
Strolling through the Gothic Quarter, where the Romans once settled, feels like stepping into a storybook. Winding cobblestone streets lined with cosy shops, cafes, and residences lead to hidden plazas, each more picturesque than the last. Hotel Neri's central location is a dream for explorers. Just around the corner, the bells of the Barcelona Cathedral serenaded us from our room. Within a 5–10-minute stroll, we reached Placa de Sant Jaume and the iconic churches of Santa Maria Del Mar and Santa Maria Del Pi, famously featured in Tom Holland's 'Uncharted.' The waterfront and the bustling Las Ramblas were also close by, ensuring we never missed a beat of the city's vibrant life.

Hop on the metro, only five minutes away, and the rest of Barcelona unfolds at your feet. And for those with a sweet tooth, a quick five-minute amble took us to Calle Petritxol, a pedestrian haven brimming with chocolate and churro shops, including the famed La Granja Dulcinea. It is not just a place to stay; it's a historical adventure waiting to be experienced.

THE LITTLE LUXURIES
Dining at the A Restaurant was a gastronomic delight. The menu, brimming with Catalan dishes and global influences, featured gems like the 'fougasse and Rum Baba.' It was a true feast for the senses. The rooftop, Roba Estesa, transformed into a romantically lit, lush retreat, was the perfect spot to unwind under the stars. Living in a medieval castle, even for a short while, feels like a vibrant, whimsical dream. Relais & Chateaux boasts nearly 600 luxury hotels and fine dining restaurants worldwide, renowned for unique accommodations, exquisite cuisine, and impeccable service. President Laurent Gardinier aptly described them as paragons of 'excellence, food, experience, and culture.' After the delight of staying in Hotel Neri, I can confirm this commitment is nothing short of remarkable. If you crave a unique and romantic historical refuge in the lively heart of Barcelona, Hotel Neri is your match. Though it comes with a boutique five-star price tag, the magical experience it offers is simply priceless. It's the little things that elevate

a hotel stay from pleasant to unforgettable. At Hotel Neri, these thoughtful touches were on par with the world's finest hotels, such as the Ritz Carlton, Four Seasons, and Six Senses. From the cosy throw blanket on the bed—so handy when we left the heat off—to the fresh clementines awaiting us upon check-in, each detail made our stay special. Turn-down service with chocolates, and our stylish glass water pitcher refilled twice daily, all contributed to a feeling of home away from home. Though our next visit to

Barcelona might be a few years away, Hotel Neri will be my go-to choice. I wholeheartedly recommend this gem—and any Relais & Chateaux property—to fellow travellers seeking a truly memorable experience.
— She is an independent food & travel writer, a chef and a catalyst and is the first Indian to have trained at Osteria Francescana, in Modena, Italy, rated as the world's best restaurant in the World's 50 Best Restaurants, in 2016 and 2018 and currently in the Best of The Best Category

By AKANKSHA DEAN

Imagine stepping back in time without sacrificing an ounce of modern comfort. At Hotel Neri, nestled in a 17th-century mansion and the only Relais and Chateaux property in Barcelona, my stay was a delightful blend of history and luxury. Picture this: a 17th-century mansion turned chic boutique hotel with just 22 rooms. This is Hotel Neri, where each corner oozes charm and every stay feels

like a time-travelling adventure. This enchanting 12th-century palace-turned-hotel, located beside the quaint Placa de Sant Felipe Neri, retains its historical charm with stone walls and archways that whisk you back in time. Though it lacks a gym, its distinct style and unbeatable location make up for it tenfold. The terrace overlooking a quaint, atmospheric square and the lush rooftop bar are just a couple of quirky touches you'll love. Given its quiet pedestrian street setting, you might have a slight hassle with heavy luggage, but

WINTER WONDERS OF DARJEELING



Darjeeling's misty mountains, scenic bus ride, and cosy Radhakunj Homestay offered the perfect winter escape amidst nature's charm, writes VISHESH SHUKLA

In winter, the mountains are always beautiful, and hill stations are also enjoyable. So, I decided to visit one of the most beautiful hill stations in India, Darjeeling, West Bengal. I boarded the Falaknuma Express from Cuttack to Howrah, and then I changed trains to the Paharia Express, heading to New Jalpaiguri (NJP). The weather was very humid in nature, and for a moment, I thought I had chosen the wrong time to come to Darjeeling. But Darjeeling proved me wrong—cold waves and fog made me feel at ease. I took an auto to the Siliguri bus stand for ₹50, then boarded a bus to Darjeeling for ₹105. The 4-hour bus journey, with its beautiful views and

winding turns, made my heart swell with excitement. Finally, I deboarded and headed to my homestay, which was near Batasia Loop. I checked in at Radha Kunj Homestay, which offered very cheap accommodation, ₹4500 for three nights. The rooms were beautiful, and the window view in the morning, with Kanchenjunga in the distance, was nothing short of breathtaking. It was around 5 PM, so I decided to visit Mall Road. I took a taxi for ₹50 and went to explore the beautiful area. First, I roamed around the market, soaking in the lively atmosphere. Then, I visited the very famous Glenary's Bakery and enjoyed some delicious snacks



there. Coincidentally, the Darjeeling Melotea Fest 2024 was happening nearby. I got to enjoy some amazing music by the famous singer Girish Chand. After that, I had dinner at a local restaurant near Mall Road. The meal was simple and tasty, costing me around ₹200. Feeling satisfied, I took a taxi back to my homestay for ₹100. Once I reached, I had a good sleep, ready and excited for the adventures the next day would bring.

MIRIK'S SERENE SHORES
On Day 2, I woke up early in the morning and rented a scooty from 'Bike Wale Bhaiya' for ₹1500 for two days. I planned to visit Mirik, 34 km away,

to see the famous Sumendu Lake. However, I missed the main route and ended up taking a secondary road, which stretched the distance to 50 km and took me around 4 hours to reach. The ride was not wasted, though, as I passed through beautiful tea gardens and stopped at a viewpoint called Lepchajagat. Finally, I reached Mirik Lake, spent some peaceful time there, and then started my journey back to Darjeeling. On the way, I also visited the Nepal border at Pashupati Nagar and enjoyed a quiet dinner before returning to my homestay.

DARJEELING'S ICONIC LANDMARKS

Day 3 was all about sightseeing in Darjeeling. I started my day at Tiger Hill to witness the stunning view of Kanchenjunga. Next, I visited the serene Ghoom Monastery and felt the peaceful vibes of Buddhism. After that, I stopped by the Peace Pagoda, built to promote harmony, and had my lunch. My next destination was the Rock Garden, located 3000 ft below the main road, which had some dangerous turns but was worth the experience. Finally, I ended my sightseeing with a visit to Batasia Loop to watch the toy train and the Zoological Park, which had some unique animals. In the evening, I did some shopping at Mall Road, treated myself to ice cream at Keventer's, and enjoyed delicious momos. I returned the scooty to the shop and headed back to my homestay to pack my bags because it was time to leave for home. On the last day, I took a shared taxi for ₹400 to NJP. From there, I boarded the New Delhi Poorvottar Sampark Kranti Express to Kanpur. The 17-hour journey brought me back home, and I ended my vacation with empty pockets but a heart full of beautiful and tremendous memories.



YOUR WEEK AHEAD

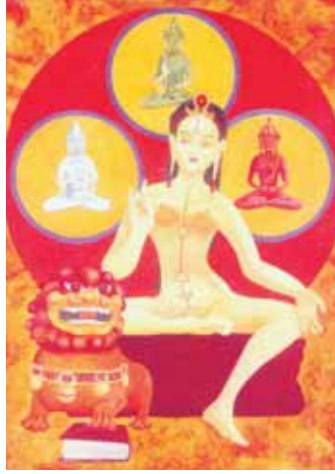
MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week presents numerous opportunities for joy, with financial gains expected from various endeavors. You may find yourself busy, perhaps with work-related travel, which could lead to some stress. Midweek brings sudden shifts that might challenge your current plans or expectations. It's a crucial time to release any unproductive bonds, clearing the path for a more meaningful existence. As the week progresses, you may feel a strong pull towards acquiring material possessions, which could lead to unrealistic expectations. Caution is advised against starting new projects or making impulsive decisions, as these could lead to setbacks. Maintaining a positive outlook will be challenging, yet essential to navigate this period effectively.

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Tuesday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This period promises to be exceptionally favorable, marked by a profound sense of blessing and personal achievement. You'll find yourself at the center of your universe, reveling in a phase rich with joy, amazement, and rejuvenation. A harmonious alignment of mind, spirit, and body will emerge, enhancing your social standing. This time will usher in newfound bravery and inspiration, leaving you relieved as certain challenges conclude. Expect transformative shifts in your perspectives and plans, paving the way for a brighter future. Changes may include adopting a new routine, dietary adjustments, or exciting career opportunities. Fresh beginnings are indicated, perhaps in personal commitments or professional partnerships, bringing a refreshing change to your life's narrative. As the week closes, familial happiness will increase, and a feeling of complete fulfillment will envelop you emotionally and spiritually.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Thursday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week centers on inner resilience rather than physical prowess. Your strength will stem from a disciplined approach to your emotions and desires, grounded in a firm moral backbone. This foundational inner strength will navigate you through deceptive circumstances to clarity. You may find inspiration and guidance from a notable woman known for her deep understanding and intuition. Considering her advice or emulating her approach could be pivotal in shaping your life's direction. An urgent call to action encourages you to embrace spirituality—engage in meditation, practice yoga, and connect with your spiritual beliefs. It's a time to move away from idle fantasies and ground yourself in reality, letting go of unproductive daydreams to focus on what truly matters.

Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Monday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week, those who are naturally resourceful will find themselves thriving financially through their inventive abilities. You possess the strength to transform your visions into reality. Choices made during this time are likely to lead to beneficial outcomes. Gifted with a flair for articulation, your words will captivate and persuade those around you, marking an exceptionally successful week. However, midweek may present some challenges with potential delays. Despite these obstacles, your perseverance and resolve will guide you through, ensuring you meet your objectives. Expect communication from afar that could influence your financial and emotional stability positively. This period promises both security and satisfaction as you navigate through the highs and lows with grace.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Yellow
Lucky day Saturday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week begins with decisive actions on both personal and work-related fronts, reflecting your resilient nature as you navigate life's challenges with courage. Expect some confrontations and issues arising from stubborn attitudes, necessitating a thoughtful and tactful approach. Embracing new perspectives and letting go of outdated beliefs will be crucial. Changes could unfold in various areas, such as your job, living situation, and close relationships, and you might encounter health challenges that could lead to feeling overwhelmed. Despite these struggles, the latter part of the week heralds a shift toward positivity, bringing a sense of relaxation, improved well-being, and financial satisfaction. You will find yourself in a position to indulge in life's comforts and will likely extend your support to those in need due to your compassionate nature.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Wednesday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week promises to be a whirlwind, touching every facet of your life—from personal finance and home life to social and professional engagements. It begins with a focus on household matters, and for those not currently in a partnership, significant life changes such as marriage may be on the horizon. Midweek, travel could play a role, adding variety to your routine. Professionally, expect to dive deep, as a drive for excellence pushes you to refine your abilities and commit fully to your projects, often extending your work into the night. Joyful family news, such as the arrival of a new member, may also grace the week. As the days progress, the fruits of your labor will become apparent, notably through substantial financial gains. Opportunities for career advancement are likely to emerge, featuring appealing terms.

Lucky number 1 | Lucky colour Rose
Lucky day Tuesday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week, individuals born under Gemini will find numerous reasons to smile. An aura of optimism surrounds you, illuminating your path and attracting positive vibes in all your endeavors. Your ability to highlight the positive aspects of life makes you a beacon of warmth, drawing others towards you. However, midweek might bring a few challenges that could disrupt your peace temporarily. Despite this, rest assured that this phase will pass swiftly, paving the way for abundant blessings and a sense of fulfillment. Your efforts toward your goals are bearing fruit, marking significant strides towards completing your success cycle. You'll likely notice substantial improvements in ongoing projects and may find opportunities for recognition, public acclaim, or international connections.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour White
Lucky day Sunday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week brims with opportunities and inventive energy, marking a period of great enthusiasm and readiness to embrace new challenges. An inspiring new concept may captivate your imagination, reinforcing that you're following the right path. You'll find yourself adeptly handling both personal and professional responsibilities. Midweek brings family gatherings and celebrations, possibly related to home-related milestones, children's achievements, or exciting career developments. These events will add to the joyous atmosphere around you. As the week concludes, your resolve and tenacity serve as an inspiring testament to others, showcasing the foundation of your accomplishments. Enjoy this vibrant period, as it promises both fulfillment and success and remain open to the unexpected joys it may bring.

Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Teal
Lucky day Friday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week, individuals born under the Aquarius sign can expect a vibrant period filled with personal satisfaction and grandeur. There will be significant progress in business ventures, accompanied by generous expenditures that not only meet family expectations but also bring joy. This generosity extends to caring for others, demonstrating a warm and compassionate nature. Relationship dynamics, especially with a partner, may involve some heightened demands, yet responses will be heartfelt and giving. Children are likely to bring joy into the household, with possible achievements in academics or career advancements for a son. However, there's a note of caution for Aquarian women to attend to their health, as they might face some challenges related to emotional well-being or other physiological concerns, which could affect their mood during this period.

Lucky number 7 | Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Sunday



CANCER June 21-July 22

During this pivotal period, the actions you take will lay the foundation for future developments. Although progress may seem gradual, your perseverance will ensure that significant strides are made. Energize yourself to tackle necessary tasks effectively, as your hard work is likely to gain recognition and yield rewards. Utilize your diverse skills optimally this week, as your resolve and tenacity will leave a lasting impression on those around you. Your role as an inspirational figure will uplift others. Effective communication will enhance your relationships with both superiors and colleagues. As the week closes, a fresh burst of innovative thinking will illuminate your projects. Your productivity will soar in your chosen field, accompanied by vibrant energy and a zest for life. This is a time to relish and optimize the joyful moments.

Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Monday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

Despite your significant efforts across various sectors to secure employment, the outcomes you've anticipated have not yet materialized. Your dedication and zeal are commendable; however, financial gains may be challenging to come by this week. Fortunately, as the week unfolds, promising opportunities are likely to emerge, potentially leading to substantial achievements. Supportive figures in your life, such as father figures or mentors, are keen to see you succeed and will play a crucial role in your progress. Remember, patience will be your greatest ally during this period. Building on a solid foundation will inevitably lead to favorable results. Remain steadfast, as you are on the verge of a breakthrough, where success promises to be significant and enduring.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Golden
Lucky day Saturday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week heralds a period of financial growth and satisfaction. You'll find yourself drawn towards seeking inner peace through practices like yoga, meditation, and chanting. Expect to feel compelled to arrange spiritually uplifting events at home, enhancing the serene atmosphere. However, midweek might present challenges in your personal relationships, possibly leading to misunderstandings or disagreements with a partner. Such conflicts may lead you to reflect on your deeper desires and life goals. Remember, your perspective may lean towards seeing the negative rather than appreciating what you have. This inclination could lead to a sense of being overwhelmed by negativity. It's crucial during these times to stay resilient and confront these challenges with courage rather than succumbing to despair.

Lucky number 16 | Lucky colour Mint
Lucky day Friday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShazaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331

Discovering the Purpose of Life

THE LIFE GUIDANCE



Seerat Kaur Marwaha

The interplay between karma and dharma is like a dance. To align with our life's purpose, we must first understand the karmic lessons presented to us

There are moments in life when the usual rhythm of existence comes to a halt—moments when a deep, unshakable question emerges from within: "Why am I here?" This question often arises not during our triumphs but in the quiet aftermath of loss, failure, or self-reflection. It is as though the universe gently nudges us to look beyond the surface of our achievements and disappointments and seek a deeper truth. Ancient Vedic wisdom holds that the answer lies not in chasing fleeting goals but in understanding and aligning with our karma and dharma, our cosmic purpose and the path uniquely meant for us. Through this alignment, we embark on the sacred journey of discovering the true purpose of life. Karma, often misunderstood as mere cause and effect, is a deeper law of action and reaction. It is not just about the actions we perform but the intentions and energy behind them. Our karmic blueprint, shaped over lifetimes, serves as both a map and a mirror. It reflects the lessons we are here to learn and the experiences we must navigate to grow spiritually.

The challenges we face are whether in relationships, health, or career, are not random but karmic threads woven into the fabric of our existence. They are opportunities to confront our shadows, resolve past debts, and refine our souls. Recognising this truth transforms our perspective. Pain becomes a teacher, and every obstacle, a stepping stone to self-realisation. While karma represents the lessons we carry, dharma is the unique path we are meant to walk in this lifetime. Derived from the Sanskrit root "dhri," meaning to sustain, dharma is that which upholds the harmony of the universe. It is our duty, our responsibility, and our spiritual calling. Dharma is not a rigid set of rules but a dynamic expression of our true self. For one, it may manifest as nurturing a family; for another, it may mean creating art that inspires the world. When we align with our dharma, life feels purposeful and fulfilling. We experience a flow where our actions serve not just personal gain but contribute to the greater good. The interplay between karma and dharma is like a dance. To align with our life's purpose, we must



first understand the karmic lessons presented to us. This requires deep introspection, self-awareness, and a willingness to confront our fears and patterns. Astrology, a profound tool rooted in Vedic wisdom, offers a roadmap to our karmic imprints. The positions of the planets at the time of our birth reveal the energies influencing our journey and the areas of life that demand growth. For instance, Saturn often points to the karmic debts we must repay, while Jupiter illuminates the areas where dharma can flourish. Once we identify our karmic lessons, the next step is to align with dharma. This alignment is not an overnight process but a

journey of gradual awakening. Meditation, gratitude journaling, and practices like EFT tapping can help clear the emotional and mental clutter that obscures our path. Aligning with dharma requires inner work. It demands peeling back the layers of societal expectations, inherited fears, and self-imposed limitations. Practices such as chakra balancing and mindfulness allow us to connect with our authentic selves. For example, the throat chakra governs communication and self-expression. If this chakra is blocked due to past wounds, one may struggle to voice their truth, hindering alignment with their dharma. Healing this energy

centre through affirmations and meditation can restore balance and clarity. Similarly, gratitude is a powerful practice in this journey. When we appreciate life's blessings, no matter how small we shift our focus from lack to abundance. This shift creates a fertile ground for dharma to emerge, as we are no longer trapped in the narrative of unworthiness or scarcity. Discovering life's purpose begins with self-reflection. Journaling about one's strengths, passions, and the activities that bring joy can provide valuable insights. Reflecting on recurring challenges and patterns often points to unresolved karma. Meditation and silence are equally crucial. Quieting the mind allows one to hear the whispers of the soul. Tools like astrology or guidance from spiritual mentors can illuminate karmic lessons and dharmic paths. Acts of service also play a vital role. Serving something larger than oneself connects one with the universal rhythm of love and abundance. Trusting the process is perhaps the most vital step. Life's purpose is not a destination but a journey. Every experience, even the challenging ones, is part of this

unfolding story. Ultimately, the purpose of life transcends personal success or happiness. It is about contributing to the greater cosmic order, uplifting others, and leaving the world better than we found it. When we align with our dharma, we become instruments of divine will, radiating love, compassion, and wisdom. Every soul's journey is unique, yet interconnected. Your alignment with your karmic path and dharma not only brings you peace but also creates ripples of positivity in the collective consciousness. In this way, the purpose of life becomes a shared endeavour that is a dance of individual and universal harmony. Discovering the purpose of life is not about seeking answers but about aligning with the divine rhythm within us. By understanding our karma and embracing our dharma, we transcend the superficial and connect with the infinite. Life, then, becomes not just a series of events but a sacred journey that is a dance of the soul with the cosmos. And in that dance, we find not only purpose but also the deepest joy of simply being. — She is a Life Coach and Founder of Soulful Wellness

Now you can write to us at agendapioneer@gmail.com