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EU backs Ukraine after Trump debacle



President Donald Trumps meets Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Ukraine's European partners as well as other global leaders rallied behind President Volodymyr Zelenskyy while the White House touted support for President Donald Trump's "American First strength" after a remarkable showdown in the Oval Office between the two leaders. Zelenskyy departed the White House on Friday after an unprecedented verbal clash in the Oval Office between him and Trump and Vice President JD Vance.

The heated exchange between Trump and Zelenskyy and the resulting outpouring of support for the Ukrainian leader highlighted the deep fissures that have emerged between America and Europe over Ukraine. Zelenskyy's timeline on X was filled with messages of support from European allies and other countries from across the world. His response to all the messages was "Thank you for your support." President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, who was in India on Friday for an

official visit, said in a post on X, "Your dignity honours the bravery of the Ukrainian people. Be strong, be brave, be fearless. You are never alone, dear President @ZelenskyyUa. We will continue working with you for a just and lasting peace." French President Emmanuel Macron, who met Trump just this past Monday, said in a post on X that there is an aggressor: Russia. "There is a victim: Ukraine. We were right to help Ukraine and sanction Russia three years ago-and to keep doing so. By "we," I mean the Americans, the Europeans, the Canadians, the

Japanese, and many others," Macron said. "Thank you to all who have helped and continue to do so. And respect to those who have been fighting since the beginning because they are fighting for their dignity, their independence, their children, and the security of Europe," Macron said. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, a close Trump ally, she would call for an EU-US summit to get diplomacy back on track. "What is needed is an immediate summit between the United States, European states, and allies to talk frankly about how we intend to deal with the great challenges of today, starting with Ukraine, which together we have defended in recent years," she said in a statement. Friedrich Merz, Germany's likely next chancellor, wrote on X, "Dear Volodymyr @zelenskyyua, we stand with #Ukraine in good and in testing times. We must never confuse aggressor and victim in this terrible war." Prime Minister of Estonia Kristen Michal said his country stands united with Zelenskyy and Ukraine in its fight for freedom. "Always. Because it is right, not easy," Michal said. The White House put out a statement 'Support Pours in for President Trump, VP Vance's America First Strength' and added that Trump and Vance "made clear to the world that the United States will not be taken advantage of - a sentiment echoed by the cabinet and members of Congress from across the country." The statement carried quotes from several lawmakers, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem. "Thank you @POTUS for standing up for America in a way that no President has ever had the courage to do before. Thank you for putting America First. America is with you!", Rubio, who was seated next to Vance in the Oval Office during the bilateral meeting with Zelenskyy as the talks unravelled, said.

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Avalanche rescue: 50 BRO workers saved, four dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ DEHRADUN/NEW DELHI

War footing rescue operations helped the Indian Army rescue 50 workers out of snow brought in by an avalanche at a Border Roads Organisation (BRO) camp in the high-altitude Mana village in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, but unfortunately four of them died on Saturday. Six helicopters, including three of the Indian Army Aviation, two of the Indian Air Force and one civil copter hired by the Army, were engaged in the rescue operations, an Army spokesperson said. Thirty-three were rescued by Friday night. Avalanche hit the BRO camp between 5:30 am and 6 am on Friday, burying 55 workers inside eight containers and a shed, according to the Army. "Fifty labourers have been rescued out of which, four unfortunately, four injured have been confirmed as fatal casualties while the search for the remaining five is underway," the Army spokesperson said. The injured were being prioritised for evacuation, he said. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami conducted an aerial survey of the affected area and directed officials to speed up the rescue operation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Dhami and assured him of full support. District Disaster Management Officer NK Joshi said Army and Indo-Tibetan Border



Rescue operation underway after several labourers got trapped under snow following an avalanche in Mana area of Chamoli district, Uttarakhand

Police (ITBP) personnel based in Mana resumed the rescue operation in the morning. According to the spokesperson, Lt Gen Anindya Sengupta GOC-in C Central Command and Lt Gen DG Mishra GOC Uttar Bharat area have reached the avalanche site to monitor the rescue operations. Lt Gen Sengupta said movement by road is impossible since it is clogged with snow. The Badrinath-Joshimath highway is blocked at 15-20 places, he said. There were eight containers at the BRO camp, of which five have been traced while three are missing. A large number of the labourers rescued so far were found in the five containers, he said. Avalanches, common enough in winter in Badrinath and Mana valley, become more likely to occur between January and March after fresh snowfall.

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Avalanche strikes Jammu

PNS ■ JAMMU

An avalanche struck the Kishtwar district on Thursday evening. Officials said that the situation remains normal. No loss of life or property has been reported. "There has been no loss of life or damage to property in the avalanche. Everyone has been accounted for and none is missing," a police official said. All the three top tourist destinations in Kashmir including the ski resort of Gulmarg, Sonamarg and Pahalgam are at present covered with a thick blanket of snow after the recent snowfall. The tourist destinations are presenting a view of winter wonderland, attracting a large number of tourists.

WEATHER

LUCKNOW
MAX 29.1°C(+1.0)
MIN 19.4°C(+6.6)

India to remain fastest growing economy: IMF

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Multilateral financing Agency International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said that India will retain its position as the fastest-growing major economy by clocking a GDP growth of 6.5 per cent in 2025-26, on the back of robust private investment and macroeconomic stability. India's strong economic performance, the IMF said, provides an opportunity for the country to advance critical and challenging structural reforms to realise the ambition of becoming an advanced economy by 2047. "Real GDP is expected to grow at 6.5 per cent in 2024-25 and 2025-26. According to the estimate released by the Indian government, the country's economy is expected to clock a growth rate of 6.5 per cent during 2024-25. "Headline inflation is expected to converge to target as food price shocks wane," the IMF said after Article IV consultations with India. The IMF statement also underlined the need for deeper implementation of structural reforms to boost private investment and employment, and push growth. "...Comprehensive structural reforms are crucial to create high-quality jobs, invigorate investment, and unleash higher potential growth. Efforts should focus on implementing labour market reforms, strengthening human capital, and supporting greater participation of women in the labour force," it added. Boosting private investment and FDI, the IMF statement said, was vital and would require stable policy frameworks, greater ease of doing business, governance reforms, and increased trade integration.

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Delhi snaps fuel for aged vehicles

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a move to check vehicle pollution, the BJP-led Delhi government announced on Saturday that vehicles older than 15 years will no longer be allowed to refuel at petrol pumps in the Capital after March 31. Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa announced on Saturday the Delhi government will stop providing petrol to vehicles older than 15 years at fuel stations across the city after March 31. This comes after a high level meeting with officials of environment department to discuss measures to combat air pollution in the national Capital. Sirsa announced anti-pollution measures saying the government is taking stringent steps to curb vehicular emissions and pollution. Besides, he also announced that all high-rise buildings, hotels, and commercial complexes in the capital must install anti-smog guns to curb air pollution levels. "We are installing gadgets at petrol pumps which will identify vehicles older than 15 years, and no fuel will be provided to them," Sirsa said after the meeting. He added that the Delhi government would inform the Union Ministry of Petroleum about this decision. Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) already enforce a policy prohibiting diesel vehicles older than 10 years and petrol vehicles older than 15 years from operating on the roads. A 2021 directive reinforced this rule, mandating that violators found after January 1, 2022, would have their vehicles impounded and sent to scrap yards. The meeting, which went on for over three hours, was called to discuss only issues related to air pollution. Petrol vehicles over the age of 15 and diesel vehicles over the age of 10 years have not been allowed to run in the city for the past several years. These vehicles can be sold in other

states after procuring No-Objection Certificates. The national Capital has more than 425 petrol-diesel stations. According to rough estimates, there are around 55 Lakh overage vehicles, 66 per cent of which are two-wheelers and 54 per cent four-wheelers, the officer said. The government also plans to phase out nearly 90 per cent of CNG-driven public transport buses in Delhi by December 2025, replacing them with electric buses to promote cleaner and more sustainable transport. Giving more details about the implementation of new rules, the officer said many fuel stations in Delhi have already installed AI-enabled cameras to check violations of pollution under control (PUC) certificate rules. "These cameras currently detect vehicles which do not have PUC certificate and the fuel pump staff deny fuel to such vehicles. We can also use these AI-enabled cameras to detect the age of particular vehicles. For this, we need to upgrade our system," the officer added. He said the fuel pumps which currently do not have such devices will have them installed soon. Moreover, the Delhi government will deploy teams to identify overage vehicles and ensure they are either prevented from entering the city or removed if already present. Delhi Petrol Dealers Association President Nischal Singhania welcomed the announcement on fuel restrictions. "Vehicles older than 15 years are already banned by the Supreme Court; they can't ply in Delhi. We already have systems where we capture the number plates of vehicles, and the system was used only to give alerts to customers who don't have a PUC setup. I think the same system can be used to capture the number of vehicles which are 15 years old," Singhania added.

Continued on page 5

HM for free access to citizens in Manipur



Union Home Minister Amit Shah chairs a meeting to review security situation in Manipur in New Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday directed security forces to ensure free movement of people on all routes in Manipur from March 8 and surrender of arms from rebel outfits. He also called for strict action against those creating obstructions. Home Minister was chairing a meeting, first time after the imposition of President's rule to review the security situation of Manipur, which has been witnessing ethnic violence since May 2023. Over 250 people have lost their lives in the violence. The Home Minister directed that free movement of people should be ensured on all roads of Manipur from March 8,

according to an official statement. He also said that strict action should be taken against those creating obstructions on the roads. Officials said Shah took stock of the security situation in Manipur and a detailed briefing was given on the overall law and order situation in the State. Shah directed that the fencing work on both sides of the designated entry points along Manipur's international border should be completed at the earliest. The Home Minister said to make Manipur drug-free, the entire network involved in the drug trade should be dismantled. Those who attended the meeting included Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, Union Home Secretary Govind

Mohan, Director of Intelligence Bureau Tapan Deka, Deputy Chief of Army Staff and Commander of the Army's Eastern Command among others. President's rule was imposed in Manipur on February 13 after N Biren Singh resigned as Chief Minister. The State Assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation. The security review was held after the February 20 ultimatum given by the Governor to everyone holding illegal and looted arms to surrender. During the seven-day period, more than 300 weapons were surrendered by the public, primarily in the valley districts. These include 246 firearms surrendered by Meitei radical group Arambai

Tenggol. Bhalla on Friday extended the deadline for the surrender of looted and illegal arms until 4 pm on March 6 following demands by people from both hill and valley areas for additional time. Several thousand arms were looted from police in different places in Manipur during the initial phase of the ethnic violence that began about 22 months ago. Since taking over the charge of Governor on January 3, Bhalla has been meeting cross sections of people, taking feedback from them on how to bring back normalcy in the northeastern state. He has also chaired several meetings in Manipur where law and order situation on the state was discussed and gave necessary directions to the security forces, officials said. Bhalla, a former Union Home Secretary, who had closely worked with Shah for five years till August 2024, was handpicked by the Union home minister himself and said to have given the mandate to bring back normalcy to the restive state. The violence in Manipur started after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status in May 2023.

Delhi police's civil wings clipped

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In a big relief to common man, the newly elected BJP led Delhi government has issued an order, making it clear that Delhi police has no role to stop or allow constructions in the national Capital. There is no provision under Delhi Municipal Corporation (DMC) Act, 1957 by which a person is required to seek the permission from police for carrying out the construction. It has been informed that there is a misconception prevalent to the effect that a person needs to obtain permission from the police for carrying out construction of a building. Additional Chief Secretary of Delhi, Naveen Kumar Choudhary said in a circular issued on Saturday. Delhi's Additional Chief Secretary further directed the Delhi police to sensitise their field officials to prevent the misuse of the provision of law and to remove the misconception that there is

any need of permission from police for carrying out any construction of building. This comes after a high level meeting chaired by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday. The meeting was attended by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Delhi Home Minister Ashish Sood and Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora and other senior officials of policing departments. During the meeting concerns were raised about police officers demanding bribes for allowing illegal construction activities. There were several instances in the past when police personnel caught taking bribe for allowing constructions. "Building construction activity is regulated by the MCD and other Local Bodies in their respective jurisdictions. Section 312 / 313 of the DMC Act, 1957 provides finalising of Layout Plan, Section 336 of the DMC Act, 1957 provides for sanction of building plan

and Section 346 for occupancy / completion certificate. There is no provision under DMC Act, 1957 by which a person is required to seek the permission from police for carrying out the construction." "There are, however, certain provisions, in the DMC Act, 1957, related to giving information by police to the MCD wrt an offence under the DMC Act or any rule, regulation or by laws made there under or carrying out investigation of such offence and follow up action [for example - Section 474, 475 and 466 A of the DMC Act, 1957]. It has been informed that there is a misconception prevalent to the effect that a person needs to obtain permission from the police for carrying out construction of a building. It has also been brought to the notice that there is sometimes misuse of the provisions mentioned in the (para 2) above for the purpose of rent seeking," reads the circular.

Continued on page 5

HOLI-RAMZAN MONTH



Residents buy dry fruits from a shop ahead of the holy month of Ramadan in Srinagar

PTI

Fire in tyres warehouse

Lucknow (PNS): A fire broke out in a tyres and autogas warehouse in Vikasnagar here on Saturday morning.

Seeing smoke coming out from the warehouse, the people living nearby informed the fire station.

The fire-tenders reached the spot and controlled the fire within three hours. According to reports, fire suddenly broke out due to a short circuit in Puneet Auto Parts owned by Ramjivan Jaiswal, in Sector 12 of Vikasnagar around 2 am on Saturday. The fire soon engulfed the entire warehouse. On receiving information, the fire station officer of Indiranagar reached the spot with a fire-tender. Later, five fire-tenders were called from Bakshi Ka Talab and Hazratganj fire stations and they brought the fire under control in three hours. No casualty was reported.

Woman accuses youth of drugging, raping her

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman has accused a young man of drugging and raping her. In September 2018, when the woman lost her job due to a dispute over salary, she allegedly contacted Rahul and he called her to the flat of his acquaintance on the pretext of a job interview. He, however, spiked her soft drink with intoxicants. When she felt dizziness, he raped her and filmed the act. The victim alleged that Rahul threatened to make the photos and video viral and started physically exploiting her. When she threatened to file a police complaint, Rahul promised to marry her. The woman alleged that they got married in a temple in Shivgarh, Rae Bareilly in December 2020 after which both of them stayed

together. During this time, Rahul started beating her and on protesting, he threatened to kill her. The victim said that while they were living together, Rahul would not come home for many days. When she made enquiries, she learnt that Rahul was married and had two children who lived in Kundri Rakabganj area of Lucknow. The woman alleged that when Rahul learnt that she knew about his first wife and children, he tried to smother her with a pillow. On January 20, 2025, Rahul beat her up and forced her to sign a blank paper and ran away. Inspector Anjani Mishra said that on the complaint of the victim, an FIR had been registered and the case was being investigated.

Miscreants hack mobile phones of entire family
Lucknow (PNS): A miscreant hacked the mobile phones of all the members of a family in Hussainganj area of the city and kept them incommunicado for hours. Vikram Chopra, a resident of Sarvapalli Mall Avenue in Purana Qila, said that miscreants hacked his and all his family members' mobile phones. "The miscreants have all the information about the house. They took control of the electronic gadgets in the house and said they had information about all activities in the house," he said. Vikram said that apart from hacking their mobile phones, the miscreants had also installed some device (bug) at his home and through it they were watching all the activities in the house. "If someone talks by writing in the diary, they read it. After this, they write it in the gallery of the phone and send it back to us," he said. The inspector of Hussainganj police station said a case had been registered and they were investigating the matter. Vikram, said that he was troubled for more than a month. "Due to the incident, the whole family is suffering from mental stress," he said in the complaint.



NOTICE

I, Narendra Kumar Mishra S/O Shri Mahendra Narayan Mishra R/O Sikandarpur Khurd Lalai Chihat Lucknow My daughter Aradhya Mishra's name is written as Prachi Mishra in the Aadhar card. Instead of which it should be Aradhya Mishra. Her DOB is written as 01-01-2009 in the Aadhar card. Instead of this it should be 18-08-2010. From today my daughter's name should be read and understood as Aradhya Mishra and DOB as 18-08-2010. Even in the school the name is Aradhya Mishra D/O Narendra Kumar Mishra.

NOTICE

ISHAMSHER SINGH (ARMY NO. JC857678N) R/O BIRAN BHIWANI, HARYANA- 127111 DO AFFIRM THAT IN MY ARMY SERVICE RECORD MY SON'S NAME WAS WRONGLY ENTERED AS JITENDRA SINGH YADAV CORRECT NAME JITENDER SINGH YADAV VIDE AFFIDAVIT DTD 27 FEB 2025 BEFORE KANPUR COURTS ONLY.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from MOHAMMAD IRASAD ANSARI To MOHAMMAD IRASAD ANSANRI for all future purposes. Mohammad Irasad ANSANRI S/o Mohd Haidar Ali R/o 116/966, Rawatpur Roshan Nagar, Kanpur Nagar

NOTICE

ISHAMSHER SINGH (ARMY NO. JC857678N) R/O BIRAN BHIWANI, HARYANA- 127111 DO AFFIRM THAT IN MY ARMY SERVICE RECORD MY WIFE'S NAME WAS WRONGLY ENTERED AS POONAM DEVI CORRECT NAME POONAM YADAV VIDE AFFIDAVIT DTD 27 FEB 2025 BEFORE KANPUR COURTS ONLY.

NOTICE

I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM MOHAMMAD MOHAJIM To MOHD MOHAJIM S/O MOHD KHALEEL R/O: 101/252, COLONEL GANJ KANPUR NAGAR

AUCTION NOTICE

दिनांक 10-03-2025 मध्यान्ह 12:00 बजे इण्डिया लिटिगेशन बोर्ड, साखरवा निकेतन कानपुर रोड, लखनऊ कार्यालय परिसर में उपलब्ध निम्नलिखित घोषित सामग्रियों की नीलामी होगी, सिक्टोरियेटि रु. 5,000/- नकद, जी. एस. टी. पंजीकरण, वैनकार्ड, आधार के साथ जमा होगी। आई. पी. सिंह एडवोकेट, लखनऊ

NOTICE

I have changed my name from JAY BAJRANG PANDAY To JAY PANDEY S/o J.P. PANDEY R/o 42, C - P Block Kunj Vihar Yashoda Nagar Kanpur

NOTICE

I, 15420483K Hav/AA Pradeep Toppo, village Kamal Bari Post-Nest Chumta, Tehsil- Siliguri, District- Darjeeling, Pin-734009, State- West Bengal, hereby declare that my Mother's name & date of birth was wrongly entered in my service documents as 'CHUPAIN TOPPO & 05 JULY 1950' instead of 'CHUPEN ORAON & 13 JUN 1950' vide affidavit dated 18 Feb 2025, Notary at Lucknow IN- UP 06237775145739X.

REQUIRED

Adharshila College of Professional Courses (ACPC) Raj Nagar, NH-232, Raibareilly Post:-Asst. Professor for Home Science 01, Geography 01, Psychology 01. **Eligibility:** -55% Marks in Related Subject in M. A. with NET/Ph.D **Pay Scale:** - As per Lucknow University / UGC norms. **Contacts:** -9454855857, 8299214485, 9453848622 Manager (Chandra Prabha Singh)

NOTICE

I, 15447513A, NK/AA Janirik Dandung, village & Post-Dandriabahal, Tehsil- Barkote, District- Deogarh, Pin-768108, State- Odisha, hereby declare that my mother's name & date of birth was wrongly entered in my service documents as 'MARIUM DUNG DUNG & 01 JAN 1969' instead of 'MARIAM DUNG DUNG & 26 APRIL 1964' vide affidavit dated 18 FEB 2025, Notary at Lucknow-IN UP 06250167405045X.

OBITUARY

OBITUARY

NAIK AMPADY R
28 MAY 1991-24 NOV 2024
ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEGRIEVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF NAIK AMPADY R WHILE SERVING WITH 1 KERALA GIRLS BATTALION NCC.
FROM: LT GEN SHIVINDER SINGH AND ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

NOTICE

I, 15420101P NK Pandurangan S, village Periyabodinatham Post-Mahimandalam, Tehsil Katpadi, District- Vellore, Pin 632516, State-Tamilnadu, hereby declare that my daughter name was wrongly entered in my service documents as P KRITHIKA & '27 MAY 2008' instead of KRITHIKA P & '27 MAY 2008' vide affidavit dated 22 Feb 2025, Notary at Lucknow IN-UP1443577764557X

OBITUARY

OBITUARY

NAIK MARIMUTHU M
20 MAY 1991-29 DEC 2024
ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEGRIEVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF NAIK MARIMUTHU M WHILE SERVING WITH 92 BASE HOSPITAL SRINAGAR.
FROM: LT GEN SHIVINDER SINGH AND ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

NOTICE

I, 15424646K Hav Kumaran R, village Gudalur, Post- Gudalur, Tehsil-Polur, District-Tiruvannamalai, Pin- 606907, State-Tamilnadu, hereby declare that my Son name was wrongly entered in my service documents as K HARISH & '06 Dec 2017' instead of HARISH K & '06 Dec 2017' vide affidavit dated 22 Feb 2025, Notary at Lucknow IN-UP14424826463918X

NOTICE

It is informed to the general public that the correct name of my son is Vaidik Kumar Shukla son of Rajeev Shukla which is mentioned in his birth certificate and educational records. Due to mistake, my son's name has been mentioned as Vedant Shukla in his Aadhaar card number 8321 7288 2806 which is a household name. In future, my son should be known and recognized by his correct name Vaidik Kumar Shukla son of Rajeev Shukla. It is hereby certified that all the legal formalities in respect of the above have been completed by myself. **Rajeev Shukla Son- Shri Ram Abhilash Shukla Resident- Ward No. 10, Paharpur, Shivgarh, Raebareilly, UP- 229308**

NOTICE

I, 15424646K Hav Kumaran R, village Gudalur, Post- Gudalur, Tehsil-Polur, District-Tiruvannamalai, Pin- 606907, State-Tamilnadu, hereby declare that my Son name was wrongly entered in my service documents as K DIPESH & '11 Jun 2014' instead of DIPESH K & '11 Jun 2014' vide affidavit dated 22 Feb 2025, Notary at Lucknow IN-UP14427635670996X

Bid to kidnap trader foiled

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Police foiled an attempt to kidnap a Lucknow businessman near Lokbandhu intersection, on Friday night. Three miscreants—a butcher, a fruit vendor and a truck driver — were waiting at the Lokbandhu Hospital intersection for the trader to kidnap him. Luckily, the police got a whiff of their plan through an informer and nabbed the trio. Those arrested were identified as 37-year-old Imran Ahmad, a resident of Mohalla Salarganj under Dargah Sharif police station of Bahraich district, who works at a meat shop as butcher; 23-year-old Niyaz, a resident of Gangwara under Deva Sharif police station of Barabanki district and a fruit vendor; and Raju, a resident of

Kukrail drain bank in Bahraich under Indira Nagar police station of Lucknow, a truck driver. The police recovered pistols, four live cartridges of 12 bore, one four-wheeler from the arrested persons. Giving details, DCP (South) Nipun Agrawal said during checking by the Krishna Nagar police, on February 28, 2025, on getting information from an informer, the cops found three suspicious persons on a four-wheeler near Lokbandhu Hospital trisection. He said the police team raided the place and caught the trio. During interrogation, all the three accused disclosed that there was a dispute between a Lucknow businessman and a trader named Manish Agarwal of Bahraich district over a

transaction of Rs 42 lakh. They revealed that at the behest of Manish Agarwal, they had come to Lucknow to collect the money and kidnap the Lucknow businessman. In lieu of this work, Rs. 10,000 was paid to them in advance in Imran's Bank of Baroda account. For this very work, they had obtained arms and cartridges and they had come to Lucknow many times earlier also but did not get the opportunity to kidnap the businessman. The DCP said all three were booked under relevant sections of the BNS and a case was registered against them. The police said five cases were registered against Imran Ahmed, in Bahraich, 16 against Niaz in Gonda and Bahraich and eight cases against Raju.

60-yr-old woman wanted in several cases held in city

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 60-year-old woman, wanted in several cases of fraud and carrying a cash reward of Rs 25,000, was arrested by a team of Vikas Nagar police on Saturday. The woman was absconding for years. She was identified as Ramvati Awasthi. She had shot into infamy after duping people of crores of rupees by creating a fake company. She is also facing a case of embezzlement of Rs 58.25 lakh and cases filed in several states. Police Ramvati Awasthi had serious criminal cases registered against her in several districts and states and an arrest warrant was issued against her by a court in Lucknow. After the arrest, the accused was produced in the court, from where she was sent to jail in judicial custody.

treatment at King George's Medical University hospital in Lucknow. The elderly woman had come for treatment with her son. The conman had sent the victim's son to the hospital counter for filling the test form and had taken away the jewellery from the elderly woman in the name of tests. The stolen jewellery was recovered from the accused. Chowk Inspector Nagesh Upadhyay said that Bahraich resident Abdulla Khan had come to KGMU with his mother Jamila Khatoon for treatment and the victim was duped in the name of medical and pathological examination. On Friday, on the information of the informer, Chinhat, Hardasi Kheda, resident Guruprasad was arrested. It surfaced that nine cases are registered against him in various police stations.

brutally beat up the team members in Chak-Amawa village in Banthra on Saturday morning. Two electricity workers were injured in the attack. Junior engineer Rajkumar posted at Khurrampur power house and his team were checking in Chak-Amawa village when Monu Singh, Shiv Shankar Singh, Durgesh Singh and Ram Shankar Singh first abused them and then started beating the team. The accused beat JE Rajkumar. When team members Sujet Kumar and Nirmal Yadav tried to intervene, the accused did not spare them either and threatened to kill the entire team. The investigation work was stopped and the police were informed. A report has been filed at Banthra police station on the complaint of Rajkumar. According to Banthra incharge inspector Ram Singh, a case has been registered and further action is being taken in the matter.

CONMAN HELD
The police arrested a conman who had robbed jewellery from a woman who had come for

LESA TEAM ATTACKED
A LESA team which went to investigate electricity theft was attacked. Four people

NBRI unveils world's GM cotton resistant to pink bollworm

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a groundbreaking development for agriculture, scientists at the CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute in Lucknow have unveiled the world's first genetically modified (GM) cotton that is fully resistant to the Pink Bollworm (PBW), a pest that has long plagued cotton farmers across India, Africa, and Asia. The announcement was made on Saturday by NBRI Director Ajit Kumar Shasany and Chief Scientist PK Singh during a press conference at the institute. The director explained that since the introduction of GM cotton in India in 2002, varieties such as Bollgard 1 and Bollgard 2—developed in collaboration with Monsanto of St. Louis, USA—had successfully controlled certain bollworm species. "However, over time, these varieties have failed to provide robust control against the Pink Bollworm (PBW), known locally in India as Gulabi Sundi. The Pink Bollworm has evolved resistance to the Cry1Ac and Cry2Ab proteins used in these technologies, thereby increasing the threat. As a result, cotton yields in India have been declining substantially," he said. In response to this growing challenge, CSIR-NBRI's researchers, led by Chief Scientist Dr PK Singh, whose career spans nearly 30 years in crop protection, developed a novel insecticidal gene. "This indigenous gene, unique-

ly effective against PBW, has been successfully tested for Pink Bollworm resistance in comparison with Bollgard 2 cotton. Rigorous laboratory trials at NBRI have shown that this new GM cotton is highly tolerant to PBW while also providing protection against other pests, such as the cotton leafworm and the fall armyworm," the director said. Recognising the potential of this ground breaking technology, Ankur Seeds Pvt. Ltd., an agri-biotech company based in Nagpur, has expressed interest in collaborating with CSIR-NBRI. "Ankur Seeds will collaborate on safety studies in accordance with regulatory guidelines and generate extensive multi-location data from field trials using NBRI technology in their proprietary hybrid cotton varieties. Once these studies confirm the safety of the technology, the seeds will be licensed to multiple seed companies for further variety and hybrid development, paving the way for wide-spread commercialisation. This collaboration promises significant economic and environmental benefits for farmers," the director said. He added that the introduction of this innovative technology offers several advantages: "Once introduced into hybrid cotton varieties by seed companies, cotton productivity could increase by around 20%, compared to current yields, which have been around 420 to 450 kg per hectare," he said.

RMLIMS promotes deceased organ transplantation

Lucknow (PNS): A workshop on brain stem death certification for deceased donor transplantation was organised by the nephrology department of RMLIMS on Saturday in a bid to give momentum to deceased organ transplant at the institute. RMLIMS Director CM Singh inaugurated the workshop and reiterated his commitment to augment transplantation activities both in the institute and in the state. The speakers included Prof Abhijit Chandra, Prof Himanshu Reddy and Prof Praveen Sharma from KGMU, Prof Narayan Prasad, Prof Afzal Azim and Prof Rajesh Harsh Vardhan from SGGGIMS, and Dr Amol Bhawane from AIIMS-Nagpur. Organising Secretary of the workshop Dr Abhilash Chandra from the nephrology department said that a committee for brain stem death certification had recently been formed and approved in the institute, and this was a pivotal step in starting deceased donor transplantation at the institute. The faculties from neurosurgery, neurology, anaesthesiology and medicine departments of RMLIMS involved in brain stem death certification actively participated in the workshop. Head of nephrology department, Prof Abhilash Chandra reiterated that increased sensitivity of ICU teams and brain stem death certification committee members would give the transplant program the necessary kickstart.

Cantt road traders raise issue of traffic jam

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Traders who have been facing the problem of traffic jams from Cantonment road to Burlington crossing to Odeon cinema crossing and Shubham cinema for a long time, held a meeting on Saturday. Uttar Pradesh Adarsh Vyapar Mandal's president Sanjay Gupta and Lucknow city general secretary Sanjay Trivedi were present in the meeting. The traders of Cantonment road said that their business was getting ruined due to the problem of traffic jams throughout the day. They pointed out that the traffic remains blocked due to the movement of roadways buses the entire day, causing great inconvenience to the traders. They further said that often people get injured and a few months ago a death also occurred in an accident near

Shubham cinema hall. The traders told Sanjay Gupta that the main reason for the traffic jam was the movement of roadways buses on this road throughout the day. They pointed out that roadways buses ply on this route even when there is already a lot of traffic pressure on Cantonment road which causes traffic jams. The Cantonment road traders said the officials concerned should change the route of the roadways buses to get rid of the problem of jams. They said they would meet the officials and demand permanent deployment of traffic policemen at the Odeon cinema hall crossing and near Shubham cinema hall. They also said that Emma Thomson School, St. Francis Xavier School, Lalbagh Kids School were on this route and due to the traffic jams children and their parents faced a lot of inconvenience.

Sanjay Gupta took cognisance of the problem and assured the traders that soon a delegation of the organisation would meet DCP (Traffic) and other officials concerned and get the problem resolved. In the meeting, the organisation's city general secretary Sanjay Trivedi, Manish Awasthi, Vijay Sahu, Shyam Lal Gupta, Amit Vaishya, Mohammad Azhar, Mohammad Naseem, Mahesh Jatyani, Anil Sahu, Arvind Kumar, Mohammad Shamim, Saif Ali, Rehan Ali, Akash, Vinay Mishra, Mahesh, Ajay Kannaujia, Arvind Kumar, Mohammad Sajid, Shubham Jaiswal, Salim Azad, Dharmendra Savita, Mohammad Tausif, Shahroz Rasool, Mazin Rasool, Mohammad Akram, Dhirendra Dixit, Taufik, Adil Eshesham and a large number of traders from Cantonment road were present.

Over 95 L receive anti-filaria medication

PNS (PNS): Uttar Pradesh has made significant strides in its battle against filariasis. As part of the Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign, conducted across 14 districts, 95.97 lakh people have already received the prescribed medication. To ensure full coverage, the remaining

beneficiaries will receive the medication during a mop-up round, which will conclude by March 4. The success of the campaign is reflected in the remarkably low number of families refusing the medication, marking a major milestone in the state's efforts to eliminate filariasis.

CITY BRIEFS



BOOK FAIR INAUGURATED
UPMRC Managing Director Sushil Kumar inaugurated the Lucknow Book Fair at Ravindralaya, in Chaharganj on Friday. The book fair will run till March 9. Over this 9-day event, various activities, including book launches, author meet-and-greet sessions, poetry recitals, mushaira, song and dance competitions, painting contests, and slogan and story-writing competitions, will take place. After the inaugurating the book fair, Sushil Kumar said he was delighted to be sur-

rounded by books. A wide variety of books are available for all age groups, with a special focus on children.

GRAVITAS CONCLUDES
The third and final day of Gravitas 4.0 at the Faculty of Management Studies, of Lucknow University marked the conclusion of a remarkable celebration of intellect and innovation. The main objective of organising Gravitas was to provide the students with a platform to explore their talents, enhance their skills, and

gain practical experience beyond academics. It fostered creativity, teamwork and leadership while encouraging innovation and problem-solving. The festival also promoted cultural exchange, networking and collaboration, creating a dynamic and enriching learning environment for the students. The winners included Gopal Gupta for stand-up comedy, Anushuman Kumar and Shruti Verma for singing, and Prateek Mishra, Shreya diwedi and Prachi Rastogi for treasure hunt, Sakshi Verma and Kunwar Divyanshu for case study, Arthriti Trivedi and Ashish Tiwari for business quiz. Shumaila Khan for debate, Sakshi Verma for poster making, Gaurav Kumar and Jigisha for value out of waste, Kinjal Patel for meme marketing, Atharva Sharma for pitching a product. Tanu Singh, Prashant Kharwar, Anurag and

CLIMATE CHANGE MUSEUM
Lucknow is set to become the home of India's first Climate Change Museum, with the project currently in its early stages. A senior official from the Lucknow Municipal Corporation shared that the proposal is still in its initial phase, with other agencies likely to collaborate on the project. There is currently no climate change museum in the country. Lucknow will be the first one in India to have it, he said.

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CM reviews Central, state govt development projects

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held a review meeting on Saturday to assess development projects of the Central and state governments. The meeting was attended by senior government officials and district magistrates of various districts, who joined the meeting via video conferencing. The chief minister emphasised the need to complete all pending land acquisition and compensation distribution processes for ongoing projects by March 15. He also gave necessary guidelines to the officers. The chief minister directed the officials to ensure that the process of land acquisition and compensation distribution for ongoing Central and state government development projects in various districts were completed by March 15. He emphasised that adherence to timelines is crucial for development projects of public importance, as they not only enhance the lives of common citizens but also contribute to employment generation. The chief minister pointed out that project delays often necessitate cost revisions, which adversely impact revenue. Chief Minister Yogi instructed the district administration to hold regular reviews of land acquisition and compensation distribution for development projects, ensuring consistent communication with affected farmers and families. He directed that the district magistrates conduct a weekly review, and the divisional commissioner to review the progress every 15 days and



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reviewing development projects related to the Central and state government at his official residence on Saturday

Conduct relief work: Yogi

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday directed the officials of the districts concerned to conduct relief work with full promptness in view of the recent rain and hailstorm. According to a government statement issued here on Saturday, Chief Minister Adityanath said that the officials should visit the area and keep an eye on the relief work and provide help to the affected people.

submit a report to senior officials in the chief minister's office, chief secretary's office, and the relevant departments. The chief minister stated that common citizens aspire for development and should be

The chief minister has also directed that the damage to the crops should be assessed on a war footing and a report should be made available to the government so that further action can be taken in this regard.

According to the details provided by the Relief Commissioner's office, many districts of western Uttar Pradesh, including Aligarh, Mathura, Kasganj, Hathras and Gautam Buddha Nagar, have received hailstorm and rain in the last two days.

made aware of its positive outcomes. They should also be informed in advance about the circle rate for compensation.

The chief minister emphasised that nodal officers must

be deployed for all initiated projects, ensuring strict adherence to quality standards and timely execution of the work. HE directed the officials concerned to ensure that the construction of a 350-bed hospital by ESIC in Greater Noida and a 100-bed hospital in Gorakhpur were completed within the set timeframe. Any arising challenges should be promptly resolved, he added. The Greater Noida hospital is expected to generate around 1,000 direct and 2,000-3,000 indirect jobs. Chief Minister Yogi instructed officials to identify those obstructing development projects and take strict action against them. He reviewed various development projects in Varanasi and directed their timely completion. He reiterated that development and employment generation remain top priorities, urging officials to work with a zero pendency approach.

Maurya slams opposition for questioning Kumbh's sanctity

LUCKNOW (PNS):

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya criticised the opposition for questioning the sanctity of the Maha Kumbh. He said on Saturday that crores of people from around the world and sadhus took the holy dip in and showed their faith towards the Maha Kumbh. "This in itself is a big slap on those who have been questioning the sanctity of the Maha Kumbh. While the Sanatanis took the holy dip out of faith, the politicians who have been questioning Maha Kumbh's sanctity also took the dip but it was a political dip and not out of faith. People are watching everything and they will give appropriate answers at the appropriate time to such politicians," Maurya said. Responding to Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav's suggestion to donate the earnings from the Maha Kumbh among the poor, Maurya said he was not the government's advisor and the government had decided to spend it judiciously for the overall development of the state. "The Samajwadi Party is a party of hooligans, rioters and mafias, and if these elements were removed, it would cease to exist," Maurya said. He alleged the SP harbours the most criminals, mafias and anarchists, and if they were expelled, the party would collapse and become 'Samaptwadi' (finished party). On the allegations by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi that the Bharatiya Janata Party was anti-Dalit, Maurya said that it was actually the Congress and the Samajwadi Party who were against the welfare of Dalits. He emphasised that under the BJP government, there has been inclusive development and respect for everyone.

Maha Kumbh set record in crowd management

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Prayagraj Maha Kumbh 2025 has not only showcased the spiritual grandeur of Sanatan dharma but has also set an unprecedented record in crowd management. With an average of 1.5 to 1.75 crore devotees taking a holy dip at Sangam daily and returning to their destinations without disruption, the event emerged as a model of efficient administration. Managing such an enormous gathering was a challenge, but the government and administration successfully turned it into an exemplary feat of planning and execution. Spanning 45 days, the event witnessed the participation of over 66 crore devotees - almost half of India's population. At its peak, Mahakumbh Nagar became the third most populated place in the world after India and China, underscoring the scale of its impact. A meticulous action plan was implemented to ensure seamless crowd movement. Separate entry and exit routes were designated to maintain a steady flow, while round-the-clock monitoring from the control room enabled rapid response to crowd surges. Dedicated parking zones were established for devotees arriving from different directions to prevent traffic congestion. This efficient management model became a topic of discussion not just in India, but on the global stage. Globally, very few events also showcase notable crowd management strategies. For instance, during Hajj in Mecca, millions of Muslim pilgrims are



Workers dismantle tents on Saturday after the conclusion of Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj

guided through digital technology and strategic route planning. Similarly, Brazil's Carnival maintains order through police coordination and administrative oversight. However, Maha Kumbh's scale and complexity remain unparalleled. While Hajj and Carnival typically manage 20 lakh to 25 lakh visitors at peak, Maha Kumbh 2025 saw a daily influx of one crore to 1.5 crore devotees, peaking at eight crore on Mauni Amavasya. The crowd surpassed five crore on two occasions, 3.5 crore on three occasions, and two crore or more on five occasions. A gathering of one crore or more was recorded on 30 different days. This sheer magnitude

makes Maha Kumbh an event beyond comparison anywhere in the world. Modern technologies such as artificial intelligence-powered cameras, drones and designated holding areas played a crucial role in managing the unprecedented crowds at Maha Kumbh 2025. This event not only stood as a symbol of deep faith and devotion but also established a new global benchmark in crowd management. The success of the Uttar Pradesh government and administration in orchestrating such a massive gathering with precision and efficiency will serve as a model and inspiration for future large-scale events worldwide.

4 killed, 19 hurt as bus rams into stationary truck in Agra

PNS/PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Four persons were killed and 19 others were injured after a Varanasi-Jaipur bus rammed into a stationary truck on the Agra-Lucknow Expressway on Saturday morning, police said. According to police, the bus crashed into the truck from behind in the Fatehabad police station area of Agra around 5:30 am. ACP (Fatehabad) Amardeep Lal said the bodies of the deceased were sent for post-mortem examination and one of the deceased was yet to be identified. All the injured were sent to the hospital. Three of the deceased were identified as Govind (68) of Rajasthan; Ramesh (45) of Rajasthan and Deepak Verma (40) of Agra. In a separate road accident, two women were killed while another was injured after being hit by an unknown vehicle in Maharajganj. The accident occurred on the Paratwal-Kaptanganj Marg on Friday night, under Shyam Deurwa police station of the district, when three women were returning home after attending a 'Haldi' function, police said. SHO of Shyam Deurwa police station Abishek Singh said the victims - Vidyawati (45), Sakuntala (46) and Phoolmati - were hit by an unknown vehi-



The wreckage of a bus after it crashed into a stationary truck leaving four people dead and 19 others injured in Agra on Saturday

cle. Vidyawati and Sakuntala died on the spot while the condition of Phoolmati was serious. She has been admitted to BRD Medical College hospital in Gorakhpur, Singh said. In Mainpuri, two persons were killed in separate road accidents involving the same container truck while five were injured, police said on Saturday. Superintendent of Police of Mainpuri Ganesh Prasad Saha on Saturday said that the driver identified as Simranpreet Singh was transporting husk from Kanpur to Rajpur (Punjab) on Friday. He wrongly entered the no-entry zone in

Mainpuri late Friday evening. Police at Karhal crossing tried to intercept and stop the vehicle from entering but the driver rushed it and in order to escape, hit two women. Tara Devi (40) was crushed to death on the spot and her daughter-in-law and granddaughter were injured. They were rushed to the hospital. In Kuraoli, the vehicle crushed Divya (28) who was returning home with her husband on a motorcycle. The woman's husband was injured in the accident. Two others were critically injured and were admitted to the district hospital and are

undergoing treatment, police said. Police said the truck driver was arrested late on Friday night from Etah district and the vehicle was seized. Meanwhile, a woman travelling on a motorcycle died after being hit by a bull in Saharanpur, police said on Saturday. The motorcyclist and his mother were seriously injured in the accident. Superintendent of Police (Rural) Sagar Jain said that Akshay, a resident of Sheikhpura village in the Nanauta police station area, was riding his motorcycle with his mother, Pramila, and a woman from the same village, when the two-wheeler collided with a herd of stray cattle on the road. In this collision, a bull threw the woman, Omi, several feet up, due to which she, Akshay and Pramila were injured, Jain said. All three were rushed to a primary health centre where Omi was pronounced dead. In Ballia, two men were killed after the motorcycle they were travelling on collided with an unidentified vehicle in Basarikapur village. The accident occurred on Ballia-Bairia highway within the Duhbar police station area on Friday night. Pawan Pandey (28) and Santosh Pandey (25) were killed in the collision.

Kumbh: Special ration scheme proved highly effective



A drone shot of the Sangam area on Saturday days after the conclusion of Maha Kumbh 2025 in Prayagraj

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

During the grand Maha Kumbh 2025, the special ration scheme launched by the government for saints, mahatmas, kalpvasis and devotees proved highly effective. So far, over 2,000 metric tons of subsidised rations have been distributed and scheme has been extended till March. The Uttar Pradesh govern-

ment successfully implemented Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Sahkarita se Samridhhi' (prosperity through cooperation) during Maha Kumbh, enabling the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) to supply 1,400 metric tons of flour and rice and 600 metric tons of pulses at affordable

prices. To facilitate ration distribution, 20 mobile vans operated across the Maha Kumbh Mela area and Prayagraj, ensuring a steady supply of essential commodities. Devotees were able to conveniently place orders for flour, rice and pulses via WhatsApp or phone call. Under this initiative, flour and rice were available in 10

kg packets and pulses in one kilogram packets. Orders can be placed by contacting 72 75 78 18 10. This initiative ensured seamless ration distribution for saints, their ashrams, kalpvasis, and devotees attending Mahakumbh 2025. According to NAFED state head Rohit Jaiman, the Ministry of Cooperation and the Uttar Pradesh government are jointly overseeing the scheme with MD Deepak Agarwal personally monitoring its execution to ensure smooth and efficient delivery. The ration distributed by the government through NAFED gained immense popularity among devotees and saints at Maha Kumbh 2025. The Bharat brand products, known for their affordability and quality, were particularly well-received, ensuring that pilgrims had access to low-cost, high-quality food items. Saints, mahatmas and kalpvasis expressed deep satisfaction with this initiative, as it enabled them to carry out their religious rituals and sadhana without any disruptions. Recognising the significance of this service, the Ministry of Cooperation and the Uttar Pradesh government closely monitored its implementation, ensuring that no saint or devotee faced any inconvenience.

Ayodhya, Kashi & Mathura as wedding destinations soon

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura, which have attracted the attention of the whole world in religious-spiritual tourism, will also become major centres of wedding destinations. The Tourism Department is preparing the ground for this. By giving special grants, marriage lawns, hotels and other wedding venues will be developed. The department's officials will hold a meeting with the businessmen concerned every week. Uttar Pradesh is a state developing rapidly in the field of tourism. About 65 crore tourists came here in the year 2024. In this, Ayodhya, Kashi, Mathura attract the most devotees and tourists. In the year 2024, a total of 16,44,19,522 devotees arrived in Ayodhya,

11,00,97,743 devotees arrived in Kashi, 9,00,81,788 devotees and tourists arrived in Mathura. "These places located in the state are symbols of religion and spirituality as well as love, dignity and dedication in life. In Hindu culture, Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura are also symbols of deep philosophical and marital values. Ayodhya is the birthplace of Lord Ram, a symbol of religion, duty and dignity. Kashi is the city of Lord Shiva, which is a symbol of self-knowledge and patience. Similarly, Mathura is the birthplace of Lord Krishna, which reflects love, joy and sweetness in life," said a Tourism official. Thus, these three cities define the high standards of married life, which the Tourism Department is promoting prominently as wedding desti-

nations. "Tourism facilities are being developed continuously here. Along with this, focus has been laid on the development of marriage halls, lawns and other wedding venues. Covered area, hall, restaurant and parking facility should be available in such units. The carpet area of the unit should be 5,000 square feet. It should have a seating capacity of at least 500 persons. The Tourism Department will provide a subsidy of 25 to 30 per cent in the construction or development of such units," he said. The official said that UP had immense potential as a wedding destination. "Efforts are being made to bring it to reality. Our effort is that people from other countries and states come here to get married and return with unique experiences," he added.

Violence in Sambhal: Judicial panel records statements of more people

PTI ■ SAMBHAL

A three-member judicial investigation committee on Saturday recorded the statements of more people in connection with the violence that erupted in Sambhal in November 2024 over a court-ordered survey of a Mughal-era mosque in the district. Gopal Sharma, an advocate of the Hindu side in the case, appeared before the panel at the PWD Guest House here. Later, speaking to reporters, he said that the Commission had asked him for a written affidavit regarding the incident as an eyewitness. "I have submitted that before the Commission. Secondly, the Commission asked me cross-questions. I answered them. They asked who all were present, was the riot pre-planned or not, why the people entered forcibly and how was the photography done. I gave proper

answers to all these," Sharma said. Tension had been brewing in Sambhal since November 19 last year when the court-ordered survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid was carried out following claims that a Harihar temple previously stood at the site. On November 24, during a second round of the survey, protesting locals clashed with security personnel which led to the death of four people and injuries to dozens. The probe panel, which includes former high court judge Devendra Arora, ex-police chief Arvind Kumar Jain and former Uttar Pradesh additional chief secretary Amit Mohan Prasad, visited Sambhal on December 1, 2024, and January 21 and 30 this year. During its fourth visit on Friday, advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, who claimed that the Shahi Jama Masjid was a Hindu temple, recorded his statement.

Razvi flays ban on Muslims in Vrindavan Holi fair

LUCKNOW (PNS): Maulana Shahabuddin Razvi, the national president of All India Muslim Jamaat, has condemned the ban imposed on Muslims attending the Holi fair in Vrindavan in Mathura as well as restrictions on their participation in setting up shops there. He said that such actions were unconstitutional and undermined the spirit of communal harmony. Maulana Razvi pointed out that a similar restriction had previously been imposed by the Akhara Parishad at the Maha Kumbh. Maulana Razvi alleged that communal elements were deliberately trying to create hostility against Muslims by enforcing such bans. He said to ban the Muslims from the Holi fair was an attempt to economically weaken the minority community, adding that such efforts would not succeed. He urged Hindus and Muslims

to unite against those who spread hatred and attempt to divide the country. He said that India thrived on its diverse culture and mixed heritage, and it was globally recognised for being a nation where people of different religions live together harmoniously. Maulana Razvi is known for frequently voicing his opinions on issues concerning the Muslim community. While he has praised the arrangements at the

Maha Kumbh, he has also raised concerns regarding the reported mass conversion of Muslims at the event. Previously, he had written a letter to UP CM Yogi Adityanath, urging him to intervene and prevent such conversions. In the letter, he expressed his concerns, stating that reports suggested hundreds of Muslims were set to be converted at the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj.

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IIVR's efforts to promote beneficial agricultural practices commended

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Indian Institute of Vegetable Research (IIVR), on Friday organised a special farmers' symposium under the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP) on the theme 'crop diversification through vegetables for economic prosperity'. The SCSP initiative is being implemented across seven districts, including Varanasi, Mirzapur, Sonbhadra and Chandauli, covering several blocks and 54 villages. More than 500 male and female farmers, as well as agricultural entrepreneurs, participated in the event.

The chairperson of the SCSP Farmers' Cluster Savitri Devi presided over the event. The chief guest was former Vice-Chancellor (V-C) of Banda University of Agriculture and Technology, Banda, Dr NP Singh and special guest was former head of department at IIVR Dr AB Rai also graced the occasion. In his welcome address, Executive Director of IIVR Dr Nagendra Rai emphasised that under the SCSP scheme the Indian government provides various benefits to SC communities, including



A speaker addressing a symposium at IIVR in Varanasi

education, employment, skill development and entrepreneurship opportunities. He also highlighted that IIVR has developed 129 varieties and hybrids of 33 different vegetables and is conducting research on climate-resilient varieties, vegetable crop protection, nutritional security, value addition, export potential, urban horticulture and integrated farming systems. Chairperson Savitri Devi commended IIVR's efforts in promoting beneficial agricultural practices and urged continued

support for such initiatives. Special guest Dr Awadhesh Bahadur Rai stressed the use of organic pest and disease-resistant solutions, including seed treatments, for effective pest and disease management. Chief guest Dr NP Singh highlighted the importance of increasing farmers' income, fostering scientific thinking and adopting market-oriented vegetable farming. He urged farmers to prevent migration from villages, create employment opportunities locally and focus on farming in their own

communities. He further emphasised that agricultural research institutions are no less than places of worship for farmers and encouraged them to develop scientific temper by engaging with researchers and institutions. Dr Neeraj Singh, nodal officer of the project, stated that the initiative is promoting inclusive development and integrating the SC community into the mainstream economy. He shared that five farmer clusters have been established in the Sikhar and Narayanpur blocks of Mirzapur district, involving around 100 selected farmers. A farm exhibition was also organised at the event, showcasing advanced vegetable production technologies by IIVR and innovative rice varieties, production techniques and drone technology by the International Rice Research Institute. Guests also unveiled and distributed farmer-oriented publications. The event was attended by Dr PM Singh, Dr Rajesh Kumar, Dr Anant Bahadur, Dr Arvind Nath Singh, along with all scientists, staff members, research scholars and students of the institute. The programme was conducted by Dr Atmanand Tripathi.

Happiness generally measured on parameters of development: V-C

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The 12th two-day international conference on 'Happiness and well-being amidst many crises: Insights from the Indian knowledge tradition' was inaugurated at the School of Management Sciences (SMS) here on Saturday. The chief guest and Vice-Chancellor (V-C) of Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth (MGKV) Prof Anand Kumar Tyagi said that happiness is generally measured on the basis of the parameters of development. "This parameter should be people-oriented and not materialism", he said. Appealing to the youth, Prof Tyagi stressed on learning the formula of knowledge contained in the Upanishads and Vedas. He said knowledge is that which teaches us to live comfortably by coordinating with nature, knowledge should not depend only on resources. "As a country, we will have to learn from other countries how they not only come out of the problem of existence on the basis of education and art but also stand firmly at the global level. If we want to achieve any goal or attain peace and happiness, we have to recognise ourselves." Swami called upon the younger generation to do selfless service and said that we all should always be ready to help



MGKV VC Prof AK Tyagi addressing a conference on happiness at SMS in Varanasi on Saturday.

Shaktidham, who was the special guest in the conference said, "If we have to make efforts in our life, then we will have to learn from other countries how they can not only come out of the problem of existence on the basis of education and art but also stand firmly at the global level. If we want to achieve any goal or attain peace and happiness, we have to recognise ourselves." Swami called upon the younger generation to do selfless service and said that we all should always be ready to help

each other as the nectar of eternity is present within us. Special guest Prof Sadashiv Dwivedi underlined happiness and social welfare and said that policies and multiple crises are interconnected. Describing the ancient Indian knowledge tradition as three-dimensional, he said in reality, people, dialogue and logic are at the centre of ancient Indian knowledge. Another special guest Prof CS Sharma, former professor of Shri Ram College of Commerce, explained what the true mean-

ing of happiness and well-being is. He mentioned that the super ordinate goal is to live in harmony with the universe. Managing Director, Open Spaces Consulting, Mumbai, Dr Anita Madhok said that in Hinduism and Buddhism, meditation is considered to help calm the mind and soul and can also help resolve past life karmas. Welcoming the guests, Director Prof PN Jha said SMS Varanasi is aware of its responsibility not only towards academics but also towards society. Describing the Mahabharata, Gita and Ramayana as relevant in the modern context, he said that knowledge is primarily a means of purification. On this occasion, a souvenir based on 'Happiness and well-being in the midst of multiple crises: Insights from the Indian knowledge tradition' was also released. The inaugural session was conducted by Prof Pallavi Pathak and the vote of thanks was proposed by the conference coordinator Prof Amitabh Pandey. Executive Secretary Dr MP Singh, Registrar Sanjay Gupta, Prof Sandeep Singh, Prof Avinash Chandra Supkar, Prof Rajkumar Singh and others were also present.

Initiative to familiarise students with importance of traditional medicinal plants

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

An Ashwagandha awareness programme was organised at Composite School Chhittapur to educate students and teachers about the medicinal benefits of Ashwagandha. As part of the initiative, Ashwagandha plants were also distributed among the participants. Ashwagandha, a highly valued herb in Ayurveda, is known for its ability to reduce mental stress, boost immunity, and enhance cognitive function. The primary objective of this programme was to familiarise

students with the significance of traditional medicinal plants. As part of the event, an essay and drawing competition was held recently, where students participated with great enthusiasm. The essay competition encouraged them to explore both the scientific and traditional uses of Ashwagandha, while the drawing competition allowed them to creatively depict its importance in human health and Ayurveda. The event was graced by the chief guest, Dr Rohit Sharma, Department of Rasa Shastra, Banaras Hindu University,



Ashwagandha awareness programme being held at a school in Varanasi

Principal Investigator Dr Satish Kumar Verma, and Co-Principal Investigator Dr Abhishek Kumar Dwivedi, Department of Botany, BHU, and his team — Gowardhan, Puja Shukla, Pooja, Chaurasia, Amit, Deepak and Shivangi. Speaking on the occasion, they said that Ashwagandha is an ancient gift of Ayurveda that nourishes both body and mind. By understanding its benefits, we can inspire future generations to embrace natural health and holistic wellness. This initiative was high-

ly appreciated by students, teachers, and parents, who recognised it as an excellent integration of health and education. This project is funded by the National Medicinal Plants Board, Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India, and was successfully organised with the coordination of project PI - Dr Satish Kumar Verma and Co-PI Dr Abhishek Kumar Dwivedi, Department of Botany, BHU. The programme aims to promote awareness of Ashwagandha's traditional medicinal knowledge among youth, students and farmers.

Successful hip replacement

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A successful hip replacement was done at the Central Hospital, North Central Railway (NCR), Prayagraj on a 100-year-old resident of Kalindipuram, Rajrupur, who had suffered a fracture in her left hip in an accident. The operation was conducted by Dr SS Nayak. The success of this operation brought great relief to the family. Medical Director Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Handu congratulated Dr SS Nayak and his team for this successful operation. Senior anesthesiologist Dr. Alok Yadav, Dr Ashra, and Manju Devi Sonkar, Chief Nursing Superintendent, Nursing Superintendent Preeti, Nursing Superintendent Harish Kumar Sharma, Dresser Amit Shukla, Hospital Assistant Rekha Singh, Mool Chand, Rajendra Kumar Tiwari and Ramesh Kumar etc played an important role in it.

Railway employees play important role in country's progress: MLC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Principal Chief Materials Manager (PCMM) Rajneesh Gupta was on Friday given a farewell by Principal Chief Personnel Officer (PCPO) Janardan Singh who presented him a medal and folder in his room in the Administration Building in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW). Later, he was also given farewell by General Manager (GM) NP Singh, Principal Chief Electrical Engineer (PCEE) SK Srivastava and other senior officers.

A total of 12 officers and employees, including PCMM Rajneesh Gupta, retired during a ceremony. Deputy Chief Personnel Officer Sagar and Senior Personnel Officer Raj Kumar Gupta were also present on the occasion and congratulated Gupta and other retiring employees for their dedicated service in Indian Railways. On this occasion, they expressed respect



towards the retiring officers and employees, appreciated their excellent service period and wished them a bright future. Divisional Medical Officer of BLW's Central Hospital Dr Amit Gupta advised the retiring employees to do regular exercise, practice yoga and be health conscious. Branch Manager of State Bank of

India (SBI), BLW branch, Pawan Vardiyar gave important suggestions to the retiring employees regarding safe and profitable investment of their accumulated money. Joint Secretary of BLW's Employees Council Shrikant and members Amit Kumar and Manish Singh extended best wishes to the retiring employees by presenting gifts.

The programme was conducted by Senior Personnel Officer (SPO) Raj Kumar Gupta. Public Relations Officer (PRO) Rajesh Kumar expressed heartfelt respect to the retiring employees. With the cooperation of Accounts and Personnel Department, a lump sum payment was also made to the retiring employees so that their future financial stability can be ensured. A special farewell ceremony was also organised in the auditorium of BLW's Technical Training Centre (TTC) in honour of the retiring employees, in which MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma was present as a special guest. In his address, he appreciated the contribution of the retiring employees and said that Railway employees play an important role in the progress of our country and society and it is because of their hard work and commitment that the foundation of the nation is strengthened.

Vocalist Soma mesmerises audience

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Eminent vocalist and adopted daughter of Bhatat Ratna Ustad Bismillah Khan Padma Shri Dr Soma Ghosh from Mumbai mesmerised the audience on the second day of three-day Youth Festival Udaan-2025 organised by the Cultural Committee under IQAC at PN Singh Yadav Smriti auditorium of DAV PG College on Friday. As soon as the chief guest Soma sang in a melodious



voice amidst the chanting of 'Har Har Mahadev', everyone present in the auditorium was seen cheering. She captivated everyone with her melodious voice. In the beginning, she along with college manager Ajit Kumar Singh Yadav, executive principal Prof Mishri Lal and other dignitaries inaugurated the programme by lighting the lamp. After this, Soma directly interacted with the youth through ghazals and songs. First of all, she sang the ghazals 'Tumhe Dekhkar Lagta Hai Jaise, Baharon Ka Mausam Aaya Ho Jaise', 'Kisi Ki Muskurahaton Par Ho Nisaar, Jeena Isi Ka Naam Hai'. After this, she sang 'Hamri Aatriya Par Aaja Re Saawariya'. Thereafter she enthralled the audience by singing 'Jaane Kyun Aaj Tere Anjaam Par Rona Aaya'.

Rare surgery performed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Department of General Surgery, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) has performed one of the rare surgeries of its kind. Recently, a 16-year-old girl hailing from Jaunpur district, was operated upon for a rare disease - choledochal cyst by laparoscopic technique. She suffered from abdominal pain for the past six years and after running from pillar to post she finally reached the General Surgery OPD IMS-BHU. She was admitted there

in the unit of Prof Mumtaz Ansari and after a series of workup was diagnosed with a rare congenital anomaly of choledochal cyst which happens in one in a lakh children. In this disease the bile duct from liver becomes hugely dilated making it vulnerable to recurrent infection. Last month Prof Vivek Srivastava performed a seven-hour-long surgery on the girl. Prof Ansari said that though choledochal cyst surgery was not a new surgery in the department but we did it for the first time using laparoscopic technique via six 5 mm key holes which other-

were would have required a 15-20 cm long incision. According to surgeon Prof Srivastava though the surgery took a long time but the advantage of laparoscopic surgery was quite evident in terms of early recovery and discharge of patient. At present, the girl is healthy and happy at home, the surgeon claimed. The surgery was assisted by Dr Arvind, Dr Rajendra, Dr Sweta and Dr Ananya and the anaesthesia team led by Prof AK Paswan comprised Dr Abhay and Dr Urvashi. Nursing officers Anupama and Dinesh did the scrubbing and assisted during the surgery.

Study unveils vital insights into domestication history of pigs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A new study led by researchers from Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and five other collaborating institutions has unveiled significant insights into the domestication history of pigs in India suggesting that the region may host multiple distinct domestication centres. This comprehensive research utilised 239 complete mitochondrial genomes to explore the origins and evolution of Indian pig breeds. Historically, the domestication of pigs has been a subject of great interest and this study amplifies the discourse by illustrating at least three different domestic pig lineages in India. "The findings propose that north India may have been the site of an independent domestication event predating 5,000 years, challenging previously

held beliefs that suggested an influx from the near east, said Gyaneshwer Chaubey, gene scientist and lead author of the study. This new evidence supports the existence of local farmers in north India during the same era as the Indus Valley Civilisation, said the first author of the study, Shailesh Desai. Moreover, the research indicates a second lineage that appears to have arrived via the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, likely brought by early Austroasiatic-speaking populations from Southeast Asia around 3000 BCE. The third lineage, originating from Northeast India, reveals a complex genetic relationship influenced heavily by wild boar populations from China. "The findings from our study not only shed light on pig domestication in India but also illustrate the correlation between animal domestication and

human migration patterns," said Prof Alessandro Achilli from the University of Pavia, Italy. The study revealed a phylogenetic structure that includes at least eight haplogroups, two of which are geographically exclusive to India. These findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of how domesticated species have reflected human social developments across regions. This research opens new avenues in archaeology, genetics and anthropology, offering a clearer picture of the interactions and migrations that shaped South Asian agricultural history. The findings are published in the latest issue of Genome Biology and Evolution. Livestock scientist Dr Akhilesh Kumar Chaubey said, "Our study provides a foundational reference for future studies in animal domestication and human migration in South Asia."

Retiring with clean record is like award: DRM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 12 retiring employees were paid their final amount of ₹6,78,31,493 in a simple ceremony held on Friday at Bharatendu Auditorium Room of Varanasi Divisional Office of North Eastern Railway (NER) under the chairmanship of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vineet Kumar Srivastava.

On the occasion Senior Divisional Personnel Officer (SDPO) Sameer Paul, Senior Divisional Finance Manager (SDFM) Rajesh Kumar, Assistant Personnel Officer (APO) Virendra Yadav along with inspectors and employees of Accounts and Personnel departments were present.

In his presidential address, the DRM wished the retiring employees a healthy and happy life. He assured them that they should not consider themselves separate from the railways and can take help from branch officers of the Divisional Railway Manager's office any time to solve their problems. He said that during his tenure, he has seen a lot of development in the railways



Divisional Railway Manager Vineet Kumar Srivastava presenting a medal to a retiring employee in Varanasi

and along with that, he has also brought about continuous changes in himself to work on new technologies and only then he has been able to provide such a long railway service. Srivastava said that in this era of modernity, there have been many changes in the working of the railways and working in harmony with those changes and retiring with a clean record is also like an award in itself

which is far more than all other honours or awards. He advised the retiring employees to form a friend group or spend their time in social and religious work according to their interest. On this occasion, the divisional railway manager presented service medals to all the retiring employees. Senior Divisional Personnel Officer Sameer Paul honoured all the retiring employ-

ees by garlanding them and gave information in detail about the ID card, service certificate, medical facility, use of HRMS and all the documents related to PPO. He explained to them that they should use their receipts very thoughtfully and should not give it to the wrong person by getting influenced by anyone or organisation or by getting carried away by emotions.

Youth's body found in field

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The body of a 22-year-old youth was found lying in a wheat field located in Malapur village under Holagarh police station area. The villagers alerted the Holagarh police about the matter. The field located just 200 metres from the highway. On reaching the spot the police found that foam was coming out of the mouth of the deceased. The police took the body in their possession and sent it for post-mortem examination. Holagarh police is investigating the matter. The police is making inquiries in the surrounding areas to ascertain the identity of the deceased and the cause of death. Holagarh police station in charge, Ashok Kumar said that body had been taken into possession and sent to the mortuary for an autopsy. The exact cause of death will be known only after receiving the autopsy report, he added. In another incident, a student who went to bathe in Sangam

with his friends drowned in deep water on Friday evening. While trying to save him, both the friends also started drowning. However, when they raised an alarm, the water police personnel saved both the students. Thereafter the body of the drowned student Prabhath Chaturvedi was found. Water police in charge Janardan Sahni said that Prabhath died due to drowning while bathing in Sangam. Meanwhile a fire broke out in the closed office of slain mafia

don Atiq Ahmed in Chakia on Saturday. On getting information three fire brigade vehicles reached the spot. The fire was brought under control within half an hour. There were no casualties in this incident. The cause of the fire is not yet known. Station House Officer (SHO) Amit Singh said that the cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained. Since the office of the building was closed for long and an investigation will be conducted to find out how the fire broke out.

Implement agriculture budget in speedy way: PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called for expeditious implementation of the budgetary proposals for agriculture and rural development, urging stakeholders to focus on "action" instead of deliberating on a new budget. Addressing a post-budget webinar on 'Agriculture and Rural Prosperity', the Prime Minister emphasised that the budget reflects the government's new expansion of the vision for a "Viksit Bharat" with a consistent policy approach in its third term. "It is important to implement this year's budget in a speedy manner. The budget has been formed and our entire focus should be on the action," Modi said, adding that the stakeholders should identify "obstacles and shortcomings" in budget implementation. Modi said before the budget, inputs and suggestions from all stakeholders helped in framing it. "Now this budget needs to be implemented more effectively on the ground, and for a better outcome, the (stakeholders') role is even more crucial.

Agriculture is considered as the first engine of growth and the government is moving ahead with the twin target of achieving agricultural growth and rural prosperity, he said. Modi said the government is committed towards the goal of "Viksit Bharat" and the effort is to ensure no farmer is left behind and to advance every farmer. "We need to fully explore the country's agricultural potential and achieve more targets." The Prime Minister highlighted record achievements in the agriculture sector, noting that foodgrain production has increased from 265 Million Tonnes a decade ago to over 330 Million Tonnes currently. Similarly, horticulture production has grown to exceed 350 Million Tonnes. Modi specifically mentioned the PM Dhan Dhanya Krishi Yojana, describing it as "a very important scheme" for him. The initiative will focus on 100 districts with low crop yields, following the successful model of aspirational districts. "We have announced the setting up of a Makhana Board in Bihar. I urge all



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses post-budget webinar on agriculture and rural prosperity in Delhi

stakeholders to explore and promote diverse nutritional foods across the country and in the global market," he said. The Prime Minister highlighted ICAR's contributions, stating that between 2014 and 2024, more than 2,900 new varieties of foodgrains, pulses, and sugarcane and other crops were developed using modern tools and cutting-edge technology in the breeding programme. "You have to ensure these new varieties are available at affordable rates to farmers. We also need to ensure farmers'

produce is not affected by weather aberrations," Modi said. He mentioned that a central mission on high-yielding seeds has been announced in the budget. "I especially urge the private sector to become part of the seed chain to ensure high-yielding seeds reach small farmers." On pulses production, the Prime Minister acknowledged improvements but pointed out that India still imports 20 per cent of its domestic consumption needs. While the country has achieved self-sufficiency in

chickpeas (chana) and mung dal, Modi stressed increasing production of tur, urad and masoor through high-yielding varieties and hybrid seeds. The Prime Minister noted that approximately ₹3.75 Lakh Crore has been transferred directly to 11 crore farmers under the PM-KISAN scheme since its launch six years ago. The annual financial assistance of ₹6,000 is strengthening the rural economy. He mentioned that a farmer-centric digital infrastructure has been created to ensure the benefits of this scheme reach farmers across the country, eliminating any scope for intermediaries or leakages. Referring to the fisheries sector, Modi said, "In 2019, we had launched PM Matsya Sampada Yojana. It was an important step towards strengthening the value chain, creating infrastructure and modernisation. It helped improve production, productivity and post-harvest management in the fishery sector." "The sector has seen higher investment and results are before us: fish production and export have increased twofold. We are going to design a

framework for sustainable harnessing of fisheries from the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone and High Seas," he added. Modi urged stakeholders to explore ideas on ease of doing business in the fisheries sector while protecting the interests of traditional fishermen. "Our government is committed to enriching the rural economy", the Prime Minister said, adding that under the PM Awas Yojana-Gramin, crores of poor people are being provided with homes, and the Swamitva Yojana has given property owners 'Record of Rights'. He noted that the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana has benefited small farmers and businesses and also highlighted the progress in empowering self-help group. "We kept the target of 3 crore lakhpati didis. With our efforts, more than 1.25 Crore women have become lakhpati didis." The announcements in this budget for rural prosperity and development programs have created numerous new employment opportunities. Investments in skilling and technology are generating new opportunities, he added.

Probe ordered into plastic sheets use for idli steaming

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has directed Karnataka's State Food Safety Department to investigate reports of plastic sheets being used in the steaming process of idlis in some local restaurants. The move comes in response to concerns over food safety and hygiene, with the FSSAI urging swift action against any establishments found violating regulations. The State Food Safety Department has been directed to take immediate necessary action on the issue and implement strict measures against Food Business Operators (FBOs) or hotels found using plastic in food preparation, the FSSAI said in a statement. FSSAI, which is closely monitoring the situation, further said the practice of using plastic sheets raises significant food safety concerns due to the potential leaching of harmful chemicals from plastic into the food. "The use of low-quality or

non-food-grade plastics in food preparation, particularly under high temperatures, poses a serious health risk," FSSAI CEO G Kamala Vardhana Rao said. These low-grade plastics can release toxic substances such as bisphenol. A (BPA), phthalates, and other chemicals when exposed to high heat and can leach into food items, potentially causing adverse health effects, he said. FSSAI is working closely with the state food safety officials to investigate the matter thoroughly and ensure that stringent actions are taken against those who violate food safety regulations. FSSAI emphasises that the use of food-grade materials and hygienic practices are crucial in food preparation. The process of steaming idlis should be done as per convention or approved food-grade materials that do not pose a risk of chemical contamination. Idli batter is traditionally spread out on fresh cotton cloths, which are then placed on idli pans and steam-cooked.

India, EU discuss ways to accelerate FTA talks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

With India and the European Union (EU) setting the year-end deadline to conclude a free trade agreement, teams from both sides held discussions on Saturday to accelerate efforts towards a balanced and mutually beneficial pact. The meeting was held between Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and EU Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maros Sefcovic in Mumbai along with officials from both sides. "Our discussions focused on accelerating efforts towards a balanced and mutually beneficial free trade agreement. Looking forward to deepening economic ties and fostering a prosperous India-EU partnership," Goyal said in a post on X. On February 28, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen agreed to seal a much-awaited free trade deal by this year amid rising concerns over US President Donald Trump's policy on tariffs. The two sides are scheduled to hold the tenth round of negotiations for the FTA from March 10-14 in Brussels. Further strengthening of economic ties between the two is crucial in light of the threat from US President Donald Trump to impose higher tariffs. In the current uncertain global economic situation, India is the fastest-growing major economy. It is projected to grow at 6.4 per cent in 2024-25. In June 2022, India and the 27-nation EU bloc resumed the negotiations after a gap of over eight years. It stalled in 2013 due to differences over the level of opening up of the markets. Besides demanding



Union Minister Jayant Chaudhary

was \$137.41 Billion in 2023-24 (exports \$75.92 Billion, imports \$61.48 Billion), making it the largest trading partner of India for goods. The EU market accounts for about 17 per cent of India's total exports, while the EU's exports to India make up nine per cent of its total exports. In addition, the bilateral trade in services, in 2023, between India and the EU was estimated at \$51.45 Billion. The agreement is aimed at further boosting bilateral trade and investments between the two. The two sides are negotiating a free trade agreement, an investment protection agreement and an agreement on geographical indications (GIs). EU's investments in India are valued at over \$117 Billion with around 6,000 European companies present in India. India's investments in the EU are valued at around \$40 Billion.

NSDC to set up future skills centre at CCSU Meerut

STAFF REPORTER ■
NEW DELHI

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is setting up a state-of-the-art Centre of Future Skills, under NSDC Academy, at Chaudhary Charan Singh University (CCSU), Meerut to empower youth in new technology courses like artificial intelligence, machine learning, internet of things, healthcare or paramedical, and languages. In addition to this, the Sports Physical Education Fitness and Leisure Skills Council (SPEFL-SC) is also establishing a Manufacturing-cum-Training facility at CCSU, funded through CSR initiatives. On Saturday, two MoUs were signed in the presence of Jayant Chaudhary, Union Minister of State (I/C) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), and Minister of State for Education at the University

premises. The first MoU was signed between NSDC CEO and MD NSDC International, Ved Mani Tiwari and Vice Chancellor of CCSU Professor Sangeeta Shukla which aims to integrate skill development into mainstream education. The second agreement was signed between Tahsin Zahid, CEO of the SPEFL-SC, and Prof. Sangeeta Shukla, aimed at empowering 600 women candidates from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in the manufacturing-cum-training centre of badminton rackets and shuttlecocks. During the ceremony, Jayant Chaudhary, said "This Centre of Future Skills in Meerut is a great initiative to facilitate various valuable training for students in new-age courses like Artificial Intelligence, healthcare, Machine Learning etc. There are continuous attempts being made to provide the students with



Union Minister Jayant Chaudhary and others at the inauguration of the Future Skills Centre

opportunities and platforms for them to showcase their skills and talent. This partnership aims to provide hands-on training in high-demand sectors, integrating skill-based programmes with academic courses to enhance employability. Ved Mani Tiwari, CEO, NSDC and MD, NSDC International, added, "With the rapid evolution of technology, the workforce of tomorrow must be equipped with skills that align with industry demands. The Centre of Future Skills will help facilitate futuristic skills in both tech and non-tech

sectors, focusing on cutting-edge healthcare and paramedical technologies, and offering language courses to enhance international mobility. We will also be providing language or soft-skill courses through NSDC International to make this youth employable globally. NSDC International is enhancing youth employability by partnering with leading different governments across the world, positioning India as a global talent hub through strategic collaborations across sectors."

India to remain fastest growing economy: IMF

From page 1

These would include both tariff and non-tariff reduction measures. It further said that despite recent moderation, India's economic growth has remained robust, with GDP growth of 6 per cent y-o-y in the first half of 2024-25. Inflation has broadly declined within the tolerance band of the Reserve Bank (of 2 to 6 per cent), though food price fluctuations have created some volatility, the statement said. The financial sector, it added, has remained resilient, with non-performing loans at multi-year lows. Fiscal consolidation has continued, and the current account deficit has remained well contained, supported by strong growth in service

Delhi police's civil...

From page 1

"Therefore, Delhi Police is directed to sensitise their field officials to prevent the misuse of the provision of law and to remove the misconception that there is any need of permission from Police for carrying out any construction of building. However, the police authority will continue to assist and provide full support to all municipal officers and other municipal employees in the exercise of their lawful authority [Section, 475 of the DMC Act, 1957]," it said. In 2014, then police commissioner BS Bassi had noted that the police did not have an inherent authority to stop any unauthorised construction on their own and had issued a circular that asked police officers to restrict their roles to being 'eyes and ears' and only inform municipal authorities

98.18 per cent of ₹2000 notes returned, says RBI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Saturday said 98.18 per cent of the ₹2000 banknotes have been returned to the banking system, and only ₹6,471 crore worth such notes are still with the public. On May 19, 2023, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced the withdrawal of ₹2000 denomination banknotes from circulation. The total value of ₹2000 banknotes in circulation, which was ₹3.56 lakh crore at the close of business on May 19, 2023, declined to ₹6,471 crore at the close of business on February 28, 2025, RBI said. "Thus, 98.18 per cent of the ₹2000 banknotes in circulation as on May 19, 2023, has since been

returned," it said in a statement. The facility for deposit and/or exchange of the ₹2000 banknotes was available at all bank branches till October 7, 2023. However, this facility is still available at the 19 issue offices of the Reserve Bank of India. Since October 9, 2023, RBI issue offices are also accepting Rs 2000 banknotes from individuals and entities for deposit into their bank accounts. Further, members of the public can also send ₹2000 banknotes through India Post from any post office within the country to any of the Reserve Bank of India issue offices for credit to their bank accounts. The ₹2000 banknotes continue to be legal tender.

Out of your scope: Law ministry on ONOE

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The question of holding elections using ballot papers does not fall under the ambit of the joint committee of Parliament examining the two bills on simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies, the Union law ministry is learnt to have said. Reverting to the ballot paper system was a "suggestion" made by some of the members of the joint committee and the law ministry was to respond to it in writing. While the ministry's Legislative Department gave elaborate responses to a variety of questions posed to it by the committee, it did not give a direct reply on the suggestion on the ballot paper system. The ministry is learnt to have said that the suggestion on the use of the ballot paper system was "out of scope" of

the parliamentary panel. Sources explained that the committee is mandated to examine the bills on simultaneous polls — the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill — and give its report on whether they are sound enough for the purpose or need changes. Using electronic voting machines (EVMs) or ballot paper for casting votes is not the subject the panel is examining, they underlined. While the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill lays down a legal framework to hold the Lok Sabha and assembly polls together, the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill seeks to align the terms of legislative assemblies of Delhi, Puducherry and Jammu and Kashmir for the purpose of holding joint elections. Delhi, Puducherry, and

Jammu and Kashmir are the three union territories with legislative assemblies. The government has on multiple occasions told Parliament that it does not favour returning to the ballot paper system and the Supreme Court too has weighed in favour of using EVMs. The

top court recently rejected pleas for reviving paper ballots, holding that suspicions regarding tampering of voting machines were "unfounded". The sources said that while the ministry answered some of the questions, some others were sent to the Election

Avalanche rescue: 50 BRO workers saved, four dead

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The fear of the natural phenomenon explains the centuries-old practice of people living in Mana and adjoining villages to shift to lower areas of the valley after the onset of winter each year. Environmentalist and Chipko movement leader Chandi Prasad Bhatt said that except the main temple of Badrinath, a large area of Badripuri is highly vulnerable to avalanches. "If we look at the previous incidents of avalanches in this area, then Badripuri keeps suffering

damages due to avalanches almost every decade. In 2014, there was heavy damage due to an avalanche in the Narayan Parvat area in Badrinath," the Gandhi Peace Prize winner said. In the past, avalanches have caused loss of life and property not only in Badripuri but also in Mana and the adjoining villages, he said. Bhatt said a few years ago, in a meeting, the DRDO scientists working in this area, especially the scientists of 'SASA' from Himachal Pradesh, were requested that the areas most sensitive to avalanches should be identified.

EU backs Ukraine after Trump debacle

From page 1

Noem said, "I am so proud of our Commander-in-Chief. Thank you President @realDonaldTrump and @VP for standing up for America. We will not tolerate the political games and disrespect of America. America is back." Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth said, "Amen, Mr President" to a statement by Trump on X. Reacting to their spat, Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova wrote on Telegram on Friday that Zelensky's biggest lie of all his lies was his assertion in the White House that the Kyiv regime in 2022 was alone, without support. "How Trump and (Vice President JD) Vance held

back from hitting that scumbag is a miracle of restraint," she said. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Russia illegally and unjustifiably invaded Ukraine. "For three years now, Ukrainians have fought with courage and resilience. Their fight for democracy, freedom, and sovereignty is a fight that matters to us all. Canada will continue to stand with Ukraine and Ukrainians in achieving a just and lasting peace," Trudeau said. Prime Minister of Finland Petteri Orpo said he and the Finnish people stand firmly with Ukraine. "We will continue our unwavering support and work towards a just and lasting peace," he said. President of Latvia Edgars Rinkevics said Ukraine is a

victim of Russian aggression. "It fights the war with the help of many friends and partners. We need to spare no effort for just and lasting peace. Diplomacy sometimes is the art of the impossible in such difficult circumstances. Latvia stands with Ukraine," he said. Prime Minister of Luxembourg Luc Frieden said his country stands with Ukraine. "You are fighting for your freedom and a rules-based international order," he added. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk sent a message to Zelensky insisting, "Dear Ukrainian friends, you are not alone," while the office of Sweden's prime minister said: "You are not only fighting for your freedom but also for all of Europe." Dutch Foreign Minister

Caspar Veldkamp underlined support for Ukraine would come in the form of "whatever it takes, for as long as it takes." US Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi also criticised President Trump and Vice President Vance, saying their "belittling treatment" of President Zelensky today was a disgrace. "The American people stand with the people of Ukraine, even if our president would rather curry favour with Vladimir Putin and the Kremlin, and echo Russian talking points," he said. In the verbal exchange in the Oval Office that played out in front of the global media, Trump said to Zelensky, "You're gambling with the lives of millions of people. You're gambling with World

War Three. You're gambling with World War Three, and what you're doing is very disrespectful to the country, this country that's backed you far more than a lot of people say they should." The bilateral meeting between the two leaders unravelled in the Oval Office. When Zelensky referred to Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Crimea in 2014, Vance hit back saying, "I think it's disrespectful for you to come to the Oval Office to try to litigate this in front of the American media. ... You should be thanking the president for trying to bring you into this conference." Minutes after the showdown in the Oval Office ended, Trump said in a statement, "We had a very meaningful meeting in the White House today. Much was learned that

could never be understood without conversation under such fire and pressure. "It's amazing what comes out through emotion, and I have determined that President Zelensky is not ready for peace if America is involved because he feels our involvement gives him a big advantage in negotiations. I don't want an advantage, I want PEACE. He disrespected the United States of America in its cherished Oval Office. He can come back when he is ready for peace," Trump said. After departing the Oval Office, Zelensky said in a post on X, "Thank you America, thank you for your support, thank you for this visit. Thank you @POTUS, Congress, and the American people. Ukraine needs just and lasting peace, and we are working exactly for that."

Delhi snaps fuel for aged vehicles

From page 1

Severe air pollution in the national capital was one of several issues on which the ruling BJP and the Opposition Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) targeted each other during the 2025 assembly election campaign. According to reports, vehicle emission is one of the biggest reasons of air pollution in Delhi. Explosive motorisation, choking congestion and inadequate public transport services are undercutting the emission gains from technology measures in the transport

sector of the city. This has emerged from the new analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) that has shown how even after implementing the largest ever CNG programme for the public transport and local commercial transport, phasing out of 10-year-old diesel and 15-year-old petrol vehicles, restrictions on entry of non-destined trucks, introduction of Bharat Stage 6 emissions standards, and onset of the fleet electrification, vehicles are still the key polluter due to the growing mobility crisis.

Kurdish militants declare ceasefire in 40-year insurgency in Turkiye

AP ■ ISTANBUL

Kurdish militants who have waged a 40-year insurgency in Turkiye declared a ceasefire on Saturday in what could mark a significant boost to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government, two days after their imprisoned leader called for the group to disarm.

The announcement by the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, comes against the backdrop of fundamental changes in the region, including the reconfiguration of power in neighbouring Syria after the toppling of President Bashar Assad, the weakening of the Hezbollah militant movement in Lebanon and the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

The PKK declaration was published by the Firat News Agency, a media outlet close to the group, on Saturday. It referred to the insurgents' leader, Abdullah Ocalan, who has been imprisoned by Turkiye since 1999.

"We declare a ceasefire effective today to pave the way for the implementation of Leader Apo's Call for Peace and Democratic Society. None of our forces will take armed action unless attacked," it said,

referring to Ocalan by his nickname.

On Thursday, a delegation of Kurdish politicians announced Ocalan's call for the PKK to lay down its arms and disband after visiting him on his island prison earlier in the day.

The conflict between Turkiye and the PKK has led to tens of thousands of deaths since it began in 1984. The ceasefire is the first sign of a breakthrough since peace talks between the PKK and Ankara broke down in the summer of 2015.

In its statement, the PKK's executive committee said Ocalan's call indicated that a "new historical process has begun in Kurdistan and the Middle East". Kurdistan refers to the parts of Turkiye, Iraq, Syria and Iran inhabited by Kurds.

While stating that it would "comply with and implement the requirements of the call from our own side", the PKK emphasized that "democratic politics and legal grounds must also be suitable for success".

Ocalan's call came as the main pro-Kurdish political party in Turkiye has faced pressure, with several of its mayors being removed from office in recent months and replaced by gov-

ernment appointees.

The PKK also appealed for Ocalan to be released from Imrali prison, located in the Marmara Sea, to "personally direct and execute" a party congress that would lead to the militants laying down their arms.

The peace initiative between the Turkish state and the PKK, which is considered a terrorist organisation by Turkiye and its Western allies, was started in October by Erdogan's coalition partner, Devlet Bahçeli, a far-right politician who suggested that Ocalan could be granted parole if his group renounces violence and disbands.

Erdogan said Ocalan's message was a "new phase" in peace efforts in Turkiye.

"There is an opportunity to take a historic step toward tearing down the wall of terror that has stood between (Turkish and Kurdish peoples) thousand-year-old brotherhood," Erdogan said on Friday.

Some believe the main aim of the reconciliation effort is for Erdogan's government to garner Kurdish support for a new constitution that would allow him to remain in power beyond 2028, when his term ends.

Bahçeli has openly called for a

new constitution, saying it was essential for Turkiye's future that Erdogan remain in power.

Erdogan and Bahçeli are reportedly seeking parliamentary support from the pro-Kurdish People's Equality and Democracy Party, or DEM.

Ocalan, 75, wields significant influence in the Kurdish movement despite his 25-year imprisonment, during which the PKK has been led by top figures who have fled and found sanctuary in the Kurdish region in northern Iraq.

In Syria, Kurdish fighters — who have ties to the PKK — have been involved in intense fighting with Turkish-backed forces on the ground there.

The leader of the US-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces has said Ocalan's call for a ceasefire does not apply to his group in Syria.

The Turkish government, however, says all Kurdish groups it claims are tied to the PKK — whether in Turkiye, Syria or Iraq — must disband.

In recent years, the PKK has been limited to isolated attacks inside Turkiye as the Turkish military, backed by armed drones, has pushed PKK insurgents increasingly across the mountainous border into Iraq.

Federal workers start to get new email demanding their accomplishments

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Federal employees are starting to receive another email requiring them to explain their recent accomplishments, a renewed attempt by President Donald Trump and billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk to demand answers from the government workforce.

The plan was disclosed by a person with knowledge of the situation who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss it publicly. Originally expected to go out Saturday, the new request began landing in the inboxes of some employees late Friday.

The first email, which was distributed a week ago, asked employees "what did you do last week?" and prompted them to list five tasks that they completed. Musk, who empowered by Trump is aiming to downsize agencies and eliminate thousands of federal jobs, said anyone who didn't respond would be fired.

Many agencies, meanwhile, told their workforces not to respond or issued conflicting guidance.

The second email was expected to be delivered in a differ-

ent way, according to the person with knowledge of the situation, potentially making it easier to discipline employees for noncompliance.

Instead of being sent by the Office of Personnel Management, which functions as a human resources agency for the federal government but doesn't have the power to hire or fire, the email was to come from individual agencies that have direct oversight of career officials.

But a version of the email received late Friday by some employees at two separate agencies — with the subject line, "What did you do last week? Part II" — came from "hr@opm.gov," the same OPM address that sent the first version.

"Please reply to this email with approx. 5 bullets describing what you accomplished last week and cc your manager," the message read, adding that going forward, employees would be expect-

ed to submit a response each week by the following Monday at 11:59 p.m. Eastern.

It's unclear how national security agencies will handle the second email. After the first one, they directed employees not to write back because much of the agencies' work is sensitive or classified.

Less than half of federal workers responded, according to the White House.

The version viewed late Friday by The Associated Press reads in part: "If all of your activities are classified or sensitive, please write. All of my activities are sensitive." That may not eliminate all security concerns given that sending an email creates a digital footprint regardless of the message's content.

On Wednesday, at Trump's first Cabinet meeting of his second term, Musk argued that his request was a "pulse check" to ensure that those working for the government

have "a pulse and two neurons."

Both Musk and Trump have claimed that some workers are either dead or fictional, and the president has publicly backed Musk's approach.

Addressing people who didn't respond to the first email, Trump said "they are on the bubble," and he added that he wasn't "thrilled" about them not responding.

"Now, maybe they don't exist," he said without providing evidence. "Maybe we're paying people that don't exist."

In addition to recent firings of probationary employees, a memo distributed this week set the stage for large-scale layoffs and consolidation of programs.

The Education Department offered employees a \$25,000 buyout and warned of looming layoffs. An email sent to all agency workers gave them until the end of Monday to decide on the offer, which was touted as coming "in advance of a very significant Reduction in Force."

It was sent from the department's chief human capital officer.

The agency did not immediately offer comment.



No progress in talks on truce with Israel

AP ■ CAIRO

The latest round of talks on the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas has made no progress so far, and it was unclear whether the talks would resume on Saturday, a senior Hamas official said.

The first phase of the ceasefire, which paused 15 months of fighting in the Gaza Strip, saw the release of 33 hostages, including eight bodies, in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

Phase one expires on Saturday, but under the terms of the deal, fighting is not to resume while negotiations are underway on the second phase, which could end the war in Gaza and see the remaining living hostages returned home.

Officials from Israel, Qatar, Egypt and the United States have been involved in negotiations on the second phase in Cairo, with the goal of bringing an end to the war with the return of all remaining living hostages and the withdrawal of Israeli troops.

Hamas did not attend the talks,

but its position has been represented through Egyptian and Qatari mediators. Basem Naim, a member of Hamas' political bureau, told The Associated Press there had been "no progress" on finding a solution before Israeli negotiators returned home on Friday.

It was unclear whether those mediators were going to return to Cairo to resume talks on Saturday as has been expected, and Naim said he had "no idea" when negotiations might start again.

Hamas started the war with its October 7 2023 attack that left 1,200 dead in Israel. Since then, Israel's military offensive has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials, who do not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths but say that more than half the dead have been women and children.

The two sides agreed to the three-phase ceasefire deal in January, with the aim of bringing an end to the war.

On Friday, Hamas said that it "reaffirms its full commitment to implementing all terms of

the agreement in all its stages and details" and called on the international community to pressure Israel to "immediately proceed to the second phase without any delay or evasion."

In addition to phase two of the ceasefire, the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said last week that mediators in the talks were "also discussing ways to enhance the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, as part of efforts to alleviate the suffering of the population and support stability in the region."

Hamas has rejected an Israeli proposal to extend the ceasefire's first phase by 42 days, saying it goes against the truce agreement, according to a member of the group who requested anonymity to discuss the closed-door negotiations.

The Israeli proposal calls for extending the ceasefire through the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which started on Saturday, in return for an additional hostage exchange, the Hamas member said.

The UN food agency, the World Food Programme, said

Trump admin approves nearly USD 3 b arms sale to Israel

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Trump administration has approved a major nearly USD 3 billion arms sale to Israel, bypassing a normal congressional review to provide the country with more of the 2,000-pound bombs that it has used in the war against Hamas in Gaza.

In a series of notifications sent to Congress late Friday, the State Department said it had signed off on the sale of more than 35,500 MK 84 and BLU-117 bombs and 4,000 Predator warheads worth USD 2.04 billion.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio "has determined and provided detailed justification that an

emergency exists that requires the immediate sale to the Government of Israel of the above defence articles and defense services in the national security interests of the United States, thereby waiving the Congressional review requirements," the department said.

Deliveries are set to begin next year, it said.

Using the same justification, the department also said Rubio had approved another munitions sale to Israel worth USD 675.7 million to be delivered starting in 2028.

In addition, it said Rubio had approved the emergency sale of D9R and D9T Caterpillar bulldozers worth USD 295 million.

In a post on social media on Saturday that it reached 1 million Palestinians across Gaza during the deal's first phase.

The pause in fighting helped "restoring distribution points,

China reopens Mt Everest area in Tibet after January earthquake

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Saturday reopened the scenic area of Mt Everest, known as Mount Qomolangma, in the Tibet Autonomous Region after it was closed to the public following the January earthquake.

The area was closed on January 7 after a 6.8-magnitude quake struck Dingri, home to the northern base camp of the world's highest peak. The quake claimed 126 lives and left 188 others injured.

The scenic area was closed on the same day for the safety of tourists and staff.

In the Tibetan language, Mount Everest is known as Mount Qomolangma which forms the part of the border between China and Nepal.

Both countries settled their border dispute in 1961 with the boundary line passing through the summit of Mount Everest.

The Mt Everest area had not been affected by the quake, with no obvious ice falls, avalanches or geological changes being observed, said Ma Weiqiang, director of Mount Qomolangma Atmosphere and Environment Comprehensive Observation and Research Station under the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

"This shows the scenic area has the safe conditions necessary for reopening," Ma told state-run Xinhua news agency.

To prepare for the reopening, the local government formed a joint inspection working group



on January 22, which took 35 days to carry out comprehensive and meticulous inspections on important locations in the scenic area, he said.

"Only through comprehensive inspections could we ensure the safety of tourists when the scenic area reopened," said Pasang, a maintenance worker at the scenic area.

The local accommodation industry is also ready for the reopening. "All 35 rooms have been cleaned up and half of the rooms have already been booked," said Tsering Geden, a hotel owner in the county's Pasmu Village.

Last year, the scenic area of the world's tallest mountain received more than 547,600 domestic and overseas tourists — an increase of 18 per cent year on year, including 13,700 overseas tourists, mainly from Singapore, Malaysia, Germany and France, earning USD 15.3 million in revenue, the Xinhua report said.

Trump expected to sign order making English official language of US

AP ■ CAIRO

President Donald Trump is expected to sign an executive order designating English as the official language of the United States, according to the White House.

The order will allow government agencies and organizations that receive federal funding to choose whether to continue to offer documents and services in language other than English, according to a fact sheet about the impending order.

Trump had been expected to sign the order Friday. But by Friday night, the White House had not announced the order had been signed and did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment.

The executive order will rescind a mandate from former President Bill Clinton that required the government and organizations that received federal funding to provide language assistance to non-English speakers. Designating English as the national language "promotes unity, establishes efficiency in government operations, and creates a pathway for civic engagement," according to the White House.

More than 30 states have already passed laws designating English as their official language, according to US English, a group that advocates for making English the official language in the United States.

For decades, lawmakers in Congress have introduced legislation to designate English as the official language of the US, but those efforts have not succeeded.



A supporter of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol shouts during a rally to oppose his impeachment in Seoul, South Korea on Saturday. The letters read 'Impeachment invalid'. AP/PTI

Sunak, wife plan new math charity for children in England

PTI ■ LONDON

Former British prime minister Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty on Saturday revealed plans to set up a new charity focussed on improving the mathematics and numeracy skills among children and young people in England.

The Richmond Project, named after the North Yorkshire home and constituency Sunak continues to represent as a backbench Conservative Party member of Parliament for Richmond and Northallerton, will be launched later this year as a registered charity.

It marks the first major joint project by the couple, both 44, since Sunak left 10 Downing Street last year and will be aimed at helping schoolchildren build confidence in tackling numbers. "Later this year, Akshata and I will launch The Richmond Project — a new charity focussed on improving numeracy," Sunak announced on social media.

"Confidence with numbers transforms lives. It unlocks opportunity, fuels social mobility, and helps people thrive. But right now, too many struggle. More to come soon," he said.

Akshata Murty took to her Instagram to note that the

charity signifies their shared passion around the power of education.

"Maths anxiety is real, but opportunity starts with confidence! Later this year, we're launching The Richmond Project, a new charity focussed on helping more people build confidence with numbers — because we believe numeracy unlocks opportunity," she said.

"Right now, half of the working-age adults in the UK have low numeracy skills. That impacts everything like getting a job, managing household bills, even navigating daily life. Both of us have seen firsthand the power of education to

change lives. Now, we want to help more young people and adults build the confidence with numbers, ensuring a happier life."

The daughter of Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy said it was "early days" for the project but asked her followers to "watch this space" for more details.

During her time at Downing Street, Murty held a regular "Lessons at 10" programme to provide children from across the UK an opportunity to see behind the scenes of the famous black door — the office and residence of the British PM in London.

UK launches review to define Islamophobia

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK has launched a new review led by a former Opposition Conservative Party minister into anti-Muslim hate to provide the Labour Party government with a working definition of Islamophobia.

Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner said on Friday that former attorney general Dominic Grieve will bring his years of legal and government expertise to the role, which will also support a wider stream of work to tackle the "unacceptable incidents" of anti-Muslim hate crimes hitting the highest number on record in 2024.

The new working group has been tasked to deliver a definition of anti-Muslim hatred, referred to as Islamophobia, within six months.

"The rise in anti-Muslim hate crime is unacceptable and has no place in our society," said Rayner,

Secretary of State in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

"That's why we've committed to defining Anti-Muslim Hatred/Islamophobia, as a crucial step forward in tackling it and creating a society where everyone feels safe and welcome," she said.

Her ministry said the new working group will advise the government on how to best understand, quantify and define prejudice, discrimination, and hate crime targeted against Muslims.

"We know Islamophobia is as challenging to define as its existence is undoubted. We need to balance addressing the lived experience of those who are victims of it and the right of British Muslims to feel heard and protected as equal citizens of our country, with the unwavering requirement to maintain freedom of thought and expression under law for all," said Grieve.

"I welcome the government's decision to bring forward this needed work and I am hopeful that this commission will come up with principles in defining Islamophobia which are compatible with those requirements and can thus help support positive change in our country," he said.

The MHCLG officials said that alongside drawing on their own expertise, members of the working group will engage widely to ensure the definition accounts for the variety of backgrounds and experiences of Muslim communities across the UK. The group's proposed definition will be "non-statutory, designed to provide the government and other relevant bodies when it comes to religions, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus or Buddhists don't have special hate crime definitions endorsed / adopted by the government," noted a social media post

endorsed by the organisation this week. British Hindu groups had also raised concerns over plans for such a focus on Islamophobia that would not be "comprehensive and inclusive".

"The selective focus on protecting one religious group over others disregards the historical injustices, threats, and discrimination faced by Hindus and other communities," said Dipen Rajyaguru, Director of Diversity & Equality at the Hindu Council UK. Community organisation INSIGHT UK had called on the government to "formulate a better and inclusive plan to combat all religious hate including anti-Hindu hate".

Back in 2019, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims had proposed a definition of Islamophobia but the then Tory government had shelved it for further consideration over a lack of agreement.

Pope has coffee, rests after setback in recovery

AP ■ ROME

Pope Francis had coffee and was reading newspapers Saturday after an alarming setback in his two-week recovery from double pneumonia: Doctors had to put him on noninvasive mechanical ventilation following a coughing fit in which he inhaled vomit that needed to then be extracted.

Doctors said it would take a day or two to evaluate how and if the Friday afternoon episode impacted Francis' overall clinical condition. His prognosis remained guarded, meaning he wasn't out of danger.

In its morning update Saturday, the Vatican said the 88-year-old pope didn't have any further respiratory crises overnight: "The night has passed quietly,

the pope is resting." He had coffee in the morning for breakfast, suggesting that he was not dependent on a ventilation mask to breathe and was still eating on his own.

In the late Friday update, the Vatican said Francis suffered an "isolated crisis of bronchial spasm", a coughing fit in which Francis inhaled vomit, that resulted in a "sudden worsening of the respiratory picture". Doctors ascribed the vomit and placed Francis on noninvasive mechanical ventilation.

The pope remained conscious and alert at all times and cooperated with the maneuvers to help him recover. He responded well, with a good level of oxygen exchange and was continuing to wear a mask to receive supplemental oxygen, the Vatican said.

Champions Trophy: India to sharpen spin play against NZ

PTI ■ DUBAI

A seemingly invincible India will be eager to sharpen their spin game and give a run to second-line players ahead of the semifinal when they take on New Zealand in their last group match of the Champions Trophy here on Sunday.

A win in their last league match will help India top the Group A. But that position of pride is of little value because they are set to face either Australia or most likely South Africa in the last four, and both of them have handy spin units at their disposal.

Indian batters have not been really comfortable against spin despite two victories thus far in the event, and New Zealand, which also qualified for the semifinals, could offer them a tough challenge.

The star Indian batters were focusing more on playing out Bangladesh spinners Mehidy Hasan Miraz (0/37) and Rishad Hossain (2/38) without taking risks, and they followed the same approach against Pakistan leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed (1/28). But they will come up against



Pakistan's former cricketer Shahid Afridi displays the Champions Trophy in Karachi PTI

more wily customers in Mitchell Santner and Michael Bracewell on Sunday, and it could be their harshest test against spin yet in this event.

Both the Kiwi spinners are in fine fettle here, and could be even more effective on the worn out surface at Dubai.

Indian batters have been clever enough to milk spinners for singles and twos, while reserving

the big shots against pacers when the ball came much more quickly and predictably at them.

But they will face 20 overs from Santner and Bracewell while a few more of Glenn Phillips' part-time off-spin.

India do not have very fond memories of facing Santner and Phillips in a Test series at home late last year, which they lost 0-3, and now they have Bracewell

too to tackle. The off-spinner has been quite parsimonious so far, conceding just 3.2 runs per over across two matches.

So, the effectiveness of Shubman Gill, India's standout batter in ODIs of late, batting icon Virat Kohli, who made a morale-boosting 100 against Pakistan, Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul against them will have a telling impact on the outcome of the game.

And even beyond this match, considering the slowing-down nature of the decks at the DICS. Spinners to the fore

But there is a pleasing side to spinners' dominance here.

The selection of five spinners - Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarthy, Washington Sundar - was not viewed with any conviction ahead of the marquee event because of the overwhelming success pacers had at this venue in the past.

But what India encountered at Dubai are tired pitches after the venue hosted the ILT20 recently, vindicating the selection call to a large extent.

Praggnanandhaa scores first win in Prague Masters

PTI ■ PRAGUE

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa cruised to a smooth victory against Nguyen Thai Dai Van of Czech Republic, while Aravindh Chithambaram emerged as the sole leader, defeating top seed Wei Yi of China in the third round of the Prague Masters here.

It was a swift and commanding victory for Praggnanandhaa, widely regarded as the biggest favourite to win this tournament. It was a Nimzo-Indian defense and in Praggnanandhaa's words it was "just a position to play".

The middle game surfaced with Dai Van being on the defensive despite his extra pawn, a typical feature of the structure and the Indian navigated the complexities with ease.

The decisive moment came on the 14th move itself when Praggnanandhaa got an undeniable advantage and after that though the game took a few twists but the result was never in doubt.

Having played two draws in the first two rounds, it was an essential victory for Praggnanandhaa and he



achieved the final result in style. The Indian won a rook for a minor piece and when it comes to technicalities, no one can doubt the acumen of Praggnanandhaa.

"Yesterday (the second round) was nothing, in the first round I had a good position", was how the Indian reflected on his performance thus far.

While Praggnanandhaa scored his first win, compatriot Aravindh Chithambaram announced his arrival in the elite circles by entering the world top 20 in live ratings for the first

time. Aravindh showed deeper opening understanding in the Ragozin where the Chinese played as black.

The middle game approached with a dynamic balance but Aravindh out-calculated Yi and launched a king side attack, sacrificing two pawns on the other flank.

The game lasted 44 moves. The victory took Aravindh to 2.5 points out of a possible 3 on a day when American Sam Shankland lost to Vincent Keymer of Germany.

Gukesh attains career-best number three ranking

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's reigning world champion D Gukesh climbed to a career-high number three ranking, while compatriot R Praggnanandhaa broke back into the top 10 in the latest FIDE classical ratings released on Saturday.

The 18-year-old Gukesh, who has been in sublime form ever since he beat China's Ding Liren to clinch the world title in Singapore in December, has gained 10 points and now has a 2787 rating.

Gukesh, who lost the Tata Steel Masters in Wijk aan Zee to Praggnanandhaa on tiebreak, is behind second-placed Hikaru Nakamura (2802) while and Norway's Magnus Carlsen (2833) continues to be the top-ranked chess player in the world.

The Indian Grandmaster has overtaken compatriot Arjun Erigias and USA's Fabiano Caruana.

Erigias, who was the highest-ranked Indian for a long time, has moved down to fifth with a rating of 2777.

Hard on Pant not playing: Doeschate

PTI ■ DUBAI

India assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate has acknowledged that it has been really hard for ace wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant to be watching the ongoing Champions Trophy matches from the sidelines but "that's the nature of sport at this level".

Pant has not been a part of the playing XI in the last two group games, with India handing over the wicket-keeping duties to KL Rahul, who has performed remarkably well behind the stumps and provided solidity to the middle order.

"It's been very hard on Rishabh not playing. But that's the nature of sport at this level, Doeschate told reporters on Friday, when asked if having two quality keepers has been a good dilemma.

"KL has been good. He didn't get many chances... We've got to keep Rishabh up and running. We never know when we're going to need him. But certainly to have two wicket-keepers of that calibre is a nice thing to have."

Doeschate admitted that Sunday's match against New Zealand could be a contest of spin between the two sides.

"They (New Zealand) have four spinners as well, so it could be a contest of spin. Coming into the competition, we weren't expecting such an over-reliance on spin.

"But the guys have bowled nicely and the pitch has helped a little bit, so I'm sure it's going to be the same for the next game here tomorrow."

The South Africa-born former Dutch cricketer hinted that the team might ring in some changes in the bowling attack for its last group match against New Zealand.

At the same time, Doeschate said the side would not compromise on the balance as it also wants to top the group with an all-win preliminary campaign. New Zealand have also already qualified for the semifinals after two wins and Sunday's match will decide the Group A toppler.

"We've had two pretty tough training sessions, so that's been the preparation. In terms of the bench strength, I think the priority is making sure that we have our best guys available and fully fit for the second game (semifinal on March 4)," Doeschate said.

"But we also don't want to rest

them for another two days. So to get that balance right, we might just try to share the bowling out a little bit. But we obviously want to win against New Zealand as well.

"It's important that we keep that momentum going. And obviously to top the group as well. So the balance of those two things I just mentioned for the selection to be thought about," he added.

Asked about captain Rohit Sharma's fitness after an injury scare in the game against Pakistan, he said, "He's all right. You can see he's batting a little bit further than earlier. It's an injury he's had before, so he knows how to manage it really well."

On whether scoring has been difficult on the pitch here, he said, "I won't say difficult. I think we've become used to a standard where you score 320 without thinking too much about it. So getting to 320 has been difficult."

"The pitch has played slightly differently, in my opinion, in those two games. But there are probably like 280-290 pitches if you batter really well. So in the bigger picture, yeah, it's not like playing in Pakistan, where you expect to get 320-330.

Matthew Short likely to miss Champions Trophy semifinal

PTI ■ LAHORE

Australian opener Matthew Short will likely miss the Champions Trophy semifinal against either India or New Zealand after the in-form batter suffered a quad injury in the washed out match against Afghanistan here.

Short had scored a 15-ball 20 on Friday but had looked in visible pain before he was dismissed by Azmatullah Omarzai as Australia advanced to the semifinals with four points.

The 29-year-old white-ball player had scored 63 as Steve Smith's Australia had chased down England's mammoth 351 in their opening match of the Champions Trophy. Smith said he didn't think the star opener would be fit to play in next week's semifinal. "I think he'll be struggling. I think we saw tonight he wasn't moving very well. I think it's probably going to be too quick between games for him to recover," Smith said.

Australia could include in big-hitter Jake Fraser-McGurk as a like-for-like replacement in the

playing XI, though he suffered two failures in the recent one-day series in Sri Lanka.

All-rounder Aaron Hardie too could be an option, while the team also has Cooper Connolly as a travelling reserve in case Short is completely ruled out from the tournament.

"We've got a few guys there to come in to fill a job," added Smith. Australia will either play the semifinal against India in Dubai on Tuesday or against New Zealand on Wednesday in Lahore, as their opponents will only be known after Sunday's group clash between Rohit Sharma's side and the Black Caps in Dubai. Australia are currently leading Group B with four points but that can change if South Africa, who are on three points, defeat England in Saturday's final group tie in Karachi.

There is also an extremely remote possibility of Afghanistan finishing second behind Australia in the group and qualifying, but only if Jos Buttler's England crush South Africa, which statistically, looks highly unlikely.

South Africa qualifies for semifinals

PTI ■ KARACHI

South Africa secured their place in the Champions Trophy semifinals after hammering a struggling England by seven wickets in the last Group B match here on Saturday.

South Africa first dismissed England for just 179 before comfortably chasing down the target with 20.5 overs to spare. England, already eliminated from the semifinal race, needed a victory by at least 207 runs to give Afghanistan a chance of qualifying for the last-four stage based on net run-rate.

However, South Africa quickly quashed any hopes, bundling out their opponents for the lowest total of the tournament this edition in just 38.2 overs. Marco Jansen (3/39) shone with the new ball, while Wiaan Mulder (3/25) and Keshav Maharaj (2/35) applied pressure throughout the middle overs, ensuring that South Africa's knockout berth was secured even before the run chase began.

South Africa completed the chase with ease, reaching 181/3 in 29.1 overs, thanks to



impressive fifties from Heinrich Klaasen (64) and Rassie van der Dussen (72 not out). Klaasen and van der Dussen added 127 runs for the third wicket.

With this victory, South Africa joined Australia in the semifinals from Group B. The Proteas topped the group with five points from three matches ahead of Australia (4 points). The semifinal line-up will be confirmed after the final Group A match between India and New Zealand on Sunday. Chasing 180 for a win, South Africa lost opener Tristan Stubbs (0) early, with Jofra Archer cleaning him up. Ryan Rickelton (27) played a quick-fire knock, smashing five boundaries to keep the scoreboard ticking.

Once Rickelton was dismissed by Archer, van der Dussen and Klaasen settled in and built a vital partnership, taking South Africa closer to the target. Klaasen, returning to action after missing earlier matches due to a soft tissue injury to his left elbow, played an aggressive knock, hitting 11 boundaries in his 56-ball innings. Van der Dussen hit six fours and three maximums during his unfinished innings. Six runs from the target, Klaasen was caught by Saqib Mahmood off Adil Rashid (1/37) for a consolation wicket. David Miller then clobbered a six to knock off the winning runs and seal the victory. In his final game as England's ODI captain, Jos Buttler won the toss and chose to bat, but the decision backfired as Jansen wreaked havoc early, reducing England to 37 for 3 by the seventh over. Opener Phil Salt (8) top-edged a rising Jansen delivery, while Jamie Smith (0) failed to handle a short ball and followed Salt back to the pavilion. Ben Duckett (24) then perished to a caught-and-bowled effort by Jansen, as England's top-order collapsed.

Shami likely to be rested against NZ

PTI ■ DUBAI

The presence of five left-handed batters in the New Zealand line-up and the slight calf trouble faced by Mohammed Shami during the Pakistan game may force the Indian team management to play left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh in the Sunday's Champions Trophy game.

If the Friday's practice session was an indication, then the Punjab pacer in all likelihood will replace Shami, who has recently returned to the national fold following a long injury lay-off.

Arshdeep trained under the watchful eyes of bowling coach Morne Morkel, bowling 13 overs with full run-up while Shami only bowled six-seven overs with a curtailed run-up. He was not bowling full steam.

During the game against Pakistan on February 23, Shami had received treatment in his right leg from the physios just after bowling his third over of the innings.

The body language of the players during the training session on Friday suggested that India are likely to give Shami a much-needed break before all important semi-finals. While KL Rahul in his interaction with media was not very sure if India would alter the winning combination despite the temptation, assistant coach Ryan Doeschate, later in the evening, hinted that the bowling line-up could be changed a bit.

Prior to India's important ICC Champions Trophy 2025 Group A match against New Zealand on Sunday, assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate confirmed that Rohit Sharma is effectively managing his injury.

Afghanistan could win ICC tournament in next decade: Steyn

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

South Africa pace legend Dale Steyn reckons the fast-rising Afghanistan can go on to win an International Cricket Council (ICC) limited-overs tournament in the next decade if their players learn how to play patiently.

Overcoming war and instability in their nation, the Afghanistan cricket team has evolved from an affiliate member to a formidable force in white-ball tournaments. They almost reached the knockouts in the 2023 ODI World Cup, defeating former champions England, Sri Lanka and Pakistan while they were the semifinalists at last year's T20 World Cup, where they knocked out Australia.

"We live in a time now where people are not patient enough. We can hardly watch two seconds on an Instagram story and it just feels like the Afghanistan players



are similar when they're playing their cricket," Steyn said on ESPNcricinfo.

"Patience is one of the biggest things that Afghanistan players need to learn, and once they get that down, honestly, in the next decade, they could win ICC tournaments, for sure."

"They want things to happen so quickly. This ball must be a wicket, there's no patience to building up and taking a wicket.

However, the loss to South Africa in their opener cost them dearly as the "virtual quarterfinal" against Australia was washed out 13 overs into the second innings with both teams splitting points.

Mathematically the Afghans can still qualify if England beat South Africa by a huge margin on Saturday, but the chances of that happening are minimal as the Proteas have a healthy 2.140 net run rate compared to Afghanistan's -0.990.

The South African feels playing four-day first-class cricket could teach the Afghanistan players how to build their innings, which will also help them improve their game in the 50-over format.

"Back in the day, a lot of players would go play county cricket. Or they would go play first-class cricket to improve their skills and improve their patience really," Steyn said.

The batters are the same sometimes, they're batting in the first over. There's so much movement happening in the crease, so they're trying to hit a six and they're trying to get the game going," Steyn noted.

At the Champions Trophy, the Afghans were in a three-way battle to reach the semifinals with Australia and South Africa after the Hashmatullah Shahidi-led side defeated England.

Shreyas Iyer gifts net bowler Jaskiran a pair of shoes

PTI ■ DUBAI

It was a special moment for one of the net bowlers Jaskiran Singh at the ICC Cricket Academy here when India top-order batter Shreyas Iyer walked up to him and gifted him a pair of spikes during a Champions Trophy practice session.

Jaskiran, a chartered accountant by profession and an avid cricket lover, was fielding at long-off when Iyer came up to him and asked, "Paaji kya haal-chaal, sab badiya? (Brother how are you? Everything fine?)"

"Shreyas bhai came up to me and asked 'what's your show size?' I said '10', and then he said 'I've got something for you and he gave me these spikes. It really means a lot,' Jaskiran, who is one of the ICC net bowlers for the Champions Trophy, told PTI Videos.

Jaskiran bowled to the Pakistan and Bangladesh batters during their net sessions. He was disappointed when he was not chosen for the India nets as there were already enough off-spinners for Rohit Sharma's side.

But disappointment turned into delight when Iyer, probably sensing that the spinner looked dejected, approached Jaskiran and gifted him a pair of his shoes.

"I am a part of the ICC net bowling team for the Champions Trophy. Today was one such special moment of my life. Received these spikes from Shreyas Iyer. "In this tournament, I've fielded for them (India) but was waiting for an opportunity to bowl to them. I've bowled to Pakistan and Bangladesh; that was a really good experience. And then this, coming from Shreyas Bhai means a lot," said

Jaskiran. "The team relies on him in the event of a top-order collapse. This really means a lot and the day was special today," he added.

Iyer scored a fine half-century in the marquee match against Pakistan, which India won by six wickets to seal a place in the Champions Trophy semifinal. Jaskiran added that he would love to bowl to Rishabh Pant, who is a left-handed batter.

"Every batter in Team India is special, but someone whom I look up to is Rishabh Pant because he is a lefty and due to the natural angle, the ball will go away from him. So, I would really love to bowl to him. "We have been with Team India since the first session and today is the fourth. Shreyas bhai is really joyful around the field and every time the ball comes to me, he's like 'catch it,'" added Jaskiran.

East Bengal needs two wins to keep playoff hopes alive

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Chasing a first-ever playoffs berth, East Bengal find themselves in a must-win situation when they face former champions Bengaluru FC in an Indian Super League (ISL) match here on Sunday.

Currently eighth in the table with 27 points from 22 matches, the Red-and-Gold brigade have already won three consecutive games and now must win their remaining two to achieve a perfect five-out-of-five run and keep their playoff hopes alive.

The Blues have already confirmed their qualification, which puts additional pressure on East Bengal to produce an unblemished record in the remaining matches.

The Oscar Bruzon side recently registered their fourth home clean sheet in a 2-0 victory over Hyderabad FC, boosting



their season tally to six, a performance level they must build on in the upcoming fixtures.

In previous matches, East Bengal and Bengaluru have split their nine face-offs evenly, with four wins apiece and one draw. Sunday's clash offers East Bengal a crucial opportunity not only to extend their unbeaten run but also to finally secure a league double

over Bengaluru - a feat they are yet to achieve this season.

With four goals and three assists this season, East Bengal FC's Vishnu Puthiya has had a productive campaign, in addition to making 34 successful dribbles and 60 recoveries too.

Bruzon assured that his team will keep battling for a spot in the top-six right until the end. "If you ask me, no doubt, we

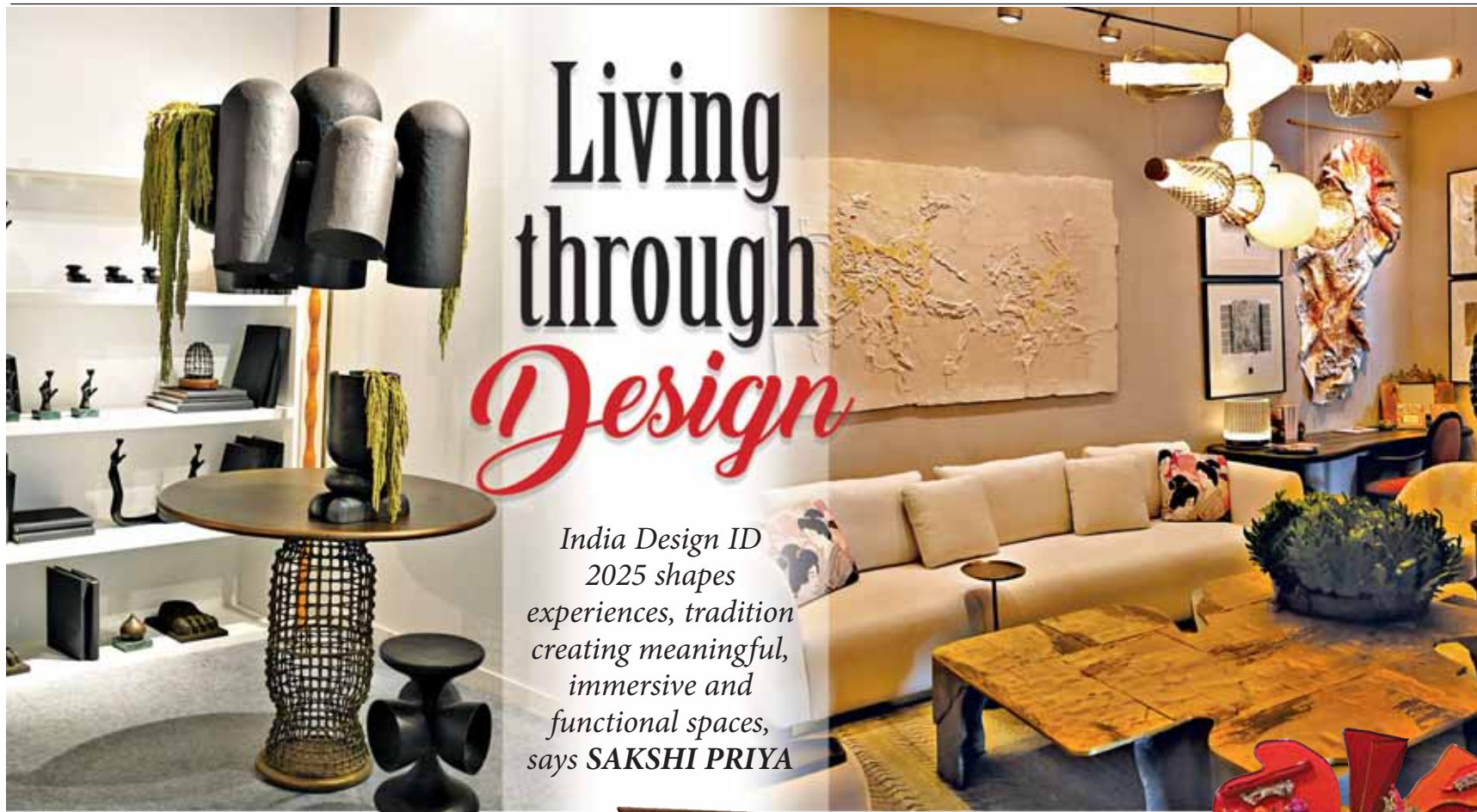
want to make it but it depends on other results. We are not going to stop fighting until our last breath," he said.

Like East Bengal, Bengaluru FC are on the back of winning three ISL matches while keeping clean sheets, and their form continues to make them a formidable opponent even as they rest on their playoffs qualification.

With key contributions from players like the talismanic Sunil Chhetri and Alberto Noguera, the Blues have also made a mark with strong domestic performances, further solidifying their standing in the league.

Bengaluru FC head coach Gerard Zaragoza outlined his team's ambitions for the remaining matches.

"We are focused on finishing as high as possible. Our target right now is to win the next two games," he said.



Living through Design

India Design ID 2025 shapes experiences, tradition creating meaningful, immersive and functional spaces, says SAKSHI PRIYA

DESIGN AS AN EXPERIENCE
Each space, each installation and each curated object tells a story not only of creation but of intention. The event brings together over 150 leading Indian and international brands showcasing innovations in home décor and accessories. Its gist lies in its ability to humanise design.



Design is a language that shapes the way people experience the world. At India Design ID 2025 this language speaks in bold forms, tactile surfaces and immersive spaces that challenge perception and celebrate ingenuity. The 13th edition of India's most definitive design fair, it is a living breathing conversation between heritage and modernity function and emotion material and memory.

This year's ID Exhibit is a sensory journey. The tactile richness of handwoven textiles, the raw honesty of sustainable materials and the sleek precision of contemporary craftsmanship all coalesce into a seamless experience. The pavilions Experience Editions Collectibles Installations and Art feel less like a trade fair and more like a series of curated worlds. The act of moving through space itself becomes an interaction with design.

Renowned names like KoKo by K2 India Atelier Ashish Shah VIYA OOR-JAA and Sansar by D'Décor present work that blur the lines between tradition and modernity. A handcrafted lamp is an object of illumination and a dialogue between maker and material between time-honoured techniques and contemporary sensibilities.

Beyond visual splendour India Design

ID 2025 is a place for discourse. The ID Symposium is where design moves beyond the tangible becoming a space for ideas innovation and introspection. This year's speaker's global visionaries such as Kulapat Yantrasast Salma Samar Damluji and Tarun Tahiliani engage in conversations that reveal how design evolves in response to global challenges.

One of the most thought-provoking segments is ID Collectible which examines design at the intersection of art and architecture. These limited-edition pieces are functional and sculptural, questioning the essence of everyday objects. Each piece is a moment in time a reflection of the designer's philosophy and an invitation to the viewer to engage in a deeper dialogue with the object.

In a world of fast design where trends change as quickly as digital feeds refresh ID Special Projects provides a grounding force. TRANSITION curated by Misha Bains explores the humble chair as a metaphor for change featuring 45 unique interpretations by 45 designers. From sculptural to functional restrained

to avant-garde this exhibit becomes a meditation on the way people interact with everyday objects.

Equally compelling is INDIA BY DESIGN curated by Srila Chatterjee which takes visitors into the heart of India's artisanal heritage. Here centuries-old crafts meet contemporary perspectives proving that tradition is not static but constantly evolving. The human touch so often lost in mass production is appreciable in every handwoven textile, every intricately carved wooden piece, every stroke of natural dye on fabric.

India Design ID 2025 is about how people feel. It is a reminder that good design is functional, beautiful and meaningful. In an era where digital screens often mediate interactions with the world, events like this remind people of the irreplaceable value of the tangible, the handcrafted and the thoughtfully made.

New Era of Corporate Cricket with ICBT20



BY TEAM VIVA

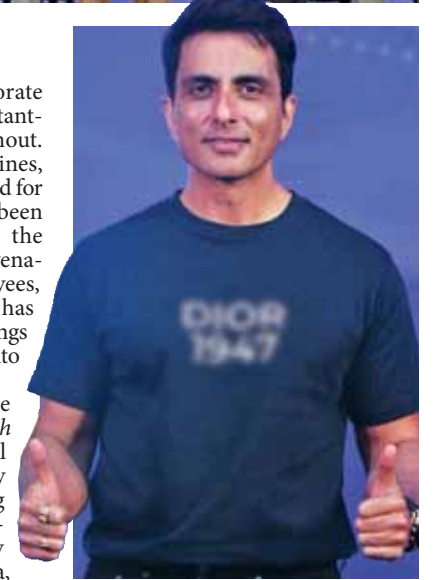
In today's fast-paced corporate world, professionals are constantly battling stress and burnout. With endless meetings, deadlines, and high-pressure targets, the need for a balanced lifestyle has never been more critical. Recognising the need for relaxation and rejuvenation among corporate employees, a groundbreaking initiative has been launched in India that brings the thrill of T20 cricket right into the corporate arena.

The grand launch of the India Corporate T20 Bash (ICBT20), an innovative annual cricket league specifically designed for top-performing young corporate and private sector players. Conceptualised by Now & Eminence Netrasup India, the event marked its official inauguration with the unveiling of a dynamic new logo and sleek jersey.

Bridging the Gap Between Work and Play

The ICBT20 Bash is not just a sporting event; it is a movement aimed at striking the perfect balance between work and life. By bringing together corporate professionals from across the country, the league emphasises the importance of health, fitness, and mental well-being—cornerstones of a productive and fulfilling career. As corporate employees step out of their boardrooms and onto the cricket pitch, they get a chance to channel their competitive spirit and relieve work-induced stress in the most exhilarating way possible.

The launch event in Delhi was graced by several eminent personalities from both the sports and corporate worlds. Herschelle Gibbs, the renowned former South African cricketer and current ICBT20 Brand Ambassador. Adding to the star power



were notable figures such as actor Sonu Sood and Vinod Kumar Tiwari, along with a roster of distinguished mentors including Tillakaratne Dilshan, Jesse Ryder, Kieth Ingram, Dharmika Prasad, and Jerome Chinnia.

The inaugural season of the ICBT20 Bash will see six formidable franchise teams—Bengaluru Avengers, Delhi Kings, Gurugram Spartans, Gujarat Diamonds, Hyderabad Royals, and Mumbai Champions—competing over 18 thrilling matches in an 8-day marathon at the Yamuna Sports Complex in Delhi. The league promises to deliver over 64 hours of live cricket action, with matches broadcasted on prominent channels such as Reliance Entertainment Network, DD Sports, and OTT WAVES.

The India Corporate T20 Bash is a visionary platform that encourages corporate employees to step away from their hectic routines and embrace the therapeutic power buzz among corporate cricket.

From Dolby Theatre to the World

The Oscars are more than just an awards show; it is a moment where the global cinematic community comes together to celebrate the power of storytelling, writes ABHI SINGHAL



The Oscars, a stage that represents cinema and cinematic excellence on a global platform are steeped in rich history. Officially known as the Academy Awards, they were first presented in 1929, since then becoming a living example to the enduring power of films. Since then, the event has turned into a spectacle, a celebration of glamour, artistry and dedication that goes into creating memorable motion pictures.

This year, 2025 will be the 97th Academy Awards. Oscars will once again grace the iconic Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles. This venue has become synonymous with the Oscars, its grandeur perfectly complementing the prestige of the event.

This year's nominations promise a thrilling ceremony, with a diverse range of films vying for the coveted golden statuettes. From the captivating narratives of 'Emilia Pérez' and 'A Complete Unknown' to the visually stunning 'Dune: Part Two' and the whimsical world

INDIA AT OSCARS 2025

- Anuja, the shortfilm, backed by Guneet Monga and Priyanka Chopra, has secured an Oscar nomination in the Best Live Action Short Film category.
- 'Anuja' is among only five films selected from 180 eligible entries.

Guneet Monga has a strong Academy Awards connection, producing Oscar-winning films like *Period. End of Sentence* and *The Elephant Whisperers*, and now, *Anuja* is nominated.

INDIAN BROADCAST TIMINGS
Time: Monday, March 3rd 2025 - 5:30 AM
Platform: Live on Star Movies and JioHotstar

The movies we make, they matter. They remind us of who we are, where we've come from, and where we're going.' - TOM HANKS

of 'Wicked,' the nominees reflect the breadth and depth of cinematic achievement. The acting categories are equally compelling, featuring stellar performances that have captivated audiences worldwide.

The Oscars 2025 nominations showcase a diverse and compelling slate of films, highlighting exceptional talent across various categories. Leading the pack, 'Emilia Pérez' garnered significant attention with nominations in multiple categories, including Best Picture, International

Feature Film, and several craft categories like Cinematography, Costume Design, Film Editing, Makeup and Hairstyling, Music (Original Score and Song), and Sound. Its unique blend of musical and narrative elements, coupled with strong performances, explains its widespread recognition.

'Wicked' received strong nominations in Animated Feature Film, Actress in a

Leading Role (Cynthia Erivo), Actress in a Supporting Role (Ariana Grande), Costume Design, Film Editing, Makeup and Hairstyling, Music (Original Score), Production Design, Sound, and Visual Effects. The film's impressive technical achievements and beloved source material contributed to its success. 'A Complete Unknown' also stands out, securing nominations for Best Picture, Directing (James Mangold), Actor in a Leading Role (Timothée Chalamet), Actor in a Supporting Role (Edward Norton), Actress in a Supporting Role (Monica Barbaro), Costume Design, Sound, and Writing (Adapted Screenplay). The film's compelling storytelling and strong ensemble cast have resonated with voters.

Animated features like 'Inside Out 2,' 'Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl,' and 'The Wild Robot' also earned nominations.

Whether you're a seasoned cinephile or a casual moviegoer, the Oscars offer a glimpse into the magic of filmmaking, a reminder the power of the screen.



SUGGESTED BINGES

<p>Dabba Cartel IMDB Rating - 7/10 OTT - Netflix Cast - Shabana Azmi, Jyothika, Shalini Pandey, Shibani Akhtar, Gajraj Rao</p>	<p>Running Point IMDB Rating - 7.4/10 OTT - Netflix Cast - Kate Hudson, Brenda Song, Drew Tarver, Scott MacArthur</p>	<p>Suzhal - The Vortex Season 2 OTT - Amazon Prime Video Cast - Aishwarya Rajesh, Kathir</p>	<p>Aashram Season 3 Part 2 OTT - Amazon MX Player Cast - Bobby Deol, Chandan Roy Sanyal, Aditi Sudhir Pohankar, Darshan Kumar</p>	<p>Ziddi Girls IMDB Rating - 7.4/10 OTT - Amazon Prime Video Cast - Shivangi Vyas, Gaurangi Vyas, Niharika Kundu</p>
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the pioneer agenda

"Life is too short to drive boring cars"
— ELVIS PRESLEY



VINTAGE CARS: THE ROYAL TOUCH

The erstwhile Maharajas of India had a deep fascination with luxury cars, particularly Rolls-Royce, which symbolised their opulence, status and power. During the early 20th century, Indian royalty became one of the biggest patrons of Rolls-Royce, commissioning custom-built models adorned with gold, ivory and exquisite embellishments. It is estimated that more than half of the Rolls-Royce cars produced in the world during that era were made for Indian Maharajas. These cars were not just transport; they showcased wealth, used in ceremonies, hunting, and even garbage collection.

THE TIMELESS CHARM OF

Vintage Cars

The passion for vintage cars in India is no longer limited to a select few; it has evolved into a nationwide obsession, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**, captured by **PANKAJ KUMAR**



THE RIGOROUS JUDGING PROCESS WAS LED BY A DISTINGUISHED INTERNATIONAL PANEL FEATURING VINTAGE AUTOMOBILE EXPERTS SUCH AS CHRISTIAN KRAMER, WHITNEY OVEROCKER, SHINICHI EKKO, ALEX VON MOZER AND ALLAN WINN.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF OLD CARS

Contrary to popular perception not all cars are vintage cars. Old cars are classified into different categories based on the era of their manufacture, reflecting historical and technological advancements in automobile design. Here's a rundown of the key classifications:

- VETERAN CARS (PRE-1905)**
 - Also known as the Brass Era or Pioneer Era cars.
 - Characterized by hand-built craftsmanship, steam, electric, and early gasoline engines.
 - Example: 1886 Benz Patent-Motorwagen, the first car by Karl Benz.
- EDWARDIAN CARS (1905-1918)**
 - Named after King Edward VII's reign in Britain.
 - Marked by improvements in internal combustion engines, the introduction of the steering wheel (replacing tillers), and mass production.
 - Example: Ford Model T (1908), which revolutionized the automobile industry with assembly line production.

- VINTAGE CARS (1919-1930)**
 - Cars produced between World War I and the Great Depression.
 - More advanced engineering, stronger steel chassis, and luxurious coachbuilding.
 - Example: Rolls-Royce Phantom I (1925), Bugatti Type 35.
- PRE-WAR CARS (1931-1945)**
 - Includes both Depression-Era Cars and World War II Vehicles.
 - Innovations like independent suspension, hydraulic brakes, and streamlined designs.
 - Example: Cadillac V16, Mercedes-Benz 540K, Volkswagen Beetle (designed in the late 1930s).

- POST-WAR CLASSIC CARS (1946-1959)**
 - The post-WWII era saw major automotive growth with more stylish designs, tailfins, and the introduction of muscle cars.
 - Examples: Chevrolet Bel Air, Jaguar XK120, Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing.
- Classic Cars (1960-1979)**
 - Covers muscle cars, early supercars, and the transition to modern engineering.
 - Examples: Ford Mustang (1964), Porsche 911 (1964), Lamborghini Miura (1966).

- MODERN CLASSICS OR YOUNGTIMERS (1980-1999)**
 - These are not officially vintage yet but are recognized as emerging classics.
 - Includes early supercars, high-performance sedans, and experimental designs.
 - Examples: Ferrari F40 (1987), McLaren F1 (1992), BMW E30 M3.

Each of these categories reflects the evolving design, engineering, and cultural significance of automobiles throughout history.

Love for Vintage cars is no less than a romance of a lifetime. The person who falls for the beauty and demeanour of these old ladies has a love of a lifetime. For the uninitiated, recall Farhan Akhtar of the iconic Bollywood movie Zindagi namilegidobara who goes nuts just seeing these old cars in bright colours of red and sky blue. From the stunning curves of a 1929 Rolls-Royce Phantom II to the bold presence of a 1954 Chevrolet Bel Air, these 'old ladies' have a charm that is unmatched. Over the past few decades, the passion for vintage cars has seen a remarkable surge in India, with collectors and enthusiasts taking this love to new heights.

For many vintage car enthusiasts, the fascination goes beyond aesthetics. These cars represent a bygone era of luxury, precision engineering and hand-crafted beauty. Owning and restoring a vintage car is akin to preserving a piece of history, with each vehicle carrying a unique story. Be it the grandeur of a Buick Super Eight or the timeless appeal of a Hindustan Landmaster, vintage cars have a soul that resonates deeply with collectors.

The Growth of Vintage Car Culture in India

In recent years, India has witnessed a rising trend in vintage car appreciation. What was once a niche hobby has now turned into a thriving community of collectors, restorers, and automobile historians. Vintage car rallies, exhibitions, and heritage drives have become a common sight in cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Hyderabad. Events such as the 21 Gun Salute International Vintage Car Rally and the Cartier Concours d'Elegance have provided a platform for enthusiasts to showcase their prized possessions. Moreover, social media has played a crucial role in connecting vintage car lovers across the country.

Challenges and Triumphs of Restoration

Unlike modern vehicles with readily available spare parts, vintage cars often require extensive research and sourcing of original components. In India, restorers and mechanics specialising in vintage cars have become increasingly sought after. Cities like Chennai and Pune have seen the rise of skilled craftsmen who can meticulously rebuild engines, repair bodywork and replicate period-correct interiors. Interestingly enough the earlier cars were made of wood and a metal sheet was plastered over it to give a metallic look. Besides their spoke wheels and their carriage style gave them a majestic look. Many of these cars are painstakingly restored and are at display in Heritage Transport Museum in Delhi NCR. "Restoring old cars is like preserving a piece of history. It's a meticulous process to bring them back to their original glory," says Tarun Thakral, whose passion brought the Heritage Transport Museum to life. Despite the challenges, the joy of seeing a beautifully restored classic on the road is unparalleled.

Preserving Automotive Heritage

With the growing interest in vintage cars, there is also a renewed focus on preserving India's automotive heritage. Museums and private collectors are working to document and showcase the evolution of automobiles in India. Efforts are being made to protect historically significant vehicles from being scrapped or lost to time.

Vintage car clubs, restoration garages and automobile historians are ensuring that the legacy of these "old ladies" continues to thrive. Their dedication highlights that these cars are symbols of history, art and engineering excellence.

Tarun Thakral, Founder and Managing Trustee of the Heritage Transport Museum.



THE 21 GUN SALUTE: CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE

To honour vintage cars, numerous rallies are organised across the country throughout the year, with some gaining increasing popularity. One such event is the 21 Gun Salute. The heart of New Delhi witnessed an

extraordinary spectacle as the 11th edition of the 21 Gun Salute Concours d'Elegance. A breathtaking parade of over 125 rare vintage cars and 50 vintage motorcycles, capturing the essence of India's rich motoring history.

The event featured an impressive lineup of iconic vehicles, including the 1939 Delahaye, the 1903 De Dion Bouton-one of the oldest cars in the concours-the 1917 Ford Model T Roadster and the regal 1935 Cadillac Fleetwood. The three day event concluded at the Leela Ambience, Gurugram. The coveted Best of Show award was claimed by the majestic 1922 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost of Mayurbhanj princely state, owned by Dhanraj Gidwani since 1992. Gidwani remarked, "All the cars in this event are special and priceless." The 1935 Buick 90L (ex-Ayodhya), owned by Diljit Titus, secured first prize in the Post-War American Coupe category.

A GROWING INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

This event is a tribute to India's motoring legacy. Besides the sentimental value, vintage cars have also emerged as lucrative investments. As the demand for well-maintained classics rises, so does their market value. Collectors are willing to pay a premium for rare models, and auctions have seen skyrocketing prices for pristine examples. Owning a vintage car is now seen not only as a passion project but also as a valuable asset that appreciates over time.

FROM THRONES TO TRIALS

Post-independence in 1947, the princely states were integrated into the Republic of India, and the economic realities shifted drastically. The newly independent nation imposed high taxes on princely wealth and the Privy Purse-financial allowances given to the former royals-was abolished in 1971 by the Indian government. Stripped of their vast fortunes, many Maharajas had no choice but to sell off their prized possessions, including their magnificent Rolls-Royce collections, to collectors and museums worldwide. Today, these cars remain a testament to a bygone era of regal extravagance.





Two Decades of Sizzling Success

Kylin reflects on a journey of gastronomic excellence and countless memories within its walls, writes ABHI SINGHAL

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

DUMPLINGS

The Mixed Vegetable variety of Kylin's Signature Dumplings, dipped in Szechuan Chilli Oil, is just like an edible poem, a spicy ballet of flavours that lingers even after the final bite. Think of the delicate, silky wrappers that are individually expertly made to hold a variety of crisp, fresh veggies.

FACT SHEET

Outlets in Delhi/NCR: Noida, Aerocity, Vasant Kunj
Cost for two: 2500 + taxes (exclusive of drinks)
Operational time: 12pm to 11:30 pm

Two decades. A score of years. However you phrase it, *Kylin* has marked a monumental milestone, an authentication to its reign as an Asian dining in India. From its humble beginnings as a single Delhi outlet, it's blossomed into a culinary empire, now boasting eight vibrant locations across six bustling cities. But beyond the numbers, beyond the expansion, lies a story woven with the threads of flavour, innovation, and cherished memories.

Stepping into a *Kylin* restaurant is an experience in itself. It's not just a meal, it's a journey. You're enveloped in an atmosphere that seamlessly blends the time-honoured traditions of Asian cuisine with a distinctly modern, sophisticated flair. Think sleek, contemporary design, inviting spaces, and a palpable buzz of excitement. Whether you're seeking a romantic dinner, a lively gathering with friends, or simply a moment of culinary indulgence, *Kylin* offers a sanctuary for every occasion.

And what a menu it is. From *Signature Bowls* from Thailand, Indonesia, Korea, Indonesia and so much more, *Kylin* is a place of flavours,

meticulously crafted to tempt the palate. You can always go for the *Chilli Oil Dim Sums*, a fiery dance of textures and tastes, or the comforting warmth of a *Hot Stone Bowl*. Their *Veg Tempura Sushi*, a delicate balance of crispy and fresh and is an example to their commitment to innovation. This constant evolution, this refusal to rest on laurels, is what has kept *Kylin* at the forefront of the dining scene for two decades.

It's not just the food that shines. *Kylin* was the first Asian brand in India to truly embrace the art of the cocktail. Their bar, a vibrant hub of creativity, offers a curated menu of concoctions that perfectly complement the culinary offerings. Each sip is a masterpiece, designed to elevate your dining experience to new heights.

So, if you're a seasoned foodie or seeking a memorable meal, *Kylin* welcomes you. It's a place where there is both sweet and savoury are offered and where every visit is a celebration. Twenty years on, and *Kylin* continues to set the standard, proving that culinary excellence, like a fine wine that only improves with age. You can visit anytime, and experience the legacy for yourself.

THE PERFECT ENDING

Kylin's desserts are a sweet symphony. There are *Fried Ice Cream Spring Rolls*,

SPECIAL RECOMMENDATION

Directly from China's heart, *Kylin's Hot Stone Bowl* deserves your undivided attention. Choose your canvas: *silken tofu*, *tender chicken*, or *rich lamb*. Then, select your grain: *sticky rice*, *fun noodles*, or *healthy quinoa*. Finally, paint it with your preferred *sauce* - the sharp bite of black pepper, the aromatic punch of hot basil, or the fiery allure of chilli garlic. Each bowl is cooked with a medley of mushrooms, peppers, and water chestnuts. For *tofu lovers*, edamame adds a delightful twist.

Spiced to Perfection



BY TEAM AGENDA

Aromatic, rich and bursting with flavour, *Hyderabadi Veg Biryani* is a classic dish that brings together fragrant basmati rice, perfectly spiced vegetables and delicate layers of saffron and herbs. This traditional recipe ensures each grain of rice is infused with the essence of whole spices and slow-cooked for the perfect dum biryani experience. Serve it with raita or mirchi ka salan for a truly authentic meal.

By Executive Chef Sanjay Kumar, The Tivoli Hotel, Chattarpur

- | | | | |
|-------------|---|----------------|--|
| RICE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2 cups basmati rice (soaked) ● 6 cups water, 1 tsp salt, 1 tsp lemon juice ● 2 bay leaves, 3 green cardamoms, 4 cloves, 1-inch cinnamon stick, 1 star anise, 1 black cardamom | VEGGIES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ½ cup each: carrots, beans, peas, potatoes, cauliflower ● ½ cup paneer (optional) |
|-------------|---|----------------|--|



MASALA:

- 3 tbsp oil, 2 tbsp ghee, 2 onions (sliced)
 - 2 tbsp ginger-garlic paste, 2 green chillies (slit), 2 tomatoes (chopped)
 - ½ cup curd, ½ tsp turmeric, 1 tsp red chilli powder, 1 tsp coriander powder
 - 1 tbsp biryani masala, ½ tsp garam masala, ½ cup mint and coriander leaves
 - ¼ tsp saffron in ¼ cup warm milk
- Layering:**
- ½ cup fried onions, 2 tsp ghee, and saffron milk
 - ½ tsp rose water, ½ tsp kewra water

METHOD

Cook Rice: Boil water with spices, salt, and lemon juice. Add rice, cook till 70% done, then drain.
Prepare Masala: Sauté onions in oil and ghee. Set half aside. Add ginger-garlic paste, chillies, tomatoes, spices, curd, and vegetables. Cook until soft. Stir in mint and coriander.
Layer: In a pan, layer rice, masala, fried onions, saffron milk, rose and kewra water, and ghee. Repeat.

CHEF'S TIPS

- Maintain a rice-to-water ratio of 1:3 for perfect texture.
- Adding a few drops of ghee before serving enhances the aroma.
- Use a heavy-bottomed pan to prevent the biryani from burning at the base.
- For an extra smoky flavour, place a hot charcoal piece in a bowl, pour a

This *Hyderabadi Veg Biryani* is a royal treat that captures the essence of authentic Mughlai cuisine. Enjoy it as a centrepiece for festive occasions or a comforting week-



Exquisite Culinary & Artistic Haven

Arts Room offers an unparalleled gastronomic experience with its elegant Parisian-inspired ambiance, writes GYANESHWAR DAYAL

Situated in Malviya Nagar, New Delhi, *Arts Room* by *Ambrosia Hospitality* is a distinguished new gem in the city's thriving culinary landscape. This global cuisine restaurant, envisioned by Navneet and Randeep Bajaj, is a seamless blend of culinary artistry, sophisticated ambiance, and immersive sensory experiences. *Arts Room* offers a dining experience that is nothing short of extraordinary.

Stepping into the *Arts Room* is akin to entering a Parisian courtyard infused with the charm of a classical French living room. The thoughtfully curated decor, adorned with Indian artwork from Pristine Contemporary, sets the stage for an atmosphere that is

both luxurious and inviting.

The menu at *Arts Room* is a testament to culinary excellence, celebrating global flavours with an emphasis on locally sourced, high-quality ingredients. Diners are treated to a diverse selection of dishes, each reflecting a perfect balance of tradition and innovation. Signature offerings such as the *Chicken Teeka Masala*, prepared with *Layla's roast chicken* and *velvety tomato cream sauce*, and the indulgent *Lobster and Caviar*, featuring *Andaman lobster* paired with *cognac* and *Osetra caviar*, exemplify the restaurant's commitment to reimagining global classics with a contemporary Indian twist. *The Crunchy Pork Belly* with *Shillong roast dip* and *Tajin seasoning*, and the refreshing *Yellowtail Ceviche* with coconut and guava accents, further showcase the chef's creative ingenuity.

Arts Room also caters to a variety of dietary preferences with a well-curated selection of vegan-friendly

and gluten-free options. The breakfast menu adds another dimension to the dining experience, allowing guests to enjoy an elegant morning meal in a setting that is as serene as it is sophisticated.

Beyond its exceptional cuisine, *Arts Room's* cocktail program is a work of art in itself. Under the expert guidance of bar veteran *Kamal Kohli*, the beverage menu draws inspiration from iconic artists and their masterpieces. *The Two Fridas*, inspired by *Frida Kahlo's* celebrated painting, features hemp seed-infused tequila blended with watermelon and chili saccharum, delivering a drink as vibrant as its muse. *The Goan Rains*, a kokum-based tequila concoction, pays homage to *F.N. Souza's* depiction of monsoon-soaked Goa, while *the La Guernica*, a whisky-based cocktail with dark chocolate and Mexican chili, honors *Picasso's* legendary anti-





Despite its beauty, Mauritius honours its painful history of slavery annually on Abolition Day



As I dived into an ambitious itinerary on my fourth visit to Mauritius, checking into the breathtaking island's luxury hotels, savouring world-class gastronomy, and admiring its storied landscapes, beaches, lagoons and reefs, I also had a rare chance this time to reflect on the country's early beginnings, marked by suffering and social upheaval.

In fact, it is impossible to understand Mauritian history, dominated by the Arabs, Dutch, English and French, without delving into its past of slavery. Located on the east coast of Africa, 702 miles east of Madagascar, the island traces its provenance to its discovery by Arabs and Malays in 1507. The Portuguese arrived in 1510, bestowing upon it the moniker 'Cirné'. By 1598, the Dutch wrested control of the island, renaming it 'Maurice' after their head of state, the Prince of Orange and Count of Nassau.

Mauritius' magnetic draw among rapacious foreign invaders was hardly surprising, given its plentiful natural resources and breathtaking beauty. No wonder Mark Twain famously said that Mauritius was "created first and then Heaven copied after it!" However, slave trading marked its ugly presence on the island in the 1640s when the Dutch ushered in the first lot of slaves.

Between the 16th and 19th centuries, some 27 million Africans were forced onto ships and transported across the Atlantic to work on lush Mauritian sugarcane fields. By the 17th century, the country was teeming with slaves from Madagascar, Africa, India and Java, who worked in Dickensian conditions, abused and exploited.

However, after centuries of slavery and international resistance, in

1834, the British Empire proclaimed the abolition of the slave trade following the passage of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833. On 1st February 1835, Mauritius was declared free of slavery. Planters were compensated with two million pounds for their slave loss, and eventually, Mauritius gained independence in 1968.

To commemorate the abolition of slavery, celebrated as 'Abolition Day', the island nation organises a series of activities each year. This year, which marked the 190th anniversary of the practice, was

both a poignant and joyous occasion, as dignitaries acknowledged the island's fraught past and the sacrifices made by its people.

At the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Le Morne Brabant, a towering mountain serving as a powerful symbol of the struggle against slavery and the enduring impact of this dark period on the island's societies, I watched a moving wreath-laying ceremony conducted by Mauritian Prime Minister Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, attended by international delegates, celebrities and

global media.

In his address, Dr Ramgoolam highlighted the significance of honouring the abolition of slavery, emphasising the need to remember history, promote social justice and strengthen national unity. "This commemoration is not just about remembering our history; it is a call to action to ensure that the values of freedom, dignity, solidarity and justice continue to guide our nation," he said. The island's legacy of slavery and its lasting impact, he added, remained one of the most painful chapters of history.

At Aapravasi Ghat, another UNESCO Heritage Site and an immigration depot in Port Louis, where thousands of Indian slaves landed in the nineteenth century, another poignant celebration took place. A symbol of Indo-Mauritian ties, the depot includes a rice store, a military hospital complex, a civil hospital and a museum. It also records Mahatma Gandhi's work on the abolition of slavery and his visit to Mauritius in 1901 on his way back to India from South Africa.

The ceremony at Aapravasi Ghat was marked by the presence of international dignitaries, top ministers, renowned human rights advocates, activists and international media. This offered me a deep dive into Mauritius' fraught past and what shapes it today.

Next, I attended a thought-provoking conference, Routes of Enslaved Peoples: Resistance, Liberty and Heritage Project, which acknowledged the com-

THE HEARTFELT HONOUR

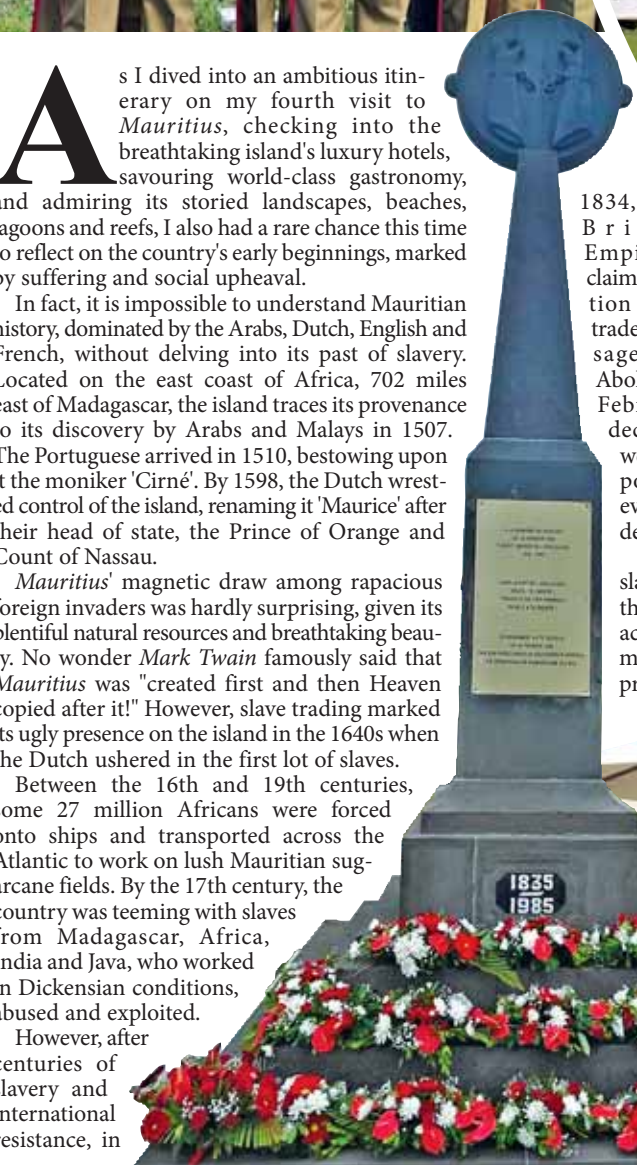
With several misty eyes among the assembled guests, the event also served as a catharsis for the descendants of slaves, whose ancestors played a pivotal role in Mauritius' nation-building. As I mingled with them, listening to their forefathers' tales of remarkable fortitude, I could not help but be moved by the fact that many of them today occupy positions of power as ministers and top bureaucrats, a development only an inclusive nation like Mauritius could have fostered. Populated by Indians, Creoles, Africans and Dutch, the country today resembles a colourful mosaic of nationalities, forming a progressive nation.



memoration of 190 years of slavery in Mauritius. Premised on the theme Resistance, Liberty, Heritage in the Western Indian Ocean, it was held at the University of Mauritius in Réduit, the island's first university. International delegates and authors listened in rapt attention to Mauritian President Dharambeer Gohul, who shared that the occasion "marks a pivotal moment in our ongoing journey to understand, reconcile and learn from shared histories of slavery and its enduring legacy".

At the Pamplemousses Slave Heritage Trail, another heritage site, descendants of indentured slaves gathered to pay tribute to their ancestors. Stephan Karghoo, Director at the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture in Mauritius, noted that Abolition Day celebrates the nation's ancestors in the most meaningful way.

— By Neeta Lal



History in Every Wave

Couple Getaways for Adrenaline Junkies



For couples who want more than just a quiet dinner or a lazy beach day, adventure can be the perfect way to bond. Facing challenges together, feeling the thrill, and creating unforgettable memories make for a different kind of romance. Whether it's diving into the ocean, climbing mountains, or flying through the sky, adventure travel brings couples closer in the most exciting ways.

Ride the Rapids Together

White-water rafting is a great way to test teamwork and have fun. Couples can brave the thrilling rapids of the Zambezi River in Africa or enjoy the stunning scenery of Costa Rica's Pacuare River. In India, Rishikesh offers an exciting rafting experience on the Ganges, where couples can paddle through the waves and admire the surrounding mountains.

Dive into a New World

Scuba diving is a magical experience for couples who love the ocean. The Great Barrier Reef in Australia, Thailand's Similan Islands, and Mexico's cenotes offer incredible underwater adventures. In India, the Andaman Islands provide crystal-clear waters and colourful marine life, perfect for a diving trip together.

Fly High with Paragliding

Few experiences match the thrill of paragliding over breathtaking landscapes. Couples can fly over the Swiss Alps, the beaches of Oludeniz in Turkey, or the hills of Nepal. In India, Bir Billing in Himachal Pradesh is a world-famous spot for paragliding, where couples can glide through the air and take in stunning views.

Hike to Breathtaking Views

Hiking is a wonderful way for couples to bond while enjoying nature. Famous trails like the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu, Mount Kilimanjaro, and Patagonia's Torres del Paine offer unforgettable experiences. In India, the Valley of Flowers trek in Uttarakhand is a beautiful and romantic hike filled with colourful blooms and fresh mountain air.

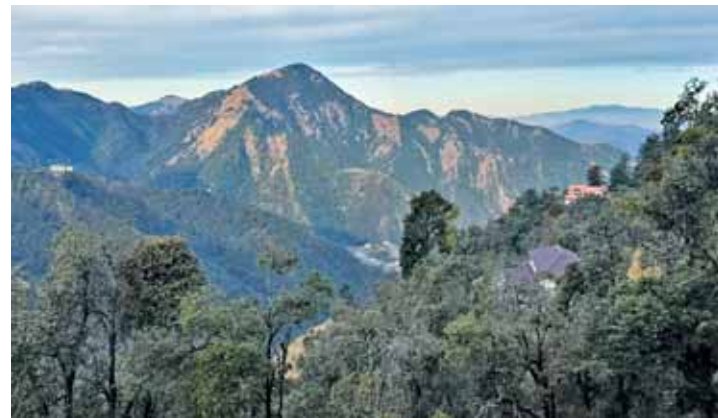
TAKE A ROMANTIC ROAD TRIP

A road trip lets couples explore new places at their own pace. Iceland's Ring Road, New Zealand's South Island and the American Southwest have stunning scenic routes. In India, a road trip through Ladakh's mountains and high-altitude passes is a thrilling and romantic journey.

— By Jatinder Paul Singh, Co-founder and CEO, Viacation

Go on a Wild Safari
Seeing wild animals in their natural habitat is an exciting and romantic experience. Couples can go on safari in Tanzania's Serengeti or camp under the stars in Botswana. In India, Ranthambore National Park is great for spotting tigers, while Jim Corbett National Park offers wildlife experiences.

Experience the Magic of Snow
Snowmobiling in Lapland, dog sledding in Alaska, or watching the Northern Lights in Finland are great options. In India, Gulmarg in Jammu & Kashmir offers skiing and snowboarding.



Dawn in the Mountains

In the sacred hours of a Mussoorie morning, tears of joy kissed my cheeks as consciousness gently returned after eight hours of profound sleep. The embrace of the "Queen of Hills" welcomed me back, not just to physical awareness, but to a deeper awakening that only these majestic mountains could inspire. Two thousand meters closer to heaven, I felt the weight of mundane existence lifting from my shoulders.

My training hostel window framed a masterpiece that no artist could replicate. The ethereal blue light, nature's most delicate performer, danced across the vast canvas of sky. Each molecule of pristine mountain air seemed to carry fragments of ancient wisdom, painting the firmament in hues that deepened at the zenith and softened towards the horizon, like emotions that grow more profound as they reach the heart.

The sun, that eternal poet, orchestrated a magnificent performance through centuries-old branches. Delicate shadows strolled across my bedspread, each movement telling stories of time immemorial. My typically bustling mind discovered a stillness that mirrored the crystal-clear mountain air. Thoughts, usually racing like mountain streams, settled into a peaceful pool of clarity. Stepping out into the embrace of the morning, each

breath became a prayer of gratitude. The mountain path unfurled before me like a ribbon of possibilities, winding three kilometers through veils of mountain mist.

In this morning theatre, a moment of divine Connection unfolded as several cows blessed me with their presence. Their eyes held the wisdom of ages, reflecting a gentleness that spoke of unconditional giving. When my empty pockets whispered regret, modern technology offered salvation through a simple QR code. Time surrendered its linear march in these precious moments of connection, allowing eternity to peek through the veil of ordinary existence.

The morning's gifts continued to unfold as two langurs graced the scene, their regal presence demanding to be captured through my phone's lens. As I shared offerings with them, more emerged from the misty shadows like spirits of the forest.

This morning in Mussoorie was more than a series of moments; it was a reunion with a forgotten part of myself. In the embrace of the Himalayas, where heaven touches earth, I rediscovered the profound Truth that We are Connected - humans, animals, mountains, and sky - in an eternal dance of being.

— By Dr Tanu Jain





YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

Resourceful and hardworking, you are good at designing and executing real-world plans. You will have a lot of responsibility to ensure that everything is done correctly and on time. When confronting laborious tasks, one should appreciate the challenge and dominion as a reward for one's hard work. Looking forward to the week, look for changes which could increase profits, but it will be important to try and build some stability among personal relationships. You should be preparing for higher volumes of business activity, as well as the possibility of a new job, project, or business opportunity. Some will let you down, but most will come to your aid. A family member might be considering taking a trip. Having set multiple activities in motion, you have to exercise some patience while the results of your effort come to be. Time like this also builds good bonds with friends.

Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Monday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week's start feels productive, as though it is prompting you to begin a journey, in both a physical and metaphorical sense. One's journey and aspirations are spent so that they receive recognition and rewards in return. Midway through the week, you will feel more celebratory as a consequence of receiving recognition and motivation to keep achieving great results. You will feel more determined and your way forward will become less bumpy. Come the week's end, you will notice a change in your self-image which has the power, both negative and positive, to influence your creative self. Keeping this in mind will help you to maintain a stable self-image while enabling you to stay motivated. To ensure you are meeting your goals, take an opportunity to reflect and reset your creative self.

Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour Tangerine
Lucky day Saturday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

If you are an adventurous and fun loving person, you might find yourself seeking love this week. This period could signify the initiation of significant relationships which if pursued correctly, can flourish gracefully with time. At this stage of new relationships, the bond of affection has the potential to develop into an everlasting connection, greatly enriching your life. Tackle life with a smile, embrace new challenges, and take bold actions – give yourself a chance. This time is also favorable for traveling, but remember to pay extra attention to your belongings while on the go. Accept the new opportunities that come your way and make the most of the fresh chance.

Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Cream
Lucky day Monday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

You seem to be approaching a time in your life where your finances are likely to improve. You may come across unexpected financial benefits that come to you in different forms. Romance can motivate you towards the hope of receiving romantic gestures that could result in long term commitments. But some people may go through intense emotional struggles, including severe regrets along with stress which disrupts sleep while heightening anxiety. These feelings could alter life in a different and overwhelming manner which in turn creates a sense of worry. When the week ends, a change in confidence will allow you to utilize your skills as best as you can to achieve your goals.

Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Rose
Lucky day Thursday



VRIGO Aug 23-Sep 22

You may find lots of difficulties this week, but there is also plenty of room for success. Your telescopic goals will motivate you and, as a result, you will pursue your goals with astonishing strength. During the specific challenges stratified, your internal motivation and bravery will become your strongest allies. You are ready to overcome all challenges which you meet and therefore, you are a warrior. This is an intense achieving period which you have worked towards and will, most likely, give you positive results. The amount of effort you input in your work is the outcome you will get. Your psychological and physical determination is what will help you in achieving all the success that you are aiming for. Self-belief and self-motivation is what will enable you to successfully counter the hurdles in the way.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Silvert
Lucky day Monday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

A sense of restlessness and disappointment, particularly in terms of rewards, will be felt this week. You are close to a significant milestone which is similar to the last step taken before a goal is reached. A period of celebration begins towards the end of the week which ushering in feelings of joy and fulfillment, perhaps celebrating a new family member or achieving personal goals. This phase provides a blend of complete experience satisfaction and relief. Now is the time to surrender worries, allowing oneself to breathe and truly bask in the efforts made. Your determination combined with creative energy and boldness will guide you towards the successful outcomes you desire, which isn't far from grasp. An end to a set of challenges will erupt into a new stage marked by stability and security.

Lucky number 19 | Lucky colour Burgundy
Lucky day Thursday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

You are free and unrestrained with feeling and imaginary sprawling. Deep down, you're a romantic who showers relationships with tenderness and care while craving for peace and tranquility. There are times when you seem moody, but there's always the chance to uplift and provide insight. Engaging in practices like yoga and meditation deepens the connection to the spiritual world where one draws true strength. Emotion and imagination are unparalleled, and you seem to embrace newer perspectives as opposed to the outdated and uncreative ones. You seem to strike this balance of mind and spirit in life. By the end of the week, you enjoy social celebrations while appreciating the success and companionship of people around you and the shared golden moments with family and friends.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Rose
Lucky day Tuesday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

There are numerous aspects one can get delight from. Joyful events like social gatherings will surely be worthy for friends and family members alike. It will be the most enlightening and inspiring, full of precious reflections. While cherishing all the festivities, exquisite food must also be relished which will embrace their inner feeling of bliss and satisfaction. Tell your cherished ones not to waste their precious time as this will be the most memorable time of their life. Indulge in the festivities of life and celebrate every bit with those you love. Festivity has an energy of its own, do embrace this wonderful time. Try wearing pastel colors this week to bring balance in life.

Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Teal
Lucky day Wednesday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

Pause and recall the relationships and milestones attained in your life. Consider your accomplishments and appreciate the achievements. You have always tended to channel your happiness towards other people which is the reason you often find yourself in the middle of "happily together" parties like weddings, anniversaries, and community celebrations. These special times enable you to not only leave your daily pressures behind, but also enjoy the warmth and happiness of Togetherness. Life at times needs you to pause and enjoy the joy it shares. Appreciate the time, reflection on the relationships you nurture makes the journey worthwhile. Use these times to inspire you to reflect on and strengthen community bonds, and to appreciate the fulfillment that comes from something greater than an individual

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Olive
Lucky day Tuesday



CANCER June 21-July 22

At the beginning of the week, relationships can feel a bit turbulent, leading to unexpected feelings of sadness. This emotional rollercoaster can sometimes cloud your mind. As the week progresses, however, your mind will gradually clear, granting you a better understanding of how strong your feelings have grown since which will enhance your ability to love. Along with renewed strength will come a desire to shed any remaining negativity. This will allow for a greater ability to communicate and put plans into motion. Many take advantage of this period for professional advancement which can lead to important personal development for many. Besides, this can also encourage deep spiritual changes allowing you to tackle big issues with fatigue.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Saffron
Lucky day Friday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week horoscopes point to excessive emotional engagement where focusing on sentimental choices may define decision-making. Creativity will reach new heights, although detaching from emotion could become increasingly difficult as goals begin to appear impossible to achieve. For users who have been thrown out of equilibrium, this phase feels particularly difficult, but it can be very satisfying in terms of creative and spiritual pursuits which can offer balance. Beware of misinterpretation as not all people surrounding you will be well-meaning and opportunistic behavior may surface looking to exploit your susceptibility. Keep assessing the fog of suspicion around uncertainty. Remember positive thinking can change the energies around you bringing positive people in life.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Lavender
Lucky day Sunday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

The individuals who resonate with energetic concepts most often linked to late winter and early spring are likely to be enjoying a phase of self appreciation and success. Had there previously been competing issues with life? They are not a worry now, at least you can take a break and bask in the sunshine of your hardwork. Most of the people around you have accepted your success and are appreciating you for your efforts. This length of time can be used as proof to show you that you are, in fact, progressing toward your destination, although it still may be a while away. Keep your self esteem and optimism at high levels. Although proper care of your money needs to be taken to avoid uncalculated waste.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Lilac
Lucky day Saturday

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THE LIFE GUIDANCE



Seerat Kaur Marwaha

If a person believes they are healthy and holds a positive mindset, their body adapts to align with that reality

Healing Power of Mantras: Transforming Health with Sound

Mantras have a certain sound frequency that is deeply healing, resonating with the body's energy fields and promoting wellness. Some mantras, such as the Mahamrityunjaya Mantra, are known for their powerful vibrations that can aid in recovery and longevity. Similarly, Bajrang Baan is chanted to invoke Lord Hanuman's unwavering devotion and strength to assist in times of dire need. Beyond the sound itself, the intention and faith behind these prayers play a pivotal role in their effectiveness.

A fascinating story demonstrates the profound impact of sound and intention on healing. Imagine being told that a cancerous tumor could disappear within three minutes-without medication, surgery, or medical intervention. It might sound impossible, but this is precisely what was observed in China, where a man diagnosed with a bladder tumor experienced spontaneous healing through an ancient practice. Several Qigong practitioners, experts in Chinese alternative medicine, surrounded the patient. Without administering any medicine or performing any surgical procedure, they began chanting high-vibrational words in their native language, which loosely translated to "already gone" and "healed." Their voices carried unwavering conviction, and their collective focus was on the complete eradication of the tumor and the total



healing of the patient. As they chanted, a live ultrasound sonogram was attached to the patient, displaying the tumor in real time. Miraculously, the sonogram showed the tumor gradually decreasing in size as the chanting continued. Within minutes, the tumor had completely vanished. What had just occurred? Could the power of words and intention have rewritten the body's physical state? If our emotions and intentions can alter the very fabric of our physical reality—dissolving a tumor within minutes—what impact do our daily emotions, thoughts, and words have on our lives? Every thought, whether conscious or subconscious, sends signals to our body, influencing our well-being. Negative self-talk, fear, and stress can manifest as illness, while positive affirmations, gratitude,

and high vibrations foster healing and prosperity. Science, too, provides compelling evidence supporting this phenomenon. Dr. Masaru Emoto, a Japanese scientist, conducted groundbreaking research on the effect of words, intentions, and emotions on water molecules. In his experiments, he exposed water to different words, sounds, and intentions. Water that was blessed with loving and affirming words formed beautifully symmetrical, intricate crystals when frozen, while water exposed to hateful words and negative energy formed chaotic, distorted structures. Given that the human body is composed of nearly 60% water, his research suggests that our words and emotions have a direct impact on our physical health. Another example comes from epigenet-

ics, a field of science that explores how gene expression is influenced by environmental factors, including emotions and thoughts. Dr. Bruce Lipton, a renowned biologist, has shown that our beliefs and perceptions can directly influence our genes. Conversely, chronic stress and negative emotions can activate harmful genetic expressions, leading to illness. Mantra chanting is a practice that bridges spirituality and science. The vibrations created by chanting mantras stimulate the vagus nerve, which plays a crucial role in the parasympathetic nervous system—the body's natural healing and relaxation response. This leads to reduced stress, lower blood pressure, and improved immune function. Studies have shown that chanting 'Om' or other sacred syllables induces a state of deep relaxation and harmony, which is essential for the body's natural healing mechanisms. The story of the bladder tumor disappearing within minutes is not an isolated case. Many ancient traditions, including Ayurveda, Tibetan Buddhism, and indigenous healing practices, have long recognized the power of sound and intention in healing. In the Hindu tradition, Vedic chants and Sanskrit mantras are used for their precise vibrational frequencies, designed to bring balance and restoration to the body and mind. Similarly, Gregorian chants in Christianity and Sufi whirling meditations use sound and movement to con-

nect with higher consciousness and promote healing. If a tumor can dissolve through focused intention and sound, consider what your everyday emotions, intentions, and words are doing to your body and your life. Every time you engage in self-criticism, worry, or anger, you send disharmonious vibrations through your system. Conversely, when you speak words of love, gratitude, and healing, you create an environment conducive to well-being and success. This is why it is essential to practice mindful speech and positive affirmations. Mantras such as "I am healthy, I am whole" or "I am blessed with abundance" are not just empty words—they carry a frequency that can shift your reality. Whether through prayer, chanting, or daily affirmations, aligning your words with healing intentions can reshape your life in ways you never imagined. In the end, the power of healing lies within us. Science is beginning to catch up with ancient wisdom, proving that our thoughts, words, and intentions play a vital role in our well-being. Let us use this knowledge wisely—eliminating negative self-talk and embracing words of health, prosperity, love, and blessings. When we do, we don't just change our mindset; we transform our reality.

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