



The Pioneer

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'India has set target of Rs 3L cr in defence production by 2029'

INDIA WILL
FOCUS ON POLICY AGILITY,
LONG-TERM VISION: FM



Pooja Hegde talks about her potential collaboration with **ALLU ARJUN**




QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

Who said Kavitha is not a rowdy? Kavitha did the liquor business in Delhi because she is a rowdy. 70 per cent of the leaders of the BRS party are rowdies. KTR should be ashamed of asking Revanth Reddy to tender resignation to CM position. Why should he resign for doing welfare and development? Congress party has full respect at Courts unlike BRS which forgot the fact that several times Courts scolded them

- Mahesh Kumar Goud, TPCC Chief



DON'T MISS...

Min Surekha: Fast track eco-tourism

Forest, Environment and Endowments Minister Konda Surekha on Thursday directed officials to accelerate eco-tourism initiatives in Telangana and ensure they are designed to attract international tourists. She emphasised that forest, tourism and industries departments must come together to plan integrated development models that can showcase the State's ecological and natural wealth. Chairing the State-level review meeting on the 'Telangana Haritha Nidhi' at the Forest Department chamber in the Secretariat, the ...

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'Judiciary cannot direct Prez'

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday questioned the judiciary setting a timeline for the president to take decisions and act as a 'super Parliament', saying the Supreme Court cannot fire a 'nuclear missile' at democratic forces. Dhankhar's strong words to the judiciary came during his speech to Rajya Sabha interns, days after the Supreme Court sought to fix a timeline for the president to grant assent to the bills reserved for her consideration by the governor. 'So, we have judges who will...

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Adani Ports to acquire Australian terminal

Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd, India's biggest private port operator, announced on Thursday a USD 2.4 billion non-cash acquisition of a coal export terminal in Australia from a group company to strengthen its presence in the Asia-Pacific region. The Board of APSEZ approved the acquisition of Abbot Point Port Holdings Pte Ltd (APPH), Singapore, from Carmichael Rail and Port Singapore Holdings Pte Ltd, Singapore (CRPSHPL), the company said in a statement. CRPSHPL is a...

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BCCI removes asst coach Nayar

The Indian cricket team's assistant coach Abhishek Nayar has been sacked just eight months into the assignment amid speculation of a rift with a high-profile member of the support staff even though Test debacles against New Zealand and Australia are being cited as the reason for his ouster. If board sources are to be believed, Nayar has already been intimidated of the BCCI's decision to part ways with him. 'While India's recent Test debacles (against New Zealand and Australia) has led to the churning but there is ...

-SPORTS

Puppalaguda IT Knowledge Hub to create 5 lakh jobs

The Telangana Government has taken steps to construct an IT Knowledge Hub on the approximately 450 acres in and around Puppalaguda in the first phase to create five lakh jobs. This was decided at a meeting chaired by Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhathi Vikramarka, along with Ministers Duddilla Sridhar Babu and Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, held at the secretariat on Thursday. Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari and top officials from the industries and revenue departments also attended the meeting. The ministers directed the officials to identify and make available land in the Puppalaguda region. It was recalled that the BRS government had allotted

The ministers directed the officials to identify and make available land in the Puppalaguda region. It was recalled that the BRS government had allotted lands in this area for MLAs, MPs, IAS officers, revenue department staff, and special police mutual co-operative societies, which collectively covered over 200 acres.

lands in this area for MLAs, MPs, IAS officers, revenue department staff, and special police mutual co-operative societies, which collectively covered over 200 acres. However, officials informed the sub-committee about a Supreme Court judgement that cancelled these land allocations.

Adjacent to these lands, officials said another 250 acres under the control of the Industrial Corporation was also available, making up the 450 acres for the Knowledge Hub. The ministers noted this was sufficient for the first phase and asked officials to expedite the planning. Officials explained that this IT Hub, once operational, would create direct and indirect employment for over five lakh youth. The ministers discussed how Hyderabad has remained a consistent player in the IT growth story since the foundation of Hitech City during the tenure of former Congress Chief Minister N. Janardhan Reddy. With Knowledge City and Financial District following, Hyderabad has evolved into a major tech hub over decades.

CEC REPORT ON KANCHA GACHIBOWLI LANDS

KTR blasts Cong Govt & Centre's silence

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao launched an attack on the TG Congress Government, alleging large-scale environmental destruction and financial fraud regarding UoH lands.

He also questioned the Modi Government's silence despite a damning report from the Supreme Court-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC). KTR demanded a high-level inquiry into the alleged irregularities,



either by a sitting Supreme Court judge or Central investigative agencies like the CBI and SFIO.

"Even after the CEC's clear findings that thousands of trees were felled and animals left without shelter, the Centre has not acted. If it has any sincerity, let it initiate a probe," he said. He questioned the Prime Minister's double standards, accusing him of preaching morality in Haryana while protecting the Revanth Government in Telangana, which "has mocked the Constitution and bulldozed public land at midnight."

Continued on Page 2

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has secured a major global investment deal with Japanese giant Marubeni Corporation committing to set up a next-generation industrial park in the Future City near Hyderabad.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who is leading the Telangana Rising delegation on an official visit to Japan, met the senior leadership of Marubeni Corporation in Tokyo on Thursday and signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) marking the formal beginning of this collaboration.

Speaking at the meeting, Executive Officer Dai Sakakura said, "We are delighted after listening to Revanth Reddy's vision for Telangana and Hyderabad, and wish to be amongst the earliest to explore possibilities there."

The proposed park, to be developed in a phased manner over 600 acres, will have an initial investment of Rs 1,000 crore and is expected to attract over Rs 5,000 crore in subsequent investments from Japanese and other multinational firms.

The park will focus on advanced manufacturing units in the Electronics, Green Pharma, Precision Engineering, Aerospace, and Defence sectors.

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TG seeks 45 TMCs of Krishna water

Cites AP's Godavari diversions

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

During a detailed hearing before the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II) on Thursday, the Telangana Government strongly argued for the allocation of 45 TMCs of Krishna water for in-basin usage, citing historic agreements and large-scale diversion of Godavari water by Andhra Pradesh.

1978, agreement in which United Andhra Pradesh had agreed to divert 80 TMCs of Godavari water from Polavaram in exchange for Maharashtra and Karnataka utilising 35 TMCs of Krishna water and United AP utilising 45 TMCs above Nagarjunasagar. Telangana now argues that these 45 TMCs must be retained for its own in-basin needs, given that it is the legal and geographical successor to the in-basin region.



The senior counsel representing Telangana pointed to the August 4,

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HC refuses to stay Group-1 recruitment process

Bars issue of appointment letters

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The High Court has refused to stay the Group-1 recruitment process conducted by the Telangana State Public Service Commission (TGSPSC) and has allowed certificate verification of the selected candidates to proceed. However, the HC directed the Commission not to issue appointment letters until the completion of the investigation into alleged irregularities.

The directions came in response to petitions filed by 20 Group-1 candidates who challenged the recently released general ranking list (GRL). The petitioners alleged discrepancies in the evaluation of the mains examination papers and claimed that several candidates suffered losses due to procedural lapses. The petitioners told the HC that the evaluation process and subsequent appointments violated established norms, and



NATIONAL HERALD CHARGESHEET

ED seeks confiscation of Rs 661-Cr assets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a recently-filed chargesheet in the Associated Journals Limited-Young Indian-National Herald money-laundering case, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has sought confiscation of assets worth Rs 661 crore that it has attached during the course of the investigation, according to official sources.

The federal probe agency has also appended the statements of Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in the prosecution

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Complete LRS process by April-end, orders Govt

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government has directed all Collectors and Municipal Commissioners to ensure 100 per cent completion of the Layout Regularisation Scheme (LRS) process by April 30.

During a video conference held on Thursday, Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MA & UD) Special Chief Secretary M. Dana Kishore stressed that pending applications must be addressed swiftly.

Dana Kishore, along with DTCP Director Devender Reddy, conducted a detailed review of LRS's progress with Collectors, Additional Collectors of Local Bodies, Municipal Commissioners, and Town Planning officials. The video conference was held at the Secretariat and focused on



improving the speed and efficiency of issuing proceedings for pending applications.

Expressing concern over districts where very few proceedings have been issued, Dana Kishore engaged with officials from those regions and also spoke to Collectors who have achieved higher processing rates, seeking to understand their strategies.

He instructed officials to speed up proceedings for applicants who have already paid the LRS fees.

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No legal mandate for displaying PM's photo in ration shops, says FCI

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Food Corporation of India (FCI) has confirmed that there is no statutory provision under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, that mandates the display of the Prime Minister's photograph in ration shops across the country.

This was stated in response to a Right to Information (RTI) query filed by a citizen from Secunderabad, seeking clarity on the legality of such displays. The RTI reply, dated April 17, 2025, explicitly states, "It is pertinent to mention here that there is no such specific statutory provision that mandates the display of the Prime Minister's photograph in ration shops across India under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013."

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70 pc of Hyd Waqf lands grabbed by Congress leaders: Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy said that 70 per cent of Waqf lands in Hyderabad were grabbed by Congress leaders belonging to a particular religion.

He said that the followers of the Owaisi brothers would benefit from the Waqf Board and that they grabbed Waqf lands in the name of the Waqf Board. Participating in a workshop conducted by the BJP on the Waqf Board Amendment Act on Thursday at the state BJP office here, Kishan said that Collectors would have powers after the Waqf Board Amendment Act.

Continued on Page 2

Harish: Govt's mismanagement triggered dip in tax revenue

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former minister Harish Rao has held the Congress government responsible for Telangana's declining economic performance, pointing to a sharp drop in the State's Own Tax Revenue (SOTR) under Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's leadership. He cited recent figures from the Comptroller and Auditor General's

(CAG) Monthly Key Indicators report to underline what he called "a clear sign of administrative failure."

According to the report, Telangana's SOTR has fallen from Rs 1,24,146.19 crore in 2023-24 to Rs 1,24,054.38 crore in the current financial year, up to February 2025-reflecting a dip of Rs 91.81 crore. Harish Rao noted that such a decline had not been recorded in the State's

history except during the extraordinary disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

He contrasted this with the previous BRS government's performance, which, he said, had maintained a steady 12 per cent Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) in SOTR between FY 2015-16 and FY 2022-23.

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Pvt hospitals warned against conducting unwanted C-sections

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha directed officials to take strong action against private hospitals which conduct caesarean (C-section) deliveries without a valid medical justification.

Stressing the need for accountability, he said that the C-section audit mechanism should be strengthened and closely monitored.

The Minister also stressed that government hospitals must significantly increase the number of normal childbirths. He said the benefits of natural birth and the risks associated with unnecessary C-sections should be explained to pregnant women and their families during antenatal check-ups.

The Minister suggested providing midwifery training to nurses working in government hospitals to increase normal deliveries. He also directed officials to improve facilities at Maternal and Child Health Centres and encourage expectant mothers to opt for



Strict Action Ordered Against Unnecessary C-Sections in Private Hospitals Health Minister Damodar Rajanarasimha

deliveries at government healthcare institutions.

Given the rise in temperatures across the state, Raja Narasimha asked hospital authorities to ensure pregnant women, new mothers, and infants are not inconvenienced by the heat. He said that fans, coolers and air conditioning should be provided in wards.

Fire safety protocols should be reviewed and reinforced at all healthcare facilities, he added.

He also reviewed the status of vacant posts in government hospitals. Officials informed him that around 8,000 posts were filled last year, and the recruitment process for another 6,200 posts is underway. These include doc-

tors, lab technicians, nursing officers, multipurpose health assistants and AYUSH medical officers.

Written exams for these posts have already been completed. He directed that results should be declared without delay and the entire recruitment process concluded within a month.

No plans to privatise Kanche Gachibowli lands: Mahesh

Kavitha did illicit liquor biz in Delhi as she is a rowdy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TG Government has no plans to privatise Kanche Gachibowli lands, TTPCC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said.

He threw a challenge at BRS Working President KT Rama Rao to come for a debate on HCU lands and the lands sold by the BRS Government in the presence of the media.

Addressing the media at the Gandhi Bhavan on Thursday, Mahesh said that KTR and BRS MLA T. Harish Rao are trying to sidetrack the Supreme Court verdict regarding Kanche Gachibowli lands.

He said the government will 'provide' five lakh jobs by allowing companies to function from HCU lands. However, the leaders of the BRS and the BJP are trying to 'block' the development schemes of the Congress Government, he added.

He said that the BRS government had sold thousands of acres around Hyderabad during its 10-year rule and made it



clear that the Congress has full respect for courts, unlike the BRS and added that the BRS is hiding the fact that courts have criticised the BRS government several times.

"KTR should be ashamed of asking Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to resign. Should Revanth quit for implementing

social welfare and development projects?" Mahesh said.

Responding to BRS MLC Kavitha's comment that she is a rowdy type, Mahesh said, "Who said Kavitha isn't a rowdy? Kavitha did illicit liquor business in Delhi as she is a rowdy. Around 70 per cent of BRS leaders are rowdies."

Harish: Govt's mismanagement..

Continued from page 1

"The present Congress administration has disrupted this growth momentum through poor planning and mismanagement," he remarked.

Calling the figures a wake-up call, Harish Rao demanded a public explanation from the Congress leadership. "This decline isn't just about numbers - it's about the financial health of Telangana and the future of its development. The government has an obligation to answer why the State's revenue has fallen under its watch," he said.

He also accused the Revanth-led administration of lacking vision and fiscal discipline, saying Telangana deserved leadership that could ensure sustainable growth, efficient revenue management and economic progress.

Opposition's campaign of 'lies' can damage state: Kiran

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress's Bhongir MP, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, said that there is no one better than BRS Working President KT Rama Rao to spread malicious propaganda and to incite hatred.

He said that the BRS and the BJP are confusing the state by using fake videos and morphed photos regarding the Kanche Gachibowli lands.

Addressing the media at the Congress's central office in New Delhi on Thursday, Kiran demanded that Prime Minister Modi, who commented that the Congress Government in Telangana is destroying forests without knowing

facts, to take action against Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy for posting 'fake' videos.

"The government will take action against people who spread false news. IAS officers and nature lovers, who spread lies, should understand facts. Your bogus propaganda and false internet posts can damage the state," Kiran said.

He said that KTR is unable to sleep after losing power in Telangana. KTR and his party leaders are trying to topple Revanth with their campaign of lies.

He said that the Central Empowered Committee had sought four weeks to submit a comprehensive report.

Sanjay asks Cong, Rahul to apologise to Modi, Amit & Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, demanded that the Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi should apologise to Prime Minister Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and

Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy for using abusive language against them during the protest in front of the ED office in Hyderabad on Thursday.

Posting regarding this on X, Sanjay said, "What Congress leaders spoke at the ED office

in Hyderabad wasn't dissent. It was a disgrace, scripted and staged by Rahul Gandhi. The abusive language used by the Congress against Prime Minister Shri@narendramodiji, Union Home Minister Shri@AmitShahji, and Our @BJP4Telangana President &

Union Minister Shri @kishanreddybjpji was not just shameful. It was a public meltdown, a disgraceful display of political bankruptcy. Telangana is watching this gutter behaviour. We demand an unconditional public apology from the Congress and Rahul Gandhi."

Complete LRS process by...

Continued from page 1

While verification of open plots has seen satisfactory progress, he noted that layout verifications have been lagging. Collectors and Commissioners were specifically asked to prioritise layout verifications alongside open plots.

Special attention was also requested for bulk applications to ensure equitable and speedy processing.

Dana Kishore urged Collectors to widely publicise the benefits of LRS through print, electronic, social media, and flex boards to raise awareness among applicants.

He also asked officials to follow up with applicants who have not paid their fees yet and ensure payments are made before the April 30 deadline.

No legal mandate for displaying PM's ...

Continued from page 1

The response was issued by the Sales Division of FCI Headquarters, which clarified that it does not oversee the day-to-day functioning of ration or fair price shops and has not issued any such instructions or circulars. The applicant, Robin Zacheus, had sought information on whether any rules or guidelines existed under the NFSA or

directives from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs that required ration outlets to feature the PM's photo.

In its reply, the FCI said that no such directive, regulation, or circular has been issued and added that the matter had been referred to the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) and the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (MoCAF & PD)

for further details. The query also sought a list of states that had either enforced or refused to comply with any such recommendations, but the FCI maintained that it plays no role in issuing such mandates or monitoring compliance in this regard. This clarification comes amid growing questions over the politicisation of welfare schemes and the use of public distribution platforms for promotional purposes

Bhu Bharati a role ... ED seeks confiscation ...

Continued from page 1

He assured that mistakes in the Dharani Portal introduced by the KCR government will be detected and that it will benefit bonafide farmers.

Ponguleti said that an officer is being appointed in each revenue village and that all problems of farmers that are not in court will be solved with Bhu Bharati.

He said that 6,000 licensed surveyors are being appointed in the first phase and that they will be trained by May 2, and land records will be maintained properly. He said that from May 1, collectors will organise awareness programmes on this Act in all mandals.

He announced that the Bhu Bharati Act will be implemented in each mandal in 28 districts from May 2 and that the Bhu

Bharati Act will be implemented across Telangana from June 2. He asked opposition leaders to get their land problems solved using the Bhu Bharati Act.

"Former BRS Ministers are now requesting us to correct errors in the Dharani Portal. They are also saying that details were recorded erroneously. However, the same leaders had tried to block the Bhu Bharati Act in the Assembly. People used to go to officials during Dharani days, but now officers will come to the people with the Bhu Bharati Act in force," he said. He said that there is no need to pay even a single rupee to apply for anything. The BRS government grabbed thousands of acres from the poor. The Congress Government will now distribute the lands to the poor after conducting audits, he added.

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complaint (chargesheet) that it had recorded in 2022 during their questioning and it is understood that they have denied any wrongdoing, saying the takeover of Associated Journals Limited (AJL) by Young Indian (YI) was not for commercial purposes, the sources told PTT.

The chargesheet names 78-year-old former Congress president and Rajya Sabha MP Sonia Gandhi as the accused number one and her son, Rahul Gandhi (54), as the accused number two, besides five others.

It was filed by the ED before a competent court here that tries criminal cases against law-makers on April 9. The court has fixed April 25 as the next date of hearing in the case, when it may take or reject cognisance of the chargesheet.

The sources said the agency has sought punishment against the accused for the offence of money laundering under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and prayed for the confiscation of assets worth Rs 661 crore that it had attached in November 2023. These confiscated assets, post the successful trial, will go to the government exchequer by way of auction or any other such process, they added.

It is understood that both Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi have denied any wrongdoing in the affairs of AJL and YI, saying while they were part of the meetings held to help the former debt-laden company (AJL), these affairs were mostly taken care of by late Congress leader Motilal Vora, who served as the chairman of AJL between 2001 and 2002, apart from other office-

bearers. The two top Congress leaders are understood to have reiterated the party's legal stand that YI was a section-25 entity under the Companies Act and hence, there cannot be any commercial activity through it nor there can be any personal benefits to the shareholders.

Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi are the majority shareholders of YI with 38-per cent stakes each. The agency has also appended in the chargesheet the statements of Congress leader Pawan Bansal and party president Mallikarjun Kharge to describe the events of AJL-YI and the All India Congress Committee (AICC) to buttress its point that a "conspiracy was orchestrated to illegally obtain the underlying assets of AJL by the beneficial owners of YI (Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi)".

KTR blasts Cong Govt ...

Continued from page 1

The BRS leader reminded that it was the Congress that first misused the CBI and now the BJP is doing the same with the ED. "The Congress and the BJP are two sides of the same Delhi coin. One uses agencies to settle scores, the other protests only when it suits them," he said.

KTR welcomed the Supreme Court's sharp observations and said the SC had restored public faith in the judiciary. "For the first time, the SC asked when and how the 100 acres of forested land in HCU will be restored and warned that temporary jails may be set up at the site if a roadmap is not submitted," he said.

Calling Revanth Reddy spineless, KTR said, "Any CM with any sense of dignity would

have resigned by now. But this man has neither self-respect nor remorse. He continues as if nothing happened."

He thanked the Central Empowered Committee for its clarity, which confirmed that the 400 acres belonged to UoH and that TSIC had violated environmental laws while misusing the land as collateral. "Even tanks on that land were mortgaged. Which other government in the world pledges lakes for loans?" he asked.

Aiming at the Centre, he reminded how Modi in April 2024 accused the Congress government in Telangana of collecting 'RR tax' from builders.

"Now, a year has passed. No probe, no action. Even after the BJP's student wing ABVP protested, the Centre has remained mum," KTR said.

70 pc of Hyd Waqf lands ...

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Kishan said that some people are spreading the lie that women would have a share in the Waqf Board Amendment Act and that the government will take away lands. He made it clear that the documents of Waqf lands would be kept in computers instead of the houses of leaders from now onwards.

"Are Rahul Gandhi and Asaduddin Owaisi ready for a debate on how many people benefited from the Waqf Board? The mosques are different from Waqf Board lands. We will distribute the income generated by the Waqf Board to poor Muslims from now onwards," Kishan said.

TG secures major global ...

Continued from page 1

Marubeni Corporation, a prominent Japanese conglomerate operating in 65 countries with over 410 group companies, expressed its strong interest in being among the first entrants into Telangana's Future City.

Speaking at the meeting, Executive Officer Dai Sakakura said, "We are delighted after listening to Revanth Reddy's vision for Telangana and Hyderabad, and wish to be amongst the earliest to explore possibilities there."

Welcoming Marubeni into the fold, Revanth said the park would generate 30,000 direct and indirect jobs, support Telangana's Net Zero development goals, and become a model of Indo-Japan industrial cooperation.

"We are delighted to have Marubeni as a marquee investor for the Future City, India's first Net Zero city. Telangana is proud to be a trusted partner of Japan,"

he said, promising personal support for smooth business operations.

A joint team comprising officials from the Telangana government and Marubeni will now work together to globally pitch the industrial park to potential investors. Revanth Reddy also urged Japanese companies to consider Telangana as a strategic base under the 'China Plus One' alternative strategy.

In a parallel engagement, the delegation visited the headquarters of Sony Corporation, where officials displayed the company's latest products.

The team also held detailed discussions with Sony's animation subsidiary, Crunchyroll. The Telangana team presented Hyderabad's strengths in animation, VFX, and gaming, and Revanth outlined his vision for developing a modern film city with end-to-end production capabilities.

TG seeks JICA support...

Continued from page 1

with the Chief Minister and senior officials.

The Telangana team presented a case for funding support, explaining that the state is pushing ahead with big-ticket infrastructure projects to make Hyderabad a global investment destination. Officials explained that the state's pro-investment policies are complemented by a vision to transform Hyderabad into a globally competitive city on par with New York and Tokyo.

The delegation sought JICA's support for the Rs 24,269-crore Metro Rail Phase-2, which is currently under the final consideration of the Centre. Telangana requested JICA to finance 48 per cent of the total project cost, approximately Rs 11,693 crore, as a long-term loan.

The CM assured JICA that all guidelines as per India's external borrowing norms will be strictly followed.

The state also requested JICA's assistance for the Musi Riverfront Development project and the construction of new radial roads, which are critical for decongesting traffic and linking growing urban zones.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister shared his broader vision of transforming Hyderabad into a future-ready metropolis with world-class urban infrastructure.

Shohei Hara, the JICA's Senior Vice President, acknowledged the long-standing relationship between Telangana and JICA and advised the state to route its proposals through the Government of India for formal consideration and support. Special Chief Secretary (Industries and IT) Jayesh Ranjan, Chief Minister's Principal Secretary V. Seshadri, HMRL MD NVS Reddy, HMDA Commissioner Sarfaraz Ahmad, and the CM's Special Secretary Ajit Reddy were also present during the meeting.

TG seeks 45 TMCs of Krishna ...

Continued from page 1

The Tribunal, chaired by Justice Brijesh Kumar along with members Justice Ram Mohan Reddy and Justice S. Talapatra, heard Telangana's plea that Andhra Pradesh's increasing Godavari-Krishna diversion capacities — ramped up from 10,000 to 17,500 and now 40,000 cusecs — indicate a clear pattern of utilising Godavari waters to serve outside Krishna basin areas.

Referring to Andhra Pradesh's recent GO establishing the 'Jalarathi Corporation' for further diversions from Polavaram to Banakacherla, Telangana stated that such schemes, along with the expansion of the Chintalapudi and Tadipudi Lift Irrigation schemes, are being used to substitute Krishna water in AP projects, leaving the saved Krishna water available for Telangana's rightful in-basin allocation.

The Telangana counsel argued

that the Krishna Delta System (KDS) has access to substantial drain water from its ayacut area, which was not earlier accounted for in water planning. Telangana asked for this to be factored into the 152.2 TMCs allocated to KDS.

The state also presented data showing that approximately 3,000 to 4,000 TMCs of Godavari water flows into the sea every year, suggesting that Andhra Pradesh can fully rely on Godavari diversions for its tail-end ayacuts in the left canal system, leaving Krishna water for Telangana.

Telangana was represented by senior counsel CS Vaidyanathan, Additional Advocate General Rajanikanth Reddy, Government Advisor Adityanath Das and engineers from the ISWR unit. Senior Advocates Jayadev Gupta and Umapathy appeared for Andhra Pradesh.

The Tribunal has scheduled the next hearing from May 14 to May 16.

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03

REFORMS AND POLICIES BASED ON LOCAL NEEDS MOOTED

TG edn panel calls NEP 2020 undemocratic and unscientific

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Education Commission called the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 undemocratic, unsecular and unscientific. During a seminar held on Thursday afternoon at the SCERT campus, the Commission urged the Telangana government to prioritise its own education reforms and policies based on local needs.

Chairperson of the Telangana Education Commission Akunuri Murali led the seminar and pointed out that the NEP was not passed in Parliament, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and political reasons.

Murali said that while the NEP document is well-written, it lacks clear solutions. He stated that the

policy promises change but has shown no results since its launch in 2020. He also raised concerns over misleading data, especially on page 60 of the document. The policy gives more control to states, but without proper guidelines or support.

The Commission said the NEP supports Public-Private Partnership (PPP), centralization and even communalisation of education. The Commission also warned that the policy increases inequality, ignores the Right to Education (RTE) and could make education unaffordable. The members called it an RSS-driven agenda aiming to control education.

Vice-Chancellor of Professor Jayashankar Telangana Agriculture University Aldas



Janaiah stressed that education should remain a State subject. He highlighted the risks of centralised education and the importance of regional languages. He warned

that lack of discussion and resolutions on restricting NEP could lead to more dropouts. Meanwhile, Prof. Bhangya Bhukya of the HCU said that the

NEP is completely a political policy and pointed out flaws in its structure. He explained that the HCU has five-year integrated courses with one exit, while under the NEP, one class has multiple exits. He mentioned that science accepted this structure, but the social sciences do not. The courses are completely different and migrating students cannot cope with them. He criticized the multi-exit system for confusing students.

Prof. Upender Reddy, former head of SCERT, GoAP, noted that schools lack proper regulation and performance tracking. He said that 60% of students do not have reading fluency. He emphasized the need for local governance, teacher motivation and clear standards for school performance.



262 constables promoted in Charminar Zone

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a significant development aimed at boosting morale and recognising service, 262 police constables in the Charminar Zone have been promoted to the rank of Head Constables. The promotion orders were issued on Thursday by V Satyanarayana, Inspector General of Police, Multi-Zone II.

The promotions were effected across five policing units, with the highest number from Cyberabad - 147, Hyderabad City - 73, Sangareddy - 18, Vikarabad - 17, and Deputation - 7.

The decision comes as part of the department's ongoing efforts to reward merit and service in the force. The IGP congratulated the officers and urged them to continue upholding the highest standards of discipline and duty in their new roles.



Leopard rescued from ICRISAT campus, shifted to Nehru Zoo Park

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A male leopard, estimated to be around five to six years old, was successfully rescued from the ICRISAT campus in Patancheru, Sangareddy district, in the early hours of Thursday. The animal was trapped safely by the team of the Sangareddy District Forest Officer, Sridhar, using a trap cage, and was subsequently shifted to Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad, for a thorough medical check-up.

Curator of Nehru Zoological Park, J Vasantha, confirmed that the leopard is currently being kept in the quarantine block under observation. A team of veterinary doctors led by Dr MA Hakeem, Deputy Director (Veterinary), is monitoring the animal's condition.

According to the preliminary health report, the leopard is in good condition and is fit for release back into the wild. The authorities are expected to take a final decision on its release based on continued monitoring over the coming days.

HC directs Metro to steer clear of historical sites in Old City

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court has directed that no damage be caused to historical monuments during the construction of the Metro Rail in the Old City. Hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by the Act for Public Welfare Foundation, the court stressed that work must not proceed at or around sites identified by the

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) until further orders.

The petitioners claimed that ongoing Metro construction activities were endangering several heritage structures in the Old City. Representing the State, the Additional Advocate General (AAG) argued that the government is taking all necessary precautions to ensure that no listed monuments are harmed. The AAG informed



the court that land is being acquired only after proper compensation is paid, and no demolition of heritage structures has been authorised. Seeking time to file a

detailed counter, the AAG assured the court that preservation of historical sites remains a priority.

In its interim directions, the Bench ordered a complete halt to any construction activity near historical monuments until the counter-affidavit is filed. The court directed the government to file the response by April 22 and posted the next hearing for the same date.

EU workshop for tourism stakeholders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao inaugurated the European-funded SIPAS project at the National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management (NITHM) on Thursday. He also launched the project's official website, www.sipas.in.

On the occasion, the Minister honoured international delegates from Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Latvia; Instituto Politécnico de Setúbal, Portugal; and Indian universities including Pondicherry University and Central University of Karnataka.



Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao felicitating international delegates at the National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management (NITHM) on Thursday

ditional dance by NITHM students, followed by a lamp-lighting ceremony. Key attendees included N Prakash Reddy, Managing Director of TGTDC; Zendage Hanumant Kondiba, IAS, Director of NITHM; and consortium members from India, Latvia, and Portugal.

Chairman of the Telangana Council of Higher Education Prof. Balakista Reddy discussed the state's focus on updating education standards. Dr P Thrayambakam introduced the SIPAS project, which aims to create skill-based, industry-aligned curricula. Dr G Mahender Reddy spoke about the project's scope across three countries, involving seven key work packages to improve student employability.

Meanwhile, Zendage Hanumant Kondiba, in his keynote, stressed better industry-academia partnerships. Prof. Sampada Swain and other experts emphasised sustainability and global standards.

Managing Director of TGTDC, N Prakash Reddy highlighted the need for skilled manpower and appreciated NITHM's efforts. The project will introduce AR/VR technology into hospitality education. The event saw participation from hotel GMs, travel agencies, and TAAI leaders Sunil and Nagesh Pampati.

ROADMAP FOR GREEN GROWTH

Fast-track eco-tourism, expand green cover: Minister Konda Surekha

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Forest, Environment and Endowments Minister Konda Surekha on Thursday directed officials to accelerate eco-tourism initiatives in Telangana and ensure they are designed to attract international tourists. She emphasised that forest, tourism and industries departments must come together to plan integrated development models that can showcase the State's ecological and natural wealth.

Chairing the State-level review meeting on the 'Telangana Haritha Nidhi' at the Forest Department chamber in the Secretariat, the Minister laid out a roadmap for green growth. She underlined the importance of enhancing greenery across the State and said that increasing forest cover must be treated as a top priority.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary Ahmad Nadeem, PCCF (HoFF) RM Dobriyal, PCCF (Wildlife) Alu Singh Meru, CAMPFA in-charge Dr Suvarna, CCF Dr G Ramalingam (Social Forestry), Dr



Bheema Naik, Dr Prabhakar, several DFOs and senior officials from the Finance and allied departments.

Discussions focused on the utilisation of the Telangana Green Fund for the year 2024-25 and the proposed budget for 2025-26. The Minister approved the key outlines and directed officials to prioritise nursery development, plantation, watering and maintenance of saplings, public awareness campaigns, and robust planning and monitoring frameworks.

Surekha appreciated the cooperation from the Union Ministry of Environment, noting that the Centre has been supportive of Telangana's green initiatives. She instructed officials to clear all pending issues swiftly and submit detailed progress reports.



MMTS specials for Easter festival to Calvary temple

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The South Central Railway (SCR) will operate three special MMTS trains on Sunday, April 20, 2025 to manage the extra rush of passengers attending Easter celebrations at Calvary temple in Hyderabad.

One MMTS special train will run from Hyderabad to Lingampalli, departing at 3:15 am and reaching Lingampalli at 4:05 am.

Another train will run from Lingampalli to Falaknuma. It will start at 2:30 am, halt

briefly at Secunderabad between 3:05 and 3:10 am, and arrive at Lingampalli by 4:00 am.

In the return direction, a special train will run from Lingampalli to Falaknuma.

It will depart from Lingampalli at 2:50 pm, stop at Secunderabad from 3:30 to 3:35 pm and reach Falaknuma at 4:30 pm.

These services are being arranged to help devotees travel comfortably and from Calvary temple for the Easter festival.



Justice Shameem takes over as Chairman of THRC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Dr Justice Shameem Akther, retired Judge of the High Court, officially assumed charge as the Chairperson of the Telangana Human Rights Commission at 10:30 am on Thursday in his chamber. Along with him, Sivadi Praveena, retired Selection Grade District Judge, joined as Member (Judicial), and Dr B Kishore, retired IAS officer, as Member (Non-Judicial).

Immediately upon taking charge, the newly constituted Commission convened a Bench sitting to hear as many as 300 old cases concerning alleged human rights violations. This prompt action underscored the Commission's commitment to clearing pending complaints and reinforcing the dignity of citizens.

The appointments were made by the Telangana Government through G.O.Ms. Nos. 58, 59 and 60 issued by the General Administration (I&E) Department on April 11.

Speaking to the media, Justice Shameem Akther emphasised that the Commission would work diligently to achieve the goals of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. He stated that the focus would remain on ensuring better protection and promotion of human rights in Telangana.

Contaminated water leak plugged in Putlibowli

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A major public health risk was averted in the Putlibowli area of Hyderabad after the Water Board officials successfully stopped the supply of contaminated water. The issue, which affected residents under O&M Division No. 4 (Red Hills), was identified and resolved using modern detection equipment and sustained overnight repair efforts.

Following public complaints of foul-smelling and discoloured water, the authorities traced the issue to a damaged 350 mm diameter cast iron trunk main pipeline near the Putlibowli junction. The pipe had been breached by a nearby open drain, causing pollution to seep into the drinking water supply. However, the exact location of the leak proved difficult to detect initially.

The breakthrough came when officials deployed a Pollution Identification

Machine, which helped pinpoint the damage through a camera inserted into the trunk main. The damaged section was located right in the middle of a busy main road, posing additional challenges for the repair team.

Despite the complexity and high traffic in the area, the Water Board officials coordinated closely with traffic and police departments to carry out the repair work without disrupting daily movement.

Rotten fruits, insects found in fridge at juice centres in Ameerpet

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Commissioner of Food Safety's Task Force team found rotten fruits, cockroaches, insects in the fridge, and extremely unhygienic conditions at juice centres in Ameerpet.

During the inspection at Coconut Juice Bar, Vinata Complex Ameerpet Main Road, the task force team found insects and cockroaches inside the refrigerator. Rotten fruits were also stored. The premises lacked pest control records, staff medical checks, and water quality reports. The preparation area was dirty, and dustbins were left uncovered. The licence was not displayed properly.

Later on, at KGN Juice Centre, opposite Government General Hospital, the Task Force team found refrigerator was in very poor condition. The shop was operating without an FSSAI licence. Houseflies were present in the



juice preparation area and spoiled fruit salad was stored. Food items were unlabelled and dustbins were open. At Natural Flavors, Tirumala Towers, expired syrups (pineapple, orange, banana) were found. The refrigerator had cockroaches and soda bottles lacked manufacturing/expiry dates. The staff had no proper uniform and the outlet had no licence or hygiene records.

Finally at Bombay Juice, Metro Pillar No. C1443, the

Task Force team found rusty refrigerator walls and rotten fruits. Staff was found chewing tobacco during preparation. The exhaust fan was oily and dirty. No medical or water reports were available, and the licence was not properly displayed.

The Telangana Commissioner of Food Safety's Task Force team stated that shops running without a valid FSSAI licence will be closed after notice, as per the FSS Act, 2006.

Tech issue delays Kavach deployment in TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Deployment of Kavach, the Indian Railways' anti-collision system, in Telangana has been delayed due to a major technological upgrade from Version 3.2 to Version 4.0. This was revealed in response to a Right to Information (RTI) request filed by Robin Zacheus.

According to the RTI reply, Kavach Version 4.0 has been installed in the Sanatnagar-Vikarabad section (63 route km). Work is going on in the

Moula Ali (excluding)-Raghunathpalli section (86 route km) with developmental vendors.

Earlier Version 3.2 has been commissioned in 566.18 route km, including the Vikarabad-Kurgunta (excluding) section (66.41 km), Vikarabad-Matalakunta section (71.77 km) and Dharmabad (excluding)-Alampur Road section (428 km).

Tenders are being finalised for the Chegunta-Yadlapur (excluding) section (11 km)

for Version 4.0. Tendering is also in progress for work between Sirpur Town and Yerupalem (342 km) under the Balharshah-BZA (NWBH) route.

Railway authorities mentioned that most deployment targets set by the Railway Board are being met. However, delays have occurred due to the ongoing upgrade from Kavach Version 3.2 to the more advanced Version 4.0, which is being handled by the Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO).



Man from UP arrested for rape attempt on three-year-old girl

PNS ■ WARANGAL

On Thursday, a young man from Uttar Pradesh, identified as Ramzan, was apprehended and thrashed by local people in Warangal city after he allegedly attempted to sexually assault a three-year-old girl. The incident happened around midnight when Ramzan lured the child, who belongs to a family in Girmajpet, to the

rooftop of a building with the intent to abuse her. Upon hearing the child's cries, neighbors rushed to the scene, confronted Ramzan, and restrained him. They subsequently informed the Intezargunj police. Following a complaint from the girl's family, police registered a case against Ramzan under multiple sections of the BNS and POCSO, said Inspector of Police Shukur.

Sand woes continue to haunt consumers

Though the Congress government's decision to enforce policies strictly help curb illegal mining, people are forced to pay higher price

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALPALLY

The state government has recently intensified its enforcement of sand policy, leading to a temporary respite. Law enforcement, Revenue, and mining officials have been actively working to prevent illegal activities in these areas.

Despite effective enforcement, it appears that irregularities have come back to haunt the consumers at some quarries in the district.

Overcharging consumer on the pretext of "quarry operator charge," "loading charge" and others continue in the quarries, according to sources.

Furthermore, local operators are managing the loading and dispatching of lorries, creating significant challenges for others.

Drivers assert that if they refuse to pay the Rs 500 loading fee, they are forced to wait for days for their turn. Additionally, drivers claim that dur-

ing the loading process, the amount of sand is often inaccurately measured, leading to an extra Rs 200 charge at the weighbridge to either remove excess sand or compensate for a shortfall.

Reports indicate that exploitation is occurring at both private and government weighbridges in some quarries.

With no oversight to curb these irregularities, illegal collections at the quarries appear to be on the rise. The apparent apathy of the authorities, who seem to ignore state government directives, has attracted criticism from various quarters.

Attempts to obtain information from officials regarding the alleged irregularities in sand quarries have been unsuccessful, as the officer concerned has remained unreachable by phone.

Despite multiple efforts, the officer has not responded or provided any clarification.



Congress leaders protest over chargesheet against Gandhis

PNS ■ WANAPARTHY

On Thursday, the Congress leaders accused the Modi government of wreaking political vendetta on Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi. Congress MLA Thudi Megha Reddy charged the BJP government at the Centre with foisting false cases on the Congress leaders.

Wanaparthi MLA Thudi Megha Reddy participated in the protest organised in Wanaparthi district. The protests were held at Ganapuram, Kothakota, Pebburu, Gopalpet, Atmakur, and Srirangapur.

The protest was held to condemn the Directorate of Enforcement filing a chargesheet against Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi. As part of the protest at Khilla Ghanapur I, MLA Thudi Megha Reddy participated and spoke on the occasion. He warned that the people would not sit by and watch if the Central government continued to harass the Congress leaders.

The programme was attended by Mahabunagar District DCCB President Vishnuvardhan Reddy, Wanaparthi Market Yard Chairman Srinivas Goud, Congress leaders Akki Srinivas Goud, Vijaya Vardhan Reddy, Vijay Kumar, and many Congress party members and



Congress MLA Thudi Megha Reddy, along with party leaders, taking part in a protest in Wanaparthi on Thursday

workers. Meanwhile, at a protest held in Wanaparthi, Telangana State Planning Board Vice Chairman G Chinna Reddy stated that the BJP hatched a conspiracy against Rahul Gandhi as it was worried over the growing support of people for Rahul Gandhi.

A demonstration was organised in front of the post office under the leadership of District Congress president Rajendra Prasad. As part of the protest, an effigy was burned.

Speaking at the protest, Chinna Reddy said the National Herald case was a 12-year-old case and that not even a single rupee was exchanged. He emphasised that the real issue was the gov-

ernment targeting the Gandhi family and the Congress party because they feared Rahul Gandhi's political presence. He described the ED's actions as "political vendetta." He reiterated that they have complete faith in the judicial system. He noted that despite the case being dragged on for years without any proof, the central government has failed to produce concrete evidence. The BJP feared Rahul Gandhi because of growing popular support for him.

The protest program was attended by District Congress president Rajendra Prasad, Kisan Congress District president Vemula Srinivas Reddy, OBC District president Kotla Ravi and others.

High-end brothel raided, HIV testing kits seized

PNS ■ WARANGAL

It is not unusual for the police to find condoms during a raid on a brothel. Perhaps for the first time, the police discovered human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) testing kits when they conducted a raid on a high-end brothel at Narasmpet in Warangal district on Thursday.

Police seized 29 HIV testing kits, several packets of condoms, five cell phones, a two-wheeler, and cash amounting to Rs 2,750. Acting on a tip-off that a brothel was operated at a residential house on Madannapet Road in Narasmpet town, police conducted a surprise raid and uncovered illegal activities.

During the raid, police took into custody a woman, along with several young men. The woman run-



Condoms and HIV testing kits seized during police raid on a brothel at Narsampet in Warangal district on Thursday

ning the brothel was identified as Kinnerapu Uma, wife of Kumaraswamy. Along with her, three men—Koyyala Ramesh, Koyyala Nithin, and Kesanapalli Vikram, son of Satyanarayana—were also arrested.

Police revealed that two women present at the brothel were rescued. Officials stated that the inquiry is ongoing to gather further details. This incident has caused a stir among the residents of Narsampet town.

'Bhu Bharati Act will play a pivotal role in securing land rights'

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Rangareddy District Collector C Narayana Reddy has stated that the newly introduced Bhu Bharati-2025 Act will play a pivotal role in securing land rights for farmers and resolving land-related issues swiftly. He made these remarks while addressing an awareness conference on the Act, held at the Shadnagar Town Municipality Conference Hall on Thursday. The event was organised under the supervision of local Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) NR Saritha on Thursday.

The conference witnessed the participation of Additional Collector Pratima Singh, Tahsildars, Revenue officials, Agriculture department staff, Municipal representatives, village secretaries, farmers' leaders, and media personnel from various mandals.

In his address, Collector Narayana Reddy emphasised that all Revenue officials, especially Tahsildars, must gain in-depth knowledge of the new Act. He used a detailed PowerPoint presentation to explain its major provisions and answered queries raised by the attendees.

The Collector clarified that the Bhu Bharati Act has provided a mechanism for free legal assistance to the poor, Scheduled Castes,



Rangareddy District Collector C Narayana Reddy at an awareness programme on Bhu Bharati Act in Rangareddy on Thursday

Scheduled Tribes, and women through legal service institutions. He elaborated on the new two-tier appeal system, where objections related to mutations and issued passbooks can be first addressed at the RDO level and then escalated to the Collector if necessary.

He noted that the Bhu Bharati Act replaces the Dharani system and introduced a fresh land rights record. Those possessing land without proper records now have the opportunity to register their rights within a year under the new law. The Act also would ensure same-day registration and mutations of agricultural land acquired through purchase, donation, inheritance, or other legal means. In cases of inheritance or will, the

Tahsildar would handle the verification and mutation process, with automatic mutation applicable if delay occurred.

The Collector also informed that land rights records would be made accessible to the public through the Bhubharati portal, allowing individuals to obtain digital copies. The Collector patiently addressed the concerns raised by village leader Narasimha Reddy from Viljarla, minority leader Ibrahim, library chairman Madanmohan Reddy, Congress party president Challa Srikanth Reddy, Qset Srinu, senior journalists Sanjeev Kumar and Raghavendra Goud, former MPTC Srisailam, and Bova Yadaiah, among others.

Bike lifter arrested, 18 stolen vehicles recovered

PNS ■ JANGAON

Addicted to vices, a young man started stealing two-wheelers to make a fast buck. While working as a food delivery boy, he started stealing the bikes.

To earn for living, Gugulothu Chandulal, a resident of Fatehpur village under Chilpur mandal in Jangaon district came to Warangal city and currently living in Gopalpur area of Hanamkonda district. He started working as a food delivery boy but he did not have a driving license. He used to work for Zomato, Swiggy and Rapido companies using his friends login ID.

As the income from this work was not enough for his luxuries, he explored ways for easy money and devised a plan to steal bikes parked in crowded areas and sell them to fund his addictions.

Chandulal started stealing bikes and in this way he had stolen 18 bikes and hid them all in one place to sell at once. But, he landed behind bars. On Wednesday the Hasanparthy police arrested Chandulal, who was committing thefts by targeting parked bikes in crowded areas.

Kothapalli—Manoharabad railway line progressing at fast pace

PNS ■ RAJANNA SIRCILLA

The land acquisition process for the prestigious Kothapalli—Manoharabad railway line project is progressing at a past pace in Rajanna Sircilla district. Not less than 88 per cent of the required land has already been acquired so far. Rajanna Sircilla District Collector Sandeep Kumar Jha revealed these details during a video conference with the officials of the Central government on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Sandeep Kumar Jha said that the railway line will extend approximately 40 kilometres in Rajanna Sircilla district. Out of the total 386.21 hectares of land needed for the project, 342.46 hectares have already been officially handed over to the Railway Department, he stated. He clarified that only 43.75 hectares of land acquisition is still pending.

Furthermore, the Collector added that out of the pending acquisition, 15.21 hectares of reserve forest land has also been handed over to the Railway Department. In exchange, 38.05 acres of land in Kondapur village of Konaraopet Mandal has been allocated to meet the needs of the Forest Department.

Regarding the financial aspects of land acquisition, the Collector said that a special fund of Rs 68.80 crore has already been deposited in the PD (Personal Deposit) account. The process of compensating displaced landowners will begin as soon as government approval is received.

The Collector briefed higher authorities on the progress of the railway line project in the district. He emphasised that the district administration is making continuous efforts to obtain all necessary permissions and complete the land acquisition process promptly.



People suffer withdrawal symptoms as village goes dry

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

The ban on toddy in a village has led to people vociferously protesting and demanding the restoration of toddy shops. The majority of villages have started displaying withdrawal symptoms after the authorities closed toddy shops after a large number of people fell ill due to alleged contaminated liquor. Villagers in Mallapur village of Birkur mandal took to streets demanding that the authorities of the Prohibition and Excise restore the shops



A woman experiencing seizures due to withdrawal symptoms at Birkur in Kamareddy district on Thursday

immediately and thus make available toddy in the village.

Now, for the past 10 days, villagers from several areas in Birkur and Narasulabhad mandals have been struggling as toddy is not available. The people complained that they have been suffered from symptoms like pain, loss of appetite, dizziness, and even fainting.

Family members of the affected individuals are concerned as some are displaying strange behaviour, raising alarm among their families.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA REVENUE (LA) DEPARTMENT
 (See-Sub-rule (1) of rule-19 and Section-11(1) of the Act-30/2013)
FORM - VI
PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION
 G.O. 1527/2025, Date: 02.04.2025.
 File No. 6242/2024, Date: 03.03.25.

Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana District Collector, Nalgonda that a total of Ac. 18.28 % gts land is required in **Memmani Village of Marketpally Mandal of Nalgonda District** for public purpose, namely **Udaya Samudram Lift Irrigation Scheme D-6 of RMC from KM 0.000 to KM. 2.244.** Hence, below mentioned lands are notified under Section 11(1) of the Act 30/2013 RFCT/LARRA Act 2013.

The Government of Telangana has issued G.O. No.54, Irrigation & CAD (LA/R&RA2) Department dated: 25.07.2017 exempting the AMRSLBC Project from the application of the Provisions of Chapter-I & II of the RFCT/LARRA Act 2013.

Therefore it is notified that for the above said project in **Memmani Village of Marketpally Mandal, Nalgonda District** land measuring, more or less **Ac. 18.28% gts** of standard measurement, whose detail description is as following, is proposed for acquisition:

SCHEDULE				
Village: Memmani ; Mandal: Marketpally; District: Nalgonda				
Sl. No.	Classification, Description of land i.e. Patta/Warid Govt & Estate	Area	Name of the patta/Enjoynr S/o. or W/o.	Details of Structures, trees etc., on the field
1	2	3	4	5
1	199 Dry/Patta 0.02%		Alugubelli Uppandar Reddy S/o. Hanmantha Reddy	--
2	200 Dry/Patta 2.32	1.23	Alugubelli Visantha S/o. Shanikar Reddy	--
3		0.07	Alugubelli Uppandar Reddy S/o. Hanmantha Reddy	--
4		0.35%	Alugubelli Prasanna W/o Uppandar Reddy	Well & 25 large trees & Pipitai
5		0.06%	Mula Venkat Reddy S/o. Shanikar Reddy Mula Verugopal Reddy S/o. Shanikar Reddy	--
6	201 Dry/Patta 0.37	0.06	Pasham Lexema Reddy S/o. Shanikar Reddy Mula Verugopal Reddy S/o. Shanikar Reddy	--
7		0.03	Mula Venkat Reddy S/o. Shanikar Reddy Mula Verugopal Reddy S/o. Shanikar Reddy	--
8	202 Dry/Patta 0.32%	0.32%	Alugubelli Uppandar Reddy S/o. Hanmantha Reddy	--
9	203 Dry/Patta 1.02	1.02	Paaka Narsimha S/o Laansiah Singam Andala W/o. Anapally	1-pipeline
10	251 Bata 0.02	0.02	Bata	--
11	251 Dry/Patta 0.09	0.09	Alugubelli Veena W/o. Madusudhan Reddy	8-Talk trees, 15-sarner trees
12	252 Dry/Patta 1.25	0.26	Erugu Krishna Reddy S/o. Narsimha Reddy	--
13		0.15	Devarapally Yadamma W/o. Perla Reddy	--
14		0.01	Devarapally Yadagiri Reddy S/o. Yalla Reddy	--
15		0.23	Devarapally Yadamma W/o. Perla Reddy	8-Talk trees, 3-toddy trees
16	274 Dry/Patta 2.08	0.07	Poligorla Chandrabah S/o. Anjiah	2-korras
17		0.15	Poligorla Venkatesh	--
18		1.26	Extant Sagar W/o. Yadagi Reddy	--
19	Bata 0.03	0.03	Bata	--
20		0.39	Jala Sivasimha S/o Pichiah	12-toddy trees
21	294 Dry/Patta 1.21	0.15	Alugubelli Jyothi W/o. Ravindar Reddy	12-toddy trees
22		0.07	Jala Sivasimha S/o Pichiah	1-tamarind tree 3-toddy trees
23	295 Dry/Patta 0.30	0.30	Gude Laamanna W/o. Pichiah Gude Buchan S/o. Gopal Gude Yadagi S/o. Gopal	62-toddy trees
24	290 Dry/Patta 0.14	0.13	Rupari Venkanna S/o. Yalliah Rupari Venu S/o. Yalliah	--
25		1.38	Sappidi Sathi Reddy S/o. Veera Reddy	--
26	291 Dry/Patta 1.38	1.04	Pochampally Srinivas Reddy S/o. Krishna Reddy	--
27	294 Dry/Patta 1.24	0.20	Pochampally Kanakar Reddy S/o. Krishna Reddy	--
28		0.04	Guduru Aruna W/o. Janardhan Reddy	--
29		0.09	Kukkadala Ramka W/o Venkat Reddy	--
30		0.06	Sappidi Sathi Reddy S/o. Veera Reddy	--
31	297 Dry/Patta 0.32	0.05	Pochampally Srinivas Reddy S/o. Krishna Reddy	12- Laxman trees 1-mustard tree 2- kasabara trees, 2- kachar trees
32		0.08	Pochampally Kanakar Reddy S/o. Krishna Reddy	--
33	298 Dry/Patta 1.28%	0.15	Orsu Yadiah S/o. Ididiah Orsu Janakanna W/o. Chinnu Yadiah Orsu Renuka W/o. Yalliah Orsu Venkatesh / Yalliah Orsu Ididiah S/o. Lingiah Orsu Ganesh S/o. Lingiah	--
34		0.36	Banda Venkat Reddy S/o. Pichu Reddy	--
35		0.17%	Guduru Aruna W/o. Janardhan Reddy	--
36		18.28%		

This notification is made under the provisions of Section-11(1) of The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (Central Act No.30/2013), to all whom it may concern.

Apian of the land may be inspected in the office of the District Collector, Nalgonda, Special Deputy Collector, R&R & LA, Unit-II, Nalgonda and the Executive Engineer, Irrigation, Divn. No.8, G.V.Gadam, Nalgonda on any working day during the working hours. The Government of Telangana Collector-cum-Appraiser Government by negotiation of the compensation, may be filed by the person interested in the land within 60 (sixty) days from the date of publication of this notification as provided under section 15 of the Act before the District Collector, Nalgonda (Special Deputy Collector, R&R & LA, Unit-II, Nalgonda.

Under section 11(4) of the Act, no person shall make any transaction or cause any transaction of land i.e. sale/purchase etc., or create any encumbrance on such land from the date of publication of such notification without prior approval of the Collector.

Objections to the acquisition if any, and claims from all the persons interested/affected for settlement by negotiation of the compensation, may be filed by the person interested in the land within 60 (sixty) days from the date of publication of this notification as provided under section 15 of the Act before the District Collector, Nalgonda (Special Deputy Collector, R&R & LA, Unit-II, Nalgonda.

Sd/-
Special Deputy Collector,
R&R & LA, Unit-II
Nalgonda

Sd/-
Addl. Collector
Nalgonda

Sd/-
Dist. Collector
Nalgonda

DPR/RO No.34/LA/APP/Pub/2025-26

MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT
NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
R.No. E1/182/Mcbhp/2025. Dated: 17.04.2025.

Expression of interest is invited in sealed covers from experienced (in similar type of works) consultants for Preparation of DPRs for Comprehensive Under Ground Drainage Scheme, Water Supply Project, Development of Roads, Parks, Junction Improvements, Buildings, Drains and other various developmental works in **Bhupalpally Municipality** under an grant for Two years in **Bhupalpally Municipality**. They can apply for RFP Document by submitting the Demand Draft of Rs. 5,000/- in favor of the Commissioner, **Bhupalpally Municipality**.

Last date for the issuing of schedule Dt: 19-04-2025, Time: 4:00 PM. Last date for submission of sealed expression of interest Dt: 23-04-2025, Time: 4:30 PM

Conditions: 1. Consultant should be employed in any dept in any state. 2. Should have worked not less than Rs. 100.00 crores project in single ULS in Telangana State. 3. The firm should have Rs. 5.00 Crores of average as financial turnover in last 3 years. 4. Experience consultants in similar nature of works shall only be considered. 5. The firm fulfilling (Agreeing above conditions only need to apply. 6. Commissioner, **Bhupalpally Municipality** has all powers to accept or reject the sealed E.O.I.

Any other details contact on Engineering section **Bhupalpally Municipality** in Working hours. Contact Mobile No: Commissioner (8977618020).

Municipal Engineer (9966737624) Sd/- Commissioner
 DPR/RO No.: 98/PNCLAD/112025-26 Dt: 17.04.2025
Bhupalpally Municipality

ACROSS THE STATES



Kailash Mansarovar Yatra to resume soon

India on Thursday said there is a possibility of resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra soon and a public notice could be issued over it. India and China have been looking at resuming the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra as part of efforts to improve ties after the two countries completed disengagement of troops at the two remaining friction points of Demchok and Depsang under the framework of a pact sealed in October last year. "We will soon issue a public notice on the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and there is a possibility of resumption of the Yatra soon," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "The Yatra will happen this year and we are making preparations. More information will be put out for the public soon," he added. The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra has not taken place since 2020.



Delhi records maximum temperature of 40.6°C

The national capital on Thursday recorded a maximum temperature of 40.6 degrees Celsius, which is 3.8 notches above the seasonal average, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. The mercury reached 40.2 degrees Celsius earlier on April 7. The minimum temperature was recorded at 25.7 degrees Celsius, 4.1 degrees above normal, the IMD said. Humidity levels fluctuated between 47 per cent and 32 per cent during the day. Thursday's minimum temperature was the second highest of the season so far. It was 25.9 degrees Celsius earlier on April 10. The weather department has predicted strong surface winds on Friday, with the maximum and minimum temperatures expected to be around 39 degrees Celsius and 25 degrees Celsius, respectively. The air quality at 4 pm was in the 'poor' category, with an Air Quality Index (AQI) reading of 204. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe', according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).



Scindia reviews progress of projects in Manipur

Development of North Eastern Region Minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia on Thursday reviewed the progress of various projects being implemented in Manipur. Scindia, along with Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, chaired a meeting at the Raj Bhavan in Imphal, a statement said. At the meeting, officers made a comprehensive presentation of the status of various projects currently underway in the state, it said. Scindia noted several areas that require focused attention for the development of the state. Among them were handicrafts and handloom, sports, tourism, international trade, agriculture, particularly palm oil farming, logistics, and the development of national highways, it added. He also directed officers present in the meeting to accelerate the pace of key infrastructure projects such as universities, Manipur IT-SEZ, the mental hospital, and the maternity and child hospital, said the statement issued by the Raj Bhavan. Later, Scindia chaired a meeting of the High-Level Task Force on Sports for the North Eastern Region. It was virtually attended by Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma, Nagaland's Deputy CM Y Patton, and representatives of Meghalaya and Manipur.

HARYANA LAND DEAL CASE ED records Vadra's statement on day three of questioning

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate recorded the statement of Robert Vadra, the businessman brother-in-law of Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, for about six hours on the third consecutive day on Thursday in a 2008 Haryana land deal-linked money laundering case.

By the end of Thursday's session, he was questioned for about 16 hours in total. Vadra 16 has termed the ED action a "political witch hunt" against him and his family.



He reached the ED office in central Delhi shortly after 11 am on Thursday, accompanied by his wife Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, an MP from Kerala's Wayanad. Robert Vadra left the agency office around 6:15 pm.

Judiciary cannot direct Prez, act as 'super Parliament'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday questioned the judiciary setting a timeline for the president to take decisions and act as a "super Parliament", saying the Supreme Court cannot fire a "nuclear missile" at democratic forces.

Dhankhar's strong words to the judiciary came during his speech to Rajya Sabha interns, days after the Supreme Court sought to fix a timeline for the president to grant assent to the bills reserved for her consideration by the governor.

"So, we have judges who will legislate, who will perform executive functions, who will act as super Parliament and absolutely have no accountability because the law of the land does not apply to them," Dhankhar said.

The vice president also described Article 142, which grants plenary powers to the Supreme Court, as a "nuclear missile against democratic forces available to the judiciary 24x7".

"Article 142 has become a nuclear missile against democratic forces (and) available to



"What is happening in the country? We have to be extremely sensitive. It is not a question of someone filing a review or not. We never bargained for democracy for this day. President being called upon to decide in a time-bound manner and if not, becomes law."

(the judiciary 24x7," he said. Article 142 of the Constitution gives the Supreme Court the power to issue orders that ensure "complete justice" in any matter before it.

This power is also known as the Supreme Court's "plenary power".

"There is a directive to the president by a recent judgment. Where are we heading?"

"What is happening in the country? We have to be extremely sensitive. It is not a question of someone filing a review or not. We never bargained for democracy for this

day. President being called upon to decide in a time-bound manner, and if not, becomes law," Dhankhar said.

The vice president said his worries were at a "very highest level" and he had never thought in "my life" that he would have the occasion to say it.

He reminded the audience that the president of India is in a very elevated position.

"(The) president takes an oath to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution. Others, including ministers, the vice president, parliamentarians and judges take an oath to abide by

the Constitution," Dhankhar said.

"We cannot have a situation where you direct the president of India and on what basis? The only right you have under the Constitution is to interpret the Constitution under Article 145(3). There it has to be five judges or more..." he said.

Stressing the principle of separation of powers, he underlined that when the government is elected by the people, the government is accountable to Parliament and to the people in the elections.

CRPF 'backbone' of mission to rid country of Naxalism: Shah

PNS ■ NEEMUCH (MP)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said Naxalism, which is confined to just four districts in India, will be eliminated by March 31 next year, and the CRPF is the "backbone" of this mission.

He was addressing the Central Reserve Police Force's (CRPF) 86th Raising Day function in Madhya Pradesh's Neemuch district.

"The Naxalites who dream of spreading red terror from Pashupatinath to Tirupati are today confined to just four districts. The biggest contribution in this is of CRPF. The menace (of Naxalism) will end in the country by March 31, 2026, as stated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Shah said.

The Central Armed Police



Forces (CAPF) and the CRPF, especially its CoBRA battalion, are playing a major role in eliminating Naxalism from the country, he said.

The Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) is a specialised unit of the CRPF, known for its proficiency in guerrilla and jungle war-

fare, particularly in combating the Naxal menace.

"The CRPF has set up over 400 forward operating bases in Naxal (affected) areas. Because of this, violence in these regions has come down by more than 70 per cent and we are now close to ending it," Shah said.

Mamata protecting 'rioters' with eye on polls: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday slammed West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over her meeting with Muslim clerics in the state, and accused her of giving protection to "rioters" to appease the minority community with an eye on next year's state polls.

Addressing a meeting with Muslim clerics in Kolkata on Wednesday, Banerjee termed the recent communal violence in Murshidabad district "pre-planned", accusing the Border Security Force, central agencies and the BJP.



'India has set target of Rs 3L cr in defence production by 2029'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The value of India's defence production this year is expected to cross Rs 1.60 lakh crore and the target is to manufacture military hardware worth Rs 3 lakh crore by 2029, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday.

India will reduce its dependency on imports and create a defence industrial eco-system that will not only meet the country's needs but will also strengthen the potential of defence exports, he said.

Singh was speaking at the 'Defence Conclave 2025 -- Force of the Future' hosted by 'The Week' magazine.

"The day is not far when India will not only emerge as a developed country, but our military power will also emerge as the number one in the world," he asserted.

"This year, defence production should cross Rs 1.60 lakh crore, while our target is to produce defence equipment worth Rs 3 lakh crore by the year 2029," he said.

The defence minister said while India's defence manufacturing capabilities are aimed at national security and strategic autonomy, they are also insulating manufacturing from global "supply shocks".

"Our defence exports should reach Rs 30,000 crore this year and Rs 50,000 crore by the year 2029," he announced. Singh underlined that India's growing

Our defence exports should reach Rs 30,000 cr this year and Rs 50,000 cr by the year 2029. "Our defence capabilities are like a credible deterrence, to maintain peace and tranquillity. Peace is possible only when we remain strong."

defence capability is not meant to provoke conflict. "Our defence capabilities are like a credible deterrence, to maintain peace and tranquillity. Peace is possible only when we remain strong," he added.

In his address, Singh laid out a compelling vision for a "self-reliant and future-ready" India in the defence sector with a focus on indigenisation, innovation, and global leadership. The defence minister said India is not only securing its borders but also positioning itself as a key player in the international defence ecosystem. Singh said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the "revival and strengthening" of the defence sector is one of the biggest priorities for the government.

'Absence of motive can't result in acquittal': SC

Upholds man's life term for son's murder

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday said the absence of motive cannot be the sole ground for acquittal and upheld the life imprisonment of a man convicted for killing his son in 2012. A bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and K Vinod Chandran rejected as

"puerile" the fervent argument of the man about the impossibility of a father killing his only son.

The top court said another compelling argument of the appellant was about the absence of a motive to kill his son. "Just as a strong motive does not by itself result in a conviction, the absence of motive on that sole ground cannot result in an acquittal," the bench held.

The verdict came on the appeal of the man challenging the Delhi High Court's August 2022 judgement, which confirmed the man's conviction and sentencing of life imprisonment by the trial court.

While referring to the top court's judgements, the bench observed if the case was built solely upon circumstantial evidence, absence of a motive would be a factor weighing in favour of the accused.

'Retaliation in guise of reform': Cong on Waqf Amendment Act

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday said the Waqf Amendment Act is not just "legally flawed" but "morally vacuous" and that it "attacks" the very soul of the Constitution.

Addressing a press conference here, Congress leader Abhishek Singhvi said the law attacks the rights of minorities in the name of reform and the party will not allow this to happen as the framers of the Constitution had not envisioned this.

Singhvi along with Congress' minorities department head Imran Pratapgarhi welcomed the Thursday's development in the Supreme



Court over the new law and thanked the top court for granting time to hear the important matter.

"I want to say this is not reform. It is retaliation in the guise of reform. Retaliation meticulously scripted, strategically timed, and constitutionally questionable. The Waqf Amendment Act is not an exercise in efficiency as it pretends to be."

Dalits, women 'completely unsafe' under BJP rule: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday lashed out at the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh over the alleged rape of an 11-year-old Dalit girl and demanded strict action against the culprit. In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said such crimes were "happening continuously" in the state due to the BJP's anti-Dalit and anti-women mindset.

The deaf-and-mute girl went missing on Tuesday and was found in a field the next morning. She was bleeding from her private parts, and there were bite marks on her body.

Eating almonds daily can help control blood sugar in Indians: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Consuming almonds daily can help control blood sugar levels in specific populations, such as "Asian Indians", according to a research article.

Analysing previously published research on almonds and cardiometabolic health, an international team of researchers and physicians said that almonds can help improve metabolic health by reducing 'bad' cholesterol and increasing beneficial gut bacteria.

Findings, published as a consensus article in the journal Current Developments in Nutrition, reinforce almonds' role as a heart-healthy, weight-supporting, and gut-friendly food, the team said.

The findings also reveal how almonds can potentially

benefit specific populations, such as Asian Indians, where rising rates of cardiometabolic diseases are a concern, study author Dr Anoop Misra, chairman of Fortis Centre for Diabetes, Obesity and Cholesterol, told PTI.

Dr Misra is also the head of National Diabetes Obesity and Cholesterol Foundation, New Delhi.

Consuming almonds was found to lower LDL, or 'bad' cholesterol by five units, and diastolic blood pressure in small but significant amounts of 0.17-1.3 mmHg.

For Asian Indians with pre-diabetes, eating almonds daily can help reduce fasting blood glucose and HbA1C, the researchers said.

"The most current meta-analyses on almond consumption and various health-relat-

ed endpoints suggest that almond consumption does not result in weight gain and results in small reductions in LDL cholesterol and diastolic blood pressure, as well as improved glycemic responses in certain populations (i.e. Asian Indians)," the study said.

Dr Misra said, "These benefits aid weight loss efforts by helping stabilise energy levels and reduce appetite fluctuations."



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Dr Misra said, "Almonds can support weight loss efforts due to their nutrient composition -- protein, fibre, and healthy fat content -- which helps people feel satisfied for longer periods and may reduce overall calorie intake."

Further, almonds have been shown to benefit one's gut by

promoting the growth of healthy gut bacteria and increasing the production of short-chain fatty acids.

"These changes support better metabolic health and can contribute to reductions in excess body fat," the author said.

Rich in proteins, fibre and heart-healthy unsaturated fats, almonds can play a crucial role in one's balanced diet, by bringing together essential nutrients, such as magnesium, potassium, and vitamin E.

"While almonds can be easily included in snacks and salads, the best time to consume them -- with breakfast, afternoon snack, post-workout or on-the-go -- depends on one's routine and goals," Dr Misra said in response to a PTI's question about how to get the most out of almonds.

Editor's TAKE

Preserving the past for the future's sake

World Heritage Day is all about protecting the identity, values and creativity of humanity

Every year on April 18, countries around the globe come together to celebrate World Heritage Day, also known as the International Day for Monuments and Sites. This important occasion, established by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in 1982 and later approved by UNESCO, serves as a reminder of the value of our cultural heritage — and the responsibility we all share to protect it.

Heritage — both tangible and intangible — is the collective memory of civilisations. It tells stories of who we are, where we came from, and how our societies evolved. While time, climate, and natural weathering have always been enemies of ancient structures and traditions, a more immediate and insidious threat today comes from political ideologies and regimes. Around the world, we have witnessed deliberate destruction of heritage as acts of dominance, revisionism, or retaliation. In trying to erase the past, these regimes destroy not just structures, but identity itself.

One of the most tragic and symbolic examples was the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban in 2001. Carved in the 6th century, these towering statues were not just monuments of religious and artistic significance — they were irreplaceable pages of Afghan history. Their demolition was a stark message: the regime rejected not only the statues, but the entire cultural lineage they represented.

In Russia, we have seen another kind of heritage demolition. After the fall of the Soviet Union, statues of Lenin and other Communist-era icons were removed or destroyed by the new regime. While many saw this as necessary to move forward from a dark period, these relics were also historic markers — powerful reminders of an era that, like it or not, shaped the modern state. Similar stories play out in other regions. In post-colonial Africa and Latin America, monuments to colonisers have been toppled by newly empowered governments or protest movements. These acts are often cathartic for communities, but they also risk oversimplifying history by erasing it altogether.

India, a country with millennia of layered history, offers a complex example. On one hand, India has shown tremendous commitment to preserving its ancient temples, forts, and cities. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) manages thousands of monuments, and sites like the Taj Mahal, Hampi, and Khajuraho receive not just national, but global attention and protection. On the other hand, certain political narratives have led to the neglect, distortion, or even destruction of heritage. Mughal-era structures and other Islamic sites have sometimes been portrayed as symbols of foreign oppression rather than integral parts of India's pluralistic history. Controversies like the Gyanvapi Mosque case or the renaming of historic cities (e.g. Allahabad to Prayagraj) show how heritage is being rewritten to fit modern ideologies. India's heritage, like its culture, is layered and syncretic. To dismantle one layer in favour of another is to misunderstand the very nature of its identity.

When a regime destroys heritage, it isn't just erasing the past — it is destroying a mirror to itself. History cannot be undone. No matter how uncomfortable, the past lives in us. Monuments are not merely stones or statues; they are vessels of memory, cautionary tales, achievements, failures, and everything in between. Their destruction is a loss to humanity, not just a nation. As political tides shift, there is a growing need for governments to adopt a more mature approach to heritage. Recognise its value beyond ideology. Understand that history, in all its complexity, must be preserved, studied, and remembered — not sanitised or destroyed. Ultimately, heritage is not just about the past — it's about continuity. In destroying it, we are only severing ourselves from what could teach us, ground us, and guide us into the future.

Leaderspeak



Harvard has set an example for other higher-ed institutions — rejecting an unlawful and ham-handed attempt to stifle academic freedom, while taking concrete steps to make sure all students at Harvard can benefit from an environment of intellectual inquiry, rigorous debate and mutual respect. Let's hope other institutions follow suit.

FORMER US PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Learning to learn and live

Beneath the surface-level diversity lies a profound truth: the core principles that govern human relationships are remarkably consistent. These shared values — truth, respect and fairness — form the bedrock of civil society

The fundamentals of all personal dealings and individual relationships, all over the world, are remarkably similar. Anywhere in the world, truth is upheld as a cardinal principle, and everywhere in the world, a line is considered drawn between proper and improper. It has nothing to do with which religion one follows, what is the colour of one's skin, or what are one's social norms. Similarly, killing is considered wrong, and so is taking something that does not belong to you. The list can be multiplied, and in all cases, there is a universal value system that brooks no distinction on account of language, creed, or anything else.

Put simply, the unifying principles of humanity are many and have withstood the test of time through millennia, and no one has found it worth his time to negate or contradict these principles.

It, therefore, does not follow that there are no differences between one part of the globe or another, or for that matter, all humanity agrees on everything.

There are differences of belief in matters of religion, creed, and values of behaviour. In certain communities, polyandry is accepted. In others, monogamy is considered desirable.

The enforcement of these values is sometimes through written laws enforceable by courts and, in certain cases, by social practices and beliefs, none of which go to a court.

The varieties are many, and the practices often differ sharply. It is this that makes the processes of legislation important, and the norms must be known to hold credence.

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There are differences of belief in matters of religion, creed, and values of behaviour. In certain communities, polyandry is accepted. In others, monogamy is considered desirable.

It is therefore essential to recognise that tolerance, communication, and respect for each other's practices are essential to cohesive collective living.

Perhaps this should be made a part of each child's learning before the child grows into adulthood. The present stage of learning through different stages of school and colleges emphasises knowledge acquisition. There is nothing wrong with that. What is needed, however, is the recognition that one has to let others live to be able to live oneself peacefully and happily.

These are lifestyle learnings and not knowledge learnings. It is, therefore, necessary to keep re-examining the fundamentals of educational systems and values which make coexistence not only desirable but feasible.

Put simply, a recognition of individual identities is useful, but a recognition of the other person's right to that living is also a must. For the physically powerful, adopting a stance of dominance, assertion, and compulsion is easy.

There has to be self-restraint in recognising how this is a must if the other person also needs to have the same spaces for life as one wants for oneself.

The long and short of it is not just the development of the mind, not just the devel-



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

remain tolerant.

This takes one back to the fundamental beliefs of accepting mutual dignity as a human being and recognising that one must not inflict one's values on others.

What can be stated so simply can become comparatively complicated to practise, and these are the roots of much conflict which takes place even in civil states.

Understanding the anatomy of conflict, therefore, requires a need for a concurrent understanding of the practice of the principles of 'live and let live'.

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child's learning before the child grows into adulthood. The present stage of learning through different stages of school and colleges emphasises knowledge acquisition. There is nothing wrong with that. What is needed, however, is the recognition that one has to let others live to be able to live oneself peacefully and happily.

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The long and short of it is not just the development of the mind, not just the devel-

opment of one's patience, one's understanding, and how necessary it is to respect each other's identity.

A marriage, and a family, are the basic unit of the constitution of a civil society, and it is important to inculcate these values at the core of these institutions.

This can be best done by example and by reflection that the other person has the same right as one wants for oneself.

It is a happy truth that civilisational values have progressively advanced in that direction. That there are notable exceptions is understandable.

Perhaps dealing with it with patience and purpose is the way forward. It takes time but can be done with positive practices in the family and positive values in collective places like schools and elsewhere. The direction is non-negotiable, and the attempt is worth its effort.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views are personal)

Why we must learn to laugh at ourselves again

SECOND Opinion

BY ASHA IYER KUMAR

Once upon a time, we laughed without offence or guilt. We laughed at power, at politics, at bureaucracy, and most of all, at ourselves. It was a laughter steeped not in mockery but in a shared understanding of the absurdities of life. Remember R. K. Laxman's Common Man?

The bespectacled, bewildered figure who stood silently witnessing the nation's daily dramas was our collective conscience drawn in ink. His was the lens through which middle-class India smiled at its foibles. No one was spared, and yet no one was wounded. His cartoons, which ran for decades under the banner You Said It, didn't merely capture the socio-political temperature — they made us laugh through the chaos, without cynicism, without rage, and it inspired us to gauge ourselves on the scale of changing times. How far we've come — and not for the better! Just the other day, The Times of India reported that Western Railway in Mumbai asked for the removal of a hoarding that humorously depicted Mumbai's famously crowded local trains.

Everyone who knows the city even remotely will vouch that the depiction wasn't far from reality. But even reality now seems too irreverent to tolerate. Our thresholds have shrunk. Satire is suspect. Irony is an offence. And humour — a great salve to wounded hearts — has become a minefield. It is as though

we have forgotten how to laugh without hurting, or how to be the subject of a joke without taking it personally. The public frame has grown brittle. Everything is either an insult or an agenda. Our collective skin has thinned, and with it, our ability to process humour as a mirror rather than a missile. We have become sensitive to our peril, for laughter now is no more a medicine but an action to be indulged in stealth. We now laugh at our own risk, for not all out there are amused. But let us pause here. What does it mean to laugh at oneself? And why is it so crucial to the health of a society, and to the sanity of the individual? To laugh at oneself is acknowledging one's imperfections without shame or embarrassment. It is to accept the human comedy in which we are all actors, fumbling, contradicting, faltering and having great falls like Humpty-Dumpty.

It is an act of humility. And humility, unlike humiliation, does not diminish. It enlarges us. It softens the ego, smoothens the sharp edges of pride, and allows us to be more forgiving — towards others, yes, but especially towards ourselves. We are not meant to take ourselves too seriously. The capacity to see one's absurdity, to smile at it, and even to share it with others, is a mark of inner strength.

In that laughter is a quiet wisdom — the wisdom to know that life is far too unpredictable to be lived in perpetual indignation. And as creatures, we are too tiny and insignificant in the canvas of the cosmos. Philosophers from every tradition have hinted at this. In Zen, the enlightened monk is often depicted laughing. In ancient Greece, Socrates was known for his irony, and his capacity to deflate pomposity through

humour. Closer home, the Bhakti poets gently mocked dogma and orthodoxy. Their irreverence was rooted in love, not spite. They knew that humour could illuminate truth in ways solemnity never could, and it was taken in its true spirit. But today, we confuse being offended with being right. And so, we silence the comedian, the cartoonist, the satirist, and slowly, we silence ourselves. We build fortresses around our fragility and call it righteousness. We seek apology where we should seek perspective.

This is not a defence for vulgarity or cruelty masquerading as humour, which too has become abundant in these indiscreet times. We know the difference between crassness and coolness. And we must always be vigilant against humour that punches down, that mocks the marginalised, that cloaks prejudice in punchlines or masks depravity in insensitivity. The answer to bad humour is not humourlessness. It is better humour. Finer irony. Truer satire. And most of all, a thicker skin. As a society, we need to grow up. We need to rediscover the art of laughing together and at ourselves.

The Common Man did not need to speak because the society around him understood the language of the silent chuckle. That silent chuckle is now endangered. Let us then re-learn the ability to look at ourselves with a smile, not a scowl. Let us not fear humour; let us fear the day when we lose our humour. When people can no longer laugh at themselves, they are no longer free.

(The author is a Dubai-based columnist and a writing coach. She has published six books. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

A bold step towards social justice

Madam — The Telangana Government's decision to divide Scheduled Castes (SCs) into three categories is a commendable move towards social justice. It's important to note that the Supreme Court, in its August 2024 verdict, permitted such classification. There are undeniable disparities within the SC community. While some groups have benefited from government schemes, others remain marginalised. By dividing SCs into three groups — each comprising various sub-castes — the Government aims to ensure that the most disadvantaged are not left behind. Other states should take inspiration from Telangana's initiative.

However, while categorisation is a step forward, much remains to be done for the overall development of the SC community. Education must be made accessible to all members of the community, as it is the most effective tool for empowerment. Additionally, self-employment opportunities and skill development programmes must be introduced to boost economic independence.

After all, inclusive human resource development is essential for national progress. To truly uplift the SC community, this categorisation must be followed by sustained policy action. Holistic measures in education, employment, and skill training are vital. Only through inclusive development can we bridge internal disparities and ensure that every section of society participates equally in the nation's progress.

VENUGS | KOLLAM

India's market resilience shines

Madam — Indian equities soared as markets reopened after an extended weekend, with the NSE Nifty 50 Index rallying by up to 2.4 per cent on Tuesday in Mumbai, surpassing its 2 April closing level. According to Bloomberg, this rebound positions India as the first major global market to recover from losses triggered by reciprocal tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump earlier this month. Investors continue to place confidence in India's large, domestic-driven economy, which appears better equipped to weather a potential global slowdown than markets more exposed to US tariffs.

Amid the escalating US — China trade war, India has emerged as a viable alternative manufacturing hub. Unlike Beijing's combative stance, India has maintained a conciliatory approach and is actively working towards a provisional trade agreement with Washington.

This recovery is indeed a positive sign for India's economic resilience. India's steady performance amidst global volatility reflects the strength of its domestic consumption, robust financial systems, and prudent policy measures.

As geopolitical tensions and protectionist policies unsettle other economies, India's focus on self-reliance, infrastructure development, and investor-friendly reforms offers a competitive edge. This rebound is not just a short-term surge — it signals long-term confidence in India's growth trajectory.

JAVANTHY SUBRAMANIAM | MUMBAI

A defining moment for Congress

Madam — Referring to the headline 'National Herald Case: ED Chargesheet Sonia, Rahul' (16 April), the Enforcement Directorate's chargesheet marks a serious escalation in the money laundering case involving the Gandhi family and the Congress party.

The allegations of financial irregularities in the Young Indian case are grave. Rather than presenting legal rebuttals, the Congress appears to be adopting a political counter-narrative, blaming the Government.

Moreover, Rahul Gandhi has yet to clarify his citizenship status amid ongoing allegations by Subramanian Swamy. The ED's chargesheet details ₹988 crore in alleged misappropriation, with market valuations of assets pegged at approximately ₹5,000 crore.

This is one of the most significant financial scandals to implicate a political family at the national level. The Congress must focus on proving its innocence in court rather than politicising the issue. It is essential that the judiciary ensures speedy justice, especially when such a high-profile case is involved. The seriousness of the charges demands transparency, accountability, and a fair legal process.

As public trust in institutions is at stake, both the Congress party and the Gandhi family must prioritise legal clarity over political rhetoric. Swift and impartial judicial proceedings will not only uphold the rule of law but also strengthen democratic credibility.

VINOD JOHRI | DELHI

ILAYARAJA'S LEGAL FIGHT FOR CREATIVE RIGHTS IN FILM MUSIC

Veteran music composer Ilayaraja has taken legal action against the makers of Ajith's recent film Good Bad Ugly for using three of his iconic songs without prior consent. The songs in question — Illamai Idho Idho from Sakalakala Vallavan, En Jodi Manja Kuruvi from Vikram (1986), and Oththa Roova from Nattupura Pattu — were used without permission.

Ilayaraja has demanded a formal apology and ₹5 crore in compensation from the production house. This case highlights Ilayaraja's unwavering commitment to protecting his creative legacy and reinforces the importance of respecting intellectual property rights. In the past, he has repeatedly defended his works against unauthorised usage. Gone are the days when filmmakers collaborated extensively with composers to create original music. Today's trend of remixing and reusing old songs might offer short-term appeal but erodes originality and often

leads to copyright violations. It is high time that filmmakers prioritised creativity over gimmicks and ensured legal compliance in music usage.

This incident underscores the growing menace of piracy and blatant copyright violations in the Indian film industry. Using a creator's work without consent not only disrespects their artistry but also sets a dangerous precedent — one that undermines intellectual property rights. Ilayaraja's legal stand is a reminder that creativity must be protected, not exploited.

In an era where originality is often overshadowed by remixes and recreations, strict enforcement of copyright laws is crucial. The industry must foster a culture that values artistic integrity, ensures rightful compensation, and deters infringement — to safeguard the future of creative expression in India. The government must take strict action against any violations.

M PRADYU | KANNUR

River ecosystems in the shadow of sand mining

As illegal mining alters the riverbeds and drains life from these once-thriving arteries, the need for sustainable management becomes urgent. To preserve rivers as living, life-giving entities, we must shift from exploitation to stewardship, write BKP SINHA and AJAY JHA

FIRST Column

Rivers are more than just flowing water — they are living archives of the Earth's memory, coded in sediment, speed, erosion, and the contours of their valleys.

Each river carries within it a unique story of origin, shaped by the terrain it traverses and the climates it endures.

Their courses mark the pulse of the land, shifting over centuries, yet always finding a path forward. In their constant motion, rivers mirror the rhythms of nature — cyclical, adaptive, and ever-evolving.

The flow of a river is driven by the force of gravity, which is counteracted by the resistance of the terrain it flows through.

The characteristics of the surrounding environment, such as the landscape's shape, soil type, vegetation, and factors like climate, land use, and geological play a significant role in determining the river's flow rate, the course it follows, and the sediments it carries. As rivers flow through diverse landscapes, they expose the layers beneath the surface, providing a glimpse into the Earth's geological history.

The sediments they carry — from fine silt to large boulders — reveal rock types, erosion patterns, and the entities that give shape to the terrain they have crossed. As rivers leave steep slopes for gentler terrain, their speed drops, reducing erosion.

They begin depositing transported sediments, with coarser materials giving way to finer silt, clay, and sand. The river may meander, forming curves and oxbow lakes, while sediment builds up along banks and floodplains, creating a more stable course and aquatic ecosystems.

Continuous erosion and deposition, however, cause these river channels to change course, often leading to braided river patterns with multiple interconnected streams.

Naturally developed embankments do help contain the river during high flows, prevent erosion of floodplains, and check disruption of ecosystems including any significant alterations to the river's path. The floods, however, deposit fertile silt on floodplains, enriching soil for agriculture like in the Indo-Gangetic plain. Again, as they approach larger water bodies, intricate deltas are formed, creating biodiverse ecosystems as exemplified in the vast Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta.

As the rivers flow, they provide a variety of resources and life-supporting services. Securing their ecological health is essential for the survival of humanity. River sand, apparently a relatively innocuous item made available by rivers, is in great demand, especially for construction activity. The extraction of river sand is regulated by the Government.

With increasing focus on construction in recent times, however, almost all the states in the country are facing an acute problem of illegal mining of river sand. Major lengths of the rivers being in non-forest areas, the newspapers abounded with journalistic accounts regarding assaults by illegal sand miners on the revenue department's enforcement agency. Indicating, however, that the sand mafia is entering forest areas too in the current construction season, there are reports of several assaults on foresters too.



Sand is abundantly available in deserts, but the sand particles created by wind erosion are rounded and hence are less suitable for construction. Construction-grade sand should be angular and with a certain mineral composition.

The proportion of fine particles (e.g. sand) and coarse particles (e.g. gravel), along with the cost of mining and transport, lead the extraction agencies to select the favourable spots. Indiscriminate sand mining, whether in the active channel or floodplain terraces, however, impacts the physical, chemical, and biological aspects of the riverscape apart from the human populations.

There are strong reasons for regulating river sand extraction. Depending on the type of mining, the riverbed's morphology changes, the groundwater table of the surrounding area is lowered, the stability of the riverbank is affected, and the flow regime of the river and the dynamic equilibrium of erosion and sedimentation gets permanently affected. They make way for disasters to happen.

As regards the chemical impact, the sand excavation and transport machinery severely degrade water and air quality through fuel/oil spills and exhaust

fumes. Extraction of river sand removes sediment-bound nutrients from the mining site which are then deposited on downstream sandbars. While these nutrient-rich deposits support green floodplains as seen along India's Periyar River, the process signifies a loss of nutrients from the river system but a reduced nutrient flow from land to marine environments.

Continuous removal of a sand layer of the riverbed can lead to the destruction of the habitat of microorganisms maintaining the river's biological health and endanger ecosystem services. Increased turbidity due to sand mining in active channels can block sunlight, hinder photosynthesis, and exterminate aquatic life like diatoms, macroinvertebrates, benthic algae, and fish eggs.

The shallow and braided flow impedes fish migration between flows and pools, disrupting the entire food web. Studies show that rampant sand mining has threatened species like the Ganges River dolphin and Chambal River's gharial. Further, unregulated sand mining results in the loss of aquatic flora and also riverside vegetation due to lowered water table, damaging the 'Shaded Riverine Aquatic Habitat' (SRA), which provides shade, bank stabilisation, and

nutrients to numerous organisms.

Again, the disturbed ecosystem creates conditions favourable for the proliferation of invasive species, such as the water hyacinth, in many Indian riverscapes. The repercussions of ecological instability are cumulative and far-reaching.

Water quality deteriorates, stagnant water in old sand mines impacts the health and livelihoods of local communities, and the collapse of infrastructures like buildings, roads, and bridges becomes imminent. Water quality deteriorates, stagnant water in old sand mines impacts the health and livelihoods of local communities, and the collapse of infrastructures like buildings, roads, and bridges becomes imminent.

The lowering of groundwater tables due to sand extraction is reported in the Achankovil and Manimala river basins in Kerala, where wells have dried up and agricultural productivity dropped as irrigation structures became ineffective. The decline in fisheries productivity has been reported in the Ganges River and other basins, impacting local livelihoods directly.

Meeting the ever-increasing demand for sand while adhering to sustainable sand mining practices in the interest of the river's survival is a formidable challenge today. With the Government's will to ensure the conservation and sustenance of our river systems as the non-negotiable premise, a range of responsible approaches must be adopted.

They should include creation of inventory of the available sustainable resources based on scientific study, carefully selected locations for extraction, pre- and post-mining baseline surveys, controlled extraction volumes, phased mining with concurrent or subsequent reclamation of mined areas through measures like refilling and revegetation, no extraction during seasons of aqua fauna's high biological activity, and third-party monitoring and evaluation as well as social audit of mining activities involving villagers and using GPS and drone surveillance as in Kerala.

Simultaneously, a concerted effort be made to diminish reliance on natural river sand by promoting the recycling of construction and demolition waste and the adoption of alternative materials like manufactured sand (M-sand), which is being promoted in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

While the ideal scenario involves widespread adherence to the above-suggested action points, developing a well-grounded strategy for effective enforcement has no alternative so far as a balanced and environmentally sound approach to sand management and riverscape conservation is concerned. Rivers have long been revered as symbols of life and spirituality.

To truly understand our rivers, we must see them as a part of the ecosystem that sustains humanity, and not just as resources to be exploited.

They deserve to be approached with cultural humility, legal innovation, and ecological wisdom. In the face of climate change and environmental degradation also, rivers stand as an eternal reminder that revival is always possible — if we learn to listen, respect, and align ourselves in harmony with nature.

(The writers are former Principal Chief Conservators of Forests, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. Views are their own)

WATER QUALITY DETERIORATES, STAGNANT WATER IN OLD SAND MINES IMPACTS THE HEALTH AND LIVELIHOODS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES, AND THE COLLAPSE OF INFRASTRUCTURES BECOMES IMMINENT. WATER QUALITY DETERIORATES, STAGNANT WATER IN OLD SAND MINES IMPACTS THE HEALTH OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

India's startup surge: A new innovation powerhouse

In less than ten years, India has transformed from a budding startup landscape into the world's third-largest startup ecosystem, behind only the United States and the United Kingdom, write VINAY PATHAK and SANDEEP JOSHI

In just a decade, India's startup ecosystem has emerged as a powerful driver of innovation, employment, and national competitiveness. From a nascent startup scene, India has exploded into one of the world's most dynamic and rapidly expanding startup ecosystems.

The numbers tell a dramatic story, where from approximately 500 Government-recognised startups in 2016, the count surged to over 1.59 lakh by 15 January 2025.

This is not just development, but represents a fundamental change in India's economic structure, making the country the world's third-largest startup hub, after the United States and the United Kingdom. The presence of over 100 unicorns depicts the scale and value being created within this vibrant ecosystem.

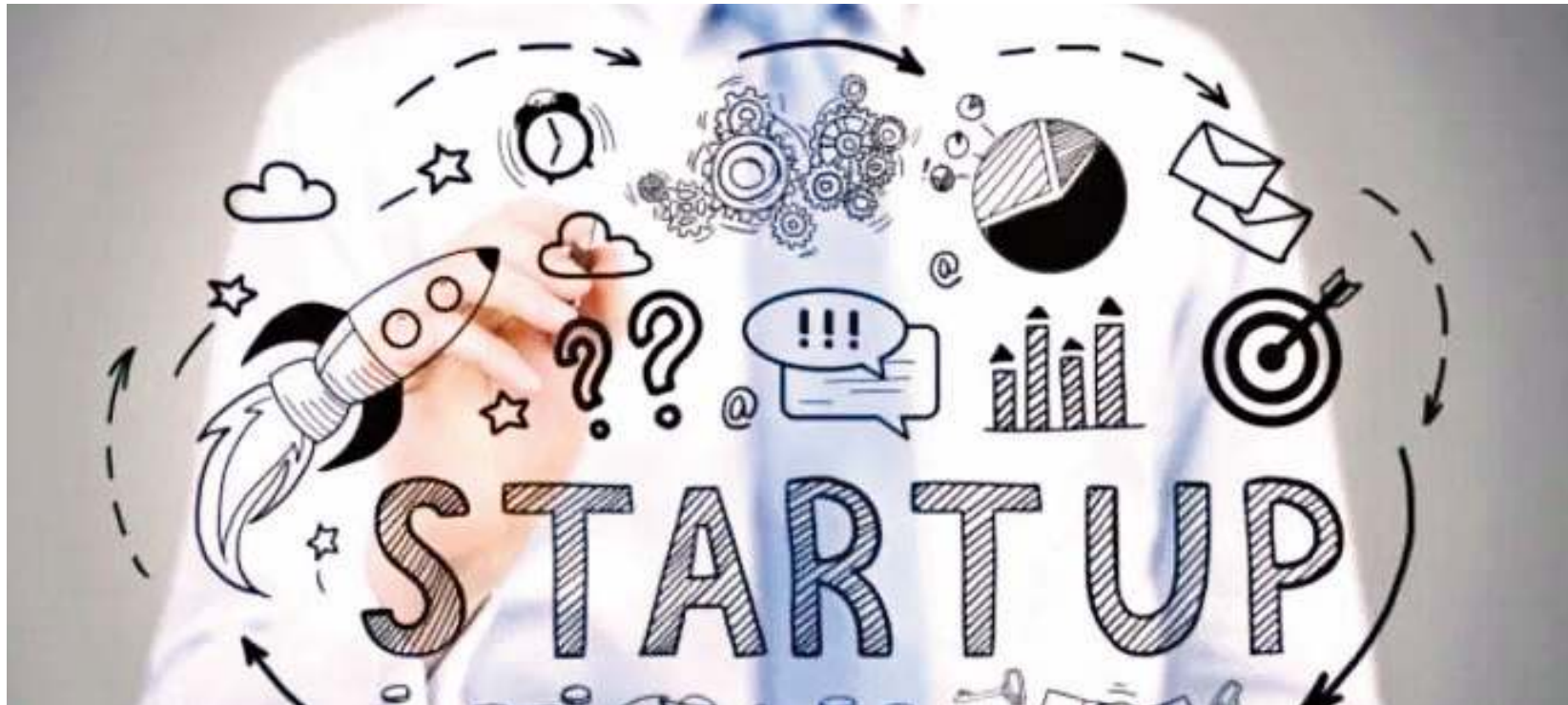
India's startup boom, from 2014 to early 2025, is not just a result of entrepreneurial spirit but the outcome of a powerful convergence — the drive of Indian entrepreneurs coupled with proactive government policies designed to nurture a thriving ecosystem.

This remarkable growth highlights the synergy between intentional policy and organic innovation, unleashing hidden potential across the nation. It demonstrates how focused efforts have transformed ideas into successful businesses, paving the way for India's emergence as a global startup hub.

The exponential growth trajectory of India's startup ecosystem coincides directly with the rollout of key government programmes and visionary leadership that removed roadblocks and actively fostered innovation. Launched in 2016, these initiatives provided a structured framework that catalysed the entrepreneurial surge. Pivotal to this transformation was the launch of the Startup India initiative in January 2016.

Envisioned as a flagship programme, its core objective was to cultivate a startup culture, build a robust and inclusive ecosystem, and fundamentally transform India into a country of "job creators instead of job seekers."

India's visionary leadership has transformed the nation from job-seekers to job providers, reflecting its entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to building a self-



reliant, job-generating economy. It wasn't just a slogan; it was backed by a comprehensive Action Plan focusing on Simplification, Funding, and Incubation. This framework offered tax exemptions, simplified compliance, and financial support to help early-stage ventures overcome funding and regulatory challenges.

Simultaneously, the Government launched the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) in 2016, which fostered a culture of innovation through initiatives like the Atal Tinkering Labs and Atal Incubation Centres. These programmes not only nurtured young talent but also created a robust infrastructure that supported startups across diverse sectors, including technology, healthcare, and manufacturing. AIM's focus on nurturing creativity and research has played a crucial role in strengthening the ecosystem and preparing it for the future.

In 2024, the Indian Government made a transformative decision by abolishing the angel tax in the Union Budget. Introduced in 2012, this tax had acted as

THE EXPONENTIAL GROWTH TRAJECTORY OF INDIA'S STARTUP ECOSYSTEM COINCIDES DIRECTLY WITH THE ROLLOUT OF KEY GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES AND VISIONARY LEADERSHIP THAT REMOVED ROADBLOCKS AND ACTIVELY FOSTERED INNOVATION

a significant obstacle for investors, discouraging investment by imposing levies on capital raised above fair market value, often hindering critical funding at vital stages. This step has cleared the way for a more investor-friendly environment, fostering growth and opportunity for startups across the nation.

The removal of this tax has been celebrated as a major step towards creating a more investor-friendly environment, helping startups access the funding they need to scale and succeed. The decision to abolish the angel tax, alongside other reforms, showcases the Government's commitment to providing a conducive atmosphere for entrepreneurship to thrive. The growth of India's startup ecosystem has been far from centralised. While traditional tech hubs like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Gurugram remain significant, a noticeable shift has occurred as entrepreneurs from smaller cities and towns have begun to make their mark.

This democratisation of innovation has been facilitated by the Government's push

for a more inclusive startup ecosystem that is accessible to a broader pool of talent.

Sectors like fintech, healthtech, and agritech have emerged as hotspots for innovation, with over 1,300 active tech startups added in 2022 alone. The Government has played a vital role in fostering growth within these sectors, encouraging investment and providing specialised support to startups that address critical societal needs.

For instance, fintech startups have revolutionised access to financial services, healthtech ventures have improved healthcare delivery, and agritech innovations have brought efficiency to the agriculture sector. Despite facing challenges like funding slowdowns and hiring freezes, the ecosystem demonstrated resilience. In 2023, India added over 1,000 startups, including 400 in emerging areas, underscoring the sector's adaptability.

The journey of our nation from ancient to modern India is a saga of remarkable achievements and milestones. It begins with the wisdom of great saints, progresses through the profound teachings of Swami

Vivekananda and the Upanishads, and extends to the strides of modern innovation like the upagrah (satellite) and the evolution from the traditional Kumbh Mela to the Startup Kumbh Mela. Each chapter of this journey stands as a powerful testament to our nation's relentless hard work, groundbreaking innovation, and unwavering self-reliance.

India is now rapidly emerging as a global leader in fostering sustainable, innovative, and thriving startups. As reported by the Press Information Bureau (PIB) on 16 January 2025, the country commemorates nine years of Startup India, a game-changing initiative launched in 2016. National Startup Day marks a key milestone in India's entrepreneurial journey.

Startup India, launched under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has become a cornerstone of national innovation and growth. It has championed the entrepreneurial spirit across the country, empowering thousands to explore creativity and innovation. As a result, India has become the third-largest startup ecosystem in the world.

India's startup story is a testament to the indomitable entrepreneurial spirit of New India. Since 2016, our vision has been to drive innovation, provide financial support, and nurture budding businesses. In just under a decade, ideas have evolved into industry giants, and dreams have become tangible realities.

Today, India stands tall, not only as a hub for technology but as a beacon of progress across diverse sectors. Our achievements in areas like vaccination further reflect our scientific prowess and societal resilience.

Inspired by the principles of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family) and Na Phaleshu Kadachana (focus on action, not results), India continues to grow with values at its core. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's push for "Vikas bhi, Virasat bhi" (growth and heritage, hand in hand) defines today's India — which is modern and aspirational, yet deeply rooted in its rich traditions and culture. India's story is not just one of economic expansion, but a journey of purpose, passion, and progress.

(Vinay Pathak is Assistant Professor at IIT Sonapat and Sandeep Joshi is a senior technology journalist. Views are their own)

IN BRIEF



Gold rises Rs 70 to hit a fresh peak of Rs 98,170/10g

Gold prices rose by Rs 70 to hit yet another record high of Rs 98,170 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid firm global demand, according to the All India Sarafa Association. On Wednesday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity soared by Rs 1,650 to hit an all-time high of Rs 98,100 per 10 grams. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity increased by Rs 70 to touch a fresh peak of Rs 97,720 per 10 grams against Wednesday's closing level of Rs 97,650 per 10 grams. "Gold prices soared to record highs, fuelled by a weaker dollar, escalating trade war tensions, and growing concerns over global economic growth following US President Donald Trump's tariff announcements," Chintan Mehta, Chief Executive Officer at Abans Financial Services, said. He said gold prices continue to surge as global uncertainty persists, with the US-China trade war disrupting supply chains and stoking fears of inflation and recession.



India's tea exports touch 254.67 million kg

India's tea exports reached 254.67 million kg during the January to December 2024 period, moving the country up to the third position globally in the export of the beverage, a statement by the Tea Board of India said. The total value realisation from tea exports in 2024 stood at Rs 7,111.43 crore, reflecting a notable increase from the previous year. In terms of regional contribution, North India led the way with exports of 154.81 million kg, accounting for a value realisation of Rs 4,833.12 crore. South India exported 99.86 million kg, with earnings of Rs 2,278.31 crore. North India's share was 60.79 per cent in quantity terms and 66.96 per cent in value terms, while South India contributed 39.21 per cent by volume and 32.04 per cent by value, the statement said. The Tea Board, which functions under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, facilitates cultivation, manufacturing and marketing of tea across the country.



Infosys to acquire MRE Consulting for USD 36 mn

Infosys on Thursday announced a definitive agreement to acquire technology and business consulting firm MRE Consulting for USD 36 million (about Rs 307.4 crore) in an all-cash deal. The IT firm will acquire the consultancy company through its wholly owned subsidiary Infosys Nova Holdings LLC. The acquisition is expected to close during the first quarter (April-June) of FY26. The cost of acquisition will be "upto USD 36 million, including upfront and earnouts, excluding management incentives, and retention bonus," according to a regulatory filing. The acquisition brings newer capabilities for Infosys in trading and risk management, especially in the energy sector, a company statement said. "Headquartered in Houston, Texas, MRE Consulting will bring a team of over 200 professionals with industry knowledge, consulting and deep technology experience in Energy/Commodity Trading and Risk Management (E/CTRM) platforms and ecosystems," the filing said.

Indian official team likely to visit US next week for trade talks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An Indian official team is likely to visit Washington next week to iron out differences on certain issues before formally launching negotiations for the proposed India-US bilateral trade agreement (BTA), an official said. The visit, which comes within weeks of a high-level US team visiting India, indicates that the talks for the BTA are gaining momentum.

India's chief negotiator, Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal is expected to lead the team for the first in-person talks between the two countries. The visit follows senior official-level talks held between the two countries last month here. Brendan Lynch, the Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia, was in India from March 25 to 29 for crucial trade discussions with Indian officials.

"The Indian team may visit Washington by mid of next week. This is not the formal first round of talks between the two countries. They would like to iron out differences on certain issues before launching the formal negotiations for the BTA," the official said. The two sides are keen to



utilise the 90-day tariff pause, announced by US President Donald Trump on April 9, to push the talks.

Earlier, an official source had said that an interim trade agreement between India and the US could be finalised in the 90-day tariff pause announced by the Trump administration if it is a win-win for both sides.

The two countries have already finalised and signed the terms of reference (ToRs) to start negotiations for the pact. The ToRs define the purpose, scope, and framework of the negotiations for such agreements. They also outline the specific areas to be covered.

On April 15, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal had stated that India will try to close the negotiations as quickly as possible with the

US. He also stated that India has decided to follow the trade liberalisation path with the US through this agreement. India and the US have been engaged in negotiating a bilateral trade agreement 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.

Virtual talks are on from this week. In a trade pact, two countries either significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. They also ease norms to promote trade in services and boost investments.

While the US is looking at duty concessions in sectors like certain industrial goods, automobiles (electric vehicles particularly), wines, petrochemical products, dairy, and agriculture items such as apples, tree nuts, and alfalfa hay; India may look at duty cuts for labour-intensive sectors like apparels, textiles, gems and jewellery, leather, plastics, chemicals, oil seeds, shrimp, and horticulture products.

From 2021-22 to 2024-25, the US was India's largest trading partner.

The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in bilateral trade.

In a trade pact, two countries either significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. They also ease norms to promote trade in services and boost investments

RBI issues master direction of deposits, accounts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The RBI on Thursday said banks can open/close rupee accounts (non-interest bearing) in the name of their overseas branches or correspondents without prior reference to the central bank.

However, the opening of rupee accounts in the name of branches of Pakistani banks operating outside Pakistan requires specific approval of the Reserve Bank, said the Master Direction - Deposits and Accounts issued by the apex bank. It further said credit to the account of a non-resident bank is a permitted method of payment to non-residents and is, therefore, subject to the regulations applicable to transfers in foreign currency. The debit to the account of a non-resident bank is in effect an inward remittance in foreign currency, it added. On funding of accounts of non-resident banks, the RBI said banks may freely purchase foreign currency from their overseas correspondents/branches at ongoing market rates to lay down funds in their accounts for meeting their

Sugar output down 18 pc to 25.49 mn tons



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's sugar production has reached 25.49 million tonnes so far in the ongoing 2024-25 season, down 18 per cent from a year ago, sugar mills body ISMA said on Thursday.

The production fall is attributed to a decline in output in the country's top three sugar producing states of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka.

According to the data released by the Indian Sugar Bio-Energy and Manufacturers Association (ISMA), production in Maharashtra, India's largest sugar producer, fell to 8.07 million tonnes till April 15

of the current season (October-September), from 10.94 million tonnes a year ago.

Output in Uttar Pradesh, the country's second top producer, fell to 9.11 million tonnes, from 10.18 million tonnes, while in Karnataka it declined to 4.04 million tonnes, from 5.06 million tonnes in the said period.

Out of 534 mills that operated, the crushing operation was on in 38 mills, while the rest were closed.

ISMA said around 3.5 million tonnes of sugar is expected to be diverted towards ethanol production this year, against last year's diversion of 2.15 million tonnes.

Markets surge for 4th day; Sensex reclaims 78k-level

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged nearly 2 per cent on Thursday, registering their fourth day of rally as investors turned buoyant after foreign investors returned to domestic equities amid expectations of a breakthrough in US-Japan trade negotiations over reciprocal tariffs.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 1,508.91 points or 1.96 per cent to reclaim the 78,000 level. It finally settled at 78,553.20. During the day, it soared 1,572.48 points or 2.04 per cent to 78,616.77.

As many as 2,427 stocks advanced while 1,522 declined and 157 remained unchanged on the BSE. The NSE Nifty surged 414.45 points or 1.77 per cent to 23,851.65.

In four days, the BSE benchmark jumped 4,706.05 points or 6.37 per cent, and the Nifty surged 1,452.5 points or 6.48 per cent.

"Benchmark indices posted sharp gains on Thursday to end the week on a high note, posting four consecutive sessions of gains. Broader Mid



and Small caps also closed higher.

"Markets opened lower on weak global cues after sharp overnight losses in US indices. After initial jitters, markets quickly bounced back to steadily climb higher throughout the day as the focus shifted to domestic factors and ongoing earnings. Banks continued to drive the benchmarks higher with private lenders leading the gains ahead of the earnings announcements," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

From the Sensex firms, Eternal, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, Sun Pharma, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finserv, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Reliance

Industries were among the biggest gainers.

On the other hand, Tech Mahindra and Maruti were the laggards.

The BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.56 per cent and smallcap index went up by 0.52 per cent.

All BSE sectoral indices ended higher. Bankex jumped 2.56 per cent, telecommunication (2.22 per cent), financial services (2 per cent), services (1.47 per cent), teck (1.19 per cent), energy (1.13 per cent), auto (1.01 per cent) and healthcare (0.91 per cent).

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 3,936.42 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Fitch affirms ratings of ICICI, Axis Bank

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings on Thursday affirmed ratings of private sector lenders Axis Bank and ICICI Bank, with a stable outlook.

The Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) of both banks has been affirmed at 'BB+'. A 'BB' IDR indicates an elevated vulnerability to default risk.

Axis Bank's viability rating has been retained at 'BB', while ICICI Bank's has been upgraded to 'BB+'. A 'BB' viability rating denotes moderate prospects for ongoing viability.

Fitch said India's strong



medium-term growth potential, and its large, diversified economy are reflected in Fitch's operating environment (OE) score.

Fitch projects GDP growth

of over 6 per cent in the financial year ending March 2025 (FY25) and FY26, driven by domestic demand, government capex and improving capacity utilisation.

"The growth will support Indian banks' ability to sustain profitable business in the medium term, if risks are effectively managed," Fitch said while affirming Axis Bank's rating.

With regard to ICICI Bank, Fitch said it expects a moderate increase in ICICI's loan/deposit ratio as the bank aims to balance loan and deposit growth.

"We have revised ICICI's asset quality score to 'BB', from 'BB+', and the outlook to stable, from positive. This follows an improved impaired loans ratio, which we expect to be sustained at around current levels," Fitch said.

Rupee sheds US tariff impact; ends 27 paise higher at 85.37 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee strengthened for the fourth consecutive session and closed 27 paise higher at 85.37 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, hitting the April 3 closing level, on the back of foreign fund inflows in domestic equities and broad weakness in the greenback.

The unit has pared all its losses since April 2, when US President Donald Trump announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs on multiple countries. On April 2, the rupee was quoted at 85.52 against the US dollar.

According to forex traders, a positive trend in domestic equities following a reprieve from the US tariffs boosted overall investor sentiment even though some recovery in crude prices weighed down on the Indian currency.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.48 and moved between the high of 85.31 and the low of 85.62 against the greenback during intraday. The unit ended the session at 85.37 (provisional) against the dollar, logging a gain of 27 paise from its previous closing level.

USD 2.4 BN NON-CASH DEAL

Adani Ports to acquire Australian terminal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd, India's biggest private port operator, announced on Thursday a USD 2.4 billion non-cash acquisition of a coal export terminal in Australia from a group company to strengthen its presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Board of APSEZ "approved the acquisition of Abbot Point Port Holdings Pte Ltd (APPH), Singapore, from Carmichael Rail and Port

Singapore Holdings Pte Ltd, Singapore (CRPSHPL)", the company said in a statement.

CRPSHPL is a related party. APPH owns the entities which own and operate the North Queensland Export Terminal, a dedicated export terminal with a current nameplate capacity of 50 million tonnes per annum (MTPA). The terminal is located at the Port of Abbot Point, approximately 25 km north of Bowen in North Queensland on Australia's east coast.



APSEZ had originally, in 2011, acquired the North Queensland Export Terminal (NQXT) at Abbot Point for USD 2 billion. Two years later, in 2013, the Adani family purchased the asset from APSEZ for the same amount, along with the capital invested, enabling the company to concentrate on expanding its domestic operations.

Now, with a strengthened balance sheet and a dominant position in India, APSEZ is re-acquiring the terminal as part

of its global growth strategy.

"The transaction will be completed on a non-cash basis. APSEZ will issue 14.38 crore new equity shares to CRPSHPL in exchange for the acquisition of 100 per cent interest in APPH. This is based on an enterprise value of NQXT of Australian Dollar 3.975 billion (about USD 2.4 billion)," the statement said.

The acquisition is valued at almost similar levels to the transfer done in 2013. This valuation is despite capital invest-

ments, growth and inflation of the past 12 years and at slightly discounted multiples to the recent deals in the region.

"As part of the transaction, APSEZ will also assume other non-core assets and liabilities on APPH's balance sheet, which APSEZ will realise within a few months of the acquisition (zero net impact on the transaction valuation). APSEZ's leverage will remain at similar levels post the transaction," the statement said without giving details of the liabilities.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
IRRIGATION & CAD DEPARTMENT
TENDER NOTICE
Tender Notice No: 01/2025-26 Date: 16.04.2025
Name of the Work: Construction of Check Dam across Akeru River near Oolavagu Thanda (V), Khammam Rural (M), Khammam District. ECV: Rs. 5,20,44,482/- Date and time for download of Tender Schedules Online: 18.04.2025, 3:00 PM, Last date and time for submission 25-04-2025, 04:00 PM. Note: For more information please visit https://tender.telangana.gov.in. Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Irrigation Circle, Khammam
OFFER NO: 485PPCL/007/12025-26 Date: 17.04.2025

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
PUBLIC HEALTH AND MUNICIPAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
TENDER NOTICE
NIT No. DB/ID4/TU/FIDC/Ramayampet/2025-26 Dt: 16.04.2025
11 No's Works costing Rs. 950.00 Lakhs: Laying of BT roads, CC roads and side drains, Central Lighting at various locations in Ramayampet Municipality under TU/FIDC loan assistance. Closing on 29.04.2025 @ 04:30 PM; For details visit https://tender.telangana.gov.in. Contact: 9154299724. Sd/- Superintending Engineer (PH) West Circle, Hyderabad
OFFER NO: 528PPCL/007/12025-26 Date: 17.04.2025

'WRITING BEFORE DIRECTING HELPS YOU KNOW YOUR CHARACTER INSIDE OUT'

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Omorshongi, the dark romantic comedy from debutant writer-director Dibya Chatterjee, dares to blend grief with the supernatural and the absurd. Set against the backdrop of a grieving novelist haunted—literally and emotionally—by the ghost of his dead girlfriend, the film offers a refreshingly unique take on love, loss, and the art of moving on. In an exclusive conversation, Chatterjee opens up about writing and directing the film, his creative inspirations, and what makes *Omorshongi* stand out in the landscape of Indian cinema.

As both writer and director of *Omorshongi*, Chatterjee found a rare synergy in bringing his vision to life. "I think as a director, it's more comfortable when you know the story inside out," he says. "You understand the spectrum of the script. When you write something and then direct it, you are already aware of every character's motivations. It's direct—from the source to the screen."

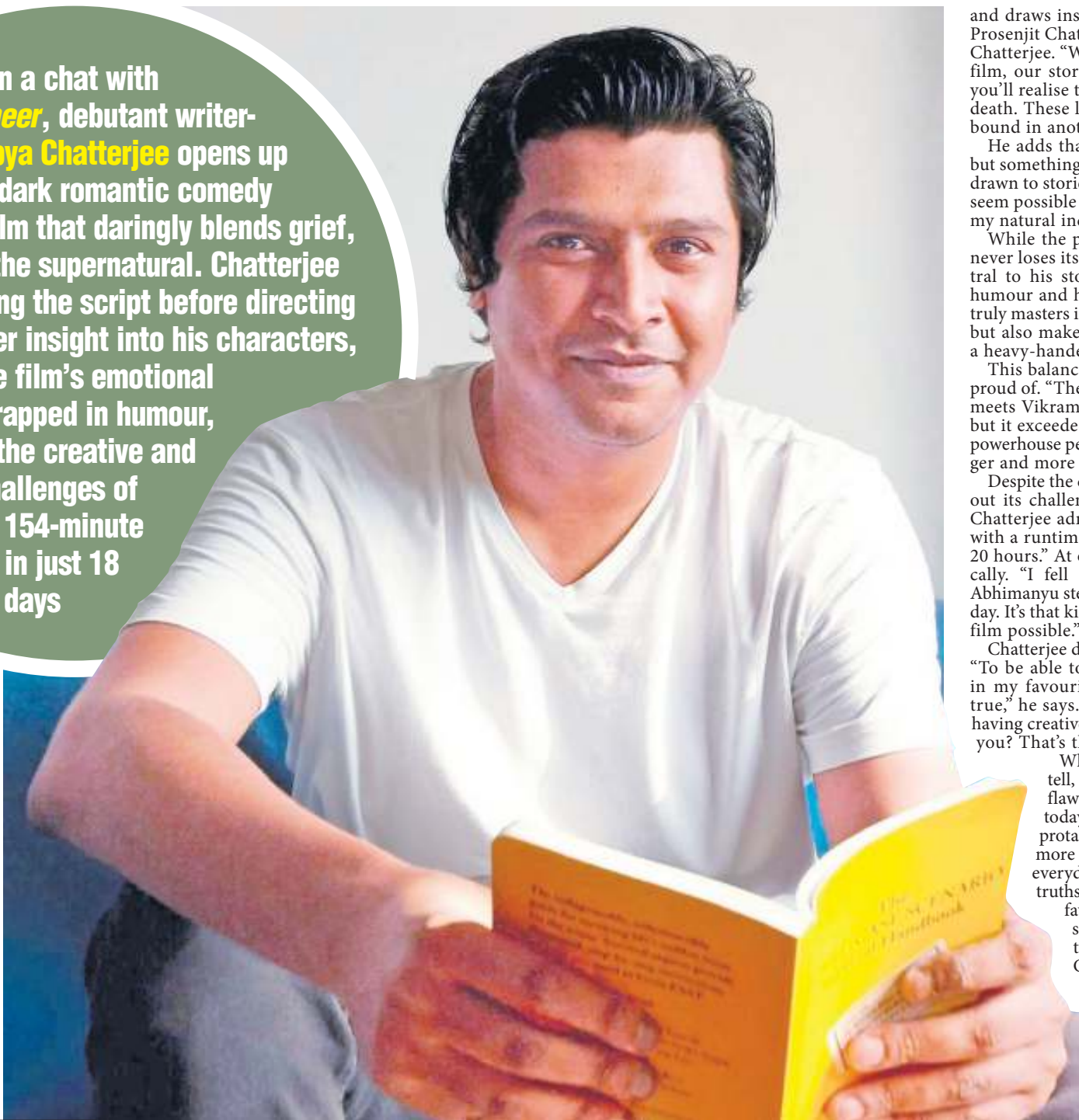
This deep understanding helped him shape a film that's both poignant and playful. "The script was already a well-defined love story when it came to me. What I brought in were the supernatural and dark comedy elements," he shares. "My voice is naturally tuned to satirical, absurd, and dark comedy. So, adapting the romantic premise into something more tragicomic was easier for me."

The story follows Anurag, a novelist struggling with the loss of his girlfriend Joyee—until she reappears as a ghost. But don't expect jump scares. "Joyee's ghost is not here to scare anyone. In fact, she's more scared than anyone else," Chatterjee laughs. "She's timid, shy, easily threatened—just like she was when alive. That brings a new layer to her character. It's not your typical ghost; she mirrors Anurag's inner trauma."

The ghost, according to Chatterjee, becomes a metaphor for unresolved grief. "Joyee's character is the manifestation of the trauma that lives deep inside Anurag. She is his mirror—his other self—helping him cope with the loss, reflecting his own reluctance to move on."

The film's title, *Omorshongi*, translates to "eternal flame"

In a chat with *The Pioneer*, debutant writer-director **Dibya Chatterjee** opens up about his dark romantic comedy *Omorshongi*, a film that daringly blends grief, absurdity, and the supernatural. Chatterjee shares how writing the script before directing gave him a deeper insight into his characters, discusses the film's emotional undercurrents wrapped in humour, and reflects on the creative and physical challenges of shooting a 154-minute feature in just 18 days



and draws inspiration from an iconic Bengali film starring Prosenjit Chatterjee. "It's colloquial in Bengali culture," says Chatterjee. "While we borrow inspiration from the previous film, our story is different. Once you watch *Omorshongi*, you'll realise the title reflects a love that transcends life and death. These lovers aren't just bound in this world—they're bound in another world too."

He adds that the supernatural isn't just a stylistic choice but something that's always fascinated him. "I've always been drawn to stories that feel absurd or surreal—things that don't seem possible on the surface," he explains. "That's just where my natural inclination lies."

While the premise is inherently emotional, *Omorshongi* never loses its comic tone. Chatterjee sees this blend as central to his storytelling. "Drawing a fine balance between humour and heavy emotions is tricky. I wonder if one ever truly masters it," he reflects. "The idea is to say serious things, but also make people chuckle. That way, it doesn't feel like a heavy-handed message—it stays fun, yet meaningful."

This balance is best exemplified in a scene he's especially proud of. "There's a scene where Joyee returns as a ghost and meets Vikram. I was nervous about how it would turn out, but it exceeded my expectations," he shares. "Thanks to the powerhouse performances of the actors, the scene became bigger and more impactful than I envisioned."

Despite the creative high, making *Omorshongi* wasn't without its challenges. "The biggest hurdle was the schedule," Chatterjee admits. "We shot the entire film in just 18 days, with a runtime of 154 minutes. Some days we worked 18 to 20 hours." At one point, the stress took a toll on him physically. "I fell sick and almost gave up. My DOP friend Abhimanyu stepped in and directed the remaining scenes that day. It's that kind of collaboration and support that made this film possible."

Chatterjee describes his debut as nothing short of a dream. "To be able to make the film exactly how I envisioned it, in my favourite genre—dark comedy—it's a dream come true," he says. "Of course, filmmaking is collaborative, but having creative autonomy while doing something that excites you? That's the goal."

When it comes to the kinds of stories he wants to tell, Chatterjee is drawn to characters who are flawed, vulnerable, and sometimes unsuccessful. "In today's world of hustle culture, I think it's okay if the protagonist doesn't win in the end. That makes them more human," he explains. "I like telling stories about everyday people, their struggles, and their emotional truths." Tragic comedies and dark comedies remain his favourite genres, but he's also keen to explore new spaces. "I'd love to do something on the subculture of spies, but with my own take on it," he says. Chatterjee is currently developing a new film titled *Likha*, co-written with Anirban Das Gupta and Sourav Ghosh. "It's a situational comedy about a writer couple and the events that unfold in their lives," he reveals. "We're still in the drafting stage and are now looking for a producer to finance the project."

Reclaiming control over urinary incontinence

Living with urinary incontinence isn't just about unexpected leaks—it's about the quiet erosion of confidence and embarrassment that follows. After many years of helping patients through this journey, I've witnessed how this condition silently steals away life's simple pleasures: laughing without worry or enjoying social activities without anxiety.

YOUR CORE'S HIDDEN HERO

At the heart of recovery lies your pelvic floor—a critical component of your core muscle system that works in harmony with your deep abdominal, lower back, and diaphragm muscles to stabilize your spine and support your organs. When this essential core element weakens due to obesity, childbirth, aging, or surgery, your body's natural control system fails.

THE EMOTIONAL BURDEN

The emotional toll can be devastating, with many patients withdrawing from activities they once loved due to self-consciousness and fear.

SHATTERING THE SILENT STIGMA

Urinary incontinence remains one of healthcare's last taboos—a condition discussed in whispers, if at all. As physiotherapists, we create safe spaces where this silence is broken and shame dissolves into understanding. By confronting this taboo directly, patients find relief not just physically, but emotionally.

THE RECOVERY PATHWAY

Through specialized pelvic floor exercises that integrate into everyday movements, patients strengthen not just muscles but rebuild confidence. These tailored regimens enhance the entire core system, restoring control and stability.

TECHNOLOGY AS YOUR ALLY

Modern physiotherapy at Aster RV Hospital offers innovative approaches through muscle stimulation and biofeedback EMG technology. Our game-based therapy transforms rehabilitation by visualizing muscle activity in real-time, making invisible progress visible and motivating.

RECLAIMING YOUR FREEDOM

With each strengthening session, patients reclaim more than muscle function—they reclaim their independence and dignity. Don't let incontinence define your story. Reach out to a physiotherapist who understands not just your condition, but your courage in breaking the silence.

(The author, Dr Palak Dengla, is the Chief Physiotherapist, at Aster RV Hospital.)

When less skincare is enough!

PNS|HYDERABAD

As skincare continues to move beyond surface-level beauty narratives, the conversation increasingly centers on long-term skin health, ingredient literacy, and mindful consumption. Amid this evolving landscape, some homegrown brands are opting for a more restrained approach—one that focuses on practicality over perfection. Skinvest Care, founded by Divya Malpani, is one such label attempting to reframe skincare as a form of maintenance rather than makeover, especially for Indian consumers often caught between traditional remedies and modern cosmetic marketing.

The name itself reflects this ethos. "Skinvest stands for 'invest in your skin,'" says Divya Malpani, Founder and CEO of Skinvest. "We see skincare not just as self-care, but as a long-term investment. Your skin is the body's largest organ—it deserves to be treated with care and gratitude."

For Malpani, this guiding principle influences both their communication and product development. The brand underscores that effective skincare should not be about quick fixes but about supporting the skin's health over time.

Despite the rising popularity of skincare, the perception of it being a cosmetic luxury persists. Skinvest has responded to this through what it describes as a community-centric approach. "We've created content series like Skininvestate, where we break down skincare myths, ingredient science, and long-term care practices," says Malpani.

One area they focus on is prevention. According to her, foundational ingredients such as SPF, retinol, and barrier-supportive actives are more beneficial when used consistently rather than reactively. "Skincare is like nutrition or fitness—it works over time. We try to communicate that through edu-

cational tools, polls, and expert-driven discussions," she explains.

Rather than aligning with elaborate beauty routines or multi-step regimens, Skinvest seems to prioritize minimalism. "We design our products to deliver results without the need for 10 different serums," Malpani says. "It's about fewer steps, but with purposeful, effective formulations."

This pragmatic approach is extended to the product line as well. One example, she mentions, is their CEO Serum—a multi-functional product developed to address multiple concerns including hydration, pigmentation, and skin repair. "It's a way to simplify routines with-

out compromising outcomes," she adds. Skinvest also cites its emphasis on Indian skin concerns as a distinguishing factor. Issues such as pollution-related damage, humidity-driven breakouts, and pigmentation are often specific to regional climates and lifestyles, and the brand claims to keep that context in mind.

"Our formulations blend Indian botanicals like turmeric, ashwagandha, and licorice root with research-backed actives like niacinamide, peptides, and retinoids," Malpani notes. "It's an attempt to bridge traditional ingredients with modern dermatology."

Each formulation, she says, goes through several stages of quality testing—from stability and

safety checks to clinical evaluations. "We don't just focus on the ingredients—we ensure how they interact, how stable they are, and whether they perform consistently over time."

In an industry driven by fleeting fads, Skinvest's approach to innovation seems deliberate rather than reactive. "We don't jump on every trend that pops up on social media," says Malpani. "Instead, we gather feedback through surveys, social polls, and consumer testing to find out what people actually need."

Their innovation pipeline, according to her, is as focused on packaging and user experience as it is on ingredients. "We aim to introduce relevance—not novelty for the sake of it."

The conversation around skincare has also shifted to include sustainability, and Skinvest claims to be adjusting accordingly. The brand states that all its products are vegan, cruelty-free, and aligned with clean beauty standards. Packaging, Malpani adds, uses recycled plastic, with a broader shift toward sustainable materials underway.

"We also try to inform users about what conscious skincare really means—beyond labels," she says. "It's about sourcing, formulation safety, and long-term environmental impact."

For all its scientific language and formulation details, the brand returns frequently to the idea of realism. One belief Malpani actively pushes back against is the notion that extensive routines guarantee results.

"There's a myth that perfect skin requires a 10 or 12-step regimen," she says. "But piling on products can lead to irritation and do more harm than good. We advocate for functional skincare—fewer, smarter steps."

She's also quick to challenge what she calls the "filtered skin fantasy." "Social media often sells this idea of flawless, glassy skin, but healthy skin still has pores, texture, and the occasional breakout," she says. "Skincare alone doesn't determine your skin's appearance—factors like sleep, hydration, and nutrition matter just as much."



Minerva Sweets has launched its third outlet at Suncity, Bandlaguda Jagir. The grand inauguration was graced by Rajendranagar MLA Prakash Goud, who officially opened the new branch. Actress Kushita Kallapu, along with several food lovers and enthusiasts, also attended the event, adding glamour and enthusiasm to the celebration.

● Alisha

● Kushita Kallapu

● Moonisha

● Aparna

● Aashi

● Rithika

● Madhu

Learnorama Technologies Pvt. Ltd. announced the launch of the Tech Generation Summer Camp 2025—a unique multi-city initiative designed for students aged 4 to 15, offering an exciting mix of technology, creativity, and adventure. The event was attended by Sampath Reddy Thigulla, General Secretary and Nisha Paryani, Principal of the host school. Dr Padala Karthik Reddy, Business Head of Learnorama Technologies.

ASUS announced the launch of its AI-powered ExpertBook P Series laptops in India, designed for businesses and professionals that require a Worry-Free Business Experience, powered by high performance, high durability, great battery backup, seamless expandability, enterprise-grade security and enterprise-grade service support.

Kamala Hospital and Research Centre for Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Disease, operating under Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Society (TSCS), Hyderabad, has been officially designated as one of the key Thalassemia International Federation (TIF) Collaborating Centres in India. -

PARTY

Photos by - SV Charly

ELGi-Powered Overhaul Boosts Efficiency

Mann+Hummel, one of the global leaders in providing filtration systems, has successfully overhauled its compressed air system in partnership with Patrons Inc., USA, a subsidiary of Elgi Equipments Limited (BSE: 522074 | NSE: ELGIEQUIP). The new system, powered by ELGi's advanced air compressors and dryers, has led to substantial cost savings, improved production efficiency, and enhanced product quality, transforming Mann+Hummel's manufacturing operations. Mann+Hummel serves numerous industries, that include automotive, agriculture, construction, data centers, energy, food and beverage, and many more.

Summer Wedding Season Begins with Diamond Launch

Tanishq and De Beers Group, the world's leading diamond company, hosted an enchanting evening to honour its cherished customers. This celebration marked a significant milestone, recognizing over 5 lakh families in Hyderabad who have become an integral part of Tanishq's legacy. Tanishq has always been warmly embraced by the people of Hyderabad, fostering a lasting bond through life's joyous celebrations. As part of this customer celebration, Tanishq showcased a stunning collection of natural diamond jewellery — crafted with rare, precious, and timeless diamonds — in line with the diamond wedding season. The highlight of the evening was the unveiling of the Diamond Zone or the 'Mine to Marvel' story of natural diamonds, a collaborative masterpiece by Tanishq and De Beers.

Stoxkart Launches SmartTrader Plan

Stoxkart, India's fast-growing discount brokerage platform, has officially announced the launch of its SmartTrader Plan, a groundbreaking zero-brokerage subscription-based offering tailored for active traders who want to trade smarter and more affordably. Built on the financial expertise of SMC Global Securities, a trusted name in the Indian stockbroking industry for over three decades, Stoxkart is redefining what cost efficiency means for traders in today's dynamic markets. The platform has consistently focused on simplifying trading through cutting-edge technology, intuitive tools, and now-transparent, flat-free pricing. With the SmartTrader Plan, Stoxkart is pushing forward a zero-brokerage revolution, removing the per-trade fee burden and empowering traders to focus on strategy, not costs.

Elite Elevators Launches India's First Bespoke Home Lift

Elite Elevators, a pioneering global leader in the premium home lift sector, has launched Elite Elevators Bespoke—India's first fully customizable, luxury home elevator. The grand unveiling took place at the company's headquarters in Chennai, attended by senior management and employees. As the home elevator industry continues to evolve, Elite Elevators stays ahead of the trend by combining state-of-the-art technology with unmatched personalization. Bespoke redefines residential mobility, seamlessly integrating with diverse architectural styles to offer a sophisticated and tailored experience.

The Kautilya School of Public Policy (KSPP) hosted its 3rd Graduation Ceremony at the Kinnera Seminar Hall on its Hyderabad campus. The event marked a significant milestone for the Class of 2025, commemorating the culmination of their rigorous academic journey and entry into the realm of public policy leadership.

FUN

ARCHIE

SHHH! IT'S MY BABY SISTER'S BEDTIME! I JUST TUCKED HER IN AND READ TO HER!

MOST PEOPLE READ STORY-BOOKS! THIS IS YOUR HIGH SCHOOL TEXTBOOK!

HEY, IT PUTS ME TO SLEEP!

HENRY DANKOFFL GOES TO SLEEP 4-30

CALVIN AND HOBBS

CAN I USE THE GARDEN SHOVEL?

WHAT DO YOU WANT IT FOR?

HOBBS AND I ARE GOING ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR FOSSILIZED REMAINS, YOU SHOULD DIG THROUGH YOUR ROOM.

HA HA. SOMEDAY I'LL NAME AN AUSTRALOPTHEMUS WOMAN AFTER YOU.

GARFIELD

YOU AND I ARE A TEAM, GARFIELD

AND I AM THE COACH

GOOD

THEN YOU CAN BE FIRED

REALITY CHECK

OCCAM'S RAZOR

THE SIMPLEST ASSUMPTION IS THAT THE BLADE IS TOO SHARP

SPEED BUMP

SORRY - DID I STARTLE YOU?

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6		7		8
9	10	11		
12		13	14	
15				
16	17		18	
				19

NANCY

I'M SICK OF ALL THESE REBOOTS AND RESTARTS

WHY CAN'T SOMETHING THAT'S GONE STAY GONE?

LOOK, I KNOW YOU HATE POLLEN BUT THAT'S STILL A PRETTY HARSH WAY TO TALK ABOUT SPRING

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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.

ACROSS

- Easiest to do
- Soldiers belong to this building
- Cairo is the capital of this country
- Postage sticker
- A house for a pet rabbit
- A unit of length
- Money made by selling something for more than it cost
- An arm or leg
- Round in shape

DOWN

- A vehicle for travelling to another planet
- A word for mother

3 Finishes

- Watch plays in this building
- Spread this on toast
- A month
- World's largest ocean
- This is held in a courtroom
- A light in the night sky
- Uncooked

SOLUTION

C	R	O	S	E	T			
I	N	T	E	N	D			
R	I	G	H	T	M	A		
A	R	M						
V	E	G	E	T	A	R		
L	O	X	V	E	S			
E	L	E						
L	U	C	O	S	D			
E	A	R	T	H	Q			
D	S	O	D	S				

GINGER MEGGS

GINGE, WHAT'S A LOBBYIST?

WHEN PUTTING CHEESE IN THE TRAP, ALWAYS LEAVE ROOM FOR THE MOUSE

I THINK IT'S A BLOKE WHO CAN'T FIND HIS HOTEL ROOM KEY.

I KNEW YOU'D KNOW.

ODELA 2: TAMANNAAH'S RETURN CAN'T SAVE THIS VIOLENT & WEAK SUPERNATURAL DRAMA

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The film *Odelia Railway Station* was directly released on a private OTT platform in 2022. Ashok Teja directed the film, while another director, Sampath Nandi, provided the story. The film was just an hour and a half long but found success on OTT. Hebah Patel played the main lead, and Vasishtha Simha had an important role. After three years, Sampath Nandi roped in Tamannaah Bhatia for the sequel, *Odelia 2*. Ashok Teja returns as the director, but Sampath Nandi once again provides the story, screenplay, dialogues, and direction supervision. Hebah Patel and Vasishtha Simha continue in the second part as well. Ajaneesh Loknath of *Kantara* fame composed the music for this sequel. Released on Thursday, the film mainly banks on Tamannaah's popularity as she returns to Telugu cinema after a two-year gap.

STORY

Tirupathi (Vasishtha Simha), who tormented the villagers of *Odelia*, is killed by his wife. The elderly villagers decide not to burn his body but instead bury it in a Samadhi Sikha, believing this form of burial will cause his soul to suffer as revenge. However, Tirupathi's evil soul (atma) escapes and begins tormenting the villagers again, particularly targeting young women. Initially, the villagers don't believe that Tirupathi's atma is behind the killings and

blame others. But when a police inspector is killed at Tirupathi's Samadhi, they begin to believe the soul is indeed haunting them.

Not knowing what else to do, they approach Radha, Tirupathi's wife. She advises them to seek help from her sister Bhairavi (Tamannaah), who has turned into a Naga Sadhu and also embodies Siva Sakthi. The villagers meet her and request her to fight against Tirupathi's evil spirit. How Siva Sakthi confronts and ultimately defeats Tirupathi's atma forms the crux of the story.

ANALYSIS

Odelia 2 picks up where *Odelia Railway Station* left off. Sampath Nandi, though credited for the story, doesn't bring anything new to the table. The central concept—of a man who turns into a devil after death and lusts after young women—feels overdone. The plot seems heavily inspired by the film *Arundhati*, and it's clear Sampath Nandi has taken cues from that storyline. Unfortunately, the visuals overpower the narrative, and the film leans more on mindless violence than meaningful storytelling.

The first half offers little in terms of engagement, as director Ashok Teja attempts to establish how Tirupathi's atma escapes and starts tormenting the villagers. The scenes are mundane and uninspired. Tamannaah appears just before the interval and continues into the second half. Although her entry scene is meant to be impactful, neither Ashok Teja nor Sampath Nandi manage to craft compelling



sequences between Siva Sakthi (Tamannaah) and the evil atma (Vasishtha).

The first half is entirely dull, and while there's some curiosity about how Tamannaah's character will be portrayed in the second half, all she ends up doing is walking around chanting "Om Namah Shivaya." In supernatural stories, believability is crucial, but scenes like a police officer sitting at Tirupathi's Samadhi simply don't work. The climax sequence drags on unnecessarily and becomes boring. The excessive bloodshed and gore are unwarranted.

Even in the first half, scenes showing Tirupathi's spirit possessing a man and raping two women are lengthy and badly executed. They are uncomfortable to watch and unnecessarily prolonged. Flying heads and overflowing blood are also major negatives.

PERFORMANCE

Tamannaah is the only saving grace in this film. She embraces a de-glamourised role as a Naga Sadhu and performs sincerely. However, her character isn't written with strength or consistency—especially in the last 30 minutes. She is initially presented as powerful, but this momentum fizzles out by the end. Vasishtha Simha appears less impactful in the climax and comes across as loud. Murali Sharma plays a routine role with nothing noteworthy. Hebah Patel makes a cameo, and her character is wrapped up quickly. Srikanth Iyengar as Pantulu and other supporting actors portraying villagers do their part.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Ajaneesh Loknath's music is just aver-

age and at times unnecessarily loud. Soundar Rajan's cinematography is decent, with a few drone shots standing out. The graphics are well executed. However, the dialogues are mediocre and fail to make an impression.

VERDICT

Odelia 2 is a disappointment and falls well short of expectations. Sampath Nandi, who managed to deliver with *Odelia Railway Station*, fails to provide a fresh or engaging storyline here. Instead, he seems to have reshaped *Arundhati* with minor tweaks. The popular phrase "Vodala Bommali" from *Arundhati* appears to inspire Vasishtha's character as well. Due to excessive blood, disturbing scenes, and a lack of engaging content, this film is not suitable for children or family audiences.

Cast: Tamannaah Bhatia, Vasishtha Simha, Murali Sharma, Hebah Patel, Srikanth Iyengar, Gagan Vihari, Sharath Lohitashwa, Naga Mahesh and others
Cinematographer: Soundar Rajan S
Music Director: B Ajaneesh Loknath
Producer: D Madhu
Director: Ashok Teja
Story, Screenplay, Dialogues and Direction Supervision: Sampath Nandi
Rating: 1.5/5

Pooja Hegde talks about her potential collaboration with Allu Arjun

Pooja Hegde is gearing up for the release of her upcoming film 'Retro'. This film makes for a striking addition to her illustrious body of work, which boasts several mega-hits with Allu Arjun. With films like *Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo*, *DJ Duvvudha Jagannadham*, and others, Pooja and Allu Arjun have become one of the most celebrated on-screen duos. Audiences have showered immense love and praise to them, and are eagerly waiting to watch them collaborate on their next project.

In a latest interview, Pooja Hegde expressed admiration over her chemistry

with Allu Arjun, and talked about their potential next collaboration. "If there's a good story, good characters, and if it fits right, then we'll do it," shared Pooja Hegde.

Be it Pooja and Arjun's on-screen chemistry, their infectious tracks, or their addictive hook-steps in *Butta Bomma*, and *Ramuloo Ramulaa*, the duo has enjoyed the attention of the audience in each film, leaving them wanting more.

While Allu Arjun was last seen in 'Pushpa 2: The Rule', Pooja Hegde will be seen in the upcoming Tamil language romantic action film 'Retro'. The actress will be seen sharing the screen space with Suriya. Directed by Karthik Subbaraj, 'Retro' is scheduled to hit the screens on May 1. Apart from this, Pooja Hegde is also gearing up for her Bollywood film 'Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai', wherein she is starring alongside Varun Dhawan. Directed by David Dhawan, the film is poised to carry a lighthearted narrative with romantic elements, and is slated to release soon.

Avika Gor back with a soulful romance in Ugly Story

Avika Gor continues to appear in Telugu films consistently. Her last film *Shanmukha*, where she starred opposite Aadi Saikumar, didn't perform well at the box office. However, the actress has landed another project, now starring opposite Nandu in *Ugly Story*. The makers recently released a romantic track titled *Hey Priyatama*, a soulful melody that instantly connects with the listeners. Composed by Shruvan Bharadvaj, the song carries a refreshing musical feel. Singer Kaala Bhairava lends a distinct depth with his unique vocal texture and expressive style, elevating the song to another level. The lyrics, penned by Bhaskarabhatla,

are simple yet deeply emotional, perfectly capturing the essence of love. Centered around the word 'Priyatama', the lyrics are sure to resonate with today's youth and those in love. The song stands out as a heartwarming romantic melody, ideal for lovers and youth alike. It's a track that audiences will want to play on repeat and immerse themselves in its emotional vibe. Apart from the lead pair, the film features a talented ensemble cast including Sivaji Raja, Raviteja Mahadasyam, and Prajna Nayan. JS Subhashini and Konda Lakshman are jointly producing the film, while Pranav Swaroop serves as the writer and director.



Abhinaya begins new chapter with businessman Karthik

Actress Abhinaya tied the knot with her longtime friend Karthik, a Telugu businessman also known as Sunny Varma. The wedding took place on Wednesday evening at a convention center in Hyderabad, performed according to Hindu rituals.

Karthik and Abhinaya have been in a relationship for a long time. They got engaged on March 9, and have now taken the next step by getting married.

Abhinaya is known for her performances in films such as *Sambho Siva Sambho*, *Seethamma Vakitlo Sirimalle Chettu*, *Raju Gari Gadhi 2*, and *The Family Star*.

Abhinaya shared her wedding pictures on Instagram with the caption, "Knotted forever." She has been in the news over the past few months, especially after she posted about her engagement, which put an end to the ongoing marriage speculations. Now, she has finally tied the knot with her longtime beau.

Sivaji's stellar return with Court sparks new opportunities



Sivaji is now the talk of Telugu cinema. Once a lead actor in many films, he took a break of nearly ten years in search of a strong role. That opportunity came with *Court*, where he played Mangapathi—a role that earned him immense appreciation. The film turned out to be a super success and brought Sivaji back into the spotlight.

This one film has completely transformed his career. Determined to make a strong comeback, Sivaji has now become a sought-after actor. He's playing a key role in the upcoming film *Dandora* and is also in talks for Akhil Akkineni's film *Lenin*.

Apart from these, Sivaji is in discussions for Naga Chaitanya's upcoming project and is also working on a film under Dil Raju's production. With this newfound demand, Sivaji is now one of the most sought-after character artists. Even Sai Dharam Tej's team is considering him for a special role in their next. This is a crucial phase for Sivaji, as he's receiving numerous offers and must choose wisely. While Telugu filmmakers often cast Hindi actors for key roles, Sivaji's resurgence might encourage a shift towards casting regional talent more frequently.

Uday Raj steps into the spotlight with Madhuram

After appearing in character roles in several films, Uday Raj is now making his debut as a lead actor with the film *Madhuram*. Directed by Rajesh Chikile and produced by M. Bangarajulu, the film is set to hit screens on April 18.

"I've had a deep admiration for Megastar Chiranjeevi since childhood, and he is the inspiration for me to enter the film industry," said Uday Raj. During the shoot of *Acharya*, Uday got a chance to interact with Chiranjeevi, which was a dream come true for him.

"I've spent 12 years in the industry, working as an assistant in various departments and appearing in many films as a background artist. I finally got the opportunity to play the lead in *Madhuram*," he added.

Uday and director Rajesh Chikile have been friends for a long time. "When he narrated this story to me, I was genuinely excited. The film is set in a 90s backdrop and beautifully portrays the innocent love between a tenth-grade girl and a ninth-grade boy. I play three versions—a small child, a school student, and a middle-aged man. I had to undergo a physical

transformation for each look," said Uday. For one character, he put on weight, and to get lean again, he survived on just water for a few days. "We did good research about the lifestyle of school kids in the '90s to keep things authentic," he said. Vaishnavi Singh plays the female lead, and Uday praised her performance in the film. "We shot entirely in real locations to maintain authenticity and emotional depth," he said. "I'm open to playing any role, not just leads. I'm ready to take on even the smallest character roles if it means being part of good cinema," said Uday Raj.



BCCI removes assistant coach Nayar; support staff all set for overhaul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Indian cricket team's assistant coach Abhishek Nayar has been sacked just eight months into the assignment amid speculation of a rift with a high-profile member of the support staff even though Test debacles against New Zealand and Australia are being cited as the reason for his ouster.

If board sources are to be believed, Nayar has already been intimidated of the BCCI's decision to part ways with him.

"While India's recent Test debacles (against New Zealand and Australia) has led to the churning but there is also a feeling in the BCCI that Nayar became a scapegoat in the turf war between an important member of the support staff and a senior star player," a BCCI source told media. Fielding coach T Dilip, and Strength and Conditioning coach Soham Desai are also on their way out after completing more than three years in their respective positions.

The new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) of the BCCI has capped the support staff's tenure at three years.

It is learnt that India's first ever Strength and Conditioning coach Adrian Le Roux is likely to return for a second stint. The South African is widely credited for ushering in a new fitness culture in the then Sourav Ganguly-led Indian team during



the 2003 World Cup. BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia, when contacted by media, chose to sidestep the query.

"Certain things are being finalised. You will receive a press note from BCCI in some days," Saikia said when asked about the development.

The 41-year-old Nayar, a former all-

rounder who played three ODIs but was largely a domestic stalwart with 103 first-class games, didn't respond to a text message sent by media. His presence deemed "counter-productive"

It is learnt that Nayar's removal was on the cards after Sitanshu Kotak was added to the Indian team's support staff as an

additional batting coach. "...Just after the tour of Australia, there was a review meeting conducted by the BCCI. The top officials of the board, including secretary Devajit Saikia and vice-president Rajeev Shukla, were present along with important members associated with the Indian team, and the national selectors," the BCCI source said.

"On the sidelines of the meeting, a powerful member of the support staff expressed his apprehensions about Nayar's presence and said how him being in the dressing room is proving to be counter-productive.

"While the BCCI didn't act immediately but they brought in Kotak, the former Saurashtra run-accumulator. It was a way of side-lining Nayar during the Champions Trophy," the source added.

It is understood that Nayar was not the first-choice assistant for head coach Gautam Gambhir when the appointments were finalised.

He was appointed to act as a bridge between Gambhir and skipper Rohit Sharma, with whom he has shared a close friendship owing to their time together as Mumbai teammates.

Nayar and Dilip have been the Indian skipper's "most trusted lieutenants" and it is not known whether Rohit was kept in the loop by the BCCI mandarins about these decisions.

Axar backs McGurk, says Australia- is game-changer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Delhi Capitals skipper Axar Patel conceded that his team has struggled with shaky starts with Jake Fraser-McGurk yet to fire this season but backed the Australian to be a game-changer once he finds his rhythm.

The 23-year-old opener, who lit up the tournament in his maiden season last year with his power-hitting, has looked a shadow of himself in this edition.

His ongoing struggles at the top continued in DC's dramatic Super Over win against Rajasthan Royals, as he perished inside the Powerplay for the fifth time this season.

"I have a different opinion. If you don't get a start, we are still doing well. So you have that cushion that you can go from the same team," Axar told reporters on Wednesday. "So I was thinking, the box isn't getting ticked but at the same time we are winning and he is such a player, that the day he gets going he will hand you the match."

I back myself: Axar on captaincy As the IPL reaches its halfway stage, the jovial all-rounder has emerged as the tournament's most successful captain, steering his side to five wins in six games.

"I was captaining for state cricket. I know what to do and what not to do. And when you get a chance to run the team as you want and play the way you want to play then why not," said Axar.

Axar, who has led his state side Gujarat in 23 matches across formats, said he isn't one to lean heavily on analytics or prescribed captaincy templates.

"I am doing what I think is right and not following a template. I am backing myself. I am not captaining for the first time. There is planning, which is for my awareness that what's going on, how the other team is playing. Obviously, sometimes it works.

"But as a captain, I see who is in form, how their day is going, what they can do and what they can't. I choose according to the situation. I am not completely data driven," he added.

Against RR, Axar's impact wasn't just with strategy. After a string of low-key

outings, he finally delivered a telling performance with both bat and ball. His 14-ball 34 provided Delhi with the much-needed boost.

"I thought I was batting well for the last one-and-a-half years. But when I came to this tournament, I wasn't able to create an impact. I don't know if it was a soft dismissal or something. I was getting out in an over-aggressive manner. But when I went today, I was clear. I knew who I wanted to target."



With the ball, he plucked his first wicket of the season by bamboozling Riyan Parag. Asked about his underwhelming returns, Axar reiterated that a finger injury sustained during the Champions Trophy has held him back. "I sustained a cut on my finger during the Champions Trophy. The skin is yet to come. Every time I bowl, the skin comes off. So I was saving myself. I couldn't bowl at my speed. So I felt I was bowling well but was not able to get the impact I want."

Du Plessis play the next match

DC vice-captain Faf Du Plessis has missed the team's last two games, against Mumbai Indians and Rajasthan Royals, due to an unspecified injury. "I had been told that he wouldn't be able to play three matches — that's the time he needs to recover — and two matches are done. Maybe he will play the Gujarat game. But the physio has to confirm how his rehab has been going," Axar said.

Rohit to be face of T20 Mumbai League; India players to feature

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

India's Test and ODI captain Rohit Sharma is set to be the ambassador of T20 Mumbai League with the MCA expressing hope that the city's other stars such as Shreyas Iyer and Suryakumar Yadav will make themselves available for the event that was halted owing to the COVID-19 pandemic after two editions.

The league was held in 2018 and 2019 before the pandemic led to its suspension. Rohit has retired from T20 Internationals but continues to play in the IPL.

Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, Ajinkya Rahane, Shivam Dube, Tushar Deshpande and Prithvi Shaw are some of the popular Mumbai players. Test opener Yashasvi Jaiswal moved to Goa a few days ago.

Most of them are busy with their IPL commitments right now. The MCA (Mumbai Cricket Association) event will not start before the IPL's conclusion on May 25.

"We have not made it mandatory for them to play but we strongly expect them to play in the T20 Mumbai League. Their participation will only help Mumbai cricket grow, and benefit the players and the league," an MCA

official told media. Rohit will be present at an event to announce the league here on Friday. It is also learnt that the MCA is contemplating a pay of ₹15 lakh each for the "icon players" in the competition.

The MCA has received more than 2,800 entries for the event. The tournament will comprise eight teams with two new sides to be announced soon.

The other six teams are North Mumbai Panthers, ARCS Andheri, Triumph Knights Mumbai North East, Namu Bandra Blasters, Eagle Thane Strikers and Aakash Tigers Mumbai Western Suburbs.

Feeling sense of seniority after coming to PBKS: Arshdeep

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mullanpur

India seamer Arshdeep Singh says he has been feeling a sense of "seniority" since the beginning of his tenure at Punjab Kings thanks to the responsibility entrusted upon him by the IPL franchise that has also helped him in his professional growth.

The 26-year-old left-arm pacer was in his teens when he joined Punjab Kings (formerly Kings XI Punjab) and has been an integral part of the side since then, leading the pace attack on most occasions.

He has been remarkably consistent with the ball having taken 84 wickets for PBKS in seven seasons with a highest of 19 scalps last year. PBKS are currently placed fourth on the points table with the gangly pacer having taken eight wickets so far in this edition of IPL.

"Ever since I came to Punjab Kings, barring the first year, I started feeling seniority in my role. I have been associated with this team for the last seven years and after spending my first year with the team, I started feeling that I have been given a huge responsibility," said the pacer during the 'Kandid with Kings' episode.

Arshdeep said the responsibility thrust upon him has "helped me grow as a player and person" both in the Indian side and at his franchise.

He said that he understood quite early that mistakes, however small, could hamper the prospects of the team and he had to be on his toes at all times on the field.

"The elevation in my role and growth came pretty early and hence, I knew that I could not mess up at crucial stages because at those times, not working as per the plan can put the team in serious trouble. Hence, I became serious and started feeling like a senior way too early." Like any other player, Arshdeep too gets trolled for a bad day in office and the India seamer said rather than getting flustered, he has started to enjoy the memes and messages.

"I have had ups and downs in my career. I have seen the highest point as well as the lowest point in a very short span. But I feel very entertained by these trolls. I laugh at their creativity and memes.

"Earlier, I used to save these memes and messages so I could use those later but now I feel they don't make any sense. However, I still enjoy looking at people's creativity," the pacer says.

PBKS will next face Royal Challengers Bengaluru at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on Friday.

Golfer Scottie Scheffler rested, ready to defend title at Hilton Head

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hilton Head Island

Scottie Scheffler was the star attraction of a parade just two days after the Masters. This one was all about a red plaid jacket from Harbour Town, not a green jacket from Augusta National.

The tradition of the RBC Heritage is for the defending champion to lead a half-mile parade that ends near the 18th green at Harbour Town, where he hits a ceremonial tee shot into the Calibogue Sound as a cannon is simultaneously fired.

"I had some ear plugs. It's always nice when a cannon is going off," Scheffler said. "It was definitely a unique experience. I was glad just to be able to make contact with the ball and not embarrass myself out there." And at least he was well-rested for Tuesday's opening ceremony.

Scheffler is in a different spot in so many ways compared with a year ago, when he was coming off a victory in the Masters. He flew home to Dallas for a brief celebration, then got back on a plane to coastal South Carolina for a \$20 million signature event. He won that, too.

Scheffler couldn't always hit it where he was aiming this year in the Masters. He still tied for fourth and was proud of putting up a fight. It was tiring, yes, but without the adrenaline rush of winning and all that

comes with it. Instead of a big party, a flight home to Dallas and then back to Hilton Head Island, Scheffler enjoyed a peaceful three-hour drive and some relaxation that this tournament offers.

Even with a \$20 million purse, this can feel like one big exhale.

Masters champion Rory McIlroy is not playing, and that's by design. He had mentioned earlier this year Harbour Town was not among his favorites — the course is more about position off the tee and small greens than blasting away — and he didn't enter the tournament at last Friday's deadline. It's the kind of course on which Scheffler thrives. Even while running on fumes after his Masters victory a year ago, he still had enough left in the tank to put on a tee-to-green clinic, building a lead with a 63 on Saturday and finishing off the win Monday morning because of rain.

"This golf course is much more about control and putting your ball in the right spots and staying out of the trouble," Scheffler said. "The fairways here are much smaller than Augusta and a flatter golf course overall. A bit of a different test, but definitely still a good test." That depends on how well he's playing, and Scheffler feels he's close.

Everything is forward in his world, though there was a concession that he has been trying to catch up form having missed



a month away from golf — the work in the gym, and practice on the course — from his decision to make ravioli on Christmas Day. He punctured his right hand with a wine glass and required minor surgery.

Scheffler is still trying to put together a complete game — driving well one week when irons are suspect, good irons and pedestrian driving the next.

even in the Masters, he was a birdie or two away — with some help from McIlroy — from having a chance.

Scheffler recalls being in the 18th fairway, two shots behind Justin Rose and McIlroy, thinking of nothing but holing out for eagle. Rose was in the group ahead of him and made a 20-foot birdie putt, leaving Scheffler three behind. He recalls telling caddie Ted Scott, "I guess I'm going to aim at the middle of the green now." Scott concurred, Scheffler made par and he was on his way to Harbour Town.

His final act was twice helping McIlroy into the Masters green jacket — first in Butler Cabin, then during the trophy presentation on the 18th green.

"It was cool to be able to see Rory get the job done," Scheffler said. "Definitely from the outside it looked a lot more like relief than anything. Rory has accomplished everything in the game of golf, and that was really the last thing for him to accomplish. The guy has won FedEx Cup, The Players, all four majors. Maybe the only other thing would be the Olympics is what he would want to win.

"It was really cool for me to be there in that moment," he said. "He's a good friend of mine. To be able to congratulate him and just see the joy on him and his family was really cool.

Courtois questions Real Madrid's attack after loss to Arsenal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Barcelona

Thibaut Courtois watched from the other end of the pitch as Real Madrid's forwards took turns crashing against the Arsenal defense.

Courtois had done his part by stopping a penalty. But Kylian Mbappé's best shot sailed high and wide. Rodrygo's dribbles got him nowhere, and Vinicius needed a defensive blunder to take Madrid's sole goal of a 5-1 aggregate defeat in the Champions League quarterfinals.

"Sometimes you have to be self-critical and have a good look at everything," the Belgian goalkeeper said after the 2-1 home loss to Arsenal midweek.

"Maybe we need to make more team moves and not so many individual ones, because if they double-mark Vini or Mbappé they can break it once, but not three, four or five times," Courtois said. "We can't always rely on one of our four attacking players dribbling past three defenders and scoring a great goal, we have to attack and defend better as a team."

Exiting from the competition it has won five times in the last decade was not what Madrid expected when it added Mbappé to a squad that was coming off a record 15th European Cup and Spanish league title last season.

The France captain has scored a glut of goals in his first season with Madrid but failed to come up big in the biggest games, including two lopsided losses to Barcelona. Jeers were heard for Mbappé when he limped off the field on Wednesday with a hurt right ankle.



The hard truth is that the team has played worse with him on board. Madrid has had injuries in defense and it lost mid-

fielder Toni Kroos to retirement but its attack has failed to click, with Mbappé having to adapt to a central striker role as

Vinicius' production dropped. Courtois even called into question the range of attacking options for a squad that

also counted on Endrick and Brahim Diaz as sparks off the bench. The goalie said Madrid was missing the tall, big striker who could win balls in the box like Joselu Mato, who scored critical goals in last season's Champions League.

"It was difficult to find openings and we had little success. We were also unlucky with balls into the box. This year we don't have a Joselu who can win those duels," Courtois said. "Now we have to analyze what we can do better because we still have the (Spanish) league, the final of the Copa del Rey and the Club World Cup, and we want to get everything right."

Athletic Bilbao up next in La Liga There will be little let up for Madrid with a strong Athletic Bilbao arriving on Sunday aiming to dig into the wound left by Arsenal.

Madrid must try to overhaul a four-point deficit to Barcelona in La Liga as it tries to salvage the season by defending its domestic title.

Madrid could be facing a seven-point gap with Barcelona by kickoff, if the front-runner beats Celta Vigo at home on Saturday. Madrid will also face Barcelona in the Copa del Rey final next week, but coach Carlo Ancelotti will likely also need his team to retain the league crown to keep his job.

The Italian manager admitted his future was in doubt after his team was outplayed by Arsenal, while also attempting to dampen speculation.

"I'm only thinking about preparing for the next game to stay in the fight for the league title and try to win the Copa del Rey," he said.