

BJP SLAMS AAP FOR ₹2,026 CR LIQUOR SCAM

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

A leaked report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on the now-scrapped excise policy of the Delhi government flagged several 'lapses' in the policy and claimed Rs 2,026.68 crore loss to the exchequer. This figure was put out for the first time to show the impact of the alleged liquor scam. The document of the government's auditor that has exposed the liquor scam is named, "Report of the CAG on Performance Audit on Regulation and Supply of Liquor in Delhi." The report has not been tabled in the Delhi Assembly so far. After the leak, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) launched a scathing attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government.

Supply of liquor in Delhi, some retailers surrendered their licenses before the policy expired, and the government did not re-tender them which led to the loss of Rs 890 crores. It said that the government made exemptions for zonal licensees, which caused a loss of Rs 941 crores. For the purpose of retail vends, Delhi was divided into 32 zones (containing 849 vends) whose licenses were granted to 22 entities through tendering. Whereas during the old policy, 377 retail vends were run by four Government Corporations and 262 retail vends were run by the private individuals. The report revealed a loss of revenue to the tune of Rs 144 crore owing to irregular grant of waiver on account of COVID-19 to zonal licenses. It also revealed that incorrect collection of security deposit from zonal licenses leading to loss of revenue of around Rs



BJP leader Anurag Thakur addresses a press conference at the party headquarters, in New Delhi

27 crore. Citing the leaked CAG report, BJP MP Anurag Thakur on Saturday claimed the Delhi Excise Policy scam is worth Rs 2,026 crore and accused the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of misleading Delhi residents. Thakur told a press

conference the CAG report has arrived at 10 major findings about the policy, which was scrapped by the AAP government amid a row, asserting that former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal will have to answer the questions it has raised. "He will have to say who pocketed the money," Thakur said, alleging that Kejriwal is the kingpin of the scam. BJP president J P Nadda claimed the CAG report has exposed intentional lapses, leading to a loss of Rs 2,026 crore to the exchequer. Nadda said on X, "Intoxicated by power, high on misgovernance. 'AAP' DA model of loot in full display and that too on something like liquor." He said it is just a matter of a few weeks before the AAP government is voted out and punished for its misdeeds. "The CAG Report on 'Liquorgate' exposes @ArvindKejriwal and @AamAadmiParty Gov. Intentional 'Lapses' in Policy Implementation. Rs 2026 Cr Loss to Exchequer money," he alleged. Asked about the BJP allegations, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said, "Where is the report? The BJP itself keeps saying no CAG report has been tabled." AAP

leader Priyanka Kakkar on Saturday accused the BJP of fabricating false allegations against the Delhi government and dismissed the party's claims about a CAG report as "manufactured and baseless." Kakkar alleged during a press conference here that the report presented by the BJP was not authentic and had neither been seen by key stakeholders, including the chief minister and the LG, nor listed on the CAG's official website. "The report they are showing is fake and manufactured in their office. It holds no credibility. This is the same strategy the BJP uses repeatedly to mislead people with false allegations," Kakkar said. Referring to previous allegations levelled by the BJP, including those in the liquor policy case, Kakkar claimed even the Supreme Court had dismissed their claims as baseless.

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Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during the 'Pratishtha-Dwadashi' programme, marking the first anniversary of the consecration of the Ram Lalla idol at the Ram temple, in Ayodhya

Yogi urges unity at Ram Temple event

BISWAJEET BANERJEE/ KAMLESH SRIVASTAVA ■ AYODHYA:

On the first anniversary of the consecration of the Ram Lalla idol at the grand Ram temple, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath issued a stark warning about the dangers of societal divisions. "If we remain divided by caste or other ideologies, our religious places will bear the consequences, and our sisters and daughters will suffer," he said, urging unity to preserve the sanctity of India's spiritual heritage. The historic event saw thousands of devotees gathering in Ayodhya, which has been transformed into a vibrant spiritual epicenter for the three-day celebrations. "Pratishtha Dwadashi calls us to unify as a nation," CM Yogi said, recalling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message: "If there is Ram, there is a nation; if there is a nation, there is Ram." He urged citizens to uphold this principle, linking

faith with national identity. The anniversary commenced with CM Yogi performing an 'abhishek' of the idol, followed by the chanting of Vedic hymns. He emphasized the need to strengthen Sanatan values as the foundation for unity and national integrity. "The Ramjanmabhoomi movement reflects the unwavering resolve of our ancestors, whose sacrifices have brought us to this historic moment," CM Yogi said, highlighting the 500-year struggle to reclaim Lord Ram's birthplace. "Today, Ayodhya feels like Treta Yuga, and in the coming years, the Ram Janmabhoomi complex will emerge as one of the world's most magnificent spiritual centers." Devotees from across the country echoed the Chief Minister's sentiments. Priya Sharma, a visitor from Delhi, said, "Being here feels like stepping into history. The energy and devotion in Ayodhya are unparalleled. It's an emotional experience to see Ram Lalla in his full glory."

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Building collapses at Kannauj railway station, 23 injured



Rescue operation underway after an under-construction building collapsed at the Kannauj railway station

Strategic Z-morh tunnel in valley tomorrow

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

With the opening up of the 6.4 km long Z-Morh tunnel, scheduled to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 13, India is inching closer to fulfilling its dream of constructing the strategic corridor between Srinagar-Leh to provide all-weather connectivity and maintain defence and civil supply lines in adverse weather conditions. After dedicating the first leg

of the corridor to the Nation on Monday the focus will be shifted to the timely completion of the 13.15 km long Zojila Tunnel. The Z-Morh tunnel will link Kangan with Sonamarg, a famous tourist destination on the Srinagar-Leh highway. The Zojila tunnel will provide year-round connectivity between the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh, which will be extremely important for the development of Ladakh, the promotion of tourism, the free movement of local goods,



and the movement of Indian armed forces in case of emergency. Currently the average travel time to cross the Zojila Pass is three hours. After the completion of this tunnel, the travel time will come down to 20 minutes, resulting in fuel savings.

The total Project cost of the Zojila tunnel is Rs. 6,809.69 crore. The tentative deadline for the completion of the project at an altitude of over 11,000 feet is September-December 2026. To welcome the dignitaries visiting the venue of the Z-Morh tunnel project the Union Territory administration is making elaborate arrangements. The security personnel have been deployed in large numbers to secure the venue.

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MVA rift grows as Shiv Sena (UBT) announces independent poll strategy

PNS ■ LUCKNOW, KANNAUJ

An under-construction building at the Kannauj railway station collapsed on Saturday afternoon, trapping around two dozen workers under the rubble. At least 23 people have been injured in the incident. Six of them were pulled out of the debris and rushed to hospital. The North Eastern Railway (NER) said it has constituted a three-member committee to probe the incident. "According to preliminary information, the incident occurred when the under-construction shuttering of the roof collapsed," said District Magistrate (DM) Shubhrant Kumar Shukl. Taking cognisance of the incident, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed officials to ensure safe recovery of those trapped inside and their proper medical treatment. State Relief Commissioner Bhanu Chandra Goswami is in touch with the Kannauj district administration for all possible help in relief work, state government officials said. Teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) have been deployed at the site where frantic efforts are underway to rescue the workers. Ambulances have been kept on standby to provide first aid and take the injured to hospital.

MVA rift grows as Shiv Sena (UBT) announces independent poll strategy

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that came close on the heels of its decision to support Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the Delhi Assembly polls and which reflected the widened rift within the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena on Saturday announced that it would contest the forthcoming local body in the state independently. A day after he questioned the very relevance of the Opposition INDIA bloc at the national level, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP and spokesperson Sanjay Raut dropped a bombshell by saying that his party would go it alone in the local body polls. Talking to media persons, Raut said: "As already indicated by our party president Uddhav Thackeray, from Nagpur to Mumbai we will contest all the municipal corporation polls independently. Let's see what happens. We will get to know our party's strength across the state." "If we are to contest the polls as an alliance, when will our party workers get an opportunity to contest the polls? If our workers don't get a chance to fight polls, it will affect the party's growth. If we are to contest the municipal corporation, Zilla Parishad and Nagar Panchayat polls, our party will be strengthened," Raut said. However, the Congress and NCP (Sharad Pawar) have not yet come out with a formal statement on the decision of their alliance partner -- the Shiv Sena (UBT) -to contest the forthcoming local body polls independently. NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, reacting to the Sena (UBT)'s decision to support the AAP in the Delhi Assembly polls, had expressed serious concerns that the Uddhav Thackeray-led party's

MVA rift grows as Shiv Sena (UBT) announces independent poll strategy



decision might have a negative impact on the prospects of the prospects of all three MVA partners in the polls. Raut's statement appeared to be in line with the stand taken by the Shiv Sena (UBT) on Friday, when he had indirectly slammed the Congress for its failure to keep the INDIA bloc together, and also questioned the very relevance of the all Opposition front at the national level. "We fought the Lok Sabha elections together, we got good results. After that it was the responsibility of all of us, especially Congress, to keep the INDIA alliance alive, sit together and guide the way forward. But till now not a single such meeting has taken place after the Lok Sabha elections. This is not right," Raut had said. "Leaders like Omar Abdullah, Mamta Banerjee, Akhilesh Yadav and Arvind Kejriwal have said that the INDIA bloc is no longer in existence. If people have begun to nurse such doubts, I would say the biggest party in the alliance - Congress -- is responsible for this. There is no coordination, there is no discussion. This means that there are serious doubts in the minds of the people whether everything is fine in the INDIA alliance or not... If this alliance breaks once, then the INDIA alliance will not be formed again," Raut had said.

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Four arrested for rhino horn trade in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The crime branch of Delhi Police have apprehended four people for possessing and dealing with horns of rare white rhinoceros usually found in African countries, valued at Rs three crore in the international market. As per the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, greater one-horned rhino is listed under Schedule I which prohibits the capturing, killing, poisoning, or trapping of wild animals. Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime) Sanjay Kumar Sain, said, the police received a tip off about some persons dealing in illegal trade of rhinoceros horns and to unearth the whole nexus, a policeman was sent as a decoy customer. The police have registered an FIR under relevant sections of BNS at the Crime branch police station.

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Mushrooms bring ₹20 Lakh profit, inspiration for Gurugram farmers

SANJAY KUMAR MEHRA ■ GURUGRAM

A small time farmer of Gurugram has now become a source of inspiration for several farmers in the Delhi NCR for his 'mushrooming' business that has served him rich monetary harvest. Prahlad Singh of Daboda village in Gurugram now earns a profit of Rs 20 lakh annually from mushroom farm production. Prahlad Singh told that earlier he was producing millet and wheat as traditional farming in which the income was becoming negligible and the profit was also decreasing day by day due to increased expenditure and less production. In such a situation, inspiration was taken from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ideas of doubling the income and emphasizing on commercial farming using modern technology. "If the farmer becomes modern and moves towards commercial farming, then along with doubling the income of the farmer, the face of agriculture and horticulture in the area will also change," Prahlad said. Gurugram ADC Hitesh Kumar Meena visited the village mushroom

Mushrooms bring ₹20 Lakh profit, inspiration for Gurugram farmers



production unit of Prahlad Singh on Saturday. After collecting information from District Horticulture Officer Neha Yadav, a plan was chalked out to set up a mushroom production unit by taking advantage of the schemes of the department. A complete setup prepared in about 8 kanal area costing about Rs 40 lakh was completed. While the farmer got 40 percent subsidy by the District Horticulture Department he also took a loan from bank for the remaining amount. The farmer told that he has set up a compost unit and four production units with government help. A production cycle of 90 days runs in each production unit. Prahlad informed that about 38 to 40 quintals of mushroom is being produced from one unit. The wholesale price of mushroom in the market is around Rs 140 to 150 per kg. Due to which all four units are earning Rs 20 to 22 lakh as net profit after deducting all the expenses in the whole year. Prahlad Singh said that most of the wholesalers in the area are coming to the farms and taking mushrooms. Due to this they do not even need to go to the market. He told that he is currently trying to get direct deals with other big food establishments in Gurugram and NCR. "The horticulture department is ready to provide them all possible help. Under the departmental scheme, the maximum unit cost of mushroom compost and a mushroom production unit has been fixed at Rs 20 lakh by the Horticulture Department, Haryana in the district. In which 40 percent amount will be given in the form of grant in General category and 85 percent amount in Scheduled Caste category," said district government official.

Principal orders 80 schoolgirls to remove shirts as punishment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RANCHI/DHANBAD

The principal of a private school in Jharkhand's Dhanbad district was accused of ordering 80 girls of class 10 to remove their shirts for writing messages on them, prompting the administration to initiate an inquiry, an official said on Saturday. The girls were allegedly forced to return home in their blazers without shirts beneath. The incident took place in a prestigious school in Digwadih under Jorapokhar police station area on Friday, Dhanbad Deputy Commissioner (DC) Madhvi Mishra said. The parents complained to the DC that



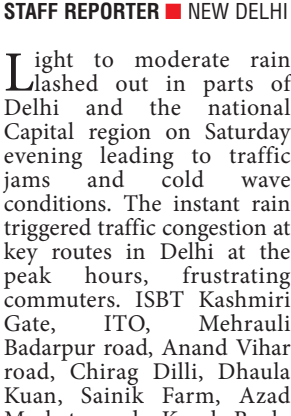
complaints against the principal. We also talked to some of the victim girls. The administration has taken the matter seriously. A committee has been set up to investigate the matter," Mishra said. The committee consists of the sub-divisional magistrate, district education officer, district social welfare officer and the sub-divisional police officer. Action would be taken on the basis of the probe panel's report, the DC said. Jharia MIA Ragini Singh also accompanied the parents to the DC's office on Saturday when they lodged the complaints against the principal. Singh described the incident as "shameful and unfortunate".

IMD warns of dense fog, rain, traffic disruptions in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Light to moderate rain lashed out in parts of Delhi and the national Capital region on Saturday evening leading to traffic jams and cold wave conditions. The instant rain triggered traffic congestion at key routes in Delhi at the peak hours, frustrating commuters. ISBT Kashmiri Gate, ITO, Mehrauli Badarpur road, Anand Vihar road, Chirag Dilli, Dhaura Kuan, Sainik Farm, Azad Market road, Karol Bagh, Peeragarhi Road, New Rohtak Road are among those stretches that witnessed traffic jams during the peak hours in the evening. The weather department forecasts that weather is expected to remain the same on Sunday. The minimum temperature

IMD warns of dense fog, rain, traffic disruptions in Delhi



A juggler with monkeys sits around a bonfire on a cold winter day

was recorded a low of 7.7 degrees Celsius. Meanwhile, moderate to dense fog continued to blanket parts of Delhi and its adjoining areas on Saturday, prompting the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) to issue multiple advisories overnight, asking passengers to contact airline concerned to be updated about flight status. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), dense to very dense fog conditions likely to continue over North,

IMD warns of dense fog, rain, traffic disruptions in Delhi

three notches below the season's average, the IMD said. Parts of the national capital, including the Central Delhi area, received light rain. Forty-five trains were delayed as a thick layer of fog engulfed the city in the morning, reducing visibility which impacted train operations, officials said. In its advisory, the IMD has cautioned that dense fog may affect some airports, highways and railway routes in the areas of met- sub-division. It has advised travellers to be careful while driving or outing through any transport. "Unless taken precautionary measures, it may lead to some road traffic collisions," it said. The weather department also stated there are chances of tripping of power lines in the very dense fog routes.

IMD warns of dense fog, rain, traffic disruptions in Delhi

East and Northeast India during next 2-5 days. According to the weather department, Safdarjung observed minimum visibility of 50 metre from 12.30 am to 1.30 am which improved thereafter becoming 200 metre and continues to remain so 7.30 am. The humidity was 100 per cent during the day. In comparison to recent days, early morning temperatures have dipped between 8 and 11 degrees Celsius, highlighting the ongoing cold conditions. The maximum temperature settled as 17 degrees Celsius,

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WEATHER

AQI	(277)
MAX	17°C(-3)
MIN	7.7°C(+0.3)

settled as 17 degrees Celsius,

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AAP MLA dies from accidental gunshot in Ludhiana

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

AAP leader and Ludhiana West MLA Gurpreet Bassi Gogi has died of a gunshot injury, with his family members and state party chief saying he was fatally hit by a bullet that got fired accidentally from his pistol when he was cleaning it. Punjab AAP president Aman Arora, who visited the grieving family in Ludhiana, said Gogi would clean his licensed pistol everyday. While he was doing so Friday night, it got fired accidentally and claimed his life, Arora said. Joint Commissioner of Police Jaskaran Singh Teja said the bullet pierced Gogi's temple and he was rushed to the local Dayanand Medical College and Hospital (DMCH), where doctors declared him dead. The incident occurred around 11:30 pm on Friday at Gogi's house. Teja said, "According to his family members, it was an accidental fire."

Legal notice against politicians for levelling allegations against BPSC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA

The Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) on Saturday said it has issued legal notices to "a number of individuals, including politicians" who have levelled "baseless" allegations against the body on the row over the Combined Competitive Examination (CCE) held on December 13 across the state. Speaking to PTI, Rajesh Kumar Singh, Examination Controller, BSPC, said, "The commission has sent notices to a number of individuals, including politicians, certain people associated with coaching centres... Those who have made baseless allegations against the BPSC... Some more notices will be sent shortly." Although the examination controller did not disclose the names of those to whom notices have been sent, Jan Suraj Party's vice president Y V Giri confirmed that one of the recipients was party founder Prashant Kishor, who is currently in a hospital due to deterioration in health

following his fast-unto-death. Giri told reporters that the notice appeared to be "misconceived and deserved to be ignored". The BPSC notice asked Kishor to provide "full details of irrefutable and verifiable proofs and evidence" within seven days to support his allegations regarding malpractices in the Integrated Examination (CCE) held on December 13 across the state. Speaking to PTI, Rajesh Kumar Singh, Examination Controller, BSPC, said, "The commission has sent notices to a number of individuals, including politicians, certain people associated with coaching centres... Those who have made baseless allegations against the BPSC... Some more notices will be sent shortly." Although the examination controller did not disclose the names of those to whom notices have been sent, Jan Suraj Party's vice president Y V Giri confirmed that one of the recipients was party founder Prashant Kishor, who is currently in a hospital due to deterioration in health

students," he told PTI. "We are also preparing to approach the Patna High Court over the issue pertaining to the alleged irregularities in the examination conducted on December 13," he added. The police have also registered a fresh FIR against a Patna-based coaching institute, linked to Khan Sir, for allegedly spreading misinformation related to the BPSC exam. Sources in the BPSC confirmed that notices have been sent to several other individuals and owners of Patna-based coaching institutes in this regard. Meanwhile, Independent MP from Purnea, Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav, has called for a Bihar bandh on January 12 in support of the students seeking cancellation of BPSC's December 13 exam. Varun Choudhary, national president of Congress's student wing National Students' Union of India (NSUI), along with his supporters, on Saturday visited Gardani Bagh, where the protesting BPSC aspirants

have been staging a dharna for the last three weeks seeking cancellation of the December 13 exam. He also observed 'maun-vrat' in support of students for some time at the protest site. Meanwhile, the protesting students organised a press conference, thanking everyone from Tejashwi Yadav, Pappu Yadav and Prashant Kishor for extending support to their struggle. "Despite their mutual disagreement, they supported our struggle. We are, however, still awaiting a response from Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who must break his silence. If he says that cancellation of the exam is out of question, then we will have to chalk out a strategy accordingly," the students said. The CCE conducted by the BPSC on December 13 has been in the eye of a storm over allegations of question paper leak. Even as the government dismissed the allegation, a fresh test was ordered for more than 12,000 candidates who had appeared in the exam at a centre in Patna.

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir experienced its driest year in five decades in 2024 as the below-normal precipitation continued for the fifth consecutive year, with a sharp 29 per cent deficit in rainfall compared to the annual average of 1322.3 mm, weather experts said on Saturday. This marks the fifth consecutive year of below-normal precipitation in the Union Territory. With the 2024 figures nearing the record low of 802.5 mm in 1974, the region's precipitation levels continue to dwindle. The prolonged deficit has left rivers, reservoirs, and groundwater sources under stress, while farmers and residents face increasing challenges due to reduced water availability, leading to concerns over water scarcity and its impact on agriculture, hydropower, and daily life. The monthly data for the year 2024 reveals the severity of the deficit, with the year starting off with a staggering 91 per cent shortfall in the month of January, the weather expert said.

IIT Kanpur develops robotic hand for stroke recovery

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Institute of Technology, (IIT), Kanpur has developed a first-of-its-kind Brain-Computer Interface (BCI)-based Robotic Hand Exoskeleton to transform stroke rehabilitation and redefine post-stroke therapy by accelerating recovery and enhancing patient outcomes. The BCI-based robotic hand exoskeleton developed by Prof. Ashish Dutta from the Department of Mechanical Engineering at IIT Kanpur, has been supported by Department of Science and Technology (DST), UK India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI), and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). It employs a unique closed-loop control system that actively engages the patient's brain during therapy. It integrates three essential components: a Brain-Computer Interface that captures EEG signals from the brain's motor cortex to assess the patient's intent to move, a robotic hand exoskeleton that performs therapeutic hand movements, and software that synchronizes brain signals with the exoskeleton for real-time assist-as-required force feedback. Talking about the innovation, Prof. Dutta said, "Stroke recovery is a long and often uncertain process. Our device bridges the gap between physical therapy, brain engagement, and visual feedback creating a closed-loop control system that activates brain plasticity, which is the brain's ability to change its structure and function in response to stimuli. "This is especially significant for patients whose recovery has plateaued, as it offers renewed hope for further improvement and regaining mobility. With promising results in both India and the UK, we are optimistic that this device will make a significant impact in the field of neurorehabilitation." Stroke-induced motor impairments often result from damage to the motor cortex, and traditional physiotherapy methods have limitations due to insufficient brain involvement. Pilot clinical trials conducted in collaboration with Regency Hospital (India) and the University of Ulster (UK), have yielded exceptional results, showcasing the transformative potential of the Brain-Computer Interface (BCI)-based Robotic Hand Exoskeleton. Remarkably, eight patients—four in India and four in the UK—who had plateaued in their recovery one or two years post-stroke achieved complete recovery through this innovative therapy. The device significantly enhances the effectiveness of rehabilitation by actively engaging the brain during therapy, leading to faster and more comprehensive recovery compared to conventional physiotherapy. Stroke recovery is most effective within the first six to twelve months, but this device has demonstrated the ability to facilitate recovery even beyond that critical time frame, said a statement from the Institute.

ED seizes 66 Kg marijuana in Tripura, money laundering case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Saturday said it has seized about 66 kg of "high quality" marijuana following searches in Tripura as part of a narcotics trafficking-linked money laundering case. The raids were undertaken on January 10 in the state against inter-state drug cartels involved in the trafficking of narcotic substances, including ganja (marijuana) and phensedyl, a codeine-based cough syrup abused as an intoxicant. The money laundering case of the federal agency stems from multiple FIRs registered by the Tripura Police against some individuals named Kamini Debbarma, Bishu Tripura, Aup Ranjan Das and others on charges of drug trafficking. "The accused maintained an inter-state network facilitating drug trafficking across various

states including Tripura, Assam, Bihar and other parts of India," the ED said in a statement. It claimed that the "proceeds of crime" generated through drug trafficking, received via hawala and deposited in benami accounts, were invested in purchasing various movable assets like fixed deposits and bank balances and immovable properties in the names of family members and benamidars (in whose name a benami property is standing). The agency said it seized about 66 kgs of "high quality" ganja, along with financial records, details of benami properties and electronic devices, suggesting the generation of a "significant" amount of proceeds of crime. This operation, according to the agency, is part of the ongoing efforts by the ED to combat the illegal drug trade and to trace and attach the proceeds of crime generated from illegal drug trafficking.

BJP releases second list of 29 candidates for Delhi polls



SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday released the second list of 29 candidates for the upcoming high-octane Delhi elections featuring notable names like first Delhi Chief Minister Harish Khurana, Delhi BJP Vice-President Kapil Mishra and former MLA Neeraj Basoya. With Khurana in the fray with the party fielding him from Moti Nagar assembly constituency against AAP's Charan Goel and Congress' Rajender Namdhari, there are a total of three sons of former Delhi Chief Ministers in the fray including Sheila Dikshit's son Sandeep Dikshit and Saheb Singh Verma's son Parvish Singh Verma. The list also features

turncoats like Kapil Mishra who had been an MLA of Karawal Nagar from AAP's ticket before joining the BJP in 2019. He has been fielded against AAP's Manoj Tyagi. Congress turncoat Neeraj Basoya has been given the ticket from Kasturba Nagar against Congress' Abhishek Dutt and AAP's Ramesh Pehalwan. With the second list, the party has so far named candidates for 58 seats for the elections to the 70-member Delhi Assembly. This comes after the Central Election Committee's (CEC) meeting on Friday where senior party leadership including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP President J.P. Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah were present. The list features the name of five women candidates including Deepthi Indora from Matia Mahal, Urmila Kailash Gangwal from the reserved Schedule Caste seat of Madipur, Shweta Saini from Tilak Nagar, Neelam Palhalwan from Najafgarh, and Priyanka Gautam from the reserved Schedule Caste seat of Kondli.

Noida teen injured in hit-and-run by reckless luxury car

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

A 14-year-old boy sustained serious injuries after being hit by a car while jogging on a service road in Noida Extension, with the police arresting the driver of the luxury vehicle. The boy is being treated at a private hospital and his condition is critical, on official said. The incident took place around 6 am on January 9 near Stellar Jeevan Society in the Bisrakh police station area when the Jaguar car allegedly struck the boy from behind, as per a complaint lodged by the victim's father, Murari Singh. "My son Neeraj was running on the service road when the Jaguar, driven recklessly, hit him from behind. He sustained serious injuries to his head and chest and is undergoing treatment at a private hospital," Singh has said in his complaint. A police spokesperson said that following the complaint, an FIR has been registered at the local police station. "The boy is being treated for his injuries at a

private hospital, where his condition remains critical. The vehicle involved and its driver are in police custody, and further investigation is underway," the official added. According to the police, the erring Jaguar XE is registered in Gautam Buddh Nagar district and its 22-year-old driver has been arrested. The FIR was lodged under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections 281 (rash driving) and 125b (causing grievous hurt with rash or negligently done act that endangers human life), the spokesperson added. Recently, taking note of the high number of accidents and casualties caused by them in Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had directed officials to launch large-scale road safety awareness campaigns, especially in schools and colleges. According to official figures on road accidents available from January to September 2024, the district recorded over 850 crashes that left around 330 dead and over 750 injured.

Strategic Z-morh...

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Ramesh Tiwari, a retired teacher from Varanasi, added, "This temple is not just a place of worship but a symbol of unity and resilience for Hindus everywhere." The celebrations witnessed an average daily footfall of over 1.5 lakh devotees, with numbers expected to surge further. Head priest Satyendra Das described the scene as a testament to the deep connection between Lord Ram and his devotees. "The overwhelming turnout shows the joy and devotion of people from all walks of life," he remarked. A highlight of the anniversary was the ceremonial 'Pancharit Abhishek', where the idol was anointed with milk, curd, ghee, honey, and sugar, followed by a ritual bath with Ganga water. Lord

Ram was adorned in yellow garments woven with gold threads, and a diamond-studded crown graced his head. CM Yogi participated in the prayers, offering his reverence and emphasizing the event's spiritual and national significance. The celebrations culminated in a collective prayer for harmony and prosperity, with devotees reaffirming their commitment to the values embodied by Lord Ram. "The temple and its festivities bring a sense of pride and connection with our roots," said Meena Gupta, a homemaker from Kanpur, who attended the event with her family. Ayodhya's transformation into a hub of devotion and spirituality continues to inspire millions, making the Ram temple a beacon of faith and unity for generations to come.

PM Modi to Inaugurate Z-Morh Tunnel

From page 1

A team of SPG, looking after the security details of the Prime Minister, are already camping in the area and conducting mock drills to secure the venue. In October 2024, a group of heavily armed terrorists targeted construction workers near Gagangir, the Z-Morh tunnel project site, killing a total number of seven employees including a local doctor. Later, the Union Territory administration ordered an immediate security audit of the major infrastructure projects in the region and also beefed up the security to prevent selective targeting of the construction workers to stall the projects and delay their construction.

been spent on the construction of the Z-Morh tunnel. The 6.4 km long tunnel got its name from the Z-shaped road stretch near the construction site. In October 2024, a group of heavily armed terrorists targeted construction workers near Gagangir, the Z-Morh tunnel project site, killing a total number of seven employees including a local doctor. Later, the Union Territory administration ordered an immediate security audit of the major infrastructure projects in the region and also beefed up the security to prevent selective targeting of the construction workers to stall the projects and delay their construction.

IMD warns of dense fog, rain, traffic...

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"A fresh western disturbance is likely to affect northwest India from the night of 14th January, 2025. Under its influence, Isolated rainfall/snowfall activity likely over Jammu-Kashmir-Ladakh-Gilgit-Baltistan-Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh during 15th-17th and Isolated rainfall activity over East Rajasthan on 14th & 15th January," it added. Meanwhile, the Centre for Holistic Development (CHD), an NGO working for the welfare of homeless, on Saturday claimed that at least 474 homeless people in Delhi have died due to exposure to the cold between November 15, 2024, and January 10,

2025. There is no official data on the same. In a letter addressed to Delhi Chief Secretary Dharmendra and Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) Chief Executive Officer Ravi Dhawan, CHD cited police statistics, indicating that an alarming 80 per cent of "unidentified dead bodies" in the city are believed of homeless individuals. "Between November 15 2024 to January 10, 2025, 474 homeless people died in Delhi due to the 'winter exposure' and unavailability of essential protective measures such as warm clothing, blankets, or adequate shelter," the NGO claimed.

Building collapses at Kannauj railway station, 23 injured

From page 1

Roof shuttering is a temporary structure that supports concrete while it sets. Minister of State (Independent Charge), Social Welfare, Asim Arun also reached the spot. Construction was going on for the new terminal of the Kannauj railway station under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Arun said. "Once the rescue operation is completed, a thorough probe will be launched into the incident," he said. The NER division of the Indian Railways said in a statement that it has formed a high-level three-member committee to investigate the incident at the Kannauj railway station. "The investigation team will include the chief engineer, planning and design; the additional divisional railway manager, Izzatnagar; and the chief security commissioner of the Railway Protection Force," the statement quoted Chief Public Relations Officer of NER Pankaj Kumar Singh as saying.

Four arrested for rhino horn trade in Delhi

From page 1

The arrested individuals are Deepak Sharma (57), a resident of Lajpat Nagar; Suresh Kumar (57), Sant Ram (57), and Anil Kumar Sethi (60), all residents of Uttam Nagar, police said. The four of them were found to be involved in the illegal trade of horns from a white rhinoceros, police added. White rhinoceros is a species native to African countries and is considered highly endangered. On January 9, the decoy customer finalized the deal for Rs one crore and the team raided a flat in Lajpat Nagar where four persons were found with two horns of

rhinoceros. All were asked whether they have any documents pertaining to legal possession of the horns but they could not provide any such documents, Sain said. "As part of the operation, constable Naveen was deployed as a decoy customer. After negotiations, the deal for the sale of the horns was finalised for Rs 1 crore, with the perpetrators planning to deliver the horns to the buyer. The team raided a flat in Lajpat Nagar, where they apprehended the four accused and recovered the two horns," said Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Sanjay Kumar Sain. The officer further stated that

upon questioning, the accused failed to provide any documentation to prove the legal possession of the horns. Wildlife experts who examined the horns confirmed they were from a white rhinoceros. The horns, which have significant value in the international market due to their rarity and demand, police said. During the investigation, it transpired that a suspect Deepak Sharma had two horns from the last 90 years from the time of his grandfather and had preserved them as being rare and antique article belonging to African white Rhinoceros. Since Covid-19 pandemic, he has been trapped in a business

loss and owns Rs 35-40 lakh of debt. He knew that the horns are rare and having a price more than Rs 3 crores and hence, due to his poor financial conditions, he decided to sell these antique horns to earn handsome money. Knowing the high value of the horns, Sharma reached out to Suresh Kumar, a Mahant in Uttam Nagar, seeking to sell the horns for Rs 1 crore, police said. Kumar, in turn, contacted Sant Ram, a government employee, who connected with Anil Kumar Sethi, a private worker, to finalize the deal, they added. "The group was motivated by financial distress, with each

individual facing debt or financial obligations. Suresh Kumar needed money for construction work at an ashram, while Sant Ram and Anil Kumar were also in debt and saw the sale of the horns as a way to earn quick money," Sain said. Police said a case under various sections of the Wildlife Protection Act has been registered, including charges related to the illegal possession and sale of wildlife products. The investigation is ongoing and further action will be taken to identify and apprehend any other individuals involved in this international wildlife trafficking network, Sain said.

BJP Slams AAP for ₹2,026 Cr Liquor scam

From page 1

The damning findings of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, Girish Chandra Murmu, over the AAP government's controversial liquor policy come as a big setback to the ruling AAP ahead of the February 5 Assembly elections, giving fresh ammunition to the Opposition BJP and the Congress who have dubbed the scam "Liquorgate". The explosive findings reveal serious violations, including lack of transparency in pricing, improper issuance and renewal of licences, failure to penalize violators, and the government's failure

to seek approval from the Lieutenant Governor (LG), cabinet, or the assembly. It also mentions that the policy by then ex-CM Arvind Kejriwal failed to achieve its intended goals and alleged that AAP leaders benefitted from kickbacks. The report noted, "There was lack of scrutiny of the business entities with regards to their financial wherewithal and management expertise. Instances of related business entities holding licences across the liquor supply chain were noticed." "Liquor supply data indicates exclusivity arrangements between zonal licencees and wholesalers and Brand Pushing. Surrender of zonal

licences during the extended policy period further led to substantial revenue loss. Other important measures which were planned in the policy, like setting up of laboratories and batch testing for quality assurance, setting up of super premium vends etc., were not implemented," it said. "Responsibility and accountability should be fixed for the lapses observed and the enforcement mechanism should be strengthened," said Murmu in his final recommendation in the report for the year ended March 31, 2022. The report was also signed by Principal Accountant General (Audit), Delhi, Aman Deep Chatha.

C'garh all set to become ODF state soon, claims CM

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Saturday claimed that Chhattisgarh was all set to be declared an Open Defecation Free (ODF) state soon as the targets set have timely been achieved.

Speaking at the inauguration function of d-sludge vehicles at his official residence, Sai said "The declaration of ODF state was not only a target but is a lifestyle and which will ensure our development and the development of nation", he said.

Sai further said that the motive for the Swachh Bharat Mission was launched was now taking shape and there



was tremendous awareness among the people regarding the cleanliness mission.

Sai further said that Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, or Clean India

Mission is a country-wide campaign initiated by the Government of India on October 2, 2014 to eliminate open defecation and improve solid waste management and to create Open Defecation

Free (ODF) villages. Under the scheme, Rs 12,000 for construction of Individual Household Latrine (IHHL) for all BPL households and identified APL households (SC/ST

Under the scheme, Rs 12,000 for construction of Individual Household Latrine (IHHL) for all BPL households and identified APL households (SC/ST households, households with physically disabled person, landless labourers with homestead, small and marginal farmers and women headed households) who do not have toilets in their houses.

households, households with physically disabled person, landless labourers with homestead, small and marginal farmers and women headed households) who do not have toilets in their houses.

Two Balrampur health Centres now NQAS certified



STAFF REPORTER ■
BALRAMPUR

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has awarded the National Quality Assurance Certificates (NQAS) to two health institutions in Chhattisgarh's Balrampur district for providing excellent health

services, an official communique said on Saturday.

The Primary Health Centre of Dipadih Kala and Ayushman Arogya Mandir of Kevali scored 92.80 and 90.72 percent marks in the evaluation.

The NQAS team audited the hospitals' on various

parameters, including patients' rights, support services, clinical services, infection control, and quality management.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai and Health Minister Shyam Bahari Jaiswal have congratulated the doctors and other medical staff of the hospitals.

23 held for killing couple, son over land dispute

STAFF REPORTER ■
SURAJPUR

Two women among 23 persons were arrested for killing a couple and their son over a land dispute in Surajpur district in Chhattisgarh.

Baisakho Toppo alias Buchchi (52), Jasinta Toppo (22) and 21 men, have been taken into custody, Surajpur Senior Superintendent of Police Prashant Kumar Thakur said.

They killed Magheram Toppo (60), his wife Basanti (53) and their son Naresh (31) when the victims were working in farmland



following a local court order in their favour after a long-standing dispute over 7.5 acre of land with the relatives on Friday.

While the couple's son Suresh was injured in the fatal attack and was admitted

to a hospital in Ambikapur. The couple had three sons Naresh, Suresh and Santosh.

After the incident, Santosh Toppo managed to escape and informed the villagers about the incident.

Two killed, six injured as centring frame collapses

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Two workers were killed and six others injured when a centring frame collapsed during the laying of a slab at an under-construction building in Chhattisgarh capital Raipur on Saturday.

The accident occurred in Vishal Nagar area on VIP Road where a multi-storey structure is being constructed, Raipur Additional Superintendent of Police (Urban) Lakhani Patle said.

A slab was being laid between the 7th and 10th floors of the building around 3:30 PM when the centring frame crashed, he said.

Eight workers trapped under the debris of iron bars and construction material, were evacuated and transferred to different hospitals. But two of them later succumbed to their injuries in the hospital.

Tatapani Mahotsav from Jan 14

STAFF REPORTER ■
BALRAMPUR

The Tatapani cultural festival will be held in a grand manner in Chhattisgarh's Balrampur district from January 14 to 16 on the occasion of Makar Sankranti.

An official communique said that this is the first religious and cultural festival in the state this year.

It will draw participation of people of Chhattisgarh and neighbouring states in large numbers.

One of the key highlights will be a tribal fashion show on the second day to promote local art and culture. Chhattisgarhi, Bollywood, and Bhojpuri artists will give their presentations. Chhattisgarhi



singer Garima Diwakar, Bollywood singer Mithoon,

and Bhojpuri artist Akshara Singh, along with students and

other artists, will showcase their talents.

Three more bodies recovered in Mungeli

STAFF REPORTER ■
MUNGELI

With the recovery of three more bodies of workers after a 42-hour long rescue operation, the death toll increased to four on Saturday in a smelting plant that collapsed two days ago in Mungeli district in Chhattisgarh.

The bodies of Jayant Sahu (35) Prakash Yadav (20) and Awdhesh Kashyap (32) were recovered from debris of the plant site, Mungeli Superintendent of Police Bhojram Patel said.

The body of Manoj Dhritlahre (35) was found on Thursday after an iron silo structure of the chimney collapsed in the plant.



Sahu hailed from Bilaspur, Yadav resided in Balodabazar and Kashyap was from Janjira-Champa districts.

"A case under sections 106 (A), 289 and 3(5) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

(BNS) has been lodged against the plant incharge Amit Kedia, manager Anil Prasad, and the plant management. Further probe is underway," the official added.

CBI nabs two more in CGPSC recruitment scam



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested two persons in alleged Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission (CGPSC) recruitment scam, a lawyer said on Saturday.

Nitesh Sonwani, a distant nephew of retired IAS officer-former CGPSC Chairman Taman Singh

Sonwani, as well as a candidate and former examination controller Lalit Ganewer were summoned on Friday for questioning. Later, the central probe agency arrested the two and presented them in court on Saturday, Sonwani's counsel Faisal Rizvi said.

They were presented before the Remand Court Magistrate Soumya Rai who sent them into two-day CBI

custodial remand. This is the fourth arrest after ex-CGPSC chairman Sonwani and Director of Shri Bajrang Ispat & Power Ltd Shrawan Kumar Goyal were nabbed in November 2024. They are in jail on judicial remand.

In July last year, the CBI

registered a FIR against then CGPSC chairperson Sonwani, Secretary JK Dhruv and others for alleged nepotism.

The agency conducted raids following charges that family members and relatives of officials and Congress

politicians were appointed in the district collectorate in 2020-22.

The probe agency alleged that children and relatives of senior officers of the then Chhattisgarh government as well as politicians were selected.

AAVAS FINANCIERS LIMITED
(CIN:L65922RJ2011PLCO34297) Regd. & Corp. Office: 201-202, 2nd Floor, South End Square, Mansarovar Industrial Area, Jaipur. 302020

POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of AAVAS FINANCIERS LIMITED under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred upon me under section 13(12) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued a Demand Notice calling upon the borrowers mentioned herein below to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on me under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 9 of the said rules on the dates mentioned as below. The borrower and Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the AAVAS FINANCIERS LIMITED for an amount mentioned as below and further interest thereon.

Name of the Borrower	Date & Amount of Demand Notice	Description of Property	Date & Type of Possession
SUKHWANT SINGH, MRS. MANJEET KOUR (A/C NO.)/LNBI02921-220191643	10 MAY 23 Rs. 987805/- 8 MAY 23	VILLAGE-KOHKA, AMBEDKAR WARD NO. -9, PHN-14, RNM-DURG-1, PART OF KHASRA NO. - 6815/1, DISTRICT-DURG, CHHATTISGARH, 490023 ADM. 1078 SQ. FT.	PHYSICAL POSSESSION TAKEN ON 10 JAN 25

Place : Jaipur Date: 12-01-2025 Authorised Officer Aavas Financiers Limited

1,704 quintal paddy seized

STAFF REPORTER ■
BILASPUR

Authorities in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur have seized a total of 1,704 quintals of paddy worth Rs 52.84 lakh due to irregularities in inventory of five procurement centres, an official communique said on Saturday.

They audited the inventory of several procurement centres and discovered that five centres had excess amounts of

paddy. The seized 240 quintals of paddy from the Bodri procurement centre, 681 from Ganiyari, 500 from Son (Pachpedi), 230 from Kaudia (Sipat), and 762.6 from Bodsara (Bodri).

Collector Awanish Sharan said that a case was being prepared against the committee officials.

Physical verification of paddy procurement centres will continue until the last day of procurement, the communique said.

IDFC FIRST Bank Limited
(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)
CIN : L65110TN2014PLCO97792
Registered Office: KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai-600031. TEL: +91 44 4564 4000 | FAX: +91 44 4564 4022.

APPENDIX IV (Rule 8(1))
POSSESSION NOTICE (For immovable property)

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 16.10.2024 calling upon the borrower, co-borrowers and guarantors 1. OCHHARAM VISHWAKARMA, 2. KUNTI VISHWAKARMA, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs. 4,55,319.56/- (Rupees Four Lac Fifty Five Thousand Three Hundred Nineteen And Fifty Six Paise Only) as on 15.10.2024 within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Demand notice.

The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this 08th day of JAN 2025.

The borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of THE IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited) for an amount of Rs. 4,55,319.56/- (Rupees Four Lac Fifty Five Thousand Three Hundred Nineteen And Fifty Six Paise Only) and interest thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Description of the Immovable properties

All That Piece And Parcel Of Plot No. 113, Abadi Land Part Of Khasra No. 196, Plot Area 403 Sq. Mtrs., Situated At Mouja: Khusrupali, Ph. No. 05, Tehsil: Bagbahara, District: Mahasamund, Chhattisgarh-493449, And Bounded As: East: N. Kumar, West: Dhanesh North: Gali, South: Lagani

Date : 08-01-2025
Place : CHHATTISGARH
Loan Account No : 37604874 & 64763318

Sd/-
Authorised Officer
IDFC First Bank Limited
(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, E/M CIRCLE, RAIPUR (C.G.)

e-Procurement Tender Notice

Online tenders are invited on behalf of Governor of Chhattisgarh from contractors, C.G. P.W.D in new Registration system (unified Registration system) for the following work :-

NIT No.	Name of work	Probable amount of contract	Date of bid submission
84/SE E/M/2024 (I Call) System Tender No164124	Supplying, Fixing, Rewinding & Dismantling & Maintenance Work of All Types of Water Pumps Unit i.e. Submersible Pump/Open well Submersible pump/Monoblock Pump, Pressure Pump etc. Of All Capacity Installed Under P.W.D. (E/M) Sub division Workshop, Raipur (C.G.) (Approved Make: Kirloskar/Textmo/CRI/Crompton)	Rs 65.00 Lacs	29-01-2025

The tender documents can be downloaded from the web-portal <http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>. Only those contractors/bidders, interested in bidding shall pay the tender document cost online.

G- 242505251/5
Superintending Engineer
P.W.D., E/M Circle Raipur (C.G.)

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, E/M CIRCLE, RAIPUR (C.G.)

e-Procurement Tender Notice

Online tenders are invited on behalf of Governor of Chhattisgarh from contractors, C.G. P.W.D in new Registration system (unified Registration system) for the following work :-

NIT No.	Name of work	Probable amount of contract	Date of bid submission
81/SE E/M/2024 (I Call) System Tender No164046	Annual Operation and General Maintenance Contract of HVAC System Installed at C.G. Niwas, New Delhi. (Approved Make Carrier/Daikin/Bluestar)	Rs 20.10 Lacs	23-01-2025
82/SE E/M/2024 (I Call) System Tender No 164008	UTILITY SHIFTING & ELECTRIFICATION WORK 33 KV LINE, 11 KV LINE FOR KACHNA SECTION UNDER PWD E/M MANTRALAYA SUB-DIVISION RAIPUR (C.G.)	Rs 99.23 Lacs	27-01-2025

The tender documents can be downloaded from the web-portal <http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>. Only those contractors/bidders, interested in bidding shall pay the tender document cost online.

G- 242505276/5
Superintending Engineer
P.W.D., E/M Circle Raipur (C.G.)

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PM Modi to spend entire day with 'Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue' participants

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will spend the entire day on Sunday with the participants in the 'Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue', being held as part of his efforts to bring one lakh youths having no political link in politics.

The programme is being held on National Youth Day, which marks the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. An official statement said Modi will engage with 3,000 "dynamic young" leaders from across India.

Modi said on social media that he will spend the entire day with "my young friends" and over conversations and lunch, they will discuss various subjects aimed at building a 'Viksit Bharat'. The youths who he will be meeting have shown great passion for science, technology, innovation, culture and more, he added. The statement said the event



aims to break the 25-year-old tradition of holding the National Youth Festival in a conventional manner. It aligns with Modi's Independence Day call to engage one lakh youths having no political affiliation in politics and provide them with a national platform to make their ideas for Viksit Bharat a reality. Modi will participate in multiple activities designed to inspire, motivate, and empower the nation's future

leaders, it said. "Innovative young leaders will make 10 PowerPoint presentations representing the 10 thematic areas pivotal to India's development before the prime minister. These presentations reflect the innovative ideas and solutions proposed by young leaders to address some of India's most pressing challenges," it added. He will also release a compilation of the best essays written by participants on the ten themes. These themes

encompass diverse areas such as technology, sustainability, women empowerment, manufacturing, and agriculture.

During the dialogue, which starts on Sunday, the young leaders will engage in competitions, activities, and cultural and thematic presentations. It will also include deliberations on the themes led by mentors and domain experts. It will also witness cultural performances showcasing India's artistic heritage while symbolizing its modern advancements.

A total of 3,000 youths have been selected to participate in the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue through the Viksit Bharat Challenge, a meticulously crafted, merit-based multi-level selection process to identify and showcase the most motivated and dynamic young voices from across the nation, the statement said. It saw the participation of around 30 lakh young minds.

Rijju embarks on five-day visit to Saudi Arabia, to sign agreement for Hajj pilgrimage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju on Saturday embarked on a five-day visit to Saudi Arabia to sign a bilateral agreement for the Hajj pilgrimage of 2025, where India is seeking an additional quota for 10,000 pilgrims. Rijju is scheduled to meet Saudi Arabian Minister Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al Rabiah on Monday when the two leaders are expected to sign the bilateral agreement.

"I look forward to visiting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to sign the bilateral agreement on Hajj 2025 and strengthen the people-to-people ties between our two great nations," Rijju said in a post on X.

Rijju will also meet Saleh Al Jasser, the Saudi Minister of Transport and Logistic Services and discuss Hajj flight operations and the pilgrimage-related bus and train services with him. Rijju will also visit the Jeddah Haj Terminal, used by Indian



pilgrims, where the government has dedicated an office space for facilitation. Some Indian pilgrims use the Jeddah Airport Terminal One, which also has a high-speed rail service, for transit. India's Hajj quota for 2025 is fixed by Saudi Arabia at 1,75,025 pilgrims and the government is seeking an additional 10,000 quota for this year's pilgrimage. Rijju will also visit Madina, where he will visit the mosques at Quba and Qublatain.

During his visit, Rijju will also meet Prince Khalid Al Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Advisor to King Salman, the governor of Makkah Region and the chairman of the Central Hajj Committee and Prince Salman bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz al Saud, the Governor of Madina. Out of the total Hajj pilgrims quota allocated to India, 70 per cent would be handled by the Hajj Committee of India while the remaining 30 per cent will be allocated to private Hajj group organisers,

according to the government's Hajj Policy for 2025.

In 2024, the Hajj Committee of India (HCoI) was allotted 80 per cent while the private Hajj group organisers got 20 per cent of the quota.

While the order of priority was 70 plus applicants, ladies travelling without mehrams and the general category in 2024, the new Hajj policy has prioritised 65 plus applicants followed by women without mehrams and then the general category.

Dark web, cryptocurrency and drones continue to be challenge for country: Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Home Minister Amit Shah said on Saturday that dark web, cryptocurrency, online marketplace and drones continue to be a challenge for the country and these have to be checked by strict measures.

Chairing a regional conference on 'Drug Trafficking and National Security' here, Shah also asserted that the country will not allow even a single kg of drugs to be smuggled in or out of the country. He said the government has not only been successful in eliminating many networks of drugs, but the terrorism linked with them too was also destroyed. He said many cases of narco-terrorism were busted in

Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh and these were major achievements.

"The use of dark web, cryptocurrency, online marketplace, drones continue to be a challenge for us even today," he said. Shah said a technical solution to these problems have to be found through joint efforts by the states and the central government and technocrats for the country's security and development.

He said the fight against drugs has gained a new strength under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. "In the last 10 years, there has been a seven-fold increase in the seizure of drugs which is a major achievement. The Modi government has given a strong message of destroying

the entire ecosystem of drugs through strict action," he said. The home minister said that in 2024, by seizing drugs worth Rs 16,914 crore, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and police across the country took the biggest action against drugs, which is a significant step in making a drug-free society.

"No country can move forward on the path of development with a young generation suffering from drug addiction. It is our responsibility that we all fight this challenge together and make all efforts to win this battle," he said.

Shah said that during 2004-14, a total of 3.63 kg of drugs were seized while during 2014-24, altogether 24 lakh kg of drugs were seized - a seven-fold increase as compared to



the previous decade. He said drugs worth Rs 8,150 crore were disposed off in 2004-14 but in 2014-24, drugs worth Rs 54,851 crore were destroyed - eight times more

special focus on eight states and Union Territories of northern India. Shah also launched the drug disposal fortnight starting from Saturday to January 25. He said that during this period, one lakh kg of narcotics worth Rs 8,600 crore will be destroyed. The home minister also inaugurated the new office complex of the NCB's Bhopal zonal unit and extension of the MANAS-2 helpline to all 36 states and UTs.

The main focus of the conference is on the sharing of real-time information from the National Narcotics Helpline 'MANAS' portal with the Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) of states and UTs, evaluating the progress of states in combating drug trafficking, and assessing the

effectiveness of the Narcotics Coordination Mechanism (NCORD). Other issues to be discussed at the conference include strengthening and enhancing the functionality of State Forensic Science Laboratories (SFLS), utilising the NIDAAN database to bolster efforts against drug trafficking, implementing provisions of the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PIT-NDPS) Act, establishing special NDPS courts for the speedy trial of drug-related cases, and fostering a Whole-of-Government approach to ensure comprehensive collaboration among all agencies to combat drug trafficking and abuse effectively.

Under the leadership of Prime

Minister Narendra Modi, the Government of India has adopted a zero tolerance policy against drug trafficking, an official release said. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is implementing a three-pronged strategy to achieve a drug-free India by 2047. This includes strengthening institutional frameworks, enhancing coordination among narcotics agencies, and launching a public awareness campaign. The conference is being attended by governors, lieutenant governors, chief ministers and senior officers from the eight participating states and UTs. Senior officers from various central ministries, departments, and law enforcement agencies also attended the conference.

IMD looking to access data from CubeSats, IoT devices for better forecasts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) is looking to access data from CubeSats, crowdsourcing, and Internet of Things devices besides conventional weather satellites to improve its forecast accuracy, a former official said.

The IMD has also sent a dedicated meteorological satellite in orbit and installed a new high power computing system (HPCS) last year that would allow it to issue more accurate forecasts. "IMD will soon move to an ensemble prediction system with a horizontal resolution of 6 km, which is an improvement over the current resolution of 12 km," Madhavan Rajeevan, Ministry of Earth Sciences former secretary, said in an article penned on the occasion of the 150th Foundation Day of IMD.

"The improvement of observation networks incorporating state-of-the-art technologies such as crowdsourcing, CubeSats, IoT devices and unmanned platforms will significantly improve data quality and forecast efficiency," he said. Rajeevan said the IMD was also setting up separate research testbeds in Bhopal and Mumbai to deepen the understanding of monsoon dynamics and cloud physics.

"As user expectations continue to grow, the IMD must continuously innovate and proactively address these demands," he said. The IMD has access to weather observations from over 6,000 surface observatories in addition to data from weather balloons, satellites, a network of radars which feed information to prediction models.

"By embracing cutting-edge technologies and continually improving forecasting systems, IMD can sustain its legacy as a global leader in weather and climate services and helping India navigate the



challenges of climate Change," Rajeevan said. In a separate article, leading meteorologist U C Mohanty said under the aegis of Ministry of Earth Sciences, significant scientific and technological advancements have been achieved across various domains of Earth system sciences, encompassing the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere, cryosphere, biosphere, and their intricate interactions.

The advances in computational resources allowed the use of advanced deterministic chemical transport models, leading to more accurate air quality forecast, replacing the previous empirical and statistical approach which has some limitations and misses to adequately represent the physical and chemical processes of pollutants.

The scientists at IMD and Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, Ministry of Earth Science jointly developed the advanced Air Quality Early Warning System (AQEWS), Rajesh Verma, Chairman of the Commission for Air Quality Management said. In the Power sector, timely weather forecasts helps in better management of electricity grids.

"There is trading in power sector in every 15 minutes. Thus, the 15-minute forecasts and hourly forecasts of basic weather parameters upto a few hours help in ensuring better management of power generation and distribution," a power ministry official said.

Delhi HC denies bail to ISIS associate in terror case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has refused to grant bail to an alleged member of ISIS in a terror case by NIA over radicalisation of youths using cyber space. A bench of Justices Prathiba M Singh and Amit Sharma dismissed the bail plea by Md Heydaitullah, who allegedly used Telegram groups to propagate the ideology of the terrorist group in India and recruit other persons.

The accused challenged a trial court order declining any relief on the ground that mere association or support to a

terrorist organisation would not constitute an offence under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).

The court rejected the contention, and said Heydaitullah, a qualified MBA graduate working at an IT company in Gurugram, was not a "passive" supporter as material showed that he advocated "Jihad in order to establish Khilafat" even through violent means.

"The Appellant admittedly in 2018 had taken an oath (Bayath) in the name of Abu Bakr al Baghdadi and Abu al-Hasan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi. Abu Bakr al Baghdadi is admittedly a well-known



leader of ISIS and as per the chargesheet had declared formation of 'caliphate' in June 2014," said the court in a judgement passed on January 10.

"ISIS had been declared to be a terrorist organisation and judicial notice can be taken of the fact that the world at large knows about the activities of ISIS. Appellant is an educated person and was well aware of the nature of activities of ISIS," it added. Dismissing the plea, the court said the bar on grant of bail under the UAPA was clearly applicable in the case.

Following an FIR registered in 2021, the National

Investigation Agency arrested the accused on October 22, 2022.

The prosecution alleged that he disseminated the ISIS ideology through the cyber space and spread hatred against the Government of India by promoting enmity against Hindus on social media.

It was further alleged that he had transferred funds for the cause of ISIS from his bank account and various materials, including the oath of allegiance, methods for preparation of explosive material, etc were recovered from him during the investigation.

CITU slams L&T chairman for urging employees to work 90 hours per week

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) on Saturday condemned the statement of the Chairman of Larsen & Toubro (L&T) urging for to extending the working hour to 90 hours per week. "Similar satanic statement was earlier made by the Infosys Head N.R. Narayan Murthy, urging for increasing working hour of 70 hours per week through statutory measure. It seems that there is a rogue competition among the corporate messiahs to rouse the blood and sweat of Indian workers and they are in active connivance and collaboration with the corporate-communal regime in governance by Modi-led NDA," said Tapan Sen, general secretary of CITU in a statement.

"Indian workers, even the permanent ones in the formal sector, are deployed in much more hours of work compared to more productive countries like China, Europe and even the U.S. The stretching of working hours is very disastrously impacting upon the health and social life of the Indian workers. Despite that, these sort of satanic exercise are being made by



the corporate class only to further minimize employment as well as labour cost with brutal working conditions to facilitate more intense exploitation on the workers for profit, cost cutting, in the guise of efficiency and productivity, which have led to 11486 suicides in 2022 as per records of Crime Bureau. The extent of severity of inhuman extraction from labour can be seen from the share of wages in net value addition going down sharply to 15.94% in 2022-23 from 27.64% in 1990-91 while share of net profit jumping from 19.06% to 51.92% during the same period as per Annual Survey of Industries report, besides aggravating 'joblessness,' pointed out CITU. The major Left trade union said that such desperate and

Total number of HMPV cases reach 15 in country, states raise vigilance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The total number of cases of coronavirus-like human metapneumovirus (HMPV) in the country has reached 15. On Saturday, the first case was reported in Assam when a 10-month-old child was detected positive for the pathogen while in Gujarat, a fourth case was reported after a 9-month-old baby was found to be affected with the respiratory illness. Gujarat has the highest number of 4 cases of HMPV in the country. Maharashtra has 3 cases, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have 2 cases each, and UP, Rajasthan, Assam and Bengal have reported one case each.

The 10-month-old child is undergoing treatment at Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) in Dibrugarh. His condition is stable, said the State Health officials, adding that the child was admitted to the government hospital four days ago due to symptoms of cold and cough.

Even as the Centre and many health experts have maintained that there is no need to worry as the virus has been doing the rounds in the country for the past several



years, States are not leaving anything to chance given the rise in cases in neighbouring China. As a part of its vigilance measures, Punjab has issued an advisory urging the elderly people and children to wear masks. Meanwhile, isolation wards are being built in hospitals in Gujarat which have reported the highest number of cases, raising further concerns about the virus' spread. In Haryana too, the health department has been ordered to keep an eye on HMPV cases.

HMPV spreads through respiratory droplets released when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It can also be transmitted by touching contaminated surfaces or through direct contact with an infected individual. As per a recent study by

researchers from JIPMER-Puducherry, a leading national institute and tertiary care hospital, HMPV, which is known to cause respiratory issues in children, has not only been circulating in India for years but has also evolved. The virus is classified into two main genotypes, A and B, with subgroups such as A1, A2, B1, and B2, along with additional sub-clusters like A2a, A2b, and A2c. For the first time, JIPMER researchers have identified two new HMPV sub-clusters - A2.2.1 and A2.2.2 - within the A genotype in India. These newly identified strains show similarities to isolates detected in the United States in 2010 and Japan in 2018.

The study is published in the International Journal of Infectious Diseases (IJID).

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 setback 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



commission Chairman or a member, wedded to a particular ideology or an individual. That will be undoing the essence and spirit 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. "Paper leakage has become an industry, a form of commerce. This is a menace that must be curbed," he added. He commended the initiative the Government has taken in this

regard, with the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024. The Vice President is also of the view that although it is "India's century", without a "calm political atmosphere" India will not really gain. A vitiated political climate is far more dangerous than the climate change we are facing, he pointed out.

"Our polity at the moment is too divisive, too polarised. Interaction is not taking place at the premium level in political organisations." The solution, according to him, is harmony in polity. "Harmony is imperative. If there is no harmony in polity, if the polity is polarized, deeply divisive, with no communication channels functioning, imagine you are in an earthquake, you are lost and you have no connection with the outside world, things will be terrible for you," he added.

He also said for India to stand strong, we need strong institutions.

Tamil Nadu Governor's actions 'childish' says CM MK Stalin

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHENNAI



Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi was unable to "digest" that the State was developing and his decision not to address the Assembly was "childish", Chief Minister MK Stalin said on Saturday. The state Legislative Assembly has been witnessing strange scenes for the last few years after Ravi took over as Governor, he said. "The Governor comes to the Assembly but returns without addressing the House. That's why I had said that his actions were childish," Stalin told the Assembly.

As per Article 176 of the Constitution, the Governor has to deliver his address to the Legislative Assembly at the commencement of the session. "But he appears to be keen on violating the rules in a planned manner," the CM said winding up the debate on the motion of thanks to the Governor for his address.

In 2022, this Governor delivered his address without altering the speech.

But in the following three years, he avoided delivering his customary address citing 'absurd' reasons, the Chief Minister said. Singing the Tamil anthem (Tamil Thai Valthu) before the session starts and playing the national anthem after the address has been the tradition for long. "I think, the Governor is unable to digest the fact that Tamil Nadu is developing. I may be an ordinary person but this Legislative Assembly came into existence due to the feelings of crore of people," Stalin said.

This House cannot bear to see the Governor doing something with political motives that drags the

position and responsibility he held by not respecting the dignity of this Assembly, not respecting the people's feelings, and 'daring' to insult the Tamil anthem. "We should not see such things again," the Chief Minister added.

On January 6, Ravi left the Assembly without delivering the customary address. The Raj Bhavan later said that he left 'in deep anguish' as the national anthem wasn't played. "Disrespecting the Constitution does not augur well for democracy," the Governor had then said. Reacting, Stalin had said, "it was childish of the Governor choosing not to read the government address."

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi seeks SIT probe into Assam mining tragedy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ GUWAHATI

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi on Saturday said he has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking a SIT probe into the mining tragedy in Assam, which left several labourers in a coal quarry dead.

He also alleged that "illegal mining continues unchecked" due to "weak law enforcement and local complicity" in the northeastern state.

Nine workers were trapped inside a coal mine in Umrangsu in Dima Hasao district on Monday after a sudden gush of water



flooded the quarry. Of them, the bodies of four labourers have so far been recovered. "As of today, rescue operations have entered their sixth day, but the fate of coal

miners trapped in the illegal coal mine at Dima Hasao remains uncertain. Illegal mining continues unchecked in Assam, fuelled by weak law enforcement and local

complicity," said the Congress' deputy leader in the Lok Sabha. "I have written to the prime minister urging an urgent SIT probe to investigate this tragedy," he said.

Gogoi urged the prime minister that the proposed special investigation team (SIT) should not only look into the "illegal" operation of the mine and identify those responsible for this tragedy but also address the broader issues at play.

"This includes the failure to enforce the NGT's (National Green Tribunal) ban on rat-hole mining, the complicity of local authorities-including the district administration

and district police - who have enabled these illegal activities to persist, despite repeated accidents and warnings," the Congress leader alleged.

The SIT should also examine safety standards and working conditions in these mines, which are "consistently ignored", leading to deadly incidents, he claimed.

"The investigation should expand its scope to identify and map out other illegal mining sites across Karbi Anglong, Dima Hasao, and Upper Assam, areas where these activities continue unabated," he alleged in the letter.

Additionally, the

investigation must address the environmental impact of such "illegal mining operations and recommend necessary actions to curb the long-term damage to both human lives and the environment," Gogoi said.

"The people of Assam, and indeed all of India, deserve to know the truth and justice done. This must be a turning point in our collective efforts to end illegal mining and protect vulnerable workers from exploitation and harm," he said.

The families of the victims deserve justice, and "we must ensure that such incidents are prevented in the future," he added.

Court relaxes bail conditions for Allu Arjun in stampede case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ HYDERABAD

In a major relief to actor Allu Arjun, a court here has relaxed the conditions of his bail in the 'Pushpa 2' stampede case, exempting him from appearing before the investigating officer every Sunday. The court also permitted him to travel abroad to specified countries, with the condition that he must undertake to appear before the SHO of the Chikkadpally police station as and when required.

He has been directed to inform the SHO of his travel schedule for each trip and provide details of his place of stay in the destination country until the charge sheet is filed. The remaining bail conditions remain unchanged, the court noted in its order dated January 10.

The court's decision followed a petition filed by the actor seeking relaxation of the bail conditions. Previously, while granting regular bail to Allu Arjun on January 3, the court had instructed him to appear before the investigating officer every Sunday between 10 am and 1 pm for two months or until the filing of the charge sheet, whichever is earlier. He was also barred from leaving the country without prior court permission.



Additionally, the court had directed the actor to cooperate with the inquiry and refrain from interfering with the ongoing investigation or influencing witnesses in any manner. Allu Arjun was arrested on December 13 in connection with the stampede case and released from jail on December 14 after the Telangana High Court granted him interim bail for four weeks, which ended on January 10.

The actor named Accused No. 11 in the case, subsequently filed a regular bail petition. A 35-year-old woman died, and her eight-year-old son was injured in a stampede on December 4 at the Sandhya Theatre in Hyderabad, as fans jostled to get a glimpse of the actor during the premiere of 'Pushpa 2'.

CM N Biren urges Naga leaders to help resolve ethnic conflict



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ IMPHAL

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Saturday requested the church, community and other leaders of the Naga community to take a greater role in resolving the ongoing ethnic conflict in the state.

Clashes between Kuki and Meitei communities have left over 250 people dead and thousands homeless since May 2023. The Nagas were not involved in this conflict. Addressing a programme at Maram in Naga majority Senapati district, Singh said "I want to appeal to the Naga communities that a third party is required to resolve the

current issues and for restoration of peace. For this, church and community leaders needs to take responsibilities and initiatives." All grievances and problems can be resolved under the Constitution and the laws of the Manipur government, he said. "Whatever happened has happened. As I said during my New Year's message, it's time to forget and forgive. We need to jointly walk on the path of peace and bring back the former Manipur. We need to jointly work together to resolve this crisis. "I seek the support of all those gathered today including elected members, former elected members, and church leaders to overcome this crisis," Singh said.

Juna Akhara expels Mahant over minor girl's induction as Sadhvi

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

In a shocking development just days before the Maha Kumbh 2025 begins, the Juna Akhara has expelled Mahant Kaushal Gauri for seven years after allegations surfaced that he accepted a 13-year-old girl from Agra as "daan" (donation) and initiated her as a Sadhvi (female ascetic).

The decision was taken on Friday during a meeting of the Akhara's top officials, held in the presence of the Ramta Panch. The girl, who had been seen in ascetic attire, was immediately sent back to her



family. The Maha Kumbh, starting on January 13 with the first holy dip on Paus Purnima, has already started drawing saints and devotees from across the

country. While the Akharas have settled into their camps, creating grand and regal setups, this disturbing incident has drawn widespread attention.

According to reports, Mahant Kaushal Gauri claimed that the minor girl, Rakhi, was given to him by her family as a "donation." He initiated her as a Sadhvi and introduced her in the Akhara's camp in religious attire. He had planned to formally initiate her into ascetic life during the Maha Kumbh by performing rituals to dedicate her to the religious flag. Furthermore, he announced

that, as per tradition, the girl would perform her own funeral rites (Pind Daan) while still alive. Kaushal Gauri had stated that the girl, now named "Sadhvi Gauri," would completely renounce worldly life and dedicate herself to asceticism. The incident has raised serious questions about the ethical practices of some religious traditions and the protection of minors in such settings. The leadership of the Juna Akhara acted swiftly to address the matter, expelling Kaushal Gauri and ensuring the girl was returned to her family.

BSF foils smuggling attempt by Bangladeshi nationals in West Bengal's Malda district

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

The Border Security Force (BSF) on Saturday said that its jawans thwarted a smuggling attempt by a group of Bangladeshis in West Bengal's Malda district. The incident occurred around 2.10 am at Border Outpost Nawada, under the 119th Battalion of the BSF's South Bengal Frontier.

BSF personnel observed a movement of 15-20 armed Bangladeshis approaching the



border. Several others were also spotted on the Indian side of

the fence, officials said. Despite being challenged by the

BSF, the smugglers advanced towards the fence. They used high-beam flashlights to blind the jawans.

The BSF initially fired two rounds in the air to disperse the smugglers, but the move proved to be ineffective.

"The smugglers then attacked the jawans with sharp weapons and sticks. In response, the BSF personnel fired two rounds at intervals in self-defence to halt the smuggling attempt," a BSF statement said. Reinforcements soon arrived,

causing the smugglers to flee. A subsequent search of the area resulted in the recovery of 572 bottles of a particular brand of cough syrup, a sharp weapon, and a high-beam flashlight. The BSF has not ruled out the possibility of smugglers injured in the firing.

In separate incidents in Murshidabad and Malda districts, the BSF foiled more smuggling and infiltration attempts at border outposts Nandanpur, Farjipara, and Harinathpur,

and Churiyantpur. BSF said it used stun grenades, pump action guns (PAG), and other weapons in self-defence to repel cattle smugglers and illegal intruders, leading to the seizure of illicit drugs, five cattle, and other contraband. The incidents and seizures were reported to the local police stations, and the confiscated items handed over to the appropriate authorities. A BSF South Bengal Frontier spokesperson said such attacks are a recurring challenge.

Lecture on 'One Nation One Election' to be held on January 18 at Mahakumbh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

A series of thought-provoking lectures on contemporary issues, along with discussions on religion, spirituality, and culture, are being organized at the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj. The Divya Prem Seva Mission from Haridwar will conduct a special lecture on 'One Nation One Election - In the Context of Economic Political Reform and Developed India' on January 18, with former President Ram Nath Kovind invited as the chief guest.



on January 12 will be on Swami Vivekananda Sanatan

Dharma ki Vaishvik Drishti. The second, scheduled for

January 17, will address "Bharat ki Gaurav Gatha Banam Atmaheena ki Bhavana" (India's Glorious Legacy vs. the Spirit of Inferiority). The third, on January 18, will cover "One Nation One Election - Arthik Rajnitik Sudhar evam Viksit Bharat ke Sandarbh Mein" (One Nation, One Election: Economic and Political Reforms in the Context of a Developed India). The fourth lecture, on January 20, will discuss "Vaishvik Aatankvad Samadhan - Bharatiya Sanskriti ke Paripekshya Mein" (Global Terrorism Solutions - Indian Cultural Perspectives). The fifth, on

January 25, will focus on "Bharat ki Akhandta - Bhogolik aur Rajnitik Chunautiyan" (India's Geographical and Political Challenges to Integrity). The sixth, on January 31, will explore "Laingik Samaanata evam Mahila Sashaktikaran - Bharatiya Sanskriti ke Paripekshya Mein" (Gender Equality and Women Empowerment: An Indian Cultural Perspective). The seventh and final lecture, on February 6, will delve into "Social Media par Nijtata aur Suraksha - Yuvaon ke Paripekshya Mein" (Privacy and Security on Social Media: Perspectives of the Youth).

Nine Naxalites, with ₹43 lakh bounty, surrender in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ RAIPUR

Nine hardcore Naxalites, allegedly involved in attacks on security forces and carrying a cumulative bounty of Rs 43 lakh, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Saturday, police said.

The cadres, including two women, turned themselves in before senior officials from the police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) here, citing disappointment with "hollow" and "inhuman" Maoist ideology and infighting within the outlawed outfit, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan said. He said the surrendered

Naxalites were also impressed by the state government's 'Niyad Nellanar' (your good village) scheme, which aims at facilitating development works in remote villages and stated that senior cadres were on backfoot with the increasing pressure of security forces and setting up of police camps in interior areas.

The official said Ransai alias Oyam Buska (34), the commander of platoon no 24 Reserve of Maoists, and Pradip alias Ravva Rakesh (20), a member under a company wing of PLGA battalion no. 1, were carrying a reward of Rs 8 lakh each. He said four other cadres carried a reward of Rs 5 lakh,

a woman Naxalite carried a reward of Rs 3 lakh, and two others, including a woman, carried a bounty of Rs 2 lakh each.

Chavan said Ransai was allegedly involved in attacks, including the Jhara Ghati ambush in Narayanpur district in 2007, wherein seven policemen were killed; the 2007 Ranibodli (Bijapur district) attack, in which 55 security personnel died; the 2017 ambush in Burkapal (Sukma), where 25 CRPF personnel were killed and the 2020 Minpa ambush (Sukma) that killed 17 security personnel. The other surrendered cadres were also involved in multiple attacks on security forces, he said.

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...

'I would have beaten Trump,' says Biden

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 against 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.

don himself asserting that he has done nothing wrong. At the same time, he might be pardoning several others before he demits the office on January 20, he indicated.

"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, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19, invites Expression of Interest (EOI) through e-Tendering process from NSDC approved Training Partners or Govt. Institution...

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.

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

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.



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.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS CHANGE OF NAME

I, Batheri 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 Batheri Devi to Bhatari, vide affidavit dated 11/01/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

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.

PUBLIC NOTICE Be it known to all that, Shivraj Kanungo s/o Late Dr. Kissen Kanungo R/o- 241-A, Aerodrome Area, AT-Palaspali, Post Aerodrome Area, Bhubaneswar, Khordha, Odisha-751020, I am the allottee/legal owner of Flat No.27-B, FF, SFS Cat-II, with Scooter Garage in Pkt-A, Sukhdev Vihar, Delhi, FILE NO F-78(346)82/SFS/SV/II which is allotted by the DDA. I have lost the Original ALLOTMENT LETTER, POSSESSION LETTER, NOCFOR WATER AND ELECTRIC CONNECTION, SITE POSSESSION SLIP, INVENTORY of the above Flat. FIR/NCR to this effect has lodged in P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi vide LR No.2484274/2025 Dated 11-01-2025. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may get in contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9937162130 with in 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE This is to inform to the public at large that Sh. Mohit Varshney is the Owner of the Flat No. 603, Block-C, on 8th floor, in the Exotica Eastern Court, P.O. No. 06, Sector-1, Crossing, Gurgaon, Haryana, India. I am the legal owner of the said flat and the respective Purchaser/s are availing loan facility against the mortgage of the aforementioned Property with State Bank of India, RAJCP Karkardoma, Delhi by mortgaging all Original Documents. In the entire chain of documents, the Original Allotment Letter dated 25.02.2012 and Original Possession Letter both issued by Exotica Developers are missing hence not traceable. Therefore, any person having any type of claim right/interest over the said property or Flat may inform in writing or contact at the address mentioned below about his/her objections within 15 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc. or any claim. Navneet, Tripathi, Advocate (SC), Sector-1, Gurgaon, Haryana. Contact: 9810966717, Indrapuram, Gurgaon, Mob No. 9698906717

PUBLIC NOTICE This is to inform the general public that Smt. Alka Suri is the Owner of Built-Up Shop No. 1 on Ground Floor without roof area measuring 8 x 5.5 x 14.220 Sq. Mtrs. Built-Up property bearing No. WZ-537, out of Kharsa No. 1575, situated at Old Lal Dora of 1908/9, village 'Inar', New Delhi - 110018. She is in possession through legal. Sale Deed dated 30.12.2015 as doc. no. 26505 executed by Smt. Kiran in favour of Mrs. Alka Suri in respect of the said property.

Public Notice It is notified to the general public that Anara Homes had allotted the Unit No. J-1105 in Tower-J in the residential project named 'Anara Homes' situated at Plot No. G1-03, Sector-15, Block-B, Capital Park, District Gurgaon, Haryana. (UP) by M/s APV Realty Ltd. (hereinafter Company). The allotment letter dated 23.10.2010 (1) Mrs. Sushma Gulati W/o Vijay Kumar Gulati (2) Gaurav Gulati S/o Vijay Kumar Gulati. (hereinafter 'Allottees') R/o A-524, Kamla Nagar, Agra, Uttar Pradesh-282004. Gaurav Gulati (Son) has informed the below mentioned company that Mrs. Sushma Gulati (Mother) had expired on 17.01.2018. Vijay Kumar Gulati (Father), Mrs. Nidhi Kasturia (Daughter) & Gaurav Gulati (Son), are the legal heirs of the deceased allottee and there is no other legal heir. They have no objection to transfer the flat/unit in the name of Gaurav Gulati. In this regard, Gaurav Gulati has requested through affidavit that the allotment letter/sale deed of the above unit be executed and registered in the name of Gaurav Gulati. Therefore, it is notified to the general public that if any person has any objection in this regard, then he should personally appear at the mentioned below address on any working day between 11:00 am to 5:00 pm within 15 (fifteen) days from the date of publication of this public notice and register his objection in writing on the basis of certificates and evidence, otherwise it will be understood that no person has any objection and the allotment letter/sale deed of the above unit will be registered in the name of Gaurav Gulati. By APV Realty Ltd. 801, 802, 8/Floor Iconic Corentium Sector-62, Noida-201301

AXIS BANK LTD. PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION OF PLEDGED ASSETS BEING GOLD ORNAMENTS THE BORROWERS, IN SPECIFIC AND THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT PUBLIC AUCTION OF THE GOLD ORNAMENTS PLEDGED IN THE BELOW ACCOUNTS IS PROPOSED TO BE CONDUCTED BY THE AXIS BANK AT THE BELOW MENTIONED BRANCH. THE BELOW MENTIONED BORROWERS HAS AVAILED THE CREDIT FACILITY FROM THE AXIS BANK LIMITED AGAINST THE PLEDGE OF GOLD ORNAMENTS ("GOLD LOAN FACILITY") IN FAVOUR OF THE BANK TOWARDS THE SECURITY. THE DEMAND NOTICES WERE ISSUED TO THE BORROWERS/GUARANTORS CALLING UP THE BORROWERS/GUARANTORS TO PAY THEIR OUTSTANDING AMOUNT TOWARDS THE GOLD LOAN FACILITY. AS THE BORROWERS/GUARANTORS HAVE FAILED TO REPAY THE OUTSTANDING LOAN AMOUNT, THE BANK IS CONSTRAINED TO INVOLVE THE PLEDGE AND PROPOSED TO CONDUCT AN E-AUCTION SALE OF PLEDGED GOLD ORNAMENTS MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED IN SCHEDULE OF PROPERTY HEREUNDER ON 22.01.2025 AT 12.30 PM TO 03.30 PM ON "AS IN WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS", "WHATSOEVER THERE IS" AND "NO RECOURSE BASIS".

PUBLIC NOTICE It is to inform to 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, Ghaziabad, 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 20.11.2004. 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 (right/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, lien etc. or any claim. Navneet, Tripathi, Advocate (SC), Sector-1, Gurgaon, Haryana. Contact: 9810966717, Indrapuram, Gurgaon, Mob No. 9698906717

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 her 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/ entity 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 Bhawan, 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/180/2024 08-01-2025 TDBI BANK Versus NEHA JAIN To: (C0 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 14/7/2023 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 (1st realization and costs of Rs 13000 (Rupees Thirteen Thousands Only) has become due against you (Jointly and severally) Fully/Limited. 1. You are hereby directed to pay the above sum within 15 days of the receipt of the notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 and Rules there under. 2. You are hereby ordered to declare on an affidavit the particulars of your assets on or before the next date of hearing. 3. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 14/01/2025 at 10:30 a.m. for further proceedings. 4. In addition to the sum aforesaid, you will also be liable to pay: (a) Such interests as is payable for the period commencing immediately after this notice of the certificate of execution proceedings. (b) All costs, charges and expenses incurred in respect of the service of this notice and warrants and other processes and all other proceedings taken for recovering the amount due. Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal, on this date: 08/01/2025 Sd/- Recovery Officer DEBITS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL DELHI (DRT 1)

Panama Canal administrator rejects Trump's assertions of Chinese meddling

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. In an interview with The Associated Press, Ricarue Vásquez denied Trump's claims that China was controlling the canal's operations, and said making exceptions to current rules concerning its operation would lead to "chaos."

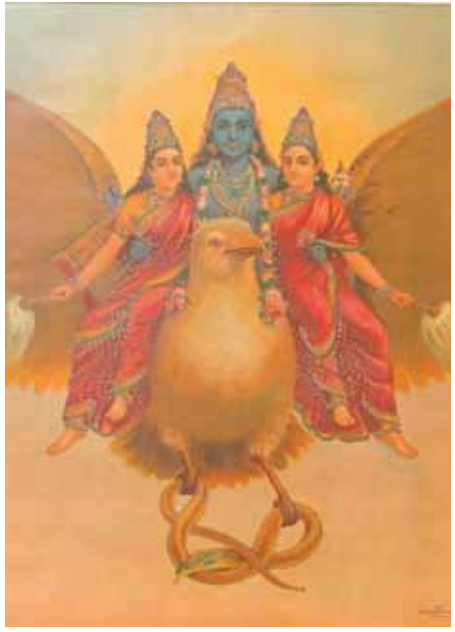
this is to maintain the established rules." Requests for exceptions are routinely rejected, because the process is clear and there mustn't be arbitrary variations, he said. The only exception in the neutrality treaty is for American warships, which receive expedited passage. Some 70% of the sea traffic 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."

Regarding the fees for using the canal, Vasquez said a planned series of increases had concluded with one this month. Any additional increases would be considered in the first half of the year to give clients certainty in their planning and would go through a public comment process, he said. "There's no discrimination in the fees," he said. "The price rules are uniform for absolutely all those who transit the canal and clearly defined." The canal depends on reservoirs to operate its locks and was heavily affected by drought during the past two years that forced it to substantially reduce the number of daily slots for crossing ships. With fewer ships using the canal each day, administrators increased the fees that are charged all shippers for reserving a slot. The canal bisects Panama, running 51 miles end to end. It allows ships to avoid the longer and costlier trip around Cape Horn at the tip of South America.



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 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**

“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

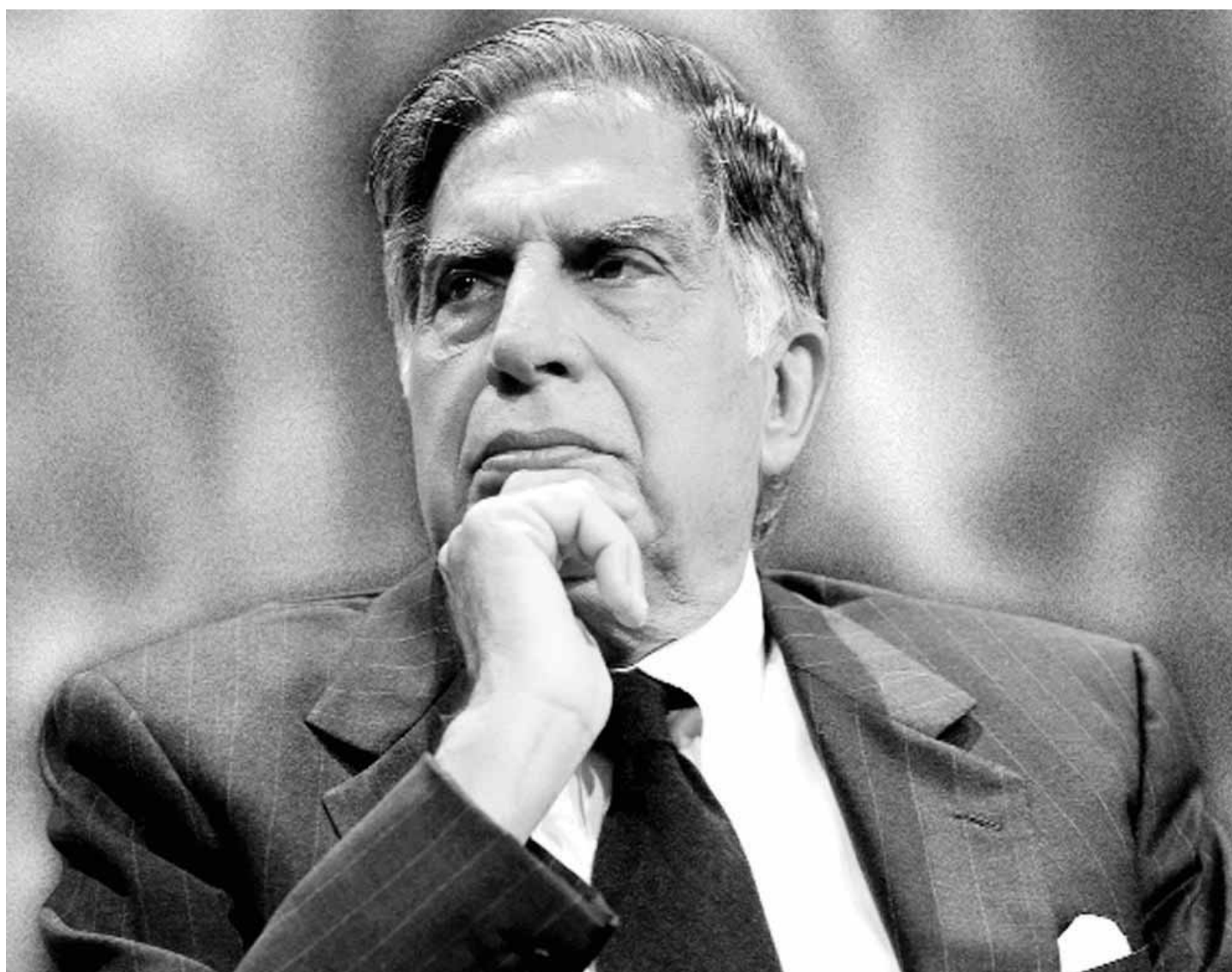
Pericles, the monumental Greek politician and statesman during the Golden Age of Athens in his historic Funeral Oration delivered in 431 BC (that is said to have influenced President Abraham Lincoln’s famous Gettysburg Address on 19th November, 1863!), said, “To famous men all the earth is a sepulchre: 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 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 Jamshepur 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



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.”



MAYFAIR SPRING VALLEY (GUWAHATI, ASSAM)

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.



VIVANTA MEGHALAYA (SHILLONG, MEGHALAYA)

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.

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.

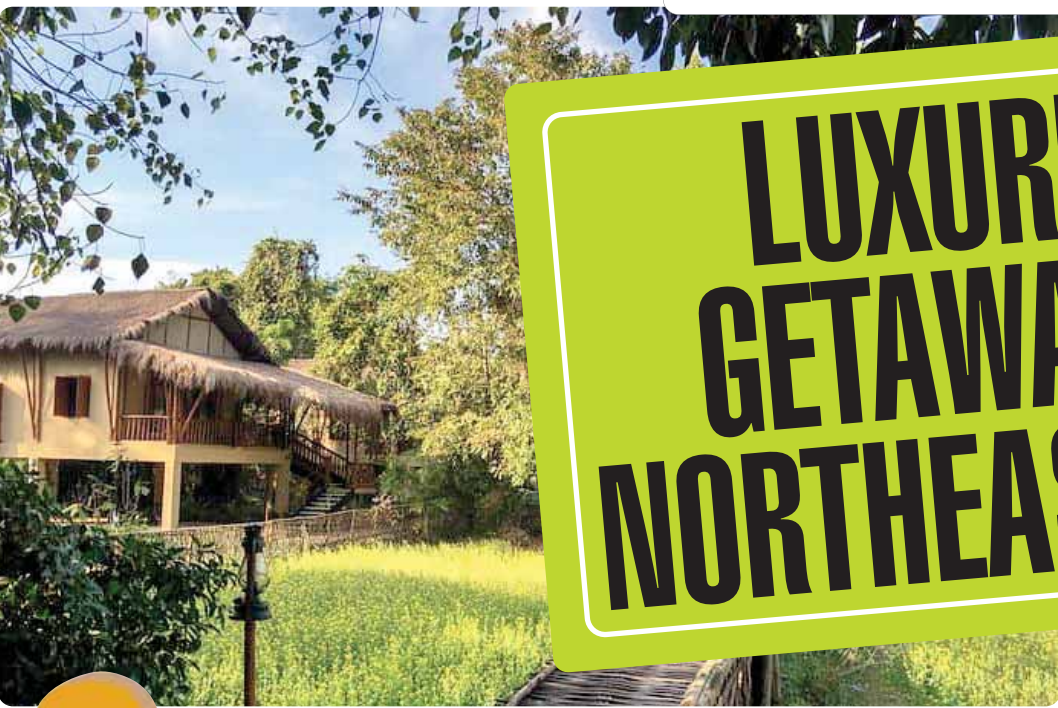


HOTEL CLASSIC GRANDE (IMPHAL, MANIPUR)

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 Jannabhoomi 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.

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week brings multiple reasons for joy, with financial gains flowing from various channels. Your earnings are likely to be satisfying, though a busy schedule may cause some mental strain. Work-related travel is also on the horizon. Midweek may bring sudden, unforeseen shifts, urging you to release any unhealthy emotional ties to make space for meaningful growth and deeper fulfillment. As the week progresses, you may experience a strong urge for material possessions, which could cloud your judgment. This period isn't favorable for starting new ventures, as impulsive decisions could lead to setbacks. Maintaining a positive mindset may feel challenging, but staying grounded and focused will help you avoid falling into a cycle of negativity and keep you aligned with your true goals.

Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Amber
Lucky day Saturday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

You will feel a deep sense of blessings and divine favor surrounding you. This is a period of joy, renewal, and healing, where you take center stage in your personal and professional life. Inner harmony and well-being will align, enhancing your confidence and reputation. Newfound inspiration and courage will lead you to embrace positive changes, marking the conclusion of old chapters. There may be shifts in your perspectives or lifestyle choices, ushering in fresh beginnings. Whether it's a career opportunity, personal goal, or significant purchase, exciting developments await. The latter part of the week promises familial joy and celebrations. Partnerships, whether romantic, professional, or contractual, may also flourish. A wave of positivity will bring emotional and spiritual fulfillment, leaving you content and energized for the future ahead.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Golden
Lucky day Tuesday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week emphasizes inner resilience and emotional balance. It's about harnessing your inner power with grace and staying composed amidst challenges. Strength comes from self-control and the courage to see through illusions, enabling you to navigate situations with clarity. Guidance may come from a wise and insightful individual, likely someone you admire for their wisdom and intuition. Their perspective may inspire you to make significant life decisions. This period serves as a reminder to awaken spiritually—practice mindfulness, meditate, and reconnect with your higher purpose. Focus on grounding yourself through meaningful rituals. It's essential to move beyond fantasies and wishful thinking, as they can distract you from your true path. Embrace the present with focus and determination to make lasting progress.

Lucky number 22 | Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Wednesday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week presents an excellent opportunity to channel your innate creativity into financial growth. You possess a remarkable ability to transform your aspirations into reality through focused efforts. Decisions made during this time are likely to bring favorable outcomes. Your communication skills are at their peak, allowing you to express your thoughts with clarity and make a lasting impression on others. Midweek may bring some delays and restrictions, but your resilience and unwavering determination will keep you moving toward success. A significant message or opportunity from afar may arrive, bringing new prospects. By the end of the week, you are likely to experience a sense of financial stability and emotional fulfillment. Trust in your ability to overcome challenges and embrace the positive outcomes headed your way.

Lucky number 21 | Lucky colour Black
Lucky day Wednesday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

The week begins with firm decisions concerning both home and work matters. You exhibit resilience and face life's challenges with unwavering strength. Potential disagreements or ego clashes may arise, requiring patience and wisdom for resolution. It's a time to reconsider outdated perspectives and embrace necessary changes, especially regarding career, family, or relationships. You may experience emotional stress or health concerns, emphasizing the need for mental balance and spiritual reflection. A sense of well-being and financial improvements uplift your mood. You'll feel inspired to indulge in life's comforts and display generosity toward those in need. This period encourages finding harmony between ambition and compassion, fostering both personal success and inner fulfillment.

Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour White
Lucky day Sunday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

The week ahead brings a whirlwind of activity across multiple aspects of life, requiring your focus and commitment. Domestic matters may take center stage initially, with important decisions shaping your personal environment. Romantic prospects may lead to significant developments for singles. Travel could feature mid-week, while professional ambitions drive you to work tirelessly, refining your expertise to meet your aspirations. Family news related to a new addition may arise, adding joy to the atmosphere. As the week concludes, the rewards of your dedication become evident, with promising financial gains enhancing your sense of stability. Job seekers may receive a lucrative offer that aligns with their goals. Overall, this period invites you to celebrate progress and embrace contentment as efforts bear fruit.

Lucky number 17 | Lucky colour Pine
Lucky day Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week promises plenty of reasons for joy and fulfillment. A wave of optimism surrounds you, bringing a sense of ease and progress in your pursuits. Your natural charm and positive outlook uplift those around you, making you a source of inspiration. Midweek may present some emotional challenges, causing momentary unrest. However, this phase is fleeting, and soon you will feel the divine blessings restoring your inner peace and balance. Your hard work will yield visible results, and you'll be pleasantly surprised at how far you've come. The goals you've been working toward will show signs of accomplishment, bringing recognition and rewarding opportunities your way. There is also a potential for significant progress in expanding your horizons, possibly with meaningful connections that elevate your professional growth.

Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Beige
Lucky day Monday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

The week unfolds with a surge of motivation and creativity. You feel inspired and energized, ready to embrace new beginnings and meaningful pursuits. A fresh spark propels you toward personal and professional growth, allowing you to manage your commitments with ease and confidence. Midweek brings moments of joy and togetherness, as celebrations and achievements within the family create a harmonious atmosphere. Milestones such as career advancements, personal projects, or family accomplishments bring pride and excitement. The positive energy around you uplifts your spirit, making each moment more enjoyable. As the week concludes, your resilience and dedication stand out, serving as a source of inspiration for others. Your efforts pave the way for well-deserved success, reinforcing your belief in your ability to overcome challenges and achieve your goals.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Jade
Lucky day Monday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week will keep you occupied with various aspects of life, requiring your full focus and dedication. Domestic matters may take priority at the start, and significant life events could unfold for some, bringing important commitments. Travel plans may emerge midweek. Professionally, your determination to excel will drive you to work tirelessly toward your ambitions. There is also a possibility of a joyful addition to the family. By the week's end, your efforts will bear fruitful results, with financial gains bringing relief and security. Those seeking career opportunities may receive an offer that aligns with their expectations, presenting a promising future. Overall, the week concludes with a sense of achievement and contentment, offering moments of joy and celebration.

Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Tuesday



CANCER June 21-July 22

Progress may seem gradual, but your perseverance will lead to significant accomplishments. By channeling your inner strength, you'll complete your tasks efficiently and gain recognition for your dedication. Your versatility will shine, so leverage your skills to the fullest. Your determination will inspire those around you, and your ability to communicate effectively will earn admiration and support from both peers and mentors. As the week concludes, a surge of creativity will illuminate your ideas, boosting your productivity. Your passion for life will be contagious, enhancing both your personal and professional experiences. Embrace this period as an opportunity to live fully, enjoy your journey, and create moments of bliss that uplift your spirit and those around you.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Lilac
Lucky day Thursday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

You have been putting in immense effort in various areas, striving for progress, but the outcomes may feel delayed. Your dedication and determination are undeniable, though financial gains might appear slow this week. However, do not lose hope—better prospects are on the horizon as the days advance, bringing the potential for significant achievements. Guidance and encouragement from elders or mentors will prove invaluable as they genuinely wish to see you excel. Trust that your hard work will pay off at the right time. The key this week is to embrace patience and trust in your journey. Remember, a solid foundation leads to lasting success. You're closer to your breakthrough than you think, and perseverance will turn your aspirations into long-term accomplishments.

Lucky number 19 | Lucky colour Opal
Lucky day Friday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week promises financial growth and material comfort, bringing a sense of stability to your life. Alongside these gains, you may feel drawn towards spiritual practices such as meditation and mindful breathing, finding solace in moments of inner peace. You might also feel inclined to host or participate in religious ceremonies at home, seeking harmony and positivity. However, midweek could bring some emotional turbulence, particularly in your personal relationships. Misunderstandings with your partner could lead to feelings of disconnection. It's important to reflect on your desires and clarify your priorities to regain control. Guard against a pessimistic mindset, as negative thinking may cloud your perspective. Instead of dwelling on what's lacking, focus on what you've achieved and confront challenges with resilience and courage.

Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Aqua
Lucky day Thursday

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The Science of Mindfulness

THE LIFE GUIDANCE



Seerat Kaur Marwaha

We are perpetually in pursuit of the next thrill of happiness. Perhaps it's a luxurious Bentley, an exclusive beach getaway, or that coveted Birkin bag. These indulgences certainly light up our lives for a moment. But then, like clockwork, the novelty wears off. The stresses of life take over, and we find ourselves once again in the relentless pursuit of the next object of happiness. In the 1970s, Richard Easterlin observed that an increase in income over time did not lead to a long-term increase in happiness. This paradox is often referred to as the Easterlin Paradox—remains a cornerstone in discussions about material wealth and its limited capacity to deliver sustained joy. While material comforts undoubtedly bring fleeting satisfaction, they fall short of providing the enduring happiness we so desperately seek. Moreover, your happiness level is genetically influenced. If your mother isn't a happy person, chances are you aren't either. A study by Lucas, Clark, et al. in 2003 found that major life events such as marriage, divorce, or widowhood brought temporary changes in happiness, but most people returned to their baseline levels within a few years. This gave rise to the Set Point Theory, which explains that individuals' happiness levels are remarkably stable over time. Within our brains, there's a division of duties: the 'Stress Brain,' tackling worries and tensions, and the 'Happy Brain,'

spreading joy and fostering connections. Genetically happier individuals show higher activity in the 'Happy Brain' and lower activity in the 'Stress Brain,' shaping their positive outlook on life. So, are those not genetically predisposed to higher happiness levels doomed to a negative state of mind? Not at all! Our brains have an amazing ability to reorganize themselves by forming new neural connections throughout our lives—a process called neuroplasticity. This dynamic ability of the brain means that our mental state is not set in stone, offering hope to those who wish to elevate their happiness levels. One proven way to increase activity in the happy brain and reduce activity in the stress brain, thus raising the happiness baseline, is consistent meditation (Fredrickson et al., 2008). Beyond altering neural activity, meditation helps to cultivate a deeper sense of awareness, allowing us to separate fleeting desires from what genuinely brings contentment. Our minds carry deep-seated traumas from childhood, parental influences, past relationships, and more. These emotional scars often go unnoticed or unaddressed, yet they dictate much of our behaviour. Rather than addressing these issues, we often suppress them and seek distraction in new pursuits. However, as Bessel van der Kolk explains in 'The Body Keeps the Score,' buried trauma doesn't disappear; it can lead to physical ailments, mental health challenges, addictions, relationship



difficulties, and self-esteem issues. Meditation acts as a tool for healing and unwinding old negative patterns and traumas. It provides a safe space to clear emotions of sadness, fear and stress held in the body for weeks, years or even since childhood. In doing so, it allows the mind to focus and work through these issues. Consider this: meditating for just 20 minutes every day for a year accumulates 7.3k minutes of dedicated self-care and introspection. Over the years, this consistent practice allows significant time for the mind to process and resolve deep-seated issues. This builds a more resilient, confident, and calm version of ourselves, better equipped to navigate life's inevitable challenges. Supporting this, research by Davidson et

al. (2003) found that an 8-week mindfulness meditation program significantly improved emotional regulation and immune function, demonstrating meditation's profound impact on both mental and physical health. The ripple effects of this practice can extend far beyond the individual, improving relationships, decision-making, and even workplace productivity. Meditation doesn't make you happy. Rather, it alleviates what blocks you from finding and appreciating happiness. This distinction is crucial. Happiness isn't something you attain—it's something you uncover once you remove the mental and emotional clutter. The key, however, lies in consistency. Just as you cannot achieve a sculpted physique by working out strenuously for four hours once a month, you cannot see significant results by meditating for two hours sporadically. A few minutes of daily practice, however, can profoundly impact your well-being. The benefits of mindfulness and meditation go beyond personal happiness. Communities practicing mindfulness often report lower crime rates and greater social cohesion. Families that meditate together strengthen their bonds, developing empathy and understanding for each other's perspectives. Imagine the collective impact if more people embraced mindfulness as a daily practice—it could transform societies, one individual at a time. Furthermore, meditation enhances our

ability to live in the present moment. In a world constantly pulling us in a hundred different directions—emails, deadlines, social obligations, and endless to-do lists—it is easy to lose sight of what truly matters. Mindfulness brings us back to the now, allowing us to savour the small joys we often overlook: the warmth of a morning sunbeam, the taste of a perfectly brewed cup of tea, or the laughter of a loved one. Another compelling aspect of meditation is its accessibility. Unlike other tools for self-improvement, meditation requires no special equipment, expensive memberships, or even a lot of time. It is universally available, adaptable to any lifestyle, and backed by centuries of practice across cultures. Whether through guided meditations, breathing exercises, or silent self-reflection, there is a form of meditation suitable for everyone. In conclusion, as Lao Tzu, an ancient Chinese philosopher, said, "To a mind that is still, the whole universe surrenders." Meditation may not provide the instant gratification of a material purchase or the thrill of a vacation, but it offers something far more valuable: a pathway to inner peace, resilience, and enduring happiness. By embracing mindfulness and making it a consistent part of our lives, we can transform not only our personal well-being but also contribute to a more compassionate and harmonious world. — She is a Life Coach and Founder of Soulful Wellness

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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 threadbare 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.

The back-to-back series defeats against New Zealand (home) and Australia (away) and the diminishing returns with the bat have put Kohli and Rohit under scanner.

The PTI has learned that the powers that be will discuss in detail the future plan — whether to activate the transition switch from next month's Champions Trophy or wait for the cycle to end with the ICC marquee event.

Though it's likely that the senior batters will get another chance to redeem themselves at the ODI Champions Trophy, a format in which they have always excelled.

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.

Both Kohli and Rohit endured different fortunes too in the series against Sri Lanka.

While Kohli amassed 24, 14 and 20 in Colombo, Rohit walked away with scores of 58, 64 and 35 against the Lankans.

But overall, Kohli has been a champion performer in 50-overs, his staple format and a good outing in the Champions Trophy could bring him, and Rohit too, back into a good frame of mind.

However, their Test future is different. The next



assignment is an away five-match series against England, and the mandarins will certainly assess the drying runs from Kohli and Rohit in the traditional format.

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.

Those performances will certainly be mooted thoroughly while seeking Gambhir's views on their desire to continue playing the longest version of the sport.

Similarly, it is possible that the performance of the Gambhir-led coaching staff too could be assayed, and asked about their vision to handle the transition period without any more hiccups.

Champions Trophy team selection

Apart from the review meeting, the selectors, led by Agarkar, will also convene on Saturday evening to pick the Indian squad for the Champions Trophy.

India will play all its matches in the UAE and will open the campaign with a match against Bangladesh on 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.

They will assess the fitness level of star pacer Jasprit Bumrah, who is recuperating from back spasms, and veteran fast bowler Mohammed Shami.

Shami, who has not played since the ODI World Cup 2023 because of an ankle surgery, is likely to get a green signal from BCCI's Centre of Excellence physics.

Shami has played in the Ranji Trophy, Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and Vijay Hazare Trophy matches recently for Bengal to underline his increasing fitness levels and match readiness.

The other interesting point will be to see whether Yashasvi Jaiswal will get the nod after doing well in 19 Tests and 23 T20I since making his debut in mid

2023. Team for England T20Is, 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.

There could not be many surprises as the team that did duty in South Africa late last year could be picked up again for the T20Is.

Shami could be included in the ODIs depending on the fitness certificate from CoE, which is understood to be positive though it will be assessed deeply before taking a final decision.

Bumrah and fellow pacer Akash Deep, who will also be in CoE in Bengaluru for recovery from a back niggle, will miss the white ball series against England.

Jaiswal will certainly feature at least one of the squads though, along with Washington Sundar and Nitish Kumar Reddy, who impressed everyone with some gutsy outings Down Under.



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