



The Pioneer

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Will make India self-reliant in defence, says Rajnath

MEET
MOTHER-DAUGHTER DUO REDEFINING HEALTHY DESSERTS

Suriya hopes for a comeback with RETRO

Revanth Reddy should be held responsible if West Bengal-like conditions take place in Telangana as AIMIM is protesting against the Waqf Bill with CM's financial support. In Telangana, there are 77,000 acres of Waqf land. Only 20% (16,000 acres) are under dargahs and mosques. The remaining 80% are illegally occupied by people like Owaisi. Do they think Waqf properties are their grandfather's wealth? Not even a square yard is accessible to poor Muslims

- Bandi Sanjay, MoS

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

Revanth Reddy should be held responsible if West Bengal-like conditions take place in Telangana as AIMIM is protesting against the Waqf Bill with CM's financial support. In Telangana, there are 77,000 acres of Waqf land. Only 20% (16,000 acres) are under dargahs and mosques. The remaining 80% are illegally occupied by people like Owaisi. Do they think Waqf properties are their grandfather's wealth? Not even a square yard is accessible to poor Muslims

- Bandi Sanjay, MoS

DON'T MISS...

Panic as lizard tail found in soft drink

The sun is blazing mercilessly outside. With the heat beating down, people are drenched in sweat. When it is so hot and harsh outside, many crave a soft drink to refresh themselves. People often grab their favourite soft drink and gulp it down eagerly. A group of friends who visited a restaurant near Peddapur in the Sangareddy district, beside NH65, had an unpleasant experience. As the weather was unbearably ...

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Shukla set for space travel next month

Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla is set to travel to the International Space Station next month as part of an Axiom-4 mission, four decades after Rakesh Sharma's iconic spaceflight onboard Russia's Soyuz spacecraft, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Friday. Singh made the remarks after reviewing the work of the Department of Space and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) ...

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All eyes on Vance visit to India next week

Ahead of US Vice President JD Vance's visit to India next week, Minister for Electronics and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw on Friday expressed optimism about "positive outcome" from the visit. Vaishnaw cited pragmatic approach and continued engagement on both sides, and asserted that India has emerged as a trusted hub in electronics manufacturing. "There will be very positive outcome is what I can say with a good level of ...

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Shooter Shriyanka 8th in World Cup

Paris Olympics shooter Shriyanka Sadangi finished eighth in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P) final on the third day of the ISSF World Cup Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun stage here. She became the latest Indian shooter on this double-legged South American sojourn to make the cut for a maiden individual World Cup final, but made the exit after the 10th shot of the standing position round, the 40th of the 45-shot final. Sagen Maddalena of the USA, the silver medalist in the ...

-SPORTS

NOTHING SHORT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE

KTR challenges Modi to probe Kancha scam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Calling it a test of the Prime Minister's environmental integrity, BRS working president KT Rama Rao on Friday demanded that Narendra Modi order a high-level investigation into the destruction of Kanche Gachibowli forest and the alleged Rs 10,000 crore scam tied to it. Taking to social media, KTR said this was not just a case of ecological vandalism but a full-blown financial fraud executed by the Congress government in Telangana. "What happened in Kancha Gachibowli is nothing short of an environmental catastrophe. A government with no legal title mortgaged ecologically fragile land to raise thousands of crores. If Modi is serious about environmental conservation, let him act," said KTR. He claimed that over 400 acres of forest land—located near the University of Hyderabad and rich in

biodiversity—was razed under the guise of development despite a Supreme Court order halting auction-related activities. He accused the Congress regime led by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy of bypassing environmental clearances and forest department permissions to mortgage the land for a Rs 10,000 crore loan, facilitated by intermediaries. KTR said peacocks, deer, and other species were displaced, and water security was endangered by this act. "Revanth Reddy's claim that there's no wildlife in the forest is laughable. The Telangana High Court Registrar's report confirmed the presence of wildlife. What more proof is needed?" he asked. Backing his claims with findings of the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) of the Supreme Court,

“What happened in Kancha Gachibowli is nothing short of an environmental catastrophe. A government with no legal title mortgaged ecologically fragile land to raise thousands of crores. If Modi is serious about environmental conservation, let him act”

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INDIA'S LARGEST AI DATA CENTRE CLUSTER

NTT DATA to invest Rs 10,500 crore in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a major boost to Telangana's ambitions of becoming India's artificial intelligence capital, NTT DATA, in collaboration with Neysa Networks, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Telangana to establish a Rs 10,500 crore Artificial Intelligence Data Centre Cluster in Hyderabad. The agreement was signed during a high-level investment meeting held in Tokyo on Friday in the presence of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy. The tripartite MoU was signed by senior executives of NTT DATA and Neysa Networks, including Ken Katsuyama, Tadaoki Nishimura, Alok Bajpai, and Sharad Sanghi. The project is designed to create the most advanced AI compute infrastructure in the country, including a 400 MW data center cluster with 25,000 GPUs for sovereign, scalable, and sustainable AI solutions. "This investment by NTT DATA reaffirms Hyderabad's position as India's leading data centre hub," said Revanth Reddy. "Telangana offers policy stability, strategic location, uninter-



Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Friday led a high-level delegation to the Tokyo Waterfront to study global best practices in riverfront development

Revanth visits Tokyo waterfront to study development of Musi Project

Toshiba to invest Rs 562 crore in Telangana

In a significant push to bolster Telangana's industrial growth and strengthen its power sector capabilities, Toshiba Transmission & Distribution Systems (India) Private Limited (TTDS) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Telangana to invest Rs 562 crore in expanding its operations in the state. The agreement was formalized during a high-level investment meeting in Tokyo on Friday, in the presence of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and Union Minister for Power, K. Chandrababu Naidu. The investment is aimed at upgrading the state's power transmission infrastructure, including the installation of advanced power transformers and substations. "This investment by Toshiba is a testament to the growing industrial and power sector of Telangana," said Revanth Reddy. "We are committed to providing world-class infrastructure solutions to support the state's economic growth." The project is expected to create thousands of jobs and significantly enhance the reliability of the power supply in the region.

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Cancel Group-1, re-conduct exams: Kavitha to CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha has written to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy demanding that the controversial Group-1 notification be



scrapped and the entire examination process be conducted afresh. She accused the Congress-led government of playing with the future of thousands of unemployed youth and slammed the Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC) for its "incompetence and opaque conduct."

KCR disburses funds to all BRS units to mobilise activists for Warangal Sabha

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Panel to investigate tribal land problems: Ponguleti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Of the 18 lakh acres that the BRS government had conspired to put in Part-B, six to seven lakh acres are agricultural lands, and these lands will be provided with a solution through the Bhu Bharati Act, said Revenue, Housing, Information and Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy. Ponguleti launched the Bhubharati pilot project in Indiramma Rajyam a state Mulugu district, along with Ministers Konda Surekha and Seethakka on Friday. Later, he attended an awareness programme on the Bhu Bharathi Act in the Pusai village of Boraj mandal in Adilabad district. Speaking on the occasion, Ponguleti said, "The Bhu Bharati Act was introduced to quench the tears of the poor. The people believed our promise made before the elections that we would dump the Dharani Portal in the Bay of Bengal. Our goal is to make Indiramma Rajyam a state without land problems." "We will provide services to farmers without



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Hyd attracting companies due to PM's efforts: Kishan

Warns Telanganites of Razakar days coming back

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad is attracting leading companies due to the efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Telangana BJP President and Union Minister of Coal and Mines, G. Kishan Reddy said. He said that Hyderabad doesn't mean High-Tech City alone, but also Amberpet, Nampally, Khairathad and other places. However, the BRS government developed only areas where real estate business existed, Kishan said. Addressing the Hyderabad Local Body MLC elections preparatory



meeting held at the Haritha Plaza on Friday, Kishan warned that there is a danger of Razakar days coming back if the people of Telangana fail to act logically, as the Congress and the BRS are supporting the AIMIM. He asked the Congress and the

BRS to explain why they are not contesting in the Hyderabad MLC elections. Rahul Gandhi and KCR, who are supporting the AIMIM, have no moral right to criticise the BJP. He said the BJP is contesting against AIMIM, which represents Razakars and that the BJP is continuing the legacy of Indian freedom fighters and TG protagonists who fought against the AIMIM and Razakars. "The AIMIM is spreading its tentacles across Telangana silently. However, the BRS and the Congress are trying to ensure the victory of the AIMIM candidate to defeat the BJP. The BRS, Continued on Page 2

Kishan & Akbaruddin might have been brothers in their last birth: Mahesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy and AIMIM floor leader Akbaruddin Owaisi might have been brothers in their last birth as Kishan keeps chanting Akbaruddin's name every day, TPCC chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said. Addressing the media at the Gandhi Bhavan on Friday, Mahesh termed Kishan Reddy as Kismath Reddy and asked him to reveal what



he has done for Telangana in all these years. Mahesh said that when the elec-

tions come, the love between the BJP and the BRS will blossom. He said that after the elections, the BJP and BRS leaders start acting like enemies. "Our party is not used to playing secret love like the BRS and the BJP. What has Kishan done for the Amberpet constituency as an MP during his 25-year political career? The BJP is daydreaming that it will come to power in Telangana. If Kishan is a man, does he have the guts to explain

Revanth must take responsibility if Bengal-like events take place in TG: Sanjay

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Revanth Reddy government is providing financial support to the public meeting that the Majlis is holding in Hyderabad against the Waqf Board Amendment Bill, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said. He said that under the pretext of

meetings, gatherings and protests, conspiracies are being made to start riots. He expressed concern that a Bengal-like situation might arise in Hyderabad if this continues and warned that immediate steps must be taken to prevent that. Otherwise, the Revanth Government will have to bear the consequences, he added.



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BuildNow platform rolled out across HMDA, DTCP launch in 7 days

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a significant step towards streamlining urban development and boosting digital governance, the Telangana Government has expanded its AI-powered BuildNow platform to cover the entire Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) area. Following its resounding success in GHMC limits, the platform now promises instant, hassle-free building permissions in newly added zones including Future City and peripheral villages. BuildNow, an automated building plan approval system with zero human intervention, has been hailed as a game-changer for the construc-

tion and real estate sectors. According to officials, average approvals are being granted in just 30 seconds, a leap from the earlier process that took days or even weeks. A standout instance was the sanctioning of a 26-floor high-rise project—comprising six towers and an amenity block totaling over two lakh square meters—approved in just 71 seconds. With the latest rollout, the platform covers all major services including instant registration, single-window clearances, occupancy certificates for buildings and layouts. Over 500 applications have already been processed since its launch in GHMC limits in March 2025, with the system praised for



ensuring transparency, eliminating corruption, and removing red tape through AI-based scrutiny. Principal Secretary for MA&UD M Dana Kishore said, "This expansion reflects our commitment to tech-driven governance—making Telangana a leader in smart, transparent, and efficient administration. Citizens and developers no longer need to wait in long queues or shuffle files from table to table. BuildNow ensures precision, speed, and fairness." Officials confirmed that the next phase of the initiative will go live within a week, covering areas under the Directorate of Town and Country Planning (DTCP). With this, Telangana is poised to set a national benchmark in automated urban planning and infrastructure development.

DEADLIEST ATTACK OF TRUMP CAMPAIGN

US strikes on Yemeni oil port kill 74 people

PNS ■ DUBAI

US airstrikes targeting an oil port held by Yemen's Houthis rebels killed 74 people and wounded 171 others, the group said Friday, marking the single-deadliest known attack under President Donald Trump's new campaign targeting the rebels. Assessing the toll of Trump's campaign, which began March 15, has been incredibly difficult as the US military's Central Command so far has not released any information on the campaign, its specific targets and how many people have been killed. Meanwhile, Yemen's Houthis rebels strictly control access to areas attacked and don't publish complete information on the strikes, many of which likely have targeted military



and security sites. But the strike on the Ras Isa port, which sent massive fireballs shooting into the night sky, represented a major escalation for the American

campaign by hitting oil facilities for the first time. In a statement, Central Command said that "US forces took action to eliminate this source of fuel for the Iran-backed Houthi terrorists and deprive them of illegal revenue that has funded Houthi efforts to terrorise the entire region for over 10 years." "This strike was not intended to harm the people of Yemen, who rightly want to throw off the yoke of Houthi subjugation and live peacefully," it added. It did not acknowledge any casualties from the attack or offer any damage assessment. Satellite images from Planet Labs PBC and analysed by The Associated Press Friday showed destroyed tanks and vehicles at the port as oil leaks into the Red Sea. The Iranian-backed Houthis later Friday launched a missile toward Israel that was intercepted, the Israeli military said. Sirens sounded in Tel Aviv and other areas.

City Pioneer

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TGCC launches Giri Nature Millet snacks

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Girijan Co-operative Corporation Limited (TSGCC) has launched two healthy snacks, Honey Millet Cookies and Millet Nutri Chikki under the Giri Nature brand to help uplift the tribal community.

The launch took place at DSS Bhavan, Masab Tank, in the presence of A Sharat, Secretary of Tribal Welfare, and Dr B Dayakar Rao, CEO and Director of Nutrihub – ICAR-IIMR.

These millet-based snacks aim to improve children's health, especially in government schools, while also supporting tribal livelihoods.

Thirupathi emphasised that healthy food is key to children's well-being and growth. Snacks like these can help provide essential vitamins and minerals in a tasty, accessible way.

Heavy rain batters city, cause traffic snarls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The city was hit by heavy rains and thunderstorms on Friday evening, causing widespread flooding and traffic snarls. What began as a light drizzle quickly escalated into a severe downpour accompanied by thunder and lightning, catching many off guard.

The day began with intense heat, but around 4:30 pm, clouds began to form, followed by heavy rainfall across several areas which also caused traffic in several areas leading to slow movement.

The storm first hit West Hyderabad, including places like Gachibowli, Nanakramguda, Manikonda, Shaikpet, Narsingi, Bandlaguda, and Rajendranagar. Later, it moved towards Central Hyderabad, according to the Telangana Weatherman. In Nallakunta, residents saw hailstorms and loud thunderstorms, which caused fear among commuters and locals.

Heavy rainfall caused major damage, especially to trees, with a total of 21 trees falling in different areas. Disaster Response Force (DRF) teams were alerted by the Meteorological Department and acted quickly.

The DRF teams quickly removed fallen trees from the main roads and restored traffic flow.

A large tree fell near Saroonagar Police Station, and staff cleared it. Other affected areas included Vijayanagar Colony, Kukatpally, Darussalam, High Court, BN Reddy Nagar, Falaknagar, Sultan Bazar, Kachiguda, Sindhi Colony, and Methodist Colony.

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and DRF teams also reached waterlogged areas to take quick action and prevent further inconvenience. Measures such as removing fallen trees,



A large tree crashed at Saroonagar Police Station

clearing drains, and imposing traffic restrictions on key roads were taken to handle the situation. Officials urged the public to stay alert due to continuing weather warnings and assured that response teams are fully active.

The Telangana Weatherman also said that these storms are likely to be more intense than those over the past two days.

Meanwhile, IMD Hyderabad has extended the yellow alert till April 21. It warns of thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds of up to 30-40 km/ph in several districts of Mulugu, Bhadradi

Kothagudem, Khammam, Nalgonda, Suryapet, Mahabubabad, Warangal, Hanamkonda, Jangaon, Siddipet, Yadadri Bhuvangiri, Rangareddy, Hyderabad, Medchal Malkajigiri, Vikarabad, Sangareddy, Medak, Kamareddy, Mahabubnagar, Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthy, Narayanpet, Jogulamba Gadwal.

Citizens are advised to stay indoors during thunderstorms, avoid standing under trees, and secure loose objects outdoors, as weather conditions may remain unstable over the week.

359 FEEDERS AFFECTED, DISRUPTS POWER IN HYDERABAD

An intense spell of rain accompanied by strong winds disrupted electricity supply across several parts of Greater Hyderabad on Friday evening, with tree falls, flex banner debris, and broken electric poles damaging lines in multiple locations. As many as 359 feeders under the 11 kV network were affected during the storm, leading to a temporary halt in power supply. Chairman and Managing Director of the Southern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Limited (TSSPDCL), Musharraf Faruqi said that out of the 359 affected feeders, power restoration has already been completed in 350. Efforts are on to restore supply in the remaining areas on a war-footing, he added. The worst impact was seen in the Metro Zone, especially in the Hyderabad South Circle, where large trees fell on electric lines and poles, disrupting 49 feeders. Of these, supply has already been restored in 45, and the remaining four are undergoing urgent repair and clearance operations. Power supply in Medchal and Ranga Reddy zones has been fully restored to normalcy, officials confirmed. Faruqi personally toured affected areas, supervising ongoing restoration work and ensuring swift deployment of teams. "All available staff are on the ground. We are working round the clock to ensure that every pending feeder is brought back to service at the earliest. Every single LT-level complaint must be addressed without delay," he said. He also issued a caution to all staff and officers to remain alert through the night, as weather warnings indicate the possibility of further heavy rainfall. With personnel actively attending to damaged lines and poles, the TSSPDCL has assured that normal power supply across Hyderabad will be restored shortly.



Rhino Food Court

New Rhino Food Court opens at Nehru Zoological Park

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a significant step towards modernising visitor experience at Nehru Zoological Park, the Telangana Forest Department on Friday inaugurated the newly constructed "Rhino Food Court," a public-private partnership (PPP) project adjacent to the Rhinoceros enclosure. The facility, developed by Mrugavani Restaurants and Resorts India Pvt Ltd, has been leased for a period of 10 years and marks one of the first PPP ventures under the Forest Department.

The food court was inaugurated by RM Dobriyal, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (HoFF), Telangana. With a seating capacity of over 300, the Rhino Food Court offers visitors a chance to enjoy meals in a green, natural setting, with views of wild animals roaming in nearby enclosures. The facility will serve snacks, lunch, soft drinks, tea, coffee, and ice cream, enhancing the overall experience for wildlife and nature enthusiasts.

"Nehru Zoological Park is a favourite destination for lakhs of visitors every year. This new food court is part of our effort to improve the standards and infrastructure of the Zoo. The tie-up with Mrugavani ensures that visitors are provided quality, hygienic food in a scenic and eco-friendly atmosphere," said Dobriyal during the inauguration.

He commended the efforts of senior officers who contributed to the planning and execution of the project. "I would like to place on record the contributions of Elusing Meru (PCCF P&V, CWLW), Dr. Suvarna (PCCF HH & CEO CAMPA), Dr. Sunil Hiremath (Director, Zoo Parks), Smt. Vasantha (Curator), and the entire Zoo team. Special thanks to Dr. Suvarna for her pivotal role in steering the project during its planning and implementation stages," Dobriyal added.

The new food court is expected to set a model for future facilities in zoological parks across Telangana under similar PPP models.

World Heritage day celebrated at Rail Museum

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

World Heritage Day 2025 was celebrated on Friday at the Rail Museum in Kacheguda, highlighting the importance of preserving cultural and natural heritage. To mark the occasion, the museum offered free entry to students, rail passengers, and railway enthusiasts.

The museum showcased old railway equipment, working models, signal systems, and lever mechanisms. A unique display of electric fans from the 1960s to the present, arranged by decade, drew great interest from visitors. A rare photo of the Kacheguda Railway Station's inauguration in 1916 by the Nizams caught the attention of heritage lovers.

Built in 1916, the Kacheguda Railway Station has also received the Platinum rating from the Indian Green



Children at the Rail Museum in Kacheguda on Friday to witness World Heritage Day celebrations

Building Council (IGBC) for its green efforts.

The Rail Museum offers a glimpse into railway history through vintage photographs and artifacts from the Nizam era. Visitors can also view logos of various railways from the pre-Independence period, along with signaling equip-

ment, locomotive and coach models, old tickets, and more.

An exclusive seating area has been set up to screen short films and documentaries on the history and growth of Indian Railways, giving visitors a deeper understanding of the legacy and evolution of rail transport in the country.

Woman 'kills' two children, dies by suicide in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A woman allegedly killed her two sons using a knife meant for cutting tender coconuts and then died by suicide by jumping from their residential apartment, police said.

The woman (35) died on the spot after jumping from the building on Thursday evening, while her elder son (11) was found dead in a pool of blood.

Her younger son (9), who was critically injured, was rushed to a hospital but did not survive, they said. A police official said a seven-page suicide note written by the woman suggests she was emotionally disturbed and angry with her husband.

He also noted that the woman and both children were dealing with health issues.

Hyderabad's green office space hits 75%

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad's green-certified office space reached 75 per cent in 2024, the highest among India's top cities, according to the CREDAI-Colliers report "Sustainability in Real Estate: Towards a Greener Skyline." The city has 86.7 million sq ft of Grade A green-certified office space, accounting for 17 per cent of India's total green office stock.

Hyderabad also saw 68 per cent of its office leasing activity in green-certified buildings, reflecting a growing preference among companies for sustainable workspaces. A total of 8.4 million sq ft of green office



space was leased in 2024 alone. Green-certified buildings in Hyderabad also offer better occupancy rates at 80 per cent and rental premiums of around 14% compared to non-green spaces.

These buildings are energy-efficient, reduce operational costs, and improve air quality, making them attractive to both developers and tenants.

The report shows that over the past five years, about 80 per cent of new office buildings in Hyderabad have been green-certified, showing a strong shift towards sustainable construction. With more projects underway and a rising focus on retrofitting older buildings, the city is expected to maintain its lead in green real estate.

Senior Director and Head of Research, Colliers India, Vimal Nadar said that as Hyderabad continues to grow, this commitment to sustainability not only supports India's climate goals but also positions the city as a leading destination for responsible, future-ready development.

Bill Collector terminated for irregularities in Indiramma Housing Scheme in Bhadrachalam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The District Panchayat Officer of Bhadradi Kothagudem has issued termination orders to Pusa Jagadish, a Bill Collector (MPW) in the Gram Panchayat of Bhadrachalam, for committing serious irregularities in the implementation of the Indiramma Housing Scheme. The action follows a detailed inquiry into his negligent conduct in misrepresenting construction progress of housing beneficia-

ries. According to official records, Pusa Jagadish erroneously entered online data stating that 12 beneficiaries had completed the basement level of their houses, even though no construction had begun. Despite being given multiple instructions by the District Collector, the Bill Collector continued to show gross negligence towards his official responsibilities.

Following a memo issued to him on April 8 by the Gram

Panchayat, Jagadish admitted to the wrongful data entry, citing ignorance and pleading for leniency as it was his "first mistake." However, the District Administration found this explanation unsatisfactory, especially in light of the repeated instructions and the potential impact on public welfare schemes.

In view of the gravity of the misconduct, the officer has been terminated from service with immediate effect.

The termination order,

dated April 18, was issued by the District Panchayat Officer and has been communicated to all relevant authorities, including the Collector, Additional Collector (Local Bodies), DLPO, MPDO, and Housing Department for further necessary action.

The administration has reiterated its zero-tolerance policy towards manipulation in welfare schemes and has cautioned all field-level staff to adhere strictly to procedures and maintain accountability.

Man caught on video banging newborn puppy against wall

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Multiple videos showing a man—reportedly a pet owner—banging a newborn puppy against a wall in the parking lot of a residential complex went viral on Thursday.

One of the videos shows the man being confronted by other residents about his "inhuman behaviour."

He is heard saying that he "wanted to control the puppies so they would not approach his dog."

In another video, he pur-

portedly admits to "killing some puppies" (apparently with a rock) and one by "hitting it against a wall."

He also states that he had "no motive to kill the puppies" but had hit street dogs earlier.

"Sometimes, they (street

dogs) bark, and sometimes they attack," he claims.

The incident was widely condemned by social media users, who shared the videos online.

A police case has been registered in connection with the incident.

RGIA achieves prestigious ACA Level 5 Carbon Accreditation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd (GHIAL), which operates Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA), has achieved Level 5 Accreditation under the global Airport Carbon Accreditation (ACA) program by Airports Council International (ACI). This is the highest level of carbon management certification and shows RGIA's strong efforts to reduce its carbon footprint. The ACA program includes seven levels, and Level 5 is the top achievement, focusing on reducing both direct and indirect emissions.

With this milestone, RGIA becomes one of only four airports in the ACI Asia-Pacific and Middle East region to reach Level 5.

The airport has already achieved net zero emissions for Scope 1 and 2 and is working towards net zero



Representatives from Rajiv Gandhi International Airport receiving the Level 5 Accreditation in Hyderabad on Friday

Scope 3 emissions by 2050 or earlier.

Executive Director and Chief Innovation Officer of GMR Airports, SGK Kishore said Hyderabad Airport remains committed to cutting emissions and supporting global climate goals set by the

Paris Agreement.

The Director General of ACI Asia-Pacific and Middle East, Stefano Baronci congratulated the airport and highlighted India's leadership in green aviation.

RGIA's efforts include switching to electric vehicles,

using solar energy, improving energy efficiency, and working closely with airlines and ground staff to cut emissions. These actions are part of its wider goal to support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action.

Man held, 710 litres of duplicate engine oil seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a major crackdown on counterfeit products, the sleuths of Commissioner's Task Force South Zone, in coordination with Mirchowk Police, apprehended one Shaik Qayyum who was allegedly involved in the illegal manufacturing and distribution of spurious engine oil under the brand label of Castrol. A total of 710 litres of duplicate engine oil along with packaging materials were seized from his warehouse in Noor Khan Bazar, Hyderabad.

The accused, identified as Shaik Qayyum, 32, a resident of Feelkhana in Begum Bazar, had been running the illegal operation for the past five months. Originally a tempo mechanic and later a labourer at an automobile shop in Nampally, Qayyum reportedly turned to this racket after facing financial hardship. Police said he used his knowledge of the automobile trade to set up a fake production unit to manufacture counterfeit Castrol Active Engine Oil.



The seized materials include 480 litres of duplicate oil packed in cartons, six barrels containing 180 litres, 340 empty boxes, 340 Castrol-branded labels, caps, and bar-codes, and other packaging items such as a blue 50-litre drum and an iron box. The accused was selling the fake oil to local shops at Rs. 220 per litre—nearly half the market

price of genuine Castrol oil, which sells for approximately Rs. 425 per litre.

Acting on a tip-off, Task Force officials raided the warehouse and recovered all materials, handing over the accused and the seized property to Mirchowk Police Station for further investigation.

A case has been registered under Cr. No. 85/2025 under

Section 318(2) of the BNS and Sections 63 and 65 of the Copyright Act.

The operation was carried out under the supervision of Additional DCP Ane Srinivasa Rao and Inspector S. Raghavendra, along with SIs K. Narasimulu, M. Mahesh, G. Anjaneyulu, N. Naveen and their teams, in collaboration with Mirchowk Police.



Mancherial sub-inspector in ACB net for demanding bribe

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a major crackdown on corruption, the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) of Telangana on Friday arrested Nelki Sugunakar, a Sub-Inspector of Police at CCC Nasoor Police Station in Mancherial district, for criminal misconduct and bribery. Sugunakar stands accused of extorting money from a complainant and later misappropriating seized funds under his custody.

The case stems from a complaint that Sugunakar registered a criminal case on January 25 against certain individuals for forming an unlawful assembly and extorting Rs. 2 lakh from the complainant. During the investigation, the officer recovered the extorted sum from the accused and remanded them to judicial custody.

However, in a shocking turn, Sugunakar allegedly

demanded a bribe of Rs. 30,000 from the complainant to avoid implicating him in the same case. The bribe was reportedly routed via PhonePe to an associate, identified as Sri D. Deepak. Later, when the complainant secured a court order for the return of his Rs. 2 lakh, Sugunakar claimed that he had already spent Rs. 1.5 lakh and offered only Rs. 50,000 back. He further took a photograph pretending to hand over Rs. 2 lakh and later disappeared without returning even the partial amount.

The ACB noted that Sugunakar not only performed his duty improperly but also acted dishonestly for personal gain.

He has been arrested and produced before the Special Judge for SPE and ACB cases in Karimnagar. The case is under investigation and the identity of the complainant has been withheld for security reasons.

Demand for MGNREGS works rises in Telangana

PNS ■ NALGONDA / YADADRI / SURYAPETA

With agricultural activities at a standstill, demand for employment under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has surged across Telangana. The recent increase in daily wages by the Central government has further encouraged rural workers to actively participate in MGNREGS works.

Currently, the scheme is being implemented across 844 villages in Nalgonda district, 475 villages in Suryapeta district, and 428 villages in Yadadri district.

In Yadadri Bhuvangiri district alone, there are 1.47 lakh job cards, covering 2.63 lakh registered members—of whom 1.27 lakh are active participants. Around 90,000 workers are consistently engaged in MGNREGS activities. In Nalgonda district, over 60,000 workers are involved in these works, while 37,775 are participating in Suryapeta district.

The demand is particularly high in drought-prone areas under the Nagarjunasagar ayacut, especially in Miryalaguda and Nagarjunasagar. In Dindi mandal, 3,951 workers are participating in drought relief works, while Devarakonda mandal has 4,568 workers engaged. In P. Apalli, 3,312



workers are reporting for duty, with another 2,944 in Miryalaguda.

Under the Musi project region, MGNREGS activities are being carried out intensively in Narkatpalli, Chityala, and Kattamguru mandals.

The budget for MGNREGS has been significantly increased this year, allowing for the creation of at least 300 person-days of work in each village.

Ongoing development activities include the construction of farm ponds, trench digging, desilting of tanks and feeder channels, and land reclamation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and small and marginal farmers.

District-wise job card statistics indicate 7.62 lakh job cards in Nalgonda, 2.62 lakh in Suryapeta, and 1.43 lakh in Yadadri.

To safeguard workers from

extreme heat, authorities have arranged Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) packets and first-aid kits at worksites. Efforts are also being made to ensure timely wage payments for all workers.

Authorities have taken proactive steps to protect NREGS workers from sunstroke by arranging the supply of ORS packets at worksites. First-aid kits have also been kept ready to provide immediate care in case any worker suffers from sunstroke.

According to officials of the District Rural Development Agency in Suryapeta district, officials are prepared to allocate work based on the needs of the workers. The MGNREGS projects are being implemented intensively across the district, with measures in place to ensure that every worker receives their rightful wages on time.

Panic erupts after lizard tail found in soft drink bottle

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

The sun is blazing mercilessly outside. With the heat beating down, people are drenched in sweat. When it is so hot and harsh outside, many crave a soft drink to refresh themselves. People often grab their favourite soft drink and gulp it down eagerly.

A group of friends who visited a restaurant near Peddapur in the Sangareddy district, beside NH65, had an unpleasant experience. As the weather was unbearably hot, they decided to head inside and gulp down a cool drink. Everyone picked their favourite cool beverages. They opened the bottles and started drinking eagerly. Most had finished nearly half of their drinks when one young man noticed something odd in his bottle.

As he looked closely, what he saw left him completely shocked—a sight that made his head spin. Inside the bottle of a well-known brand of cool drink, he noticed some unusual particles. On closer inspection, he realised, to his horror, that it was the tail of a lizard.

Panic erupted at the restaurant once the tail of a lizard in the cool drink came to light.

The customer, who had already consumed half of the drink before noticing it, along with his friends, expressed outrage. The young man, who began feeling unwell, was immediately taken to the hospital by his



A soft drink bottle in a lizard tail is found at Peddapur in Sangareddy district on Friday

friends.

It was not the first time, the youth alleged, that they had faced similar experiences.

There were complaints in the past about insects found in bottled water at the same place.

Despite such incidents, food safety officials appear to be turning a blind eye to complaints, allowing hotel owners to play with public health without facing any consequences.

Collector, Cong leaders escape bee attack

PNS ■ RAJANNA SIRCILLA

District Collector Sandeep Kumar Jha and several Congress leaders were swarmed by honey bees at Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyaya in Veernapalli mandal on Friday.

After laying the foundation stone for a Mahila Sree Shakti Bhavan in

Veernapalli, the Collector, along with Congress Sircilla constituency in-charge KK Mahender Reddy and other officials, was touring Lal Singh Thanda.

They proceeded to the Kasturba Gandhi school to review the mid-day meal programme and inspect the storage area. While on the first floor, they were were unexpectedly attacked by honey bees.

Nizamabad to host three-day Rythu Mahotsavam from April 21

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

The Department of Agriculture, Government of Telangana, is set to organise a grand three-day Rythu Mahotsavam in Nizamabad from April 21 to 23, aimed at showcasing agricultural innovations and empowering farmers through knowledge-sharing and market linkages.

Director of Agriculture Dr B. Gopi, IAS, announced on Friday that the event will be held at the GG College Grounds in Nizamabad and will be inaugurated by State Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao.

The Mahotsavam is expected to draw participation from farmers across Telangana and neighbouring states, making it one of the largest agri-exhibitions of the year.

The event will feature over 150 stalls representing various sectors including agriculture, allied departments, agricultural universities, banks, startups, FPOs (Farmer Producer Organisations), and private agri-enterprises.

"This is not just a festival but a platform for knowledge transfer, innovation, and direct engagement with experts and institutions," said Dr Gopi.

A major highlight will be a three-day workshop where agricultural scientists, award-winning farmers, and progressive cultivators will demonstrate new technologies, methods, and sustainable practices in agriculture.

The sessions will focus on improving crop productivity,

smart irrigation, organic farming, and government schemes accessible to farmers.

Dr Gopi emphasised that the Mahotsavam is designed to bring all stakeholders—researchers, policymakers, innovators, and cultivators—onto a common platform.

"This is an opportunity for farmers to explore new technologies, marketing avenues, and financial services under one roof," he said.

With thousands of farmers expected to attend the event, officials have been instructed to work in close coordination to ensure seamless execution and farmer-friendly arrangements.

The state is aiming to use such initiatives to make agriculture more resilient, profitable, and knowledge-driven.



Narasampet MLA Donthi Madhava Reddy and District Collector at the rice procurement centre at Gottakonda village in Warangal district on Friday

MLA asks farmers not to trust middlemen

PNS ■ WARANGAL

The rice procurement centre being run by women's organisations at Gottakonda village under Nekkonda mandal in the district was inaugurated on Friday by Narasampet MLA Donthi Madhava Reddy, District Collector Satya Sharada, and Additional Collector G. Sandhya Rani.

On this occasion, MLA Donthi Madhava Reddy stated that the Telangana people's government has achieved the remarkable feat of waiving loans for farmers at once. He advised farmers to keep tarpaulins ready at the rice procurement centres. He urged farmers not to trust middlemen, assuring them that the government would purchase every grain. He mentioned that the state government provides a bonus of Rs 500 per quintal for fine variety rice. Officials should take initiative to expedite the rice procurement process and ensure that loading and transportation are completed swiftly. He directed them to ensure there is no shortage of jute bags. As it is summertime, he advised farmers to stay in the shade as much as possible. He emphasised that the welfare of the people and the development of farmers is the government's goal.

On this occasion, District Collector Satya Sharada stated that farmers should be made aware of the harvesting of rice and should use the paddy cleaners effectively to bring rice to procurement centers without husks and while maintaining moisture at 17 per cent.

This programme was attended by DCSO Kishtayya, DM Civil Supplies Sandhya Rani, officials, market committee chairpersons, and other public representatives.

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Centre plays major role in free rice scheme: BJP

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

BJP State executive member Palamuru Vishnuvardhan Reddy has stated that the Centre's contribution was Rs 40 per kg compared to State's Rs 10 per kg.

Speaking at the Gaon Chalo, Basti Chalo programme held in Siddapur village under Kothur mandal on Thursday, he highlighted the significant role played by the Centre in supporting the underprivileged.

The programme was organised under the leadership of Mandal President Athapuram Mahender Reddy. Addressing the gathering, Vishnuvardhan Reddy, along with BJP Parliament Co-Convenor Andapuram Narasimha Goud, asserted that the central government has always remained committed to the upliftment of the poor. They emphasised that the Centre's involvement is evident in almost every welfare initiative taken up by the state government.

During the visit, the leaders paid floral tributes to the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Srisailem, where Vishnuvardhan Reddy had



earlier contested as an MPTC from the BJP in 1998. As part of the programme, they also inspected the local ration shop, Anganwadi centre, and both the primary and high schools in the area.

Speaking at the fair price shop, Vishnuvardhan Reddy reiterated that 80 per cent of the free rice provided through the public distribution system is contributed by the Centre, while the state government provides the remaining 20 per cent. He mentioned that this breakdown is clearly mentioned in the ration bills. He further added that the central government also plays a major role in the mid-day meal schemes implemented in Anganwadis and schools.

Calling it misleading for the state government to claim

just a fifth, he urged the public to stay informed about the actual contributions being made. Supporting his statement, Andapuram Narasimha Goud said it is essential for BJP leaders to communicate the central government's role in welfare schemes directly to the people.

Senior BJP leaders including Prapat Reddy, Baskara Chari, HariKrishna, Narender Reddy, Sriidhar, Mallareddy, Kiran, Kudumula Bal Raj, Anil Kumar Goud, Naveen, Gunti Shiva, Bhairamoni Narasimha, Gannoju Mohana Chari, Gannoju Naveen Ravi, Vamsi Chari, Hanmanth, Muni Naresh, Mangali Ramesh, Mangali Pramod, and Raju Govardhan Reddy participated in the programme.

50 sheep killed by lightning strike in Vikarabad district

PNS ■ VIKARABAD

In a tragic incident at Maisamma Gadda Thanda, under the jurisdiction of Burri Thanda village panchayat in Bomraspet mandal of Vikarabad district, as many as 20 sheep were killed by a lightning strike.

According to Peeklya Nayak, thunderstorms, accompanied by heavy lightning and strong winds struck the area in the evening, leading to unexpected rainfall. During this time, around 50 sheep that were grazing near his field took shelter under a neem tree.

At around 6:30 pm, lightning struck the area, killing 15 sheep on the spot, while 5 others were left critically injured and struggling to survive.

Peeklya Nayak expressed deep anguish, stating that the natural calamity caused him a loss of approximately Rs 2 lakh. He appealed to the government for financial assistance to recover from the government to help him.



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Bhadrakali temple in Warangal set for major facelift

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Bhadrakali temple set for major facelift on line Madurai Meenakshi

The Bhadrakali Temple in Warangal is set to witness a grand transformation. Development works have begun with a budget of Rs 54 crore as per the directions of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy. The temple is being developed based on the model of the Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai, Tamil Nadu.

The Orugallu Bhadrakali Temple in Uttara Telangana (North Telangana), is a prominent and ancient shrine dedicated to the goddess Bhadrakali. The temple features a striking idol of the goddess, which stands 9 feet tall and 9 feet wide, carved from a single large block of stone in a monolithic style. Nestled on the banks of Bhadrakali Lake, the temple boasts a scenic setting between Hanamkonda and Warangal, just 1.5 kilometres from the national highway.

Inscribed on the temple walls is a historical note indicating that King Pulakesi II of the Chalukya Dynasty commissioned its construction around 625 AD to commemorate his victory over the Vengi Chalukyas in the Andhra region. This is evident in the temple's architecture, where the square pillars differ from the circular pillars typically used by the Kakatiyas. The



Aerial view of Bhadrakali Temple alongside the proposed design for the Bhadrakali temple in Warangal

Kakatiya rulers later considered Goddess Bhadrakali as their family deity. During this period, Ganapathi Deva of the Kakatiya Dynasty constructed the Bhadrakali Lake and established a road leading to the temple.

The Kakatiya rulers showed immense devotion to the goddess, and the temple gained significant popularity during the reign of Prataparudra. However, following the decline of the Kakatiya Empire, the temple's prominence waned until it was renovated by devotees and traders after 1950. In the 1940s, a devotee named Sri Ganapathi Sastri, also known as B S Ganesh Rao, a Brahmin from Karnataka, relocated to Warangal. He discovered the dilapidated Bhadrakali Temple and took the initiative to renovate it in 1950.

Prior to the renovation, the temple was known for the practice of animal sacrifices, a traditional custom at Kali temples in India. Following the renovation, this practice was abolished. During the restoration, a Chandi yantra was installed, and sacred mantras (amrutha beejaksharas) were inscribed on the deity's hanging tongue.

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao emphasised the need for planned development of Khammam city.

On Friday, the Minister laid the foundation stone for a new cement concrete road project at Lotus Hills in the 16th Division of Khammam Municipal Corporation, along with City Commissioner Abhishek Augustya and public representatives. This project is being constructed with the fund amounting to Rs 1 crore released by TUFIDC (Telangana Urban Finance Infrastructure Development Corporation).

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Nageswara Rao stated that Khammam city should be developed beautifully and systematically. He stressed that development should be planned in a coordinated manner by different departments and in accordance with a proper plan. He advised that the existing administrative machinery and people's representatives in Khammam should initiate developmental



Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao laying the foundation stone for the CC road in the 16th Division in Khammam on Friday

programmes.

He directed officials to propose a proper drainage system at Lotus Hills. The Minister also instructed the officials to ensure that there are no illegal structures in public places. He said that only systematic development would truly benefit the people. He added that if any poor people are found residing on encroachments, the government should assist them by providing housing plots, homes, and livelihood support through appropriate schemes.

He urged the officials to ensure that the ongoing works are completed with quality and before the rainy season, so that people do not face any inconvenience. He also directed the officials to complete all approved works and submit proposals for necessary new ones, assuring that he would take responsibility for securing the required funds.

Later, the Minister inaugurated the Jai Babu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan Constitution Protection Yatra in the 39th Division.

Those present included Khammam Mayor Punukollu Neeraja, Khammam Market Committee Chairman Hanumantha Rao, Khammam Revenue Divisional Officer Narasimharao and others.

ACROSS THE STATES



Sharp rise in land value will prompt probe: BJP

BJP national general secretary and Rajya Sabha MP Arun Singh on Friday said Congress leader Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law Robert Vadra is being probed because of 'sharp rise' in value of land deals. The Enforcement Directorate recorded the statement of Vadra (56), the businessman husband of Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, 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. The latest probe against Vadra is linked to a land deal in Haryana's Manesar-Shikohpur (now sector 83) in Gurugram. The deal of February 2008 was done by a company named Skylight Hospitality Pvt Ltd, where Vadra was a director earlier. It purchased a 3.5 acre of land in Shikohpur at a price of Rs 7.5 crore and then sold it to realty major DLF for Rs 58 crore in 2012.



Punjab Police seizes heroin, arms in narco-terror case

Punjab Police have recovered a hand grenade, heroin, some arms and ammunition during the ongoing investigation in a narco-terror case linked to a USA-based gangster, officials said Friday. Punjab's Director General of Police, Gaurav Yadav in an on X said that the recovery was made on the disclosure of Baljinder Singh, one of the two accused already arrested in FIR dated April 11, registered at Ramdas Police Station under the provisions of the Arms Act and Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. "In a major breakthrough, Amritsar Rural Police recovers a hand grenade, 183 grams of heroin, and arms & ammunition during the ongoing investigation in a narco-terror case linked to #USA-based Gangster Happy Passion," Yadav posted on X. Earlier, police had recovered a pistol and 523 grams of heroin on the disclosure of co-accused Palwinder Singh alias Pala, who had attempted to fire at the police team and sustained injuries in retaliatory action, he said.



Hospitals asked to carry out Ayushman Bharat Yojana

The Delhi Health Department has directed more than 100 hospitals to implement the Ayushman Bharat Yojana at the earliest, an official source said. The previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government did not implement the BJP-led NDA government's flagship healthcare scheme in the national capital. The source said the department has issued an advisory for the implementation of the Ayushman Bharat Yojana in 110 hospitals. As part of the initiative, a copy of the contract letter has been sent to these hospitals to enter into an agreement with the Delhi government. Along with this, the guidelines for implementation have also been shared with all the associated hospitals. The source said the hospitals have been asked to sign the agreement as soon as possible so that the beneficiaries of Ayushman Yojana do not face any problems in availing healthcare services. The BJP-led Delhi government inked an MoU with the Centre on April 5 to implement the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) in the city.

'Students tend to go against US laws will face consequences'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Students attempting to go against US laws will face the consequences, including deportation, the country's state department has warned.

In a virtual interview with PTI, US Department of State spokesperson Margaret MacLeod said the Trump administration was rigorously enforcing immigration laws, including the Immigration and Nationality Act and the Alien Registration Act.

"If you follow the law, America offers opportunities. But those who violate the law will face the consequences," MacLeod told PTI. Videos on a question related to the issues faced by Indian students in various US universities.

Indian students in the US are grappling with a growing threat of deportation as authorities cancel F-1 visas over a range of issues -- from participation in pro-Palestinian protests to minor legal infractions. During his weekly press briefing on Thursday, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "We are aware that several Indian students have received communication from the US government regarding their F-1 visa status, which happens to be the student visa. We are looking into the matter. Our embassy and consulates, they



are in touch with the students to provide support."

Jaiswal was responding to a question on several Indian students receiving communications from US authorities under the Trump administration on possible revocation of their visas.

While MacLeod did not mention specific cases, she emphasised that adherence to US legal and visa requirements was essential to avoid penalties.

On the broader issue of illegal immigration, MacLeod underscored the Trump administration's rigorous enforcement of immigration laws. "The US government is committed to securing its borders and will not welcome those who enter by breaking our laws."

MacLeod urged individuals residing in the US illegally, including relatives of Indian families, to voluntarily return to their home countries.

Fetters on powers of Guvs, no one above law: Surjewala

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Randeep Surjewala on Friday said the Supreme Court judgement putting constitutional fetters on the powers of governors and the president is timely, accurate and courageous as no one is above the country's law or the Constitution.

In a post on X, he disagreed with Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar's remarks on the judiciary and said the President of India must come forward and salute the supremacy of the Constitution above all else.

"I hold the Hon'ble Vice President of India in great esteem, both for his wisdom and eloquence, but I respectfully disagree with his formulation. The Supreme Court judgement putting Constitutional fetters on the power of governors and the President of India is timely, accurate, courageous and corrects the notion that 'those holding high offices are above any fetters or imposition of checks and balances in exercise of their powers,'" he said in his post.

Surjewala, who is a Congress general secretary and in-charge of Karnataka, said as a citizen, a student of law and a parliamentarian, his view is that in



our democracy, only the Constitution is supreme and most elevated.

"No office, be it of the president or the prime minister or governor, is so elevated as to be above the fetters of Constitutional propriety.

"Our democracy is founded upon the fundamental principle of 'will of people' expressed through elected Parliament and Legislatures. Hence, the highest bodies are Parliament and Legislatures. Even their decisions and law-making powers are subject to 'judicial review' by courts on the touchstone of Constitutionality," he noted.

The Congress leader asked why the actions of governors and the president should not be subjected to the same review, more so when the governors are mere nominees of the central government and the president is elected by the same Parliament and legislatures.

"Can the president be said to have unilateral or unchecked power to hold on to giving assent to the laws passed by Parliament or legislatures (vested by the Constitution to enact laws by majority mandate) for indefinite periods?"

"If the president or gover-

ners were to have such power, it will go against the very tenets of democracy, for the elected Parliament and legislatures will be rendered powerless and helpless," he said.

Surjewala said the Constitution would never confer such unbridled powers on anyone, including the president.

"The office one holds, however high or elevated it may be, doesn't make the office immune to Constitutional control and adherence. In fact, the higher the office, the higher the responsibility to be fair, transparent and accountable," he asserted.

Judicial independence, he said, is indeed a "nuclear missile" to strike at injustice, arbitrariness, inequity, usurpation and assumption of power to subvert the Constitution and to defend the rights of people against arbitrary actions and decisions of those in power.

"If the last door of justice was to close for ordinary people and justice becomes subservient to or gets dictated by the powers that are, democracy will die and dictatorship will prevail," he said.

Surjewala said no one is above the law or the Constitution, be it the president or any other authority.

Indian astronaut Shukla set for space travel next month

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla is set to travel to the International Space Station next month as part of an Axiom-4 mission, four decades after Rakesh Sharma's iconic spaceflight onboard Russia's Soyuz spacecraft, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Friday.

Singh made the remarks after reviewing the work of the Department of Space and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) here.

"Group Captain Shukla's journey is more than just a flight -- it's a signal that India is stepping boldly into a new era of space exploration," Singh said. ISRO Chairman V Narayanan made a presentation on various upcoming space missions.

ISRO is set to launch the NISAR satellite -- developed jointly with NASA -- in June on board the GSLV-Mark 2 rocket, Singh said, adding that in July the space agency will put in orbit BlueBird Block-2 satellites of US-based AST SpaceMobile Inc. using the heavy-lift LVM-3 rocket.



Singh said Group Captain Shukla's mission, scheduled for May, marks a milestone in India's expanding international space collaborations.

A decorated test pilot with the Indian Air Force, Group Captain Shukla was shortlisted under ISRO's Human Spaceflight Program and is among the top contenders for the Gaganyaan mission.

His journey aboard the Axiom-4 mission is expected to provide critical hands-on experience in spaceflight operations, launch protocols, microgravity adaptation, and emergency preparedness -- all essential for India's crewed space ambitions, an official statement said.

"What sets Shukla's mission

apart is its strategic importance.

Unlike the symbolic undertones of India's first human spaceflight, this time the focus is on operational readiness and global integration," it said.

The statement said Shukla's participation underscores India's growing engagement with public-private international partnerships in space and its resolve to emerge as a serious contender in human space exploration.

Singh said the collaboration with international partners and the strategic momentum of projects like Gaganyaan reflect India's commitment to becoming a global leader in space technology.

DGCA orders probe into death of Air India Express pilot

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aviation watchdog DGCA has ordered a detailed investigation into the circumstances that led to the recent death of an Air India Express pilot, including checking the medical history of the deceased crew member and examining the existing guidelines to deal with such emergencies.

The Air India Express pilot, who was the first officer, died due to a sudden cardiac arrest while operating the flight IX1153 from Srinagar to Delhi on April 9. Ordering the probe, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) investigation team will check whether the crew reported the sickness to the Air Traffic Controller (ATC) while in air and if so, whether the ATC initiated action appropriately.



Motion to combat anti-Hindu prejudice in Scottish Parl

PNS ■ LONDON

A member of the Scottish Parliament has tabled a motion in the House commending the work of a Glasgow-based Gandhian society that has drafted a report that highlights the "rising levels of prejudice, discrimination and marginalisation" of Hindus in Scotland.

Ash Regan, an Alba Party Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) representing Edinburgh Eastern, tabled the motion based on the report by the charity Gandhian Peace Society last week. Such motions are intended to draw attention to issues of importance and concern. The report 'Hinduphobia in Scotland' was presented to the Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group on Challenging Racial and

Religious Prejudice in February by the society promoting Gandhian principles of peace, non-violence and harmony. "That the Parliament commends the work of the Gandhian Peace Society in addressing prejudice against the Hindu community in Scotland," reads Regan's motion entitled 'Gandhian Peace Society's Report to Address Prejudice Against Scotland's Hindu Community'.

"(It) highlights rising levels of prejudice, discrimination and marginalisation experienced by members of Scotland's Hindu community; acknowledges the importance of their research, advocacy and public engagement in raising awareness and advancing interfaith dialogue, social cohesion and mutual respect across Scotland's diverse communities," it states.

Congress team meets Omar, discusses political situation

PNS ■ JAMMU

A high-level Congress team led by national general secretary Syed Naseer Hussain on Friday called on Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah here and discussed the current political landscape in the Union Territory.

Flanked by AICC general secretary G A Mir and Jammu and Kashmir Congress chief Tariq Hameed Karra, the Rajya Sabha MP met Abdullah at his residence, the party leaders said.

They were engaged in a productive meeting with the chief minister, they said.

"The discussion focused on the INDIA



alliance and the current political landscape in Jammu and Kashmir, highlighting collaborative efforts and the importance of addressing contemporary challenges in the region," a senior leader said.

Use of cryptocurrency in narco dealings flayed

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday said cryptocurrency is being used in narco dealings as the dark web is emerging as the new marketplace for drug trade.

Speaking at the passing out parade at Police Training School, Manigam, in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, Sinha said technology is changing at a very rapid pace and the use of new technology outside the training schools, and upgradation of skills to tackle the challenges put up by enemies are the need of the hour.

"The threat of drug smuggling has not remained conventional now. Smugglers and narco-terrorists are changing their ways of communication every day. Dark web is emerging as the new marketplace for drug trade, and cryptocurrency is being used in place of conventional transactions," Sinha said.

The LG said the misuse of new technologies has expanded organised crime and increased the number of cyber-crime incidents as well.

"In such a situation, you have to implement a policy of continuous innovation to remain a step ahead of the criminals. I hope the J-K Police



force is dedicated and ready to tackle all these challenges," he said, assuring that the J-K administration and the central government stand with the security forces with full might.

Appreciating the security forces for curbing terror incidents in Kashmir to a large extent, Sinha said attempts were being made to revive terrorism in the Jammu region.

"In the last few years, J-K Police, Army and other security forces have succeeded to a large extent in controlling terrorism in the Kashmir valley. Attempts are being made to revive terrorism in the Jammu region, which was peaceful in comparison. I have faith in J-K Police. It is the collective resolve of J-K Police and other security forces to make both Jammu and Kashmir regions terror-free," he said.

The LG said he was sure the way the security forces succeeded in putting brakes on terror incidents in the Kashmir valley, "you will repeat that

resolve in Jammu". "All the agencies have to come together as a strong team to take a resolve to uproot the neighbouring country's conspiracy," he added.

He asserted that the Jammu and Kashmir Police has to be made a future-ready police force which is equipped technologically, and capable of tackling emerging challenges of terrorism and crime. "J-K Police is very different from other forces in the country because it has a huge responsibility. On one hand, our brave soldiers face terrorism, and on the other, they have the responsibility to maintain law and order and help in creating a conducive atmosphere for development in J-K," he said.

In the last few years, Sinha said, the performance of Jammu and Kashmir Police in real-time intelligence sharing and swift response has been appreciable.

"I hope the combination of special strategy, advanced technology, and specific intelligence will put the last nail in the coffin of terrorism and its whole support system. In future, the success of the anti-terror operations and (maintenance of) law and order missions will depend on the effective use of the technology," he added.

Sibal criticises Dhankhar's remarks on judiciary

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha member Kapil Sibal slammed Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday for questioning the judiciary over the timeline for the president to take decisions, saying this is "unconstitutional" and he had never seen any Rajya Sabha chairman make "political statements" of this nature.

A day after Dhankhar used strong words against the judiciary, Sibal asserted that the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman remain equidistant between the opposition and the ruling party, and cannot be the "spokesperson of the party".

"Everyone knows that the Lok Sabha Speaker's chair is in between. He or she is the



Speaker of the House, not the speaker of one party. They also don't vote, they only vote when there is a tie. The same is with the upper house. You are equidistant between the opposition and the ruling party," the senior advocate said at a press conference here.

"Everything you say must be equidistant. No speaker can be the spokesperson of a party. I don't say that he (Dhankhar) is but no Speaker in principle can be the spokesperson of any party. If it appears so then the dignity of the chair is lowered," Sibal asserted.

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.

He also described Article 142, which grants plenary power

to the Supreme Court, as a "nuclear missile against democratic forces available to the judiciary 24x7".

Slamming Dhankhar for his remarks, Sibal said, "If you give such statements it will look as if judiciary is being taught a lesson. It is not neutral and not constitutional."

The judiciary should not be attacked in this manner by the executive, especially two ministers -- Arjun Ram Meghwal and Kiren Rijiju -- and the chairman of the house, as the judiciary cannot defend itself.

"Then the polity must defend the judiciary. Independence of the judiciary is fundamental to democracy in the country. What is being done is unconstitutional," he said.



Editor's TAKE

Searing Summer, Soaking Monsoon

IMD forecasts an above-average monsoon – a silver lining with a dark cloud: floods

As India braces for a searing summer, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has offered a glimmer of hope: this year's south-west monsoon is expected to bring above-normal rainfall...

For a country where nearly 60 per cent of agriculture is rain-fed, the monsoon is nothing short of a lifeline. A good monsoon translates to better crop yields, improved groundwater recharge, replenished reservoirs, and stable food prices.

Yet, the same monsoon that nourishes our farms can wreak havoc on our homes and cities. Floods are a recurring nightmare, leading to massive loss of life, destruction of infrastructure, and displacement of communities.

As the IMD also warns of below-normal rainfall in parts of Tamil Nadu and the Northeast, the risk of regional imbalances – where some areas drown while others dry – becomes very real.

Projects like river interlinking can redistribute excess water from flood-prone regions to drought-hit areas. While controversial and logistically complex, such initiatives, if executed sustainably, could balance water distribution across states.

IMD's forecasting has improved significantly, but local authorities must act promptly on early warnings. Investments in community awareness and disaster response training can save countless lives.

Reviving these ecosystems will go a long way in reducing the impact of flash floods. Our cities need a radical revamp of their drainage systems.

The monsoon, India's annual gamble with nature, holds immense power, both to nurture and to destroy. As IMD's forecast signals a wet season ahead, it's time to plan not just for reaping its bounty but for mitigating its fury.

Fundamentalism in Bangladesh

Once hailed for secularism and cultural vibrancy, Bangladesh now finds itself at a critical crossroads. Islamist fundamentalist groups like Jamaat-e-Islami are regaining prominence, with alarming implications

Is Bangladesh moving once again towards becoming a cradle of Islamist fundamentalism and terrorism? Fundamentalism does not always mean terrorism, but it does create a discourse that facilitates the rise of extremism through the promotion of intolerance, leading to hatred towards those considered infidels and violence against them.



damentalist doctrines and encourages other fundamentalist organisations to flex their muscles. One of their principal targets is Bangladesh's moderate and liberal ethos – shaped by its rich literary and philosophical heritage, shaped by Rabindranath Tagore and the country's highly talented writers, poets and performing artists.



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Muhammad Yunus, reversed the order, saying that there was no proof that the Jamaat and the Shibir were involved in terrorist activities. On 23 October 2024, the Appellate Division of Bangladesh's Supreme Court restored the Jamaat's appeal, which the Supreme Court had rejected on 19 November 2023.

Meanwhile, the Jamaat is now politically fully active – holding meetings, demonstrations, meetings with other parties and foreign diplomats, and projecting itself as a major force to be reckoned with in the forthcoming elections, whenever they are held. Its ideology is quite clear. Its website says, "Jamaat performs as a spiritual party as spiritual life is important in Islam."

March 2021. Thirteen persons were killed and scores injured in clashes between its supporters and members of the security forces and Awami League's supporters. The Hefazat is a hard-core Islamist organisation. This is clear from its 13-point charter of demands in support of which it held a rally in Dhaka on 5-6 May 2013.

fair was to be hosted in Madya Narsingpur, Kashipur Union Parishad in Narayanganj, on 22 November 2024.

The district administration, however, ordered its cancellation. According to a report in The Daily Star (23 November 2024), Hefazat-e-Islam leader Maulana Abdul Auwal had warned the administration to stop the event or face intervention by protesters.

In Dhaka, a theatre group was all set to stage a play titled Shesher Kobita on 13 and 14 April. The authorities of the auditorium concerned, however, decided to cancel the programme on the 13th after receiving a threatening letter from a mob.

(The author is the Consulting Editor of The Pioneer. Views are personal)

Inside the Mind of a Champion

SECOND Opinion

BY RAVI VALLURI

What is the difference between the brain and the mind? While the brain is a vital physical organ within our body, the mind is the seat of consciousness – it is where thoughts, feelings, and emotions arise.

What sets these titans apart from the rest? Beyond talent and training, it is the strength of their minds – their inner power – that elevates them. Their minds are like that of Ajjatashatru, a Sanskrit term for one who has no enemies, at peace with oneself and the world.

Why do some settle for simply qualifying, for placing somewhere between fourth and tenth, rather than striving for the podium? It's not just physical preparation that separates winners from the rest – it's the mind. The mental resilience to endure, to persevere, and to focus with unflinching determination is what produces Olympic champions.

inspiration from Arjuna, the legendary archer of the Mahabharata, whose single-minded focus, humility, and faith in his mentor Dronacharya and friend Lord Krishna made him peerless.

Arjuna was not born a master; he became one by surrendering ego, trusting his training, and silencing doubt. His mind was his greatest ally – free from clutter, fear, and distraction. He truly embodied the spirit of Ajjatashatru.

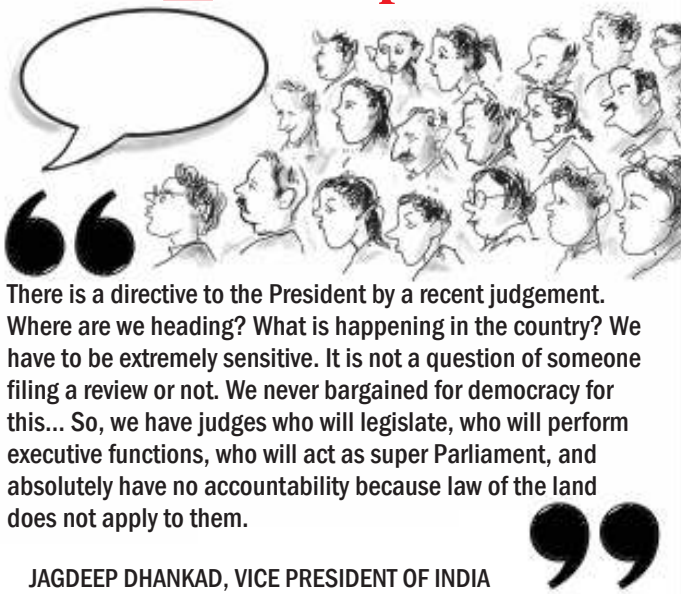
So, what are we lacking? First, a cultural shift. India is not a sporting nation. Parents often discourage children from pursuing sports, fearful of the risks and uncertainty. We lack adequate infrastructure, visionaries who can scout talent, and political will to support sports beyond cricket.

sors, public imagination. Yet even in this bleak scenario, some institutions like the Indian Railways have provided much-needed support. In Paris 2024, India secured six medals – one silver and five bronze.

To nurture it, the Ministry of Sports must undergo a radical overhaul. We need public-private partnerships, active involvement of the armed forces and Indian Railways, and a robust CSR-driven funding model to create a sustainable ecosystem for sports.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living. Views are personal)

Leaderspeak



There is a directive to the President by a recent judgement. 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... So, we have judges who will legislate, who will perform executive functions, who will act as super Parliament, and absolutely have no accountability because law of the land does not apply to them.

JAGDEEP DHANKAD, VICE PRESIDENT OF INDIA

Letters to the Editor

MGNREGA: A lifeline undermined

Madam – On April 17, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge strongly criticised the Modi government, labelling it "anti-poor" and accusing it of systematically oppressing MGNREGA workers.

Despite recommendations from both the Joint Parliamentary Committee and the 2023 high-level committee led by Amarjeet Sinha, the government has failed to raise the daily wage meaningfully. Instead, it continues to impose restrictions – such as mandatory Aadhaar-based payments – and has allocated the lowest MGNREGA budget in the last decade relative to the overall Union Budget.

Today, that legacy is under threat. If the government genuinely cares for rural India, it must adopt the two key demands: ₹400 per day as minimum wage and 150 days of guaranteed work per year.

In conclusion, the government must act decisively to uphold MGNREGA's founding purpose. Adopting the demands for ₹400 daily wages and 150 workdays annually is essential to protect rural livelihoods and restore dignity to India's poorest.

Funding threatens academic freedom

Madam – As someone who closely follows the intersection of politics and education, I find former President Trump's decision to freeze over \$2.2 billion in funding to Harvard University deeply troubling.

Harvard, led by President Alan Garber, rightly resisted, citing violations of academic freedom and the First Amendment. This isn't just about one university; it's about the growing use of state power to intimidate academic institutions.

When funding is used as a weapon to enforce political conformity, we edge dangerously close to authoritarianism. While concerns about hate speech or foreign influence are valid, they must be addressed through balanced, lawful means – not by bulldozing university autonomy.

True leadership is measured by its tolerance for dissent – not its impulse to crush it. In threatening Harvard's funding, the government undermines academic freedom and sets a chilling precedent for all universities.

In a democracy, campuses must remain spaces for open inquiry, not instruments of political control. Freedom of thought is not negotiable – it is foundational.

The shame of trafficking

Madam – The Supreme Court's recent expression of dismay over a newborn trafficking case is a sobering reminder that 'son preference' continues to plague Indian society. In this case, a newborn was purchased for ₹4 lakh simply because the buyer "wanted a son."

This mindset fuels child trafficking, sex-selective abortions, and violence against women. With India's sex ratio at birth (933 girls per 1,000 boys) still alarmingly skewed, we are witnessing the long-term damage of systemic gender bias.

Add to that the daily average of 1,200 crimes against women in 2022, and the picture turns bleak. There is a lesson to be learned from South Korea, which successfully normalised its skewed sex ratio through emotionally resonant campaigns like Daughters Are More Compassionate.

Public messaging, school curricula, and media initiatives helped shift mindsets – not just laws. India must embrace a similar strategy – one that reshapes hearts and minds. Women like Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, and Delhi CM Rekha Gupta prove that daughters are not burdens – they are the nation's future.

WAQF AMENDMENT ACT: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR DIALOGUE

The Supreme Court's observations regarding the Waqf Amendment Act, 2025, have brought much-needed legal scrutiny to what has largely been a media-driven, politically charged issue.

However, the discourse lacked depth. There was little to no engagement from legal scholars or constitutional experts. Instead, television debates fuelled fear and division, with repeated claims that Waqf properties endangered national interests.

of such sensitivity could have been resolved through inclusive dialogue and mutual understanding. Instead, we are left with increased polarisation and unrest. As Mark Twain once said, "Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it's time to pause and reflect."

True progress lies not in reactionary amendments, but in fostering inclusive conversations that respect both religious rights and national interests. As citizens, we must demand more thoughtful governance – one that seeks unity, not division. Let this moment serve as a reminder that justice, not majoritarian sentiment, must remain the cornerstone of a healthy democracy.

AVINASH GODBOLEY DEWAS

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

The Saudis: Peacekeepers or power brokers?

In a transformation as ambitious as it is paradoxical, Saudi Arabia is rebranding itself from an austere theocracy to a cosmopolitan architect of global diplomacy. This evolution raises a fundamental question: can a state rewrite its past without reckoning with it?

FIRST Column

The transformation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from a puritanical theocracy to an aspiring architect of global peace is one of the most paradoxical and politically engineered evolutions of the modern era. Far from the deserts where Wahhabism first struck its austere roots, the Kingdom now positions itself as a mediator between global powers, a patron of modernity, and a crucible of cross-cultural aspiration. Yet beneath the glistening architecture of NEOM and the diplomatic smiles of peace summits lies a stratified narrative — one obscured by revisionist theatre and gilded silence.

Saudi Arabia's foundation in 1932 under King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud was not merely a unification of tribal territories; it was a theological consolidation. The strategic pact with Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, brokered generations earlier, transformed Islam into an instrument of statecraft. As the CIA Handbook observed in 1972, "The Saudi Government is a monarchy based on a fusion of secular and religious authority, with the King at its apex." The same report stated, "The royal family dominates both the political and economic life of the country," a candid admission of dynastic monopolisation. Governance was less institutional than charismatic, mediated through familial bonds, tribal allegiances, and theocratic endorsement.

The Kingdom's export of Wahhabism, particularly from the 1960s onward, became one of the most under-scrutinised forms of ideological colonisation. Flush with petrodollars after the 1973 oil embargo — an embargo that King Faisal declared in defence of Arab dignity, stating, "Our oil is our weapon, and we will use it to protect our Arab rights" — Saudi Arabia embarked on a global proselytisation project. Mosques, madrassas, and clerical scholarships were funded from Islamabad to Jakarta, Sarajevo to Khartoum, shaping generations in an image that often opposed indigenous Islamic traditions. A lesser-known revelation from a declassified 1981 US State Department cable noted: "Saudi financial support to Islamic institutions in Southeast Asia has significantly altered the religious landscape, prioritising doctrinal rigidity over cultural synthesis."

The domestic reality, too, remained draconian under the veneer of religiosity. The 1979 Grand Mosque seizure by a fundamentalist group paradoxically catalysed a more regressive clampdown, as the royal family tightened its alliance with the religious establishment to legitimise its authority. It is telling that King Fahd, who in the 1980s declared, "We will build the future without abandoning our past," presided over an era where ministries functioned as courtiers rather than administrators. As noted in a 1972 CIA internal report, "Much of the bureaucracy remains inefficient, with key decisions often bypassing formal channels and handled by royal intermediaries."

The paradox deepens when juxtaposing Saudi Arabia's financing of foreign conflicts with its self-portrayal as a stabiliser. The Kingdom, directly or through proxies, has been implicated in the fomen-



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

helped perpetuate. This performative peacemaking is a diplomatic palimpsest, rewriting its culpability in real time.

Yet perhaps nowhere is the ideological volte-face more pronounced than under the stewardship of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS). A man who rose to prominence not through military conquest or scholarly erudition but via internal court

tation of conflict zones including Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and Libya. In Yemen, particularly, its military intervention since 2015 has left an indelible humanitarian scar. UN estimates suggest over 375,000 deaths, mostly from indirect causes. Despite this, Riyadh now courts global opinion as a peace broker, hosting summits that purport to end the very conflicts it

“SAUDI FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA HAS SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERED THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE, PRIORITISING DOCTRINAL RIGIDITY OVER CULTURAL SYNTHESIS.”

calculus and the invocation of modernist necessity, MBS has become the emblem of Saudi Arabia's neo-nationalist rebranding. His statement in 2017, "We will not waste 30 years of our lives dealing with extremist ideologies. We will destroy them now and immediately" serves as both mea culpa and strategic distancing. It is a rhetorical exfoliation of the kingdom's historical role in incubating the very ideologies it now condemns.

What makes this transformation most paradoxical is the simultaneous consolidation of autocracy. The same MBS who champions futuristic cities and cultural liberalisation also orchestrated the arrest of dissenting clerics, feminists, and businessmen — a campaign sanitised by the euphemism of anticorruption.

The chilling assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul became a gruesome watermark of the state's coercive architecture. This contradiction was prophetically foreshadowed by King Faisal decades

earlier, who once mused, "Injustice cannot be concealed, and one day it will speak."

In global diplomacy, Saudi Arabia is no longer content with petrodollar influence; it now seeks epistemic legitimacy. The launch of NEOM, a city touted as the world's first cognitive metropolis, symbolises this ambition — yet, emblematic of the new Saudi state, it is erected upon contested land and enforced silence. Beyond NEOM, the Kingdom's financial outreach has extended to international media, sports, universities, and even Hollywood, buying not just partnerships but narratives. This is cultural laundering masquerading as soft power.

Saudi Arabia's overtures toward mediating the Russia-Ukraine conflict, brokering a rapprochement between Iran and Arab states, and its increasing engagement with China and Israel signify not merely a regional aspiration, but a superpower mimicry. In February 2023, Riyadh hosted talks to ease tensions in Sudan, while simultaneously continuing arms imports that fuel its military-industrial complex. As a 2022 report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute noted, "Saudi Arabia remains one of the top five global arms importers, despite its increasing involvement in peace dialogues."

This dualism is not new but is now consciously choreographed. The kingdom no longer hides its contradictions; it flaunts them as strengths. It wishes to be judged not by the tenets of liberal democracy, but by a self-fashioned rubric of efficacy, vision, and global brokerage.

And in this, it has found unlikely endorsements. Elon Musk, after touring Saudi ventures, declared them "an exciting vision for civilisation". Goldman Sachs and SoftBank speak of "unprecedented opportunities". Even sceptics are drawn to the economic gravity Riyadh exerts.

But can a state undergo ontological transformation without historical accountability? Can it broker peace while archives of complicity remain sealed? The Kingdom's diplomatic epistles, such as the declassified 1973 letter from the US President to King Faisal praising him as "a voice of wisdom and reason," read today as documents of strategic appeasement, not genuine admiration. The phrase, "Your personal efforts to bring moderation and stability to the region are of great significance," thinly veils the realpolitik that underpinned Western support for autocracy.

Indeed, what Saudi Arabia seeks now is not reinvention but redemption. It seeks to transmute petrodollar moral hazard into soft power prestige. In doing so, it exploits the cognitive dissonance of the global order: that authoritarianism, when efficient and well-funded, can be tolerated, even admired. Perhaps this is the Kingdom's most radical export yet — a model where ideological elasticity replaces democratic legitimacy.

(The writer is a Colombo-based journalist. Views are personal)

The cost of the skies: The risk and reality of fighter flying

The recent crash of an Indian Air Force (IAF) fighter jet, which tragically claimed the life of a young pilot, has once again stirred public concern and debate over flight safety and the risks faced by those in uniform

A few days ago, the Indian Air Force (IAF) suffered a devastating loss when a fighter jet crashed during an operational sortie. The tragic accident claimed the life of a young fighter pilot, a promising individual in the prime of his life and career. The exact cause of the incident is still under investigation by a Court of Inquiry, and conclusions will only be drawn after a thorough examination.

While we collectively grieve the loss of a brave soul and extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and comrades, the incident has once again ignited public debate — particularly on social media — about the IAF's safety record. Many have questioned why, after decades of technological advancements and operational experience, such accidents continue to occur. With each modern fighter aircraft costing upward of ₹500 crore, the financial burden is immense. Yet, even more valuable are the human lives put at risk and, at times, tragically lost.

This article attempts to offer readers an insight into the world of fighter pilots — a world often viewed as glamorous from afar but fraught with danger, discipline, and unyielding demands. It also seeks to dispel the widespread misconception that the Air Force forces its personnel to fly outdated or poorly maintained aircraft.

Fighter Flying Is Dangerous

To begin with, fighter flying is among the most high-risk professions in the world. Pilots operate incredibly powerful machines weighing up to 40,000 kg and powered by engines capable of producing over 25,000 kgf of thrust.

Achieving maximum performance from such a complex aircraft requires seamless coordination between the pilot, the aircraft, and multiple supporting agencies on the ground. Even a minor error in judgment or execution can have catastrophic consequences, especially during air combat.

Fighter pilots are selected after a rigorous evaluation of their flying skills, temperament, and psychological makeup. Qualities such as mental agility, fast decision-making, situational awareness, and emotional resilience are non-negotiable. Only after years of intensive training are they considered fit for combat missions.

Even during peacetime, these pilots undergo combat training that mirrors the conditions of actual warfare as closely as possible — minus the use of live weaponry. Every day in the cockpit is a test of their physical endurance and mental sharpness.

Camaraderie and Competition

Flying in formation, especially during combat training, demands absolute trust among pilots. Each member must perform at their best — not just for personal safety but for the team. There's an unspoken



RAJIV HORA

Fitness: The Hidden Demands

Maintaining peak physical condition is critical. Fighter pilots regularly train to increase their G-tolerance, which is crucial during the high-speed, tight turns of air combat.

Even with G-suits, seasoned pilots can experience forces up to 8-9 times their body weight. The stress on the human body is enormous, and those unac-

but powerful mix of pride, ego, and responsibility. No one wants to be the weak link, and this drives pilots to push the limits of their aircraft and themselves.

Air combat is binary, there are no partial victories. You either prevail, or you are outmanoeuvred. This stark reality instils a relentless drive for excellence and perfection.

customed to it can lose consciousness.

Even minor illnesses such as a cold can impair judgment or sensory performance and are grounds for grounding a pilot. Strict rules govern alcohol consumption and sleep routines — standards summed up by the phrase "12 hours between bottle and throttle." Flight fitness is constantly monitored under the supervision of aero-medical experts.

Practice and Precision

Each training mission is carefully reviewed post-flight. Advanced tools allow for detailed debriefing, helping pilots analyse their performance, correct errors, and refine tactics. This ensures that when a real combat scenario arises, the pilot is ready for the critical moment when an enemy target appears in the radar scope.

Mistakes in modern warfare can be fatal — not just personally, but collectively. In the era of Beyond Visual Range (BVR) combat, where pilots often engage targets they cannot see, the risk of fratricide, or "blue on blue" incidents, increases. Identifying targets cor-

rectly in a high-pressure, information-dense environment demands exceptional clarity and focus.

The Systems in Play

Weather is another unpredictable factor. While missions are authorised based on available weather data, conditions can rapidly change mid-flight, presenting fresh challenges during takeoff, flight, or landing. Thunderstorms, turbulence, or poor visibility are all part of a fighter pilot's reality. To mitigate risks, the IAF, like other global air forces, uses an Operational Risk Management (ORM) system. This considers multiple variables, from pilot experience and aircraft condition to mission type and weather — to determine if a sortie should be authorised.

Even once airborne, the pilot must juggle a host of responsibilities. From interpreting radar and electronic warfare systems to tracking formation positions and navigating terrain at 900 kmph just a few hundred feet off the ground, everything hinges on razor-sharp timing. A single lapse can be fatal. At such speeds, there are no second chances.

Team Effort Behind the Scenes

A fighter pilot never flies alone in the truest sense. An extensive support ecosystem underpins every mission. Engineers, technicians, air traffic controllers, radar operators, and safety crews work in synchrony to ensure aircraft are airworthy and operations are smooth. Even older aircraft are rigorously maintained to official standards. The notion that pilots are forced to fly "junk" aircraft is baseless and unfair to the dedicated personnel who keep these machines operational. Still, aircraft can develop snags mid-air. Pilots are trained to respond to emergencies calmly and quickly, often practising drills in simulators. In worst-case scenarios, they may have to eject to save their own lives. While it's heartbreaking to abandon a multi-crore aircraft, saving a trained pilot — whose training takes 6-7 years and enormous investment — takes precedence.

Flight Safety: A Mission

Despite the best efforts, accidents do occur. They are rarely due to a single error; rather, they're often the result of multiple, layered failures — a concept known as the Swiss Cheese Model of accidents. A hole in the system, hidden until it aligns with others, can lead to tragedy.

The IAF maintains a robust flight safety mechanism. Every incident is examined thoroughly, and lessons are incorporated into procedures and even future aircraft designs. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), often forged in the aftermath of loss, are sacred and followed rigorously. Phasing out a fleet of aircraft is a strategic decision, balancing operational needs, cost implications, and national security. Not every accident warrants the retirement of an entire platform. Over time, accident rates do fall — thanks to continuous risk management, technological upgrades, and relentless learning from both successes and failures.

The Reality of Service

Behind the image of swaggering pilots in sunglasses lies a life of discipline, danger, and determination. Fighter pilots sacrifice comfort, health, and sometimes their lives — not for glory, but for duty. It's important for the public to understand that accidents often happen not due to negligence, but despite stringent precautions.

It is never as simple as flipping a switch or grounding a fleet. As the saying goes, "The safest place for a ship is in the harbour, but that's not where it's meant to be." Similarly, fighter aircraft and the warriors who fly them are meant to be in the sky, safeguarding our nation. Treading safely, always — but boldly.

(The writer is an Air Vice Marshal (Retired). Views are personal)

IN BRIEF



CMF Phone 2 Pro to set new benchmark

London-based technology company Nothing has announced today that CMF Phone 2 Pro will set a new benchmark in the budget smartphone segment with a best-in-segment triple-camera system and will be powered by a MediaTek Dimensity 7300 PRO chipset, a compact powerhouse that meets one's daily entertainment needs. One of the standout upgrades in the CMF Phone 2 Pro is its camera system, which includes a powerful 50MP telephoto lens, a high-performance main sensor, and an ultra-wide camera. The CMF Phone 2 Pro's telephoto camera comes with a 2x optical zoom - a first in the segment to deliver high-quality magnification with preserved detail and sharpness. Furthermore, the CMF Phone 2 Pro boasts a 50MP Main camera with a 1/1.57" sensor - the largest in the segment. Lastly, the triple camera system is completed only by an 8MP ultra-wide camera with a 119.5° field of view.



TVS Motor rolls out new Apache at Rs 2.77 lakh

Two and three wheeler manufacturer TVS Motor Company has rolled out the 2025 edition of its super premium motorcycle Apache RR310 equipped with a host of features and also adheres to OBD (on-board diagnostics)-2B norms, the company said. The new variant is priced from Rs 2,77,999 lakh (ex-showroom India), the city-based company said. In a press release on Friday, TVS Motor said the Apache RR 310 would be available in three built-to-order customisation options. It comes with four riding modes - track, sport, urban and rain and offers 38 PS at 9,800 rpm. The new features added to the 2025 edition is launch control, cornering drag torque control, Gen-2 race computer, 8 spoke alloys among others. The OBD-2B norms refers to on-board diagnostics conforming to stricter emission norms. "Since its debut in 2017, the TVS Apache RR 310 has emerged as a formidable force in the super-premium sport motorcycle segment, redefining performance benchmarks through its race-bred DNA.



Shekhar becomes new prez of CREDAI-National

Shekhar G Patel has become the new President of realtors' apex body CREDAI, which represents more than 13,000 real estate developers from across the country. Patel, the Managing Director of Ahmedabad-based real estate firm Ganesh Housing Corporation, has become the new president of CREDAI for the term 2025-27, the body said in a statement on Friday. He succeeds Boman Irani, CMD of Mumbai-based listed firm Keystone Realtors Ltd. Irani has now become CREDAI-National Chairman. CREDAI also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and the Quality Council of India (QCI) to establish a collaborative framework for skill training, capacity building, and worker certification in the construction and real estate sector. "Empowering the workforce with industry-relevant skills is paramount to enhancing productivity, improving quality and maintaining global standards. Through our collaboration with NSDC and QCI, we aim to create a robust ecosystem for talent development, ensuring that India's real estate sector remains competitive and future-ready," said Patel.

Positive outcomes from US Vice Prez visit expected

PNS ■ MANESAR

Ahead of US Vice President JD Vance's visit to India next week, Minister for Electronics and IT Ashwini Vaishnav on Friday expressed optimism about "positive outcome" from the visit.

Vaishnav cited pragmatic approach and continued engagement on both sides, and asserted that India has emerged as a trusted hub in electronics manufacturing.

"There will be very positive outcome is what I can say with a good level of confidence, because we have approached this thing in a very pragmatic way, and very agile way, and we have continuously engaged," Vaishnav said when asked what outcomes he expects given the backdrop of Vance's upcoming visit, and India and US' economic and trade engagements.

"Over a period of time, India has emerged as a very trusted country, because the way Prime Minister Narendra Modi conducted foreign policy, that trust has got generated about our country today, and that is going to be a big and important factor for all of us," Vaishnav said.

On whether there are any

apprehensions about electronics products being dumped in the country from China given the intense trade and tariff war playing out, the minister said "more or less our country is prepared for any situation" but added that the commerce ministry would be the nodal authority to respond to such a query.

On whether China's export



curbs on critical rare earth minerals would have any implication for Indian component manufacturing, the minister said Indian industry believes that they will be able to work out alternatives.

"Whatever we have had discussions with the industry so far, the industry feels that they will be able to figure out alternatives to this, because the entire world has been preparing for diversifying value chains since COVID struck," the Minister said. One of the biggest learnings from the pandemic for the industry was the need for building diverse supply chains.

Infosys: Growth of 4.2% in CC, operating margin expansion of 0.5% in FY25

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Infosys (NSE: INFY), (BSE: INFY), (NYSE: INFY), a global leader in next-generation digital services and consulting, delivered \$19,277 million in FY25 revenues, growth of 4.2% in constant currency. Operating margin was at 21.1%, expansion of 0.5% year on year. Free cash flow was the highest ever at \$4,088 million, an increase of 41.8% year on year. TCV of large deal wins was \$11.6 billion for the year, with 56% net new.

Q4 revenues were \$4,730 million, an increase of 4.8% year on year in constant currency and 3.6% in reported terms. Operating margin was at 21.0%, an increase of 0.9% year on year.

"We have built a resilient organization with sharp focus on client-centricity and responsiveness to the market, thanks to the trust of our clients and dedication of our employees. Our performance for the year has been robust in terms of revenues, expansion in operating margins and highest ever free cash generation", said Salil Parekh, CEO and MD. "Our depth in AI, cloud and digital and strength in cost efficiency, automation, and



consolidation position us well for the needs of our clients", he added.

"FY25 operating margins expanded by 0.5% which reflects our relentless focus on identifying opportunities for efficiency and executing Project Maximus with discipline, after navigating through multiple headwinds in a challenging macro environment. We delivered the highest ever free cash flows in the history of the company in FY25," said Jayesh Sanghrajka, CFO. The Board has proposed a final dividend of ₹22, which along with the interim dividend, is an increase of 13.2% over last year," he added.

Infosys announced the expansion of its long-standing strategic collaboration with Citizens to Propel AI-led Transformation. Michael Ruttledge, Chief Information

Will make India self-reliant in defence, says Rajnath

PNS ■ CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR (MAHA)

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Friday said the government is committed to make the country self-reliant in the defence sector and has already taken several steps in this direction.

Addressing industry representatives here, Singh said defence exports have risen from Rs 600 crore in 2014 to Rs 24,000 crore.

"Our target is to achieve (exports of) Rs 50,000 crore by 2029-30," he said.

The BJP-led government has taken several major steps to achieve self-reliance and declared items that will be indigenously manufactured and not imported, he noted.

The defence production is at Rs 1.60 lakh crore at present and the aim is to increase it to Rs 3 lakh crore, the minister said.

He sees good potential in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar as a production hub, Singh said, adding, "You have a mature industrial ecosystem here. Come to me with concrete proposals."

Meanwhile, Rajnath Singh said Maharana Pratap and



The BJP-led government has taken several major steps to achieve self-reliance and declared items that will be indigenously manufactured and not imported, he noted

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj are national heroes and not Mughal ruler Aurangzeb.

Speaking at a function after unveiling a life-size statue of the Mewar ruler at Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar

Maharashtra, Singh said Maharana Pratap was an epitome of courage and patriotism.

"Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj drew inspiration from Maharana Pratap, especially for guerilla warfare tactics," Singh said.

Post-Independence historians with Left leanings did not give due credit to both Rana Pratap and Shivaji Maharaj but eulogised Aurangzeb, the senior BJP leader claimed.

"Those who feel that Aurangzeb was a hero should have read Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who wrote that the Mughal emperor was a cruel, fundamentalist ruler," he said.

Maharana Pratap sacrificed his life to uphold his self-respect and challenged the dominance of Mughal

Emperor Akbar, Singh further said.

Apart from his exemplary bravery, Maharana Pratap united all sections of society, he said, adding, "Adivasis (tribals) and Muslims were part of his army. Hakim Khan Suri sacrificed his life in the battle of Haldighati, fighting against the Mughals. A Muslim youth was Shivaji Maharaj's bodyguard."

Those who eulogize Aurangzeb insult the Muslims, the minister said.

Govt tweaks Delhi gas policy, moves to advance allocations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government will now allocate natural gas to CNG and piped cooking gas retailers two quarters in advance to give city gas companies greater clarity, the Oil Ministry said Friday.

With city gas retailers like Indraprastha Gas Ltd, Mahanagar Gas Ltd and Adani Total Gas Ltd reporting pressures on margins after the allocation of cheaper administered price or APM gas to them was cut without giving enough advance notice, the ministry decided to tweak the allocation policy.

"From Q1 (first quarter) of FY 2025-26 (April 2025 to March 2026 financial year), domestic natural gas allocations for CNG (Transport) and piped natural gas (domestic household cooking gas) segments will be done on a two-quarter advance basis," the ministry said in a statement.

Besides the lower-priced APM gas produced from old fields given on a nomination basis, the allocation will also now include gas from new wells

drilled on the nomination fields of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL), it added.

The gas from new wells is slightly more expensive than the APM gas.

While APM gas currently is priced at USD 6.75 per million British thermal units, the new well gas comes to close to USD 8 per MMBtu.

"Estimations by GAIL and ONGC will help ensure supply visibility to CGD entities in a d v a n c e , enhancing planning and delivery efficiency," it said.

GAIL is the state-owned marketer of gas.

The ministry said new well gas allocation will be done on a pro-rata basis.

"Auction-based allocation for new well gas has been replaced with a quarterly pro-rata allocation to ensure timely and reliable supply. GAIL will allocate new well gas to city gas distribution (CGD) entities in proportion to their requirements, in accordance with prevailing Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas guidelines," the statement said.



Parl panel members flag flight delays at Delhi airport

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

MPs from different parties have criticised the civil aviation authorities at a Parliamentary panel meeting, saying "mayhem" continues at the Delhi airport causing flight delays and serious inconvenience to passengers, according to sources.

At the meeting of the Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture headed by JD(U)'s Sanjay Jha on Thursday, various members questioned the civil aviation ministry officials about the planning to deal with the fallout of the closure of Terminal 2 (T2) and the



recent flight delays.

The Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in the national capital, also the country's largest and busiest airport, has three terminals -- T1, T2 and T3 -- and four runways.

Currently, T2 and one runway RW 10/28 are temporarily shut for maintenance works.

T2 was shut on April 15 and all the flights from there have been moved to the revamped T1.

At the meeting, some MPs noted that their flights were delayed to highlight the persisting problem.

In response, the ministry officials said the flight disruptions were mainly due to last week's dust storms and assured that efforts are being made to address the situation but the MPs flagged that the situation remains bad and far from normal, according to the sources.

The sources also said the ministry's explanation was not "satisfactory".

One MP, who was present at the meeting, said the only people happy in the airport were those running restaurants and cafes as they had a brisk business as delays and overcrowding have forced passengers to spend a considerable period of time at the airport.

Shrivastava is Revenue Secy, Samir to head Civil Aviation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior IAS officers Arvind Shrivastava and Samir Kumar Sinha have been appointed as Revenue and Civil Aviation Secretaries respectively as part of a top-level bureaucratic reshuffle effected by the Centre on Friday.

Shrivastava, a 1994 batch Karnataka cadre Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, is currently working as Additional Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved Shrivastava's appointment as Secretary, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, a Personnel Ministry order said. Sinha, Shrivastava's batch-mate from the Assam-Meghalaya cadre, has been appointed as Civil Aviation Secretary in place of Vumlungmang Vualnam.

Vualnam has been named as Secretary, Department of Expenditure. He succeeds Manoj Govil, who has been

appointed as Secretary (Coordination), Cabinet Secretariat.

Vivek Aggarwal, a 1994 batch senior IAS officer of Madhya Pradesh cadre, has been appointed as Secretary, Ministry of Culture.

Aggarwal is currently Additional Secretary in the Department of Revenue. He is also holding the charge of Director, Financial Intelligence Unit- India (FIU-IND).

Eighteen IAS officers, including two working in the PMO, have been appointed to different central government departments as part of this secretary-level reshuffle that comes ahead of the Civil Services Day on Monday.

Hari Ranjan Rao, another Madhya Pradesh cadre IAS officer of the 1994 batch, has been named as the Sports Secretary. Rao is currently working as Additional Secretary, PMO.

The ACC has approved his appointment as Officer on Special Duty (OSD), Department of Sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.



No GST on UPI transactions above Rs 2,000, says FinMin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Friday clarified that it is not mulling to levy GST on UPI transactions above Rs 2,000.

Clarifying on reports, which said that the government is considering levying Goods and Services Tax (GST) on UPI transactions over Rs 2,000, the finance ministry said they are completely false, misleading, and without any basis.

"Currently, there is no such proposal before the government," the ministry said in a statement.

GST is levied on charges, such as the Merchant Discount Rate (MDR), relating to payments made using certain instruments.

Effective January 2020, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has removed the MDR on person-to-merchant (P2M) UPI transactions.

"Since currently no MDR is charged on UPI transactions, there is consequently no GST applicable to these transactions," the ministry said.

UPI transaction values have seen an exponential increase, growing from Rs 21.3 lakh crore in FY 2019-



20 to Rs 260.56 lakh crore by March 2025.

The ministry also said the

government remains committed to promoting digital payments via UPI.

Clarifying on reports, which said that the government is considering levying Goods and Services Tax (GST) on UPI transactions over Rs 2,000, the finance ministry said they are completely false, misleading, and without any basis

To support and sustain the growth of UPI, an incentive scheme has been operational

from FY2021-22. This scheme specifically targets low-value UPI (P2M) transactions, benefiting small merchants by alleviating transaction costs and promoting wider participation and innovation in digital payments.

In 2023-24, the government paid Rs 3,631 crore under the scheme, up from Rs 2,210 crore in 2022-23.

"The total incentive payouts under this scheme over the years reflect the government's sustained commitment to promoting UPI-based digital payments," the ministry noted.

BABIL KHAN HOLDS LOGOUT TOGETHER IN A SOLO-LED, SCREEN-CENTRIC THRILLER

TEJAL SINHA
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PLOT

Logout, directed by Amit Golani and penned by Biswapati Sarkar, dives deep into the psychological impact of social media obsession. The story follows Pratyush Dua (played by Babil Khan), a popular influencer addicted to the validation loop of digital life. Set in Delhi, the film showcases Pratyush's manic race toward hitting 10 million followers—his life revolving entirely around likes, shares, and content creation. But things spiral out of control when a mysterious admirer gains access to his phone, turning his virtual haven into a personal nightmare. The thriller captures the claustrophobia and fragility of a life lived online, where privacy dissolves and identity becomes a performance.

HIGHLIGHTS

The narrative shines in portraying the darker, more relatable aspects of influencer culture. It doesn't glamorize social media but rather reveals the mental strain and contradictions it breeds. From moments of high anxiety to quiet desperation, the film maintains an undercurrent of tension that reflects the protagonist's unstable reality. Smart commentary—like an influencer promoting a vegetarian brand while secretly enjoying non-veg food—adds satirical bite to the story. What really works is the eerie realism of the plot and how closely it mirrors the current digital age.

DRAWBACKS

Despite its sharp premise and promising setup, Logout stumbles in its final act. The big reveal—unmasking the stalker behind the digital chaos—lacks the punch the buildup promised. While the tension holds up for most of the film, the resolution feels rushed and slightly implausible, weakening the psychological grip it had initially established. Additionally, certain themes—like the pressure to create "authentic content"—are repeated without deeper exploration, risking tonal monotony.



PERFORMANCE

Babil Khan delivers a commanding performance in what can largely be described as a solo act. The camera rarely strays from him, and he handles the weight of that responsibility with remarkable maturity. His portrayal of Pratyush is equal parts ambitious, insecure, and slowly unraveling—a tough act to balance, which Babil manages with finesse. Supporting voices like Gandharv Dewan as his frantic manager and Nimisha Nair as the obsessive fan add dimension, while Rasika Dugal appears briefly as Pratyush's sister, grounding the narrative with emotional realism.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Visually, the film embraces minimalism to emphasize its protagonist's isolation. The confined settings and heavy use of digital interfaces mirror the film's thematic core—being trapped in a screen-driven world. The background score subtly amplifies the unease without overwhelming the narrative. However, the pacing occasionally lags, especially in scenes meant to heighten suspense but instead stretch the runtime.

Sound design deserves a nod for its clever use of notifications, calls, and alerts to maintain constant digital tension.

VERDICT

Logout is a bold and relevant commentary on the cost of digital validation, elevated by Babil Khan's breakout performance. It's a psychological thriller that taps into real-world fears with a contemporary lens. While it falters in wrapping up its high-stakes premise, the film successfully delivers a cautionary tale about losing oneself in the pursuit of online perfection. If you're someone who lives life logged in, Logout might just make you rethink your next scroll.

CAST: Babil Khan, Rasika Dugal, Nimisha Nair, Gandharv Dewan and Anisha Victor

DIRECTED BY: Amit Golani

WRITTEN BY: Biswapati Sarkar

RATING: 3/5

Understanding SPF ratings for babies and toddlers

For parents, protecting their baby or toddler from the sun is a major concern. With so many sunscreens available, selecting the safest and most effective one can be overwhelming. Dr. Swathi Ramamurthy, Head of R&D at Herby Angel, shares insights into SPF ratings and how to choose the best sunscreen for infants while minimizing exposure to harmful chemicals.

"Sun Protection Factor (SPF) measures how well a sunscreen shields the skin from UVB rays, which cause sunburn. SPF ranging from 15–35 is ideal for babies and toddlers, offering effective sun protection without excessive chemical exposure. Higher SPF levels provide only a marginal increase in protection while increasing the risk of irritation due to additional chemicals," explains Dr. Swathi.

A common misconception is that a higher SPF offers longer-lasting protection. However, regardless of SPF level, sunscreen must be reapplied every two hours to maintain its effectiveness.

Why Avoid High-SPF Sunscreens for Babies?

Many parents assume that higher SPF numbers mean significantly better protection. However, SPF 30 blocks 97% of UVB rays, while SPF 50 blocks 98%. The difference is minimal, but the potential exposure to harsh chemical filters increases.

Some high-SPF sunscreens contain ingredients like oxybenzone and avobenzone, which can penetrate the skin and disrupt hormone function. They may also lead to allergic reactions or irritation. Infants, whose skin is more sensitive and absorbent, are more vulnerable to these risks.

Best practices for sun protection in babies and toddlers

For infants under six months, direct sun exposure should be avoided. Instead, parents should opt for physical protection such as shade, hats, and lightweight, full-coverage clothing. When choosing a sunscreen, it is best to look for broad-spectrum protection (SPF + PA++), ensuring coverage against both UVA and UVB rays.

Dr. Swathi advises parents to opt for mineral-based sunscreens enriched with

natural ingredients like grapeseed oil, bala ashwagandha oil, licorice, and yashad bhasma (the ayurvedic zinc oxide). These provide safer and gentler protection for delicate baby skin. Spray sunscreens should be avoided, as inhalation poses potential risks. Before applying a new sunscreen, parents should conduct a patch test on a small area of the baby's inner arm to check for any skin sensitivity.

Reapplication is the key. Regardless of SPF level, sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours, especially after swimming or sweating.

Why Do Babies Need a Special Sunscreen?

A baby's skin is thinner, more absorbent, and has lower melanin levels, making it highly sensitive to UV damage. Chemical sunscreens can penetrate their delicate skin, potentially leading to irritation or other adverse effects. Mineral sunscreens or Organic sunscreens, on the other hand, remain on the skin's surface and reflect UV rays, making them the safest choice for infants.

Dr. Swati further mentions, "The market lacks gentle, baby-friendly options, and Ayurvedic sun protection remains largely overlooked. Ayurveda, with its time-tested natural ingredients, offers effective and safe sun care, but it's often underestimated. It's time to shift our focus towards solutions that are both protective and nurturing for our little ones."

The ayurvedic approach to sun protection

When it comes to protecting delicate baby skin, Ayurveda has always had the answers. Here are some exceptional ingredients that have been trusted for centuries to soothe, nourish, and guard against environmental stressors while embracing sun care that's as safe as it is effective.

1. Bala Ashwagandha Oil – A Natural UV Shield

Used in Ayurveda for centuries, this oil enhances the skin's natural defense against UV rays. Rich in antioxidants, it helps combat free radical damage caused by sun exposure while deeply nourishing the skin.

2. Licorice – A Natural Brightener and Sun Protector

Licorice contains glabridin, a compound that helps reduce sun-induced pigmentation while offering mild SPF protection. It also calms inflammation, making it ideal for delicate baby skin.

3. Yashad Bhasma – The Ayurvedic Zinc Oxide

This purified form of zinc oxide is an ancient Ayurvedic remedy known for its UV-blocking properties. Unlike synthetic zinc oxide, it has additional healing benefits, helping soothe rashes and irritation.

4. Grapeseed Oil – Small but Powerful Protection

Packed with antioxidants, grapeseed oil helps prevent UV-induced skin damage. It strengthens the skin's protective barrier while being lightweight and non-greasy—ideal for infants' delicate skin.

Things to Look for in a Baby Sunscreen?

When selecting a sunscreen for babies, parents should prioritize:

- Broad-spectrum protection against UVA and UVB rays
- Mineral-based formulas with Zinc Oxide or Titanium Dioxide
- Fragrance-free and hypoallergenic formulations to minimize irritation

Additional sun protection tips

While sunscreen is an essential part of sun protection, Dr. Swathi also recommends the following measures:

- **Avoid peak sun hours:** Babies under six months should stay out of direct sunlight between 10 AM and 4 PM.
- **Use hats and protective clothing:** Lightweight, tightly woven fabrics and UV-protective clothing offer excellent protection.
- **Choose shade over sunscreen:** A stroller with a canopy or an umbrella can provide natural SPF 50+ protection without any chemical exposure.

Meet mother-daughter duo redefining healthy desserts

PNSHYDERABAD

So, you know what's really cool? This incredible mother-daughter team, Simran and Tina Bapu, are completely changing the Indian dessert landscape with their clean-label bakery, Paleo Bakes! Since 2019, they've been creating these amazing delights that are not only incredibly tasty but also incredibly healthy—without a trace of processed sugar, gluten, or maida! Tina is an incredible pastry chef, while Simran contributes her knowledge of nutrition. And guess what? They just nailed it on Shark Tank India, securing a Rs 1 crore investment to take Paleo Bakes to the next level!

Simran, who holds a Master's degree in Clinical Nutrition and a degree in Nutrition and Dietetics, is passionate about creating wholesome meals that taste great. Together with her mother, Tina Bapu, who has a knack for baking and a love of trying out healthy ingredients, they have developed a revolutionary brand. Paleo Bakes has had an incredible journey, growing 200% year over year and turning a 38% profit after taxes, from modest beginnings in their home kitchen during the epidemic to a 2000 square foot cloud kitchen in Versova. That's amazing! Simran and Tina are at the forefront of clean-label baking, which is undoubtedly the way of the future. Who knew eating well could taste so delicious? Can't wait to see what they do next! The update comes straight from the founders themselves.

In India, "healthy dessert" was still a niche idea when you started Paleo Bakes in 2019. What were the first indications that your vision of a clean-label future would be accurate and scalable?

Simran Bapu: When we first started out, folks would come to us just asking for something "healthy," but they weren't necessarily sure what that meant in terms of nutrition or ingredients. What was most notable was how those discussions began to change over time. Consumers started to inquire carefully about certain ingredients, nutritional information and the sources of our goods. It demonstrated to us that people were becoming

more conscious of their dietary choices. Parents searching for truly healthier solutions for their children as well as people with diabetes, thyroid problems and PCOD began placing repeat purchases with us. For us, that was a true turning point. It became evident that this was a deeper, more deliberate movement towards thoughtful, educated eating rather than merely a fad.

As a clinical nutritionist (Simran) and a pastry chef (Tina), you both embody opposite extremes of the food spectrum: self-control and decadence. What impact did this dichotomy have on its identity as a concept?

Simran Bapu: As a clinical nutritionist, I brought science and credibility to the table, ensuring that every ingredient we used had a purpose and was supported by nutritional value, while my mother, with her experience as a pastry chef, made sure that taste and experience were never compromised. This balance between discipline and indulgence allowed us to create desserts that felt truly indulgent but came with zero guilt and it significantly shaped our core philosophy: you shouldn't have to choose between health and happiness. That's exactly what we wanted it to stand for.

It has experienced a 38% PAT and 200% annual growth. What do these figures reveal about changing Indian customer attitudes as well as your business savvy?

Simran Bapu: These figures accurately capture our dedication as well as the changing attitudes of Indian consumers. Despite the fact that our products cost a little more than typical desserts, consumers are becoming more aware of what they put into their bodies. They would rather spend a bit more on guilt-free, clean treats than later medications. It demonstrates a move toward preventive options and it's heartening to see that consumers now prioritize health, quality and transparency over low costs alone.

What have been the most significant turning points or instances of reinvention in your path, from placing your first order to establishing a 2000 square foot cloud kitchen?

Simran Bapu: The transition from our home kitchen to a 2,000 square foot cloud kitchen was one of the most

significant turning moments in our lives. It wasn't an overnight success; rather, it was the consequence of consistent, natural expansion and a strong indication from our clients that demand was surpassing our initial setup. Although scaling up was necessary, we were adamant about maintaining its handcrafted touch and quality. The change in customer thinking during this phase was what was most noticeable. Desserts that felt decadent but guilt-free and truly nourishing were what people wanted, not simply diet-friendly or sugar-free options. Every phase of expansion reaffirmed how crucial it is to maintain flexibility and a close relationship with our clients' changing needs.

You were able to acquire a Rs 1 crore investment on Shark Tank India. What did that experience teach you about communicating a bigger purpose in a high-stakes situation?

Simran Bapu: Shark Tank taught us that effectively expressing the "why" behind your brand is more important than simply proposing a product. You just have a few minutes to convince others of your greater purpose in a situation like that, where the stakes are so high. For us, it was about demonstrating that it is more than just a dessert company—we're supporting a movement toward enjoyment that is mindful and guilt-free. The encounter truly forced us to hone our narrative, make our mission clear, and express the more profound influence we wish to have on people's lives. It made us realise that people relate to you on a deeper level than just your product when your mission is obvious.

Do you have concerns about "healthy washing" in the F&B industry as the clean-label movement gets traction?

Simran Bapu: Indeed, there is a lot of "healthy washing" that can confuse customers as the market for healthy desserts becomes more competitive. However, I bring genuine credibility to the table as a clinical nutritionist, which is what makes us unique. It's about comprehending the science of food and nutrition together, not just about utilizing trendy terms. Since most ordinary bakeries do not possess that level of expertise, we are able to maintain our integrity and transparency rather than merely adhering to a marketing fad.



How can the essence of traditional Indian desserts be combined with the science of nutrition, particularly when rethinking traditional recipes without the use of butter, sugar, or maida?

Simran Bapu: It's undoubtedly a fine balance. From gluten-free flours that are easier to digest to natural sweeteners with a lower glycemic impact to healthy fats that fuel the body, the science of nutrition assists us in carefully choosing components that offer genuine functional benefits. Preserving the essence of classic Indian desserts—their coziness, nostalgia and decadence—is just as crucial. To help individuals enjoy the flavors they grew up with while still supporting their health objectives, we strive to recreate the same depth and emotional connection. It's about preserving the heritage of these recipes while adapting them for the conscientious consumer of today, making sure they are satisfied without sacrificing anything.

Compromise is a common danger associated with scaling. What are the unavoidable challenges that will shape its future as it transitions to FMCG retail and wider distribution?

Simran Bapu: Quality is the foundation of our brand and the confidence we have earned in our community, thus it is absolutely non-negotiable to us. We are not just expanding our reach but also establishing a new standard for clean-label sweets in India as we expand into FMCG and wider distribution. To guarantee that every product satisfies the highest standards of ingredient integrity, food safety, and consistency in flavor and texture, we have made significant investments in R&D and developed strong SOPs. Our procedures, which range from obtaining premium, ethically



produced products to strict quality control, are made to be uncompromising. However, our path is personal and goes beyond the scientific. A mother-daughter desire to make decadent pastries that nourish rather than hurt gave rise to it.

In an entrepreneurial climate that is dominated by men, what has it meant to establish a firm as a mother-daughter team?

Simran Bapu: To be honest, we have never worked in an entrepreneurial structure that is controlled by men, therefore it was never our main concern. It has always been about our shared passion and mission. Our greatest strength has been that we are a mother-daughter team, with one contributing the taste and the other the vision. Of course, there are bad days, but we always persevere because of our mutual trust, under-

standing and desire to create something significant.

How do you envision indulgence in India developing in the future?

Simran Bapu: It is obvious that indulgence in India will shift in the future toward more thoughtful, knowledgeable decisions. Individuals desire the best of both worlds; they long for that comforting, nostalgic flavor but no longer wish to bear the associated guilt. It all comes down to finding a balance: indulging in sweets that are both decadent and beneficial to the body and mind. Our goal is to spearhead this trend by establishing a new standard for inclusive, transparent, clean-label desserts that accommodate a range of lifestyles and health requirements. We want enjoyment without guilt to become the rule rather than the exception.



● Purushotham and Kiran Myee



● Samyuktha Menon

South Indian actress Samyuktha Menon inaugurated the first showroom of Neelambhari Silks at Saket Main Road, Bhavani Nagar, A.S. Rao Nagar, Hyderabad. The launch marked the presence of MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy and Neelambhari Silks founder Bojja Purushotham, adding a touch of grace and elegance to the occasion.



● Aishwarya Rajesh

Actress Aishwarya Rajesh inaugurated the new store of Kanaka Vasthra Silks, a new name in premium ethnic wear, at its first flagship store in Kukatpally. Located near JNTU Metro Station, opposite Bramharamba Theatre (Metro Pillar No. 685), the store marks a new legacy in Kanjivaram elegance, offering a refined collection of traditional silk wear.



● MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy



● BhavyaSri and VidhyaSri

PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary



Good Friday was solemnly observed in Secunderabad with heartfelt prayers and religious gatherings across various churches. Devotees participated in the Stations of the Cross, special masses, and spiritual reflections to commemorate the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The atmosphere was filled with devotion as people of all ages came together to mark the significance of the day with reverence and peace.

The Telangana Under-16 Boys Basketball Team has made the state proud by storming into the Top 6 at the 40th National Basketball Championship held in Puducherry from April 9 to 16, 2025. Competing against teams from 29 states, the boys showcased exceptional talent, passion, and perseverance on the court. Organized by the Basketball Federation of India (BFI) in association with the Puducherry Basketball Association, the championship marked a significant milestone for Telangana basketball.



Cocomunzz, has opened the country's first-ever all-coconut café, located in the heart of Vijayawada. The brand, founded by entrepreneur and agri-innovator Venkata Vikas Vepuri, officially launched its flagship café with a celebration of local produce, purpose-driven entrepreneurship, and culinary creativity.



Tenali Double Horse Group had been recognized as one of India's Fastest Growing Brands & Leaders for 2024-25 at the prestigious 25th Asian Business & Social Forum, presented by URS Media and AsiaOne Magazine. The award was received by Chairman and Managing Director, Mohan Shyam Prasad Munagala.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



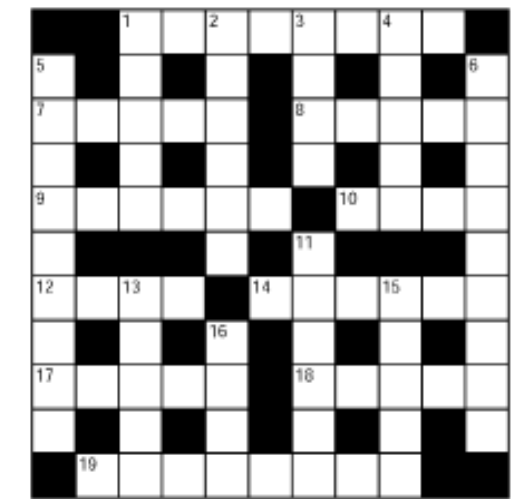
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

2		4		8	5			
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Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

ACROSS

- Altering
- To cook something in an oven
- Last
- Failed to remember
- Injured by a bullet
- Stink
- An award for a successful university student
- One of the planets
- Lift up
- Tree limbs

DOWN

- Sit on this
- The writer of a book
- Birthday present
- Follows eighth
- Favoured, liked better
- Squashed
- Look very carefully for something
- Mistake
- Straps controlling a horse
- Part of the face

SOLUTION

S	I	M	P	L	E	S	T	I
P	O	N	H	A				
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GINGER MEGGS



ARJUN S/O VYJAYANTHI: WEAK EMOTIONAL CORE OVERSHADOWED BY MINDLESS ACTION

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
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Senior actress and National Award winner Vijayashanthi is known for her portrayal of the cop role Vyjayanthi in the film *Kartavyam*, which released a few decades ago. Now, Nandamuri Kalyan Ram takes on the role of Vyjayanthi's son in the film titled *Arjun S/o Vyjayanthi*. Vijayashanthi reprises her iconic role in this film directed by Pradeep Chilukuri. 'Kantara' fame Ajaneesh Loknath has composed the music, and Saiee Manjrekar plays the female lead. Here is how the story unfolds.

STORY

The story is set in Visakhapatnam. Arjun Vishwanath (Nandamuri Kalyan Ram) is the son of honest IPS officer Vyjayanthi (Vijayashanthi). She dreams of seeing her son become a police officer like her, and Arjun is preparing for the exams. However, an unexpected incident leads Arjun to become a criminal who is supposed to attend a court hearing—but doesn't. As a result, Vyjayanthi decides to sever ties with her son, urging him to surrender and accept his crimes.

Arjun, along with his wife Chitra (Saiee Manjrekar), hides away while protecting local poor people from goons. Meanwhile, Pathan (Sohail

Khan) seeks revenge on Vyjayanthi. A new police commissioner (Srikanth) is appointed in Vizag. The film then unravels the reasons behind Pathan's vendetta, Arjun's criminal turn, and the fate of Arjun's father, who works as a naval officer.

ANALYSIS

Before its release, the makers pitched this film as an emotional mother-son drama. However, director Pradeep Chilukuri only lightly touches upon that emotional connection and instead delivers a routine and predictable action drama. The film's narrative revolves around the sincere police officer Vyjayanthi and her son who aims to follow in her footsteps but ends up on the wrong path. Unfortunately, the reasons behind his transformation are presented in a very formulaic way.

The director leans heavily on action sequences, many of which feel unnecessary. The attempt to blend mass appeal with emotional depth falls flat. Several characters, including Pathan, the commissioner, and a goon, are introduced but serve little purpose beyond conventional tropes. Scenes lack believability and veer into the overly cinematic, such as the protagonist easily taking down dozens of goons multiple times.

The first half offers very little, with the actors elevated only through a few select scenes. There are no significant twists, and the film

REVIEW



proceeds in an entirely predictable manner. Although the climax stands out as interesting and surprising, it feels like the entire film was made just to arrive at that final scene.

The police characters, surprisingly, never intervene while goons openly fight the protagonist. Similarly, Pathan and his sons move freely in and out of central jail and police stations without consequence—raising questions about the logic behind these scenes. Many moments are unnecessarily stretched. The romantic track between Kalyan Ram and Saiee Manjrekar is underdeveloped, and their songs seem forced rather than organic.

PERFORMANCES

Kalyan Ram delivers his role with intensity and performs well in the action sequences. This film highlights his mass appeal as it is a typical action entertainer. Vijayashanthi, being a seasoned performer, fits her role perfectly. Prudhvi is given a significant role and handles it with ease. Sohail Khan's character feels like a wasted opportunity. Srikanth is a surprising addition as the Commissioner and delivers well. Saiee Manjrekar, although the female lead, has a weak role with minimal scope. Other supporting actors play their parts without much impact.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Following the success of *Kantara*,

Ajaneesh Loknath has been roped in for several projects. However, his work in this film is just average and lacks the uniqueness of his previous scores. Ram Prasad handles cinematography, but the visuals remain mediocre and merely serviceable. The dialogues are functional but nothing noteworthy.

VERDICT

Arjun S/o Vyjayanthi is a typical action drama filled with formulaic elements. The storyline is entirely predictable and fails to offer anything new. Except for the climax, the film doesn't engage, and the screenplay is clichéd. The emotional core between the mother and son is underexplored, and the film is bogged down by unnecessary, mindless action.

Cast: Nandamuri Kalyan Ram, Vijayashanthi, Saiee Manjrekar, Sohail Khan, Srikanth, Prudhvi, and others

Music Director: Ajaneesh Loknath

Cinematographer: Ram Prasad

Producers: Ashok Vardhan Muppa, Sunil Balusu

Story, Screenplay, and Direction: Pradeep Chilukuri

Rating: 2/5



Shine Tom Chacko of *Dasara* fame faces drug charge

Malayalam actor Shine Tom Chacko is in the news again. The actor, who is also known to the Telugu audience through films like *Dasara* starring Nani and *Rangabali* featuring Naga Shaurya, recently appeared in *Robinhood* alongside Nithiin, which was released a few days ago. According to reports, the Anti-Narcotic Special Action Force of Kerala raided the hotel where Shine Tom Chacko was staying. In a scene straight out of a film, the actor reportedly jumped from the third floor to the second and then into the swimming pool to escape. He fled from the hotel and is currently absconding. The police are searching for Shine Chacko to question him in connection with alleged drug use on film sets. The raid was conducted by the Kerala

police's District Anti-Narcotic Special Action Force (DANSAF), a team focused on narcotics enforcement. Reports indicate that no illegal substances were found in Shine's room. However, he will be questioned once located. Previously, Malayalam actress Vincy Aloshious publicly stated that she would not work with co-actors who used drugs on sets. She filed a complaint with the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) and the Kerala Film Chamber of Commerce regarding drug use by a co-actor. Though she didn't name anyone, it has now become evident that the complaint was about Shine Chacko. Vincy also alleged that the actor misbehaved with her on set. A spokesperson from AMMA confirmed to the media that the accused actor is Shine,

who shares screen space with Vincy in the upcoming film *Soothravakyam*. Shine Chacko had a notable role in *Dasara*, followed by *Rangabali*, and recently played a cop in *Robinhood*. It remains to be seen how Telugu filmmakers will respond to this controversy and whether they will continue to cast him in their films. Interestingly, now that Shine's name has come out publicly, Vincy reportedly wants to withdraw her complaint. She did not expect his identity to be revealed and is hesitant to pursue the matter officially.



Prabhas on break, film shoots halted

Two films are currently on the floors, and another is about to start, but actor Prabhas has gone on vacation. He was supposed to complete *The Raja Saab* first, but despite being in production for three years, the film is still not finished. Prabhas also began another film titled *Fauji* with director Hanu Raghavapudi, which is now also on hold.

According to sources, the actor has been dealing with a

knee problem since the time of *Adipurush*. It seems the issue has worsened, and doctors have advised him to rest for a few weeks. As a result, Prabhas has flown to Italy, his favorite holiday destination.

Due to his absence, all his ongoing projects are temporarily halted. *The Raja Saab* is being directed by Maruthi, but Prabhas is reportedly unhappy with how the film is shaping up. Meanwhile, *Fauji* has also started production,

and Prabhas has signed another film titled *Spirit* with director Sandeep Reddy Vanga. The latter has already finalized shooting locations and is waiting for Prabhas to return and give the green signal.

While Maruthi has been using Prabhas' body double for some portions, Sandeep is clear that he wants the actor physically present for the shoot. All eyes are now on when Prabhas will return from his vacation.



Sukumar supports indie film *Dooradarshini*

Fresh off the success of *Pushpa 2*, director Sukumar is busy writing the script for his next film with Ram Charan. Meanwhile, he has extended support to a small film titled *Dooradarshini*. On Friday, Sukumar launched the lyrical video of the song *ApannaTannaManna* from the film.

Suvikshith Bojja and Geethika Ratan play the leads in this nostalgic love story directed by Karthikeya Kommi. The film is

being produced by B. Sai Pratap Reddy and Jaya Shankar Reddy. Currently in post-production, the film is set in the 1990s and promises to evoke heartwarming memories of young love.

Speaking at the launch, Sukumar said, "The film's lead actor Suvikshith once farmed in the paddy fields just like me—that's how I first got to know him. He is truly passionate about cinema. This song is beautiful, and I wish the film great success. It

deserves to be a big hit and must bring recognition to everyone involved."

Actor Suvikshith Bojja expressed his joy, stating it was an honor to have his song launched by Sukumar. "Dooradarshini will take audiences back to the 1990s, reviving their memories and personal love stories," he said.

Anand Gururaj has composed the music. The film's post-production work is currently in progress.



SURIYA HOPES FOR A COMEBACK WITH RETRO

Actor Suriya is going through a challenging phase. His recent film *Kanguva*, which had a massive budget and high expectations, failed miserably at the box office. Suriya had pinned his hopes on it, but the film turned out to be a major disappointment. It also took a long time to make, during which Suriya did a few cameo roles in other projects.

Now, the actor is gearing up for the release of *Retro* on May 1. Directed by Karthik Subbaraj, the film stars Pooja Hegde as the female lead. The project began shooting last year and was

wrapped up by the year-end. With the release nearing, Suriya is promoting it aggressively.

The Telugu distribution rights of *Retro* have been acquired by Sithara Entertainment, which plans to release the film on a large scale. While Suriya remains a popular figure among Telugu audiences, he has not had a major hit in recent years. His last successful outing was *Jai Bhim*, which was released directly on OTT and received widespread acclaim.

