









VP Jagdeep Dhankhar stresses merit-based appointments, slams extensions and favouritism

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Saturday that extensions in service, in any form for a particular post is a set-

back to those who are in line. Dhankhar was delivering the inaugural address at the 25th National Conference of Chairpersons of State Public Service Commission being held in Bengaluru. Vice President

also said that extension of service indicates that some individuals are indispensable. "Indispensability is a myth. Talent abounds in this country. No one is indispensable. And therefore, it lies in the domain

of Public Service Commissions (PSC) at the state and the central level that when they have a role in such kinds of situations, they must be firm," added the VP. He also said PSC's appointments cannot be

driven by patronage, or by favouritism. "We cannot have a public service commission Chairman or a member, wedded to a particular ideology or an individual. That will be

undoing the essence and spirit of the framework of the constitution," said Dhankhar. The Vice-President also frowned upon post-retirement recruitment and said it is antithetical to what was

visualised by framers of the Constitution. "In some states, it has been structured. Employees never retire, particularly those in the premium services. They get a number of ad-hoc

nomenclatures. This is not good. Everyone in the country must have due and that due is defined by law," said the VP. The VP also said fairness of selection has no meaning if paper leakages occur.

AXIS BANK LTD. PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION OF PLEDGED ASSETS BEING GOLD ORNAMENTS

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Table with columns: CUSTOMER NAME, LOAN A/C NO., AMOUNT OUTSTANDING (IN RS.), DATE OF RECALL NOTICE, GROSS WEIGHT, NET WEIGHT. Lists various borrowers and their loan details across multiple branches.

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AXIS BANK LTD. HAS THE AUTHORITY TO REMOVE ACCOUNT/CHANGE THE AUCTION DATE WITHOUT ANY PRIOR NOTICE AUCTION WILL BE HELD ONLINE HTTPS://GOLD.SAMILIN BETWEEN 12.30 PM TO 03.30 PM. FOR DETAILED TERMS AND CONDITIONS, PLEASE LOG INTO GIVEN WEBSITE HTTPS://GOLD.SAMILIN PLACE: PUNJAB & HIMACHAL PRADESH SDI, AUTHORIZED OFFICER, DATE: 12.01.2025

Chinese FM makes surprise visit to Maldives, holds talks with Muizzu

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi made a surprise visit to the Maldives, during which he held talks with President Mohamed Muizzu and discussed the state of bilateral relations, amid Male's recent warming up to India.

This was the first major visit by a Chinese official to Maldives after Muizzu visited China in January last year, months after his election.

During Muizzu's visit, the two countries elevated the bilateral ties to a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership and signed some key agreements.

In his meeting with Wang, Muizzu stressed the importance of fast-tracking key infrastructure projects outlined in the agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between the two countries, Maldives media reported.

He emphasised the need to prioritise social housing and road development projects, which are among the most urgent requirements for the Maldivian people, and referred to China's commitments in this regard.

Additionally, Muizzu highlighted his administration's focus on economic diversification, particularly in agriculture and fisheries, and requested China's support in advancing these crucial sectors.

'I would have beaten Trump,' says Biden

PTI ■ WASHINGTON
Outgoing US President Joe Biden on Friday said that he would have defeated Donald Trump in the November general elections, but he decided to withdraw from the race mid-way for the sake of the unity of the Democratic Party.

The US Presidential race after Trump after his disastrous performance at the presidential debate in Atlanta in June. Following a lot of criticism from his own party leaders, Biden decided to withdraw from the race mid-way and endorsed his running mate Vice President Kamala Harris to be the Democratic Party's presidential candidate.



out of mind?" he was asked. On January 20, Donald Trump, 78, would be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States.

"The idea that he (Donald Trump) would punish people for not adhering to what he thinks should be policy as related to his well-being is outrageous, but there is still consideration of some folks but no decision," Biden said in response to the question.

NOTICE INVITING EOI
No. SSA-45035/1/2024-MIS-SEC-SSA/507157
Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha Axom, Kahilpara, Guwahati-19, invites Expression of Interest (EOI) through e-Tendering process from NSDC approved Training Partners or Govt. Institution recognized as awarding body by NCVET for implementation of Skill Education in Govt./Prov. Secondary, Hr.Secondary Schools and KGBVs under National Skill Qualification Framework across Assam.

CORRIGENDUM No. - 1 FOR TENDER NO.: N 10 HQ IDS 2024-25. DTD.: 09-01-2025
Tender Notice No.: N\_10\_HQ\_2024-25. Name of work: Provision of Elephant Intrusion Detection System for detection of elephant movements with tracking and Level crossing alerts to increase Safety and capacity enhancement over N.F Railway in Kathihar and Alipurduar Division. E-Tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 24-01-2025.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, Bathari Devi, Mother of No.2897858L. Hav Ram Kishan Yadav, R/o- Vill & Post-Chhardra, Teh- Kotputli, Dist-Jaipur, Rajasthan- 303105, have changed my name from Bathari Devi to Bathari, vide affidavit dated 11/01/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1240)C I, Mithlesh Devi, Mother of JC-473307F Nb Sub Vikash Kumar, R/o- Vill- Chitlang, PO- Dewas, Distt- Mahendragarh, Haryana-123034, have changed my name from Mithlesh Devi to Mitesh Devi, vide affidavit dated 11/01/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(1241)C I, Smt Babita Devi W/o- JC-473307F Nb Sub Vikash Kumar, R/o- Vill- Chitlang, PO- Dewas, Distt- Mahendragarh, Haryana-123034, have changed my name from Smt Babita Devi to Babita, vide affidavit dated 11/01/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

सर्वजनिक सूचना
सभी आम व खास को इस सार्वजनिक सूचना द्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरी मुकदमा राकेश कुमार, रमेश कुमार पुत्राजी नीकी, प्रवीण, सविन पुत्रान्नी दिनेश कुमार, विरला पत्नी दिनेश कुमार पुत्र नीकी, सभी निवासीयान नमक नम्बर 50 वार्ड नम्बर 2, 12 बिस्वा, गुरुग्राम, हरियाणा के रहने वाले हे 02 निम्नलिखित सार्वजनिक सूचना प्रकाशित करवाते हे कि:- 1. यह हे कि मेरे मुकदमान ने अपनी जमीन जो कि खसरा नम्बर 3046 (1-2-19.5), 3047 (0-13-0), 3048 (1-4-0) खसरा 2 बिता 10 बिस्वा याका मौजा गुरुग्राम गांव मे स्थित हे, का कोलाकोरेशन एजीमेंट दिनांक 10.03.2007 व दोबारा से दिनांक 19.05.2014 को मैजर्स रहेजा डेवेलर्स, नई दिल्ली के साथ कुछ शर्तों पर रजिस्टर्ड किया था. जिसमें रहेजा डेवेलर्स लिंग मे रहस्यीकार किया था कि अग्र 16.04.2018 से 6 महीने के अन्दर वह एल.ओ.आई. प्राप्त नही करते हे तो मेरे मुकदमान को हर महीने रुपे 50,000/- रुपये का मुआवजा देने तथा मुकदमा जमीन को अधिग्रहण की प्रक्रिया से मुक्त करायेगे, परन्तु रहेजा डेवेलर्स ने ना तो अब तक मेरे मुकदमान को मु50,000/- रुपये प्रतिमाह का मुआवजा दिया हे तथा ना ही जमीन को अधिग्रहण प्रक्रिया से मुक्त कराने के बाबत कोई कार्यवाही करी हे तथा रहेजा डेवेलर्स विचालिया को चुकी हे तथा उसके खिलाफ एल सी.एल.टी. मे विचालिया घोषित करने की कार्यवाही चल रही हे।

Ukraine says it captured 2 North Korean soldiers

Kyiv (PTI): Ukraine's forces have captured two North Korean soldiers fighting alongside Russian troops in Russia's Kursk border region, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Saturday. He made the comments days after Ukraine began pressing new attacks in Kursk to retain ground captured in a lightning incursion

in August that resulted in the first occupation of Russian territory since World War II. Moscow's counterattack has left Ukrainian forces outstretched and demoralised, killing and wounding thousands and retaking more than 40 per cent of the 984 square kilometres of Kursk Ukraine had seized.

Venezuela's Maduro takes new oath amid protests, international rebuke

PTI ■ CARACAS
Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro was sworn in Friday for a new term, extending his increasingly repressive rule in the face of renewed protests and rebukes from the United States and others who believe he stole last year's vote. Venezuela's legislative palace, where he was sworn in and delivered a fiery speech, was heavily guarded by security forces who have become Maduro's main hold on power since last summer's disputed election.



al sovereignty. "I have not been made president by the government of the United States, nor by the pro-imperialist governments of Latin America," he said, after being draped with a sash in the red, yellow and blue of Venezuela's flag.

Caracas on Friday contrasted sharply with the hundreds of Venezuelans who took to the streets Thursday to protest Maduro's power grab. The protest took place in relative calm but after it ended, aides to the popular former lawmaker María Corina Machado — the driving force behind what's left of Venezuela's beleaguered opposition — said she was briefly detained by security forces.

PUBLIC NOTICE
If I am to inform the public at large that Mr. Imran Ahmed who is the owner of the Plot No. 12A & 12B, measuring 70 sq.yds., Kharsa No. 1358/1min, New Hindon Vihar, Ardhala, Loni, Ghaaziabad, Uttar Pradesh owner vide Gift Deed dated 19.11.2024 (Document No. 14458) executed by Mrs. Hasina Begum and same to be financed & mortgaged by Fedbank Financial Services Limited. That, Mr. Zamid Ahmed was the owner through Sale Deed dated 20.12.2004. Further, Mr. Jamil Ahmad expired on 19-11-2012 leaving behind his legal heirs namely Mrs. Hasena Begum (wife), Mr. Imran Ahmed (son), Mr. Rizwan Saifi (son), Ms. Salma (daughter) but Mr. Rizwan Saifi and Ms. Salma were not present at the time of execution/registration of Gift Deed dated 19.11.2024 to comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim (freight/interest/creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections within 7 days, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, liens etc. Lucern Legal LLP B-9/38, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank Sector-2 Noida UP-201301 Contact#0120-4289379

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client Smt. Saroj Devi W/o late Sh. Surender Kumar, residing at House No. A-599, New Ashok Nagar, Vasundhara Enclave, s.o. East Delhi, Delhi-110096, do hereby formally disown and debar their son namely Virender Kumar and his wife Gaurav along with their children, Piyush and Vidhi from all my movable and immovable properties. My client severed all relations with them. Any person/agency dealing with them, will do at their own risk, cost, and responsibility. My client shall not be held liable for any acts/dealings involving them as they are doing unlawful acts and not obeying my client. Tushar Malhotra (Advocate)

FORM No. 14 (See Regulation 33(2)) By Regd. A/D, Distt falling with by Publication. OFFICE OF THE RECOVERY OFFICER - (I) DEBITS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL DELHI - DRT 1 4th Floor, Jeevan Nigam Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001 DEMAND NOTICE NOTICE UNDER SECTIONS 25 TO 28 OF THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS BY BANKRUPTCY ACT, 1993 AND RULE 2 OF SECOND SCHEDULE TO THE INCOME TAX ACT, 1961. RC/1802/2024 08-01-2025 IDBI BANK Versus NEHA JAIN To: (CO 1) NEHA JAIN, PROP OF M/S N J LEE WALL, R/O A-3/74, 1ST FLOOR, SEC 3, ROHINI, DELHI 110085 This is to notify that as per the Recovery Certificate issued in pursuance of orders passed by the Presiding Officer, DEBITS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL DELHI (DRT 1) in IA/232/2023 an amount of Rs 1040227.10 (Rupees Ten Lakhs Forty Thousands Two Hundred Twenty Seven And Paise Ten Only) along with pendente lite and future interest @ 13.15 % Compound Interest Monthly w.e.f. 24/05/2019 till realization and costs of Rs 13000 (Rupees Thirteen Thousands Only) has become due against you (Jointly and severally) Fully/Limited.

Panama Canal administrator rejects Trump's assertions of Chinese meddling

PTI ■ PANAMA CITY
The administrator of the Panama Canal said Friday that the vital waterway will remain in Panamanian hands and open to commerce from all countries, rejecting claims by President-elect Donald Trump that the United States should take it over.

"This is to maintain the established rules," Requests for exceptions are routinely rejected, because the process is clear and there mustn't be arbitrary variations, he said. The only exception in the neutrality treaty is for American warships, which receive expedited passage. Some 70% of the sea traffic that crosses the Panama Canal leaves or goes to US ports. The United States built the canal in the early 1900s as it looked for ways to facilitate the transit of commercial and military vessels between its coasts. Washington relinquished control of the waterway to Panama on Dec 31, 1999, under a treaty signed in 1977 by President Jimmy Carter. Last month, Trump told supporters "We're being ripped off at the Panama Canal." He claimed that the US "foolishly gave it away."

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Gambhir, BCCI officials to meet to review Australia tour

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The future of leading batters Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will be discussed in a meeting that head coach Gautam Gambhir and chief selector Ajit Agarkar is scheduled to hold with BCCI officials to review the recent tour to Australia here on Saturday.

They may also take into consideration the fact that both Kohli and Rohit have played just three ODIs in 2024 after the 2023 World Cup at home, and that could be too light a sample size to make a final call on their 50-over career.



In the most recent outing against Australia, Kohli, despite a hundred at Perth, could garner only 190 runs at an average of 23.75 while Rohit, who skipped the first Test and opted out of the fifth match, made 31 runs at 6.2.

February 20. However, it is unlikely that the team will be announced on this day itself, as the selectors have time till January 12 to release the squad.

ODIs The selectors are also expected to discuss and pick the India squad for the five T20Is and three ODIs against England for the home series, beginning from January 22.

Satwik-Chirag lose Malaysia Open semifinals

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR



Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty's impressive run at the Malaysia Super 1000 badminton tournament came to an end following a straight-game loss to Korea's Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae in the semifinals, here on Saturday.

Seeded seventh, Satwik and Chirag, who reached the finals last season, lost 10-21 15-21 in a 40-minute semifinal clash.

laughed Satwik. "They are not giving away any easy points, and that's their best quality. We have to work hard for every point, and that's exactly what happened today."

come to us, but we could have shown a little more attitude on the court and played with a little more fire," he said.

नगर निगम रोहतक सार्वजनिक सूचना... नगर निगम रोहतक

सूचना... भोपाल सिंह पुत्र रिशाल सिंह निवारी

Rani Rampal hopes Women's Hockey India League will inspire future Olympic stars

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Former captain Rani Rampal believes the Women's Hockey India League (HIL) can have a similar impact on the sport as the Indian Premier League (IPL) has had on cricket, providing a platform for young girls to earn national team spots for the 2032 Olympics.

Shrachi Rarh Bengal Tigers, and Soorma Hockey Club. "There may be four teams only this time but starting the league has been a long time coming. Hockey India needs to be complimented for this," Rampal, who will serve as a mentor and coach for the

Soorma HC, told SAI Media. "The men's hockey team won back-to-back bronze medals in the Olympics in Tokyo and Paris because the foundation was laid by the men's Hockey India League years back," said the former India hockey captain.

David Moyes returns as Everton manager during 'pivotal time' for club



Everton hired David Moyes for a second stint as manager at the Premier League club on Saturday. Moyes replaces Sean Dyche, who was fired Thursday with the team just one point above the relegation zone.

Everton's next game is Wednesday at home against Aston Villa in the Premier League. "We are pleased that David is joining us at this pivotal time in Everton's history," club executive chairman Marc Watts said in the team's statement.

JM Financial Asset Reconstruction Company Limited Corporate identify Number : U67190MH2007PLC74287... E-Auction Sale Notice - Fresh Sale

JM Financial Asset Reconstruction Company Limited Corporate identify Number : U67190MH2007PLC74287... E-Auction Sale Notice - Subsequent Sale

SMFG India Home Finance Co. Ltd. (Formerly Fullerton India Home Finance Co. Ltd.) POSSESSION NOTICE FOR IMMovable PROPERTY... Sd/- Authorized Officer, SMFG INDIA HOME FINANCE CO. LTD.

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JM Financial Asset Reconstruction Company Limited Corporate identify Number : U67190MH2007PLC74287... E-Auction Sale Notice - Subsequent Sale

PTI ■ LIVERPOOL

DATE OF E-AUCTION: 30-01-2025, FROM 11.00 A.M. TO 1.00 P.M. (WITH UNLIMITED EXTENSION OF 5 MINUTES EACH), LAST DATE OF SUBMISSION OF BID: 29-01-2025, BEFORE 4.00 P.M.

DATE OF E-AUCTION: 20-02-2025, FROM 11.00 A.M. TO 2.00 P.M. (WITH UNLIMITED EXTENSION OF 5 MINUTES EACH), LAST DATE OF SUBMISSION OF BID: 19-02-2025, BEFORE 4.00 P.M.



# A LEGACY PRESERVED

Celebrating 11 years, the museum hosts exhibitions blending art, history and imagination, says **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**



The *Heritage Transport Museum* (HTM) marked its 11th anniversary with two captivating exhibitions blending futuristic imagination and historical heritage. Running until 31 March 2025, the exhibitions, *Light Years Ahead* and *Prints of the Divine*, offer visitors a journey through artistic innovation and cultural history.

### A Legacy of Art and Vision

The event featured *Rama Varma Thampuran*, *Prince of Kilimanor Palace* and a descendant of the iconic artist *Raja Ravi Varma*, and *Rajiv Lochan*, former *Director of the National Gallery of Modern Art* (NGMA). *Rama Varma Thampuran*, a renowned musician and cultural advocate, celebrates the legacy of *Raja Ravi Varma*, while *Rajiv Lochan's* commitment to art underscores the exhibitions' significance in India's cultural landscape.

### A Vision of the Future

Curated by artist *Vishal K. Dar*, *Light Years Ahead* transforms the museum's experience room into a futuristic realm. Featuring luminous sculptural totems and tri-coloured coded messages, this installation invites visitors to ponder alternate realities and embrace boundless imagination.

### A Glimpse into India's Art History

*Prints of the Divine* celebrates India's artistic legacy through oleographs, lithographic plates, and postcards by *Raja Ravi Varma* and *M.V. Dhurandhar*. Curated by *Prem Kandwal*, this collection features rare works that highlight the evolution of early Indian print art, blending mythological themes with artistic innovation.

Reflecting on the exhibitions, *Rama Varma Thampuran* remarked: "Art and music have the power to heal and inspire. Sharing this passion with the world is truly an honour." *Rajiv Lochan* echoed these sentiments: "Art is a universal language that bridges cultures and fosters compassion. Creativity has the potential to unite us all."

### Honouring Raja Ravi Varma's Legacy

*Raja Ravi Varma* (1848–1906), a pioneer of lithographic printing in India, is celebrated for combining Indian aesthetics with European techniques. His iconic mythological depictions brought art to the masses and continue to inspire generations.

### HTM: A Journey Through Time

Reflecting on HTM's milestone, Founder and Managing Trustee *Tarun Thakral* said: "We are delighted to present these exhibitions to commemorate our 11th anniversary. They offer visitors a unique journey through time, one into the future, the other into the past."

Since its inception in 2013, HTM has become India's first comprehensive transport museum, showcasing over 3,500 curated objects. Located in *Taoru-Gurgaon*, an hour from *New Delhi*, the museum combines historical exhibits with contemporary themes, offering visitors a unique blend of education and cultural engagement.

Through *Light Years Ahead* and *Prints of the Divine*, HTM not only celebrates its anniversary but also reinforces its mission to merge history with innovation, creating a space where past, present and future converge.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

## SUGGESTED BINGES



**SUBTERAN**  
OTT: Netflix  
Director: Octav Gheorghie, Daniel Sandu, Anca Miruna Lazarescu  
Cast: Cezar Grumazescu, Ana Ularu, Florin Piersic Jr.



**THE SABARMATI REPORT**  
OTT: Zee5  
Director: Dheeraj Sarna  
Cast: Vikrant Massey, Ridhi Dogra, Raashi Khanna



**GOOSEBUMPS: THE VANISHING**  
OTT: Disney+ Hotstar  
Cast: Ana Ortiz, Elijah M. Cooper, Galilea La Salvia, Francesca Noel



**BLACK WARRANT**  
OTT: Netflix  
Director - Vikramaditya Motwane, Satyanshu Singh  
Cast - Zahan Kapoor, Rahul Bhat, Paramvir Cheema, Anurag Thakur



**AGRA AFFAIR**  
OTT: MX Player  
Cast: Harshita Gaur, Prateek Pachauri, Aakash Dahiya



Netflix's *Reunion* promises a murder mystery set against the backdrop of a high school reunion, but the execution leaves much to be desired. The movie has a decent cast, including *Chace Crawford*, *Jillian Bell* and *Nina Dobrev*. However, what could have been a gripping whodunit is weighed down by a mix of inconsistent writing, underwhelming performances, and a tone that fails to balance suspense and humour.

### THE PLOT: Potential Turned Mediocrity

The story begins with a high school reunion, where old classmates come together, bringing with them unresolved tensions, romantic entanglements, and deep-seated grudges. The film introduces *Mathew Danbury* (*Chace Crawford*), a charming yet flawed character, whose behaviour hints at trouble ahead. He flirts with the women at the party, dances as the high school football mascot, and generally becomes the centre of attention. Meanwhile, *Vivian Chase* (*Jillian Bell*) accuses *Mathew* of tormenting her in high school, adding a layer of confrontation to the gathering.

A severe snowstorm traps the main characters *Evan* (*Billy Magnussen*), *Ray* (*Lil Rel Howery*), *Jasmine* (*Jamie Chung*), *Amanda* (*Nina Dobrev*), *Vivian* and *Mr. Buckley* (*Michael Hitchcock*) in *Mathew's* house overnight. The next morning, *Mathew* is found dead, shot in the chest. The storm has cut off communication lines, making escape or calling for help



## HIGH SCHOOL GRUDGES, LOW EXPECTATIONS

impossible. As suspicions arise, it becomes clear that everyone had a motive tied to their high school grievances. The setup holds promise, combining classic mystery tropes with personal drama. Unfortunately, the film squanders this potential with a rushed and unsatisfying resolution. **PERFORMANCES: Mixed Bag** *Chace Crawford's* portrayal of *Mathew* is engaging, but his character's untimely demise early

in the film undermines any attachment the audience might have had. *Jamie Chung* and *Billy Magnussen* bring some charm as the budding romantic duo, but their chemistry feels underdeveloped. *Jillian Bell* as *Vivian* delivers an earnest performance, but her character lacks depth, and her emotional confrontation with *Mathew* feels forced rather than cathartic. *Lil Rel Howery's* comedic

timing feels out of place in a story that should rely more on suspense than humour, making his character, *Ray*, come off as an unnecessary distraction. **THE KILLER REVEAL: A Letdown** The film's climax is its most glaring weakness. The killer's identity is revealed through a tedious 15-minute monologue by one character, who conveniently "figures everything out" without any prior indication of



investigative situation. This lack of build-up or evidence makes the twist feel random and unearned, leaving the audience scratching their heads rather than gasping in surprise. A good mystery thrives on subtle clues and revelations, but *Reunion* opts for a nonsensical, last-minute info dump instead. **DIRECTION AND WRITING: Where It Fails** The pacing is uneven, with long stretches of inconsequential

dialogue that fail to build tension. The screenplay tries to blend humour and drama but ends up diluting the impact of both. The lack of meaningful character development makes it difficult to care about the characters' fates, while the attempts at dark humour often fall flat. **VERDICT: A Missed Opportunity** *Reunion* is a film that had the ingredients for success with a strong cast, an amazing premise,

and a confined setting perfect for suspense. Unfortunately, poor writing, lack of lustre direction, and a clumsy resolution turn it into a forgettable experience. If you're looking for a well-crafted murder mystery, this isn't it. While the film might appeal to those seeking light, mindless entertainment, it's unlikely to satisfy fans of the genre.

Rating: 2/5





PHOTO: PANKAJ KUMAR



# THE SPIRIT OF MAHA KUMBH

The *Maha Kumbh Mela 2025* in Prayagraj is a unique gathering where spirituality, culture and commerce come together, attracting millions from all walks of life to witness this incredible event, writes **BISWAJEET BANERJEE**

The countdown to the *Maha Kumbh 2025* has begun, with Prayagraj transforming into a bustling hub of spirituality, culture, and economic activity. From 13 January to 26 February, the city will host the largest human congregation on earth, drawing an estimated 40 to 45 crore pilgrims. This iconic event, steeped in Hindu tradition and faith, is more than a ritual, it is a celebration of India’s cultural and spiritual essence. The Sangam, where the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati converge, is at the heart of this grand spectacle. Pilgrims believe that a dip in these holy waters during the auspicious period cleanses them of sins and paves the way to salvation. “The Maha Kumbh Mela is not just a religious gathering but a transformative experience,” said Acharya Ramkishore Tiwari, a spiritual leader. “It is where faith meets divinity.” At the heart of this grand celebration lies the belief in spiritual purification. According to Hindu tradition, a dip in the holy confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati during this auspicious period is believed to absolve sins and pave the path to salvation. The origins of the *Kumbh* are steeped in the Puranic tale of the Samudra Manthan, where drops of divine nectar (amrita) spilled at four locations, Prayagraj, Haridwar, Nashik, and Ujjain, sanctifying these sites forever.



## A CITY REBORN

The banks of the Ganga and Yamuna have transformed into a temporary city, sprawling across the Sangam area. Colourful tents of all sizes and hues have sprung up, creating an awe-inspiring sight. These tents house spiritual discourses, yoga sessions, cultural programmes, and temporary dwellings for millions of devotees. The air is filled with the aroma of traditional Indian delicacies, as numerous eateries and food stalls cater to the surging crowds. Stalls selling Rudraksha beads, saffron garments, holy books, and souvenirs stretch along the pathways, adding vibrancy to the bustling atmosphere. The iconic Naga Sadhus, covered in ash and wearing Rudraksha beads, take centre stage, drawing devotees and curious onlookers alike. Aghories, known for their intense spiritual practices, are seen meditating near the riverbanks, adding a mystical charm to the gathering. “We are not just preparing for an event; we are crafting an experience that celebrates India’s cultural heritage,” said Divya Prakash Singh, a senior official overseeing the arrangements. “From smart surveillance through 10,000 CCTV cameras to a dedicated mobile app for route and ritual updates, technology is playing a crucial role in ensuring safety and convenience.” “The energy here is contagious,” said Abhilash Narain, a resident of Prayagraj. “You do not have to be Hindu to feel the magic of this gathering.” Among the pilgrims is Rajni Devi, a 62-year-old widow from Rajasthan making her third trip to the Kumbh. “The Kumbh is my escape,” she said. “It’s where I find peace and the courage to face life’s challenges.” Similarly, Sunil Mishra, a young IT professional from Bengaluru, sees the



*Kumbh* as a chance to reconnect with his roots. “In the hustle of corporate life, you lose touch with who you are. The Kumbh gives me clarity and a sense of purpose,” he shared.

## ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

Beyond its spiritual significance, the *Maha Kumbh Mela* is a colossal economic engine. The Uttar Pradesh government has allocated a staggering ₹5,600 crore to infrastructure and event management, with the total budget projected at ₹6,382 crore. The local economy thrives on this influx, benefiting small vendors, hoteliers, and service providers alike. “During the Kumbh, my daily earnings triple,” said Shyam Lal, a shopkeeper selling puja items near the ghats. Hotels across Prayagraj are reporting record bookings, with many fully reserved months in advance. “The demand is unprecedented,” said Priya Mehta, the manager of a mid-range hotel in the city. The ripple effect extends beyond Prayagraj. Nearby religious hubs like Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Mathura also see a surge in tourism,



creating thousands of new jobs. “The Maha Kumbh 2025 could generate economic activity worth over ₹3 lakh crore,” estimated Awanish Awasthi, advisor to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

## CHALLENGES AND INNOVATIONS

Hosting an event of this magnitude comes with its share of challenges. Ensuring the availability of clean drinking water, medical aid, and sanitation facilities for millions of pilgrims requires meticulous planning. “The key is vigilance,” said Ramesh Chandra, a senior police officer stationed at the Mela. “We’re deploying over 50,000 security personnel and using AI-enabled systems to manage crowds and prevent untoward incidents.” “The Maha Kumbh is a test of our organisational capabilities,” said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. “We aim to set a global benchmark in event management while preserving the spiritual essence of the gathering.”

## A GLOBAL CELEBRATION

The *Maha Kumbh Mela* is not just a religious event; it is a global celebration of India’s living traditions. Documentary filmmaker Lisa Reynolds, covering the event for an international audience, described it as “a story of humanity in its purest form.” For first-time visitors, the scale of the event is overwhelming. “I’ve never seen anything like this,” said Hiroshi Tanaka, a journalist from Japan. “The blend of chaos and harmony is fascinating. It’s a reflection of India itself.” As the countdown begins, the anticipation surrounding *Maha Kumbh 2025* is palpable. For millions, it is a journey of faith and a reaffirmation of humanity’s enduring spirit. For Prayagraj, it is an opportunity to shine as a beacon of tradition, resilience, and progress. Acharya Ramkishore Tiwari sums it up: “Kumbh is about coming together as one family, transcending divisions and reaffirming our shared humanity.”

“He was the king amongst the industrialists of India”  
— NARAYANA MURTHY



“What I would like to do is to leave behind a sustainable entity of a set of companies that operate in an exemplary manner in terms of ethics, values and continue what our ancestors left behind.”

— RATAN NAVAL TATA

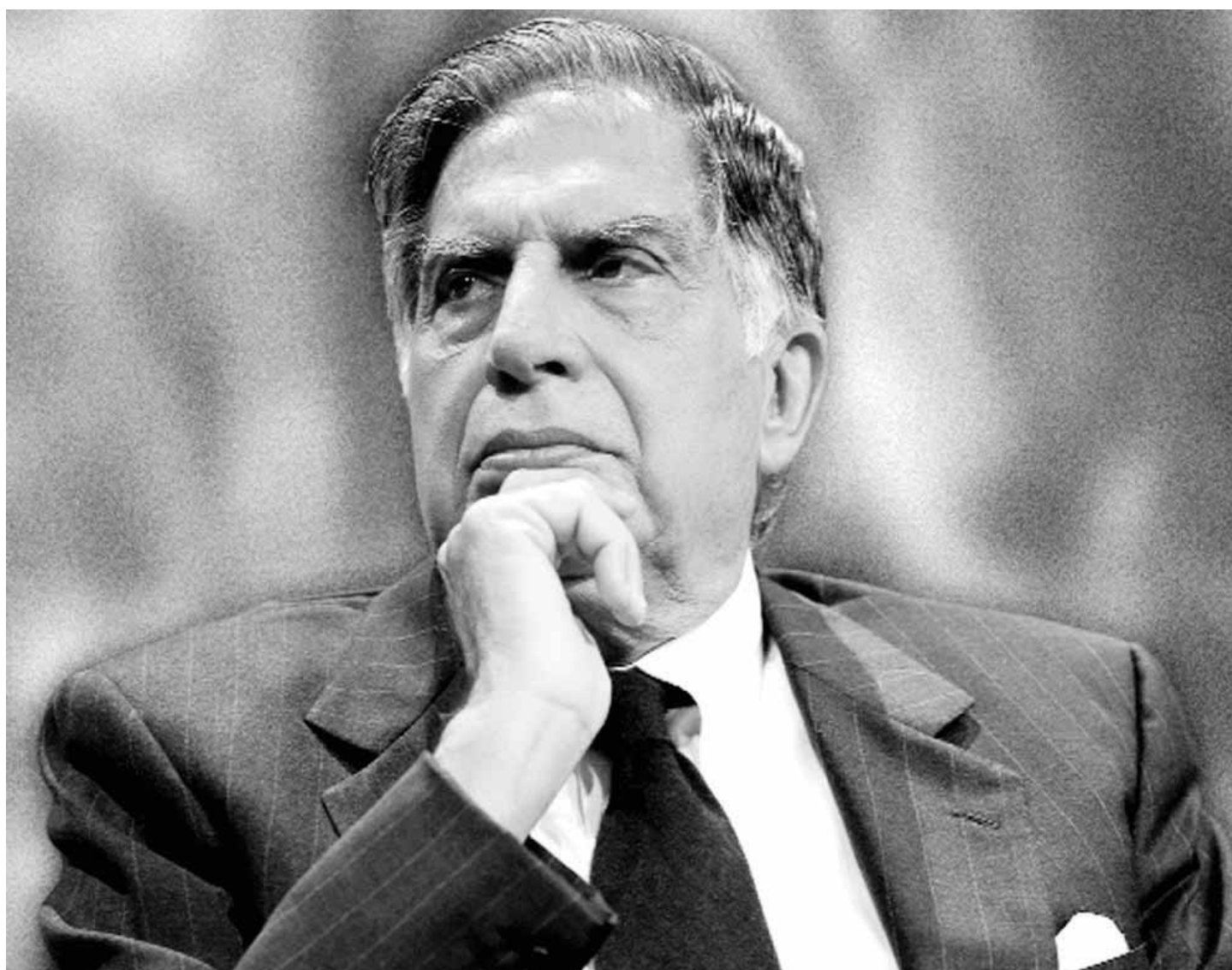
Pericles, the monumental Greek politician and statesman during the Golden Age of Athens in his historic Funeral Oration delivered in 431 BC (that is said to have influenced President Abraham Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address on 19th November, 1863!), said, “To famous men all the earth is a sepulchre: and their virtues shall be testified not only by inscription on stone at home but in all lands wheresoever in the unwritten record of the mind, which far beyond any monument will remain with all men everlastingly.”

On 9th October, 2024, at exactly 11.30 pm IST, the towering 5 feet 10 inches tall Surat born Parsee industrialist-philanthropist Padma Vibhushan Ratan (meaning “precious jewel”) Naval Tata, the Chairman Emeritus and the patriarch of the House of Tata, the largest business conglomerate in India (having a staggering annual revenue of over 165 billion US Dollars and encompassing a grand well knit family of over 1 million happy, well cared for and dedicated members worldwide!), breathed his last at the iconic Beach Candy Hospital nestled atop the Arabian Sea facing Cumballa Hill at the age of 86. He had been hospitalised on 7th October, 2024 owing to a critical combination of senescence and hypotension. Ratan held a meger 0.83 % cent stake in Tata Sons and had a net worth of Rs 7,900 crores, according to the Hurun India Rich List 2024. A large part of his wealth-nearly 75 per cent-was tied to his shares in Tata Sons. For Ratan, accolades poured in a torrential stream from across the country and from all corners of the world. In an impassioned eulogy that reflected the melancholy mood of a shattered nation, our Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi tweeted on X - “Shri Ratan Tata was a visionary business leader, a compassionate soul, and an extraordinary human being.” On 13th October, 2024, the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin “Bibi” Netanyahu in a post on X addressed to his friend Modi, condoled Ratan's death and highlighted his stellar contributions in fostering Israel-India ties, “I and many in Israel mourn the loss of Ratan Naval Tata, a proud son of India and a champion of the friendship between our two countries.” In a post on LinkedIn on 14th October, 2024, Padma Bhushan Natarajan Chandrasekaran, (popularly known as “Chandra”), the most worthy successor of Ratan (he effortlessly stepped into Ratan's distinguished shoes and proudly donned his enviable mantle on 12th January, 2017) and my personal friend for over 15 years since my heady days as a long term Advisor to Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. (“TCS”), the flagship of the prodigious Tata fleet, paid an effusive heartfelt homage to his former boss and mentor, “Anybody who met Mr. Tata came away with a story about his humanity, warmth, and dreams for India. There really was no one like him.” Joseph Bitner Wirthlin, the renowned American businessman and religious leader rightly observed, “Some memories are unforgettable, remaining ever vivid and heartwarming!” In a moment of helpless nostalgia, my mind goes back irresistibly to the rather sultry summer day in the year 1986 when I fortuitously met Ratan (he was then the Chairman of Tata Industries and had in that capacity drafted the Tata Strategic Plan) for the very first time within the majestic confines of the Taj Palace Hotel, the only “palace” hotel in the national capital since 1983. Thereafter, I often used to stay at the Taj Mahal Hotel (the second hotel built by the Indian Hotel Company Ltd. (“IHCL”) belonging to the Tata group after the iconic Taj Mahal Palace Hotel (“Taj Mahal Palace”) in Colaba, Mumbai, in 1903 and popularly known as the Taj Mansingh Hotel because of its strategic location at 1, Mansingh Road), the 5 star-deluxe hotel of 1978 vintage, characterised as the “Epicentre of Delhi”.

I used to meet Ratan sporadically in the hotel lobby mostly in the company of its various General Managers and close personal friends belonging to the golden days of the hotel viz. Ravi Dubey, Ronnie Lobo (both Ravi and Ronnie are sadly no more in this world!), and Patu Keshwani or even otherwise. Ratan used to be invariably accompanied by his old faithful, close confidante, trouble shooter and quintessential out and out Taj-Man Devendra Kumar Beri (“DK” to his friends!). Ratan used to mostly stay at a spartan guest house in the Tata Apartments at 23, Prithviraj Road, New Delhi. In those heady days, Uncle PV, who used to live at 9, Motilal Nehru Marg, often dropped by at the famed coffee shop Machan to drink endless cups of freshly brewed sugar free piping hot filter coffee over steamed idlis and vadas soaked in mild sambar. Ratan never missed the opportunity to wish him if he happened to be around in the hotel. He was an indefatigable admirer of Uncle PV! After Uncle PV became the Prime Minister on 21st June, 1991 consequent upon Rajiv Bhai's tragic assassination on 21st May, 1991, and before he moved into Prime Minister House at 7, Race Course Road (renamed Lok Kalyan Marg), a special Suite was booked in the hotel for his family members through the good offices of Ratan, which was guarded round the clock by the Special

# THE SHAH OF THE CORPORATE UNIVERSE

Ratan Naval Tata redefined corporate leadership with vision, ethics, innovation and unparalleled philanthropy, writes ANOOP BOSE



Protection Group (“SPG”). Ratan personally saw to it that members of Uncle PV's family were well cared for in the hotel. I had the glorious good fortune of staying with Uncle PV at his residence even prior to his becoming the President of the Indian National Congress and was, naturally, a regular visitor to Suite where I used to meet and interact with Uncle PV's two sons Rajeshwar and Prabhakar under the watchful eyes of the SPG personnel. One of my close friends Prashant Tewari, who used to work very closely with Uncle PV and Hansraj Bhardwaj, (the versatile lawyer and later rose to become India's most famous law minister), both were closely known to Uncle PV's family, used to co-ordinate crucial governance and political issues during the period of most dramatic transformation of the country. Again, I used to have the opportunity to meet Ratan in the hotel! Ratan used to take a very special interest in the JRD Tata Memorial Lectures. On 19th September, 2008, Somnath Chatterjee, eminent Barrister and the then Speaker of the Lok Sabha and a close personal friend, delivered the 11th JRD Memorial Lecture on “Economic Development and Political Consensus Building” at the Mansingh Hall in the Taj Mansingh. I was a special invitee to the event. After Somnath's lecture, I met Ratan and Somnath at the adjacent Aftab Mahtab, the regal wood and marble panelled venue, over dinner. My old friend Dr. Jamshed Jiji Irani (popularly known as “Doc I”), the honorific Managing Director of Tata Steel, was also there at Ratan's table. The tall and handsome Sanjay “Pole” Singh, Principal Resident Executive and Adviser, Tata Sons, came over to the table unobtrusively and recounted how I had saved Doc I's life by forewarning the Tata Management that some evil people had plotted to attack Doc I with crude bombs in the heart of Jamshedpur with a sinister motive. My last Taj Mansingh encounter with Ratan was just before the outbreak of the Covid epidemic in 2020. I was standing outside one of the hotel lifts when suddenly as if by magic Ratan emerged from the lift along with his old Harvard educated friend Prince Shah Karim al-Husseini, Aga Khan IV (known by his religious

“TO FAMOUS MEN ALL THE EARTH IS A SEPULCHRE: AND THEIR VIRTUES SHALL BE TESTIFIED NOT ONLY BY INSCRIPTION ON STONE AT HOME BUT IN ALL LANDS WHERESOEVER IN THE UNWRITTEN RECORD OF THE MIND, WHICH FAR BEYOND ANY MONUMENT WILL REMAIN WITH ALL MEN EVERLASTINGLY”

title “Maulana Hazar Imam”), the founder and chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network, and DK of course. I wished him and walked with him to his waiting car. He bid me goodbye with a wave of his hand before getting into his car! As a Special advisor to the Marathon group of companies, I used to travel every year to Bengaluru to participate in Aero India, the biennial air show and aviation exhibition held by the Ministry of Defence at the Yelahanka Air Force Station, Bengaluru, along with my illustrious Israeli friend Hezi Bezalel, the Chairman of the group, and other top Israeli officials. The 2007 Aero India was a very special event for me as Ratan, who was 69 years old at that time, valiantly reached out for the skies in a

spellbinding saga of high adventure on 8th February, 2007. Clad in a G-Suit, he co-piloted a Lockheed Martin F-16 Falcon multi-role fighter jet in a historic 35 minute sortie. Ratan held licences to fly both jets and helicopters! Upon landing after what Ratan described as an “exhilarating” flight, I heartily congratulated Ratan shortly after he was greeted by my old friend William “Bill” Sebastian Cohen, former US Defense Secretary, Royce Keplinger and other senior Lockheed Martin officials. On 9th February, 2007, a G-Suited Ratan once again took to the skies co-piloting a Boeing F/A-18 Super Hornet fighter jet. I met Ratan shortly after his second flight in the Boeing Pavilion to felicitate him with a small bouquet of pink roses in the august presence of my close friends Thomas “Tom” Reeve Pickering, the former US Ambassador to India and the former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs in the Clinton Administration, Dinesh Keskar, the senior Vice President, Sales in Asia-Pacific and India, Anil Srikhande, India President, and other top officials of Boeing Company. During that visit, I also had the golden opportunity of watching a scintillating aerobic display by the Hindustan Aeronautical Industries Ltd. manufactured fly-by-wire Light Combat Multi-Role Tejas Aircraft in the distinguished company of Ratan, Arackaparambil Kurien Antony, Union Defence Minister, Indru and Bookanakere Siddalingappa Yedyurappa, Chief Minister, Karnataka, amongst other important dignitaries. Ratan noticed to his enormous delight that I was smartly attired in a royal blue English blazer, grey English flannel trousers, a hand crafted boater hat from the reputed hatters K.R.Snoxell & Sons, Luton, and dazzling gold rimmed Zeiss sun glasses! On 26th November, 2008, “a date which will live in infamy”, Mumbai, the financial capital of India, witnessed a brutal, dastardly terrorist attack orchestrated by the Pakistani sponsored group Lashkar-e-Taiba, when the Indian Home Secretary Madukar Gupta, by an ominous coincidence, was enjoying Pakistan's hospitality in Murree, a mountain resort city close to Islamabad. Ten highly trained and heavily armed

terrorists infiltrated the city, having stealthily landed in inflatable speed boats at Macchimar Nagar, in Mumbai's Cuffe Parade neighbourhood, and heinously targeted several meticulously planned locations, including the Taj Mahal Palace. The Indian Government's response to the attack was “pusillanimous”, as aptly observed by the Hindustan Times on 26th November, 2023! The attack claimed 166 lives, including 33 at the Taj Mahal Palace, and did not spare even the General Manager of the hotel Karambir Singh Kang's wife Niti and his two young teenage sons Uday and Samar. Gautam Shantilal Adani, the Indian billionaire businessman (who has recently been in the eye of a storm!), by a superb stroke of luck managed to save himself by hiding in the kitchen of the hotel! Defying all odds, it was Ratan who in a truly Churchillian manner valiantly rose to the occasion and provided the much needed leadership to an embattled nation facing an “ordeal of the most grievous kind”! In the face of the attack watched by a shell-shocked nation, Ratan, who was then 70, displayed superhuman courage, resolve and determination. He strode like a colossus and stood like a Rock of Gibraltar at the Colaba end of the Taj Mahal Palace for 3 days, as security forces fiercely battled the terrorists in the Taj Mahal Palace. Everyone became just those inches taller, every back just that much broader, as Ratan's own was. This was undoubtedly Ratan's finest hour when he embodied the will, spirit and grit of our people..indomitable, undaunted, relentless! Ratan was imbued with the extraordinary, nay God given, ability and gift to pick out and support the ideal leader both for the House of Tata as well as the nation...he was the Kingmaker extraordinaire! Ratan backed Modi to the hilt before the General Elections in 2014 and on 19th May, 2014 tweeted on X, “Mr. Modi's landslide victory echoes the people's mandate for strong leadership and clear policies for growth and prosperity for India.” On 19th December, 2020 at the ASSOCHAM Foundation Week, Ratan ecstatically heaped praise on Modi for his leadership during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, “I think if we all stand together and follow what you have said, what you have done and what you have shown, we will have a situation where the world will look at us and say this Prime Minister said it could happen and he made it happen.” In January, 2017, Chandra's “mentor, guide and friend” Ratan cherry-picked Chandra to lead Tata Sons as its Chairman, the first non-Tata family member to hold the coveted post! On his appointment as the Chairman of Tata Sons, Chandra said, “I am humbled and honoured to be chosen to lead a truly great institution that occupies a unique position in hearts of the people in India and the world. I am proud to have been part of the Tata family for over 30 years and assuming this position is a great privilege. I want to thank the Tata Sons board and Mr Ratan N Tata for their confidence in me to lead this trusted institution that has a rich heritage.” Addressing the annual gala annual event at the National Centre of Performing Arts on the birth anniversary of JRD Tata on 30th July, 2018, Ratan expressed gratification with regard to the direction in which group companies were headed under the leadership of Chandra and said that he was confident that “Tata Group is in safe hands.” Yes, only a true leader can identify other true leaders! Both Modi and Chandra have proved to be phenomenal leaders of the 21st Century and have earned international acclaim, respect, adoration and admiration. I have a myriad of friends who knew Ratan intimately and worked with him closely. I am highly emboldened to single out only 5 names viz. Pole, Tanmoy, Raian, Suprakash and Zubin Mehta, the Managing Director of Uniforms Unlimited, Mumbai, who holds a Masters Certification from the internationally reputed Savile Row Academy, London. All of them are unquestionably ad idem about Ratan : “He was a genuinely good, dedicated and large hearted soul filled with the milk of human kindness and our age is hardly fit to understand him.” We should remember the stellar quality of Ratan's character as well as the remarkable range of his achievements. In his love of adventure and his imaginative powers, he was far removed from the modern industrialist-philanthropist. Yet everyone who came in contact with him paid tribute to the unimaginable power of his mind. He had an aptitude for business which raised him far above the ordinary levels of our generation. He had a firmness of spirit which was not often elated by success, seldom downcast by failure and never swayed by panic. He loved life and was perfectly at peace with himself and the world around him. He could be helplessly uproarious. He wanted everyone to be happy. He wanted to taste and try everything that life could offer. Power never corrupted him, nor did success make him conceited, arrogant or pompous. Beyond his reputation as a business magnate and animal lover, Ratan's tenure as Chairman of the Tata Trusts has left an ineradicable mark on India's cultural kaleidoscope. The trusts have spearheaded numerous initiatives across healthcare, education, environment and disaster relief and their manifold contributions to art and culture stand out as particularly noteworthy. With no thought of the length of time he might be permitted on Planet Earth, Ratan was concerned solely with the quality of the service he could render to his nation and to humanity.

— The author is an internationally reputed senior lawyer practising in the Supreme Court of India and various High Courts and Tribunals in India



Located amidst the lush greenery of Guwahati, Mayfair Spring Valley offers a luxurious escape from the city's hustle and bustle. This premium resort is designed to provide guests with ultimate comfort and relaxation, featuring elegantly appointed rooms, a rejuvenating spa, a dedicated kids' play area and top-notch dining experiences. Surrounded by picturesque landscapes, the resort offers serene views of rolling hills and verdant gardens, making it an ideal retreat for nature enthusiasts and luxury seekers alike. Guests can also explore nearby attractions, such as the famous Kamakhya Temple and Brahmaputra Riverfront, ensuring a blend of tranquillity and adventure during their stay.

MAYFAIR SPRING VALLEY (GUWAHATI, ASSAM)



Located in the vibrant city of Shillong, Vivanta Meghalaya is known for its proximity to exciting outdoor activities and cultural events. The resort offers 87 elegantly designed rooms and 14 spacious suites, providing comfort and luxury. It serves as a perfect base for exploring the region's natural beauty and music festivals. Known as the 'Abode of Clouds,' Meghalaya captivates one and all with its misty hills, living root bridges, and cascading waterfalls amidst lush greenery.

VIVANTA MEGHALAYA (SHILLONG, MEGHALAYA)

By TEAM AGENDA

Blessed with nature's bounty, Northeast India is a safe haven for many travellers who wish to escape the overcrowded and over-polluted city life from time to time. With the winter season worsening the pollution's threat to healthy living, Northeast India is the best place to take refuge in to revitalise your health and take a step back to recentre within. Here are a few of the many scenic vacation spots that can do just that.

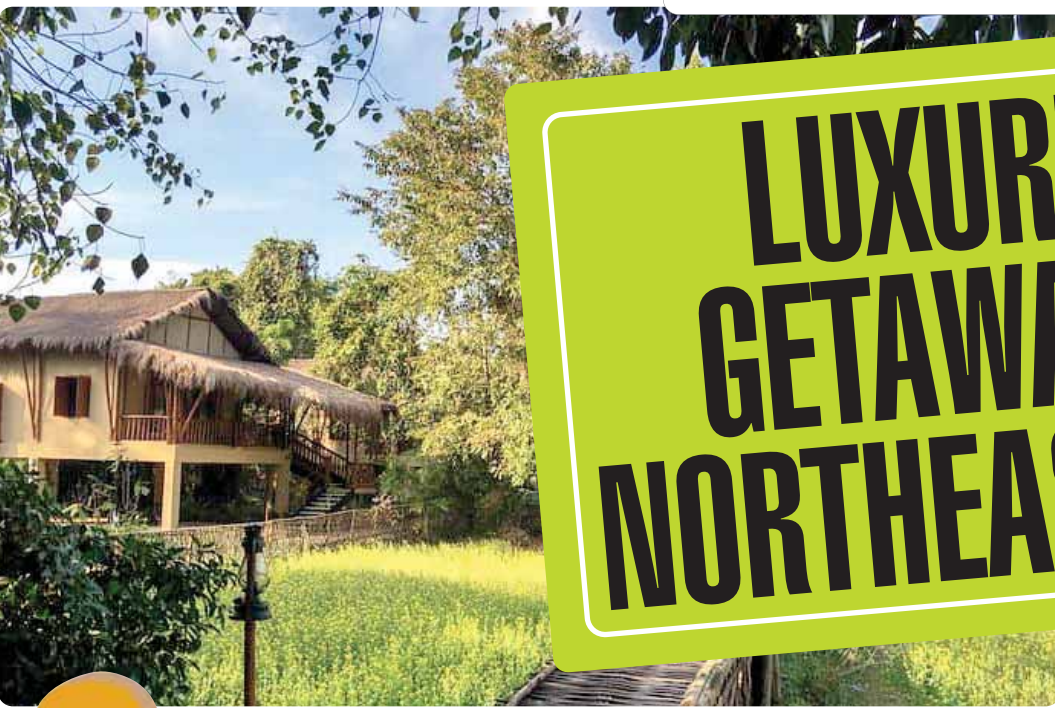


HOTEL CLASSIC GRANDE (IMPHAL, MANIPUR)

A part of the Radisson Individuals group, Hotel Classic Grande provides cosy accommodations in Imphal. With 171 rooms and suites featuring modern amenities, this hotel offers warm hospitality infused with local culture. Guests can enjoy exquisite dining options while taking in views of the Baruni Hill range. Manipur, known as the 'Jewel of India,' boasts of the world's only floating lake, 'Loktak Lake' and the serene Keibul Lamjao National Park, home to the endangered Sangai deer. It is also celebrated for its classical dance and handwoven textiles making it a true treasure of the Northeast.

TAKEAWAY

From the serene hills of Shillong and Gangtok to the wildlife-rich Kaziranga and Tawang, these destinations offer both luxury and tranquillity. The aforementioned resorts offer that entire one can dream of in a staycation that rejuvenates the mind and soul. Whether you're seeking a luxurious resort or a more rustic retreat, Northeast India provides the perfect haven for anyone looking to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life and reconnect with nature.



DIPHLU RIVER LODGE (KAZIRANGA, ASSAM)

Situated on the outskirts of Kaziranga National Park, Diphlu River Lodge offers an authentic experience with its rustic ethnic design. The lodge features comfortable accommodations and a range of activities such as bird watching, vehicle safaris, and village treks, making it an excellent choice for nature lovers. A land of rolling tea gardens, the mighty Brahmaputra, and rich wildlife, Assam is brimming with its natural beauty and vibrant cultural heritage.



SUMMIT NORLING RESORT AND SPA (GANGTOK, SIKKIM)

This resort is set in a picturesque location with beautiful gardens and a serene atmosphere. Summit Norling Resort & Spa offers 27 well-appointed rooms, including luxurious chalets with stunning views of the Himalayas. Guests can enjoy various recreational activities and unwind by the pond or around a campfire. A serene paradise, Sikkim is adorned with snow-capped peaks, alpine meadows, and vibrant monasteries, offering breathtaking views and spiritual tranquillity.

LUXURIOUS GETAWAYS IN NORTHEAST INDIA

The pressure of waiting for my admission results was becoming unbearable. My friend, Vishesh Shukla, suggested a short trip to Mathura and Vrindavan, known for their spiritual aura and rich heritage. Without much planning, we packed our bags and boarded the Lucknow-Agra Intercity Express in the evening. The train reached Agra late at night, and from there, we caught another train to Mathura. By the time we arrived in Mathura, it was around 1 a.m. A short auto ride costing ₹50 took us to Vrindavan, where we stayed at the Tourist Facilitation Centre. After a long journey, we finally got some rest, excited about the day ahead. In the morning, we checked into a modest hotel that charged ₹1,300 for 24 hours. After freshening up, our first stop was the famous Banke Bihari Temple. The temple's energy and devotion left us amazed. We continued our exploration with visits to the ISKCON Temple, Radha Raman Temple and Nidhivan, each offering a unique spiritual experience. Walking through the streets of Vrindavan, surrounded by the sound of bhajans and the sight of devotees, was truly calming. After a simple lunch at a local eatery, we returned to the hotel for a quick nap. The evening was reserved for the magnificent Prem Mandir, which looked breathtaking under the evening



SOULFUL TRAVEL DIARIES

Mathura's sacred temples, peaceful ghats and lively streets provided the perfect getaway from the stress of admission results, writes MANOJ SINGH NEGI



lights. The intricate architecture and devotional atmosphere made it a highlight of the trip. Dinner was at the newly opened Bikanerwala Restaurant on Chhatikara Road. The delicious food was the perfect end to the day. That night, I received the news I had been eagerly waiting for, I had been admitted to my dream institute, IIMC Dhenkanal! The happiness and relief were indescribable. I couldn't help but thank the positive energy of this spiritual trip for making this moment even more special. The next morning, we visited the Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Temple, the birthplace of Lord Krishna. The early morning peace at the temple was soothing. We also stopped by the Dwarkadhish Temple, which is known for its vibrant morning rituals. The temples of Mathura left a deep impression on us with their history and devotion. After breakfast near Yamuna Ghat, we boarded a bus from Mathura Bus Stand to Tundla. We had a hearty lunch at Tundla before catching the Gomti Express, which took us back to Lucknow. This trip was much more than just a getaway. It gave me the clarity and positivity I needed, along with the joy of achieving my dream. The spiritual vibe of Mathura and Vrindavan, combined with their timeless charm, made it a journey I will never forget.

