HYDERABAD, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2025; PAGES 12 ₹4

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Modi govt 'squeezed' share of states in cess on petrol, diesel: **Kharge** 5

VANCE'S VISIT TAKES INDIA-US DIALOGUE A STEP FURTHER: SCINDIA 8

Priyadarshi: No pressure after Court, just excited for *Sarangapani* **JATAKAM** P11

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

All police officials found responsible in the Lagacherla NHRC report should be dismissed within six weeks, as ordered by the Commission. If the government fails to act, we will take the fight back to the Supreme Court. If Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who represents Kodangal as its MLA, has even a shred of decency left, he should hang his head in shame and take responsibility. Instead, he's shielding those who acted like savages

- K T Rama Rao, BRS MLA

DON'T MISS...

Minister Surekha for protection of environs

Marking the occasion of World Earth Day, Telangana Environment, Forests and Endowments Minister Konda Surekha emphasised that environmental protection is not just the government's job but a collective responsibility of every citizen. She released a special poster titled 'Earth Day - Student, Youth in Action' in Hyderabad on Tuesday to raise awareness among the younger generation. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister reminded that Earth is the foundation of life for all living beings. "Mother Earth ...

-PAGE: 3

Maha govt stays order to make Hindi

The Maharashtra government has stayed its order to make Hindi mandatory as a third language for students of Classes 1 to 5 in Marathi and English-medium schools in the wake of opposition to the move from various quarters. State School Education Minister Dada Bhuse on Tuesday made the announcement about the stay on the government resolution (GR). "We are staying the word mandatory (as mentioned in the GR).We will issue a revised GR," he told reporters. Learning Hindi as the third...

-PAGE: 5

RBI: Migrate to '.bank.in' domain

The Reserve Bank on Tuesday directed banks to start migration of their existing domains to the '.bank.in' domain and complete the process by October 31 this year, aimed at combating increasing instances of fraud in digital payments. In the wake of fraud in digital payments, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to introduce the 'bank.in' exclusive internet domain for Indian banks. The initiative aims to reduce cybersecurity threats and malicious activities like phishing; and, streamline...

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SRH desperately need win against MI

The misfiring Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) will hope for a happy homecoming when they take on a resurrected Mumbai Indians (MI) here on Wednesday, eyeing a much-needed victory to revive their campaign in the Indian Premier League. With only two wins in seven outings, SRH are in a desperate situation. Their power-packed batting has let them down more often than not while their bowlers are not making any strong impression either. That SRH are a one-dimensional side has been proven by the...

-SPORTS

Terror strikes kill 26 people in Kashmir

PNS ■ PAHALGAM (J-K)

Deadliest attack in the Valley since Pulwama

Terrorists opened fire at a famed meadow near Kashmir's Pahalgam town on Tuesday afternoon, killing 26 people, mostly tourists, in what is the deadliest attack in the Valley since the Pulwama strike in 2019.

The 26 dead included two foreigners and two locals, a high ranking official said without getting into details. The toll is still being ascertained, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said while describing the terror attack as "much larger than anything we've seen directed at civilians in recent years".

The attack, which comes as US Vice President J D Vance is visiting India and just as the tourist and trekking season is picking up momentum, took place around 3 pm, officials said.

Baisaran, about six kilometres from the resort town of Pahalgam, is an expansive meadow ringed by dense pine forests and mountains and Continued on Page 2

IB officer from Hyd killed in terror attack

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

An Intelligence Bureau officer posted in Hyderabad was killed in a terror attack in Pahalgam in Kashmir on Tuesday.

The officer, Manish Ranjan, who hails from Bihar, was on a Leave Travel Concession (LTC) visit with his family when the attack occurred. He was killed in front of his wife and children, according to preliminary information from IB sources.

Manish Ranjan was working in the ministerial section of the Intelligence Bureau's Hyderabad office during the last two years.

A proud moment

Seven from Telangana shine in UPSC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana had a moment of joy with the announcement of the UPSC Civil Services Examination 2024 results, as many candidates from the state, including beneficiaries of the Rajiv Gandhi Civils Abhayahastam scheme, secured top ranks.

The scheme, launched by the Telangana Government to support hopefuls from marginalised communities, bore fruit in its very first year.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy congratulated the seven successful candidates who availed financial assistance under the scheme and cleared the examination. "It is a matter of great joy for us that these hopefuls have Continued on Page 2

Shakti Dubey tops, Goyal, Parag get 2nd, 3rd ranks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Banaras Hindu University's post-graduate Shakti Dubey and Haryana's Harshita Goyal have bagged the first and second rank, respectively, in the UPSC Civil Services Examination (CSE) 2024, with three women, including the topper, securing positions in the top four, according to the results announced on Tuesday.

Shah Margi Chirag is the third woman in the top four. She earned Continued on Page 2

TG bags Rs 12,062 cr Japanese investments

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Chief Minister Revanth Reddy-led TelanganaRising delegation concluded its multi-city Japan tour, returning with investment commitments totalling Rs 12,062 crore and an estimated job creation potential of nearly 30,500 in sectors like Artificial Intelligence, manufacturing and industrial infrastructure.

The Marubeni Corporation signed an agreement to develop a next-generation industrial park in Hyderabad's proposed Future City. With an initial investment of Rs 1,000 crore, the total estimated investment could touch Rs 5,000 crore. The project promises to generate 30,000 jobs.

NTT Data and Neysa Networks signed an MoU to set up an Artificial Intelligence Data Centre Cluster in Hyderabad. The project, backed by a Rs 10,500 crore investment, is expected to boost Telangana's digital infrastructure significantly.

Toshiba Transmission and Distribution Systems India (TTDI) has committed Rs 562 crore to expand its Rudraram facility, which manufactures transmission and distribution equipment. The expansion is set to bolster Telangana's leadership in power equipment manufacturing.

In the employment sector, TOMCOM, in partnership with Turn Corporation and the Raj Group, has signed an agreement to facilitate the placement of 500 skilled workers from Telangana in Japan.

CM Revanth moots Hiroshima–TG automotive & mobility corridor

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy was given a ceremonial welcome by the Hiroshima Prefectural Government and Assembly during his visit to Japan on Tuesday.

The CM and his TelanganaRising delegation engaged in a series of high-level meetings and symbolic gestures of friendship, with both sides affirming the shared values of peace, innovation, and sustainability.

The Chief Minister, accompanied by Industries and IT Minister D. Sridhar Babu, Special Chief Secretary Jayesh Ranjan, and senior officials V. Sheshadri, Ajith Reddy, and Vishnu Vardhan Reddy, met the Vice Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture to discuss a comprehensive roadmap for collaboration. Continued on Page 2

LAGADACHARLA INCIDENT

KTR demands dismissal of police officials

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao launched a scathing attack on the Congress Government on Tuesday, asking Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to apologise for the police atrocities on tribal women in Lagadacharla which has been detailed in the National Human Rights Commission's (NHRC) damning report.

KTR said that the NHRC's findings were nothing short of a slap on Revanth Reddy's face.

"The report confirms what we have been saying from day one, that is, Dalit and tribal women were subjected to horrific sexual harassment and Continued on Page 2

All eyes on BRS, Cong councillors

Hyd local MLC poll today

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU
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■ HYDERABAD

All eyes are on the Councillors of the BRS and Congress parties, although it had lost all hopes on cross-voting in the Hyderabad local body MLC election being held on April 23, that is, on Wednesday.

The total votes in the Hyderabad local body MLC elections are 112. The BRS has 24 votes and Congress has 14 votes and the BJP has 24 votes, and the AIMIM has 50 votes. However, the AIMIM and the BJP are in the fray. The BJP needs BRS and Congress votes if it wants to win the Hyd local body MLC seat.

However, BRS Working President KT Ramarao announced that BRS corporators Continued on Page 2

KALESHWARAM PROBE

KCR, Harish & Eatela may be quizzed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao, former ministers Harish and Eatela are likely to be summoned for questioning during the final round of inquiry by Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose into the Kaleshwaram scam. The former Lokpal is scheduled to arrive in Hyderabad on Tuesday to oversee the concluding phase of the investigation.

The BRS said that this is a Congress move to disturb its Silver Jubilee celebrations. BRS spokesperson Krishank Manne said, "The pervert Congress CM wants to disturb the BRS in every way before Chalo Warangal."

The commission, which has been examining the structural, financial and procedural lapses in the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project, is believed to be entering a decisive stage. Sources indicate that direct testimonies by the individuals involved during the execution of the project are being sought to establish accountability.

Justice Ghose's presence in Hyderabad marks a critical turn in the proceedings, with high-level political scrutiny expected to dominate the final leg of the inquiry.

With KCR and his former Cabinet colleagues being brought into the spotlight, political observers anticipate that the outcome of this probe could have far-reaching consequences.

Ursa Clusters reaffirms commitment to India's AI infra

PNS ■ SAN FRANCISCO
HYDERABAD

Ursa Clusters, a global tech infrastructure alliance, has issued a statement detailing its financial structure, land procurement details, and project roadmap, stressing full transparency and due diligence.

Refuting the claim that it was allotted land at 99 paisa per acre, Ursa stated that its proposal was to purchase land at Rs 1 crore per acre for 3.5 acres and Rs 50 lakhs per acre for the remaining 56.5 acres. Continued on Page 2

BRS gaining ground, Congress in decline, says SAS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A recent political survey conducted by the SAS Group (Sri Atmasakshi Group) and IPSS Team, Hyderabad, has revealed that the political landscape in Telangana is changing as of April 2025.

According to its findings based on a sample of 32,500 respondents across 113 Assembly constituencies, the BRS currently leads the mood of the electorate with an estimated 39% vote share, followed by the Congress at 34.25% and the BJP at 18%.

The survey projects that the BRS will win 58 to 60 Assembly constituencies if elections are held today — a gain over its 2023 performance. The Congress is expected to secure 37 to 39 seats, while the BJP may bag 18 to 19 seats, with the AIMIM likely to retain its 6 to 7 seats.

The survey stresses rising public dissatisfaction with the Congress Government led by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. A significant 47% of respondents rated the government's performance as "bad," and 44% stated that key promises like Mahalaxmi, Rythu Bharosa, Indiramma housing and Cheyutha remain unfulfilled.

Voters also expressed frustration over the administration's repeated attacks on the KCR regime, which they say is seen as a diversionary Continued on Page 2

Gold touches Rs 1 lakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold future prices sustained upward trend for the fourth straight session by surging Rs 2,048 to hit a fresh record high of Rs 1,00,000 per 10 grams as investors rushed to safe havens after US President Donald Trump indicated plans to overhaul Federal Reserve amid continuing global trade war jitters. Continued on Page 2

Gaddar Telangana Film Awards to be held on a grand scale

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

For the first time after the formation of Telangana State, the state government is set to host its own official film awards —named in honour of revolutionary balladeer Gaddar — under the banner of the Gaddar Telangana Film Awards (GTFA).

The awards will recognise the best Telugu films certified between 2014 and 2023, with plans for a grand ceremony to mark this cultural milestone. Apart from regular awards, special honours will also be conferred for prestigious titles like the NTR National Film Award, Paidi Jairaj Film Award, BN Reddy Film Award, Nagi Reddy and Chakrapani Film Award, Kantha Rao Film Award and the Raghupathi Venkaiah Film Award

The GTFA will retrospectively honour one film per year for each of the 10 years from 2014 to 2023, recognising excellence during the formative years of the new state. The government has decided to celebrate the awards ceremony with grandeur, marking it as a tribute to the cultural identity of Telangana after over a decade of cinematic silence.

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu on Tuesday announced Continued on Page 2

Girls outshine boys in Inter results

DEEPIKA PASHAM
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■ HYDERABAD

Girls scored 73.83% pass rate in first year
2nd yr female performance reached 74.21%
Medchal Malkajgiri district tops
9.97 lakh students appeared in exams

Girls outperformed boys in the Telangana Intermediate public examinations, the results of which were announced on Tuesday.

The Telangana Board of Intermediate Education (TGBIE) released the results of the Intermediate Public Examinations (IPE) held from March 5 to March 25.

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and Ministers Ponnam Prabhakar and Komatireddy Venkat Reddy were present while announcing the results.

Boys have been improving their show since the last three years, with nearly a one percentage increase from last year and three per cent from 2023.

A total of 9,97,012 students appeared for first and second year exams in both General and Vocational streams. The results show a significant performance gap between girls and boys, with girls securing a higher pass percentage in both years.

A total of 4,88,430 students appeared for the First Year exams, with 73.83 per cent of girls and 57.83 per cent of boys passing. In the second year, 5,08,582 students appeared for the exams, and of that, 74.21 per cent girls and 57.31 per cent boys passed.

Girls of both Intermediate years topped the result, with first-year girls scoring 68.68 per cent and second-year girls scoring 71.57 per cent in 2023. First year 2023 boys percentage remains stagnant at 54.66 per cent. In the second year, boys percentage remained at 55.60 per cent.

The Board recorded a peaceful and fair conduct of exams, with over 29,000 invigilators Continued on Page 2

Pay special attention to implementing Indiramma Indlu, *Bhu Bharati* Act: Ponguleti

Says bills to be paid every Monday
LRS deadline will not be extended
Selection of Indiramma housing beneficiaries on war footing

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Revenue, Housing, I & PR Minister, Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, asked Collectors to work according to the government's priorities. Collectors should pay special attention to implementing the Indiramma Indlu and Bhu Bharati Act, as they are important for the government, he added.

Ponguleti held a video conference on Tuesday with Collectors on Bhu Bharathi, Indiramma Indlu, LRS, etc, along with Chief Secretary Shanthikumari.

Speaking on the occasion, he said the government introduced the Bhu Bharathi Act as it was necessary for the people and that it is the responsibility of Collectors to implement it. He asked Collectors to study the Bhu Bharathi Act in depth before going to the public.

Ponguleti said that revenue meetings have been held in 16 of the 56 revenue villages from April 17 in the four mandals where the Bhu Bharathi pilot project is being implemented. So far, 5,905 complaints have been received regarding land issues during these meetings. Of these, 1076 were from Nelakondapalli in Khammam district, 233 from Maddur in Narayanapet district, 810 from Lingampet in Kamareddy district, and 3,786 from Venkatapuram in Mulugu district.

Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy participated in the video conference with the district collectors along with chief secretary Santhi Kumari on Tuesday

He asked Collectors to complete revenue meetings in the pilot mandals by April 30. Keeping in mind the experience gained from the four pilot mandals, one mandal from each of the remaining 28 districts, except Hyderabad, will be taken as pilot mandals in the first week of May, and the Bhu Bharati Act will be implemented in them.

Before this, a team of officials led by the Tahsildar of the four mandals will conduct a workshop on the Bhu Bharati Act for Tahsildars, Deputy Tahsildars and two other officials of these 28 mandals.

He said that awareness sessions on Bhu Bharati have been organised in 159 of the 605 mandals in the state. It was suggested that pending applications in the CCLA stage should also be included in the revenue meetings in the pilot mandals. Keeping in mind the rainy season, Ponguleti asked Collectors to complete the selection process of Indiramma housing beneficiaries on a war footing by the first week of May and to speed up construction.

All set for voting in Hyd local body MLC polls, says Returning Officer

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Returning Officer Anurag Jayanti on Monday confirmed that all arrangements have been completed for the Hyderabad Local Body MLC elections scheduled for April 23. Addressing a press conference, he outlined the preparedness across all levels to ensure a smooth and fair polling.

The polling will be held from 8 am to 4 pm on Wednesday at two designated centres set up inside the GHMC head office. "There are 112 voters, and each polling station will be staffed by four officials. In addition, a reserve team is also in place to tackle contingencies," Anurag said.

Section 144 will be in force around the polling centres, and approximately 200 to 250 police personnel have been deployed to maintain law and order.

Nearly 500 officers and staff have been assigned for election duty. "We've provided thorough training to all polling and counting staff. All basic facilities have been provided at the polling centres to ensure smooth voting," he added.

Krishank gets notice in old case, terms it political vendetta

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Madhapur Police issued a notice to BRS social media convenor Krishank Manne in connection with a case registered over a year ago, taking the total number of cases against him to 22 since the Congress Government came to power.

The latest notice, dated April 1, 2025, is regarding a complaint filed by TPCC Senior Vice President Kumar Rao, alleging that Krishank posted a message on the Internet targeting him.

The notice was issued under Section 35(3) of the BNS, citing alleged offences under IPC Sections 504, 505(2), and 505(1)(b), for a case registered on March 31, 2024.

Reacting to the development, Krishank hit back sharply, saying, "I didn't post anything in this case. This is nothing but an attempt to intimidate me. The earlier notice was from Gachibowli, and this one is from Madhapur. Both have been drafted so lazily that they referred to me as the 'Soda Media Convenor' instead of 'Social Media Convenor.' Are these notices coming from the CM's office or a comedy scriptwriter?"

Highlighting what he called deliberate harassment, Krishank said, "Last year, I had submitted a phone in Madhapur. Now they want another one. At the same time, the Gachibowli Police are asking for my phone too. What do they expect me to do — give the battery to Madhapur and the display screen to Gachibowli? What is this nonsense? This is nothing but political vendetta." He alleged that the cases are a diversion tactic. "While this government is busy slapping false cases,

Congress to file complaint against Sanjay: Ponnam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad in-charge Minister Ponnam Prabhakar said that the Congress would file a complaint against the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, with the Election Commission for stating that Hindutva supporters should vote for the BJP candidate in the Hyderabad local body MLC elections. He appealed to the Election Commission to immediately take action against Sanjay.

Addressing the media on Tuesday at the Gandhi Bhavan, Ponnam Prabhakar said that BJP leaders had incited the councillors while displaying flexes in front of the houses of the councillors belonging to the BRS and the Congress.

The Hyderabad MLC election code requires caution in dealing with religious issues, he said.

Ponnam requested the EC to take action against Sanjay as he incited voters publicly saying that they have to vote for the BJP candidate if they are Hindus.

Terror strikes kill ...

Continued from page 1

a favourite with visitors from across the country and the world.

Armed terrorists came into the grassland, dubbed 'mini Switzerland', and started firing at tourists milling around eateries, taking pony rides or just picnicking, officials and eyewitnesses said. At least 20 people were injured in the strike in the volatile Kashmir Valley where tourists have so far mostly been spared.

As news of the terror attack targeting tourists in Kashmir spread, The Resistance Front (TRF), shadow group of the banned Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror group, claimed responsibility.

Officials said it was possible the terror group could have crossed over from Kishtwar in Jammu and reached Baisaran through Kokernag in south Kashmir.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah briefed Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is on a visit to Saudi Arabia, and left for Srinagar soon after to hold an urgent security review meeting with all agencies.

"I strongly condemn the terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir. Condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. I pray that the injured recover at the earliest. All possible assistance is being provided to those affected," the prime minister said on X.

"Those behind this heinous act will be brought to justice... they will not be spared! Their evil agenda will never succeed. Our resolve to fight terrorism is unshakable and it will get even stronger," he added.

Eyewitnesses painted a chilling picture of gunfire breaking the calm of a regular Tuesday afternoon with scores of people enjoying their day out. Cries for help were heard as lifeless bodies lay motionless in pools of blood.

Some put the number of attackers at five. "My husband was shot in the head while seven others were also injured in the attack," a woman survivor told

Girls outshine ...

Continued from page 1

and 18,500 evaluators involved. Practical exams were held from February 3 to 22, and spot valuation was done across 19 centres.

Students can apply for Recounting and Scanned Copy-cum-Re-verification* from April 23 to April 30, 2025, via the TGBIE website. The recounting fee is Rs 100 per paper, and re-verification with script is Rs 600 per paper, said Krishna Aditya, the Secretary of the TGBIE.

Students who could not clear the exams can appear for Advanced Supplementary Exams starting on May 22, 2025. Practical exams are scheduled from June 3 to 6. Fees must be paid between April 23 and 30 at the respective colleges.

Short memos are available for download from the Board's portal starting 5 pm on April 22. Students are advised to keep colour printouts as no physical memos will be issued until the pass certificates are dispatched, said the Board.

Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu said, "My heartfelt congratulations to all Intermediate students who have passed. I wish all the successful students success in life. On behalf of the Government, I extend warm wishes to the students and their parents." The government is continuously working for the development of the education sector. I appreciate the official team for conducting the Intermediate results declaration programme transparently and successfully without any errors, he added.

In Intermediate First Year, 66.89 per cent of students cleared the exams, while 71.37 per cent cleared the second year. A total of 4,88,430 students appeared for the First Year exams, and in the Second Yea,r 5,08,582 students appeared for the exams.

In Intermediate First Year exams, Medchal emerged as the best-performing district with a pass percentage of 77.91 percentage.

Humans destroying forests indiscriminately: Vijayashanthi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress MLC Vijayashanthi said that human beings are destroying forests indiscriminately in the name of development. She tweeted regarding this on World Earth Day, that is, Tuesday.

Vijayashanthi tweeted, "Today is World Earth Day. The only planet in this infinite universe that is habitable for humans is the Earth.

Only if the resources bestowed by nature are properly utilised... can human existence proceed smoothly. If any of those resources is misused... the life of all humanity is bound to be in chaos.

CID launches probe into Adi Srinivas' complaint against Chennamaneni

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Government Whip Vemulawada MLA Adi Srinivas filed a complaint with the Director General of Police (DGP) against former MLA Chennamaneni Ramesh on Tuesday.

In his complaint, Adi Srinivas said that Chennamaneni Ramesh had contested elections using fake documents, although he has no Indian citizenship. He appealed to the DGP to take action against Chennamaneni Ramesh.

Responding to Adi Srinivas's complaint, CID officials filed an FIR against Chennamaneni Ramesh and asked Adi Srinivas to come to their office to provide details of the case.

It may be recalled that Telangana High Court Justice Indrasen Reddy had dismissed the petition of Chennamaneni Ramesh, who challenged the Centre's orders abolishing his Indian citizenship.

Moreover, the High Court directed Chennamaneni Ramesh to pay a fine of Rs 25 lakh to Adi Srinivas, who had filed a complaint against Chennamaneni Ramesh regarding his citizenship, and Rs 5 lakh to the Legal Services Authority. Chennamaneni paid the fines through Demand Drafts on Monday.

Gaddar Telangana ...

Continued from page 1

that the Gaddar Telangana Film Awards ceremony will be conducted on an unprecedented scale, with the government offering full support to ensure the event garners global attention.

Participating in the jury committee meeting held at the LV Prasad Film Lab, Bhatti said the government is committed to celebrating the awards in a way that would be remembered for generations.

"The event should be like none in the past and none in the future—nabhuto na bhavishyati—a cultural milestone for Telangana," he said.

Bhatti recalled that the Telugu film industry had suffered neglect over the last decade, with the state failing to conduct any official award ceremony since 2011.

He credited past Congress governments for encouraging the industry and stated that the present Congress-led regime under Chief Minister Revanth is determined to regain its lost glory.

KTR demands ...

Continued from page 1

violence by police officers. If Revanth has any shame, he should apologise and resign immediately," he said.

At an interaction with the victims in Nandinagar in Hyderabad, where tribal women from Lagadacharla donated Rs 1 lakh towards the BRS silver jubilee event, KTR spoke emotionally about their pain. "Despite facing torture, they came forward to support our cause. I bow to them with folded hands," he said.

Referring to the NHRC's observations, KTR said the report established that the police behaved like Revanth's private army. "Every form of physical abuse was inflicted on tribal families. Officers acted like beasts, without even a shred of compassion for the women's dignity," he said.

He reminded that one of the victims even told the NHRC that not just she, but even her mother-in-law was sexually assaulted, while another said she was beaten on her thighs.

KTR demanded that all police officials found responsible in the NHRC report be dismissed from service within six weeks, as ordered by the Commission. "If the government fails to act, we will take the case back to the Supreme Court," he warned.

Criticising the muted response in the media to the NHRC report, he pointed out that officials had used third-degree torture, threatened magistrates, and even assaulted farmers uninvolved in the protest. "CCTV footage was deliberately disabled so that no evidence would surface. It is a textbook case of state repression," he said.

The BRS leader also directed flak at the Chief Minister, calling him both the Home Minister and the MLA of Kodangal. He accused the Revanth Government of ignoring a High Court stay and continuing land acquisition operations in Lagadacharla for a pharmaceutical firm allegedly linked to his family.

Ursa Clusters ...

Continued from page 1

"These terms were part of a transparent evaluation process over five months, involving financial scrutiny and feasibility checks," the company said.

Addressing concerns about its recent incorporation, Ursa said it was always clear about being a newly registered entity in India. The founders, however, are industry veterans with decades of experience in enterprise infrastructure, AI, and strategic partnerships.

Among them are Satish Abburi (ex-Oracle and Snowflake), Eric Warner (ex-Sun Microsystems), and Kaushik Pendurthi, who has raised around USD 60 million for many ventures.

The company said it is backed by a Rs 4,063 crore net worth team and is capable of executing multiple data centre projects. It asserted that Phase 1 of its AI data centre project would be completed within 12 to 24 months, with a 300 MW capacity targeted by 2032.

The Rs 5,728 crore investment is part of the IndiaAI Mission, aimed at building cost-effective, sovereign AI infrastructure. The project is designed to offer AI compute power at 40–60% lower total ownership costs compared to global options, while creating thousands of high-skilled jobs.

Ursa defended its project location strategy, stating that it is currently operating in lean mode but will transition to permanent headquarters at an appropriate time.

BRS gaining ...

Continued from page 1

tactic rather than governance. Group politics within the Congress and poor coordination with the party's old activists are eroding the party's internal strength.

The BRS has reportedly gained voter confidence among several sections, particularly in rural areas and among middle-income groups, women and SC/ST communities. The party leads in preference for the development of infrastructure, industrial growth, and software development. Notably, 43% of people chose KCR as their preferred Chief Minister candidate.

The Congress Government is under public scrutiny for its handling of controversial land acquisition projects in Lagadacharla and Hyderabad Central University. A majority (45% and 47%, respectively) disapproved of the moves. Similarly, the HYDRA initiative received poor marks, with 44% saying they were dissatisfied.

Only 3% of respondents gave the Congress Government a score above 60 out of 100. On issues like unemployment, corruption, and law and order, 42% to 47% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction.

While the BJP has improved marginally from its 2023 vote share, reaching 18%, its growth appears scattered and confined to North Telangana and pockets in Hyderabad. Sanjay trails KCR and Revanth Reddy in CM preference.

The survey identified 18 constituencies witnessing triangular or close contests like Sangareddy, Huzurabad, Mahbubnagar, Alampur and LB Nagar. In most of these seats, the BRS and the INC are locked in close battles, with the BJP posing a challenge in some.

The top factors influencing voting decisions are unemployment, unfulfilled social welfare promises, inflation, basic infrastructure gaps, and a decline in governance quality. The BRS leads as the party best positioned to address these concerns.

Gold touches...

Continued from page 1

On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), the August delivery contract of the yellow metal bounced by Rs 2,048 or 2.1 per cent to hit a fresh peak of Rs 1,00,000 per 10 grams in the mid-session trade. Later, the precious metal trade at Rs 99,790 per 10 grams, up by Rs 1,838 or 1.88 per cent, with an open interest of 2,492 lots.

Additionally, the October contract bounced by Rs 2,016 or 2.04 per cent to hit a record high of Rs 1,00,500 per 10 grams on the MCX.

Meanwhile, the most-traded June contract climbed by Rs 2,079 or 2.14 per cent to touch a record high of Rs 99,358 per 10 grams.

Analysts said the surge in the precious metal was sparked by concerns surrounding US monetary policy, after President Donald Trump unveiled plans to overhaul the Federal Reserve.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi:	
Dashami:	Apr 22 06:13 PM to Apr 23 04:43 PM
Ekadashi:	Apr 23 04:43 PM to Apr 24 02:32 PM
Nakshatram:	
Dhanishta:	Apr 22 12:44 PM to Apr 23 12:07 PM
Shatabhisha:	Apr 23 12:07 PM to Apr 24 10:49 AM
Rahukalam:	12:14 PM to 1:48 PM
Yamagandam:	7:32 AM to 9:06 AM
Varjyam:	06:56 PM to 08:26 PM
Gulika:	10:40 AM to 12:14 PM
Amritakalam:	04:00 AM to 05:31 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	Nil

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 37°C
Humidity: 43%
Sunrise: 5:55 AM
Sunset: 6:34 PM

Updated: April 22, 2025 5:00 PM

CM Revanth moots ...

Continued from page 1

Revanth thanked the Hiroshima leadership for their warmth and described the city as a global beacon of resilience and progress. "Telangana is committed to building a greener, peaceful, and progressive future, and we see Hiroshima as a valuable partner in this journey," he said.

He proposed a "Hiroshima-Telangana Automotive & Mobility Corridor" to tap the strengths in electric vehicles, precision manufacturing and electronics. Educational and cultural linkages, student exchange programmes with the Hiroshima Institute of Technology, and collaboration on Buddhist heritage and peace park initiatives were also proposed.

Industries Minister Sridhar Babu gave a detailed presentation covering areas of potential cooperation, including clean technology, waste-to-energy projects, sewage treatment, disaster-resilient urban planning, and smart city solutions.

Later, the delegation was honoured at the Hiroshima Prefectural Legislative Assembly with a ceremonial visit hosted by Speaker Takashi Nakamoto and fellow legislators. In a symbolic gesture, the Speaker invited Revanth Reddy and Sridhar Babu to sit on his chair, marking the strength of the growing Telangana-Japan relationship.

All eyes on ...

Continued from page 1

would not participate in the elections. Meanwhile, the Hyderabad in-charge Minister Ponnam Prabhakar made it clear that the Congress would certainly participate in the elections and the Congress corporators would not cast their votes to the BJP. It means, that Congress councillors are going to vote for the MIM candidate.

However, BJP leaders have been stating that they are in touch with the corporators of the BRS and the Congress. The BJP leaders like G. Kishan Reddy and Sanjay exuded confidence that the BJP candidate would win the elections.

BJP leaders are asking the BRS and Congress councillors to participate in the elections and cast their vote following their conscience.

Here, the question is whether BRS councillors can participate in the elections defying the dictates of BRS Working President KT Rama Rao or not? Another question is whether Congress councillors would indulge in cross-voting or not. There is no use even if all Congress Councillors engage in cross-voting and if all BRS Councillors boycott the elections and vote for the BJP candidate. The BJP candidate can win only if the BRS and Congress councillors vote for the BJP candidate.

A proud ...

Continued from page 1

achieved success in their very first attempt under the state-backed initiative. I wish them the very best as they step into roles that contribute to nation-building," he said, reaffirming the government's commitment to empowering youth.

The selected candidates are Ettaboyina Sai Shivani, Hari Prasad Potharaju, Preethi Raparthi, Nagaraja Naik Banothu, Suryateja Thogaru, Anjaneyulu Gokamalla and Ramtenki Sudhaker.

Adding to the celebration, the RC Reddy Study Circle released a list of 26 rank-holders trained under its various programmes. Among the prominent achievers are Ravula Jayasimha Reddy (AIR 46), Saichaitanya Jadhav (AIR 68), Chakka Sneith (AIR 94), and Potharaju Hari Prasad (AIR 255), a double achiever who was also a beneficiary of the state scheme.

Simultaneously, the CSB IAS Academy announced that nine of its students had cleared the UPSC exam. Academy Director Balalatha felicitated the toppers, including Navin Edwin Anthony who secured AIR 15, and praised the students for their dedication and the faculty for their guidance. "We are proud to contribute to the nation's bureaucracy through consistent mentorship and quality training," she said.

The CSB IAS Academy's UPSC 2024 rankers are Rapolu Jaya Singh Reddy (AIR 46), Kolipaka Sreekrishna Sai (AIR 190) Manugani Pavan Kumar (AIR 375), Gubbala ERV Surya Teja (AIR 647), Aada Sandeep Kumar (AIR 667), Sangarapu Sai Bhardwaj (AIR 798), Toguru Surya Teja (AIR 799) and Rapolu Mohisin Mohsin (AIR 975)

The DGP, Dr Jitender, congratulated DSP A. Venugopal, whose son Annu Koushik Narasimha secured AIR 225. An alumnus of IIT Roorkee, Koushik's success was described as an inspiration for many youth across the state.

Dubey tops ...

Continued from page 1

the fourth rank in the coveted exam. Maharashtra's Dongre Archit Parag achieved the third position, with Delhi's Aakash Garg finishing fifth. Women bagged the top four ranks in the civil services examination 2022, too.

As many as 1,009 candidates have cleared the civil services examination this year, the results of which were declared on Tuesday.

Speaking to PTI, topper Dubey said she used to study every day to prepare for the coveted examination. "There was never a day when I did not study. There may be days when I have studied for four to five hours. But there was never a day when I did not study at all. So this has been a constant thing (of my preparations)," she said.

Twenty-eight-year-old Dubey said that there was a time that made her think not to prepare for the exam anymore, but because of her parents' continuous encouragement, she took the test.

"I took the interview last year, too. But, I could not find my name in the final results. At that time, I realised that I won't be able to do more than this. This is it! But for one last time, I mustered courage because of my parents encouragement and gave the 2024 prelims. With the grace of god, I made it," she said.

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City Pioneer

The Pioneer

HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | APRIL 23, 2025

CITY EVENTS

Cultural Programmes
By Sri Kuchipudi Dance Academy
Venue
Ravindra Bharathi
April 23, 9 am.

Musical Programme
By HK Entertainments
Venue
Ravindra Bharathi
April 23, 6 pm.

Igniting Innovation
Spark Social Seminar
Venue
T-Hub Foundation
April 23, 2 pm.

Maha Periyava
Telugu Play By Sutradhar
Venue
Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha
April 23, 7:30 pm.

Live Performance
By Kammani (Band)
Venue
36 Downtown Brew Pub (Vapour)
Apriil 23, 8 pm.

INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

Social Welfare Residential Colleges set new record

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a remarkable academic achievement, 26 Social Welfare Residential Junior Colleges secured a 100 per cent pass rate in the Intermediate Second Year exams, while 9 colleges achieved the same feat in the First Year results, setting a new record not seen in the past decade, said the release. This year, the overall pass percentage for the Intermediate Second Year in Social Welfare Residential Colleges stood at an impressive 86.16 per cent with 11,979 out of 13,940 students clearing the exams. The First Year results saw a 77.48 per cent pass percentage.

Excluding the Covid-19 pandemic year, this year's results are the highest recorded in the last ten years across TGSWREIS colleges.

Congratulating the toppers, Dr Alugu Varshini, Secretary of TGSWREIS, applauded the efforts of the students who secured state ranks. She also extended her gratitude to the principals and faculty members of the high-performing colleges for their dedicated service and commitment to student success.

DOST notification to be out soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Council of Higher Education has announced that Notification under Degree Online Services Telangana (DOST) will soon be released for students who passed intermediate.

"As the Chairman of Telangana State Council of Higher Education (TGCHE), I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all students who have successfully passed the Intermediate examinations," said Dr Balakista Reddy, Chairman, TGCHE.

"I am pleased to announce that the Undergraduate syllabi in all the Conventional Universities of Telangana have been reorganised to align with current employment trends and global standards.

The courses integrate emerging areas of Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, and Project-based learning to enhance employability.

They also offer industry-relevant skills and foster research and critical thinking," he said. "We are excited to welcome the new batch of learners to the TGCHE family through the DOST platform, which will be released soon," he added.

WORLD EARTH DAY

Minister Surekha for protection of environs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Marking the occasion of World Earth Day, Telangana Environment, Forests and Endowments Minister Konda Surekha emphasised that environmental protection is not just the government's job but a collective responsibility of every citizen. She released a special poster titled 'Earth Day - Student, Youth in Action' in Hyderabad on Tuesday to raise awareness among the younger generation.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister reminded that Earth is the foundation of life for all living beings. "Mother Earth provides us with air, water, food, and livelihood. But due to human-induced climate change and reckless exploitation of natural resources, this delicate balance is being disrupted," she said.

Expressing concern over the rising environmental degradation, Surekha stressed the need to reduce the use of fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions. "We must adopt and promote renewable sources of energy like solar and wind," she added.

The Minister revealed that steps are already being taken to utilise lands under the Endowments Department for promoting solar energy. "Solar energy is the future. We are exploring ways to make optimal use of temple lands for solar installations. Everyone must take steps to switch to solar power," she said.

Calling for collective action, she urged citizens to take proactive steps toward adopting green energy solutions and contributing to environmental preservation.

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh addressing the Startup Conclave on Tuesday

CSIR STARTUP CONCLAVE

Jitendra Singh calls for synergy between innovation and industry

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology Dr Jitendra Singh said it's time for Indian science to break barriers and work closely with industry, investors and the public. He stressed the need to connect innovation with industry for sustainable development.

Speaking at the Startup Conclave organised by CSIR-IICT, CSIR-CCMB and CSIR-NGRI, he appreciated the joint effort of Hyderabad's CSIR labs, calling it a step toward Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of inclusive innovation. Dr Jitendra urged labs to be more open and involve the public. He noted that science should not stay behind gates. If your work is in agriculture, invite farmers to see it. He highlighted the success of CSIR's Aroma Mission, where over 3,000 youth became entrepreneurs, earning up to Rs 60 lakh annually.

In 2014, India had just 50 biotech startups. Today, there are over 10,000, and the sector's value has grown from $10 billion to nearly $170 billion. Dr Singh said this shows India's progress in innovation. He called for less compartmentalisation in science and more joint meetings between departments. He also spoke about opening up the nuclear sector and sharing research for better collaboration.

Dr Singh concluded by saying Hyderabad, with its strong science and tech ecosystem, can lead India's innovation journey.

C Shekhar Reddy, National Vice-Chairman of IGBC along with other members on Tuesday

IGBC stresses green practices for better future

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Confederation of Indian Industry's Indian Green Building Council (IGBC), Hyderabad, celebrated World Earth Day 2025 on Tuesday with a special 'Green Crusaders Felicitation Programme," honouring leaders in the green building movement.

The Green Crusaders included top organisations like Blue Star, Godrej, DCB Bank, HDFC Bank, Infosys, Domino's, Wipro, Balrampur Chini, Indian Oil, LTI Mindtree and IIM Shillong.

This year's Earth Day theme, 'Our Power, Our Planet,' focused on clean energy and sustainable growth. C Shekhar Reddy, National Vice-Chairman of IGBC, delivered the keynote, stressing the importance of buildings in achieving the goal of tripling clean energy by 2030.

He said green buildings can save power, generate energy and protect the planet. IGBC has registered over 142 new projects across 14 sectors, covering 875 million sq. ft., raising the total to 15,800+ projects and 13.56 billion sq. ft.

Shekhar Reddy highlighted the importance of Net Zero buildings, which produce as much energy and water as they use and manage waste sustainably.

He also mentioned government support, with 13 states offering incentives and faster approvals for IGBC-rated projects.

He urged all stakeholders developers, architects, engineers and officials to adopt green practices for a better future. He noted that it's not just about saving energy, but securing a healthy planet for future generations.

TEEN DEATH WITH DRUG OVERDOSE

Accused sold at 4 times market price to victims

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a shocking case of illegal drug abuse, a 17-year-old student died and two others were hospitalised in Balapur after injecting a highly addictive painkiller, Tapentadol Hydrochloride purchased for Rs 150 per tablet - nearly four times its market price.

Police arrested the peddler and the medical store owner involved in the illegal sale of the scheduled H1 drug.

The accused, Sayeed Sahil (21) of Shaheen Nagar, allegedly sold the tablets to three youth, including the deceased, after purchasing them illegally from Siroomani Jagannathan Praveen (54), owner of Srinivas Medical Store in Shamshabad.

Sahil had been procuring the tablets at Rs 45 each and selling them at inflated rates to addicted youngsters, police said.

On April 17, the victims crushed the tablets, mixed them with saline water, and injected themselves using syringes at a residence in Shaheen Nagar.

Soon after, they experienced dizziness. Later admitted in critical condition, they died at Osmania General Hospital on April 19. The other two remain in semi-conscious condition in Owaisi and Asra Hospitals.

Police launched an investigation after a grieving relative of the deceased shared a video on social media, appealing to authorities to act against drug peddlers and protect children from addiction.

A joint team from the Telangana Anti-Narcotics Bureau (TGANB) and Balapur Police arrested Sahil, who admitted to both addiction and peddling.

Matchmaking between academia and industry outlined

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Only 10 per cent of Global Capability Centres (GCCs) are working on local problems, while the remaining 90% focus on backend problem-solving, said BITS Pilani Hyderabad Vice-Chancellor, Prof. V Ramgopal Rao.

Speaking on 'Will the GCCs Redefine India's Global Economic Leadership" at the NASSCOM GCC Summit 2025 on Tuesday, he said the government should improve matchmaking between academia and industry through co-funding.

Prof. Ramgopal Rao said that in academia, progress depends on the number and quality of research publications. He said that India has now realised the importance of filing patents and currently ranks 6th in the world in patent filings.

However, he pointed out that raising funds for big tech ventures in India is difficult due to its bureaucracy and other challenges. "What takes five years in the US takes double the time in India," he said.

Prof. Ramgopal Rao said that most government funding goes to private entities, and the two main challenges are orientation and transactional issues.

He explained that when public institutions receive funds, the process is government-handled, which causes delays. He said that importing equipment for an institution takes up to 11 months and needs approval from the Ministry of Education.

He stressed that structural changes are needed in the system, especially in Intellectual Property (IP) developed by institutions. He also raised concerns about research integrity, saying that while India ranks third globally in research and academic interactions, the intense competition to publish has led to unhealthy practices in the academic community. Meanwhile, Nasscom President Rajesh Nambiar said the next wave of global capability will not come from size, but from speed, specialisation and strategic influence.

Zoostastic summer camp from May first week to June

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad, will organise the Zoostastic Summer Camp from the first week of May to June. Each daily batch will include 15 to 20 participants. The Zoo invites wildlife-loving children from Grades 5 to 10 to join this fun and educational camp.

The summer camp aims to teach children about zoo life and wildlife through a variety of activities. These include a zoo overview, guided zoo tours, animal interaction sessions, reptile awareness programmes, night house visits and many other fun activities, all led by experienced wildlife educators.

The Registration fee is Rs 1,000 per participant, which covers snacks and a vegetarian lunch. Each participant will also receive a kit containing a cap, notepad and a badge with the Nehru Zoo logo.

The Zoo announced that online registration is now open and advised checking updates on its Instagram and Facebook pages, or contacting them at 040-24477355.

Codeine syrup abuse racket busted in joint TG raid

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a joint operation that exposed the darker underbelly of pharmaceutical diversion in the city, the Prohibition and Excise Department, along with the Drugs Control Administration (DCA), Telangana, unearthed a racket involving the illegal sale and abuse of Codeine-based cough syrups. The crackdown led to the arrest of three individuals and the cancellation of drug licences for two prominent medical shops in Hyderabad.

The operation, conducted on April 21, stemmed from the arrest of two individuals in Ramanthapur for possession of dry ganja. During interrogation, they revealed details about illegal Codeine syrup distribution. Acting on the tip-off, enforcement officials intercepted a woman, Nalla Rajini, near Moula Ali Bridge with 13 bottles of Codeine phosphate syrup.

She failed to produce either a valid prescription or a drug licence.

Rajini confessed that she procured the syrup from Generic World Medical Shop in Vidyanagar. A decoy operation was quickly launched by DCA and Excise officials at the shop, during which three bottles were sold without a prescription or bill.

A follow-up inspection found 80 more bottles in stock. The sale was in violation of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, which mandates a prescription from a registered medical practitioner and maintenance of proper sales records.

Further investigation led authorities to Himalaya Pharma in Old Bowenpally, the supplier of the Codeine syrups to Generic World. This pharmacy, too, was found to be flouting the law, storing and selling Codeine-based syrups without prescriptions and proper documentation. Both establishments were run by individuals closely linked-Dinesh Kumar Goyal, the licensee of Himalaya Pharma, is related to the owner of Generic World.

The arrested include Nalla Rajini, Anmol Kumar Singhal (Generic World licensee), and Dinesh Kumar Goyal (Himalaya Pharma licensee). The DCA has cancelled the licences of both pharmacies involved.

A case has been registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act at the Malkajgiri Excise Station. Authorities have assured that further investigation is underway and strict legal action will be taken against all involved.

Officers who led the operation included J. Jeevan Kiran (Assistant Excise Superintendent), D. Saritha (Assistant Director, Secunderabad), and several others from both departments.

Three of family held for gruesome murder in KPHB

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

KPHB Police have cracked a sensational murder case with the arrest of three individuals - including the wife, her sister, and brother-in-law of the deceased - for plotting and executing a brutal killing involving electrocution and physical assault.

The main accused, Boini Kavitha, reportedly hatched a conspiracy to eliminate her husband Boini Sailu, citing long-standing domestic discord.

According to police, Kavitha was fed up with her husband's orthodox behaviour and the humiliation she faced whenever she visited her children. Matters escalated when Sailu decided to marry off their daughter to his sister's son, brushing aside Kavitha's objections.

Angered by his response, Kavitha joined hands with her brother-in-law Sadhula Mallesh and her sister Sadhula Jyothi. She lured Sailu to Hyderabad under the guise of earning money for their daughter's marriage. Upon arrival, he was taken to Mallesh's residence, given alcohol, and when he fell asleep, the trio carried out the murder.

Police said the accused connected binding wire to an electric wire and placed it on Sailu's body, electrocuting him. When he regained consciousness, Kavitha allegedly pressed his neck and private parts while Jyothi restrained him by holding his legs. The combined assault led to his death.

They then attempted to transport the body in an auto rickshaw, concealed in a large blue cover. However, the auto driver grew suspicious and returned them to the pickup point. Later, Mallesh and Jyothi reportedly buried the body in an isolated area near Jogipet.

Police seized two mobile phones used during the offence - a Vivo phone from Kavitha and an iQOO phone from Jyothi. The investigation was conducted under the supervision of ACP K. Srinivasa Rao and KPHB Inspector S. Rajashekar Reddy. Commending the team's efforts, officials said the personnel involved would be suitably rewarded.

Nagaland officials praise TG's Prajavani

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A high-level team of officers from the Nagaland government has lauded the functioning of the Chief Minister's Prajavani initiative in Telangana, calling it "excellent" and a model that deserves replication.

The team visited the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan on Tuesday and observed the functioning of the Prajavani grievance redressal system first-hand. During the visit, the delegation was briefed by State Planning Board Vice Chairman and Prajavani Incharge Dr G Chinna Reddy, along with State Nodal Officer Divya Devarajan.

The officials were given a detailed walkthrough of how public grievances are received, digitised, and promptly forwarded to the concerned departments online. The delegation also examined the role of desk officers and the help desk operations.

Muslims object to Centre's intervention in Waqf Board Act

PNS ■ KAGAZNAGAR

Objecting to the reforms proposed to be introduced by the BJP government at the Centre in the functioning of the Waqf Board, several members of Muslim community, under the aegis of the mandal-level Muslim Committee, took out a huge rally from Jama Masjid to the Gandhi X roads here on Tuesday demanding the government to safeguard the piety of the Waqf properties.

Any changes effected in the management of the Waqf properties would hurt the sentiments of the Muslims severely, they said, demanding the government to withdraw the Wakf Bill. Otherwise, the protesters threatened to intensify their agitation.

Describing the Waqf properties as pious and religious community wealth, the protestors said that the main responsibility of the Waqf Board is to safeguard the wealth and spend it meeting the real targets of the board.

They expressed concern over the proposed reforms in the functioning of the board would reduce the autonomy being enjoyed by the board and would lead to intervention of the government in the management of Waqf properties.

Further, the rallyists maintained that the Muslim community has had the highest regard for the piety of the Walk Board properties and its historical significance.

They contended that the Wakf properties are being used to meet the community needs since long.

Muslims protest against Wakf Bill at Mancherial on Tuesday

Ponguleti warns of tough action on encroachments

PNS ■ YADADRI BHUVANAGIRI

Telangana's Revenue, Housing, Information, and Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy warned that illegal occupation of government, forest, Bhoodan, Wakf, and endowment lands would not be tolerated. He said complaints can be submitted through the official portal, and strong action will be taken against encroachers.

The announcement was made during an awareness seminar held on Tuesday at the Zilla Parishad High School in Valigonda mandal, under the aegis of the Revenue Department. The event was presided over by Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, and attended by Government Whip and Aleru MLA Bheerla Ilaiah, Bhuvanagiri MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy and Nakrekal MLA Vemula Veeresham. Minister Ponguleti was the chief guest.

Tributes were paid to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar with floral offerings, and respects were also extended to the late Roman Catholic spiritual leader Pope Francis.

Minister Ponguleti also highlighted key welfare schemes, including up to ?10 lakh of medical coverage under Arogyasri for the poor, 200 units of free electricity, LPG cylinders for ?500, free bus travel and a ?500 bonus per quintal of paddy to support farmers who contribute to the state's subsidized rice supply program.

The Minister was felicitated with a shawl and a portrait during the event.

Other attendees included Additional Collector (Revenue) Veerareddy, District Library Chairman Awaiz Chisti, Bhuvanagiri Market Chairman Rekha Baburao, Valigonda Market Committee Chairman Bheema Naik, RDOs Krishnareddy and Shekhar Reddy, local elected representatives, officials, and farmers.

Meanwhile, Collector Hanumantha Rao explained that Bhu Bharathi includes an appeals process, unlike Dharani.

Applicants dissatisfied at the village level may appeal to the RDO, and if unresolved, escalate to the District Collector or even the tribunal. Every year, land records will be updated and secured in December, with physical surveys and digital maps being integrated into the system to ensure boundary clarity and ownership transparency.

Poor are very happy with fine rice scheme: MP Chamala

PNS ■ RAMANNAPET (NAKREKAL)

Bhongir MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy said the poor people are very happy with the fine rice distribution scheme. He said that in the past, when any festival came, the poor used to buy two or three kilos of rice and eat it. However, in the Congress government, the poor are eating fine rice every day and celebrating festivals everyday, he said.

Kiran Kumar Reddy had a fine rice meal at a beneficiary's residence in Ramannapet mandal headquarters in Nakrekal constituency on Tuesday along with Nakrekal MLA Vemula Veeresham and Yadadri Bhongir Collector Hanumantha Rao.

Speaking on this occasion, MP Chamala alleged that there are no records of where the double bedroom houses that the previous government boasted about were found.

Chamala said, "If you look at the hut where this mother lives, you will understand what golden Telangana is like. I am appealing to the Collector to grant Indiramma house to this poor family, which is living in a hut, and also provide Rajiv Vikas scheme to her two sons."

'Great platform for resolving land issues'

PNS ■ MAHABUBADAD

Mahbubabad District Collector and Magistrate Adwait Kumar Singh in awareness conference held at the farmers' platform in Kothaguda and Gangaram mandals said

the new Bhu Bharati ROAR Act - 2025 serves as a significant platform for resolving land issues. An awareness conference was held on Monday at the farmers' platform in Kottaguda, Gangaram mandal, where the District Collector Adwait Kumar Singh, Additional Collectors (Revenue) K Veerabrahmachari, Revenue Divisional Officer Krishnaveni, local Tahsildars Ramadevi, Sathyanarayana, and MPPs Ravindra Prasad B Appa Rao, among others, attended. They sang the Telangana anthem and read out the details of the new Bhu Bharati ROAR Act to the farmers.

Jagga Reddy extends Rs10 L cash to cancer patient

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) working president and former MLA T Jagga Reddy extended Rs 10 lakh cash assistance to a cancer patient on Tuesday at Sadasivpet.

Jagga Reddy went to the residence of the cancer patient named Amani of Sadasivpet town personally and handed over the amount. Amani informed that she borrowed Rs 7 lakh for the sake of cancer treatment till now. She said that she lost her husband and she thought of committing suicide but she has been living for the sake of her two daughters.

Speaking on this occasion, Jagga Reddy said that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy took a decision to conduct cancer screening tests in the State for everyone. He said that he has no habit of seeking publicity when he extends help to the needy. However, he extended Rs 10 lakh to the cancer patient in presence of media because to create awareness on cancer.

Jagga Reddy lamented that if the poor get diseases like cancer, they face great difficulties because they do not have money to at least get treatment. He appealed that all donors should come forward to support such poor cancer victims. Jagga Reddy said that the situation at the field level regarding cancer victims and the problems faced by poor cancer victims for treatment will be brought to the attention of CM Revanth Reddy.

Permanent solution to land issues with Bhu Bharati Act: Narsampet MLA

PNS ■ WARANGAL

MLA Donthi Madhav Reddy and District Collector Dr Satya Sharada attended awareness seminars on the Bhu Bharati Act - 2025 held at farmers' platforms in Chennaraopet and Khanapur mandals of Narsampet constituency in Warangal district on Tuesday. District revenue officials explained the Bhu Bharati Act through a Power-Point presentation to the farmers.

Narsampet MLA Donthi Madhav Reddy and Warangal District Collector Dr Satya Sharada at Bhu Bharati Act awareness seminars in Chennaraopet & Khanapur mandals of Narsampet

On this occasion, MLA Madhav Reddy said that the State government is ambitiously implementing the new Bhu Bharati ROAR Act to eliminate the long-standing land problems faced by the people and noted that this act will not only resolve land issues but also prevent future land disputes and problems.

The MLA criticised past practices under the name of Dharani, stating that hundreds of acres were listed in prohibited categories, causing hardship to poor people and that authority was centralised with the district collector, making minor name changes more difficult due to a lack of empowerment for tahsildars and RDOs. The Bhu Bharati Act has delegated powers back to the tahsildars and RDOs.

The MLA highlighted that the Act mandates that applications for inheritance rights be completed within a month and pointed out that land records in villages had been neglected under the name of Dharani. The Bhu Bharati Act grants the authority to cancel any illegal land registrations on government lands through proper land record management. District Collector Dr Sharada explained that the Dharani Act was introduced in 2020 to address issues in the 1971 ROAR Act, but the absence of rules prevented the government from effectively resolving some problems, requiring court intervention for any land record changes. The State government devised the Bhu Bharati Act to provide solutions to various problems effectively, the Collector said. There will be an opportunity to correct errors in rights records. The survey map detailing the land owned by the farmer is included in the passbook of landholders, which is now referred to as the Bhudhar card.

The Act will ensure that decisions regarding the mutation of inherited land are made within a stipulated time, and if the inheritance mutation is not completed within 30 days, it will happen automatically, addressing official negligence and ensuring accountability among officials. The Collector advised everyone to gain a complete understanding of the Bhu Bharati Act.

Hanamkonda Collector reviews rice procurement process

PNS ■ HANAMKONDA

Collector P Praveenya, instructed officials to ensure sufficient jute bags and tarpaulin covers are ready at all rice procurement centres in the district.

The Collector held a review meeting with officials from relevant departments at the Hanamkonda District Collectorate to discuss the management of rice procurement, facilities to be available at the procurement centers, and other related issues.

The Collector inquired about various aspects of the rice procurement process from the officials of the relevant departments.

Later, the Collector stated that sufficient jute bags should be stored at the rice procurement centers. She emphasised the need for adequate tarpaulins at the procurement centres due to the possibility of unseasonal rain. Each rice procurement center should have a paddy cleaner along with a moisture measuring moisture meter.

Nirmal SP constitutes lady commando Team Sivangi

PNS ■ NIRMAL

In an unprecedented move, Superintendent of Police Janaki Sharmila of Nirmal district raised an unprecedented female commando team, which the Minister Sitakka inaugurated at a formal function held here, titled Team Shivangi in the district to aid the police.

She inspected the parade presented by them and laid emphasis on creation of such teams in all districts. She appreciated the SP specially for her initiating in raising the team. Creation of such teams in all districts would serve as a shot in the arm of the police, she said.

The SP formed the Team Sivangi drawing very active lady constables (20) from all police stations. She arranged a 45-day training programme for them on a par with elite commando teams like the Grey Hounds, NSG and SPG.

The training programme constituted vertical rope climbing, sustaining under difficult conditions, police strategy, combat skills, use of explosives and weapons, firing the most modern weapons, map reading, field signals, navigating without map, watching the movements of the target, sudden ambush, combing in forests, raiding on the enemy hideouts. The commandos who have excelled during the training were entrusted with command responsibilities.

Following their induction into the police department, the commandos were given the task of finding out the whereabouts of four women belonging to Kappanapalli village of Mamadamandal of Nirmal district.

The women went missing deep into the forest area. On a tip off from the villagers, the SP deployed the commando team tasking with it the responsibility to trace the whereabouts of the women.

Shadnagar girl shines in UPSC Civils

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Indrarchita Padukone, daughter of P Raghavendra Rao and a resident of Teachers Colony in Shadnagar, has brought pride to her hometown by securing the 739th rank in the prestigious UPSC Civil Services examination held at the national level. Her remarkable achievement has earned widespread appreciation from all quarters.

Known for her dedication and consistent efforts, Indrarchita's success stands as a strong source of inspiration for the youth in the region aspiring to join civil services. Celebrations broke out among family members, friends and well-wishers, who extended their heartfelt congratulations to her for reaching this milestone through relentless hard work.

Social activist murdered for exposing cop's illicit affair

PNS ■ HANAMKONDA

A social activist missing case has come to a tragic end. The police found his body and it seems an illicit relationship led to his murder. The Hanamkonda police have arrested the gang involved in the murder and are investigating.

Chidem Sai Prakash has a non-profit organisation called Cheyutha and is a resident of Venkatapuram mandal in Mulugu district. On the April 15, he went to Hanamkonda in his car to admit his relatives in a private hospital. After admitting them to the hospital he left for home.

But Sai Prakash did not reach home that day. Sai Prakash's younger brother Sai Teja at Hanumakonda PS on April 18.

As Sai Prakash could not be found, the police started an in-depth investigation with the observation of CCTV cameras in Hanamkonda. In this process, the police have identified that five or six people were following Sai Prakash's car in an auto.

To this extent, the suspects were identified based on the auto number, detained and interrogated.

The accused confessed to killing Sai Prakash and throwing him into a well near Husnabad on the outskirts of Warangal. Based on the information given by them, Sai Prakash's body was taken out of the well and taken to Warangal MGM hospital for post-mortem.

Chidem Sai Prakash

The reason for the murder of Sai Prakash was to expose an illicit affair. In Venkatapuram, Mulugu district, a constable named Srinivas was having an illicit affair with a local woman and the woman seems to be a relative of Sai Prakash, This illicit affair matter was exposed by Sai Prakash .

As a result, the police higher-ups suspended him. Since then, Constable Srinivas, who had grown angry, seems to have decided to kill Sai Prakash.

Centre favours elite over poor, says MLA Shankar

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Shadnagar MLA and Chairman of State Public Sector Undertakings, Veerlapalli Shankar, strongly criticised the Central government, stating that it prioritises the interests of influential elites over the needs of the poor and marginalised communities. Speaking at the Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan programme held in Kondurgu mandal, he emphasised the importance of raising public awareness about constitutional values and the need to safeguard democracy.

The programme organised as part of the 75th anniversary of the enforcement of the Indian Constitution, saw enthusiastic participation. MLA Shankar was joined by Mandal in-charge and former MPP Shivshankar Goud, former Market Committee Vice Chairman Syed Sadik, former Municipal Chairman Viswam, Town Congress President Konkalla Chennaiyya, Block Congress President Balaraj Goud, Parliament Leaders Purushottam Reddy, Minority Leader Ibrahim, Mandal Party President Srikanth Reddy, and Agganur Basvam.

As part of the event, participants garlanded the statue of Dr BR Ambedkar and paid their respects. Addressing the gathering, MLA Shankar said that the Constitution is not just a book but a sacred text that embodies the ideals of great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar and Jyotirao Phule. He accused the BJP-led Central government of undermining constitutional values and pointed out that Union Home Minister Amit Shah had disrespected Ambedkar in Parliament.

He urged Congress workers to take the Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan message to every village and mandal to protect the spirit of the Constitution.

Shankar further stated that it is time to implement the principles and ideologies of Gandhi and Ambedkar in the true sense.

Highlighting the initiatives of the Congress-led state government under Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, the MLA mentioned schemes like Indiramma houses, free RTC bus travel, subsidized gas, the CM Relief Fund, Arogyasri, and rice distribution, emphasizing that the government is committed to fulfilling its promises step by step.

Shankar and his team received a grand welcome in Srirangapura, led by former Market Committee Vice Chairman Syed Sadik. A spirited bike rally was held, with enthusiastic participation from the public. Slogans supporting constitutional values and Congress leadership echoed throughout the event. Among those present to welcome the MLA were Palle Mahender Reddy and several local leaders and supporters.

ACROSS THE STATES

Child sold for Rs 5,000 by step-grandfather; rescued

Assam Police rescued a one-year-old girl, who was sold around 11 months ago by her step-grandfather, and arrested two persons for their alleged involvement in the crime, a senior officer said on Tuesday. Deputy Commissioner (East) of Guwahati Police, Mrinal Deka, told reporters that the two accused have been arrested on charges of selling and buying a minor for a sum of Rs 5,000 and the child has also been rescued. "We received a complaint from the mother, a resident of an area near the Games Village here, yesterday stating that her stepfather had taken away the child on May 30 last year on the pretext of medical treatment in the absence of her husband," he added. Subsequently, the woman came to know that her minor one-month-old daughter was sold by her stepfather to someone for Rs 5,000, Deka said. "Accordingly, a case was registered with Basistha police station and an investigation was initiated. A police team rescued the child from Sontali area in Kamrup district," he added.

Delhi sees sharp dip in minimum temperature

The national capital witnessed a sharp dip in the minimum temperature on Tuesday, which was recorded at 20.9 degrees Celsius, 5.3 notches below normal, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). In comparison, the minimum temperature on Monday was recorded at 26.2 degrees Celsius, the highest in the last six years for this time of the year. A similar temperature was last observed in 2022, the IMD said. The maximum temperature on Tuesday was recorded at 39.9 degrees Celsius, which is 2.2 degrees above normal. Humidity levels fluctuated between 17 and 26 per cent during the day.Several weather-monitoring stations in the city also recorded high daytime temperatures. The Ridge reported 41.7 degrees Celsius, Aya Nagar logged 41.1 degrees, Narela reported 40 degrees, and Palam recorded 40.5 degrees Celsius, according to the weather office.

Bengal to play key role in revival of CPI(M): Baby

Newly elected CPI(M) general secretary M A Baby on Tuesday said that West Bengal has to play a very important role in ensuring independent strength of the party and the Left in the country's political scenario. Maintaining that West Bengal is an advanced outpost of the Left and democratic forces, he claimed that various parties came together in the state, and a systematic attack has been unleashed on it. Admitting that there has been "some decline in the electoral performance of our party and the Left in Bengal and Tripura", he said that the independent strength of the CPI(M) and the Left is important to fight "neo-fascist forces" in the country. "In ensuring the independent strength of the CPI(M) and the Left, West Bengal has to play a very important role, and so is Tripura," he said, addressing a press conference at the party's state headquarters here. The CPI(M) could not win any seat in the 2021 West Bengal assembly elections and in the 2024 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls in the state. During the state conference of the CPI(M) held from Monday in Kolkata, which he attended, the party planned political and organisational tasks to be undertaken in West Bengal so that its strength can be regained here, Baby said.

VANCE TO INDIA

Procure more American energy, military hardware

PNS ■ JAIPUR

US Vice President JD Vance on Tuesday called on India to drop non-tariff barriers, give greater access to its markets and buy more American energy products and military hardware as he outlined a roadmap of deeper ties between the two nations for a prosperous and peaceful 21st century.

In an address at an event here, Vance repeatedly praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi describing him as a "special person" and emphasised on the need for India and the US to work unitedly to deal with global challenges.

"I really believe that the future of the 21st century is going to be determined by the strength of the United States-India partnership," he said.

"I believe that if India and the US worked together successfully, we are going to see a 21st century that is prosperous and peaceful.

But I also believe that if we fail to work together successfully, the 21st century could be a very dark time for all of humanity," Vance said.

The US Vice President, accompanied by Indian-origin Second Lady Usha Chilukuri, and their three children -- sons Ewan, Vivek and daughter Mirabel -- landed in Delhi on Monday amid growing global concerns over the US's tariff war.

Vance and Modi held wide-ranging talks following the two leaders welcomed "significant progress" in negotiations for a mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreement.

In his remarks, Vance also urged India to provide greater market access to American products and buy more defence platforms and energy from his country.

"We also want to help India explore its own considerable natural resources, including its offshore natural gas reserves and critical mineral supplies," he said.

"We have the capacity and we have the desire to help. Moreover, we think energy co-production will help beat unfair competitors in other foreign markets."

"But India, we believe, can go a long way to enhance energy ties between our nations. And one suggestion I have is maybe consider dropping some of the non-tariff barriers for American access to the Indian market," he added.

Vance said he and President Donald Trump are looking forward to stronger ties with India.

"Americans want further access to Indian markets. This is a great place to do business and we want to give our people more access to this country and Indians," he said.

"We believe, will thrive from greater commerce in the United States. This is very much a win-win partnership, certainly will be far into the future," he said.

'DISTURBING'

Supreme Court laments non payment of compensation to road mishap victims

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday found it "disturbing" that road accident victims were deprived of compensation despite orders of the Motor Accident Claims Tribunals.

Issuing a slew of directions, a bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said while filing claim petitions under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, names and addresses of the injured or the owners of the damaged property; their Aadhaar and PAN details and email id, should be submitted.

"If the aforesaid details are not furnished, the registration of the application should not be refused on that ground, but MAC tribunals at the time of issuing notice may direct the applicant(s) to furnish the information and make the issue of the notice subject to making compliance," it said.

While passing an interim or final order of grant of compensation, the bench said, the MACTs should order those entitled to receive compensation to produce their bank account details along with either a certificate of the banker furnishing all details, including IFS code, or a copy of a cancelled cheque of the bank account.

The claimants would have to produce the documents within a specified reasonable time, it added.

The apex court's order came on a suo motu petition over large sums of money lying deposited in MACT and labour courts.

The bench said further directions would be issued to the persons entitled to receive compensation to keep updating information on the bank accounts, email id, in case of changes.

Modi govt 'squeezed' share of states in cess on petrol, diesel: Kharge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday hit out at the Modi government over imposition of cess on petrol and diesel despite falling global crude oil prices, and alleged that even though it has collected Rs 38.89 lakh crore since 2014, it has "squeezed" the rightful share of states by not sharing this with states.

"The Modi government's 'Cooperative federalism' = CESSation of federalism," Kharge said in a post on X.

He alleged that despite international crude oil prices falling to a 47-month low, the Modi government raised the central excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 2 each.

This year, the Modi government shall earn Rs 1.47 lakh crore from the total cess on petrol and diesel, and a whopping Rs 28,000 crore from this Rs 2 central excise duty alone, he claimed.

But states, including the BJP-ruled ones, he said, would not get a single paisa from this cess, even though the states have been constantly demanding a higher share of the divisible pool from the Union government.

"Since 2014 to December 2024, the Modi government has collected Rs 38.89 lakh crore by taxing petrol, diesel and petroleum products.

"Instead of following the model of 'Team India' propagated by PM Modi, the Union government has passed on the burden of Rs 1 lakh crore revenue forgone in giving tax rebate to personal income tax up to Rs 12 lakh slab announced in the Budget 2025-26," the Congress chief said. He further claimed that Rs 5.7 lakh crore collected through various cesses and surcharges since 2019-20, will remain unspent by the Modi government (till March 2026).

Maha govt stays order to make Hindi mandatory

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government has stayed its order to make Hindi mandatory as a third language for students of Classes 1 to 5 in Marathi and English-medium schools in the wake of opposition to the move from various quarters.

State School Education Minister Dada Bhuse on Tuesday made the announcement about the stay on the government resolution (GR).

"We are staying the word mandatory (as mentioned in the GR).We will issue a revised GR," he told reporters.

Learning Hindi as the third language will be voluntary, Bhuse said.

The government decision taken last week to make Hindi compulsory as a third language for students of Classes 1 to 5 in Marathi and English-medium schools in the state had met with stiff resistance from different quarters, including some opposition parties.

The move comes days after the Maharashtra government's language consultation committee urged Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to revoke the decision.

Minister Bhuse also asserted that learning of Marathi language will be made compulsory in the state and the education department will see to it that it is implemented effectively.

He stressed that the Centre did not pressurise the state to "impose" Hindi.

On earlier GR which had made Hindi mandatory, Bhuse said both Hindi and Marathi had Devnagri script and that would have made the students easier to learn the language.

When asked why a third language was introduced from Class 1, Rahul Rekhawar, Director of the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), said efforts will be taken to ensure children do not feel any pressure of learning a third language.

He said a third language is only for speaking and listening purposes.

The three-language formula for classes 1 to 5 is a part of the new curriculum implementation under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Murshidabad violence orchestrated by 'outsiders': Mamata

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday asserted that "outsiders" were responsible for the violence that erupted in parts of Murshidabad district over the Waqf Act recently, and said she would visit the troubled areas in the first week of May to evaluate the situation.

Banerjee also said her government would "soon expose the conspirators" behind the riots that took place in two wards of Dhulian in the district.

"The violence was unfortunate. We do not want riots. Some outsiders orchestrated it, but we will expose them and their conspiracy," she said at an administrative programme in Midnapore. "I have promised the families of those killed in the violence to give a compensation of Rs 10 lakh each. We will also rebuild their houses under the 'Banglar Bari' scheme... I will be going there in the first week of May and evaluate the situation," Banerjee said. The CM also said that the state government could take responsibility for the education of the children of those killed in the violence. "We are surveying the damages faced by the shopkeepers there," she said.

Governor C V Ananda Bose had on April 19 met family members of a man and his son, who were killed during violence over anti-Waqf (Amendment) Act protests in Murshidabad district, and assured them of all possible support.

At least three people died and over 280 have been arrested in connection with the violence earlier this month.

Man in jail since 2018 for killing whom?

Delhi HC asks, grants bail to accused

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a peculiar case, the Delhi High Court has granted bail to a man, who spent about seven years in jail on a murder charge, even as the victim's identity remained a mystery.

"To say the least, investigation in this case shocks the conscience of this court," Justice Girish Kathpalia said on April 21.

The judge added, "Till date, deceased has not been identified. As regards the 'last seen' hypothesis, the said last seen was with Soni alias Chhoti, who has been found to be alive."

Accused Manjeet Karketta booked for the murder sought bail on the ground though he had been incarcerated since 2018, nobody knew who was killed. "It is extremely saddening that a human being lost life in such a gruesome manner and the body was cut into pieces way back in the year 2018 but till date even identity of the deceased has not been established," the judge said.

The incident took place in 2018 and the mortal remains were identified to be that of one Soni alias Chhoti. After the arrest of the accused on May 17, 2018, Soni was reportedly found alive and the dead persons has remained unidentified till date.

The police filed about five chargesheets in the case, but the court opined it was not just the investigator, but also the senior police officers who had to "supervise investigation" and they "seem to have not been diligent".

The prosecutor opposed the bail plea and said the evidence of "last seen" connected the accused with the murder. The bag used to dispose of the victim's body was recovered from the accused, the prosecutor added.

Don't do anything that may affect the review petition

Bengal Edu Min to protesting teachers

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Asserting that the West Bengal government was firmly with the school teachers who lost their jobs, Education Minister Bratya Basu on Monday urged them to refrain from doing anything that might weaken the review petition which the state was planning to file in the Supreme Court.

Addressing a press conference, Basu said the School Education Department is working to ensure that those deemed eligible can continue with their jobs in accordance with the court's order.

"The state government is with the agitating teachers. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has assured all sorts of help. We are working in the interest of those who lost their jobs, and will continue to do so," he said.

"We are filing a review petition. So, I request the agitating teachers not to act in any way that may weaken our petition, violate the Supreme Court's order, or result in contempt of court by them or us," he added.

On April 3, the top court invalidated the appointment of 25,753 teachers and staffers in the state-run and aided schools, calling the entire selection process "vitiated and tainted".

"According to the Supreme Court verdict, eligible teachers have been requested to continue in their schools till December 31.

Our department is working on the salary issue, and we are taking responsibility to resolve it. The SSC case will come up for hearing in the division bench of the Calcutta High Court tomorrow," Basu said.

"We have the data with us, and we are working accordingly. Please do not do anything or compel us to do anything that could go against you during the review petition," he said, responding to the protests outside the West Bengal School Service Commission (SSC) office in Salt Lake.

ROW OVER BILLS

SC to examine if TN verdict covers issues raised by Kerala

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it would examine whether the recent judgement on a plea of Tamil Nadu, fixing timelines for the grant of assent to bills, covered the issues raised by the Kerala government in its pleas.

A bench comprising Justices P S Narasimha and Joymalya Bagchi agreed to hear on May 6 the pleas of the Kerala government against Governor over the delay in approving bills passed by the state assembly.

"We will look into that judgement and see whether issues raised here are covered," the bench said when Attorney General R Venkataramani and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the Governor's office, said the recent judgement delivered by a bench headed by Justice J B Pardiwala did not cover the issues raised by the Kerala government.

The bench comprising Justices Pardiwala and R Mahadevan on April 8 delivered a significant verdict on the plea of Tamil Nadu and set aside the reservation of the 10 bills for President's consideration in the second round holding it as illegal, erroneous in law.

The bench, for the first time, also prescribed that President should decide on the bills reserved for her consideration by Governor within a period of three months from the date on which such reference is received. Kerala seeks similar directions in its case.

On Tuesday, senior advocate K K Venugopal, appearing for Kerala, said the pleas of the state were covered by the recent judgement.

"What is the timeline for making a reference to the President by the Governor and this issue is dealt with by that judgement and there are no other questions," he said.

He urged the bench to allow the pleas of the Kerala government in terms of the Tamil Nadu judgement.

Mehta, however, insisted on making submissions saying the case of Kerala was not covered by the Tamil Nadu judgement.

"The (Tamil Nadu) judgment does not cover certain issues in this case on facts which are essentially different," the bench said and fixed the pleas for hearing on May 6.

Editor's TAKE

A cultural gesture or a strategic reachout?

JD Vance's 3-day visit to India is more than a family trip. It's a message

United States Vice President JD Vance's three-day visit to India might appear on the surface as a cultural homecoming for his family, but beneath the surface lies a layer of strategic nuance that reflects the evolving dynamics of India-US relations — particularly amid the backdrop of Donald Trump's sanctions policy. Vance's India trip is being billed as a family-focused tour, with cultural visits to Jaipur and Agra aimed at helping his children connect with their Indian heritage through their mother, Usha Chilukuri Vance.

However, even such personal diplomacy carries weight. As the highest-ranking US official to visit India under the current administration, his presence alone sends a strong signal: despite recent tensions and Trump-era trade policy headwinds, the US values its long-term strategic relationship with India.

While the official itinerary includes only one major formal engagement — a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi followed by a state dinner — the subtext of that conversation is expected to be significant. Trade negotiations between the two nations remain in a delicate phase, especially with Trump's reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods paused only temporarily until July. The resumption or removal of those tariffs hinges on political will from both sides. Vance's visit offers a diplomatic window for quiet discussions, signalling a willingness from Washington to keep dialogue channels open even if the Trump administration's broader rhetoric leans toward economic nationalism.

Vance's visit comes just weeks after Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard's trip to India, indicating a deliberate staggered engagement from Trump's key officials. Vance's attendance at regional and business forums in Jaipur, including a speech at the Rajasthan International Centre, and his interactions with political figures, provide an opportunity to reinforce bilateral ties beyond just military or economic frameworks.

His presence also comes at a time when Modi is preparing for a high-profile visit to Saudi Arabia, underscoring how both nations are recalibrating their global engagements and seeking balance in a multipolar world order. Vance's India stop, sandwiched between Italy and other key visits, thus plays a quiet yet strategic role in maintaining American visibility in the Indo-Pacific theatre.

By prioritising a family-led cultural immersion alongside limited political engagements, Vance is walking a fine line. It's a display of soft power — highlighting shared values, people-to-people ties, and the significance of diaspora connections — while also reaffirming the transactional, interests-based nature of current US foreign policy under Trump.

The symbolic guard of honour, shopping trips for Indian handicrafts, and visits to Jaipur's heritage sites are diplomatic gestures that soften the harder edges of policy friction. This duality makes Vance's visit a potent blend of optics and opportunity. Whether Vance's trip translates into tangible outcomes on trade or security remains to be seen. But the fact that his first visit to India is being positioned as a cultural one, while quietly engaging on serious policy matters, reflects the Biden-Trump transition's lingering complexities — and how Vance is being groomed not just as a vice president, but as a statesman with cross-cultural appeal.

In a time of strained alliances and recalibrated partnerships, JD Vance's India visit is a quiet assertion: that while policy may shift, relationships endure — and sometimes, it's the personal visits that pave the way for political resets. As India and the United States navigate a landscape marked by shifting alliances and political flux, visits like Vance's offer more than ceremonial value. They signal intent, test the waters of diplomacy and often sow the seeds for future policy recalibration. In an age when optics can drive narrative, such symbolic overtures may well prove to be the quiet bridges over turbulent geopolitical waters.

India bolsters ties with Sri Lanka

As China deepens its presence through major investments, India is doubling down to protect its strategic interests — offering aid, infrastructure to send a message that it is Sri Lanka's most reliable partner

Amid the intensifying India–China battle for influence in Sri Lanka, New Delhi has reason to be satisfied following the recent two-day state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the island nation during which economic, defence, and energy ties with an important neighbour were shored up. India's strategic interests are intrinsically tied with those of Sri Lanka, hence the need to maintain close and robust bilateral relations with it. New Delhi also sought to convey to the Anura Kumara Dissanayake — led Government the message, yet again, that it can reap greater benefits from India, which is a reliable friend.

The underlying message herein being that China isn't one. It was also conveyed to Colombo once again that protecting India's security interests as well as its own should be of paramount importance. Towards this end, New Delhi also extracted from President Dissanayake an assurance, yet again, that he will keep in mind India's security interests.

To New Delhi's undoubted relief, President Dissanayake reiterated that he will not allow Sri Lankan territory to be used in any manner that will threaten India's security interests. For now, the Dissanayake Government appears to be walking the talk on this account going by news reports that Sri Lanka cancelled a joint naval exercise with India's arch-foe Pakistan, which was to be held in the waters off the strategically located Trincomalee, not too far from the Indian coastline. But not before New Delhi intervened and made its security concerns known, following which the exercise — which was to have been held around the dates PM Modi was to visit the island nation — was scrapped. Given its strategic imperatives in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), it's essential for New Delhi to consolidate its influence in Sri Lanka where India no longer holds sole sway, and to maintain robust ties with the new Government in place there.

In its outreach to the island nation, New Delhi is also seeking to burnish its credentials as a leader of the Global South, projecting itself as a dependable partner for nations facing economic hardship, and who need not fear falling into a debt trap as is often the case when they avail of loans from China.

During the PM's visit, there was also important messaging for Colombo about the perils of hob-nobbing too closely with Beijing, with PM Modi stating during the visit, "We have shared security interests. The security of both countries is inter-connected and co-dependent." As a maritime neighbour in the Indian Ocean straddling vital sea lanes, New Delhi knows that Chinese expansionism can pose a strategic threat to both India and Sri Lanka.

The spreading tentacles of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Sri Lanka too have given New Delhi sleepless nights. As China's footprints in Sri Lanka increase, New Delhi knows well that it cannot afford to let its guard down vis-à-vis Beijing as the latter builds deep inroads into India's immediate and extended neighbourhood.

PARUL CHANDRA

This has forced India to redouble its efforts to ramp up its engagement and provide all manner of development assistance to countries in its neighbourhood so that they remain within its sphere of influence. In the case of Sri Lanka, India provided financial assistance totalling $4.5 billion in 2022 and 2023 to it during its post-pandemic economic meltdown. This played a vital role in helping Sri Lanka obtain an IMF bailout. India's outreach to the Dissanayake Government has also seen it convert $20.66 million given as lines of credit into grant assistance to reduce Sri Lanka's debt burden. All this, plus New Delhi's willingness to help Sri Lanka achieve economic stability, is possibly what has helped it forge close ties thus far with the Dissanayake Government.

Despite pursuing a policy of 'Neighbourhood First,' India's strategic space in the IOR is increasingly shrinking amidst a relentless Chinese onslaught. Though India has coined the new term 'Mahasagar' (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) replacing the earlier coinage of 'Sagar' (Security and Growth for All) for countries in the IOR, containing China's influence remains a challenge. India's efforts don't always bear fruit, especially when China-leaning Governments are in power in the neighbourhood. Besides, the offer of Chinese loans and financial assistance to build infrastructure is too tempting to resist for cash-strapped neighbours of India struggling to execute mega projects.

In the case of Sri Lanka, the Left-leaning Dissanayake has adroitly managed to balance his country's diplomatic ties with the two Asian giants in the six months since he took charge. It also means that the island nation for now is seeking to reap the benefits from the fierce India–China rivalry in Sri Lanka and the wider IOR. So if Dissanayake earlier this year managed to secure the largest-ever FDI (foreign direct investment) of $3.7 billion for his country from China for a state-of-the-art oil refinery at Hambantota to be built by Sinopec, he's being wooed by India as well in the area of energy security. PM Modi's visit saw the joint launch of the plan to build the Sampur solar power plant.

It will be developed by the Trincomalee Power Company, which is a joint venture between Ceylon Electricity Board and India's NTPC. To boost the island nation's energy security, all the more imperative as it went through a crippling forex crisis post the pandemic — which meant huge fuel shortages — the visit saw a tripartite agreement between India, Sri Lanka, and the UAE to develop Trincomalee as a regional energy hub. India needs to consolidate its foothold in Trincomalee on the island nation's eastern coast and keep China at bay. With its huge natural harbour, Trincomalee is of immense geo-strategic import and has the potential to be developed as a naval base. India is also already jointly redeveloping with Sri Lanka World War II — era strategic oil tank farms in Trincomalee. Apart from Trincomalee, New Delhi is also keeping a close eye on another strategic port, the one in Kankesanthurai, which lies not too far away from the Indian coastline. The port in Sri Lanka's Tamil-dominated northern province is close to the Indian coastline and is being "rehabilitated" with a $61.5 million grant assistance from India. Given its vital security stakes in Sri Lanka, a defence cooperation agreement with the island nation, the first between the two countries, inked during the visit would also help India counter Chinese moves in the region.

After all, China's hegemonic ambitions present a real and present danger to India and indeed the entire IOR.

(The author is Senior Journalist. Views are personal)

Leaderspeak

Deeply Pained by the Passing of His Holiness Pope Francis. Pope Francis will always be remembered as a beacon of compassion, humility, and spiritual courage by millions across the world. From a young age, he devoted himself towards realising the ideals of Lord Christ. He diligently served the poor and downtrodden. For those who were suffering, he ignited a spirit of hope.

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

Overthinking is injurious to mental health

SECOND Opinion

BY SAKSHI SETHI

Overthinking is a subtle but destructive habit that many people silently suffer from. It often disguises itself as caution or deep reflection, but in truth, it's a mental loop that traps individuals in cycles of worry, doubt, and inaction. While it may seem like a method of preparation or problem-solving, overthinking is far from harmless — it quietly undermines peace of mind, self-confidence, relationships, and even opportunities.

What begins as a desire to make the right choice or prepare for future outcomes quickly spirals into obsessive thinking. The mind replays conversations, dissects every detail, and invents endless "what ifs" and "should haves."

Instead of arriving at clarity, individuals find themselves stuck in a loop of mental noise that prevents real progress. A 2013 study published in the Journal of Abnormal Psychology found that overthinking is closely linked with anxiety and depression. Repetitive negative thinking was shown to be a shared factor in many mental health issues. This highlights that overthinking isn't just an annoying quirk — it's a serious risk factor that drains emotional energy, limits engagement with real life, and inhibits personal growth.Overthinkers often question every decision they make, fearing failure or embarrassment. This undermines self-trust, making even small choices feel high-stakes. When someone begins to believe that every decision must be perfect, they become paralysed by the fear of imperfection, holding themselves back from growth, both personally and professionally. Relationships are also affected. Overthinkers tend to overanalyse texts, tones, or expressions, often creating negative narratives. A delayed response from a friend can spiral into "They're mad at me," or "I must've said something wrong." These imagined scenarios create emotional distance, tension, and unnecessary stress, making it hard to connect authentically. On top of that, the constant mental activity can interfere with sleep, leading to insomnia or disrupted rest, which further affects emotional well-being. So what fuels this habit of overthinking? At its core, overthinking is driven by fear — the fear of failure, of being judged, of losing control.

Often, these fears stem from past experiences where mistakes were punished or outcomes were unpredictable. As a coping mechanism, the brain tries to take control by playing out every possible scenario. Ironically, this attempt at control results in more chaos and mental fatigue.To escape the grip of overthinking, the first step is awareness. You can't change what you don't recognise. Start by observing your thought patterns and identifying when helpful reflection turns into rumination. The next step is to disrupt the cycle. One effective technique is to set a "thinking deadline." For instance, give yourself 30 minutes to evaluate a decision, weigh the pros and cons, and then make a choice. This method trains your brain to move from overanalysis to action.Journaling is another powerful tool. Writing down your thoughts gets them out of your head and onto paper, immediately reducing their emotional charge. It also engages the logical part of the brain, helping you process emotions more constructively.

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), a scientifically supported method, is built around this very idea — challenging irrational thoughts and replacing them with more realistic, balanced perspectives. Most importantly, take action. Overthinking convinces us to wait until we feel perfectly ready, but clarity often comes after we start. Even the smallest step — sending a message, making a phone call, beginning a project — can break the mental gridlock and build momentum.

We begin to see that the consequences of our decisions are rarely as catastrophic as we imagine, and even when things go wrong, we gain experience and resilience. Building trust in yourself is crucial. Each small, confident decision reinforces your capability. Along the way, practising self-compassion helps loosen the grip of perfectionism. You don't need to be flawless or have all the answers. Life is unpredictable by nature, and embracing that truth allows space for peace and growth. In the end, overthinking drains our most valuable resources — time and mental peace. It disguises itself as preparation but only delays action and postpones growth. Life isn't meant to be overanalysed — it's meant to be lived fully and authentically.

(The writer is an educator. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

SY Quraishi and the politics of identity

Madam — Former Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi responded firmly to BJP MP Nishikant Dubey's recent remark labelling him a "Muslim Commissioner." On Monday, April 21, Quraishi stated his unwavering belief in an India where individuals are defined by their contributions, not their religious identities. He noted that for some, such identities are used to push hateful political narratives. Quraishi served India with distinction as Chief Election Commissioner from July 2010 to June 2012. During his tenure, he introduced key reforms such as the creation of a Voter Education Division and Expenditure Control Division, and he founded the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management.

A proud member of the Haryana cadre of the IAS, Quraishi's public service career is a model of integrity and dedication. His work has been recognised by many, including Dr Gopalkrishna Gandhi, the distinguished grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and C Rajagopalachari. Dr Gandhi lauded Quraishi's efforts to uphold the values of India's constitutional institutions. Dubey's inflammatory comment followed Quraishi's criticism of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, which he described as a "sinister and evil plan" to seize Muslim lands. In a time when hate speech threatens the fabric of democracy, voices like Quraishi's serve as crucial reminders of the constitutional values India must continue to uphold.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Rohit Sharma's wankhede moment

Madam — There could be no better timing than this for Indian cricket captain Rohit Sharma. Soon after the Mumbai Cricket Association honoured him by naming a stand after him at Wankhede Stadium, he delivered a stunning unbeaten 76-run knock against Chennai Super Kings, featuring four boundaries and six sixes.

His performance not only secured victory but also pushed Mumbai Indians up to sixth place on the IPL points table. From a young boy in Borivali known for breaking window panes to a cricketing legend who has broken records on the global stage, Rohit's rise is truly inspirational.

His success stems from a passion for the game and an unrelenting commitment to his team, not personal milestones.

What sets Rohit apart is his leadership, consistency, and ability to inspire. He is the only Indian cricketer to win two T20 World Cups — once as a player, once as captain — and has led the team to multiple ICC titles.

He is also the only player with three double centuries in ODIs and holds records for the most international sixes and the highest ODI score.

A fearless and flamboyant cricketer, Rohit Sharma's name now fittingly graces a stand at Wankhede. When he bats, it's nothing short of a festival for fans — an experience of joy, energy, and unforgettable moments.

G DAVID MILTON | MARUTHANCODE

Nurturing emotional bonds

Madam — Recent scientific research lends weight to poet William Wordsworth's timeless observation that "the child is father of the man." A study conducted by King's College London, Duke University, and the University of Osloemphasises that children given the right emotional support can positively influence society as a whole. It is troubling to see that emotional bonds within families are weakening. The lure of seductive technologies is isolating children from authentic human interaction, inhibiting essential emotional and intellectual qualities such as empathy, compassion, and kindness.

In the 21st century, children are often subjected to rigid schedules and academic pressure, leaving little time for meaningful connection with their parents. Given the rise in societal violence, insecurity, and alienation, even small acts of kindness — whether a warm gesture, kind word, or embrace — can serve as seeds for empathy and resilience. In a world increasingly fragmented by ego, hatred, and authoritarianism, the parent-child relationship remains a powerful antidote to many of humanity's ills. Emotional support fosters empathy, resilience, and compassion — qualities essential for a humane society. As technology and pressure erode connection, small acts of love within families can counteract alienation and help shape a more compassionate, unified future.

RANGANATHAN SIVAKUMAR | TAMIL NADU

A BREWING CRISIS THREATENING KERALA'S COMMUNAL HARMONY

Munambam, the jewel of Vypeen Island in Kochi, is a picturesque suburban area nestled along the Arabian Sea. However, it has now become the Achilles' heel of Kerala. In 1902, Abdul Sattar, a prominent member of the Kutchi Memon community — a Muslim trading group from Gujarat that had migrated to the state — was granted a lease for over 400 acres of land in Munambam by the princely state that governed the area. Later, in 1948, his close relative Mohammed Siddique Sait registered the deed, and in 1950, he endowed the land to Farook College in Kozhikode.

Over time, the college sold portions of the land to various encroacher–occupants. In 1971, the Paravur Sub Court ruled that the land was covered under a formal waqf deed. This decision was upheld by the Kerala High Court in 1975. Reports submitted by the Ernakulam Collectors to the High Court in 2008 and 2009 also confirmed the land's waqf status. Subsequently, in 2019, the Kerala Waqf Board formally registered the property as waqf, effectively nullifying all previous land sales. Amid the ensuing confusion, numerous tourist resorts have been established on the disputed land. The residents of the area — primarily Latin Catholic fisherfolk — have been staging a relay hunger strike for over 175 days, demanding recognition of their revenue rights over the land they have long inhabited. Unfortunately, the issue has been framed as a Christian–Muslim conflict, driven by partisan political narratives that now threaten Kerala's communal harmony. Union Minister Kiran Rijiju, during his speech in Parliament while introducing the Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2025, stated that the Munambam issue would be resolved in favour of the residents once the Act came into force. These statements reflect a lack of sincere intent to address the serious concerns of the affected residents. A respected Archbishop recently told the media that the hope for a resolution now lies with the State Government.

— HARIDARSAN RAJAN | KOZHIKODE

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

Why India must cut GST on farm equipment?

As rural labour dwindles and food security demands rise, mechanisation is no longer optional — it's imperative. Yet the very tools needed to modernise farming are taxed more than luxury items, placing an unjust burden on small and marginal farmers

FIRST Column

India's agricultural sector, the backbone of rural livelihoods, is at a critical juncture. The transition to modern and mechanised farming is no longer a choice but is necessary to ensure food security, optimise productivity, and improve farmers' incomes. Yet, a significant bottleneck hampers this transition — the irrational Goods and Services Tax (GST) structure on tractors and other agri-implements.

Today, farm equipment is taxed at 12 per cent, more than a luxury watch is taxed at 5 per cent. For a small or marginal farmer purchasing a low-horsepower tractor costing ₹5-7 lakh, this means paying ₹60,000 to ₹84,000 upfront as GST alone — a prohibitive cost for most. This, in turn, delays the mechanisation process in areas where it is needed the most.

Pre-GST Scenario Was More Farmer-Friendly

Before the implementation of GST on July 1, 2017, tractors and most agri-implements were exempt from excise duties and subject to only 4-6 per cent Value Added Tax (VAT), depending on the state. Fertilisers, an essential element of agriculture, were previously taxed at 6 per cent (1 per cent excise and 5 per cent VAT). In the GST regime, the introduction of a 12 per cent GST rate on fertilisers was reduced to 5 per cent. However, on agricultural machinery still, 12 per cent GST disrupted the affordability landscape, disproportionately impacting small and marginal farmers, who make up over 86 per cent of India's total landholdings and are responsible for producing more than 60 per cent of the country's food grains.

While GST has unified the country's indirect tax system, it has also inadvertently penalised these vulnerable farmers by making essential farm tools more expensive. Rationalising GST to 5 per cent or even zero for tractors, their components, and agri-implements would significantly ease their financial burden and accelerate rural mechanisation.

Haryana's Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini has recently written to the Union Finance and Agriculture Minister seeking GST exemption on 10 essential farm implements like rotavators, zero-till drills, super-seeders, straw-balers, and tractor-mounted spray pumps — a move and other states CMs should also collectively endorse.

Policy Contradictions: Subsidise on One Hand, Tax on the Other

The contradiction is glaring. The Government's flagship schemes, like the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and the Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM), offer subsidies of up to 50 per cent on machinery such as tractors, combine harvesters, sugarcane harvesters, cotton pickers, for establishing custom hiring centres (CHCs) and also to individual farmers for buying pump sets, tractor mounted sprayers, zero till and seed drills. Yet, these efforts are undermined when the same equipment attracts a steep GST rate.

A reduced GST rate on farm machinery will empower smallholder farmers and reduce the Government's subsidy burden. Lowering upfront taxes means farmers can buy machines at more reasonable prices, translating into more minor subsidy requirements for the Government.

AS MITTAL

Inconsistencies in the Green Energy Push

The policy incongruities extend to the renewable energy sector as well. Renewable energy devices such as solar panels, biogas plants, and windmill components attract only 5 per cent GST to promote sustainability. Electric vehicles (EVs) also enjoy a 5 per cent GST and a 15 per cent discount on third-party insurance premiums. Yet, electric tractors — vital for reducing agriculture's carbon footprint — are taxed at 12 per cent GST, the same as diesel tractors, and do not qualify for any insurance premium relief. According to a study by the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT), aligning electric tractors with EV incentives could reduce the price gap between electric and diesel tractors by nearly 40 per cent, helping India make a greener shift in agriculture.

> INDIA'S AGRICULTURAL FUTURE HINGES ON WIDESPREAD MECHANISATION, YET HIGH GST RATES ON ESSENTIAL FARM EQUIPMENT ACT AS A MAJOR ROADBLOCK. SMALL AND MARGINAL FARMERS — ARE UNFAIRLY BURDENED BY THE 12 PER CENT GST ON TRACTORS AND IMPLEMENTS, A RATE HIGHER THAN THAT ON LUXURY ITEMS.

The Urgency for Mechanisation

Mechanisation is the key to addressing India's agricultural productivity paradox. Despite India being the world's second-largest agricultural producer, only 47 per cent of its farming processes are mechanised, compared to 95 per cent in the United States, 75 per cent in Brazil, and 57 per cent in China. At this pace, India will need at least 25 more years to reach comparable levels.

Labour shortages due to rural-to-urban migration have further exacerbated the crisis. The share of the agricultural workforce has dropped from 59 per cent in 1991 to just 39 per cent in 2023. Mechanisation is essential to offset this shrinking labour force, increase yields, reduce drudgery, and make farming more attractive to rural youth.

Limited uptake

Tractors dominate India's farm equipment market, while implements such as harvesters, seed drills, tillers, and planters account for only 15-20 per cent of the market share. This limited uptake is due to the prohibitive costs and a lack of awareness about the productivity benefits of modern equipment.

The Government and multilateral agencies are already focusing on mechanisation schemes. However, these interventions will not reach their full potential unless complemented by lower taxation.

Farm mechanisation is not merely about replacing manual labour; it is about optimising inputs, improving efficiency, and securing rural incomes in a challenging agrarian landscape. It is time for the GST Council to undertake an urgent review of agri-implement tax slabs. A uniform GST rate of 5 per cent or zero on all agricultural machinery and their components would make mechanisation affordable for small and marginal farmers, stimulate demand in under-mechanised regions, encourage the adoption of green technologies like electric tractors, and reduce Government subsidy outflows in the long run. The 'magical' character of farm mechanisation needs a booster dose. Rationalising GST will empower farmers, create rural entrepreneurship opportunities via CHCs, and help India achieve sustainable development goals. It will bridge the mechanisation gap and unlock the true potential of Indian agriculture. Mechanisation is the future, but affordability is the key.

India's agricultural future hinges on widespread mechanisation, yet high GST rates on essential farm equipment act as a major roadblock. Small and marginal farmers — who form over 86 per cent of India's agrarian base — are unfairly burdened by the 12 per cent GST on tractors and implements, a rate higher than that on luxury items. This policy contradiction undermines Government subsidies offered through schemes like RKVY and SMAM, inflating costs and stalling progress. Haryana's call for GST exemption on key implements is a step in the right direction that other states must support. The mismatch extends to green technologies too — electric tractors face the same GST rate as diesel ones, with none of the incentives that electric vehicles enjoy. This hinders both affordability and sustainability goals.

Meanwhile, India's mechanisation rate lags behind other major agricultural economies, slowed further by rural labour shortages and high upfront machinery costs. Rationalising GST to 5 per cent or zero for all agricultural equipment is critical. It would ease financial pressure on farmers, reduce Government subsidy burdens, and accelerate the adoption of both conventional and green technologies. Mechanisation is not a luxury — it's a necessity. Affordability, enabled through fair taxation, is the key to unlocking a more productive, sustainable, and prosperous agricultural future.

(The writer is Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council. Views are personal)

RTI amendment erodes transparency

By removing the public interest safeguard from Section 8(1)(j), the amendment now imposes a blanket exemption on all personal data — even when linked to public duties — thereby crippling the citizen's ability to hold public officials accountable

The recent amendment to the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, through the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, marks a pivotal retreat from the transparency regime that India painstakingly built over nearly two decades. By shielding personal information under a blanket exemption, the Modi Government has altered the balance between privacy and the public's right to know.

The operation of the RTI Act — informed by several judgments by the Supreme Court and High Courts — has shown that personal information not related to public activity was already protected.

It underlines that there was already sufficient judicial restraint in place to protect genuinely private data. Landmark rulings like Girish Deshpande vs CIC (2013), and the Puttaswamy (2017) privacy judgment, drew clear boundaries between personal data and information relevant to public interest. Courts consistently held that unless the disclosure of personal information served a larger public cause, it should be denied.

Therefore, the amendment was not needed and shows legislative overreach, reflecting mistrust in judicial discretion. It signals a shift from a principle-based regime to a bureaucratic shield where no scrutiny is possible. The amendment now legalises the denial of information that courts had earlier allowed when public interest was evident-setting a regressive precedent that may encourage arbitrariness and corruption.

The SC judgment reinforces that safeguarding personal privacy and promoting institutional transparency are not mutually exclusive but are jointly essential.

This point underscores a vital democratic balance. The Supreme Court, especially in the Puttaswamy case, held that privacy is a fundamental right but not an absolute one; it must be balanced with transparency, especially when public interest is involved. The original RTI Act embodied this balance by permitting the release of personal information where larger institutional accountability or public interest was at stake.

The amendment breaks this balance by giving unchecked primacy to privacy, even when it is used as a smokescreen to hide inefficiency, nepotism, or corruption. For instance, public access to officials' attendance, disciplinary records, or property details — which can reveal disproportionate assets — would now be blocked. The implication is that institutions become unanswerable to the public, reducing the citizen's role from a watchdog to a mute spectator.

KS TOMAR

The sweeping changes have been introduced through the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, which amended Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act. Earlier, this section exempted disclosure of personal information unless there was an overriding public interest. The amendment removes this public interest override and comprehensively exempts all personal data from disclosure under RTI, regardless of its connection to public duties. It is a fundamental shift from a "case-by-case" evaluation to an "absolute bar" on access to personal information, thereby hollowing out the core of the RTI regime.

> THE AMENDMENT BREAKS THIS BALANCE BY GIVING UNCHECKED PRIMACY TO PRIVACY, EVEN WHEN IT IS USED AS A SMOKESCREEN TO HIDE INEFFICIENCY, NEPOTISM, OR CORRUPTION.

The implication is grave: details about the conduct, performance, assets, and public duties of Government officials — even when crucial to detect corruption-can now be shielded from public scrutiny under the excuse of "Privacy". It turns the RTI from a transparency-enabling instrument into a tool riddled with opaque exemptions, undermining citizens' ability to hold officials accountable.

This proviso was a crucial equaliser — it mandated that any information which cannot be denied to Parliament or a State Legislature should not be denied to a citizen.

Its removal gives disproportionate access to legislators while stripping ordinary citizens of equal standing in accessing information. It opens the doors for selective transparency, where MPs and MLAs can access sensitive Government information while citizens are stonewalled. This defeats the spirit of the RTI Act, of 2005 which was built on the idea that transparency is not a privilege but a right.

The move indicates a central tendency to empower the political class at the cost of democratic equity. It also allows the bureaucracy to selectively disclose information to suit political interests while denying the same to activists, journalists, or public-spirited individuals.

This technical change has a wide-ranging impact. By using the DPDP Act to amend Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act, the Government has effectively introduced a data protection regime that overrides the RTI's foundational purpose-access to public information. The phrase "all personal information" is undefined and absolute, allowing information officers to deny almost anything under the guise of personal data.

Details such as educational qualifications, performance appraisals, transfer postings, and reasons for disciplinary action can all now be denied, even if such data expose abuse of power or fraud. This will embolden non-performance, discourage whistle-blowers, and limit the ability of journalists, lawyers, or citizens to demand accountability. In essence, it turns a democratic law into a bureaucratic fortress.

The Modi Government claims that legal obligations under RTI remain unaffected but this assertion is misleading. Section 44(3) of the DPDP Act directly amends the RTI Act itself, thereby altering the legal obligation.

There is a common perception amongst the citizens having consciousness about the RTI Act that the center should pause and review the amendment which reflects a broader democratic concern as it will dilute the purpose of the entire process of seeking information. The vociferous demand to reconsider the amendment is a red flag from the opposition and civil society as these changes are not about protecting privacy but about restricting scrutiny.

The repeal demand stems from fears that the Government is creating an architecture of secrecy behind the smokescreen of data protection. If allowed to persist, this may institutionalise opacity and convert public institutions into information black holes-something antithetical to participatory democracy.

The RTI Act was a landmark law that was an unprecedented achievement of the people's movement under Magsaysay winner, Aruna Roy that democratised access to governance and brought the citizen to the center of accountability. By altering its core provisions, the Modi Government risks reversing this progress.

While data protection is necessary in the digital age, it should not come at the cost of institutional transparency. Instead of finding a nuanced balance, the Government has chosen to impose blanket opacity.

The implications go far beyond legalese-they erode the foundations of a transparent republic, where the citizen has the right to question power. This amendment must be revisited, reviewed, and if necessary, repealed to restore the sanctity of the RTI Act.

(The writer is a senior political analyst and Ex Chairperson of the Standing Committee of All-State Public Service Commissions in India. Views are personal)

RBI asks banks to migrate to '.bank.in' domain by Oct

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Tuesday directed banks to start migration of their existing domains to the '.bank.in' domain and complete the process by October 31 this year, aimed at combating increasing instances of fraud in digital payments.

In the wake of fraud in digital payments, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to introduce the 'bank.in' exclusive internet domain for Indian banks. The initiative aims to reduce cybersecurity threats and malicious activities like phishing; and, streamline secure financial services, thereby enhancing trust in digital banking and payment services.

"It has now been decided to operationalise the '.bank.in' domain for banks through the Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT), which has been authorised by National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI), under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), to serve as the exclusive registrar for this domain," it said in a statement.

Banks may contact IDRBT at sahyog@idrbt.ac.in to initiate the registration process.

IDRBT shall guide the banks on various aspects related to the application process and migration to the new domain.

All banks have been advised to commence the migration of their existing domains to the '.bank.in' domain and complete the process at the earliest and in any case, not later than October 31, 2025, the RBI said.

India to get benefit from supply chain realignments: RBI

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India is poised to benefit from supply chain realignments, diversified FDI sources, and engagement with global investors seeking resilience and scale, given its already established trade linkages, said the RBI's April bulletin. Moreover, India's consistent strength in services exports and remittance inflows continues to provide a vital buffer for the current account, said an article on 'State of the Economy' in the bulletin.

"Calibrated policy support can help India turn global volatility into an opportunity and strengthen its position in the emerging world economic landscape," it said.

MONEY MATTERS

Licence for tobacco farmers valid for 3 yrs

Giving a big relief to tobacco growers, the government on Tuesday said the registration certificate or licence of tobacco farmers will now be valid for three years instead of one year currently. This increase in the licence period from one to three years will help around 83,500 farmers of the country covering around 91,000 barns in renewing their registrations/licences across Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana and Odisha. "This measure will save the time of the farmers' for renewing their registrations/licences every year to plan their logistics and finance to take up cultivation for three years ahead," the commerce ministry said in a statement. India is the second largest producer and fourth largest exporter of unmanufactured tobacco in the world, in value terms, during 2023. In 2024-25, the exports contributed about USD 2 billion (Rs 16,728 crore) to the Indian exchequer. Virginia tobacco is regulated in India under Tobacco Board Act, 1975. As per the Act, every grower intending to take up cultivation of Virginia tobacco has to obtain certificate of registration as a grower and a license for operation of a barn. Accordingly, the Tobacco Board is facilitating the registration /licensing on annual basis.

Kaushalya Logistics expand network to over 100 depots

Logistics and supply chain firm Kaushalya Logistics on Tuesday said it has grown its depot network to over 100 from 70 depots within the past four months, thereby significantly expanding its national footprint. This acceleration underlines the company's strategic focus on scaling capacity to meet rising demand across India's infrastructure and construction sectors, the company said. Aligned with its network expansion, Kaushalya Logistics also recorded a sharp rise in cargo handling, managing 3-lakh tons of cement in March 2025 -- a 50 per cent month-on-month increase from 2 lakh tonnes handled in February, it said, adding the company's operations now service over 2,000 dealers on behalf of the cement majors, solidifying its position as one of India's leading logistics partners for the cement industry, Kaushlya Logistics said. As part of its robust growth strategy, the company said, it has strengthened key partnerships with industry giants like Adani Cement, Dalmia Bharat & JK Cement, enabling the company to expand its operational footprint and meet the growing demand for cement logistics. These collaborations have been crucial in driving the company's growth and operational efficiencies across multiple states in India, it said.

Rupee falls 8 paise to settle at 85.23 against US dollar

The rupee consolidated in a narrow-range and settled for the day lower by 8 paise at 85.23 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, as the support from positive domestic equities was negated by dollar short-covering by investors. Forex traders said foreign fund inflows supported the domestic unit. However, a recovery in crude oil prices dented investor sentiment. Moreover, concerns persisted over economic headwinds from tariffs and US monetary policy that could dampen demand. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.11 and moved between the intra-day high of 85.07 and the low of 85.23 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.23 (provisional), registering a loss of 8 paise over its previous closing level on Tuesday, after witnessing a gaining streak for five straight sessions. On Monday, the rupee appreciated 23 paise to settle at 85.15 against the US dollar. In the last five trading sessions, the Indian currency had added 155 paise since its April 9 closing mark of 86.68 against the greenback. "We expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias on rise in risk appetite in global markets and fresh FII inflows.

6 DAYS OF MARKET RALLY

Investors' wealth jumps Rs 33.55L cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Equity investors became richer by Rs 33.55 lakh crore in six days of market rally where the benchmark Sensex jumped nearly 8 per cent during this period. The 30-share BSE benchmark index climbed 187.09 points, or 0.24 per cent, to settle at 79,595.59 on Tuesday.

Since April 9, the BSE benchmark Sensex has jumped 5,748.44 points, or 7.78 per cent. During this period, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms surged by Rs 33,55,384.01 crore to Rs 4,27,37,717.23 crore (USD 5.02 trillion).

"Nifty extended its winning streak for the sixth straight session, closing at 24,167.25, while Sensex gained 187 points to 79,595.59. Despite the gains, markets showed signs of a breather amid overbought conditions.

Ather Energy's Rs 2,626-cr IPO to open on Apr 28

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Electric two-wheeler maker Ather Energy Ltd is set to launch its much-anticipated Rs 2,626-crore initial public offering (IPO) on April 28.

This will be the first mainboard public issue of the current financial year (2025-26). The three-day public issue of Ather Energy will conclude on April 30 and the bidding for anchor investors will open for a day on April 25, according to the red herring prospectus (RHP).

The proposed IPO is a combination of fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 2,626 crore, and an offer-for-sale of 1.1 crore equity shares by promoters and other shareholders.

In talks with states for signing PPAs of 40 GW RE capacity: Pralhad Joshi

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday said 40 GW of renewable energy (RE) can soon come online as talks are on with states for signing power purchase agreements (PPAs).

"We are targeting 50 GW of RE capacity annually to meet the 500 GW target by 2030 , which of course includes 292 GW of solar energy", Joshi told reporters on the sidelines of inauguration of solar PV module testing facility at National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) here.

India added 29.52 GW RE capacity in 2024-25.

The New & Renewable Energy Minister said peak power demand will double in 2032 from the present levels.

The peak power demand touched an all-time high of 250 GW in May 2024. The power ministry has estimated 270 GW peak power demand during this summer. Joshi said India needs to create innovative solutions to maximize solar energy generation from available land resources.

The minister also called for use of innovative solutions for using building materials like glass to generate solar energy from limited space available like in high-rise buildings.

He said talks are on with states to sign PPAs for 40 GW RE projects.

Joshi also said that 12 lakh households have installed rooftop solar under Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana.

Vance's visit takes India-US dialogue a step further: Scindia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US Vice President J D Vance's visit to India takes dialogue between the two countries a step further, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Tuesday as New Delhi looks to stitch an early deal with Washington that spares it from President Donald Trump's additional tariff hikes.

Vance began a four-day tour of India on Monday as the two nations engage in talks to nail a bilateral trade agreement that would avoid reciprocal tariffs. A 26 per cent 'reciprocal' tariff on Indian exports to the US is currently on a 90-day pause, set to expire on July 8. However, like other countries, India is presently subject to a 10 per cent tariff under the existing policy.

In an interview, Scindia said India and the US represent "tremendous markets", adding that closer cooperation between the two nations is not only mutually beneficial but also in the broader interest of the world.

"Vice President of the United States coming to India is a very welcome and a very important step. I think it takes that level of dialogue and communication one step further," said Scindia, who is the Minister for Communications as well as Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER).

> "Vice President of the United States coming to India is a very welcome and a very important step. I think it takes that level of dialogue and communication one step further."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Trump share a warm personal rapport, but the US president has repeatedly criticised India's high tariffs, labelling it a "tariff king" and a "big abuser" of trade ties.

The US is India's largest trading partner and the biggest buyer of its exports.

Cement demand may rise 7%: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cement prices are expected to rise 2-4 per cent in the ongoing fiscal year, helping companies increase their sales realisation, according to a report from rating agency and analytical firm Crisil.

Besides, it also expects demand for cement to grow from 6.5 to 7.5 per cent in the current fiscal year, driven by increase in budgetary allocation for core infrastructure, rural housing projects and above-normal monsoon.

"The cement sector is expected to see a 6.5-7.5 per cent demand growth this fiscal driven by a 10 per cent rise in budgetary allocation for core infrastructure ministries and on expectation that an above-normal monsoon will boost agricultural profitability, in turn lifting rural housing demand," it said.

> "The cement sector is expected to see a 6.5-7.5 per cent demand growth this fiscal driven by a 10 per cent rise in budgetary allocation for core infrastructure ministries and on expectation that an above-normal monsoon will boost agricultural profitability, in turn lifting rural housing demand."

In FY25, the cement industry had a moderate demand growth of 4.5-5.5 per cent owing to a sluggish start to the year because of the general elections, well-distributed monsoon that impacted construction, along with high base of the past three fiscal years.

Trade pact with India will help open new markets for American goods: USTR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The proposed trade pact with India will help open new markets for American goods and create new opportunities for workers, farmers, and entrepreneurs in both countries, the USTR said on Tuesday.

US Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer said that there is a "serious" lack of reciprocity in the trade relationship with India.

The USTR also welcomed Vice President J D Vance and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement reaffirming the importance of the India-US COMPACT (Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology) initiative and highlighting the progress in the negotiations for a Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA), launched by both nations on February 13.

"These ongoing talks will help achieve balance and reciprocity by opening new markets for American goods and addressing unfair practices that harm American workers. India's constructive engagement so far has been welcomed and I look forward to creating new opportunities for workers, farmers, and entrepreneurs in both countries," he said.

'India a great market'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Tuesday threw his weight behind having more players in satellite internet space, saying the service was needed particularly in the rural and underserved areas of the vast market that is India.

The government has already granted licences to firms backed by billionaires Mukesh Ambani and Sunil Bharti Mittal to offer satellite internet services, and Scindia indicated more may be granted if players meet security and regulatory norms.

'Safeguard duty on steel may halt imports; raise prices'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Imposition of 12 per cent safeguard duty on five steel product categories may halt their imports and force importers to buy these goods from domestic players, who are likely to raise prices following the levy, think tank GTRI said on Tuesday.

It said since Indian producers can not meet demand for specialised steels like abrasion-resistant plates, imports are essential but the new safeguard duty could raise input costs by 8-10 per cent, just like the recent hikes by local steel mills.

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that "12 per cent safeguard duties with high threshold values, is expected to halt most imports, effectively forcing buyers to shift to domestic suppliers. Indian steel companies are likely to exploit this policy to raise prices further, a trend already evident with an 8-10 per cent price increase seen in recent months following news of the safeguard proposal."

Traders' body demands regulator for digital commerce

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Traders' lobby CAIT on Tuesday demanded setting up of an independent regulatory body for digital commerce for oversight and fixing accountability on e-commerce and quick commerce platforms, alleging anti-competitive practices like predatory pricing, deep discounting and exploitation of gig workers.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) also sought expeditious roll-out of the National e-Commerce Policy and e-Commerce rules under the Consumer Protection Act, both currently under finalisation by the Commerce as well as Food & Consumer Affairs Ministries, respectively, to safeguard the interests of retail traders.

It recommended an imposition of a 'luxury tax' under the prevailing GST framework on goods sold via e-commerce platforms, arguing that the practice of buying goods online be considered a 'luxury'.

Currently, goods and services tax is a four-tier tax structure with slabs at 5, 12, 18, and 28 per cent.

Dhairyasheel Patil, National President, All India Consumer Products Distributor Federation (AICPDF), and CAIT's Senior Vice President, told PTI that as per estimates, as many as 10 lakh kirana stores have shut down operations in the last two-three years, owing to lack of viability and affordability. While several kirana stores have also come up during the period, he said, more shops have closed as compared to the number of new retail shops opened.

"Quick commerce has now expanded to 100 cities. In metro cities, 70 per cent of the retailers are using rented shops. Till now 10 lakh shops have been shut as per our estimates in the last two-three years.

Though new shops have also opened, the number of new shops that have opened is less as compared to the number of small retail stores that have shut down due to lack of affordability and viability of operations," he shared.

NORTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED
CIN No.U40109TG2000SGC034119

Short Tender Notice Nos. 01/2025-26 of the SE/Op/Nizamabad
Specification. No. 01/2025-26 of SE/Op/Nizamabad.
Sealed tenders are invited from the registered contractors of TGNPDCL for Erection of New Separate 2.59KM 33KV Line from 132/33KV SS Sirikonda to Tapping point at Loc.KDR-22 of existing 33KV Kondur to give relief on overloaded 33KV Gadkole Feeder in Operation Section-Sirikonda of Operation Sub-division Dichpally in Dichpally Division. The details of the works can be obtained from our website www.tgnpdcl.in.

Short Tender Notice No. 02/2025-26 of SE/Op/ Nizamabad
Specification. No. 02/2025-26 of SE/Op/Nizamabad.
Sealed tenders are invited from the registered contractors of TGNPDCL for Extension of supply to pump house with a CMD of 1260 KVA under HT Cat-IV(A) at 33KV level to the Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division No.1, Banswada for Lift Irrigation and Agriculture purpose at Chandur (Vg) in Operation Section Chandur of Operation Division Bodhan under 100 % LI Scheme. during the FY 2025-26. The details of the works can be obtained from our website www.tgnpdcl.in

Short Tender Notice No. 03/2025-26 of SE/Op/ Nizamabad
Specification. No. 03/2025-26 of SE/Op/Nizamabad.
Sealed tenders are invited from the registered contractors of TGNPDCL for Extension of supply to pump house with a CMD of 1610 KVA under HT Cat-IV(A) at 33KV level to the Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division No.1, Banswada for lift irrigation and agriculture purpose at Jakora (Vg) in Operation Section Varni of Operation Division Bodhan under 100 % LI Scheme during the FY 2025-96. The details of the works can be obtained from our website www.tgnpdcl.in

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Operation :: Nizamabad.

The Pioneer
Hyderabad

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WEDNESDAY APRIL 23, 2025

‘I’ve surpassed the stage of finding similarities between me and my characters’

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

In a candid chat with *The Pioneer*, actress Helly Shah opens up about her refreshing new avatar in the sitcom *Zyada Matt Udd*, where she plays a feisty air hostess with unapologetic sass and “main character energy.” From navigating the challenges of comedy to drawing strength from her Gujarati roots, Helly talks about breaking stereotypes, her instinctive approach to picking roles, and why she believes *Sufiyana* still remains a defining moment in her career

Helly Shah has long been a familiar face on Indian television, known for her emotionally layered and impactful performances. But with *Zyada Matt Udd*, the actor is entering uncharted skies—this time, quite literally—as she steps into the shoes of Kajal, a spirited air hostess in a genre she’s been itching to explore: situational comedy. With its vibrant setting and ensemble-driven storytelling, *Zyada Matt Udd* marks a departure from the intense roles that have defined her career so far, offering Helly the perfect playground to experiment with comic timing and character quirks.

For Helly, this role wasn’t just another assignment—it was a chance to stretch creative boundaries and dive into a character who’s bold, self-assured and unapologetically herself. In this interview with ***The Pioneer***, the actor opens up about breaking stereotypes, the camaraderie with her co-stars, the challenge of perfecting comic timing, and the joy of staying connected to her Gujarati roots through her upcoming film projects.

Stepping into a fresh avatar in the sitcom *Zyada Matt Udd*, and playing an air hostess named Kajal—a character that stands apart from anything she’s portrayed before. For the actor, the appeal of the show was immediate. “I think the show itself is a very fresh one, something that we haven’t seen in a really, really long time. This is a sitcom, and that genre isn’t much explored. I’ve been wanting to explore it for a while, so when this came in, it was a no-brainer,” shares the *Gullak season 4* fame.

Kajal, her character, is bold, assertive, and unapologetically herself. Helly said that while she no longer tries to find similarities between her characters and herself, Kajal still left a mark. “She doesn’t give a damn. She has that main character energy all the time, twenty-four seven,” Helly said with a smile. “She knows her worth really well. She’s that sorted girl who knows what she wants and what not. She treats herself as a queen and that’s really beautiful.”

Interestingly, Helly didn’t draw much from real-life air hostesses or pop culture while preparing for the role. Instead, the emphasis was on the dynamic between the six lead characters and their camaraderie. “There’s this vibe between these six friends that we really wanted to bring out. It’s something like ‘yeh log bahut saalon se jaante hain ek dusre ko, but unki apni hi alag bhasad chal rahi hai life mein’. We did have our workshops and tried to improvise ourselves.”

Comedy, she admits, came with its own challenges. “Yes, comedy is definitely difficult. I feel in real life I’m not very funny. This is all about timing and being nuanced. We had our share of reading workshops and everything to understand each other better.” She added that regular meetings and rehearsals with the team played a huge part in making the process easier. “We used to meet regularly, and that really helped in understanding who’s doing what, sharing suggestions and being on the same page. We have a great cast that’s very, very supportive.”

When asked about who made her crack up the most on set, she laughed and said, “If I had to name one, I think Gaurav. He has really, really good timing. And also Satish. But overall, I feel we have a very, very good cast.”

Having explored television, OTT, and now a sitcom, Helly described how she chooses her roles. “I go by gut feeling. If I’m unsure or in two minds, I don’t do it. I have to be extremely sure and it has to be exciting enough for me to just even go and audition for the character,” she explained. “I also look at the project as a whole—the premise, the genre and whether it’s something I’ve done before. I want to do different projects and characters that people don’t imagine me doing.”

One such defining role for her was in *Sufiyana Pyaar Mera*, where she played a double role. “That show really pushed me as an actor. Now that I think about it—it’s been five or six years—I know I could have done so many things differently. But at that time, with the schedule we had, I gave it my all. That show changed my perspective on how I pick projects and characters. It’s very close to my heart.”

As for what’s next, Helly revealed that she has two Gujarati films lined up for release this year. “One is a film that I shot in January, and the other was done about two years ago. Now that they’re finally releasing, I’m very excited. Both are very different, and being a Gujarati, it makes me very proud to be working in the Gujarati industry. Like I always say, I’m a proud Gujarati—you can’t take that out of my system!”

Guiding dreams, not just applications

PNS|HYDERABAD

For many students, studying abroad is a dream clouded by confusion and conflicting advice. But for those who find their way to eduVelocity Global, that journey becomes a thoughtfully mapped-out adventure. Founded by Vinu Warrier, the organisation doesn’t just prepare students for college—it prepares them for life. With a mentorship model that starts early and goes deep, they are reshaping how India approaches global education.

“We’re probably the most personalized education advisory in the country,” says the Managing Partner adding, “Most consultancies come in just a year before applications. We start working with students four to five years in advance. It’s about understanding who they are, not just where they want to go.”

Here, students are matched with dedicated counselors who guide them through profile building, psychometric testing, subject selection, extracurriculars and eventually, college essays and applications. “Our goal is to build a relationship, not just submit forms,” he adds.

Warrier stresses that getting into a top college isn’t the only marker of success. “For us, it’s not about brand names—it’s about fit. That includes academics, personality, finances, even geography,” he says.

This best-fit model has helped over 5,000 students receive admission offers from universities across the globe—many of them on scholarships. “We’ve helped students secure over $45 million in scholarships. You don’t get that kind of success with a cookie-cutter approach.”

MANY OF OUR TEAM MEMBERS VOLUNTARILY TOOK PAY CUTS JUST SO WE COULD CONTINUE SUPPORTING STUDENTS. THAT’S THE KIND OF CULTURE WE’VE BUILT

Long before the world went online, eduVelocity was already serving students in multiple countries through virtual sessions. So when the pandemic hit, their transition was seamless. “We didn’t have to change much. In fact, that year alone, 115 of our students received over 600 admission offers.”

What stood out was the commitment of the team. “Many of our team members voluntarily took pay cuts just so we could continue supporting students. That’s the kind of culture we’ve built,” he says.

The pandemic also shifted how students evaluated universities. “Health, safety and wellness became as important as academics. We adapted quickly to those changing priorities.”

Warrier is especially passionate about bringing quality counselling to smaller towns. “There’s so much untapped potential in tier 2 and 3 cities. Our model is particularly effective for mid-range students—not just toppers.”

Unlike agencies that cater mostly to urban elite, eduVelocity aims to democratise access. “Our strongest growth has come through word-of-mouth. That says a lot about the trust parents and students place in us.” In an industry often driven by commissions and affiliations with foreign universities, eduVelocity stands apart. “We don’t take a single rupee from colleges or aggregators. That’s a conscious decision,” Warrier states.

He believes that such independence allows the organization to focus entirely on what’s best for the student. “We’re not here to fill quotas or push certain universities. That’s why our students get into places like Brown, UPenn, Dartmouth and Cornell—with scholarships.”

Beyond academics, they encourage students to explore their interests and grow as individuals. One such initiative is the eduVelocity Global Business Challenge (EGBC), where students work on real-world business ideas.

“These platforms help students develop critical thinking, teamwork and leadership,” Warrier says. “It also strengthens their college applications, because they’re doing meaningful work, not just attending workshops for certificates.”

Some students even travel abroad for competitions or campus visits. “It’s not just about winning. It’s about broadening their perspective,” he adds.

They also works with schools to host university fairs and awareness sessions. One standout initiative was in partnership with Satluj Public School in Panchkula, where students from smaller towns got to interact with global university reps on their own campus.

“Events like that are game changers. It opens doors for students who may never have thought studying abroad was possible.”

Behind every student’s success is a well-informed counselor. eduVelocity takes this seriously, investing in monthly training sessions, expert-led workshops and international visits.

“We have people from the College Board, IELTS and top universities come in to train our team. Our counselors have visited campuses like Yale, NYU Abu Dhabi, and NUS to stay updated. That firsthand exposure helps us guide students better.” As they enter its second decade, the mission is clear—scale responsibly while staying true to their student-first values.

“We want to do more pro bono work, especially for students from financially weaker backgrounds. And we’re expanding our services in Indian university admissions too. Families need help navigating that space.”

He also sees tremendous opportunity in spreading awareness through early psychometric testing and career exploration. “Whether it’s a top Delhi school or a rural campus in Himachal Pradesh—we want every child to have access to the right information at the right time.”

At its core, their success lies in its unwavering belief in the student. “We’re not agents. We’re mentors. We don’t sell dreams—we guide them,” Warrier concludes.

Boosting conversions with agentic AI

In a digital economy where every click costs, every lead counts—and yet, most businesses still struggle to turn interest into intent, and intent into action. The problem? Lag, friction and missed opportunities. And the culprit behind that? Outdated engagement models built for another era of customer behaviour. Enter Agentic AI—a smarter, context-aware, goal-driven solution that’s rapidly reshaping how businesses approach lead conversion. By enabling real-time, two-way engagement, it doesn’t just chat—it acts. It’s not here to replace marketers; it’s here to supercharge them.

FROM GENERIC TO GENERATIVE TO AGENTIC

We’ve come a long way from static lead forms and templated emails. Generative AI took a leap forward by making conversations feel more natural. But this goes a step further. It’s not just about generating content—it’s about generating outcomes. It is built to take ownership of workflows. It doesn’t just answer questions—it asks the right ones. It doesn’t just respond—it remembers, adapts and drives each interaction forward toward a defined goal. Think of it as a digital salesperson, one that never sleeps, never misses a lead, and always knows what to say next.

THE POWER OF REAL-TIME, TWO-WAY ENGAGEMENT

What makes Agentic AI so powerful is its ability to meet users where they are—and guide them intelligently in real time. Whether it’s a website visitor at 2 a.m. or a WhatsApp message triggered from a YouTube video, Agentic AI steps in immediately, holding a context-rich, two-way conversation that feels personal and purposeful.

This real-time responsiveness does more than improve the customer experience—it directly impacts conversion rates. In fact, businesses using Agentic AI report:

- Massively reduced lead leakage due to instant qualification
- 5–7x improvement in conversion from CTWA (Click-to-WhatsApp) campaigns
- Reduced call center load, freeing up teams to focus on high-intent leads

It’s Not Just a Chatbot. It’s a Closing Machine. Unlike traditional bots, which follow rigid flows, Agentic AI is flexible. It understands nuance. If a customer changes direction midway through a conversation—asks about pricing, or jumps to another product—the system pivots. It re-routes the journey, not with pre-set scripts but with intelligent decisions.

And this isn’t just for SaaS or D2C brands. Agentic AI is already making a measurable impact across verticals like real estate, fertility clinics, financial services, and education—industries where high-ticket items demand high-touch engagement, but scale has always been the problem.

FROM ENGAGEMENT TO INTELLIGENCE

The other unsung superpower of Agentic AI? Data. Every conversation becomes a data point. Every drop-off, a lesson. Every conversion, a map. And when these interactions are unified into a single dashboard, marketers get a clear, actionable view of the entire funnel—from first click to final decision. Agentic AI doesn’t just help you engage better. It helps you understand better. And that intelligence feeds right back into the system, creating a closed loop of optimisation that drives consistent growth.

SUMMING IT ALL UP

At its heart, Agentic AI is about reducing the distance between interest and action. It’s about making every interaction count. And for marketing and growth teams, it’s about finally having a system that works as hard as they do.
We’re already seeing businesses rethink their entire marketing stack around Agentic AI—not just as a support tool, but as a central engine for customer engagement. The brands that adopt it early won’t just see better conversions. They’ll build smarter, more responsive businesses ready for the next era of growth. Because in a world that moves fast, the ones who respond faster—win.

(The author, Dikshant Dave, is the CEO of Zigment.)

PARTY

Ananya Nagalla

The vibrant city of Hyderabad witnessed a star-studded evening as Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) players made a special appearance at a Meet and Greet in Illuzion Club and Kitchen, located in Jubilee Hills. Several key players from the SRH team including Travis head, Klaasen, Ishan kishan and Nitish Reddy took part in the celebrations.

Travis head and klaasen

Nayanaka

JSP Hyundai has partnered with Surya Travels and Logistics Pvt Ltd to promote CNG-powered transportation, aiming to reduce carbon emissions and encourage sustainable mobility in the corporate sector. As part of this green initiative, a fleet of 35 Hyundai Aura CNG vehicles was handed over to Srinivas Murthy, MD of Surya Travels, at the JSP Hyundai showroom in Jubilee Hills on Tuesday.

P.Prudhvi Reddy and V.Snigdha

The students of Sri Saraswati Junior College in Banjara Hills have made their mark in the recently announced Intermediate results. The college achieved an impressive 97% pass percentage, with several students securing top marks in their respective streams. In the Secondary MPC stream, Jasmitha scored an outstanding 990 marks, while Rushi secured 989 marks in the Secondary BiPC stream. In the First Year MPC, Satyajeeth scored 462 marks, and Rohit scored 432 marks in the First Year BiPC.

The official poster of "Chitramrutham 2.0", a grand musical celebration honouring the legendary playback singer K.S. Chithra and her glorious 45-year musical journey, was unveiled in Hyderabad by noted singer S.P. Charan and Oscar-winning lyricist Chandrabose. The event is scheduled to be held on June 14. Venue details will be announced shortly.

Photos by- SV Chary

LISTINGS

vivo Launches T4 5G

Vivo has unveiled its latest addition to the series T- the vivo T4 5G. Featuring India's biggest-ever 7300 mAh high-density battery and 90W FlashCharge, the T4 5G delivers unmatched endurance in a sleek and slim design. Powered by the Snapdragon 7s Gen 3 processor, it delivers seamless multitasking and offers an impressive AnTuTu score of 820K+7, making it the fastest smartphone in the segment. The T4 5G also boasts a Quad-Curved AMOLED display with 5000 nits8,9 local peak brightness— the highest in the segment — and is available in two striking colours: Phantom Grey and Emerald Blaze.

Mahesh Babu & Tamannaah Bhatia joins Lloyd's latest ad campaign

Lloyd has unveiled Stunnair Air Conditioner, a standout addition to its new Luxuria Collection. Showcased in a vibrant ad featuring superstars Mahesh Babu and Tamannaah Bhatia, Stunnair is India's first AI powered designer AC with a sliding fascia and mood lighting, blending style with innovation. Designed to elevate home interiors while delivering superior cooling efficiency, it redefines luxury in air conditioning. Conceptualized by McCann, the ad film showcases the sleek design and cutting-edge features of the Stunnair AC, positioning it as more than just an air conditioner.

Suba Group Expands South India Presence

Suba Group of Hotels has expanded its footprint in South India with the launch of Click Hotel in Hyderabad. Strategically located just 10 minutes from Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, the new property offers convenient access for business and leisure travelers. This marks the group's third hotel in the city and its fourth major launch in the past two months, underscoring its ambitious growth trajectory. In a joint statement, Mansur Mehta, Managing Director, and Mubeen Mehta, CEO of Suba Group of Hotels, expressed their enthusiasm about the launch.

Anurag University has strengthened its strategic academic partnership with Arizona State University (ASU), expanding global education pathways for Indian students. Through this collaboration, students can pursue Bachelor's or Master's degrees in Computer Science, Engineering, Business, or Management.

Gyanville Academy has once again demonstrated academic excellence in the Intermediate Public Examinations (IPE). In the first-year MPC stream, Aare Dhanush scored an impressive 465, while in the MEC stream, Vutukur Bhavya Raaga, Gaddam Pranavi, and Karthika Poreddy achieved a perfect 493. Second-year results were equally outstanding, with Kasam Ashutosh scoring 992 and Kotha Krishna Chaitanya 989 in MPC. In the MEC stream, Meghavardhan Kaniki Reddy secured 984, followed closely by Karna Akki Aakruthi with 983.

FUN

ARCHIE

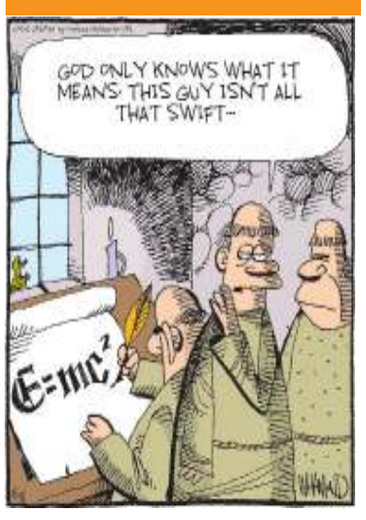
CALVIN AND HOBBES

GARFIELD

NANCY

GINGER MEGGS

REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP

SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

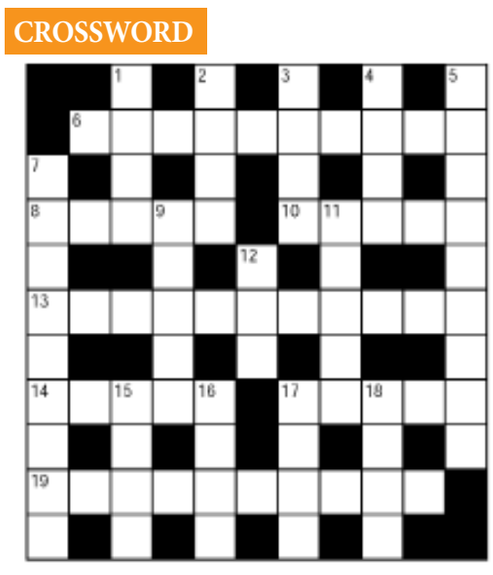
Yesterday's solution

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

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.

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

6 A traffic circle where roads cross
8 A pointy thing that indicates direction
10 Snapshot
13 A greeting (4,7)
14 Salty water from the eyes
17 Rubber covers on wheels
19 Getting better after illness

DOWN

1 Bitter-tasting
2 Cold winter crystals
3 Moist
4 A song for one singer
5 The most powerful
7 Female children
9 A command
11 Bees make this
12 A fishing pole
15 A curved support under a bridge
16 Rescue
17 Grow weary
18 Wear this on a finger

SOLUTION

PRIYADARSHI: NO PRESSURE AFTER *COURT*, JUST EXCITED FOR *SARANGAPANI JATAKAM*

PNS|HYDERABAD

With a string of successful films under his belt, actor Priyadarshi is currently on a high. Following the success of *Court*, his next film *Sarangapani Jatakam* is gearing up for release on April 25. Directed by Mohana Krishna Indraganti and produced by Sivalenka Krishna Prasad under the prestigious Sridevi Movies banner, the film promises to be a deeply emotional, relatable narrative—something that has become a hallmark of Priyadarshi's film choices.

In an interaction with the media ahead of the film's release, Priyadarshi shared his excitement and insights into *Sarangapani Jatakam* and his career trajectory.

Reflecting on his current frame of mind post-Court, Priyadarshi said, "I heard the story of *Sarangapani Jatakam* last year. It was supposed to be released at the end of last year but got delayed a bit. Now it's releasing on April 25. I'm really happy to come back with this film right after a hit like *Court*. I'm confident and not under any pressure."

The film's protagonist is a man deeply rooted in astrology. When asked if he personally believes in horoscopes, Priyadarshi admitted, "Not to the extent shown in the movie, but I do believe in them to some extent. In this industry, nothing is really under our control. We just try to make good cinema, but the result is not in our hands."

He added that while the team initially planned to release the film earlier, business and theatre availability factors led them to finalise April 25 as the release date.

Clarifying the film's stance, Priyadarshi said, "We're not saying one should believe or shouldn't believe in horoscopes. But we are showing what happens when someone imposes their beliefs on others. We haven't taken sides in the story."

When it comes to his preferences in film narratives, Priyadarshi is clear: he gravitates towards stories that reflect real, grounded experiences. "I believe common man characters reach a wider audience. Be it *Mallesham* or *Sarangapani*, these are people we see around us. Their journeys are often painful. Stories like *Mallesham, Balagam, Court* and *Sarangapani* are all rooted in our surroun dings," he explained, adding that in this film, he plays a young man who strongly believes in horoscopes.

While Priyadarshi's roots lie in comedy, his evolution into a lead actor hasn't strayed far from his origins. "Making people laugh is very difficult these days. Indraganti has great comic timing. I've never played a role like this before. It feels very fresh. I believe the character and the film will connect with everyone," he said.

Riding high on the success of *Court*, actor Priyadarshi returns with *Sarangapani Jatakam*, a film he describes as emotionally rich and rooted in the lives of everyday people. Set to release on April 25, the film is directed by Mohana Krishna Indraganti and produced by Sridevi Movies. Confident and excited, Priyadarshi says there's no pressure this time—only joy in bringing another heartfelt story to the audience

Sarangapani Jatakam also presented a linguistic shift for the actor. "So far, I've mostly spoken in the Telangana dialect. But in this film, I speak in the Andhra dialect. I tried to follow Indraganti sir's style. He created a separate track and timing for me, and I think audiences will like it," he noted.

Speaking about his experience working with industry veterans, Priyadarshi shared, "They are all amazing actors and true legends. Tanikella Bharani, Naresh, Avasarala Srinivas—working with them was a delight. Vennela Kishore is a fantastic artist. Viva Harsha has great timing. Despite being seniors, everyone was very friendly and we had fun during the shoot." As for whether he felt any pressure as the lead actor, Priyadarshi was quick to dismiss the idea. "It was Indraganti sir who worked the hardest for this film. More than me, it was his effort. I just followed his direction on set. I never felt any pressure," he said.

Priyadarshi also recalled how astrology once tried to dissuade him from pursuing a film career. "Yes, before I entered the industry, astrologers said I would never become an actor. But I didn't care about any of that. My mother got my horoscope checked out of concern. I came into the industry with faith in myself and my work," he said.

Speaking about what truly draws audiences to theatres, Priyadarshi remarked, "Some films revolve around characters. In *Court*, not just me, all characters stood out. It got great word-of-mouth and became a blockbuster. People don't come to the theatres just because I'm in a film—they come because they believe the film will have a strong point or content. Today's audiences are very clear about what to watch and what to skip. Only meaningful films are working."

When a film doesn't perform well, Priyadarshi believes in learning from the experience. "Absolutely. When a film fails, I always introspect. I look at where I went wrong, what could've been done differently, and make sure to be more careful next time," he said.

While emotional, content-driven roles remain his forte, Priyadarshi isn't opposed to donning a massy avatar. "There are many action heroes in our industry. Mass commercial entertainers pull great collections too. But look at Nani—he did *Dasara* and then *Hi Nanna* and both were hits. Earlier, even Chiranjeevi, Rajinikanth, and Balakrishna followed this format—doing all kinds of films and impressing everyone. I want to do the same. If Srikanth Odela is ready, I'll pick up a sword!" he quipped with a laugh.

Describing his first interaction with director Mohana Krishna Indraganti, Priyadarshi recalled, "I used to dream of just taking a picture with Indraganti sir. But he came to me with a story! The moment I heard it, I felt it was amazing. He called it the story of a horoscope-crazy guy and told me the title *Sarangapani Jatakam*. I loved the title too. I told him, 'Sir, it's an amazing title.' I'll never forget my first day shooting with him. I hope everyone gets a chance to work with Indraganti sir." On working with veteran producer Sivalenka Krishna Prasad, Priyadarshi said, "He's a great producer. He produced classics like *Aditya 369*. Even now, he respectfully addresses newcomers like me as 'sir.' He's very humble. I consider myself lucky to have worked under his banner."

With the film's release just around the corner, the team is in full promotional swing. "We're going to Vizag for *Sarangapani Jatakam* promotions. We're doing events there and will be organizing premiere shows too. We want to show the film a bit early—if people like it, they can come to the theatres. Our film will entertain everyone with laughter," Priyadarshi assured.

Priyadarshi firmly believes that today's audiences are more inclined toward content-rich films. "Yes, today's audience prefers films with solid content. They love stories of the common man. In films like *Lucky Bhaskar* and *Pushpa*, the hero is a common man who rises. Even Chiranjeevi sir did many such films in the past and won hearts," he said.

On the work front, Priyadarshi has exciting projects lined up. "I'm doing a film called *Premante* with a new director under Asian Cinemas. I'm also doing another project titled *Mitramandali* under Geetha Arts, produced by Bunny Vas. I'm listening to a few more scripts. I want to focus more on films with strong roles," he concluded.

Mahesh Babu summoned by ED in real estate scam case involving Rs 5.9 crore

Superstar Mahesh Babu, who is currently immersed in the shoot of his much-anticipated film *SSMB29* with director SS Rajamouli, has found himself in an unexpected spotlight—this time off-screen. According to reports, the actor has been issued a summons by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with a real estate scam and an alleged money laundering case involving a staggering Rs. 5.9 crore. He has reportedly been asked to appear on April 27.

The investigation centers around two Hyderabad-based real estate companies that are under fire for allegedly duping homebuyers. What brings Mahesh Babu into the picture is his reported association with one of the prime accused companies—Sai Surya Ventures. According to the report, the Kurchi Madathapetti star received Rs. 5.9 crore for endorsing the firm, which has now come under the ED's radar for financial fraud.

While there's no direct allegation of wrongdoing on Mahesh Babu's part, authorities are probing whether the actor was paid using proceeds from the scam. His promotion of the brand allegedly encouraged several investors to put money into the venture, unaware of its potential fraudulent background.

Sources close to the ED reveal that the cash payment made to the actor is considered a significant lead in the ongoing probe. The case gained momentum after Telangana police registered an FIR against the directors of the two real estate firms. As of now, there has been no official statement from Mahesh Babu or his team regarding the summons. However, he is expected to fully cooperate with the authorities as the investigation unfolds further.

On the work front, Mahesh Babu continues to draw fan frenzy with his upcoming project *SSMB29*, touted as a cinematic spectacle. With a massive star cast including Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Prithviraj Sukumaran, the film has been creating buzz despite the makers keeping all details tightly under wraps.

Outside the professional whirlwind, the actor recently returned from a serene European getaway with his family. Wife and former actor Namrata Shirodkar shared picturesque glimpses from their countryside vacation, showing Mahesh in a relaxed avatar far removed from the current headlines.

JR NTR BEGINS NEW SCHEDULE OF ACTION DRAMA WITH PRASHANTH NEEL

Man of Masses Jr NTR has officially resumed shooting for his highly anticipated action drama with director Prashanth Neel. Tentatively titled NTR-Neel or Dragon, the film is being touted as a high-octane, mass-loaded saga that fans are eagerly waiting for.

After a brief initial schedule in Hyderabad a few months ago, Jr NTR has now joined the team for a new leg of the shoot in Karnataka. A massive set resembling a port has been constructed near the seashore in Mangaluru, where the actor began filming today.

Although the makers have yet to share any official pictures or sneak peeks from the location, fans have already taken to social media demanding a first look at Tarak in action. The buzz surrounding the shoot has been palpable, with expectations riding high on the film's scale and intensity.

This particular schedule is expected to span four days, with an official update from the production team anticipated shortly. The film marks Jr NTR's first collaboration with KGF and Salaar director Prashanth Neel, adding further excitement to the project.

Rukmini Vasanth is likely to be cast opposite Jr NTR in the film, which is being made on a grand scale under the Mythri Movie Makers and NTR Arts banners. Music for the film is being composed by Ravi Basrur, whose high-energy scores have become synonymous with action blockbusters.

Director Krish's career in Limbo as *Ghati* stalls & *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* remains unfinished

Director Krish, known for his impactful storytelling with films like *Gamyam* and *Vedam*, once stood as one of Telugu cinema's most promising filmmakers. While his work has often received critical acclaim, Krish's career has been marred by recurring setbacks when it comes to large-scale commercial success.

One of the most highly anticipated projects in his filmography was *Hari Hara Veera Mallu*, a historical action drama starring Power Star Pawan Kalyan. The announcement of this collaboration raised major expectations across the industry. Many believed it would catapult Krish into a new league of stardom. However, the reality turned out to be far more complicated.

The project faced an endless series of delays, from scheduling conflicts to logistical issues, eventually pushing Krish to walk away from it. While the film remains unfinished with no clear timeline in sight, it marked a significant detour in the director's career.

Post-*Veera Mallu*, Krish shifted gears and quietly began work on a new project titled *Ghati*, starring Anushka Shetty in the lead role. The film's first look and initial promos received an encouraging response, sparking hope among his fans for a strong comeback. The release date was locked for April 18, and even a promotional video confirmed the announcement.

However, as the date neared, silence engulfed the project. With no updates on the film's progress, marketing, or release strategy, the buzz around *Ghati* began to fade. Fans who were eagerly waiting to see Anushka's return and Krish's signature storytelling were left disappointed once again.

Now, with both *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* and *Ghati* in limbo, the director's journey seems to be at a standstill. It's a tough spot for someone who once redefined mainstream Telugu cinema with content-driven narratives.

Supporters of Krish still hold faith in his talent and vision, hoping that he gets the platform and momentum he deserves. As the film industry continues to evolve, it remains to be seen when the director will finally make his much-awaited return to form.

Romance, action & mystery await as *6Journey* hits screens on April 25

The upcoming Telugu film *6Journey*, produced by Palyam Ravi Prakash Reddy under Aruna Kumari Films, is all set for a grand theatrical release on April 25. Directed by Basir Alluri, the film features an ensemble cast including Ravi Prakash Reddy, Sameer Datta, Tasty Teja, Pallavi Rathod and Ramya Reddy.

At the trailer launch event, director Basir Alluri expressed his gratitude to the team and shared his excitement about the film's release. "Our hero Sameer has worked incredibly hard for this film. Ravi Prakash Reddy has led this project from the front. Our heroines have delivered outstanding performances and Tasty Teja brought tremendous energy to his role. Simha garu provided us with excellent songs and Surendar Reddy garu guided us throughout. This film reached this stage because of him and I will always be indebted to him. We're thrilled to release the trailer and the movie will hit theaters on April 25. I'm confident it will impress the audience," he said.

Lead actor Sameer Datta described the film as a compelling mix of genres. "*6Journey* is a unique love, action, and thriller movie. The entire team has worked tirelessly and Basir garu has crafted the film beautifully. I thank our producer, Palyam Ravi Prakash Reddy garu, for his support. As the movie releases on April 25, I wholeheartedly request everyone to bless and support our film."

Actress Pallavi Rathod added, "*6Journey* is coming to you on April 25. With the support of Basir garu and Ravi Prakash garu, the film has been made exceptionally well. It has all the elements to entertain, and I'm sure it will resonate with everyone." Tasty Teja, who plays a full-length role in the film, also shared his excitement: "Playing a full-length role in *6Journey* will earn me recognition as an actor. The success of this journey is thanks to Basir garu and our producer, Ravi Prakash garu. We urge everyone to support this film, releasing on April 25."

ALCC RECEIVES WARM RECEPTION AHEAD OF RELEASE

The upcoming film *ALCC (O Universal Bachelor)*, directed and produced by Leleedhar Rao Kola under the LR Film Circuits banner, is all set for a grand theatrical release on April 25. Following a positive response to the trailer, the team recently hosted a pre-release event was attended by notable directors, media personnel, and well-wishers from the industry.

Hero JP Naveen, who marks his debut with this film, shared his heartfelt appreciation for the opportunity and support. "I sincerely thank all the media friends for attending today's event. For a youngster with no background, getting an opportunity as a lead actor is very rare — and the media knows that best. I'm truly thankful to director Leleedhar Rao Kola garu for giving me such a big break. The cinematography and music in this film have come out wonderfully. I request everyone to support newcomers like us," he said.

Director Nagesh, speaking at the event, emphasised the importance of supporting unique voices in cinema. "Whether it's a small film or a big one, unique content should always be encouraged. Though this is a small film, it offers a fresh perspective. Director Leleedhar Rao Kola has crafted it very well. Just as a farmer doesn't quit farming due to losses, we too won't stop making films because of failures. We'll continue striving to make meaningful cinema."

Director Samudra lauded the director's transition from education to cinema, saying, "Leleedhar Rao Kola is a good teacher who has inspired many young minds with valuable lessons. Today, he's taken a new path as a director and producer with this film. I sincerely wish *ALCC* becomes a grand success."

Concluding the event, Leleedhar Rao Kola shared, "My heartfelt thanks to all the guests and media friends who came forward to encourage our film. We made this movie with great passion, and I truly believe it will connect with the audience. Our entire team has worked very hard, and I thank each one of them. I also express my sincere gratitude to directors Nagesh garu and Samudra garu for their unwavering support."

ALCC stars JP Naveen and Sravani Setti in the lead, supported by Srikar Komanduri, Kamal, Sham Nayak, Nethra, Harinadh Raju and Rajeev Kolar. With cinematography by S Charan Teja and music by Jashwanth P, the film promises to deliver a fresh cinematic experience with a mix of romance, humour and youth-centric storytelling.

SRH desperately need win against Mumbai Indians

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hyderabad

The misfiring Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) will hope for a happy homecoming when they take on a resurrected Mumbai Indians (MI) here on Wednesday, eyeing a much-needed victory to revive their campaign in the Indian Premier League.

With only two wins in seven outings, SRH are in a desperate situation. Their power-packed batting has let them down more often than not while their bowlers are not making any strong impression either. That SRH are a one-dimensional side has been proven by the manner in which it has struggled on slow and turning pitches. The Pat Cummins-led outfit has lost two home matches too.

Their four-wicket defeat to MI in Mumbai on a tricky Wankhede pitch with grip and turn was the most recent instance of their frailties being exposed in challenging conditions. SRH batters thrive on flat wickets which produce high-scoring contests and having a favourable surface against MI would give the them the best chance to find some momentum.

Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head will have their task cut out against MI given SRH's chances of winning hinge, to a large extent, on the left-handed opening pair. Their success in the powerplay defines the team's fortunes in a contest.

Abhishek smacked a 55-ball 141 in his last outing here against Punjab Kings to record the highest individual total for any batter in this IPL.

There will be, however, some concerns around Head who hasn't gone all guns blazing like he usually does and SRH will want their Australian star to be at the top of his game.

A defeat would put SRH in a tough situation. They will also have to be wary of their head-to-head record against Mumbai Indians. The team has won 10 out of their 24 matches while losing 14.

For Mumbai Indians, it is a perfect opportunity to test their resurgence in an away game before they return home to face Lucknow Super Giants in Mumbai on Sunday. Mumbai Indians have put their disappointing start to the IPL behind with three consecutive wins.

The five-time champions are coming off a massive nine-wicket hammering of Chennai Super Kings on a batting-friendly wicket on which they went over the line chasing a target near 180 with more than four overs to spare. Rohit Sharma's sensational 76 not out and Suryakumar Yadav's 68 not out with all his trademark shots coming out fluently signalled the return to form of MI's two batting pillars.

Tilak Varma did not get to bat against CSK but the left-hander has been in prime form, while Naman Dhir has shown signs of hitting his strides as a finisher alongside skipper Hardik Pandya.

Jasprit Bumrah has not been at his menacing best when it comes to taking wickets but the ace India bowler has begun nailing his line and lengths perfectly.

This could be a warning sign for the SRH batters given MI tend to use Bumrah more strategically, with Trent Boult and Deepak Chahar sharing the new ball.

The nature of the surface could have a bearing on the outcome with SRH's two wins here coming on flat decks ensuring run-fests in their contests against Rajasthan Royals and Punjab Kings earlier.

Teams

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD: Pat Cummins (c), Ishan Kishan (wk), Atharva Taide, Abhinav Manohar, Aniket Verma, Sachin Baby, Smaran Ravichandran, Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Travis Head, Harshal Patel, Kamindu Mendis, Wiaan Mulder, Abhishek Sharma, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Mohammed Shami, Rahul Chahar, Simarjeet Singh, Zeeshan Ansari, Jaydev Unadkat, Eshan Malinga.

MUMBAI INDIANS: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Robin Minz, Ryan Rickelton (wk), Shrijith Krishnan (wk), Bevon Jacobs, Tilak Varma, Naman Dhir, Will Jacks, Mitchell Santner, Raj Angad Bawa, Vignesh Puthur, Corbin Bosch, Trent Boult, Karn Sharma, Deepak Chahar, Ashwani Kumar, Reece Topley, VS Penmetsa, Arjun Tendulkar, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Jasprit Bumrah.

KKR batters are low on confidence: Bravo

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) batsmen are "low on confidence" right now, the team's mentor Dwayne Bravo conceded after the franchise slumped to its fifth loss in eight IPL matches this season but refused to blame the much-talked about Eden Gardens pitch for the side's woes.

KKR were handed a 39-run loss by Gujarat Titans here on Monday with skipper Ajinkya Rahane's 36-ball 50 being the only knock of substance in the steep chase of 198 here.

"IPL is a tough tournament, and when you do not start well, you know, batsmen go into a period where they lose confidence," Bravo said at the post-match media interaction, summing up the mood in the dressing room.

"That's what's happening at the moment. So like I said, we just have to keep backing them, and hopefully they come good. Our batters, low in confidence and normally runs bring confidence.

"Form brings confidence. And we, at the moment, to be honest, don't have that confidence," he explained.

The Eden Gardens surface has been under the spotlight this season after the KKR camp voiced concerns about not getting its preferred home track. However, Bravo steered clear of blaming the pitch.

"Nothing is wrong with the wicket. I didn't come here to talk about the wicket. I think both teams play on the same wicket. We did not play a good game of cricket. They played better than us," he asserted.

Last night's loss came close on the heels of an embarrassing collapse against Punjab Kings, where they were bundled out for 95 while chasing just 112. Bravo insisted that despite the horror run, the batsmen have been doing everything they can to regain rhythm in practice.

"...They are not sitting back and missing practice. So as coaches, as a group, we cannot fault the effort. It's just not working out in the middle. But I have to just keep backing the team and supporting the guys." Asked about the big-hitting Andre Russell's continued struggles with the bat, Bravo was quick to dismiss the idea of teams targetting their star all-rounder in particular.

"Russell is not the only one who is struggling at the moment. Russell is an experienced player, he's a successful player. Actually as a team we're not batting properly. So that's just the reality.

"...But as a group, we have to make sure that the players keep putting in their work and practice, keep preparing well, try to keep them mentally focused," he explained.

Rahane has done the heavy-lifting, and young Angkrish Raghuvanshi has impressed with his fluent strokeplay. KKR's decision to send the promising youngster as low as number nine as an impact sub raised several eyebrows in their match against GT.

Bravo, however, defended the move.

"Well, we didn't start the game for him to bat at number nine. But the way how the game panned out, eventually, he ended up at number nine. So, you know, we tried to create that left-right combination," he reasoned.

"He's one of our better players. He's been doing very well for us throughout the season. But when you're chasing 200, you try to maximise as much as possible and try to get the guys who have the ability to really hit the ball in the middle."

Bravo however did admit that they were "caught up" with the left-right combination and Raghunvanshi ended up batting way down the order when the match had all but slipped out of their hands.

Bravo acknowledged that finishing has become a massive problem for KKR.

"...There is a fine line between backing a player and trying to come up with the best combination that we can also try to make some changes, make some necessary adjustments to give the team that spot that is missing.

"It's something we have to discuss as a group, as a staff."

It was not on my roster: Harsha Bhogle on absence from commentary panel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Noted commentator Harsha Bhogle has rejected speculation that he was kept away from the IPL match between Kolkata Knight Riders and Gujarat Titans on Monday due to a complaint by the Cricket Association of Bengal, insisting that he was only empanelled for two games in Kolkata, which are over. His clarification came a day after the CAB's letter to the BCCI, sent about 10 days ago by its secretary Naresh Ojha, was revealed in media reports. In the letter, the body asked for the removal of Bhogle and New Zealand's Simon Doull from the commentary panel for matches in Kolkata after they stated that the Eden Gardens pitch was not helping the local franchise Kolkata Knight Riders.

"There are some inappropriate conclusions being drawn about why I wasn't at yesterday's game in Kolkata. Quite simply, it wasn't on the list of matches I was down to do!" Bhogle posted on 'X'.

"Asking me would have resolved the issue. Rosters are done before the tournament starts. I was rostered for two games in Kolkata. I was there for the first and an illness in the family prevented me from being at the 2nd," he added without specifying the games. KKR played against Gujarat Titans at the Eden Gardens on Monday and lost by 39 runs.

Both KKR captain Ajinkya Rahane and head coach Chandrakant Pandit have demanded a more spin friendly track at the venue and expressed their frustration at not being given a track that suits their attack featuring Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine and Moeen Ali.

After the CAB threw its weight behind curator Sujan Mukherjee, Doull had suggested that KKR should look for a new base given that Mukherjee was not fulfilling the team's requirements.

Bhogle had also stated that KKR deserved to have the home advantage.

Kolkata Knight Riders struggling in IPL 2025: Morgan after loos to GT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) have struggled with batting issues throughout this IPL season and the changes made for the home game against Gujarat Titans (GT) were not effective, feels former captain Eoin Morgan.

KKR's loss to Gujarat Titans by 39 runs here on Monday was their second consecutive defeat in the tournament, third in the last five matches and overall fifth in eight games.

It has also been a season of struggle at home for the three-time champions who have also lost three of the four matches at the Eden Gardens.

"Kolkata Knight Riders has simply not bounced back as well as we would have liked them to. It's always a good sign for a strong team with a lot of character around, but they had the same failures that they've shown throughout the tournament," said JioStar expert Morgan.

"They made a couple of changes (against GT), mainly to try and gain some impetus in their batting line-up, and it didn't necessarily come off. Were the changes worth it? They'll sit back and say no."

> They made a couple of changes (against GT), mainly to try and gain some impetus in their batting line-up, and it didn't necessarily come off
>
> — EOIN MORGAN, CRICKETER

Morgan said KKR failed to forge partnerships in chase of 199 as they finished at an ordinary 159 for eight.

"It was interesting to hear Ajinkya Rahane talk about 199 being a chaseable score because towards the back end of Gujarat Titans' innings, we thought the ball held up more than we expected (and) that made finding boundaries harder," Eoin Morgan said.

Morgan added, "But there was no rhythm, no substantial partnerships - almost the polar opposite of what Gujarat Titans displayed."

Morgan was all praise for India and GT pacer Prasidh Krishna who delivered another vital spell of 4-0-25-2.

"He's the purple cap holder at the moment, and his rhythm just keeps getting better. We know he has that extra bit of pace to work with, but you have to admire the strength he brings during the middle phase of the game," he said.

"As a captain, having a seamer who can make that kind of impact in the middle overs is absolutely priceless."

"He now finds himself with the most wickets in this year's tournament — by some margin, actually, by four. It's great to see him growing as a player, evolving across formats, and now being rewarded with national honours as well," Morgan added.

Jasprit Bumrah, Mandhana honoured in Wisden

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India's premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah was on Tuesday named as Leading Men's Cricketer in the World while prolific batter Smriti Mandhana grabbed the honour in the women's category in the 2025 edition of Wisden Cricketers' Almanack.

The two Indian players were honoured for their stand-out performances last year.

The 31-year-old Bumrah picked up 71 Test wickets in season 2024 at an average of 14.92, the most by any bowler with such an economy in a single year. He became the first Test bowler in history to claim 200 wickets at an average of less than 20.

In the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia, Bumrah almost single-handedly carried India's attack with 32 wickets at an average of 13.06.

At the T20 World Cup, he was named Player of the Tournament for his 15 wickets at an economy rate of just 4.17, leading India to their first ICC trophy since 2013. Women's team senior batter Smriti Mandhana made it an India double as she was named as Wisden's Leading Women's Cricketer in the World.

The 28-year-old Mandhana scored 1659 runs across formats in 2024 — the most by a woman cricketer in a calendar year of international cricket — including four ODI hundreds, which was another record.

She capped her efforts with a second Test century — 149 — in a 10-wicket win over South Africa.

Mandhana became the first Indian woman since the inception of the award to earn the title twice. She had already earned the coveted honour in 2018 also.

West Indian Nicholas Pooran was named as the Leading T20 Player in the World.

Novak Djokovic returns to Madrid Open

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Madrid

Former champion Novak Djokovic has returned to the Madrid Open for the first time in three years in hopes of achieving his 100th tour-level title. Djokovic is seeded fourth in the same half of the draw as second-seeded Carlos Alcaraz, the home favorite who arrives at the Caja Magica this week with fitness concerns after reaching consecutive clay-court finals.

The 37-year-old Djokovic, a three-time champion in Madrid, hasn't played in the Spanish capital since losing to Alcaraz in the 2022 semifinals, their first meeting. Djokovic won his 99th title last August at the Paris Olympics. He has lost four finals since then, most recently last month in Miami.

The 100-title club features only Jimmy Connors (109) and Roger Federer (103).

Over the last two weekends, Alcaraz has won the Monte Carlo Masters and lost in the Barcelona Open final, where he needed treatment on his upper right leg on Sunday.

"I'm confident it won't affect me in Madrid," he said. "That's what happens when you play so many matches and have so few days to rest. It's so demanding, and you have to give 100 per cent every day. Having played a tournament like Monte Carlo and arriving in Barcelona with few days to adapt is really tough." Alcaraz said fellow Spaniard Rafael Nadal, a five-time winner in Madrid, wrote to him after the Barcelona final to encourage him and say he hoped he wasn't injured.

"I bow at the feet of Rafa because of what he did week after week," Alcaraz said. "You have to respect that."

Alexander Zverev, number 2 in the world after winning in Munich at the weekend, was the top seed in Madrid and Taylor Fritz was the third seed. Defending champion Andrey Rublev was the seventh seed. Djokovic has a 30-9 record in Madrid, with titles in 2011, 2016 and 2019. He beat his coach Andy Murray in the 2016 final.

Alcaraz won Madrid in 2022 and 2023.

Sabalenka leads women's draw

The women's draw has 29 of the top 30 players. Number 15 Barbora Krejcikova is missing because of an injury.

Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka seeks her fourth final appearance in Madrid in five years.

She won the tournament in 2021 and 2023, and lost last year's final to Iga Swiatek, the second seed this week.

Michael Slater gets jail term for domestic violence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Sydney

Australian cricketer-turned-commentator Michael Slater was on Tuesday sentenced to four years in prison after pleading guilty to multiple charges, including domestic violence, but will be allowed to walk free immediately after having served over a year in custody.

According to a report in ABC Sport, his sentence was "partly suspended" due to the time served. The 55-year-old was charged with more than a dozen offences including domestic violence, unlawful stalking or intimidation, breaking into a dwelling with intent at night, common assault, assault occasioning bodily harm and choking or suffocation.

The prosecution told the Maroochydore District Court, that alcohol "was a repeating feature with his offending as his behaviour becomes more erratic."

"The court heard Slater made threats of self-harm as he warned the victim not to report harassment and she felt extremely fearful and exhausted by Slater's behaviour," the report read. The identity of the victim was not revealed in the report. It merely stated that she hailed from Noosa region (Queensland) and was being allegedly subjected to "assault, strangulation, burglary and stalking" since late 2023. Judge Glen Cash described Slater as an alcoholic and warned that his rehabilitation "will not be easy."