



TRAGEDY STRIKES DELHI'S HEART, ELEVEN DEAD

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

In a tragic incident, a nightmare unfolded in Mustafabad area of North East Delhi in the early hours of Sunday when a four-storey building came crashing down like a stack of cards, leaving 11 people dead including two women. At least 11 of them were pulled out alive by rescue teams and rushed to a hospital, where five are undergoing treatment, while six have been discharged. Using cranes and thermal cameras, rescue teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), fire services, Delhi Police and other volunteers carried out rescue efforts for over 12 hours at the site of the 20-year-old four-storey structure that collapsed in the Mustafabad area of the national capital around 3 am, trapping several under the rubble. The congested bylanes of Mustafabad are making it

harder to move heavy equipment.

Reacting to the incident, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta expressed her condolences and ordered a probe into the incident, assuring that strict action will be ensured against the culprits. "May God grant peace to the departed souls and give strength to the bereaved families to bear this irreparable loss," she said on social media. CM Gupta said the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Delhi Fire Service (DFS), and other agencies are engaged in relief and rescue efforts. "Arrangements have been made for proper treatment of all the injured," she said. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi, in a statement, said that the structure was around 20 years old and was fully occupied.

According to police, there were 22 people at the building, most of them



Rescue operation underway after a building collapsed at Shakti Vihar area in New Delhi. 11 died and several others are feared trapped after the four-storey building collapsed. RANJAN DIMRI/THE PIONEER

families. The owner of the building, Tehseen, and six from his family were among the 11 who died in the building collapse.

Police said they received information about the building collapse around 3.02 am at Dayalpur police station. A police team rushed to Gali No. 1, Shakti Vihar, where the building was found to have collapsed. Rescue teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Delhi Fire Services (DFS), and ambulance services were immediately pressed into action. Police said around 22 people were reported to be trapped when the building collapsed.

According to Rajender Atwal, Divisional Fire Officer of the Delhi Fire Service, the office was alerted about the incident at 2.50 am. When the fire officials reached there, they found the entire building had collapsed and some were trapped, he said. CCTV in an adjacent

alley has captured the moment the building collapsed. The footage showed a sudden spark and a thick cloud of dust filling the alley, preventing any further recording. The police said that several families were suspected to be staying inside the building on rent and the tragedy occurred when the occupants were sleeping.

It was a harrowing experience for neighbours living next to the ill-fated building as some of the residents said it felt as if an earthquake had hit them. Even before they could comprehend as to what was happening, everything was covered in dust, shaken survivors recounted. "It felt like an earthquake. The floor shook beneath us and before we could understand anything, everything was covered in dust," said Shiv Vihar local Ryan who lives next to the building that collapsed on Saturday morning.

MHA issues digital fraud alert for pilgrims, tourists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre, under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, has alerted the public about online booking frauds, especially those targeting Char Dham pilgrims and tourists, across the country.

These frauds are being perpetrated through fake websites, deceptive social media pages, Facebook posts, and paid advertisements on search engines such as Google, the home ministry said in a statement.

The scams involve the creation of professional-looking but fake websites and social media profiles and WhatsApp accounts offering various services.

These include helicopter bookings for Kedarnath, guest house and hotel bookings for Char Dham pilgrims, online

cab or taxi reservation, holiday packages and religious tours, according to the statement. Unsuspecting individuals, upon making payments through these portals, often realise they have been duped when no confirmation or service is received and the contact numbers become unreachable. People are advised to exercise extreme caution, the ministry said in the statement.

"Always verify the authenticity of websites before making any payments. Verify before clicking on 'sponsored' or unknown links on Google, Facebook or WhatsApp. Cross-check bookings only through official government portals or trusted travel agencies," it added.

The Ministry also urged the public to report such websites immediately on the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal at cybercrime.gov.in or call 1930 in case of any fraud.

Protect minorities without excuses: India tells Bangladesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India on Saturday condemned the alleged abduction and killing of a Hindu minority leader in Bangladesh and called on the interim government in Dhaka to live up to its responsibility of protecting the minorities. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the "brutal killing" of Bhabesh Chandra Roy follows a "pattern of systematic persecution" of Hindu minorities in Bangladesh. "We have noted with distress the abduction and brutal killing of Shri Bhabesh Chandra Roy, a Hindu minority leader in Bangladesh," he said in his social media post.

"This killing follows a pattern of systematic persecution of Hindu minorities under the interim government even as the perpetrators of previous such events roam with impunity," Jaiswal said.

"We condemn this incident and once again remind the interim government to live up to its responsibility of protecting

all minorities, including Hindus, without inventing excuses or making distinctions," he added.

The Congress also condemned the killing and demanded that the government take up the matter with Dhaka, saying

There has been a sharp downturn in India-Bangladesh relations after Sheikh Hasina fled Dhaka in August last year in the face of a massive anti-government protest

silence and inaction were not options when such targeted violence was being allowed to take root.

Reacting to the killing, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said the party stood in solidarity with the Hindu community in Bangladesh and added the government should ensure efforts were made to ensure

transparent action to bring the culprits to book. "The Indian National Congress strongly condemns the brutal killing of Bhabesh Chandra Roy, a prominent leader of the Hindu community in Dinajpur, Bangladesh.

The abduction and assault leading to his tragic death is a chilling reminder of the growing sense of insecurity among religious minorities in the region," he said in a post on X.

"Noting that this was not an isolated incident, he said there had been repeated and deeply disturbing instances of attacks on minority communities in Bangladesh over the past months — from desecration of

Hindu temples to targeted attacks on the homes and businesses of minorities.

"This pattern of intimidation and brutality cannot be ignored," Ramesh said.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said that according to the government's reply in Parliament, there were 76 attacks on Hindus in the previous two months, leading to the deaths of 23 Hindus.

"Recently the chief advisor of Bangladesh made a very condemnable and disappointing comment about the north-eastern states of India. The atrocities against religious minorities in Bangladesh, human rights violations and the attempt to eliminate the memories of the 1971 Liberation War are efforts to weaken the relations between India and Bangladesh," Kharge said.

From 1971 to today, the Congress president said, India had always sought peace and prosperity for all the people of Bangladesh as it was in the best interest of the subcontinent.

There has been a sharp downturn in India-Bangladesh relations after deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled Dhaka in August last year in the face of a massive anti-government protest.

The relations nosedived dramatically after the interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus failed to contain attacks on minorities, especially Hindus, in that country.

Indian team to visit US ahead of BTA negotiations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Indian and US officials will hold three-day talks from April 23 in Washington for a proposed trade pact with terms of references (ToRs) covering around 19 chapters such as tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and customs facilitation, official sources said.

The Indian official team is visiting the US to give further impetus to the negotiations in the 90-day tariff pause window and discuss these ToRs to iron out differences on certain issues before formally launching talks for the bilateral trade agreement (BTA).

India's chief negotiator, Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal, will lead the team for the first in-person talks between the two countries. Agrawal was appointed as the next commerce secretary on April 18. He will assume office from October 1.

"Both sides will discuss the level of ambition. The ToRs will be further developed and discussed. What will be the pathway for talks? The ToRs will include issues like tariffs, non-tariff barriers, rules of origin, goods, services, custom facilitation and regulatory issues," the official said, adding general contours of the pact will be discussed, besides scheduling, so that things can be finalised in 90 days.

The three-day deliberations assume significance, as a senior government official had recently stated that an interim trade agreement between the two countries could be finalised in the 90-day tariff pause announced by the Trump administration if it is a "win-win" for both sides.

In international trade parlance, the level of ambition refers to the extent to which two countries are willing to commit to specific trade liberalisation measures. The visit also follows senior official-level talks held between the two countries last month here.

Brendan Lynch, the Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia, was in India from March 25 to 29 for cru-

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cial trade discussions with Indian officials. The two sides are keen to utilise the 90-day tariff pause, announced by US President Donald Trump on April 9, to push the talks.

On April 15, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal had stated that India will try to close the negotiations as quickly as possible with the US. India and the US have been engaged in negotiating a bilateral trade agreement since March. Both sides have targeted to conclude the first phase of the pact by the fall (September-October) of this year, with an aim to more than double the bilateral trade to \$ 500 billion by 2030, from about \$ 191 billion, currently. In a trade pact, two countries either significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. They also ease norms to promote trade in services and boost investments.

While the US is looking at duty conces-

sions in sectors like certain industrial goods, automobiles (electric vehicles particularly), wines, petrochemical products, dairy, and agriculture items such as apples, tree nuts, and alfalfa hay; India may look at duty cuts for labour-intensive sectors like apparels, textiles, gems and jewellery, leather, plastics, chemicals, oil seeds, shrimp, and horticulture products.

From 2021-22 to 2024-25, the US was India's largest trading partner. In the last fiscal, India's exports to the US rose by 11.6 per cent to \$ 86.51 billion as against \$ 77.52 billion in 2023-24. The imports were up by 7.44 per cent in 2024-25 to \$ 45.33 billion against \$ 42.2 billion in 2023-24. With America, India had a trade surplus (the difference between imports and exports) of \$ 41.18 billion in goods in 2024-25.

America accounted for nearly 19.78 per cent of India's total exports and 6.29 per cent of the total imports.

To address the gap and boost manufacturing, the Trump administration announced sweeping tariffs on April 2, including 26 per cent on India. It was later suspended for 90-day till July 9.

In 2024, India's main exports to the US included drug formulations and biologicals (\$ 8.1 billion), telecom instruments (\$ 6.5 billion), precious and semi-precious stones (\$ 5.3 billion), petroleum products (\$ 4.1 billion), gold and other precious metal jewellery (\$ 3.2 billion), ready-made garments of cotton, including accessories (\$ 2.8 billion), and products of iron and steel (\$ 2.7 billion).

Imports included crude oil (\$ 4.5 billion), petroleum products (\$ 3.6 billion), coal, coke (\$ 3.4 billion), cut and polished

diamonds (\$ 2.6 billion), electric machinery (\$ 1.4 billion), aircraft, spacecraft and parts (\$ 1.3 billion), and gold (\$ 1.3 billion). Meanwhile, imposition of high tariffs to protect domestic industries, once criticised by developed nations, is back in global trade and the rationale for levying such duties, which was earlier championed by developing countries, is also making a comeback in trade talks, sources said.

Without naming countries like the US, they also said that now the advanced economies are also talking about protecting livelihood of fishermen and farmers.

Now, the whole concept that livelihood fishing and farming are different from commercial activities is making a comeback. The same principles once raised by developing countries - previously dismissed - are now resurfacing in global discussions, they added. "Developed countries are using tariffs which they had left during GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) to come back and say that tariffs are necessary for protection."

We have been arguing about this when we gave the infant industry argument that developing countries' industries require some kind of tariff protection, the whole world went against this and they stated that your tariffs are very, very high and now the same sectoral tariffs are being used," one of the sources said.

The US imposed sweeping tariffs on April 2 which were later suspended for 90-days except on China, which is facing 245 per cent duty on steel, aluminium and auto components.



For the first time in Ranchi, Indian Air Force's prestigious Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team (SKAT) enthralled the audience with a breathtaking show at the Namkung Army Ground on Saturday. Air Chief Marshal A P Singh, senior defence and administrative officials were present at the event, which was split into two phases. The event will continue in Ranchi on Sunday as well, followed by an air show in Patna on April 22-23. PTI

India rings happiness, warmth for army men at high-altitude Siachen

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

In the cold desert region of Ladakh, the Indian Army is 'warming up' hearts and 'ringing in happiness' for thousands of families of soldiers, standing guard at the Siachen glacier — the world's highest battlefield and several other high-altitude forward locations, both in the eastern and western Ladakh sector, by providing round-the-clock seamless high-speed mobile connectivity thereby enabling them to stay in touch with each other.

For a long time, soldiers deployed in high-altitude forward locations, including the Galwan valley, used to wait for their turn to make a return call to speak to their loved ones and ask about their well-being. Due to adverse weather conditions and inhospitable terrain, they even failed to make calls and returned to their barracks with a heavy heart.

Senior Army officials deployed in the Ladakh region said the Indian Army has

fulfilled its long-pending commitment by bridging the digital divide and providing high-speed mobile connectivity across the remote and high-altitude areas of Ladakh, including forward locations in eastern Ladakh, western Ladakh, and the Siachen Glacier.

The Indian army has successfully completed the installation of a 5G mobile tower on the Siachen Glacier — the highest battlefield in the world — showcasing India's technological prowess and resolve.

Following this, the mobile tower network was further expanded to provide 4G and 5G mobile connectivity to the foot soldiers deployed in some of the world's most inhospitable terrains — such as Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO), Galwan, Demchok, Chumar, Batalik, Dras and the Siachen Glacier.

By extending this facility, the Indian Army has brought soldiers closer to their families in such inhospitable forward locations.



A senior Army officer observed that ever since we have extended this high-speed mobile connectivity, the morale of the soldiers deployed in remote locations is relatively high. "We have also observed that their emotional health has improved as they can regularly speak to their loved ones and share their emotions."

The pioneering effort has been made possible through a collaborative approach under the Whole-of-Government framework, wherein the Indian Army — leveraging its robust optical fibre cable infrastructure — has partnered with Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and the UT administration of Ladakh.

Ladakh-based Fire and Fury Corps has also played a leading role in enabling this synergy, resulting in the installation of multiple mobile towers on Army infrastructure, including four key towers in Ladakh and Kargil districts alone, the Army officials said.

By extending this facility in the region, the Indian Army is already reaping rich

dividends. Its impact can be felt beyond the troop welfare. It is a significant nation-building endeavour transforming the socio-economic fabric of remote border villages.

By integrating 'First Villages' into the national digital network, this effort is bridging the digital divide, boosting local economies, promoting border tourism, enhancing medical aid and emergency services, and enabling educational access.

The officials said local populations have welcomed this initiative with overwhelming gratitude. Mobile connectivity is not just a communication tool; it is now a lifeline for remote communities, fostering inclusion, opportunity, and dignity.

This visionary initiative by the Indian Army stands as a testament to its enduring commitment to national integration and development, echoing the spirit of 'Viksit Bharat' - India@2047, the officials added.

Delhi Government assures help after tragic building collapse

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Government on Saturday expressed full sympathy with the families affected by this tragic incident and said it is committed to providing assistance at every level. This assurance was given after Delhi Minister Kapil Mishra and Deputy Speaker and area MLA Mohan Singh Bisht visited the site.

Mishra further directed the MCD commissioner to survey the entire area within the next 2-3 days and prepare a report listing the high-risk buildings. "Areas like Seelampur, Mustafabad, Jafraabad are overwhelmed with illegal constructions, and the situation is extremely alarming," he added.

Meanwhile, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva demanded that the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) should order the evacuation, sealing, and demolition of illegal 5th and 6th floors to prevent such incidents.

He added that there are several such ticking time bombs in Muslim-majority areas.

Mishra inspected the site and met with the affected families to listen to their concerns.

Terming the incident extremely heart-breaking, he said the Delhi Government stands with the victims with full sensitivity and will provide every possible assistance.

The Minister informed that relief and rescue operations have been promptly initiated. He said under the directions of Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, he himself had come to assess the situation.

He clearly stated that this incident is not merely an accident, but the result of serious criminal negligence and the culprits will not be spared under any circumstances. Mishra stated that the NDRF and Delhi Police are actively involved in the relief work.

He directed the concerned officials to investigate the incident thoroughly and take strict action against the guilty individuals and officers.

The Minister said the area is surrounded by illegally constructed 6-7 storey buildings, which may cause even bigger disasters in the future.



Delhi Minister Kapil Mishra and Dy Speaker in Delhi Assembly Mohan Singh Bisht visit the site of building to take stock of the rescue and relief work in Mustafabad area in New Delhi, ranjan dimri

He directed officials to identify all such buildings and evacuate them immediately to ensure the safety of lives and property in time. He issued clear instructions that no construction work should be allowed without government approval and a valid map. Mishra said in order to prevent recurrence of such incidents in the future, old and unsafe buildings in the area will be identified and necessary action will be taken.

For this, he instructed the Commissioner of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi to survey the entire area within the next 2-3 days and prepare a report listing the high-risk buildings.

Additionally, the Minister assured the removal of illegal encroachments and appealed to citizens to carry out all construction activities as per the rules and government guidelines. Bisht said he has been continuously raising the issue of illegal constructions in the area and that the government is committed to the overall development of the region so that people do not face any kind of problems. "Three months ago, when I won the elections, I was in this area. I had said at that time that

this building could cause an accident. I have told the Delhi LG and MCD commissioner that action should be taken against the officials for their negligence. Appropriate compensation will be provided to the family of the deceased, the entire Mustafabad is full of buildings that can cause harm. Buildings have been constructed illegally. The power companies are not providing power connections to the poor, but there are electric poles inside the houses, MCD and such departments are drenched in corruption and this incident has exposed them," he said.

Taking a dig at AAP, Sachdeva He alleged that in the last 10 years, Aam Aadmi Party MLAs and councillors elected from these Muslim-majority constituencies, for the sake of increasing their vote banks and income, have allowed their political associates to construct unauthorised fourth, fifth, and sixth floors and rent them out to small tenants. "The tragic incident in Dayalpur is a reflection of many potential disasters waiting to happen in areas like Mustafabad, Karawal Nagar, Seelampur, Okhla, Matia Mahal, Ballimaran, and Sadar Bazar," he said.

Tragedy strikes Mustafabad: Building collapses, lives lost

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

It was a harrowing experience for neighbours living next to the ill-fated building as some of the residents said it felt as if an earthquake had hit them. Even before they could comprehend as to what was happening, everything was covered in dust, shaken survivors recounted. "It felt like an earthquake. The floor shook beneath us and before we could understand anything, everything was covered in dust," said Shiv Vihar local Ryan who lives next to the building that collapsed on Saturday morning.

Around 3 am, a four-storey residential building in Gali No. 1, Mustafabad, came crashing down like a stack of cards, trapping several people under the rubble. While some have been rescued alive, others were not so fortunate. So far, around 11 people have been pulled out alive by rescue teams, who continue to work at the site, said an official. Four people have been declared dead while many remain trapped



Rescue operation underway after a building collapsed at Shakti Vihar area in New Delhi, ranjan dimri

as rescue operations continue. "We thought maybe something hit our house but when we looked out, the entire building next to us had turned to rubble," Ryan said. Shahzad Ahmad lost two nephews, Danish and Naveed, who stayed in a third-

got a call around 4 am and rushed to the site as soon as I heard," he said. Sonu Abbas, another resident, said he lost his sister whose family was living on the fourth floor of the building. He said that she was still alive when she was taken out of the rubble.

"She got up, saw that her husband and children were safe, and helped them out of the rubble," he said. Only after that she collapsed and passed away," Abbas said.

Both her children have injuries while her husband remains in critical condition, he added. Some residents claimed that the ongoing construction work on the ground floor where a shop was reportedly being built might have triggered the collapse.

They also expressed concern about the structural condition of nearby buildings. There are around four to five buildings in a similarly fragile state," said Salim Ali.

"Wastewater from the sewer has been seeping into the walls of the buildings for years and over time, the moisture has weakened the structure, causing the walls to absorb water and develop cracks,"

floor house with their parents — Ahmad's sister and brother-in-law. "Both my nephews were the breadwinners of the family. They ran the entire household. Now they are gone," he said. His sister and brother-in-law are in critical condition. "I

MCD launches survey after Mustafabad building collapse

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on Saturday said the civics body will carry out a survey in the area to identify such buildings having fifth and sixth floors not having adequate load bearing elements and will take necessary action to seal them accordingly.

"Further strong action will be taken against those found guilty," it said. Municipal Commissioner Ashwani Kumar visited the site along with the Deputy Commissioner of the Zone and other officials at the site of building collapsed in Mustafabad. In a statement, the MCD said "Prima facie, it was found that the structural design of the building did not adhere to the required load-bearing capacity.

"It appears that other buildings in the area may also have structural issues and may not possess adequate load-bearing elements". The property is located in an unauthorised colony characterised by a dense-

ly populated area with narrow lanes. "As per a local inquiry and inputs from police sources, it was found that the said property, with an approximate plot area of 60 square yards, consisted of a ground floor plus three additional storeys," it said.

The property is located in an unauthorised colony characterised by a densely populated area with narrow lanes

According to the civics body, a message was received from the Control Room regarding the collapse of Property No. D-26, Shakti Vihar, Gali No. 1, Nehru Vihar. Immediately upon receiving the alert, field staff from the Building Department, Maintenance Department and Sanitation Department rushed to the site along with the necessary tools and personnel, including JCB machines and a labor force.

Government to launch Ayushman Arogya Mandirs in every constituency

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi government is preparing to launch 70 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAYs) across the national capital, one in each assembly constituency beginning May.

A senior Health Department official said that the AAYs would be developed by upgrading existing Primary Health Centres (PHCs), dispensaries and mohalla clinics. He said that the work to implement these is already in progress. In around 10 to 15 constituencies, the process is at the final stage as suitable locations are being identified. "This is a long-term initiative, so we are avoiding temporary fixes. Everything is being done in a planned and sustainable manner," the official added.

The official highlighted that over 1.75 lakh families have been enrolled to date under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme which was implemented on April 5

"In the first phase, 70 AAYs will be launched, one in each assembly constituency beginning May," he said.

Backed by the funding from the central government of Rs 2,400 crore, the project includes the creation of a total of 1,139 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs which the Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta had announced earlier.

The initiative follows the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Centre under the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) and aims to strengthen the city's primary healthcare network. New centres will be built upon the existing services of mohalla clinics and are expected to offer general outpatient care, and maternal and child healthcare services, including vaccination and screening for non-communicable diseases like hypertension, the official said.

Ayurvedic treatments will be made available, he said. The official highlighted that over 1.75 lakh families have been enrolled to date under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme which was implemented on April 5. The BJP which returned to power in Delhi in February after more than 26 years, approved the scheme at its first cabinet meeting held shortly after the chief minister and six of her ministers took the oath of office on February 20.

Delhi HC stops action against Le Meridien's license renewal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court has restrained authorities from taking any coercive action against Le Meridien hotel at Janpath which has applied to renew its eating house and lodging licences.

The high court directed the Joint Commissioner of Police (Licensing) to process the application of C J International Ltd, which runs the Hotel Le Meridien, for renewal of the 'Eating House Licence' and 'Lodging Licence' without insisting on a health trade licence.

The health trade licence of the petitioner was cancelled in 2017 and when it challenged the authorities' decision, the high court stayed the cancellation order which is still in existence.

Justice Sachin Datta on Thursday issued a notice to the Joint Commissioner of Police (Licensing) and Delhi government on the petition of hotel management which is aggrieved by the refusal or inaction on the part of the authorities in renewing its eating house licence and lodging licence.

The court granted four weeks' time to the authorities to file their replies and listed the matter for further hearing on August 5.

The respondent nos. 1 and 2 (police authorities) are directed to process the petitioners' application for renewal of the eating house licence and lodging licence without insisting on a health trade licence.

"Further, in the meantime, till the next date of hearing, respondents are

restrained from taking any coercive action against the petitioners," it said.

The petitioners sought a court direction to restrain Delhi government from asking the hotel to furnish the health trade licence pertaining to the already renewed excise licences.

Their counsel submitted that for serving alcoholic beverages and running the restaurant, the hotel management was required to obtain a valid eating house licence and lodging licence.

The court granted four weeks' time to the authorities to file their replies and listed the matter for further hearing on August 5

The petitioners said the authorities were insisting on producing a valid health trade licence from the New Delhi Municipal Council as a pre-condition for renewing its eating house licence, lodging licence and excise licence.

The plea said the portal of police authorities reflected the non-renewal of the hotel's licences only over a health trade licence, which is already under challenge in the high court.

The court, recently in another restaurant's case, has held that the eatery's excise licence was liable to be renewed and the same cannot be impeded for want of any health trade licence.

Similarly, in this case, the court said C J International Ltd's eating house licence and lodging licence is also liable to be renewed.

Sleep, exercise key to good health: Amit Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said he achieved a turnaround in his health and capacity to work by ensuring the right amount of sleep, focussing on his food and water intake and regular exercise in the last few years. Speaking at an event here at the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS) on World Liver Day, Shah shared his own experience, saying he has achieved a very big change since May 2019 till now. By having the right amount of sleep, pure water, food and exercise, I have achieved much in life. In the last 4.5 years I have become free from all allopathic medicines," he said.

Shah urged the youth to follow a regimen of two hours of physical exercise and six hours of sleep to ensure good health.

Shah this helped in his capacity to work, think, and make decisions. The minister inaugurated an Integrated Liver Rehabilitation Centre at ILBS and also visited a cartoon gallery organised around the theme of liver health at the institute. "I enjoy cartoons, including those based on me," Shah said in a lighter vein and lauded ILBS director Dr S Sareen for the gallery and other initiatives of the institute in creating awareness on liver health.

The home minister urged corporate houses to publicise the importance of liver health and support the institutes working in the field of liver treatment and research.

He said the Modi government's schemes such as Ujjwala Yojna, Khelo India, Fit India and other initiatives on drinking water and toilets were directly associated with the health of people. Shah said that the health budget of the government which was ₹37,000 crore in 2014 has now grown to ₹1.27 lakh crore. Under the lead-



Home Minister Amit Shah addressing the 'Healthy Liver - Healthy India' programme organised in New Delhi, Delhi CM Rekha Gupta is also seen

ership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said, the central government has worked to create a holistic system of healthcare in the country.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said Delhi has the responsibility of providing healthcare not only to its residents but also to people from across the country who come here for treatment and underscored to improve healthcare infrastructure. Highlighting the importance of strengthening healthcare infrastructure and upgrading medical technology, CM Gupta said, "It is our responsibility to ensure that no citizen in the country suffers due to lack of healthcare."

"Delhi, being the capital, cannot restrict itself to treating only its residents. Patients from all over India come here for care." Delhi Health Minister Pankaj Singh and other senior officials also attended the World Liver Day event. The chief minister stressed the need for collective efforts towards improving healthcare and praised central schemes like the Ayushman Bharat Yojana which is now available for people in Delhi. "Our elderly population, especially those above 70, are our responsibility. Taking care of their health is our duty," she added. The chief minister said more awareness is needed on organ donation in the country. "Even after death, our organs can help save lives. I feel blessed that I was able to pledge to donate my organs 15 years ago," she said, urging people to come forward for such noble causes.

Speaking at the event, Delhi Lt Governor VK Saxena said under CM Gupta's leadership, healthcare has become a core part of the government's policy agenda. "Delhi, as the capital, should lead in healthcare innovation and delivery. Due to past policy lapses, we fell behind, but the current government has worked hard and will continue to do more," he said.

MCD detects double payments via Legal case monitoring portal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

With digitisation of records on E-office and implementation of Legal Case Monitoring System (LeCMoS) portal, Finance Department of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has detected four cases of possible double payment and misappropriation in Engineering, M-3 of MTS cadre of Shahdara North Zone.

It is apprehended that similar cases will tumble out in other departments when vigilance inquiry goes further in Shahdara North Zone and other zones. MCD has been vigilant now to detect all such cases of embezzlement in one form or other.

MCD is adopting zero tolerance policy towards such acts. Giving details, officials said on Saturday substantial documentary evidence was collected and verified in all four cases. Prima facie, it appears that (Establishment Clerk or Billing Clerk (EC/BC) of the Engineering-M3 department has processed priority payment file without checking whether the payment for the same cause has already been

received by municipal employee.

First they got payment of their regularisation arrears, non metric arrear etc. through bank attachment by filing LCA.

When they received payment through bank attachment, they did not inform the department that the case is closed as the payment is received.

EC/BC got the sanction of Competent Authority for priority payment without verifying and cross checking that the municipal employees has already received the payment vide execution no. 3711/2024,1351/2024,3245/2024 etc.

It is the case of unbecoming of municipal employee and misappropriation of funds by concealment of facts by all those who processed the case file for priority payment. Senior officer of Vigilance department has told that necessary instructions has been issued to do intensive investigation of all possible cases of double payment of last ten years.

Departmental action and legal consequences under Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita will be taken as per report of vigilance inquiry.

Improve pension process: MoSW

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Minister for Social Welfare Ravinder Indraj Singh on Saturday instructed officers to improve the process of adding new beneficiaries to the old age pension scheme.

In a review meeting held with Social Welfare Department officials, Singh has directed to start the process to add new beneficiaries into the pension scheme and also to resolve pending cases.

Currently, over 400,000 senior citizens in Delhi are benefiting from the old age pension scheme, supported by both the central and state governments.

The BJP and AAP had locked horns over old age pension. The BJP, while sitting in opposition, had alleged that the "corrupt AAP government was least bothered about public interest" and said it had no right to remain in power.

The party during the Assembly elections promised to increase pension amount, clear pendency of new applications and ensure release of money on a monthly basis.

The then AAP government had said that they have released pension amount of beneficiaries which was

pending for a few months. The Delhi Minister held a review meeting with officials from the Department of Social Welfare regarding the old age pension Scheme.

In the meeting, officials provided updates on the progress of the pension scheme.

The Social Welfare Minister gave directions regarding the process of adding new beneficiaries to the scheme. He also issued instructions on resolving cases where pensions have been returned for some reason or where objections have been raised through applications.

The meeting also included discussions on third-party verification of beneficiaries and the role of Common Service Centres (CSCs).

The Minister directed that applications should be resolved in a timely manner, and applicants should not have to make repeated visits.

Bank accounts should be linked with the necessary documents to avoid any issues with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

Officials were directed to continuously monitor the process and collect feedback from the pension beneficiaries.

BJP worker held for killing Congress leader

STAFF REPORTER ■
KONDAGAON

Chhattisgarh Police on Saturday arrested BJP worker Purenra Kaushik for killing local Congress leader Hemant Bhojar in Kondagaon district.

The incident occurred near Dogri Guda village on Friday night when Hemant Bhojar and his sister-in-law Champi were heading to the local market on a motorcycle, Kondagaon Sub Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Rupesh Kumar said.

Kaushik rammed his car into their vehicle and then hit Bhojar on his head with some weapon till he died. Then, Kaushik fled the scene.

Bhojar (30), a local leader of the Youth Congress, was a panch of the Mulmula village panchayat, and his sister-in-law is the sarpanch.



Kaushik had contested for the sarpanch's post of Mulmula village but lost the election to Champi. Locals rushed the injured persons

to the hospital, where Bhojar died during treatment.

Bhojar's family alleged that Kaushik killed him due to a rivalry following

the panchayat elections.

The deceased man's brother alleged, "Kaushik had been targeting him and even threatened him with dire consequences after the panchayat polls. Kaushik killed him when he got the opportunity on Friday."

Bhojar's family and Congress workers gathered at the police station, demanding Kaushik's arrest.

The Congress also staged a sit-in protest in front of the district hospital and national highway, alleging that Bhojar's murder was pre-planned.

Former minister Mohan Markam alleged that the police had arrested the accused following the intense protests of locals and Congress workers.

Initially, the police had taken Kaushik into custody to probe the matter. Later, Kaushik was arrested on Saturday under section 103(1) of BNS for murder.

CBI books two retired IAS, ex-AG for interfering in NAN scam probe, trial



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has taken over the investigation into the EOW's FIR, the central agency said in a statement.

Tuteja and Shukla allegedly abused their official position to influence proceedings in the NAN scam case registered against them by the EOW/Anti-Corruption Bureau in 2015 and a money laundering case registered by the ED on the basis of the NAN case (in 2019).

As per digital evidence seized by the Income Tax Department, the accused public servants made several attempts to frustrate the proceedings in the two NAN cases.

The former bureaucrats allegedly provided inappropriate benefits to Verma, then Chhattisgarh Advocate General, to secure anticipatory bail for themselves in the cases.

To seek anticipatory bail, it was alleged, the ex-IAS officers manipulated documents concerning procedural and departmental work of the senior EOW officers and the reply to be filed in the Chhattisgarh High Court in the NAN case.

Based on the two NAN scam cases, the IT department had collected some digital evidence, including WhatsApp chats, against Tuteja and Shukla which suggested that they made several attempts to derail court proceedings against them.

The two not only tried to frustrate the probe by the ED but also were constantly in touch

with bureaucrats and constitutional authorities of the then Chhattisgarh government to influence the ongoing trial against them in a Raipur court in the ACB/EOW's case.

Shukla, the principal secretary between 2018 and 2020, and Tuteja a joint secretary between 2019 and 2020, had become influential officers during the previous government (from 2018 to 2023).

The alleged scam was exposed in February 2015 after ACB/EOW raided 25 premises of NAN (or Civil Supplies Corporation), the nodal agency for ensuring effective operation of the Public Distribution System, and seized unaccounted cash of Rs 3.64 crore.

Many of the rice and salt samples collected during the raid were claimed to be substandard and unfit for human consumption. Later, the ACB made 18 people, including Tuteja and Shukla.

In 2019, the ED registered an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act based on the FIR and chargesheet filed by Chhattisgarh's ACB/EOW in the scam. Tuteja and Shukla had served in NAN.

In April last year, Tuteja was arrested by the ED in a money laundering case linked to the alleged Rs 2,000 crore liquor scam in Chhattisgarh.

The CBI has registered a case

Bureaucratic reshuffle: 41 IAS get new postings

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh government on Saturday effected a major bureaucratic reshuffle, transferring 41 IAS officers including 11 collectors.

The district collectors of Bilaspur, Raigarh, Sarangarh-Bilaigarh, Rajnandgaon, Balod, Mungeli, Gariaband, Janjgir-Champa, Dantewada, Kondagaon and Khairagarh-Chhuikhadan-Gandai have been shifted, the order said.

A 2009 batch IAS and Bilaspur collector, Awanish Sharan, has been made Commissioner of Town and Country Planning besides additional charges as Commissioner of the Chhattisgarh Housing Board (CGHB).

Raigarh Collector Kartikeya Goel (2010 batch) has been made Director of Chhattisgarh



Civil Supplies Corporation with additional charges as Managing Director of Chhattisgarh State Warehousing Corporation. Rajat Bansal (2012 batch IAS) has been named as Director of Mining and Managing Director of

Chhattisgarh State Mineral Development Corporation. A 2011 batch IAS officer, Janmejay Mahobe, will be the Champa-Janjgir collector now. A 2014 batch IAS and CGHB Commissioner, Kundan Kumar, was appointed as Mungeli Collector.

Smart classrooms launched in 28 schools



STAFF REPORTER ■
MUNGELI

Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister Arun Sao launched smart classrooms in 28 government schools in Mungeli district on Saturday.

Sao said that these classrooms will increase the interest of children in studies and their ability to learn. He emphasised that it

was necessary to connect schools in rural areas with new and effective techniques of study and teaching.

He added that the use of modern technologies will be further encouraged in schools to provide quality education.

These smart classrooms have been built in collaboration with the HDFC Bank and ARO Foundation.

Five Maoists surrender, seven held in C'garh

STAFF REPORTER ■
JAGDALPUR

Five Maoists, carrying Rs six lakh reward, surrendered to the security forces and seven rebels were arrested in Narayanpur and Bijapur districts in Chhattisgarh on Saturday.

In Narayanpur, five Naxals laid down their arms and three were apprehended, Superintendent of Police Prabhat Kumar said.

Of the five surrendered Naxalites, Dasri Dhruv was a deputy commander of the zone doctor team, he said, adding that he carried a reward of Rs 2 lakh.

Chhanu Gota, Sita and Sunita Vedde alias Irpe, were Local Squad Organisation (LOS) members, and Jyoti Vedde alias Kutke, was a militia member, he said.

The four carried a bounty of Rs 1 lakh each, he added.

Also, three Naxals identified as Bandu Durva alias Sonu, Jhuru Mahay and Juru Nureti were apprehended by the police, the



official said.

The trio was involved in the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) explosion in a forest between Jadda and Markud villages in the Kohkameta area in which a villager was killed and another was injured, he added.

In Bijapur, three lower-rung cadres identified as Jitendra Kashyap, his brother Chhotu and Pandu Sodhi were nabbed

from a forest near Kupmeta village in the Jangla area during an area domination exercise, Additional Superintendent of Police Chandrakant Governa said.

A tiffin bomb, cordex wire, electric wire, a battery and digging equipment were seized from them, he added.

One more radical Lachchu Tambu was held from the forest of Nadpalli village in the Usur area, he added.

BJP is weakening rural economy: Congress



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Pradesh Congress Committee chief Pradeep Bajaj on Saturday accused the BJP government of weakening the rural economy.

Speaking in Raipur, Bajaj said that the BJP has closed down the schemes of the previous Congress government, like

'RIPA', which encouraged production in the rural regions and actually boosted the rural economy.

They (the government) do not have an actual plan to strengthen the rural economy, he said.

Their actions have led to a rise in unemployment in rural areas and the weakening of the rural economy, he alleged.

'Sushasan Tihar' resolves issues at ground level



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The second phase of 'Sushasan Tihar 2025' is underway across Chhattisgarh to resolve people's issues at the ground level, an official communication said on Saturday.

The work of resolving the applications received during the first phase from April 8 to 11 is on. The aim is to resolve them within a month.

Efforts are on to ensure people promptly receive the benefits of welfare programmes and

no one is devoid of them. In the third and final phase, solution camps will be organised between May 5 and 31.

The goals are to ensure timely resolution of problems of the people and to speed up development works as well as establish direct dialogue between people, public representatives and various social organisations.

To make this good governance festival more effective, detailed guidelines have been issued, and a portal has been created.

Paediatric thyroid cancer risk rises with early exposure to air, light pollution

AGENCIES ■

Early-life exposure to small particle air pollution and outdoor artificial light at night could increase the risk of paediatric thyroid cancer, a new study led by researchers at Yale University in the US has suggested.

The team found a "significant association" between exposure to ambient fine particulate matter air pollution (PM2.5) and outdoor artificial light at night (O-ALAN) and increased risk of papillary thyroid cancer in children and young adults up to 19 years old, according to the study published in Environmental Health Perspectives.

The exposures occurred during the perinatal stage of life, typically

defined as the time from when pregnancy occurs up to a year after birth.

"These results are concerning, especially given how widespread both of these exposures are," said Dr Nicole Deziel, an environmental epidemiologist with the Yale School of Public Health (YSPH) and the study's lead author.

Fine particulate matter is found in urban air pollution due to automobile traffic and industrial activity, and artificial light at night is common, particularly in densely populated urban areas, Deziel added.

The research team analysed data from 736 individuals diagnosed with papillary thyroid cancer before age 20 and 36,800 matched control participants based on birth year.



The team found a "significant association" between exposure to ambient fine particulate matter air pollution (PM2.5) and outdoor artificial light at night (O-ALAN) and increased risk of papillary thyroid cancer in children and young adults up to 19 years old

Using advanced geospatial and satellite modelling, the team assessed individual-level exposure to PM2.5 and O-ALAN based on residential location at birth. All of the study participants were from California.

The findings showed that for every 10 micrograms per cubic meter increase in PM2.5 exposure, the odds of developing thyroid cancer rose by 7 per cent overall.

The strongest association between exposure and thyroid cancer was found among teenagers (15-19 years of age) and Hispanic children. Similarly, children born in areas with high levels of exposure to outdoor light at night were 23-25 per cent more likely to develop thyroid cancer, according to the study.

"Thyroid cancer is among the fastest growing cancers among children and adolescents, yet we know very little about what causes it in this population," said Deziel, an associate professor of epidemiology (environmental health sciences) and co-director of the Yale Center for Perinatal, Pediatric, and Environmental Epidemiology.

The study is the first large-scale investigation to suggest that these exposures early in life — specifically to PM2.5 and outdoor light at night — may play a role in this concerning trend.

The researchers emphasised that more work is needed to replicate and expand on their findings, ideally using improved exposure metrics and longitudinal designs.

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PM Modi to visit Saudi Arabia for bilateral talks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will pay a two-day visit to Saudi Arabia beginning Tuesday with focus on further expanding bilateral cooperation in several key areas including energy, trade and defence.

A number of agreements will be inked between the two sides following talks between Modi and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud.

The visit will be hosted in the city of Jeddah, where Prime Minister Modi's engagements will include a ceremonial welcome by the Crown Prince. Additionally, the two leaders will co-chair the second meeting of the Strategic Partnership Council, aimed at building on the already strong bilateral relationship.

The visit will provide an opportunity to build on the already strong strategic partnership between the two countries, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said here on Saturday at a media briefing. There will be an effort to infuse a strategic dimension to the India-Saudi Arabia energy cooperation, he said.

The Foreign Secretary highlighted the importance of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Saudi Arabia, stating, "The visit is significant due to Saudi Arabia's role as a strategic partner for India. The country is home to one of the largest Indian expatriate communities globally."

Additionally, Saudi Arabia is a key voice in the Islamic world and is increasingly influential in regional matters. This visit presents an opportunity to further strengthen the already robust ties with this



FILE PHOTO

strategic partner. The Prime Minister and Crown Prince share a strong personal bond, marked by mutual respect, which has greatly benefited the bilateral relationship."

Prime Minister Modi is visiting Saudi Arabia at the invitation of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. This will be the third visit of the Prime Minister to the Kingdom after his previous visits in 2016 and 2019.

The visit follows the State Visit of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to New Delhi in September 2023 to attend the G20 Summit and co-chair the first meeting of the India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council.

India and Saudi Arabia share close and friendly ties with a long history of socio-cultural and trade contacts. As strategic partners, the two countries share strong

bilateral relations across various areas including political, defence, security, trade, investment, energy, technology, health, education, culture and people-to-people ties.

India's relations with the Kingdom have evolved into a stronger and enduring partnership in the past decade, expanding into many strategic domains, with growing investment commitments, broadening of defence cooperation and intensive high-level exchanges across sectors.

Modi's visit reflects the importance India attaches to its bilateral relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It will provide an opportunity to further deepen and strengthen our multi-faceted partnership, as well as to exchange views on various regional and international issues of mutual interest.

Inherited truth, courage from Nehru: Rahul Gandhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Jawaharlal Nehru's greatest legacy was giving Indians the courage to resist oppression and claim freedom, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Saturday and added he inherited "truth and courage" from his great-grandfather — the country's first prime minister.

In a free-wheeling conversation with party leader Sandeep Dikshit that was posted on the former Congress chief's social media handle and YouTube channel, Gandhi talks about his pursuit of truth and his willingness to stand by it no matter what the cost.

"Nehru didn't teach us politics — he taught us to confront fear and stand for the truth. He gave Indians the courage to resist oppression and ultimately claim freedom," the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha said in the post on X.

"His greatest legacy lies in his relentless pursuit of truth — a principle that shaped everything he stood for," he added.

The video has been uploaded on Gandhi's YouTube channel with the caption "Truth and Courage - What I Inherited from Nehru".

"This one's personal. In this podcast-

style conversation with Sandeep Dikshit, I speak about what drives me — the pursuit of truth — and how that pursuit is inspired by my great-grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru. He wasn't just a politician. He was a seeker, a thinker, someone who walked into danger with a smile and came out stronger," Gandhi wrote in the video description.

"His greatest legacy lies in his relentless pursuit of truth — a principle that shaped everything he stood for. He didn't teach us politics — he taught us to confront fear and stand for the truth. That need to seek, to question, to stay rooted in curiosity — it runs in my blood," the former Congress chief added.

Gandhi said his grandmother — former prime minister Indira Gandhi — told him stories of how Nehru nearly fell into a glacier in the mountains he loved, how animals were always part of the family, or how they never missed an hour of exercise.

"My mother still watches birds in the garden. I do judo. These aren't just hobbies — they're windows into who we are. We observe. We stay connected to the world around us. And what we carry most deeply is the instinct to face challenges with quiet strength," he wrote.

Centre engages fishermen to combat pollution in Ganga

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In a bid to combat escalating plastic pollution in the Ganga, a government-funded study has proposed a "cash-for-nets" scheme aimed at incentivising fishermen to return worn-out or abandoned fishing nets.

These abandoned, lost or discarded synthetic nets — referred to as "ghost gear" — pose a severe, long-term threat to aquatic ecosystems.

Conducted over five years by the Wildlife Institute of India, the study forms part of the long-term conservation initiative — Planning and Management for Aquatic Species Conservation and Maintenance of Ecosystem Services in the Ganga River Basin for a Clean Ganga.

Based on extensive riverine and socioeconomic surveys, the study recorded 72 incidents of aquatic species becoming entangled in fishing gear — both active and abandoned. The researchers documented fishing gear and materials every five kilometers along the river.

For the socioeconomic survey, 150 key informant interviews, 10 focal group discussions with fishers, and personal observations were used.

The 'vulnerable' Indian flapshell turtle accounted for the highest number of entanglements with 21, followed by the 'crit-

ically endangered' gharial with 11.

However, the study cautioned that these figures likely underrepresented the actual scale as it was limited to incidents observed during the brief survey window (30 days per year) or reported by local communities. Approximately 40 per cent of the respondents reported witnessing aquatic species trapped in ghost gear.

Low level of education among fishing communities was identified as a key barrier to awareness and access to information about the environmental and economic impact of ghost gear.

The report also pointed out systemic shortfalls — none of the 20 block and panchayat offices surveyed across Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal had the infrastructure to collect, store or recycle ghost gear.

The abandoned nets can take up to 600 years to decompose, continuing to entangle fish, turtles and other riverine species long after their use.

As they degrade, they break down into microplastics, polluting the food chain and further deteriorating water quality.

Pollution levels were found to be particularly severe in West Bengal, where more than 4,600 abandoned nets were documented in a single survey area.

"The highest concentration of fishing nets was observed in the lower stretches of the

Low level of education among fishing communities was identified as a key barrier to awareness and access to information about the environmental and economic impact of ghost gear

river, with West Bengal (4,690) leading, followed by Uttar Pradesh (2,131), Bihar (1,194), and Jharkhand (191)," according to the report.

With nearly 30 lakh fishers relying on the Ganga for their livelihoods, the study underscored a critical knowledge gap.

Despite being directly affected by the problem, most fishers are unaware of the long-term damage caused by abandoned gear. While about 80 per cent of the respondents admitted to having lost fishing gear, only 25 per cent understood the environmental consequences of "ghost nets".

The study also highlighted economic pressures — poverty, a lack of alternative livelihoods and rising demand — exacerbating unsustainable fishing practices.

"The cost of fishing gear plays a crucial role in usage patterns. Traditional gear with larger mesh sizes is more expensive. Therefore, lowering the cost of sustainable, natural fibre-based alternatives and offer-

ing incentives could encourage eco-friendly practices," the Wildlife Institute of India said in its study report.

The proposed "cash-for-nets" scheme suggests rewarding fishers for depositing worn-out or abandoned nets to designated collection points, potentially managed through the existing network of fair price shops. The nets would then be transferred to block-level processing units and subsequently consolidated at the district level.

Identified recycling partners appointed by the government would collect the nets for upcycling and recycling.

The model calls for a multi-stakeholder, multi-tiered approach backed by robust policy measures to create strong upstream and downstream linkages.

Beyond one-time payments, the initiative proposes a rewards-based system — fishers who responsibly use nets could access subsidised rates for replacements — tracked through biometric IDs.

The longer a net is appropriately used, the greater the subsidy on its replacement — promoting both economic and ecological benefits. The plan also envisions broader community participation.

The Wildlife Institute of India suggested involving self-help groups (SHGs) in the collection, sorting and recycling process, creating income opportunities while supporting river conservation.

BJP steps up attack on Supreme Court

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, one of the more vocal party members in the Lok Sabha, launched a broadside against the Supreme Court on Saturday, saying Parliament and state assemblies should be closed down if the apex court has to make the laws.

He accused the court of arrogating to itself Parliament's legislative powers by striking down laws passed by the legislature and even giving directions to the President who, Dubey noted, is the appointing authority of Supreme Court judges.

"Kanoon yadi Supreme Court hi banayega to Sansad Bhavan bandh kar dena chahiye," the BJP MP said in a social media post. His comment came following the Centre's assurance to the court that it would not be implementing some of the contentious provisions of the Waqf (Amendment) Act till the next day of hearing after the court raised questions over them.

It is hearing several pleas challenging the constitutionality of the Act, which was passed by Parliament in the first week of this month.

Dubey appeared to question the court's

The SC's decision to set a timeline for the President to take a decision on the bills sent to them has triggered a fresh round of debate, with VP Dhankhar voicing strong disapproval of the judgement

critical observations on the Act's dilution of the "Waqf by use" provision, saying it has sought documentary proof in cases involving temples, including Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, but has chosen to ignore the similar need in the ongoing case.

Citing Article 368 of the Constitution, he said that law-making is the job of Parliament, and the Supreme Court is meant to interpret the laws.

The court can order the government but not Parliament, he asserted.

Dubey cited the court's earlier decisions to decriminalise consensual homosexuality, which was covered under Section 377 of the erstwhile Indian Penal Code, and to strike down Section 66(A) of the IT Act to target its alleged overreach.

He claimed that the court decriminalised homosexuality despite all religions

considering it wrong and that Section 66(A) was required to curb the increasing misuse of online platforms to send objectionable contents.

Dubey, an MP from Godda in Jharkhand, is often in the vanguard of the BJP's political attacks on its rivals in the Lok Sabha and in articulating the ruling party's stand on various issues.

The apex court's recent decision to set a timeline for the President of India to take a decision on the bills sent to her has triggered a fresh round of debate, with Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar voicing strong disapproval of the judgement.

Dhankhar has also been maintaining that the apex court was wrong in striking down the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act in 2015.

On the other hand, opposition parties have lauded the court's direction to the President as well as the proceedings in the apex court in the Waqf (Amendment) Act matter.

The discovery of a huge amount of cash last month in an outhouse at the residence of Justice Yashwant Varma, who has since been transferred from Delhi High Court to Allahabad High Court, has also reignited debate over the issue of judicial accountability.

Railway added more facilities since 2014

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi

With no facility of on-board lavatories for the railway loco pilots in 2014, the Indian Railways enhanced with more than 9,000 facilities to improve the working conditions of train pilots.

The facilities includes urinals, air conditioned well furnished running rooms. As per railways data, before 2014 there was not a single running room with adequate recreational facilities for the loco pilots who at one go ferries about 1000 lives from one destination to another.

Further more than half the locomotive cabs have been upgraded with ergonomic seats, air conditioning and other improvements. "Toilets are being fitted in all new locos manufactured henceforth. This was not even part of the production plan before 2014.

Older locomotives are being retrofitted with toilets. Design modifications are being done in older locomotives for this purpose. New running rooms are being added on the routes with heavy congestion. These steps have already brought down the working hours significantly," said a senior railway official.

New safety features like fog safety devices, Kavach, driver alert systems and better tech-



FILE PHOTO

nology for braking systems are further improving safety. Onboard facilities, better technologies, and better rest timings are also improving the working conditions, claimed the officials.

"Railway takes care for necessary requirements of all type of loco pilots. Goods Trains stop at many stations and yards for significant time. Timing at these stations is sufficient for using toilets. Crew also use this time for light snacks," added the official.

"In suburban trains, loco pilots work on short distance trains and crew of these trains

use toilets at terminal stations. Crew of passenger trains use toilet of train when train is standing at station and also use this time for snacks. All above steps are continuously being implemented," he explained.

Last year in July Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi courted a controversy after he visited New Delhi railways station and raised work conditions of the loco pilots which was immediately countered by Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw who accused the Opposition of trying to demoralise the Railway family with fake news.

Waqf by user issue deliberately raised by Centre to bring properties to dispute: Mallikarjun Kharge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday said the Supreme Court has given importance to the points raised by the Congress and other opposition parties on the Waqf (Amendment) Act and alleged that the government had raked the 'Waqf by user' issue deliberately to create a dispute over such properties.

Addressing a meeting of general secretary and in-charges here, Kharge said former party chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi were named in the Enforcement Directorate chargesheet and National Herald properties in Delhi, Lucknow and Mumbai were attached with a "spirit of vendetta".

Referring to the Waqf (Amendment) Act that is being heard in the Supreme Court, he said, "I am happy that the Supreme Court has given importance to the points raised by the Congress and other opposition parties."

He accused the BJP and the central government of misleading people on the issue of Waqf. "Especially the issue of 'Waqf by user' has been deliberately brought up by the government to put Waqf properties into dispute," he alleged.

Kharge said the Congress would be cowed down by the Enforcement Directorate's action in the National



PTI

Herald case. "You must have noticed how, as part of a big conspiracy, the names of CPP Chairperson Sonia Gandhi and leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi have been put in the charge sheet in the National Herald case. But no matter whose name they put, we are not going to be afraid," Kharge said.

"Just two or three days before that, the properties of National Herald in Delhi, Lucknow and Mumbai were attached. There is no doubt that all this is being done out of a spirit of vendetta," he said.

Asserting that 'Young Indian' is a 'not for profit' company, Kharge said this means that no one can take or transfer the shares, properties or profit of AJL.

"The BJP people are misleading people by lying. We have to tell the truth to the public," he said.

The Enforcement Directorate filed the chargesheet against Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others before a special court here in the National Herald case, accusing them of laundering ₹ 988 crore.

It is alleged that a "criminal conspiracy" was carried out by Congress leaders to "usurp" properties worth Rs 2,000 crore of its public company Associated Journals Limited(AJL) by transferring 99 per cent shares to their private company named Young Indian for just Rs 50 lakh, a firm where Sonia and Rahul Gandhi are the majority shareholders.

Amit Shah urges Naxals to surrender, join mainstream

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday asked all underground Naxals to surrender as soon as possible and join the mainstream, saying the government is determined to free the country from the scourge of Naxalism before March 31, 2026.

Shah also said that the Cobra commandos and Chhattisgarh Police have arrested 22 notorious Naxalites with modern weapons and explosive materials in various operations in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district. He said that 11 Naxalites have also surrendered in Badesetti Panchayat of Sukma due to which this panchayat has become completely Naxal-free.

"I appeal to the hiding Naxalites to lay down their arms as soon as possible and join the mainstream by adopting the surrender policy of the Modi government. We are determined to free the country from the scourge of Naxalism before 31 March 2026," Shah said in a social media post.

Addressing the CRPF raising day function at Neemuch in Madhya Pradesh earlier on Thursday, the home minister said that Naxalism is now confined to just four districts in India.

"Naxalism has been confined to just four districts in India. The menace will end in the country by March 31, 2026, as stated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The CAPF (Central Armed Police Forces)

The Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) is a specialised unit of the CRPF, known for its proficiency in guerrilla and jungle warfare, particularly in combating the Naxal menace

and the CRPF, especially its CoBRA battalion, are playing a major role in eliminating Naxalism from the country," he said.

The Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) is a specialised unit of the CRPF, known for its proficiency in guerrilla and jungle warfare, particularly in combating the Naxal menace.

Shah said the the CRPF has set up over 400 forward operating bases in Naxal affected areas and violence in these regions has come down by more than 70 per cent because of this and "we are now close to ending it".

On Thursday, he said the CRPF's contribution to national security is unparalleled, whether it is fighting terrorists in the Kashmir valley, ensuring peace in the Northeast, or confining hardened Naxalites to just four districts today.

"In all these achievements, the CRPF jawans have played a major role. No number of books can do justice to their bravery, sense of duty and courage," he said

Bhutan King visits Assam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Guwahati

Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk arrived at Jogighopa in Assam's Bongaigaon district on Saturday to inspect India's first International Multimodal Logistics Park (MMLP), a state minister said.

He arrived by a royal helicopter and landed inside the MMLP, where the King was received by Assam Minister for Public Health and Engineering Department Jayanta Malla Baruah.

"This morning, as per the directives of Hon'ble CM Dr @himantabiswa dangoriya (respected senior), I had the honour of welcoming His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk ji, the King of Bhutan, to Assam for his visit to inspect India's first-ever International Multi-Model Logistics Park (MMLP), currently in its final stages of construction under the Bharatmala Project (sic); Baruah said in a post on X.

Besides the MMLP, the King also visited the Inland Water Transport (IWT), which is under construction on the Brahmaputra river, he said.

"I am truly overwhelmed by His Majesty's affection towards Assam and extend my heartfelt gratitude to him for this gracious visit to our state," Baruah said.

Constructed by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL), the park



Bhutan king Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk visited India's first International Multi Model Logistics Park at Jogighopa in Assam on Saturday. PIONEER PHOTO

will seamlessly integrate road, rail, air and waterways upon completion, the minister said.

"Spread across 317 acres on the banks of Brahmaputra, this project will unlock immense economic potential for our state by facilitating trade with neighbouring countries like Bhutan and Bangladesh," the minister said. "The strategic proximity of Bhutan's visionary urban development

initiative — The Gelephu Mindfulness City, will also undoubtedly contribute to the success of the MMLP," Baruah added.

Security has been tightened in and around the MMLP, with the local police and personnel from Bhutan deployed in the area, officials said.

The King's visit took place amid strict diplomatic protocol and mediapersons were barred from entering the park.

Akhilesh Yadav condemns attack on SP MP Ramjilal Suman's residence in Agra

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Agra

Samajwadi Party (SP) president and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav strongly condemned the recent attack on the residence of SP Rajya Sabha MP Ramjilal Suman in Agra, allegedly carried out by members of the Karni Sena. Calling it a "planned conspiracy," Akhilesh said the assault was not just an act of political aggression but a targeted attempt to instill fear among Dalits and the broader PDA (Pichhda, Dalit, Alpsankhyak) communities.

"This was not an ordinary incident. The attack on a Dalit leader's home is a message — a dangerous one — to those who dare to speak up for the rights of the backward, Dalits and minorities. It is a calculated attempt to silence their voices and create an atmosphere of terror," Akhilesh said after meeting Suman at his residence in Sanjay Place.

Akhilesh alleged that the attack was carefully orchestrated and carried out with full knowledge of its implications. "This was not a sudden outburst. The attackers came with a clear intention — to cause harm, to intimidate and to send a message to the PDA communities that they should remain silent. This is part of a larger, sinister design to divide society and

crush dissent," he added. The attack reportedly took place days after a controversial remark was made in Parliament regarding historical figure Rana Sanga. The Karni Sena, known for its aggressive stance on issues related to Rajput pride, held Suman responsible for the remark and allegedly vandalised his property.

The incident has sparked a fresh political storm in Uttar Pradesh, where caste and identity politics continue to dominate the political discourse

Akhilesh was quick to dispel any notion that his visit was meant to mobilize political support or display the party's street power. "I did not come here to demonstrate political strength. I came to meet a senior leader of my party, to stand by him during a difficult time. We had made it clear from the beginning that this visit would be peaceful — no protests, no sloganeering," he said.

Despite this, hundreds of SP supporters gathered near Suman's residence even before Akhilesh's arrival. Anticipating possible unrest, the Agra administration

had made heavy security arrangements from Hariparvat Chauraha to Speed Color Lab. Police personnel were deployed in large numbers and kept on high alert. Thankfully, the visit remained peaceful and no incidents of violence or disruption were reported.

Reiterating his party's commitment to the PDA communities, Akhilesh said the Samajwadi Party will not be deterred by such attacks. "We will continue to speak up for justice, for equality, and for the rights of every marginalised person in this country. Those who think they can silence us through violence are mistaken. We will not be intimidated," he asserted.

The incident has sparked a fresh political storm in Uttar Pradesh, where caste and identity politics continue to dominate the political discourse.

SP leaders have demanded strict action against those involved in the attack and accused the ruling BJP of tacitly encouraging such groups for political gain. As tensions remain high, the spotlight is now on how the administration and political parties respond to the growing discontent among marginalised communities who see the attack on Suman as an attack on their voice and representation.

CM Nitish using public funds for JD(U) campaign: RJD

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Patna

Opposition RJD on Saturday accused Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar of "institutionalising" corruption in the state and using government funds for electoral campaign ahead of the assembly polls due later this year. It also alleged that the NDA government in Bihar was responsible for "financial anarchy" in the state. The ruling JD(U), however, termed the allegations "baseless".

"Nitish Kumar is responsible for institutionalising corruption in Bihar, the CM is using state government funds for his party's poll campaign," RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said at a press conference here. He also alleged that the recently launched 'Mahila Samvad' initiative to

connect with and inform women about welfare measures was a part of the JD(U)'s electoral campaign "by using government funds." "The cabinet approved ₹225 crore for it.

Reacting to Yadav's allegations, JD(U) national working president Sanjay Kumar Jha said people of the state are well aware of the development work undertaken by CM Nitish Kumar

The state government is using public money for its campaign, there is nothing concrete on the ground for women of the state, but crores are being spent for propaganda," Yadav asserted. The former

deputy chief minister also hit at the state government over "global tenders" for construction work. "The cabinet has cleared proposals for ₹76,622-crore funds for construction activities in the state from December 2024. Surprisingly, for the first time, the government has floated global tenders for such work, what was the reason for floating global tenders?" the young RJD leader said.

"Also, we have seen that bridges have been constructed without approach roads, several buildings are ready but the departments concerned were not taking possession, (new) hospital buildings are without equipment or doctors, several crores were spent on the 'Har Ghar Nal Ka Jal scheme' but there is no supply of water," Yadav said. He also claimed that ministers in the state government were paid

hefty commissions in lieu of projects. "I have heard that around 30 per cent commission of the total amount is paid to the ministers concerned for each project, and through this, the NDA government is trying to cover election expenses," alleged Yadav. The RJD leader criticised the Bihar government over rising liabilities of the state, too. "The government's wasteful spending of public funds on campaigns for elections is highly condemnable, liabilities are increasing day by day. The Bihar government is paying at least ₹25,000-30,000 crore annually as interest for its loans," he said.

Reacting to Yadav's allegations, JD(U) national working president Sanjay Kumar Jha said people of the state are well aware of the development work undertaken by Nitish Kumar across Bihar.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma during a meeting in New Delhi. PFI

Assam CM invites PM Modi to Hazarika centenary launch

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Guwahati

Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Saturday and invited him to the year-long celebration of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika's birth centenary, beginning in September.

Hazarika was born on September 8, 1926, and the Assam cabinet had recently decided to hold a year-long celebration of the music maestro.

"It was my privilege to meet Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji in New Delhi today. I had the honour of inviting him to Assam as the Chief Guest for the inaugural ceremony of the year-long celebration of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika's birth centenary," Sarma posted on X.

Events across India, release of Hazarika's biography and commemorative

coin among others, have been planned. "I also took the opportunity to request his gracious presence for the inauguration of the Assam Bio-Ethanol Plant, with a production capacity of 49 KTPA ethanol, using 300 KTPA bamboo as feedstock," the Chief Minister said.

Assam Bio Ethanol Private Ltd (ABEPL) is the first bio-refinery to produce fuel-grade ethanol from bamboo biomass and has been formed as a joint venture company between Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) and two Finnish companies, Fortum and Chempolis Oy.

"In addition, I also requested him to lay the foundation stones of two key infrastructure projects: the ₹5,700 crore Guwahati Ring Road project and the Darrang Medical College and Hospital," Sarma said.

The CM said the prime minister has "agreed to grace these important occasions on September 8, 2025".

Delay in MP BJP chief appointment worries party cadre

GIRISH SHARMA ■ Bhopal

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Madhya Pradesh finds itself at an organizational crossroads as the long-anticipated appointment of a new state president continues to face delays. As per the original timeline, the election for the state unit chief was to be completed by January 15, 2025, but as April nears its end, there has been no official movement—fueling speculation and unease within party ranks.

The absence of a new president has created a leadership vacuum in the state unit and is now being seen as a bottleneck in the BJP's national organisational roadmap, particularly the selection of a new national president, which is to follow the completion of state-level appointments. VD Sharma, the incumbent state president, has been at the helm since February 2020. Though his term formal-

ly ended in February 2023, he was granted an extension to steer the party through the November 2023 assembly elections. Despite earlier indications that a successor would be announced by mid-January, the process remains stalled.

Party insiders attribute the delay to several factors, including the central leadership's preoccupation with the Delhi Assembly elections, ongoing internal deliberations, and the challenge of choosing a candidate who can uphold the party's organisational goals while navigating Madhya Pradesh's intricate caste dynamics.

Traditionally, the BJP has maintained a strategic caste balance in Madhya Pradesh by selecting a Chief Minister from the Other Backward Classes (OBC) and appointing a state president from the upper castes. This formula has helped consolidate the party's support base across communities. With Chief Minister

Mohan Yadav belonging to the OBC category, expectations point toward an upper caste or minority community leader taking over the state unit to maintain this equilibrium.

However, there is also growing pressure on the party to enhance representation for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and women, reflecting the evolving political and social landscape of the state.

Several names have surfaced as contenders for the top post, including Narottam Mishra, Gajendra Singh Patel, Alok Sharma, Raghendra Sharma, and Hemant Khandelwal. Among them, Hemant Khandelwal—a legislator from Betul and a prominent Vaishya community leader—is reportedly emerging as a consensus candidate, acceptable to multiple factions within the party.

He is seen as a strong contender with cross-sectional appeal. Sources suggest that the party high command is cautious

about appointing a leader who could evolve into an alternative power centre in the state, particularly in parallel to Chief Minister Mohan Yadav. This strategic consideration is believed to be one of the key reasons behind the prolonged decision-making process.

The delay has also disrupted the party's internal organisational framework. Although elections at the booth and mandal levels have been completed, the finalization of district presidents has faced multiple hiccups.

Some appointments were even revoked due to non-compliance with internal guidelines, further slowing down the structure-building process.

Rajneesh Agrawal, State Co-Election Officer for the BJP's organisational elections, told The Pioneer that the state unit is fully prepared for the election and is currently awaiting approval from the central leadership.

Principal Secretary to PM envisions \$5 trillion economy to eradicate poverty

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Sambalpur (Odisha)

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Dr P K Mishra, on Saturday said the vision of a \$5 trillion economy is not just a GDP figure — it is about millions lifted from poverty, world-class infrastructure, energy security, and digital empowerment.

Addressing the graduate students during the ninth Annual Convocation of the Indian Institute of Management at Sambalpur, Mishra drew inspiration from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's grand vision of Amrit Kaal. Mishra reiterated PM wants all of us to take the country to the next level through the process of



"reform, perform and transform". In this endeavour all of us will be playing a critical role in ensuring that India becomes a developed country by 2047. Speaking on a theme "Opportunities and Challenges in the Current Geopolitical and Economic Context", Mishra opined that we are living in an interesting and challenging time as the global economy is at a critical juncture, facing an array of complex challenges including disruptions in global supply chains, protectionist policies, heightened geopolitical tensions, and changing global trade patterns.

Mishra exemplified India's prowess in becoming a global innovation powerhouse. He mentioned that with over 100 unicorns, we are the third-largest start-up

ecosystem in the world. Talking about Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes across sectors such as electronics, pharma and solar are driving manufacturing resurgence, Mishra highlighted that this opens up exciting roles in operations, logistics, supply chain strategy and manufacturing excellence.

Dr Mishra encouraged the students to be courageous and resilient in adversity. In line with the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — "The world is one family", Dr Mishra concluded his deliberations by saying that leaders who think beyond profits and positions. He exhorted the students to be managers who can manage not only businesses but also values, diversity and change.

Punjab police bust two ISI-backed Khalistani terror modules

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chandigarh

With the arrest of 13 people, Punjab Police on Saturday claimed to have busted two major ISI-backed Khalistani terror modules that were being run from abroad and seized two rocket-propelled grenades, two hand grenades, IEDs and RDX along with other munitions.

The first terror module was operated by France-based Satnam Singh alias Satta and the second by Greece-based Jaswinder alias Mannu Agwan, Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said.

These modules, which were backed by Pakistan's spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), were being operated by a proscribed terrorist outfit Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) from abroad, Yadav said. This is a major blow to transnational terror networks targeting peace and stability in Punjab, said Yadav in a post on X. Sharing details, the DGP said the police seized two rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) including a launcher, two IEDs (2.5 kg each), two hand grenades with detonators, two kg RDX with remote control, five pistols (Beretta and Glock), six magazines, 44 live cartridges, one wireless set and three vehicles.

The arrested have been identified as Jatinder alias Honey, Jagjit alias Jagga, both residents of Kapurthala, Harpreet and Jagroop, both from Hoshiarpur, said the DGP, adding their terror module was operated Satta. He said a case has been registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the Explosives Act in Amritsar.

VHP demands President's rule in West Bengal after Murshidabad violence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi/Kolkata

The Vishva Hindu Parishad on Saturday staged protests in different parts of the country against the recent communal violence in West Bengal's Murshidabad over the amendments made to the Waqf law, demanding immediate imposition of President's Rule in the state.

The protests were held in Murshidabad, Delhi and Noida, among other places, with VHP members claiming a complete breakdown of law and order in the Mamata Banerjee-ruled state where clashes claimed at least three lives last week. In Delhi's Nangloi Chowk, Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) general secretary Bajrang

Bagda led a protest condemning the violence in West Bengal. In Noida, the VHP took out a rally raising slogans against the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal led by its national spokesperson Vinod Bansal.

"Protests were held at multiple locations across the country, barring Punjab, because the Trinamool Congress is carrying out a cycle of oppression and repression of Hindus in connivance with Bangladeshi-Rohingya infiltrators," Bansal said.

"The recent incident of violence in Murshidabad was only a 'gruesome form' of the ongoing oppression (of Hindus) in Bengal under Trinamool's watch. In Bangladesh, what began as protests against reservation eventually went on to

target Hindus. But we will not tolerate such Bangladeshi mindset in our country," Bansal said. The VHP demands immediate imposition of President's Rule in West Bengal, fencing of borders in the state, adequate compensation to the victims of violence in Murshidabad and ensuring the safety of Hindus in Bengal, the VHP leader said. "The VHP also demands that land grabbing in the name of Waqf be immediately stopped and a high-level inquiry be ordered into the properties acquired in the name of Waqf," Bansal said. "We also demand that authorities identify the Bangladeshi-Rohingya infiltrators in West Bengal and drive them out. Strictest action should be taken against the perpetrators of violence in Murshidabad," he said.

Ricky Rai shot near Bidadi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ramanagara (Karnataka)

The son of late underworld don N Muthappa Rai was allegedly shot at by unidentified assailants near his residence in Bidadi here, police said on Saturday. Ricky Rai is currently undergoing treatment at Manipal hospital in Bengaluru, they said.

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said he was aware of the incident and sought details from the police. "I was told that the incident happened at 1:30 or 2 am. I have asked for details. He (Ricky) has been admitted to Manipal Hospital and I'm told he is out of danger. Police have begun the investigation at the spot by deploying extra force," he told media. The incident occurred between 1 am to 1.30 am (late Friday night) near his residence when he

was travelling from Bidadi to Bengaluru in his car. According to police, some unidentified people allegedly opened three rounds of fire and a bullet struck the vehicle. He was seated in the rear along with his gunman when the bullet pierced through the driver's seat, injuring both the driver and Rai.

Citing preliminary inquiry, a senior police officer said Ricky, who usually drives himself, sustained injuries to his nose and arms. Both the driver and the Ricky are stated to be out of danger. Initially, Ricky was taken to a private hospital in Bidadi and later referred to Manipal Hospital in Bengaluru for advanced treatment. Based on the complaint of his driver, a case has been registered against Muthappa Rai's second wife Anuradha, entrepreneur Rakesh Malli (close associate of Muthappa) and Niketan trust, the senior police officer said.

US airstrike on Yemen escalates Trump's campaign

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

US airstrike on an important oil port held by Yemen's Houthis rebels killed more than 70 people and wounded many others, the Iranian-backed rebel group said Friday, marking a major escalation in the military campaign President Donald Trump launched against the faction last month. The overnight strike on the Ras Isa port sent massive fireballs billowing skyward and turned tanker trucks into burning wrecks. It was the first American attack on a Houthi-controlled oil facility since the US began its new bombing campaign. It also came just before the resumption of negotiations in Rome between the US and Iran over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme, which Washington has linked to its Yemen campaign. The US is targeting the Houthis because of the group's attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, a crucial global trade route, and on Israel. The Houthis are the last militant group in Iran's self-described 'Axis of Resistance' that is capable of regularly attacking Israel. The port serves as a major hub for incoming fuel shipments that power areas of Yemen held by the Houthis, and analysts say the airstrike could seriously affect daily life there. The Houthis, who said the attack killed at least 74 people and wounded 171 others, aired graphic footage of the aftermath on their al-Masirah satellite news channel, showing corpses strewn about the port and

smashed tanker trucks. They denounced the strike as a "completely unjustified aggression." "It targets a vital civilian facility that has served the Yemeni people for decades," the group said in a statement. US Central Command declined to answer any questions about possible civilian casualties but referred to a statement in which it said "this strike was not intended to harm the people of Yemen." "US forces took action to eliminate this source of fuel for the Iran-backed Houthi terrorists and deprive them of illegal revenue that has funded Houthi efforts to terrorise the entire region for over 10 years," it said in its statement. A US official said the attack sent a message to those supplying fuel to the Houthis despite sanctions. The official spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity to provide details not yet made public. Hours after the US strike, the Houthis launched a missile toward Israel that was intercepted, the Israeli military said. Sirens sounded in Tel Aviv and elsewhere. Meanwhile, the Houthis said they shot down another American MQ-9 Predator drone, which the US official acknowledged. The Ras Isa port is a collection of oil tanks and equipment that sits in Yemen's Hodeida governorate along the Red Sea. It is just off Kamaran Island, which has been targeted by intense US airstrikes in recent days. Before the Houthis took control of Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in 2014 and sent the government into exile, oil from the



country's energy-rich Marib governorate moved through Ras Isa for export. But since the Houthis don't control that region, the port now serves as an import hub for gasoline, diesel and liquefied petroleum gas that help power those parts of Yemen the Houthis control. The new US operation against the Houthis under Trump appears more extensive than attacks on the group were under President Joe Biden, an AP review found. The new campaign started after the rebels threatened to begin targeting "Israeli" ships again over Israel blocking aid from entering the Gaza Strip. From November 2023 until this January, the Houthis targeted more than 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones, sinking two of them and killing four sailors. That has greatly reduced the flow of trade through the Red Sea corridor, which typically sees \$1 trillion of goods move through it. The Houthis also launched attacks targeting American warships without success. Assessing the toll of the month-old US airstrike campaign has been difficult because the military hasn't released information about the attacks, including what was targeted and how many people were killed. The Houthis, meanwhile, strictly control access to attacked areas and don't publish complete information on the strikes, many of which likely have targeted military and security sites. The Ras Isa port airstrike is the dead-

liest known attack yet in the month-old campaign. The actual cost in lives is hard to assess, said Luca Nevola, the senior analyst for Yemen and the Gulf at the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, a think tank. "Since they are targeting civilian areas, there's a lot more victims. But it's also difficult to assess how many because the Houthis are releasing these umbrella statements that cover all the victims. Or tend to stress only the civilian victims," Nevola said. Further complicating the situation is the U.S. Strikes hitting military targets, said Mohammed al-Basha, a Yemen expert at the Basha Report risk advisory firm. He pointed to an American attack that Trump highlighted online with black-and-white satellite footage, which might have killed about 70 fighters. "Although the Houthis claimed it was a tribal gathering, they neither released any footage nor named a single casualty, strongly suggesting the victims were not civilians but affiliated fighters," al-Basha said. "However, the overnight strike on the Ras Isa Fuel Port marks the first mass-casualty incident the Houthis have openly acknowledged and publicised." The AP analysed satellite images of the port provided by Planet Labs PBC that showed destroyed oil tanks and vehicles, and what appeared to be oil leaking into the Red Sea. Wim Zwijnenburg, an analyst with Dutch peace organisation PAX, said it appeared at least three fuel storage tanks had been destroyed and that oil had leaked from mooring pipelines.

The US accuses a Chinese company of aiding Houthi attacks. A US State Department spokesman, Tammy Bruce, accused a Chinese commercial satellite image provider, Chang Guang Satellite Technology Co. Ltd., of "directly supporting Iran-backed Houthi terrorist attacks on US interests." During a briefing with reporters, Bruce did not elaborate in detail. But she acknowledged a report by The Financial Times that quoted anonymous American officials saying the company linked to the People's Liberation Army has provided images allowing the rebels to target U.S. Warships and commercial vessels traveling through the Red Sea corridor. Bruce said "Beijing's support" of the satellite company "contradicts their claims of being peace supporters." Responding to a question about the allegation, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said Friday: "I am not familiar with the situation you mentioned." However, he insisted China is seen as urging countries "to make more efforts conducive to regional peace and stability." "Since the escalations in the Red Sea situation, China has been playing a positive role in de-escalating the situation," Lin said. "Who is promoting talks for peace and deescalating the tensions, and who is imposing sanctions and pressure?" The company didn't respond to request for comment. The US Treasury sanctioned it in 2023 for allegedly providing satellite images to the Russian mercenary force the Wagner Group as it fought in Ukraine.

Trump to invoke 'Schedule F' to fire some federal workers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

President Donald Trump is preparing to make one of the controversial personnel changes laid out in the conservative Project 2025 blueprint for his second term. He plans to reclassify 50,000 federal employees under what's known as Schedule F, which means they'll have less civil service protection. The proposal follows an executive order signed at the beginning of



his term, and it's expected to be published in the Federal Register on Friday afternoon.

behavior, they should no longer have a job," he wrote on his Truth Social platform. "This is common sense, and will allow the federal government to finally be run like a business." Administration officials argue that it's necessary to increase accountability in the workforce. The change is expected to make it easier to replace career employees who have "important policy-determining, policy-making, policy-advocating, or confidential duties," according to a White House fact sheet. Details were first reported by Axios. Once the rule is finalised, the president plans to sign another executive order to conclude the process. It's the latest step in Trump's battle against what he describes as "the deep state," which frustrated his goals in his first term. Now he's moving more swiftly to fire people and reshape the government bureaucracy, steps that have alarmed labour unions and political opponents who worry about him consolidating power and violating worker rights. The fact sheet said the plan "empowers federal agencies to swiftly remove employees in policy-influencing roles for poor performance, misconduct, corruption, or subversion of presidential directives, without lengthy procedural hurdles." Everett Kelley, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, criticised the move.

Member of Ahmadi community lynched in Pakistan TLP rally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Karachi

A mob of Islamists allegedly beat to death a member of Pakistan's minority Ahmadi community Friday while demonstrating near an Ahmadi place of worship in Karachi, a member of the community said. Police said they were investigating the killing. The victim, identified as Laeeq Cheema, died before he could receive medical treatment at a hospital in the southern port city, said Amir Mahmood, a spokesman for the Ahmadi community. Government Civil Hospital spokesperson Summayia Tariq confirmed the death of Cheema, saying he had multiple injuries. Mahmood blamed the attack on a mob of people from the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, or TLP, a radical Islamist party, and said they had rallied outside the Ahmadi place of worship and tried to damage it. Senior Karachi police officer Asad Raza told local media outlets that they had deployed additional police to

avoid any unrest in the city ahead of the TLP rally. He said Cheema was killed away from the Ahmadi worship site, and that police were still trying to confirm who attacked him. Karachi police rescued community members from the worship site after it was surrounded by demonstrators, Mahmood said, but he also complained that police have been slow to take action against TLP protests nationwide. There are about half a million of Ahmadis in Pakistan, which has a population of 250 million. The Ahmadi religion is an offshoot of Islam, but Pakistan declared Ahmadi non-Muslims in 1974. Ahmadi homes and places of worship are often targeted by Sunni militants who consider them heretical. Video footage that Mahmood shared with The Associated Press showed crowds chanting anti-Ahmadi slogans outside the worship site. He said TLP supporters had been holding such protests every Friday and that police had not taken any action in previous weeks.

OFFICE OF THE DIGP, GROUP CENTRE, C.R.P.F. DADRI ROAD GREATER NOIDA-201306. ADVERTISEMENT. It is informed that requirement of Lady Headmistress, Teacher & Aaya for Nursery, LKG and UKG for the academic Session 2025-26 at Montessori School of Deputy Inspector General of Police, Group Centre, CRPF, Dadri Road, Sutiara, Greater Noida-201306 purely on temporary and contractual basis (From 01/07/2025 to 31/05/2026). Applications are invited from eligible Indian citizens for the following posts:-

MPL MAITHON POWER LIMITED. Registered Office: Corporate Center, 34 Sant Tukaram Road, Carnac Bunder, Mumbai 400 009, Tel: 91 22 67171232. Website Address: www.tatapower.com/mpl. E-mail: angshuman.c@tatapower.com

PUBLIC NOTICE. Notice Inviting Suggestions/ Objections on Petition of Maithon Power Limited in compliance with Clause (7) of Regulation 23 of Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (Conduct of Business) Regulations, 2023 for determination of supplementary tariff for ECS (De-Nox System) for Control Period FY 2024-29.

Table with 3 columns: Sr. No., Particulars, De-Nox System, FGD. Row 1: Approved Capital Cost, 3866.00, 495660.00. Row 2: Authority which has Approved the Capital Cost, Board of Directors, Central Electricity Regulatory Commission.

Table with 4 columns: Proposed Year-wise Supplementary Tariff. Columns: 13.01.2025 to 31.03.2025, 01.04.2025 to 30.12.2025, 31.12.2025 to 30.12.2026, 2026, 2027. Rows: Capacity Charges (Rs Lakh), Additional Energy Charges (Rs/ kWh).

Place: New Delhi (Angshuman Chakrabarti) Date: 20.04.2025 CFO - Maithon Power Limited

PUBLIC NOTICE. This is to inform General Public and others that my Client Radhey Shyam Vijay S/o Late Sh. Ram Swarup Vijay R/o RZ-421 Gali No. 13 Tughlakabad Extn. New Delhi - 110019 presently residing at H.No. 20/1 Gali no. 3, Malik Colony, Udhampur Singh Nagar, Uttarhand-263153 has severed his all relation from his son Om Vijay and his family and Disowned from all moveable and immovable properties with immediate effect. If someone deals with him he shall be responsible himself and for all consequences. Ganpat Singh (Advocate)

PUBLIC NOTICE. Public is hereby informed that Mr. Lokesh Kumar has claimed to the DDA LG Flat No. A-4C/164, Situated in the layout plan of Housing Estate, Janakpuri New Delhi. And now, Mr. Lokesh Kumar and Mrs Jagtamba Devi has approached the IDBI Bank Ltd. for loan against mortgage of above said property, if any person has any right, claim, title or interest in any manner over the said property then intimate within 5 days to Vikas Shokeen, Advocate, H-20, BASEMENT, BALI NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110015. Thereafter any kind of claim will not be accepted.

PUBLIC NOTICE. Be it known to all, that my client M/s Manik Motors India LLP intends to purchase the property being Freehold Industrial Plot No. A-7, situated at Mohan Co-operative Industrial Estate, Mathura Road, New Delhi, measuring 1004.88 Sq. Yards, from its present owner M/s Mirza International Limited (formerly Mirza Tanners Limited). The public at large, Financial Institutions or if any party has interest, right, title, encumbrance, mortgage, lien or any other claim over the said property, the same shall be informed to the undersigned within a period of Seven (7) days from today failing which it shall be presumed that the party, if any, will be left with no interest, right, title, encumbrance, mortgage, lien over the said property. MANSOOR ANSARI (Advocate) B-43A, Kalkaji, New Delhi-19 Mob. 97111 77423

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS. CHANGE OF NAME.

I, Bijender Singh, Father of No.10137044F Rfn Sonu, R/o-Vill- Koth Kalan, PO- Koth Khurd, Teh- Narnaund, Dist- Hisar, Haryana, have changed my name from Bijender Singh to Bijender Sharma, vide affidavit dated 19/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1863)C I, Kanta Devi, Mother of No.10137044F Rfn Sonu, R/o-Vill-Koth Kalan, PO-Koth Khurd, Teh- Narnaund, Dist- Hisar, Haryana, have changed my name from Kanta Devi to Kanta, vide affidavit dated 19/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1864)C I, Laxmi Devi W/o-No. 6395722Y Hav Ravindra Singh, R/o-Vill-Adhurjpur, PO-Bishenmur, Teh-Bighapur, Dist-Unnao, U.P.-229503, have changed my name from Laxmi Singh to Laxmi Devi, vide affidavit dated 19/04/2025 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1865)C

Iran, US to hold second nuclear talks in Rome

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Rome

Iran and the United States prepared Saturday for a second round of negotiations over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme in Rome. The talks in Italy over Easter weekend again will hinge on US billionaire Steve Witkoff, the US Mideast envoy of President Donald Trump, and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. Whether the two men find common ground in the high-stakes negotiations could mean success or failure in the talks. That talks are even happening represent a historic moment, given the decades of enmity between the two countries since the 1979 Islamic Revolution and US Embassy hostage crisis. Trump in his first term unilaterally withdrew from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018, setting off years of attacks and negotiations that failed to restore the accord that drastically limited Tehran's enrichment of uranium in exchange for the



US special envoy Steve Witkoff

spiked over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip and after US airstrikes on targeting Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels killed more than 70 people and wounded dozens more. "I'm for stopping Iran, very simply, from having a nuclear weapon," Trump said Friday. "I want Iran to be great and prosperous and terrific." Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei wrote Saturday on the social platform X that Iran "always demonstrated, with good faith and a sense of responsibility, its commitment to diplomacy as a civilized way to resolve issues." "We are aware that it is not a smooth path but we take every step with open eyes, relying also on the past experiences," he added. Both men have been traveling in recent days. Witkoff had been in Paris for talks about Ukraine as Russia's full-scale war there grinds on. Araghchi will be coming from Tehran, Iran, after a visit to Moscow where he met with officials including Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Group sues Costa Rica over rights of 81 deported children

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mexico City

A group of human rights lawyers is suing Costa Rica, alleging the Central American nation violated the rights of dozens of migrant children by detaining them in a rural camp for nearly two months after they were deported from the US in February. The children, some as young as 2, are part of a group of hundreds of migrants from mostly Asian countries - Afghanistan, China, Russia and others - who were deported from the US as part of a wider effort by the Trump administration to ramp up deportations. Many had hoped to seek asylum in the US and expressed fear over returning to their own countries. Instead, they were dropped in Costa Rica and Panama, where they don't speak the local language. The countries were originally intended as a kind of deportation layover, but the migrants have now spent 50 days in limbo. Critics described it as a way for the US to export its deportation process, while human rights groups have warned that the two countries were turning into a "black hole" for deportees. In Costa Rica, around 200 migrants, 81 of them children, were driven out to a rural migrant processing centre along the Costa Rica-Panama border and detained in a former factory building. The lawsuit from the Global Strategic Litigation Council and other human right groups was filed before the UN committee that monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Thursday night, and alleges that Costa Rica violated the convention. Silvia Serna Roman, one of the attorneys filing the

Lack of resources hinder recovery after Myanmar's deadly earthquake

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bangkok

Basic services have yet to be restored to the areas of Myanmar worst hit by a huge earthquake three weeks ago, and emergency workers recovering bodies and clearing debris are contending with regular aftershocks and lack of resources, humanitarian services say. A situation report issued late Friday by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA, said frequent strong aftershocks continue to shake central Myanmar almost daily, increasing fear and uncertainty among affected residents, disrupting the pressure on already limited resources and services. "Three weeks after catastrophic twin earthquakes hit Myanmar on March 28, the worst-affected communities are still without safe shelter, clean water and sanitation, stable electricity, health care and essential services," the report said. The epicentre of the 7.7 magnitude quake was near Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city, but it hit a wide swath of the country, causing significant damage to six regions and states including the capital, Naypyitaw.



When Walls Hold Stories

These homes show how vintage design can make spaces feel warm, lived-in and personal, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Step inside a home that tells a story and time slows down. The scent of polished wood, the soft glow of aged brass, the weight of a mirror with history in its frame—these are not impulse buys. They are chosen, kept and remembered. In a world driven by constant novelty, vintage interiors offer something far deeper: character. The design world has begun to shift. Clean, modern lines may still dominate, but they are often softened by a velvet armchair with studded legs or a table with claw feet. One, shaped by Anjaleka Kriplani through Angie Homes and the other, the deeply personal residence of Ragini Mehra, CEO of Silhouette Salon de Beauté at The Oberoi, New Delhi. Each holds a unique voice, yet both embrace history through objects and design choices that elevate lived experience over surface styling.

Vintage as a Way of Life

Anjaleka Kriplani approaches vintage interiors with a sense of permanence. Her curated collections feature teak sideboards, carved headboards, and low tables with intricate brass inlay. Spaces feel collected, not styled. Nothing is hurried; every element adds to the room's quiet confidence.

Textiles create warmth—mustard velvets, deep indigos, and brocade with gold tassels. Colours hold depth, often bold but never brash. Curtains fall with a certain weight. Armchairs in mohair or linen invite pause. Perfection is not the goal. Slight irregularities bring charm. A crack in a table leg, the worn polish of a wooden bench—these details add presence, not flaws. Lighting is selected with restraint. Linen lampshades cast a warm glow, echoing the gentle angles of mid-century design. Wooden rafters, carefully preserved, lend a lived quality to the room. This approach treats interiors as layered narratives rather than stage sets.

A Home That Holds Memory

Ragini Mehra's residence is where every corner tells a story, as she is a professionally trained Interior Architect. Known for her impeccable taste and strong design sensibilities, Ragini Mehra's home is a visual diary of textures, memories and artistic expression. Her journey began with a degree in Interior Architecture from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), where she honed her keen eye for aesthetics and detail.

From heritage-inspired statement pieces and modern minimal elements to unique décor accents sourced from her travels, the home strikes a balance between luxury and character. Persian rugs and Indian Carpets further enrich the space, adding texture and a sense of timeless elegance. The spaces are large, where both the empty and filled areas



blend to create an aesthetic and serene environment allow the design to breathe without feeling overcrowded. Furniture includes exquisite pieces from Bo Concept, Maitland-Smith, Baker and Henredon, each contributing its own character to the overall aesthetic. Each room is designed to look beautiful and feel lived-in, layered, and deeply personal. The unmistakable individuality of the space is shaped by her experiences, intuitions and affections.



THE BEAUTY LIES IN THE DETAILS, A TURNED LEG, A WORN HANDLE, AN OLD LIGHT SWITCH. THESE ARE HOMES THAT WELCOME, NOT IMPRESS. AT A TIME WHEN SPEED DEFINES MOST CHOICES, SPACES LIKE THESE CALL FOR THOUGHT



Wear What Reflects, Not Just Shines

BY TEAM VIVA

Is jewellery still about luxury or is it becoming something deeply personal? This is a question worth asking as more women turn to jewellery as a means of self-expression. No longer tied to tradition, ritual or display, jewellery has entered a new space of individuality.

This shift reflects a cultural change in how women engage with design. Jewellery is selected for its alignment with personality and purpose. Jewellery has become part of how women see themselves and how they wish to be seen.

Designer Janvi Sachdeva has embraced this evolving sensibility. Her new collection, **The Symphony of Wild Flowers**, captures a gentle strength. Working in 92.5 silver, she creates forms inspired by nature, floral shapes, delicate birds, textured leaves, shaped into pieces that are both elegant and wearable. There is no excess here, only attention.

A triangular purple gemstone necklace is one of the collection's highlights, where design precision meets a striking palette. Elsewhere, vivid birds set in silver pendants suggest joy and movement. These are thoughtful pieces, crafted for those who value detail and delicacy.

The collection stands out for its adaptability. Emerald-toned chokers pair with



matching bracelets and rings, creating harmony without repetition. Each stone, each clasp, each engraving is part of a larger dialogue between the wearer and the world around her. This kind of jewellery does not depend on excess or volume. It invites interpretation. It's a question worth asking: Are we entering an era where the value of jewellery is measured less in carats and more in character?

If so, the answer lies not in market trends but in the mirror. Woman is no longer waiting to be adorned — she selects, she curates, she defines. Jewellery, then, becomes her punctuation, graceful, sharp and entirely her own.



WHAT SHE WEARS, SHE MEANS — NOT FOR SHOW, BUT TO FEEL LIKE HERSELF, ALWAYS

A Bold Sequel Unmasking the Perils of Totalitarian Ideologies

BY TEAM VIVA

Crimson Crescent — The Last Quarter, a riveting 105-minute feature film by acclaimed filmmaker Mayank Jain, emerges as a powerful and timely sequel to the 2005 documentary **Bangla Crescent** — ISI, Madrasas & Infiltration.

The original film, launched by senior IPS officers Late KPS Gill, Prakash Singh and Late R.K. Ohri, was a path-breaking exposé of indoctrination and infiltration in the Indian subcontinent. Twenty-five years later, **Crimson Crescent** arrives with undiminished urgency. These 25 years have been largely wasted. Infiltration has not ceased. Indoctrination through madrasas has not slowed. And most alarmingly, the threats identified in **Bangla Crescent** — ISI, madrasas & Infiltration have only metastasised — spreading far beyond borders.

A Global Canvas: From South Asia to Europe and the Middle East While **Bangla Crescent** — ISI, madrasas & Infiltration focused sharply on Bangladesh and Pakistan's role in radicalisation and infiltration, **Crimson Crescent** — **The Last Quarter** greatly expands its scope. The film explores the rising aggression in many European countries grappling with mass immigration from Middle Eastern, African and Pakistani regions. It captures the social unrest, ideological clashes and erosion of public safety emerging from these demographic and cultural shifts.



The documentary also covers the volatile Middle East, diving into the complex dynamics of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria and Israel. Here it examines not only the geopolitics but also the internal ideological conflicts and state-sponsored radical narratives that continue to destabilise the region. Encouragingly, signs of rationality and scientific thinking are beginning to emerge within the highest echelons of power—a welcome and much-needed development.

Crimson Crescent draws a provocative and compelling parallel between three major ideological threats of the past and present: Nazism, Communism and Jihadism. All three, the film argues, are driven by a thirst for absolute control and the destruc-

tion of dissent. Each has claimed millions of lives and eroded the moral foundations of societies they have touched.

Mayank Jain asserts that these ideologies thrive by silencing reason, glorifying violence and promoting absolute truth claims — often using religious or revolutionary fervour as a shield. The film is a cautionary tale of what happens when indoctrination replaces education and belief systems abandon dialogue in favour of dogma.

A central theme of the film is the insidious power of indoctrination through institutions like madrasas. It reveals how such education systems instil rigid ideological thinking, leading to intolerance, polarisation and often violent radicalisation. The film critiques societies that fail to challenge these systems and instead allow radical narratives to flourish in the name of tradition or religious freedom. A lesser-acknowledged but crucial aspect the film highlights is that Muslims themselves are often the first victims of Islamist extremism. From Shia Muslims targeted in Pakistan to the marginalisation and persecution of other minority Muslim sects, **Crimson Crescent** explores the deep fractures within the Muslim world.

Amidst the bleak landscape, **Crimson Crescent** also offers hope. It recognises the growing internal reform movements within radical Islam where bold voices from within the community are challenging violence and calling for rationality in discourse. The film uplifts these efforts, urging both policymakers and civil soci-

ety to support rational reformers rather than extremists. "Reason is humanity's shield against ideological tyranny," says Jain, reinforcing the film's core message: that education, critical thinking and open dialogue are the only long-term antidotes to radicalisation.

Resist Absolutism, Embrace Dialogue

This is not just a documentary. **Crimson Crescent** — **The Last Quarter**, is a call to action. It appeals to governments, communities and individuals to resist the growing appeal of absolutism and divisive ideologies. It advocates for education policies that foster rational thought and for a cultural shift toward Universalism, intellectual freedom and unity.

Mayank Jain is a renowned filmmaker with over 27 years of experience and more than 50 critically acclaimed films to his credit. His work spans governance, national security, public health and social reform and is known for tackling complex issues with intellectual rigour and cinematic clarity.

He rose to national prominence with **India Tomorrow** — **The Gujarat Miracle**, a documentary on Gujarat's development model under Narendra Modi. As Content Head of NaMo TV during the 2012 Gujarat elections, he shaped political communication strategies with high-impact visuals. Mayank's portfolio includes politically resonant films like **Gujarat Fast Track**, **Gujarat Tomorrow** and **No to Terror** and public health documentaries.

SUGGESTED BINGES



Logout
OTT — ZEE5
Cast — Babil Khan, Rasika Dugal



Khauf
OTT — Amazon Prime Video
Cast — Monika Panwar, Rajat Kapoor, Geetanjali Kulkarni, Shilpa Shukla, Chum Darang



Daveed
OTT — Zee5
Cast — Antony Varghese, Mo Ismail



Stranger Things: The First Shadow
OTT — Netflix
Cast — Kate Trefry, Stephen Daldry, Justin Martin

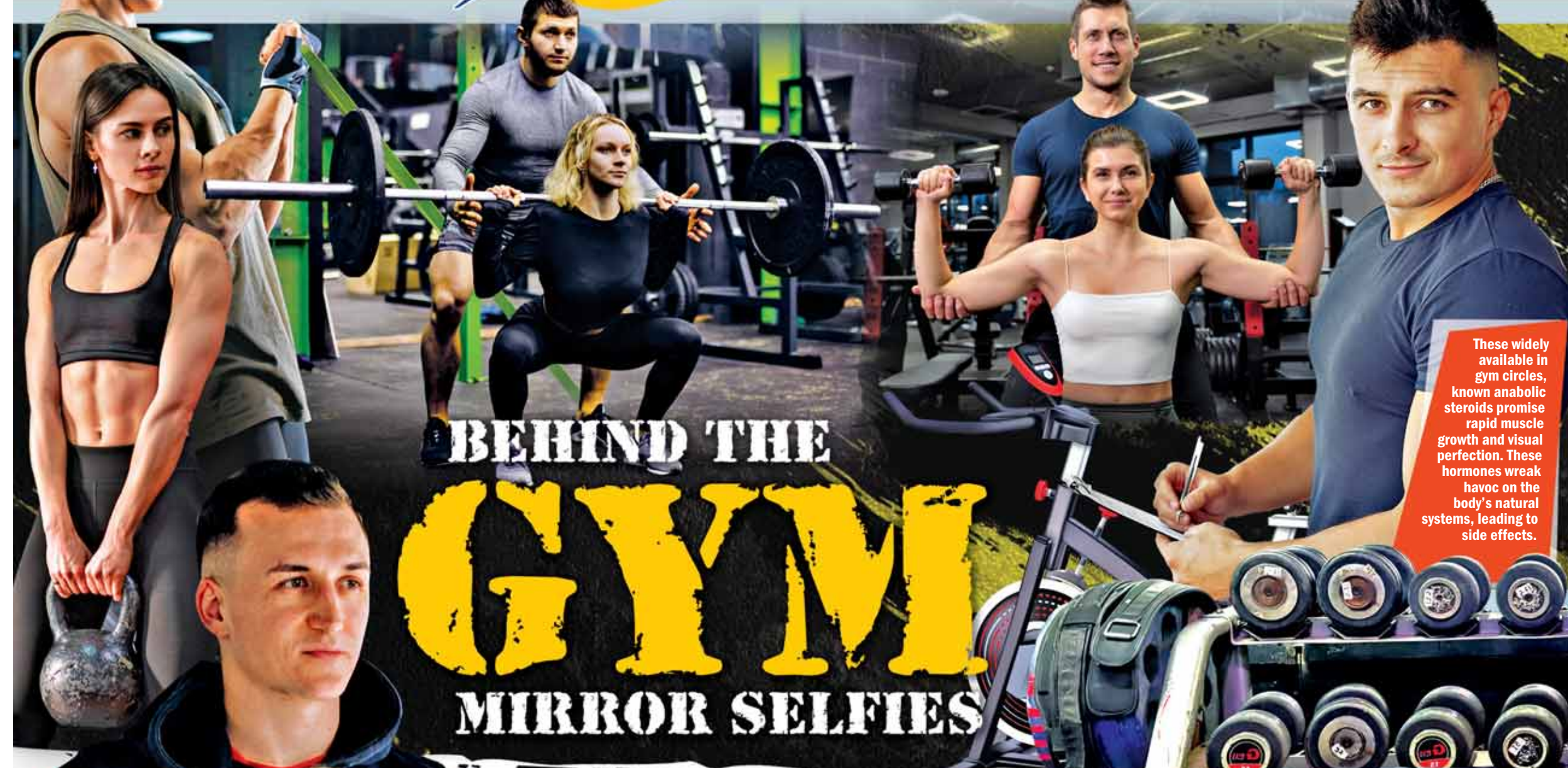


The Stolen Girl
OTT — JioHotstar
Cast — Denise Gough, Beatrice Cohen, Robyn Betteridge, Jim Sturgess



AGENDA

"Don't worry about what other people are doing. Worry about your own training" — Ronnie Coleman



BEHIND THE GYM MIRROR SELFIES

These widely available in gym circles, known anabolic steroids promise rapid muscle growth and visual perfection. These hormones wreak havoc on the body's natural systems, leading to side effects.

Beneath the neon lights and monthly memberships of the gyms, lies a reality we're not talking about enough, says **ABHI SINGHAL**

It is always talked about certified things while you train or build your body but it is equally important to choose the right place while you workout. The clang of iron plates, LED-lit workout zones, and neon signage screaming "TRANSFORM NOW", the gyms have become the modern sanctuaries of fitness. Across every urban block, new fitness centres sprout like cafés, each promising better bodies and faster results. What was once affair with morning walks in parks, yoga under the tree, or evening strolls around the neighbourhood with family or friends is steadily being replaced by treadmills and protein shakes.

More and more people are signing up for gym memberships, not just for health but often for aesthetics, validation and a fast track to physical change. The idea of fitness has shifted from functionality to form. The motto has shifted from feeling good to looking good within some years. But beneath the curated Instagram reels and sculpted abs lies a more pressing concern: *Are we choosing the right places to work out? And more importantly, are we trusting the right people to guide us through it?*

Gyms Are Everywhere, but Quality Isn't

Like not all that glitters is gold, not every gym with flashy equipment and discount deals is built for real fitness. The explosion of gyms across cities has brought with it a mixed bag — some well-equipped and guided by the certified professionals, others run by underqualified enthusiasts with little understanding of body or the process involved.

This boom in numbers doesn't guarantee quality or safety. While the fancy lighting and trending playlists may attract the crowd, the real test lies in the integrity of the space and the credentials of the trainers. A wrong choice can do more harm than good, both physically and mentally.

Fitness should energise the mind as much as it does the body. There are people who depend on external validation often spiral into cycles of anxiety, social withdrawal, or aggressive behaviour. The perfect body becomes a trap rather than a triumph. Unfortunately, many gyms are chosen based on popularity, influencer promotion, or peer pressure—not research or reliability. "People come to us saying, I just want a physique like a fitness influencer or a filmstar, they don't come in the gym for

fitness or health. The main purpose of today's generation is just getting a good physique," said *Piyush Aggarwal*, Owner of *HAMR Fitness Centre* at Shankar Chowk, Northwest Delhi for the past 16 years.

It is important that people keep a check on the trainers and advice provided by them. *Piyush Aggarwal* further added that there are cases where people don't even talk to trainers or experienced people and start following diets and steroids on their own for cost cutting, which leads to cheap quality items and, in turn, affects their body.

A Trainer Can Make or Break Your Body

This brings us to the second part of the question: Do we trust the right people to guide us through it? Trainers are your fitness compass. The right trainer knows when to push, when to pull back, and when to say rest. Yet, many gym-goers fall into the trap of trusting unqualified trainers who hand out one-size-fits-all workout plans and unrealistic expectations.

A certified trainer doesn't just have the responsibility of guiding; they have the responsibility of assessing and educating. They chart workouts based on your goals, physical limitations and lifestyle. More importantly, they know how to prevent injuries and manage progression before it's too late. Talking to *Ayush Singh*, a certified trainer practising in Delhi, he said, "Qualified trainers make a customised plan for different body types. But if you go to unqualified trainers, they will go on with the same plan they have learned from someone else or used on their own body. This is a major difference. If a product is not suitable to you, a qualified trainer will switch it, but an unqualified one will keep pushing the same because he doesn't have alternatives."

It's easy to get lost in filters and reels but fitness, was never meant to be a popularity contest. It was meant to empower and to strengthen the body and the mind. Prioritise your health over haste and don't fall for dangerous shortcuts. So, yes join the gym. Push yourself. Challenge your limits.

Fitness should be a celebration of your body. So, most importantly train for life, not for likes. Because strength built the right way doesn't just change your body, it transforms your life.

THE ILLUSION OF FAST RESULTS: THE STEROID SHORTCUT

In this pressure-filled ecosystem, where transformation pictures and social media likes serve as reward systems, people chase fast results and fall into darker traps. One of the most alarming trends is the misuse of steroids. "Nonprescription doses are usually many times higher than the doses prescribed for health conditions by your doctor. These doses have short and long term side effects when misused like high blood pressure, liver damage, heart attack, increased aggression, acne, and even depression. Young adults get attracted to improve body appearance which should not be done. These medicines should only be taken under medical supervision," said *Dr Paras Agarwal*, Clinical Director & Head - Diabetes, Obesity & Metabolic Disorders, *Marengo Asia Hospitals*.



CHECKLIST

It was equally important to speak to someone experienced who has practised gymming for years and competed at various levels. *Akshay Tyagi*, a fitness enthusiast, winner of many body building competitions like - *Mr. Delhi, National Dead Lift Championship, 7th Amberprix Mr. India*, said, "You have to keep a check from the start. The most important thing is the equipment. It should not be outdated, must be serviced regularly, and shouldn't be broken. Faulty machines can cause serious injuries. It's not always important to choose expensive gyms but to go to the right one where you can work out properly." Before signing up, consider these: verify gym credentials, observe the environment, ask for an assessment and listen to your body.



FITNESS FOR LIFE, NOT JUST FOR SOCIAL FEED

True fitness isn't built in 30-day challenges or shortcut supplements. It's a lifelong journey rooted in discipline, consistency, and informed choices. A healthy lifestyle isn't a trend but it's a personal investment. *Dr Indramani Upadhyay*, MPT (Ortho), HOD Physiotherapist at *The Centre for Knee & Hip Care*, says, "Overtraining or poor guidance from unqualified trainers can lead to both short- and long-term health issues. Some red flags in your gym trainer's guidance will be seen as persistent fatigue, recurring injuries, lack of recovery days and sleep disturbances."



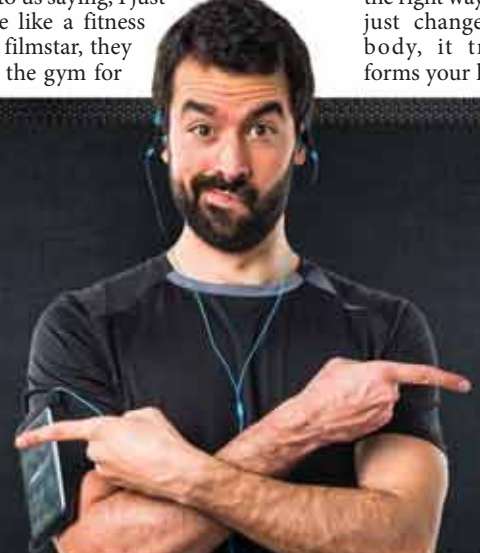
THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE WRONG PROCESS ARE NOT JUST PHYSICAL; THEY CAN LEAD TO MENTAL, EMOTIONAL AND LONG-TERM HEALTH CHALLENGES THAT AREN'T WORTH THE TEMPORARY HIGH OF A PERFECT PHYSIQUE TO SHOW OFF

The most disgracing factor is that all the joiners are asked to do the personal training just for the money factor regardless the fact that they actually don't need it. People don't even ask for certification and follow routines that look effective on someone else.

MOVES TO KEEP IN MIND FOR YOUR GYM SUCCESS

- Your body is unique. Follow a plan that suits your fitness level, body type, goals and lifestyle and is ideally one crafted by a certified trainer or coach.
- Progress in fitness doesn't come overnight. Consistency beats intensity. Show up regularly, even if some days are light.
- Nutrition is key. Focus on balanced meals like protein, good fats, complex carbs, fibre. Stay away from fad diets or extreme calorie deficits.
- Learn the basics of anatomy, movement, and nutrition. It helps you make informed decisions and avoid blindly following trends.
- Stick to basic, tested supplements like whey protein, creatine, multivitamins — and only if

- needed. Always consult a trainer or a nutritionist.
- Seek guidance only from certified trainers (ACE, ISSA, ACSM, etc.). They are trained to guide you smartly — not push you into ham.
- Focus on your routine and stick to your plan. Avoid getting distracted by others or feeling pressured to do what they're doing.
- Ask questions from the trainers if you're unsure about how to use a machine or do an exercise, ask a trainer instead of guessing.
- Keep a track of your progress by using a journal, app, or progress pictures for your own self to stay motivated and track improvements over time.
- Dress comfortably and wear flexible gym clothes.



WORKOUT BLUNDERS YOU SHOULD SKIP IN GYM

- Steroids may promise faster gains, but they bring irreversible side effects — liver damage, hormonal imbalances, mood disorders, infertility, and more. They're not worth the risk.
- Avoid following gym "bros" or influencers who aren't qualified. What works for someone may harm you.
- Pro bodybuilders have years of experience and often unnatural aids. Their routines are not meant for beginners or average fitness goals. Don't try to be like them and follow them.
- Pain, dizziness, exhaustion, loss of motivation — these are all signs that something's wrong. Don't push through blindly.
- Starving your body will only weaken your immunity

- and metabolism. Long-term health always wins over quick fixes.
- Don't skip warm-ups or cool downs as this leads to stiffness, soreness, or worse that is injuries.
- Avoid texting or scrolling between sets as it disrupts your focus and slows your routine.
- Don't compare yourself constantly as everyone's fitness journey is unique. Celebrate your own progress, no matter how small.
- Don't rely on supplements alone as supplements are just the support systems but not the actual solutions. Real nutrition comes from real food.
- Don't neglect cleanliness. Always wipe sweat off equipment after use as it's basic hygiene.



A Toast to Taste

BY TEAM AGENDA

Somewhere between a laid-back hangout and a full-sensory culinary voyage, *Dos Delhi* is shaking up the city's bar culture, one artfully crafted cocktail at a time. Tucked into a lively corner of New Delhi, it is a mood. With its high-energy vibe, edgy design, and a menu that's unapologetically adventurous, this hotspot is redefining what it means to dine and drink in the capital. Now, the creative minds behind the concept — Chefs *Jatin Mallick* and *Julia Carmen De Sa* are raising the bar with the launch of a brand-new Beverage & Bar Snack Pairing Menu.

This isn't just about snacks that accompany your drink. It's a thoughtfully curated sensory experience where bold cocktails and inventive bites come together in a masterful dance of balance and contrast.

A sleek glass of *Truffle Spy*, made with gin, Martini Extra Dry, Cointreau, Campari, and a touch of truffle, paired with golden, crispy *Truffle Parmesan Fries* makes a day. What is refined, decadent, and almost too good to share are the fiery *Dos Me Up*, where tequila combines with wasabi, sour cream, cilantro, and basil. Its punch is balanced by the earthy calm of *Charcoal Grilled Snack Peppers with Yam Hummus*.

Each pairing feels like a little world of its own. The *Smirking Cacao*, with its heady mix of dark rum, vanilla liqueur, spiced vermouth, and cacao nibs, is like dessert in a glass. It is perfectly complemented by *Buttered Edamame with Thai Herbs and Lemongrass Ketchup*. Then there's the refreshing

Hot Russian Zombie, a vodka-apple-citrus-based drink that comes alive with Potato Lavash topped with Avocado, Salsa Macha, and Chipotle Cheese Sauce. And if tropical and smoky is your flavour, the *Sexy Lady Stunner*, a blend of whisky, Martini Bianco, and roasted pineapple, pairs beautifully with Mustard Marinated Fish Belly Fingers and lemon marmalade.

However, *Dos Delhi* isn't only about the drinks. The bar snack menu is a genre of its own - part street-style comfort, part global fusion, and entirely packed with surprises. Take the *Guntur Chilli Glazed Crispy Chicken Wings* for instance, bold and spicy, and ideal with whisky. Or the *Flash-Fried Sweet & Sour Green Candy Tomatoes* served with Yoghurt Tahina and Flour Crispies, which offer a tangy, crunchy contrast to citrus-forward cocktails. If you love bold umami flavours, the *Dos Magic Spiced Cassava Chips* with *Sriracha Cheese Ketchup* deliver a satisfying punch. And of course, there's the ever-popular Cheese Garlic Bread, warm, gooey, and comfortingly familiar — especially when enjoyed with red wine sangria or a smooth whisky spritzer.

The ambience is as much a part of the experience as the food and drink. Spread over two floors, with both indoor and outdoor seating, the space pulses with a modern, welcoming energy. Contemporary artwork adds visual intrigue, while live DJs set the tone, with music that shifts seamlessly from laid-back evening grooves to weekend party anthems.

At its core, *Dos Delhi* is about slowing down, enjoying good company, and celebrating the pleasures of flavour and connection. So whether you're winding down after work, reconnecting with friends, or seeking your next great cocktail discovery, Beverage & Bar Snack Pairing Menu invites you to sip and savour.

FACT SHEET:

Name: Dos By Tres
Address: Shop No. 9 & 10, Fourth Avenue Road, Lodhi Colony, New Delhi
Price for Two: ₹2,500/-
Timings: Mon - Thu, Sunday: 12:00pm to 12:00am
Fri - Sat : 12:00pm to 01:00am

Chill Mornings with Light Breakfast

BY TEAM AGENDA

Breakfast is often called the most important meal of the day and for all the good reasons. A wholesome breakfast fuels your body, sharpens your focus, and sets the tone for a productive day. Especially during summer, starting your morning with light, nourishing, and refreshing meals becomes

all the more essential to keep your energy up without feeling heavy.

In this spirit, we bring you two delightful breakfast recipes that are both satisfying and summer-friendly. First up is *Poha*, a light and flavourful dish made from flattened rice perfectly with a cup of chai. Then *Curd Upma*, a unique twist on the classic Upma that blends roasted semolina with curd.

CURD UPMA

Curd Upma, a dish combining the cooling effects of curd with the nutritional benefits of Upma, offers several advantages during the summer months. It helps to regulate body temperature, promotes digestion, boosts immunity, and provides hydration, making it a refreshing and healthy summer meal.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 Cups sooji
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 10-12 Curry leaves
- 1 tsp urad dal
- 1 tsp chana dal
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup vegetables of your choice, chopped
- 1 cup curd
- 1 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- 2 Green chillies (slit)
- to taste salt
- to taste Red chilli powder
- for garnishing coriander leaves

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Roast sooji till fragrant. Keep aside.
- Heat ghee in a pan. Add mustard seeds, curry leaves, urad dal and chana dal. Wait till they splutter.
- Saute onion and ginger-garlic paste.
- When onion browns, add the
- vegetables, cover the pan and let the vegetables cook.
- Add curd water and saute for a minute. Add roasted sooji, 4 cups of water and let everything cook.
- Garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot.

POHA

Poha is a dish made from flattened rice, which is lightly steamed and cooked with onions, spices, and herbs. The term 'poha' refers both to the ingredient-flattened rice flakes, also known as beaten or

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup poha (flattened rice)
- 1 medium onion (finely chopped)
- 1-2 green chillies (slit or chopped)
- 1/4 tsp mustard seeds
- 5-6 curry leaves
- 1/4 tsp turmeric powder
- Salt to taste
- 1 tsp oil
- 1 small potato (optional, peeled and chopped small)
- 1-2 tsp sugar (optional, for a slight sweetness)
- 2 tbsp roasted peanuts
- Fresh coriander leaves (chopped, for garnish)
- Juice of half a lemon



INSTRUCTIONS:

- Rinse 1 cup poha in a colander under running water.
- Gently fluff it with your fingers and let it sit for 5-10 minutes to soften. (Make sure it doesn't become mushy)
- Heat 1 tsp oil in a pan, add mustard seeds and let them crackle.
- Add curry leaves, green chillies, and peanuts.
- Sauté for a minute and add chopped onions and sauté until translucent. (If adding potatoes, cook them until soft before adding onions)
- Sprinkle turmeric powder and mix well.
- Add the softened poha, salt, and sugar. Mix everything gently.
- Cover the pan and cook for 2-3 minutes on low heat.
- Turn off the flame, squeeze lemon juice, and garnish with coriander.
- Enjoy your poha with a hot cup of tea!



Brewing Innovation: Microbreweries

BY AJAY GOWDA

The craft beer industry thrives on passion, innovation, and an ever-evolving consumer palate. In a dynamic market like India, where beer culture is rapidly evolving, microbreweries must continuously adapt to remain relevant. This evolution goes beyond brewing exceptional beer as it requires innovation in menu offerings, immersive experiences, and customer engagement strategies. Leading microbreweries recognise that craft beer is more than just a beverage; it is an experience that fosters a deeper connection between consumers and the craft. Reinvention is not merely a business strategy but it is a commitment to consistently enhancing the customer journey, offering authenticity, novelty, and lasting impressions.

Craft beer lovers seek a holistic experience that extends beyond the pint glass. At our brewing company we have always believed that a microbrewery is more than just a place to drink — it's an immersive experience. This means that while our beer remains at the core, our food menu, ambience, and service must evolve to keep guests excited and engaged. Food and beer pairing is an area where we see constant innovation. The modern beer drinker wants to explore beyond traditional bar snacks, which is why we consistently experiment with our menu. A well-thought-out food pairing can enhance the flavours of a beer. Our recent menu refresh, inspired by global flavours while keeping our Viking



spirit alive, is a testament to this philosophy. Beyond food, microbreweries are also diversifying their beverage offerings. Craft cocktails, beer-based drinks, and even house-made non-alcoholic options ensure that there is something for every guest, making the microbrewery experience more inclusive and engaging.

The modern beer seeks variety. The rise of unique beer styles such as hazy IPAs, barrel-aged stouts, and fruit-infused sours, demonstrates that consumers are open to experimentation. Reinvention is about adapting to what our consumers want before they even know they want it.

— The author is Managing Director of Byg Brewski Brewing Company

THE FUTURE

The microbrewery industry in India is at an exciting juncture. With evolving tastes, rising consumer expectations, and a growing appreciation for craft beer, reinvention is no longer an option but it is a necessity. As we look to the future, our focus remains on pushing boundaries while staying true to our core values of quality, craftsmanship, and experience.

Step into a Slower World
Where Culture, Nature,
and Stories Breathe
Freely in Nagaland

Let the Hills Tell Their Story



CRAFTED MEMORIES

Souvenirs That Tell a Story Don't leave without picking up a bottle of Infamous-its bold character and striking design make it a gift worthy of your shelf. Handwoven Naga shawls, each tribe with its distinct pattern, ideal as a wrap or a wall accent. Tribal jewellery made from beads and brass-rustic, sustainable, and deeply symbolic. Bamboo and cane artefacts, from baskets to lampshades, crafted by local artisans. Smoked pork or dried bamboo shoot, vacuum-packed and available at select markets in Kohima. Locally grown wild Naga chillies, both fresh and in pickled form, for those who like their food fiery. Why Go Slow?

PANKAJ KUMAR



PAWAN SONI
COLUMNIST
Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards



If you're weary of Insta-itineraries and whirlwind checklists, perhaps it's time to let Nagaland happen to you—slowly, deliberately, and with the grace of a place untouched by frenzy. This Northeastern gem invites not a race, but a pause. Here, you don't "do" a holiday; you dwell in it. The gateway to Nagaland is surprisingly accessible—courtesy of a direct flight from Delhi to Dimapur. No layovers, no fuss. From Dimapur, it's a picturesque 90-minute drive to Kohima, the state's capital, where the hills roll in like a lullaby and time decides to take the long road. For those who prefer to stay in Dimapur, you're still in the heart of it all—with the added advantage of being just 20 minutes from Khatkhati in Assam, where the spirit flows a little more freely (more on that in a bit).

A Walk Through History

Kohima holds within it the whispers of the past. The Kohima War Cemetery, perched gracefully over green slopes, honours the brave who fought in one of the Second World War's fiercest battles. It's not just a site; it's a silenced storyteller. The epitaph that reads "When you go home, tell them of us," is reason enough to spend a moment longer in reflection. In December showcases all this and more—dance,

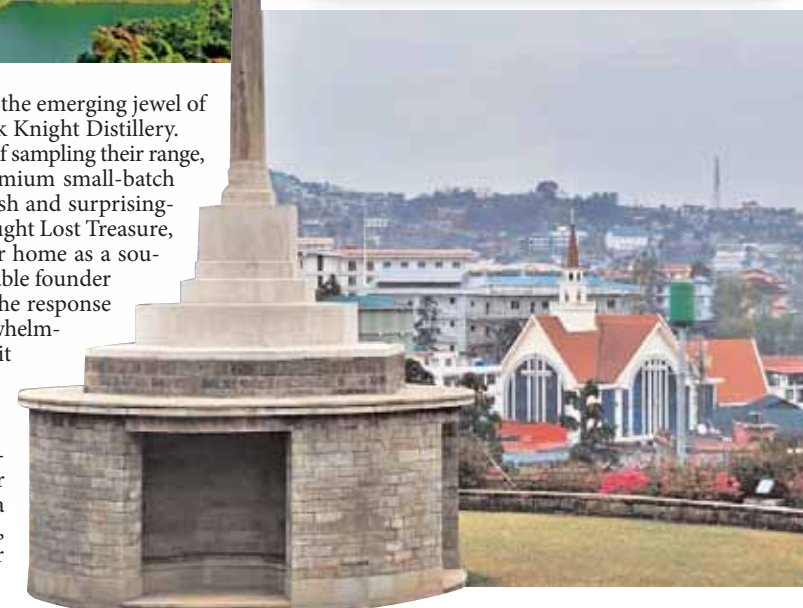
folklore, crafts, and cuisines that are as layered as the land. Now, here's the delightful surprise: while Nagaland's indigenous cuisine is a delight of lightly spiced, easy-to-digest dishes—think bamboo shoot pork, fresh river fish, sticky rice—there's no dearth of North Indian comfort food either. Craving choley bhature, jalebi, or a good old paratha? You'll find it in Kohima's modest eateries and hotels, served with the warmth of familiarity and a view to match.

Nagaland may be officially dry, but that doesn't mean you're cut off from your evening pour. A short ride to Khatkhati, across the Assam border, brings

you to a clutch of bars and the emerging jewel of the local spirits scene—Dark Knight Distillery.

Here, I had the pleasure of sampling their range, including Infamous, a premium small-batch whisky with a smooth finish and surprisingly nuanced profile, and bought Lost Treasure, a cold-brew coffee rum for home as a souvenir. Dani Chand, the affable founder of Dark Knight, stated, "The response to Infamous has been overwhelming. We're still keeping it small-batch to retain quality, but expansion plans are definitely brewing."

This place is about learning to savour again, whether it's a bite of Naga stew or a verse of war history. So, take that flight. Take your time. Let Nagaland linger.



HORNBILL VILLAGE AND THE 16 TRIBES OF NAGALAND

Nagaland is home to over a hundred tribes, each with its own dialect, traditions, and legacy. Among these, 16 are officially recognised as major tribes, and their presence is vividly brought to life in the Hornbill Village—a living museum where tradition stands tall. Here, tribal architecture tells you as much as the elders do. You can walk through authentically built morungs, see traditional weaponry once used in headhunting days, and witness daily practices that have survived centuries.



Luxury Beyond the Ocean's Horizon

BY AKANKSHA DEAN

As I boarded, the promise of an enchanting journey ahead filled the air. Flying Business Class with SriLankan Airlines transformed the journey into a memorable escapade. As I settled into my plush seat, the friendly flight attendants welcomed me with warm smiles and a glass of sparkling champagne that shimmered like the Indian Ocean below. Soon enough, we glided into Colombo, a city alive with culture and hues. Upon my arrival at the Anantara Peace Haven Resort, I was instantly lulled by the gentle sound of waves crashing against the shore.

The brutal noise of everyday life faded away, replaced by a peaceful ambience suffused with the fragrance of tropical flowers and fresh seafood grilling nearby. My luxurious villa had a private plunge

WAVES, WELLNESS AND WONDERS

My adventurous side thrived during watching a thrilling surf lesson with an extraordinary instructor, who transformed missteps into pointers—by the end of it, you could be riding waves like a pro. A session of restorative yoga against the backdrop of the sun dipping into the ocean was the perfect balance, allowing me to connect both mentally and physically with nature. It was a moment of pure zen. Every treatment I enjoyed led me deeper into tranquility, leaving me blissfully void of any worldly stress. Between flavours, surf and spa, I truly felt the essence of Sri Lanka's welcoming charm.

pool, which beckoned me for a refreshing dip. As I settled in, excited for what lay ahead, I could feel Sri Lanka's rich culture and bright spirit spilling from the very walls of this oasis.

CULINARY BLISS BY THE SEA

Let's start with the food—where do I even begin? My culinary journey kicked off at Journey's, the resort's breakfast haven. The vibrant buffet was as impressive as an art gallery, boasting an array of dishes from traditional egg hoppers to decadent pastries.

My taste buds danced with delight at the first bite of savoury fish curry paired with that unique hopper texture. Post breakfast, I lounged by the infinity pool, which effortlessly merged into the horizon—each glance towards the ocean felt like I was shifting between reality and a surreal painting.

The true joy of dining at Anantara lies not only in casual meals between sun-soaked hours but in the mystical dinner experience that awaited me at Verele, the beachside teppa-

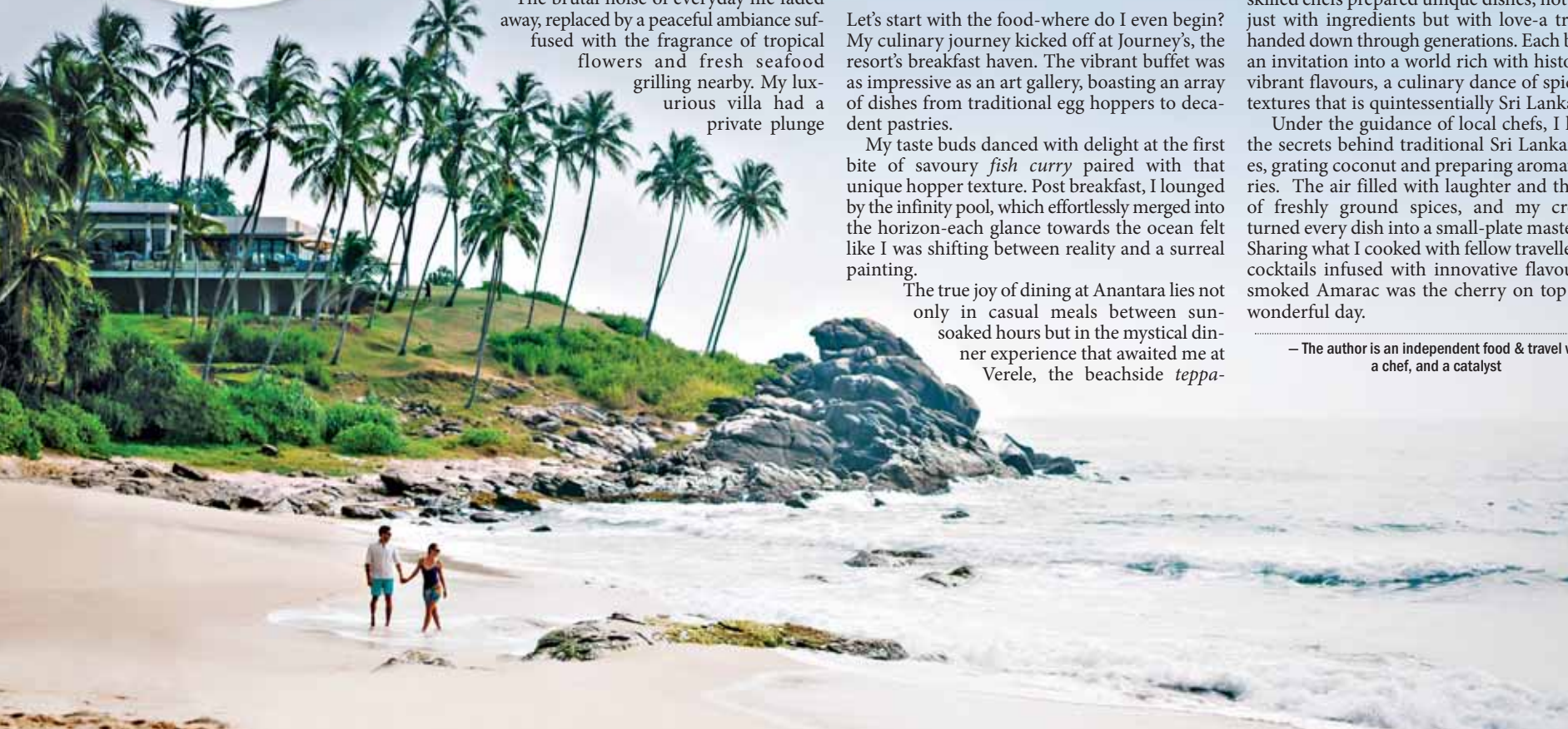
nyaki restaurant. As the sun slipped below the horizon, live folk music curated a soothing backdrop to my BBQ feast.

I relished every moment as the skilled chefs prepared unique dishes, not just with ingredients but with love—a tradition handed down through generations. Each bite was an invitation into a world rich with history and vibrant flavours, a culinary dance of spices and textures that is quintessentially Sri Lankan.

Under the guidance of local chefs, I learned the secrets behind traditional Sri Lankan dishes, grating coconut and preparing aromatic curries. The air filled with laughter and the scent of freshly ground spices, and my creativity turned every dish into a small-plate masterpiece. Sharing what I cooked with fellow travellers over cocktails infused with innovative flavours like smoked Amaranac was the cherry on top of this wonderful day.

— The author is an independent food & travel writer, a chef, and a catalyst

IN THE END, IT'S THE LAUGHTER SHARED OVER SPICES, WAVES RIDDEN, AND PEACE FOUND AMIDST VEILS OF PALM TREES THAT MAKES THE ANANTARA EXPERIENCE TRULY UNFORGETTABLE





YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week may bring some financial disappointments for you. If you've set high expectations, you might find that things don't unfold as anticipated. In your work environment, confusion prevails, leaving you unable to make decisive moves. Tasks remain unfinished, and your organizational efforts feel scattered. Procrastination may take over, especially regarding work or travel plans. However, by midweek, you'll find a renewed sense of stability, and you will begin to approach your tasks with a clearer mindset. Connections from distant places could offer some benefits. Your colleagues and subordinates will expect more involvement from you, and you will rise to the occasion. But the week concludes on a challenging note, with family issues or health concerns demanding your attention, which might affect your professional commitments and result in some losses.

Lucky number 17 | Lucky colour Yellow
Lucky day Thursday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

Work is the primary focus of your energy this week. You could feel overloaded with work and unable to find time for even small breaks. The feeling of working towards something seems permanently out of reach, and slow advancement only exacerbates the feeling. Midweek, your stability might be shaken by unexpected factors like the arrival or departure of someone important. It is essential not to make hasty choices, particularly when one is muddled or burned out. Travel of some sort is probable, providing a refreshing shift. When uncertainty grips you, a few minutes of quiet contemplation can invoke poise. Even though facing tough decisions with fairness is your forte, acting too quickly might make your efforts null—it's wisest to avoid needless expenditure.

Lucky number 29 | Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Sunday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week emphasizes the need for organization, focus, and discipline. However, confusion may cloud your thoughts, and there could be a rift between partners. In some situations, answers are available, yet fear may prevent you from accepting the truth. You might hesitate to confront reality, worried that acknowledging it could worsen things. Midweek may bring legal challenges or situations beyond your control, potentially leading to disappointment. Be mindful of your health and avoid unnecessary confrontations. It's best to hold back from arguments and take some time to rest. Reflect on your actions in solitude, heal, and approach your challenges with renewed strength. Patience is key—this is just a temporary setback, and things will improve with time.

Lucky number 21 | Lucky colour Grey
Lucky day Sunday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week, a wave of positive energy surrounds you, bringing blessings from all directions. If you have children, expect their academic efforts to bear fruit, and any long-awaited projects will finally come to fruition. There's also a strong possibility of a new home entering your life, whether through a lucky break or a new opportunity. Your family and peers will be celebrating together further fortifying relationships and filling you with joy. You showcase personal magnetism, a trait which draws people toward you, making you an automatic leader within your community. With progression in the week, practices like meditation, prayer, or chanting will enable you to feel a greater connection to the divine, which in turn will increase the flow of creativity and also enhance further growth on the spiritual level.

Lucky number 30 | Lucky colour Orange
Lucky day Monday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

Analyse the upcoming days as them bringing growth, personally satisfaction and financial gains all in one. Your work ethic and application of knowledge is noteworthy. Everything about your work endeavors right now starting from discipline, attitude towards time, and fairness ensures a solid financial foundation which offers safety and comfort. Inheritances or windfalls, expected or unexpected, could come your way. Increased recognition will accompany your confidence through promotions and salary boosts, delivering them at this time. Taking the time to contemplate past accomplishments is recommended. In closing, new projects, tasks, or roles which are around the corner will enable the effective usage of resources. Welcome those insights and put them into action for your professional life. This along with youthful energy from your kids and younger individuals surrounding you will elevate your overall wellbeing.

Lucky number 14 | Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Tuesday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

Your hard work will soon bear fruit. You are likely to focus on work-related issues during the first part of the week, paying attention to personal development as well. Your ability to progress and succeed will be determined by your attention to detail, how persistent you are, and how focused you are while handling what looks like overly complex challenges. Moreover, through this process, unwavering devotion will be rewarded, allowing you to appreciate the knowledge gained along the way, giving you a renewed sense of pride. This time frame also supports spiritual development and reconnection with higher guidance. Towards the week's end, you may undergo deep healing on a personal level and with others. This can mean finding acceptance within oneself in love, or for some, being proposed to—which marks a major milestone.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour White
Lucky day Wednesday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week encourages you to embrace all aspects of life: emotionally, spiritually, and materially. Initially, your financial goals will also be achieved, and there will be an increase in profits as the week progresses. Your bold approach, coupled with your caring nature, will allow you to foster warm relationships in the workplace. There's also a chance of travel for work or pleasure, which might include international or water-based travel. Midweek, you will focus on personal and professional life balance, handling household matters with a gentle touch. Toward the end of the week, you will gain the fruits of your toils which will manifest as good health, vitality, and creativity. The weekend leaves you a peaceful, pleasant time with to spend with family so you can recharge.

Lucky number 23 | Lucky colour Blue
Lucky day Saturday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week, you will begin with a mini period of self-exploration to find answers that help you mitigate problems and help you achieve your desired outcomes. You have a few more hurdles to overcome, but you are standing right at the precipice of success. Romance is bound to make an appearance midweek, so expect a surge of it which will help further bond with your partner or spouse. You will likely, by week's end, find yourself in favorable scenarios concerning your most crucial property decisions like buying a new home or an automobile. In this week, you will be one of many who are placed in a fortunate position where favorable opportunities are abundant. With the full support of your family, you are healthy, feeling vibrant, and energized.

Lucky number 26 | Lucky colour Black
Lucky day Friday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

Utilize this week as a timeline to achieve your goals and let your mental framework enhance your self-organization, gut feelings, and mental sharpness. Prepare yourself to receive an increase of love and joy as you are showered with riches and blessings. You can make remarkable strides in your goals and shift business outcomes magically. Claims and loved ones will become a main focus this week because all in your strife will finally come together. Fresh opportunities in your vocation or enterprise can come up too. Expect to feel vibrant and self-assured. Be at peace knowing that the universe is there to champion all your endeavors. Expect this week to provide richness not just in terms of finances, but your emotional, and personal development too.

Lucky number 27 | Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Thursday



CANCER June 21-July 22

Different shifts will give way to an undeniable feeling of amazement within your life. Suddenly, you find yourself in a situation where you feel composed, proud, and ready to accept the world. You will receive success in areas where there was once no hope of ever triumphing. You will gain respect for your achievements which will make you famous, winning both admiration and envy. True supporters will celebrate your progress. All areas that resonate best will align in your interests observing much progress. A challenge is now behind you, receiving the recognition of others towards your goals accomplished. You will be delighted because of the past, and by the end of the week, you will still revisit the positive moments and spend them with loved ones and younger people.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Red
Lucky day Tuesday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, focus primarily on work and embracing the opportunities it brings. There's a strong potential to earn through your efforts, as the risk now presents itself as an opportunity. With a surge of creativity, you're equipped to push past any limitations. A challenge that has seemed insurmountable now becomes an achievable task, and your confidence will lead you to success. Midweek, expect guidance from a wise female figure in your life, such as a mother or mentor. Heed her advice, as it will bring valuable benefits. Strengthen your mind by engaging in intellectual activities like reading or puzzles, and prepare for a breakthrough that will deepen your spiritual understanding.

Lucky number 19 | Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Wednesday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

Success stems from collaboration and cooperation, fostering improved relations and understanding in your professional environment. This will allow you to appreciate your self-esteem and recognize your value, rejuvenating both your career and lifestyle with energy and creativity. Promising opportunities awaiting you look optimistic, including positive results from a recent endeavor. If you are working, perhaps a new employment opportunity will arise. Integration will be essential from a cooperation standpoint, and negotiations should go favorably. Spirituality and further divine creation are very relevant during this timeframe as well. For those waiting for joyful news, a happy family announcement for a new addition may be on the way. You, as a spearhead, are prepared to take on fresh challenges boldly and wholeheartedly without hesitation.

Lucky number 16 | Lucky colour Lemon
Lucky day Monday

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

Steps to Reconnect: Healing Relationships with Love

THOUGHTFUL INSIGHTS



Dr. Tanu Jain

The beauty of life lies in meaningful, long-lasting relationships. True happiness does not come from material success or fleeting pleasures, but from deep, fulfilling connections with those around us

Have you ever experienced a friend suddenly stopping communication with you? Have you seen a loved one become distant, with no conversations for weeks or even months? Were these relationships always like this from the beginning? No. Every connection starts with warmth, affection, and mutual understanding. However, over time, misunderstandings, unresolved emotions, and changing circumstances can create distance, making communication difficult and eventually leading to broken ties.

Have we ever paused to reflect on why this happens? Is it simply because change is a natural part of life? What really transforms a relationship from closeness to estrangement? More often than not, we blame the other person for their changed behavior. But in reality, the root cause lies within the restless nature of our own minds. The human mind is inherently unsettled, untamed, and constantly moving from one thought to another. This restlessness influences how we perceive relationships, leading us to react impulsively, hold grudges, and drift away from people who once meant a lot to us.

Yet, deep within our hearts, we do not want our relationships to turn stale or bitter. We long for them to remain fresh, full of warmth and understanding. We wish to preserve the love and care that once brought joy into our lives. The good news is that it is possible to bring back the same delight and freshness we once had in our



relationships. But this requires us to train our minds, overcome inner resistance, and take conscious steps toward reconciliation and emotional maturity.

So, how can we nurture our relationships and restore lost connections? Here, are some essential steps to cultivate spiritual maturity in relationships:

Train Your Mind to Stay Present The mind is always wandering, overanalyzing the past or worrying about the future. Teach your mind to stay in the present moment. If you consciously ask it to stay, it will listen. Allow yourself to go with the flow rather than

resisting change.
Be Mindful of Your Thoughts Observe how your mind functions. Meditation is a powerful tool to bring awareness to your thoughts and emotions. Instead of being consumed by mental restlessness, direct your focus to your surroundings, nature, or even the simple joys of life.
Let Go and Forgive Holding onto resentment only burdens your heart. Remember, life is fleeting — why waste it on grudges? Forgiveness liberates not only the other person but also yourself. It allows you to move forward with peace and clarity.

Overcome Prejudices and Assumptions Many relationships suffer not because of real harm done by others, but due to our own assumptions and prejudices. Our mind often magnifies problems, making them seem bigger than they actually are. Let go of unnecessary judgments and look at situations with an open heart.

Express Your Emotions in a Healthy Way Suppressing emotions leads to inner turmoil. Share your thoughts and feelings with someone you trust. If that is not possible, write them down or confide in nature. Releasing pent-up emotions helps in clearing mental clutter.

Take the Initiative to Reconnect If a relationship has turned cold, don't wait for the other person to take the first step. Muster the courage to reach out. A simple message, a phone call, or a heartfelt conversation can rekindle lost connections.

Free Yourself from Expectations One of the biggest barriers in relationships is the weight of expectations. We expect others to behave in a certain way and feel disappointed when they don't. Release yourself from the need for constant validation. Instead, focus on giving without expecting in return.

Respect People for Who They Are Every individual is unique. Instead of trying to mold others into what we want them to be, appreciate them for who they truly are. Accepting people as they are strengthens relationships and fosters deeper understanding.

Adopt a Positive Mindset Train your mind to see the good in people. Constantly finding faults leads to dissatisfaction and negativity. Make a conscious effort to switch to a no-complaint attitude, focusing on what is right rather than what is wrong.

Appreciate Strengths Instead of Focusing on Weaknesses Nobody is perfect. Instead of dwelling on a person's shortcomings, recognize their strengths. Celebrate their positive qualities, and you will find that relationships naturally become more fulfilling.

The beauty of life lies in meaningful, long-lasting relationships. True happiness does not come from material success or fleeting pleasures, but from deep, fulfilling connections with those around us.

Spiritual maturity in relationships requires self-awareness, patience, and a willingness to nurture bonds despite challenges. By training our minds and letting go of ego-driven conflicts, we can create a life filled with love, understanding, and harmony. In the end, relationships thrive not on perfection but on the effort we put into keeping them alive. Choose peace, choose connection, and above all, choose love. As Lao Tzu wisely said: "Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage."

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