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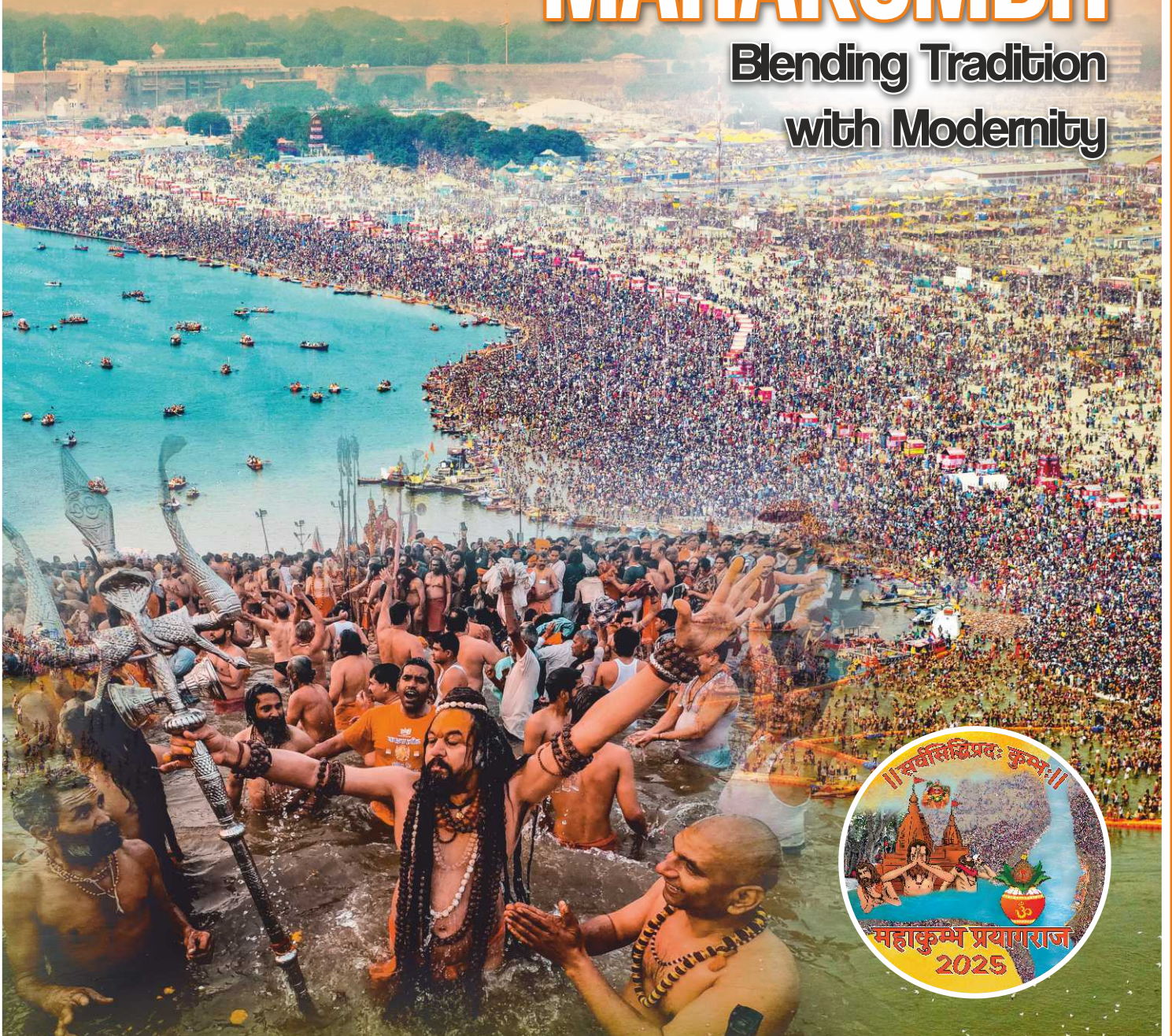
# CITY ESSENCE

DISCOVER | ENGAGE | EVOLVE

VOLUME 04 | ISSUE 11 | JANUARY 2025 | ₹80

## MAHAKUMBH

Blending Tradition  
with Modernity



Tourism boom tells a tale | Dr. Mala Mehra talks to City Essence



दिव्य-भव्य-डिजिटल  
एकता का महाकुम्भ

# सनातन गर्व महाकुम्भ पर्व

## महाकुम्भ 2025 के लिए प्रयागराज है तैयार

### अलौकिक अनुभूति के लिए आएँ महाकुम्भ नगर

- 4,000 हेक्टेयर में विस्तृत • 25 सेक्टर में सुव्यवस्थित • 1,850 हेक्टेयर में पार्किंग • 1,50,000 शौचालय • 1,60,000 सुसज्जित टेंट • 67,000 एलईडी स्टीट लाइट
- 2 नए विद्युत सब स्टेशन • 66 नए विद्युत ट्रांसफॉर्मर • 2,000 सोलर हाइब्रिड स्टीट लाइट • 1,249 किमी पेयजल पाइपलाइन • 200 वाटर एटीएम • 85 नलकूपों की स्थापना
- 7,000 बस का बेड़ा • 550 शटल बस का बेड़ा • 7 नए बस स्टॉप • 30 पापटून ब्रिज (400 किमी में) • 9 पक्के घाटों की स्थापना • 7 रिवर फ्रंट रोड • 12 किमी में अस्थायी घाट
- 14 नए फ्लाईओवर एवं अंडरपास • 11 नए कॉरिडोर का विकास • 3,000 स्पेशल सहित 13,000 रेल गाड़ियां • प्रयागराज एयरपोर्ट पर नया टर्मिनल

#### स्वस्थ महाकुम्भ

- सरकारी/प्राइवेट अस्पतालों में 6,000 बेड तैयार
- मेला क्षेत्र में 43 अस्पताल, 381 चिकित्सक तैनात
- 125 रोड, 7 रिवर एवं एक एयर एम्बुलेंस तैनात
- शहर के अस्पतालों में अतिरिक्त 6,000 बेड आरक्षित

#### स्वच्छ महाकुम्भ

- 850 समूहों में 10,200 स्वच्छताकर्मियों की तैनाती
- स्वच्छता निगरानी के लिए 1,800 गंगादूतों की तैनाती
- 25,000 लाइनर बैगयुक्त इस्टबिन, 300 सक्शन गाड़ियां
- जीपीएस से लैस 120 टिपर-हापर और 40 कॉम्पेक्टर ट्रक

#### सुरक्षित महाकुम्भ

- 37,000 पुलिसकर्मी एवं 14,000 होमगार्ड की तैनाती
- 2,750 एआई बेसड सीसीटीवी एवं 80 वीएमडी टीवी स्क्रीन
- 3 जल पुलिस स्टेशन, 18 जल पुलिस कंट्रोल रूम, 50 फायर स्टेशन
- 50 फायर स्टेशन, 20 फायर पोस्ट, 50 वॉच टावर, 4,300 फायर हाइड्रेंट

#### प्रमुख आकर्षण

- श्रद्धालुओं-पर्यटकों की मदद के लिए ट्रेवल गाइड • मार्गदर्शन के लिए कुम्भ सहायक AI चैटबॉट
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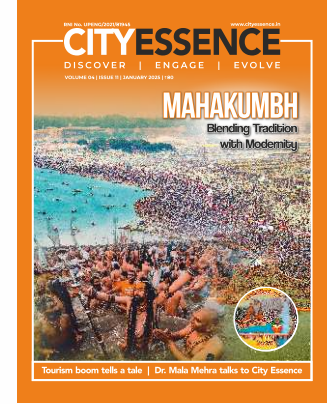
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# TAKE ONE

From the Editor

## A Momentous Time for Uttar Pradesh



January 2025 marks a defining chapter for Uttar Pradesh as it hosts two monumental events that carry immense spiritual, cultural, and historical significance. The Prayagraj Mahakumbh, a once-in-12-years congregation of faith, and the first anniversary of the Rama Mandir in Ayodhya collectively elevate the state as the epicenter of global attention.

The Mahakumbh, the largest gathering of humanity on earth, is not merely a religious event but a phenomenon that underscores India's ancient traditions of unity in diversity. Millions of devotees from across the globe converge at the Triveni Sangam, reaffirming their faith and celebrating a shared cultural heritage. The seamless organization of such a massive event is a testament to Uttar Pradesh's administrative capabilities,

bolstering its reputation on an international scale.

Simultaneously, Ayodhya stands as a beacon of historical and spiritual pride with the completion of the grand Rama Mandir. A symbol of resilience and devotion, the temple is more than an architectural marvel—it is a manifestation of a cultural renaissance. Its first anniversary is a time to reflect on Ayodhya's transformation into a world-class spiritual hub, contributing to the state's economy through tourism and pilgrimage.

These events hold the potential to create ripple effects beyond religion. The influx of tourists stimulates local businesses, infrastructure development, and employment, creating a cascading effect on the

state's economy. Additionally, they provide a platform to showcase Uttar Pradesh's rich heritage, modern governance, and inclusive vision.

Uttar Pradesh, in January 2025, is truly the heart of India.

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# Hindi Heartland witness to many firsts in 2024

Arijit Bose

Under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh made remarkable strides in 2024, achieving significant milestones that strengthened the state's development trajectory. From historic moments in Ayodhya to advancements in health, education, and infrastructure, the year brought national and international recognition to the state.

### Ram Lalla Installed in Ayodhya After 500 Years

On January 22, 2024, Uttar Pradesh witnessed a historic event as Prime Minister Narendra Modi ceremoniously installed Ram Lalla at the Ayodhya Shri Ram Temple. The event, held in the presence of CM Yogi Adityanath, marked the culmination of a 500-year wait and a milestone in India's spiritual and cultural history.

### Implementation of ₹10 Lakh Crore Investment Projects

Building on the momentum of the Global Investors Summit 2023, Uttar Pradesh commenced work on ₹10 lakh crore worth of investment projects in early 2024. At an event held on February 19-20 at the Indira Gandhi Pratishthan, Prime Minister Modi officially launched these projects, bolstering industrial growth and job creation across the state.

### Revolutionizing Healthcare

The year saw transformative advancements in Uttar Pradesh's healthcare sector, with the establishment of 18 new medical colleges in districts such as Bijnor, Bulandshahr, Kushinagar, and Pilibhit.



Additionally, the virtual inauguration of AIIMS Raebareli by PM Modi on February 25 expanded specialized medical care in the region. Alongside AIIMS in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh is emerging as a hub for advanced healthcare.

### Tripling Scholarships for Sanskrit Students

For the first time in 24 years, the Yogi government increased scholarships for Sanskrit students threefold, benefiting over 1.5 lakh students. Scholarships were also extended to students in grades 6, 7, and 8, demonstrating a commitment to preserving and promoting India's ancient language and culture.

### A Guinness World Record at Deepotsav 2024

The annual Deepotsav in Ayodhya set a new Guinness World Record with 25,12,585 earthen lamps lit during the celebrations. Additionally, 1,121 Vedic scholars performed the Saryu River aarti, creating another record and

highlighting Uttar Pradesh's rich cultural heritage.

### Farmers Benefit from Increased Compensation in Jewar

On December 20, 2024, the compensation for land acquisition in Jewar for the third phase of the Noida International Airport was raised from ₹3,100 to ₹4,300 per square meter. This decision safeguarded farmers' interests and marked another milestone when the first flight successfully landed at the airport on December 9, heralding the project's near completion.

### Record-Breaking Plantation Drive

In 2024, Uttar Pradesh planted 36.80 crore trees, achieving a new record. With an increase of 559.19 square kilometers in forest and tree cover, the state secured the second position nationally in this category. Eco-tourism also received a boost with the launch of air connectivity between Lucknow and Palia for visitors to Dudhwa Tiger Reserve.

## Zero-Tolerance Against Crime

Adopting a zero-tolerance policy toward crime, the Uttar Pradesh Police intensified operations under "Operation Mafia," eliminating 33 notorious criminals in encounters throughout 2024. The first encounter occurred on January 4 in Sultanpur, leading to the death of Vinod Kumar Upadhyay, a sharp shooter with over 35 criminal cases.

## DGP Prashant Kumar on Zero-Tolerance Policy

DGP Prashant Kumar emphasized that any criminal attacking law enforcement would face strong retaliatory action. He stated, "We are working tirelessly to root out organized crime, ensuring effective prosecution of incarcerated criminals to secure their convictions."

## Impact of Police Actions

The Uttar Pradesh Police's relentless efforts instilled fear among criminals and boosted public confidence. The state government's firm stance demonstrated its commitment to controlling crime and maintaining law and order effectively.

Since assuming office in 2017 following the BJP's historic win in Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has adopted a zero-tolerance policy against crime and mafia elements in the state. Now, after seven years in power, the government has released detailed data showcasing the significant strides made in curbing organized crime and dismantling mafia networks.

## Key Statistics on Encounters and Arrests

According to data shared by the Uttar Pradesh Police, a total of 217 criminals have been killed in encounters since



Yogi Adityanath took office. Additionally, 7,799 criminals have been injured in various operations conducted by the police. Over the same period, a staggering 19,955 offenders have been arrested.

Under the Gangster Act, 78,977 criminals have been apprehended, and 924 individuals have been detained under the National Security Act (NSA). These figures reflect the state government's unwavering commitment to eradicating organized crime.

## Seizure and Demolition of Illegal Properties

The crackdown on illegal properties owned by mafia and criminal elements has been one of the hallmarks of Yogi's governance. Police reports indicate that under the Gangster Act, properties worth a massive ₹140,90,50,79,181 (approximately ₹140.9 billion) have been seized.

Furthermore, in the past four years, 68 mafia leaders and their gang members have faced action, resulting in the confiscation or demolition of properties valued at over ₹4,067 crore. The use of bulldozers in these operations has become a symbol of the government's determination to enforce law and order.

## Action Against Illegal Loudspeakers

To ensure compliance with noise pollution regulations, the government has also taken strict measures against unauthorized loudspeakers at religious and public venues. So far, the police have removed 1,09,437 loudspeakers and reduced the volume of an additional 1,65,515 loudspeakers.

## Impact of the Policies

The rigorous actions undertaken by the Uttar Pradesh government have sent a strong message to criminals across the state. With a comprehensive approach that combines legal enforcement, property seizures, and community compliance initiatives, the Yogi Adityanath administration has significantly reduced crime rates.

As 2025 approaches, the Yogi administration's resolve to maintain law and order continues to redefine Uttar Pradesh's narrative, emphasizing safety, security, and economic stability.

As 2024 draws to a close, Uttar Pradesh stands as a testament to Yogi Adityanath's governance, characterized by progress, cultural preservation, and unwavering law enforcement. The year's achievements pave the way for a brighter, more prosperous 2025. ■

# Tourist influx towards U.P. sees new boom

City Essence Team

Uttar Pradesh has emerged as a key driver of tourism growth in India, due to the policies and vision of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. As per recent reports, India has become the fifth most popular destination for global tourists, with domestic tourism, especially religious tourism, playing a pivotal role. Among the standout contributors are Ayodhya and the Braj region, the birthplaces of Lord Ram and Lord Krishna, and the sacred city of Kashi (Varanasi), renowned as Lord Shiva's abode. These destinations have collectively turned Uttar Pradesh into India's new tourism growth engine.

### Uttar Pradesh: The Top Choice for Tourists

In the past seven years, Uttar Pradesh has witnessed a staggering influx of nearly 200 crore tourists, including 1.26 crore foreign visitors. According to the state tourism department, the number of tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh in 2022 stood at 32.18 crore. In just the first six months of 2024, this figure surged to 32.98 crore, with Ayodhya and Kashi significantly contributing to this growth. The grand inauguration of the Ram Mandir in January 2024 set a new benchmark, attracting 11 crore tourists in the subsequent six months. In January alone, the temple welcomed a record-breaking 7 crore visitors, the highest ever for a single destination in one month. Similarly, the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor has transformed Varanasi into a tourism hotspot, drawing 4.59 crore tourists in the first half of the year. This number continues to grow with each passing month.

### Infrastructure Development Driving Tourism



Recognizing the growing interest in religious tourism, the Yogi government, with support from the central government, has undertaken several projects to enhance visitor safety and convenience. Key initiatives include the Vindhya Dham Corridor in Mirzapur, the Nath Corridor in Bareilly, and the comprehensive development of the Braj region. Other projects like the Ramayan Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Krishna Circuit, and Swadesh Darshan schemes are further expanding Uttar Pradesh's tourism appeal.

### Maha Kumbh: The Pinnacle of Religious Tourism

The upcoming Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, scheduled for next year, is anticipated to be the world's largest religious congregation, with an estimated attendance of 40 to 45 crore people. Preparations are underway on a war footing, with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath personally overseeing the progress through frequent visits to

Prayagraj.

### Celebrations Enhancing Uttar Pradesh's Attraction

Regular cultural and religious events have further elevated Uttar Pradesh's profile as a tourist destination. The grand Diwali celebrations in Ayodhya, the Dev Deepawali in Kashi, and the Rangotsav (Holi Festival) in Mathura hold special significance and attract millions of visitors annually.

### Focus on Eco and Rural Tourism

The Yogi government is also prioritizing eco-tourism and rural tourism to diversify Uttar Pradesh's offerings. These initiatives aim to provide a more holistic experience for tourists while promoting sustainable tourism practices. With its robust infrastructure, focus on religious tourism, and commitment to eco-friendly initiatives, Uttar Pradesh is poised to remain at the forefront of India's tourism sector for years to come. ■

# Uttar Pradesh's Vision for a \$1 Trillion Economy



City Essence Team

As part of the centenary celebrations of Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Good Governance Week, a significant session on Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) and Uttar Pradesh's ambitious vision of becoming a \$1 trillion economy was held at Tilak Hall, Vidhan Sabha Secretariat. The event underscored the strides made by the state in fostering a business-friendly environment and attracting investments.

### Dignitaries and Key Insights

The session witnessed the presence of prominent dignitaries, including:

- **Asim Arun**, Minister (Independent Charge) for Social Welfare, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes Welfare
- **Abhishek Prakash**, CEO of Invest UP
- **Alok Kumar**, Principal Secretary of Planning and Program Implementation
- **K. Ravindra Naik**, Principal Secretary of Secretariat Administration

Addressing the gathering, Minister Asim Arun emphasized equipping stakeholders with modern tools and skills to achieve the \$1 trillion economy vision. He described the government's relentless efforts as “paving the highway of development,” urging all involved to accelerate progress through continuous skill enhancement.

### Achievements and Initiatives

A detailed presentation by **Invest UP** highlighted key accomplishments in improving business operations in the state. Central to these efforts is the '**Nivesh Mitra**' portal, a single-window platform offering over 500 online services across 42 departments. Garnering a 97% user satisfaction rate through third-party audits, the portal has become a cornerstone of Uttar Pradesh's EoDB framework.

CEO Abhishek Prakash outlined proactive measures to reform outdated regulations, stating, “We have decriminalized over 500 rules to

foster a business-friendly environment.” He stressed the importance of these reforms in positioning the state as an attractive destination for both domestic and international investors.

### Vision for the \$1 Trillion Economy

Principal Secretary Alok Kumar presented a strategic roadmap towards the \$1 trillion economy target. He stressed the necessity of meticulous planning, execution, and stakeholder collaboration to achieve this ambitious milestone.

### Commitment to Investment and Development

The event concluded with a renewed commitment to strengthening Uttar Pradesh's role as a hub for business and investment in India. With platforms like 'Nivesh Mitra' and continuous policy reforms, the state is poised to drive sustainable economic growth while honoring the legacy of Atal Bihari Vajpayee through good governance practices. ■

## BY INVITATION

# How Cold Weather Affects the Ageing Body

**W**ith winter just around the corner, the challenges of chilly winds, freezing temperatures, and snow become part of daily life in many parts of the country. While these months are often associated with respiratory issues such as sore throats, runny noses, bronchitis, flu, and pneumonia, they also pose significant risks to heart health. Heart attacks, elevated blood pressure, and strokes are known to occur more frequently during colder months, with senior citizens being especially vulnerable. But why does this happen, and how can it be prevented?

### How Cold Weather Affects the Ageing Body

Cold temperatures trigger vasoconstriction, a narrowing of the blood vessels, which leads to higher blood pressure. This constriction limits blood flow, reducing the body's ability to retain heat and increasing the workload on the heart. Older adults often feel the effects more acutely because their endurance to cold is diminished.

Even minor temperature drops can lead to hypothermia, characterized by confusion, sleepiness, stiff muscles, and poor coordination. Certain pre-existing conditions like diabetes, as well as medications such as decongestants containing ephedrine, can further impair the body's response to cold, raising blood pressure and restricting oxygen supply to the heart. This creates a perfect storm for cardiac events such as heart attacks. Moreover, cold air combined with wind, snow, or rain can quickly strip away the body's natural heat, increasing the risk of hypothermia and other complications.

As people age, the body's ability to regulate temperature becomes less effective, making older adults more prone to the harmful effects of cold weather.

### Winter and Heart Disease

Winter brings shorter daylight hours, which disrupts the body's hormonal balance. Hormones like cortisol, which

are influenced by this change, can lower the threshold for heart attacks and other cardiovascular events. Studies suggest that these incidents are more likely to occur in the early morning, a time when blood pressure naturally spikes due to the body's circadian rhythms.

During winter, people often engage in outdoor tasks during morning hours to make use of limited daylight, inadvertently adding to the morning cardiovascular surge. Research shows that sudden drops in temperature such as a 5-degree plunge in a single day significantly raise the risk of heart attacks, especially in individuals with pre-existing high blood pressure. Such drops can increase the risk by more than 60%.

Cold weather also thickens the blood, increasing the likelihood of clot formation, which can obstruct blood flow to the heart. Respiratory infections, which are more common in winter, add further strain on the heart, raising the risk of cardiac events.

### Exercise in Winter: Balancing Benefits and Risks

While regular exercise is essential for preventing heart disease, it must be approached cautiously during winter. Physical activity in cold weather increases the heart's workload, which can amplify the risks for individuals with a history of heart disease.

In milder winters, walking outdoors can be beneficial, provided one dresses warmly in layers. However, in extreme cold or snowy conditions, it's safer to exercise indoors using treadmills or visiting a gym with controlled temperatures. Avoid stimulants like coffee or nicotine after exercising, as they add stress to the heart. Similarly, avoid alcohol before venturing out in the cold;



while it may provide a temporary feeling of warmth, it ultimately drains heat from vital organs, including the heart.

### Protecting Your Heart in Winter

Here are some practical tips to safeguard heart health during the colder months:

1. Stay indoors during extreme cold.
2. Keep yourself hydrated with warm, non-alcoholic drinks.
3. Avoid outdoor activities you are unaccustomed to.
4. Change damp or sweaty clothes immediately.
5. Dress in multiple layers for insulation, and always cover your head with a hat or scarf to prevent heat loss.
6. Wear gloves and warm socks to protect your hands and feet from rapid heat loss.
7. Keep an emergency kit in your car, including a blanket, candles, matches, and a charged cell phone.

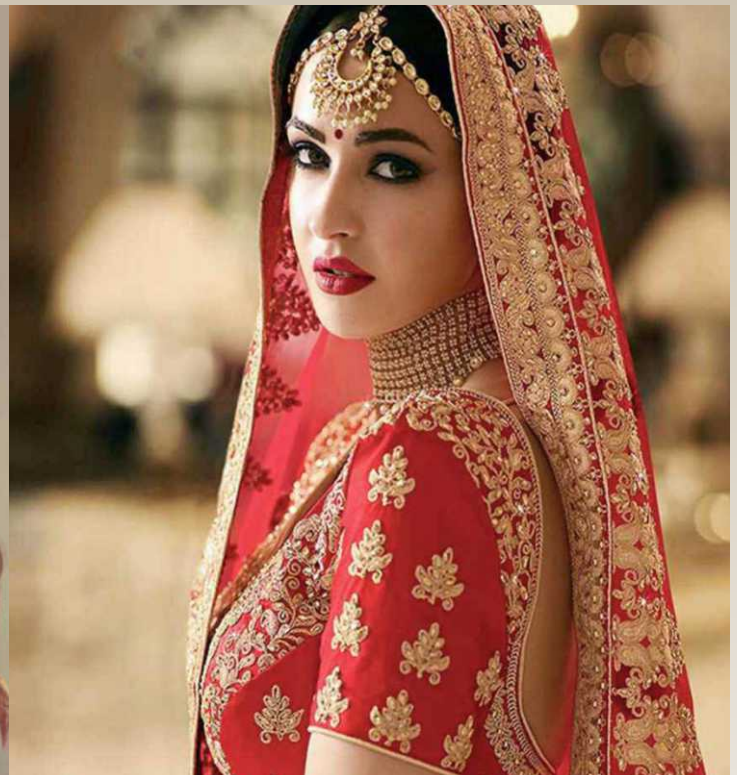
Winter doesn't have to be a season of increased risk for heart disease. With the right precautions and awareness, you can stay warm, healthy, and safe.

### Dr. Abhishek Shukla

**MD (Gold Medallist), FRCP (Edinburgh),  
Fellow Geriatric Society of India**

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## SPECIAL INTERVIEW

# Core values of Hoerner College are respect and empathy – Dr. Mala Mehra



Nestled in the heart of Lucknow at C-66 A, K-Road, Off Mandir Marg, Mahanagar Extension, Hoerner College is a beacon of holistic education and innovation. Under the esteemed leadership of Dr. Mala Mehra, the college continues its mission to empower students for a joyful and productive life, aligned with the vision of its founders, Dr. Surender Singh and V.S. Singh. Founded in 1969, Hoerner College has built a 54-year legacy of excellence, innovation, and inclusivity.

The institution prides itself on pioneering milestones, including being the first school in Lucknow to introduce computer education, digital fee payment, and vocational courses such as fashion designing and robotics. Guided by core values of respect and empathy, Hoerner College ensures an inclusive and dynamic environment where students thrive academically, creatively, and socially.

From its unique academic programs aligned with the National Education Policy to extracurricular activities fostering overall development, the college offers unparalleled opportunities for growth. With state-of-the-art facilities, a robust support system, and community engagement initiatives, Hoerner College equips students to achieve their highest potential while contributing meaningfully to society.

For those seeking affordable world-class education with a focus on holistic development, Hoerner College is the place to nurture dreams and shape a brighter future. EXCERPTS



By Arijit Bose

**City Essence: What is the mission and vision of Hoerner College?**

**Dr. Mala Mehra:** The mission and vision of the College as laid down by the Founders is – empowering joyful and creative life for students as they concentrate on assimilating knowledge in preparation for a productive and successful life as good human beings and good citizens of the country and the world by transforming learning into a pleasant, essential and delightful experience so the students may achieve their highest potential of learning, growth and success in service for mankind and God.

**CE: Can you describe the college's history and milestones?**

**Dr. M. M.:** Hoerner College was founded by Dr. Surender Singh and his wife Mrs. V.S. Singh after they returned to India from the United States of America in 1969. The Foundation Stone was laid by the Honourable Chief Minister Shri C.B. Gupta. The School was opened on the request of the neighbourhood of Mahanagar Extension, Lucknow. Dr. Singh was the Founding Vice Chancellor of Avadh University Faizabad and education was his mission as he founded many schools in rural areas as well. Hoerner College was primarily to impart education to all with a special mandate for the economically challenged.

Initially upto Class 5, Hoerner College flourished with its innovative teaching techniques and global thought. It was then a High School affiliated to UP Board in 1985 and then switched to the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations in 1989. In 1997 affiliation to Class 12 was also taken. With a 54 year legacy the milestones are many as Hoerner college was the 1st School in the City to impart Computer Education as early as 1989, 1st School with its Website in the year 2000, the 1st School with a thriving ERP in 2007, the 1st School with its own App in 2014, the 1st School with digital Fees Payment platforms in 2015, the 1st School to introduce Fashion Designing in 2018, the 1st School to introduce Data Entry as a Vocational Subject. Milestones are many in the quantum of achievements for students and continued technological enhancements with empathetic students contributing to society in many a projects for economically challenged through social useful productive work. Hoerner College in its history has thrived on deep rooted learning pedagogies and continued enhancements in all fields of learning, curricula and extra curricular activities.

**CE: What are the Hoerner College's core values and how are they reflected in its policies and practices?**

**Dr. M. M.:** The core values of Hoerner College are respect and empathy. They are reflected in the everyday lives of all within the portals of Hoerner College in the carriage of their growth as individuals with secular values and nation building. Be it the secular vibe or the respect for elders, governance, teacher-learner relations and empathy towards the less fortunate by giving vivid types of concessions including sibling concessions and concessions on Humanitarian grounds, the entire fraternity of Hoerner College thrives on respect.

**CE: What academic programs does Hoerner College offer, and what are their unique features?**

Apart from regular curriculum, Hoerner College offers vocational studies, legal studies, fashion designing and Artificial intelligence and Robotics. Each of these have their own specific unique features as they concentrate on application of knowledge which will open a vista of opportunities in their future paths and personal and professional enhancements. The Assessments have been given a paradigm shift from monthly tests to Assessments spread over into 2 semesters, based on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) and Global Competencies in Education (GCE). This has thus decreased the load of tests for the Teacher and student alike and has made classroom environment more conducive to learning in the absence of pressure and given room for co curricular activities as well.

The students are thus encouraged to be self dependent and learn at a pace more suited to them with accountability as well. Teachers are encouraged to research for the topic at hand and innovate in the methodology for enhanced learning.

It is the endeavour at Hoerner College to work in tandem with the statutes of the National Education Policy (NEP) and National Curriculum Framework (NCF) as well as the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations towards a common goal of education. In alignment with the NEP, Hoerner College also introduced 10 Bagless Days in Primary and Junior Sections wherein various activities like Carpentry, Gardening, Pottery and Electrical Engineering are conducted for the holistic growth of students.

**CE: How does Hoerner college ensure the quality of its academic programs?**

**Dr. M. M.:** A continued and consistent exposure to local and global endeavours and technology based learning ensures the quality of the academic programs with workshops, seminars and online and offline interactions further enhances these endeavours.

**CE: What are the college's strengths and weaknesses in terms of academic programs?**

**Dr. M. M.:** The strength of the academic programs lies in a robust teaching fraternity and continued study of pedagogies through Government instructions and Globally viable vision and mission. Be it the National Education policy or the United Nations Vision 2030, at Hoerner College much is incorporated to ensure continued growth and relevance to Nation Building and personal growth of its students/learners.

**CE: What support services does the college offer to students, such as counseling, academic advising, and career guidance?**

**Dr. M. M.:** There is a Counselling division in the College, a cell for academic enhancements with interface with both parents and students, regular Career Counselling interface with guest speakers and workshops etc.

**CE: How does Hoerner college promote student engagement and extracurricular activities?**

**Dr. M. M.:** Extra curricular activities are aplenty, be it sports, fine arts, socially empathetic projects etc which promote the overall development of the students. Intra School activities and inter school competitions also ensure healthy competition and the will to excel.



**CE: How does Hoerner college support faculty professional development and research?**

**Dr. M. M.:** There is a robust in house training infrastructure and continued training programs with our affiliating body as well as renowned professional companies that impart workshops etc. The Faculty is equipped with cutting edge technologies and references for research and development.

**CE: How does Hoerner College engage with the local community, including partnerships with businesses, organizations, and government agencies?**

**Dr. M. M.:** Hoerner College is known for its hospitality and engagement with governmental authorities and policies thereof. Parents are involved in many programs and local communities are engaged with from time to time for various projects as are businesses and local organisations. There is a regular interface with all and ideas are sought to better pedagogies and development of the School Community.

**CE: What are Hoerner college's strategies for promoting community outreach and service?**

**Dr. M. M.:** The strategies for promoting community and outreach programs include direct interface and working with NGO's and organisations apart from inhouse development programs and working with and for rural areas.

**CE: What opportunities does Hoerner College see for growth**

**and development, and how is it capitalizing on them?**

**Dr. M. M.:** In today's world of fast growing technologies, opportunities are varied and can be capitalized through policies of continued incorporation of latest technologies and enhancing skill sets that are other than purely academic.

**CE: How does Hoerner college balance its short-term needs with its long-term goals and vision?**

**Dr. M. M.:** The balance is easy as targets are set for both short term and long term goals and vision and a constant reinventing of these policies with present and expected future scenarios.

**CE: Message to youngsters who might need quality education? Why should they pick your institution?**

**Dr. M. M.:** Hoerner College should be picked by students for its sheer tenacity towards the development of future ready ethos of the Student, affordable education with world class infrastructures. There is a thrust towards building of skill sets other than academics and at Hoerner College we ensure the overall development of a Happy child ready to take on challenges fully equipped with knowledge and relevant skill sets. The message is to have your own dreams and take on life with renewed vigour each day with faith and belief that you can do whatever you want on your own steam. Being self sufficient to take forward life and face challenges and have positive outcomes always. Keep the faith, in God and Yourself. ■



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# Candlelight Concerts Debut with Tribute to R.D. Burman

City Essence Team

**R**enowned globally for its enchanting blend of live music and candlelit ambiance, the **Candlelight Concert** series has successfully debuted in Lucknow, the City of Nawabs. The launch event, held at a private hotel, paid tribute to the legendary R.D. Burman and marked a significant milestone in the series' expansion across India.

### A Resounding Success in Lucknow

The Lucknow debut was met with overwhelming enthusiasm, with all tickets selling out quickly. The event captivated the city's music aficionados, setting a celebratory tone for the series' future in Uttar Pradesh. This triumphant entry builds upon previous successes in cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Pune, Jaipur, and Bengaluru, further cementing Candlelight Concerts' status as a must-attend cultural phenomenon.

### Vision for Uttar Pradesh

Deepa Bajaj, Country Manager of Live Your City India, expressed her delight at the response, stating, "We are thrilled with the spectacular reception that Candlelight Concert received in Lucknow. This is just the beginning of our journey in Uttar Pradesh. We are in talks with several historic sites across the state to create experiences that blend the city's legendary heritage with our innovative concert format."

Encouraged by the success of the launch, the Candlelight Concert series



is now planning to expand its presence in Lucknow with exciting new venues and performances. The series promises to transport audiences into a world where music and candlelight intertwine to create unforgettable experiences.

### Bringing Music Closer to People

Produced by **Live Your City**, a division of Fever Labs Inc., the Candlelight Concert series aims to make classical music more accessible by hosting performances in venues that reflect each city's cultural heritage.

The series features a wide range of musical performances, including:

- Indian film soundtracks
- Reimagined Punjabi music hits
- Contemporary tributes to international artists
- Timeless classical compositions

This diversity is designed to attract broad audiences, including those who may not have previously considered attending classical music events. In India, the series has expanded its repertoire to include both Western and Indian classical music, with instruments such as the **sarangi** and **tabla** creating a unique fusion of cultural experiences.

### Cultural Resonance with Global Appeal

Candlelight Concerts' approach ensures a blend of local and global musical traditions, appealing to a wide audience while preserving the essence of classical and contemporary music. By collaborating with local artists and incorporating Indian elements, the series provides a platform for celebrating cultural heritage while offering world-class performances.

### Future Aspirations

Following the success of its Lucknow launch, Candlelight Concerts is poised to explore new venues in Uttar Pradesh, further enriching the state's cultural landscape. With its unique format and diverse repertoire, the series aims to create a lasting impact, making music an accessible and memorable experience for all.

As the flickering candlelight illuminates the stage and the melodies of R.D. Burman resonate, Candlelight Concerts have ushered in a new era of live music experiences in Lucknow, blending tradition with innovation in a truly magical setting. ■

# India set to join Elite Club with Space Docking Capability

City Essence Team

India is on the brink of a monumental achievement as it prepares to join an elite group of nations capable of space docking, a technology that allows two spacecraft or satellites to connect in orbit. The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has transported its **Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX)** satellites to the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, where they await launch from the First Launch Pad. The mission will utilize the **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle-C60 (PSLV-C60)** to deploy the SpaDeX satellites, marking a significant milestone in India's space ambitions.

## What is ISRO's SpaDeX Mission?

SpaDeX, or the Space Docking Experiment, is India's first mission designed to demonstrate the intricate processes of docking and undocking in space. According to ISRO, this cutting-edge technology is crucial for future lunar missions, the construction of the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS), and other advanced space ventures. Once operational, it will elevate India to the ranks of the United States, Russia, and China in space docking expertise.



## Key Features of the SpaDeX Mission

- **Satellites:** Two satellites, each weighing approximately 220 kilograms, will be deployed into a 470-kilometer low Earth orbit with a 55-degree inclination.
- **Technology Demonstration:** The mission aims to showcase autonomous docking and undocking processes in space, a critical step for future space exploration and infrastructure.
- **Mission Duration:** The experiment is planned to last for 66 days, during which the satellites will perform docking and undocking maneuvers using advanced technology.

## Significance of Space Docking Technology

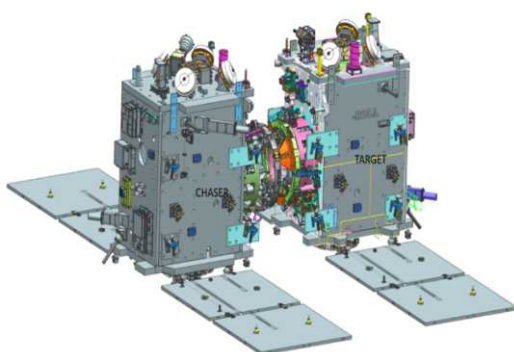
The SpaDeX mission is poised to take India's space endeavors to new heights. Docking technology

is essential for missions that involve assembling structures in space, launching multiple rockets, or conducting long-term space exploration. It lays the groundwork for ISRO's ambitious future projects, such as lunar missions and building the Indian space station.

## Global Implications

By mastering space docking, India will join an elite group of nations, enhancing its position in the global space community. This achievement underscores India's growing capabilities in space exploration and positions ISRO as a key player in the development of advanced space technologies.

With SpaDeX, India takes a significant step toward realizing its ambitious space aspirations, marking a moment of pride and progress in the country's journey to the stars. ■



# Cancer Cases Surge Among Youth: A Global Alarm

Health Desk

Cancer, once considered a disease predominantly affecting the elderly, is now increasingly impacting younger populations. A recent review of cancer registry data from 44 countries has revealed a significant rise in early-onset cases of 13 types of cancers related to the gut and digestive system, particularly among individuals under 50 years of age. This alarming trend is most pronounced in high- and middle-income countries, where lifestyle and dietary changes are believed to play a major role.

## Contributing Factors to Early-Onset Cancer

Experts have identified several key factors driving the surge in cancer cases among younger individuals:

- 1. Obesity and Sedentary Lifestyles:** The rise in obesity, coupled with physical inactivity, has emerged as a major risk factor.
- 2. Diabetes:** Metabolic disorders like diabetes contribute to increased cancer susceptibility.
- 3. Smoking and Alcohol Consumption:** Tobacco use and excessive alcohol intake are long-established carcinogens.
- 4. Dietary Patterns:** The overconsumption of red meat, especially in Western countries, and the presence of chemical additives in processed foods are significant contributors.
- 5. Environmental Pollution:** Exposure to harmful pollutants exacerbates cancer risks.
- 6. Unidentified Factors:** Emerging

research suggests that certain unknown factors, possibly related to chemical additives in food, may also play a role.

## Types of Cancer on the Rise

Most of the observed cases involve cancers of the stomach and digestive system.

Data highlights an average annual increase of 2% in colorectal cancer cases in countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, France, and Japan. In the United Kingdom, the growth rate stands at 3%, while nations like South Korea and Ecuador have reported increases of up to 5%.

## Expert Insights

Dr. Elizabeth Platz, an epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, underscores the role of obesity as a driving factor. She points out that obesity, once a rare condition among youth, has now become commonplace, significantly elevating the risk of cancer in younger generations.

Dr. Ogino, a prominent researcher, draws an analogy to inflation, warning that if these growth rates continue unchecked, the next 10–20 years could see dire consequences for global health.

## Prevention: A Call for Action

As cancer rates rise among the youth,



experts emphasize the importance of adopting preventive measures:

- **Healthy Lifestyle Choices:** Prioritizing regular physical activity and maintaining a balanced diet can significantly reduce cancer risks.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Educating younger populations about the dangers of smoking, alcohol, and poor dietary habits is critical.
- **Policy Interventions:** Governments should regulate harmful food additives and promote healthier alternatives.

## The Way Forward

The increasing prevalence of cancer among younger individuals serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need for proactive measures. By addressing lifestyle factors and fostering early detection, society can work towards mitigating the impact of this life-threatening disease. It is imperative to act now to ensure a healthier future for the coming generations. ■

# How to Spot Genuine Leather Products: A Consumer Guide

Esha Singh

In the ever-evolving world of fashion, leather products such as jackets, shoes, and bags remain timeless essentials. Known for their durability, elegance, and comfort, genuine leather items command a premium in the market. However, with rising demand, counterfeit leather is frequently disguised and sold as real, leaving many buyers disappointed. This detailed guide offers insights into how you can differentiate between authentic and fake leather before making your next purchase.

### The Growing Demand for Leather

The appeal of leather transcends age and style preferences. Whether it's a classic leather jacket, sturdy shoes, or a chic handbag, the versatility of leather has made it a staple for fashion-conscious individuals. Yet, this popularity has also led to an influx of synthetic leather imitations. To ensure consumers get value for their money, it's crucial to understand how to distinguish real leather from fake alternatives.

### Key Tests to Identify Genuine Leather

#### 1. Texture Test: Feel the Surface

Authentic leather has a natural texture derived from animal hide. It feels slightly uneven, soft yet firm, and often shows elasticity. Pressing real leather creates wrinkles that resemble human skin. In contrast, synthetic leather, made from plastic or rubber, feels smooth, overly soft, or unnaturally stiff. It lacks the nuanced texture of genuine leather.

#### 2. Color and Flexibility Check

When genuine leather is folded or bent, it develops small creases and may slightly

change color due to its natural structure. Fake leather, however, remains rigid when bent and may even crack along the fold lines due to its synthetic composition.

#### 3. The Smell Test: Trust Your Nose

One of the most reliable ways to identify genuine leather is its distinctive smell. Real leather carries a natural, musky scent reminiscent of animal hide. Fake leather, on the other hand, has a chemical-like odor, often resembling rubber or plastic due to the materials used.

#### 4. Stitching Quality

The stitching on real leather products is typically more refined, with strong, even, and durable threads. Counterfeit leather often features substandard stitching that looks uneven or weak, indicative of lower craftsmanship.

#### 5. Fire Test: The Ultimate Verification

Real leather is fire-resistant and chars slightly when exposed to a flame, emitting a burnt hair smell. Fake leather ignites quickly and produces a plastic-like odor, melting under the flame. While effective, this test should be performed with caution.

### Why This Matters

Understanding the difference between real and fake leather isn't just about getting your money's worth. Genuine leather products offer better durability, comfort, and a classic aesthetic appeal that fake leather fails to replicate. With counterfeit products flooding markets globally, consumer awareness is the first step toward ensuring ethical purchases



and avoiding financial loss.

### The Industry Perspective

Experts from the leather goods industry note that the rising demand for leather items has led to a surge in counterfeit products. This has not only affected consumer trust but also impacted local leather craftsmen who rely on the authenticity of their products to sustain their livelihoods.

"Authentic leather has always been a symbol of quality and style," says Priya Sharma, a designer specializing in leather accessories. "It's disheartening to see buyers unknowingly investing in fake products. Educating consumers is the only way to preserve the integrity of genuine leather craftsmanship."

The next time you're in the market for a leather product, remember these simple yet effective tips. By examining the texture, smell, stitching, and flexibility of the item, you can safeguard yourself from falling prey to counterfeit goods. Leather is not just a material; it's an investment in style and longevity—one that deserves careful consideration. ■

## BEAUTY

# Life has just started at 60, keep spirits high

Beauty Desk

**B**eauty knows no age, and women over 60 radiate elegance, wisdom, and charm. Embracing aging gracefully is about enhancing natural features, prioritizing self-care, and feeling confident in your skin. As skin matures, it requires extra love and nourishment, while makeup techniques evolve to complement changing textures and tones. From gentle skincare routines to flattering makeup tips and hair care tricks, this guide is designed to celebrate your timeless beauty.

### Skincare Routine

- 1. Gentle Cleansing:** Use a mild, hydrating cleanser to clean your face without stripping away natural oils.
- 2. Moisturize Regularly:** Opt for rich, nourishing moisturizers with ingredients like hyaluronic acid, glycerin, or ceramides.
- 3. Sun Protection:** Always apply sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) daily to protect against sun damage and age spots.
- 4. Exfoliation:** Use a gentle exfoliant once or twice a week to remove dead skin cells and promote cell renewal.
- 5. Serums:** Incorporate serums with retinol, vitamin C, or peptides to target fine lines, wrinkles, and uneven skin tone.
- 6. Eye Creams:** Use eye creams to reduce puffiness, dark circles, and fine lines around the eyes.

### Makeup Tips

- 7. Light Foundation:** Use a lightweight, hydrating foundation or a tinted moisturizer for a natural finish.
- 8. Concealer:** Brighten under-eye areas with a creamy concealer to hide dark circles.
- 9. Blush:** Opt for cream blushes for a natural, dewy glow.
- 10. Brows:** Define eyebrows with a soft



pencil or powder, as they tend to thin with age.

- 11. Eyeshadow:** Choose neutral shades that enhance your natural beauty. Avoid overly shimmery products.
- 12. Lips:** Use moisturizing lipsticks or tinted balms to prevent drying. Choose shades that complement your skin tone.
- 13. Mascara:** A gentle, lengthening mascara can make your eyes pop without being too heavy.

### Hair Care

- 14. Hydrate Hair:** Use shampoos and conditioners designed for dry or aging hair.
- 15. Regular Trims:** Keep hair trimmed to avoid split ends and maintain a polished look.
- 16. Color Options:** Consider low-maintenance hair colors or highlights to blend grays seamlessly.
- 17. Volume Boost:** Use volumizing products to add body to thinning hair.

### Health & Lifestyle



**18. Hydration:** Drink plenty of water to keep your skin plump and hydrated.

- 19. Balanced Diet:** Eat a diet rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and healthy fats for radiant skin.
- 20. Exercise:** Regular exercise improves circulation and gives your skin a healthy glow.

**21. Sleep:** Aim for 7-8 hours of quality sleep to allow your skin to repair and regenerate.

### Specialized Care

- 22. Hand and Neck Care:** Don't neglect your hands and neck—moisturize and protect them with sunscreen.
- 23. Regular Facials:** Treat yourself to facials tailored to mature skin.
- 24. Dermatologist Visits:** Consult a dermatologist for professional advice and treatments if needed.

### Confidence Boosters

- 25. Smile Often:** A confident smile radiates beauty and positivity.
- 26. Embrace Aging:** Celebrate your unique features and focus on enhancing, not hiding, them.
- 27. Accessorize:** Add stylish accessories like scarves or statement jewellery to brighten your overall look.
- 28. Posture Matters:** Stand tall and maintain good posture—it instantly elevates your presence.

By embracing these tips, you can look and feel your best at any age! ■

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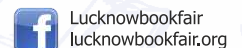


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## PHOTO FEATURE

# In Shadow of Mahakumbh, Prayagraj Hosts Literary Extravaganza

Aakarsh Chandel

The Prayagraj Book Fair, an annual celebration of literature, culture, and spirituality, has taken on a heightened significance this year as it set the stage for the grand Mahakumbh of 2025. Dubbed the "Literary Mahakumbh," the book fair has become a symbolic precursor to the spiritual extravaganza, combining intellectual and devotional pursuits in the heart of Prayagraj.

### A Fusion of Literature and Spirituality

This year, the Prayagraj Book Fair featured a unique confluence of literary discussions and spiritual themes, drawing inspiration from the Mahakumbh's ethos of unity and enlightenment. Publishers and authors from across the nation converged, showcasing books on ancient Indian scriptures, philosophy, mythology, and contemporary interpretations of spirituality.

Special stalls dedicated to works like the Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, and Vedas were central attractions, catering to a diverse audience of scholars, spiritual seekers, and casual readers. Alongside these, modern literature exploring themes of mindfulness, yoga, and holistic living also enjoyed significant attention.

### Interactive Sessions and Cultural Highlights

The fair hosted a series of interactive sessions featuring eminent writers, spiritual leaders, and scholars. Topics range from the significance of Kumbh

traditions to the evolution of Indian spirituality in modern times. Panel discussions and workshops on creative writing, self-publishing, and scriptural studies have attracted attendees of all ages.

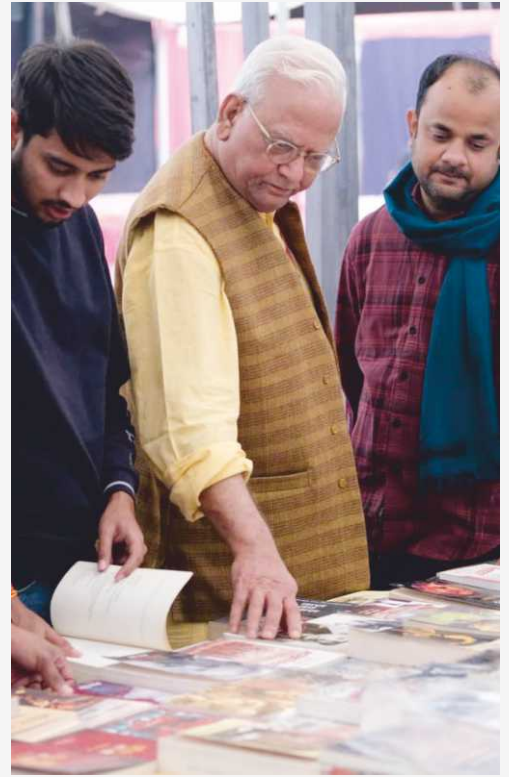
Cultural programs, including classical music concerts, Kavi Sammelans (poetry gatherings), and storytelling sessions, provided a rich cultural fabric to the event, celebrating India's literary and spiritual heritage.

### Bridging Tradition and Modernity

In preparation for the Mahakumbh, the book fair also embraced modernity by integrating technology. Digital kiosks offered e-books and audiobooks, while virtual reality (VR) experiences allowed attendees to explore historical Kumbh Mela sites and immerse themselves in the cultural richness of Prayagraj.

### Building Momentum for Mahakumbh 2025

As Prayagraj gears up for the Mahakumbh, the book fair is seen as a stepping stone, fostering an intellectual and spiritual awakening among its visitors. It set a contemplative and celebratory tone, reminding the world of Prayagraj's historical and cultural significance. The Literary Mahakumbh promised not just to enthrall book lovers but also to resonate deeply with the spirit of the Mahakumbh, reinforcing Prayagraj's position as a beacon of knowledge, spirituality, and cultural unity.





# 2025: A Year of Collective Commitment and Action

From winning the T20 World Cup to Gukesh becoming the Chess World Champion, and from the visionary leadership of Modi 2.0 to ISRO's historic Moon landing, India made remarkable progress in 2024.

With achievements spanning space exploration, sports, technology, and governance, the nation thrived in every sector, setting a shining example of growth and innovation. While many dreams became a reality this year, one moment that truly startled me was switching on the fan in December. It wasn't just surprising—it was unsettling. A clear reminder of how climate change is altering the world around us, urging us to take action before such unexpected moments become the norm.

Since the 1972 Stockholm Conference, the first major international gathering focused on environmental issues, global climate conferences have been a constant fixture in international diplomacy. For over 50 years, these conferences have repeatedly highlighted the ghastly consequences of environmental degradation, from rising temperatures to biodiversity loss. At each meeting, leaders have acknowledged the urgency of the crisis and agreed on solutions. Notable conferences like COP21 (Paris Agreement, 2015) and COP26 (Glasgow Summit, 2021) marked milestones in these discussions. Yet, despite the growing body of consensus, the reality is that even the United Nations can only talk, and not deliver.

Today, through this platform, I urge you to act now—our planet needs us,

and the future of our children depends on the choices we make today. Let's not wait for governments or laws to guide our choices between what is right and what is easy!

India's solar energy journey, launched with the National Solar Mission in 2010, has been truly impressive. By 2023, the country had achieved over 70 GW of installed solar capacity, establishing itself as a global leader in renewable energy. With a clear focus on clean energy, India aims to reach 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based energy by 2030. Through collaborations such as the International Solar Alliance, India is driving global solar adoption. Leveraging its vast potential, India is not only meeting its own energy needs sustainably but also playing a key role in global climate action.

Similarly, Costa Rica has invested heavily in clean energy sources, including hydro, wind, and geothermal power. By 2023, Costa Rica generated almost 100% of its electricity from renewable sources, making it a global leader in clean energy. The nation has set ambitious goals to become the first carbon-neutral country by 2050, further demonstrating its commitment to fighting climate change. Through policy reforms, innovation, and sustainable practices, Costa Rica is inspiring the world to adopt cleaner, greener energy solutions.

These examples demonstrate how clear intentions and consistent actions can lead to extraordinary results. If these nations, with their unique challenges and diverse resources, can



**Medha A. Parashar, Vice-Principal  
CMS Gomti Nagar Extension**

achieve such milestones, so can we—the residents of planet Earth. Imagine the impact we could have if 2 billion people commit to doing what is necessary for a sustainable future.

So, let us resolve to bring the change we wish to see in the world. Every small action counts—whether it's carrying a cloth bag, avoiding single-use plastic, carpooling, or being mindful of our water and electricity usage. These small, consistent changes will have a far-reaching impact. By making conscious choices in our daily lives, we can collectively work toward a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable world. The future is in our hands, and together, we can make it a brighter one for generations to come.

As we welcome the New Year 2025, let it bring renewed hopes, aspirations, and opportunities. May every challenge transform into a doorway to success, every setback fuel determination, and every effort lead to growth and achievement. Here's to a year filled with resilience, progress, and endless possibilities! ■

## CITY TREND

# Heart & Lung Transplants: Narayana Health City Delivers

### City Essence Team

**N**arayana Health City, a leader in advanced cardiothoracic care and organ transplantation, made headlines while highlighting its excellence in patient care and cutting-edge medical treatments. A distinguished panel of four eminent doctors—Dr. Aditi Singhvi, Dr. Syed Tousheed, Dr. Bagirath R, and Dr. Julius Punnen—discussed two highly complex case studies involving heart and lung transplants, underscoring the institution's leadership in the field.

The first case featured a 66-year-old male patient from Kanpur, who had been struggling with severely reduced ejection fraction (25%) after an angioplasty. Despite initial treatment, his condition worsened, leading to frequent hospitalizations and an inability to function. Under the expert leadership of Dr. Aditi Singhvi, Clinical Lead for Adult Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiologist at Narayana Health City, the patient was diagnosed with end-stage heart failure, necessitating a heart transplant.

Following a thorough evaluation, the patient was registered as a heart transplant candidate. In October 2023, a suitable donor became available, and the heart transplant was successfully performed. Over a year post-surgery, the patient has shown remarkable recovery and is now leading a healthy, active life. Dr. Singhvi, along with her colleagues Dr. Bagirath R, Dr. Varun



Shetty, Dr. Julius Punnen, and Dr. Kumaran T, spoke about the complexities involved in transplant surgeries and the critical role of post-operative care.

“It’s always a moment of immense satisfaction when we see our patients thriving after such a high-stakes procedure,” said Dr. Singhvi. “Heart transplantation requires meticulous planning, but with a dedicated team and state-of-the-art facilities, we can offer the best possible care to our patients.”

The patient, Rajesh Kumar (name changed for confidentiality), expressed his heartfelt gratitude, stating, “When I first learned about my condition, I felt hopeless. But thanks to the team at Narayana Health City, I was given a second chance at life. The transplant has completely transformed my health. I’m able to do things now that I never thought I would be able to do again.”

The second case presented was that of a 30-year-old woman, Ayesha Malik (name changed for confidentiality), who had been suffering from a

congenital heart defect known as sinus venosus atrial septal defect with a partial anomalous pulmonary venous connection (PAPVC). The condition had progressed, leading to life-threatening complications, including recurrent hospitalizations and bouts of coughing up blood.

Despite initial medical interventions, Malik’s condition continued to deteriorate, necessitating a combined heart and lung transplant. She was registered for the transplant in January 2023 and was fortunate to receive suitable donor organs in December 2023. The transplant was successful, and today, Malik is recovering well, thanks to the multidisciplinary team involved in her care.

Founded by the visionary Dr. Devi Shetty and headquartered in Bengaluru, Narayana Health is one of the largest healthcare providers in India. As the second-largest healthcare group in the country, it operates a wide range of super-specialty tertiary care centers, positioning itself as a global healthcare leader. ■

# Mahakumbh: Blending Tradition with Modernity

Aakarsh Chandel

The Kumbh Mela is the world's largest peaceful gathering, drawing millions of pilgrims for a ritualistic bath in holy rivers. This bath symbolises spiritual cleansing and renewal. It takes place four times every 12 years, rotating between Haridwar on the Ganges, Ujjain on the Shipra, Nashik on the Godavari, and Prayagraj, where the Ganges, Yamuna, and Sarasvati meet.

### History of Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 Prayagraj

The Kumbh Mela is more than a spiritual gathering. It is a vibrant blend of cultures, traditions, and languages, showcasing a "mini-India" where millions come together without formal invitations. The event brings ascetics, sadhus, kalpavasis, and seekers from diverse backgrounds, embodying devotion, asceticism, and unity. Recognised by UNESCO in 2017 as an intangible cultural heritage, the Kumbh Mela holds immense historical and cultural value. Prayagraj will host this grand event again in 2025, from January 13 to February 26, offering a blend of rituals, culture, and astronomy.

### Maha Kumbh Mela 2025: A New Era of Spirituality and Innovation

The Maha Kumbh Mela in 2025 promises a unique blend of spirituality, culture, and history in Prayagraj. From January 13 to February 26, pilgrims will not only engage in a series of spiritual rituals but also embark on an odyssey that transcends physical, cultural, and even spiritual boundaries. The city's vibrant streets,



bustling markets, and local cuisine add a rich cultural layer to the experience. The Akhara camps provide an additional spiritual dimension, where sadhus and ascetics come together for discussions, meditation, and sharing wisdom. Together, these elements make the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 an extraordinary celebration of faith, culture, and history, offering an enriching journey for all attendees.

The upcoming 2025 Maha Kumbh Mela is also poised to enhance the experience of devotees with advanced facilities and infrastructure, ensuring a seamless, safer, and more immersive journey for all participants. Improved sanitation systems, expanded transportation networks, and upgraded security measures are

expected to provide a smoother, safer, and more enriching experience. Incorporating innovative solutions, the 2025 Maha Kumbh Mela is set to redefine global standards for hosting spiritual and cultural events of this magnitude.

### Prayagraj: A Journey Through Time

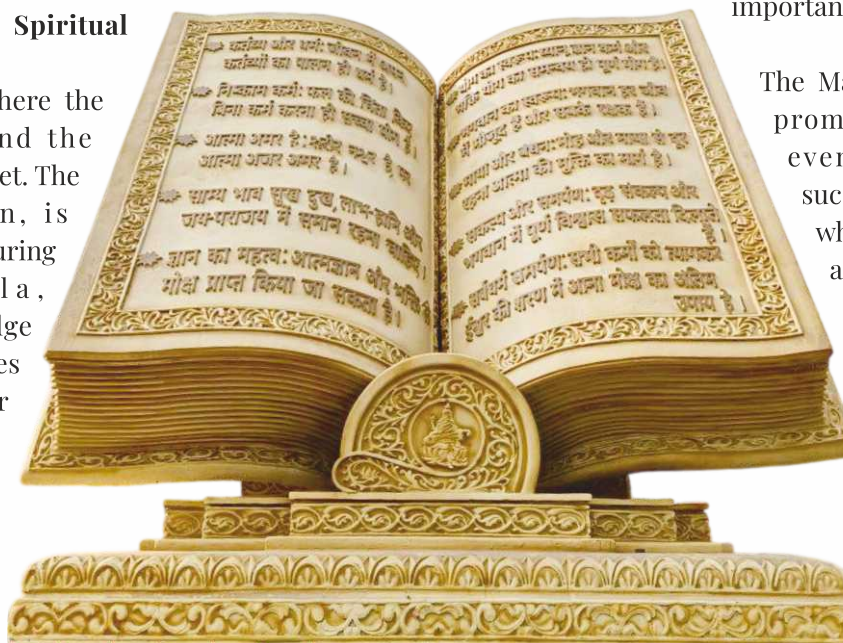
Prayagraj, with a rich history, dates back to 600 BC when the Vatsa kingdom thrived, and Kaushambi served as its capital. Gautama Buddha visited Kaushambi. Later, emperor Ashoka made it a provincial centre during the Mauryan era, marked by his monolithic pillars. Rulers like the Sungas, Kushans, and Guptas also left artefacts and inscriptions in the region.



In the 7th century, Chinese traveller Huiyen Tsang described Prayagraj as a "great city of idolaters," reflecting its strong Brahminical traditions. Its importance grew under Sher Shah, who built the Grand Trunk Road through the area. In the 16th century, Akbar renamed it 'Ilahabas,' turning it into a fortified imperial centre and key pilgrimage site, setting the stage for its modern relevance.

### Key Landmarks and Spiritual Sites of Prayagraj

Triveni Sangam is where the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mystical Saraswati meet. The Saraswati, unseen, is believed to appear during the Kumbh Mela, symbolising knowledge and wisdom. Devotees visit to cleanse their sins, making it the heart of the Kumbh Mela, a grand celebration of India's cultural heritage.



Pilgrims visiting Triveni Sangam also explore many revered temples in Prayagraj. The Shri Lete Hue Hanuman Ji Temple in Daraganj, established by Saint Samarth Guru Ramdasji, features idols of Shiva-Parvati, Ganesh, Bhairav, Durga, Kali, and Navgrah. Nearby, the Shri Ram-Janki and Harit Madhava temples add to the spiritual atmosphere. The Alop Shankari Temple, dedicated to Shri Alopshankari Devi, and the Nagvasuki Temple, honouring the serpent deity, are also popular,

with the latter being restored for the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025.

The Shankar Viman Mandapam, a 130-foot-high South Indian-style temple, houses idols of Adi Shankaracharya, Kamakshi Devi, and Tirupati Balaji. The Shri Veni Madhav Temple, the most important of Prayagraj's twelve Madhava temples, is essential for completing the Prayag pilgrimage. The

Akshayvat Tree and Patalpuri Temple near Allahabad Fort hold deep mythological significance, with the Akshayvat being a sacred fig tree mentioned in Hindu texts. Other notable temples include the Mankameshwar Temple, Dashashwamedha Temple, and Takshakeshwar Nath Temple. The Saraswati Koop is being refurbished for the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 to preserve its historical and cultural value. The evening Ganga Aarti at Ram Ghat is a captivating ritual honouring the river goddess, performed daily with chants, lamps, and devotion, symbolising the five elements of nature.

Prayagraj is also home to Allahabad University, India's fourth-oldest university, established on September 23, 1887. Its origins trace back to Muir Central College, founded by Sir William Muir on December 9, 1873. The Public Library of Prayagraj, set up in 1864 and relocated to its current building in 1878, houses rare manuscripts and books. It also hosted the first Legislative Council meeting of the state in 1887, adding to its historical importance.

The Maha Kumbh Mela in 2025 promises to be a landmark event, building upon the success of previous editions while embracing innovative advancements. Prayagraj's rich historical, cultural, and spiritual fabric, combined with state-of-the-art facilities, will offer pilgrims an unparalleled experience of faith, unity, and devotion. ■

# India takes on the Dark Web Head on: High-Tech War on Cybercrime



City Essence Team

**T**he dark web, a hidden part of the internet accessible only through specialized software, has become a hotbed for illegal activities. While it offers anonymity, its misuse has led to crimes like drug trafficking, child exploitation, arms trade, and even terrorism. As one of the fastest-growing digital economies, India faces a growing threat from the dark web. Cybersecurity breaches and illicit trades originating from these hidden networks have made it imperative for India to develop robust strategies to combat the perils of the dark web.

### The Dark Web Threat Landscape in India

The dark web poses significant threats to individuals, businesses, and national

security in India. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), cybercrimes in India surged by over 15% in 2023, with a considerable portion linked to dark web activities. Ransomware attacks, one of the most prevalent threats, affected 75% of Indian organizations in 2023, as reported by cybersecurity firm Sophos.

One of the most alarming cases occurred in 2022 when a dark web-based drug syndicate operating across Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru was dismantled. This syndicate used cryptocurrency for payments, making it challenging to trace their transactions. Another instance saw the personal data of over 100 million Indians, including Aadhaar and PAN details, being sold on dark web

marketplaces, highlighting vulnerabilities in data security.

### India's Legal Framework and Policies

To address these challenges, India has strengthened its legal and policy framework:

- **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000:** This act serves as the backbone of India's cybersecurity laws. Sections 66 and 67 address hacking, identity theft, and distribution of obscene content, commonly facilitated via the dark web.
- **Personal Data Protection Bill:** Though still in draft form, this bill aims to regulate data storage and processing, ensuring stricter measures to prevent data leaks that often find their way to the dark web.

- **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C):** Established by the Ministry of Home Affairs, I4C acts as a nodal point for combating cybercrimes, including dark web activities. It coordinates with state cybercrime units and leverages technology to track illicit transactions.

- **Global Collaborations:** India collaborates with international bodies such as INTERPOL and has shown interest in acceding to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, which facilitates global cooperation.

### Technological and Operational Countermeasures

India has made significant strides in adopting technological tools and operational tactics to curb dark web crimes:

1. **Dark Web Crawlers:** Law enforcement agencies utilize advanced tools to monitor dark web marketplaces. These tools help trace illegal activities, such as the sale of narcotics, weapons, and counterfeit documents.

2. **Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning:** AI-based systems identify suspicious patterns and flag activities associated with the dark web.

3. **Cybercrime Units:** CERT-In (Indian Computer Emergency Response Team) and state-level cyber cells actively investigate cybercrimes linked to the dark web. The Maharashtra Cyber Department's success in dismantling a child pornography ring in 2021 is a notable example.

4. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaboration with IT firms and ethical

hacking communities has bolstered India's ability to detect and respond to cyberthreats.

### Awareness and Capacity Building

Recognizing the importance of awareness, India has implemented various initiatives:

- **Training Programs:** Police forces and judicial officers undergo specialized training to tackle cybercrimes. Workshops by the National Police Academy and state-level cybercrime units focus on tracking dark web activities.

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Initiatives like Cyber Swachhta Kendra educate citizens about the risks of the dark web and promote safe online practices.

- **Digital Literacy Drives:** Programs under the Digital India campaign aim to empower citizens with basic cybersecurity knowledge.

### Challenges in Combatting the Dark Web

Despite these efforts, India faces several challenges:

- **Anonymity and Encryption:** The use of Tor browsers, VPNs, and cryptocurrencies makes tracking users extremely difficult.

- **Jurisdictional Complexities:** Cross-border crimes often complicate legal proceedings and enforcement.

- **Technological Gap:** While strides have been made, there is a need for more advanced tools and expertise to keep up with evolving dark web technologies.

- **Resource Constraints:** Many state-level cybercrime units lack sufficient personnel and funding.

### Success Stories and Progress

India's efforts to combat the dark web have yielded notable successes:

- **Operation Pangea:** As part of a global initiative, India's Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) played a crucial role in cracking down on online

pharmaceutical crimes, seizing counterfeit medicines sold on the dark web.

- **Data Breach Busts:** In 2022, CERT-In successfully tracked and neutralized a major breach involving the sale of 30 million Indian debit card details on the dark web.

- **Cyber Surakshit Bharat Initiative:** This program aims to enhance the resilience of government systems against cyber threats, including those originating from the dark web.

### The Way Forward

To strengthen its fight against the dark web, India must adopt a multi-faceted approach:

- **Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** Expediting the passage of the Personal Data Protection Bill and updating the IT Act to address emerging threats.

- **Enhanced International Cooperation:** Sharing intelligence and collaborating with global agencies to tackle cross-border crimes.

- **Investing in R&D:** Developing indigenous tools for monitoring and dismantling dark web networks.

- **Promoting Ethical Hacking:** Encouraging ethical hackers to contribute to identifying vulnerabilities and securing systems.

- **Public Engagement:** Educating citizens about cyber hygiene to reduce the risk of exploitation.

India's battle against the dark web is far from over, but the country has demonstrated resilience and innovation in addressing this complex issue. By leveraging technology, strengthening laws, and fostering global cooperation, India is building a robust framework to combat dark web threats. Constant vigilance, investment in cybersecurity infrastructure, and public awareness will be pivotal in ensuring that the dark web's perils are minimized, safeguarding India's digital future. ■



# Rakul Preet Singh's Fitness Mantra

Esha Singh

**R**akul Preet Singh, a renowned Bollywood actress and fitness icon, has once again captured the attention of her fans by sharing her fitness mantra. Known for her dedication to health and wellness, Rakul frequently posts workout videos and fitness tips on Instagram, inspiring millions. Recently, she used the "Ask Me Anything" feature on Instagram to connect with her followers and share valuable insights into maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

### The Instagram Session: Key Takeaways

During the interactive session, a fan asked Rakul about her meal plan and tips for staying healthy and fit. Rakul responded by posting a video that detailed her approach to weight management and fitness. Her response was both practical and motivational, emphasizing that achieving fitness goals is a combination of discipline, consistency, and enjoyment.

### "No Shortcut to Weight Loss," Says Rakul

In her video, Rakul Preet Singh made it clear that there are no shortcuts to losing weight. She explained that the key to shedding extra pounds lies in adopting a sustainable and disciplined lifestyle. According to her, weight loss requires:

- 1. Hard Work:** Incorporating regular physical activity into your routine.
- 2. Determination:** Staying committed to your health goals.
- 3. Consistency:** Following a daily routine that includes healthy habits.

Rakul emphasized the importance of making wellness an integral part of one's lifestyle. She advised her fans to prioritize clean and healthy eating, focusing on home-cooked meals that nourish the body.

### The 80-20 Rule: Balance and Moderation

One of the highlights of her session was her endorsement of the 80-20 rule for weight loss. Rakul explained:

- **80% Healthy Meals:** Your primary meals should consist of nutritious, home-cooked food.
- **20% Indulgences:** Reserve a small portion of your diet for treats or cravings, allowing for two cheat meals per week.

This approach, she said, helps in maintaining a balance between health and enjoyment, preventing burnout from overly restrictive diets.

### Lifestyle Changes: Small Steps for Big Results

Rakul advised her followers to focus on long-term lifestyle changes rather than quick fixes like crash diets. She discouraged fad diets and highlighted the importance of:

- **Home-Cooked Meals:** A diet based on fresh, clean ingredients prepared at home.
- **Regular Exercise:** Making physical activity a daily habit, whether through gym sessions, yoga, or other workouts.
- **Enjoying the Process:** Finding joy in the journey of becoming healthier

rather than treating it as a burden.

She reminded her fans that fitness is not about temporary changes but a lifetime commitment to health.

### Rakul's Message: Make Wellness a Priority

Rakul Preet Singh's candid session resonated with her fans, many of whom found her tips both relatable and actionable. Her philosophy of fitness revolves around balance, sustainability, and mindfulness. By sharing her journey and practical advice, Rakul continues to inspire her audience to prioritize their health and embrace a holistic approach to wellness. ■



# Lucknow's Online Food Market set to hit \$23 Billion by 2025

Food Desk

**F**ood delivery services have seen a significant transformation in Lucknow, driven by technological advancements, evolving consumer preferences, and an expanding range of service providers. The convenience of ordering food from home, combined with a burgeoning food culture, has contributed to the growing popularity of food delivery in the city.

## 1. Technological Advancements

### ● Mobile Apps & Online Platforms:

The rise of food delivery platforms like Zomato, Swiggy, and Uber Eats has made it easier for consumers to access a wide variety of food choices from the comfort of their homes. These platforms have integrated features like real-time order tracking, cashless payments, and personalized recommendations, enhancing user experience.

● **Contactless Delivery:** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of contactless delivery options. In Lucknow, food delivery services introduced features like “contactless delivery,” where customers could have their food left at the doorstep without any direct interaction with the delivery person, increasing safety and convenience.

## 2. Expanding Food Delivery Market

● **Growth in Orders:** The number of food orders in Lucknow has surged. According to industry estimates, the online food delivery market in India is expected to reach a valuation of \$23 billion by 2025, with smaller cities like

Lucknow contributing a significant portion of this growth.

### ● Increasing Popularity of Online Ordering:

A report by Zomato found that tier-2 cities, including Lucknow, saw a 50% rise in food delivery orders over the past 2

years. This surge has been particularly notable in areas with high student populations, working professionals, and families opting for convenience.

## 3. Diverse Restaurant Options

● **Wide Range of Choices:** One of the driving forces behind the rise in food delivery is the vast selection of eateries available through delivery platforms. In Lucknow, consumers can choose from local favorites like kebabs, chaat, and biryanis to international cuisines such as pizza, Chinese, and continental foods.

● **Support for Local Restaurants:** Many local eateries in Lucknow have partnered with delivery platforms, enabling them to reach more customers. This move has been particularly beneficial for smaller, local businesses, helping them expand their reach without the overhead costs of physical expansion.

## 4. Consumer Demand and Changing Habits

● **Customized Menus:** Consumers are increasingly demanding specialized diets, such as vegan,



gluten-free, or low-calorie options. Many restaurants and food chains in Lucknow are catering to these specific dietary requirements, offering a wider variety of meals to suit diverse preferences.

## 5. Local Data & Statistics

● **Order Frequency:** According to recent data, food delivery orders in Lucknow have risen by 35% annually over the last few years. A significant proportion of these orders come during weekends and festive seasons, indicating the growing reliance on food delivery services for occasions, celebrations, and casual dining.

● **Popular Delivery Items:** In terms of popular food categories, **Indian cuisine** (like biryani, kebabs, and parathas) dominates the market in Lucknow, but international options like pizza and Chinese are also highly popular.

● **Demographics:** The city's food delivery market is especially popular among young professionals (25-35 years) and students, with the **upper-middle-class segment** making up the majority of consumers. ■

# Another year goes by in a blink

Arijit Bose

2024 has been a landmark year for entertainment, with record-breaking achievements, groundbreaking collaborations, and thrilling moments across music, film, and television. From Taylor Swift's billionaire status to major wins at the Oscars, this year has seen stars rise, break records, and leave an unforgettable mark on pop culture.

## 1. Taylor Swift Becomes a Billionaire

- In April 2024, Taylor Swift made history by becoming the first musician to reach billionaire status purely from her music and concerts. This milestone solidified her dominance in the music industry, with her record-breaking tours and chart-topping albums serving as the cornerstone of her financial success.

## 2. "Oppenheimer" Wins Big at the Oscars

- Christopher Nolan's gripping biographical film *Oppenheimer* dominated the 96th Academy Awards in March 2024. The film took home the coveted Best Picture award, while Cillian Murphy's riveting portrayal of J. Robert Oppenheimer earned him the Oscar for Best Actor, marking a monumental moment in cinema history.

## 3. Beyoncé Breaks Grammy Record

- In November 2024, Beyoncé made history at the Grammys by receiving her 99th nomination, becoming the most nominated artist in the award show's history. This record-setting achievement further cemented her legacy as a powerhouse in the music industry.

## 4. "Inside Out 2" Sets Box Office Record

- *Inside Out 2* became the highest-grossing animated film ever, earning a staggering \$1.462 billion worldwide in July 2024. This achievement added to the film's legacy, solidifying its place as a fan-



favorite and groundbreaking animated feature.

## 5. Victoria Monét Wins Best New Artist

- In 2024, Victoria Monét won the Grammy Award for Best New Artist, marking her rise as one of the most

exciting new voices in the music world. Her unique blend of R&B and pop has earned her critical acclaim and a strong fan base.

## 6. Eurovision Song Contest Winner: Nemo

- Switzerland's Nemo made history at the 68th Eurovision Song Contest by winning with the song "The Code." As the first non-binary winner of the prestigious competition, Nemo's victory represented a major step forward for inclusivity in the music industry.

### 7. Madonna Ends World Tour with Free Concert

- Madonna wrapped up her Celebration world tour with a free, unforgettable concert in Rio de Janeiro in May 2024, attended by a massive crowd of 1.6 million fans. The event was a testament to her enduring influence and ability to unite fans across generations.

### 8. Sabrina Carpenter's Chart-Topping Anthem

- Sabrina Carpenter's song "Espresso" became a defining anthem of 2024, dominating music charts and playlists worldwide. With its catchy beat and relatable lyrics, it solidified Carpenter's place as one of the year's breakout artists.

### 9. Kendrick Lamar's Powerful Hit

- Kendrick Lamar's track "Not Like Us" became one of the most powerful and thought-provoking songs of 2024, highlighting his unrivaled ability to blend social commentary with powerful storytelling.

### 10. Billie Eilish Wins Song of the Year

- Billie Eilish's poignant track "What Was I Made For?" from the Barbie movie soundtrack won the Grammy Award for Song of the Year. The emotional depth of the song resonated with millions, capturing the essence of self-discovery and reflection.

### 11. Varun Dhawan's Shocking Claim

- Bollywood actor Varun Dhawan made headlines with a shocking revelation about being stalked by the wife of a powerful man, who even broke into his

house, believing he would leave his family for her. His revelation sparked widespread media attention and conversation about privacy and safety in the public eye.

### 12. Salman Khan and Hrithik Roshan's Upcoming Collaboration

- Rumors about a collaboration between Bollywood superstars Salman Khan and Hrithik Roshan have set fans abuzz. The two actors are rumored to appear together in an upcoming action project directed by Ali Abbas Zafar, promising an exciting cinematic experience.

### 13. Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani 2 Confirmed?

- Dharma Productions sparked excitement by dropping a hint about a possible sequel to the beloved film Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani. Fans eagerly awaited official confirmation, hoping for the return of their favorite characters and the magic of youth.



### 14. Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh's Baby

- Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh's baby, Dua, was spotted by paparazzi, fueling excitement among fans. There's speculation that the couple might adopt the no-photo policy followed by fellow Bollywood stars Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor.

### 15. Ram Kapoor's Dramatic Weight Loss

- Actor Ram Kapoor shocked fans with his dramatic weight loss transformation.

Revealing the extensive work he had done on himself, Kapoor's journey became an inspiration to many, showcasing the importance of health and self-care.

### 16. Pushpa 2 vs Baby John Show Sharing Issue

- A late-night drama over show-sharing issues between Pushpa 2 and Baby John was finally resolved, allowing Pushpa 2 to continue its run in PVR and Inox cinemas. The issue sparked debates over theater dynamics and film scheduling.

### 17. Mouni Roy's New Project

- Actress Mouni Roy teamed up with Khuda Haafiz director Faruk Kabir for her new project Salakaar. Fans were excited to see her in a new and challenging role, signaling her growth as an actor in the industry.

### 18. Gauahar Khan's New Luxury Car

- Actress Gauahar Khan celebrated her recent purchase of a luxurious Mercedes-Benz Coupe worth nearly Rs 1 crore. She marked the occasion by celebrating with her family, highlighting her success and appreciation for the finer things in life.

### 19. Academy Award Nominee Santosh's India Release

- The Academy Award-nominated film Santosh released in India on January 10, 2025. The film

has garnered international acclaim, and its Indian release is highly anticipated by cinephiles.

These moments reflect a year of remarkable achievements in entertainment, from history-making artists to groundbreaking cinematic triumphs. 2024 has truly been a year of milestones across the global pop culture landscape. ■

## SPORTS

# Using Football to Improve Lives: Super League Kerala

Arijit Bose

A vision that began with a single inspiring moment has grown into one of the most ambitious football projects in Kerala. Navas Meeran, President of the Kerala Football Association (KFA), recalls a turning point that ignited his determination to use football as a tool to uplift lives. A few years ago, he watched as a young player from Kumily Football School signed a lucrative Rs 25-lakh contract with Chennaiyin FC, a team in the Indian Super League (ISL). For Navas, this was a realization that football could transform lives, particularly those of aspiring players from humble backgrounds.

With this vision in mind, Super League Kerala (SLK) was born in September 2024, a professional football league aiming not only to entertain but to serve as a catalyst for social change. The league, consisting of six teams—Calicut, Forca Kochi, Kannur Warriors, Malappuram, Thiruvananthapuram Kombans, and Thrissur Magic—wants to use the global love for football to benefit people at the grassroots level.

“We aim to help young players, especially from underprivileged communities, earn recognition and financial opportunities that could transform their lives,” said Navas speaking to New Indian Express, who is also the chairman of Scoreline Sports, the league's organizing body. His words reflect the heart of the project: a desire to offer young talent a pathway



to professional football careers and, in turn, a brighter future.

The success of the inaugural season, which concluded in November, confirms that SLK is on the right track. An impressive 35,000 spectators attended the final match at Kozhikode's EMS Corporation Stadium, and the league attracted a total of approximately 4.53 lakh attendees across stadiums in Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Kozhikode, and Malappuram.

### A Transformative Platform for Talent

SLK has proven to be more than just a sports league; it has become a platform for young Malayali footballers to step onto the national and international stage. “SLK has created opportunities for players to progress from local competitions to professional leagues like ISL and I-League,” said Firoz Meeran, Vice-chairman of Scoreline Sports to the media. The league's scouting process, which began over three years ago, identified and nurtured talent through various

training camps and competitions.

Mathew Joseph, CEO of SLK, explained that the league's creation was a result of meticulous planning and grassroots efforts, including the revival of Kerala's local competitions such as the Kerala Premier League and the Chakolas Gold Trophy. These initiatives have led to the registration of 3,600 players and the organization of over 800 matches, helping develop a solid base of football talent across the state.

The league's first season saw several Kerala-based players earning spots in prestigious teams like ISL clubs, I-League sides, and even the Santosh Trophy squad. These milestones mark the league's success in fulfilling its mission to promote local talent and offer young players a professional platform.

### A Look Ahead: Growth and Expansion

Looking to the future, SLK is set to expand its impact. For the 2025 season, the league will introduce two new clubs, adding more games, extended broadcasting, and enhanced

sponsorship deals. This will increase the competition's reach, including the addition of six new venues for matches.

The inaugural season saw games held at four major stadiums: JLN International Stadium in Kochi, Chandrasekharan Nair Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram, EMS Corporation Stadium in Kozhikode, and Payyanad Stadium in Manjeri. With the expansion, stadiums in Kannur and Thrissur will be upgraded to create a more engaging atmosphere for fans. The plans for football-specific stadiums are also underway, which would further strengthen Kerala's football infrastructure.

One of the key goals for the next season is to bring fans closer to the action. SLK's organizers, including CEO Mathew Joseph, are keen to build stadiums with a seating capacity of 15,000-20,000, where fans can sit near the pitch for a more immersive experience. Additionally, Kochi's Ambedkar Stadium is poised to become a premier football venue, enhancing the state's reputation as a football hub.

### Global Reach and Family-Friendly Environment

SLK's impact has extended beyond the stadiums. The league gained significant traction on digital

platforms, generating 131 million impressions across social media. Matches were streamed worldwide, with over 20,000 viewers in the Middle East on Manorama Max and more than 10 lakh domestic viewers on Disney Hotstar. FIFA TV also provided international streaming, further expanding SLK's global footprint.

One of the unexpected outcomes of the league's first season was the increase in attendance from women and families. To build on this momentum, the organizers plan to improve facilities at stadiums, adding better sanitation and creating family-friendly sections to make the experience more accessible to all.

### A Lasting Impact

The mission of SLK goes beyond just football. Navas Meeran's vision of using the sport to change lives is beginning to bear fruit, with players emerging from the league's ranks already earning professional contracts and securing financial stability. As the league continues to grow, it is expected to play a significant role in shaping Kerala's football culture, offering more young people a chance to dream and succeed.

Super League Kerala has

successfully demonstrated how football can be leveraged as a tool for social change, offering opportunities to talented individuals while fostering a sense of community and pride across the state. With its sights set on further expansion, SLK is poised to make a lasting impact on the sport and its players, driving both the growth of football in Kerala and the personal transformation of those involved. ■



Photo Courtesy - Amarnath Unnikrishnan

# From Cave Paintings to Art Galleries: Evolution of Modern-Day Art

Feature Desk

Art, as an expression of human creativity, has evolved dramatically over millennia, reflecting cultural, social, and technological shifts. From rudimentary cave paintings to the sophisticated art galleries of today, the journey of art showcases humanity's relentless quest to communicate, explore, and innovate.

### The Dawn of Art: Cave Paintings

The earliest form of artistic expression can be traced back to prehistoric cave paintings, such as those in Lascaux, France, and Bhimbetka, India. These depictions of animals, hunting scenes, and symbolic patterns were more than mere decoration; they served as narratives, rituals, and markers of early human identity. Created using natural pigments like ochre and charcoal, these artworks demonstrated an innate desire to document and interpret the world.

### The Rise of Civilizations: Structured Art Forms

As societies evolved, art became more structured and diverse. Ancient civilizations like Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome contributed significantly to the development of artistic techniques and aesthetics. Egyptian art, for instance, was deeply symbolic, portraying gods, pharaohs, and afterlife beliefs with meticulous precision. Greek and Roman artists emphasized realism and idealism, introducing innovations like perspective and anatomical accuracy, which became the foundation of Western art.

Simultaneously, other regions, such as India, China, and Mesoamerica,



developed their unique artistic traditions. Indian temple carvings and Mughal miniatures, Chinese ink paintings, and Mayan murals reflected spirituality, mythology, and everyday life, showcasing a blend of form, function, and meaning.

### The Middle Ages to the Renaissance: Art as a Reflection of Society

During the Middle Ages, art was predominantly religious, with Europe producing magnificent cathedrals, illuminated manuscripts, and stained glass. The Renaissance (14th–17th century) marked a turning point, as artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo embraced humanism, science, and individualism. This era revived classical techniques, introduced oil painting, and celebrated realism and emotion.

### Baroque to Romanticism: Drama and Emotion

The Baroque period (17th century) brought dramatic flair, with artists like Caravaggio and Bernini emphasizing movement, contrast, and grandeur. The 18th century's Rococo style softened this intensity with playful elegance. Romanticism (late 18th–19th century) countered the Industrial Revolution's cold rationality, celebrating nature, emotion, and the sublime in works by

Turner and Delacroix.

### The Modern Art Movement: Breaking Boundaries

The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed seismic shifts in art. Movements like Impressionism, spearheaded by Monet, broke away from traditional forms, focusing on light and atmosphere. This was followed by Cubism (Picasso), Surrealism (Dali), and Abstract Expressionism (Pollock), each challenging conventions and exploring new dimensions of perception and expression.

Technological advancements like photography and industrialization also influenced art, broadening its mediums and democratizing access.

### Contemporary Art: Diversity and Innovation

Today, art is more diverse than ever, encompassing digital art, installations, and performance pieces. Art galleries and museums have become global hubs for innovation, showcasing works that tackle pressing issues like climate change, identity, and politics. Platforms like NFTs (non-fungible tokens) are redefining ownership and distribution in the digital age. ■

# How best to ace the Startup Founder Act ?

City Essence Team

Starting a business is no small feat, and being a successful startup founder requires more than just a good idea. It demands a unique blend of vision, resilience, and adaptability to navigate the unpredictable journey of entrepreneurship. At the heart of every successful startup is a founder who sees opportunities where others see challenges, turns setbacks into stepping stones, and builds a team capable of transforming an idea into a thriving enterprise.

In today's fast-paced and competitive business landscape, a startup founder must wear multiple hats — innovator, leader, strategist, and risk-taker. They must possess the foresight to identify gaps in the market, the courage to take calculated risks, and the persistence to push through inevitable obstacles. Moreover, the ability to inspire a team, foster a customer-centric approach, and effectively manage resources is critical to turning vision into reality.

A founder's journey is a delicate balance of passion and pragmatism, creativity and discipline. Here are the most critical needs:

### 1. Visionary Thinking

- Ability to identify trends, gaps, and opportunities in the market.
- A clear vision of the product or service and its impact on the industry.

### 2. Resilience

- Capacity to navigate challenges, failures, and uncertainties.
- Mental toughness to stay committed despite setbacks.

### 3. Adaptability

- Openness to pivoting the business

model or strategy when required.

- Ability to embrace change and innovate quickly.

### 4. Leadership

- Inspiring and guiding a team toward shared goals.
- Building and nurturing a strong company culture.

### 5. Problem-Solving Skills

- Thinking critically and creatively to overcome obstacles.
- Breaking down complex problems into manageable solutions.

### 6. Risk-Taking Ability

- Willingness to make bold decisions under uncertainty.
- Balancing calculated risks with sound judgment.

### 7. Strong Communication

- Effectively articulating ideas to investors, customers, and team members.
- Negotiating deals and partnerships with confidence.

### 8. Financial Acumen

- Managing budgets, cash flow, and investment wisely.
- Understanding the financial metrics that drive business success.

### 9. Networking Skills

- Building meaningful connections with mentors, advisors, and stakeholders.
- Leveraging a network for funding, hiring, and partnerships.

### 10. Customer-Centric Approach

- Deep understanding of the target audience and their needs.
- Commitment to delivering value and exceptional experiences.



### 11. Work Ethic

- Willingness to put in long hours and lead by example.
- Self-motivation and discipline to stay focused on goals.

### 12. Passion

- Genuine enthusiasm and belief in the product or service.
- Using passion to fuel perseverance and inspire others.

### 13. Strategic Thinking

- Setting long-term goals while managing short-term priorities.
- Aligning resources and efforts to achieve sustainable growth.

### 14. Team-Building Skills

- Hiring talented individuals who share the company's vision.
- Empowering and retaining team members through effective collaboration.

### 15. Empathy

- Understanding and valuing team members' and customers' perspectives.
- Building trust through emotional intelligence and relationship management.

A successful startup founder is a lifelong learner who evolves with experience and feedback, continuously sharpening their skills to meet the demands of their journey. ■

# Unicorn Startups witness Workforce Attrition

City Essence Team

**B**etween August 2023 and August 2024, India's unicorn startups saw 6,700 employees exit their roles, translating to an average attrition rate of 4.5% over the year, according to a report by Private Circle Research, a market intelligence firm. Despite this, unicorns remain a vital pillar of employment in the nation's burgeoning startup ecosystem.

## Key Findings

- **Total Workforce:** The study revealed that 116 unicorns, including recent entrants like Moneyview, Ather, and Rapido, collectively employed 4,10,829 individuals in August 2024. This marks a decrease from the 4,17,561 employees in August 2023.
- **Attrition Trends:** Despite the decline, compounded revenue growth across unicorns has remained robust, registering high double-digit growth over two years.
- **Efficient Human Capital Usage:** "The stable employee numbers amidst rapid growth indicate effective use of human capital," said Murali Loganathan, Director of Research at PrivateCircle. Over the review period, the monthly net change in workforce ranged from -0.9% to 2.5%.

## City-Wise Analysis

### 1. Delhi NCR:

- **Leader in Growth:** The region experienced the largest workforce expansion, adding 18,554 employees.

- **Mass Recruiters:** Key contributors included unicorns like PolicyBazaar, Blinkit, and Zomato.



### 2. Chennai:

- **Second in Hiring:** Unicorns in Chennai onboarded 4,785 new employees, reflecting steady growth in its startup ecosystem.

### 3. Bengaluru:

- **Modest Growth:** Known as India's startup capital, Bengaluru recorded a net addition of 2,384 employees—a surprisingly modest figure compared to its reputation as a tech hub.

### 4. Mumbai:

- **Significant Decline:** Mumbai unicorns reported a net workforce reduction of 7,024 workers, the largest among all major cities.

### 5. Other Regions:

- **Hyderabad and Pune** also experienced declines, with net reductions of 66 and 643 employees, respectively.

## Implications for Unicorn Startups

Unicorns have demonstrated a unique ability to balance workforce numbers

with aggressive revenue growth. This reflects an industry-wide shift towards optimizing operations without compromising on performance or innovation.

"India's unicorn ecosystem remains resilient," said Loganathan. "The ongoing refinement in workforce management is likely aimed at sustaining profitability and scalability."

## Broader Context

Unicorns play a pivotal role in the Indian economy, serving as incubators for innovation and large-scale employment. While attrition rates remain a concern, the broader trend of workforce optimization suggests that startups are prioritizing long-term stability over short-term expansion.

As India's startup ecosystem continues to mature, workforce strategies employed by unicorns could set the benchmark for other businesses navigating growth amidst a competitive environment. ■

## CITY TREND

# 25th Quality Circle Conference: Resounding Success

City Essence Team

The 25th International Quality Circle Conference 2024 concluded with remarkable success, bringing together educators, students, and dignitaries to explore innovative educational strategies. Hosted at City Montessori School, Kanpur Road Campus, Lucknow, the event emphasized the importance of quality education, collaboration, and technological advancements.

### Inauguration and Highlights

The event began with the inauguration of the newly established Artificial Intelligence Laboratory by Dr. Joseph Emmanuel, Chief Executive of the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CICSE). He praised the lab's advanced ROS capabilities and its potential to revolutionize education. Dr. Emmanuel officially opened the convention, welcoming 117 participating schools from India and abroad, and paid heartfelt tributes to the late Dr. Jagdish Gandhi, a beacon of educational excellence.

The inaugural day also featured performances by 11 school bands, showcasing their talents in music and dance, with themes addressing global challenges like war, empathy, and justice. Over 7,000 students participated, reflecting their creativity and commitment.

### Themes and Discussions

The conference revolved around themes like environmental conservation, peace, and unity. Dr. Geeta Gandhi Kingdon, Manager of CMS, emphasized the



transformative power of education, quoting Abdul Baha, "Amongst the greatest services that man can render to God is education." She highlighted the school's efforts in adopting advanced teaching methodologies like metacognition and the ALFA system, which accelerate learning and foster analytical abilities.

Prominent international speakers enriched the conference:

- Dr. Senthil Kumaran from Bangalore discussed quality as a journey requiring strong values and a vision.
- Dr. M.R. Kabir from Bangladesh stressed the importance of outcome-based education and involving every child.
- Dr. Hayal Koxsal from Turkey focused on empowering students through collaboration and real-life challenges.
- Shan Rup Rai from Australia highlighted the need for global competencies and AI integration in education.

Key topics like equity vs. equality, collaborative learning, and critical thinking resonated throughout the sessions. The event also emphasized inclusivity, featuring insights from

Mohun Das Teeluck of Mauritius, who showcased the achievements of disabled students in creative activities.

### Cultural and Social Activities

Evening sessions featured vibrant cultural performances by schools from Thailand, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and India, culminating in a spirited Dandiya night. Students embraced the opportunity to celebrate diversity through dance and music, strengthening bonds across borders.

The convention concluded with Dr. Sunita Gandhi introducing the ALFA pedagogy, which has shown transformative results in student learning. The closing ceremony underscored the value of participation over competition, with almost every school receiving trophies. Dr. Kamran, the convenor, inspired students to dream big, urging them to foster peace, unity, and brotherhood globally.

The 25th Quality Circle Conference was a testament to the collective pursuit of educational excellence, leaving participants motivated and eager for the next edition. ■

# Elon Musk's Geopolitical Moves: From Markets to Political Dominance

Arijit Bose

Elon Musk, the world's richest person, appears to be expanding his influence beyond global markets into the realm of international politics. Known for his dominance in business, Musk's recent interactions with world leaders, including Donald Trump, Nigel Farage, and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, have sparked widespread speculation about his ambitions in global politics.



## From Trump to Farage: Musk's Political Foray

Musk's support for former U.S. President Donald Trump during his 2024 campaign proved pivotal in securing Trump's victory. Musk not only funded campaign initiatives but also launched controversial lottery systems aimed at increasing voter turnout. Following Trump's reelection, Musk was reportedly offered a significant advisory role in the administration, raising questions about his influence on U.S. policies.

In a surprising turn, Musk has now engaged with British right-wing politician Nigel Farage. The duo recently discussed potential funding for Farage's Reform UK party, signaling Musk's interest in shaping British politics. Farage, an advocate for immigration reforms and Brexit, revealed that Musk shared disdain for both the Labour and Conservative parties, aligning himself with Reform UK's vision.

"His funding would be transformative for our party," Farage remarked, adding that Musk's strategies to boost voter

engagement in the U.S. could serve as a blueprint for their campaigns.

## Global Conversations: From Zelenskyy to Javier Milei

Musk's geopolitical interests extend beyond the U.S. and the UK. His Starlink satellite network has been instrumental in supporting Ukraine during the Russian invasion, with Musk personally assuring Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of continued assistance.

In Argentina, Musk has cultivated a relationship with President Javier Milei, known for his libertarian policies. Argentina's vast lithium reserves, critical for Musk's Tesla electric vehicles, have strengthened this alliance. Musk's admiration for Milei's governance has been well-documented, with reports of their frequent discussions on economic policies.

## Criticism and Controversies

Musk's involvement in politics has not been without controversy. His statements on electronic voting machines (EVMs) during elections in India and Puerto Rico have drawn significant backlash. Critics accuse Musk of meddling in sovereign electoral

processes and exploiting his business stature for political gains.

Additionally, his potential funding of Farage's Reform UK party has sparked debate in the UK. Observers argue that Musk's financial backing could skew political dynamics, undermining democratic processes.

## A Blueprint for Political Dominance?

Musk's business empire, which spans SpaceX, Tesla, Neuralink, and The Boring Company, has already established his global economic dominance. Analysts suggest his foray into politics might be a calculated move to safeguard and expand his business interests while shaping global policies in his favor.

His geopolitical outreach extends to at least a dozen world leaders, focusing on trade agreements that could align with his enterprises. Musk's critics warn that his influence, if unchecked, might blur the lines between corporate power and political sovereignty.

## A Future in Global Leadership?

From leveraging SpaceX to assist Ukraine to funding political campaigns, Musk is redefining the intersection of

business and politics. His ambitions appear to be aimed at establishing a new paradigm of influence—one where the world's richest person plays a central role in shaping global governance.

Whether Musk's moves signify a genuine interest in bettering global politics or merely a strategic alignment to further his empire remains to be seen. As he continues to forge ties with influential leaders worldwide, one thing is clear: Elon Musk is no longer just a business magnate—he is a geopolitical force to reckon with.

### **Elon Musk: The Rise to the Top as the World's Richest Person**

Elon Musk, a name synonymous with innovation and ambition, has cemented his position as the richest person on Earth. His journey from a curious child in South Africa to a global business icon reshaping industries is a testament to relentless vision and determination.

Born in Pretoria, South Africa, in 1971, Musk displayed an early interest in technology and entrepreneurship. At just 12, he developed and sold a video game, showcasing his innate talent for coding and innovation. His determination to escape the limitations of apartheid and seek greater opportunities led him to Canada and

later the United States, where he pursued education and business ventures.

After dropping out of Stanford University in 1995, Musk co-founded Zip2, a software company providing business directories and maps for newspapers. The company's sale to Compaq in 1999 earned Musk \$22 million, marking the start of his financial ascent. This success fueled his entry into the financial technology space with X.com, an online payment platform that later became PayPal. When eBay acquired PayPal in 2002, Musk received \$165 million, solidifying his reputation as a visionary entrepreneur.

Musk's ambitions, however, extended far beyond financial technology. He aimed to revolutionize industries critical to humanity's future. In 2002, he founded SpaceX with a vision to make space exploration more affordable and sustainable. SpaceX achieved historic milestones, including the first privately funded spacecraft to reach orbit and partnerships with NASA, reshaping space travel.

Parallel to SpaceX, Musk joined Tesla Motors in 2004 as an investor and later became its CEO and product architect. His mission was to accelerate the world's

transition to sustainable energy through electric vehicles. Despite early skepticism, Tesla became a market leader, pioneering innovations in EV technology and achieving mass-market adoption with models like the Tesla Model S and Model 3.

In addition to SpaceX and Tesla, Musk has pursued groundbreaking projects like Neuralink (merging the brain with AI), The Boring Company (revolutionizing urban transportation), and SolarCity (advancing solar energy solutions). These ventures reflect his commitment to addressing existential challenges through bold innovation.

Musk's rise to the top was also fueled by his ability to inspire investors and capture public imagination. Tesla's market valuation surged, making it one of the most valuable companies globally, while SpaceX's success drew massive funding rounds, further boosting Musk's wealth. In 2021, as Tesla's stock skyrocketed and SpaceX secured billion-dollar contracts, Musk surpassed Amazon founder Jeff Bezos to become the world's richest individual.

However, Musk's journey has not been without controversy. His outspoken nature and polarizing statements often draw criticism, and his management style is described as demanding and unorthodox. Nevertheless, his ability to execute ambitious goals continues to overshadow his detractors.

Musk's net worth nears unprecedented levels, reflecting his impact on technology, space, and energy industries. Yet, his wealth is not just financial; it's a representation of the influence he wields in shaping the future of humanity. As Musk ventures into geopolitics and global leadership, the world watches closely, wondering where his insatiable drive will lead him next. ■



## What your stars foretell for February

February 2025 is poised to be a transformative month, marked by significant astrological events that may influence various aspects of life. Here's an overview of what each zodiac sign might anticipate:

### Aries (March 21 – April 19)

The past couple of years have been busy and tumultuous, but your Aries horoscope for 2025 is proof that it's about to get even busier.

### Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

February encourages Taureans to focus on personal growth and self-care. It's an ideal time to reassess goals and nurture relationships, paving the way for emotional and spiritual development.

### Gemini (May 21 – June 20)

February is a social month for Geminis. Whether it's romantic dates or friendly gatherings, you'll thrive in shared experiences. The stars also highlight career breakthroughs, so be ready to showcase your skills.

### Cancer (June 21 – July 22)

This month encourages emotional healing and self-care for Cancerians. The full moon brings clarity in relationships, helping you resolve past misunderstandings. Focus on nurturing your inner world and strengthening bonds with loved ones.

### Leo (July 23 – August 22)

Leo, February is all about love and creativity! The Valentine's season adds excitement to your romantic life, while your professional endeavors benefit from your charisma and leadership. Shine bright and embrace new opportunities.

### Virgo (August 23 – September 22)

Virgos, February is a time to step back and reassess your goals. Use this energy to organize your priorities and create balance in your life. Relationships may require extra care, but your efforts will bring harmony.

### Libra (September 23 – October 22)

Libra, Venus highlights your romantic side this month. Expect magical moments with a partner or exciting new connections if you're single. Creative projects also take center stage, bringing joy and fulfillment.

### Scorpio (October 23 – November 21)

February pushes you to transform and grow, Scorpio. Let go of old habits that no longer serve you and focus on building deeper emotional connections. The stars also favor financial growth through strategic decisions.

### Sagittarius (November 22 – December 21)

Sagittarius, your adventurous spirit thrives this month. Whether it's travel, learning, or exploring new hobbies, February invites you to broaden your horizons. Relationships deepen as you share your passions with others.

### Capricorn (December 22 – January 19)

February is a stabilizing month for Capricorns. Focus on strengthening your foundations, both personally and professionally. The stars favor financial planning and long-term commitments, making this a month of steady progress.

### Aquarius (January 20 – February 18)

Aquarius, with the sun in your sign, February is your time to shine! Your creative ideas and innovative mindset will open new doors in your career. In love, embrace your unique charm to form meaningful connections.

### Pisces (February 19 – March 20)

Pisces, February amplifies your natural intuition and creativity. This is a powerful month for spiritual growth and self-discovery. Romantic energy flows smoothly, making it a great time to strengthen bonds or meet someone special.



GEMINI



LEO



VIRGO



LIBRA



SCORPIO



SAGITTARIUS



CAPRICORN



AQUARIUS



PISCES



ARIES



TAURUS

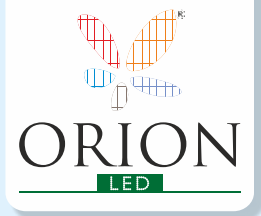


CANCER

### Astrological Events to Watch in February 2025

- New Moon in Aquarius (February 9): A great time to set intentions for innovation and fresh starts.
- Full Moon in Virgo (February 24): Clarity and completion in personal and professional projects.
- Venus in Pisces (February 2 – February 28): Heightened romance, creativity, and emotional depth.

This month encourages embracing change, nurturing relationships, and focusing on personal growth. By aligning with the cosmic energies, each sign can navigate February 2025 with confidence and clarity.



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