

Central Chronicle

Founder: Late Shri Ramgopal Maheshwari
Inspiration: Late Shri Prafulla Kumar Maheshwari

EDITORIAL

Cleanest Indore

The city of Indore in Madhya Pradesh has once again emerged as the cleanest city in the country. This is the eighth consecutive time that Indore has topped the 'Swachh Survekshan', which is a proof of its extraordinary commitment and citizen participation. Getting the highest marks in the 'Super Swachh League' is an indicator that Indore has made cleanliness a mass movement, which is now being seen as a model for the whole country.

This time the award ceremony also took place in Delhi, where the team of Indore Municipal Corporation and Administration received this honor. Local Government Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya, Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava and Municipal Corporation Commissioner Shivam Verma received this honor from the President. This is a proud moment not only for Indore but for the entire Madhya Pradesh.

This achievement also reflects the visionary leadership of the state government and the Chief Minister. Such results have been possible only by strengthening the Local Government Ministry of the state government and giving priority to the Swachhta Abhiyan. Indore's success shows that when the government, administration and citizens work together, any goal can be achieved. Other cities of Madhya Pradesh such as Ujjain, Bhopal, Jabalpur, Budhni and Gwalior also getting awards in various categories is proof that the standards of cleanliness set by Indore are having a positive impact on the entire state. However, in the future, challenges are going to increase for Indore. By joining the 'Super League', Indore will now not only have to maintain its cleanliness as before, but it will also be given the responsibility of bringing another 'B' category city ahead in cleanliness. The points received by this second city in the next survey will also be added to Indore's account.

This is a tough challenge, but Indore officials are ready for it. Indore has already provided support and suggestions to many cities in the cleanliness

system, and under the changed rules, this initiative will now get formal recognition. This is a great step that will help raise the level of cleanliness across the country. However, amidst this great success, it is necessary to pay attention to one important aspect and that is freedom from vehicular pollution. Indore has set excellent standards in solid waste management and public hygiene, but smoke from traffic vehicles is still a concern. Air pollution not only affects the health of citizens but also reduces the overall quality of the city.

Therefore, Indore should focus on reducing pollution from traffic as its next challenge. Promoting electric vehicles, strengthening the public transport system, developing infrastructure for cycling and encouraging citizens to adopt eco-friendly transport options can be important steps in this direction. Just as Indore has made cleanliness a movement, freedom from air pollution can also become a mass campaign.

Indore has shown us what can be achieved with commitment and cooperation. Now the time has come for this city to set a new paradigm in the field of cleanliness as well as clean air. Indore's journey is inspiring, and it will remain a guide for other cities in the country. However, Indore should now become an ideal city overall. Anyway, congratulations to all those responsible for this success of Indore.

The holy city of Ujjain ranked first in the 3-10 lakh population category under the Swachh League Award. Similarly, Budhni was recognised as the cleanest city among towns with a population of less than 20,000. Among cities with more than 10 lakh population, Bhopal ranked second, Jabalpur fifth, and Gwalior fourteenth. In Swachh Survekshan 2024, Gwalior also received the State Award for Most Promising City in Cleanliness. Dewas topped the category of cities with populations between 50,000 and 3 lakh. It is worth noting that the capital city Bhopal had already been recognised as the cleanest state capital in the country.

Will we-the-quails unite to lift the net or wither away the gains made in AIDS response?

SHOBHA SHUKLA, BOBBY RAMAKANT – CNS

A person in a blue shirt AI-generated content may be incorrect.

Let us refresh the old gold Buddhist tale of The Quail and the Net: “Long ago a flock of quails lived in a forest. Everyday a hunter would cast a net and trap many of them. But eventually, a wise quail told the rest that if they worked together, they could lift the net collectively at the same moment and escape as one. Next time the hunter tried to capture them, quails moved in unison, raising the net and flying off together. Unity is strength,” said Eamonn Murphy, Director of UNAIDS for Asia Pacific and Central Asia and Eastern Europe regions around the world's largest conference on HIV science (13th International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Science).

He continued narrating this tale of deep wisdom: “For several days thereafter, quails were able to drop the net far from the catcher's reach. But soon some of them became annoyed – small quarrels started – one quail felt ‘I am doing most of the work’ the other felt ‘I want to go in the opposite direction’ - eventually they stopped working together. Next time the net fell, instead

of flying, they argued. Then the hunter caught them all. This tale teaches us that the discord and breaking focus can lead to ruin.”

AIDS response faces the ruin but

Agrees Dr Jakkrapatara Boonruang, research physician at the Institute of HIV Research and Innovation (IHRI) and a Mark Wainberg Fellowship Awardee.

would we – the quails – fight or unite?

“I would be blunt. Today, it is the AIDS response that faces ruin. We are all the quails – from advocates to academics, countries to communities, doctors to development partners - we worked together to lift the net of the disease that once threatened to devastate us. We even came up with a plan to cast it off for good. Some of us have grown tired, others are doing part of the work but not all they should – many are not pulling their weight – and now we risk being tracked by a disease we should be condemning to history,” said Eamonn Murphy of UNAIDS.

“Recent global funding cuts could send the world back to levels of HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths not seen since the early 2000s,” said

Murphy while showing a 5-years projection of how new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths globally can dangerously rise if the lost funding both this year and in recent years does not

been included in universal health coverage of the government, there are some aspects like reimbursements that have not been covered. Salaries of service providers and utility courses are yet to be covered by the universal health coverage for instance,” added Dr Boonruang. “While services are fully covered by tax payers money, service providers are losing jobs or facing salary reductions. For example, we at IHRI have lost 20% of our colleagues following the suspension of US funding.”

Rising new infections, low treatment coverage and funding cuts in Asia Pacific

“Nine countries in Asia and the Pacific region have rising new HIV infection rates. 9 countries in the region have too low coverage of lifesaving antiretroviral treatments. Moreover, the region has been hit with funding crisis – and – overall HIV prevention crisis too,” said Cedriann Martin, UNAIDS Communications Advisor.

Between 2010 to 2024, there were 9 countries in Asia Pacific which reported an increase in newly diagnosed people with HIV. Fiji has the world's fastest growing epidemic, new HIV infections increased by over 3091% in Fiji.

MATUAS MUST OPEN THEIR EYES

KAJAL CHATTERJEE

Matuas form a section of Bengalis who have settled in the South-Eastern part of West Bengal (bordering present day Bangladesh) following Partition of India and thereafter in various periods of time. They swear allegiance to Harichand Thakur -- social reformer and founder of the Matua Mahasangha (a federation representing this Scheduled Caste group). Despite full-fledged Bengalis, how tragically do they identify themselves as 'Matuas' only (as if they are not Bengalis!) and dance to the tunes of that political camp whose "love" towards West Bengal, Bengalis and Bangla language are "legendary to say the least! And they are dancing to which tune apart from the obvious communal one - - that they would be awarded "Indian citizenship"!

If they are not Indian citizens at first place, how can Matuas live in West

Bengal/India in an independent way, vote in all possible elections and even adorn the seat of MLA MP and even Union Minister of India!

Can any "foreigner" afford

When will the self-declared Matuas arrive at the conclusion that at the end of the day they are also Bengalis and just for their "sin" of speaking Bangla; they are currently getting harassed, detained with their political patrons looking the other way!

to live in India without a passport and visa! Can any foreigner be allowed to vote in India and turn into public representatives in Assemblies and Parliament and also enter the seat of governance!

So it clearly proved that self-proclaimed Matuas are not foreigners by any standard; yet they started dancing to the tune of the concerned camp to secure "Indian citizenship" when they are already citizens of this coun-

try in the first place!

And not only indulging in "dance", the Matuas had liberally and consistently voted in favour of the saffron dispensation in 2019 Lok Sabha,

2021 West Bengal Assembly and 2024 Lok Sabha polls and gifted several seats to that very party which is so allergic to all things Bengal Bengali that they have deprived the state of its entitled share amounting to lakhs and crores of money and always demand fragmentation of Bengal by discovering "discrimination" against the Northern part of the state!

And in return what have the Matuas got! Far from receiving

the so-called "Indian citizenship"; now they are also being detained and harassed in Maharashtra just like innumerable Bengalis in several "Double Engine" states! Even the identity cards issued by one of their own community leaders, an Union minister, are not being recognised by Maharashtra police!

When will the self-declared Matuas arrive at the conclusion that at the end of the day they are also Bengalis and just for their "sin" of speaking Bangla; they are currently getting harassed, detained with their political patrons looking the other way!

It is high time the Matuas learn to open their eyes and give fitting lessons to that camp which is interested in only the votes of Bengalis - - - the welfare of Bengal Bengalis and Bangla language being the last thing in their highly prejudiced minds!

Satire

Shubhanshu Shukla given name Shaks



Friend told us, ‘This is the opening line of a ghazal - Why is there a burning sensation in the chest, why is there a storm in the eyes, why is everyone in this city so worried?’ We said, ‘Don't worry about the worried person living in pollution and smoke in the metropolis. His life will pass amidst such difficulties and compulsions. You should forget the person and think about ‘Shaks’ who has seen more than 300 sunrises and sunsets by staying in space for more than 20 days. Shaks means Indian astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla! His colleagues call him by this name.

I said: He has travelled 1.3 crore kilometres in space and has conducted many scientific experiments while staying in the International Space Station under the Axiom Mission. Shaks is now returning to Earth after a 22.5 hour flight. In the joy of his return, you can sing - Ghar Aaya Mera Pardeshi, Pyaas Bujhi Meri Ankhiyan Ki!’ The neighbour said, ‘Do not use words like Nishanebaaz, Pardeshi or Parpraandi. If Shaks or Shukla, who is from Lucknow, is surround-

ed by MNS people after returning from space and he expresses his inability to speak Marathi, he will be beaten up.’

Friend said, ‘Do not worry about this. The ‘Grace’ capsule in which Shaks and his fellow astronauts are sitting will splash down in the American sea. Then that capsule will be brought to the shore. Shaks and his companions will be kept in quarantine for about a week so that they can adjust to the earth's atmosphere. There was no gravity in space. These people remained in a state of weightlessness for so many days.

I said: Indian astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla reunited with his family just a day after returning from an 18-day mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS), and the heart-warming photos of their embrace have touched hearts across the country. Shukla, who shared the reunion moments on Instagram. In the images, he's seen hugging his wife and son after more than two months apart. “Felt like home,” he wrote, capturing the emotion of the moment.

Science Fact

How giant ‘water batteries’ could make green power reliable

The machines that turn Tennessee's Raccoon Mountain into one of the world's largest energy storage devices—in effect, a battery that can power a medium-size city—are hidden in a cathedral-size cavern deep inside the mountain. But what enables the mountain to store all that energy is plain in an aerial photo. The summit plateau is occupied by a large lake that hangs high above the Tennessee River, so close it looks like it might fall in.

Almost half a century ago, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the region's federally owned electric utility, built the lake and blasted out the cavern as well as a 329-meter-tall shaft that links the two. “It was quite an effort to drill down into this mountain, because of the amount of rock that's here,” senior manager Holli Hess says dryly. The cavern holds a candy-colored powerhouse, filled with cherry-red electrical ducts and vents and beams in a pale grape. Four giant cylinders, painted bright green and yellow, are the key machines: Each one houses a turbine that becomes a pump when it spins the other way, and a generator that is also an electric motor.

At night, when demand for electricity is low but TVA's nuclear reactors are still humming, TVA banks the excess, storing it as gravitational potential energy in the summit lake.



Spiritual

Interfaith Meets And Spirituality Of Science

One of the most famous scientific conversations consists of a two-line exchange between Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr. Averse to the randomness of quantum mechanics, Einstein brushed it aside with a dismissive, “God doesn't play dice with the universe.” To which his friend and colleague, Bohr, replied, “Please stop telling God what to do.”

That two of the greatest scientists should cite God as an arbiter in a scientific dispute shouldn't cause any surprise to those who see no innate contradiction between the spirit of religion and that of science. Indeed, far from being in an adversarial relationship the two chime elegantly together in perfect harmony. Both represent a common search for knowledge about the origin and nature of the cosmos, and our relationship with it.

Why then is it that they are often seen to be at loggerheads with each other, as in the case of the ongoing battle between Darwinian Evolutionists on the side of science and Creationists on that of religion? The answer lies in the concept of dogma, an article of faith that is beyond any doubt or debate. In the predawn of history our forebears interpreted natural phenomena, the rising and setting of the sun, the waxing and waning of the moon, solar and lunar eclipses, by attributing them to supernatural entities, which had to be propitiated by worshipful ritual and the offering of sacrifices. Such animistic rites helped humans to be in consonance with nature. These practices, and the mythologies which gave birth to them, were a metaphor for the universe, a form of poetry before the invention of the written word. Such metaphoric interpretations, were a reflection of reality devised to help consciousness focus better on what was being reflected, but over time through repetitive tradition, the reflection came to be seen as the reality itself, the mirror was mistaken for the light, which does not generate, but only transmits.



Letter to the Editor

Protect the Fourth Pillar

Dear Sir,
Journalism is the cornerstone of any true democracy—its voice, its conscience, and its mirror. The brutal attack on journalist Sneha Barwe is not just an assault on an individual, but a direct blow to press freedom and the people's right to know the truth. When truth-tellers are silenced with sticks instead of arguments, it signals a dangerous drift towards fear and lawlessness. A democracy cannot survive if its media is threatened, censored, or cowed into silence. The government must act decisively; not just to punish the culprits, but to ensure that journalists are protected, empowered, and free to hold power to account. A nation that fails to defend its press risks failing its people.

Asad Kabir Nagari

True Spirit of Swachh Bharat

Dear Sir,
Award initiatives like Swachh Survekshan are commendable as they recognize cities like Indore for their consistent cleanliness and inspire healthy competition. However, on the ground, many cities still lag far behind in hygiene, as observed by the public. True reflection of the Swachh Bharat Mission lies not just in celebrating the cleanest cities, but in addressing the gaps in the dirtiest ones. A meaningful and result-oriented approach must include public participation, committed governance, regular monitoring, and modern sanitation systems to ensure that cleanliness becomes a nationwide reality, not just a title for a few.

Mohammad Asad

Tech

Elon Musk denies funding talks for his AI firm AI amid speculation

Entrepreneur Elon Musk clarified on Friday that his artificial intelligence venture, xAI, is not engaged in discussions with investors to secure funding, countering earlier reports suggesting otherwise.

In a statement shared on the platform X, Musk refuted claims of capital-raising activities, stating, "xAI is not raising capital and I have had no conversations with anyone in this regard." The clarification comes in response to a report by the Financial Times which indicated that xAI was exploring fundraising opportunities with a target of up to \$6 billion, valuing the startup at \$20 billion. According to sources cited in the FT report, xAI has been in discussions with family offices in Hong Kong and is eyeing investments from sovereign wealth funds in the Middle East.

The AI landscape has witnessed escalating competition, with investors increasingly backing startups poised to leverage advancements in artificial intelligence, a sector that has gripped the attention of Silicon Valley in recent times. This is not the first time Musk has found himself addressing speculation surrounding xAI's financial endeavours. Just last week, he refuted claims that the company had secured \$500 million in commitments from investors towards a \$1 billion funding target. Musk's commitment to advancing AI safety is well-documented. While he co-founded OpenAI in 2015, he stepped down from its board in 2018. Last year, xAI made headlines with the launch of "Grok," a chatbot platform positioned as a competitor to OpenAI's ChatGPT.



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