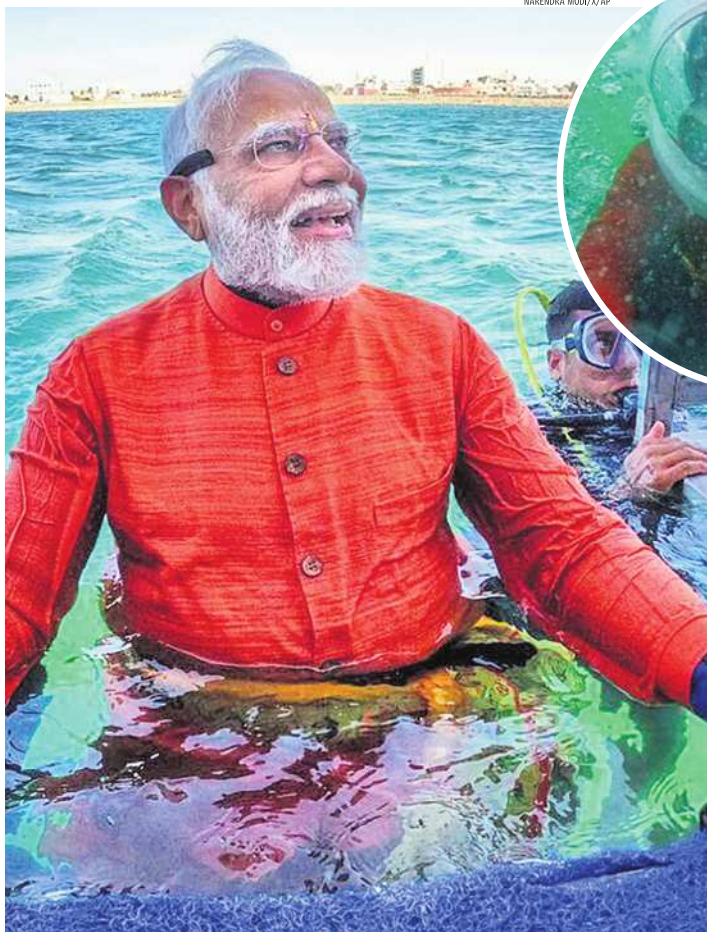


NARENDRA MODI/X/AP



## Modi dives to pray in Krishna city

**N**arendra Modi has fulfilled “a decades-old dream” by diving into the Arabian Sea and praying underwater at the site of an ancient kingdom sometimes referred to as the Indian Atlantis (Penelope MacRae writes).

The Indian prime minister used a diving helmet, marked with

Indian flag, and wore a traditional long collarless saffron shirt and pyjamas. In Hinduism saffron symbolises purity.

Modi, who practises yoga daily, sat cross-legged underwater. He was held in place by scuba divers and he offered a peacock feather in tribute to Krishna, the Hindu god of protection, compassion and love.

According to the Mahabharata, the classic Hindu text, Krishna founded the kingdom on the site of what is modern-day Dwarka, in Gujarat, western India.

“To pray in the city of Dwarka, which is immersed in the waters, was a very divine experience. I felt connected to an ancient era of spiritual grandeur and timeless devotion,” Modi said on social media on Sunday.

The city’s ancient incarnation, referred to in the Mahabharata as Krishna, sprawled across nearly 96 sq km (37sq miles) where the Gomti river meets the Arabian Sea. The city, believed to have been a hub of grandeur, sank beneath the waves when Krishna died, the

Narendra Modi wore a saffron shirt, the colour of which symbolises purity, and a diving helmet, above

epic says. Archaeologists have tried to find evidence of the sunken city in an attempt to prove its existence and stone blocks, pillars and pottery have been discovered, but there is debate about the age of the finds.

“In our scriptures also, it is said about Dwarka that it was a city with beautiful gates and tall buildings, as tall as the top of the world. Lord Krishna himself constructed this city,” Modi said.

With general elections due to start in April, Modi, leader of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, has been busy visiting temples to highlight his devotion.

This month he inaugurated a huge new temple in Ayodhya on the site of a centuries-old mosque that was razed by a Hindu mob in 1992. The temple opening marked the de facto launch of Modi’s campaign for a third consecutive term.

Hindus believe the site of the temple is where the deity Rama was born, and the opening was a moment of celebration for many Hindus.