



The Pioneer

Paper with passion since 1864

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Waqf Act not anti-Muslim; WB CM 'inciting violence':

Rijju



INDIA BETTER PLACED TO DEAL WITH TRUMP TARIFFS: ITC CHAIRMAN

'I felt like this role would completely change the course of my CAREER'



QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

I am not like KCR - he's calm and composed. I'm a rowdy type. If you harass our cadre, we'll see you out properly. We've got the names of those who are threatening our people. We're writing them all down in our pink book. The officers and leaders behind this will not be spared. Those days are over. Don't expect mercy

- Kavitha, BRS MLC

DON'T MISS...

2 TG men killed by Pakistani in Dubai

In a tragic incident in Dubai, a Pakistani national allegedly murdered two individuals who hailed from Telangana and seriously injured two others. Though the incident occurred on Friday, it has come to light belatedly. Among the deceased is Ashtapu Premeasgar (40), a native of Nirmal district, while the other victim has been identified as Srinivas from Nizamabad district, according to their colleagues. The two injured individuals are also reported to be from Telugu states. All the victims, including the accused Pakistani...

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Stalin steps up attack on Centre

Making a strong pitch for empowering states, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Tuesday alleged that their rights were gradually being snatched by the Centre, and announced the constitution of a panel under state autonomy that will be headed by a retired Supreme Court judge. The establishment of the high-level panel, marking half-a-century of DMK government's 'historic' state autonomy resolution moved in the Tamil Nadu Assembly by then Chief Minister M Karunanidhi, was aimed at re-asserting...

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India to go for trade ties with US

India has decided to follow the trade liberalisation path with the US, and both countries are negotiating a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) for which in-person talks are expected to begin next month, senior government officials said on Tuesday. India and the US are starting negotiations in virtual mode from this week. They have also finalised and signed the terms of reference (ToRs) for the pact. India and the US have been engaged in negotiating a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) since March...

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DC eye comeback against RR in IPL

Jolted by a dramatic loss at home after a dream start to the season, Delhi Capitals (DC) will look to put the setback behind them when they take on a faltering Rajasthan Royals (RR) in the IPL here on Wednesday. Riding high on a four-match winning streak, the Axar Patel-led Capitals looked like a well-oiled machine before a stunning batting meltdown against Mumbai Indians (MI) halted their momentum here on Sunday. What was meant to be a triumphant return to base ended in despair as the loss saw them...

-SPORTS

NATIONAL HERALD CASE ED chargesheets Sonia, Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has filed a chargesheet against Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others on charges of money laundering in the National Herald case.

Special judge Vishal Gogne examined the chargesheet, which was filed on April 9, on the point of cognisance and posted the order for further proceedings on April 25.

The chargesheet also names Congress leader Sam Pitroda and Suman Dubey as accused persons. "The present prosecution complaint shall next be



taken up for consideration on the aspect of cognisance before this court on April 25, 2025 when the special counsel for the ED and IO shall also ensure the production of the case diaries for perusal by the court," the judge said.

Nothing but political vendetta: Cong The Congress on Tuesday described the ED's chargesheet against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in the National Herald case as vendetta politics and claimed seizing of assets in the case was a "state-sponsored crime masquerading as the rule of law".

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a chargesheet against Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others on charges of money laundering in the case.

"Filing chargesheets against Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, and some others is nothing but politics of vendetta and intimidation by the prime minister and the home minister gone completely berserk," Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.



TG: Krishna delta needs met through Godavari diversion

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II), chaired by Justice Brijesh Kumar, resumed hearings on Monday in New Delhi, with Telangana presenting its arguments on Andhra Pradesh's access to additional water, particularly from the Godavari River.

Representing Telangana, senior counsel CS Vaidyanathan argued that the water needs of the Krishna Delta System (KDS) could be sufficiently met through diversions from the Godavari, especially the 80 TMCs allocated under the Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal (GWDT) Award via Polavaram and Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Schemes.

He asserted that United Andhra Pradesh had itself confirmed to the Central Water Commission and the Union Ministry of Water Resources that KDS requirement stood at only 151.2 TMCs.

The Tribunal noted that earlier projections had placed the delta requirement at over 215 TMCs, but the allocation by tribunals was limited to 151.2 TMCs, potentially justifying the need for Godavari diversions. Telangana, however, maintained that even Andhra Pradesh's own statement of case before the Tribunal pegged the KDS require-



Telangana argued that after bifurcation, Andhra Pradesh had initiated a major diversion from the Godavari to the Penna basin, first under the Godavari-Penna scheme, later renamed the YSR Palnadu Scheme, and now known as the Polavaram-Banakacherla Link Scheme

ment at 152.2 TMCs, and once 80 TMCs is diverted from Godavari, only 72 TMCs from Krishna would be necessary.

Telangana argued that after bifurcation, Andhra Pradesh had initiated a major diversion from the Godavari to the Penna basin, first

under the Godavari-Penna scheme, later renamed the YSR Palnadu Scheme, and now known as the Polavaram-Banakacherla Link Scheme. The scheme utilizes the Polavaram Right Main Canal (RMC), proposed Vaikuntapuram Barrage upstream of Prakasam Barrage, and Nagarjunasagar Right Main Canal to divert substantial volumes of water.

Vaidyanathan explained that the current infrastructure could divert more than 17,000 cusecs (approximately 1.5 TMCs per day), compared to the 10,000 cusecs proposed in the original Detailed Project Report before the GWDT. Telangana asserted that up to 135 TMCs could

be drawn within 90 days using the existing system, with further expansions already planned.

The hearings before KWDT-II will continue for two more days. Telangana's legal team included Advocate General Sudarshan Reddy, senior officials like Adityanath Das, and engineers from the ISWR unit. Andhra Pradesh was represented by senior counsel Umapathy and other legal and engineering officials.

Meanwhile, the hearing on W.P. 772/2021 of Andhra Pradesh and W.P. 666/2021 of Telangana before the Supreme Court, related to the broader Krishna water dispute, could not take place on April 15 and has been postponed to May 7, 2025.

SC to hear pleas against Waqf Act today

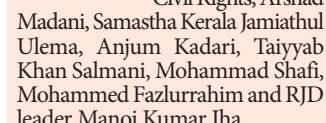
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court would likely hear on Wednesday a batch of petitions, including the one of AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi, against the constitutional validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.

A three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Sanjay Kumar and K V Viswanathan, so far, listed 10 petitions on the issue.

In addition to Owaisi's plea, the court listed for hearing the petitions filed by AAP leader Amanullah Khan, Association for the Protection of Civil Rights, Arshad Madani, Samatha Kerala Jamiathul Ulema, Anjum Kadari, Taiyyab Khan Salmani, Mohammad Shafi, Mohammed Fazlurrahim and RJD leader Manoj Kumar Jha.

Several fresh pleas, which are yet to be listed, were filed in the top court subsequently including the ones filed by TMC MP Mahua Moitra, Samajwadi Party MP from Sambhal, Zia-ur-Rahman Barq. The YSRCP-led by former Andhra Pradesh chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, the Communist Party of India (CPI), Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam chief and actor-turned-politician Vijay have also moved the top court on the issue.



CEA promises to meet TG's growing power needs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Central Electricity Authority's (CEA) Chairperson, Ghan Shyam Prasad, on Tuesday assured that the Centre will extend full cooperation to Telangana's power utilities to meet the state's rising electricity demand and renewable energy goals.

He chaired a high-level review meeting in Hyderabad to discuss Telangana's demand-supply trends, project implementation, and the required support from the CEA.

The meeting was attended by top officials, including Energy

Department Principal Secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultania, Transco CMD Krishna Bhaskar, Southern Discom CMD Musharrarf Farooqui, and Northern Discom CMD Varun Reddy, who presented the progress of projects and future action plans.

Prasad acknowledged the steep increase in Telangana's power demand, driven by development schemes in the last 18 months and the 24x7 free power supply to farmers. He appreciated the state's focus on balancing rising residential and industrial demand while also pursuing green energy targets.



Don't cross party line: CM to MLAs

Says high command's decision on Cabinet expansion final

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy warned Congress MLAs and MLCs that the party would not remain silent if they crossed its line. He said that leaders would face trouble if they troubled the party. Speaking against the party will do more harm than good, the CM said.

It is learnt that the CM said that the high command's decision on Cabinet expansion is final. There is no use if anyone speaks against it, the CM said.

He said that party leaders should be patient like Addanki Dayakar. "We thought we would give Addanki an MLA ticket first, but that didn't happen. We thought we would give Addanki an MLC seat, but that did-



CM Revanth Reddy addressing the CLP meeting on Tuesday

n't happen. Addanki Dayakar was patient; that's why he is now an MLC," the CM said. Munugode MLA Komatireddy Raj Gopal Reddy, Chennur MLA Vivek and

Continued on Page 2

Overladen lift at Novotel Hotel troubles CM, staff

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy narrowly escaped an accident. There was a minor disruption in the lift that Revanth was using at the Novotel Hotel in Hyderabad. The lift they were using descended below its scheduled height as it was overladen. This worried the CM and his staff. They were confused for a while, not understanding what was happening. Later, they got out of the lift after realising that there was no major accident. Later, officials moved the Chief Minister to another lift.

Continued on Page 2

Unlike gentlemanly KCR, I'm a rowdy-type, warns Kavitha

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

BRS MLC Kavitha blasted the Congress at a preparatory meeting held in connection with the Silver Jubilee celebrations in Banswada, declaring that she's "not good like KCR" but a "rowdy type" who won't tolerate threats against BRS workers.

Fuming over reports that some Congress leaders were making threatening phone calls to prevent BRS workers from attending the April 27 rally in Warangal, Kavitha said, "We've got the names of those who are threatening our people. We're writing them all down in our pink book."

Continued on Page 2



RS 4 LAKH EX-GRATIA FOR VICTIMS Heatwave declared a State-specific disaster

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a landmark decision aimed at tackling the rising toll of extreme heat events, the Telangana government has officially declared heatwaves, sunstrokes, and sunburns as "State-Specific Disasters." This classification will allow victims' families to receive an ex-gratia compensation of Rs. 4 lakh per deceased person under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).

The announcement was made through G.O. Ms. No. 5 issued by the Revenue (Disaster Management) Department on Tuesday signed by Special Chief Secretary Arvind Kumar. The government noted that heatwaves are a "hidden hazard" with a devastating yet under-recognized impact, especially on vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children, outdoor workers, and those in the construction sector. Citing recent studies and forecasts by the



Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), the government said that Telangana experienced unusually high temperatures in 2024, with 28 out of 33 districts recording over 15 days of heatwave conditions. Districts like Nalgonda, Mancherial, Peddapalli, and Jagtial reported over 30 days of severe heat.

While many districts had already prepared heatwave action plans and set up ORS stations and water kiosks, the government noted that lack of disaster classification had limited relief measures. Until now, families of heatwave victims received only Rs 50,000 under the Apadbandhu scheme — a figure deemed insufficient given the severity of the loss.

With the new order in place, the State can now use up to 10 per cent of the annual SDRF allocation to provide relief to victims of such state-specific disasters. This also opens the door for mitigation projects under the State Disaster Mitigation Fund (SDMF), aligning Telangana's disaster response with national guidelines.

The new relief norms specify that diagnosis of heat-related deaths must be confirmed by appropriate authorities, including medical officers and police officials, and documented with temperature records and other proofs.

Sanjay enquires about murder of TG residents in Dubai

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, called Premeasgar's family a short while ago. Premeasgar was brutally murdered in Dubai by a Pakistani national. He expressed his sympathies and inquired about the incident.

Sanjay assured the family that all arrangements are being made to bring back the bodies of Premeasgar and Srinivas, a native of Nizamabad who was also killed, as soon as possible.

Sanjay also assured the families that the government would stand by them and ensure justice is served.

As soon as Sanjay received the information, he contacted the Ministry of External Affairs and requested immediate action to bring back the bodies of Premeasgar and Srinivas from Dubai.

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Is the basic structure doctrine a shield or a barrier?

Constitutional protection is not merely the authority of courts – it is a reflection of people's rights. Of late, however, the "Basic Structure Doctrine" seems to be emerging as a silent obstacle to the evolution of social justice and equitable representation. In a democratic federation, instead of enabling proportional inclusion, it appears to be safeguarding the interests of certain historically privileged classes.

Established in the landmark Kesavananda Bharati case in 1973, the basic structure doctrine was initially intended to act as a bulwark for constitutional integrity. Over time, however, it has begun to function more as a limitation on legislative independence, especially in matters concerning the advancement of socially backward classes. It

risks redirecting constitutional intent from empowerment to restriction. The pertinent question is – should the doctrine only act as a guardian of institutional power balance, or should it also incorporate the heartbeat of the Constitution – equitable representation and distributive justice?

The Indian Constitution never envisioned equality as a mere statistic. Articles 15(4) and 16(4) explicitly empower the state to make special provisions for the progress of socially and educationally backward classes.

In the Nagaraj (2006) judgment, the Supreme Court insisted on quantifiable data to prove 'inadequacy of representation.' Yet, in Indra Sawhney,

The Indian Constitution never envisioned equality as a formula or representation as a mere statistic. Articles 15(4) and 16(4) explicitly empower the state to make special provisions for the progress of socially and educationally backward classes

the same court observed that 'social justice is the very foundation of all rights.' These views may not be contradictory, but they highlight a gap in judicial empathy for ground realities.

IR Coelho Judgment – Basic Structure Must Not Override Social Justice

In the IR Coelho v. State of Tamil Nadu (2007) case, the Supreme Court ruled that laws

placed in the Ninth Schedule are subject to basic structure review. However, it also clarified that:

"Equality of opportunity, inclusive representation, and social justice are themselves integral parts of the basic structure."

Therefore, the doctrine should not be used to strike down laws that aim to enhance representation, but to uphold them.



DR VAKULABHARANAM KRISHNA MOHAN RAO
Former Chairman – Telangana BC Commission

Articles 31-B, 31-C – Constitutional Safeguards for Social Legislation

Article 31-B shields laws in the Ninth Schedule from judicial review, especially those connected to reservations and

land reforms.

- Article 31-C allows laws made to implement Articles 39(b) and 39(c) to override fundamental rights under Articles 14 and 19.

These provisions were never meant to bypass rights, but to realise socio-economic balance as envisioned in the Constitution.

Why 42% representation for BCs in Telangana is justified

Backward Classes constitute over 50% of Telangana's population. But their representation in education, employment, and local governance remains dismal. Even after conducting surveys and establishing the empirical need, attempts to provide 42% reservations face legal scepticism.

In Vikas Kishanrao Gawali (2021), the Supreme Court held that 'even where inade-

quacy is proven, undue delay in implementing reservations violates the Constitution.' This precedent demands timely action, not hesitation.

Without Social Justice, Constitutional Protection is Incomplete

Constitutional protection is not textual rigidity – it is the assurance of dignity to those historically denied voice and power. This includes:

- Social justice
- Collective participation
- Equitable distribution of economic and political power

These values must be embedded within the Basic Structure itself.

Conclusion: A path to stability lies through justice

The Basic Structure doctrine was envisioned as a principle of institutional balance. But if it is increasingly used to block the rights of margin-

alised communities, it loses democratic credibility.

Constitutional morality demands that social justice be seen not as an exception, but as an essential expression of India's constitutional soul. Without representation and participation of the marginalised, the Basic Structure is like an empty bottle – shaped but devoid of ethical essence.

In the present legal scenario, a democratically accountable government must proceed with caution – but with commitment. If the government truly upholds the principle of social justice, it must overcome legal hurdles through credible data, expert-backed reports, and due constitutional process. Fulfilling the promise of equality requires not just intent, but informed and constitutionally guided action.

Over 8,000 water kiosks set up across TG; Seetakka orders more

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As summer intensifies across Telangana, the Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Department (PR&RD) has swung into action by setting up over 8,090 chali vendrams (drinking water kiosks) across villages and mandal headquarters, ensuring that people working outdoors are not left parched in the sweltering heat.

Minister Seetakka has directed officials to ensure that every village and remote area has access to a Water Kiosk.

Acting on these instructions, the PR&RD department has mobilised its teams to scale up the effort and place drinking water kiosks in all high-traffic and vulnerable locations across rural Telangana.

Appreciating the department's proactive measures, Seetakka lauded the dedication of officials

and field staff for rapidly rolling out the initiative. "These kiosks are a lifeline for people braving the summer sun. I've asked officials to identify and address every single pocket that still lacks



one," she said.

To further strengthen the state's response to summer water stress, the PR&RD department has sanctioned Rs. 1 crore each to the collectors of all 31 districts from its internal funds. This marks a significant shift, as earlier such allocations would require clearance from the

Finance Department—clearance that, officials note, had often not translated into actual fund releases in past years.

"Learning from previous experiences where approvals didn't ensure disbursements, the department has now made its own financial allocation to tackle urgent drinking water needs," said a senior official. These funds can be used by collectors for emergency water supply where Mission Bhagiratha water is disrupted or unavailable.

The PR&RD's approach is aimed at ensuring that no village faces a drinking water crisis during peak summer. With the state already grappling with rising temperatures and expanding heatwave zones, the department's swift action has brought much-needed relief to rural Telangana.

BJP govts have not sold land in any State: Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP governments have not sold any land in any State across the nation, Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy said.

During a chit-chat with journalists on Tuesday, Kishan said the Revanth Government is trying to rule Telangana by selling public lands. He criticised the Revanth Government for trying to raise funds through the sale of liquor and public lands.

"One needs the GHMC's permission to cut a tree even in one's own compound. However, a large number of fully grown trees were cut at the HCU. The Revanth Government violated the Conservation Act. BJP Governments have not sold land in any state," Kishan said.

He said the BJP president election will be held soon and added that the media seems to be more anxious



about this. He clarified that the BJP's programmes are being carried out comprehensively.

Kishan reminded that the BJP had an alliance with the AIADMK earlier and that it has been restored. He said that Prime Minister Modi would give Annamalai a chance at the national level. He said the Modi Government has not taken any decision on the delimitation of LS constituencies so far.

Kishan said the BJP wants to strengthen itself in south India. And asked why the BJP would take action against the south.

'Miss World is our opportunity to showcase heritage, progress'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A high-level State Steering Committee chaired by Special Secretary K Ramakrishna Rao convened at the historic Chowmahalla Palace on Monday to finalise preparations for hosting the prestigious Miss World events in Telangana. The meeting marked a key milestone in the state's plans to present itself on the global stage through a vibrant mix of heritage, hospitality, and world-class infrastructure.

"The Miss World events will place Telangana at the centre of a global cultural and economic conversation," said Special Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao. "We are ready to welcome the world with open hearts and showcase the spirit of Telangana in its finest form."

The committee reviewed logistical and planning aspects to ensure the event's flawless



A high-level meeting held to review arrangements for Miss World event to be held in Telangana

execution. From iconic venues and transportation upgrades to high-end accommodations and connectivity, the discussions centred around creating a seamless and memorable experience for international delegates, participants, and visitors. The organisers aim to turn the Miss World pageant into a showcase of Telangana's capability to host global events with precision and grace.

Culture took centre stage in the planning process. The committee proposed a series of immersive experiences featur-

ing Telangana's traditional arts, crafts, and cuisine. Performances by local artists and curated visits to cultural landmarks like the Ramappa Temple and Golconda Fort are expected to create a strong impression on global audiences and promote Telangana as a premier tourism destination.

Security was another top priority. The committee called for inter-agency coordination between police, traffic, fire, and emergency services to ensure comprehensive safety for all guests.

Sanjay enquires ...

Continued from page 1

Following this, officials from the Ministry of External Affairs also communicated with the authorities in Dubai. The Union Home Ministry has asked its officials to coordinate closely with the Ministry of External Affairs to ensure that the bodies are repatriated at the earliest.

After the intervention of Union Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar, officials of the Ministry of External Affairs, including Indian representatives based in Dubai, visited the Bur Dubai Police Station and collected information regarding the case.

Local police informed that Ashthapu Srinivas and Prensagar were working at the Modern Bakery located in the Al Quoz Industrial Area in Dubai. The Head of the Criminal Investigation Department at Bur Dubai Police Station stated that a case had been registered on April 11 for premeditated murder. He informed that the case was handed over to the prosecution on the same day.

The forensic report is said to be crucial in the case. As it is a murder case, police officials said that approval of the prosecution is mandatory for the repatriation of the deceased's bodies to India. They assured that formalities are being speeded up and that the bodies will be sent to India as soon as possible.

NO WAGES SINCE 3 MONTHS

Harish blasts Congress for undermining MGNREGS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Senior BRS MLA Harish Rao lashed out at the Congress Government on Tuesday, accusing it of deliberately dismantling the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) through mismanagement.

In a sharply worded press release, Harish said it was shameful that a scheme bearing the name of Mahatma Gandhi is being handled with such apathy.

Harish pointed out that since the last three months, wages have not been paid to labourers, field assistants, APOs and COs. "Those who have worked hard are waiting endlessly for their dues. Labourers and support staff are being forced into debt and hunger while the government remains unmoved. This is cru-



elty in the name of governance," he said.

He added that workers have repeatedly raised their grievances with ministers and officials to no avail. "This reflects the utter failure of the so-called Praja Palana. What is the point of tall promises if they don't translate into salaries?" Harish asked.

He also took a dig at Chief

Minister Revanth Reddy's earlier remark about managing the government on salary rotation.

"If salaries are on rotation, then whose accounts are the NREGS wages being diverted into?" Harish asked, tagging the CM's social media handle directly.

He reminded the Congress that it is nearly one and a half years since it promised increased wages and job security for MGNREGS workers in its Abhaya Hastham manifesto. "Like all other promises, this too has been abandoned," he said, questioning what the Congress leaders who made high-sounding announcements during elections would say now.

Demanding immediate action, Harish said the BRS insists that the government must pay pending wages to labourers and supporting staff without any further delay.

VH is my senior, but Jana Reddy is my junior: Jeevan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Senior Congress leader T. Jeevan Reddy said that former PCC president V. Hanumantha Rao is senior and that no one is more experienced than him.

"Jana Reddy is four years junior to me. I am the one who fought against the BRS government's dictatorial policies for the last 10 years. I have done more than Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's fight in the Assembly and Council," Jeevan said.

Addressing reporters on Tuesday, Jeevan said that dissatisfaction is certain if there is no due recognition for seniority in the party.

TG Cong to stage protest in front of ED office tomorrow

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC President B Mahesh Kumar Goud stated that a protest and dharna in front of ED office under the auspices of TPCC would be conducted on April 17th.

In a statement, Mahesh Kumar Goud said that massive protest programme will be held in front of ED office in Hyderabad on 17th at 10 am to lodge a protest against the BJP and PM Narendra Modi's political factionalism.

The dharna will be held under the auspices of TPCC to lodge protest against inclusion of names of AICC top leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in the chargesheet in the National Herald case in a partisan manner, Mahesh Kumar Goud said.

Overladen lift ...

Continued from page 1

The CM had gone to the Novotel Hotel to attend the CLP meeting on Tuesday.

The Telangana Government's whips and some MLAs invited the Chief

Minister and took him inside the hotel. However, while going to an upper floor, 13 people, including Revanth got into the lift, which could accommodate only eight people. Due to this, the lift sank below its intended height. Immediately, the alarm rang, and officials and hotel staff rushed to the lift.

Later, everyone, including the CM, was brought out of the lift. The CM was taken to the second floor, where the meeting was taking place in another lift. All the MLAs, officials and the hotel staff breathed a sigh of relief as Revanth escaped the accident.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Tritiya: Apr 15 10:55 AM to Apr 16 01:17 PM

Chaturthi: Apr 16 01:17 PM to Apr 17 03:23 PM

Nakshatram:

Anuradha: Apr 16 03:10 AM to Apr 17 05:55 AM

Jyeshtha: Apr 17 05:55 AM to Apr 18 08:21 AM

Rahukalam: 12:16 PM to 1:49 PM

Yamagandam: 7:36 AM to 9:09 AM

Varjyam: 12:05 PM to 01:50 PM

Gulika: 10:42 AM to 12:16 PM

Amritakalam: 06:19 PM to 08:06 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham: Nil

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny

Temp: 36°

Humidity: 52%

Sunrise: 6:00 AM

Sunset: 6:32 PM

Updated: April 15, 2025 5:00 PM

Eatala leads in ...

Continued from page 1

AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi, now in his fifth term, also maintained 92.64 per cent attendance and asked 54 questions, leading all MPs in debate participation with 21.

Godam Nagesh, the BJP MP from Adilabad, maintained 92.64 per cent attendance, asked 40 questions, and participated in four debates.

DK Aruna from Mahbubnagar posted 88.23 per cent attendance, asking 73 questions and speaking in 14 debates.

Arvind Dharmapuri, representing Nizamabad, matched that attendance figure with 59 questions and two debates.

Vamsi Krishna Gaddam from Peddapalle also stood out among first-time MPs, asking 31 questions with

89.7 per cent attendance. Balram Naik Porika from Mahbubabad shares the same attendance rate, but managed 13 questions and three debates. These low engagement numbers raise concerns about effective representation from their constituencies.

Performance data was not available for Union Ministers G. Kishan Reddy (Secunderabad) and Bandi Sanjay Kumar (Karimnagar), as ministers typically do not participate in questions and are not evaluated under the same parameters. Data corresponds to the period from 24-06-2024 to 04-04-2025 extracted from PRS legislative research

While Telangana MPs on an average have posted strong attendance, with most above 85 per cent, their engagement in questions and debates reflects sharp disparities.

Unlike gentlemanly ...

Continued from page 1

I may not be like KCR, he's calm and composed. I'm a rowdy type. If you harass our cadres, we'll see you out properly. Don't expect mercy."

Her remarks triggered loud cheers from BRS activists as she tore into what she called the "Congress's politics of fear."

"Police stations were used to impose false cases on our workers. The officers and leaders behind this will not be spared. Those days are over," she warned.

Kavitha reminded people of the Congress' betrayal during the Telangana Movement. "They made us beg for a decade. Telangana didn't come out of sympathy. It came due to KCR's sacrifice. He gave up a Union Minister's post for this state. That grit created Telangana, not favours," she said.

She mocked Congress's unfulfilled guarantees. "They distributed guarantee cards signed by Sonia and Rahul Gandhi in all houses.

Now, there's no Rythu Bharosa, no farm loan waiver, no gold for brides, no Rs 2,500 for women. Where are those promises?" she asked.

Kavitha also slammed the Congress for letting down farmers. "There's no Rythu Bima, no paddy procurement, no irrigation. Farmers are struggling, and realtors are ending their lives because of the market collapse. This is what the Congress has done in just a year and a half."

Calling for massive mobilisation for the Warangal rally, Kavitha said, "From every house, at least one person must come. Telangana's image will roar again under the pink flag. And if anyone thinks they can stop us with threats, remember, you are not dealing with the gentle KCR. You're dealing with me."

MLC Kavitha visited the Chintala Nagaram check dam built on the Manjira River near the centre of the Banswada constituency.

Don't cross party ...

Continued from page 1

Mancherial MLA K. Prensagar Rao, who spoke on cabinet expansion, did not attend the CLP meeting.

The CLP has decided that MLAs should donate Rs 20,000 from their salary to the party (Rs 10,000 to the CLP and Rs 10,000 to the party). Addanki Dayakar is already giving 10% of his salary to the AICC and 15% to the TPCC, he said.

"Our main aim is to come to power a second time, and everyone should work for that. You should focus on getting traction in your constituencies. MLAs should visit their constituency and find out the problems of the people," he said.

Addressing the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) meeting held at the Shamshabad Novotel Hotel on Tuesday, it is learnt that the Chief Minister warned leaders like Bhongir MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, saying, "You are announcing one minister every day. That is not a good thing. The high command has already decided on Cabinet expansion. It will decide who to appoint as ministers. Don't speak again on this matter and confuse Congress activists."

It is learnt that the CM said that every-

one's aim should be to bring the party to power a second time. The government got a good name regarding fine rice distribution. However, the BRS and the BJP are conspiring to sideline it, the CM said and asked the MLAs and MLCs to defeat their machinations.

It is learnt that the CM assured the MLAs that he would take up the responsibility of completing works suggested by MLAs if they are likely to influence the voters of the constituency.

It is also learnt that the CM asked MLAs to visit every village in their constituencies from April 16 onwards till June 2. The CM also said that he would also go to the people from May 1 onward.

The CM said that Union Ministers Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar used to criticise the Telangana Government.

"Both the BRS and the BJP are engaging in venomous campaigns against the Congress Government. We will have a future only if the government's image improves. We have to go to the people now onwards if we want to win again. A discussion is going on across the nation on the Telangana model. The fine rice supply scheme is our scheme. The BJP should explain why it could not supply fine rice in states ruled by it," the CM said.



City Pioneer

The Pioneer

HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | APRIL 16, 2025

03



Vipperla Srinivas

TGSWREIS admissions transparent: Secretary

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TGSWREIS) informs all stakeholders that admissions to Gurukulam institutions for the academic year 2025-26 are being done in a fair, transparent, and merit-based manner.

Students selected through the official entrance examination will be admitted to their preferred schools, based on seat availability. Secretary, TGSWREIS, Alagu Varshini requested parents and students to patiently wait for the seat allotment process to finish.

She noted that the official Merit/Selection List is available only on the TGSWREIS website. Any lists shared elsewhere should be ignored. Do not believe false claims or messages from unauthorised people or websites.

Admissions will happen in phases (Phase 1, Phase 2), depending on available seats. Students selected in the current list must report to their allotted schools by 20 April 2025. After this deadline, no admissions will be accepted. Vacant seats will be given to other students from the merit list.

Contract assistant professors to hold Mahadharna in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hundreds of contract assistant professors working across 12 government universities in Telangana are set to hold a massive Mahadharna at Indira Park's Dharna Chowk on Wednesday, demanding immediate regularisation of their services. The protest, spearheaded by the Telangana Government Universities Contract Teachers Association Joint Action Committee (TGUCTA-JAC), will be held from 11 am to 5 pm on April 16.

According to the organisers, political leaders cutting across party lines will participate in the protest and express solidarity with the agitating teaching community. Among those expected to address the gathering are Harish Rao (BRS), Eatala Rajender (BJP), R. Krishnaiah (BCW), Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao (CPI), John Wesley (CPM), Prof. Haragopal, Justice Sudarshan Reddy, Teenmar Mallanna (MLC), and Jajula Srinivas Goud (BCWA), along with several academics, public intellectuals, and civil society representatives.

In a prelude to the Mahadharna, contract facul-

ty members across all 12 universities organised local dharnas at their respective administrative blocks on Tuesday and submitted memoranda to their Vice Chancellors. The JAC has announced that an indefinite strike will begin from April 19 if the government fails to act on their demands.

"For years, we have served the universities with dedication under contractual conditions without job security or equal pay. Despite repeated assurances from successive governments, no concrete steps have been taken to regularise our services," said Dr. Dharmateja, a JAC leader.

JAC leaders Dr. Parasuram, Dr. Velpula Kumar, Dr. Upendar, Dr. Vijayender Reddy, Dr. O. Krishnaiah, Dr. Tirupati, Dr. Pandayya, Dr. Tallapalli Venkateswarlu, and Dr. Reshma Reddy also participated in the statewide protests on Tuesday and reaffirmed the community's resolve to intensify the agitation.

The contract teaching community is urging the state government to frame a clear policy on regularisation and to acknowledge the long-standing contributions made by these educators to the state's higher education ecosystem.

GHMC targets 7-star rating under garbage-free city norms

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) presented its progress under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) at the DISHA Committee meeting, outlining its achievements, fund utilisation, and current targets—most notably its application for a coveted 7-star rating in the Garbage-Free City (GFC) category.

As per the data shared, GHMC has received a total of Rs 181.74 crore under SBM 1.0 and SBM 2.0, of which Rs. 160.31 crore has been utilised. The civic body fully utilised the Rs 155.31 crore sanctioned during SBM 1.0 for solid waste management (SWM) activities such as distribution of twin bins, tricycles, secondary bins, and leachate treatment. Under SBM 2.0, however, the utilisation remains at an early stage, with only Rs. 5 crore spent so far. Key components like construction and demolition (C&D) waste management, scientific landfills, and mechanical sweeping are under implementation, with funds expected to be utilised by March 2025.

GHMC's sanitation achievements extend beyond fund utilisation. The corporation has maintained its Open Defecation Free (ODF++) status since 2019 and was re-certified in 2021 after inspection. It also holds the distinction of being the first Urban Local Body (ULB) in Telangana to receive the Water+ certification from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in 2021—a certification it retained again in 2023.



GHMC has reapplied for Water+ status for 2024, indicating sustained focus on liquid waste management and safe sanitation practices.

In terms of rankings, GHMC's performance in Swachh Survekshan has consistently improved. From ranking 19th among 73 cities in 2016, Hyderabad moved to 9th place in the 2023 edition in the category of cities with over one lakh population. It also received several special recognitions: Best State Capital in SWM (2018), Swachhata Excellence Award for promoting dignified livelihoods (2019), Best Mega City in Citizen Feedback (2020), and 3-star and 5-star Garbage-Free City ratings in 2021 and 2023 respectively.

With its recent application for a 7-star rating submitted in December 2024, GHMC aims to join the highest tier of cleanliness and waste management standards. The assessment for Swachh

Survekshan 2024 is currently underway under the theme "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle". A new evaluation toolkit was introduced in January 2025, which includes simplified indicators, separate evaluation matrices for city categories, new focus areas like tourist sites and schools, and stricter data validation mechanisms.

GHMC has also qualified to be part of the 'Super Swachh League'—a new elite category introduced by MoHUA for cities that ranked in the top three of their category in at least two out of the last three Swachh Survekshan editions. To remain in this league, cities must now score 85 percent of total marks, with the overall marks for the 2024 edition raised to 12,500.

As Hyderabad eyes its next star, the civic body's consistent focus on structured waste management, public participation, and transparent assessment places it in strong contention for national recognition.

GHMC Deputy Director caught red-handed in Rs 2.2 lakh bribery case

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

ACB officials recovered the bribe amount from the accused officer, and a chemical test conducted on his right-hand fingers returned positive. The officer is being produced before the Principal Special Judge for SPE and ACB cases at Nampally Court, Hyderabad. The case is currently under investigation.

Officials described the officer's conduct as a gross misuse of his public position, stating that he acted "improperly and dishonestly" in performing his official duties.

The ACB has urged citizens to report any instance of bribery demands by public servants by calling their toll-free number 1064. Complaints can also be submitted via WhatsApp (9440446106), Facebook (Telangana ACB), or X/Twitter (@TelanganaACB). The identity of the complainant will be kept confidential.

ETHames Business School teams up with KPMG to offer industry-driven programme

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad-based ETHames Business School (EBS) has announced a partnership with KPMG in India to offer academic programmes that blend industry relevance with academic excellence. This collaboration aims to better prepare students for real-world careers in a rapidly changing business environment.

As an academic partner, KPMG in India will support the delivery of several EBS programmes, including B.Com (Taxation), B.Com (Financial Accounting), BBA (Business Analytics), BBA (Financial Markets and Investment Banking), BCA (Data Science and AI), and BCA (Cyber Security).

These programmes offer students practical learning, hands-on experience, mentorship from experts, and insights into industry trends. The goal is to bridge the gap between classroom learning and workplace expectations.

Partner and Head of



Kalil Prasad Gadiraju, Chairman, ETHames Business School Narayanan Ramaswamy, Partner and Head of Education and Skill Development, KPMG in India unveiling KPMG posters in Hyderabad on Tuesday

Education & Skill Development at KPMG in India, Narayanan Ramaswamy said the job market is changing fast, and students need relevant skills to stay ahead. He emphasized the need for context in learning real-world experience beyond theory.

Chairman of EBS, Kalil Prasad Gadiraju called the partnership a game-changer,

helping students compete in global job markets. He highlighted that the curriculum is designed for the post-Gen AI world and includes guidance from experienced KPMG professionals.

This first-of-its-kind partnership in the region aims to promote innovation, leadership, and critical thinking, helping students become job-ready for global careers.

Ameenpur residents allege extortion by Telangana Foods Chairman

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Residents of Ameenpur have levelled serious allegations against MA Faheem, Chairman of Telangana Foods, accusing him of extortion and intimidation under the guise of official demolition drives. In a letter addressed to the Chief Minister, members of the Ameenpur Welfare Association have appealed for immediate intervention, alleging that Faheem is exploiting the local community by using the name of the government and senior political leaders.

According to the representation dated March 10, the association claimed that Faheem was demanding large sums of money from residents after a demolition drive was undertaken in the area using a HYDRAA machine. Residents allege that Faheem claimed the machinery was deployed with the support of the Chief Minister and that if they failed to pay, further demolitions would follow.

"He is using the names of the Chief Minister, Minister Sridhar Babu, PCC chief

Mohammed Ghouse, and senior leaders Jagareddy to pressure residents," the letter stated, adding that the situation had caused "immense distress" to the local population.

The association urged the state government to act swiftly, stating that locals were living in "constant fear of further harassment." The members claimed that Faheem had even started calling people directly, threatening to bring the demolition machinery back unless payments were made.

HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath confirmed that an enquiry is underway. "We are conducting an enquiry into it. Complete facts will come out in 2-3 days," he said.

The representation was signed by office-bearers of the Ameenpur Welfare Association, including President K. Ram Reddy, Vice President Mohd. Ghouse, General Secretary Mahesh Goud, and several other local leaders. They expressed hope that the government's intervention would help bring an end to what they described as "blatant exploitation."

'TG government proactive in women's welfare'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government's unique initiative, the 'Bharosa Centres', has helped improve conviction rates, with 36 recent convictions, 12 of them being life sentences, said Hyderabad Police Commissioner CV Anand. He spoke at the STREE Summit 2.0 on Tuesday.

Organised by the Hyderabad City Police in collaboration with the Women's Forum of the Hyderabad City Security Council (HCSC), the summit brought together government leaders, corporate heads, industry experts, NGOs, and community members to discuss new strategies for strengthening Hyderabad's safety framework.

Speaking at the summit, Police Commissioner CV Anand explained that STREE stands for She Triumphs Through Respect, Equality, and Empowerment. He expressed concern that, despite many discussions, anti-women issues continue. Female infanticide still occurs, and the



Hyderabad Police Commissioner CV Anand speaking at the STREE Summit 2.0 in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

safe for women. During the recent Numaish Exhibition, 10 to 15 eve-teasers were arrested daily.

Anand added that more women are joining the police. There are 7 all-women police stations, and 8 out of 19 DCPs are women. He highlighted that women officers now serve in patrols, traffic, and even as 3 SHOs. He concluded with a call to Empower Women to increase the State's and Nation's GDP.

Meanwhile, Senior Specialist, Governance & Research, Law Division of NITI Aayog, Dr. Banusri Velpandian discussed their efforts in women empowerment. She highlighted partnerships with the Women and Child Welfare Department and shared that 38.45% of women are part of the multidimensional poverty index. She stressed the need for education, skills, financial access, and digital tools to support women. She called for both short- and long-term goals for real progress.

Social media warriors are Congress strength: Kiran

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress's Bhongir MP, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, said the main factor behind the Congress's victory is its social media warriors. On Tuesday, Kiran held a review meeting with the Congress's Bhongir Parliament constituency social media soldiers at his camp office in Pedda Amberpet.

On this occasion, Kiran gave them several suggestions and directions on the steps to be taken to strengthen the party. He said the Congress has been working with sincerity since coming to power and providing effective public administration.

He said the Congress has been working for the people by introducing schemes like rice supply scheme, free electricity, gas cylinder for Rs 500, free bus travel for women, Rajiv Yuva Vikasam for self-employment of youth and is working for the people.

He suggested that all these should be widely publicised by all Congress workers and that the party leadership should be strengthened without any differences of opinion.

He said that the Congress is like an ocean and that those who have worked for it will be given the right posts and due respect at the right time.

He called upon the party's social media warriors to take a pledge aiming for the victory of the party candidates in the upcoming local body elections. Social media coordinators, Youth Congress leaders and others from various constituencies attended the programme.



INDIA JUSTICE REPORT 2025

TG tops police rankings

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The 2025 edition of the India Justice Report (IJR), released on Tuesday, placed Telangana at the top among large states for its policing framework, while Andhra Pradesh climbed to the second place overall, marking a sharp jump from its fifth position in 2022. Telangana retained its third overall rank.

Among the 18 large and mid-sized states assessed, Karnataka held on to the top position, followed by Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Kerala. The report, now in its fourth edition, assesses the performance of states in delivering justice through the pillars of police, judiciary, prisons and legal aid.

Telangana ranked first in the police pillar and second in the judiciary. The state also recorded the highest share of women judges in both the High Court (33%) and district courts (55%). Over 85% of police stations in Telangana have CCTVs and women help

desks, and police stations cover among the smallest jurisdictions in the country, indicating better accessibility.

However, concerns remain. Only 9% of Telangana's police force comprises women — among the lowest in the country — and the state struggles to meet ST reservation quotas. A 29% vacancy among High Court judges and a 24% shortfall among support staff were also flagged. Notably, the state reported a high 59% shortfall in prison medical staff.

Andhra Pradesh, now ranked second overall, performed notably well in prisons and legal aid, ranking fourth and fifth, respectively. It recorded one of the lowest vacancy rates among High Court (19%) and district court (12%) judges. It also spends the most per inmate in the country — Rs 733 daily — compared to Telangana's Rs. 91.

The state fulfilled SC and ST quotas in the district judiciary but showed a 10% shortfall in SC officers in the police. Andhra's police force has the



highest share of women officers in the country at 22%, but among all police personnel, women comprise just 5%. The state continues to report a complete absence of correctional staff. No posts have been sanctioned since 2017.

Both states have over one-third of cases pending for more than three years in district courts. Telangana's legal aid budget shows over 100% utilisation of state funds, but it utilised only 61% of NALSA funds, compared to Andhra's 89%.

Telangana's network of legal aid clinics remains sparse — one clinic for every 440 villages,

compared to Andhra's one for every 121.

While both states report high representation of women in the judiciary, Telangana struggles with representation in police ranks and among Scheduled Tribes. Andhra Pradesh showed progress in officer diversity but has regressed in meeting ST constable quotas.

Justice (Retd.) Madan B. Lokur and Maja Daruwala, chief editor of the report, emphasised that lack of investment in first-contact institutions — police stations, courts and legal aid — continues to burden individuals instead of enabling the justice system. They called for justice delivery to be recognised as an essential service.

The India Justice Report is produced by Tata Trusts in collaboration with partners CHRI, DAKSH, TISS-Prayas, Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, and How India Lives. The rankings are based on a two-year review of official data and performance trends across states.

Motor-free tap drive begins. 64 illegal motors seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a decisive move to prevent water wastage and tackle the rampant use of illegal motors, the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) has launched a city-wide "Motor-free Tap" drive. The initiative, which began on Tuesday, saw teams fanning out across various low-pressure zones notorious for unauthorized motor use to seize equipment and issue penalties.

Managing Director Ashok Reddy personally participated in the inspections at Kakatiya Hills in Madhapur during peak water supply hours. Accompanied by vigilance and field staff, he interacted with apartment residents and explained the seriousness of the issue. "We are pumping water from nearly 150 kilometres away through large-scale pipelines. It costs the Water Board around Rs 50 to purify every 1,000 litres.

That kind of effort should not be wasted on gardening or washing vehicles," he told residents.

He appealed to citizens to use supplied water strictly for drinking and essential domestic needs. The groundwater table is already depleting, he said, and in many areas, tanker demand is spiking due to over-extraction and wastage. "We might face serious water challenges in the days ahead. Using drinking water for construction or irrigation is not acceptable," Ashok Reddy said.

He also pointed out that when individuals attach motors directly to public water pipelines, it reduces pressure in the supply lines, affecting others in the neighbourhood. "This has led to a rise in tanker bookings and further strain on the system," he explained, adding that this was one of the key reasons for launching the drive.





KGBV students staging a sit-in protest at Naganool in Nagarkurnool district on Tuesday

Alleged harassment: KGBV students demand teacher's suspension

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

Students of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) School at Naganool in Nagarkurnool district, staged a protest demanding the suspension of the English teacher, who they claim, has been harassing them in many ways. The students threatened to fast until the teacher is suspended.

The protest erupted after an incident where an English teacher allegedly punished a Class 9 student for being late to study hours by making her stand for three hours. After this incident came to light, the authorities conducted an inquiry. Following the inquiry, the students alleged that the teacher began targeting them and causing them severe distress.

Claiming that they were being harassed, the students once again staged a protest, declaring firmly that they would not eat until the teacher is suspended. Despite efforts by authorities to convince them to stop, the students did not relent.

It is known that 10 days ago, a Class 9 student attempted suicide by cutting her wrist, allegedly unable to bear the harassment of English teacher Kalyani. Even after 10 days, the authorities failed to take any action against the teacher.

Protesting the inaction of the authorities against the English teacher, the students once again staged a sit-in protest in the scorching sun. The students expressed their anguish, saying, she grabs around their throats and lifts us up." The students have boycotted classes for almost three hours. The students made it clear that they would not go to classes or touch food until English teacher Kalyani is suspended.

Unseasonal rains shatter hopes of farmers in Mahabubnagar dist

PNS ■ MAHBUBNAGAR

After toiling for months and nurturing their crops, farmers are now left devastated as the harvested produce has been wholly drenched in unseasonal rains. A farmer, witnessing his crop soaked and ruined, is left heartbroken. Having borrowed lakhs of rupees to invest in farming, the sudden untimely rains have shattered their hopes, farmers lament.

They are pleading with the government to step in and support them, warning that without assistance, it will be impossible to continue farming in future.

On Monday evening, heavy rains accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning lashed several areas of the erstwhile Palamuru (Mahabubnagar) district. In some places, strong winds uprooted trees.

In Devarakadra, Mahbubnagar rural, Kalwakurthy, Midjil and Veldanda mandals, the untimely rains have soaked the paddy crops. Farmers, who safeguarded their



Rain-soaked paddy

crops from pests since the time of transplantation, are disheartened to see them destroyed when the crops

were ready for harvest.

At the procurement centre set up at Manyamkonda Crossroads under Mahbubnagar rural mandal, heaps of paddy grains got drenched in the absence of tarpaulins. With agricultural markets closed for two consecutive days, no purchases happened, leading to greater losses.

In villages like Appaipally, Machanpally, Obulayipally Thanda, Ramachandrapur, Kodur, and Telugu Gudem, hailstorm damaged paddy crops.

Power supply was also disrupted. In Vadial, Velugumma Ayavariipally, and Chiliver villages of Midjil mandal, farmers reported that 50 to 65% of their paddy crops had fallen flat due to the rains.

In Kalwakurthy mandal, hailstorms with gusty winds affected 40 acres of paddy belonging to 15 farmers. With their investments completely washed away, farmers are left in tears, saying they are now left with nothing.



Warangal Collector Sathya Sharada holding a meeting in Warangal on Tuesday

Warangal Collector warns against sale of fake seeds, fertilisers

PNS ■ WARANGAL

On Tuesday, Warangal Collector Sathya Sharada chaired an awareness meeting with seed, fertilizer, and pesticide dealers in the district. The event was also attended by Deputy Commissioner of Police P Ankit Kumar and District Agricultural Officer Anuradha as special guests. During the meeting, the Collector strongly emphasised the government's zero-tolerance policy towards the sale of fake or expired seeds, as well as prohibited pesticides. She made it clear that strict legal action, including registration under the Pesticides

Act, would be taken against violators. Agricultural officers were instructed to regularly monitor and prevent the sale of counterfeit products.

Dealers were directed to adhere to government regulations, including displaying price lists for fertilizers and seeds at their stores. Additionally, they were told to prominently show their shop licenses and ensure that seeds and fertilisers are sold only at government-approved prices.

To tackle the illegal transportation and sale of fake seeds, the Agricultural Seed Corporation was tasked with taking action.

Maoist activities spark criticism

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

Outlawed Maoist activities along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border have caused a stir in the region. A letter recently released by the Maoists advising tribals to stay away from Karregutta, a hillock on the inter-state border, has raised concerns. The police have heightened their alert in response.

The letter from the Maoists, which urges the tribal community to avoid Karregutta due to landmines, has drawn sharp

criticism from both the local police and the Adivasi communities. Many question the Maoists' authority to restrict the movement of tribals, who rely on gathering forest resources for their livelihood.

"What right do the Maoists have to control the movement of Adivasis? How are they allowed to impose restrictions on the tribals' constitutional rights?" said both the tribals and the police. There is also concern about how the presence of landmines, planted by the Maoists, endangers the lives of innocent people.

The Maoist letter explains that the landmines were placed on Karregutta as part of their strategy to protect themselves from the security forces' Operation Kagar.

The Maoists accused the police of sending tribals to act as informers and warned them not to disregard their orders. The letter states, "Tribals should not act as police informers, as it will bring trouble to their families."

The police view the landmines as a tactic aimed at targeting officers conducting search operations in the area.

Two TG men killed, 2 more injured by Pakistani in Dubai

PNS ■ NIRMAL / NIZAMABAD

In a tragic incident in Dubai, a Pakistani national allegedly murdered two individuals who hailed from Telangana and seriously injured two others. Though the incident occurred on Friday, it has come to light belatedly.

Among the deceased is Ashtapu Premsagar (40), a native of in Nirmal district, while the other victim has been identified as Srinivas from Nizamabad district, according to their colleagues. The two injured individuals are also reported to be from Telugu states.

All the victims, including the accused Pakistani national, were employed at a renowned bakery in Dubai. Initial reports suggested that work pressure, personal issues, and religious intolerance may

have led to this gruesome incident.

Some reports indicate that after committing the murders, the accused shouted religious slogans. However, the bakery management is reportedly taking extensive precautions to prevent any information related to the incident from being leaked out. Employees were reportedly warned that if the matter became public, they could lose their jobs, leading to fear and anxiety among the staff. It is also reported that the majority of workers at this bakery are from Telangana.

Full details of the incident are yet to be revealed.

Dubai police registered a case and are investigating the matter. This incident has caused deep shock in the state. The families of the deceased are left devastated.

Woman's suicide triggers protest in Bakkamantulapad village

PNS ■ NALGONDA

A tragic incident occurred in Bakkamantulapad village under Nidamanur mandal in Nalgonda district. A young woman named Malleshwari died by suicide after being heartbroken over betrayal by her lover. She allegedly committed suicide in Hyderabad on Monday.

A man named Janareddy and Malleshwari, both from the same village, were reportedly in love for some time. Malleshwari belonged to the Scheduled Caste community. Janareddy allegedly secretly married another woman about 15 days ago while Malleshwari was staying in Hyderabad.

Upon learning about this, Malleshwari was deeply distressed and ended her life. Her



Relatives of a woman, who committed suicide, staging a protest on Devarakonda-Miryalaguda highway in Nalgonda on Tuesday

relatives, blaming Janareddy for her death, placed her dead body in front of his house and staged a protest.

As there was no response from Jana Reddy's family, the relatives staged a protest on

the Devarakonda-Miryalaguda highway, demanding justice.

As a result, there was a massive traffic jam. Later the police persuaded the protesters to relent.

ASPIRATIONAL BLOCKS PROGRAMME

Gangaram mandal in Mahabubabad district secures top position

PNS ■ MAHABUBABAD

In the Delta Rankings of the Aspirational Blocks Programme in the country, "Mahabubabad District, Gangaram mandal" in Telangana secured the top position, while Mulugu District, Kannaigudem mandal came in second said Aspirational Block Programme Officer Srinath Halke.

Minister for Panchayati Raj Dhanasari Anasuya Seethakka complimented Aspirational Block Programme officers.

Recently, Mahabubabad District Gangaram Block achieved first place in the NITI Aayog ranking, indicating that all departments in the district worked together under the guidance of District Collector Advait Kumar Singh to enhance social outcomes and development.

Efforts have been made to identify gaps and improve through 40 indicators across five themes, including Health and Nutrition, Education, Social Development, Basic Facilities, Agriculture, and Non-Agricultural



Minister for Panchayati Raj Dhanasari Anasuya Seethakka congratulating Aspirational Block Programme Officer Srinath Halke on Tuesday

Development. Srinath mentioned that this success inspires everyone to continue striving for excellence in the Aspirational Block Program and that with everyone's cooperation, more significant achievements can be realized in the future.

State Minister Seethakka stated that in the Delta Rankings of the Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP) for the third quarter announced by NITI Aayog, Gangaram Block in Mahabubabad District, Telangana ranks first. The goal of this program is to improve

governance in the most underdeveloped blocks in India and enhance the quality of life. The ranking is based on the performance of the blocks and progress on various indicators. She emphasized that ranking is a crucial part of the ABP, which promotes competition and cooperative federalism, adding that Kannaigudem Mandal in Mulugu District secured second place. She urged the relevant officials in Mahabubabad and Mulugu District to work with greater enthusiasm at the grassroots level to foster development.

Illegally stored sand seized in Asifabad

PNS ■ KUMURAM BHEEM ASIFABAD

Acting on reliable and credible information, Asifabad Circle Inspector Budde Ravinder seized around 100 tractor loads of illegally stored sand on the outskirts of Chirrakunta village in the district. Ravinder made it clear that strict action would be taken against gangs involved in the illegal transportation and sale of sand for profit without permit. At a press meet held at the Asifabad Police Station, he explained that, under the instructions of Asifabad District Superintendent of Police Srinivas Rao, a special drive was launched.

30 Gurukul students take ill due to heatwave

PNS ■ JAGTIAL

At least 30 students at the Social Welfare Gurukul School on Kallur Road in Korutla town of Jagtial district suddenly took ill. According to the District Medical Officer, the children became dehydrated due to sudden changes in weather.

They have a high fever, according to doctors. The affected students were shifted to the Korutla Government Hospital. A medical camp has also been set up at the Gurukul School to continuously monitor the students' health condition.

Officials reported that the children's health is now stable.

They explained that the sudden spike in temperature and ongoing heatwave conditions resulted in dehydration, which sub-



Gurukul school students undergoing treatment in Government Hospital in Korutla on Tuesday

sequently led to fever. Health authorities confirmed that the students received prompt medical attention. Some students, who had complained of high fever, were admitted to the hospital, while others

were treated on-site at the school, where a medical camp had been set up. Korutla MLA Sanjay Kumar visited the hospital and interacted with the affected students.

Three of family die as car collides with truck

PNS ■ JANGAON

Three members of a family dies, while three more were injured, in an accident on Monday morning on the outskirts of Raghavapur village under Station Ghanpur mandal on the national highway 163 Warangal-Hyderabad. The family visited the Kaleshwaram temple and the family members were returning to Hyderabad by a car when the accident happened.

The accident happened when the car in which they were travelling collided with a truck.

According to Station Ghanpur police, the deceased were identified as the residents of Gajularamam in Hyderabad. The deceased were identified as Srinu, Ramana Kumari (Wife) and Anusha (Daughter). The injured were identified as Srinivas Rao, his wife Anthalakshmi, and their son Aravind. The three injured

were immediately taken to Jangaon District Government Hospital for treatment.

The police inspector from Station Ghanpur G Venu, sub-inspector B Vinay Kumar and team rushed to the spot upon receiving the information.

As per the preliminary investigation from police, Srinu was driving the car and had lost control and collided with a moving truck causing a major accident.

Man electrocuted hours before son's marriage

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

A tragic incident struck family just hours before a wedding was to take place. Gajjala Venkati (57), who had been joyfully spending time with relatives and friends in anticipation of his son's wedding, died after suffering an electric shock.

The wedding was scheduled to be held at a function hall in the village of Shivayipally under Rajampet mandal in Kamareddy district.

As part of the wedding

preparations, Venkati had gone to the function hall along with his relatives.

While moving a metal stand used to support tents, he accidentally came in contact with a nearby 11 kV high-tension electric wire.

He was electrocuted and collapsed on the spot.

His wife Narsavva and other relatives rushed him to a hospital in Kamareddy, but unfortunately, he could not be saved. His sudden death has cast a pall of gloom over the village.

Nonagenarian commits suicide due to 'harassment' by son

PNS ■ WARANGAL

In a heart-wrenching incident, an elderly man committed suicide by consuming pesticide due to alleged harassment by his son and daughter-in-law demanding share in property.

Nampally Mallesham (90), an elderly man from Kadari Gudem village under Wardhannapet Mandal, had three sons and a daughter. Among them, his youngest son Koteswar and his wife Elendra had allegedly been harassing Mallesham for the past few years. Unable to bear the harassment, he allegedly consumed



pesticide and died by suicide.

Local people who arrived after Mallesham consumed the poison initially took him to Warangal MGM Hospital where he died while undergoing treatment.

Mallesham's daughter filed a complaint at the Wardhannapet Police Station, demanding action against her younger brother.

ACROSS THE STATES



India to get above-normal rainfall this monsoon

India is expected to get above-normal rainfall in the upcoming southwest monsoon season, the India Meteorological Department said on Tuesday, raising hopes for a bountiful harvest for the largely agri-based economy. According to the long-range monsoon forecast, the IMD said large parts of Tamil Nadu and the northeastern region were likely to get below-normal rainfall, while the rain-deficient parts of Marathwada and adjoining Telangana are expected to witness above-normal showers. "India is likely to see above-normal rainfall in the four-month monsoon season (June to September), with cumulative rainfall estimated at 105 per cent (with a model error of 5 per cent) of the long-period average of 87 cm," M Ravichandran, secretary in the Earth Sciences Ministry, told a press conference here. The southwest monsoon lasts from June 1 to September 30. He said that all of the global factors that influence monsoon rainfall over India, two will have a neutral impact, and one will have a positive impact on rainfall this year.



Abducted Pune businessman killed in Bihar

A 55-year-old businessman from Pune was allegedly abducted from outside Patna airport and murdered, police said on Tuesday. After Laxman Shinde's body was found in Jehanabad district, around 50 km from Patna, police detained several suspects from nearby villages for questioning. The preliminary investigation suggests that the crime was linked to a sophisticated cyber-led business entrapment scheme, police said. Shinde, the owner of Centrifugal Casting Bearing located in Khedshivapur in Pune, had travelled to Patna by flight on April 11. However, after sending a message to his daughter around 8:30 PM, in which he mentioned heading to Jharkhand, no further communication was established. Sambhaji Kadam, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone III), Pune, stated that when the family couldn't contact Shinde, they filed a missing person's complaint on April 12 at the Kothrud police station in the city.



Hemant Soren elected as JMM central president

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren was on Tuesday elected as the central president of the ruling JMM, while his father Shibui Soren was made the "founding patron" of the party, a JMM leader said. Shibui Soren had been the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha's chief for the past 38 years, while his son Hemant served the party as its executive president since 2015, he said. Senior party leader Nalin Soren proposed the name of Shibui Soren as the founding patron during the JMM's 13th Central Convention, which was seconded by Stephen Marandi. Thereafter, Shibui Soren proposed the name of Hemant Soren as the central president of JMM, which was passed unanimously.

HC upholds life sentence to 2 Chhota Rajan gang members

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday upheld the conviction and life sentence of two members of the Chhota Rajan gang in a 2010 double murder case, stating that the trial court's judgment was "well-reasoned and legally sound".



establishes the guilt of the appellants beyond reasonable doubt," the bench said.

A court here in August 2022 convicted Mohammed Ali Shaikh and Pranay Rane for murder, criminal conspiracy and offences under the Arms Act while acquitting Rajan and two others for lack of evidence. A division bench of justices Neela Gokhale and Revati Dere on Tuesday dismissed the appeals filed by Shaikh and Rane.

"The evidence on record, when assessed in its entirety,

As per the police, represented by special prosecutor Pradeep Gharat, four men opened fire on Asif Khan, an alleged aide of fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim, at a spot near the JJ Marg police station in the city on February 13, 2010.

Khan managed to escape, but Shaheel Modak and Asif Qureshi, who were there to meet Khan, sustained bullet injuries and died on the spot.



New York City declares April 14 as Dr B R Ambedkar Day

PNS ■ NEW YORK

Mayor Eric Adams has proclaimed April 14 this year as Dr B R Ambedkar Day in New York City, with its 8.5 million residents celebrating the day, a top official in the mayor's office said.

Deputy Commissioner for the New York City Mayor's Office for International Affairs Dilip Chauhan made the announcement here.

Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Dr Ramdas Athawale, who delivered a keynote address at a special event organised at the UN Headquarters on Monday to commemorate Ambedkar's 134th birth anniversary, was also present on the occasion.

"A historic moment at the UN Headquarters in New York as Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's birth anniversary is officially proclaimed by the NYC Mayor's Office. My heartfelt thanks to Mayor @NYCMayor and Deputy Commissioner Dilip Chauhan for honouring Babasaheb's global legacy of justice and equality," Athawale posted on X along with photos and a video.

Proclamations are issued for only one day, week, or month per year.

The proclamation states that Ambedkar was an Indian economist, political leader, and social reformer who chaired the committee that drafted the Constitution of India.

"Ambedkar - whose message to his followers was 'educate, agitate, organize!' - advocated against the exploitation of farmers and tenants in India, as well as the social institution

of untouchability. After experiencing severe caste discrimination in his youth, he spent the rest of his life fighting for the diversity, equity, and inclusion, which, collectively, have long defined the five boroughs."

Chauhan called for recommitting to the values that Ambedkar lived and died for—liberty, equality, fraternity, and dignity for every human being.

Born on April 14, 1891, Ambedkar - popular among his followers as Babasaheb - was the chairman of the Constituent Assembly's most crucial Drafting Committee that earned him the moniker Architect of the Indian Constitution. Ambedkar had received his PhD in Economics from Columbia University in 1927 and an honorary degree in 1952.

Chauhan said Ambedkar's ideals go beyond borders and time, finding strong connections in the halls of the United Nations and New York—a city built by immigrants, energised by its diversity and united by its shared belief in opportunity and inclusion.

Foundation for Human Horizon President Deelip Mhaske said it is a profound recognition of one of the world's most transformative champions of equality and civil rights that April 14 has been proclaimed as 'Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar Day'.

Mhaske expressed gratitude to Adams noting that "this proclamation is more than symbolic—it is a moral declaration that positions New York as a global capital for human rights and justice."

Waqf Act not anti-Muslim; WB CM 'inciting violence': Rijiju

PNS ■ KOCHI

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Tuesday said the amended Waqf Act was not aimed at the Muslim community but was intended to correct "past mistakes", and accused West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of "inciting violence" in her state through her opposition to the implementation of the law.

Rijiju told a press conference here that the government's intention was to ensure that, in India, there is no provision for anyone to "forcibly and unilaterally" take away someone else's land.

The Union Minister of Minority Affairs was in Kerala to meet residents of Munambam village in Ernakulam district-- mostly Christians -- who have strongly supported the BJP-led government at the Centre when it brought in the amendment to the law.



They had alleged that the Waqf Board was unlawfully laying claim to their land and properties, despite having registered deeds and land tax payment receipts.

Rijiju said the Waqf law was amended as certain provisions in it gave "unprecedented power and authority to the Waqf Boards".

"This is not targeted at Muslim community. It is to correct mistakes of the past and provide justice to the people," he said.

Rijiju said that the Waqf Board has the largest properties in the world, but despite that the women and the destitute in the Muslim community were allegedly not benefiting from it.

That, coupled with the plight of the Munambam residents, prompted the Narendra Modi government to bring amendments to the Waqf Act, he said.

Responding to a query about the situation in West Bengal, where violence has erupted in various parts in connection

with the Waqf Act, Rijiju blamed Chief Minister Banerjee for it.

"The CM is visibly inciting violence by asking people to protest and saying that she will not follow the law passed by the Parliament," he said.

He also asked how the West Bengal CM can declare she will not implement the amended Waqf Act passed by the Parliament.

"How? How can she say she will not implement it? She is sitting in a constitutional position and the law is passed by a constitutional body, then how can she say that she will not follow something that is constitutional," he said in response to reporters' queries regarding Banerjee's statement that the Act will not be implemented in West Bengal.

Rijiju, who was flanked by Union Minister of State George Kurien and state BJP president Rajeev Chandrasekhar, said that following the amendment,

STALIN STEPS UP ATTACK ON CENTRE

Announces high level panel on State autonomy

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Making a strong pitch for empowering states, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Tuesday alleged that their rights were gradually being snatched by the Centre, and announced the constitution of a panel under on state autonomy that will be headed by a retired Supreme Court judge.

The establishment of the high-level panel, marking half-a-century of DMK government's historic state autonomy resolution moved in the Tamil Nadu Assembly by then Chief Minister M Karunanidhi, was aimed at re-asserting the principles of state autonomy in today's context, he said while making a statement in the Tamil Nadu Assembly.

The move was meant to protect the 'legitimate rights' of states and to improve relations between the Union and the state governments, he claimed in the Assembly.

He utilised the occasion to flay the present AIADMK leadership, after the party MLAs staged a walkout over a different issue.

Despite their differences with the DMK, AIADMK stalwarts and late Chief



He said B R Ambedkar unequivocally stated that "both the Union and the States are created by the Constitution...the one is not subordinate to the other in its own field and the authority of one is co-ordinate with that of the other."

"Yet, the steady encroachment of the Union into the rightful domains of the States has disrupted the delicate constitutional balance...a strong Union is not built by weakening States. It is built by empowering them," Stalin emphasised.

Opposition AIADMK slammed the CM over the announcement, asking what was his DMK that shared power with the Congress-led UPA earlier, did all these years. The move was aimed at "diverting" public attention, the principal opposition party charged.

Stepping up the attack on the BJP-led NDA at the Centre, Stalin said the high-level committee headed by former Supreme Court judge Kurian Joseph will examine in detail the relationship between the Union and state governments to ensure state autonomy. It will submit its interim report in January 2026. The final report with recommendations will be submitted in two years.

Bengal must stop attacks on Hindus over Waqf: VHP

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad on Tuesday called upon the state administration to put an immediate stop to attacks on lives and properties of Hindus in pockets of West Bengal over the Waqf Act-related protests, and demanded compensation for the victims.

It also asserted that if such incidents recur elsewhere in the state, the Centre's intervention would become necessary.

Speaking to reporters in Siliguri, the national secretary general (organisation) of VHP, Milind Parande, also criticised Siddiquallah Chowdhury and Firhad Hakim - two TMC ministers of the state - for their reported statements in the wake of the violence, and termed those "provocative and insensitive".

Parande said the fleeing of Bengali Hindus from their homes in Dhulian area of Murshidabad district and taking shelter in adjacent Malda district to escape attack from



"jihadi marauders", is reminiscent of "the exodus of Kashmiri pandits from Jammu and Kashmir in the past".

The West Bengal government should ensure that law and order does not worsen in Siliguri "during any anti-Waqf (Amendment) Act agitation" or in other places in the state, he said.

"Otherwise, the intervention of the central government will become necessary," Parande said.

On West Bengal minister Firhad Hakim's comments that the attacks on Hindus in parts of Murshidabad were "shock-

ing but stray incidents", the VHP leader said "it is a matter of shame" and testimony of the "casual approach" of the Mamata Banerjee government over the plight of Hindus in the district.

"Instead of issuing such statements, the government must ensure that the violence stops, security and compensation are given (to the victims), and attackers and instigators booked for atrocities on Hindus.

These comments show that the administration is not serious in addressing the core issues," Parande said.

Statue of Biju Patnaik set on fire

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A statue of former Odisha chief minister Biju Patnaik was on Tuesday set ablaze at Patnagarh town in Bolangir district, police said.

Apart from BJD, CPI and other Left parties, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi also condemned the incident. "This can only be the handiwork of some lowly person, perhaps suffering from some mental illness," Majhi said, adding that he has directed police to take stern action against persons involved in this incident and expose if there is any conspiracy behind it.

The chief minister said that one person has so far been arrested. He said the state government recognises the contributions of Biju Patnaik and gives due respect to all legendary figures, who made significant contributions to nation building.

Majhi in a statement also mentioned that his government recently held a state-level function in memory of Biju Patnaik on his birth anniversary on March 5.



INSV 'Tarini' flagged off from Cape Town for final journey

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Naval Sailing Vessel (INSV) 'Tarini' carrying two women officers was on Tuesday ceremonially flagged off from Cape Town in South Africa for the final leg of her journey to Goa.

The send-off took place in the presence of the officiating consul general of India in Cape Town, the defence attaché of India to South Africa, members of the Royal Cape Yacht Club (RCYC) governing council, and representatives of the Indian community in Cape Town, a spokesperson of the Indian Navy said.

The vessel was flagged off from Goa on October 2 last year by Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi.

The vessel was ceremonially flagged off from the Royal Cape Yacht Club in Cape Town at 10.30 am local time (1400 hrs IST) for the final leg of her journey to Goa, he said.

'Tarini' is undertaking the global circumnavigation journey under the Navika Sagar Parikrama (NSP) II, an Indian Navy expedition attempting a double-handed circumnavigation of the earth via the three Great Capes.

"The circumnavigation is a significant endeavour aimed at promoting ocean sailing in India, showcasing the strength and resilience of Indian women in uniform, and highlighting India's indigenous shipbuilding capabilities," the

spokesperson said. As part of the ongoing Navika Sagar Parikrama II, the vessel, crewed by Lt Cdr Dilna K and Lt Cdr Roopa A, made a scheduled stopover at Cape Town.

During her port call at Cape Town, the vessel served as a hub for numerous outreach and diplomatic engagements.

It played host to several guests including High Commissioner of India to South Africa Prabhat Kumar; Deputy Speaker of the Western Cape Reagan Allen; former South African cricketer Jonty Rhodes; Kirsten Neuschaefer, winner of the prestigious Golden Globe Race 2022-23 and a noted solo circumnavigator; Ruby Jaspreet, Counsel General of India at Cape Town; and members of the Indian diaspora and other local dignitaries, he said.

In addition to hosting high-profile guests, the crew of INSV 'Tarini' also engaged in a series of interactive events aimed at promoting gender equality, women empowerment, and India's capability in indigenous boat building, the official said.

The vessel is expected to reach Goa by the end of May, marking the successful completion of yet another proud chapter in India's maritime history. The Navika Sagar Parikrama II continues to be a beacon of women empowerment, maritime excellence, and national pride, he said.

CPI(M) demands probe into Murshidabad violence

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The CPI(M) on Tuesday demanded a judicial inquiry into the violence in West Bengal's Murshidabad district by a sitting judge of the Calcutta High Court.

Claiming that the police have been accused of not acting properly to quell the violence in Murshidabad that claimed three lives, CPI(M) West Bengal state secretary Mohammed Salim said that as such an independent probe is required to unravel the truth behind the clashes.

"We demand a judicial inquiry into the incidents of



violence in Murshidabad by a sitting judge of the Calcutta High Court," he said, addressing a press conference at the party's state headquarters here.

Salim said that the CPI(M) is also demanding compensation for those affected by the violence.

The CPI(M) leader also said that he filed a petition on Tuesday before the Supreme

Court challenging the constitutionality of the Waqf (Amendment) Act.

"This is not an issue between two religions, it is about the fundamental rights of the Muslims which are being taken away by way of the new Act passed in the Parliament," he said. Salim also claimed that Haragobinda Das, who was hacked to death along with his son, is a former member of the CPI(M) and that owing to old age he has ceased to continue his membership. The CPI(M) leader claimed that both the BJP and the Trinamool Congress were trying to divide the people on religious lines.

Editor's TAKE

Babasaheb and the battle for justice

The truest tribute to Dr Ambedkar is to see the work he began through to completion

As the nation marked the 135th birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar — the principal architect of the Indian Constitution and a tireless champion of equality — a deeply unsettling incident unfolded in Indore district of Madhya Pradesh, the place where Dr Ambedkar was born. In Indore district's Sanghvi village, a Dalit bridegroom seeking blessings at a local Ram temple was denied entry when members of the Rajput community forcibly locked the temple doors. The situation escalated into a major controversy, and despite the presence of police, the authorities remained unable to defuse the tension or uphold the groom's right to worship. This is exactly what Dr Ambedkar fought for throughout his life — dignity to the people and equal rights for all, clearly still a far cry in many parts of the country including his hometown.

Every year Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar Jayanti is celebrated to pay tribute to a towering intellect, a tireless reformer, and the chief architect of the Indian Constitution. But the work he started is still unfinished. A lot needs to be done when it comes to social equality, justice, and liberty. This is where Babasaheb's legacy guides us. It continues to inspire millions, especially those fighting for equality, justice, and dignity in modern India.

Dr Ambedkar served as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly. Entrusted with the monumental task of crafting the legal backbone of independent India in a caste divided society, he approached it with clarity, wisdom, and an unshakeable commitment to liberty, equality, and fraternity. He ensured that the Constitution enshrined fundamental rights for all citizens, irrespective of caste, creed, or gender — a radical and visionary step at the time. One of his most enduring legacies is his insistence on constitutional morality — the idea that institutions must function according to ethical and legal principles, not merely the will of the majority. His emphasis on social democracy as the foundation for political democracy remains deeply relevant today.

Born on April 14, 1891, in Mhow (now officially Dr Ambedkar Nagar), a town in the Indore district in Madhya Pradesh state of India, into a Dalit family, Dr Ambedkar's early life was marred by discrimination and exclusion. Yet, he rose through sheer brilliance and perseverance. He earned multiple doctorates from prestigious institutions, including Columbia University and the London School of Economics, becoming one of the most educated Indian leaders of his time. Despite his global education, Ambedkar never distanced himself from the struggles of the oppressed. He turned his intellect into a weapon against caste oppression, tirelessly working to uplift marginalised communities through education, legal rights, and political representation. Dr Ambedkar's thoughts were rooted in human dignity, rationalism, and social justice. He believed that political independence was meaningless without social equality. He was also a sharp critic of the caste system and Hindu orthodoxy. His decision to embrace Buddhism in 1956, along with millions of his followers, was both a spiritual and political act — a rejection of caste-based discrimination and an embrace of a religion founded on compassion, reason, and equality. He has been posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award. However, till India becomes as he wanted it to be — free from injustices and treating all individuals equals his work remains unfinished. Dr Ambedkar was a visionary and saw that the work he started was not easy and would take decades, if not centuries, to complete. As India reflects on his legacy, Dr Ambedkar's words serve as a reminder and a warning: "However good a Constitution may be, if those who are implementing it are not good, it will prove to be bad." His vision was not just about drafting laws — it was about awakening the moral soul of a nation.

Saluting the Gorkha spirit

From World War trenches to high-altitude patrols, and now well into their centenarian years, these warriors — my comrades, my teachers, my brothers — carry their legacy with the same quiet pride as they once did a *khukuri*

In my nearly 66 years of trekking and travelling in Nepal, from a Second Lieutenant to a General, in every rank, I have savoured Nepal at its best — from dawn to dusk and at night glow with fireflies. Especially meeting Nepal's greatest gift to mankind, the Gorkha soldier. His name is emblematic of everything tough, brave and never to be messed with — and not for the faint-hearted.

The *khukuri*, *madal*, *share*, *Khukuri rum*, *Gorkha beer* and the list goes on; are all synonymous with the soldier. Whether during the two World Wars, Falklands, Borneo, Kashmir, Sylhet, or Jaffna, the Gorkha has left his indomitable imprint. As there is no expiry date for his use, after retiring he has been called out as fighter — contractor in Afghanistan, several places in the Middle East and North Africa, and other places under the radar for even rogue operations. The pedestal the Gorkha occupies in India will soon vanish if the government persists with the demented Agniveer policy, willy-nilly wiping out a strategic asset from the 'colonial' era.

There is a flicker of hope that the absurdity inflicted on the Indian Army — which has damaged deterrence and combat capability — will be removed sooner than later. In my travels and trekking in Nepal since 1959 — worth 60,000 km — I have met Victoria Cross winners, Mahavir Chakra awardees and other gallantry award notables.

But with very difficult conditions in Nepal in the past, their survival rate was low. Now, with development in inaccessible places, health and education improving, and the vintage habits of old soldiers fading, the new Gorkha is living longer. There is no one better than me to make this judgment, as I have seen Nepal transform in slow motion over the years. My Holi travels last month touched Pokhara, Sallyan, Rolpa, Piuthan, Ghorai and Tikapur, where at most places I met old soldiers, some of whom even accompanied me on my climb to Swargadwar, the famous shrine in West Nepal.

I had not met many burros — as pensioners are endearingly called — who were older than me. But last year, while distributing awards to burhos above 80 years, I met 92-year-old Khetiram Pun from our 3-inch mortar platoon.

He was my Guruji when I joined my VC battalion 2/5 Gorkha Rifles FF in 1957 in Kashmir. But this Holi, occurred the mother of all surprises — attending the 106th birthday party in full Gurung style



of our own Havildar Ramprasad Gurung on 18th March; and one week later, the 99-year-old Havildar, Tejbahadur Thapa. The young Gurung joined the battalion as a 16-year-old in 1939. The Master of Ceremonies at his birthday party introduced Ramprasad with his Army number 5430423, adding that he was from Gandaki Pradesh, Syangjah district, Putlibazar Nagapalika, Oda no 6, Kolma-Pokhrichap, Majhakot ghar. Gurung was from B Company, 2/5 GR VC Paltan, who retired with 21 years of service in May 1961, fought in World War II mainly in Burma from 1939 to 1945, then was in Japan with the British Occupation Force. Later, in 1961, he served in Kashmir, and before that from 1946 in NEFA, Nagaland and Calcutta.

His only daughter, 59-year-old Jhaman Kumari, was the envy of attention and query. All of Kolma-Pokhrichap appeared to have descended on Pokhara to join the festivities. We represented his beloved battalion and were squeezed into the elaborate Tamu Samaj protocol and allotted a short window to congratulate Gurung. I recalled visiting Kolma

Pokhrichap in 1959, 66 years earlier. The cake-cutting ceremony was unique: the icing on the two cakes was used as a tika to be planted on the forehead. Every well-wisher is trying to put a pinch of cake into Gurung's overloaded mouth. Daughter Jhaman Kumari's yells of 'bhayo bhayo' (stop) — his mouth cannot take any more cake — go unheard. Gurung is unable to speak and not unhappy about it.

He is covered with confetti, icing, khatas (scarves) and gifts. Loud Nepali music signals the start of the feast. They're serving Old Durbar whiskey, *Khukuri rum*, *Gorkha Strong beer* and the hill favourite, *Kodo ko Rakshi*. After the mammoth menu of snacks of every edible two-legged and four-legged, there is dal, bhat and masu, without which no celebration is considered complete. The 106-year-old Gurung would have liked to recall his patrol encounters with the Japanese near Basha Hill in which he was wounded. But he has lost his voice. Fully repaired, Gurung returned to the battalion to survive the fateful Sittang River crossing in 1942.

Gurung's celebrations are covered in local newspapers as well as Annapurna Express and Naya Patrika. My second encounter a week later is with a 13-month-shy of a century-old soldier in Ghorai. His career graph is more colourful and enchanting than the 106-year-old

Gurung's. Havildar Tej Bahadur Thapa was born on 5 May 1926 and joined 2/8 GR, was transferred to 6/8 GR and again moved to 3/8 GR, where he was Signal (communications) Havildar. He too fought in the Burma jungles and at the end of the war, was chosen among 1350 Indian soldiers led by Brig JN Chaudhury, who later became Indian Army Chief, at Victory Parade 1945 in London. After retiring from the Indian Army, Thapa joined Nepal Police by fudging his age by five years. He told me triumphantly: 'I have three dates of birth and get two pensions: one from India, one from Nepal. Next year my Indian pension will double.' His memory is crystal clear and his art of mixing nostalgia with encounters of war, spellbinding.

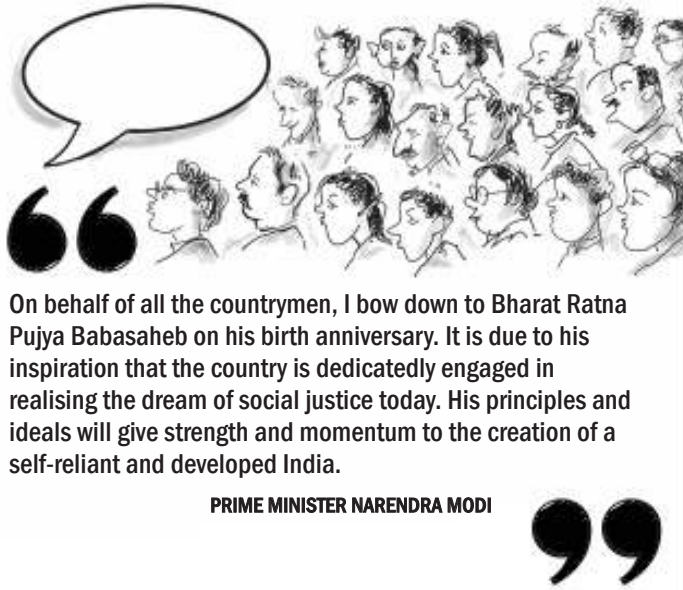
He walks with a medical stick and has a hazy vision but imbibes with gay abandon. He loves Blue Riband gin, Tuborg beer — which we split — and of course, Old Monk Rum. But he also has local rakshi. He's a perfect specimen from Jumlepani village made famous by late Hon'y Capt Indrabir Thapa, Sardar Bahadur, OBI, MBE, MC from my VC Paltan. I must be blessed to have met two great old soldiers.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. Views are personal)



ASHOK K MEHTA

Leaderspeak



On behalf of all the countrymen, I bow down to Bharat Ratna Pujya Babasaheb on his birth anniversary. It is due to his inspiration that the country is dedicatedly engaged in realising the dream of social justice today. His principles and ideals will give strength and momentum to the creation of a self-reliant and developed India.

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

Human trait: Excusing the inexcusable

SECOND Opinion

BY RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

It is one of the reasons why mankind has been unable to solve many national and international problems. Man, who is considered rational, has been using his reasoning in a wrong and perverted way. He has either been rationally explaining the defects of his personality and flaws of his character as his sterling virtues, or he has been using reason wrongly to justify his uncivilised behaviour as necessary for the well-being of his community or the security of his country.

He has been rationalising even his vulgar, barbarous, or animalistic behaviour as biologically 'natural', psychologically justified, and politically beneficial. Like, in the past, until recently, any woman who gave birth to many children was considered 'very fertile' and the father of those children was considered as 'potent', 'manly' or 'masculine' in character. In other words, people adored his libidinousness and her sexual vigour, rather than took notice of the lack of self-restraint or self-control on the part of the man and the woman.

Likewise, one who could slaughter large numbers of people, even for a tyrant ruler or for an aggressive and ambitious nation, was considered a 'brave warrior', a 'courageous soldier' or a 'national hero'. In other words, people praised the quality of one's being a greater butcher, i.e. a killer, and less attention was paid to the quality of forgiveness or compassion.

Moreover, they rationalised aggression as an 'instinct', as an in-built psychological response, or as genetically correct behaviour. It is this kind of rationalisation that has resulted in the present state of the world. Man's faults of character have now acquired global dimensions and are now threatening the very existence of society. Yet his attempt to rationalise his irrational behaviour continues to be. Man's arguments justifying his habits of smoking, drinking alcohol or taking a non-vegetarian diet also are due to his tendency to rationalise the irrational. A matter of more pity is that he does not recognise that he is arguing in favour of irrational and harmful behaviour.

Unless he realises this wrong tendency, no global problem can be solved. As stated earlier, this tendency to rationalise the irrational has led to small and individual defects taking the form of global problems. For example, man's libidinous tendencies, which were earlier justified on biological or psychological grounds, have now resulted in the grave danger caused by over-population, promiscuity, illegitimate children, rapes, abductions and the threat of the spread of AIDS.

The threat caused by overpopulation is not less than the one caused by nuclear weapons. Yet man does not try to have self-restraint, self-control or continence. Instead, he tries to rationalise his irrational and errant behaviour since that suits his perverted instincts, and emotions, and gives him short-lived pleasure even though it is a great strain upon his stamina and moral health.

The same can be said of his tendencies of aggression and greed. His justification of his self-interest and the wrong notion of security has led the world into the morass of grave econom-

ic imbalance and the race for war weapons. Hence there is an urgent need to put man's rational faculty on the right track and, thereby, enable him to put an end to his irrational, irresponsible and injurious behaviour to save mankind from several global upheavals.

There was a time when defects in man's personality or faults in his character were considered as of individual concern. It was thought that society had no cause to bother about an individual's habits, as it was believed that these can, at the most, be of concern to one's family members or a few individuals who directly interact with that man. But now, with our better understanding, we know that defects in man's personality are of concern not only to that individual but to the whole society as well because individual defects add up to global problems. Smoking, for example, is not only injurious to the health of the man who smokes but it is injurious to others also who do not smoke but are exposed to tobacco smoke.

The libidinousness and the aggressiveness of individuals, as already explained, have now led to the problems of high population growth and a huge stockpile of war weapons respectively. The whole society has thus to suffer because of these habits of the individuals. The way to solve these problems now lies in the inner transformation of the individual but this is not possible unless man first gives up the habit of rationalising his irrational behaviour and justifying his bad habits of perverted instincts by employing faulty reasoning.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Larger than life cut-outs are menacing Congress party revamps itself

Madam — The giant cut-outs of the candidates during the time of election in our country make them appear as larger-than-life characters. This is to create supermen out of democratic leaders and to generate bhakti and awe among us for them. However, such an effort is surely against the concept of democracy. Bhakti for a superman is a roadblock to safeguarding the essence of democracy. B. R. Ambedkar categorically said, "In politics, Bhakti or hero worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship." Hero worship emanates from a slavish mindset, which interestingly wants to enslave others. On the other hand, a person who does not have a slavish mentality will never try to enslave others. Abraham Lincoln once said, "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy." "You — master — me — slave" or "Me — master — you — slave" mentality is nothing but two sides of the same coin — and both are equally dangerous for a democracy. Bhakti in politics injects a TINA (There Is No Alternative) factor into our mindset. Ironically, this TINA has a "No" within it which says no to other leaders and no to any democratic change — which is indispensable for the survival of democracy. Thus, bhakti in politics makes democracy slip into a dictatorship, as bhakti and awe are the basic ingredients of manufacturing a dictator. Indeed, bhakti in politics weakens democratic bhakti.

SUJIT DE | KOLKATA

Madam — Apropos the news report "Rahul Gandhi launches pilot to strengthen district units" published on 15 April, here is my response. Congress held its first AICC session in the state of Gujarat since 1961, as it has been out of power in Gujarat for almost three decades now — and it laid down a revival plan, from reviving the organisation to pledging a caste census. Congress's biggest rival — the ruling BJP — is a cadre-based party, and this is where the grand old party lacks the most. We hope that it has realised its biggest weakness. It has to build an effective organisation at the grass-roots level across the country. District committees and district-level leadership is a step in this direction — but how Congress would be able to manage this in the strongly established high-command culture, where Gandhi's way or the highway prevails, will be interesting to watch.

Almost all Congress state units are in disarray, and whether district-level leadership will unite them — or widen the gulf further — will decide Congress's fate in future state elections, including the Gujarat elections to be held in two years' time. The CWC session from the land of Mahatma Gandhi will decide which path Congress will usher into. At the moment, all that Congress needs is a sense of direction and purpose — which it must find to remain relevant in the game.

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

Now enjoy sleep tourism

Madam — Although tourism and vacation is the most preferred time for any individual who wants to have fun with family and friends — to the surprise of the world, after ecotourism, cultural tourism, and medical tourism, a new variant is paving its way into the current world order: sleep tourism.

The level of tiredness and exhaustion is so high these days that the world needs more sleep for bodily rejuvenation than anything else. To the tiring world, deep sleep is — no doubt — the ultimate panacea which everyone is searching for. Sleep tourism is the need of the hour for the fast-forward, rushing world that is constantly chasing things with an unstoppable approach.

There was a time when tourism was all about exploring, adventure, and recreation. As we all had health soundness, we could better enjoy vacations. But with time, the level of physical, mental, and emotional fatigue has increased — and as a result, man is in search of health soundness, happiness, and mental peace.

Then many new forms of tourism were added — village tourism, medical tourism, and even slum tourism. The latest one to join is, of course, sleep tourism. The idea of sleep tourism is actually welcome in this world like Piccadilly Circus — because, at the end of the day, the art of rest is what

KIRTI | WADHAWAN

THE SC CURBS GOVERNORS' POWERS TO WITHHOLD BILLS INDEFINITELY

The Supreme Court curbed the power of the President to indefinitely delay the enactment of state legislation in a judgement that is bound to have serious repercussions on the Indian polity — especially in helping restore the balance between the Centre and the states in India's federal structure.

And it will be taken as a welcome strike in favour of states' rights that had been casually infringed upon by an authoritarian Centre that has little respect for democratic norms and federal principles.

The Supreme Court judgement settling the dispute between Tamil Nadu Governor R. N. Ravi and the ruling DMK government over the clearing of Bills speaks volumes about the courage demonstrated by the apex Court.

This is yet another bold milestone that is rarely seen these days — when the borderline between the executive and the judiciary often gets blurred, to

the peril of the institution of democracy that rests on the three pillars of the legislature, executive, and judiciary functioning independent of one another. It is in the interest of a healthy Indian democracy that its three pillars — the legislature, executive, and judiciary — run at cross purposes, rather than their interests converge.

After the 8 April judgement, the Tamil Nadu government notified 10 pending Bills as Acts in the government gazette, citing: "There is no 'pocket veto' or 'absolute veto' available to the President in discharge of his functions under Article 21."

The use of the expression 'shall declare' makes it mandatory for the President to make a choice between the two options available under the substantive part of Article 21 — that is, to either grant assent or to withhold assent to a Bill," the bench said.

YASH PAL RALHAN | JALANDHAR

Please send your letter to the letterstopioneer@gmail.com. In not more than 400 words. We appreciate your feedback.

Bridging education and employability

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 promises a sweeping transformation of India's education system. Its success hinges not just on vision, but on action, investment, and a unified national commitment to reimagining education for the 21st century

FIRST Column

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a landmark initiative to reshape India's educational landscape, particularly by integrating vocational training into mainstream education. This integration is vital for enhancing skill development and employability, and it complements initiatives such as 'Samagra Shiksha' and the Skill India Mission.

The establishment of PM SHRI Schools embodies the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP), promoting a holistic educational experience nationwide. However, significant challenges stand in the way of realising this ambitious vision.

The Challenges in Implementation

The primary objective of NEP 2020 – to ensure that by 2025, at least 50 per cent of learners receive vocational exposure — faces multiple hurdles. As of 2023, states such as Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Uttar Pradesh have lagged significantly in implementation due to financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of qualified teachers. A staggering 75 per cent of technical institutions currently report a lack of alignment between the skills being taught and those sought by industry, highlighting a disconnect that must be addressed.

At the core of these challenges is the lack of a well-designed curriculum that is robust enough to meet the demands of the job market.

Despite a government push, only about 5 per cent of students in vocational education receive practical training in fields relevant to today's job market. Many traditional academic institutions remain resistant to integrating vocational education into their curricula, fearing it may dilute academic rigour.

This results in inadequate exposure for students, many of whom graduate without the skills needed to thrive in a competitive labour market.

Furthermore, there is a notable deficiency in educators trained in emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and automation. Reports indicate that over 80 per cent of institutions lack faculty proficiency in these essential areas, compromising the quality of vocational training offered.

The Path Forward

The path forward requires actionable strategies to ensure that vocational education becomes a core component of the school curriculum. Making vocational education mandatory from Class 9 to Class 12, with students continuing in their chosen fields, is essential.

For instance, a student selecting 'Electrician' as a vocational subject should continue to engage with this subject through Class 10 and beyond, ensuring a deep, practical understanding.

To encourage participation, the government could implement a financial incentive model. Providing a monthly stipend of ₹500 for students from economically weaker sections, along



DINESH SOOD

with vocational training kit, could promote enrollment. An increased stipend of ₹1,000 per month for students who continue in vocational training through their higher classes would further incentivise sustained commitment. Graduating students should receive certification after four years, bolstering their employability both domestically and internationally.

Bridging the Skill Gap

India, with over 260 million students in 1.5 million schools and more than 40 million in higher education, holds one of the largest student populations globally.

Yet, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) stands



INDIA, WITH OVER 260 MILLION STUDENTS IN 1.5 MILLION SCHOOLS AND MORE THAN 40 MILLION IN HIGHER EDUCATION, HOLDS ONE OF THE LARGEST STUDENT POPULATIONS GLOBALLY

at approximately 32 per cent, compelling many to seek employment in the unorganised sector — a domain fraught with exploitation and underpayment.

Vocational education has the potential to effectively address this gap. By focusing on industry-relevant skills, these programs not only enhance employment opportunities but also foster the development of future entrepreneurs.

Countries like Germany and Switzerland exemplify successful dual vocational education systems, blending classroom learning with hands-on industry experience.

India could adopt similar frameworks, ensuring students gain practical exposure, which is increasingly necessary in an evolving job landscape.

Adapting to Emerging Technologies

As technological innovation accelerates, vocational programs must incorporate modern skills relating to AI, IoT, and cloud computing. The Central

Board of Secondary Education's (CBSE) initiative to introduce AI and IoT into the curriculum for Classes VI to X is a step in the right direction. With over 20,000 teachers trained in these areas, reaching approximately 350,000 students, substantial progress is evident.

However, a 2022 survey indicated that 31 per cent of teachers are still not proficient with digital tools, while a 2023 report found that 49 per cent feel unprepared to address the impact of AI on education. To tackle these challenges effectively, the public and private sectors must invest in comprehensive teacher training that equips educators for a changing marketplace.

Collaborations with ed-tech companies to bring AI-powered learning tools into classrooms can further support this transition, ensuring that students receive training that is both modern and relevant.

Addressing Regional Disparities Although the Union Education Minister has asserted that states are beginning to implement NEP 2020, the pace of implementation varies greatly.

Reports indicate that Haryana has set an ambitious target to fully implement the National Education Policy (NEP) by 2025, aiming to increase the gross enrollment ratio of girls in higher education from 32 per cent to over 50 per cent by 2030.

However, discrepancies across states — due to funding shortages, trained faculty shortages, and bureaucratic inertia — not only create inconsistencies but also significantly undermine the policy's potential.

To ensure a level playing field, a centralised monitoring mechanism is essential to track progress and enforce uniform implementation across states.

Conclusion NEP 2020 presents a transformative opportunity for integrating vocational education into mainstream schooling, but its success hinges on strategic implementation, sufficient funding, infrastructure development, and robust teacher training.

As India aspires to become a \$10 trillion economy, investing in a comprehensive vocational education system is not just an educational imperative — it's a vital economic strategy.

By addressing the barriers to implementation, India can empower its youth with essential skills, fostering innovation and adaptability that contribute to national growth.

A well-implemented vocational skills education framework represents a win-win for both students and the government, laying the groundwork for a skilled and self-reliant workforce that is pivotal to India's economic future.

(The writer is a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and a Network Member of India International Skill Centres, an initiative of the Government of India. Views are personal)

How PM Modi's vision revitalised BIMSTEC

Over the years, through initiatives like the 'Neighbourhood First and Act East policies,' the MAHASAGAR vision, and a consistent push for institutional reform and regional connectivity, PM Modi has transformed BIMSTEC into a vibrant platform for cooperation

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was established in 1997 with the promise of fostering deeper regional collaboration among countries bordering the Bay of Bengal.

Yet, for nearly two decades, the organisation remained relatively dormant — its potential untapped, its purpose loosely defined. That changed in 2016 when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi injected fresh momentum into the grouping, anchoring it firmly within India's broader regional and global strategic vision.

A Strategic Turn in Goa

The turning point came when PM Modi extended a special invitation to BIMSTEC leaders to attend a Leaders' Retreat in Goa, held on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in 2016. This wasn't just a diplomatic courtesy — it was a strategic pivot. By placing BIMSTEC on the same platform as BRICS, Modi elevated its visibility and importance. His message was clear: India viewed the Bay of Bengal region as central to its regional diplomacy, economic connectivity, and maritime strategy. Since then, Modi's personal involvement and consistent emphasis on BIMSTEC have transformed it from a symbolic forum to an active and evolving regional body. In a move that underscored his commitment, he again invited BIMSTEC leaders to attend his swearing-in ceremony in 2019 — signalling continuity, priority, and seriousness of intent.

Vision-Driven Diplomacy:

What sets PM Modi's leadership apart is his ability to integrate BIMSTEC within a broader web of policies that collectively enhance India's regional and global role. His Neighbourhood First policy, Act East strategy, and the MAHASAGAR initiative are all geared toward strengthening India's ties in its immediate and extended neighbourhood.

At the same time, his Indo-Pacific vision promotes a free, open, and inclusive region, aligning with global efforts to ensure stability and cooperation across maritime domains.

This policy convergence has lent BIMSTEC a new strategic dynamism. The group now finds itself not just an extension of South Asian cooperation, but a crucial bridge connecting South Asia and Southeast Asia, linking economies, people, and futures.

Strengthening the Institutions

While BIMSTEC's Secretariat had existed for some time, a significant leap in its institutional development came in May 2024 with the formal adop-



SHEFALI GUPTA

tion of the BIMSTEC Charter. This milestone endowed the organisation with an international legal identity, clearly defined principles, and an institutional architecture that allows it to function with more coherence and purpose.

Further boosting its multilateral capacity, India appointed Indra Mani Pandey — an experienced diplomat known for his multilateral acumen — as the Secretary-General. India also committed USD 1 million to enhance the Secretariat's institutional and capacity-building efforts.

India's active diplomatic engagement has also seen it hosting the BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July 2024, followed by an informal meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September 2024. These events marked a new phase of energised diplomacy and

engagement, laying the foundation for greater regional integration.

A Holistic Agenda

One of the standout features of BIMSTEC under India's leadership has been the expansion and organisation of its agenda.

The grouping now operates through seven key pillars, each led by a different member nation, allowing for greater ownership and specialised focus.

India leads the all-important Security pillar, while Bangladesh helms Trade, Investment, and Development.

Bhutan focuses on Environment and Climate Change, Myanmar leads on Agriculture and Food Security, Nepal on People-to-People Contacts, Sri Lanka on Science and Technology & Innovation, and Thailand on Connectivity.

This structured approach has allowed BIMSTEC to evolve into a results-oriented body, addressing challenges and harnessing opportunities across the spectrum — from trade and security to climate action and innovation. And the

change is visible in its approach.

India's Pillars of Focus

India's leadership in the Security domain has seen the development of a robust legal framework to tackle terrorism, violent extremism, and transnational crimes — issues of shared concern across the region. Efforts are underway to harmonise counter-terror frameworks, intelligence-sharing, and maritime cooperation. On Connectivity, India has placed particular emphasis on developing physical, digital, and energy links. The BIMSTEC Energy Centre, hosted in Bengaluru, coordinates initiatives toward regional grid interconnectivity.

This aligns with PM Modi's bold vision of "One World, One Sun, One Grid", which aims to create a globally interconnected solar energy grid. In the area of Sustainability and Disaster Management, India has positioned itself as a responsible regional partner. It hosts regular disaster management exercises involving member countries and leads the BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate in Noida, playing a critical

role in forecasting, climate data sharing, and early warning systems.

Given the region's high vulnerability to natural disasters, this collaboration holds immense practical value.

Fostering Regional Identity

Beyond policy and security, PM Modi has consistently championed the softer dimensions of regional cooperation — particularly culture, youth engagement, and environmental consciousness. These elements have been brought to the forefront through a series of vibrant events that promote shared identity and regional pride. Recent highlights include the BIMSTEC Aquatic Championship in Delhi (Feb 2024), the BIMSTEC Business Summit (Aug 2024), and cultural showcases like the BIMSTEC Pavilion at the Surajkund Mela (Feb 2025) and the BIMSTEC cultural troupe's performance at Bali Jatra in Cuttack (Nov 2024). Youth engagement, too, has been given a fresh thrust through the BIMSTEC Youth Summit in Ahmedabad and the BIMSTEC Youth-Led Climate Change Conference in Delhi, both held in February 2025. Another notable milestone was the launch of the BIMSTEC-India Marine Research Network in February 2024, which aims to foster scientific collaboration and ocean sustainability.

From Goa to Bangkok

The vision articulated by PM Modi during the 2016 Goa Retreat continues to shape BIMSTEC's trajectory. The decisions taken during that seminal retreat are coming to fruition, most recently in Bangkok, where two key developments have been unveiled: the adoption of the BIMSTEC Vision 2030 and the Eminent Persons Group Report. These initiatives provide a long-term roadmap and intellectual foundation.

Conclusion

Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BIMSTEC has transitioned from a dormant regional forum to a vibrant, forward-looking grouping. India's proactive engagement — rooted in strategic vision and people-centric diplomacy, has redefined the role of BIMSTEC in the 21st century. What began as a diplomatic gesture in Goa has evolved into a robust regional movement.

As BIMSTEC continues to chart its course, India's leadership remains central to its strength, stability, and success, ensuring the Bay of Bengal

(The writer is Founder President, Om Aarohanam Sansthan (Janani Saraksha Yojana) and a BJP functionary. Views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Auto stocks rally as Trump considers pausing tariffs

Auto stocks rallied on Tuesday after US President Donald Trump said that he might temporarily exempt the industry from tariffs that were announced earlier. Shares of Samvardhana Motherhood International jumped 8.17 per cent, Bharat Forge surged 6.86 per cent, Tata Motors rallied 4.50 per cent and MRF soared 4.50 per cent on the BSE. The stock of Hero MotoCorp climbed 4.02 per cent, Eicher Motors (3.45 per cent), TVS Motor (3.06 per cent), Ashok Leyland (3.04 per cent), Bajaj Auto (2.79 per cent), Mahindra & Mahindra (2.42 per cent) and Maruti (2.15 per cent). The BSE auto index surged 3.39 per cent to 47,618.30. "Trump also suggested he might grant exemptions on the 25 per cent levies for automobiles that are already in place, leading to a sharp rally in auto stocks," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst at Lemnons Markets Desk, said. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,577.63 points or 2.10 per cent to settle at 76,734.89. The NSE Nifty surged 500 points or 2.19 per cent to 23,328.55. "Auto stocks gained on potential tariff relief," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Investments Limited, said.



Capacit bags Rs 220-cr contract from Raymond group firm

Capacit'e Infraprojects Ltd on Tuesday said it has received the Letter of Intent (LOI) from Raymond Ltd's step-down subsidiary TenX Realty for a realty project contract worth Rs 220 crore. The civil core and shell works for the project in Bandra east include two basements, G-23 floors and non-tower area, Capacit'e Infra said. "We have been entrusted by our client, Raymond Limited's realty division, with repeat orders through TenX Realty Limited," said Rahul Katyal, Managing Director at Capacit'e Infraprojects Ltd. "With a strong track record of project delivery, we're confident in our ability to meet timelines and exceed client expectations. We are expanding our portfolio with quality orders and showcasing our growing expertise in project execution," he added.



IHCL expands footprint with 100 new locations

Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL) on Tuesday said it has expanded its footprint with 100 new locations, comprising 74 signings and 26 openings in FY2025, taking the total portfolio to 380 hotels. "In the last fiscal, we clocked a record 74 signings with over 95 per cent of these signings being capital light and resulted in an industry-leading pipeline of 137 hotels. In alignment with our strategic roadmap 'Accelerate 2030', a significant share of the signings were in Gateway and Ginger brands, reflective of the fast-growing Upscale and Midscale segments in India. "This year, we continued to build scale in each of the brands with Ginger crossing a 100-hotel portfolio and Vivanta reaching the over 50 hotel mark," IHCL Executive Vice President - Real Estate and Development, Suma Venkatesh said in a statement. In line with IHCL's strategy of growing with the Taj brand in key international markets, the company has forayed into the cities of Bahrain and Ras Al Khaimah in the Middle East with over 800 keys, strengthening its footprint in the region, she added.

India better placed to deal with Trump tariffs: ITC Chairman

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is much better placed to deal with disruptions emanating from Trump tariffs as there is a possibility of signing of a trade agreement with the US for which discussions are happening at fast pace, ITC Chairman Sanjiv Puri said.

US President Donald Trump imposed reciprocal tariffs on many countries, including India, which he later postponed by three months with the exception of China on whom a 145 per cent tariff has been slapped. However, a 10 per cent additional duty on exports to the US will continue. The reciprocal tariffs have been suspended until July 9.

When asked about the impact of such tariffs on the domestic industry, Puri said it will be difficult to say how it will evolve, but India will be much better placed in this.

"It's difficult to say how it will evolve, but my own sense is that at the end of it, I think India is going to be much better placed, because we do see the possibility of several FTAs (free trade agreements) being inked, which industry has been looking forward to for some time, hopefully during the year, whether it's the EU, UK, and, of course, the US, where there is, I think discussions, dialogue happening at a faster rate," he said.

India and the US have been



India and the US have been engaged in negotiating a Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) since March. Both sides have targeted to conclude the first phase of the pact by fall (September-October) of this year with an aim to more than double the bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030

engaged in negotiating a Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) since March. Both sides have targeted to conclude the first phase of the pact by fall (September-October) of this year with an aim to more than double the bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030.

In international parlance, trade pacts are described as FTA, CECA (Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement), CEPA (Comprehensive Economic

Partnership Agreement) or BTA. In these pacts, two trading partners either significantly reduce or eliminate import duties on maximum number of goods traded between them.

Puri noted that though India's consumption-driven economy may face some short-term uncertainties, its levers of competitiveness, digitisation and future-ready portfolio has much to offer. "So while short-term uncer-

ainty, unpredictability may be causing some kind of impact on global growth also...a consequent little impact on India will be also there," he said while speaking in a fireside chat - Resilience and Growth in the New World Disorder - at AIMA summit.

On ITC, Puri said it is also a "more domestic-focused industry" and may face some impact due to the US tariffs.

He emphasised the need for agility and empowered teams to navigate rapid changes in the tariff structure.

ITC's strategy to deal with uncertainties includes diversifying its portfolio, investing in sustainable packaging, and leveraging digitalization and innovation. The company emphasises supply-side resilience, climate-proofing infrastructure, and agile, empowered teams.

ITC's human capital development focuses on integrated rural development hubs and vocational training. Sustainability is integrated into corporate strategy with initiatives like Climate Smart Agriculture and green infrastructure.

The company aims to balance economic, social, and environmental goals, he said.

Puri also highlighted how the quick commerce revolution is challenging traditional FMCG players, necessitating new skills and modes of operation.

India to go for trade liberalisation with US

in-person trade talks likely to start next month

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has decided to follow the trade liberalisation path with the US, and both countries are negotiating a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) for which in-person talks are expected to begin next month, senior government officials said on Tuesday.

India and the US are starting negotiations in virtual mode from this week. They have also finalised and signed the terms of reference (ToRs) for the pact.

India and the US have been engaged in negotiating a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) since March. Both sides have targeted to conclude the first phase of the pact by the fall (September-October) of this year, with an aim to more than double the bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 from about USD 191 billion currently.

Negotiations of the various track groups for the pact will start virtually within this week. "We hope to get into physical mode of negotiations may be in the second half of May. So we are on schedule as far as the BTA and its negotiations are concerned," Additional

Secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal told reporters here. He is also the chief negotiator of India for this pact.

Speaking on the agreement, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that the agreement, if finalised, will open huge opportunities for both India and US businesses.

"...There are both concerns as well as opportunities for India in terms of the current tariffs (globally). India has already taken a path, where we will be going for trade liberalisation with the US. There is a clear pathway which we have decided at the leaders' level, and then subsequently meetings have been held.

"Negotiations are going on and we have taken a path of trade liberalisation and BTA. So if we follow that path, then I think not only India's trade with the US will grow...that will also open up opportunities for India and for US as well, he said.

Barthwal added that both countries will gain from this BTA and that is the assumption based on which such trade agreements are finalised and negotiated.



Japan's trade negotiator to visit US for tariff talks

PNS ■ TOKYO

Japan's chief trade negotiator will visit the United States this week for talks aimed at convincing US President Donald Trump to remove tariff measures against the East Asian country, officials said Tuesday.

Economic Revitalisation Minister Ryosei Akazawa will be in Washington from Wednesday to Friday for talks with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, according to Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi.

"The visit is to 'build a relationship of trust' between the two sides, with Japan requesting the US side to drop the tariff measures, Hayashi said. "The government will tackle the challenge and work as one so that we can resolve the issue as soon as possible."

Japan is among the first countries to start negotiations with the US.

"I will carefully think what will best serve Japan's national



interest, what will be most effective and do my utmost in the negotiation," Akazawa told reporters Tuesday.

Trump last week abruptly announced a 90-day pause on the latest series of duties, which put Japan's 24 per cent across-the-board on hold, but the 10 per cent baseline tariff and a 25 per cent tariff on cars, auto parts, steel and aluminum exports to the US are kept in place.

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba described the situation as "a national crisis."

Ishiba, however, told a parliamentary session Monday that "haste makes waste" and that he was in no rush to con-

clude the negotiations with the US. He also said Japan is not retaliating with tariffs against the United States, saying the measures weren't beneficial.

With concerns rising that US tariffs may deal a serious blow to Japan's economy, Ishiba's government seeks to cooperate and exchange views with other countries that support free trade and multilateralism.

Later Monday, Ishiba held telephone talks with Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong about the impact of US tariffs on the two major Asian economies. Ishiba also held phone talks with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer last week.

Radico Khaitan's Abhishek Khaitan enters Whisky Hall of Fame

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

PRNewswire/-- Radico Khaitan Ltd., a titan in the Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) industry and one of the nation's most storied and largest manufacturers, proudly celebrates a momentous milestone as its visionary Managing Director, Abhishek Khaitan, is inducted into the illustrious World Drinks Awards - Hall of Fame.

This distinguished honor marks not only a personal triumph, but also a resounding global recognition of Radico Khaitan's enduring legacy and excellence in the world of spirits.

The induction ceremony took place on April 12, 2025, during the globally renowned Icons of Whisky Awards, held annually as part of the World Drinks Awards. Organised by Whisky Magazine, the platform celebrates the most outstanding individuals and innovations in the global spirits industry. The Hall of Fame

represents the highest individual honour in the whisky world-reserved for trailblazers whose work has made a lasting impact on the industry. Khaitan's inclusion as the 103rd inductee in the Whisky Hall of Fame marks a proud milestone not only for Radico Khaitan, but also for India's expanding footprint in the global premium spirits landscape. The honour recognises his visionary leadership, unwavering commitment to innovation, and tireless efforts in building homegrown Indian brands with worldwide appeal.

Under his leadership, Radico Khaitan has transformed and revolutionised into a future-forward, innovation-led spirits company with a diverse portfolio including Rampur Indian Single Malt Whisky, Jaisalmer Indian Craft Gin, Royal Ranthambore Heritage Collection Whisky, Sangam World Malt Whisky and India's most loved Vodka - Magic Moments.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

TECNO ranked #1 in smartphone connectivity

TECNO, a global mobile brand renowned for its innovative products and cutting-edge technology, has now earned another feather in its cap-recognized as a front-runner in smartphone signal performance, as per the latest TechMark report by TechArc. The comprehensive benchmarking study spotlighted TECNO's power-packed signal-boosting technologies, which are not just reserved for the top-tier flagships but are generously packed across mid-range and entry-level devices too. For TECNO, a strong signal isn't a special feature but a basic that all users must have access to.

ECNO is now positioned as the only smartphone brand providing superior signal quality to a wider consumer base and constantly innovating to deliver a well-connected experience to users. The result, faster downloads, seamless payments, buffer-free entertainment, and calls that don't drop while travelling-best signal every time, everywhere.

Investors' wealth swells by Rs 18.42 L cr in two days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Market investors added Rs 18.42 lakh crore to their wealth in two days of sharp rally in equities echoing a rally in global equities after US President Donald Trump relaxed some of the tariffs on electronics products and hinted at duty revision for automobiles.

Rallying for the second straight session on Tuesday, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,577.63 points or 2.10 per cent to settle at 76,734.89. In two days, the benchmark Sensex has surged 2,887.74 points or 3.91 per cent.



The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms jumped by Rs 18,42,028.91 crore to Rs 4,12,24,362.13 crore (USD 4.81 trillion) in two days. "Buoyancy across global equity markets provided

major support to local benchmarks as recent developments suggest that there could be some solutions to the ongoing tariff war over the next few weeks. However, falling crude oil prices and strong FII fund outflows continue to create a lot of uncertainty among the investors," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 3.21 per cent and midcap index rallied 3.02 per cent on Tuesday.

"Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty jumped more than 2 per cent on account of positive global market cues after US President Trump

announced a temporary tariff relief on phones, computers and popular consumer electronics. He also hinted at possible exemptions on tariffs for imported vehicles and auto parts," Siddhartha Khemka, Head of Research - Wealth Management at Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

All BSE sectoral indices ended higher. Realty zoomed 5.81 per cent, industrials soared 3.76 per cent, capital goods (3.67 per cent), auto (3.39 per cent), consumer discretionary (3.12 per cent), financial services (2.94 per cent) and metal (2.75 per cent).

Manufacturing cluster to be set up near Hisar airport

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

To boost industrial development in Haryana, an Industrial Manufacturing Cluster (IMC) will be established near Maharaja Agrasen Airport in Hisar over approximately 3,000 acres.

The estimated cost of the project is around Rs 4,680 crore. This IMC will be developed jointly by the Haryana government and the National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC), an official statement said here on Tuesday, giving details about a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini. Haryana Civil Aviation

Minister Vipul Goel was also present at the meeting.

In the meeting, the chief minister was apprised by the officials that the Centre, in partnership with state governments, is developing integrated industrial corridors based on multi-modal connectivity to accelerate manufacturing growth and ensure planned urbanisation.

Under the Amritsar-Kolkata Industrial Corridor, industrial townships will be developed in six cities across seven states, with the IMC in Hisar being the largest project, to be developed over nearly 3,000 acres. The cluster will be developed in two phases.

Visament: Helping Indians travel without paperwork

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Two young founders, Vipul Jain and Shubham Jain, started Visament in 2022 to solve a big problem. They saw how confusing and slow the visa process was for many Indians. Their goal was simple: make travel paperwork fast and easy.

Vipul, who comes from a tech and business background, noticed how stressful visa applications were. "The process was outdated and hard to follow. I wanted to make it better using technology," he says.

He teamed up with

Shubham, an expert in operations and customer service. Together, they built Visament—a tech-driven service that helps Indians with visas and travel documents.

Visament began in Jaipur, helping NRIs with OCI cards, passport renewals, and e-visas. From the start, the team focused on making the process clear and simple. "We designed everything to be easy, even for someone doing it for the first time," says Shubham.

As the demand grew, Visament expanded to support tourists, students, and business travelers. Today, they offer



visa help for popular places in Europe, Asia, and North America.

One major achievement was building strong ties with foreign embassies. This helped

Vipul, who comes from a tech and business background, noticed how stressful visa applications were. "The process was outdated and hard to follow. I wanted to make it better using technology," he says

make the process faster and improved success rates. Now, Visament also offers docu-

ment checks, and custom holiday packages.

People trust Visament because they deliver on three key promises: speed, honesty, and support.

Next, the company plans to expand its services to the UK and USA. They aim to be a one-stop shop for travel paperwork for Indians worldwide.

"Our mission is clear," says Vipul. "We want to remove the stress from travel paperwork so people can enjoy their journey." Visament shows how one idea—done right—can make travel easier for thousands of people, and soon, millions.

SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED
SHORT TENDER PAPER NOTIFICATION NO. 01/2025-26
 E-procurement Short tender is invited from the experienced and GST Registered Vendors for "T.S.No: 01/25-26/36/Division of 33KV Kistareddytpet feeder work in Sangareddy Circle) and Material supply T.S.No.01/02/25-26 for Supply of material for chemical resistant coating systems for prevention of chemical deterioration of SS-structures & copings for utilization in Medhaval & Habibnagar Circles". Bid down load starts date & time: 16.04.2025 from 14:00 Hrs. Bid Submission closing date & time: 24.04.2025, 11:14:00 Hrs. Technical bid opening date & time: 25.04.2025, at 14:30 Hrs & Price bid opening date & time: 26.04.2025, at 15:00 Hrs. For further details please visit www.tender.telangana.gov.in or www.igsouthempower.org. Self-Civil Engineer, Operations/OPFR/O No: 06/PPCL/ADVT/1/2025-26, Dt: 15-04-2025 Medhaval Circle, TCSPOCL, Medhaval compound.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA IRRIGATION & CAD DEPARTMENT
"E" PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
 Tender Notice No.: 08/2025-26, Dt: 11.04.2025 (1st Call)
 Name of the Work: I&CADO - FDR-2024- Permanent Restoration to the Bund of Breached portion of Bandham Cheruvu, Narasimhulapet (V), Narasimhulapet (M), Nahabubabad (Dist). Estimated Cost Value: Rs. 28,14,246/-, Tender Documents Available: From 17.04.2025 at 11:30 AM onwards upto 24.04.2025 at 3:00 PM. For more details and for downloading tender documents please visit: <https://tender.telangana.gov.in> Self-Superintending Engineer, OPFR/O No: 06/PPCL/ADVT/1/2025-26, Dt: 15-04-2025 I&CADO, Irrigation Circle, Mahabubabad.

'Hair design has now become an integral part of character delineation in film industry'



TEJAL SINHA
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What do Ranveer Singh's fierce Khilji mane, Saif Ali Khan's mystical Laal Kaptan beard, and a swanky premium barbershop in Mumbai have in common? One man—Darshan Yewalekar. From a small-town boy studying microbiology to becoming the mastermind behind Bollywood's most iconic hair transformations, Darshan's journey is a story of guts, grind, and glorious style. Whether he's crafting a historically accurate look for a period film or giving a Gen Z star a signature edge, Darshan brings cinematic precision to every snip. And now, with D Barbershop, he's turning everyday grooming into an art form. Darshan's evolution into the world of hair design was not a predetermined path. "This journey has been absolutely incredible, especially because I had not even imagined stepping into Bollywood even in my wildest dreams," he says. With a father who was a bank employee and a mother who ran a beauty parlour, Darshan found early exposure to the world of grooming. After completing his 12th grade, he studied microbiology but ultimately pursued his true passion—hair design. His early career saw him assisting a celebrity hairstylist, eventually leading to bigger opportunities. "I had even started a salon early in my career but it didn't work out, and between 2008 to 2012, I struggled financially and

emotionally," he recalls. His breakthrough came with Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Gollyon Ki Rasleela: Ram-Leela. Once he had established himself in the industry, Darshan launched D Barbershop with a vision to introduce "a world-class, premium barbering experience," where grooming would be elevated into a unique, personalized art form. Over the years, the hair design industry has undergone a dramatic transformation, especially with the influence of digital media and celebrity culture. Darshan notes, "In the film industry, the concept of hair design has evolved enormously over the past 10 years and has become an integral part of character delineation." From red carpets to media campaigns, hairstyling has become a key visual component of celebrity personas. "Digital media has completely changed the game," he adds. Clients now walk in with reference images of actors, influencers, or even AI-generated styles, expecting precision. Social media has accelerated trend cycles and increased the demand for innovation. "There's constant pressure to innovate and stay ahead of trends." The shift from on-set styling to entrepreneurship required more than just creative talent. "A prerequisite for any business is a vision and a clear understanding of how you are going to materialise it," says Darshan. Managing a barbershop meant learning the ropes of people management, client servicing, and branding. His time on sets—often dealing

with extreme pressure, last-minute changes, and tight deadlines—prepared him for the demands of running a business. "The ability to adapt and evolve is crucial." Darshan's approach blends artistic integrity with commercial sensibility. "For films, the character's authenticity takes priority, so creativity is driven by the script. In commercial styling, it's more about trends and personal expression," he explains. At D Barbershop, he combines both approaches, ensuring each client walks out with a style that is fashionable yet deeply personal. "We really work hard on not just cutting hair, but crafting a look which is curated for you," he says, adding that their unique method aims to put Indian barbering on the global map. When it comes to biopics, authenticity is key. "A director's brief is very important," Darshan shares. "Sanjay Leela Bhansali always visualises characters very minutely and his inputs laid the foundation of the work I did with Ranveer in Bajirao Mastani and Padmaavat." Period research becomes essential when visual references are scarce. In '83, Darshan and Ranveer had to embody the legendary cricketer Kapil Dev. "It turned out to be very challenging. We had to accurately create a character mirroring Kapil Dev's distinct persona, his aura and his legacy." Preparing an actor's look for a biopic involves an extensive process. "The director's brief, the world they are visualising, and extensive research of every available image, reference or



video are very important," he says. Look tests, wigs, and constant monitoring on set are all part of the job. Every project presents its own set of challenges. "In Bajirao Mastani, Ranveer had to sport a bald look, while in Padmaavat, he blended his natural hair into prosthetic hair to create Khilji's long mane." Darshan is a firm believer in constant learning. "If you are passionate about your craft, you will continuously seek out new information," he says. He stays updated by studying international cinema and the work of global hair design icons. At D Barbershop, traditional grooming techniques are blended with cutting-edge tools and calming therapies to create a unique experience. Working with established stars like Saif Ali Khan presents a unique set of challenges. "The only challenge is to constantly innovate and go beyond what has been done before," he shares. For the Netflix series Jewel Thief, Darshan created a mix of classic and contemporary looks for Saif. With Ibrahim, it's about crafting an identity independent of his lineage. "He has a very sharp face and a natural style of his own, so we experiment a lot to enhance that uniqueness." Some transformations have left a lasting impact on both the actors and Darshan himself. He recalls Laal Kaptan with Saif Ali Khan as one of the most immersive experiences. "We did around eight look tests before finalizing his Naga Sadhu look. Even on the night before the shoot, we were still adjusting the beard. That

level of detail made a huge difference—once Saif saw himself in the full look, he completely became the character." Hair design, Darshan believes, plays a critical role in enhancing an actor's performance. "A lot of research and preparation goes into hair design to enhance a character's believability and an actor's performance," he says. The script, era, and director's vision all inform the creative process. For instance, in '83, the script itself offered detailed insights into Kapil Dev's personality, aiding Darshan in creating a look that was both authentic and visually compelling. At D Barbershop, Darshan applies the same precision and innovation seen in his film work. "Every cut is tailored—there's no one-style-fits-all approach. We also keep up with international trends, so whether someone wants a classic cut or something experimental, we can deliver," he says, adding that quality control is non-negotiable. Creating an iconic character look is a collaborative effort. "The look of a character is a collective effort—hairstyling, costumes, and makeup all have to be in sync. The best results come when everyone is on the same page and working towards a common vision," he shares. Looking ahead, Darshan believes personalization is the future. "People want styles that are unique to them, not just copied from a celebrity," he says. In the world of entertainment too, he sees hair design gaining even more prominence—shaping personas not only on screen but off it as well.



Celebrity hair designer Darshan Yewalekar has transformed the looks of iconic film characters and stars like Ranveer Singh and Saif Ali Khan with precision and passion. From humble beginnings to leading large-scale transformations on Bollywood sets, in an exclusive conversation with The Pioneer, he shares insights on working with Sanjay Leela Bhansali, designing for biopics, and building his premium grooming space, while emphasizing that hair is not just style, but storytelling

Rewiring organisational mindsets!

PNS|HYDERABAD

With more than 20 years of experience working with leading companies and governments on four continents Shruiti Swaroop is a true game-changer in the DEI and HR fields - yeah, that's a lot of globetrotting! She founded EMBRACE Consulting in 2019 and has since assisted more than 550 customers worldwide in improving their workplace culture, leadership and productivity. But here's the thing: her goal as a global leader, HR Advisor and entrepreneur is to empower people and promote inclusive communities through projects like her impactful "Find Your Voice" campaign and her collaborations with the International Inclusion Alliance and ERTZ Academy. And it's no surprise that she's earned recognition as a thought leader and award-winning author, with TEDx talks and speaking engagements to her name - she's the real deal! Take a look at this exclusive interview to learn more.

What does it take to rewire organisational mindsets at scale in a world where performance is still frequently valued more highly than people?

It takes a multifaceted, multi-layered strategy to rewire any corporate thinking at scale. Among the things we've observed in that function are that the leadership must have a clear idea of what they hope to accomplish and how. For people to comprehend and support this vision, it must be effectively conveyed and ingrained throughout the organisation. The ideal mindset needs to be actively encouraged and modeled by leaders. Leaders are viewed as role models by the public; if they only articulate the idea without acting on it, the entire plan will fail. It's critical to communicate the changes, their justifications and their advantages in a regular and open manner. We need to be willing to welcome and accept candid conversations.

What have you learned about the applicability—or limitations—of DEI frameworks from international exposure?

The idea of inclusion is universal and consistent across all regions. The difficulties that people encounter are the same regardless of our location. The problems of family and entrepreneurship are often similar or different for the women I have mentored in South Africa, Belgium and Uganda. The fundamental ideas of justice, equity, and equality are still the same, but the cultural setting and opposition to change have changed. For instance, while LGBTQAI is widely accepted in some regions of the world, we encounter opposition from both individuals and even discussions about the notion in the majority of other regions.

What have been the most surprising things you've learned about leadership?

The most significant characteristic that unites leaders from all sectors and regions is their strong emotional intelligence, strategic thinking and ability to look ten years into the future. The majority of executives also give incremental elements that support growth a lot of weight. They are aware that when one remains consistent, seemingly insignificant things can result in significant improvements. Boardroom discussions also center on how the past influences the future, yet in order to advance, we must take measured risks. Boardroom discussions also center on how the past influences the future, yet in order to advance, we must take measured risks.



Another obvious characteristic of effective leaders is their capacity to accept responsibility, empower their groups and persuade key stakeholders to promote change.

Your "Find Your Voice" campaign is both poignant and intensely intimate. How did that phrase come to be and how has your personal voice changed over time to negotiate exclusionary and power structures?

We learn more the more we travel. Having visited more than 40 countries, met women from all over the world and mentored them, I have noticed a commonality: abuse is a widespread issue that is not discussed enough. We talk about domestic abuse because it is obvious, but we don't talk about emotional abuse because it is a part of who we are. The majority of jokes define and reflect our personalities. Every joke, if we listen carefully, reveals a lot about the individual and how they view the world. The Find Your Voice Campaign, in my opinion, was born out of the urgent need to make sure that individuals could express what they were experiencing—the emotions that are not expressed but must be expressed. Standing up for what I believe in and speaking truth to power are two ways that the campaign and what I do have shown up over the years. Has it been simple? Obviously not! Has it been rewarding? Absolutely!

What keeps you up at night and what gives you hope?

Many people are criticising inclusion because, although some recent attempts were sincere, many of them were about people pushing this to the next level of entitlement. It is hoped that, like any change, which swings in extremes like a pendulum, this extreme behaviour will eventually subside and the idea of inclusion will find a balance that is both sustainable and acceptable to everybody.

How do you strike a balance between thought leadership and the equally important task of silent, long-term transformation within organisations?

For me, inclusion is deliberate and non-inclusion bothers me on many levels. I've learned how to use my personal organisational experiences in my talks and use what I've learned to promote long-term change. My own outlook on life, humility and capacity to accept that things will fail a hundred times before they progress have all changed as a result of this. The most important lesson I've learned is that sometimes the most impactful work is done offstage, quietly breaking down barriers, changing processes and fostering

trust. Therefore, it's acceptable to occasionally go unnoticed or unheard, particularly if you're interested in long-term, sustainable change.

Have there been times when your work approach had to change due to your own personal development?

Indeed, every setback, every achievement and every experience I've had throughout the years have subtly shaped and reshaped my own personal development. These have subtly but significantly changed my perspective on the world and how I have presented myself professionally. I have realised how frequently I have been acting in accordance with inherited conventions rather than true ideals as a result of my life experiences, a personal loss and a profound discourse. Naturally, this realisation causes us to speak up in different ways in rooms, posing new queries or questioning presumptions that I had previously held. For instance, losing both of my parents changed the way I saw life and now I talk about spirituality in leadership just as much as I talk about inclusion. It is impossible to separate the two. My personal experiences have also helped me identify my strengths and what I have to offer. One question I pose to everyone I meet is, "What do you have to offer?"

The phrase "psychological safety" is frequently used but hardly understood. What does it mean outside of the textbook?

Fundamentally, psychological safety is about fostering an atmosphere in which people feel comfortable taking interpersonal risks without worrying about embarrassment or repercussions. It is not just about being kind. In a workplace that is genuinely psychologically safe, people are free to express themselves honestly in meetings, even if it is not popular. Mistakes are discussed as teaching opportunities rather than being buried; junior team members politely challenge senior decisions. Feedback travels sideways, upward and downward. Disagreement and laughter may coexist in the same space. It virtually ever occurs in the world we live in. This is mostly due to the fact that people are motivated by their own fears, hopes, expectations and insecurities. The most important thing I have observed leaders failing to recognise is that everyone is accountable for this; when we establish a psychologically safe environment, we establish it everywhere, whether on a personal or professional level.

To have an impact on systemic frameworks, you co-founded the ERTZ Academy and the International Inclusion Alliance. Which procedures or frameworks do you think are essential for any company in the twenty-first century to be genuinely inclusive?

For 21st-century enterprises to be truly inclusive, equity must be ingrained in their processes, culture, and structures, going beyond superficial DEI pledges. To establish a truly inclusive environment, a variety of organisational rules, procedures, systems, awareness and programs that develop the culture from the ground up are needed. In-depth research on the real problems that lead to a non-inclusive workplace and strategies for fostering an inclusive and psychologically safe culture may be found in my book, "Microaggressions at Workplace."

How do you resolve the conflict between promoting representation and making sure the systems they are joining are actually prepared to assist them as a mentor of up-and-coming leaders, particularly women?

Without changing the structures people are entering, advocating for representation may inadvertently expose people to danger, tokenism, or fatigue. A layered, truthful and systems-aware approach—what I refer to as a "Triangle Approach"—is necessary to navigate this environment. Structural change and representation should be co-created concurrently, not sequentially. We must advocate for representation in order to support systemic improvement; we cannot wait for the system to be 'perfect.' We must provide success-promoting scaffolding before or in tandem with diversifying teams, including mentorship programs, inclusive leadership training, psychological safety and transparent feedback systems that enable marginalised perspectives to be heard and taken into consideration. Engage marginalised communities in transforming the processes, policies, and culture—not as a favour, but as co-creators of equity. The phrase "we're doing this with you" should replace "we're doing this for you." Finally, when we carry out the aforementioned tasks, we must exercise caution to avoid becoming mired in tokenism and the weight of representation. Leaders must be sincere, genuine, and able to live up to their words. They must be ready for the discomfort and be prepared to question customs, power relationships, and routines. Inclusive coaching is one way to accomplish this. All of the aforementioned points are crucial because systems remain unchanged unless the people in charge are prepared to adapt.

LESS-IS-MORE Minimal yet effective skincare essential

Less-is-more is catching fire in the realm of beauty and self-care. In the domain of skincare, more and more women are discovering minimalism as an answer to elaborate 10-step routines and a veritable never-ending array of products. This method is relatively straightforward: choose fewer options, opt for quality, and concentrate on a few key points that target specific needs in the skin without over-saturating it. A minimalist skincare routine includes three significant steps: cleansing, moisturizing, and sun protection. These three steps form the foundation of healthy skin and can be adjusted according to the specific needs of each individual's skin type and concern.

CLEANSING

Cleansing is the backbone of any routine. A gentle cleanser removes dirt, oil, and makeup without stripping the skin of its natural oils. Opt for sulfate-free and pH-balanced formulations to maintain the skin's barrier. Over-cleansing or harsh cleansers can disrupt this barrier, leading to dryness and irritation.

MOISTURISING

Moisturizing is important to keep hydrated and support the skin's natural repair. Oily skin types can use a lightweight, non-comedogenic moisturizer, while dry or sensitive skin types can use more decadent formulas with ceramides or hyaluronic acid. Well-moisturized skin barrier is healthier and better able to fight environmental stressors.

SUN PROTECTION

Sun protection is perhaps the most important and least remembered practice. It protects the skin from harmful UV rays that primarily cause premature ageing and skin cancer, using a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. Therefore, sunscreens are no substitute but rather a non-negotiable element in practice.

SERUMS

The beauty of minimalism is that it's adaptable. A minimalist routine does not exclude treatments for specific concerns like acne or hyperpigmentation but encourages selective use of active ingredients such as retinoids, niacinamide, or vitamin C. Introducing them gradually prevents irritation and ensures effectiveness.

Moreover, a minimalist skincare approach is kind to your skin, environment, and wallet. Fewer products mean less packaging waste and a more sustainable lifestyle. Ultimately, the "less-is-more" philosophy is about understanding that healthy, glowing skin is achievable without overcomplicating your routine. You can embrace a streamlined yet effective skincare regimen that respects your skin and the planet by choosing products mindfully and using them consistently.

(The author, Dr. Nirupama Parwanda, is a Dermatologist & Founder of Zolie Skin Clinic.)



Lakshmi Manchu



Teach For Change Annual Fundraiser 2025, a star-studded evening supporting education was held in Hyderabad. Rhea Chakraborty headlined Lakshmi Manchu's Teach For Change Annual Fundraiser 2025 at Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre, co-hosted by HICC. The evening was graced by distinguished chief guests, including Telangana Ministers D Sridhar Babu and Konda Surekha



Rhea Chakraborty



Anasuya



Tejaswi



Payal Rajput



Sridevi



Hebah Patel



Saina Nehwal



Eesha Rebba



Manju Manchu



Ruksar

PARTY

Photos by - SV Chary

The Ashoka School of Business (ASB), a premier institute under the Ashoka Group of Institutions, held its convocation ceremony with grandeur and dignity at its campus. Governor of Telangana Jishnu Dev Varma graced the event and delivered the convocation address, emphasizing ethical leadership, continuous learning and responsible entrepreneurship



The IAA Olive Crown Awards celebrated excellence in sustainability communication and Tempest's win reflecting the agency's growing leadership in purpose-driven creativity. The award-winning "Fast Fashion" campaign used modern AI tools to generate visually arresting imagery that captured the devastating environmental cost of fast fashion. Focusing on how the textile industry is the largest gold win at the Olive Crown Awards, it stands as a testament to Tempest's enduring focus on work that not only builds brands but also shapes conversations

The demand for folk songs on social media is high. Wise Studio and Srinivasa Entertainment Production Company launched a song with the name *O City Bava* at Wise Studio, Filmnagar. Folk music takes a heartfelt turn with the release of "*O City Bava*", the latest single from rising/renowned artists Samskruti Reddy and Dhee Rohann. The track blends traditional folk elements with modern storytelling, promising a soulful experience for listeners and viewers around the world. Lyricist and director Shraavan Nalla, music director Pawan Sesha, choreographer Vishal, actresses Samskruti Reddy and Dhee Rohann, and producer Srinivas Kalluri attended the song launch.



Freedom Healthy Cooking Oils on Tuesday unveiled its new refreshing pack of Freedom Groundnut Oil and introduced a new digital initiative by compiling a delightful collection of traditional Indian pickle and chutney recipes on their brand website launch by P. Chandra Shekhara Reddy, Senior Vice President, Freedomhealthyoil.com. This initiative aims to celebrate India's rich culinary heritage and provide home cooks with authentic recipes to complement their meals.

Dr. Ravichandra Vattipalli, a leading Robotic Knee Replacement Surgeon, achieved a remarkable milestone in orthopedic surgery by performing India's first robotic knee replacement for complex cases at Care Hospitals, Visakhapatnam. During a success meet on April 15, 2025, he showcased this groundbreaking achievement, involving a 50-year-old patient with a challenging medical history. Utilizing the advanced Velys Robotic System, Dr. Vattipalli corrected the patient's deformity and performed a total knee replacement in a single procedure, eliminating the need for multiple staged surgeries. This innovative surgery provided immediate pain relief and expedited recovery, demonstrating

the transformative power of robotic technology in orthopedics. Dr. Vattipalli's pioneering work at Care Hospitals signifies a new era in high-risk orthopedic care, emphasizing the potential of advanced surgical techniques for improved patient outcomes.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



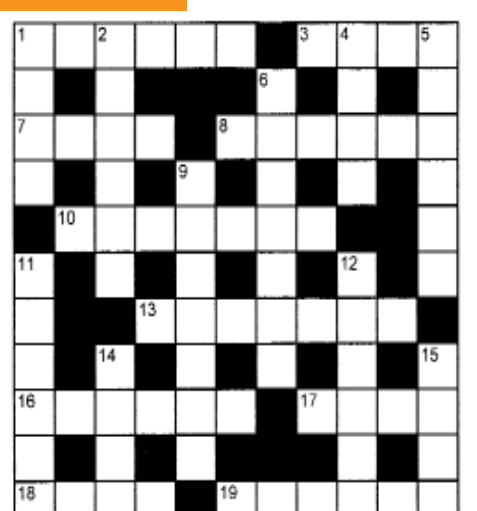
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

Yesterday's solution

2	3	7	9	6	8	4	5	1
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9	4	1	2	6	6	3	7	8
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8	7	2	3	4	9	1	6	5

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

ACROSS

- Cleaned with water
- Small town
- A wartime explosive
- One quarter of thirty-six
- A robber at sea
- Old-aged
- Using a shovel
- Talented, skillful
- Wicked
- Gritty stuff on the beach
- Connected together
- Light wind
- Find these in a cookbook
- Pieces of cut bread
- Not level
- Stitched
- Pleased

DOWN

- Close and open one eye quickly
- Unmarried
- 4-gg-shaped



GINGER MEGGS



'I FELT LIKE THIS ROLE WOULD COMPLETELY CHANGE THE COURSE OF MY CAREER'



In a candid chat with *The Pioneer*, actress Apsara Rani opens up about her transformative role as Bhargavi Reddy in the Telugu political drama *Racharikam*, now streaming on Lionsgate Play. From shedding her glamorous image to embracing the raw intensity of a 90s-era political leader, Apsara shares how the emotionally charged story resonated with her personal experiences

TEJAL SINHA
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In *Racharikam*, Apsara Rani steps into one of her most layered and intense roles yet—playing Bhargavi Reddy, a strong-willed woman navigating the volatile political terrain of 1980s Rachakonda. The film, which premiered in theatres on January 31 and is now streaming on Lionsgate Play, marks a significant shift in Apsara's acting journey—showcasing her in a rustic, performance-oriented avatar that has surprised even her close ones. For Apsara, *Racharikam* offered more than just a powerful script—it was a long-awaited opportunity to break out of glam-centric roles and take on a character with depth. "Honestly, I was looking for a powerful role as an actor, which I feel I wasn't able to get before. I kept rejecting a lot of films because I realized something was always missing. But when this came to me, I felt like it would completely change the course of my career," she says. "I feel very grateful—by God's grace, I got the role at such an early stage of my journey." Bhargavi Reddy's character is a blend of political intensity, emotional vulnerability, and inner conflict—elements Apsara found deeply resonant with her own life. "Personal experiences helped me understand her. Every woman at some point feels a little unwanted or unimportant, especially when it comes to decision-making in families," she shares. "I could relate to that. I come from a very traditional background, and growing up I did face restrictions—being told not to go out alone, or not to do certain things. Bhargavi has faced similar barriers, and that emotional grounding helped me

portray her truthfully." The emotional complexity of the role challenged Apsara to push her boundaries. "I played a more mature character than my real age, so it was definitely challenging," she says. "But I had a young, passionate team with me—everyone was so dedicated. That energy helped me immensely." Since *Racharikam* is set in the backdrop of the late 1980s and 90s, Apsara had to make a conscious effort to unlearn modern mannerisms and embody the physicality and grace of a traditional Andhra woman. "We worked extensively on the look—the hairstyle, costumes, body language, even the way I sat or ate," she reveals. "I stopped gymming for a while. I didn't want to look like a modern, gym-toned actor playing a rural politician. That would've killed the authenticity." Her transformation wasn't just physical—it was mental and emotional, and one scene in particular left a lasting impact. "There's this moment when Bhargavi meets her lover, Shiva, after seven years of him being in jail. She hugs him with the same innocence from their college days, but he pulls back, seeing her as someone else's wife now," Apsara recounts. "That moment broke me. I cried on set and continued crying in my caravan. That feeling of how time changes people and love—it was overwhelming." The film was helmed by debutant directors Ishwar and Suresh Lankalapalli, and it was their passion that sealed Apsara's decision to come on board. "Ishwar gave me the narration in a language I was comfortable with. The moment I heard it, I knew I had to do this film. I didn't care if it was an experimental film or if they were new directors," she says. "Their belief in the story was so strong, and my intuition just

said yes. Every cell in my brain screamed, 'Go for it!'" Now that *Racharikam* is streaming, viewers across the country are seeing a different side of Apsara—one that her close circle had been rooting for all along. "My friends and family were shocked when they saw the trailer. I looked absolutely unrecognizable," she laughs. "They've seen me dance and do glam roles, but this time, they saw me perform. Even my conservative relatives were proud. They finally saw me do something substantial." The actress believes the film will resonate widely. "It has all the elements people love—South masala, action, songs, a gripping storyline. It's folk, raw, rustic, and very Rayalaseema. Films like this aren't made often anymore," she says. "Even North Indians will enjoy it. It has that strong 90s flavour and a solid emotional arc." Having portrayed a fierce political figure, Apsara is now gravitating towards roles that continue to push the envelope. "I've always wanted to play a politician—and I got to do it so early in my career," she smiles. "Next, I'm playing a cop in *Blood Roses*. And one day, I really want to play a thief! Or maybe do a simple college love story." For her, the thrill lies in doing something new every time. "I get bored easily, so I want each role to challenge me. I like pressure—it brings out the best in me." While her path has firmly led her into the world of cinema, Apsara reflects on her alternate career paths with a touch of humour and honesty. "I studied computer science engineering, but I would've made a very bad engineer," she admits. "Maybe I'd be a yoga teacher, or a dancer, or even an interior designer—something creative for sure. But every time I'm in front of the camera, I feel like this is exactly where I belong."

Acting is easy, but producing is the real challenge: Sumaya Reddy

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Sumaya Reddy wears many hats in *Dear Uma*—she's not only the female lead but also the producer and the writer of the story. Originally from Anantapur and holding a degree in Aviation from Hyderabad, Sumaya first came up with the film's concept during the COVID-19 pandemic. "I wrote a script during the lockdown and shared it with director Sai Rajesh Mahadev. He liked it, and that's how the film began," she recalls. Sumaya initially wanted an all-Telugu cast, but scheduling conflicts made that difficult. "I reached out to several actors, but none were available. That's when I cast Prudhvi Ambat as the male lead," she explains. *Dear Uma* delves into the workings of corporate hospitals and the ways some patients are misled. "The story is inspired by real incidents, but we've added fictional elements to build the narrative," she adds. Interestingly, Sumaya didn't plan to act in her own production. "I didn't take on the lead role just to be on screen. I truly believed in the story and wanted it to be told. My experience in theatre helped me bring the character to life." When asked which is harder—acting or producing—Sumaya doesn't hesitate. "Producing is far more difficult. Acting feels easy in comparison," she admits. The film's budget has exceeded initial expectations. "Because the shoot was delayed, and we brought in talented technicians and actors, costs went up," she says. Family and friends often advise her to invest in real estate instead. "They say I'd get guaranteed returns there. But with films, I'm constantly moving around, meeting people, and taking risks." Despite the challenges, Sumaya is undeterred. "Even though producing is tough, I won't back away. I want to make more films." Sumaya acknowledges that she had no industry connections starting out. "Getting people to attend our pre-release event was difficult. I had to personally request many of them. It's not easy," she admits. Still, her faith in her content keeps her going. "Look at the film 'Court'. It did well without big names. That kind of success inspires me." Before entering films, Sumaya worked as a model. "I've always had a passion for cinema, and that's what

SUMAYA REDDY, THE FEMALE LEAD AND PRODUCER OF THE UPCOMING FILM *DEAR UMA*, OPENS UP ABOUT HER JOURNEY—FROM WRITING THE STORY DURING THE PANDEMIC TO NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF PRODUCING HER DEBUT FILM



brought me here." A few days ago, she shared an emotional video online, which drew public attention. When asked about it, she says, "Regardless of political parties—TDP, YSRCP, or Pawan Kalyan's camp—no one should drag women into political controversies. It's not right." Talking about *'Dear Uma'*, Sumaya describes it as a feel-good film that families can watch together. "The last half-hour is particularly emotional. Since the lead character is a doctor, we titled it *'Dear Uma'* instead of *Dr. Uma*, to give it a more personal touch." She also highlights the need for more Telugu representation in cinema. "Just like in government jobs, there should be reservation in films too. At least 70% of the cast should be Telugu actors," she says passionately. When asked whether *Dear Uma* is similar to Chiranjeevi's *'Tagore'*, which also touched on corruption in corporate hospitals, Sumaya clarifies: "In *'Tagore'*, it was a small subplot. In *Dear Uma*, we explore the issue in depth." She reflects on how the pandemic revealed the darker side of the healthcare industry. "So many people were admitted to hospitals and spent lakhs, even when they didn't need to. Many recovered at home. We bring that reality to light in the film." Sumaya also touches on rising costs in education and healthcare. "People are spending 90% of their income on these two sectors. Only 10% is left for their actual living. And with GST on top of everything, it's overwhelming. The government should prioritize free education and healthcare over freebie schemes. That's the real solution."

Ilayaraja slaps ₹5 crore legal notice on *Good Bad Ugly* makers

Legendary music composer Ilayaraja has taken legal action against the producers of *Good Bad Ugly*, a recent film starring Tamil superstar Ajith. The movie, backed by Mythri Movie Makers, released last week and has underperformed in Telugu states, although it is reportedly doing better in Tamil Nadu. Ilayaraja has sent a legal notice to the producers, demanding Rs 5 crore in compensation for the unauthorised use of three of his songs. He claims the tracks were used without his prior



consent. In addition to monetary compensation, the composer has also requested a formal written apology within a

week. While some reports suggest that the production house had obtained a No Objection Certificate (NOC)

from the music label, Ilayaraja insists that such permissions are invalid without his personal approval, as he is the original composer. This isn't the first time Ilayaraja has taken legal action over his music. He previously issued notices for the Malayalam film *Manjummel Boys* and even sent a similar notice to his longtime friend and legendary singer SP Balasubramanyam for performing his songs without permission. All eyes are now on how Mythri Movie Makers will respond.

Siddu and Pradeep Machiraju latest films crash at the box office

Siddu Jonnalagadda's much-anticipated film *Jack* has turned out to be a major disappointment at the box office. Coming off the massive success of *Tillu Square*, expectations were high for *Jack*, especially given its larger budget. However, the film opened to poor reviews and failed to impress audiences or critics. Directed by Bommarillu Bhaskar, *Jack* was expected to carry the emotional depth and charm of his previous films. But the final product felt disconnected from Bhaskar's signature style, and word-of-mouth quickly turned negative. Despite releasing around a holiday weekend, including Ambedkar Jayanti, the film failed to generate momentum, resulting in heavy losses for buyers and the production team. Meanwhile, popular TV

host Pradeep Machiraju's second film as a lead actor, *Akkada Ammayi Ikkada Abbai*, also flopped at the box office. The film received minimal attention from audiences and was unable to create any buzz, marking another setback in Pradeep's transition to films.



Shambhala making video hints at visual spectacle

The team behind Aadi Saikumar's upcoming film *Shambhala* has released a behind-the-scenes making video, generating buzz for what looks to be his most ambitious project to date. The film is being made on a massive Rs 12 crore budget and is directed by Ugandhar Muni, with Rajasekhar Annabhimoju and Mahidhar Reddy producing. The making video showcases rich visuals, a mystical storyline, and high-intensity action sequences. The film is set across three differ-

ent timelines — the 1980s, 1,000 years ago, and 10,000 years in the past — blending mythology, history, and supernatural themes into a time-traveling epic. Aadi plays a geo-scientist unraveling an ancient mystery. Featuring Archana Iyer, Swasika, Ravi Varma, and others in key roles, *Shambhala* is nearing completion. A teaser launch is expected soon. With its grand visuals and intriguing concepts, the makers believe the film could be a game-changer in Aadi's career.



