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ED action in National Herald case **is to protect** nation's assets: Goyal

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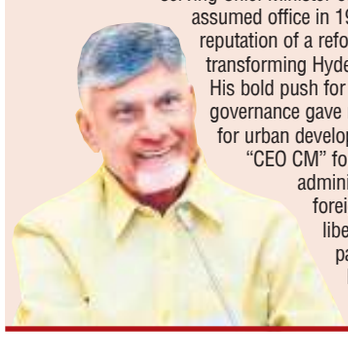
RBI to remain 'agile & proactive' **IN POLICY** action: Guv Malhotra

8

Wheels of strength, **WORLD** stage ahead

Dil se

NCBN@75
HAPPY BIRTHDAY



As Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu turns 75 on Sunday, Andhra Pradesh salutes a statesman whose political career has been defined by vision, innovation, and resilience. Marking nearly five decades in public life, Naidu remains one of India's most influential regional leaders. Born on April 20, 1950, in Naravaripalle village of Chittoor district, Naidu rose through the ranks to become the longest-serving Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. He first assumed office in 1995 and quickly earned the reputation of a reformist, credited with transforming Hyderabad into a global IT hub. His bold push for digital infrastructure and e-governance gave rise to "Cyberabad," a model for urban development in India. Dubbed the "CEO CM" for his technocratic style of administration, Naidu's focus on foreign investment, economic liberalisation, and public-private partnerships placed Andhra Pradesh on the global map.

Continued on Page 2

DON'T MISS...

'Run for Jesus' rally peaceful

The message of Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead after His crucifixion, is one of peace for all humanity, stated Most Rev Bishop T Joseph Raja Rao of the Catholic Diocese of Vijayawada and Bishop T George Cornelius of the Krishna-Godavari CSI Diocese. They made these remarks while addressing the gathering at the 'Run for Jesus' peace rally held on Saturday morning on Easter eve. The rally was jointly organised by the Andhra Pradesh Federation of Telugu Churches...

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Maha officials visit Polavaram

A delegation of senior officials from the Maharashtra Water Resources Department visited the Polavaram Irrigation Project and Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Scheme on Saturday to study their design, construction, and operational features. The visiting delegation included Sanjay Belsare, Secretary of the Maharashtra Water Resources Department; Santosh Tirmanwar, Executive Director of Godavari River Management, Aurangabad Division; Hanuman Gunale, Chief Engineer of the Water Resources Department, Pune...

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Raj and Uddhav spark reunion buzz

MNS leader Raj Thackeray has sparked speculation about a potential political rapprochement with his estranged cousin and Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, noting their past differences are "trivial" and uniting for the greater good of "Marathi manoos" is not a difficult task. The buzz strengthened when Uddhav on Saturday said he is ready to put aside trivial fights provided that those working against Maharashtra's interests will not be entertained, a veiled reference to Raj hosting Shiv Sena head and Deputy CM Eknath Shinde at his residence.In an interview with...

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Looking forward to visiting India: Musk

Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk on Saturday said he is looking forward to visiting India later this year. The tech billionaire's remarks came a day after he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke and discussed the immense potential for collaboration in technology and innovation. "It was an honor to speak with PM Modi. I am looking forward to visiting India later this year!" Musk said in a post on X. Musk is considered one of the most influential persons in the Donald Trump administration and is spearheading the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) aimed at cutting...

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SWACHH ANDHRA - SWACHH DIWAS

Educate public on e-waste: Narayana

Minister cautions officials to avoid negligence in executing the programme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development, Dr Ponguru Narayana, has cautioned officials against any laxity in the implementation of the "Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas" initiative, stressing the need for continuous efforts in e-waste management and public awareness.

Speaking during a teleconference with municipal commissioners and engineers on Saturday, Dr Narayana called for large-scale collection of electronic waste across municipalities. He directed officials to establish permanent e-waste collection centres and to organise awareness rallies to educate the public on safe disposal practices. The Minister underscored the need for active participation from local MLAs, officials from all departments, and public cooperation to ensure the programme's success. He asked officials to share photos and videos of the day's activities with him for review.

The teleconference, attended by Principal Secretary Suresh Kumar and Swachh Andhra Corporation MD Anil Kumar Reddy, focused on the large-scale collection of e-waste across municipalities.

Minister Narayana called for the involvement of local MLAs, departmental officials, and public support for the success of the programme. He also instructed the creation of continuous e-waste collection centres and stressed the need for awareness rallies in municipalities.

- Minister inaugurated E-waste collection centres, emphasising the importance of responsible disposal of electronic waste
- He participates in an awareness campaign, educating citizens about collecting e-waste from households and shops to promote environmentally-friendly practices.
- Minister calls for the involvement of local MLAs, departmental officials, and public support for the success of the programme.

Earlier in the day, the Minister led a large rally with nearly 5,000 participants, including citizens, students, volunteers from NGOs, and political leaders. The procession, which began at the VRC Centre and extended to Narthaki Centre, filled the main Trunk Road with lively chants of "Swachh Andhra – Swarna Andhra." Minister Narayana paid floral tributes to the statues of Dr BR Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, honouring their contributions to social reform and cleanliness.

As part of the initiative, the Minister inaugurated E-waste collection centres, emphasising the importance of responsible disposal of electronic waste. He also participated in an awareness campaign, educating citizens about collecting e-waste from households and shops to promote environmentally-friendly practices.

The event was an important step in raising public awareness on cleanliness, sustainability, and effective waste management under the vision of a cleaner, greener Andhra Pradesh.

The Minister cautioned officials to avoid any negligence in executing the "Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas" programme and requested photos and videos of today's activities.

MA & UD Min Narayana and his team for Guj on study tour today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister Narayana, accompanied by a delegation, will embark on an official tour of Gujarat from April 20 as part of an ongoing study for the development of Amaravati. The delegation includes CRDA Commissioner Kanna Babu, ADC Chairperson Lakshmi Parthasarathy, and Greening Corporation MD Srinivasulu.

During the visit, the minister will inspect the Statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at Ekta Nagar. The purpose of the visit is to use the statue as a reference for the large-scale statues planned in Amaravati. On the afternoon of April 20, the team will visit the Gujarat International Finance Tech-City (GIFT City), located on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. The delegation will also tour CEPT University (Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology) in Ahmedabad.

Later in the day, the group will review the Sports City in Ahmedabad. The following morning, on April 21, the minister and his team will visit the Sabarmati Riverfront to explore urban planning and development models.

Naidu govt fast-tracks mass housing drive for the poor

3 lakh houses to be inaugurated on June 12

C PRADEEP KUMAR
cpk007@gmail.com
■ VIJAYAWADA

In a decisive step towards ensuring shelter for the underprivileged, the State government is set to inaugurate three lakh houses on June 12, marking the first anniversary of the current administration under Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

The State's housing initiative, one of the flagship welfare schemes of the NDA government in AP, is being fast-tracked with additional financial support and administrative push. With a focus on timely delivery, the Chief Minister has directed officials to complete three lakh houses within a year - an ambitious target now nearing realisation.

Each beneficiary is being offered financial assistance of Rs 1.87 lakh, supplemented by a low-interest loan of Rs 35,000 under government guarantee, on the lines of support provided to DWCRA groups. In a move aimed at social equity, the government has announced additional top-up aid of Rs 50,000 for beneficiaries from Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes, and Rs 75,000 for those from Scheduled Tribes.

As of now, about 1.7 lakh houses have been fully completed, while construction of another 60,000 is nearing the final stages. With the latest round of financial assistance sanctioned, nearly six lakh beneficiaries are expected to benefit across the state. To back the initiative, the government has already released Rs 300 crore, with Rs 202 crore specifically directed towards BC, SC and ST beneficiaries. Officials from the Housing Department are actively encouraging beneficiaries to utilise the funds and complete their homes without delay.

Housing Minister Kolusu Pardhasaradhi is holding regular reviews to monitor field progress, while Special Chief Secretary Ajay Jain is conducting daily follow-ups with District Collectors and housing officials.

Continued on Page 2

Housing Minister Kolusu Pardhasaradhi is holding regular reviews to monitor field progress, while Special Chief Secretary Ajay Jain is conducting daily follow-ups with District Collectors and housing officials. Special officers have been appointed for on-site supervision, and timelines have been drawn up to ensure timely completion.

No-trust motion passed against Vizag Mayor amid high drama

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

After a high-voltage drama and camps by rival groups in Sri Lanka and Malaysia, the no-confidence motion moved by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) against Visakhapatnam Mayor Golagani Hari Venkata Kumari was passed with a clear majority on Saturday. Tight security arrangements, including extensive CCTV surveillance, were put in place around the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) premises, as rival factions traded charges of coercion, blackmail, and inducements aimed at swaying corporators.

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP), a key NDA constituent, had flown its corporators to Kuala Lumpur, while the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) initially shifted its group to Bengaluru before moving them to Colombo. After the outcome of the special council meeting, jubilant NDA supporters celebrated with fireworks and sweets distribution.

"We brought the no-confidence motion against the Mayor owing to rampant corruption and the paralysis of development works across several wards," said Bheemili MLA and senior TDP leader Ganta Srinivasa Rao, speaking to The Pioneer. The Mayor and several YSRCP corporators, who had just returned from Colombo, chose to abstain from the meeting at the last moment.

Despite the absence of TDP-backed corporator Bhupatiraju Sujata, who was reportedly untraceable in Malaysia during the NDA camp, the alliance managed to secure the required numbers. Crucial support came from YSRCP corporators Priyanka and Tippala Vamsi Reddy. Priyanka, daughter of former minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao, had resigned from the council just two days earlier.

Continued on Page 2

CS for circular economy via e-waste management

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand emphasised the importance of scientific management of electronic and electrical waste to protect the environment and foster a circular economy. Speaking at an e-waste management awareness programme held on Saturday at Sri Venkateswara Vignan Mandir in Guntur, Vijayanand stated that e-waste must be reduced, reused and recycled effectively to prevent environmental degradation.

The event, organised under the Swarna Andhra – Swachh Andhra initiative by the Guntur Municipal Corporation, witnessed the participation of several key officials and public representatives. Activities included planting saplings, launching an e-waste collection vehicle, and taking part in a signature campaign.

Vijayanand noted that with the growing use of electronic gadgets, the generation of e-waste is rising rapidly. He warned that improper disposal of such waste leads to severe land and water pollution and poses significant health risks. He lauded the awareness rally and expo held at the venue, stating that they effectively highlighted the dangers of unmanaged e-waste and the urgent need for sustainable disposal practices.

He announced that Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (RRR) centres would be established across Guntur and all districts in the state to streamline e-waste collection and processing. "Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will soon introduce a comprehensive e-waste management policy to promote circular economy practices through these RRR centres," Vijayanand said.

Continued on Page 2

AP girl among natl toppers in JEE Mains

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a remarkable academic achievement, Sai Manogna Guthikonda from Andhra Pradesh has secured a perfect 100 percentile in the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Main 2025, Paper 1 (B.E./B.Tech), placing her among the elite group of national toppers.

The National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducted the prestigious engineering entrance exam in two sessions—January and April—announced the results on 18 April 2025. Over 1.5 million candidates registered across both sessions, with nearly 1.475 million appearing for the computer-based test.

Sai Manogna is one of only 22 students nationwide to achieve the highest possible NTA score of 100. Notably, she is also one of just two female candidates to accomplish this feat, highlighting her exceptional performance in a highly competitive examination.

Continued on Page 2

MEGA DSC NOTIFICATION TODAY

16,347 teacher posts to be filled

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has embarked on a series of reforms in the School Education sector. With a strong commitment to providing quality education to students, the Government has decided to conduct a Mega DSC to fill 16,347 teacher posts.

The Mega DSC Notification will be released on April 20, 2025. Teacher aspirants can submit their applications online from April 20 to May 15, 2025.

The Computer-Based Tests (CBT) will be conducted from June 6 to July 6, 2025. Complete information regarding the Mega DSC–2025, including relevant Government Orders, post-wise details, exam schedule, syllabus, notification and help desk details, will be available from 10:00 AM on April 20, 2025, on the School Education Department's official websites: https://cse.ap.gov.in / https://apdsc.apcfss.in.

Medico ends life; family alleges harassment

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A fourth-year MBBS student of NRI Medical College, Sangivalasa, allegedly died by suicide on Saturday, sparking grief and protests from his family. The student, identified as Shriram Dutta Praneeth (24), reportedly jumped from the fourth floor of the college building during supplementary exams.

OBTUSE ANGLE

Tech-driven policing, public trust key to crime control: HM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha on Friday underscored the importance of technology-led "invisible policing" backed by visible public assurance to curb drug trafficking and cybercrime across the state.

Chairing a high-level review meeting with senior police officials of the Guntur Range, she announced that Cyber Crime Police Stations would be established in every district to boost detection and prosecution. Citing Prakasam district's achievement of zero cybercrime cases over the past three months, she credited effective coordination with the prosecution department.

The Minister appreciated cybercrime recoveries in Guntur and Bapatla districts and pointed out that partnerships with private agencies, along with public awareness campaigns in places like Nellore, were helping tackle digital threats.

Highlighting law enforcement

successes, Anitha said that 30 convictions had been secured in POCSO cases since the coalition government assumed office, reflecting its commitment to child protection and justice.

Security is being tightened in sensitive areas, including the High Court, Secretariat, the capital region, party offices and residences of political leaders. Ten new police stations are proposed under modernisation efforts.

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Andhra Puts Brakes on BRS Bus Hunt

REPORTERS' DIARY

As preparations for the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of BRS for Warangal Sabha heat up, party leaders in border constituencies found themselves in a logistical pickle - with Telangana RTC buses fully booked, they tried knocking on APSRTC's doors. But the response wasn't welcoming. A former BRS MLA who reached out to a local Andhra depot was told bluntly - approval from "higher-ups" was needed since it involved a political gathering. Translation: the nod had to come from the TDP-BJP-JSP government in Andhra.

Irritated by the political filter, the leader dropped the plan and settled for private buses. If even hiring a bus now depends on interstate political blessings, it's not just petty - it's deeply telling, muttered a senior BRS functionary. With Andhra's top brass not exactly BRS-friendly, the message even from Depot Staff was loud and clear -this isn't just a matter of transport. It's politics with a gear shift.

BRS dips brush into Revanth's playbook, Congress smirks

As BRS gears up for its grand Warangal Mahasabha on April 27, party cadres are out with paintbrushes in hand - literally. Across villages, walls are getting a pink splash with slogans and posters announcing the event. But the optics have handed Congress leaders an unexpected punchline. "BRS particularly KTR used to mock Revanth Reddy for being a painter/ Now that a painter has become CM, maybe someone advised them - try painting too, maybe it'll work for you," chuckled a senior Congressman when asked about the wall campaign. The sarcasm didn't stop there. Taking a direct swipe at BRS MLC Kavitha, the Congress leader added, "First they said going to jail qualifies one to become CM. Now painting walls too? If that's the case, Kavitha is clearly ahead -she's done both". While BRS leaders insist it's about connecting with the grassroots, the opposition sees it as another case of the former rulers trying to imitate the very styles they once ridiculed. However, soon the wall paintings were cleared off by local leaders.

Bandi's balm, Kishan's burn - Raja Singh simmering again

The saffron camp in Telangana is once again seeing sparks fly — and not the festive kind. With BJP announcing N Gowtham Rao for Hyderabad MLC, firebrand MLA Raja Singh is fuming. Already at odds with Telangana BJP chief Kishan Reddy, this fresh move has only widened the gap. Raja Singh was furious over being kept out of the loop and sees this as yet another attempt by Kishan to sideline him. The tension between the two has been an open secret - both fighting for control over Hyderabad's narrative, but barely on talking terms. Enter Bandi Sanjay - the party's crisis manager for all things of Raja. On Hanuman Jayanthi, Sanjay paid a customary visit to Raja Singh's residence, reportedly to cool tempers. And it seems to have worked - for now. But not without a cheeky parting shot. "Whenever I want to go all out, Sanjay comes and tries to pacify," a visibly frustrated Raja Singh told reporters after the meeting. The line says it all - the volcano hasn't erupted, but it's still bubbling.

Faheem's Waqf protest sparks buzz of Minority power shift

There's a quiet but unmistakable churn within the minority leadership of Congress in Telangana - and Faheem Qureshi is emerging as its new face. While old guards like Shabbir Ali continue to hold sway in public memory, it's Faheem's bold Waqf bill protest - held without MIM's shadow - that's being seen as a symbolic shift in Muslim political assertion within Congress. What raised more than a few eyebrows was not just the protest itself, but who all turned up later at Faheem's Eid gathering. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, a regular guest, was expected. But this time, Asaduddin Owaisi also walked in - and that rare mix of TPCC leadership and MIM supremo under one roof has sent the minority grapevine buzzing. Was it just courtesy? Or something more brewing? Behind the scenes, whispers confirm that Faheem's protest had the full blessings of the CM - not just moral support, but logistical backing too. And this Eid, the message seems to be: the old order is watching, but a new order is gathering momentum.

Jana Reddy's letter lands TPCC chief in a tight spot

A letter written by senior Congress leader Kunduru Jana Reddy to the party high command has stirred political waters in Telangana, putting TPCC chief B Mahesh Kumar Goud in an uncomfortable position during a recent media interaction at Gandhi Bhavan. The letter, in which Jana Reddy urged the Congress leadership to consider the appeal of MLAs from erstwhile Rangareddy and Hyderabad districts for Cabinet berths, was seen by some as an indirect endorsement of a particular regional bloc within the party. In it, Jana Reddy reportedly argued that fulfilling their appeal would serve not just regional interests but also benefit the Congress party and the development of Telangana at large. Facing tough questions from journalists, Mahesh Kumar Goud attempted to downplay the letter. He insisted there was nothing controversial about it, calling it an expression made in the party's larger interest. "If any journalist asks Jana Reddy for an MLC seat under the Governor quota, he'll even give a letter for that," Mahesh quipped, suggesting Jana Reddy's accommodating nature. However, the comment quickly backfired. Journalists pressed him on why similar letters weren't written in support of MLAs from Madiga, Tribal and BC communities who have also been demanding Cabinet berths. "If Jana Reddy can endorse one group, why not support inclusivity across caste lines?" one reporter asked. Another questioned whether the leadership was selectively listening to voices from more dominant districts. Caught off-guard by the barrage of uncomfortable questions, Mahesh Kumar Goud abruptly ended the interaction, stating he would "discuss with Jana Reddy" before making further comments.

(Naveena Ghanate and Kolishetty Venkateshwarlu)

Major scam in Gosala during Jagan rule, alleges TTD chief

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

A large-scale scandal took place in the SV Gosala during the previous regime, and even cattle fodder was not spared, said TTD Chairman BR Naidu.

The Chairman, along with TTD board members, All India Cow Protection Organisation General Secretary and former TTD Cow Protection Committee member Sri Koti Sridhar, and members of the media, inspected the SV Gosala on Saturday.

During the visit, the Chairman enquired about the availability of fodder, drinking water, cleanliness, medical care being provided to the cows, and other related issues from Gosala in-charge Director Sri Srinivas.

He later inspected the cow sheds where cows and calves are currently being housed and expressed satisfaction with their condition.

Speaking to the media, the TTD Chairman said some individuals with vested interests were attempting to politicise the issue for personal gain, while large-scale financial irregularities and misappropriation had taken place in the TTD Gosala over the past five years.

He asserted that no corruption has taken place in the TTD during the last ten months, ever since the coalition government assumed office.

He added that engaging in false propaganda and diversionary politics was not appropriate, as it hurt the sentiments of millions of devotees across the world.

The Chairman further stated that, according to the then Cow Protection Advisor, Koti Sridhar, several disturbing facts had come to light regarding the scandals in the Gosala during 2023–24.

He also alleged that former TTD Gosala Director Dr Harinath Reddy committed several irregularities, treating the Gosala as his estate and acting in an autocratic manner by not allowing anyone to enter the premises.

The Chairman said that, if required, an ACB inquiry would be requested into the irregularities that occurred in the past.

On the occasion, TTD Board Member G. Bhanu Prakash Reddy said a police case had been filed against former TTD Chairman B. Karunakar Reddy for spreading false information about the natural deaths of cows in the Gosala and tarnishing the reputation of the TTD. He claimed to have full evidence and affirmed that no one can escape the law.

Former Gosala Protection Committee member Koti Sridhar alleged that several irregularities occurred under the previous regime, including in the procurement of medicines, fodder, and cows from other states. He claimed there was no proper record of what happened to the cows after they gave birth.

TTD Board Members Shantha Ram and Naresh Kumar were also present.

Midhun appears before SIT, terms liquor case a vendetta

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP leader and Rajampet MP Peddireddy Midhun Reddy on Saturday said that the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the alleged liquor scam during the YSRCP regime is "baseless and politically motivated".

Reddy made these remarks after emerging from a hours-long probe in this case here where the SIT summoned him.

"Since the matter is sub judice, I cannot elaborate, but these false cases have become a pattern under Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's regime," Reddy told reporters.

The MP recalled that he was also accused in other unrelated cases such as Madanapalle files burning, red sandalwood smuggling, and mining irregularities and others. He asserted that all these cases were never proven in court.Likewise, former YSRCP leader V Vijayasai Reddy was also questioned by the SIT in Vijayawada, which is probing the alleged multi-crore liquor scam that occurred during the YSRCP government's tenure.

WORLD LIVER DAY

Free FibroScan camp held at Railway Hospital

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

To mark World Liver Day, a free FibroScan (liver) screening camp was held on Saturday at the Radiology Block of the Divisional Railway Hospital, Vijayawada. The camp was organised in collaboration with Zydus Life Sciences under the theme "Food is Medicine", highlighting the crucial link between diet and liver health.

The screening camp focused on Railway employees and their dependents, particularly those at higher risk due to obesity, chronic alcoholism, high cholesterol, diabetes, and HBV/HCV infections. A total of 59 individuals underwent FibroScan, a non-invasive diagnostic test used to assess liver stiffness and detect early signs of fatty liver and fibrosis.

Dr Ch Srinivasu, Chief Medical Superintendent, Vijayawada Division, inaugurated the camp and stressed the importance of early screening and lifestyle changes to prevent liver diseases. Those found with abnormal scan results will undergo further evaluation by a physician and be referred to a Consultant Gastroenterologist for appropriate care.

Dr M Jaideep, Assistant Chief Medical Superintendent (Health & Family Welfare), expressed his gratitude to Zydus Life Sciences, hospital staff, and participants for their contribution to the success of the camp. This initiative reflects Indian Railways' commitment to the health and well-being of its employees and their families.

NCBN@75

Continued from Page 1

His efforts drew admiration from world leaders and industry giants, even as his governance model sparked debate at home. After setbacks in his political journey, Naidu staged a remarkable comeback in 2024, returning as Chief Minister for a fourth term. He is now steering key initiatives such as rebuilding Amaravati, boosting agriculture, and promoting green energy and emerging technologies like AI. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is celebrating the occasion with statewide events—blood donation drives, exhibitions, and public meetings—highlighting Naidu's contributions to Andhra Pradesh and Indian politics. At 75, Naidu continues to shape the state's future with characteristic drive, embodying continuity and change in equal measure.

Jagan flays Naidu for manipulative politics

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Chief Minister and YSRCP President YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has strongly criticised TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu for allegedly using manipulative and coercive tactics to overturn the public mandate and unseat a BC woman from the post of Visakhapatnam Mayor.

In a post on social media platform X, tagging Chandrababu Naidu, Jagan pointed out that the YSRCP had won 58 out of the 98 seats in the municipal corporation and questioned how the opposition coalition could claim the Mayor's post. "We had given the Mayor post to a woman from the Yadava community. The TDP has misused its influence, deployed police forces, used threats, coercion, money and muscle power, and even attacked the location where our corporators were taking shelter. CCTV footage of this is available for all to see. This is a clear case of undemocratic behaviour and abuse of official power," he stated.

He further remarked that with only one year left in the current term of the Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation, such undemocratic methods reveal the TDP's true disregard for democratic values. "People will give them a fitting reply," he said.

Jagan also lauded the YSRCP corporator and the Left member who stood firm in support of justice despite threats and inducements. "My hats off to all our cadre who remained committed to the party despite the misuse of power by Chandrababu," he added.

Youth drowns in River Godavari

PNS ■ MANCHERIAL

Ashok (20), a young man from Kotapalli mandal in Mancherial district tragically died while taking a bath in the River Godavari.

His family members staged a protest on National Highway 63, demanding action against the sand contractor and compensation for their loss.

APCRDA chief reviews Amaravati development

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) Commissioner K. Kannababu participated in the "Swachh Andhra-Swarnandhra" rally in Amaravati. As part of his ongoing efforts to oversee the development of the capital, Kannababu visited various sites, including Venkatapalem, Tidco housing complexes in Mandadam, Malkapuram, Velagapudi, Rayapudi, and Tullur. The Commissioner assessed the progress of construction activities in the region and engaged with local farmers and officials on the advancement of capital development projects. He also addressed community concerns and discussed measures to meet international standards in Amaravati's development.

The rally, organised by sanitation workers and residents in Velagapudi, was part of the Swarnandhra-2047 initiative and aligned with the Swachh Bharat Mission, which focuses on enhancing cleanliness and greenery in the capital region. This month, the state government has adopted the theme of 'Collection of e-waste and its safe recycling' under the "Swachh Andhra-Swarnandhra" programme.

Kannababu also held discussions with officials on the collection and disposal of wet and dry waste, the efficiency of waste transport vehicles, and encouraged public awareness on environmental conservation. Additionally, the Commissioner visited Anganwadi centres, e-health facilities, and schools under construction in Amaravati as part of the Cities Project.

No-trust...

Continued from Page 1

Vamsi Reddy is the son of former Gajuwaka MLA Tippala Nagi Reddy.

With backing from 63 corporators and 11 ex-officio members, the NDA crossed the magic number of 74 to ensure the motion's success. Meanwhile, YSRCP district president and Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council, Gudivada Amarnath, denounced the move, accusing the NDA of subverting the people's mandate through unethical practices.

Minister Durgesh extends birthday wishes to CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister Kandula Durgesh wished Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu a happy birthday, praising him as a visionary leader who has steered Andhra Pradesh toward progress.

He described Naidu's 45-year political journey as an inspiration to many.

In his statement, Durgesh highlighted Naidu's record of serving 15 years as Chief Minister and as leader of the opposition, an achievement unmatched in the state's history. He also lauded Naidu's key role in the democratic restoration movement, emphasising his sacrifices, relentless effort, and discipline.

Durgesh commended Naidu's ability to balance development with welfare, citing his philosophy of turning crises into opportunities. He noted that Naidu's leadership continues to propel Andhra Pradesh towards a new era of development.

Durgesh further recalled Naidu's innovative governance initiatives such as "Shramadanam," "Praja Vedikaku Palana," and DWCRA groups, which empowered rural women economically.

Naidu govt...

Continued from Page 1

Special officers have been appointed for on-site supervision, and timelines have been drawn up to ensure timely completion.

Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh State Housing Corporation Managing Director M Siva Prasad is overseeing daily operations via virtual reviews, urging field staff to continue motivating beneficiaries. Engineering officials, including Chief Engineer Padmanabhaiah and Superintendent Engineers Jayaramachary and Krishnaiah, are carrying out site inspections to ensure quality and pace.

With strong political backing and cross-departmental coordination, the government appears determined to deliver on its promise of safe, affordable housing for lakhs of poor families across the State.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi:	
Saptami:	Apr 19 06:22 PM to Apr 20 07:01 PM
Ashtami:	Apr 20 07:01 PM to Apr 21 06:58 PM
Nakshatram:	
Purva Ashadha:	Apr 19 10:21 AM to Apr 20 11:48 AM
Uttara Ashadha:	Apr 20 11:48 AM to Apr 21 12:37 PM
Rahukalam:	4:56 PM to 6:29 PM
Yamagandam:	12:15 PM to 1:48 PM
Varjyam:	08:04 PM to 09:43 PM
Gulika:	3:22 PM to 4:56 PM
Amritakalam:	06:42 AM to 08:24 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:50 AM to 12:39 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 38°C
Humidity: 53%
Sunrise: 5:48 AM
Sunset: 6:23 PM

Updated: April 19, 2025 5:00 PM

CS for circular....

Continued from Page 1

He also revealed that over 1.90 crore people have participated in the Swarna Andhra – Swachh Andhra programme over the past three months. The initiative, held on the third Saturday of every month, promotes cleanliness and sustainability with a specific theme each time.

Swachh Andhra Corporation Chairman Kommareddy Pattabhiram reiterated the Chief Minister's vision to make Andhra Pradesh a national leader in cleanliness by 2047. He added that the government would ensure proper implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), making manufacturers accountable for recycling e-waste generated by their products.

District Collector S. Nagalakshmi highlighted the monthly themes under Swarna Andhra – Swachh Andhra, stressing the importance of sustained awareness to keep the cleanliness movement alive.

Joint Collector A. Bhargava Teja, City Commissioner Puli Srinivasulu, In-charge Mayor Sheik Sajila, MLAs Mohammed Naseer Ahmed, Galla Madhavi, Burla Ramanjaneyulu and others were present.

Tech-driven policing...

Continued from Page 1

The Minister criticised the previous YSRCP regime for neglecting police recruitment and allowing key infrastructure such as CCTV systems, fingerprint identification, and body-worn cameras to fall into disrepair. She said the current administration has invested Rs 10–12 crore in reviving these systems, and CCTV footage now aids in solving nearly 70 per cent of criminal cases. Plans are in place to install 5,000 to 10,000 CCTV cameras in each district, and citizens are being encouraged to install them at homes, schools and businesses.

She noted that drones were being used effectively to monitor large gatherings and curb unlawful activities, citing successful surveillance during events at Kotappakonda and Bapatla beach. Lifeguards in Bapatla are also being trained under SDRF protocols to improve rescue operations.

Reiterating the government's commitment to women's safety, Anitha pledged stern action against harassment and assured improved training and deployment of women police personnel in alignment with their qualifications. Regarding infrastructure, the Minister said a proposal had been submitted to the CRDA seeking 8 acres in Tullur for police housing. Recruitment for 6,000 constables is underway, and court clearance has enabled the promotion of 95-batch Circle Inspectors to Deputy Superintendents of Police. Earlier, Anitha inspected the Guntur District SP office and participated in the Swachh Andhra – Swachh Diwas programme. As part of the state's new resolve to observe the initiative on the third Saturday of each month, she took part in the cleanliness drive and encouraged citizens to contribute to maintaining hygienic surroundings.

Guntur Range IG Sarva Sreshta Tripathi, Guntur SP Satish Kumar, Prakasam SP Damodar, Palnadu SP K Srinivasa Rao, Bapatla SP Tushar Dudi and Nellore Additional SP Soujanya were among the officials present at the meeting.

AP girl among natl...

Continued from Page 1

According to family members, Praneeth's OMR sheet was seized by an invigilator at the beginning of the exam. Despite pleading for nearly three hours to be allowed to continue, the college management allegedly did not respond. Distraught, he is said to have taken the extreme step in front of fellow students and staff.

The family has accused the college of harassment, claiming the mental distress led to his death. Supporters gathered at the college, demanding accountability and a thorough probe. Bhimili police have registered a case. Circle Inspector (in-charge) CH Sridhar visited the spot. The body was sent for postmortem. The college is yet to respond officially.

Her score places her at the top, not just in her home state but across the country, earning her the distinction of being the state topper from Andhra Pradesh.

The JEE (Main) serves as a gateway to India's premier engineering institutes, including the National Institutes of Technology (NITs), and also qualifies candidates for the JEE Advanced, the entrance test for admission to the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).

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E-Waste management drive launched in city

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a major step towards environmental sustainability, the NTR district administration launched a special E-Waste Management Drive under the Swarna Andhra – Swachha Andhra programme on Saturday at Nara Chandrababu Naidu Colony, near Benz Circle in Vijayawada. The drive has served as a model for other districts, promoting environmental responsibility while paving the way for a cleaner and greener Andhra Pradesh.

District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha and Vijayawada East MLA Gadde Rama Mohana Rao spearheaded the initiative, urging citizens to treat e-waste collection as a public movement to prevent environmental degradation and conserve valuable resources. The programme received an encouraging response from the local community, with many residents voluntarily handing over outdated electronic items such as laptops, televisions, mobile phones, and kitchen appliances for safe disposal.

Dr Lakshmisha, addressing the gathering, stated that the state government, under the Swarna Andhra – Swachha Andhra initiative, has ramped up efforts to tackle the dangers posed by electronic waste. He highlighted that nearly 700 kg of e-waste is generated daily in Vijayawada alone, citing the widespread use of devices such as computers, chargers, microwaves, and mobile phones in daily life.

He warned that hazardous materials like lead, cadmium, mercury, and beryllium found in e-waste are contaminating air, water, and soil, leading to severe health risks such as cancer, heart and lung diseases, and even the contamination of breast milk. "Small steps can bring big change," he said, urging the public to adopt responsible e-waste disposal practices and support the government's efforts to make the district pollution-free.

MLA Gadde Rama Mohana Rao echoed these concerns, adding that the state government plans to establish dedicated e-waste collection centres in industrial areas and major urban zones. "Recycling can not only protect our environment but also generate significant revenue through the extraction of valuable minerals," he said.

VMC Commissioner HM Dhyanachandra, Additional Commissioner Dr D Chandrasekhar, Corporator Chennupati Kranthi Sri, Zonal Commissioner K Shammi, and In-charge CMHO Dr Gopala Krishna Naik also participated in the programme.

4 Aakash students score 99 percentile in JEE Mains

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Four students from Aakash Educational Services, Vijayawada, have scored above the 99 percentile mark in JEE Mains 2025 (Session 2). Madhusudhan Reddy Yeruva secured the 99.89 percentile, followed by Ujwal Bapanna Dora Padala (99.56), Nideesh Yemineni (99.54), and Nithish Ram Sunkara (99.33). The National Testing Agency announced the results today, marking the conclusion of this year's final JEE session.

Congratulating the achievers, Dheeraj Kumar Misra, Chief Academic and Business Head, Aakash Educational Services, said their success reflects a combination of hard work, determination, and quality coaching. He wished them the best for their future academic pursuits.

CREDAI Women's Wing launches buttermilk kiosk

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

To help people cope with soaring summer temperatures, the Women's Wing of CREDAI, in partnership with the Lions Club of Visakhapatnam, set up a buttermilk kiosk outside the Lions Club Community Hall in Ramnagar on Saturday. The kiosk was inaugurated by CREDAI Visakhapatnam Chairman V Dharmender, who appreciated the team's timely initiative.

Women's Wing Coordinator S. Bharati and Secretary D. Pranati said the drive aims to provide relief to passersby and help them stay hydrated. The free buttermilk distribution will continue until Wednesday.

The kiosk has attracted a steady flow of commuters and daily-wage workers seeking respite from the heat. CREDAI Youth Wing Coordinator Pavan Sanka and committee members Ganapathiraju Rajesh and Kiran Kumar Rajana also participated in the effort, extending their support to the community-focused campaign.

The initiative forms part of CREDAI's broader corporate social responsibility programme.

'Run for Jesus' rally peaceful

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The message of Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead after His crucifixion, is one of peace for all humanity, stated Most Rev Bishop T Joseph Raja Rao of the Catholic Diocese of Vijayawada and Bishop T George Cornelius of the Krishna-Godavari CSI Diocese. They made these remarks while addressing the gathering at the 'Run for Jesus' peace rally held at 6 a.m. on Saturday morning to mark the occasion of Easter.

The rally was jointly organised by the Andhra Pradesh Federation of Telugu Churches and various Christian organisations in the city. It was flagged off in a grand and joyful manner by Bishop Joseph Raja Rao, Monsignor Rev Father Muvvala Prasad, CSI Bishop Cornelius, Bethel Ministries and Bible College President and Director Rev Pastor Salluri Jayakumar Babu, and Convener Rev Pastor Alluri Vishwaprasad, along with Praveen Seelam. The dignitaries, holding torches, welcomed the risen Christ and inaugurated the peace rally.

Speaking on the occasion, Bishops Raja Rao and Cornelius said Christians around the world observe Good Friday and Easter with deep faith and devotion. They emphasised that Jesus Christ bore the cross and sacrificed His life for the redemption of humankind, and rose again on the third day. The 'Run for Jesus' event is conducted with great reverence to commemorate this act of salvation.

Monsignor Rev Father Muvvala Prasad and Rev Pastor S Jayakumar Babu highlighted the growth of the rally since its inception in 2011. Originally launched in 30 locations, 'Run for Jesus' has now expanded to 600 centres, symbolising Christian unity across the Telugu-speaking states. They stressed the urgent need for Christians to remain united, especially at a time when attacks against Christians by religious extremists are reportedly on the rise.

The rally commenced from the premises of St Paul's Cathedral near Benz Circle, with thousands of Christian believers participating. The procession passed through Pinnamaneni Polyclinic Road, Siddhartha College, Mother Teresa Circle, and Srikhamani Centre, concluding at the CSI Church of St Paul's Basilica near the State Guest House.

State Coordinator of 'Run for Jesus' Rev Pastor Bellamkonda Shivaji Raju, Convener Rev Pastor Praveen Seelam, Federation of Telugu Churches representatives Father Muvvala Prasad, Director Pastor S Jayakumar Babu, Pastors Alluri Vishwaprasad, I Karunanidhi, former Deputy Mayor S Gritton, Korukonda Ashok Kumar, Pastor B Philomin Swarna, and many others participated in the run.

Samprokshan Kumbhabhishekam at Geeta Mandir

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The three-day Maha Samprokshan Kumbhabhishekam celebrations commenced with devotion at the Geeta Mandir at Nunna on city outskirts on Saturday. As per Vaikhanasa Agama traditions, the rituals began with Trayahnika Deeksha and continued in a spiritually charged atmosphere.

The event is being conducted under the guidance of Asanghanandagiri Swamy of Erpedu Peetham near Tirupati and Archaka Rompicharla Dattakumar. Vedic scholars performed sacred rituals such as Gopuja, Vishwaksena Puja, Punyahavachanam, Akalmasa Homam, and Vastu Poornahuti.

Marking the 12th anniversary of Lord Krishna's idol installation, the temple committee has dedicated the event to Sri Maharshi Sadguru Malayala Swami and Sri Paripurnanandagiri Swami of Sri Vyasashrama Peetham.

On the first day, several couples took part in special poojas. Evening rituals included Ajastra Deepaaradhana, Mrityangrahanam, Ankurarpana, and Kumbhasthapanam. Devotees received Tirtha Prasadam after Aarti and Mantra Pushpam. The rituals will continue till April 21.

Drive to boost enrolment at ZP high school

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a bid to boost enrolment in government schools, teachers of ZPHS Nunna in Vijayawada Rural Mandal, NTR district, launched a door-to-door campaign on Saturday under the 'Badi Bata' initiative. Led by Headmaster Vazrala Bhupal Reddy, the staff distributed colourful pamphlets showcasing the school's achievements, facilities, and SSC results. Inspired by corporate school outreach, the campaign is drawing interest from parents considering shifting their children from private to government schools. Bhupal Reddy said the initiative aims to change mindsets, highlighting that ZPHS students regularly secure IIIT seats and match corporate school performance.

KRU sets up PGCET Helpline Centre

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In an effort to streamline postgraduate admissions at Krishna University and its affiliated colleges, a PGCET Helpline Centre is being established at SSR Degree College, Machilipatnam.

Dr L Sushila, Director of Admissions, stated that the centre aims to support students applying for the PGCET by addressing their queries and providing necessary guidance. She said the primary objective of the centre is to raise awareness among students about the various postgraduate courses offered by Krishna University and its affiliated institutions, thereby helping more students make informed choices. Dr Sushila noted that the centre would be particularly helpful to students in and around Machilipatnam, who can now access essential admission-related information without the need to travel to the university campus. Faculty members from Krishna University will be available at the Helpline Centre to assist students and encourage them to utilise this facility to resolve their admission-related doubts.

Union Minister for Civil Aviation K Rammohan Naidu releasing Olive Ridley turtle hatchlings into the ocean.

'Barua Beach to be developed as global eco-tourism hub'

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu has unveiled a transformative plan to develop Baruva Beach in Sompeta, Ichapuram, into a world-class tourist destination. Speaking at the Beach Festival, he emphasized the beach's potential, highlighting its serene shoreline, Mahendratanaya backwaters, historic lighthouse, and a sunken vessel offshore. The Minister noted that Baruva Beach, with its unique geography, is ideal for ecotourism and adventure activities like scuba diving and paramotor flying.

To kickstart development, a feasibility study is being conducted to evaluate the region's ecological and infrastructural assets. Naidu also announced skill development programs for local youth, focusing on scuba diving, lifeguarding, and event management. Additionally, efforts to integrate marine conservation with tourism are underway, including training local fishermen in turtle conservation practices. The event, attended by Government Whip Bendalam Ashok and District Collector Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar, featured activities such as beach clean-up drives and awareness campaigns. A key highlight was the launch of Andhra Pradesh's state-level ecotourism program.

Adding a maritime perspective, Indian Navy representative Balaram noted that a 75-metre sunken ship off the Baruva coast supports a thriving marine ecosystem, offering scuba divers a rare underwater experience. Captain Surya also highlighted the region's ideal conditions for a range of aquatic and aerial sports.

Highlighting turtle conservation efforts, Collector Pundkar informed that only 50% of Olive Ridley hatchlings survive the journey to the sea. Sixteen turtle protection centres have been established in the district, aiming to safeguard over two lakh turtles. Fishermen are being incentivized and trained to support these efforts.

Exhibitions on waste-to-energy innovations, educational campaigns on turtle conservation, and student art contests added colour to the festivities. Students from Simhadri Hasini ZPHS, Buragam, and Rentikota were among the awardees. To enhance Barua's visibility, the District Administration announced a promotional website targeting national and global tourists, branding it as a model for sustainable coastal tourism.

MP Sivanath hails Naidu as AP's future

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) has praised Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu as the leader capable of securing a golden future for generations to come. In a statement ahead of Naidu's 75th birthday on April 20, MP Chinni extended his heartfelt birthday wishes.

Chinni described Naidu as a visionary, wealth creator, and the driving force behind the 'Swarna Andhra Pradesh' initiative. He lauded Naidu's profound vision, which enables him to transform crises into opportunities for welfare. The MP emphasised Naidu's relentless pursuit of realising the "Swarna Andhra Vision 2047", which aims to elevate the Telugu community globally and make Andhra Pradesh a leading state in India.

"Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu is tireless in his efforts to reduce economic inequalities and eliminate poverty through his 'P4' policy, with the ultimate goal of comprehensive state development," said MP Chinni. He highlighted Naidu's unwavering dedication, noting that despite being 75, he works tirelessly, like a youth, to restore the state's damaged systems and debt-ridden economy.

Naidu is making significant strides in boosting IT and industrial development, creating job opportunities for the youth, and fighting poverty. His 'P4' policy encourages affluent individuals to support the less fortunate, helping to uplift them. The number of supporters of this initiative is growing daily, creating better opportunities for families to achieve financial stability.

"May God shower his blessings on CM Chandrababu Naidu, who is continuously developing the state with innovative ideas, and grant him a long and healthy life," MP Chinni said.

Manyam district chosen for NITI Aayog's 'Rural Transformation Plan'

District gears up for enhanced agricultural productivity and rural development with DARTP

PNS ■ PARVATIPURAM

Collector releases multiple agricultural guides covering high-altitude farming, sorghum in tribal areas, organic fertilisers, animal feed, mango cultivation, and sesame farming.

Parvatipuram Manyam district has been selected for NITI Aayog's District Agri Rural Transformation Plan (DARTP), signaling a focused push towards boosting agricultural output and overall rural progress. The announcement was made by District Collector A. Shyam Prasad during the Zonal Research and Extension Advisory Council (ZREAC) meeting held for the upcoming Kharif and Rabi seasons of 2025–26.

The Collector stated that a comprehensive strategy is being developed to strategically deploy the district's resources for the benefit of the farming community. He pointed to the district's significant 16.20% growth in the previous year, largely attributed to agriculture and related industries, and set an ambitious 16.12% growth target for the current fiscal year.

Emphasising the need for synergy across agriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry, Shyam Prasad advocated for crop diversification into maize, red gram, cashew, turmeric, banana, and oil palm. He encouraged farmers to utilise schemes such as MGNREGS and micro-irrigation subsidies. Scientists were urged to provide export-quality paddy seeds.

The Collector also stressed the importance of increased support for tenant farmers, promoting millet cultivation, and enhancing post-harvest infrastructure for value addition in crops like jackfruit and turmeric.

There are plans to potentially hand over cold storage facilities to Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and the Rice Research Station at Seethampeta is slated for an upgrade.

Minister assures support for mango farmers

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

State MSME and SERP Minister Kondapalli Srinivas on Saturday assured full support to mango farmers in Vizianagaram district, while emphasising the need to address their specific challenges related to pricing and quality. He was speaking at a coordination meeting organised by the Horticulture Department that brought together growers, traders, and buyers.

Despite large-scale mango cultivation in the region, the Minister said poor prices persist due to inadequate quality control and post-harvest practices. He urged farmers to adopt improved cultivation methods and learn from successful models in other states. Plans are underway to establish cluster farms and a Common Facility Centre to enhance value addition and boost farm incomes.

Budithi Rajasekhar, Special Chief Secretary for Agriculture and allied sectors, underscored the critical role of agricultural transformation, pointing out that 35% of the state's economy relies on the primary sector. He stated the state's ambitious goal of achieving 15% growth in agriculture and advocated for a transition towards natural farming practices, reduced chemical inputs, and adherence to export-oriented quality benchmarks. The promotion of drone technology for precise pesticide application is also underway.

Rajasekhar further suggested the adoption of intercropping to augment profitability and emphasized the importance of branding Andhra Pradesh's distinctive mango varieties, such as Banginapalli and Suvarna Rekha, to effectively compete with Maharashtra's renowned Alphonso mango in the market.

The meeting witnessed the participation of key officials, including District Collector Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, MLC Dr. Suresh Babu, Nellimarla MLA Lokam Madhavi, alongside representatives from agriculture, horticulture, NABARD, and marketing departments, as well as numerous farmers and traders.

Tension erupts as demolition of houses sparks protest

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Tensions flared at Alluri Sitarama Raju Nagar in Palakoderu village on Saturday as residents forcefully opposed the demolition of houses allegedly built on government land.

A large police contingent, including over 30 women officers, arrived in the colony early in the morning, accompanied by three JCBs, a fire engine, and an ambulance. Upon learning of the impending demolition, residents gathered on the road, some holding bottles filled with petrol.

In response to the police's use of water cannons, women in the crowd threatened to set themselves on fire, prompting hesitation among the authorities. As the situation escalated, many residents sat in front of the JCBs, forcing officials to remain silent, recognising the seriousness of the confrontation.

CPM district committee member Jakkamshetti Satyanarayan arrived at the scene in support of the residents. Tensions soared when the police forcibly detained the CPM leader, sparking an altercation with the crowd. During the scuffle, several women fainted, and one woman, N. Eeshwari, sustained a serious head injury after being pushed by a police vehicle, falling against a culvert. She was later rushed to the hospital.

Other women who fainted were taken to the Palakoderu PHC for medical treatment. CPM leaders accused the male police officers of excessive and inappropriate conduct, including allegations of physical assault.

CPM district secretary JNV Gopalan also arrived in the village, expressing solidarity with the residents and questioning the inaction of MLA K. Raghurama Krishna Raju.

In response to the police's use of water cannons, women in the crowd threatened to set themselves on fire, prompting hesitation among the authorities. As the situation escalated, many residents sat in front of the JCBs, forcing officials to remain silent, recognising the seriousness of the confrontation

Gopalan noted that the ASR Nagar area in Palakoderu had been established in 1986, with no previous government taking action against the residents.

"The behaviour of the police was unacceptable, especially towards the women. Nine people were injured during the incident," Gopalan stated, warning that the protest would intensify if the demolition efforts were not halted. Meanwhile, N. Eeshwari is receiving treatment at the Government General Hospital in Bhimavaram.

Maha officials visit Polavaram Project, Pattiseema LI Scheme

PNS ■ POLAVARAM

A delegation of senior officials from the Maharashtra Water Resources Department visited the Polavaram Irrigation Project and Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Scheme on Saturday to study their design, construction, and operational features.

The visiting delegation included Sanjay Belsare, Secretary of the Maharashtra Water Resources Department; Santosh Tirmanwar, Executive Director of Godavari River Management, Aurangabad Division; Hanuman Gunale, Chief Engineer of the Water Resources Department, Pune; and Ashish Deogade, Chief Engineer of CDO Nasik Division.

At the Polavaram site, the officials closely examined key components of the project, including the spillway, spillway gates, fish ladder, upstream and downstream cofferdams, diaphragm wall construction site, and the Polavaram hydroelectric power station. They were briefed on the advanced technology, machinery, and materials being used in constructing the diaphragm wall.

Special emphasis was placed on the fish ladder, a unique feature of the Polavaram project. Officials from the Andhra Pradesh Water Resources Department explained that it was designed specifically for the Pulasa fish, which swim upstream during floods in the Godavari River. They highlighted that this fish ladder is the first of its kind in India and plays a crucial role in preserving the river's biodiversity.

After their visit to Polavaram, the delegation toured the Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Scheme, where they inspected the pump house and forebay structures. AP officials explained how floodwaters from the Godavari River are diverted through the Pattiseema project to the Krishna delta and other regions for irrigation purposes. They noted that the scheme was constructed in record time, providing a vital solution to water scarcity in downstream areas.

The Maharashtra team was presented with traditional shawls by Project Chief Engineer K Narasimha Murthy. Detailed presentations on the Polavaram and Pattiseema projects were given by Executive Engineer D Srinivas, Assistant Executive Engineers Padma Kumar and Anil Kumar, and officials from Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Ltd., including COO Satish Babu Angara and DGM Murali Pammi.

The visit served as a platform for interstate knowledge exchange, with the Maharashtra team expressing appreciation for the scale, innovation, and impact of these projects in managing inter-basin water transfers and enhancing irrigation.

Payments through ePOS at AMC check-posts

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

The East Godavari district administration is set to introduce a digital payment system at Agricultural Market Committee (AMC) check-posts, with the initiative to be implemented as a pilot project within the district.

District Collector P. Prasanthi convened a meeting with State Bank of India (SBI) sales executives on Saturday to discuss the rollout. Speaking on the occasion, she announced that Electronic Point of Sale (ePOS) devices would be installed at AMC check-posts to facilitate the digital collection of various government payments.

She instructed officials to ensure the installation of an adequate number of ePOS devices across all check-posts. There are 12 AMC check-posts in the district where tax collection will now be handled digitally.

Collector Prasanthi stated that the ePOS system is being introduced in East Godavari as a pilot project and, based on its outcomes, it may be extended across the State. She said the system would help eliminate irregularities in financial transactions, as digital payments would be credited directly into government accounts, thereby ensuring transparency at toll points.

She further directed the integration of technology to enable the generation of digital slips via ePOS devices, with stamping and data entry based on the type and quantity of goods being transported.

The Collector specified that ePOS devices should be installed at the Bikkavolu check-post under the Anaparthi AMC, at Kateru under Rajahmundry, Kovvur and Seetampet under Kovvur AMC, Yernagudem, Gopalapuram and Nallajerla under Gopalapuram AMC, Peravali and Nidadavolu under Nidadavolu AMC, and Rajanagaram, Sitanagaram and Korukonda under Rajanagaram AMC.

She added that this initiative, part of the digital services policy, aims to strengthen the AMC economy based on freight movement, particularly as farmers transport their produce to various destinations.

Collector Prasanthi instructed officials to ensure the new system is operational within the next three to four days. AD Marketing M. Sunil Vinay, Lead District Manager D.V. Prasad, and SBI Zonal Sales Manager N. Rajesh were among those present at the meeting.

Plenty of jobs for polytechnic diploma holders: Collector

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has stated that ample employment opportunities are available for polytechnic diploma holders and urged students to complete their courses with distinction.

On Saturday, the Collector inspected the free POLYCET 2025 coaching classes being held on the campus of the Government Polytechnic College in Tadepalligudem.

Addressing an awareness seminar on the occasion, she said that polytechnic diploma holders are assured of employment, as many industries are offering jobs to them.

Collector Nagarani observed that several companies are keen to recruit students who complete polytechnic courses, noting that reputed firms are coming forward with attractive packages and that many students have already secured employment opportunities.

"If you join courses other than polytechnic or ITI, you may receive only a certificate, with limited job prospects. There is no doubt that a polytechnic course can provide financial stability for your family through a stable job at a young age," the Collector remarked.

She pointed out that laboratories in many government polytechnics have been modernised and equipped with better facilities. These labs are crucial for providing students with practical training, she added.

She lamented that while there was once keen competition among students to pursue polytechnic courses, corporate colleges now attract students with various other courses, often placing a financial burden on parents.

"Those who complete a polytechnic course should understand that they not only have a job guarantee but also the opportunity to pursue engineering, if they so wish. Once employed, they gain the confidence to secure other jobs with ease in the future," she said.

The Collector further informed that SC candidates only need to appear for the POLYCET examination, while BC and OC candidates must obtain the specified marks to secure a seat. She emphasised that studying a polytechnic course not only ensures employment but also enables students to contribute to national development.

Polytechnic College Principal Phanindra Prasad, faculty members from other departments, POLYCET aspirants and others participated in the programme.

Medical equipment inaugurated at cancer institute

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Minister for Health Satyakumar Yadav and Minister for State Industries, Commerce, and Food Processing TG Bharat jointly inaugurated a linear accelerator, CT simulator machines, an operation theatre complex, and a medical oncology ward at the State Cancer Institute at Kurnool Government General Hospital.

During the event, the Ministers toured the Cancer Institute's wards and spent nearly two hours interacting with patients. While inspecting the Cancer Prevention Department, Emergency Department, and Medical Oncology Ward, Minister Satyakumar spoke with several patients, inquiring about the quality of their treatment, whether the doctors were attentive, and if they were facing any issues.

Subsequently, the Minister visited the Cardio Thoracic Vascular Surgery Ward in the Super Specialty Centre and spoke with patients who had undergone bypass surgery, gathering their feedback. The Minister was pleased to hear that the patients reported receiving excellent medical care and encountered no issues.

In a statement to the press, Minister Satyakumar Yadav highlighted the launch of a state-of-the-art linear accelerator worth Rs 28 crore, along with various diagnostic equipment valued at Rs 2.5 crore, which are not available in any government or private hospitals across the state. This development will enable advanced cancer treatment to be provided in Kurnool.

The Health Minister also announced that the Kurnool State Cancer Institute now boasts advanced facilities.

Addressing concerns about a shortage of doctors at government hospitals, he noted that there had previously been a 40 per cent deficit in staffing. However, through recent redeployment efforts, doctors and teaching staff from Adoni and other locations had been transferred to Kurnool, alleviating the shortage.

Among those present at the inauguration were MP B Nagaraju, MLAs B Dashagiri, G Charita, Parthasarathi, APMSIDC Chairman Srinivasa Rao, JC Dr B Navya, GGH Superintendent Dr Venkateswarulu, and College Principal Dr Chittinarasamma.

SEIL Energy joins green rally

PNS ■ NELLORE

SEIL Energy India Limited, one of India's largest independent power producers (IPP), participated in the "Green Rally" held here on Saturday as part of the Swarna Andhra - Swachh Andhra initiative. The event was organised by the Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board (APPCB) and the Nellore Municipal Corporation (NMC).

Municipal Administration Minister P Narayana attended the rally as Chief Guest, while APPCB Chairman P Krishnaiah was also present.

The rally commenced from the VRC Grounds and proceeded via the Madras bus stand to the Gandhi Bomma Centre. Several employees from SEIL, including the company's Safety Head, actively took part in the rally, reinforcing their commitment to environmental awareness and sustainability.

BRS to stay away from MLC poll in Hyd: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President K T Rama Rao on Saturday said the party has decided to stay away from the April 23 MLC election from the Hyderabad Local Authorities' Constituency as it does not have the requisite strength to win.

When asked about Union Minister and Telangana BJP president G Kishan Reddy's allegation that the BRS and Congress were trying to help the AIMIM candidate win by not contesting, Rao said his party had chosen to abstain because it could not support either the BJP or AIMIM.

"Kishan Reddy can say what he wants. The fact is, we don't have the numbers to win in the local body here. So, we have decided to abstain and boycott the election. We cannot vote for either the BJP or AIMIM, and therefore, we will not take part in the electoral process," Rao told PTI Videos.

However, BJP MLA Raja Singh criticised the BRS, alleging that the party had deliberately stepped aside to help AIMIM win.

He claimed there was a tacit understanding between the ruling Congress, BRS, and AIMIM.

Singh further said that the political future of Congress and BRS corporators in Hyderabad, who are eligible to vote, would be in jeopardy if they supported the AIMIM nominee.

He added that abstaining from voting amounted to disrespecting democracy and urged Congress and BRS corporators to vote according to their conscience.

The election to the Legislative Council from the Hyderabad Local Authorities' Constituency will be held on April 23. The contest is between BJP's N Goutham Rao and AIMIM's Mirza Riyaz Ul Hassan Effendi. Congress and BRS have not fielded candidates.

DC, JC, SP take part in Swarnandhra initiative

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K VetriSelvi, Joint Collector P Dhatri Reddy, and Superintendent of Police K Pratap Shiva Kishore participated in the Swarnandhra Swachh Andhra programme on Saturday, where they actively engaged in the removal of garbage.

As part of the "Swarnandhra Swachh Andhra" initiative, held on the third Saturday of every month for environmental protection, as per the directive of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, the event was organised along the banks of the Krishna Canal. Activities included clearing weeds, garbage, and cleaning the canal to protect the environment.

Speaking at the event, District Collector VetriSelvi emphasised that in order to promote a healthy lifestyle and environmental protection, the use of plastic must be reduced. She reiterated that the state government will continue to organise the Swarnandhra Swachh Andhra programme on the third Saturday of each month, encouraging widespread participation from the public.

"The municipality will take further action if electronic and plastic waste is handed over to them. When cleanliness is maintained, it fosters a pleasant atmosphere, and people are less likely to litter," said the Collector, urging citizens to use cotton bags instead of plastic covers for daily needs. She also advocated for a complete ban on single-use plastic bags.

The Collector stressed the importance of maintaining cleanliness, advising the public not to litter on roads. She further advised that any garbage should be disposed of in dustbins, and stated that the district will remain clean through rigorous cleanliness initiatives.

VetriSelvi also instructed officials from the Irrigation Department to organise a Subrahmanya programme along five kilometres of the Krishna Canal in Eluru. Additionally, she directed them to take steps to install barriers on both sides of the bridges over the canal to prevent waste from being dumped into it. SP Pratap Shiva Kishore called on the public for their support in keeping Eluru city clean and maintaining a good environment. Joint Collector P Dhatri Reddy also addressed the gathering.

The event was attended by a number of officials, including DRO V Visveswara Rao, RDO Achyuta Ambareesh, Municipal Corporation Commissioner Bhanu Pratap, DSP D Shravan Kumar, Irrigation SE Nagarjuna Rao, DSO Pratap Reddy, Civil Supplies Corporation District Manager Sivarama Murthy, and Inspector Satyanarayana, among others.

Sunday Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | SUNDAY | APRIL 20, 2025

ACROSS THE STATES

Shah to inaugurate 'Save Earth Conclave'

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will on Tuesday inaugurate the 'Save Earth Conclave' to explore the potential of bamboo to mitigate climate change and drive economic growth. Pasha Patel, the chairman of the Chief Minister's Task Force for Environment and Sustainable Development in Maharashtra, said that Shah would inaugurate the conclave, which is being organised by Phoenix Foundation Sanstha, Latur, and the Indian Chamber of Food and Agriculture. Nearly 1,200 delegates from across the country are expected to attend the conclave, Patel told reporters here. Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari and Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav are also scheduled to address separate sessions at the day-long conclave at the NASC Complex here on April 22. The organisers will also give away the India Sustainability Awards 2025 to 15 pioneers, who have led transformative change in climate action and green innovation.

Indian student killed by stray bullet in Canada

A 21-year-old Indian student was killed in Canada after being struck by a stray bullet while waiting at a bus stop, as shots were fired from a passing car. Harsimrat Randhawa, a student at Mohawk College in Hamilton, Ontario, was on her way to work on Wednesday when the incident occurred. Hamilton Police, which is investigating the case as a homicide, called her an innocent bystander. Back in Punjab, from where she hailed, her family has urged the Indian and state government for their assistance in bringing back her body. In a statement, police said they received reports of a shooting near Upper James and South Bend Road streets at around 7.30 pm local time and found Randhawa there with a gunshot wound to the chest. She was rushed to a hospital but succumbed. Randhawa was struck by a bullet after a passenger in a black car opened fire on a white sedan, it said.

Girl's 'accidental' death in turns out to be murder

The probe into the death of a 7-year-old girl in Nalasopara in Palghar district, which was registered as an accidental death at first, has taken a massive twist with her minor brother being detained for murder, a police official said on Saturday. The girl was found dead in her house in Valaipada on April 17 and her father had told Pelhar police she hit her neck against a spanner after falling from a stool, resulting in her death, MBVV police Central Crime Unit senior inspector Pramod Badakh said. "Based on information provided by the father, a case of accidental death was registered at Pelhar police station and the body was sent for post mortem to Mumbai's JJ Hospital. The autopsy report said she died of injuries around the neck. A subsequent probe, which included talking to neighbours and a thorough check of the site, pointed the finger of suspicion at her juvenile brother," he said.

WORLD LIVER DAY

Modi pitches for fitter India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday pitched for a fitter and healthier India by taking small steps such as reducing oil intake and raising awareness about the adverse effects of obesity, as he lauded the Union health ministry's efforts to mark World Liver Day.

Observed annually, World Liver Day seeks to raise awareness about liver health and diseases. The theme for this year is "Food is Medicine".

Modi said in a post on X, "Commendable effort to mark World Liver Day with a call for mindful eating and healthier living. Small steps like reducing oil intake can make a big difference. Together, let's build a fitter, healthier India by raising awareness about obesity."

The prime minister was replying to Union Health Minister JP Nadda's post urging people to pledge to reduce their edible oil intake by at least 10 per cent and embrace a healthier lifestyle, a reiteration of Modi's call on these lines to stop obesity.

Nadda also said, "Let's also pledge to raise awareness about obesity and its growing impact on our society. Together, let's work towards a future where healthier living is the norm, starting with the food we eat."

Small changes can lead to big results when food is treated as medicine, he added.

India committed to improving tourism ties with ASEAN: Union Min

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Union Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita on Saturday said India's participation in the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (MATTA) Fair in Kuala Lumpur underscores the country's commitment to strengthening tourism ties with ASEAN nations.

"MATTA is a platform that gives an opportunity to India's cultural and geographical richness to a global audience", the Union Minister said while inaugurating the India Pavilion of the fair at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) in the Malaysian capital.

India's participation at MATTA Fair is part of the broader Tourism Professionals Exchange Programme 2025, a two-part initiative designed to foster closer tourism engagement between India and ASEAN countries, he said.

The first phase involved a field visit by ASEAN tourism professionals to Assam earlier this year.

The second phase, currently underway, includes collaborative activities at MATTA Fair with Indian and ASEAN counterparts working together to promote joint tourism initiatives, the Minister added.

This initiative follows the announcement made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 21st ASEAN-India Summit in Lao PDR, where 2025 was designated as the ASEAN-India Year of Tourism, he said.

The collaboration aims to encourage mutual learning, create market-relevant tourism products, and promote sustainable travel practices across borders.

"On our part, India has allocated USD 5 million to the ASEAN-India Tourism Work Plan for the period 2023-27", the Minister said.

This will be used to support promotional campaigns, capacity-building programs and sustainable tourism projects, he added.

The Indian Pavilion has been made possible by involvement of the Indian High Commission in Malaysia and implemented by Assam Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC).

ATDC has taken the lead in curating and coordinating India's participation with a strong focus on Northeast Indian's tourism potential, he added. "As a manifestation of our focus on the NE part of India, the special feature of the India pavilion has substantial presence of tourism professionals from the region, which provides the vital land link with the ASEAN countries", the Minister said.

The eight states of NE India are blessed with scenic natural beauty, rich biodiversity, unique wildlife, historical sites, distinct cultural and ethnic heritage and most of all warm and welcoming people, he added.

With a footfall of over 180,000 visitors and business transactions exceeding RM 300 million in each edition, MATTA Fair serves as one of Southeast Asia's most dynamic platforms for destination promotion.

India's representation this year includes 50 delegates from Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Sikkim, Mizoram, Delhi, Gujarat, Kerala, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Jammu and Kashmir, Andamans and Nicobar among others, each contributing regional strengths to a unified national showcase.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by Chief Minister of Kedah Darul Aman Dat Seri Sandi Bin Md Noor, Indian High Commissioner in Malaysia B N Reddy, ATDC Managing Director Padmapani Bora, delegates from ASEAN countries, Indian tourism boards, travel operators, cultural groups, and government officials.

The India Pavilion will remain open for public and trade visitors until April 20.

11 dead in multi-storey building collapse in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A multi-storey residential building collapsed in northeast Delhi's Shakti Vihar area in the early hours of Saturday, leaving 11 people dead and 11 injured, officials said.

Teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), fire services, Delhi Police and other volunteers carried out rescue efforts for over 12 hours at the site of the 20-year-old four-storey structure that collapsed in the Mustafabad area of the national capital around 3 am.

According to police, there were 22 people at the building, most of them families. The owner of the building, Tehseen, and six from his family were among the 11 who died in the building collapse.

A police source said construction work in "two-three shops" on the ground floor could have led to the collapse. Locals also said construction work going on at a new shop could have triggered the collapse. They also expressed concern about the fragile state of four to five buildings.

Waste water from the sewer has been seeping into the walls of the buildings for years, and over time, the moisture has weakened the structure, causing the walls to develop cracks," said Salim Ali, another resident.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi, in a statement, said that the structure was around 20 years old and was fully occupied.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta ordered a probe into the incident and expressed sadness over the incident.

Residents of nearby buildings who also felt the tremors described it as an earthquake and said the floor beneath them was shaking.

Will win battle on Waqf issue, ED action will not frighten us: Kharge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday said the party will not be daunted by the Enforcement Directorate's action against its leaders and also asserted that it will win the battle against the BJP-led central government on the Waqf (Amendment) Act.

Addressing a meeting of party general secretaries and in-charges here, Kharge said the Supreme Court has given importance to the points raised by the Congress and other opposition parties on the Act and alleged that the government had raked the 'Waqf by user' issue deliberately to create a dispute over such properties.

He said the Congress party brought together the entire opposition against the government's Waqf (Amendment) Bill.

"The Supreme Court is hearing this case right now, we are confident that we will win this battle too," he said, adding, "I am happy that the Supreme Court has given importance to the points raised by the Congress and other opposition parties."

He accused the BJP and the central government of misleading people on the issue of Waqf.

"Especially the issue of 'Waqf by user' has been deliberately brought up by the government to put Waqf properties into dispute," he alleged.

He said former party chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi were named in the Enforcement Directorate chargesheet and National Herald properties in Delhi, Lucknow and Mumbai were attached with a "spirit of vendetta".

"You must have noticed how, as part of a big conspiracy, the names of CPP Chairperson Sonia Gandhi and leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi have been put in the charge sheet in the National Herald case. But no matter whose name they put, we are not going to be afraid," Kharge said.

"Just two or three days before that, the properties of National Herald in Delhi, Lucknow and Mumbai were attached. There is no doubt that all this is being done out of a spirit of vendetta," he said.

Asserting that 'Young Indian' is a 'not for profit' company, Kharge said this means that no one can take or transfer the shares, properties or profit of AJL.

ED action in National Herald case is to protect nation's assets: Goyal

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Union minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday said the action by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the National Herald case is aimed at protecting the nation's assets from being "taken over by the Gandhi family for personal use".

Goyal alleged that Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi were involved in a conspiracy to take control of the property, originally meant for public interest, through the now-defunct National Herald newspaper.

"The ED's action in the National Herald case is to save the nation's assets," the Union commerce minister told reporters here.

Such property should be returned to the people, he said.

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

"A shocking issue came before the country. Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi conspired to grab wealth worth Rs 2,000 crore through the National Herald property. Today, the property is worth Rs 5,000 crore," Goyal claimed.

He said the property was originally given by a Congress-led government to the newspaper, which has since ceased operations.

"It was a Congress party newspaper and the various Congress governments gave it land. The National Herald shut down much earlier. Then they planned to rent it out. Rs 38 crore was taken as bogus advance rent by Associated Journals Ltd (AJL) under the direction of Congress leaders," Goyal claimed.

The AJL used to run the National Herald.

The BJP minister, who represents the Mumbai North Lok Sabha seat, claimed the Congress collected donations from the public under the guise of social service and political work, but used the money to provide an illegal loan to AJL.

"Around Rs 90 crore were given to AJL as a loan. It is illegal to give such a loan by a political party," he said. The loan was later transferred to Young Indian, a company controlled by the Gandhi family, according to Goyal.

"After some period, the Rs 90 crore loan was settled for merely Rs 50 lakh and transferred to Young Indian. Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi control 76 per cent in Young Indian. The entire property came under Young Indian's ownership in 2010-11 for just Rs 50 lakh," he said.

He called the transaction a calculated move to transfer public property into private hands. "Can you tell me any better scheme than this," asked the minister.

Raj and Uddhav spark reunion buzz

Say ready to ignore trivial issues

PNS ■ MUMBAI

MNS leader Raj Thackeray has sparked speculation about a potential political rapprochement with his estranged cousin and Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, noting their past differences are "trivial" and uniting for the greater good of "Marathi manoos" is not a difficult task.

The buzz strengthened when Uddhav on Saturday said he is ready to put aside trivial fights provided that those working against Maharashtra's interests will not be entertained, a veiled reference to Raj hosting Shiv Sena head and Deputy CM Eknath Shinde at his residence.

In an interview with actor-director Mahesh Manjrekar's podcast, released on Saturday, Raj said he had no issues working with Uddhav when they were in the undivided Shiv Sena. Raj said the question is, does Uddhav want to work with him?

"For a bigger cause, our fights and issues are trivial. Maharashtra is very big. For Maharashtra, the existence of Marathi manoos, these fights are very trivial. I don't think it is a difficult task to come together and stay united. But the issue is of desire.

"It is not the question of my desire or selfishness. We need to look at the larger picture. All Maharashtrians should form one party," Raj said when asked whether the two estranged cousins could come together politically.

Raj, for his part, stressed that ego should not be brought to dictate such small issues.

Responding to Raj, Uddhav told Shiv Sena (UBT) workers, "I am also ready to put aside trivial issues and I appeal to everyone to come together for the sake of Marathi manoos."

Murshidabad: NCW team meets riot-hit people

Ruling TMC describes commission as BJP's wing

PNS ■ KOLKATA

A delegation of the National Commission for Women (NCW), led by its chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar, on Saturday met riot-hit people in West Bengal's Murshidabad district and assured them that the Centre would take necessary steps to ensure their safety.

The ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC), however, questioned the NCW's neutrality, accusing it of functioning as a "political wing of the BJP."

During the visit, affected women shared their harrowing experiences from the recent communal violence, which claimed three lives.

They demanded the establishment of permanent BSF camps in select areas and called for an NIA probe into the clashes. Rahatkar said, "I am dumbfounded by the agony these women are having to suffer. What they went through during the violence is beyond imagination." The NCW chief assured the victims that there was "no cause for worry" as the Centre is with you.

"We have come here to see your plight. Please don't worry. The country and the commission are with you. Don't think that you are alone," Rahatkar told the victims at Betbona village.

Many of the riot-affected women broke down in tears during their interactions with the NCW team.

The villagers were seen holding placards that displayed messages such as 'We don't want Lakshmir Bhandar, we want BSF camp. We want security'.

'We are under attack,' read another placard. 'We demand resignation of chief minister for her failure to protect us,' said another placard.

NCW member Archana Majumdar told reporters that the Commission would report the women's demands to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, especially regarding the deployment of BSF camps in the area.

BJP MLA Sreerupa Mitra Chaudhury, who was accompanying the NCW team, told PTI Videos, "This is my constituency, Dakshin Malda. I have been contesting from here for the last 12 years, and what I have seen this time is unprecedented.

Patnaik becomes BJD chief for 9th time

Asks party workers to expose BJP's 'false' narrative

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Former Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik, who was chosen as the BJD president for the ninth time in a row, on Saturday called upon party workers to expose the alleged false narrative of the ruling BJP.

BJD's organisational election returning officer PK Deb announced 78-year-old Patnaik as the party president at the state council meeting held at its state headquarters, Sankha Bhawan.

Addressing party leaders and workers after being named as the BJD president, Patnaik said, "We conceded defeat in the last assembly election by a narrow margin, even though our party got more votes. This is because we couldn't effectively counter the false narrative. Creating a false narrative is the main strategy against the BJD. We should be aggressive in exposing this, especially on social media."

The leader of opposition in the Odisha assembly also said, "We need to improve our social media presence. Technology should be used to tell the truth and the facts, and without technology, we cannot reach out to people."

Patnaik has been the founder president of the regional party and was the lone candidate for the post.

"Patnaik was elected as the BJD president unopposed," Deb said.

In a veiled attack on the ruling BJP, the BJD chief said, "No one should underestimate the organisational strength of our party. The spirit of BJD workers remains very high. They are our real assets."

"I have full faith in BJD workers, brothers and sisters. They are the ones who will give a befitting reply to the propaganda. They will spread the message of our service to every village and city of Odisha," Patnaik said.

"THE ONLY TIME TO EAT DIET FOOD IS WHILE YOU'RE WAITING FOR THE STEAK TO COOK"
— JULIA CHILD

A Toast to Taste

BY TEAM AGENDA

Somewhere between a laid-back hangout and a full-sensory culinary voyage, *Dos Delhi* is shaking up the city's bar culture, one artfully crafted cocktail at a time. Tucked into a lively corner of New Delhi, it is a mood. With its high-energy vibe, edgy design, and a menu that's unapologetically adventurous, this hotspot is redefining what it means to dine and drink in the capital. Now, the creative minds behind the concept — *Chefs Jatin Mallick* and *Julia Carmen De Sa* are raising the bar with the launch of a brand-new Beverage & Bar Snack Pairing Menu.

This isn't just about snacks that accompany your drink. It's a thoughtfully curated sensory experience where bold cocktails and inventive bites come together in a masterful dance of balance and contrast.

A sleek glass of *Truffle Spy*, made with gin, Martini Extra Dry, Cointreau, Campari, and a touch of truffle, paired with golden, crispy *Truffle Parmesan Fries* makes a day. What is refined, decadent, and almost too good to share are the fiery *Dos Me Up*, where tequila combines with wasabi, sour cream, cilantro, and basil. Its punch is balanced by the earthy calm of *Charcoal Grilled Snack Peppers with Yam Hummus*.

Each pairing feels like a little world of its own. The *Smirking Cacao*, with its heady mix of dark rum, vanilla liqueur, spiced vermouth, and cacao nibs, is like dessert in a glass. It is perfectly complemented by *Buttered Edamame with Thai Herbs and Lemongrass* Ketchup. Then there's the refreshing *Hot Russian Zombie*, a vodka-apple-citrus-based drink that comes alive with Potato Lavash topped with Avocado, Salsa Macha, and Chipotle Cheese Sauce. And if tropical and smoky is your flavour, the *Sexy Lady Stunner*, a blend of whisky, Martini Bianco, and roasted pineapple, pairs beautifully with Mustard Marinated Fish Belly Fingers and lemon marmalade.

However, *Dos Delhi* isn't only about the drinks. The bar snack menu is a genre of its own - part street-style comfort, part global fusion, and entirely packed with surprises. Take the *Guntur Chilli Glazed Crispy Chicken Wings* for instance, bold and spicy, and ideal with whisky. Or the *Flash-Fried Sweet & Sour Green Candy Tomatoes* served with *Yoghurt Tahina and Flour Crispies*, which offer a tangy, crunchy contrast to citrus-forward cocktails. If you love bold umami flavours, the *Dos Magic Spiced Cassava Chips* with *Sriracha Cheese Ketchup* deliver a satisfying punch. And of course, there's the ever-popular Cheese Garlic Bread, warm, gooey, and comfortingly familiar — especially when enjoyed with red wine sangria or a smooth whisky spritzer.

The ambience is as much a part of the experience as the food and drink. Spread over two floors, with both indoor and outdoor seating, the space pulses with a modern, welcoming energy. Contemporary artwork adds visual intrigue, while live DJs set the tone, with music that shifts seamlessly from laid-back evening grooves to weekend party anthems.

At its core, *Dos Delhi* is about slowing down, enjoying good company, and celebrating the pleasures of flavour and connection. So whether you're winding down after work, reconnecting with friends, or seeking your next great cocktail discovery, Beverage & Bar Snack Pairing Menu invites you to sip and savour.

FACT SHEET:
Name: Dos By Tres
Address: Shop No. 9 & 10, Fourth Avenue Road, Lodhi Colony, New Delhi
Price for Two: ₹2,500/-
Timings: Mon - Thu, Sunday: 12:00pm to 12:00am
Fri - Sat : 12:00pm to 01:00am

Chill Mornings with Light Breakfast

BY TEAM AGENDA

Breakfast is often called the most important meal of the day and for all the good reasons. A wholesome breakfast fuels your body, sharpens your focus, and sets the tone for a productive day. Especially during summer, starting your morning with light, nourishing, and refreshing meals becomes all the more essential to keep your energy up without feeling heavy.

In this spirit, we bring you two delightful breakfast recipes that are both satisfying and summer-friendly. First up is *Poha*, a light and flavourful dish made from flattened rice perfectly with a cup of chai. Then *Curd Upma*, a unique twist on the classic Upma that blends roasted semolina with curd.

CURD UPMA

Curd Upma, a dish combining the cooling effects of curd with the nutritional benefits of Upma, offers several advantages during the summer months. It helps to regulate body temperature, promotes digestion, boosts immunity, and provides hydration, making it a refreshing and healthy summer meal.

INGREDIENTS:
- 2 Cups sooji
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 10-12 Curry leaves
- 1 tsp urad dal
- 1 tsp chana dal
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup vegetables of your choice, chopped
- 1 cup curd
- 1 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- 2 Green chillies (slit)
- to taste salt
- to taste Red chilli powder
- for garnishing coriander leaves

INSTRUCTIONS:
- Roast sooji till fragrant. Keep aside.
- Heat ghee in a pan. Add mustard seeds, curry leaves, urad dal and chana dal. Wait till they splutter.
- Saute onion and ginger-garlic paste.
- When onion browns, add the vegetables, cover the pan and let the vegetables cook.
- Add curd water and saute for a minute. Add roasted sooji, 4 cups of water and let everything cook.
- Garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot.

POHA

Poha is a dish made from flattened rice, which is lightly steamed and cooked with onions, spices, and herbs. The term 'poha' refers both to the ingredient-flattened rice flakes, also known as beaten or parched rice - and the final prepared dish. These rice flakes are regarded as wholesome and nutritious, as they undergo minimal processing from raw paddy. This is a nutritious, traditional food widely eaten in many regions of India.

INGREDIENTS:
- 1 cup poha (flattened rice)
- 1 medium onion (finely chopped)
- 1-2 green chillies (slit or chopped)
- 1/4 tsp mustard seeds
- 5-6 curry leaves
- 1/4 tsp turmeric powder
- Salt to taste
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 small potato (optional, peeled and chopped small)
- 1-2 tsp sugar (optional, for a slight sweetness)
- 2 tbsp roasted peanuts
- Fresh coriander leaves (chopped, for garnish)
- Juice of half a lemon

INSTRUCTIONS:
- Rinse 1 cup poha in a colander under running water.
- Gently fluff it with your fingers and let it sit for 5-10 minutes to soften. (Make sure it doesn't become mushy)
- Heat 1 tbsp oil in a pan, add mustard seeds and let them crackle.
- Add curry leaves, green chillies, and peanuts.
- Sauté for a minute and add chopped onions and sauté until translucent. (If adding potatoes, cook them until soft before adding onions)
- Sprinkle turmeric powder and mix well.
- Add the softened poha, salt, and sugar. Mix everything gently.
- Cover the pan and cook for 2-3 minutes on low heat.
- Turn off the flame, squeeze lemon juice, and garnish with coriander.
- Enjoy your poha with a hot cup of tea!

Brewing Innovation: Microbreweries

BY AJAY GOWDA

The craft beer industry thrives on passion, innovation, and an ever-evolving consumer palate. In a dynamic market like India, where beer culture is rapidly evolving, *microbreweries* must continuously adapt to remain relevant. This evolution goes beyond brewing exceptional beer as it requires innovation in menu offerings, immersive experiences, and customer engagement strategies. Leading microbreweries recognise that craft beer is more than just a beverage; it is an experience that fosters a deeper connection between consumers and the craft. Reinvention is not merely a business strategy but it is a commitment to consistently enhancing the customer journey, offering authenticity, novelty, and lasting impressions.

Craft beer lovers seek a holistic experience that extends beyond the pint glass. At our brewing company we have always believed that a microbrewery is more than just a place to drink — it's an immersive experience. This means that while our beer remains at the core, our food menu, ambiance, and service must evolve to keep guests excited and engaged. Food and beer pairing is an area where we see constant innovation. The modern beer drinker wants to explore beyond traditional bar snacks, which is why we consistently experiment with our menu. A well-thought-out food pairing can enhance the flavours of a beer. Our recent menu refresh, inspired by global flavours while keeping our Viking spirit alive, is a testament to this philosophy. Beyond food, microbreweries are also diversifying their beverage offerings. Craft cocktails, beer-based drinks, and even house-made non-alcoholic options ensure that there is something for every guest, making the microbrewery experience more inclusive and engaging.

The modern beer seeks variety. The rise of unique beer styles such as hazy IPAs, barrel-aged stouts, and fruit-infused sours, demonstrates that consumers are open to experimentation. Reinvention is about adapting to what our consumers want before they even know they want it.

— The author is Managing Director of Byg Brewski Brewing Company

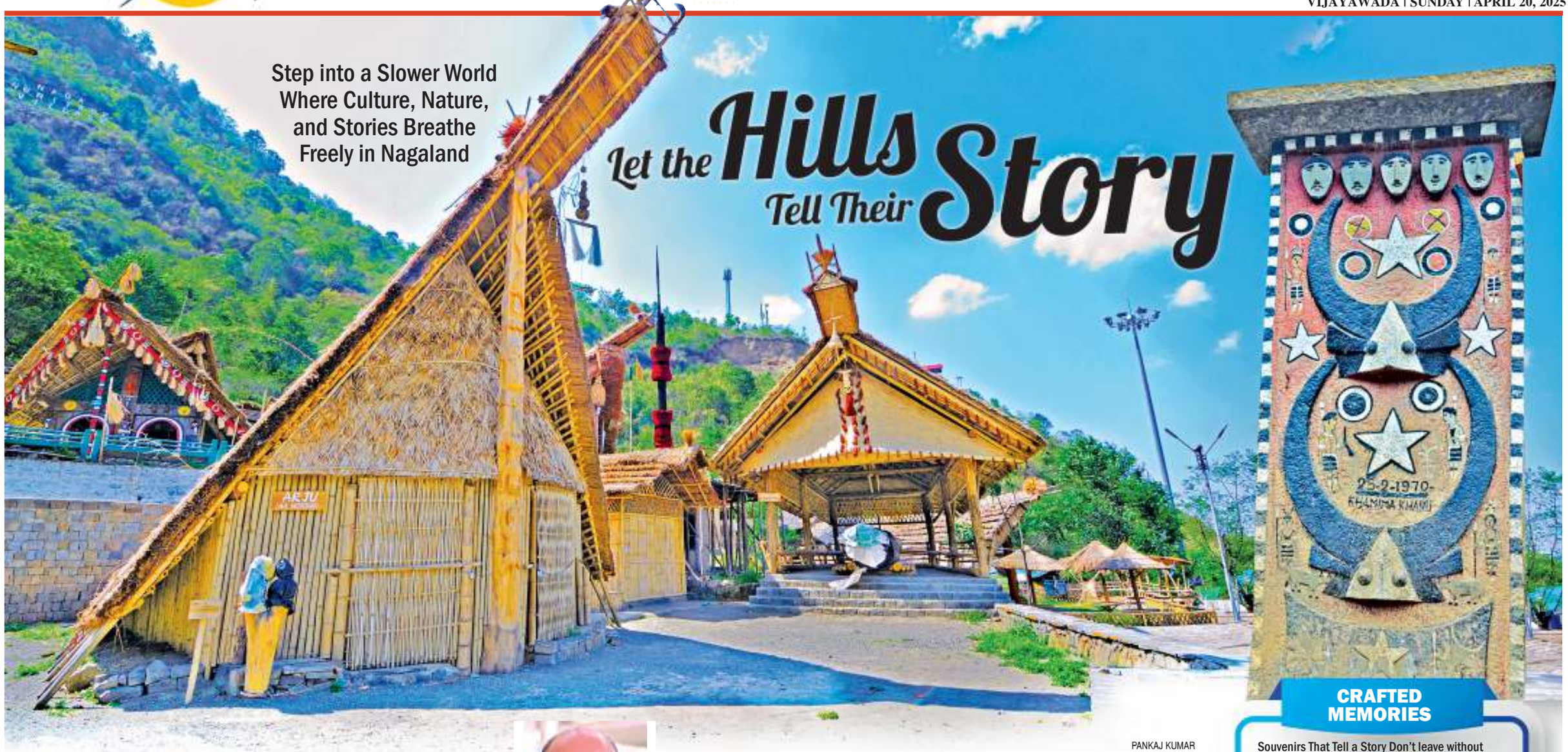
THE FUTURE

The microbrewery industry in India is at an exciting juncture. With evolving tastes, rising consumer expectations, and a growing appreciation for craft beer, reinvention is no longer an option but it is a necessity. As we look to the future, our focus remains on pushing boundaries while staying true to our core values of quality, craftsmanship, and experience.

"TAKE ONLY MEMORIES, LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS"
— CHIEF SEATTLE

Let the Hills Tell Their Story

Step into a Slower World Where Culture, Nature, and Stories Breathe Freely in Nagaland



PAWAN SONI
COLUMNIST
Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards

If you're weary of Insta-itineraries and whirlwind checklists, perhaps it's time to let **Nagaland** happen to you-slowly, deliberately, and with the grace of a place untouched by frenzy. This Northeastern gem invites not a race, but a pause. Here, you don't "do" a holiday; you dwell in it. The gateway to Nagaland is surprisingly accessible-courtesy of a direct flight from Delhi to Dimapur. No layovers, no fuss. From Dimapur, it's a picturesque 90-minute drive to Kohima, the state's capital, where the hills roll in like a lullaby and time decides to take the long road. For those who prefer to stay in Dimapur, you're still in the heart of it all-with the added advantage of being just 20 minutes from Khatkhati in Assam, where the spirit flows a little more freely (more on that in a bit).

A Walk Through History

Kohima holds within it the whispers of the past. The Kohima War Cemetery, perched gracefully over green slopes, honours the brave who fought in one of the Second World War's fiercest battles. It's not just a site; it's a silenced storyteller. The epitaph that reads "When you go home, tell them of us," is reason enough to spend a moment longer in reflection. In December showcases all this and more-dance, folklore, crafts, and cuisines that are as layered as the land. Now, here's the delightful surprise: while Nagaland's indigenous cuisine is a delight of lightly spiced, easy-to-digest dishes-think bamboo shoot pork, fresh river fish, sticky rice-there's no dearth of North Indian comfort food either. Craving choley bhature, jalebi, or a good old paratha? You'll find it in Kohima's modest eateries and hotels, served with the warmth of familiarity and a view to match.

Nagaland may be officially dry, but that doesn't mean you're cut off from your evening pour. A short ride to Khatkhati, across the Assam border, brings you to a clutch of bars and the emerging jewel of the local spirits scene-Dark Knight Distillery.

Here, I had the pleasure of sampling their range, including Infamous, a premium small-batch whisky with a smooth finish and surprisingly nuanced profile, and bought Lost Treasure, a cold-brew coffee rum for home as a souvenir. Dani Chand, the affable founder of Dark Knight, stated, "The response to Infamous has been overwhelming. We're still keeping it small-batch to retain quality, but expansion plans are definitely brewing."

This place is about learning to savour again, whether it's a bite of Naga stew or a verse of war history, So, take that flight. Take your time. Let Nagaland linger.

PANKAJ KUMAR

HORNBILL VILLAGE AND THE 16 TRIBES OF NAGALAND

Nagaland is home to over a hundred tribes, each with its own dialect, traditions, and legacy. Among these, 16 are officially recognised as major tribes, and their presence is vividly brought to life in the Hornbill Village — a living museum where tradition stands tall. Here, tribal architecture tells you as much as the elders do. You can walk through authentically built morungs, see traditional weaponry once used in headhunting days, and witness daily practices that have survived centuries.

CRAFTED MEMORIES

Souvenirs That Tell a Story Don't leave without picking up a bottle of Infamous-its bold character and striking design make it a gift worthy of your shelf. Handwoven Naga shawls, each tribe with its distinct pattern, ideal as a wrap or a wall accent. Tribal jewellery made from beads and brass-rustic, sustainable, and deeply symbolic. Bamboo and cane artefacts, from baskets to lampshades, crafted by local artisans. Smoked pork or dried bamboo shoot, vacuum-packed and available at select markets in Kohima. Locally grown wild Naga chillies, both fresh and in pickled form, for those who like their food fiery. Why Go Slow?

Luxury Beyond the Ocean's Horizon

BY AKANKSHA DEAN

As I boarded, the promise of an enchanting journey ahead filled the air. Flying Business Class with SriLankan Airlines transformed the journey into a memorable escapade. As I settled into my plush seat, the friendly flight attendants welcomed me with warm smiles and a glass of sparkling champagne that shimmered like the Indian Ocean below. Soon enough, we glided into **Colombo**, a city alive with culture and hues. Upon my arrival at the Anantara Peace Haven Resort, I was instantly lulled by the gentle sound of waves crashing against the shore.

The brutal noise of everyday life faded away, replaced by a peaceful ambiance suffused with the fragrance of tropical flowers and fresh seafood grilling nearby. My luxurious villa had a private plunge pool, which beckoned me for a refreshing dip. As I settled in, excited for what lay ahead, I could feel Sri Lanka's rich culture and bright spirit spilling from the very walls of this oasis.

WAVES, WELLNESS AND WONDERS

My adventurous side thrived during watching a thrilling surf lesson with an extraordinary instructor, who transformed missteps into pointers-by the end of it, you could be riding waves like a pro. A session of restorative yoga against the backdrop of the sun dipping into the ocean was the perfect balance, allowing me to connect both mentally and physically with nature. It was a moment of pure zen. Every treatment I enjoyed led me deeper into tranquillity, leaving me blissfully void of any worldly stress. Between flavours, surf and spa, I truly felt the essence of Sri Lanka's welcoming charm.

CULINARY BLISS BY THE SEA

Let's start with the food-where do I even begin? My culinary journey kicked off at Journey's, the resort's breakfast haven. The vibrant buffet was as impressive as an art gallery, boasting an array of dishes from traditional egg hoppers to decadent pastries.

My taste buds danced with delight at the first bite of savoury *fish curry* paired with that unique hopper texture. Post breakfast, I lounged by the infinity pool, which effortlessly merged into the horizon-each glance towards the ocean felt like I was shifting between reality and a surreal painting.

The true joy of dining at Anantara lies not only in casual meals between sun-soaked hours but in the mystical dinner experience that awaited me at Verele, the beachside *teppanyaki* restaurant. As the sun slipped below the horizon, live folk music curated a soothing backdrop to my BBQ feast.

I relished every moment as the skilled chefs prepared unique dishes, not just with ingredients but with love-a tradition handed down through generations. Each bite was an invitation into a world rich with history and vibrant flavours, a culinary dance of spices and textures that is quintessentially Sri Lankan.

Under the guidance of local chefs, I learned the secrets behind traditional Sri Lankan dishes, grating coconut and preparing aromatic curries. The air filled with laughter and the scent of freshly ground spices, and my creativity turned every dish into a small-plate masterpiece. Sharing what I cooked with fellow travellers over cocktails infused with innovative flavours like smoked Amarac was the cherry on top of this wonderful day.

— The author is an independent food & travel writer, a chef, and a catalyst

IN THE END, IT'S THE LAUGHTER SHARED OVER SPICES, WAVES RIDDEN, AND PEACE FOUND AMIDST VEILS OF PALM TREES THAT MAKES THE ANANTARA EXPERIENCE TRULY UNFORGETTABLE

MONEY MATTERS

HDFC Bank profit rises to Rs 17,616 crore

HDFC Bank on Saturday posted a 6.6 per cent increase in standalone profit at Rs 17,616 crore in the fourth quarter of 2024-25. The country's biggest private sector lender had earned a net profit of Rs 16,512 crore in the same quarter a year ago. Total income increased to Rs 89,488 crore during the quarter under review, as against Rs 89,639 crore in the same period of last year, HDFC Bank said in a regulatory filing. The bank reported interest income of Rs 77,460 crore during the January-March quarter of 2024-25, compared to Rs 71,473 crore in the same period a year ago. The board of the bank recommended a dividend of Rs 22 per equity share of Re 1 each for the year ended March 31, 2025. As regards asset quality, the bank witnessed slight deterioration, with gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) rising to 1.33 per cent of the gross loans by the end of March 2025, from 1.24 per cent a year ago. Similarly, net NPAs or bad loans rose to 0.43 per cent, from 0.33 per cent at the end of the fourth quarter of the previous fiscal year. consolidated basis, the bank clocked a growth of 6.8 per cent in net profit to Rs 18,835 crore, as against Rs 17,622 crore in Q4 FY24.

Punjab govt to provide 33% subsidy on hybrid seeds

The Punjab government on Saturday said it has decided to provide a 33 per cent subsidy on BT cotton hybrid seeds, as part of its move to promote crop diversification in the state. The subsidy will be given on seeds which are recommended by Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana. Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khuddian said a sum of Rs 20 crore has been allocated for the subsidy programme and this move would reduce financial burden on cotton growers, while simultaneously discouraging the cultivation of non-recommended hybrids to enable them to adopt high-yielding and pest-resistant BT cotton hybrid seeds. The department has fixed a target to increase the cotton crop area to at least 1.25 lakh hectares this year, he said. Cotton, a crucial kharif crop in the south-western districts of the state, presents a viable alternative to the water-guzzling paddy crop, contributing to both agricultural diversification and economic growth. Urging farmers to take advantage of this opportunity and opt for the recommended Bt cotton hybrid seeds, Khuddian said the state government is committed to supporting farmers and promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

Delhivery, Ecom Express seek CCI nod for Rs 1,400-cr deal

Logistic firm Delhivery Ltd and Ecom Express have sought Competition Commission of India's approval for their Rs 1,400-crore deal. Under the deal announced on April 5, Delhivery will acquire a controlling stake in Ecom Express for a cash consideration of Rs 1,400 crore. While Delhivery is a listed integrated logistics player, Ecom Express provides logistics solutions to the Indian e-commerce industry. According to the notice submitted to the regulator, the relevant products and geographic markets can be left open, given that the proposed deal will not lead to any change in the competitive dynamics, let alone cause any appreciable adverse effect on competition, in any market in India. Against the backdrop of potential business overlaps, the notice has mentioned that with respect to horizontal overlaps, the markets for provision of express parcel delivery services in India, and for provision of warehousing and supply chain services in India can be considered as relevant ones. In terms of vertical relationships, the relevant markets for provision of intralogistics automation services in India (at the upstream level), and for provision of logistics services in India (at the downstream level) can be considered, as per the notice.

11-DAY VISIT TO US, PERU

FM to participate in G20, IMF-World Bank meetings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will participate in G20 meetings and attend Spring Meetings of the IMF-World Bank, among other bilateral engagements, during an 11-day official trip to the US and Peru, the finance ministry said on Saturday.

Sitharaman is leaving for the official trip on Saturday night.

The finance minister will also interact with top CEOs from prominent fund management firms during a Roundtable meeting with investors, besides holding bilateral meetings with CEOs from top information technology (IT) firms based in San Francisco.

As part of the US visit, she would land in San Francisco to deliver a keynote address at the Hoover Institution at the Stanford University on April 20.

INDIA, US TRADE TALKS FROM 23

Pact's terms of reference include about 19 chapters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian and US officials will hold three-day talks from April 23 in Washington for a proposed trade pact with terms of references (ToRs) covering around 19 chapters such as tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and customs facilitation, official sources said.

The Indian official team is visiting the US to give further impetus to the negotiations in the 90-day tariff pause window and discuss these ToRs to iron out differences on certain issues before formally launching talks for the bilateral trade agreement (BTA). India's chief negotiator, Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal, will lead the team for the first in-person talks between the two countries. Agrawal was appointed as the next commerce secretary on April 18. He will assume office from October 1.

"Both sides will discuss the level of ambition. The ToRs will be further developed and discussed. What will be the pathway for talks? The ToRs will include issues like tariffs, non-tariff barriers, rules of origin, goods, services, custom facilitation and regulatory issues," the official said, adding general contours of the pact will be discussed, besides scheduling, so that things can be finalised in 90 days.

The three-day deliberations assume significance, as a senior government official had recently stated that an interim trade agreement between the two countries could be finalised in the 90-day tariff pause announced by the Trump administration if it is a "win-win" for both sides. In international trade parlance, the level of ambition refers to the extent to which two countries are willing to commit to specific trade liberalisation measures.

The visit also follows senior official-level talks held between the two countries last month here. Brendan Lynch, the Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia, was in India from March 25 to 29 for crucial trade discussions with Indian officials.

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

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

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

Elon Musk says he looks forward to visiting India

PNS ■ WASHINGTON/ NEW YORK

Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk on Saturday said he is looking forward to visiting India later this year.

The tech billionaire's remarks came a day after he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke and discussed the immense potential for collaboration in technology and innovation.

"It was an honor to speak with PM Modi. I am looking forward to visiting India later this year!" Musk said in a post on X.

Musk is considered one of the most influential persons in the Donald Trump administration and is spearheading the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) aimed at cutting government expenditure and reducing the federal workforce.

After their talk on Friday, Modi took to X and said, "Spoke to @elonmusk and talked about various issues, including the topics we covered during our meeting in Washington DC earlier this year. We discussed the immense potential for collaboration in the areas of technology and innovation."

"India remains committed to advancing our partnerships with the US in these domains," he added.

UK PM holds 'productive' talks with Trump

PNS ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he and President Donald Trump held "productive" talks on the ongoing discussions towards a trade agreement with the US to address the hefty import tariffs imposed by the American administration on countries around the world.

Downing Street said the phone call on Friday also covered the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the recent US strikes on a Yemeni port to target Houthi rebels. The call came soon after Trump told reporters at the White House that his proposed second State Visit at the invitation of King Charles III is expected in September.

RBI to remain 'agile & proactive' in policy action: Guv Malhotra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

> "Even though we have projected a somewhat lower real GDP growth for FY26 at 6.5 per cent, India is still the fastest growing economy. Yet, it is much below what we aspire for. We have reduced repo rates twice and provided sufficient liquidity."

Amid the ongoing tariff war, Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra has said that the central bank will continuously monitor the rapidly evolving global situation and remain 'agile and proactive' in its policy actions.

Observing that the Indian economy and the financial markets have demonstrated remarkable resilience, Malhotra cautioned that "they are not immune to the vagaries of an uncertain and volatile global environment."

"In view of the rapidly evolving situation, especially on the global front, we are continuously monitoring and assessing the economic outlook. We will be agile and proactive in our actions on the policy front, as always," he said, while addressing the 24th FIMMDA-PDAI Annual Conference in Bali on Friday.

He said the growth-inflation balance has improved significantly and there has been a decisive improvement in headline inflation which is projected to remain aligned to the target of 4 per cent in FY26.

Global uncertainties and weather disturbances, however, pose risks to the inflation outlook. "Even though we have projected a somewhat lower real GDP growth for FY26 at 6.5 per cent, India is still the fastest growing economy. Yet, it is much below what we aspire for. We have reduced repo rates twice and provided sufficient liquidity," he said.

On the Indian financial markets, the Governor said all market segments including FX, G-sec, Money Markets, have largely remained stable.

While the rupee came under a bit of pressure a few months ago, it has fared better thereafter and regained some lost ground, he noted.

India, UK talks for FTA moving towards closing end: Sources

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The negotiations for the proposed free trade agreement between India and the UK are progressing towards the final stages, with both sides working to resolve remaining issues, sources said.

They said that a UK team was here to discuss issues in the bilateral investment treaty.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on April 9 wrapped up the 13th Ministerial India-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) with her British counterpart, Chancellor Rachel Reeves, on a note of positivity and eagerness to conclude the bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations soon. Sources indicated that now another full round of negotiations is unlikely as discussions are progressing at a faster pace.

On February 24, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds announced the resumption of negotiations for the proposed FTA between the two countries. The negotiations resumed after a gap of over eight months. The talks were launched on January 13, 2022. So far, 14 rounds of talks have been completed.

The two countries are actively negotiating on three different fronts - FTA, a bilateral investment treaty (BIT), and a Double Contribution Convention Agreement. In the BIT, the sticking point between the two nations is with regard to the resolution of disputes. On the progress of negotiations for the proposed India, European Union (EU) free trade pact, one of the sources said that both are discussing for an early harvest agreement.

"In-principle they are agreed for that," the source added. The 11th round of negotiations is scheduled from May 12-16 here. The two are looking to conclude the free trade agreement in phases amidst an uncertain global trade environment.

'Govt committed to fostering business-friendly environment in J-K'

PNS ■ JAMMU

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday reiterated his government's commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment and streamlining regulatory frameworks across various sectors in the Union Territory.

He was addressing a high-level meeting convened here to review the progress on compliance reduction and deregulation under the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) framework aimed at making the regulatory environment more conducive for businesses.

The meeting was part of the national initiative led by the Union cabinet secretariat in collaboration with key institutions including the PMO, NITI Aayog, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), an official spokesman said.

The initiative focuses on eliminating redundant regulations, reducing compliance burdens, particularly for MSMEs, promoting digitisation and single-window clearances, and decriminalising business laws wherever necessary.

Instructing all officers to break down the identified action plans -- most of which have timelines of five to six months -- into smaller, achievable deliverables on a fortnightly basis, Abdullah emphasised the need to track progress closely and examine reasons for any delays.

He directed that finalised action plans be promptly uploaded on the MIS portal and that implementation should begin without delay.

Stressing the importance of accountability, Abdullah laid down a review mechanism under which the progress of reforms will be evaluated every two months.

"My government is committed to fostering a business-friendly environment and streamlining regulatory frameworks across various sectors," he said.

ICICI Bank net profit up 15.7% to Rs 13,502 cr

PNS ■ MUMBAI

ICICI Bank on Saturday reported a 15.7 per cent jump in March quarter consolidated net profit at Rs 13,502 crore.

On a standalone basis, the second largest private sector lender's net profit for the January-March quarter came at Rs 12,630 crore, up 18 per cent, as against Rs 10,708 crore in the year-ago period.

The core net interest income moved up 11 per cent to Rs 21,193 crore, from the year-ago period's Rs 19,093 crore. The non-interest income excluding treasury increased 18.4% to Rs 7,021 crore.

Provisions came at Rs 891 crore in the March quarter, as against Rs 718 crore in the year-ago period.

US small manufacturers hope to benefit from tariffs

Some worry about uncertainty

PNS ■ NASHVILLE

Drew Greenblatt is fully on board with the Trump administration's use of tariffs to rebalance a global trading system that it says favours foreign companies over US manufacturers.

Greenblatt is the president and owner of Marlin Steel Wire Products in Baltimore, Maryland, which makes baskets and racks for medical device manufacturers, aerospace companies, food processing companies and others. It has 115 employees and makes its products in three locations in Maryland, Indiana and Michigan. The steel is sourced from Tennessee, Illinois and Michigan. Currently, it's hard to compete with baskets made overseas., Greenblatt says, because the countries he competes against have an "unfair advantage."

For example, due to European tariffs and taxes, it costs much more for a German consumer or company to buy Marlin wire baskets than it does for Americans to buy a German-made basket, creating an uneven playing field, Greenblatt said.

"It's wildly unfair to the American worker," he said. "And this has, by the way, been going on for decades."

What Trump is doing

The Trump administration has called US manufacturing an "economic and national security" priority. US manufacturing has been declining for decades.

High tariffs back in global trade debate: Sources

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Imposition of high tariffs to protect domestic industries, once criticised by developed nations, is back in global trade and the rationale for levying such duties, which was earlier championed by developing countries, is also making a comeback in trade talks, sources said.

Without naming countries like the US, they also said that now the advanced economies are also talking about protecting livelihood of fishermen and farmers.

Now, the whole concept that livelihood fishing and farming are different from commercial activities is making a comeback. The same principles once raised by developing countries - previously dismissed - are now resurfacing in global discussions, they added.

"Developed countries are using tariffs which they had left during GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) to come back and say that tariffs are necessary for protection. We have been arguing about this when we gave the infant industry argument that developing countries' industries require some kind of tariff protection, the whole world went against this and they stated that your tariffs are very, very high and now the same sectoral tariffs are being used," one of the sources said.

The US imposed sweeping tariffs on April 2 which were later suspended for 90-days except on China, which is facing 245 per cent duty. The US has imposed 25 per cent duty on steel, aluminium and auto components.

These duties on steel or aluminum or auto components are being imposed to create a tariff wall and to protect those segments.

"So whether a tariff is good or bad, will depend upon what is the stage of your development," they said adding the way free trade agreements are now negotiated has also changed, as rich nations are pushing for non-trade issues in such pacts.

It is the world which does not believe in principles of special and differential treatment (SDT), common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) and duty free tariff preferences (DFTP) for least developed nations.

"Now the rules of the game have completely changed," they said.

RECIPES

SPINACH RICOTTA CHANNELLON

More basil and parmesan , for garnish (optional)

INGREDIENT

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion , finely chopped
- 4 garlic clove , minced
- 1 bay leaf , fresh (sub dried)
- 1/2 tsp each dried thyme and oregano
- 1/3 cup tomato paste
- 800 g / 28 oz canned crushed tomato
- 4 cups vegetable or chicken stock/broth , low sodium
- 1/3 cup Chardonnay or other dry white wine (sub more stock)
- 3/4 tsp salt • 1 1/2 tsp sugar
- 1/3 tsp black pepper
- 2/3 cup basil leaves , roughly torn (recommended but not critical)

FILLING

- 250 g / 8 oz frozen chopped spinach , thawed (Note 1)
- 500 g / 1 lb ricotta , full fat please (Note 2)
- 1/3 cup parmesan , finely shredded
- 1 cup shredded cheese (Mozzarella, Colby, Cheddar, Tasty, Gruyere, Swiss)
- 1 egg
- 1 large garlic clove , minced
- Grated fresh nutmeg (just a sprinkling) or 1/8 tsp nutmeg powder (optional)
- 3/4 tsp cooking / kosher salt
- ½ tsp black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

Sauce

Sauté – Heat oil in a small pot over medium high heat. Add garlic, onion, bay leaf, thyme and oregano. Cook for 3 – 4 minutes until the onion is translucent. Add tomato paste and cook for 1 minute.

Reduce wine – Add wine, increase heat to high and let it simmer rapidly until mostly evaporated (about 2 minutes).

Simmer – Add tomatoes, stock, sugar, salt and pepper. Stir then simmer on medium low for 20 minutes.

Blitz – Remove bay leaf then blitz with a stick blender until smooth. Simmer for 1 more minute then remove from the stove

Basil – Stir in basil then cover to keep warm until required.

CANNELLONI

- 18 – 22 dried cannelloni tubes (250g pack) or 14 manicotti tubes (8.8 oz) (Note 3)
- 1/3 cup parmesan , finely shredded
- 1 1/4 cups shredded Mozzarella

By Sunil Dhoundiyal, Executive Chef at Curry Crown

FILLING

Squeeze spinach – Place spinach in a colander and press out most of the liquid (don't need to thoroughly squeeze dry).

Mix filling – Place Spinach in bowl with remaining Filling ingredients. Mix, taste, adjust salt and pepper to taste (different cheeses have different saltiness).

ASSEMBLE & BAKE

Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F (160°C fan).

Pan – Choose a baking pan which will comfortably fit about 20 cannelloni – mine is 21 x 26 cm / 8.5 x 10.5".

Smear – Spread 1 cup of Sauce on the base (stops cannelloni from sliding around).

Fill tubes – Transfer Filling to a piping bag with a large nozzle (that fits in the tubes), or use a strong ziplock bag. Or do this step using a knife (it's a bit tedious though!). Pipe the filling into the tubes.

Assemble – Place cannelloni in baking dish. Pour over remaining Sauce, covering all the tubes.

Bake covered (but naked) – Cover with foil, then bake for 30 minutes.

Cheese it! Remove foil, scatter over parmesan then mozzarella. Return to oven for 15 minutes until cheese is melted.

Serve, garnished with extra parmesan and basil if desired.

SOYA BASIL CILANTRO TIKKA

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup soya chunks (boiled & squeezed) • 1/2 cup fresh basil leaves
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro (coriander) leaves • 3–4 garlic cloves
- 1-inch ginger piece • 2 green chilies
- 1/2 cup thick yogurt (hung curd preferred) • 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp garam masala • 1 tsp cumin powder • Salt to taste
- 1 tbsp oil or melted butter (for grilling)

INSTRUCTIONS

Make the marinade: Blend basil, cilantro, garlic, ginger, and green chilies into a smooth paste. Mix it with yogurt, lemon juice, garam masala, cumin powder, and salt.

Marinate: Coat the boiled soya chunks in the marinade. Let it rest for at least 30 mins (or up to 4 hours for more flavor).

COOK

Oven/Grill: Skewer and grill at 200□C (392□F) for 15–20 mins, basting with oil/butter halfway.

Pan: Sauté in a little oil until lightly charred.

Serve hot with mint chutney and onion rings!

KULCHEY CHOLE POCKETS

FOR THE CHOLE (CHICKPEAS)

- Chickpeas (soaked overnight or canned for convenience) • Onion (finely chopped)
- Tomatoes (pureed) • Green chilies (optional, for extra heat) • Ginger-garlic paste
- Chole masala (a spice blend of coriander, cumin, dry mango powder, and other spices) • Garam masala (for depth of flavor)
- Turmeric powder • Cumin seeds • Bay leaves
- Salt (to taste) • Fresh cilantro (for garnish) • Lemon juice (to add tang)

FOR THE KULCHE (BREAD/POCKET)

- All-purpose flour (maida)
- Yeast (or baking powder for quicker versions)
- Sugar • Salt • Oil or butter (for a soft texture)
- Baking soda (optional, for fluffiness)
- Water (to knead the dough)
- Ajwain (carom seeds, optional, for flavor)
- Sesame seeds (optional, for garnish)

GARNISHES

- Chopped onions • Fresh coriander
- Green chutney (optional, for a tangy flavor)
- Sweet tamarind chutney (optional, for a sweet contrast) • Sliced cucumbers and tomatoes (optional for freshness)
- The Cooking Process: Making Kulchey Chole Pockets

Step 1: Preparing the Chole (Chickpeas)

Soak and Cook Chickpeas: If using dried chickpeas, soak them overnight and pressure cook them until soft. If using canned chickpeas, drain and rinse them before cooking.

Sauté the Base: Heat oil in a pan. Add cumin seeds and bay leaves, and sauté them for a few seconds until they splutter.

Add Onions, Garlic, and Ginger: Add finely chopped onions, ginger-garlic paste, and green chilies (optional) to the pan. Cook until the onions turn golden brown.

Tomatoes and Spices: Add the tomato puree along with turmeric, chole masala, garam masala, and salt. Stir and cook until the oil starts separating from the masala.

Simmer: Add the cooked chickpeas to the masala mixture and simmer for 15-20 minutes, allowing the spices to meld into the chickpeas. Adjust salt and spice levels to taste. Garnish with chopped cilantro and a squeeze of lemon juice.

Step 2: Making the Kulche (Bread/Pocket)

Prepare the Dough: In a large bowl, mix all-purpose flour, sugar, salt, and yeast (if using). Add warm water little by little and knead the dough until it's smooth and elastic. You can also use baking powder if you want a quicker version without fermentation.

Rest the Dough: Cover the dough with a damp cloth and let it rest for about 1-2 hours, allowing it to rise.

Shape the Kulche: Once the dough has risen, divide it into small portions and roll them into balls. Flatten each ball with a rolling pin to form thick circles or discs.

Cook the Kulche: Heat a griddle or tawa on medium-high heat. Cook each kulcha on the tawa until it starts to puff up, turning occasionally until both sides are golden brown. Optionally, brush them with butter or ghee for extra flavor.

Stuff the Pockets: Once the kulche are done, slice them horizontally but not all the way through, leaving one side intact to form a pocket.

Step 3: Assembling the Kulchey Chole Pockets

Stuff the Pocket: Once your kulche is ready, gently open the pocket and stuff it with the spiced chole (chickpeas). You can also add extra fillings like onion rings, cucumbers, or even a dollop of yogurt or chutney for extra flavor.

Garnish: Sprinkle some chopped cilantro, onions, and a squeeze of lemon juice. If you like tanginess, drizzle a bit of green chutney or sweet tamarind chutney inside the pocket.

By Chef Harpal Singh Sokhi, Karigari

WHAT'S NEW

Celebrate prosperity with gold & diamond gifts this Akshaya Tritiya

Akshaya Tritiya is one of the most auspicious days in the Indian calendar. Celebrated with much fervor across the country, it marks the beginning of prosperity, success, and good fortune. This day is particularly significant for buying precious metals like gold and diamonds, which are believed to bring wealth and happiness to the individual. Whether you're planning to gift something for yourself or someone special, Akshaya Tritiya offers the perfect opportunity to indulge in luxury while also embracing the joy of giving.

If you are looking for the perfect gift for this special occasion, below are some amazing gift ideas for every budget, from affordable to luxurious, that will leave a lasting impression and align with the significance of Akshaya Tritiya 2025.

GOLD JEWELLERY FOR WOMEN – A CLASSIC CHOICE

When it comes to gold jewellery for women, the options are endless. Gold jewellery has always been a symbol of wealth and prosperity in Indian culture. Akshaya Tritiya is the ideal occasion to buy or gift exquisite gold jewellery that can be cherished for years. Whether it's a delicate gold ring design for women, a stunning pair of gold earrings designs for daily use, or a sophisticated gold tops design, this jewellery never goes out of style.

If you're looking for something simple yet elegant, a gold ring design for women with intricate designs or a nose pin gold design could be a perfect option. For those who prefer statement pieces, a pair of bold gold earrings designs or a classic diamond bracelet for women could add that touch of glamour to their wardrobe.

GOLD EARRINGS DESIGNS FOR DAILY USE – SUBTLE YET ELEGANT

If you're looking for something practical but still stunning, gold earrings designs for daily use are a great option. These earrings can be worn every day, adding a touch of elegance without being too flashy. Consider gold earrings designs that feature small diamonds or other stones for a subtle yet chic appearance. These pieces are versatile and can be paired with almost any outfit, making them a thoughtful gift choice for those who prefer minimalist yet stylish accessories. From studs to stunning hoops, you will find a wide variety of options in gold earrings designs. Given the cultural importance of wearing gold during Akshaya Tritiya, these simple pieces make a wonderful gesture of love and good wishes.

ADDING SPARKLE TO THE WRIST

The Gold Charming Twist Diamond Bracelet, crafted from 14K gold, features two elegant wavy designs, accented with sparkling lab grown diamonds. A perfect blend of style and sophistication, this bracelet makes a beautiful gift for your niece, offering her a timeless piece she can cherish for years to come.

18K GOLD CHARMING MAGIC DIAMOND RING

For those with a higher budget or looking to gift something truly special, a solitaire diamond ring is the perfect choice. A solitaire ring is timeless and will always be a prized possession. It represents love, commitment, and the desire for forever, making it an ideal gift for someone special. Whether you opt for a classic design or something more modern, this piece of jewellery will uplift any occasion, especially Akshaya Tritiya.

GOLD MAGNIFICENT FLOWER DIAMOND NOSE PIN

For those seeking a traditional yet trendy gift, a nose pin gold design is a perfect choice. Nose pins have been a part of Indian culture for centuries and continue to be a cherished accessory. Whether it's a simple, single-stone design or something more ornate with intricate patterns, a nose pin gold design can be an ideal gift. Nose pins are both feminine and graceful, and their popularity has only grown over the years, with modern variations available that blend traditional and contemporary styles.

The appeal of a nose pin gold design makes it a great gift idea for Akshaya Tritiya 2025. It's a piece of jewellery that resonates with cultural significance and adds charm to the wearer's appearance. Whether you're looking for something simple and practical or a luxurious statement piece, Akshaya Tritiya presents the perfect opportunity to gift precious jewellery. From GIVAgold jewellery for women to solitaire diamond rings, the choices are endless, and each piece holds a special meaning that aligns with the auspiciousness of the day.

Remember, when choosing a gift, consider both the gold rate and the recipient's taste and style. The key is to find something that will not only be appreciated but also treasured for years to come.

GOLD CLASSIC DIAMOND HOOP EARRINGS

These 18K Gold Classic Diamond Hoop Earrings feature a timeless hoop design, adorned with sparkling lab-grown diamonds. The perfect blend of elegance and luxury, these earrings make a thoughtful and cherished gift for your sister. Celebrate her with a piece that symbolises beauty, sophistication, and lasting memories.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES

The going may get tough. Stay calm in crises, communicate openly, avoid impulsive habits, and trust your instincts.You are a romantic, and you'll attract the strength you need through your philosophies.

TAURUS

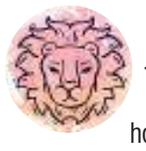
Despite pressure and self-doubt, your talent and sincerity will earn praise. Take time for family and self-care. Support and success await, but overcoming fear and adjusting to change will take effort.

GEMINI

Clear communication strengthens bonds, while your guidance uplifts others. Embrace creativity, self-care, and spiritual connections. Assert yourself at work, stay focused, and take initiative to unlock growth.

CANCER

Stay calm through setbacks; success follows persistence. Your charm and strength inspire, though ego may cloud judgment. Embrace love and creativity to overcome fears and build a secure, joyful future.



LEO

Expect emotional turmoil, restlessness, and challenges at home. Stay cautious in relationships, seek refreshment, and trust your instincts. Honest communication and family support will help restore balance.

VIRGO

You may be put under pressure. Stay gentle with loved ones. Let go of pride and illusions. Career progress, emotional growth, and a joyful trip await. Trust guidance in love and adapt to new beginnings.

LIBRA

Your innovation and warmth shine, earning admiration and joyful moments. Despite setbacks and ego clashes, stay focused, rise above frustration, and lead with clarity. Success and fulfilment will follow.

SCORPIO

Charming yet burdened, you'll manage pressure with patience and purpose. Seek support to regain energy. Embrace change, refresh memories, and take a break. A new contract brings career stability.

SAGITTARIUS

Your future vision may shift, bringing excitement and reward. Avoid escapism and stay grounded. Rekindle relationships, embrace public appreciation, and seek expert advice before making major decisions.

CAPRICORN

Unexpected attractions could lead to significant changes. Job shifts offer better prospects, while kindness attracts support. Overcome self-doubt, embrace joyful relationships, and continue your charity.

AQUARIUS

Your curiosity and insight spark innovation. Overcome emotional lows and haunting memories with rest and socializing. Embrace new experiences and uplifting connections that bring joy and growth.

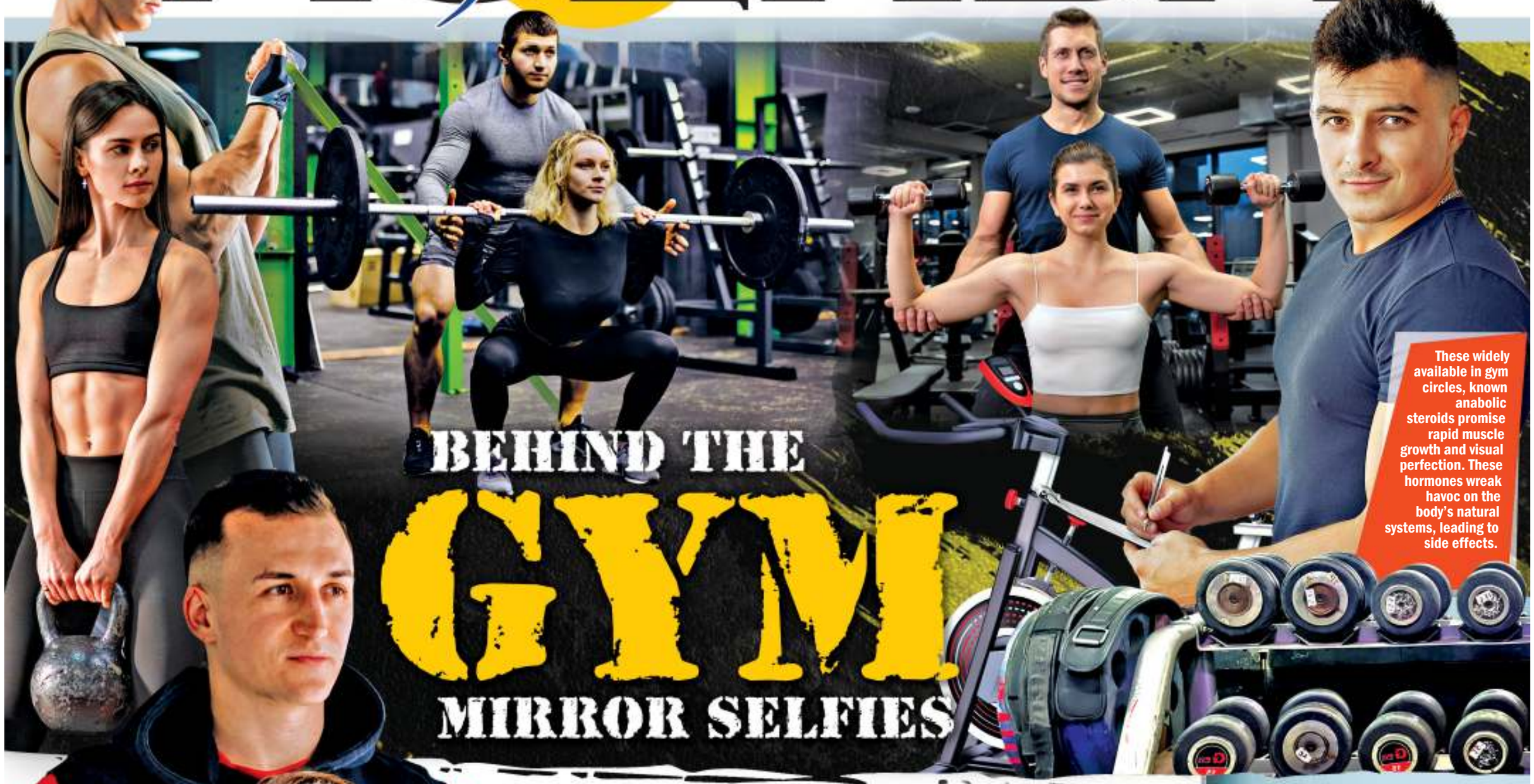
PISCES

Stay calm in critical situations, but avoid isolation from family and work. Unexpected love sparks energy. Embrace silence and flexibility, focus on studies, and navigate changes with confidence and logic.

sunday magazine
Vijayawada, April 20, 2025

The Pioneer
AGENDA

"Don't worry about what other people are doing. Worry about your own training"
— Ronnie Coleman



BEHIND THE GYM MIRROR SELFIES

These widely available in gym circles, known anabolic steroids promise rapid muscle growth and visual perfection. These hormones wreak havoc on the body's natural systems, leading to side effects.

Beneath the neon lights and monthly memberships of the gyms, lies a reality we're not talking about enough, says ABHI SINGHAL

It is always talked about certified things while you train or build your body but it is equally important to choose the right place while you workout. The clang of iron plates, LED-lit workout zones, and neon signage screaming 'TRANSFORM NOW', the gyms have become the modern sanctuaries of fitness. Across every urban block, new fitness centres sprout like cafés, each promising better bodies and faster results. What was once affair with morning walks in parks, yoga under the tree, or evening strolls around the neighbourhood with family or friends is steadily being replaced by treadmills and protein shakes.

More and more people are signing up for gym memberships, not just for health but often for aesthetics, validation and a fast track to physical change. The idea of fitness has shifted from functionality to form. The motto has shifted from feeling good to looking good within some years. But beneath the curated Instagram reels and sculpted abs lies a more pressing concern: *Are we choosing the right places to work out? And more importantly, are we trusting the right people to guide us through it?*

Gyms Are Everywhere, but Quality Isn't

Like not all that glitters is gold, not every gym with flashy equipment and discount deals is built for real fitness. The explosion of gyms across cities has brought with it a mixed bag — some well-equipped and guided by the certified professionals, others run by underqualified enthusiasts with little understanding of body or the process involved.

This boom in numbers doesn't guarantee quality or safety. While the fancy lighting and trending playlists may attract the crowd, the real test lies in the integrity of the space and the credentials of the trainers. A wrong choice can do more harm than good, both physically and mentally.

Fitness should energise the mind as much as it does the body. There are people who depend on external validation often spiral into cycles of anxiety, social withdrawal, or aggressive behaviour. The perfect body becomes a trap rather than a triumph. Unfortunately, many gyms are chosen based on popularity, influencer promotion, or peer pressure-not research or reliability. "People come to us saying, I just want a physique like a fitness influencer or a filmstar, they don't come in the gym for fitness or health. The main purpose of today's generation is just getting a good physique," said *Piyush Aggarwal*, Owner of *HAMR Fitness Centre* at Shankar Chowk, Northwest Delhi for the past 16 years.

It is important that people keep a check on the trainers and advice provided by them. *Piyush Aggarwal* further added that there are cases where people don't even talk to trainers or experienced people and start following diets and steroids on their own for cost cutting, which leads to cheap quality items and, in turn, affects their body.

A Trainer Can Make or Break Your Body

This brings us to the second part of the question: Do we trust the right people to guide us through it? Trainers are your fitness compass. The right trainer knows when to push, when to pull back, and when to say rest. Yet, many gym-goers fall into the trap of trusting unqualified trainers who hand out one-size-fits-all workout plans and unrealistic expectations.

A certified trainer doesn't just have the responsibility of guiding; they have the responsibility of assessing and educating. They chart workouts based on your goals, physical limitations and lifestyle. More importantly, they know how to prevent injuries and manage progression before it's too late. Talking to *Ayush Singh*, a certified trainer practising in Delhi, he said, "Qualified trainers make a customised plan for different body types. But if you go to unqualified trainers, they will go on with the same plan they have learned from someone else or used on their own body. This is a major difference. If a product is not suitable to you, a qualified trainer will switch it, but an unqualified one will keep pushing the same because he doesn't have alternatives."

It's easy to get lost in filters and reels but fitness, was never meant to be a popularity contest. It was meant to empower and to strengthen the body and the mind. Prioritise your health over haste and don't fall for dangerous shortcuts. So, yes join the gym. Push yourself. Challenge your limits.

Fitness should be a celebration of your body. So, most importantly train for life, not for likes. Because strength built the right way doesn't just change your body, it transforms your life.

THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE WRONG PROCESS ARE NOT JUST PHYSICAL; THEY CAN LEAD TO MENTAL, EMOTIONAL AND LONG-TERM HEALTH CHALLENGES THAT AREN'T WORTH THE TEMPORARY HIGH OF A PERFECT PHYSIQUE TO SHOW OFF

The most disgracing factor is that all the joiners are asked to do the personal training just for the money factor regardless the fact that they actually don't need it. People don't even ask for certification and follow routines that look effective on someone else.

THE ILLUSION OF FAST RESULTS: THE STEROID SHORTCUT

In this pressure-filled ecosystem, where transformation pictures and social media likes serve as reward systems, people chase fast results and fall into darker traps. One of the most alarming trends is the misuse of steroids. "Nonprescription doses are usually many times higher than the doses prescribed for health conditions by your doctor. **These doses have short and long term side effects when misused like high blood pressure, liver damage, heart attack, increased aggression, acne, and even depression.** Young adults get attracted to improve body appearance which should not be done. These medicines should only be taken under medical supervision." said **Dr Paras Agarwal**, Clinical Director & Head - Diabetes, Obesity & Metabolic Disorders, *Marengo Asia Hospitals*.

CHECKLIST

It was equally important to speak to someone experienced who has practised gymming for years and competed at various levels. **Akshay Tyagi**, a fitness enthusiast, winner of many body building competitions like - *Mr. Delhi*, *National Dead Lift Championship*, *7th Amberprix Mr. India*, said, "**You have to keep a check from the start.** The most important thing is the equipment. It should not be outdated, must be serviced regularly, and shouldn't be broken. Faulty machines can cause serious injuries. It's not always important to choose expensive gyms but to go to the right one where you can work out properly."

Before signing up, consider these: verify gym credentials, observe the environment, ask for an assessment and listen to your body.

FITNESS FOR LIFE, NOT JUST FOR SOCIAL FEED

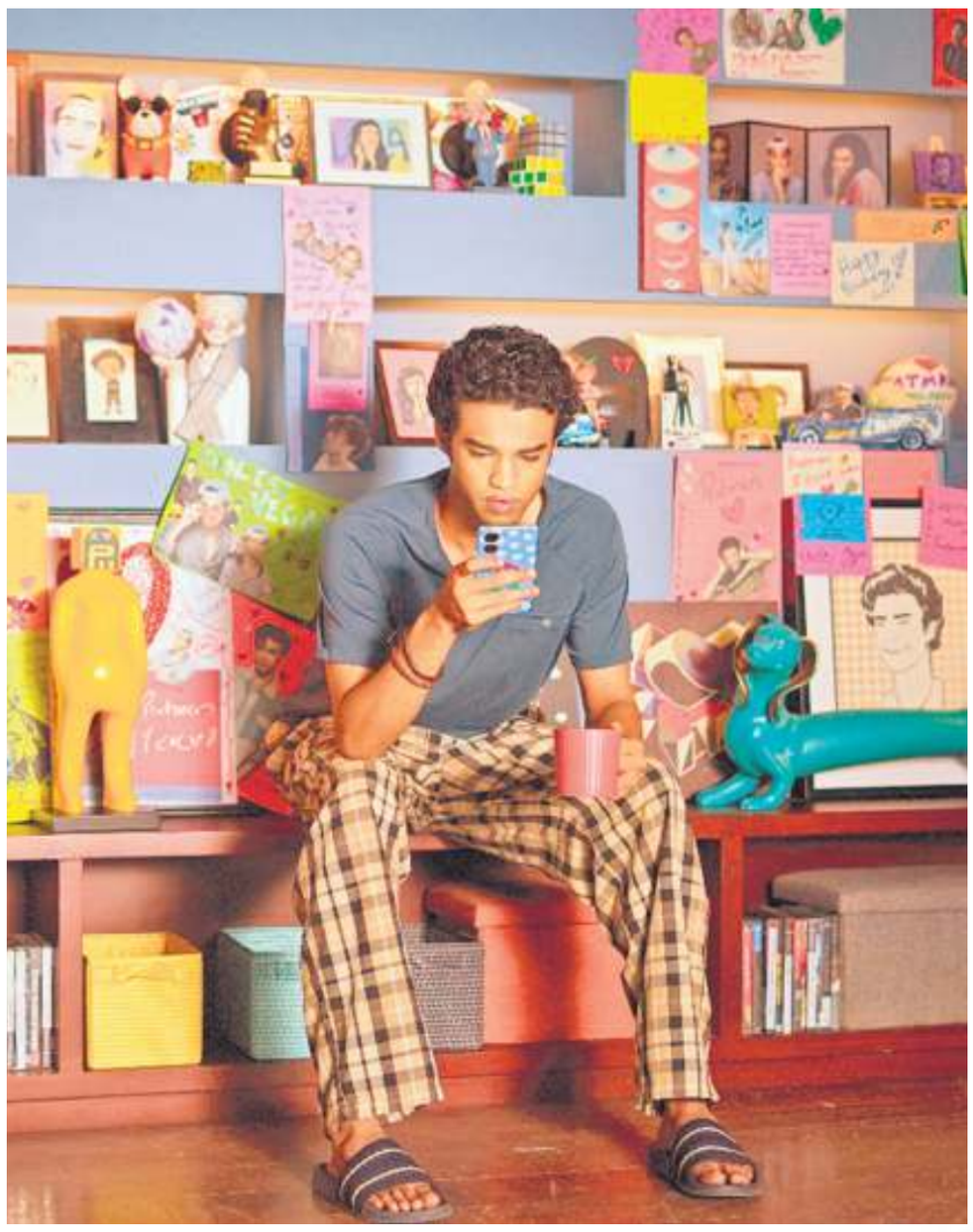
True fitness isn't built in 30-day challenges or shortcut supplements. It's a lifelong journey rooted in discipline, consistency, and informed choices. A healthy lifestyle isn't a trend but it's a personal investment. **Dr Indramani Upadhyay**, MPT (Ortho), HOD Physiotherapist at *The Centre for Knee & Hip Care*, says, "**Overtraining or poor guidance from unqualified trainers can lead to both short- and long-term health issues.** Some red flags in your gym trainer's guidance will be seen as persistent fatigue, recurring injuries, lack of recovery days and sleep disturbances."

MOVES TO KEEP IN MIND FOR YOUR GYM SUCCESS

- Your body is unique. Follow a plan that suits your fitness level, body type, goals and lifestyle and is ideally one crafted by a certified trainer or coach.
- Progress in fitness doesn't come overnight. Consistency beats intensity. Show up regularly, even if some days are light.
- Nutrition is key. Focus on balanced meals like protein, good fats, complex carbs, fibre. Stay away from fad diets or extreme calorie deficits.
- Learn the basics of anatomy, movement, and nutrition. It helps you make informed decisions and avoid blindly following trends.
- Stick to basic, tested supplements like whey protein, creatine, multivitamins — and only if needed. Always consult a trainer or a nutritionist.
- Seek guidance only from certified trainers (ACE, ISSA, ACSM, etc.). They are trained to guide you smartly — not push you into harm.
- Focus on your routine and stick to your plan. Avoid getting distracted by others or feeling pressured to do what they're doing.
- Ask questions from the trainers if you're unsure about how to use a machine or do an exercise, ask a trainer instead of guessing.
- Keep a track of your progress by using a journal, app, or progress pictures for your ownself to stay motivated and track improvements over time.
- Dress comfortably and wear flexible gym clothes.

WORKOUT BLUNDERS YOU SHOULD SKIP IN GYM

- Steroids may promise faster gains, but they bring irreversible side effects — liver damage, hormonal imbalances, mood disorders, infertility, and more. They're not worth the risk.
- Avoid following gym "bros" or influencers who aren't qualified. What works for someone may harm you.
- Pro bodybuilders have years of experience and often unnatural aids. Their routines are not meant for beginners or average fitness goals. Don't try to be like them and follow them.
- Pain, dizziness, exhaustion, loss of motivation — these are all signs that something's wrong. Don't push through blindly.
- Starving your body will only weaken your immunity and metabolism. Long-term health always wins over quick fixes.
- Don't skip warm-ups or cool downs as this leads to stiffness, soreness, or worse that is injuries.
- Avoid texting or scrolling between sets as it disrupts your focus and slows your routine.
- Don't compare yourself constantly as everyone's fitness journey is unique. Celebrate your own progress, no matter how small.
- Don't rely on supplements alone as supplements are just the support systems but not the actual solutions. Real nutrition comes from real food.
- Don't neglect cleanliness. Always wipe sweat off equipment after use as it's basic hygiene.



LOGOUT STAR BABIL KHAN GETS REAL ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT

PNS| HYDERABAD

Babil Khan, known for his introspective nature and thoughtful take on the world around him, continues to carve his own path in the industry with a quiet but steady intensity. In Logout, a gripping digital-age drama, he steps into the shoes of a young man caught between reality and the online world—navigating emotional disconnection, blurred identities, and the constant pressure of digital validation. The film delves deep into the psychological impact of social media and the fine line between staying connected and getting consumed.

In a candid moment during this interview, Babil Khan offers a fresh perspective on the digital age, stating, "Social media was never the problem—it's how we use it that defines its impact." Emphasizing personal responsibility, he adds, "Social media just happened to come into our life and then that became an aggravator for us. It is not social media that is the problem. You realise? You have to find a balance. The individual has to find the balance." His words echo a growing sentiment among young voices calling for mindful digital habits in an age dominated by screens.

Reflecting on his own approach, he shares, "I use social media to be able to reach out to the people that want to watch cinema—our work—and I really like connecting with people. And, yeah, it's just for that connection, I use it and then I log out."

This insight mirrors the theme of his latest film Logout on ZEE5, where Babil plays Pratyush, a social media influencer on the brink of hitting 10 million followers. His seemingly perfect online world spirals into chaos when an obsessed fan hacks into his phone, blurring the lines between digital fame and real-life danger. Directed by Amit Golani and written by Biswapati Sarkar, the film explores the psychological toll of staying constantly connected in a hyper-digital world.

ROOTS TO SHOOTS

Kriti Sanon's homecoming with a twist of *ishk*

Kriti Sanon is on a dream run—and there's no slowing her down. 2024 was her cinematic hat-trick year with Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya, The Crew, and Do Patti—each role a genre flip, each performance a testament to her rising stardom. A dancing robot, a fierce air hostess, and a dual-role mystery woman? Kriti nailed them all. National Award in hand, box office numbers soaring—Sanon is soaring higher than ever.

And now, she's come full circle. A video that's now gone viral captures Kriti shooting in Delhi for her next, Tere Ishk Mein. The internet isn't just excited about the film—it's thrilled because the Do Patti star is back on home turf. Yes, the Delhi girl is back in the lanes she once walked as a student, now shooting as a star.

Fans were quick to spot her in character as Mukti—the enigmatic role she teased in a haunting promo a while ago. Her look? Intense. Her presence? Magnetic. The on-set glimpse has added fresh fuel to the ever-growing buzz around the film.

Mukti isn't just another character—she's a mystery wrapped in fire. And Kriti, with her knack for layering emotions, seems ready to dive deep into this raw, riveting role. If the teaser stirred curiosity, this shoot has sent it into overdrive.

With Tere Ishk Mein, Kriti isn't just riding her wave—she's creating new currents. Shooting in her hometown, soaking in nostalgia, and stepping into another powerful avatar, Kriti Sanon is proving she's not just in her prime—she's defining it.

TRENDING

PERSON

ABHISHEK SHARMA

24-year-old Abhishek Sharma created history by registering the highest individual score by an Indian in the IPL. Following his remarkable knock, he dedicated the performance to his team's fans by holding up a handwritten note that read, "This one is for ORANGE ARMY."

VIDEO

PRINCIPAL'S BIZARRWE DEMONSTRATION

A video from Delhi's Laxmibai College has gone viral, showing a woman—identified as the principal of a Delhi University-affiliated college—standing on a wooden desk and applying cow dung on the walls. In the 35-second clip, she is seen scooping cow dung, smearing it on the surface, smoothing it out, and repeating the process. The principal, Pratyush Vatsala, later clarified that the act was part of a research project being undertaken by a faculty member.

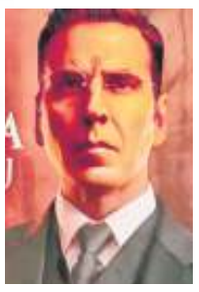
MOVIE

LOG OUT

Babil Khan stars as social media influencer Pratush Dua in Logout, a gripping thriller that explores the dark side of digital obsession and the question, "Do you control your phone or does it control you?" The film reveals his perfect online life spiraling into chaos after a desperate follower steals his phone, leading to a dangerous and violent confrontation.

SONG

O SHERA



The makers of the movie Kesari Chapter 2 released the first song O Shera from the soundtrack across social media platforms. Sangtar is the music composer, while the lyrics are written by Sukhwinder Amrit. It has been sung by Manmohan Waris, Kamal Heer, and Sangtar. The song promises to make the listeners emotional and ignite the spirit of patriotism.

PICTURE

ORBITAL LIT OFF

SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket successfully launched from NASA's Kennedy Space Center on Saturday night following multiple delays, carrying 21 Starlink satellites into orbit. Of these, 13 are equipped with direct-to-cell technology to enhance global mobile connectivity, and the liftoff treated spectators along Florida's Space Coast to a stunning visual experience.

MODERN MEDICINE AT WORK

Joint replacements no longer mean long recoveries

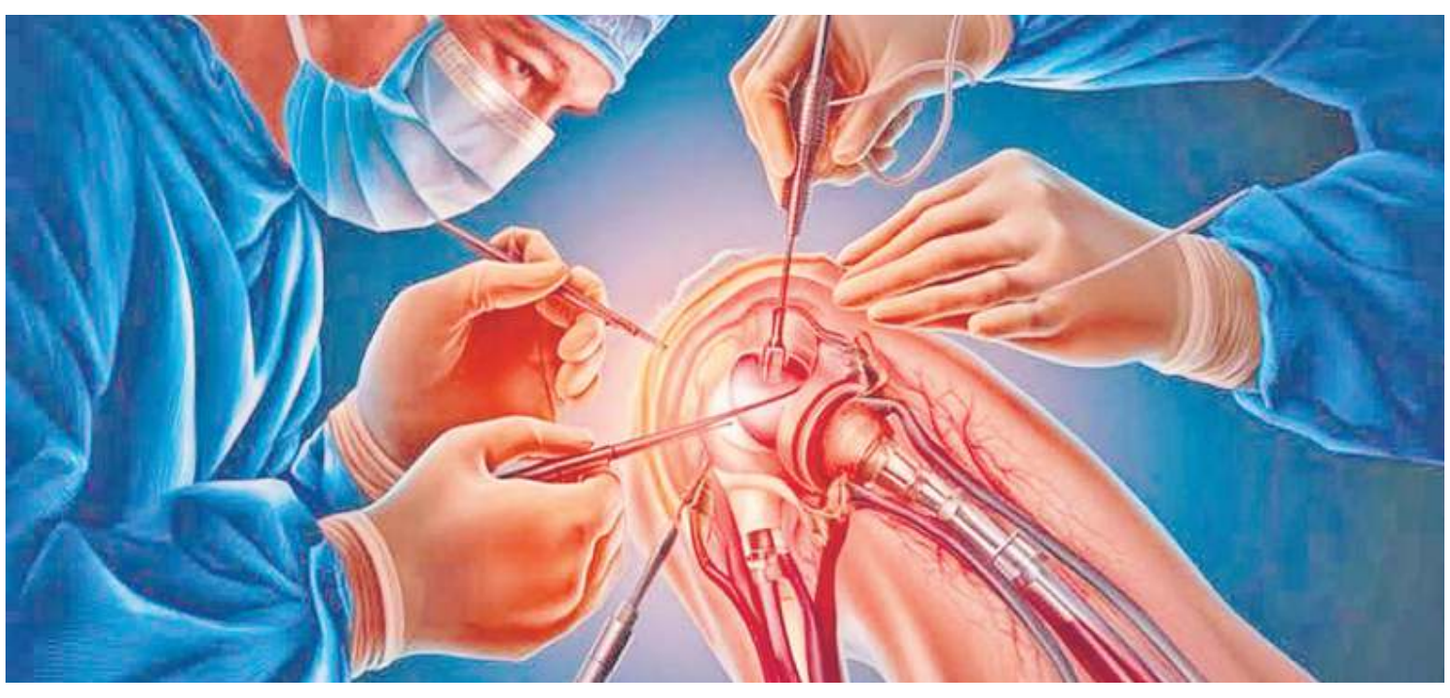
Joint replacement surgeries, once considered long and arduous in terms of recovery, have seen a transformation in recent years thanks to advancements in orthopedic technology and surgical techniques. From robotic-assisted procedures to minimally invasive methods and patient-specific implants, modern orthopedic care is reshaping what patients can expect in terms of both outcomes and recovery time. The days of weeks in the hospital and months of immobility are giving way to faster discharge, improved mobility, and a quicker return to normal life.

One of the most significant breakthroughs has been the integration of robotic technology into joint replacement surgeries. This has not only improved surgical precision but has also reduced trauma to surrounding tissues, leading to faster healing.

Dr. Palash Gupta, Director, Robotic Joint Replacement & Orthopedic, Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute, Delhi, explains, "Robotic-assisted knee and hip replacements have revolutionized our approach. These systems provide real-time 3D imaging and mapping of the joint which helps us align the implant with much more accuracy than before. The more precise the alignment, the less stress there is on surrounding muscles and ligaments. As a result, we see reduced post-operative pain and inflammation. Patients are able to start walking within a day or two and are often discharged within 48 hours. It's a remarkable shift from the conventional techniques where recovery used to stretch over weeks."

Equally crucial has been the development of minimally invasive surgical techniques which involve smaller incisions and limited disruption to the soft tissues. This translates to reduced blood loss, fewer complications, and quicker mobility restoration. Surgeons are now able to perform total joint replacements with minimal cuts, allowing patients to move much more comfortably in the initial days following surgery.

Dr. Manav Luthra, Senior Consultant - Orthopedics, Apollo Spectra Hospital, Kanpur, shares, "The biggest advantage of minimally invasive surgery lies in its ability to preserve muscle and tendon integrity. In traditional joint replacement, a longer incision and muscle cutting was inevitable which made recovery painful and slower. Today, with smaller incisions and careful retraction instead of cutting through muscles, we are able to significantly reduce post-surgery downtime. Most patients begin physiotherapy within 24 hours and regain substantial mobility within a week. For elderly patients or those with co-morbidities, this approach is especially helpful because it reduces the strain on the body during healing."



Advancements in implant material and design have also played a pivotal role in reducing recovery time. Customized implants that match the patient's anatomy help achieve a more natural joint motion and fit, thereby minimizing discomfort during movement and reducing rehabilitation needs.

According to Dr. Ravikumar Mukartihal , Consultant- Orthopedic and Joint Replacement Surgeon, SPARSH Hospital, Infantry Road, Bangalore, "Modern implants are designed using advanced biomaterials that mimic the natural joint's biomechanics more closely than ever. Additionally, we are now able to tailor the size, shape, and orientation of the implant according to the patient's CT or MRI scans. This customization means that the body doesn't have to work as hard to adapt post-surgery. Pain levels are lower, mobility is better, and in many cases, patients are able to climb stairs or return to daily activities within 10 to 14 days. We are witnessing a faster and more confident recovery process because the joint feels more natural and less foreign to the patient."

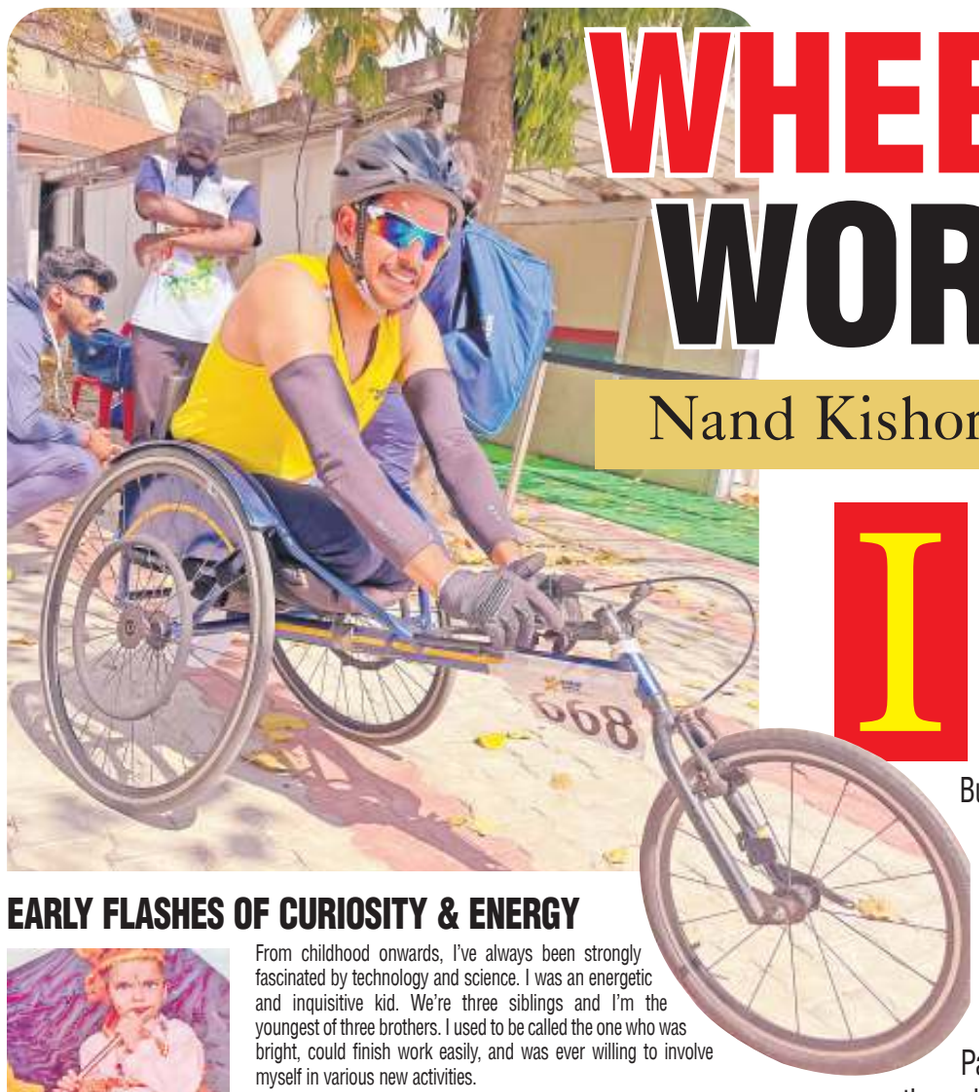
Apart from surgical and implant-related progress, modern rehabilitation techniques have also evolved. Early mobilization, advanced physiotherapy tools, and patient education are proving essential in helping individuals get back on their feet faster. Prehabilitation, or pre-surgery conditioning, is also gaining ground as a method to shorten post-operative recovery times.

Dr. Mihir Thanvi, Consultant, Orthopedic Apollo Spectra Hospital, Jaipur, emphasizes, "Today, we start preparing the patient weeks before the surgery through prehabilitation programs. These include guided exercises to strengthen the surrounding muscles, improve joint flexibility, and enhance cardiovascular stamina. This makes a big difference post-surgery because a stronger body recovers faster. After the surgery, we implement a very structured and closely monitored rehab plan that focuses on restoring range of motion and building strength without causing pain. Many patients are walking independently in under a week and can resume driving or light work in just three to four weeks. The synergy between surgical excellence and focused rehabilitation has completely changed recovery timelines."

This evolution in orthopedic care doesn't just enhance patient experience but also lowers the overall healthcare burden. Faster recovery means fewer days in the hospital, reduced need for extended physiotherapy, and less time away from work or family responsibilities. It also leads to improved mental well-being, as patients no longer dread the long and painful recovery traditionally associated with joint replacement surgeries.

Moreover, patient awareness and expectations have also shifted. With easy access to medical information and improved doctor-patient communication, individuals now approach surgery with more confidence and better understanding of the healing process. They are more likely to stick to rehab routines and follow up regularly, which further speeds up recovery.

The time when joint replacement meant a long and painful recovery is quickly changing. New surgical methods, robotic tools, custom-made implants, and better rehab plans are helping doctors give patients faster and more comfortable results. People are now able to leave the hospital sooner and get back to their daily routines much earlier than before. As medical technology keeps getting better and different parts of care work more closely together, recovery after joint surgery will become even quicker, helping more people return to a normal, active life without delay.



WHEELS OF STRENGTH, WORLD STAGE AHEAD

Nand Kishore Sharma's victory spread—from Telangana to India

In a world where even the slightest setback can appear impossible to overcome, there are some souls who rise—again and again—refusing to be defined by their situation. One such remarkable soul is **Nand Kishore Sharma**, a national para-athlete from Hyderabad, Telangana, whose life is a living example of resilience, grit and unbreakable willpower.

From losing his father at a young age and entering adulthood much too early—holding down several jobs just to keep his household afloat—Nand Kishore has known life at its toughest. But never did he let adversity dull his flame. His love of science, civic duty and physical fitness prompted him to wear multiple hats: a hospital professional, pandemic social worker, plasma donor and a regular warrior who runs marathons after working 14-hour shifts.

But fate had more trials in store. A tragic accident in May 2023 left him with a paralyzing spinal cord injury and a future, as far as medicine was concerned, that looked bleak. But Nand Kishore did what he always does—recoiled. With a broken back but an unbreakable spirit, he stood—first in a walker, then on his own two feet—and ultimately raced again. Not any race, but wheelchair racing, one of the most demanding and most prestigious sports in the Paralympic universe.

With only a month of self-practice on an old, rusty racing wheelchair borrowed from Chennai, he amazed the country by winning a 5th position for Telangana and qualifying for the Khelo India Para Games—a milestone most athletes take years to achieve.

Now, he dreams not only for himself but for the country. With absolute faith, Nand Kishore is determined to represent India at the 2028 Paralympics and return home with a medal in the wheelchair race. In an exclusive chat with ***The Pioneer's*** **Tejal Sinha**, he takes us all through his childhood days, how the passing away of his father made the then li'l Nand Kishore work at a tender age, the nightmare of his life and more. Today, all he asks for now is support—just one racing wheelchair—to help him fly the Indian flag higher.

EARLY FLASHES OF CURIOSITY & ENERGY

From childhood onwards, I've always been strongly fascinated by technology and science. I was an energetic and inquisitive kid. We're three siblings and I'm the youngest of three brothers. I used to be called the one who was bright, could finish work easily, and was ever willing to involve myself in various new activities.

FATHER'S LOSS & LEGACY

I learned my passion and determination from my dad. But life became tough after I lost him when I was 11 years old. When the head and sole breadwinner of a family dies, nothing remains the same. Families break apart, and ours did too. We had two older brothers, but we could not manage to keep things intact. When I entered the 8th grade, I started taking up small jobs to sustain my family. My day would begin early—cleaning at a gold shop in the morning before school, going to school in the daytime, back to the shop in the evening, and tuition classes at night. Our rent for the house was Rs 1200, and I was able to pay it from the income from this work, along with assisting my mother, who prepared food for others to earn.

BALANCING WORK, EDUCATION, RESPONSIBILITY

None of our relatives came forward to help us when my father passed away. The initial days were very tough, but gradually we gained some stability. I continued working and pursuing my studies. During my Intermediate years, I had proper salaried jobs—working in a hospital during the day and giving tuitions in the evening. Along with handling responsibilities and studies, I slowly developed an interest in social service and voluntary work, which became a significant part of my life.

BOND BUILT THROUGH STRUGGLES

Subsequently, my older brother married and moved away from us. Indeed, both of my brothers were already staying away, and I kept living with my mother. Whether it was taking care of her, meeting household expenses, or taking care of my school charges, I did everything myself. These mutual struggles brought my mother and me very close, and an intense and unshakable bond formed between us.

BALANCING CHALLENGING CAREER WITH PASSION TO SERVE

I had worked as the PA to a director in AIG Hospitals in Hyderabad. My working hours were hectic, beginning at 7 a.m. and extending till 8 or 9 p.m. in the night. Even with this challenging timetable, I was passionately interested in working for NGOs and participating in volunteer activities. I was involved in relief efforts during the pandemic. Having experience in the hospital sector, I was able to get access to valuable resources—I coordinated hospital beds, oxygen cylinders, and other basic necessities for those who needed them. I coordinated with donors and facilitated plasma donations. I donated plasma three times myself and successfully encouraged approximately 150 people to do so as well.

DISCOVERING STRENGTH IN EACH STEP

During all this, I fell in love with running and started joining marathons. Regardless of how late I came home—sometimes even as late as 10 p.m.—I ensured that I ran at least 10 kilometers before sleeping. Running became an unavoidable routine. Not only was it keeping me physically healthy but also acted as an effective channel to relieve stress. With so much workload on my shoulders, running kept me alert and energetic at the battlefronts.

ACCIDENT THAT ALTERED EVERYTHING

Everything was working out just fine when life took a drastic turn around 22 months ago. May 29, 2023. I had a terrible accident while going to work at about 6:30 in the morning. It was pouring rain, and the road had no divider. A moving auto-rickshaw ahead of me suddenly stopped, and I had to do the same. My bike went skidding and threw me to the other side of the road—directly into the way of an oncoming SUV. The car hit me at full speed and left the scene. I had previously worked with an illustrious spine surgeon Dr. Raghav Dutt, who has also been the President of the Orthopaedic Association of South Indian States (OASIS), which provided some insight into spinal injuries. Post the fall, I couldn't feel my lower limbs and sensed immediately that my spine must be involved. In spite of the commotion, I remained aware and unruffled, directing passersby to assist me out of harm's way and calling for an ambulance myself. It should be known that other people can remain safe if they also remain calm in these situations, as it saves lives. While I was being taken off the road, my legs were dangle and my torso was bent under the full force of the bike. After reaching the hospital, I was hurried for an MRI and scans. I was in the operating room within six hours. My elder brother was told by the doctors that the injury was bad—there was no certainty that I would walk again, or even sit.

WILL TO RISE AGAIN

Even with this terrible news, I assured my doctor that I would walk into his office one day. That unshakeable belief in myself has gotten me through every difficult chapter of my life, and this was no different. For the following months, I was bedridden for good and completely reliant on others to do even the most minor tasks—using the bathroom, taking a sip of water, or even rolling over in bed. This was particularly hard for someone like me, who had always been such an active person. Refusing to believe this was my destiny, I immersed myself in rigorous physiotherapy and exercise. My perseverance amazed even the physiotherapists, who would frequently cry upon witnessing my struggle. I screamed through the pain, but I never gave up. After five months of continuous effort, I stood up with the assistance of a walker. By the ninth month, I went back to work. Despite the many health complications I encountered—urinary infections, serious sputum infections, a 2.5 cm bladder stone that needed surgery, and bedsores that hurt—I overcame each difficulty only to become stronger. I knew I was not finished yet. I was only beginning.

ANOTHER SETBACK: MY MOTHER'S INJURY AND POOR HEALTH

Just as I had decided to go back to work, life presented me with another hurdle—my mother fell and injured her ankle. It was another agonizing phase in my life. I had to accompany her for physiotherapy sessions for almost a month and a half before returning to the hospital myself. Since I was now employed, my mother was forced to stay at home alone. I would move around in a wheelchair, which was incredibly dangerous since doctors had advised me against falling for at least two years. A bone in my spine had been crushed in the accident and substituted with a permanent rod, exactly in the L1 area. With time, my mother slipped into deep depression. Within just two months, she lost about 25 kilograms. Her appetite completely vanished, and she had to be admitted to the ICU. She even attempted suicide. Alongside psychiatric care, she required treatment for stomach complications, which became very expensive. Fortunately, through one of my friends, I was able to have her admitted in a hospital where a sympathetic doctor waived most of the fees, and I paid only for her medicines.

A SON'S STRENGTH

She was hospitalized for approximately six months. Throughout this time, I kept working from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and then I would drive 60 kilometers to see her. Every day, I would wake up at 4:30 a.m. and take the same 60-kilometer trip back to work. It was just so painful—even for an able-bodied individual, covering 120 kilometers every day without knowing when or what they will eat is challenging. For me, to do this while being wheelchair-bound was not only tiring but also perilous. In spite of all this, my mother is well today. She has had two huge operations and weathered a period when doctors questioned whether she would recover. Her resilience provided me with even greater motivation to persevere, however difficult the path seemed.

FINDING STRENGTH TO RISE AGAIN

There's always a limit to what one can bear, and when doctors told me that my mother's second operation was successful, I collapsed. This was a turning point for me. I knew I had to do something for myself, something that would be a challenge even for the able-bodied. Wanting to do something extraordinary, I started searching and found the Paralympic Association of India. A nice woman from the association had been of great assistance, having an assessment done to determine the sport that would be compatible for my body. At this stage, I used to go to Necklace Road, a hotspot for running, every Sunday. I would see people run marathons and feel guilty because I could not run either. Being an erstwhile marathon runner, I yearned to run again.

HOW I BECAME TELANGANA'S FIRST WHEELCHAIR RACER

One day, while browsing on the internet, I realized that I could take part in marathons using a wheelchair, and I started learning about wheelchair racing. After a month, I had learned all the facts and took a 7-year-old cycle from Chennai on rent, which was not in good condition. I got it repaired and then decided to leave my job in order to pursue sports full-time. Wheelchair racing, which is one of the most challenging and costliest events in the Paralympic arena, did not discourage me. I trained myself using YouTube tutorials and counseling with other racers. Just a month later, I represented Telangana and bagged the 5th position. My competitors had professionally designed wheelchairs that were very expensive, exceeding Rs 10 lakhs. My cycle was 12.5 kg, rusty, and was an old model that was 7 years old. I became the first Telangana person to have ever taken part in wheelchair racing, and it left many amazed. Subsequently, a few organizations invited me as chief guest, guest of honor, and brand ambassador.

BREAKING LIMITS, BEYOND RECORDS

After my victory, India's best wheelchair racer, Kiran Sriram Medkar, who is a gold medalist, contacted me and said he was willing to train me. She is a world champion wheelchair racer, and I began training under her. The Nationals were in February, and I had submitted my form and was selected for the Nationals within a month, a process that typically takes years. The officials initially doubted my equipment, but when I asked them to consider my application, they accepted it. This resulted in my being chosen for Khelo India Paralympics, a tournament only the best athletes can play, with standards on par with international games. I broke my own records within a span of one month of practice. I reduced my 800-meter time by 9 seconds and my 1500-meter time by 20 seconds, breaking my own limits. The experience was a testament to the determination and resilience I had gained throughout my life.

PURSUING MY PARALYMPIC DREAM, AN INDIAN REPRESENTATIVE

My intention is clear: to participate in the 2028 Paralympic Games, and I won't rest until I reach there. Wheelchair racing is one of the most challenging and most sought-after sports globally, but it's not as popular in India. It's not only physically demanding but also costly. In this sport, the players compete from an inclined position, pushing the wheelchair ahead with their hands. The event is segregated into four categories: T51, T52, T53, and T54, which accommodate various disability levels in track events. Specialized equipment is needed to compete at the top level, and without it, it is hard to match the international level.

CALL FOR HELP

I am asking the public for one very important thing—a proper sports wheelchair. With the proper equipment, I'm sure that I can win a top position in the national championships within a year. At present, I'm racing with equipment way below the standard, but I know that my passion and drive are what differentiate me from other racers. In the coming nationals between December 2025 and March 2026, I am sure I will surpass my own records and return with a gold medal for Telangana. But for that, I need support. I've approached the government, but they informed me they have no funds for sportsmen like me. The bitter reality is that government assistance usually comes after a significant success. But I do not require more training or services—I need only an appropriate wheelchair to compete. My appeal is not just to the government but to the nation, NGOs and business groups. If they would help me with the basic facilities I require, it would make all the difference in terms of helping me live up to my potential and fulfill the timings that I am capable of.

DAY-TO-DAY STRUGGLE FOR EXCELLENCE

In spite of the obstacles, I still train hard. Daily, I rise at 4 AM to go from Secunderabad to Gachibowli Stadium to attend my training sessions. This is a 60-kilometer round trip, which I undertake on my side-wheel scooter. At Gachibowli, the staff has been very supportive of my journey. I train twice daily, going out of my way to be better, despite doing so on inferior equipment. My savings from past work now pay for everything, and my coach freely gives me training without any cost. I also have the assistance of my doctors, who assist me with any medical needs.

RAPID FIRE

Your biggest source of energy:
Be Motivated

Your driving force:
Challenges of my life and inspiring many others like me

What describes you the best:
My surgeon once complimented me saying 'You're unstoppable with your mind' and I do believe that about myself

Your favourite cuisine:
Daal Baati Churma

Biggest inspiration:
Veer Savarkar and Subhash Chandra Bose

High phase in life:
I'm going to participate in the 2028 paralympics representing India and become the first one in wheelchair racing. I'm surely going to achieve a medal for India.

Lowest phase of your life:
When my mom was in the ICU and when my own brother's couldn't come to support me