

Maha Kumbh: Devotees brave biting cold to take holy dip in Sangam



M A H A K U M B H NAGAR: Braving the biting cold, the devotees brimming with energy and enthusiasm converged at the Triveni Sangam to take a holy dip at the Maha Kumbh on Wednesday. Chants of 'Har Har Mahadev', 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Jai Ganga Maiyya' were heard as the devotees took a dip in the bone-chilling water. "It was for the first time that I took a dip in Sangam. After taking the dip, I really felt refreshed," said Nibar Chaudhary, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Basti district. The 62-year-old was escorted by two persons, as he walked towards the Sangam area to

take a dip. Shivram Verma, who accompanied Chaudhary, said that his experience was good, adding the administration here has made proper arrangements for the devotees. Lucknow resident Nancy, who came here for the first time, echoed similar sentiments. "My experience in the Maha Kumbh has been good so far," she said. Abhishek, a resident of neighbouring Fatehpur district, said the "overall experience was good" and added that he "did not face any problems". Vijay Katheria, a resident of Kanpur, lauded

the security arrangements made at the Maha Kumbh. "My experience was good. Proper safety arrangements were made for the devotees and adequate police force was maintained from the security point of view," he said. Earlier on Tuesday, the seers belonging to various 'akharas' took the first 'Amrit Snan' at the Maha Kumbh on the occasion of 'Makar Sankranti'. Around 3.5 crore devotees took a dip at the Triveni Sangam on 'Makar Sankranti'. Leading most of the akharas were ash-smearing Naga sadhus, who mesmerised the onlookers with their mastery of traditional

weapons. From skilfully wielding spears and swords to energetically playing the 'damru', their demonstrations were a vibrant celebration of age-old traditions, an official statement said. In addition to the male Naga sadhus, female Naga ascetics were also present in significant numbers. The present edition of the Kumbh is being held after 12 years, though seers claim the celestial permutations and combinations for the event are taking place after 144 years, making the occasion even more auspicious. The fair would continue till February 26.

EC asks Delhi police to file case against BJP's Parvesh for distributing shoes

NEW DELHI: An election official on Wednesday asked the Delhi police to register a case against BJP candidate Parvesh Verma for distributing shoes to voters. In the complaint, the returning officer claimed Verma distributed shoes to electors of his New Delhi assembly constituency. "Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma, prospective BJP candidate is distributing shoes to electors of New Delhi Assembly Constituency in the religious campus of Valmiki Temple near Mandir Marg, Police Station," the complaint, which was filed at Mandir Marg Police Station, read. The poll officer said that Verma did come under the preview of "corrupt practices" as per section 123 of the Representation of People Act, 1951. The officer said the BJP candidate's act was also in violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). This is not the first time that the BJP's New Delhi candidate has got into the centre of controversy



for undertaking distributions. Last month, Verma spurred electoral heat in the poll-bound capital when he handed out Rs 1,100 to women in his constituency. AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal labelled him a "traitor" while chief minister Atishi called for his immediate arrest. Hitting back, Verma said that by calling him a traitor, Kejriwal had called the en-

tire Jat community traitors. "My father, Dr Sahib Singh Verma, always helped people. I am also helping people. Delhi's rural areas will never forgive Kejriwal," he said. Verma announced his initiative to provide women with Rs 1,100 in financial aid through Rashtriya Swabhiman, an organisation established by his father.

He said, unlike Kejriwal, he was offering "genuine assistance" to people rather than distributing alcohol. Notably, BJP has pitted Verma against Kejriwal from the high-stake New Delhi assembly constituency that goes to poll on February 5. Both leaders filed poll papers on Wednesday. The results of the Delhi elections will be declared on February 8.

BJP MP slams Rahul over his 'fighting the Indian state' remark

NEW DELHI: Senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Lehar Singh Siroya on Wednesday criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his remark that the Congress is "fighting the Indian state." In a scathing remark, he drew parallels between Gandhi's comments and Naxal ideologies, accusing the Congress of endorsing anti-state sentiments. "Shri Rahul Gandhi has come back from his foreign holiday and has said that @INCIndia is fighting the Indian state. We should thank him for confirming the suspicion.

3-year-old falls off escalator at Delhi's Pacific Mall, dies

NEW DELHI: A three-year-old boy died after falling from an escalator at Pacific Mall in west Delhi's Tilak Nagar on Tuesday evening. The boy, Vishal, was at the mall with his family members when the incident occurred. The family came from Uttam Nagar to watch a movie at the mall's multiplex. Police sources said probe was on and the process of filing an FIR against the mall was underway. The parents of the victim are in the business of reselling old clothes.

"The child was with his mother and other female family members who were in the process of purchasing movie tickets. Around 5.45 pm, while the adults were occupied at the ticket counter, the boy wandered towards the escalator and attempted to slide down its handrail, leading to the fatal fall," said DCP (West) Vichitra Veer. Mall security staff and bystanders rushed to help the child and he was quickly taken to Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital. However, doctors declared him

"brought dead" upon arrival around 7 pm. "We received information from DDU Hospital about a child being brought dead. Our team immediately began investigating the circumstances surrounding the incident," the DCP said. Police officers were reviewing CCTV footage from the mall and speaking with witnesses to understand the exact sequence of events. The mall management was asked to provide details about their safety protocols and security measures, particularly around escalators.

Cold weather conditions continue in Punjab and Haryana

CHANDIGARH: A thick blanket of fog enveloped many areas of Punjab and Haryana on Wednesday with Moga being the coldest place recording a low of 2.2 degrees Celsius. The fog was also observed at many other places, including Amritsar and Ludhiana. Among other places in Punjab, Amritsar's minimum temperature was 2.8 degrees Celsius, one degree below normal, according to a report of the meteorological department. Ludhiana recorded a low of 5.6 degrees Celsius, while Patiala, Pathankot, Bathinda and Faridkot districts experienced cold weather conditions at 5.8, 7.6, 4.2 and 3 degrees Celsius respectively. The Union Territory of Chandigarh, the common capital of both states, recorded a low of 6.9 degrees Celsius. In neighbouring Haryana, Hisar was the coldest place with 3.5 degrees Celsius.

Kharge names Indira Bhawan library after Dr Manmohan Singh

NEW DELHI: Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday announced that the library of the new AICC headquarters – Indira Bhawan – will be named after former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. Addressing the party leaders and workers after the inauguration of the new building, Kharge said, "Remembering the historic contribution of Dr Manmohan Singh ji, I pay my tributes to him and announce that the library in this new headquarters will be named after former PM". He said that that the party had always given respect and recognition to all those who have made contribution to the Congress and will keep on doing so in the future also. On the former Prime Minister's remark that "history will be kinder to me", the Congress Chief said, "I would like to assure Dr

Manmohan Singh ji that history is indeed very kind to you". He said that the Congress stood on the power of ideas. Adding that all the major national heroes including Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahatma Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, Sardar Patel, Nehru, Maulana Azad, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Rajendra Prasad were the party's heritage. Kharge said, "Many historical works have been done during the Congress rule that changed the face of the country. Under the leadership of Nehruji, India became the largest democracy in the world. The best Constitution of the world was made under the leadership of Ambedkar ji. The slogan of Jai Jawan - Jai Kisan was given under the leadership of Shastri Ji. During Indira Gandhi's tenure, banks were nationalised. She took forward the work

of the green revolution and the white revolution. Indira Gandhi defeated Pakistan and liberated Bangladesh". The Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha said that Congress in 140 years had witnessed several ups and downs, but never lost patience. "Our leaders have taught us not to be proud if there is a huge victory and not to be dejected if there is a defeat. We have to establish contact with the public, support their struggle with unity and discipline, and find solutions," Kharge said. He hoped that the new headquarters of Congress will give a new energy to the party, with the help of which all will fight and succeed for the rights of the people. The Indira Bhawan located at 9A Kotla Road, here was inaugurated by Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and CPP Chairperson Sonia Gandhi.

SC seeks comprehensive medical report on farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Chief Secretary of Punjab to submit a complete comparative medical report of farmers' leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on a hunger strike for over 49 days. The reports, including Dallewal's latest vitals, are to be handed over to the Registrar (Judicial) of the Supreme Court, who will then obtain a medical opinion from the Director of AIIMS. A bench comprising Justice Surya Kant and Justice N.K. Singh after the State of Punjab claimed that Dallewal's health condition was "improving" but later clarified that his vitals were "stable"

rather than improving. Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the State of Punjab, informed the bench that a medical facility had been set up just 10 meters from Dallewal's latest vitals had been submitted. Sibal added that his parameters were currently stable. Justice Kant expressed concern over the claim of "improving vitals" and questioned the State's position, noting the inconsistency with earlier reports indicating deteriorating health. "How can a person's vitals improve after fasting for more than 46 days?" Justice Kant remarked, emphas-

izing the need for accurate and transparent medical updates. Sibal clarified that the statement of "improvement" was based on the findings of a Medical Board and reiterated that Dallewal's condition is stable, not improving. Jagjit Singh Dallewal, a cancer patient with age-related ailments, has been on a fast-unto-death since November 26 at the Khanauri border, demanding a statutory guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops. His health has deteriorated significantly, and he is now unable to take water.

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Psychological scars of sexual abuse during childhood indelible: Court

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court, while sentencing a man to five years of rigorous imprisonment for sexually assaulting a seven-year-old girl in 2018, said it was the responsibility of society as a whole to take care of its children and protect them from physiological and psychological exploitation at the hands of sexual abusers. The court also directed Rs three lakh compensation to the survivor. "The children of the present day are the future of society. The interest of

the vulnerable child needs to be protected for a healthy, developed, and vibrant society. The psychological scars of sexual abuse during childhood are indelible, and they keep haunting the individual forever, thereby hindering their proper physical and psychological development," said the court. The court of additional sessions judge Susheel Bala Dagar was hearing a case against a 48-year-old man who was convicted last year under sections 354 (assault or criminal force to woman

with intent to outrage her modesty) and 354B (assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to disrobe) of the Indian Penal Code and under provisions of the POCSO Act. Additional public prosecutor Yogita Kaushik Dahiya submitted before the court that the convict deserved no sympathy for his abominable and reprehensible act. She further requested that maximum compensation be awarded to the child survivor as per the Delhi Victim Compensation Scheme, 2018.

Ludhiana targets stray dog population after fatal attacks

LUDHIANA: In response to two fatal dog attacks in Hassanpur village within 15 days, the district administration has partnered with a private firm to conduct emergency sterilization of stray dogs in the area. The initiative, aligned with the Animal Birth Control (ABC) program, aims to curb the stray dog population and prevent further incidents. The private firm, already associated with the Ludhiana Municipal Corporation, began sterilizations in Hassanpur on Tuesday. The administration will compensate the company based on existing terms, with the Block Development and Panchayat Officer (BDPO) and the Deputy Director of Animal Husbandry serving as nodal officers to ensure effective implementation. Deputy Commissioner Jitendra Jorwal, speaking at a meeting with officials, stressed that the sterilization project is a critical step toward controlling the

canine population and reducing the risk of dog bites. "Immediate action in Hassanpur is essential, but a district-wide approach will follow," he said. In addition to the emergency efforts in Hassanpur, municipal committees across the district will issue tenders this week to identify suitable firms for ongoing sterilization operations. These firms will work under guidelines established by the Animal Welfare Board of India and will provide services in rural areas on a paid basis. To ensure transparency, selected firms will maintain detailed records of all sterilized dogs. Oversight committees will be established within each municipal committee to monitor the program's progress and adherence to guidelines. The initiative reflects a broader commitment to public safety and humane animal control, addressing a pressing issue for both urban and rural areas in Ludhiana.

Tamil Nadu to set up its 1st Buddhist museum in Nagapattinam

CHENNAI: The Tamil Nadu State government plans to set up its first Buddhist museum in Nagapattinam dedicated to showcasing artefacts and bronze statues of Buddha to highlight the state's rich historical ties to Buddhism. The move is likely to be announced during the upcoming Budget session in the Tamil Nadu Assembly, ThePrint has learnt. The session is expected to be held in February or March, though the dates are yet to be announced. A senior state government official told ThePrint that the process of collecting Buddha bronzes excavated from Nagapattinam over the years was underway. The museum aims to showcase the region's rich Buddhist history during the Chola period from the 9th to the 13th century. "As of now, there are at least 30 Buddha bronzes kept in the Chennai museum that were excavated from Nagapattinam. But several of them have been distributed to various plac-



es," the official said. "We are in the process of taking stock of the available Buddha statues and tracing the distributed statues." Archaeologists and historians estimate that over the years about 350 Buddhist bronzes have been excavated from Nagapattinam, once a major Buddhist centre. A few of them are in museums in Lucknow, Kolkata and Mumbai, while some are in museums in London and

Germany. Some are untraceable. The official said that the initial plan was to establish the museum in Kanchipuram but the government chose Nagapattinam following the efforts of its MLA J. Mohamed Shanavas, who said setting up a museum showcasing the town's Buddhist heritage would be a milestone in Tamil Nadu's history. "People following Buddhism in various countries

visit Nagapattinam. We have a lot of evidence to show that Buddhism was once practiced in this coastal town. We have also excavated several Buddhist statues in the town, which are now preserved in various museums. Now, if they are all brought here, it would be great," he said. Nagapattinam was once a major centre for Buddhism before it began to decline in the 16th century and eventually disap-

peared. Dr B. Jambulingam, retired professor and author of Buddhism in Chola Nadu, welcomed the Tamil Nadu government's decision to establish the museum in Nagapattinam, saying the move would help people know their own history. "It's a welcome move that the Tamil Nadu state government is displaying the Nagapattinam Buddha bronzes in the same town where they were excavated," Jambulingam said. The push for a museum began in March 2022 when Shanavas first raised his voice for its creation. "Nagapattinam is not only a coastal and cultural town, but also a town where Buddhism flourished once upon a time. In excavations in the town, around 350 bronze Buddha statues were recovered, but we don't know where they are. All of them have to be recovered and a separate museum should be set up to preserve them," he said in the Assembly. In 2023,

based on his request, an Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) team led by Superintending Archaeologist K. Amarnath Ramakrishna conducted a three-day survey in Nagapattinam. The team submitted a report to the district collector, the regional director and the director of ASI. According to this report, accessed by ThePrint, the team identified at least 19 places, including the current district court complex in the town, with archaeological and historical vestiges of Buddhism. The team identified the district court complex—with its colonial building resembling a Chaitya Vihara, constructed after the demolition of a China Pagoda by Jesuit missionaries in 1867—as the most appropriate location for the exhibition to showcase the cultural legacy of Nagapattinam. It said the site was a fitting spot as it recalled the historical significance of the Chudamani Vihara, an 11th-century Buddhist monastery in Nagapattinam.